

Akanksha Public Charitable Trust

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Annual Report 2016-17

ABOUT AKANKSHA

Akanksha was born when a group of friends started volunteering on weekends at public hospitals and homes for destitute children and women in Chennai in 1998. Akanksha Public Charitable Trust was created on July 15, 2000 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu and registered soon after when some of its volunteers decided to devote more time and energy to Akanksha to make it their primary work.

PURPOSE

Akanksha's purpose has evolved over the years. Today, Akanksha works to learn along with and support individuals caught up in life's unfortunate circumstances through collaborative initiatives in areas of education, health and livelihoods engaging especially with the young, the old and with women.

ACTIVITIES

Over the last decade, Akanksha's work has involved the following activities:

- Volunteering at state owned 'children's observation homes' to help them deliver better by organizing activities for their children and helping children who have strayed away from their homes to get in touch with their families and return home.
- Volunteering at state owned hospitals for women and children, helping cancer afflicted children and their families cope with hospitalization and medical treatment by organizing recreational activities and financial aid for them.
- Providing relief material to those affected by earthquakes and tsunamis.
- Augmenting the work of other not for profit organizations whose work is closely aligned with that of Akanksha by providing voluntary services and / or financial assistance to such organizations.
- Sponsoring medical expenses of needy people especially women and children.
- Sponsoring the educational expenses of needy children.
- Establishing and operating a rural school in a tribal area.

Today, Akanksha's work primarily revolves significantly around the last three activities.

THE YEAR THAT WAS

During the year 2016-17, Akanksha continued to build on the work undertaken during the earlier years.

The work of the Trust was located in Balenga Para and Kumhar Para villages in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh state and in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The highlights of Akanksha's work during the year are summarized below:

• Educational Support

During the year, the Trust continued supporting 16 children in Chennai and 44 children in Kumhar Para village in Chhattisgarh for their educational expenses with an understanding with their families that the children will not be withdrawn from formal education until they themselves express such wish. The urban children's parents work as small entrepreneurs, drivers, domestic helpers and school workers while the parents of the rural children are traditional craftspeople, subsistence farmers and landless laborers. Many are single parents.

• Medical Relief

This year, the Trust helped:

- a 17 year old grapple with cancer in her knee (she is still undergoing treatment at the Cancer Institute in Chennai, was not able to take her class 12 examinations and has a few cycles of chemotherapy remaining to be undergone);
- an 8 year old get a liver transplant from a cadaver (she is still in hospital in Chennai but well on her way to recovery);
- a 3 year old commence the process towards getting a liver transplant (he succumbed to his congenital liver disease while undergoing tests for the transplant);
- a 12 year old deal with malaria, encephalitis and epileptic seizures (he has recovered well and is studying, climbing trees and learning to play the tabla at Imlee Mahuaa School);
- an 11 year old get his Jaipur foot changed as his leg continues to grow (he has coped with his tractor accident of a few years ago well and continues to climb trees, has learnt to ride the bicycle and studies at Imlee Mahuaa School);
- a 25 year old cope with a motor accident that left him with broken limbs and severe internal injuries in the brain (he underwent three surgeries and is recuperating in Balenga Para);
- a middle aged unemployed individual in Chennai grapple with a cerebral stroke that has left him paralyzed by getting regular checkups and medicines; and
- a 70 year old get treated for her motor disability, debility and other problems associated with her age (she is recovering rather slowly at her home in Balenga Para, after a short hospitalization).

The Trust continued to provide primary medical care at Imlee Mahuaa School to its students, staff and visitors from Balenga Para and neighboring villages and referred them to hospitals when needed.

• Imlee Mahuaa School

During the year members of Imlee Mahuaa School continued to nurture it as a place to come to and be in freedom, be non-judgmental and sensitive to each other's preferences and responsible to oneself, to each other and to the place. All the members of the School continued to direct their own learning independently; benefiting from the classes that they requested for and the informal help and advice they got from each other, and worked individually or in groups. The School community evolved as a place to which its individual members came at their own will and convenience, engaged in activities that interested them, got absorbed in doing things that fascinated them, developed hobbies, coexisted happily in their differences without fearing reprimand or being expected to fall in line, and learned deeply.

For glimpses of the life at Imlee Mahuaa School, watch the film made by Video Volunteers on behalf of Kalpavriksh, Pune at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSlaAIP-wwM&index=1&list=PL60GAnFL6tn0EILQCwfzmRIWnJICtHmNN>.

You could also read Kalpavriksh's case study report to get their view on the School at <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/alternatives/CaseStudies/ImleeMahuaaLearninginFreedomtheDemocraticWay.pdf>

1. Happenings

Specific events that took place in the School during the year 2016-17 were as follows:

April to June 2016

- Meeting with parents and cultural program
- Meeting with parents of children studying in classes 6 to 8 about registering their children for the secondary program of the National Institute of Open Schooling, NOIDA.
- Case Study Report on Imlee Mahuaa School published by Kalpavriksh, Pune
- Halbi translation of an organic farmer's story done by the students and staff of Imlee Mahuaa School published on Kalpavriksh's 'Alternatives or Vikalp Sangam' website – you can read it in the Food and Water Section of the website
- Meetings of the School community to decide various matters relating to the School
- Hosting resident guests from Anand Niketan School Sevagram, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, and from Bilaspur, Coimbatore and Madurai

July to September 2016

- Cultivation of raagi (mandia) millet in the School using Shree Vidhi technique
- One day excursion to Charray Marray waterfall near Antagadh
- Hosting visitors from Koraput, Shikshantar in Udaipur, Durg and Kondagaon
- Educational trip to New Delhi and Lakshmi Ashram Kausani
- Meetings of the School community to decide various matters relating to the School

October to December 2016

- Meeting with parents and scholastic exhibition and performances
- Uninvited media coverage, visits by District Collector, District Education Officer and congratulatory telephone call from the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh State Dr Raman Singh post media reports
- Measures to meet stated parental expectations of homework to be given to the children, improvement in hand writing, public speaking and English skills commenced and continued through the year and further
- Elocution workshops in Hindi and English
- Educational trip to Maharashtra and Karnataka
- Day with past students and members of staff

January to March 2017

- Short documentary film made on the School by Video Volunteers on behalf of Kalpavriksh
- One day contributory cook out at Sadaadi village
- Participation in Children's Library Conference in New Delhi by two children librarians from the School
- Month long observation of the School's work by a student of anthropology from Delhi and Geneva
- Commencement of tabla and harmonium classes
- Hosting residential guests from Pune, Satara, Jamia Milia New Delhi and Lakshmi Ashram Kausani
- Meetings of the School community to decide various matters relating to the School
- 180 kilometers 3 day cycling trip to Chitrakot waterfalls
- Participation in the meeting of the Network of Alternative Schools at Chennai

2. Decisions taken by the School Community

During the year the School Community comprising all children and adults met on May 13, July 1, and August 17, 2016 and on 7 and 8 March 2017, to discuss and take various decisions by simple majority vote (one member one vote irrespective of age) relating to the School. All meetings were chaired by children and the work of the chair- persons was facilitated by the adult members. The following decisions were taken by the School Community during these meetings:

- Give vocational training in the School
- No separate scholarships to be given for participation in vocational work and de-linking attendance from scholarship amount
- Children can bring mobile phones to school picnics and excursions
- Shifting the location of the indoor games room
- Freeing children from their voluntary work related responsibilities
- Four members (three children and one adult) of the community volunteered to talk to 10 prospective donors each to solicit donations for the School
- The children and adults will translate 10-12 story books into Halbi during the year
- No cultivation of raagi millet this year, only vegetables and fruits will be planted
- 300 library books to be kept in one of the classrooms to facilitate reading
- Restart lending library with activities learnt from the Children's Library Conference and plastic cover the books till all have been covered on 2 Fridays every month
- A student studying in class 8 in the School who volunteered to set up her own lending library at her home to be helped by donating 25 books from the School every quarter to her library for the next three years; the books to be returned by her if she decides to close her library

3. Traveling away from School

Experiencing life outside the School has been an important part of the array of learning experiences at Imlee Mahuaa School from its inception.

