



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Once again, we bring you the happenings from Bala Mandir in the quarterly newsletter, BM Connect!

In March 2018, Bala Mandir completed 69 years. In our 65th year celebration in 2014, we chose 'Reaffirm', 'Renew' and 'Rededicate' as our focus. The changes in service activities, infrastructure and management over the last four years have been based on these. As Bala Mandir enters its 70th year, it is time to take stock and consolidate what we have done so far, and to figure out the way forward. We look forward to a very special 70th year!

As readers of BM Connect, and well-wishers and friends of Bala Mandir, we also invite you to also contribute your own stories – how you got to know about Bala Mandir, your relationship, maybe an incident that occurred, or just even a photo or a memory. We would love to feature your anecdote in our newsletter. Do write in to the email ID given below.

We also hope you can look up our official accounts on Facebook or Twitter for regular updates on the events and happenings in Bala Mandir.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. Do share your feedback at the same email ID below. Happy reading!

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THIRUPAVAI CHANTING COMPETITION

The 14th annual Thiruppavai Thiruvizha Chanting competition was held on January 9th 2018 in Sathyamurthi High School by Gokula Bhakta Bhajanai Sabha. The Bala Mandir children participated in the competition.



NEWS BYTES: JANUARY 2018 TO MARCH 2018

Training for Teachers

All the teachers of Bala Mandir Primary School attended a training workshop conducted by Madras Dyslexia Association focusing on children in the Tamil medium. The teachers were made aware of how to identify students with dyslexia and how to handle such situations in the Tamil medium.



Meeting with Matrons

On January 25th, the social workers had a meeting with caregivers in the Main Block and the Hospital Block. The session was held to have a discussion about the queries and issues faced by the caregivers in childcare, and to help them resolve them.

Women's Day

Women's Day was celebrated by the lady staff and organised by Veena (Superintendent). Meenakshi and Girija gave a talk about teamwork. Athilakshmi sang a song, and Bhooma, Sangeetha, Banu and Latha performed a dance. A fun game was also played. Ms. Kalpagam gave a talk on the importance of being united.



Shyamala weds Karthikeyan

Bala Mandir girl and staff, Shyamala, married Karthikeyan on January 21st. Karthikeyan has his own business and lives in Chennai with his parents. The marriage was held in Tirupati, and was followed by a reception in Chennai. The groom's family took care of the marriage arrangements.

Do you know...

There's something really special about the photo on the right! These are the staff members who have been with Bala Mandir since the time of our founder, Manjumma – Janaki Akka, Lakshmi Akka and Geetha Akka (in the middle), who have served in Bala Mandir for 30-40 years. Alongside them is Ms. Kalpagam who goes back to the 1970s (on the left), and Ms. Maya who goes back to the 1980s (on the right). We salute their sense of dedication to the institution!



CELEBRATIONS IN BALA MANDIR

Special functions and festivals are celebrated with fervour and excitement in Bala Mandir. Every function and festival has a special meaning and significance, and the celebration showcases that. Some glimpses from the celebrations!

New Year's Day: Ushering in the new, interacting with the Hon. Gen. Secretary and visitors



Republic Day in Nagercoil: Respect for the nation and inculcating patriotism



Shivaratri: Meditation and chanting



Rama Navami: Pooja, prayer and storytelling



PONGAL CELEBRATIONS

As always, the children of Bala Mandir celebrated the festival of Pongal. The harvest festival, dedicated to the Sun God, is widely celebrated across Tamil Nadu.

As part of the celebrations, the traditional sweet and savoury Pongal was cooked outdoors in pots, decorated with sugarcane sticks. The children enjoyed watching the Pongal boil over and decorating the area outside the main block with kolam designs. The elder boys performed the Surya Namaskar, and offered obeisance to the Sun God. The younger children performed a harvest dance, and, much to their joy, Dr. Reddy joined in once again. Dr. Wolfram Gaden and Jeannie Gaden, Bala Mandir's long time friends from Denmark joined the festivities as well.

The highlight was the participation of the police personnel from the Teynampet Police Station in Pongal celebrations along with the children. The children thoroughly enjoyed the game of musical chairs conducted by the police officials, shaking hands with them, and having interesting conversations with them. The Commissioner of Police, Mr. Viswanathan, Additional Commissioner Mr. Arun, and other police officials joined in the events for the day.



NAGERCOIL ANNUAL DAY

The Nagercoil Annual Day was held on February 10th, 2018. The chief guests were Dr. Uma Selvan and Mr. John Murray. They advised the children on health, and also donated a medical kit and deworming tablets to the institute. The experience shared by a former child, Annalekshmi, and some crèche parents, made the event much more eventful.



