



**Isha  
Vidhya**



Educating  
Rural India

**Newsletter Issue 7**



*Dear Readers,*

*As we launch into 2010 and the third term of this academic year, we look back on eventful and growth-filled past year. Your support has been key in this success and we take this opportunity to thank you!*

*This 7th edition newsletter will update you on recent events, foremost amongst which was Sadhguru's visit to the Nagercoil and Tuticorin Schools on August 17th, 2009. This unforgettable day offered students and teachers a unique opportunity to meet and speak with the founder and visionary of their school. We invite you to share in the experience through their sharings and an excerpt of Sadhguru's address to them.*

*From walkathons, to marathons, to treks up Mt. Kilimanjaro, dedicated individuals are jumping into action to bring quality education to rural children. Read their inspiring stories, poems and recounts in the newsletter.*

*Moving into the New Year and a new period of growth, we encourage you to get involved - whether it's by volunteering, sponsoring or joining our team - your support will make a difference!*

*Sincerely,  
Isha Vidhya Editorial Team*



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## SADHGURU VISITS ISHA VIDHYA

August 17th, 2009 began bright and early for Isha Vidhya students and teachers in Nagercoil. Decked out in fancy, Kerala attire the students greeted Sadhguru with big smiles and bright faces as his car rolled into the school at 8 AM.



Through a shower of flower petals tossed by the Kindergarten students, Sadhguru was escorted to the front of the school where he planted and dedicated a Baobab tree.



To the delight of onlookers, Sadhguru then tried out the nearby playground, confirming that one is never too old to enjoy the slide!



Next came a tour of the classrooms, elaborately decorated by students the day before. Each class teacher attended her room to answer any questions, hear Sadhguru's suggestions, and receive his blessing.



Following the school tour, Sadhguru interacted with the students, captivating their interest with his entertaining stories. After the students, he met with the teachers- touching their hearts and moving them to tears through his inspiring words about the significance of their vocation.



Meanwhile, close to 1000 parents and local Isha volunteers assembled in the pavilion set up outside the school, awaiting the students' performances and Sadhguru's address. They weren't disappointed- the students put on a dazzling display of dance and drama, followed by Sadhguru's enthralling speech- recognizing the accomplishments achieved at the school so far, while also challenging those present to further action in transforming the educational landscape of rural India. The program closed with Sadhguru presenting a ceremonial check for the 192 scholarship donations awarded to the school.

Though only 135 km away, arid Tuticorin couldn't provide more of a geographical contrast to the lush greenery of Nagercoil; however, the enthusiasm of the awaiting students and crowd was equally exuberant. To celebrate a different aspect of Indian culture, the students in Tuticorin dressed in traditional Tamil Nadu attire and held oil lamps to decorate Sadhguru's path to the school.



After planting and dedicating a Peppal tree, Sadhguru toured the school with the guidance of the school principal and teachers.

Along the way, he stopped to inaugurate the new school library: Donated by Capt. Avinash Badra, the library contains over 2000 children's books, more children's books than have any of the book stores in Tuticorin.





*"I was very excited when Sadhguru visited our school. He blessed us and told us a story. We got a wonderful library and no other school in Tuticorin has a library like this. This day is memorable forever."*

*S. Atchaya – Class 4 Student, Isha Vidhya - Tuticorin*

*"Sadhguru visited us on August 17th, Monday. I gave Sadhguru a bouquet of flowers. He enjoyed the day with us and visited all our class rooms. He sang a song for us and told stories. That day was a wonderful day."*

*Sruthi – Class 4B Student, Isha Vidhya - Nagercoil*

After interacting with the students and teachers, Sadhguru proceeded to the pavilion to enjoy the students' performances and then address the crowd. Before leaving the stage, Sadhguru signed and handed over a ceremonial check for the 262 scholarship donations awarded to the school through the generosity of donors from across India and the world.



*"When Sadhguru came to our school, I was speechless, and even now I can't describe my feelings in words. The joy I felt that day can be compared with the day I gave birth to my son. I forgot all my sorrows and I was filled with inspiration."*

*Anushya – Teacher, Isha Vidhya - Nagercoil*



## SADHGURU'S ADDRESS

Generation after generation, people in villages are living in the same suppressed socio-economic conditions without any improvement. The only remedy to this situation is education. If we can provide villagers with this ladder, they will have a chance to come out of their situation.

