



March 2015

Dear Friends and Donors,

Our highly motivated German volunteers, Malina and Hannah, would like to share some of their experiences with you. Upon arriving at Deepam they quickly took up extra responsibilities and were soon at home with us.

Malina tells about her work at Deepam:

“I love to do the ***Stitching Class***, which I took over from the previous volunteer. It is a wonderful way of teaching fine-motor skills and concentration. For some of our students it is even a challenge to thread the needle. On one hand I support the weaker students in their efforts and on the other I challenge the more advanced and capable students. The older ones have started to stitch patterns with flowers and mandalas. Our aim is to make meaningful use of these patches, for example to decorate T-Shirts or bags.

Additionally I regularly accompany a group of children to the ***Botanical Gardens*** in Auroville where they learn the importance of preserving the tropical rainforest and to saving water. Awareness of environmental issues is raised through a program especially designed for students from the local villages. Our children are free to experiment with leaves, sticks, stones, seeds, flowers and soil – almost everything is allowed. Being out in Nature they visibly relax and create stunning, colorful designs.”

Hannah explains about her work at Deepam:

“During an outing to Solitude Farm in Auroville we were amazed by the variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables. The papaya harvest was particularly fascinating as the fruits are hit with a stick and need to be caught quickly by another person. Now I take some of the older ones regularly ***to the farm for work***. They learn how to place seedlings carefully into pots and love to touch the soil with their bare hands.

Nandini is one of the children to whom I give individual lessons. She is a twelve year old girl who appears much younger than her age and is delayed in her general development. However she is a lively girl who uses a lot of body language to express herself, as her vocabulary is still limited. Due to her motivation and eagerness new words are daily emerging from her in a joyful flow. She has learned numbers one to ten, is able to distinguish colors and can match objects and shapes. Threading games are helping to improve Nandini's fine-motor skills, while navigating obstacle courses improves the balance and coordination of her body. Nandini is fascinated by ball games. As catching a ball is a real challenge for her we now use balloons. Full of joy, she jumps through the room trying to keep the balloon above the ground. Because she is easily distracted I need to encourage her to focus and insist that she completes tasks. With her tender and lovely being Nandini is a ray of sunshine!”

Nandini's background: This charming girl had a very difficult life from before she was born. Her father is an alcoholic and does not care for his family. In despair, her mother used kerosene to set herself on fire while she was pregnant with Nandini. Her mother was admitted to the hospital with severe burn-wounds and Nandini was born there prematurely by caesarian section. The problems continued for this family. Unsupervised and neglected Nandini was often left on the road, unwashed and unfed. She started coming to Deepam as a baby for therapy, unfortunately only on an irregular basis. When Nandini was seven years old she joined the daycare program here. With continuous care she has made significant and visible progress.



Over the years *Angelika* in the course of her work with the children from the surrounding villages has seen a lot of suffering. As a result she has developed “a thick skin”. Still *some destinies touch her deeply* and keep her mind busy beyond work hours. She would like to share two such stories with you.

“Fifteen year old *Ajai* lost his mother when she died of cancer just before Christmas. She was the one who held the family together. For a long time Ajai's brother has been roaming around and is prone to violence. His father, though working as a mason, drinks with his friends at night and returns only late to do some cooking. Now when Ajai returns home after his day at Deepam there is nobody waiting for him. Left on his own he has started to wander around and we are extremely worried that this adolescent boy, who has a soft nature, will fall under the influence of wrong elements. There is no suitable hostel in the vicinity for Ajai. We know it is important that he continues to attend our day-care where he experiences stability, receives attention and care, regular meals and education. Increasingly now there are moments when I see that Ajai laughs wholeheartedly and is deeply happy about something. When I steal a glance at him I am filled with admiration and respect for a boy who is mastering his destiny.

Mahithra is a pretty little girl who was recently brought to us for treatment. Though already three years old her appearance and development is more like that of an eighteen month old. Mahithra was born prematurely and with several disabilities. She reacts when we address her, shows likes and dislikes, uses both hands clumsily and kicks with her legs. She is not able to move on her own and cannot communicate through words. When Mahithra was two years old she was thrown back in her development by a severe case of meningitis. Since then she has suffered from serious spastic attacks which occur regularly and unexpectedly. The attacks occur frequently, even in her sleep. Her little body arches from head to toe like a stiff bow and it takes several minutes until all her muscles relax. Even the muscles in her mouth and throat are affected, therefore Mahithra is only able to swallow mashed food with great difficulty. Her mother needs unending patience feeding her child with a small spoon. It is important for us to support Mahithra's mother who cares for her daughter day and night. As Mahithra is not able to explore the world on her own it is necessary for us to offer her lots of stimulus for her nervous system, things to see, to hear, to smell and to handle. Happily we are noticing improvement since Mahithra has been receiving intensive physiotherapy, osteopathy and Shiatsu sessions at Deepam. The number of spastic attacks have declined, thus relieving this young child of significant pain.



Nandini



Mahithra



Ajai

Over here the summer sets in and we can observe how the migratory birds, who have spent the winter in the Tropics, are now gathering to get ready for their long journey. Soon you will receive them in Europe.

Our children and our team-members send you warm greetings from India,
Angelika Ehrle und Lawrence Selvi

