



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The quarter between July and September 2022 was a very busy one, filled with many functions, events, holidays, festivals and training programmes! As you can see from this newsletter, many of the regular activities have resumed after the lockdown of two years due to COVID.

It was indeed special to see the annual events across units being held in person after such a long break. The children, parents and staff participated in these events with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. The children got the opportunity to go for outings to different places to improve their learning and have fun. This issue of the newsletter is filled with news and pictures from these events and outings.

Along with these, the weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings and interactions were held in person, including the Annual General Body Meeting. You can read the recently released Annual Report for 2021-22 on our website, at: <https://www.balamandir.org/site/index.php/information/annual-reports>

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Editorial Board Mr Ramesh N, Member-in-Charge of Satyamurthi High School.

We hope you find the newsletter interesting! Happy reading!

Archana Natarajan, Editor
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SAMYAM AT MNC

'Samyam' is one of the most important events of MNC – bringing together past students, present students and new entrants to MNC. This event was held for the first time in person, after two years, on 16 July 2022. The children performed interesting action songs. The alumni performed a song reminding the students about why they were coming to MNC for intervention. The parents also performed a dance for the occasion. The Chief Guest was Ms Sumitra, alumna of the AVMVK Academy and past teacher in MNC, who encouraged the parents and students to be optimistic. The event ended with interactions between the parents to share their experiential learning among each other.



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Vaijyanthi Desikan Sushmitha Chandrasekhar Sangeetha Mani Archana Natarajan

NEWS BITS FROM AROUND BALA MANDIR

The annual Voices in Unison Choral Music Workshop was held after two years on 27 August 2022, in partnership with Madras Youth Choir. Over 15 teachers participated in the workshop.



Nalanda Way held a workshop for Vidyalaya teachers on 2 July 2022 on the incorporation of art in day to day activities. The workshop and further sessions to be held over the year will help teachers understand the use of art as a teaching methodology.



An engagement session was held for Vidyalaya parents to promote wellbeing, through Bhumi. The session included interesting activities for the parents to help them gauge the children's mindset and connect better with the school.



Volunteers from U&I have started conducting regular sessions on Sundays for the children in the Home. They are supporting children in Standard II and III with English language learning. They are also conducting a programme called LIFT, to support the children in Standard IX with their personality development.



Anna Administrative Staff College invited BMRF to hold a three day programme for Noon Meal Organisers on the topics of health, nutrition, child psychology and behavioural problems. Ms Saulina Arnold conducted the sessions.



On 2 July 2022, Bhumi representatives held a workshop as part of the Socio Emotional Learning programme for the professional development of Vidyalaya teachers. The workshop covered sensitivity to personal identities, diversity and inclusion without biases.



AhaGuru resource persons conducted refresher training on their pedagogy and approach for the Vidyalaya teachers.



On 17 September 2022, workers from an anganwadi near Kannagi Nagar conducted awareness sessions about the importance of nutrients, hygiene and haemoglobin levels for girls. The students were also provided with healthy snacks after the sessions.



The Chennai Corporation conducted a session on 8 July 2022 for students in Standard VI to VIII on environmental awareness, including information on dry and wet waste segregation and disposal.



FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

Glimpses into the various festivals and important days celebrated across Bala Mandir!



← **Varalakshmi Viratham** was celebrated in the Home in Chennai on 5 August 2022

→ On **Moharram**, Mr P Natarajan spoke to the children in the Home about the significance of the day



↑ **Independence Day** was celebrated in the Home in Chennai on 15 August 2022 with Ms Thayammal hoisting the flag. The children sang patriotic songs.



↑ **Independence Day** was celebrated in the Nagercoil Home with a cultural programme and sports competitions



↑ **Independence Day** was celebrated in the Education unit with a cultural programme. LIC felicitated the best students from the last academic year for each class. The Rajasthan Youth Association sponsored gift hampers for all children and staff members.



Krishna Jayanthi was celebrated on 19 August 2022 in the Homes
← Chennai
Nagercoil →



← **Vinayagar Chaturthi** was celebrated in the Chennai Home with a drama and dance. The idol was immersed on the third day



← **Vinayagar Chaturthi** was celebrated in the Nagercoil Home with clay idols made by the girls.



← **Vinayagar Chaturthi** was celebrated in MNC on 30 August 2022. The children of EIC made Vinayagar idols with atta, salt and food colour, while Jivikam children made them with clay.

