

Adyar Newsletter

September-October-November 2024

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Indian Pond Frog

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

ANNIE BESANT'S BIRTHDAY

1 October is celebrated as Annie Besant's birthday in TS Lodges all over the world. At Adyar too, the day was celebrated at the International Headquarters Hall. After the recitation of the Universal Prayer that was written by her, President Tim Boyd gave a talk about the remarkable life of Annie Besant, highlighting her early years. She had a great influence in reforming the education system both for men and women, the revival of Indian classical art, especially Bharatanatyam, which also emancipated women, and the Indian Independence Movement. She touched the lives of people at all levels.

It is appropriate here to quote from a talk given by C. Jinarajadasa: 'Thousands, though most of them now gone, will have said of Annie Besant that, because a Light shone through her, they who had sat in darkness had "risen" to a wondrous discovery of themselves and of Life. Such is always the case with great souls who in

our humanity are as yet only a few. As the Light shines through them it is as if, for some at least, a second sun had arisen in the sky while the first had become obscured.'

There was a musical presentation by a choir organised by Mr Srinivas Krishnan, where the songs rendered reflected many of the values that Annie Besant emphasized.

The meeting concluded with the offering of flowers to the statues of the Founders and the photograph of Annie Besant.



FOUNDATION DAY

Another great day in the Theosophical calendar is Foundation Day that is celebrated every year on 17 November to commemorate the founding of the Society in New York in 1875. The occasion is unique as it marks the beginning of the introduction of the Ancient Wisdom to the western world. On this day, let us remember what Colonel Olcott pointed out in his inaugural address when he said the Society 'consecrates itself to the intrepid and conscientious study of truth, and binds itself, individually and collectively, to suffer nothing to stand in the way'.

At Adyar, the day was celebrated in the great Hall with Dr Pablo Sender, USA, addressing the gathering on 'Continuing the



Legacy: Theosophical Work for the Future'. In this well-attended meeting he recalled the purpose of the Society which was to resuscitate the Ancient Wisdom and to unite the world in understanding and brotherhood. In paying reverential tribute to our great

Founders, it is important for each member to invoke the strength within himself and stand always by what is true, right, and sacred. We need to rededicate ourselves to the Society's

objectives of universal brotherhood and the spiritual enlightenment of man.

The meeting concluded with the offering of flowers to the statues of the Founders.

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

OMHSS has been having a great, event-packed term as always. In September 2024, the Eikas Foundation conducted a Science Quiz that was both informative and enjoyable. KPMG, known for its expertise in cyber risk management, conducted cybersecurity sessions for 8th and 9th grade students, educating them on online safety and digital security. Career counselling sessions were conducted by BHUMI volunteers for 10th and 12th graders who were taught to identify their strengths and weaknesses to help them set realistic career objectives and create an actionable plan to work towards their goals. NEXINFO volunteers conducted a four-day training programme in MS Office for the ninth Graders, some of whom also attended a 3D Printing Workshop at the American Centre in the US Consulate.

The Project Day celebration held on 25th October 2024 was a vibrant display of student creativity, teamwork, and hands-on learning. The event, hosted in the school's Prayer Hall, was inaugurated by

Chief Guest Jayanthi Aravamudhan, who lauded the students' exhibits that covered a range of topics including environmental conservation, science, and social awareness.

Six of the classrooms of the school have been rebuilt by Baashyaam Constructions Pvt. Ltd, as part of their CSR initiative. Spacious and airy, with big windows overlooking the greenery outside, it is a beautiful learning space greatly appreciated by the students.

An in-house knowledge transfer session was conducted by J. Lalitha for staff members of various departments, focussing on using Gamma AI to create effective PowerPoint presentations by utilizing easy-to-use templates and graphics. There were a number of field visits with students visiting Egmore Museum, Dakshina Chitra, and the Madras Crocodile Bank.

During the Children's Day celebrations, the teachers put up a delightful puppet show for the students deepening their bond and connection with them. Extending the spirit of celebration, they also presented the same puppet show to the children of the Adyar Theosophical Academy.



Inauguration of the new block of classrooms by President Tim Boyd on Vijayadasami Day



Visitors at the Project Day exhibition

Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)

ATA Chronicles: A Season of Discovery, Culture, and Sustainability

ATA organised numerous enriching events and activities from August to November. The highlight of the term was 'The Time Traveller's Odyssey' on Social Studies Day, a vibrant journey and an immersive experience through different eras, featuring themes like the Mesozoic Era, Early Humans, Indus Mela, the Spice Route, and Marvels of India, showcasing both natural and man-made wonders. Each theme had interactive corners where parents and guests engaged in activities such as making seals, pots, and origami flowers. This event went beyond textbooks, leaving lasting memories and deeper historical insights.

Sustainability initiatives included Grades 4–7 field trips to Jacob and Klooster Farms and the Organic Farmers Market Zero Waste Store. Dr Babu's tree walk enlightened students about the trees on the school campus, while environmentalist Yuvan Aves captivated the students with insights on ghost crabs and damselflies. The children were also introduced to bird identification tools like Merlin and iNaturalist, sparking curiosity and awareness among students.

Pre-KG students celebrated Grandparents' Week with activities to strengthen bonds. Grades 5 to 7 engaged with Tim Boyd, President of the Theosophical Society, and Lily Boyd, who baked cupcakes with them. Grade 5 students met Joss Brooks, founder of Pitchandikulam Forest, who shared his vision of a campus treehouse. A Theosophical Society volunteer, Merike Martsepp from Estonia, engaged with Grades 5 to 7 on her experience in cleaning up the river walk and how 'Small Steps Matter'.

Students embarked on diverse educational trips including visits to the Egmore Museum, Guindy National Park, Hanu Reddy Raghava Farm, and the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary.

The ATA Film Club screened Studio Ghibli's *The Boy and the Heron*, inspiring students from Grades 4 to 7 to analyse its emotional depth and theme. There were also cultural celebrations of festivals — Krishna Jayanthi, Vinayak Chaturthi, Onam, and Diwali. ATA's blend of academics, cultural immersion, and environmental stewardship ensured a dynamic and holistic learning environment for the students during this term.



Environmentalist Yuvan Aves engaging with students in an inspiring talk



Young ones making 'Pookolam' for Onam festival

ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AED)

Under the able stewardship of the famous Australian ecologist Joss Brooks of Pitchandikulam Forest Consultants, the project is working towards speedily transforming the sprawling campus of the Theosophical Society into a Centre of deep learning, healing, and creation. Beginning with the revival of the old nursery opposite the Great Banyan Tree, now re-stocked with 5,000 plus new saplings belonging to the native Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) flora — several thousands of which have already been planted in various areas of the estate — the ‘eager beaver’ team has rapidly moved on to a host of other things!



TDEF saplings awaiting planting in the nursery

The beautiful octagonal Garden of Meditation allotted for the use of the AED team is the operational base for planning and building up initial knowledge repositories on the flora, fauna, water distribution etc. Olcott Bungalow, the stately colonial-era heritage building on the estate is getting a makeover to transform it into a Blue Green Centre — ‘Blue’ for the ocean and the rivers, and ‘Green’ for the forests and the earth. The crumbling building has been repaired, cleaned up, and its surrounding wild gardens given a haircut in preparation to showcase a few exciting glimpses of ‘what is to come’ at the upcoming international Theosophical

Convention at Adyar. The insides of the bungalow will soon be filled with artworks, exhibits, books and information displays as it becomes a place of awe, inspiration and deep learning about the local ecology and our inexorable connections to it.



AED meeting in the Olcott Bungalow

The Olcott School is to have its very own Blue Green Centre. A simple, beautiful and functional prefab structure is being erected in the lovely sapota orchard behind the school to integrate environmental education with the school curriculum to foster an ecologically conscious student community most of whom hail from marginalized communities.

A team of brilliantly intuitive gardeners have drawn out beautiful, winding paths into the woods surrounding the Olcott Bungalow, each of them offering walks full of contemplation and wonder at what they might reveal at the next bend or clearing. The team has brought in some captivating pieces of art painted on Cuddapah stone slabs, beautiful boulders and granite pillars, which have been artfully placed along existing paths and clearings to inspire thought and a quiet resonance among people coming upon them in their rambles. It is planned to place benches of interestingly hewn or polished stone and rock at different places on the campus to

create seating spaces that invite more gentle dialogue and sharing among community members in an idyllic environment.



Some of the artworks on stone slabs

Interestingly, the team is also working on the restoration of old wooden furniture with more material-friendly techniques to preserve the texture and character of the original pieces. Another fascinating project underway is the restoration of the amazing and invaluable collection of early 20th century shellac records currently housed in the Garden of Meditation, from days long ago when it was a place of

music, quiet conversation and reflection. The team hopes to restore both the records and the atmosphere that they inspired in the coming months.



Vighnesh, AED Coordinator, and a gardener planting saplings



The handy 'Bobcat' moving boulders on the estate

BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

Fighting disease, life-threatening injuries and horrific abuse of street animals on a daily basis, the BMAD staff plough on valiantly, savouring their success stories and refusing to allow adversities to affect their spirits and their work. One such is the happy story of two abandoned golden retrievers, Dory and Jamun, that came to BMAD in a pitiable condition. While Dory was suffering from severe hepatitis and jaundice, Jamun when abandoned on the streets had been badly mauled by street dogs and had maggot infested puncture wounds all over her body. Miraculously, both dogs responded positively to the medical treatment and love given to them



Dory and Jamun in their new USA home by the BMAD vets and caregivers. And even more wonderful, in response to adoption appeals on social media, a compassionate family near Washington DC adopted both of them. After completing an extensive load of paperwork over a period of 3 months, Dory

and Jamun flew to their new home in the United States and have settled down well with their new family.

