Vidyavanan School

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www.vidyavanam.org
Letter from the President

Dear friends and supporters,

It gives me great pleasure to update you on our progress as the Bhuvana Foundation nears its 10th year. Our educational initiative, Vidya Vanam, has reached important milestones in the current year. The affiliation with the Edexcel IGCSE has allowed us to become a nationally recognized school and perhaps the only Tribal School in India to be given such an affiliation.

The school has received many accolades in its commitment to academic freedom, scholarship and sense of how children from underprivileged societies can — given the right atmosphere — can channelize their talents to realize their ideas, hopes and dreams. This is endorsed by the initial evaluation of our students by the Edexcel team. We have completed a new science block and have allocated additional space for Arts and Crafts. With this, the academic requirements until grade 10 have been met.
Letter from the President

As usual, our focus is on our mission to serve the underprivileged groups. Seventy percent of our students are from tribal, scheduled castes or most backward communities. Also, in keeping with our belief that education needs to dovetail with opportunity for employment, we have in the pipeline a series of vocational skill development programmes, which will create career opportunities for the students.

Vidya Vanam’s ideology is finding acceptance beyond Tamil Nadu’s borders. On the government of Kerala’s request, the school will act as a resource centre for its initiative to bring tribal school dropouts in Attappadi area of Palghat district back into the educational mainstream. Vidya Vanam will train the teachers and oversee the programme. In Karnataka, Vidya Vanam will establish a learning centre for children of labourers in the coffee plantations on the outskirts of Belur.

Another initiative is the community development project. We have established a women’s self-help group, whose members are mothers of our students. They have been trained to create a wide variety of art and craft items for the larger market. This not only gives them financial independence but also boosts their self-esteem and confidence.

One of the main challenges in sustaining our work is maintaining a reliable revenue stream to keep the operation of the school smooth and without breaks. This is sustained only by contributions and donations from well-wishers sympathetic to the cause. I take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped us to keep this programme afloat.
About Bhuvana Foundation (India)

The Bhuvana Foundation (India) is dedicated to serving the underprivileged and marginalised sections of society in rural India. The foundation focuses its efforts in the areas of education and vocational training. The foundation is registered under Section 12AA of the Income Tax Act, 1961, vide C.No. 627/07-08 dated 06-12-2007. Donations are exempt under Sec 80g of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Bhuvana Foundation is authorised to receive foreign donations under the FCRA Act, 2010 vide Registration No. 075901291.

Location:

Bhuvana Foundation (India) Registered office: 2A, 115A, Sivashwamy Salai, Chennai 600 004
Vidy Vanam is located on Thuvaipathy Road, Anaikatti, Coimbatore 641 108
About Vidya Vanam

Vision: To nurture tribal children to become self-confident, motivated, knowledgeable, and emotionally stable adults who will be the leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

Mission: To provide a fear-free learning environment and a specially designed curriculum that integrates today’s educational requirements with the community’s unique needs; To inculcate appreciation and respect for their culture, their knowledge base and their environment.

Objectives:

- To build an integrated personality; achieved only when the intellectual, emotional and the physical needs are fulfilled
- To build empathy for the environment, the community and all living creatures
- To ensure that children are free to voice their opinions, think critically and pursue their individual passions
Members of the Board
Bhuvana Foundation (India)

Dr. Subramanian Sriram, President

is an internationally recognised neuroscientist currently holding the William Weaver Chair in Experimental Neurology at Vanderbilt Medical Centre, Nashville, TN, USA. He has recognised the needs of the underprivileged in India and has dedicated his time and resources to the formation and development of Vidya Vanam.

Ms. Shanthi Ranganathan, Vice-President

is a social worker and the founder of T. T. Ranganathan Clinical Research Foundation, which manages the TTK Hospital, which treats and helps rehabilitate drug and alcohol addicts. She is the first recipient of the UN Vienna Civil Society Award and also received the Padma Shri in 1992. She has been associated with Vidya Vanam since its inception. She is related to Prema Rangachary by marriage.

Ms. Prema Rangachary, Secretary and Director of Vidya Vanam

Trained in Oxford, the U.K., to teach English as Second Language, 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 programmes by which art can enhance the understanding of language and sciences.
Advisory Committee to
Bhuvana Foundation (India) Board

Ms. Susheela Raghavan
is a Chennai-based educational consultant. She was headmistress of Padma Seshadri School, Chennai, and taught Geography in The School-KFI, Chennai. She has been associated with Vidya Vanam since its inception. She is related to Prema Rangachary by marriage.

