



Auro-Mira Service Society

Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch

Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016

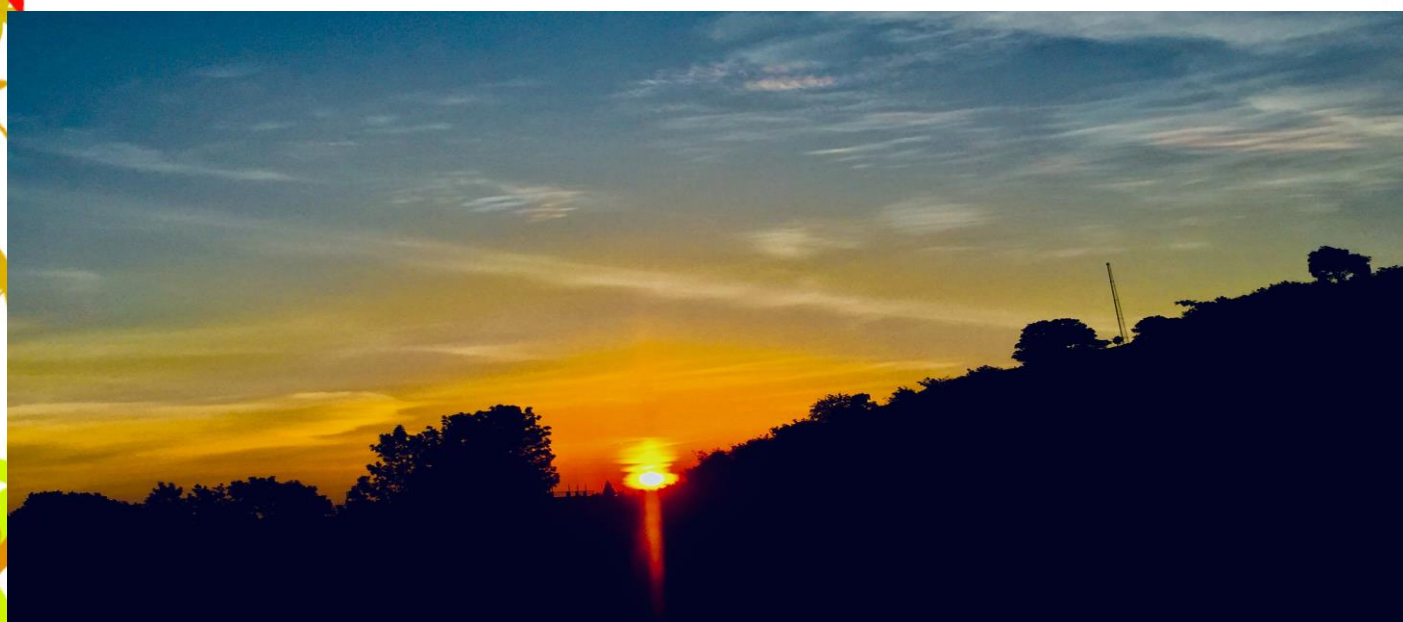
Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir

Annual Report 2019-20

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The Calling of the Red Earth

Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir

School Report 2019-20

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Malcolm X

Situated on the foothills of the green hills beside the Kolab reservoir, Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir (AMVM) is a residential school for the tribal children in Koraput district of Odisha. With the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the school has been providing free education to the deprived children of Kechla Village. It aims to provide all students with quality education that will enable them to develop independent thinking skills, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, to be a perpetual learner and a positive thinker. These qualities empower the young citizens towards a smooth journey of their lives.

There are about 139 students in the school; 78 staying in the hostel and the rest are in day boarding.



ACTIVITIES

Acknowledging the unique potential of each individual, the school gives scope to the students to explore themselves and their area of interest through various activities.



Yoga

The body must learn to obey before it can manifest power and physical- education is the most thorough discipline for the body. – Sri Aurobindo

Children of AMVM attend morning Yoga sessions regularly. An initial reluctance for doing Yoga was soon offset by their realization that yoga led to positive change in their agility and stamina. This attitudinal change has made the children execute even difficult asanas with comparative ease.

Shramdaan

For a happy and effective life, the essentials are sincerity, humility, perseverance and an insatiable thirst for progress. – The Mother



This thirst for progress is facilitated when we understand and respect the domain of work. Residential children are divided into 6 groups for learning music, practicing music, working in the kitchen, toilet cleaning, gardening, and cleaning cereals and pulses. Each group rotates in designated activities under the supervision of an adult facilitator providing needed guidance. Working in different areas helps in inculcating discipline as well as appreciation of the usefulness for various kinds of work.



Toilet cleaning

For one who wants to grow in self- perfection, there are no great or small tasks, none that are important or unimportant, all are equally useful. – TheMother

'Understanding of health and hygiene cannot be attained unless I keep my surroundings clean', a dictum, which each child of the school believes and practices. Every day the children assiduously clean the toilets, and their plates after every meal. Refilling bottles with soap solution for cleaning utensils is also done by students

Music

Music... gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination... and life to everything. – Plato



Soft notes of flute and strumming of Guitar are a welcome pursuit each morning in AMVM. The campus reverberates with beautiful music played by the children on their flute, tabla, guitar and keyboard generating positive energy to the surroundings so that all living beings including plants and animals are so happy and healthy. Their engrossment in the beautiful melodies expresses their love and devotion. Some children have even made their own notations of their favourite songs. The assembly and cultural programmes are organised for showcasing their talent. Besides practicing music during Sharman, two hours are provided for music practice. To live peacefully we have to move cohesively, and the orchestra helps this objective; therefore on Tuesday evening all children sit together to perform an orchestra.

Gardening

As the Mother says “Changing one’s mental activity is certainly one way of resting, but the greatest possible rest is silence.”

Children connect to Nature...they share the same energy. This special bond can be observed when the children are working in the garden. They love to spend their time with plants; nurturing them by digging, weeding, watering, etc. They internalise the power of patience with gardening. Both the hostel and school gardens are taken care of by the children themselves. Thus appreciation of beauty happens with the “*Hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body but the soul*” opined

Alfred Austin, and this can be clearly seen by observing children at work in the gardens.



Kitchen

Kitchens are made for families to gather and if you can organise your kitchen, you can organise your life.



Kitchen helps in building a strong character. It develops patience, tolerance, problem solving, and creativity to name just a few. Children of the school go to the kitchen turn wise and help in chopping vegetables and cleaning the dining area. In case the cook is absent, children show their self-reliance by preparing breakfast and contributing to the preparation of other meals. While doing these activities, they ensure that cleanliness and hygiene are maintained.



Infrastructure

Girls' Hostel – Since the roadwork is over, it has become easier to get material but a shortfall in the availability of skilled workers persists. Work is however going at a faster pace and generators are being used to provide electricity. We did not get an electricity connection having noticed that the provision of electricity to the village even is only intermittent. Hostel structure is complete. Steel work of railings and skylights is about half done. About a third of the tile work is complete. The aluminium work is underway. With adequate availability of material and skilled workers, which unfortunately is subject to the impact of COVID-19, the project may be finished by the end of the year.



Dairy



The number of cows & calves has increased to about 18. Hence the cow-shed is being renovated to accommodate a bigger herd and a caretaker room is also under construction.

The children also take good care of the cows. on some occasions they pray for their good health an feed them with their hands.

Welcome!!!

We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all the beautiful things... – Desmond Tutu

Six new kids in the Bliss group adjusted well in the new environment promptly.



