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Theosophical Order of Service International Newsletter

Issue 20 – February 2012

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

We trust that you are beginning 2012 with a sense of optimism and a conviction that every small act of service imbued with compassion and given selflessly will make a positive difference to life on this beautiful planet. We hope that you will continue to enjoy keeping in touch with what is happening in the TOS worldwide and find inspiration and ideas for service.

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

Please also consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions by email to the editors at carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

With best wishes,
Carolyn, Diana and Geoffrey



(L. to R.)

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

Special announcement

We are happy to express a warm welcome to the newly elected international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Mr Mahendra P. Singhal. Our brother is well known within India where he has held numerous responsibilities within the TS over his many years of membership. Of special interest to TOS members is the fact that Mahendra acted as National Secretary of the TOS in India from 1985 to 1992 and then as National Director from 2001 to 2004. Most recently, Mahendra has been free to support our current Director, Birendra L. Bhattacharyya, by taking responsibility for the TOS work in Delhi and by attending regional and zonal conferences as guest speaker.

Mahendra and his wife Shashi will be moving from their home in Delhi to Adyar in March. We wish them all the best in their new assignment.

For full biographical information on Mahendra, and photos, [read more here](#)

Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.

— Mother Teresa



Invitation to an International TOS Conference in 2013

We are happy to announce that the TS and TOS in America have kindly agreed to host a three-day international TOS Workers' Conference from Wednesday July 24 to Friday July 26, 2013 at Olcott, its national centre in Wheaton, Illinois.

TOS office-bearers and those with responsibilities in the TOS at international, national or local level are warmly invited to attend.

All are cordially invited to participate in the five-day Convention and Summer National Gathering of the TS in America immediately preceding the Conference, from July 19 to July 23. Participants will be actively involved throughout the TOS Conference. The goals of the conference are to:

- review the current international Plan of Action and ensure that it takes into account the needs of each country for the period 2014-2018;
- involve each participant in implementing part of the Plan of Action;
- deepen links amongst active TOS workers and increase the effectiveness of their



collaboration.

Further information will be provided in the next few months. [Read more....](#)



Inspirational people – Rukmini Devi Arundale

The month of February saw both the birth and death of an inspirational Theosophist, Rukmini Devi Arundale. She was born in 1904 into a Brahmin family. Her father, an engineer, and his musical wife were strongly influenced by theosophical ideas to which they had been introduced in 1901. When her father retired, he settled in Chennai close to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

At the age of 16, Rukmini married Dr George Arundale, an Englishman destined to become the third International President of the Theosophical Society. In partnership with him and under the influence and inspiration of Annie Besant, she became very active in the theosophical movement.

In 1936, she and George Arundale established Kalakshetra, an academy of dance and music, built around the ancient Indian Gurukul system. The school has many renowned graduates including Radha Burnier. Because of their shared commitment to education and to the Montessori method in particular, Rukmini Devi and George Arundale have left a legacy of schools in India.

Rukmini Devi was committed to improving the welfare of animals in India and worked tirelessly to promote an awareness of the sanctity of all life. She was instrumental in establishing the legislation for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and for later setting up the Animal Welfare Board of India, under her chairmanship in 1962. She remained on its board until her death in 1986.

Rukmini Devi was a strict vegetarian and did a great deal of work to promote vegetarianism within India. She was Vice-President of the International Vegetarian Union for 31 years from 1955, until her death in 1986.

[Read more....](#)

Service in the community in the Philippines and Delhi

In presenting her Annual Report in the last issue of this newsletter, the International Secretary commented on her frustration at the impossibility of mentioning all the wonderful work going on in the TOS. She wrote, "Only a small proportion of the members' work can be mentioned in an Annual Report. Whole countries – 18 this year to be precise – have not even been referred to!" She gives a couple of examples of this unsung service work here.

PART 1: The TOS in the Philippines

Most Theosophists have heard of the Golden Link College in the Philippines by now. Did you know, though, that the TS and TOS in the Philippines run no fewer than five schools and learning centres for the underprivileged? Did you know that whole villages have been adopted and helped toward autonomy through vocational training, micro-loans, nutrition programmes, parenting skills training and values awareness classes? Did you know that for many years now, peace-building and conflict resolution seminars have been run for Philippine army officers and for multi-religious and multi-cultural groups?

PART 2: The TOS in Delhi

Another group that merits closer attention is the TOS in Delhi. Its annual report for 2011 shows how amazingly varied TOS undertakings are. In India there are so many groups – over a hundred – that National TOS Director, Mr Birendra L. Bhattacharyya, has to have a team of senior members to help him visit them all. In reading this annual report, it is easy to see that a whole issue of this newsletter could be filled reporting on the year's activities in Delhi. They organise various medical, educational and social welfare programs, including a number of vocational training centres.

[Read more....](#)

TOS news from around the world

In this issue you'll find news from the TOS in Lisbon, **Portugal**, about the popular vegetarian cooking classes they've been conducting. The TOS in London, **England**, shares news about their successful fundraising concert at the recent European School of Theosophy and the TOS in **Pakistan** reports on a recent function held in Karachi to acknowledge the work their teachers are doing in the home schools, despite the violence and unrest in their community. The dedication of these teachers is most inspiring and is very much appreciated by the TOS internationally. There's also news about an initiative of the TOS in Brisbane, **Australia**, to make carry bags for their Theosophical Society



At Karachi Theosophical Society

bookshop from recycled newspapers and magazines. Finally, the TOS in **France** tell us about a recent meeting that not only raised funds and motivated members about the projects the group supports, but also included a beautiful celebration focused on peace.

