

Adyar Newsletter

March-April-May 2023

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Flower of the Powder Puff Tree

WHITE LOTUS DAY

Let us not only remember her [HPB] with gratitude, but obey the instructions which she gave us, and live the theosophic life. In that we shall be raising a true monument to her memory, in the way she would most have desired. ~ C. W. Leadbeater

White Lotus Day is the celebration in which theosophists all over the world join, without exception, to pay homage to that great 'Light-Bringer' and root-source of the modern theosophical movement, Madame H. P. Blavatsky. When HPB laid aside her most troublesome mortal coil on 8 May 1891, she had expressed the wish that at the anniversary of her death, friends should gather and read portions from *The Light of Asia* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Her great colleague and President of the Society, Col. Olcott, instituted the commemoration of the day from 1892 and he also included a reading from HPB's last book, *The Voice of the Silence*. And we are told that on the first anniversary white lotuses bloomed in profusion on the Adyar estate which made Colonel Olcott give it the name 'White Lotus Day'.

On 8 May 2023, residents and members gathered in the great Hall of the Headquarters at Adyar for a solemn meeting. Mr C. A. Shinde welcomed the gathering and Catalina Isaza-Cantor spoke on 'HPB: A Timeless Light Bearer'. There were readings from *The Light of Asia* (Geetha

Subramanian), *Bhagavad Gita* (R. Vighnesh) and *The Voice of the Silence* (Geetha Jaikumar). The meeting began and ended with chanting by Jaishree Kannan, that reverberated and filled the beautiful Hall with a wondrous melody. The meeting concluded with the offering of flowers to the statues of the Founders.



ADYAR LIBRARY AND RESEARCH CENTRE (ALRC)

In an attempt to increase the readership at the ALRC, a series of initiatives have been mooted. One such is the 'Libraries as Communities' gathering every month, where a theme-based display of books available at the ALRC will be organized for the readers. An invited speaker will give a brief introductory talk about the books available on the chosen theme, followed

by a discussion and an invitation to the audience to browse through the displayed books and borrow them, if interested.

The first session on the theme 'Meditation' was held on Saturday, 1 April 2023 at 11 a.m. Over a hundred books on meditation available at the ALRC, including many rare and valuable ones were displayed. Ms Jaishree Kannan, Librarian, welcomed

the gathering and Mr K. Jaikumar, General Manager of the TS estate, explained the rationale behind the new initiative and the steps proposed to be taken to popularize the usage of the library and its precious resources. The international Secretary of the TS, Ms Marja Artamaa, gave a bird's-eye view of the various books displayed and invited the participants to browse through them.

The second session of 'Libraries as

Communities' was held on 6 May 2023 on the theme 'Mysticism'. The lead speaker for this session was Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, Assistant to the General Manager of the TS estate, and he gave a gist of the various books displayed on this theme. Two follow-up book-reading and discussion sessions were also conducted by him on the two following Saturdays, for a more in-depth exploration of the theme and proved to be extremely interesting and informative.



NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

The last quarter of the academic year 2022-2023 wound down with some interesting events. Jessica Kay Frankl, a Fulbright English teacher from the USA successfully completed one year of English teaching for the middle-school students before returning to her country. Her stint at the Olcott School where she endeared herself to both students and staff, was reported in the *Adyar Times*, a local weekly newspaper, as well as in *The Hindu*, a popular national daily newspaper.

In the Class XII public examination held in March 2023, A. R. Thameema of the Commerce Stream was the school topper, securing 570 marks out of 600. While there was 100% pass in the Science and Commerce streams, there were three failures in the History stream mainly due to irregular attendance and consequent missing

of classes. The pass percentage for classes X and XI was 70% and 80% respectively. Overall, the school management felt that the results were satisfactory keeping in mind the classes missed due to the closure of the school during the pandemic.



OMHSS teachers attend a training session on using the smartboard

The Rotary Club of Chennai Mithra had donated a Smartboard to OMHSS. This was installed in May 2023 and training sessions were conducted for the teachers in its effective use in classroom teaching.

Ten girl students who had completed their twelfth class attended a two-day training programme in cosmetology and beauty arts and also received certificates.

In an important initiative, the TVS Free Skill Training Centre in Chennai has admitted 6 boys from the OMHSS alumni for a three month in-house intensive skill development training programme, scheduled to begin during the first week of June 2023. The selected boys will be given free accommodation, food, uniforms and training. Successful completion of the

course will greatly enhance their ability to get a good job placement in various automobile and engineering companies. A wonderful opportunity indeed!



The TVS Free Skill Training Centre

The Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)

The ATA came to the end of another year filled with learnings, celebrations and memories, culminating in the showcasing of the Annual Day, *Umang*, on 25 March 2023. This much-looked-forward-to event took place in the Adyar Theatre in the main campus of the Theosophical Society, where, as the sun set, the stage came alive with the sound of music, dance, and drama, throbbing with the excitement and anticipation that the children held in their hearts.

