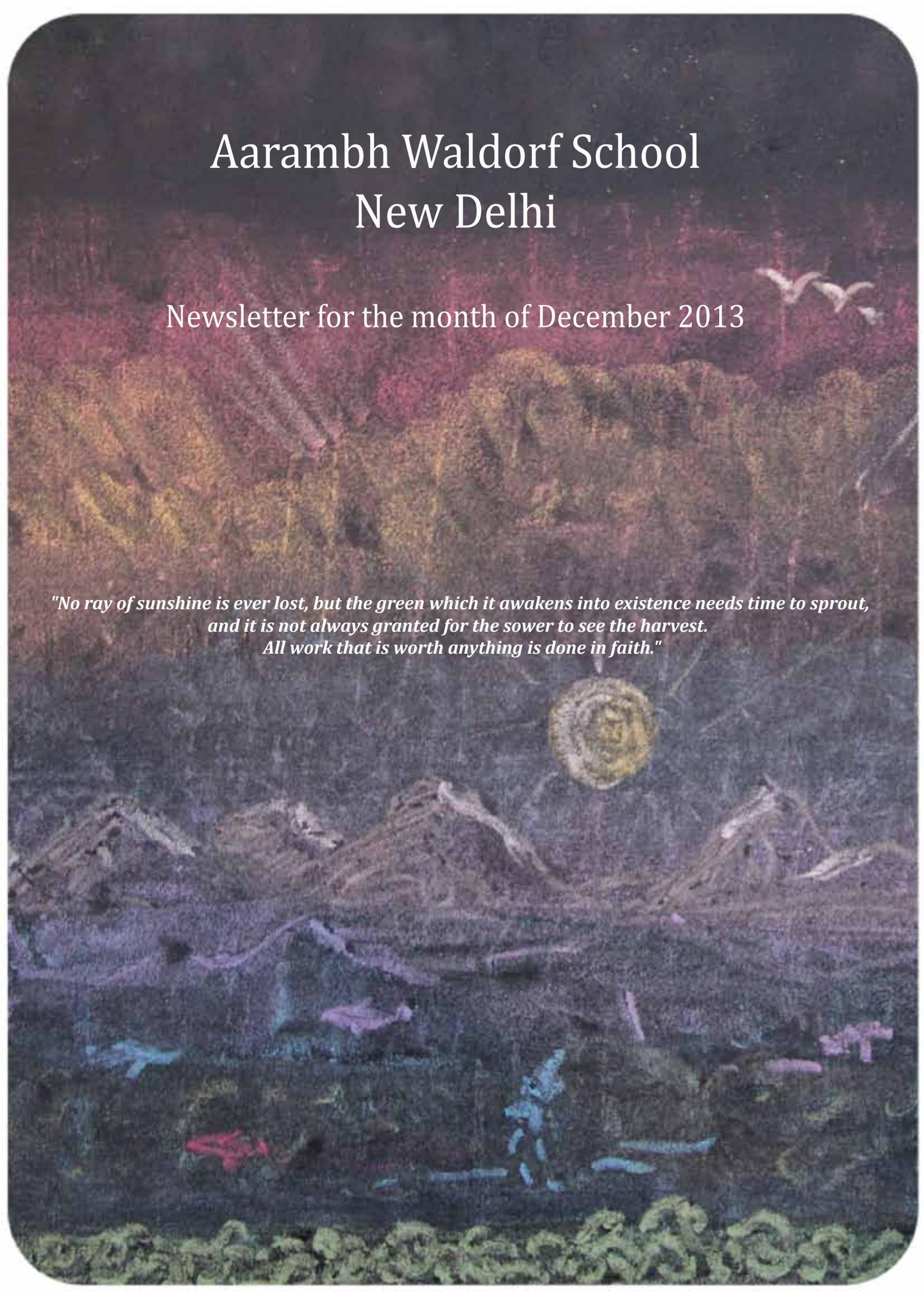


Aarambh Waldorf School New Delhi

Newsletter for the month of December 2013

*"No ray of sunshine is ever lost, but the green which it awakens into existence needs time to sprout,
and it is not always granted for the sower to see the harvest.
All work that is worth anything is done in faith."*



