

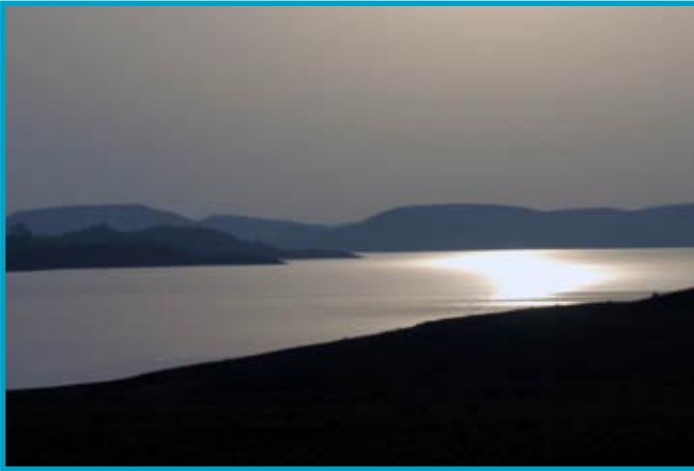


Auro-Mira Service Society

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

Report of activities in Kechla, Dt. Koraput, Odisha, during 2010-11

Kechla, a village of 6 hamlets, and a few surrounding villages with population of some 5,000 persons is an extremely primitive but scenic region in the state of Odisha (formerly Orissa). Auro-Mira Service



Society started working here in 2004 with the objectives of improving the social and economic status of the almost exclusively tribal population through education, cultivating grains, vegetables, fruits, etc., environmental awareness, and renewable sources of energy.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.

2010-11 was our seventh year in Kechla and we can



say that the above lines of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were true for us. By Indian philosophy it is not the actual work that is of the highest importance, but the *bhava* (spirit) in which it is done. In that vein, it is patently apparent that the feel of the place has been consistently changing for the better. The children and the plants make all the difference and we have come to realize more and more that these indeed need to be our primary focus.

Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir

This was the third year of the school.

The school was shifted in November from the few rooms in its inception to the hostel building as a temporary measure, whereas kitchen and dining area were shifted permanently to the hostel premises at the same time. Construction of a larger school building began during this fiscal year in March 2011. Children have been living in the hostel only intermittently as the building was not completely ready.

During the academic year, a large number of children had 100% attendance demonstrating the fact that children are now well settled. This is truly remarkable as the school functions on all days of the year without holidays or Sundays.

Taradidi visited the school in November. Her coming gave a lot of encouragement to the teachers



Tara didi , Mr. Brij & Dr. Krishna Sapru
with Kechla team



Tara didi with school children



Tara didi with Rainbow group



Dance performance for Tara didi and
Mr. Brij & Dr. Krishna Sapru

and students. She also spoke to the children and students which was extremely useful. Dr Krishna Sapru and Mr Brij Sapru from USA also accompanied Taradidi. They were very enthusiastic about the progress of the school and gave their blessings for the continued improvement.

During the year, many groups and individuals visiting AMSS project in Kechla worked with the school children. We had two camps of students of The Mother's International School. Several students of Class XII of the Mother's International School, New Delhi came in May for a week and worked full time with the children. Students of Class IX came in December to participate in an adventure cum personality development camp and did many activities with the children in the school, interacted with them over meals, and had fun and frolics with them on the treks.

Even the teachers of The Mother's International School involved themselves with school children during their stay. Mrs. Milan Mala worked on linguistics. Mrs. Darshana Nagpal and Mrs. Nisha Mehra



MIS class IX students and AMVM students on a trek

worked with Physical Education

There were three National Integration Camps and many Value Education camps and some of the campers worked with the children during their free time.

A number of teachers of Mirambika School of New Delhi including Sulochana didi, Baren, Sashwati, Niharika, Rabindra, Surendra, Bhaskar, Diptimayee, worked consistently with school children during their own school vacation in May and June

Circe from Switzerland spent a lot of quality time with the children. She narrated stories and taught many songs.

Steven from USA worked in the school during March. He helped set up the activity room racks and also repaired the cycles.

Sarah Lee from Canada came in March. She told stories and sang songs with the children.

Dr Pradhan from Delhi did medical check-ups of all the children. Sanjeeb Giri assisted her.

Mrs Uma Sircar from Bengal, a resource person for National Integration Camp, found time to teach many songs to the children in December.

