

## RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENT TIM BOYD

Mr Tim Boyd was re-elected international President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, for a second term in office of 7 years, commencing 27 April 2021. Though there were 15,746 members who were eligible to vote, only 5,420 votes were received. Of these, 5,162 votes were in favor of Tim, 48 were against, and 210 were invalid or blank votes.

We convey our hearty congratulations to our newly re-elected President and wish him all the very best for continuing the theosophical work in his inimitable style, with

wisdom and insight, for the strengthening and widening of the theosophical movement.



Mr Tim Boyd

## BHARATA SAMAJA TEMPLE CENTENARY CELEBRATION

During the time when Dr Annie Besant was President, a number of shrines and temples for the performance of religious practices were erected on the Adyar estate and used by the adherents of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism.

The Bharata Samaja Temple or the Temple of Light with its finely sculptured dome was one of them. It is situated just off the Founders' Avenue. The novel idea in this temple is that there is no *image* whatsoever of any aspect of the Deity, but only a burning lamp, for Light is recognized by Hindus of all the various divisions of Hinduism, as a symbol of God. Here, at sunrise every morning, the beautiful Bharata Samaja Puja is performed.



Bharata Samaja Temple dome

The main focus of the Bharata Samaja was to bring to light the essential teachings of Hinduism. And hence, in the daily ritual, an attempt has been made to distil the very essence and content of the Hindu form of worship and shed all the unnecessary accretions and superstitions. However, scrupulous care was taken to retain the essential ancient verses from the Vedas.



Side view of the Temple

The Hindu form of worship had so far been individualistic. But at the Bharata Samaja, the first congregational worship as a collective way of invoking the Almighty's power and blessing was attempted. It is noteworthy that for the first time, women were permitted to

perform the puja, in what was till then, an exclusively male preserve. Incidentally, Smt. Rukmini Devi was the first woman celebrant to perform the puja.

The Centenary Celebration of the Foundation Stone Laying of the Bharata Samaja temple took place at Adyar on 1 May 2021. To mark the occasion, two online events were organized. At 6 a.m. there was a puja conducted by Mr S. M. Umakanth Rao. This ritual, which was first performed by J. Krishnamurti in December 1925, is an act of self-surrender, designed to assist in the development of the

devotee by stimulating certain of the higher chakras, as well as to pour out waves of power and blessing on the inner and outer worlds. After the puja, the international Secretary, Marja Artamaa, planted a sapling of the *pari-jatham* or night-flowering jasmine (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*), in the temple grounds. In the evening, at 6 p.m., there was an online Power-Point presentation by Dr R. Revathy and Mr Vinay Kumar Patri, on the history of the temple, its esoteric significance, and the meaning of the intricate carvings on the temple pillars and walls.

## WHITE LOTUS DAY

Mme Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the principal co-Founders of the Theosophical Society, passed away on 8 May 1891. In her will, Madame Blavatsky requested that members meet on the anniversary of her passing and read selected passages from the *Bhagavad-gita* and *The Light of Asia*. Later, readings from *The Voice of the Silence*, HPB's last published book, also came to be included. The name 'White Lotus Day' came from an observation by Colonel Olcott that one year after HPB's passing, white lotuses were seen to grow in unusual profusion at Adyar.

It is a striking thought that in her death and commemoration request, as in her life, HPB asked nothing for herself except that the work to which her life had been dedicated, should continue. *Keep the link unbroken*, was how she expressed it.



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

Given the raging COVID-19 pandemic, theosophical groups around the world held online meetings to commemorate her memory and re-dedicate themselves to the cause of Theosophy.

## BUDDHIST SHRINE — THE SIX REMEMBRANCES

Situated in the coconut grove near the river, the Buddhist Shrine is one of the most beautiful places in Adyar. In front of the Shrine is a tank with pink and white water lilies, and nearby is the temple gong (now kept in the Museum for safety reasons). In the early days this was sounded at six o' clock, both in the

morning and in the evening, to call to mind, the six remembrances of the Lord Buddha, which were painted on a roughhewn stone and kept near the gong, opposite the Bodhi tree. However, during the Vardah cyclone in 2016, a small tree fell on the stone, breaking it into two.



The new granite plaque with the Six Remembrances of the Buddha

Mrs Radha Gopalakrishnan, a devout Buddhist and caretaker of the Shrine since 2004, was deeply pained by this and after getting the consent of the TS management, approached Mr Brahma of the VIGISH Group, a construction company specializing in natural stone and wooden finishes, who also happens to be a walker in the TS. Mr Brahma very

willingly undertook the job which he completed at his own cost, in record time. The finished plaque, in polished black granite, with the words beautifully etched on it, is a fitting addition to the historic shrine. We are deeply grateful to Mr Brahma for his generosity and also extremely thankful to Mrs Radha Gopalakrishnan, who lovingly attends to the cleaning and upkeep of the shrine, while offering prayers regularly to the Lord Buddha.



