

Auroville, November 2017

Dear Friends and Donors,

Today we would like to share with you the story of three children who have been benefiting a lot from the therapy at Deepam. These children also have in common that they are anaemic. Therefore we encourage them to taste healthy food at Deepam while at the same time we explain to their parents why it is important to eat nutritious things.

Servajith is a 6 year old boy who has been coming since 2013 for therapy sessions. He has a neurological disorder which is called ataxia, his muscles shake and are unstable – he walks with stiff and wide open legs, has poor balance and falls frequently. With regular physiotherapy his gait has meanwhile improved considerably. Servajith has one older sister who goes to school. Their parents are blood-related. Initially Servajith was brought to us by his mother while his father refused to see us as he could not accept that his son had problems. Servajith was “sticking” to his mom and was simply uncooperative. Finally we came on the idea that the father should bring his son and this worked out well. Servajith stopped crying, started mingling with other children and is meanwhile saying “Vanakam”, which means “hello and goodbye” to everybody. Recently Servajith started staying on his own for the full morning at Deepam and participates in different activities. In individual classes he learnt to distinguish colors and counting up to 10, also he is talking a lot more than before. Servajith's even joins the weekly horse-therapy session and his father is extremely proud of his son's progress!

Kasmitha is a lovely 6 year old girl who talks and sings non-stop. From birth some of the nerves in her lower spine do not work efficiently. Therefore she has delayed motor-development of her lower limbs. She came to Deepam first in 2014 and with only intensive physiotherapy she learnt to stand on her legs and is meanwhile able to walk short distances with a wide gait. She wears special shoes to support her weak and flat feet. For longer distances we have provided her with a wheeled walker. Joyce, our physiotherapist, gets shiny eyes when she talks about Kasmitha as she likes this little girl so much even though in the first year she was absolutely uncooperative. Joyce was persistent and found out that singing and stories were the key to getting Kasmitha to do her daily exercises. She was sent for special investigations and is under medication for her condition. Meanwhile Kasmitha attends the regular Kindergarden at Aikyam School. At Deepam she still receives physiotherapy and osteopathy, once a week she joins the therapy in the nearby swimming pool. Kasmitha's parents are quite committed and support their daughter. As she is a single child and they want her to thrive well they are at times pushing her even a bit too much.

Harish is just 4 years old and was referred by his Kindergarden teachers to Deepam as he did not interact with other children and he did not speak. While talking to his parents it became clear that he was born with low birth-weight and there was no birth-cry. He is still undernourished and anaemic and has therefore weak muscles. At Deepam we encourage him to try out more healthy food items. At first Harish only came twice a week. When his parents realised how much their son was profiting from the therapy at Deepam they asked us if he could stay for one full year until he will be accepted at the regular kindergarden. Harish is integrating gradually into our daycare programme and starting to talk and to mingle with the other children. He also dares



meanwhile to climb and to jump. This gentle and sweet boy will certainly, like Kasmitha, follow mainstream schooling. As therapists it is our aim to support children to be independent of our help in the future!

Safeguarding the future of Deepam.

Angelika writes: Today I would like to share a concern with you. The 25th birthday was an occasion to celebrate and to look back on Deepam's development. It started out as a playground under trees where 25 years ago volunteers gathered children with special needs. Step by step we grew into a substantial therapy-centre. I try to imagine how Deepam will further develop. By now I am 57 years old. In another 25 years, that means in 2042, I will probably not be able to be that actively involved anymore. Today we have at Deepam a team of engaged and experienced therapists and teachers who share the different aspects of our work. Personally I am grateful that the daily schedule with the children runs well when I am not present. My colleague Selvi who shares with me the responsibility of Deepam, is 15 years younger than I and has taken charge of many management tasks, though the fundraising is still mainly on my shoulders. You all know that Deepam's work for the children is carried out entirely with the help of donations. Not exclusively, but to a large extent, our donations are given by personally known friends and a few smaller organisations in Germany. I am sometimes worried about the financial sustainability of Deepam, especially as maintenance costs and prices are constantly increasing. Since 2003 the Zukunftsstiftung Entwicklung, which is a charitable foundation, supports us with collecting our donations in Germany and channelling the funds to India free of costs for us. They also post to our donors a tax-exemption certificate. For this service we would like to thank Dr. Annette Massmann and her team whole-heartedly! For safeguarding the future of our work with the differently-abled children the Zukunftsstiftung Entwicklung initiated an endowment-fund. The interest of this fund is for Deepam. Donors from Germany and European countries, who wish to support the future of Deepam, can do a SEPA transfer into the account of the Zukunftsstiftung Entwicklung: GLS Gemeinschaftsbank Bochum, BIC: GENODE M1 GLS, IBAN: DE05 4306 0967 0012 3300 10. As 'purpose' please mention: „Deepam F175 – Stiftungsfonds“. At Deepam we all agree “The work for the children needs to continue for ever!” - at least as far as this lies in our own hands.

Our children and team-members would like to thank all of you for your continuous support. We wish you a peaceful year end and fulfilment for the New Year!
With warm regards from South-India,
Angelika Ehrle und Lawrence Selvi

