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Your own Self-Realisation is the greatest service you can render the world.

— Ramana Maharshi

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

The older we become the more we realise that balance is the key to spiritual growth. The theosophical triad of study, meditation and service exemplifies this. Study utilises our ability to reason and think logically. Meditation helps us to tap into our Higher Selves, the divine within, and gives us respite from today's hectic world. Service then is the fulcrum – the point of balance. Service is that part of the triad which allows us to demonstrate the divine in the world.

Let's keep in touch and continue to share our experiences. 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 by email to the editors at nancy.tosinternational@gmail.com.

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

With best wishes in putting theosophical principles into action,
Nancy, Diana, Geoffrey, Rozi and Vicki

Our very best wishes to Carolyn Harrod upon her retirement from the EN team. Heartfelt thanks. We'll miss you!



The editorial team (L to R, top to bottom)
Geoffrey Harrod, International TOS Webmaster
Vicki Jerome, Proofreader extraordinaire
Rozi Ulics, Assistant International TOS Webmaster
Diana Dunningham Chapotin, past International Secretary of the TOS
Nancy Secrest, International Secretary of the TOS

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

Want to donate to short and long term relief for the victims of the April 25 earthquake in Nepal and its aftershocks? [Click here](#) for information.

TOS Healing Intention

We invite you to join us in a healing intention directed toward the people of Ukraine who are caught up in the armed conflict between Russian and Ukrainian forces. Read more [here...](#)





The TOS salutes Henning Christensen

On March 23, 2015, Henning Christensen, a dedicated member and worker for the Canadian Theosophical Association and the TOS in Canada, passed away in Calgary, Alberta a few days short of his 76th birthday.

Henning was one of those infinitely kind, hardworking and reliable servers always present in the background and about whose life you find out really interesting facts only after they pass on. Loving and fun, strong yet discreet, Henning was the right hand helper of the current National Director of the TOS in Canada, his wife Lorraine. They have done outstandingly fine service work together. We extend our deepest sympathy to Lorraine and their four children. Read about Henning's life [here](#).



Changing the Mindset of Violence Against Women and More ...

Dr Deepa Padhi and her TOS team continue their multi-faceted campaign in Odisha, India to stop violence against women. In Deepa's latest report, we read of a new initiative to give self-defence training to young girls at the Adruta Children's Home. In spite of their impressive concentration on gender issues, the TOS group have continued their many other activities and commitments. In October, they welcomed special guests, International TOS President Tim Boyd and his wife Lily and in November Ms Ananya Sri Ram Rajan from the TOS-USA. Read of these joy-filled visits and enjoy the many photos [here...](#)



A Sacred Sights and Service Tour 11-23 October 2015

Join the TOS in Australia for a TOS fundraiser group tour to the Kingdom of Cambodia. You will see the three major temples in Siem Reap plus pay visits to the charities sponsored by the TOS Sunshine Coast and visit the bustling capital Phnom Penh. The tour has been planned at a leisurely pace, offering plenty of time for relaxation or private sightseeing. The TOS Australia receives \$30 for each booking.

The tour offers a unique day trip to a remote Khmer village and a visit to a school where one of our TOS workers volunteers. Most Westerners are unable to visit such an authentic and remote village. Read more [here](#).

You do not have to be a member of the TS or TOS to participate.

For further information check this link on [TOS Australia's National website](#) or contact tos-australia@gmail.com.



Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret

"Is a ground-breaking feature-length environmental documentary



following an intrepid filmmaker as he uncovers the most destructive industry facing the planet today, and investigates why the world's leading environmental organisations are too afraid to talk about it." ([Cowspiracy](#) – official trailer, published on June 6, 2014)



Want some ideas for putting Theosophy into action on our own doorsteps?

Check out this eminently practical article on our website written by Carolyn Harrod, entitled [Serving in Our Communities](#).



TOS news from around the world

The Theosophical Order of Service–USA, at its February 2015 board meeting, approved a \$2,000 grant to the Mushrooms for Well Being Foundation: Mushrooms in Ghana Project. The funds will help to renovate and complete a spawn (mushroom seed) laboratory at Bemcom Training and Resource Centre in Techiman, Ghana, West Africa.

In this issue you'll also find news from our **Philippine** members about how they continue to take Theosophy out into the community – this time to employees of the city government of Iligan and to students at Mindanao State University. **The TOS in Hungary** has begun working with the Roma Advocacy Organisation of Tápióbitske to provide clothing and educational encouragement for the most vulnerable gypsy population of the village. [Read more here](#).



What's new on the International TOS website?

In our [Latest News](#), we bid farewell to Carolyn. Sad news for us, glad for her! Carolyn Harrod retires from the international TOS team after eight years' dynamic participation, "often as the brains behind the operation" according to our former International Secretary, Diana. Carolyn and her husband Geoffrey designed our e-newsletter in 2008 and have produced it ever since. They also designed and created our website. Carolyn picked up the TOS's strategic plan created by fellow Australian Dorothy Bell after wide consultation and ensured that the team followed it over its five-year life. She wrote a lot of the resource material to be found on our website and in our Handbook (which she also designed). She masterminded and led our last TOS Conference, held at Olcott in July 2013 – all this while acting as National Coordinator, then Treasurer, of the TOS in Australia and some of the time Coordinator of the TOS team in her home city of Brisbane.



