



## TRIBAL MENSA NURTURING PROGRAM

MENSA INDIA PUNE CHAPTER

Sita- Wildflower in Tribal Niche

### Sita- Wildflower in Tribal Niche

Monthly Report- August and September 2007

Dear Narayan *dada*,

Our first acquaintance was through your letter and so I am writing one in reply. In your first letter you wrote to me about my selection as a Mensan as well as about the ***Maher Ghar*** (Mother's home) that you have been developing for us. You also informed me about the first workshop known as "***Kartik Damodar***" starting from 24<sup>th</sup> November to 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007. It has turned out to be the new beginning in the life of this wildflower from the Tribal Niche.

On the evening of **24<sup>th</sup> November**, I finally arrived at the *Maher Ghar*. Huddled in the bus for around three hours with students from other schools, we arrived at the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Centre which is the **Nishta Kendra, Kamshet** tired and cold. You immediately made us sit down comfortably and spoke to us in a friendly manner. As we were all a bit cold, sitting out in the open, you first handed a dark green color monkey cap to all of us. There we sat, under the shed, all similar, all one, wearing a green monkey cap! You made it clear in the first instance that you were not our teacher, that we could call you by your first name cause we are all equal in terms of being Mensans and intelligent. You spoke to me like I was your younger sister and I was sure you would take care of me.

You put us into groups with other children from our school so as to make us feel comfortable. As we were trying to settle into the new places with so many unknown faces around us, you made sure we had comfortable place and things to sleep with. In the morning I was awoken by the sound of '*Suprabhatam*'. As the day unrolled before me I realized that this place had a different system. We were informed about a time table and were not forced to do anything but just reminded of our responsibilities.

How was this different from the school time table? Well, at *Maher Ghar* I was made aware of the tasks I needed to do everyday but I had the choice to decide when I would do it in the entire day. There was no bell as the one rang in our school but just *shlokas* to wake you up and mentors to guide us throughout the day.

As our mentors took us for a tour around the house I realized there was a specific arrangement in this *Maher Ghar*. Everyone had been assigned rooms and each space was identified by a name, by a God's name with its use specified (Annexure I). I was staying in a room with all girls and it was called **Govind Kaksha**.

You gave us so many new things which I was free to use but also act responsibly as it belonged to my group and finally my *Maher Ghar*. The **stationary box** prepared with the material brought from **Abhinav Pustak Mandir** and the **coloured sheets of paper** prepared by **Step-in copiers** were one of the most new and

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liked part of the things. Apart from the stationary material, you had taken care of all the **items of daily use** required by us. Like you had written in the letter, each of the groups had their own **toiletries** like soap for bathing and washing, talcum powder, as well as a comb and hair-oil. Who would have thought that attention would have been paid to these needs as well? Each group was also given **buckets and mugs, mosquito-coil, torch.**

When you saw that on the first day as there was no school bell nor clocks, some of my brothers woke up 3.30 in the morning, you brought **small clocks** for us. These clocks showed the time, as well as you taught us how to set an alarm on it for the next morning. **Blankets and carry mats** to sleep on, **plates, bowls** and **glass** for each family member. There were also sweaters given to some of us who hadn't brought any and they were given to us by Yusuf dada (**Yusuf Jariwala**).

The *Maher Ghar* was our own and thus we played our own part in looking after it. The **five groups** which were made by you were given five different responsibilities. Each group was assigned a color by which it would be easily recognized (Annexure II).

We were given the yellow color which was for the 'Food Arrangement Group'. As we were a group of 10 girls we would be responsible for getting the food, serving it, disposing off left over food and putting everything for wash, cleaning before and after food in the Vishwa Kaksha. Slowly I know we will be given more responsibilities like helping in cooking the food as well as giving information to students about the benefits of what they eat.

You also appointed a leader and an assistant leader for all the five groups. I was not the leader this time. But you said that leaders would change every time and hence all of us would get the chance to lead. Thus each family member had a responsibility to fulfill. Similarly my brothers from the White group were in-charge of cleaning the activity rooms, keeping the toilets and bathrooms clean, keeping the centre surrounding area clean, keep shoes and chappals properly. Once these tasks are perfected, other tasks like organizing prayers and puja, taking care of electricity, attendance register and helping in cleaning vessels after meals would be added for them.

