

**VINIMAG – December 2005**  
(Covering events during Apr. – Dec. 2005)

**“Win Hearts with Vinimag”**

**Issue No.10**  
**For Private Circulation Only**

Dear Friends,

I have some exciting news for you!

It's been more than 3 years since the last issue of Vinimag was released. We've been getting a lot of requests to revive our very own Vinimag giving details of all our activities.

So after several kicks we have restarted the issue – beginning from the end of the year; namely the last month of 2005! In this issue we will cover our activities for the last quarter and we will cover significant events which have happened earlier in the year too. However we intend to have this newsletter released every quarter.

Hope you find this newsletter interesting and enjoyable. We welcome any suggestions / recommendations – please email them to [vinimag@vsnl.com](mailto:vinimag@vsnl.com) or send in your comments to the postal address given on the last page of this newsletter.

Wishing you all a very happy and prosperous new year.

Until next time...

Jayashree Mukund (Editor, Vinimag)

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## 1. Message From Vinimay Trust

Dear Well-wishers,

Let me take this opportunity to wish all of you an extremely happy, prosperous, healthy and successful year 2006. A new year is always harbinger of good things and we hope that Vinimag is amongst the first of the many good things that will come your way this year. It is indeed a great pleasure to see "Vinimag" back. This gives us a platform to share with you information on our activities, valuable experiences, memorable moments, significant achievements, occasional trials and tribulations. Through this sharing, we have been able to draw the necessary strength, support, resilience as well as inspiration from all of you. In fact, Vinimag has not only been an invaluable tool in establishing the link between us and our well-wishers but also a means of self-assessment of our work. It started in 1998 with the first issue of VINIMAG covering activities during the period April to September 1998. Until March 2002, it served the purpose of communication admirably for four years. The intervening period up to now, i.e. December 2005, we were not able to publish Vinimag due to various reasons. For that, we definitely owe you an explanation.

Vinimay is purely a group of voluntary social workers drawn from a multitude of professions. Even TARUN SADAN (our transition hostel) is run with only one full-time residential Superintendent, who is more a member of Vinimay group than an employee. Voluntary groups like ours, work amidst terrible constraints of time and limited human resources.

In this context, the period from 2002 to 2005 has been very eventful. As you all know, Tarun Sadan occupies a special place in our hearts as it embodies the implementation of Vinimay's concept of integrated child and youth care. In 2002, it completed three years and the first batch of "Tarun-Sadanites" graduated into society at large. Since the year 2002, the average occupancy of Tarun Sadan has remained at about 30. The task of shaping the lives of 30 adolescent youth in a manner befitting Vinimay's philosophy and enabling them to stand on their own feet was indeed a Herculean task. During these years we learned as we grew and tried to evolve a system to achieve these goals. It took an extremely large chunk of our time and effort. Today, more than 40 boys have passed through Tarun Sadan and integrated in to mainstream society. This is something that we all are proud of.

The child welfare activities at units of Children's Aid Society (CAS) where our work was concentrated suffered a setback in October 2003, when CAS decided to stop activities of all NGOs in all its units with a view to streamlining NGO participation. Since we did not know how long this situation would continue, there was some uncertainty in reorienting our activities. As a spin off, we had a chance to interact with other NGOs and academic institutions. We also used this interim period to know about many other child welfare and social welfare organizations and expand our activities to cover them. However, our activities in the units of CAS have resumed since October 2003.

The tenth Balmahostav 05 is just over. As it happens during each Balmahostav, we were truly invigorated by the smiling countenances, joyous spirits and sweet memories of the thousands of children who enjoyed the event thoroughly. This is the right time for Vinimag to be resurrected, go outdoors and do its job of providing the information highway, linking you and us. We are now fortunate to have in our fold an extremely keen and enthused volunteer to keep this going and reach you once every three months.

Adieu for the present and happy reading.

Yours Sincerely

**For Vinimay Trust  
(TVA Padmanaban)**

## 2. Feature Article: Arjun's Journey

An indomitable spirit + willingness to work hard + a few helping hands = Success. It has not been an easy journey for Arjun – every step was difficult and the end of the road was uncertain. Arjun's story will tug at your heart and show you that we can make a difference.

