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CONTENTS

A STEP FORWARD	83
<i>S.Sundaram</i>	
LISTENING TO THE MARCH OF THE FUTURE	84-90
<i>Shikhar Agnihotri</i>	
SERVICE AS THE WAY FORWARD	91-96
<i>Geetha Jaikumar</i>	
THE UNFOLDMENT OF GREATER REALITY	97-103
<i>S.U. Mahesh</i>	
NEWS AND NOTES	104-118

Editor

S. SUNDARAM

Cover Page: A *Pakad* (local name) tree near the Headquarters Building, Varanasi. The botanical name of the tree is **Ficus infectoria**. It belongs to Family : **Moraceae** (to which *Bargad* and *Peepal* belong).

Courtesy: **Sri Kuldip Singh Virk, Life Member of TS.**

A STEP FORWARD

In order to strengthen the work of the Theosophical Society (TS) several valuable suggestions were made and implemented in past. Such efforts are still being made at the Section, Federation and the Lodge level. But, as I mentioned in this column a few years ago, the impact of the growing materialism on society in general is increasing day by day. As such, the years ahead will be years of major responsibilities to be taken up by the members of the Indian Section.

Keeping the 125th year of the Indian Section in view the Section organized a few programmes. A lecture on the occasion of the Foundation Day (17 November) was delivered by Prof. Awadhesh Pradhan of Banaras Hindu University in which the learned speaker highlighted the significant role of the Theosophical Society in the Regeneration of this county and the positive way in which the Pioneers and Leaders of the Theosophical Movement tried to establish higher values of life. Then, a seminar on ‘**Looking Ahead in the Context of Theosophical Society**’ was organized at the Section HQ on 18-19 November 2015. The papers presented in the seminar by the speakers will be published later on. The report of the seminar has been published in this number of the journal.

During the 140th International Convention of the TS at Adyar three members of the Indian Section, namely Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri, Sis. Geetha Jaikumar and Bro. S.U.Mahesh were asked to share their views on ‘**Listening to the March of the Future**’*. Their talks were very much appreciated by the delegates. All the three talks have been published in this number. Now, as per the plan, a few talks will be organized on almost similar themes at the Section HQ. It is hoped that all these will initiate further dialogue and discussion at many points and stimulate and encourage for further thinking on several important issues relating to promote the work of the Section.

Let all of us put as much of our energy as possible to understand and spread the message of Theosophy and also strengthen the work of the organization at every level.

* This subject for short talks was based on an article entitled “Listen to the March of the Future” by late Revered Miss Joy Mills, published in ‘*The Theosophist*’ in February 1976.

LISTENING TO THE MARCH OF THE FUTURE

This is a subject which deals with the very existence of someone or somebody or in this case the Theosophical Society (TS), because we are in a changing world. Everything is changing within and without. So, one has to constantly *listen to the march of the future*, to remain relevant to the contemporary needs and requirements but not at the cost of diluting the teachings, instead making them more appealing to the prevailing times, taking the help of intuition if possible.

But we cannot listen to the future without giving the due attention to the past. Because the past is the basis of the present and the present is the seed for the future. From the past I want to emphasize on the aim with which the TS was founded. Not in the terms of its objects but rather the approach that is to be taken. And a very good expression of that I read in the foreword to the small but valuable booklet by the name of “Five messages” by HPB to American Section. It says Theosophy commands us to work for Humanity: that service is of a particular character; its nature is spiritual; the method whereof is two-fold:

“Firstly, to watch the steps of erring humanity and erect signposts against certain pitfalls.

“Secondly, to hold aloft the beacon light of Instruction which cheers the weary pilgrim and inspires him to make his very own the Power which is Peace, and the Service which is Joy.”

We all are trying to do this by using the various resources available which include writing articles in the newspapers, arranging lectures for the public and college students etc. Apart from that most of us by this time are aware of the fast pace with which the technology of the modern science has over run our lives. We are becoming so used to it that we just cannot imagine our lives without it. Due to this fact, I feel that to

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better our effort in propagation of theosophy and which is already being done, is use of technology, as much as possible. Because today it is much more convenient for a person to read an update on a social net working site or e-mail rather than taking time out for a two day or three day study course, for which may be he gets time only once in a year. For a few weeks now we have been posting the synopsis of our lodge meetings on the social net working site. And believe me it does have its effects. It serves two purposes. Firstly, the members who could not attend the meeting also can read the synopsis and at least get an idea about the subject. Secondly, those who are not yet members but who are interested in such subjects are also attracted to study.

At the national and international level we have already seen a considerable development in this direction. The Society's webpage is now very informative and suggestive with minute details. And this is most astonishing effect of the technology, if properly used, that it tends to develop in us, the members in different geographical areas, a sense of connectedness, a sense of family which is the real source of strength of the Society. Now everyone is just a click away and no doubt it does make the bond of friendship stronger by removing the hesitation.

In the same light, the second object of the TS gives us a direction. To encourage study of comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science. Practically the number of Religions and Philosophies are limited and so there is one aspect which is ever reinventing itself and that is Science. But very unfortunately science has brought the same limitation which the organized Religion did for centuries. And that is Blind faith. In present times, we tend to believe in anything that is offered to us in the name of scientific research, no matter what. Not even the fact that the next research will contradict the previous one and more so, that many such researches are sponsored to have a desired outcome. So, as a theosophist, having been enriched with such a vast knowledge given to us in the form of *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters* it is our duty to gradually acquaint ourselves with this knowledge so that we can not only correlate it with the modern scientific findings but also point out its limitations and thus try to awake a few scientific minds that it is not only through the side of matter that we can find the secrets of existence. And create a platform where such correlations can be

explained and discussed with people at large in order to make them aware of the divine wisdom which is theosophy.

But is that enough? Yes it is true that by making Theosophy more visible by various means it is possible to give a ray of hope to those who have developed their mental faculties to some extent and have faced or facing their share of high's and low's in life and looking for answers.

But there is a greater challenge when it comes to those, who although having a religious bent of mind do not think that such teachings can be implemented in daily life by an average householder. That, it is the work designated only for some great souls and we are here just to worship them. It is this mentality that we have to fight, within and without, because it does not let us make a whole hearted effort. This comes up very often during the day-to-day conversations that reactions like anger, irritation, greed, etc., are part of human nature and cannot be gotten rid off. Why this mentality has become so common? Because there is a tendency of the mind to compare itself with its surroundings and when the mind sees the majority going in a particular direction it assumes that to be the correct path and to make the matter worse it does not find any real life examples in its immediate surroundings.

In this case, the work of a theosophist is all the more difficult because unlike some other organizations working with similar objects, there is no uniform, set of rituals or way of greeting by which a theosophist can be recognized which is also the beauty of the TS as it has carefully kept itself free from any creed. At the same time it is the test that a theosophist has to solely depend upon his behaviour or character to convincingly convey his words. Because this behaviour or character is not just limited to the lodge or the campus of the TS. It extends far and beyond. It permeates each and every aspect of our daily life. And it is this behaviour and character of a person which is perceived first by the people around.

We may say that this is nothing new. We have been doing this for long. I too think the same. But I am sure we all understand that there are no short cuts to this work. And it is in this "Sincere Effort Making"

process that we develop Patience and Perseverance, Hope and Strength, Love and Wisdom, which begins to reflect outside in the form of various efforts and in its turn strengthens the organization.

Many of us here may assert this fact by their personal experiences that when we begin to work on ourselves, with every step that we take ahead we see someone asking for assistance from the step that we left behind. For the simple reason that One life pervades all and all units of consciousness have this inherent thirst for Growth, and if there is a little bit of progress made at some unit, the other unit is automatically directed towards it. That is my understanding of the statement, “where there is honey, the bees will come.”

And this is the only way to fight this pessimism or inertia that ideals are for worshipping and not for living. I am not at all saying that we become perfect in the first attempt. We may and we will fail miserably innumerable times but that does not matter because I have this firm conviction that “failing while trying is not failure but failing to try is the real failure”, and it is this inertia of not trying whole heartedly that we have to shake off ourselves. And it can start right where we live, whatever situations we are facing. This attitude completely removes the doubt that what is the value of my effort as a member? That is why I wish to include the following statement by Col. HSO. A very powerful statement which gives me energy and hope every time I read it. He says, “I wish that everybody in the society could realise how certain it is that those Great Brothers who are behind our work keep a vigilant eye upon all of us who with a pure heart and unselfish mind throw our energies into it.” I do not think we can ask for any more persuasion about the significance of even a small effort made with an altruistic attitude for the society.

