

Theosophical Order of Service

Annual Report to September 30, 2019

Nancy Secrest, International Secretary

The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) is present in 36 of the 59 countries where the TS is active. The TOS is headed by its ex-officio President, Tim Boyd, the President of the Theosophical Society (TS), and an International Secretary (IS), currently Nancy Secrest, appointed by the President. The IS represents the TOS internationally and carries out the administration and coordination of the TOS at the international level. The TOS has no official physical headquarters. It operates from wherever the International Secretary is located, currently Adyar in India.

The TOS has several outreach avenues. David Sztain of TOS Canada edits our *TOS: Intouch on-line* e-Newsletter. The e-newsletter, published quarterly, gives us the opportunity to keep our members and friends informed about the latest happenings in the International TOS and projects and programs in the various TOS countries. We also publish articles on issues relating to service written by TOS members and others. Our webmaster is Rozi Ulics. A new website is pending, our current website address is www.international.theoservice.org. We continue to increase the activity on our TOS International Facebook Page, www.facebook.com/tosinternational/. Our following is growing. All of these outreach efforts offer further contact with our members and friends. We are currently working with a General Council committee for Applied Theosophy to find greater opportunities for service and to increase awareness of the TS/TOS to the general public.

Some highlights of the year's activities at the international, national and local levels:

Besides the many visits made to TOS Groups by ex-officio President Tim Boyd and his wife Lily, visits were made by the TOS International Secretary, Nancy Secrest, to TS/TOS groups in India this year. In December, Nancy gave the keynote address at the annual meeting for the National Day for Mentally Retarded Persons sponsored, in part, by the TOS Adyar in Chennai. She also gave a presentation at the TS International Youth Conference, held at Adyar, on "TOS as Karma Yoga". At the TS annual Convention in Adyar Nancy updated the delegates on TOS work around the world. In February, Nancy travelled to Bhubaneswar, Odisha region where she visited various TOS projects and spoke at TS & TOS Conferences on Theosophical Education and Compassion. March saw a visit to Guntur with a talk on Pilgrimage based on the Proem from the Secret Doctrine and a TOS presentation. Back at Adyar, Nancy gave three talks to the Workers' Conference held there for members of the TS in India. She spoke about Theosophical Principles, gave a Biographical look at the three Founders of the TS and shared thoughts about the future of the TS. In June, Nancy travelled to The Netherlands for the General Council meetings at Naarden. During a personal visit home to the United States in July, Nancy attended the Theosophical Society in America's (TSA) Summer National Convention (SNC) and the ITC (International Theosophical Conference - of the theosophical movement) Conference that followed. She led a TOS Peace Meditation (written by TOS members from around the world) during the SNC, and was spontaneously invited to give a TOS presentation to the ITC while attending their meetings. Back home in India, Nancy travelled to Bangalore in August for the TOS India's South Zonal Conference and to Amravati

the following weekend for the TOS West Zonal Conference speaking at both events about women's empowerment, the encouragement of youth involvement in the TS/TOS and theosophical education.

Several prominent TOS workers/supporters were lost to us this year. Three shining stars among them were: Carolyn Harrod who passed to peace on 14 October 2018. Carolyn, from Australia, was an outstanding volunteer, both within Australia and at international level. She edited our international e-newsletter and acted as the right hand person for Diana Dunningham Chapotin (former International Secretary TOS) for many years. John Kern, from the United States, passed away on 20 January 2019. John chaired the Kern Foundation that for a number of years provided a matching grant for donations to the Golden Link College run by the TOS in The Philippines. He was an energetic supporter of TOS work throughout his lifetime. Fernando Perez Martin passed into light in February 2019. Besides being TOS Director in Spain, Fernando also acted as Spanish language coordinator for the 13 TOS countries in the Spanish speaking world and produced a TOS e-newsletter in Spanish for them. Alejandro Bueno is the new TOS Director in Spain.

Some of our TOS groups worldwide collected and/or donated money to help with flood relief efforts in India again this year. Many also helped with recovery efforts in Bhubaneswar, India after Cyclone Fani hit there. These efforts were particularly close to home as damage was sustained at some of our own TOS projects. Hands on efforts by TOS members were, of course, prevalent there.

