



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

July to September is an interesting and activity filled quarter for Bala Mandir. Many of the activities are targeted at helping children make the most of their potential, and building a balanced and holistic life for them. Celebrations are meant for the children to understand and inculcate values, tradition and culture as part of their everyday life. Like in any family, Bala Mandir wishes to pass these on to the children in its care by giving them joyful and meaningful experiences.

Till date, 2016 has seen many significant changes. A year that began with recovery from a difficult flood situation, has become a year of repair, rebuilding and revamping infrastructure, and reorganizing living and other arrangements for the children.

Many readers of this newsletter who visit Bala Mandir often will find that, as the saying goes, change is the only constant. Many of the changes being looked at will be covered in the future newsletters.

In the meantime, if you would like to know how you can help support these changes, do write in to us at the email address below. You are also welcome to contribute your suggestions and experiences for this newsletter, and share your ideas, thoughts and feedback for improvement.

Hope you enjoy this issue!

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INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOL

The Cognizant Foundation has helped Bala Mandir rebuild a wall in the Satyamurthi High School, which had been demolished by the Corporation for cleaning the Mambalam Canal. The entire wall has been rebuilt to ensure that the safety of the children.

In addition to rebuilding the wall, the Foundation has also provided a net around the grounds of the High School, so that the cricket balls and footballs being used by the children during their Physical Education class, and after school games do not fall into the canal.

With this enhancement there are plans to open the playground to children from the neighbouring areas as well in the near future.



NEWS BYTES: JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2016

Teachers' Choral Music Workshop

A one day workshop was held for teachers to train them on choral music, in partnership with the Madras Youth Choir. A total of 14 teachers from 6 schools participated, and they were taught the technical aspects of composing songs, singing in harmony, and the nuances of how to train children. The feedback was very positive, and the teachers enjoyed the session very much.



Miranda Corti and Benedict visit Bala Mandir

Miranda Corti and her son Benedict came on their annual visit to Bala Mandir and taught the children colouring, craft, making bead necklaces and collage work. The boys and girls, enjoyed baking along with Miranda, which was a fresh experience for them. Miranda also spoke to the staff about service orientation when working in an NGO.

Long Service Awards

As part of the Founder's Day celebration held in the month of September, long service awards were given out. Ms. Sundari and Ms. Banu of Main Block and Ms. Sumathi of the Hospital Block, who have all served Bala Mandir for twenty years, were given this award by the Hon. General Secretary.

Left to right: Ms. Sundari, Ms. Banu, Ms. Sumathi



Independence Day Celebrations

In the Home in Chennai, Ms. Janaki hoisted the flag. Children sang patriotic songs and the national anthem. In the school, Mr. Mohan, Advocate Notary, hoisted the national flag and distributed sweets. Speeches were given by students of BMPS & SMHS about India. The Nagercoil Home celebrated Independence Day with members of the Rotary Club of Yarn City.

Visits from Government Agencies

Government agencies often visit Bala Mandir for inspections to ensure that rules and regulations are being followed. In this quarter, in a rare gesture, the Social Welfare Minister Dr. V. Saroja visited Bala Mandir and interacted with the children. Other officials from the Department for Social Welfare visited on other days.



BLOCK PRINTING WORKSHOP

On July 23, Ms. Nivedita Ramji held a Block Printing Workshop for 25 children. The children were taught how to use the blocks given to create designs on cloth. They block printed a whole range of dupattas as part of this exercise. Ms. Ramji appreciated them for their enthusiastic participation, and for the team spirit that they showed in distributing the limited number of blocks between themselves to complete the project. She also applauded their 'can do' and 'will do' attitude – even mundane tasks like cleaning up and washing the blocks / rags / plates were done by the children with a smile and with happiness. The children enjoyed this experience and expressed their happiness at learning a new skill. Earlier in the year, Ms. Ramji her own artwork and donated the proceedings to the Balu Sir Endowment.



FESTIVALS IN NAGERCOIL

The Nagercoil Home celebrated the different festivals in this quarter with much gusto. Krishna Jayanthi saw the children enthusiastically decorating the front of the Home with rangoli. A dance / drama was presented by the girls, following which they sang devotional bhajans on the occasion. For Onam, the children drew Athappokolam (rangoli of flowers), and got together to celebrate the festival.



