

July 14, 2003

Dear Friend,

The situation in Ananda Bharathi changes each year, as per the fresh enrolments. This year the school turned livelier with the younger group aged 6 to 10 increasing in number. This meant re-adjusting of workload of the teachers and a change in the overall planning to cater to the needs of the younger children. It is also encouraging that we will have more children to be prepared for mainstream.

Currently we have 40 girls and 9 teachers - 5 full time and 4 part time. Lalitha and Maria have passed and joined 8th class in an aided school close to their homes. Sailaja has put in extensive effort for these admissions, which included convincing the school management to give concession in the admission and monthly fees, convincing the parents to support the girls etc. Anita failed in Mathematics and Social studies. We are persuading her to continue tailoring classes with us.

Four out of the five students, who have appeared for the Prathama examination conducted by Dakshin Bharath Hindi Prachar Sabha, have passed. This is very encouraging and Manisha will now teach the girls in class VII Hindi. She has also begun teaching a batch of beginners hoping to lead them to the Prathama examination next year.

The teenage group continues their lessons relating to general science with Sailaja. Concurrently, they are also improving their skills in Telugu. Many girls have joined at the entry level and are with Anuradha. Jyothilakshmi has joined us in October as a teacher assistant to help her. Jyoti, another new teacher is taking Mathematics for the senior girls. Madhavi's baby, Tholakari arrived on the day of the Class VII Mathematics examination, much to our delight. The little one cooperated, so that Madhavi could help the children till the day before she arrived! Since Madhavi will be away for a year, we need help to teach Mathematics and Physics for the Class VII examination.

News from our girls at the Social Welfare Residential Schools: Ruthamma, Premalatha, Sobha and Venkatamma have completed Intermediate with a first division. Except Sobha the three girls have taken admission into Sarada Degree college, to pursue graduation. Sobha is trying for admission into Nursing. Anita and Thirupathamma have passed Class X in first division. Anitha has joined the Gowlidoddi college for Intermediate with Commerce, Economics and Civics and Thirupathamma has joined the Mahendra Hills college with Maths, Physics and Chemistry. Rajamma who was earlier with Ananda Bharathi and now in a private aided school, could not clear all the class X subjects. It was heartening to see the readiness with which our senior children offered help. These children had just returned from hostels for the holidays, and willingly spent time teaching Rajamma for the instant exams.

Our fund raising efforts this year has been fruitful, thanks to many of you. A sum of Rs Three lakhs has come from Yogi, Aravinda & friends. ASHA, USA had shown interest to consider funding our efforts. This year we got a sum of \$1000 from ASHA for which we got the FCRA clearance.

Interest rates continue to fall and the monthly interest of 8000 rupees is sufficient only to meet half of our monthly expenditure. So, we continue to rely on your donations to meet the shortfall as well as to increase the corpus.

Events

We received two cycles from our friends at Anveshi. Our girls enjoyed learning and teaching cycling. The few who knew to cycle took turns to initiate others.

Independence Day was celebrated with enthusiastic participation from the children. The senior girls spoke about India, our Constitution and other countries in Asia. The larger group made the India Map. An outline of India was made on a brown sheet and each girl spoke about 2-3 states and pasted them on the sheet like a jigsaw. The children could see India coming together in front of their eyes. This year there was a significant Hindi component with welcome speech, songs, poems etc. On 5th September, Teacher's day, we had a discussion on discipline.

On 2nd October, Kondapalli Koteswaramma, a freedom fighter and a writer was invited to talk about Gandhi. The children were greatly impressed by her account of meeting Gandhi as a child, her involvement in the freedom struggle and her experiences in jail. She also spoke about important incidents from Gandhi's childhood. Later on the children wrote a letter to her appreciating her talk. In the words of Bhavani, a 15 year old "I could see Gandhi when she was talking".

During October, Dr. Meena Hariharan had two interactive sessions with the teachers, on building teamwork and on each one being able to contribute her best. She also gave valuable ideas for effective communication among teachers and with the children.

On 14th November, Sailaja read out a piece relating to Nehru's life to the children. Dr. Sagari Ramdas, a veterinary doctor who works with the tribals in East Godavari district visited the school. She taught the girls a few Telugu tribal songs and Hindi Songs. The girls picked up the songs readily and enjoyed singing.

This year we had the annual sale on 14th December, which was well attended. All the items were sold out and like every year, the proceeds were set aside for the tailoring section.

Due to the academic pressure of sending children for class VII examination in March and Prathama in February, we could not spare much of children's time in the Republic Day preparations. Sarada Srinivasan, well-known for her reading over the All India Radio was invited. She read out parts from a Telugu novel, "Hridayanetri" covering the period between pre-independence and post independence. Vyaghreswara Rao, a senior scientist at NGRI talked about his Antarctica expedition through an interesting slide show.

