

# Chandana's Unique Specialization:

## Art beyond vision

Individualised Art & Craft Education

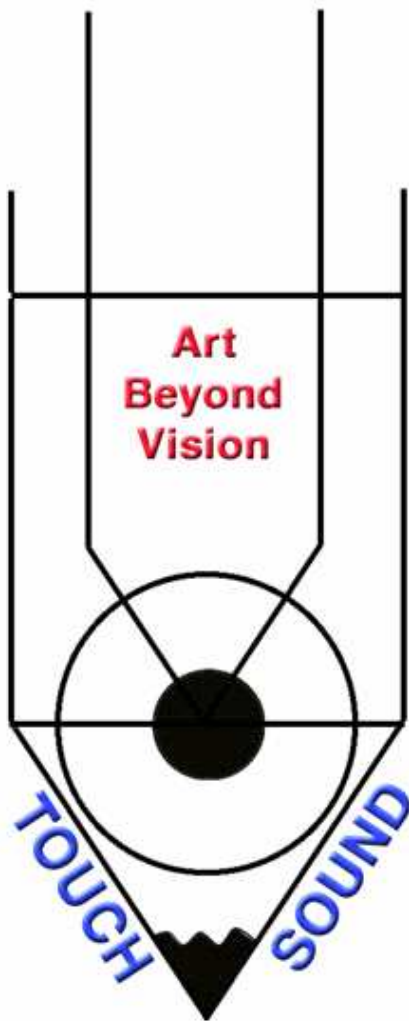
for

**Blind & the visually impaired Children**

**with multiple Disabilities**



Many people are surprised to hear that people, who are blind and partially sighted, including those who have never had full sight, often enjoy making what we typically call "visual" art.



Chandana is deeply concerned about the welfare of blind and visually impaired children, we have actively promoted the cause of the on the basis of our experience and keeping in view our objectives, the Foundation is promoting vocational art education and training to create useful skills for blind and visually impaired for rehabilitation / self-sustenance.



" The best and the most beautiful things  
in the world cannot be seen or even touched.  
they must be felt with the heart "

Hellen Keller

# “Broaden the Vision – Deepen the Roots”

## Building Parent-Teacher-Student Partnerships

Chandana works with primary and secondary schools, mainstream and special schools, colleges and organisations outside the formal education sector. Chandana has actively promoted vocationally-oriented Individualised Art & Craft Education and Training for the blind, visually impaired, Deaf blind and students with multiple disabilities to create useful skills for rehabilitation / self-sustenance.

CAFI's primary interest is to find role models, which would encourage visually impaired to pursue a career in the creative media or encourage providers of Art education and to explore their ways of thinking and working within an arts world which is essentially visual using multi sensor approach as a way of making and appreciating art. The purpose of the art beyond vision camp is to enable individuals who are blind and visually impaired to develop skills that lead to independence, personal expression and social and community involvement.

**MISSION:** To promote vocationally-oriented art and craft education and training to create useful skills for blind and visually impaired so as to make them self supporting. CAFI organises 'art beyond vision' camps to enable individuals who are blind and visually impaired to develop skills that lead to independence, personal expression and social and community involvement.

**GOAL :** There is very little research and documentation done on art education for the blind. Until now there is no prescribed academic curriculum, procedure, technique, had been evolved for teaching art. But the art teachers have formulated their own tailor made syllabus for regular repetitive work.

- Stimulate imagination, encourage and promote self-confidence.
- Develop creative thinking to solve problems and make better life choices.
- Stimulate and maintain visual memory. Develop sensory and tactile skills.
- Improve thought organization, concentration and communication.
- Develop esthetic appreciation and promote artistic skills.
- Develop an awareness of art from an individual, sociological, historical and cultural context.

Chandana's staff specializes in art education for specially abled children, with particular expertise in art education for children with vision disabilities. But there are few or no resources dedicated to helping people with vision disabilities who would like to make art, and the teachers would like to assist them.



Thus Chandana began developing a syllabus of art exercises people with vision disabilities can follow easily and effectively.



Chandana has been beta-testing the syllabus with students to make sure the exercises make sense to them, are enjoyable, and can be effectively implemented. There is very little research and documentation done on art education for the blind.

Until now there is no prescribed academic curriculum, procedure, technique, had been evolved for teaching art. But the art teachers have formulated their own tailor made syllabus for regular repetitive work. To promote the integration of the arts into the curriculum for blind and visually impaired students. To increase knowledge of the variety of art making which are worthwhile for blind and visually impaired people of all ages. Chandana is on the process of publishing this work in English and Braille.