Another kind of inertia that very often overcomes us as a member is that it is the job of the office bearers, whether at the federation or the section or international level to do everything. Yes, it is true that the growth of a unit depends a lot on the enthusiasm and ability of the office bearer but each and every effort, however small, by any member bears an equal significance because it is not the President or the Secretary of the TS or a Section that comes in a day to day contact with the people. It is the members like you and me who are the ambassadors of the TS in

our immediate surroundings. So we can very easily estimate the amount of responsibility that lies with us as an individual that how we would like to represent Theosophy and the TS in our surroundings and here comes the importance of a lodge.

My personal view is that although the headquarters, whether national or international, have a significant role to play as a nucleus by being a source of inspiration and vitality but a lodge is that organ of the society which deals with the immediate surroundings on a day-to-day basis. Although not everyone gets the responsibility to work in the headquarters due to individual karma. But the very same karma gives us an opportunity to work with similar zeal and enthusiasm in our lodges if we are willing.

A lodge is that nucleus which is the very source and a channel of subtler forms of energies and without a doubt a blessing for that society or area. So, an effort is to be made consciously to have more and more of such vital nuclei. We may think that easier said than done. Of course it is not easy. A lot of effort has to be put in. And here comes the role of the lodges or members who are old enough to give birth to new ones, not as a replacement but as a supplement. There is no quick fix or short cut that will offer us to strengthen us as an organization. In words of HPB to WQJ in 1888:

“The multiplication of local centres should be a foremost consideration in your minds, and each man should strive to be a centre of work in himself. When his inner development has reached a certain point, he will naturally draw those with whom he is in contact under the same influence; a nucleus is formed, round which other people will gather, forming a centre from which higher influences are directed.”

To give an example I feel that ten centres with seven members each is much more beneficent, than having one centre with 70 members. On the first look it seems that a gathering of 70 members at one place is a lot better than seven members because we all are aware of how the power of thought increases geometrically with the number of people. Very true. But on giving it a deeper look we can easily make out that due to various deterrents like old age, lack of conveyance, timings, traffic, travelling time etc., out of that 70 only 10-15 are able to attend the weekly study meetings on a regular basis. The rest of the logic

becomes very clear that if there are more number of centres, strategically located, may be not a society's building, the meetings can be done at some member's home on a rotational basis, which is very practical, we would be able to deter the deterrents that we just talked about and not only the number of members attending the study will increase but also it will make its influence felt in that area as well.

There is one more aspect to this effort of ours. And that aspect is **motive**. What is the motive behind doing all this? Because being the students of theosophy we all know that it is the motive which is the real weaver of karma, whether individually or collectively as an organization. So how are we listening to the future? Are we doing it as a CEO of a company does? That is, how to make more and more profit. Profit in this case, being the number of members. Or I want to do this because "I" am related to this organization and in which case "I" is more important than the teachings promulgated. If that is the only purpose, then it may not be enough. How can that be, if the essence of theosophy is altruism. Is this not a better motive; "to bring theosophy to more and more people whether or not they become member. To bring the light of theosophy to the souls caught in between the brutal materialism and exploitative spiritualism." Also not because "I" am related to the society but because it is the right thing to do because the TS was founded as a channel for diffusing the knowledge of Theosophy and student of theosophy can very easily identify that the teachings and principles of Theosophy are ALL INCLUSIVE. And only that which is all inclusive could offer a solution to any possible situation which is called a problem in any aspect of life of an individual, society, country or the planet. Be it the problem of climate change, of terrorism, of religious intolerance and sectarian violence, violence against children, women and elderly etc. So, when we work for theosophy and the TS we are actually performing our universal responsibility. If that, selfless devotion to the cause of theosophy be the motive, which I assume all of us present here have, then we generate a force beyond the mental plane which practically moves unopposed and which as per the law of retribution will bring its consequences. The consequences which will not only be positive but also long lasting.

As far as the membership is concerned I feel there will always be sufficient embodied souls to continue the work of the TS who by their

karmic link whether to the society or the teachings will get attracted towards it and many of us may be having the real life examples how someone just saw the board of the theosophical lodge, contacted and very soon became a willing student of theosophy.

Last but not the least, working together for some social cause also tends to bring the members closer and TOS is really an asset in this. So ideally I feel that with every TS lodge either there should be a TOS group as well or if not a formal group then at least the TS lodge should engage in some TOS activities. Because then as a group we try to make theosophy a living wisdom which makes the bond stronger among the members.

Lastly, HPB warns us against the dangers of craze for psychic development (without the foundation of moral strength) which has once again become or gradually becoming the source of exploitation of sincere aspirants. And various entities are offering instant Yoga or Nirvana by some short cut method. We as a theosophist shall not only remain vigilant of our temptation for such things but also try to communicate the related dangers at least to those who come in our contact. Because the Ethics of Theosophy are even more necessary than the scientific aspects of the psychic facts of nature and man.

We all can and are contributing in this effort, whether by sharing our time or finances, by sharing our views in the form of a lecture, by writing an article, by acts of charity, by spreading the theosophical literature, by attending a study class, by starting a study centre or a lodge, by meditation or by any other means available.

And very clearly this has been stated by HPB in *The Key to Theosophy*:

"The future of the TS will depend almost entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, devotion and last but not the least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members, on whom it will fall to carry on the work."

SERVICE AS THE WAY FORWARD

Listen to the March of the Future, is an article by our late revered Miss Joy Mills in which she quotes from a 1575 book by Louis Le Roy where he vents his despair over the changes and dislocations caused by the so-called progress in society. Four hundred years later, in 1975, Miss Joy Mills' own inventory of despair is a long one, and includes overpopulation, overuse of resources of all kinds, pollution and degradation of the environment, to list just a few. Today, forty years since her article was published, the problems remain, more intensified than ever before, and with additional problems added to an ever growing list.

All of us are quite aware of the disturbing social and political situation in the world today. Our world is increasingly a place of violent conflict, hatred and brutal atrocities. Religious intolerance is on the rise, with tempers flaring at the slightest and flimsiest of reasons. Religion, which is supposed to help people become better individuals, is itself proving to be the cause of strife, and is often accompanied by heavy loss of life. All religions give the individual the same chance for salvation. One wonders therefore, why anybody should become an enemy just because he or she professes a different religion.

Undoubtedly, we have advanced technologically by leaps and bounds and the variety of gadgets at our command defies imagination. But paradoxically, in an age of extensive connectivity and networking, we are finding a generation of youngsters who though very vocal on social media platforms, seem to be growing more reclusive, lacking social skills, and experiencing difficulty in having meaningful relationships which are so essential for a fulfilled and happy life.

Despite all the apparent material prosperity that we have garnered, the number of poor people in the world has actually increased, with

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more people going to bed hungry than ever before. A substantial proportion of India's population lives in the villages depending largely on agriculture for their livelihood. And with agriculture in the doldrums for various reasons, our farmers who provide us with life giving food are pushed to penury and suicide. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened enormously with over three-fourth of the country's wealth vesting with just 10 per cent of her population. Added to this is the backwardness of many states, in stark contrast to a few progressive ones. Such a skewed distribution of wealth, coupled with lack of uniform development makes for an unjust and exploitative society and provides a fertile breeding ground for extremism and insurgency.

The greed for quick profits and the ruthless plundering of Nature and natural resources has resulted in extreme levels of pollution and environmental degradation. Chennai has witnessed unprecedented and devastating floods last month, with terrible loss of life and property. While it is speculated that the larger problem of global warming and climate change may be the main contributing cause, the fact remains that the havoc which it caused and the resulting loss of life and property is mainly due to the unbridled and unprincipled building activity and encroachments on riverbeds, lakes and marshlands which blocked the flow of the flood waters causing extensive inundation. The disaster saw humanity at its best and worst. Many people put their own lives on line and went all out to rescue and provide succour to the thousands of displaced people while some others, capitalized on the helplessness of the victims and tried to make a killing. An example is the exorbitant amounts charged by some of the boatmen for rescuing stranded people. In some instances demanding up to Rs 30,000 for a rescue!

It is easy to list the ills and problems of society and easier still to be bogged down with a sense of fatalism and hopelessness. But as members of the Theosophical Society we need to do more, beginning with ourselves. Theosophical literature gives us valuable guidelines about how we need to purify ourselves, before we can even hope to contribute in any small manner to redressing the ills of the world. Mahatma Gandhi famously said, 'be the change you want to see in the world' and any change that we wish for, can come about only when we internalize and change ourselves first.