It all began one Sunday morning at one of Vinimay's birthday programs. Noticing an odour, all heads turned around to look at a small boy. He was about eight years old and huddled up in a corner. The boy was dressed in a shabby shirt and did not wear the usual shorts; instead, in its place was a stained towel.

Moved by this sight, Vinimay was quick to inquire about his case with the authorities of the child welfare institution where he lived. Arjun had been abandoned by his parents near a government-run hospital, when he was hardly two years old, perhaps due to a deformity he had been born with. Hearing his cries, passers-by admitted him to a state-run home for infants. Once there, he was promptly referred to a government hospital, where he underwent nine surgical operations within a period of two and half years. The child care institution where Arjun was subsequently transferred (and where Vinimay's volunteers worked) had received only a brief description of the operations he had undergone.

To describe Arjun's state then as pitiable would be an understatement. He had absolutely no control over his bladder and was dripping urine all the time. Being only seven or eight years old, he could not manage to keep himself clean all the time. Since he had spent most of the time moving in and out of hospitals, he had not attended school. The embarrassment of being different from others affected him profoundly. He hardly spoke to anyone and preferred to keep to himself. This, then was the situation when Vinimay came across Arjun for the first time.

There was no doubt that he needed immediate attention. With the consent and support of the authorities at his institution, Vinimay had Arjun admitted to a government hospital for fresh investigations. Since his medical condition was complicated, these investigations took almost a month. The diagnosis was grim: One of Arjun's kidneys was damaged beyond repair; his bladder was open and non-functional since birth. Therefore, he had no control over his urination.

Reconstruction of the bladder was possible and was an option that was considered. But owing to muscular atrophy (due to long disuse), the chances of regaining bladder control were very slim. Also there was a great risk of his other, normally functioning, kidney being damaged due to such an operation. The only real option left then, according to medical experts, was fitting a pouch externally into which the urine could collect. Even this option involved a major surgery.

Considering the seriousness of the case and the risks involved, Vinimay decided to have Arjun treated at Bombay Hospital, one of Mumbai's reputed private hospitals, even though treatment at such a hospital would be very expensive. Vinimay had a series of meetings with the senior pediatric urologist and other authorities of the hospital and could successfully plead for a significant concessions in the fees. The highly reputed surgeon had many cases on hand and there was a delay of a few months for the date of the operation. Unfortunately for Arjun, communal riots broke out in Mumbai and his operation had to be further postponed.

Thus, almost six months after the preliminary investigations, Arjun was admitted to Bombay hospital for surgery. The staff of his institution and Vinimay's members visited him frequently

at the hospital to ensure that he did not feel scared or lonely. The hospital staff too became very fond of the ever-cooperative boy.

And finally, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1993, Arjun underwent the surgery which was to give him a new life. The operation lasted five hours and fortunately there were no post-operational complications. After about two weeks of hospitalisation, Arjun was back at his institution.

Though it took time for Arjun to come to terms with his physical changes, slowly but surely he started mingling with other boys of his age. The pouch gave him a new freedom and the opportunity to move around without any hindrance. He started enjoying himself by playing games that hitherto had seemed out of bounds for him. The other boys also found it easier to accept him in their activities, and, gradually Arjun started feeling that he was no different from his friends; this entire transformation took almost a year.

In the meantime, Vinimay investigated the possibility of further medical treatment abroad for Arjun, including through the route of adoption. It turned out that the best possible treatment had already been rendered and there was nothing more that could be done for him abroad.

Today, the shy, timid and introvert Arjun whom we met about a decade ago is a blurred memory of a distant past. He is a bold and confident young man now.

\* \* \*

A few months ago, when he completed eighteen years of age, he was to leave his institution as per the rules of the government. Vinimay decided to take over the responsibility of his further rehabilitation by granting him admission to Tarun Sadan, a hostel Vinimay runs for homeless youth.

Since Arjun is almost illiterate, and has not had much of interaction with outsiders, we had apprehensions about finding him an appropriate job and about his ability to cope up with the job. True to our fears, Arjun had difficulty in dealing with the first employment we managed to procure for him. But then miracles never cease! Some well-wishers of Vinimay, who had an idea about Arjun's background, decided to give him a break in their office. For Arjun, as well as for us, who had come to the conclusion that he could only get odd jobs here and there, it was like a dream come true. The sensitive handling of Arjun by his employers did wonders and unleashed the enthusiasm and boundless energy that had so far remained hidden in him.

