

AMI Birth to Three - Assistants Certificate Course

- **Aditi Ganesh**

The Birth to Three Assistants Certificate Course was held for the first time in India at Navadisha Montessori Foundation, Chennai, between November 27 and December 6, 2017. Julia Hilson, AMI 0-3 Trainer and Consultant, conducted the session for about 60 participants, who were seeking to gain a better understanding of the Montessori Infant community and ways to set up the right kind of environment for them. It is a great milestone for the Montessori Community in India as there is a lot of interest in the Montessori work at this age level. India has two AMI 0-3 Trainers in Training now - Kavya Chandrashekhar, Bangalore and Vibhuti Jain, Mumbai.

Pavithra Rakesh, an event coordinator for the Indian Montessori Foundation shares her experience.

"I had completed my 3-6 AMI Training and was very keen in understanding the child's needs from birth before I could have my second child. Through this course, I understood that mothers must be sensitive towards a child's needs which can sometimes be unanswerable and is important that we are there for our child at the right point of time. It was great to hear Julia Hilson bring to light her life experiences in relation to the child for our better understanding. With the knowledge I received from this course, I would like to pursue the 0-3 course in the future."

Anita Unnikrishnan, a teacher at Redwood Montessori School, talks about her biggest takeaways.

"The two main points which I learnt over this course are to step back and not intervene in the child's work until and unless there is an issue in which someone could get hurt. And secondly to be slow, graceful and cautious in every word and movement which the adult takes."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Book Corner	2
Up Close with Julia Hilson!	2
Little Chef	4
Explore Montessori	5
Good Reels	5
Flora—Here, There, Everywhere!	6
IMF Talks	6
Poetry Corner	7
AMI Membership	7
IMF Membership	8
Advertisements	8



Pavithra and Anita receiving their certificates from Julia Hilson



A to I Assistants Course 2017 Batch - Chennai



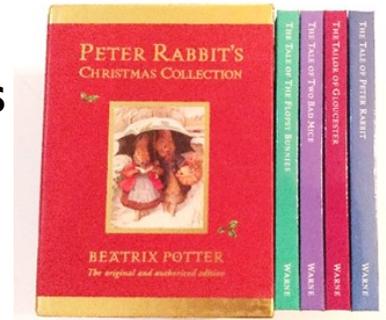
Books are real and magical, simple and transcendent, right here and beyond, and an essential part of children's lives! We bring you a series of reviews of books suitable for children of different age groups. Watch this space in every issue for a different book!

Book Corner

- Tarunya Gouthaman

PETER RABBIT'S CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

Text & Illustration - Beatrix Potter
 Publisher - Penguin Books
 ISBN No. - 0-7232-4937-7



Beatrix Potter was an English writer, illustrator, natural scientist, and conservationist best known for her children's books featuring animals, such as those in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

Peter Rabbit's Christmas Collection has four wonderful original tales by Beatrix Potter. *The Tailor of Gloucester*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* and *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* are included which is a great combination to introduce children to the tales by the author. These books can be read aloud to children from an early age. These tales would appeal to the children's vivid imagination and they will thoroughly enjoy the adventures of these little animals. Their stories are written in rich language complemented by the beautiful watercolour



pictures by the author. This lovely collection of books is great keep for children of all ages and even adults too! The books by Beatrix Potter are available on Amazon in paperback and hardcover.

Up Close with Julia Hilson!

- Preethi Rsum

Elementary Teacher at Navadisha Montessori School, Chennai

Julia Hilson is an AMI Assistants to Infancy trainer, recently in Chennai for the Birth-Three Assistants course at Navadisha Montessori Foundation. She has over 30 years of experience working in both UK and Australia and has also been involved in implementing Montessori programs in indigenous communities in Australia. She holds AMI Diplomas for 0-3 (Australia), 3-6 (London) and 6-12 (Bergamo) and a Bachelor and Masters in Education. She has conducted courses in London, Australia, Japan, Gambia, South Africa and is starting a course in New Zealand in May 2018. She graciously agreed to answer a few questions for The Touch Board after a really long day at the Institute.

Julia, this is your first time to India. How has your experience been so far?

As soon as I go into a country I have a sense of 'Do I feel comfortable? Is it a space that I could be in for a period of time, particularly if I was thinking of coming back again?' And I have to say I feel so at home here. The food, the dress, just the people, so open! I feel like I have been here before. Even though I live in a country where down the streets I don't have things like cows walking in the street, dogs, rubbish. But that's not how I see it. I love it. I feel really at home here.

That's lovely. We have heard a lot about your Montessori journey. But how did this journey begin?

