



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Bala Mandir completed 70 years of dedicated services to the cause of children, on March 10, 2019.

While the theme for the last 5 years was to Reaffirm, Rededicate and Renew, the theme for the next 5 years is to Encourage, Engage, and Enrich – encourage each child to achieve their potential, engage with the community, and enrich the lives of all those around us.

A series of wonderful events over three days in March marked the 70th year, covering different aspects of Bala Mandir. It was truly amazing to see the good wishes and blessings coming Bala Mandir's way on this occasion. The event was made very special indeed, with the release of a desk calendar showcasing different units, through write-ups and pictures. Credit goes to the entire team, including staff and members, who worked tirelessly day and night to put together events to be remembered for many years to come.

Of course, other activities of Bala Mandir continued as well, with the academic pressures of the board exams, the fun and cultural learning of festivals, and the excitement of Annual Day celebrations, much of which has been captured in this newsletter.

We hope you enjoy reading about all this and more in this newsletter. Please do share your feedback as well, at the mail ID below. Happy reading!

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OBITUARY: DR. S. ANANDALAKSHMY

Bala Mandir remembers with respect ex-President Dr. S. Anandalakshmy, who passed away on March 13, 2019 after a brief illness.

Through the years, Bala Mandir, especially the Research Foundation, has been very fortunate to have had her expertise and experience with child psychology and child development to advise on the many different projects being taken up. With her background in teaching and setting up a school, and her research in the areas of the Girl Child, Cognitive Development in Early Childhood and Socialization, her ability to steer Bala Mandir's vision was unique.

As a Trustee of many years' standing, Dr. Anandalakshmy was the choice for President of Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust in the year 2017, upon the retirement of Mr. V. Sethuram. Her role as President was taken up in February 2019 by Mr. N. Kumar.



NEWS BYTES: JANUARY 2019 TO MARCH 2019

MNC Staff Trip to Coorg

From 17th to 21st January, the MNC staff went on a tour to Kushal Nagar, Coorg. They visited the Namdroling monastery, the Kote bedda trek, Chiklihole reservoir and the Dubare elephant camp, and enjoyed sightseeing and the campfire on the last day.



Republic Day

Republic Day was celebrated across all units, including the Homes in Chennai and Nagercoil, the schools, and the Madhuram Narayanan Centre, in different ways, including flag hoisting, drawing competitions and speeches by the children.

Madras Youth Choir Programme

The children belonging to the Junior Choir of the Madras Youth Choir participated in the 31st Memorial Day of the Choir's founder, Late Sri M.B. Srinivasan, at the Cine Musicians Union MBS Hall, Vadapalani.



Nutrifest in Madhuram Narayanan Centre

NUTRIFEST, a festival for nutritional awareness, was organized for the twelfth year on March 8th, to create awareness about the importance of right and balanced diet in growing children. The theme this year was "Food as Medicine". There was a cookery competition for mothers of the children on the theme, and marks were given for the exhibition of recipes, charts depicting the importance, calorific value, and the medicinal property that the dish offers.

Gandhi Connect

The annual Gandhi Connect workshop was held, with Ms. V. R. Devika providing her insights on Gandhiji, and what inclusion meant to him, and the lessons to learn from his views. Before her session, Ms. Vijaya Ramkumar conducted a session on communication with students and the effects of pre-judgements and prejudices on students, and the way to look at students as equals. This session had role playing and activities.



70TH YEAR CELEBRATIONS: DAYS 1 AND 2

In the morning on March 8th, Mr. Lars Odd Pettersen, Chairman of Braade Stiftung, inaugurated the new Bala Mandir Cultural Centre, following a homam held in the Dining Hall.



In the evening on March 8th, a Sarva Dharma Prayer was held at the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre with participation from Sikhism, Jainism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.



In the morning on March 9th, a meet was held for the alumni of Bala Mandir, who shared their nostalgic experiences and their desire to keep in touch with their alma mater.



In the evening on March 9th, a fun event was held for the volunteers of Bala Mandir. Experiences with the volunteers and volunteer organisations were shared through videos and demonstrations by the children.



70TH YEAR CELEBRATIONS: DAY 3

In the morning on March 10th, a Villupattu was rendered on “Empowering through Education” at the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre, by Thirumathi Bharathi Thirumagan, and team. This was meant to the parents of the school children and the community from the nearby slum on Bala Mandir and ‘Parenting’.



In the evening on March 10th, the main Anniversary event of Bala Mandir was held at the Mahaswami Hall, Vani Mahal. The Chief Guest for the function was Sri Gopalkrishna Gandhi. The welcome was by Ms. Devi, an alumna. P. Natarajan provided an overview about the growth of Bala Mandir and the journey ahead. This was followed by the children putting up a cultural programme – the choral group girls singing the inspiring songs of Bharathiyar, accompanied by children dancing and depicting the theme of Inclusion.

