VIDYA VANAM SCHOOL

Annual Report

2014-2015

www.vidyavanam.org
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Letter from the President

We are on track to graduate our first batch of students through the 10\textsuperscript{th} grade by March of 2017. Our school strength is 314, and we will cap at around 360 students by 2017.

More importantly we have become affiliated with the Eduexel an organization which partners with the IGCSE. Our first batch of students will graduate 10\textsuperscript{th} grade with IGCSE affiliation in 2017.

We have kept our focus on our mission to serve the under privileged groups. Seventy percent of our students are from tribal or most backward communities and the remaining from backward and underprivileged communities.

Also, to keep in line with our mission that education needs to dovetail with opportunity of employment, we graduated second group of women certified in early childhood development program. This will be the first of many vocational tracks which will be established in the next few years.

We have also added a community center which caters to the parents of many of the children who seek avenues to be helpful.

We have and continue to face challenges. These include maintaining a reliable revenue stream to keep the operation of the school smooth and without breaks. We are forever appreciative of the efforts of so many friends and well-wishers to keep our mission alive and well.

Subramaniam Sriram, President of Bhuvana Foundation
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Phone: 001-615-476-4994 (cell)
Dr. S. Sriram is an internationally recognized neuroscientist currently holding the William Weaver Chair in Experimental Neurology at Vanderbilt Medical Center, Nashville, TN, USA. He has recognized the needs of the underprivileged in India and has dedicated his time and resources to the formation and development of Vidya Vanam.

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Prema Rangachary was trained in Oxford UK to teach English to children whose mothetongue is not English. She has long promoted the need to advance novel changes in the curriculum and to foster education especially in regions where resources are limited. As director of the school, she has engineered innovative programs by which art can enhance the understanding of language and the sciences.

Prema Rangachary
Thuvaipathy Road, Anaikatti, Coimbatore Dist, TN 641108
Trustees

Susheela Ragahavan  Jagdish Dore  Vasantha Laxminarayan  Shanthi Ranganathan

Dr. N. Uma  Bhooma Parthasarathy  Mridulatha Dore
Vision of Vidya Vanam

Vidya Vanam is a non-residential school for rural children from tribal and underprivileged families. The school is located about 45km northeast of Coimbatore, in Anaikatti, at the border of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The school serves children from 28 surrounding villages. It is our endeavor to help children of illiterate or uneducated parents to become self-confident, motivated, knowledgeable, and emotionally stable adults.

Vidya Vanam provides children with the tools for self-learning while simultaneously recognizing the rich cultural traditions of their villages and the world in which they live. They are encouraged to imagine a world outside of the classroom walls and their rural environment. Vidya Vanam strives to educate with respect for a broad cultural identity and instills pride in the children for their roots as well as their accomplishments. Teachers learn how to educate using methods of Montessori, language immersion, arts/creative expression, and project-based activities all centered around the child. Instruction begins for pre-schoolers and our vision is to provide pre-college and vocational tracks through 10 Standard.
Scope of Services

All students receive a mid-day nutritious meal and snack each day

The current scope of services at Vidya Vanam includes:

- Academic instruction from Pre-K to 7th Standard
- Special Needs Assessment
- Nutritional Support
- Transportation
- Vocational Training
- Extracurricular activities, physical education, and field trips
- Community Service
- Referrals for Alcohol and Mental Health Services
- Staff Development and Enrichment
- Annual school newsletter available on website
- Accredited by the National Institute for Open Schools (NIOS)
- Core curriculum competency tests for Middle School
- Remedial support for students from Vidya Vanam and the adjacent Government school on Saturday mornings
- Annual medical check-ups for all students
Facilities

Vidya Vanam consists of a campus with the following features:

- Administrative block
- Dining/ Multipurpose hall, kitchen complex
- 13 Classrooms, including art, AV room, science lab, Montessori, and computer lab
- Library containing 3,000+ books
- Magazine and newspaper subscriptions
- 15 Bathroom facilities and drinking water provided
- Security room and fenced campus
- Faculty/Guest quarters for 18
- Biogas generator
- Campus-wide wi-fi
- Solar power (entirely self-supporting)
- Water harvesting/groundwater recharging
- Sports grounds and kindergarten play area
- Two school buses.


- The entire school is completely accessed by broad-band Wi-fi.
- We added an extra solar panel and we do not have any of the power outages.
The school is located a short walk from the town of Anaikatti (circled in red), within the Elephant Corridor, on the Thuvaipathy Road. The campus is 1.65 acres on a gentle slope. The students are drawn from about 50 villages within the green circle.
Transportation

The school offers transportation to students who come from Kerala and Tamil Nadu. A radius of 15 KM is covered by the bus. Two buses are owned and operated by the school. 165 students are transported daily on Vidya Vanam buses. Vidya Vanam was the recipient of a donation of a new bus from the State Bank of India.
**Staff/Faculty**

Director-1  
Administrative Support-3  
Pre-K Faculty- 2  
Primary Grade (K-4) Faculty- 10  
Middle Grade (5-8) Faculty-10  
Housekeeping-5  
Cooks-2  
Drivers-2  
Security-2  
Maintenance-1  
Full-time Volunteers- 1
Part time teachers include individuals who teach, dance, music and drums.

The 18 full-time faculty have the following levels of certification: UGBed- 7, ECed-6, BA-1, MABed-1, PGBed-3.

Vidya Vanam has part-time consultants for special educational needs assessment, dance, vocal and instrumental music, and theater. Pre-K teachers and classroom aids are recruited locally so they are familiar with the tribal dialect. Primary and Middle School faculty are recruited from a wider area, often representing other countries and far reaching parts of the Indian continent.
**School Day**

The school opens Monday-Friday at 9:00 am with morning assembly. All students and faculty have lunch and a snack before departing at 4:00 pm. Students arrive and leave on foot, bicycle, or by Vidya Vanam bus. Pre-K students have Montessori classroom instruction, hygiene and use of toilet facilities, Tamil, English, and project-based learning. Students in Pre-K leave school at 2:00 pm after lunch and a nap. Kindergarten and Primary School students continue bilingual instruction.
Curriculum

The curriculum is developmentally appropriate and specifically designed to be relevant to the child’s life and environment. Teacher-directed and child-directed activities utilize learning tools tailored to the student’s interests and level of achievement. These tools are themetic or generic, flexible, continuously updated worksheets, journals, etc. Eighteen to twenty children work in multi-age groupings. The children work individually, in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class. These groupings are based on interest, learning style, need for skill instruction, or reinforcement. These various groupings promote independent work, cooperative learning opportunities, participatory activities for large projects, and discussions. Videos and lectures; hands on use of computers and tablets; Montessori classroom techniques, learning activities, and tools; and art and craft projects are all integrated into the academic program. The curriculum actively recognizes and nourishes the tribal cultures and diverse student backgrounds as songs, stories, and traditions are woven into the school activities.

Middle School students study math, social studies, science, Tamil, Hindi, health awareness, art/craft, and physical education through interactive classroom work, computer and iPad use, projects, and extracurricular activities. There are Saturday morning remedial classes for students needing a little more support academically.

On April 2015, Vidya Vanam was granted recognition as a Registered Private Institution under NCS Pearson VUE (Centre No 93278) for the conduct of Edexcel International GCSE and International Primary and Lower Secondary Curriculum examinations. High school curriculum will be developed and
imparted with the support of Edexel to comply with the rules and requirements of affiliation. In addition, the school is equipped with computers and iPads, docu-cameras, and AV equipment for educational needs. The installation of solar panels has allowed for an uninterrupted power supply. Thanks to a generous donation from Pfizer we now have replaced the old CRT monitors with laptop computers. This not only reduces the power usage but is more user friendly for the students. It is connected to the internet and students now have one hour of instruction in the use of computers every week.