This year, the School community went out every weekend into the nearby areas for short outings where they climbed hills and trees and played games. Besides, everyone went out for a contributory cook out at a nearby check dam and for a picnic to the Charray Marray waterfalls about 100 km from the School.

A group of 10 children accompanied by an adult member and a mother went in September 2016 on a 10 day trip to Lakshmi Ashram, a residential school for girls, in Kausani, Uttarakhand. On the way to this Nai Talim school, the group also stopped for half a day in New Delhi and saw the India Gate.

In November and December 2016, another group of 13 children accompanied by an adult member and a mother also went on a month long trip through Maharashtra and Karnataka. During this trip, they did workshops at the Homi Bhabha Center for Science Education, Mumbai and at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research at Pune, went for a boat ride off the coast of Mumbai, climbed Rajgad fort in the Sahyadris, stayed with a couple of environmental activists and writers in Konkan, spent a week at the Kalkeri Sangeet Vidyalaya near Dharwad learning Hindustani classical music, spent a few days farming at Sangatya farm in Nakre village near Karkala, Udupi, visited the St. Mary's island off the coast of Udupi, admired the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma and other artifacts in the Jaganmohan Palace and Art Gallery at Mysuru and also visited the Maharaja's palace and the Rail Museum in the city.

This year, the children went on two cycling trips – once on a day trip to village Golawand about 35 kms from the School, and in February 2017 on a three day trip to the Chitrakot waterfalls about 90 kms away.

2 children librarians of the School and an adult member also participated in the first Children's Library Conference at New Delhi, organized by Parag Initiatives of the Tata Trusts. At the conference they saw an exhibition of library best practices from across India and interacted with other librarians, authors and individuals interested in children's books, reading and libraries for children.

4. Hosting visitors and guests

The School community enjoys hosting guests and visitors. Guests and visitors offer glimpses into their own lives and work and bring with them new ideas and skills that all members of the School learn and benefit from. The School got a steady stream of visitors through the year. During June 2016 and March 2017, the School also hosted resident guests.

People visiting the school came with different objectives and from different walks of life. During the year the School hosted teachers from Anand Niketan School at Sevagram Ashram, graduate students from Azim Premji University, social entrepreneurs from Bilaspur, a family from Coimbatore that works after school hours with rural children, an individual from Madurai who is studying self directed learning, an activist and organic farmer from Koraput in Odisha, lawyers from Kanker in Chhattisgarh who work pro bono for victims of police atrocities, a group of students ' Khojis' and their mentors from Swaraj University and Shikshantar in Udaipur, an individual from nearby Kondagaon who runs a seed bank for indigenous varieties of paddy, an individual from Durg who has developed a new high yielding technique Shree Vidhi for organic farming of paddy and raagi millet, media persons, the District Education Officer and the District Collector, Kondagaon, a scientist from Pune interested in developing science curriculum drawn from indigenous tribal knowledge and practices, a student of anthropology from New Delhi and Geneva, two engineers from Satara in Maharashtra who are trying to find their respective callings in life, an Englishman who has made India his home and country and has traveled thrice by the land route from England to India and a student pursuing his doctoral studies at Jamia Milia University in New Delhi who will be returning in July 2017 to Balenga Para for a period of 18 months to understand what education

means to tribal children studying at Imlee Mahuaa and at the government school in nearby Kokodi, for the purposes of his doctoral thesis.

Sahib Singh Tulsi, a student of Anthropology, visited Imlee Mahuaa every day for a month during December and January. After returning home, he wrote a blog that he shared with us which gives his reflections on the time he spent at Imlee Mahuaa. We have reproduced his blog at the end of this Annual Report with his permission.

5. School capacity and strength

53 children (31 girls and 22 boys) studied at Imlee Mahuaa School in grades nursery to eight and in the self-study program for the class 10 examinations of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) during the year. Approximately 81 percent of the children are members of the Scheduled Tribes, 9.5 % are from the Scheduled Castes and the rest 9.5 % from the Other Backward Classes. No child is from the General category. 51 (96%) of the 53 children, belong to families whose incomes are below the official poverty line.

Towards the end of the year 3 children left the School and 1 new child was admitted to the School. As on April 1, 2017 the School has 9 vacant seats for students, all of which have been allocated to girls. Thus the School has started the new academic year 2017-18 with 51 children - 44 (19 boys and 25 girls) studying between classes nursery and eight and 7 (5 girls and 2 boys) studying in the self-study program for the class 10 examinations of the NIOS.

The School worked in a single shift through the year from 10 am to 4 pm between April 2016 and February 2017 and between 7 am and 1 pm during March 2017, with flexible timings for all.

6. School registration

The School continued to be an accredited study centre of the National Institute of Open Schooling, NOIDA and to be registered under the law for free and compulsory education with the District Education Officer, Kondagaon.

Organization

The Trust continued receive donations from many individuals who have been contributing to it for many years and from some new donors too. It renewed its annual listing with Give India an internet portal that connects donors and not for profit organizations. The listing helps the Trust to spread its donor base across a large number of individuals interested in contributing very small sums to causes that interest them.

HelpYourNGO, an organization that independently reviews the work of NGOs and lists them on its website and in its Yearbook and also rates the NGOs for their financial performance continued to list Akanksha this year too. Akanksha has received a 5 star Financial Score from the organization.

The distribution of donations received by Akanksha across donors during the financial year 2016-17 is as follows.

Amount of donation (Rupees)	Individuals	Foundations and Trusts	Others	Resident	Non- resident
< 5000	238	1	-	237	2
5000 – 100,000	36	1	-	37	-
> 100,000	3	1	-	4	-
Donations in kind	1	-	-	1	-
Total	278	3	-	279	2

The average value of monetary donations received during the year ended on March 31, 2017 was Rs 7336.

There were no changes in the members of the Board of Trustees, employees or volunteers of the Trust during the year. As of March 31, 2017, they were as follows:

Employees

Gautam Ram Sethiya

Milan Ram Baghel

Volunteers

Nandini Joshi

Seema Joshi

Trustees

Khodadad Moradian

Oswin Thayal

Prayaag Joshi

Imlee Mahuaa: A memory journey

As finality hung in the air, on January 9 (2017), Nikhil, a student of class I, came up to me and said,

“I know you are leaving tomorrow. Let us shake hands.”

And then, many of them followed his queue, shook my hand before charming me with a “thank you,” leaving me in a rather melancholic state. On my first day at the Imlee-Mahuaa school, on December 17 (2016), I had asked Prayaag (one of the three adults at the school): “What do I have to do to break ice with the children?” He simply told me to keep coming there and leave the rest to the time-inspired familiarity. On that last day, reflecting on the ties of affection that familiarity can forge, the strength of his advice had finally dawned upon me.

