

# Kolotan School; Site Visit Report from Sept 13, 2024

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## Background:

KOLOTAN, established on 2nd November 2018, is a charitable trust aiming at multifaceted social developments. Kolotan aspires for educational development in rural areas, want to spread environmental awareness, want to ensure the retention of indigenous culture, aims at child development, works towards skill development so that employment can be created for the independence of the economically challenged families. We aspire to build an educational, sympathetic, and democratic society.

Kolotan abide by the Tagorean philosophy of education where teaching is done primarily with the aid of music, dance, arts and crafts, drama, and recitation.

They strongly believe that these methods can ensure better retention and application of education. This approach also adds to the pupils' vocation for the future.

## Site Visit:

I visited Kolotan School on 13th September 2024 along with my childhood friend Anindya Sanyal. This was a surprise visit and my 4<sup>th</sup> visit to the school over the years. I called their Secretary Sujoy Sarkar from the door and he was pleasantly surprised to see me. He greeted us inside and first took me to a room where children from grades 5 and 6 were learning Tabla. They played some taals for us under the guidance of a able teacher. I was pleased to see that many girls learning table as well, which was a not a common practice even a few years back in Bengal. The whole environment in the room was very vibrant. The children were least perturbed by our presence. I liked their adaptability to a changing boundary.

As we visited late in the day, the teachers were finishing the classes and we dropped into a few class rooms. My experience was very similar to that of the last visits. Children were in a good mood, teachers were keenly connected to the students and had a hands on approach of teaching. Unlike traditional schools where the students sit like a rock and listen to the instructions, here I observed lot of movements to write, draw or present something. The classes were interactive indeed. The energy was palpable everywhere.

Later Sujoy took us to the pottery room and Tapas Das, the President of Kolotan was at the Spinning wheel. I was amazed to see that Tapas has become a pretty efficient potter and made many artifacts on his own. This spirit of learning not only among the students but also among the teachers and the Trustees is indeed notable.

Later Tapas and Sujoy took us to the staff room where we met other trustee members and pretty much all the teachers. I got the opportunity to talk with each of them. A local government schoolteacher was also in attendance who is a friend to one of the trustees. I asked him about his experience about Kolotan and he was all praises and said He wished he could teach kids in that manner in his school where he teaches.

All of Kolotan's teacher, teaching Bengali, English, Math, Science, Art, Music were very enthusiastic and involved with the kids. I could feel their passion and eagerness to do something differently.

Overall, it was a rewarding experience. I also asked the trustee about the operational cost and their future plans. They mentioned that they are challenged to keep up and profusely thanked Asha for their help and looking forward for their continued assistance.

They also shared their plan to build a schoolhouse of their own. They are working with a local architect, Laurent Fournier, who is famous for building environmentally sustainable houses made of locally procured bamboo, mud etc and minimal steel. They have also connected with a German Non-Profit called Social Architecture for possible funding.

I think it is completely worthwhile for Asha to continue to help Kolotan to progress their mission.













