Chennai celebrates its unsung champions in myriad fields

Chennai: While many go for the call of duty, few go beyond it. The champions of Chennai’ award was an evening that recognised the contribution of such people who had toiled alone and made a silent contribution to the lives of marginalised people.

The inaugural year of the award honoured six individuals for their initiatives in arts, education, entrepreneurship, healthcare, social service and sports. T. Samuel Joseph was awarded for bringing a change in society through music. In 1976, he established the Christian Cultural Academy which has many physically challenged people in the 50-member choir. For around two decades he was involved in rehabilitating social outcasts like children of leprosy patients and members of Nalikuravu community.

Shankuthala Sharmma was awarded for her school for the needy called ‘The Children’s Garden.’ Started with seven students in 1973, it grew to a home for 1,500 in 2013.

Sridhar Venbu was awarded the ‘Champion entrepreneur of the year.’ His software product company is based in Chennai and has a unique staffing programme. “Our university called Zoho provides software engineering skills to undergraduates who can’t afford a regular course and gives them a platform to showcase their abilities. Around 20% of our staff is recruited from the university,” said Venbu’s brother Manikan-dan who received the award.

In the past 35 years, Dr. Hari Ramesh established a geriatric healthcare institute, provided facilities for the visually challenged and offered occupational therapies to the poor. He was selected as the pioneer in healthcare. “I re pledge my continued activity in healthcare,” he said. In 2000 there were no students in Yasarupadi who had cleared the matriculation exams. Now there are around 8,000 matriculates from the area.

S Dakshinamurthy, a volleyball coach, was chosen as the sports champion. “Around 35 of my players have played in the Indian team,” he said.
Volleyball coach S. Dakshinamoorthy receives Champion of Chennai award from R. Seshasayee (right), non executive vice chairman of Ashok Leyland, and citation from writer Sivashankari, on Saturday.

Pat on the back for Dakshina and Thangaraj

DC CORRESPONDENT

Lengthy and contrived speeches, predictable winners, haphazard schedule, impatient audience... Award functions can often be tedious. But Champions of Chennai, organised by Kalyanasundaram & Associates Trust, at Chinmaya Heritage Centre, on Saturday veered from the beaten path. In a nifty function, conducted with a touch of professionalism and class from start to finish, the KSA Trust headed by auditor K. Kalyanasundaram, honoured six unsung heroes for their exceptional work. The award winners straddled arts, education, enterprise, healthcare, social service and sports. All of them are champions of Chennai in their own right. R. Seshasayee, non executive vice-chairman of Ashok Leyland, gave away the awards. Tamil writer Sivashankari presented citations.

Sports Authority of India volleyball coach S. Dakshinamoorthy who has produced a number of international players in addition to helping more than 50 youngsters get jobs in government units through his tireless work got the award in the sports section. N. Thangaraj who is combining education and sports in the slums of Vysarpadi through his football club (Steds) was honoured in the social service category.

Sivashankari lauded the efforts of the KSA Trust for highlighting the work of people who may not be well known to everyone in the city. “Appreciating popular personalities is also necessary but I feel honouring silent achievers is even more praiseworthy,” she said. Seshasayee said he was delighted to be part of a function in which people who go beyond their call of duty were honoured. “The KSA Trust has identified role models in various fields. All the award winners are doers rather than talkers,” he added.

Kalyanasundaram, managing trustee of the KSA Trust, said the awards would be an annual affair. TR. Gopalakrishnan and R. Manikandan are the other members of the trust. An impressive souvenir chronicling the achievements of the award winners was released on the occasion.

Award winners: T. Samuel Joseph (arts), Sakuntala Sharma (education), Sridhar Vembu (enterprise), Dr. Hari Ramesh (healthcare), N. Thangaraj (social service) and S. Dakshinamoorthy (sports).
Champions of Chennai Awards announced

Chennai: The first edition of the Champions of Chennai Award was given away by the KSA Trust on Saturday. The award is an attempt to recognise personalities who have done outstanding service in their respective fields and yet went about their jobs silently without seeking any recognition. Six citizens from the fields of arts, education, social initiative, enterprise, healthcare and sports were given the awards at a grand function at Chinmaya Heritage Centre.

The Champion of Chennai Award for Arts was won by T Samuel Joseph aka Shyaam, for his work in the field of music in Chennai.