The freedom of expression and visualization of composition / colour scheme of the illustrations and paintings done by blind children of CAFI are adopting spatial technique and verbal instructions (*Touch and Sound - Multi sensor approach*). The students have high concentration when compared with the partially blind children. In addition to these techniques mentioned more natural sun light is required by partially blind students to build aptitude. The language of communication plays a very important role while making pictures and need of concentration and remembrance for painting, some times students feel tiresome, what cannot be felt (Colour schemes) must be described through words incorporating tactile diagrams, atmospheric sound compositions and hands -on - art activities.



Shri Venkatesh K - in the Art Beyond Vision training session at NAB - KB

### **DEAF BLINDNESS :-**

Deaf blindness is the combination of visual and auditory impairment that causes severe communication and other developmental and learning needs that child can't be educated appropriately in special programme solely for Visual or Hearing Impairment without supplementary assistance.

Chandana had adopted the professional strategy to teach families members, resource teachers, and other educational personnel through effective communication and educational methods for deaf blind students and to inspire them to view each learner as an individual with unique needs and abilities.



Smt. Priya Sheshadri - Internationally renowned Blind artist during the training session

The Individualized training gives a holistic view of a learner—communication abilities, learning style, family, culture, cognitive style, and vision and hearing abilities—while providing a visual display of the learner's abilities across all environments (school, home, and community).

It illustrates his or her interests, effective interactive strategies to enhance communication, and techniques for accessing and commenting on people, events, and things in the environment as topics of conversation. Individualized training helps a learner tell all about him- or herself in a user-friendly way.

For rehabilitation / self sustenance of Deaf blind child and need some work where they can show their talent. Preparing seasonal greeting cards is a beginning of rehabilitation for them though which the person learns disciplines value of money, time, and creativeness. They enjoy the process of creating art work. The confidence built by the training of a deaf blind person to be an earning member of the family like other in the family and lead an independent life with the family.



**Case Studies:** Two of the deaf blind children, namely Rizwana and Salma 13 years, have low-vision and severe degree of hearing impairment. We wanted these two girls learn some skills which would help them to earn some income. The children were trained to prepare Greeting Cards. After the training the children paint the greeting cards in their residence under supervision of the resource teacher and family members. Parents were happy that their girls were able to do some work and earn some amount. While they were preparing seasonal card in residences the neighbours were also observing them.

From the last few years these children are preparing seasonal cards. In the first year they prepared 1000 cards. In the second year they prepared 3000 cards with the knowledge and skills needed to develop communication strategies with deaf blind students. And the journey continues.....

## Art beyond vision

### Deaf Blind Children at creative work : NAB-KB



Rizwana and Salma in happier moods





Shri Venkatesh K with Rizwana and Salma - in the Art Beyond Vision training session



Dr. (Mrs) Saroja Ramachandran, Hon. President, NAB-KB motivating the students

## What Motivates a person who is blind to draw ?



*There is really Art Beyond Vision We were really pleasantly surprised to see the art potential of visually challenged children and appreciate the 'vision' of Mr. Venkatesh*

Dr. (Mrs) Saroja Ramachandran  
Hon. President

**National Association for the Blind – Karnataka Branch**



DR. (MRS) Saroja Ramachandran,  
Hon. President, NAB – KB Delivering the speech



Muktha .G.R. Managing Trustee Mathru Educational Trust for the Blind receiving the memento from dr. (Mrs) Saroja Ramachandran, Hon. President,NAB – KB



*New experience to our visually impaired children they enjoyed very much we expect more and more such camps*

Muktha .G.R.  
Managing Trustee

**Mathru Educational Trust for the Blind - Bangalore**

# TRAIN THE TRAINERS' –

## Training session for the resource teachers from various districts of kanataka at NAB-KB

### Objectives

1. By the end of the Training, teacher-participants will be able to:
2. Develop some arts activities for classrooms integrated with visually impaired students, supported by resource materials.
3. Understand how information is successfully conveyed through senses other than sight.
4. Use the arts to address objectives.



Mr. Venkatesh with the outreach resource teachers of NAB-KB

### **Why teach art education? Art History, Art Appreciation, Art Making?**

One of the challenges at this point is to usher in a new sense of visual art. As we strove to find a new meaning to the word visual art for the blind and visually impaired. We like to share the decision-making, responsibilities and endlessly discuss new plans and goals. In trying to redefine the concept of visual art for the blind and visually impaired. We made it a point of doing things together and sharing our thoughts on almost everything.



