

## **THE WHEELS OF CHANGE: TRANSITIONING FROM THE WORLDLY TO THE SACRED**

**Mrs Linda Oliveira**

*(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 26.12.2014)*

In his poem *Keramos*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: 'Turn, turn, my wheel! All things must change to something new, to something strange.' Macro-cosmically, HPB wrote of numberless Universes 'incessantly manifesting and disappearing', the 'appearance and disappearance of worlds'.

We are used to comfortable, familiar types of change such as the changing of the seasons, the growth of small plants or the growth of children. However, Longfellow mentioned that all things must change not only to something new, but *to something strange*. This is the harder aspect of change — less comfortable, because so many of us are afraid of the unknown. The potential for human change goes way beyond the ubiquitous personal development courses which are prevalent today; it involves a radical transformation away from self-centred pursuits, away from wanting to grow the personal self, to the emergence of a new consciousness.

This is the ultimate renewal of the human being, a state of being which must be immensely strange compared with that familiar 'me' which has existed since our birth in this life.

The worldly refers to the environment in which we live from day to day, with all of our hopes, fears and longings, as well as our response to that environment — both collectively and individually. One author, Hugh Mackay, writes of what he calls 'the Utopia complex'. Utopia, a term originally used in the sixteenth century by Thomas More in his book of that title, refers to an imagined perfect place or state of things. The Utopia complex refers to the sense that with materialism we have in fact reached the perfect state. Hugh Mackay asserts that to many people in the West:

'... this feels like a Golden Age. And why not? Extraordinary advances in medical science; the explosion of information and communication technology that stimulates, informs and entertains us

like never before; swift and cheap international travel; efficient, reliable, affordable cars; promising talk of a clean-energy revolution; online shopping; . . . and so forth.

One could question whether this Utopia complex is limited to the West though, given how rapidly similar changes are impacting the lives of so many people in countries around the world.

The pursuit of all that the material world has to offer is driven by that 'great tiger named *manas*' mentioned in the *Viveka-Chudamani*, which refers to our vast field of thought and reasoning, twinned with desire. The Asvattha tree is described in the *Bhagavadgita* as the banyan tree of samsara or worldly life. When we are enmeshed in the world the roots grow downwards like those of the banyan tree; we lose our connection with our heavenly roots.

But the Utopia complex inevitably runs its course. When this happens, the force of all that is worldly starts to lose its magnetic grip. Something different is needed in order to fill the vacuum. So commences a gradual transition to a new way of living. Within the pages of the *Viveka-Chudamani*, or *Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*, is the observation:

As by mixture with water and by friction, sandal wood emits an excellent odour, removing all bad smells; so divine aspiration becomes manifest when external desire is washed away. (274)

In proportion as the mind becomes firm by devotion to *atman*, it renounces all desires for external things; when

all desires are completely exhausted, the realization of *atman* is unobstructed.' (277)

So it seems that the antidote for the Utopia complex was prescribed by Sri Shankaracharya thousands of years ago, this being the renunciation of the desire for externals in order for the *atman* to be known. It sounds simple enough in theory, but practising such comprehensive renunciation is probably the ultimate challenge for the human being.

Hugh Mackay writes about living a good life which is animated by kindness and compassion, a virtuous and even a noble life which may produce inner calm, moral confidence and a deep sense of wellbeing. For any act to count as noble or virtuous, he asserts, 'we need to delete our *own* happiness from the list of motives' for such an act. If it is performed for our own emotional benefit, 'if we are acting compassionately, virtuously or ethically in order to feel good about ourselves, we've missed the whole point' because this 'amounts to exploitation of the person towards whom we have acted charitably'. Here we have a contemporary Western resonance with one of the core messages in the *Bhagavadgita*, in which Arjuna is exhorted by Krishna not to be concerned with the fruit of action.