I was a nanny for three years for this little girl in London. At two and a half she started in a Montessori class, but I never really looked inside. One day, the teacher came out in a panic and said that her assistant was not there as she was sick. And she knew that I only had this little girl to take care of. So, she asked if I could help her out, as she really needed an assistant for the morning. We got permissions and I went in and it was just 'Oh my Gosh! I have to do this'. I was eighteen then. I saved up money for a year. I enrolled in the course and I did it in London with Hilla Patell and Lynne Lawrence who was a trainer in training at that time.

So, you did the 3-6 first and worked for a long time at the Children's house?

Yes. I have roughly about 17 years of experience in 3-6. I was running my own school in Australia. Then I decided I would do the 6-12 because I wanted to open a 6-9 class. That was the next stage. And parents were really pushing like we really want more. So, I took off to Italy where I studied with Camillo Grazzini. And then I came back and worked for a year in that class until I found someone else to take it over. And I went back in to 3-6. And then I decided to go the other way and do 0-3. And that's really what I have been involved in now.

Ten years ago, I got this opportunity to go up to an aboriginal community and be part of this pilot project in Torres strait island school. I put my hand up for it and I went with my family and lived there for six years. And I realized that this could never really be sustainable unless I empowered local people to take this message on. So, it is at that stage, up there, that I decided I would put my hand up to train, to help that community.

And in fact, I just used to think, in my 3-6 mind, I can only deal with what is in front of me, the child in front of me. And then I started to realize, 'My Gosh! now I know what happens even before they come to us. In fact, it's the parent that have the biggest impact. So how do I work with them?' So, I decided to become a trainer at this level. Even though I understood Montessori very deeply, and I felt I understood and knew the child, I still needed to push myself out of my comfort zone to get some more skills so I could talk to people to share this message.

So how do you find time for everything? Balancing family and the travelling?

When we moved from my hometown to Torres strait, my husband gave up his job and came. So, we were all there together. And my two older children, one was in University and one was travelling the world. They just used us as the base. My two younger children were six and eight. The first thing I did was to go and do seminars. Then I was only gone for two weeks. So the travelling is only since I have become a trainer and they are in their adolescence and they are away at the Hershey farm school. I never ever trained when they had their June-July time off. Luckily we have skype now. They can see me and that's how we kept in touch. My husband has now started travelling with me. He hasn't come on this because it is a short trip. But if I come back to do a course, he would be with me.



Julia Hilson and her family

You mentioned you were very passionate about gardening.

That's what I do when I go home. I get up early in the morning and I am in the garden. For me, that's my happy place. I love to be in nature. So, I always find time for that. But I don't do it enough because I am not home very much.

We, Montessorians, know the rewards of the job and we enjoy working with the children. Some days can be really profound. But, is there a challenging part in being a Montessorian? Days when it is too hard?

Well, I tell you what, I still haven't really worked out how to do this, balancing between the family and work. You know how Montessori said work with the hands is so important and when you really see a child truly engaged with something, for me, it's really soulful to see. You can see this child completely immersed in something. There is an inner peace and you see it, like radiate out from them. You can see it in their face, in their body. And for me, this work does that.

I am at the end of couple of years of travelling, non-stop and not having any time for myself. I am exhausted. But it is amazing. I just know that this is what I am meant to do. Because when I get up in front of people, even if I am tired, I can still do it. For me, the work with the children has always been like that too. I don't get down about it. Because for me I also have great faith in us as humans, that we will all always rise above and overcome these things. This is not work for me. I was born to do this. This is what I am meant to do. I am on a journey too, to become a better trainer, to develop better skills to communicate more effectively. And for me, this journey is exciting.

The biggest struggle is honestly my family. I feel the guilt, standing in a different country, and knowing that my family are at home. And they have to give me up willingly and lovingly, which they always do and they never ever make me feel guilty. That's what I struggle with. Because there is a part of me that I am giving up a lot to do this. And so that is my struggle.

Your greatest inspiration?

Well, has to be Montessori. It has to be. But, I tell you what I am inspired by even more now. I know this sounds a little corny to say this, but it has been my children and how they have coped. Particularly my two younger children who have seen me go through this process of leaving them and being a trainer. They are young adolescents and feel a sense of responsibility for the rest of the world. Because they have come on this journey of seeing remote communities and working in aboriginal Torres Strait islander communities, as well as Africa. They know what's out there. They know that we are so blessed and that we have so much in our lives. And for me the fact that they say 'Mum, you need to do this. You have to go out there and share the message. This is what you are passionate about', this has been inspiring. Because it's the only reason I could come away and leave them.

