

The Essence

Aug – Sept'24 Edition

A NEWSLETTER FROM TATVA



"Man is already weak at the moment he searches for laws and rules according to which he shall think and act. Out of his own being the strong individual controls his way of thinking and doing."

-Rudolf Steiner

From The Director's Desk – Protecting Childhood – An Impulse for these Times

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream,
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wherever I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

- Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood, William Wordsworth.

I often find myself pondering over the nature of childhood - especially when I see children in school either playing freely or working deeply. Childhood is seen as the time when young children freely and enthusiastically connect with and explore the world around them and slowly find who they are meant to become. There is inherently something so **precious** about the childhood years when our connection to nature seems to be at its strongest; our senses are sharp and bright and everything that we see and smell and hear seems to leave an imprint inside of us. And as we grow up, we keep losing a little bit of this gift - to become one with the other so deeply, to embrace the world with wonder in our whole being and with innocence in our hearts! And as a parent, as an educator it feels so important to ensure that our children get to experience this gift as much as they can, as long as they can. And therein comes this impulse to protect childhood from the tendency in the modern world to accelerate the journey towards adulthood, to urge our adult society to **slow our lives down** a wee bit and to stand as **a protective wall** around our children's childhood so that they can lose themselves safely in play, in dreams and stories, in getting into mischief and in getting their hands filled with real, purposeful work. And somewhere in this journey of experiencing childhood deeply, we should remember that our children are also busy building an endless supply of joy and goodness out of which they find the strength to face adult life. Signing off dreaming of more adults joining us on this quest!

Krishna Jayanthi Celebration



Krishna Jayanthi, also known as Janmashtami, is celebrated in TATVA School as a holistic event that integrates education, art, and spirituality, enriching students' understanding of their cultural heritage. In the days leading up to the celebration, students participated in storytelling sessions recounting the life and teachings of Krishna, emphasizing values such as compassion, love, and joy. Art and crafts play a significant role; children make clay pots, clay idols symbolizing Krishna's

playful nature. They also supported the teachers in decorating the campus for the celebration.

On the day of the celebration (22-08-2024), rituals such as decorating the idol of Krishna and

singing devotional songs foster a sense of community and spiritual connection in every classroom. Grade 12 students also gave "Krishna rides" to the younger children, adding a playful touch to the celebration. After lunch, the school hosted a vibrant gathering where students performed plays, dances, and songs, showcasing their artistic talents while honoring the spirit of Krishna. Additionally, the Physical Education team organized a special games session for all students, ensuring a joyful celebration.

- Bala Pavithra (Grade 4 Assistant Teacher)



From the Kindergarten Classrooms - Onam Celebration



Preparations for Onam went on for over a week with parents from various grades volunteering to perform for our KG children. They stayed after school hours and even on weekends to practice for their performance. On the day of the celebration, the children arrived dressed for the occasion and were warmly welcomed with a lit diya, sandalwood paste, and trays brimming with colorful flowers.

The children then eagerly helped sort out the flowers, removed the stems, and carried the trays up to the terrace.

Together with the teachers, the children made a large round **pookolam** drawn at the center of the space. Once completed, they gathered around the pookolam and sang traditional Onam songs. Then came a surprise announcement—children were asked to close their eyes in anticipation. A few moments later, the children opened their eyes to see parents, dressed in traditional Onam sarees, carrying a lit diya to the center of the stage. These parents, some of whom were the children's own mothers, performed a beautiful dance. The children were overjoyed to witness their mothers and friends' mothers in a new and delightful way. We are incredibly grateful for this wonderful experience and look forward to many such performances and participation from the parent community.

- Vidyavathi (Kindergarten Teacher)

“How do we receive children in reverence and educate them with love - A workshop by Tim Dunn and Marilou Araullo”

The school had organized a 3-day workshop at the end of August by our visiting mentors Dr Tim Dunn and Marilou Araullo. Between the two speakers, they walked the participants through the journey of a child's life in a Waldorf school. The key note talk in the mornings was on the developmental journey of the growing child from 3 - 18 years and how the child's willing, feeling and thinking faculties slowly unfold in these years. The developmental milestones in every septennial cycle were discussed in depth. The rest of the day had sessions on story-telling, painting, movement and music activities helping the participant to experience the beauty that is embedded in the Waldorf curriculum.

Marilou with her decades of experience in the kindergarten space held discussions on the use of stories, art and play in the early years. Tim spoke of the underlying “Golden rules” in the Waldorf curriculum - making the human being the starting point of all endeavors in the school, doing precedes learning and understanding, importance of a breathing rhythm to all that we do in the classrooms, working with pictures to nourish the child's life forces - to name a few. More than 50 of our school educators and a few of our school parents participated in this weekend programme and the school was brimming with energy and enthusiasm.

In the words of a Grade 5 Parent, the workshop was truly an eye opening one, helping us understand the importance of child development in a holistic way. This has made us feel more connected to the philosophy and confident in fostering a more balanced, mindful learning environment at home.

