CHAPTER V
MADHAVI MANDIRAM LOKA SEVA TRUST

G. Ramachandran returned to his hometown after half a century of committed work to popularize Gandhian thoughts with an idea to start a small organization in his native soil. Schumacher’s famous words, “Small is Beautiful” inspired him in starting a small venture, at this place in the name of his beloved mother, Smt. Madhavi Thankachi donating all his landed properties. As a result, the Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust was born as a registered society on the 2 October 1980. The Trust was registered under the Travancore Cochin Literary Scientific and Charitable Societies Act of 1955. In his inaugural speech G. Ramachandran said, “Only my body has become old and weak. My mind is still young”. The Trust runs the Mahatma Gandhi Vidyapeedam which is an institution of the People’s Education Programme.

The declared objectives of the Trust are as follows:

1. “To preserve, maintain and keep in good condition Madhavi Mandiram as a memorial to my beloved mother, who gave the house to me with the treasures, all the photographs, library, books etc.

2. To utilize to the best advantage the lands attaching to Madhavi Mandiram by improving the soil by suitable cultivation, so that the income will maintain the memorial to some extent.
3. To undertake appropriate cottage industries and small scale industries to give some employment to women and girls in our rural area (Oorooottukala specially) as we are doing now.

4. To run Anganwadis or Crèches for the care of children in our area.

5. And to teach sanitation and nutrition to the mothers.

6. To actively work for prohibition in our area, enlisting the support of women to keep their homes free of drunken troubles.

7. To enlighten mothers and women to understand Mahatma Gandhi’s Constructive Programme and to participate in it wherever possible.

8. To continue the People’s Education Programme through study classes and popular talks.

9. To propagate “Sarva Dharma Samanatva” in the Gandhian spirit and thus destroy the poison of communalism.

10. To do whatever other things are needed to create a ‘Sarvodaya’ social order in our rural area”.

The main aim was to set up a happy and non-violent village group based on the welfare of women and children. Educating the women to be self-supporting and impart job-oriented education is one of its aims. For this, Ramachandran started Village industries which have employment potential. Prayer meetings, educative talks and lectures on living standards, training
camps for voluntary organizations from out stations etc are organized here to
give the villagers chances to interact with others.

The activities of the trust started with the work of Shantisena. Mahatma
Gandhi Vidyapeedam is aimed at giving training to peace volunteers to take up
the leadership in building up a society based on non-violence. A Shantisainik
should neither retaliate nor surrender. He or She values the art of solving
problems in a non-violent manner. The first thirty trainees were sponsored by
various organizations. They lived inside Madhavi Mandiram campus. Even the
day to day activities were monitored by G. Ramachandran himself.

The Trust had a well-equipped library also, DR. GR Library, with books
on Politics, History, Literature, Sociology etc, is open to the trainees and social
workers interested in acquiring knowledge. The Library has in its stock more
than 7500 rare books. Many of the books have his writings and markings.

The Mahatma Gandhi Vidyapeedam is publishing a bilingual magazine
by name ‘Non-Violent Revolution’ from 1981. The aim of the magazine is, to
spread the message of non-violence based on constructive work and to keep in
touch with Gandhian workers and others concerned in India and abroad.

The Trust also started the People’s Education Programme. Community
prayers according Gandhian line are conducted on every Friday. Important
days of the years, Gandhi Jayanthi, Independence Day, Onam, Christmas etc;
are celebrated. Adult Education classes for the illiterate workers are also conducted. The programme for giving employment to the poor women in this area to earn a living is one of its important works.

The Trust has a well planned farm also. G. Ramachandran named the farm as ‘Soundram Farm’. The Trust planted various types of seedlings for social forestry and is cultivating various crops.

Step by step, this small organization has grown into various production units in Khadi and village industries, winning name and fame for its products - GR Sarees and GR Fibre fancy articles. There were plenty of weavers idling their time around Madhavi Mandiram Campus, G. Ramachandran wanted to give employment to them. Employees were well paid. More than 250 workers were employed in GR Khadi Saree unit. If G. Ramachandran were available in the Campus he usually spent his time with the workers. He used to say, “All these workers are our own daughters-daughters of Madhavi Mandiram”.

In the education field, Trust has Day-care centers, Anganwadi Program, KG Classes and an English Medium School in the name of Dr. G. Ramachandran under Mahatma Gandhi Vidyapeedam.