CELEBRATIONS IN BALA MANDIR

Vocational Skills Day



Dance to a patriotic song (left)

Drama on Equality – Dr. Ambedkar (below, right)

Pyramid formation (below, left)



Chief Guest Mr. P. K. Sridharan, Director, Premier Centre for Competency Training, addressed the gathering



Mr. M. N. Prabhakar, Director Global Sutherland Services, spoke about his rise in the corporate world from NCVT beginnings

Kamaraj Day / Education Day



Villu Paatu about Kamaraj



Chief Guest Ms. Padma Venkatraman, President, Women's Indian Association, addressed the gathering



The HGS shared with children the importance of honouring and expressing gratitude to 'helpers' who were then honoured as part of the function



Uniforms were distributed to the children of the Day Care Centre

Medical Day – “Sports as Key to Health”



Mr. Vineeth Ravi, Member of Indian Basketball and Tamil Nadu Basketball team, spoke to the children and demonstrated some moves



Mr. Vikram Aditya Menon, Director Transform Sports Media & Entertainment, and Mr. Arun Karthik spoke about how sports can lead to a healthy life



The children enjoyed following and imitating different sports moves

Founder's Day (Children's Programme)



Villu Paatu about Manjumma



**Left: Ms. Saraswathi (ex-Bala Mandir girl, now Main Office staff)
Centre: Ms. Janaki (Bala Mandir caregiver for over 20 years)
Right: Ms. Rukmani (headmistress of Bala Mandir Primary School)
All shared their memories of Manjumma to commemorate her life**

Mr. Jayendra Panchapakesan, Co-founder – Real image Media Technologies and Founder Trustee – Bhoomika Trust gave a motivational speech



MEET OUR DONOR: MR. C. K. MURALIDHARAN

Mr. C. K. Muralidharan is very familiar to the office staff of Bala Mandir, helping through his donations, both in cash and in kind, month after month, for the past several years, silently and effectively.

Mr. Muralidharan was exposed to Bala Mandir from a young age – his grandmother Smt. Doraiammal used to stitch clothes for the little ones from soft cotton cloth, and send it across to the institution. As she grew older, despite her failing health, she continued to stitch the clothes. She would also ask friends or relatives to buy cloth to stitch clothes with. Mr. Muralidharan rues the fact that he did not understand the value of this service when he was younger. When he was given the responsibility to hand over the clothes, he would delay the work, and would sometimes even refuse to do it. But somehow the spirit of giving that he was exposed to at that age remained with him, especially the view that it was not enough to just give money – something that is created with love and effort is even more valuable to the receiver.



When Mr. Muralidharan married, his mother-in-law Mrs. Mallika Ramamurthy who was under his care, also spoke to him about how a small percentage of a person's income should be earmarked for charity. Inspired by this view, Mr. Muralidharan began giving small donations. While his wife Mrs. Revathy was a little concerned about their finances, she soon began supporting his efforts. The husband-wife duo decided to donate 10% of their income for charitable causes. They put the cash to be given for charity inside a bag (which they called UK bag) every month and then distributed it by making a chart for the amount for each organisation. Bala Mandir due to the past association of his grandmother was topmost in Mr. Muralidharan's mind, along with other Homes. He has also contributed to Udavum Karangal, Vishranthi, Cancer Institute, VHS etc. and continues to do so.

Over the years Mr. Muralidharan has been helping Bala Mandir through contribution of rice, dal and sugar, which are delivered from the grocery shop on his instructions, and also through cash contributions. He says that it has now become almost a pleasant routine for him, since it is a monthly occurrence. He has also been contributing for food on his son's birthday. His son, who is married and living in Qatar, has been extremely supportive of his parents' efforts.

Mr. Muralidharan tells a story of how the Bala Mandir staff had been inviting him to join in for the meal, and he decided to come to the dining hall one day, which also happened to be a festival. When he witnessed the typical festival celebration in Bala Mandir, his heart was touched and he felt elevated (aatma trupti').

Mr. Muralidharan is ready to help whenever he feels that his contribution towards a worthy cause. Recently he saw a lady being interviewed by popular host Visu on TV. She had a son who snatched away her pension as soon as it came. The lady is living in a home for the elderly and Mr. Muralidharan decided to support her.

The various NGOs that he is supporting often wish to honour Mr. Muralidharan for his contributions, but he is very clear that, while he is thankful for their appreciation, he does not wish for publicity for his contributions. Mr. Muralidharan was kind enough to share his story for publication in our newsletter as a special favour.

An organised man by nature, and Mr. Muralidharan has been making a list of things to do for the past twenty years, and an assessment of what has been completed. Despite having faced a financial crunch and also faced family pressures. But he feels that God has been kind and he has never had a shortage of funds and he has been able to contribute whenever he can to society. Bala Mandir thanks Mr. Muralidharan for his contributions, and for his spirit of giving, which is and will be an inspiration to Members and staff alike.

HR NEWS – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2016

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Arul Pricella Mary, Social Worker
- Ms. Veena, Social Worker / Caregiver
- Ms. Biruntha, Nursing Assistant, Hospital Block
- Ms. Selvi, Helper, Children's Programme

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Sivasankari, Helper, Children's Programme
- Ms. Nagasudha, PET Teacher for BM girls
- Mr. Muralidhar, Computer Assistant, SMHS
- Ms. Subasri, Admin Assistant, Vidyalaya

MEET OUR MEMBER: DR. REDDY

Dr. P.J.N. Reddy is a very familiar face in Bala Mandir, having been associated with the organisation from November 1977. He is a paediatrician who has been practising for the past 41 years, and a Member of the Executive Committee and the Adoption Committee and was instrumental in setting up the Medical Committee.

