

In-person Site visit by Melli Annamalai and Chris Hunter

July 17-18, 2019

Asha for Education has had a long relationship with Deenabandhu, starting from the late 90s. Support for the [Deenabandhu home](#), a [joint partnership to improve government schools](#), WAH funding of a teacher resource center, help in getting corporate grants, and the more recent [learning corners by Asha Boston](#) and Asha SV and a Science Van by Asha SV are a few examples.

When I visit Mysore, I typically visit Deenabandhu irrespective of whether we are actively funding a project or not. Over the years I have come to appreciate characteristics of their work - their compassion, humanity, desire to do good and help change the world. The campus is an oasis of joy, sharing, and compassion and understanding for each other.

On this particular visit I was eager to look at how the schools that the Adobe grant was helping was doing. Along with my brother-in-law Chris I planned a two day visit, which would give us time to visit the schools and also spend time with children at Deenabandhu home.

Day 1: Chris and I visited a government school. All the upper primary children from the school were gathered in a well appointed Science lab. As always the key aspect is all the Science kits were made with local materials, using local skills. Chris led a session on astronomy, with much engagement from the students. The key is the students were confident and engaged. Sunil, who had joined Deenabandhu relatively recently had also been spending time at the school, including a visit for 3 days to stay at the school and understand the challenges of the school and the community better. He explained that recent work on diverting water to ponds in the village had led to an improved water table, so that farmers with borewells were doing better. This had in turn led to families coming back from cities they had migrated to, and had led to a slight uptick in the number of students.

In the afternoon we had a good discussion with the full team on the various metrics for the Science teaching project in government schools. We evaluated how things were going, and how certain processes needed to be modified.

In the evening Chris led a session on astronomy for the children at Deenabandhu home. As always the children were eager and engaged. We ended the day with dinner in the large dining hall with everyone.

Day 2: Every child in Deenbandhu has a role to play in the smooth functioning of the organization. They help in the kitchen, help with various cleaning activities, help in picking produce from the garden, and so on. They take turns and do all the necessary tasks in rotation. Still a bit jet lagged, I awoke early that morning. As I sat outside, I saw children cheerfully going about their assigned tasks for that morning. In the kitchen, girls were helping chop mounds of vegetables. In the garden boys were picking and harvesting vegetables, and milking the cows. One boy climbed up a tree to pick a ripe jackfruit.

Chris and I started the day visiting a few historical sites nearby, including an active Jain temple, and a couple of inactive temple sites dating to the Ganga dynasty. Later we spent some time at Deenabandhu school, and in the afternoon had another detailed meeting on the how to help government school teachers adopt techniques that Deenabandhu was encouraging them to use. The

Deenabandhu Teacher Resource center has done an enormous amount of work in creating Science kits that are from local materials and relevant to local life, creating a group of staff that is dedicated and motivated in the improvement of the teaching of Science, and identifying highly motivated government school teachers who take what they learn to their schools and to schools around them. The question was how to next reach other teachers, beyond the group of motivated teachers who are in regular touch with Deenabandhu. We discussed various ideas to make progress on this and arrived at a few plans.

We left Deenabandhu at the end of day 2, energized and happy, and took the bus back to Mysore.

Photos are [here](#).