The boys from the Blue group had to arrange for *Madh Pani* (Honey in warm water) in the morning, serving water during meals, purifying water for drinking, arrange drinking water near activity rooms, water arrangements for washing hands and feet.

The boys from the Green group were in-charge of the garden. Their responsibilities consisted of tending to the garden, preparing a nursery and plantation, keeping the outside area of the clean. The Red group had

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some interesting tasks to do like arranging a notice board, seating arrangement, movie watching, library, board games and other game equipment, welcome and entertainment for guests.

There was so much to do suddenly. Then we were told to do prioritize the tasks and slowly add a task at a time to the group responsibilities. We all made a chart listing our own tasks and put it up in our activity rooms. This helped us remember who was appointed what task and whom we could help in their activity. Thus, this activity helped me in understanding the tasks, its details, how to organize, how to allocate the work between group members and fit it in given time.

Food was served to us with a lot of attention and care. You insisted we ate enough and were always given what we asked for. While eating, stories were being read for us. Our meals included vegetables, pulses, whole grains, rice, biscuits and milk and sweet like rice kheer or jaggery and ghee or sheera (sweet made of Semolina).

We also played many games with you. We competed with groups while playing relay races, then we played the voice modulation games and dog and the bone games.

This time you had done something very new for me. There was a small screen and a computer which played movies! And you showed so many different kinds of them. There were movies of animals and forests, and there was also a movie with people who didn't talk but only made actions. I have never seen a man with such a small moustache (Charlie Chaplin) be so clumsy or create such chaos. The sound of our laughter together, you and all the children still rings in my ears. You also showed my Marathi movies like *Sant Dyaneshwar* and *Shyamchi aai*. I thoroughly enjoyed all the films I saw during my stay. One boy after the movie Syamchi aai cried. And you sat there with him at 11 o'clock at night.

You spoke to us every morning and I can still remember some of the important things you spoke to us about. You told us the importance of washing our hands and feet and keeping clean to avoid the entrance of *Kali* (disease or illness) in us. You told us the importance of sitting in an upright position, and corrected our postures. That would help the Brahma nadi to become upright thus allowing smooth flow of energy.

In the morning when we all got together soon after the Maun (silence) period, we all would chant '*Hare ram hare ram*' and '*Hare krishna hare krishna*' together. we all could feel the rise in energy in all of us as well as in the room.

You spoke about sharing amongst us and feel brotherly towards everyone, as we are all the same in intelligence. I did make some friends and I still have to get to know so many other members of this new family. Sometimes we would sit in our rooms and work on projects given by you and your team like doing a

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collage or writing a poem or a poster competition for the name of the group. Each activity we did, had its own importance, like you arranged for a competition for reciting shlokas. This not only encouraged us to memorize the shlokas but to learn how to say it together as a group with correct pronunciation. Then you also gave us a song which you had written for us. We also put a tune for it, five groups five different tunes.

I met so many new people; there were other intelligent young people who like us had been your students, like, **Harshal dada, Chaitanya dada, Linata tai, Shruti tai and Anuja tai**. Then there were also **Sameena tai, Sashi tai and Varsha tai** who had come to our schools during the Mensa test.

All that you have done to bring us here! **Writing letters** to each one of us to writing letters to our principals and teachers. And then **taking consent** from **Kapse sahib** (Project Officer, Ghodegaon) and school authorities to extend their support and cooperation for the project. Sameena tai and Sachin dada had personally visited each school to talk to the principals and schools about the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program.

As so many schools were not familiar with Nishta Kendra you made travel arrangements for all the children to be picked up from our schools and dropped back after the program. And as you have taught us, to give blessings instead of just saying thank you, I would like to do the same for so many people. To **Sevadham trust**, **Chang Bhale** (Wishing you good) to provide us the bus and jeep to help us get to the centre and then back to school. **Chang Bhale** to **Kiran dada** for helping with the travel plan. All the people who helped you in gathering the material for the workshop like **Sukumar Beri, Sachin dada, Varsha tai, Amit dada, Chang Bhale** for all of them. **Chang Bhale** to **Dixit kaku** for preparing such *Sattvik* (pious) food for all of us and **Dixit kaka** for taking care of things at the centre.

