

# A SCHOOL UNDER TREES

By: Raghu Babu

## AN ASHRAM SCHOOL

### GANDHIJI STARTED SABARMATHI ASHRAM IN NORTH INDIA.

A few Gandhians of Nellore district too desired to start an ashram on the banks of river Pennar. So, they started “PINAKINI SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM” at Pallipadu about 10 Kms from Nellore town, in 12 acres of land. There are Coconut, Mango, Tamarind, Sapota, Casuarinas trees on which are dwelling the parrots, owls, mynas, and squirrels with often a large group of visitors called cranes. Fields like Brinjals, Groundnut, Ladies fin-gers, Maize, Sesamum, Settle nut crops are surrounded the ashram....

Twice Gandhiji visited this ashram and spent some time here in the past. After independence a few activities were conducted for some time by the Gandhi-ans. After that a few private persons took the ashram for a lease.

From sixties this ashram was neglected. The land was occupied by the small farmers and the ashram was ruined.

In, 1983, Sri Sivaram and Sri Devkumar, two close friends have visited this place and decided to start a school for the poor village children of Pallipadu. Sri Sivaram, is a poet and philosopher educationist, likes Jiddu Krishna Murthy's talks very much, and likes to introduce JK's insight into education. Sri Devkumar was the student of Rishivalley School!

They started rebuilding the ruined ashram, and named it “SRUJANA SCHOOL”. At this stage Mrs. Eleanor Watts, an educationist from England, has joined Sri Sivaram. It was an experimental school, aided by “Action Aid”, a funding agency from England, which helps many voluntary organisations, particularly for child education.

They did many educational experiments from 1983 to 1987. They gave some sort of insight to education; gave new creative touches to teaching; integrated various subjects, arts and crafts into education. Invented very simple techniques with the use of locally available waste material! It was a creative school!

In 1987, due to different reasons, Mrs. Eleanor Watts left the school. Then I joined the school. For her convenience Mrs. Eleanor made the school as English medium school. I turned it into Telugu medium. I tried my best to follow integrated teaching methods and take care to retain the creative potentialities among the children, which ‘were devel-



**PINAKINI SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM - PALLIPADU**  
**" SRUJANA SCHOOL "**

oped by Sivaram and Eleanor. And, along with another teacher Rama, we tried to give a shape to “AGRICULTURE BASED EDUCATION”! We faced lots of problems from the villagers, from the politicians, and from the parents!

The ashram building itself has our school and our residence too! We used to meditate in the beautiful, quiet nature around us! Meditate while we teach to children in that calm and peaceful nature’s lap! Irrespective of success or failure, meditation has its own place in our lives, it lead us to understand the present moments and enjoy whatever we do .....

There were no classes in the school. There were four groups. We named each group with the name of trees, which are in the ashram campus. The senior children’s group is called as “TAMARINDS” — they had 9-11 years age and completed four years in the school. The second group is “COCONUTS”. The third group is “SAPOTAS”. “MANGOES” is the name given to the newly joined children’s group.

These four groups are divided according to their mental abilities and standards of the children. In this school, there was no scope to get promotion one class after another at the year end. We had our own evaluation techniques to assess children’s abilities and if they reach the required standard, they will be promoted to the next level! So, every year the groups will be shuffled according to their standards!!

The school never compromised with the present existing educational systems. The school not at all recognised the present educational systems..... All the present educational systems are suppressing the creative potentials and natu-

ral intellectual development among the children and forcing them to by-heart a few answers, or committing to do malpractices during the examina-tions; And of all the above, it makes children to be dependent, non-peaceful, aggressive and violent citi-zens!! — Isn't it? The present educa-tional system gives valueless education both for physical and mental develop-ments! So, Srujana School had its own curriculum - which was linked to the Nature; linked to the life of their families; linked to the society where they are living; linked to all the problems, situations, struggles and clashes they are facing or have to face in future .....

We can not separate children from the Nature and from the social life!! We are part in the Nature! .....

There were, lots of pressures from the parents, from the politicians of the village, and small farmers who occupied the ashram land -- but, amidst all these, the school never compromised with the present educational system.

This non-compartmentalisation gave a great strength to us, to be more innovative, more creative, and more sensitive to love children....

### THE ROUTINE OF THE SCHOOL

School starts around 9 A.M. with the assembly activities for about 45 minutes Every day one activity will be taken up during the assembly sessions : On one day singing; On one day dramas; On one day general discussions; On one day reading news papers and One day listen-ing tape-recorder etc.,

After assembly session, between 9.45 A.M. to 1 P.M. there will be three academic periods in the morning session; and one more academic period in the after noon 2 to 3 P.M. - Where exercises of different subjects i.e. Eng-lish, Telugu, Maths, Science will be dealt. Senior groups spend one hour per day in “Self - Learning Corners”. Second period of the afternoon session is arts & crafts period! In it they learn painting, clay work, collage, pottery, etc. And then they had to do some manual work like digging pits for tree plantation or for long jump or for agriculture purpose. After that they had to do garden work for a while! Lastly they play games.... Some times they used to go the river Pennar for swimming.

Every Saturday there will be no academic classes. But, we had “SATURDAY SEMINARS” in which all groups participate and discuss various issues. A few issues belong to them or to their families or to the village issues or may be any other general topic in which the chil-dren are interested. Some times we may have a small discourse with children on different aspects like superstitions, fear etc. Those seminars prepared children to be conscious about what is happening in their lives. Those semi-nars helped children a lot to develop their intellectual process. Even junior children of “Sapota” group like Prabhakar, Chinna Nagaraju, Ramesh used to participate very actively. After the seminar they used to read library books for one hour and then go homes. Now and then we had sight seeing visits to the fields, near by villages, fairs, etc...

### WE CAUGHT THE SEA IN OUR POEMS.

“Like a half rupee coin  
Sprouted in the sky  
The moon has grown over the sea!  
Waves are flying  
To catch and kiss the moon!  
Like the rice, boiling and over flowing,  
Like heaps of salt, like kids competing to run first,  
The waves are running towards the bank!”

—— JAYA

Around 6 O'clock in the evening. The moon was seen as if raising from the ocean. Jaya sat beside me. She was watching the raising moon in a medita-tive mood! And by Watching she was telling poetry. I too was watching the raising moon and writing down at full speed whatever poetry Jaya says! Jaya's poetry too is growing like the boundless ocean, into pages & pages like an epic! She was telling each sentence in meditation. She was collecting metaphors and telling. Jaya's poetry is competing with the ocean!!

“Oh! Ocean!  
How pride of grace you are  
You drag everything into you  
Like a demon!  
O! Moon!  
However you think to fall into the water  
You can't  
The waves make you disperse....”

———— JAYA

There she stopped! The poetry has taken three full pages. She said “there we stop” and she ran into the sea....

A few teachers from two voluntary organ-isations visited our school to learn modern teaching methods! Particularly reading and writing methods. They stayed at the school for a month. One fine full-moon day the school children and these teacher trainees went to Mypadu beach to swim in the sea. The children were at the sea for 2, 3 times in the past. But, still it looks new to them. They were surprised at its waves and its vastness....

Boys undressed and ran into the sea.

They were full nude! Girls ran with their clothes on. Small children were fearful to go deep. But the elder children were playing with the waves. The big waves were taking up their tender bodies up to a little height and suddenly falling down. If they stand opposite to the waves they throw them. The waves took away the sand beneath the legs and make them to fall! It is a funny game with the sea....

There were no boundaries for joy and happiness. Elder children like Jungli, were swimming deep in the sea. Everybody is happy. The sea also happily teaching lessons to the children very interestingly.

Ramesh, a seven years old boy put forth his experiences this way:

“Waves has beaten with speed  
Children from each other dispersed  
Moon thought  
Why these children are dying  
So he is catching everyone  
— Moon wishes to give light  
to this dancing children....”

RAMESH

Prabhakar, a classmate of Ramesh ques-tioned the sea:

“Where are you born?  
Sea!  
Good shells and fishes are

Inside you  
O Sea!  
Why you rise up?....”  
——PRABHAKAR

Chinna Nagaraju, prays the sea:

Ocean! You are swallowing and beating us  
Moon! You are like a golden disc  
When your rays touch the sea  
Up and down with roar...  
Like a silver gold tiger you fall on us  
Ocean! Can't you take me into the middle of the ocean?  
Can't you show everything?  
Can't you show entire sea  
How far are the Fishes, Shells, Waves .... everything...  
Ocean! Let me sit on your waves...”

Whatever it is - we have to feel it intensively. Subject and object has to merge together and they should not be separated. It is one; it is unique from the moments of ecstasy the creative work should begin! When children are taken into such moments -- that is the right education! -- Is it not?

Pedda Nagaraju questions himself whenever he visits the sea, with curiosity and he questions the sea too:

“When waves see the moon  
Then they roar like a lion  
They see a human being...  
Ocean! When the water in you dry up?  
I am asking same question  
Whenever I come?....”  
PEDDA NAGARAJU

“Ocean! You help the beggars a lot  
If you give shells to them  
They give them to the people  
The people give food to them  
The beggars eat it  
And remember you for ever....”  
—— NARAYANA

Narayana is a rough and mischievous boy in the school. But, now his heart responds with lots of compassion! Education should wake up these sensitive and delicate gentle moments among the rough and tough children -- then only it will be called as “right education” -- is it not?



The significance of education is to draw out the innermost humanistic qualities and make children as right “individuals” -- is it not?

The sea at Mypadu gave such an opportunity to our children to bring their inner most feelings and share them with all.

How one can teach creative methods of teaching to these teacher trainees, if they are not aware of creative moments! Can the text books which are prepared at national level and prescribed all over the state help children to bring out their innermost poetic expression .....not at all.....!



### MOTHER EARTH

Telugu class started in the shades of the tamarind tree! Mastan laid down on the small writing table, but listening to the story. Mallikarjuna, Jungly and Nagaraju sat on the writing tables. Jaya had put her chin on my legs and looking into the book which was in my hands. Other children sat in front of the tables on the ground and listening to the story.

Since three days I was narrating the story “Mother Earth”, a novel written by a soviet writer Mr. Chingeez Itmatov.

Mastan, with a stick in his hand was ‘pricking the children in front of him with it. Mallikarjuna was also pricking the girls with a ball pen tip. The sufferers who were suffering by Mastan & Mallikarjuna complained me. And some-times they shout at Mastan as “Mastan O! Short calf”.

Though those quarrels are going, on one side, I was trying myself to tell the story interestingly, watching Mastan’s and Mallikarjuna’s mischievous nature on the other. Quarrelling is children’s nature! One way it is their right! If they don’t quarrel, who will do it? How can we stop them on the name of “discipline” or another? In my class children may lie down or sit on the writing tables, or do some thing mischievous, but, all the way they listen to the story very attentively.

The common definition to the word “attention” is -- children who tie their hands, will not speak or question the teacher, gauge the teacher without moving the eyes and sit quietly in the class-room. They are also considered as “attentive”. But, in fact they watch the lip movements of the teacher, but their mind may be away!

I suddenly stopped the story and questioned Mallikarjuna “with whom Tolganoi is speaking? And why is she speaking?”

Mallikarjuna not being confused, or delayed and correctly answered very, quickly! On one side he is pricking the girls, laughing at them and disturbing the class, but when did he “listen?” And how he answered well?

Children can not sit quietly! Some thing or other they do -- whether it is meaningful or not, whether it is painful to others or not, but, their senses work fantastically....

I never warned them on the name of discipline, but, smoothly suggested them; tried to make them understand the pain if they do mischievous things.

For about half an hour I told the story, and suddenly, I kneeled on the earth, took a handful of soil, shown it to all children, and asked them, “if you all are loving this mother earth, write some poems ....”

Mallikarjuna walked away with his note-book and sat on the top of the pump shed. Two more children followed him. Jaya and Sudhir ran, sat on the school veranda. A few lie down on the grass. Ravi and Vijaya sat under the tamarind tree, in front of the tables and started writ-ing.

After 20 minutes all children ran to me with loud and pleasurable shouts! All gathered under the tree. Everybody sat in front of their tables and made them-selves to read their poetries....

Anuradha read her piece at first with ‘glittering eyes:

“Mother Earth!

You promoted the civilization!

At first men didn’t know building houses

You found the innocents who know nothing

You nurtured their civilization....

In our childhood we played on you....

We played with clay by building house models

We put the clay on our heads and teased each other....

O! Mother Earth! Really you are like our mother .....

—ANURADHA

Ravi was a deaf boy. He wanted to read at first. But, everybody competed to read first. So, strong children like Mastan, Jaya got the opportunity at the first, and Ravi in the last. Mastan started his poem:

“Mother!

I crawled in the dust and played

And bathed in your hands

Again I ran into the dust as nude

—  
MASTAN

Then Vijaya read her poem:

“Mother Earth!

This farm

Hide the seeds in your lap

After sprouting it will be

Green and beautiful...

We feel like a festival....”

—VIJAYA

Mallikarjuna thought to complete his poem as early as possible, so that he can go outside and play! So he started reading with full speed and loud voice.

“I born in you  
I grew in you  
I merge in you  
How grateful you are!  
You give your essence to us Mother!  
Take all of us with you  
We can not bear all these turmoil....”