Imlee-Mahuaa is a centre of education in the village of Balenga Para (Panchayat – KibaiBalenga) in the Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh. I still use the word ‘school’ in this write-up, for, the spoils of habit are hard to unlearn. But, to be sure, Imlee-Mahuaa is far from the conventional perceptions that we cling onto when we think of a ‘school’, as I hope to demonstrate through this brief memoir. At the time of my stay, there were 54 children in the school, enrolled in classes I to VIII, with a few pre-school children as well. Later on, I was to realize, very gradually, that all of them are coming to the school because they wanted to, without any trace of coercion from anyone. Most of them belong to the Muria Gond tribe. The rest of them belong to Scheduled Castes – Gaandas (traditional musicians) and Pankaas (traditional weavers) – and Other Backward Castes – Kalaars (traditional distillers). There are two children who are also preparing for the class X examinations to be undertaken by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS); Imlee-Mahuaa is not a Tribal Residential School, but is a registered centre of NIOS.

A journey through memories

As one enters through the iron-door of the school, to the extreme left is a little open mud-space, with a stone-made playground slide occupying the lion’s share of this area. Very seldom, though, did I see children climb up from the holes in the back of the slide; they preferred running upwards diagonally along the slide, only to slope down from the side railing. My regard for my heavy build soothed the envy I used to feel at times at the amount of energy these frisky children seemed to possess.



To the right of this space is the library of the school. A decent-sized room, with a mud-floor, dwelling made of clay tiles and wooden beams with a few open spaces covered with glasses to allow the sunlight to seep through, and concrete walls on both the sides (all the enclosed rooms are built in a similar way), it houses many books – textbooks for all the relevant classes, references books, storybooks, et cetera. It is managed by two children, who arrange the books in a systematic way every morning on the working days when the school opens at ten o'clock in the morning, with written records of all the books that have been issued. Recently, both the librarians and Prayaag decided together to change the opening hours of the library from the post-lunch hour to a couple of hours before the lunch since some children preferred to go back to their home forthwith after lunch.

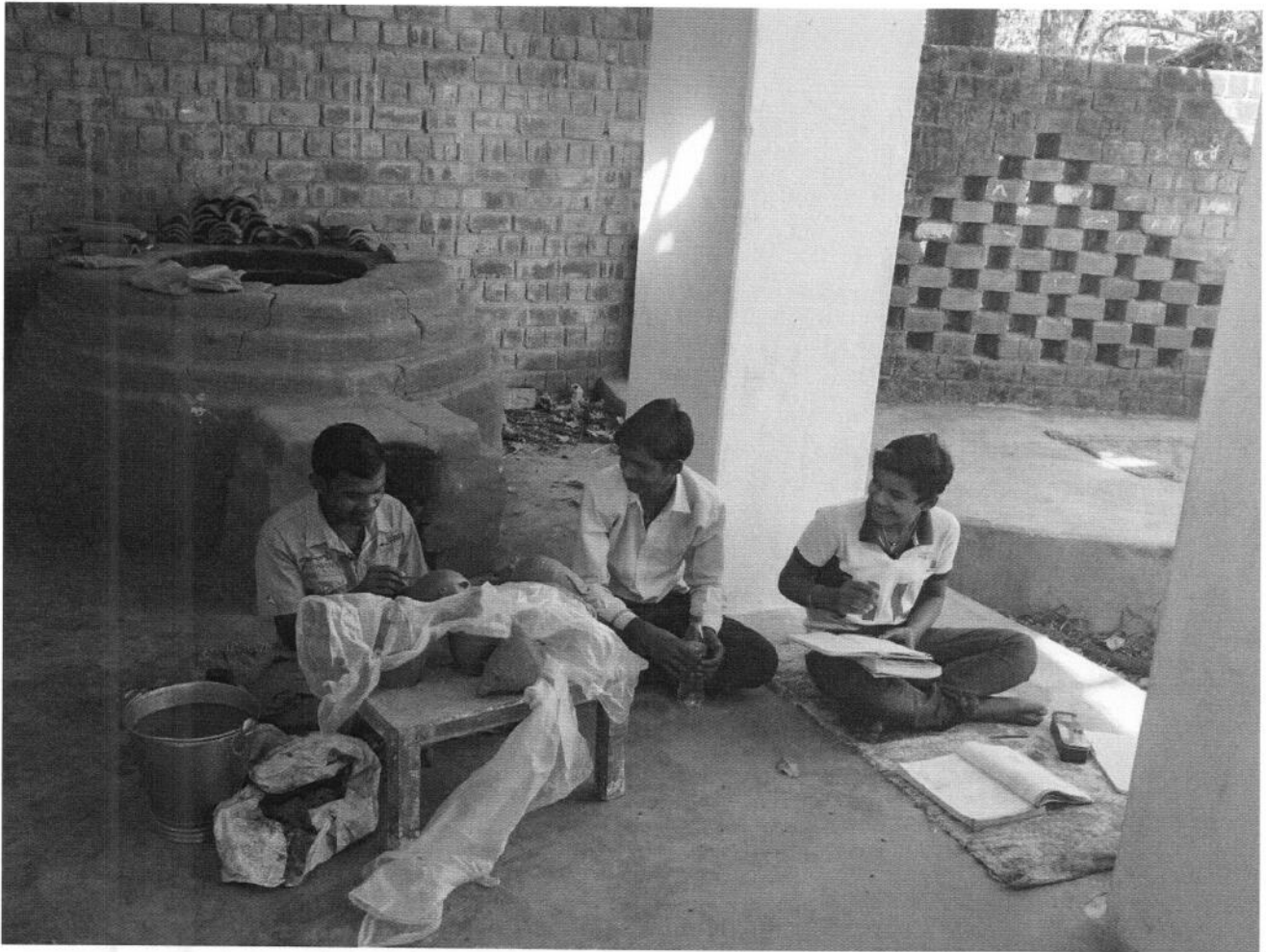
Next to the library is the first of the two 'classrooms'. Every morning, the three sides of the room are lined with tables, with various books being displayed (mostly storybooks, reference books and NCERT books like Rimjhim, Marigold, Vasant, Baal Vaigyanik, et cetera). Above the tables, one can see the cloth-bags of the children with all their personal copies, drawing-sheets and pencil-boxes. Many of these bags have been embroidered with the name of the child, to whom the bag belongs, by the respective child himself/herself. Children come in the room whenever they want to read something, spend some time immersing themselves in the visual imageries of the books or solve various puzzles and crosswords. Many times, they would scan various books, pick the one that interested them the most and start perusing through the pages, quietly, sitting on one of the two mats lying in the centre of the room, totally absorbed in their activities. Many of them would come to me in the morning to greet me: *"Good morning, bhaiya."* This was also the room where I spent maximum time, reading.



