

Auroville May 2018

Dear Friends and Donors,

Team-work is essential at Deepam! Today we would like to introduce to you three of our team members who share the responsibility of giving physical exercises to our children.

**Joyce** has worked with us as a physiotherapist since 2013. *"Most of the children and youth I am working with have severe physical and neurological disorders. It is important that the exercises are done regularly. I also try hard to motivate the parents to support their children. At Deepam I have received further training to apply osteopathy techniques and I learnt how to assist children in the swimming pool. The biggest change for me was to work in a more playful way and to use songs - like this the children love to participate. I am very proud to be part of our team at Deepam as we work closely together and support each other. We are like a family with lovely children and team members, who celebrate many events and festivals during the year together. In my eyes nobody is dis-abled - everyone is an abled person!"*

**Kayal** joined Deepam in 2010 after finishing her diploma in community based rehabilitation. *"I am ever grateful for having the chance to work at this amazing place where children with special needs become engaged with so many different activities. There are good materials available and each child gets individual care and attention. Since I joined Deepam my life has completely changed. I have received a lot of training and was able to develop my skills. I am eager to learn more and like to give a really good service!"*

**Palani** was trained as a multi-purpose rehabilitation technician and has worked with us since 2001. He is in charge of the day-care programme, is involved in giving basic education to some children and does physiotherapy, especially with our older boys. *"We are discussing problems with the other team-members and find solutions. This improves the daily life of the children entrusted to us. Deepam helps also to improve the personal life of the people who are working here. I have a lot of liberty to put my ideas into practice."*

**Our student Nishant** is now a young man of 19 years. He was born with Cerebral Palsy (a condition of muscular spasticity). When Nishant was 5 years old his grandmother brought him for intensive physiotherapy until he was able to walk short distances. The stiffness of his leg muscles is severe – therefore his walking does not look very elegant and he will need to continue lifelong exercises. Nishant attended the mainstream school in his village, but as he is a slow learner he did not receive the necessary support and was not able to pass the exams. At his own request, Nishant has been attending the day-care at Deepam since 2021, where we provide basic education and physiotherapy for him. The onset of puberty was challenging as Nishant realised that he is different. For some time he was not motivated by anything and was often missing, though he wanted to look pretty and to walk straight. A few times Nishant even refused to join us on outings as he was shy of being seen with his particular way of walking. We had to tell him that also Gopal and Kalaimani, our two team-members with Polio, have great difficulties walking. Gradually Nishant became more cooperative and is ready to work hard. Since 2016 he has regularly attended our vocational training programme with Cathy and Babu who report: *"Nishant's comprehension is slow and it takes time for him to learn new things. Especially by doing macrame knots he could improve tremendously his concentration, as well as his fine-motor and coordination skills. He is also doing floating candles, key-chains and other accessories. Obviously Nishant became much more self-confident."*

Nishant is the best English speaking student at Deepam and we provide some basic computer training to him. Our team works hard to equip Nishant with the skills which enable him to lead later an independent life.





**Christel**, a most courageous French lady, recently gifted Nishant her old three-wheeler. She met with a severe car-accident when she was young, and is therefore paralysed and bound to the wheel-chair, which does not stop her coming every winter for several months to Auroville. Christel is a perfect role-model for Nishant, who is now mobile with his scooter within his native village.

### **Visiting my Indian family:**

Mareike writes: “Actually this year I intended to do something totally else. But when my holidays came closer I started longing to eat 'idly and dosa', to ride the motorbike through chaotic traffic and to hear the terribly noisy music from nearby temples. Especially I was thinking of the lovely children and the team of Deepam, whom I met first in 2014 during my year of voluntary work. Like this I was flying in March for the fourth time to India to be in Auroville. At Deepam I had a heartily welcome and felt instantly at home. It was nice to see how many things were added and improved since my last visit, such as new activities at the vocational training center. Hema and Nishant presented proudly their work to me. Certainly this was not my last visit with my Indian family at Deepam!”

### **Visit to Germany with a Purpose:**

Selvi has once again been invited by friends of Deepam. This wonderful network of supporters is really beneficial to us. Selvi will arrive end of May in Germany and will have a chance to be at different institutions to have an insight in the work with children who have special needs. In 2007 Selvi was in Germany for the first time and was excited about the quality of work and the standard which is offered. Back in India, Selvi put a lot of what she had learnt in practise and adapted it to the local conditions. Angelika will join Selvi beginning of July and we will be at several events and be able to meet many friends of Deepam. In middle of July Selvi will leave for one week to France and will return from there to India. Our wonderful team generously offered that we can both be out for a short while!

Our children and team-members send you many greetings from the summer-heat in South-India.

Sincerely,

*Angelika Ehrle & Lawrence Selvi*

