



After the primary school was given its summer vacation, the 6th to 8th children had a spinning workshop. **Mr. Madhav Sahasrabudhe** from Pune came with his wife Nilima and taught us to maintain the petti charkhas and spin yarn on them. He also taught us how to condition the cotton we grow at puvudham before it can be used for spinning. Till then we had been purchasing conditioned cotton from Sevagram. Under his guidance Madhavraj made a charkha from bamboo and we are now spinning on it. This year we plan to make a few more of the bamboo charkhas. They are light, easy to use and produce stronger thread.



Puvudham has had the opportunity to share the curriculum based on the five elements with a lot of people last year. Meenakshi attended the **National workshop on Alternative Education** at the **Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies- Bhopal** from the 18th to 20th of May. **Why, What and How of Learning** was explored by close to 70 participants from all over India.

In late May, **Aksharavidyashram School** in Cuddalore asked Meenakshi to share our farming curriculum with their 30 teachers to convince them of the possibility and feasibility of extending the classroom to the garden and making learning easier and more meaningful through real work. The CSR group of **IL&FS**, working with education, invited Meenakshi for sharing our curriculum at their annual reviewing meet at Nagpur and later invited her to Delhi to their evening center at Noida to demonstrate to their teachers and program coordinators how concepts can be integrated into stories. They have decided to print the stories and use them in their schools. As per our belief that all learning material must be free for all, we have shared all our work. The government education department of Dharmapuri asked us to host one day of their Headmaster's Leadership Development Program for all the Headmasters of the District. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to share our no exam curriculum with them. The four hour interaction focused on the fact that to develop leaders we need to remove fear from the classrooms.



The new hostel building is coming up nicely. We have the largest filler slab span we ever made over the boys room cum auditorium. It is a hexagon of side 12 feet and diagonal dimension of 24 feet. This will be able to house all 89 children when we want to screen some films. The building is made of mud cob walls internally and stone walls with mud mortar externally.

It is fitted with a smokeless fuel efficient fireplace which uses only 8 kgs of firewood to cook **two** meals for the 38 inmates. In this **new Lorena stove** we have fitted a hot water boiler on the terrace which uses up the heat that goes up the chimney after travelling through 5 heating and cooking chambers and heats up 100 liters of water for bathing to 80°Celsius!



This year when the school started, we were only 8 adults doing all the activities. Jothi is still not well and so Madhavraj has to do the driving and trust accounts and administrative work while taking class for the 5th and 6th! Rameshwari and Gunavati are doing all the register maintenance and admission work for the school and looking after 3rd 4th and 1st 2nd respectively. While Amudhamozhi is doing the same for the hostel apart from looking after the Lkg Ukg class and engaging the children with farming on the new land. Ramesh is in charge of maintenance and farming on the old hostel land which is 2kms away and ploughing and transporting water for all of us. Palniamma is doing the cooking and



some of the vegetable gardening and Tavamani is looking after the cows and sheep. Meenakshi is doing some earth construction projects to raise funds for the hostel construction while preparing proposals and reports and taking class for the 7th and 8th level children. The children supported us a great deal to conduct the craft classes and expand the nursery too!

During the last month we had two interns from Christ University who are doing their masters in Social work. All the 7th 8th children, 10 in number with the help of the interns, Diana and Sudarshan, conducted a consumer pattern survey in the three villages near puvudham. The idea is to start a dialogue with the people on what are their requirements and what part of it can be produced locally by the women's self-help groups thereby providing employment and moving towards sustainability of the region! Madhiashagan who is a chemistry graduate, Arun and Mahua who are our old students and Rajesh who has masters in art from Vishwabharti University West Bengal have also joined us. Now Rajesh is taking art class for all the classes giving some time for the teachers to create stories and read for their own exams. Arun is doing the wood work class for the older children and getting guidance from Rajesh. Mahua is helping with the Lkg Ukg while Madhi is observing our methodology to be able to relieve Rameshwari who has been doing a lot of experiments in soap making and tooth powder making to be able to share these methods with the local women. Ramasubramanian of Samanvaya in Chennai came to help us plan our livelihood activities to suit local needs rather than depend on outside market. He inspired us to do the survey and instilled in us a belief that localization of production to meet local needs is the way to go. During our survey last year the farmers had shown an interest in working towards increasing the ground water by doing water harvesting on their lands to recharge the wells. This year they are keen to see this happen. We are only short of committed people to take this forward!

Amongst all this we had quiet periods of reading, walking in the forest, collecting, observing and painting.



This year the rains came early in May and there was enough water in the well on the new land to do vegetable farming as a part of the module work. Each group has been provided with a plot of land to grow whatever they want. They can bring seeds from home or take them from the seeds we saved last year. But whatever they grow the first fruit is to be left for seed. We have been talking to the children about the importance of having own seed and not becoming dependent on the market for them. The next vegetables are harvested, weighed and given either to the children to take home or to the school kitchen if they are in



fair quantity or to the hostel when they are in plenty. The greens for their evening snack is grown in these gardens and mixed with green gram sprouts. We have also fitted different systems of irrigation for different patches for the children to see for themselves the advantages and disadvantages of each. Flood irrigation, sprinklers and drip are the different systems. There is also experimentation



with the planting with the Biodynamic Planting Calendar, mulching and selective weeding.

Puvidham has also been working with few other local organizations to help revive a lake in Dharmapuri.

Talirgal, Aindinai and many individuals have come together under the banner of Dharmapuri Makkal Mandram (Dharmapuri citizen's forum) and done the cleaning by removing the plastics and then done de-silting of the lake. Balasubramani Dharmalingam, one of the Talirgal founders took on the task of making this happen. The soil that was taken was put together in small mounds on which trees are planted. The puvidham children participated in the cleaning of the plastics and have been raising saplings to be planted on the mounds.



The children also went to COOP Forest to help with the construction of the resting spaces on Ayyappa Malai created by Piyush, our favourite activist! Piyush, then spent time to explain the nuances of water harvesting and discussed his pet topic of Mari the water goddess and Ayyappa the god of the forests. He is out to make people worship nature with reverence like in the days before.



The children and staff of puvidham also participated in a campaign against the WTO-GATS treaty to be signed in December and are creating awareness on what will happen once education becomes a commodity tradable as per the WTO rules.



Wood craft, painting, sports, sculpture with natural materials and photography are all engrossing activities! Our main concern is the happiness and exposure of the children to a variety of activities so that they can know themselves through creating something with their hands!

We thank all our donors and friends for their continued support!

Do look us up at www.puvidham.in or come to Puvidham. If you would like to foster one or more children or contribute to any of the activities, do contact us at puvidham@gmail.com

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