Radha Gopalakrishnan offering prayers at the Shrine

## NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

### OLCOTT MEMORIAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL (OMHSS)

At the OMHSS, a lot of emphasis was given to learning English, both spoken and written. Students from Class VI to XII had online classes conducted by volunteer groups for this purpose and also to ensure better usage of the e-tablets given to them.

In March 2021, a farewell party for Class XII students was organised by the teachers themselves as the Class XI students were not allowed to come to the school due to the pandemic. It was a bitter-sweet occasion for the students, both heart-warming and heart-wrenching, to leave the sheltering portals of the school where they had spent so many of their formative years, to face the tough new world outside. Many stories were shared, tears were shed, and the students presented

all the teachers with a jasmine plant as a token of their love and appreciation.



Students presenting a jasmine plant to the Headmistress, Mrs Lalitha

The Class XII students have been gearing up for the Board Examinations and numerous classes and revisions have been happening to prepare them adequately. Career guidance online workshops were also conducted.

## ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

In the new normal that is prevalent in these Covid-ridden times, ATA's classes have been online for almost a year. Yet, strong bonds were formed and joys shared. Science, Maths, Arts, Perspective Building and much more happened through stories which breathed life into the small window on the computer screen that has taken the place of ATA's airy and beautiful classrooms.



Beautiful paintings by the ATA students

Grade students did interesting explorations of continents and their native wildlife; and understood the need to keep our forests growing while respecting the tribes of India. They also celebrated with their theatre presentations and songs recorded individually and put together in a video reflecting the reality of the pandemic that has both isolated and brought them together.

As the classes ended, teachers too had time to enrich and expand their understanding of their role as mentors by participating in many workshops, including those covering intervention strategies to help students having a different pace of learning. ATA staff also attended a very in-depth workshop facilitated by Bhoomi College, Bengaluru, which focused on participative learning that is deep, holistic, and practical. The teachers are now busy planning for the next academic session, set to begin on 9 June, 2021, with 126 students in classes Pre-K to IV.

## ADYAR LIBRARY AND RESEARCH CENTRE (ALRC)

Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS), Kalady's Department of Vedanta, in association with ALRC, Chennai, conducted a two-day International Webinar on the topic, 'Interpretation in Indian Philosophy: Changing Perspectives and Paradigms' on the 23 and 24 April 2021.

The Webinar was inaugurated by Dr P. K. Dharmarajan, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, SSUS, Kalady, while the felicitation address was given

by the international President, Mr Tim Boyd. Dr Radha Raghunathan (Director and General Editor, ALRC) made an extremely erudite presentation on the second day of the Webinar which was packed with a number of useful and interesting sessions handled by experts in the field. This goes to show how much knowledge and experience can be shared and disseminated when such collaborative efforts take place.

## BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

Stray cats and their burgeoning population are a huge problem on the streets of Chennai. Many pet cats end up as strays when their owners no longer feed/care for them, leaving them to fend for themselves as best as they can.

Apart from the heartrending sight of starving and diseased cats and kittens on the streets, many are also run over by vehicles, mauled by dogs and subjected to sadistic cruelties by people. And there is a mind-

boggling statistic which says that over an eight-year period, a pair of stray cats, if left unspayed, can multiply into 4,00,000 or more individuals! This underscores the importance of conducting Animal Birth Control (ABC) programmes for street cats.

There was a Cat ABC surgery marathon in BMAD on the 13 and 14 of April 2021, where over 30 stray cats were successfully captured and operated upon. It is heartening to note that in the TS campus too, BMAD has been able to spay, neuter and vaccinate most of the feline and canine residents (!) with help and support from many of the (human!)

residents who have developed close bonds with them through feeding and care.



Cat ABC surgery in progress

Post surgery — a comforting hug!

## LOCKDOWN AMID COVID PANDEMIC

India experienced a brutal second wave of the COVID pandemic during April-May 2021, resulting in an unprecedented surge in cases as well as fatalities. Chennai was no exception to this trend.

However, amidst this depressing scenario outside, TS Adyar has managed to keep the campus COVID-free. This has been made possible due to certain proactive steps taken by the management. Adhering to the state government guidelines, the management decided not to allow the resumption any kind of gathering — in-person Lodge meetings, seminars, study camps or conventions; in-

stead all of them were moved online. Next, both of our schools (OMHSS, ATA) too shifted to digital teaching while institutions like the Social Welfare Centre and Vocational Training Centre have not reopened since March 2020.

The complete lockdown announced in the state in May 2021 implied that we had to again work with a reduced workforce. So, like last time, only 'essential services' workers were allowed to come in and work, for which they were paid 'extra' — over and above their normal salary, whereas all other workers and staff were advised to remain at home with their salary completely protected.