The Chief Guest for the event, Mrs Uma Shankar, Director of the Indian Montessori Training Course, shared some beautiful insights on the meaning of real education along with some heart-touching anecdotes. Grade 5 presented her with a memento — a table runner made using applique work, a technique they had enjoyed exploring over the year.

Children of every class presented a medley of programmes, all captivating and refreshing. A dance drama, 'The Enchanted Forest', dedicated a visual prayer to Mother

Nature who is forever protecting, feeding, and nurturing us.

Cheerful songs sung by the children in many languages describing the beauty of Nature, the city's beautiful coastline, and songs on friendship, love, unity and kindness had everyone's feet tapping and hands clapping. The thought-provoking and witty *Villu Paattu* sequence, a traditional musical storytelling art form in Tamil Nadu, was performed by Grades 4 and 5 to tell the tale of our beloved river, 'Adyar'.



Villu Paattu — A musical story-telling

The kindergarten children celebrated *Umang* on 28 March in the amphitheatre on the ATA grounds. Dressed in cute attires

and equipped with colourful props, the children greeted everyone with big smiles. They sang and danced with elan and also dramatized an engaging tale 'The Rooster and the Sun', based on a folktale of the Ao tribe in Nagaland which depicted the important role played by the Sun in our lives for the survival of all living creatures. The month-long preparations for *Umang* thus had interesting learning experiences for the children by creating an opportunity for them to engage with the joys of life.



The Rooster and the Sun — dance

THE HPB BOYS HOSTEL

The HPB hostel was founded in 1971 as a memorial to our great Founder, Madame H. P. Blavatsky. It provides free board and lodging for select students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School who have an aptitude for learning but whose home environment is not conducive for studying. There are around 12 boys — studying in classes VI through XII — staying in this hostel.



The HPB hostel building

The Hostel Committee carefully selects the boys based on their background and potential and they live in the hostel until their schooling is completed. All their basic needs — bed, food, clothing, toiletries like soap, oil etc. — are provided so that they lack nothing and can concentrate on their

studies. They have also been provided with sports equipment (badminton racquets, football, carrom board etc.) so that they can play games in their leisure hours.

The hostel which had earlier been functioning from a building in Besant Gardens on the TS estate since its inception, moved to more spacious and modern premises located very close to the Olcott School buildings, in 2022. Logistically this was preferred as the proximity to the school made it easier for the hostel students to commute and also helped in better supervision.

Since the shifting of the hostel to its new location, Mrs Lily Boyd has been taking a personal interest in equipping the hostel with the needed furniture and facilities. Apart from using her personal funds, she has been actively involved in getting donations from TS members and lodges all over the world for this purpose. And not only this, she has taken great pains to get to know each hostel child and talks to all of them on video calls periodically, even when she is back home in the US. Recently, under her direction, the area outside the hostel was paved with paver blocks so that the children do not bring in dust and make the floor dirty when they enter the hostel. Bunk beds with good mattresses and bed linen have been

provided so that the children can enjoy a good night's sleep. Curtains have been hung on the windows to make it more homely and a host of other improvements made besides.



The hostel living room

The main purpose of all these improvements is to make the space into a warm and loving home for the children, where they can study peacefully without any worries or stress.



Bunk beds for the hostel boys

BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

BMAD is happy to welcome Dr Ayyappan as a member of the veterinary team. Formerly the Head of Surgery at the Madras Veterinary College, Dr Ayyappan is an expert in complicated orthopaedic procedures. Associated with BMAD for many years as a part time consultant, Dr Ayyappan's presence has greatly

enhanced the veterinary capability of the facility by training and mentoring the younger vets in handling complicated ortho procedures efficiently and with confidence.



WISDOM FOR LIVING LECTURE SERIES

Three interesting and useful lectures were organised under the Wisdom for Living Series. In March, Dr Balaji Srinivasan spoke about how we can prevent orthopaedic problems by making lifestyle changes; while in April, Guru Swami Bodhananda

gave a scintillating talk on Mythology and Mysticism; and in May, Mr G. Reguraman shared his experience on the journey of achieving holistic wellness by harmonizing and keeping the various bodies (physical, mental and astral) in balance.

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Much has been spoken and written about Madame Blavatsky's famous Scrapbooks. But lost in the mists of time is an enchanting story about the magic embedded in the colourful front cover of the first volume.

HPB with friends bought some illustrated alphabets, which come in sheets like the little sheets of birds, flowers and animals so popular for decorating pottery and vases. She was making a scrap book and wished to arrange her title page with these pretty coloured letters. But she was short of a few alphabets and so she precipitated

them to the delight of her companions at the Lamasery!

