

July 22, 2006

Dear Friend,

This year we write the newsletter with mixed feelings. On the one hand we had a few heartening successes such as moving to a suitable new premises and getting a new teacher Radha who has taken up her tasks very well; while on the other Janaki has been unwell since September 2005. We have missed her guiding presence in the school for the rest of the year. She has resumed this year to some extent; we hope she regains her energies to fully come back.

It was a good beginning for us in 2005, with Radha joining in August to teach the entry level children. After the initial training period she is now a part of the Ananda Bharathi family. We thank Thota Ramesh for introducing Radha to us.

We reopened on 12th June this year; there are now 12 new admissions and overall strength is 33. Venkatesh, our Maths teacher had to relocate and Manisha has taken a break this year. Anuradha, Radha and Jyothi continue to teach full time and will have to take a lot of load until we get one more teacher. Madhavi continues with teaching specific science topics once a week. Vishalam and Padmavathi continue to handle the tailoring class.



Lalita and Maria have completed class X successfully and there was a discussion and debate on a suitable career path for the girls. Ruthamma helped us in getting information from different colleges offering vocational courses at Intermediate level. With Sailaja's support we could get Lalita and Maria admitted to Intermediate courses in Physio Therapy and Multi Purpose Health Work. We hope this will be a positive experience with respect to employment opportunities, in which case this can be a path for the girls passing from Ananda Bharathi in the future.

It is a matter of great pride and happiness for us that Kanakamma has passed class VII examination this year. She had suffered from Tuberculosis last year and with support in different ways from many of you she has been able to come back to school. Now she has joined the Lalapet government school in class VIII.

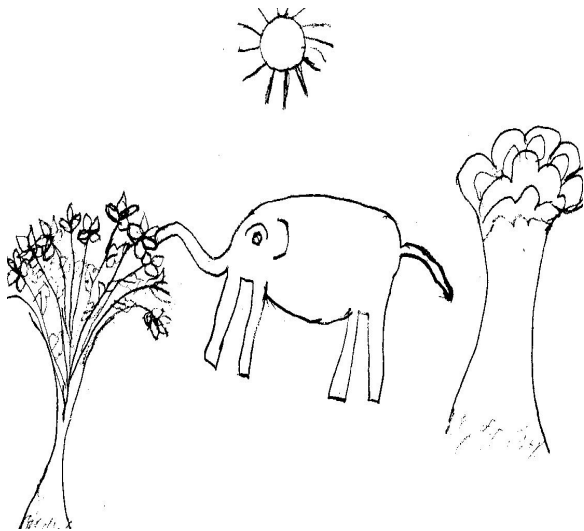
Ruthamma's completing graduation with a first class in B.Sc, is a matter of great pride for Ananda Bharathi. She is in search of a job and is currently helping us with teaching in the school. Yadalakshmi and Anita are struggling with graduation; we hope that they would stabilise by next year. Premalatha and Venkatamma are in final year of graduation this year.

We have written last time about Bamma and the crisis in Mahbubnagar. We are happy to inform that she is back to school; one of our friends Shyamala from Anveshi has offered to have Bamma stay in her house and attend school regularly. We really appreciate Shyamala's support in giving a childhood and learning opportunity to Bamma.

In the financial year 2005-06, our income from donations and interest was about Rs 4.0 Lakhs and expense Rs. 3.5 Lakhs. Donations include \$1500 from Rishta Foundation, USA and a remarkable one from our friend Karthika, who donated her marriage gifts received in cash. Friends from Asha chapters at Cornell and Irvine visited the school; in the current year Asha-Irvine has committed a donation of \$2500. There was a lot of delay in receiving permission from the Home Ministry to accept foreign donation and our application for registration to accept foreign donations without prior permission has been rejected. This means that for every foreign donation we need to take separate permission.

Events

On 15th August the children enacted a play "Adavilo Prajaswamyam" (Democracy in the Forest), written by our Hindi teacher Manisha. The play had a role for every child in the school, with the very little ones playing the role of chirping birds. Sheela Prasad from University of Hyderabad discussed the topic of health and nutrition with the children. The senior children first spoke on the subject and subsequently participated in the discussion with her.



On Teachers' day children discussed the subject of "what is help", "how should help be given and taken", based on their experiences in their neighbourhood. Some of the interesting observations from the children were "physically handicapped children need help" and "children in the street that HCHW (which runs shelter homes for street children) caters to, are more in need of help compared to us". We were happy to see this way of thinking from children who themselves are in difficult circumstances. One of the girls even said that sharing problems of others would also be of great help. This was very touching.

On 10th September we had a meeting with the mothers of our girls. First we spoke to all of them together on the activities of the school and importance of regular attendance. Later teachers individually spoke to mothers about their children, of their progress and problems in some cases.

