

Adyar Newsletter

September-October-November 2023

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A Family of Spotted Owlets

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

ANNIE BESANT'S BIRTHDAY

On 1 October, the birth anniversary of Dr Annie Besant, that remarkable 'warrior soul' with a lion heart in a tiny frame was celebrated. International President of the Society from 1907 to her passing in 1933, Dr Besant's driving energy, fighting spirit, and brilliant intellect, carried her to the top in every cause she espoused, from the Free Thought and Suffragette Movements in England in her early years, to the Independence Movement and social, educational and religious reform in India, the country of her adoption.



Mr Tim Boyd addresses the audience

Humble till the very end, she always shrugged off the praise that was showered on her, as she said: 'I am only a poor instrument in far mightier hands, and you should no more praise me than you praise the chisel in the hands of the sculptor. The sculptor

cuts the marble into some exquisite form of beauty. You praise the artist and not the tool. . . . For me I will do my best, but [as] my great leader, Madame H. P. Blavatsky said: "I am only the window through which the sun comes.""

At Adyar, there was a wonderful meeting at the Headquarters Hall to remember this great soul. The programme began with chanting by Jaishree Kannan, followed by an inspiring talk on Dr Besant by Mr Tim Boyd, international President of the TS. He then presented the Annie Besant award for service to humanity to the TOS Madras Region in recognition of the excellent work done by them. Later in the evening, at the Blavatsky Bungalow, there was an hour-long beautiful sitar concert by Shri Hemant Desai which transported the audience to sublime heights as they listened enraptured to the lilting, sonorous notes that filled the hall.



Sitar concert by Shri Hemant Desai

FOUNDATION DAY

17 November commemorates the founding of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875 with the aim of resuscitating the Ancient Wisdom and uniting the world in understanding and brotherhood. It is a day when members of the Society all over the world pay reverential tribute to our great Founders, each invoking the strength within, to stand always by what is true, right, and sacred.

At the international Headquarters at Adyar, Foundation Day was celebrated in a

slightly different fashion from the usual. The meeting began with a talk by Marja Artamaa, international Secretary, who spoke about the early days and the founding of the TS in New York, the sacrifices made by the Founders and early theosophists, and the need for all members to rededicate themselves to the cause of Theosophy, by making it a living force in their daily lives. After her talk, the newly formed Adyar Residents' Choir, consisting of around twelve enthusiastic members, led by our resident nightingale,

Jaishree Kannan, sang a number of inspiring spiritual songs in different languages — Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Sindhi, Sanskrit, English, and Spanish. The practice sessions that preceded the performance were full of fun and laughter and helped in forging stronger bonds among the residents. The meeting closed with an offering of flowers to the photo of Dr Besant and the statues of the Founders, Mme H. P. Blavatsky and Col H. S. Olcott.



The Adyar Residents' Choir

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

OMHSS, under the dynamic leadership of Mrs Sashikala Sriram and her stalwart team, has been scaling impressive heights. This quarter too has been filled with activities — both academic and otherwise.

The Annual Sports Meet was held on 13 October with Mr Saravanan (an illustrious alumnus and former head of the fishermen's community) as the chief guest. His presence added a nostalgic touch to the event, inspiring students with his journey from our school to a position of influence. In the evening, there was a prize distribution function, with Mr Tim Boyd, international President of the TS, as the chief guest.



The winners of the Sports events pose with Mr Tim Boyd



Gymnastics display by OMHSS students

Teachers' Day saw a delightful role reversal as students stepped into the shoes of the educators, making it a memorable celebration of mentorship. Four students from Class 9 secured scholarships after excelling in the Ullas Trust Test, showcasing their academic prowess and earning recognition and support for their educational journey. A Class 11 student, Kishore, secured the first place in the 110m hurdles competition earning him a well-deserved spot at the revenue district level.

A number of workshops were conducted for students including one on cyber crime by KPMG that provided valuable information on keeping safe in the face of digital threats. The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Department conducted an impactful awareness program for classes 6–10, focussing on the detrimental effects of bribery and its consequences, thus helping to build a principled and morally conscious student body.



Workshop on Cyber Crime

The teachers attended a few useful workshops including one on 'Well-Being in the Classroom', conducted by Mr J. Krishna Murthy, Retd. Headmaster of a Government school in Pondicherry, that focused on fostering teacher-student relationships, based on the philosophy of Janusz Korczak that highlights the importance of love in education.

There were a number of excursions as well — to the Crocodile Bank and the Matsya Narayana Perumal Temple, Dakshinachitra, Vandalur Zoological Park, the Railway Museum, Birla Planetarium, Pondicherry,

and Mahabalipuram. These experiences provided the students with a holistic learning platform, fostering companionship and expanding horizons.



