

Adyar Newsletter

March-April-May 2026

English Quarterly | Rs 10



Lemon Pansy Butterfly on Coral Vine Blossoms

WHITE LOTUS DAY CELEBRATIONS

White Lotus Day is observed each year on 8 May to commemorate the passing of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB), who left the physical world on this day in 1891. Across the world, wherever the spirit and influence of Theosophy have spread, the day is held in reverent remembrance, as earnest theosophists gather in quiet fellowship to send forth their loving thoughts in homage to HPB — the luminous soul who rekindled the light of Theosophy for the modern age — and to all cherished friends who have gone before.

It was HPB's own wish that this sacred day be marked by gatherings of members and by readings from *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Later, Col. H. S. Olcott added readings from HPB's inspired work, *The Voice of the Silence*. He also bestowed upon the occasion the name "White Lotus Day", prompted by the profusion of pure white lotus flowers — a symbol of spiritual beauty, purity, and awakening — that appeared across the Adyar Estate a year after HPB's passing.

NEW VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Shikhar Agnihotri was elected as the twenty-third international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society on 5 March 2026 at the age of 46 (he turned 47 on 9 March 2026), narrowly missing the distinction of being the youngest Vice-President in the Society's history. That honour still rests—by the slimmest of margins — with Curuppumullage Jinarajadasa, born on 16 December 1875, who became Vice-President in 1921 at the age of 45, only to turn 46 later that very month. Across more than a century of TS history, it remains a delightful photo finish!

Shikhar graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Nautical Science from the

At the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, the White Lotus Day observances commenced with welcome words by the international Secretary, Marja Artamaa, followed by an illuminating address by President Tim Boyd on "HPB and Today's World". The traditional readings then followed: *The Light of Asia* (Geetha Jaikumar), the *Bhagavad Gita* (Shikhar Agnihotri), and *The Voice of the Silence* (Dr R. Revathy). The gathering concluded with the chanting of the *Shanti Mantra* by Jaishree Kannan, after which flowers were offered to the statues of the Founders.



President Tim Boyd addresses the gathering on the occasion of White Lotus Day

University of Mumbai, India, spending nearly a decade in Merchant Shipping before voluntarily stepping away, guided by an inner call to look beyond a conventional career and to explore the deeper questions of life and the Self. Introduced to Theosophy by his mother, Mrs Vasumati, he joined the Society in 2008 and has since devoted himself actively to its work.

He is a founder member of the TS Pragma Lodge and the TOS Maitri Group in Lucknow, and has served as National Lecturer of the Indian Section since 2016. Through study camps, seminars, youth programmes, lectures, writings, and online initiatives, he has worked extensively to share theosophical

ideas with diverse audiences. Since 2019 he has served as an International Speaker for the Theosophical Society, Adyar, and in 2020, together with his wife Catalina, launched the YouTube channel PragyacSstudio to make theosophical teachings accessible in multiple languages.

Shikhar serves on the TS General Council as international Vice-President and volunteers full-time at the International Headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, where he lives with his wife and daughter.



Vice President, Shikhar Agnihotri, at his new office

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS OLCOTT MEMORIAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL (OMHSS)

The months of March, April, and May 2026 were marked by significant academic activities, student achievements, teacher development programmes, and preparations for the upcoming academic year.

On 14 March 2026, Class 8 students embarked on an enriching educational trip to Puducherry, organized by KPMG volunteers. Accompanied by teachers and mentors, 44 students explored the Puducherry Museum, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Rock Beach, blending learning with cultural discovery. Conversations with the KPMG volunteers added a meaningful dimension to the journey, inspiring students with insights into higher education, careers, and future possibilities.

In April, annual examinations for the remaining classes brought the academic year to a disciplined close. The school also secured the Third Prize in the Asha Computer Project Competition, emerging among the top 17 finalist schools from nearly 800 entries. During the month, Class 11 student, Bernice Jasper, participated in a five-day electronics outreach programme conducted by IIT Madras. OMHSS teachers also visited the Environmental Centre at the Olcott Bungalow to learn about biodiversity and heritage conservation.



Asha Computer Project Competition winners

The month of May focused on teacher training and preparations for the new academic year. Selected teachers attended the MiKids Educator Development Programme, the five-day Asha for Education workshop at the IIT Campus, Chennai, and the STEAM education, mathematics teaching, and lesson planning. Teachers also undertook timetable preparation, and other administrative work to ensure the smooth reopening of the school.



Educational trip to Puducherry with KPMG volunteers

ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

The Year in Gentle Bloom

The final quarter at the ATA brought the academic year to a quiet and meaningful close. The Annual Day celebrations became a heartfelt coming together of the school community. Through music, movement, and theatre, students shared not merely performances, but journeys of growth and discovery, reflecting the confidence and authenticity nurtured through the year.

Classroom learning continued to blossom beyond textbooks. Mathematical ideas found expression in real-life situations, traditional food practices connected language with science and culture, and spaces such as the bird gallery invited others into the children's discoveries. These experiences revealed the joy and meaning that emerge when learning is lived and shared.

