



New Buildings, New Beginnings...

The momentous day finally arrived - January 23, 2019 will be etched in the memory of everyone associated with the Thulir - the word literally meaning the botanical word shoots. Certainly, it wouldn't be exaggeration to visualise the occasion with that of a farmer looking excited to see the shoots arising from the seeds sown. The event was filled with joy of welcoming the future and the thoughtful reflections of the journey that has been travelled so far.

The idea of starting a school was conceived in 2013, when the basic technology course was on the wane due to lack of demand from the youth. Meanwhile, there was a need from the staff of the Tribal Health Initiative and affiliated institutions for a pre-school program for their children. Started with three children, it evolved into a school over the past 5 years - a journey that I am proud to witness in person.

In early 2016, they acquired 3.2 acres of land for the construction of a new school. The fund raising efforts began in 2016 for the School and Asha Bangalore stepped up to contribute Rs. 10 Lakhs towards the building of the new school. The first phase comprising of 5 classrooms, toilets and an office building with a staff room (a requirement from the Department of School education), was envisaged to be completed by end- 2017.

During the construction phase, I visited Thulir in January and August 2018. The challenges to get the building in time were plenty and it required relentless commitment from Anu, Krishna, and rest of the team, to see the buildings take the final shape. There were issues of shortage of material, drought conditions in the village, health, and many others that took a toll on the schedule.

The Buildings

The vision outlined for the new buildings was “*Aesthetically pleasing, structurally sound, child sensitive, environmentally friendly and cost effective campus using alternative renewable energy sources and built by local Artisans.*” True to that vision, the building uses minimal material from outside the valley. The flooring is done using discarded unpolished granites sourced from a quarry within 50 Kms from Sittlingi. The walls were developed using compressed earth and roofing uses concrete channels with tin sheet covering it for protection in extreme climates. Aesthetics were given due place, be it in using abacus in the gates or the art work on the floor and walls. The labour was sourced locally and students of the basic technology course like Jayabal, Perumal, Dhanapal, Mohan, and Kumar contributed significantly towards the construction of the school.

The Event

Shunning the established system of calling a political figure or a renowned personality, Thulir chose a different track to call some of their well-wishers and unflinching supporters to inaugurate the new premises. The ceremonial lamp was lit by the elders of the village, doctors from THI, Trustees of Thulir and parents of the children studying in Thulir. An image of banyan was drawn on a blackboard and each of the well wishers over the past decade was invited to draw a leaf to symbolically indicate that Thulir has moved to the ‘budding’ stage now. I was certainly overwhelmed to represent Asha Bangalore through which Thulir has been supported for the past decade. All my predecessors who played significant roles in raising funds, stewarding the project and supporting during every budget presented over the decade.

The best part of the event was the simple joy of watching the excitement on the faces of the 50-odd children eagerly looking forward to move to their abode. It was unparalleled and with them, the teachers were equally excited. When pointed out to one of the kid that they don’t have a playground as yet, he calmly pointed out that they will go to the “old” Thulir - time ages too fast for them!

Well begun is half-done. It goes without saying that the next two phases should be accomplished with ease. A tired looking Anu and Krishna didn’t look excited to talk about it, very much like a marathon runner who doesn’t like to be questioned about the next marathon after finishing one. Then, they wouldn’t stop at anytime!

You can view the photo gallery here -

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/sUrwqh3y5V5WXFjB9>