

Adyar Newsletter

September-October-November 2025

English Quarterly | Rs 10



Purple-rumped Sunbird and Red Powder Puff Flowers

DR BESANT'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The Theosophical Society's international headquarters at Adyar came alive on 1 October 2025 with a warm and uplifting celebration of Annie Besant's birthday. Members and visitors gathered to honour the life and legacy of the Society's second President — an educationist, reformer, and spiritual pioneer, whose fearless vision continues to guide theosophists around the world.

A special highlight of the event was an engaging and insightful conversation between international President, Tim Boyd, and noted international speaker, Shikhar Agnihotri. Their dialogue brought Annie Besant's courageous life into sharp focus — her unwavering commitment to human unity, her advocacy for India's freedom, and her bold efforts to bridge spiritual wisdom with modern thought. The exchange resonated deeply with the audience, reminding them of how Dr Besant's voice still speaks powerfully to the challenges of our times. It also illuminated her rare capacity to unite intellectual clarity with spiritual

depth, and action with idealism. Through personal reflections and historical insight, the speakers revealed the inner sources of her strength and moral courage. Many present felt renewed inspiration to apply her principles of service and brotherhood in their own lives.

Adding a touch of devotion and musical grace, Jaishree Kannan offered a soulful rendering of *Devi Vasanthe*, a song on Annie Besant composed by the legendary Papanasam Sivan. The event concluded with the offering of flowers to the portrait of Annie Besant, and the statues of the Founders, Mme H. P. Blavatsky and Col. H. S. Olcott.



Tim Boyd in a dialogue with Shikhar Agnihotri

FOUNDATION DAY

The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Russian mystic Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and American reformer Henry Steel Olcott, marked its 150th year with a moving celebration of its origins, ideals, and enduring mission. To honour this historic milestone, TS Adyar screened the newly released documentary *ONE FIRE*, a compelling film scripted and directed by Terhi Ahava.

The Foundation Day programme on 17 November drew a large and enthusiastic audience, all eager to revisit the Society's extraordinary beginnings. Through evocative storytelling and rare historical insights, *ONE FIRE* transported viewers back to the vibrant birth of the movement - a time when its Founders sought to unite East and

West, science and spirituality, wisdom and compassion under one universal banner.

The commemorative gathering concluded with a solemn and heartfelt offering of flowers at the statues of the Founders, reaffirming the enduring gratitude and dedication of the theosophical community as it steps into its next century of service.



NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

OLCOTT MEMORIAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL (OMHSS)

This quarter was rich in academic and cultural activity. Students proudly represented the school at the CAN STOP competition organised by the Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra. Bharathiyar Day was celebrated with spirited competitions across Classes 6–12. Teacher's Day brought special appreciation from chief guest, Rtn IPDG N. S. Saravanan, who presented the Best Teacher Awards to M. Kayalvizhi and Sashikala Sriram, the latter also receiving a commemorative memento for ten years of voluntary service. Adding to the school's distinction, Vels University honoured J. Lalitha and V. K. Swarna Kumar with the Teachers Excellence Award.



Teachers' Day award function

The school has always placed strong emphasis on student well-being. Classes 9A and 9B participated in World Suicide Prevention Day activities, with a complementary mental health workshop by Dr Divya, helping Class 9 students build emotional resilience. Health awareness was further reinforced through a Greater Chennai Corporation drive addressing skin-related issues. The Adyar All-Women Police Station also conducted an impactful session on preventing sexual harassment, ensuring that Class 8 students received guidance and essential contact information.

A forward-looking discussion held at the Blue-Green Centre encouraged students from Classes 6 to 12 to share their ideas for

the school's future.

The school's Annual Sports Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Chief guest, TS President, Tim Boyd, unfurled the School flag, while the General Manager of the TS estate, K. Jaikumar, awarded prizes to the young achievers.



