

# AURO-MIRA SERVICE SOCIETY



**Report of activities in Kechla, Dt. Koraput, Odisha, 2012-13**

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## ANNUAL REPORT



**Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016**

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# Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir

## SCHOOL REPORT

### 1st Term

April to September 2012



The school has 79 students. 53 of these are boarders and the rest are day-scholars. We did not increase the number of students due to unavailability of water in the new school building. The water will be made available through bore-wells drilled immediately after the monsoons.

Getting teachers and volunteers is a challenge as people consider Kechla a remote place. Those who stay a few months stay on and do not want to go back.

**100% Attendance in 2011-12** - The School runs for 365 days in a year. Except for the very small children, most children attend school regularly and the total number of days they are absent is in single digits. There were six children who had a 100% attendance in 2011-12. A bank account was opened for all these children with a deposit of Rs 1,000.



Creation and Concentration group

have been divided into three groups and by rotation they take turns between Yogasana, Bharat Natyam and Shramdan. Children usually take bath in the evening between 4pm - 5 pm after games.



**Schedule** - Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir is a free progress school.

**Meals:** Breakfast is at 8 am, lunch is from 12 noon to 12:45 pm. The children go group-wise and age-wise with the Flower group going at noon and Faith and other groups at 12:30 pm. Snacks are at 4:30 pm and dinner at 8 pm. Meals are vegetarian and we have a specific menu for each day.

**Activities:** The day starts at 5:30 am, though some children get up before that. The children of Faith, New



The children assemble in the Meditation Hall at 6:30 pm every day. They meditate, chant, sing bhajans and carols and then sing all types of songs in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Oriya and other regional languages. They do plays, listen to stories and create their own stories.

The new songs the children have learnt during these six months are: **Sanskrit** - Shri Ramchandra Kripalu, Anna Graham Karne Se, Trishul Tandav Uma Maheshwar; **English** - Red is Amma's Bindi, Listen to the Chime, I Love You, I have a body, a very busy body, Ducks Like Rain, All I need is within me now, The more we get together, In Hindi- Ye Kaun Chitrakar Hai, Man Ke Sukhsagar Mein, Lage Vrindavan Niko, Ishwar Sheesh Jhukate Hain Ham, Mere Desh Ki Dharti, Tera Mangal Mera Mangal, Suraj Ki Kirane Aati Hai, Subah Hui Ujala Hua, Om Jai Jagdish, Prem Mudit Man Se Kaho, Tak Dhina Dhin Dhin, Kabuliwala, Phoolon Se Ham Hansna Seekhein, Banao Hamein Veer Yoddha, Majhi Re Majhi, Thandi Thandi Hawa Khane, In Kumaoni- Ber Pako Bar Masa, Khadi Yamuna Ke, Marathi song- Mani Taara Mandaryama.



**Trip to Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri and Konark:**

Ten children of New Creation Group and four children of Faith group attended the camp from 18th to 20th April at Bhubaneswar organized by Falcon Movement, an NGO.

Children went to the Regional Natural Museum and they saw a movie on wild animals. On one of the evenings they sang songs. There was an Aeronautics college close to the camp, which



of the evenings they sang songs.

they presented at night before the group. On one

There was an Aeronautics college close to the camp so we were taken to see helicopter and airplane models on display. The children were fascinated and asked many questions about how the machines work and where the engines are etc.

Right in front of the college was a Science Park where there were models displaying how hydro-electricity works, how solar energy works and the children enjoyed pedalling a cycle that powered a light bulb. They were also shown a movie on the evolution of the earth. Since we had done the topic here in school, the children were able to relate well.



We also made a visit to the Khandagiri caves. We saw sculptures of Buddha and of the Jain saints.

On the last day of the camp we went to the zoo where we saw many animals.

We also made a visit to Dr. Chandrashekhar Rath's home where the children interacted with him about their visit to Bhubaneswar.

Our next stop was Cuttack. We stayed at Matru Bhawan for a week. From there we made day trips to the temples of Konark and Puri. In Puri we went to the Jagannath temple and then to the beach. There the children saw many artists making sculptures in the sand. The children also saw a camel for the first time.



We also visited Dalijoda ashram near Cuttack. The ashram in-charge, Dharanidhar bhai was very hospitable and gave the children a tour of his garden and nursery where they breed earthworms. He showed the children a number of medicinal plants and told them about how the earthworms help in turning the soil.

After our visit to the ashram we went to an integral school at Tailipada in Bentakar block of Cuttack District where we had been invited to share with them the benefits of Free Progress Education. The children put up a play, told stories and sang songs for all those gathered in the audience.

We also had the pleasure of meeting the MLA from Cuttack, Mr. Debashish Samantray. He showed us around, taking us to the Barabati stadium, the Barabati fort, the Chandi temple and also the deer park. However the most memorable visit was to the home where Subhas Chandra Bose was born.

## Spoken English Camp for teachers at Delhi

The chief purpose of education, in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's view, is to awaken and draw out the innate, latent and veiled 'divine perfection' that already exists in the learner. In an attempt to translate this profound philosophy into practice, the Ashram conducted a free residential **Accelerated English Speaking Course from 19th May to 27th June 2012** for 35 participants, including 19 teachers from 5 schools of Odisha. Five teachers Jogi Bhaiya, Niharika, Babita, Surekha, and Bina from Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir also attended the program.



Tara Didi flagged-off the program on 19th May 2012 by setting of the guidelines for code of conduct during the stay at the Ashram and introducing the Workshop-coordinator Mrs. Aradhana Kumar and the faculty to the participants. Didi told the participants that while staying at the Ashram the student teachers become an integrated part of the larger community, participating in the various programs organized by the Ashram.

To be a professional entails not just sharing information but releasing that tremendous potential within a young, growing person to the fullest. Also it entails working on oneself. To facilitate this purpose, the daily Schedule involved Shramdan, Workshops: Kitchen, Handmade paper, Tapasya, Tailoring, Computer, Games, Yoga & Meditation in between the English Classes which were held for 6 hours per day in 3 sessions of 2 hours each.

The English class began daily with chanting the Invocation & Peace mantras. The course content included: Introductions; Vocabulary; Grammar; Sentence Formation; Conversation & Telephone Handling; Asking Questions; Story Telling & Enacting; Giving Instructions; Reading And Comprehension; Preparing Speeches; Presentations; Preparing for an Interview; Integral Education & The Three Principles of True Teaching. 13 Volunteers contributed to teaching and successful completion of the course.



The certificates of Mirambika Research Centre and books as gifts with The Mother and Sri Aurobindo's blessings were given away by Indu didi at the Certificate Distribution ceremony held in the Meditation Hall on 27th July at 9.30a.m. On behalf of Tara Didi, Mrs. Aradhana Kumar gave books as blessings from The Mother to the volunteer teachers. Group snap brought the event to a close.