—  
—  
MALLIKARJUNA

We really do not know. From which source the children respond? Every one has their own experiences! Mallikarjuna who teases the girls in the classroom, does he wrote a poem like this? He does not want to enjoy the turmoil’s....

How many turmoil’s, pains and tears are hidden in the innocent minds of these children! They are fearful to their parents! How much their parents are troubling them? How much is the effect of the surroundings on the children? What are the real life conditions of the children? To whom these children can speak their difficulties? ....

At last, Ravi got his opportunity. No child was in the class i.e. under the tree! Everybody left out and was playing. But, I was there, to listen to Ravi’s poem....

“We build the houses on your head  
We travel on you  
Trees, dogs, and all other animals born  
In your lap  
The burdens are falling on you!  
Mother, on you  
The towns, countries are developing..”

— RAVI

How we can teach “patriotism” to our children? Every day we ask children to sing national anthem, and take the pledge, but, do they become “patriot-s?” They stand in attention and do salute to the national flag, but do they become “patriots?” If they join in scouts or in NCC or in NSS teams do they become “patriots?” Do they learn social responsibility? Children do not know about “love” “dedication” “patriot-ism”. Children do sing, play, quarrel, mischief, fight, tease....

Teacher has to understand this natural characteristic of the children and start their teaching journey - accordingly!

Above poems reflect that child can take anything onto their intense feeling and express through it. Children may quarrel, misbehave, but if there is right education, they never forget their duties.... This is the task before the parents and the teachers....

How can we let our children feel to recognise their duties and responsibilities?



## A TAMARIND TREE.

Tamarind trees were full of tamarinds. These tamarinds have special taste -- sweet and sour!! These were huge old big trees. Children can not climb. But they want to taste the fruits. So, none to spare but all were throwing stones onto the single, innocent tree. It was very kind tree to give its young leaves; fruits and more over we learn many subjects under its shadow! But, my children have no kindness! They were beating the tree with huge Stones!

Children want to eat something! If any eatable is available to them at free of cost, they will not afford to loose it. Those who know climbing the tree, were very selfish, they get enough fruits for themselves and got down the tree -- they will not pluck some fruits for their friends. Whatever, they collected; they give one or two fruits to those who are very close to them! And they will not bother about others....

Children like Jungli and Vijaya were some what different. When they climb the tree, first they get enough fruits for themselves, and later they pluck the fruits and throw them down for others. The children standing under the tree compete with each other to get those fruits. Some times they quarrel, to get a fruit! Those who don't get, beg the children who are successful in picking a few fruits.

But, children like Sudhir, who were mild, can not climb the tree or fight or beg to get fruits -- if any one kindly gives, they take and eat. Otherwise, they, not even ask! They simply and calmly stand aside! Sudhir's close friend Nagaraj knows it very well, when he got more fruits, he gives a few to Sudhir!

The general psychology of children is quite different. No mater whether they eat or not, they want to collect more! They give a piece to those whom they like! Otherwise they don't give even a piece of a fruit to others! They feel proud to have more material with them. They maintain a sort of status on others, who beg them for a piece of fruit, and they will not give but they make other's mouth watering!!

We know, people punish the mad by throw-ing stones at them, like the children now were punishing this tamarind tree, but how kind is this tamarind tree!

I ran there and shouted the children to stop it, I asked the children about who knows to climb the tree, so that they get a few fruits and distribute equally to all school children. Under my super-vision they did it, but, when I was away those selfish children who knows climb-ing, repeated the same story!!

Several times, myself and other teachers motivated the children not to throw stones onto the trees, but to pray the trees to give fruits, and take permis-sion of the tree to climb and pluck the fruits, then get fruits for entire school children and distribute equally among themselves. But, children never understand this concept! Whenever I say that trees to have "LIFE", they just listen, and in practice they behave very cruelly..... We tried our best to make them sensitive towards all beings, particularly at trees.... but they didn't keep their promise!

What to do?? .....

How can I make my children sensitive, alert, aware on all living beings? How can I teach them to change their attitudes and develop compassion, kindness on all beings, on nature, on whole world?  
can I make them understand the bad effects of quarrels, selfishness and how can I  
insight of love?

How  
give an



Telling stories, singing songs had no effect!

Telling morals too not brought the right action!

Discussions too didn't help!

Disciplinary actions too not changed the situation!

What to do...?? ...

## PROJECT/INTEGRATED TEACHING METHOD

Normally, our school will take up some PROJECTS. All subjects and arts & crafts will be taught in a project.

If we ask children to write a poem or paint a picture -- they can not. Before asking the children to create any poem or picture we have to create proper atmosphere and lead them into a creative mood! Certainly it is a very difficult task to a teacher, but if we do it, then only children can draw out themselves and create!

In January 1987, school had taken up a project around SHANKRANTHI festival. It is fully a country festival! Farmers' festival!.. Villagers' festival! Children's festival!

After two days of discussions, a plan was ready around Shankranthi. Children had rich experiences about Shankranthi. So teachers wished to explore their experiences and provide an opportunity to learn all subjects, including arts & crafts.

Teachers can take up projects to teach different lessons. But, creating an atmosphere to "create" is entirely different from teaching a lesson. The Shankranthi project may be for about a week or ten days! But whenever children enter the school, they should find an atmosphere of Shankranthi festival everywhere. All activities and subjects should be related and integrated. In all periods they have to work on Shank-ranthi. Otherwise it will be very difficult to draw out their innermost qualities.

In these projects children may create their own pieces individually! At the same time they have to learn to create in a "group". They have to concentrate all their energies and work together to produce a team work. Teacher is just a helper to the children towards bringing out their inner world! Teacher is a person to arrange such a creative atmosphere and lead them to a creative mood.

The plan was:

### 1. TEUGU & ENGLISH CLASSES:

Symbols; Songs and actions of Gangireddulu, Haridasas, Budabukkalavallu etc., Bhogipallu; Shankranthi festival celebrations; 3rd day Kanuma festival; Rangolies; Games with cocks; Cooking rice-milk with new rice; Superstitions during the festival ....

### 2. SCIENCE CLASS:

Sun; Planets; Is Earth rotating around the Sun? or is Sun rotating around the Earth?; Zodiac; How Sun enters into each zodiac sign of Capricorn? ....

### 3. SOCIAL CLASS:

Calendar; Crops; Seasons ....

### 4. MATHS CLASS:

Area; Shapes; Patterns; Symmetry; Divisions; Income and expenditure....

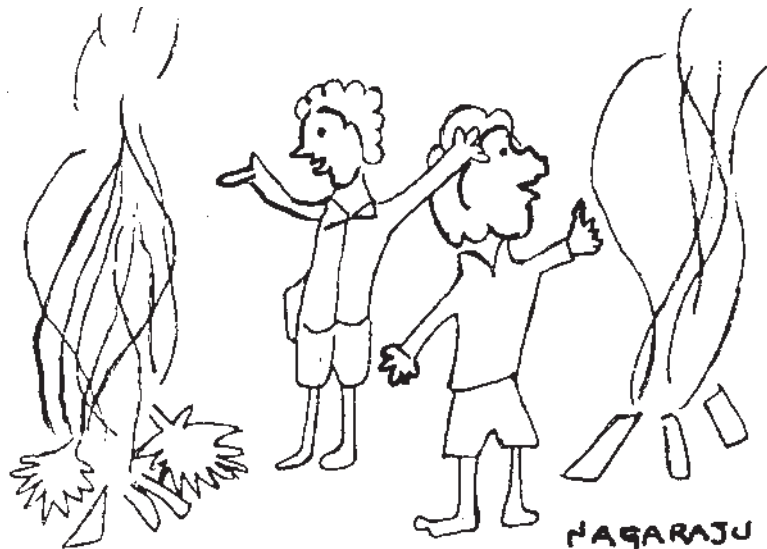
### 5. CRAFT CLASS:

Decorate the school yard with rangolies

### 6. PAINTING CLASS:

Mixing of colours; Drawing & Painting of Bhogi fire; pictures of Gangireddulavallu; Gobbi dance; Games with cocks; Bhogi bath; White washing the houses; Cooking rice-milk with new rice; Worshipping the cattle .... etc.,

7. DURING ASSEMBLY CLASSES: Acting like a family celebrating the festival; Monoacting of Gangireddulavallu, Budabukkalavallu, Yanadivallu etc. and dances ....



### WHAT IS DISCIPLINE ?

“What is this sir? Is it a class?..” Jaya’s father surprised and got a little angry about the class under the tamarind tree. He warned the children, “Chil-dren! Sit right and listen the lesson attentively ...” and went away to his fields. I just smiled at him, turned towards the children and asked the children,

“So, you say Shankranthi is farmer’s festival, o.k., ‘how?’”

“It is because

- Jaya pulled my legs
- Narayana got up and ran towards, me and pulled my shoulders
- Vijaya raised her hands and shouted to answer first
- Mallikarjuna stood up and bent onto the children to give the answer with eagerness
- Malli started requesting me to give first chance to her

Sudhir - just sat before his writing table with a smile.

Every child has an anxiety to explain. Because of this anxiety, eagerness it does not look like a class -- every time this conversation method creates a big noise -- a noise like in a village fair! Though children do mischief’s, they all will be involved in this conversation. Children like Sudhir who has no much intimacy with others, also can not sit quietly. I can not allow my children to sit quietly! I like to involve every one by asking their opinions, for this I have to tolerate the rudeness of the children -- one pulls my shoulder, another pulls my legs, someone scratches my knees -- these are rural children, poorly civilised children!

Every child knows the answer; based on their family background and their surroundings every one has their own answers! Every one has their rich experiences! But, they get little confused when they put their experiences into words! And moreover there is an eagerness to say! They do not want to express by a realistic and logical answer, but, just they are eager to say whatever strikes to them....

That was the base for my method of teaching.... I am a brother to the children, but, not a teacher, to read the lesson, explain the meanings, oppo-site words etc., like in the government schools! First I gather what children know, then I put them in an order, and from these known things I will lead the journey towards unknown things, both logically and psychologically - I feel it is the right way of education!

When I start the class under the tamarind tree or in a classroom I throw lots of doubts to them -- there the howl will start. Certainly they make quarrels, but they slip into thinking! Everybody wishes to contribute something! Malli thinks very slowly, but she responds at her own times. We can not pressure her to contribute immediately! Some times even

after the school finishes, she will come back to the school in the evening and says the answer, or some times they will start the next day class with their observations....

This learning method is really a dis-turbance to the other classes. Who watch from outside they feel bad with these howls! They may get angry for this undisciplined class -- like Jaya's father!! But what to do??

### GREEN SHANKRANTHI CAME ONCE AGAIN BY WEeping

“Very good! You said many things about Shankranthi. I learned a lot from you. Now it is the time for creation. Before we write something I would like to read a few poems ...” I said.

When I want to read a few poems, immedi-ately Narayana loudly started to sing a drama poem. I stopped him with a smile and read a few poems from classical literature -- children did not like them! Then I asked children, “never mind, if you do not like, can you write poems like this

Everybody went into a meditative mood. Vijaya, Ravi, Malli, Mallikarjuna sat quietly with closed eyes for some time --then began to catch their ideas into words.

Jungli brought his poem:

“It has come! It has come!  
Shankranthi festival has come!  
It came to spend money!  
Money it spent on  
For the rice  
For preparing sweets...  
No paise are left in their hands!  
But, again they enjoyed chicken curry!!”

Jungly see every thing from a view of economics, he reflects poverty and his difficulties....

Kristayya always, thinks in negative way:

“Green Shankranthi came by weeping  
When we are preparing sweets it came by weeping  
Shankranthi ate all of our sweets  
Along with this weeping Green Shank-ranthy  
The fog also came  
Then we lit Bhogi fire  
Because the weeping Shankranthi brought the fog”

Narayana wrote a small conversation:

I: Wake up brother-in-law! Mother asked to wake up and lit the Bhogi fire.

Brother-in-law: Wait! Sun did not rise up.

I: Wake up! Otherwise mother will beat with the cooking spoon.

Brother-in-law: Wait

(Brother-in-law slipped into the sleep and did not wake up)

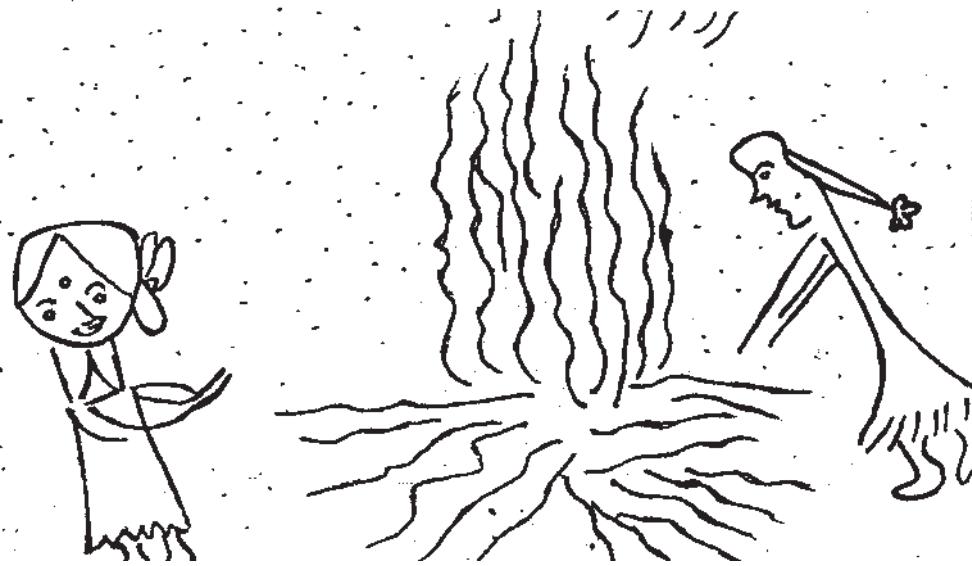
I: Mother! Brother-in-law has not wakeup. Bring water ...