### ADYAR NEWSLETTER

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I, S. M. Umakanth Rao, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

S. M. Umakanth Rao  
Publisher

Dated : 29.03.2021

## LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The Garden of Remembrance



Entrance to the Garden of Remembrance

One of the most beautiful and hallowed spaces on the Adyar estate is the Garden of Remembrance, a quiet nook located on the north-east corner of the main campus, beside the river path. The site was originally consecrated by Annie Besant on Vaisakh Day, 17 May 1917, as the foundation for *Suryashrama*, a temple for the Order of the Brothers of Service. Circumstances decreed that *Suryashrama* should not be built, and after Dr Besant's passing, her body was cremated at this spot on 21 September 1933, and her ashes buried here. The following year, some of the ashes of C. W. Leadbeater, who had been cremated at Sydney, were also brought and interred here.

While planning the design for the Besant-Leadbeater garden, it was found that the place where the body of Dr Besant was given back to the fire, was not exactly in the centre, and presented an asymmetrical appearance. On Rukmini Devi's suggestion, it was decided to extend the mound on which the body had rested, and make it into two mounds, thus affording an opportunity for the ashes of Bishop Leadbeater to lie side by side with those of his great friend.

On 20 September 1935, on the anniversary of the death of Annie Besant, which was also the Diamond Jubilee year of the Theosophical Society, the site was dedicated to the memory of these two great servants of The Theosophical Society, Dr Annie Besant and Bishop Charles W. Leadbeater.

On 12 August 1945, on the passing of Dr George Arundale, his body was cremated very close to the Garden of Remembrance. In January 1946, the Besant-Leadbeater garden was extended to cover the site of Dr Arundale's cremation and a beautiful lotus pool, like a moat, was built, joined by small arched bridges to another pool in the centre.



The beautiful lotus pool built on the site where Dr G. S. Arundale was cremated

Today, the central platform which originally consisted of two mounds has now been re-modeled and extended to form a beautiful terracotta star with interlaced triangles filled with flowers. On the sides are plaques in the memory of the Founders, Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott and the past TS Presidents.

Other than Dr Besant, three former Presidents — Dr Arundale, Mr N. Sriram and Mr John Coats — were also cremated at the Garden of Remembrance and their ashes have been interred here. Mr Jinarajadasa, however, shed his physical body at Olcott, Wheaton, and all his ashes were scattered in the Fox River as per his request. Mrs Radha Burnier’s ashes are also interred here.



The terracotta star with interlaced triangles

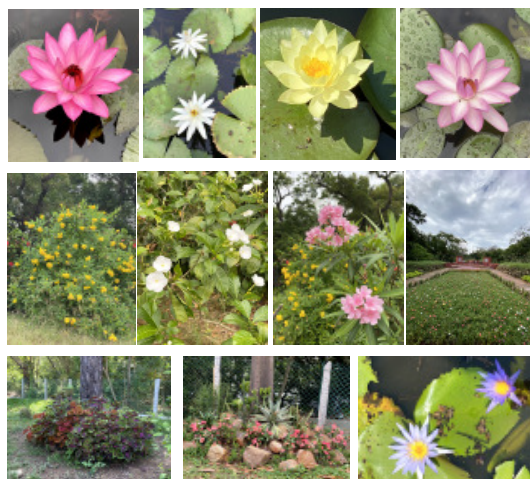


A view of one of the leaf-shaped lily ponds

Thus the living memory of our Founders, Mme H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott, the two great brothers in service, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, and our past presidents, G. S. Arundale, C. Jinarajadasa, N. Sri Ram, John Coats and Radha Burnier —

is kept fragrant and strong among the arms of the star, set with flowering plants and shrubs, amidst the calm leaf-shaped lotus pools.

Here, one may sit in meditation, surrounded by flowers, watching the shimmer of the sun’s golden rays on the waters of the beautiful lotus and lily pools, the only sounds being the distant booming of the surf and the melodious songs of the birds, and try to capture the reflection of the dreams of our great theosophical leaders about the future of Adyar and the Theosophical Society. It is a place of peace and inspiration to TS members to follow in the footsteps of the earlier leaders.



Lilies of varying hues and colourful blooms add enchantment to the beautiful garden

#### Editor’s Note:



Five ancient carved stone trilithons were brought to Adyar by Col. Olcott from a ruined temple in old Chandragiri in North Arcot district. The stone seat that is placed outside the Garden of Remembrance is actually the original cross-piece from the second trilithon which is located between Arundale House and the Headquarters building. Mr C. Jinarajadasa, the fourth President of the TS, mentions that when the time came to widen the road for cars, the cross-piece of the second trilithon was found to be too narrow and he replaced it with a longer slab. The original cross-piece thus became a seat!

**Cover Picture:** Geetha Jaikumar

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