Message from The School

As we complete 6 months, our team at Aarambh has been experiencing many wonderful moments of coming together and working. Our first effort at putting up a stall in the Vasant Kunj Diwali Mela was truly joyful. All of us worked day & night to create some handmade dolls, knitted balls, finger puppets, skipping ropes, Mandalas and other handicrafts. The entire experience for the team was great and very enriching.

Meanwhile, we successfully conducted two trainings in September and October, with an aim to spread the richness of Waldorf education. The participants included parents, home-schoolers and teachers from mainstream and progressive schools. These trainings were truly inspiring and the participants also received deep insights on "The role of a teacher and parent in a child's life"

As we build and grow our community of parents and teachers, we are proud to announce that our grade school will begin from the 2014 session. Our mentors from India as well as abroad have given us time for exhaustive trainings and thus helped us build this next step after Kindergarten.



Teacher Talk

One aspect of the Waldorf Kindergarten's is "Rhythm"; our belief in Rhythm is affirmed when we work with children and see how predictability of one thing following the other gives children calmness and assurance. Just like we know how every day the sun will shine followed by the starry skies - the dawning of night, so do they know what will follow through the day. Now when a new child joins the class the questions on what activity will follow in the rhythm are answered by children who have already been part of the school rhythm, and at times, from the youngest one around!

As a teacher and an adult, you begin to wonder and see beauty in things which may have earlier gone unnoticed. Children keep discovering mushrooms, 'ant houses', and other small nature's miracles. We observed so many things and I as a teacher enjoy and get to learn so much in the whole process. Once when children were playing in the sandpit, I heard a soft excited voice "Look we found a road" and then the voice got more animated and louder while they chanted the words in unison. They had found road in the sandpit! (They had dug through the sand up to the floor) it was their 'Eureka' moment, very similar to how one would react probably when one would have found maybe a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow!

Indoor free play is the time when imagination is at its best, one can see through the lens of children the kind of life experiences they are having. We see role plays of mother, father, uncle, eating out in a restaurant, buyer seller, setting up a stall at Mela, visiting a place. The sky is the limit here :)

Workshop experience

I got the opportunity of attending an enriching training on 'Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education Training', the second of its kind, in October this year. This was conducted by Sir G. Manivannan, the trustee at the 'Bangalore Steiner School' and 'Heart and Soul Foundation'. Sir Mani is a teacher trainer and has been conducting workshops for parents and teachers for many years now.

We were a group of different people, coming with different backgrounds but it was amazing how knitted and close we felt by the end of the training. We realized we are all together on the same journey of, enriching the lives of our children while constantly working on our self...this bonded us all so well. Understanding the theory of Anthroposophy and the philosophy behind Waldorf Education sometimes might not be very easy, but this training by Sir had such useful life examples to explain each detail, that it has left a vivid picture in your mind and you are sure to remember all the why's behind the theory.

Various exercises including the meditation activity, art work, hand work and the morning songs we sang together each day helped us feel and experience Waldorf in all practical senses and this was indeed a lovely feeling.

We learn so much from each other as individuals and collectively and this gives so much strength and energy to each other as a group; it is always great for such like-minded people to come together to discuss and carry back things that resonate with us in our lives. Trainings like these bring you back to your basics, they make you sit back and reflect and slowdown in many important ways.

Thank you dear Sir and Aarambh for constantly organizing these much vital and needed trainings

Nikita Seth, Mama to 2.5-year-old Ahaan



Working together for the Diwali Mela

Aarambh had its first Diwali Mela, in the last week of October in Vasant Kunj. We barely had a week to prepare for it. And we as parents were very keen to participate in all capacities that we could. Our Waldorf School has all handmade toys, and we were always in awe and were curious about how these were made. The Mela gave us the perfect opportunity to participate and experience the making of such toys. The whole journey of the week, which included meeting other parents and learning from them, learning from Namita, was the wonderful bit - even more than the outcomes that we all could come up with.