**Chang Bhale** for all those people who came from Pune to be with us, to teach us, to play with us. There was **Deshpande kaku** who looked after all our meals, **Anjali tai, Devesena tai, Swapna tai** and **Neha tai** who taught us new things. The four *dada's* from **Jnana Prabodhini** who played games with us, told us stories and taught us new songs. They spoke to us about their school and lessons of respect and love and devotion for parents, our country and guests that they had learnt from their masters and in their lives.

Sashi tai who took care of us as well as worked on making a profile of each child by doing psychological tests and collecting information.

There were guests who cam to visit he center, Dr. Gore and Dr. Vadhokar from Sevadham Trust. As well as Col. Joshi, the Chief Mentor for Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program.

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*Chang Bhale* to Dr. Vadhokar and **Sevadham Hospital** for providing medical treatment to one of my brothers. He had fever and *dada* immediately rushed him to the hospital with Amit *dada*. Then while Narayan *dada* went to get the teacher from Shaskiya Madhyamik Ashram Shala, Gohe Sachin *dada* stayed with him. Narayan *dada* also told me how **Surve sir** (Teacher) immediately came to the hospital and took care of the boy who was ill. He was present to leave the children to the centre as well as to take hem back to school. Such teachers who extend their support and co-operation to the program are essential and form an important link between the Tribal Mensa Project and the school authorities.

At the end of the four days, you even asked us what we liked or didn't like at our *Maher Ghar* or what else would we like to have. I agree that we may have taken time to open up and start talking to you but you took the time to talk to each one of us. We all ate together, watched movies together, played together and had fun together. Remember how we were laughing and enjoying on the last day. We were all sitting in the Anant Kaksha and all the groups were performing plays or one of my friends who sang a song, another who cracked a joke and there were others who told stories. And this togetherness is what we need to build more amongst us. With our groups and group leaders we are to excel at the tasks we do, we need to be creative in what we do and we need to take responsibility for what we do.

Narayan *dada* you not only taught us new things at our *Maher Ghar* but you also told us what we are to take back from here to our schools. All the material you gave us was properly packed and returned to you on the understanding that it will be kept for us till we visit our *Maher Ghar* again. What we can take back to our schools is the things we have learnt here, like reciting prayers in the school, spreading awareness about maintaining personal hygiene, and sharing in school all that happened in the four days at the *Maher Ghar*. You have also told us to get you information about the *Deorai* (sacred groves) near our school. I will definitely do that. As you have given us so many gifts at the *Maher Ghar*, I will get you the gift in the form of the information about the *Deorai* around my school. I will observe closely everything in the *Deorai* using all my five senses as I have learnt from you.

And when you come next to visit me in my school, I will show all I have done. And then I shall return again to my *Maher Ghar* where once I learnt so much to and to learn so much more.

Your sister,

Sita.

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This is how I felt and what happened during the first part of the Nurturing Program. How did such a Nurturing Program come into being?

Once long back I had mentioned that Devasena *tai* and Anjali *tai* have been working on a concept for the Nurturing Program. Then Narayan *dada*, having read the Bhagwatam, Geeta and studying it, designed the Nurturing Program based on the five Koshas. These five Koshas which are:

1. Annamaya Kosha- related to healthy food and exercise
2. Pranamaya Kosha- related to the five Karmendriyas and five Jnanendriyas
3. Manomaya Kosha- related to feelings, and emotions
4. Vidyamanamaya Kosha- related to intelligence
5. Anandmaya Kosha- related to spirituality and serving the society

The Nurturing Program is thus based on these five Koshas and we, the Tribal Gifted children will be taken from one level to another level. For such type of nurturing to express, to manifest the nurtured qualities a platform is essential. The platforms in this model are psychological, ecological and social.

The psychological platform will talk about inside composition of the Gifted Tribal students. The ecological platform will deal with relationship between us and the landscape. The social platform will emphasize our role in the community. Each platform at each Kosha is drafted with defined aim, objectives and method. The method includes psychological assessment, ecological action and social awareness. In this way the Nurturing program has been conceptualized by *dada*.

As has been explained in the nurturing program concept, the five Koshas are manifested not only through activities but also in the atmosphere of the centre, the time-table set for the children, the resources made available for the children and through the living and eating arrangements as well.