National Science Day at Ananda Bharathi was different this year. The children formed into groups and did simple experiments and spoke about various topics of interest and relevance to their own lives. Children carried out experiments relating to Air, Light and Germination. They spoke about flowers, pollination, mosquito & housefly with their lifecycles, diseases spread by them and precautions to be taken. The children spoke extensively on eye-care. We invited the mothers of our girls and friends of the school to the exhibition. We also invited the Principal of Sanghi Vidya Niketan, an English Medium School in the neighbourhood. It was encouraging to us that the Principal of a formal school took time off from the daily activities to bring the children of 9th class to the exhibition. A festive air enveloped the school from the moment the program was announced. The children helped each other with their charts, experiments and presentation with enthusiasm. Their team spirit and striving to excel both individually and collectively made the day memorable for teachers and students. It boosted the morale of the girls and also the teachers. Mothers participated enthusiastically, asked questions and discussed the exhibition. In the words of a student, Shyamala, "We celebrated it like a festival".

On 1st October, 27-year-old Shantayya who has been associated with the school right from the beginning (as a Carpenter, Electrician, an all-in-all) died of electrocution while working in a private house. We were quite overcome with this tragedy. His daughter, Sumati studies in our school. The network of supporters of Ananda Bharathi pitched in and helped to create a fund for the family.

Outings

On the occasion of World Sight Day on 11th October, L.V. Prasad Eye Hospital organised an exhibition at the Birla Science Centre. There were video shows on Glaucoma and other eye diseases. As these were in Telugu, the girls enjoyed themselves and learnt a great deal. All the girls got their eyes tested and those who had serious problems were referred to the hospital. Vanaja, a new admission to the school, went to the hospital and had a surgery later. We benefited from the hospital's scheme of free treatment for the underprivileged.

On 2nd November, we took the younger children to a park near the school. There were cement figures of elephants, a giraffe and a dinosaur and a merry-go-round. There was tall grass and the little ones somersaulted, rolled and enjoyed themselves. They were very reluctant to leave and asked to be allowed to spend the night there!

On 15th November, five of our senior girls and Anuradha went to meet the girls of Mahila Samata who were in Hyderabad for a meeting. Hearing them speak about the challenges they had faced, our children were inspired to share their own experiences.

On 8th March, the school went on a trip to Golconda. Janaki and Madhavi could not go on this trip, but there were enough friends volunteering to help the teachers. It was an enjoyable outing and the children were at their cooperative best.

Reaching out

This year we made a novel attempt to reach out to the employers of our girls. We sent them New year greetings prepared at school, with information about what the girl is learning and general school activities. Through this effort,

we have requested the employers to extend their support. While it is true that there was not much response from any of the employers, we could see that this attempt meant a lot to our children.

On 3rd February a seminar was held at Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL). Janaki addressed one of the plenary sessions on the Curriculum for Primary Classes. It was well received by the audience consisting of delegates from different parts of India.

Andhra Jyothi, the Telugu daily that was revived this year, carried a half-page article on Ananda Bharathi. Asra Shaheen of Newstime, a local newspaper came to the school and spent two afternoons. Her article covered the school activities very well. Our activities were also covered by WOW Hyderabad and Femina.

An account of our Science Day celebration in school written by our teachers was published in Teacher Plus of March/April '03 and the recent edition of Chaduvu. Ananda Bharathi was covered by Television on 8th March, International Women's Day. There were shots of some of the teachers explaining the school activities.

Our Visitors

C.S. Lakshmi of SPARROW, Mumbai who has been collecting women's writings from all over the country, visited the school on 11th July. She spoke about her work and the children asked several questions.

Dr. Lalitha Iyer visited the school on 24th October, to share her experiences in Kenya. She went to Kenya as a part of a team to find out how women contributed in maintaining peace and avoiding family feuds. The girls learnt a great deal from the interaction.

Sreedevi, the principal of Sarada Degree college visited Ananda Bharathi. The NSS division of the college contributed cupboards, notebooks, umbrellas and sweaters to the school. Subsequently, three of our students have also been given free admission in the Degree course.

On 24th December, R. Yogeshwar, Janaki's cousin, who lives in Luxembourg visited the school. He has been showing consistent involvement in school in the recent years. He was happy to spend an afternoon with our children. We have also been fortunate in contacting Dr.G.N.Rao, a dentist who has offered help with our children's dental problems.

Though the newsletter is full of news and events, the year has been tough on us. Shantayya's sudden death shook us all up and made us feel helpless. Janaki was unwell and was not able to attend the school continuously for over a month. But, through all the struggles there are joyous moments such as when the mothers came to visit school on National Science Day. With a sense of pride and wonder they watched their children explain various phenomena. Being able to share thus gives us a sense of fulfilment and the strength to go forward.

Cordially Yours,

Janaki N Iyer