

## Visit to Center for Learning - Hyderabad.

---Report by G.Madhavaraj  
Visit date 30<sup>th</sup> march – 16<sup>th</sup> April.

### **A SHORT SUMMARY.**

I joined Asha Bangalore in February 2010 and am under training to see how a person like myself can learn more and share what I know with other schools that ASHA is working with. After my first interaction with Anandniketan at Sevagram, I was asked to go to CFL School Hyderabad. They were having difficulty in maintaining the accounts because their accountant left them suddenly last year.

When I arrived at CFL I was surprised to see the accounts. The two teachers, Subitha and Jayashree, who were looking after the accounts, had maintained a clear and detailed account of the expenses, with bills and neat records. But the way the cash book and the day book were managed was new to me and I had trouble understanding the real situation.

So I asked them if they could rewrite the accounts all in one book in the system that I was familiar with. They agreed to do that and slowly we all got a clear picture of the accounts. Ramgopal and myself managed to enter the accounts in to TALLY. He was able to handle the tally records there after and they are now managing on their own. Ramgopal has asked for another visit sometime in August.

### **The general view of CFL.**

The classes starts from pre- preprimary to 10<sup>th</sup> STD, depend on their age group and there is the bridge group which is a transition phase for the children who has learning difficulties. Presently in CFL there are 65 children and the male and female ratio is 60:40. There are five female and one male teacher in the school. The teacher and the student's ratio is 1:11.

CFL believes that nothing comes free. They collect fees for the children. But the fee is variable, depending on the paying capacity of the parents. The school has students who are from various back round, starting from laborer, below middleclass, middleclass and upper middle class. There are three categories of children- full fee payee, half fee payee and sponsored children. For the half fee paying and sponsored children the balance fee is subsidized by the school.

### **Report on individual child:**

They do not give progress report card to the children. But for the parents request initially they started the color grading as stars. But at times few children got black stars. So they had to give up these color grading. Later they thought that if they wrote the children's year ending report in a descriptive manner it would be the best for all. Having a few guidelines in mind they started to write their descriptive report on their subject knowledge, social participation individual growth and few more things. They also attach the children's own assessment write up with the report which will give a clear picture to the parents.



\* Attached separately is a child's Assessment report as a pdf file.

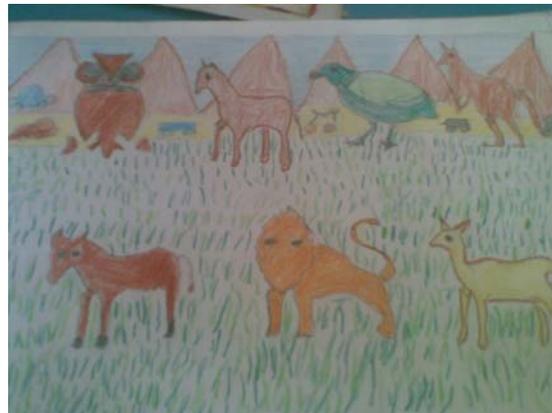


## Feed back from parents

Most of the parents were happy about the teaching method and the way they give individual attention to each child. The parents are feeling good about their children's behavior and the responsibility they take towards the family after attending CFL. They appreciate the way the teachers or Gurveen approach the children's problems. Particularly the sponsored children's parents are very much thankful and impressed by the way their children talk in English because being in the city atmosphere it is a must now. They are happy about the report on the child's progress at the end of the year. If it is a rank card, there will be just the marks mentioned but in the report sheet the parents get a good picture of their child.

## Feed back from older children

The children who studied in CFL and are presently continuing in other main stream schools are missing a lot about CFL. They feel in CFL they got a lot of freedom but in the present school it is not possible. Even though there was no play ground in CFL, they played many games within the available place. But in the present school they have playgrounds but they focus only on studies, the children don't even get a chance at least once a month to play on the ground. The older children are aware of the social issues like building dam across Krishna, the poverty problem, the increase of population and the wide spread diseases of corruption. They keep in touch with the CFL family, and seek advice when ever they have some problem or any issues to discuss. They are welcomed to the school and time is spent to listen and share.



## My observation

The special atmosphere at the school is successful in connecting the various backgrounds of the children. All the children in the school are treated the same. No partiality is shown to any of the children. The children understand the freedom which they get from the teachers and they use the freedom in a proper manner they don't misuse.



All the children communicate in English and talk freely when a stranger comes to the school. Even though they are having children from different backgrounds in the school all the children talk in English.

The first word they say to the child when they show any drawing or painting to the teacher, is the very good and you have done well, this comes from their heart. If it needs any correction then they will say you could have done this way or any thing.

The interesting part is at end of the year. The older children have a review on their academic year. Each child is given a chance to share his or her experience, like what did they learn as a new activity this year apart from the subjects, the fear they over come, the fear still they have, their weakness, their strength and what are they interest in.

But the sad thing is that there is no hold for the school to demand the continuance of the children. Where as the other school have certificates etc through which they can control to some extent the continuation of a child till the end of the term, in CFL some times children stop in the middle of the term. This is putting the child in a very vulnerable position and also upsetting the teachers.

When they were doing the annual day celebration I thought that they may not do well, because there was no proper arrangements for the annual day program and the events were not in order, but at the end I was surprised that they did it so well.

