

**DEVELOPMENT OF CITY FARM AT ROSARY HIGH SCHOOL
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP HELD ON 24TH MARCH
AT ROSARY SCHOOL**

The lecture on 24th March was the second lecture in a series of 8 lectures in the schedule of the training programme of the farming project.

Attendance sheet of the day showed absence of only one student. Members present were:

1. Preeti Patil
2. Sabrina Modak
3. Mr. Nandoskar
4. Mr.Kondar
5. Ms. Surekha
6. Ms. Ranjana
7. Mr. Aakash
8. Ms. Gayatri Subramaniam

+ 9 students Vimla Vikas Kendra (1 absent)

+ 4 students from MAGIC BUS (NGO)



CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY ROOM

Everybody assembled in the Library Room of the Rosary school. Also present on this day were 4 new participants from MAGIC BUS Mumbai.

This session started with a recapitulation on the first session held on2005. The recipe for Amrut Pani was revised. The children recollected the recipe very easily.

The new session then started with a story of Nature's way of building soil. The children listened enthusiastically to Preeti who explained ;

“How nature builds its own soil”.

She commenced the session by saying, “Think of a forest or a meadow. Every year as the season changes the leaves grow and then fall off. They then decompose and break down; flowers grow bloom and fade; animals die and decompose – all life adds organic matter to the soil”.

The cycle of growth and decay and growth again was explained as a wheel, where birth, growth and maturity take place above ground in the light, and the process of decay below the surface in the darkness, giving birth to life anew. If growth is faster than decay the wheel is broken, destroying nature’s balance. The importance of natural decay must not be undermined. What lives eventually dies, and it’s substance returns to the soil to be recycled into new life. This is nature’s law of return. This is the cycle that we are trying to create in our farm.



To illustrate the meaning of “cycle” the children were explained the *Water cycle*. How rainwater evaporates, goes to form clouds, cools and comes down again as rainfall and collects in rivers and lakes.

It was explained to the children that they were “copying nature on their farm”. Nature on its own takes at least **500 years** to prepare one inch of soil. However by copying nature man is able to create the same soil in exactly **2-4 months** time.

The children were introduced to some new English vocabulary that they picked up very quickly.

- **Compost**
- **Cycle**
- **Decompose**
- **Inorganic**
- **Microbe**
- **Mulching**
- **Organic**

Preparation of compost heaps:



The group left the Library room for a practical session of compost heap preparation on the terrace. Mr. Nandoskar, the gardener had pre-prepared the Amrut Pani and had gathered enough dried leaves for demonstrating the making of compost heaps. The children put a layer of dried leaves, then sprinkled some amrut pani on the leaves and finally put a thin layer of garden soil. They repeated these layers until the heap reached the height of 12 inches. Finally, the heap was covered with wet gunny bags as mulch.

ACTIVITY 1

Waste segregation



Bags full of garbage were given to each group. They were asked to identify the biodegradable from the non-biodegradable and segregate the two. The children were then informed that the biodegradable could be recycled into the compost heap. All plastics, metals etc... were to be recycled in other ways as natural recycling was not possible.

ACTIVITY 2

Naming the groups

The activity of giving two separate names to the two groups of students was an assignment given at the first workshop. The underlying concept of this activity was to give reasons for choosing the name of a plant, fruit or vegetable selected for one's group. The earlier classification of "peru" and "anar" groups had been asked to identify name for their groups and also to evaluate why they had chosen the names.

To aid the children in their selection of names was our little bilingual (Telegu-Hindi-English) friend Gayatri Subramaniam, an 11 year old student of St Agnes Convent, Clare Road studying in the 7th grade. Gayatri explained to the children the idea of choosing an appropriate name for their group. As the children are Telegu-speaking (a south Indian language spoken by the children) they found Gayatri's intervention very helpful and they

also found someone speaking their dialect with whom they could relate to in a light hearted manner.



Gayatri conducted the session by interacting with the children and making them understand the activity that required them to really think. The results were as under:

The “anar” and “peru” group named their team “coconut” and “sugarcane” respectively. Reasons and uses given by both groups for selecting the names are as follows:

| COCONUT | SUGARCANE |
|---|---|
| 1. Coconut oil for cooking and anointing hair | 1. Good to eat |
| 2. Coconut oil for making Soap | 2. Sugar is made out of sugar cane |
| 3. Rope made from coconut husk | 3. Chewing the cane gives exercise to the teeth |
| 4. Coconut fruit used as “prasad” | 4. Sugarcane waste is used as mulch |
| 5. Coconut water for drinking | 5. Jaggery is made from sugarcane |
| 6. Coconut milk for cooking | 6. Sugarcane juice is medicinal for jaundice patients |
| 7. Coconut leaves for thatches of huts | 7. Sugarcane juice gives energy |

This exercise gave us an insight into their thinking and intelligence.

The session ended with biscuits dunked in refreshing “cutting chai” from a nearby “chai” delivery shop. The conversation steered onto the proposed “Chai Party Event” to be hosted for the students by the students. The children named the herbs that could go into herbal tea infusions: Cardamom, ginger, lemon grass and basil (tulsi).

The session concluded with a discussion on the exciting agenda for the forthcoming field trip to the MAHARASHTRA NATURE PARK.

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