This year the children have been traveling and experiencing new relationships, country sides and cultures. This we believe is an integral part of knowing about our environment and about ourselves as individuals and as the human society.

During their visit to M.M.Hills in Kollegal District, the children of the 5th and 6th class were following up what they had been working with in the Earth Module. They had been learning about biodiversity and local herbs. Harisha, Sharada, Sudhapa and Narayan of ATREE guided the children through the scrub forest of MM Hills, which is very similar to our forest in Nagarkoodal. The children of different classes had been preparing a herbarium for around three years now. They took the same to clarify the names and uses with Harisha who is an expert with edible and medicinal plants.

They had a great time bird watching, collecting dried flowers, leaves and grasses to make collages and doing the various activities that Harisha had planned for them. Each child was asked to write a story about the waste material that they picked up on the way. They were also asked to make impressions of their visit using the dried material they had on card paper. All in all they had a great time for three days from 23rd to 27th of September. On their way back, they had a small accident with a vehicle that was driving ahead with out break lights. Luckily they were going very slow and only the wind shield and left door of the new Tata Magic got damaged.

From October 6th to 8th a group of 12 children and two teachers went to Chennai to the Crocodile park. Dr Gowri was very kind to have hosted them at the premises and Gayatri, Ganga and Kaveri were instrumental in making the visit a memorable one. They handled crocodile babies and helped clear crocodile dung. Many of them are inspired to work with animals and were amazed to know that even crocodiles can be trained to behave themselves. That they can recognize their caretakers and even understand their moods was a real surprise to them. They also went for walks and saw snakes in the wild. While at the park they handled the pythons and learnt about their food habits and preferences in the way they like to be handled.
Amit and Jayashree of Adharshila learning centre near Itarsi in Madhyapradesh and Deven and Sudhi of Hum Kisaan at Manoharthana near Jhiri in Rajasthan hosted 12 of the 7th and 8th level children and two teachers from 16th of November to 10th of December. The children traveled by train and it was a novel experience in every sense. On the train they started learning about the rivers they crossed and the states they were traveling through. They also experienced the cold winter and vast cultural difference in the regions they went through.

They first went to Hum Kisaan. There they took time learning about the local language and the food tradition. They went for walks in the local reserve forest and saw that there are many trees that they could identify as available in our area. Deven organized a trip to Sanchi and they all got to see the 3rd century BCE Stupa which was the first stone building in India and is reputed to have been initiated by Emperor Ashoka.

They had great time preparing a south Indian meal for their friends and learning Hindi. They also got to see the process of weaving and dyeing the cloth with natural dyes that is happening at Sudhi and Deven's. They learnt an activist song and have been singing it at every opportunity they have got. They have also written a tamil song on the same beat with similar meaning. They went to the local market and got an idea of the prices of things and got to see the different vegetables and eatables peculiar to Jhiri.

At Adarshila the children got to meet the tribal children live and study at the centre. They went to see the Narmada river and the Ahilyabai fort in Maheshwar. They went boating and enjoyed the scenic beauty of the river and learnt about the problems of the tribals that live in the forest and the aftermath of the Dams. They also learnt about the crafts and arts tradition of the tribes in the region. They spent time learning Crochet work using wool and have brought back this skill and are making bags and getting more practice before they can pass on the skill to the other students.

They communicated in spite of the language barrier and learnt how to communicate in the language of love.
From November 1st to November 4th 15 children and two teachers visited the Agumbe Rain forest Research centre. They had the opportunity to interact with young students who had given up the comfort of the city to be in the forest and learn about the life and habits of creatures like stream fish, tree frogs and the King cobra which is the specialty of Agumbe. The ever green forest brought out the wonder of the children and they were asking questions about the reasons for so much rainfall in the western ghats while we in Dharmapuri hardly had enough to keep the trees alive.

It was a good lesson in learning about climatic regions and different kinds of forests and followed up with lot of inquiry about the climatic regions of the world and the reasons why they are thus. They also find meaning in learning about the different habitats and different species evolving to adapt to different regions after the experience. Their interest in insects and birds has always been nurtured at puidham yet the exposure provided new observation points and life to the whole work of understanding the living world and the human role in it. We can only hope this love stays with them.

The children have designed and made a key hanger on which they have stuck embroidered work. This is their chief achievement in the craft work because it makes a new product using wood work and embroidery and the product is useful and not just an ornamental piece. They are busy preparing many of these to give to guests visitors and donors. They also prepared a few calendars to give to the local SP, Collector and a few local donors. It is really satisfying to see the children of the 7th and 8th take up responsibility of the earth worms in the Vermicompost tanks, the Rabbits and Chicken in the school, and the vegetable beds that we are creating around the school to make maximum use of the organic matter available on the puidham land. They are busy with collection of leaves for mulching, sticks for preparing charcoal and ash to make the vegetable beds hold moisture in our dry climate!

Do look us up at www.puvidham.org or come to Puvidham.

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