Shyaam, who has composed around three hundred songs in several languages, is the founder of Christian Cultural Academy that raises funds to help the physically challenged and social outcasts. The other members of the academy include trained musicians. Shyaam is also involved in rehabilitating social outcasts like leprosy patients and ethnic minorities like the Nari-kuravas.

Trained in western music, Shyaam learnt classical Indian music later in life. He runs the Geethanjali Trust for promoting Indian Classical Music.

The award for education went to Sakunthala Sharma, for dedicating her life to building a self-sufficient school that caters to the economically weaker sections of Chennai.

Sharma has worked on a backward integration model to create a largely self-sustaining educational institution through her Children’s Garden Schools.

Her achievements also include a meticulously documented archive of learning methodologies, which are much sought after tools on Indian learning systems by educators from Far East and Europe.

In the enterprise category, Sridhar Vembu, won the award for creating a global software product company with its core operations in Chennai. An alumnus of IIT-Madras, his product competes with the best in the world.

Dr Hari Ramesh won the award in the healthcare category for pioneering geriatric care as a scalable profession. Under social initiative category, N Thangaraj, won the award for reforming the youth in one of Chennai’s toughest neighbourhoods through football. In the sports category S Dakshinamoorthy, won the award for moulding several young enthusiasts into National and International level Volleyball champions.
Award-winning composer uses music to help underprivileged

Manish Raj | TNN

Chennai: Through 300 film songs, he filled the hearts of Tamils and Malayalis for years. After having had his fair share of fame, composer Shyam has been using music to fill the lives of the physically challenged and socially ostracised with happiness.

A recipient of the Kerala state film awards for his songs in "Auroodam" and "Kanamnayathu", Shyam trains visually challenged children to sing, and the hearing impaired to dance. Shyam’s Christian Cultural Academy, founded in 1996, has been conducting Christmas programmes in aid of the physically challenged along with a professional orchestra and playback artists like K J Yesudas and S P Balasubramaniam.

Proceeds of the events support leprosy patients and their children, ethnic minorities like Madikeris, orphans and the physically challenged. CCA provides them with musical instruments, tricycles, sewing machines and Braille equipment. "It’s the divinity of music that heals," says Shyam, who sees M S Viswanathan, S R Chowdhury and Henry Mancini as his mentors.

In April 2013, he founded Geethanjali – an initiative to train marginalised children in Indian classical music. "There are schools at Kodambakkam, T Nagar, Adyar, West Mambalam and Kilpauk," he says. The inspiration came from an American missionary called Miss Chandler. "As a child, I lived in Guindy. There was this leprosy patient living under a tamarind tree. People did not care for him, but one woman, Miss Chandler fed him everyday. Even when it rained, she carried food for him. The memories of that leprosy patient haunted me for years. When I found my footing in the music industry one day I saw from some blind people crossing the road. It was the turning point. I had my share of fame, I wanted to do something for such people," says Shyam.

He believes visually challenged children have an innate ability to concentrate. "They can memorise lyrics and perform in 45 minutes flat," he says. "We give them clothes and chocolates. But the feeling of having performed is more rewarding. It has been 27 years and in their smile, I see God." Shyam was among the six 'Champions of Chennai' selected by the KSA Trust for a significant contribution to society.
What are your views about the innumerable people across the country who contribute to the society without making too much noise about their social endeavours?

Every society is made up of numerous arenas – politics, administration, science, medicine, commerce, profession, sports, arts, etc. Every individual in the society chooses one or more of these arenas to make their lives. The vast majority of them contribute in their own limited way. Some of them become famous in their chosen fields by virtue of their outstanding work. But many of them inspite of outstanding work, remain silent and unrecognized. If their remaining silent is out of their choice, then we must respect them for that. If not, we believe that it is the society’s duty to unearth such stars and hold them aloft for the world to see and follow.

Why do you think it is important to recognize the efforts of silent contributors to the society?

Recognition is the best form of encouragement. Genuine recognition is the surest feedback that one is on the right track. Such recognitions are actually signposts in the journey of life and play a vital role in ensuring that one does not go off-track.

