



Auroville, April 2010

Dear Friends and Donors,

Last year's dining hall extension was finally finished at the beginning of December, just in time for our annual Deepam Celebration of Light. We were able to use the new hall for the children's performance, which was enjoyed by at least 300 friends, family members and guests. Children from different schools played their impressive big veenas (an Indian string instrument). Our own children sang vocal pieces in the traditional style.

Looking back, 2009 was a challenging year for us with 5 months of construction, changes in the team and a number of new children being integrated. Now we feel again more together and strong as a team and the day care group is more settled.

We would like to wholeheartedly thank all our donors, as we received enough funds to sustain our work in a year of world-wide recession! A beautiful network of friends supports Deepam from behind in different ways. We feel carried by all of you!

After the monsoon, from about the middle of December to the end of February, is the most beautiful climate, with crystal clear, cool nights and pleasant sunny days. In this season there are many guests from all over the world in Auroville. At Deepam we receive plenty of visitors, some come every time they are here, some are regular donors, others have volunteered with us or work somewhere else with children who have special needs and would like to see the way we are working.

We are in the process of gradually integrating two more children into the day care group:

**Gladia** has been coming since 2005 as an outpatient for physiotherapy. She was born with cerebral palsy (spastic limbs) and is also mentally challenged. At 7 years of age she has only recently started speaking simple words. Gladia is a single child, which is quite unusual here, and is very shy and clings to her mother. Gradually we exposed her to the other children in the group – soon she liked it very much and started crying every time her mother wanted to take her home. Step by step her mother has been withdrawing. Now Gladia even eats on her own. Only using the toilet is still really difficult, especially as the family has no toilet at their home.

**Akash** is also 7 years old. He is severely behind in all his skills and has a behavioural disorder with autistic features. We have known him since he was about 2 years old. It was not possible to work with him continuously for several reasons. Akash comes from a poor family with uneducated parents. His father is addicted to alcohol and does not help to raise his children. When his little sister started preschool, Akash's mother started working to support the family. Akash is left with his old grandfather who is overwhelmed with this lively, naughty grandson. For some time the grandfather used to come twice a week with Akash for occupational therapy. Unfortunately, Akash became very sick with recurrent fevers and it took months to find out that he had a specific type of tuberculosis infection. He required strong medical treatment for 9 months. It was necessary that he not come to Deepam during this period, in order to ensure that others were not exposed to his tuberculosis. Meanwhile Akash's mother has found it more and more difficult to manage him. She wanted to admit her son to a boarding school, but he was refused because of his challenging behaviour.



Akash comes now for some mornings and joins the other children for different activities, eats with them and is shown how to use a toilet. He still needs to be monitored and guided continuously. In very structured individual work sessions, we focus on simple tasks to enable him to cooperate and concentrate. Deepam is his only chance to gain social integration and education.

Our annual outing with the children of the daycare group brought us to Nadakuppam, where we were impressed by the dedicated work of the Pitchantikulam team, another Auroville outreach project working in the field of environmental restoration and education. Our day finished at a beautiful beach with a cheerful boat trip.

A lot of work went into our new website. Please visit it and read about the evolution of our project from under trees in 1992 to where we are now. In the gallery are many photos you might enjoy: <http://www.deepam-auroville.in>

From South India our children and our team members at Deepam would like to send you our warmest greetings,

Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi

