

Adyar Newsletter

June-July-August 2023

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A Blue Jay rests on a tree branch in the TS Adyar Estate

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, ADYAR, CHENNAI, INDIA

THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE (TOS) NATIONAL CONFERENCE

A two-day National Conference of the TOS was organized by the Adyar Group, Chennai Region, on 8 and 9 July 2023, to commemorate the 175th birth anniversary of Dr Annie Besant. Founded by Dr Besant in 1908 to alleviate the suffering of humanity, the TOS encourages self-forgetful service and is the natural counterpart of the work of the Theosophical Society to guide people to wisdom.

The programme began with the universal invocation and a song on Dr Besant sung by Ms K. Jaishree. Mr S. K. Srinivasan, President of the TOS, Chennai Region, welcomed the gathering, while Mr K. Sivaprasad, National Director of the TOS, India, gave the formal welcome address. The inaugural address was given by the international Secretary (TOS), Mrs Nancy Secrest. There were a number of inspiring short talks on Dr Besant

and her work on both the days by various speakers. An entertainment programme by the special children of Sri Arunodayam thrilled the audience and kept them riveted to their seats.

The Conference concluded with a presentation of the TOS activities by various regional groups, the annual general body meeting of the TOS India, and meaningful deliberations on the roadmap for the future.



Participants of the TOS National Conference

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

On 15 August this year, India celebrated her 77th Independence Day after throwing off the yoke of British colonialism. The nation simultaneously rejoiced and paid homage to the countless patriots who had made enormous sacrifices and laid down their lives to win this precious freedom.

There were celebrations galore on the TS estate to mark this special day. At the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, Rtn. R. Praveen, the President of the Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra, hoisted the national flag and delivered an inspiring speech, stressing the need for freedom, unity, and progress. This was followed by a captivating cultural programme and concluded with the distribution of awards to the students who had excelled in academics and topped in the public examinations.

At the Adyar Theosophical Academy,

Mrs Nancy Secrest, international Treasurer of the Theosophical Society, hoisted the national flag. This year, the students who had taken a deep dive into the history of Indian textiles, visited Kalakshetra to learn more about the weaving looms and handloom fabrics. They showcased their learnings with an impressive exhibition on the rich variety of Indian textiles. Songs, dance performances, poetry recitations, and skits, all revolving around India's rich textile heritage, helped to amplify the students' understanding of this marvellous and diverse aspect of India's heritage and culture.

Not to be outdone, the Social Welfare Centre too celebrated this special day with flag hoisting by the General Manager of the TS, Mr K. Jaikumar. This was followed by an endearing cultural ensemble by the tiny tots of the Centre.

PROGRAMME TO RE-CONNECT WITH MOTHER NATURE

On 27 August 2023, the Blavatsky Bungalow hummed with activity. The Madras Theosophical Federation and the Vasanta Youth Lodge jointly conducted a thought-provoking seminar titled “Re-connecting with Mother Nature”. An exhibition on “Eco-friendly Products and Alternatives to Plastics” was put up in the spacious verandas surrounding the building and provided practical tips on how to move away from a wasteful, use-and-throw lifestyle to an ecofriendly one.

The MTF President, Mr Vinay Patri, welcomed the gathering and spoke about the need to eschew the use of plastics, drawing attention to the dangers caused to the earth and all its inhabitants by the mountainous piles of discarded plastic waste. There were a number of other extremely inspiring talks by speakers who spoke with a passion born

of conviction of the urgency of addressing the problem before it was too late. The keynote address was given by Mr J. Radhakrishnan IAS, Commissioner, Corporation of Madras, while the other speakers were Mr Natarajan, Climate Leader and Founder of PUVI Earth Care Solutions, Prof. Indumathi from IIT Madras, and Environment and SWM Enthusiasts, Ms Janani Venkitesh and Ms P. Saranya.

As part of this event, young school children took part in an immersive art activity where they were grouped and given different themes like kindness, love, friendship, and cleanliness, to ponder and discuss. They then converted their thoughts into vibrant illustrations which were imprinted on cloth bags that they were allowed to take home to use for shopping. It was a sensitive, yet fun-filled event, replete with environmental learning.



Mr Vinay Patri
MTF President



Mr J. Radhakrishnan IAS
Corpn. Commissioner



Mr Tim Boyd, President
Theosophical Society



The young children proudly
show off their creations

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

After the summer break, OMHSS reopened for the middle and senior school on 12 June 2023, while the junior school reopened on 14 June. Prior to the reopening of the school, there was a professional development programme for the OMHSS teachers, spread over three days, covering areas like the handling of emotions, teaching techniques for various types of learners and the use of planning, teamwork, concentration, and strategy, for making the teaching-learning process more effective.



Professional development programme attendees

The investiture ceremony held on 16 June was a solemn affair when the members of the Students’ Union took the oath of office.

The annual day celebration took place on 14 July with Mrs Malathy Sreenivasan, former Principal, Devi Academy, as the Chief Guest. The students did the school proud by putting up a breathtaking display of dances, songs, and skits.

Nine students of OMHSS were part of a project, "Ocean Matters" organised by the Consulate of the United States and The Energy Resources Institute (TERI). They were trained by the TERI staff to measure the salinity gradient at various points on Elliott's Beach,

which they then successfully explained to Mr Michael Regan, US Minister for Environment, who was in the city to attend the G20 summit. A truly proud moment for Olcott!



OMHSS students at Elliott's Beach

The Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)

After the summer break, the ATA sprang back to life on 14 June 2023. Walking into their green haven with a bounce in their stride, the students returned to ATA's fifth academic year with excitement and anticipation.

ATA's fourth birthday on 24 June 2023 was celebrated before the school closed, with poetry, music, puppetry, a skit titled "a day in ATA", and a school-wide art project illustrating the beauty of the campus and their aspirations for the future. Grade 5 presented a shadow puppet show and penned a poem titled, "In a little school amidst the green", while Grade 6 sang a rap song that they had composed. ATA now has classes up to Grade 6 with a total of 185 students and 24 educators. Three newly constructed classrooms have created beautiful learning spaces for the children, with big glass windows on the eastern side affording an enchanting view of the forest outside.

At one of the morning assemblies there was an interaction with Dr P. V. Venkatkrishnan, Retd. Director of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) who explained the process in the making of Chandrayan-3, right up to its landing on the south pole of the Moon, in as simple a manner as possible. Needless to say, it whetted the students' curiosity and they were literally over the moon! This year, Grades 3-6 stay back for an extra hour to learn yoga, dance, art, sports, and chess.



Shadow Puppet show



ATA children at work

WISDOM FOR LIVING LECTURES

As has become the norm, we have had monthly meetings under the "Wisdom for Living" series. On 24 June 2023, Ms Archana Stalin gave an extremely informative speech on the topic, "You Are What You Eat" — highlighting the dangers of pesticides and harmful chemicals in our food and the need to go organic; on 22 July, Mr R. Jagannathan, an

architect by profession, spoke about "Holistic Spaces" and the need to harness the unseen vibrations and forces of Nature for creating harmonious buildings; on 26 August we had Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar, Founder, Sneha Suicide Prevention Centre, speaking to us on "Positive Mental Health". All the lectures were extremely informative and thought-provoking.

NEWS FROM THE BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

Due to the large influx of injured urban wildlife rescued by the Forest Department and brought for treatment to BMAD, a need was felt for an exclusive space for treating wild animals as they are extremely shy and prone to stress. When approached, the TS management was kind enough to allot *Shanti Kunj*, an old bungalow on the eastern side of the estate for setting up a Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. The facility has already treated and rehabilitated several deer, monkeys and other wild mammals,

including a variety of birds and reptiles, since it was set up a few months ago.



Shanti Kunj

ADYAR LIBRARY AND RESEARCH CENTRE SEMINAR

On 26 and 27 July 2023, the Adyar Library and Research Centre (ALRC) organized a two-day seminar on the theme, "Indian Classical Texts in the 20th and 21st Centuries". Aably spearheaded and organized by the ALRC Director, Mrs Radha Raghunathan, and assisted by the ALRC Librarian, Ms K. Jaishree, the seminar provided an opportunity for the coming together of a number of luminaries and experts in the field who shared their knowledge and wisdom gleaned over years of patient research and study of the classical texts.

The programme began with a prayer and

the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries. Mr K. Jaikumar, General Manager of the TS Estate, welcomed the gathering and touched briefly upon the history of the library, founded by Colonel H. S. Olcott. Benedictory addresses were given by H. H. Sri Sri Vidyadheesha Teertha Swamiji, Pithadhipati of Sri Palimaru Matha and by H. H. Swami Srihariprasadji, Founder and Managing Trustee, SVMF, Chennai. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, also addressed the gathering online. The seminar which concluded late in the evening of the second day was greatly appreciated by all.