Experiential journeys remained central to the quarter. Visits to forests, museums, villages, heritage sites, and coastal ecosystems, allowed students to connect classroom inquiry with lived realities. Overnight journeys to places such as Agastya Creativity Centre, Auroville, Madurai, Agumbe, and Hampi, offered opportunities for independence, reflection, and deeper engagement with Nature, history, and community.

Assemblies continued to be thoughtful spaces of listening and sharing, where stories, presentations, and discussions, encouraged reflection and collective engagement. Care for the environment, too, remained quietly

woven into everyday learning through projects centred on reuse, thoughtful consumption, and creative expression.

The reflections initiated during the Transformative Education workshops led by Sonal Murali, Director of the ATA, during the Theosophical Society's 150th year International Convention, continued to resonate through classrooms and daily interactions. Ideas of gratitude and the interconnectedness of life helped shape a more thoughtful and compassionate learning space.

The quarter also offered teachers opportunities for introspection and renewal through workshops, collaborative dialogue, and Nature-based activities that encouraged stillness, observation, and reconnection.

As the year draws to a close, what remains is a sense of quiet fulfilment — a reminder that education is found not only in achievement, but also in the subtle transformations within us and in the deepening of our relationship with the world around us.



Stories brought to life through hands-on learning



Gratitude bracelets workshop by Grade 7 for Grade 3



Library project of mending books by Grade 8

SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE (SWC)

Among the many compassionate community initiatives nurtured by the Theosophical Society, the Social Welfare Centre stands as a quiet yet enduring expression of service through love. Its roots reach back to June 1894, when Henry Steel Olcott established on this very site, a humble mud-walled, palmyra-thatched school for the education of children then cruelly excluded from society. What began as a small act of courage and human dignity gradually grew into a living tradition of care. In the 1960s, during the presidency of N. Sri Ram, the property was secured for the Society through the generosity of an Indian member and dedicated to welfare activities. Over time, the TS Child Welfare Centre and the Olcott Welfare Society, founded through the efforts of Dr Jean Raymond and others, joined hands, formally merging on 15 July 1985, to continue their shared mission under one compassionate vision.

Today, the SWC blossoms as a joyful Montessori nursery for children between the ages of three and five — a sanctuary where everything is provided entirely free of cost, allowing children from deeply impoverished backgrounds the rare freedom to play, learn, and simply be children in a space filled with dignity, beauty, and affection. The children receive nourishing meals, learn amidst airy classrooms brightened with murals and child-sized materials, and spend long, happy hours outdoors in gardens alive with wonder.



Learning the Montessori way

In the vegetable patch, under the loving guidance of Sivaraman *thatha* (grandfather), the head gardener of the TS grounds, the children plant seeds, water tender shoots with little watering cans, and watch in delight as flowers bloom and vegetables ripen. The harvest they help nurture eventually becomes part of their own midday meal! Spacious play areas with swings, see-saws, jungle gym, and other play equipment, ring with laughter and freedom, while every aspect of the Centre reflects thoughtful and loving care.



Children in the vegetable garden

Much of this transformation reflects the devoted stewardship of Mrs Lily Boyd, whose commitment to the Centre transcends distance. Though based in the United States, she remains deeply engaged in its ongoing development, maintaining daily contact with Superintendent V. Mekala and guiding both long-term planning and the countless small but significant details that shape the children's experience. Her careful attention, generosity of spirit, and unwavering belief in the value of early childhood education have helped create an environment where learning is woven naturally into the rhythms of play, discovery, and daily life.



Mrs Lily Boyd and V. Mekala

ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT (AED)

The AED team was a hive of activity these past three months. The nursery was bustling with energy, steadily expanding its repository of seeds and saplings with the induction of two new very capable botanists to the fold. The educators were busy preparing for the coming academic year, and the summer camp.

Several improvements were completed around the Olcott Bungalow during the quarter. An old toilet block was renovated to provide suitable facilities for visiting schoolchildren, while the former garage behind the Bungalow was transformed into a functional carpentry shed. This new space supports the restoration of furniture and other woodworking projects regularly undertaken by the team, and also serves as a venue for hands-on workshops for students.

The pond in the enclosed garden before the Bungalow was revitalized with the addition of a solar-powered fountain system, enhancing both its appearance and ecological value. Solar lighting was also introduced throughout the garden and around the Bungalow, creating a more welcoming and sustainable environment.



Solar-powered fountain system

The Pitchandikulam team also sourced nine beautiful red hematite stones, as well as some remarkable stones from Cuddapah for the upcoming landscaping work on the estate and in the Olcott School campus.



Gardeners scrub the red hematite stones

The nursery is rapidly emerging as the vibrant heart of the project, with preparations intensifying to support future growth. More than a thousand sapling bags, along with dozens of new germination trays, were brought in, while substantial quantities of soil, red earth, manure, and cocopeat, were procured to nurture the next generation of plants.