If you were to meet a non-Montessorian what would you tell them?

If someone asks, for me, it's about helping the child follow a natural path of development. To be able to fulfill who they truly are. And that's very philosophical. I want to sort of draw them in. What do we mean by natural development? For me, I want a child to be able to truly express who they are. And they can't do that unless we start from birth. And if we can start this journey then the trajectory for this baby, who is born here, is going to be much more! So, that's what my aim is. Montessori helps the child to stay on this natural path of development, follows natural development. It is as humans should unfold.

Little Chef

- Kavneet Chadha

CHOCOLATE CRUNCHIES

METHOD

- Slowly melt the butter, golden syrup, castor sugar and cocoa together in a fairly large pan.
- Cook for a minute. **This step will require adult supervision.**
- Remove from fire and stir in the cornflakes and nuts.
- Divide the mixture into the paper cases and press them with a blunt knife.
- Leave them to cool and become crisp.

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup butter
 1/3 cup ground sugar
 3 levelled tbsp. golden syrup OR runny honey
 3 levelled tbsp. cocoa powder
 1/4 cup cornflakes
 1/2 cup walnuts
 18 paper cases

PLEASE NOTE:- Children below 3 years of age need support in cooking. This can be given by preparing and measuring out the ingredients for them before they begin. Older children can measure out the ingredients, first by collaboration and then independently.



Food is comfort,
 security, art,
 connects to us on
 many levels –
 emotionally,
 philosophically,
 spiritually and most
 importantly food is
 love! In this series
 we bring to you
 simple recipes with
 tips on involving the
 children of different
 age groups in the
 art of food
 preparation

Explore Montessori

- Mridula Chunduri

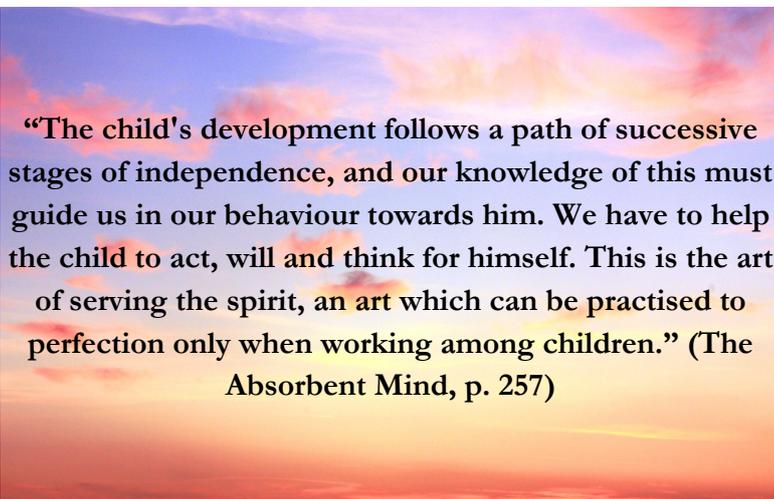
Content Developer, Blue Blocks Montessori School, Hyderabad

Explore Montessori is an annual event of Blue Blocks Montessori School and was held this year on December 9, 2017. This year the event was coupled with the inauguration of the Blue Blocks Complete School campus at Osman Nagar, Tellapur in Hyderabad.

There was a rapt audience consisting of parents, grandparents, extended family and friends, and many inquisitive visitors. Children welcomed them and held court in all the kiosks-Botany and Zoology, Geography, Sensorial, Mathematics, Exploratory, Languages and even Elementary education. While four-year olds were distinguishing between an isthmus and a peninsula, seven-year olds were calculating the precise time across the various time zones of the world. They spoke on life cycles of frogs and butterflies, identified plants from their leaves, put together detailed the etymology of months; solved divisions, showed proficiency four spoken languages including French, Telugu and Hindi; and many more. There were Timelines depicting the life story of Dr Maria Montessori, the history of Indian Mathematicians, the evolution of Indian music; and an account of the most popular languages of the world.



Dr C Mrunalini a visitor at the event says *“It was creative, educational, challenging, heartwarming and holistic, a boon for children and a pleasure for elders.”*



Good Reels

In this segment we are bringing out reviews and related articles on films and music for children.

