



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

With the schools reopening during this quarter between January and March 2022, there has been resumption of normalcy to a great extent. The rollout of boosters and vaccines for children also meant that many of the children are now vaccinated, and the eligible staff and Members also received boosters. This gives us a lot of optimism that a complete lockdown of the kind from the last two years should not happen again soon.

The Bala Mandir Anniversary function held on March 10th was the main event for the quarter, with all units working together to put up a memorable show. Among the events for the day were the inauguration of the new Crèche in the morning, and staff rewards and recognition through the annual gifts, through Long Service Awards for those who have worked in Bala Mandir for 20+ years, and through the 'Employee of the Year' award. These are covered in this newsletter.

The newsletter also features our Member, Mr G Anbumani, Bala Mandir's legal advisor. It was very interesting to trace his journey with Bala Mandir. We thank Mr Anbumani for the time he took out to talk to us for the newsletter.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions on the newsletter. Please do write to us at the ID below!

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CRÈCHE INAUGURATION

On March 10th, the day of the Bala Mandir Anniversary, a Crèche was inaugurated by Ms Punitha Ramalingam, Member in Charge of the Infants & Toddlers Block. This Crèche has been planned for children of the Bala Mandir staff, old students of the Day Care Centre (which had been shut down due to the pandemic), siblings of the students in Bala Mandir schools and children of staff from offices and the community nearby.

The Crèche has been refurbished completely, and is equipped with learning materials and games meant to stimulate the minds of the children between the ages of 1 and 3, and is getting inputs from the Bala Mandir Research Foundation's Early Childhood Care and Development programme. The children are also provided with milk and food during the day. Currently the Crèche has 13 children, with plans for further expansion.

The children of the Infants & Toddlers Block had day care started for them as well, in the premises of their Block, with similar games and activities to stimulate their minds.



Editorial Board: Leela Natarajan Rukmini Amirapu Sudha Lakshmi Rao Smita Aiyar Pooja Bomb
Vaijayanthi Desikan Sushmitha Chandrasekhar Sangeetha Mani Archana Natarajan

NEWS BITS FROM ACROSS BALA MANDIR

The **library in the Boys Section** was shifted to the ground floor from the first floor. The room was painted with bright colours and inspirational quotations by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam were inscribed on the walls.



Training sessions were held for younger staff members across all units on **personal financial management**. The sessions were conducted on Saturdays by a volunteer Mr S Venkataraman, a financial expert

A **Dental Camp** was conducted by the Government Dental Hospital on March 1st for the students and staff of Bala Mandir schools.



Ms Meena Suresh (Member of the Education Sub Committee) conducted a **training session** on January 29th for all the teachers on the topic '**How to make Maths interesting to learn**'. With the help of simple teaching materials like coloured dice and cuboids, she showed the teachers how students can be taught basic concepts in an interesting way.



The teachers from Vidyalaya attended **Bhumi's Teachers Express event**, held at Adyar Youth Hostel on March 19th. Over 125 participants from 10+ schools participated in the event. Stations had been organised based on Multiple Intelligences, and teachers took part in the activities there. They also showcased their talents in the open mic. All the participants received gift bags from Bhumi.



50 Tabs have been purchased and equipped with the education software of Aaha Guru / Aid India. These were distributed to the children under Kinship Care to supplement their learning as part of a **project called KMK (Kai Mel Kalvi)**. The tabs were purchased with the support of a CSR donor. The tabs were given for use and return with suitable documentation and safeguards and has the Bala Mandir logo.



An NGO from Gujarat, Oasis, conducted a '**life camp**' for SMHS students as part of their 'Pay it Forward' project. The facilitator, Dr Ami Desai spoke about the importance of positive thinking.



On March 13th, the 3rd **Nari Shakthi Football Tournament** for girls under 18 years was held by Victory Sports Foundation in the SMHS premises. 9 teams from Chennai, Kanchipuram, Thirupathur and Thiruvallur participated in the tournament.

