



May 08 - August 08

APNE AAP WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE NEWSLETTER

At Apne Aap a frog hops around tall achievers...

AMOLE GUPTA'S (The maker of Taare
Zameen Par) experience at Apne Aap on 17th May 08.

... have you had an occasion, ever in your life, where you were dwarfed by angels half your size?
Sir... have you ever felt ashamed of not having stretched yourself to your fullest capacity when confronted by bursting human spirit in the pint sized form of a girl-child grittily taking charge of her life?
Sir... have you been to Apne Aap? ... i have.

It had to be auspicious, the time, day or date not mattering, when Suddu Mama invited me to visit his Apne Aap family. Climbing the steps of their family home in Central Mumbai, I hiccupped nervously because I was invited as a guest of honour at the children's party. Mama picked me up and brought me home. Smiles greeted me even as I stepped up to meet Mama's expectation. Met the pillar of strength, Ms. Manju Vyas and immediately bonded with her, agreeing with her concerns about her family's progress. Raahen, sparkling in white on her birthday, was moving about busily, followed by a long tail of little sisters... preparing for the show about to be put up... and what a show it was!

Song, Drama, Dance followed by heart wrenching speeches by teachers and their students, displaying their affection for each other with such emotional honesty that it was bound to choke their throats as they spoke and bring tears to our eyes.

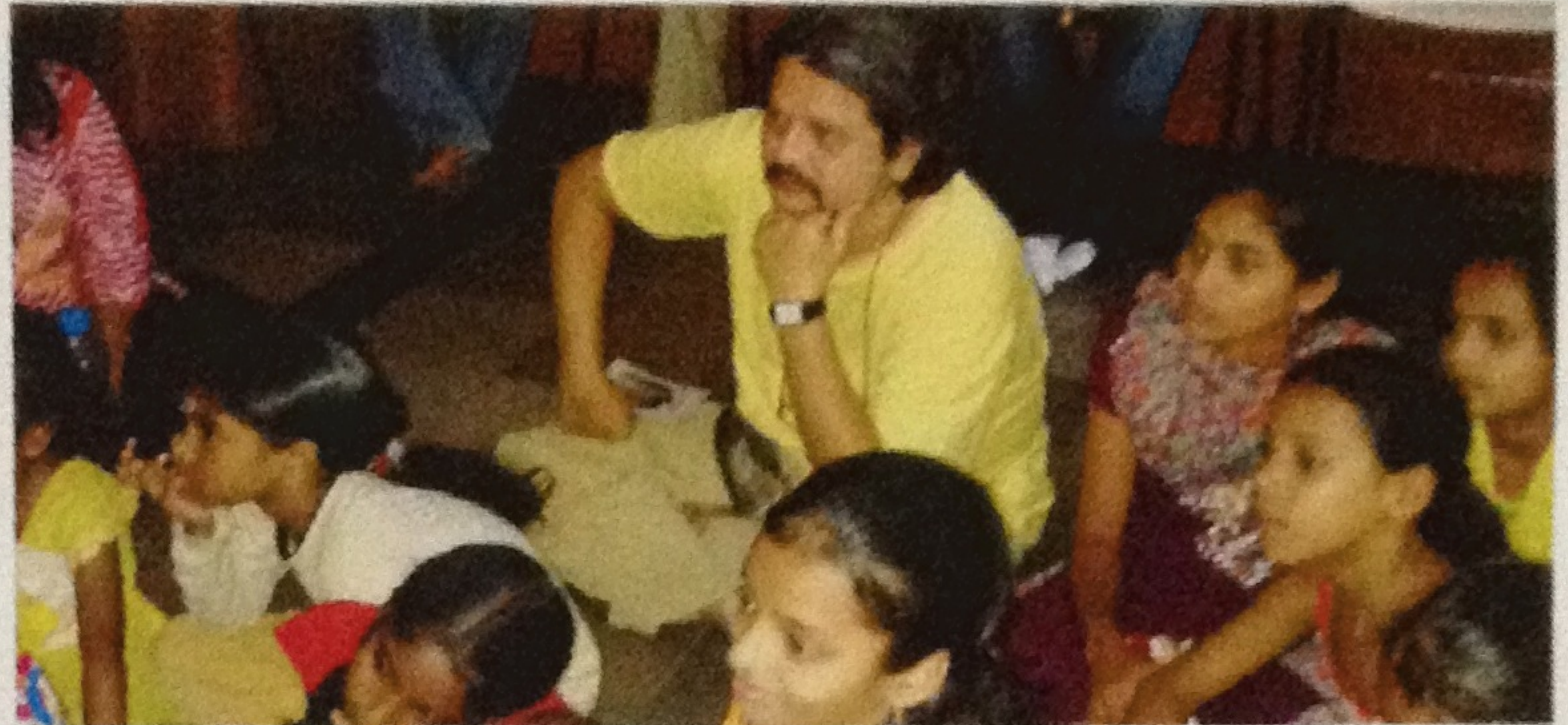
I could barely speak after the angels in the room took flight... The camaraderie, the attachment, the joy thereof... all so evident in the room-full of good vibrations. It was most humbling.