→ **Onam** was celebrated in the Nagercoil Home with traditional Athapookalam and a dance by the children and staff



→ **Onam** was celebrated in SMHS with a traditional pookalam



Navaratri was celebrated at the end of September in the Homes with traditional kolu
← Chennai
Nagercoil →



EVENTS IN BALA MANDIR

Education Day – 15 July 2022

Education Day was celebrated on the birthday of Thiru Kamarajar. The schools presented Kamarajar through a programme on his ideals and a Villuppaattu on his life. Ms Nandita Krishnan, former Correspondent, Vidyodaya Schools was the Chief Guest. Helpers across units were recognized on this day.



Founder's Day – 23 September 2022

Founder's Day was celebrated on Manjumma's memorial day. Ms Vimala Kannan, Member of MNC, was the Chief Guest for the event. The Home children presented a Villuppaattu on her life. Manjumma loved music, and in her memory the Madras Youth Choir presented songs, which the children enjoyed singing along with.



Bala Mandir Family Get Together – 24 September 2022

After a break of two years, the Bala Mandir 'Family Get Together' was held with staff members across all units. Each unit was allocated a different colour to wear, so when all the staff members came together, it created a medley of colours. The staff members were divided into ten groups, including representation from each unit in each group. Each group was given one of the four Bala Mandir pledges, and they were given an hour for preparation to show how the pledge can be upheld in the units – through songs / drama / art etc. The groups composed songs and poems, came up with dramas, did artwork and made colourful posters to demonstrate the pledge. Ms Punitha Ramalingam then summarised the groups' presentations. The feedback about the Family Get Together was very positive, and it gave the staff an opportunity to get to know their colleagues across units better, as well as to understand the Bala Mandir pledges better.



VIDYALAYA ANNUAL DAY

The Vidyalaya Annual Day was held in person on 10 September 2022 for the first time since the COVID lockdowns. The themes for the events for the year are the four Bala Mandir pledges, and the children put up a programme on them. Ms Radha Vasudevan, Correspondent, Vidya Niketan Matriculation Higher Secondary School was the Chief Guest.



SMHS ANNUAL DAY

The Satyamurthi High School Annual Day was held in person on 3 September 2022 in person after a gap of two years. Ms Lakshmi Prabha, Senior Principal, Prasanna Vidya Mandir Group of Schools was the Chief Guest. The children put up performances based on the four Bala Mandir pledges, at their level of understanding.



KINSHIP CARE SUPPORT FOR MOTHERS

While Bala Mandir's Kinship Care programme focuses on support for the children who lost one or both parents due to COVID, the team also extended help to the mothers to enhance their mental wellbeing and economic self-reliance. With some support, it was possible to empower some of the mothers to supplement their earnings – and donors have also been very happy to support this cause where the results of their donations could be seen immediately. Some examples of the support provided in the last few months are:

- A sewing machine is helping a mother who is a trained tailor to work from home and support her family with her earnings
- A wet grinder provided to a mother allows her to make batter and sell in nearby houses to meet their daily expenses
- A refrigerator provided has allowed a mother to set up a food joint outside their house
- A donor has supported the purchase of multiple sewing machines for mothers and also cycles for children to access school



OUTINGS FOR THE CHILDREN

After a gap of two years, the children across different units of Bala Mandir went for different outings

On 20 August 2022, 140 students and staff of Satyamurthi High School went for an educational field trip to **Dakshin Chitra**. There they got to appreciate the art, architecture, lifestyles, crafts and performing arts of South India. The students witnessed the traditional folk dances of South India in the open air theatre and enjoyed tapping along to the beats of Karagam, Mayilattam and Pariattan folk dances. Another highlight were the to-and-fro bus trips, during which the children enjoyed singing and dancing together.



On 16 July 2022, the children from Home attended a **choral music programme** by the Madras Youth Choir held at **Bharathi Illam in Triplicane**. The children enjoyed going through the old artifacts in the museum there, dedicated to the poet, Subramaniya Bharathi.



On 18 August 2022, the students from **Vidyalaya** went to **Guindy National Park** for an informative field trip. The children saw different species of animals and enjoyed learning about them. The staff and students were also provided with refreshments.



Students from SMHS who had won a zonal level throwball competition were sponsored to visit the **Birla Planetarium** on 17 September 2022 by the Police Boys & Girls Club.

On 26 August 2022, the students, staff and parents of **MNC (both EIC and Jivikam)** went to **MGM Dizzee World** theme park. This was the first 'mega outing' for the children after the Centre reopened.



MNC incorporates outings as part of 'Sambhavam' or experiential learning. As part of this, students of **Jivikam** visited the **nearby Murugan Stores** while **EIC** students went to **Virudhunagar Chettinad Restaurant** for lunch. These experiences are important to help students reinforce their learnings in real life situations.