The teacher writes a report at the end of the year for each child instead of the rank card. The parents and the children can get a clear idea of the child's level.

There are few things different in CFL to compare with other alternative schools:

Teacher has a classroom permanently, the children should move to their subjects with the particular text book.

There is no place to play but still the children could play games within whatever the place available in the school itself.

The teachers are given their class as soon as they join and they get trained on the job.

***The school news letter is called Educare- magazine and they circulate it with in the alternative schools.***

### **My questions and discussion on them:**

I had a few questions in my mind and we discussed on it with Gurveen and Ram.

**Q:** I feel there is no vocational activity like clay, carpentry or any thing that will suit for the children, later it will help them for monitory support.

**A:** we tried the clay work in the beginning, but later the cost of clay raised up, we had to pay around 500Rs for a Kg of clay as we are in the city. What ever the clay we had we are reusing in a minimal amount. We are thinking of introducing some vocational training like computer hard ware repairing, electrical repairing and stitching for the children who do not want to study further.



**Q:** Don't the children get bored when they have to move for each subject to a different class?

**A:** Actually they enjoy moving from class to class. It is also more convenient for the teachers since all the material for teaching that subject is in that room and they can cater to the level of the child accordingly. When they move from one class to another we could find they do better in studies.

**Q:** The older children are responding only to Ram or Gurveen. They don't even answer the other teachers. Is it the freedom that teaches to them that do not respond the other teachers?

**A:** We know that only few children behave like that with other teachers, it is not due to the freedom we give, the background in which they come also is to be considered there. We try to talk with the children and we have open talk about this.

**Q:** I understand that CFL has no playground, but can you do some thing else so that the children don't miss the fun of games. Do you think there is a need for drill class?

**A:** we thought about, the other schools have their own play ground but they don't give time to play for the children. But in CFL we don't have a proper play ground but they play a lot with the available place. If there is a need for a particular game the parents should take the responsibility.

**Q:** Is there a need for the children to get exposed to growing any plants with the available place?

**A:** yes, we are thinking of terrace gardening, give each child a pot and a plant or a seed and they can explore with that. This way we can grow little bit of vegetables for our kitchen.

**Q:** I felt in the annual day program the parents of fee paying and the sponsored children did not mingle. What do you say about it?

**A:** We always make a point that all category parents should mingle, but it takes some time for them to understand the situation. Whenever there are a parents and teachers meeting we give both the parents equal space to share.

**Q:** I learnt that few girl children from the sponsored category don't write their 10<sup>th</sup> class, why is this what do you feel about it?

**A:** yes, a few below poverty level girl children are not allowed to write the 10<sup>th</sup> class by their parents. They feel once the child finishes her 10<sup>th</sup> class then the parents are obliged to find a suitable bridegroom, and it costs more dowries. If we go and try to talk with the parents they suspect us. Still we try our best but in few cases we could not do anything.



**Q:** what do you think about the Central Government's new education law? What is the future of CFL?

**A:** If the RTE comes into action and if it comes to it that we have to close the school, we will close it. We wouldn't try for giving bribes and get approval. All our teachers are good at their art and craft work, still we can conduct evening classes or support classes for the children who are interested. I and ram can conduct trainings for the teachers. We will continue our work in education as much as it is possible.

### **My contribution in CFL.**

#### **Accounts:**

My job was to help them to maintain accounts in an easy and systematic way. All the transactions were there but not maintained in an order. Subitha, the science teacher, who maintains the day to day accounts, used to write the accounts, like salaries in one place, donations in one place and fees receipt in one place. We asked her to rewrite the accounts day book again in a proper order, all transactions in one day book. We opened a tally company in the computer, Ram and Subitha got an idea of how to work on Tally. Now Subitha is confident that she can manage to do the accounts.



#### **Science Experiments.**

As CFL children were preparing for their annual day programme. I could not spend much time with them. But Ram and Gurveen asked me to do a science experiment session with the older children. We prepared around 7 simple experiments on water and air pressure. The teachers and the children participated in the experiment session and we asked them to observe each experiment. Then we had discussions on how it works. The highlight of the experiment was the measuring the lungs capacity, everyone tried to know their air blowing ability in one big blow.

#### **A session of flash cards with LKG teachers.**

They are teaching English well; still they wanted to know what this flash card method is. We had a class with the pre primary class teachers, Glory and Jayashree. We shared how flash cards work, word bag activity, alphabet introducing through pictures and making our own picture matching cards. The teachers find it a good method for the children who has some learning problem and in general also.

## **Charka:**

Ram and me could practice on charka every evening as he had the knowledge of charka before from Anand Nikethan, he picked up very easily. As CFL was busy for the annual day I could not practice with them, but we demonstrated to the teachers. They tried to spin and got the feel of thread making.



## **What I learnt:**

I had not seen a good method of reporting on children's progress till I saw the student's assessment report made in CFL. I think it is a good way to express the teacher's observation of the children. The children also have to make an assessment report for themselves. The Over all Review of the year where each child gets to express his or her expectations and interests and then give feed back to the teachers is also new for me.

