

# NEWSLETTER



Tamizh Vazhi Payirchi - Remediation Programme for Dyslexic Children Studying in Tamil Medium



## தமிழ்வழிப்பயிற்சி

கற்றலில்குறைபாடு உள்ள குழந்தைகள் மொழிப்பாடம் கற்றலில் அதிகசிரமத்தை எதிர்நோக்குவதாலும், தமிழுக்கென்று இக்குழந்தைகளுக்குத் தனிப்பாடப் புத்தகம் இருந்தால் சிறப்பாக இருக்கும் என்ற நோக்கில் ஆரம்பிக்கப்பட்டது இப்பெருமுயற்சி. இதில் பலரது ஆலோசனையையும் அறிவுரையையும் சிறப்பாக ஒரு பயிற்சி உபகரணத்தை உருவாக்கியுள்ளோம். இது மட்டுமன்றி தமிழ்வழிப்பயிற்சியை பயிற்று விப்பதற்கு ஆசிரியர்களுக்குப் பயிற்சித்திட்டமுகாம் ஒன்றும் ஏற்படுத்தியுள்ளோம். தமிழ்வழிப்பயிற்றுவிக்கும் ஆரம்பநிலைப்பள்ளிகளுக்கும் இம்முயற்சி சென்றடைய வேண்டும் என்பதே எங்களின் மிகப்பெரிய நோக்கம். ஆசிரியப்பயிற்சிமுகாம், உபகரணங்கள் (kit) பற்றிய விபரங்களை மேலும் அறியவேண்டி உபவர்கள் எங்களது எம்.டி.ஏ. நிறுவனத்தை அணுகவும்.



Hydra - A Project of Multiple Intelligences Foundation



## MDA Celebrates



**D Chandrasekhar**

### How It All Began

Madras Dyslexia Association (MDA) was actually conceptualized over a special dinner. Hazel Mackay, former Vice President of British Dyslexia Association, sowed the seed for a platform where children with dyslexia could seek help. It was 1992. And MDA was born.

An initial group of parents (who were not sure whether their children were dyslexic) and a few special educators were part of this initiative. The first office bearers of MDA were: C Ramanujam, President; Azeez Akhtar, Vice President; Ravi Valecha, Treasurer; D Chandrasekhar, Secretary. We were yet to register our Association and find a place to work out of. At that time, there was an opportunity to invite Dr Sunita Sodhi to Chennai so she could share her experience about dyslexia. Since the Association had not opened a bank account each of us contributed resources to make MDA's first awareness programme on dyslexia a success. You can listen to Dr Sodhi's speech here:



Our first batch of special educators was trained by Dr Sunita Sodhi. Soon things began moving quickly. Our first Resource Room was set up in Rajaji Vidyashram school.

During the initial days, awareness, assessments and part-time remediation were our major activities. In the meantime, we were able to convince quite a few schools - Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan, T.Nagar and K.K.Nagar, St Michaels, Rajaji Vidyasramam - to set up resource rooms in their schools. We also set up and ran a centre for SIET.

As our work progressed, we came across academically under-performing children who were rejected by the schools and who had nowhere to go, because they were dyslexic. We started a full-time remediation centre, Ananya, where children who were pulled-out from full-time schooling, were remediated and sent back into main-stream schools in a year or two.

In 1996, we organized a National Conference on Learning Disabilities for which over 200 participants attended.

We took up problems faced by dyslexic children in examinations with the various boards and this resulted in special provisions like, exemption from attempting certain subjects, extra time, provision of a scribe and calculator.

Our aim now is to impact 5,00,000 dyslexic children studying in Tamil Nadu, in the next two years. To achieve this, we are digitising our training programmes for greater reach with the help of NPTEL IIT Madras.

We have set up 37 new Resource Rooms.

Our newsletter is now handled by a very dynamic and efficient team which has been able to increase the limited circulation of 200 copies to nearly 5000 within two years, by digitization.