For Gandhi Jayanthi we had a programme on experiences of the Total Literacy Programme organized in Serilingampally by faculty and staff of University of Hyderabad. Senior children had earlier interviewed Meena on different aspects of literacy. They first briefed the gathering on the summary of this interview. Later Vijayalakshmi, Meena and Ramabrahmam spoke and answered the children's enthusiastic queries.

On 3rd October we had viewing of partial solar eclipse on Janaki's terrace. Sreekumar helped in conducting the event. We used three methods to show the eclipse: first by projecting the image using a mirror on to a board, second direct viewing through solar goggles and third by projecting sun's image using a telescope. Since it was very cloudy and the eclipse was partial, only the projection using telescope was clear. Children traced the eclipsed, crescent image of the sun.

For Deepavali sparklers were distributed to the children.

On children's day we showed two short films, one a Korean film "The Way home" a sensitive rendering on the relation between grand mother and grand son. The other was a film about Ananda Buddha Vihar and Buddhist monks' life. Thanks to Sajaya for organising this event and to friends at WASSAN for the support in screening at their premises. Sajaya narrated the story of a Japanese child Sadako, victim of the Hiroshima nuclear disaster. She showed us the making of paper swan, which is a symbol of Sadako's memory.

On 28th November we organized an outing to Mahaveera Harina Vanasthali, the deer park at Vanasthalipuram. Manisha's friend Anuradha working in the Wildlife department helped us and took special care in arranging the snake show, safari trip, posters and booklets and also food for

the children. Children made drawings to describe their trip. Harina Vanasthali published these drawings in their magazine "Pala Pitta", along with a note on Ananda Bharathi's visit.

January 26th was special in more ways than one. It was the last public event in the old premises and Janaki came to school after a gap of 4 months. The children spoke about countries neighbouring India – Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka and Pakistan. Flags of each of these countries were shown to the audience and the children spoke on basic details such as present political leaders and also crops grown, minerals etc. available in these countries. Children performed a dance and song sequence about rain and nature. Thanks to Chaitanya from Anveshi for teaching the children and giving them such an enjoyable time. Syamala from Dastakar Andhra, spoke about handloom in Andhra Pradesh. She explained the various activities involved and answered questions on the problems and potential of this important sector.

On Women's day the children wrote and enacted a play "Mahila Lokam" where they showed some new ideas about how women try and change their drunken husbands. It was a one hour play and they were able to sustain the interest of the audience.

New friends

On Science day February 28th, Professor Ramanathan visited the school and showed experiments on Electricity. The children found the session interesting and informative.

On March 11th Shalini, Manisha's friend, came to school to teach making use of waste material such as paper, coconut and egg shells and jute thread. She showed how to make 'star tortoise', one of the endangered species.

Dr. Jhansi a homoeo doctor came to school through Sailaja. It is a matter of great happiness and relief for us to have a doctor to examine the children on a monthly basis for a modest compensation towards cost of transport and medicines.

Before closing for 2006

We shifted to the new premises on 4th March. We acknowledge Vishalam's efforts in fixing up this place; this school is airy, has a hall for conducting events and space outside for the children to play. The senior children helped in packing and rearranging the books in the new premises. Vimala, Anuradha's sister and Rajamma, one of our old students, did the cataloguing.



We closed the tailoring sessions on 15th April. On 25th April there was a painting session for all the children which they enjoyed very much. All students made star tortoise and took them home.

On 26th April we had mothers' meeting before closing of school for summer. The senior children showed the formation of rainbow and also spoke about magnetism; the mothers listened with enthusiasm and interest. The meeting too was on a positive note and well attended. We met the parents individually and showed the marks scored by their children and also their attendance pattern. On 27th we gave lunch to the children and closed for the academic year.

Reaching Out

This year the Network (of alternate schools) meeting was held in Nasik. Anuradha went for the meeting along with Gurveen from CFL. The topic of discussion was *Body and Mind*. After their return we had a joint meeting between CFL and Ananda Bharathi friends to share the learning from the meeting.

In the month of February, Jyothi, Radha and Venkatesh attended a Mathematics workshop conducted by the Learning Network. The sessions were very useful and informative.

On 29th April Radha and Anuradha conducted a training programme for the Samyukta Foundation that runs mobile schools for children of construction workers. Our teachers demonstrated a few teaching methods to inculcate interest in the child to learn an alphabet and a number. The training was very much appreciated and they will continue to be in touch with us for sharing experiences and also teaching material.

In the holidays our senior children who are now in intermediate and degree formed into groups and visited the slums around Tarnaka. This was to speak about Ananda Bharathi and identify girls to join the school from this academic year. Though the number of new admissions was much less than expected, the initiative itself was heartening for us. To see the children who have been part of our institution, able to go out and speak in their neighborhood confidently and to advise other younger girls to be literate and aware – this itself is a small step towards taking the more arduous tasks in store.

Cordially Yours,

Janaki N Iyer & V Sailaja