

# Thulir

## Newsletter – October 04

### **Greetings from Sittilingi,**

Here is a news update about happenings at Thulir.

### **Puvidham visit**

We are fresh from a visit of students from a rural alternative school called Puvidham, 100 kms away from here. 10 students, aged 9-12, came over for the weekend. It was the first such event Thulir has hosted, and there was much enthusiasm. It came about very suddenly so events could not be planned in detail. The Puvidham children were taken on a forest hike around Sittilingi. The children showed a lot of interest in birds and plants. They could identify many plants and fruits and there was a lot of fun collecting wild berries and saplings to take back with them. There is some amount of flowing water in the Sittilingi river, and the children cooled off in the hot afternoons swimming there. On Sundays we normally do not have sessions. But this Sunday we sent word to the children to come. We were surprised that they gave up their normal T.V watching and came here promptly. The Thulir children went swimming in the river with the visitors and then came to Thulir for an interactive paper folding session in which much learning and teaching between the two sides happened. It was heartening to see Thulir children responding warmly to visitors and interacting with confidence. The Puvidham children too enjoyed the visit and felt at home here and both sides have promised to have more such visits.



### **Learning material from Puvidham:**

Puvidham has made low-cost learning materials and has used them successfully with their children. Puvidham offered to make some of these materials for Thulir and the first consignment of these also arrived with them when they visited us. So now we have some well-made and effective material for our children to learn basic math and language skills.

### **Dulari's Visit:**

Dulari Gupta, a medical student from CMC Vellore visited us for a weekend and conducted a session on paper folding. There was a lot of interest and the activity spilled into the next couple of weeks too. The children continued to spread the skill among the children who were absent during Dulari's session.

### **Parents not happy**

Some parents have not been happy with the inputs at Thulir. They think we are very lenient, do not enforce discipline and do not like the children playing here. They do not like our methods of teaching concepts through play. A couple of them have taken off their children because we don't beat them! We also find that the older children prefer to learn by rote, memorizing text from the books. It is a difficult task to get them to approach learning as a means to finding meaning in the text. But the couple of dropouts we have, seem to have got out of this bind and are showing interest in genuine learning.

### **Parents meeting**

Since our last update two parents meetings have been held. The September meeting was mostly a repeat of the previous meetings to reinforce the messages and also to let a few newer participants catch up.



The October meeting was held in Thulir and we exhibited the various learning materials we have and asked the parents to try them out. This created a lot of interest among them and there were positive feedbacks in the next couple of days. We also seem to have continuing informal discussions on a one to one basis with the parents, where they like to discuss specific issues regarding their children.



### **VCD films**

We have got a couple of VCDs produced by TNSF –Tamilnadu science Forum. One was on Bernoulli's principle with interesting, but simple experiments and the other was about early childhood. The former had a very good response and the children immediately tried out a couple of experiments that they saw.

### **Recycled papermaking and artwork on it.**

The children also made recycled paper by making a pulp out of waste paper and making thick paper out of it. This was then painted upon using watercolours to create artwork.

### **Poetry sessions**

A simple exercise in poetry writing was also tried and there were some good attempts. The exercise gave the children a chance to write originally, and though initially there was some fear and reluctance to write, the children made good attempts.

### **Indira's visit**

Indira Jayaram from Poorna School in Bangalore visited us for a couple of

days and observed the sessions. She made very useful suggestions on the kind of content to use for the language teaching. She also held a session for the children in making of paper toys.

### **Nurses' classes**

There was a continuation of the language exercises. The material chosen for the classes helped introduce social issues and discussions on it [caste prejudices, women's issues]. The students also wrote a play in Tamil and enacted it to take health awareness messages to the villages.

Anuradha and Krishna.