

RAISE 2024 – 2025: A Brief Report¹

A Project by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning

Supported by CSR from Cohesity India Private Limited

Ramana Art-form Interventions for Self-Awareness and Excellence

RAISE is a unique educational and cultural initiative of RMCL Bengaluru, which harnesses the power of theatre arts to empower self-expression and confidence of underprivileged children in Bengaluru, India and to inculcate values that will help them develop into responsible citizens of the earth. The Project was started in 2014 and worked with 200 children of the Geddalahalli Government Model Primary School.

In the past decade the RAISE Project has made several strides ahead and *in the year 2024 – 2025 the Centre could impart RAISE training to more than 1000 children with the support of Cohesity India Private Limited*. The schools that were serviced through the project were:

1. KECS – Karnataka Educational and Cultural Society - higher primary section 210 students
2. KECS high school section 160 students
3. Geddalahalli Government Model Primary School 370 students
4. Manjunatha Primary and High School 80 students
5. Maithree English School 155 students
6. Shree Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind 100 students

In addition 100 students were trained in the Summer Camp held in the summer of 2024.

On attending the performance ‘Sreshta Bharatha’ of the Geddalahalli Government Model Primary School children as the **Chief Guest, Sri Krishnan Narayanaswamy said**, *“I really enjoyed the show. It was very well conceptualized. All the children played their roles really well. It was truly amazing. I congratulate the teachers who have taught these children. The kind of value-based concepts that have been taught and presented today are no longer taught in schools. This is a great contribution to society. I congratulate Dr. Sarada Natarajan and her team at Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and wish the Centre all the best to continue the good work they are doing. Cohesity is happy to support this significant endeavour.”*

Multi-level Approach

¹ See separate detailed report.

RAISE is primarily addressed at achieving holistic development of underprivileged children in Bengaluru. However, the tool of Indian Theatre used as a methodology in training achieves several goals simultaneously:

- Training in Indian Theatre Arts through the methodology of the RASA Way or TAHD – Theatre Arts for Holistic Development. This helps to preserve and create awareness about Indian Cultural Heritage, especially Intangible Cultural Heritage as stipulated by UNESCO.
- Educational Excellence - The program works with and around prescribed school texts adapting them to the Theatre format with a newly created syllabus every year.
- Life skills Education – The Theatre activities and productions are honed to inculcate the ten essential life skills recommended by WHO such as self awareness, communication, creative thinking, interpersonal skills, analytical thinking, problem solving, handling emotions and empathy.
- Promotion of Social Equality - On the stage every actor, every participant is equal. Even a small mistake in a small role can make or break a program. So, there is no one who is less important. Children learn to respect role play as well as enjoy working as a team without a sense of competition. Everyone is a winner.

Five Contributions of the RAISE project 2024 - 2025

There are four specific contributions of the RAISE program of 2024 – 2025. These are - Preparation of New Material, Intensive Training in schools, Performance Opportunities, and Documentation.

- **Preparation of New Course Material**

The important developmental tool used is the application of the TAHD methodology, Theatre Arts for Holistic Development. While this has its own intangible and long-term benefits, there is a need to perceive immediate outcomes. Hence, the training program is linked to the academic course materials of the children.

New material developed included:

1. Preparing Lesson Plans²
2. Writing of new songs and dramas³
3. Recording and editing of audio of the songs and dramas⁴
4. Editing of video material for the background projection⁵

² Annexure 1 contains a couple of lesson plans.

³ Annexure 2 contains a few of the drama scripts.

⁴ The link to one of the songs: <https://youtu.be/7IfE9mqkJAo> - All Things Bright and Beautiful

⁵ The link to one of the scenes with a background projection: <https://youtu.be/MhXUp-JTQSY> - Visualization

5. Planning of costumes and stage properties for the songs and dramas⁶

Taking the instance of one of the schools serviced under the project, the following lessons were selected to be presented in the theatre performance of the KECS Primary section of the school.

The theme 'Bhakti' or devotion was chosen with the object of teaching the values of faith, dedication and service. Devotion to the family, devotion to the community, devotion to the country and devotion to God were explored in the dance drama presentations. In the high school section, the subject of 'Jnana' or 'Knowledge' was explored.

The children were given an in-depth understanding of the core values presented in each of the selected lessons that were taught to them through the song, dance and drama that were taught and performed by them on stage.

1. Standard V – Lesson 2 and 3 from EVS (Environmental Science) 'Family' and 'Community'.
2. Standard VI – Lesson 6 from Social Science – Civics 'Citizen and Citizenship' and Lesson 4 from English 2 the poem 'All things bright and beautiful'.
3. Standard VII – Lesson 8 from Social Science – History 'Bhakti Cult and Sufi Heritage'.
4. Standard VIII – Lesson 3 from Mathematics 'Linear Equations with one variable' and Lesson 10 from English the poem 'Leisure'.

5. Standard IX – Lesson 3 from Social Science 'Religious Reformers of India' in the History section.

The **Director of the school, Sri Arun Kashyapa, in his speech observed**, *"I have understood and emphasized that they are in great need of an emotional anchor in the lives of children to give them emotional stability and strength. This will result in their holistic flowering. In today's societal situation this emotional bonding is often missing for children due to various circumstances. Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning has introduced the support and ideal of dedication and devotion and at the same time fulfilled its promise of teaching values to the children based on their academic syllabus and lessons."*

• **Intensive and Inclusive Training in schools**

Three teachers, who are TAHD Post Graduate Diploma holders, give training for 30 sessions to each child. Every child in the given academic group, which may be the entire school or a designated set of classes, is given TAHD inputs according to his or her level of education.

