



Bala Janaagraha - POWER of children



It was less than a year ago, March 2003 when I walked into the Janaagraha office to meet with Ramesh Ramanathan with my proposal for a Youth Leadership Programme. Srikanth and I had moved back after 15 years in the US to settle down in Bangalore in July 2002.

After taking 6 months off to make sure that our young children had comfortably adjusted to school and our home was running smoothly, I decided it was time to try and put my ideas into action.

Swati & Ramesh had started Bala Janaagraha with complete conviction that involving children was essential for participatory democracy to become a reality. **Successful**

Janaagraha had just completed a successful Bala Janaagraha pilot in Ward 55 with 170 children from 5 schools, and were preparing to take it forward on a larger scale.

Apart from being a software professional in Silicon Valley, I had worked with children from public schools and private organizations in the US to get them involved in community service. My idea was to inculcate citizenship values and voluntarism in children and help shape the

next generation of responsible community leaders. With respect to Janaagraha, the timing was perfect and the goals were well aligned.

And that's how I came on board to coordinate the Bala Janaagraha Programme 2003-2004.

While most of us can talk eloquently about situation at the Center or the State, our knowledge and interest with respect to our local government is woefully inadequate. Ironically, this is the only aspect of the government that is relevant to us, that can improve our quality of living.

The Bala Janaagraha dream is to mobilize a whole generation of youth, arm them with the knowledge, passion and skills to make a difference in their neighbourhood. To teach them about who runs their city and what they can and should do as citizens. Also, it was important that they learn all this through action, so that they fully internalize this philosophy.

Practical Civics

So we designed Bala Janaagraha to be a "Practical Civics" programme for school children. The programme was to be after-school Saturday afternoon sessions, run by community members of that ward. It was

completely activity-based and included fieldtrips, surveying, leadership games and projects.

After a month of design, detailing, planning and documentation, we started making the rounds to our Janaagraha communities to introduce the idea to them.

All of them received the idea with strong enthusiasm, brushing aside doubts that crept in like; "schools in our ward have no interest in activities like this", "aren't children too young to understand social issues?",

(Contd... Page 6)

INSIDE PAGES

Page-2 : Students Energy & Vision

Page-3 : The Sapling Grows

Page-4 : Bala Janaagraha Round-up

Page-6 : Power of Children (contd.)

Page-7 : Lessons of Living together in a Community

Page-8 : Cubs in Action + H.H.

We describe "OUR" Janaagraha this way:

Janaagraha ko attend kiya to aisa laga

Jaise Jeevan ka maulya
Jaise Parisar ka suraksha
Jaise Sansar ka protection
Jaise Jnan prapt hua
Jaise anand mila jaise

Dharti pe hua ek jalta diya
Ek baar aaoge to aate reh jaaoge
No one can come just once!!!

- **Sahana, Lakshmi, Deepa, Shashank, Shreyas, Aditya, Soumya L**



The best game was "Brain Fry." I liked it because we were able to express our own problems and find solutions for them. This is the most wonderful class. 'From now onwards, I will protect our nature and never spoil it.' This is the oath that I have taken. Thank you.

- **Shruthi R**

I really enjoyed the two sessions of Bala Janaagraha very much. I enjoyed the games, which taught us about unity and communication. I got to know how to solve our problems and lead a good and honest life. I have become a better man through Janaagraha. I also feel that we must have this Janaagraha programme every Saturday.

- **Abhilash**

I learnt many activities and games. This is also the second happiest day of my life.

- **Keshava Murthy**

LETTERS

I liked the way I lead my team. I learnt that I must be communicating well with others. We learnt to act and not to cheat. We learnt to be creative and to sing. It was fantastic.

- **Shyam**

It is cool! I enjoyed it a lot. It even teaches many values of life. The teaching is not at all a burden

because it is taught by games. I love this method. The communication skills, win-win guidelines were good. It's fun here.



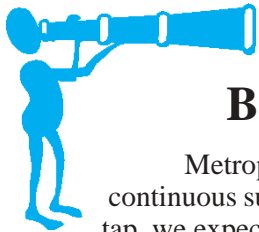
- **Lakshmi V Ganesh**

I learnt to do the right job, think the right thing, at the right time. Thanks Bala Janaagraha.

We enjoyed a lot in Bala Janaagraha. We learnt teamwork, respecting and mingling with others and working in unity. We gained confidence and determination because Bala Janaagraha taught us all this.

- **Neha, Virinchi,**

Ranjitha, Shreyas, Prithvi



Students Vision

Bangalore on Tap

Metropolitan cities like Bangalore need a continuous supply of water. When one turns on a tap, we expect clean, drinkable water. We expect this water to be purified and piped into every house, office building, factory, hospital, park, and hotel in our city. We also expect the used water to be piped away.

