

ANANDALAYA project – Site Visit Report
An initiative by Vivekananda Kendra Odisha Seva Prakalpa (VK OSP)
(Ghatagaon Block, Keonjhar District, Odisha)
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Back Ground :

In Odisha, Vivekananda Kendra has spread its service activities in town and rural areas of 12 districts through its approved branch and activity centers at Sambalpur, Baleswar, Bhubaneswar, Baripada, Keonjhar, Gunupur, Banapur, Gop and Brahmapur. Looking into the vast rural and tribal areas of the state, that needs a focused attention for sustainable development; Kendra felt the necessity of intensifying its MAN MAKING-NATION BUILDING activities in these regions for building a developed and better rural Odisha with a focus in areas with higher concentration of depressed category population and higher incidence of rural poverty. Accordingly the Project “Vivekananda Kendra Odisha Seva Prakalpa” has been launched on 11th Sept’2006.

Basic aim

"Let New India arise..... out of the peasants' cottage out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper..... Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains." — Sw.Vivekananda

To promote social, economic, cultural and spiritual advancement of the masses living in rural and tribal regions of Orissa by - 1) Conducting service activities action in the fields of Health, Education, Nutrition, Agriculture, Environment, etc. 2) Helping the individuals to develop themselves completely, 3) Providing sap for healthy growth of associative village communities and 4) Help creating an adequate foundation for self sustaining development in the underdeveloped regions of Odisha.

Target group and area

All sections of people living in rural and tribal regions of Odisha. Kendra’s main focus is on village school students and poor children, village youths, women and old-aged people.

Focus activities

Based on the objectives and felt needs of the target group, VK OSP promoted various developmental activities during the last ten years, One of the key focus to achieve the aim is **Anandalaya (details are as mentioned below). Other related activities are :**

- **Samskar varga** in villages for the disadvantaged and vulnerable children to cultivate good characters and shape the young minds with the help of Story, Devotional and Patriotic Songs, Games, Yogasanas etc.
- **Cultural Exams** in schools and colleges to expose the village students to our cultural heritage, ancient ethos and ideals and to inspire the students to read the lives of our great saints and personalities which will help the budding child to grow with firmly rooted in our culture.
- **Camps –**
 - Anandalaya Acharya Prasikhan Shibir to select, train, mould and prepare the village youths for serving in Anandalayas as Acharya.

- Youth Shibir, Yoga Shibir to organize and mould the rural youths for service activities through yoga and swadhyaya.
- Personality Development Camp / Samskarvarga Shibir - To develop creative leadership in rural school students, residential and non-residential camps for all round personality development of children living in the villages.
- **Mobile Library facilities in the rural areas** - With books in Odia, Hindi and English on various relevant titles, the mobile library gives access to books, magazines and other learning facilities to the students and youths of the remote villages.
- **Audio Visual shows** for students, youths, women and village community - Educational films, video shows and other programs help to increase the female literacy level and eradicate illiteracy among the adult population of the village communities.
- **Environmental** education, Eco-farming and tree plantation programs for the community
- Income generation for women, Water & sanitation facilities in villages
- **Village** meetings and Value enrichment programs for building associative village communities
- **Publication** of books in Odia on Swami Vivekananda and his messages for the youths & nation building
- **Celebrations** - Vivekananda jayanti and other annual celebrations of Kendra in villages
- **Health Camps** and awareness programs.
- Providing support to the poor village youths for pursuing higher education.

Our purposeful and effective programs give rich dividends in increased productivity, improvement in health care, family stabilization and general betterment of social and political life of the SC, ST and other socially disadvantaged groups. The special programs and training for the village youths of all communities create quality manpower in every village which will be skillful enough to organize, monitor and implement all kinds of village developmental programs.

ANANDALAYA

Education being the most important and effective instrument for socio-economic empowerment and to develop the human capital, high priority should be accorded to improve the educational status of SCs, STs and the socially disadvantaged. To catch up with the educationally developed districts, there is a need to put more emphasis on increase in enrolment of children in primary and middle schools level and also retention over successive classes by acting as a deterrent to parents from pre-mature withdrawal of the children from schools.

Target group: Students of class I to V belonging to poor families living in remote areas and the socially disadvantaged section of society.

Aim:

- ◆ To create education supportive atmosphere in interior villages
- ◆ To reduce the rate of drop outs & thus improve the status of the education
- ◆ To give 'man making' value based education & thus improve the quality of the education
- ◆ To increase patriotic feeling among the children
- ◆ To develop self respect among the villagers
- ◆ To create health awareness among the children & through them among the villagers

- ◆ To work for all round development of the village
- ◆ TO HELP THE CHILD
 - Develop good Physique, Mind and Intellect
 - Learn through nature and environment
 - Understand the society
 - Learn while he/she plays
 - Develop creativity and self-expression
 - Prepare to go to school
 - Learn good Samskaras
 - Make him/her feel proud of our ancestral culture

Methodology:

In a sitting with Village elders, the Anandalaya concept is introduced for the total development of children of their village. The village offers a place to organize classes for 3/4 hours every day. Minimum 10th passed youths having urge to work for the people are selected from the village where Anandalaya is opened and are trained as Anandalaya Acharyas to take up this work. Then the trained Anandalaya Acharyas with the active involvement and co-operation of the villagers conducts the Anandalayas and other service activities. Like all our activities, this too is participatory in nature. The local people along with these volunteers will be given responsibility for implementation of this project under our direct supervision.