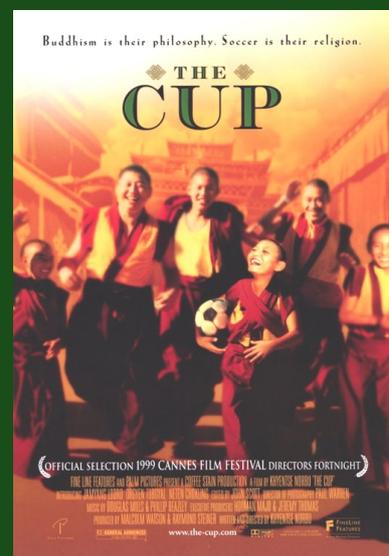
The Cup

- Roopa Sundar

A 1999 Tibetan movie, introduces one to life in a Buddhist monastery – with butter tea, lamas, and the whole lot. But life is not as calm as one would imagine as football fever takes over and a young monk is determined to watch the World Cup final. Two Tibetan refugees who join the monastery are not spared from it. But will they get permission for the same? And even if they do, how will they finance a satellite dish?

The movie brings out bonds of friendship, strengths in unity, empathy, charming humour, beauty in sacrifice, and challenges in an ever-changing world, all in its subtleties.

‘The Cup’, suitable for children above 6, is available as a DVD on Amazon.



Flora - Here, There, Everywhere!

- Vidhya Ramalingam

In this issue we are doing a special feature on plants as part of an environment and how love for the same can be imbibed in children. We thank Lakshmi Reddy from Prakruthi Montessori for sharing this information with us.



Children preparing the soil and watering the plants

Prakruthi Montessori is set up in a farm house of about 2 acres in Kondapur, Hyderabad surrounded by nature and farm animals to provide indoor and outdoor learning environment. It was founded by Lakshmi Reddy in 2015 with two trained adults and 8 children.

The school has a beautiful outdoor environment with a variety of fruits, vegetables and flowering plants. The outdoor has also has a play area for children. The garden has trees like banana, papaya and mango and plants like brinjal, tomato and ladies finger. There are creepers like bitter gourd, pumpkin and bottle gourd too. Pretty, colourful flowering plants like marigold, chrysanthemum and lilies add more beauty to the outdoors.



Flower arrangement

The outdoor area has a manmade well and geometrically shaped patches for gardening activities. Regular gardening activities are carried out by the children where they are encouraged to prepare the soil, sow seeds, water and care for the plants as well as harvest the vegetables. The gathered vegetables and greens are made into salads, vegetable parathas and at times children take the vegetables home. The outdoor environment is also the abode of farm animals like hens, cows and rabbits. Children feed the animals, collect the eggs and observe the process of milking. The school library has plenty of books to expand the children's understanding and connect with nature better.

IMF Talks

Mumbai

- Mehak Hemnani

Two talks were organised by the Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) in Mumbai during November.



Anahita Gandhi answering a query

The first one was keeping up with the excitement of the 4th National Montessori Conference, a talk on **Moving Towards Independence** at Kinderhome Montessori on November 16, 2017 by **Anahita Gandhi**, AMI Primary Trainer (3-6 level). She has worked in various Montessori schools and has been part of the training faculty in Mumbai, Bangalore and Thrissur. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her work. Anahita began her talk by highlighting the independence of the child in the womb. She took the participants through the entire journey right from the birth to how the child first starts moving his head, to lifting his head, then sitting, crawling, holding and walking to finally walking independently. Then she went on to give ideas about how as adults we can give opportunities to the child to move towards independence. Several questions were raised and discussed on topics such as misuse of independence by the children and educating caretakers of the children to encourage independence in the absence of parents.

The second talk was on November 29, 2017 at Jamnabai Narsee School, titled '**Follow the child**' and was conducted by **Zarin Malva** (Director of Training at RTI - Ratan Tata Institute Montessori Training), **Anahita Gandhi** (AMI Primary Trainer), **Geeta Savla** and **Pavithra Rajagopalan** (both are AMI Primary Trainers in Training at RTI). Being the first of its kind, this talk was organized for the parents of a mainstream school with children in the age group 2½ to 6 years and were new to the idea of Montessori Education. The talk focused on the nature of children in this period and as adults what can we do at home to help the children. Videos were also used to supplement the talk highlighting the Montessori concepts. The biggest take away was the idea that there is reason behind children's behaviour and as parents we need to understand them and respond accordingly. Few questions were raised on topics such as how much time can children watch television in a day, the changes that can be expected in children after the age of 6 and the help that can be provided to them, leading to healthy discussions.

Hyderabad

- Vidhya Ramalingam

A talk titled '**Food: For Mind and Body**' was conducted at Sri Aurobindo Montessori School on December 14, 2017, by **Rukmini Ramachandran**, Director of Training at Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF). She spoke about how eating is just not a matter of merely feeding the body; but it is from the start of the child's life, a formative and a psychological process. Food is connected to our emotions, to our culture and to our way of life. Instead of worrying why children are not eating, we have to find ways to make this basic instinct of eating a joyful, sensorial and delightful practice. As parents and teachers, we must understand this fundamental human activity so that we can support the healthy development of children.