And then the surprise! The screening of the Apne Aap crafted film on the 'girl child'! And an encounter with the film-makers, who, in one apne aap voice shared the credit for the evocative piece... And a most impressionistic painting gifted to me by the artists Surekha and Jyoti... and yes... hot, hot vegetable pulaav and raita... sumptuous feast made by the artist Surekha's mother!

Had to come back for all this!

So I did... again with my assistant Faraz in tow... Called friends Vipin Sharma, Manju Singh, Anupama Bose and Naomi along. We called it a theatre experience session that turned into a song writing session with the little masters... Apne aap making an apne aap song! Well that's what happened!

Chaahe ho kuchh ek baat hai saaf
Zyaadaa nahi boloongi mai, karnaa maaf
Hai khud par vishwaas, hauslaa hai paas
Soch hai positive, kar jaa kuchh khaas



Padhoongi-likhoongi mehnat karoongi
Aandhi-toofaanon se datkar ladhoongi
Raah par chalke raahen badloongi
Iss jag ka sitara hoon mai
Ashaon ka kinara hoon mai
Mere apnon ka sahara hoon mai
Kisi ki muskuraahat hoon mai
Ummeedon ki zaahat hoon mai
Isi mai se bane hain Hum
Humraa nahi kisi mein Dum!

Kisiko rulaenge hum, kisiko hasaenge hum
Khushiyaan laenge hum, hasenge-hasaenge hum
Hum se hain Hum
Hum sa nahi kisi mein Dum!

I guess, the song says it all, let the frog, affectionately named 'Ammu Mama' by his ApneAap Angels hop on silently... hop... hop... hop...

Editorial

This quarter was very fulfilling !

Editorial 3rd Newsletter - Aug' 08.

This quarter was very fulfilling!

We were pleased with the way our girls performed in every endeavour that they chose for themselves. For us it's not just a pre-conceived idea of success but also the ability to make decisions to work towards the aspirations that our staff members and the girls set for themselves.

In that light, I would like to share some of the experiences of this quarter.

Two senior girls were chosen as trainees for a 2 year program in hotel management conducted by a leading five star hotel.

Four girls achieved above average percentages in their tenth standard board exams.

The highest average was 72% and she has chosen to study science. Three other girls whose percentages were above 55% have chosen to study commerce.

Three girls have chosen to study in government school after completing their 7th standard from a Municipality School.

We also placed 5 girls into a quaint boarding school as their mothers preferred for them.

In this current academic year 20 children have taken admissions in our Kindergarten program. The 28 kids who passed out of the kindergarten last year have been efficiently admitted to the

government and municipal schools.

The summer activities were full of creative art and expressions, the experience of which has been penned down by the girls themselves in this newsletter. There were various activities like glass painting, greeting card making, blow painting, story making and telling, drama writing and presenting, puppet show, life skills sessions and a number of games.

Dr. Khyari Mehta's General Medical camp was arranged at the centre, to ensure proper medical care was provided to all the children.

The Staff were sent for various education workshops. Ms. Sangeeta was sent for training in counseling HIV/AIDS patients, Ms. Sarika was sent for a Gender sensitization and the second phase of Art based therapy workshop was continued by Ms. Raheen.