Mother: Water! Why?

I: Bring - I will tell you afterwards. Mother brought water. I sprayed water on the face of brother-in-law. He had been startled... When he startled, then I pulled out his lower garment. Sister laughed aloud! Brother-in-law hides behind the wall....

Many issues are there in the life. Everybody has their own background. From it they will respond. The school is a place to create such opportunities to respond! Who will teach language? Who will teach literature?? Children are knowledgeable persons. They know every thing! If the school gives opportunities to respond, then they will become great artists, will become great scientists! Certainly....

Are we create such opportunities for our children.....



### A CONVERSATION ON SHANKRANTHI

Birds were making noise on tamarind trees. Squirrels chasing each other from top of the tree to the ground, from ground to the tree, and were enjoying..

Children gathered under the tamarind tree and started a conversation....

I: So, your sisters, brother-in-laws and your relatives who live in other vil-lages, will come to your home for the festival -- o.k. But, tell me what a festival is? What it means?

Children: We all gather, meet with each....

I: Then

Children: White wash our house

- Smear the houses and put rongolies inside and outside the house

- Worship the cattle

- Prepare sweets to eat

- Wear new clothes

I : O.K. I agree all that, but, I want to know what is a festival ....

Chi: We all will be cheerful, happy, and together we play games

I: What is cheerfulness ?

Children: ?????

I: O.K. When you will be cheerful?

Children: When we enjoy, when we are happy..

I: So, if you are happy, you will be cheerful. If you are happy you can play, sing.... What do you think; will you be happy if you are alone? Will you be happy if you are with a group?

Children: We will be happy if in a group

I: Why, why don't you get happiness if you are alone?

Children: If I am alone, there will be none to converse; no one to play and we will be bored, Anna!

I: If so, go and sleep when you are bored.

Children: How far we can sleep?

I: Then, keep free, don't do any thing

Children: How can it be! If we speak with others we will be happy. Is it good for us to be alone without speaking to others?

I: So, if you be with others, you will be happy! O.K. Not only you and your few relatives, if entire village is with full of happiness, wearing new clothes, eating sweets.... then ....

Children: Then it is a festival....

I: Festival means?

Children: All will be happy....

I: Festival means, not only one person or a few persons, but the whole village and entire country should feel happy and live happily.... Then it will become a festival.... Mallikarjuna, how do your family members celebrate festival?

Mallikarjuna: What festival Anna?

I: Any festival, for example takes Shankranthi....

Mallikarjuna: We celebrate it for three days. First day we wake up at early in the morning, lit Bhoghi fire, boil TEGAs also, and thus we get warmness from the cold.

I: How is that Bhoghi fire?

Children: - The fire touched they sky -- It was red

I: After Bhoghi fire what do you do?

Children: We have an oil-bath by my mother

I: How is that oil-bath?

Children: We have oil-bath with soap-nuts

I: Why you have oil-bath with soap-nuts, why can't you use other material?

Children: Because it will remove the oil and dust in the head.

I: What happens if the dust, oil retain in the hair?

Children: We will get headache

I: What happens if you get head-ache?

Children: If we get any ache, it will be not good four our health

I: After bath what will you do?

Children: After bath, mother will give new clothes. We wear them, meet our friends and play....



Conversation will go on like this ... There will be no beginning, or ending! There is no hesitation from either side. Children are eager to inform whatever they know, and whatever they celebrate at their homes. The only thing is that the teacher has to be patient and make appropriate dialogue with children. Otherwise, they get bored. There are no text books. No lessons. No teaching. No Definitions to explain and nothing to ask children to by-heart! The experiences of children are our text books. They can think they can come to conclusions; they can invent definitions, they are happy to announce whatever definition they found..... They know many things! One way lecturing method makes children dull, and disinteresting! But this type of conversation will allow all children to think and respond! They can find unknown things -- but still children make noise, quarrels, mischief's under the tamarind tree -- because it is an open place, not a class room! They had lots of materials around them like sticks, stones, soil to tease other children; sometimes they chase the squirrels, drive away the birds, and watch the surroundings for an interesting thing... In the class room within the walls they can not get such materials...

## MATHEMATICS IN SHANKRANTHI

### I. EXPENSES

“During the festival your mothers prepared sweets, I think so, what material is required to prepare sweets?...” Rama asked the children in her maths class,

Vijaya informed, “One K.G. rice, quarter K.G. jaggery and half K.G. oil etc.,”

“How much you spent to get this material?”

The children listed the expenses:

One K.G. rice = Rs. 2.00

Quarter K.G. jaggery = Rs. 2.00

Half K.G. Oil - Rs. 12.00

Total = Rs. 26.00

In Vijaya's house they spent Rs. 26 towards preparing milk-porridge. But, they prepared 2 to 3 other varieties too. Every child listed out what sweets their mothers prepared, what material they used and how much they spent on that material!

### II. PATTERNS

“How many dots are required for peacock-rongoli?” Rama asked the girls. And she continued, “How much area it will occupy? Did you draw it in two feet area or in four feet area?”

Rama divided and marked four feet squares in the front yard of the school. Children decorated the front yard with beautiful rongoli patterns. They decorated with colour powders too!

How many dots each design required; how many squares will come in a design; shapes of the designs; area each design occupied; how much quantity of colour powder they applied; etc., things they learned practically.

Observe the government mathematics text books: how many theories; definitions the writers of the text books will pour for the children with unknown and undigested technical terms in primary stages. In 3rd class Mathematics text book the government imposed the hard Sanskritised technical terms on 8-9 year old younger minds to by-heart, such as like: Sankhyamana; Sangnamana; Sankalan; Vyavakalan; Ekankasankhya; Viyogakam; Viyogyam; Sesham; Natural value; Place value ....

Is it necessary to impose such these technical terms in primary stages? Is there other possibility to prepare textbooks for primary class children in simple language, without any imposed terms? Is there no possibility to simplify and create interest about mathematics? Unless the teacher is aware of children's environment, it is really a difficult!

No maths chapter will take the children into their life situations! Very dull, boring and uninteresting maths...! Moreover it creates fear among the children! To pass examinations children have to by-heart the theorems with terms. Around 70 % of children fail in maths paper only in all standards. And then in English paper.

But, Rama made easy the maths. She has taken it into their experiences, taken it into their environment, into their homes, into their routine activities and provided them an opportunity to learn mathematics very simple, without learning and by-hearting the definitions and the terms.... Maths also a part in their daily activities like language! Realising this is really a great experience!

### CHILDREN BECAME PLANETS FOR A WHILE

If you turn the pages of Language (Telugu) text book you can find that:

“...During the Shankranthi day the Sun will enter into the Zodiac sign of crocodile ....”

If you turn the pages of social text book of the same class you can find:

“.... The Sun and stars do not move. The Earth and other planets rotate around the Sun

Certainly the language teachers are so traditional and ritualistic that they still consider that the Sun and the Moon are planets! We do not know, whether they know or not that the Uranus and the Neptune are 8th and 9th planets in our solar system, but, still they teach that RAHU and KETHU are planets mentioned by myths! Still they teach that the Sun eclipse will occur because the RAHU swallows the Sun during that day! The language text books support this concept

Don't you find the confusion between language, social and science text books? Don't you find how our text books are unscientific and unrealistic? And more over there is no co-ordination in writing language and science text books and between teachers while they teach! They teach according to their text books to complete syllabus! Don't you feel how our children are growing with the most unscientific, unrealistic and confusing thoughts!

I have asked 12 children to stand in a circle. One boy stood in the middle of the circle. One girl was rotating around that boy in the centre. That boy is the Sun. The rotating girl is the Earth. The 12 boys in the circle are the 12 zodiac signs! I drew the same picture on the black-board.

Suddenly I asked the Earth to stop some-where. Earth stopped. I asked: “Vijaya! How you see Mastan, where is he?”

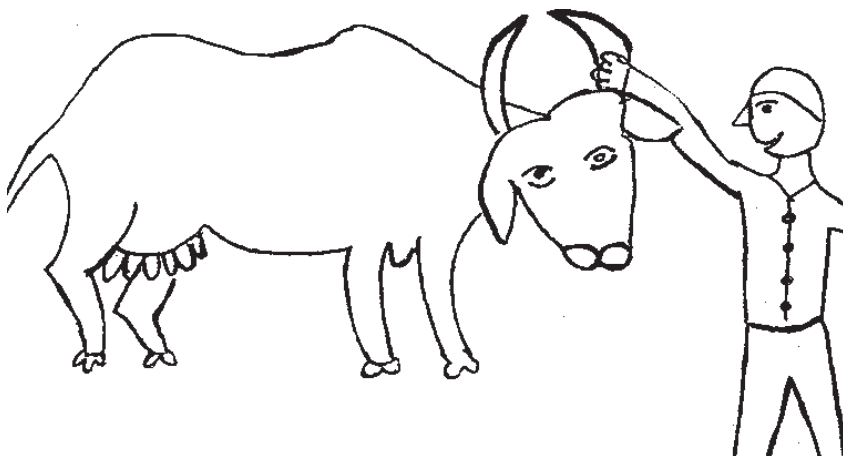
Vijaya answered, “Mastan is in front of Jaya

“So, if Mastan is the Sun, and if Jaya is the Zodiac sign of Virgin, how he seems to be?...”

Vijaya again replied, “The Sun is in-front of the zodiac sign of Virgin....”

Again the Earth started rotating around the Sun. She stopped here and there, and observed the position of the Sun. In this game the Sun and the zodiac signs are not moving, only the Earth is rotating....

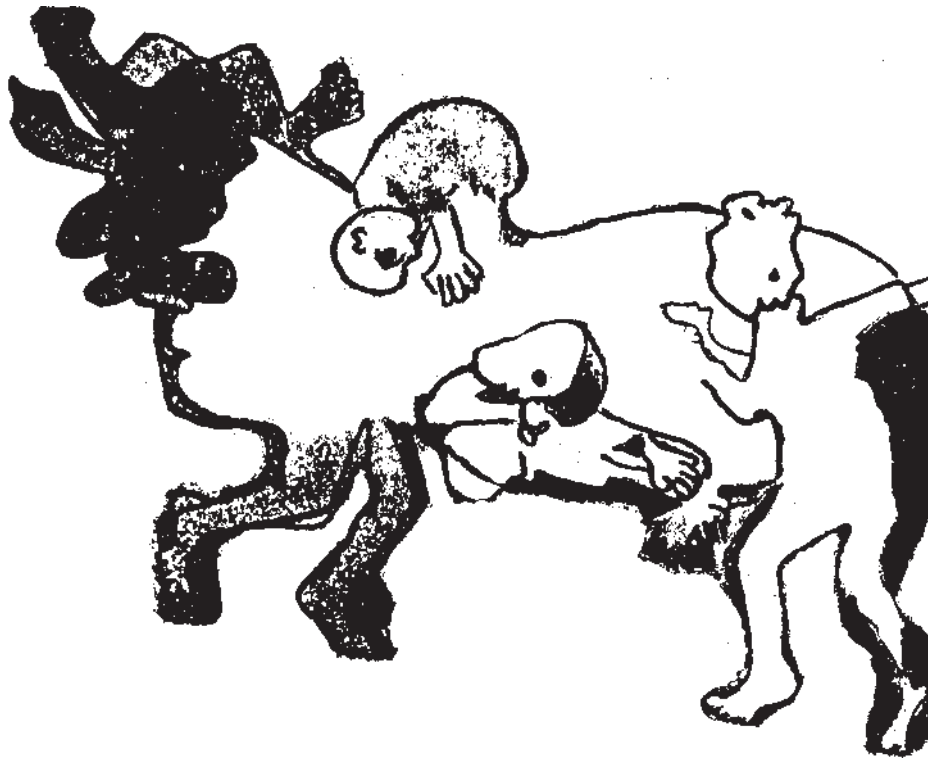
“Earth! Now how you see the Sun?”



“He is in the zodiac sign of the crocodile...”

“So, due to the Earth's rotations, we feel that the Sun enters into the different zodiac signs and travels through them over a month of period! That is why we feel that the Sun enters into the zodiac sign of crocodile on the Shankranthi day ....”

Children became the planets and zodiac signs for a while! They experienced the complexity and the variety of the Universal movements!



### CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS ARE THE BASE FOR MODERN ART

“See the hump of the cow -- is it not like an unborn baby?” Mani explains to his mother of a painting, which was collectively drawn by the children.

“These legs I have drawn” Mallikarjuna explained the same painting to his father. The body & the heads are not on those legs. Those are merged into the stomach of that huge bull....

