



Account on trip made by 4 members of our association to the Gandhi Sevam Ashram organisation - November 2017

From now on, the association Education for Development supports two types of actions:

- an experiment to support science studies for public school children in the Udupi district
- the continuation of school and educational support for the children of the untouchables

These actions are supported by the Indian organisation Gandhi Sevam Ashram founded by our Indian correspondent Déodas Shetty

The new action of supporting science studies on the basis of specific laboratory experiments

Example of a class given at the Malar school near the town of Kaup in a rural area. This school has 162 children, including 75 girls, spanning classes 5 to 9. The particularity of the school is that it welcomes 90% Dalit children (the untouchable caste).

The class was aimed at students of classes 6 and 7 and was based on chemistry experiments adapted to the syllabus of these two grades in accordance with their student's book.



- Transformation of sugar into caramel
- Iron sulphate-based magnetisation phenomenon
- Dilation of metal by heat
- Production of carbon dioxide extinguishing a candle
- Use of a precision scale
- Cell observation under the microscope



The children paid close attention and seemed interested. They prepared the lesson with their teachers and their textbooks, which they sometimes opened during the class in order to check the theory behind the chemical formulas.

Pupils were involved by taking part in the experiments, working in small groups around a makeshift lab bench, asking questions related with the experiments and finding answers to them.

This is the first time that scientific material has been brought into a school in the State of Karnataka and that such a teaching and learning method has been practised, especially with pupils from so-called “backward” communities. The interest shown by the teaching staff, and specifically by the headteacher of this school, has been reflected in a request to provide the pupils at all levels with lessons like this every year.

An identical class was given in Sri Rama, another school with 154 pupils in Majoor, a small rural town next to Kaup. The same interest was shown by the headteacher, who wanted his teachers to prepare similar classes based on their own choice of experiments.



As a reminder, the scientific equipment was acquired by Gandhi Sevam Ashram, through our association, funded by the Children & Future Monaco association, which organises Trails No Finish Line sponsored by major companies. This has made it possible to acquire a significant amount of scientific equipment enabling all the scientific programmes from levels 5 to 10 (ages 10-16) in the fields of chemistry, physics, biology and astronomy to be carried out. English learning tapes have also been acquired in order to apply into the scientific language the efforts to practise English, which has become the first language taught in schools before Hindi. A list of the equipment acquired can be found in the previous newsletter.

The conditions of use of this equipment, at this early stage of experimentation, are relatively precarious. The equipment is in fact stored in a rented establishment in Kaup that Gandhi Sevam Ashram uses as an office. The material used for the two classes that have been thought was transported in a rented car and packed in cardboard boxes. When it arrived at the schools it was laid out on rudimentary tables and then repacked and brought back to the premises in Kaup. There is obviously a risk of deterioration.

The project is to allow a dozen schools to benefit from this experiment. This will require transport methods much more adapted to this kind of equipment, which means to buy a car specifically for the transport of the equipment, as well as ad hoc storage and packaging methods. It is also necessary to recruit one or more teachers familiarised with the use of this material and with teaching methods

adapted to children. A meeting of about fifteen teachers from 10 schools is already planned for December.

Science education is provided to students from 6th to 12th grade. Ten classes of 20 to 30 children each will be able to benefit from the lesson and teacher training will begin in December 2017. The demonstrations, like the one we will test today, will be running in all 10 schools.

