



Issue 5 - July 2009

Dear fellow members of the TS and TOS around the world,

Welcome to this fifth edition of our international TOS electronic newsletter. In this issue you'll meet the outstanding National Director of the largest national network of TOS groups in the world and you'll find reports of a variety of TOS group activities in India, North Wales, the Philippines, Canada and Australia. Be inspired by the full transcript of President Obama's speech in Cairo, learn about current animal welfare issues that you could support and consider the 'food for thought' in the article on a social experiment conducted by the *Washington Post*.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and find some ideas for your TOS activities.

Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

Please consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions, either through your National TOS Director/President /Coordinator/Correspondent or directly to the editors at: carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

Meet Mr Birendra Bhattacharyya, the National Director of the TOS in India

Mr Birendra Bhattacharyya spends several months each year on the road visiting groups to oversee and support them in their activities. Even with a team of some 18 regional secretaries to help him, his hands are still very full.

[Read more](#)

TOS news from around the world

Find out about recent TOS activities in North Wales, Delhi in India, Canada and Australia.

[Read more](#)

What's new on the International TOS website?

What makes a successful lobbyist and can ethics and success go together in the political arena? Carolyn Cottom, known in the USA for her work in the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, shares her experiences in the new [Featured Article](#). Tim Boyd reports on a series of *Service Workshops* being conducted by the TOS in the USA. This new [Featured Project](#) provides a way for volunteers to broaden their field of service and their effectiveness. In the [Recent News](#) section, Mr Chaganti V.K. Maithreya and Dr Sunita Maithreya talk about their visit to Africa and the work of the TS and TOS that they saw. There are also additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section. Go to: <http://international.theoservice.org>

Annie (Besant!) eco-products

The TOS in Chennai has collaborated with two self-help groups to establish recycling units to make eco-friendly paper products.

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President Obama's speech in Cairo

If you were invited to name seven major sources of social and political tension in the world today, what would they be? Many of us saw President Barack Obama on television delivering his remarkable June 4 address in Cairo and were moved by his courage. How many heard the entire speech, though? How many remember the seven issues he identified and discussed – without notes – with such frankness and sincerity? How long is it since the world heard a truly theosophical political address? We offer it here *in toto* as food for reflection. The question is, what can the TOS contribute toward the new beginning President Obama suggests?

[Read the speech](#)

Animal welfare in the news

Three animal welfare issues have recently been in the news: The European Parliament's vote to ban the sale of all seal products in the EU; a report from the University of Bristol, UK, on the welfare of animals in circuses; and the anticipated revision of the European Union legislation governing the use of animals in research.

[Read more](#)

UN International Days

For information on UN International Days from [August to November](#) 2009.

The TOS schools in the Philippines celebrate United Nations Day

Every year the Golden Link College, the Sunshine Learning Center and the TOS Learning Center celebrate United Nations Day with a varied program presenting interesting information about the UN and countries around the world.

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Time to stand and stare!

In a commonplace environment at an unusual hour, do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognise great talent in an unexpected context? The *Washington Post* gained insights into these questions as part of a social experiment about perception, taste and priorities of people. Their findings may cause us to stop and think.

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Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

1. To sign up, you only have to send a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line. Please do this only ONCE - You will be on the mailing list until you ask to be taken off it.
2. If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

With best wishes,

Carolyn and Diana

Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS and Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia.

If you are unable to discover opportunities for service where you are at present, you will be unable to discover them in the place you would like to be.

G.S. Arundale

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Meet Mr Birendra Bhattacharyya, the National Director of the TOS in India

Can you imagine being a member of a country with over a hundred active TOS groups? Our Indian sisters and brothers can because they are members of one! Total individual membership of the TOS in India is over 6,000 and growing. The National Director, Mr Birendra Bhattacharyya, spends several months each year on the road visiting groups to oversee and support them in their activities. Even with a team of some 18 regional secretaries to help him, his hands are still very full.

