



Auroville, October 2009

Dear friends and donors,

when I came back from Germany at the beginning of July three smaller children, who had been outpatients before, were integrated into our day care group. With 4.5 years of age **Nathya** was supposed to have started schooling in June but no school had taken her as she was still too small and shy. We plan to keep her at Deepam for at least one year to improve her skills and self confidence. **Santhya** being six years old is undernourished and too small for her age. Specific tests confirmed that her brain cannot process spoken language properly – therefore she is able to hear and understand but cannot speak according to her age. With intensive speech therapy she has now started to talk in simple words. Santhya also benefits from the meals and the health care provided at Deepam. She had persistent diarrhoea and was eating only tiny portions of food. Three different kinds of intestinal parasites were diagnosed and treated with medication. She now eats with more pleasure. **Nanadakumar** being four years old is the youngest in our day care group. His father is very motivated and supports his son. Nandu was born with profound hearing loss and requires a strong hearing aid. Selvi and Gopal take care of his speech therapy - now Nandu starts speaking simple words. His vocabulary is increasing – he even tries to join the singing with the other children. He is a bright boy who fast learnt to distinguish the basic colors and to count objects up to 10. Maybe he will follow Subash, a boy with the same diagnosis, who also started receiving treatment at Deepam when he was four years old and was admitted when he was 7 years old to a special school in Chennai which gives “recognised certificates” to acquire mainstream schooling . We are certain that Nandu will later on be able to lead an independent life. For us it is beautiful to see these three young children participating in various activities at Deepam. They have shiny faces and are blooming.

In the past months there have been changes to our team. Baskaran and Titus left us for personal reasons. At about the same time our volunteers, who had been with us for a year, also left. One after another three new volunteers joined: two young women from Germany and one young man from Iran, who has completed his physiotherapy training in India. Two Indian women with a training in our field started working under probation. One of them was not suitable for our team work but Kayalvizhi was liked from the first moment for her charm and her work by our children and the other team members. Intitailly it takes some time before each new person finds their specific place according to their experience and to our needs. For me it is a pleasure to work in such a colorful team with highly motivated colleagues.



We would have liked to have kept Antonia and Johanna, our volunteers from last year, with us forever. They left a nice gift for our children – they created a very original play-shop, much like the local Indian road-side shops, known as “Petty-Shop” Our shop is made out of bamboo poles and planks. For weeks together with our children they modelled tiny fruits, vegetables and other items. The play-shop is equipped with a balance, a cash box and a pocket counter for learning how to count objects, to issue a bill, to weigh quantities and to handle money.

This September for the very first time we were invited to the marriage of one girl who has been attending our day care program for several years. **Lakshmi** is generally slow in her development but is able to manage simple household chores. We have mixed feelings about seeing her married at the age of 24. For Lakshmi's mother, being a widow and having no relatives, it was a deep wish to find a husband for her daughter who could care for her in the future. The young groom gave a nice impression. He is himself affected by polio and walks with bent legs. Everybody at Deepam was invited to the arranged marriage in a small Christian church. Lakshmi and her mother were overjoyed – We wish them all the best and hope that their joy will continue.

Our construction work was meant to be small but once again it is taking much longer than planned and our work is affected by the noise and dirt. We are expanding our dining hall. The roof of our small kitchen was extended and connected with the roof of our therapy rooms. The work started in August with digging of the foundation for the pillars. Meanwhile the carpenters have erected the wooden structure. We hope that the roof-tiles will be fitted before the monsoon rains begin. The flooring has still to be done and parts of the garden have to be rearranged. We would like to be ready by the 1<sup>st</sup> of December when we will have our annual Deepam celebration. At dusk we will light about 1,000 traditional small earthen lamps with oil and a wick around our building and in the garden. This creates a wonderful serene atmosphere.

The little lampshades which are with our information letters are made of handmade paper from Auroville. Our children have folded and decorated them. We hope you enjoy this gift with which we would like to convey our thanks for your generous support which makes our work possible.

Our children and our team members would like to send you our best wishes for Christmas and the coming New Year from South India.

Angelika Ehrle

Our new website [www.deepam-auroville.in](http://www.deepam-auroville.in) is soon to be launched. It has many photographs and details about our work. Please feel welcome to visit it.

