

Auroville, November 2015

Dear Friends and Donors,

In March our team enjoyed an *outing with our older children and youth to Kanyakumari* at the south-tip of India, where three oceans meet. Kanyakumari is world famous for its beautiful temples and for the phenomena that when at full-moon the sun sets at the same time the moon rises and when the moon sets the sun is rising. For going there and coming back we have spent the nights in the long-distance train, most amazing for our children who have been sleeping for the first time in a train. Ranjith, who wears hearing aids, was telling that the engine of the train was too loud and that our Deepam school bus driver should drive the train. With a rented bus we went over the border to Kerala where we visited the well-known Palace with its filigree wood-work. We could have spent much more time to discover the zoological garden in Thiruvanthapuram with its beautiful animals and birds. On the last day all our students received some pocket money and were proudly buying some small gifts to take home for their families. This outing will be unforgettable for all of us.

A few of our “older boys” have left our programme in the past months.

- **Ajai**, who's mother has died of cancer (see info-letter of November 2014), has joined on a trial basis the *Friends of Camphill Community in Bangalore*, lovingly run by an Indian-Dutch family, who are living with 24 of their adult friends with special needs, providing for them a family like home, health-care, vocational training and social togetherness. Though it was sad for us to send Ajai that far away we knew that there he is well taken care of. Quickly he has made new friends and is helping in the garden and baking bread. Ajai has expressed that the daily routines and the regular meals mean a lot to him.
- **Mani** is 24 years old and was never interested in education as he is a slow learner. Its now several years that we had sent him to help a nearby carpenter. For some time Mani was still coming to Deepam for his lunch, which was stopped recently. Of course Mani is always welcome in case he would have a problem.
- **Suresh** who is already 25 years old and was born with hearing impairment. We were happy to find a plumber who was ready to take Suresh as a helper and paid him a reasonable salary, especially as it is was already the second attempt to integrate Suresh outside. After four month, while we were drafting this letter, the plumber brought Suresh back with the complaint that he was not ready to work hard and he was rather a burden for him. We do not give up easily, as we find that Suresh cannot depend on us and needs to earn his own living in the future, we have asked at a local pottery for a job for him.

Some of our older students have done a lot progress:

- **Sarasu** is now 16 years old and came to us at the age of 1.5 years to get her first hearing aids and for intensive speech-therapy. There were many ups and downs with Sarasu as her family situation was always challenging. Since about two years she attends increasingly the Life Education Centre in Auroville where girls from the local villages receive training in handicrafts and life-skills. Sarasu learnt there tailoring and started stitching her own panjabis (pants with a knee-long top). She became a role-model for our older girls who want to be like Sarasu.



- **Nishant** is now 16 years old and was born with cerebral palsy, making it difficult to coordinate the spastic muscles of his legs. As a small boy he came to Deepam for physiotherapy where he learnt walking with the help of calipers. For some years he attended the mainstream school at his village where he was barely able to follow. On his own wish, he chose to attend Deepam's day-care where he receives education in one to one sessions according to his abilities. In the last years there have been complaints about Nishant's motivation and progress at Deepam, but recently Nishant gets a lot of praise and recognition for his interest in learning skills and for doing his physiotherapy exercises: *"I want to walk straight and be tall. Now my height is 5 feet and 2 inches. My favourite is the computer class at Deepam. In future I would like to run my own shop in the village, selling spare parts and recharge for cell phones."*
- **Vanitha** was not able to follow at the mainstream school due to her bad vision and was also a slow learner. She was a shy and innocent girl when she joined Deepam's day-care as a teen in 2006. Even eye-surgery and with the help of strong glasses she has difficulties to do handicrafts and to read with ease. As both her father and brother do not work regularly she wanted rather to find work and support her mother financially. After a trial period we employed Vanitha in 2010 as a kitchen and cleaning help for Deepam which has worked out very well. *"I cannot imagine my life anymore without Deepam. Here I get so much support and I earn money and get some saving on my own account which will help me in future when I am getting old. At Deepam I learnt many things such as drawing and handicrafts, making tea and juice and how to keep things clean. Also I have many friends at Deepam and we go together on tours which I never have done with my family. Still I feel insecure about my future as my family insists to marry me off, but I do not want it."*
- **Jayasudha** was born with cerebral palsy and has been bound to the wheelchair since she is small as her muscles are severely spastic. Her father was sick and died early and her mother burnt tragically to death in a fire-accident which was intentionally caused by her mother in law. Jayasudha never went to school. *"Without Deepam's support in all those years I would be not alive any more. At Deepam I get help for my health and I receive regularly physiotherapy. Never I will forget when I did my first steps being already 29 years old, with the help of calipers. Tears were running down my eyes - it is hard to express my happiness. At Deepam I learnt how to do knitting, painting and singing. I also learnt how to read and write in Tamil and to speak some English. I feel proud that I am part of the older girls class where Selvi teaches us about our own bodies and about health and nutrition. Soon we will present a project about environmental issues to the children at Deepam. I eagerly wait for the week-end to be over to meet my close friends at Deepam who are caring so much for me."*

The children and the team members at Deepam would like **to thank all our well-wishers** for their continuous support and send you **best wishes for Christmas and for the New Year!**

Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi

