

From the Editor's Desk

As the festive season spreads cheer and bonhomie around the city of Chennai, the same spirit is reflected in the joyful atmosphere in Bala Mandir. For the quarter that went by, significant days in the year's calendar, like Kamaraj Day, Independence Day, and Teachers' Day were given the attention, respect and honour they deserve.

Festivals are fun times at Bala Mandir and the children participated with great enthusiasm and enjoyed special treats. Poojas and other religious occasions were observed solemnly and the significance of these events was inculcated through stories and plays.

'Every Child Matters' resonates through the corridors of the institution and every effort is made to enhance the care and welfare of the children, be it through Government policies, NGO partnerships, private donations or volunteer services. Every unit performs to its maximum capacity. Outreach programmes conducted by Kinship Care and BMRRRC are flourishing and as a consequence benefit a large number of children and adults in marginalised communities spread across Tamil Nadu.

Do delve into this issue of *BM Connect* and gain a glimpse at the busy lives of the children, staff, teachers and all those involved with the institution.

We will be happy to hear back from you at minnie@balamandir.org
Till next time!
Rukmini Amirapu

Contents

<i>From the Editor's Desk</i>	1
<i>Founder's Day Celebrations</i>	1
<i>Education Day</i>	2
<i>Annual Day</i>	2
<i>Independence Day</i>	2
<i>Teachers' Day at BM Schools</i>	3
<i>Festivals and Celebrations in BM Home</i>	3
<i>Happenings around Bala Mandir</i>	4
<i>Newsbits from BM Schools</i>	5
<i>Festivals & Celebrations at BM Nagercoil</i>	6
<i>News from BM Kinship Care</i>	7
<i>News from BM MNC</i>	8
<i>News from BMRRRC</i>	9
<i>News from the HR Desk</i>	9
<i>BM Creche</i>	10
<i>Children's Corner</i>	10

Founder's Day Celebrations - In Fond Remembrance

The Founder's Day celebrations were held on September 28, 2024, at the Bala Mandir Cultural Hall to honour Smt Manjubhashini. The programme began with a *villupattu*, rewritten for the 75th year, and sung by the children of Bala Mandir under the guidance of exponent Ms Bharathi Thirumagan, followed by a song by the BM girls. The Primary School children danced to a Bharathiyar song highlighting empowerment of women. The Chief Guest was Dr Rema Chandramohan, Director of the Institute of Child Health & Children's Hospital, who spoke about the values to be imbibed from the life of Smt Manjubhashini. Some of the events planned for the BM staff were a team quiz and enacting a personality connected to their unit. There was also a group presentation titled, 'If our Founder Manjumma were present, how would you convince her that your unit is fully striving towards the motto 'Every Child Matters'.' The teams were judged by Ms Lakshmi Gopal, Ms Latha Kumaraswami, and Mr L Ravichandran, based on upkeep of time, usage of props, team participation and most of all, effectively conveying the message to the audience.



Kamaraj Day - Educating Young Minds

On July 15, 2024 Kamaraj Day was commemorated as Education Day, with a vibrant cultural tribute to the visionary leader. Students from SMHS showcased their artistic talents through captivating performances, including a rewritten *villupattu* chronicling Kamaraj's life, a thought-provoking Tamil skit exploring his educational ideals, 'Kamarajar Kalvi Kanavu', and an imaginative English skit, 'Impact of Kamaraj on Education'. The latter was creatively woven into a fantasy drama, and highlighted the transformative impact of Kamaraj's educational reforms to Tamil Nadu.

These performances not only celebrated Kamarajar's pioneering contributions to education but also instilled a sense of appreciation and responsibility among students towards the value of learning.



Annual Day - Together from KG to Class I2

Bala Mandir Vidyalaya Nursery and Primary School and Satyamurthi School celebrated a combined Annual Day on August 31, 2024 in Vani Mahal-T.Nagar. The programme began with a beautiful welcome dance, *Nitranadam* performed with lamps by the High School girls.