Ms. Bhooma Parthasarathy
is the Director of the Thirumalai Charity Trust. Along with her friends and family, she set up the Thirumalai Mission Hospital, for primary and secondary healthcare. She was instrumental in setting up the three Vedavalli Vidyalaya Schools, which she helps manage.

Ms. Vasantha Lakshminarayan
is a retired science teacher who worked in Frank Antony School, New Delhi. She has been associated with Vidya Vanam since its inception.

Mr. Jagdish V Doré
leads Sidvim LifeSciences. In his previous roles he was Managing Director India and Head of Asia Technical Operations for Sandoz and then CEO of Matrix Labs. He has over 30 years of experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry. He is B Tech (IIT Madras) & MBA.

Dr. N. Uma
is a Chennai-based paediatrician working in Apollo Hospitals. She has been associated with Vidya Vanam since its inception.
Members of the School Committee

- Mr. T.M. Srikanth
  Academic Coordinator, Vidya Vanam
- Ms. Uma Maheshwari
  Senior School Coordinator, Vidya Vanam
- Ms. Prema S.
  Junior School Coordinator, Vidya Vanam
- Dr. Pramod
  Sr. Scientist, SACON
- Mr. Tejpal
  Industrialist, Coimbatore
- Mr. S. Kannan
  Parent
- Ms. R. Bindu
  Parent and Community Representative

School Committee

A school committee comprising teachers, parents, community members and outsiders was instituted this year. Among other duties, the committee will also help prepare and evaluate improvement plans; institute programmes that generate greater cooperation between the community and school; to align all stakeholders to the vision, mission and long-term goals of the school; provide advice and recommendations to the Bhuvana Foundation to hire teachers and non-teaching staff.

The school committee was constituted and the first meeting was held on November 19, 2015. Ms. Prema Rangachary, Director, Vidya Vanam, was appointed as the representative of the Bhuvana Foundation on the committee. It was also decided that the Vidya Vanam website will be managed by the school; that the periodic newsletter and annual report will be handled by the school. The committee also resolved to put in place a plan for teacher and student development and a review of teachers and to get feedback from the staff.
Profile of the children

Anaikatti being on the border of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Vidya Vanam has children coming from both states. The villages on the Tamil Nadu side are Anaikatti, Vadakalur, Thekkalur, KK Nagar, Arnatkadu, Kallkadu, Thuvaiapathy, Jambukandi, Kuttupilikadu, Aalamaramedu, Kondanur, Pudur, Kandivali, Pannapalle, Moongilpallam, Doomanur, Sembukarai, Mangarai, Veerapandi, Thiruvalluvar Nagar, Singuli, Pattisalai, Kalany Pudur, and Aalangadi.

On the Kerala side, the villages are Anaikatti, Mandiamman Koil, Dasanur, Lakshamveedu, Vattalakki, Mattathukadu, Kallmukayur, Kottathora, Sandhamadai, Gulikadavu, Agali, Boothiavali, Memuthumpali, Kizhmuthumpali, Seerakadavu, Ranganathapuram, Chavadiyur, Pudur, Aalamaran, Pattimelam, Vadakotthathorai

### Community Representation

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Legend:
- SC - Scheduled Caste
- ST - Scheduled Tribe
- BC - Backward Caste
- MBC - Most Backward Caste
- G.Total - Grand Total
Profile of the children

Gender Distribution

- Boys: 163
- Girls: 147
- Total: 310

Cost of educating a child at Vidya Vanam

- 10-11: INR 15000
- 11-12: INR 16000
- 12-13: INR 17000
- 13-14: INR 18000
- 14-15: INR 19000
- 15-16: INR 25000
Curriculum and Working

The curriculum is developmentally appropriate and specifically designed to be relevant to the child’s life and environment. Teacher-directed and child-directed activities utilise learning tools tailored to the student’s interests and level of achievement. These tools are thematic 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 recognises and nourishes the tribal cultures and diverse student backgrounds as songs, stories, and traditions are woven into the school activities. The school is equipped with computers and iPads, docu-cameras, and AV equipment for educational needs.

The school works Monday-Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. All students and faculty have lunch and a snack before departing at 4.00 pm. Students arrive and leave on foot, bicycle, or by the school bus.