Sudam Mishra, another resource person for the National Integration Camps, also taught songs to the school children in December.

Sanjay Mohapatra and Bikash Parida visited several times during the year. They did science topics, physical education and also dramatics with the children.

Celebrations and festivals

Darshan Days: All Darshan Days are celebrated with children offering flowers, listening to stories about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, chanting slokas and singing bhajans, and attending a session of meditation.



21st February. Mother's birthday
Dance by AMVM students

This year on 15th August, Sri Aurobindo's birth anniversary, the children put up a programme. The children narrated Sri Aurobindo's life. They also told about Jhansi Ki Rani and Gandhi ji. The Rainbow group children recited the Hindi poem - Jhansi Ki Rani. Butterfly group sang a song of which the words and music were composed by them. The song was on Sri Aurobindo. The other groups also presented various items.

After the presentations, a movie on Bhagat Singh was screened for everybody's enjoyment.

On 21st February, the Mother's birthday, children put up an exhibition on flowers. They collected flowers, decorated and displayed them with the spiritual significance assigned to them by the Mother. Rainbow group made up and presented a play on flowers. Butterfly group made up a song on the Mother, choreographed and executed a dance on it. Rainbow group also sang a bhajan.

New Year 2011– The children made and decorated cards outside the group. We had special meditation. This was the first time that New Year was celebrated properly in the school.

Raksha Bandhan - The children made Rakhis and tied to each other. School teachers presented a puppet show.

Janmashtami - A programme featuring drama, songs and dances was presented by the children on this day. Children made Jhoolas and decorated the school area.

Ganesh Puja - Children made Ganesh statues in clay, coloured and decorated them. Teachers told



Meditation on New Year's Day

Kartik Purnima - The children made boats. Everyone sang songs which had been made by them when the boats were put in the reservoir. Puja ceremony with incense, candles and flowers was performed.



Kartik Purnima - Paper boats in Kolab

Holi - The children played with water and mud and Haldi. This was a token celebration.

Birthdays - Every child's birthday is celebrated in a special way. The birthday child begins her/his



Birthday celebration

stories. The children themselves cooked special sweets for the festival.

Deepawali - Diyas and candles made by the children were lighted the whole campus. Children enjoyed decorating their classrooms. Children also prepared and presented a programme was put up where the children had dance performance and also sang songs they had written.



Dipawali in the Ashram

Christmas - The students of The Mother's International school were in Kechla during Christmas. The children had made a Christmas tree and decorated it. They also made caps, Santa Claus and gifts. They prepared and decorated the field for an outdoor programme. The whole school was wearing red dresses. A student of the Mother's International School dressed up as Santa Claus distributed gifts. All children sang Christmas Carols.



MIS & MVM students on Christmas

day by going to the meditation hall. All children assemble together and sing songs. Sweets and Prasad are distributed. Good Wishes Cards are made by children for the birthday child, and the child also receives gift of clothes on this auspicious day.

Construction

About 100 metres from the Hostel building, the big construction project started this year was for the construction of new school building which will have its own campus separate from other premises. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's devotees, Mrs. Krishna Sapru and Mr. Brij Sapru have undertaken to finance the entire Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir school building project in memory of their beloved daughter, late Anuradha (Sapru) Kohl. In addition to their own substantial contribution, they are collecting



Tara didi , Mr. Brij & Dr. Krishna Sapru arriving in Kechla



Tara didi and Dr. Krishna Sapru in Kechla



AMVM School Foundation Stone laying



Asthis of Anuradha Sapru Kohl being enshrined in the AMVM School Foundation

funds from their relatives and friends for the school. The Saprus accompanied Tara Jauhar, Chairperson of Auro-Mira Service Society, and travelled to Kechla



to visit the Kechla project and to lay the foundation stone of the School. Their visit was extremely encouraging for all Ashram workers, teachers and the children. On their side, they were seemingly



Foundation ceremony of AMVM School

We also inched closer to completing the girls hostel building.



Solar system on the roof of Hostel

Hostel blocks in memory of their founder Chairman, late Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar 'Faquir'.

Contributions of Rs 1,79,140 & Rs 5,85,406 by Ushagram Association, Switzerland towards construction of the Hostel Building are gratefully acknowledged.