This huge cow was collectively painted by children. Children sat on all sides of a 3 to 2 metres size big chart! They all have drawn standing, sitting, walk-ing pictures of the children from all dimensions. At the end, two British young artists, who visited the school during Shankranthi, Mr. Luis Cook and Mr. Daniel Saul joined all these chil-dren's pictures together and gave an out line. Then it looked like a huge cow! One of the child's hands became the tail! One child, who sat with raised hands, formed the horns! In the head portion one of the children is sleeping with closed body! One of the child's head became the hump of the cow! One standing child's legs became the rear legs of the bull! Another's hands became fore limbs! And one's fingers as ud-ders.... Like that in this entire big cow's painting, we can see standing, sitting, sleeping children! It is a collective effort!

Still there were other paintings — children taking bath on Bhogi day; girls decorate the front yard of the houses with rongolies; Gangireddula persons; beggars; men are decorating horns of the bulls; white-washing the houses; preparing sweets; Gobbidance; giving milk-porridge to crows; cock-races; cooking milk-porridge; worshipping the cattle .. etc. paintings drawn by the children were exhibited in the school, after the project work completed! Parents were invited to see the paintings and chil-dren explained their works to their parents. More than 30 art pieces -- gave a shock surprise to the parents! One side in daily assembly class's children were singing Shankranthi songs; reading poetry; telling stories; acting like Gangi reddula persons etc; and playing dramas that they celebrate the festival at their homes....

Another side during academic classes, the teaching is concentrated around the Shankranthi. In Telugu & English language classes children were writing poems, essays etc. In science classes children were learning about planets, zodiac signs etc. In maths classes they solve maths, based on Shankranthi activ-ities.... Every where there was an atmosphere of Shankranthi!

In this atmosphere children worked hard for a week to produce marvellous art pieces around Shankranthi! Neither they imitated the famous artists nor did they copy down from the other artists! Neither the British artists nor the school teachers helped them to draw pictures, mixing colours.. No instructions, no suggestions are given to the children to draw!

Every child is an individual artist! Every body draw the paintings from their own internal, imaginative and creative world! They drew whatever they like, with their own styles!

A few painted leaping on the chart; a few lie on the face and painted; a few sit with crossed legs and painted very patiently; a few children like Ramesh, Prabhakar had the paint on their faces, on their legs; a few got the paint on their shirts & bodies; children like Abdullah and Narayana rub the paint to the neighbouring children and laugh!! Children are divided into pairs to paint. Vijaya by nature was an artist. She did not allow Sudhir to join her; she really got fear where he can spoil her painting. So she liked to paint lonely. Every child had a limited space to draw, the given space was not sufficient to Hemalatha, so, she entered into the other's space - the neighbouring artist Mallikarjuna shouted at her that she occupied his space!

Any way, at last, children produced wonderful and rare art pieces! In their lines there were no cause and effect relations; no symmetry. Every object, every sound, every idea was taken into their imaginative world, later it was transformed and came out like an abstract painting!

We normally think, that, if we direct children with specific instructions, like -- “don't do like that, do like this, this is right, that is not right.” then only children do well, but, we do not understand that we are spoiling the natural, imaginative and creative talents of the children....

Naturally, children are creative! Education means to draw out their inner most talents and make them artists and scientists - is it not!

Pablo Picasso said, “It had taken me a life time to learn to draw like a child”

Children's drawings are base for modern art! The two British artists worked with children for a week, to get “creative” paintings from them! They were tired after working three hours with them every day! Louis burst out without hesitation...

We are getting tired working three hours with the children only. You and your staff spend morning 9 to evening 5 with children and you tolerate their mischief's and quarrels — don't you feel tired??”

Teaching is not an occupation!

It is too a creative job!

How many of us get the opportunity to spend time with the children?

How many of us get the opportunity to make the children to be creative??

### **CAN OBSCENITIES BE USED OR NOT?!**

School was not yet started. Children who came early were playing different games. A few plucking young sprouting leaves of the tamarind tree. Three children went into the garden observing how far the plants have grown! And two children writing the day's news on the black-board from a Telugu news paper.

I sat on the school steps, observing the children.

Boys were playing a game called “billam-godu”, got a dispute and started quarrelling with each other. Mastan was abusing young Prabhakar by naming Prabhakar's caste ... “You! Washer man....” Prabhakar too was not a mild boy; he too abused Mastan by calling his caste “You! Cotton cleaner....”, Pedda Nagaraju wanted to interfere into their quarrel, but other children did not listen to his words and abused Nagaraju by calling his caste “You! Weaver... Why you interfere” Nagaraju came out of the scene.

Just then, Saila's father came to me. He over-heard those obscenities, and abused the children, “Are you studying in the school? Don't you get obscenities other than caste and religion....?” He came to me, sat beside me on the steps

and made a complaint, “See, we send children to school, to learn good, civilized language and good behaviour! At our residences we use slang language. Frankly speaking, it is not good. Children should get afraid of you! If there is no fear of the teacher, children will not learn anything and they will be spoiled!” He complained from his own traditional background of education.

I smiled and said, “Yes it is true! Still I could not come to a conclusion, whether obscenities can be used or not?! Any one can express their anger by way of using slang language! If there are no obscenities, how one can express one’s anger! I am sorry! At present I can not teach any moral to my children. They have to analyse the nature of anger, the situation, the psychology behind anger and correct themselves. It should be understood through freedom only! If you guide them, start to correct them, not to use slang language, like this, they can not express their anger freely and understand the nature of emotions ....”

I do not know how far Saila’s father understood my words! But he stood on his argument very strongly!

The school started! Assembly began! Children sat “in a big circled, myself and Rama too sat among the children. All sang a group song. After a while of silence, I began a short discussion with the children.

“Listen, now I am bringing an important issue before you. You have to think about it, understand fair and unfairness of it, then come to a conclusion -- the issue is ...”. I paused for a while and continued, “In our school you are abusing each other by calling your religions and castes like, “You, washer man” “you, weaver’s man” “you, cotton cleaner” like this, is it good to abuse each other on the name of your castes? .... Think.... Is it good?”

All were silent. A few slid down their heads. A few writing lines on the floor with their fingers....

Jaya normally uses slang’s more than others in the school ... She slowly said “It has become a habit Anna!”

I said, “Another issue is also here. You abuse not only on the name of your castes & religions, but also, abuse by bringing women into the scene, like “Lanjakoduka (You son of a bitch)...” etc. I heard many times. Why you abuse each other on the name of prosti-tutes and mothers.... Have you ever thought about these slang’s? Are you just following your elders, because those are using slang -- why we use slang’s....?”

When I coin obscenities in my talk, children laughed....

Ramesh of Sapota group emotionally answered, “Yes! Because we shouldn’t abuse on the name of caste Anna! Castes are created according to our work! So...”

Jaya cried, “Why Anna! All the men use slang on the women....?”

I tried to convince her, through classifying the school children into their religions and castes. On that day, children came to a conclusion not to abuse each other by the name of religion caste, and women. But there are very inconstant children! They promised, but, they do not know how to stand on their promise....

Really they want to stand on their promise, but, during the night all the streets smell with liquor! Sounds with obscenities! Fathers drink, abuse, beat their wives by using obscenities! All the streets are filled with dirt, drain-age canals with pigs — How my children can stand on their promise ....!?

### RIVER PENNAR TOO IS OUR TEACHER

Children were walking on the sand. I find a few turmeric like grass plants in the sand. I asked very innocently, “who has thrown these turmeric here? See, this turmeric is very small ...” I took them into my hands and observed. Children laughed at me and said, “These are not turmeric Anna! They look like that -- you just press them and see”

I pressed one of them. It burst like a balloon. Children explained me “these are the roots of grass like water plants Anna! If you get stomach-ache or motions powder these roots, mix them in water and drink ....”

“So, these roots are used as medicine...”

“Anna! Anna! See these plants under water. The leaves are like ribbons...” Children dragged me into the river.

Vallisneria plants are shaking their heads under the water. “As we are educated persons, we call these plants as Vallisneria, but how do you call these plants in your village?...” I asked them. But they do not know.



I strain the water. Children too gathered around me, “Have you ever observed these plants -- Do you know, like us they too are divided into male and female plants...” Children surprised and tried to pluck out those plants.

“Don’t pluck them. First see their character. See the flowers of the male plants detached from the plants and ‘are floating on the water. But the flowers of the female plants remain to their stalk-attached to the plant. Observer-the stalk -- how is it? It is like a spring, do you know why it is like that? ...”

Children do not know pollination, fertilisation etc., I explained them about it there itself. And again started walking in the water. I have shown another type of plant -- “These are Hydrilla plants. We can do many experiments with it

Children daily come to this river. They swim very often. Vijaya, Chinna Nagaraju were washer men, so they wash clothes in the river — but these plants did not attract their attention.

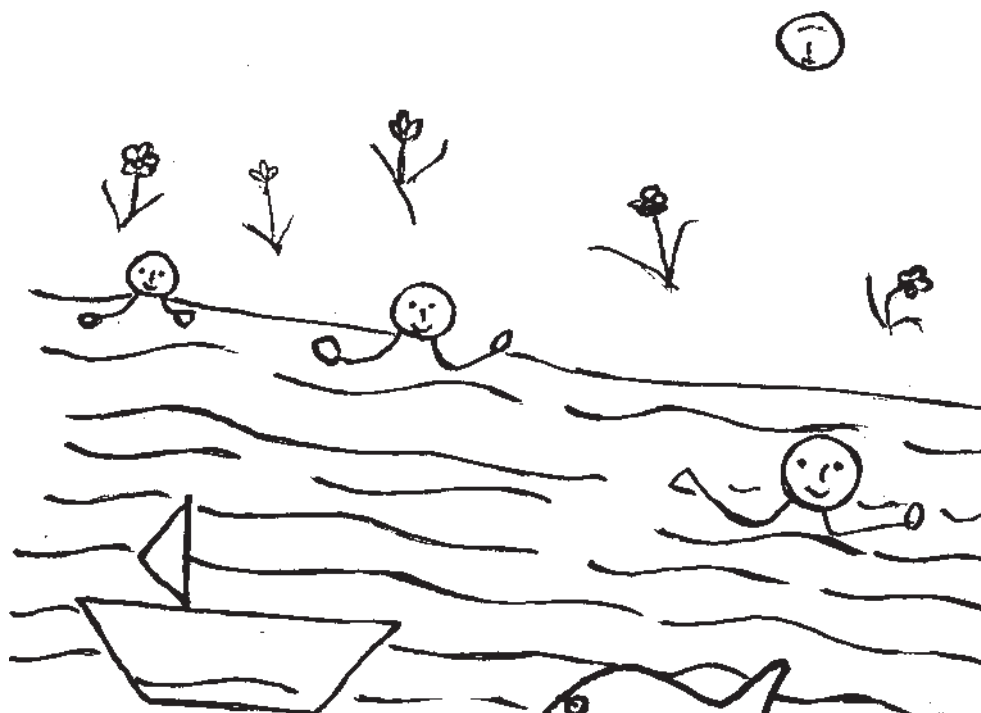
Boys put off their clothes, entered the river and started swimming nude. The girls entered the river with their clothes on. They made lot of nuisance there -- chasing each other; fighting; competing how far they can swim; few dived into the water and pull the legs of the other children; the fish in the water kissed their bodies and the boys shout; small children who do not know swimming fell suffocated and cried.....

Water and sand must open the doors of the children’s imaginative world. They built small cages in the sand and decorated with flowers, leaves. They draw pictures in the sand; they hide their legs up to the knee and try to take out them - but they can’t! They play games like Kabaddi and Kho-kho etc., in the sand.

Children collect lots of shells and fine smooth variety of stones; discuss about them; they swim in the river; chase each other on the banks of the river; sing songs; play games; dance; dramatise stories..... they had rich experiences with the river ..... Every experience will be stored in their memory forever and the same they can recollect in their future life to bring them a memory of their sweet childhood!

River Pennar allowed children to learn about water plants; about fishes; about shells and cones; about birds which try to catch the fish; about the cucumber, watermelons -- plants which grow on the sand during the summer; about the Vemana festival which will be celebrated on the river banks once in a year; about pollution of the river water with the chemicals from the nearby paper factory.... many-many things - the river Pennar taught the children.

All children after swimming came out. ‘Evening Sun, was about to set on the other side of the river. I sat in meditation, watching the sunset!’ Children also sat in a row. Jyothi started telling “OM” and everybody joined in chanting “OM”. On one side the sun set and on the other side a beautiful, rhythmic sound of “OM” echoing “in the quiet, peaceful and pleasant atmosphere. All the voices of the children turned one - it is a rare experience of meditation period! But, Mastan, Jungly and Mamulla as they are Mohammedans they felt inconvenience, and they tried to disturb the atmosphere.





## SELF LEARNING CORNERS

I stepped into the science laboratory, which was away from the main school building. In fact it was not a laboratory, but it was a “science corner”, in one of the classrooms. Two small tables and a few science apparatus were arranged there - Mallikarjuna was experimenting on heat. Now and then he was looking into the work-card, which was lying down on the floor and which was prepared by the teachers..... The moment I entered into this corner, one of the balloons was burst. In fact that was the last of the balloons that I have given to him to perform the experiment. Mallikarjuna informed me with an innocent face, “All the balloons are burst ....”

