



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome to another edition of the Bala Mandir newsletter!

It has been four years of bringing out this quarterly update, and it has been a great way to share what's happening in Bala Mandir with you. Over the last four years, there has been so much happening every quarter – some continuing traditions that we value, activities, and some new initiatives – and it's been wonderful to record these for posterity!

While a lot happens in Bala Mandir, there are some external factors which influence us as well – and a key one is action taken by the government in the application of certain norms as per the Juvenile Justice Act, with a 'one-size-fits-all' approach across ages (from infant to adolescent). This has led to a drop in the number of children in the Home. Bala Mandir has used this opportunity to relook at the existing space, and adjusted the living space to make additional dormitory areas. We have also constructed additional toilets and bathing rooms. With these changes, we should be back to our original numbers shortly.

Other changes include the many initiatives being taken up for staff engagement and welfare – some of which you will also get to see in this newsletter.

We also look forward to hearing from you! If you wish to contribute to our newsletter, please do write in to the email ID below to share your experiences and stories.

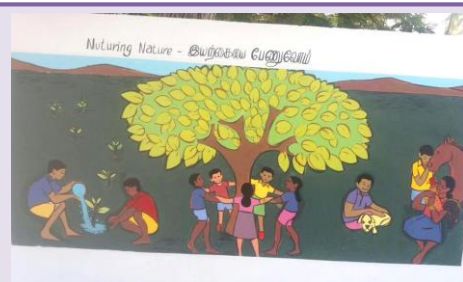
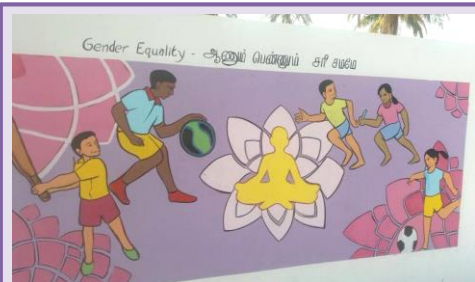
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BALA MANDIR'S FRONT WALL

April 28th saw the inauguration of a special initiative that Bala Mandir had undertaken in partnership with the Rotary Club of Madras East – the new front wall paintings! The artists who guided the process and brought the concept to life were Mr. Thyagarajan and Mr. Vignesh. Volunteers from the Rotary, and children and staff from Bala Mandir spent about 100 man hours to paint the outside walls. These children also spoke during the inauguration and shared their experience of working on this. Dr. Sujatha Srinivasan, First Lady of Dist 3232 was the Chief Guest for this occasion.



NEWS BYTES: APRIL 2018 TO JUNE 2018

Teachers' Orientation

On 30th June, an orientation programme was held on 'The Montessori Philosophy of Education: Childhood to Adolescence', with attendance from DCC, BMPS, Vidyalaya and SMHS teachers. Ms. Vidya Shankar, of Relief Foundation, conducted this session.



Tamil New Year's Day

Tamil New Year's Day was celebrated with a song and dance, and distribution of awards of excellence, and winners of intra club sports activity. These were handed out to the children by Kalpagamma and Ms. Leela, members of the Executive Committee.

Sessions for the Bala Mandir girls

Dr. Suchitra held a session for the adolescent girls emphasising the need for personal hygiene, especially during menstruation. She answered questions and clarified doubts raised by the girls.



Saint Gobain India Foundation Event

Volunteers from Saint Gobain India Foundation (SGIF), who are supporting Bala Mandir's schools through their CSR project, conducted an event at the schools on June 13 to mark SGIF's 10 year anniversary. They ran a session on how to improve English knowledge for students from the 9th standard. The children carried out activities and enjoyed this form of learning.

Investiture Ceremony in the School

An investiture ceremony was held on June 18 in the school, following the selection of house leaders and leaders for four committees, which were established this year to increase order and discipline in the schools. Mr. Satish & Mr. Yugesh of YRG Care have taken on the role of mentoring these student bodies. The committees are Environment, Discipline, Current Affairs and Cleanliness.



