

**Hello Everyone ! Here is India 2022!**

So, we are off again. Jordan was in May and now here we are in India visiting the remedial classes and sewing training classes in Delhi's poorest areas. In addition we are going to the south where we have installed oil extracting machines for a women's association. Whoopeee!

Almost every child in the Western World would opt out of school if they could, right? But in the EQU+ remedial classes, the children are clamoring for more! How crazy is our world! The 10 classes of 250 children are held in resettlement areas where displaced people (for making roads or something else) are dumped and "housed." As they often come from rural areas, the children are way behind in school and without help can never hope to catch up. The first area was Bawana.



Glenn and Sabby at the entrance to a classroom

We drove for hours! The traffic was bad. In India you don't look ahead at the traffic as the driving is completely mad! Amazingly, there are relatively few accidents; logically there should be many, many more.



Eventually we made it and visited a number of classes. The rooms are rented and then the teachers have full sway. The decorations are delightful, bright, sharp and instructive and the teachers are proud of their efforts. Also they decorate the attendance and report books (is there a competition???) That's Glenn the Exec director of



Lotus Outreach ([www.lotusoutreach.org](http://www.lotusoutreach.org)) and Sabrina the coordinator or the many classrooms all over the place!

The next day off to Rohini where we had the honor of opening the new Hub. Sabrina has found it necessary to make a centralized office where there is room for an office, a meeting hall, a sewing class (part of STEP – see below) and a way to keep tabs on all the facets of the program.



STEP – Skills Training for Employment – runs 6 month sewing classes for 30 women aged 16 to 30 years of age. One class had finished and so I was able to give them their graduation certificates.

We then had lunch together and a very pleasant discussion with most of the teachers and off to visit more classes... There is nothing more to say: the







children are adorable and one was so conscious of the joy they have in coming to class. We met some mothers later on that day also.

When asked why they send their children – one mother had never missed bringing her two boys on time – they explained that all of them had only completed Class 4 and they didn't



want that for their children. Class 4 means that they quit school at around 8 years of age: because they were needed at home for work,

looking after siblings or maybe there were no alternatives in their area. Whatever the reason it is usually based on poverty. So, they were all determined that their kids would do better.



The next phase of my visit was off to the South: a small village about half an hour outside of Vellore. There Dr Manivannan and his trusty wife Sheela have spent 17 years establishing the Garden of Peace (GOP) (<http://gardenofpeace.org.in>). In order to realize the dream, they spent 17 years recreating the topsoil of land that has been stripped for brick making. In fact the people thought he was so mad to even try something like that that they sold him 10 acres for under \$7,000!!!. The land is near some hills and so the rain washes soil down but that is not enough. They had to add leaves and manure and work incredibly hard but now the land is valuable! They are making a mango plantation and adding coconut trees all around the edge!

But we did not go to the GOP for that. We were visiting our fantastic oil mills. Dr Mani is particularly interested in oil. He feels that it is so important for health and so easily adulterated, that he has always wanted to create



high quality oil. Also, good oil is essential for traditional medicine, the famous Ayurvedic system. And so GOP oil in much demand.

Since 2015, they have been making peanut, coconut and black sesame oil using the ancient method of a granite basin, a wooden pestle driven by two bullocks. It is laborious but the 30 liters of oil produced each day are of the highest quality, much sought after and so they fetch a good price. Dr. Mani has hunted high and



low for support for two electric grinders, and (□) we were able to oblige. These are kept at a low rpm or 15 in order to make equally good cold pressed oil.



Tribal kids with their dedicated teacher

The GOP runs a primary school mainly for the children of people who smash big stones by hand for road building etc. There are also tribal children probably from the people driven to the south by the Aryan invasions of 1500 BCE. Basically, these people as well as other low castes have everything stacked against them and education is the only hope. So Dr. Mani's dream has always been to help them and, at present, there are 180 primary school children going to GOP. The sad thing is that they have to go elsewhere to attend secondary school which – thanks

to the primary education – they can now do. However enormous differences are noticed. This all came to light when we had a marvelous meeting-discussion with the teachers.



Off to school –  
uniform in the wash!

The teachers reported that at the GOP school, the education is much more rounded with agricultural activities and sports. The result of the small classes, freedom for the teachers in using their own methodology, choice of discipline means that the children are (quote) “happy.” The teachers reported that when the children change schools, weaker students are neglected, the classes suffer from favoritism and the parents notice that their children become more selfish. And so GOP hopes to open a secondary school ..... one day. And, of course, they need a proper art room, science lab etc. I sincerely hope that the funds can be found one day.

So after all this – and 10 days in Ladakh with my dear friends – I left India once more as always a little sad. I must admit that I felt quite disoriented when I first came home but now all is back to normal?

What is normal???

May you all be well and happy!



Dr. Manivannan, daughter Nile, a friend, Sheela and son Rishi

**Why don't you, dear reader, go and visit???**