

## THE ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

*Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. . . . We should aim at creating free men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, unselfish.*

– H. P. Blavatsky



The Adyar Theosophical Academy

The Adyar Theosophical Academy is a school run by the Theosophical Educational Society, Chennai, located in the tranquil campus of Besant Gardens, in the midst of the bustling city. A puja was conducted on 20 June 2019 at 9 a.m. to pray for an auspicious start to the school. Following the puja, there was light rain, almost as though the nature spirits had blessed the young venture.

The school, which started functioning on 24 June 2019, is surrounded by trees, including a large banyan tree. With spacious indoor and outdoor classrooms, ATA provides an ideal space for creativity and exploration for children. It will prepare students for the Indian

Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) with English as the language of instruction and will have a high teacher-to-student ratio with not more than 20 students per class. Apart from a carefully crafted and diversified academic programme and a host of co-curricular activities, the school will create unique learning opportunities through an active engagement with Nature, the environment and the community. Initially, ATA will have classes in Nursery, LKG, UKG, Grade 1 and 2 but has plans to expand every year with the addition of more classes in a phased manner. Mrs Sonal Murali is the Director of the school and oversees all its activities.



Puja to invoke divine blessings at the ATA

## The Philosophy of the ATA

On the opening day, there was a lucid and highly informative slide presentation by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, a distinguished theologian. Past president of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines, and Founder and Chairman of the Golden Link School there, he spoke about the objective of the Theosophical Society which is to bring about transformation of the individual and that of society. True transformation comes from awakening the higher faculties of a person and the mastery of the lower nature. From such transformed individuals will emerge a society that will be truly harmonious, loving and growth-giving. As a natural corollary to this, he said that theosophical education aims at laying the right foundation for the development of the personality, mind and character of the children.



Address by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr

Some key takeaways from his address:

- Individuals are the products of culture, media, parenting and education. Among these influences, it is in the area of education that something can be done systematically in order to transform individuals to become more peaceful, harmonious, altruistic and happy.
- Majority of the schools today, all around the world, however, are but transmitters of the prevailing values and cultures that have been responsible for selfishness, crime, corruption and violence. They promote the rat race in a society that is based on comparison and competition. They instil fear and create frustration and unhappiness among the young people.
- Why can schools not be oases of joy, excitement, love, challenge, creativity and happiness, instead of being dungeons of fear, bullying, stress and unhappiness? Can students not become competent and intelligent without the use of threats, comparison and punishment? Is this practical? Can a school be a loving and happy place and yet produce competent adults?

Such then is the vision and mission of theosophical educational institutions like the Adyar Theosophical Academy. They will try to nurture well-balanced and wholesome individuals who will also become competent people in their careers. They will seek to provide a school culture and environment that encourages the fuller flowering of the inner potential of a child, without compromising on the academic rigour required to prepare them for the outside world. This can be done in an atmosphere of freedom, love, kindness, creativity and challenge. The students will then not only grow to become competent, but will also transform into happy people who will find joy in helping others.



Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, plants a *champaka* sapling in the ATA grounds



Children engaged in creative learning in a class at the ATA

## WATER CRISIS IN THE CITY

Chennai has experienced a severe water crisis in the summer this year. It is difficult to believe that Chennai used to be a water-surplus metropolitan city till a couple of decades ago. Following the age-old water conservation tradition of Tamil Nadu, Chennai had nearly two dozen water bodies, including three rivers and a British period Buckingham Canal. Today, all the three rivers are dry and the canal is full of sewage and other rubbish. Many of the water bodies have been allowed to degrade and have lost their primary function of water storage and recharge. Also, the marshlands which act as a sponge for critical groundwater recharge for the city, has shrunk to a third of the original area, with rampant encroachment to expand urban settlements.

After the unprecedented and devastating floods of December 2015, when all the reservoirs were full and overflowing, the monsoon has been in deficit in the subsequent three years. This has resulted in the combined storage in our reservoirs plummeting to almost zero level.

Limited recharge due to poor water conservation methods, inadequate desilting of reservoirs, indiscriminate ground water extraction and unplanned urbanisation, all avoidable man-made factors, has resulted in

falling water tables, rapidly leading to wells drying up, deteriorating water quality and the risk of saline seawater ingress requiring the deepening of wells or the search for wells further away from the city.

The TS Adyar estate too has been impacted to a significant extent by this problem. The excessive ground water extraction by burgeoning residential colonies around the estate has inevitably taken its toll. Many of the ponds too have dried up. As a precautionary measure, the TS management had issued a circular to the residents cautioning them against water wastage and to economise water usage for gardening. Thanks to these measures and the cooperation of the residents, the TS has been able to tide over the current water crisis for the time being.