## Visit to Panchgani and Pune (Maharashtra)

**A seminar on Indian Perspectives of Education** was held in Panchgani from 20th to 23rd of September'12.

The children also visited Sanjeevan Vidyalay. The management, staff and children were very welcoming and warm. There was a very good interaction. There were many eminent speakers invited in the seminar. Some of the speakers were: - Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, Dharamshala, HP; Some important dignitaries who attended the seminar were: Chhalamayi Reddy , Dileep Chinchalkar , Kabir Jaithirtha , Pulak Datta , Rajeev Sangal , Samdhong Rinpoche, Suchitra Pareekh, Tara Kini, Yogesh G. Shastri.

Pranjal, Rabindra and Poonam from Kechla attended the seminar. They took seven children with them for the seminar. Pranjal spoke on Integral Education as envisaged by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo and practiced in Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir, Kechla. The children gave a presentation to the participants of the seminar on one of the days. The children did chanting of mantras at the start. They presented plays in Sanskrit and English, action songs and dance in their tribal language, Oriya, Hindi and English. The programme was appreciated by everyone.

Sh. Kurban Husain showed the children around in Pune. He also gifted each child a pair of clothes. The children visited the Agha Khan Palace and the Snake Park at Pune. They were hosted in Pune by Mrs Eina and Mr Sugato Majumdar. They treated our children like their own and the children felt more at home than they could ever feel in their own house.

**Butterfly hunting** - They were told stories of butterflies. They did plays of butterflies. They kept caterpillars and fed them till they became butterflies.

**Hari's thoughts**- I was sitting on a hilltop using my computer and Hari comes up and quietly sits down. Hari is 9 years old and in New Creation group, has three sisters, one older and two younger. Children have been encouraged to collect the little money they get. Whenever a guest comes to visit anyone, they give a rupee or two to the children. Hari takes the money from his sisters also and deposits it with Didi in school. At the time of this episode, Hari had Rs 71 (less than \$1.50). When asked what he would do with the money, Hari said that he is collecting to have enough to purchase a motorcycle. At the time of this episode, Hari had the maximum money and no child had close to his deposit. This is the background of the dialogue below. The dialogue was in English was typed while Hari was talking and has not been edited.



**Hari** - Bhaiya, the garden is looking very beautiful.

**Pranjal (P)** - When the garden has fruit trees, it is called an orchard.

**Hari (H)** - Why are we growing them?

**P** - So that when you children grow up and take care of the school, you will sell the fruits and run the school. **Silence**

**H** - How many times are we reborn.

**P** - Till you become a good person.

**H** - So you will not be reborn.

**P** - I will be reborn many times.

**H** - Sukant Bhaiya and Gayatree didi will not be reborn.

**Silence**

(Please see background Para before this dialogue to understand this dialogue: -

**H** - I will be born as a poor man in my next life.

**P** - Why do you think so?

**H** - Because I am rich in this life.

**Silence**

**H** - You will be born in China as a girl.

**P** - Why a girl?

**H** - All boys will be girls and all girls boys. I will be born here in Kechla only.

## Festivals

On 26th June, the Collector and District Magistrate of Koraput, Mr Sachin Jadhav, invited students of our school to put up a programme in Koraput. Our children put up the programme and the arrangements were made by the administration. 200 persons including the Collector and all the main functionaries of the Government and the Education department, Principals and Head Masters of Government schools attended the programme. All of them, including the Collector, saw the programme.

An exhibition was put up which included items made by the children. We had also put posters of photographs on the gate.

The programme started as scheduled at 11 a.m. However, it was supposed to start with marching, but just as the children stood in their formation, it started raining. We therefore turned the programme around and first went into the hall.

The programme was as follows:-

The program included gymnastics, pyramids, a play, an Oriya song, Saree dance, March-past, Ribbon and Hoopla Drill.

We were served breakfast before the programme and even though the children had had their breakfast, it was too tempting to let it pass. After the programme we had a sumptuous Lunch.



**School's Foundation day And Taradi's Birthday** on 5th July was celebrated. The Children got up early and got ready. They went to the mediation hall at 6.30 am and at 7.30 am we did Hawan for the first time. After this the children did marching and they saluted the Mother's flag. Children themselves played the band. After breakfast children from all groups did some programme as an offering to the Mother.



**Mango group** – Make of us the Hero warriors, a students' prayer by the mother was recited with action in four different languages.

**Flower group**- Action songs Khadi Yamuna Ke Teer in Gujarati and Mani Tara Mandaryama in Marathi.

**Concentration group** - A song created by the children about the school and their surroundings.

**Faith group** - Creative play on the village in Oriya.

**New Creation group** - Dance drama on Sri Aurobindo's poem, 'Who'.

Teachers did a dance drama on Sri Aurobindo's poem, Divine Worker. Radha didi sang a bhajan in hindi on Saraswati Maa. Rabi bhaiya sang a song in Sanskrit. In the evening everyone lighted diyas which they had prepared themselves.

**Raksha Bandhan** on 2nd August was celebrated by the children. All Children made rakhi for each other. Children made rakhi with thread, paper, beads and glitter.

The cultural program presented included a play in Hindi - Kabuliwala, a dance drama made on seasons and dance on - Tu Pyar Ka Sagar Hai.

**Janmashtami on 10th of August** was celebrated by the children. The children sang many songs of Krishna and broke the matka which was hanging and had Kheer in it.



The Collector Sh. Sachin Jadhav attended the programme of Janamashtami with his family.



**Cultural program presented included:** song Chhote Chhote Gaiyan and Makhan Banaye Ham, recitation of Amma Mujhe Bansuri De do and song Kanhaiya Happy Birthday, a play on Sudama and Krishna in English, a play in Hindi on Krishna and a song in Oriya - which told the Krishna Katha.



**11th August Nandotsav** was celebrated by all the children. **Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar's Birthday on 13th August.** Children with teachers did hawan in the Ashram. They heard stories of Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar in the evening.



**Sri Aurobindo's Birthday and Independence Day on 15th Aug.** Most children got ready very early in the morning and were present in the ashram to hoist the Mother's flag. They sang Vande Mataram. They also sat for half an hour in the Meditation Hall from 6 am to 6:30 am. The older children went from 10 am to 10.30 am for Special Meditation. In the afternoon children presented a **cultural program which included:** song Pyaari Bharat Maa, Taqat Watan Ki; dance on Rang De Basanti, Chandan Hai is Desh ki mitti; recitation of Sri Aurobindo's poem - Krishna; play in English on Subhash Chandra Bose; Children did marching and saluted the Mother's flag before bringing the flag down.



## Visitors



On 4th April Mrs Aradhana Kumar, Mrs Kirti Kaul and Mrs Anupama Jauhar came on a ten days visit. Mrs Aradhana Kumar worked with the teachers on child psychology and helped teachers in report writing.

Mrs Anupama Jauhar, mother of Pranjal Bhaiya



Mrs Kirti Kaul also worked on the school reports. She also spent time in story-telling and read out stories to the children.

Ashish Kumar an ex-student of MIS, currently working in Citi Bank Delhi, visited Kechla and spent time with the children on Mathematics. He found the children very keen on doing Math. What he found most noteworthy was their interest in Mathematics was much more than most children in big cities.