In a Tamil skit, *Kalvi Kanavu*, a special tribute was paid to Kamaraj and Manjubhashini - two visionaries who founded the schools. The performance showcased their contributions and ideals. The KaRe team presented a stunning peacock dance that highlighted the importance of inclusion.

The SMHS students presented an English skit emphasising the impact of the BM Founders on education. The Primary School students presented a vibrant forest scene, complete with animals and butterflies depicting the theme 'Compassion towards animals' - which was enjoyed by everyone.

The Chief Guest, Mr B Santhanam, CEO Asia Pacific and India Chairman, Saint-Gobain India, addressed the gathering, inspiring the students and teachers with his words. He spoke about 4 Es - Energy - Empathy - Enthusiasm - Excelling, which he said makes successful people different from others, and should be followed by the students.



Independence Day Celebrations - Evoking Patriotism



On August 15, 2024, Vidyalaya Primary School and Satyamurthi School proudly commemorated India's 78th Independence Day.

The ceremony was graced by Chief Guests, Mr Nikhil Rao, Mr Bhagath Kumar, and Mr Thulasi Rao from Boeing India. The event showcased the talents of our students through captivating dance performances, soulful songs, and inspiring speeches on naturalism and patriotism.

A pivotal moment was the Investiture Ceremony, where students were presented with the school flag and house flags, and took an oath to uphold the values of leadership, teamwork, and responsibility.

Independence Day was celebrated at the BM Home with the hoisting of the Indian flag by a staff member Ms Thayamma. The children sang patriotic songs and the National Anthem. The junior toddlers celebrated Independence Day in BM Crèche, with some children dressing up as Bharat Mata, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru.

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Teachers' Day at Bala Mandir Schools - Respecting our Preceptors

On Teachers' Day students from Classes 10, 11, and 12 dressed up as teachers and took charge of classes for the Middle School students, showcasing their teaching skills and creativity. Meanwhile, the teaching staff gathered for a relaxed meet-up session in the afternoon, enjoying snacks and refreshments. The High School students had arranged engaging games in the Vikalpa Lab, adding to the festive atmosphere. Heart-warming moments unfolded as students shared thoughts about their favourite teachers. To make the day even more special, teachers were recognised in categories such as Cultural Coordinator, Child-Friendly Teacher, Teacher with a Helping Hand, and Amenable Teacher. The celebration was a beautiful tribute to the teachers' dedication and hard work

Festivals and Celebrations in Bala Mandir Home - Following Traditions

On July 15, 2024, Sri Kamaraj's 122nd birthday was celebrated. The children visited Kamarajar Illam in the morning and sang bhajans and later participated in the function held at the Cultural Centre by the Schools. A special lunch was provided to all the children, members and staff on that day, across BM units.

On August 16, 2024, Varalakshmi Viratham was celebrated with Ashtothram chanting and bhajan singing. Ms Sujatha explained the story of five mythological women and the significance of the celebrations, and the children dressed up and performed a mono act which exemplified 5 values.

On August 26, 2024, Krishna Jayanthi was celebrated with chanting of Ashtothram and singing bhajans on Lord Krishna. The junior and senior children enacted a drama, and the senior girls performed a dance. All the Home staff symbolically rocked the cradle of Lord Krishna highlighting the care BM provides young children. In the I & T Block, Ms Hima, a volunteer, narrated the story of Lord Krishna, and the children danced to a song sung in praise of Lord Krishna.

On September 7, 2024, Vinayaka Chaturthi was celebrated with Ashtothram chanting and singing Ganesha bhajans and visiting a nearby Ganesha temple. Ms Sujatha, MIC-BM Children's Home, explained the story symbolising Lord Ganesha in an interactive session. The children dressed up as Lord Shiva, Devi Parvathi, Lord Murugan, and Lord Ganesha. In the Infant & Toddler Block, teachers sang songs and recited slokas, with children dressed up as Lord Ganesha. The immersion ceremony was performed on the third day, when the statue of Ganesha was taken in a procession and immersed in the well.