VIDYALAYA IN FOCUS

Here's a brief glimpse into some of the changes in the Vidyalaya, Bala Mandir's English medium nursery and primary school over this quarter.

Classrooms were upgraded for the beginning of the new semester



A Pooja was held on May 14 to mark the shifting to the crèche to its new space provided in the VTC



Saturday morning activities are being held for the children



OUTINGS IN MAY

The children in the Home, who are unable to go home for the summer holidays, went on outings to different areas in and around Chennai, including the Vandalur Zoo, Anna Centenary Library, Birla Planetarium, and other such places.



ACTIVITIES OF BALA MANDIR RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Bala Mandir Research Foundation (BMRF) continued with its activities in the areas of research and development in parenting and early childhood (ECCD). Some of the initiatives in this month included the following:

- Field staff and the training coordinator participated in a **three-day training** between May 7 and 9 on **Early Identification of Disabilities** conducted by Vidyasagar, a Michelin CSR partner. The workshop covered a range of topics on understanding the causes of intellectual disabilities and importance of early identification.
- Ms. Maya Gaitonde along with Ms. Lakshmi Gopal and Ms. Nirmala, Training coordinator, participated in the **two-day workshop on May 16 and 17**, organized by the Social Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. The workshop aimed to take stock of the ECCE in the State and to develop a convergent plan through a multi-sectoral approach for a successful ECCD programme. Several experts and ICDS workers presented their work on a range of topics. Ms. Lakshmi Gopal spoke about the traditional child-centric practices prevalent in India while Ms. Maya Gaitonde's presentation focused on parenting and the importance of involving parents in the ECCD programme.
- Ms. Nirmala, BMRF training coordinator, conducted a **session on June 6, on brain development, positive communication and importance of stimulation** for newly recruited CDPOs at the ICDS training centre in Taramani, Chennai. Positive communication was taught through role play.
- Sports day was conducted in April in each of the ten villages where BMRF partners, to **raise awareness about the importance of physical activities for growth and development of children**. Various fun activities were conducted for children of different age groups. Parents were also invited to participate.
- Ms. Deepika and Ms. Sharanya conducted a **training programme on parenting for employees of Michelin Tyres, India**, guided by Ms. Lakshmi Gopal. The programme addressed specific concerns of parents of children below the age of 5 years. Positive parenting and holistic child development were discussed.



Game to understand effects of positive and negative experiences on the brain

VOLUNTEERS AT BALA MANDIR

On June 26, students from ITE/Singapore visited BM as part of their Overseas Community Service programme. Their visit included:

- Introduction & Bala Mandir Orientation by Ms. Sushmita
- Interaction with Social workers
- Interaction with the Vidyalaya children
- Interaction with HGS
- Dance Performance by ITE Students

Ms. Priya, Co-ordinator of the group from ITE, was very happy with the outcome and expressed a desire to plan an itinerary which includes more interaction with the children. The children also had an excellent time with the students, and enjoyed the dance especially very much.



BALU SIR SUMMER CAMP

The annual Balu Sir Summer Camp was held from April 30 to May 12 at the Rajagopalan Hall in SMHS for senior children (Standards III to VIII) and a total of 61 children participated. The session started 9.30am with Yoga for half hour, followed by 1 hour of Dance / Skit / Mime where children could choose the activity they liked. They then had a half hour break where tasty and healthy snacks were given by YRG Eco-Kitchen. In the second half, the kids could again choose between Art and Crafts. All children were given a healthy lunch by Eco Kitchen. The response and impact this year were very positive.

Simultaneously, a summer camp was held for the toddlers, in which activities like drawing, crafts, dance, puppet show, and group games were held, and approximately 80 children participated.



