

The Service Link

*Promoting the Application of Theosophical Principles
in Your Community*

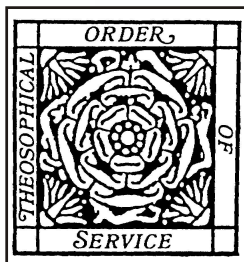
SUPPLEMENT
TO THE 2006/2007 ISSUE OF
THE SERVICE LINK

FEATURING
REPORTS ON

***THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE***

&

THE TOS IN CHENNAI



A Publication of the
THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE



Participants at the first International TOS Conference held at Adyar in January 2005.

Participantes en la primera conferencia internacional de la OTS celebrada en Adyar en Enero de 2005.

Impressions of A Special Experience

**The Event: The TOS International Conference
The Place: Theosophical Society Headquarters Hall, Adyar
The Time: January 1 and 2, 2005**

By Dorothy Bell, TOS Australia

We gathered in Headquarters Hall, many of us fatigued after six days of lectures, symposia, discussions and short talks in the TS International Convention program where participants numbered over one thousand. A much smaller group of around 160 TOS members from fifteen countries, more casual and informal, but perhaps more cohesive, sat in a U-shaped arrangement around the alcove housing the statues of H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, with a bust of Annie Besant

completing the circle of silent witnesses.

In such an environment the purpose was well focused and seemed to go beyond the immediate program to link with the vision of the initiators and founders of both the Theosophical Society and the Theosophical Order of Service.

‘Official’ representatives from overseas included Terezinha Franca Kind, National Director of the TOS in Brazil, Luigi Marsi, Director of the TOS Italy, Birgitta Stålhammar, Director in Sweden, Michel Chapotin and Betty Bland, Vice-Presidents of the TOS in France and the USA,

Lynette Muller from the Brisbane TOS and Dorothy Bell from the TOS Melbourne, Australia; Hutsy and Dinshaw Contractor, TOS volunteers from Tucson, Arizona (Hutsy coordinates the healing network) and Juliana Cesano from Argentina. Valerie White, representing the TOS in Auckland, New Zealand, flew in especially for the conference!

During the conference, Mr B.L. Bhattacharyya of Kolkata in the state of Bengal was warmly welcomed as the new National Director of the TOS in India. Retiring director, Mr M.P. Singhal, was wished every happiness and a card, signed by many, sent to him.



Conference group discussion on the theme of mobility aids, facilitated by Mr K. Dinarakaran of the TOS in Trikkur, Kerala, and Dr P. Nagaraj, TOS Chennai.

Grupo de debate de la Conferencia sobre el tema 'ayudas a la movilidad' ofrecido por el Sr. K. Dinarakaran de la OTS en Trikkur, Kerala y por el Dr. P. Nagaraj de la OTS en Chennai.

A warm welcome was extended to all by Mr P.S. Mital, TOS National Secretary, representing the host Indian Section. Diana Dunningham Chapotin, with characteristic enthusiasm, humour and camaraderie identified the goals of the conference: to stimulate the work of the TOS, to encourage new people to join in, and to allow the workers to get to know each other and pick up fresh ideas for projects back home.

Diana also reminded us of the extent of our outreach in her summary of TOS activities internationally and encour-

aged us to visit the exhibition on the work of the TOS arranged by Dutch member, Paul Zwollo, in the Archives Room, which also included some twenty wall panels of photographs prepared by Michel

Chapotin showing the Order's activities: theosophical schools, clinics, healing and peace groups, animal welfare and ecological awareness campaigns and public awards. Messages of greetings to the delegates of

TOS conference group discussion facilitated by Hutsy and Dinshaw Contractor of Arizona, USA.

Grupo de debate de la Conferencia presentado por Hutsy y Dinshaw Contractor de Arizona, EE.UU.



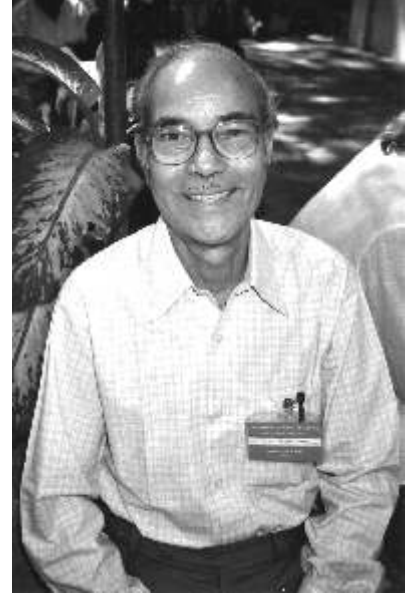
the Conference extended along four yards of wall space! Glass cases showed historical items, early correspondence and publications. Print-outs of sample pages from TOS websites were laminated for display by Mr C.V.K. Maithreya of the TOS in Chennai.

After her words of welcome, the International President of the TOS, Mrs Radha Burnier, spoke about the relationship between the TOS and the TS: 'If we limit our concern to organisations, we see separateness. If our energy and attention are focused on the spirit of the work, we simply see opportunities for fraternal collaboration', she said.

Three speakers – Mrs Betty Bland, Mr P.S. Mital and Dr C.V. Agarwal – shared their experiences and practical suggestions for service in the fields of peace, mobility aids and animal welfare work.

- From educating the poor, to living in harmony with nature,

peace is both a facilitator and a result', explained Betty Bland in her presentation about the Peace Department in the American TOS. Deni Gross, the head of that department, has developed flexible, all-encompassing activities that provide many opportunities for participation in the USA as well as internationally. We listened with great interest as Betty described the four projects that make up the bulk of the Peace Department's work – Artists for Peace, Circles for Peace, Gardeners for Peace and the Peace Action Network. She also alerted us to a workshop programme that she and her husband David had organised around the topic of 'choosing and developing a service project' – a practical 'how to' workshop in incremental steps. Later in the day they gave an overview of this workshop that aroused enthusiasm.



Conference participant, Mr B.L. Bhattacharyya, National Director of the TOS in India.

El Sr. B. L. Bhattacharyya, Director de la OTS en India, participante en la Conferencia.



Hutsy Contractor of the TOS in America with children at the Social Welfare Centre during a visit organised for Conference participants.

Hutsy Contractor de la OTS en EE.UU. con los niños del Centro de Bienestar Social durante una visita organizada por los participantes a la Conferencia.



Betty Bland, member of the TOS in America and guest-of-honour at the Social Welfare Centre in January 2005, presents a diploma to one of the students completing the handicrafts course.

