

Adyar Newsletter

June-July-August 2024

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A Common Crow Butterfly on a Beautiful Pink Rose

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INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE TS CAMPUS

Independence Day (15 August) was celebrated in the TS campus at various locations. At the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, the national flag was hoisted by the Chief Guest, Rotarian Mr R. Krithivasan. At the Assembly Hall, students Monisha and Kavitha took charge of the proceedings and spoke about the contributions of historical figures like Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhagat Singh in the freedom struggle. The event concluded with the distribution of endowment prizes and scholarships, followed by a vote of thanks.

At the Adyar Theosophical Academy,

Independence Day was marked by vibrant performances by all grades, showcasing India's cultural heritage and emphasizing the importance of education and the nation's rivers. Chief Guest, Mrs Uma Raman, an educationist, engaged students in a discussion about what freedom meant to them.

The Social Welfare Centre and Vocational Training Centre jointly celebrated Independence Day, with Dr R. Revathy, our long-time resident doctor, hoisting the national flag. The tiny tots put on an enchanting medley of dances and songs, cheering the audience with their sunny smiles.

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHSS)

OMHSS staff and students ushered in the first quarter of the academic year 2024–25 with a host of exciting events and achievements ranging from cultural celebrations to academic milestones.

June saw the conduct of three training sessions for the OMHSS teachers to enhance their ability in dealing effectively with the students most of whom come from troubled backgrounds. The first workshop was on 'How to Improve Productivity' (Mr Srinivasa Raghavan), the second on 'How to Manage and Control Anger' (Mrs Sheela Ramanujam), and the third workshop was for primary teachers (V-Excel Educational Trust and Atos Prayas Foundation) on 'Learning Styles' of young children.

During this period, OMHSS also had the honour of welcoming three distinguished office-bearers of private schools — the District Educational Officer, the Chief Educational Officer, and the Director of School Education — who addressed the students during the morning assembly and also conducted an interactive session

for Classes 10 and 12, offering strategic advice aimed at securing a 100% pass rate in the forthcoming board examinations. In a gesture of encouragement, they distributed free textbooks provided by the Tamil Nadu government, extending their best wishes to the students for their academic success.

The Annual Day celebrations, with Mrs Lakshmi Srinivasan as the Chief Guest, was a vibrant and memorable event. A special moment was the honouring of the Headmistress, Mrs Lalitha Jayaraj, for 25 years of dedicated service and Mrs Anuradha Sampath for her 36 years of commitment to the school. The celebration was a resounding success, filled with joy, pride, and unity.



Honouring the OMHSS Headmistress, Mrs J. Lalitha, on completion of 25 years of dedicated service

The Energy and Resources Institute educated the OMHSS students on the protocol to monitor microplastics in the ocean. Australian ecologist, Joss Brooks, from Pitchandikulam Forest Consultants, addressed the students and teachers about a proposed eco-garden to be set up in the school campus.

Thuvakkam, an NGO, conducted a workshop on 'Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility' for Grade 6 students, focussing on the importance of biodegradable materials, their environmental impact, and how they differ from non-degradable options. On World Nature Conservation Day, Grade 7 students attended a workshop where they learnt about protecting and conserving the soil, water, and energy resources.

OMHSS is most grateful to V-Excel Educational Trust, which conducted a screening camp to identify psychomotor development and learning disabilities in children from Grades KG to 5. Of the 109 children evaluated, 27 children were identified as having significant difficulties in these areas, thus allowing for targeted support and intervention to address their specific challenges and enhance their educational experience.

This year OMHSS was asked by the Tamil Nadu government to host the zonal sports competitions for all the schools located in the Adyar Zone. Though this put an additional burden on the overworked staff, they took up the challenge and worked tirelessly to make it a resounding success. Kudos to the OMHSS team headed by the Director, Ms Sasikala Sriram, whose painstaking attention to detail helped in ensuring that all the events were conducted smoothly and without a hitch. The event was a crucial step in ensuring a well-coordinated and competitive zonal meet, reflecting OMHSS's commitment to excellence in sports.

Volunteers from KPMG conducted some useful sessions for the students like the rewards of pursuing a career in Chartered Accountancy and practical strategies for balancing academics with extracurricular activities, and preparing for the exams.



Zonal Meet conducted by OMHSS

Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)

ATA began its sixth academic year on 12 June 2024 with the return of the students as they excitedly eased back into the school environment with a series of engaging activities such as Human 'Tic-tac-toe', 'Pair and Share', 'Know your School', and a thrilling Treasure Hunt. In teams, they solved clues and navigated their way searching for hidden treasures. Dr K. Sankar, a retired Professor from the Wildlife Institute of India, spoke on 'Endangered Mammals of India', of which sadly, there are many.

ATA celebrated its fifth anniversary with a variety of performances, the highlight being a skit where Thiruvalluvar, the ancient Tamil poet and philosopher, visits the modern world only to be dumbfounded by its transformation.