But, what is happening? New schools are being built in cities, but they're not being built in places where they are most needed. They are not being built in places where the majority of the people are living—the villages. Schools are being built where people are scarce but money is abundant. But, education should not be conducted as a business. A society which treats education as commerce can never improve. Only when it is served with love and affection, it will reach people.

Today, without education, people will not even be in the position to earn their own food. So we are using education to make it possible to earn food. But, the purpose of education is something else: Education is a tool to increase one's capacity to understand life.

In Isha Vidhya, we are providing the children education not only for earning food, but also to expand their understanding of life. Each child must bloom as a person without fear, a person without anger or disgust, a person full of bliss. At Isha Vidhya, education is not merely about preparing our children to get through the examinations, get a good job, and earn money; but also, about making them into loving, caring, and cheerful human beings.

We started this work just some 3 years back. Shall

we develop it in another 100 years? No? If we want this generation itself to get benefited, then we do not have 100 years. Everyone says that we can do it in 10 years. But in my mind, even 10 years is too long. We need to work hard to develop these schools rapidly.

Developing these schools is like growing trees: If we plant a sapling today, we do not know whether we will reap the fruits of the tree, nor do we know whether we will relax in the shadow of the tree. But, after decades, someone will certainly benefit from the tree. In the same way, we do not know where these pupils will go after their schooling; we do not know whether they will come back and thank us. But, it is not important. Let them live a blissful life wherever they go. That is the aim with which the schools are run.



Bringing up your own children is a different ball game. You take good care of them, and later they take good care of you; but, it is not so with our schools. Our aim is to make the students live a blissful life, without regard to whether we receive some thanks or benefit from them in the future.

Many people from around the world are sending donations for scholarships for these children. They have not seen the children, and may never meet them, but they want them to get educated. The students here must be aware of the support they are receiving: People who have never even met them care that they get educated. If we feel that everyone steals, everyone cheats, everyone scolds -then there is no meaning in our lives. The students must understand that there are good people, people who have never seen them, but who have enough concern in their hearts that they are contributing towards their well-being. A child should grow up with this feeling.



Every man, women and child must believe in humanity; if we lose our belief in humanity we cannot live a peaceful life. Isha Vidya is a tool for regenerating this belief.

The students must understand that someone somewhere in the world is interested in their well being. With this awareness, tomorrow they will definitely help someone. That is how goodness is propagated.

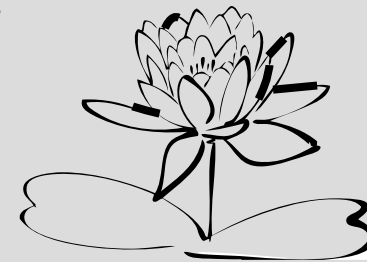
So many people have volunteered in creating these schools; people from all parts of the world. Saying thank you is not enough to convey to you what your support has meant. Our hope is that you will have the opportunity to visit one of the schools and share in the joy of seeing how these children are growing and changing.

I came to understand that 500 of you have given up your dinner on Wednesday? <sup>1</sup> Good. But, still there are around 700 people here who have not done so... Can you skip your dinner on Wednesdays? I am asking for Wednesdays because all the other days have been taken away by some God or other. We only have Wednesdays left for the children (laughs). Can you give up your dinner on Wednesdays?

Those who cannot skip their food, can you offer your service for one hour per week for the school? Help the people working in the school for one hour per week. Take up any work that is required - it is not what we eat which decides who we are; it is what we do.

If you want something to blossom in you, you need a helping mentality. Without thinking of the benefits, if you can help at least a few, your heart will blossom. My wish is that you feel and experience this in your life.

Love and Blessings,  
Sadhguru



*1. Just by giving up one meal and donating the amount saved each week, you can transform the lives of rural children by helping open an Isha Vidhya School. To find out more and to join this effort, visit [www.ishavidhya.org/skip-a-meal](http://www.ishavidhya.org/skip-a-meal)*

## SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE



Your support has made a huge impact in the lives of so many rural children and their families. This year, a total of 1264 rural children received the priceless gift of education through your generosity!