The teachers for the project are:

1. Ujwal Jagadeesh – A Vidwan in Bharatanatyam, a Carnatic Classical singer, an engineer by qualification and profession who has later dedicated himself to the service of society by imparting cultural value education to children. He is a TAHD post graduate diploma holder and professional currently pursuing his MPhil in the University of Vedic Studies.

⁶ Annexure 3 contains the first draft of the list of characters and the costumes plan for the 350 children of Geddalahalli school

2. Revathi Sankar – A multi-media expert, an adept Bharatanatyam dancer and Carnatic Classical singer, a double M.A. in Sanskrit and Bharatanatyam, a TAHD post graduate diploma holder and professional currently pursuing her PhD in VELS University.

3. Uma Sripathy – An adept at crafts and design, a Bharatanatyam dancer with an M.A. in Kannada, she is a TAHD post graduate diploma holder and professional.

Smt.Malathi, the Headmistress of Geddalahalli Government Model Primary School said, *“The dedication and enthusiasm of these three teachers, Revathi, Uma and Ujwal, is to be seen to be believed. It is simply amazing. The children look forward to their coming and eagerly learn what they teach. They are full of energy and love for the children. At the same the discipline with which they work and which they inculcate in the children is exemplary. They are able to spot the talent in the children and give each child an appropriate role in the production.”*

Sri Arun Kashyapa also stated, *“The teachers have developed a rapport with the students. This gives them the much-needed emotional bonding as well as role models to follow.”*

After the wonderful performance by the children, **Smt.Rajalakshmie, Principal of Maithree English school, said in her speech,** *“I have only seen how happy the children are whenever Ujwal comes for class. I did not even ask him or try to see what it is that he teaches. I had faith in the fact that he could inspire such a positive response in all the children. Today, all of us have seen how wonderfully the children performed and what values they have been taught. I believe that they would have imbibed some of these values without fail. A great part of the credit goes to the dedication and love of the teacher, Ujwal, and his own deep faith in the values that he is teaching.”*

● **Performance**

All the students are given a performance opportunity at the end of their training. RMCL provides the entire facilities and requirements for the program free of cost as a part of the project. These are Auditorium, Costumes, Makeup, Refreshments, Transport, Participation Certificates and gifts for the children.

The experience of practicing for a group performance inculcates a natural sense of discipline in the children. Participating in a live performance on stage is always full of excitement, wearing colourful costumes, getting made up and then appearing on the stage with the shining lights. Getting the appreciation of the audience while on stage and later from the teachers gives a great boost to the self-confidence of the children leaving an unforgettable imprint on their consciousness.

Saritha Ramesh, an old student of KECS was amazed by the performance, *“What synchronization! How disciplined the children were. And they looked so gorgeous with the rich variety of costumes. It was a great treat for me to watch the show. I was so thrilled by the children’s performance, more so since it is my alma mater.”*

- **Documentation**

Documentation of the syllabus, lesson plans and course material is undertaken both at the outset as well as at the conclusion of the project for clarity, sustainability and to benefit larger number of children. This would include the preparation of texts as well as audio and video materials.

Post production documentation in the form of videos and review notes is also undertaken. In addition, these programs are webcast on the Centre's YouTube channel.⁷

Outcomes of RAISE

The RAISE program addresses the skills which benefit children's education and development in several ways:

Primary Benefits to participants:

- Indian Heritage awareness and direct experience
- Self-awareness and confidence
- Life skills training

Ancillary Benefits to participants:

- Physical development/kinesthetic skills
- Artistic development /drama and theater skills
- Mental development/creative thinking and problem-solving skills
- Personal development/intra-personal skills
- Social development/interpersonal skills
- Social-Awareness and Harmony
- Self-Awareness and Self-Confidence

Ancillary Long-term Benefits to participants and others:

- Parents and families of the participants.
- Teachers and school.
- Future generations in terms of availability of study material created.
- Students can become teachers of Indian Cultural Heritage and TAHD professionals.

⁷ Video links of the major programs during 2024 – 2025

<https://youtube.com/live/MrIYRq4IEE> - KECS Primary School

<https://youtube.com/live/jqAmFge32nY?feature=share> - KECS High School

https://youtube.com/live/Rv_ZrHotxmg - Geddalahalli Government Higher Primary School

<https://youtube.com/live/hPApHpkjxMs> - Manjunatha School

https://youtube.com/live/JdGOz5_oHIY - Maitri English School

Once again, we thank Cohesity India Pvt. Limited for the CSR support to the RAISE project of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning which has made a remarkable difference in shaping the lives of more than 1000 underprivileged children of Bengaluru. While some of the benefits of this program are visible and tangible, there are immense long reaching, immeasurable gains to each of the children.

We trust that Cohesity India Pvt. Limited will continue to support this program in even greater measure in the year 2025 – 2026 enabling us to reach out to more and more children in an even more fulfilling manner. Through RAISE we would like to service the cultural needs of our neighbourhood schools in an incremental manner leading to their holistic development.