## **Visit to Usha & Shilajai's natural farm:**

I took the opportunity to visit a small natural farm near Zeherabad. There are two women Usha and Shilaja who are interested in natural farming and they are staying on the farm itself. They live a very simple life. They have one and a half Acres of dry land. I stayed with them for a day and night. The land which they bought in 2003 was just barren and the soil was up to 1 feet depth. Both the ladies are doing a lot of work from morning to evening, both are well educated. Usha is from Karnataka and Shilaja is from Madhiyapredesh, they are not from farming background family, but they feel that land should be cared for. So to create awareness and inspire other people, instead of saying that we have to do farming, they are doing and it.

They live in the hut which is built using the local materials like grass, reeds sugarcane straw and wood which they got form locally. There is no electricity. They have a small solar panel someone donated to them which they use for very minimum lighting. They have a solar cooker and when the sun is not there they use the fire wood stove. The farm is situated in the forest; they have a neighbor who provides water from his boar but only limited. No body is there. In an emergency also, they have to walk 4 km to the road point where they can meet some one. They have planted many trees on their land. Every year in the monsoon season, they grow some amount of toor, jovar ragi and few vegetables. One can sense their hard work on the



farm by looking at the land how it has developed. Usha is interested in working with children and she goes to the neighboring villages on Sundays carrying some books on her cycle and spends some time with kids providing the story books to read and helps them to read. But they are not getting enough from the farm for their livelihood. They are dependent on some friends who provide some monitory support. The beautiful thing is that they have only a few problems. Both are very happy to stay in the farm and to do farm activities. It is not that only these people are struggling, today there are many farmers in India are in this situation. Hope they will succeed in their

venture.

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**FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION PLEASE SEE THE -Detailed report below...**

## ***Detailed report on CFL.***

### **The nature of the school:**

The school is situated in Secunderabad city. Most of the children are from the city back round. They have a concrete two story building with 6 class rooms separately. There is a library cum computer room where children explore their knowledge. Enough toilets are available and there is a helper to keep the campus clean with the help of the children. There is a separate place for making the midday meals with using a LPG stove. Lots of space available on the terrace where they plan to start terrace garden from next year onwards. Not enough place for the children to play and walk around. No place for gardening but good infrastructure.

The classes starts from pre- preprimary to 10<sup>th</sup> STD, depend on their age group and there is the bridge group which is a transition phase for the children who has learning difficulties. Presently in CFL there are 65 children and the male and female ratio is 60:40. There are five female and one male teacher in the school. The teacher and the student's ratio is 1:11.

CFL believes that nothing comes free. They collect fees for the children. But the fee is

variable, depending on the paying capacity of the parents. The school has students who are from various back round, starting from laborer, below middleclass, middleclass and upper middle class. There are three categories of children- full fee payee, half fee payee and sponsored children. For

the half fee paying and sponsored children the balance fee is subsidized by the school. The fee category will be decided by the parent's background. For example their life style, own house, car what kind of work they do etc. There are parents who are not able to pay the sponsored fee and some parents do not pay even though they can pay. They have a proper syllabus of their own. They are not restricted by or limited to following either the state syllabus, NCERT syllabus or ICSE syllabus. They use all these texts as references but do not prescribe any one of these text. Children use multiple texts in the classroom.

Lunch is provided by the school. The food is free for the sponsored children but those who can pay must pay. There is a helper in the school who does cleaning and making lunch with the help of teachers and some time the children also participate in cooking.

**Though there is less space for children to move around they are able play many games and manage quiet well.**

### **Talks with the people**

#### **Gurveen- The founder of CFL.**

I felt there was not real learning in the school where we studied; the schools thought us only the academics. I went through across India, but I was not happy with their system. I had many questions about meaning full education. I believe that learning is fun. So we thought about a meaningful way to learn and a place where the children learn with fun. The thought became reality in February 1982 and we started Center For Learning with 4 kids and we reached 17 in the very first year itself. We registered the organization but



we tried to register the school three times, two times on the state level and one time on the central level. I did not want to give any bribe so we could not get approval for our work form the Government.

### **The methodology**

The teachers approach the children in a friendly manner. First of all we give a lot of love to the children. They are given the chance to decide their subjects for the day. We believe that when we give the responsibility to the children they perform well. They do misuse the freedom and we are constantly trying to figure out how to convey to them the importance of accountability and responsibility in the use of freedom. They have a certain amount of flexibility and freedom to take certain decisions. We do sometimes scold and often need to check and correct children but do not beat or give rigorous physical punishment.



We give individual attention to every child. We go with the child's learning pace. We receive a fair number of children who are having different kinds of learning problems.

Our children feel more secure here. When we scold the children they also know that we scold for a reason only and they realize their mistakes and are willing to have a talk with us. We give individual attention for their personal problems also if it is needed.

We never force our thoughts to the child; they are given space to discuss. Visitors tells us that we give a lot of freedom to the children, but at the same time many fee paying parents feel that we give more learning activities and they ask us to give the subjects little by little at the child's learning pace.

### **Children from the main stream - a bridge course:**

We received children from the main stream. Like the children who had learning problem, dyslexia mostly form fee paying category. Some time we get children as a sponsored child who never gone to school or who works in the houses. Mostly we receive children from fee paying sector who finished 5<sup>th</sup> in the main stream but doesn't know basic alphabet. When we take the child we tell the parents that we don't put them in a class what they have finished in the previous school, but we check their reading ability only we put them in a class, may be lower than the previous class. We get 1- 2 years time from the parents saying that the time is for the child to fit in the school atmosphere. We just go at the child's pace.