Are we going to miss our TOS Wonder Woman? What a question! We cling to Geoff's continuing presence for comfort as new team members appear to fill the breach. (Rozi Ulics is our newest colleague but to see our whole international team, look [here](#).)

Carolyn: we love you, we thank you! Readers: enjoy this collection of photos of our Carolyn in action. (She avoids the limelight so it was hard gathering these!) [See photos here](#).



In our [Featured Article](#) we share with you the talk given by **Mrs Usha Shah**, Convenor of the TOS in Kenya, during the Theosophical Society Convention held at Adyar in December 2014. Usha's heartfelt talk was truly one of the highlights of the convention.

"Bringing Change to East Africa"- There is a very poignant memory I have of a Hindi song from a film called *Boot Polish*. Two young children in the song are asked what they are holding in their closed fist and they answer, "In our fist we are holding our fortune. We are going to control our own destiny!" The song goes on to say that there will be no hunger, no misery, no sadness and all will have a crown on their heads!



How does visiting a farm, trekking up a mountain side, making origami flowers and fantasy animals instil good moral values and a sense of brotherhood within children?

As our [Featured Project](#) The **TOS in Colombia** may have the answer as their continuing work with children shows.



Desks in rural India

Does the TOS need to become more creative? Marjorie Emerson of Ojai, California sent us this link to a brilliant piece of thinking to help needy school children in the state of Maharashtra in India.

Watch this two-minute [video here](#).



Birds that sing in the dark

Mrs Manju Sundaram, in her talk at the 2014 Adyar Convention, used a quote by Rabindranath Tagore, "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings while it is still dark." We love the quote and thought you might like to see this famous line put to song. [Watch this You Tube video](#).



Bon Appétit!



"The Gods created certain kinds of beings to replenish our bodies; they are the trees and the plants and the seeds." – Plato



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TOS Healing Intention

We invite you to join us in a healing intention directed toward the people of Ukraine who are caught up in the armed conflict between Russian and Ukrainian forces. We ask you to remember particularly our fellow Theosophists there who themselves are working hard helping refugees of both Russian and Ukrainian origin. (See report on one project [here](#).)

The fighting in Ukraine against Russian troops began in April 2014. According to a United Nations report, in the first nine months more than 4,700 people died and over 10,300 were wounded. By early March 2015, the number of people internally displaced by the conflict reached the 1.1 million mark, with an additional 674,300 Ukrainians seeking asylum in neighbouring countries.

The Ukrainian authorities are working to evacuate people from Donetsk and Luhansk, the worst hit areas, but their efforts fall grossly short of the need. Conditions there are dire with the supply of water and electricity often disrupted by shelling and rocket attacks. Many are still trapped in the conflict areas in basements and buildings under constant bombardment. The fighting makes the delivery of humanitarian aid extremely difficult.

Concern is especially great for the most vulnerable of the population, children, the elderly and the disabled. The UN's children's fund (UNICEF) estimates that over 1.7 million children have been affected by the crisis in Ukraine, with at least 130,000 displaced. Moreover, up to 150 schools have been shut down due to fighting in the Donetsk region. (See our report on our TOS members' work to comfort the children [here](#).)

Healing intention: "Om . . . We ask for and invoke healing power, love and light for all people living in the conflict areas of Ukraine, and for those involved in TOS work in the Ukraine. May they be comforted, protected and strengthened. May they be filled with inner light and unshakeable optimism for their families' and their nation's future. May compassion and tolerance fill their hearts. May they know safety in their schools, families and communities. We give thanks. Om."



Children of Kiev, Ukraine with teddies hand-knitted for them by members of the TOS France.

Mrs Diana Dunningham Chapotin, former International Secretary of the TOS, Ms Raisa Kalashnikova, President of Laya Lodge, Kirovograd City, Ukraine, Mrs Nancy Secrest, International Secretary of the TOS and Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko, President of the Regional Association, Ukraine. The Ukrainian delegation to the 2014 Adyar Convention presented Nancy and Diana with little dolls known as mOtankas. The dolls keep one safe "from all bad things". A wonderful gift!





Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko, President of the Regional Association, Ukraine, Ms Raisa Kalashnikova, President of Laya Lodge, Kirovograd City, Ukraine and Ms Olga Fedun at the TS 2014 Adyar Convention.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN HEALING INTENTIONS?

In 1946, Geoffrey Hodson was the Director of Thought Projection Groups for The Theosophical Society in New Zealand. He wrote of the opportunity available to all humans to consciously and intentionally work with angelic beings to tap spiritual power and radiate potent influences for good into the world.



Solar Angel

Geoffrey Hodson's message: "The mind and brain of man are powerful mental 'radio-stations'. Thought moulds not only the character of the thinker but also that of all recipients of his mental broadcasts. The mental impress produced by man upon fellow man helps to form national characteristics, and influences both human destiny and the progress of civilisation...The power of individuals mentally to influence the thought, character and conduct of others increases by geometrical progression, we are taught, when they think together in groups."