A **Police Club** has been set up to engage students from Bala Mandir schools and the nearby community gainfully through the week, before and after school hours. Activities like yoga, sports, tuition, counselling and health camps will be part of this.



The History of Bala Mandir continued through the Study Circle with information on the **Medical and Socio Economic units**.

FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS



← New Year celebrations in the Chennai Home



↑ Pongal celebrations in different units



↑ Republic Day celebrations across Bala Mandir



↑ Maha Shivaratri celebrations in Chennai



↑ Annual Day celebrations in Nagercoil

EVENTS IN THE MNC

Nutrifest – March 25th

The annual nutritional awareness festival of MNC, Nutrifest, was held in the hall in MNC. The theme for the year was '**Age appropriate balanced diet with traditional recipes**' for children in the age groups Birth to 2 years, 2 to 4 years and 4 to 6 years and 7 – 18 years. There was a competition of recipes prepared by the mothers.

The festival provided awareness to parents and special educators on the importance of a balanced diet, the incorporation of traditional recipes into the daily diet, innovative presentation and learning new recipes to motivate children to eat.



Annual Sports Day – third week of February

The Annual Sports Day was conducted online for the EIC children and physically for Jivikam children. The children were divided into three groups – birth to 2 years (February 21st), 4 to 6 years (23rd February) and SRTC and Jivikam (25th February). The EIC children performed the activities in their homes, which was cast alive at the hall in MNC through Google Meet. The judges sat at the centre and declared the winners. The Chief Guest was Mr S Gurumoorthy, Rehabilitation Officer, NIEPMD, Chennai. He appreciated the efforts of the children and made suggestions to add more games.



BALA MANDIR'S 73RD ANNIVERSARY

Bala Mandir celebrated its 73rd Anniversary on March 10th, 2022, in the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre Hall. The theme for the event was '**Bala Mandir Pledges – A Way of Life**', and this was brought out through drama, dance and music, with all the children of the Chennai Home from kindergarten onwards participating. The children from the Nagercoil Home, Vidyalaya, Satyamurthi High School and Madhuram Narayanan Centre participated virtually, with an item each on the theme. The event was live streamed to people who were not able to attend the show physically.

Ms Kalpakam Narayanan, long-time Member of Bala Mandir, was the Guest of Honour for the event. Kalpakamma also told a signature story from her repertoire as Bala Mandir's 'Kadhai Teacher', which was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience present in the auditorium as well as others watching virtually.



Comperes for the evening



Performance by the Kindergarten children



Watching the video by Vidyalaya



Song by the Vidyalaya Home children



Video by the SMHS students



Dance performance by High School Home girls



Dance by the MNC children



Play by the High School Home children



Mime by the Nagercoil Home children



Dance by the Vidyalaya Home children



Group photograph with the Guest of Honour



Guest of Honour Kalpakamma tells a story

EVENTS CONDUCTED BY BMRF AND BMCLC

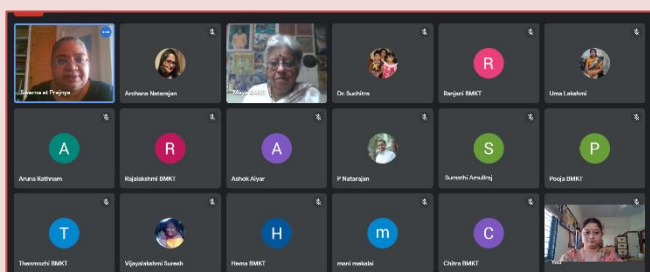
During the quarter events were conducted by the Bala Mandir Cultural and Learning Centre (BMCLC) and the Bala Mandir Research Foundation (BMRF), which were targeted at building awareness on important topics for the staff members and Members.

PoSH Seminar – January 6th

A virtual seminar was held for the management on the **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH)**, with emphasis on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 under the aegis of the SGS Legal Education programme.

It was conducted by Ms Swarna Rajagopal, Political Analyst, Writer and Consultant, and Founder and Managing Trustee of Prajnya Trust, Chennai.