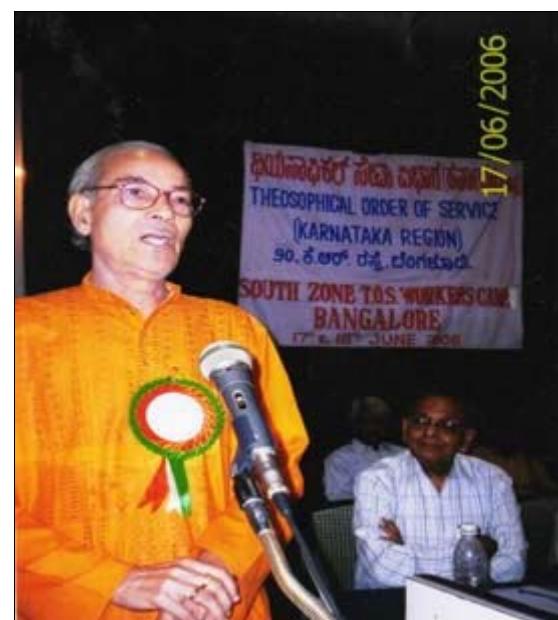
Most of Birendra's work is done out of the limelight. Many Theosophists around the world know of the sterling work done in or near the international TS HQ at Adyar in Chennai: the Social Welfare Centre, the Animal Dispensary, the Olcott School and the HPB Hostel for boys attending the school. Many now know of the fine environmental, medical and relief work done by the local TOS team in Chennai under the leadership of Mr Harihara Raghavan and more recently under Dr Sunita and Mr C.V.K. Maithreya. How many know of Mr Bhattacharyya's tireless travels in the outlying regions of India, however; of his meetings with hundreds of local workers, many of whom cannot afford to travel to Adyar themselves?

The TOS in India concentrates its activity in the areas of medical and nutrition services, education for underprivileged children and mobility aids for the handicapped: canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, etc. Emergency relief work is also extensive, of course. Birendra's job is therefore multi-faceted. He meets the workers at zonal conferences and talks things over with them when they run into problems. He inaugurates new TOS groups (five in the year 2007-2008). He visits TOS schools, coaching classes, pre-primary learning centres (called Balwadi Schools), boarding establishments for the blind and for orphans, medical dispensaries as well as yoga therapy, naturopathy, acupressure, ayurvedic treatment and pranic healing centres. In visiting local groups as a special guest, Birendra does the formal presentation of educational materials and mobility aids to the needy; he distributes school uniforms, student kits, garments, study material, cooked food, scholarships to meritorious students, prizes to essay and elocution contest winners, and relief materials during natural disasters. He also inaugurates self-help projects, congratulates workers receiving awards for outstanding service to the community, and of course takes time to meet with our friends – the recipients of aid themselves.

We are very happy and grateful that Mr Bhattacharyya has accepted a second term of office (3 years from January 2008) and we extend thanks to him for his selfless work.

Here are some photos showing Birendra in action around the country:

Mr Bhattacharyya attends three regional TOS conferences per year in order to keep in touch with the members and convey national news and policy decisions.



As part of the TOS centennial celebrations organised by the TOS in Chennai, Mr Bhattacharyya presented a DLP projector



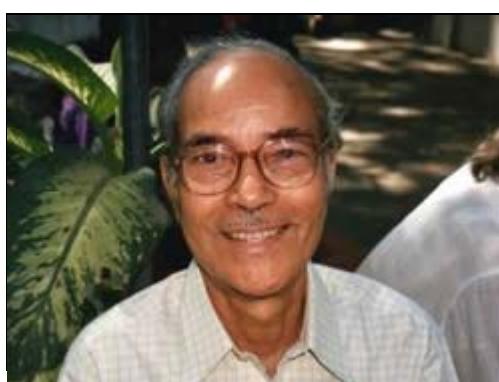
The TOS in Chennai donated tools and machines for one of the paper recycling plants set up in coastal Tamil Nadu to provide employment for victims of the 2004 tsunami.

to Besant Theosophical High School in Adyar in January 2008. He was accompanied by Mr Harihara Raghavan, coordinator of TOS work in the south zone of India.



Bhattacharyya's work is to appear as guest-of-honour and present items gathered by local TOS groups for the needy. Here we see him with Mr S.S. Gahla, president of the TOS in Kolkata, distributing winter garments.

