

Auroville, June 2016

Dear friends and donors,

Several new children with serious diagnosis have been coming to Deepam. Most of them we have referred to the paediatric specialist for further investigations and follow-up. Never before we have had at the same time so **many children with severe types of epilepsy** who require constant medication. A few babies and children have frequent epileptic attacks, despite the maximum dose of anti-epileptic drugs.

*In the past months we were confronted with even more medical issues than usual.*

- Though we are used to tragedies, the case of **two teens who have undergone surgery for brain-tumours** and their traumatic medical history has touched us deeply, the more so as their prognosis is unsure. Both, a ten year old girl and a sixteen year old boy, had developed weakness and paralysis in their limbs and required physiotherapy and emotional support. Sadly, they were successful students before, but are unable to return to the mainstream school in their present condition.
- In February, **the mother of one of our older girls died of HIV** - ten years ago her father died of the same disease. Four adolescent siblings are left behind without family support. Deepam is helping the youngest brother with his school-fees and the older sister to settle the fees for her last year at the college. Fortunately none of these children are infected with HIV.
- For the first time **one of our own team-members was diagnosed with tuberculosis**. He had to suspend his work immediately and has started a course of antibiotic treatment for six months – already he is feeling better. This came as a shock for all of us. Tuberculosis is quite common in India and difficult to diagnose at an early stage as the first signs are the same as for a regular cold & cough. By the time TB is finally confirmed, the disease is already highly contagious. At Deepam we have now to be even more careful and to send our children and our staff for check-ups.

*We would like to introduce to you two children who come with their mothers for therapy sessions:*

- **Sadhana** is delayed in her development and has floppy muscles. Being already three years old she is not able to walk. Due to fluid collection in her brain, her head is “square” shaped and big. Only recently Sadhana was diagnosed with hypomelanosis, a syndrome which comes with harmless looking skin lesions, mental retardation, neurological disorders and many of the inner organs can be affected as well. We did not dare to explain the severity of this diagnosis to Sadhana's mother, as she is still depressed after her husband passed away last year due to a brain-tumour. Sadhana is an extremely sweet and alert girl. Though she was physically rather lethargic before, with the regular stimulation and physiotherapy she is visibly improving: she now plays with toys, is able to sit and starts to articulate her first words. This progress in Sadhana is also “lightening up” her mom.
- **Gopinath** is a five year old boy who was born prematurely and kept in the incubator for fifteen days. He has a complex brain-disorder, hypothyroidism and autism. Despite strong medication he has frequent epileptic seizures. Gopinath was also diagnosed with cortical blindness, which means that his eyes are able to see, but his brain cannot process properly what he sees. He is a pretty looking boy, who is physically well-developed and able to walk,



but he is not able to communicate with words. Gopinath shows severely destructive behaviour, e.g. he is biting himself and others or hits his head hard on the stone floor. He does not like to be touched, but loves instruments and sounds, rocking and swinging. With a lot of patience and various stimulations we keep finding out how to get Gopinath engaged in play. Our aim is to get him better integrated and participating in his environment.

*Early identification of children in need of intervention:*

Often children are brought too late for treatment and precious time gets lost. **Early intervention is much more successful!** Last year we gave some introductory training to Sarala and Padmini, two lovely ladies from the local village. From January onwards they went, equipped with a questionnaire, to all households at the nearby village Kuilapalayam where Deepam started in 1992. The aim was to identify children who are delayed in their development. Whenever the two women came across a child with some signs of delay or serious disease, we made sure that the necessary steps were taken. This survey was completed in May this year. The two ladies found 5 children with different disabilities who were not yet known to us as well as some cases of children and youth in need of medical treatment. Our census shows that in this nearby village 2347 persons live in 505 households, with an average of 4 persons per household. We intend to extend this survey in future to other villages.

*Last year we started two regular classes at Deepam:*

- A very energetic Indian yoga teacher comes on Friday mornings to teach some **classical yoga asanas** to a group of twenty of our children and youth. Though these poses are not easy for some of them, they all eagerly participate.
- Another class is for **all the women in our team**. We practise once a week at the end of the working day a sequence of lively and energising exercises, especially beneficial for women's health. All our therapists, the volunteers, our "cleaning-ammass" and us "ladies from the office" equally move and jump, are sweating a lot and have even more fun together.

In the past months we have done an overhaul of our website.  
Please visit [www.deepam-auroville.in](http://www.deepam-auroville.in)

An extremely heavy monsoon season ended last year abruptly in the beginning of December. There was not a drop of rain for five months. Many parts of India suffer severe droughts. For us some relief came in the middle of May with thunderstorms that brought refreshing rains for the nature. During this tropical summer season the weather-report reads, for example, "38°C - feels like 42°C".

Our children and team-members send you many greetings from Deepam in South-India,  
*Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi*

