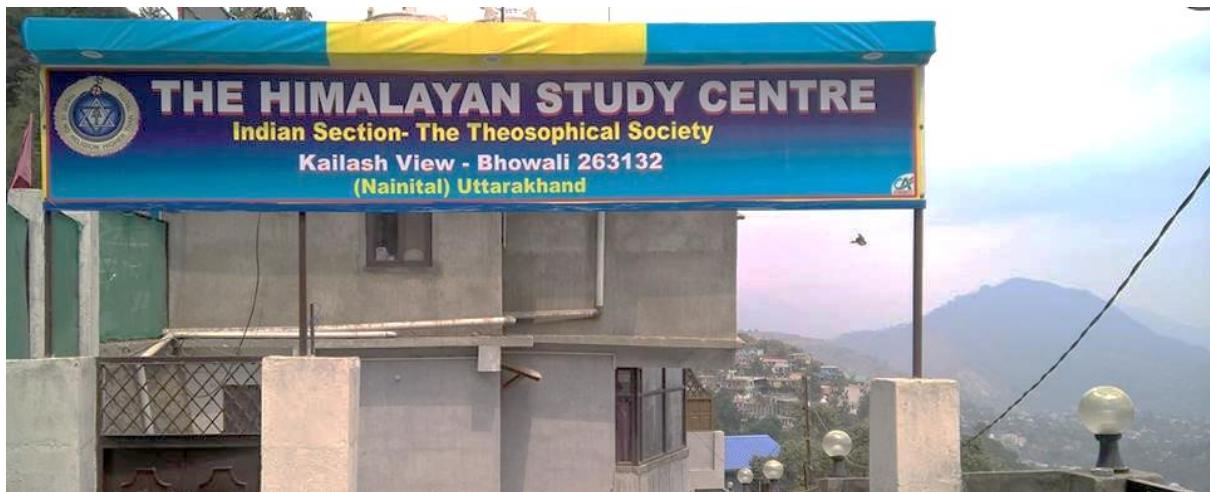


TOS camp at Bhowali 29-31 May 2018

By K. Sivaprasad



TOS camp at Bhowali - Building

First Day, 29th, Tuesday

Bhowali is a beautiful small hill station located in the Kumaon Hills of the Himalayas, at a height of 5,426 feet above mean sea level. It is in the Nainital District of Uttarakhand state, with many lakes that attract tourists. In response to the announcement of the Indian Section, Theosophical Society, this camp was held at The Himalayan Centre. Thirty-six delegates participated.

Active TOS members from different regions of India joined in the event. It was a good gathering, including: Deepa Padhi, International Vice-President TS, Nancy Secrest, International Secretary TOS, Marja Artamaa, International Secretary TS, along with Adyar members: Dr Revathy and Sr Sudha. From Varanasi, Br Narayanan, National

Treasurer, participated and took care of the entire



TOS camp at Bhowali

programme from beginning to end. All the members who participated expressed sincere thanks for his kind-hearted support.

The theme of the camp was “Working Towards Future.” The meetings started with the Universal Prayer. The welcome by Br Sivaprasad, National Secretary, TOS India expressed gratitude for all those who gathered to attend this TOS camp. He read out kind and encouraging messages from Tim Boyd, International President, Br Bhattacharya, TOS National Director, Br Pradeep Gohil, General Secretary, Freny Toddywala (Mumbai), Adyar lodge, Telugu region, Karnataka region. In her inaugural address Sr Deepa Padhi emphasised that “you need to give more service.” Service is really a journey of awakening, because, by rendering service to all forms of life, human and non-human, one realises the Unity of All beings and gets connected to the source.” The theme, “Working Towards Future,” refers to a process, a transformative journey through service. Service changes people. It refines, purifies, gives the best in every individual and importantly prepares them to realise the oneness of being. While defining Theosophical Education, our International President Tim Boyd says, “It is an act of skill, science, art and wisdom.” He further says, “let our educational motive be to create the environments in which our students can experience the freedom, co-operation, strength, honesty, happiness and responsibility that are the birthright of every soul that comes into this world.”

At this point in time, the TOS needs more willing hands, more caring hearts and more intelligent minds to move our work towards the future. The theme suggests optimism, dynamism and vision. It is said that, “vision without action is a day-dream and action without vision a nightmare; vision and action together bring hope for the future.” The ‘future’ is contained in the womb of ‘now’, in the form of experiences of the past and potentialities of the present. Working for the future is the process of actualisation of these potentialities. The outer requirements of any act of service include 1) selecting a genuine cause, 2) identifying the target group or the beneficiaries, 3) planning a budget and arranging funds, and 4) organising human resources. But the inner equipment is most important. These refer to: strong will, pure motive, selflessness, empathy, compassion, commitment and involvement. These are necessary for working towards a sustainable future.

Sr Nancy Secrest gave a detailed picture of theosophical efforts in support of education from the time of the TS founders. Children are to be nourished with the right kind of education for free thought, values, self-reliance and to lead a whole life (not for their jobs alone). Col. Olcott started with 45 downtrodden children at Adyar and the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School is serving the poor local communities even today, expanding into a high school. Other schools were formed in Kodambakam, Mylapore along with the Besant School at Adyar. The Theosophical Educational Trust was formed in 1913. Col. Olcott started many schools in Sri Lanka. Home schools and Nursing scholarships are provided by the TOS in Pakistan. The Australian and American TOS sections helped with significant contributions for the upliftment of women. The TS hosted Maria Montessori in India at Adyar where the unique child-centred education was propagated, and TS gave awards for her contribution during World War II. The evolution of the Golden Link College in the Philippines is an excellent effort to inculcate universal values and the right kind of teaching towards the

overall growth of the learner. Theosophical education places emphasis on how to think but not what to think.

