

# Adyar Newsletter

June-July-August 2021

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Baillon's Crake Foraging for Food

## NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

### Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

With the government reimposing lockdown due to a surge in Covid-19 infections, the scheduled reopening of schools did not take place. Instead, the pattern of online classes which characterized the whole of the previous year was followed.

After a considerable period of confusion and uncertainty, the Department of Education announced the cancellation of the Class XII public examinations. After some more delay, the modalities of awarding marks to the students sans examinations were mapped out, and the results were announced. At the OMHSS this year, 36 students qualified for the higher secondary examination, with 89% of the successful students scoring marks above 60%.

The staff of the OMHSS also went the extra mile in helping students who were interested in pursuing a college education. Not only did they help with securing admissions, but they also managed to arrange sponsorships for eight deserving students for the first year undergraduate course fees! Kudos to the enterprising and dedicated team of OMHSS staff, who managed this with the help and support given by the Headmistress, Mrs Lalitha, and the dynamic Director, Mrs Sasikala Sriram.

The e-tablets which were given to the Class XII students last year to attend online classes were collected back and given to the present batch of students after cleaning and service. This task was done by the OMHSS teachers themselves for which they had earlier received training. All the OMHSS staff were vaccinated for Covid-19 at a special camp organized in the school campus by the Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra. The school is also following all the pandemic protocols stipulated by the state government.

### Independence Day celebrations at OMHSS

Notwithstanding the pandemic, the 75th Independence Day of the nation was celebrated with a lot of joy and enthusiasm. As the students could not come to the school due to the lockdown, live streaming of the event was arranged by the President of the Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra, Mr Srinivasan, so that they could participate in the function from the safety of their homes. The national flag was hoisted by Mr K. Jaikumar, General Manager of the TS and Secretary of the Olcott Education Society. He also distributed endowment prizes to the students who secured the first three places and also to the toppers in each subject in the 2021 public examination.



Mr K. Jaikumar hoists the national flag



The school topper receives an endowment prize from Mr Jaikumar



An OMHSS student gives an Independence Day speech

## THE ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

### Reflecting on two diverse years of ATA

The ATA has completed two years in its pursuit of transformative education. One year on campus, and the other in virtual classrooms. On the school's second birthday on 24 June 2021, President Tim Boyd participated in an online event where the children took charge of the celebration, and expressed their love for the school through poems, cards, and a no-fire cooking party. India's 75th Independence Day was celebrated in a novel manner by giving the students a ringside view of the conservation efforts made for the national animal, the tiger, courtesy of wildlife expert, Dr K. Shankar. The children also explored the thrilling journey of cotton from plant-to-fabric, and ended their voyage of discovery by weaving a pattern with yarn.



Posters exploring India, Nature, stories and the world

ATA in its two diverse years has been consistent in its efforts to make education both accessible and inspiring. As it begins

Year Three, the many wonderful educators who have put in time to connect with the students and regularly update their skills with myriad, year-round workshops, say they are excited and eager to resume classes (albeit online), with a focus on intrapersonal skill development and storytelling which breathes life into deep discussions on varied topics.



Students celebrating the art forms of India

One of the highlights of the current year was the Science Hub, where students experimented, designed, thought through and drew conclusions, while making incredible discoveries. Mindfulness as an activity is also being pursued regularly. Labyrinths, a 4000-year-old design practice, help children follow instructions, decode patterns, and even create their own. Students described this experience with phrases like: 'I feel calm', 'almost hypnotized', 'feel like I'm floating', and 'wow!'

As Year Three progresses, ATA's plans and hopes are to keep feeding this fire of curiosity and organic learning.

## BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

*The impossible we do immediately, miracles take a little longer!*

A slogan attributed to the US armed forces in World War II, can very well become BMAD's rallying cry as well, in the war against disease and animal cruelty on the streets of Chennai.

Animal suffering is everywhere and the causes are many. The increase in vehicular traffic on the roads, coupled with rash driving, has resulted in street animals

often becoming victims of accidents. With mangled limbs and grievous injuries, they are often left to die a slow and agonizing death. Many animals, when they grow old or sick, are abandoned on the streets. Unwanted kittens and puppies are dumped in public spaces, while the plight of cattle and horses is horrendous. The list goes on . . .

