



### *Intro*

The 1<sup>st</sup> Hyderabad Rainbow Home was started last April (in 08) with just 4 little girls. Since then life has been hectic, sometimes worrying, at other times ecstatic, but with never a dull moment. Recounted here in the 3<sup>rd</sup> newsletter are some of our experiences and landmark activities.

### *Progress reports*

#### *a) Regular school progress card*

The half yearly progress reports of the children admitted in regular school have come. All of them have done very well and their teachers are very happy with them. They have scored remarkably well considering they joined late in the second term. In fact, they have done much better than most of the regular day scholars who have been attending school from the beginning of the year. Some of our children have never been to school before, this is their first experience. (Xerox some)

**Nagasri** is now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> standard, she had never been to school. She is very good at maths, but has to work hard to improve her reading skills. She is excited at the experience of schooling, and that her teacher keeps appreciating her efforts. She proudly shows us her work which the teacher has marked with a 'good'.

Nagasri is sometimes peevish and resorts to tantrums, but calms down when she is reasoned with, and sheepishly acknowledges her mistake.



#### *b) Rainbow Homes Progress report:*

Annual examinations were held in May 1<sup>st</sup> week. Most of the children did very well in the oral as well the written tests. A meeting was held exclusively to discuss report format. One can have an idea of the level of their learning in various aspects to capture the degree of transformation from the reports in the

annexure. The following aspects have been examined under various heads. For example in case of hygiene

For example under the head of Hygiene the following indicators have been looked at and the progress has been recorded in grades:

**a) Care of hair and teeth :**

***In the beginning:***

Many children wouldn't do anything to take care of their hair—oiling, combing, washing, clearing it of lice etc, leave alone trimming it. Some children did take care of their hair, but still they wouldn't comb the lice out.

**Progress:**

Now most of the children like their hair to look clean and neatly combed. None of them even the little ones now like to be seen scratching their heads or killing lice. They suffer the trouble to apply bitterly stinking neem (Indian Herb) oil to their scalp to kill the lice and nits.



**b) Nails and washing hands before eating:**

***In the beginning:***

Majority of the children wouldn't clean or cut their nails, though they would paint them with nail polish. Some children's nails were appalling, particularly the little ones. They wouldn't wash their hands before eating, they would if it was insisted upon, but suddenly soil their hands again just before eating

**Progress:**

Now particular care is taken to cut nails and wash hands especially after the hand wash programme was conducted in the homes. After using the loo they wash their hands with soap, and after the call for a meal the children run to the taps to wash hands and show them to be examined by sharp eyes of food committee members and house mothers.

**c) Wearing slippers and under clothing:**

***In the beginning:***

Most of the children were not used to wearing slippers; they'd go barefoot just any where. It was necessary to threaten to leave them out of outings if they didn't wear slippers and innerwear. Sometimes this threat was actually carried out.

**Progress:**

The children don't dare to neglect wearing slippers and innerwear for fear of being left out. Now most of the children now remember to wear slippers to go out anywhere, and also wear underclothing and keep them clean. BUT... at the zoo, the team leaders threatened to leave the children at the gate as at least 30 children had lost their slippers and had come there barefoot, and the house mothers felt very bad at seeing their downcast faces, they were all bought new slippers. House mothers still have to keep track of their slippers and underclothes and keep bringing them back.



**d) *Using soap and bathing regularly***

**In the beginning:**

Many children would shirk from having a bath, except perhaps on special occasions. The house mothers had to run after the younger ones, and admonish the older ones to get them to bathe. Then they would relent but sluggish about it and bathe at odd times.

**Progress:**

Now most children don't have to be told to bathe, they do it before breakfast and attend class. If anyone misses her bath, the other girls announce it not only to the house mothers, but to the entire Home.

**e) *Wearing neat clothes and maintaining them***

**In the beginning:**

The children would change their clothes only once in 3-4 days. Some would keep wearing them till they tore and wouldn't stay on the body. Then when donations of clothes started coming in, they would rummage among the clothes and at once change and leave the used clothes there.

**Progress:**

Most of the children have developed a sense of dressing, and they like to dress up neatly and as per their taste. The more responsible among the older children even sometimes monitor the younger ones' dressing in their

respective groups. BUT...there are some children who need to be badgered into wearing neat clothes.

Likewise, to assess the progress, we have included a separate section titled 'Behaviour and Attitude' in the progress report. This section covers the following indicators:

**Hygiene:** covers mostly cleanliness, i.e. personal hygiene from hair to toes, wearing slippers, dressing, eating habits, and also conducting themselves.