Betty Bland, miembro de la OTS en EE.UU. e invitada de honor del Centro de Bienestar Social en Enero de 2005, entrega el diploma a uno de los estudiantes que ha terminado el curso de manualidades.

taken on the subject of 'distance healing'; and elaborated on his involvement in an environmental project concerning the health and pollution of the Adyar River. He reminded us that this type of project presented many dilemmas such as the eviction of unauthorised slum and riverside dwellers. He explained the 'human cost' that is present in many proposed solutions to environmental degradation.

There was a productive fruitful discussion, led effectively by Mr C.V.K. Maithreya, on how to expand the role of the TOS in the theosophical world. Brother Maithreya also reviewed the work of the TOS in

- Mr Mital expanded our understanding of the range of mobility aids needed by people with disabilities. 'There are four million people in India who have a need for mobility aids,' he said. These include carrying and physical support, walking sticks, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, three-wheeled vehicles for roads as well as specifically designed orthopaedic aids for individual needs.
- Dr Agarwal reminded us of the issues involved in the use of animals and animal products in soap, shampoo and cosmetics, the commercial market for feathers, the so-called sport of cock fighting and the practice of vivisection. In animal rights projects he advised us of 'the need to arm ourselves with authentic facts' before taking specific action. He also reminded us of the useful pamphlets with practical suggestions that were available at the Besant Memorial Animal Welfare Dispensary in Adyar.



Geetha Jaikumar, K. Dinakaran, David Bland, Dinshaw Contractor, Dr P. Nagaraj, Hutsy Contractor and Betty Bland visiting the Social Welfare Centre.

Geetha Jaikumar, K. Dinakaran, David Bland, Dinshaw Contractor, el Dr. P. Nagaraj, Hutsy Contractor y Betty Bland, de visita en el Centro de Bienestar Social.

Discussion groups took these three themes further with the emphasis being on concrete ideas for action that participants could engage in at their own local level.

As the programme moved through specific activities that make up the spectrum of TOS work, we heard from key Chennai TOS member, Mr S. Harihararaghavan and the service performed by the Adyar Healing Group; Dr Srinivasan referred to the research being under-

Chennai over the past year. Reports on some of these themes are provided elsewhere in this issue or will appear in future issues.

The Adyar Lodge of the TS organised a beautiful Indian dance programme and the local TOS in Chennai hosted lunch for over a hundred people at the Social Welfare Centre, after a visit to see the free medical treatment offered there by the TOS team and the presentation of three wheelchairs by Mrs Radha



Children of The Order of the Round Table, a ceremonial movement embodying theosophical principles, sing for participants at the Conference.

Niños de la Orden de la Tabla Redonda, un movimiento ceremonial que incluye principios teosóficos, cantan para los participantes en la Conferencia.

Burnier. Thanks to the Social Welfare Centre staff.

The final session on Sunday afternoon went to the 'up close and personal' experiences of workers from around the world – Valerie White (New Zealand), Maria Rosa Garcia (Argentina), Lynette Muller (Australia), Birgitta Stålhammar (Sweden) and Dorothy Bell (Australia). Entitled 'Sharing from the heart: a special moment of insight, upliftment or inspiration in service work', the stories of these workers exemplified the subjective reality of being in the field of action – the lessons learnt, the wonderment of synchronicity and coincidence when strange things happen, and the invisible support that is always present for those who serve...

The Conference programme closed with an address by Mary Anderson and a meditation led by Dara Tatray of Australia.

This TOS conference was not only a consciousness-raiser about the diverse and manifold activities that are taking place around the globe, it was also a time for forging new working links and connections across the states of India, and across the boundaries of different nations and cultures of the world. The communications revolution that allows us to email information quickly to each other about similar or quite different projects, will be further utilised to

expand the work.

Special mention must be made of the local TOS team in Chennai. Not only did they take care of the organisation of the conference itself – registration and physical arrangements, etc. – they also helped create the programme. At the same time, they were working around the clock providing emergency relief for the victims of the tsunami! This great tragedy drew out the qualities of leadership and organising skills amongst the members of the TOS in

Chennai: Mr Ramana Reddy, Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, Mr Gopal, Mr C.V.K. Maithreya, Dr Sunita Maithreya, Mrs Radha Muthiah, Miss Keshwar Dastur and Mrs Sumitra Gautama . . . an efficient and discreet team. Sincere thanks also to staff and volunteers of all departments of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. All were involved in the tsunami relief work and/or support for the TOS Conference in some way or another.

A final tribute to Diana Dunningham Chapotin for her unswerving commitment and effort in the TOS work and for conceptualising an interesting programme that included variety and both macro and micro service experiences; and to all her resource people. Until next time?



David Bland of the TOS in America addresses the Conference.

David Bland de la OTS en EE.UU. dirigiéndose a la Conferencia



Can We Do Anything About This?

Extracts from a talk given at the first international conference of the TOS on the subject of mobility aids in his country.

P.S. Mital

National Secretary, TOS India

The sight of a sick man, an old man and a funeral moved Gautama Buddha to renounce his throne, to abandon all his royal comforts and family and to seek for humanity the path that would end sorrow. Daily, however, we see men, women and children in worse condition than some of what the Buddha saw yet we are not moved to action. Can there be worse misery than persons on all fours; persons dependent upon others even for such needs as hygiene, dressing and eating; persons wanting to go some-

where but looking for someone to take them there?

One may ask, can we really do something? Yes, we can. There are many types of mobility aids that can make many of the disabled mobile to some extent. Here is a list:

1. **The simplest aid**, one that costs nothing, is ourselves. We can bodily lift, support and move the disabled as needed.
2. **A cane or walking stick**. For better stability nowadays, walking sticks with three and four legs are available.
3. **Crutches**. This is one of the cheapest devices we can donate. Many handicapped people can't afford them.
4. **A walker**. Three years ago, at Anand Lodge of the TS in Allahabad, we distributed mobility aids to a



Mr P.S. Mital

number of handicapped people. A three-year-old boy who had always been in a lap and had never walked, was provided with a walker. The moment he started walking, the thrill was visible on his glowing face. Observing this expression of happiness was a blessing bestowed upon us that day. The little boy was so enthusiastic that he quickly crossed the threshold of the building, left through the main gate and went into the street! Fortunately a security



guard saw him and brought him back.

5. **A wheelchair.** Prices vary with the degree of sophistication.

6. **A self-driven wheelchair.** These have large wheels on either side by which people can use their hands to drive the chair.

7. **Battery-driven wheel chairs.** These relieve the physical strain on the handicapped.

8. I recently saw on television a **wheel chair provided with robotics** which could even climb stairs.

9. **A hand-propelled tricycle.** These are three-wheeled vehicles with cranking handles on both sides that drive the wheels, through sprocket and chain. There is a front wheel device that permits turning left or right. In India these are by far the most sought-after aids as they enable their owners to pursue a living. They can be provided with a box for,

say, newspapers or other articles to sell.

