

Auroville May 2014

Dear Friends and Donors,

At Deepam we are confronted with the fact that **we are receiving more small children** who come accompanied by their parents for very time-intensive therapeutic treatments. It is most wonderful when these children need to come only for a limited period of time and become independent of our continuous support. However the ones with more severe special needs have often to be integrated into our daycare group where they also receive educational classes.

In addition, **the older program participants require vocational training.** A few of the ones who started with us in 1992 - when we were working under the trees - are now around thirty years old. In the past years we have trained some of them in candle-making, greeting card creation, embroidery, stitching, and household and garden work. While several of them will never be able to manage in the outside world, we aim to equip some of them early on with skills which will enable them to lead an independent life in the future.



This January we started a **project in woodworking.**

We chose to produce a **set of about 800 building blocks** of different shapes and sizes. Temporarily we have employed a carpenter who had already pre-cut and planed the wood. Our trainees are split into smaller groups and very proudly sandpaper and wax these blocks. With this project we are able to offer training to our youth and adults while simultaneously receiving very beautiful, unique play-blocks which will be used by our children in the future for many years to come.

In February we were able to enjoy the shining faces of our children during the **first train ride in their lives** – from Pondicherry to the next junction where they could watch the long-distance trains. Afterwards we went for a delicious picnic under a scenic banyan tree and a boat ride on a lake. This was an unforgettable day for all of us. For five year old **Vinoth**, who has a profound hearing loss, this was his first outing with us and he visibly enjoyed it. It was a delight to watch the transformation in **Akash**, who is mentally challenged with autistic features. He was so relaxed, smiling and participating compared to the year before when he was still extremely stiff and tense.



Akash



Vinoth



A really special treat was our **three day long outing to Yercaud**, one of the closest places in the Western Ghats. For the eight hour journey we selected only the older ones. For the last hour of the trip our rented bus made the hair-raising climb on a winding road to 1500 meters and we left the heat of the tropical plains behind. The jacaranda trees flowering with bright blue flowers were a wonderful sight and we saw how coffee and pepper is grown. For most of the youth it was their very first time away from their families. It was the first time that all of them were in the mountains and they all wanted to stay longer. **The togetherness, the fun and laughter** we experienced on this tour was amazing and climaxed on the way home. On such a bus ride you need to throw overboard all safety precautions. Most buses are not equipped with security belts and the drivers tend to make little use of the brakes and instead make frequent use of the mind-blowing horns with which they also indicate that they come first. The most important equipment of such a bus is the music system which is turned up to full volume. The bus was vibrating from the drumming and singing of our children and team members – some were dancing in the through-way until they were completely exhausted.

The main limitation of our work is often **the cooperation of the parents**, when the values which we try to teach at Deepam are not supported at home. For example at Deepam beating is not allowed but we observe that the same children who experience violence at home often pass beating on to others. Some other parents have expectations which we cannot fulfil. For most severely disabled children we can only offer improvement and continuous therapy but often their parents expect us to bring their child to walk and to speak. Sometimes it also happens that we made an incredible effort at providing intensive physiotherapy and other treatment. We see tremendous progress and then suddenly parents stop bringing their children to our program. This can be a sad experience but we hope that we can give these children something which will stay with them for ever. Luckily there are parents who do cooperate and continue with the exercises at home - with their children a lot more can be reached.

Our children and team members would like to send you greetings from **hot** India,  
*Angelika & Selvi*