Unfurling the OMHSS flag on Sports Day



Mr Tim Boyd lights the torch marking the start of the Sports Day celebration



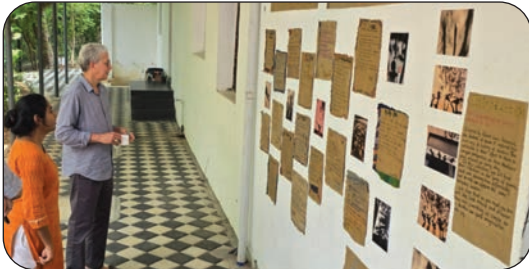
Mr K. Jaikumar, General Manager of the TS, with the winners of sports events

On World Interact Day, the students took part in a school-wide campus cleaning drive. The quarter concluded with vibrant Project Day celebrations, where students showcased innovative science exhibits before alumni and chief guest, Mrs Vijaya Nirmala.

ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

Rooted in Purpose, Growing with Joy

The season opened on a thoughtful note with the visit of Mr Tim Boyd, international President of the Theosophical Society, who viewed the Brown Paper Poetry Project by Grade 5 students. Their handwritten poems, displayed on reused brown paper bags, beautifully blended imagination, expression, and environmental awareness.



Grade 5's "Shadow and Me" poetry series
on recycled paper

Teacher's Day brought laughter and gratitude as Grade 6 students stepped into the role of teachers for a morning, planning lessons and leading classes. Their reflections later revealed a newfound respect for the art of teaching and the patience it demands.

The Bhoomi Pooja at Kirby Gardens on 6 October was a moment of reverence and hope — symbolically laying the foundation for ATA's new building. The morning radiated gratitude, faith, and the promise of new beginnings.



A new chapter begins — Tim and Lily Boyd join in
invoking blessings for the new school campus

ATA students also shone in inter-school events. At a STEM Expo, they secured third place in the Design Innovation Challenge,

and at the inter-school athletics meet, they earned multiple individual medals along with the Runner-up Trophy.

Through Socially Useful Productive Work, students collected soft plastics for recycling into furniture, made bio-enzymes as eco-friendly cleaners, and created decorations from palm leaves, coir, and coconut fronds. The Model United Nations became a platform for dialogue and leadership, while the Photography Club, guided by filmmaker Hari Varma, helped students tell stories through light and observation. Assemblies remained spaces for creative expression through theatre, dance, music, and storytelling.

Field-trip destinations included Guindy National Park, Mahabalipuram, the Rain Centre, Higginbothams Bookstore, the Besant Nagar Post Office, and IIT Madras. A small group also travelled to Marudham Farm School in Tiruvannamalai, where they learned about sustainable living and traditional crafts. A highlight of the term was the visit to the Fine Art educator's solo exhibition, *Between Petals and Silence*, at Ashvita's Gallery, where students saw how art evolves from observation to expression.



Where hands create, and minds imagine —
ATA students at Marudham Farm

On 17 November 2025, ATA observed the 150th anniversary of the Theosophical Society with a special assembly titled "History of the Theosophical Society and Its Influence on the World".

ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT (AED)

The Adyar Eco Development (AED) team remained industrious over the past three months, carrying out extensive nursery work, planting indigenous species, landscaping, and leading environmental education initiatives through the Blue-Green Centre (BGC).

Nursery and Landscaping

The team continued close monitoring of the venerable Baobab tree behind Olcott Cottage, removing wood-borer-damaged sections and applying lime mortar to strengthen the weakened areas. The pond near the First Trilithon was restored through careful draining, plastering, and flooring to stop leakages, and will soon host white lotus blooms, long absent from the campus.



White lotuses to bloom anew in the restored pond beside the First Trilithon

Around 200 indigenous saplings were planted near the main gate to enrich local biodiversity. A major reorganisation of the coconut grove near the Administration Building saw 2,000 coconut saplings transplanted into dedicated sections. Attractive kadappa stones with painted motifs were installed in the refreshed garden between LBC and the Adyar river.