Our Jewels

Every beginner possess a great potential to be an expert... – Lailah Gifty Akita



Chandrama Jani, Talsa Jani, Kamli Krisani, Kokila Jani, Gauri Muduli, Bikanti Mali, Bhavna Gouda, Jagat Nag and Darshana Gouda; these older children have started helping in the groups by being quite capable of handling the younger children aptly. Simultaneously they are doing their higher studies.

Most of them have cleared their class 12th from NIOS and are enrolled under IGNOU for the Graduation.

Ready for battle

"I will struggle but I will never quit."

Five children from New Creation group who were enrolled in NIOS are preparing for class 10th board exam. The practical exams have started and they were quite confident. Now they are grooming for the theory part of exams under the supervision of teachers.

Steps to a new world

Five students from the school have taken a bold step to go out for their higher studies. Pitambar Muduli and Mahadev Jani are enrolled in Ramkrishna school, Muniguda in the science stream. Suryodhan Gouda and Madan Muduli are doing a diploma in computer science whereas Vivek Mali is doing Electrical science in Hitech Institution of Information and Technology in Jeypore, Odisha. Though the new environment was initially a little trying, they adjusted to the novel lifestyle quite well and soon.



Celebrations & Festivals

Cultural education is an important part of School's curriculum. To make the children aware of the glorious traditions of India, AMVM celebrates important festivals and important days of the Ashram throughout the year. Children get a chance to express themselves through plays, dance, singing, music, etc. Festivals bring a change by breaking the monotony of routine and contribute to a build-up of harmony. And the children imbibe a reverence for their culture by assimilating the high endeavours and values associated with various festivals.

Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's Arrival in Pondicherry, 4 April 2019

*A new mind and body in the city of God
And enshrine the immortal in his glory's house
And make the finite one with infinity.*
– Savitri

Sri Aurobindo reached Pondicherry on 4 April 1910. In response to a query from a disciple as to “Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place for your Sadhana?” Sri Aurobindo replied, “Because it was by an Adesh — command from Above — I was asked to come here?”. “Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya,— not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention.” To commemorate this momentous day, a special meditation was held in the Ashram meditation hall. Children also sang devotional songs on this occasion.



Anniversary of the Mother's Final Arrival in Pondicherry, 24 April 2019



The anniversary of the final arrival of the Mother in Pondicherry on 24 April, 1920 was celebrated with a session of collective meditation and prayers.

The Mother's flag was hoisted in the Ashram courtyard and the children saluted the flag with a March-Past.

A special Naam Jap programme was held in the school and the children of Gratitude Group onwards participated in it.

Rabindra Jayanti, 7 May 2019

To commemorate the birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore, AMVM organised a cultural programme on 7th May beginning with a discussion of his literary works. A programme highlighting songs composed by the poet, were sung by the students with accompaniment by diverse instruments.

Thus children of Smile Group sang *Moyur Moyur*, of Joy group sang *Dhitang Dhitang Bole*, Gratitude and Humility Group sang *Ekla Chalo* and *Are O Beli Chameli*, and Aspiration Group put up an Orchestra with Flute, Tabla and Keyboard playing *Ekla Chalo* and *Purano Shei Diner katha*. Enthusiastic participation of all students made the event a great success.



Swing Festival (Raja Parba), 14 June 2019



Raja paraba a three day festival of Odisha was celebrated in the school with lots of pageantry and grandeur. The girls wore beautiful traditional clothes, Bindi on the forehead and Alatha on their feet. On this day the girls were pampered and made to feel special and were given leave to spend time on the swings. Some older boys took initiative in cutting vegetables and cooking scrumptious food. They also put up ornately decorated rope swings and bamboo swings using colourful dupatta, flowers and mango leaves. Children sang beautiful raja song *Banaste Dakila Gaja* while swinging. Swings were put up in the hostel trees for the younger groups. Sulochana didi made traditional Raja Pitha for everyone on three consecutive days. Anand Bhaiya with his family came to make special south Indian Dosa, Chutney and Sambar. In the evening there was a basketball match between the teachers and the students. The children won the match.

Ratha Yatra, 4 July 2019



Ratha Yatra also known as Chariot Festival that involves a public procession of the three deities on the chariot was held on 4 July. On this special occasion a short assembly was held in the meditation hall. Papa Ji made a beautiful idol of Lord Jagannath using paper only. The children sang a few chants on Vishnu Ji, Ram ji and Krishna ji, for they are the incarnation of the Supreme Lord. Srinath bhaiya and Surekha didi sang beautiful devotional songs on Lord Jagannath.

School Foundation Day and Tara Didi's birthday, 5 July 2019



A string of programs were presented by various groups of AMVM to celebrate the anniversary of the school's foundation day and Tara Didi's birth anniversary:

Forenoon

The programme started with an offering by the dance of Twinkle Group children on the song My Friend Ganesha. The senior children from the Faith Group presented a play named Fred's New Car directed by Pranjal Bhaiya. It was followed by a mind blowing Bharatnatyam dance on the theme of Shiva by the Aspiration Group girls. A creative play in English was shown by the children of the Joy Group. The children of the Smile Group did a creative play, Chinch- Chidiya in Hindi. The little Children of the bliss Group danced on the song Bum Bum Bole. A play named "The Tale of the Rabbit" was done by the Children of the gratitude group. The Most enthusiastic dance "Bhangra" was done by the Aspiration

children. The children of the Humility put up a play 'Listen to the Mountains'.

Afternoon

In the afternoon the programmed started with the traditional Sambalpuri dance by the kids of Joy on the song Jhain Re. Another Samalpuri dance was performed by the Gratitude children. The Children of Twinkle group put up the play "Ugly Duckling". A Skit "Listen to the Boy" was performed by the children of the New-creation Group. The senior Girls of the faith Group presented a Sambalpuri dance. Everyone sang birthday songs for the school and Tara didi. Children enjoyed the sumptuous meals the whole day. The programme ended with Savitri reading by the teachers and students.

Chacha ji's birthday, 13 August 2019



The students and teachers assembled in the Ashram meditation hall to pay tribute to our reverend Chacha ji (Late Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar). The children sang a few favourite songs of Chacha ji from the collection *Arpan Gaan*. As he was an active follower of Arya Samaj, a Havan was held, which was followed by tree plantation. About 20 new seedlings were planted by different groups. In the evening assembly Pranjal bhaiya, the eldest grandson of Chacha ji put up a few skits.

Babaji Maharaj's birthday, 14 August 2019

AMVM organised a collective meditation in the school meditation hall to commemorate the birth anniversary of Shri Ramkrishna Dash who is familiarly known as Babaji Maharaj. His devotion towards work in the Ashram was discussed and children were told a few anecdotes from his life. Devotional songs were sung in the meditation hall.

Sri Aurobindo's birthday, & Independence Day 15 August 2019

Our school commemorated the 73rd independence day of India and 147th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo with lots of enthusiasm. Early in the morning everyone gathered in the Ashram with their special marching clothes. After unfurling of the flag by Srinath Bhaiya, children and teachers marched forward to salute the Mother's flag. The environment was surcharged with the spirit of patriotism as Vande Mataram was sung with fervour. It was followed by a collective meditation in the Ashram meditation hall. After a scrumptious breakfast, children presented a cultural programme.