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB) should increase their water pressure in required areas. The timings of water supply should be changed. Pipe-leakage complaints should be tackled immediately. BWSSB also needs to make the public aware of the way the water is brought from the river to their houses and the cost involved.

Citizens must also conserve water. Some of us have been experiencing a water crisis. Still, there is a lethargic attitude in saving water. During our research, we found Bangaloreans could not believe that our city one day might be like Raichur or Bellary or even a desert.

People need to be educated about the recycling of water and rainwater harvesting. Leaking taps must be repaired and drops of water from taps should be collected in buckets. Though

this seems ridiculous, practically 3- to 4- litres can be collected every day. Digging of bore wells should be restricted and planned by authorities to maintain groundwater levels.

- **Harshita Ramnath, Megha, Pratheek, Shivkumar, and Varun**
Auden School

Road to the Future

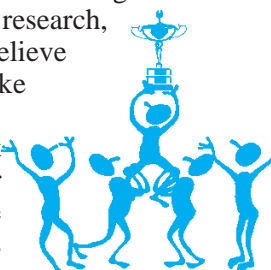
Transportation plays an important role in the growth and development of a country. The need for transport arises from the fact that goods are often produced at one place and consumed at another. Road transport is especially useful for carrying light goods over short distances.

Roads also pose problems. One is the pollution of the air by smoke and dust from the cars and trucks. Another is the increasing number of accidents as they become congested.

How come developed countries have good roads all the way home, and in our country we have to go to the outskirts to reach a highway?

We are all human beings. The main difference is in the effort that they put in.

- **Akilesh, Archana, Chethan & Supreetha**
Carmel High School



The Sapling Grows

A year ago, we began a small, tentative initiative with school children from 5 schools in one ward. This week, we complete the first full-year of Bala Janaagraha, with over 1,100 students from 24 schools.

The first phase was only a pilot. What we are completing is a full-fledged, year-round programme. There are many things that we have learnt over the past year, and I would like to share some of these learnings with you:

1. There is no substitute for leadership. However sketchy an idea may be, however many weaknesses it may have, it can be a success if the right kind of leadership takes hold of it. In Sunita Nadamuni, we have that kind of leader. She got in touch with Janaagraha like so many others, interested in knowing more about our work, and possibly taking some small part in our activities. Like so many others, she could have given a few hours or days of her time in one of our activities, and moved on, and we would have been happy for her efforts. However, she stayed. And over the past 12 months, Sunita has completely redefined the Bala Janaagraha programme: she has detailed all the specific activities, met with new school administrators, talked with the communities, harnessed hundreds of volunteers, coordinated the partners' inputs, and ensured that all this was done with professionalism.
2. Only a small portion of the Janaagraha energy comes out of the office. Despite all of Sunita's leadership, the Bala Janaagraha programme could not have been a success without the complete ownership of the programme by community leaders. These are individuals, operating without any secretaries or office support; most are home-makers who have to cook, take care of their homes, manage the help, and do all the regular things that everyone else has to do. They have done all this, and yet found time and energy to lead this initiative. Of this entire group, one person who exemplifies this spirit is Seethalakshmi of Malleswaram. If we had twenty community leaders like her, there can be no doubt about the future of Bala Janaagraha.
3. When it comes to students, Newton's laws of motion are completely violated! Every action with students does not just have an equal reaction, it has ten times the reaction! Over the course of the year, we have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the students in taking up the activities. Nothing showed their excitement more than the project work, where we saw 41 projects from one school alone,

Seshadripuram High School of Yelahanka. Their enthusiasm was infectious.

4. The quality of the programme is directly correlated to the response from the school administration: the more the ownership, the better the coordination with students and parents, the better the overall experience. Here again, while many schools were enthusiastic supporters, one school stands out for its total commitment to the Bala Janaagraha idea: Vijaya Bharati Vidyalaya of Girinagar.
5. Selfless and cheerful partners took the programme to another level. Be it Buoyancee with their leadership training, or the Mount Carmel students who facilitated so many of the sessions, or the agencies like BDA, BWSSB, Bangalore Police, BMP, BESCOM, each ensured that the school children enjoyed every minute of the activities.
6. And finally, there were learnings. Like many first-time initiatives, there are things that we can do better the next time. This was a 7-month programme with many moving parts: 12 weekly sessions for each school, 2 field visits involving tens of bus trips to multiple locations, community activities, area mapping, leadership classes, computer games and the like. There are hundreds of experiences - small and large - that we are carrying into next year, for a better Bala Janaagraha.