On September 13, 2024, Onam festival was celebrated. Ms Padmavathy shared the story of Onam and Ms Meenakshi sang the Onam song for the toddlers.



Happenings Around Bala Mandir

- On August 21, 2024, Ms Rashmi Siddharth Zagade, the District Collector, visited the I&T Block - Infants Room and the Toddler Section. She expressed her satisfaction and appreciation for the facilities and gave a complimentary feedback on the cleanliness and overall organisation of the Block .
- On September 18, 2024, The DLIC (District Local Inspection Committee) did their quarterly inspection and verified all the documents. The committee appreciated the effective use of Dhruva software (used for capturing children's data), showcasing its positive impact on the operations and management of the institution.



Infant & Toddler (I & T) Block Activities - Bundles of Joy

On July 11, 2024, Green Day was celebrated by the Junior and Senior toddlers who wore green outfits, and the activity room was decorated in green.

On August 8, 2024, Fruit Day was celebrated. The children dressed up as different fruits, and teachers interacted with them, discussing various types of fruits.

On August 30, 2024, teachers and caregivers performed a role play as vegetable vendors, while the children acted as buyers and got the feel of a marketplace.

On September 21, 2024, a puppet show was conducted by the crèche teachers for the children.

On September 27, 2024, a model zoo was created in the activity room. Children dressed up as various animals, like a tiger, cow, rabbit, and goat.

Evening Volunteers Class - Evening classes running from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm have been held for students from Classes 1 to 5. The classes are conducted by Ms Rajeswari and Ms Mubena, with support from staff members of both the boys' and girls' sections.

Holiday Activity - a Reading Initiative - Books have been issued in the High School library to encourage reading habits. Students are required to provide oral interpretations of their selected books to their English teacher.

Session on Safe and Unsafe Touch - Social Worker Amali conducted an important session on Safe and Unsafe Touch during the holiday activity. She engaged the children in a thoughtful discussion and provided worksheets to help them understand the concept better. Staff from both the boys' and girls' sections assisted in guiding the children as they completed the worksheets.



News From Bala Mandir Schools - Enhancing Learning

Robotics Workshop - Robotics for Everyone

The Robotics Workshop held on July 27, 2024, was a successful event. The session included practical demonstrations on Simple Gear Systems, covering the basics of gears, the differences between gears with various teeth counts, and spur gear connections using the provided kit, which the students enjoyed.



Higher Secondary Students' visit to the Bank

On August 3, 2024, students from Classes 11 and 12 embarked on an enlightening field trip to the neighbouring Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) branch. They had an opportunity to glimpse into the inner workings of a commercial bank. During the visit, students engaged with bank officials, who provided insightful explanations on various aspects of banking operations, including account management, loan processing, and transaction procedures. This educational outing not only enhanced their financial literacy but also sparked interest in career possibilities within the banking sector.

Medical Day Event

On August 16, 2024, our Middle School students benefitted from an enlightening Medical Day programme organised by Dr Suchitra. The highlight of this annual event was an engaging quiz programme which, along with testing students' knowledge on vital health and hygiene topics, sparked enthusiasm and teamwork among participants. Dr. Suchitra's expert insights and interactive sessions educated students on essential health habits, disease prevention, and wellness strategies.



Students' One-day Trip

The school tour to the Guindy Park on August 17, 2024, was a resounding success, with students from Classes 6 to 12 enthusiastically exploring the park's innovative features, alongside their teachers. The objective of the tour was to provide students with an opportunity to appreciate nature's beauty, develop teamwork and bonding among students and teachers, enhance observational and scientific skills, and create lifelong memories, wherein the students displayed immense enthusiasm.