- Aishwarya Swaminathan (Grade 6 English Teacher)

TATVA School Parents Engage with Renowned Waldorf Educators

Tim and Marilou, seasoned mentors from Australia with over two decades of experience in Waldorf education, facilitated two enlightening sessions for TATVA School's parents. Approximately 30 parents attended both sessions, benefiting from the duo's vast expertise.

Session Highlights:

1. Health-Giving Education:

Tim and Marilou shared their insights on holistic health, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach. Marilou focused on kindergarten developmental aspects, while Tim addressed the needs of higher-grade students.

2. The Gift of NO:

This session proved invaluable, as Tim explained the significance of setting clear boundaries. Children, he noted, seek structure and security when limits are established. Without clear guidance at home, they may seek direction elsewhere, potentially leading to misguided choices.

These two sessions were eye opening for parents. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to TATVA School for organizing these informative sessions. We eagerly look forward to future engagements with Tim and Marilou, continuing to enrich our parenting journey.

- Amudha (Parent)

Field trip to Guindy Park – Botany Block for Grade 5

It is the Waldorf Way to move from whole-to-parts, and to move from close-to-home to farther-away. In TATVA, Grade 5 children begin the Botany Block by learning about all the friendly trees, flowers, and grasses in our own little gardens in school. We live and experience nature outdoors as much as possible, and when inside the classroom, the teachers bring the plant world to life through stories. As part of this block, Grade 5B children embarked on a nature walk inside the Guindy Children's Park in Adyar.

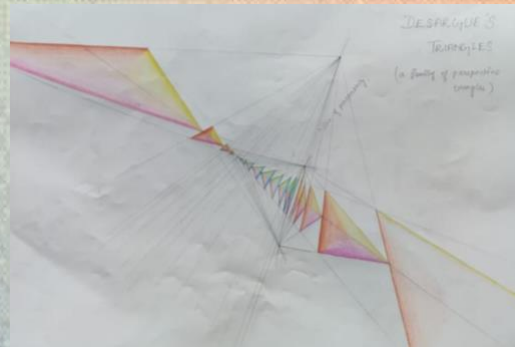
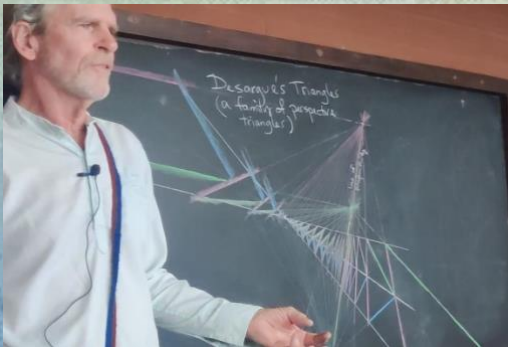
Children spotted many trees and plants that they are familiar with like the mushrooms, moss, lichens, ferns, banyan trees, etc. The highlight of the day was to sketch their favorite tree in the park by observing them. They were also very interested to see animal species housed in the park, including mammals, birds, and reptiles. The experience left a lasting impression on children, combining excitement with a sense of awe for nature. Overall, the field trip was a resounding success, leaving children with cherished moments and a new connection with nature. Moments clicked, memories packed, and happiness recorded.



- Usha Hariharan (Grade 5 Class Teacher)

Projective Geometry - Where Zero meets Infinity

Earlier this month, our Grade 11 children had an opportunity to experience the signature block of Projective Geometry taught by Dr. Tim Dunn. Along with the children, a few of us educators from TATVA participated in class observations and I am happy to share my personal experience here with our larger community of parents and educators. To me it seemed to be a culmination of the geometry blocks that are part of the curriculum, starting with initiating to the world of Geometry with constructions to bring about the beauty and precisions in Grade 6, leading onto the constructions using Euclidian principles and wondering about the aspects of spirals that we can observe in nature in Grade 7 and diving into a deep exploration of platonic solids in Grade 8. In Grades 9 and 10 children move on to topics of Loci and Trigonometry.



With Projective Geometry, Dr. Tim Dunn walked us through a path how the artists during the Renaissance period played a major role in bringing in the perspective of the real-world scenery to a 2-

dimensional plane. Then a question was put forth, what happens to the Euclid's fifth postulate when it comes to a spherical plane? What happens to the lines that appear parallel within our sensory view as they extend out on both sides and reach far beyond? Do they still continue to be in parallel? We had to stretch beyond our analytical thinking and imagine the idea of Zero and Infinity. Are they one and the same?

Currently lots of investigations are underway with the data that we receive from Hubble Space Telescope. We are able to look back in time, to study the origin of the Universe. What can they find when it sends the empirical data closer to the origin of the Universe? It was a great three weeks where I could feel myself stretching my thinking beyond imagination, with lots of questions to hold within myself and all the while my hands were being stretched with more and more complicated constructions. The satisfaction on children's (and indeed all participating educators') faces mirrored the sense of achievement they felt at the end of the block.