An angel's message (through Geoffrey): "Power, life, light; these are the gifts which companionship with the angels shall place in human hands. Power that is limitless; life that is inexhaustible; light before which all darkness melts away. . . Fear not the result; banish from your minds all doubt of our existence, and of our power to help. . . Meet in your groups with strong intent to send a mighty flood of power, of blessing, of love towards those people and those places whom you seek to heal, to purify and to illumine. . . Such in part is the work of the Brotherhood of Angels and of men."

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The TOS salutes Henning Christensen



From *The Song Celestial*

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
 Never was time it was not; end and beginning are dreams!
 Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit forever.
 Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems!
 Sir Edwin Arnold

Born on April 4, 1939 in Denmark, Henning immigrated to Canada at the age of 18. After a stint working in the uranium mine at Elliot Lake, Ontario, Henning ventured westward – eventually to the Yukon – where he found employment in a silver mine near Dawson City. For a time he was also part of the work crew that built the Jasper Highway in Alberta. Henning saved his hard-earned money in order to go to the New York Institute of Photography where he graduated with a diploma in photography.

After returning to Canada, Henning went on to become a health care worker in several hospitals, eventually becoming employed in the Calgary General Hospital where he worked for 31 years as a medical photographer.



Henning lived a full and well-rounded life. He was a devoted husband and father of four. In his spare time, he gave many hours to volunteer work in helping the poor and needy through the St Vincent de Paul Society. He also volunteered to help immigrant children get involved in sports through the Calgary Football Hockey Link, a non-profit organisation committed to supporting the integration of culturally diverse children and youth into Canadian society.

Henning's love for learning was a constant throughout his life. He was a prolific reader and attended many university courses, lectures and workshops. At the ripe age of 71 he graduated with a bachelor's degree from St Mary's University in Calgary.

Dear Henning,

We hold Lorraine and you in our hearts, visualising you at your happiest – out in nature such as here in Banff National Park. We know that your expeditions to the mountains together were like pilgrimages, elevating you spiritually and strengthening you for the Work. We wish you peace on your onward journey.



Henning loved hiking and getting out in nature. Portraiture and nature photography were special passions. Some of his works have been displayed in galleries and public institutions.

The spiritual path was one that Henning earnestly embarked on from earliest days. He was a serious seeker and true inquirer in the Theosophical tradition, always delving into the mysteries of existence. Meditation and philosophy, both oriental and occidental, were of special interest. For many years he was active in interfaith dialogue, to build bridges of understanding among those of various faiths. His absorption in these interests led to his finding a home in the Theosophical Society. In 1999, he formally joined the Society.

Henning was not only a student of Theosophy, but actively involved in serving the Theosophical Society. For seven years (from 2003 to 2010) he held the position of local lodge librarian and archivist. From 1996 to 2010, Henning helped to organise and host over 300 Theosophical meetings.

In 2003, Henning played a key role in reactivating the Theosophical Order of Service in Canada, along with two other Canadian Theosophical Association (CTA) members. He faithfully served on the TOS in Canada Administrative Committee for eleven years, and helped facilitate many TOS initiatives.

For the years of 2006, 2007 and 2008, Henning served on the National Board of the CTA. During that time, he also served on the CTA Finance Committee. Between the years of 2000 to 2009, Henning attended, and took an active part in, seven out of nine CTA conventions in the cities of Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary. He played a key role in organising conventions for the years of 2004 and 2008 in Calgary and 2009 in Vancouver.



2012 meeting of the TOS branch of the TS in Calgary

Henning was a founding member of Veritas Study Centre of the TS in Calgary, when it was formed in June 2011. From 2011 to 2014, he played an active role and never missed a meeting, even though he was suffering from a serious illness.

To honour Henning's memory, Veritas Study Centre held a Theosophical Remembrance Gathering in Calgary in May of 2015.



Veritas TS Study Centre meeting June 2014

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CHANGING THE MINDSET OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND MORE . . .

Dr Deepa Padhi and her TOS team continue their multi-faceted campaign in Odisha, India to stop violence against women. In Deepa's latest report, we read of a new initiative to give self-defence training to young girls at the Adruta Children's Home. In spite of their impressive concentration on gender issues, the TOS group has continued their many other activities and commitments. In October, they welcomed special guests, International TOS President Tim Boyd and his wife Lily and in November Ms Ananya Sri Ram Rajan from the TOS-USA. Read of these joy-filled visits and enjoy the many photos.



Dr Deepa Padhi

Dr Deepa Padhi, Vice-President of the Theosophical Order of Service Odisha region and President of the TOS Mahabharat group, begins her report for the period October 2014 to February 2015 with an account of a visit to Bhubaneswar, Odisha Region by Theosophical Society International President and ex-officio President of the TOS, Mr Tim Boyd, and his wife, Mrs Lily Boyd.

Their first day was a busy one that included visits to the Day Care Centre for underprivileged senior citizens run by TOS Mahabharat group and Mission Ashra, a home for mentally ill, destitute women and their children. At the Senior Day Care Centre the President and Mrs Boyd distributed clothes and other items as Diwali gifts. They planted fruit-bearing trees on the premises of Mission Ashra and presented a slide and basketball kit to the children on behalf of the Mahabharat Group. As parents themselves, the President and Mrs Boyd enjoyed meeting the children and spending a little time playing with them.