**For the academic year starting in June 2010, we're looking forward to welcoming a total of nearly 2500 Isha Vidhya students, with an estimated 1750 of them needing financial assistance. We turn to you to continue your support and help make this happen!**

Over the last two years of the Scholarship Program, each and every rupee you donated has been stretched to the maximum, with 100% of your contribution going directly towards helping the students. With rising input costs and with the desire to see the changes in these students taken to the next level, it has become necessary to increase the scholarship donation amount. We regret the necessity of making this increase, but are sure you won't mind contributing a few extra rupees to help your child.



*"I am Kalaimani. I am a farmer and I live in the village of Chinnandikuzhi, Cuddalore. Last year my two daughters, K.Pavithra and K.Rajalakshmi, enrolled in a private Matriculation School in Cuddalore, but I couldn't pay the fees because of my poor income and my daughters had to leave the school. This year I admitted them in Isha Vidhya. In this school the teaching method is different. There is lot of improvement in their studies and behavior. I am totally spell bound about the service of the donor who is taking care of my children's welfare and studies. My eyes are filled with tears of joy, and I pray to God and Sadhguru to bless the donor with good health and long life. I thank you for this dedicated and loving service."*

*- Mr. and Mrs. Kalaimani*

The additional donation amount for the scholarships will make the following possible:

*\* Student health: With a well nourished body, your student will have the energy to enjoy life and develop to her full potential. The protein-rich health snacks Isha Vidhya students currently receive have led to noticeable improvements in their health. To take this further, we will begin providing hearty, nutritious lunches from June 2010. Ensuring one balanced meal a day will be a huge support for these children. Your scholarship donation will help subsidize the cost of the lunches, which will be provided free of cost for the most economically disadvantaged students.*

*\* Subsidizing transportation costs: Economic downturns hit the poorest members of society the hardest. Since few rural families own their own vehicles, our students primarily rely on school transportation to get to and from school. With rising fuel prices leading to higher van and bus fees, we will increase our subsidization of the transportation costs to lessen the burden on families. Your donation will make this possible.*



*\* Increasing the supply of teaching aids: Every child enjoys toys. Beyond just the fun, however, hands-on toys (like building blocks and puzzles) and audio-visual materials (like DVD programs and audio books) play a critical role in guiding proper development. Imagine growing up with no toys at home, this is the case for many of the rural children coming to Isha Vidhya. Your scholarship donation will help to increase the schools' stock of these materials, putting another toy in the hand of a rural child.*

*\* Increasing teacher salaries: Attracting experienced and qualified teachers to rural areas is often a challenge. Raising the salaries we offer is one way to attract more experienced and educated teachers, and also reflects increases in salaries paid to government school teachers.*

*\*The new Scholarship Contribution amount for the academic year starting in June 2010 will be: Rs. 10,000 / USD 240 / GBP 150.*



## SUPPORT FROM AROUND THE WORLD

There are many ways to support the Isha Vidhya students, from sponsoring a child's education, to spending a few months volunteering at one of the schools. Those inclined to activity- participating in a walkathon, marathon, or even climbing a mountain, can become avenues to show your support. Below are highlights of recent events from around the world focused on generating awareness and raising funds for Isha Vidhya. *To all the volunteers and participants who helped make these events a success – Thank You!*

### Isha Vidhya UK Walkathon

The second annual Isha Vidhya UK Walkathon took place on Sunday 20th September at Bushy Park. More than 60 Isha Vidhya supporters joined together to complete the 5k walk through the beautiful royal park where they were greeted by an array of wildlife and magnificent oak and horse chestnut trees.

Gathering after the event in high spirits, participants met shared heard from those who had visited the schools about the impact of their contributions are making on the lives of so many children and their families. In total, the dedicated work of the UK volunteers and participants brought in over £7000 for Isha Vidhya through the combined events of the Walkathon, the Kailash Trek and the evenings of entertainment hosted by Jayashree Mene and Jolie Driscoll.

Below is a sharing from Shakti, scholarship sponsor and participant of the 2009 UK Walkathon.



