

**ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES- ( To be sent to all sponsors/Asha chapters/ Nalamdana trustees)**  
**Activities-June 2000 to May 2001**

**1. Appreciation of Classical Carnatic Music/ Veena- 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2000**

The basics of appreciating classical music and an introduction to music scales/ raga etc. were demonstrated by Mrs. Nithya Balaji on the Veena. Mr. Ilanthiriyar sang some songs/ and demonstrated certain ragas. Performances of students and a lively game of Antaakshari (music game) followed. There were also guest performances by Anushka and Kalpana, two students of Classical Music, who had visited the office on that day.

**2. Interactive session with students from the U.S.-18 June 2000**

ASTHA ; Association of Students Teaching HIV/AIDS Awareness, an organization of students from Vanderbilt University in Nashville ,Tennessee (USA); were in Chennai to conduct interactive awareness programs in schools and colleges in collaboration with Nalamdana. The Nalamdana scholarship students were the first group that they interacted with.

In comparison to some of the private schools (Sishya,Kalakshetra,Sankara) that were covered by ASTHA in Chennai, our students had higher awareness levels and brought up a lot of discussion on social issues related to the disease like rights and privileges of the infected.

**3. Geometric Origami-Math in 3-D... presented by "Chotu"**

A workshop on " Geometric Origami " also known as Stereo metric conducted by V.S.Nataraj (Architect and expert on the subject, alias "Chotu Uncle"). This was an introductory paper folding session where the students created pyramids, hexagons, octahedrons etc .The essence of this rare art form is the creation of 3D objects using paper. This was the first in the series that we hope to have. (Unfortunately, Mr.Nataraj passed away during early 2001.The student community and several institutions where he volunteered this skill are sorely missing him.)

**4 English Speaking and Grammar Course**

These classes taught by Ms.Kaveri Bharath starting on the 30th of August are conducted regularly on Sundays. The group was graded according to their reading, writing and speaking skills. We found that 20 out of the 31 students need to improve their English. These students are taught via using a mix of formal and informal teaching methods like games where they learn different ways of greeting each other, conversational skills etc.

**5. Mock Trial**

Ms.Maya Thiagarajan and Ms.Kaveri Bharath conducted a mock trial where the students were introduced to the workings of the judicial system. The students were given roles as judge, plaintiff, defendant, lawyer etc. The program was a huge success. The students wanted to have many more along these lines.

**6. Narmada Bachao Andolan –awareness Talk**

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, the students met and interacted with Mr. Balaji Sampath, an NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan) activist who also works with the Tamilnadu Science Forum to hear his viewpoint on the issue.

This was an interactive session where students voiced their ideas about the role of the government, why protests happen, what kind of people protest, their existing knowledge of dam's etc. He covered some of technical details about the dam, tribal displacement and rehabilitation, attitudes toward tribals and got the students to do a cost benefit analysis of constructing a dam. The students watched a video documentary called the Narmada Diary, which is a video record of some of the main events that have happened.

Following the documentary the resource person explained the other alternatives available and why there is no wide spread acceptance of these alternatives.

Some of the students having heard this are doing further research on the subject especially with tribal displacement.

The same day after a serious discussion on the Narmada issue, to celebrate the students completing their Quarterly exams, we screened Disney's animated "Jungle Book" in the office video/TV set.

## **7. Student Body**

To get the students to be involved with the organizing and make the education programme more participatory we introduced the concept and role of the student body and the various responsibilities they involve.

The students volunteered to take on the various responsibilities

<i>Workshop Co-ordinators</i>	Mayilvel and Sateesh
<i>Co-editors of the newsletter</i>	Suchitra and Anjan Bai
<i>Social projects Coordinator</i>	Noordheen and Devi
<i>Overall Representative</i>	Ramaswamy and Vijay Raghavan
<i>Library In-charge (Book collection)</i>	Lokeshwari and Lakshmipriya

## **8. Newsletter**

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, Mrs. Gita Narayanan, a freelance journalist came in and introduced the concept of a newsletter, the various inputs that goes into the making of a newsletter, difference between news reporting and article writing etc. She has offered to volunteer some time on a regular basis.

Having been introduced to the various technicalities, the group then sat down to plan what they would like to have in their newsletter, the periodicity of the newsletter, the name, designing of the logo and when they plan to launch the first newsletter.

The newsletter has been named " BRIGHT SPARKS "which they intend on bringing out once every two months. The newsletter was launched on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

The newsletter included articles in Tamil and English.

