

Rohini Muthuswami  
[rohini\\_muthuswami@gmail.com](mailto:rohini_muthuswami@gmail.com)

I visited the Kishangarh school of Sunday. Usually, they do a carnival in January but this year it got postponed to April. They sort of combined 3 events together- school reports and handing out of school supplies, monthly ration, and the carnival. The event was held in their school ground and included a meal. There was also a cotton candy man, two stalls set up by the students for small games, and a pottery stall where people encouraged to try their hands at the pottery.

Roohi told me that 50% of the people were families of men incarcerated in Tihar Jail. all the men/women who had come had a card given to them by Samarpan-this card was used to note down the monthly ration provided. Few women had got the report card of their children. Roohi told me that the school also helps with tuition- so many children come only in the morning or afternoon for help with their school work.

The Tihar activities- Roohi and Sabby told me- included soft skill development, literacy activities, some bit of theatre (but it failed because they could not take the equipment/prop inside the premise), counselling etc. I also met with one person who was working with the Juveniles. He was doing his M.A. (political science) in JNU but as he had experience in doing lot of workshops he started working with the juveniles through Samarpan. So he worked with them for about a year and he recounted his experiences. He told me that most of the youth are troubled and there is a lot of violence. In the beginning he had trouble with them as they would passively or actively disrupt the proceedings. But he persisted, introducing many activities like playing with the ball, card making, writing out their experiences/thoughts, rakhi making, diya making- and finally there was a change for the better. The juveniles became more calm and disciplined. Most of them are illiterate but few could read and write. I read some their thoughts- they miss their families, they send love to their parents, there is a girl whom he loves... The diyas they had made was really amazing. I was impressed by the resource person's commitment but unfortunately he is not going to continue.

Roohi and Sabby told me that they have not renewed their Tihar permission as they were not sure about the funding. So they have to now apply for permission. Usually the permission and the activities are decided in January and so they are not sure how this will pan out. One thought they were toying with was to ask Tihar authorities as to what they want and then go from their. I also understood that the skill development had not panned out well as the Jail already trains the inmates in skills such as carpentry and electrician. So they have to decide what kind soft skills they wish to impart. I am also not sure how the activities with the Juveniles will work out as their resource person is leaving- he has family commitments and needs to get a job. They might do some amount of theatre- retweaking this activity such that not much of equipments/props are needed. My understanding of the situation was that Roohi and Sabby are also unsure how the coming year is going to work out. This is the reason that they are going to ask Tihar as to what they need from them.

As I have not attended any of their Tihar activities, it is difficult for me to assess how the funds are being spent. Certainly, they seem to have spent money on getting accessories for the activities like their resource person was doing with the juveniles. I am enclosing some photos that I took that day.





