



Theatre as Creative Space and Therapy

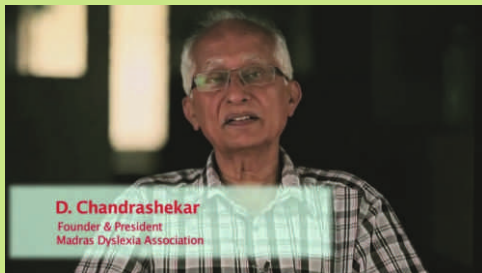
There is an increasing awareness about using theatre as a creative space for therapeutic purpose. We've featured two articles on the benefits of theatre, especially when remediating children with learning difficulties.

Dyslexia Week

Dyslexia Week is a series of competitions spread over one week and which is open to main stream

schools that run remedial centers/resource rooms on their campus; and to learning centers that cater to children with Dyslexia. Since the Chennai chapter was interrupted by floods last year, it was rescheduled for February this year. More than 500 school children participated in events spread over a week.

Listen to D Chandrasekhar, Founder Director of MDA speak about how Dyslexia Week was conceived and how it has evolved; MDA now plans to make it into a pan India event.



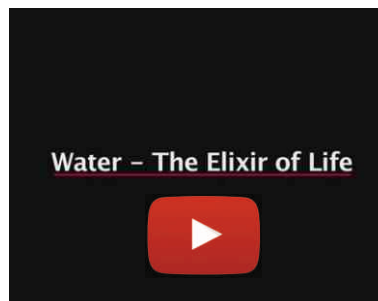
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The Editors



Nandini Sridhar

MDA and Ananya Present...Drama – A Life Skill



<https://youtu.be/rbK4kCa0yks>



<https://youtu.be/RtGasy1PKtQ>

“Ma’am! We don’t know what to do. You tell us a story.”

“Ma’am! I don’t want to act that role. Let him do it.”

“Ok Ma’am, I will do it today.”

“Ma’am, let’s act thaananæ thanaethanana.”

“Ma’am. If she can’t do that role, I will do ma’am”.

“Ma’am! I will be the director for the drama today”

I have attained my self-actualization need!!

I remember as a child when I went on stage to perform a group dance, my legs were trembling in fear. They were cold. I was perspiring. The bright lights on me and the silhouettes of heads in the auditorium was enough to make me freeze for a moment.

Having gone through this stage fear and having overcome it, I am where I am... teaching children drama.

Acting/Drama! What does it do to a child? It makes you a better actor. It works on your voice. By pretending to be someone else you

can throw away your inhibitions. Therefore, you become more assertive and self-confident. You present yourself better. You accept yourself and you are happy with the self-revelation. You learn to speak out. By listening to feedback, you analyse yourself constructively and find ways for improvement. You understand space - around you, personal space and inter-personal space. It triggers the creativity in you. You become more motivated to take up new challenges.

Just to watch the progress of each child is sheer joy.

As you grow older inhibition sets in. It is easy to make a child below 12 years act without being self-conscious. But the moment they grow up, inhibition sets in and they do not want to do anything that makes them uncomfortable. This reflects in everyday life. To overcome their inhibitions, they either become silent or very brash. Acting in different roles helps them get in touch with their emotions and understand others' feelings too.

"I am not going to make my child an actress Madam. So why should she go for drama classes? Studies are enough for her." To all who believes in this, I must say Drama is not about performing well on the stage. It is a life skill. It teaches you the art of living; to face life and to achieve your dreams; to realise your fullest potential. It is a tool. It does not necessarily have to make you a fine actor... or why not?!

"Ma'am. If she can't do that role, I will do it ma'am."
 "Ma'am! I will be the director for the drama today."
 As a teacher I have realized my fullest potential!!

Nandini Sridhar is a Speech and Drama Therapist, Storyteller and Media Consultant whose work is focused on children with learning difficulties.

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Theatre – A Tool for Communication, Therapy and Fun



PC Ramakrishna

For long theatre had been thought of as just a form of entertainment to wind up at the end of a tiring day. However, in the last 20 years, theatre has emerged as an effective medium in showcasing lessons in communication and social behavior. In fact, the essence of these aspects of theatre is being extensively used in areas of corporate training, human resource development and individual therapy.

