

MKV Picnic, February 15-2007

All children are special...well, we learnt that some are just more special. Mother's Blossoms' day out with 82 such kids from Matri Karuna Vidyalaya, an initiative of the Sri Aurobindo Education Society to run a school for the economically disadvantaged was definitely a day of learning for some of us.

On February 15, 2007 three members of Mother's Blossoms – Sujata Suri (1989), Manish Mittal (1991) and Chirag Dadlani (2002) set out on a mission. The plan was to take the children of MKV on a tour to the Delhi Zoo followed by lunch at Lodhi Gardens. As a 15 member staff of the school was accompanying us we didn't think it would be a tough task but we had a lot to learn.

The buses arrived on time and we all sang and danced our way to the zoo. Once we all got down requests for the "toilet" began. I think it was the really little ones who wanted to go first and when one goes the rest feel the pressure to go too (like the Indian Cricket team!!). The patient and loving teachers went about the whole process with practised ease. The tickets were bought and it was nice watching Chirag trying to get the children together. He did very well and managed to get them into the zoo. All hell broke loose as the children were told to board one trolley and it was heartbreaking for the ones who had to get down because of over crowding. After sending off this group the wait for the next trolley began.

After about half an hour, Kamlesh didi decided to walk through the zoo. "We are all energetic. Let's walk." The children were lined up and the walk began. By now, the ever resourceful Manish and Chirag had managed to get hold of two more trolleys. Most of the children were packed in them and sent off but we still had about 10 kids (9-10 year olds) who had to walk. Once the situation sank in, the protests began. "I am tired! This is boring! I don't want to walk! Why should I walk?" The energetic adults had to do something - so every information sign that came our way was discussed and every feature of every animal seen was pointed out. I think it worked for they kept going. Over the next couple of hours or so, the birds, the deer, the jaguars, the hippos, the lions, the giraffe

and the surprisingly healthy white tigers were appreciated and gaped at. By the time we reached the bus we were all exhausted.

The journey from the zoo to Lodhi Gardens happened in relative silence. The sight of Mrs. Mohini Anand (Principal, MKV) standing at the entrance of the gardens with food was a delightful sight indeed! The children were made to de bus and once they had settled down, lunch was served. Delicious food from the Ashram, beautiful surroundings and lovely weather; I don't think one could have asked for more.

The children played for some time and then were given their afternoon snack. Dolly Didi and Kamlesh Didi soon had them engrossed in a story telling session. Soon , with much reluctance, the children wrapped up their things and boarded the buses back to school. By now, Chirag and I were ready to fall down. I truly admire the teachers and staff of MKV for their patience and love and energy!!

I think this is one of the best things we, the members of Mother's Blossoms, have participated in so far. The smile on the childrens' faces, the satisfaction on the faces of the staff made us forget all the hurdles we had gone through to put this thing together.

The way it made us feel...well all I can say is that this feeling can get addictive!

With the firm conviction that this is a path we must tread often. A small effort took these kids to the zoo. If we get it right, I am sure it wouldn't take them much to reach the skies.