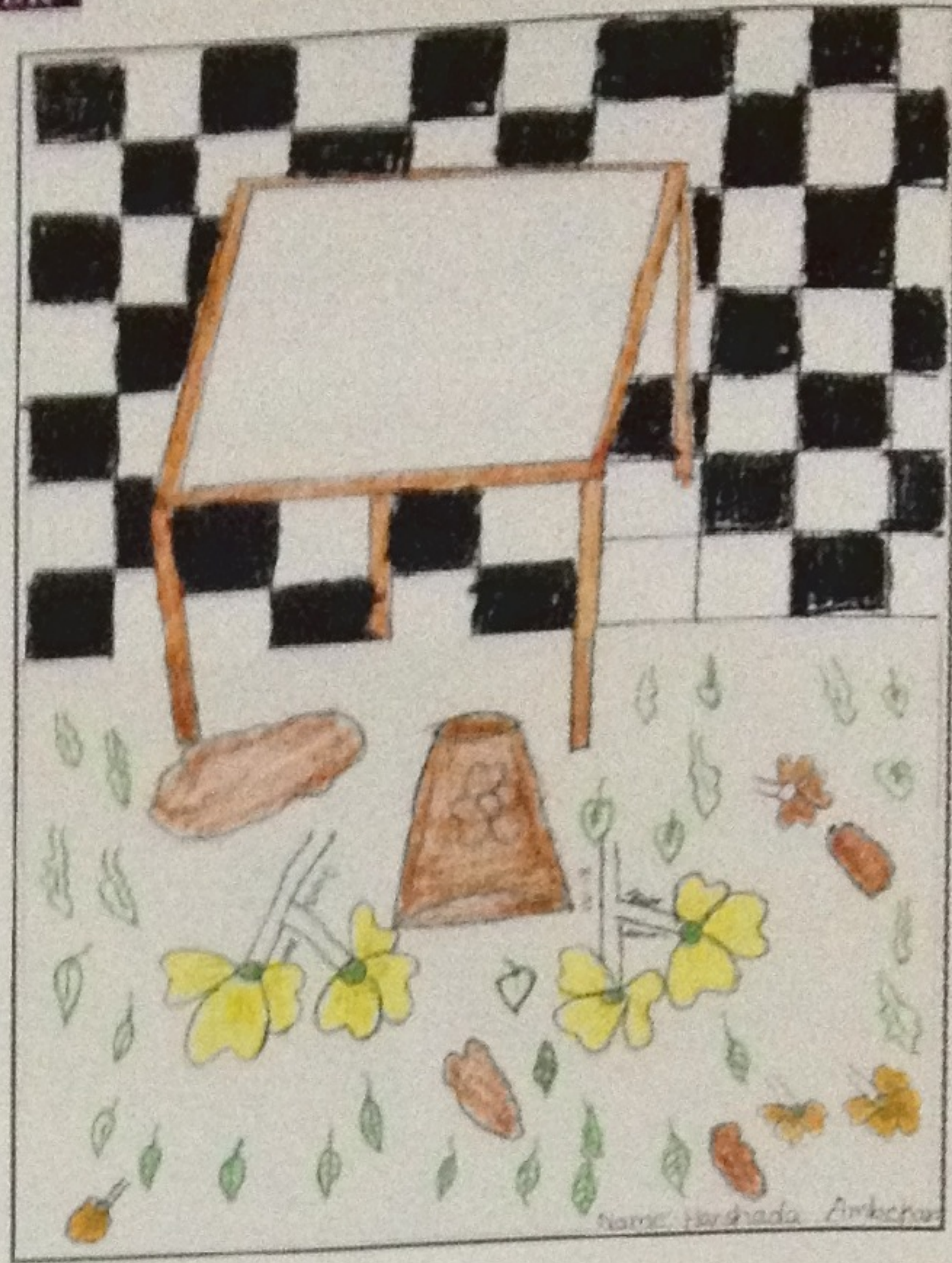
AAWCC become part of Govt. 1298 helpline for women in distress.

We thank all the guests visiting us at AAWCC. The ANZBAI Chairman Mr. Simon Johnson, Australian Consulate General Mr. Peter Forby, Smt. Sharayu Daftary, Smt. Gauri Pohoomul, Smt Kavita Khanna were part of our Independence Day and Rakhi celebrations along with their friends and associates.