He was liked by the other colleagues and also started cooking for them (young IT professionals) earning some extra income. When they changed their location, Arjun lost that job and tried his hands at a couple of other jobs; as watchman in a housing society, a roadside dosa stall, etc. He was able to move about on his own, search for jobs and discuss job related issues confidently with new employers. Today Arjun is a cheerful and hard-working young lad earning a decent sum of money. He has moved out of Tarun Sadan and stays with his friends at Koparkhairane. Recently he disclosed that he spends only half of his earnings and saves the balance. He is very thankful to Vinimay, his friends, roommates and all others who have helped him to start a life of his own and get integrated with society. Of course, Arjun always has the fall back option of approaching Vinimay for any of his future needs.

Arjun's story has been long but we are happy to note that he is living independently like so many other boys whom Vinimay has helped to integrate with society and start life on their own.

***(Story Chronicled by Shri Atul Shah with inputs from Shri L. Venkatraman & Shri C. Subramanian)***

### ***3. Events Review -***

#### **Bal Mahotsav –**

An utsav to celebrate childhood! The tenth Balmahotsav was held from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2005 organized jointly by Vinimay and “Our Children”. With about 1000 participants from 22 institutions, 120 volunteers and 150 events covering both indoor games and competitions – the Bal Mahotsav lived up to its ‘Maha’ name. Carrom, Chess, General Intelligence, Singing, elocution, drawing, recitation, cricket matches were some of the events that were conducted prior to Balmahotsav due to time constraints. The first four days were full of the highly competitive field games, specially designed fun games for small children, a curiosity corner featuring science exhibition, coconut shell curios, model trains, etc followed by a cultural show by the children every evening. The main volunteer force that ran this mega event were ex-students from Child Welfare Institutions. The final day had a blood donation camp where the volunteers donated blood. As always, the final evening was dedicated to fun, frolic and good eats. About 2000 children enjoyed the FUNFAIR that started from mid afternoon and lasted through the evening.

Here are the names of some winners:

- March Past trophy : Shree Manav Seva Sangh
- Cricket : Juniors : David Sassoon Indl. school
- Cricket : Seniors : Government Certified school - Ulhasnagar
- Quiz Competition : D.N.Sirur Balakashram
- Most prizes won by an individual (Male) : Laxmikant Purandare of Chembur Children’s Home
- Most Prizes won by an individual (Female) : Anita Sonawane of Shraddhanand Mahilashram
- Institution that won the maximum individual prizes : Chembur Children’s Home
- Institution that won the maximum no. of team events : D.N.Sirur Balakashram

#### **Tarapur Camp -**

A week long camp was organized at Tarapur Atomic Power Station colony at Boisar (about 100km from Mumbai) from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2005. A total 44 boys from Chembur Children’s Home, Bal Kalyan Nagri, Anjuman-e-Mufidul Yatama, and Anand Kendra Trust participated. This was the 22<sup>nd</sup> week-long out-station camp conducted by Vinimay. This camp was run mainly by Tarun Vinimay members. The Camp was supported by authorities and staff of Tarapur Atomic Power Station.