Kartik Vishwanathan visited Kechla in April and decided to give up his job as Editor at the Delhi office of Hindu newspaper and join AMVM, Kechla. He gave his resignation immediately after returning to Delhi. He had to give a three-month notice period and joined Kechla on 1st August.

**May and June-** This is holiday period in most schools, hence teachers teaching elsewhere can usually come and work during that period. As usual, teachers from Mirambika, under the guidance and supervision of Sulochana di came to Kechla from mid-May to end June, they were Rina di, Minoti di, Prinkya didi, Prashant bhaiya, Vaibhav bhaiya, Sukanti di, Bina di, Manasamayee di, Dipti Ranjan bhaiya.



Sulochana di worked with the teachers basically for the new ones on how should one be disciplined. She also discussed some important paragraphs from Letters on Yoga, On Education etc.

Rina di-she and Sukanti di worked with Mango group children. She helped them in making statues. She also taught Odishi dance to the children.

Dr. Ira Pandit, Professor, Daulat Ram College, Delhi University also came. She read out stories to the children.



On 8th of August, Raibhan (Class-2), son of Sh. Sachin Jadhav, Collector, Koraput came and enjoyed himself with the children.

On 10th of August, Mr Sachin Jadhav, the Collector came with his family joined in the Janmashthami celebration.



From 14th to 20th of August Sheetal Pundir from Canada visited Kechla. She fascinated and inspired the kids with her own childhood anecdotes.



Sangita Didi's Birthday

**Auro - Mira Vidya Mandir**

**SCHOOL REPORT**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Term, October 2012 - March 2013**

*The child is not only a mind to be trained, but a consciousness that must be helped to grow and widen itself.*



- **Sri Aurobindo**

Driven by the light and hope that we receive from the above said words, the Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir continues to move relentlessly towards a determined, purposeful and an adventurous journey. Blessed by the beauty and the calm of nature around, it has been our sincere endeavour to bring a joyful quietude into the lives of the 95 children who reside in the school. We have just completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of 2012-2013 and are looking forward towards the months to come.

## **So what's new!**

Deeply involved in all matters of the school, children from the older groups were given the responsibility of bringing in younger children from their villages. Taking keen interest in this, they were able to convince their parents and relatives into sending younger children to the school.

As a result 16 new children, between the ages of three and four made an entry into our school. Their inclusion added a new colour to the school, and the group was rightfully christened 'rainbow' by the older children.



## ***Evolving together***

We have also initiated a study circle for the spiritual development of our faculty members this year. Held once a week, it is an opportunity for our teachers to share, read and chant together.

The school faculty also meets every Monday afternoon where they discuss and read books related to education.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month the entire school community sits in the morning to chant some *shlokas* and *mantras* together. In the evening the teachers and some children sit to read '*Savitri*', an epic by Sri Aurobindo.



**A small step forward by the school, a giant leap for the children!**



**Hostel Building with Makeshift Classes**



**New School Building**

With a sense of pride, our children took their small, but firm steps towards the new school building that had been inaugurated last year, and has now become functional. The school has 16 classrooms, a meditation hall and two rooms which have been assigned as science laboratories. Each of the 16 classrooms have been assigned to a particular subject or an activity. In the Maths Lab the children work on their mathematical abilities exclusively, while the art & craft room is used primarily to enhance their creative skills. Similarly, the games room houses various levels of increasingly challenging puzzles and blocks to act as brain-teasers for the children. The building also has an office, two activity rooms and 10 toilets.

Apart from this, the children have rolled their floor beddings aside and climbed up to more colourful bunk beds. The 'climbing activity' each night has not only led to more excitement but also with one or two children deciding to tumble down! The children also have tables and chairs for classroom use now.

The teachers and the students have worked tirelessly into transforming each activity, every event and the most mundane chores into a 'joyous togetherness'; making the school truly unique.

In the last six months our children have had numerous opportunities to explore, to review, to reflect and to implement what they have learnt, with the teachers by their side, always. Many projects were undertaken by the children, and emphasis was laid on experiential learning. The several events, celebrations and visitors to the school were also opportunities to learn new things.

## Music, Dance and Sports

### 'The crackling laughter of a child is music to my ears'

Over the last few months, the children have developed a fascination for musical instruments. While they always enjoyed and appreciated music, their interest in the instruments is new-found. A *dholak* has found place in their everyday rendition of devotional music in the meditation hall.



They have also learnt several new songs in different languages. Some of these songs are:

Sanskrit: *Devi Namaste, JananiPaadavandana, ChiraSundara Sri Aurobindo jai*

Hindi: *JagoJago Re, Hai re kasambajra*

English: *Make your children, Drummer boy, Frosty the snowman, away in a manger, Living water, Joy to the world, we Three Kings, Rudolf The red-nosed reindeer*

Oriya: *A as eeierururu, Amesabutikitikiphula*

### **Dancing with gay abandon**

Who does not like to groove and shake a leg sometimes? Our children have enjoyed learning new dance moves and forms.



### **Dance Drama on Shishu Parab**

In the last six months, they have learnt the folk dance of Punjab—*Bhangra* and a western folk dance. They have also been exposed to *Kathak*. Though all the three forms are distinctly different, the children enjoyed all three equally.

The school has always encouraged the children to be in touch with their mother tongue, their local festivals, songs and dance. As a result the children are now taken to their respective villages, where they participate in the village celebrations by singing their local songs as well as taking part in their folk dancing.

**'Every single cell of my body has fun, as I hop, skip, jump and run'**

Sports are an integral part of the curriculum at our school. The children enjoy all sporting activities especially football, relay racing and fun games. Most of the children have also learnt cycling in the last few months, and can be seen zipping in and around the school campus. A new basketball court has been made, and the children have been learning to dribble the ball. The children are also learning to play table tennis. Gymnastics and physical exercises like making pyramids etc. are part of the regular physical education in the school and are enjoyed by the children immensely.



**Shishu Parab**

Apart from the outdoor games, indoor games are equally fascinating for the children. The school now has a space where the children also play carom, ludo, chess and snakes & ladder. In the true spirit of not giving up, some of our older children have been trying their 'feet' at skating, and are improving with each passing day.

## Health

### **Striving for a healthy mind, body & soul**

Right from the initiation of the school, good health and hygiene has always been given a lot of emphasis. Under the supervision of the group didis & bhaiyas, the children clean their rooms, cupboards, stack their clothes and belongings, as well as lay their beds neatly every single day. On Sundays all children in the school get turmeric or a *neem* bath to keep skin infections at bay. As part of *shramdan*, the children have been trained to clean their toilets as well.

#### REIKI Class

Rajeev bhaiya along with his daughter Barkha from Mumbai spent ten days in the school. They conducted a Reiki workshop with the teachers, highlighting both the theory and the practical elements of this practice.



Dr. Pradhan and Dr. Raj Gupta from The Mother's Integral Health Centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch visited the school and held discussions with children of Faith group on First aid and guided Bina on how to arrange and store the medicines.