Rotary Interact Club Initiation

On August 24, 2024, our school's Rotary Interact Club was officially initiated for the new academic year. The event marked the induction of new members, who were honoured and welcomed into the club. Two forthcoming workshops focused on career guidance and motivational topics to empower students are planned, and the club plans to engage students from Classes 9 and 11, in meaningful community service projects, fostering social responsibility and civic engagement.



Festivals, Celebrations and Activities at Bala Mandir, Nagercoil - A Home Away From Home

Special days and festivals were celebrated in a grand manner at BM Nagercoil. On Kamaraj Day in July, Mr Shantha Kumar, HM-Government Primary School, Irulappapuram was the Chief Guest and gave a very interesting speech on Shri Kamaraj and to add to the gaiety, cultural programmes were organised.

On Independence Day Mr Tamil Kuzhavi, Founder - Kuralagam, Kanyakumari Dist, hoisted the National Flag and gave an inspiring speech on 'Independence'. Dr. Thiruchellakatheeswaran, Asst Professor, Anna Vinayagar College, explained the importance of 'Aim & Education'.

During the Krishna Jayanthi celebrations, the children drew footprints using rice flour to mark Lord Krishna's arrival. For Vinayakar Chathurthi the children made Vinayaka statues with clay and special prayers and poojas were conducted. For Onam, the children prepared Athapookalam and expressed their happiness with a beautiful dance.



As part of the 75th Anniversary Celebrations, Ms Suseela Pillai, former Secretary, BMKT, inaugurated the Children's Park for which Ms Kaleeshwari, Revenue Divisional Officer, was the Chief Guest. Ms Maya Gaitonde, Hon General Secretary gave a presentation titled 'Retrospect' depicting three decades of Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust's service in Nagercoil. A delightful presentation through song, dance and tableau formed part of the programme, which highlighted the empowerment of women in India.



A medical check-up by Dr Kannan and a talk on the importance of Dental Hygiene by Dr Ram Sarana Vinoth were also held. Dr Vinoth explained the two types of teeth cleaning methods for children aged below and above 10 years.

Ms Latha & Ms Padma from All Women Police Station, Nagercoil, presented an awareness programme on the POCSO Act and explained the importance of the Act through some real-life incidents.

The Bala Mandir children were also on air! Ms Kiruba Ganesh from the radio station Kumari FM 101 coordinated a live broadcast where the children presented an awareness song on water conservation, speech on importance of education and a story on how to overcome difficult situations, as part of a programme.

Bala Mandir Kinship Care (KC) - Reaching Far and Wide in TN

During the quarter, there were programmes across 4 districts in the Chennai Hub. To celebrate the 75th year of Bala Mandir, the events were held to create visibility about Bala Mandir and its 5 units, among the stakeholder communities. All the events therefore, began with greeting the audience with displayed information on Bala Mandir and its units and screening the 75th year film.

The events served to create greater awareness about Bala Mandir and the Kinship Care (KC) programme. With a presentation about KC and the various programmes under the KC umbrella, the management team spoke about each service, the objectives, expectations from parents and the benefits. To keep it interactive, parents were encouraged to share their experiences and ask questions. Many parents spoke about the benefits they received from Bala Mandir and shared their positive experiences and the impact of the programmes. Counselling, Kai Mel Kalvi, and Happy Reading were among the most popular programmes that have impacted many families, and mothers could see the difference in their children, in terms of their reading, comprehension and even speaking abilities. Mothers also expressed their gratitude for school fees/ private tuition fees/transportation fees received from Bala Mandir for the last 3 years.



In Tiruvallur: The highlight was a puppet show. The Chief Guests were Ms A Mary Auxilia, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Tiruvallur and Ms K Malarvizhi, Protection Officer, District Child Protection Unit, Tiruvallur.

Mr P Stephen, Director – Integrated Rural Community Development Society (IRCDS) was of immense help in organising the programme.

