

Ananda Bharathi

(Reg. No 48 of 1991)

July 08, 2002

Dear friend

We at Ananda Bharathi send you greetings from our new location. Last month we have moved to this place which is a kilometer away from the old premises. We had been asked to vacate by the old landlord and finding a place close by was a compelling requirement as all our children walk to school. The new premises is larger than the old one and is in a quiet residential locality. We share the compound with two other families forcing us to painstakingly keep our noise levels low! This year the summer months at the school were hectic with packing, shifting and unpacking. The efforts made by the teachers in visiting the children's houses and informing the parents about the shifting have paid off. No child has dropped out due to re-location. During our home visits we also stressed on the need to pay more attention to the girls' studies and health.

Currently, we have 27 students and 8 teachers (4 of them full time). Sailaja, who has honed her skills as a remedial teacher, has started to work full time with us from this academic year. She is teaching a group of teenage girls who are learning basic literacy and numeracy skills. She is able to enthuse them to think about the world around them and to find meanings and relationships that they had not been aware of before. Three of our senior children are appearing for class VII examination next year. The youngest group aged 6-8 years has started reading and writing. Manisha, a friend of ours, is preparing a group of 5 children for the Prathama examination conducted by the Dakshina Bharatha Hindi Prachar Sabha. As a part of our ongoing activity of making science learning interesting, we have prepared lesson plans on the topic 'Measurements'. We intend to build further on this.

We continue to support our senior girls in Social Welfare Residential institutions. This summer Janaki taught them English. The four girls who went to college last year are in Intermediate 2nd year now. Yadalakshmi, who was in Residential School, Narsingi has passed class X in 1st division. She joined Intermediate with Commerce, Economics and Civics at the Residential Junior College, Gowlidoddi. Anita, Thirupathamma and Rajamma are in class X now. The search for suitable career options that we started last year is still on.

Book reading continues to be an enjoyable activity at Ananda Bharathi. The books read last year include Telugu translation of Mahashweta Devi's "Etova won the battle", Railu Badi (Totto-Chan) and a one-act play on Savitri Bai Phule-a famous social reformer of Maharashtra. In addition, there was an interesting session when the girls formed groups to read a selection of Telugu books on various topics and presented them to the others.

Due to the falling interest rates and rising expenses, the school was facing financial problems. In the month of December, we decided to start a fundraising drive to increase the corpus fund by Rs. 6 lakhs. After a gap of 10 years, we have prepared a new brochure with the active participation of many of our friends. This helped us to reach out to a few trusts and many more friends. As always, Ananda Bharathi has received a heartening response. Rs. 3 lakhs has been raised and we have the arduous task of raising the rest of the amount.

Events

The Independence Day programme included a song on our national flag written by three senior children and another song written by Anuradha about the joy of childhood. Children put up a play about the problems faced by them in coming to school regularly, with a message that each one should try and find a solution that suits them. On Gandhi Jayanthi, children spoke about the different phases of his life. Syamala and Jhumur, our friends spoke about the principles Gandhi believed in and shared with them anecdotes that threw light on the way he practised them. As a part of children's day, the children wrote and sang songs against war, in contrast to the prevailing mood of aggression all around. M. Srinivas, a friend translated and read out a letter from "Letters from a father to his daughter" by Jawaharlal Nehru. The children made masks with the help of friends from IMI Soft. On the Republic Day, there was dance by the younger children. The children sang a song written by Anuradha about the problems of migrants to the city. Most of our children belong to this section. The children also did a play on the spirit of true respect and trust. This was written by our lawyer friend Vanaja. On 9th

February, we repeated the Republic Day programme for the parents. This was well attended by the mothers and they appreciated the performance of their children. They were moved by the song by Anuradha and could not stop their tears. On International Women's day, Anuradha initiated a discussion on the violence faced by girls in every day life. Children participated with enthusiasm and spoke about gender discrimination that they face at home. The discussion took an interesting turn when Padma, one of our girls, drew our attention to the ill treatment of her disabled younger brother by their father! This discussion appeared as an article in Bhumika, a Telugu bi-monthly. This year we had the annual sale on April 20th. The response was good and all the articles were sold out. The school closed on 30th April with a session of origami and painting.

Going Places!

On 5th September, we took our children to the Nehru Zoological park. The children were thrilled to see the wild animals and birds. On 1st January, the younger children were taken on a visit to the Landscape gardens at Osmania University. Children made tree and leaf rubbings with the help of their teachers. On 26th February, we went to the K.B.R. National Park in Banjara Hills. Sri. Sankaran, Deputy Conservator of Forests and his staff took the children around the park and explained everything to them with great interest. Two young people from the "Friends of Snakes" society showed us a few kinds of snakes. They talked about poisonous and non-poisonous snakes, the need to co-exist with them while demystifying popular myths about snakes. We learnt a lot from our children with rural background in the discussion that followed. On 28th February, National Science day, children formed into groups and spoke about the visit - on topics like the symbiotic relationship between humans, trees and animals.

Meeting People

In the month of September, Madhavi and Anuradha attended the Network meeting at Kadoli, a village near Belgaum in northern Karnataka. This year the topic was Freedom, Order and Discipline. It was an enriching experience. On 17th February, the teachers and close friends of the school had a meeting focussed on "Visioning the future of Ananda Bharathi". Lalitha facilitated the group to share their thoughts for Ananda Bharathi. We met the Commissioner of school Education with the help of friends K A S Reddy and Subhashini. He has issued orders giving permission for our children to appear for class VII public examination and for issue of free textbooks. Our request for recognising the experience of teachers of Ananda Bharathi as valid for correspondence B.Ed course, is under consideration.

Our Visitors

In June 2001, we had a visitor from Pakistan, Nasira Habib. She spoke to the children about the condition of women in Pakistan and their on-going efforts to educate them. It was an eye opener for the children to see the similarity between women on both sides of the border. On 30th October, we had a unique event in the school, with the idea coming in from our friend Sajaya. It was the release of a children's book called "Chichibaba Sahodarulu" - a Telugu translation of a story written by Prof. D.P. Sen Gupta on the futility of the Arms Race between impoverished nations. The youngest group did the releasing and the senior children read out the story. On 21st December, David Johnson, a friend from the UK, visited the school. He told us that his grandmother was also a late starter in education and had been helped by a teacher. He felt happy that he had been able to sensitise his family and friends to the needs of Ananda Bharathi. On 30th April, Prakash and Ranjani from Coimbatore visited the school as a part of their tour of visiting non-formal schools. On 7th March, our friend Usha Raman arranged a visit by the doctors from the L.V.Prasad eye hospital to the school. After the eye check-up, 12 children went for further examination and four children were advised to use spectacles.

A friendly gesture!

The children and teachers of Ananda Bharathi raised an amount of seven hundred and twenty rupees for the carnival for street children, organised by the Hyderabad Council of Human Welfare. This generous response gives us a clue to the sensitivity of our girls to children less fortunate than themselves. It is our responsibility to see that this sensitivity is retained.

Cordially Yours,

Janaki N Iyer