As we close out this year and peer into the future, we see a massive programme, with the potential of having 1 lakh school children in a regular Bala Janaagraha programme within the next 5 years. I say this with confidence because of all the reasons that I have mentioned above. With good intentions, and great leadership all around, we can accomplish a lot.

And we have plenty of both.



Ramesh Ramanathan
Campaign Co-ordinator

Published by Janaagraha at # 198, Nandidurg Road, Jayamahal, Bangalore - 560 046 and Printed at Shubhodaya Printers, (Ph : 26679508) # 48, Rangarao Road, Shankarpuram, Bangalore - 560 004.

Editorial : Ishwar Daitota (Communications Advisor), Suresh (Layout)

JANAAGRAHA TIMES

Phone: 23542381/2, 23542977

Fax : 23542966

E-mail : communications@Janaagraha.org, info@janaagraha.org

Read Janaagraha Times on the web at www.janaagraha.org

Bala Janaagraha - Power of Children

(Contd from Page 1)

“it’s difficult to get 30 volunteers on Saturdays” etc. Soon enough, 7 core communities had signed up and then we began the next round of visiting the schools.

Together with the community members from each ward, we went to address the children and staff of some schools in that ward. Addressing packed halls of 500-800 students, Ramesh would begin by “How many of you think India is a great country?” followed by “How many of you think we have a great government?”

All the hands would magically drop, forcing the next question “can we have a great country without a great government? Whose responsibility is it?” By the end, hundreds of energized kids would shout out that **they** were going to work in their communities to make it the best ward in the country!

Then followed weeks of groundwork to set the process in place. Meetings with city agencies to arrange for fieldtrips, maps for surveying, partners for leadership activities, training sessions, facilitation manuals, parent consent forms, transportation arrangements, venues in each ward, volunteer management and the list went on...

Finally, in June everything was in place for the launch. 24 schools, 1100 children were signed up. June 21 and June 28 were Orientation Day conducted in each ward. Kaarwahn enacted a comedy to highlight the importance of civic sense. Buoyancee facilitated icebreaker games so that the children from a school got to meet and mingle with children from other schools in the same ward, with community members and Janaagraha volunteers.

This set the stage for all the players who were going to work together for the next 6 months.

After that, the activities ran according to a carefully planned calendar. Wards 50, 54 and 55 on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of every month. Wards 7, 77, 85 and Yelahanka on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month. Community coordinators would start preparing by Monday for their Saturday afternoon programme. Volunteers would call Gayatri, the volunteer coordinator, to find out which ward they were going to and what they would be doing that Saturday. Once the rhythm set in, I began to relax and enjoy the sessions with the children.

There were pleasant surprises along the way; A student of Auden School getting awarded by the Karnataka Governor for the community work done during the Bala Janaagraha programme. 40 civic models created by enthusiastic children of

Seshadripuram High School instead of the two that we asked for. The entire MLA school showing up to support their Bala Janaagrahis at the Malleswaram exhibition.

We also took the opportunity to try out some new activities. SimCity, a computer simulation game mentored by Elizabeth Clay of Janaagraha was one such activity. 12 students from Malleswaram took part in this month-long activity and created a sophisticated model city.

In November, Ishwar Daitota, our inhouse media expert, a seasoned, highly reputed journalist, conducted a Communication Workshop for 50 children with some principals & parents along with Udaya TV anchor Sunita Reddy. The event was a huge success with the children asking more questions and chat with their inspiring role-models.

In December 8



Joyful Learning; most ‘lessons’ be it on civics or leadership was taught through games, activity and fieldtrips. Children were constantly asked to think differently and out-of-the-box.

The above creative teaching methods did show some results when it came to the concluding sessions. In December, there was a Civic Exhibition in each ward, designed, planned and implemented by the children with minimal guidance from the adults.

At the exhibition, students presented their Vision for their ward. They debated on whether “Citizens are responsible for their conditions of their cities” and it was especially gratifying to see children from government schools walk away with prizes. They displayed innovative scientific models on rainwater harvesting, highway construction, composting etc. And they took parents, teachers and local residents through a tour of their stalls educating them on civic issues.

The finale for this programme is the Bala Janaagraha Convocation on Feb 28th for all the

children from Malleswaram had a photography session with reputed photographer, Mahesh Bhat. And they went around their neighbourhoods shooting photographs, giving us an insight into the child’s perspective on the development in their ward.

While the Indian education system created wonderfully talented young people and has powered many of the innovations in science and technology around the world including New York or London, this high quality education has still remained the luxury of the few-upper middle class children or naturally talented and gifted children.