[Read more....](#)



Famine relief in East Africa



What's new on the International TOS website?

Our **Latest News** this month is, of course, the announcement of the International TOS Conference from Wednesday July 24 to Friday July 26, 2013 at Olcott, the national centre of the Theosophical Society in America, in Wheaton, Illinois. TOS office-bearers and those with responsibilities in the TOS at international, national or local level are warmly invited to attend.

The new **Featured Article** is by a Canadian TOS member, Tim Marrin. In his article, *The Occult Side of Service*, Tim explore some of his thoughts on what it means to serve from an occult perspective, how service relates to who we are at the deepest level of being, and how, through the practice of self culture, we can open up to our true nature – a limitless resource waiting to be discovered.

In our **Featured Project** we provide the third and fourth reports on the famine relief project organised by the TOS in Kenya and supported by several TOS groups around the world. Usha Shah, the Coordinator of the TOS in Nairobi, tells us that the food distributions to the 55 families involved in the project continue to proceed smoothly. Usha is now working to put in a water bore to enable the villagers to grow food and become self-sufficient. Donations for the water bore would be warmly welcomed.

We have added two more theosophically orientated funeral services, a memorial service and several new quotations to the **For Members** section, under the title *Funerals*. You'll also find additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section.

Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>

Insights through service

One of our readers suggested that an important feature is missing from our electronic newsletter: "Personal stories of inner growth and spiritual insights gained through service action." The idea is to share with our readers the more difficult and challenging elements and effects of the work and show how we can turn these around to become opportunities to move forward.

To make up for this lack, we are starting a column entitled "Insights through service". Our International Secretary is the first to share an insight with us. [Read more....](#)



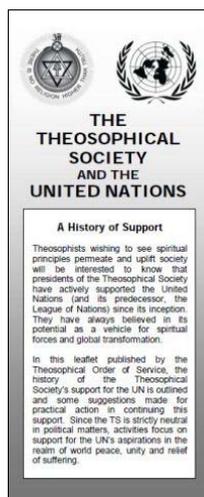
Brochure documenting TS support for the United Nations

In our December update of the international TOS website, we reported on the publication of a new brochure describing the history of the Theosophical Society's support for the United Nations. In case you missed that news item, we share it again here, in our electronic newsletter.

In 2010, the international TOS formed a committee to make better known the historical role of the TS/TOS in supporting the work of the UN, and to explore and promote ways that the TOS can continue to support its work. The TOS United Nations Committee is chaired by Lorraine Christensen, the Coordinator of the TOS in Canada.

The UN Committee has now published its first brochure, documenting the history of support that the TS has given to the United Nations. In Lorraine's words, the brochure describes "how the TS's history of support spans a century, going back to the early days when the TS was a leader in sowing seeds of internationalism and world brotherhood".

[Read more](#)





Courtesy UN/Eskinder Debebe

UN International Years for 2012

When you start planning your group activities for 2012, you might be inspired by the United Nations themes for the year. 2012 has two major themes. One is the **International Year of Cooperatives** which aims at raising public awareness about the contribution of cooperatives to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration. Have a look at the third and fourth reports on the famine relief project coordinated by the TOS in Kenya and you'll see a wonderful example of how forming a co-operative can benefit an entire small community.

2012 is also the **International Year of Sustainable Energy for All**. This theme provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of increasing access to energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy. It is a call to promote action on energy issues at the local, national, regional and international levels. [Read more....](#)



Eyes for the blind: letters from Roscoe

Ann Davis, a member of Pretoria Lodge, has shared with us three letters from Roscoe, a beautiful, intelligent dog that she and her family cared for while he was a 'puppy in training' to become a Guide Dog for the Blind. These letters were first published in the South African Theosophist in 2006, 2007 and 2009. We will be sharing them over the first three editions of the newsletter in 2012.

In his first letter, Roscoe tells us about his early life as a puppy and what it was like to be a 'puppy in training' and an honorary member of the TOS. [Read more....](#)



A joke to provoke

This short story is a joke but it has a deep, underlying message. [Read more....](#)

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

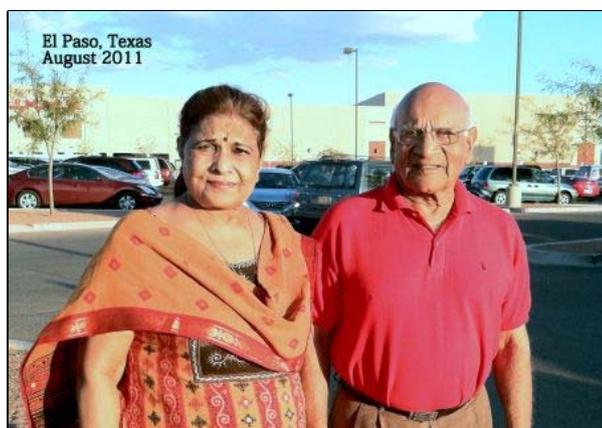
- To sign up, you only have to send a message telling us which country you live in to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.
- If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

Biographical information: Mahendra Prakash Singhal

Mr Mahendra P. Singhal was born in a rural town of Uttar Pradesh in 1932. He completed schooling in 1949 and received a degree in science from Allahabad University in 1951 and a degree in civil engineering in 1954 from Roorkee University. He joined Uttar Pradesh irrigation department prior to being selected to the Indian Railway Service of Engineers in 1956. Joining as Assistant Engineer, Mahendra rose to the position of Chief Engineer in 1978. After 4 years, he sought deputation to Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES) to head its International Projects Division to supervise railway consulting projects in the Middle East and North Africa, travelling widely.