The President and his wife, Lily, visiting Dibashraya Day Care Centre for senior citizens in October 2014.



The President and Dr Deepa Padhi distributing Diwali gifts to the seniors at the Day Care Centre.



Tim and Lily Boyd planting fruit-bearing trees at Mission Ashra while Deepa and others look on.



Mrs Lily Boyd, with the President, holds one of the youngest children living at Mission Ashra.



Children of Mission Ashra enjoying their new slide and the President playing basketball with some of the boys. Show them how it's done, Tim!

Providing a home for mentally ill and destitute women is an important service. After visiting the mission the following month, Ananya Rajan commented, "As many are aware, women are considered basically a commodity in many parts of the world and while India progresses economically, socially it still has a lot of work to do. The mentally ill, especially women, are treated worse than an abused and neglected animal. They are often left to fend for themselves, thrown out of their homes, and are sexually preyed upon by men. Just as in the US [and the rest of the Western world], mental illness has its own stigma in India, but the risks are greater. The value of a life in an overpopulated country that is surrounded by constant poverty is lessened. There is no shock factor. One of the greatest tragedies we must change through our work in the TOS is humanity's lack of compassion for the suffering of others. . . Through generous donations of the TOS in Bhubaneswar and other types of fund raising, the women at Mission Ashra now have a facility that provides comprehensive care, mentally, emotionally, socially and medically in a safe and caring environment." To know more about Mission Ashra, visit [this link](#).

The next day, TOS Mahabharat group hosted the Regional Conference on the theme, *Transformation Through Service*. Tim, Lily and Dr Ashok Kumar Das, the Vice-Chancellor, Utkal University, were the Principal Guests. Prof. R. K. Mishra chaired a symposium organised on the theme. Speakers were Prof. Aditya Mohanty and Prof. Sahadeb Patro. Short speeches were given by Mr D. N. Padhi, Mr G. C. Nanda and Mr Jagadananda on the topic *Youth and World Peace*. A large number of university students attended the conference. Tim and Lily spent some time with the students answering questions during the interactive session.



Dr Aditya Mohanty, Professor of Philosophy and a member advisor, Dr Deepa Padhi, VP TOS Odisha Region, Dr Ashok Kumar Das, Vice-Chancellor, Utkal University, Mr Tim Boyd, President Theosophical Society, Mrs Lily Boyd and Mr R. C. Pattanaik, Regional Secretary of Odisha Region, at the inaugural session of the Odisha Regional Conference in October 2014.

A postgraduate student of Utkal University asking President Tim Boyd a question during the interactive session.



President Boyd cutting his birthday cake.

On November 7, 2014, Ms Ananya Rajan, TOS Ambassador to India (a title informally given to her by Mr Birendra L. Bhattacharyya, the National Director of the TOS in India), visited Bhubaneswar and was the chief speaker at a workshop on Gender Equality organised by the Mahabharat group. She spoke on "A Possible Approach to Gender Equality". The workshop, held at the Sai International School, was sponsored by TOS Canada. The Chief Guest was Mr S. C. Mishra, former Director General of Police. Thirty-six students of high school age actively took part in the afternoon part of the workshop. The students were divided into six groups and given a particular theme about gender inequality. Topics ranged from diffusing gender roles, gender roles past, present and future, the breaking down of stereotypes surrounding gender, and gender-based violence.



The group had to give some kind of presentation on the theme as well create a poster. In Ananya's words, "As many know, Deepa has spearheaded a campaign in Bhubaneswar for women's rights and gender equality. Aside from raising awareness about this issue, Deepa's TOS/TS group has been doing tremendous work to help disadvantaged females in various capacities. The work being done by her small group of TOS 'warriors' is so admirable and deserves immense recognition. It was an honour to be welcomed and hosted by such a wonderful group of people."



Gender Equality workshop presented in November 2014 was sponsored by the TOS in Canada.



Ms Cynthia Rabe, Ms Ananya Rajan and students participating in the workshop.

The next day, Ananya also chaired a workshop cum retreat on Self-Healing, conducted by Ms Lipa Rath, author of *Living Courageously*, a book on overcoming the trauma of domestic abuse. Other speakers were Ms Cynthia Rabe, Prof. Aditya Mohanty and Sister Leena. Short presentations were given in the morning while the afternoon was devoted to more hands-on activities. Most of the participants were women of various ages, but young students who had a number of questions about healing and the energetic body also attended. The retreat on self-healing was provided to impart self-care methods to those (mainly women) who are often busy caretaking others. All 65 participants were awarded certificates at the end of the programme.

On December 24, a mega health check-up camp or clinic was organised in Mission Ashra which has 200 residents. Skin, eye and medical specialists, gynaecologists and dentists were deputed to perform the health check-ups for the camp. Mahabharat group donated 20,000 rupees (US\$325) for the purchase of medicines.



On December 21, 25 teddies hand-knitted by the members of TOS Italy were distributed among the children of Shradhalaya orphanage at Cuttack.