Grades 6 and 7 visited the Alliance Française of Madras to see an art exhibition titled 'Travelling Plants' on the topic of how plants have travelled the world. Grades 5 to 7 were introduced to the basics of robotics with each group designing and building

their own robots. The STEM Gym sessions continue to explore science through wonder and discovery.

Grades 4 to 7 celebrated their reading journeys by sharing book reviews and dressing as their favourite literary characters, bringing beloved stories to life colourfully and imaginatively.

A key addition to the curriculum for Grades 4 to 7 is the Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) initiative. The children engaged in thought-provoking sessions on the distinction between needs and wants, school and house waste audit and management, culminating in a reflective visit to the Perungudi biomining facility to understand how the 40-year-old legacy of waste is being recycled there.

The youngest learners celebrated Grandparents' Week with heartfelt activities, harvested their organic farm products, did a lot of fireless cooking, honed their fine motor skills, and embarked on a field trip to a farm where they connected with Nature and animals.

A Film Club to explore the world of cinema, was started this year for Grades 4 to 7 to

help develop visual language skills, enhance critical thinking, and appreciate the intricate details of filmmaking.



Film Club students in a discussion

Teachers engaged in professional development workshops covering topics like Positive Behaviour Management in classrooms, gender sensitization, AI integration in education, and ongoing workshops for English and Social Science.



ATA Educators at a workshop

ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (AED)

The Adyar Eco Development project gathered momentum these past few months with the historic Garden of Meditation building now established as the new Knowledge and Planning Centre for the undertaking. This charming building is seeing a flurry of activity, as new furniture and computers have moved in, as have project coordinators, managers, books, maps, charts, manuals, and seed collections. A host of gardeners, entomologists, landscape architects, educators, botanists, ornithologists, and restoration ecologists, among others, have been visiting the TS

campus, to transform the Adyar estate into an ecologically healthy space.



Joss and Vighnesh working in the Garden of Meditation

As one of its foremost tasks, the team rallied to revive the nursery opposite the Great Banyan Tree. The space was cleared

and re-fenced, and over 5,000 new saplings of 50 different species were brought in after conducting a botanical survey, to create a fresh repository of native flora that has sadly become rare or gone entirely missing from the estate. With the monsoon rains on the verge of commencing, the team will soon begin the mammoth task of planting these new saplings strategically across the campus to begin restoring its true Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) character.



Volunteers help to unload the saplings

Lovely kadapa stone tablets with vital information on the local ecology, and beautiful paintings of the wonderful birds and butterflies found in the TS were also



A child views a stone painting with curiosity!

brought in and placed by the pathways to the delight and wonder of the passersby.

More planning continues for the next big phase of the project — to establish a Blue Green Centre for transformational environmental education, research and training, at the Olcott Bungalow. While the bungalow is undergoing necessary repair and cleaning, the team is engaged in weaving some beautiful dreams! How to transform the Bungalow’s interiors into beautiful, immersive spaces that meld art and science, and its surroundings into gently landscaped gardens of native flora, stone benches, mini-ponds and sculptures to ignite a love for Nature and ecology among visiting children and community members.

The team is also consulting experts to explore ways of improving the purity of the water and infrastructure on the campus to ensure its conservation and sustainable use over the long term.



Stone tablets with information on the local ecology in English and Tamil

VISIT BY STUDENTS FROM MAURITIUS

This August we had Fatima Martin, one of our Spanish members, bringing ten of her students from the National School of Architecture (Nantes) to TS Adyar as part of a fresh initiative to engage young, creative minds in our work at the TS. The students were encouraged to look at how we use

some of our buildings on the campus, and come up with new ideas for their restoration and revitalisation. And they certainly didn't disappoint!

The group surprised and inspired the administration with their energy and insight, and very professionally delivered reports on

the possibilities of harnessing the full potential of our campus in Adyar — from hosting artistic ventures, improving efficiency in maintenance and administration, to providing a more immersive access for the public to the wonderful collection of books and manuscripts at the Adyar Library and Research Centre. The students, too, were moved by their stay at the TS, with a unique exposure to the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom.

DARSHAN — CENTRE FOR IMAGINATION AND WORLD CULTURES

One of the latest projects on the Theosophical Society campus is the establishment of a Centre for Imagination and World Cultures, called Darshan. This is a continuation of the long-standing collaboration (since 2016) between the TS and Artistic Director, Professor Srinivas Krishnan (Srini), and the LEAP Boundary Breakers. This unique venture has resulted in the production and presentation of many music videos and concerts in the campus, including at the annual international conventions. The young artistes who have acted in the musical documentary specially produced this year for commemorating the 150th year of the founding of the TS, are keen on deepening their connection with the TS and Theosophy.

The purpose of Darshan is to promote and sustain 'self-transformation' through music, dance, and the arts. Some Olcott School girls have also joined the choir during the summer this year and have enthusiastically learnt new songs and some choreography as well.



