



## TRIBAL MENSA NURTURING PROGRAM

MENSA INDIA PUNE CHAPTER

Sita- Wildflower in Tribal Niche

### Opening ceremony for Nishta: Tribal Mensa Nurturing Centre

#### Report for 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007

Sita, the wildflower has been found from among green pastures in the Ghats. She was found among 2200 children. 64 such beautiful wildflowers in the Tribal Niche which had strong fragrance and vibrant colors were found along with her (50 boys and 14 girls), from 12 schools in Maval, Khed, Ambegaon and Junnar talukas. Sita, born in a village at the base of the Western Ghats and studying in one of the Government Ashram schools has now an open access to our world. What is it that we would like to show her, give her, teach her.....

Considering the financial constraints of the project, **50 Tribal Mensans** out of the bunch of 64 have been selected for the **Nurturing program of 18 months**. Swami Vivekanand asked for a 1000 youth who could be nurtured to work for the development of society. We have 50 of them, to build a similar army.

To build this army, that is nurture these wildflowers, we need a fertile land where they can grow. One such fertile land has been chosen to grow and nurture these seeds of intelligence. **Nishta Kendra** at Mauli nagar, Kamshet has been committed to us by **Sevadham Trust**, the land owners for the next **5 years**. This centre will be developed as the **Tribal Mensa Nurturing Centre**. The centre will be developed keeping in mind the background these Gifted children come from and their needs.

Nishta Center has been conceptualized as:

**N** stands for **Nature**, **I** stands for **Intellect**, **S** stands for **Synergy**, **H** stands for **Habitat**, **T** stands for **Tribal** and **A** stands for **Ambassador**. So **Nishta** stands for **Nature and Intellect Synergy Habitat** for **Tribal Ambassador**.

This land will be ploughed and enriched with manure with the help of **Disha Foundation Trust** and **Niteingale Charitable Trust**. This centre will be developed so as to encompass facilities like audio-visual learning aids, educational DVD's and VCD's, scientific and

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academic books, various activity material, games and sports equipment, religious and spiritual books.

The land will be looked after by Dr. Narayan Desai who will be the farmer in-charge for growing and nurturing the young minds. As the land is huge and the seeds (children with high intelligence) are precious, others will join Dr. Desai in his quest to cultivate these wildflowers. These include Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program team members, resource persons who will come and share their expertise in the field of education, creativity, social skills, ecology, and philosophy, psychologists who will do assessment, and other mentors to provide guidance and support.

These 50 Tribal Mensans will come to the Nishta Centre once every month on Saturday and Sunday. Here they will be exposed to different skills and will do various activities in psychological, education, environmental, social, emotional and spiritual areas. These children will simultaneously be carrying out projects in their schools, with their peers and in their villages to explore and apply their leadership skills. And thus through this nurturing program the seeds will bloom into beautiful, fragrant, vibrant wildflowers which will spread over their schools and villages.

On **9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007** an opening ceremony was organized to mark the beginning of the nurturing phase of the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program. The doors were opened to 50 Tribal Gifted children for nurturing their potential and developing leaders amongst them during the next 18 months.

In order to develop the existing property into a Centre for the Tribal Gifted Children the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program team along with other technicians undertook repair and construction work. The top most priority was given to repairing all the toilets and sewage system of the centre as well as repairing electrical connections and lines. An added shed in the verandah of the centre was also constructed keeping in mind future activities of the centre. The garden which was unkempt was also tended to making space for a nursery or similar projects that could be undertaken by the gifted children.

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The centre which has now been developed enough to start activities hosted a number of people on 9<sup>th</sup> October. The guests present for the ceremony included Nishtha *tai*, an 85 year old French lady who was clad in a *sari* and who showed complete enthusiasm and inspiration. She had donated the property to Sevadham trust, Pune several years back. Dr. Gore as well as Dr. Vadhokar, trustees of the Sevadham Trust, Pune were present to give their assent for the program.

Other people who participated in the ceremony were Mr. Subhashrao Deshpande and Mr. Vivekrao Kulkarni (JPSS), Dr. Sujala Watve and Dr. Vanita Patwardhan (JPIP), Col. Joshi and Mrs. Joshi, Dr. Nandedkar, Mrs. and Mr. Shrinivas Desai, Mrs. and Mr. Nitin Deshpande, Mrs. Kalpana Salunke, Mr. Deepak Gore, Mrs. Veena Patil (parent of Urban Mensan), Mrs. Vandana Singhal, Dr. Sujata Vaidya, representatives of the EcoSan Foundation and Praj Industries.

The guests were taken through an exhibit which had posters of activities carried out by Mensa India Pune Chapter for Gifted children over the last ten years like seminars, lectures, eco-tours and workshops. There was also a display of books in Marathi which had been given to each child who appeared for the Mensa test as well as some books and CD's donated to the school library.

One could also see a map that showed the 12 schools where the screening had taken place as well as the three talukas from where the Tribal Gifted children will come to the centre for nurturing. The Nishta centre will also set up a library full of resources which were displayed like books, National geography and Discovery CD's and DVD's, donated or brought for the children from different countries.