Deepa Padhi's granddaughter, Sasha, on the left holding a baby while the children play with their teddies.



Dr Deepa Padhi gave a speech on December 27, 2014 at the International Convention of the TS and TOS, held at Adyar. Her topic was "Gender Issues in a Changing World". Her talk was very well received by those present, and was web-cast to theosophists around the world. In her talk, Dr Padhi told the audience some of what the TOS in the Odisha region has been doing to combat violence against women, the reasons for the campaign and the importance of recognising gender equality in the home, at work and in society in general.

Mahabharat group started its self-defence (karate) training programme for girls and women in Adruta Children's Home on January 15, 2015. Adruta was started in 1998 by Prof. Aditya Mohanty and his graduate students and has grown by leaps and bounds. Adruta Home's care is now extended to over 400 children, boys and girls in various cities of Odisha. The home in Bhubaneswar is exclusively for girls. Fifty of them participated in the self-defence programme and learned the art of karate to protect themselves. To read more about the Adruta Children's Home, visit www.Adruta.org. This training will next be given to the disabled girls in the deaf, dumb and blind school as girls who are hearing and visually impaired are soft targets for violence.



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Sacred sights and services tour 11-23 October 2015

On this tour sponsored by the TOS Australia, you will not only look at major sights in Cambodia, you will also see charities sponsored by the TOS Sunshine Coast and pay a unique visit to an authentic and remote Khmer village. Read what Kaz Shakespeare, an active Sunshine Coast TOS member who volunteers at 'Jimmy's school' in Siem Reap, has to say about the school and the village.



An English class at Jimmy's evening school

"As a habitual traveller to Cambodia, I have been blessed with the great fortune of meeting and becoming good friends with a young Khmer man named Jimmy. He works as a tuk-tuk driver and every evening he opens up his family's home to teach English to the local children. His English is excellent due to sponsorship by an Australian couple. Whenever I'm in Cambodia I enjoy helping him. The children are so dedicated to their education. All of them understand the incredible opportunity Jimmy is offering them for free. He tells them that English is the torch that will lead them out of poverty.

"He invites Westerners to attend and join in conversational English so that the children become more confident in speaking. As a result, the tourists become acquainted with and appreciative of the lives of young Cambodians.

"Jimmy will take our group to a remote village that is without the basic luxuries of soap and medication. Through the generous donations of the Sunshine Coast TOS, I am the one that feels their gratitude and experiences the overwhelming joy of giving. There are 30-50 families in the village. They are very isolated and extremely poor, like 80% of rural Cambodia. Most have never been to the nearest main town of Siem Reap. They have neither the means nor the desire.

"They never know when Jimmy is going to pay them a visit. There is no electricity but even without technology, word travels quickly and we are greeted with a gathering of eager smiles. We always take enough food for a party of noodles and baguettes. It's like Christmas for them mostly live on a plain diet of rice and vegetables. Jimmy is like Santa. Everyone knows they will receive something to take home. One day we bought a \$1.50 bag of elastic bands. The children immediately sat down in small groups and weaved the bands into skipping ropes. Balls are always a huge hit with these toy-deprived kids.

"Medication is always the main priority and parents politely hold their hands out to receive small amounts of painkillers, antiseptic, bandages, etc.

"The most popular gift is soap. Lack of clean water exacerbates their health problems so soap offers some hope in their attempt for hygiene and keeping their skin clean from infections.

"There are no medical facilities and most villagers do not have the means to get to town. A young lady there lost her leg from a land mine about 20 years ago and wears a prosthetic leg. She had mentioned to Jimmy that her prosthetic leg was broken. When we questioned her through Jimmy about how much it would cost to get a new leg, she told us it was free from the hospital. When we asked why she didn't go, she explained that she had no money to get there. Between the volunteers, we gave her the \$15 to travel the five hours there and back. Her relief and her lovely smile were priceless.

"I give gratitude to my good friend Jimmy and others like him, who have so little themselves but work so hard to help others. He says, 'I give not because I have a lot, but because I know what it is to have nothing'."

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Serving in our communities

When Dr Besant formed the TOS, her intention was that it would provide an avenue through which TS members could apply their theosophical principles within their own communities. She wrote in the March 1908 edition of *The Theosophist*:

The T.S. Order of Service aims at making Theosophy practical in order that the sum of human misery within and around the areas of every branch of our Society may be visibly diminished. It will seek to model the conceptions arrived at by theosophical study, for their adaptation into useful forms of daily life ... and it offers a common work to all who are willing to act on these principles.

Many of us in western countries put considerable effort into raising funds for educational and social welfare projects run by TOS groups in Asia and Africa. We do this because we see the vast needs in these countries and want to help alleviate suffering. Our donations definitely help these TOS groups extend the services they provide in their countries, so this is service work that we need to continue. At the same time, Annie Besant's words challenge us to look more closely at our own communities and to identify opportunities on our own doorsteps for putting Theosophy into action.

So how might we go about doing this?

