

Dr. Nannapaneni Manga Devi
Recipient of the Award for
Development and Welfare of Women and Children - 2016

Born: July 1, 1937

Dr. Nannapaneni Manga Devi is the Founder Secretary, Sri Venkateswara Bala Kuteer and Chetana Charitable Trust. She was born in Tenali, in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Manga Devi, after her post-graduation in History and Education obtained her Doctorate in Early Childhood Education. Later, she joined in Government's Women and Child Welfare Department, to quench her thirst for service. That gave her an opportunity to undergo training at Gandhigram in Madurai – where she physically witnessed the practicing of Gandhian principles. After that, Dr. Manga Devi was motivated to get trained in Montessori System of Education. She was convinced that children had to be nurtured with care, love, information, skills and education to bring out the best out of them. She left her Government job to walk this new path.

Education: Dr. Manga Devi's close friend who also shared the same ideologies, joined hands with her to work in the field of Child Development. In 1965, they set up A Montessori House of Children, Sri Venkateswara Bala Kuteer (SVBK) in Brodipet, the first of its kind in Guntur with a single girl child. By the eighties, Dr. Manga Devi was a trend-setter in pre-school innovative teaching techniques, wherein she integrated various aspects of nature and art into the informal teaching modules.

By 1975, the phenomenal success of the first school at Brodipet which became Co-Educational English medium Secondary School motivated her to start another branch at Shyamalanagar which is affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

Chetana: Dr. Manga Devi's meeting with Saint Teresa led her to think and serve the needy women and children. This brought a sea-change in Dr. Manga Devi's vision which led to the formation of Chetana Charitable Trust, a multi-purpose rural project in Chowdavaram village near Guntur, in 1990. She initiated this to emphasise on

- Security, education, development and welfare of children
- Rehabilitation and employment of the destitute women
- Shelter and solace for the old in the lively company of the little ones from the Children's Village

It houses multiple activities viz., Nandana - a Rural School for the underprivileged children; Ushodaya - a Residential English Medium School; SVBK College of Education - for Bachelor of Education; School on Wheels; Children's Village - Home for the Homeless children; Anganwadi Workers Training Centre for the rural women; Sandhyaraga - a Home for the Senior citizens; Srujana - Centre for Fine Arts; Krishi - a vocational training centre for the youth; Vigyana Vani - the Science Park; Raksha - Home for destitute women; Jeevanarekha - a family counseling centre; Swastha - a rural health centre and Centre for Alternative Medicines.

The child education and eco-friendly campus of Chetana comprises of Science Park, sculptures and educative figures made of non-biodegradable items, plants of various species and medicinal values, an Auditorium, Centre for Fine Arts, Library with over 5000 books, space for Sports and Games, Toy Library, etc. Dr. Manga Devi initiated conducting classes in the open and gardening as a therapeutic routine activity for the beneficiaries. Cultural and theatrical programs are also part of the children's development program. There is human and nature centered progress in her work.

Schools: Nandana Grameena Patashala, a Telugu medium rural school which was set up in 1992, provides free education facilities to the child labours, physically challenged children, children from the orphanage, children of quarry workers, shepherds, labourers, and villagers. Currently, there are

520 children studying here.

Dr. Manga Devi has also set up three formal schools, situated in the suburbs, Brodipet (981 students), Shyamalanagar (2155 students) and Ushodaya English Medium School (782 students), in Guntur. The children coming from the affluent families who attend these schools, are motivated by Dr. Manga Devi to visit and mingle with the children of the Rural School Nandana, Orphanage and economically backward children in the rural areas so that they can develop humane qualities of sharing and caring and helping them in need by donating educational materials, Mid-day meal and uniforms required.

Since 1982, rural women and volunteers were trained in the Anganwadi Workers Training Centres of Sri Venkateswara Bala Kuteer. Over the years, 27,436 women have been trained through various educational pedagogy and training modules. Legal literacy, women empowerment, child-care, food and nutrition, health and hygiene, awareness of HIV, women trafficking etc., are the key subjects. Special training programs are also organized for the school Principals, Teachers and mothers.

Her strong will, besides the skill and ability to tap the resources and through her wide network Dr. Manga Devi could facilitate rehabilitation of the unfortunate women and children in her rehabilitation centre Raksha.

Jeevana Rekha, the family counseling centre headed by Dr. Manga Devi is known for its remarkable services in solving the problems tactfully and successfully in order to sustain the family ties. Thousands of families are benefited and the needy women and children are provided with shelter and opportunities to develop different life skills for decent living.

Children's Village: In 1993, Children's village was set up in Guntur by a charitable organization HEAL (Health and Education For All), United Kingdom with Dr. K. Satya Prasad as the Founder Chairman and Dr. Manga Devi as the Secretary. It shelters the Homeless and Orphan children under the supervision and care of foster mothers. The children under the personal care and love bestowed by Dr. Manga Devi, are supported with shelter, food, education, health care and training in life skills. Currently, there are 200 children in the Children's Village.

Sandhyaraga (Home for the aged) is in the vicinity of the Children's Village. It provides space for the old to mingle with the children, and has helped fulfill the psychological needs of both the young and the old.

School on Wheels: In 2003, Dr. Manga Devi started the School on Wheels, an innovative project, to help children learn informally and playfully at their doorstep. Once motivated successfully for schooling, the children later-on, are enrolled in the main stream. So far, around 1200 dropouts are mainstreamed from the surrounding 50 villages.

Woman as a Catalyst: Dr. Manga Devi has been organizing adult and rural women literacy activities, legal literacy camps, awareness camps in health and hygiene, HIV awareness camps, water and natural resources conservation sessions, and afforestation in the nearby quarries of 50 villages around Chetana, in co-ordination with different Government Departments.

Personal Toilets at Home: As Dr. Manga Devi strongly believes in reaching the community through the child, every outstanding girl-child of the rural school was gifted a toilet at home - to serve two purposes, viz. to encourage girl-child education and create awareness on health and hygiene.

Toy Library: Children of SVBK city schools donate their toys and play-material for the use of the poor and orphan children of Nandana.

To take care of the health of the children mega medical camps are organized by the doctors who are alumni of Bala Kuteer.

Krusha a vocational training centre for the educated and unemployed youth is established to train in tailoring, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, chalk-making, soft toys and basket making, book-binding

and growing plant nurseries, to make them self-reliant. It also conducts career orientation sessions.

Dr. Manga Devi has a strong support of her over 6000 odd alumni who have pledged to support her service activities in kind or cash.

Dr. Manga Devi asserts that the purity of all religions find place in her philosophy of education. She indulges in creative pursuits by writing many books for children. Dr. Manga Devi has penned and composed music and choreographed numerous cultural activities, dance, dramas and ballets for children. She has instituted the Dr. Manga Devi Bala Sahitya Puruskaram for honouring outstanding contribution to children's literature and for encouraging budding artists. Her passion and bonding has also developed good team and spirit to carry work effectively. Dr. Manga Devi, an epitome of love, is a visionary, a close friend and a mother to all the children.

Awards & Honours

- Life Achievement Award from Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam for promoting education in rural areas by Association of writers and illustrators for children
- National Award for Child Welfare from the President of India
- Best Academician Award bestowed by Indian Council for Child Education, New Delhi
- Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi Award for Children Literature
- Visishta Mahila – Award from Doordarshan in the field of Education
- Vidya Siromani by UNESCO
- Siromani Award by World Telugu Conference, New York
- National Award from NCERT for Innovative Methods in Teaching
- Kala Ratna Award for promotion of Fine Arts for Children
- Stree Sakthi Award for working for the upliftment of women

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