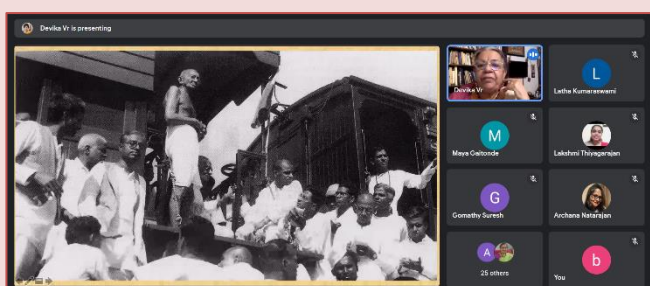
The seminar had presentation slides on the Act, and was very interactive, with real examples of situations taken up for discussion. These provided better insight into this difficult topic and led to thought-provoking discussions among the 45+ staff and Members of Bala Mandir who attended the session.



Gandhi Connect – February 26th

As part of the annual series called ‘Gandhi Connect’, a virtual seminar was conducted by Dr V R Devika of Aseema Trust on the topic ‘**Spin a Yarn – Value Education through principles and life incidents of Gandhiji**’. Teachers of Standard VI, VII and VIII from Ramakrishna Mission, PSBB, Emerald Valley and Golden Gate Valley School, Salem and Satyamurthi High School attended the programme. Over 50 participants were present, including senior staff, Members and volunteers of Bala Mandir.

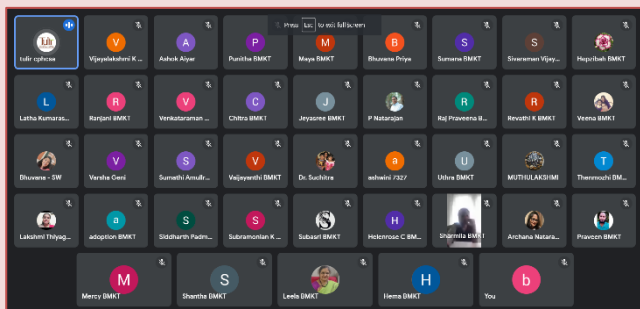
The session was through presentations, videos and audio songs on Mahatma Gandhi. This also led to open ended discussions where many participants shared their thoughts and experiences with children.



POCSO Seminar – February 5th

A virtual seminar was organised on the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** as a continuation of the SGS Legal Education Programme. The speaker was Ms. Vidya Reddy, Founder of Tulir, a registered non-profit Trust based in Chennai, that has been working against child sexual abuse in India since 2004.

Ms Vidya made sure that she covered the salient points of the Act, the guidelines to be followed, and the Government Order 83, which provides the details of how to implement the Act. The session was made more interesting by the questions from the over 50 participants in the session on best practices for implementation of the Act.



S Manjubhashini Memorial Seminar – March 5th

The annual S Manjubhashini Memorial (SMM) Seminar was held virtually. The keynote speaker was Ms Mina Dilip – Psychologist, Trainer and Writer. The topic for discussion this year was ‘**I.M.P.A.C.T of the Pandemic on Children and Our Role as Caregivers**’. Over 30 participants attended, including BMRF partners from Mumbai and Gujarat. Using IMPACT as an acronym, Ms Mina shared how adults and caregivers can support and create safe spaces for children to process their emotions and recover from the ill effects of the last two years. The session included games to build deeper understanding into the minds of children, and was interactive, with many insightful questions from the attendees.



MEET OUR MEMBER: MR G ANBUMANI

Hon. Joint Secretary Ms Leela Natarajan shares excerpts from her conversation with Bala Mandir's legal advisor

Mr Anbumani has been a pillar of support for Bala Mandir on all matters legal for over 30 years. A highly principled lawyer, he has helped Bala Mandir Management through his thorough understanding of what is required for the benefit of the organization. Here, he talks about his background, his association with Mr Govind Swaminadhan and continuing association with Bala Mandir.

Mr Anbumani was born on Republic Day, 26th January 1951. He belongs to an agricultural family of Tanjore district but settled in Chennai. He had his earlier schooling at Seva Sadan, Chetpet, along with his sister, after which he studied at the Thiru Vi. Ka High School, Shenoy Nagar.

