



Apne Aap Women's Collective

Newsletter

May - August 2009

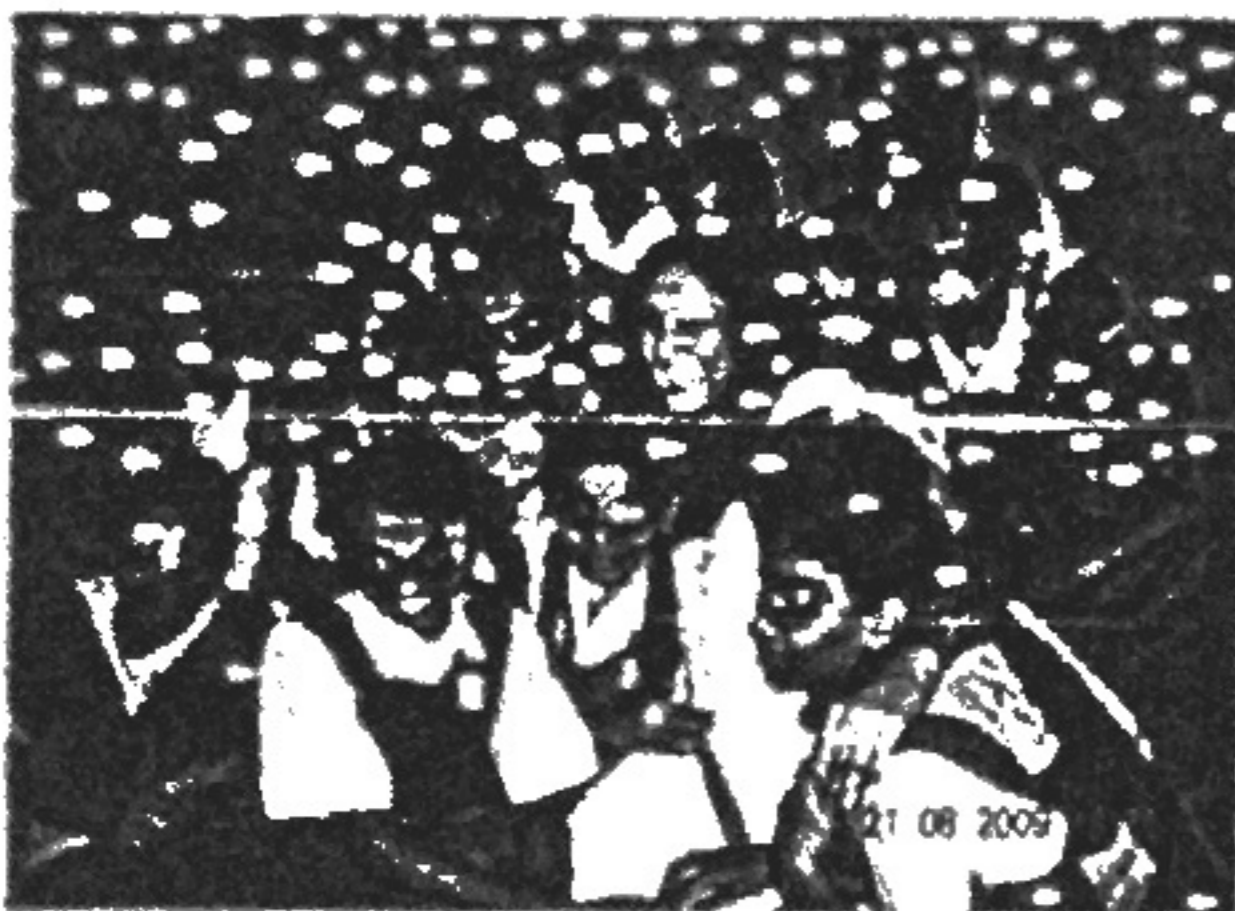
Issue 6

Editorial

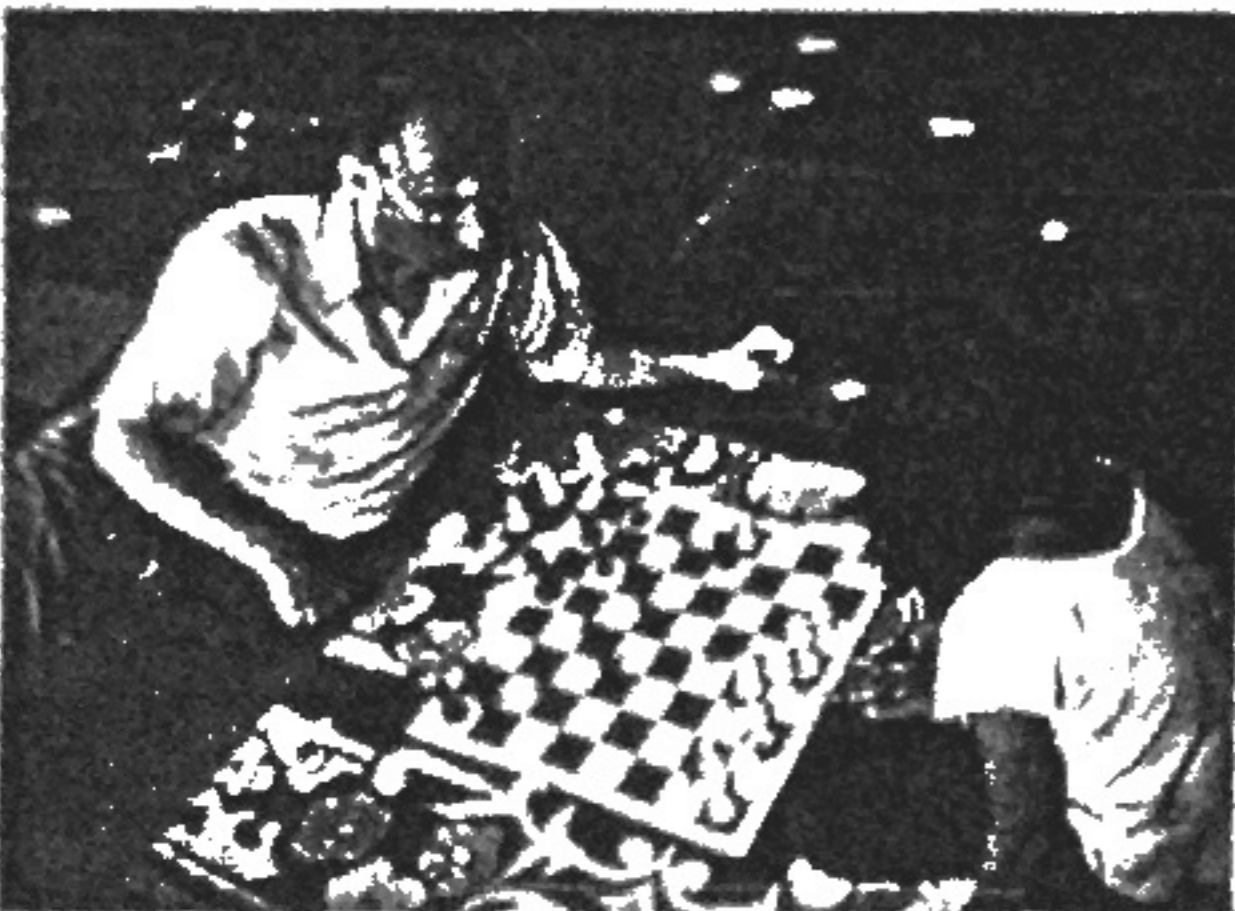
First off, we would like to introduce the new members of the AAWC team. Ms. Deepa Narayanan is our new project co-coordinator, Ms. Ambrita Dhavle, Miss. Tina Deshmukh and Miss Swapna Gaikwad are our new outreach staff members, and Ms. Arti Choughale is our new accountant. The increasing strength and enthusiasm of our staff is helping us to expand our outreach activities, thereby strengthening our membership and making our programs more effective.

These past few months have also been an exciting time for our members as they had the opportunity to interact with Miss India World Ms. Pooja Chopra and renowned film director, Mr. Shekhar Kapoor. Ms. Pooja Chopra inspired our girls to persevere through adversity to reach their goals, while Shekhar celebrated Rakhi with our women.