- One possible starting point is for your TOS group to talk about the various areas in which theosophical principles can be readily applied – education, social welfare and justice, healing, peace, animal concerns and the environment. Choose an area about which you are collectively interested. Feeling that you really want to make a difference in an area is vital to gaining commitment and to people's willingness to set aside time for action.
If you have two areas in which different people want to work, then form two action groups. They are not competing with each other so it will often work well to discuss plans for the two areas as an entire group, since this expands the range of ideas generated.
- When you have decided on a focus area, brainstorm issues in your community that are related to that area.
- Identify one or two of these issues about which your group could do something to help. List all your ideas about ways of helping. Now look at your list and underline the ideas that you could realistically put into action given the number of people available and willing to work on this project, the time members can reasonably give to the project, and the amount of funding that you would need to raise. Don't delete ideas from your list, because over time you may find that ideas that were not practicable in the beginning can become achievable.
- Identify potential partnerships with other organisations working on similar focus areas.
- Now comes the exciting part of your planning. Decide which idea/s you are going to begin with. Talk about the things you need to do to put that idea into action. Write down these smaller activities, preferably in the order in which they will need to be done. Ask for volunteers to do each smaller activity and write their names beside it.
- It is a good idea to ask for a volunteer to coordinate the project. Provide members with a record of what is being done and who is responsible.
- Include your community project on the agenda of each meeting, review progress, discuss ideas to get around problems, promote your project amongst other TS members and plan further developments. Remember to celebrate your achievements!

Serving in our communities by partnering with other groups

Partnering with established community organisations makes good sense for small groups like ours, provided that their aims and ways of working are consistent with the values that underpin the TOS. We need to be confident that their funding comes from ethical sources, that they act in ways that are respectful of other people's rights and that the services they offer are not conditional upon taking up a particular set of beliefs.

Frequently, established groups have already created networks to identify current areas of need and sources of funding and to coordinate action. They have developed communication

strategies at a political level and they have often formed coalitions with other groups with similar aims and are open to further partnerships. At the local level of social welfare, their size has usually enabled them to set up refuges, kitchens, etc.

When you partner with other organisations make sure to let them know that you are working with them as a group of TOS volunteers.

So let's look at some possible partnerships related to areas of service that resonate with the aims of the TOS.



United Nations related activities

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.

The following are a few of the UN designated days that might be relevant to your group.

January 2: World March for Peace and Non-violence

February 20: World Day of Social Justice

March 8: International Women's Day

March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

June 5: World Environment Day

June 12: World Day against Child Labour

June 20: World Refugee Day

June 26: International Day Against Drug Abuse

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

August 17-23: World Water Week

September 8: International Literacy Day

September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day

September 21: International Day of Peace

September 28: World Heart Day

October 1: International Day of Older Persons

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

October 9: World Sight Day

October 10: World Mental Health Day

October 17: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

October 24: United Nations Day

November 20: Universal Children's Day

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

December 1: World AIDS Day

December 3: International Day of Disabled Persons

December 10: Human Rights Day



Animal welfare

Many organisations work in this area at national or international level and are an excellent source of information on current campaigns and projects to educate the community. Sadly, there are many issues that require attention such as factory farming, animal testing, live animal export, the fur trade, slaughtering practices, poaching and the use of animal parts in traditional medicines.

Some organisations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (www.peta.org) and Animals Australia (www.animalsaustralia.org), not only have campaign information on their websites but also offer information on vegetarianism and living a cruelty free lifestyle.

We also, of course, have our local animal refuges that are always looking for supporters and hands-on volunteers.



Environment

Major environmental organisations like World Wildlife Fund (www.wwf.org) have news, scientific information, updates on government policies and information about campaigns and email petitions. They also have interactive tools that enable you, for instance, to calculate your environmental footprint.

Each year, hundreds of millions of people, businesses and governments around the world unite to support the largest environmental event in history – **Earth Hour**. Encourage your friends to join you in switching off the lights at 8:30 p.m. on the last Saturday of March each year and show your support for a more sustainable planet.

Don't forget partnership possibilities with your local Council and community environmental groups with an interest in such things as tree-planting and caring for waterway and coastal areas.



Healing and well-being

In this handbook you'll find a healing meditation designed to restore the harmonious flow of Divine Life through one's whole nature. It was designed by Geoffrey Hodson and can be used by groups or individuals.

Have you ever considered promoting the benefits for children of relaxed mindfulness or offering workshops for members' families on this topic?

Experts at Duke University, in Durham, NC, USA, recommend mindfulness, which is a technique borrowed from meditation, to help children deal with the many academic and social pressures in their lives. You'll find some of their suggestions in the *For Members* section of our website.



Peace ideas

You'll find a range of ideas for promoting peace or celebrating the International Day of Peace on our website in the *For Members* section. These include beautiful peace prayers for the world, suggestions about personal action to promote peace, a guide to starting a Peace Club, information about participating in the Pinwheels for Peace Project and ideas for planning your own Peace Day event.

For ideas on activities that you could organise, check out associated websites such as:

- *Pinwheels for Peace* at <http://www.pinwheelsforpeace.com>
- *UN Peace Day* at <http://peaceoneday.org/> and <http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org/>



Peace Day, on 21 September each year, is not just about stopping wars. It is also an opportunity to promote harmony and peace within our families and communities. Look out for peace events that you and your TOS group can support within your community.