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Sterlite Foundation for providing volunteers who are coaching our girls in Computers. Padmashree Smt. Sharayu Daftary for her humble gesture to teach embroidery. Preeti and Gagan Agrawal for helping us renovate our kindergarten room. Mr Ajay and Mrs Sukeshi Sondhi for helping us renovate our office and in the purchase of new furniture. Mrs. Radhika Daiya for helping us design our new office.

Some of the important challenges faced by us are to break the age old tradition and convince some families to send their daughters to school. Also to get volunteers and professionally trained staff to work with us as there are several stigmas attached towards the community we work with.

This newsletter is special to us as most of the articles and the art work are done by our girls. We intent to make this a community driven initiative. Hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed producing it.



Drawings by Yogita (left) and Harshada (right) after watching the film "muskurati roshani"

कॅमेरा से पुरे किये हमारे ख्याब!

हम छः लड़कियाँ तुपती, चांदनी, राखी, निशिगंधा, सविता और अश्विनी ने She Creates Project के दौरान 'मस्कुराती रोशनी' नाम की एक फिल्म बनाई। ये फिल्म हम ने हमारी संस्था में सारी सहेलीयों को दिखाई। योगिता हमारी दोस्त को इस फिल्म में उगता हुआ पौधा देख कर ऐसा लगा कि, अगर हमारे मन में आत्मविश्वास की किरण हो तो हम आगे बढ़ सकते हैं। हमें वाको टूटते हुए गमले को देख कर बहुत दुख हुआ, उसे माँ और बेटी के दूर होवें का एहसास हुआ। ऐसी सारी प्रक्रियाएँ सुन कर हमें लगा कि हम और ज्यादा फिल्में बनाएँ।

जब हमें She Creates में पहली बार फिल्म बनाने का मौका मिला, तब फिल्म के लिए विषय चुनने में बहुत तकलीफ हुई। पहले हम भेदभाव विषय पर सोच रहे थे, उसके बाद हमारी सोच बढ़ती गई, और फिर हम ने Selective abortion पर फिल्म बनाई। इसमें हमने शूटींग, एडीटींग, ऑनलस, लोकेशन, ये सब सिखा। हमारी सहेली चांदनी और तुपती को कॅमेरा को कैसे ऑपरेट करते है, इसमें बहुत रुची थी।

हमारी फिल्म मानिक सभागृह में दिखाई गई। पर वहाँ बहुत बड़े-बड़े लोग आए थे जैसे महेश भट्ट, मधुर भंडारकर, राजपाल यादव, कैलाश खेर, सुनिता राव इत्यादि। उन्होंने हमारी बहुत तारीफ की। हमारी यह फिल्म 'मस्कुराती रोशनी' बहुत सारी जगह गई पर दिखाई है जैसे कि I.I.M. Ahmedabad- वहाँ पर सारे लोगों की आँखों में आसूँ आ गए, और सब ने खड़े हो कर तालियाँ बजाईं। अब हम ने अपना एक 'विडियो युनिट' बनाया है, उसमें हम ने दो और फिल्में बनाई है। पहली फिल्म "आशाएँ" में हम ने फोटोज का इस्तेमाल कर के हमारी कामयाबी का सफर बताया है, और दुसरी फिल्म "Smiling Angels" छोटे बच्चों पर बनाई है

हमारी सहेली पूजा की सोच कुछ अलग ही है। उसे लगता है कि हमारी फिल्म कुछ खास है। जैसे बहुत सारी फिल्मों में लवस्टोरी या मजा मस्ती रहती है, पर हमारी फिल्म में एक गहरी सच्चाई है।

हमने अभी अपने आप संस्था पर फिल्म बनाना शुरू किया है। अब हमारा कॅमेरा फिर से चालू हुआ है।

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!!!

