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ON FEBRUARY 27, 1919, GURUDEV RABINDRANATH TAGORE SANG HIS INSPIRING DEVOTIONAL POEM AND ENTHRALLED STUDENTS AND STAFF OF BESANT THEOSOPHICAL COLLEGE AT MADANAPALLE. MARGARET COUSINS, WIFE OF JAMES H COUSINS, PRINCIPAL OF THE COLLEGE, PUT THE MELODY TOGETHER FOR THE POEM, GIVING US OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

YEARS AGO, JANA GANA MANA FOUND ITS MELODY AT MADANAPALLE, AND INDIA ITS NATIONAL ANTHEM

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According to Hyderabad-based historian Professor KSS Seshan, Tagore was on a tour of South India when he reached Madanapalle from Bangalore by train in the last week of February 1919. Tired from the arduous tour, he wanted to take rest at the Theosophical College, which was founded by Dr Annie Besant, the great Theosophist and nationalist in 1915.

Tagore also wanted to enjoy the company of the college principal Dr James Henry Cousins, whose poetry he admired.

Madanapalle was also the birthplace of Besant's protégé, the great Indian philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti.

'JANA GANA MANA' GETS THE UNIVERSAL TUNE

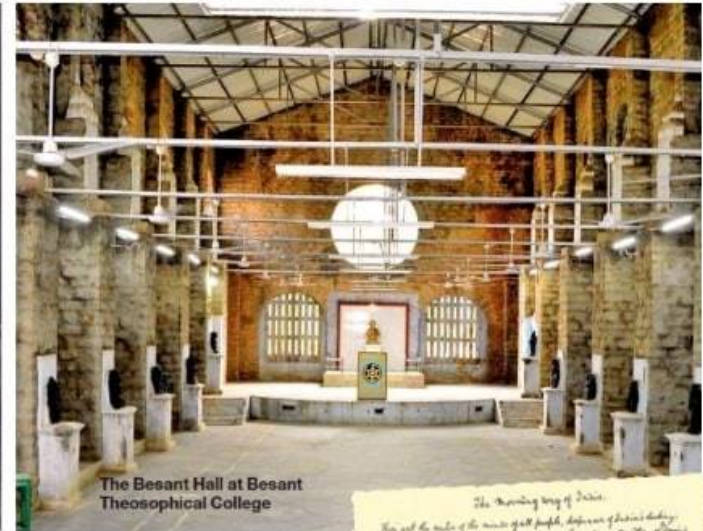
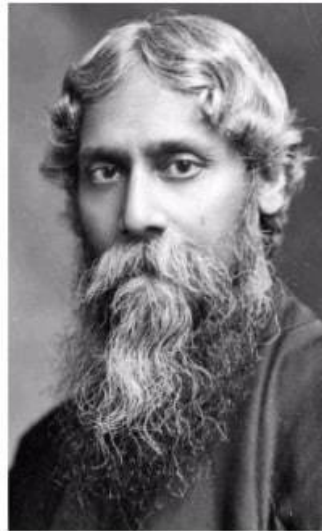
According to Professor Seshan, Dr Cousins and his wife Margaret used to conduct a 'fun-singing session' every Wednesday night after dinner for the entire college community. At one of these sessions, Tagore, who joined the gathering, asked if he could sing one of his poems.

The audience, who had gathered in one of the classrooms that night, had never imagined that they would be witness to a defining moment in Indian national movement.

Later, Dr Cousins recounted the historic moment in his autobiography: "In a voice surprisingly light for so large a man, he sang something like a piece of geography giving a list of countries, mountains and rivers; and in the second verse, a list of the religions in India. The refrain to the first verse made us pick up our ears. The refrain to the second made us clear our throats. We asked for it again and again, and before long we were singing it with gusto: *Jaya hat, Jaya hat, Jaya hat, Jaya Jaya Jaya Jayahat* (Victory, victory, victory to thee)."

Mrs Cousins, who was moved by the poem's profound beauty and magnificence, wanted to give a suitable tune to it. She was a graduate in Music from the Royal University of Ireland, Dublin and the following day she grasped the general theme, notations, nuances and 'swara' for the song from its creator himself. With the help of her students, Mrs Cousins gave musical notes to the song using only a few simple musical instruments.

Tagore showered praise on Mrs Cousins and appreciated her efforts in composing a delightful melody for his poem. "It made literary history and carried the name and thought of Tagore into the minds and hearts of millions of young children in schools and colleges. It ultimately gave humanity, the nearest approach to an ideal national anthem. It happened, as so many great events of the spirit do, without anticipation and without collusion," Dr Cousins wrote in his autobiography.



The Besant Hall at Besant Theosophical College

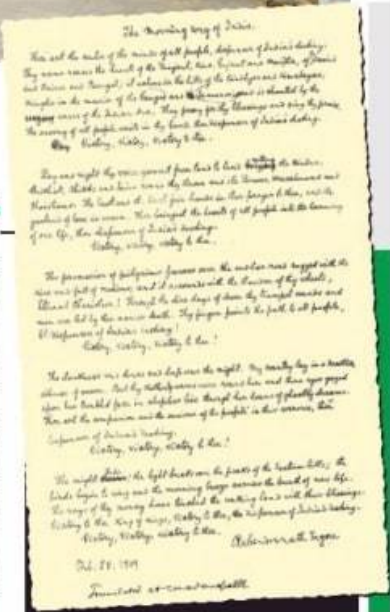
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-Dr Cousins

Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's arrival to Madanapalle and his subsequent stay in the campus has found a place in the annals of Indian history. The monumental work which was done during this period left a rich legacy to the institution and brought country-wide recognition to Madanapalle. This is the time to remember the services of this great personality, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and his association with this historical institution.