10. So far we have listed general mobility aids. There are, however, other **devices made to measure** as recommended by an orthopedic surgeon. One of these is **calipers**. A growing child needs frequent replacements, hence most people do not choose to donate these. However, in October 2004 we provided calipers to 10 children in Varanasi. **Artificial legs** are another made-to-measure device.

Now let us see the extent of neurological and orthopedic physical disability in India. A survey has indicated that there are about four million people out of a population of one billion who need mobility aids. The most common cause is polio. An income of US\$1 per person per day is the international poverty line and 50% of Indians fall below this line! 70% of children do not have access to

adequate sanitation. Countless families with a handicapped child cannot afford even the simplest mobility aids, a situation that affluent nations would consider scandalous for their children. For the last seven years, the TOS in India has therefore retained mobility aids as its national service project. The regions *in toto* are given around 70,000 rupees per year [a little over US\$1500] from the interest on its National Project Endowment Fund. The regions themselves also manage to collect almost the same amount in donations.

The sophisticated, designed-to-measure mobility aids mentioned above are very costly and effectively reserved for the rich disabled. The TOS concentrates on serving the poor. It collaborates with manufacturers receiving government aid but whose waiting lists are always long. When we provide money, the queue moves forward a little more quickly.

Dr J.B. Bannerji, an orthopedic surgeon in Allahabad who has devoted his whole life to the service of the handicapped, affirms that what is needed in India are mobility aids that can be manufactured in villages themselves, which will make them very cheap. He has developed a large number of aids using bamboo and other local materials. He says that bamboo is not at all costly, is very light, flexible and strong. I hope that the TOS will cooperate with him in his scheme.

It is often said that we should undertake big projects. What is important, however, is having the compassion and the helping spirit, and to do whatever we can, whether it be big or small. If we are not in a position to provide a wheel chair or tricycle or artificial leg, let us not hesitate to provide crutches, walkers or canes.

Insight from the Heart

A talk given at the first International TOS Conference

Dorothy Bell
TOS Mornington
Peninsula Group, Australia

A few years ago I trained as a volunteer worker at a Support Centre for men who had contracted the HIV/AIDS disease. It was a government-funded project and indeed many people opposed this funding and any support being given to people with this 'self-imposed' disease.

The volunteers were trained in either therapeutic massage or the modality of Reiki Healing – which is similar to Therapeutic Touch. My work was in the area of Reiki.

One day a man called Michael made an appointment to see me and surprisingly, when he arrived, I recognised him as a colleague of twenty years earlier. We had both worked in the Curriculum Directorate of the State Education Department in Melbourne. He had been living with AIDS for fourteen years and was taking copious tablets a day to stabilise his condition. Physically, the disease had reduced him to skin and bone and he spoke of the battle he had had with it – and himself. But most of all he spoke about the pain and suffering of the young men with AIDS, whom he had committed to support at the Centre – especially those who had been rejected by their own families and churches, their workmates and friends.



Then I began the treatment. Initially I worked toward what the Reiki technique refers to as clearing the aura and chakras, and then moved into channelling the 'energy'. I stood quietly, eyes closed, focusing, a conduit – just allowing the energy to flow. Slowly I became aware of my thoughts. I was remembering Michael as he had been before the disease – a talented teacher, an active member of the teachers' union and a leader of people. I thought about how homosexuals had been alienated, discriminated against and persecuted throughout history, especially by the churches and fascist groups.

I thought of the young men condemned and rejected by their families, workmates and friends. Emotions began to stir within me. I felt their hurt and anger, their pain of rejection, victimisation, social alienation and injustice. I looked down at

him lying on the table in a deep relaxed sleep and felt such compassion... (or so I thought).

Suddenly a huge wave of nausea swept over me – and I was forced to sit down very quickly. Michael was undisturbed. I went beyond nausea, and felt very ill. I even thought I was going to lose consciousness. However, I recovered fully not long afterwards. But it was much, much later that I realised what had happened. Until the time that I began thinking about Michael's life and the injustice and discrimination surrounding the situation, I had been completely detached, allowing and accepting – being the instrument. There was no subconscious identification with the situation and no emotional involvement.

The energy of pure love and compassion seem to come from another place. This Love that embraces all in Oneness is 'of itself'. It is self-existent.

However, as soon as I allowed the thoughts and emotions to take over, as I made judgements about those who condemned and rejected those with AIDS, as soon as subconsciously the personality took the situation personally in some way, disruption occurred. The energy flow was blocked. And since our auric fields were as if merged together, somehow I was experiencing the

To respond to the needs of another without any judgement or self-projection is a truly loving and practical action.

sickness energy of Michael's disease.

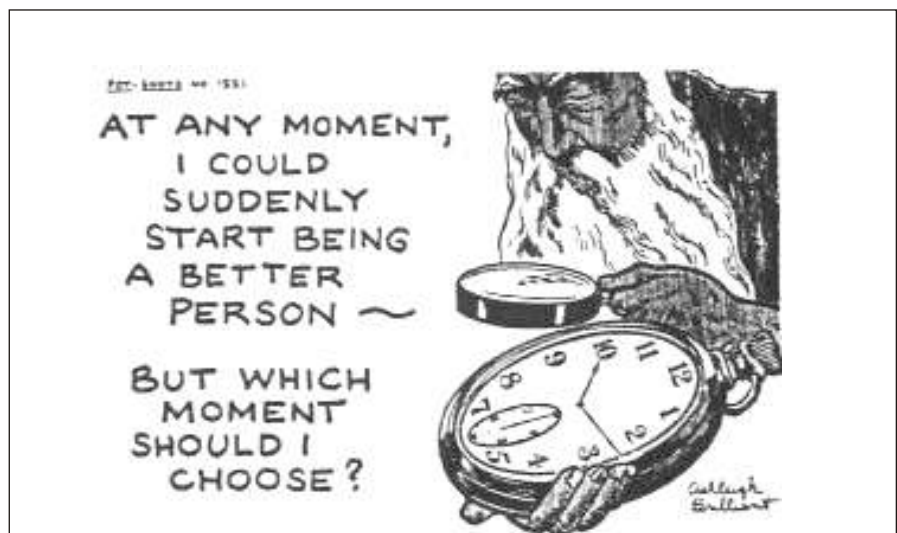
What a painful lesson in detachment that was – but what a great learning. Unknowingly, I was projecting my own emotional baggage, judgement, anger and sorrow about non-acceptance and victimisation, and imagining it to be compassion for Michael and the young men. But compassion is not emotional. And as I now understand it, the situation had triggered memories of old wounds of injustice, rejection and being the victim, that were carried in *my* subconscious, in the memory of *my* soul – possibly through many lifetimes. How true is it that the rescuer is the one who needs rescuing? Triggered by what I read into the situation, wounds of unfinished business rose to the surface of my mind and were waiting to be acknowledged and healed. By the intervention of these head emotions, the flow of energy had been blocked. I was no longer detached, no longer in the NOW, no longer an instrument of service.