-राखी

आवाज और कल्पना

हम जो सोचते हैं वह हमें कभी ना कभी जरूर मिलता है। सिर्फ हमें उस पर विश्वास और मेहनत करना जरूरी है। यही सोच हम आठ लड़कियों की है। हम आठ लड़कियाँ अश्विनी, राखी, निशिगंधा, चांदनी, पारु, निलोफर, गोसिया और आठ साल की छोटी सी दानिश सभी पहले रेडीओ सुनते थे। सब की तरह हम भी गाने ही सुनते थे। जब गाने सुनने से फुरसत मिलती, तब रेडीओ पर आर.जेस. की बातें सुनते थे। उनकी बातें सुनकर हमारे दिल में ऐसा लगता था, कि काश हमारी आवाज़ भी रेडीओ के द्वारा सारे लोगों तक पहुँच जाए। हमारी यह आरजू अपने आप संस्था की राहिन दीदी को पता चली तो वह बहुत खुश हुई और हमें रेडीओ पर बोलने का मौका मिला। हमें 904.5 MHZ ग्यानवाणी पर प्रोग्राम करने की परमिशन मिली। हम ने स्क्रिप्ट लिखने की तैयारी शुरू की। राहिन दीदी ने बताया की हमें ऐसे विषय पर स्क्रिप्ट बनाना है। जिससे सब को नॉलेज मिले। उत्साह के साथ हमारे मन में थोड़ा सा डर भी था कि हम यह कैसे करेंगे? उनको हमारी स्क्रिप्ट अच्छी लगेगी या नहीं? हम माइक के सामने कैसे बोलेंगे? चांदनी को लगता था, कि वह कभी भी रेडीओ पर बोल नहीं पायेगी क्योंकि उसकी आवाज़ अच्छी नहीं है। पर हम सब ने हमारे डर पर काबू पाया। सिर्फ अपनी स्क्रिप्ट पर ध्यान देते हुए दो विषय चुने। पहला- घरेलू झगड़ों का बच्चों पर प्रभाव और दुसरा- साथ लो पर सहारा नहीं। हमने यह विषय इसलिए चुना क्योंकि घर में झगड़ों के कारण बच्चों का पढ़ाई में ध्यान नहीं लगता, गलत खयाल आते हैं और वे गलत कदम भी उठा सकते हैं। दुसरा विषय हम ने इस लिए चुना क्योंकि कुछ लोग हमेशा दूसरो पर ही निर्भर रहते हैं और खुद का काम दूसरों से करवाते हैं। जब कोई उनका काम करने वाला नहीं होता तो वह अपने सारे काम अचुरे ही छोड़ देते हैं।

हमने झुमा के साथ Quiz Competition, Riddles, Glass Painting Session भी रखा जिससे सुननेवालों को अच्छा लगे। इस सब की हमने बहुत Practice की। जब हम Radio Station पर गये, तब हमें वहा के Recording Studio का शांत माहोल बहुत अच्छा लगा। जब हमें माइक के सामने बोलने को कहा तो हमें बहुत डर लगा, क्योंकि एक्सप्रीशन या Acting से तो हम अपनी सोच सब को बता सकते हैं। पर सिर्फ अपनी आवाज द्वारा किसी को कुछ समझाना मुश्किल है। Radio Station की परवीज़ मॅडम ने हमें बहुत समझाया और हर वक्त प्रोसाहित किया। फिर हमने अपनी हिम्मत, विश्वास के साथ दो Radio मॅक्सीन रिकार्ड की।

हमें बहुत खुशी है कि पुरी मुंबई हमारी आवाज़ सुनेगी। Radio द्वारा इन

विषयों पर रोशनी डालने का हमारे दो मकसद थे पहला जो बच्चे माँ-पापा के झगड़ों के कारण घर छोडकर चले गये हैं उन्हें अपनी गलती का एहसास हो। अगर कोई ऐसा करने का सोच भी रहा है तो वह ऐसा नहीं करेगा। और दूसरा हम सब हमारे सारे काम बिना किसी सहारे के खुद कर सकते हैं Because we can do it by "OUR SELF"

-अश्विनी

Raheen- project co-ordinator

The Film Project

This Journey started last year with the She Creates wherein they learnt the entire process of Film Making and OUR Sparrows have turned it into A Video Unit Of A.A.W.C.

Through this Journey I have been with them being a witness to - Brain Storming of script ideas, selecting the locations, characters, angles, props etc.etc... Indeed a Development process mentally and creatively not only for them as well as for me. "Feels Lucky to be with them."

Radio Project

Our Sparrows recorded the Radio Magazines on the 24th July. It was written by them and recorded in their voices. I have been working in the Radio Industry from past 7 years; I always desired to hear my voice as a child. My childhood wish came true. The silent studio turned to be their room bursting with artistic ideas, friendly arguments, laughter, cheers and elation as their dream came true. Now we all are desperately waiting to hear them on the Air. I hear them daily at our centre but I am sure it's going to be a complete Special Experience to Hear My Sweet Hearts on Radio.