Mahendra retired in 1990 and continued to work as advisor and consultant in RITES' Urban Transport Division for planning and developing metro rail projects in Delhi. Simultaneously he worked as National Secretary of Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) in India from 1985-92. Elected as General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in India in 1992, Mahendra worked in that position until 1998, headquartered in Varanasi. He travelled widely in India for TS work and wrote lead articles every month for the Indian Theosophist under the heading "Let us Ponder."

Mahendra acquired a Master's degree in Environment and Ecology in 1994. In 1998 he took retirement and settled in New Delhi. Mahendra was appointed National Director of the Theosophical Order of Service in India from 2001-2004. He attended TS workshops with his wife, Shashi Singhal, in Wheaton, Illinois (Headquarters of American TS) in 1996 and the Krotona School of Theosophy in Ojai, California in 2000. He attended TS World Congresses in Sydney, Australia (2001) and Rome, Italy (2010).



Mr Singhal is currently elected as President of both TS and TOS, Delhi. He is interested in the study of subjects relating to religion, philosophy and science; also project planning and management pertaining to environmental topics.

Mahendra's wife Shashi graduated in sociology and fine arts in 1959. She actively participates in the TS work. They have three sons, Aditya, Ravi and Arvind, the younger two living in the United States; and have five grandchildren.



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International TOS Conference 2013



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

**The Theosophical Society in America National Headquarters,
Wheaton, Illinois (Chicago) U.S.A.
Wednesday July 24 to Friday July 26, 2013**

We are happy to announce that the TS and TOS in America have kindly agreed to host a three-day international TOS Workers' Conference at Olcott, its national centre in Wheaton, Illinois.

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All are cordially invited to participate in the five-day
Convention and Summer National Gathering of the TS in America
immediately preceding the Conference,
from July 19 to July 23.

Participants will be actively involved throughout the TOS Conference. The goals of the conference are to:

- review the current international Plan of Action and ensure that it takes into account the needs of each country for the period 2014-2018;
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- deepen links amongst active TOS workers and increase the effectiveness of their collaboration.

To apply to stay at Olcott in Wheaton, you must be a member of the TS and have a letter of recommendation from the General Secretary or President of your Section. Nearby accommodations are available at a Holiday Inn with free shuttle service back and forth. Information about the programme and the cost of accommodation and meals will be provided in the next few months.

The international TOS thanks the TS and TOS in America most sincerely for their generosity in hosting another Conference.

Fraternally,

Diana Dunningham Chapotin
TOS International Secretary
tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

Carolyn Harrod
TOS Conference Convenor
carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

Rukmini Devi Arundale – an inspirational Theosophist



The month of February saw both the birth and death of an inspirational Theosophist, Rukmini Devi Arundale. She was born in 1904 into a Brahmin family. Her father, an engineer, and his musical wife were strongly influenced by theosophical ideas to which they had been introduced in 1901. When her father retired, he settled in Chennai close to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society.

At the age of 16, Rukmini took the controversial step of marrying Dr George Arundale, an Englishman destined to become the third International President of the Theosophical Society. In partnership with him and under the influence and inspiration of Annie Besant, she became very active in the theosophical movement.

In 1923 she became the President of the All India Federation of Young Theosophists, and the President of the World Federation of Young Theosophists in 1925.

Travelling throughout the world with her husband, Rukmini Devi met many influential people such as the visionary educator and doctor, Maria Montessori, the poet, James Cousins and the ballet dancer, Anna Pavlova.

Anna Pavlova awakened Rukmini Devi's interest in dance. After first learning European ballet, Rukmini was inspired to discover and learn classical Indian dance, Bharatnatyam, which had fallen into disrepute.

In 1935, Rukmini Devi gave her first public performance at the Diamond Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society.



Rukmini Devi dancing

The following year, she and George Arundale established Kalakshetra, an academy of dance and music, built around the ancient Indian Gurukul system. The school has many renowned graduates including Radha Burnier.

Rukmini Devi was also an innovative choreographer who collaborated with classical musicians and other artists. She left a legacy of pioneering dance-dramas based on Indian epics such as the Ramayana and Gita Govinda.

In January 1994, an Act of the Indian Parliament recognised the Kalakshetra Foundation as an 'Institute of National Importance'.



Because of their shared commitment to education and to the Montessori method in particular, Rukmini Devi and George Arundale have left a legacy of schools in India, including The Besant Arundale Senior Secondary School, The College of Fine Arts, The Besant Theosophical High School, and The Craft Education and Research Centre, all within the Kalakshetra Foundation Campus. The Foundation also has a resource centre and three libraries, including the Swaminatha Aiyar Library which houses a rare collection of Tamil literature.

Rukmini Devi was committed to improving the welfare of animals in India and worked tirelessly to promote an awareness of the sanctity of all life. She wrote and spoke regularly about animal welfare, saying that we need to be the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves. "Animals need our kindness, not our exploitation," she said.