Over the years BMAD has significantly upgraded its medical infrastructure, the latest being the acquisition of a Wildlife LFT-KFT

machine that has greatly enhanced diagnostic accuracy in wildlife, leading to more effective treatment strategies. A CSR donation of a new ventilator machine has bolstered its capacity to provide critical respiratory support to animals in need.

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Celebrated Roof Talks

The open space on the first floor of the Headquarters building outside the President's room has an interesting history. For this was where the celebrated 'Roof Talks' used to take place many years ago. These talks were formally instituted by C. W. Leadbeater (CWL) in 1909. On this roof under the gleam of the stars, in the intimacy of the falling darkness, were held many informal gatherings of the residents of Adyar who were privileged to hear from our theosophical leaders, answers to their questions on everything from the core of the earth to the furthest star, events of the present, past and future, immediate and remote, not excluding the destiny of the Amoeba and of Man!

Even before this, however, Colonel Olcott spoke at more informal gatherings on the roof, as recorded in his *Old Diary Leaves*:

Our evenings have always been pleasantly spent in dry weather on the pavement-like terrace roof of the main building, where, on moonlit or starlit nights, we have the glory of the heavens to look at and the ocean breezes to cool us. I have visited many lands, but recall no more beautiful view than that upon which the eye rests from that terrace, whether by daylight, starlight or moonlight. Sometimes we only talk, sometimes one reads and the others listen. Often on such occasions, in the months of the Western winter season, do we speak of our families and friends, especially of our theosophical colleagues, and wish

they could float over to us . . . and see and compare with their own climatic miseries, the delights of our physical surroundings.

The roof was more than a place of mere beauty, however, as the Masters often crossed the roof on their way to visit HPB and Colonel Olcott when they resided there. CWL tells us in *Adyar, the Home of the Theosophical Society* about how he was sitting there in the year 1885, with the late Mr T. Subba Rao, when he first had the honour of seeing the Master KH:

I saw Him first in the act of stepping over the balustrade at the southern edge of the roof; He advanced with rapid steps straight across the roof to where we were sitting, greeted each of us in the fashion of our respective countries, sat down with us and talked for about twenty minutes.

The Roof Talks continued into the 1930s, with Dr Arundale and Mr C. Jinarajadasa continuing the tradition. Thus, the talks, and the roof itself, have a long history indeed!



The 'Roof' at the Headquarters building

LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITIES AND WISDOM FOR LIVING LECTURE SERIES

Libraries as Communities hosted Mrs Veena Ramachandran who spoke on 'Eminent Women Theosophists', while the Wisdom for Living series hosted three lectures: 'Spirituality and Health through Divine Wisdom' (Mr G. K. Kannan), 'Neurolinguistic Programming and Emotional Health' (Mr D. Manivannan) and 'Science and Pseudoscience' (Mr Anoop Jaiswal).

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 September 2023 to 30 November 2024

(Above Rs. 25,000)

	Rs.		Rs.
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY		Swetha Mahapotra, India	50,000
Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, India	25,00,000	Vinodhini Gnanasambandam, India	46,000
Indo National Ltd., (CSR), India	3,00,000	Reefat Rasool, India	40,000
Indian Animal Fund, India	2,50,000	Nadeem Naser, India	32,000
Aravind Venkatraman, India	2,00,000	Nikhil Grover, India	30,000
Neelima Bajaj Swamy, India	1,80,000	Ramswamy Shankar Sumanth, India	30,000
S. Fardeen, India	1,34,000	Aishwarya Raamkumar, India	30,000
R. Deepa, India	1,10,000	Aashruth Rangarajan, India	30,000
A. K. Siva, India	75,000	M. Chitra, India	28,150
Vikram Surana, India	67,222	B. Swaathi India	28,000
Shunmuga Nathan Narendran, India	62,101	Mira Dhurga	27,500
Nisha Raghunathan, India	52,000	THEOSOPHICAL EDUCATION	
		Chetna Agarwal, India	41,500

DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 September 2024 to 30 November 2024

(Above Rs. 25,000)

	Rs.		Rs.
INDIAN DONATIONS		No Food Waste,	75,000
KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP	2,53,485	Bureau of Indian Standards	75,000
The Theosophical Society	61,38,000	Wells Fargo International Solutions Pvt. Ltd	75,000
Dharma Paripalana Sabha & Annadhanam		RCC Magnum Foundation	75,000
Charitable Trust	45,000	Society for Rights of All Women with Disabilities	75,000
Thennai Trust	1,20,000	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam	75,000
		Gurubalaa Healthcare	75,000

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. The Indian Pond Frog (*Euphlyctis hexadactylus*) is a common species of aquatic frog found in India. The diet of an adult Pond frog is unusual in that plant leaves and some flowers constitute a large part of its diet. However, they also consume invertebrates and small vertebrates. Juveniles are insectivorous. They breed after the first rain and lay their eggs in ponds, paddy fields, and other fresh waterbodies with water plants.

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