This year annual reports were received from 25 of our 36 TOS countries, 69%. Efforts to communicate with those who did not respond will be made and help offered if needed/wanted. The projects highlighted in the reports are sometimes different in their approaches, but centre around similar topics that the international TOS has been encouraging: women's issues, theosophical (or other) education and youth involvement. Most are also active in animal welfare and supplying humanitarian assistance at both group and individual levels. Almost all countries, even if they do nothing else, have healing groups and some practice peace meditations on a regular basis. Each year this annual report highlights four or five groups. This year they are: England, Finland, India, Italy and Pakistan.

The **TOS in England** concentrates mainly on raising funds which are then donated to TOS and TS projects in Adyar, the Philippines and Kenya, and small, ethical charities in England, many of whom work on small projects in third world countries. These include: the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary, the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, the Free Dispensary, Women's Aid and Seeing Eyes for Everyone all located in Adyar, Chennai, India. **Since 2000, TOS England's hands-on project has been Teddies for Tragedies**, a concept that encourages people to knit small teddies to give to children in third world countries recovering from treatment in hospitals, as it has been found that their recovery is smoother and quicker with a friend to hold onto. Teddies have also been given to under privileged children and those who have been involved in the traumas of war, strife or natural disaster. **To date over 27,000 teddies have been knitted and donated.** Some teddies find their way to two other charities: International Aid Trust (IAT), that transports teddies and other knitted objects to third world countries, and Furniture for Education Worldwide C.I.O (FEW). FEW auctions off special teddies knitted with costumes at its annual dinner. The proceeds go to

purchase surplus school furniture and equipment which they then ship to some of the most desperate children in the world. This association exemplifies what small efforts made by individual TOS members can do when grouped together and then paired with the work of other organizations.



England is also quite proud of TOS member Romey Barnes who received an award for being the first individual to raise £20,000 for her favourite charity “Aspire”. She did this by running, cycling and swimming in Marathons, Triathlons, and other events.

The **TOS in Finland** encourages its TS lodges to participate in TOS activities. TOS Director Nonna-Nina Mäki also tries to promote TOS’ visibility in the media so that the organization gets more followers. TOS Finland regularly donates to the Social Welfare Centre at Adyar. Their donations are used to buy new outfits for the little children there and rice, lentils and oil for their teachers. This year riding toys complete with flashing lights, bells and music were also purchased bringing much joy to the little ones. In January of 2019 Nonna-Nina and Päivi Kaario travelled to Adyar visiting the Olcott School and bringing 1500 picture cards to them. The themes of the cards were fairy tale like and some were from the book ***The Foamy Sea***, written by Nonna-Nina and illustrated with her paintings (which have been displayed at the United Nations).



The book was published by the TOS in Finland. It has now been translated into English. **All profits from the book go in their entirety to the welfare of children in India.**

The Theosophical Order of Service in India was formally established in 1976 and registered as a Charitable Society with its own constitution in 1977-78. It is currently present in 22 Regions in India. Most of the regions organized annual general meetings as well as zonal conferences again this year. TOS India National Secretary, K. Sivaprasad, travelled widely visiting and speaking at many events as did TOS India National Director, Birendra Bhattacharyya. The travels of International Secretary, Nancy Secrest, concentrated on India this year as well. India has 1,370,899,651 (as of October 31, 2019) in population one fourth of which are living below the poverty line, many are women and children. **News of kidnapping innocent girls, violence toward women and the exploitation of child labour caused the TOS India to declare “Women’s Empowerment” as its National Project at its annual meeting in December 2018.**

In addition all TOS regions in India have been requested to work for the education of poor students to prevent dropouts from schools and to open primary schools in remote villages



and slum areas. Dr. Deepa Padhi has been doing excellent work in both of these areas for a number of years now, most recently by encouraging the empowerment of women with a mobile vocational training centre that moves from slum to slum teaching poor women the arts and skills of sewing and tailoring. **Donations of sewing machines were made by the TOS New Zealand to this project.** Other areas have similar training centres. The education of young women is also a primary concern. To this end scholarships are being

given to 25 young women in the Odisha region. **The scholarship amount of Rs.5,000 is being matched by the TOS Italy for the next five years to give a total scholarship of Rs.10,000 to each one.** These are wonderful examples of TOS countries working together to alleviate hardship and to empower woman wherever they are. The West Bengal region is running ten primary schools, two orphanages and six tailoring training centres to improve the earnings of poor women. A hostel and a school for blind students is being run in Bihar. A new TOS group with an English medium primary school has been formed in Kerala, and the TOS Maharashtra Region is running an English medium primary school at Akola.



