

July 21, 2005

Dear Friend,

Greetings from Ananda Bharathi. We reopened on 13th June this year, with 26 children, five of them being new entrants. These new children came from the neighbourhood as a result of teachers' visits during the first week of June. They have adjusted well and are very happy to be with us.

This year, there are fewer girls in higher classes. The middle level group has around 12 children and the youngest group has 10 children. Kanakamma, our senior most child is appearing for 7th public examination this year. Three other children Swapna, Shanthi and Rama will be appearing for 7th public examination in March 2007.



Sailaja has been giving more time for the school and is helping Janaki in the school administration. Venkatesh, a teacher working with another NGO has joined us to teach Mathematics and Physics for the seniors. Jyothi continues to teach Mathematics and Telugu for the middle level. Madhavi comes once a week to teach specific topics in science with a view to developing scientific thinking in the children. This has been giving encouraging results. Anuradha has completed M.A in Sociology from Dr Ambedkar Open University. She continues to handle the youngest group. Manisha continues to teach Hindi once a week. She has a group of four children doing the 7th class Hindi and another group of 10 beginners. The tailoring class continues to work 12:30 – 2:00, three days a week, under the guidance of Vishalam and Padmavathi.

We continue to support our girls who are in higher classes in schools and colleges. Vanaja and Manjula who have joined the Lalapet government school passed the 7th class public examination and joined 8th class as regular students. Lalita and Maria are in class X at Kamala Memorial High School. Thirupathamma and S. Anitha have completed Intermediate and joined college for graduation. Premalatha, Yadalakshmi and Venkatamma are in the second year of graduation and Ruthamma is in the final year. Yadalakshmi got married last month and is continuing her studies.



For the girls doing graduation, change in medium and the pressures at home are the challenges in coping with their academic load. We are able to help these girls to an extent financially due to the support extended by all of you. We continue to talk to their parents to help the children adjust to the change from hostel to home.

One of our children Bamma went through a crisis. Her father died of AIDS in the village and according to their belief she was to be dedicated to the temple and made into a Jogini. This came as a shock to us when we heard about it; with the help of a local NGO working at Mahbubnagar we were able to prevent this and get Bamma back to the city and to Ananda Bharathi.

Thanks to the contribution from some of you, we were able to provide better food and nutrition for Kanakamma and she is back in school completely cured of T.B.

It is a matter of recognition to Ananda Bharathi also that Sreekumar has been requested by Sir Ratan Tata Trust to be the reviewer and member of the project review committee of a project of the AS Rao Awards Council, Hyderabad. This 3-year project is to enhance the capacity of high school Mathematics & Science teachers in government schools in Mahbubnagar district.

In the financial year 2004-05, our income from donations and interest was about Rs. 3.6 Lakhs. Donation included \$1500 from Asha. This year Rishta Foundation, USA has extended us support

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by a donation of \$1500. There was a lot of delay in receiving permission from the Home Ministry to accept foreign donations. We thank our auditors and our friend Nivedita for helping us complete all required formalities.

Contributions

Kamakshi Balasubrahmanyam, a teacher in the American British Academy at Muscat has been a friend of Ananda Bharathi since long. She sponsored a field trip with the contribution made by the children in class VI of her school. She initiated a correspondence between children of both the schools. We thank Kamakshi for her initiative as these activities help in widening the horizon of the children at both the ends.

Rajesh from Wipro initiated the move to build up a library for the school. Towards this he contributed books and play material. If we get a place with sufficient space we will be in a position to accept his offer of cupboards and equipment for a full-fledged library.

Events

On Independence Day, our girls welcomed the guests in Hindi and Telugu. Two senior girls spoke about Independence Day and formation of Andhra Pradesh. A group of children made the Andhra Pradesh map and spoke about the different districts. They also spoke about the boundaries and major rivers of AP. The senior children scripted and enacted a play titled "Palle baagu", centered on the migration of villagers to the cities. The play portrayed various problems related to housing and livelihood faced by migrants. The play ended with the people returning to their native village and appreciating the efforts made for the betterment of the villagers. There was a Hindi song "Insaf ki dagar se" sung by all the children. The younger children enjoyed performing a dance about a village boy with a desire to go to school.



On 5th September, Suresh from WASSAN (a voluntary organization working on watershed management) spoke on watershed programmes. The session was highly informative and interactive.

On Gandhi Jayanthi, two senior girls spoke about the life and work of Gandhi. Kalpana brought out the important fact that – to Gandhi, economic independence and social reforms were as important as political freedom. In the context of social reforms, the children prepared posters on eye-care and discussed the need for awareness of the problem of blindness.