“See, if you alone burst all the five balloons and finished the entire big candle, then, how the others can do the experiments on heat? Our school is poor, where from I can get material for your class-mates? You have to be careful in using the material given to you. For me, it is very difficult to provide five balloons and one candle for each one of you really very difficult...” I warned him very gently, and enquired about the results of his experiments. And later I explained him how to handle test-tube etc., after that I moved towards the sapota trees.

Under the sapota trees, “Pottery corner” was arranged. Ravi and Jaya were sitting in front of the pottery wheel and making an earthen pan. Actually they want to make a small pot, but it came out as a pan! After rotating the wheel they started to do the work, but the clay was falling down from the wheel! Jaya was arrogant!

“It is not coming....” she angrily has thrown the clay onto the wheel. I took over the charge, sat in front of the wheel; put the clay onto the wheel. Ravi rotated the wheel. I put my thumb inside the clay and prepared a small earthen glass.....

“See we should have patience. Whatever we do, we have to fix our total concentration onto it,...” I moved again towards the main school building.

Shanta and Hemalatha were sitting in the veranda, outside the school building and painting on the charts. It was a “Painting corner”. Hemalatha drew a girl's drawing with a nice skirt with colourful design. Hemalatha was not much interested to draw other than girls' pictures. On the other hand, Shanta drew a very small picture of a girl on a big chart, and gave unattractive colours and she thought, that she has completed the painting work, and watching surroundings, not paying much interest on painting! I took Shanta's chart, enlarged her girl's picture with symmetry and explained her how to draw a picture on a big chart and how to handle brushes!

Now, I entered into the school building. In one of the corners, we arranged a small library. It was a “Reading corner”. Vijaya was silently reading a translated book of Mark Twain. Jungli was reading Chandamama (a children's monthly) stories loudly! Vijaya felt inconvenience with his loud reading. She warned him to read silently. But, he couldn't.

In another corner, Sudhir and Mastan lie with face to the floor and referring dictionaries for meanings of the difficult words. It was a “Language corner” We kept a few dictionaries and a work-card in that corner. Mastan looked into the work-card and said a word. Then Sudhir refers the dictionary and saying the meaning of the word, he shouted, “Ah! Mastan! Look into this how many meanings are here for this small word? Nearly one and half page meanings are given ...!!” Sudhir was really amazed

In the third corner of the school building Nagaraju lonely sat before four Telugu books and searching for the answers. Sometimes he was unable to find the answers, so he was impatient! This was the “Reference corner”. We usually keep 2 - 4 books of different writers on the same subject in this corner, and with a work-card of one or two questions. The children have to refer and find the various versions of different writers to the same question. I sat beside Nagaraju and explained him how to refer!

There were six “SELF-LEARNING CORNERS” in the school. In every corner we kept a work-card, according to the instructions of the work-card, children have to work at their own interest, own risk, and own intellect, without the help of the teacher! Children have been divided into pairs, and each pair got a chance to work in each corner once in a week. Each pair spent one period a day in those self-learning corners.

At first, children could not understand this concept of “Self-learning”, because all the time they were dependents on the instructions of the teacher. Now, in these self-learning corners, no teacher was with them, no supervision by the teachers, no consultation with the teachers -- every thing will be in work-cards, they have to read and learn silently.

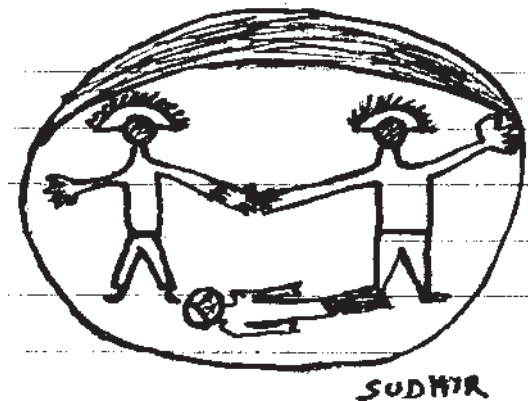
Now, every pair has to work alone! No interference with others; no classroom noises, quarrels and teasing. Now they got an opportunity to work by themselves with freedom and learning by doing!

After one month of practice in these self-learning corners, the interests of the children came out, slowly but steadily these corners really helped children to develop their intellectual process!

Mallikarjuna was interested in science experiments, and he demanded to put him in the science corner every day.

The artists inside Vijaya and Pedda Nagaraju emerged out and sharpened. Ravi, Vijaya and Sudhir became book-worms! When we kept the library close to them, whenever they get leisure time they used to take a book and sit in a corner. Shanta and Hemalatha not showed any interest in any thing. Mastan became an escapist! He was interested in acting, he was a best actor!

Jungli and Jaya also did not use these self-learning corners sufficiently for their cognitive development. Though there is a little development in their psychological state, Jungli was inter-ested in labour work, such as working in the farms etc., He became a skilled boy in manual work, but not gave much impor-tance to exercise his intellectual abi lities.



### EXIBITION

Mrs. Sobha is a feminist. She works for women rights. She often discusses women problems, particularly the security of women through law and justice for the women! She is a good artist too. She makes posters on women issues and exhibits them -- thus she focussed the women issues for public attention and under-standing!

She is one of the best friends to the school. Now and then she visits the school and discusses many issues. After a few months hard work she designed many posters on “Women and Law” on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1988, on the eve of International Women’s Day she exhibited those posters in Women’s Library at Nellore. She invited the school children to see the exhibition!

For two days, before going to the exhibition, children were prepared on women issues. They reflected, their experiences.... how their fathers over rule their families; how they torture their wives!... Children classified the works that women and men do during the day; how much time they spend on each activi-ty; which works are difficult; which difficult works men and women do; why men subdue the women; why men will not help the women in household duties; how men behave towards women; how mother-in-laws behave towards their daughter-in-laws; how the boys, those study in school behave towards the girls ... Not only these, but, many other things related to women problems are discussed by children. They really felt sad!

During the same time, three persons attempted suicide in the village! One has committed suicide because his wife absconded with her lover. Another woman attempted suicide for non-tolerance of her hus-band’s tortures; and the

third one is an old man.... Any way three attempted suicide because of non-tolerance of the tragedies of the life and discontent. Every 3 to 4 months some one commits suicide in this village! Children enquired the realities and analysed the reasons in the school, during assembly sessions.

Children do see, do listen. But, nothing will touch their thinking process. So, here the important role of the school is to help children by bringing forward the issues which children regularly see and listen. They discuss them, if necessary they have to participate, collect information and try to understand the root causes of the issues! It is not a simple responsibility to a school!

You may get a question that, can the primary children understand the problems like women issues etc?? And you may say that, these issues are not reasonable for their age? So, those should not be included as lessons in the syllabus! But, I question, how many text book writers today can know children's psychology and their mental abilities? How many text book writers have a touch with children's imaginative world and with their dreams?

If you open the text books, they will produce bad smell of useless morals! But, they will not allow children to observe the life, to do research, investigation, to analyse, to reflect their experiences...! They will not provide an opportunity to take care about women, about the Nature, about the community, about the Nation, about the Universe and at last about themselves! — They will teach useless morals to by-heart and pass the examinations, but not teach practical attitudes; responsibilities and they will not teach to love the life, but to escape from life!!

The surroundings, environment and conditions of the children are very hard and crucial. Because of the poverty, illiteracy of their parents, parents negligence and may be because of selfishness of the heads of the society..... children are not in a capable position to digest the Government's nationalised text books! They badly need education which can analyse their life! The second day afternoon, children painted pictures with their tears:

Mother-in-law pouring kerosene on her daughter-in-law to kill

A bride-groom taking dowry from the father of a bride

Extra-marital contacts of a husband

A sadist husband

A child marriage scene

All these problems were faced by the parents of the children. Children know the tears of their parents.

They got a simple introduction about women issues. So, they visited the exhibition of "Women Law"

Mrs. Sobha and her team welcomed and explained each and every poster in a simple language to the children.

Now children have so many questions in their minds. Very freely they expressed their questions without hesitation. These are children from primary classes, but, whatever they are learning here in this exhibition, though these topics are not in their reach. Even the graduates in existing educational structure, have been completely avoided from the real life!

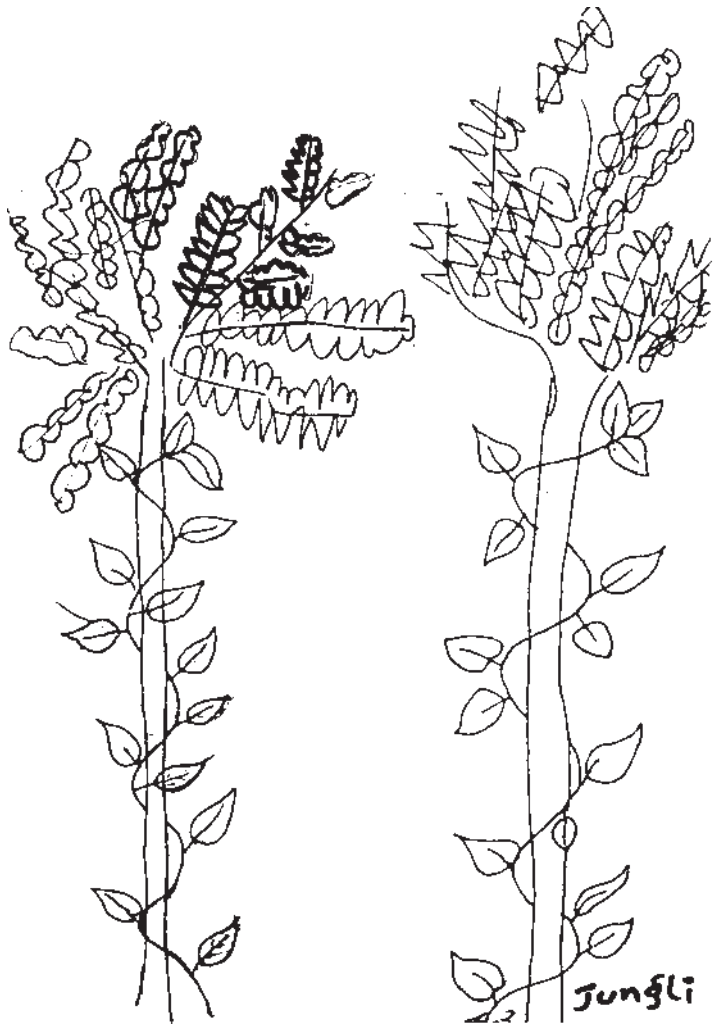
That day, there were tears in eye, particularly the girls! Their heart filled with pain!

Certainly, children like, Mastan, Sudhir did not like the exhibition. It is not a very interesting subject to the children. Courts, Policemen, Law etc do not create interest among the children. But, they understood that there should not be dual justice for men and women!

After 'watching the posters, they made a small interview with Mrs. Sobha.

From posters, Jaya entered into Mrs. Sobha's life:

"Sister! You are married, why you don't wear "Mangala sutras"? Why don't you wear ear rings? Why don't you put "Kumkum" on your fore head?"



## AGRICULTURE BASED EDUCATION

### EARNING WHILE LEARNING

“Learning” depends on two things ... One is physical strength of the child, and the other is psychological condition of the child. Physical strength means, structure of various parts of the body, correct growth of bones and muscles. This growth depends on what food the child is having, and what exercises the child is practising....”

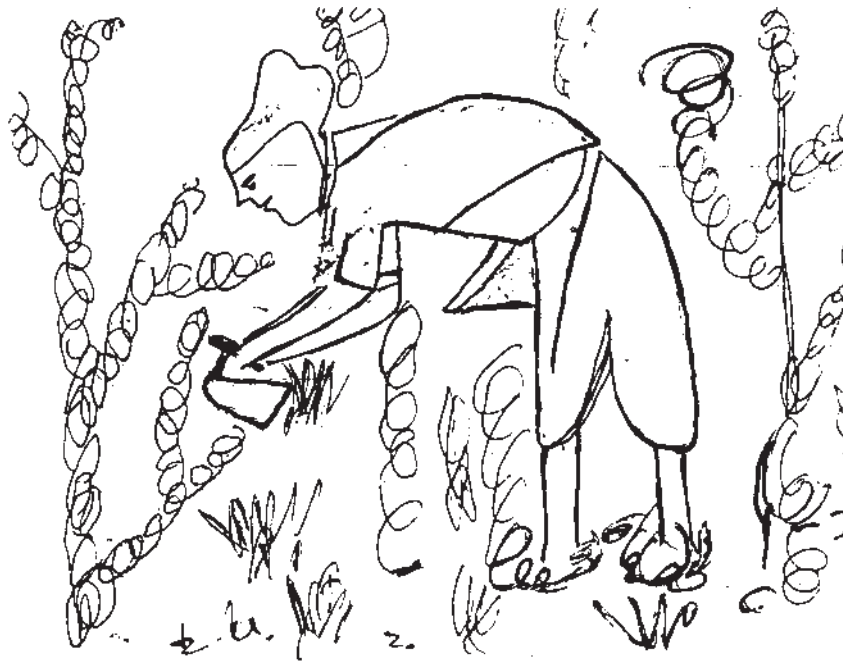
Background of their families and environment where they live will account for the behaviour, attitudes, and interests of the child!