The dried up pond in Besant Gardens

## INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

On 15 August 2019, which is India's Independence Day, the children and staff of the Social Welfare Centre (SWC), along with the staff and students of the Vocational Training Centre (VTC), celebrated the occasion with a variety of entertainment by the tiny tots of SWC, patriotic songs by the staff of the VTC and SWC and dance programmes by the VTC students. The national flag was hoisted by Prof. C. A. Shinde, Chief Librarian, Adyar Library & Research Centre, TS Adyar. In his speech, he remarked that after seven decades of independence, the time has now come for interdependence! He explained that interdependence means listening to each other, respecting one's neighbour, tolerating diverse viewpoints and helping each other out — concepts that are very much aligned with the theosophical ideals. Hence, he exhorted all present on the occasion, to work towards interdependence in a fast-moving, new and young India.



Prof. C. A. Shinde hoists the national flag at SWC

At the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS), the Independence Day Celebrations included marches by student groups and the hoisting of the national flag by the Chief Guest, Mrs Sheela Rani Chunkath,

a retired official from the Indian Administrative Service. The students organised plays, skits and short speeches on South Indian freedom fighters. This was followed by the Chief Guest's address which was highly interactive and hugely popular. She spoke on the topic of women's empowerment but instead of defining the topic and tracing its roots in India, she queried the audience and made them realize that almost all of the announcers/organisers of their variety programmes were girls; many of the scholarship winners were girls; several of the Group Heads in their school march past were girls and so on. Her message to the girl students was that they should carry this empowerment message from the school back to their homes and communities where the status of girls in the society is a lot worse. Speaking in Tamil, Mrs Chunkath received repeated rounds of applause for her well-appreciated address on the need for women's empowerment in India.



Mrs Sheela Rani Chunkath, IAS, hoists the national flag at OMHSS

There were celebrations at the Adyar Theosophical Academy too! The flag was hoisted by the Chief Guest, Ms Nancy Secret, international Treasurer of the Theosophical Society.

The National Anthem was followed by a patriotic song — *Hind Desh Ke Nivasi*, sung by the children, celebrating India's unity in diversity. An exhibition showcasing India's National symbols — Lotus, Banyan Tree, Tiger, Peacock, and Mango — was prepared by



Ms Nancy Secrest, international Treasurer of the TS hoists the national flag at ATA

the children with help from their teachers. Children also presented India's successful launch of Chandrayaan-2. Mr Anoop Jaiswal made a model Chandrayaan rocket which was successfully launched much to the joy of the students and travelled 80 metres upwards!



Mr Anoop Jaiswal lights the model Chandrayaan rocket

## SEMINAR ON 'MISSION STATEMENT 2019'

The Madras Theosophical Federation (MTF) held a seminar on the theme 'Mission Statement 2019' on 31 August 2019, at the Blavatsky Bungalow. Dr N. C. Ramanujachary, President of the MTF, welcomed the gathering and explained that the Mission Statement had been recently formulated by the General Council of the Theosophical Society at its meeting in July 2018. Dr R. Revathy, Prof. C. A. Shinde and Ms Sonal Murali elaborated

on the sub-clauses of the statement, namely: 'Cultivating an Ever-deepening Understanding', 'Realization of the Ageless Wisdom', and 'Spiritual Self-transformation'. Ms Nancy Secrest, international Treasurer and Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary, who are also ex-officio members of the General Council which formulated the Mission Statement, summarized the proceedings. Mr S. Raman, Secretary of the MTF, proposed the vote of thanks.

## NATURE WALK BY STELLA MARIS COLLEGE STUDENTS

On 27 July 2019, students from the Zoology Department of the Stella Maris College, one of the leading women's colleges in Chennai city, took a nature walk inside our beautiful campus and their experience (in their own words) is narrated here:

### Believing in Nature

We were a slightly muted group like birds on a windy, overcast day, occasionally interrupted by a series of loud, wet coughs or a surprised sneeze, murmurs of 'Bless you' and 'Excuse me' following after. 27th of July

dawned dull and chilly, with huge puddles on the roads bearing witness to the heavy rains the day before.



A ramble through the verdant estate

The Shikra Club, an initiative of the Department of Zoology of Stella Maris College, visited the historic Theosophical Society. This marked the Club's second field trip, in as many months, since its founding. We thought our first trip and the subsequent studying of field notes had primed us for spotting and identifying the various creatures around us. No one had imagined the sheer magnitude and diversity of life in the Theosophical Society.