Pilot project for Drip Irrigation



Drip Irrigation Project

overwhelmed with the beauty of the place and the remarkable upliftment achieved in just a few years, as a perusal of their comments in the 'Inspirations' section will testify. An additional boost of morale was felt by everyone with the maiden visit of Km. Tara Jauhar, who as a Trustee and the Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch is a well known figure in India's NGOs.



Tree planting by students

We wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous contribution of Rs. 50 lakhs by Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch Trust of New Delhi for construction of one of the



'Faquir' Chacha ji with the Mother

Ms Sarah Lee from DRIPTECH USA visited Kechla in March. She

wanted to explore the possibility of promoting drip irrigation in the region for sustainable self employment. Kopernik was willing to sponsor this project. Sarah accompanied by AMSS personnel visited the following villages: Kechla, Girlaguda, Narjiput, Semla, Panasput, Paidaput, Gulelput and Hingeiput. She held meetings with the villagers to introduce drip irrigation. She showed photographs, slides, posters,

films and also equipment of the same. A list was drawn up of interested farmers. In the village of Kechla two systems were installed – one in the hamlet of Janiguda for Shyama Pukia and the second for Sunadhar & Ramu Muduli in the hamlet of Ratamatiguda – as a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of a wider implementation of drip irrigation in this remote location and to see what kind of problems, if any, crop up.

Irrigation (repair and maintenance)

AMSS Project in Kechla has five portable pumps for irrigation. Funds for these were provided by Ushagram Suisse. These pumps are loaned without charge to villagers for growing vegetables in dry seasons. The only requirement for the users is that every week the borrower has to bring back the pump to show that it is being properly used and kept in good condition. AMSS bears the expense on repair and maintenance of these pumps. This can run in to a sizeable amount as the pumps have to be carried to Koraput for repair. Both transportation and repair costs can add up to a good amount.

Bee Keeping

Four persons were sent for training in Bee Keeping to Sarvodaya Samiti, Koraput in April. They were Jagabandhu Muduli of Ratamatiguda, Guru Krishani and Mangu of Leduguda and Damru of Giralguda. Six Bee boxes, complete with Bees and all other material were purchased. These were installed in AMSS orchard. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of funds for this honey-project by Ushagram Suisse



General Health Care & Medical Camps

Teachers and staff of AMSS know how to take preliminary care of injuries and conditions. Many allopathic and homeopathic medicines are stocked on site in Kechla. With the consultation link up with the Mother's Integral Health Centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, most problems can be addressed on site in Kechla. This facility is freely available to all villagers in the region at all times of day or night throughout the year. For serious conditions, patients are transported to the town of Koraput.

As in preceding years, medical camps were also conducted during this fiscal year. From October 14 - 30, two paramedical workers, Sanjeeb Giri and Anandamayee Sahoo, provided healthcare to about a 100 patients for the following conditions:

- Viral Fever
- Headache
- General Dressing
- Old Wounds
- Skin rashes and infections
- Malaria
- Diarrhoea
- Stomach disorders



Sterilization for Family Planning
Detected for Cataract Operation
Health Check up
Eye Exercises
Integral Health Check up
Medical Camps held
Patients attended



In a series of medical camps organized by Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch during December 14 to January 8, health survey were conducted in 5 villages of the region. Following activities were carried out during this period:

5 Women
5 Patients
84 Students of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir
200 persons
100 persons
7
250



Eye Exercise

Resource persons were volunteer doctors, Dr. Mrs. Surinder Pradhan – Dr. M.S. Mohapatra & Mrs. Chandra Bhatia – from The Mother's Integral Health Centre (a unit of Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, New Delhi) with the supporting paramedical workers, Mr. Sanjeeb Giri, Mr. Uttam Kumar, and Ms. Roopa Arya, also part of the same unit.

Adventure Youth Camps

During May and December 2010 & March 2011, three adventure youth camps were conducted for participants from the Birla Public School, Pilani, Rajasthan (1 camp or 52 participants), The Mother's International



Morning keep-fit



Shramdan



On the Kolab River Reservoir



Excursion to Kechal Tourist Tower



Eye Care



Rappelling



Adventure & fun at waterfall





Swimming and Rowing on the Kolab River Reservoir



Trek to View Point

School, New Delhi (two camps, with 9, and 50 participants). Activities of the camps included bouldering, rappelling, swimming, rowing, trekking, asanas & pranayama, keep-fit exercises, talks & workshops on health including vision-care, western folk-dances, shramdan, meditation, and interactive talks on value based topics. Pranjal Jauhar, Dr. Nirankar Agarwal, and Jayanta Paul were among the resource persons. Several pictures are included to illustrate the manifold activities that formed part of these camps.