Social welfare and justice

Many partnership possibilities connected with social welfare and justice will involve us in volunteer activities. Volunteers are regarded as playing a crucial role in the well-being of most communities. Indeed, in some countries, statistics show that volunteers contribute over 800 million hours annually. But it's not just

the time we contribute that is valuable. Frequently, the human contact, our interest and friendship are even more important.

Many organisations working in the community and social services sector have websites that provide information about volunteer opportunities. You may also know of local groups that provide support to people with disabilities or health issues, run soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence, mentor students from disadvantaged backgrounds, conduct parenting programs or provide support to refugees, etc. Groups like these welcome volunteers and often provide training.

If you are interested in joining campaigns about social welfare and justice issues, websites such as Avaaz (www.avaaz.org) and Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) will enable you to keep in touch with current issues.

When you volunteer to clean the kitchen or scrub the pots, if you practise as a bodhisattva, you will have great joy and happiness while doing so. But if you have the feeling, "I am doing a lot, and others are not contributing their fair share," you will suffer, because your practice is based on form.

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Cultivating the Mind of Love*

The photographs below are of related TOS activities: a healing circle in the USA, tree planting in Kenya, educating needy children in Pakistan and providing veterinary care in India.





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TOS news from around the world

TOS-USA Awards Grant to Mushrooms in Ghana Project



Photo: Shiitake mushrooms, grown on logs, are native to East Africa and can now be found the world over. They are high in protein and B vitamins.

The Theosophical Order of Service—USA, at its February 2015 board meeting, approved a \$2,000 grant to the Mushrooms for Well Being Foundation: Mushrooms in Ghana Project. The funds will help to renovate and complete a spawn (mushroom seed) laboratory at Bemcom Training and Resource Centre in Techiman, Ghana, West Africa. A member of the TOS-USA board of directors said, “Not only is this project in line with the TOS motto, we felt it was also in line with our pledge to support the International TOS’s two-year emphasis on women’s issues which began in September of 2013.” The TOS-USA grants 5% of its invested funds each year to other charitable organisations that do service work in one of its service areas: animals, arts & music, ecology, healing, family, peace and social services.

The Mushrooms for Well Being Foundation seeks to promote education about the health and medicinal benefits of mushrooms, promote mushroom consumption and production worldwide, including in the US, and also in developing countries where small-scale

mushroom production can increase food security and economic development and provide an additional source of protein.

The Mushrooms in Ghana Project has been working with Bemcom Training and Resource Centre in Techiman, Brong-Ahafo Region, Ghana, West Africa, firstly to address contamination issues with the centre and with area oyster mushroom farmers; secondly to introduce shiitake mushroom production on logs as a way to diversify crops and increase production and profits, and to protect against crop failure, as has happened in the past due to contamination; and thirdly, to establish a government-approved laboratory to manufacture spawn for central and northern Ghana, as spawn is in short supply throughout Ghana and West Africa – and in all developing countries.

Bemcom’s motto is “Freedom from Poverty”. According to its founder, Bernard Bempah, Bemcom now has 800 farmers growing oyster mushrooms. The farmers, most of them women, are increasing their incomes and feeding their families and communities with their mushroom production.

John Osmond Boakye, General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in West Africa, assisted the TOS-USA by visiting Bemcom and speaking with Bernard Bempah personally. Nancy Secret, President of the TOS-USA, said, “General Secretary Boakye’s help was invaluable. He could do what we could not, actually visit the site. John’s glowing report of the facility and the young man who runs it secured us in our decision to help. We are grateful for his assistance.”



Farmers of the Bomkum Women's Cooperative

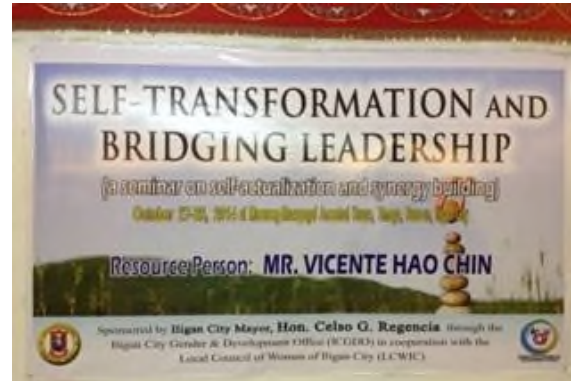
More information about the Mushrooms in Ghana Project can be found on its [website](#).

Self-Transformation Seminars in the Philippines

In this issue you'll find news from our **Philippine** members about how they continue to take Theosophy out into the community – this time to employees of the city government of Iligan and to students at Mindanao State University.

A Self-Transformation Seminar was recently conducted by Theosophists Ms Saturnina Rodil and Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr for the city government of Iligan in Mindanao, Philippines. Sponsored by the Mayor of the city, heads of departments, four city councillors and several NGO leaders attended the event.

Initially, many of the participants felt compelled to participate because the local government required their presence. After half a day, though, they thanked the organisers, saying that this kind of training was different from anything they had experienced and was very helpful indeed.