All religions, and our very own theosophical literature, stress that

the only way forward is to serve others, in the noblest and truest sense of the word. We need to not just speak, but to actually **live**, *The Theosophic Life* as detailed in that little gem of a book by Dr Besant where she says:

“The Theosophic life must be a life of service. Unless we are serving, we have no right to live. We live by the constant sacrifice of other lives on every side, and we must pay it back; otherwise to use an ancient phrase, we are but thieves and do not repay the gift”.

The Dalai Lama once said, ‘Be Selfish, Be Generous.’ On the face of it this appears to be an oxymoron, for how can one be selfish and generous at the same time? When we think more deeply we will realize that when we give, we may think that we are helping others which is no doubt true, but we are also helping ourselves. With any act of unconditional service, however small, our thinking and attitudes change, our minds quieten, and we experience a sense of unalloyed happiness. This inner transformation fundamentally shifts the direction of our lives. Apart from the transformational effect on us when we give, there is another dimension, a selfish one. When people around us are happy and content, they are in a better position to help us when **we** are in need. Hence the advice: be selfish, be generous.

Service is not only about grand and big deeds. Simple and small acts of everyday kindness can transform the lives of people one comes in contact with. Like minute flecks of gold that accumulate over time into a large treasure, our everyday acts of kindness and service will accumulate into a life filled with love, and a sense of peace and joy will pervade us each time we reach out to another. While on the subject of service, we can ponder over this lovely quote from Nipun Mehta who said, ‘Service doesn’t start when you have something to give; it blossoms naturally when you have nothing left to take . . . real privilege lies in knowing that you have enough.’

When we look at the natural world, we find symbiotic relationships everywhere. Symbiotic relationships in Nature are ones in which two organisms benefit each other’s survival. In Nature there is always giving and receiving; never taking and taking. The flower offers nectar to the bees and in return they help in pollination. There are very many

such examples, that can be given, but one of the most interesting and intriguing, is that of the Rufous Woodpecker which is found in India in the Western Ghats and the black tree ant.

The main diet of the Rufous woodpecker is black tree ants. One of the main items in the diet of the black tree ants is birds’ eggs. In the spring of the year when the woodpeckers get ready to lay their eggs, they will find a nest of the black tree ant, which is about the size of a football, and from the side, carve out a six-inch-wide chamber in the centre of the ant’s nest and lay their eggs there. While this is going on, the ants **do not** attack the woodpecker, even though some ant larvae are killed as the nest is being built. Once the bird has laid its eggs, it will not eat any of the ants of this colony and nor will it allow other woodpeckers to do so.

Scientists have not been able to totally explain how the woodpecker identifies the ants of the colony, but it will not eat them even when it chances on them some distance from the nest. The arrangement offers great advantages to both the bird and the ants. For the bird, it is a safe nesting place, as no predator will dare to take on the aggressive tree ants, and the ants too are protected from being picked off by other woodpeckers. To use management terminology, it is a WIN WIN situation all around. How such relationships come about can at best be a conjecture, but it would not be unrealistic to suggest that symbiotic relationships like these are excellent examples of the intricate design that is woven into the fabric of all creation. If we are able to emulate and integrate this natural principle - of giving and receiving - into our own lives, we would become enormously rich, both materially and spiritually, with a contentment which comes from a life well lived.

Our late President, Mrs. Radha Burnier, in her book, *No Other Path to Go*, talks about how indifference is a common condition of the mind. Many people do no overt acts of harm but they do no definite acts of good either. The Buddha taught that one has not only to ‘cease to do evil’ but also ‘learn to do good’. Ceasing to do evil may amount only to a self-satisfied harmlessness, which may not really mean an absence of selfishness. It may actually be a smug self-contentment which ignores the rest of life. In this context, Radhaji also talks about a common question that people ask: namely, what *sadhana* or spiritual practice can best lead to spiritual progress. This question is based on the faulty assump-

tion, that life can be divided into various compartments, with the spiritual quest being separate, from the other activities of our daily life.

This, however, is not how spiritual quest is to be viewed. It cannot be separated from the way we live our lives, from the way we think and act, react and respond to the various situations which confront us on a daily basis. We need to be mindful in all our activities, from the smallest to the biggest task on hand. The attitude and spirit that we bring to our work is extremely important. No work is demeaning or small and we need to bring the same spirit of selflessness and total commitment as if it were a job that we are doing for the Masters. Any decision that we take, any task that we set ourselves, requires that we look at it as if the Master is watching us and by that light, we can discern easily what is worthy and what is not. As *Light on the Path* says:

“When you have found the beginning of the way, the star of your soul will show its light; and by that light you will perceive how great is the darkness in which it burns . . . shrink not . . . but try to lift a little of the heavy karma of the world; give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of darkness from obtaining complete victory. Then do you enter into a partnership of joy, which brings terrible toil and profound sadness, but also a great and ever-increasing delight.”

Given the huge burden that the earth is facing today, with over population, extreme pollution and degradation of all the priceless life giving resources – air, water and soil – leading to global warming and climate change, with the accompanying increase in natural disasters like cyclones, tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes and the like, what can we as individuals do? The scale of the problem is so immense that it is daunting. But instead of giving up the task as impossible and beyond our reach, we should each of us do what we can to make the world a better place and bring peace and harmony to our community. The ripple effect is far reaching and as Margaret Mead remarked:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Many people today are opting for a more frugal and simple lifestyle, so that they can reduce their carbon footprint and walk more softly on

this earth. I remember a BBC programme which talked about the joy of living with less, also called a minimalistic lifestyle. The motto of the minimalists is *eliminate excess, go with less* - a new breed who would rather cycle to work, give up unnecessary possessions and live the simple life. All of us, during the great deluge in Chennai were compelled to live in a minimalistic manner. No electricity, no pumped water, no newspapers, no milk on some days, no TV and were compelled to listen to the news on the radio to get information on what was happening in other parts of the city. Many caught rainwater as it fell in tubs and used it for drinking and bathing, and made do with simple meals. No petrol in the bunks meant that the use of vehicles was greatly reduced and people walked everywhere to get what they wanted. And most important of all, everyone connected with everyone else in the tragedies which unfolded and tried to do whatever they could to help others less fortunate than themselves. It was a natural disaster but the spirit of the people triumphed and no deluge could quench the fire of humanity and compassion.

We are so caught up in materialistic pursuits that we have let go of things which matter, things which bring great joy and happiness, but which need not necessarily come with a price tag. We also need to rediscover the joy in the little everyday things. And all of us need to reconnect with Nature. Too often we get caught up in the drama of human existence, and forget that we are part of a much bigger web. Nature is not simply a backdrop to our lives — in reality we are but minor characters in its grand and ever unfolding play. Sometimes we catch a glimpse of its mystery and infinite beauty – while looking at a glorious sunrise or sunset, or gazing out over the blue expanse of an ocean, or watching trees blaze forth in summer glory, or listening to the song of a bird. And as we go through the day, we should make space to honour Nature, whether by taking a walk in the woods, or simply leaning out of the window to feel the breeze on our face, or stopping to smell the roses. We need to smile, breathe and give gratitude for all the gifts that we are blessed with, the friends who add richness to our lives, the roof over our heads and food in our stomachs, and everything else which we have been given and which we are often too busy or preoccupied to notice. As the saying goes, ‘we need to stay a lover of little things . . .’

THE UNFOLDMENT OF GREATER REALITY

Social media refers to internet based platform, application or technology that enables people to interact or communicate with one another through the internet by sharing ideas, events, personal messages, etc. It is a fairly new form of communication which is fast gaining popularity and is accessible even at remote locations. It has radically changed the way people communicate, even while the communicators remain unrelated and unknown to each other in the traditional sense. Some examples of presently popular sites are YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc. Social media tools are used to share transmittable information that could be in the form of texts, photos, audio and video. The amount of information that can be shared is limitless. There is continuous improvement in this technology with very little or no restrictions placed on its users. Even the slightest signs of limitations or restrictions will make that site almost instantly unpopular. There seems to be an endless possibility as to for what purpose it can be used, how best it can be used and what benefit arises from it.

Social media has for the past few years visibly impacted every aspect of human life. Education, economy, politics, philanthropy, environmental issues, animal welfare, the list is endless. Its influence on the people continues to expand with improvement in technology and accessibility.