**Emotional stability:** getting over aggressiveness and bullying, mood swings, giving up harmfully addictive habits, restlessness, mistrust on adults, suspecting everyone, attention craving, threatening with drastic actions like jumping off a high building/leaving the Home/ cutting up oneself, ability to focus on studying

**Compassion:** Sensitivity towards difficulties of fellow beings especially the disabled, sick and younger ones, developing a feeling of togetherness, a sense of belonging and bonding with team members as well as children in the Rainbow Homes, welcoming new members to the Home and trying to understand them, sharing their woes and comforting them.

**Social awareness:** knowledge of the society and issues around them, trying to understand the Indian scenario vis-à-vis gender, religion, caste and class through the stories of the children who came here and connecting to the larger world, knowledge of rights as well as responsibilities, and each individual's significance in building the society

**Secular outlook:** appreciating and celebrating diversity in cultures, accepting the existence and respecting other faiths.

**Accommodating and adjusting:** willing to share work responsibilities and material possessions, overcoming the desire to dominate or be obstinate, being understanding and reasonable, willing to accept change and prepare for it, being ready to face lacunae and other difficulties, willing to forego comforts for those who really need them like sick and disabled.

**Overcoming lures:** overcoming desire to possess things, from money to small things like tooth brushes, soaps, pins, bed-sheets, clothes, trinkets, pencils and books, to the extent of even stealing them, kicking off habits harmful to one's own body or to others, realizing that lures are temporary pleasure and resist them, persuading others to resist lures.

**Punctuality and regularity:** being on time for any program or class, not missing or jumping classes or training programs

The common annual tests by the SSA will be held on June 05th, and the girls are geared and ready for it, though some are a little anxious.

### **Workshops, training sessions:**



### **Expanding Rainbow Homes.....new intervention :**

Harsh Mander had a meeting in March 09, with district collector and officials along with Amanvedika team to expand the network of Rainbow Homes in Hyderabad in the context of upcoming programme of Indian Govt's 'Integrated Child Protection Scheme' with a long term commitment. The following consensus was arrived at:

1. School buildings appropriate for opening of opening of Homes shall be identified and sanctioned
2. committed NGOs willing to take up the work shall be identified and brought together in a network to take up the responsibility
3. Resource mobilisation shall be taken up

In April 09 one more meeting was held by Harsh Mander with SSA project officer and all network partners to work out time frame to launch new RHs by June 15<sup>th</sup>. The same was discussed with district collector and agreed upon.

Another round of reviewing of action plan was held on 9<sup>th</sup> May, at Collector's residence along with 7 partner organisations by Harsh Mander and Naveen Mittal-district collector.

### **Status of new homes:**

- All the partners have submitted project proposals to SSA
- Now the school buildings identified by the partners have been approved by the officials and now they are preparing agreement letters.
- The orientation and training sessions and along with exposure visits to the functioning Homes was conducted
- Meeting was held to prepare budget for Rainbow Homes and now partners are engaged in drawing up budgets
- On the basis of vulnerability scale children have been identified, and their case studies are being prepared by partner NGOs.

### **Harsh Mander's inputs to AV Rainbow Homes Team:**

#### **Where does the child stand on the vulnerability scale?**

Harsh stressed the importance of reaching the most marginalised children on the basis of vulnerability scale, since generally NGOs find it very difficult to work children on the street, they do begin with them, but end up with children in the slum.

Therefore a detailed discussion followed on vulnerability scale and our priorities, and where the child stands on the vulnerability scale.

He cautioned the team to verify and monitor regularly the status of the child on the vulnerability scale.

Harsh also pointed out that each case of a drop-out from our Home has to be understood in the proper perspective; If the rate of dropping out is 5-10%, it is understandable; if the %age is more, the cause could be one of the following:

We are not prepared; our understanding of the child is not sufficient; the child is not made to feel welcome.

He also shared the MIS followed by Delhi Homes' team and that it is very easy to record any thing from stocks to events, from growth of children to hygiene and maintenance of Homes.

Some of Hyderabad RH team visited Delhi RH and confirmed this, and would like to follow the MIS pattern in Hyderabad too!

#### **Discovering the strengths of the child and the self:**

Father George is a passionate child rights activist with many years of focused interventions with children on the street. RH Management team decided to organise a series of workshops with him. In the first round, the participants opened up and discussed what hurt / impressed them most in their childhood,

which no one present there knew about? did they have any pet names? did they get any help to cope with the problem? Do they have anyone important in their lives they could turn to? This self examination

led to discussing and understanding new dimensions of emotional needs of children, and discover the strengths of the child.

In the second round, the importance of



setting oneself goals, various aspects of child development and participation, home management, and counseling were discussed at length.

The following action points were agreed upon:

One child's case study that the person relates with or took challenge with;

Diary of the day: reflections, personal reflections, what went into the mind, and self assessments.