Today, lakhs of children are becoming child labourers for supporting their families. Due to lack of nutritive food and health facilities in rural areas, the infant mortality rate is increasing year by year. Many children are becoming orphans and becoming “street children”. Which law can support these children and touch them with affection-ate feeling?

Vijaya is a washer man’s daughter. On one side she studies in the school, and on the other, when the school is over she used to go to the river, to help her parents in washing, folding, and dis-tributing the clothes. She collects the money and food from different houses every night! She is just ten years old!

Jaya and Malli are sisters. Their father always thinks to stop their education and wishes to put them to work in the field! Their land is just oppo-site to the school. These two sisters start their work in the fields before the sun raise and work till 8.30 a.m. Then they finish their bath and meals, attend the school. And soon after the school, in the evening again they direct-ly go to their field to work. Their age is around ten years only...

Except three or four children, all most ‘all children of the school have been’ involved in work, either cattle grazing or agriculture work or something whenev-er they are free.



Especially when the harvest season begins, the strength of the school will be reduced. All the children, who completed eight years, will go to earn something during the season! It is an unavoidable situation in our rural areas. Children are crushed! Withering! Becoming rough, insensitive at this tender age!

To justify economical, social and cultural growth of the children -- it is essential that every school should be self-reliant! ..... Yes! It means, the school may start a small industry or involve in agriculture; teachers and children should involve in "PRODUCTION" process, learn academic subjects and at the same time "EARN" to meet the needs of the school, needs of the teachers and needs of the children!

Not only to provide good comforts for the teachers, i.e. good salaries etc., but also, if the school provides nutrition one time per a day, and if it provides some "REMUNERATION" to the children's manual work -- it certainly help children to meet whatever expenses occur for their education. Certainly, it will to some extent, free the children from their family's financial difficulties. And moreover, some sort of self-confidence; managing capabilities they can learn; from the roughness they may make a journey towards sensitivity — where things can be understood rightly! And finally it may provide an opportunity to understand the philosophical background of the life; between physic and psyche; between matter and mind; between the work and the life; between relationships they establish and attitudes they exhibit towards community.....

An argument is raised, that, if the school provides some "REMUNERATION" for their manual work, then children start to concentrate on "EARNING" but not on "LEARNING".

In this whole concept "EARNING WHILE LEARNING", children will not become "EMPLOYEES" or "LABOURERS" in the school, but they are "LEARNERS!" Teachers must be careful to keep up their interests on "learning", make children attentive on learning -- but not just on earning! The remuneration provides an opportunity to overcome a few financial difficulties of the children towards their educational expenses! But, this concept is not to make children as "CHILD LABOURERS" and make the school as an "INDUSTRY!" It is not the objective of the school to bring the radical change in the economic status of the school, obviously, it should not stand for "more production, more income, more "profits..." etc., The school and children should be allowed to earn to meet their minimum needs.

The school should stand for "Learning and Creativity". Both, teachers and children should learn together and keep creative atmosphere in the school!

In 1988, the school got two and half acres of land. Teacher's team took an initiative to plan "AGRICULTURAL BASED EDUCATION". Because the school is in the village many of our children belong to the families of farmers or agricultural labourers! They all know the process of agriculture!



In AGRICULTURAL BASED EDUCATION, children do agriculture, and they learn all academic subjects, arts and crafts around it. It is not simply learning agriculture! Subjects will be linked to agriculture! When we see into our culture, the religion, folk lore, art and crafts, life styles of the people, all activities in the village are related to agriculture! All are interrelated, cannot be divided with each other! We can not find out the dividing lines.

Here, children have an opportunity to equally use their body and minds for manual work and the intellectual developments! On one side they participate in production process for livelihood, and on the other side they will draw out their innermost creative potentialities so children may have a clear worldly outlook!!

Today the children are captivated within the school walls and the teachers are becoming the jailors! Importance is given to by-hearting theories and pass examinations! To achieve a certificate they will have private tuitions at their class teachers, leak the question papers, do malpractices during the examinations, warn examiners while examinations, bribe the evaluators .....

Where are we going? We have experiences, though children study in vocational training centres, they are not much different from the unskilled labour force; Sometimes, the mechanics who have grown by experience in workshops are better than these diploma holders! Are they not?! Moreover, education became a major commercial practice and commercial educational institutions are responsible to the de-valuation of values of the education! Aren't they?

For all this, as we think, that the education has no relation with "PRODUCTION". Students have no part in the production process.... and students are responsible for nothing! Parents do hard work, give some pocket money, so children spend it, and enjoy the student life! But, when they enter the colleges, they will be easily misguided by the politics! So, now, if we look into the whole educational system, which leads to the unrest and violent nature among the students. What we can understand! And what we can observe? Is there any solution with the rulers for this ???

Today education limits herself, to prepare the clerks and labour force: is it producing "INDIVIDUALS"? We have lots of doubts on the existing educational system.....

Which child has full experience with the life?

Which child has a great experience with the Nature?

Which child can freely express from his innermost world?

Which child has the capabilities to find out the root causes for the difficulties, which he/she face and solve them?

Which child has the heart that can intensively love the life and the Nature?

After analysing many drawbacks in the existing educational system, we came to know, that "AGRICULTURAL BASED EDUCATION" can give some insight towards practical educational system..... As it involves the students not only in production, but also mingles them with nature and gives them an opportunity to face the life.....

Agricultural based education is in different stages:

\* In the 1st stage children will learn sowing, plant growth etc.

\* In the 2nd stage children will learn taxonomy etc.

\* In the last stage children will learn production oriented lessons!

During our experiment in the 1st year, the school completed the 1st stage! During this stage, the school faced lots of difficulties from the parents and villagers.

The school got two and half acres of land - We cultivated Maize (Monocotyledons) in one and half acres. In half an acre Ladies fingers (Dicotyledons) were planted; and in the remaining piece of land Angular gourds (Creepers) were cultivated.

The children worked in the field daily one hour during the school hours, and learned different subjects around their work through an integrated teaching plan of the teachers. They produced poetry pieces, songs, essays, paintings, clay models, collage works. They retained their creative potentialities.

But, amidst all this, children used to keep quarrels, fights, teasing etc., as usual, but, they highly co-operated to their brothers and sisters (teachers) to continue their experiments in education. Which can not be forgotten.....



SHANKRANTHI OTHER FESTIVALS	CULTURE	GEOGRAPHY	SOILS UNDERGROUND WATER
TERMINOLOGY FOLK LORE	LANGUAGE	SEASONS	WEATHER WATER CYCLE
FOOD PROBLEM TRADITIONAL & MODERN AGRL..	HISTORY	BOTANY	SEED GROWTH POLLINATION FERTILISATION RESPIRATION PESTS .....
DAIRY POULTRY SHEEP REARING	AGRO INDUSTRIES	ZOOLOGY	ANIMALS BIRDS INSECTS LIFE CYCLE
RONGOLIES SCENERIES "BOMMALA KOLUVU" SCIENCE DIAGRAMS	ARTS AND CRAFTS	CHEMISTRY	FERTILISERS PESTICIDES COMPOST
CAPITAL LABOUR CHARGES MARKETING PRODUCTION INCOME-LOSS SELF-RELIANCY	ECONOMICS	PHYSICS	IMPLIMENTS TRACTOR   SPRAYER PUMPSETS   GRINDERS
POVERTY LAND-LORDS LAND DISTRIBUTION BONDED LABOUR UNTOUCHABILITY LAND STRUGGLES	SOCIALOLOGY	ECOLOGY	FOOD CHAIN SOCIAL FORESTRY DROUGHT   CYCLONE
		MATHS	MEASUREMENTS GRAPHS STATISTICS .....
		GENETICS	NATURAL & HYBRID VARIETIES
PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE BASED EDUCATION			

### AGRICULTURE DICTIONARY

Parrots are chattering on the silk cotton tree. Cuckoo from the Sapota tree is now and then informing that she is listening our lessons. Squirrels chasing each other came near the chil-dren and just escaping with fear. Labour woman, who are plucking brinjals, beans etc in the field are chit-chatting with each other. The entire surroundings of the school are very quiet and serious, except the school!

I said to the children, "We want to do agriculture and simultaneously we want to learn all subjects. Then, I think, we want to know the terms, which are used in agriculture, is it not? What ever crop it is, like groundnuts, paddy, ladies fingers, beetle nuts -- any, whatever crop our villagers grow, we have to make a list of agricultural terms, which our farmers use. O.K. After preparing the list, we will pre-prepare an "AGRICULTURE DICTIONARY". Do you like it..."

Children divided into three groups. One group went into the veranda. Second group sat under the tamarind trees. Last group sat under the sapota tree. Now and then one of the group members used to come to me to clear their doubts

First, they listed out all the words, which they know. The group members discussed among themselves, whether the word belongs to agriculture or not. Sometimes they consulted with the work-ing women in the field. After the school they consulted their parents and totally they gathered 150 - 200 words, which are generally used in agriculture by farmers of Pallipadu.

After gathering the words, again I gave work to them. "You collected the words used in agriculture, particularly in our village. You did a good work. But, we have to know the meanings of those words. First, you write whatever meanings you know. If you do not know, then refer the dictionaries for meanings. Some times one word will have several

meanings. You take those meanings too! If you do not get meanings in the dictionaries then consult your parents and gather.

Now children did not go away, they sat near to me. They sat in three different circles. They got several doubts while they refer the dictionaries. A few words are funny to spell, children used to laugh while they spell the words.

Mastan, Nagaraju, Mallikarjuna, Jungli gave nick names to girls and mock at them. Girls used to irritate for it. For a while emotional scene has taken place. Girls too gave nick names to boys and abuse them like, "Mastan! Small bullock!", "Nagaraju! Snake!" ... And used to complain to me -- sometimes they cried out.....

One extends his two legs, keep books on them and write; one extends one leg and fold another; one sit on crossed legs; one sit quietly without moving; one can chit-chat, laugh; one inspect the other groups and when he returns he knocks on heads of the others; one call the others with nick-names ..... But, they were all involved in referring to huge dictionaries, finding meanings and writing them in their note books!

Now, they understand the meaning too! Most of the meanings came out from their experience. Now we entered into the third stage.

Again I asked them to put the words in alphabetical order, like a *pucca* dictionary.

After a weeks strain, children got in touch with words used in agriculture. They knew the difference, relativity, rhythm between the words, they got in touch with the linguistic importance of the words; the beauty in spelling them and use them for fun..... They have got in touch with words by playing, singing, quarrelling, teasing ....

At last, I asked them, "You prepared the words list first, and then gathered the meanings. Is there any possibility to draw a picture to every word. See, for example, for the word "Sickle" you can draw a picture of sickle. Same as to the word "Harvest", you can draw a picture of harvesting - For a few words you have to draw a shape only; for a few words you have to draw a scene. Try your best to draw pictures to all words you collected ....."

I gave them small pieces of papers of two inches width. For two days they did hard work, and drew the pictures on those papers. If they draw wrong, we had a small conversation, whether the picture is suitable for that word or not. Now children had a touch with the pictures of those words.

కాయ = పువ్వు నుంచి పుట్టి తినే పదార్థం  
కాయ కొట్టడం = వేరు శనగ కాయ కొట్టడం నేలలో గుంట లోడి, అడ్డంగా చెక్కగానీ, గడ్డపారగానీ పెట్టి చెట్టుకుండా కాయని కొట్టడం

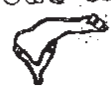


కొలవ చేయటం = పంటలకు నీళ్లు వచ్చే దానికి రెండు గెసాల మధ్య పొడవైన దారి చేయటం

కొవడి = ఒక కర్రను తిసుకుని రెండు కొసలా తాళ్లు కట్టి వాటితో బరువులు పెట్టుకొని మనకి భుజినపెట్టుకొని కుండలు, నారు మోస్తారు.



కొరిటర బాలు = పంగల కర్ర రెండు అవర్సా రబ్బరు కట్టేసి, రెండు రబ్బరు మధ్య దర్జం కట్టి, దానిలో కాయ పెట్టి కొడితే అదో పట్టలకు తగులుతుంది.



కుంబం = ఒడ్డు కొలుచుకునే టప్పుడు ఉపయోగించేది.

కుప్ప = పంట పండినాక వాటిని ఒక దగ్గర గుట్ట వేస్తారు. కుప్ప వేయటం



కూలి = ఒక మనిషి పని చేస్తే దబ్బులు ఇస్తారు. దానిని కూలి అంటారు.

కూలివాడు = కూలిచేసే వాడు - కూలిలు

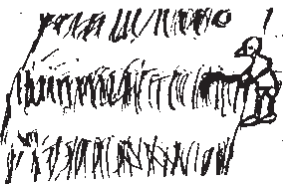


కొడవలి = పంటలను కాయటానికీ పనికీనట్టు పని ముట్టు



కొలవటం = ఏదైనా వస్తువుని లెక్కంచటం కొట్టకాలవటం,

కొత కాయటం = పంట కొతకు నాణ్యనప్పుడు కొడవలితో కాయటం.



I thanked the children. And I too worked hard for another week, and made a beautiful “AGRICULTURE DICTIONARY” with children’s pictures.