### ***4. News about Us***

1. Regular monthly meetings of members were held.
2. A three-day training course on "Understanding the problems of adolescents and youths" was specially tailored by Dr. Anand Nadkarni and his team of Institute for Psychological Health (IPH). Fifteen of our members participated and found it highly enriching.
3. Many Vinimay and Tarun Vinimay members participated in the rain-floods disaster relief work in Mumbai. The effort led by Thyagarajan, ensured that an amount of approximately Rupees two lakh twenty-five thousand (Rs.2,25,000/-) were spent on funding school fees, uniforms and books for children from the affected areas. It may be noted that the funding was raised separately for this event through the members' own contacts and no funds were spent from Vinimay for this purpose
4. Vinimay was invited to attend meetings of Government Rehabilitation Committee for children. Dr. Das and Mr. Andure attended.
5. Vinimay has been running Play Centres both at CCH and BKN aiming to build and enhance confidence, sense of belonging, group feeling, responsibility and thinking powers in children. The play centre is open twice a week with about 28 volunteer hours being put in. Sosva has been a source of new volunteers for Play centre. **Archana, Sneha & Aparna** are law students who have recently joined (through Sosva) the play center at Bal Kalyan Nagri. Toys worth Rs 4000/- were added during this period. Cycles and children's scooters are a rage with the children.
6. The supplementary nutrition program has been running regularly on Saturday afternoons at BKN and CCH. The program run by Shri C. Subramanian and his group of volunteers provided supplementary food on 15 occasions for children of CCH and 30 occasions for children of BKN. This included ice cream on one day each (in appreciation of the hard work the children put in their school studies during the last academic year). Expenses for six days were funded by AKKK Sabha, Anushakti Nagar. In addition, milk for all children of CCH was provided one day per month.
7. This period saw some happy occasions and brought some sad news too :
8. Mrs. Sheela Joshi's daughter got married on 19<sup>th</sup> May; and Sharmila Kushalani got married to Dilip Karamchandani in USA. Our best wishes to the married couples.
9. However, during this period there were bereavements in the families of Hema Balasubramanian who lost her husband and the Sens who lost their brother and brother in law. Vinimay expresses its sincere condolences to the bereaved family members for their tragic loss.

## **5. Rewind – The months behind us**

It has been several months of hectic activity – at the Chembur Childrens Home (CCH), Bal Kalyan Nagri (BKN) & at Tarun Sadan.. The gamut of the activities ranged from entertainment, educative training sessions, sports training and felicitations. The activities are classified as Child welfare activities and youth welfare activities.

### ***a) Relating to Children***

#### **Birthday Program at Chembur Children's Home (CCH) Participated by Vinimay members, CCH staff & family members**

The birthday program is designed to increase the child's self confidence, self respect and individuality. On this day every month, the Children are provided a new set of clothes, soap, etc. by Vinimay. Aarti is performed, birthday song is sung, and of course there is the cake; the children choose who will feed them the cake. One of the students of CCH presides over the function. A Vinimay member - Mrs. Neela Purandare usually tells a story to the children in Marathi. In order to inspire hope and motivate the children, ex-students of CCH shared their life experiences with children during some of the birthday programs. New children are also welcomed and introduced to the gathering. Vinimay provides and shares breakfast with children on that day.

#### **Karate Classes for the Children of CCH**

Karate classes were re-started by Vinimay in CCH in June '05 after a gap of a few years. Twice a week, about 90 children take part. Children were taken to a tournament on two occasions and they won 11 medals. During one of the tournaments, Sangita Govekar, (member-Smit Vinimay) who is now married and stays close to the venue of one of the tournaments brought lunch for all the participating children! Sangita herself was a keen karate enthusiast during her earlier days at Bal Kalyan Nagri.

#### **Entertainment for the children of CCH & BKN**

Five films by children's film society were screened for approximately 200 children of CCH and BKN on five Saturday evenings during summer vacation (this is a practice we have been following for several years). Snacks were also provided on all days

#### **Training & Tuitions at CCH & BKN**

- Four boys from CCH were sponsored for two months' training in house keeping. All expenses including travel, uniform, etc. were taken care of. AKKK Sabha, Anushaktinagar specifically provided funds for two of these boys.
- Six boys of CCH who passed SSC were sponsored for one month's computer course conducted by Pratham (an organization working for children's education).
- Two boys of CCH were sponsored for computer animation training at M/s Edit institute.
- Tuition classes started at CCH and BKN for 200 children from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> std children are provided tuition by about 17 volunteers, focusing mostly on Mathematics and English. On an average Vinimay puts in about 65 volunteer-hours per week. We also arranged for rewiring of the study room at BKN.

