



Newsletter 06 – December 2007

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Model school

At the beginning of November the pupils one by one found their way back to our model school in Sagar Nagar. Their happy faces revealed how much they enjoyed staying with their families during the short vacation. Excitedly they shared fabulous stories and news from their villages.

With the new energy and enthusiasm the children brought in we all had a great start in our daily school

life. Furthermore the pupils were in the perfect mood for the upcoming festival period, to name just three of them: Diwali, Naga Panchami and Rajulmmas birthday.

Diwali

Diwali, a 4 daylong Hindu festival, is celebrated for different reasons, in each part of India. In The north it includes the New Year celebration. Whereas in South India we celebrate Lord Krishnas victory over a daemon. Throughout the whole country Diwali is also known as the festival of lights.

On the 9th of December, the final day of Diwali, the school was illuminated



with numerous oil lamps. Pupils were singing and dancing which created a festive atmosphere. The evening was finished off with a colorful display of firework.

Naga Panchami / snake festival

Naga Panchami is also connected with the legend of Krishna. In his early childhood he caught a snake though he set it free again when it promised that henceforth it would not harass anybody.

Since snakes are believed to like milk and eggs devotees sacrifice these goods to them on the day of the snake festival. Supposedly this ensures protection from any snake attacks.

Our Balamitra kids build little snake houses in the school garden, little holes in piles of soil. These animal homes were decorated with flowers and oil lamps. During a small Puja children concealed eggs and rice in the snake houses. This immolation should prevent further snake visits in our school, such as the visit of the black cobra a few days before.



Puja next to the snake houses



Rajulamma's Birthday

Rajulamma, an experienced nurse, is part of the Balamitra education program since the beginning of the project. She lives in the Balamitra model school and does an incredibly good job in taking care of the children. The children would say: "she is the Mama of all of us".

Friday afternoon all of the Balamitra students were hiding in one of the classrooms, busily preparing gifts for Raju. On Saturday the 5th of December a magnificent Birthday celebration took place. Students presented their "mama" with pictures, self-made gifts and uncountable gorgeous bangles.

The evening came to an end with a dancing session on Indian movie songs: even though the children are experts in traditional dancing they enjoy getting a glimpse of Indian popular culture.

Class IV

In November a new face entered our model school. Giulia Albertini, born in Italy, has almost finished her Waldorf teacher training in England. With her fresh enthusiasm she is a great help for both teachers and volunteers in any questions concerning teaching.

Thanks to the increased number of members in our model school we were furthermore able to create a fourth grade. The fourth class pupils are now trained intensively in Telugu, English, Mathematics and social studies in order to be prepared for the test of admission for tribal government schools. The students are aware



English class in class IV

of the fact that there are only four months left until the exam. Hence they study with admirable diligence.

Projects

In the past weeks our pupils have been working on several project concerning their language skills. Most of our students don't speak Telugu as their mother tongue. Common tribal languages in the Eastern Ghats are Kui, Konda and Adivasi Oriya. During our morning assemblies children already learned a few traditional songs. However, these tribal languages are only used orally, meaning there is no script. Since only Telugu and English are taught in governmental schools tribal languages are endangered of getting extinct. Therefore we started writing down songs, verses, proverbs and primary dictionaries in these languages.

Another project is the recently established friendship between our pupils and the students from the Waldorf School in Duesseldorf (Germany). Mrs. Doehring, one of our former teachers from Germany, has written letters with her 7th graders to our Balamitra kids. Our pupils are very excited about the interest these German students have shown in them and their culture. They can't wait to respond. Additionally this is their first opportunity to use their assiduously learned English, even in an international contact.

At this point we would like to thank the students from Duesseldorf for the enjoyment they gave our students and the kind donations they send to our school. Furthermore we thank all the other donators who supported the Balamitra education program in 2007. Without your help it would be essentially impossible to run such a program!

Student portraits

Rajeswari

Rajeswari is an openhearted twelve-year-old girl who has been shifted to class IV. Being the oldest one among the children she does a great job in caring for the smaller ones like a sister. Her family belongs to Bagata tribe and originates from Kesiripuram, a small village in a hilltop area. They grow their own rice, Ragi, corn and several kinds of dhal.



Arjun

Arjun is an eight-year-old student from Karakavalsa village who has joined Balamitra Model School only after the last holidays. As his father owns only very small land, his family is completely dependent on labor work. Still, Arjun is a very smart student who is integrating very well. Since his mother tongue is Oriya, he is only able to write very few Telugu sentences and understand English very little. However he is always the first to try something out, spreading the spirit of interest in class 2.

Village Visits:

During December, Sitarama Raju, our new field schools coordinator, organized meetings with the Balamitra field school teachers. In these meetings various issues were discussed, such as lesson plans, school gardens and again the nonexistent midday meals. In addition the idea of libraries for the field schools was introduced. The teaching materials that we offer the villagers frequently get lost. Therefore the teachers should now borrow these materials at a local “library” which is set by our field school coordinator.

In the meetings also the results of the recent parents meetings concerning the possible improvements in the village schools were discussed. Some villagers decided to put up

sand pits next to the Balamitra schools for the children younger than six, as it is difficult to teach students with such a huge age difference in one classroom.

All Balamitra teachers will meet at the end of December for the next teacher’s training, this time in Poolabanda village.



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Appeal:

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