After the death of G. Ramachandran, Sister Mythili became the successor as Managing Trustee of the Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust. Now the Trust consist of a child health centre, G.R.Fibre Unit, G.R.Khadi Production
Unit, G.R. Public School, Daya Sanitary Napkins and Garments production. Social Forestry, Soundram Farm and the construction work of a building to house a new equipment of “E.T.O Sterilization” unit to be setup with a technical assistance from Sree Chitra Tirunal Medical centre is in progress.

5.1 Last Days of G. Ramachandran

G. Ramachandran was admitted in the Medical College Hospital Trivandrum, owing to severe fever on 7 January 1995. Dr. S.K. Ramachandran who was the Medical Superintend took charge of him. After a detailed check up, the Doctor declared that G. Ramachandran was suffering from Bronchial Pneumonia. After seven days treatment in Medical College hospital Trivandrum G. Ramachandran was discharged on 14 January and returned to Madhavi Mandiram. G. Ramachandran wrote down some directions for last journey in his personal diary. He directed, “he should be cremated in the Kerala manner. But, there should be no usual rituals. The body would be carried straight to the funeral pyre on a cot and placed in position with plenty of white flowers and burned. The site of the grave will be near mother’s tomb. The fire must burn strong with coconut shells. Sarvodaya Bhajanas must go on while this is being done. When the mud plaster of the grave has shrunk, people attending the funeral may disperse. There will be no formal Sanchayanam. but only Sarva Dharma prayers as the one I arranged after my brother’s funeral. Invitation to the prayer meeting should be sent to relations and friends. Sweet
Prasadam distributed to all those who attend the meeting. This prayer meeting will be in the place of Sanchayanam. My eyes may be taken out by Dr. S. K. Ramachandran and given to the Medical College Hospital. Any other organ of the body may also be removed in time before the funeral as decided by Dr. S. K. Ramachandran. Ashes may be collected in an ‘urn’ if so desired by relations and friends part of it cast into the Indian Ocean at Cape Kanyakumari near Gandhi Mandap.  

G. Ramachandran died on 17th January, 1995 at 5.45 am. As directed, his eyes were donated to the eye Hospital. His body was laid in Kalabhavan for the last Dharsan to the public. On 18 January his body was cremated at the spot he selected, with State honour. The fire was lit by Sister Mythili. The final words of G. Ramachandran were, “My body shall pass but my work shall go on. And my spirit shall live on. Even when I am taken away I shall work with you all for the deliverance of the world.”

After his death his colleagues and admirers gathered together and constituted a National committee under the chairmanship of president K.R.Narayanan to plan and execute appropriate programmes to perpetuate the memory of G. Ramachandran. The committee decided to honour G. Ramachandran and Dr. Daisaku Ikeda by instituting an award - the Ramachandran Ikeda award. Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, the president of the Soka Gakkai International is one of the greatest of the contemporary leaders who...
have been using education, culture and dialogue diplomacy to unify humanity by creating mutual understanding of common heritage. So the committee decided to commemorate both the leaders and institute Ramachandran Ikeda award. This award is instituted by Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust. This consists of a cash award of one lakh Rupees, a Plaque and citation.

5.2 Conclusion

At the old age of seventy six G. Ramachandran founded a Trust, Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust for the memory of his mother Smt. Madhavi Thankachi and to popularize Gandhian thought. This shows G. Ramachandran’s commitment to society even at the old age. Even though he was physically very weak he was mentally very strong. The Trust has a number of objectives. The main aim of the Trust was to set up a happy and non-violent village group based on the welfare of women and children. The Trust is working under the control of Mahatma Gandhi Vidyapeedam. In order to spread the message of non-violence the Mahatma Gandhi Vidyapeedam is publishing a magazine by name ‘Non-Violent Revolution’. This Trust also promotes education, farming and small-scale industries like Khadi, fancy articles etc. The Trust provides employment opportunities to the neighbouring villages. Under the auspices of the Trust a number of activities are taken for the empowerment of women and children. Now, Sister Mythili is the Managing Trustee of the Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust. Above seven
decades of work of G. Ramachandran to humanity came to an end by 1995. He died on 17th January 1995.

Thus, drawing inspiration from Gandhian ideals, G. Ramachandran visualized and implemented a series of socio economic organizations and institutions in Madhavi Mandiram, keeping in view the socio economic progress of the poor. It provided employment opportunities to many; the hopeless women folk and the destitute could find an asylum in the shelter provided by him.
NOTES


2. Interview with Sister Mythili, Oroottookala, 30 May 2002.


5. Ibid., p.29.

6. Interview with Sister Mythili, Oroottookala, 30 May 2002.

7. Sister Mythili, op. cit., p.3.


9. Interview with Sister Mythili, Oroottookala, 30 May 2002.


13. Ibid. p 2.