The identified Mensan children and their principals and teachers from two schools in the Maval taluka were also present for the opening ceremony. The 17 Tribal Mensans were curiously looking at the exhibits and were eager to turn the pages of the books to read. Some of them also asked the meaning of Mensa and questions regarding the posters.

All the guests were given a set which contained a report about the significance of the Nurturing program and the future activities of Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program. Along with

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that it contained monthly reports of the projects and a report containing the number and names of children identified as Mensan in the 12 Tribal Residential Schools.

**Dr. Jan ter Laak** a professor from the University of Utrecht, Netherlands was also present on this important occasion. Jnana Prabodhini Samshodhan Sanstha who has been a constant support and resource for Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program was represented by Subhashrao (Head, Rural Mensa). He spoke about Dr. Narayan Desai's involvement, initiative and his passion for development in the tribal areas. He also shared another perspective on the Nurturing Program. He said we could look at it as facilitating the exploration of potential present in the Tribal Gifted children. He also distributed Mensa certificates to the children coming from Tribal Residential schools of Vadeshwar and Malegaon.

Dr. Sujala Watve (Head, Jnana Prabodhini Institute of Psychology) with the support of whom, the Identification phase was completed in the month of September related her experiences during Mensa testing of 2200 children. She stated the importance of recognizing each child's abilities and then encouraging them to use their potential to the maximum. She also made an important point stressing that it was necessary to collaborate with experts from different fields to be able to provide the best to the Tribal Gifted children. She assured that Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program will receive continuous support from Jnana Prabodhini Institute of Psychology in the future.

One of the most important people to provide support and consent was Mr. Kapse, Project Officer of Integrated Tribal Development Project, Ghodegaon. Mr. Kapse showed complete openness and willingness to take the project forward.

Finally, it was an old yet very active and enthusiastic lady, Nishtha tai who surprised the entire audience by speaking in fine Marathi. She narrated a short story from how she came to acquire the existing property to how it was developed and the happiness she felt in knowing that the centre will house the nurturing program for the Gifted children.

A presentation was also made by Dr. Narayan Desai regarding the project concept and vision of the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program.

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Dr. Desai talked about four areas in which this program will spread,

1. Natural Resource Management through **Traditional Ecological Knowledge Program**
2. **Tribal Nurturing Program** for which the nurturing centre and the nurturing module has been developed
3. Green Teacher Program which will be a part of **Tribal Teacher Training Program**
4. **Nourishing** which will be achieved through developing and using the Tribal children's Naturalistic Intelligence

The presentation also explained the Olympic module on the basis of which the Nurturing program will be developed. This contains five rings which symbolizes five aspects which include:

1. **I** that is Giftedness of the child,
2. **WE** which addresses the community,
3. **OUR** which stands for Nature (conservation and management of resources),
4. **WHY** which involves motivation and goals of the Tribal Gifted child
5. **HOW** which signifies the methodology to achieve all of the above

Lastly, Dr. Devasena Desai spoke about the need to look at growth and development of the children from multiple sides and thus put forth the idea of a Tribal Teacher Training Program to develop the skills and motivation of the teachers who play the dual role of teacher and parent in the Tribal Residential Schools. She laid out a brief outline of the program which will be executed for the teachers of the 12 Tribal Residential Schools.

This ceremony which brought together very interesting people received an overwhelming response, appreciation and a willingness to support the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program in different ways. The coming together of people working in diverse fields generated an atmosphere of charged energy and in-depth discussions on ideas regarding the Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program.

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Mr. Kelkar from Praj Industries showed interest in collaborating in future for Tribal Mensa activities in the area of natural resource management. Similarly there were other individuals like Dr. Sujata Vaidya who will be joining the nurturing program to study the change in the energy fields of the Tribal Gifted children during the Nurturing Program. These and many more such ideas were brought out and discussed during this occasion.

After the presentation, everyone sat together and were served a meal by the Mensans from Pune. These Mensans who are now pursuing their graduation studies have been nurtured under the mentorship of Dr. Narayan Desai since the last 8-10 years. They were the ones who had helped in organizing the exhibition and other arrangements. To adorn this occasion with sweetness, Puran Poli was served to the guests along with some *namkeen* (salty preparations). Along with the guests, the children were also served. They were very shy and did not freely ask for what they wanted. But they always humbly took what was put into their plates.

After lunch, as the guests started to leave we had Ms. Mehek, journalist from NDTV interviewing Nishtha tai, Dr. Gore and Dr. Narayan Desai himself in the context of Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program.

All the invitees appreciated the efforts of the Tribal Mensa Nurturing team for being visionaries for the Tribal community. It is at this level where true developmental work can begin and it is here where we will be able to see self-sufficiency of the villages if we are able to achieve our aim. We hope that an army of 50 nurtured Tribal Gifted children, **Wildflowers in the Tribal Niche**, will pick up from where we leave, bringing the Tribal community into the mainstream, having protected and conserved our natural resources and emerging as Leaders of their community taking them from dependency to self-sufficiency and prosperity.

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