The Honorary General Secretary presented video clippings of Guiding Lights of Bala Mandir – Ms. Kalpakam Narayanan, Ms. Jaya Krishnaswami, Ms. Premilla Shanmugham, Dr. P. J. N. Reddy, and a message from Dr. Anandalakshmy, and she expressed appreciation for Members and Donors who have had a long relationship with Bala Mandir and helped the organization in various ways. Bala Mandir Alumna Ms. Janaki, presented a self-composed song on Bala Mandir. The Chief Guest released the special desk calendar created for the occasion, for April 2019 to March 2020. He addressed the gathering and spoke about how lucky Chennai has been to have women such as Bala Mandir’s founder, Ms. Manjubhashini, who had the ‘ability of telescopic and microscopic vision’, that has enriched its social capital. He thoughtfully brought out the vulnerability an ‘orphan’ (one without protection) faces, across age / border / condition / gender, and how childcare institutions and old age homes are twins in this respect.



INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Along with the new Cultural Centre (A), which was inaugurated during the 70th year celebration, the following enhancements have been made in the open areas of Bala Mandir:

(B) The playground has been cleared and improved with filling up of sand, and the games equipment has been fixed

(C) The temple near Vidyalaya has been repositioned and a shelter has been built for it

(D) A gazebo has been built for intra-Bala Mandir club meetings and the outdoor classes of Vidyalaya Primary School

(E) A covered two-wheeler shelter has been constructed opposite the main office

(F) The area around the well near Vidyalaya has been cleaned and cleared, and the pump house there has been relocated

Here's a look at these different changes below (each alphabet corresponds to a picture).



PONGAL CELEBRATIONS

Pongal was celebrated with fervour at BM. Beginning with a Surya Namaskar by boys from Standard III to V, a dance by girls from standard IV & V and ended with a blessing by Members.



FRIENDSHIP DAY

The annual visit of the Chairman of the Braade Stiftung Trust, Mr. Lars Odd Pettersen was in February. He and his family visited the Homes in Chennai and Nagercoil. In celebration of the long-standing friendship with Braade Stiftung, Friendship Day was celebrated on February 12th in the Dining Hall. The children performed a dance on the theme of Inclusion.



VIDYALAYA SPORTS DAY

Sports Day for Vidyalaya was held on February 22nd. Mrs. Sudha Lakshmi Rao presided over the programme. In the spirit of the theme of 'Inclusion', the Sports Day was combined with the Day Care Centre and the Bala Mandir Primary School. The events began with a march past, followed by a drill by the kindergarten children depicting the Indian flag. Other events like water filling, put the colours balls in their respective bags, rolling the ball, skipping and unified relay which showed the unity among differently able children, set the tone for a wonderful day, that culminated with a dumb bell drill forming the word 'INCLUSION' which was displayed using mirror technique. The whole event conveyed that playing together as a team is as important as working together.



SATYAMURTHI HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

Sports Day for Satyamurthi High School was held on January 31st. Dr. C. Raman, Physical Education Director, graced the occasion. A flag hoisting and march past kicked off the occasion. The chief guest then distributed prizes to the students in the individual and group categories. The girls displayed their synchronized skill in a spectacular drill display. Lastly, there were a series of breathtaking, well organized pyramid formations by the junior and senior boys, which was a treat to the eyes.



MADHURAM NARAYANAN CENTRE SPORTS DAY

Sports Day for the Madhuram Narayanan Centre was held on February 8th with the Chief Guest as Sub Inspector M. S. Ramesh, of the Teynampet Police Station who is in charge of Law and Order. The children made a presentation on the ban on plastics as part of this. Competitions were conducted according to the ability of the children in their age group.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

The children in Nagercoil created wonderful craft work and showcased their skills



Children from Standard VI to IX presented a special Tribal dance at the Nakshatra programme conducted by Bhumi on February 23rd.



Cognizant volunteers sponsored a small vegetable patch and gave the children a first hand experience to understand the life cycle of a plant. On 26th January 2019, they all got a chance to sow seeds, add extra soil, water the seeds and listened to tips given for the care of these seeds.



The farewell party for class 10 students (batch of 2018-2019) was held on March 11th. To bless all the students and pray for their success in the board exams, Mr. Tamilarasan of AryaSamaj performed a Homam. The students were subsequently given a pouch that had all the essentials needed.



In January children from the High School went for excursions. Standard VI and VII went to Vivekananda Illam, while Standard VIII, IX and X went to Dakshin Chitra and Crocodile Bank



The New Year 2019 was celebrated in Bala Mandir style with a special rangoli and wishes by the children to Members



Intra-Home Competitions like Essay writing, drawing, kolam & Elocution for Junior and Senior children were held. The theme for all was 'Inclusion'.



VIDYALAYA ANNUAL DAY

The Vidyalaya Annual Day celebrations were held on March 28th. Children put up several items which included a mime on Sarva Dharma, a medley of dances from all over India, and a short Tamil and English skit and songs. The programme spread the message of peace and harmony irrespective of caste, creed, language, religion, job and colour.



DAY CARE CENTRE ANNUAL DAY

The Annual Day of the Day Care Centre was held on March 29th. The children of the pre-KG performed an invocation fusion dance, and put up a skit. The toddlers danced to a song inviting the rain God and depicted animals living in harmony. Children of baby section did an action song.



PROJECT DAY

Vidyalaya



Satyamurthi High School



HR NEWS

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Gowri R., Assistant Matron, Children's Programme
- Balachandran, Cook, Children's Programme
- Rani, Helper, Children's Programme

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Pooja, Social Worker, Children's Programme
- Anjali Hariharaputhran, Supervisor, DCC
- Selvi, Helper, DCC

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