

Auroville, November 2011

Dear Friends and Donors,

In Aug./Sept. we again had the yearly **change of volunteers**. Each time we are sad to let go of the ones who have been with us for a full year and have become familiar with our children and team members. It will take some time until the new ones know how everything works and can contribute to their maximum. Our new young women are again **highly motivated and very pleasant**. By chance, all three of them come from the German city of Munich. Most of the volunteers who have been with us over the years keep in touch. Many of them come back to visit and to give a hand during their stay. For them Deepam is their **Indian family** and it feels like coming home.

Our children are very excited about our **new playground!** We were able to install a ready-made **spiral slide** which fits harmoniously into our existing garden. A **swing with 4 seats** has been ordered at a local workshop. The craftsman has been telling us for 2 months that it will be ready within two days only. Once again we need patience!

This summer all our children had their **routine tests** done. The results of the blood-tests were discussed with the paediatrician. Several children received **de-worming, vitamins and mineral medication**. A few, who were often sick and had a lack of weight despite the nutritious and healthy food at Deepam, were examined for **tuberculosis**; two of them who tested positive are now under medication and observation.

In the day-care group there are two new boys:

Ruthrapathi, whose parents are related to each other, has been suffering from hearing loss since birth. He is eight years old and has one younger sister. When his father started living with another woman he stopped taking care of his children. His mother labours for a daily wage on construction sites to earn a living for the family. Ruthrapathi never went to school and was left on his own during the day. For the first time he **was given a hearing aid** by us. In the beginning he came, several times a week as an outpatient, to get used to the machine and to acquire his first “steps” in learning to speak. Ruthrapathi has a shiny face when he wears the machine, even though the process of learning to speak will be long. It requires a lot of effort and patience from him and our team member Gopal, who is his speech-therapist. Meanwhile, Ruthrapathi has become integrated in the group where he still has to learn social behaviour, such as learning to wait or take others into consideration. We also had to teach him how to use a toilet. With the food provided at Deepam, he will put on weight and look healthier. He was also de-wormed and is still taking additional minerals and vitamins.

Periyasami is now twelve years old and has two older brothers. His physical disability has never allowed him to walk; he has no control over his bladder, and he was not able to attend



school. Only last year, a growth -the size of a fist- on his lower back, with which he was born, was removed with a sophisticated surgery. It took quite a while until the big wound was fully healed. After some months, in another surgery, drainage (shunt) needed to be inserted in his brain to allow excess liquid to drain. Since May Perisamy has been coming to our team member Palani for intensive physiotherapy. With crutches and walking aids, tightly strapped to his legs, he is progressing to a point where he is able to take **the first steps in his life**. At the beginning Perisamy was extremely timid. Now he talks to us and participates with the other children and youth in all the different activities which are offered during the day. Perisamy also gets individual lessons to improve his reading, writing and his maths skills.

Our twelve year old **Dharani** is under strong medication for **epilepsy**. At the local school she did not get the individual attention she needs to improve her skills. She requires more individual attention in order to be able to focus and has at times really strange social behaviours. Since she came to Deepam she has made steady progress and has integrated well into the group and became helpful with the smaller ones. Dharani's father died of AIDS about 6 years ago. Her mother, now a widow with three daughters and one son, lived in a terribly bad housing situation. The palm-leaf roof was broken and replaced by plastic-sheets, which barely protected them against rain. Dharani's mother found work as a cleaning helper at a hospital in town. With her salary the family can only afford essential commodities. At the moment we are helping, with funds donated to Deepam, to build a **small but solid house** with a kitchen corner and a bathroom. In India the costs of living are rising tremendously and disproportionately to the income of low-wage earners. Each time when the petrol price hikes the costs for building material also rises. The wages for construction work have doubled within the last few years. A mason – whom we trust – has started to build the house. Unfortunately the monsoon set in early and the workers had to wait for a few days before the roof could be concreted. Once the work is completed Dharani and her family will have a really nice home.

In August we started to think about what we could post this year with this Christmas letter. Then we started with **500 of these little handi-crafted gifts**. From experience we know that when the rains start, from middle of October, the glue does not dry easily and the paper gets moist from the high humidity. Sometimes we had to treat everything with a hair-dryer, before we could put it into envelopes.

We hope you will enjoy this little gift and would like to **thank you for your support!**

Our children and team members would like to send you best wishes for Christmas and the coming New Year!

Many greetings from South India,
Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi

