

## NEWSLETTER OF DECEMBER, 2007

Dear Saksham Friends,

The year 2007 began on a very sad note for the children of Nithari, with the discovery of the skulls and bones of the missing children from the drains around D-5, a house belonging to an affluent businessman in the neighbourhood, Moninder Singh Pandher. It was a horrible reminder staring in the face of the migrant population of Nithari, that the lives of their children hardly had any value attached to it.

At Saksham, the kids talked about it non-stop in the initial weeks and months. Gradually, it was shelved at the back of their minds for the time being, as is our wont, with most of the tragic events that happen to us. But to believe that the trauma totally disappears is perhaps wishful thinking.

Now that a year is gone by, Nithari has again become the focus of media attention.

A journalist from Hindustan Times had visited Saksham with a team of three psychologists. They interacted with the children and on the basis of drawings and writings, they have concluded that there is still a lot of suppressed fear and insecurity in the minds of the kids. The article on the workshop was published on the 22nd of December.

Today's Hindustan Times also carry a report based on their visit to the school yesterday. They had wanted to see the skit that the children had enacted in April this year as part of the finale of the theatre workshop conducted by the group "Pandies" during the year 2006-2007. Today's article focuses on the play and the children's responses. The report can be accessed in the internet version of Hindustan Times, if you register as a user, which won't take you more than a couple of minutes.

A team from NDTV had also visited the school and spent a couple of hours talking to the children, some of the mothers and the teachers. They will be telecasting the report tomorrow, they said.

A recap on what we have been up to in Saksham during the rest of the year.



Classes have been going on very regularly. As you know, the school is being run in two shifts now. We have a strength which is around 350, sometimes more, sometimes less. In the morning shift, we have enrolled children starting from the age group of 3. We felt that this will at least provide some sense of security to the kids, who have to be left behind at home, when the mothers go to work.



Some older children also bring along their little siblings, as otherwise, they themselves will not be able to attend school.



Many of the older children are going to the Senior Secondary Govt. School and many

more have been streamlined into the govt. primary school after giving them a basic schooling for making them literate. All these children, however attend the evening classes as the continuity of coaching is required to maintain the desirable standard of education.



Similarly, many kids who had been going to primary school in the villages and who had discontinued their studies after migrating to the city, have also been put back to school after coaching them.



For a large number of other kids, Saksham still continues to be their only source of learning.

The kids did have lots of occasions for fun during this year. We celebrated Independence Day with a programme in the community Centre in the neighbourhood.

Around 150 children got an opportunity to see a circus, courtesy the benevolence of the owner, Shri Dilip, who is a friend of Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, one of the Trustees of Saksham. It was indeed a memorable outing for them.



Colonel J.P. Santhanam, who has been a friend of Saksham for a long time now, has donated a T.V, in very good condition, for the children of Saksham. Every day, the little ones watch the Cartoon channel by turns. The older ones watch the News etc. Thanks a lot J.P :-)

Ashit Saxena, who has been supporting Saksham, from the very beginning has sponsored the cost of "sattu", a drink which is made out of roasted gram which is being given to the children, twice a week. Sangita, one of the teachers is being paid for supplying the "sattu" powder. Along with jaggery, the drink will give the kids some amount of nutrition and barring one or two, all the children like the taste of the drink. Thanks Ashit :-)



Dr. J.K Jain, Shri P.C. Jain and Shri B.K.Jain, have been coming to the school every Thursday, without fail for providing free medical check-ups. Initially started only for the children, the programme has been extended to the parents and nowadays, there is a long line of patients waiting. The medicines are also being supplied by this team, free of cost. One must put on record our sincere thanks to Smita Jain( who is now pursuing her studies in the U.S.) for roping in her parents, Mr. and Mrs. B.K. Jain to become friends of Saksham, who in their turn have introduced many other well-wishers to support the efforts of Saksham.) The medical check-ups have been very beneficial in curtailing the incidents of minor illnesses as well as in detecting more serious ones, which is being followed up. Five cases of T.B was discovered and the medication course is on. We are very grateful to this team.

Support from the group "Jatan" is continuing. They organised a Sports Day for the children in a park in the neighbourhood, which the kids really enjoyed. The Morna classes, supported by Jatan, are going on regularly and many of the children can read and write fluently now. Thanks a lot to the team of "Jatan."

U.K based Dr. Ramesh Shamdasani, of the Saibaba Trust, who had been approached by Smita Jain, to find out the probabilities of financial support from them, had sent us a cheque of Rs. 2500/ with the promise that they would consider continued assistance if

convinced about the genuineness and effectiveness of our work. Dr. Ramesh, during a recent visit to Delhi, visited the school and gave us another cheque of Rs. 10,000. He expressed happiness at the work we were doing, but at the same time shared his views that we would gradually have to think of making our endeavours self-supporting at least to some extent. Opinions/ suggestions on this aspect from all our Saksham friends are absolutely welcome.

Saksham's work has been greatly helped with some very substantial contributions during this year. We wish to place on record our sincere thanks to Vijay Enterprises and the Saraswati Educational and Social Welfare Society for their generosity and support for this cause. Saksham is similarly grateful to all the others who have contributed financially, in kind and with their time and moral support, without which, it would have been very difficult to take this work forward despite all our good intentions.

Sincere thanks to Tariq Salaam, who designed and put in place the website of Saksham ([www.sakshamkids.org](http://www.sakshamkids.org)). We really appreciate it.

If something has been left out, it is not wilful. Do forward this newsletter to your friends as well as others who may be interested in knowing about this work.

To conclude, wishing all of you a very happy, healthy new year. Looking forward to your continuing support.

Nadira Razak,  
General Secretary, Saksham