Our program continues to grow from strength to strength. We would like to thank all our volunteers for spending their time to better the lives of our beneficiaries. In addition, we would like to extend a special thanks to all the organizations that have supported AAWC, especially the Sahachari Foundation for spreading awareness about Apne Aap Women's Collective through their endeavors.



Miss India Pooja Chopra with sparrows



Dr. Levin having a chess game with a sparrow

AAWC UPDATE

- * Nice Foundation, a Chennai based NGO organized a Project Proposal Writing and International Fundraising Workshop on 26th and 27th June at Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The workshop covered topics like how to identify potential funding agencies, strategies to increase flowing funds, tips for websites, structure of project proposals and so on.
- * The first International Conference on Alcohol and HIV in India was organized by International Institute for Population Sciences on 3rd and 4th of August at Hotel Taj President, Mumbai. Eminent persons handled sessions on various topics interlinking Alcoholism, HIV, Sexuality and High Risk Behaviour. Also several researches carried out in this regard were discussed.
- * United Way Mumbai organized a Charity Meet with all NGOs to discuss Mumbai Marathon 2010. AAWC is participating in the Corporate Challenge, wherein 2 corporate houses have agreed to sponsor us.
- * Ms. Beban Kidron (acclaimed Hollywood Director and Producer) visited our centre to interview women for a documentary she is making on the Devdasi system. She usually makes films about offbeat relationships. Her films have been a huge hit, "Oranges are not the only fruit", "Antonia and Jane", "Shades of fear", to name a few.
- * A team from CRY visited our organization as a part of their pre-funding assessment formalities.
- * Dr. James Levine, Professor of Medicine and Researcher at Mayo Clinic, Minnesota visited AAWC to know more about our work. He visited the red light area with our outreach staff, interacted with our beneficiaries and spent quality time with our sparrows too.
- * Down To Earth, an NGO is coming up with their 2nd Cultural Program on 11th and 12th December 2009. They are working in collaboration with 5 NGO's. Their main objective is to build confidence of the children through Performing Arts. 6 of our sparrows have been selected through audition for it.
- * Indira Gandhi National Open University is a well known university for distance education. AAWC is joining hands with IGNOU to have a Special Study Centre for the underprivileged children of the society, for 10th and 12th classes to start with.
- * ETHOS is a group of young professionals from different fields, who are interested to help NGOs, using their areas of expertise. It has come up with a pilot project called "I support NGOs" and they have collaborated with AAWC for the same.
- * We are currently looking for volunteers or teachers who could teach Computers, Maths, Science, Economics and Accounts to our sparrows.

Women's Update

- * We have placed many of our girls in Boarding Homes, which in turn impose strict rules to be followed. These rules have been made to ensure the safe and healthy upbringing of the girls. In this regard, only the mothers are allowed to visit the girls once a month; no male member is allowed to visit or establish any kind of contact. But we got information that many a time our beneficiaries (mothers) are accompanied by male companions.

To deal with this we held a meeting at our centre with all the women, to make them understand the reasons behind these rules, and how negligence on their part could affect the lives of their daughters.

- * For the past 10 years we have been helping our women secure Yellow Ration Cards, which pertains to people living below the poverty line. At one point, the Government stopped issuing cards in this category, but many women are still in need of help.

In this regard, we have requested Rationing Office that in exchange of ration cards of our beneficiaries who have passed away, issue the same to the deserving women in the waiting list. Process is going on since last one year.

- * Our women celebrated Raksha Bandhan with Shekhar Kapoor, acclaimed Director cum Producer, of films like Mr. India, Bandit queen, Elizabeth, etc. Since Mr. Kapoor could visit us only in the evening, we invited only few of our women, unlike other times.

but it was nice to see the women tying Rakhi to him and participating and interacting with Mr. Kapoor in a friendly manner.

- * The sad news is that we lost 2 of our beneficiaries, to AIDS and Tuberculosis, aged 30 years and 25 years respectively. These are the times we feel helpless...

The former has been a member of AAWC since 1999 and is survived by one adopted nephew, while the latter became our member in 2006 and is survived by 4 children.