She was instrumental in establishing the legislation for *The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960* and for later setting up the Animal Welfare Board of India, under her chairmanship in 1962. She remained on its board until her death in 1986. Rukmini Devi was a strict vegetarian and did a great deal of work to promote vegetarianism within India. She was Vice-President of the International Vegetarian Union for 31 years from 1955, until her death in 1986.

She received numerous awards for her animal welfare work, including Prani Mitra, *Friend of All Animals*, from the Animal Welfare Board of India, the Queen Victoria Silver Medal from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, London and was listed on the roll of honour by The World Federation for the Protection of Animals, The Hague.



Rukmini Devi Arundale died on 24 February 1986 at Chennai. You can read a translation of her obituary at:

<http://www.sawnet.org/whoswho/?Arundale+Rukmini+Devi>

She is still recognised today in India, and features in *India Today's* list of '100 People Who Shaped India'.

The video presentation, *Remembering Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale*, uses her words to talk about art, dance, animal welfare and vegetarianism, the Theosophical Society and the spirit of the artist. You'll find it on:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzVZr13OIE8>

You can find more details about her work in dance by reading the *Welcome Address as Chairman, Kalakshetra Foundation at the Inauguration of Centenary Celebration of Smt. Rukmini Devi at Kamani Auditorium New Delhi on 29.02.2004*:

http://www.presidentvenkataraman.in/images/pdf/culturalpluralismPdf/21-Rukmani_Devi_Arundale.pdf

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An air-conditioned mobile surgery donated by the Rukmini Devi Arundale Trust



Rukmini Devi (left) at the International Vegetarian Congress 1967

As part of her commitment to social welfare and the recognition of Indian culture, Rukmini Devi also worked for the re-establishment of traditional Indian arts and crafts, including sculpture and the ancient Indian craft of textile printing.

In recognition of her contribution to Indian culture and society, Rukmini Devi was nominated as a member of the Indian Parliament's Council of States, the Rajya Sabha in April 1952 and re-nominated in 1956.

In 1977, the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, offered to nominate her for the post of President of India, which she graciously declined.



Service in the community in the Philippines and Delhi

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What is remarkable about the TS and TOS in the Philippines is that they work hand in hand, acting as veritable partners in what Vic Hao Chin refers to as "the challenge of mainstreaming Theosophy". The TS's Self-Transformation Seminar has been presented to government agencies such the Civil Service Commission, the Department of Education and the Parole and Probation Board, Non-Government Organisations involved in community development, mayors, city councillors and municipal employees, universities and private companies, in addition to the general public and, of course, TS groups.

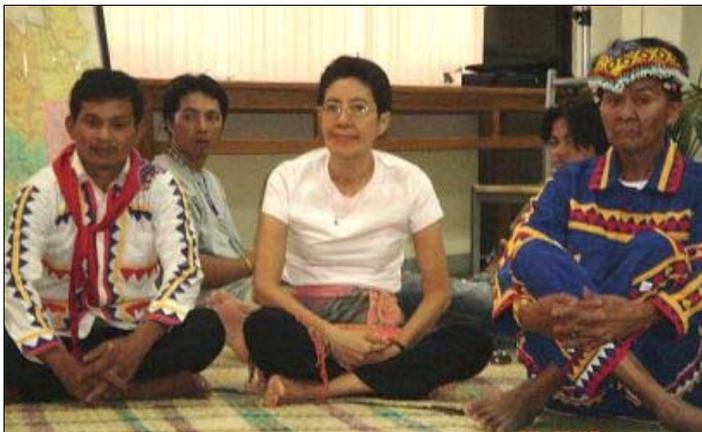
Here are some photos illustrating this work.



Here is the TOS Skills Training Center in Bago City, near Bacolod City. It is also the site of the Rainbow Play Center, a preschool serving the poor families of a nearby farming village.



The Philippines is one of the countries where the most journalists are killed each year and where fighting between Christian and Muslim groups is endemic, especially on the island of Mindanao. Filipino Theosophists conduct in-depth seminars in hot spots, addressing two issues in particular: core commonality in religion, and dealing with one's own anger and fears regarding other people or other ethnic and religious communities. Here we see one of the trainers – Bebot Rodil – running a peace-building seminar for army officers assigned to Mindanao. This programme has been running for several years and is an on-going part of the TOS's work.



Here we see Bebot conducting a seminar on peace-making for a multi-religious and multi-cultural group in Mindanao.



Here is Vicente Hao Chin, Jr training students as youth leaders in Mindanao which includes instruction in theosophical principles, meditation, conflict resolution and the skills useful in community service.



A youth camp for the chairpersons of the government youth councils in the entire province of Iloilo



In November 2011, Vic addressed 700 graduating high school students in Bohol. He spoke of developing qualities of character as an important foundation for adult life.



A theosophical preschool that serves a very poor community in Calocan City



A group of young people attending a summer class

PART 2: The TOS in Delhi

Another group that merits closer attention is the TOS in Delhi. Its annual report for 2011 shows how amazingly varied TOS undertakings are. In India there are so many groups – over a hundred – that National TOS Director, Mr Birendra L. Bhattacharyya, has to have a team of senior members to help him visit them all. In reading this annual report, it is easy to see that a whole issue of this newsletter could be filled reporting on the year's activities.

