



Australian T.O.S. Links

August 2006

We are midway through our year's activities and I trust that all is going well with implementing your plans. Being involved in service activities within our local communities and supporting international projects requires a commitment of time and energy. Sometimes we can wonder if our small efforts make any difference in a world where there appear to be so many unmet physical and psychological needs. I am reminded of Mother Teresa's words, *In this life we often cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.....Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.*

Our focus service area: Social service

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to flourish. So our intentions behind our acts of service are powerful determinants of whether or not our service will contribute to peace. As we are frequently reminded by spiritual teachers, for service to contribute powerfully to peaceful relationships it must be open-hearted and altruistic.

Peaceful relationships are central to building world peace. As the Dalai Lama stresses, only through kindness and love can peace be achieved whether it is personal inner

peace, peaceful personal relationships or peaceful relationships between people of different cultures and nations. The Dalai Lama assures us that all this is possible. But first we must change ourselves.



World peace and social service

Daily life in our society provides us with multiple opportunities on a variety of levels to be of service for the welfare of others. We are encouraged to contribute to international campaigns related to human rights and disaster relief. At the level of our local communities, there seems to be an increasing number of avenues for us to be of service to others. Our own families, work places and circle of friends also provide constant avenues for service.

It is unlikely that anyone would deny that service for the well-being of others was positive and the sort of behaviour that should be encouraged. But does it really contribute to world peace? I would suggest that it depends on the context and our intent.

The motivations behind our service are important. If we act from a position of viewing ourselves as superior or are attached to the outcomes of our service, then our service may not promote more positive relationships. We may indeed put up barriers that strengthen the sense of 'them' and 'us' or 'me', rather than reducing the barriers to allow a feeling of 'we'ness, fellowship or oneness

Action motivated by love and compassion is our aim. Compassion is a deep feeling that one cannot bear other's suffering without acting to relieve it. Compassion leads to a strong commitment to acting for the welfare of others. This is unbiased service toward all beings, without reference to their values, beliefs, habits or relationship to ourselves. Selfless service, without attachment, contributes powerfully to peaceful relationships and hence to world peace.

Thanks for donations to the Yogyakarta earthquake appeal

Thanks to all who promoted the Yogyakarta Earthquake Appeal during June and July and a special thanks to those of you who contributed donations. Your generosity has

enabled me to transfer \$2 580 to the TS Lodge in Solo for distribution. As you are aware, three TS members lost their houses in the earthquake and



they will be among those benefiting from our donation and other donations from TS and T.O.S. members in South East Asia.

Pedro Oliveira has recently visited Indonesia in his role of President of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS. He reports: *On Thursday 17 July I visited Yogyakarta and Kotagede, two places severely affected by the earthquake. The visits were kindly arranged by Mrs Shanti Suyono and her husband, Mr Ananda Suyono, who are coordinating the relief effort. I saw scenes of widespread destruction, entire houses razed to the ground, helplessly poor widows bereft of their homes and large families with many children in a state of destitution. The money donated through TOS Australia was used to build temporary accommodations (see photos), but as the rainy season is about to begin in Indonesia it is doubtful for how long these fragile structures will last. I was informed that government help was restricted to food allowance which only lasted for a month. A family of TS members from Yogyakarta, who had their house totally destroyed, is now spending the night in a nearby cemetery!*

The Indo-Pacific Federation has issued a fresh appeal for donations, since the earthquake victims still urgently need help. Please consider sending a donation if you can.



Generous donation from Maple-Brown Abbott

Once again Maple-Brown Abbott Limited has generously supported the work of the T.O.S. This company is the investment manager for the Theosophical Society in Australia. We are very grateful that they have been able to make a donation to the International T.O.S. work this year. They requested that their donation of \$10 000 be distributed for the following work:

\$3 000 for Pakistan's Educational Sponsorship Program

\$3 000 for Adyar's Olcott School and HPB Hostel

\$1 000 for the Philippine's Educational Peace Studies Program

\$3 000 for Brazil's Orphanage run by the TS.

International T.O.S. conference

27 to 30 July, 2007 is a date to reserve in your diary if you are able to travel. Our International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, is currently at the national TS in America's centre in Wheaton, Illinois progressing plans for next year's conference. This will be a marvellous opportunity for T.O.S. members from around the world to get together to share ideas, learn from each other, plan activities and develop partnerships. The theme: **Exploring our potential for service**, says it all.

As more details become available they will be provided in our national newsletter.