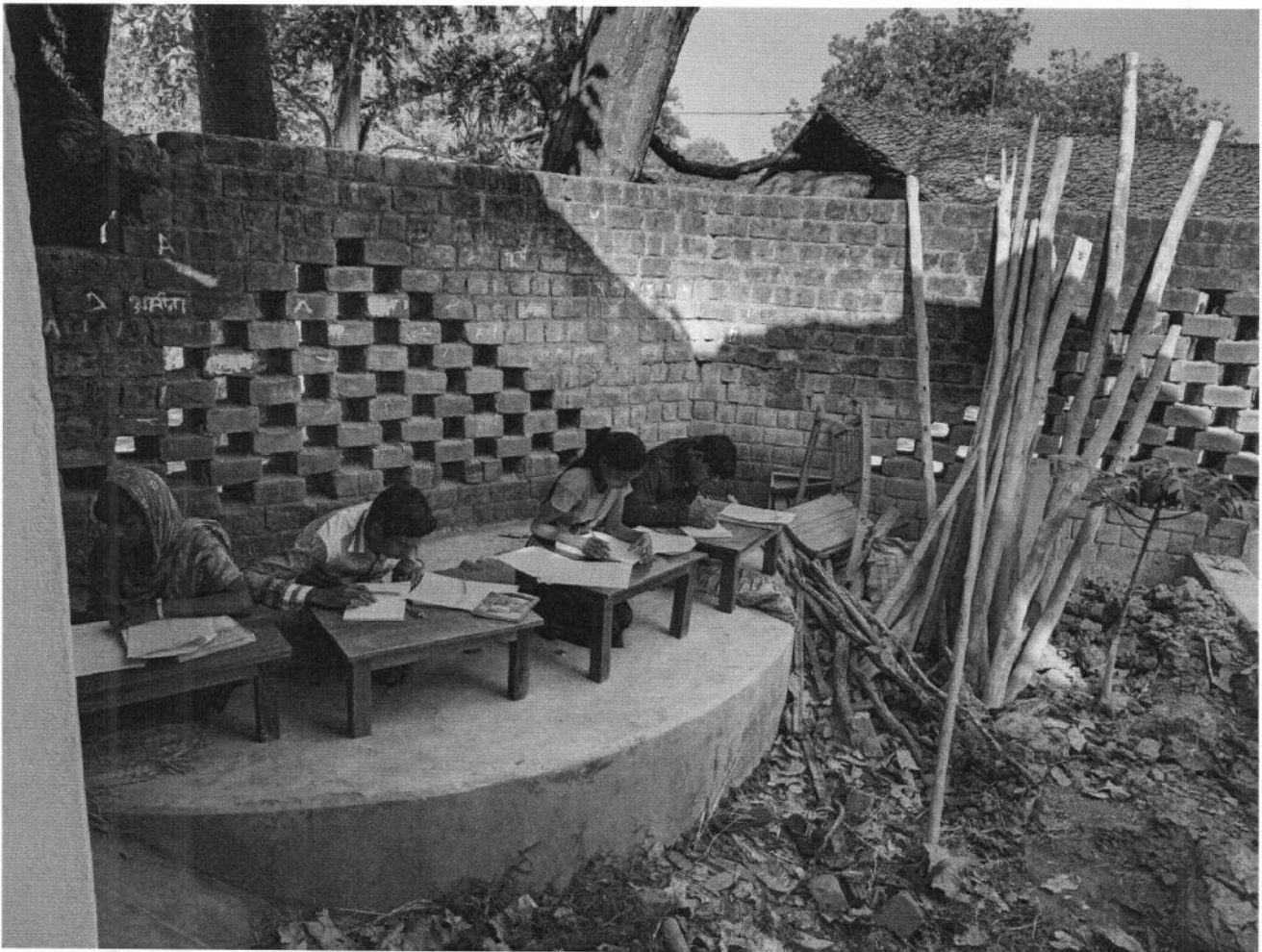
It was in this room that I got to know many of the children. For it was here that they would come to me, with their shy and affectionate smiles, showing me their drawings. They are very fond of putting the pictures of flowers, trees, birds and animals on paper. It was in this room that a few of them would come to me once in a while with a storybook, in Hindi, and request me to read aloud to them. It was here that I would sit with them and put the jigsaw pieces in the huge cardboard political map of India. It was here in this room that some of them would talk to me about my life, my family, my studies, and the books that I read; and enquire about the workings of solar system, the lifecycle of plants and forests, Bollywood, and trains and airplanes; explore the science kit, abacuses and a spinning wheel, along with me, that Prayaag had so thoughtfully brought for them. I always marveled at how each of them would satiate their curiosities, fiddling with these kits and then, spend as much time as it would take to arrange them in the way it was to be done before keeping it back at its allotted place. And, I do not remember seeing a single book lying on the mat unused. The books were always put back from where they were taken out.

Adjoining this first study-room was a two-sided open space where I got a glimpse into the life of Kumhars (potters): Pottery Section. Milan (second of three adults at the school), a potter, sits here, engaged in the intricate threads of his craft. I spent many afternoons sitting with him, engrossed, observing the metamorphosis of his creative imagination into something tangible, delighting with aesthetic pleasure at the final results (very often, my delight was initiated by Milan's contended countenance that used to accompany the skilful working of his hands), and trying my hands at pottery as well, albeit maladroitly. He also showed me the working of the potter-wheel; polishing of the earthen products he was making (animal-

shaped piggy banks and incense stands) and finally, drying them in the sunlight before heating them in the kiln. His delicate use of fingers never ceased to mesmerize me. A soft-spoken man, he also shared a lot of knowledge with me about the social and cultural world of potters in Kondagaon.

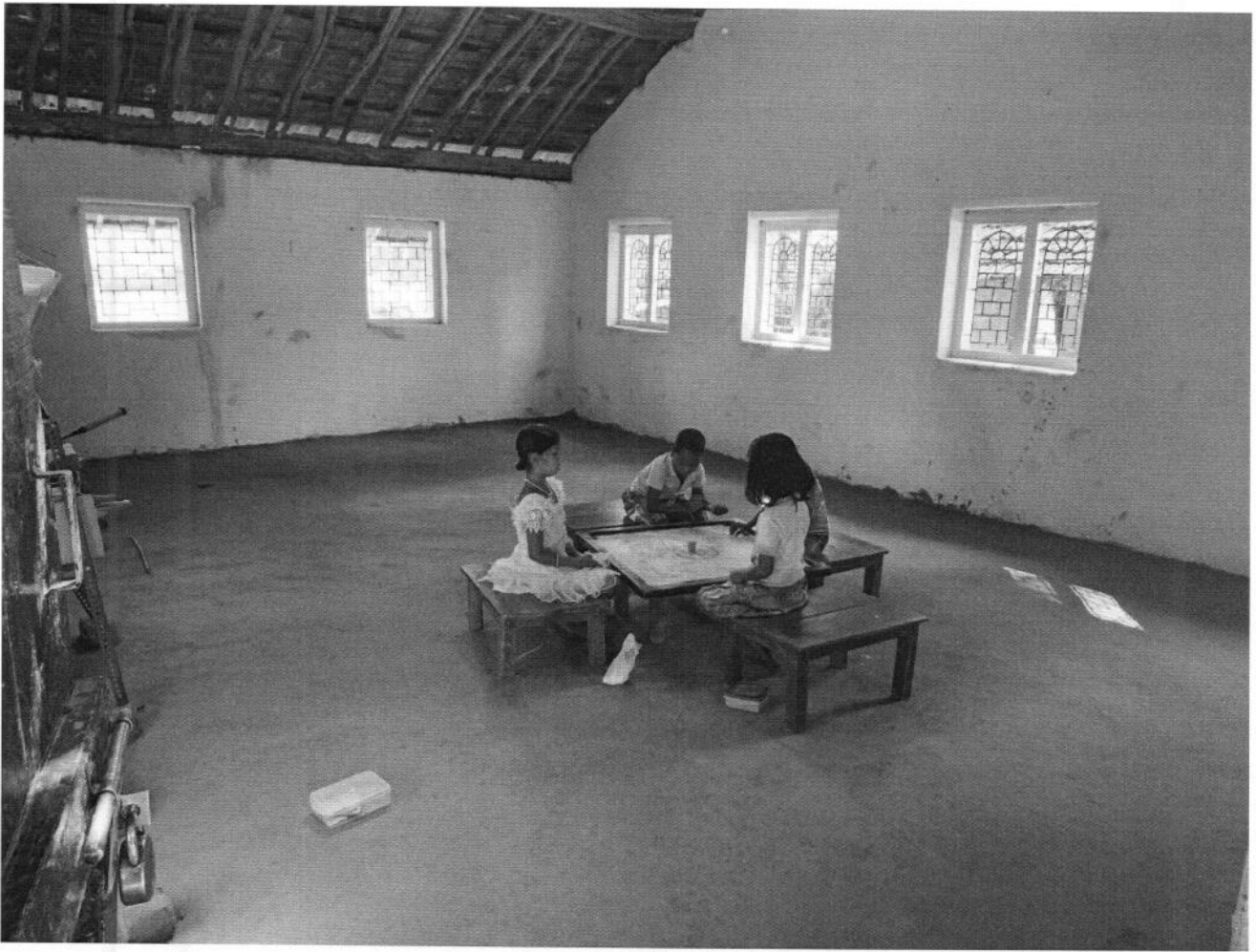


Next to the pottery-space, behind the boundary of the school was a huge *mahua* tree, under the shade of which, Gautam (third adult at the school), who has an M.A. in Economics, used to take his Mathematics classes. I often used to climb the boundaries of the school, to go to another tree a little further from the mahua tree: the tree of Tamarinds. It was quite an effort to pluck tamarinds from here, using logs of wood, but, the taste of bitter-sweet tamarinds was a frequent source of joy to many children, including me.