### Let's stop child marriages!

Human Rights Law Network ( HRLN) organised a workshop on Act for the Prohibition of Child Marriage which passed in 2006, and delegates from SWARD and Child Rights Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) from 8 districts in the state. Resource persons from MVF, Taruni, and HRLN organisations spoke and facilitated the discussions.

5 children from RH participated in this workshop. One of them, Sumanjali, was herself forcibly married to a cousin. The audience was visibly moved when she recounted her plight, the trauma she went through till she ran away from there to Hyderabad, where she was luckily found by an Aman Vedika volunteer and sent to MVF camp to complete her basic schooling. She even sang a song appealing to the parents of girl-children to think about the aspirations of their daughters too.

Our teachers also who had no previous exposure realised the plight of the girls that are forced into early marriage. The workshop was an eye-opener for the children who attended it. The discussion of a recent report on child marriages shocked them, which said that 25,000 children all over the world are married off, India ranks 9<sup>th</sup>, and 57% of whom are Indian girls. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, Mahbubnagar tops the list, and Hyderabad is 2<sup>nd</sup>, due to the high rate of

migration. In Warangal district, a study found out that, out of married 120 children in 10 villages, 10 children died – 7 at childbirth, and 3 committed suicide.

Both teachers and children were excited at the proposed action plan: Advocacy and awareness programs for students and teachers, parents and village leaders; formation of Balika Sanghams ( girls associations) everywhere; sensitisation of officials at local levels, conducting programs in schools for girls with games and other events, like essay writing, debate, poetry writing; formation of people's Enforcement Committees at village level consisting of local officers, elected representatives, NGOs, local govt employees and teachers; and organising just before the marriage season, village meetings, rallies and poster exhibitions.

### **The pains and pleasures of growing up**

Asmita Women Resource Centre conducted one day workshops in both Musheerabad and Medibavi Homes on issues of adolescent girls – the inhibitions, urges, desires, enthusiasm, frustrations and fears of the changing contours of the body that plague adolescence, gender issues and the need to build friendships and confidence, and the need



to address the unrest within. Most importantly, they impressed on the girls the importance of the role of women in fighting back discrimination and in building a sensitive and violence free society. 2 films on meaningful friendships were presented and participants played games aimed at helping to improve concentration.

### **Dimensions of reaching out to children on street: Saathi workshop**

The 2 day workshop discussed issues like how to reach children on street, how to identify and develop rapport with them, how to get information from them like address, names of parents etc., how to get baseline data, home placement and methods of street presence, relationship between staff and children. the methods used were group discussion and presentation, role play, sharing childhood memories, and SWOT analysis.

After the workshop, participants, especially Rainbow Home team members, felt better equipped and confident in locating and approaching children, and to deal with difficult children.



### Education is damn easy, yaar!

Bhavitha organisation has been working on the issue of education for under privileged and discriminated sections of society like dalits ('untouchable caste'). After conducting a lot of studies and experiments, drawing on the experiences of organisations like MVF and Ananda Bharathi, they developed an easy method to teach children literacy, especially dropouts and labourers.



Bhavitha offered to teach RH teachers this method in a 2 day workshop. 2 resource persons conducted the workshop. Teachers learnt how to teach the Telugu Alphabet, number places, prepare teaching aids and timetables, and write lesson-plans.



Thereafter, Bhavitha members will come one day every month, morning they will observe the teachers, and post lunch, they will review and discuss lesson plans, syllabus, daily reports, and registers. They have also offered to help in preparing te children for entrance exams to prestigious residential schools run by the Govt.

### Let's Wash Our Hands Clean!

A big group from Satyam Foundation has taken up a 'Hand Wash' campaign. They came to Rainbow Homes and showed films depicting what happens if one eats with dirty hands. After they saw the germs on a dirty hand which a child puts into its mouth, now most of the children take the trouble to wash their hand with soap after using the toilet and before eating.

### Colours of Hope

Aashayein Foundation (hopes) is a group of young soft ware professionals that conducts various educational activities for children from deprived backgrounds. They came to know of Rainbow Homes from a RH teacher and visited RH. They **arranged breakfast one**



day. They interacted with the children and were excited at the potential and enthusiasm among them. They conducted a pot painting workshop for them. The girls are very proud of having turned ordinary looking mud pots into beautiful pots. They even gifted one to the collector.

