

MY STAY AT KALIYUVA MANE

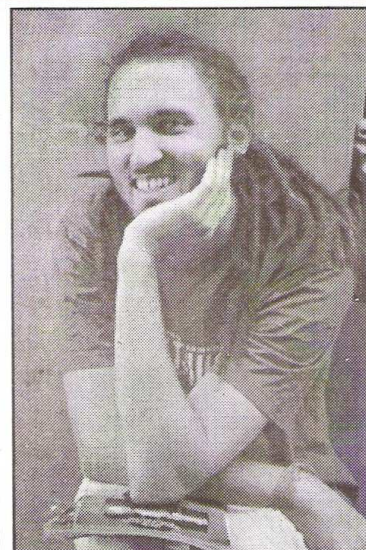
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At the time I am writing this four weeks has passed since I left India for the travel back to Sweden. It rather feels like a year. The distance and differences between these two places on planet earth makes it hard to understand its only a little more than a month since me and Shrinath left Kaliyuva Mane on that Friday morning, waving hands through the car window. While India was hot and dry, Sweden is cold and wet. While India is vibrant, crowded, noisy and full of activity, Sweden is calm, silent and empty.

I came in a group of eight Swedish participants in a culture exchange project, arranged by CIU, the Swedish center for international exchange and the Indian counterpart ICDE, Inter-Cultural Dialogue and Exchange. Together with another eight Indian participants we are spending six months together in India and Sweden, working at social

projects. My co-volunteer Shrinath and I were living and working beside the children, staff and volunteers from January till the end of March at Kaliyuva Mane. During our stay we've tried to put our shoulder to the wheel and help the cause of Divyadeepa in different ways. We've been organizing and indexing school resources, helping with office work, gardening, teaching and more.

Shrinath and I spent most of our days in the company of the kids, from the knocks on the door in the morning to the evening meals and TV-watching afterwards. I found them a great group of children, playful and curious. I was struck by how happy the children of the school were. Many of them have gone through terrible things and came from families with big problems. But with many of them it's not possible to tell this unless



you don't know them from the start. This is maybe Divyadeepa's biggest success, providing a caring, loving home for the children, to give them a stable environment. It's probably only then it's possible to provide education that will do any good.

The level of their English varied a lot. Many of them learned much during our stay over discussions on the world, Sweden, India, cricket and more. I am very happy to have been able to contribute to this, and hopefully they have gained confidence in speaking

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We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today. - Stacia Tauscher

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English. Fortunately, the difficulty of language does not apply to a smiling face, a helping hand or for that matter a bucket of colour during Holi! Language is an obstacle, but not for the things that really matter: love, care, and empathy. People, no matter of what religion, language or country, fortunately have more similarities than differences.

During my lessons with the children I was constantly bombarded with questions about myself, my family, Sweden, Europe, the world and more! The urge to know more, the curiosity is something that children all over the world share. The objective of the schools should be to use this curiosity, to promote it and to make the children capable of finding out things on their own. Teaching children to search for information by themselves should be of first priority. With the

world's entire knowledge one computer away on the Internet, the children's own curiosity will take care of the rest.

I think that, perhaps the biggest contribution I made to Divyadeepa was to give the children, a window to the rest of the world, someone to ask all those questions to; letting them get to know a foreigner (who gets such an enormous importance in India), getting them accustomed to talk English and hopefully fuelling the urge to get out there and learn more about it, beyond the borders

of Mysore, Karnataka or India.

I wish the best of luck to all of you who work on to make it possible for schools like Kaliyuva Mane to continue working. Giving opportunities to the underprivileged and promoting a different kind of school than the one provided by the government. Without teachers teaching with their fist, where positive things like love and curiosity rather than fear and punishment drive teaching. Where children are taught to think by themselves. Slowly you are making the world a better place.

VOICE OF A CHILD

We adults take pride in the fact of the capability, which we possess to distinguish good from the bad. And this ability (if at all it is present!!!) is something, which comes out to us through experience and environment.

On the other hand, kids are termed as naive and not very highly opinionated.

Understandably, we do not always expect a kid to know all the good and bad in the world and hence try to correct it as and when an opportunity arises.

But here's something to testify the sense of moral values that a kid studying at Kaliyuva Mane has developed. At Kaliyuva mane, once a week children are made to read

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Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime - Aldai Stevenson