

Sri Sarada Niketan Site Visit Report

Date of Visit: December 21, 2016

Site visit by: Srikanth Madala, Krishna Murthy Madala, Saritha Ghattamaneni, Srinivasa Jaladi.
Sahana Madala and Rajeshwar Jaladi (Volunteers)

My family and I have been fortunate to visit Sri Sarada Niketan located in Martur during our recent trip to India. The site visit was planned for Wednesday, December 21, 2016 and we were scheduled to meet Mrs. Lalitha Rani and Mrs. Victoria, the Principals of Secondary and Primary Schools respectively.

The school sits on an expansive site in a rural setting. Upon arrival at the main entrance, the security personnel guided us to through the entrance. As we entered the main campus, we saw a group of students performing physical exercise drills. At the school office, we were greeted by Mrs. Lalitha Rani. In her office, Mrs. Lalitha outlined action plan for the day.

Mrs. Lalitha detailed on how the orphan and underprivileged students get enrolled at the school and efforts of school administration staff in reaching out to interiors and tribal communities in the region. Some of the new students enrolled in 2016 academic year did not have any prior education and never learnt alphabets. Mrs. Lalitha mentioned that these students were placed in a specialized program where curriculum is more intense for the students to catch up on all the years of missed education.

We started our visit with a tour of the school buildings. The tour started with a trip through the primary section and later the secondary sections of the school. As we walked through the primary classes, students were reciting multiplication tables (in 4th grade). Students in the classrooms were sitting on the floors. As we walked through the secondary classes, we saw students (in 7th Grade) working through math problems. As we continued through the secondary section, we walked passed the 9th grade class who were having a science class. Down in the playground, we saw 8th Grade girls practicing volleyball and the boys playing cricket.

Completing the main building tour, we walked to the huge auditorium building. By the time we reached, Mrs. Lalitha had students from all classes gather in the auditorium. After welcoming the team to front of the assembly, each member of the visiting team introduced themselves. Each member elaborated on how education helped to explore career opportunities.

During the lunch break, we saw students being served traditional Andhra meals. We talked to the chef and kitchen staff who detailed on how most of the items used to prepare the food (that is being served to students), including vegetables, are grown in the surrounding fields that belong to the Sri Sarada Niketan. We learnt that all students are provided with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The kitchen was clean and food preparation area appeared to be well maintained. The dining area was cleaned thoroughly at the conclusion of the lunch session.

After lunch session, two young volunteers, Sahana Madala and Rajeshwar Jaladi, who accompanied us went to the 5th grade classroom. They volunteered and spent time with students – conducting academic activities, team activities, quiz, teaching geography and math for nearly 90 minutes. Both the volunteers were pleasantly surprised to see the students' enthusiasm, working together in team events, and competitive spirit. The students repeatedly informed us that coming to Sri Sarada Niketan was best thing that could happen to any orphan kids. Teachers supported and helped students during the course of the activities – providing translation to the questions, helping students understand the accent of the volunteers etc.

Walking through the corridor, we came across some 10th and 12th grade students. The students seemed very excited about the teaching staff and confided that quality of the teachers was very good. All the students unequivocally reverberated the caring nature of the teaching staff and how they go beyond to ensure all the students understand the subject. The teachers also take remedial measures for students who are falling behind and to catch up with rest of the class. These students indicated that additional resources in the form of teaching specialists, in science and math subjects, will help them prepare for college admission tests like EAMCET, IITJEE, BITS, AIIMS, and other higher level of competition.

We continued our tour with a visit to the dairy farm. The dairy farm provides all the required supply of milk for the consumption of students and to prepare yogurt for meals. The dairy adds to the self-sustaining model of the school, providing milk to the students, biogas for cooking in the kitchen. Further, any additional supply of milk is sold to outside people providing an alternative source of revenues.

During our visit, we witnessed students - boys and girls, across all ages groups with a passion to learn, helping each other, and sharing a sense of bonding. Given their economic background, it was disheartening to learn about the personal childhood misgivings and their personal stories of

hardships. It was very comforting to learn, from each of the students we talked to, on how getting into Sri Sarada Niketan changed their outlook towards life. Some of the students also admitted that they can now dream big - of being successful professionals, and becoming an inclusive member of the 'educated' echelon of the society.

Witnessing the efforts and direct impact of Sri Sarada Niketan on uplifting underprivileged students and children from tribal communities, Dr. Polineni and his team are truly committed to this cause. In this regard, any financial assistance and donation of school supplies will come a long way in supporting Sri Sarada Niketan's vision of giving orphans a chance to come to a learning institution they can call a 'home'.

Regards,

Srikanth Madala