Invocations for peace and brotherhood

Many T.O.S. groups use affirmations or invocations that remind us of the oneness of all life, of our brotherhood with every person, and indeed with every living thing. Below are a few of the favourites.

O Powers of Love!

We pledge to you our faithfulness,

Knowing that only you can redeem the world.

We invoke your blessing on all who strive to serve you.

We invoke your blessing on all who have to endure suffering,

That they may discover their enfoldment in your love, even in the midst of their affliction.

We invoke your blessing on all who inflict suffering

That they may be moved to return to you and serve you.

George S. Arundale

The mantram of unification

The sons of men are one and I am one with them.

I seek to love, not hate;

I seek to serve and not exact due service;

I seek to heal, not hurt.

Let vision come and insight.

Let the future stand revealed.

Let inner union demonstrate and outer cleavages be gone.

Let love prevail.

Let all men love.

World Goodwill; London, New York & Geneva

May the Forces of Light bring illumination to humankind.

May the Spirit of Peace be spread abroad.

May the Law of Harmony prevail.

May people of goodwill everywhere meet in a spirit of cooperation.

So let it be and help us to do our part.

It is I who bloom in the flowers, spread in the grass,
Flow in the water, scintillate in the stars,
Live in the lives of men of all ages.

Rabindranath Tagore

Do you have a favourite invocation? Please share it by sending it to either my postal or email address, listed at the end of the newsletter.



Tips for writing letters to legislators about social issues

The following advice comes from an advocacy group in the USA, PETA.

While everyone's good at complaining about politics to their friends, too few citizens express their opinions to those who can do something about it: legislators. Constituent input really does make a difference.

According to former Congressperson Billy Evan, "Legislators estimate that 10 letters from constituents represent the concerns of 10,000 citizens.

Anybody who will take the time to write is voicing the fears and desires

of thousands more." If that's not enough to convince you, ask yourself this: If you don't communicate with the officials representing you, who will? You're probably not going to singlehandedly convince your legislators, but many legislators share your objectives and just need to be convinced that there is sufficient public support before putting their necks on the line. The Advocacy Institute explains: "When votes are secured or changed, it's most likely the aroused constituent- activists - the grassroots - who can claim the credit."

Here's how to make your voice count:

- Find out who your federal and state representatives are and write to them directly. Identify yourself as a concerned citizen, NOT as a member of an organization. Legislators want to get feedback from voters, not lobbyists.
- Keep letters brief - no more than one page. If you're writing about a specific bill, mention the bill's name and number if you know it, and whether you support or oppose it in the first paragraph. Include reasons and supporting data in the next paragraph or two. Conclude by asking for a response.
- Focus on a specific topic because different issues are at stake with each topic.
- Be polite and concise. Keep everything relevant to the bill or issue in question.
- Never be threatening or insulting.
- Remember: Each letter pertaining to a particular piece of legislation is usually counted as a "yes" or "no." Don't get overwhelmed by the project. As few as 10 letters on any one topic can sway a legislator's vote. And don't be discouraged if you receive unfavourable responses; the more we

Sharing ideas about social service activities

T.O.S. groups around Australia are involved in a wide variety of social service activities, some on their own and others in partnership with other community groups. Below are a few examples:

- Running a social activity group for residents in an aged care facility.
- Being a personal visitor to residents in aged care facilities.
- Volunteering for a hospital visitor scheme.
- Organising a collection point for packaged food-stuffs to be distributed to families in need and/or through programs for the homeless.
- Collecting second-hand household items for women and families moving from refuges to more permanent housing.
- Collecting cleaning materials and personal toiletries to make 'starter packs' for homeless women and families moving into long-term accommodation.
- Knitting squares to be made into blankets for homeless people or to be sent to refugee camps through programs like *Wrap with Love*.
- Collecting used stamps for charity groups.
- Collecting donations to support people who have suffered as a result of natural disasters.
- Being selective when buying goods, by supporting companies that do not use child labour and who pay reasonable wages; choosing items carrying Fair Trade stickers.
- Supporting international social-justice actions through groups such as *Amnesty International*. This group invites interested people to join them in letter and fax writing at a governmental level to influence decisions about individual and group human rights.

If members of your T.O.S. group are involved in other social service activities, please let me know so that I can share them through our newsletter.

communicate with public officials, the sooner they'll change their positions.

International T.O.S. social service projects to support

Many T.O.S. groups in Asia and South America maintain extensive social service programs that you or your group may like to consider supporting. In most cases, Australian dollars go a long way. Some of these programs are listed below:

Adyar

A large number of social service programs are run from the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar.

