

Adyar Newsletter

AUGUST 2008



A Pond at the Garden of Remembrance

THE ADYAR PANTHEON OF RELIGIONS

Emblazoned above the Great Hall of headquarters building is the Theosophical mantra: ' . . . NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH'. These words preside over a pantheon of world faiths, a serenely neoclassical Temple of Religions. Emblems of every major living creed, and several extinct ones, bear silent witness to the ultimate authority of the Ancient Wisdom that gave them life.

Col. H. S. Olcott had long dreamed of establishing a Temple of Religions at Adyar that would gather the world's many faiths under a single roof. In place of exclusionary churches, mandirs (temples), and mosques, so damaging to the cause of Truth, Theosophy would collect symbols from all such structures to consecrate a single space, sacred to the entire globe.

His dream began to take physical form in 1885 when he had the verandah of the headquarters building enclosed to create an assembly hall for the annual Convention. During Annie Besant's presidency, C. Jinarajadasa continued work on the space, with the final emblems — those for Islam and Shinto — not added until after 1911.

A chain of small oval icons rings the top tier of the Great Hall. It features symbols of the living religions and their founders (Baha'u'llah, Moses, Mahavira, Nanak, Lao Tse, Confucius, Shinto, and Freemasonry) and of the extinct religions (Mithra, Orpheus, Osiris, Quetzalcoatl, Ashtaroth, and Asshur).

But pride of place is given to the five Great Religions. Five bas-relief white plaster sculptures float ethereally out from pale cream paint of their alcoves, commemorating Five Founders. These Theosophical savants stand at ground level, their heads even with passers-by; they return your gaze, inviting you to turn your thoughts to matters of the spirit.

First is Jesus Christ. Wearing his crown of thorns, and accompanied by a lamp, he stands outside an imposing stone wall. He knocks on its locked door. Inside, it would seem, is an unkempt garden. Weeds clamber over the top, and flowers spring out from under the door. The buds catch Christ's gaze. He carries with him a lantern, a spiritual light that would dispel the murk of the



untended garden. But will its owner hear the knock, and open the door?

Second is Gautama Buddha. A young man sits in perfect symmetry under a pagoda, his legs crossed atop a lotus cushion. His robes, in Gandharan style, are draped over his muscled shoulder, and his hair culminates in a topknot that echoes the finial capping the pagoda — the Buddha is a man in complete harmony with his surroundings. His face is impassive, deep in meditation. His right hand reaches down to touch the earth, while his left extends forwards, palm up, to reassure the viewer:



do not fear. He meditates for us all.

Third is Sri Krishna. The Dark Lord holds his flute lightly to his mouth to sound his song of love. One foot is raised slightly, as though about to dance. A large, beaded garland cascades down his chest. Above Krishna, a tree, heavy with fruit, sways to his divine tune, while a cow behind him reverently lowers her head to the sole of His



foot. Krishna looks playfully forward at the viewer, inviting all comers to don the garb of gopis and join his dance.

Fourth is Zoroaster. He mounts a star, transfigured by the divine light of Ahura Mazda. A glorious halo surrounds his head, as he lifts his rod and orb. This ancient Prophet, after years of asceticism, has finally



attained the divine light; he pauses before returning to the world to share it with humanity.

Fifth is Islam. No icons here, only the elegance of language: there is no God but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet. All these sculptures steer us away from the material world — we open the door to the light of Christ, witness the enlightenment of the Buddha, join the dance of Krishna, share the glory of Zoroaster — and this, an iconic representation, of Muhammad perfects this message. No pictures to entrance the eye; only purity of form, the wisdom of words. Calligraphic religion reminds us that Truth surpasses form, image, and the myriad particulars of this world. Truth is formless



and always one. Indeed , the message of the pantheon seems to be that to affix

oneself too firmly to any one image is to become a kafir.

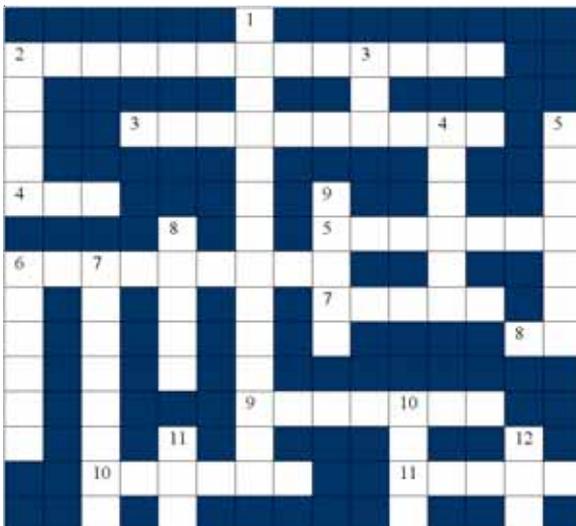
Adyar’s role as a spiritual home for followers of all world faiths does not, of course, stop at the threshold of the Great Hall. Theosophy’s global sensibility infuses the entire campus, and this plaster pantheon resounds through all of Adyar’s sacred spaces — a Hindu temple, a Buddhist shrine, a Catholic church, a Parsi agiary, an Islamic mosque. These small structures were built, starting in the 1920s, to extend Olcott’s dream. They render all of Adyar a sacred space, a veritable Garden Temple of world religions, the sky its only roof.