Dr. Gouda, Dr. Mahapatra and Dr. Mishra from Koraput. They did health check-up for the children, and also provided the school with medicines.

**Ms. Suriya** assisted by a colleague from Auroville held the Dental Camp at the school. They did dental check-up and also gave a demonstration on how to brush and keep the teeth clean.

### **Kechla Dental programme**

|   | 2011 | 2012 |
|---|------|------|
| No. of Male children                    | 35   | 36   |
| No. of Female children                  | 38   | 42   |
| No of children NAD (Good)               | 3    | 13   |
| No of children need treatment           | 70   | 65   |
| Scaling simple done full mouth 00 2     | 47   | 18   |
| Scaling surface done full mouth 00 3    | 0    | 4    |
| Scaling lower front teeth done 07 3     | 0    | 8    |
| Sealant done in Milk teeth              | 15   | 2    |
| Class I filling done in milk teeth      | 95   | 13   |
| Class II filling done in milk teeth     | 1    | 1    |
| Sealant done in Permanent teeth         | 60   | 8    |
| Class I filling done in Permanent teeth | 10   | 1    |
| Redone class I milk teeth filling       | 0    | 22   |
| Redone sealant in Milk teeth            | 0    | 0    |

|                                   |           |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Redone sealant in Permanent teeth | 0         | 28        |
| Children not seen                 | 0         | 2         |
| <b>Total no of children</b>       | <b>73</b> | <b>78</b> |



**Dr. Suriya and Team**

**Dr. Divya and Dr.Lalit** from England came to the school and stayed at the school for a week and conducted a complete health check-up for 80 children of the school.

**What Dr. Divya and Dr.Lalit had to say.....**

“We came with an intention to teach (Health & Hygiene) but instead have come back being taught by the happiest bunch of kids that I have ever seen. During our two weeks stay we never saw any children quarrelling or fighting. Jealousy is something that these kids are not aware of and for them jealousy is non-existence.



On the 14 January I saw the kids celebrating the kite festival and they taught me that one does not really need material to enjoy but an outlook towards life is all you need. The ever helping attitude, care and concern of the elder group of children towards the younger kids is something that seems to come out of some fairy tale. The kids were a wonder to behold, **Seeing is Believing** is what we have learnt.”

## Outstation Visits

### **'Forests and mountains I explore, I want to know more and more'**

The school was abuzz with excitement as two outstation trips were planned for the children in the last six months. Ten children from the 'Faith' and the 'New Creation' group had a great opportunity to visit Deomali, the highest peak in Odisha. They also had a lot of fun, playing and splashing water at the huge waterfall near the peak.



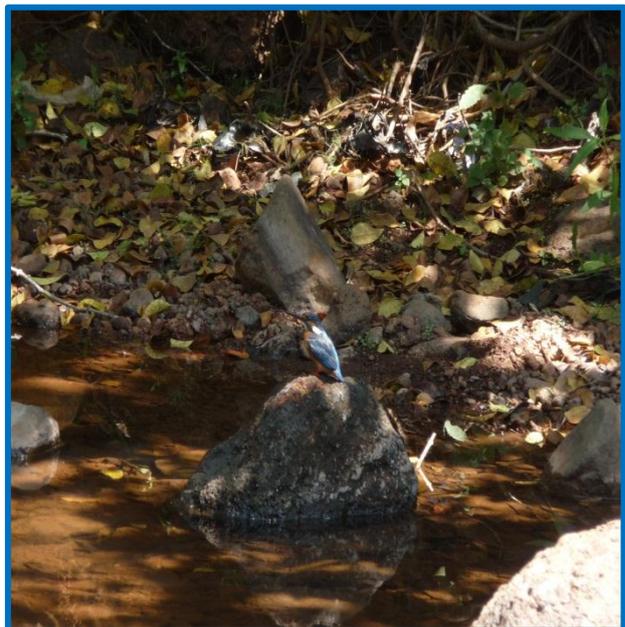
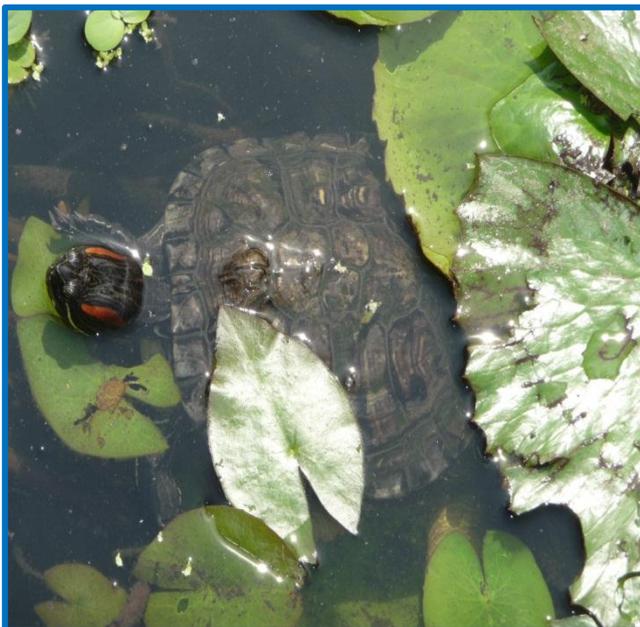
### A Brief Report of their trip up to Panchgani

The trip was very special as it was for the first time that the entire New Creation group of fourteen children went for an outstation trip, together. The trip to Panchgani was planned at the invitation of Ms. Mona Patrao who runs an eco-organic farm. The group spent about three to four days in Pune, and about a week in Panchgani. The first few days at Panchgani were spent in trying to experiment and experience different kinds of food and the various ways in which food can be cooked. In an attempt to improve their culinary skills, the children assisted Mona didi as she taught them to make strawberry cream and shakes, soup, some Maharashtra dishes like *dhanshak*, Thai red curry and even pasta. The children enjoyed this to the core.

While at Panchgani, Vishwas Bhaiya visited the kids and conducted an elaborate session on alternate energy. He explained how and why wind and solar energy can be used as great alternatives to conventional forms of energy. Mona didi added to the session by explaining global warming to the children. She also shared some information on *gobar* gas. The children had a first-hand experience of making *gobar* gas by actually working in the plant. This was a great learning experience for the children.

To add some more fun to the visit, there was a story-telling session by Nehal didi. The story was then enacted by the children and they made illustrations for the same.

Gunvant Bhaiya, an avid bird-watcher himself took the children for some bird-watching experience in the Lingyana forest, one of the thickest forests in Panchgani. A one day trek was also organized for them to the Gureghar forest where Mona didi explained some important facts about unusual trees. She elaborated further by explaining the difference between a mono-culture and poly-culture forest. In an attempt to have some cultural exchange, the children also visited the Sanjivan School in Panchgani.