Gardeners transplant coconut saplings

A small and versatile new Bobcat machine was acquired and immediately put to work — levelling pathways, and shifting stones and boulders across the estate. It was crucial in large-scale landscaping at the Olcott School, where new outdoor dining spaces were created with levelled ground and the installation of 20 granite benches and an upright stone using the Bobcat and a crane. Additional stone benches were placed in the garden between the Adyar Theatre and the First Trilithon.



The new Bobcat with President Tim Boyd at the wheel

In the nursery, tables were installed in the new bamboo germination shed, and seeds of species such as *Walsura trifoliolata* and *Strychnos nux-vomica* were sown in trays, with germination data updated systematically. Saplings of *Saraca asoca*, *Mimusops elengi*, and others were shifted into protective covers.



New germination shed in the nursery

Environmental Education and Outreach

Educators at the BGC further developed an interactive, Nature-based curriculum

focused on local biodiversity. In collaboration with the Olcott School and the Adyar Theosophical Academy, a plan was drawn up to involve students deeply in BGC activities in the coming months.

A variety of experiential sessions—wasp and butterfly walks, birding, sketching and potting, creative writing, and ecological observation—sparked discussions ranging from ant colony dynamics to biomimicry. Students of Olcott School were encouraged to take greater stewardship of their campus through a newly formed “Ministry of Design”, with committees for gardening, waste management, water works, and landscaping, all working with AED on design ideas and maintenance.

Beyond the two TS schools, the BGC team also hosted visiting private schools as part of its outreach efforts.

A highlight of November was the visit of 90 international Montessori trainers to

Olcott Bungalow and the BGC. Working with the Surendra Narayan Archives of the TS, and the Association Montessori Internationale, the BGC curated displays on Maria and Mario Montessori’s remarkable stay on the campus from 1939 and the beginnings of the Montessori Movement in India. Archival photographs and content brought alive the vibrant lectures once held for students from across India and abroad. The trainers were delighted to revisit Dr Montessori’s time on the estate and explore the Montessori kindergarten facilities at Olcott School.

Later in November, Green Fellows — civil society members appointed by the Tamil Nadu Department of Environment and Climate Change — visited the BGC to understand its educational approach. The visit opened promising avenues for future collaboration and the wider implementation of BGC activities across the state.



New paintings on granite grace the LBC garden



Association Montessori Internationale members

BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

A major highlight during this quarter was a two-day cat neutering marathon, during which the veterinary team successfully sterilised around 85 male cats, each surgery contributing to a healthier and more humane future for community animals.

In line with the Greater Chennai Corporation’s pet licensing rules, BMAD also remained a leader in promoting responsible pet ownership, assisting pet parents with microchipping and registration to ensure

greater accountability and safety of their companion animals across the city.



Long line of caregivers waiting for microchipping

This quarter also brought moments of intense rescue and recovery. A critically injured cat, found impaled on a metal rod, was rushed to BMAD and taken into emergency surgery. Fortunately, no major organs were damaged, and the rod was safely removed. The cat is now stable, alert, and showing encouraging signs of recovery.



The seriously injured cat



Recovering after life-saving surgery

BMAD's wildlife unit, working closely with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department's Headquarters Range, also oversaw the incubation of several clutches of rescued cobra and rat snake eggs. Over a monitored 60–80-day period, 24 out of 25 eggs hatched successfully, marking a significant milestone in their conservation efforts.



Cobra hatchlings

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Colonel Olcott's Rishi Beard



Colonel Olcott was known for many things, but none so instantly captivating as his snow-white beard, reputed to fall all the way to his seventh rib! The strange tale behind this hirsute phenomenon, tucked away in *Old Diary Leaves* (First Series, pp. 361–2), is possibly even more delightful than the beard itself.