The programme started with seeking the Mother's blessing. Mummy Ji lighted the diya of aspiration and thereafter Mothers' music was broadcast on speaker. Bhavna and Bikanti did Odishi Dance with Bande Mataram sung by lata Mangeshkar. The Smile group children did a beautiful dance on the National Anthem Jana Gana Mana.



A skit on Indian Freedom Movement was put up by jointly by Twinkle Group, Gratitude Group, Humility Group and Aspiration Group. Children played the roles all prominent national figure and created a patriotic atmosphere. The patriotic songs interspersing the play infused more life into it. Children of Gratitude and Humility groups sang the song Teri Mitti mein Miljawan in tune. Children of Humlity Group put up a dance on the song Ai Watan Watan....At the end everyone saluted the National Flag while singing the National Anthem.

To commemorate Sri Aurobindo's birthday, boys of Aspiration group recited Sri Aurobindo's well-known poem, WHO, while girls staged graceful movements along with the recitation. In the evening everyone gathered around the flag and Pranjal Bhaiya lowered the flag. Lamps of Aspiration were thereafter lighted in the Ashram premises and Pranjal Bhaiya read passages from Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* in the Meditation Hall.

Raksha Bandhan, 15 August 2019

We laugh and cry together. We care and share for each other.

Share our moments of happiness and sorrow. They make our bond stronger.



The preparation for Raksha Bandhan started a month before. Bliss Group children began making beautiful rakhis for each other. The small children made simple and beautiful rakhis using beads and colourful paper whereas children of Gratitude, humility and Aspiration Groups weaved various types of colourful bands. On the auspicious occasion, the plates were kept ready with threads, Kumkum, Rice and flowers in the early afternoon. Everyone tied Rakhi to each other and prayed for a healthy and prosperous life. The delicious sweets were prepared in our own Kitchen and by the teachers with lots of love and care. Some older



children sang the old song "Rang Birangi Rakhi Lekar Aayi Behna". Children heard stories related to Raksha Bandhan with much interest. Papaji wrote a beautiful poem on the love of brother and sister, which he recited to the children.

Janmashtami, 24 August 2019



Everyone is fond of Lord Krishna, be it a small child or an adult or an elderly person. His birthday is a prominent day in Hindu mythology. To celebrate his birthday preparation started weeks earlier. The little ones learned songs of Krishna to imitate his loving character. The colourful attires of Gopi, the peacock feather on the forehead, the butter pot bring the Krishna era again into life. Janmashtami is celebrated with lots of pomp and gaiety.

The children enacted skits from Krishna's life. A splendid colourful programme was organised by the students and the children. The young students were overwhelmed when they watched Krishna's stories of valour and his life full of adventure. Groups presented diverse items such as: Bliss-chants on Vishnu ji and Krishna Ji Joy-dance on the song Govind bolo Hari Gopal bolo Humility- KaliaNaag play in English. Aspiration - Orchestra with keyboard, Guitar, Flute and table, song Nat Nagar ki hai sari Lila Gratitude and Humilty- Tabla and Flute Ganesh Bhaiya, Damru, Basant-Flute and Tabla-Achytam Keshavam Twinkle- Krishna lila Smile- dance on the song Kisine Mera Shyaam Dekha Bhavna, Kamli, Chandrama and Darshana played raag Bhinna Shadaj on flute.

Ganesh Chaturthi, 2 September 2019



Vinayak Chaturthi was celebrated with lots of enthusiasm and devotion.

Preparation started a couple of weeks before. Children collected clay from the shores of the reservoir and made moulds to shape the lord. Older boys from the Aspiration group helped in making the statue. On the final day the idol of the lord was installed. The altar was decorated by children with help of the teachers. The session started with traditional lamp lighting. Children showcased dances, songs and skits depicting the vital importance of Lord Ganesh. Various groups presented diverse items including the following:

Twinkle- Kaveri and Kuver play in English, Smile- Ganesh Aarti Joy-Jai ho Siddhi Vinayak Jai Ganapati song, Gratitude and Humility- some children- Shankar ji ka Damru Baaje dance and other half did singing part. Bliss- Chants on Ganesha, Gratitude- Play – Shumbha and Nishumbha. Ganesh bhaiya and Damru played Tabla.

Gandhi Jayanti, 2 October 2019

Visiting students of The Mother's International School (M.I.S.), New Delhi, in their Khadi apparel reached the school to present their performance along with students of AMVM. All started with a short run-through followed by the final presentation. The programme began with an introduction and a short oration about Mahatma Gandhi's momentous life, followed by three enactments on the life of Gandhiji, a collective effort of the MIS and AMVM children. The first enactment comprised of Gandhiji's awakening to his life-mission; the second was about the famous saying of Mahatma Gandhi "BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD"; and the third acted out the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Prayers and bhajans sung by the children added extra charm to the presentation. The programme concluded with an eye catching movements by the little ones with the song EKLA CHALO. Pranjal Bhaiya gave a talk about the real meaning of Gandhism in one's life along with anecdotes from his personal experience. In the evening quiz and declamation were held in the hosted assembly hall to commemorate the birth anniversary of the great soul.



Children's day, 14 October

Children's day was celebrated with great gusto by the children of Auro Mira Vidya Mandir. A short cultural programme was held in the school common room. The children with live music and soulful songs fascinated the teachers. The children of joy Group spoke about our beloved CHACHA ji. Anecdotes from Jawahar Lal Nehru's life were discussed with the children. A science exhibition was put up by children of models and games they had made. All students of Gratitude group onwards took part in the event.



Diwali, 27 October 2019



Preparations for the festival of light began days earlier by a thorough cleaning drive of the hostel and school premises. Aspiration Group children made colourful candles to decorate the hostel and school buildings. Papaji made such a big candle that it illuminated the hostel building for three nights in a row. Dipawali is celebrated for more

than one reason in India. We at AMVM celebrated it mark the return of Lord Rama after completing 14 years of exile as well as his great victory over the demon Ravana. The programme began with the Mothers's Music and the passages about Mahakali from Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother* were read to invoke the Mother's Grace. Children of various groups put up a skit on episodes of Ramayana. Thus Bliss group presented a Bhajan on Shri Rama; hostel children chanted couplets from Ram Charit Manas; Joy and Smile group children presented portions of Ram Lila in English; Gratitude group children narrated stories related to the festival and jointly with Humility group children enacted parts of Ramayana in Hindi. The programme ended with a bhajan glorifying Lord Rama and distribution of sweets to all the attendees. Older children also cooked delicious items for this special occasion. In the evening everyone went to the Ashram to light diyas and children hugely enjoyed their candle light dinner, thereafter.

Boat festival, 12 November 2019

Boat festival was celebrated on the full moon day of the Kartik month. The children made boats from the banana plant and floated on the reservoir. They were told the stories of the great merchants of Odisha who used to return on this day with the wealth and riches after the trading in the foreign countries.