The room opposite to the pottery-space was the second study-room. The arrangement of this room was same as the first study-room. A few months back, regular classes used to take place in these two study-rooms. However, there was no conventional classroom-teaching going on at the school currently.

The room adjoining the second study-room was the one which was very seldom empty, for it was the play-room. As one enters through the wooden door, there are two large cardboard-boxes, filled to the brim with various games and playthings. These include Frisbees, rackets with shuttlecocks, cricket bats, balls and wickets. Next to the boxes is a small wooden study-table on which lies, wrapped in a cloth, a carrom-board. Carrom is probably one of the most adored playful activities at Imlee-Mahua. (The other two being *pitrool*, the local version of *PittuGaram*, and cricket, both played in the open spaces outside of the school premises.) I tried to play one game of carrom daily, at least. Many times, on being beaten quite comprehensively, I would hear someone console me, "*Bhaiya, you will get better by the time you leave, but you need to practice.*" The skills for this game, which was such a sweet companion of my childhood, had taken an embarrassing beating with age. By the time I left, though, I had gained respect of a few of my friends.



From the windows of the play-room, one could see the spacious courtyard nearby. It was in this comfortable courtyard that all of us used to assemble at 12 P.M., exactly two hours after the opening time of the school. First, Prayaag takes the attendance for the day. All the children need to be present for the attendance; barring that, they are free to indulge in any activity they want, at any place they want (including outside of the school premises), and leave for their homes as per their wishes, unless they have expressed some desire to take a class (more on this, later). This was generally followed by some announcements from Prayaag or anyone else, if any.



In my first week, children used to share the memories of the month-long trip they had taken along with Prayaag, to some places in Maharashtra and southern Karnataka during November and December, and made plans for the upcoming alumni meet on December 30. And, in my last week, I was also a part of the planning for the upcoming picnic; I could not be part of this picnic since my departure from Kondagaon was too near. Then, some of us used to take out buckets from a kitchen room, go to the hand-pump, which was right next to the now dilapidated premises of Ghotul (for which Muria Gonds are quite well-known), to fill them with water. I spent some time in the premises of Ghotul on a couple of days, trying to whet my imagination with my reading of Verrier Elwin's, *"The Muria and their Ghotul,"* but the journey through the realms of time long gone is never a pleasant one. As I heard people talk about the decline of Ghotul throughout Kondagaon, as a student of Anthropology, it inspired a strange dread in me, with traces of dolefulness.

After washing hands with soap, all of us would then proceed to have our lunch in the courtyard, in the warmth of the afternoon. Plates were also prepared for those who were hungry but did not bring lunch from their homes, with everyone who had brought some 'extra' food, contributing to these plates. Following the repast, we would wash our lunchboxes/plates with mud before proceeding with the rest of the day.



I ought to add here that keeping the premises of the school clean is a very important part of the quotidian activities at Imlee Mahuaa; Prayaag, Milan, Gautam and a few children wash the premises on every Tuesday with cow-dung. This is in addition to the dusting that takes place every afternoon when it is time to close the premises, at four o'clock in the evening. The cleaning is undertaken voluntarily by those who do it. The premises of the school always looked very inviting to me, courtesy of the neatness in which it was draped.

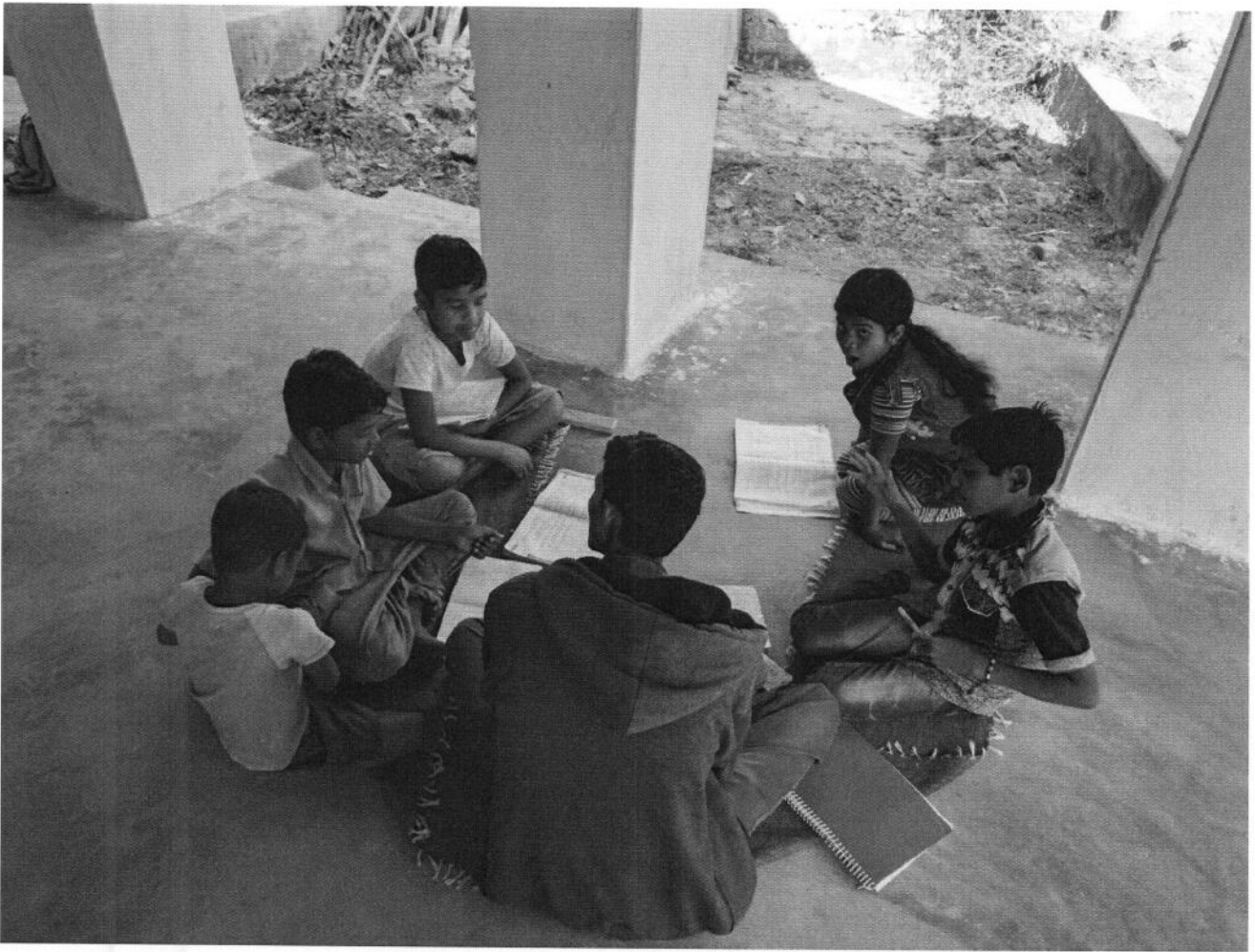
A few rooms are aligned on the extreme right hand side of the school premises too. The first one is the only room in the premises which is using an electricity connection. As I entered the premises at 10:30 in the morning on every working day, the melodious voice of Prayaag practicing on the harmonium, emanating from this very room (the music-room-cum-office), welcomed me. Quite often, in the afternoons, as Gautam and a couple of other children practiced on the Tabla in this room, its resonance reverberated through the physical spaces, rendering it a contemplative air, reaching my ears in the first study-room. Next to the 'music-room' are the lavatory and a couple of other rooms. While the first one is a kind of guest-house where Imlee-Mahuaa hosts a few guests during a specific time period, annually, the second one is the former kitchen (for the cooking was done till a few months back), quite spacious, now generally used for storage and other logistical purposes.

