



What Inspires You?

TOS-USA Webinar Series

Ananya Sri Ram Rajan

At the July 2017 board meeting of the TOS-USA, a proposal was made to host a webinar series. The series was designed to encourage dialogue between board members of the TOS and the liaisons of the TOS – members of a TS lodge or study group who are actively involved in the TOS and provide information and service ideas to their lodge or study group. It was also hoped that the dialogue would strengthen the roots of the organisation by inspiring liaisons and creating a sense of support when taking on a leadership role.

As a board, we decided that each board member must find one video that was five to eight minutes long that discussed such topics as inspiration, dedication, courage, leadership and service. It was quite interesting that many of us did a search on YouTube and tended to pick similar videos. We viewed the chosen videos on our own and voted on the videos we liked best. Eventually we set up a meeting online to view and discuss the four chosen videos. As we watched all of them together, it was apparent that there was an order to the videos that we did not see before. Each video seemed to provide a basis for the next one. To view the four videos and watch the recorded webinars, please visit our website at www.theoservice.org.

Once the videos were chosen, we started our first webinar in September. We decided the format of the program was to:

- Introduce the topic of the video
- Screen it
- Spend the rest of the time discussing the content.

We made sure the program was interactive so everyone could participate whether they were on the phone or their computer. The program lasted no longer than an hour. We sent out a mass email to invite participants and found that it was not liaisons who responded, but many others who quietly did service projects in their neighbourhoods. This made us realise that perhaps our initial goal of using the webinar series to help our liaisons needed to be reconsidered. Each time we hosted one of the webinars, we had some people sign up who were unfamiliar with the TOS, but interested in what we were doing and the format.

While it is difficult to have the discussions do justice (it is better to just watch the recorded webinars), what we found was that the videos provided a “feel good” to many of the viewers,

while the discussions allowed participants to seriously consider their role in their service work. Some of the topics discussed were:

- The difficulty of societal discrimination against those less fortunate
- The fear of taking on a leadership role
- The question of how the TOS is different from other service organisations
- How to be creative in our service work

Many of the participants were amazed at how the discussions helped them look at their service work differently, while others said the discussions definitely helped inspire them and reminded them that they are not working alone.

One of the wonderful things about technology is that it makes the world much smaller. We had participants from Canada and France as well as interest from India, Saudi Arabia and England.

If people who signed up could not attend, the recorded webinar was sent to them with the invitation to provide feedback or comments at our email: theoservice@gmail.com. Another webinar series is in the process of being designed, which will focus on how the principles of theosophy can be made practical in our everyday life. If anyone would like to participate in this series, they are welcome to add their email address to our email list at www.theoservice.org or we can send the recorded webinar the day after.