We give a lot of co- curricular activities to the children and basically we build their confidence. We work with the child's interest. If the child is interested in drawing we encourage them for a better work. We keep on saying that the drawing is good but they should improve the quality of the drawing and we tell them that they can do better than that. Once they get a good drawing we take them with the same pace to Maths. Now they will be doing a better job. Once the fee paying child gets a little better in their studies, the parents put the children back to the main stream. The parents appreciate our effort, but when they put the child back in the main stream I get frustrated very much. With out the change made completely they change the school. If we are not doing our work properly I could understand, but when the child puts his interest they change the school. I can't take it at all. But still the children who went to other schools who spent some time in CFL are doing well.



**Funding:**

In the beginning Action aid helped us. One English couple Sue and Ian from UK sponsored some amount to buy the land for the school. Later we got funds from SRTT for the running expenses. We also got some local donations on which we could build our corpus a bit. At presently ASHA – Seattle supports us.

**Gender Issues**

We mostly concentrate on female children, take more sponsored female children. If we collect 1000 from a male child for one year, we collect only 500 from a female child. We try our best to give more space for girl children, but the parents come with the idea that we teach good English so they put their male children.

We face a gender issue at the age of 8-10. At this age they are reluctant to sit with the opposite gender. We talk with the children about the problem and we discuss with the teachers in the meeting. Parents withdraw the female children before their 10<sup>th</sup> class. Because they believe that if the girls finish their 10<sup>th</sup> class they have to find a bride groom by paying a lot of dowry. If they don't finish their 10<sup>th</sup> class it is easy for them to find a person for their female children. We try our best, but the parents don't understand. They question us why we are showing so much interest and they suspect us. But still we try our level best.

**Syllabus:**

We have a proper syllabus of our own. We are not restricted by or limited to following either the state syllabus, NCERT syllabus or ICSE syllabus. We use all these texts as references but do not prescribe any one of these text. Children use multiple texts in the classroom.

**Report on individual child:**

We never give progress report card to the children. But for the parents request we started the color grading as stars. But in times few children gets black stars. So we had to give up these color grading. Later we thought that if we write the children's year ending report in a descriptive manner. Having a few guidelines in mind we started to write their descriptive report on their subject knowledge, social participation individual growth and few more things. Also we attach the children's own assessment write up with the report which will give a clear picture for the parents. Few Parents appreciate the kind of evaluation and development reports that we give but most don't like or understand them.

**Educare:**

We started to write news letters every quarter, we thought it just should not be a report. We decided that it should be some thing more than that and it should give knowledge to the other schools. So we started Educare – CFL magazine, and started to issue to the alternative schools and who ever is interested in education.

**Sushma:** An ex –teacher.

I joined as a typist in 1989 when Gurveen was writing a document about CFL. I felt there was a need for a teacher in CFL at that time; personally I don't want to be a teacher. But when I saw the school and their teaching method I got interested. With out text books we taught the children and we never gave any rank card.

We used to give color stars to the children. Later we started one or two line reports along with the stars. The old students Madhu and Narishimah are working in the corporate sector; still they have touch with CFL. Presently I work with Teachers plus magazine. We wish CFL should grow more and more and we keep in touch with CFL as a family member.

**Usha raman-** one of the board member.

I am one of the board members at CFL since last 10 year. Presently I publish a magazine called Teachers plus. It is mainly meant for the mainstream, formal schools. Many alternative schools also subscribe it. We take interest in CFL's growth. As I was a journalist I wrote article about CFL and talked about it with many friends. My children studied here for some time. As a parent I spent some time in the school. Many time we, Gurveen and me had discussion about what is true education? In Educare we discuss about the learning points, the meaning of learning, learning in fun and the adult education. We wrote some children's case study which gave a good idea for these kinds of alternative schools. There are many ifs and buts there in the new Education RTE. But education is fun for all is our concept and CFL will work towards for that.

### **Ramgopal:**

I was not happy as a software engineer, but now with the children I am feeling that I am doing something meaningful. I had interest in children naturally and was interested in education. We had the fear of what would happen if I quit from the corporate job and take up new challenge. The fear was there whether to quit this corporate job and go for some thing which I liked but there were many fears. Once I got a chance to visit Navadharashan, a NGO near Banglore which works on Gandhian concept. There I could meet many people like me and their commitment towards their wishes. So the spark began its flame and got confident. While I was working in Wipro itself I learnt that the company itself runs an educational institution in rural area in Madanappali dt, in AP. I and my wife visited those places and got some idea and I decided to quit.

I stayed in Madhanapalli for a year and participated in some of the activities under Wipro foundation. But I was not happy about the work which I was doing in collaboration with the foundation. Then I learnt about the M.A elementary educational course programme in Tata institute, Mumbai. So I moved to Hyderabad and joined in the course in 2006. I had to do some project in a school and I learnt about Gurveen and CFL at that time. As I was doing my project in CFL I got interested with children and found that this is the right place for me. I decided to teach in CFL. Gurveen was so pleased because she was short of teachers at that time. I am taking Maths and English for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. I am also working on the administrative part like fund raising and writing proposals. I love to play games with the children. We are planning for terrace gardening, one pot for one child.