Meeting expectations?

On my first day, Prayaag had told me that he had sent a letter to the households of all the children in mid-November, asking the parents and/or guardians of the children about the expectations that they have from Imlee-Mahuaa, in relation to their children. Many of the households had sent their response back to Prayaag; I did have the opportunity to read this exchange. Later on, during my stay, for quite a few days, I was to observe Prayaag talking to children of different classes, trying to understand what the children desire. He was kind enough to let me read this list as well.

In the next few days, he was to organize a few classes (of Hindi, being taught by Prayaag himself, and of Mathematics, being taught by Gautam). These classes were a result of Prayaag's efforts to maintain a very delicate and intricate balance between the desires of the children and the expectations (most of them being academic) of guardians of these children. The requirements of these efforts were excruciatingly demanding since the common grounds to walk upon – between the desires and wishes of the children and their guardians – were quite narrow and fragile. On the initial day of my meeting with Prayaag, he mentioned about this delicate 'expectation management-task' which he has to undertake. It is a continuous process, primarily to ensure that all the major 'stake-holders' involved in this endeavor, called Imlee-Mahuaa, feel a sense of happiness and engagement.

As I saw him at work, working through these complex modalities, I often used to ponder, painfully, about the simplistic - and so pernicious - understanding of 'education' that so many of us are happy to entrench in our imagination, foreclosing all the subjectivities and complexities at play.