Olcott narrates:

After having shaved my chin for many years I began to grow a full beard, under medical advice, as a protection to a naturally delicate throat, and at the time I speak of, it was about four inches long. One morning, when making my toilet after my bath, I discovered a tangle of long hair under my chin next [to] the throat. Not knowing what to

make of it, I very carefully undid the mass at the expense of almost an hour's trouble, and found, to my great amazement, that I had a lock of beard, fourteen inches long, coming down as far as the pit of the stomach! Whence and why it had come no reading or experience helped me to guess; but there it was, a palpable fact and permanent phenomenon. Upon my showing it to HPB, she said it had been purposely done by our Guru while I slept, and advised me to take care of it as it would serve me as a reservoir of his helpful aura. I showed it to many friends, but none could venture any better theory to account for it, while all agreed that I ought not to cut it back to its former length. So, I used to tuck it away inside my collar to hide it, and did so for years, until the rest of the beard had grown to match it. This accounts for the "Rishi beard", so often mentioned in friendly allusions to my personal appearance, and explains why I have not yielded to my long-felt wish to clip it into a more convenient and less conspicuous shape. Whatever the fact may be called, it assuredly is not a Maya, but a very real and tangible verity.

LIBRARIES AS COMMUNITIES (LaC) AND WISDOM FOR LIVING (WfL) LECTURE SERIES

This quarter brought a rich tapestry of ideas through the two vibrant lecture series.

LaC featured a trio of insightful sessions. In September: "Echoes of Ageless Wisdom — A Journey through H. P. Blavatsky's Writings" (Catalina Isaza-Cantor); October: "The Patterns of Life" (Merike Martsepp); November: "Divine Therapy in Medicine"

(Abhinav Kadambi).

Under the WfL series, three interesting and useful talks were held — in September: "Perspectives on Well-being and Public Health" (Dr N. Karikalan); October: "Cyber Crimes in Our Day-to-Day Life" (Dr S. Latha); November: "Are Humans a Resource?" (Dr Akanksha Jaiswal).

INDIAN DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 September 2025 to 30 November 2025

(Above Rs 20,000)

	Rs.		Rs.
ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT		R. Ramesh	47,051
Radiance Realty Developers India Ltd.	25,00,000	Vikram Surana	45,000
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY		Hari Pranav B. Gargi	44,450
Thryve Digital Health LLP	8,41,600	K. Priyadarshini	44,300
Krishna Mines	6,00,000	Social Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.	38,525
Sava Health Care Limited	5,00,000	Chidambaram Trust	30,000
Neelima Bajaj Swamy	1,80,000	RC Chennai ECR Charitable Trust	26,500
Rotary Club of Chennai Kilpauk Charitable Trust	1,25,000	Vasisht Sharma	25,000
Inner Wheel Club of Madras Zinnia	1,11,000	M. Chitra	24,300
Arvind Venkatraman	1,00,000	Aishwarya Mani	24,000
Adarshya Hari Narayanan	1,00,000	Vinodhini Gnanasambandam	23,500
A. K. Siva	75,000	Arya Mahashabde	22,600
Shweta Mohapatra	60,000	Prani Raksha Trust	22,500
Josika Navukkarasu	53,940	Venkatesha Prasad	22,000
Saurav Mishra	50,000	B. Swaathi	21,000
		Subash Balakrishnan	20,004

INDIAN DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 September 2025 to 30 November 2025

(Above Rs 20,000)

	Rs.		Rs.
Dharma Paripalana Sabha Annadhanam & Charitable Trust	45,000	C. Raghu Anjan	40,000
Arut Jyothee Foundation (AJF)	50,000	Vijyalakshmi Venkataraman	1,45,000
N. Chandrasekaran	39,000	Rajendrakumar	10,000
N. S. Mangala	40,000	Wipro Cares	3,75,000
		Online Giving Foundation	71,516

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. A gentle moment in the garden: a female purple-rumped sunbird studying the glowing red powder puff blossoms (*Calliandra haematocephala*) as though listening for the whisper of nectar within!

Edited by Dr Geetha Jaikumar, published by Mr Shikhar Agnihotri and printed by Mr S. Baskar at The Vasanta Press, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India.

ISSN 09720-1878

Regd. No. R.N. 5627/1960