*My name is Thavasakthi Needhirajan. I'm 9 years old and live in the U.K. with my parents who are both doctors.*

*I get lots of toys to play with and can go lots of different places to visit. I sometimes think about the children in India who don't get these things.*

*One day, I saw my parents reading a letter and looking at pictures from the girl they sponsor from Isha Vidhya, and immediately I thought of doing the same thing from my pocket money for another girl.*

*I realized that this is a challenge for me, and I love facing challenges! I thought of so many different ways of saving my expenses. I stopped buying sweets and toys and unnecessary things. When I go shopping with my parents, if I want something, I think twice if I need it or not. If I don't need it, I get that money from my parents and save it.*

*In 2009, I managed to collect £100, and I sponsored a girl named Adhi Muthra. When I came to know from Shanti Murali [the Isha Vidhya Scholarship Coordinator] that I am the youngest sponsorer for Isha Vidhya, I was so happy! I will help this little girl and support her all the way through her education. I write to her regularly and she writes back to me regularly. I feel so happy when I get letters from her! I thank Isha for giving me a chance to do this.*

*I really hope that many more people can do this and help all children have a joyful life.*

## Great Delhi Run

125 enthusiastic Isha volunteers joined together with world-class boxer and Olympic bronze medalist, Vijender Singh, to represent Isha Vidhya in the 7km Great Delhi Run on November 1st. Their efforts paid off, raising over Rs. 350,000 and bringing Isha Vidhya into the Delhi media spotlight.

While for some, a marathon may be a simple test of endurance, for others it goes much farther.



The below poem expresses the profound experience of one Isha supporter in the Delhi Marathon:

### A Walk with Grace

*The cool early morning greeted by the excitement to run,  
T-shirts, caps and running shoes, all were geared up for the fun.  
Waving flags of 'Running for Isha Vidhya', carrying banners two,  
'We are Isha Vidhya!' the chants and passion grew.*

*An injured hip, a leg that for nine months had turned hard as stone,  
To be part of the Isha spirit, participation in the run I had shown.  
"A kilometer of walking, that's all!" The doctor had made me ensure,  
To the start line I had already walked a kilometer or more.*

*My leg grew numb, my mind raced fast,  
As the race began I watched all run past.  
I began to walk steadily without looking back,  
As I walked it seemed to be a never ending track.*

*Less than midway through I felt my leg stiffen with pain,  
I sat down dejected. I could not do it, what a shame.  
I felt as though stranded in the middle of an ocean,  
All love draining, deadening of all devotion.*

*Pain had taken over my body and my mind,  
As all raced past me, peace I could not find.  
That is when it touched me with a whisper into my ear –  
"You can use your own legs or let me carry you through to the end my dear."  
I felt this silent presence sweep me back onto my feet,  
Effortlessly walking, my Isha companions on the finish line did I greet.  
Pain had receded a new faith had come through,  
Grace everywhere - just waiting to be embraced by me and you.*

- Shivani Aggarwal

## Climbing Mt Kilimanjaro

Not one to settle for small goals, Alok Kumar set his sights on raising £5000 and climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in the name of the Isha Vidhya students. Touched by his undertaking on their behalf, the students researched Mt. Kilimanjaro with great interest and sent Alok a card to convey their blessings and gratitude. Alok shares his experience below:



*Coming from a humble family background where my father did most of his education under a lamp post, I have always had a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of children who don't have the chance to get a formal education.*

*Seeing the work of Isha Vidhya in changing the lives of thousands of children and their coming generations, I decided to support them in my own small way – planning a trek up Mount Kilimanjaro to raise awareness and funds.*

*Mount Kilimanjaro, often referred to as the Roof of Africa, is the world's highest freestanding mountain and the highest point in Africa. After committing to trek up this 5895 meter*

*mountain, doubts started hitting my mind as to whether I'd overestimated my abilities- my only experience with climbing was going up the staircases in buildings! But, sometimes the thirst to achieve triumphs over the cynicism of a doubtful mind, and as I started my training, my desire grew and grew.*

*The trek of 7 days was simply exhilarating. There are few places in the world where the topography changes 5 times over in 5 days as you ascend: "Bush land" to "Rainforest" to "Moorland" to "Alpine Desert" and lastly to "Arctic". If you want to be with nature, Kilimanjaro is the place! The beauty is pristine. Kilimanjaro is mighty, magnificent, and yet melancholy... melancholy, because the glaciers are fast disappearing due to global warming. Scientist estimate there may be no glaciers left on Mt. Kilimanjaro 20 years from now!*