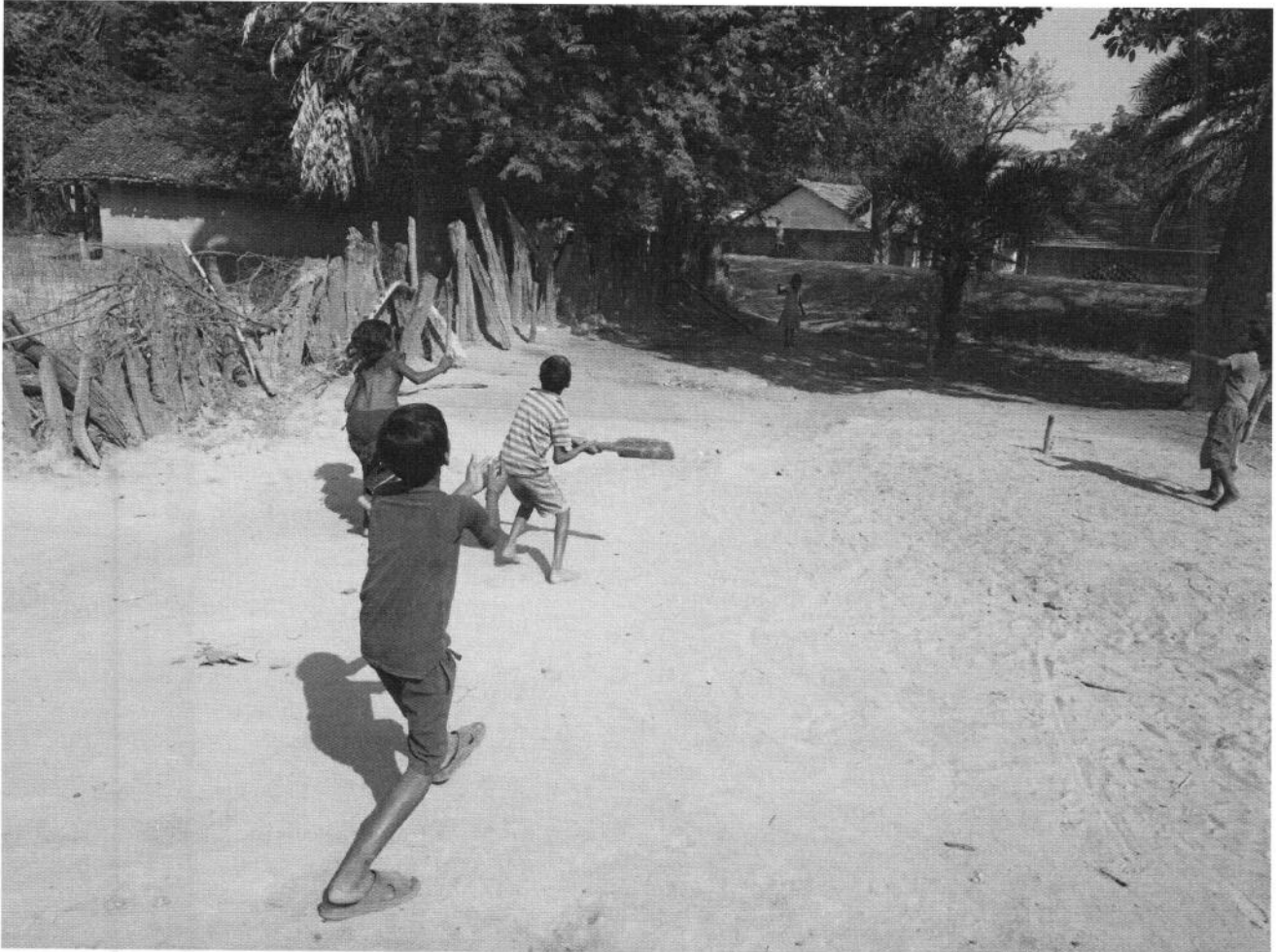
Part 4

Alumni meet

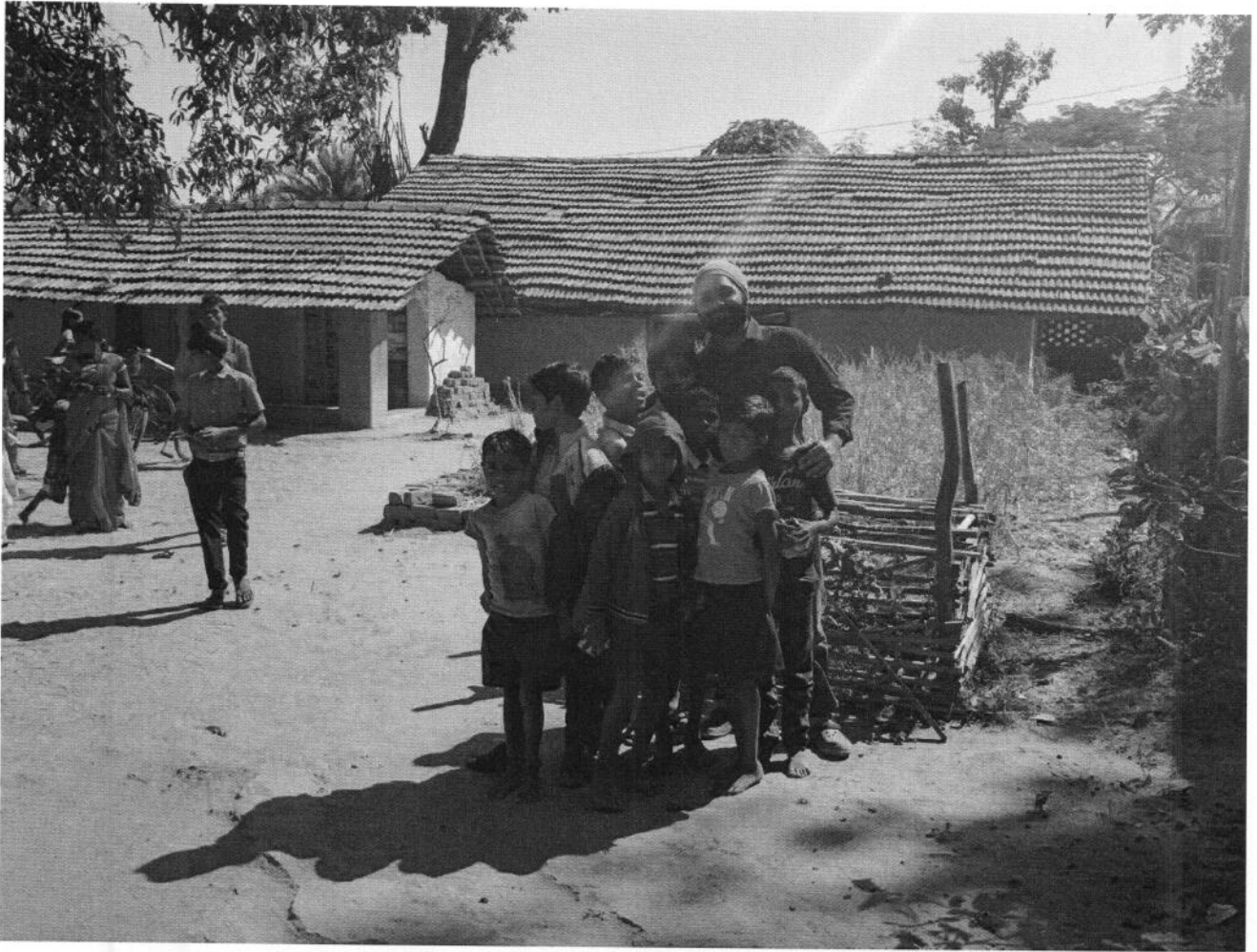
Friday, December 30, was an especially sweet day at Imlee-Mahuaa, for it was the day of the alumni meet. I had been a witness to all the preparations that had been made, right from the start, through an Organizing Committee. The function was to start at 8:30 in the morning. As I reached at a quarter to nine, I was ushered into the play-room by a couple of senior children where many children had already gathered, and, led by Prayaag, they were singing inspirational songs. To be brutally honest, there was not much that I could comprehend in terms of the meanings of some of the words in these songs. But, that did not, in any way, bore me or dull me; for, I felt involved, without any sense of dislocation. As I looked around, I saw plenty of ex-students and ex-instructors at Imlee-Mahuaa (the school had started way back in 2007), beating the cold of the morning, to be a part of this affectionate gathering. Once the singing was over, all the ex-members were given flowers – a very sweet smelling bundle of bougainvillea, marigold and rose.

Thereat, all of us gathered in the courtyard, to chat and mostly, give the ex-students and instructors an opportunity to tell us of their present primary activities/occupations. The simplistic manifestation of shyness of the children, when asked to speak in front of an audience, never ceases to delight me, primarily due to its gentleness. Following this, Prayaag said that we could go and play for an hour. While some of us played cricket, a few others, along with Prayaag and most of the girls,

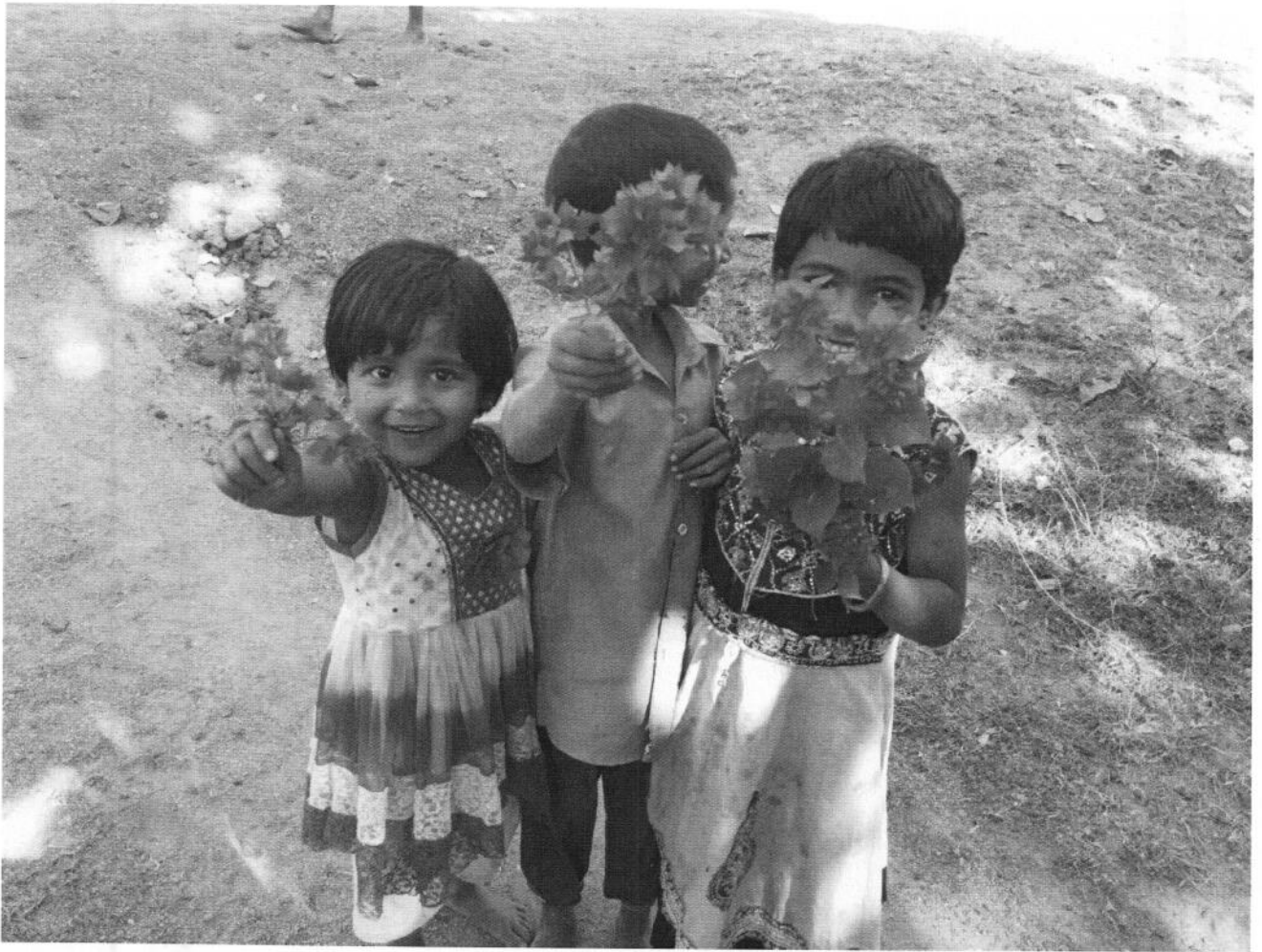
played pitrool. As I stood there with a bat in my hands after such a long time, listening to the wafting of winds through the trees, I realised that playing cricket still takes me into a world which is full of wonder, happiness, amusement, and involvement. Then, finally, we all settled in different areas to have our breakfast – boondi, kachori, and jhalmuri. The 3-hour function was finally wrapped up with a few group photographs.