The children were seeing us working towards making these precious toys and they too got attached to everything that was made and found it difficult to understand that these were actually being put on sale. We turned out with some lovely Waldorf dolls, knitted balls, jute skipping ropes, finger puppets, mandalas and some angel mobiles. The stall was well-received and we as parents felt proud to be supporting the school and at the same time help create an awareness in Delhi about Waldorf, the technique and the purity involved in the pedagogy.

We will keep you posted on more of such activities soon!

Nikita Seth, Mama to 2.5-year-old Ahaan



children admiring the toys



the stall



Anjali making the chalk board drawing



story time by Nikita



toys made by parents and teachers for sale



Parent Talk

It is our honour that our son Manikya is a part of Aarambh Waldorf School. Just within a week or two of joining the school we started observing several beautiful changes within him. He had lost his will to go to his earlier school, but here he did not want a holiday even on a weekend. His true child like nature and innocence is blooming more and more. During the fruit time in the morning he looks forward to eat new fruits everyday. He is now easily having fruits like pomegranate, custard apple, papaya and several others which he was not so keen to have earlier. Every morning he takes initiative in deciding about the fruit he wants to take to school to share with his friends that day.

We have also observed now that he is able to play much more easily everywhere. He finds or innovates new ways to play. His willingness to go and play in nature has been increasing manifold. He is now happier playing with leaves, twigs, pebbles and so much more. He is happy to have found a way to have never ending toys. He has even started liking and playing with animals, which he was earlier very afraid off.. He is singing beautiful songs throughout the day and we can feel his soul singing in joy.

We feel grateful that the school understands his dietary restrictions and he does not feel left out in any way. The school is educating not just his mind, but his whole being. He is getting freedom to express himself fully and we are seeing more aliveness in his spirit everyday. Although we travel over 20 kms one way, every day to reach school, but we are so glad that we took such a wonderful decision for our son and our family.

Parents of Manikya Sanghi

Developing the Physical Body

The Gen X today has found a new definition of play that involves physical movement. Wii and Play station are introduced as a replacement to human beings (kids of similar age). Playing with computer is supposedly healthy for the physical body as you'll get to sweat striking your opponent on the TV screen.

I was introspecting what play time meant for us as kids, for the most part it was outdoor games like cricket, badminton, hockey or football depending on the season. Alternatively it was hopscotch, 7 times, kabaddi, Kho Kho depending on the mix of bunch of neighborhood kids and the gender mix involved. But whatever it was there were vital lessons learnt from the play, it was natural bonding, development of the physical body was a by-product not a conscious attempt undertaken as a task.

While the benefits loom far many but in the interest of time and limited words I shall just delve a little on these two alone. Any team sport teaches a plethora of lessons, play to your strengths, play for the jersey (learn to sacrifice for the larger cause), compassion, every individual is important but the most important is to play together and not as individuals. The gadgets are not going to instill these values unless in future science is able to make tablets for each of these that can be gulped down the throat and deficiencies could be removed. Until then it would be advisable to reap the benefits of what we have and make the most of the same.

Plucking Mangoes by climbing the tallest branch of the tree or collecting the most number of beans from the creepers give a different adrenaline rush. Milking a cow / a goat or having milk directly from the udder is a life time experience. These are smallest of memories but shall be cherishes for a life time. Last weekend when we stepped out to a park to grab sunshine, seeing Shivanshi climb with confidence was reassurance of the right choice of education we have made. The path is correct and this trajectory is going to lead to path of fulfillment of a rich childhood experience and amazing memories.