One can review the program in terms of the activities done through out the day or how each Kosha has been successfully introduced and implemented throughout the five days of the program.

### 1. Annamaya Kosha

**Food:** In the morning children were given Honey and warm water (Madh Pani) to drink. This helps to clear the digestive system and is a more healthy substitute for tea in the morning.

Food prepared at the centre was healthy, nutritious and *Sattvik* (pious). Food was prepared without using onion and garlic. The atmosphere during eating was created with care given to washing hands before eating, being served with love and care, children eating as much as they want. While we ate, a volunteer read out aloud a story or spoke about the different forms of Ganapati in different kinds of fruits and vegetables. This helped in creating an atmosphere which was calm, quiet as well as

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informative and interesting while eating. Narayan *dada* during food asked us to chant God's name and recite shlokas (prayer). He also explained the meaning of the shlokas to us. As I understand eating and preparing food is a spiritual activity. It is performing 'Yajna'. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Sri Mad Bhagwat Gita, Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, that he resides in every body, be it animal or plants, in the form of fire (by the name of Viashwa). Eating pious food is like giving an offering to him. Thus, sweet, ghee (butter) and six different *rasa*'s (juices/tastes) are very much essential in our daily meals. He also explained how many Lord Vishnu's forms are in the different food items. Thus, in this way he started explaining every action in terms of its principles (like eating food) which we performed daily.

**Exercise:** Every morning from 7.30 to 8.30 am we exercised. We were taught Surya Namaskar by Anand *dada*. Posters with each posture in Surya Namaskar were put up around the centre for us to see and learn. The first three postures were performed correctly by all of us.

There were also outdoor games which we played to help us utilize all our physical energy. On the second day we played some games with Narayan *dada*. We had lots of fun; we made two groups and then had competitions among the two groups in the games. Games were based on team work, mental ability, observation skills, communication skills and concentration. After every game, Narayan *dada* explained the importance of the game and what skills were nurtured through it.

Volunteers from the *Yuvak Vibhag* (Youth club) at Jnana Prabodhini took a two hour playing session for us. They taught us slogans and told us to compete with each other. The boys played tug of war whereas we played *langdi* (skipping on one leg, trying to catch others).

### 2. Pranamaya Kosha

**Cleanliness:** We were told the importance of washing hands and feet after visiting the toilet as well as before eating. We were also told about Kali (disease or illness) and the only way to prevent it was by maintaining personal hygiene. We already had one group appointed for keeping the centre clean as well as the Blue group making arrangements for soap and towel at specific places for washing.

For inner cleanliness we played a game taught by *dada*, it involved control of breath. This would help us to breathe more deeply and increase the intake of oxygen in our body.

### 3. Manomaya Kosha

**Sharing:** We were divided into five groups and each group was given material and daily use items to be shared. This helped us learn group cooperation, sharing with one another and understanding each others needs. Incidents where there were conflicts among us were pointed at and criticized. We were encouraged to do not only our own individual tasks but also help others in their tasks and work as a group together.

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**Entertainment:** We saw a lot of comedy films. We enjoyed the films with the whole group. There were also sessions where we were encouraged to come up and perform songs, plays, jokes in front of the whole group. This helped us gain confidence and the whole group was able to enjoy together.

### 4. Vidyanamaya Kosha

**Creativity:** We were encouraged to write poetry. In our stationary boxes we were given varied pens, colors and other stationary to experiment with. Another activity involved making collage out of photographs given to each group. A poster competition with the theme of "Name your group based on a religious place" was also held. Lastly we were also asked to choose an animal to which we had a similarity in nature or personality with. This helped us make associations with different animals.

**Observation skill:** Observation was introduced to the us through 3 activities. The first activity was to make observations of an object given to each group. The mentor for each group helped us make observations using all five senses and demonstrated the same. My group was the Yellow group and the object given to us was a potato. As we were trying to make observations, Sameena *tai* helped us by once asking us to close our eyes and just feel the potato in our hands, smell it. Then Narayan *dada* also came and he made a short poem instantly asking questions to the potato, talking to it. That made us all smile and helped us think more about what we could write about the potato. The second activity involved taking all the five groups out for a walk where we would make observations using our five senses. Then each group was asked to assemble all their information together and represent it using a drawing, a map, a story, a poem etc.

