

VISIT TO KUVEMPU PROJECT, MAY 11-12, 2019

During this trip I visited different activities of Kuvempu as described below:

EDUCATION GRANT

This is a highly successful endeavor as it is providing a path to higher education and gainful employment for many former students of the Vidya Kendras, which typically provide support until the 7th class. Here are some notes regarding the students I met:

Guru Prasad, B. Tech 3rd year

He attended Ramenahalli Vidya Kendra from class 3 to 7. Thereafter, he attended SLNR High School at HD Pura until 10th class and Govt. Boys Jr. College at Chitradurga for 11th and 12th class. His parents are farmers and he dropped off for a year in Jr. College after failing in Physics subject. He was an education grant beneficiary through the years and upon encouragement from Dr. Geetha, had rejoined. Eventually, he obtained a Govt. College seat to join Mechanical Engineering at Chitradurga. He received a Rs. 45,000 scholarship from the State Government with the Kuvempu organization supporting his books, fees, and mess bill (~ 15,000/year).

In Engineering, he has consistently scored 60% or higher. He aims to join Forest Service upon graduation.

Sridevi, 2nd year GNM (General Nursing Midwifery)

Sridevi was a long time Vidya Kendra student having attended 1-7th class at the Nagarhatta center and thereafter benefiting via the Education Grant program. Incidentally later that day, she was to be felicitated by her college for having topped the batch the previous year (73%). She is supported by a single mother who works as a school cook. It was really a pleasing sight to see the pride in her mother having pursued her education through many hardships. Sridevi aims to be a Staff Nurse after completing her degree.

PUC graduates: Priya, Sahana, Pushpa, Nayana, Megha, Ranjitha

Priya passed the 10th class securing 92% overall marks and is the topper at Chitrahalli High School. She is a VK student from the 1st class at Eachgatta center. Her parents are farmers but due to no rains in the recent past, have to work as daily wage laborers. She wants to pursue science in Jr. College.

Priya is part of a group of six students that studied together since 9th class. Their approach paid off really well. They used to get-together at a house in their neighborhood (Sahana's grandmother's) and spend typically 3 hours in a session covering six subjects. The results were really unheard of in the locality: Sahana (91.2%, Pushpa 67%, Nayana 87%, Megha 87%, Ranjitha 87%). Pushpa, who scored the least, was considered a weak student prior to the group study activity and her performance improved significantly in the end. All, apart from Megha (who belongs to SC/ST) are from general category for admissions.

I visited the Eachgatta village and homes of each of the students. Some of them come from really humble background. Ranjitha, is raised by her mother (a single parent) and grandmother. Her home has

three small rooms, with the first serving as a cow shed, second a living and sleeping room and the third a kitchen.

Megha is also raised by a single parent (mother). She was hesitant in sending her daughter out of town for higher education. After some motivation and discussion with other students joining her daughter, she agreed to send her to Jr. College out of town.

Sahana is relatively well off in the group. However, she is engaged at the age of 16 to be married to her mother's brother, possibly marrying when she will turn 18. Her mother is against sending her out of town to Chitradurga for higher education.

Priya's parents are in full support for her future studies.

Radha K, 1st year BA

Radha was 10 years at the Vidya Kendras. She was married when she was in the 10th class. She fought with her parents to pursue her studies after marriage. Dr. Geetha was instrumental in convincing her parents as well. Radha wants to stand on her own feet. Was in correspondence courses for the last three years and wants to attend live classes now. She has four other siblings who did not pursue higher education. She did well in school, having achieved 79% in 10th class and achieved 65% in first year BA despite a lot of opposition at home. Her husband is very tough and stubborn, yet she persists and eventually wants to pursue a B.Ed. degree.

Pavithra, 10th Class

Pavithra attained 88% in 10th class. She was with the Tekalavatti Vidya Kendra for five years and completed High School from the same village. She wishes to pursue Arts (History, Economics) and wants to become a teacher.

Jyothi, 12th Class

Jyothi did well in 10th grade and obtained 84%. She joined Commerce branch, which wasn't a good fit based on her interest – she wants to pursue Nursing. Her parents will not support and she is seeking support from the organization to convince them.

Sangeetha, 11th Class

Breaking down, Sangeetha describes a family problem. Her father is a card player and gambler and ends up losing a lot of money. Her mother is working as a laborer. They are three siblings (all girls). Her elder sister is married and the husband is a drunk. She obtained 74% in 10th class and joined HD Pura Govt. Jr. College, which according to Dr. Geetha, is not of good quality. She would have instead suggested SLN College which is Govt. aided but private. She has a problem of having to reimburse tuition fees without receipt which the Jr. College is not cooperating in providing.

