

Navjyoti

Navjyoti Swawalamban Sewa Sansthan

Site visit report - January 2013

Site visit done by Neena and Chandan

The goal of this site visit was to visit schools and vocational training centers run by Navjyoti Swawalamban Sewa Sansthan (referred to as "Navjyoti" from hereon) in Harsos, Nagepur and surrounding areas - about 40 km from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Navjyoti provides primary education in two main schools (in Harsos and Nagepur) and non-formal education in about ten centers including six kishori kendras and more than 30 self-help groups in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The organization also runs vocational training centers and supports various social causes, mostly pertaining to women in the community.

Navjyoti was started by Nandlal Master and focuses on the villages of Aaraji line block at district Varanasi. People manufacture Banarasi saris in most of these villages. Many people, due to their poverty, employ their children to manufacture the saris. Children are busy working on their family business during the day and miss out on attending school. Keeping all these things in mind, firstly an evening school at Usarapatti village was opened on 13 August, 1994. The school was established through donation and contribution from the local villagers. This evening school helped the children get education without leaving their work and likewise later other centers were opened at different villages by motivating the people of these villages. The day schools in Harsos and Nagepur were added later on as more children became interested in going to regular schools. At present, about 800 children are receiving education through ten centers and two formal schools, all run by Navjyoti.

Navjyoti's school in Harsos:

The school had been using available space in the village's Community Center building. However, Navjyoti was recently told to vacate the premises as the village panchayat wanted to establish its office in that building.



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We were greeted by the students with their morning drill and prayers. One student led the morning exercises. This routine is followed everyday before the classes begin.



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The students then broke into groups and proceeded to their respective classes. We found that the kids had to sit in the open area outside the building because of the eviction notice from the panchayat. The village panchayat had a problem with this arrangement as well and the future of this school was a big uncertainty.



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We were happy to see many girls enrolled in the school and asked them about their interests and hobbies. The students were eager to talk and present what they had been working on.



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We then drove to the other school in Nagepur village.

Navjyoti's school in Nagepur :

Navjyoti's school in Nagepur is housed inside an Asha Trust building. All the classes were being held in an L-shaped building with asbestos roof. There were no partitions or walls separating the different classes. Noise was a big problem since conversations and lectures occurring within one classroom were clearly audible in the other classrooms.



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Students in the 2nd class were learning language and grammar by reading stories from their textbooks and writing down lines that they were reading.



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In another class, students were practicing arithmetic. The girls were equally enthusiastic about coming to the school and participating in class discussions.



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During the lunch break, students played around in the courtyard. It was very satisfying to watch them enjoy their childhood without being forced to do child labor in saree factories or other places.



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Later on in the day, we spoke to the students from class 9 about the subjects they liked and their dreams. One girl wanted to be a doctor and started asking us questions about what we do and what are the things that she should do after completing her high school. We were happy to see that girls were dreaming about careers and trying to make life decisions without the fear of getting married off at an early age.



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Students had regular computer classes. Navjyoti has a computer room with 2 functional computers. However, due to scheduled power loss in the village for up to 12 hours every morning, students are not able to use the computers properly.



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We had a discussion with all the teachers and staff of Navjyoti. The biggest hurdles they were facing were related to new provisions under Right to Education (RTE). The first hurdle is related to minimum qualifications required to be a teacher. Only one B.Ed (a three yr course after a college degree like B.Sc) is required to be the principal of a primary school. Presently, Suresh, Mukesh, Arvind, Vijay Kumar who are associated with the group at NJSS have B.Eds. Two other members Mahendar and Manish are also enrolled in the program. The remaining teachers technically only require D.Ed (a 1 yr diploma after 12th class). However, if student/teacher ratio of 30/1 is maintained with those with a degree, there is no degree requirement for additional teachers. RTE also mandates that the classrooms have to be bigger and the school should have drinking water and toilets for the students.



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There is a government school in the vicinity of Navjyoti's school in Nagepur. However, Nandlal ji told us that government teachers were not regular.

Vocational training:

Navjyoti also runs several vocational training centers where girls can get trained in sewing and tailoring. Each center has 1 - 3 sewing machines and is headed by one experienced instructor. These centers have been able to train many women in this village. Some of these women have even started their own small businesses after getting trained at these centers.



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The women made school uniforms (below), salwar, blouse and other hand work.



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To know more about Navjyoti or support the project, visit the webpage -

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=124> [<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=124>]