**Meetings and exposure visits:**



**Girl-Child Day, Jan 24<sup>th</sup> :**



In response to the Govt of Jan 24 every year as Vedika invited activists to a small rejoicing, the fun as part of Girl- in Musheerabad premises. The event nearly 20 people and Medibavi Chirunavvu



of India's declaration Girl-Child Day, Aman and other RH friends and to participate in Child Day celebrations Rainbow Home was attended by the children from Home

### **Women's human chain against violence**

Andhra Pradesh Coalition for Gender Justice is a loose coalition of groups in the state working for gender justice, formed with the initiative of Aman Vedika. The Hyderabad groups in the network felt that Women's Day should be observed in a way that would make people take notice of the action and think about it even long after, and not just be a run of the mill affair. The country was shocked by incidents of men throwing acid on women in revenge for rejecting their love, and hounding women out of public places on Valentine's Day. Also, once again, the issue of imposing of dress codes upon young women especially college girls by all religions raised its head. Thus it was decided to organise a human chain with women from all communities on March 5<sup>th</sup> near the Charminar, a historic monument, with banners, placards and posters protesting against violence on women in the pretext of love, and calling upon sensitive men also to openly endorse women's rights as human rights. 30 RH girls in their teens were the most spirited and enthusiastic.

As a bonus, the girls got to see inside the monument, leaving them gaping at the magnificence, grace and cool interiors of the ancient structure.

### **Protecting tradition, attacking women!**

On the occasion of March 8<sup>th</sup>, Asmita Women's Resource Center for Women organised a public meeting on the issue of women being attacked in the name of protecting tradition and culture, suppressing women's mobility, and exclusion of women from public spaces. 18 RH children attended this meeting and learnt about the many dimensions of women's oppression.

### **Jan 30<sup>th</sup> peace march**

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on this day, and many groups and individuals remember him and the principles and ideals he worked, lived and died for, in peace meetings and rallies, and competitions on the subject of peace, harmony and social justice. 10 of our children participated in a meeting and in a painting competition after that.



*Gouri in the centre leading the prayer.*

### **Rainbow FM's programme with Rainbow Homes:**

Rainbow FM is a radio channel which runs a popular weekly live radio programme each time with a different group of people. They chose Rainbow Homes for two of their weekly programmes. Almost 30 of our children were interviewed on this programme and their favourite songs were played. Our children without inhibitions shared their likes and dislikes, aspirations apart from their struggles. The home



managers were also invited to share their thoughts to motivate civil society to take up cause of children. This programme brought lot of fans to our children and popularized our Rainbow Homes.

### **Stop child labour and child marriages!**

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a street play was performed by children who were once street children and trained by MVF teachers. The theme of the play revolved around child marriage and bonded labour. The play was performed in an area where child labour and child marriage are rampant. 12 RH children watched the play. Lot of them were able to relate to it at once. They made good friends with the performers and invited them Home and teach them too.

### **Indigenous people participatory learning to protect their forests**

Lok Biradari, an organisation run by Prakash Amte and his wife, Gandhians and among the latest Magsaysay award winners for their priceless contribution to environmental awareness and work among marginalised peoples in a forest area of Maharashtra state, had taken up a tour of major cities in the country to spread Gandhian ideas and way of life. The exhibition had come to Hyderabad also with photographs of the flora and fauna of the area, and utility items of bamboo produced by the local people.

10 RH children visited the exhibition and got to interact with the organizers. They learnt about their way of life and about the organisation. They poured out a lot of questions. They saw photographs of their schools and could almost feel the enthusiasm of tribal children in the difficult terrains and circumstances. Our kids were awed that tribal communities are in complete harmony with nature, by their friendship with wild animals and fearless handling of 'dangerous' animals. They wondered at their abilities to utilise nature and natural things without harming the forest. They were amazed by the stunning beauty of the artifacts.

They also found very interesting the customs, beliefs, their respect for culture and elders.

Back Home, they shared what they learnt with the other children.

### **Hyderabad Book Fair-08**

20 RH children visited Book Fair in 2 batches and visited all the stalls, but lingered for a long time in Manchi Pustakam( MP) stall run by our friends and read all the books they could read easily. MP is a publication concern that not only brings out in Telugu the best of children's literature in the world, they actively promote reading by children by conducting reading events. They donated a set of books for Rainbow Homes.

Our children bought books on craft and biographies of India's national leaders. Teachers bought books on teaching of English and Maths. Some of their friends who came there felt motivated to give some books for the children. Some children were more interested in wandering about near the food stalls, while one or two showed their knack in flicking off small items from the stalls which was revealed by them only in the daily review meeting of the children.

### **'Disabled'? Oh no! Differently abled!**

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, LSN organised a Mela about opportunities for people with disabilities (PWD), and also as part of a campaign to show these people as not 'disabled', they are differently abled, they can do the same things a normally abled person can do. The products for sale and exhibition in the many stalls proved this point, as also the cultural program in the evenings. 27 Rainbow Home children and their teachers were completely enchanted and amazed by the melodious songs of the visually challenged, and lively colourful dances by other differently abled persons. They returned home after dinner enthused and inspired.