Traditionally there was one 'source' for example radio, television and the people who controlled it and the rest were 'receivers' i.e., the listeners, the people watching it. The source depending on its own interest would release information, while the receiver in the absence of alternate source, would wholly believe that source or interpret that information out of personal experience.

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With revolutionary improvement in technology and its low cost, the spread of social media and its utility was probably underestimated even by their inventors. Those who believed in control and regulation, ignored such innovative technology, and realised its damaging influence only after a major shake-up.

At the individual level the benefit of social media has been tremendous. In our daily life of family, commerce and other matters that concern us the social media has been very informative.

Enterprising individuals and groups using this ever advancing technology, at their own risks create platforms or networks open to all. Anybody can come on to this platform and present their views or give information of an event that has occurred or occurring. This has radically changed the meaning of communication. Any person anywhere in the world became a source for information on a particular platform while many others without being hampered by geographical or linguistic limitations could access and add to it. From a larger perspective this can be interpreted as a dialogue without restrictions. The receiver is now in a position to make his choice.

To understand the influence of social media on the world around us, we choose three events that occurred in the year 2015 that just went by.

United Nations Climate Change Conference held at Paris represented by almost all the countries of the world, have drafted a legally binding agreement which set limits for rise in temperatures arising out of greenhouse gases called global warming. Heads of states have taken initiative to directly communicate with leaders of other states to keep up the momentum of the negotiation process until it reaches its final shape.

It has taken the U.N more than 20 years to reach this stage and many decades for countries that would be directly affected by such levels of pollution and environmental changes, to have it initially accepted at the U.N. Countries which directly and vastly contributed to this global warming phenomenon wielded their extraordinary power, to veto or boycott such legislations for the benefit of a small but highly influential group, even though their own scientists and reputed institutions gave undisputable scientific data about the impending environmen-

tal disaster and its effect on human population, if the current policy of industrialisation, unbridled consumption and wastage continued. With the advent of social media scientists, activists and people across the world, instantly contributed information gathered by them on increasing levels of pollution, industrial accidents, exploitation of natural resources, unseasonal weather patterns, natural calamities and its direct impact on our health and longevity. With building up of proof and increasing awareness, different and innovative forms of protests and with strong representations to the Executive and Judiciary, environmental damage and its impact on human society could no longer be passed off as stray and unrelated events.

The second reference is to the Harvard Business Review selection of the top 100 Chief Executive Officers for 2015, from companies across the world. For many years, the financial performance of these companies during the year i.e., which company made the highest profits and distributed maximum of those profits amongst its share holders in that year decided the order or ranking of their CEO. Making more and more profits was the only motive of these companies. This year, however, the measurement criteria were slightly altered. While 80% were allotted to the measurement of financial performance, balance 20% was given to measure the company's Environmental, Social and Governance performance. Another criterion that was added was of providing long term leadership for enduring success. That meant the person leading the organization occupied that post purely due to his personal abilities, vision and consistent performance that lead to the benefit and growth of that organization. These changes in measurement forced the reviewers to look at CEO's of companies which were not considered earlier. The results were unexpected. CEO's of little known but well performing companies came to occupy the top spots. The No.1 position was occupied by the CEO of a company from Denmark which mainly manufactured insulin. In an interview, the No.1 ranked CEO said if we keep polluting, don't treat our employees well and don't provide inexpensive products to poor people, regulations will be imposed on us and we will end up being costly. On another question as to why he did not use private aircraft for his travels as is the current practice by most, he said "that would send a signal to my subordinates that my time is more valuable than theirs". To just get a glimpse of how radically this new

measurement has affected the rankings in comparison, the No.1 CEO of the previous year has now been ranked No.87.

Public display of wealth and extravagant life style are instantly posted and visible across the world. This is in sharp contrast to images of crisis that humanity is facing in different parts of the world. There is every possibility that these very areas where human suffering is at its greatest would have been exploited to contribute for the enormous profits cornered and controlled by a few.

The third event is something that has happened here in Chennai and its surrounding areas. The unprecedented concentration of seasonal rain fall, within an extremely short period of time, which otherwise would have normally spread over a longer duration, submerged most parts of the city. Even those with the best of preparations and early warning could not have dealt with what was to come.

Knowledgeable and concerned people almost immediately took to social media rather than wait for help to arrive or fully depend on the government for relief materials. During similar crisis earlier, even though there was this spontaneous response to help, due to lack of specific information the benefits did not reach where it was desperately needed and thus got wasted or accumulated at another place. But this time (December 2015), with the use of social media not only did relief material largely reach where it was much needed but also what was specifically required was given.

On our quest for Theosophical knowledge and as members of the Theosophical Society, how do we look at the use of technology? How do we apply it? Not just for our own progress but also to that vast sea of humanity that seeks to know more about it. Shouldn't we harness it to spread information that helps mankind, to raise our self from the lower to the higher, from the not knowing to the knowledgeable, away from animosity and anger and closer towards love and compassion? Can it be more often used to cheer and encourage those who suffer, those who struggle and toil in a gloomy situation, when all hope is lost? Founders of the Theosophical Society and many of its members may have been critical of the slow progress of the social and spiritual development in the society at large, but their own efforts to revitalize and give

a direction to the social and spiritual movement never diminished. Those who have held firm belief in compassion and brotherhood have continued to toil in that direction despite the upheaval and challenges that are faced in daily life.

In the early days of incessant rains and flooding at Chennai, a mischief was spread on the social media. On the outskirts of the city a facility for the scientific study and conservation of crocodiles is set up. The rumor was these creatures had escaped.

When institutions and organizations are established and run on scientific lines, there is a fair level of competence among those running it, an ability to handle difficult situations, even though at times mistakes or accidents do happen. People were desperate for a ray of sunlight, a silver lining in the clouds, news of approaching help and relief. During these times do we become passive observers, interpreting differently, criticising the efforts of those who are trying to work in a hopeless situation? In the city of Bangalore in the neighbouring state of Karnataka, when people became aware of the enormity of devastation caused in Chennai by these rains and the subsequent flooding, there was a constant buzz on the social media. People were asked to look at it as a humanitarian crisis, to help fellow brothers in distress, to forget past differences, if any. Messages were constantly flashed for the type of relief materials required and centres where the relief materials were being collected, to be later delivered by bulk transportation. To avoid delay and wastage, the same networks and platforms were used to speedily identify people and locations that were in distress.

At the Bangalore City Lodge of the Theosophical Society, younger members were invited to give talks on one Sunday of every alternate month as part of their public lecture schedules. After some discussion amongst the younger members, a deviation was sought from the concept of one source and many receivers, from the concept of the lecturer and the lectured. The time allotted to them now would be used with a little difference.

For one such programme, a Theosophical quiz, containing audio, video and puzzles with the use of computer, internet and overhead projector was prepared. During the entire duration of the programme, all the participants experienced some form of constant awareness. After

the conclusion of the Theosophical quiz, feedback was collected from the participants on how to improve the presentation, its contents, etc. One of the suggestions was to use similar format to introduce the book that would be taken up for the regular study class. This would encourage the participants of the study class to read that book and come prepared, to face questions that would be put to them and thereby others would get to know about the author, the need for writing that book, interesting anecdotes surrounding that time, etc., in a more lively and positive environment. Information gathered in this way would surely be remembered for a long time and might find more practical application in their daily life.

There always exists an opportunity to discover something new, an opportunity to change for the better, to do the right thing in different ways. All it requires is an open mind and a pure heart which helps us to leave the past behind and look towards a new dawn and make a new beginning. The founders of the Theosophical Society and many members of this movement have led by example, we have a treasure house of literature, not just to be good human beings but to continue on the spiritual path keeping aside distractions and overcoming obstacles and challenges with a smile, carrying on without any feeling of bitterness. We have to travel far, we have to overcome obstacles, cross many milestones to be one with the higher Self. How we do this is entirely left to us. Should we go around in circles desperately holding on to a shrinking world or gather sufficient courage, if necessary with the help and advise of fellow travellers, the more experienced, to take the next higher step towards fulfilling our Destiny. Every individual has to make this choice. It can be postponed but cannot be avoided. It is inevitable. The earlier that choice is made, sooner will we get the opportunity to make the next one.

We have to move away from being the average enquirer indulging in theoretical intellectualism, move away from allowing the mind to speculate and wander. We have to move towards the theosophical teachings, to find the greater purpose of our life.