## **METHOD**

Art education for the blind comprises a Multi-Sensory approach to the visual arts, which incorporates both touch and sound as it is the first and only method that offers blind and visually impaired individuals the tool to grasp visual concepts in art. What cannot be touched must be described through words incorporating the tactile diagrams, atmospheric sound, compositions and hands-on art activities. The success in art education for the blind is achieved by the 10% of inspiration of the teachers with artistic background / resource guides who involve themselves in the dedicated service and remaining 90 % of perspiration of the students.

Teacher should understand the role; Art education for the blind is not a degree but a meditation for enlightenment, creativity and entertainment and should perform with joy, confidence and ease, when there are no rules to follow.

It takes a long while to get adjusted with children. During this period, the most important aspect for consideration is to look forward to the positive things with strengths and re-evaluate / develop a constant loving relationship and continuous monitoring.

## **TEACHERS NEED TO MAKE**

- Blindness and the visual arts.
- Basic information on visual impairments.
- Integrating art activities into main curriculum
- Touch vs Vision. Theory of tactile perception.
- Guidelines for writing verbal description.
- Using music to explain visual concepts
- Using tactile diagrams
- Discussion

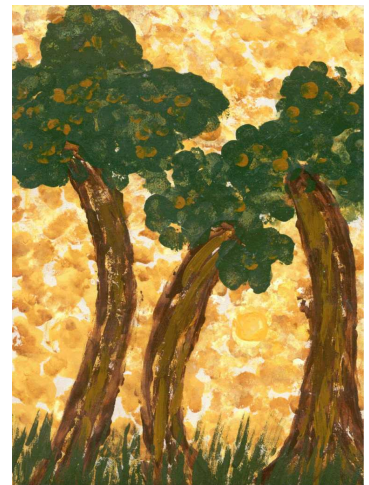
## STUDENT ROLE

It is the "Cerebral Exercise" in coordination with the ( Feel ) touch and ( Hearing ) sound which plays the crucial role which infuses the vitality of a different kind. The "process" involved in interpretation of thinking, creative experimentation is only the feast of satisfaction, which is felt and well appreciated by the viewer. We are grateful for the management of National Association for the Blind – Bangalore for permitting us to conduct an experimental approach of art and craft education which had given very good results. The students are confident of self-sustenance in preparing artificial paper flowers on their own without the help of any teacher. These flowers are used during festive seasons to decorate their houses.



**Baby Shalini** – youngest student trained by us in art is a very sensitive child. She is very good in visualizing and uses spatial technique and colour concepts. She creates the drawing by using the wax crayons labeled with Braille to identify the colours. She uses her left-hand fingers as locators and feeler for starting and ending of the forms like tree branches, circles etc. She says in confidence she is very much interested in painting.

**Smt. Priya Dinesh** - She may not have seen what the world looks like but that hasn't stopped her from giving a shape to her 'view' of life with the help of a paintbrush. She has taken part in painting exhibitions conducted by Lalita Kala Academy in New Delhi and she was a special invitee at the International Arts Festival organised by 'Very Special Art' at Brussels in 1994. Mrs Priya was the co-ordinator of the unique Art Camp – "Art Beyond Vision" which was organised by Chandana on 4th May`2002 in association with NAB - Bangalore.





Seven years old and totally blind ; youngest student, Baby Shalini's Painting printed in the Resource guide Co published by Art Education for the Blind, Inc. (AEB) New York – USA and AFB Press of the American Foundation for the Blind - USA in the year 2002



Birds flying in the garden : Baby Shalini



## Art Beyond Vision camp at

"Edith Stein School" for blind and visual impaired children – **Munich, Germany**



Shri Venkatesh K - during the training session at "Edith Stein School" for blind and visual impaired children. – Germany

CAFI had an opportunity to visit "Edith Stein School" for blind and visual impaired children Munich, Germany and to conduct a training session. We could see the very interesting new play-ground for the children with sand, stones, water, wood climbing and different swings. In the class-room for art we met Mrs Fanderl, art-teacher, and 4 girls in the age of 12-15 years. They all could speak English with me and they had many questions and wanted to have a hands on painting lesson for the students by me during their recreation-time.

The four girls felt very free and relaxed in expressing themselves, that they did like to choose their own colour, the kind of paper and that some of them needed to be encouraged also by reflecting their drawings and that the appreciation of their way, how they express themselves, is very important. So never there are mistakes to criticize, even if the arms drawn at the body are flying nearby.