In order to meet the increased demand for assessments and screening, we have worked with SSA to develop screening tools.

Special programmes like Dyslexia Week have been introduced to highlight the hidden talents of children. Hydra, Multiple Intelligences Centre identifies the talent buried deep inside dyslexic children. They work in tandem with Ananya, our full-time remediation centre. Ananya is open to pre-primary and primary children. Here children spend one-third of their time in occupational therapy, multiple intelligences activities like yoga, drama, music, art and crafts, so children get a holistic development. We have

developed a software, AVANCE 360, that helps take a 360-degree view of the child.

A significant segment of students in Tamilnadu are still learning in Tamil medium. We have developed a learning kit Tamil Vazhi Payirchi that has both screening and remediation techniques for children learning in Tamil medium.

Efforts are underway to provide study skills to college students too. A special cell is being created to support dyslexic adults and help them to manage their social, professional and home environments.

We also have a group working with the renowned neuroscientist, Dr V S Ramachandran of San Diego University.

To mark our Silver Jubilee MDA is evolving to become a Centre of Excellence for Life Long Management of Dyslexia in order to help dyslexic persons in different stages of their life.

The journey of Madras Dyslexia Association, over 25 years, would not have been possible but for the contribution made by our special educators, non-teaching support staff, donors and parents.

## Message from the First President of MDA

Congratulations on reaching 25 years of dedicated service. Brings back very pleasant memories of working with you in the formative years. Wish you all the best for the future. God bless you all.

**C Ramanujan**  
 Founder - Trustee  
 Sri Krishna Trust, Chennai



**Nirmala Pandit**  
*As told to Mrudula Govindaraju*

### Early Days

Our aim when we started MDA was to reach as many children and parents as possible. In the beginning, we debated whether we must address all disabilities or only dyslexia, and decided we would focus only on dyslexia.

We plunged with great enthusiasm into many activities. In those days, only physical manifestation of a disorder/disability was considered a disability. We had to first change that perception. Awareness and training went hand-in-hand.

Dr Sunita Sodhi trained the first batch of special educators and we had our work cut out for us. Teacher Training and Awareness Programmes were on in full-swing. When we set up our first Resource Room in Rajaji Vidyashram we imparted training and helped the school run their Resource Room for a year and then handed it over to the school. We also started itinerant teaching for those teachers who didn't have resource rooms in their school.

We realised we needed to do more to help more number of children. MDA began training teachers who could run resource rooms in their homes. This way a big network of special educators would be distributed over a wide area and children who needed help could be directed to the resource room nearest to their home. We also started a parent support group.

At this point we found children with dyslexia in middle school were languishing in their schools and the idea of pull-out programme happened. We started with two senior children. One student passed the 10th as a private candidate and went back to school. The other child finished Class 12 through the Open School System. Soon we began working with various education boards, CBSE, NCERT and the State Board, for concessions.

Soon centres for dyslexic children started opening in cities in Tamil Nadu and other states in South India. Now, MDA is poised to become the Centre of Excellence for Life-Long Management of Dyslexia. And I am happy and proud to be part of this movement.



**Dr Sunita Sodhi**

After gaining a Ph.D degree in Psychology from the Punjab University in 1977, Dr. Sunita Sodhi taught for a number of years in elementary, secondary and college levels. She then worked in the field of juvenile delinquency and criminology at the National Institute of Social Defence, Government of India, for 5 years from 1979-1984. Following this she did some consultancy work for UNICEF during 1984. In 1985, she joined the American Schools, New Delhi as a teacher and an educational psychologist in their Learning Center programme for children with learning difficulties. It was during this 5 years period that she felt an imperative need to work for the cause of the dyslexic child in India. She established a pioneer learning center at St. Columba's School, New Delhi, in August 1988, initially training one special needs teacher for them. Later she helped in foundation of CHILD Reach – Delhi chapter in 1989, in order to provide services for those children requiring special interventions during schooling. In March 1990, Dr. Sodhi went to the Dyslexia Clinic at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London to specialize further in remedial methods and clinical assessment of learning disabled children.