The Truth waits at the Flaming Centre.

J. Barton Scott

IN THE CAMPUS

CLUES



Across

2. A Theosophical red-letter day (5,5,3)
3. and 11 Dn 17 November (10, 3)
4. A school on our compound — abbr. (3)
5. The one who left us (7)
6. One of the twins (9)
7. One of the names of 6 Across (5)
8. A founding Master (2)
9. A Sagittarian president (1,3,3)
10. *Old Diary* ____ (6)
11. *Letters that have Helped Me* author (5)

Down

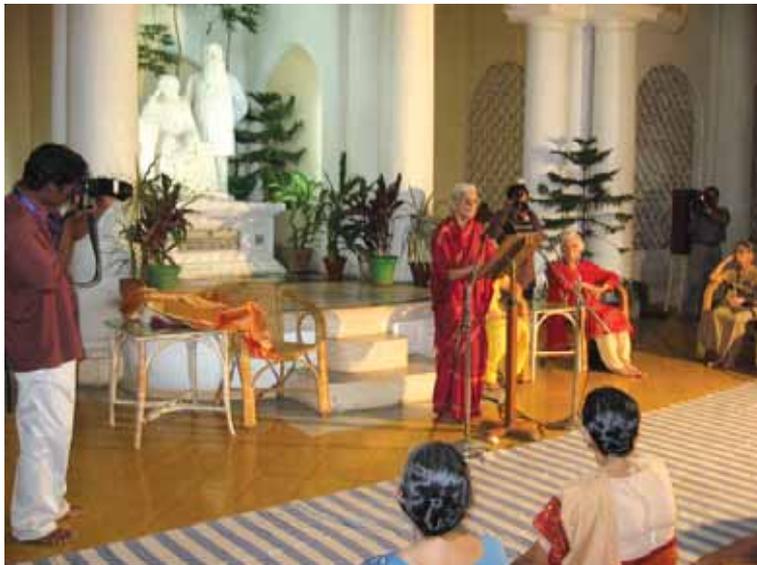
1. Countries all lined up here (8,6)

2. A Buddhist observance (5)
3. Truth — Skt (3)
4. The other twin (6)
5. Creator of 'The Messenger'
6. Diamond soul
7. He was our third (8)
8. A subject we study (5)

9. 'Where the river and ocean meet' (5)
10. Created *Ritual of the Mystic Star*, fondly (4)
11. See 3 Across
12. The lower one (3)

* **Note: Answers on last page**

AN EVENING TO REMEMBER



Residents, members from near and far and several dignitaries associated with our Theosophical work recently gathered together for an open air tea party. Beside the lily pond, beneath the trees, the event was a friendly prelude to the special occasion which followed in the international hall nearby.

The audience was 150 strong. The President led the universal prayer, whereby hidden life, light and love are invoked from within the assembly. Then came the announcement regarding votes for the International President. Reported by the

Chairman, Miss Mary Anderson they were as follows:

John Algeo - 4123

Radha Burnier - 8650

Radha Burnier was therefore declared re-elected as International President for seven years from 17 July 2008.

The customary garlands and shawls were then presented to the dignitary of the evening, the President.

A short and penetrating address followed, by the President. Coverage included a great many of our ideals: the uninterrupted vision necessary for living the

spiritual life, basically, brotherhood without distinction; there have always been teachers to lead the way, the evolutionary way proclaiming the teachings of the great unfolding Plan; the secrets of Nature shall gradually be revealed, as yet, they are known only to

the few, unselfish of heart. Then will peace prevail on Earth. The message rang out loud and clear.

In closing the International Treasurer, Miss Keshwar Dastur praised the President whom she considered to be the epitome of Theosophical ideals.

MONKEYS AND PIGS — A VERITABLE MENAGERIE!



It began on the roof of the international headquarters. Taps had been turned on for no apparent reason. A few minutes later the culprits were spotted, cupping their hands and suitably drinking their fill. Were taps then turned off? That skill had still to be learnt.

Turning south the three monkeys perused the upper terrace — their eyes alighted on the giant mango tree — and they jumped across to it to search for ripe fruit, bit into them and found them slightly sour... discarded them.

The descent was difficult because other members of the animal kingdom had their eyes on the monkeys. From branch to branch they jumped but no lower, because those other members were barking ferociously. The mischief-makers finally retraced their steps to the HQ rooftop, and overnight, vanished.

Six years ago a female piglet strayed into our compound. It was allowed to stay, on compassionate grounds.

It was fed regularly on rice, gruel and vegetables, and obtained food from the soil by goring the roots of grasses and tubers. As a result it grew to be a one-tonne sow.