What is it that survives? For all the thoughts and actions that an individual undergoes during his lifetime, how much of it was useful? How has it helped us to take a significant and irreversible step in our

NEWS AND NOTES

spiritual progress? Or are we still the same, with minor or superficial changes? When we stand by the seashore, watching the sea, it occupies our mind. A gentle breeze across the sea and the gentle waves have a calming and soothing effect on us, whereas strong winds and a rough sea with huge waves create a sense of awe and fear. Each wave, no matter how powerful and at times destructive lasts only for a short while. Once it has run its course, it has nowhere to go. It has to merge with the ocean from which it came and become one with it. The waves are comparable to the illusions formed in our mind. Illusions arising out of opinions, assumptions, anger, fear, etc., Each passing event fuelling a new short lived illusion. Man, whatever the path he chooses has to understand the greater reality, to put effort to stay away from such illusions, to have noble thoughts and to surrender and merge with the universal consciousness.

Those who showed us the way, the Buddha, Mahaveera, Jesus, did not write any book, still their wisdom continues to be quoted. Kings or saints, seekers of that same truth are remembered even today for having patronized and propagated that wisdom, even after a significant lapse of time. For they have helped mankind through darkness unto light. Those who acted differently, however intelligent, have long since been forgotten. For, it is in the nature of man that during difficult times he turns towards that source of light and inspiration, towards the teachings of the Masters and Mahatmas.

There is always abundance of material available. Our search should be to find good information, Information that helps us in our spiritual progress. Our quest should be for the better understanding of that wisdom. We have to filter information and pursue that which inspires and strengthens our belief in brotherhood, the Oneness of all life, to realize that we are branches of the same tree. The reflection of the Universal Spirit is in all of us. It is important that we acknowledge this as early as possible.

Assam

The Annual General Meeting of the Federation (ATF) was held in the auditorium of Bishnu Nirmala Trust Bhavan at Latasil, Uzanbazar, Guwahati. The subject committee meeting was held at 9.45 a.m. with Bro Gokul Ch. Deka, Vice-President of A.T.F., in the Chair.

Bro. R. N. Choudhury led the Universal Prayer.

The object of the meeting was detailed by the Secretary (i/c) Bro. A.K Barua.

A *borgeet* was presented by Sis Manju Malakar of Nalbari.

Bro. Barua presented the Secretary's report for 2014-15 and Bro P.N. Das, Treasurer presented his report which was duly audited by the Chartered Accountant for the Financial Year 2014-15. The unaudited a/c for the period 01.04.14 to 30.09.15(6 months) and the budget for 2015-16 were also presented by him. After discussion both the reports and the budget were duly passed in the meeting and later on in the A.G.M.

Bro. R.C. Devsarma expressed his inability to continue as the Secretary of ATF, because of his ill health. So by a resolution Bro. Anil Kumar Barua, Joint Secretary, was made full-fledged Secretary of the A.T.F. for the remaining period of present term of the E.C. This resolution was passed formally in the A.G.M. as well.

It was resolved that a new councilor in the person of Dr. Bipul Sarma may be recommended to the Indian Section in place of Bro. Devsarma, subject to approval by the President.

The inaugural session of the A.G.M. was started at 11-30 a.m. with All Religion Prayers. Bro. D.N Chakravarty, President of A.T.F., was in the Chair. The annual magazine of the Federation *Jnana Jeuti* (2015) was presented by the Editor Dr. Chandra Prabha Bhuyan and was released by the Guest of Honour Sri Prafulla Goswami, Retd. Professor of Krishna Kanta Handique Sanskrit College, Guwahati. Shri Goswami, in absence of the Chief Guest of A.G.M, delivered a thought provoking lecture on the Role of Theosophy(Brahma Vidya) in bringing peace to the crisis-ridden world.

Bro. N.C. Dutta also spoke on the importance of Theosophy to fight the imbalances in the world today. A song was presented by Sis. Pratibha Choudhury of Silver Jubilee Lodge. Dr. Bipul Sarma and Bro. Harinath Hazarika from Jorhat Sampriti Lodge and Sri Indrajit Barua a reputed person from the audience also presented their views in brief.

In his Presidential address Bro D.N. Chakravarty gave a talk on ethical aspects of Theosophy and invited all the members to work for and live with Theosophy so that we can derive the ideals and higher values of life by our own Karma. The vote of thanks was extended by Bro A.K. Barua.

The meeting concluded by Shanti Mantra recited by Bro. Ramesh Dev Sarma.

A symposium was organized at Nalbari in the local Anandapuram Ashram hall at Gopal Bazaar. It was held on 22 November, 2015, with Bro G.C. Deka, Vice-President of A.T.F., in the Chair. Bro. J.N Patowary, Regional President T.O.S, Assam & Arunachal region was the Director of the symposium. The topic of the symposium was "Theosophy & Human Values". It was attended by about 70 members coming from different Lodges of the district, apart from several members from Guwahati.

The meeting started with the Universal Prayer. A song was also presented by Sister Manju Malakar. The following speakers Bro. Raghu Nath Choudhury, Bro. Anil Kumar Barua, Secy., A.T.F., Dr. C.P. Bhuyan and Bro. Jogen Kalita dealt with the subject and elaborately discussed it and established that the 'Human Values' go hand in hand with Theosophical concept and is the most important aspect of Theosophy.

From the audience Bro. Md. Mokibul Rahman spoke about how "Human Values" have eroded in the present day life and how killing of fellow beings is carried out in the name of religions. He asserted that only Theosophy with all its ethical and moral teachings can bring about a positive change in the world. Sister Renuka Sarma also spoke in brief in appreciation of the Wisdom Religion(Theosophy).Director Bro. J.N. Patowary summed up all the points raised by the participants and concluded the discussion adding his own point of view. The closing prayer was performed by Bro. Iswar Goswami.

The 40th A.G.M of Pragjyotishpur Theosophical Lodge for 2014-15 & the Prag group T.O.S. annual meet was held in the Bharalumukh Lodge premises, on 23 November 2015.

Since Bro. D. N. Chakravarty, President of A.T.F., could not come due to his important preoccupation Bro. R. N. Choudhury, President of Pragjyotishpur Lodge, took the chair. The meeting started with Bro. Choudhury leading the Universal Prayer.

Bro. N.M Baruah, Secretary, read his report and presented the audited a/c which were accepted in the meeting. Since the chief guest Bro. Pradip Mahapatra, Asstt. General Secretary, Indian Section, could not come Professor (Retd.) Mohini Kr. Bordoloi of Guwahati was invited as the Chief Guest. Prof Bordoloi gave an illuminating lecture and spoke lucidly on ethical values. More than 50 members and some non-members attended it.

The old Executive Committee resigned in the meeting. It was replaced by a new Executive Committee of the Lodge: President: Bro. Raghu Nath Choudhury; Secretary: Bro. Ramesh Mahanta; and Asstt. Secretary & Librarian: Bro. Mahendra Nath Sarma. The term of the new committee is for 3 years.

Thereafter Bro. Kabindra Kr. Das presided over the group A.G.M where Dr.J.Patgiri presented his report of a/c. A new executive committee was also formed for the group with Bro. Jagannath Patgiri as President & Sis Charulata Kalita as Secretary.

The upper Assam Theosophical Co-ordination Committee of Jorhat organized a seminar on 25 November. The venue of the seminar was Sanskrit Sikha Parishad Bhavan.

Dr. Bipul Sarma, Vice-President, A.T.F., was in the Chair. The meeting started with a *Mangalacharan* presented by the students of Sanskrit Sikha Parishad.

The seminar was to be inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Agriculture University who could not come because of preoccupation. Bro. J.N. Patowary, President, T.O.S Assam & Arunachal region inaugurated the seminar followed by an inaugural address. He spoke on the topic of the seminar "Theosophy & Human Values".

Bro. R.N Choudhury, former Secretary, A.T.F. released the 1st issue of the bilingual magazine “Antar Jyoti” of Upper Assam Co-ordination Committee edited jointly by Dr. Bipul Sarma & Bro Prabin Sarma.

Bro. Mridu Paban Goswami, President of Sampriti Lodge and a renowned educationist was the Director of the seminar. Bro. Purna Chandra Dole, former Professor of Agriculture University dealt with Theosophy & Sanatana Dharma. He also deliberated on origin of mankind and how it is connected with Theosophy & Human Values— co-relating these to Science and Social Status. Bro. R.N Choudhury, Bro. A.K.Barua and Bro Hari Nath Hazarika were the other speakers and they effectively dealt with the topic.