We will follow the ideals as envisaged by our legendary founder Dr Annie Besant and continue to work for the cause of education.

-Dr N Vijaya Bhaskar Choudary, Correspondent, Besant Theosophical College, Madanapalle



A photocopy of the Morning Song of India, the translated version of Jana Gana Mana, in Tagore's handwriting

100 YEARS OF JANA GANA MANA

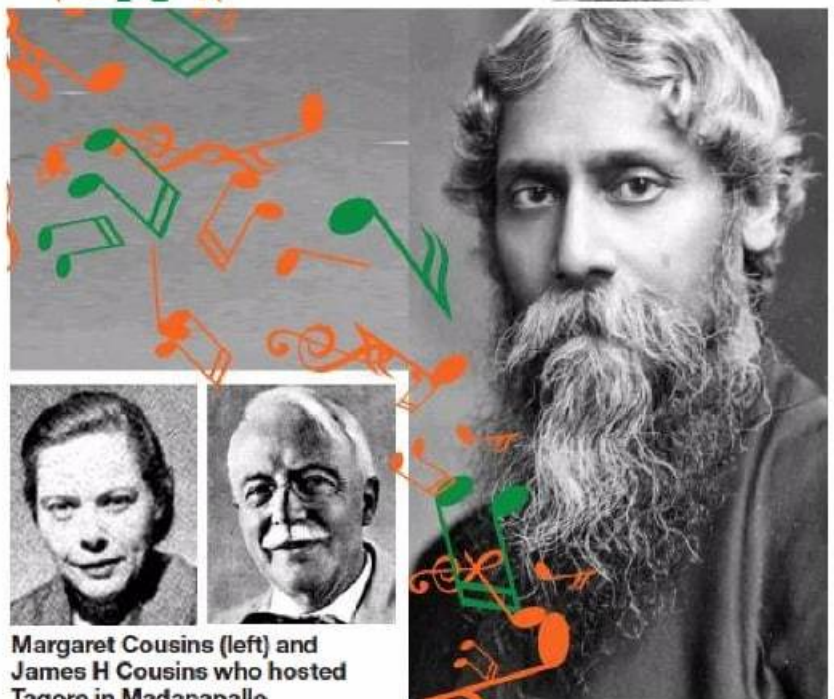
HOW A POEM RECITAL IN MADANAPALLE LED TO INDIA GETTING ITS NATIONAL ANTHEM

As India prepares to celebrate hundred years of 'Jana Gana Mana', Hyderabad Times rolls the clock back to recount how Rabindranath Tagore's poem recital in Madanapalle, near Chittoor, on February 27, 1908, led to the birth of our national anthem

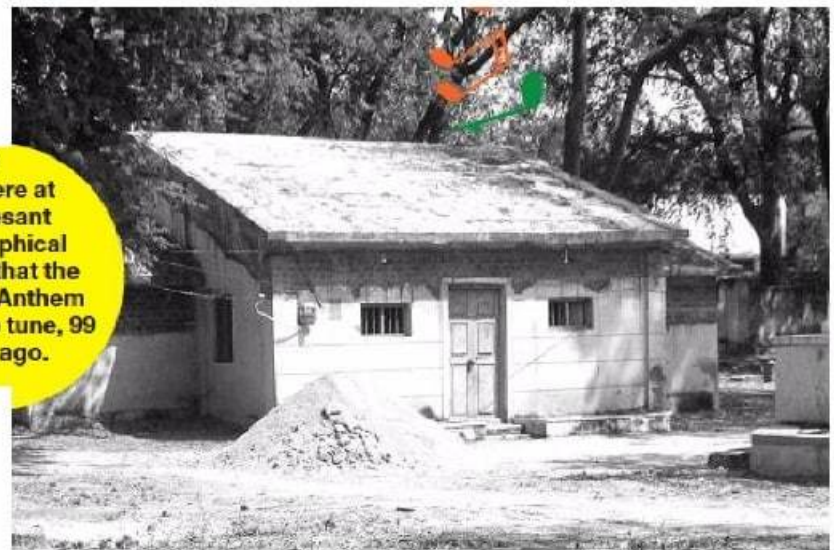
Jayakrishnan.U@timesgroup.com

Oblivious to many Indians, Madanapalle, a sleepy and serene town in Chittoor district of the Rayalaseema region, enjoys the rare distinction of contributing some of the firsts to the Indian national movement. It was here at the Besant Theosophical College that the original tune of the National Anthem *Jana Gana Mana* was set, 99 years ago. Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore's brief but momentous stay at the college in the last week of February 1919 also saw the great poet translating his Bengali poem '*Jana Gana Mana*' into English as '*Morning Song of India*'.

It was here at the Besant Theosophical College that the National Anthem was set to tune, 99 years ago.



Margaret Cousins (left) and James H Cousins who hosted Tagore in Madanapalle



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