Bhaiya's (Pranjal Jauhar's) birthday, 29 November 2019

*When we searched for the light, He appeared as the sun in our lives.
In the pitch dark night, He shines always bright.
He puts all his effort to make our dream real.
He is Pranjal bhaiya no less than a pearl.*



It was Pranjal Bhaiya's birthday, a very special day for everyone to celebrate. The children love him from the bottom of their hearts. They hang around him, share everything they have. They respect him as a teacher, they love him as a father and they fight with him as a friend. They unveil their feeling of gratitude and never forget to thank him literally on his birthday. They always try to make this day very special for a special person like him. They decorate the hall with balloons, colourful drapes

and festoons. To honour the day a havan was conducted by the children in the school premises. Bliss Group children presented a birthday song, *Badhai ho badhai*, in Hindi. As he adds colour to the life of the children, Smile group children put up a short creative drama-dance item on Rainbow. Bhaiya loves comedy and he is a person full of humour so the children put up a funny skit, danced with the song *Ka Ka Shrieks the Crow* and also did a play *A Fly went By*. Twinkle group did two plays, *Jasper* and *A chicken for dinner*. Gratitude group children put up a few comedy skits. Bhaiya loves the nature. He wants to preserve it and motivates the villagers to plant more trees. So the children of Humility Group put up a play, *The Good Earth*. The children of Aspiration Group did an orchestra and danced on a Punjabi song. Some Children of Faith Group played Raag Durga on the flute very melodiously.

Christmas, 25 December 2019



Christmas was celebrated with lots of zeal and exuberance as the day of the descent of light. The children decorated the Christmas tree with beautiful stars, gifts, glitters, flowers, etc. In the evening everyone wore red clothes

and added flavour to the festival. Children presented skits on the birth of

Jesus Christ and sang melodious carols. Parents were also invited to grace the occasion. The evening programme started with

concentration music by the Mother, and was followed by cultural programmes by the children.

The children of Smile Group put up an action song called

Door Akash Mein Ek Taara and also sang *Moon Moon Siverly Moon & Away in a Manger* carols. This was followed by a play *Yishu Ka Janm* by the Twinkle group. Small children of Bliss group sang *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* and everybody joined them. The children of Humility group sang

Ride The Sleigh Sleigh Sleigh... and *Little Drummer Boy* and did a dance on the carol *Jingle Bell Rock*. The Gratitude group children put up a drama with songs on the birth of Jesus Christ. On this occasion the Twinkle Group children narrated stories behind the festival and sang the song *Up on the Housetop*. The Joy group sang *Gloria in tune*. The elder children of Aspiration and Faith groups sang Hindi carols and they sang *Rajuda, Aaya Yishu Aaya, Tere aane se and Raat ki Christmas* on top of their voice. The special attraction was the entrance of Santa Claus during the programme which is generally a surprise for the younger children. After the programme the small children had their dinner in the school courtyard and everyone bid them with a goodnight's sleep.

New Year Eve and advent of New Year, 31 December & 1 January

Children made preparations for the newyear eve programme beforehand. Right after dinner everyone including the visiting MIS children assembled in the school hall. The cultural programme started with a two minute silent Meditation. Children of AMVM presented a few fun related skits. The programme also included various dances and songs by the MIS children. The voices of Shireen and other students were really enchanting.

The older children of our school presented the village folk dances. Slowly all the others joined them to jig with the rhythm. The programme ended with gratitude to the Divine for the year past and by seeking blessings for the coming year. A collective midnight Meditation was held in the Ashram Meditation Hall. The New Year calendar was distributed to everyone in the meditation hall. Everyone wished A Happy New Year to others.

Annual Sports Day, 8 January 2020

The much awaited annual sports day was held on 8th January 2020. Everyone took responsibility to make the event an eye-opener. Children along with the diya's made colourful papier Mache butterflies for mementoes. The field was decorated with colourful flags, festoons and beautiful posters painted by the children. The day started with concentration music followed by march past in the forenoon. Children saluted the Mother's flag. After student's prayer, children went to their respective corners.

Fun relay and musical chair were arranged for the junior children and the senior children joined in the batten relay which was followed by Frisbee. The most fun part was the tug of war which everyone enjoyed immensely. A first-aid team was on the spot for the prompt care of any mishap. The children were excited for the afternoon presentation. Everyone with their colourful attire attracted the attention of the audience. The spectators from the nearby village and the ongoing adventure youth camp children (from Sri Aurobindo International School, Hyderabad) made a huge crowd to energize the children. The booming voice of the announcer drew complete attention of the audience to the ongoing event. The programme began with a welcome dance by the Joy group children.



A mass Yosgasana presentation by the Gratitude, Humility and Aspiration groups for 15 long minutes captivated everyone's attention. Smile group children presented a dance drill with dumbbells and music. Twinkle group children's skating was full of vim and vigour. The audience was awe-struck by seeing their balance and coordination. The little ones of 4 years of Bliss group did an aerobic presentation. The children of Joy group presented Gymnastics on the ground showcasing their fitness and agility, a breathtaking display. Children of Gratitude, Humility and Aspiration resumed to make large pyramids with precision to avoid any risk of injury. The Circus added colour to the Sports Day. To the loudspeaker boom of the song,



Mera Naam Joker, they carried the audience to a real circus show. Children balancing on the bar and on the plank, on a pipe, skipping, hoopla, juggling were congregated together to give the real sensation of a circus. The jokers were the special attraction of the show. Some older children put up a western folk dance. Last but not the least was the performance on unicycle. The children's fearless adventures on it stunned everyone and the field reverberated with enthusiastic applause & cheer from the spectators. The Day's special flavour was provided by Pranjal Bhaiya and his team. With their clown like attire, they also presented a skit to make everybody friends with the animals and birds. Their jolly entrance in between the events provided additional mirth to the audience. The programme ended with the *shanti mantra* and mementoes as tokens of industriousness and perseverance were distributed to everyone.



Vasanta Panchami, 30 January 2020

Everyone bid farewell to the winter by welcoming the spring. On the fifth day of the season the school organised a cultural programme to venerate Mother Saraswati, the goddess of music and wisdom. After concentration with mother's music, Saraswati Stotram was put up to invoke her blessings. The Maha Saraswati passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother* was read quietly. Children sang devotional songs and chants to implore the grace of the goddess and to bestow on us Her light, knowledge and wisdom.



Children of Joy group sang *Maa Saraswati Sarade* beautifully. *Teri Binaki Ban Jaun Taar*, a Hindi bhajan was sung by the Smile and Bliss groups jointly. Children of Twinkle group sang *Saraswati Maa Saraswati*. Children who learn Flute and Tabla offered a small orchestra. Bhavna and Chandrama played soulful music in Hansadhwani and Ganesh Bhaiya played raag Bhatilal on the sitar captivating the admiration of the audience.

Mothers birthday, 21 February 20

142nd Birthday of the Mother was celebrated in the school with devotion splendour. This year the programme was relatively short as children of Gratitude and Humility groups had left for an Andaman Trip. Older children decorated the room beautifully on the preceding day. The programme started with marchpast at 6 a.m. After saluting the Mother's Flag, children meditated in the Ashram Meditation Hall followed by a cultural programme in the School Hall. After a collective meditation to the Mother's Music, an orchestra item was proffered by Aspiration group. They played a soothing tune in raag Bhopali on flute with accompaniment on Tabla by several boys. A few children thereafter played solo instrumental songs on Keyboard. Bliss group children sang the Birthday song while the children of Smile group recited the Student's prayer given by the Mother. A beautiful shloka *Shubha Taba Janma Divas* was also chanted by the Smile group. As it was also Shivratri that day, children offered the Poem 'Shiva' by Sri Aurobindo. Children of Progress Group (former name: Twinkle group) narrated snippets of the Mother's life.



Anuradha Sapru's birthday, 27 February



The 53rd birth Anniversary of late Anuradha Sapru was celebrated on 27th February. All children gathered around the plaque of Late Mrs Anuradha Sapru to pay tribute to her memory. After lighting the lamp everyone chanted and sang a few bhajans in her commemoration. Later *Prasad* was distributed.