Children were happy -- because they compiled a DICTIONARY!!

Children of how many schools get this kind of opportunity -- to smell, to taste, to feel, to experience the words.....  
???

### SONGS DURING WEEDING TIME

I was singing a few folk songs under the tamarind tree for tamarind group children (senior children of the school)... towards introducing folk songs which will be sung during weeding, during grinding time etc. My voice is not good. But I tried to convince the children and make interest about the rhythm of songs.

I wrote one folk song on the blackboard, explained the metrical composition; metaphors; rhyming and rhythm of each line. A few supporting words can be used at the end of each line in the folk lore. I explained about it too! Children are familiar with folk songs like lullabies, bhajans, romantic songs and mystic folk songs....

I observed children did not understand it. Mastan and Mallikarjuna started to write in the dust.

Then I asked children to say a line each, so that making a group song. Everyone has to say one line keeping in view of the previous lines.

By that time a crow has stolen one of the owlets! The other owlets started crying with a peculiar big sound! All children lifted their heads and listened to the cry! Jaya hesitated and said to start the lesson again.

Everyone said one line. I helped them to say the line with metrical composition and rhyming! Except three children all tried their best to follow the instructions and formed an idea in the total song. But, three children like Shanta just said prose. They not at all tried to follow the metrical composition and rhyming! I again changed those prose lines into the lines of the song by changing and adding new words! I did not removed or added with a force from my side, I asked children to find out suitable words, as substitutes for the previous words, sometimes I gave four or five words, asked them to choose right one, which suits into the particular metrics and rhyme — It was a two way exploring! Ultimately all children prepared a song! After completion I sang that song by using snaps with fingers. With this demonstration children understood the rhyme and rhythm of a song! They were surprised! Now they learned a new skill: WRITING A SONG!!

After the demonstration, I asked the children, “See, tomorrow, we are going to weed in the maize fields! Then we have to sing songs to forget our fatigue! Our elders used to sing “Weed songs” during the weeding. Not only these songs, all folk songs born during the work..... Work and song are not different! “Can you write a few “Weed songs “for tomorrow....”

Children were dispersed. I said once again, “Whichever we write or paint, we have to meditate for a few moments. If we want to write a song on weeding, “we have to sit before the maize plants and meditate .... then only we can write good songs . . .”

Vijaya and Sudhir went into deep meditation!

Children wrote “songs”! Spelling mistakes were there! But, somehow, they caught the idea and rhythm in writing songs! They meditated at every letter and freely expressed their feelings into the song! I was very fond of them -- my children wrote songs!!!

We can observe, not only what they wrote, how they wrote, but also the psychology of the children behind those songs, i.e. their family conditions, financial difficulties, labourers’ situations.... all these have been reflected in those songs.

“Come women come for weeding!

Come men come for weeding!

Come men come for making rows!  
Come men, come for making canals!  
Come women come for sowing!  
Come men come for giving manure!  
Come women come for weeding!  
Come men come for spraying pesticides!  
Come men come for harvesting the corn!  
Come men come to fill the bags with corn  
Fill the bags and load the lorry!  
Load the lorry and earn the money!  
Earn the money and we all, can share!  
We can share and live happily!!”

———— JUNGLI

Jungli’s song is one of the most credible songs. In his song, he has mentioned the order of the agricultural activities, he discriminated the works of women and men. At the end he expected to live all together quietly comfortably by sharing the profits! He has just 11 years! This idea “Sharing” is not from just his lips, but, his poverty, his economic difficulties provoked him to say “sharing”!

Whoever studies in a “good” school, should get this feeling! We can teach morals easily about secularism, socialism and unity! But, how we can nourish these feelings among the children? How can they recognise these, and express through a creative form? And how can they put it in practice? Teaching morals is not enough; there should be a practical education, where, children can FEEL the necessity of secularism, socialism, democracy and moreover human values....

Kalyani, a teacher, composed tunes for Jungli’s song, and we all sang it not only during weeding times, even on the roads, everywhere -- nearly for two months it chased us in every moment...

“Take off weed - O Weed!  
Occupied the crop - O Weed!  
Plants don’t get water – O Weed!  
Plants don’t grow - O Weed!  
As we know pains - O Weed!  
Back is paining - O Weed!  
Loss to the people - O Weed!  
Weed, Weed don’t grow!  
Give joy to us - O Weed!”

———— Vijaya

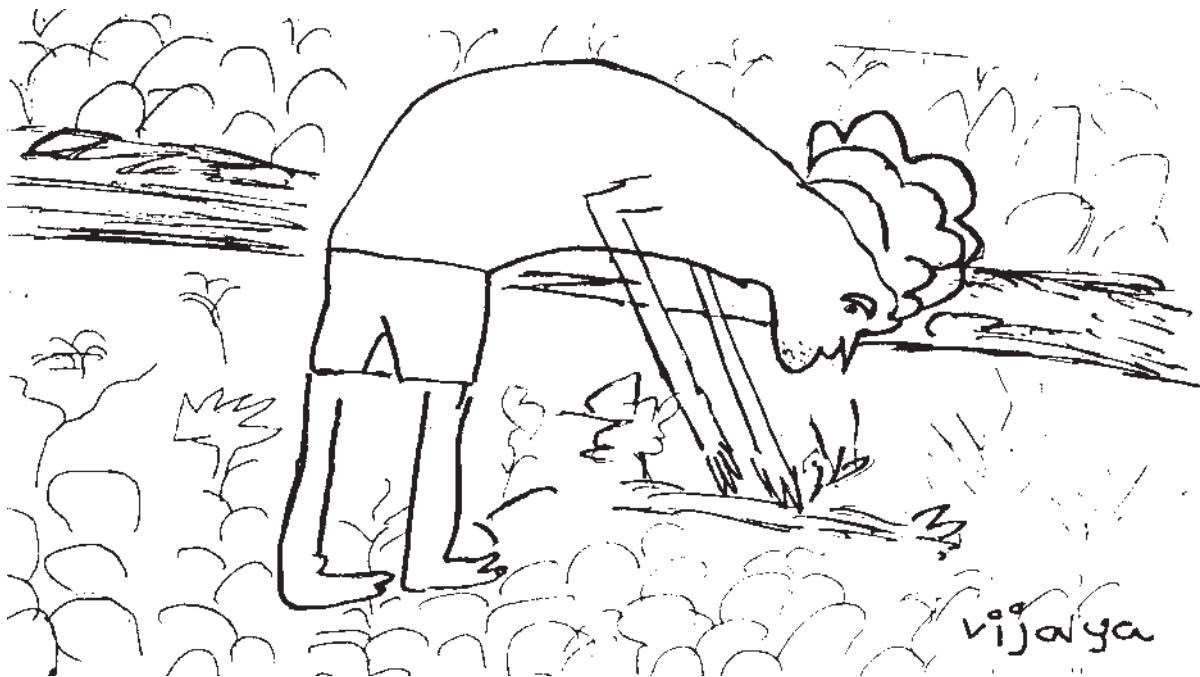
Ravi reflected the life in an ordinary way.

“Take off of the weed  
In the greenery field  
Come men and women!!

Come on! Farmers!  
Come on! Common man!  
To get on our lives  
Live by labour work!!  
Come on! Farmers!”  
———— RAVI

Kalyani tuned all songs on “weeding”, and gave a practise to all.

Working in the fields, teaching and creation are all not separate entities; but, they are inter-related and inter-mixed!



### OBSERVATION OF THE FIELD

Maize germinated after eight days. The day, when the sprouts came out of the soil, I gave straight sticks to all the children. I instructed them to fix the sticks besides the sprouts and observe the plant growth everyday. Children daily marked the plant growth with a piece of chalk, on the fixed stick.

For the first ten days they observed the plant growth regularly. Then after every 15 days they recorded the growth. The children were curious in the first ten days. After measuring, they run to me and informed.

“Anna! My plant has grown only half C.M...” “Malli informed. “Anna! Our plants are grown one and half C.M...” Mastan & Nagaraju informed with some pride. Mallikarjuna said with a pathetic face, “My plant is not grown even one C.M...”

I raised a doubt, “We have sown all seeds on the same day, and all germinated the same day. Then why is this difference between the plants while they grow?”

Everybody started thinking with a question mark? I enquired further, “Are your plants getting sufficient water? Is the land wet or not? And can you tell me where your plants are located?”

Children observed the land and came back, Malli told with a sad voice, “Anna! Where my plant is located there the land is not wet enough”

DATE OF SOWING	ACRAGE	DATE OF SPROUTS CAME	PLANT GROWTH - HEIGHT					
			DAY 1	DAY 5	DAY 10	DAY 15	DAY 30	DAY 60
MAIZE 29.6.88	1 Acre 20 Cents	3.7.88	1 CM	10 CM	13 CM			6 FEET
DATE OF FLOWERING	SIZE OF CORN	DATE ON WATERING	DATES THAT FERTILISER GIVEN	DATES THAT PESTICIDES SPRAYED	DATES OF RAINFALL	DATES OF WEEDING		
2nd WEEK OF AUGUST	30 CM	29.6.88	13.7.88	IN THE BEGINING FOR	7.7.88	11.7.88		
		2.7.88	2.8.88		16.7.88			
		13.7.88			21.7.88			
		2.8.88			22.7.88			
		13.8.88			15.8.88			
		22.8.88			23.8.88			
		26.8.88						
		8.9.88						
15.9.88								
PERIOD OF CROP	TOTAL INCOME ON THE CROP	OBSERVATIONS						
3 MONTHS	Rs. 2,100/-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. PULSELESS SEED</li> <li>. SQUIRRELS SPOILED THE SPROUTS</li> </ul>						

Mallikarjuna and Ravi selected the maize plants, which are growing under the shadow of tamarind trees. Mastan, Vijaya, Narayana, Jyothi selected the plants where the plants get sufficient air, water and sun-light — “So, what we have learnt is, water is necessary for the plant to grow .... The plants can not grow rightly under the shade ....” Children learned a lesson by experience!

Narasimhulu is the agricultural labour-er. Along with him children and we too worked in the field. We worked hard. We watered the plants, weeded, gave fertiliser; we drove away the birds which try to eat the corn..... We observed and recorded the plant growth, the inflorescence, the transformation of flowers into fruits, the seeds which are hidden inside the fruits..... We tasted the younger maize corn; we had ladies fingers and angular gourd curry in our food. And we learned different subjects around our work!

Many things came into our experience during the three months of crop time! Every issue strikes our minds and made interesting! We recorded every observation in a table during the three months period. Based on that table we again learned science and maths!

If the school has a small piece of land to do agriculture, whether the school may self-reliant or not, but we can learn a lot practically! We can have extraordinary experience, through it! Not only plant growth, we learned about fertilisers, pesticides, pests, plant diseases, worms, birds, animals particularly squirrels and rats which do harm to the crop, and we learned about the thieves who theft the ripped corn in the dark!. Just we have grown creepers, dicotyledons and monocotyledons, but learned not only Botany & Zoological lessons, but by using implements we learned physics and by using fertilisers & pesticides we learned simple chemistry — very practically!

Moreover, we got an opportunity to learn about the relationships between the Nature and the living beings by growing a few different plants! We may be self-reliant or not, can we make our teaching live???

Can this question touch any teacher? Or just teach the theorems, ask to by-heart and allow children to sit for examinations - instead of an out world experience.....





CROPS IN PALLIPADU

### CROPS IN PALLIPADU

Jyothi was walking and balancing on the bunds of the fields, with a questionnaire. Kavitha was behind her, fearful that she can fall down! I was following Kavitha. Behind me Narayana was walking by singing drama poems loudly. He too had a questionnaire with him.

I stopped him, “See, we are going on a work. They may answer to our queries or not. Sometimes they may be hesitant, be angry with us.... We have to approach them obediently and ask them that we want to learn a few things from them, if they kindly answer for our queries!”

If you sing like this, I doubt, if any one will co-operate with us.”

We prepared variety of questionnaires on village crops, as a part in agriculture based education. Children were divided into pairs. Every pair had one questionnaire with them. They have to visit different farms and make an interview with the farmers or workers whoever available in the farm. Enough space was given under each question of the questionnaire. One child had interviewed the farmer and the other wrote the answer in the given space!

Narayana was a persisting boy. He could not join others. And no one invited him to accompany with them. So he lonely involved in this task.

Jyothi and Kavitha turned into a brinjal field. I too followed them. Narayana proceeded towards beetle nut field.

The farmer was working in his brinjals farm. Jyothi introduced herself and explained the task. But he did not care them. He did not stop his work. The girls saw each other. They turned towards me. I came with them, but denied to help them, Jyothi again asked the farmer. He simply hesitated and said without stopping his work, “If I sat with you to chit-chat who will do my work? go on asking....”

He did not stop his work. Jyothi saw into the questionnaire, read the question ‘ and asked him, then he answered very simply.

“Anna! Which soils are good for these brinjals?” Jyothi asked.

“Except in the fuller’s earth, anywhere you can grow brinjals, but water could not be stagnated ....” he answered.

Kavitha sat on the bund, and started writing the answers. After writing, Jyothi asked another question.

“What pests spoil the brinjal crop?” He said all types of pests which spoil the crop very briefly, by using local terms of the pests.