### **Our environment is in danger**

Hyderabad Children's Film Society organised a film festival on environmental issues from 06-03-09 to 09-03-09. 20 RH children went on 07-03-09. On that day, 3 films were screened:

1. the Mongoose – in the beginning, children were not interested, as the film was in English. But as it went on, they got interested when they understood that mongoose skin is used to make paint brushes. They wanted to know-- 'We also do a lot of painting. How can we know what our brushes are made of?'

2. the Antarctica – during this film screening also initially the children were bored, as they couldn't understand the language. but their interest grew as the film went on – they saw flora and fauna and people in different climates. They could know something about Tsunami, floods, drought, and global warming.
3. traffic rules and regulations: this film looked at the importance of traffic rules, the impact of traffic pollution on people; most of all, this film was in Telugu.

There was a discussion about the 3 films. Only our children were remaining. They asked many questions. The organizers looked happy at the participation of these girls.

### **Abacadabra!**

It was the birthday of a volunteer's relative. So they arranged a magic show and special dinner in Musheerabad, and children from Medibavi also came. There were many games for children as well as Aman Vedika volunteers like fixing the tail on the donkey, musical chairs, and dances. Pencils and notebooks were distributed to the children.

### **Spreading smiles...**

Marg Foundation brought together all organisations who are working with children and on child rights to get their children to participate in a mega sports and fun games event free of charge. 2 buses were arranged for Rainbow Homes. There were fun games like shooting at balloons, walking through labyrinths, and throwing a ring round an object to win it. Our children even won some prizes which they received from film actors, journalists and radio jockeys. Hard-working children good at studies were also feted. The collector had addressed the participants and interacted specially with our RH children. The children became good friends with the volunteers for the event who were all students.

### **Sarita met her twin brother**

It was at this games meet that Sarita met her twin brother, Srinivas is in a home run by another NGO. She didn't know where he was. She didn't even tell any of us about him. At the meet, the children made friends with children from other homes and went and sat with them. Happened to be sitting nearby, and everyone just STARED at him, as he is the splitting image of Sarita, right upto the dimple on her cheek. Then he saw Sarita and came and talked to her and to the accompanying adults. He provided the missing links in Sarita's story. Sarita's meeting with her brother was a touching sight – she was laughing and crying at the same time, and there was big bright smile on her face.

### Lumbini Park

There's a lesson in the Telugu text book on the writers hailing from Andhra Pradesh (AP) state. So some of the children got to go to see their statues on the bund of Hussain Sagar lake and discussed their lives. Later they went to Lumbini Park nearby and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They returned home tired and happy.



### The goodness of traditional varieties of Brinjal Festival

Centre for Sustainable Agriculture in association with 'Bhumi' organised a traditional varieties of Brinjal festival on to spread awareness on the goodness of traditionally grown foods vis-à-vis genetically modified crops. Cookery contest of recipes using Brinjal was held previously and prizes were given away at the festival. They shared their prize-winning recipes with the audience in a chat show, one participant even sang a song about Brinjal. There was a food stall that sold organically grown food grains, as well as delicious cooked food.



10 RH children went there as volunteers. They were briefed on the issue and they had to explain to visitors to the event, and record their names, addresses and opinions.

After a sumptuous lunch, a scientist from ICRISAT talked about the risks to environment involved in consuming GM Food. They were surprised at the variety of traditional food grains and the simplicity of traditional farming. Apart from that, they also came to know about different dimensions of the marketing and the system of patents. The organizers were happy with their energetic participation, and the children were also happy with the outing—they got to know of new things, see and taste new types of food, meet new people, and look at and wander around the vast and picturesque surroundings.

### Hail O Deity of Education!

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, volunteer teachers along with our home management team took 15 of our children to Saraswathi Temple 80Kms away from the city. Saraswathi is regarded by many as the deity of education, so many people come there and put their books at the feet of the idol. Our children were surprised that education was being given so much importance. They also did likewise and put their books

at her feet. The priest asked them the names of their parents, so he could offer prayers on their names. He was taken aback when the girls gave him the names of RH teachers and house mothers—‘they are our parents.....’ He was also touched and he gave the girls special Prasadam (sacred food offered in worship to the deity).

### Salarjung Museum

In November 09, as part of the museum week celebrations, the govt declared free entrance to all children to museums for the whole week. Rainbow Home team took the children in 2 batches to visit the museum and view the one man collection. The children were struck with wonder at the beauty of the artefacts displayed there and wondered how they were preserved so carefully all these years. At 12 noon, on coming to know that there is a clock which has a figure coming out to strike the gong, the Rainbow Home children and staff rushed there to watch it. ‘5 minutes after we sat in the front chairs, a door opened in a corner of the clock and a man came out and struck 12 and went back and the door closed behind him! We saw it again at 1 pm.’ the excited children later narrated later at home what they saw.