So this experience, framed in the simple quotation 'To respond to the needs of another without any judgement or self-projection is a truly lov-

ing and practical action' (source unknown) has given me great insight into the essential nature of service and altruism. My truth is that truly loving action occurs when the personality-ego does not intrude and when the projected head-emotions and soul baggage are not mistaken for compassion. The energy of pure love and compassion seem to come from another place. This Love that embraces all in Oneness is 'of itself'. It is self-existent. This energy or vibration of Love loves through the

human instrument and knows where to go and what to do. Like the sunlight that illuminates and nourishes the planet, it does not discriminate between one human being and another in any way, shape or form. And in true service when the personality is surrendered, it becomes the instrument and channel of the higher. It is through the heart that the connection is restored.

A dramatic experience – but a perfect lesson in detachment in service.



Reprinted with permission. This Cartoon is one of hundreds of different 'Pot-Shot' cards. For US\$3, a sarter set and catalogue may be ordered from: Brilliant Enterprises, 117 W. Valerio Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, USA.

Do You Care About Animals?



Of course you do. Theosophists have nothing less than an outstanding record in the area of animal welfare work, starting right back with the pioneers of the theosophical movement. How does that care translate into personal action, however?

TOS members from India, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Argentina chose to face this question at the TOS Conference at Adyar in January 2005. They identified three areas for exploration. The group's facilitator was Dr Geetha Jaikumar, a Professor in a

Women's College in Chennai, who edits Wake Up India, a quarterly journal of the New Life for India Movement, published by the TS at Adyar. Her notes may be useful to us in our own reflections.

The issue of animal welfare can be broadly addressed from three fronts:

As always, we can begin with ourselves. This involves introspection into our individual lifestyles:

- our diet, our attire, our accessories (silk, fur or leather?);
- our cosmetics and toiletries (do

they contain animal ingredients and/or have they been tested on animals?);

- the forms of entertainment we enjoy or look at idly in passing (cruel sports and circuses?);
- our livelihood (do we work in an industry engaged in animal exploitation?)...

The second front is direct service. We can involve ourselves in animal welfare activities in our local communities. We can help in the rescue and rehabilitation of sick animals, support animal birth control programmes, liaise with other NGOs, raise funds...

In places like Adyar which has one of the few remaining woodlands within the city of Chennai, there is an additional responsibility to protect the biodiversity and fauna present in the campus. Wild creatures are increasingly pushed into a corner with the fast pace of development all around us. In our own local areas, we could all think in terms of a small wildlife refuge to rehabilitate fledgling birds and other young animals that come into our care for a time before being released into their natural environment.

The third front for personal action is the creation of awareness about the widespread cruelty to animals by sensitising people to the terrible suffering inflicted. As someone re-



Geetha Jaikumar and her discussion group at the first International TOS Conference.

Geetha Jaikumar y su grupo de discusión en la primera Conferencia internacional de la OTS



When the strong and the weak are face to face, all the rights are on the side of the weak and the duties on the side of the strong.

Mr R.V. Narayanan, Administrative Manager of the Besant Memorial Animal Welfare Dispensary with R, aged 15. As the oldest dog on site and blind (through cataracts), she is looked after in the retirement wing!

El Sr. R. V. Narayan, Director administrativo del Dispensario para el Bienestar de los Animales en Memoria de Besant con R de 15 años. Al ser el can más viejo y estar ciega por cataratas, está situada en un ala separada.

Not all members of the TS around the world know how active our International President is on behalf of our younger brothers. As busy as she is with administration and lecturing, Radha always finds time for animals.

No todos los miembros de la ST en todo el mundo saben lo muy activa que es nuestra Presidenta Internacional en favor de nuestros hermanos más jóvenes. Aún estando tan ocupada con las tareas administrativas y las conferencias, Radha siempre encuentra tiempo para los animales.

marked, 'If slaughterhouses had glass walls, few people would eat meat'. Very often ignorance is at the root of many of our actions and when the full extent of animal suffering is realized most people would hesitate to be a party to it.

Geetha adds: 'At Adyar we run the Chennai Centre of Beauty Without Cruelty, an international animal rights organisation that tries to spread awareness of animal exploitation and the need to adopt a compassionate lifestyle. We could all join hands with similar groups in our own countries as there is strength in numbers and we have a greater chance of being heard. We can join campaigns to protect the environment, to prevent animal cruelty and to find solutions in a host of related

issues.'

We can also remember what Dr Besant said back in 1910 when she addressed the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She said that when the strong and the weak are face to face, all the rights are on the side of the weak and the duties on the side of the strong. We have no rights over animals, only duties to protect and care for them.

j j j

Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.

Albert Einstein





Staff on duty at the Besant Memorial Animal Welfare Dispensary that treats hundreds of animals per week for free or almost for free. This service to the poor depends on our generosity. Three part-time vets are employed there.

Grupo de trabajo del Dispensario para el Bienestar de los Animales en memoria de Besant que trata a cientos de animales cada semana gratuitamente o casi. Este servicio a los pobres depende de nuestra generosidad. Tres veterinarios a tiempo parcial están en él empleados.

Serving God by serving humanity

Mr K. Dinakaran from Kerala, India, a member of the national TOS committee, shares the following quotations from Thomas à Kempis's work, *The Imitation of Christ*, in the hope that they will inspire his fellow readers to serve God by serving humanity.

If thy heart be right then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so little and so worthless which does not represent the goodness of God.
Book I, Chapter 4, page 101, Bombay St Paul Society, 1998.

When the day of judgment comes, we shall not be examined on what we have read, but on what we have done, not on how learnedly we have spoken but how religiously we have lived.
Book I, Chapter 3, page 24.

If you know the whole Bible by heart, and the saying of all the philosophers, what would it all profit you without the love of God and His Grace? A pure and good conscience will bring more joy than the knowledge of philosophy.
Book I, Chapter 1, page 18.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of an enlightened and devout man and the knowledge of a learned and studious man.
Book III, Chapter 31, page 221.

Indeed a humble farmer who serves God, is better than a proud philosopher who neglecting himself, considers the course of the heaven.
Book I, Chapter 2, page 19.



What Can We Do to Help the TOS Develop?

At the 2005 international conference of the TOS, Mr C.V.K. Maithreya of the TOS in Chennai led an evening discussion on the question of how to stimulate interest in the work of the TOS where it already exists. Here are a few of the ideas participants came up with. Some of them are culture-specific and require adaptation to local conditions, but they can perhaps serve as fresh avenues to motivate/attract your fellow TS members.