Alongside nurturing new growth, the project remains deeply committed to safeguarding the estate's venerable heritage trees like the majestic Great Baobab near Olcott Cottage and the baobab at Kasi Vilas that have been receiving treatment with insecticides for pest-affected branches, together with other supportive measures such as clearing encroaching creepers to provide greater access to sunlight, air, and growing space.

The two new botanists from the Auroville Botanical Garden who have joined the team, are bringing in fresh energy and ideas on organising the nursery and managing the flora on the campus. Hundreds of saplings spanning over 30 species were purchased from Auroville. Seeds and cuttings are constantly being collected from across the campus, as well as from foraging trips outside.

The Blue Green Centre continues to serve as a vibrant outdoor classroom, hosting a variety of guided nature walks and field-based learning sessions for students from Olcott School, ATA, and several visiting

institutions. Through these immersive experiences, children explored a wide range of ecological themes, from sand dune ecosystems and grassland studies to food-chain journaling, symbiotic relationships, and pollination investigations.

During May, the Centre organised a summer camp for students of Olcott School, drawing over a dozen eager participants. The programme offered a rich and

engaging blend of activities, including nature observation, journaling, biodiversity exploration within the school grounds, and sustainable art workshops. The experience was further enriched by a series of field visits to environmental centres and ecological hotspots, providing the children with valuable opportunities to deepen their understanding of the natural world through direct experience.

BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

BMAD's Wildlife Unit witnessed a heartening success with the rehabilitation of a hawksbill sea turtle admitted in a weakened condition. Through sustained treatment and monitoring, the turtle gradually regained strength, improving her buoyancy and ability to dive and rest underwater for longer periods. After consulting the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Wildlife Wing to identify a suitable release site, the BMAD team, in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, undertook a journey of nearly 700 kilometres by road and boat to the pristine waters of the Gulf of Mannar.



The rescued hawksbill turtle being transported to the release site after healing and recovery



The turtle being released in the presence of Supriya Sahu IAS, Addl. Chief Secretary of Environment, Climate Change & Forests, Govt. of Tamil Nadu

Renowned for its rich marine biodiversity and minimal fishing disturbance, the region offered a safe habitat for her return to the wild. The success of the rehabilitation was further strengthened by the support and guidance of international conservation organisations, reflecting a collaborative commitment to marine wildlife protection.

This quarter also saw significant progress in strengthening BMAD's infrastructure through generous CSR support. The expansion of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) kennels has enhanced BMAD's capacity to care for dogs undergoing sterilisation procedures, further strengthening one of the city's most advanced ABC programmes. A dedicated feeding vehicle was also introduced, streamlining the daily distribution of food for both community and in-house animals. In addition, the procurement of a digital radiography machine has greatly improved diagnostic capabilities by providing instant X-ray results, enabling faster diagnosis and timely medical intervention for animals in critical care.

Another uplifting story was that of Minnal ("Lightning" in Tamil), a Rottweiler brought from the Corporation pound for rehabilitation and rehoming. After nearly two months at BMAD, and despite the challenges posed by perceptions surrounding her breed, Minnal finally found her forever home. A dedicated

social media campaign by the BMAD team brought widespread attention to her story, and within a day of the post going viral, she was adopted by a loving family living just minutes away from BMAD. Her journey stands as a testament to the power of persistent advocacy and digital outreach in giving animals a second chance at life.



Minnal, with her foster parents

BMAD's Summer Camp 3.0 concluded as a joyful and inspiring journey for 25 young animal enthusiasts, blending curiosity with compassion through five immersive days of learning and discovery. Guided by the BMAD team, the children explored animal welfare, rescue practices, and urban wildlife conservation, through hands-on activities ranging from equine care, suturing workshops to Nature walks.



Summer camp children learn to bathe a horse

ADYAR NEWSLETTER

PARTICULARS UNDER SECTION 19D SUB-SECTION (B) OF THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF BOOKS ACT - FORM IV (RULE 8)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Place of Publication | : The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020 |
| 2. Periodicity of Publication | : Quarterly |
| 3. Printer's Name | : Mr S. Baskar |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020 |
| 4. Publisher's Name | : Mr Shikhar Agnihotri |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020 |
| 5. Editor's Name | : Dr Geetha Jaikumar |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020 |
| 6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital. | : The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600 020 |

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran

Lemon Pansy Butterfly on Coral Vine Blooms

The delicate Lemon Pansy butterfly (*Junonia lemonias*), with its sunlit wings and watchful eye-spots, pauses lightly among the cascading sprays of Coral Vine (*Antigonon leptopus*). The flowers lend a striking beauty to the scene, drawing butterflies and bees with their nectar-rich clusters. Yet beneath their charm lies a darker truth — coral vine, though attractive, is an exotic invasive creeper that spreads rapidly, often overwhelming native vegetation and altering local habitats. The image is thus both beautiful and thought-provoking: a meeting of fragile native life with a plant whose unchecked growth can unsettle the balance of the landscape.

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.