

TOS Adyar, Chennai, India

Sponsors, National Day for the Mentally Retarded Persons

On December 15, 2018 the TOS Adyar helped to sponsor an annual event to support mentally retarded persons. TOS International Secretary, Nancy Secret, gave the keynote address at the event, which was attended by about 100 people. She found it educational and great fun.

36th Year Celebration of the
NATIONAL DAY FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED PERSONS
DECEMBER - 8
முனை வளர்ச்சி நோக்கியோர் தேசியத் திருநாள் - 2018
ORGANISED BY
CHENNAI - 73
ALONG WITH
LIONS CLUB OF MADRAS - SAIDAPET, DIST.324 - A1
LIONS DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON'S SECRETARIAT
FOR WELFARE OF SPASTIC CHELDREN, DIST.324-A1
NESAPPAKKAM VALLALAR CHARITABLE TRUST,
SAMARASA SUTTHA SANMARGA SATHIYA SANGAM, CHENNAI - 76
MANITHAM ARAKATTAL AI, CHENNAI - 83
THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE, ADYAR GROUP, CHENNAI - 20 AND
NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME, (GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR OF NSS)
PRINCE SHRI VENKATESHWARA ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE
DATE: 15.12.2018, SATURDAY TIME: 9.30 AM TO 5.00 PM
VENUE: PRINCE SHRI VENKATESHWARA ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, CHENNAI - 73
தேசமுதையால் இணைந்து தொண்டாய் மலர்வோம்....!

The event began with the arrival of the children and a flag raising. We all stood at attention for the raising of the Indian flag, after which, Marja Artamaa, International Secretary of the Theosophical Society, and Nancy shook hands with about 20 children from the Vishwas Special School.

Everyone followed, as the children led the way with their banner into the meeting room, where the event was held. Talks followed, given by several sponsors of the event. Various aspects about mental retardation and the care and education of mentally challenged individuals were also



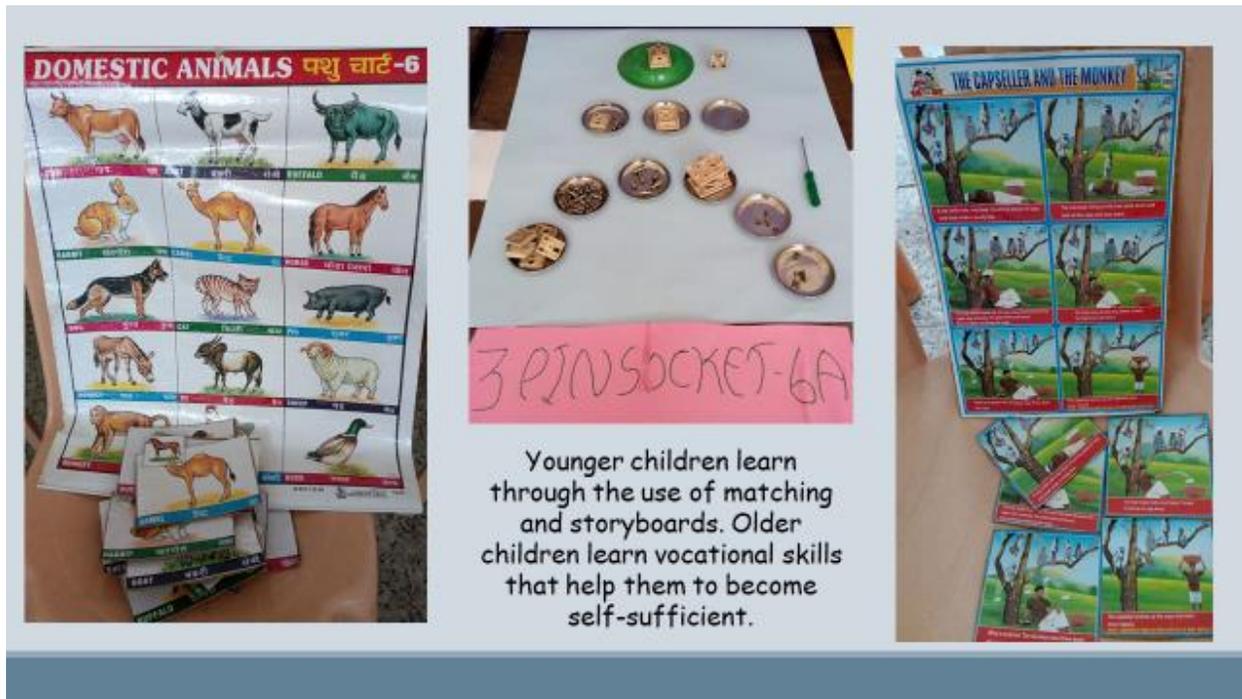
related to those present from the perspectives of medical professionals, educators, social workers and government representatives. The day included lunch and entertainment, provided by the young women and men from the Prince Shri Venkateshwara Arts and Sciences College, who were our hosts. The girls performed Indian dancing with grace and skill. The young men combined dance and gymnastics, in a performance accompanied by a roar of screams and applause from the girls in the audience, that would have befitted a rock concert. It was so

