



MASTERPIECES Handcrafted works by inmates of children's homes on display at the annual 'Makkala Habba' on Hosur Road. DH photo

No child's play this

Inmates at children's homes show off skills at annual event

BANGALORE: There were colourful lampshades, glass paintings and handmade friendship bands. And then there were photo frames. They appeared to be the craft of skilled hands.

But to the visitors' amazement, they turned out to be the works of runaway children rescued from different parts of the country.

The gems were displayed by inmates at the government-run children's homes on Hosur Road here on Tuesday, at their annual 'Makkala Habba'. Not only that, the children also moved a leg or two and crooned many a melody.

Fourteen-year-old Punith (name changed) of Tamil Nadu had run away from his family and landed in the City. Police rescued him from a railway station and he landed at the boys' home two months ago. His life now has a meaning and a purpose. "It feels great to have learnt so many things. I will tell my parents that I didn't waste my time here," he says. "I will return with my head held high."

Anagha. (name changed)

was rescued from the Majestic area by the Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA). She shows off the greeting cards she made in the last month. She has also made a snake out of discarded paper cups. "I don't want to go back. If given a chance, I want to stay with friends I have made here... Friends like me, who share similar background," she beams.

Varying backgrounds

Set up in 1958, the boys' home has 189 inmates; the girl's home, established in 1980, is the refuge of 61 inmates. The homes have separate buildings on the same lane. Inmates come from varying backgrounds. Some were abandoned, a few others rescued from railway stations, bus stands, etc by the child helpline 1098.

A handful are victims of child marriage. Some others are separated from their divorced parents. All are aged between six and 18 years. They come from all states, excluding Chandigarh and Jammu and Kashmir. A small number

of them belongs to Bangladesh and Nepal.

The inmates are trained by about four volunteers of Makkala Jagrithi, a not-for-profit organisation working with underprivileged children in the field of education. They teach them SPICE — a programme whose initials stand for Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional — from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm everyday. The children are taught art, craft, music, dance, etc at the summer camp conducted every March and April.

NGOs like APSA and Bangalore Oniyavara Seva Coota (Bosco) help in tracing the children and sending them home, depending on the correspondence with their parents or their immediate relatives.

"Sometimes we trace their families through the telephone numbers/location traced by the police. While some children do share their background, others are not as forthcoming," the boys' home's probation officer, Vasantha T R, said.

DH News Service