Dr Annie Besant mentioned 'The Law of Sacrifice' in her little book, *The Laws of the Higher Life*. She described it as the life of the Spirit which 'consists in giving, and not in taking, in pouring itself out and not in grasping,

in self-surrender and not in self-appropriation . . . The Life inexhaustible is found, that is ever bubbling up out of the illimitable fullness of the Self.'

The Sacred is a state which is in many ways a mystery and therefore, somewhat strange, to refer again to Longfellow's poem. Lessening our

attachment to the worldly indeed has a pivotal role to play in its revelation. Our sense of the Sacred is energised and sustained by reverence, compassion, truth, beauty, goodness, by an ability to discern what is really important and, most of all, by an unshakeable sense of Unity.



## **THE CYCLE OF LIFE**

**Mr Colin Price**

*(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 27.12.2014)*

Our personal development is a component part of the development of all humanity and we accomplish it with our own series of cycles. Each cycle commences with our birth into a physical body so that we become subjected to the many cycles of earth life, days and nights, seasons, years, and so on. The component parts of our earth life become increasingly spiritually significant as we grow in understanding and awareness of the meaning of life. If we fail to advance through the cycle of knowledge and wisdom we will have little to contribute to the bigger cycle of which our life is a part.

As Autumn sees the fading of Nature's Summer bloom and she prepares through Winter for another Spring; so man's physical strength weakens while his spirit grows in wisdom and lays the foundation for another earth life. However, the concept that we live an earth life for spiritual

development and the acquisition of qualities of unselfishness, altruism, and loving concern for others does not seem to be widely held. More often it seems that humanity as a whole is motivated primarily by selfish desires with little concern about the effect that their fulfilment has on the lives of the individual as well as that of others.

This is why the consideration of the whole cycle of life is so essential. Where the earth life is a life of causes, the Bardo state between lives is that part of the cycle where the effects are experienced. Each individual reaps the harvest they have sown. Without fear or favour the inexorable and immutable law of karma pays the wages of good and ill. The process is not enacted under anaesthetic like a hospital operation. The persistence of some consciousness after physical death ensures that justice is not only done, but seen by the individual to be done.



# THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

**Mr Marcos de Resende**

*(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 27.12.2014)*

The Theosophical Society, in the beginning, was closer to the Masters, its true founders. At that time some members were instructed even through letters. Today there is no more direct intervention by Them, whose influence, in modern times, depends directly on the quality of the work and the affinity with Their purposes.

Only true perception and experience can make us spiritual people, so that brotherhood may become a living reality. For us not to be merely intellectual or utopian it is necessary to have the flourishing of a feeling of affection that goes far beyond the intellect.

As HPB warned, it is also part of our challenge not to allow the Society to dogmatize or crystallize itself by becoming a belief and, consequently, losing the vitality that only the living Truth can provide.

The vast theosophical literature is a precious heritage, a rich source for study and reflection, which only can produce any change when there are people interested in understanding

more, deciphering, to the extent and scale of their capacity, the mysteries of existence.

Self-knowledge and Theosophy are two sides of the same coin. Without our perceptions and the unconscious manifestations that emerge from being self-centred, there is no spiritual progress.

Our Theosophical work has internal and external dimensions. We need group study sessions in order to deepen our understanding and, at the same time, studies focused on the public with simple language, easy to understand by any person, so that we may make our institution known throughout the world, drawing the attention of higher minds, as said by the Mahatmas. The affiliation of new members will come naturally if our doors are effectively open.

We need to modernize and keep up with the transformations affecting the world and be open to young people. However, we should preserve freedom of thought, commitment to Truth, a fraternal and tolerant spirit, learning, and service to others.



**Relatively what causes suffering is wrong, what alleviates it is right.  
Absolutely, what brings you back to reality is right and what dims reality  
is wrong.**

Nisa rgadatta Maharaj

# OPENING OF THE CONVENTION

About 1,130 delegates are attending  
the 139th International Convention on the opening day.