Lighting the Lamp



Mr K. Jaikumar



Mr Tim Boyd's online address



Mrs Radha Raghunathan

LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITIES

The Adyar Library and Research Centre (ALRC) had monthly meetings to showcase its wonderful collection of books. On 17

June, Mrs Sonal Murali, Director, Adyar Theosophical Academy, gave tantalizing glimpses of the various books in the library,

on the theme “Occultism”. On 15 July, Mr C. A. Shinde, former ALRC Librarian, spoke about “Spirituality” which was the theme for that month, while touching upon the various books on display. On 19 August, we had Mr G. Kameshwar, speaking about the

books available on the theme “Books on the Path of Self-Knowledge”. These monthly “book-reading and discussion” sessions started recently have become extremely popular with good attendance from Library users.

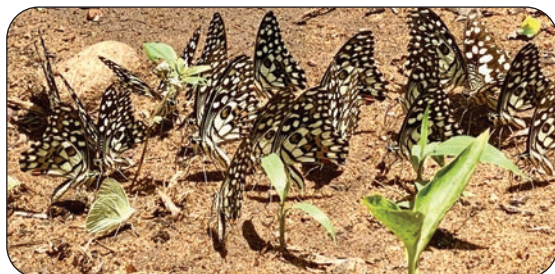
ADYAR NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT CENTRE (ANEC)

The months of July and August are filled with clouds of colourful butterflies that transform the TS campus into a bejewelled fairyland. To experience and enjoy the season, ANEC partnered with the Madras Naturalists’ Society (MNS) to conduct two walks — a Butterfly Walk

on 29 July and an Ant Walk on 19 August, both led by a young and extremely knowledgeable MNS member, M. Yuvan. Twenty members — adults and children — participated and blissfully immersed themselves in the world of Nature for a few hours.



ANEC-MNS Nature walk participants



Mud puddling butterflies

PASSED TO PEACE

It is with profound sorrow that we report the demise of Bro. S. Harihara Raghavan on 18 June 2023, at the age of 88 years. A long-time resident of the Adyar estate, he joined the Theosophical Society (TS) more than six decades ago at Anantha Lodge, Thiruvananthapuram.

He served at the International Headquarters of the TS at Adyar in many capacities. At various times he looked after the Bookshop, the Vasanta Press, the Theosophical Publishing House, the Adyar Library and Research Centre, the Garden Department, and as the General Manager of the estate. He also served as a National Lecturer of the Indian Section and was a member of various theosophical bodies including the TS Executive Committee, and the Olcott Education Society, among others.



He is survived by his wife, Radha, daughter, Priya, and son, Rajesh. He will be greatly missed at Adyar and we pray that his soul may rest in peace.



Mr M. Natarajan

Mr M. Natarajan (77) who worked in the Theosophical Publishing House and the Adyar Library, digitizing books and manuscripts for about three months, passed away on 26 July 2023. He is survived by his wife, Sudha Natarajan, and two sons. May his soul rest in peace.

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Fascinating History of the Small Village Temple on the TS Estate at Adyar

Near the Main Gate of the estate, about 200 yards from the bank of the Adyar River, there is a small temple, near which in the olden days, there was a Neem (Margosa) Tree, associated with the dark cult. The villagers from the nearby village of Urur believed that the Tree was inhabited by a cruel, malignant entity who they believed had the power to bring small-pox and cholera upon them, when dissatisfied. Out of ignorance and fear, they worshipped there once a year, offering blood-sacrifices to this demon. They seemed to think that this abominable entity was the spirit of the Tree though C. W. Leadbeater says that it was nothing of the kind, but an artificial elemental formed long ago by a local leader who dabbled in black magic and attached by him to that particular spot because an atrocious murder had been committed there.

This demon appeared in the form of a loathsome old hag, half human in shape, with a craving for blood that alone enabled her to prolong her baneful existence. To keep her happy and satiated, the villagers of Urur performed a ceremony annually, when they came in a procession late in the evening to the Tree, bringing with them a specially selected and prepared boy, who after a bath in the Adyar river, was expected to get possessed by the *amma* and fall into a trance and answer questions asked of him. After this they would return to the temple where after further ceremonies, animal sacrifices used to take place.