On 14th October, World Sight day, 24 children and five teachers went to Vidyaranya High school to attend a programme conducted by L.V. Prasad Eye Institute. Our girls were delighted to see their posters on display.



Sparklers were distributed to the children on the occasion of Deepavali. On the eve of Christmas, some of our children narrated the story of Christmas and sang a few songs.

On children's day, Chaitanya (Sailaja's son), a doctor in the making, spoke to our girls. He explained to the children about the skeletal system using the jigsaw of the human body. Chaitanya was able to reach out to all the girls with the clarity of his

expression. Kamakshi Balasubrahmanyam visited the school on the same day. She was impressed by Chaitanya's presentation and the children's interest and involvement.

In the first week of January, Sarita, one of our friends conducted a drawing session in the school. Children and teachers enjoyed the session.

On 8th January, there was an exhibition cum sale of the articles made in the sewing section. This year bags with a different design with mirror work and zip were the special attraction. The sale was patronised by friends and neighbours.

On 26th January, Annie Namala visited the school. She spoke about her visit to Nagapatnam, a coastal village in Tamil Nadu which was devastated by the Tsunami, using a collage of newspaper cuttings. Her detailed description on the process of salt making and the differences in prices at the makers' and the consumers' end helped the children understand the exploitation by the middle men. The programme ended with a few songs and a dance by the youngest group.

Venkat, an expert in permaculture and author of a book on Composting visited the school on 7th February. The children were already familiar with the book and could relate very well to his talk on safeguarding the ecological balance. The compost that they had prepared during this session was used for the Science day.



On Science day the children demonstrated experiments in different areas that they have studied in the class. Some of them showed experiments related to water in its three states. Others showed the usage of the Thermometer, of solar lamp and explained the working. The youngest group spoke about housing, climate and water cycle and demonstrated experiments on water. The senior children spoke on pollination, vegetative reproduction with the help of drawings. They displayed a sample of the compost made by them and explained the process of making it.

Reaching Out

On 4th July, Sailaja attended a workshop on "Child Rights and Law for Social Justice" conducted by DISHA, an organization working for child rights.

This year the annual Network meeting was held at CFL, Hyderabad in the month of November. Ananda Bharathi co-hosted the meeting. The topic for discussion was "Language and Culture". The meeting was well attended and gave us a chance to meet new friends. Vasant Palshikar's illness and his absence cast a shadow over the meeting. We felt the absence of Vidya Patwardhan and others from Pune.

On 12th February, Janaki visited All India Radio along with Yadalakshmi and Premalatha, old students of Ananda Bharathi. Both the girls spoke about their initial days at the school and expressed their happiness to have studied. Janaki also spoke about the school and its uniqueness. This was recorded to be broadcast as part of a series on school education.

In the month of November we collected the contribution from teachers and children towards Street Children's carnival organized by HCHW. The children were very prompt in their response to participate in this gesture.

Outings

We went on a trip to the Nehru zoological park on 2nd April. Shailesh from Wipro accompanied us. In a supportive gesture the Hyderabad region of AP State Road Transport Corporation provided a bus at a concessional rate. The zoo continues to captivate our children's attention. They were amazed at the white tiger with its three cubs and the white peacocks. They enjoyed the boat ride in the Mir-Alam tank. We were heartened to find that all the children remembered their experiment to demonstrate the Plimsol line and were cautious about not overloading the boat.

The senior children and three teachers went to the Gramasree Mela organized by CAPART and MSS. It was an exhibition cum sale of articles made by village women. The girls admired the work done by the women and also understood the need to eliminate middlemen.

We had a session of painting on wet paper on 27th April, which the children enjoyed. On 28th April, we had the mothers gathering at the school. Our girls who are at different colleges and schools spoke to the mothers and explained the importance of sending their children to school regularly. The school closed on 28th April for summer vacation.

In the month of May, we searched in the neighbourhood for a suitable place as the current one is small and has severe water shortage, but we did not succeed. We had two MBA students Deepthi and Naseer Ali from Loyola College helping us to prepare Mathematics learning material for beginners. These students who came to us through Bhuvanewari of CSIM also helped us to consolidate addresses and other details of donors and well wishers of Ananda Bharathi.

In May - June we participated in a household survey conducted in Nacharam, H.M.T Nagar, and Tarnaka organized by local groups working for prevention of child labour. The survey was to identify children who are out of school. We found that some children are also kept in their employer's homes and they have no childhood to speak of. Experiences such as these help us appreciate the magnitude of the problem and strengthen our resolve to continue and expand our work at Ananda Bharathi.

Yours truly,

Janaki N Iyer