The Convention was inaugurated at 8 am on 26 December starting with a few moments in silence to recognize the recent death of the children in Peshawar and the ongoing cycle of violence that we seem to be witnessing in the world. After the silence, the Prayers of the Religions, and the Universal Prayer led by the President, Mr Tim Boyd, were given. The International Secretary, Ms Marja Artamaa, read out greetings received from overseas. The General Secretary of the Indian Section, Mr S. Sundaram, conveyed greetings from different parts of the Indian Section.

General Secretaries and representatives of Regional Associations presented greetings of their members, as listed below:

## General Secretaries:

Mr John Osmond Boakye	West Africa
Mrs Linda Oliveira	Australia
Mrs Sabine Van Osta	Belgium
Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende	Brazil
Mr Colin Price	England
Mrs Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu	France
Mrs Manuela Kaulich	Germany
Mr S. Sundaram	India
Ms Els Rijnaker	Netherlands
Mr John Vorstermans	New Zealand
Mrs. Angels Torra Buron	Spain
Mr Pertti Spets	Sweden

## Representatives:

Ms Maria Widjaja	Indonesia
Mr Salesh Noshie	Norway
Mr Pavel Malakhov	Russia
Ms Svitlana Gavrylenko	Ukraine
Mrs Nancy Secrest	TOS International, USA

After welcoming the gathering, the President, released a book, *Listen to The Song of Life*, a compilation of Mrs Radha Burnier's Convention lectures.

The President delivered the Presidential Address, starting by saying the invocation, followed by an introduction on theosophy in changing times, a comprehensive report about the work of the Society around the world, and declaring the International Convention opened.



## THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

Based on the reports that have been received to date, the overall TS membership has dropped slightly from 26,744 last year to 26,351. This is less than a 1% drop, and not a cause for concern. The highlight of the activities during the year was the 37th **European Congress** held in Paris from 30 July to 30 August at the **French Section's** headquarters and the 'Adyar' Theatre. The Congress theme was 'Bridging Science and Spirituality', and it was coordinated with the European Federation, while the Section handled the logistics. Around 190 participants attended from 24 countries, mostly from European Sections, but also the USA, South America, Australia, and Asia. I was the guest of honour, and gave two lectures, led a meeting with members, and agreed to be interviewed. The General Secretary and President of the European Federation, Ms Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu, reports that the Section added two Lodges during the year: Alcyone in Paris and Jenne d'Arc in Orléans, the latter having been revived. As part of my European summer tour, I visited the **Italian Section**, the largest on the continent, to attend their 100th National Congress, taking place in Vicenza in early June. The attendees were an enthusiastic audience and my talks were well organized and received. In addition to speaking during the Congress, I delivered other lectures for the Vicenza and Venice Lodges. Mr Ricardo Lindemann also spoke during the Congress and gave lectures for the

Florence and Rome groups. The General Secretary, Mr Antonio Girardi, writes that their website is constantly updated, tracking an average of more than 3,000 visitors every month and presenting videos of theosophical conferences. Their monthly magazine has a run of 1,300 copies, with over 1,000 subscribers, and their monthly newsletter is emailed to over 2,400 people interested in theosophical activities in Italy. The Section's activities in cooperation with the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) were further developed during the year, supporting charity initiatives in Italy, India, Pakistan, Burma, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Philippines.

While visiting **the Netherlands**, I met with the Dutch Section in Amsterdam for the whole of 10 August, their 'Dutch Day', during which members had an opportunity to interact with me. The General Secretary, Ms Els Rijnker, tells us that their Section offers activities in either Dutch or English. It held seven other programmes during the year, including a five-day silent retreat, a commemoration meeting on the passing of former International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, a large symposium involving sister organizations, two Krishnamurti study days, and an ongoing six-day program on meditation.

