

I am Rajaraman Krishnan, a volunteer of Asha Chennai. I had made a site visit to the FTC Seeyapoondi project on 10th July 2014. I had also visited another project (Hariksha Trust) at Avalurpettai. I went from Avalurpettai to Seeyapoondi. I could see the remoteness of the place. While the roads up to Thayanur were alright, after that it was just a very small pot holed road with no buildings in sight for the last 2 Kms to Seeyapoondi.

The two Asha teachers Gnanasoundari and Revathi were there. The other volunteer teachers who come there couple of times a week couldn't come today to meet me. Paripooranam's (Project Steward) family had given this house for free to run the tuition centre. The house had just one pucca room and then an area in the back which is covered with thatched roof and walls. The room can comfortably seat about 10 children and the area behind about 15 children. However it was serving about 15 and 25 children respectively. The area behind had only mud floor and without any mats. I am not sure how this would function when it is raining. I think Asha should provide some mats for the children to use.

Here is our teacher Gnanasoundari with some of the students at the entrance to our center.



The children came in by about 6:00. I started chatting with them. I thought I will do the exercise with them on words for different vowel sounds. We went all the way from the short 'a' sound to the 'ou' sound. The children participated very actively, especially the older children. I hope they also learnt something out of this. The children in 9th and 10th had fairly good vocabulary -- actually probably

even better than our teachers! They wanted me to teach them grammar. I started with tenses. Then realised that they also had problems with the word "have". They couldn't translate sentences with "have" to Tamil properly. Anyway went over those a little bit. I realised there isn't much point going over the continuous and perfect tenses. So asked them to become proficient in simple tenses and the "have", "is" and "can" based sentences.

The children come there every day. So like in other Asha Chennai supported centres I have seen (for instance Nagalapuram of Project Pearl), this is serving an important need in the village. I think given that the parents are often illiterate, coming to this centre for their studying where they can consult an educated person is of great value. Gnanasoundari is helping with the older children (9th and 10th std) and Revathi with the rest of them (6th to 8th). Like in Nagalapuram we can add some reference books and make this into a mini-library. The computer we are putting there would be a very good addition.

Anyway after our English session, these children left. I met with the students who have passed out of the 10th standard last year. Two of them (one boy and one girl) have got 400+ marks and the rest of them have passed as well. They all found these tuition classes to be useful. They could get clarification from Gnanasoundari. It is very important that both Gnanasoundari and Revathi significantly improve their own abilities so that they can serve these students better.

In my interaction with them I told them the importance of understanding. While it is important to memorise answers to get maximum marks (unfortunately), they shouldn't do that without understanding. They were OK with basic things like negative numbers and angles. But in probability their lack of understanding showed through.

After that by about 8:15 pm I left Seeyapoondi. While I noticed the remoteness of Seeyapoondi when I came in from Thayanur, it became really clear when I returned. Many people were just sleeping outside their houses (given the good weather I guess) either on mats or cots. I was scared of hitting one of them. Thankfully I did not. There was very little light anywhere nearby. Only after reaching Thayanur did I get back to good roads and some lights nearby!