## **A Brief Report of their trip up to Pune**

Fourteen children of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir, a school in a tribal area of Odisha run by Auro-Mira Service Society based in New Delhi, started from Kechla on 8th March 2013 by train and reached Durg at 5:15 am. The train for Pune was later in the forenoon and there was sufficient time for an excursion in to the town of Durg. These children had never seen a Gurudwara before, and it was a good opportunity to visit one on the Station Road. As the children were doing *pranam*, a few residents of the Gurudwara began conversing with the children and invited them to stay back for Breakfast. Bread, jam and milk for tea were fetched from the market and in the meantime, the children started cleaning the Langar hall and soiled utensils from the preceding night's meal.

Later, Mrs and Mr Jotwani of Durg provided lunch in such an ample and generous measure that sufficient leftovers could be packed for their dinner as well.

At 7 pm on 10<sup>th</sup> March, Shri Ashutosh Bhupatkar of Pune was at the station to receive the group. He had kindly arranged a bus which was to be at our disposal throughout our stay in Pune. He also spent a lot of his precious time with the group. The arrangement for stay was made at Kamayani, Near Patrakar Nagar and the facilities were wonderful. The NGO Kamayani is run by Dr. Arvind Kulkarni, Chairman, Mr Ashutosh Bhupatkar, Vice-Chairman and Mr Kalidas Supate, Jt Secretary. During the entire 3 day stay in Pune, Mr Makarand Kulkarni and Mr Shriram Bhavde of Kalpak Caterers provided delicious meals to the children *ex gratia*. After a sumptuous breakfast, we visited Shaniwarwada old fort and Lal Mahal Palace. The children were very curious about the fort, its history, the plants, flowers and the birds in that area. The children spent a lot of time in the museum. After that Ashutosh bhai treated the children to wonderful Sugarcane juice which none of them had ever tasted. Except for Nila, everyone liked it immensely.

We were back for lunch. All meals on this day were special Vrat dishes as it was Shivaratri. After a short nap, the children went for a walk to the Vetala Tekari or hill. The children observed many birds such as Parakeet, Pea hen, Bulbul. They also saw a mongoose. We visited the Vetala Temple on top of the hill and saw the sunset from there. We returned and after prayers had dinner. We then went to see a Shivaratri procession.

Ice episode- On our way, we were crossing a cart selling Chuski (grated Ice with sugar syrup). The vendor was busy grating the ice and a piece of the same fell on the road. All the children were watching intently and they pounced on the Ice which had broken into small pieces. This was another first for them since they had never seen ice before. People all around were surprised with the reaction of the children.

The children were fascinated to see large drums and gongs and men dancing on the rhythm, dance with lathis, Large Shiva statue on a tractor trailer and many other groups performing in the procession.

On our return the children had strawberry Ice-cream. It was a first time experience for all of them. Some of them did not like the taste or found it too cold but the majority relished it.

11th March- The day started with a pre-breakfast walk on the road, observing the city waking up. We visited the Zoo and the snake park in the morning. The children were very thorough in

their observation and spent a lot of time there. After a wonderful lunch the children went to Kamayani School for Mentally Handicapped children. They spent an hour with the children in the classrooms. They sang, did paper folding and heard the singing of Kamayani School children. They spent an hour after this at the workshops at Kamayani where the older special people were working. This was a wonderful learning experience to see how a very difficult task can be done efficiently by dedication.

At 4 pm we went to Parvati Hill Temple. The museum was fascinating. It was a beautiful experience to observe the city from the peak of the Hill.

After 7 pm the children observed skating classes and were enthused and wanted to learn skating themselves.

12th March- We started with the Gultekdi market yard. This is supposed to be the second largest wholesale market for fruits, vegetables and flowers. The children were very inquisitive. One shopkeeper gifted them 2 Kg grapes. After a while they wanted to taste a new fruit. As they had never tasted a melon, we enquired the price of the same and were told that it was Rs 50 each. Hari said that he had seen one fallen in the middle of the busy road. We went back and collected it. After a while we found another one on the road. The children were happy to have saved Rs 100. They also found a few more fruits in the same way and were gifted a water-melon by another shopkeeper. We purchased some oranges for the children. At dinner time when the children had the fruits, they collected all the seeds for planting in their school.



### **Trip up to Pune & Panchgani**

At Sarasbaug garden, children had a grand time observing the birds, fishes and flowers. The children were invited to Gurukul School. They were treated to a good lunch and after that they gave a performance which was applauded so warmly by the teachers that the children were really touched.

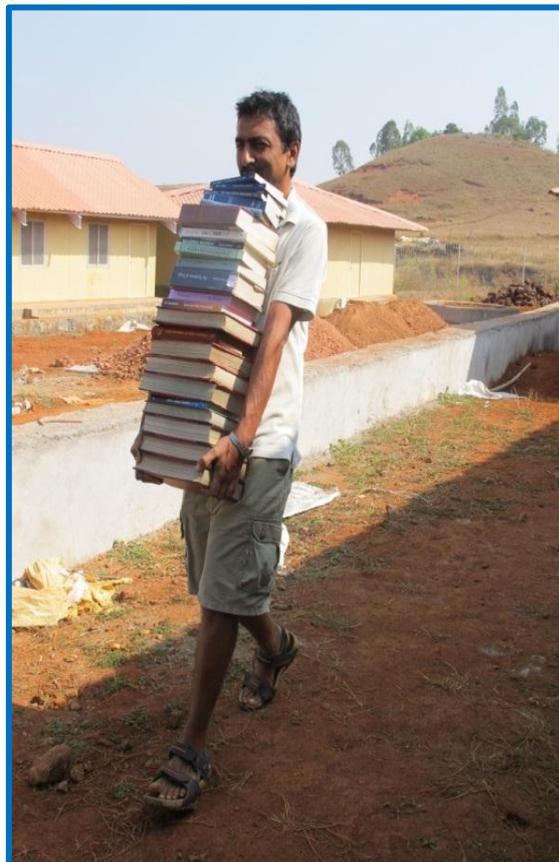
The dinner at Kamayani was a real treat. The children had an unlimited number of Gulab Jamuns. They had never had any sweet to their heart's content in their life and were not aware that it was possible to have so many without anyone stopping them. The kitchen staff also went and purchased biscuits for the children from their personal money. To express their appreciation, children prepared and presented thank you cards to everyone at Kamayani.

The kitchen staff had a television on which they would watch movies frequently. They realised on the first day itself that the children were not allowed to watch movies. It is also noteworthy that from that day on, they would only watch Discovery or Animal Planet when the children were around.

Coming from a purely tribal background, the children were overwhelmed with the variety and tastiness of foods, the sight of wonderful places, their comfortable accommodation, and the warmth of people who extended such generous hospitality to them during their visit to the historical city of Pune. As a distinct gesture of their appreciation, the AMVM children presented several crayon pictures to officials in the Kamayani Workshop. The pictures the children had themselves painted.

***'Basking in your glory, I seek books for company, O' Goddess of learning'***

Our library which has now been moved to the new building is well-stocked with books from numerous genres. We have more than 15,000 books in the library. Open to all children at all times, it is a sacred space in the school premise. The children are encouraged to read and refer to books.



**I take pride in my abilities, but with humility**

The children of our school received an invitation from Mr. Sachin R. Jadhav, the collector of Koraput to perform at a state level cultural program 'parab'.