Sr Marja Artamaa spoke about the Finnish Section of the TOS's support for Adyar's Olcott school. She expressed that compassion exists in every individual – TOS is an avenue for Theosophical living. TOS can work for public concerns, where TS may not be able to intervene. She explained the connection of TS and TOS and how both complement each other in spreading Theosophy.

Br Narayanan extended a warm welcome to all the delegates for attending this TOS camp. In charity people may feel that they are giving, but it is also important to observe the opportunity provided by the served community. As treasurer of TOS in India he is in a position to guide financial regulations applicable to the charitable organisations, to be followed by the branch offices.

Br Basavaraja Reddy enlightened the delegates with the topic *Spiritual Evolution and Service*. He gave a detailed speech on how individualisation of the soul takes place from the divine spark in the journey of human evolution. Moving our attention from our lower selves to our higher selves, we will be undertaking service actions for the welfare of humanity, rather than having a self-centred attitude. We have a tendency to grow horizontally with materialistic desires and that has to be converted into vertical growth through spiritual growth. Personality development is centred on selfishness, whereas spiritual development is towards unselfish growth. The process of personality growth is a trial and error approach – the lower triad involved in worldly desires transforms into the higher triad through tolerance, compassion and unselfishness. Service is one of the channels for this transformation.

In the next session Sr Nancy gave a PowerPoint presentation on the past and future scenarios in the progress of the TOS. Participants were fortunate to view a glimpse of international TOS programmes happening in various countries. The historical events of TOS from Annie Besant's time up until now, gave an overview of the work of the TOS, which was informative and inspiring, with valuable pictures and messages.

Second day, 30th, Wednesday

In the first session representatives attending the camp from the regions of: Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh (East), Chennai, Telugu, Rayalaseema, Odisha, NOIDA, Rajasthan and Karnataka presented their respective Action Plans for the Next Five years (2018-2022). The need for the revival of our dormant TS and TOS lodges/groups has been highlighted to be considered an important priority. Regular service activities such as tailoring machines support, note books for poor children, medical aid, school fee payments for the poor, wheel chairs, artificial legs and other various support activities, as per the local needs, are proposed in the future action plan. Special focus was on strengthening existing Theosophical schools and initiating new schools as priority work of TOS considering the need for primary education to the deprived communities.

In the next session, brief talks on TOS-related subjects were given by Col. Kailash, Br A. P. Lokhande, Dr Revathy, Br B. L. Kandoi, Br Pradip Mahapatra and Mithalini. Speakers shared various service-related matters with their practical experience in the field. Besides



TOS camp at Bhowali – delegates

poverty, compassion, education and health concerns, they also spoke about the degradation of environment/ecological destruction, a serious issue linked to poverty among the poorer sections of society.

The afternoon session was on *Past Life Regression Therapy* by Sr Lipa Rath, whose grandfather, the late Dr Ramachandra Rath was founder of the Theosophical Society in Odisha. This technique of past life regression is based on QHHT (Quantum Healing Hypnosis Technique), founded by Dolores Cannon in America. It was interesting to learn how this technique is beneficial for the acute health issues of various psychological, physical and mental ailments.

The evening cultural event was a time of entertainment with dance, music and songs performed by the local Kumaon Cultural Association. All participants were happy to see the local, traditional folk dances of this region.

Third Day, 31st, Thursday

In the morning session Sr Deepa Padhi held an interactive discussion on the practical applications of TOS. In this crucial matter related to the TOS programme needs, implementation and cooperation were discussed thoroughly. During this interactive dialogue session, challenges faced by the TOS as an institution were dealt with. Major concerns include: the lack of active members, funds, leaders, ideas and motivation. Some of the best examples of success from TOS initiatives were narrated by members. Participants were informed that in November 2018 there will be a two-day TOS teacher training programme, which is being organised at the Indian Section, Varanasi with the guidance of Br Vicente Hao Chin from the Philippines. Schools run by theosophical societies in India will receive communication about this for their teachers' participation.

Br Narayanan gave financial details as per the Indian law regarding obligations under Income tax, service tax and the registration norms to be followed as non-profit bodies.



Bhowali camp – Sivaprasad leading the group

indiatos.org web site may be more actively used for sharing information and reports. It was acknowledged that the International TOS website is very resourceful, with valuable information related to TOS for ready reference. All members who attended expressed how useful this camp experience was and made suggestions for further improvement in the future. Local delegates Br Sanit Joshi and other office bearers of the Bhowali TOS group, which was formed recently, received Diplomas from Sr Nancy. Br Sanit Joshi appreciated the camp and made a request for more activities at the Himalayan centre.

K. Sivaprasad

In the last session Br Sivaprasad presented the Action plan for the next five years. All delegates contributed valuable input to make the list at the group, regional and national levels, as well as those that affect all levels.

The three-day camp concluded with encouraging feedback from the participants. The need for strengthening TOS as an institution, working actively at the group, regional and national levels was emphasised. There are more than 6,000 patron/life members of TOS India and their involvement at present is confined to their membership fee payment only, whereas it is suggested that their participation in activities of service will be more meaningful. Hence there is a need to form a network

of them to further strengthen the TOS. It was observed that the



TOS camp at Bhowali – group photo