OMHSS students at Vandalur Zoo

The Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)

The past months at the ATA have been filled with enriching experiences and memorable events, but two stand out as cherished moments for both the students and the school community.

30 September marked a significant occasion as the students enthusiastically participated in 'Ganith Charcha', a Math Day celebration that echoed the essence of its name — a day dedicated to exploring the depth and diversity of mathematics. It brought together an understanding of the patterns around us and unique teaching-learning methods aimed at internalizing these concepts. The classrooms became hubs of creativity as students crafted mathematical models, ranging from intricate Sierpinski triangles to inventive 3D chessboards.

On the day of the event, mathematics, often confined to books and abstract forms, came alive through interactive games and practical demonstrations. The special guest for the event, Mr Tim Boyd, international President, along with other members of the Theosophical Society, enjoyed exploring the puzzles, games, activities, and models, set up by each and every child. Parents, equally enthralled, spent hours touring the various engaging setups created by our students.



Mr Tim Boyd cheerfully engaging with students on Math day



Students of Grade 1 playing their life-size snake and ladder game with Ms Marja Artamaa



Erika interacting with students of Grade 3

Another treasured memory in the first term was the presence of Erika, a passionate

theosophist and educator from Argentina, who volunteered at the school. Erika immersed herself in the classrooms of Grades 1–6, spending dedicated time with each grade, understanding the nuances of the teaching and learning methods. Her vision is to establish a theosophical school in Argentina after taking back insights from here.

ART RESTORATION WORK

TS is home to a largely unknown but exceptional collection of artwork comprising over 100 pieces, primarily featuring a selection of paintings representing the Bengal School of Arts. Other remarkable works of art in the Adyar estate collection include a series of small format portraits by Florence Ada Fuller, a painter, who lived in Adyar during the 1910s. While many of these paintings have to be ‘restored’, some of Fuller’s paintings will be exhibited during the 148th International Convention.

Restoration of these paintings has become necessary as they have deteriorated over time. Thanks to the initiative of President Tim Boyd, Elif Kamisli, a Turkish art exhibition maker and writer, and Erica Georgiades, Director, School of the Wisdom, it was decided in June 2023, to restore these paintings to their original glory. This move would not only help revive interest in the arts among the theosophical community but also encourage aspiring artists to visit and create artwork on the campus. The entire project is to be funded through donations from art lovers across the globe.

After a brief search, the Art Restoration Centre (ARC), New Delhi, led by Ms Anupama Gaur, Art Restoration Consultant, was identified and a six-month contract was executed between the TS and the ARC. As per the contract, two art restorers working full time on restoring these art pieces would stay in

During her time at the ATA, Erika seamlessly integrated into the school, forging beautiful bonds with the students and teachers. Although she has now returned to her country at the end of the first term, her involvement in the work done by the school and passion for theosophical education have left a deep impact on everyone at the school.

the campus, along with a supervisor. The work would be overseen by the Consultant from the ARC, along with periodic online monitoring by Elif Kamisli from Turkey.



Art restorers at work



Putting the finishing touches on a restored painting

Before the commencement of the actual restoration work, the work site — called the Art Restoration Laboratory (Lab) — had to be made ready. The place chosen for the Lab was the eastern wing of the Headquarters Hall where the TS Archives had earlier been located. This room had to be made dust free, with smooth and even flooring (to facilitate easy movement of trolleys with chemicals). The humidity levels also had to be controlled and brought to reasonable levels. The room

was got ready in record time by a project team in the TS, thus enabling the art restorers to commence work as per schedule on 11 September 2023.

All persons interested in knowing more about the art restoration process are welcome to visit the Lab and interact with the art restorers on any Friday afternoon between 2 to 4.30 p.m.



The Art Restoration team

NATURE DIARY

The Adyar campus is home not only to some fortunate humans but also to myriad wild creatures whose habitats in the fast-expanding metropolis have been adversely impacted by mindless development.

Starting from a lone peahen that landed here a few years ago, the peafowl population has rapidly increased to around 30 individuals today! Their satisfaction with their new home is evident from their successful breeding as many of the peahens can be seen wandering with their

offspring all over the estate. The scream of the peacock now blends in with the chirping of the birds as they usher in the new dawn.

The TS estate also has a healthy population of snakes, so essential for good ecological balance. Recently, our naturalist photographer, Mr A. Chandrasekaran, whose beautiful pictures taken on the campus so often grace the cover of this newsletter, was fortunate in capturing a thrilling encounter between a mongoose and a cobra, with the cobra worsted in the fight!