Venue:- Village community hall or school premises or any other public place.

No. of students:- 35 students (maximum) per Anandalaya.

No. of Acharyas:- 2 per Anandalaya.

No of Supervisors: 1 per 10 Anandalayas

Time and Days:- Morning 2 hrs and evening 1-2 hrs, i.e. 3 to 4 hours a day for 6 days a week.

Daily Routine:

- ◆ Prayers and sloka chanting
- ◆ Exercises
- ◆ Action Songs/ Rhymes
- ◆ Activity
- ◆ Patriotic Song
- ◆ Story Telling
- ◆ Games

Impact of Anandalayas

- Regularity of students in School increased
- Good results of students with the increase in learning graph and retention level

- Drop out of students at the primary level prevented
- Our programs help students forming good characters as they grow
- Remarkable changes in the attitude of the parents towards the education of their children
- Our training for the rural youths helps developing all round personality

Site Visit:

During my visit to Odisha in July 2016, I went to the Harichandanpur, Keonjhar site of VK OSP. Mr. Laxminarayan Panigrahi from the VK Kendra, Bhubaneswar branch arranged my visit, there at Harichandanpur, Mr. Pratap, who is a full time volunteer, in-charge of the site office, received me along with few Acharyas. I reached there on 11th July evening from Bhubaneswar, it was a 4 hour journey by car. I stayed at the Kendra office, which is still under construction, but they have couple rooms ready for visiting guests and other volunteers from other Kendra sites. We all chatted for couple of hours, then did prayers before we had our dinner.

My Learning from the discussions: This area is primarily a tribal area and the livelihood of the people are from farming and growing vegetables. There is no other source of income for them. Most of them are illiterate and they do not have any motivation to educate their children either, rather they make the children help them in their farming etc. Although there are primary schools, hardly any parent send their children to school, if at all some goes, they only go there for mid-day meal. although there are these primary school, each school has about 60+ students (from class 1 to class V)but there are only 2 teachers for the school. Most of time, specially in harvest season hardly any student show up to the school. All the students are promoted to next grade without even any test or exam, so naturally their level of education is very poor. A 5th standard student can not even read properly.

When VK OSP started their Kendra in this region, initial years, Mr. Pratap and Mrs. Varsa, both of them had to visit each and every parent in every clusters and tried to motivate them to sign up their kids to this program, Mean while they were able to find some students from local area who have graduated high school and aiming to attend college, they have appointed them as Acharyas, trained them in VK way of teaching and with their help finally they were able to enroll village students into their program. Even now they still go to interior area and motivate parents to enroll their children.

My Visit to sites : Next day morning at 6 AM, we started our visit to two sites (Ada Kata and Nua Gaon) in Ghatgaon block, 1st one was about 30 min drive from the site office. It was a Primary school, they use the school premises from 6.30 AM to 8.30 AM for their activities. When we reached there, about 20 kids (boys and Girls) and three Acharyas already there and getting ready for prayers. After the prayers the kids play some outdoor games, team building exercises, all of these are designed such a way that while playing kids learn counting, Alphabets, learning phonetics, story telling etc.

We spent about one hour there. Mrs. Varsa (popularly known as Varsa Didi) joined us. We proceeded to another site in Nua Gaon. There were about 15 students, and three Acharyas. It was the same routine and all the students were busy with the activities.

I liked the unique way of teaching and I noticed that students are enjoying the learning lessons and they seemed very enthusiastic and engaged.

We came back to the site office, there I met around 7 Acharyas, had a detailed talk with them, tried to understand what motivates them. Each one of them had very interesting stories to tell and all are very emotional. All of them are highly motivated and proud to be associated with this initiative. The all have very high ambitions and wants to go for higher studies and better life. Before they got associated with this VK OSP, they were no sure what their future would look like, they were frustrated, angry, aim less and were very vulnerable to stray into wrong path (ex; these type of youths are the easy recruits for

Naxalites), but now with VK OSP, they can see a bright future ahead, they are well disciplined, trained and all are beaming with positive and progressive attitude.

Conclusion :

The time I spent there was completely worth of my time and I learnt a lot from these kids and Acharyas and specially from the VK OSP volunteers like Mr. Pratap,Varsa Didi, who quite their stable and lucrative government Jobs and dedicated their life for this mission to educate under-privileged children and making their lives a better life. We , Asha for Education, have the same mission and we should support the VK OSP Anandalaya Project.

Some of my site visit photos and videos :

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/hdXt2J1OHng6T1MY2>

Thank you

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