When an artist yearns and strives for recognition of his/her work or performance, it is accepted. Why should it be any different when any other individual yearns and strives for recognition? In his/her mind the individual, whether an artist or not, is the creator of a piece of work which gives him/her satisfaction and pride. Right from childhood all of us have responded positively to words of appreciation and recognition. But sadly, the moment the parent/teacher-student relationship phase ends, encouragement and recognition literally stops but for random efforts by a few well-meaning persons around us.

How would you compare such champions with individuals who are often projected by the media again and again?

The silent champions are those who have done positive and useful things equally but who, either out of choice or by circumstances, have remained unrecognized. By unrecognized here I mean not getting the public attention that they and their work deserve.

Individuals who are often projected by the media are also champions who have done something positive to deserve such recognition and have chosen to remain in the limelight. This may sometimes lead to distraction from one’s goal and purpose.

How would you compare these champions with political leaders who should be contributing in a similar manner?

The silent champions do not suffer from the pressure to perform. They are free to work at their own pace and free to experiment and fail. They, however, can benefit from the huge advantages that recognition will bring, without getting distracted. They will also be fulfilling the need for role models in a society as large as ours.

Political leaders, on the other hand, tend to get distracted from their avowed goal and purpose on account of intense media projection. They can be compared to listed companies that are constantly under pressure from the Street to beat not only their own revenue/profit guidelines but even those of analysts whose interest lies mainly in the figures and by extension the stock price. As a result, just like companies lurching from one quarter to another, these politicians lurch from one election to another.

What are the changes in general, faced by such unsung champions?

The unsung champions do not actually face any great challenges that are different from those that a storied champion faces. The challenges mostly vary in dire proportion to the size, scale and complexity of the work. Society needs both, the famous champions and a large number of unsung heroes.

The important message that the Champions of Chennai Awards that we have instituted carries is that “It’s ok to be a silent champion. You need not be rich/famous to earn recognition. Recognition will come where it is due.”

How do you believe they should be supported by the government/corporates/private individuals?

By copying. The silent champions have experimented or arrived at a solution or business model that works well or gives immense personal satisfaction. The best thing that a Government / Corporate / Private individual can do is partner with the silent champions or to just copy what they have done. That way we will see more of the good work.

Do you believe that such people can be good role models for young India?

Absolutely. The silent champions have done something that many others have not been able to do. They have achieved where many others have failed. Thus, their stories are laden with messages for India’s youth. By recognizing them, we are opening up their life to a sort of a biography or fable or management lesson from which the youth can learn and draw inferences.
The Champions of Chennai

Speaking on the occasion Mr. R Seshasayee said, “The current scenario in this country favors academia and bold talk; however there is not much action or result. The ‘Champions of Chennai Award’ has in stark contrast chosen to recognize people who have opted not to talk but to act, people who have stood by what they believed in and succeeded in their endeavor to make a difference in the society. Kids today are increasingly drawn to a materialistic world and are in need of role models. It is important for us to step back and revisit our ethos and values and I am glad that KSA Trust has come forward to project the true ethos of Chennai through the Champions of Chennai Award.”

The award consisted of a specially designed Trophy and a Citation. An Awards Book profiling the 6 awardees was also released on this occasion. Sivashankari, the renowned Tamil writer, who was a special guest in the function, has written the foreword for this book.

The award function was preceded by a music concert by Sri O S Arun, who rendered some beautiful Tamil songs.


The awards will be given every year on 17th August, the date on which KSA was formed in 1988 to citizens for six categories including arts, sports, education, healthcare, social initiative and enterprise.
KSA Trust Champions of Chennai Award function from left to right: Dr. Hari Ramesh (Healthcare Award), Shakunthala Sharma (Education Award), Shivashankari, R Seshasayee, Non-executive vice chairman Ashok Leyland Ltd. Kalayanasundaram, managing Trustee KSA Trust, Dr. T Samuel Joseph (Arts Award) and Manikandan representing Sridhar Vembu (Enterprise Award).
Recognising ‘Champions’ in serving society

Non executive vice-chairman of Ashok Leyland Limited R Seshasayee presenting The Champions of Chennai award to volleyball coach S Dakshinamoorthy in Chennai Saturday. Also seen is writer Sivasankari.