Rakhi celebration with Shekhar Kapoor

Volunteer's Update

- * Ms. Emily, from Australia was with us for a month and helped us in designing our promotional materials
- * Mr. Prayank Agrawal and his friend, who are pursuing their MBA in Singapore taught cricket to our girls on the Saturday's evenings.
- * Ms. Shanor Seerwal, from USA volunteered with AAWC for 3 months, and helped in outreach and documentation.
- * Ms. Alisha Patel handled English tuition for one of our older sparrows.
- * Mrs. Muketa Jhaveri and her children taught Chess and other indoor games to our sparrows and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. It was indeed a sight worth watching to see our sparrows sitting in several small groups, each one deeply engrossed in their games.
- * Ms. Arshiya Mittal explored the drawing and hand painting skills of our girls (9 older girls and 8 younger girls) through a unique exercise.
Music was played and the girls were told to visualize something related to the music and make drawings. This was a helpful exercise as our girls never got an encouragement to think or visualize since their childhood.
- * Ms. Frika from New Zealand joined AAWC for a month to help in activities of women and children.
- * Mr. Alan, an Australian National, Teacher with a reputed school in Mumbai, teaches Spoken English to the older sparrows on Saturday evenings.

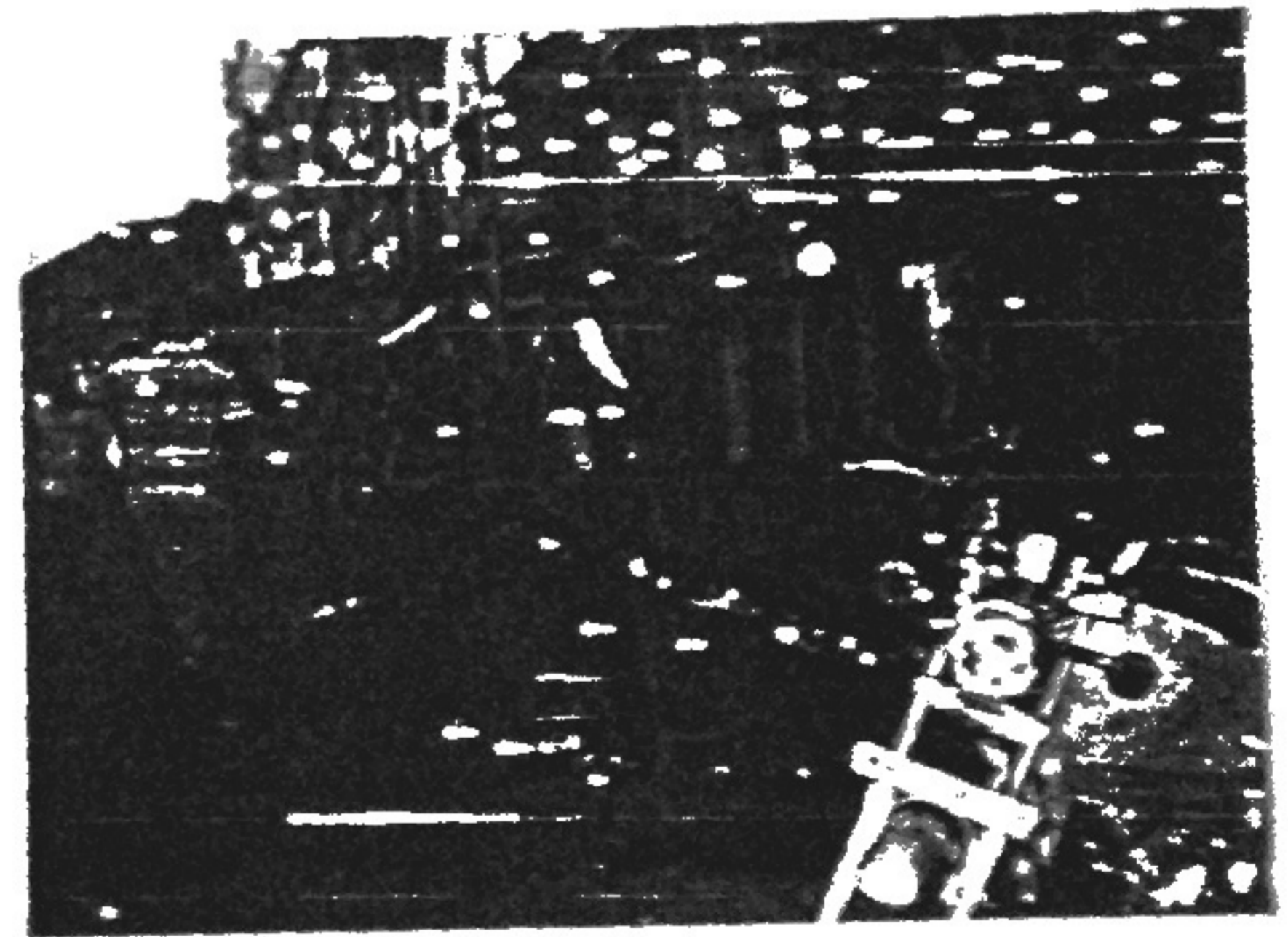
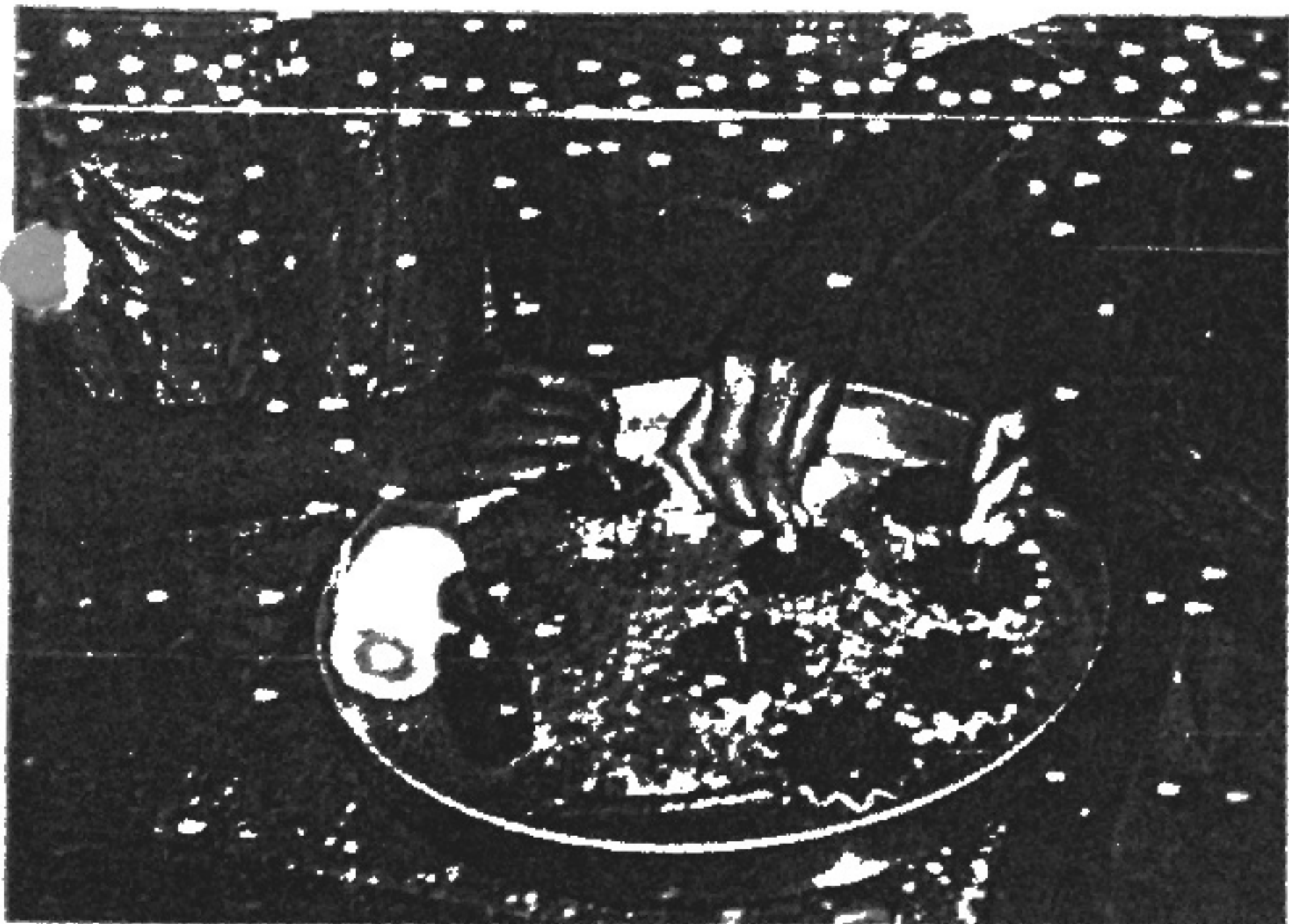