Annual Report (2010-11) Theosophical Order of Service, Delhi NCR Region

Details of activities undertaken during the year are as follows:

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

The following cases were sponsored:

Heart Surgeries for Children (four)

- Child from Nagpur – One
- Child from Agra – One
- Children from Noida – Two

Eye Surgeries

- Cataract – Seven
- Squint Surgeries – Two
- Miscellaneous – One

Spectacles

Over 40 free pairs of spectacles were arranged for needy persons including children identified during the free eye checkup camps.

Cleft Lip Surgeries (one)

Immunization

57 children of new Nursery class and newly admitted children of Om Foundation School were immunized.

Dental Treatment AT TOS Deepti Lodge Dental Centre

The Dental Centre conducted five Dental Checkup Camps in Schools and provided free treatment to a large number of children for Caries and Root canal treatments. In addition over 250 rural walk-in child patients were given free treatment.

PolioPlus

- Polio Surgeries (one)
- OPV. Two teams from members of Noida Lodge participated in all NIDs and administered Polio Drops and carried out PolioPlus advocacy in the neighborhood.

Hearing Aids

A set of hearing aids was donated to a needy child.



Heart surgery for children from the economically weaker section of society is co-sponsored by TOS Deepti Group.



Bro B L Bhattacharyya observes Dr Bhushan inspecting teeth during one of the many Free Dental Check Up Camps being organised by TOS Deepti Group. Free treatment is provided at "TOS Deepti Dental Centre", a fully owned Dental Centre of their Group.



Bro M L Khatri & Sister Sunita Gahrotra recognizing the students of Om Foundation School. TOS Noida Sanatan and TOS Deepti Groups play an advisory role for this exclusively "zero cost" school for the economically disadvantaged community of Noida and adjoining areas. Prof. KVK Nehru has been one of several Theosophists visiting the School.

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Individual:

- The school expenses of five economically disadvantaged students are supported.
- Five students in rural areas were supplied with books, stationery items and uniforms.
- Two students were given personalised home tuition.

Schools: The following schools are supported by TOS Delhi Region:

- Sanatan Primary School: This school is being run by TOS Noida Sanatan Group.
- Om Foundation School: This school is being run under the aegis of Om Foundation. TOS Noida Sanatan group is providing support in terms of extracurricular activities, medical care, personality development work, etc. A two day Integrated Child Development programme was run in September together with TOS U.P. Federation.
- ABSA School: This school is being run by Aum Baal Suraksha Aandolan Trust for informal social support of migratory labour in the neighbourhood.



S D School, a "special free privileged" school for the wards of local casual labourers, sponsored and organised by TOS Noida Sanatan Group, celebrates its Annual Function together with the members of the TOS Noida Sanatan Group.

SOCIAL

Vocational Training Centres

The following vocational training centres for rural women, known as "BrahmShakti Mahila Prashikshan Kendras" are being run by TOS Delhi NCR Region for the following villages: Sikendrabad, Palwali, Mangroli, Dhondra, Barola, Raipur, Chhijarasi, Sector 15A Noida, Barola-II and Rabhupura. More such Centres are planned. Theosophical literature in vernacular is made available to the students and lectures organised with visiting dignitaries. TOS Certificates are awarded to the students passing training. Employment assistance is also provided in the Local Entrepreneurial Units.

Support to Genuine NGOs

- **Goonj:** Regular donation of items by all TOS groups to this group that collects and distributes clothes and household material to the needy.
- **NavPrerna:** Visits and donations are made by members of the TOS Groups to this very special organisation working for the physically challenged.
- **Rotary Blood Bank:** A large number of Blood Donation Camps have been organised by TOS Lodges of Delhi NCR in collaboration with the Rotary Blood Bank.



Bro B L Bhattacharyya, National Director TOS in India inspecting the "BrahmShakti Mahila Prashikshan Kendra, Raipur", one of the many Vocational Training Centres for Rural Women being conducted by Sister Sunita Gahrotra, TOS Deepti Group



Rural School children on Mass Meditation during the Pranic Healing Training

SPIRITUAL

Global Synchronised Meditation

Certain members do this individually at a synchronised time every day.

Pranic Healing

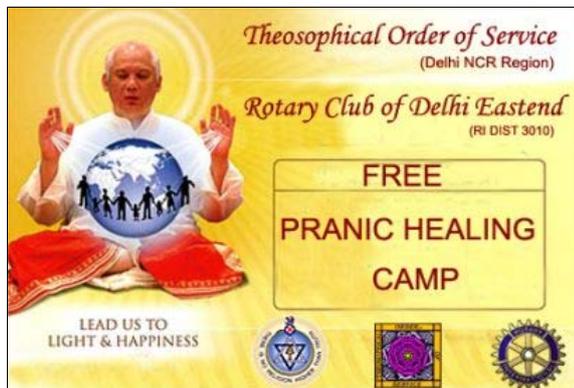
- Free Pranic Healing Camps were conducted on the last Friday of every month in collaboration with the members of the Pranic Healing Foundation of Delhi. Occasional Free Healing Camps were also organised in collaboration with the Organisational Free Medical camps.
- Pranic Healing Training Courses
- Basic/Advanced Pranic Healing Training Courses were conducted at Agra, Greater Noida, Noida and Delhi.

Healing Rituals

TOS Healing Rituals were carried out every Thursday.