### **Talk with the other teachers**

**Subitha-** Teacher for science and Maths:

I am a teacher as well as a parent of CFL. My daughter Rithika, studies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and my son Ariman, studies in 1<sup>st</sup> grade here. One of the oldest teachers of CFL, Sushma told about CFL and their need for a science teacher and I saw the advertisement d on the news paper. I contacted Gurveen and joined in CFL in 2005. When I joined in the first week of June there were no children but the teachers were there and they were cleaning the class rooms. Gurveen, the principle was also working along with the teachers. I was puzzled, as I knew there were helpers to do this kind of work in the other schools but here all the teachers were doing. I thought it might be a different school.



I was given a lot of freedom to take my own time to understand the children and it took more than a year for me to settle down. In the beginning I used to teach maths and science for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> group. Later I had to take class for the bridge group children and teach Hindi for all. I knew Hindi, but I was not sure where to start and how to start. I had to work a lot on Hindi teaching. We started to talk a lot in Hindi and we solely started the alphabets. Once they knew a list of simple words

we started to write and once they knew to write the words, we started to construct the small sentences.

We never had any problem due to the different background of the children. But even though we tell the parents in the beginning, some time they come up with some issues like they don't like their children to mingle with the other slum children. We have to talk with the parents and so far we did not have any major problem.

But one thing I feel even the others also feel that when we provide some eggs to the children, who eats midday meals, some time the fee paying small kids comes asks for the egg. We feel bad about not giving egg to the fee payee children but still we give them. Once we had a meeting with the parents that we will provide the midday meals for all, may be the fee payee children has to bear the cost for their food. Most of the parents did not agree for that. After that incident we started to give eggs for all.

We also face some bad language problem because of the slum children, complained by the fee payee parents. We had to talk a lot in the students meeting now it has reduced quiet a bit.

Every year end we give report on the children, as how they performed, their social involvement, reading skills, under standing and hoe much they learnt this year. It helps the child, parents and the teacher also where the child's level is. Based on this we give promotion for the child.

**Jaya** – Teacher of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class.

I joined in CFL as a typist in 94. After a few months Gurveen asked me to take part in the class activity and I slowly started to take the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class. I studied up to 12<sup>th</sup> class but I never talked in English, but after I joined here I developed my English knowledge. I had no experience in teaching, I used to observe the older teacher, Sushma's class and I learnt a lot. I used to discuss with Gurveen when ever I had some doubt, she is always helpful and kind to us. It took a long time for me to fit in the classroom.

Presently I work with the age group of 5 to 7 and I also teach Telugu for the bridge course children. We don't follow any text book for the children based on their ability we use our own material. I use seeds, sticks and wooden blocks to teach Maths. As we have children from different background we use both the language, Telugu and English, they learn quickly when we use both the language. They all understand what I say in English and many of them reply in English. In CFL we give individual attention to every child.

We have children from the main stream schools who, have learning problems but here they are doing well. The sad part of this is that once the parents know that their children are getting a little better suddenly they put them in the main stream again. They do well in their other school as well.

**Glory-** Teacher LKG & UKG

I am a teacher and a parent also. My daughter and my son are studying here. We are from a poor background and in the beginning we paid 500 per year under the sponsored children scheme. I studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> class. I used to come to school everyday and do some cleaning work. As I was coming everyday, Gurveen asked me if I am interested I can take part in the lower class and teach. There was a teacher in the KG section and I used to help her in the class. Suddenly she stopped and I had to handle the whole class from then on. Gurveen helped me to take classes whenever I had some trouble. After I joined in CFL, I learnt English and became confident. I also learnt drawing, painting and a lot of rhymes in English and Telugu. Presently I am working with 2 and half to 5 age group.

I use stones, leaves and beads to teach small-big, long -short and other things using the locally available materials. We start English alphabet in the LKG level. We start on letter say 'a' and we introduce at least 10 words stars with a. if they know about 10 alphabets we give them the writing practice. We never give them any home work, what ever the writing work is there, we make them to write in the class itself. We expect the children in LKG should know up to 9 but they know more than that.

Children in UKG should know numbers up to 20. My class children can recite 5 nursery rhymes in English, Telugu and few in Hindi. We talk a lot with the children in English. Few children can follow our English and can repeat to us.

In my class I never felt the difference between the different background children. I am happy to be a part of CFL family.

### **Jayashree:**

I have finished my 12<sup>th</sup> class. I joined in CFL in 2006 when I came for my children's admission. I have two boys who had some learning problem in the mainstream school. When my sons came here for admission Gurveen told us that she can't put them in the class in which they had come from the other schools. By then my older son finished 5<sup>th</sup> and my younger son finished 4<sup>th</sup>. But here Gurveen checked their level and told they were at the level of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. So they started in that level and after 3 years bridge course they could do well.

I started to help a bit in the administrative work in the beginning and slowly I participated in teaching Telugu for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. It took me more than one year to take up a full class. Now I teach Telugu for the regular children and for the bridge course children also.

I have never gone for training and we learnt everything in CFL itself with the help of Gurveen. The only problem we have is that a few older children don't listen to the other teachers like me or Glory. But if the same thing Ram or Gurveen tells they listen. Still we do tell them what is right and what is wrong.