Unfortunately majority of our children never realize their full potential when they grow up due to a rigid system that assesses rote learning and discourages them from asking questions. The Bala Jaanagraha program was completely designed around

students where we are also taking the opportunity to thank our numerous partners and volunteers.

Personally, the last one-year has been a tremendously enriching experience for me. Ramesh and Swati have been pillars of support; always available to help with any issue and always encouraging.

The close interactions with the community groups in several wards which are like family now to us; scores of phone calls and ironing out programme details with volunteers Devyani, Gayatri, Sowmie, Veena and others at Janaagraha and of course the enthusiastic response from children during every Saturday afternoon session has made this a year to remember.

Now, armed with all the learnings and experience of year 1, we look forward to taking a new improved Bala Janaagraha into year 2.

- Sunitha Nadamuni
Campaign Co-ordinator,
Bala Janaagraha

Lessons of Living together in a Community

Team leadership is gaining more and more importance in the present world. Our students **learned about the qualities of a good leader and the basics of how to live together in a society.** They developed skills of patience, coordination, and teamwork. This program will definitely bear fruit in the future.

- **Ravi T S**

Teacher, Sajjan Rao Trust

I found interacting with children invigorating, as the process reflected the spirit of community ownership and gave an insight into how our future citizens view civic issues. The children tended to look at issues in their totality and their observations were unbiased, and often educative, because of their innocence and openness. **School authorities were very cooperative and helpful, and provided all the support I needed despite their busy schedules.**

- **Sitha Lakshmi Kumar,**

Ward Coordinator,

Sri Vidya Mandir, M.L.A., M.E.S.

The magic spell cast on the students by Bala Janaagraha was seen with their more humane and enthusiastic spirit when approaching challenges.

Their animated queries, if they continue after their schooling, will be steps toward reducing civic problems in the future. Bala Janaagraha members! May your tribe increase!

- **Anasuya Ramachandran,**

Principal, The East-West School

I feel proud that our school children won some prizes for their participation in this programme. I would like to thank the volunteers of Kumara Park Residents Welfare Association who ran this program and are working for the welfare of our society.

Teachers Observations

I would also like to say that mutual co-operation between the BMP and the citizens is very much essential.

- **N Vijayalakshmi**

Teacher, St. Thomas School

Every activity was conducted in an atmosphere of fun and co-operation.



Ravi T.S



Sneha Narayan



Anasuya



Shameena Banu

Programmes like tree planting, interaction with residents, field trips to various government facilities, discussion of waste management, and rainwater harvesting have given students an insight into various civic problems. I hope their service to the community will lead to a better Bangalore in future.

- **Sneha Narayan,**

Principal, V.E.T. School

I mentally juxtaposed the teams of Bala Janaagrahis to our resident group to see how we could improve ourselves.

- **Sita Ravi**

Community Member, Ward 7

My experiences with this program have changed a lot of my views regarding social causes and inspired me to seek a higher degree of social responsibility. Our coordinator, with her charming smile, clear look of determination, and "never say die" attitude is from where the spirit of Bala Janaagraha has spread among our students.

- **Smt. Shalini Raj**

Assistant Head Mistress,

Kumara English School

Our students had an opportunity to develop leadership qualities and civic sense. We admire and appreciate the noble ideals of Bala Janaagraha and wish it the best of luck in its endeavors.

- **Shameena Banu,**

Principal, Ayesha Siddiqua

Crescent High School

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Ward 7	: Malleswaram Swabhimana Initiative, Monsanto Employees
Ward 50	: Supraja Federation
Ward 54	: Girinagar Welfare Association
Ward 55	: Abhyudaya Federation
Ward 77	: Kumara Park West Association
Ward 85	: Sarvagnanagar Welfare Association
Yelahanka CMC	: Yelahanka Citizen's Forum



SCHOOLS

- Apollo Convent
- Carmel School
- Banashankari Vidya Peetha
- Shubha Mangala
- Red Fort School
- St. Aloysius High School
- Shobana Memorial School
- Government High School
- St. Thomas School
- Kumar English School
- Mallya Aditi Intl School
- Seshadripuram School
- Sri Vidya Mandir
- MLA
- MES Kishora Kendra
- Sri Sajjan Rao Trust
- Sri Saraswati Vidya Mandir
- East West School
- Vasavi Education Trust
- Crescent School
- Auden School
- Auden Public School
- Vijaya Bharati Vidyalaya
- Shantinikethan School

MEWS, Malleswaram- Groups of children from various schools arrived bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. After all, it was their models that were going to be exhibited. The fruit of their never-ending efforts were to be realized this day.