### Sports and games

#### Cycling

It was decided to get bikes and get the girls to learn cycling. We went shopping for bicycles and prevailed on a shop owner to give us bikes at concessional rates. He obliged and we got 7 bikes and 2 tricycles. Some of them are already very good at it. Kavita can ride at top speed all around the ground in Musheerabad, and Parvati very proudly shows off her skills riding hands free. She catches sight of a house mother coming in at the gate in Medibavi, and she calls out to her--‘Look! Look at me ride the bike!’ They drew up lists of who should ride which bike and at what time. Mostly they stick to their schedule, but sometimes someone wants to be mischievous and grab some one else’s time, and then there is a great FUSS! Now all the bikes have already been put aside for repair and the blame game is on—‘it was you who dragged it!’





‘Oho! Was it? Who pushed me off the seat, tell me?’ and so on...

### New sports teachers

Now Rainbow Homes have new sports masters who come every morning and teach the children games. They have



already learnt Kho-kho, march-past and simple aerobic exercises. Many girls are already good at kho-kho, some among them exceptionally good.

Initially, some of the girls refused to obey the rules of the game. Dhanalakshmi refused to sit aside when she was caught, ‘ I wont go, I’m not out!’ she declared and stubbornly sat in the line. At first the teacher was very upset at her show of disobedience and tried to discipline her, but chewing on it, later realised that it would take some more time for the children to learn some discipline.

### Games by COVA:

Confederation of Voluntary Agencies works with women in the Old City area of Hyderabad and in other districts on various issues including gender issues and communal harmony. On the occasion of International Women’s Day, COVA organised games for adolescent girls on 09-03-09. After the games, the prizes were distributed in a meeting addressed by eminent women’s rights activists. 20 girls from Rainbow Homes participated in this event;



some even won some of the games. Unfortunately many of our girls did not qualify as they were below 15 yrs. But nevertheless, they enjoyed watching the games and the exquisite rangoli ( designs on the floor with coloured powder). They listened in rapt attention to the speeches.

‘Education is useful to fight back injustice’:

Laxmi Satya Narayan (LSN) Foundation recently conducted games and essay writing contest for Rainbow Home children on the occasion of its annual function.

Our children participated in games and sports event with gusto. They put their soul into their essays. The topic was 'Necessity of Education'. Reading their essays it was the turn of the Rainbow Home team to jump in glee. This is what some of them wrote:

- **'Education is useful to fight back injustice'**
- **Education improves ones self esteem as well as raise one in the eyes of others**
- **Education facilitates travel - one can travel new places but one will be laughed at if one can't understand their language of those people. They will think that we don't know anything, we are illiterate.**
- **Some of the children even wrote stories illustrating the importance of education**

RH team and children were invited to the LSN function and for prize giving ceremony. The prayer was recited by Rainbow Home girls, and the essay writing winners were asked to say a few words. Our girls confidently talked about what they felt when they first went to school, when they were declared winners and called upon to talk at the function. The Foundation presented much needed caroms boards and coins as prizes. Koshish Theatre group presented a well enacted play on communal harmony. RH girls also were prepared to perform the same play. However, they too watched with great interest, as this play had several new dimensions, and they got new ideas for their next performance.

## **Health**

### **Dental camp**

A medical tam from the Army college conducted a dental camp for the children. they advised them on care of teeth. Some of them were found to have dental caries and given required treatment/ referred to Gandhi Hospital.

### **Eye camp**

A team from Gandhi Medical College conducted eye camp in which 6 children were prescribed eye-glasses. The prescriptions have been sent to Shroff Hospital who promised to provide the spectacles.

One child, Sagaya Mary, has been referred to the Govt eye hospital for further tests.

### **Spotted children**

There was an outbreak of chicken pox in the city, and in no time, all the girls

in RH got it. It was the testing time for the RH – the whole home management team was at the end of its tether. With a lot of patience and care, now they have all recovered, though spots can be seen on some of the girls.

#### **Vani's case**

7 yr old Vani was deserted by her family and found on the platform in Secunderabad Railway Station. Usually she was silent and withdrawn. She was playing with the other children one evening, when she suddenly collapsed and fell to the ground. The ever alert house mother, Jayamma, spotted her falling in the dim twilight, and ran to revive her. She started having convulsions and Jayamma panicked and called the management team members who rushed her to the govt hospital, and just in time too! The doctors examined her and concluded it was epilepsy. A burn mark on the side of the head confirmed it. Usually in the villages, burning is regarded as a treatment for many ailments, particularly epilepsy. Within a week Vani recovered and bonded well with the home team. Now she is a cheerful child, often naughty.

