

ANANDALAYA project – Site Visit Report
An initiative by Vivekananda Kendra Odisha Seva Prakalpa (VK OSP)
(Deobandh, Keonjhar District, Odisha)
by Sanjukta Satapathy, Member, AFE, Danbury Chapter
sanjukta_satapathy@yahoo.com

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 March 4th 2025, I went to the Deobandh, Keonjhar site of VK OSP. Mr. Laxminarayan Panigrahi and Santosh Mohanty from the VK Kendra, Bhubaneswar branch accompanied me for the site visit. We started from Bhubaneswar on March 4th to the site office, it was about 4 hours' drive from Bhubaneswar, we reached out first at Anandalaya at Jamposi around 5 PM, and then visited one more Anandalaya at Purumunda. These two villages are few kilometers apart from each other. Purumunda Anandalaya, which is situated in the village club house did not have electricity and the Acharyas were conducting classes with cell phone light. We discussed having the option of solar light as an alternative. Even in semi darkness the full sessions were going on and the Acharyas were fully engaged in teaching the kids.

After the site visit, I stayed overnight at the Kendra office at Deobandh. The building is a fully built structure that has halls and rooms to house Acharyas who otherwise would not have the right conveniences to go to their colleges from their respective villages. It houses 10 high school going Acharyas as well from nearby villages, who were able to do their studies effectively and perform their duties as Acharyas. I met two supervisors as well, who are overseeing the Acharyas. We visited two more Anandalayas in the morning – one at Salbeda and the other at Gohitangiri. I could see the sincerity of the students and their little brothers or sisters, who were accompanying their role model elder siblings.

My Learning from the discussions: It is primarily a tribal area and the livelihood of the people are from farming and growing vegetables and working as daily labourers. 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 sends 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 the time, especially in harvest season hardly any student shows 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 cannot even read properly.

We met the parents/villagers to get their feed back as to how Anandalaya is helping the children and it was pretty positive. I was impressed to see one year old students to be conversant with three languages – Hindi, English and Odia and are able translate from one language to other effectively along with multiplication table upto 12.

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. Now after few years of continued dedication and efforts, I see more students, more Acharyas and more Anandalayas.

From the discussion with the VK OSP, I learnt that they are planning a workshop to understand the tribal ways of life and a proof of concept project to provide wells to solve water problems. I could see effect of education and the Acharyas leading the various projects to solve local problems. I could see their enthusiasm for participation in the local welfare and shaping of their own future. I could see the role of VK OSP, which is shaping the youth, who would otherwise be frustrated, angry, aimless and vulnerable to take wrong path (ex; these type of youths are the easy recruits for Naxalites).

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 who, despite their day-to-day professional and personal lives, are fully dedicated to this mission of uplifting the under privileged children. 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.google.com/u/1/share/AF1QipNOGQQ60hK-ob2-J2voiID8gFwDP6J8Evnz0qqWJvpcVRDH5n223lIZ8STIOpYYaw>

Thank you

Sanjukta Satapathy

Member, AFE, Danbury Chapter

sanjukta_satapathy@yahoo.com