His father Mr Anbu Ganapathy, was a Professor of the Tamil Department of Pachiappa's College and was the hostel warden, staying with his family at the College Hostel campus.

Mr Anbumani completed his PUC at Pachiappa's College and then went on to do B. A. English Literature. He then went to Delhi, to work at the Parliament House. It was a time when he met several stalwarts of the political arena. Mr Anbumani, during his free time, took to going to Supreme Court to watch the proceedings, since the general public was allowed at that time. When he came back to Chennai, he enrolled himself to become a lawyer, at the Madras Law College, and did his three-year course (from 1977 -80). Then began a very meaningful and fruitful journey under the stewardship of Mr S Govind Swaminadhan (SGS), who became a great inspiration. 'The Boss' as he was referred to, was very clear that 'Mani' should be in the Chambers for a year, rather than in the Courtroom and gather experience, and paid him for the training period also. Mr Anbumani was deeply influenced by Mr Swaminadhan's strict work ethics, honesty, punctuality and his total refusal to ask for favours of any kind.

Since SGS was the President of Bala Mandir, Mr Anbumani remembers coming along with him to visit Bala Mandir. While his personal interaction was limited with Smt Manjubhashini, he recalls her protective attitude to the girls in Bala Mandir, which she showed when she stopped the construction next door which would enable office goers to peep into the Bala Mandir compound.

When SGS stepped down from being President of Bala Mandir, he assured the members that he would recommend a lawyer to oversee the legal matters of the Executive – and handpicked Mr Anbumani for the post, who since then, has been part of the Executive Committee. Mr Anbumani recalls having the Executive Committee meetings at the Bala Mandir Main Block (the TV Room currently), his friendship with past President Mr Sethuram and his many interactions with Mr V Y Gaitonde, Mr C R Ramakrishnan and Ms Maya Gaitonde. Apart from advising on and approving all legal documents – Memorandums of Understanding with Government and Donors, and the Memorandum of Association, Mr Anbumani has handled interesting cases in Adoption, Habeas Corpus and legalising of land documents.

The team of young lawyers who SGS had built up, had the privilege of celebrating his 50 years at the Bar at Abbotsbury and 60 years at Rani Meyyammai Hall. After his passing, it was decided to hold the S Govind Swaminadhan Legal Education Seminar every year at Bala Mandir, with children from city schools being invited to debate and discuss on topics of great importance and relevance to society. The first one was in 2006, the 97th year of SGS, and the team continues to contribute to the programme generously to date.

Along with his involvement in Bala Mandir, Mr Anbumani is the President of the Maharishi Vidya Mandir Group of Schools. His wife Ms. Chelvi Anbumani is a homemaker and his son Mr Arun Anbumani and daughter in law Ms. Arya Raj are both lawyers. He has been blessed with twin granddaughters, Yamini Arun and Yazhini Arun – studying in Standard III at Maharishi Vidya Mandir, Chetpet. He follows a disciplined routine of alternately walking and swimming. His other interests include listening to old Tamil and Hindi film songs, especially those of the 60s and 70s. He is also an avid reader who prefers Indian authors, enjoys books on Political Science in English, and his favourite Tamil authors are Akilan, Na. Parthasarathy, Kalki, Sandilyan.

Mr Anbumani observes the changes in Bala Mandir that he has seen – in expansion of activities and efficiency in administration and management, wider range of donors and support. He continues to be an active member of the Executive Committee and has always been spontaneous to requests of anyone in the organisation.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

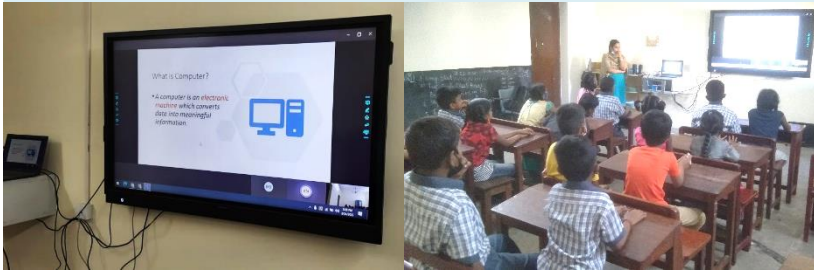
U&I volunteers conducted Spoken English classes for the children in Standard IX and above, and special classes on important general topics. The initiative helped the children gain confidence.



