

Visit to Devi Ahilyabai Smarak Samiti by Arundhati Vinod:

I had the opportunity to visit Devi Ahilyabai Smarak Samiti (DASS) during my recent trip to India in January 2010. This established, well recognized and reputable organization, runs a very unusual program of rehabilitation & education for women affected by the atrocities committed by certain groups in Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalay, Tripura & Nagaland. These women who are physically abused, sometimes widowed and homeless are brought to DASS, and with help by DASS volunteers. Over the years, they were provided with a roof over their head, food, clothing and education. In duration of 4-5 years, after completing a vocational training or basic matriculation, many go back to their native land, and establish an institution modeled after DASS. I met Mrs. Chitra Joshi who enlightened me about this and many other charitable activities conducted by DASS. I feel that the commendable work done by this organization certainly deserves the support of MF.

Visit to Vimalashram Amrapali Utkarsh Sangh by Arundhati Vinod:

Vimlashram, the brainchild of Mr. Ram Ingole, was established in 1982. It is a rehabilitation center for the children of sex workers. Started with the adoption of four children, it now houses sixty. I found these children to be healthy, well adjusted and pursuing technical education. In 'Vimalashram Gharkul' a feeling that "*I am a part of the society and I am obliged to do something for the needy in the society*" is constantly impressed on the children. The "Gharkul Family" thus undertakes various altruistic and awareness driven initiatives on a weekly basis in the slums of Nagpur.

I had the opportunity to visit Mr. Ram Ingole and personally review the activities of this unique institution. The upkeep of each child is approximately \$ 300.00 per year, and MF should consider appealing to our donors to sponsor a child and lend a hand to this deserving organization.

Visit to Anjanvel–Taluka Guhagar–Dist Ratnagiri by MF members

Maharashtra Foundation run out-patient clinic at Anjanvel, in Ratnagiri district was visited by Sunanda Mane, Aditi Vaidya and Arundhati Vinod. This is MF's flagship project in the making. Late Prince Chitresh & his wife, the late Mrs Nineshka Khedkar willed the donation to build a hospital for the people of Anjanvel. A small facility which would be the living quarters for the physicians was built, and has served as out-patient facility. We had reports that the facility was damaged by the cyclone Phyan in October 2009. This trip was to evaluate & reassess the damage to the building.

As reported, the roof of the building was completely destroyed by the cyclone. The clinic was moved to a near by building. We met Dr. Mahajan, Mr. Bait and some villagers.

The clinic is still operating, and the villagers feel that the clinic is genuinely needed and conveniently located. It was reassuring to see that the raw material for the new roof was already on the premise, and the designated contractor was keen to start the work. Mr. Murdeshwar, project manager from Yusuf Meherally organization, and our partner in this venture gave us the time line for the completion of repairs . We were disappointed that the damage caused by the cyclone will delay the final construction by an year or so and would need significantly more resources.

#### Visit to Nandini Datar's Mahila Melawa by MF

MF members – Arundhati Vinod, Sunanda Mane, and Sharayu Tulpule visited Nandini Datar's project near Pauna River dam in Maval. Nandini Datar's project 'Swayamsiddha' is partly funded by MF since 2007. Nandini has directed her Janseva Pratishthan's work towards welfare of rural women and their family members. Projects like savings group, prevention of domestic violence, prevention of female infanticide, pre-marital counseling are some of the successful endeavors of Nandini Datar's portfolio. On Jan 23rd, Janseva Pratishthan was hosting their annual Mahila Melawa - a two day event of fun and learning for the women from the surrounding villages. About 200+ women were in attendance. One of the themes of this year's event was to coach women to participate in village 'Gram Sabha'. The Govt of India has mandated that about 33% of seats in every Gram Panchayat be reserved for women. Nandini decided that in order to provide meaning to this law, it was necessary to train and teach rural women about workings of Gram Panchayat and roles the women could and should play as representatives of their villages in Gram Panchayat. The two day Melawa was a culmination of the empowerment training given to the women.

The MF members were very impressed by what they saw and heard during their short visit. They offered full support from MF for Janseva Pratishthan's work and words of encouragement to the assembled women to be participating members of Indian democracy.