The director highlighted the salient points raised by the resource persons and ably commented on the deliberations and summed up saying that Theosophy or Brahma Vidya or Divine Wisdom is nothing but similar to the teachings from the Vedanta and the essence of all religions of the world. There are ethics and human values in the said Divine Wisdom which we must practise earnestly in our day-to-day life, then only Theosophy will be able to overcome all the challenges of the present world.

The ladies’ group of Pragati Lodge presented a beautiful chorus on theosophical teachings.

The President summed up every point and congratulated the co-ordination committee for the success of the meeting. Bro Prabin Sarma offered vote of thanks.

With a view to propagate theosophy to new areas Dr. Bipul Sarma, Vice-President, A.T.F & Bro A.K Barua, Secretary, A.T.F. visited Tinsukia and Dibrugarh on 27 & 28 November respectively.

A public meeting was arranged at 27 November at the Institute of Fine Arts, at Kachujan Road near Tinsukia College where 25 people were present. Sri Durgadutta Sarma, a retired Principal, presided over the meeting. All present in the meeting took keen interest on the subject of Theosophy and finally decided to open a new Lodge at Borguri Durga Mandir, Tinsukia.

A formal application has been forwarded to the Indian Section for prior permission.

A book fair was held at Chowkidingee field in Dibrugarh where the organizers very kindly arranged a slot for a theosophical meeting. The meeting was presided over by Dr. Biren Barthakur, a retired professor and was attended by several intellectuals of Dibrugarh. Bro. A.K.Barua, explained to the public the purpose of the meeting and drew the attention of the audience that Theosophy is not a new subject in Assam. Assam Theosophical Federation has completed 37 years and it is due to lack of adequate effort this was not spread so far to these areas. He narrated a brief history of TS and its leaders.

Dr. Bipul Sarma started with the Universal Prayer and spoke eloquently about Theosophy and how it can be useful to the society and humanity as a whole in the present crisis-ridden world.

The president concluded the meeting emphasizing the need of Theosophical studies in the present day world and appreciating the efforts made by Assam Theosophical Federation in this respect.

Later on this was discussed and several people joined hands to form a new lodge at Dibrugarh.

A seminar was organized at the A.T.F. office, Guwahati, on the topic of “Brahma Vidya (Theosophy) & Sabda Brahma”. It was held on 29 November and was conducted by Bro Nagen Chandra Dutta of A.T.F. The resource persons were Dr.Rajendra Nath Sarma, retired H.O.D of Guwahati University and Prof. Uma Kanta Sarma. Both the scholars deliberated on the subject in a very lucid manner and enlightened the audience on such a highly philosophical topic. The seminar was dedicated to the memory of late Manick Ch. Dutta, an active member of Silver Jubilee Lodge who always tried to arouse interest amongst the members about the particular subject. A short talk was delivered by Sri. Subrata Dutta, the eldest son of late Manick Ch. Dutta, regarding the contribution of his father in promoting theosophy.

Bro N.C. Dutta summed up the main points and thanked both the resource persons for their valuable presentation.

Bengal

The 102nd Anniversary of Bally Theosophical Lodge.

The Bally Theosophical Lodge celebrated its 102nd Anniversary on 15 November 2015 at Bally Sishu Samity Hall, Bally. Prof. Prahlad Sarkar, former-Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, Calcutta University and Shri Akhil Bandhu Banerjee, (Freedom Fighter) graced the occasion as chief guest & special guest respectively. The meeting was attended by 50 persons including members from Bharadwaja & Jnanamarga Lodge.

The meeting started with the Prayers of All Faiths followed by one minute's silence as a mark of respect to the departed soul of our beloved brothers and sisters. Then the meeting was inaugurated by Prof. Prahlad Sarkar by lightening the candle and garlanding the portrait of Madam H.P. Blavatsky. Bro. Achintya Kr. Chakraborty, Jt. Secretary of the Lodge, welcomed all the guests & the participants and gave a short talk on "Theosophy and its relevance in our present life". Bro. Joydev Goswami in his Secretary's Report narrated the history of the Lodge and thanked all for participating in the meeting, Bro. Budhadeb Mukherjee, Bro. Rhosshc Universe, Shri Brindaban Ghosh, (Freedom Fighter) also spoke on the occasion. Membership Diplomas were given to the new members by the Chief Guest.

Chief Guest, Prof. Prahlad Sarkar, spoke on the "Historical background of the Theosophical Movement". Special Guest, Shri Akhil Bandhu Banerjee spoke about his long association with the Bally Lodge and invited the young participants to join the Lodge. Bro. Maloy Sengupta, Ex-Chief Justice, in his Presidential speech narrated about the moral values of Theosophy and thanked all the participants. Vote of thanks was given by Bro. Ananda Mohan Patra. The meeting ended with the devotional song rendered by Shri Nitya Nanda Patra.

Delhi

The members of Besant Lodge studied Theosophical Society pamphlet on January 7. It was with reference to Objects, Philosophy, Universal Invocation and significance of Freedom of Thought with the conclusion that TS is unique in its universal and holistic human development approach. On Jan 14 the members discussed the convention theme

(modified) as "Compassion in Our Violent World." The idea was that our presentations should not merely be theoretical dissertations but deal with real world situation. In the last meeting of the month the members discussed, 'Blending of Psychic Human nature with his Spiritual nature.

Bro. M.P. Singhal addressed the members of Indraprastha Lodge on January 3 and narrated his observations regarding the work of the TS in Philippines.

Uttarakhand

A meeting of Nanda Devi Lodge of Almora was held on 9 January in which nine members were present. The members expressed their views on the relationship between materialism and spiritualism. They discussed about the future plan of action and in this connection it was decided to start a study circle in order to spread the message and philosophy of Theosophy and keeping this in view some theosophical literature were given to the members. It was further resolved to meet once in two months turn wise at the residence of each member. Besides, it was decided to invite lecturers of national and international repute so that the general public too may be made aware of the knowledge and benefit one can get from the principles and ideas of Theosophy and the work of the Theosophical Society.

The aforesaid meeting was chaired by the Lodge's President Bro. Girish Sharma and was conducted by the Lodge's Secretary Bro. Pradeep Kumar Gururani.

A visit to Bangladesh

B.L. Bhattacharya visited Dhaka and Comilla in Bangladesh from 1-8 December 2015. On 1st Dec. Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hye formed a new Lodge at Dhaka with 20 members. Bro. B.L. Bhattacharya gave a talk on this occasion on the Motto of the TS i.e. 'There is no Religion higher than Truth'. Next day, Dr. Hye arranged a meeting with Vice-Chancellor and professors of Dhaka University where Bro. Bhattacharya explained the relevance of Theosophy in modern world. On 3rd Dec. Bro. Bhattacharya met the members of Olcott Lodge and spoke on Universal Brotherhood. On 4th Dec. there was a meeting at Nanaksahi Gurudwara, Dhaka. On 5th Dec. Bro. Bhattacharya visited Comilla with 10 members

of Olcott Lodge including Adv. Subrata Chowdhury, Coordinator, and attended the meeting as Chief Guest. It was organized by Comilla Lodge. On the same day a new Lodge namely 'Maynamati Lodge' was formed at Comilla with 19 members including young advocates, professors and teachers. Adv. Prahlad Debnath took initiative to form this lodge and organized a meeting in the evening with TS Members and eminent persons of Comilla Town. It was held near Nazrul Manch and Rani Dighi where Bro. Bhattacharya spoke on "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society". On 6th December, Olcott Lodge organized a seminar at the Auditorium of Dhakeshwari Temple. The theme was "Compassion and Universal Responsibility". Bro. B.L. Bhattacharyya as Chief Speaker. On 7th Dec. a new Lodge "Proactive TS Lodge" was formed at Dhaka with the initiative of Dr. Md. Almasur Rahman, where Bro. Bhattacharya explained the three noble objectives of the Theosophical Society. News of the meetings were published in the local dailies.

All the meetings started with the invocation to unify, it's explanation in local language and ended with short Meditation. TS Members at Dhaka are carrying out humanitarian activities and have decided to form TOS Groups in near future.

Theosophical Order of Service

The TOS Odisha Region, in collaboration with the Academy for Philosophy & Professional ethics, conducted a workshop on 'Mind Management' at Saheed Nagar Sanskrutika Samiti. It was held on 20 November. The programme was sponsored by the members of Mahabharat TOS Group. Dr. Deepa Padhi, President, TOS, Odisha Region, gave the welcome address. Prof. F.M. Sahoo and Prof. Aditya Mohanty, Director, APPE, delivered a talk on "Mind Management". Mr. Atal Bihari Mallick, Director Mind & Memories, delivered a talk on "Inner Mind Activation". Ms. Lipa Rath, Counselor & Therapist, spoke on "Past life Regression" through power point presentation.