*Thanks to my training, the 5 days leading up to the base camp went smoothly and I really enjoyed them. However, the walk from the base camp to the summit was a different game. With 4 layers of clothing to protect against the freezing weather and the 200 km per hour winds, relying on the illumination of the full moon to guide us, we started our final ascent to the summit at midnight on the 2nd December. We attempted to rest a few hours in the tent before starting the midnight climb, but the mighty winds descending down the slopes left us constantly in fear that our tent would blow away with us in it. Our guide told us that in his 9 years of climbing he had rarely seen such winds.*

*In the first 5 days we had climbed 3100 meters, but in the estimated 7 hours it would take us to reach the summit, we would need to climb another 1300 meters. To gradually acclimatize ourselves to the higher altitude and protect our*

*elves from exhaustion (which would make our bodies need more oxygen- something not available at that height,) we followed a methodical pace and avoided long breaks which would lower our body temperatures. We carried water, but all three of my bottles froze. To top it off, I suffered a severe bout of nausea at about 5200 meters. I had done enough research to know that nausea is a common, but usually temporary reaction to acute altitude change. This knowledge helped me calm my nerves and keep my focus, in spite of seeing an alarming number of people throwing up along the way.*

*What do you do when your body and mind deceive you completely? When my mind and body stopped communicating properly, and the only message they continued to send was for me to give up and turn back, at that moment, I experienced a different dimension that pulled me through to the finish line.*

*A simple “Best of Luck” card given to me by the Isha Vidhya students in Erode kept flashing in front of my eyes, and I knew I had to do it for them.*



*I kept praying to the mountain to give me access to the top, not for my own pride and glory, but so that I could come back next time with a larger group to help Isha Vidhya.*

*After what seemed like a lifetime, we reached the summit at 07:02 on Dec 2nd. Overcome by the beauty of the sunrise and the pristine glow of the fast disappearing glaciers, I momentarily forgot my pain. I had read about the disorientation your mind goes through at the top, but never knew how it would feel! I took my mittens out to click some pictures and am still to recover from the damage the exposure to the biting cold caused my fingers.*

*In looking back, I know my efforts were worth the awareness and the support I generated for Isha Vidhya. The donations received through the trek will provide 60 children with education, book supplies, uniforms and nutritious lunches for a whole year. A small start to a long journey!*

*With determination in my mind and optimism in my heart, I await to set on my next journey that can bring more smiles and joy to the children of Isha Vidhya!*

*I thank everyone who supported me in my journey and prayed for me during the climb. A special thanks to my wife, who has carefully watched and supported me through the last few weeks.*

*Pranams.*

*Alok Kumar*

## CAREER/VOLUNTEER/ DONATION OPPORTUNITIES



### CAREERS

The success of the schools depends on the dedicated hard work of the principals, teachers and staff. Isha Vidhya is seeking enthusiastic teacher candidates and experienced principal candidates to join its dynamic team. English ability and an open mind are more important than experience for new teachers as training is provided once hired. With the schools located in rural areas, finding the right teacher and principal candidates can be a challenge. If you or anyone you know fits the above description, please contact us at [info@ishavidhya.org](mailto:info@ishavidhya.org)

### VOLUNTEERS

Short term and long term placements are open for volunteers in the schools or as a part of the Isha Vidhya project team.

Assignments cover a wide range, including reading stories to children, joining the construction team, helping develop curriculum, being part of the scholarship coordination, and many more opportunities. A minimum two month commitment is encouraged - the more time you commit, the more of an impact you will make! To find out more, please contact us at [info@ishavidhya.org](mailto:info@ishavidhya.org)

### DONATIONS

The generosity of donors from around India and the world is making Isha Vidhya happen. Your support will touch many lives, whether it is sponsoring an entire school infrastructure or donating a single library book. At this time, donations for scholarships and scholarship renewals are being accepted. Donations can be made online at [www.ishavidhya.org/donate](http://www.ishavidhya.org/donate) or by downloading the PDF form and mailing in a check. For more information, please contact us at [info@ishavidhya.org](mailto:info@ishavidhya.org).

*Small drops make an ocean.*