Dedication ceremony for a water purification plant donated by the TOS in Chennai to a tsunami-affected village.



Born in Bangladesh, Birendra spent most of his life in a corporate sector as a general manager. He has travelled widely, visiting most TS Centres around the world. In addition to his work for the TOS, he acts as secretary to the Executive Committee of the Indian Section of the TS and recently spent 6 years as President of the Bengal Theosophical Federation. He also takes a personal interest in the development of the TS and TOS in Bangladesh and does as much as he can to develop the



work there.

At the international TOS centennial celebration held at Adyar in January 2008, Mr S. Sundaram, General Secretary of the TS in India and Mr B.L. Bhattacharyya, National Director of the TOS, re-dedicate themselves to the work of the TOS during a ceremony arranged by Dr Sunita and Mr C.V.K. Maithreya.



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TOS news from around the world

TOS in North Wales

Promoting animal welfare is one of the activities of TOS groups in North Wales.

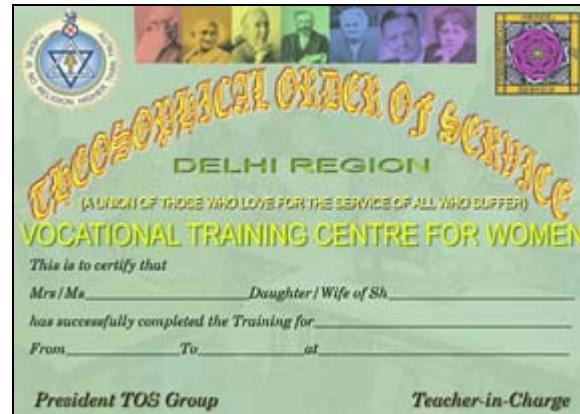
The Conwy TOS Group Branch has been supporting World Wildlife Fund projects as well as the Cinnamon Trust. This trust is the only British charity for people in their last years and their much loved companion animals. A network of 8,000 volunteers provide loving care such as dog walking and caring for pets when their owners go into hospital. Whenever possible they aim to keep owner and pet together but find a new home for the pet when staying with their owner is no longer an option.



The Bangor Group has supported PETA's campaign to end the terrible treatment of animals in China.

TOS in Delhi, India

The Theosophical Order of Service in the Delhi Region has established Vocational Training Centres to provide low technology vocational training to economically disadvantaged rural women. The program's aim is to empower them with economic independence. Graduates are presented with the certificate shown here.



TOS in Canada

The Canadian TS has recently launched its new website with a section for the TOS. Check them out at:

www.theosophical.ca



and

http://www.theosophical.ca/aboutus_tos.shtml

Lorraine Christensen, the National Coordinator of the TOS in Canada is in the picture opposite, sorting books for one of the TOS projects.



TOS in Brisbane, Australia

The Brisbane TOS group recently honoured the many years of theosophical service contributed by older members of the Brisbane TS and TOS. As you can see, they transformed the TS Lodge meeting room into a gracious tea-room for this happy occasion.



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Annie (Besant!) eco products

The efforts of the Theosophical Order of Service Chennai to help the victims of the 2004 tsunami have been widely reported amongst Theosophists, who have taken a close interest in its activities and generously supported them, particularly the installation of numerous costly water purification plants carried out along the southwest coast of India in close partnership with other NGOs.

One of its initiatives, it will be remembered, was the creation of new employment opportunities. The TOS helped set up twelve tailoring units, for instance, providing dozens of sewing machines for the wives of fishermen. It also provided machines for the production of 'idlis' (a staple food item in the region) by women in the village of Injambakkam, close to Chennai. Further, it donated machines and tools for two waste recycling units for the making of paper products.



In setting up these recycling units, it collaborated with two self-help groups, the Annie Besant Ammaiyan Coastal Women's Federation in Cuddalore and the Annai Theresa Coastal Women's Federation in Pazhaverkadu. The TOS has been very happy to contribute to such constructive new enterprises and has developed friendly ties with its partners. At the International Convention of the Theosophical Society in December 2008, for example, members of one of the self-help groups put up a stall of eco-friendly products, which were very popular among the delegates.