Dr. Sunita Sodhi is currently the Chairperson of the Educare Charitable Trust and Director of The Educare Centre.

The trust was formally registered in February 1992 and has been actively involved in the consultancy with various public school systems, conferences and teacher and parent workshops. The trust has been instrumental in setting up "Learning Center" for children with 'specific learning disabilities in several

schools all over India. The trust has co-ordinated with several government and non-government organizations to spread awareness of Dyslexia, provide legislations and endorse classroom and examination reforms for Dyslexics.

The Educare Centre, established in July 1992, incorporates a clinic for the diagnosis and remediation of dyslexics and children with ADD. The centre runs two separate centres for teaching these children. The morning session is a regular school for classes KG – class 12 providing a curriculum based schooling alongwith a remedial programme in reading, spelling, writing. Maths and Hindi. The Educare school currently has 70 children between the age of 4 to 20. The Educare afternoon session has children coming for private individual remedial classes, alongwith attendance in their regular schools. The centre is fully equipped with current workbooks and state of the art testing procedures.



**Geet Oberoi**

Dr Sunita Sodhi made a pioneering effort to put Learning Disabilities in the field of special needs in Delhi and maybe even India. Her organization Educare was where I started my journey as a green special educator. It was at Educare that I first came across children with LD, and thereafter there was no stopping me. Learning Disabilities and the uneven neurodevelopmental profile it presents is an intriguing factor. I will be forever grateful to her for guiding me in my path to help children.



**Vilasini Diwakar**

## Training at MDA

In 1996 when I enrolled for the course: Teaching Methodology for Dyslexia, Nirmala Pandit trained us. Lakshmi Radhakrishnan, SubhaVaidyanathan and Shoba Madhavan made up the faculty and covered all areas where we could do multisensory remediation. Today the training course packs in so much more and we are getting more special educators who are effective remedial teachers.



**Sushi Natraj**

I have been associated with MDA almost since its inception. From its early years of functioning out of a small facility on Sambasivam Street to its present avatar of Ananya, Hydra and innumerable remedial centres, it has been a journey of immense dedication. I remember one of the earliest fundraising attempts which turned out to be a huge success. The first National Seminar hosted by MDA was also a path-breaking event.

Congratulations on this great achievement. Your service to the community to help children with Dyslexia is applaudable. For more than 2 decades the Association has contributed to the society under the guidance of a very efficient team of leaders. My best wishes to see your work expand and grow successfully in the coming years.

**Lalitha Ramanujan**

Director

Alpha to Omega Learning Centre, Chennai

**Rajini Rao**

It's a very happy moment for me as MDA completes 25 years of wonderful service. I was a part of this organisation when they started in 1992. As a trainee I learnt various methods of teaching, diagnosis and formulation of an IEP. The opportunity of learning how to set up learning centres was an added advantage. My association with MDA has helped me reach out to many children and help them realise and develop their potential.

**Subha Vaidyanathan**

It was the year 1995. A new idea was born to offer a full-time pull-out programme for children struggling with academics in school. It was an exciting one and this unique attempt was called Ananya (unique). Ananya started with 3 children, and like a river, its course kept changing and its scope broadening, touching the lives of many children who could have otherwise become school dropouts.

**Savithri Krishnan**

When I joined MDA 25 years ago I never realised that it would be a journey for life. The institution has given me the opportunity to interact with hundreds of children and provide inputs and guidance through their struggle. When I meet these children I realise how meaningful and worthwhile an activity it has been since I can see their confidence and success in their careers. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of MDA I extend my heartiest congratulations.

**Lalitha Chandrasekhar**

## Benefits of Resource Room

The Resource Room set up by Ms Jayashree and Ms Shobana under MDA's guidance has been a great game changer. Colourful visuals and manipulatives created by the teachers from various materials helped students who needed a different methodology to learn. One-to-one attention given to students helped in improving social skills, confidence, understanding of concepts and motivation to learn. The benefits reaped from the Resource Room has been immense. Kudos to all who make learning more interesting!