In Kancheepuram: Counsellor Sujatha's group held one-on-one counselling with mothers. P Natarajan's interaction with Class 10 children, Ms Akila and Mr L Ravichandran's interaction with families, helped in team bonding with Social Workers who came together from both hubs for the event. Rural Women's Social Education Centre (RUWSEC) held a Medical Camp for children and mothers, and medicines were distributed for ailments, infection, and supplements for deficiencies

In Tiruvannamalai: Social Worker Muthu created a positive image about KC & BM which was evident in the understanding of the programme by many parents who kept it interactive. The interactions of the parents talking specifically about the programmes and how it had helped their children, was very encouraging. A medical screening camp was held in collaboration with the Indian Association of Paediatrics.



“Coming for this annual camp in Tiruvannamalai is like going to our mother's home and we look forward to it. We should thank Bala Mandir for this opportunity, where we feel one with the Bala Mandir family and can open up about our problems, knowing fully well that you care for us and will help find a solution. We are also happy that you make so much effort to focus on our children's education and the only way we can do our bit is to ensure our children attend the programmes regularly,” said A Tamilselvi, a beneficiary mother.

At Salem: The first Kinship Care event of the Coimbatore hub helped the parents understand the huge support that is provided by Bala Mandir in various sectors. Around 260 Participants from Salem, Erode and Namakkal attended this event. Mr Satish Kumar, Child Protection Officer from Namakkal spoke about the various issues faced by children and the Government schemes and support available for children.



News from Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre (BM-MNC) - The Joys of Inclusion

Teachers' Day Celebrations in BM-MNC - The parents took the lead and decorated the prayer hall with balloons, festoons and colour paper. Pictures of all the staff were hung on streamers. They invited the teachers to the prayer hall and showered petals on them as they entered. Each teacher was given a present by the students and a cake was cut. The mothers entertained the teachers by singing, dancing and organising games.

Vinayaka Chaturthi - As a part of the arts and crafts class on the day, the children learned to make Ganesha idols. Children in the Early Intervention Centre (EIC) used wheat dough with turmeric, and older children in the Jivikam class used moulds and clay to make the idols. This exercise gives lot of scope for the development of both gross motor and fine motor skills.

Saraswathi Vidyalaya, a school in Chennai was started in 1956 by Smt K Saraswathi, and was inaugurated by Hon'ble Thiru K Kamaraj. The Founder Chairman and Principal, Smt K Saraswathi's son Mr K S Natarajan celebrates her birthday every year at MNC. This year they came on July 30, 2024 and the children had a wonderful time watching the dancing and singing.



Samyam - Madhuram Narayanan Centre introduced a new event Samyam in 2013. Samyam, meaning 'getting together at the right time' - is a platform where old, current and new students of MNC, along with their parents, get together and celebrate. This project was conceived to bring the past and present and the new entrants together in the Centre and was celebrated on July 20.

In keeping with the tradition of inviting parents of alumni as Chief Guest, this year Mrs Revathi Sridhar, (a parent of Master Sankalp, alumnus 2001 Batch) was invited. Her address to the gathering was very motivating and well received by all parents who had assembled. She said that her son had cerebral palsy and she came to the BM-MNC when he was an infant. She took early intervention for 4 years which helped her know the nuances of special education and physiotherapy.

They continued both for a long time at home and tutored the child to pursue his education. With physiotherapy, the child's motor skills improved and he showed good results in academics too. They included him in all the normal activities of the family.

It was very interesting to note that he had visited 100 temples out of the 108 Divya Kshetrams. There were temples where they had to carry him on their shoulders up a mountain or in rough terrain, but they took him all the same. Today, he has a BA in English and is working in a private firm. The success story that she shared, showed the part the parents had to play for a special child and how perseverance had its fruitful results.



