JAMGHAT

AANCHAL SITE VISIT

JULY 2014

ASHA FOR EDUCATION, BERKELEY

I visited Aanchal on Tuesday 22nd July 2014. I went around 3pm so that I could meet all the children and the tutor. The house is located in a secluded alley in Saket. I had to call Amit for I could not find the house. He then sent some one to direct me to the house. I liked the loacation because with the girls one has to be careful- give the crime rate and how vulnerable these girls are.

Jamghat has hired two floors in the house. In the basement is the office. Amit and the accounting people sit here. There is also a small workshop where Jamgh at is producing items for sale- bags and such like things. I saw some of the bags and they were of professional quality.

Currently 10 girls reside in Aanchal. Jamghat does not plan to expand the numbers as logistically it is difficult. It means bigger house, more responsibility- it is not feasible.  There are two house mothers who work in 12 hour shift. So there is constantly an adult overseeing the girls. In addition, there is a coordinator who comes everyday from 9 to 5 pm.

No one can enter the house, not even Amit. He rang the bell and the coordinator opened the door after confirming. When I visited there were 6 girls
Ayesha and Muskaan attend the Little Ones Public School which is next door. Ayesha is the chattier of the two and little bit of encouragement had her spilling out everything.  They do watch TV but only things like cartoons- Chota Bheem which is very popular with the kids and other such programs. Muskaan was quiet initially but when we started talking about the Annual program, she opened up and told me about the program. She was the baby and another girls acted as her mother in the drama Andher Nagari. They had practiced  for it through the summer.

Uzma has just given the 8th class exam through NIOS. She has also completed computer training from NIIT. However, for placement she needs to complete the 10th class exam. She will be giving that through NIOS this year. Meantime, as she knows Tally and other accounting program, she is going to help out in the office in the basement.  Her sister Iram is in school. She is going to the Life Center academy with the boys from Aman.  Uzma and Iram's mothe is alive but no one knows about the father.  Uzma is the most confident of all the girls.

Pratigya has just recently joined the home. Her father lives in Ghaziabad and she was recommended through CWC. Her enrollment in government school is under process and soon she will be starting school.

Two other girls are also attending government school.

Most of the girls are from the Jama Masjid Area but now CWC has started recommending girls to Jamghat for rehabilitation.  Of all the girls only Priya is truly an orphan- the rest of the girls have either one of the parent or both alive though they are incapable of taking care of them.  Muskaan's father lives in Sarai Kale Khan and her brother is in Aman.  Muskaan's hands were burnt for begging but now she seems to be well-adjusted in Aanchal.

The girls took me around the house. The house is kept clean and neat. There is one room for the house mother to sleep. One of the room functions as a classroom where the tutor teaches them. There is a time-table that they have to follow. The tutor helps them with school work and also coaches them in English, Hindi and Math.  As most of the girls started going to the school late, the tuition are supposed to help them grasp the fundamentals. Unfortunately, the tutor was late that day and I could not meet her.

Monday and Friday are reserved for sports- the girls are taken to the nearby playground by a sports teacher.

The menu is basic but as in the boy's home it is seen that they get nutritious meal.

I asked Amit about the house rent. They pay Rs 20000 for renting Aanchal space while for the basement (which is smaller) they pay Rs 10000.  This is about on par for the area. The biggest advantage of the location is its seclusion. Further bedroom has a small balcony and there are trees outside so the room is quite breezy. In fact ventilation is absent in the basement and you can smell the stench as you enter it.  In comparison the flat where the girls live is airy and there is plenty of light.

You had asked whether there are other such homes in the area. The only one I am aware of is Prayas which is quite a distance away from Jamghat. Other than that in this locality I am not aware of any other homes.

Jamghat has to report to CWC about the progress of the girls. Further, when the girl reaches 18 years, she has to leave the place. By then she has to find a job and become independent. I think Jamghat is doing a good job in that direction with the boys. But with the girls we have to see. I think Uzma would be the first one to leave the house and we will need to monitor her progress.

The coordinator is cheerful young woman and the girls like her. She visits the schools and interacts with the teachers and principals to find out the progress of these girls. She is young and can enter into their enthusiasms easily.  So I felt comfortable with her.

Amit said that he will email the details of the girls if we want them.

-Rohini Muthuswami