



From the Editor's Desk

Greetings from Bala Mandir !

A flurry of activity marks every day of the calendar in Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust. No day goes by without some important happening or development in the many units that comprise BMKT. With Archana Natarajan at the helm, over the last ten years, these events have been captured and recorded in a spectacular manner through this newsletter. She has brought out 39 glorious editions which have served to acquaint us with and bring us all closer to the organisation and kept us abreast of everyday life at Bala Mandir.

The present edition comes to you based on the format built so painstakingly by Archana. The page has now turned and a fresh perspective is being added. Hers is a hard act to follow with the superior standards she had set, with regard to the quality of content and the vibrancy of the layout.

We welcome you to take a peek into the new edition of *BM Connect* which is replete with news and tidbits in and around Bala Mandir.

We record our grateful thanks to Archana, for being the founder-editor of *BM Connect* and her many years of unstinting service in keeping Bala Mandir alive in our minds.

Do give us your feedback on this issue and do let us know what else you would like to see here.

Till next time...

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FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS IN BALA MANDIR

- Tamil New Year and Rama Navami were celebrated in this quarter where children had opportunities to chant mantras and understand their significance through spiritual stories.
- Days of national and international importance that bring harmony like World Environment Day, World Yoga Day and World International Drug Abuse Day were also observed in Bala Mandir. Activities and speeches on awareness on protecting the environment and efficacy of Yoga were given. The children took a solemn oath on avoiding drug and substance abuse



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MOVING AHEAD CEREMONY IN BMMNC

MNC celebrated its yearly graduation ceremony for the tiny tots who are Moving Ahead to school education. These children with Developmental Delays & Mental Retardation are ready to move on to special or main-stream schools and have completed the Early Intervention - Upanayan programme at MNC. Since Moving Ahead was initiated - over the past 18 years, about 228 children have been successfully enrolled into the mainstream schools/special schools. This year, five children also moved on to our Jivikam Skill Development Unit. This has been a significant contribution towards habilitating the children with developmental delays. **This ceremony was indeed an occasion of celebration for each child moving out from Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children to the outside world.**



HOMAGE TO MRS JAYA KRISHNASWAMY FOUNDER, MNC

Condolences poured in from far and near as Mrs Jaya Krishnaswamy passed away peacefully on June 2nd 2024. She had turned 90 last December and was continuing her daily involvement in MNC. Homage was paid to her at the memorial meet arranged in the Bala Mandir Cultural Hall on 14th June, 2024. A fine intellect, perceptive mind, generous heart and the loving soul that she personified were recalled during the meet. Mrs Jaya Krishnaswamy's life and times stand testimony to her sterling contribution to the world of disability. Her life was rooted in service to the causes she espoused so fervently, her commitment was total and unparalleled. She was loved, respected and admired by all who had the privilege of associating with her. 'JK', as she is fondly remembered had made immense contributions to the disability sector, particularly Early Intervention, in children with developmental delays, touched countless lives spreading warmth, comfort and cheer to beleaguered parents and caregivers.



Her journey from being a school teacher to headmistress, special educator and Founder of the Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children, along with her husband Air Vice-Marshal V Krishnaswamy, is an outstanding example of her remarkable qualities of compassion, love and empathy for special children and their guardians. She generously shared her knowledge, skills and resources to empower teachers, mothers and students, actively encouraging and supporting those who aspired to enhance their skills. Her legacy will live on to gently guide everyone whom she influenced and inspired to be a better version of themselves



NEWS BITS FROM AROUND BALA MANDIR

The erstwhile DCC building that was refurbished by the Donor M/s. Virtusa Foundation as Staff Quarters and Tuition Centre was inaugurated on 25th April, 2024. As per the Arya Samaj rites, Mr Tamilarasan performed the inaugural *Ganapati Homam*. Mr Ram Meenakshisundaram, Executive Vice-President and Chief Technology Officer of Virtusa Consulting inaugurated the building. Thanks to this facility the much-needed additional space for tuition classes for children in the Home can now be taken up and they will receive crucial academic help. The new facility will also provide residential accommodation for senior staff in the Home.



The Meghdoot Atmospheric Water Generator System installed in BMMNC donated by M/s Virtusa Consulting Services Pvt. Ltd was inaugurated on 18th June, 2024 by Mr Ramaswamy P V – Chief Information Officer. This water system absorbs the moisture in the air and converts it to pure drinking water rich in minerals. There is a dispenser for the same kept on each floor to facilitate easy access to drinking water.



Students from ITE/Singapore visited on 20th June, 2024 and interacted with children across BM units – MNC, Children’s Home and Schools. They conducted fun-filled engaging activities such as Brain Gym, coordination games, and group games which were aimed at promoting mental and physical exercise while fostering interactive learning and enjoyment among the children. The activities that they organised involved creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere, and it was a valuable learning session for both. They provided gifts for the children who won in the group games.