In northern Europe the **Finnish Section**, with 23 lodges and 2 study groups, is the largest in the Nordic countries. Their General Secretary

(and also our International Secretary), Ms Marja Artamaa, states that 17 members attended the European Congress in Paris, where they had the pleasure of having an opportunity to meet with the international President. Both Ms Artamaa and Mr Tim Boyd attended the International Theosophical Conference held in the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands, held in July, which congenially brought together members from several theosophical organizations in addition to the TS. The Section has upgraded their technical facilities and are now webcasting, beginning with three lectures and practices on 'Mindfulness'. Their theosophical library in Helsinki now has a computerized catalogue and an updated reference library. The Lodges hold regular public lectures in 17 towns, 14 of which run their own library. The TOS in Finland supports the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, the Social Welfare Centre, and the Boys' Hostel in Adyar. The **Icelandic Section** held their regular summer school and Friday and Saturday meetings during the year. During January and February a group of members viewed seven DVDs of dialogues between J. Krishnamurti and Drs David Bohm and David Shainberg, *The Transformation of Man*, followed by very fruitful discussions. The Section's biannual journal, *Gangleri*, has been published since 1926. It is sold to over 700 subscribers. Their website has a new name and is in Icelandic and English.

It is frequently visited by enquirers and they have often had applications for membership through this page. Unfortunately, the General Secretary, Mr Halldor Haraldsson, says the Section is still going through financial difficulties due to the economic crisis in 2008. The **Swedish Section's** General Secretary, Mr Pertti Spets, reports the formation of a new study centre in Stockholm. A series of regular gatherings, lectures, and autumn and spring courses were held, including the study of *The Secret Doctrine*, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, Advaita Vedanta, and John Algeo's *Theosophy — An Introductory Study Course*. The Organizing Secretary of the TS in **Norway**, Dr Saleh Noshie, writes that, due partly to lack of funds, their activities for the year have been only on Facebook, and that the international President's blog, which is always posted on their website, is much appreciated by all.

Membership of the **English Section** (TSE), the largest in Europe, has remained mostly stable over the past year. After Mr Eric McGough retired due to ill health, Mr Colin Price was re-elected in April. we are told that much of the year has been focussed on cutting financial losses and ensure resources for future growth. The sale of Tekels Park Estate, steered by Treasurer Piero Soteriou, was concluded in September: the proceeds were donated to a new account, set up and controlled by us at the Charities Aid Foundation to benefit the TSE via charitable giving, and the

---

Number of delegates registered Saturday, 27 December: 1,168.

money ethically invested to provide an income which will sustain the Section once full charitable status is achieved. It is reported that the English Summer School continued to be well supported, with over 100 people attending for a week of lectures and study groups. The Headquarters building continued to be used extensively for lectures and study groups throughout the week in term time. The Dhyana Centre, our meditation Lodge, is particularly popular, with around 100 members and sessions at least three days a week and some weekends. In **Ireland**, Mrs Marie Harkness reports that they have had a successful year. Their All-Ireland Convention took place in Dublin held in June with an international lecturer as guest speaker, Mr Bhupendra Vora, who addressed the appreciative audience on 'The Mystical Journey'. Over half of the members of the TS in **Scotland**

have studied the Diploma Course in Theosophy introduced by the English Section. Additional funding has again been made available to assist members in traveling to summer schools in England and Europe. In **Wales**, the Organizing Secretary, Ms Julie Cunningham, states that visiting speakers sponsored by the Foundation for Theosophical Studies included the Organizing Secretary from Scotland, Mr Gary Kidgell, who gave two talks at different Lodges. The General Secretary of the English Section, Mr Colin Price, Mr David Harvey, from South Wales, and three other speakers from the English Section, including Mr Wayne Gatfield, were also visiting speakers. Eleven new members are taking the English Section's Diploma Course in Theosophy and 34 others have been awarded the diploma over the past three years.



**If you want to find spirituality you must find it whilst living in the world, yet not being of it. In other words, being inwardly detached and renounced, but outwardly living and enjoying as other people do, not held in your heart by material things, not mentally imprisoned by time, but able to renounce them at a moment's notice. If you can do this you are free, you are no longer a slave.**

Paul Brunton