

ANNIE BESANT 1847 - 1933

FOUNDER, THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

In the Supplement to *The Theosophist* of February 1908, Annie Besant announced the creation of an organisation whose mission was – and is, more than a hundred years later – 'to unite all who love in the service of all that suffers'.

A number of members of the T.S., feeling the wish to organise themselves for various lines of service, to actively promote the first object of the Society, I hereby constitute an order, to be called 'THE T.S. ORDER OF SERVICE'.

An early expression of the Order's aims was to: (1) To minimise the sum of misery in the world; (2) To forget self in working for others; (3) To eliminate selfishness and substitute love as the rule of the world; (4) To live to the highest that is within us.

Within a few years, many TOS 'leagues' had sprung up under the Founder's inspiration (thirty-four in 1908 alone): Braille League, Esperanto League, League for Daily Meditation, League for the Abolition of Vivisection, League of Healers, Humane Research League, Prayer League, Poor Children's Clothing League, Education League, Temperance League, Religion and Art League, etc.



Annie Besant (third from right at rear row) supporting women workers of a match factory asking for fair wages.

**THE THEOSOPHIC LIFE MUST BE
A LIFE OF SERVICE. UNLESS WE
ARE SERVING, WE HAVE NO RIGHT
TO LIVE.**

The Theosophic Life



Dr. Besant and her fellow Theosophists in fact pursued social reform through a multitude of forward-looking movements: The Order of the Sons and Daughters of India, the movement against child parentage, The Round Table, The Theosophical Education Trust Inc., The Order of World Peace, Brotherhood of Arts, Workers' Educational Union, Animal and Bird Protection Association, and the Home Rule League, India.



A number of organisations started by TOS workers in England and elsewhere became independent and vigorous national movements. Innumerable schools were started during Dr. Besant's presidency. Appointed by Lord Baden-Powell to organise the Boy Scout Movement in India, Dr. Besant was awarded the 'Silver Wolf' in 1932 for her service to the movement.

All these movements were linked together in Mrs Besant's mind. As a person and as President, she sought constantly to rally those around her to uplift society.



Besant with Gandhi