Gaurav, Papa to 4.5-year-old Shivanshi



The Vital Role of Play in Childhood Written by Joan Almon

“The ability to play is one of the principal criteria of mental health.” Ashley Montagu Over thirty years of working with children, families, and teachers in Waldorf kindergartens all over the world, I have observed one overwhelming similarity: creative play is a central activity in the lives of healthy young children. It helps children weave together all the elements of life as they experience it. It allows them to digest life and make it their own. It is an outlet for the fullness of their creativity, and it is an absolutely critical part of their childhood. With creative play, children blossom and flourish; without it, they suffer a serious decline.

From all sides—parents, teachers, psychologists, and psychiatrists—one hears tales of young children who do not play. Some seem blocked and unable to play. Others long to play, but busy schedules outside school or an overemphasis on focused learning in school have driven play out of their lives. Add to this mixture the hours spent sitting still in front of screens—television, video game, and computer—while children absorb other people’s stories and imaginations but can’t act out their own, and the result is a steady decline in children’s play. This decline will certainly have serious consequences for children and for the future of childhood itself.

The Nature of Play

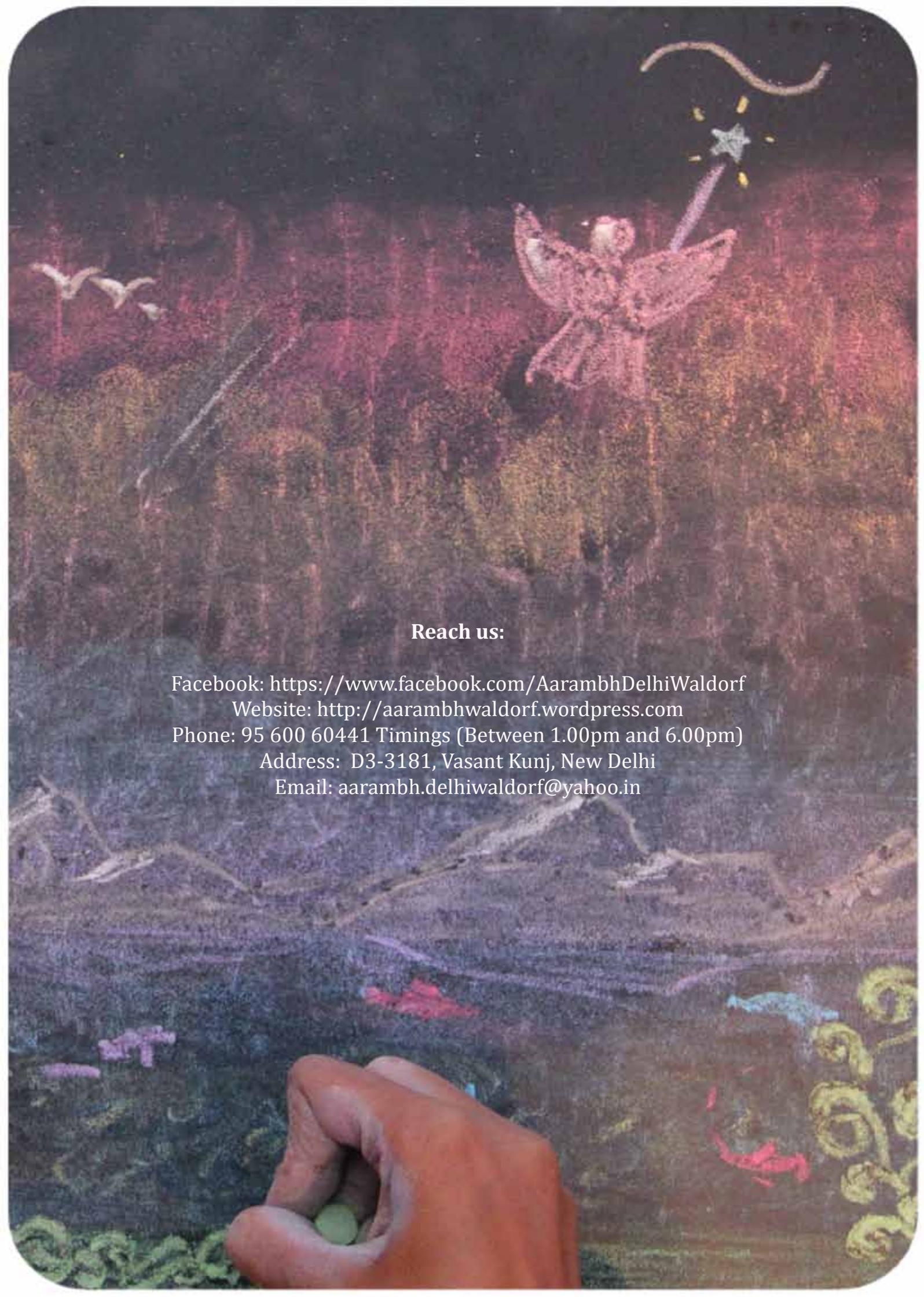
If we are to save play we must first understand its nature. Creative play is like a spring that bubbles up from deep within a child. It is refreshing and enlivening and is a natural part of the make-up of every healthy child. It is so fundamental to the make-up of the child that it is often hard to separate play from learning. Whether children are working on new physical skills, social relations, or cognitive content, they approach life with a playful spirit. As a friend said of her eight-month-old recently, “It just seems that she’s working all the time.” But is it work or play? In childhood there is no distinction.