Amidst this sea of unimaginable animal suffering, there is a small ray of hope. BMAD has come gamely to the rescue of the 'streeties' to offer free first aid for injured animals and treatment for the sick ones. After complete recovery, they are released back to the places from where they were picked up. Those animals, whose injuries though healed, cannot make it back on the streets due to disability, become permanent residents at the shelter. Thanks to generous contributions (both monetary and in kind) from many donors, BMAD now has an in-house lab, with an X-Ray machine, blood analyzer, and other state-of-the-art equipment, rivaling the services offered by many private veterinary clinics and all this equipment is used for the treatment of injured and diseased street animals.

This radical turnaround has happened over a short span of just four years, when Shравan Krishnan took over as the BMAD Coordinator in 2017 and assembled a dedicated team of doctors and caregivers, transforming a rundown and derelict facility into a busy veterinary hospital, humming with activity and bustling with people and animals.

Another feather in an already much decorated BMAD cap was the recent visit by the Chief Minister's daughter-in-law, Mrs Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi, who was so impressed with the work done by BMAD that she wanted a similar transformation to happen in the poorly run and managed Corporation pound and animal shelters and also give a fillip to humane animal birth control measures for street animals. To this end she facilitated a visit by top bureaucrats of the Indian Administrative Service and Corporation officials for first-hand acquaintance with the facility and staff. Needless to say, they were extremely appreciative of BMAD's work for street animals, all of which is funded by donations.



Shравan Krishnan explains the working of BMAD to the visiting government officials

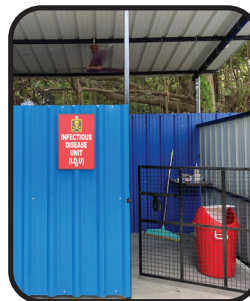
On 20 July 2021, President Mr Tim Boyd (virtually) inaugurated a new BMAD outpatient (OP) unit which is spacious and airy, with a separate area dedicated to the treatment of animals with infectious diseases. With the exponential increase in the number of people thronging BMAD, seeking quality veterinary care at affordable prices, the new unit comes with a comfortable waiting area and plenty of parking space outside.



Foundation stone laid virtually by the international President Mr Tim Boyd



Entrance to the new OP unit



Treatment area for infectious diseases



Examination area in the new OP Unit

## PANDEMIC STATUS AND OPENING UP THE CAMPUS TO WALKERS AGAIN

As the pandemic in the city started easing from June 2021, the government allowed private organizations to open fully and public transport too resumed their services, although with restrictions on capacity. Hence, from 1 July 2021, the TS management too decided to open its doors to all its workers and staff, strongly urging them to get vaccinated at the nearest

vaccination centre with at least the first dose of Covaxin or Covishield before returning to work. In this manner, not only would they protect themselves from Covid-19, but they would also help to prevent the spread of the dreaded 'delta' variant among other members of the community. Similar messages were also communicated to the TS Adyar residents.

### NEW APPOINTMENT



Erica Georgiades has been appointed as the Director of the School of the Wisdom. She brings many years of study, TS work, and creativity to the position. Erica is no stranger to Adyar as she has been a member of the TS, Adyar, since 1991, and had resided here

while working in the Archives during 1994–1996. She has also served as the Director of the European School of Theosophy since 2018 and as Secretary of the International Theosophical History Conference. Erica possesses numerous academic degrees in the fields of Religion, Psychology, and Philosophy. She lives in Athens, Greece, with her husband and daughter.

### LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES The Buddhist Shrine



Situated in the coconut grove near the river, the Buddhist Shrine with its tank is one of the most beautiful sights in the Adyar estate.

