

NEWSLETTER

INDO-PACIFIC FEDERATION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

July 2003

A FORLORN HOPE?

Sometimes the question is asked: what is the Theosophical Society? This question is asked by enquirers and newcomers, or simply by the curious. Perhaps this is a question that should be asked by members, even long-standing ones, again and again.

From an objective point of view, the TS is a world wide organization founded in 1875, which aims at forming a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of humanity without distinctions. The Society is now established in almost sixty countries of the world and has had a definite impact on the thought atmosphere of the world since its small beginnings.

Those who have studied something about the history of the TS know that it was not the brainchild of Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott. The original inspiration came from those Adept-Teachers who stood behind the Founders, and who belong to a very long lineage of enquirers, referred to in the *Bhagavad Gita* as the “Seers of the essence of things”. To give us an idea of what kind of outlook they have on life, one of them wrote: “The first object of the T.S. is philanthropy. The true Theosophist is a philanthropist — “not for himself but for the world he lives”.

Throughout its history, the TS faced very strong opposition — from Church clerics and missionaries, from intellectuals and scientists, from The essence of Theosophy is altruism or philanthropy. It implies a totally different quality of relationship in which there is real listening, understanding, cooperation and renunciation of the personal desire to assert oneself. Can we work and live in such a way that the

journalists and writers, among others. Somehow the challenges posed by such critics helped the TS to grow stronger for many members were united in the defense of the Society’s principles and aims. But in hindsight, the problems created by members within the Society caused much more damage to its work, for they generated dissension, division and a crystallization of points of view that made the work of the TS in certain areas very difficult, causing it to collapse in some cases.

This led one of the Adepts associated with the foundation of the TS to compare it, in a letter to A.P. Sinnett, to a “Forlorn Hope”, “to one of those desperate efforts against overwhelming odds that the true soldier glories to attempt”. But he clarified: “You have done well to see the “large purpose” in the small beginnings of the T.S.” They never undertook to direct the Society personally, but left its direction and activities to the Founders.

Today, in the 128th year of its existence, the Society has acquired an great deal of stability but, alas, here and there dissension and personal differences of opinion threaten its harmony. This perhaps makes it relevant for us to reflect and ponder, as deeply as we can, on the original, timeless inspiration that brought this Society into being.

original inspiration may continue to guide the TS and strengthen its work?

Pedro Oliveira

INDO-PACIFIC THEOSOPHICAL NEWS

2004 INDO-PACIFIC CONFERENCE

The next triennial meeting of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS will take place in Singapore on the weekend of 5, 6 and 7 November 2004. The theme will be "Working Together for Theosophy". We are very happy to announce that our International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, will be the Guest of Honour of the Conference and will deliver a public lecture on "Life is Relationship". A detailed programme as well as information about venue, costs, etc., will be made available in the next few months. Start planning to be in Singapore in November 2004!

SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM, ADYAR

The first part of the coming session of the School of the Wisdom will take place at the end of October 2003, with details to be announced later, on the theme "Living and Dying", and will be conducted by Professor P. Krishna, former Rector of the Rajghat Education Centre, Varanasi, India, and Mrs Radha Burnier, International President. Dr John Algeo, International Vice-President, will be the Director of the School from 17 November to 12 December 2003. His theme is "Practical Theosophy: *At the Feet of the Master* as a Guidebook to Theosophical Living". For more information please contact Mrs Dolores Gago, Secretary of the School of the Wisdom, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India. Tel: (+91 44) 491 2474; fax: 446 3464; e-mail: theossoc@satyam.net.in.

SINGAPORE

A long-standing member of Singapore Lodge, Brother Kwee Sim Djiang, passed away on 13 December 2002. He had joined the TS in 1957 and attended the Lodge meetings assiduously. He was known for his kindness and generosity

and was a strong supporter of the Singapore Lodge, having served at different occasions as its Vice-President, Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee.

The Lodge continued its regular programme of activities which includes the Basic Theosophy Course, a study class on *The Voice of the Silence*, plus public talks. Recent overseas speakers included Mary Anderson, International Secretary of the TS, who gave a talk on "Pseudo-Gurus and Genuine Spiritual Teachers" on 15 March, and Ali Ritsema, former General Secretary of the TS in The Netherlands, who visited the Lodge on 10 May and spoke on "The Yearning of the Inner Man for the Infinite".

JAPAN

Mitsuko Yanagida, Secretary of Nippon Lodge Tokyo, attended the 2003 School of Theosophy at the Springbrook Centre, in Queensland, Australia. The School was conducted by Mary Anderson, International Secretary, on the theme "The Fundamentals of Theosophy". Like all the students attending, Mitsuko also presented a short talk. She later visited the National Headquarters and Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney before returning to Japan.

She reports that the Nippon Lodge continues its monthly meetings at Ikebukuro in Tokyo. A small group of members are presently studying a commentary on *Light on the Path* and the meetings are a source of encouragement. Articles and news from *Theosophy in Australia* are frequently translated and published in the Japanese theosophical magazine. The International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, will visit Japan in August and will deliver a public lecture. Members look forward to the encouragement that such visits always bring.

SRI LANKA

The Federation President, Pedro Oliveira, visited Sri Lanka from 7 to 17 March 2003. He first addressed members and sympathizers of the Hamsa Lodge in Badulla on "The Purpose of the TS". While still in Badulla he addressed members of a village community library on "Universal Brotherhood", spoke to children of a Buddhist Sunday school and held a question and answer meeting at the Municipal Library. He was asked to address the students of Dharmadhuta College, Badulla, which was founded by Col. Olcott in 1891. At this meeting the students decided to form the Hamsa Theosophical Youth Group. This opportunity for college students to study Theosophy is due to the initiative and enthusiasm of S.M. Jayathilaka, President of Hamsa Lodge.