Adults are convinced that we need to “teach” young children. It is certainly true that we need to set an example in all kinds of activities. We also need to create appropriate spaces where children can play and learn, and we need to lend a helping hand—and at times even intervene when things are going wrong. But mostly we need to honor the innate capacity for learning that moves the limbs and fills the souls of every healthy young child. The child’s love of learning is intimately linked with a zest for play.

Nathan at one year came with his parents to the summer house we share as a family. He was delighted to find several staircases in this house, for in his own home there was only one step, and he had long since mastered it. Now he gave full vent to the young child’s wish to climb stairs. Over and over he would climb up and down. We took turns standing guard, but he rarely needed our help. He was focused and concentrated and did not like to be taken away from this activity. He gave every sign of being a happy, playful child while climbing, yet he was also clearly exploring and mastering a new skill and one that was important for his long-term development. Most important, it was a task he set for himself. No one could have told this one-year-old to devote hours to climbing. And no one needed to. He did it himself, as will every healthy child whose sense of movement has not been disturbed.

Another example: Ivana at age four came to kindergarten one Monday morning and proudly announced that she could tie shoes. I must have looked skeptical, since most children at four can’t tie a real bow. Ivana was determined to show me, and she sat down on the floor and untied her shoes. She then retied them into perfect bows, looked at my astonished face, and beamed. Later in the day I asked her mother how Ivana had learned to do this. Her mother laughed and described how over the weekend Ivana had pretended that she was going to a birthday party. She used all the scrap paper she could find and folded it into little birthday packages. She raided her mother’s yarn basket and used scraps of yarn to tie the packages with bows. She probably tied 60 or 70 packages during the weekend until she had at last mastered the art of tying bows. Again, no one could have assigned Ivana such a task. She clearly felt ready, and what was important was that she did her work in the spirit of play, pretending to go to a birthday party. Learning to tie was not a tedious task but something she enjoyed doing.

The simple truth is that young children are born with a most wonderful urge to grow and learn. They continually develop new skills and capacities, and if they are allowed to set the pace with a bit of help from the adult world they will work at all this in a playful and tireless way. Rather than respecting this innate drive to learn, however, we treat children as if they can learn only what we adults can teach them. We strip them of their innate confidence in directing their own learning, hurry them along, and often wear them out. It is no wonder that so many teachers complain that by age nine or ten children seem burned out and uninterested in learning. This is a great tragedy, for the love of learning that Nathan and Ivana displayed is meant to last a whole lifetime. Furthermore, it is intimately bound to our capacity to be creative and purposeful.



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