Col. Olcott records in 1883 that he received a note from the Master KH

expressing the wish that a Buddhist Shrine be erected on the estate. The note included a donation of Rs 150 and a plan of the sanctuary. However, it was not until the Golden Jubilee of the Society in 1925, that

the wish expressed in that note from the Master began to take shape. Writing in *The Theosophist* of December 1925, Mr C. Jinarajadasa says:

'The foundations have been laid of a small Buddhist shrine at Adyar . . . near the Olcott Memorial, which marks the spot where Colonel Olcott's body was cremated. In front of the shrine is a pond where pink and white lilies bloom in profusion and at one side, about 200 yards from the shrine, the Adyar River flows down to the sea . . . The design of the shrine is a combination of two styles . . . the base of the shrine, with its rounded arches and pillars, is taken from Buddha-Gaya, whilst the cornices and the dome are from a Buddhist temple in Nepal.'



Consecration of the Buddhist shrine in December 1925. C. W. Leadbeater performs the ceremony while Annie Besant and Krishnaji look on

The exquisitely beautiful antique image of the Buddha in the shrine was presented by Dr Besant and is a typical example of twelfth century Pali sculpture, in grey stone, from Bihar or Bengal. The 'mudra' or position of the hands is that of 'expounding the Law'. Around the head, in Tibetan characters, is the famous Pali verse which summarizes Buddhism:

*ye dhamma hetuppabhava,  
tesam hetum tathagato aha;  
tesan cha yo nirodho,  
evamvadi mahasamano.*

(Of all objects which proceed from a Cause, the Tathagata has explained the Cause; and He has explained their Cessation also. This is the doctrine of the Great Samana.)

The image represents the First Sermon, 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma', which was delivered in the Deer Park at Sarnath, near Benaras. Hence, the wheel and the two deer, below the image.



The image of the Buddha

Close by was an old Japanese pagoda bell which used to be sounded at six o'clock, both morning and evening, to call to mind the six remembrances of the Lord Buddha and to share the merit of meditations in the shrine with Devas and men in all the six quarters of the globe – north, south, east, west, above, below, around and everywhere. These remembrances are now beautifully etched in black granite and placed in the garden. Unfortunately, the original bell was stolen many years ago and the new bell which was installed has now been kept in the Museum for safety.

### The Bodhi Tree

Opposite to the shrine, across the lily tank, is a magnificent Bodhi tree, which was grown from a sapling, brought from Buddha-Gaya, a descendant of the original tree under which the Lord Buddha is said to have sat in meditation when He became the Lord of Enlightenment. This was planted by Mr Jinarajadasa on 24 December 1950, in the presence of two yellow-robed Buddhist monks, who had first given him the Panchasila in Ceylon. After he placed the sapling

in the selected spot, straight opposite the Buddhist Shrine, the two monks chanted Pali verses of benediction. This was a favourite meditation place of Col. Olcott, where he built a seat with the pond in front of the shrine and a wide view of the Adyar River.



The Bodhi tree

In the March 1951 issue of *The Theosophist*, Mr Jinarajadasa recounts how for over thirty years he had been wondering how to obtain a sapling from this famous tree to plant at Adyar and how a curious set of circumstances enabled him to obtain not one, but two saplings. The then Director of the Adyar Library, Dr G. Srinivasa Murti, had a colleague, one Dr Swamy, who happened to be the physician of the High Priest in charge of the Temple at Buddha-Gaya. While the great monument is under the control of the Archaeological Department, the sacred tree is in the charge of the Priest, who was prevailed upon to provide two precious saplings, which were brought to Adyar by Mrs Kunwar Taimni of Allahabad. The second sapling was taken to Saigon, in Vietnam, where it was received reverently by a procession of Buddhist monks and planted there.

### **The Fall of the Bodhi Tree**

This, our special and much-loved Bodhi tree, with such historical underpinnings, toppled over late at night on 1 July 2021. There was no apparent, external cause for its

sudden fall — like a strong wind, or torrential rain. Therefore, the logical conclusion was that the reason(s) was hidden within the tree itself. And this surmise proved correct.



