



● **Jegadeeswari Pandian**

Seeing your child perform on stage is one of the proudest moments for any parent, more so for parents of special children. The events that unfolded on Wednesday evening at Justice VR Krishna Iyer Community Hall in KK Nagar witnessed tears of joy and laughter.

As many as 108 autistic children from Sparks Vidyalaya, a special school for children with autism in Madurai, performed yoga, dance and music during the fifth annual day celebration of the school. "There is nothing in this world that an autistic child cannot do. Unlike normal people, they live a very structured life. So, once they take up something and fix into a schedule, they can perform wonders. That's the impact we had when we introduced a yoga session in our school curriculum, a year ago," says Andavar P Jaidev, founder of the school.

Parents and teachers were able to see changes in the behaviour of their ward after they started doing yoga on a regular basis. KP Gangadharan, yoga trainer at Sparks Vidyalaya says, "Yoga brings behavioural changes in children with autism as it helps them calm their nerves and improves flexibility in their body. It also prevents health problems such as wheezing and constipation which the children may face as a result of inactivity, and avoids hormonal imbalance in them."

Gangadharan and around 15 teachers trained the students for more than 30 days to perform yoga in the function. "It was difficult to make the children sit in a static posture for thirty seconds. But soon we were able to see good results and we are now preparing nearly 13 of them to perform in state and national level competitions," he says.

It's a dream for parents of special children to see their kids on stage. The school ensured that every child

AN ANNUAL DAY TO REMEMBER

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Discover their talents

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from the school performed for the function. As a result, even the kids who had severe anxiety problems, which may prevent them from doing yoga on stage, were able to be a part of the function through other performances like tableau.

According to Jaidev, autistic children have hidden abilities which many parents fail to discover at an early age. The awareness

among parents about autism has increased tremendously but they sometimes fail to recognise the talent in their own children.

For Meena, her 18-year-old son Kamalesh is not a burden but a treasure. "For special parents, seeing their children crossing even a milestone gives great joy," says Meena.

She further shares her opinion about the common myth that autistic children become aggressive during their adolescence, saying that she did not have any such issues with her child. "Do not believe in such myths or expect social acceptance. Treat your child with dignity and that's all that matters to the child," is her message to parents like her.



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—KP Gangadharan