Dr. Reddy comes from an agricultural background, from a small village, where the Elementary School had only one teacher teaching 5 classes. Dr. Reddy was given special attention by his teacher, who gave him double promotions and by the time he was 8 years old, he was already in his Standard V. His maternal uncle, Dr. M.V. R. Reddy, who was a vet, saw his potential and offered to take care of his further education and brought him to Chennai in 1964. Dr. Reddy then chose the medical field as his profession.



In 1977, Dr. Reddy had just completed his Diploma in Child Care and not yet joined his PG course. He needed to work and gain experience. His teacher Dr. J. Viswanath, who was then associated with Bala Mandir, recommended that he should go there to gain experience. In October 1977 Dr. Reddy met Smt. Manjubhashini and joined Bala Mandir for a salary of Rs. 400/-. He used to go for two hours every day. Dr. Reddy reminisces that he had initial hiccups, given that Manjumma was a very strong lady and he himself was young and inexperienced. While he was an enthusiastic worker, the views of the organization at that point were very different from his. Manjumma was not keen to give the children immunisation like BCG, due to her strong belief in naturopathy. But Dr. Reddy was able to talk to her and convince her, and he says that once she was convinced, she fully supported his decisions. In April 1978, Dr. Reddy started his MD and he had to be at Children's Hospital, but he continued to come to Bala Mandir from 4 to 6 pm and then used to go to his clinic. Many times he has travelled by bus and walked long distances to get to Bala Mandir, sometimes even in flood times. Dr. Reddy remembers the situation in those times well: "There were so many children then, about 400 at any given point in time. They used to be left outside the institution, and the hospital inside the Bala Mandir Home used to be full. Mortality used to be high and the development of these children used to be painstakingly slow. In those days, there were no places where special children could be shifted, and so managing them was a huge problem. It was heartrending to see them sitting and rocking themselves. Now things have improved thousand fold. Many things started falling in place from the 1990s, and the circumstances for children became better."

An incident Dr. Reddy remembers vividly is one where he had managed a difficult situation. For Manjumma her children were top priority. She felt that the children should not be put to any unnecessary trouble. Once a child had a chest infection. When she was taken to Children's Hospital, the doctors diagnosed that she would need a surgery and so she was admitted immediately. When Manjumma came to know about it, she gave instructions that the child was to be brought back, so that she did not have to go through the trauma of surgery. At that time, Dr. Reddy stepped in and convinced Manjumma that discharging the child was not the right thing to do and the surgery was for the child's own good. Manjumma then relented and the surgery was performed. The child recovered, grew up in Bala Mandir and when she got married, Dr. Reddy did her Kannikadanam (gave her away).

Dr. Reddy has seen three generations of children in Bala Mandir. The person who joined for a small income soon became a volunteer doctor who Manjumma completely relied on. He in turn, learnt a lot from her – she used to go into minor details which helped him hone his skills. As she grew older, Manjumma relied only on the advice he gave her, not only for Bala Mandir, but for herself as well, and many times her family approached him to convince her to take medication, and finally for going into hospital for her hip fracture at the age of 90. It was a very special relationship which had developed beautifully over the years.

Dr. Reddy is married to Dr. Ruckmani Reddy, who is a General Physician and was the Head of Department of Medicine at Stanley Medical College. He has two children - a daughter who is an architect and living in the US, and a son who is an engineer and management graduate and living in Chennai. Both of them are married and have children. Dr. Reddy also rendered free service at the Chinmaya Mission for 25 years. He has a philosophy he lives by: 'Know your abilities. Develop aptitude for your work and give your best to it'. He feels that he is privileged to have been granted this opportunity to be useful to society. He is grateful to every person who has had even a very small role to play in his life for his betterment. He has also donated generously to Bala Mandir – not just of time, but monetarily as well. Bala Mandir has been very lucky to be the recipient of his unrelenting services, and thanks him for all he has done for the children and staff.

STAFF GET-TOGETHER

As a continuation of the Founder's Day celebration, a Staff get-together was organised on September 24th. The staff of the various units were asked to depict Equality and the way of depiction were left to them. Various groups performed skits as below:

1. Day care staff performed a stage show of women achievers in India in different fields
2. Care givers and helpers performed song, drama & dance based on the theme Equality
3. Vocational Training Centre held a 'pattimandram' on the issue of Equality
4. Office staff performed on Women Empowerment in different professions
5. Primary School teachers performed Drama on Equality
6. SMHS school teachers performed drama on Gender Equality followed by songs on Equality
7. Social Workers performed a street theatre on Equality in education, opportunity, disability and gender



ANNUAL DAY AT SCHOOLS

Vidyalaya Annual Day



Performances by all children of Vidyalaya (Std. I, II and III)



Certificates of merit and story books for high performing children

BMPS & SMHS Annual Day



Drama on equality by SMHS students



Dance on equality



Performance by the children



Academic excellence awards for BMPS and SMHS students