**Lakshmi Srinivasan**

## A Peep into the Past

After the seminar on Specific Learning Disabilities organised by Alpha to Omega Centre in August 1990, Hazel Macay of the Hornsby Centre, London suggested that an association be formed to bring parents, teachers and educationists to a common platform to help, support and serve the needs of dyslexic children. And MDA was born. Working as a Remedial Teacher for over two decades, MDA was the source of support for assessments, referrals, training and advice I always went to.





### Jyothi Valecha

When I was a school psychologist I felt an intense need to be trained to teach students who were bright, intelligent but had specific disabilities with reading, writing and maths. I became one of MDA's first core group of specialists. Identifying, remediating and monitoring the progress of students with Dyslexia in the school premises as well as at our own institute gave us all an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of persons with Dyslexia and their families.



### Lakshmi Lakshminarayanan

It has been an interesting journey the last 20 years or so with MDA. When I joined MDA as a volunteer in 1994, little did I imagine my stint would take me through this great period of learning. MDA let me discover my own identity, taught me to be compassionate, patient and disciplined. Best wishes for great years ahead for MDA.



### Geeta Raghavan

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), offered by MDA, is an alternate available for children with Specific Learning Difficulties. Students who are smart but struggle with learning a second language, the Sciences and Math can choose from a variety of subjects that are both conventional and practical. This along with the flexibility in taking examinations helps them to clear their first major hurdle, the school! I am extremely proud to share that those who did NIOS, showed they do have the potential to be successful in college and later in life!



### சந்திராதிருமலை

25 ஆண்டுகளுக்கு முன்னால் தமிழ்நாட்டில் கற்றலில் குறைபாடுகள் என்ற ஒரு குறையைப்பற்றி விழிப்புணர்வு அதிகம் இல்லாத காலத்தில் விழுந்தவிதைதான் எம்டிஏ என்னும் அமைப்பு. அது இன்று விருட்சமாக வளர்ந்து ஆயிரக்கணக்கான பெற்றோர்கள் மற்றும் ஆசிரியர்களின் கவலைகளைந்து நம்பிக்கை தரும்மையமாக செயல்படுகிறது. இத்தகைய உன்னத அமைப்புடன் ஆரம்பமுதலே சேர்ந்துவளரும் வாய்ப்பு பெற்றதில் நான் பெருமை கொள்கிறேன். பாலவித்யாநதிர் பள்ளியில் ஒரு உதவிமையத்தை ஏற்படுத்திக் கொடுத்து பலவழிகளிலும் எனக்கு நண்பனாய் வழிகாட்டியாய் இருந்து இன்றும் அந்தமையம் மிகச்சிறப்பாக செயல்படு வதற்கு மூலகாரணம் எம்டிஏ. வெள்ளிவிழாக்காணும் இந்த நிறுவனம் நூற்றாண்டுவிழாக்கொண்டாட வாழ்த்துகிறேன்.

## A Parent's View

At MDA I learnt to read my child's unique thought process. MDA gave me spectacles to view and visualise the world through my child's eyes. To me MDA stands for Master Divine Architects who not only chartered my child's educational excellence but supported and trained parents like me to enjoy our parenthood without guilt, without remorse and without any reservations whatsoever. I congratulate MDA for their selfless service in nurturing GOD's special creations and wish and pray these services are strengthened for years to come

### Payal Melwani

# Alumni



**Arun Fernandez**

Founder-Director of Blink Foundation and Blink Research and Services Pvt Ltd



**Renuka Balakrishnan**

Just completed Masters in Interior Design



**Mohammed Hasim Sultan**

BBA, first year



**Veeru Murugappan,**

Founder, Coromandel Productions



**Anirudh**

M.Sc Visual Communications, final year



**Pradeep Thangappan,**

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