Middle School students study Math, Social Studies, Science, Tamil, Hindi, Art & Craft, and Physical Education, Music and Dance through interactive classroom work, projects, and extracurricular activities.

A special educator takes charge of children with special needs. The high school follows the EdExcel IGCSE curriculum.
Apart from the regular academic work, Vidya Vanam also saw a whole host of events ranging from sports, environment awareness, music and dance.

Van Mahotsav, August 8, 2015: To spread awareness about the perils of felling trees. This festival helps provide sources of alternative fuel, create shelter-belts around fields to increase productivity, provides food for cattle, offers shade and decorative landscapes, and helps conserve soil deterioration.

Sports Day, August 15, 2015: Mr. V. Baskaran, former captain of the Indian hockey team that won the gold the 1980 Olympics, presided over the function.

First-ever field trip to Mysore: From visiting well-known author Mr. R.K.Narayan’s house, the Railway Museum, the zoo, Palaces and the Brindavan Gardens, this trip brought not just fun, but immense learning to the children.

Events

- Children of the Nilgiris group (Std VII) sang along with vidwan TM Krishna for the album release of Muttusvami Dikshitar’s nottuswaras. The event took place in Coimbatore and was repeated due to popular demand at Chennai in November.
- Vidya Vanam’s students performed the spinach dance at the inauguration of the 24th session of the National Indian Art History Congress held at Kumaraguru College, Coimbatore.
- Project Day, themed forests. Mr. Pankaj Sekhsaria, a well-known environmentalist who has worked in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the chief guest for the day, spent over two hours quizzing the students, listening to and chatting with them.
- Educational trip to Santiniketan for the faculty. The Viswabharathi University, the craft centre at Sriniketan and the outdoor classrooms of Pata Bahavan were all points of interest. They also visited the crafts mela organized and run by the students of Viswabharati University and its printing unit.
Events

- Annual Day: From Yakshagana performance to bringing to life the Lion King, the junior and high school children came together in a festive spirit to showcase performances in dance and theatre.

Notable achievements:
- Archana of grade 9 and Pavin Kumar of Grade 8 being placed 2nd and 7th respectively in an essay writing competition conducted by the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve across 30 schools in Coimbatore.
- Eighteen students from various grades received merit certificates in the National Geography Talent Test conducted by the Association of Geography Teachers of India.
- In a competition conducted by the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Manav of Grade 9 won the Young Birdwatcher of the Year Award in the Senior Category. Manav and Abhijit of Grade 8 won the first prize in the quiz competition. Archana of Grade 9 won first prize in Tamil poetry writing competition on the theme of Environment.

Medical Camps
Dr. N. Uma, a trustee of Bhuvana Foundation, conducted a medical camp for children, teachers and non-teaching staff. This covers height, weight, nutritional status, basic dental, eye, skin and ENT check-up. Any supplements or medication required is supplied by her and administered to the children by the school according to the prescription. Dr. Kezevino Aram of Shanthi Ashram, Coimbatore, brought a team of doctors to the school to administer the Hepatitis B and MMR vaccines to those children who had not been vaccinated earlier. Aravind Eye Hospitals conducted an eye-testing camp for the children, teachers and non-teaching staff. Spectacles were supplied to those who required it free of cost.
Faculty and Staff

Vidy Vanam has full-time teachers for arts and crafts and physical education and part-time consultants for special educational needs assessment, dance, vocal and instrumental music. Pre-K teachers and classroom assistants are recruited locally so they are familiar with the tribal dialect. Primary and Middle School faculty are recruited from across India. The full-time faculty have the following levels of certification: UG & B.Ed, ECEd, BA, MA &B.Ed, PG & B.Ed, D. Ted; MBA. Vidy Vanam also has part-time volunteers who come for short spells and help in various ways.

Vidy Vanam’s staff – both teaching and non-teaching -- is given medical insurance through the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). The employee contribution is 1.75 per cent of his/her salary while the management contributes 4.75%.
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Vidya Vanam is grateful to these corporates and foundations, without whom we would not have been able to reach out to the community.

BGS Trust
Bhuvana Foundation (USA)
GKD Charity Trust
Parathasarathi Samatva Trust
S.S. International
Shree Sarita Jain Foundation
Sidvin Foundation
TT Logistics
T.T.K. Healthcare Ltd