deafening. At the end of the day thank you gifts were presented to the sponsors, and awards presented to the children, who had earlier participated in a drawing competition. And, guess what, everyone was a winner!

(The following is from Nancy's keynote address.) "We all want the best for our children. We care for and nurture them even before they are born. We have hopes and dreams for them. We hope that they will be healthy, perhaps eventually wise. We dream that they will be pretty or handsome, school valedictorian or captain of the soccer team or maybe even all those things. For a few parents those dreams come true just as they envision them. For most of us, they need to be modified to one degree or another as the realities of life set in. The degree of modification needed, lesser or greater, depends on whatever those realities are for us in our particular circumstances. Most of all we love our children and want them to be happy. We all want the best for our children. Sometimes we don't know what that is or how to provide it. Sometimes we need help.

"Before we have children, we think we know what love is. We've loved our own parents, our friends and we grow to love whoever becomes our partner in life (if we are lucky enough to have one). We think we know what love is, ha! While those are all valid, and different, forms of love, nothing prepares us for the intensity of the love of a parent for his or her child. I have often said that "my son taught me how to love." I didn't even know it was happening. I just realised one day that one of his purposes in life, his dharma, and the dharma of all children I think, was to teach me how to love – to teach me the real meaning of love. I'm sure many of you have experienced this as well. "So, what is the real meaning of love, the highest form of love? One of my teachers said that, '**love is the realisation of Unity.**' When we look into our child's eyes, don't we feel that Unity? Doesn't caring for our child bring out the innate knowledge within us that we are somehow blended together with them at the highest level? The founder of the Theosophical Order of Service, Annie Besant, said that, we are all One, that while we may be separate forms, '**One life lives and moves in All.**' It is when we realise this, that we truly experience love, the kind of love our children teach us. And not just our own children, but all children. Perhaps even more especially children who have special needs. When we parent children, teach children or work with children who are mentally retarded or challenged in some

way, our love for them, the realisation of our unity with them, brings out our compassionate nature even more, giving us the impetus, the will, to help, and to act on whatever level we are



capable.

“... There is no ‘cure’ [for mental retardation, despite false claims of those who would exploit caring parents. There are ways however to stimulate the children and help them to be better able to cope with life in our world, as they get older. In special schools, such as the Vishwas Special School, younger children are taught with the use of matching exercises and stories. Older children, who are able to, learn vocational skills that will allow them to be as independent as possible in their adult years.]

“I mentioned earlier that sometimes we don’t know how to provide the best for our children, that sometimes we need help. This can come from parents’ groups, schools, medical professionals and others. ...

“When my son was five or six years old, I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He answered, ‘Happy.’ Happy, not fireman or cowboy or astronaut, just happy. I was so surprised. Where did this little child get such wisdom? When I look at the faces of the children here today, I see happy faces. I see love shining from their eyes. We must all learn from that love. We must all learn the lessons that children have to teach us. We must all give the children the best of which we are capable.”