Though our Club is a group of students of Zoology, our teachers believe our understanding of Nature should not be restricted to the observation of animal species alone. After all, it is greenery that supports life.

'Learning about plants and trying to establish connections between them and animals will help us predict what kind of fauna we could encounter on a particular plant', explained one of our teachers.

The firebush (*Hamelia patens*) attracts sunbirds and butterflies for pollination. The

crown flower (*Calotropis gigantea*) is host to a variety of insects and butterflies — particularly the milkweed butterflies. Observing a large colony of flying foxes (fruit bats) was one of the high points of the trip. Fanning their wings and swaying upside-down on the branches of a banyan tree, it was almost as though they were posing for the entourage of cameras and excited students.

The white-throated kingfisher appeared to be tailing us instead of the other way round. From sitting atop a high leafless branch, to watching a woodpecker fraternize with the Seven Sisters (Yellow-billed Babbler), then showing off and modelling for five whole minutes, all the while munching on a worm, and finally bidding us goodbye on our walk back to the gate, the turquoise blue halcyon bird was everywhere!

In just two and a half hours, The Shikra Club was able to spot 44 species of arthropods, 2 species of molluscs, 2 species of reptiles, 4 species of mammals and 26 species of birds! The Club is very grateful to the Theosophical Society for allowing us to experience a small part of the diverse life on the grounds, and to Dr Geetha Jaikumar for teaching us things only experience and commitment can.



Something interesting spotted in the bushes!

**LIST OF DONATIONS: Rs 5,000 AND ABOVE**  
**DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (TS)**

1 April to 30 June 2019

	<u>Rs.</u>		<u>Rs.</u>
<b>GENERAL DONATIONS</b>		Ms Supriya Mimani, India	9500
Ms Diana Ratnagar, India	200000	Mrs S. Nirmala, India	10000
<b>ADYAR DAY CONTRIBUTIONS</b>		Ms R. Manimegalai, India	5000
Noida Lodge, India	10000	Mr N. Sreekumar, India	5000
Hyderabad Theosophical Society, India	5690	Ms S. Geetha, India	5000
<b>ARCHIVES</b>		<b>LBC RENOVATION</b>	
Mr Sanjiv Narayan, India	500000	Ms Tehmina Annie Pomeroy, India	350000
Mrs Saraswati Narayan, India	300000	Ms Malti Vinayak Pandya, India	50000
Mr Anupam Narayan, India	720000	Ms Apurva Vinayak Pandya, India	50000
Mr Chetna Narayan, India	100000	Mr Vinayak Ramashankar Pandya, India	75000
Ms Deepa Narayan, India	700000	Mrs Thrity Cyrus Dalal, India	200000
Ms Pratima Dayal, India	100000	<b>ABC ENDOWMENT FUND</b>	
<b>BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY</b>		Mrs Padma Venkataraman, India	100000
Mr Amit Sudhir Nichani, India	20000	<b>ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY</b>	
Chennai Animal Rescue, India	6000	Mrs Lata Kiran Metha, India	11000

**DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY**

1 June 2019 to 31 August 2019

	<u>Rs.</u>		<u>Rs.</u>
<b>INDIAN DONATIONS</b>		India Inclusion Foundation	50000
Mr Suresh Krishn	20000	Mr J. Ramakrishnan	13000
Mr Madhan Karky	10000	Sundaram Medical Foundation	25000
Chaitanya Foundation Pvt. Ltd.	10000	ECS	23150
Ms Kanchana Prasanna	10000	<b>FCRA DONATIONS</b>	
S. H. Associates	50000	Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, France	15364
Mr Rajaram Majali	15000	TOS, Finland	76220
Mr Rahul Shankar	60000	TOS, Australia	140686
NEB Sports Entertainment Pvt. Ltd.	50000	<b>ENDOWMENT</b>	
Dharma Paripalana Sabha	26000	Mrs Sashikala Sriram	10000
RCC Magnum Foundation	50000	Mr N. Chandra Sekara Kumaran	10000
Sri Chakra Builders	10000	Ms Usha Loknath	10000
Aristocrat Foundation	50000		

**Cover Picture: R. R. Chari**

The rose-ringed parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), also known as the ring-necked parakeet, is a vibrantly bright green bird, frequently found in woodlands, parks, and gardens, where it feeds mainly on the trees. The male wears a narrow black and pink collar, while in the female this ring is missing. It nests in cavities, including holes in buildings.

Edited by Dr Geetha Jaikumar, published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan and printed by Mr V. Gopalan  
at The Vasanta Press, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India

ISSN 09720-1878

Regd. No. R.N. 5627/1960