Holi, 10 March 2020

The festival of colours was celebrated with lots of enthusiasm. Instead of playing with harmful colours, AMVM put up a food market for the children. Delectable dishes were prepared with lots of love and care. Children spent their money in buying the goodies. It also gave them an opportunity to understand the practical use of money and its value. Children were given the message of love and harmony in the assembly hall. A sumptuous Moonlight dinner was arranged for the children. They relished the delectable food with Kheer under the bright moon light on the terrace.

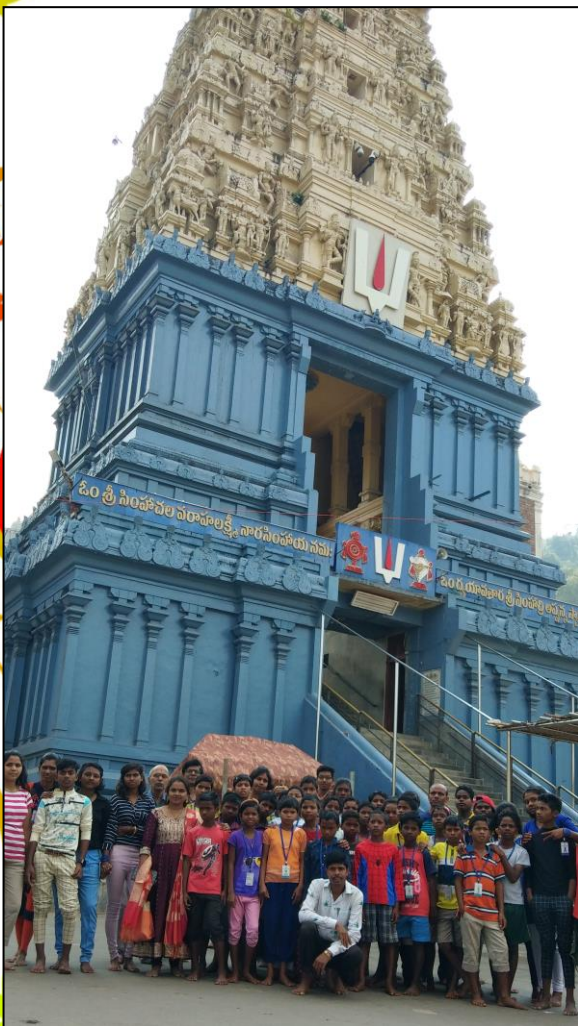


Trips

In general, every alternate year, senior students of the school along with the teaching staff go on an extended trip. But since the cows and the gardens of AMVM need essential care, students and teachers are divided in to two groups for the purpose of excursion. In the month of February and March this year we went to Andaman Islands.



Trip to Andaman – 1st Group



A group of 49 students in the age group 10-15 accompanied by several teachers started their journey for Andaman Island on 20th February 2020. The group comprised of the students of Humility and Gratitude groups and the older children who were due to appear for their 10th or 12th board exams in March and April'20. Their first thrilling experience was a journey by ship. After *Darshan* of Lord Simhachalam, the group arrived at the port of Visakhapatnam, completed all formalities and boarded the ship, Swaraj Dweep, around 4 pm on 21st Feb. After depositing the luggage in allotted cabins, the group lined up along the railing to see the ship leave the port which happened around 7.45 pm.

Before embarking everyone was a little apprehensive about motion-sickness. Fortunately, the weather was kind and nobody encountered any problem and all had a delightful time. The ship reached Port Blair at 4 pm on 24th February. During these 4 days in the ship the group enjoyed vastness of the sea, and delightfully observed sunrise and the sunset, tortoises, dolphins, crocodiles

and lots of flying fish. The ship staff was cooperative and polite. They took us to the bridge house and explained how the ship travels. AMVM teachers got a chance to meet the captain of the ship and had a rewarding





chat with him. In Andaman we stayed from 24th Feb to 2nd March in a teacher-training hostel thankfully arranged by Andaman Education department. Our visit followed the pre-planned programme drawn by the protocol department of Andaman Administration. We visited Cellular Jail where we also watched the light and sound show, Anthropological Museum, Naval Museum, Samudrika Museum, Marina Park, Chidia Tappu, Gandhi Park, Ross Island, North Bay Island and Swaraj Dweep (Havelock) Island. The story of Cellular Jail narrated by a guide and light and sound show were extremely touching. We could feel and understand the struggle of the freedom fighters for the national independence and how wretchedly they were forced to spend their time during the confinement here. Anthropological Museum had exhibits showing the lifestyles of various tribes living in Andaman and Nicobar. In Samudrika Museum and Naval museum we came to see a great variety of aquatic flora and

fauna such as fishes, shells, corals, etc. 3D Show about flora and fauna in Science Museum was informative and interesting. The children enjoyed pedal boating in Gandhi Park. In North Bay Island, we saw the live flora and fauna through the glass-window of the boat. A few teachers greatly enjoyed snorkeling. Ross Island was not as exciting for children because it only contained a few damaged structures from the bygone British era. On a day excursion to Swaraj Dweep (Havelock) by government ferry, the group enjoyed bathing in transparent waters of the attractive Radha Nagar Beach and its white sandy shore. On the way back, the group spent half an hour at another beach, Kala Pathar. Both sides of the road were flanked by coconut and betel-nut trees on this trip. On 2nd March we boarded the same ship at 4 pm for the return journey and again



enjoyed watching dolphins, crocodiles and other fauna. On 5th we reached Vizag around 2 pm and after leaving the heavy luggage at the Railway Station, visited Submarine Museum and Aircraft Museum. At 10 pm we boarded the train to Koraput and arrived at the school on the morning of 6th March. The entire trip was educational, thoroughly enjoyable, exciting and fascinating for school children and the teachers.



A week before the journey started everyone was very excited. Children's title tattle about their bags, bottles, slippers and clothes filled the air with their uncontrolled glee. Children were also given clothes from the school for the trip. On 6th March, children gathered to concentrate before their departure.



Their bags were loaded in the tractor and the children in autos moved to the station for the train to Simhachalam. The train reached Simhachalam later that night and lodged at the dormitories of Simhachalam Temple through the courtesy of a senior priest. Woken by chanting in the early morning, after ablutions everybody climbed 1100 steps barefooted to pay their devotion to the divine lord Vishnu, the temple deity. Prasadam was arranged for the children during lunch. We then returned and caught the bus for the harbour. The 150 metre long ship "SWARAJ DWEED" was to be our home for four days. Early dinner was served and the hungry pack enjoyed the food very much. We went to the deck to see the ships in the harbour and to feel the sea breeze and see the jelly fish. The pilot in the tugs pushed, pulled and guided the ship out of the harbour. It was a rare sight to see. The voyage of three nights and four days in the Bay of Bengal was a pleasure

as well as leisure. Children spent most of their time moving around and got to know various parts of the ship and also saw turtles and flying fish. They also were fortunate to visit the Control Room (Bridge) and learnt about the functioning of radar, propeller shaft and navigation instruments. On the second day we saw hundreds of dolphins bobbing and bouncing on the blue water. Their silvery grey body bleached out slowly with the mist of water created by the sunlight. Some children spent their time reading books sitting on the deck benches and some just roaming around and exploring the sea as well as the ship. The sunrise and the sunset added magnificent hue to the journey.