Photo taken by a sparrow for photo book project by a volunteer



Sparrows Update

- One of our sparrows has been sent to New Life Boarding Home. It was a Herculean task, as her mother was addicted to Cough Expectorants while the brothel owner considered this girl as a potential for her business. Finally we were successful in displacing the girl from a highly vulnerable environment.
- 3 more sparrows were referred to New Life Boarding Home in the previous quarter.
- One of our older sparrows has joined Magic Bus NGO, to provide football training and life skill sessions for the slum and pavement children.
- Our sparrows were all excited when we decided to screen the Oscar Winning movie "Slumdog Millionaire". Most of them remarked that in life, experiences count more than education and success comes for anybody who strives hard in the right way.
- Last year 2 of our older sparrows got selected at a 5 Star Hotel Apprentice program. We are extremely happy that they have scored 75% and 79% respectively in their first year exams.
- One of our sparrows who is residing in New Life Boarding home got operated for Appendicitis, and is doing fine now.
- Silver Innings Foundation, an NGO working for the Aged has collaborated with AAWC for an Intergenerational Project. On 13th June they conducted a session with our girls, followed by a poster making session. The goal of the workshop was to sensitize the younger generation about the rights of the elderly and the problems suffered by them. Our girls made 32 posters, to spread awareness and put an end to elder abuse. Also the sparrows participated in a fancy dress show where they dressed as aged people.
- 11 of our girls participated in Summer Funk 2009 organized by Victory Arts Foundation (Choreographer Shiamak Davar's Dance Institute)
- 13 sparrows were certified in a Candle Making Course of 7 days by Sophia's Women's Studies Center.
- 3 sparrows passed 10th standard with 62%, 58% and 52% respectively and have taken admission in Commerce and Arts.



Candle making workshop



Stop elder abuse day



Balwadi

Update

- * Our Balwadi is always buzzing with activities; be it the regular prayer, rhymes, stories, dance class, games or the craft sessions, we find the children having a good time. Individual attention is given to every child. Many a time, children are taught through play-way method, to ensure better understanding.
- * It is unfortunate that these children are prone to deficiencies and skin infections more often, as they do not live in sanitary conditions or eat healthy food; hence their nutritional and medical needs are the most important needs we are taking care. During noon, the teacher prepares all of them for a nap, by narrating stories. Thus we aim at holistic development of our children.
- * This academic year, we have placed 9 children in regular Municipal and Govt. schools. Remaining 10 children have gone to village or moved out of the area.
- * One of the regular problems we face is the non-consistent attendance of the children. The reasons behind this are many, i.e., the mothers are not physically able to take care of their children, they are not used to a systematic way of life, etc.
To deal with this challenge our staff who has a very good rapport with the children and their families, pick up the children from their homes and drop them back at noon after the Balwadi classes.
- * Our Balwadi was closed for summer vacation from 1st April to 30th June.
- * On Raksha Bandhan, our Balwadi teacher introduced them to the tradition of rakhi; the girls tied rakhi for the boys and exchanged sweets.
- * On account of Independence Day, the children were taught to salute the Indian Flag and sing the National Anthem.
On the same day, Dahi Handi was celebrated. The children had great fun, bursting the balloons filled with water that were hung on a rope.
- * A new Balwadi called Darshan has opened in the area, whose timings are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Dahi Handi Celebration



Independence Day Celebration