We don't believe in punishment. If at all we are giving some punishment, we send them out of the classroom for a while. We never followed rank cards in our school. As I told you for my own children in the other schools gave rank in the 15<sup>th</sup> place or 7<sup>th</sup> place. But when we checked their reading and writing skills separately they were not doing what we asked. So in CFL we write each individual child's reading, writing, Maths and other co-curricular activities in a proper report in which the parents can get a clear picture of their children. Still I feel I have to improve my language skills a bit.

### **The unique system in CFL**

#### **Different class room for the teachers:**

As we know the teacher should go to the class room when the period changes, but in CFL the children should move to one class room to another for their next class. There is a room given to the teacher and he/she stays in the same room with the teaching and learning materials and the children should move from one class room to the other where their subject teacher is. This is a quiet interesting but a lot of struggle for the child to move from one place to another with their bags. LKG and UKG don't need to change their class because they have only one teacher for their class.

#### **English:**

There are children from various back ground, but mostly all the children can speak well in English. From the pre kg itself the teachers are instructed to talk in English with the children. By the time they reach 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> they are talking fluently. The bridge course children are doing their best to talk in English and even performed a drama in English on their Annual Day.

#### **Different back round of the children- the culture:**

There are children from upper middle class, middle class and even below poverty line in CFL. There are many opportunities for the children to learn from the differences in their lives. When Guveen talked about this issue she said that only few parents told that they like everything in CFL except the sponsored children. They believe that the rich children are learning bad things from the poor children. But it never happens. We don't believe it, we tell them in the beginning about our conditions. There is no real problem among the children; it is the parents who create some problem. Very few parents leave the school due to this mixed background.

## Annual day:

As I mentioned, the whole school was practicing for their annual day from more than 3 weeks, still they made many mistakes when they practiced. Only one time they practiced on the stage in an order from the beginning to end with. They did not organized properly. The materials were not used on right time. But the teachers were engaged all the time with the children for the preparation.



It was a wonderful show to the audience from the CFL children, though they did not show much interest in organizing the dramas initially, but on the annual day they did it well. One could sense the teacher's hard work behind the program. The way they organized on the last minute, was excellent. The children had no fear to talk and they took initiative to come on the stage and conducted the program.

When the children had their annual day review, many children shared their mistakes. Many children told that they forgot to tell the dialogue on the right place on a right time. But I feel those are the beautiful events in the whole thing. Because I felt it was natural and it was so nice to see children

as children as in their natural way.

The bridge course children who are learning English only now, done a drama called Raja's Mustache, in English. This is the first time they are doing a drama in English and they done well.

There were parents, friends, old student's parents, neighbors and well wishers of CFL visited the annual day program. A silent but meaningful, cultural program, which all the viewers showed their happiness by clapping. Each child in the school got a chance to climb on the stage. The most important thing in the event is that no teacher or adult came to the stage to communicate or compeer. Everything was done by the children in a beautiful way.

I feel this annual day program is the exam and the audience claps are the result for the children.

## Children's overall year end Review:

Each year whole of CFL, the teachers and as well as the children do their whole year planning like what are they going to do this year, what are the learning points, what they want to improve. This is like planning for the year, not only for the teachers but for the children also and here they both discuss and decide. End of the year they again review their goals.

But they review is not only on subjects, it is more on the personal development of the child. They are given chances to share their experience, their fear and the fear which they overcome, behavioral changes, their strength, their weakness, their interest, any thing that they learnt new, which they don't like, any attitude that the child should change, the bad habit which they realized and dropped and what they did to improve by themselves. It is an open discussion to the whole of the school. All the teachers and the children participate and share their experience with out any fear. Few children have some hesitation to share but they are given time to think.



## A few children's review:

### Student -1.

Fear: I have fear in Maths subject. Every one in my class is ahead of me, but I take a long time to understand the problem.

Overcome:

I used to hit other children and I made almost 3 fights a day. Now I reduced it to 3 fights a week. I used to beat every one in the school even if they are little older than me also. But now I am having fights only with my equal age children. With out fight I don't feel happy about the day, I know nobody likes it, but if I don't have fight then I feel bad. It takes some time for me to come out of it. Gurveen and Ram anna are helping me to overcome of this habit. Strength: I can control my anger quiet well now but before it was difficult for me. Reading books is my interest.

### **Student -2**

I had fear about few teachers in the school. But now I am not feeling fear of them. They are so friendly and kind to us. But still I feel little fear when Ramanna scolds some one in the class. I am good at my stitching and my drawing. Still I am not able to write on my own.

### **Student -3**

I used to be rude with other children. Now I have come out of that. I reduced beating of my sister and brother. I am interested in drawing and dancing. I Cook well. When the older children use some bad words I get angry. Still I feel fear about Ram anna .

### **Student -4**

I used to interfere when two people were talking, now I learnt to ask excuse me. I am good at my studies this year. Still I have fear to talk with teachers. Reading books is my strength.