LIBRARY AS COMMUNITIES AND WISDOM FOR LIVING — SPECIAL LECTURE SERIES

The periodic special lecture series, 'Libraries as Communities' (LaC) and 'Wisdom for Living' (WfL), have been very well received with more outsiders attending the same. During this quarter, two sessions were held under the aegis of LaC: 'Texts on Right Course (NEETI)' by Dr Radha Raghunathan on 16 September; and 'Gems of Indian Architecture and Sculpture' by Dr Chitra Madhavan on 11 November.

There were three WfL talks during this period. On 16 September, Shyam Sekar spoke

on 'The India Opportunity'; on 21 October, Dr Kousalya Nathan spoke on 'Lifestyle Management and Anti-aging'; while the third talk was by Capt. K. K. Venkatraman (Retd.) on 'Surrender and Faith' where he described his *parikrama* of walking 2600 kms along the banks of the holy Narmada River, carrying no money, and with just one change of clothes, and living on *bhiksha* or alms—a riveting tale which kept the audience spell bound!

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Annie Besant's Birthday Resolution



It was Dr Besant's practice to make a birthday resolution each year and we take pleasure in reproducing one of them here. We present this as an offering to our readers who may choose to adopt the same as their New Year resolution. If we succeed in fulfilling this well, the world will surely be the better for it.

October 1, 1931.

My Birthday Resolution

On each day & all day long,
during this 85th year of my
present incarnation,

I will patiently try to tune
my daily life into fuller harmony
with that of the
Divine Master

who lives within my heart.

Annie Besant

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 September 2023 to 30 November 2023

	Rs.		Rs.
GENERAL DONATION		Bhavani Sankaranarayanan, India	20,000
Mercedes Vila Robuste, Spain	28,12,279	Nandini S. Kumar, India	20,000
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY		Chandrasekar Rajaguru, India	20,000
Krishna Mines, India	3,00,000	Rashmi Devaprasath, India	28,000
Neelima Bajaj Swamy, India	1,80,000	M. Yamunavathi, India	15,500
Vinodhini Gnanasambandam, India	1,12,500	ADYAR RENOVATIONS	
Srimathi Mohan, India	1,50,001	S. Ravishankar, Singapore	61,000
A. K. Siva, India	75,000	Kt Venkatesan, India	20,000
Shunmuga Nathan Narendran, India	71,700	LILY BOYD'S PROJECTS	
Vikram Surana, India	50,100	Theosophical Society in Zealand	4,72,393
Amritha Jagannathan, India	45,000	SCHOLARSHIPS FOR GIRL STUDENTS	
Girishsanthosh Ranganathan, India	30,000	TOS In Italy	1,37,726
Gowthami Chandrasekar, India	27,500	MEDHA GARDEN MAINTENANCE	
Bhagirath D. Sheth, India	26,000	N. Gautam	40,000
B. Swaathi, India	26,000	ADYAR NATURE & ENVIRONMENT CENTRE (ANEC)	
S. Bhooma, India	25,000	M. Yamunavathi	15,500
Maria Antony, India	22,800		

DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 September 2023 to 31 November 2023

	Rs.		Rs.
INDIAN DONATIONS		Ms Gomathi Balamurugan	4,000
M/s ECC Recreation Club	50,000	M/s Blavatsky Lodge TS	4,000
Mr G. Ramprasad	2,000	M/s KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP	1,27,200
M/s Kauvery Hospital	50,000	M/s Extra Mile Foundation	50,000
M/s Tamil Events and Productions	50,000	M/s Colours of Glory Foundation	25,000
M/s Rotary Club of Chennai, Mithra	22,000	M/s RI District 3232 (2023-2024)	50,000
Mrs R. Mythili	3,000	M/s Wipro Cares	8,25,000
M/s Dharma Paripalana Sabha Annadhanam and Charitable Trust	45,000	Mr Veera Gnana Prasanna	15,000
Mr R. V. S. Vighnesh	3,000	M/s NEB Sports Entertainment P.Ltd.,	60,000
Ms M. Ajitha	3,000	Mrs C. N. Kalpana Gurumurthy	3,000
Ms R. Saritha Kanagaraj	2,000	Mrs Sashikala Sriram	3,000

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. The TS estate at Adyar is home to four species of owls—the spotted owl (*Athene brahma*), the barn owl (*Tyto alba*), the Indian scops owl (*Otus bakkamoena*), and the brown hawk owl (*Ninox scutulata*). Of these, the spotted owl is the most common and can be seen in tree cavities which are aplenty on the campus, bobbing its head and widening its eyes at the people who stop to admire its quaint beauty!

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