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Over the years Bala Mandir has provided financial support for school fees, for the children of the alumni of the Home as well as children of staff members. These were classified as the 'Manjubhashini Fund', 'Kamaraj Fund' and 'Higher Education Fund'. The funding for these schemes was through endowments set up for the purpose.

These schemes have now been consolidated and expanded in scope from this academic year onwards, under a common Education Support Programme. This provides financial support for the children in the above categories as well as other categories – such as children of alumni of Satyamurthi High School, children of indirect or contract staff members, and current students of SMHS and Vidyalaya who have lost a parent. The programme has defined guidelines for support, and a committee has been constituted to enforce these guidelines. So far about 72 children have benefitted through the programme.

Prospective beneficiaries can write to subasri.vidyalaya@balamandir.org for more information or to apply for support.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

On 13 August 2022, students from SMHS and Vidyalaya presented two songs each as part of a **choral music programme** in Natesan Park for Madras Week. These junior and sub-junior choirs are being trained by Madras Youth Choir as part of school Saturday club activities.



A **motivational talk on Education** was organised in the Nagercoil Home on 27 August 2022. The speaker was an alumna of the Bala Mandir Home in Nagercoil, Ms Sathya Veni.

A **Medical Quiz** was held in SMHS on 6 August 2022 by Dr Suchitra on the occasion of Medical Day.



Ms Jayaradha Shankar and Ms Geetha Rajagopal conduct online **Critical Thinking sessions** for children in Standard VII and VIII in the Home.

A **Medical Camp** was held in SMHS by DMS Teynampet on 12 July 2022 for basic medical check-ups for the children



SMHS teams participated in **football and throwball competitions** in MCC Higher Secondary School. The girls won the zonal championship in Under-12 throwball, while the boys Under-14 football and girls Under-14 throwball teams entered the semi finals.



On 1 September 2022, a team from Seshasayee Papers gave an interesting talk to SMHS students about the **manufacturing of paper** in their factory in Karur. They also conducted a quiz and gave away notebooks as prizes.

Sessions were conducted in SMHS by the E3 Teynampet Police on **Awareness of POCSO Act** (← on 13 July 2022) and, in partnership with TTK Hospital, on **Drug Awareness** (→ on 11 August 2022).



The children from the Chennai Home visited **Kamarajar Illam** on his 120th birthday and sang bhajans.



Elections were held in Vidyalaya to choose Student Pupil Leaders and Sports Leaders



STORYTELLING DAY AND WORKSHOPS

The annual storytelling session to commemorate Balu Sir – the late V Y Gaitonde – was held at the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre on 16 June 2022. Ms Ambujavalli Nagarajan, an IT professional turned storyteller, conducted sessions for Vidyalaya children in two batches – Kindergarten to Standard II and Standard III to V – so that age-appropriate stories could be shared. The sessions were interactive and impactful, and the children responded with great enthusiasm.

As a continuation to this successful session, Ms Ambujavalli was requested to share her vast experience through storytelling workshops for teachers, which were held at the end of June and in early July. She demonstrated how to teach a lesson with storytelling, and recommended storytelling as one of the methodologies for teaching to enthuse children to learn. The teachers were highly engaged in the session and they shared very positive feedback as well.



LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Long Service Awards were given out to staff members across different units in acknowledgement of their association with Bala Mandir for 5 and 10 years. The awards were given out on Teacher's Day (5 September 2022) in the Education unit and MNC – and on Founder's Day (23 September 2022) to staff from the Children's Programme, BMRF, Kinship Care and Administrative Services. Twelve employees received awards for 5 years of service, and five employees received awards for 10 years of service.



HR NEWS

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Jaishree, Social Worker, Children's Programme
- Sudha M, House Mother, Children's Programme
- Kiruba M, Caregiver, Children's Programme
- Kalaivani K, Caregiver, Children's Programme
- Mala M, Caregiver, Children's Programme
- Ellammal V, Caregiver, Children's Programme
- Malliga S, Caregiver, Children's Programme
- Vidhya R, Physio Therapist, MNC
- Jayabala E, Special Educator, MNC

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Nithya Shiva Sankari, PT Teacher, SMHS
- Shankar B, Teacher, SMHS
- Anupriya T, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Praveen B, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Beaula B, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Fowz Unisa Begum S, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Divya Lalitha N, Research Coordinator, BMRF
- Magendiran N, Social Worker, Kinship Care
- Lajapathy Roy V, Coordinator, Accounts

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