

# Trip to the Sri Devi Kamakshi Mandir

By Parijata, Mother of Kanishka, Prep A



The children of Prep class of Santa Maria Integrated Learning Environment were excited to go for a temple visit. As the children entered their classroom, they systematically returned their library books and homework to the teacher. Every child eagerly greeted their friend, and the weekend separation seemed far longer than just 2 days. Once everyone returned from the washroom, the children all sat for Circle Time. The teacher asked few children to place a bench in the middle of the circle. She then proceeded to place certain cards on the table and started the circle time.



The teacher informed everyone that, today they would be going to the Devi Kamakshi Temple. A few children already knew the temple and excitedly mentioned how it was close to their house or how they had seen it from their buses. She then asked the children if they remembered where they had gone the previous time, to which they enthusiastically replied they had gone to the Mosque. She also reminded them of the Church visit done in the beginning of the term.

She then proceeded to ask children about the Mosque. She asked if they remembered the colour of the building-to which everyone replied in unison as white. She asked them to recall the structure on top and spoke about the dome which was green. She asked if there were any idols in the mosque, to which the children replied, "No". The teacher also mentioned she had recently gone to the Golden Temple which was a Gurudwara. She asked if anyone had gone there, and quite a few children had been there and were narrating their experiences. The children were excited to know that the dome was made of gold in the Golden temple. One of them was curious to know if the golden temple shimmered.

The teacher then spoke about the Devi Kamakshi Temple and asked them to observe the colours and shape of the temple.

The children by now were very excited to discuss the rules of the visit. The first rule mentioned by one of them was 'No touching'. On asking what it meant, one said we should not touch the idols another said we should not touch the wall. The teacher clarified that they could touch the idols if the Pandit ji allowed them. The teacher also spoke about safety and said that no one should touch the lamps or agarbattis as they could get burnt.

The next rule was no running in the premises. The teacher said they should walk quietly, and someone remarked that it was because they were going to a temple and not a playground. The next rule was "No shouting". The teacher told everyone that they should speak softly if they needed to and listen to the pandit ji and calmly observe the surroundings. The last rule was that they would have to remove their shoes before entering the temple. A final check was made to see if everyone had ID cards. After this the children waited calmly for the teacher to inform them that they needed to go to the bus. The children quickly made a line, armed with their water bottles and marched towards the bus. There was a proud announcement of, "Ye to meri bus hai" by a few students. On the bus the children sat down with their friends.



The bus ride was a filled with laughter, games and conversations. I was also told the story of Stree 2 by a child who took pity on the fact that I hadn't seen the movie yet. Soon we reached the temple.

Ma'am instructed the children to remove their shoes before entering the temple. Each child was given a name card to place in the shoe. They smartly de-boarded the bus and headed for the temple. Just outside the temple was a flower vendor. Children were asked to observe the different flowers present and smell them. There was also a lotus bud which the children were shown. Ma'am also found a garland of lemons much to the pleasure of the children and was informed that even this garland was used in rituals.



Once inside the children soaked in their surroundings and took a few minutes to observe everything. They were also asked to pray for a few minutes.