- Prepare an announcement to be given to TS branch members, new and old, letting them know that the TOS exists and explaining the complementary nature of the TOS and TS;
- Set up a display of TOS materials at your branch – copies of the healing ritual, current and old issues of *The Service Link*, Dr Arundale's peace invocation, etc.;
- Put up notices at the branch announcing activities;
- Perhaps make a TS branch committee member an ex officio member of the TOS group;
- Invite the branch to support or 'adopt' a TOS activity elsewhere;

- Start an electronic chat group amongst your fellow workers;
- Link TS and TOS websites;
- Put out a small TOS sales table at the branch (second hand books, etc.) with an honesty box for people to leave coins in;
- Suggest a national mailing on what's happening around the world in the TOS or a sample copy of *The Service Link* to all branches.
- Act as a gateway organisation, putting people in touch with each other. We may not be able to do something ourselves but we can link people up;
- Adopt an orphanage, retirement home or hospital for visiting;
- Collect blankets for the homeless;
- Circulate a petition; write letters of support or protest to public figures and organisations on matters of public concern e.g. use of landmines, treatment of refugees, abuse of the environment or animals;
- Contribute to AIDS awareness campaigns;
- Tutor students in difficulty and adults learning to read; help migrants learn their new language.

What new activities can attract TS branch members to the TOS?

- Form a group to campaign for peace: let qualified members lead skills training workshops – in 'active listening' or conflict resolution, for instance;
- Create a theosophical parenting group; organise activities for children showing theosophical ideas in action in the community e.g. environmental preservation projects;
- Create 'How-to' packages on themes such as human rights;
- Start Tibetan refugee work, perhaps in collaboration with other associations;

EDITOR'S NOTE

If you are interested in starting the TOS in a country where it is not yet active, contact the International Secretary (address page 1) for guidelines on how to go about it.



A Moment of Insight and Encouragement in Service

*A talk given at the first International
TOS Conference*

*Maria Rosa Martínez
San Rafael, Argentina*

When we feel called to service – in the street, at our place of work, at home, or at a TS branch or Centre, we

soon find that there never seems to be enough time, money or helping hands for all that is crying out to be done. However, an insight I have gained in the course of my service work is this: if the cause is genuinely philanthropic, unselfish and impersonal, it always finds support. There is an unknown power that helps us at the proper time. It may appear in the form of a donation to permit paying

for something, or of the arrival of the right person, or as a sudden injection of energy into an exhausted body.

I would like to relate a true story that illustrates this conviction.

In 1980 a piece of land with nothing on it was bought for the Theosophical Society in Argentina with money gathered from 11 members who thought that the dream of a Theosophical Centre was possible. It



If the cause is genuinely philanthropic, unselfish and impersonal, it will always find support. There is an unknown power that provides help just when it is needed.

was known that the task would be hard; it proved even harder than expected!

Most of the work, except that of the construction itself, was done by a very small group of members who were constantly present. But age, family and financial problems whittled the group away over the years. The work required a great physical effort and certain skills were just not available at that time.

One winter they were offered the wonderful gift of 200 poplars and the loan of a pick-up vehicle to move them. The opportunity was exceptional and the work of picking them up and planting them could not wait. The roots of the trees were without protection and the temperature was below 5°C. A neighbouring farmer agreed to help unload the trees and protect the roots from the freezing temperature overnight before planting the next day. It was a working day and only one member was avail-

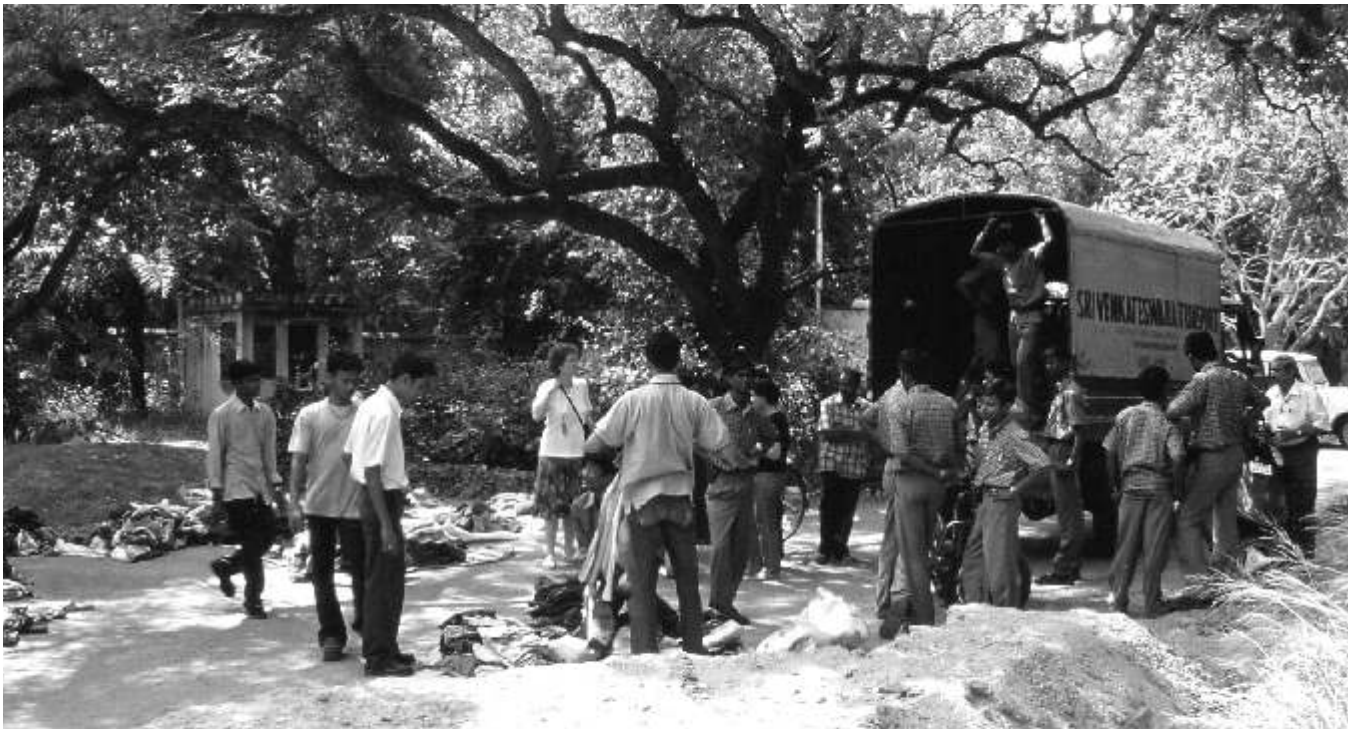
able to collect the trees. She had a two-and-a-half-hour break in her school teaching schedule and that was all. She couldn't call on her husband, because he was working. She had a quick lunch then the race started. Go and get the pick-up. Drive to the nursery, load up the trees, go to the TS land, meet the farmer, unload the trees and protect their roots. Return the pick-up vehicle and rush back to school.