The Olcott Memorial School

This is one of the first items of service work taken up at Adyar. This school was established to provide free education for poor children in the Adyar area.



The Olcott Memorial High School provides free education for over 700 children, both boys and girls, and also free textbooks, exercise books and uniforms to many of them. Free mid-day meals and a nutritious breakfast are given to all the children.

A **Craft Centre** started in 1988 gives instruction to children from deprived homes in such skills as carpentry, plumbing, screen printing, gardening, home craft and tailoring. Music, dance, games and scouting are part of the program.

HPB Hostel

This hostel, founded in 1971, offers free board and lodging to students of the Olcott School and some others. They are sponsored by members of the Theosophical Society in various countries and given parental care by the Warden.

Social Welfare Centre

The Social Welfare Centre cares for about 200 infants. It runs two creches free of charge for the children of poor working mothers in the neighborhood, and a pre-primary school which provides education to children aged 3 to 5 years. In addition to a nourishing breakfast in the morning, the children are given a midday meal. Poor women of the area receive training in sewing

and handicrafts, the products are sold, and the proceeds help supplement the women's income. A Medicare Centre provides free medical aid to poor persons in the neighborhood. It is proposed to expand this welfare work, and for this purpose a Social Welfare Endowment Fund has been set up.

Vocational Training Centre for Women

This Centre was established in 1999 for training young women as domestic help in households. They are trained in ethics and etiquette in addition to the various aspects of household work.

Bhubaneswar T.O.S. (Northern India)

This T.O.S. group runs extensive social welfare programs for the poor, focused on family support, health and education. Among other things, they provide adult literacy programs, free medicines, food for lepers and school materials for children.

Brazil

The Theosophical Society has run an orphanage for about ten years on its premises on the outskirts of Brasilia. Mrs Zeneida Cereja da Silva and her team of supporters are doing a marvellous job of taking care of 20 children from very poor backgrounds.



Chennai T.O.S. (Adyar)

The post-tsunami rehabilitation work continues to be a focus of this group. Continuing projects include provision of clean drinking water, vocational retraining and support for women's self-help small businesses.

Pakistan

The T.O.S. in Pakistan describes its social service programs under two categories.

Relief & rehabilitation

Under the umbrella of this scheme, destitute and aged persons especially widows, are provided with financial aid if they do not have a fixed source of income. Widows with very young children have also benefited.

Many requests for aid are received from destitute families who are unable to bear the marriage expenses of their daughters. In such cases the

TOS helps with the marriage expenses to set up these young women in their new homes.

The donations received for medical relief are utilized for medical treatment, hospitalization, procurement of medicines and support for the handicapped. Some needy persons have also been provided with spectacles, immunization and other minor forms of medical treatment.

Education

A major educational activity is the **Educational Sponsorship Programme**. The TOS has been working to provide opportunities at primary, secondary and college levels to those bright young people who are unable to afford an education. Many finish their schooling and go on to get a University Degree and are able to better their lives and those of their families. Each applicant is interviewed, the case is investigated and if approved, sponsorship is found. To date, several thousand students have benefited from T.O.S. sponsorship, many becoming doctors, nurses, engineers and other technical professionals. Currently, sponsorship costs AU\$150 a year, which is well within the capacity of many groups and individuals.



The T.O.S. also runs a **Literacy Programme** to enable children, young girls and women who have had no opportunity to pursue even a basic education, to attend classes. Reading, writing and arithmetic are taught by a teacher who holds classes at her own house which is in the same locality as the students.

Philippines

The Golden Link School was established by the TS and T.O.S. to help provide a strongly values-based education for underprivileged children. Its philosophy is that individuals who are at peace with themselves will ultimately create a world at peace. Families are included in many events and celebrations and can access a free parenting program and newsletter. The school has just graduated its first group of elementary students and begun a high school class.



Donations

Donations to any of the activities of these international T.O.S. groups can be made through the Theosophical Order of Service in Australia, with cheques sent to my address at the end of the newsletter.

A thought to share

Each one of us is responsible for all of humankind. We need to think of each other as true brothers and sisters, and to be concerned with each other's welfare. We must seek to lessen the suffering of others... The goal must be to serve others, not dominate them... Being motivated by compassion and love, respecting the rights of others — this is real religion.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, *Widening the Circle of Love*

Contact

Please contact me by email at cdharrod@bigpond.net.au or by mail at Ms C Harrod, 26 Lytham Street, Indooroopilly Q4068.

If you have a friend who would like to receive this newsletter by email, please encourage them to contact me. Email copies are free.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in service
Carolyn