- Balasubramanian T H (Grade 11 Class teacher)



Inner Organs and Circulatory System in Grade 9

After having completed all blocks of Man and Animal, Plant in relation to the Earth, Human Physiology and Food Chemistry in their earlier grades, children are now ready to understand the relationship between the plant and animal life, the functions of each organ system in relation to one another and the cellular processes involved. The purpose of this block is to bring a sense of reverence in children for the, otherwise ignored, unseen processes that make life possible.

In this block, children were introduced to the plant and animal cells through microscopic observations. The relationship between plants and animals was drawn at the molecular level: the carbon dioxide exhaled by animals becomes a crucial source for the plant to produce carbohydrate which in turn is consumed by animals. The block then focused on the process of enzymatic and cellular digestion and transport of macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) across the intestinal wall and into the blood. The pathway of macronutrients was traced in the blood to liver, lungs, heart and from heart to other parts of the body. Children saw how these macronutrients nourished the entire body at the cellular level. Children also tracked the pathway of waste products in the form of exhaled air, sweat, urine and feces via lungs, skin, kidneys and anus – the vital excretory organs.

- Bala Gujam (High School Biology Teacher)

Bio Dynamic Farming

When you visit TATVA High School, you will be greeted by a patch of plants growing on the right-hand side, just inside the entrance, who knows you might just witness a sunflower or any seasonal flowers at the time. This patch will have distinct circular plots, with an assortment of plants in each, and you would be hard pressed to find one similar to any other plot in the entire patch. This patch was made by our own Grade 12 and Grade 13 children, who built the beginning of a deeper connection with nature, in the past three months. These plots are individual, and reflect each young adult who worked on it, during the time. With the help of the TATVA gardeners and Lohit, a Biodynamic gardener and farmer, Grade 12 and 13, headed by their class teacher Praveena, immersed themselves the expanded perspective of nature that is Biodynamic Agriculture. If we were to describe what Biodynamic Agriculture is, then at its essence, it is building a strong bond with your garden/farm, providing the best possible space for the plants to grow to their fullest potential.



Expanding your perspective on what impacts and influences your plants, from cosmic rhythms to mycorrhizal fungi allowing for nutrient transfer within the soil, and the wonders or modern enrichment methods of cow dung and fermentation at its best, Biodynamic Agriculture is not just a standalone method of organic farming, it is the most effective supplementary practice to implement in any growing space. The same young adults who had their reservations for the then upcoming gardening block, now don't quite want to part with their plots, and have a deep connection to their plants, having poured in their being into the land, and the land has responded wonderfully. Without applying any pest repellent or any of the '-cides', the very weeds growing in the plots help in tick and worm repelling, reducing chances of bad produce, and provide a healthy and diverse environment for the crop plants they have sown. Sunflowers, runner beans, Egyptian Spinach and cornflower, are a few of the varieties you will find there. Nature responded by providing basil, both peppery and sweet, and a wide range of flowering plants to encourage bees to pollinate and bring more life into the space.



As the first graduating class of Tatva, is it any surprise that along with paving the way for their juniors in the classroom, they have also forged a strong bond with nature for all their fellow students?

- Lohith (Biodynamic Agriculturist)

Open day at TATVA

The Open Day at TATVA was truly a mesmerizing experience, offering a vibrant glimpse into the unique, life-enriching educational journey from kindergarten to Grade 13. Upon entering, I was immediately struck by the colourful displays of hand-drawn artwork and intricate sculptures created by children across various grades, showcasing their creativity.

The kindergarten classroom was especially enchanting, a simple yet elegant space filled with handmade wooden toys and beeswax sculptures that reflected the beauty of nature. The room radiated warmth, reminding me how foundational imaginative play and hands-on learning are an essential part of the Waldorf approach. As I moved through the grades, I could clearly see the progression in children's skills and understanding. The lower school classrooms (Grades 1-5) were filled with vibrant chalkboard drawings, storytelling illustrations, and imaginative paintings. Students in Grades 6-8 had created intricate woodworking projects, precisely drawn geometrical figures, and detailed science illustrations.



In the upper grades (9-13), the students' projects were particularly impressive, ranging from scientific research to essays, artwork, and academic performances. Their displays reflected an inspiring blend of independent thinking, creativity, and specialized knowledge.



Mr. Balasubramaniam, the school director, conducted insightful sessions that challenged common misconceptions about exams, highlighting the importance of stress-free education. The entire experience left me with profound appreciation for the holistic, balanced approach of Waldorf education.

- Venkatesu (Parent)

Other events @ TATVA

1. Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations in every class
2. Parent Reading Circle of Steiner lectures every Thursday
3. Teachers' Day celebrations in respective classrooms
4. Dr Karthiyayini's Session on "Daily Routines and Nutritional Tips for School
5. Community Lunch and Nila Choru gatherings in Grades 3A and 3B
6. Grade 9 children's 11-day trip to the Himalayas
7. Printing of the second edition of TATVA Times - A Journalism project by Grade 11
8. TATVA Music Band had its first public performance! and many more...

More details on these in the upcoming newsletter.

<<< Lovingly prepared by TATVA Parents >>>

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