



RISHI VALLEY INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL

Metric Mela

Taking Math closer to life



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In the evening around 6 PM, we went to Ma ndamvaripalli, a village about a twenty-minute walking distance from the Rishi Valley School. We were informed that we were going to attend a 'Metric Mela'. While we had read about this earlier, it was quite a novel experience to participate in this *mela*. We walked through the village and as we turned a corner we saw the decorations. The entire street was decorated with banners and festoons. At the gate, groups of youth were filling out cards (about the size of post cards). Each person's name and number was noted down. The card allowed one to participate in all the activities.

As we walked past the entrance, on both sides children between the ages of seven and ten were taking charge of their stalls. One could buy hot *dosas* (for fifty *paise*) *vadas*, *sundal*, sweets and watermelons or have one's weight or height measured! Coloured ribbons were



Learning to measure

strung across for one to guess the length and poles struck into the ground to guess height. At the end of the row one could time oneself and see how many pebbles could be transferred from one box to another box in a matter of sixty seconds. So there it was – weights, heights and lengths, time concept, money concept, addition and subtraction.

The crowd soon thickened and everybody was having a jolly good time. The young children, especially the girls, were a sight to behold. Dressed in silken saris, they attended to the customers in pairs. Whatever was sold or measured was noted down against each customer's number. These sheets are like practice sessions for the children in simple arithmetic calculations. They are then used in the class to work out further problems. These problems are real ones that they have experienced. The names are familiar and they are interested to check out whose mother or father weighed more and whether more *vadas* or *dosas* were sold.

We left after a couple of hours, but the *mela* continued. We were told on the next day the names of the villagers who guessed the height and weight correctly would be announced and the prize they collect is a coloured photograph of themselves! There are also announcements as to whom is the tallest, the shortest and the heaviest in the village. Such *melas* were an event to be remembered for the village and the children.

One could see the pride on the people's faces as their children managed all activities and were the centre of attraction. Each village organizes these *melas* once in every six months or once a year.

- From *Bringing Within Reach: A Document on Universalization of Girls' Education*,
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