After docking, we reached our accommodation by bus. After a long walk to Aberdeen Bazaar, we returned for dinner. Next morning we walked to the airport and saw planes taking off and landing. Right after breakfast we went to Cellular Jail to pay homage to the martyrs, for the cause of national independence, who were interned there. Even now one can emotionally feel the cruelty of the British inflicted on those lion-hearted souls of India whose songs seem to echo still from the walls of their dungeon cells. The guide enlightened us about the jail and freedom fighters, sang their valour and chastised the British attitude towards freedom loving people. The gallows, the

hanging ropes, the wishing slab, the museums and the watch tower are still standing as symbols of their sacrifice for the motherland.



At the science museum, children explored the fun of science by playing various games. The most interesting was the 3D show of a marine life story. We saw the display of the sea under us and the gorgeous creatures and their struggle with the sea monsters. At the fishery museum, the skeleton of a dolphin, colourful fishes in the aquarium, corals and shells were fascinating.

In the evening we saw the light and sound show in the cellular Jail. The profound voice of the Banyan tree narrated the misery and the agony of

our saviours and unfolded the treachery and the brutality of the British rule. The story ended leaving a nagging ache in our heart. The three storeys of the jail were illuminated with tricolour lights. Thereafter we visited the flag point where our revered Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had hoisted the national flag. The rainbow coloured lights reflected on the water was a captivating spectacle and children recorded the scene on their camera.



Andaman is full of indigenous trees and famous for its primitive tribes. Our school children, part of a native tribe of Koraput district in Odisha (now of course developed), were quite keen to see the native tribes of Andaman Island and to fulfil this, we started for Baratang by bus at 6 am. Our bus stopped at the checkpoint from where we had to be a part of a convoy. To pass the time we visited a temple nearby. After an hour the trip resumed and we saw some Jarawa tribesmen from the bus before arriving at Baratang. We boarded a ferry and a few buses and trucks were also loaded in the same. We went by speedboats to the lime cave. It was really amazing to see the mangroves. Within an hour we explored the cave and came back. We walked really fast so that we could get more time. We saw different shapes created naturally by water including stalactites and stalagmites. It was really bewitching. Our boat brought us back to the jetty. After a sumptuous lunch, we boarded the ferry and waited anxiously to see our bus climb on it. While going back we saw three Jarawas in colourful headgears. They were wearing only trousers. We also saw a group of Jarawas sitting on the roadside basically attired in their native apparel. But with the moving bus their colour mingled with the black tar road. We saw another Jarawa walking in a loincloth with a spear in his hand.



Next day we went by Rani Laxmi ferry to Havelock Island. We got permission to stay on the fore deck and saw a stunning number of flying fish. We reached Marina Beach where we did Scuba diving. The colourful fishes were extremely attractive. The corals were enticing and to swim with the colourful fishes and explore their home was truly exhilarating. Around 2 pm we reached Radhanagar Beach which they claim is the 2nd largest beach in Asia. A delicious lunch was arranged for us. Right after lunch the children had fun splashing and jumping in

the water. We returned by North Passage Ferry. We again climbed the deck to enjoy the sunset. It was really beautiful to see the harmony of two contradictory colours, the sea and the sky. The orange fire balls reflected in the dark blue water and the vast sky engulfed by the sea. In the evening we got the message that the last ship will leave on 16th of March from Port Blair, due to Covid19.

We were scheduled to start on 21st March but now had to leave early. We had only two more days to explore. We went to Chidiya Tapu at 3:30 AM. We did not want to disturb the people around so we walked to the road for the bus. But the bus came at around 4:30 am. We stopped our bus and climbed the dense hill. Everyone scrambled carefully up the rooted and winding path of the forest. We crossed the light house and reached suicide point. The sunrise was a sight to see. After breakfast we left for North Bay. Children walked on the beach and collected beautiful shells and corals. Those children



who had not done scuba diving, got an opportunity to discover the beauty of the underwater denizens through a glass boat ride. Soon after, the same boats took us to Ross Island. The ruined buildings furnished an example of the then prevailing architecture. Tufts of peepal tree roots had preserved those remnants of the fading walls. The place is now a tourist attraction and has become a habitat for hundreds of spotted deer. After lunch we went to the Marine Museum. There we enjoyed the pictures and the exhibition of different kinds of corals and shells. Children also saw the skeleton of a whale. The museum was well maintained and the pictures and writings gave good info about the marine life. Then we went to the Carbyn Cove. Some children swam to their hearts content and in the evening we came back to our dorm. The next day we went to the Zonal Anthropological museum. Mr Muthu Pandey enlightened us about



the five indigenous tribes of Andaman Nicobar Islands. He took us around to show us their tools, utensils, ornaments, attires and food habits. It was really fascinating for the children to learn that the things they had exhibited in the museum are still being used back home in their village Kechla.

Then we also visited Nature's park which was cordoned off by the government to protect the nature as well as to give the local people space to roam freely. We saw the butterfly garden and enjoyed the scenic beauty of the park and saw various medicinal plants and collected some beautiful black and blood red seeds called *kaincha*.



We then went to Chatham Island which is connected to Port Blair by a bridge. A large sawmill was built there by the British with the then modern technology in the 18th century. It was wondrous to observe how machines cut huge and strong logs so facilely. In the exhibition room we learned about the quality and variety of wood. The exhibition room was beautifully decorated with the elegant models carved



in wood. The children also saw a skeleton of a dolphin which they had got from the shore after the tsunami. We were made aware of the British rule during the 2nd World War. We were taken around the mill to see the bomb pits where the British had thrown bombs to destroy the mill during Japanese occupation. We also saw the 2 kilometre long bunker which was built by the Japanese to escape. At 3:30 pm we again started for Chidiya Tapu to enjoy the sunset and to visit the zoo. Children saw crocodiles relaxing under the cool shade of the trees. We also saw some monitor lizards. There were big fences made to

preserve the wild pigs and deer. Small netted rooms were built to keep the birds. It was the final day for us. After packing and cleaning our rooms and toilets, we walked to Gandhi Park. We enjoyed watching the lilies in the fish pond. We came back for lunch.

At 3:30 PM we boarded the bus for the port. This last ship was scheduled to travel to Khidipur Dock in Kolkata. After everyone moved on to the ship we climbed on the gangway giving a last look to the beautiful place. This time, it was a five day journey as the ship also had to stop at Maya Bunder. On the final day we enjoyed watching the scenic view of Sundarban on the bank of Hoogly river. 4 nights and 5 days passed in a wink. We saw the Vidyasagar Hanging bridge from the ship. There were thousands of fishing boats plying in the water. We enjoyed watching these boats. At one point encountering a dam & lock system, the water level had to be raised, taking a couple of hours, for enabling the ship to proceed further. At another point, the iron bridge was mechanically manipulated sideways to let the ship pass through, a process which the children watched with amazement. After docking of the ship, health professionals checked the temperature of all passengers before letting them go (a Corona virus precaution).