BRAADE STIFTUNG VISIT AND FRIENDSHIP DAY

Mr. Lars Odd Pettersen, Chairman of Braade Stiftung, made his annual visit to Bala Mandir, visiting both Chennai and Nagercoil. In celebration of his visit, as always, Friendship Day was held on February 10th, where the children performed small skits, a dance and a song on the topic of ‘Empathy’ or ‘OthuNarvu’. Along with Mr. Pettersen, other friends of Bala Mandir were honoured – Mr. D. Ramachandran (Artistic Director, Madras Youth Choir), Mr. A. K. Ganesh (Chief Program Officer, Y.R. Gaitonde Foundation), and Mr. R. Venkatesh (Managing Director India, Temasek Holdings Advisors India Pvt. Ltd.), who all also spoke about their association with Bala Mandir.



BALA MANDIR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

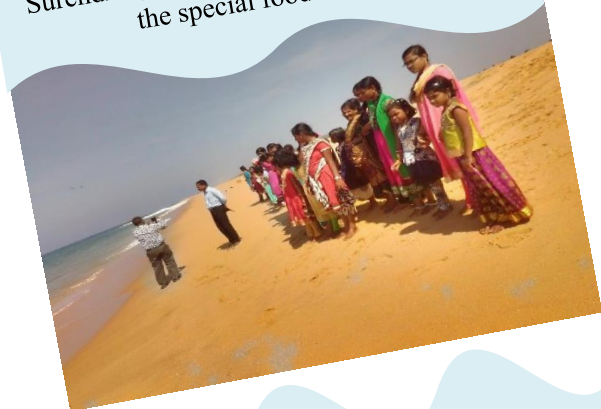
The 69th anniversary of Bala Mandir was celebrated on March 10th, with the Bala Mandir children re-presenting the programme on Empathy at Rajagopalan Hall. A special lunch was provided for everyone at the dining hall. Sports for the Bala Mandir Home children were held in the evening, as inter-home competitions, involving thematic relay and obstacle races among the three houses. These were a combination of physical fine and gross motor skills, combined with intellectual activity. Sub junior boys and girls performed a drill, and senior boys and girls performed a pyramid with gymnastics and Bharatanatyam poses. A relay was conducted for the staff as well.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

The children and staff in the Nagercoil Home went on a day's outing to Poovar in Kerala. The outing was arranged with great care by Dr. Gopal Surendran (S/o Dr. Indra Surendran). Everyone enjoyed boating and the special food served.



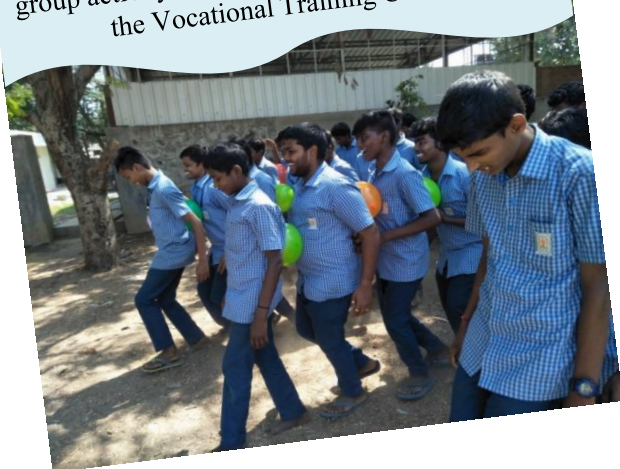
Annual sports and games were held for the trainees from the Vocational Training Centre in the Ramakrishna play ground.

The Nalanda Way – Fundango pilot project was conducted over a period of one week for Standard V students. The objective of the project was to test whether storytelling through audio support can be used as an effective tool for learning. The stories narrated were based on Social Science from Samacheer Kalvi syllabus.



The Road Safety Patrol from Satyamurthi High School participated in a quiz conducted by the E3 Teynampet police station. Students of Standard IX won the second prize.

MSW Trainees from Loyola College, Fr. Thomas Sebastin and Ms. Abinaya conducted group activity sessions for the junior trainees of the Vocational Training Centre



Hostelites from the Vocational Training Centre enjoyed many outings during the vacation, including to the park, planetarium, and to Valluvar Kottam

EVENTS IN THE DAY CARE CENTRE

Sports Day was held in the Day Care Centre on 1st February, with Ms. Uma Prabhu (Child & Family Counselor) presiding over the celebrations. Mrs. and Mr. Lars Odd Pettersen from Braade Stiftung also participated in the event, and were very happy with the active participation of the children, and the organised way in which the programme was conducted by the staff.



The Day Care Centre Annual Day was celebrated on March 27th. Ms, Kalpagam Narayanan, Member of the Bala Mandir Executive Committee, presided over the function.



Published by: Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust,
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