Earth Healing Meditation

Earth Healing Rituals were carried out every Thursday, jointly attended by members of TOS and Pranic Healers.



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Distribution of Theosophical Literature

TOS Delhi NCR Region participated in a World Book Fair in Delhi in February 2010 and a Sanskrit World Book Fair in Bangalore in January 2011. It regularly displays theosophical literature for sale to the public through numerous book stalls.



TOS News from around the world

Teaching vegetarian cooking in Lisbon

Every two weeks, the TOS's Correspondent for Portugal, José António Machado Alves, is giving cooking classes in premises belonging to the city hall in Lisbon. As a guest Theosophist committed to a compassionate way of life, his aim is to communicate to the public the ethical and spiritual reasons for vegetarianism and the increasing harmony between body and soul that is a natural consequence of a more balanced and healthy diet. José António gives out recipes and shows how to make dishes for those who wish to join the workshop sessions. Participants are delighted with the classes and enjoy tasting the food they make together.



José António



Last May at TS HQ in Lisbon, at the invitation of the General Secretary of the TS, José António gave a public presentation on the work of the TOS within Portugal and around the world. The immediate past coordinator of the TOS, Alida Rodrigues, also participated in the session.

A fundraising concert in London, England

The European School of Theosophy is an annual one week event that takes place in different countries around Europe. 2011's school was held in St Albans in the outskirts of London. One evening, to entertain the students, a concert was organised in aid of the TOS's famine relief project in Kenya. It was well attended, people were generous and no less than £250 (US\$385) was raised.

The concert was given by two inwardly and outwardly beautiful young ladies, one playing flute and the other piano. Sarah Waycott and Hannah Mitchell are not members of the Theosophical Society, nor had they heard of Theosophy, but they were so moved by the plight facing the people in Kenya that they accepted the request to play at the European School of Theosophy. They drove from Wales, a journey of three hours, gave the concert of one hour and thirty minutes, had dinner and then drove all the way home again. They were offered accommodation, but as teachers they had to work the following day.

The TOS is touched and delighted by Hannah's and Sarah's kindness and thanks them heartily. Thanks also go to the organisers of this event.



TRANQUILLO
 INNOVATIVE. VIVID. CAPTIVATING.
 GIVING NEW MEANING TO FLUTE AND PIANO

Sarah Waycott
Flute

Hannah Mitchell
Piano

Charity recital
European School of Theosophy,
Quality Hotel St Albans

Monday 10th October 2011 @ 8.30pm
 Music by Gaubert, Martinu, Hue, Harty, Ian Clarke
 & Rebecca Faith Mitchell

www.tranquilloduo.com

Acknowledging dedicated Qandeel school teachers in Pakistan

Fareeda Amir reports that despite the unrest and violence in Karachi, the teachers at the literacy home-schools continue their work in an exemplary way. These schools are known as Qandeel home schools, symbolising the light of learning spreading out from a lantern.

Fareeda tells us that the TOS recently held a function to acknowledge the work their teachers are doing for the home schools despite the many hurdles they encounter (including getting shot in the leg! Thankfully the teacher involved has made a full recovery.) Each teacher was given a bonus equal to the salary for a month. A letter of appreciation from the International Secretary of the TOS was also given to each teacher. Of course the letter had a translated Urdu version attached.

The function went very well and there was much excitement amongst the teachers and children. It was supposed to be a concert, and the children of each school had prepared songs, small plays etc. The bonus and letter were a surprise!



One of the Qandeel teachers being presented with her certificate and cheque



▲ *Students singing the Pakistan National Anthem*

◀ *Students performing the Dil Dil Pakistan song*

Getting into recycling in Brisbane, Australia

Members of the Brisbane TOS group have been exploring ways of reducing their environmental footprint for several years. They have also been promoting practical ways that people can help the environment by reducing their general consumption, energy use and water use.

They are committed to recycling because of the energy it saves and the consequent reduction in carbon dioxide production. For instance, the energy saved recycling one plastic bottle can power a computer for 25 minutes.

Members have recently been learning how to make carry bags from recycled newspapers, magazines, cardboard and fabrics. They are now in the process of making several hundred bags of various sizes for use in the Brisbane TS library and bookshop.



Members learning how to make carry bags out of newspapers and magazines.

Celebrations in Paris, France

The TOS in France held a lively and enjoyable meeting in Paris in early January at which photos were projected of all the service projects the TOS in France supports. This power point programme inspired several spontaneous donations. A small fundraising sale of home-made items was held and live music was played. The members then sat down to share what are known as Twelfth Night cakes. These are a traditional part of Epiphany, a Christian Holy Day celebrating, amongst other things, the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus. In each cake, a little porcelain figurine is hidden. Those who find the figurine in their slice of cake are crowned king or queen for the day, symbolising their mission to maintain peace and unity in their kingdom.



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Insights through service

One of our readers suggested that an important feature is missing from our electronic newsletter: "Personal stories of inner growth and spiritual insights gained through service action." The idea is to share with our readers the more difficult and challenging elements and effects of the work and show how we can turn these around to become opportunities to move forward.

To make up for this lack, we are starting a column entitled "Insights through service". Our International Secretary is the first to share an insight with us.