Sri Aurobindo National Integration Camps

Three Sri Aurobindo National Integration Camps, organized by Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi, were conducted at Kechla during the financial year 2010-11. Two were held in October, 14 - 21, and 23 - 30, and one from December 30 to January 6, 2011. Each camp had 100 participants. Many



Yogasana class



Shramdan



Yogasana class



Journalist Santakar gives a talk



Pranjal Jauhar's value based talk & discussion



Learning community songs



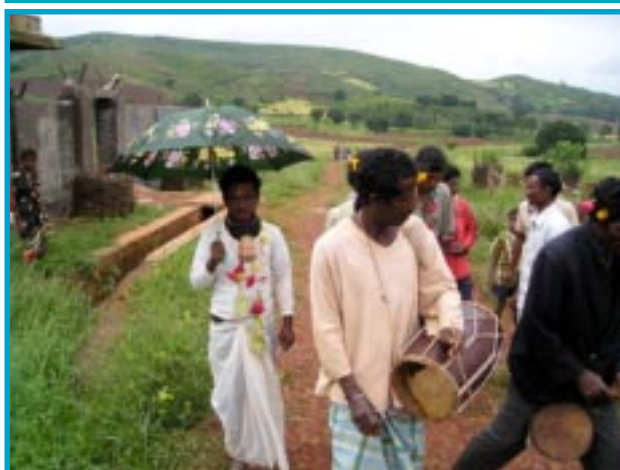
Eye Care - application of honey



Eye Care - ball play



Trekking



Tribal musicians



Drama class



Practice for Valedictory Function

participants travelled from a long distance, for instance from Haryana and Uttarakhand, changing train three times in the process. Participants came from Uttarakhand, Delhi, Maharashtra, U.P., Odisha, M.P. Bihar, Haryana, W.B., Chandigarh, A.P., Tamilnadu. Despite language barrier in some cases, attendees made friends with people from distant regions and different cultures. Activities of the camps focused on physical fitness & health, unity in cultural diversity, and integration of people from various parts of the country. Interaction with the local tribal people, children of the school and adults created much hilarity at times due to language barrier and people were seen interacting with sign language and pantomimes. Activities included yogasanas, keep-fit, shramdan, talks and discussions, visit to the hamlets of village Kechla, trekking in the forest and to the hill tops and during the night hours to build stamina and remove



Valedictory Function



Valedictory Function



Award of Certificates

apprehension, rappelling to remove fear, swimming, chanting and meditation, presentation of culturally unique items from different states including music, dance, skit, plays etc., learning local tribal folk dances, preparing and tasting regional foods prepared by participants, etc.

Sri Aurobindo Value Education Camps

Four Sri Aurobindo Value Education Camps (SAVEC) organized by Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi, were held in Kechla Project site during the year. Two of these camps were for teachers and two were for students. Unlike the National Integration Camps, the focus here was to impart values of a lasting nature among the participants.

Sri Aurobindo Value Education Camps for students focused on Role and importance of values,



Morning yogasana



Community singing



Stomach rappelling



Value based talk & discussion



Imbibing values through Ramayana Game



Folk Dancing



Dip in the Reservoir is fun



Talk on value-based topics



Eye Care - Blinking in Water



Eye Care - Fine Print Reading

clarification of differences between values and virtues, use & misuse of money, environment and sustainable living, need & greed, responsibility & accountability, how is the society moulding us and vice versa, etc. were some of the topics thoroughly debated during the camps. Other activities included morning yogasanas & keep-fit, shramdan, trekking, rappelling, swimming, rowing, eye-care workshop, cultural evenings with music, dance, skit, plays, visit to the hamlets of Kechla, learning of community and patriotic songs in many languages, etc.