The above incident was published by *The Hartford Daily Times*, 2 December 1878, along with details about the time spent by one of their reporters with HPB and her pupils at the Lamasery, New York. Colonel Olcott had also quoted portions of

this article in the *Old Dairy Leaves*, Vol. I, but Mary K. Neff, one of the early archivists at Adyar, felt that it merited publication in full and therefore ensured that it was published in *The Theosophist*, March 1934.

**Ante and Post Natal
HISTORY
of the
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
Tribulations, Mortifications
and
TRIUMPHS
of its
FELLOWS**



To quote from the *The Hartford Daily Times*:
'Madame, my friend and myself were out one day, looking about the stores, when she said she desired some of these illuminated alphabets which come in sheets like the little painted sheets of birds, flowers, animals, and other figures so popular for decorating pottery and vases. She was making a scrap-book, and wished to arrange her title page in these pretty colored letters. Well, we hunted everywhere, but could not find any, until at last we found just one sheet, containing the twenty-six letters, somewhere on Sixth Avenue. Madame bought that one and we went home. She wanted several, of course, but not finding them, proceeded to use what

she could of this. My friend and I sat down beside her little table, whilst she got out her scrap-book and busily began to paste her letters in. By and by she exclaimed petulantly, "I want two S's, two P's and two A's."

I said, "Madame, I will go and search for them downtown. I presume I can find them somewhere." "No, you need not," she answered. Then, suddenly looking up, said, "Do you wish to see me make some?" "Make some? How? Paint some?"

"No, make some exactly like these."

"But how is that possible? These are printed by machinery."

"It is possible — see!"

She put her finger on the S and looked upon it. She looked at it with infinite intensity. Her brow ridged out. She seemed the very spirit of will. In about half a minute she smiled, lifted her finger, took up two S's exactly alike, exclaiming, "It is done!" She did the same with the P's.

Then my friend thought: "If this is trickery, it can be detected. In one alphabet can be but one letter of a kind. I will try her." So, he said, "Madame, supposing this time, instead of making the two letters separately, you join them together, thus; A — A?"

"It makes no difference to me how I do it"; she replied, indifferently, and placing her finger on the A, in a few seconds she took it up, and handed him two A's joined together as he desired. They were as if stamped from the same piece of paper. There were no seams or joinings of any kind. She had to cut them apart to use them. This was in broad daylight, in the presence of no one but myself and my friend, and done simply for her own convenience.

We were both astounded and lost in admiration. We examined them with the utmost care. They seemed as much alike as two peas in a pod.'

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 March 2023 to 31 May 2023

	Rs.		Rs.
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY		Vikram Surana, India	30,000
Jan De Nul Dredging India Pvt. Ltd, India	8,00,000	Mallica Banthia, India	30,000
Terra Mater Inc., USA	4,03,131	S. Bhooma, India	25,000
Neelima Bajaj Swamy, India	1,80,000	A. K. Siva, India	25,000
Sangeetha Viswanathan, India	1,05,750	Vandana Bhaskaran, India	25,000
Vinodhini Gnanasambandam, India	51,000	Shunmuga Nathan Narendran, India	22,000
Century Plyboards India Ltd, India	51,000	Milaap Social Ventures India Pvt. Ltd, India	20,748
Prasanna Muppidi, India	50,000	ADYAR DAY DONATIONS	
JAZZ Animal Foundation, India	50,000	The Theosophical Society in Spain	1,90,100
Adam and Coal Resources Pvt. Ltd, India	50,000	Karnataka Theosophical Federation, India	25,902
Veronica Gamboa, USA	40,276	GENERAL DONATION	
Pradeep Ramachandran, India	40,000	Krishnaswamy Associates, India	55,000
Tanvi R. Kamdar, India	38,500	ATA – KIRBY GARDENS CLASSROOMS	
Nusky Mumtaz, India	30,200	TOS In Odisha, India	1,66,295

DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 March 2023 to 31 May 2023

	Rs.		Rs.
INDIAN DONATIONS		Dharma Paripalana Sabha Annadhanam	
Vijayalakshmi Kalyanasundaram	4,250	and Charitable Turst	30,000
KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP.	85,200	Tamarai Credit & Investments Pvt. Ltd	10,000
Madav Baskarrao Naidu	10,000	Marja Artamaa on behalf of TOS Finland	2,62,300
Qualcomm India Pvt. Ltd	50,000	Decathlon Sports India Pvt. Ltd	50,000
Indian Plumbing Association	50,000	Dr P. Tirumalai	15,000
The Esoteric School of Theosophy	50,000	Wipro Cares	8,25,000

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

S. Harihara Raghavan
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Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. The Powder Puff tree (*Calliandra haematocephala*) is a native Bolivian evergreen shrub whose beautiful flowers attract butterflies and other pollinators.

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