

Isha Vidhya



Back to School
Issue 3

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Welcome Back Students, Teachers, Donors, Staff and Volunteers! What an amazing time to be a part of Isha Vidhya as we kick off another wonderful year of exciting new adventures. To begin, we would like to thank the students, teachers, principals, volunteers and donors who are making Isha Vidhya happen. Last year, Isha Vidhya closed its second year with 720 students, only to reopen this year with an amazing 1077 students split between our four schools; Sandegounden Palayam, Perumapalayam (Erode), Kornady (Nagercoil), and Sirupadu (Tuticorin).



In this new academic year, focus will be given to enhancing the education quality within these four schools, while also working to create a solid foundation off which to launch further schools in the upcoming years.

Our Schools Blossomed this year as we admitted many new kindergarten, 1st and 2nd standard students while our students from last year were promoted to their new classes. We would like to share with you just how much we grew in each of our four schools; Sandegounden Palayam now has 322 children, Erode 273, Nagercoil 271 and Tuticorin went from just 44 students last year to 222 this year!

Top 10 Things I did this summer!

Although our students very much enjoy their school days, like all other kids around the globe they also love the summer holidays. When asked what fun things they did this summer, with eager bright smiles, they told us of the many things.

1. Eat ice cream; favorite flavors are Chocolate, Mango and Strawberry
2. Go to the beach
3. Go to a Hill Station
4. Read Story Books
5. Play Stones
6. Cricket
7. Badminton
8. Volleyball
9. Play Kitchen Set
10. Pick Flowers



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Revival of Tuticorin Isha Vidhya Matriculation School

How did our smallest school with just 44 students blossom into 222 students this year? Well, let's start at the beginning on the 25th of March 2007, when we broke ground for our Tuticorin School. We had just 90 short days to build the school and fill it with students for opening day on June 25th 2007.

Come rain or shine, in true Isha style, we knew no matter what happened during these 90 days the buildings would be ready. However, the parents in the surrounding villages were not convinced that this could be done. Without visible school buildings, parents were reluctant to enroll their children and unfortunately we ended up with very low admissions.

The majority of our students came from the nearby villages of Kootampuli Sirupadu area. These villages, belonging to the lowest socioeconomic demographic, have been marginalized and neglected for too long. Due to the economic status of these people, they were not able to pay even the minimal fees being charged by Isha Vidhya which was another reason for our low admissions.



In spite of our shortcomings, we continued with the vision of creating a positive impact in this rural area until finally, from across the globe, our hopes and dreams were answered. In San Francisco, California, one of our Isha meditators, Rajesh Swaminathan, had been working diligently to help our situation.

He made a successful proposal to ASHA which is a non-profit organization focusing on supporting basic education for under privileged children. After several weeks of persistence and dedication from Rajesh, ASHA agreed to sponsor 80 children in the Tuticorin School!



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Revival of Tuticorin continued...

The exciting news was confirmed in March 2008 and immediately volunteers began working to promote the school! The Isha medical van was brought to Tuticorin and a door to door campaign was organized in neighboring villages. Free medical treatment was given while a video about the Isha Vidhya School was played. Games were organized in the evenings and for about 15 days this van went around adjoining villages within a 20km radius of the school.



Promises of education were made to the villagers; if they enrolled their children we would give them a scholarship to cover their tuition fees. Now, parents could see the beautiful new buildings, students buzzing about in their new brightly colored uniforms and knowing the fees would be taken care of, it was enrollment time for our new academic year!

Blessed with remarkable success, today we have over 200 students belonging to the lowest economic demographic. We would like to thank Rajesh for all of his hard work and dedication and to ASHA for helping us to revive an almost forgotten group of people. It has been a magical happening for these children, families and villagers alike.

Rural Voices of Tuticorin...

"My little girl never mixed with anyone at home or with friends she never even smiled...Today she came home from school and so excited with things at school, she told me that she laughed aloud in school today!"