Darshan, 4th year B. Tech

Darshan is finishing final project in his 4th year of Mechanical Engineering. His father is a auto rickshaw driver and comes from a very poor background. Is extremely thankful to Kuvempu organization for supporting him through College. He wants to pursue Computer Aided Design, preferable in the Automobile industry. Darshan also serves as a part-time teacher at one of the Vidya Kendras when his College schedule permits.

Raghu 11th Class

Raghu is deaf and dumb and an excellent student. He secured 94% in both 10th and 11th class.

A sample from six teacher of the Vidya Kendra showed a history of 26 students from the activity are employed.

VIDYA KENDRAS

I visited three Vidya Kendras to sample how the evening school activities are progressing. There are 13 Vidya Kendras in operation at present. The first is at the Nagarhatta village. Long time teacher Nagarajappa, and a newer teacher Linga Raju are in-charge. The VK meets at the village Samudaya Center building. It is a single big room in good condition. There was no electricity on the day so it was held in candle light. There are plans to add solar lights to the room in the near future – moving from the Shivaganga I center (Devendrappa teacher) which was closed due to Devendrappa dropping out to pursue other means of income. I met two special needs students, brother and sister, who are not able to pick up basic literacy after several years. Otherwise, the students are able to read from books and answer general questions as in my past visits.

The second center I visited was at Sondekola village. 30 of 45 students at the center were present. I talked to Chetana a 7th class student who completed seven years at the Vidya Kendra. He said English is his favorite subject but needed translation and was very shy to respond. Despite that, he was the topper in his class and aspires to become an engineer. He is raised by a single parent and has a another brother at the center.

Apoorva, a 1st class student told the story about the crow and water in a pot very nicely and confidently. It was a pleasure to hear the confidence. Another 7th class student, Kriran Kumari was asked to summarize the story but was very shy.

Lighting is needed in school premises. We have a solar set available but need to check with the School management to install it.

The third center visited was at Hulluru village. Subith and Suma are the teachers. Sasikala, a 12th class student, was also helping at the center. I talked to Pallavi, a 5th class student. She wants to become a doctor. I was told she does her tests in no time. She sovled a division problem, read shapes related chart and explained the meaning, and read from a Kannada text that she never saw before.

Sasikala, the supporting teacher, is a good student, having scored 85% in 10th class and 77% in 12th class. She wasn't sot do a banking exam. Father is an auto rickshaw driver. She is joining B.Com at the Govt. College at Chrित्रadurga.

STAFF MEETING

The following day we had a full staff meeting, which is a monthly activity. The meeting began with an agenda and followed by a prayer.

We discussed following topics:

- Goals of Asha's partnership with Kuvempu project: Zero dropouts; Value to student in reading, writing, and basic mathematics by the 5th class; encourage students to pursue high school, college, and eventually gain employment.
- Budget summary for 2019-20 and the potential opportunity for teachers to increase salary based on performance of the students.
- Future enhancements to quality of teaching: Teacher training, Library, which prompted a discussion of the need for space for the books and building. A minimum of Rs. 15 lakhs is required for the building. Minimum to start is between 5-8 lakhs.
- Computer based learning such as IXL used in the US. Will need to check compatibility for Android operating system for teachers to access the topics first and then teach the students.
- Talked about the personal financial needs of some of the teachers.
- Migrant Laborer school: The center at Chitrahalli was running well for nearly 10 years in association with the Chitrahalli High School. Due to the good teachers there, the migrant laborer children are eventually able to join mainstream classes appropriate for their learning level. Several have completed high school and now are in college.
- There was agreement to move to a new area for supporting similar migrant laborers. Lokesh Naik, the main teacher assigned to support the Chitrahalli migrant laborer community, accepted this proposal. This could be motivational work or community organization.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Sixteen of the 20 students from the tailoring batch were present. Additional students are expected to join after June 1st. Four degree seeking students (B.A.) are in the class. Eleven machines, with three electric powered, are being used for instruction.