NT Bureau
Chennai, Aug 19: Ashok Leyland non executive vice-chairman R Seshasayee showered praise on those serving society without expecting anything in return and was all for recognising such individuals and organisations in the long run. He was speaking at a programme here Saturday to bestow The Champions of Chennai award to individuals who had registered significant achievements in the field of arts, education, social initiative, enterprise, healthcare and sports. The programme was organised by KSA Trust, which is a non-profit organisation and the charitable initiative of a firm of chartered accountants in the city Kalyanasundaram & Associates (KSA) and Tandem Consulting, its associate company.

The Champion of Chennai Award for arts went to T Samuel Joseph (Shyaam) for serving a lifetime for the cause of music in Chennai. The award for education went to Sakunthala Sharma for dedicating her life to building a self-sufficient school that caters to the economically weaker sections of Chennai. Award for enterprise category went to Sridhar Vembu for creating a global software product company with its core operations in Chennai. Dr Hari Ramesh received The Champion of Chennai Award in the healthcare segment of pioneering geriatric care as a scalable profession.

Award for social initiative segment went to N Thangaraj for reforming the youth in one of the Chennai’s toughest neighbourhoods through football. And, S Dakshinamoorthy received the award in the segment of sports for moulding several young enthusiasts into state and national level volleyball champions. Seshasayee further said it is the responsibility of the society to recognise those who service without any expectations in return. They are exemplars, he added. Managing trustee of KSA Trust Kalyansundaram welcomed the gathering. Popular writer Sivasankari also spoke.
KSA Trust Awards
6 சென்னை அரஞ்சோட்டத்திற்கு வெளியீட்டு விளக்கம் ஆய்வு:
அருந்தசங்கோயில் சென்னை அமைச்சரானாக

முக்தமுதல், என். 2020-ன் ஆண்டில், எண்ணல் நூறாண்டு வருடத்தில், சென்னை அரசு, அருந்தசங்கோயில் முழுவிலும் பெரும்பான்மையான கூட்டுத்தல் நிறைவு செய்யவும், அருந்தசங்கோயில் பற்றிய தொடரும் விளக்கம்களை முன்னேற்கவும், 'அருந்தசங்கோயில் சென்னை அரசு' கூறுத்து சென்றுசென்று முடித்தது. இச்செயல்களை மேற்கொள்ளும் அமைச்சரானான சென்னை அமைச்சர் சி. பி. வெங்கடேசன் எடுத்துச்செல்லலாம்.

இந்த விளக்கம் வழங்கும் நூறாண்டு சென்னை வருடத்தில் முதல் நூறாண்டு, வருடத்திற்கு முன்னேற்கும் செல்வற்றை விளக்கம்களை குறிப்பிட்டுள்ளன அமைச்சரானான்.

அருந்தசங்கோயில் சென்னை அரசு விளக்கம் கூறுத்து, அருந்தசங்கோயில் முழுவிலும் பெரும்பான்மையான கூட்டுத்தல் நிறைவு செய்யவும், அருந்தசங்கோயில் பற்றிய தொடரும் விளக்கம்களை முன்னேற்கவும் அமைச்சரானானார் சி. பி. வெங்கடேசன் எடுத்துச்செல்லலாம்.

The Champions of Chennai Awards announced
KSA Trust Presents ‘The Champions Of Chennai Award’
'The Champions of Chennai Awards' announced
சுந்தரபாத்திர நூற்றாண்டு போராட்டத்தின் புத்தகத்தில்

'சிங்கத்தில் போராட்டம்' அறிக்கை

The Champions of Chennai Awards announced
CHENNAI, AUGUST 21
KSA Trust, a non-profit organization and the charitable initiative of a firm of Chartered Accountants in the city, Kalyanasundaram & Associates (KSA) and Tandem Consulting, its associate company, today presented the 'The Champion of Chennai Award' to six Chennai citizens who have made a difference in the fields of Arts, Education, Social Initiative, Enterprise, Healthcare and Sports.

The awards were presented by Mr. R. Seshasayee, non-Executive Vice-Chairman of Ashok Leyland Ltd., who was the chief guest, at a grand function at Chinnayya Heritage Centre.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Seshasayee said, "It's truly a privilege for me to be participating in this function. The current scenario in this country, favors academia and bold talk however there is not much action or result. The 'Champions of Chennai Award' has in stark contrast chosen to recognize people who have opted not to talk but to act, people who have stood by what they believed in and succeeded in their endeavor to make a difference in society. I must compliment the KSA trust for constituting this award. It's a genuine recognition of merit and value and I do hope the award will grow from strength to strength in the years to come. Kids today are increasingly drawn to a materialistic world and are in need of role models. It is important for us to step back and revisit our ethos and values and I am glad that KSA Trust has come forward to project the true ethos of Chennai through the Champions of Chennai Award."

