

National Conference on Theosophical Education

In late September 2016, some 45 representatives of twelve Theosophical Society (TS) and Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) schools within India attended the National Conference on Theosophical Education. Organised by Deepa Padhi, President of the Odisha Region, on behalf of the TS and TOS and held in the city of Bhubaneswar, Odisha State, the goals of the conference were: to integrate theosophical principles into the educational philosophy and methodologies of the schools, to elevate the teaching standard of the schools, including the incorporation of English as the medium of instruction, and to plan for the long-term sustainability of the schools. Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, inaugurated the conference and gave a fine retrospective on theosophical education within India. Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, President of Golden Link College in the Philippines, facilitated the conference.

Report submitted by Dr Deepa Padhi, President, Odisha Region



Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, Conference Facilitator, B.L. Bhattacharyya, National Director, TOS India, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, International Vice-President, Theosophical Society and Dr Deepa Padhi, President, Odisha Region

The first National Conference on Theosophical Education was held at Bhubaneswar on 23 and 24 September 2016, inaugurated by Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society. It was presided over by Mr B.L. Bhattacharyya, National Director, Theosophical Order of Service. In her welcome address, Dr Deepa Padhi, President, Odisha Region, introduced the chief speaker, Mr

Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines. She said that theosophical education brings about wholesome development of

human beings thereby enriching them spiritually besides elevating their physical, emotional and intellectual faculties. Brother Sri R.C. Patnaik introduced the dignitaries on the dais. They were Brother Sri Chittaranjan Satapathy, International Vice-President, Theosophical Society, Brother Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, President of Golden Link College in the Philippines, Brother Sri B.L. Bhattacharyya, National Director, TOS, India, the Chief Guest, the Chief Speaker, and the President respectively of the conference and Sister Deepa Padhi, President, TOS, Odisha Region.

Brother Sri B.L. Bhattacharyya, the President of the conference, suggested in his opening remarks that the Theosophical Society and Theosophical Order of Service are

rendering very valuable service in the field of education that promotes social order and stability.

Brother Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, the Chief Guest, inaugurated the Conference and gave a historical narration of the contribution of Theosophy to education. In his speech, he highlighted the efforts of Col. Olcott and the Olcott Education Society in propagating theosophical values in the field of education.

Brother Vicente Hao Chin, Jr delivered the keynote address, "Theosophical Education." He stressed that standard education is usually incomplete because it usually does not deal with core issues in living. Theosophical education, on the other hand, assists us to understand life with far deeper quality and gives insight into life to help us face its vicissitudes, for example, tranquillity and turbulence, or for that matter, achievements and failures with equanimity. More importantly, it not only helps one to deal with one's own life contentedly but also motivates one to spread the feeling of wellness among others thereby having a multiplier effect on the total wellness of society and improving the social order. This brings about social transformation and makes the human being "**humane.**" He pointed out the inadequacy of conventional education's value system that revolves around financial success, social status, competition, materialism and consumerism giving rise to social conflicts. He further reiterated that theosophical education embodies the theosophical principles and intends to build a stable society by nurturing social values among human beings. In his address, he underlined the essence of theosophical education that teaches students to be free from fear, ignorance, meanness and discrimination. The basic principles of theosophical education embrace certain virtues like happiness, altruism and spirituality so as to develop right habits and personality traits among individuals. Vic emphasised the need for making TOS schools less dependent on donors and self-sustaining in the long-run. This is possible only by raising the academic standards of these schools to attract students from different socio-economic strata such that besides imparting values education they should be in a position to impart a quality education comparable to the best in the area. In his narratives of the needs, proposal and plans of theosophical education, Vic focused on two aspects: "education for excellence and not merely competition" and recommended that schools should have a strong English curriculum with English as a medium of instruction since this is what is needed for professionals in India." While everybody agreed to the first, some raised apprehensions about the latter as right now the TOS schools are oriented towards students from among the underprivileged. To this he responded by saying that as English gives some advantages in India, the TOS schools as centres of learning should be able to empower the students in such a way that the



students are able to face the world without any handicap just like children from other good schools.

Brother Chitta was kind enough to release the souvenir publication commemorating the

national conference and the third regional conference, 2016, of the Odisha Region. After that the TOS Odisha released to the conference the translations of the booklet written by Brother Vicente Hao Chin, Jr entitled “Establishing Theosophical Schools” in four Indian languages namely, Odia, Hindi, Telugu and Bengali. This will immensely benefit and guide local entrepreneurial theosophists interested in opening such schools in their local areas or contacting the education department of state governments to usher in a paradigm shift to a value-based educational system.



After completion of the inaugural function, in the first plenary session, the representatives of different TOS schools from India presented their reports regarding the functioning of their schools. In all of their reports, they suggested that the TOS schools in India are schools with a difference. The objective of these schools is to focus on the harmonious development of children by nurturing their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual faculties. Then Br Vicente Hao Chin, Jr explained the elements of theosophical education followed by his interaction with the delegates. This marked the end of the first day's session.

On the next day, in the third plenary session, Brother Vic conducted a meditation followed by a workshop on theosophical education. He spelled out the needs, plans and proposals of theosophical schools, and suggested that theosophical education has a promising vision for the future. He shared the experience and learning of Golden Link College in the Philippines in implementing theosophical education, and he observed that children tend to blossom more fully and in a more balanced way under such an environment. He asked the representatives of the different TOS schools from India to spell out their needs, proposals and plans in a concise manner. They said that the main

problem is finance coupled with management issues. Brother Vic advised them that this could be sorted out in the long-run with the coordinated efforts of the different stakeholders of the theosophical schools.

In the fourth plenary session, there were remarks by some observers who represented the different TOS schools from India. This was followed by the valedictory function which was addressed by the Conference Chair, Sister Dr Deepa Padhi. Certificates were distributed to the participants followed by concluding remarks by Br Vic Hao Chin and Br B.L. Bhattacharya. The function ended with a vote of thanks by the conference convenor, Dr K.P. Padhy.

On both days, there was a summary presentation in Hindi of all the deliberations for the benefit of Hindi-speaking participants by Dr Kamalini Panigrahy, Dept. of Hindi, Imruty Devi Women's College, Cuttack, India.

In the evening participants enjoyed a cultural programme, with a documentary film on Dr Annie Besant, a flute recital by Jagat Ranjan Patnaik and Odissi classical dance by the children of the Adruta Home. The programme was very much appreciated by the conference delegates.

