

Snap shots - 1997 - 98

Since the article written by Shri.C.Subramaniam was published in June 96, in The Hindu, we were visited by several interested NGOs.

The highlight of year 1997 was the school trip to Chennai - with 18 children. They drank in the sights and sounds of the city, though they felt that Arasavanangkadu smells better! This included a romp at the MGM-Dizzie World, enjoying on rides they could not have even dreamt of. They also learned science through those rides - but of course that was at the debriefing when we got back. At the Airport they saw how big the airplanes really were, and not the familiar speck. With the consent of the Airport Authorities the children were taken for a round of the insides of the Airport, with commentaries on the working of security and the Airlines.

At the Vandalur zoo they saw the reds of the eyes of the lion, tiger and a panther that like them wouldn't stay still. Until then, they had only seen two dimensional zebras and hippos. Seeing them live was an indescribable reality; two eyes weren't enough to take in all that they saw.

A visit to the Spencer Plaza a departmental store, it was a store to experience cleanliness, beauty and quantitative merchandise. They also visited all the antiques and state emporiums giving them a first hand knowledge of the special arts of the states. Of course, they had an escalator and a glass-covered lift ride, with all its attendant excitement. The whole trip was conceived to give them a journey by train, as none of them had ever traveled on a train. Travel in reserved compartments they did, but in the excitement of all the other experiences they took the train ride as a matter of course.

We have been approved by Asha - an organisation in US made up of students of Indian Origin as their international project for the next three years and they would send us funds every year over the next three years. We have received the first cheque and allocated towards capital expenditure - a store-room has been built, kitchen completed.

We have been adopted as the international project for the year by "Rotary club of Napa - California " and we are to receive books, stationery and art materials used and new from them. We and the children were really excited with the prospect.

We put up an ad for fresh entrants and 15 kids (five 5 year olds and ten 3 year olds) have enrolled. It is cheers for the moment as we can now boast of 36 kids in the school. We began with Independence Day celebrations on

15th August and they commenced school that week. We now have a strength of 38 children.

We have purchased materials for recommended physical programs and have begun the physicals for all the kids. It is helping to some extent. Also Nirupama, who had completed the beginners and intermediate course in Yoga at Madras last summer, had taken up teaching the Young Adults what she could and they even put up a performance on Independence day on their own - each child coming upstage, saying a few words about themselves and the Asana they were to perform and then the splendid display. It was completely organised by her, with active help from the other kids - a heart warming performance it was. She is now besieged with students for the next course !

In June, Aruna's mother began a course on Stitching and embroidery with four kids who had dropped out at the 9th / 10th grades; ten children have nearly completed their basic course. We purchased materials for this from Mumbai and the program is a big success. Several requests have poured in for further courses !

We have purchased a Pentium 200 with MMX etc. In the coming months we shall have three computers - to be loaned to us initially, networked on NT with 95 / 98 clients. So with NT, MMX, Fax etc. we would be truly hi-tech ! (Except of course when we have electricity , and the telephone lines work and.... and....)

We have finally graduated to a scooter from the cycle - we can no longer bear the weight of the vegetables, provisions etc. on the cycle (increasing volumes - and our age catching up!)

Vasudevan, Raghavan's brother, had come over for one week, as a visiting faculty member and has completed one week basic course in computers for all the kids. Also we are hoping to make this an example for others who may be interested in coming over for similar short teaching sessions in their field of expertise. This would help the children be really exposed to a variety of vocations and how learning may be projected to end uses.

Aruna was invited by Vijay TV for a talk on "A different perspective of child education". It was telecast on 8th September. For those who could be up by 6:00 am... and understand Tamil...and do not mind being preached at, at that hour of the day !