

Auroville, November 2016

Dear Friends and Donors,

At the end of the year we would like to share with you again some news from our work at Deepam.

### **Selvi talks about an amazing outing to Mysore**

“Two times we had introduced overnight outings to our older students. This February we were once again on tour with our team members only, but I missed the presence of our students. I wondered how to arrange another trip with all our older ones, which is not an easy task as some of them, as well as two team members, cannot walk long distances. It is hard to find a suitable location for 30 people and to arrange transport, food and accommodation. At our tea table the discussions continued day by day, until we decided to go to Mysore, one of the most beautiful cities in India. The first challenge was to find accommodation. Ordinary hotels are not suitable for our kind of travel group. Finally a friend shared the address of a Youth-hostel where I could reserve two big dormitories, one for the male and one for the female participants. The preparations continued in full swing with booking the train for both ways, advance payments for the hostel, meeting the parents and listing what needed to be packed. One day before travelling we checked each bag. Some of our students had to carry also the medication which they need to take regularly. Finally on the 9th of July we started out, full of joy and enthusiasm. A rented bus brought us to the railway station in Chennai from where we travelled over night to Mysore. Early morning another pre-booked bus was waiting to bring us to the hostel and to tour us around for three days, visiting historical places and ancient temples with astonishing beautiful carvings. Luckily the driver was very helpful with our students, e.g. he brought us to affordable places for meals and if required he also lifted wheelchairs up some stairs. Our team members shared smoothly all the responsibility. Unforgettable moments of togetherness were shared in the evenings while singing and dancing. In Mysore our students were impressed by the huge palace where the kings and queens had lived whose stories they had heard. The highlight was on Sunday night when the palace was illuminated with a hundred thousand bulbs which were lit all in one stroke sharply at 7pm. At the very same moment a sudden downpour occurred and the umbrellas, which everyone had packed, came in handy. When I saw the big eyes of our youth, full of joy and shine, I was so happy myself and all the difficulties which I had faced organizing this trip vanished.”

### **Fun at the Pool**

“I'm Gitti from Germany who has frequently helped at Deepam since 2006. I am grateful for being accepted by this wonderful team and these amazing children. Whenever I arrive in Auroville I can hardly wait to see the children and meet the team members. They are my Indian family! A highlight is accompanying a group of children twice a week to the swimming pool in Auroville, where we teach the children basic swimming skills and play water games with them. Besides having lots of fun together, being in the water has many benefits for children who have special needs. Especially for the ones who cannot walk easily, the water helps to move their limbs and relax their muscles deeply. Also social skills are getting trained, as the older children assist the smaller ones. As most of these children have at their homes no bathrooms / toilet with running water, the visit to the pool gives the chance to learn how to have a proper shower and how to wash their hair on their own. Most of the children were first very scared of the pool. It makes me extremely happy to see how they develop their skills in the water and how they become more self-confident.”



Our team member **Babu** came to us in 2006 as a young man of nineteen for training. He grew up in the local village, but had gone to school for most of his life in Auroville. As his father has polio and his mother died early he had not received much family support and became independent early. At Deepam we appreciate Babu especially for his loving care of our children, e.g. when they need extra help because they are sick or when they make a mess while eating or at the toilet - Babu does not shy away from any work. His other strength is doing handicrafts. Babu has a very quiet hand and is able to do most tedious craft-works with an enduring patience. He is the one who has taken it up to finish, together with some of our children, most of the cards and Christmas gifts which we send out to our friends.

It is time to introduce **Cathy** who discovered Deepam when she first came to visit India in 2014. Meanwhile she has settled with her husband in Auroville. Cathy is an experienced occupational therapist from France. Though she had never worked with children she quickly integrated in our team and found her place doing lots of crafts with our youth. Cathy has introduced macrame-knotting, which is quite challenging and helps her students at the same time to develop their memory and their fine-motor skills. With Cathy's support and encouragement even the ones who have severe coordination difficulties manage meanwhile to finish proudly a bag or a wall-hanging. Cathy encourages her trainees to do each step on their own and to work independently. She emphasises that the work has to be adapted to the special needs of these children, so that each of them is able to do something beautiful. Wrong knots are not accepted, but will be undone and redone!

**Cathy and Babu are in charge of the vocational training at Deepam** which is a must as our students will not pursue an academic career. We teach all of them early manual skills, e.g. how to use scissors, brushes, paint and different tools in the hope that some of them will be able to integrate into the outside work-force. Techniques which we use are clay, candle-making, greeting-cards of different kinds, wood-work, stitching and jewelry. Not only is the outcome important, but also the skills which are learnt: to improve the hand-hand coordination, the eye-hand coordination, the fine-motor skills, the concentration, strength and endurance, memory, reaction and speed, to organise the work and to be creative. Additionally many other things can be trained such as counting, measuring, reading, copying, about patterns and colors – always according to the specific different needs and abilities of each student. All of them are extremely proud of their products. They felt even more empowered while selling their crafts in front of the Auroville Bakery for the occasion of Diwali - one of the most important festive days in India. Their next chance will be at the Auroville Christmas Fair – some people come especially for buying handmade decorations from our students. Cathy and Babu are looking forward to move the vocational training workshop soon to a bigger space nearby which will allow more options to explore vocational training for our older ones.

**We would like to thank our friends and donors** for the various kinds of support throughout this year, which makes our work possible! The children at Deepam, as well as our team members, would like to **wish you a peaceful Christmas and send you best wishes for the New Year**,  
*Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi*

- See more info and many pictures on our beautiful homepage: [www.deepam-auroville.in](http://www.deepam-auroville.in)
- "Google" the following words to see impressive pictures of the illuminated palace at Mysore: images for mysore palace illumination