The children put up an exhibition, and performed a dance-drama and also displayed their skill in *Bharatnatyam*. Children from the other participating schools showed a lot of interest in the teaching-learning methodology of our school, and directed their questions to Pranjal bhaiya who was also present on that occasion.



The children performed so well that this invitation was followed by another invitation by the DIG of the Border Security Force, Mr Akhileshwar Kumar to perform for the BSF day at Koraput.





## Celebrations

### *Happy days are here to stay*

Celebrating local as well as national festivals has always been a part of our culture at the school, right from its inception. Adding gaiety and colour to the school environ, our children immersed themselves in preparing for these festivities.

We celebrated the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. Some children narrated stories from the life of the Mahatma, and the entire school joined in to sing 'vaishnavojana to' and 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram'. In the afternoon the children also watched a movie on the life of the Father of the Nation.

*Durgastotra* was recited by the children of the New Creation group on Dushera. This was followed by the festival of lights – Diwali which has always been a favourite with the children. The celebration started with an invocation to Goddess Kali followed by some dancing and chanting by the children.



*Diyas* made by the children of the Concentration group were lit at night in the hostel premises. With a deep sense of reverence they also lit some lamps in the meditation hall as well as in the Ashram in the evening.

Sri Aurobindo's *siddhi diwas* was celebrated with great enthusiasm by the children on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The day began with meditation and flag hoisting in the morning. This was followed by shifting to the new school, where a meditation and a chanting session was conducted again by the children. Seeking the blessings of The Mother, each group then took a 'light of aspiration' to



place it in their new classrooms.

Pranjal Bhaiyas birthday was celebrated with a lot of love by the children on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012. A *havan* and a cultural program were organized on that day. The children of the New Creation and the Faith group performed plays entitled 'Our India' and 'Ekaurchaupat raja' respectively.



Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi day was observed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2012 by all the children and the teachers of the school.



Santa Claus visited the school on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, bringing joy and festivity. Goodies and chocolates were also gifted to all the children by Santa. All the children celebrated this day with a lot of fun and Christmas carols. In the afternoon the teachers played some innovative games with the children. These games had been created by the teacher's themselves.





On the auspicious occasion of *Makar Sankranti* all the groups made presentations about how this day is celebrated in different parts of the country. The four older groups made cuisine from four different states of India on this day. The children presented a puppet show in the morning, and also enjoyed flying kites during the day.

the children watched the parade on television.

Kartik bhaiya narrated the significance of the Republic day on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 and

Basant Panchmi was celebrated with a collective meditation session and singing of devotional songs and chanting.



21<sup>st</sup> February is a special day, for it is The Mother's birthday. It was celebrated with great devotion and delight, as the children presented a cultural program that included singing and many other activities. The Concentration group presented a play and the New Creation group recited the poem 'Blue Bird' by Sri Aurobindo. Children from all the groups sang the song 'make your children battle ready Mother' at the end of the program. In the afternoon a march-past was conducted during which the children saluted The Mother's flag.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, the entire school community gathered to pay their homage to late

Ms. Anuradha Sapru Kohls, in whose memory the new school building has been built. They chanted the '*Maha Mritunjaya mantra*' 108 times and prayed for the departed soul.



29<sup>th</sup> March is a day to remember for us at the school. It was on this day that The Mother arrived from France to Puducherry. The children sat for a special meditation session, seeking the grace of The Mother.

## VISITORS

### 'You graced us by your presence'

*We were happy to receive many guests in these last six months and our children learnt a lot from each one of them.*

Mr. Arun Jain from Delhi visited the school in the month of October. He accompanied the children for a visit to the Deomali peak. He also taught accounts to Raghu Bhaiya from our school.



Anupama from the Delhi Ashram spend some time at the school with the Concentration and the Rainbow groups, teaching them some dance movements on Vedic chantings.

Mr. Narendra Rana stayed at the school for fifteen days. He spent a lot of time with the children in the garden, talking about various flowers. He also shared the significance of different flowers as explained by The Mother.



Mrs. Deepa Rautala from Bhawali, Kumaon spent nearly six months with the mango group. She taught weaving to the older children, and some Kumaoni folk and devotional songs to all the children in the meditation hall.



Ms. Gayatri along with her husband Mr. Uday Kumar came to the school and distributed some sweets to the children. a couple of months later they also sent some new clothes for the children.



Mr. Sachin R Jadhav, the collector of Koraput along with the DIG of BSF, Mr. Akhileshwar Kumar visited the school and the children presented a dance-drama –*Krishna leela*. The children also displayed their physical agility and flexibility by performing gymnastics and pyramids.

Mr. Sachin Jadhav's father, Mr Ramchandra G. Jadhav and his uncle also came to meet the children at the school at a later date.





### **Under a tree with a lamp, experiencing life in a camp**

Fifty children from Happy Days School, Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh came for an exchange program to our school in the month of October. The children from both schools spent time together doing various activities and reading books together. They taught our children some songs, and to dance on a song from the Bollywood film 'Tare Zameen par'. They also taught them some *Bhangra*.

This was followed by a visit from the students of class 9 of The Mother's International School who came for a week-long camp along with their principal, Ms Sanghamitra Ghosh in December. The children from our school took them around the village and the upcoming orchard around the Ashram. The children from the concentration group accompanied the MIS children for trekking to the hills and the waterfall close by.



Another group of students from MIS visited our school in the month of March. This group was accompanied by Gulshan bhaiya, Velu bhaiya, Hira bhaiya, Nirankar bhaiya and Bharti didi. Hira bhaiya conducted a two hour drill with the children of the three older groups from our school. He also taught them some innovative ways of creating music by using plates, sticks spoons, buckets and even pots!



Gulshan bhaiya and Velu bhaiya taught the children basketball and table tennis respectively. Bharti didi conducted some sessions on art. She taught them pencil shading, shading with oil pastels and how to use water colours efficiently. Nirankar bhaiya taught some western folk dances to the children.

Twenty nine students of class IX and three teacher of The Mother's International School took part in a Personality Development & Adventure Camp at Kechla (in District Koraput of Odisha) from March 24-31. Activities included morning keep-fit, shramdan, trekking (day & night trekking), rappelling, swimming, rowing, Western folk-dancing, eye exercises, interaction with tribal children & adults, meditation, talks & lively discussions on value based topics.



As the day of Holi occurred during the middle of the camp, students gathered on the shore of the reservoir to paint & decorate each other and had great fun. Comments by a couple of campers deserve special mention:

“I got the opportunity to teach the children of Faith group drama and reading, and I realised how efficiently resources can be managed and how one can make do with little. We the children of privileged [class] keep cribbing about things we don’t have, though we have much more than we need,” wrote T.C.

“.. What was really breath-taking was looking at the night sky. The Nature and landscape here look like they’ve been individually designed to every pixel.. And how could I forget Pranjal’s talks with his disturbing opinion[s] which I could debate for hours,” opined an articulate A.C.

