

NEWSLETTER
Indo-Pacific Federation of The Theosophical Society
July 2007

The Future of the Theosophical Society

Members of the Theosophical Society will once again be called to vote in an election for the position of international President of the TS sometime in the first half of 2008. Under the Rules of the Society, a call for nominations will be issued to members of the General Council – our international governing body – next December.

The TS, as we all know, is a democratic organization in which leadership positions at Lodge or Branch, Section as well as the Presidency are decided by a direct vote of the members. The Society leaves its members entirely free in matters of belief and in their own understanding of Theosophy. However, when we study the Society's history we cannot help notice that it was not the brainchild of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. Both the Founders indicated in their writings that the real impulse to form the Theosophical Society came from the Elder Brethren, the Adept-Teachers who chose it for a wider and non-dogmatic dissemination of the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition.

In the book *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*, edited by C. Jinarajadasa, there is the following statement by HPB:

Belief in the Masters was never made an article of faith in the T.S. But for its Founders, the commands received from Them when it was established have ever been sacred.

Every successive President, from Col. Olcott to Mrs Radha Burnier, has maintained a living sense of this original inspiration and reaffirmed, through their writings and their dedicated lives, the profound reality that the Society exists to help the work of the Great Ones in lifting humanity out of its condition of sorrow, spiritual blindness and illusion. In other words, our Presidents have kept unbroken the link of profound understanding and reverence for the sacred dimension at the heart of the Society's work. They did not expect members in general to believe in this, but they, together with many generations of dedicated Theosophists in the past 130 years, have known this to be a reality corroborated by practical experience.

The future of every organization and indeed of humanity is quite uncertain. But one thing seems clear: Presidents in the future who are chosen – by the members – to lead the TS will not in all likelihood be people who are cynical or indifferent to the original inspiration that brought it into existence – neither, one might add, individuals who are partisan to only one teaching or author and who deny the spirit of universality and tolerance that are the hallmarks of Theosophy.

Because the President is elected by the members the latter have a responsibility that cannot be lightly ignored. The continued existence of the TS as a living, open and vital instrument for the forces of Wisdom and Compassion in their work for the transformation of the human mind depends upon their choice.

Pedro Oliveira

INDO-PACIFIC THEOSOPHICAL NEWS

INDONESIA

A new Lodge – Shanti Lodge, located in the southern part of Surabaya, was chartered. It is presided by Herry Ispoernomo, and developed from a study group of the Surabaya Lodge in 2006. In June 2007 its membership stood at 11 members. The membership of Indonesian Section increased by 22 during the first half of 2007.

L. Michelle Irawadi and Lydia Harsono, of Luxor Lodge, participated in the School of the Wisdom at Adyar in January-February 2007 as scholarship students. They also attended the International Convention in December 2006. The Section's website is being prepared by Michelle.

The Annual Convention was held in the Sala Lodge in Surakarta. The theme was "Study-Meditation-Service". A seminar on this theme was presented by speakers from the Adiwerna, Kreshna, Luxor and Saraswati Lodges. On the opening night, the Death Centenary of H. S. Olcott was commemorated with a talk about his life and work; a pamphlet containing his writings was distributed. The opening was attended by 150 members and invitees.

The *National Secretary*, Andrini Martono, was invited by the Theological Institute in Jakarta as resource person with the priest of the Liberal Catholic Church, Robert Gorlitz, at a student presentation on The Liberal Catholic Church, on the general theme of "Streams within the Church".

The Centennial of H. S. Olcott's passing was commemorated on Adyar Day by the Lodge in Jakarta with a talk on his last years. On the White Lotus Day, a pamphlet on *H. P. Blavatsky International Year 1991* was published. It appeared as a series of articles by and on HPB in the Kreshna Lodge Newsletter.

The Sala Lodge extended their Lodge premises which now include five rooms to accommodate participants of small meetings.

A new Study Group of the Kreshna Lodge was initiated in January in the Sunter area, north-east Jakarta. The group was provided with about 30 books on Theosophy. Recently, they received the visit of Ms Padma Pillay, from Malaysia, who presented a talk on the *Bhagavad Gita*. She also lectured in the Sophia Lodge in Bandung.

Matius Ali, Vice-President of the Indo-Pacific Federation and an active member of the Indonesian Section, will visit Singapore and Malaysia on the third week of July 2007. The topic of his talk at Singapore Lodge will be a PowerPoint presentation on "Windows in Consciousness". At the Selangor Lodge in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he will speak on "Yoga as Philosophy and Spiritual Practice". Brother Ali is also the editor of the magazine *Logos*, which is brought out by Luxor Lodge and aimed at the younger generation of inquirers.

TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE, MANILA

The revised theme is now 'Live to Benefit Humanity'. There was a slight change in the programme: the visit to the Golden Link School will take place on Monday, 5th November, combined with a tour to places of cultural interest in Metro Manila. This is being kindly arranged by the Host Section (TS in the Philippines).

We are happy to announce that the *International Secretary* of the TOS, Diana Dunningham-

Chapotin, has confirmed her participation and will contribute a presentation on the work of the Theosophical Order of Service around the world.

Other speakers include S. Sundaram, *General Secretary*, Indian Section; Chong Sanne, *President*, Singapore Lodge Theosophical Society; Manju Sundaram, Indian Section, TS; T. Siva, *President*, Selangor Lodge, Malaysia; Linda Oliveira, *National President*, TS in Australia; Lily Chong, *Secretary*, Singapore Lodge TS; Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, *National President*, TS in the Philippines; Matius Ali, *Vice-President*, IPF; Terezinha Kind, *President*, Inter-American Theosophical Federation, and John Vorstermans, *National President*, TS in New Zealand.

The Guest of Honour, who will deliver the Public Lecture, is *Chief Justice* of the Supreme Court in the Philippines, Justice Reynato Puno.

Register now to take part in a memorable Theosophical event in the Indo-Pacific region.

For registration and general information please visit:

www.theosophy.ph/ipf

The Federation is very thankful to Brother Hao Chin, Jr and the team at the TS Headquarters in Quezon City, Manila, for all the organisation and planning involved in the preparation for this Triennial Conference. Participants from a number of countries in the region are expected to attend.

In Memoriam

HELEN VASANTA ZAHARA

(1917-1973)



Born in New Zealand, Helen Zahara came to Australia in her late teens. She joined the Theosophical Society in 1937 and was active in theosophical work in Sydney. At the invitation of C. Jinarajadasa, she went to Adyar, international Headquarters of the TS, in 1946 and became one of his secretaries. Soon after that she was appointed Recording Secretary of the TS, a position she served in for five years.

In 1953, Helen went to the United States where she worked for two years as Assistant Editor of *The American Theosophist* while also lecturing in many cities throughout the country. Following her stay in that country she undertook an extensive lecture tour through sixteen Latin American countries, addressing her audiences in Spanish, which she learned in order to lecture in that language.

Returning to Australia, Helen was elected General Secretary of the Australian Section from 1957 to 1965. It was during her period in that office that she organised the first Indo-Pacific Conference near Sydney. She was the inspiration for the formation of the Indo-Pacific Theosophical Federation, which was eventually established in 1978.

In 1965, Helen was invited to return to the US to be the guest speaker at the Annual Convention and Summer School, and to undertake a lecture tour through that country. A year later she was appointed head of the Department of Education at "Olcott", the National Headquarters of the TS in

America, as well as coordinator of the Kern Foundation programmes, including the publication of *Quest Books* for The Theosophical Publishing House.

During the course of her work for the Society, Helen addressed audiences in more than thirty countries. In addition to Australia, India, the Latin American countries and the US, these include Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia, South Vietnam, England, Ireland and New Zealand. Her travels and work in many lands, East and West, impressed upon her the urgent need for a practical philosophy of life based on a awareness of the human being's spiritual nature, the underlying meaning of the evolutionary process and the oneness of life. It was her sincere belief that the theosophical philosophy fulfils this need. She passed away at Wheaton, Illinois, USA, on 26th February 1973.

Joy Mills, former International Vice-President and former National President of both the American and Australian Sections, said of Helen at a memorial service held at "Olcott" on 27th February 1973:

Helen was a theosophical activist to whom brotherhood was a way of life, compassion a deed of love, truth a practical experience.

One of the memorable moments for her was her visit, together with Joy Mills, to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1972. She wrote in a letter to an Australian friend about the visit, on 2nd January 1973:

The Dalai Lama was most gracious and we were served afternoon tea (English style). We were with him for about fifty minutes. At first he answered our questions in Tibetan and his secretary translated; then he spoke in good English himself. After we had finished our business discussion we got on to some philosophical talk. I asked him if he knew of the work of H.P.B., how she had been trained in Tibet and had taken her knowledge to the West. He did not seem to be aware of this. Then I mentioned some of her writings which were based on Mahayana Buddhism, particularly *The Voice of the Silence*. He looked at me and said, "can you please explain its essence." You can imagine the shock I got. Anyway I did my best aided by Joy and he said, yes, it sounded like Mahayana Buddhism. We have been laughing ever since at my trying to explain the essence of the V. of the S. to the Dalai Lama.

(Source: Archives, TS in Australia)