Due to time constraints and exam pressure the students were unable to bring out the newsletter once in two months as planned. The students are currently reworking the periodicity of the newsletter and are working on the next issue which they intend on bringing out by mid June.

## **9. Community Work**

We have explained that one of the main reasons that we selected them is that they have the potential to give back to the community and we expect them to do it in whatever small way that they feel possible. They have the option of doing projects on their own or in groups or else with the whole group.

The students themselves have grouped up and identified projects they'd like to work on.  
Suchitra, Lokeshwari and Lakshmipriya want to help an orphanage  
Manikandan would like to help a home for special children  
Ramaswamy, Noordheen, Manikandan and Sateesh want to identify an old age home that they can volunteer time with.  
Shobana, Nirmala and Ramaswamy want to do more research on the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

On our part, to increase their social sensitivity, we intend to have interactive discussions with individuals working on various causes and organize field trips to various organizations on a regular basis. The social service award has been previously given to a scholar who volunteered the most amounts of time and effort in Nalamdana's activities. But now that the students are evolving their own projects. Hence, if these projects are to be evaluated for the service award, the students will be required to maintain a record of their service to the community and at the end of the year make a presentation which may be judged by a panel of judges; to consider them for the service award. If not, the award will be given as per previous years.

To increase their social sensitivity interactions with activists and field visits will be planned on a regular basis.

## **10. Parents Meeting**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, we held a parents meeting to know their feedback regarding the programme. The parents felt that their children

- Are more independent. Initially parents were apprehensive about their children commuting alone and would accompany them to the Nalamdana office. But now after Nalamdana encouraged them to let their children travel alone the once apprehensive parents are now confident that their children can find their way around the city.
- Are becoming bold. Jennifer, one of the students, helped to save a girl from eve teasers and questioned onlookers who did not come forward to help.
- Are very active/ busy. One parent jokingly said her daughter is like a minister. She needs a prior appointment to see her daughter cause she's so busy.
- A lot of the students have voluntarily opted to watch less television and rather do other activities. The choice of programmes that they watch now includes more informative programmes.
- The parents feel their general knowledge is improving and more importantly their thirst for knowledge is increasing.
- Parents felt all activities held by Nalamdana should be completed by 4 p.m. so that the students can return home before dark. (We have taken this point seriously).

Regarding the parent child relationship the parents felt that the children are more open and discuss a lot of issues with them. Children who were previously very withdrawn are slowly opening up.

Regarding siblings attitude

- Older siblings feel they lost out. Had they known about the scholarship they might have had better opportunities.
- Younger siblings feel they are missing out and avidly listen to the narrative accounts of their brother / sister. Some students occasionally bring their siblings along.  
The positive affect is that the younger ones are improving their grades to match up.

## Social Service Award

It was explained to the parents that we have a special award to acknowledge the efforts of the students who volunteer and assist at the Nalamdana office.

Unfortunately this year we could not give this award because there were no students who came forward to volunteer time.

The parents were requested to encourage their children to undertake community service and at the same time parents were also invited to volunteer.

Many parents were unaware of this aspect of the programme and have agreed to encourage their students and possibly volunteer some of their own time as well.

(Some of the parents were single- as the husbands would have abandoned the wife, some were unemployed, or out of work etc.)

### **11. October 21<sup>st</sup> The Mentoring Program**

Eight students participated in this first attempt- as three offices had agreed to participate in this program. Two students spent the day at an Architect's office, three in a Chartered Accountant's office and three with an Advertising agency. (Four students who had signed up did not come on the appointed day.) A Nalamdana senior staff accompanied each group. Students spent the entire day- seeing, interacting with specific staff, and getting exposure to the different skills, work and jobs at each of these professions.

A sharing session with other students and Nalamdana staff was held on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. students were asked to write up their experiences for their newsletter.

More such visits are planned for all the students to various organizations so that the students have first hand exposure to various kinds of career/ professional opportunities and the educational requirements. Some of these offices have invited students to come again.

**12. Collage workshop** on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November conducted by Mr. Hans Kaushik, (School of design ,Baroda), resident and resource person of Chennai, also a renowned theatre professional. This workshop allowed the students to experiment and express their creativity through paper. Themes were identified by the students and Hans guided them to create posters, with waste materials, paper and went through the basic techniques of using 3-D type crafted posters.

**13. Child Rights:** An interaction was arranged with Ms. Lucinda of Child Relief and You (CRY), to explain the concept of Child Rights and how organizations like CRY and Nalamdana are working with this issue.