Remember the paintings of Chagall or Picasso! Important is the inner movement and feeling, which becomes 'Gestalt' in the drawing-process. The process is most important! So the 4 girls left their drawings back for me. I spoke about the same feeling they all share: Most important for the child is to win self-confidence. In India it is very important for some blind to earn some money, so the products are important too. We found out, that here in our situation in Munich painting and drawing is a great help for individual development and sometimes it may be a therapy for children in difficulties. At the end we met the director of the school, Mr Schuster and I gave him a present from India. Before saying good bye, we had coffee and apple-cake in full darkness (blind folded). We were taught by a special teacher how to manage it properly. For me it was even more difficult eating soft, brittle fruit cake with fork and spoon with eyes wide open. What wonderful tools our fingers are.

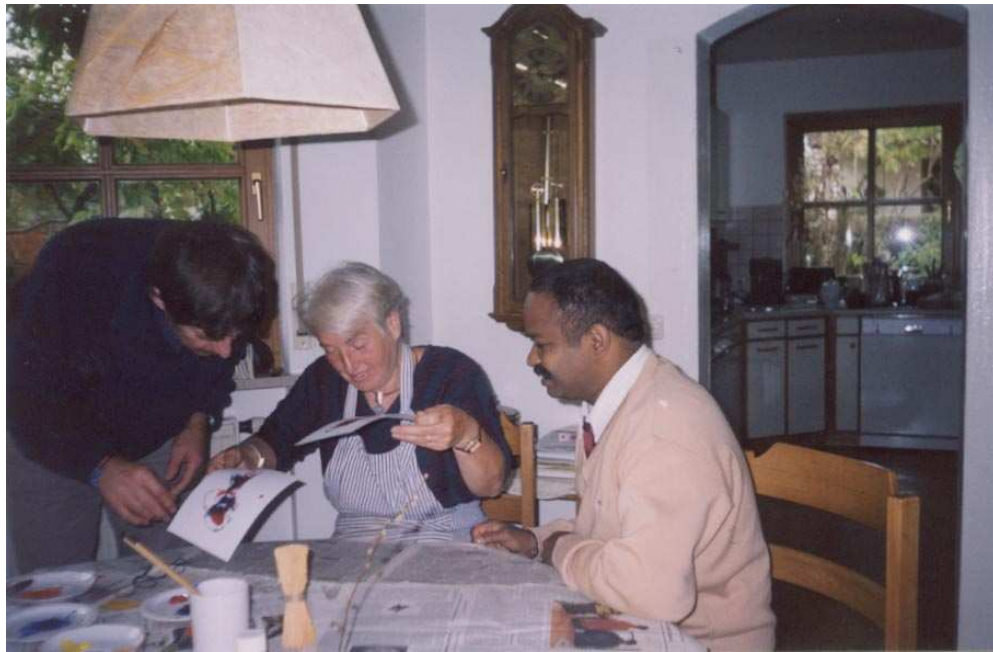


Shri Venkatesh K & Mr. Karl-Heinz Goller, art-teacher, blind folded at "Edith Stein School" for blind canteen

With an invitation to an exhibition in a Bavarian castle with paintings of the blind Mr. Goller, we said all thanks and good bye and send me the best wishes for myself and my family and my wonderful work with blind.



This was my memorable experience with **Elke Zollitsch** my senior friend / teacher / guide in the field of "Individualized Arts & Craft Education for the Blind and the Visually Impaired" at Munich. We used our time together very seriously for exchanging ideas and experiences of art with blind adults and blind children. Our meeting in the house of Sabine Friedrich, blind psychologist (you will read about her in my book) was full of good exchange also with **Karl-Heinz Goller**, visually impaired, artist and art-teacher.



Shri Venkatesh K - with both the visually impaired, artist Mrs Sabine and Mr. Karl-Heinz Goller, art-teacher - during the training session at Sabine's Studio

We mutually exchanged the information how I work creatively with blind children in India. We had a painting session to learn from me a special technique with wool-thread and colours and we experimented with Chinese ink and plants and sand of the Sahara. We also could admire some wood cuts of the blind **Sabine** made in the atelier of a famous artist in Bavaria. It requires soft wood and not much material to do it, all handmade, no machine. (Perhaps an idea for new postcards) we could see Raku-pottery, vases, plates and a very individual cat in black and white, burned in the fire all made by the blind Sabine in a special workshop.

Elke Zollitsch showed me a thermoscopy tactile picture of the German artist Lili Ende. I made my first drawing on a special folie on a special gum-layer and we all think it is a wonderful material for blind to make some short tactile drawings, like blind children did in the classroom. Elke Zollitsch donated two books '**I KNOW WHERE I AM**' authored by her



## Art beyond vision

### Rural Art Camp



Students from NAB – KB rural centers