- Officials from the Police Department visited Bala Mandir and gave an awareness speech on Social Media usage and Good & Bad Touch to our children.
- Ms Suryakala, Deputy Director, Department of Children’s Welfare and Special Services, along with 16 newly-recruited District Child Protection Officers visited Bala Mandir and an orientation was given regarding CCI and Adoption.
- Counselling sessions for the PAPS who had registered in CARA were held, as also sessions on Parenting were held for Caretakers and Staff of the I & T Block

NEWS BITS FROM BALA MANDIR HOME



Glimpses into the various Club activities and competitions held in Bala Mandir during the quarter.

A whirlwind of activities were planned as part of the later half of the Summer holidays to engage those children who could not go home. These activities included Cookery, Tailoring, classes on Ventriloquism, Juggling, and Cricket coaching for the older children. The Class X girls interacted with the Junior and Senior Toddlers and KG children in the Home. They entertained them by narrating stories, teaching rhymes and crafts and fun games.

The BM Creche celebrated 'Green Day' as a theme for this quarter and the children, all dressed in hues of green, participated enthusiastically. This not only made the children enjoy the day, but they learnt to associate the colour 'Green' with things around them.



BALU SIR STORYTELLING SESSION

During the Balu Sir Storytelling session on 13th June, 2024 our regular storyteller Ms. Ambujavalli engaged the children from UKG to Class V, by helping them improve concentration, memory and listening power through body and breathing exercises, and rhyming songs. As part of each storytelling, she made the children sing songs, repeat dialogues from the stories, and make appropriate animal sounds, thus involving the children in the storytelling – all of which they enjoyed.



BALU SIR SUMMER CAMP – 75TH YEAR

Balu Sir Summer Camp for the year was conducted from 1st to 11th May, 2024. As a **new inclusive initiative in BM's 75th year**, 16 boys and girls from two Government Children's Home and 12 children from MNC participated in the camp. The camp was divided into - Junior Camp consisting of 63 children from LKG –Class II and Senior Camp for 76 children from Class III – VIII. At the Valedictory function, the children performed a Mime, themed 'Overcoming Obstacles and Victory in Sports', which provided valuable lessons on acceptance of failure and striving towards success. The dance performances and display of art and craft materials that they had learnt to do during the camp were greatly appreciated by all. Certificates were given to all attendees and as a token of appreciation mementos were given to the resource persons by the Chief Guest Mr Churchill Joseph, Member, CWC South and Central. He also had a lively interaction with all the children.



A special thanks to all the staff and senior girls of the BM Home and Teachers of Vidyalaya who were deputed to the camp, for the wonderful job of ensuring the smooth running of the Camp.

NEWS FROM KINSHIP CARE

Kinship Care Summer Camp @ Bala Mandir

- To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Bala Mandir, a summer camp for children under the Kinship Care was organised at Bala Mandir's Chennai campus on 24 May, 2024. Over 96 children and 60 parents from Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengalpattu and Kancheepuram districts, unmindful of the heat and the long distances, participated in the day-long event. Children of the Bala Mandir Home enthralled the audience with a juggling event which included sequence coordination with rings, balls, hoops and hats. They shared their skill with the participants. During the storytelling session by Srividya Veeraraghavan from Story Train fame, she used powerful techniques to keep the children engaged and concentrated. The interactive session of sharing experiences between the parents and the KC management team was heartwarming.
- Kinship Care has introduced the concept of a **Remote Social Worker** to work in partnership with the new Field Social Workers, for documentation, follow-ups and better contact with families.
- Mobile data top-up plan** has been introduced for mothers who help their children attend *Happy Reading, Kai Mel Kalvi* tab or other online classes on a regular basis.
- The first batch of six children from the Kinship Care programme who attempted the Class X public exams in March 2024, passed with good scores.
- At the end of the June 2024 quarter, Kinship Care has **1419 children from 807 families** from the Chennai and Coimbatore Hubs.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

- **Awards and Certificates of Excellence** and Exemplary behaviour were distributed to children in the BM Home – Dakshinamoorthy & Sathya Angel of Class 6, and Sandeep & Sandhya of Class 8 were the beneficiaries.
- **The Junior and the Senior children** of the BM Home accompanied by staff and social workers enjoyed the following outings to Anna Nagar Tower, Egmore Museum, Integral Coach Factory, Mahabalipuram, Airport and Aero Hub. They also watched a movie in the nearby theatre.
- **A trip outside Chennai** – On 24th May 2024 Ms Veena and Mr Praveen accompanied 13 girls and four boys in High School for a 3-day trip to Somangalam Rehoboth Home, where they experienced a warm welcome and excellent hospitality. The trip not only provided entertainment, the children also had an opportunity to interact with the mentally challenged women residing there and also visited an old-age home run by the institution. The children entertained and brought joy to the residents by dancing and performing juggling activities. They all came back with a sense of empathy and a better understanding about life!
- **BMMNC** – as is tradition, children whose **birthdays** fall in the months on April, May and June were celebrated at end of June. Ms. Sumitra Manoharan, Former staff of MNC graced the occasion and wished the children.