#### **Gauri's recovery**

Gauri has recovered from tubercular meningitis. She is regaining her weight and is eating well. Everyone in the home including the smallest children understand the need for her special diet and do not hinder least envy her for special food like fruits, meat, nuts etc, though in the beginning it was an quite difficult to give her these things in the presence of smaller children. Everyone is very protective of Gauri and takes special care. Gauri has bounced back to health, so much so that she is regained a bit of her original aggressiveness. She actually threatened to leave the home after her disagreement with some of the girl and went of stood on the road at 11PM, but eventually came back inside after thinking it over. When asked about it she now gives a sheepish grin, "Yes, I did like that. In the hospital also I was screaming and many foolish things, no? I even hit Kalyani and Swapna who looked after me, no? I remember...."

#### **Health Card for Each Child**

CC Shroff Memorial Hospital is the India HQ of an international organisation ( name?). One of their programs is to regularly conduct health camps in selected areas and then regular follow up for school going girl-children. Mostly they find malnutrition is a common problem mainly due to insufficient nutritional intake. In case of serious problems, Shroff Hospital offers treatment at nominal / free of cost according to the need.

They heard of Rainbow Homes and offered to adopt the Homes in their regular beat. They took blood samples of all the girls and prepared their health cards.

Almost all the children have good levels of HB in blood, barring a few new comers. The white nutritional deficiency patches have disappeared from the

faces of almost all the children.

### **Holiday Diary of RH Children**

The kite festival in January is one of the major festivals in the South. It is a harvest festival, celebrated when the harvest is cut, threshed and stacked, and brought home from the fields. Kites are flown particularly in the urban areas, and there is friendly banter and competition between neighbours and friends as to who cut the most kites. Those who had some relative willing to look after them for a couple of days took them for the festival. But there are nearly 35 children who have no one and nowhere to go. So we arranged a vacation for them with various friends, accompanied by a responsible adult. All the groups had a good time, some had an exhilarating experience.

#### **Quila Shapur(QS) group:**

Traveled by push-pull train.

Reached QS by 10.30pm. Had to get down at Raghunathpally and take an auto to the village. Spent the night at Elliah Sir's house. Early next morning, went to the fields. Saw all the fields. Had baths at the wells. Whole day spent at the fields.

Next day, visited the Quila in the village. It is an old fort, the den of a revolutionary, Sarvai Papanna, who led the struggle in the area against the Nizam. Couldn't go inside as the sarpanch was away and it was locked. In the afternoon, watched a cricket match being played by the youth of the village.

At night, had a good time learning to make the traditional sweets and snacks for the festival. Early next morning, again helped to make the puris and sakinalu and ariselu. It was fun.

Next early morning, helped the ladies of the house clean up the courtyard and decorate it with rangoli. Each of us made a special design. There was a rangoli competition in the village, only for local children.

The lunch that day was special, since it was the day of the festival—there was mutton curry, fried rice.

That night, there was a cultural program by a renowned state level cultural team. Enjoyed till late at night. The cultural programs had a social message. The people who were educated and had gone in for higher studies like engineering, teacher training, etc, particularly girls, were called on to the stage and feted.

Traditional scenes like Gangireddu and Haridasu were some of the themes in the rangoli. Some others depicted village scenes, some made the map of India.

On 15 th afternoon, had cool drinks, and snacks. In Raghunathpally town, went to watch a funny Telugu film. All the relatives showed a lot of love to us. Early next morning, started out for Hyderabad by train.

These 4 days were very enjoyable, and we mingled very well with the village folk, and didn't want to return to Hyderabad.

**Kollapur team:**

Visited the temple, and the ponds, lakes and surrounding hills in Singotam village. From there went to Kollapur, and had lunch with SVK friends. In the evening, to Chukkaipally village with Nani Sir, our host. Liked it very much.

Next day, visited the Somasila Project. It was beautiful! There were green fields, and a full river, and some fishermen. Went boating, it costs Rs.120. the fields were lovely. Transport in and around Chukkaipally costs Rs. 600. then to Kollapur and from there went to Molachintalapally to see the Mahatma Gandhi Lift Irrigation Scheme. There also saw so many hills, valleys, caves and lush fields! Lovely!

We also visited the Raja's Bungalaow where there are many fruit trees.

The local people loved to us to be with them, we also wanted to stay on. They had new dresses made specially for the smallest 4 children. From there went to Jutaprolu to an ancient temple with many paintings of the royal family of those times. Took many fotos. There also the river flows. Some other mysterious looking fort like structures. From there to the Somasila reservoir. Such lush greenery, so much water! There is a nearby forest also, which we saw from afar. Had a picnic lunch – chicken curry, fried rice, papad, and rasam. So delicious! All cooked by a local auntie. Returned on 16<sup>th</sup> to Kollapur. The vegetable gardens, rice fields, are lovely here.