They arranged their models, posters of "Clean Bangalore" and "Pollution-Free Environment." Excitement in the air, a crowd of spectators arrived at the venue waiting to see the Bala Janaagraha exhibition.

About 700 students arrived, all eager to see what their fellow classmates had learnt over the year. "The energy and enthusiasm of the children is unbelievable," one adult spectator commented. "Their models spread a message of maintaining Bangalore."

Janaagraha had conducted a program called "Bala Janaagraha" in three wards. Activities for students ranged from field trips, leadership activities, and street theater to Sim City computer simulations, photography, and surveys.

The field trips to places like Bangalore's police control room, water purification plant, and Kalyan Nagar compost site were meant to give students information useful in building their models that were to be exhibited today.

Once the proceedings got underway, students presented their models with detailed explanations about their uses and functions.

In a separate session, students expressed their visions for Bangalore in the year 2010. Judges evaluated the ideas and models presented.

"Janaagraha has played an important role in getting children to think about civic issues and about the future of Bangalore," said

one judge. "It is great to see children creating awareness and Janaagraha has done a great job in bringing children together."

Reporters : Shana Rao and Archana Nathan
MES Kishora Kendra

Unbelievable Energy and Enthu of Students

"A Citizen is Responsible for Progress of the City"

Charity begins at home. If each person performs his individual duties well he contributes to the cleanliness of society. Then why should not we, the public, help in the progress of the city?

Let me begin with our own green city, Bangalore. In our own sweet homes, we plant seeds and grow trees for beauty. This spreads greenery to the city and is good for all the folks and thus leads to a successful, vital city.

My opponents might argue that politicians are responsible for services. But how many leaders, except for a few, have taken active part in programs like rural education schemes, social welfare programs, midday meals, and such services? Not many!

It is only citizens who take up every activity, from getting educated, teaching, servicing, and contributing in other ways.

Hence, citizens make greater contributions to the progress of the city.

Lastly, but not least, students like us are coming together for such informative competitions that help nurture our young minds, which are the future of the world. We citizens play an important role in the progress of the city. That's it!

Thank you for this opportunity.

Debator : K. Geetha
Carmel School

HELPING HANDS

Buoyancee, a training company based in Jayanagar has taken up the lead in facilitating the Leadership Training for children of all 24 schools. 10 of the trainers from Buoyancee underwent a training session on the activities and have since been very successfully conducting training for the children.

The Home Science department of **Mount Carmel College** has partnered with Janaagraha in the Bala Janaagraha programme. 22 students in groups of 8 have been facilitating the leadership training for 200-250 children per ward every Saturday along with Buoyancee. The MCC students bring with them their enthusiasm and energy increasing the quality of the programme.

Sharma Transport has partnered with Janaagraha for this programme to provide their luxury coaches at a well subsidized rate for the students' fieldtrips. In all there are 48 fieldtrips for the 24 schools, and Sharma Transport is providing a very professional service for this programme.

The **Bangalore Development Authority, BDA**, has arranged for the students to visit the flyover construction sites in various parts of the city. In addition, the BDA team will first provide an exciting presentation for the students on the function and work of BDA, followed by the site visit.

BWSSB has made arrangements for children to visit two of its sites, the Tataguni pumping station and the elahanka Treatment plant. Experienced employees on the field will show the children around and educate them.

BESCOM has made arrangements for children to visit the Peenya station and the Somanahally station, and officials on site

will take the children around.

The **Police Commissioners office** on Infantry road has been working proactively with Janaagraha for this programme. Children have made a couple of visits to the Police Control Room.

Rain Water Harvesting facility at Vidyanarayapura headed by **Dr. Viswanath**, and at Lalbagh headed by **Dr. Shivshankar** are the other fascinating destinations for the children.

Community composting at Kalyannagar, headed by **Mr. Karvir** is another site for students to learn about how to effectively and in a sustainable manner, deal with garbage.

BMP's health department has arranged for field trips for the KCDC site for garbage on Hosur Road. Children will learn from the Medical Officers of Health about the life-cycle of garbage.

The Corporator for ward 55, and the BMP's horticulture department are doing the tree-planting activity in these 2 wards. Children along with community members will identify the locations for trees to be planted, and the BMP team will plant the trees and provide tree-guards.

Street Atlas from Fraser Town has been an highly supportive partner in this project. They are providing the detailed maps of every ward which are used by the children for surveying. After the data collection, Street Atlas will take on the extremely valuable task of compiling all the data and digitizing it.

And finally, last but not the least have been the dozens of **individual volunteers** who come and participate in a ward (which they don't even belong to) just for the sheer belief in the project and enjoyment of participation.