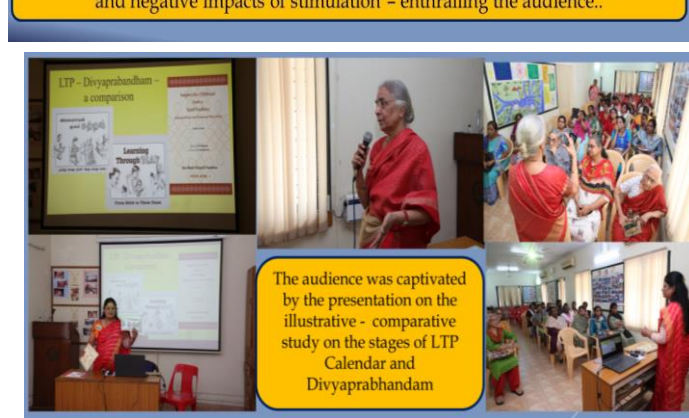


BMRRC SHOWCASE EVENT

To mark the 75th anniversary of Bala Mandir, the BMRRC unit showcased an event on 29th June, 2024 with a display of posters and pamphlets and activities on Early Childhood Care Development and Education, Parenting and Brain Development.

There were 6 different displays and activities viz. Model Creche, Birth to 3 - Home Environment, Divyaprabhandam – LTPC comparison workshop, Street Play and Brain Game.

Various Resource Materials and publications of BMRRC were also displayed



PORTRAIT GALLERY AT THE TT VASU HALL



Shri K. Kamaraj, the Founder President of Bala Mandir continued his involvement with the organisation even as Chief Minister of Madras. On his demise in 1975, Bala Mandir was registered as Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust.



Smt S. Manjubhashini, the Founder-Secretary, dedicated her life to the upliftment of children in difficult circumstances. Her legacy lives on in the work of Bala Mandir as a primary childcare institution.



Shri Ramnath Goenka, Founder Member, was a well-wisher and constant support to Bala Mandir in the early years. He was involved in the building of the Main Block.



Shri S. Govind Swaminadhan was a legal luminary and a close associate of Manjumma, who established 'Bala Mandir' as 'Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust'. The SGS Legal Education Seminar is held in his honour every year. He took over as the Second President of Bala Mandir after Sh K Kamaraj passed away.



Shri T T Vasu, the Third President of Bala Mandir, was the scion of a well-known industrialist family and he was closely associated with Shri K Kamaraj. His connections and contacts greatly aided the expansion of Bala Mandir's infrastructure and well-wishers.



Shri V. Sethuram was associated with Manjumma since his childhood. He was witness to Bala Mandir's growth almost from inception, and steered it through its changing phases, as the Fourth President of Bala Mandir.



Dr S. Anandalakshmy, an expert in Early Childhood Care and Development, worked closely with the development of BMRF, was instrumental in furthering research and also introducing it to the national and international arenas. She served initially as President of BMRF and later as the Fifth President of BMKT till her demise.



Smt Jaya Krishnaswamy was Founder-Director of MNC and earned national and international acclaim in the field of Special Education. She was also closely involved in parenting programmes to empower parents with early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, along with creating of the nationally recognized 'Upanayan' tool.

Smt Saroj Goenka, Patron, BMKT and daughter-in-law of Sri Ramnath Goenka was actively involved in the first three decades of Bala Mandir's functioning and also served as Joint Treasurer.



SAMVAAD

- Meeting with staff across units and screening of the 70th / 75th year short films about Bala Mandir – Hon General Secretary.
- Four refresher sessions of the Code of Conduct emphasizing practical ways to integrate these values into daily work routines - Hon General Secretary.
- Skill development session on 'Behavioural Thinking' – Mr Bharath Natarajan
- Effective Communication at Workplace - Mr Bharath Natarajan
- 'The Key is Me' – by Mr Keshav of Mantra – a session on building self-esteem and enriching the personalities

HR NEWS

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Benjamin Samuel Nessaiyan, Social worker, KC
- Ponnusamy P, Social worker, KC
- Ponni M, Admin, SMHS
- Lekshmi Priya Raghubalan Prema, Hepler-Kitchen, Nagercoil
- Fermie A Priyadharshini, Social worker, KC

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Shivsankari U, House mother, Ch. Home
- Sreekumari Premananth, Cook, Nagercoil
- Amrutha Kalvakalva, Teacher, Vidyalaya
- Mary Subha R, Educator, Nagercoil
- Devakirubai P, Special Educator, MNC

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