### **Interviews with the parents:**

#### **Parent -1**

My grand daughter joined in CFL last year in August. There are five schools near our house, but when my daughter visited those schools for admission, she found that there were no proper teachers to take care of the children. They made the children to sit in one corner and provide some play material and there will be a care taker who will be with them just watching the children. We were not happy about those schools. There is a girl near my house who studies in CFL and told about the school. When my daughter visited CFL, she could see how the teachers are giving individual attention to the children and got impressed. So we put my grand daughter here.

I bring the child and stays here till she finishes her class. I got interested in the school activity and started to teach spellings for 4<sup>th</sup> class. I am also working with the bridge course children for their English spellings. My grand daughter doesn't know Telugu. She speaks only in English. So the other children have to speak in English with her for communication. I feel so good when the children talk with each other in English, because it is a must now a days. But I feel CFL has to improve a bit on spoken English, because I could find some grammatical error when the older children talk. Children pickup language by listening, here there is so much conversation in English, and they should concentrate on it.

We never had any problem of the poor children in the school. She never learnt any bad habits from them. The good thing she learnt is sharing with others and saying goodbye to all when she leaves school. The teachers here are all very amicable.

#### **Parent – 2**

We moved to Hyderabad from a village near west Kothavari dt, just two months back. I don't know much about CFL. I work in a house as a helper. The house owner told about the school and we are under sponsored child scheme. My daughter was studying in a school in the village and they used to give a lot of home work everyday. But here they don't give any home work. I don't know how they will study with out

giving home work. If the children reads well then there is no need for home work. I don't know much about CFL's teaching methodology, I have to talk with the teacher later. We are expecting our child to study well, because both my husband and myself studied only up to 10<sup>th</sup> class. We support her for her studies what ever she wants to study.

### **Parent – 3**

My older son joined in CFL 4 years back. He used to quit the classes in the pervious school and he had some learning problem. So we put him in this school. After two years I put my other two children also in the same school. I work in a house as a house maid and my husband works in marketing agencies. Even though we both earn, we still have monitory problem. We pay the sponsored amount, for that also we have crises and we have not yet paid fully.

Few years back my older son never listens to me. I told to Gurveen and Ram about this they talked with him. Now he behaves properly.

Children in CFL learn a lot of art and craft work. They sing well and dance well. My children started to read well after joining in CFL. Before they used to demand for many things but now after joined in CFL they never demand for any thing. There is no problem about my children mingling with other children.

### **Parent – 4**

I am working as a house maid and I have three children, two boys and a girl. They are studying here since last 6 years. We are under sponsored children's scheme. When my children were studying in the pervious school, they did not listen to my words, but now after joining in CFL they listen to my words and they do most of the house work. My elder son cooks at home whenever it is needed and he washes his own clothes. I feel good about my children. I am sure my son learnt cooking only form CFL. I was living separately from my husband for a while, but soon he came back but we had a lot of fights. Our children got disturbed, but they are aware of their father's behavior. Now he has changed and children are happy and so close to him. My husband buys whatever my children ask. One time My older son asked for a cell phone saying that his friends in the school are having, it took a while but we bought one for him. But he never takes it to the school.

Some time all my children become adamant which I had to talk with Gurveen and Ram, after that they behave properly. My older son is interested in painting, but I insist him to study. My other two wants to become teachers. We are lucky hat we have CFL and I used to beat my children when they are adamant but now I stopped. CFL teaches good things to my children, they never talk any harsh words.

### **Parent – 5**

My son studies in 4<sup>th</sup> group in CFL. I learnt about Gurveen through one of my friend and after my son joined in the school I started to volunteer for a year. The children in CFL have more freedom to compare with other schools but they know their limit. My son is good at his other subjects except Telugu, he at the level of first grade in Telugu. The beautiful thing in CFL, the teachers go to the child's level and teach them. I used to teach English and maths for the bridge group. I plan to volunteer this year also. I am happy about CFL and I am proud to say that I am a part of this family.

## **Interview with the older students:**

### **Ex- Student -1**

Now I am doing my CEC- in Inter collage. Before I joined in CFL I was studying in an English medium school. There I finished my 6<sup>th</sup>, but I was not able to read well and had a lot of understanding problem. I was lost in that school. My parents were worried about my condition. We learnt about CFL through our relatives and I joined in CFL in 2003. When I joined here I felt this school is different from my pervious school. The teachers in CFL treated me like a friend. I learnt craft and drawing apart from subjects which helped me build up my self-confidence.

I was a fee paid student in this school. As my parents are degree holders they could keep an eye on my studies and I could do well in my studies. I could make friendship with all kind of children here starting

from poor to rich. We were 14 or 15 in our class when we studied in CFL, we get individual attention. But where I study now there are more than 70 students in one class and the teachers write the sums on the board if we understand or not we have to write and mug up the whole thing. I don't like the way they write the question and the answers on the board, they never explain what it is. If we ask for explanation also they tell us to just mug up and write the answers.

I would like to keep in touch with CFL after I finish my studies and I am interested in sports. So I would like to teach some sports activity to the children at CFL. I would like to become a chef.

Social issue:

I feel that the farmers should sell the vegetables directly to the consumers. There should not be any middle men in the business. The farmer works hard and the people like Reliance buys from them and they get a lot of profit. I would like to make awareness about it with my friends and with other people.