The fallen Bodhi tree

A local Tree NGO was contacted for assistance and acting on their advice, we got in touch with Mr Raghavendra Rao, a horticultural expert with a lot of experience in transplanting fully grown trees. His inspection of the tree revealed that the main trunk of the tree had snapped off at the base, completely disconnecting it from the roots, making it impossible to replant the tree. This had happened because of pests attacking the roots and eating away the trunk from within, in addition to fungus infestation, which had weakened the tree over the years, without anyone being aware of the fact, until it finally keeled over. He also felt that the tree had survived this long mainly because it had been receiving nourishment from the roots on the sides. Mr Rao felt that we could attempt to revive the growth on these roots by treating the area with bio-pesticides and natural fertilizers after clearing out all the dead tissue.

Much to our joy, a search in the nearby areas revealed the presence of a young and healthy Bodhi sapling, most likely a seedling from our own special tree. This was dug up and transported with utmost gentleness and care and planted in the central space.

Now, we just need to wait and pray that the Nature spirits will step in to heal and revive our precious tree!

## DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (Rs 20,000 AND ABOVE)

1 March to 31 August 2021

	Rs.		Rs.
<b>BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY</b>		Theosophical Society in Iceland, Iceland	33,344
Neelima Bajaj Swamy, India	3,00,000	<b>CYCLONE RELIEF FUND</b>	
Malavika Ravindar, India	1,00,000	The Esoteric School of Theosophy, India	1,25,000
Gautham Badri Ramachandran Sundar, India	20,000	<b>GENERAL DONATIONS</b>	
Indumathi Balaraman, India	24,000	The Theosophical Society in America, USA	1,18,75,167
Sivananda Rajaram, India	24,000	Krotona Institute, USA	1,07,204
Shreemoyee Chakraborty, India	20,000	<b>RENOVATION FUND</b>	
Vani Sengupta, India	1,00,000	N. Govindaraju, India	20,000
Malliga Ravindar, India	1,00,000	Brigid Murphy, Canada	70,000
Prani Raksaa Trust, India	1,00,000	The Esoteric School of Theosophy, India	1,25,000
Latha Swamy, India	20,000	<b>LBC RENOVATION</b>	
Dodla Rahul Reddy, India	50,000	Zenobia Khodaji, India	3,50,000
Ambika Gupta, India	25,000	Prashant Jaikumar, USA, in memory of Dr A. Kannan	3,50,000
Monica Suresh, India	50,000	<b>ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY</b>	
Balakrishnan K., India	30,000	Blavatsky Lodge, India	29,500
Prethee Martina, India	45,000	<b>ADYAR ESTATE</b>	
Shriram Kidambi, India	20,000	Clemice Petter, India	38,000
Dhruvi Sama, India	20,000	<b>CONVENTION, CULTURAL AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS</b>	
Prashant Jaikumar, USA	36,616	Theosophical Society In France	87,500
Veena Rajasekar, USA	22,517	<b>COVID RELIEF</b>	
<b>HEADQUARTERS HALL GARDEN PROJECT</b>		The Theosophical Order of Service in England	10,06,040
Dr N. Gautam, India	3,30,000	<b>LILY BOYD'S PROJECTS</b>	
<b>ADYAR DAY CONTRIBUTIONS</b>		Societa Teosofica, Italy	1,30,485
The Karnataka Theosophical Federation, India	20,132		

## DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY (Rs 20,000 AND ABOVE)

1 March to 31 August 2021

	Rs.		Rs.
<b>INDIAN DONATIONS</b>		Shivathmika Ramanathan, Chennai	25,000
The Esoteric School of Theosophy, Chennai	1,50,000	Mahalingam S., Chennai	45,000
<b>FCRA DONATIONS</b>			
Radha & Sri Venkatnarayanan M.Trust, Chennai	40,000	Societa Teosofica Italiana, Italy	1,28,250
Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra Charitable Trust, Chennai	60,000	Ordre De Service Theosophique, France	1,18,792
Sasikala Sriram, Chennai	27,500	Dr Christos Anastasios Bartzokas, UK	6,93,565
		Asha For Education, USA	24,50,000

**Cover Picture:** R. R. Chari. The Baillon's Crane is an extremely secretive, small waterbird which breeds in Kashmir and in Central and East Asia. It frequents marshy areas, ponds and *jheels*, where it feeds on the seeds of aquatic plants, snails, worms, insects and their larvae. It can sometimes be spotted in the Chennai marshes too.

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