Never had seen the village atmosphere before, so we loved it. The bullock carts, hens, fields – a novel experience!.

**Ongole group:**

Visited Mela, sat on the giant wheel, went to the beach., visited a village called Tangutur and stayed in a relative's house there. There watched competitions like Kabaddi and Dance programmes. Very interesting to watch the grandly decorated deity being paraded on a small dinghy called 'Teppa'. Had cool drinks and a lot of specially prepared traditional sweets. The local people looked after us very lovingly.

Visited a lecturer's house, they received us warmly. Then to the beach at Kothapatnam.

**Mancherial group:**

unable to go anywhere as our host and also one of our girls, Raveena, were both very unwell with throat infection, so just stayed home and watched sensitive films like Lagaan, Taare Zameen Par, cooked ate and ate a lot of different types of yummy food.

**Nagarjuna Sagar group:**

Nagarjuna Sagar is a prominent multipurpose dam in India and is located 100

KMs away from Hyderabad. Those of us in 5<sup>th</sup> standard also have a lesson about it. Visiting that dam is an exciting event and having written their half yearly examination, we recollected the whole lesson. 2 days visit of that area gave experiences of gardens with green carpets, parks, swings, see-saw, roaring water falls, boat ride, Museum of Buddhist culture, tasty food, ice creams, hot pea nuts etc... One of friends, Parveen, could not fit into her pants as by mistake she brought smaller one which gave lot of fun..... Sarita always tried to climb trees... Divya didn't want to leave the swing in the park..... Premalatha's sudden mood of meditation and love of water falls... Safai Karmachai Andolan National leader, Wilson Sir's jokes and affection are the sweet memories....



### **Mounika :**

When her aunt came to visit Mounika, she asked Mounika if she wanted to go back with her. Mounika suddenly took it into her head to take a break. She pleaded with the Home Manger to allow her to go for only 2 days. She wouldn't listen to reason that the annual exam, was only 10 days away, she could go, after that or she might miss it. The aunt also promised her to send her back. But Mounika didn't return even after a week. So the team went to find out what happened. Mounika's aunt did her volte face and refused to send her "we are going to get her married! Otherwise who will do all this for this orphan?" she declared. RH team members threatened them with dire consequences and left. Mounika missed two subjects in the annual exam. Just when everyone gave up a hope of her returning, and had decided to approach the police, she turned up "I am back! And never go there again! Please will you arrange the exam for me?" Head mistress was approached by RH team and she promised to arrange the exam for her when school reopens.

### **Trying to Trace Sony:**

Sony, the gentle little creature, fair and delicate looking, was taken away by her mother one day, promising to bring her back soon. She never did. It is rumoured that she is a sex worker, and Sony's father beat her up and snatched Sony away. The Home team and social workers went out and looked for her in all the most probable places, but to no avail. Now it is rumoured again that Sony has been sold by her father. So the RH team has decided to lodge a complaint with the police and enlist their help to trace out the child.

### To the Zoo....

It was decided to go on a picnic to the Zoo. A friend sent two buses, and the children, home teams, and food and water crammed into them, and of the way went singing, clapping and laughing all the way. The bus reached the zoo, everyone got out, but alas! 35 children face threat of being left out as they had come bare foot, and there is a strict rule no one shall go bare foot any where. Looking at their downcast faces, the home managers felt sorry for them and decided to buy them slippers and take them along inside. They went round the zoo and played games, had food and generally enjoyed themselves.

But the actual intention of this picnic was to discuss the some issues of plaguing everyone especially the issue of stealing. In the past few months a total amount of nearly INR 10000 was found to be on several occasions belonging to several people. Lot of discussions among home managers and children could not stop it. Secondly some children have been very restless and wandering about in the school without sitting in class. The picnic was used as an occasion to discuss these two issues. The older girls of both the homes were asked to sit together and thrash it out among them without naming any one in particular, so that no one might point at our Rainbow Homes and say that is a 'den of thieves' or 'there go the illiterates of Rainbow Home'. At the end of 30 minutes animated debate the girls came up with names of some girls who apologized, some openly and others quietly. Now the stealing has mostly stopped bearing a few things now and then and most of the children are putting in most efforts in studying.

Last Week, the Musheerabad home is being expanded as promised by the govt department SSA and a play ground is being laid. So the whole Home, lock, stock and barrel, has been shifted to Medibavi Rainbow Home for 10 days more and the children will come back to a more spacious Musheerabad with exclusive and professional play ground.



To conclude some of the main events have been recounted here though both home teams as well as would have liked to add more details. It was very difficult to leave out those stories, but they'll have to wait for the next volume of the newsletter.