In time twin piglets were born, their coats jet-black, and together, the family of three, especially during mornings and evenings may be seen in the coconut groves and on the riverside grassland behind Arundale



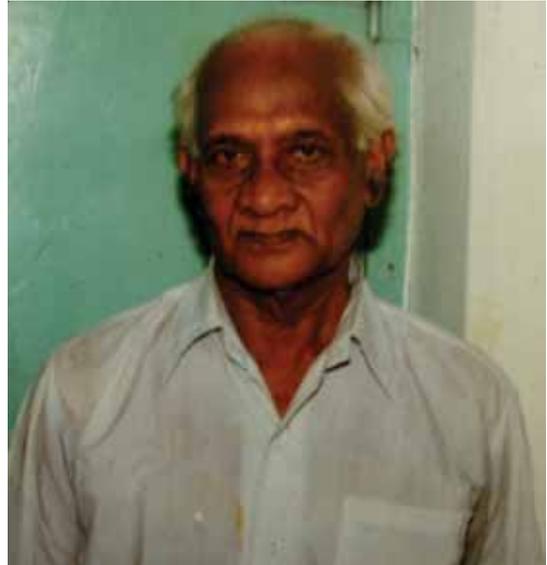
House, contentedly roaming about. But why did they not think to stay where all was safe? They strayed to our precious HQ lawn, if you please, and played havoc with its root system. Their fate is now sealed. They may have to depart soon for a home in the forest.

OBITUARY

How many of us living now were born to a Theosophical family as early as 1918? Thus began the life of Sri V.V. Mony who joined the TS in 1930 and whose diploma is signed by Dr Annie Besant. Like his parents he belonged to and served in a Lodge in South India as secretary and in other offices. The only breaks in formal Theosophical service were for graduation studies and during World War II, as an Army Captain serving in Rangoon, Burma.

In 1959, at the request of the International President, Mr N. Sri Ram, he came to work at headquarters in the Engineering Department (Maintenance) for a period of twelve years. The next twelve years were in the Theosophical Publishing House, another six years covered Treasury, and two years were spent as Security Officer in the Watch and Ward Department. His final fifteen years took him to the Theosophy-Science Centre until 2004 when age precluded his continuing steady and devoted service. Lodge activity included offices of Secretary, Vice-President and President, at Mylapore, a suburb of Chennai.

V. V. Mony is also remembered for his faithful work as a priest in the Hindu Temple in the non-sectarian Hindu shrine called the



‘Temple of Light’ where there is no object of worship other than a flame; here Vedic verses are chanted daily.

His third son serves in the Publishing House as a clerk, and his wife in the computer section of the Library.

Throughout he was closely associated with the *Mystic Star* movement, teaching by ceremonial method of the great religions throughout the ages.

A dedicated life, well lived.

* IN THE CAMPUS (Answers)

Across

2. White Lotus Day 3. Foundation 4. KFI 5. Damodar 6. Blavatsky 7. Aditi 8. KH 9. N. Sri Ram 10. Leaves 11. Judge

Down

1. Founders Avenue 2. Wesak 3. Sat 4. Olcott 5. Roerich 6. Besant 7. Arundale 8. Karma 9. Adyar 10. Raja 11. Day 12. Ego

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

(1 April to 30 June 2008)

ADYAR DAY CONTRIBUTIONS	Rs.	GENERAL DONATIONS	Rs.
Vasantha Lodge, India	600	Dr V.V. Chalam, India	5000
Bangalore City Lodge, India	6000		<u>5000</u>
Bhavnagar Lodge, India	1600	ANIMAL WELFARE FUND	
Antaraganga Lodge, India	450		
Gauribidanur Lodge, India	800	Dr V.V. Chalam, India	10000
Asoka Sankara Lodge, India	401	Mr G. Muralidhar, India	100
The Poona Lodge, India	3000		<u>10100</u>
Hyderabad Lodge, India	1500		
Secunderabad Lodge, India	300	PRESIDENT'S DISCRETIONARY FUND	
The Bengal TS, India	471		
Bombay Theosophical Federation, India	1300	Mr Vijay Gopalaratnam, India	10000
Delhi Theosophical Federation, India	840		<u>10000</u>
Adelaide TS, Australia	Aus\$ 516 18301	ANIMAL WELFARE ENDOWMENT FUND	
TS in Spain	€ 744 46242		
TS in Norway	US\$ 136.99 5527	Estate of late R. Padmini, India	5982
	<u>87332</u>	Estate of late R. Padmini, India	6877
			<u>12859</u>
ADYAR ESTATE IMPROVEMENT FUND		T.S. WORKERS' TRAINING FUND	
Dr V.V. Chalam, India	10000	Mrs Neela N. Abhayankar, India	700
	<u>10000</u>	Mr Nitin D. Abhayankar, India	700
			<u>1400</u>

The Spirit it is, that, under the myriad illusions of life, works steadily towards its goal; silently, imperceptibly, irresistibly, moving on to divinity.

Gems from the East