Tuticorin Parent

"Till yesterday these children were all looking so dirty and unkept and after getting into this school, they look like convent going children, they learn with computers, sing in English and lastly, the uniform has a great effect on them, it has a richness that cannot be explained!"

Kootampuli Sirupadu Villager



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A New Beginning for Tribal Children



Located about 30 kms from Coimbatore, the Velliangiri foothills offer a scenic space sans pollution. Amidst the lush green flora and fauna is Thanikandi, a tribal village. With even the barest of amenities being considered a luxury in this village, a tamarind tree rules the roost. For the children of this tribal village, this tamarind tree is downtown and every single activity of theirs happens around this tree, except education. The one school established by the government looked like a rudimentary shed and was used more as a shelter by the locals from the elements of nature. Teachers had to walk at least 3kms on rugged terrain, often frequented by Elephants and other wild animals. This deterred them from even thinking about taking the daily trek. So with no teacher present the basic daily education took a back seat. The children were engaged in some kind of work within the forest to earn their livelihood and education was the last thing on their agenda.



When Isha Foundation adopted Thanikandi, the first thing they wanted to do was provide the people with basic education. By organizing daily food and proper clothing including footwear for these children, the parent's confidence was earned. Further by providing the adults with daily jobs, their minimal expectations were met and this meant that the children can focus on education. A passionate teacher was identified and vertical class rooms were set up to impart education. This process continued not only in Thanikandi, but also in the nearby tribal villages. Future plans included mainstreaming these children by adopting them into Isha Vidhya schools that were coming up and also vocationally training them to take up meaningful jobs.



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A New Beginning for Tribal Children continue...

Today, with a well established Isha Vidhya School in Sandegounden Palayam which is just 30 minutes away from these tribal villages, combined with an overwhelming response to the Scholarship Program, we have invited some of the tribal children to attend our Sandegounden Palayam Isha Vidhya School. Because of the children's background and economic status, they need not only tuition scholarships but also transportation, food and uniform scholarships. In order to ensure the families hold value in what is being offered to them, minimal fees are being charged but even this is difficult for them to pay. However, the opportunity is well worth any amount of challenges we face, and all you have to do is see these little faces and you will know.

Currently a small van is taking the 20 tribal children back and forth from the Yoga Centre to the school each day and recently we rode home with them. Their bright eyes and smiling faces noticed everything that was happening along the way as they pointed at the other vehicles, shops and people, making comments and enjoying all the new sights. For these children, traveling 30 minutes away to school might as well be across the country.

Join us on this exciting new journey as we continue to reach out to the poorest of the poor and make their dreams of education continue to become a reality.

Let's Make It Happen!

You, Me and Isha Vidhya

“Adopt a Child’s Education”

One Child, One Year:
\$180/£95/Rs.7000

Donors receive letters,
photos and progress reports
from their child and can be
in contact with their child
through the schools.



For more information on how you can sponsor a child's education, transportation, uniforms and educational materials, please visit the “**Get Involved**” page on our website at: www.ishavidhya.org

100% of all contributions made to Isha Vidhya goes directly to helping our needy children! What better way for you to use your extra pocket change, than to educate a child and bring hope for a better future into their life.



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Visiting Teacher from Abroad

Bright little faces began to emerge from the masses of children in orange pants and cream tunics while child after radiantly smiling child wished me a good morning and asked, "What is your name, Miss?" My answer sent them springing away giggling! What they don't know is that I'm just as curious about them as they are about me. Spending two months teaching at the Isha Vidhya School allowed the students to get to know me better during which their inquisitiveness expanded to domains like my family, my country, my hair, skin color and the lack of a bindhi on my forehead. They were not at all shy to speak to me. Even the younger students, who are not yet advanced in English, ask whatever they are able to ask, enlisting the help of older students.

As I observed several classes, I was very impressed with the teachers' ability to manage the students, who are limitless bundles of energy. After a few minutes of following commands to jump, turn, bend, and laugh, they are ready to sit down and hit the books.