Have you ever tried moving 200 saplings? Well, when she arrived at the TS land with the trees, the neighbouring farmer was nowhere in sight. The minutes ticked by and no help was on hand. Impossible to unload and carry 200 trees all alone. Disappointed and tired, our member looked into the distance and couldn't see or hear anyone for miles. She looked within, desperate, trying to find the strength and courage to face the situation. At that very moment, another neighbour came into view. 'What are you up to?' he asked.

When she explained her plight, he warmly offered to help her with the task at hand. They worked side by side in rhythm and she was able to arrive back at her school just as the bell was ringing.

There are about 2000 trees planted in the Theosophical Centre now. Those 200 hundred poplars are amongst them.

How was it that a kind neighbour arrived at that crucial moment in that isolated spot? We may lack a rational answer, but to me it is simple: the work had to be done. Will was present, the 'I' was absent, and it was accomplished. Let me repeat the insight – the conviction – that I wish to share: if the cause is genuinely philanthropic, unselfish and impersonal, it will always find support. There is an unknown power that provides help just when it is needed. I wonder if any of you have had the same kind of experience?



Scouts sorting clothes

Above: The local TOS swung into action within an hour of the tsunami striking the coast. An appeal was made and donations started pouring in. Clothes, utensils, food grains, medicines and money were received from individuals who brought them to the Theosophical Society. Volunteers from the Boy Scout Movement and local colleges were enlisted to sort, classify and distribute the items. Mr S. Harihara Raghavan of the TOS in Chennai did an outstanding job in supervising and working alongside the volunteers.

La OTS local entró en acción una hora después de la llegada del tsunami a la costa. Se hizo una llamada y comenzaron a llegar donaciones. Ropas, utensilios, granos alimentarios, medicinas y dinero fueron aportados por personas que los llevaron a la Sociedad Teosófica. Voluntarios del Movimiento de los Boy Scouts y de colegios locales se ofrecieron para clasificar y distribuir los artículos. El señor S. Harihara Raghavan, de la OTS de Chennai, realizó una excelente tarea de supervisión y trabajo junto con los voluntarios.

The TOS in Chennai

Three establishments run by the Olcott Education Society, all situated close to the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Chennai, India, do fine work for the needy. They are:

a) the Olcott School that provides free education for over 700 children mostly drawn from the local fishing villages and that gratefully receives donations from Theosophists around the world;

b) the H.P.B. Hostel that provides board for a number of boys attending the school;

c) a Social Welfare Centre where day care for underprivileged children is offered and vocational skills taught to young women on the threshold of their working lives.

In addition, the Besant Memorial Animal Welfare Dispensary, about five minutes' bicycle ride from the TS HQ, currently treats over ten thousand animals per year and has re-

cently started an outreach programme for villages where there are no veterinary facilities. Medical care for animals has been offered at Adyar for around a century!

But there is more to relate about service work done locally. The Chennai branch of the TOS (one of over a hundred active branches throughout India) has its own dynamic programme.

It runs health and medical 'camps' for hundreds of poor people, besides a regular free medical service every Sunday morning. It also manages to gather funds to pay for medical and clothing relief during crisis periods. Besides these activities, a TOS healing group meets every week.

The TOS in Chennai also carries out environmental and animal welfare projects. In 2005 it initiated a clean up project for the pathways along the Adyar River within the

Theosophical Society domain under the guidance of Dr Srinivasan. It also set up wooden nesting boxes on trees for birds around the Adyar Estate.

In 2003, it contacted animal welfare organisations, the Police and Telephone Departments, etc. to en-

courage the government in Chennai to start an Animal Helpline, which is now up and running.

The Chennai TOS's biggest challenge, however, came when the tsunami hit on December 26, 2004: on behalf of the Theosophical Society, it found itself spearheading relief work for the victims both in Chennai and further down the coast. It was already, at short notice, helping with the organisation of the International TOS Conference about to start at headquarters but then found itself confronted with a significant emergency relief operation. TS Treasurer Miss Keshwar Dastur, Mr S. Harihara Raghavan and team worked long hours replying to concerned messages, processing donations from members around India and overseas, and sorting and delivering tons of clothes, foodstuffs, medicines, medical disposables and cooking utensils. Clean drinking water in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu proved an urgent necessity and so as soon as possible the TOS facilitated the setting up of three reverse osmosis plants to desalinate groundwater. A contract was signed with Thirumalai Charity Trust to run and maintain the plants. The media



TOS Chennai medical team

Some of the volunteer TOS doctors at Adyar who offer eye, dental and general checkups to needy locals, as well as specialist advice in gynaecology, orthopaedics, paediatrics and ear, nose and throat ailments.

Algunos de los doctores voluntarios de la OTS en Adyar que ofrecen cuidados oftalmológicos y dentales y comprobaciones generales a los necesitados locales, así como consejos especializados en ginecología, ortopedia, pediatría y enfermedades de garganta, nariz y oídos.

were present in March 2005 at an official contract-awarding ceremony presided over by Radha Burnier, International President of the TS and TOS, with the State Relief Commissioner as chief guest. Reports were

carried in several newspapers, on radio and television.

In May 2005, Mr C.V.K. Maithreya, Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, Mr Gopal, Dr Sunita Maithreya, Miss Keshwar Dastur, Mrs Radha Muthiah and four others visited coastal villages where the water purification plants were being set up. They saw one that had just arrived and participated in the Hindu dedication ceremony. Mr



Olcott School Children

Children at the Olcott School. 700 to 750 persons from the local villages took shelter in the School for a few days after the tsunami struck. Books and school uniforms were distributed to about 125 children.

Niños en la Escuela Olcott. Entre 700 o 750 personas llegadas de pueblos aledaños fueron acogidos en la Escuela durante unos pocos días después de la llegada del tsunami. Se distribuyeron libros y uniformes escolares a unos 125 niños.

Maithreya wrote:

'The water purification system is working well and the villagers are happy. Piping has to be done if they are to get water without walking a long distance. At present women and girls do the job of fetching water. Men and boys don't do it. We have been talking about re-educating them on this point, diplomatically!

'We were also at the sheds to be used for training women in tailoring with the sewing machines we are acquiring. We have purchased 91 machines and the Thirumalai Charity Trust, with whom the TOS is collaborating, has given 41 machines. Lastly, 33 professional grade machines were given by the TOS for commercial use, besides the ones meant for training.