The TOS Italy continues its outstanding work with Syrian refugees. Last Christmas OTS (TOS in Italian) contributed for the acquisition of kerosene in the Bab Al-Salam refugee camp due to the cold weather. The Turkish authorities have now banned people from entering the camp. Many who fled from the camp can now be found in the city of Kilis. In the coldest months OTS Italy helped 30 of the poorest families (often lone widows or people with disabled children) by providing them with stoves. Italian members paid personal visits to some of these families bringing with them fruits and vegetables. School materials were also donated to the small infant school and contributions made to the teachers’ salaries. A

“community” wood burning stove was also donated and placed in a private garden that is available to the refugee community.



The OTS Italy also continues its support of the paediatric clinic in the Bab Al-Salam camp, receiving monthly reports from the doctor, Ali Nasser. Unfortunately, per his reports, conditions in the camp are getting worse rapidly because of the lack of food and hygiene, spawning intestinal parasites, scabies and lice. Since 2016 the OTS Italy has also been supporting a small group of Roma/Sinti people, and their children in particular. In addition, food and other supplies were sent to TOS Kerela for the flood emergency. As per HPB's guidance from *Key to Theosophy*, OTS Italy's efforts go into concrete action to PUT INTO PRACTICE the Theosophical spirit.

The main focus of the TOS in Pakistan is education. To that end they run five educational programs plus various workshops, trainings and seminars on various topics. **The Jamshed Memorial School provides quality education at affordable cost.** Over time the school has expanded from Montessori to primary level with over 500 children. The education philosophy of the school is in line with the ideals of Theosophy as practiced by other similar schools around the world. The curriculum and the method of education encourages the children to become self-reliant, compassionate and creative members of society. **The Education Sponsorship Program was started four decades ago and has helped thousands of under privileged college and school going students with financial aid to pursue their educations.** Thus improving the quality of their lives and their families. The program is supported mainly by sponsors from Australia, New Zealand and some local sponsors. One encouraging success story is Rimsha Rizwan who has been receiving a scholarship since 2011 when she was in Class – V. Rimsha is determined to become a doctor. She is about to take her 2nd year pre-med exams and is confident to pass with high grades. **The Minwalla Montessori Institute was inaugurated in 2015 for conducting a one year Montessori teacher training course.** Seventy-five girls have completed the diploma course. Practical experience is provided in house at the Jamshed Memorial School. After graduation some of the passing student are employed in the school and others have obtained employment elsewhere. **There are presently fourteen home literacy centres known as Qandeel Home Schools functioning in one of the main marginalized areas of Karachi.** Approximately 25 boys and girls can be taught in each home school. The purpose is to motivate and encourage parents who are not aware of the advantages of education and normally not willing to send their children, especially girls, due to cultural norms or economic problems. Here the teachers nurture the children in a homely environment and prepares them with a basic level of literacy for further education. **Qandeel Home Schools are supported by TOS sponsors from Australia, New Zealand and Italy and**



other sponsors from South Africa, the USA and Pakistan. **The TOS Pakistan in collaboration with the United Nations Women's Guild provided scholarships to 15 young women to study nursing at the Holy Family Hospital Nursing School in Karachi.** These students completed the three year basic nursing course. The funding ended. However, **funds were received from the TOS-USA for five more students.** Presently support continues to be received from other donors. The TOS Pakistan would like to continue this program and efforts are being made to raise more funds for this program.



The work that TOS groups around the world are doing testifies to Annie Besant's foresight in creating the Theosophical Order of Service as its members are truly putting the First Object of the Theosophical Society into action, and it follows HPB's teachings in the *Key to Theosophy* that theosophists should live a life of active altruism.