Children enjoyed their first tram ride to the nearest metro station and then reached Maharashtra Niwas where reservation for stay had been made by Shri Madhusudan Singhania. After a sumptuous breakfast at a nearby sweets shop, we took the metro to visit the Future Foundation School where we were bid welcome by Shri Ranjan Mitter, the Chairman. Shri Mitter and his colleagues enlightened the children about the history and geography of Kolkata and habits and customs of the Bengalis. We also saw a movie, SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE –THE



FORGOTTEN HERO. After lunch with take away dinner packets we left for the Railway Station and boarded the train for Koraput at night. Only 2 other passengers shared the compartment we were in. After 24 hours in the train, the journey ended at 9:30 pm the next day. From the station, we walked quietly in the half-moonlit night towards the shore of the Kolab Reservoir and boarded the motor launch. The lockdown of the entire country began on the day we reached home sweet home. Despite the cutting short of the trip duration due to Corona Virus Pandemic, for us it was a thrilling adventure and a highly rewarding educational trip.



Kechla Project



Construction

Plastering work is complete. Tiles work, Railing work, Plumbing pipes work, Doors & windows work are all in progress. However, due to CoronaVirus Pandemic, most work is in abeyance since it is a big problem to get workers from Bihar and Delhi.

Tree Plantation

This is an ongoing project and we have not only been maintaining trees planted in the previous years, but also planting new trees:

Trees planted on the school grounds

Service Tree- 1
Gulmohar- 6
Flowering creeper- 8
Drumstick- 6
Bamboo- 5
Ashok- 20
Brahma Kamal- 1
Croton- 8
Victor- 1

Trees planted on AMSS land in the orchard

Passion Fruit – 52
Lemon – 60
Service Tree – 1

School Camps



COMMUNITY SERVICE BY M.I.S. STUDENTS AT KECHLA SCHOOL: “It was life changing, thought-altering and awe inspiring in so many different ways. I feel like I discovered multitudes in myself, and in the beautiful world around me.” This is how many MIS (The Mother’s International School, New Delhi) students described their sojourn and experience in Kechla where a group of 38 students and 2 teachers reached on 29 December 2019 to fulfill the requirement of Community Service in their curriculum of class XI. Every Morning, from 8:30 to 10:00a.m., the students taught children of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir, (AMVM, a school for tribals run by Auro-Mira



Service Society at a remote village, Kechla, in District Koraput of the state of Odisha) followed by an hour of extra co-curricular activities; debate, drama and declamation. Post lunch, an hour of other interesting activities, ranging from martial arts to classical dance and photography, ensued. Evenings were devoted to treks, rock climbing, expeditions and walks in the hills with the indefatigable children. For a blissful week, MIS students threw themselves into a way of life that struck perfect balance between developing the

mind, body and heart, and experienced the untainted joy of holistic learning. Whether it be their outstanding scientific and mathematical aptitude, or their excellence at all sports, or their willingness to keep learning more, or the all-encompassing love and kindness in their hearts, the

children of AMVM ended up teaching MIS students perhaps as much as they themselves ended up learning. On 5th January 2020, the last day of MIS students' sojourn, the entire assembly of AMVM students put forth a demonstration of all the diverse skills and forms of art that had been taught to them, and to say that the display was a success is an understatement.



"The experience of interacting with students [AMVM] who possess all the ideals and qualities that we continuously strive to attain and imbibe was nothing short of phenomenal" commented one admiring MIS students.

ADVENTURE FOR M.I.S. STUDENTS AT KECHLA: Sixty six students of class VIII and four teachers of The Mother's International School (MIS) took part in a Personality Development & Adventure Camp at Kechla, Odisha, from January 6-11, 2020. The trip was a beautiful amalgamation of physical and mental healing. Activities such as mountain climbing, rappelling, boating and cliff jumping at the waterfall were indeed one of a kind experiences for all students. Some conquered their fear and some quenched their thirst for adventure, but learning ran deeper as these activities became a source of bringing forth children's inner courage & strength. After these strenuous and challenging activities cavorting in Kolab River Reservoir surrounded by mounds of red soil and grass, turned out to be a really welcoming spot to loosen the tired muscles. Other activities included keep-fit exercises, trekking, learning eye care routines, International folk-dancing, practical sessions of breathing routines including pranayama for a more efficient respiratory system to deal with pollution on a personal basis. On 8 January 2020, the group became a part of the Annual Sports Day of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir (AMVM), a unit of Auro-Mira Service Society. This was an eye opening experience for students as well as the teachers. The students of AMVM performed exceptionally well and displayed the meaning of hard work, resilience and positive approach towards life. Students were truly delighted with as is obvious from their feedback: "Kechla was a beautiful experience for all of us. We had everything from thrilling adventure, sports, International folk dancing to talks on the existence of God and other deep questions" (A.P.); "The activities like bouldering, rappelling, etc. were quite interesting" (D.M.); "There are a lot of things that I

experienced for the first time such as swimming in the reservoir, jumping from a cliff and last but not the least the HAND PUMP, we were so fascinated with it" (K.N.); "This place's food was very fresh and organic straight coming from the fields. It was healthy and had a special taste" (P.P.); "I have learned how to live a life without electronic devices and transports" (T.V.); "Kechla has opened my eyes to how rural people can be educated and continue to live naturally... The Sports Day [of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir] was amazing. I have never seen kids perform better" (K.A.); "all those different treks and especially boating and the waterfall jump was truly exceptional!" (V.G.); "Every evening we had to go to learn folk dances of different countries. We learned Mayim Mayim [Israel], New York, New York [U.S.A.] & Prime Minister [England]" (S.H.); "There are so many things to take away from here and I am taking a few. This was a very educational trip and all of us got to know things we didn't know before" (S.B.); "I liked the demonstrated eye cleaning process using honey by Dr. Nirankar Agarwal which helped in strengthening the eyes" (S.S.); "Thanks to this trip I have started trying new things which I never thought I could do" (H.G.); "The treks were beautiful and the scenery was breathtaking. This was a once in a life time experience for us" (C.V.); "Everything in Kechla was more than perfect... If I would have to give a feedback it would be a big big smile" (S.K.); "THANK YOU for giving me this wonderful trip!" (S.S.).



ADVENTURE CAMP AT KECHLA FOR TELANGANA SCHOOLS : A group of 64 students of class VII and 7 accompanying staff of Sri Aurobindo International School and New Creation School from



Telangana attended a Personality Development & Adventure Camp at Kechla (Dt.Koraput), Odisha, from January 16-20, 2020. Activities included morning keep-fit exercises, trekking, bouldering, rappelling, learning eye-care routines, swimming in the Kolab River Reservoir, jumping into the pool formed by waterfall from a height of 6-7 metres, learning International folk dances, meditation, routines and procedures for improving the strength & efficacy of the respiratory system in these times of unprecedented pollution, etc. Children had a fun time and learning experience as is evident from their feedback: "Trekking, rock climbing, boating, rappelling & the honey treatment. Here the children were in strict discipline and they were following rules without fail... The food which we ate was

awesome as they have mixed pure vegetables not full of chemicals" (U.S.T.); "Here we had super view, and I enjoyed the camp a lot with my friends" (R.K.); "Hyderabad was so polluted and uncleaned but over here Kechla is so clean and silent and the population is so less...Rappelling was little scary but it was adventurous. So I did it 3 times" (D.S.R.); "The most wonderful thing I enjoyed was reservoir, waterfall & rappelling... I was very lazy before coming to the camp but after coming here I was very eager to wake-up. Last but not the least the food was nice & tasty. The most funny thing was fog was coming from our mouth"(R.S.); "It was a very good adventurous experience...