### ***Crossing another milestone.....Looking ahead***

*The last six months that have gone by, have been fulfilling and joyous in every way. A lot has been learnt, our children have grown, and the school has taken another step ahead. For us there is no looking back, as we welcome the times to come with open arms and a prayer on our lips.*

# KECHLA PROJECT REPORT

April-2012- March 2013

## Construction

### **A. Basket Ball Court**

The construction started on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013 under the supervision of Mr. Yograj Malhotra from Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. The flooring is complete but boards and markings are yet to be done.



## B. Atithigrah

The Atithigrah started last year with the construction of the building. This year the following work has been completed:

- 7 toilets
- Tilling of the Floor and Bathrooms
- Water supply pipes laid
- 3 overhead tanks with a total capacity of 3000L of water storage installed
- All wood work of doors and windows
- Painting of the building



## C. Cow Shed

Three rooms were built this year:

1. storage room for cow feed
2. storage room for milk
3. Caretakers Room along with Toilet and bathroom



## New Initiatives

### **A. Water Pumps in School**

8 hand pumps have been installed in the School:

- i. New school building – 2 pumps
- ii. Boys Hostel – 2 pumps
- iii. New Kitchen – 1 pump
- iv. Cow Shed – 1 pump
- v. New land – 2 pumps

### **B. Water Hand Pumps in Villages**

1 hand pump has been installed in each of the following villages:

- Village Semla
- Village Ratamatiguda
- Village Janiguda



### C. Water Footpump

A portable leg water pump was purchased to draw water from reservoir, well or any other place where ever there is water. The uniqueness of this pump is that it is low cost, with no maintenance required and can be carried anywhere.



### D. Food Distribution

Mr. Jacques from Switzerland on the occasion of Thanksgiving sponsored the Food Distribution for all the villagers from 4 villages.



**E. Clothes Distribution:** Donated clothes from New Delhi were brought and distributed to villagers from all the villages in Kechla. The Clothes were donated by Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch



### E. Solar System

The school has 60 solar panels in the hostel building.



## Activities

### A. Health Camps and Medical Activities At Village Kechla, Dist-Koraput, Odisha

#### **Camp & Medical Treatment:**

1. **Dr. Suriya** accompanied by her husband and friend came to Kechla for a week. During this time they conducted a dental check-up of the children as well as the teachers. The doctors finished cleaning the teeth and did the filling and sealants. They found that generally all the students' oral hygiene was good, they were brushing their teeth properly.



2. **Dr. Divya and Dr.Lalit** from England came to the school and stayed at the school for a week and conducted a complete health check in January 2013. In the hostel they did the medical check-up of all the children. Total number checked 80. They felt that the diet needs to include protein and somewhere between 0.8 and 1 gram of protein per kilogram would be a protein recommendation for vegetarians. The best source of protein would be from Beans, Lentils and Legumes, Tofu and other soy products, Nuts, Seeds and Nut Butters. They also suggested that it would be useful if they have fresh fruits at least three times per week.

During the two weeks stay they visited 12 Villages. Total no. of patients seen was 222, which included 42 children. Most of the cases were related to musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal and malnutrition arising from their addiction. They encountered a lot of skin problems in the children in villages. The fertile soil of Kechla and the flush green abundance of greeneries have a lot of potential medicinal values. If only the villagers are taught to capitalise on this it would be a great help. The most important need they felt was the education of the villagers as most of their illness is related to heavy alcohol consumption and tobacco chewing, both in men and women.



### Health Camp at Kechla (2012-13) by Dr Lalit & Dr.Divya:

| Date     | Place        | Camps | Patients |
|----------|--------------|-------|----------|
| 08/01/13 | Leduguda     | 01    | 06       |
| 09/01/13 | Parjapandi   | 01    | 21       |
| 10/01/13 | Simla        | 01    | 26       |
| 11/01/13 | Chenda       | 01    | 30       |
| 12/01/13 | Girlaguda    | 01    | 19       |
| 13/01/13 | Janiguda     | 02    | 07       |
|          | Ratamatiguda |       |          |
| 14/01/13 | Guleput      | 02    | 49       |
|          | Sirsi        |       |          |
| 15/01/13 | Narjiput     | 02    | 53       |
|          | Pada Chenda  |       |          |
| 17/01/13 | Putranga     | 01    | 11       |

**Total Camps – 12**

**Total Patients Examined - 222**

### 3. Dr. Gouda, Dr. Mahapatra and Dr. Mishra from Koraput.

This visit was coordinated by Mr. Manoj Acharaya who runs an NGO in Koraput. The three doctors did a complete health check-up for the children, and also provided the school with medicines.



**B. Dusshera Gifts** of Steel Utensils were given to all the workers. The gifts were handed over by Radha as it was her Birthday.



### **C. Adventure Camps: Five Camps held this year were:**

- Sri Aurobindo International School, Hyderabad sent 40 children for 5 days camp.
- Three camps for 7 days each were held for MIS students of Class IX (2 Batches) & class XI
- Happy Day School, Shivpuri, M.P. sent 47 children for 7 days camp.

**The Activities In the camp included:** Rappelling, Trekking, Western folk dance, Campfire, Honey & Eye exercise, Meditation, Discussion, Rowing, Swimming and Games.

#### **What our students say about the Camp**

“In December 2012, our school organized a trip for class IX to Kechla, which is an extremely remote village in the hills of Orissa. After three days and two nights of exhausting yet enjoyable travel, which was an experience in its own, we finally arrived at the beautiful village of Kechla. The view was simply stunning, and it took our breath away.

There were 42 of us, and 3 teachers, including Nisha ma’am, Shimita ma’am, and our principal, Ms. Sanghamitra Ghosh

Each morning began with an early morning exercise routine, ‘Keep Fit’, which was exhilarating and was followed by fun and games.

Our morning treks were challenging yet extremely enjoyable, and brought us closer to Mother Nature. The cuts and bruises didn’t seem to matter at all, for all we cared about was the fun and frolic.

Interaction with the children of the school was an eye opener in itself, making us realize how aware of their surroundings they were. They were the happy-go-lucky kind, and taught us a lot in our short stay of one week.

The daily visits to the reservoir were the ones most awaited for, splashing in the water gave a thrill of a different kind to everyone. The one activity which was dreaded by everyone was rappelling, which half the children had decided not to engage in, for it literally made them cry. But Pranjal Bhaiya convinced us all and made us do it for our own good, and each and every child on the camp ended up doing it, and feeling a lot better about themselves. It even cured many of us of our fear of heights!

Another activity which was immensely looked forward to was boating, for which there was an eager rush. We all tried rowing the boat atleast once and realized that it was not as easy as it appeared to be at first! Rowing the boat with your friends, with people cheering you from the shore, and the boatman terrified yet tutoring us all the while on how to monitor the boat properly, really made our day.

The day culminated with meditation with the children, which was very relaxing at the end of an exhausting day. The chanting and the bhajans made us all come closer to our inner self and provided for an environment of utter calm and peace.