USTAAD- SOCIAL MARKETING OF CONDOMS

The most significant way of reducing the figures of HIV in a high-risk area is through the systematic distribution of condoms. After much research, Apne Aap Women's Collective has joined hands with HLPPT to use social marketing for the distribution of condoms within the community. Condom social marketing ensures that good-quality condoms are easily available at affordable prices. It can increase demand, supply and access to such condoms. Sex workers have special needs when it comes to the usage. Management of condom distribution by peers can simplify access to condoms and reduce stigma.

Apne Aap's field workers after much interaction with the women have confirmed that Ustaad condoms have better lubrication, length and a longer shelf life. 'The customers are even aware of the brand' say the women, hence making it easier for the women to convince their clients. They are more durable and effective. These condoms are sold at Rs. 3

for 5 pieces. While the other brands sold in the open market are priced at Rs. 5 for 3 pieces.

There have been challenges in making this process. As Sangeeta an Apne Aap field staff explained that the women are used to getting free condoms by various institutions which lacks in quality. The women she says 'have managed to store up this free supply hence resisting investing money into buying newer ones'. However, the argument of Apne Aap is simple...it is the question of health and of their children in particular... which cannot be put to risk. National Aids Control Organization has pointed out that the amount of free supply of condoms does not breakeven with the number of affected HIV patients. The success is not predictable but the mantra is to 'keep at it'.

Apne aap is also going to be instrumental in installing condom vending machines in the area with the same Ustaad brand for easy accessibility. This initiative of Apne

Aap is scheduled for the coming quarter. "Anything for our women" says Manju Vyas, The Chief functionary of Apne Aap who seems unperturbed by the challenges.



WORKSHOP ON AIDS AWARENESS

HIV/AIDS cannot be considered a mere health issue as it is closely linked to economic, sociological and political aspects of any society. Recent figures of HIV/AIDS infections among adults and children in India are estimated at 5.1 million. India has the second largest HIV positive population after South Africa. If there are no corrective measures taken then the risk factors in India, some predict the infection levels will rise as high as 20 to 25 million by 2010, or equal to the combined population of London, New York and Tokyo. Kamthipura being one of the high-risk areas in Mumbai it's important for a community based NGO like Apne Aap to involve themselves and address severe health issues such as Aids. Workshops are one of the important activities that Apne Aap constantly

engages in. In one such undertaking Sangeeta- a Senior Outreach Worker attended a workshop organized by Social Activists Integration. The workshop was conducted for three days at Byculla from the 12th to the 14th of June.

Senior doctors and researchers such as Dr. Dasha Pandit from Sion hospital, Dr. Dilip Kadam from KEM and Dr. R.V. Aras facilitated the workshop. The sessions as Sangeeta mentioned were extremely holistic and comprehensive. They were taken through from the basic introductions such as the abbreviations of HIV (human immune deficiency) to the complex details about how to administer the medicines prescribed to the patients. As a field-worker she was able to take back effective suggestions pointed out by the

doctors. One such implication was the importance and the timeliness of the medicine RNA which stops the multiplication of the virus. The patient needs to be highly punctual. If the patient skips this discipline then it is likely to affect the longevity of the person's health. It was a workshop that put all her field work into perspective and gave her practical suggestions that she could apply.

This new perspective will provide a new outline and a mission to work towards for APNE AAP and in Sangeeta's sincere notes two lines were underlined, "that everyone reaches their end but when we are entitled to live ...we rather live it with good health and spirit."