Indian Section Headquarters

(1). Seminar Proceedings

On the significant occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Indian Section, a two-day seminar on "**Looking Ahead in the Context**

of Theosophical Society" was organized by the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society on November 18-19, 2015 in the Annie Besant Hall at the Indian Section Headquarters, Varanasi. The seminar was structured in seven academic sessions including the inaugural and valedictory sessions. *The Indian Theosophist*, Vol. 113, No. 10 & 11 was distributed to all the delegates and participants.

In the inaugural session, welcoming the delegates and guests and introducing the theme of the Seminar, Sri S. Sundaram, General Secretary, Indian Section, Theosophical Society outlined the aims and objectives of the Theosophical Society and said that now is the time to retrospect for all members of the Theosophical Society. We have to ask ourselves what transformation has occurred in one's self after becoming a member. Although the total number of members of the Theosophical Society in India is 11300, this number is not a small number because any organization is to be recognized by its discipline and its inner strength. We need to ask whether we understand the responsibility of being a member of the Theosophical Society. The underlying philosophy is that Theosophical Society is not meant for fulfilling one's individual ambitions. The goals and objectives are not achieved as long as we see all pervasive violence in society. The question is of the unity of heart and mind. It is not existing side by side but living together. If attaining knowledge is the goal, then it has to happen at the level of consciousness – transformation at the level of consciousness which can be understood as *Prajna*. The time has come to assess whether there is correspondence between the ideal and the action. We have had such members whose ideals were always manifested in their actions. An institution can be effective only when there is perfect harmony between the thought and the action between theory and practice. It is a continuous journey. Therefore, at this juncture, we have to introspect and analyse the achievements and also the failures. Therefore, the time is to question ourselves. He emphasized that one has to attain the inner strength.

Introducing the keynote speaker Prof. Anand Kumar, a Retired Professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Sri Sundaram said that Radha ji was very much impressed when Prof. Anand Kumar spoke in this very hall (Annie Besant Hall) on the occasion of Annie Besant's Birth Anniversary on 1st October, 2003. In his keynote address Prof. Anand

Kumar talked about his association with the Theosophical Society which started when he was a young student at the Central Hindu School and he grew up under the teachings of Annie Besant, Dr. Bhagwan Das and such other thinkers. In the University, he was associated with *Angrezi Hatao Andolan*. He said that in the post-Independent India, the populace of his generation became part of the defeated generation because the promises of the Independent India have not been fulfilled. The traditions which were established in the first part of the twentieth century were destroyed in the later part of the twentieth century. He said that we have to be committed to the freedom of others, justice to all and therefore, we have to go back to the basis. Going back to the basis is the way to move forward. What has happened in our society is increasing intolerance for multi-culturality. In this situation, no one is clear about what next and therefore, for answers we have to enter the spiritual realm of Annie Besant. We are living in a world where science is without humanity and knowledge is without character. Therefore, the principles of Theosophical Society although formulated in the nineteenth century are very relevant today for transformation of the individual. He deliberated upon the issues of poverty, environment, gender injustice, religious drifting, decreasing spirituality and politicization of religions. The answers to all these lie in the Theosophical thought because Theosophical Society has not vacated the religious space, education, health, happiness. He emphasized on the need for Theosophical movement. Although Annie Besant dissociated herself from politics, the need of the hour is to bring the Theosophical Society movement in politics. Today ethics and politics are divorced. Only Theosophical Society can bring about ethics and politics together. This is the path for us – **looking ahead**.

National Lecturer of the Indian Section Dr. S.K. Pandey spoke on life's challenges and our responsibility. He said that challenges that we see outside in the world are our own creation. He referred to Buddha, Annie Besant, Krishnamurti and Jinarajadasa. He also referred to Gita and said that we have imposed materiality on our spiritual self.

Dr. T.K. Nair, Secretary, Theosophical Order of Service, elaborated upon Theosophical Order of Service which he said is no different from the Theosophical Society and the core of the Theosophical Society is service to others. He referred to Madam Blavatsky, Leadbeater

and Radha ji. According to them service also means sacrifice and the acts of philanthropy.

Session 2 was chaired by Dr. S.K. Pandey and the invited guest speakers were Prof. Harikesh Singh, Faculty of Education, BHU and Colonel Kailash, Member of Noida Lodge. Prof. Singh spoke on 'Pertinence of Theosophical Perspectives in resolving the emerging Indian crises'. He drew attention on intra-reality and inscape (*Atmchetna*). He emphasized on the cosmic consciousness and said that the issue is of Gross National Happiness. The issue is being Indian and becoming Indian. This comes under the theosophical perspective. Theosophy talks of internationalism. And the five elements of theosophy can bring about the evolution of the self. These are: realization of the cosmic truth and its practice, selflessness, renunciation, harmonization and integration. He referred to Swami Vivekananda in this context.

Colonel Kailash spoke on 'Thought' and emphasized on thought as Science and that the entire universe is comprised of our thoughts. So, the transformation can be brought about through love, peace, harmony and oneness. Concluding the session, Dr. S.K. Pandey drew attention on the practical aspects of theosophy.

The third session was chaired by Prof. Harikesh Singh. Prof. Harikesh Singh introduced the two guest speakers of the session – Sri Shikhar Agnihotri, Pragya Lodge (Lucknow) and Dr. Rachna Srivastava, Associate Professor, Political Science, Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya (VKM). Sri Agnihotri spoke on the topic 'How to strengthen the work of Theosophical Society?' He illuminated the audience by his ideas of how to spread the message of theosophy. He forwarded recommendations for preparing the teachings of Annie Besant. He stressed on the importance of an individual soul, even a single member of the society can add to the development of the society for drops add on to make an ocean. He also stressed on how the pastness of past seeps into the present. He referred to the power of theosophy — 'Power which is peace, service which is joy.' He proposed relevant strategies for spread of theosophy like the use of technology which can increase connectedness. He also suggested of more nuclei of theosophy like lodges at more strategic locations so that attending its meetings, seminars and symposia can be made easier by reducing the deterrents. Citing several theoso-

phists and other scholars, Sri Agnihotri said, ‘... each man should try to be the centre of the world in himself’. He concluded by stressing on selflessness, earnestness, devotion and amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by the members.

Dr. Rachna Srivastava posed whether India is a nation or it is only a state. If we go into the past we find that before the advent of British rule India was not a nation. It was divided into several states. But the exploitative policies of British brought Indians together, united them into a nation. The social reformers of that time evolved an idea of an Indian past to meet the British challenge. However, after independence, despite having a common language, a constitution, a sovereign government, that consciousness, that social structure is lacking which evolves a state into a nation. The challenges before Indian nationalism are many – communalism, casteism, regionalism, religious intolerance, corruption, economic inequality, terrorism etc. Theosophy has those tools that can address these problems. These methods were given by Dr. Annie Besant almost 100 years ago, yet they are still relevant. These tools are: universal brotherhood to re-establish spirituality among human beings; *Sarvadharm Sambhav* to convey the real meaning of religion – unity with self and one life in all and education with focus upon religious and moral education which is fundamental for building of individual and national character. This will make India a strong nation with foundation stone of spirituality, intelligence and material prosperity.

The fourth session began on the second day of the seminar with two presentations, one by Prof. Sushila Singh, Professor Emeritus of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and the other by Dr. Atul Bhatnagar, IMS, BHU. Prof. Sushila Singh elaborated upon higher consciousness which is the purpose of human evolution and which can be attained only through non-violence. She discussed the vision of spiritually perfect future contained in Shri Aurobindo thought, William Blake’s art and Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. She discussed the four steps for spiritual evolution namely, search in the right place, removing the dust, opening one’s inner eye and creative leadership which is essential for looking ahead.

Dr. Atul Bhatnagar focussed on ‘Education as an integral part of looking ahead’. He lamented that there is something grossly wrong in the present day education. Therefore, it is essential that we unlearn. He

suggested three aspects of education – (i) intention – good work for better production, (ii) good citizenship – fulfilling one’s responsibility and (iii) good person – brotherhood. These three model aspects of education have not been achieved. We have gained skills but missed the goals. He also suggested for harmony and co-existence. Three solutions which are universal brotherhood, adult education which he said is the root cause of all present day maladies. In this connection he also talked of emotional intelligence, being aware of the other person and concerned or feeling of compassion. The session was chaired by Dr. T.K. Nair.