#### **Felicitations & Sponsorships**

- Six boys of CCH, who passed SSC were felicitated with gifts.
- Film, snacks and indoor games were provided on one day to rescued child labourers temporarily housed in CCH
- Cricket balls were provided for summer cricket matches at CCH.
- Expenses for hiring costumes were provided for children of CCH taking part in the 'Children's Meet' cultural program organized by 'Our Children' Trust.
- Stationery worth Rs.3000/- was provided to A. D. Bawla Female Orphanage, Andheri
- Medical treatment expenses of a girl (belonging to A. D. Bawla Female Orphanage & suffering from acute tuberculosis) to the tune of Rs.15,000/- were borne by Vinimay Trust.
- Undergarments for the girls of BKN (about 540 pieces) and boys of CCH (about 400 pieces ) were provided.
- Expenses were sponsored for one CCH boy to visit his father at native place.

## ***b) Relating to Youth***

### ***News and Titbits***

- Regular monthly meetings of Tarun and Smit Vinimay were conducted. In April, many Vinimay members hosted meetings (at their homes) of smaller groups of Tarun and Smit Vinimay members in order to have closer interaction. July witnessed a monsoon trek to Gaoli Dev in Navi Mumbai. The August meeting was combined with Independence Day celebrations at Tarun Sadan Hostel.
- Scholarship were continued for two Tarun Vinimay members for their second year ITI course. Scholarship was given to one Tarun Vinimay member for a short term call centre training course.
- Two Tarun Vinimay members, trained by Vinimay in an engineering field, got job assignments in gulf countries; three Tarun Vinimay members got jobs in BARC in a technical field.
- Raja Pujari, (Tarun Vinimay member) got married on 28<sup>th</sup> May. Pandurang Sakpal, (another Tarun Vinimay member) got married on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug.
- Loan was granted to a Tarun Vinimay member to re-build his house damaged in the recent Mumbai rain-floods. Another youth was given a grant for the same purpose. Medical expenses were paid to a Tarun Vinimay member and a loan was also granted to him for renting a house.
- Lalitha Subramanian, Dr. Rajiv Ganguli and Venkat gave tutorial help for Tarun Vinimay members in their college studies.

### **Help for Youth in Trouble**

Vinimay has been making a conscious effort to provide whatever help is needed to the youth it cares for. Naturally, a lot of time and efforts goes in individualized attention to the youth. This involves helping them to solve their personal problems, medical issues, providing gentle guidance and many times simply 'hearing them out'. During this period, individual problems of about 20 youth were attended to. Volunteers often play the roles of parents, doctors, marital

guidance counselors and once even helped out in a police case where a member was falsely implicated. Some sample cases are described below. Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

### **Medical Assistance :**

- Amit, a Tarun Vinimay member, had lost touch with Vinimay after being discharged from the institution where he resided till the age of eighteen. Through one of his friends (another Tarun Vinimay member) we learnt that he had fallen seriously ill. Sensing his hesitation in approaching us, a Vinimay member visited him and put him at ease as far as his not being in touch with Vinimay was concerned. Care was taken to ensure that he took proper treatment for the ailment that he was suffering from after undergoing the necessary tests. Slowly but surely he started recovering and sometime back he attended a Tarun Vinimay meeting – perhaps his first one in a long time. Though the monetary help rendered by Vinimay in this particular case was modest it sent out a much needed message to him – that Vinimay’s doors were always open for him.
- Ashok an ex-student of Tarun Sadan went in to serious depressions due to a failed relationship. It was obvious that he needed continuous medical care and attention. He was accommodated in Tarun Sadan so that a close watch could be kept on him besides ensuring that he took his medicines regularly. During his entire period of stay he was not able to continue with his job. His entire expenses relating to the sustenance, medical bills, conveyance, etc. was taken care of by Vinimay. Vinimay volunteers regularly met him, accompanied him for the doctor’s sessions and did everything possible to keep his spirits up. Finally after over five months, Ashok regained his confidence and zest for life, has started with a new job & has recently moved in to a rental accommodation with a friend. He has successfully been able to put his past behind and is looking forward to life with a new zeal.
- Varun, a Tarun Vinimay member, was abroad when he suffered from a retinal detachment. When he called up one of our members, he was advised to take the first possible flight home. Meanwhile, Vinimay made arrangements for his surgery the very day he landed in Mumbai. The surgery went off well and he was advised complete rest for a few days to take care of the affected eye. Since his wife & kid were away when he returned from abroad, after surgery he stayed with a Vinimay member’s family for a couple of days till his family returned. Unfortunately there was a recurrence of the problem after a couple of weeks (a common problem with retinal detachments) Varun had to be operated once again. Varun’s problem went on for a few months as he had to be referred to the doctor frequently and Vinimay stood by him all through. Fortunately all went well and he is back to his normal routine.