The last activity for Observation involved looking at a picture and writing down all that one can observe. We were also asked to think of what must be the past, present and future of the picture as well as what were our feelings or thoughts on the picture. Each group then presented their observations to the whole group.

### 5. Anandmaya Kosha

**Serving others:** We were encouraged to serve others as well as work for the centre, our *Maher Ghar*. As mentioned above each group was given a task involving working for the centre as a whole and doing things for the other children, like serving food, water, maintaining cleanliness of the centre etc.

**Short talks:** We were always spoken to with respect. We were also asked to respect all the guests and mentors who came to the centre. While the guests or resource persons left us we were taught to say

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*Chang Bhale* (Wishing you Good) as a gesture of gratitude. There was also recitation of prayers and we were told the importance of praying to God.

**Story-telling:** We were told short stories or personal experiences through which one could bring out values like respect, devotion and love for parents, the feeling of love with which guests are taken care of in our culture.

In this way the four days unrolled with the five koshas intermingled through each activity, action, thought or thing present at the *Maher Ghar*.

After the 4 days were over, I am sure the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program team members had to complete other work as well. I know that **Sashi tai** made an inventory of the material purchased for the workshop. In this accountability would be maintained and they will get a clear picture as to the requirements for the next program.

Then of course there was a meeting at Thane, Mumbai with **Disha Foundation Trust**. There amongst all the Non Governmental Organization, the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program was presented to all and so many people got to know about us. Now having completed the report for this first workshop, focus is being given to preparing an expenditure statement for the workshop.

Having done all of this I, Sita hope to have my dreams come true. To have a *Maher Ghar* where I have the freedom of choice is a dream in itself. I know I will need to work harder. Not only do I have to do my regular school work but now there is added responsibility to do the work for my *Maher Ghar*. So let me get back to work and I will write to you soon.

**Sita** (Wildflower in Tribal Niche, Looking for Disha, To experience Santosh in My Life)

### (Monthly Report, November 2007)

Written by: Ms. Sameena Manasawala

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Annexure I

### ROOM ARRANGEMENTS

Ground floor	Name	Assigned for
Room 1	Keshav Kaksh	Women teachers and resource person
Room 2	Madhav Kaksh	Women teachers and resource person
Room 3	Govind Kaksh	Tribal Mensans Girls (10 Girls)
Room 4	Dhyan Kaksh	Prayer, library, movie, activity room
Room 5	Anirudh Kaksh	Grocery storage
Room 6	Osari	For shoes, brooms, rangoli
Room 7	Padvi	Kitchen
Room 8	Anant Kaksh	Dixit family
Room 9	Vishwa Kaksh (Shed)	Food, activity, exercise, games
Room 10	Nishta Kaksh	Exhibition, meetings, activity

Toilets were assigned as one downstairs for Tribal Mensans-Boys, one inside the Tribal Mensan Girls room for their use. One toilet outside for Women resource persons and Dixit family.

First floor	Name	Assigned for
Room 1	Shri Krishna Kaksh	Tribal Mensa- Boys (10 boys)
Room 2	Shri Ram Kaksh	Tribal Mensa- Boys (10 boys)
Room 3	Vaman Kaksh	Tribal Mensa- Boys (10 boys)
Room 4	Parshuram Kaksh	Tribal Mensa- Boys (10 boys)
Room 5	Shri Dhar Kaksh	Teachers/Volunteers- Men
Room 6	Damodar Kaksh	Activity room, storage room-stationary
Room 7	Anant Kaksh	Activity room, Entertainment

Toilets on the first floor were assigned for the teacher and resource persons only.

The Vedvyas Kaksh on the outside was for Narayan dada, guests and government officials.

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Annexure II

### **Group division/Assigned tasks/ Mentors**

<b>School</b>	<b>Group color</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Mentor</b>
Malegaon, Aasane and Kohinde	White	Cleanliness in-charge	Shruti, Anuja
Vadeshwar and Terungan	Blue	Water in-charge	Sameena, Swapna
Gohe	Green	Garden in-charge	Harshal, Anjali Joshi
Phulawade and Tokawade	Red	Entertainment in-charge	Chaitanya, Sashi Sarvade
Girls only	Yellow	Food in-charge	Linata, Sameena

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