To prevent the heinous practice of animal sacrifice on the TS estate, C. Jinarajadasa erected a tiny temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha, one of the two sons of Lord Shiva, and after placing an idol there, got it formally consecrated by the Brahmin priests

from the Adyar Library. And to remove all trace of evil magnetism in connection with the Tree, he decided to request the representatives of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, to perform certain ceremonies to purify the area and also free the Tree from the presence of the malignant spirit.



Ganesha Temple



Ponni Amman shrine

A Buddhist Bhikkhu, Rev. Nilwakke Somananda of Ceylon, who was residing at the Ashrama of the Maha Bodhi Society, came to the Tree at 8 a.m. and recited three sermons of the Lord Buddha, calling upon all creatures of the earth and the invisible worlds present at the spot to give their goodwill and assistance to human beings.

In the afternoon, a Christian ceremony took place, with Bishop Leadbeater, assisted by the Rev. C. D. T. Shores, in full vestments, with mitre and crozier, exorcising the Tree according to the Christian ritual, using magnetized salt and water, driving away all evil influences, and preventing the spot ever being used again by the invisible entity of the dark cult. He then placed the Tree under the guardianship of a minor Deva.

Later, in the evening, at 5.30 p.m., four Brahmin priests performed a Hindu ceremony by chanting Vedic verses, and later sprinkling the water in a brass pot

which had become magnetised, all around the tree, forming a protective circle.

All these ceremonies of the three religions were performed, to free the spot from evil influences, and also to strengthen the efforts of the villagers to abolish blood sacrifices

as part of their religious ceremonies. And when Jinarajadasa constructed the platform around the tree, he deliberately arranged for one side to touch the Ganesha temple so that the Tree might be magnetically linked with the Temple.

Editor's note: *The Tree has since died due to age, but on its base is kept the idol of Ponni Amman, and this hallowed spot continues to be worshipped even today.*

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 June 2023 to 31 August 2023

(Above Rs. 30,000)

	Rs.		Rs.
GENERAL DONATION			
The Theosophical Society in USA	35,37,122	Vinodhini Gnanasambandam, India	58,000
Krishnaswamy Associates Pvt Ltd., India	50,000	Jazz Animal Foundation, India	55,500
ATA CLASSROOMS			
L&T Technology Services, India	20,00,000	Vikram Surana, India	50,001
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY			
Vinoth Sampath, India	2,00,000	Parameshwaran Ravi Shankar, India	50,000
Neelima Bajaj Swamy, India	1,80,000	A. K. Siva, India	50,000
The Crowd Wave Trust, India	1,00,000	Kumararaja Thiagarajan, India	50,000
Vara Futura LLP, India	1,00,000	Gowthami Sekar, India	31,000
Krishna Mines, India	1,00,000	Arvind Kumar Selvaraj, India	30,163
B. Vikram Kumar Bagmar, India	1,00,000	ADYAR RENOVATIONS	
Lakshana Viravalli, India	75,000	The Theosophical Society in USA	12,47,456
Shunmuga Nathan Narendran, India	61,001	ART RESTORATION PROJECT	
		Theosophical Society in Switzerland	3,14,265
		LILY BOYD'S PROJECTS	
		Theosophical Society in Italy	2,66,947

DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 June 2023 to 31 August 2023

	Rs.		Rs.
INDIAN DONATIONS			
Udayakumar Selvan	50,000	CANSTOP	50,000
The Theosophical Society, Adyar	30,00,000	MRT No.1 Charitable Trust	50,000
RCC Magnum Foundation	50,000	Wipro Cares	8,25,000
Rotary Club of Madras East Trust	1,00,000	Sneha Foundation Trust	50,000
Rahul Shankar	1,00,000	Timesol Facility Management Pvt Ltd.	50,000
Theosophical Order of Service	2,71,950	Dharma Paripalana Sabha Annadhanam and Charitable Trust	45,000
		Asha for Education	16,30,000

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. The Indian Roller or Blue Jay (*Coracias benghalensis*) is a pretty bird with a mesmerizing azure blue tail, known for its startling aerobic display during courtship. It nests in tree holes or cavities in tall buildings and feeds on all kinds of insects, reptiles, moths, and frogs.

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