When I was in my early twenties, I moved into the home of a good friend in her sixties to help her look after her husband who was suffering from advanced oesophageal cancer. Brett had never seemed to have a particular philosophy of life that one could give a name to so in all the chats I had with him at his bedside, I didn't mention Theosophy. What I did do regularly, though, was take advantage of the periods when he was asleep to stand at the end of his bed, extend my arms toward him and try silently to channel healing forces. I don't remember whether I called upon a 'higher being', the 'powers of love', 'spirit' or 'God' but I know that I poured a veritable torrent of energy into the endeavour. One day Brett woke up when I was standing there, fully concentrated. He didn't exclaim, "What on earth are you doing?" He said nothing. I didn't explain myself. I simply sat down beside him again.

After a period of silence, Brett told me that he was afraid of just one thing at death: annihilation. He believed that human beings – body and soul – are annihilated and said that the fear of it was haunting him. He asked me what I believed happened after death. His courage in facing squarely what he believed to be utter extinction stopped me in my tracks. I had been raised a Theosophist but had yet to perceive the difference between these inherited family beliefs and what was 'real' through my own experience. Brett was the kind of man who could see right through fake speech. I was struck dumb! Instead of outlining theosophical ideas about the life beyond death as I had been taught them, I was constrained to sit and search within. After some time, I found that the only notion I could share with complete sincerity was the belief that the human being has infinite powers within – the brain infinite potential, the human heart an infinite capacity to love, for example – and that infinite powers cannot be annihilated.

Brett's response showed me that it wasn't so much what I said that gave him comfort as the quiet conviction with which I said it. That day I learned a small but valuable lesson about the importance of speaking the truth rather than parroting others' ideas of ultimate truth that I had not yet really tested and assimilated for myself. Today I still feel gratitude to Brett and his wife for allowing me to help them at an intensely sad time in their lives. They faced their trial with love, with dignity, and without desperately trying to make themselves believe something they were unconvinced of and thought was imaginary.

Brochure documenting TS support for the United Nations

In our December update of the international TOS website, we reported on the publication of a new brochure describing the history of the Theosophical Society's support for the United Nations. In case you missed that news item, we share it again here, in our electronic newsletter.

In 2010, the international TOS formed a committee to make better known the historical role of the TS/TOS in supporting the work of the UN, and to explore and promote ways that the TOS can continue to support its work. The TOS United Nations Committee is chaired by Lorraine Christensen, the Coordinator of the TOS in Canada.

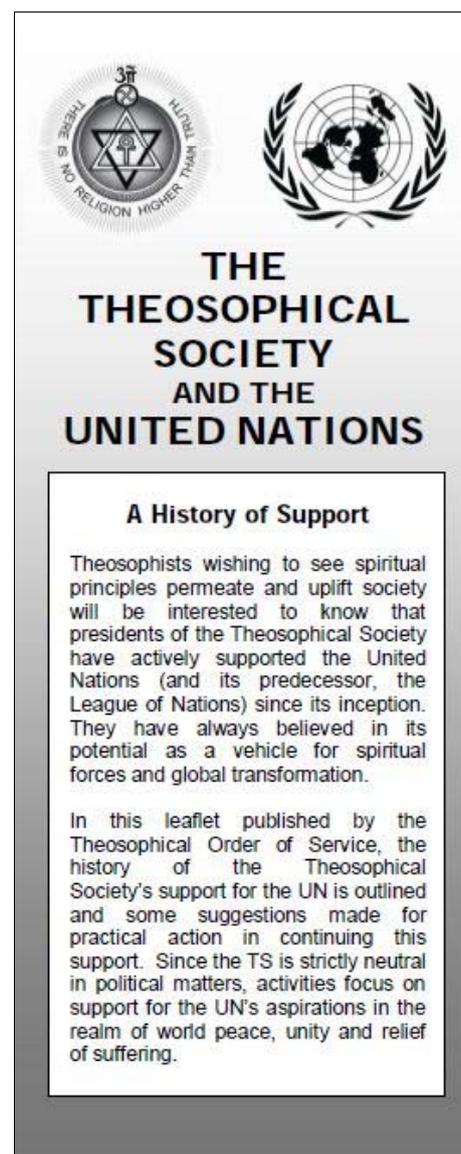
The UN Committee has now published its first brochure, documenting the history of support that the TS has given to the United Nations. In Lorraine's words, the brochure describes "how the TS's history of support spans a century, going back to the early days when the TS was a leader in sowing seeds of internationalism and world brotherhood."

The United Nations, which officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, was built on universal values of peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, along with justice, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. These reflect the fundamental principles of the Theosophical Society since its inception in 1875. Many international presidents of the Theosophical Society, including Dr Annie Besant, George Arundale, C. Jinarajadasa and N. Sri Ram, were staunch supporters of the United Nations and its precursor, the League of Nations.

The aims of the United Nations resonate with those of the Theosophical Order of Service in its worldwide efforts to alleviate suffering and to promote peace, development and quality of life for all. TOS members and groups may continue to support the work of the United Nations by recognising special UN days in TOS projects, presentations, articles, exhibits and debates. United Nations Day – October 24 – can be set aside and celebrated with a special programme of meditation and readings interspersed with discussion.

The TOS is indebted to Pedro Oliveira and Ananya Rajan in particular for their help in painstakingly researching the TS's extensive history of support for the UN and the League of Nations.

You can [access the brochure here](#) and on the *For Members* section of the website. Members of both the TS and TOS are warmly invited to print out this brochure for distribution.