The children dive into the lessons with as much gusto as when they run onto the playground. They pay close attention to the teacher's every word and eagerly raise their hands to answer her questions. Not only do they learn about letters and numbers, but also the structure of a plant, the seven continents, the history of man, and global coordinates - a very impressive curriculum, indeed!

I am so joyful walking down the hall and seeing all of the beautiful, smiling faces! But the best treat, both for the students and for me, is spending time together on the playground. They get such a kick out of playing with adults! And this also gives them a great opportunity to use English naturally and spontaneously while outside of the classroom. "Miss, come play with us on the swings!" "Miss, please take a photograph of us!" "Miss, will you play catch with me?"

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Visiting Teacher from Abroad continued....

As I spend my days at Isha Vidhya, I feel very lucky to have been a part of, if only for a couple short months. These precious children have had an impact on me that will last a lifetime. You just can't help but love them! My hope is that I have not only helped them improve their English, but also broaden their concept of the outside world and help them gain confidence to achieve their dreams.

April Perkins
Florida, USA



Isha Vidhya Teacher Training Workshop, May 24th – May 28th

Forty-five teachers from the four Isha Vidhya schools came together to share in the Isha Vidhya Teacher Training Workshop, held from May 24th through the 28th. With the 2008-2009 academic year, Isha Vidhya is increasing the use of hands-on materials and active learning in the classroom. Therefore, the training workshop equipped teachers to make this transition by providing them with experience and understanding for using active learning materials in the classroom. Teachers took on the role of students and participated in a number of hands-on activities, while they explored everything from math laboratory materials to paints and clay. Teachers were transported back to their childhood days as they went through the activities, learning and enjoying themselves.

As new and returning teachers gained practical teaching experience they also developed their theoretical understanding of the key Isha Vidhya courses: *Total Physical Response (TPR)*, *Karadi Path*, and *Computer Assisted Learning*. Suzanne Boeters has been successfully employing Total Physical Response for the past two years to teach French to students at the Isha Home School. Drawing on this experience and her extensive training in the topic, she reviewed the principles behind using TPR to teach a foreign language, led the Isha Vidhya teachers through a sample class in which they quickly picked up 10 new words in French, and then guided them as they practiced developing and implementing their own TPR class curriculums. The topic of *Karadi Path* was covered by C.P. Vishwanath, director of *Karadi Tales* and Director of Pedagogy for Isha Vidhya. Beginning with an overview of how language is learned, Vishwanath explained the theoretical basis of *Karadi Path* and why it is so successful as a tool for teaching foreign languages. With this foundation, teachers will be prepared to guide students through the intuitive learning process of the *Karadi Tales* and *Karadi Rhymes* books. Teachers also learned about new programs to be included in this year's Computer Assisted Learning classes. Building on the previous year's syllabus, the new programs will allow students to improve their English skills while also strengthening their understanding of other core subjects like math, science and social studies.



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Isha Vidhya Teacher Training Workshop continued....

The training schedule this year was packed full of opportunities for learning; in addition to covering the academic material, teachers were given the special opportunity of participating in the Isha Yoga Introductory Program. Those teachers who had already gone through the introductory program, supported the new teachers by attending the sessions as volunteers and helping out whenever the need arose. With morning and evening yoga sessions, and training sessions throughout the day, the teachers threw themselves wholeheartedly into the five day workshop. Most importantly, they finished the workshop motivated, excited and better prepared to begin the new academic year!



"I do not know how many of you are connected with rural life. But, today, if you walk into any village, you will see that almost 60% of the men have underdeveloped skeletal systems. This is a quiet, but very huge disaster happening in this country which nobody is paying any attention to. It does not make a big noise like a tsunami or an earthquake, but the scale of disaster is much bigger. If one's body does not develop, his mind will also not develop fully. So we have a mass of substandard humanity. If this mass of humanity had an opportunity to be healthy in mind and body, think what a huge asset it will be for this nation and the world."

Sadhguru

We ask that everyone forward our news letter to friends and family because

You can make a difference! To find out more, visit our website at:

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