### **Related to Marriage :**

- Tanu, a Smit Vinimay girl had a troubled marriage. In distress, with a small child to look after, she turned to Vinimay for help. Her relation with her husband and in-laws too had soured beyond a limit. Vinimay placed her in a well paid job in one of our own member’s office. Vinimay also stood by her whenever she felt low owing to her ongoing family tussles. Today Tanu stays in a rented house and is able to fend for herself and her daughter without having to look to anyone for financial support. At the same time, talks are on between her family and her in-laws to find a way out and possibly salvage the marriage.
- Vinit, a Tarun Vinimay member and a boy of strong character fell in love with a girl in his neighbourhood. However he was not able to gather courage to speak to the girl’s parents.

Sensing his hesitation Vinimay intervened, played the role of his parents ( as the boy is a destitute) & spoke to the girl's family on his behalf. The girl's parents readily accepted and Vinit is a relieved boy today. He plans to get married sometime soon.

### **Miscellaneous :**

- Mandar, a Tarun Vinimay member, was accused of a theft of an expensive item. Having grown up virtually under Vinimay's care, Vinimay was confident that Mandar would never stoop to such a level. Vinimay volunteers spoke to the complainant and also visited the police station along with Mandar to clear up the misunderstanding. The whole episode stretched over a few weeks and it eventually turned out to be a case of mistaken identity.
- Two ex-students of Tarun Sadan needed shelter while they were undergoing medical treatment, one of them a surgical operation. True to the declared principle that 'Tarun sadan is always the home of its inmates', both were given temporary accommodation at Tarun Sadan till they became fit to resume work.

### **TARUN SADAN**

- During this period ten more youths were admitted to Tarun Sadan taking the total number of admissions to date to 68. Over the years about 40 boys have left the hostel. The present strength is 28.
- The sixth annual day was celebrated on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Students of Tarun Sadan, ex-students and Vinimay members participated. Mr. Mansoor Qadri of 'Saathi' was the chief guest. The celebrations were flagged off in true Vinimay style with a cricket match in the morning followed by a group discussion amongst the students and ex-students on the topic "Tarun Sadan and its role in youth rehabilitation". A simple but wholesome lunch was followed by a discussion meeting with Mr. Qadri on the "Saathi model" of youth rehabilitation. The formal annual day function and felicitation of outgoing Tarun Sadanites was held in the evening with Mr. Qadri addressing the gathering.
- Birthdays of inmates of Tarun Sadan were celebrated. Many Vinimay members participated in these functions. Independence Day was celebrated. Dr. Dixit, Vinimay member, unfurled the flag. Mukta, Mandira and Shailaja (Vinimay members) visited Tarun Sadan on raksha bandhan day and tied 'rakhis' to the boys.
- Subhash Gawarikar along with his friend Mr. Gohil and Mr. Andure took the boys of Tarun Sadan on a monsoon trek to Matheran. For many of the boys, this was their first such experience and they were thrilled.

### **6. Contact Vinimay**

Vinimay Trust : Plot 21, Sector 23, Kopar Khairane, Navi Mumbai 400 079, India

### ***DID YOU KNOW THAT?***

- **For Rs.2000 you could sponsor monthly expenses of one boy at Tarun Sadan.**
- **For Rs.3000 you could sponsor the Annual get together dinner for 50 children.**
- **For Rs.2500 you could sponsor the birthday of 25 children or birthday clothes for 10 children**
- **For Rs.3000 you could sponsor a week long camp for 5 children**
- **For Rs.1000 you could sponsor supplementary nutrition program for 300 children**

### ***Donate Generously***

**Donations to Vinimay Trust are exempted under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act. Vinimay Trust is registered under the Foreign Contribution Act and is authorized to receive donations in Foreign currency.**

**Cheques may be drawn in favour of “Vinimay Trust”**

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**Editor: Jayashree Mukund**