- Some students stated that they don't want to waste holidays and instead want to learn an activity. Others are there for potentially making income after graduation.
- Many are like Deepa, who is one of four sisters in a family that wants to support the family economically.
- Three already have a small business. One of them is seeking to refresh skills – design on dress and blouse. Two of the three earn around Rs. 2000-3000/month.
- Addition of embroidery training by Jayamma is very useful
- An example of a design learnt in one week was presented – it was an “umbrella” skirt and blouse for kids.
- Regular training is stitching Nighty and simple blouse.
- The center charges a nominal fee: Rs. 250 for the 3-month training session. Students get their own cloth. For comparison, the charge is Rs. 1000 at Holalkere and Rs. 3000 at Chitradurga.
- There was a suggestion to start a garment business in Kuvempu's name.
- During rainy season, the roof leaks and the place is not usable
- Mangalagowri is one of the teachers and also a Vidya Kendra teacher. We would like to send her for skills development but her family will not agree.
- Jayamma, who teaches embroidery and bag-making, is handicapped and can't really go out to a training class. She has her own business at home and makes Rs. 4,000-5,000/month.



Guru Prasad, 3rd year B. Tech and Dr. Geetha Devi, Coordinator, Kuvempu Trust



Sridevi, 2nd year GNM. Topper in the college, with her mother



Priya, who scored 92% in the 10th exam



These are the students in the Eachgatta study group that all excelled in 10th class public exam



Radha, 1st year BA, who despite being married in the 10th class, is carrying on with her education



Education grant beneficiaries



Teachers at the Vidya Kendras with the education grant beneficiaries



New building (a single room) built by the Govt.





Bad condition of the tailoring center roof makes it impossible to conduct classes when it rains.

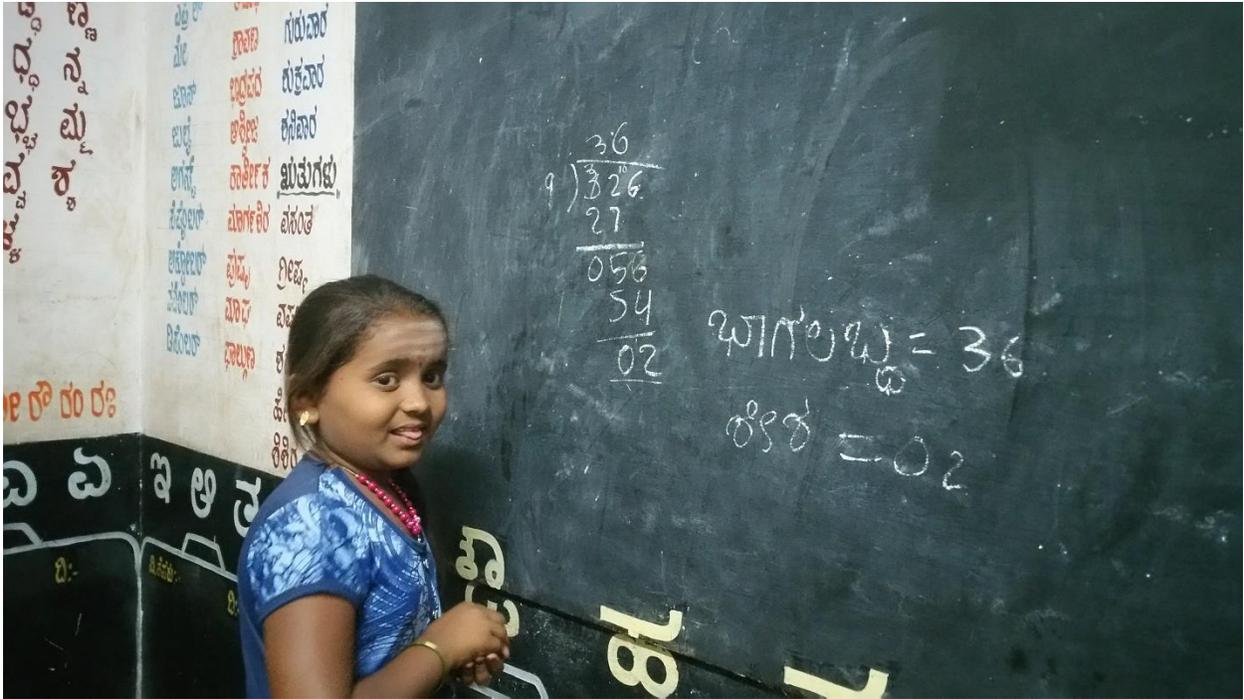


Darshan, 4th year B.E., Mechanical Engineering



Nagarhatta Vidya Kendra





Hulluru Vidya Kendra



Water Harvesting in one of the farm lands



Staff meeting



Tailoring center, Shivaganga









Sahana in front of her home



Room where the group study took place



Nayana in front of her home







Priya in front of her home, with parents



Megha in front of her home





Rangamma, Eachgatta Vidya Kendra teacher