



## Southern Cross Student Services Pvt Ltd News from our Chandigarh office

On Thursday 17 January we held a special ceremony called Puja (pooja) in order to bless our office and to thank God for our good health and well being and to ask that he continue to bless us. The Lord is not normally accessible to our eyes, ears, nose, touch and ordinary intellect, but by carrying out Puja we can touch, feel, smell, see and taste something pertaining to God. Our Puja on Thursday was held in the form of a Havan ceremony.

Havan is literally a fire ceremony where we sat around a fire placing offerings into the flames. The offering which is placed into the fire consists of several elements, including jav, sesame seeds, rice, ghee, incense and sandalwood. Each element has a different significance. It has been said that simply inhaling the smoke of a holy



yagna fire has the ability to cure ailments of the lungs or respiratory system.

Havan is in essence, a purifying ritual. Just as fire purifies everything it touches, so we perform havan that we may be made pure. But these offerings are not being made simply to a fire, rather they are being made to the real fire - God.

Anupam receiving blessing from Pandit watched by Surbhi, Tannu and Gail

As we placed the ahuti (offerings) into the flames, we symbolically offered all our "impurities" - our anger, our greed, our jealousy, our grudges, our pains and our obstacles - and we prayed to God to make us as pure as the ghee we poured into the flames.

The basis of life is said to be food. The basis of food is earth. The basis of earth is water and the basis of water is air. If air will be pure, all elements of the chain will become pure, thus purifying and cleansing life itself. The Pooja was both a spiritual experience and a way of sterilising and purifying our environment, freeing it of germs and infection.

So, on Thursday the Pandit (holy man) came to our office to carry out the Puja for us. It was a beautiful and moving ceremony and yes, there was a fire lit in an old pan in the middle of our office into which we placed various ahuti (offerings). Our office



filled with thick smoke as the fire blazed in the middle of the floor. We opened doors and windows and I expected fire sirens to ring at any moment, but of course in India a Puja for a new business is always practiced so our neighbours were not concerned.

After some time the still smoking frying pan was carried through the office and sat out on the window sill where it continued to burn for some hours. The Pandit sat for a while and shared chai with us – a very gentle, serene young man. Since Thursday, the fragrance of the fire and incense has lingered pleasantly in our office.



Havan Kund – the Havan Kund is filled with pure soil and decorated with wheat flour and turmeric