Fridays are, in general, different at Imlee-Mahuaa. While the school opens for six days a week, with Sunday off, Friday is a half-day, with the opening hours being 7:30 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. The primary reason for this is the weekly market in the nearby village, Kokodi, which happens on every Friday. Many children go to this market with their parents, filled with an excitable anticipation. In the four hours in the school as well, they do not have a regular day, for, all of the people at the school go for an excursion to some spot near the village, like a dam or a hilltop. While some of them walk, many others ride their bicycles to this spot, before coming back to the school around 11:30.



In retrospect, when I am going to think about the most important things that I had the pleasure (and honor) to learn from all the people at Imlee-Mahuaa, the one that shall always stay with me is this – the surest way to calmness, that so often eludes us, is to live ... in the present. To end on a rather nostalgic note, I have to say that I shall cherish the memories of a time that flew with utmost innocence, recollecting the joy of being accommodated, accepted and cherished.



Sahib Singh Tulsi

Abridged Financial Statements

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31, 2017

	Schedule	As at March 31	
		2017 (Rupees)	2016 (Rupees)
Sources of Funds			
Corpus		88,000	88,000
Surplus		15,75,161	18,53,701
TOTAL		16,63,161	19,41,701
Application of Funds			
Fixed Assets		55,544	55,544
Current Assets			
Tax deducted at source		1,398	1,398
Cash and Bank Balances	1	15,75,552	18,84,759
Loans and Advances	6	30,667	-
TOTAL		16,63,161	19,41,701
Significant Accounting Policies And Notes to the Accounts	7		

Refer my report of even date

For Velu Muthu Associates For Akanksha Public Charitable Trust

Chartered Accountants

Firm Regn, No. 0045905

Velu Muthu Oswin Thayal Prayaag Joshi

Proprietor Trustee Trustee

Membership No. 22976

Place: Chennai

Date: April 5, 2017

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2017

	Schedule	For the year ended March 31	
		2017 (Rupees)	2016 (Rupees)
Income			
Donations Received	2	19,14,714	21,99,079
Interest on Bank Accounts	3	1,16,835	1,26,659
Excess of Expenditure over Income		2,78,540	28,897
TOTAL		23,10,089	23,54,635
Expenditure			
Expenditure in connection with the objects of the Trust	4	23,10,089	23,54,635
Add: Balance brought forward from the previous year		18,53,701	18,82,598
Balance carried to the Balance Sheet		15,75,161	18,53,701

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2017

	Schedule	For the year ended March 31	
		2017 (Rupees)	2016 (Rupees)
Sources of Funds			
Donations Received	2	19,14,714	21,99,079
Interest on Bank Accounts	3	1,16,835	1,26,659
TOTAL		20,31,549	23,25,738
Application of Funds			
Expenditure in connection with the objects of the Trust	4	23,10,089	23,54,635
Increase or (Decrease) in Net Current Assets	5	(2,78,540)	(28,897)
TOTAL		20,31,549	23,25,738

Credibility Alliance Norms Compliance Report

IDENTITY

- Akanksha Public Charitable Trust ('Akanksha' or 'the Trust') was created as a public trust on July 15, 2000 under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882 and registered (Reg. No. 1003 of 2001 of Book 4 dated September 3, 2001) with the Office of the District Registrar Madras South.
- Akanksha is registered as a Public Charitable Trust under sections 12 AA and 80 G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 (Reg No. DIT(E) No.2(182)/2000-01) and its Permanent Account Number is AAATA6371J.
- Akanksha is registered as an Educational Association under section 6(1)(a) of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976 (Reg No. 075901259).
- Scanned copies of this annual report, trust deed and the letters of registration, audited financial statements from the inception of the Trust, minutes of meetings of the Board of Trustees are exhibited on our website. These documents are available for inspection at the registered office too.

Name and address of our Main Bankers

ICICI Bank Limited, Chennai Branch, 459/1, Anna Salai Road, Teynampet, Chennai 600018

State Bank of India, L B Road, Tiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600 041

Name and address of our Auditors

Velu Muthu Associates, Chartered Accountants, 1 B, Prabha, 17 Bishop Wallers Avenue (East), Mylapore, Chennai 600004

PURPOSE

Akanksha's purpose has evolved over the years. Today, Akanksha works to learn along with and support individuals caught up in life's unfortunate circumstances through collaborative initiatives in areas of education, health, livelihoods, culture and ecology especially engaging with the young and with women.

GOVERNANCE

The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees ('the Board') whose details as on March 31, 2017 are given in the table below.

Name	Age	Sex	Position on Board	Occupation	Area of Competence	Meetings Participated
Khodadad Moradian	63	M	Chairman	Business and financial consulting	Business reengineering	3/3
Oswin Thayal	46	M	Trustee	Medical practice and business	Medicine and medical diagnostics	3/3
Prayaag Joshi	52	M	Trustee	Participation in a learning community	Finance and education	3/3

- Akanksha's Board of Trustees met thrice in FY 2016-17 on April 11, 2016, September 30, 2016 and on March 31, 2017. Minutes of the Board meetings are documented and circulated. All members were present at each meeting of the Board, either physically or over the telephone.
- None of the members of the Board are related to each other by blood or by marriage. A Board Rotation Policy exists and is practiced.
- The Board ensures that all the activities of the Trust are in line with its stated purposes and approved objects, key decision making is consultative and roles and responsibilities are defined for staff and volunteers. The Board approves programs, budgets, annual activity reports and audited financial statements and ensures the organization's compliance with laws and regulations.


ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

- No remuneration, sitting fees or any other form of compensation has been paid since the inception of the Trust to any trustee or member of the Board.
- No reimbursements were made to any Board Member during FY 2016-17.
- All staff members are issued letters of employment and draw equal remuneration, linked to their hours of work. The remuneration drawn by the highest paid staff member as on March 31, 2017 was Rs 7,500 per month and that drawn by the lowest paid staff member was Rs 7,500 per month. There is a personnel policy in place.
- Staff details (as at March 31, 2017)

Gender	Paid full time	Paid part time	Unpaid Volunteer
Female	-	-	2
Male	-	2	-

All members of the Board are volunteers and have given their time pro bono. They are not included in the table above.

- No paid member of staff drew monthly gross salary and benefits that were less than Rs 5000. The average salary was Rs 7,500 and the median salary was Rs 7,500. The remuneration drawn by the Executive Head is zero.
- The total cost of National Travel by all members of the Board was Rs 97,335, by all staff (including volunteers, independent consultants, etc) was Rs 2,310 and by beneficiaries was Rs 3,00,259. The total cost of Air Travel was NIL and the total cost of International Travel whether paid by Akanksha or by external sponsors was NIL.
- The financial statements indicate the method and basis of accounting. There are no serious adverse notes on any material point in the statements. The Trust has not entered into any material transaction that involves a conflict of interest between the Trust and any member(s) of the Board or between the Trust and any member(s) of the staff.



Khodadad Moradian

Chairman April 5, 2017