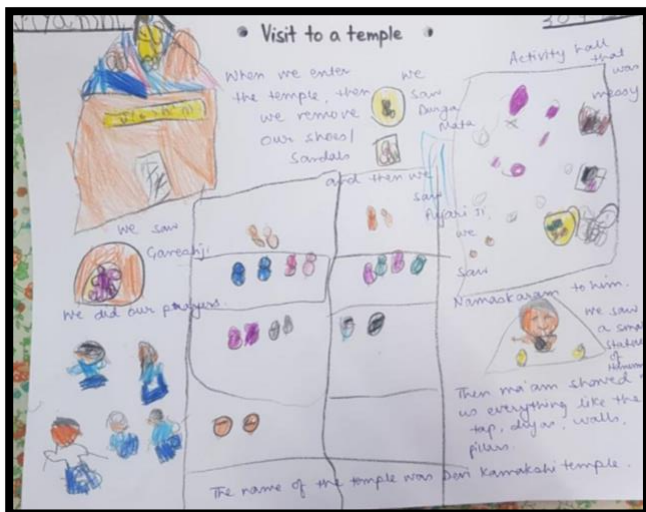


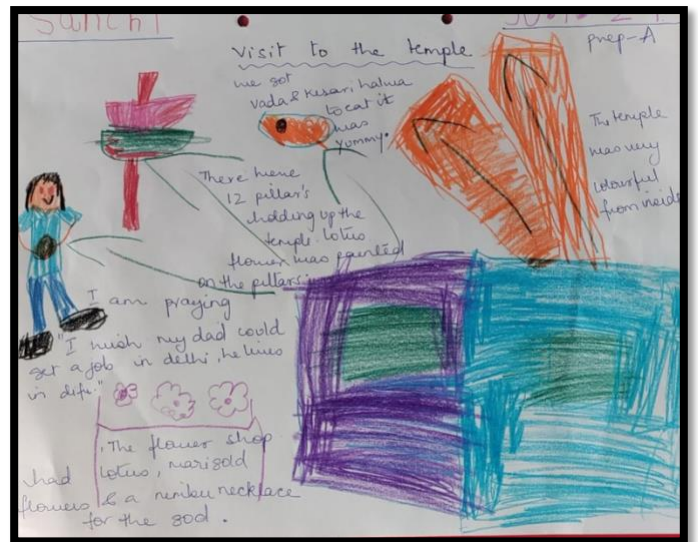
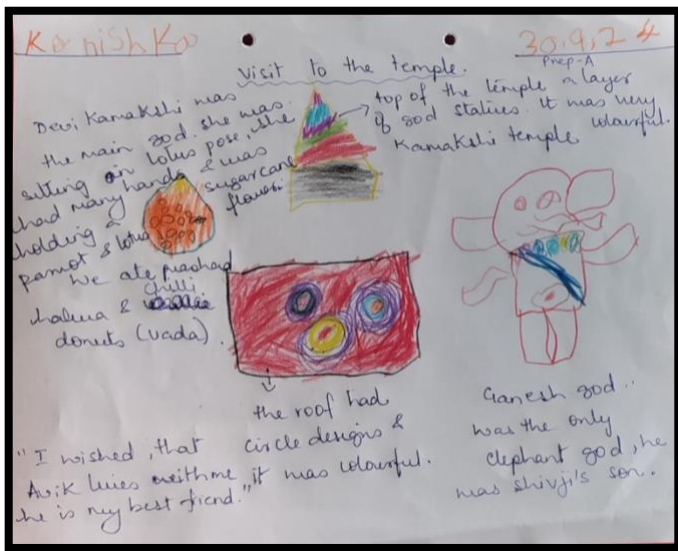
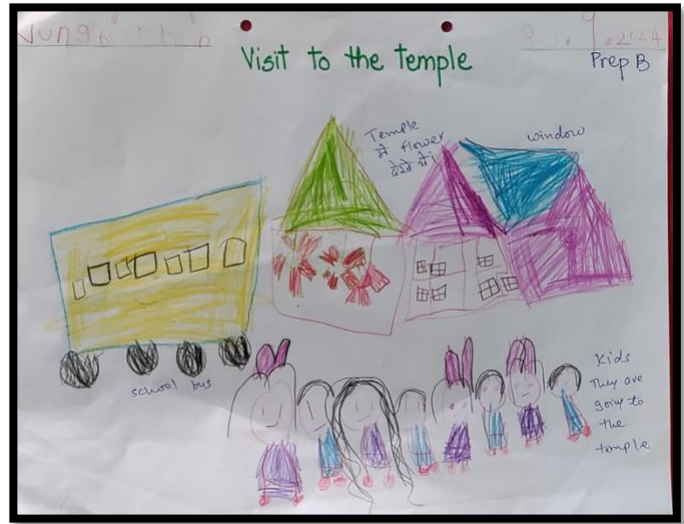
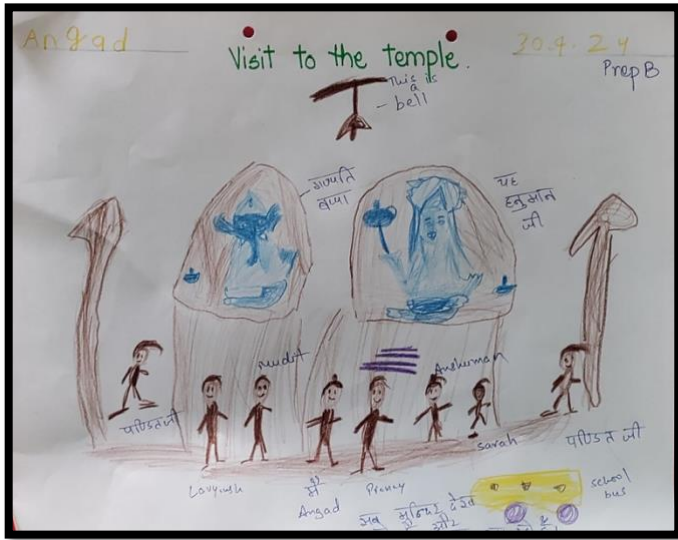
One of them prayed for ma'am to always be healthy and beautiful. Then the teacher pointed to the 12 pillars inside and the different designs present. The children remarked the designs looked like flowers. The temple had three chambers which housed Ganesh, Devi Kamakshi and Adi Shankaracharya. The teacher informed them that Adi Shankaracharya was a very wise person. The children then got up to do a parikrama and noticed the carvings on the temple and remarked at the colors and shapes. Some of the deities were painted blue and they assumed it was Krishna but were informed that it was also a devi, that the temples were tall so that they can be seen from far away. The teacher then showed them the painting of Devi Kamakshi and asked them to identify the things in her hand. After some observation, they noted a parrot, a lotus and a sugarcane stick. They then saw the inner chamber and found that a mirror was also present on the wall from where they could see the reflection of the deity. Children also discussed about worshipping and the teacher informed them that it was their choice if they wanted to worship or not, but it was important to be open to knowledge and observe different practices.

Finally, came the best part which was receiving the Prasadam. The children sat in neat rows and were served yummy kesari and vadai. Few children mentioned they did not want to eat and were excused. Some shared their prasadam with friends. All the children took pains not to waste or litter the area. Finally, after washing their hands and faces, the children happily walked back to the bus to head back to school.



It was a fun visit not only for the children but also for the other devotees present who were happy to see so many children in the temple.





With Regards,

Parijata, Mother of Kanishka, Prep A