So, what is it in theatre that lends itself to such adaptive methodologies in seemingly diverse fields? To put it briefly, the qualities that it promotes are...**Empathy, Group Dynamics, and Communicative ability.**

Empathy

Quite often we find ourselves being self-indulgent, somewhat obsessed with ourselves, and insensitive to the feelings of others. Theatre serves to break you out of this. You are presented with the opportunity to inhabit a character, which could be diametrically opposite to you. To do justice to that character you are required to get into his or her skin----in other words, develop an empathy with that character to make it credible on stage. This process enables you to come out of yourself and understand deeply the mind of someone very different. It is truly an enriching experience.

Group Dynamics

In theatre you have to work with co-actors. You have to listen to others speaking and respond. It is a continuous interaction involving give and take.

You learn what drives another character; you are filled with the need to complement one's presence; and you are thrown into a situation of together making a story come alive on stage. Barriers get broken, and social behavior becomes more inclusive and meaningful.

Therapy

This opportunity that theatre provides for human interaction, is made easier by actually removing you from your daily pressures, prejudices and fears, to enact a story on stage with others, to be deeply therapeutic.

In a very different context, theatre has been found to be extremely useful in dealing with issues like Attention Deficiency and lack of intrapersonal communication. Theatre requires actors to concentrate on and learn lines. It provides opportunities for actors to empathize with roles other than they are familiar with, and interact with co-actors on stage, to bring a play alive.

In this process they learn to shed inhibitions, discover new universes and feel comfortable with others in doing a common job. People including children become socially more active and develop self-confidence to be part of a collaborative process.

Theatre also requires one to be a good listener. Many of the interpersonal problems are often aggravated by the inability or unwillingness of persons to listen. Theatre specific exercises have been developed that help in positive listening.

Sub-text is another very important part of theatre that helps persons/actors understand the environment and context of their action on stage.

A very sensitive director once said that no one comes into a scene in vacuum. They come in with “baggage” which drives the scene and makes it real, and carry out “baggage” for the next. Actors are required to act the unwritten earlier scene before entering the scene to be played. It has been found that this opens out the psyche of the players, and they realize that all of them carry some

emotional load or other. This realization is found to be deeply therapeutic, and enhances the emotional awareness of the actor thus making the actor a fuller person. Persons with personality disorders and inhibitions have been known to blossom into well rounded individuals. Children, particularly benefit from theatre exposure—it is a proven fact.

Finally, theatre is FUN—Children love it, live it and learn from it.

PC Ramakrishna is a veteran Theatre Actor / Director and voice over artist based in Chennai. He has acted in several plays over 50 years and has been an integral part of Madras Players – oldest English theatre group in India.

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Dyslexia Week

Dyslexia week in Chennai was held from 14 to 19 February 2016. The event was a huge success and was very well received.

It began with a painting competition co-partnered by the Rotary Club of Madras South. Fireless cooking, Kolam, Art from Waste, Music and Drama were the categories in which children from 18 schools, across Chennai, participated.

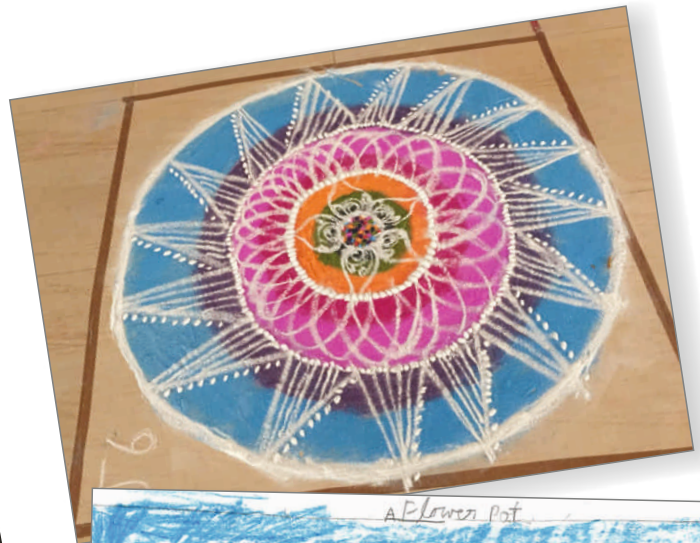
We would like to thank the Rotary Club of Madras South for partnering the event. We are also grateful to

