



New Year greetings and apologies for the delay in bringing you the news at Puvigham.

Since the end of September we have categorically avoided the text books and are very busy with our farming activities, theatre, touring and campaigning, though we keep in touch with our math!

The third fourth and fifth classes went to Yercaud, a nearby hill station for a day long trek. Their observations of the change in vegetation and climate, and the correlation therein were quite a surprise for us.



The Bear Falls at Yercaud



Rock climbing naturals.

The bear falls are down a steep hike of about 1000 meters. But our 7 and 8 year olds managed the climb down and back up without too much stress. It was a wonderful experience for all of them and they came back and made a tour report expressing their experiences. For many of the children it was the first time they were doing rock climbing yet they were very quick on their feet and their sense of balance and stamina is incredible.

The 6th and 7th level children grouped together to do their farming experimentation. They started in mid October. They marked their plots – the precondition was that the plots had to be quadrangles and not regular rectangles or squares. So they marked, measured, plotted to scale and worked out the areas of their plots. Then they decided on the vegetables they wanted to plant. The winter vegetables to choose from were carrot, beans, beetroot, greens, chilly, drumstick and coriander.



Mulching the plots

They also decided to put in some flowers and fiber plants. Now they had to decide the spacing for the plants and the **planting patterns** and **plant density**. They did all this on paper and calculated the number of seeds or saplings that they needed. They dug up the plot and make it free of weeds and well aerated for the fresh planting. Then they collected mulch for their beds and put the mulch on the paths and on the beds. We then procured the seeds and saplings and after copious watering, the seeds and saplings were planted by the end of October.



Measuring and observing.

All through the experiment they maintained a date-wise activity record checking how many of the seeds and saplings had survived and measuring their growth rate and observing their health. They also collected the pests and identified and observed their growth cycle and applied organic pesticides to control their spread. Through this whole activity they also made **drawings** of the plants and the pests. Farming is one activity all the children do with zest.

The Diwali celebration and feast happened as per the tradition for the last 7 years and some friends provided crackers to light up the moods of the children.



Walking in solidarity

Soon after Diwali an organization called SEED in Salem asked us to take part in a rally against Chemplast and Malco (local plastic manufacturing companies and mining big-wigs) who are dumping lethal quantities of poisonous chemicals into the Kaveri river and the lands around the location of these companies. Some activists from the Bhopal area were there to make the population of the Salem city aware of the hazards to health and environment due to the uncontrolled and continuous dumping of toxic effluents.

Our venture into the **dissemination** of our learning material and the creation of **learning centers** in 5 villages is now benefiting around 100 more children in the vicinity.

Three of the village centers have also received the learning material while two others are running only libraries for the time being with very **enthusiastic response** from the local community. The centers are open from 6 pm to 9 pm. Children of age groups 5 to 15 work with the material and derive varied learning from the same material. We also conducted a 10-day training for our school teachers and the village center caretakers so that they understand the concept behind and the use of the various learning and teaching aids.



Learning while working

We are also happy and lucky to have Ramchandrar with us since the middle of December. He takes care of the 7th, 8th and 6th classes for Math, English and Science. Madhavraj and Ram will be visiting the village centers once a week with some activity for the children of the village and thereby further the dissemination of learning through doing.

We hope to be able to make the learning material for two more centers by March.



Do look us up at
www.puvidham.net or come
to Puvidham in person any
time.

If you would like to foster one or more
children or contribute to any of the
activities, do contact us at
puvidham@gmail.com

**PUVIDHAM RURAL DEVELOPMENT
TRUST**

Phone: 09345620626 and
04342291100

FCRA #: 075870079

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