Sri Aurobindo Value Education Camps for teachers were oriented towards enhancing skills of the teachers in various disciplines so that students would eventually benefit from better teaching methods and more timely and value-added topics including the following:

1. Nine emotions through a play: Importance and need to expose children to various emotions so that they are cognizant of them in themselves: a. Peace, b. Shringara (enjoyment of beauty), c. Karuna (compassion), d. Adbhuta (awe, wonderment), e. Hasya (laughter, mirth), f. Veerta (valour, heroism), g. Bhaya (fear), h. Vibhatsa (disgust), i. Raudra (anger, fury), j. Vatsalya (love for a child)
2. Ideal leader: Who is an ideal leader, whom will you chose as an ideal leader, what qualities you would like to bring in you to become an ideal leader?
3. Difference between a Guru and a Teacher
4. Puppet show- to make teaching and learning process interesting for children
5. How to walk: posture and technique, benefit; walking meditation
6. English Teaching activities and games



Shramdan



Puppet show



Workshop on teaching Science



Village *Goshthi Ghar*



Cultural presentation



Receiving Certificate

Other activities during the camp included discussions and workshops on:

- * Physical development and health through asanas, pranayama
- * Introspection and self observation
- * Aim of life and money as the driving force
- * Meditation
- * Ideal teacher
- * Ideal leader
- * Value based drama and puppet show with the following themes:
 1. Saving and conserving energy
 2. Love and affection within the family

3. Importance of discipline in life
 4. Plantation & afforestation
 5. Value of and respect for the environment
- * Teaching of science and math, origami, rhymes,
 - * Physical activities: minor games, rappelling, trekking, rowing, swimming, cultural evenings, etc.

Inspirations

OUR AMAZING TRIP TO KECHLA'S SRI AUROBINDO SCHOOL AND ASHRAM DURING NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 1, 2010

We have been overwhelmed by so much here that we will have to cover in separate categories:

1. The Natural Beauty of Kechla: This is one of Nature's most beautiful areas - the beauty of the surrounding hills, trees and the water - it is a perfect place for the work that goes on here. Just looking around is a feast for the eyes and the soul. Peaceful, most of the time, one can feel God's presence here in the environment.



2. The Children's School: All the children bring additional joy and add to the natural beauty of this place. These very young girls and boys starting at the age of 3 and mostly in the age group of 3-7 speak English, Hindi and their mother tongue fluently. An incredible achievement. The education is very balanced. We were treated to music, dance, recitation and plays by all the children. If this school continues to get the support it deserves, then



it will continue to create India's future leaders, scholars. The effort put in by each and every child is a testimony to their creativity. It is an absolute, practical and living proof that given the right environment, any child can overcome the unfortunate circumstances into which they are born. These children are getting all of that here: a balanced education (includes the ability to speak various languages, *bhajans*,

shlokas, acting, art and poetry) AND LOVE (the most precious ingredient that they are receiving). They also get nutritious meals which is necessary for their physical and mental growth. Even children of wealthy families living in large cities do not get this high quality education. These children here have learned the importance of unity and have learned to have a fighting spirit to face obstacles. It has been a joy watching them. We hope to be back to see them as they advance. The sounds of children laughing, playing and running adds to the beauty of this place. How many remote and tiny villages in India have running water and electricity? This place has solar



Windmill on the premises



electricity and wind mill for water pumping.

3. The Staff of Kechla: This includes teachers, all the helpers, cooks, gardeners and all supporting staff. The teachers are obviously doing a wonderful job as can be seen in the children's knowledge. They do this with love and dedication AND they do it happily. They are also growing with these precious ones. These teachers and staff deserve better living conditions. We would like to provide them with at least the basic necessities like a bed, a desk, a chair, bedding, etc. We request that these needs be pointed out to us so that we can help.

4. The School and Ashram Surroundings: By planting trees (for shade), fruit trees, vegetables and flowers, this place will soon be transformed into an oasis. Already we have tasted the fruits of some trees. In addition to this, it is important teaching the children and the staff the value of how much we can get from mother earth. This is done as an environmentally sustainable manner.

5. The Leader of This Place: He may not like to read this but we have to say that all the credit goes to PRANJAL JAUHAR. His persistence, dedication and humility are the foundations of all that is blossoming here (animate and inanimate elements). For this we not only have to be extremely thankful but wish him a very long and healthy life so he can continue the work he has started and do it for ever and ever.

6. Why Did We Come to Kechla: We came to dedicate something to our darling daughter, Anuradha (Bulbul). This may be hard for others to believe, but we already feel her presence here. She is in the air and enjoying the immense beauty. We could not have found a more beautiful resting place for her. She is watching and smiling. She deserved to be in this very special place. We love you Bulbul. Lalit and Tina will come to visit you here and we will do whatever we can to see that this place flowers. It has been a privilege.