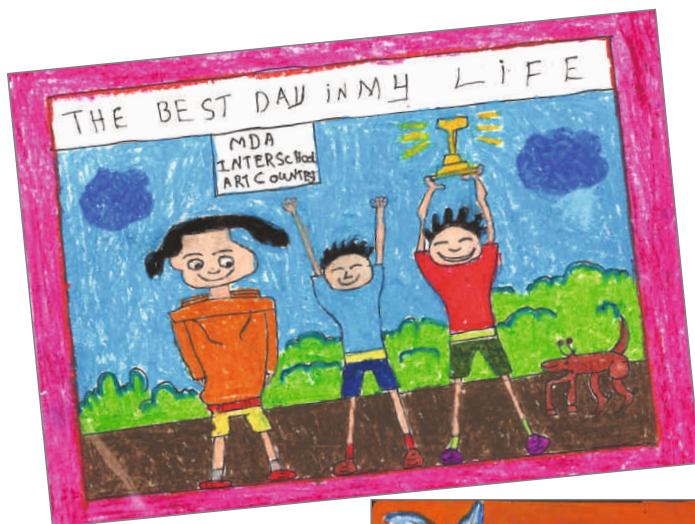
Mr Mahadevan of Winners Bakery and Dabur India for sponsoring snacks and soft drinks for the participants; to Mr Bhandari of Deccan Finance for providing the prize money; to Swamiji of Ramakrishna Mission and Mr Gopalakrishna of PS Society for providing space at their respective institutions to conduct the events.

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Prize Winning Entries





Alumnus Corner

Timely Help



Namrata Namby

“Help me! Do something. Help me!”- I had told my mom earlier that day. I sat there wondering what could possibly be wrong with me. My quarterly results had come and I had successfully managed to fail in all the subjects except English and Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, I had just scraped through.

Half yearly and final exams were left and at this rate I was sure I wouldn't be able to pass in those two as well.

Impending fear of repeating the 9th grade or being a school dropout (which I thought was more likely) had set in and I was desperately looking out for solutions. No one was able to figure out what was happening. Tuitions after tuitions, sitting and trying hard to study, repeatedly reading the same paragraph again and again, solving the same problem ten times, nothing seemed to work. It didn't make sense. And I didn't know how to make my school teachers or classmates understand what was happening. I was crowned with all names like “Lazy”, “Slow”, “Dull” etc. Going to school was a big effort.

Finding excuses to skip going to school was a bigger effort! Especially on days when some of the teachers had this amazing habit of reading out your marks to the whole class while distributing the exams sheets after correction. It was the peak of humiliation when a comment about my mark would follow resulting in the rest of the class gaping, commenting or either laughing at me. I would look at the questions in the exams and remember that I had learnt the answers but, everything was blank in my head. By the time I actually managed to remember something, time

would be up. My handwriting was good but considering the speed at which I used to write, my answer papers would end up incomplete most of the time.

I felt enemies didn't come in the form of human beings but subjects! And I felt Math was the worst of them all. Math was a real hard nut to crack. Chemistry was like Greek and Latin. Physics had formulas and a little bit of math so that was like my second worst enemy. I liked English and Biology. Biology mainly because the teacher was such a sweetheart and the whole school loved her. Since Hindi was too hard I had switched my second language to Sanskrit, giving me a tiny ray of hope there. Imagine tucking your glasses at the top of your head and then searching the whole house for them. Well history was just like that! Remembering all those dates and incidents! Phew! I was a pretty average student till 6th grade but, from 7th it all slowly started. First it was Hindi and then Math, and slowly the rest of the subjects. By the time I finished 8th, my report card was decorated with red ink.

And you wouldn't even want to know how my 9th grade report card looked! To cope with all this, my interest in Art grew and I started going for Art classes. Colouring, doodling, writing poems and making craft items were of great interest to me. Many of you must be wondering what I am trying to convey here but, I know that a few of you out there can relate to what I went through.

Dyslexia is not that difficult to handle.

Being dyslexic and unaware about it is quite a thing to handle. Helplessness, guilt, frustration and low self esteem are big thorns pricking you for no fault of yours. Dyslexia is not a parameter for discrimination or a matter of worry. It has nothing to do with intelligence. In fact, dyslexic people have amazingly high IQ (Give me a five, fellow friends!). Consider all these famous people- Einstein, Picasso, Da Vinci, Steven Spielberg, Agatha Christie, Tom Cruise, Abishek Bachchan, Steve Jobs,

Robin Williams and a lot more which I'm sure would result in a long list. All the misconceptions that especially parents and school teachers have about it should be dropped. Every teacher who joins a school should be trained to identify a dyslexic child. Okay, so coming back to my story, my parents were worried. My mom knew there was something more to it than just failing but couldn't pin point what. Prayer and Faith worked for her. One day while reading the newspaper, an article about dyslexia caught her attention. She started making enquiries and got a few leads about MDA and Ananya. That moment is what I would call a big miracle that happened in my life!