The guest speaker in the fifth session was Dr. Shanta Chatterjee, Associate Professor of Sanskrit, VKM. She spoke on Dr. Annie Besant’s principle of Education in the light of Indian religion and philosophy. With numerous illustrations, she defined what is education and said for the evolution of human mind and consciousness education is as important as food for human body. She also emphasized that what is *Dharma* must come in practice and politics should be guided by *Rajdharm*. She said that morality is *sarva dharm sambhav* – to be with each and all. In present times, we have left *dharm* behind, we have become *dharmnirpeksha*. In this process, we have forgotten *swadharm*. This session was chaired by Sri Shikhar Agnihotri.

The post-lunch interactive session wherein the students and all delegates participated was an open session and the panellists were Dr. T.K. Nair, Dr. S.K. Pandey and Prof. Sushila Singh. The objectives of Theosophical Society were taken up and its relevance today was deliberated upon by the panellists. Sri Jwala Prasad Mishra, Manager of Vasant Kanya Inter Section, in his comment focussed on attaining happiness (*Anand*) and talked of the role of theosophy in it. He emphasized that this can be done by removing selfishness, study and meditation and realizing God. For this one needs to have indepth knowledge of the principles of theosophy. Colonel Kailash said that one has to enter the inner world and before that one has to remove the psychic garbage. Then only the envisioned virtuous life can be attained. He added that pain is our creation and this makes us think of what is *karma*. For coming out of pain and suffering, he said, love and justice could be the only path and the realisation that ‘I am creation and the creator’. Dr. S.K. Pandey added to this that without the inner strength, the concept

of brotherhood cannot be realized as a reality. The question is how to enter the inner self. This can be done through love and the glimpse of the inner self. Dr. Indu Upadhyay (VKM) particularly related the idea of social concern of the Theosophical Society. She spoke of the haves and have not and said that without including those who are suffering and marginalized, universal brotherhood cannot be achieved. The idea of universal brotherhood has to be incorporated in our understanding of nationalism. Commenting poignantly and perceptively Smt. Manju Sundaram emphasized upon relinquishing the 'I' because there is no 'I' in happiness. She defined what is *anand* which is different from happiness (*sukh*). This *sukh* is momentary and individualistic but *anand* or bliss is universal. Laws of nature do not obstruct the attainment of *anand*. So *anand* or bliss cannot be attained by going against the laws of nature. Therefore, we have to understand the universal laws and the principles for harmonious unity. And then only we can spread the message of the Theosophical Society – universal brotherhood, interdependency and inter-connectiveness.

Dr. T.K. Nair explained the idea of the unity of life and said if we understand the unity of life then there should not be any difficulty in accepting universal brotherhood. Smt. Uma Bhattacharyya spoke on the importance of experiencing unity of life and from there going on to universal brotherhood. The intervention from Sri Sundaram brought focus on study, meditation and giving back through service to society. This brings us to the path of action, he said. That is the way to looking ahead.

The Valedictory Session was chaired by Sri S. Sundaram and the valedictory address was delivered by Sri Pradeep Gohil, Member, Bhavnagar Lodge. He gave the message of renunciation and hope. The Indian Section of the Theosophical Society in the course of its 125 years of existence has had several milestones to its credit. Now is the time for a leap. The issues before us are now how to further grow the individual consciousness. This is to be done through the academics, publication, translation and national lecturers. He exhorted that the youth of today must be made members of the Theosophical Society and we should work ahead with an open and unconditional mind. He also em-

phasized on the six qualities as expounded by Radha Burnier – selflessness, earnestness, devotion, knowledge, wisdom and living truth.

In his presidential address, Sri Sundaram spoke on the need for understanding the underlying meaning in the theme of the seminar which leads us to ask questions and the first question is are we doing anything that we can have better future, for this we have to adhere to Radha ji's teachings that self preparation is an important step for Theosophical Society's future work. The task before us is to make the society in general (*samaj*) a better place to live in. Is it possible to establish a world with universal brotherhood? How to move in that direction unless we prepare ourselves in that direction? Therefore, the theme of the conference is very important. He said there is possibility of doing wonders even with small number of 11000 members. In this context, he referred to Arnold J. Toynbee and his idea of '**creative minority**'. The work can go on smoothly for the regeneration of India. A continuance is required in this effort. Why do we wait for some crisis to be engaged creatively? he asked. He exhorted to be strong in the present then only we can move ahead. In the process of self-preparation, he asked some very pertinent questions through a poem 'Which of these are you?' (anonymous). The poem was circulated to all delegates.

The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Dr. T. K. Nair.

(Courtesy: Prof. Sushila Singh)

(2). **Retreat Seminar: Quest of the Absolute: Abhinavagupta's Parâtrûikâ VivaraGa**

From 1 to 7 December 2015 a retreat-seminar was held at the Indian Section, HQ, Theosophical Society, Varanasi, under the guidance of Dr. Bettina Sharada Bäumer, in collaboration between the T.S. Indian Section and Trika Trust, Varanasi.

In all, 24 participants came from different parts of India and abroad: from U.P., Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Delhi, Chandigarh, from Germany, U.K., USA, France and Iran.

The theme was "Quest of the Absolute: Abhinavagupta`s

Parâtrûikâ VivaraGa”, one of the most mystical texts of Kashmir Saivism, being a commentary on the *Parâtrûikâ Tantra*.

The programme consisted of two sessions of text study daily, based on the Sanskrit text, with translation and explanations, 3-4 hours silent meditation (both were held at the Annie Besant Hall), with musical recitation of the Tantra and of *maEgalaælokas* and other stotras, under the guidance of Smt. Manju Sundaram. The week was concluded by a *granthapûjâ*, worshipping the text studied, under the guidance of Dr. Ajithan from Kerala, with a dance offering by Navtej Johar.

The title of the seminar was taken from the first words of the Devî to Bhairava: *anuttaramkatham deva.....* “How does the unsurpassable, Absolute.....”, asking for the way to attain “harmony with the power of Consciousness moving in the space”. The explanations of this verse occupy almost a third of the entire commentary, going into all the possible meanings of *Anuttara*, the Absolute. Abhinavagupta states clearly the purpose of the text:

Abhinava has composed this commentary on the question of the Devî which elucidates the essence of Trika for cutting asunder powerfully the knot of mâyâ in the ether of the heart, for the mind which is engrossed in destroying forever the mâyic ignorance which is the root of all ill (*asiva*), the mind in which Siva has penetrated and which is athirst to drinking the nectar of the bliss of Siva. (Jaideva Singh, transl. p.63)

One of the important focuses of the text is the philosophy and mysticism of the Word or of language, with the four levels, from the Supreme (*Parâ*), to the Visionary, intuitive (*Paîyantî*), to the level of Thought (*Madhyamâ*), and finally to the spoken, expressed word (*Vaîkharî*). Its spirituality is also centred on the Heart as the locus of Consciousness, and on the mantra.

Studying and practicing meditation with the text certainly presupposes some background in spiritual experience and some basic knowledge of Kashmir Saivism, but it was a powerful introduction into this tantric mysticism.

(Courtesy: Dr. Bettina Bäumer)

N.B: The Teaching and musical recitation have been recorded and copies can be given on request.

Study Camp at Gwalior

As part of celebrations of 125th anniversary of the Indian Section, TS. M.P. & Rajasthan Federation and U.P. Federation are jointly organizing a study camp on *The Pathway to Perfection* (by Geoffrey Hodson) on 9-10 April 2016 at Gwalior. Members of all Federations are welcome to participate in it.

The persons coming from outside Gwalior will be provided board and Lodging from 8 April (evening) to 10 April (AN), for which each such participant will pay a contribution of Rs.300/— on arrival at Gwalior. Each such person many inform his/her name to any of the following contact persons latest by 25 March, 2016.

Bro. H.S. Dwivedi- Secretary, M.P. & Rajasthan Federation
Mob. No. 9425119409

Bro. U.S.Pandey- Secretary, U.P. Federation
Mob. No. 9451993170

A Study Camp based on ‘**Initiation into Yoga**’ written by **Krishna Prem** was to be held at the Indian Section HQ, Varanasi, on March 11, 12 & 13, 2016. But now, it has been postponed. The future dates for this study camp will be announced later.