थिरकता मन

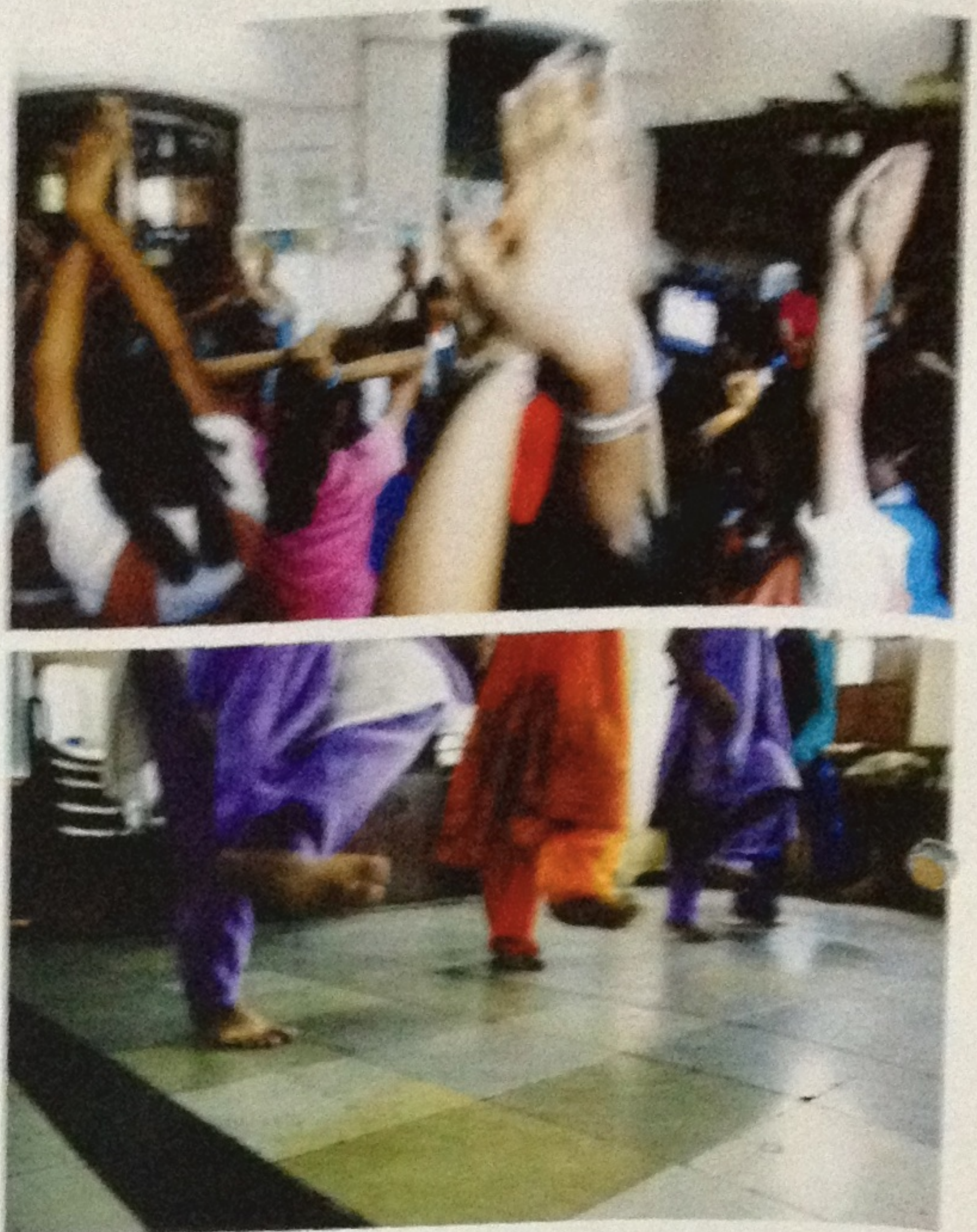
कम काम करो, कम रहाने लो
 पैर जमीन पर ना टिके
 इतना नाचूँ कि कभी काम ही ना सके।।।

डान्स को ज्यादा के पहले,
 काम को डान्स से पहले,
 परिवार को प्रिक्टिस के पहले,
 और हमें कंधाधुरीं भिने डान्स से पहले ।।।

व्यायाम से दिन खरता है अच्छा,
 इसलिए मन खरता है ताज़ा-ताज़ा,
 डान्स क्लास हो हमेशा, क्योंकि
 वह दिन खरता है मज़ा ही मज़ा ।।।

थिरकते कदमों को रोक नहीं पाते,
 मचलते हूँ मन पर जैसे-तैसे काबू
 है सारे,
 दिल से बह उड़ता है पहसास
 आखिर, सोज़ कब्यों नहीं होता हमारा डान्स क्लास।।।

- अपने आप स्पॉन्स



Illustrations by Surekha on MS Paint

