

Dear Friends of Puvidham,



The end of the year is near and it is time for us to give you an update . On the whole 2006 has been a year of reflection and consolidation . We had an unannounced visit recently from the District Education Officer and we were pleasantly surprised when he commended us on the level of learning we had been able to achieve with our first generation learners. And on reflection, realized that ***the credit went directly to the children as they were, most of the time, learning by themselves.***

A class discussion

The method of self learning which we follow demands that even the youngest child makes learning decisions and adjustments every day . For example , if the child wants to do a particular activity or a puzzle , she can do so only if it is free at that particular moment .If some one else is working with it, the child has to either wait patiently for the material to come back to its place on the shelf or choose to do another activity. The respect for the material and the other people in the environment comes naturally . These continuous choices give the child a lot of freedom with a great deal of responsibility. The child feels in control of the environment and has a lot of regard for the space and word of another member in the environment . This makes the role of the teacher very special since the teacher has to have the utmost regard for the ideas and decisions of the child and has to trust the child to do her work well.

Thus, our children take charge of their learning with in a framework of rules guided by the teacher.

In our school we have carried the same freedom to the higher classes . The children as a class decide what they want to learn and when . They are given the text books and they are aware of what it is that they must learn in a particular term. Thereafter, they are expected to work as a group and do their lessons and activities . The role of the teacher is that of a guide and a walking talking encyclopedia. Our children have their 'life' skill. They know what they want and say so with confidence and at the same time are very co-operative whenever doing a task.

The 1st, 2nd & 3rd level children went to Kaigal waterfalls for two days in October. It is a beautiful area about 150 km North of Puvidham. Sudha Premnath of the Krishnamurthy Foundation runs schools for the tribal children and our group learnt a few of their songs during the trip .



3rd and 2nd level kids trip to Kaigal waterfalls in Andhrapradesh



The Buds (3rd level) and Dewdrops (4th level) children started their farming project towards the middle of August and their vegetables started coming in around the middle of October –cluster beans, maize ,sword beans , coriander and ridge gourds .The harvest was small because the rains failed and the watering done by the children was not always timely. But the learning was good and they all realized the value of mulch as a moisture retainer. They also made drawings of the leaves and their plots.

The children of class one and two did their own experiment on growing plants with and without direct sunlight. Almost all of them felt that the sun would dry the plant up and so the plants in the shade would definitely grow much better since they would not be exposed. And in the beginning the shade plants did sprout earlier and grow taller. So they were thrilled that their observations were right. *The group that was taking care of the plants in the shade had to water the plants only once in two days further proving their point about evaporation.* But soon their plants grew too tall and stringy and bent over. While the plants in the sun looked good and sturdy though shorter. So much for common sense!



The five and six year olds performing a dance .

On October 21st eve, the eve of Deepavali , we had a cultural program in which all the children participated . After the function, we had fun with fireworks .Many children lit sparklers and flowerpots for the first time and were delighted to have over come their fear . We also had a feast complete with sweets and savories .

In November, during the Deepavali break of 15 days, we completed the Dome of the building we started in April.

Meenakshi went to Bombay to finish the course on Eurythmy and visited a Waldorf school based on Dr . Rudolf Steiner's philosophy. The idea of combining art and science used there is now being practiced in our school too.

We have initiated the program of visiting the two government schools in the villages nearby with some of our learning and teaching aids for the 1st and 2nd level children. The AEO has expressed his support for our involvement.

End of September ,Murugan and Sabarimani , two of our boys who have joined the government school in Nallampalli for their 9th went to Rajasthan. The trip was meant to broaden their wealth of experiences and give them an idea of the culture and life of another part of India. They learnt “ weaving” and “tie and dye”, the traditional arts of the place and had fun learning to communicate in Hindi. We have managed to find a Karate master to come and teach the students Karate. Not every one is enthusiastic about Karate .Yet we have 20 children, including few from the village school , continuing serious practice .



The festival of light



The dome is completely made with brick and mud !

With best wishes for the new year and hoping to see you at Puvudham in 2007 ---Thank you all, for being with us in this venture .

If you would like to foster one or more children or contribute to any of the activities , do contact us at puvudhamtrust@hotmail.com
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80G no: c.No:9755(23) / SLM / 2003-2004