

## Newsletter from The Vatsalya Foundation

July - September 2013

Dear Friends,

The months July, August and September are full of festivity as well as studies at the time at Vatsalya. Children at the Shelter Home and the centres look forward to the events in this period while settling down in their new classes.

### Education



The staff of the Shelter Home and the centres visited the schools to check the progress and behaviour of the children. A rapport with the teachers is maintained in order that our children are treated without any discrimination by the teachers and the other school children. If any issue in the behaviour of a child is found out it is sorted out by counselling the child. Regular visits to the homes of the children were made to ensure that children from the centres and outreach attend school regularly and parents provide the necessary support.

Chetan Medhekar, a student of 12<sup>th</sup> std. in Ambedkar College, Wadala, is an enthusiastic member of NCC at his college. He has participated in many camps and events as part of NCC activities. He stood first in drill competition from 400 NCC cadets in Combined Annual Training Camp held in Virar.

### Festivals of the season

Festivals are a means to celebrate life. At Vatsalya festivals of all the religions as well as the national ones are the medium to inculcate in children the values of love towards one and all and respect for diversity. They are also a platform to bring out leadership qualities of children and to express their joy in the form of cultural programmes.

**Rakshabandhan - the bond of love** is one of the most awaited festivals at Vatsalya. August 20<sup>th</sup> was marked by dances, delicious food and togetherness at the Shelter Home. Children belonging to different religions from all the centres celebrated the festival of love and respect towards each other by tying *rakhis*. *Didis and Uncles* (staff of vatsalya) joined the children in tying *rakhis*. Parents, donors and old children were present too to enjoy the festival. Children of each centre had prepared dances which they performed for the audience. After the cultural programme and *rakhi* ceremony the children were served a sumptuous lunch of *puri, matar-panir, pulav, shira*, and banana. Around 200 children participated in the event, many of whom for the first time. They learnt the value of togetherness as well as love and respect for everyone.

**Ganapati Festival** is a ten-day affair at the Shelter Home every year. The boys of the Shelter Home started the preparation a few days before the festival by booking an eco-friendly Ganapati and cleaning the premises. The children were involved in all the activities from bringing the idol of

Ganapati till its immersion. They along with the staff performed the *arati* twice every day during Sep. 9 - 18, the festival time. The donors and well wishers of Vatsalya were invited for *Ganapati darshan* and to participate in the *arati*. The *maha-arati* was organized twice during the festival period in which the children from the centres were invited and lunch was served to all. The children learn to organize an event by taking up responsibilities like performing the *arati* on time, distributing the *prasad*, hosting the guests, decorating the place.

The children of each centre were taken to visit various Ganesh Pandals in their nearby area. They were invited to Heera Panna Society to perform dance number by a donor.

**Eid** too is an important and popular festival celebrated at Vatsalya. Each centre celebrated *eid* in its own way. The Mahim centre organized an *Iftar* party on Sep. 9<sup>th</sup> at the centre in which all the children of the centre participated. The group of Muslim children brought sweets for everyone and celebrated with songa and dance. South Mumbai centre also celebrated *eid* by eating sweets



Children visit ganapati pandal (top left) and Ganapati festival at Shelter Home (top right). Rakshabandhan celebrations at Shelter Home (down)

together and playing games. The staff conducted a session on *eid* at all the centres to explain about *eid*.

The children of Shelter Home were taken for Mumbai Darshan by a charitable trust '*Khushiyan*' on the occasion of *eid* wherein they saw the Gateway of India, Worli Seaface and Hanging Garden. The children danced and had lunch of *chhole-puri* along with sweets. The bus ride all over Mumbai in their new t-shirts was very enjoyable too besides learning the historical and cultural aspects of Mumbai from the tour.

**Independence Day** was celebrated on Aug. 15<sup>th</sup> by the children at their school and also at the Shelter Home by participating in the flag hoisting ceremony. Group sessions were conducted at each of the centres by the staff on the importance and relevance of Independence Day.

Vatsalya was part of the campaign of TV channel Star Plus '**Saath Hain Hum Uttarakhand**' to raise funds for relief and rehabilitation of people of Uttarakhand which was struck by floods, storm and landslides recently. Film actor Vivek Oberoi visited Vatsalya and interacted with the kids on helping the people of Uttarakhand. The children presented him a sapling, a symbol of peace and prosperity, along with their belongings such as tooth brushes, soaps, as donation to the people of Uttarakhand. The interaction was aired on the channel on Aug. 15<sup>th</sup> in a seven hour-long programme.

Besides the festivals the children got an opportunity to watch the movie '**Chennai Express**' on Aug. 11<sup>th</sup>, a sponsored recreational activity which children enjoyed thoroughly. More than 200 children from Shelter Home, South Mumbai, Mahim and Bandra centres enjoyed the movie as well as the snacks provided by the donor at a multiplex in Dadar. They also watched '**Bhag Milkha Bhag**' and were inspired to pursue their goal with determination.

Vocational skill training provided to the children in the age group 12-18 years builds confidence in them and paves way for their financial independence. As many as 10 girls of Mahim centre were enrolled in *mehendi* and computer classes. At the Bandra centre 12 girls were enrolled in sewing classes while 4 boys and girls began their computer classes.



**Art & Craft session conducted by ASCEND group (left) and Mumbai Darshan by 'Khushiyan' (right)**

**ASCEND** is a group of students who volunteer to support the grassroots NGOs. Ayushi, Nikita, Ayesha, Ishaana and Anushray spent five days from Jul 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> at the Shelter Home to teach the children art, acting, dance, public speaking and gardening. Each day they taught one topic and were enriched in return by the warmth and love of our children. They were surprised to know the talents and skills of our children.

A group of seven children of the Shelter Home were part of the musical-play '**Grease**' produced by Raell Padamsee's ACE Productions. The boys performed a dance in the play along with the children of a few other NGOs of Mumbai at the prestigious NCPA Theatre on Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. They had put in months of practice before the performance with the other members of the play.



**Film actor Shahid Kapoor interacting with the children of Vatsalya**

The boys of the Shelter Home were pleasantly surprised to receive film actor Shahid Kapoor on September 5<sup>th</sup>. Shahid spoke to the boys at length and answered all their questions. Sumit Jadhav, our 10 year old boy, asked him how much hard work was required to be a hero in a film and impressed him a lot. Shahid appreciated the fact that the boys from Vatsalya have become instructors at Shaiamk Davar's Institute from where he has also learnt dance. He liked the thank you card made by the boys. TV channel Zoom brought Shahid to Vatsalya as part of the promotional tour for his film.

Warm regards,

The Vatsalya Foundation Team

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