In order to become the owner of its own premises, the Annie Besant Ammaiyan Coastal Women's Federation recently re-located its unit. The new 'waste to paper' unit was set up in the coastal hamlet of Killai near the temple town of Chidambaram, south of Pondicherry. About a hundred women are now employed there.



A function was held to inaugurate the new premises on May 31, 2009. The Chief Guest was Mr. Rajendra Ratnoo, the District Collector of Cuddalore. (The town falls in the jurisdiction of the Collectorate.) Mr Ratnoo was also greatly instrumental in getting the money for the construction from one of the tsunami relief funds of the state government. The TOS, Chennai Region, had donated nearly half a million Indian Rupees for the machinery.

Mr. Chaganti V.K. Maithreya was the keynote speaker on the occasion and he spoke of the life and work of Annie Besant and the role of the TOS in setting up the plant. He emphasised the aspects of self-reliance and self-respect for women in addition to the importance of women's rights and responsibilities in human society.

The session was chaired by a functionary of the local government, Mr. Ravichandran. Mrs. Geetha Ramakrishnan of the Unorganised Workers Federation and Mrs. Krishnaveni of the Self-Help Group were among the many speakers. Attention was drawn to the life of Dr. Annie Besant by the speakers.



Lamps were lit by the dignitaries, before the meeting. The lamps on behalf of the TOS were lit by Mr. Maithreya & Dr. Sunita Maithreya. Their daughters Upasika and Aditi accompanied them. The function was covered by the English and Tamil newspapers.

It was decided to give the brand name of 'Annie Eco Products' for the produce of the plant. The Collector, in consultation with Mr. Maithreya, suggested this name.

The TOS in Chennai thus continues its work with its partners for the victims of the 2004 tsunami. Each project requires follow-through and opens opportunities for further collaborative service.

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Animal welfare in the news

Seal product ban

The European Parliament voted on 5 May to ban the sale of all seal products in the EU, except those hunted by indigenous communities. The ban comes as a victory for animal welfare groups, but riles Canada, which licenses the culling of 280,000 seals a year and now fears the collapse of the sealing industry.



Report recommends ban on circus animals

Circus acts featuring elephants, lions and tigers should end, the first global study of animal welfare in circuses concludes.

"Whether it's lack of space and exercise, or lack of social contact, all factors combined show it's a poor quality of life compared with the wild," says lead researcher Stephen Harris of the University of Bristol, UK.

On average, circus animals were found to spend just 1 to 9% of their time training, and the rest confined to cages or enclosures typically covering a quarter of the area recommended for zoos. Species such as elephants, lions, tigers and bears cannot adapt to these conditions, the researchers say.

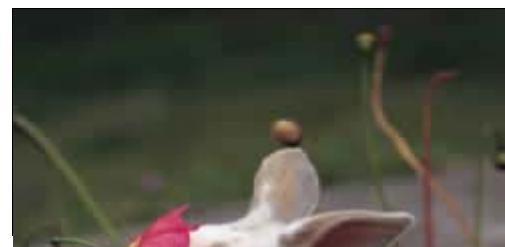


Many of the confined animals exhibit stress behaviours such as pacing up and down for hours on end. "Even if elephants, for example, are in a larger circus pen, there's no enrichment such as logs to play with, in case they use them to break the fence and escape," says Harris.

Some countries, including Austria, have already banned wild animals in circuses, but they still feature prominently in the USA and much of Europe. While elephants were not seen in UK circuses for about 10 years, three have been performing in 2009 in the *Great British Circus*.

Anticipated EU vote on using animals in research

After 23 years, the European Union legislation governing the use of animals in research is being revised.



A vote by members of the European Parliament is expected later in 2009, and lobbying has already begun.

Many anti-vivisectionists believe we have the technologies to replace animals now. In-vitro research, for instance, has already supplanted some animal experimentation, a trend which will continue as more complex cell types are replicated in the laboratory. In the future, engineered human tissue could be used in place of animals to test new drugs and study disease.



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UN International Days from August to November 2009

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. TOS groups will therefore find that many UN designated International Days provide opportunities for promoting the theosophical principles underpinning TOS work as well as networking with similar community groups in supporting relevant UN activities.