### **Ex- Student -2**

At presently I am doing my 10<sup>th</sup> class in CRPF. Up to 4<sup>th</sup> std I studied in a English medium school and adjoined in CFL in my 5<sup>th</sup> class. The teachers here take interest in every child. There are many co-curricular activities going on here. I loved art class and learnt to draw well. But in my present school there is only time for studies. I like the way they teach in CFL. They don't make us to mug up like what we do now in the present school. The teachers would try their best to make us to understand the lessons. All the teachers are so friendly with the children.

I personally feel children in CFL should get more computer knowledge. CFL doesn't give a valid certificate; they are not a recognized school. It is a problem for further studies in the state board government. So I had to skip the school. Now I have to focus on my studies well and I will be writing an entrance exam for my higher studies. If children play in CFL also they will be studying well. But I don't get any time to play in my school.

I often read in the news that what ever the mistake one does, if they have the power of money they can pay as bribe and can escape from the law. This should change. The culprits should be punished. Still children at the age of 10 and above are working in the construction site and other places. The government says they do a lot of work on child labor but they have to do something seriously about this.

### **Ex- Student -3**

I studied in CFL from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>. My father is an educationist and he works with the tribal children. He knows about Gurveen and the concepts of CFL. He is so much interested in this kind of system so he put me here. We never had exams in CFL, but when I played with my other friends near my house they used to laugh at me. Then I used to think why this CFL School doesn't have exams. It was difficult to understand then but now I understand that all these exam systems are useless. I can't see any point why do we have exams. The exam knowledge is only for two days. All the matters are there in the books. There is no outside knowledge taught to us in the mainstream school where I am now. I was an average student at CFL and the same today also. I am not bothered about getting good marks. I would like to do some research on language so no need to worry about marks.

No need to mug up subjects at CFL, but in the present school we have to mug up things which we don't understand. Mostly I try to understand the concept like I used to do in CFL.

When we are in CFL we participated in various social issues. Once we went to the big lake near Secunderabad having candles in our hands and prayed for a natural calamity. I love the freedom which we had in CFL. We had the freedom to decide what to do for the day. But we did keep our responsibilities in our mind. But at presently we have to follow the instruction. The dictators give us instruction and we have to follow the instruction which I hate it, I believe if sit at home I could spend my time in a use full way. Inrelation with language research, if its needed I would like to spend some time in CFL and want to contribute to the school in teaching after my research.

The AP government is going to build a big dam across the river Krishna near Kammam. I understand that building dams are good in some sense but it is a big problem and nonsense for the people and the tribal who are living in that area from ages. The tribal in that area are innocents and illiterate, but the government is interested only in money. I would like to make awareness about this among the people.

**Ex- Student -4**

I have written my 10<sup>th</sup> exam this year from Sunflower school. My father works in a private concern and mother runs her own food shop. My parents learnt about CFL in a magazine and they put me here in LKG and up to 7<sup>th</sup> I was here. Then I felt there were no friends so I had to move to another school. Apart from studies we learnt many co-curricular activities like painting and drawing. I could mingle with all kind of children at CFL. CFL teaches in a different way, they teach not only from the text books, they refer from other resources also. The teachers are so friendly with us and we share all our happiness and sorrows with them. I am missing the teaching method in the present school. But when I went to the new school I found all my classmates were at the level of 4<sup>th</sup> grade children in CFL school. They did not know anything about the outside world except the books knowledge. There is partiality even in the schools. We never felt about that when we studied in CFL.

I often come to CFL to discuss with Gurveen if I have any problem, now also I have to discuss about my future plan with her she will guide me in a proper line. She knows personally everyone in the school. But in the other school nobody cares for us. Only one thing I missed in CFL when I studied was the playground.

**Ex- Student -5**

I have finished my 9<sup>th</sup> class in Indus world school. I joined in CFL in my first grade because my parents learnt about this school through some friends and my brother has some bone problem. They were searching for a proper school because it was a problem for my brother to mingle with other children, they might push him down.

So they were happy to put him in CFL and I also joined here. We got individual attention in the school. We are feeling that we are a part of CFL family even though we have left to other schools. We got a lot of freedom in CFL and learnt many things by doing. In the present school also we got freedom in the beginning but the students started to misuse. So they became very strict.

Corruption is the main problem in the society I feel and we should not bribe for any thing any where.

**Ex- Student -6**

I joined in CFL when I was 10 year old kid. I came from a village and I knew Telugu only at that time and I was living with my grand mother at that time. I don't have a father. I was a sponsored child. We learnt everything in fun. I still practice drawing and stitching at home which I learnt at CFL. We never had any problem in the school while mingling with the middle class and upper middle class children. We could make friendship with everyone. In the beginning, I felt a bit left out but as time went I just picked up. Teachers in CFL are open to listen to our problem.

**Ex- Student -7**

I joined here in my 3<sup>rd</sup> class. The school was close to my house. I enjoyed every activity in the school. In CFL I never felt any discrimination. I made friends and enjoyed our studies. If don't understand some lessons the teacher would take personal interest and explain to me. The teaching methods and the teachers are different in the present school. The approach towards the children was different and the teachers were very lovingly in CFL. If we make any mistake the teacher never punished us. But they feel guilty about that. Some time they give punishment to them like not coming to the class or not talking with the students. So that time we felt guiltier than the teachers. CFL is an open place to understand each individual's problem.

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....Thank you....