'The trip left us shocked and feeling disturbed about our brother and sister human beings who are experiencing untold suffering. We are happy to be the channels for providing whatever little help we can to alleviate their suffering. The task is very far from being done. We have just decided to set up one and perhaps two recycled paper making units for the tsunami victims to provide alternative employment.'

Since Mr Maithreya wrote these words, four more water purification plants have been put in place in collaboration with Thirumalai Charity Trust, a Danish company called Grundfos Pumps and a German one, K'a'rcher. Further, two waste recycling units for the making of paper products have been constructed. These are being operated by two self-help groups, the Annie Besant Ammaiyyar Coastal Women's Federation in Cuddalore and the Annai Theresa Coastal Women's Federation in Pazhaverkadu. The TOS donated machines and tools for these operations.

The final project in the work to help the tsunami victims has involved the providing of tools to masons, electricians & plumbers and idli making machines for women in the village of Injambakkam. (Idlis are a kind of rice cake.)



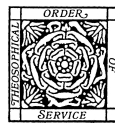
Parsi's tear?
Hindu's?
Muslim's?
Jain's?
Sikh's?
Christian's?
Buddhist's?

Or

A tear of human agony?

Think about it: no matter who we are, the tears we shed have the same salty taste of human suffering. Every time society faces a lapse of sanity, we lose our most precious possession — our humanity.

Let us now come together to restore our faith in one another, to bring back the confidence that enables us fearlessly to walk the streets of our own neighbourhood, our own city, our own country. Let us unite to build, not to demolish.



Theosophical Order of Service

Adyar, Chennai, India
tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

A few years ago, the TOS Chennai raised over a hundred thousand rupees from corporate clients of one of its members to run a creative media campaign against communal riots in Gujarat.

Hace unos pocos años, la OTS de Chennai obtuvo cien mil rupias de los clientes corporativos de uno de sus miembros para crear una campaña creativa en medios de comunicación contra los desmanes comunales en Gujarat.

However, there is no rest for the wicked – or for the dynamic, in the case of the TOS Chennai. Even while handling all these tsunami relief projects, the team managed to organise the purchase and despatch of 190 tents to the people of Kashmir, so badly affected by September 2005's massive earthquake, and the distribution of clothing to 7,000 South Indian people left without resources after the severe flooding that hit in December 2005 (once again encroach-

ing on the TS domain at Adyar).

In February 2006, the National Director and Secretary of the TOS in India, Sri B.L. Bhattacharya, and the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, came especially to Adyar to meet with the Chennai TOS team and to see all that they have accomplished in recent months. They expressed their respect for a local team that has worked exceptionally hard.



Water Purification Plant

Lining up for clean water.

Haciendo fila para conseguir agua limpia.



Tsunami relief – clothing distribution

One of the clothing distributions made by TOS members in Mylapore, Chennai shortly after the tsunami struck.

Una de las distribuciones de ropa efectuada por miembros de la OTS en Mylapore. Chennai rápidamente después de la llegada del tsunami.



TS HQ Main Gate

Some of the bundles of clothes dropped by well-wishers at the main gate of the TS, Adyar.

Algunos de los paquetes de ropa dejados por bienintencionados a la entrada principal de la ST en Adyar.



Contract exchange

Tsunami relief contracts exchange hands at a special ceremony held at TS HQ in March 2005. Front left: Mr S. Harihara Raghavan representing the TOS in Chennai.

Contratistas de la ayuda por el tsunami intercambian saludos en una ceremonia especial que tuvo lugar en la oficina principal de la ST en Marzo de 2005. Delante a la izquierda el Sr. S.Harihara Raghavan, representante de la OTS en Chennai.

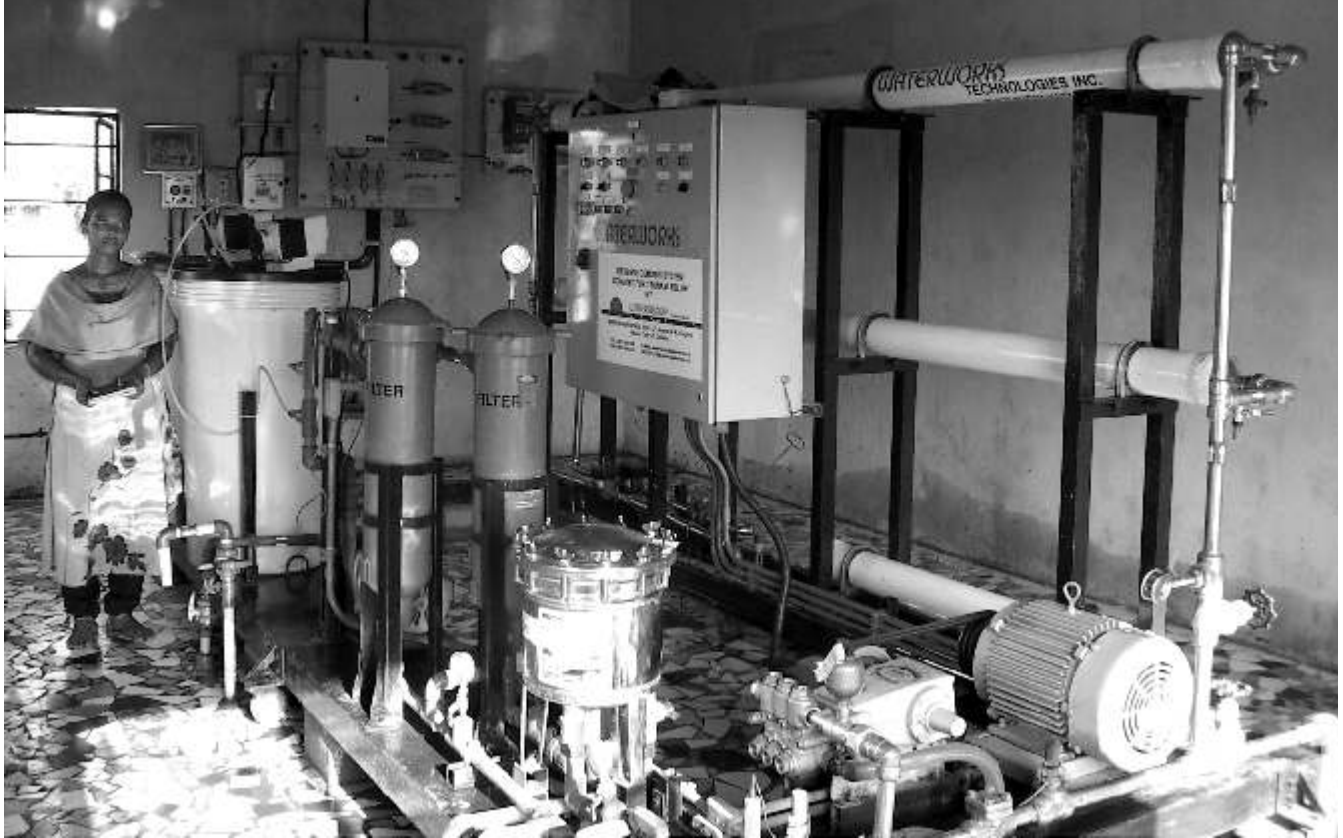
As part of his work supervising operations in the tsunami-affected villages of coastal Tamil Nadu, Mr Maithreya has seen living conditions at close hand, including dozens of villages drinking brackish and saline water. 'As used as we Indians are to seeing poverty,' he said, 'I have yet to see a more shocking situation than this. It is heartrending, months and months after the tsunami itself.'

