

Snehanilayam 1998

Araku is an ideal place to spend quiet times with the Lord of creation. Away from the maddening crowd and the noises of the cities, it provides congenial atmosphere for retreats and seminars especially during the summer months when the school and the college are on holidays. Besides eight days' retreats, many groups of Sisters of the Congregation have made thirty days' retreat in the peaceful atmosphere of Araku.

As one goes up the Ghats, the winding road with its hairpin bends, the freshness of the air filled with the fragrance of the wild flowers, the scenic beauty as one begins to climb, the rows of hills and mountains dressed in evergreen which soothes the eyes, the deep silence of the valleys except for the twittering of the stray birds – all these make a feast for one's senses and make one cry out, "Indeed, God is in this place, I did not know it".

Waltair had been the formation house for many years in the past as it was away from the Visakhapatnam town. But over the years, this town has grown into a highly industrialized city. The polluted air and the noise did not make it a suitable place for the novitiate any more. After much prayer, discernment and searching, the decision was taken to move the Novitiate from Visakhapatnam to Araku. The construction work began in 1996 under the supervision of Sr.Gratia supported by Sr.Priscilla the then Superior of Araku community on a site much higher than the Convent. The Novitiate house is a spacious building and is free from noise, pollution or any other disturbance.

On 19th June 1998, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. K. Mariadas, Bishop of Visakhapatnam blessed and inaugurated the new Novitiate and named it, 'Snehanilayam', the abode of love. Almost all the communities of the Province were represented on this occasion. During the Solemn Thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration that followed, the Novitiate chapel was blessed and Jesus came to remain with them in the beautiful tabernacle.