During the short break from school for Pongal holidays, the children in the Home played board games like chess and read stories and did activities in the learning tabs given.



STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) classes were started for the children from Standard V to VIII with the help of volunteers from Cognizant Technology Services. The goal of the programme is to make students digitally literate and help them make informed decisions about their career. On February 5th, an online orientation programme was conducted by the team and classes continue every Saturday after that.



General Knowledge sessions were started for the children every Sunday. Mr P Natarajan, Treasurer, began the sessions, after which he received support from Members such as Dr Suchitra, and then the children began conducting them themselves. Topics covered included gravity & flying, the Union Budget, science, and sports.



Sky Yoga Vedathri Maharishi Manavala Kalai Mandram resumed their Yoga classes for the SMHS students from March.

One of the interesting initiatives during this quarter was the start of the Eco Champs programme on February 26th, to be conducted by Bhumi on Saturdays over a period of seven weeks. The initiative is meant for children from Standards III, IV and V, to create awareness about waste segregation, gardening and environment.



Nine children from Standard VI to IX visited the Marina Beach to see the decorative vehicles that were a part of the Republic Day parade celebration. The students learnt about Velunachchi, Mahakavi Bharathiar, Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Periyar whose lives were memorialized in them.

STAFF REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Coinciding with the Bala Mandir Anniversary, staff rewards and recognition awards were provided. All staff members received annual gifts from Bala Mandir.

Long Service Awards were given to staff who completed 20+ years of service. The government teachers were also part of the function this year. The awardees were:

- **40 years:** Ms Lakshmi R and Mr Bojarajan B (*Administration*)
- **25 years:** Ms Sumathi G (*Children's Programme*), Ms Durgabai M S, Ms Meena B, Ms Amudha A, Ms Pramila Rani M S, Ms Uma B, Mr Vishwanathan M (*Education*), Ms Hemalatha A (*MNC*)
- **20 years:** Ms Kanchana S (*Administration*), Ms Kala M, Ms Mani Mekalai P, Mr Sundar Rajan V (*Education*)

In addition, awards were given away to 9 staff members who were selected as '**Employee of the Year**' based on their stand out contributions in the previous year.

All the awards were given away during the Bala Mandir Anniversary function on March 10th, 2022 by the Guest of Honour Ms Kalpagam Narayanan and the President of Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust, Mr N Kumar.



Annual gifts for the staff members



40 years of service: Ms Lakshmi R and Mr Bojarajan B



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Employee of the Year Awardees: 1. Subasri P (*Education*) 2. Ramani S (*Education*) 3. Sarojini R (*MNC*) 4. Jeyasree V R (*MNC*) 5. Vasantha K (*MNC*) 6. Dakshinamurthy B M (*Administration*) 7. Nalini Seshadri (*Accounts*) 8. Logasundari K M (*Children's Programme*) 9. Praveen Raj J (*Boys Section*)

HR NEWS

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Aishwarya R, Academic Coordinator, Children's Programme
- Shakila B, Nurse, Children's Programme
- Anjali Devi K, Caregiver, Infants & Toddlers Block
- Jayalakshmi S, Caregiver, Infants & Toddlers Block
- Mahalakshmi, Caregiver, Infants & Toddlers Block
- Mahendiran K M, Social Worker, Kinship Care

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Chandini Parveen M, Trainee Accounts, Accounts
- Sangeetha S, Teacher, SMHS
- Stella P, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Vallinayahi S, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Anitha Alwin, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Varsha A, Physiotherapist, MNC
- Mageshwari R, Special Educator, MNC

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