

Slum children feel at home in Bharathiyar evening school

## A sound mission that's on silently

T MURUGANANDHAM

Chennai, Jan 24:

Only seven out of 100 students enter colleges and all others are dropouts at various levels, most of them at the elementary and middle-school levels. Despite efforts of the Central and State governments, this statistics on education in the country startles us and the biggest hurdle is the 'dropout' rate.

While various NGOs are doing their best to bridge this dropout gap, many service-minded individuals are also silently contributing their mite by devoting their routine life to the cause of educating the poor children. One such effort has just entered its fourth year successfully in Tiruvanmiyur area. Bharathiyar Evening School caters to the needs of the poor children from Periyar Nagar, Ranganathapuram and Indra Nagar. But this evening school has no proper place.

Kind-hearted couple Savitri Kannan-Kamalam Savitri Kannan has converted their rented house itself into a school. All rooms in the house turn into classrooms between 4 pm and 8 pm everyday.

Kamalam, who devotes almost all her time for the poor children, knows the bio-data of every child who attends the class and their educational requirement.

Savitri Kannan, a journalist by



Dr M Ananthakrishnan, chairman, Madras Institute of Developmental Studies, actor Sivakumar, actor Rohini and journalist Savitri Kannan at the fourth anniversary celebrations of the Bharathiyar Evening School at Tiruvanmiyur, on Saturday.  
Photos : A R Jayakumar

profession, says the main objective of this evening school was to reduce the dropout rate among the slum children and also reduce their idle time by engaging them in fruitful activities to keep them away from the common hazards of the slum life.

The school, which was started with just three children three years ago, now has 110 students studying from the first standard to SSLC. There are three periods everyday and at least five paid teachers take classes for them.

The fourth anniversary celebrations of this school was celebrated a

couple of days ago with cultural programmes performed by the students. Dr Ananthakrishnan, chairman, Madras Institute of Development Studies, spelt out the ways to gain self-confidence and achieve great heights.

Actor Sivakumar, who has been helping the helpless without any fanfare, extend his gesture to this school also. Besides distributing sweets to the students, he spent around three hours with the children encouraging them.

Narrating his own experience and the hardships faced by him in his

early days, Sivakumar assured a sum per month to run the evening school. Actress Rohini, who has closely associated herself with these children, motivated the kids to pursue their studies effectively.

The students of this evening school had an opportunity to interact with President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam.

The school, which is located at No 552, Second West Street, Kamaraj Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur, is being run despite shortage of funds to meet the expenses incurred for providing tuition and other assistance. What the school needs is good helping hands.

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