UN International Years for 2012

When you start planning your group activities for 2012, you might be inspired by the United Nations themes for the year. 2012 has two major themes. One is the **International Year of Cooperatives** which aims at raising public awareness about the contribution of cooperatives to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration. Have a look at the third and fourth reports on the famine relief project coordinated by the TOS in Kenya and you'll see a wonderful example of how forming a co-operative can benefit an entire small community.

2012 is also the **International Year of Sustainable Energy for All**. This theme provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of increasing access to energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy. It is a call to promote action on energy issues at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The availability of sustainable energy is an issue for all of us. In developing countries, almost one and a half billion people are still lacking access to energy, and electricity in particular, and this often has an impact on the capacity of their community to generate employment. In our developed communities, much of our energy comes from polluting energy sources.



Courtesy UN/Eskinder Debebe

Both these themes are related to focuses of service within the TOS.
The websites for these two International Years -

<http://social.un.org/coopsyear/> and <http://sustainableenergyforall.org/about/faq>

have lots of suggestions for ways they can be celebrated in our communities.

We could have featured speakers, discussions about potential opportunities for cooperatives in our communities and forums about ways of promoting sustainable energy generation. We could become involved in supporting a cooperative project, such as the village water bore project that the TOS in Kenya has initiated.

Eyes for the blind: letters from Roscoe

Ann Davis, a member of Pretoria Lodge, has shared with us three letters from Roscoe, a beautiful, intelligent dog that she and her family cared for while he was a 'puppy in training' to become a Guide Dog for the Blind. These letters were first published in the South African Theosophist in 2006, 2007 and 2009. We will be sharing them over the first three editions of the newsletter in 2012.

"Hi, I am Roscoe, a black Labrador dog, who has had the privilege to be born at the Guide Dog Kennels in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 27 May 2005.

My destiny was pre-determined. I was allocated to Ann Davis in Pretoria who was my puppy raiser. This is how I became a member of the Theosophical Society in Pretoria. I went to every lecture on a Sunday night and also to yoga and other meetings.

So I asked to be part of and join the Theosophical Order of Service to humanity. My destiny, if I work hard, is to become eyes for someone who is blind. "The highest ideal in life is to serve", I heard them say and that is what I want to do.

But I had to learn the baby steps first. The instructions given were that I needed a good walk every day and I had to learn good manners. How better to learn this than at school? Auntie Ann, as the children call her at school, took me to school every day, where I joined the Grade Four class.



What an opportunity to learn all sorts of funny things! During a lesson on farming, a sheep skin was passed around the class to feel. I had had my eye on it but pretended to sleep. Then when no one was looking I quietly chewed it up into a thousand pieces so the children knew this was happening but did not say a word. I did it to make sure no other human could use my friend the sheep's skin again. This made Auntie Ann do a new African dance without drums so I thought she was pleased!!



When I felt drowsy, I would just curl up on my cushion and sleep. I quickly learnt to sit, stay and lie down. The school has lots of stairs to climb. I soon learnt where the staff room was, as I usually had a little mid-morning snack. Once a week, when Auntie Ann had two free periods, we would walk around the whole school, in and out of the classrooms. Lots of people and children are very scared of dogs and I wanted to help them overcome this. I learnt to be focused, to allow children and people to touch me and not get excited or involved.

Being independent and detached is very hard but with my dedicated teacher we worked hard together. Going on long walks and having a trip to the sea was fun. We even broke down in the car. I called on the angels and help soon arrived. I made sure all was calm and safe.

Uncle Tom and Aunty Ann also took me for regular walks to the park to learn how to walk properly, to stop, to look both ways before crossing the road and to do all manner of tricks, like rolling over, circling and getting some yummy cheese as a reward. I also love fetching ball and catching it on the bounce. I made lots of friends in the park, too.



I passed all my tests easily and I am sure it was the Theosophical knowledge that helped me grow so quickly. I am wearing a harness now instead of a lead around my neck, and a learner dog coat.

I am now into full training; learning about traffic, traffic lights and escalators.

I would like to thank Loreto School, Queenswood, the TS, Pretoria Lodge, my TS family and Roel Goudriaan for all the sponsorships and collections which they have given to help me with my studies.

I will let you know when I graduate and get my posting. But I will never forget you all. The love, the experience, the bonding I have had with you all will be carried with me. On this solid foundation I have been able to grow and build so that I can 'Live what life brings, and die what death comes'. WOOF!!"

Dictated to Auntie Ann Davis by Roscoe

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A joke to provoke

A young journalist got to hear of a very elderly Israeli who had been going to pray at the Wailing Wall every day for decades.

Thinking that she may have found a good subject for an article, she went to the Wall herself and eventually saw an old man walking slowly up to the Wall.

After 45 minutes of prayer, he moved off again, leaning heavily on his cane. The journalist took the opportunity to approach him.

"Excuse me, Sir," said the journalist, "I am Rebecca Smith from CNN. May I ask your name?"

"Morris Fishbien," he replied.

"For how long have you been coming here to pray, Sir?"

"For more than 50 years."

"Fifty years! That's incredible. What are you praying for?"

"I am praying for peace amongst Christians, Jews and Muslims. I pray for the end of all war and of hatred. I pray that our children may grow up in security and become responsible adults who love their neighbours."

"And how do you feel after 50 years of prayer?"

"I have the impression I'm speaking to a wall."