I soon found myself going to Ananya for an assessment. The minute I entered the school and saw other kids, I knew I was not alone. I knew it wasn't my fault. There was Hope! When I joined Ananya I had a big smile on my face. The fear of either repeating a year again or dropping out of school had vanished. I spent just one year in Ananya but, I would say that it was easily the best and happiest in my school life. The teachers were so warm and friendly. Their amazing teaching methods (Key points were my favourite) and giving individual attention did magic. They showered us with such

positivity and motivation and built up our confidence. My classmates turned out to be such good friends. It was so easy to relate to them since they went through similar issues in school. I looked forward to going to school. The best part was getting extra time and calculator for final exams. I passed my 10th standard scoring 77%. For a kid who failed all the while in school, passing out with 77% was awesome! My life had changed. My classmates and I went ahead and joined regular school in 11th. Some of my friends took commerce and others, science. They later ended up graduating in B.Com and Engineering successfully. I took Home Science and Dress designing, and passed out with 92%, topping my course in school. Visual Communication followed in college after that. MDA helped me in getting extra time for exams in college as well. As I'm writing this, I feel very grateful and thankful.

Thanks to my most supportive parents.

Thanks to my best friends from Ananya for making this rollercoaster ride a fun one!

And the Biggest thanks to Ananya, MDA and the teachers who were there for us.

Not to just only teach but to make a big difference in our lives. Thank you!

Resource Room at Ramana Vidyalaya

Thursday 17 December 2015 was a landmark for Ramana Vidyalaya, since they inaugurated their Resource Room in collaboration with MDA. Three special educators who have been undergoing training with MDA have embarked on a journey to empower children with learning difficulties in their school. Congratulations to Ms Lalitha Chandrasekharan for her sensitivity and forward thinking decisions to help children with Dyslexia. MDA offers its full support and wish Ramana Vidyalaya all the very best and great success in their endeavour.

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சிறப்பு தமிழ் பதிப்பு

தமிழ் வழி பயிற்சி - ஒரு தொடக்கம்

Ford நிறுவனத்தின் ஹேப்பி ஸ்கூல் ப்ரோக்ராம் திட்டத்தின் கீழ் அவர்களின் பள்ளிகளிலே நான்கு பள்ளிகளில் சிறப்பு மேம்பாட்டு அறை அமைப்பதற்கான பேச்சு வார்த்தையினை நடத்த திருமதி விலாசினி திருமதி ஹரிணி இருவரும் அங்கு சென்றபொழுது அந்த நான்கு பள்ளிகளுமே, தமிழ்வழி கல்வி கற்பிக்கும் பள்ளிகள் என்பது தெரியவந்தது. ஆனால் எம்.டி.ஏ. ஆங்கிலவழிக் கல்வி கற்கும் பிள்ளைகளுக்கு மட்டுமே கற்றலில் குறைபாட்டுக்கானத்தீர்வு பயிற்சிகளை அளித்து வந்தது. தமிழ் வழிக்கல்வி கற்பிக்கும் பள்ளிகளுக்கு நாம் ஏன் தமிழ் வழியிலே பயிற்சி அளிக்கக்கூடாது என்ற எண்ணம் தோன்றியது. அப்பொழுது உதயமானது தான் எம்.டி.ஏ.யின் „தமிழ் வழிப்பயிற்சி“. இந்த தமிழ்வழிப்பயிற்சி திட்டத்தினை அனுபவம் வாய்ந்த எட்டு சிறப்புக்கல்வி பயிற்சியாளர்கள் ஒருங்கிணைந்து உருவாக்கி செயல்படுத்திக் கொண்டிருக்கின்றனர்.

தொலைநோக்குப் பார்வை-

தமிழ்வழிக் கல்விகற்கும் மாணவர்களில் கற்றலில்

குறைபாடுள்ள மாணவர்களுக்கு இந்தப் பயிற்சியைக் கொண்டு போய் சேர்ப்பதே இத்திட்டத்தின் நோக்கம்.

குறிக்கோள்-

கற்றலில் குறைபாட்டுத் தீர்வுக்கென ஆசிரியர்களை நியமிப்பது.

தமிழ் வழி ஆசிரியர்ப் பயிற்சி, சிறப்புப் பயிற்சியாளர்களுடன், ஆசிரியர்ப் பயிற்சி பெற்றவர்கள் இணைந்து கற்பித்தல்.

கற்பித்தலுக்குத் தேவையான உபகரணங்கள் தயாராகிக் கொண்டிருக்கின்றன.