Extracurricular activities during the past year included Bharatnatyam dance, choral and instrumental instruction, farming/gardening, charka, and theater. Field trips to the Nilgiri Biosphere, Salim Ali Center (SACON), Yercaud, Sirthuli, and Mahabalipuram were made.
Highlights of Academic Year 2014-2015

Independence/Sports Day in August 15th 2014

Every year Vidya Vanam organizes its sports week ahead of India's Independence Day with finale being held on I-day. Presently there are 310 children studying in Vidya Vanam and each and every child participates at least in one game of this programme. Mr R P Durai, who is the president of Coimbatore District Football Association, was the chief guest.
Project Day in December 2014- Role of Rice in Society

The learning methodology at Vidya Vanam is shaped in the second term around a theme: this time, it was rice. Throughout the term, all subject areas explore this decided theme, culminating in Project Day, a showcase of the community’s learning. The event is spread across an exquisite display of charts, models graphs, recipes, performances, debates, all centered around rice. Renowned journalist Mr. P. Sainath, renowned journalist and photojournalist, was the chief guest of the day.

The exhibition showed a progression of the theme from one subject area to another. For example, in Math there was a lot of measurement and statistics around rice; Science explored its Biology and agriculture; English, Hindi and Tamil had stories and poems, fabled as well as original. As one walked through the show case, one saw home-made delicacies, art work, intricate models, and meticulous crafts, to emphasize that academic subjects are but one part of the learning. Working with just the head, to the exclusion of the hands and the heart, could never lead to such cohesion in these students’ doing, and being. The learners hear about the history of rice, and its related economics, its price today and how their farms and families grow the rice. Archana and Kalpana the senior students choreographed on their
own a dance on rice and included the boys, with Gopi as the jester and Manav the resource-box.

**Scholastic Program for the Tribal Children**

Nine Vidya Vanam children participated in national level talent search scholarship for encouraging visual and performing arts in children from Tribal families. This competition was held at Bangalore on November 11th 2014. Four of the students were selected for their exceptional artistic potential and were given scholarships by the Government of India.
Our Winners: Sneha, Viadehi, Durga Devi and Divyabharathi.
Statistics

The school has 314 students, 165 boys (52%) and 149 girls (48%).

Demographic of Student Body

![Pie chart showing demographics of student body for 2014-2015]

- Most Backward Community
- Scheduled Tribe
- Scheduled Class
- Backward Class
Distribution of Underprivileged groups in the student body

2010-2015
Annual Dropout Rate 2010-2015

Transportation of Students from their villages to Vidya Vanam
Annual costs for education (Indian Rupees)

![Chart showing annual costs for education in Indian Rupees from 2010-11 to 2014-14. Costs increase over the years.]

- 10-11: INR 15,000
- 11-'12: INR 16,000
- 12-'13: INR 17,000
- 13-'14: INR 20,000
- 14-14: INR 22,000
Plans for Expansion

1. We have submitted plans to the Panchayat for approval of a 2000sqft science block. This block will be built in the newly acquired 0.7acre land adjacent to the school. It consists of the four room science lab and class room with room for expansion if needed to the first floor.

Sketch of plan for the science building is shown within the red rectangle.

2. Develop a vocational program which include additional vocational stream for school drop outs and students who have completed their 10th or 12th grade education.
3. Develop ties with regional industries to support vocational education.

4. Increase the number of dorm rooms to accommodate additional staff and teachers.
Donations

The Bhuvana Foundation was formed expressly and solely to support the Vidya Vanam School and has 501(c)3 status in the US and India. The Bhuvana Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization, eligible for 50% exemption (80G) and under the Foreign Contributions Regulatory Act.
Details of the mechanisms for contribution is available on our web site: www.vidyavanam.org

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