ñ Brij & Krishna Sapru, U.S.A.



Pranjal Jauhar with Smt. Renuka Pradhan

I visited this holy and beautiful place today. This is a very beautiful and nice place. This institute established at a nice place. It is an organization providing educational system to the local tribal girls and boys. The student are very prompt and enthusiastic. But Govt. has to take proper care for development and infrastructure development. It is not only a holy place but also a Gurukula Ashram. The people and Mr. Pranjal Bhai are very cooperative. I hope all the success.

**- Smt. Renuka Pradhan, Rajya Sabha M.P.
from Odisha, Bhubaneswar**

I visited the cutoff area site and the infrastructure development is very nice. I am proud of you. In future if you are interested to develop this site, I am helpful to you at any time. If you want in future, then I will help to you anytime for interest of local people.

- Shri Jayaram Pangi, Lok Sabha M.P. from Koraput

For any local development required I will be available with you and kindly intimate for any work for your organization in future. I should be helping you.

ñ Shri Raghuram Podal, MLA from Koraput

My Pranam to Sri Aurobindo and The mother. Only a person like a Pranjal my dear brother could set up such a beautiful ashram. Today I received the blessing of the Mother in this special place. What an excellent school and what beautiful ambience. I will come back and spend some more time. We need may more places like this to rejuvenate the movement towards a truly great meaningful world order.

**- Darshan & Col Devdutt Chowdhary (Retd.)
Principal, Birla International School, Pilani, Rajasthan**

It was a beautiful and memorable experience here. It is Mother's blessing that in such a remote and serene surrounding her work and teachings are being practised. Pranjal is doing something extraordinary. I would definitely come back here to learn from him.

- Debashree, Pilani

It is a very serene and beautiful place. The children are fortunate in that they are fed well. Wish them all the best in their learning skills of good health.

- Indumati Rao, Chennai

The place is absolutely stunning in its natural beauty. Pranjal ji is very devoted to its development and has lovely plans despite many insurmountable barriers placed by Govt. and others. The children are fortunate to have the school. The teachers are devoted. We saw the Rainbow group perform. They were excellent. The children are excellent and give their strength to learn. They are able to concentrate. I love the place. I will return. Thanks Pranjal bhai.

- Mridu Sekhar, Chicago, USA

A calm, serene place of beauty. I really was happy with the teachers who managed the school so well. Kids from the underprivileged section of the community were learning and smiling all day. Everyone associated with Ashram is very friendly and helpful. I thanks them all.

The service the Ashram is rendering to the local tribal community through educating local children is invaluable.

I pray for its growth and success.

- Satya P. Das, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi

The most unforgettable experience of this visit to Sri Aurobindo's Place of Kechla has been the living divinity at the Sanctum Sanctorum established in the Adi Kutir by the Auro Mira Service Society. It is the source of all aspirations and their fulfilment, all plans and their success. All works and their benefits to the surrounding tribals.

The place provides a beautiful opportunity to begin with and proceed further in Sri Aurobindo Yoga to the interested fortunate.

P.S- I wish that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo may bless the sincere and dynamic staff of the institution with greater illumination, sincerity and truthfulness.

- Y.R. Malhotra, Saharanpur

Thank you Pranjal, Sudam, Jogi, Sukant and others for hosting me here and helping make drip irrigation a possibility for farmers in surrounding communities to improve their livelihood. I enjoyed the clean air, starry sky at night, and sunsets over the hills.

- Sarah Lee, Ontario, Canada

A beautiful and tranquil place. Everyone is doing a fantastic job helping improve the lives of the locals. The children are a wonder to behold. I enjoyed my short stay here and wish the very best for this worthy project.

- Steve Kingston, Kelso, Washington, USA

Dear Pranjal, Thank you for everything. I am so glad you were able to bring with you some MIS students. All this exchange is so good for these children. Hopefully someday Kechla children will be able to visit Delhi.

We have gone over the photographs many times with family and friends. It was really an amazing trip. I am still overwhelmed and feel so connected to the place..

Here is wishing you and everyone else at Kechla a very Bright and Cheerful New Year. Lots of love and Mothers blessings.

- Krishna Sapru, USA