In Kandy, the IPF President spoke at a memorial meeting in remembrance of Brother T.R.R. Rajan, a former TS member and well known philanthropist. In Colombo, Oliveira participated in a seminar, gave a public lecture and addressed the members. There is great potential for the theosophical work in Sri Lanka, but much of it depends on the members' efforts to create a renewed interest in Theosophy in this land which held a special place in our Founders' hearts.

Since the March visit by the Federation

During this period the renovation of Besant Hall — the premises of the Hyderabad Theosophical Society — has been completed and the Hall is now in excellent condition. This marks the revival of the Hyderabad Lodge. More work has to be done to make it a true centre of theosophical study.

In another landmark of the TS work in Pakistan, a 1,000 copies of a Sindhi translation of *At the Feet of the Master* were printed.

INDONESIA

The Annual Convention took place in Solo, 16-18 May 2003. On the opening

President, the Hamsa Theosophical Youth Group had its inaugural meeting on 18 March, during which an executive committee was elected and the group explored the subject "The Contribution of TS Leaders to Buddhist Education in Sri Lanka". They plan to have monthly meetings and their future projects include organising a home garden and tree planting campaign in the college premises. They also hope to establish a library for theosophical teaching and moral education. At the request of the IPF President, TPH Adyar has sent them ten copies of *Life - Your Great Adventure* by Eunice and Felix Layton.

PAKISTAN

Dara Mirza, Presidential-Representative of the TS in Pakistan and Vice-President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, reports that the work there has continued along the same lines as previously. A monthly lecture is held at a five star hotel in Karachi. Invitations to the lecture are sent to all members and to about 80 other interested persons. It is also advertised in the press, with good response. They also conduct a weekly study class for in-depth study of Theosophy, with the attendance varying from 10 to 20 persons. This is held at the Jamshed Memorial Hall, the headquarters of the TS in Pakistan.

night there was a commemoration of the Centenary of the Penerangan, Dharma and Bogor Lodges. Ali Ritsema, former General Secretary of the Dutch Section of the TS was the guest speaker at the meeting, which also featured a Javanese spiritual song and a classical guitar duet. On the second day there was a seminar on "Blavatsky and the New Age". Ali Ritsema spoke on "The Contribution of HPB to New Age Thinking" and Andriani Martono, the Section's National Secretary, spoke on "Preparation for the New Age". There were group discussions on the theme in the evening. The third day was allocated to the Annual Meeting of the Section's Council.

After 21 years of dedicated service as National President, Mr H.M. Soesiswo retired and Prof. Dr. Supangat Sumarto was elected. He is a long-standing member since his student days in the 1950's. Matius Ali, Director of Research and Development, introduced a newly edition of the Section's journal *Theosofi*, which had ceased publication since 1998. It will be published every four months. In celebrating its Centenary the Penerangan Lodge of Surabaya provided all participants with free lodging and meals. About 80 members and friends participated, including the Committee. The Seminar was attended by 60 participants.

AUSTRALIA

The Section held its annual Convention in Perth, Western Australia, from 11 to 18 January 2003, on the theme "Theosophy and Human Transformation". The guest speaker was Dr Aryel Sanat, author of the book *The Inner Life of Krishnamurti*. Several Australian members contributed to the programme.

The 2003 School of Theosophy, held in the beautiful Springbrook Centre from 5 to 12 April, was led by Mary Anderson, International Secretary, on the theme "The Fundamentals of Theosophy". A student from Japan and another from New Zealand also attended. The School marked the inauguration of the new spacious hall at the centre, which was dedicated by Mary Anderson.

The Section also held from 16 to 19 May an intensive Theosophical Speakers Seminar at the Springbrook Centre. The programme included research techniques, teachings aids, public speaking, voice training, MS-Powerpoint presentation, learning how to teach, theosophical course preparation and workshop methodology. Each participating student presented a 20 min talk on some aspect of Theosophy.

NEW ZEALAND

The Section has been working on their governance plan finally approved last April. The changes include the introduction of an administrative team of five officers responsible for the running of the National Headquarters, to whom the National President reports to. They have also introduced a National Education Coordinator. There were also changes in the process of election of both National President and National Vice-President, who are now elected for a three year term each. They are now considering medium to long-term goals in the area of education and networking. These areas were selected as important for the future of the Section.

Last February they inaugurated their annual School of Theosophy which aims at providing members with one week of in-depth study and education. The guest speaker was Dr Ravi Ravindra, while Diana Dunningham-Chapotin and Gavin Laurie facilitated educational programmes.

Last May the Section hosted a session for members who are interested in updating their presentation skills by using a data projector as part of their audio-visual aids. The workshop covered the use of MS-Powerpoint with all those attending finishing the three day event with a short presentation.

Considerable amount of work is being done in the valuable Section's Archives, which includes cataloguing, digitising and indexing. This work is being carried out by TS members with the necessary expertise.

**INDO-PACIFIC FEDERATION OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**
4th Floor, 484 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Tel: +61 2 9264 7056 Fax: +61 2 9264 5857
E-mail: indopres@austheos.org.au
Editor: [Pedro Oliveira](mailto:Pedro.Oliveira@indopres.org.au)