**14. Nalamdana's Annual Day Celebrations:** On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, the students put up a variety entertainment programme that they themselves coordinated and performed. The programmes included dances both folk and western, songs, poetry recitation and a karate demonstration. This was followed by lunch with the students and their families.

Students became busy with their exams after the January break. Regarding activities for the next few months, the students had requested a lighter schedule till April 2000, since the last semester in school is hectic due to the pressure to complete portions. The students would like a lot of activities during their summer vacations.

--- as reported by March 2001.

--- continued documentation of Summer activities- during 2001-(April-May)

### **Summer Activities 2001**

#### **English Classes**

Summer Programs began with interactive activity oriented sessions with Fiona Bolger, a trained Irish teacher/theatre expert, teaching English in the local Montessori school- "Abacus".

The activities were designed with a mix of games, and theatrical exercises to boost their self confidence to encourage them to open up and express themselves.

One theatre exercise called "the photograph" required students to create a photo. One student begins by posing and each student adds on to create a total picture. One photo they created was based on the rap poetry they had done earlier in the day called "Fear Not" by Benjamin Zephaniah and using their poses they expressed peace, war, flower power etc.

The classes allowed students to constantly make choices regarding what activity that they would like to do. While some prefer to write others might opt to play a game – all their choices are accommodated.

Fiona was assisted by Kaveri our regular English teacher who is currently continuing classes in a similar manner using an activity based approach.

One obvious development is that students who were previously inhibited to speak in English because they were afraid that they would make mistakes are now more confident to speak in English and are not afraid to make mistakes.

### **Croc Talk: Interaction with Rom Whitaker.**

"Croc Talk" – a guide to the Madras Crocodile Bank was launched at the Good Books Bookstore and Resource Center by the Whitaker family. Rom Whitaker, a herpetologist started the Croc Bank in 1976. This is now an international conservation centre.

The launch was used to allow students to interact with Rom Whitaker to learn about crocodiles and share his experience working with crocodiles. Just before the interaction the children watched a film on the croc bank made by the National Geographic Channel. Students came up with interesting questions like what kind of diseases affect crocodiles how can they be prevented etc.

This interaction was followed up with a visit to the Croc Bank.

**Theatre Workshop** – 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of April facilitated by The Nalamdana Core group  
This week long workshop enabled students who were interested in theatre to learn the way Nalamdana uses theatre to communicate preventive health messages. The students worked in groups to develop their own stories, scripting and finally producing a radio play and a simple street play that they presented at the end of the week.

**Puppetry Workshop** at the Good Books Resource Centre- 28, 29 April and 5,6<sup>th</sup> May This workshop conducted by Ms. Rangashree trained in classical music, folk tales, arts and craft was conducted over two consecutive weekends. The students made a variety of puppets and put up a performance using traditional folk music.

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(To be included in the report for next year:)

**Parents Meeting** – was conducted on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2001 by the Core group.

Feedback from Parents regarding students/ program last year

1. Parents feel that students show much enthusiasm and improvement in their school education.
2. Parents said that many students show interest in applying what they have learned in the Nalamdana workshops and home or at school. For example, the Puppetry and Theater workshops conducted in May 2001.
3. Parents feel that the students have more self-confidence and show more interest and awareness about what is happening around them / in their community.

4. Many parents felt that in general education has become very commercial, but in Nalamdana they feel this is not the case.

#### Parents Expectations

5. Parents expect that Nalamdana should support the students beyond 12<sup>th</sup> STD for College education as well. Without this they feel that the students do not have viable options to continue their further education.
6. Can Nalamdana support the students' extracurricular activities such as Hindi, tuition for school subjects, computer classes, music classes etc.
7. Parents asked if Nalamdana could arrange for more computers in the office or outside, so that the students can learn and practice their computer skills.

#### Other issues discussed with Parents

1. Sustainability – Students should continue to interact and support Nalamdana activities even after they complete their schooling/ or stop receiving scholarship. To facilitate this students can start a Nalamdana Students Alumni program and support new scholarships students as well.
2. In the future the parents themselves can take charge and rotate to arrange for the Parents meeting on a bi-annual basis with Nalamdana staff. This means that they make all arrangement, including correspondence, tea/ snack and also record minutes of the meetings.
3. Students tour program – As per students suggestion to have one tour program per year, It was discussed that the students contribute 50% of costs for such a tour and Nalamdana will provide the other 50%. Further, one male and one female parent will accompany the students in the tour along with Nalamdana staff. Parents agreed to these suggestions.

**The activities held during the reporting period were very intense. Feed back about these from the parents are encouraging. Only minor suggestions like timings have been received. This report is to be shared with all our supporters and funders.**