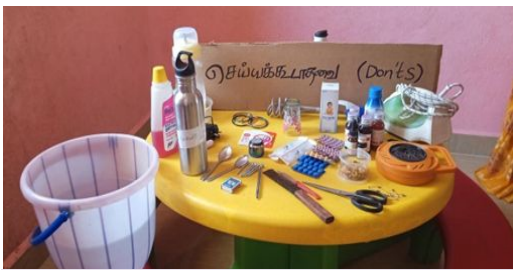
The cultural show by the children was very well-received. EIC children presented an action song on Flowers “மல்லிகை பூவே மல்லிகை பூவே” while the alumni children presented an action song “குளத்தின் கரை ஓரத்தில் கொக்கு ஒன்று நிக்ருது”. The parents presented a concluding dance which was well-appreciated by all. The panel discussion among the parents focused on the difficulties faced by parents of special children.

News from Bala Mandir Research & Resource Centre (BMRRC) - Parenting Matters

BMRRC held various training sessions during the quarter for the field staff on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) at the Ellapuram block. These were conducted by Mr Anand and his team at various project sites.



The second Information Education and Communication (IEC) implementation, Health, Nutrition and Safety was conducted in 10 villages where a total of 384 beneficiaries attended. Importance of breastfeeding, vaccination, monitoring baby's weight, safety of surroundings, need for supervision of children etc were emphasised.



Other Training programmes during the quarter were:

- Information, Education & Communication (IEC) Training on Importance of ECCD.
- One-day awareness programme on ECCD.



News from the HR Desk

Honouring employees for their service acknowledges their hard work and commitment. It encourages others to strive for excellence and build a strong team. Ultimately, it's a way to express gratitude for their role in the organisation's success. Long Service Awards were presented during various occasions in the quarter to the following staff who have been rendering their services to Bala Mandir:

Ms Divya S – Administration

Mr Vijayan S – Administration

Ms Vijayalakshmi S – Kinship Care

Ms Subhashini – Children's Home, Chennai

Ms Siva Priya R – Children's Home, Nagercoil

Ms Usha R – Children's Home, Nagercoil

Ms Hepziba Beulah C – Bala Mandir Satyamurthi School

Ms Renukadevi - Bala Mandir Vidyalaya Nursery & Primary School

BM Creche - Learning Through Play

The Parent-Teachers Meet held in July covered the daily activities at the creche, emphasising the structured schedule that is followed to ensure a balanced environment for the children, along with highlighting various assessment methods used to track and support each child's development

Every month, the BM Creche follows a theme to teach kids, to enhance learning experience. The themes for the quarter were

- Vegetables - where the children were taken to the nearby supermarket for an hands-on experience
- Animals - where a Zoo set up was created, allowing children to learn about animals in a playful and interactive way.
- Fruits - where the children were made to do a role-play and they learnt to express themselves through song and dance.

Festivals of this quarter were also celebrated along with the children



Children's Corner - Vignettes From the Lives of Our Children

- On July 28, 2024, the Primary School children visited our Member Ms Kalpakam Narayanan, known as Kathai Teacher. She engaged the children with delightful stories and they had a great time singing rhymes.
- On August 3, 2024, all the children took an oath to promote organ donation in honour of Organ Donation Day.
- On August 9, 2024, children from Classes 6-8 participated in a Scouts and Guides camp held at Satyamurthi High School.
- On August 12, 2024, children pledged their commitment to raising awareness about drug-related issues on International Drug Awareness Day.
- On August 15, 2024 Independence Day, children attending the classes conducted by Madras Dyslexia Association participated in the elocution and drawing competitions and won prizes.
- Vaccination for Children - On September 6, 2024, HPV Cervical Cancer Prevention Vaccine was age-appropriately administered to 104 boys and girls of MNC, Vidyalaya and Sathyamurthi High School. The vaccination drive was sponsored and supported by the Inner Wheel Club of Madras. Dr Jaishree Gajaraj, eminent gynaecologist gave an awareness talk to the parents. The second and third dose will be given age-appropriately at timed intervals.



Errata: +

In the 40th issue of BM Connect, it was wrongly mentioned that Ms Saroj Goenka was the Joint Treasurer. It should read as Honorary Treasurer.

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