



SRI ARUNODAYAM
Home for Mentally Challenged Destitute

EVENT REPORT

SRI ARUNODAYAM'S
SPECIAL MOM AWARD 2018

*"You can be shaped, or you can be broken.
There is not much in between."
– David Foster Wallace*



Mr. K Pandiarajan, MLA, Minister of Tamil Development,
Culture & Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu honouring a Special Mom

*Date : May 13, 2018
Time : 5.30 PM
Venue : Bharatiya Vidya
Bhavan, Kilpauk,
Chennai*

Our 2nd Annual Special Mom Awards was held on May 13, 2018 (Mother's Day), where we celebrated the lives of 15 incredible Mothers of Special Children.

They each received a Cash Award of INR 15,000/- and a Special Lifetime Pass entitling them to free services from Sri Arunodayam.

Sri Arunodayam is grateful to:

Sanyukta Gupta, Karpagam, Sowmya Simhan, Madhuri Amin, Lakshmi Pradeepa, Srinivasan, Saraswathy, Deepakraj, Anusha Kurra, Ravinder Sakhi, Sethukumari, Saratha, Jayashree Kannan, and Lakshmanan and their families; The Lions Club of Golden Roses & The Lions Club of Chennai Jasmine.

As we pored over the unique stories of each potential finalist (and there were many!) we couldn't help but get into their world and experience what they were going through. Of course, it was incredibly difficult to choose just 15, but with the help of an eminent panel of judges whose selections were followed up by personal home visits, we were quickly able to determine the most deserving mothers for 2018.

And so, **Anuradha K** (Kanchipuram), **Jayara** (Chennai), **Kalaiselvi** (Cuddalore), **Kamala V** (Chennai), **Kanniselvi G** (Kanchipuram), **Krishnaveni G** (Thiruvallur), **Lalitha Devi Chima Kurthi** (Ongole, Andhra Pradesh), **Meera Balachander** (Chennai), **Murugeswari T** (Madurai), **Premavathi Bai** (Kumbakkonam), **Senthamil Selvi B** (Thiruvallur), **Sharadha Devi** (Kanchipuram), **Usharani** (Chennai), **Vedavalli V** (Thiruvallur) and **Vishali Kemiseti** (Warangal, Telangana) have joined our 'hall of fame' as the second batch of 'Special Moms' who are now an integral part of the Sri Arunodayam family.

These are mothers who choose to remain faithful to their children, refusing to abandon them despite being encouraged to do so by the communities in which they live. That they have stoically resisted and trodden a new path toward self-discovery and loyal commitment to their defenceless children speaks of the calibre of women we seek to honor and promote. The award recognizes their progressive abilities as having made a significant impact in the lives of their children and demonstrating an ability to be positive role models of parenthood in the community.

Our Chief Guest, **Mr. Pandia Rajan - MLA and Minister of Tamil Development, Culture and Archaeology**, his wife Mrs. Latha Pandia Rajan - Director of Ma Foi Strategic Consultants, Mr. Murali Mohan - Associate Vice President Operations, LogixHealth Solutions, Mr. Joseph Ravi - District Differently Abled Welfare Officer (DDAWO), Chennai, and Mrs. Sheeba - Speech Therapist & Audiologist, State Resource Training Center (SRTC) together with Sri Arunodayam's long-standing donors, gave away the prizes.

This time around, the entertainment was provided by 'special' artistes themselves! We wanted to showcase these amazing people who have become professionals in their own fields.



Sri Arunodayam's Special Lifetime Pass is carefully thought out to provide a lifetime of free services to each year's finalists and their children.

The promises Sri Arunodayam made include:

- **Automatic membership to Sri Arunodayam's SPECIAL MOM FORUM** – a project aimed at empowering all special mom finalists through regular training programs to help them advance in caregiving and personal areas of development. Such empowerment will help shape them into powerful agents of change in society.
- **Free short duration stay for their children in an emergency:** The mothers are entitled to leave their children in our care for limited periods of time when they may be required to travel and have no one to care for their children during those periods.
- **Sri Arunodayam as custodian and official guardian of their children:** Understanding their anxiety concerning the future of their children on their demise, Sri Arunodayam offers the parents an option to appoint us as custodian and official guardian of their children. Sri Arunodayam will either induct or network with peer organizations to enable a safe home for the children on their parent's demise.

Rekha, a visually challenged girl, sang the invocation song. Rekha is a very accomplished artiste who created a record of singing 140 songs non-stop for 12 hours! She has completed her Music Teacher's training.

Krishna (our Special Mom finalist's son) played percussion with a team coached by Lakshmi Mohan, the founder of Sowmanasya Trust working with autistic children. All members of this group, except Ilavarasan, have autistic behavior issues. Ilavarasan is a visually challenged 12 year old who can play any percussion instrument with ease!

Jyothikalai, a visually challenged 17 year old, studied Carnatic Violin and Western Keyboards, completing 6th grade in Trinity College. She too has completed her Music Teacher's training and is a playback singer in the Tamil Film Industry. She features in many top publications.

Ashwin Prabhakar is a keyboardist certified by Trinity College of Music, London. Despite being diagnosed with learning disability, Ashwin completed his schooling at Saraswathi Kendra Learning center and pursued an education in music, becoming proficient in Carnatic, Western and Light Music genres. He takes one-to-one music classes for challenged children, apart from regular keyboard classes at his music Centre - 'Ashwin Prabhakar Recording Studio', in Anna Nagar.

Sri Arunodayam's children performed many dances under the able tutorship of **Reshma Gunasekaran**, a classical Bharathanatyam and Kuchipudi dancer who is quite famous on YouTube. She learned Kuchipudi under Kalaimamani Shri Madhavapeddi Murthy, Director of Siva Foundation, Chennai and is currently training under Kalaimamani Kutralam Selvam who happens to be the son of the legendary Nattuvanar Kalaimamani Chevalier Muthuswami Pillai.

The Special Mom Award will be an annual event as we quest for applicants from across the country for the 15 most deserving finalists.

Sri Arunodayam received applications from mothers across Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and a group of eminent panelists screened each application carefully to arrive at the 15 finalists for 2018.

More information on the Special Moms and their stories are available at:
<https://sriarunodayam.org/special-mom-award-2018-post-event/>

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Welcoming our Guests



Welcome Dance by our Children



Welcome Speech



Honouring our Special Moms



Entertainment Highlights



"I feel truly blessed to have been part of the Special Mom Award function. It is the most humbling experience and gives our lives so much perspective. Each mother's story is one of courage, grit and a "never say die" attitude reminding us of how insignificant our worries and problems actually are. The concept of not stopping at just an awards function but addressing real issues with a long-term perspective and problem solving approach is so commendable! I pray that each year sees Iyyappan, Chitra and their wonderful team at Sri Arunodayam grow from strength to strength. "Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves" - shine on Team SACT!"

- Sanyukta Gupta [Philanthropist & Social Activist]



"I was extremely happy to be present at this function. I was so inspired by how Sri Arunodayam honored these mothers who go through so many struggles to take care of their special children. They are the true unsung heroines of today. Sri Arunodayam took the trouble to prepare videos of each mother's story which was very good. It was touching to see how these mothers take care of their children by giving them their best despite the hardships they face. I admire Iyyappan's passion and vision, and his selfless service. May God bless you Iyyappan and help you reach out to many more such mothers and children."

- Sr. Mercy George [Principal, Good Shepherd's Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Nungambakkam, Chennai]