

Site visit by Melli Annamalai

In February and March 2026

As usual my visit started with a nice breakfast alongside the children who stay at Deenabandhu Children's home. As always in the mornings the place is humming with activity with children finishing breakfast and getting ready for school. When I visited the LPG shortage fear was beginning and Deenabandhu had switched to using firewood on that day, still everything seemed to be running on time. With the help of a donor they have also installed some machinery for hot water in the dish washing area for even better hygiene and ease of washing.

Regarding the Deenabandhu School on this visit I held several discussions with Ketan from Deenabandhu and Ramakrishna sir (previously with Azim Premji foundation, now consults with Deenabandhu and another school in Mysore) on how we can improve the academic level of Deenabandhu school. Deenabandhu school was founded with the goal of providing an excellent quality of education to children from poor backgrounds, and also demonstrate how English can be taught well in a Kannada medium school. School graduates from the initial years speak very good English. Lately there have been some challenges with increasing focus on memorization (exam prep has become memorizing question bank answers – this is across all schools including fee-charging private schools) and the consequent decline in teacher competency (if the teachers passed exams that way, they naturally bring the same ideas to their classrooms). Also, it has become extremely difficult to find a teacher who knows English, to be an English teacher.

Ketan and Ramakrishna sir are tackling this problem head-on. Ramakrishna sir has extensive experience in pedagogical methods, and conducts weekly sessions with teachers on pedagogy, creating lesson plans, and so on. We held many discussions on this, particularly on teaching English.

To help the teachers themselves learn to speak English confidently they organized speaking sessions with visiting volunteers from abroad. A volunteer from the UK was speaking with the teachers for an hour every day when she was at Deenabandhu. Teachers enjoyed these sessions, as they could interact with someone from a different culture. After this volunteer goes back home we came up with the idea that Asha Boston volunteers will try to conduct these sessions remotely. We will start with two sessions a week and see how it goes. I met the teachers that we will be interacting with.



I also spent time in the school library to understand what English books teachers and students have access to. The librarian was very interested in understanding how she can improve the activities at the library. I think a book club can be a good idea.