Olcott School girls at a Darshan programme



Fatima Martin and her students with President Mr Tim Boyd and others



Darshan students share some light-hearted moments

Darshan is located in Vysiya Quarters, a beautiful old building in the Subbiah Chetty Avenue. This is now in the process of being renovated in order to make it suitable for Darshan's activities, including the conduct of small concerts and exhibitions for the community and guests.



Outside Vysiya Quarters

The Darshan programme will make a significant impact on the youth by integrating cultural education with music thus helping to foster an understanding of world cultures and its diversity.

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Buddhist Flag

It was in 1886 that Colonel Olcott rendered yet another signal service to Buddhists. This was the support that he gave to his Colombo colleagues in devising a Buddhist flag which could be adopted by all Buddhist nations as the universal symbol of their faith, thus serving the same purpose as that of the cross for all Christians. The Buddhist sacred books frequently mentioned the colours in the aura of the Lord Buddha and by arranging these six colours in the form of a flag, Colonel Olcott and the Colombo members helped to create a religious symbol for all the Buddhists of Ceylon. Today, its use is widespread on the island, especially during the Wesak Festival, when it is hoisted in Buddhist temples, as well as in people's homes.

The flag's six vertical bands represent the six colours of the aura which Buddhists believe emanated from the Buddha's body when he attained Enlightenment.

Blue: (Pali and Sanskrit: *nila*): The Spirit of Universal Compassion

Yellow: (Pali and Sanskrit: *pita*): The Middle Way

Red: (Pali and Sanskrit: *lohataka*): The Blessings of Practice — achievement, wisdom, virtue, fortune, and dignity

White: (Pali: *odata*; Sanskrit: *avadata*): The Purity of Dhamma — leading to liberation, timeless

Orange: (Pali: *manjettha*; Sanskrit:

manjishtha — alternatively scarlet): The Wisdom of the Buddha's teachings.

The sixth vertical band, is made up of a combination of the five colours. This new, compound color, is referred to as the Truth of the Buddha's teaching or *pabbhassara* (essence of light).

In its original form, the flag had a long streaming shape that made it inconvenient to use. Olcott therefore, suggested modifying it so that it conformed to the size and shape of the national flags of other countries.

In 1889, the modified flag was introduced to Japan by Anagarika Dharmapala and Olcott — who presented it to Emperor Meiji — and subsequently to Burma. At the 1952 World Fellowship of Buddhists, the flag was adopted as the International Buddhist Flag.

In *Old Diary Leaves*, (Fourth Series, 1887–1892), Colonel Olcott mentions that the Buddhist flag bears a very striking resemblance to the standard of the Dalai Lama, helping to promote a common platform of belief on which all Buddhist nations and sects could unite in a brotherly spirit.



PASSED TO PEACE

Mr D. Gnanasekaran served for more than 37 years as an offset printer at the Vasanta Press. He was a dedicated and sincere worker who contributed to the production of many books and magazines for the Theosophical Society. In addition to his printing work, he also served as a binder and performed various other stationery-related tasks. His sudden demise is a great loss to the Vasanta Press and we pray that his transition to the higher plane is easy. May his soul rest in peace.



3.05.1957–23.08.2024

DONATIONS TO THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

1 June 2023 to 31 August 2024

	Rs.		Rs.
BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY		Aditya Dhathathreyan, India	30,000
Sangeetha Viswanathan, India	5,00,000	Girishsanthosh Ranganathan, India	30,000
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Sumithra Gopalakrishnan, India	34,000	GENERAL DONATION	
Saagarika Shenoy, India	30,000	Infiniteism Spiritual Foundation, Chennai, India	2,00,000
Innerwheel club of Chennai Verve, India	30,000	DARSHAN	
Ashish Mehta, India	30,000	OPG Power Generation Pvt. Ltd., India	2,00,000

DONATIONS TO THE OLCOTT EDUCATION SOCIETY

1 June 2024 to 31 August 2024

	Rs.		Rs.
INDIAN DONATIONS		Isai Mitra	50,000
Indian Plumbing Association	75,000	Durairaj Sethu	10,000
CANSTOP	75,000	P. Suryavathy	5,000
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Karmen International Pvt. Ltd.	1,80,000	J. Ramakrishnan	3,000
Dharma Paripalana Sabha & Annadhanam Charitable Trust	30,000	P. Gunasundari	1,000
Y Not Company	85,000	P. Thirumalai	20,000
V. K. Swarnakumar	3,000	R. Poornalingam	10,000
Dream Runners Foundation	75,000	Playu.in	75,000
Lakshmi Sairam	15,000	Pandit Damodar Shastri Charitable Trust	1,00,000
2E Events & Service Pvt. Ltd.	75,000	Kauvery Medical Care India Ltd.	75,000

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran. The Common Indian Crow butterfly (*Euploea core*) is widely distributed in South East Asia. As caterpillars, this species sequesters toxins from its food plant which are passed on from larva to pupa to the adult. It has a strong scent that signals its unpalatability to predators. Some other butterflies mimic this species to escape from predators.

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