The honey which they kept in our eyes was nice. In the Meditation Hall they told us about snake plant which gives oxygen [at night]" (A.B.); "The folk dance was awesome. We learnt 4 folk dances – Mayim Mayim (Israel), New York dance (U.S.A.), Prime Minister dance (England) & Kendime (Turkey){G.K.R.}"; "Even [though] it was a long trip leaving our parents, I enjoyed a lot. It was an adventurous trip. The hostel was soo good" (M.)

Visitors

Nigel George-29th May to 24th June

Nigel who was a facilitator in this school visited Kechla and spent a month with the children. All children love to study with him. During his stay, he taught social science to the New Creation group; English to Basant and Jagat, and Geography to Bhavna. He also spent some time to train them in basketball.



Sulochana didi-2nd June – 24th June



Sulochana didi, a teacher training facilitator, visited the school in the month of June. Children fondly call her Raja didi because she is the one who adds flavour to this festival. On this occasion, she makes traditional sweets of Odisha with the children for three days, and everyone relishes the dainty sweet dishes. During her stay, she helped Anuradha didi in her assignment, and she also taught Home science to Bhuvan, Niraj, and Damru. In the study circle, her discussion on Science of Living helped the children to be aware of themselves and also infused a sense of values in their living.

Smt. Annupma Jauhar

She loves the serene and tranquil atmosphere of Kechla. She likes to spend sometimes here away from the crowded, polluted and noisy city of Delhi. She also likes to spend time with the tiny ones. The little ones love to listen to her stories which she tells with lots of movements and expression. Most of her time she spends reading books in the library.



Dr Ira Pandit-7th June to 24th June

Dr. Pandit, retired professor & HOD of English at Daulat Ram College of Delhi University, spent a couple of weeks here and helped Manasmayee (a teacher at AMVM) in preparation for her postgraduate degree in English.



Dr. Surinder Pradhan

She is now 82 years old. Still she is not retired from her work. She loves teaching the students and she teaches children with love and care. This time she taught Biology to the Gratitude, Humility and Aspiration groups. The Gratitude and Humility group children learnt about various functional systems and their role in the human body. She also prepared the New Creation children for their exams.



Anuja-8th June to 24th June

Erstwhile teacher of AMVM, Anuja, taught English to the children of Aspiration group, as well as Jagat. She spent her time in swimming in the reservoir and also volunteered in the kitchen in cutting vegetables.

Shashank

During his stay of a couple of days, he helped children in their search for appropriate colleges for higher studies in the near future.



Shashi



Shashi, a yoga teacher with five German nationals spent two days in Kechla. During their stay, they visited AMVM and spent time with the students, and were much impressed that the children could communicate with them in English. They also toured the village and observed the lifestyle of the tribals. They enjoyed the food and were extremely appreciative of the pleasant and placid environment.



Ms. Ruth Alice Proslmeyr

M. Ruth Alice Proslmeyr, principal of Paraburdoo Primary School, Western Australia, along with Mrs Aparna Ray visited Kechla in the month of October. They spent most of their time with the children. Ms. Ruth worked on the aspect of language development for the children between the ages of 6-10. She brought a few interesting tools for the children to involve them thoroughly and to sustain their interest in various topics. She also interacted with teachers to learn about this place and the strategy of teaching-learning process.

After her return, she sent a letter of appreciation about her experience of the trip to the Ashram and its sister institutions:

Dear Friends of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, I am writing to you with heartfelt thanks for the inspirational and uplifting two weeks that I spent with you all recently.

I came as an educator on a school exchange program to share and engage our students with intercultural understandings so that they may be prepared as global citizens for the future world. During the two weeks I was accommodated as a guest at three of your Ashrams all of which were beautiful, peaceful environments where I was cared for, and enjoyed a life of simple humility and which enabled me to breathe and feel life freely without limits. I experienced life 'on the ground' and was immersed in learning at the New Delhi Ashram, Nainital Ashram and Kechla School Community. Each uniquely special and true to their context and purpose but each having the same consistent underlying philosophy of love, the priority of life and sustainable living and a guiding divinity which is the signature of Sri Aurobindo. I thank from the bottom of my heart Aparna Didi for her kindness and compassion, for her company on the journey to the school in Kechla and for teaching me to let go of fears and trust in the divinity of the Mother. From Aparna I learnt how striving for divinity through spirituality is the highest possible reach, which goes beyond academic or religious positions. To achieve this I learnt from her that one must do more than think – one must feel.



I would also like to thank Pranjal and all staff at the Kechla Community School for the beautiful welcome and inclusion into their school community on every level. The achievements for student learning and the priority for their emotional and social well being in the most remote of contexts is truly uplifting and an example to the world of how it is truly possible to live and learn in harmony with the natural environment each at our pace. The priorities of language and the arts demonstrated that student achievement can be accelerated and lifted exponentially even in the most isolated of environments. Importantly this school showed how resourcing the language arts is not a material condition but about utilising the language and the arts from within ourselves – from the inside out. Students in Kechla showed me proudly their work and lives and personally took me to their family villages where I was welcomed as a sister. They learnt completely through English, transferred learning and language to Hindi seamlessly and spoke proudly in their first language Odiya. These students lived a humble and gracious life, giving service before breakfast,

meditating daily and attending school almost 100% of the entire year. They showed how it is possible for tribal children to walk freely in both worlds.

The community is an outstanding example with its rainwater tanks and pumps, solar paneling, edible and medicinal gardens and community kitchen of sustainability in action. Staff at this school demonstrated the art of service leadership committed to the lifelong learning of all students giving of their time and love every minute of the day. In our over indulgent, over materialistic and over entitled world of the West we have so much to learn from your world and our students do too as future global citizens. This for me was the most outstanding experience of my personal and professional life and for which I thank you all for giving me. It will remain with me for the rest of my life. With your endorsement I would like



to continue to work with Pranjal to bring this life wide learning to my staff and students in Western Australia. I was very nervous of making the trip to India and even more so to the community school in Kechla. I travelled alone and was unsure of the destination or purpose. I do believe now that there is a bigger higher purpose for us all in life and that we should be guided much more by what we feel is right rather than what we think is right and not to over think or overcomplicate a situation. I am so glad that I did go with my feeling and make this journey and chose the road least taken. It has made all the difference.

Dr B Rajgopal

Dr B Rajgopal Director of Regional Centre, Ignou, Koraput visited Kechla to bring about awareness of the courses offered by IGNOU. He also talked about the special concessions and privileges being offered for the tribals and other backward classes. He explained about the changes in IGNOU by the semester system.



Nirankar Bhaiya

Nirankar Bhaiya taught Pranayam and western folk dances to the children. The children were enthusiastic about the dance classes and wanted to continue it with bhaiya. It was really appreciated by the children.

Shri Himanshu Lal

IPS of 2003, Odisha Cadre and Koraput Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) visited Kechla and spent time with children. He visited different groups and interacted with the children and appreciated the system of education very much. The little children put up a few action songs and sang a few songs for him.



Annapoorni Ma'am

Annapoorni ma'am who visited Kechla with the MIS children during the study camp spent her valuable time in teaching our children. She taught History to class 10th, 12th and graduation students. She teaches them with love and care.

Mr. Madhusudan Mishra, collector & district magistrate of Koraput, with his family and several colleagues visited AMVM for a short period of time. He conversed with the children and also told them about the functioning of the district Koraput of which he is in-charge.

Mr. Sanjay Panda, a well-wisher and supporter of AMVM visited Kechla on 5th February. He spent his valuable time with the children. He told stories to the children to make them aware of the environment pollution and wastage. Children were highly fascinated by his stories.