Talks and sermons with Pranjal Bhaiya every day made us aware about many factors of our environment which required attention, each having an importance of its own. Pranjal Bhaiya's words of wisdom were very thought-provoking and we truly were the lucky lot to have Pranjal Bhaiya with us.

The jump into the waterfall at the last day was the cherry on top of the cake, a first for many. Each one of us jumped many times, and even convinced our teachers to take a dip!

Apart from all the hustle and bustle, Kechla was an extremely memorable, different and fun-soaking experience, that would probably never be forgotten in this lifetime."

– Class IXE

**Flowers In Our Campus:** that bloomed this year were Amaltas, Anamika, Cactus, Cosmos, Dahlia, Garjina, Hibiscus, Lily, Madhumalti, Mulberry, Mili, Palash, Puppy, Sadabhar, , Sunflower, Ticoma etc.





## Inspirations

“Serene and wondrous. So much to learn, re- discover, ponder. Going back with a feeling of immense warmth, simplicity and a connect that will last a life time. There’s gratitude and lots of warm feelings and am going back holding on and cherishing it.

KIRTI

“To feel the Mother’s presence one should visit and look the work at Kechla, Koraput. I must express my gratitude to The Mother & thanks the inmate of the Ashram and the person behind such work.”

SN Sarangi, Nabarangapur

“Stillness speaks in this ashram very happy to here.”

Ann-Charlotte Mahanandia, Una von Schedvin

Dear Mr.Pranjal,

Kechla was a name I had heard in 2009, when my grandson was studying in MIS and was scheduled to go for a school camp. Unfortunately the camp did not materialise and I failed to locate this "island in the lake" in the atlas.....

The warmth, spontaneous acceptance and the hospitality shown by the inmates and the children was really awesome! I have yet to come across a bunch of such lively, cheerful, focussed, self-sufficient and satisfied looking bunch of kids as I saw there. This speaks volumes for the care, love , and consideration shown by the teachers and all helpers there. I was really surprised at the expanse of the School, the Ashram and the Orchards. The care and planning taken over all the needs of living like Solar heating, Windmills etc was most amazing to see. Now with the Dairy project coming up the additional need for children’s milk requirement will be comfortably met. A BIOGAS plant would ease out the problems in the Kitchen to a great extent. We were very fortunate to attend the prayer session at the Meditation Room with Ms Gyatri and Mr. Sukanto. The peace and pleasure one felt at the prayer would be a memory to cherish... always. The impromptu dance drama put up for us by the young ones was really great! A big thanks to Poonam and Ravi. I have to make special mention of Ms Sangeeta , who at this young age manages the others with such respect and affection that its unbelievable. The way Ms .Parvati cajoles the children so tactfully to interact with one another as well as with the visitors is remarkable. I was so gratefully happy to see the young ladies from Delhi so well adjusted and happy doing their duties. My friends here at Arpana Trust were delighted to hear about Bharati and Vidotma. and thank you for for giving them this wonderful opportunity Had I been younger I would have looked forward to making another trip soon , but at 80 I guess I'll have to be careful ! My family and I shall be happy to be of some help in any form you think fit.

With best regards and love to all who remember me,

sincerely ,

Dr. Raj Gupta

Respected Sir,

Generally all the students' oral hygiene is good, they are brushing their teeth properly. This year I am very happy to treat the children. Redone fillings and sealants are due to lots of saliva and full of tatar (dirty mouth) for all the children last year. First we finished cleaning the teeth and we did the filling and sealants.

I spoke to Sanjeev Ji regarding the exchange programme Kechla and the Udavi school students, He is happy to receive the kechla children for a week. If it is possible to do this programme in Dec' 13 end of the week. I am planning to take the children to Zoo and the some temples. If you have some idea please let me know. I apply for the project for cultural event one evening in Bharat Nivas with our music children and the Kechla students also participated in the cultural dance and songs.

I will know the result in March' 13 only for the funding this event.

Thanks,

Suriya.

Dear Pranjal bhai,

Your work at Kechla is incredible! After having been there I realized that one has to go there, be immersed in the on-going work of transformation and become one with it. It is only then that this work becomes a part of one's being and one wants to participate in it.

The tribal children are being given a rare opportunity to explore and express themselves, to articulate their aspirations and to follow their dreams. How did you and your team manage to make them proficient in English considering the fact that they come from poor illiterate families. These small children read and converse in English! It leaves me wonderstruck. And not to miss their impeccable pronunciation of Sanskrit when they recite shlokas and mantras or enact a Sanskrit play. Whereas at times even some college teachers of Sanskrit as well as trained pundits are not able to pronounce Sanskrit words correctly, these children do so with ease.

I have a confession to make. One thing had bothered me considerably, before I went to Kechla. I thought the children were being transplanted in a magical never-land. My apprehensions were unfounded. I find they go home once a week to stay with their families and in this way they remain touch with their mother tongue and their cultural roots as well.

You and your team are bringing about a wondrous transformation in a quiet, unobtrusive and determined manner. Your work is heart-warming as well as uplifting. It uplifts both, the children and those who are helping them in being groomed.

May more and more tribal children benefit from your work.

Ira Pandit  
Associate Professor of English  
Daulat Ram College  
University of Delhi

Dear Pranjal,

Your school fits with my concept of ideal school which nurtures spirituality along with learning. Schools here are quite nice, however I feel that they completely miss out on spirituality, they do take lots of efforts to foster good values, but still I feel something is missing. Surroundings are beautiful like Koraput here as well and New Zealanders are quite natural people with strong community spirit.

I should have started a school like yours one here - perhaps too late - running out of energy.

Will write again sometime. It seems all is well at your end. We are fine as well.

Arti

My dear Pranjal,

Thank you! I know that a large team of dedicated and wonderful people has made this school a reality....and the improvements are amazing, but you are the team leader who everyone looks up to. Every time I read anything about the school, or very often, look at the children's photographs that I took during our visits, I want to be with them. You are an amazing human being along with all the teachers and helpers at Kechla. Please give all of them, and our children lots of love and hugs.

Till we meet again in Delhi and in Kechla. I promise to spend much more time with the children next year.

Lots of love,

Urmila Didi

***A Tribute to Teachers  
Of  
Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir***

*O' Teacher of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir*

*You are so wonderful*

*'Cause you watch the little step*

*You hold the little hand*

*You mould the little mind.*

*O' Teacher of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir*

*You are 'Shakti' in manifestation*

*You are 'Radha' with your devotion to Krishna in every child*

*You are 'Sita' volunteering with love for humankind*

*You are 'Saraswati' spreading the knowledge*

*You are 'Laxmi' sowing seeds of wealth of character in every heart*

*You are 'Durga' putting your heart and soul in everything you do*

*You are the Creator & Preserver of 'Sewa Bhava', instilling it in every child*

*You are the Self (Shiva) in every self, all around.*

*O' Teacher of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir*

*know this and do not forget...*

*"You are one with many,*

*And many are none other than the only One".*

*"May the Divine work through you in service of all  
His names and forms, towards the Oneness."*

*- Aradhana to the Divine*

***With Love ,  
Aradhana Didi  
16.4.2013***