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous People

Coincides with the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People; 2005-2014.

August 12: International Youth Day

August 17-23: World Water Week

August 23: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

September 8: International Literacy Day

Coincides with United Nations Literacy Decade (2003 - 2012) "Literacy as Freedom".

September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day

On average, almost 3,000 people commit suicide daily.

September 15: International Day of Democracy

September 21: International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations as an annual observance of global non-violence and ceasefire.

September 28: World Heart Day

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes, are the world's largest killers, claiming 17.5 million lives a year.

October 1: International Day of Older Persons

October 2: International Day of Non-Violence (Gandhi's birthday)

October 6: World Habitat Day

October 8: International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction

October 9: World Sight Day

A worldwide initiative aims to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. About 37 million people worldwide are blind and 124 million people have poor vision. Three-quarters of cases of blindness are treatable or preventable. Without intervention, the number of people who are blind will increase to 75 million by 2020.

October 10: World Mental Health Day

October 15: International Day of Rural Women

October 16: World Food Day

October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 24: United Nations Day

October 24-30: Disarmament Week

November 6: International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict

November 14: World Diabetes Day

This year the theme is Diabetes in Children and Adolescents. Diabetes causes about 5% of all deaths globally each year. 80% of people with diabetes live in low and middle income countries. Most people with diabetes in low and middle income countries are middle-aged (45-64), not elderly (65+). Diabetes deaths are likely to increase by more than 50% in the next 10 years without urgent action.

November 16: International Day for Tolerance

November 20: Universal Children's Day

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

November 29: International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

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The TOS schools in the Philippines celebrate United Nations Day

Every year the Golden Link College, the Sunshine Learning Center and the TOS Learning Center celebrate United Nations Day.

Students wear the national costumes of different countries, with a sash indicating which country each one represents. Their parents usually take the trouble of looking for the appropriate national costume.



The whole body of students parades around the community with the flag of the United Nations in front. Community members have fun watching the parade and become conscious not only of the UN but of the different countries represented by the students.

The program has a variety of items that introduce the audience (which includes the parents of the students) to interesting information about the countries of the world. For instance, younger children might use greetings in different languages. Older children sometimes give complete short speeches in several languages, such as Spanish, Chinese and French.

Students might give slide presentations on particular features or customs of selected nations. For example, they could share information about the Petronas Buildings in Malaysia; talk about wedding customs in various countries, or demonstrate how New Year is celebrated in different ways around the world.



Sometimes students may deliver speeches about international peace, the history of the United Nations and so on.



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No Time to Stand and Stare



A man stood at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning in 2007. He played six classical masterpieces in 43 minutes. During that time it was rush hour and 1,097 people passed by, most of them on their way to work.

Three minutes went by and a middle aged man noticed there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried up to meet his schedule.

A minute later, the violinist received his first dollar tip: a woman threw the money in the till and without stopping continued to walk.

A few minutes later, someone leaned against the wall to listen to him, but the man looked at his watch and started to walk again. Clearly he was late for work.

In the 43 minutes that Joshua Bell played, seven people stopped what they were doing to hang around and take in the performance, at least for a minute. Twenty-seven gave money, most of them on the run – for a total of \$32 and change. That leaves the 1,070 people who hurried by, oblivious, many only three feet away, few even turning to look. Only six people stopped and stayed

for a while. When he finished playing and silence took over, no-one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

It was all videotaped by a hidden camera. No-one knew it, but the violinist was one of the finest classical musicians in the world, playing incognito some of the most elegant music ever written on one of the most valuable violins ever made. His performance was arranged by *The Washington Post* as part of a social experiment about perception, taste and priorities of people. In a commonplace environment at an unusual hour, do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognise great talent in an unexpected context? Two days before his playing in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theatre in Boston where merely pretty good seats sold for \$100.

One of the possible conclusions from this experiment could be: if we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing? If we can't take the time out of our lives to stay a moment and listen to one of the best musicians on Earth play some of the best music ever written; if the surge of modern life so overpowers us that we are deaf and blind to something like that – then what else are we missing?

What is this life if, full of care,

We have no time to stand and stare.

– from *Leisure*, by W.H. Davies

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