In January, the Self-Transformation Seminar was again conducted in Iligan City, this time for sociology and community development majors at Mindanao State University (MSU). The three-day seminar was part of a training programme organised by the two professors in charge of the university's service extension programme to communities.

The new volunteer-graduates are now deployed in various parts of Mindanao for a period of six to eight months and are involved in local development projects of NGOs.

The MSU organisers requested that the spiritual element be given due emphasis in the seminar, with special attention to the concepts and practices of the major religions because the volunteers could be working in places with Christian, Islamic and Indigenous populations. Those attending the Self-Transformation Seminar were themselves a mixed group of Christians and Muslims. To meet the request, the session on 'Love and Caring' was extended to include 'Compassion and Service', while 'Human Perfection' was extended to include an examination of the relationship of self-transformation to social transformation.

Victor Peñaranda and Saturnina Rodil co-facilitated the seminar. This is not their first collaboration by any means. They have teamed up several times to lead self-transformation training for volunteers working in communities heavily affected by war – notably the traumatised civilians of Lanao del Norte province and soldiers assigned to the conflict areas in the central and western regions of Mindanao.

In late March, in the course of his professional work as a resource person in governance and community development, Victor led a three-day seminar involving local government officials on the theme of good governance in water and sanitation projects. The seminar included a half-day discussion on 'Values, Leadership and Service' adapted from the Self-Transformation Seminar.

It is wonderful to see how our fellow Theosophists in the Philippines are integrating Theosophy into every walk of life, isn't it? We have reported in the [past](#) on the seminars the TS has long been conducting for military personnel, emphasising the importance of inner peace in the process of outward conflict resolution.



The TOS in Hungary has begun working with the Roma Advocacy Organisation

The TOS in Hungary has begun working with the Roma Advocacy Organisation of Tápióbcské to provide clothing and educational encouragement for the most vulnerable gypsy population of the village. The Romanis in Hungary are among the poorest sectors of the society, with unemployment rates the highest and education rates lowest compared to the majority and other minority groups. Roma groups are scattered across the country.

One of the the TOS members, Adrienne, came into contact with a head of the Roma Advocacy Organisation in the village of Tápióbcské. At Christmas 2014, the TOS in Hungary began a cooperative effort with the Organisation. As a result, the TOS in Hungary donated clothing from its warehouse. Their plans are to continue this donation in the future. Many TOS projects begin with an unexpected contact in our daily lives that offers an opportunity for service. Perhaps your group has experienced this as well.

Adrienne has also offered one week's camping in her country-house for the four best upper school students from Tápióbcské. The aim is to encourage gypsy children to aspire to learn. We look forward to hearing about this camping adventure and seeing photos of the young people.

As their second Christmas action, the TOS in Hungary targeted a small town, Szöd, 30km from Budapest. In cooperation with the local Family Support Service, they donated food packages for the neediest families and were able to support 17 families.



Csilla Kiss, Coordinator of TOS Hungary, and László Hertel, Mayor of Szöd with food packages donated at Christmas to families in Szöd, a small town near Budapest, Hungary.

Holiday trappings at the TOS in Hungary



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Farewell Carolyn

In our Latest News - Farewell, Carolyn. Sad news for us, glad for her!



Carolyn Harrod retires from the international TOS team after eight years' dynamic participation, "often as the brains behind the operation" according to our former International Secretary, Diana. Carolyn and her husband Geoffrey designed our e-newsletter in 2008 and have produced it ever since. They also designed and created our website. Carolyn picked up the TOS's strategic plan created by fellow Australian Dorothy Bell after wide consultation and ensured that the team followed it over its five-year life. She wrote a lot of the resource material to be found on our website and in our Handbook (which she also designed). She masterminded and led our last TOS Conference, held at Olcott in July 2013 - all this while acting as National Coordinator, then Treasurer, of the TOS in Australia and some of the time Coordinator of the TOS team in her home city of Brisbane.



Are we going to miss our TOS Wonder Woman? What a question! We cling to Geoff's continuing presence for comfort as new team members appear to fill the breach. (Rozi Ulics is our newest colleague but to see our whole international team, look [here](#).)

Carolyn: we love you, we thank you! Readers: enjoy this collection of photos of our Carolyn in action. (She avoids the limelight so it was hard gathering these!)

*Farewell Carolyn! We love you!
Geoff and Carolyn – What a team!*



Carolyn & Jean Carroll



At work: Carolyn (Treasurer), Travis James (Secretary) and Jean Carroll, Coordinator of the TOS Australia



Carolyn at Australian TOS AGM



Carolyn at Springbrook Theosophical Centre in Queensland, Australia where she has often participated in TOS organised "working bees" to beautify the grounds.



Carolyn, Geoff and Diana working on the e-Newsletter



Carolyn and Nancy at work at Olcott 2013



Carolyn speaking at the TOS Conference at Olcott 2013



Carolyn guiding us through the programme at Olcott



Cleaning bee at the Olcott kitchen



Carolyn draws numbers out of a hat at a raffle drawing at Olcott with help from Renee Sell and Dorothy Bell.



Carolyn often helps with the catering of TS events at Springbrook Theosophical Centre. It is an expression of her commitment to the TS as a TOS member.



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