The award consists of a specially designed Trophy and a Citation. An Awards Book profiling the six awardees was also released on the occasion. Ms. Sivashankari, renowned Tamil writer, who was a special guest in the function, has written the foreword for this book.

The award function was preceded by a music concert by Mr. O. S. Arun, who rendered some beautiful Tamil songs.

The Awardees
The following are the 2013 Champions of Chennai:
1. Arts - Dr. T. Samuel Joseph (Shyam), for serving a lifetime for the cause of music in Chennai,
2. Education - Mrs. Sakunthala Sharma, for dedicating her life to building a self-sufficient school that caters to the economically weaker sections of Chennai.
3. Enterprise - Mr. Sridhar Vembu, for creating a global software product company with its core operations in Chennai.
4. Healthcare - Dr. Hari Ramesh, for pioneering Geriatric Care as a scalable profession.
5. Social Initiative - Mr. N. Thangaraj for reforming the youth in one of Chennai's toughest neighbourhoods through football.
6. Sports - Mr. S. Dakshinamoorthy, for moulding several young enthusiasts into State and National level Volleyball champions.
KSA Trust presents ‘The Champions Of Chennai’ Award
The Champions of Chennai

KSA Trust, a non-profit organization and the charitable initiative of Kalyanasundaram & Associates (KSA) and Tandem Consulting, today presented the "The Champion of Chennai Award" to six Chennai citizens who have made a difference in the fields of Arts, Education, Social Initiative, Enterprise, Healthcare and Sports. The awards were presented at a grand function at Chinmaya Heritage Centre. The chief guest for the evening was Mr. R. Seshasayee, non-executive vice chairman of Ashok Leyland Ltd.

Mr. R. Seshasayee, non-executive vice chairman of Ashok Leyland Ltd., the chief guest for the award ceremony said, "It's truly a privilege for me to be participating in this function. The current scenario in this country favors academia and bold talk, but not much action or result. The 'Champions of Chennai Award' has in stark contrast chosen to recognize people who have opted not to talk but to act, people who have stood by what they believed in and succeeded in their endeavor to make a difference in society. I must compliment the KSA trust for constituting this award. It's a genuine recognition of merit and value and I do hope the award will grow from strength to strength in the years to come. Kids today are increasingly drawn to a materialistic world and are in need of role models. It is important for us to step back and revisit our ethos and values and I am glad that KSA Trust has taken forward to project the true ethos of Chennai through the Champions of Chennai Award."

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KSA Trust presents Champion of Chennai Award

Kalyana Sundaram & Associates (KSA), a firm of chartered Accountants and Tandem Consulting, its associate company presented the ‘The Champion of Chennai Award’ to 6 Chennai citizens who have made a difference in the fields of Arts, Education, Social Initiative, Enterprise, Healthcare and Sports. The awards were presented on 17th August 2013 at a grand function at Chinmaya Heritage Centre. The chief guest was R Seshasayee, non Executive Vice Chairman of Ashok Leyland Ltd.

Speaking on the occasion, R Seshasayee said “The ‘Champions of Chennai Award’ has in stark contrast chosen to recognize people who have opted not to talk but to act, people who have stood by what they believed in and succeeded in their endeavor to make a difference in society”. He added he was glad that KSA Trust has come forward to project the true ethos of Chennai through the champions of Chennai Award.

The awardees are: Arts - Dr. T Samuel Joseph (Shyaam), for service for the cause of music. Education - Sakunthala Sharma, for building a school for the economically weaker sections of Chennai. Enterprise - Sridhar Vembu, for creating a global software company with core operations in Chennai. Healthcare - Dr. Hari Ramesh, for pioneering Geriatric Care as scalable profession. Social Initiative - N. Thangaraj, for reforming the youth in a Chennai neighbourhoods through football. Sports - S. Dakshinamoorthy, for moulding the youth to become Volleyball champions.

The award consists of a specially designed Trophy and a Citation. An Awards Book profiling the 6 awardees was also released on this occasion. The award function was preceded by a music concert by Sri O S Arun.