Rukmini Ramachandran delivering a talk at Sri Aurobindo Montessori School

Asma Lalani from Anthea Montessori School shares her experience with us. "*The talk was brilliant and explained to us how FOOD is a sensory delight by giving real life examples. She brought up a very important point that we adults take very quick decisions and become judgmental about the children's eating habits, but continuous and consistent trials will surely help them out to enjoy food as 'Food is Love and Food is social.'*" Radhika Pulella from Pragnya Montessori School said, "*I enjoyed the talk and it answered most of the questions parents were asking me frequently. The main idea to remember is feed the hungry child, respect and accept the child's choice and give them opportunities to balance between too much and too little.*"

Poetry Corner

The Rain

Robert Louis Stevenson

The rain is raining all around
It falls on field and tree
It falls on umbrellas here
And on the ships at sea.

AMI Membership

Membership to Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) is open to everyone! Become a part of a worldwide community dedicated to the recognition of the unique nature of childhood, natural human development and the rights of the child. Discounted rates to events, AMI eBulletins and Journals are some of the benefits a member receives. AMI membership is an individual membership and is not available to schools, universities, and other educational organisations.

Membership fees begin at 40 euros.

To join, please visit www.montessori-ami.org

Anyone can become a subscriber!

The Indian Montessori Foundation brings out two publications, a monthly newsletter, The Touch Board (6 copies a year) and an annual journal, Montessori Matters.

Subscriptions:

- One year: Rs. 1200
- Two years: Rs. 2000

Print out the subscription form from our website (www.montessori-india.org), fill in all the details required and send it along with your payment to the Indian Montessori Foundation.

Touch Board Team

- Editorial Team** - Roopa Sundar & Tarunya Gouthaman
- Reporting Team** - Aditi Ganesh, Kavneet Chadha, Mehak Hemnani & Vidhya Ramalingam
- Layout Designer** - Khyati Shah

Trustees - Shirley Madhavan Kutty, Kamini Sundaram, Leela Samson, Zarin Malva, Rukmini Ramachandran

Do send in articles or news to thetouchboard@gmail.com

Want to get noticed? Place your advertisements in the Montessori Matters and The Touch Board!

Package Details: Rs. 3600—A full page (20 x 12 cms) advertisement in two issues of Montessori Matters and 4 x 5 cms advertisements in all issues of The Touch Board (2017-2018)

Send us your advertisements in the following specifications:

Format : JPEG

Colour : Black and White (Montessori Matters), Colour (The Touch Board)

SIR RATAN TATA INSTITUTE
in affiliation with
AMI, The Netherlands

DIPLOMA COURSE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

LECTURES IN ENGLISH
MONDAY to FRIDAY
1:30PM to 4:30PM

Practice class - 3 times a week, morning or evening
Practice in schools - 12 weeks

CONTACT: Ms Zarin Malva
Tel: 66648847 / 66236934 / 902969613
www.montessori-mumbai.org
Email: zarinmalva@gmail.com

Abacus Montessori School is looking for Counsellors and teachers in Political Science, Maths, Physics and Hindi. If you understand children, have excellent communication skills in English, and a Bachelor's or Master's degree and are open, responsible and reflective, please apply to

abacusmontessorischool@gmail.com
Phone: 2496094, 24963823

AMI
MONTESSORI COURSES
in Chennai & in Bengaluru
offered by
NAVADISHA MONTESSORI FOUNDATION
Phone: 988 466 9104
E-Mail ID: course@navadisha.org
Website: www.navadisha.org



SHARANALAYA
MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Sai baba Gardens,
Akkarai ECR,
Near ISkon temple, Chennai

www.sharanalayaschool.com
044-42137651 / 044-64558801

MILESTONES® Montessori
Inspiring Young Minds School
WE FOLLOW THE CHILD

LOOKING FOR TRAINED MONTESSORI ADULTS IN PUNE

Milestones Montessori School
S. No. 204/2 (P), Wakad Pune - 411057
Ph. : (020) 65100238, 65227333

pumpkinpatchpune@gmail.com
www.pumpkinpatchpune.com

Can geometry ever touch you?



Admissions Open
Pre-Primary to Grade 10
Dr. A. S. Rao Nagar & Thirumaluru

Call: +91 60 6021 6992
Mail: info@pubblecreek.in