“Then what pesticides you use?” “Endrin, Rogar, Ecalex and Perathene..”

“How you apply pesticides?”

“First we mix pesticides with water, and then spray with a sprayer....”

“What fertilizers you use for better growth?”

“Manure. Then, 28, Urea, CN, will be given once in 15 days...”

“When this crop gives first yielding?” “After 45 days....”

The interview started with little fear, but at the end they got the entire information regarding the brinjal crop. After completion of the interview, children said “thanks” to the farmer, and returned to the school.

Like this, Vijaya & Shantha gathered about paddy crop; Jungly & Mastan collected about maize crop; Nagaraju & Sudhir gathered about cotton crop..... All the children visited different fields, interviewed the farmers and gathered the information with the help of questionnaires.

A few farmers not co-operated and abused the children; a few said very concise answers; a few farmers highly responded to this method, and gave much additional information with patience and kindness! But, children like Kristayya, not visited any field, just sat under a tree, and filled the questionnaire without interviewing the farmers!

Children liked this method very much going out of the school, meeting different types of people, interviewing them it makes not only interest among the children, but also, provided an opportunity to learn a skill of interviewing! Weekly two periods we allotted for this activity. Children interviewed not only on crops, but also, on village workers etc., too.

Children do not like to sit hours together in one place. They like to move, quarrel, tease, fight..... This method gave such opportunity to them. They can walk on bunds, on the roads -- when they visit fields they can eat corns of millets etc., or sugarcane. They enjoyed the freedom in, this WORK! As we think this is the first step towards moulding their carrier! When they returned they said with large eyes:

“Anna! We went there, the farmer re-buked us -- we were fearful.... He is stout, had big moustaches...” “Anna! We went there, the farmer asked us to sit on the bund. He too sat besides us, read the questionnaire and he wrote to the few questions ....”

After interviews, they collated the information in the science classes, and prepared essays on paddy, sugarcane, cotton, maize, beetle nut, ladies fingers, brinjals, turmeric, beans etc. Then they again visited the fields, and drew the pictures of those crops during the art classes.

At last I prepared a book with their pictures: CROPS IN PALLIPADU.

Shantha, Vijaya and Hemalatha prepared an essay on brinjal crop:

“This crop will be grown whenever the season is found. Except in fuller’s earth, any where it can be grown. It needs less water. Crop comes within 45 days. Plants germinate after 5 days of sowing. They re-plant the younger plants in the fields. Plants will be watered for every 10 days. During the germination gamaxin & seven will be applied. Squirrels spoil the crop. Yellow warms etc. pests attack this crop. So, endrin, rogar, ecalex, perathene etc. pesticides will be sprayed on crop. For better growth manure, 28, CN, Urea etc, fertilisers can be used The fertiliser can be given once in 15 days

Can children forget the information which they collected and collated at their own risk? ... What a torment to a normal school child to by-heart the theorems within the walls! The normal school children do not know the crops whichever cultivated in their villages, but they have been forced to by-heart the crops which grow in America and in Mediterranean regions in primary classes! They do not know the history of their village temples, but they have been forced to by-heart the history of Hampi dynasty and Mugal dynasty! They do not know how to draw a map of their village, but they have been forced to by-heart to draw the borders of Akbar’s kingdom or the biggest river in the world!!!

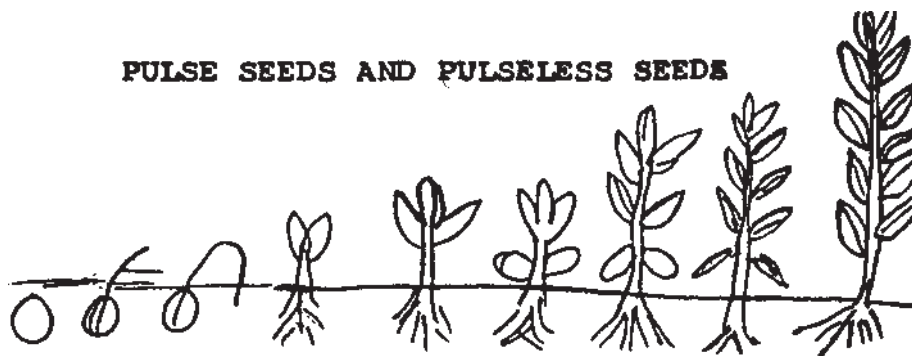
Today,

How many schools are providing an opportunity to the children to observe the world outside the school?

How many schools are providing an opportunity to learn by seeing; listening; touching; smelling and working?

How many teachers are there to take risk towards providing an experience to the children?

All children dispersed to pluck the growing plants, which are naturally growing in the field. They identified and plucked the sprouts and growing neem, tamarind, soap nut, maize and grass plants. Within five minutes they all come back to me, sat around in a circle.



Crows, on the tree were calling something with unbearable sounds! Sparrows were continuing their music practice. Parrots on the coconut trees were making nuisance. Now and then squirrels visit us and observe what children are doing here?! The labourers, who were going just beside us through the tamarind groove, have a look into our circle, watching us and leaving us behind....

I asked children to keep the growing plants in an order, whatever they collected from the fields. They demonstrated the plants on the ground.

First they arranged a seed. Beside it a germinating seed, thirdly a sprout with roots, fourthly a sprout without seed-cap, beside it a tender plant, then a young plant, lastly fully grown plant with strong root and shoot system. They rightly arranged without much knowledge and guidance from me.

I kept various seeds in front of the children. And since a week I was growing paddy and green pea seeds in a plate, now they are germinated....

Mallikarjuna guessed very well, he cried out, "So, now Anna is going to say about seed growth...."

Our conversation has started. Children were observing the seeds and growing plants. They touched the plants, turned them and slipped in deep thinking! Children who make quarrels, tease each others are also involved in observing! They were not even aware that the squirrels ran just beside them.

I drew pictures in the soil with my fingers, "now we will observe another interesting thing! Just take the seeds and cut them into two halves ...." And I gave tamarind, neem, soap nut, green-pea, paddy and maize seeds to them.

Children removed the seed coat and observed two halves in tamarind, neem and peanut seeds, but they did not find two halves in maize and paddy seeds!

Mastan, with impatience beat the paddy and maize seeds with a stone, the seed became powder! But not two halves.

I suggested them to observe these seeds and the growing plants. I have shown the cotyledons of the seeds and asked the difference between the leaves and cotyledons. They responded. They do not know the technical terms of the plants and seeds -- like cotyledons, seed coat etc.

"These stout, first leaves were in the seed, take water and germinate! These stout leaves help the sprout grow with roots and stem. When the plant has grown, these stout leaves dry and fall-down. The thin and green leaves are growing to the stem...." They recognised the difference between cotyledons and the leaves.

“See, seeds of neem, tamarind, pea have two first leaves, but what about maize and paddy seeds?.....” I enquired.

“.... There is nothing...”

“.... It is a single seed...”

“.... There are no pulses...”

“.... Seed and the pulse both are same.”

After their responses, I suggested them to observe the seeds again. “See the natural phenomena. Some seeds have TWO halves, means pulses! Some seeds do not have pulses.... How can we name these seeds?”

I have to teach the terms MONOCOTLYDONS AND DICOTLYDONS. But I do not like to teach the terms of science which are prescribed by the Government text books in primary stages.... Lots of terms are prescribed in Government text books for classes III - V. In science text: cotyledons, tap root system, pollination; fertilisation etc. And in social texts the terms like: democracy: independence; satyagraha; ahimsa; truth; non-cooperation; swadeshi and many more terms are imposed on primary school children. I doubt if the primary school children grasp the essence of these words, experience these words and coin with a feeling again??? They can't! They can not feel the terms, but simply they by-heart the terms and write examinations. ... Whoever can not by-heart they have to follow malpractices!! .... Is it not one of the causes for the high failures in examinations & dropout rate?

Here I do not like to say “MONOCOTLYDONS AND DICOTLYDONS”. But, I do not know, what terms I can coin instead of them.....

Jaya cried loudly, with clapping of hands:

**PULSE SEEDS AND PULSELESS SEEDS**

The problem is solved,

Children found their own TERMS, instead of science terms which are imposed on the normal school children today! My children know better than me!! ..... **PULSE SEEDS AND PULSELESS SEEDS**

What an easy terminology is born!!

For fun sake I introduced the science terms, but children failed to spell them.

“We are growing ladies fingers, angular gourds and maize in our fields. Among them which belong to pulse seeds and pulse-less seeds ....”

Children responded immediately, “Maize belongs to pulse-less seeds and ladies-fingers and gourds belong to pulse seeds... “

The next day, I gave note books and white papers and said, “See, now we are going to prepare a book on **PULSE SEEDS AND PULSELESS SEEDS**. So, at first, you all will be divided into two groups, one group has to write your observations on pulse seeds and the other group has to note down their observations on pulse-less seeds. And then every one of you has to write essays on pulse and pulse-less seed plants. And then you have to draw pictures of plants and seed growing.... O.K., “

Children dispersed again and did their job. With their essays and pictures I prepared a book on **PULSE SEEDS AND PULSELESS SEEDS**.

A general introduction of pulse-less seeds written by children:

“These are generally called as grass plants. These are having nodes. Roots are like fibres. The stem is very lean and short. They can be fall down by wind. These plants give corn. Leaves are long. When the seeds germinate, first leaves (pulses) will not come out. The seed has no pulses. For examples pulse-less seeds are: paddy, maize, millets. They have a short life period. These plants have no branches....”

Hemalatha noted her observations on RAGI “We can easily pluck this plant. It is not much stronger. It will not live for more time. This plant is like a huge grass plant. The leaves of this plant are lean and long! This is a short plant. The bunch of flowers having black & white colours. With ragi, people prepare ragi malt.”

Learning should be encouraged in a natural process. If it is not, children have to by-heart the terminology of the text books! It is very difficult to the 8-10 year old children! Is it not?! If we provide opportunity to develop their natural curiosity, observation and creative potentialities and encourage them to express themselves in their own known language...Certainly children can develop their memory power and respond spontaneously. With this experience I strongly believe, that children are my teachers, they can teach to the teachers, the only issue before us is we have to enter, into their world.

## I AM NOT A TEACHER

Freedom is creativity.

Where there is creativity

There will be the discipline.

Freedom should be the base for our education! No competitions, no rewards, no punishments are encouraging! From the books, children learn reading and writing. Through experience only, one can understand the real meaning of writings in a book! By-hearting the text books and passing the examinations is not the educational criteria! And it should not be!! Children have to experience every lesson, have to be observe, experiment, explore and invent new vistas.... Learning should be an enjoyable activity and it should be continued throughout the ups and downs of the life!!

I don't know what discipline is!

Parents demand teachers to teach discipline to their children... May be, in their context discipline means: not to speak against the elders, respect elders, not to speak obscenities, lies etc. But, if we see the reality, the parents themselves drink, abuse with obscenities, beat their wives, never care about neatness at their homes and around their homes. I know, many parents who send their children to bring cigarettes, liquor bottles ....I know many fathers who tell lies on various occasions, when the children are observing.... But, these parents expect the school to teach discipline to their children -- like not to tell lies, not to smoke, to have good conduct etc., etc. And moreover they demand to teach discipline through punishments and keeping them in fear!! Really -- I don't know! Unless, parents don't change their behaviour towards the children, how can they expect their children to have good conduct ... and maintain discipline?

I know only freedom!

Freedom can teach discipline!

Freedom gives a marvellous opportunity to observe things around you, to be alert, to be attentive, be think, to understand the relationships...

Many things will be learnt only through freedom ... If there is no freedom every thing will be suppressed -- the thoughts, the emotions.....

Certainly, when children come out freely,

When they burst out freely,

Then they will be the architects of the modern world!

EDUCATION means TO DRAW OUT.

VID of VIDYA means TO KNOW.

..... What to draw out?

..... What to know?

The school should give an opportunity to draw out the children's inner world, i.e. their emotions, their thoughts, their pains, their hidden talents, their hidden psychological characteristics.... When they know their own innermost world, know them -- then the DISCI-PLINE comes automatically into the life of the children!

Which school is working towards this? All schools, all children, all parents are trapped by the world of competitive examinations! All are in the clutches of competition and are competing with each other without knowing themselves!!

We never tried to divide our children from the NATURE! How can we separate ourselves from the Nature? In fact, Nature is our actual teacher! The Nature, the environment is giving and teaching a lot for us! In return we have to contribute to the environment! So, we have to learn from the NATURE!

I know, it is very difficult to teach "MEDITATION" to the children, but not impossible! It is the only key TO KNOW themselves! TO DRAW OUT their innermost hidden talents! Meditation is not a sentiment, not belongs to any particular religion or sect! It is Universal! It not only allows us, to draw out our hidden talents, but also teach us to LOVE ourselves and the world around us! We tried our best to give this to our children.

I am not a teacher; I am a brother to the children. Children used to call male teachers as ANNA (Brother) and female teachers as AKKA (Sister). We never taught anything. We just helped them to learn themselves. We helped them to be creative persons. Every child is an individual, and every individual has its own talents! They have to identify their NATURAL talents, practice them, and become skillful persons! ..... We just helped them to-wards this..... Moreover we learned many things from our children, we never hesitated for that and we are very thankful to them for allowing us to learn from them!!!



END