Como parte de su trabajo supervisando trabajos en pueblos costeros afectados por el tsunami en Tamil Nadu, el Sr. Maiathreya ha visto condiciones de vida de primera mano que incluyen adocenas de pueblos bebiendo agua salobre o salina. "Aún tan acostumbrados como estamos los hindúes a ver la pobreza", dijo, "todavía tengo que ver situaciones más impactantes que esta". Desgarra el corazón, meses y meses después del tsunami.

Ed and Mary Abdill from the TS in New York, with the President of the TOS in Chennai, Mr C.V.K. Maithreya and his wife Dr Sunita Maithreya.

Ed y Mary Abdill de la ST en Nueva York, con el presidente de la OTS en Chennai, el Sr. CVK Maithreya y su esposa la Dra. Sunita Maithreya.





One of the reverse osmosis plants installed in villages along the coast of Tamil Nadu to provide potable water.

Una de las plantas por osmosis instaladas en pueblos a lo largo de la costa de Tamil Nadu para proporcionar agua potable.



Mr B.L. Bhattacharya, National Director of the TOS in India, cuts the ribbon on one of the machines donated to the paper recycling plant in Cuddalore.

El Sr. B. L. Bhattacharya, Director Nacional de la OTS en India, corta la cinta en una de las máquinas donadas para la planta de reciclar papel en Cuddalore.



The Theosophical Order of Service

The Theosophical Order of Service was founded by Dr Annie Besant in 1908 to provide an opportunity for participation in activities that promote the first Object of the Theosophical Society:

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

Defining itself as 'a union of all who love in the service of all that suffers', the TOS offers a framework in which the individual may demonstrate practical and humanitarian action in a theosophical spirit, and acts as a forum where members may air their views on matters of public interest.

The TOS is international although not active at this time in all countries where the Theosophical Society is represented. Each section is autonomous and organised to meet the needs of its own communities. Members of the TOS need not be members of the TS. A variety of interests is welcomed. For further information, and written contributions to *The Service Link*, write to: Diana Dunningham Chapotin, TOS International Secretary, Résidence Isabelle, 18 Avenue Berlioz, 93270 Sevran, FRANCE. E-mail: tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

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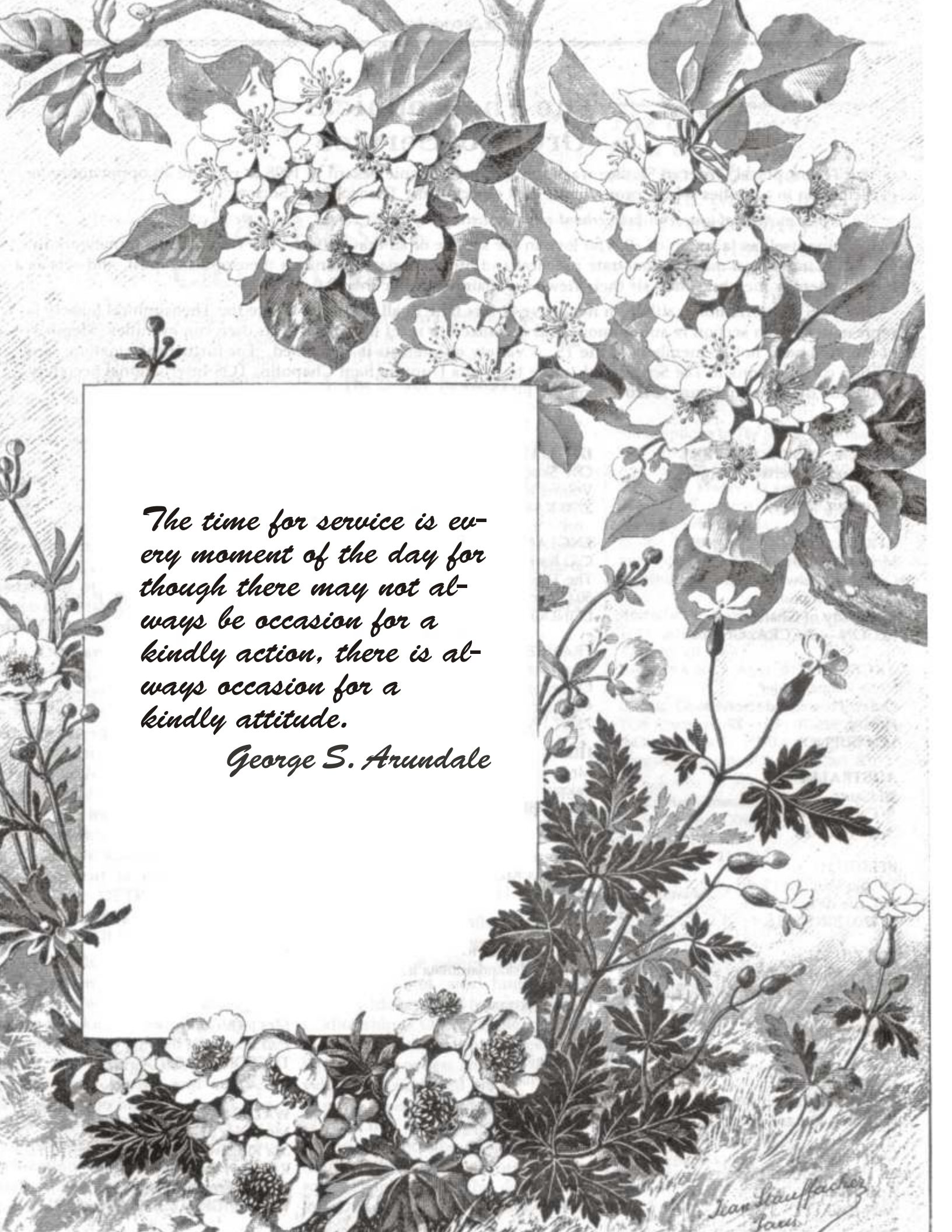
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The time for service is every moment of the day for though there may not always be occasion for a kindly action, there is always occasion for a kindly attitude.

George S. Arundale

*Jean Stauffer
Paris*