Lady Nye ஆரம்பப்பள்ளியிலும் தவத்திரு நாகமணி அடிகளார் பள்ளியிலும்_சிறப்பு ஆசிரியர்ப்பயிற்சி வகுப்புகள் நடத்தப்பட்டன. இது போன்ற பயிற்சிகளை மேன்மேலும் வழங்குவதே எங்களின் குறிக்கோள்.

ஹரிணி ராமானுஜம்

சிறப்பு பயிற்சியாளர், MDA



Dr Mullai Ramaiah is a retired Professor of Language and Linguistics from the University of Malaya. She develops intervention strategies for remediating children learning in Tamil. She will write regularly for the newsletter.

உடற்பயிற்சி

டிஸ்லெக்ஸியா ஒரு நரம்பியல் பாதிப்பு என்பதால் வலது, இடது மூளைகளுக்கிடையில் உள்ள நரம்பு சார்ந்த பாதைகளைத் (neural paths) திறந்துவிடுவது மாணவரின் கிரகிப்புத் தன்மையையும், நினைவாற்றலையும் கூட்டும். இது அவர்களுக்கேற்படும் பிரச்சனைகளைக் களைவதற்குப் பெரும் பங்காற்றுகின்றது. அதனால், ஒவ்வொரு பாட நேரத்திற்கு முன்னும், உடற்பயிற்சி செய்வது மிக முக்கியமாகின்றது. முதல், இரண்டு பயிற்சிகளையும் எல்லோரும் கட்டாயம் செய்யவேண்டும். மிச்சம் உள்ள 5 பயிற்சிகளில் மாற்றி மாற்றி எதை வேண்டுமானாலும் தேர்வு செய்து செய்யலாம். ஆனால் இந்த 5 பயிற்சிகளையும் வெவ்வேறு நாட்களில் மாணவர்கள் விட்டு விட்டுச் செய்திருக்கவேண்டும். மொத்தம் 5 நிமிடங்களுக்குப் பயிற்சி செய்யவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 1:



வலது கை விரல்களைக் கொண்டு இடது புருவத்தையும், இடது கை விரல்களைக் கொண்டு வலது புருவத்தையும் தொட்டு, 10 முறை நீண்ட மூச்சுகளை மென்மையாக உள் இழுத்து வெளி விடவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 4:



குதித்துக்கொண்டே, கற்றுக்கொண்ட சொற்களை உச்சரிக்கவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 2:



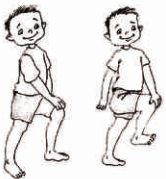
வலது கைவிரல்களைக் கொண்டு இடது காதையும், இடது கைவிரல்களைக் கொண்டு வலது காதையும் பிடித்துக் கொண்டு 10 முறை தோப்புக்கரணம் போடவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 5:



வலது கையால் இடது கால்விரல்களையும் இடது கையால் வலது கால்விரல்களையும் 10 முறை தொடவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 3:



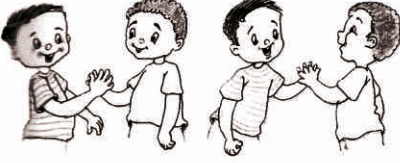
வலது கையை வீசி இடது முழங்காலையும் இடது கையை வீசி வலது முழங்காலையும் மாற்றித் மாற்றித் தொட்டுக்கொண்டே வகுப்பைச் சுற்றி அணிவகுக்கவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 6:



கால்களை மாற்றி மாற்றிக் குறுக்கே வைத்து நடக்கவேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 7:



இரண்டு மாணவர்கள் எதிர் எதிரே நின்று ஒரு மாணவர் தனது வலது கையால் மற்றவரது வலது கையையும், இடது கையால் மற்றவரது இடது கையையும் 10 முறைத் தட்ட வேண்டும்.

உடற்பயிற்சி 9:



2 பந்துகளைக் கைமாற்றி மாற்றி விளையாடலாம் (juggling)

விட்டில் பெற்றோர் கற்பித்தால் சீழ் உள்ள பயிற்சிகளைச் செய்யலாம்

உடற்பயிற்சி 8:



வர்ண மெது நீள துணிகளைக் (scarfs) கொண்டு கைகளை உடம்பின் குறுக்கே வலது புறம் இடது புறமாக மாற்றி மாற்றி இசைக்கு ஏற்ப நடனமாடலாம்.

இனிய அகில பூக்களும்
வாழ்க்கை

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