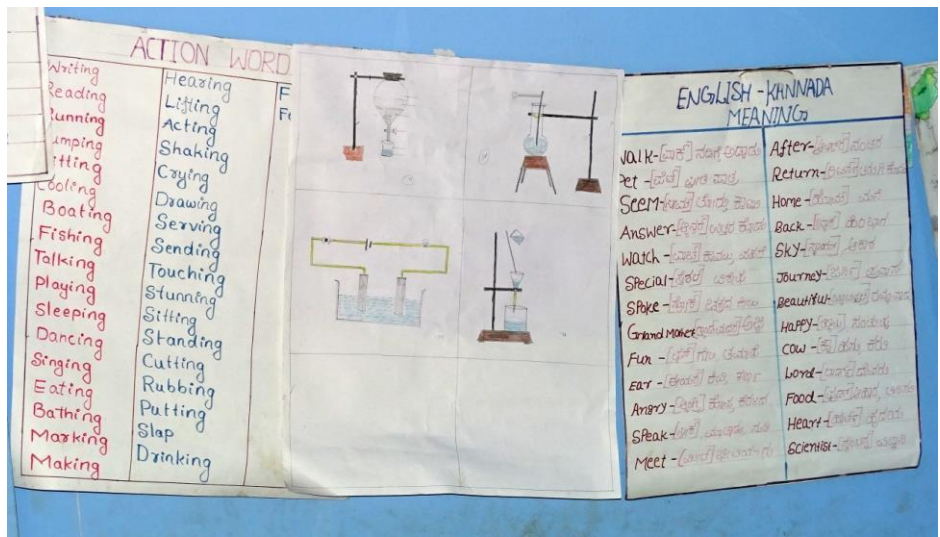


Déodas Shetty also wants to supply the school support centres for the children of the tribes he cares for in the region with scientific equipment. This is in order to provide these children with science education by organising two- or three-day camps as part of the tutoring programme.

We are witnessing the start of a major project which will have to prove its worth at least over a period of three years in the eyes of the Karnataka State before the administration can count on a programme of support and widespread rollout to reinforce science education in Karnataka schools.

News from the tutoring and educational support centres

Five educational support centres for tribes are still located in the region where these tribes are settled. The visit we made to the centres allowed us to witness the work that teachers do with children. The children arrive after their school day to the organisation premises located in the place where their families live, always isolated from the villages. Tutoring is provided for two hours every evening from Monday to Friday and on Saturday afternoons. The work is done on the ground, as often happens in schools. The walls of every room are lined with posters chosen by the teachers, with learning content such as the alphabet, reading, history, arithmetic, English, etc. Lots of drawings, figurines and games made by the children can also be found. A small library corner often containing a few English books is used by the children.



Each teacher has his or her own way of working with children, but the two-hour daily tutoring session usually includes:

- An opening song
- Individual reading time with questions asked by the teacher
- A collective recitation of the multiplication tables
- Maths exercises given to each child by the teacher, who will come back to the children with individual feedback
- Singing in English
- Recitation in English of vocabulary concepts such as numbers, days of the week, months of the year...
- Individual reading of a text in their English book and reading aloud in front of the teacher
- Personal reading of a book chosen by each child from the library corner



An impressive effort could be seen in the learning of English, both written and spoken, and also with vocabulary. For example, in one of the centres, the Gangoli one, which operates with two teachers for children from the Adidravidas tribe, one of the teachers devotes all his time with the children to learning English. This is an essential step forward, which pushes them to go further in their schooling and higher education, and gives them prospects that will help them to get rid of the outcaste condition they are caught in. During a visit to the family of the person in charge of the centre in Bedrakatte, from the Koraga tribe, we talked with two of his daughters who spoke English very well. The eldest one who is taking her higher secondary exam wants to be a stewardess, the youngest one who is in 5th grade wants to be a film actress. Their father cleans toilets in a temple, job reserved for Dalits. Other examples were given by children who have become teachers, workers in the local administration, office workers, water service managers, etc.



Building a relationship with the families is very important in order to make the children understand the benefits of continuing their schooling and to follow the daily tutoring offered to them. These ties are forged by the teachers with quarterly meetings with parents and individual appointments when necessary, and by taking a look with the parents at each child's personal progress notebook during these appointments.

A social worker will soon be recruited to replace the one who has left. This is an important role to ensure a regular presence in tribal settlements and with families. It is also the social worker's responsibility to ensure the proper working of the centres and the children's attendance. It is also up to him to organise outings, camps, meetings, collective games and parties which are all opportunities for the children to assert themselves, to boost their self-esteem and to contribute to their personal development.

NB: The travel expenses of the 4 members of the Association were, of course, entirely at their own expense.