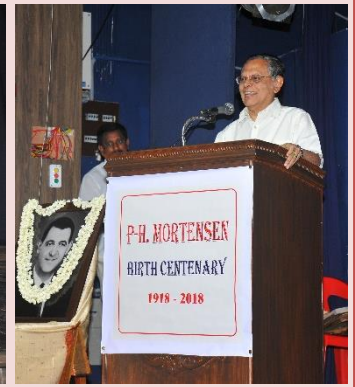
STORY TELLING DAY

Ms. Sri Leka and Ms. Sri Devi anchored a 'Story Telling Day' for students from Standard I to X in Vidyalaya, BMPS and SMHS. The session was bilingual, which made it a fun and learning experience for the children. The anchors included gestures and movements to make the stories more appealing to the children. This was held in memory of Mr. V.Y. Gaitonde (Balu Sir), who loved to tell stories to children.



VTC ANNUAL DAY

The 18th Annual Day celebrations of the Bala Mandir Vocational Training Centre were held on June 29, combined with the commemoration of the birth centenary of the Late P-H Mortensen, whose association with Bala Mandir began in 1965 (read about him in Newsletter 2). The programme was sponsored by L&T. Mr. Thiagarajan, Joint Managing Director of Blue Star Ltd. was the Chief Guest and addressed the gathering. A photo Feature on Mr. P- H Mortensen and his relationship with Bala Mandir was presented by the HGS. Mr. K.V. Rangaswami, Former Director of L&T and Trustee of Bala Mandir, paid a special tribute to Mr. P-H Mortensen and shared his personal experiences. The cultural programme of drama, impressive dance and pyramid display by the trainees was based on “inclusion”, and presented along with an interesting video clip on understanding slow learners and their innate potential.



FAREWELL FOR STANDARD V AND X

A farewell programme was conducted for students of Standard V in April. Students of Class V gave their hand-made presents to the chief guests. As a token of Special Gratitude, Class V students lit the candles and gave them to their high school mentor to take care of them. The Standard X farewell was held on March 12, and a special Pooja was held that day. The HGS, members-in-charge and teachers attended this and blessed the children.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

A football Summer Camp was conducted by Mr. Koteeswaran between April 22 and May 21. The children had two 2 hour sessions in the mornings and evenings. They were also given healthy protein and calcium-rich food like sundal, millet kanji, fruits etc.



The school conducted House meetings for the four houses – Gandhi, Kamarajar, Sathyamurthi and Manjubhashini



Glances from the school cleaning activity!



The senior girls were taken for shopping, and they enjoyed themselves very much, picking out jewellery and accessories, while learning the important skill of managing their pocket money!



Ten children participated in the cultural events in "Kumari Kalai Vizha" organized by the government. Many BM children won prizes in the quiz competition arranged by the DCPU on that day.

Further to the annual intra-club competition, the children from the three clubs in the Home went for their usual outings based on first place, second place and third place



TEAM OUTINGS

As a new initiative, in addition to the outings for the children, staff members of the different units in Bala Mandir went for outings in the months of April and May. Here are some memories from those trips!



→
Staff from the BMPS and SMHS went to Thamarapakkam, Koney Falls and Thiruthani



←
Staff from Vidyalaya went to Crocodile Bank, Dakshin Chithra and boating at Muttukadu Lake



→
Staff from the Vocational Training Centre went to Pondicherry



HR NEWS

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Sangeetha, Coordinator, Main Office
- Ms. Deepa, Assistant Matron, Bala Mandir Home
- Ms. Pavithra, Teacher, Vidyalaya

Best Wishes!

Ms. Lakshmi R from the Main Office retired after more than 40 years of service.

Appraisal and Increments

The performance appraisal process for 2017-18 was completed for all units, following the usual model of self-appraisal by the individual, appraisal by the unit head / coordinator / member-in-charge, and finally an appraisal by the Honorary General Secretary.

The employees received their annual salary increments for the year 2018-19.

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