



Newsletter 03 – May 2007

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Model School:

Annual School Day

Thanks to our hardworking children, staff and the help

of many friends and supporters our 2nd Annual School Day was a good success, even though just a few of the invited officials took the opportunity to get their personal impression of Balamitra School.

Our visitors were welcomed by a group of tribals playing their traditional drums. On their way up to the School Bazaar they passed decorated walls showing pictures of everyday life at our school and the tribal villages. For the School Bazaar the students had tinkered little handicrafts such as bookmarks, various percussion instruments self stitched bags and colorful lamps. The children of class II also sold soaps in four different aromas, which they made in a project with two of our volunteers.



Visitors at the School Bazaar

In each of our three classrooms the children exhibited their workbooks and pictures from their lessons.

In the later afternoon the students presented some of their recent classroom activities and songs in English and Telugu.



Class V students performing the game "Eklavya"

The highlight of the performances was the play Eklavya, which class V rehearsed with Kristina. The drama was one of her last contributions to Balamitra as she flew back to Germany only a few days later.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Kristina for the inspiration and joy she gave to the students and us. We hope that we can fill the gap she leaves as soon as possible. Therefore if any experienced Waldorf teacher is interested in volunteering with Balamitra, please contact us.

While class V was just solving some difficult mental maths problems, a high representative joined the audience: the recently elected deputy mayor of Visakhapatnam, Dorababu. In the speech he held at the end of the program he said, that he approved the work of Balamitra very much and he promised to donate 50.000 Rs. (862 €) to our school.

For the children the end of the program was not the end of the festivity as we celebrated the birthday of four of them together with Jayshree Hattagandi's who is one of our main supporters and who was a great help in organizing the whole bazaar.

Portraits:

Rekha – A six-year-old girl from the Kondadora tribe who is very talented in singing, drama and traditional



dance. Rekha comes from Demuduvalasa, a very remote village, which is located in a valley about 20 km away from any road, so walking is the only possibility to reach it and even this is almost impossible during the monsoon season. Her family, whose language is Adivasi Oriya, works on hill-slopes, cultivating maize, ragi, different vegetables and minor millets and cereals. Rekha is one of the pranksters in our school.

Giribabu – A bright and energetic boy of seven. He is bold, articulate and eager to perform all activities,



reflecting the tribe he comes from, the Bagatas, which is the most superior of the tribes in the ethnic hierarchy. He is comfortable with multiple languages – Oriya, Kui and Telugu. His family has some wetlands, grows rice and vegetables in the valleys and pulses on the terraces. As the hills are denuded, they do not have much forest produce to collect. The annual family income is Rs.18, 000 approximately.

Village Schools:

As the hot summer sun intensifies in the hill area and even the first signs of the upcoming monsoon season are visible, it is time for the village schools to wind up their doors and give their children summer holidays as well.

Before the vacations starts Balamitra Training Team usually visit the schools to review the school performance.



Test in one of the villages schools

This contains assessments of the

academic skills and growth of the children, to evaluate their potential for ascent to higher classes. As the Balamitra concept just provides the classes I to III at the moment, children who have successfully completed class III will be offered help in getting admission to one of the government residential schools for tribal children.

In the last summer a total number of 157 children made their way to one of the government school, which means for most of them either a long journey to school every morning or that they have to leave their villages to live in hostels. But for some children their school-life even ends after class III as they do not want to leave the villages and their parents need help in housework and harvesting. Because the midday meal program (for details see last newsletter 02.2007) still just exists on the paper for our schools, some of our village teachers reported that quite a few parents apply for their children at government schools to get them free lunch.

About this and other issues in which they have been trained, like hygiene, healthy nutrition and the aims of Balamitra education, the schoolteachers held regular parent meetings.

Because it is such a big challenge for our Field Coordinator Prabavati to maintain the motivation of the teachers who have to work alone in remote areas and without any guidance, we want to reduce our input in the Model School to focus more on the work in the village schools in the next term.

Homeopathic Support



Rambabu visits the doctor

by him and contain all sorts of homeopathic medicines. Our aim is to use a combination of tribal and homeopathic instead of allopathic medicine.

Dr. Sharma checks the children at the Model School regularly and he was a reliable help in several cases of malaria and other serious diseases.

On our regular Teacher Trainings, held at the Model School, the health of the children is always one of the main topics.

In teaching basic skills to the village teachers we have been supported by Dr. K.V.R.L.N. Sharma since nearly three years now.

He consults the teachers in health questions and instructs them how to monitor the healthy growth of the children. The first-aid-kits given to the village teachers are composed

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Appeal:

You can contribute to our efforts by way of donations in materials or money. Financial contributions to Samata are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G and has a contribution regulation act (FCRA) number from the Central Government which allows it to receive foreign funds. Please make Cheques payable to 'Samata'. Legal Status:

Registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 (No.554/90)
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