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Diksha Foundation: Project site visit

I happened to visit my home during 2016 winter holidays. Recalling that one of the projects that Asha at Purdue is working on is situated in Patna, I thought it would be a great opportunity to visit the project site and become aware of the functioning of the social movement. With that in mind I contacted the Diksha foundation project coordinators at Purdue who connected me to Gautam and Shyamlika, project managers at Patna.

It's always difficult to manage time for anything else other than meeting and being with your family when you're visiting home after many years. Somehow, I managed to visit the project at Shanti Vihar colony. Since their location was not very far from my place, I convinced my mother to accompany me to the site. It was appropriate in some sense. After all, she herself was a high school teacher.

The building is situated in a populated area. Everybody in the locality seemed to know the building so it wasn't difficult to find the place. Since we arrived without any prior notice, we were requested to sit in a small computer room while the staffs had an ongoing weekly meeting. While we waited, we noticed the kids who were using computers. They were probably taught to leave their footwear outside before entering the room. We followed suit. It was interesting to see them trying to do various things on the computer – some were drawing figures while some typed in texts. They all seemed well-behaved – we were greeted everywhere we walked inside the building complex later on. In a few minutes, Shyamlika and Gautam appeared who asked us to join them for a cup of tea. While we sat in their office, we talked about the functioning of the facility, the socio-economic background of the students and how the two got into the social welfare work. The students who were mostly from primary and middle school grades came from families whose main source of income was from labor works such as in construction and in passenger transport (taxi, rickshaw etc.). We also talked about some of the group events they organized for kids. In fact, just a day before or two, they had organized "Matrix Mela" event.

After our tea, we walked around the complex and saw the classrooms and art and craft of the students, including the paper-art hanging from the ceiling, the first thing we noticed. We saw how the seating as well as blackboard arrangements were made for the students in the classroom. We also met Gautam's mother who happened to be a volunteer teacher for the same foundation. Both of them would drive to work together every day.

Since my mother and I had a different plan for rest of the day, we had to leave. However before leaving the site, we managed to pose for a group photo with the kids present at that time. It was great to see those cheerful faces of the kids as well as those of the hardworking volunteers who appeared to be highly motivated towards their objective. They praised the efforts of Asha Purdue and wanted more individuals to visit the project and get involved. Maybe the next time I travel home, I will give them another visit.

Raja,

PhD Student,
Purdue University

