Vigyan Ashram 2015 site visit report

Date: - 18th October 2015
Volunteers: - Shailesh Valvaikar and Srihari Suthamally
Vigyan Ashram: - Vishal, Ranjeet and others

The presence of students in different colour jackets welcomes you into the Ashram. Every student is busy doing one or the other activity.

First we met up with Vishal and Ranjeet in the newly laid out office that is adjacent to the kitchen and TV room.

Vishal showed us the new rain water harvesting tank that is below the dining area. This tank can hold upto 40 kilo liters which will be sufficient for around 1.5 months. 1 kilo litre is the daily usage.

Next we went to a piece of rocky terrain where the students are trying out a new method of cultivation called as the pit cultivation. For each plant a pit is dug up, filled with the black soil, manures, vermi-compost and other nutrients and seed is sown. The pit is covered with mulching paper that will keep the moisture intact. The students are trying pumpkin, ridge guard and bitter guard veggies in these pits with different results. This kind of cultivation is especially useful for farmers who have rocky lands. As the plans grow it slowly makes the remaining area cultivable.

Then we went into the new kitchen where the new Chula is laid down which apparently has increased the efficiency of energy consumption. They have even published a report which I will try to get my hands on.

The newly laid Chula used 7 kg wood for making breakfast, daal, rice and one baaji. The one problem we saw is that the outlet is closer to the work area which may cause respiratory problems. Vishal said that they are working on a solution to resolve the issue.

Vishal said that the kitchen rcc work is done by the alumini with the help of students. The contract is laid in such a way that students will indeed be a part of the construction process

The kitchen contains a notice board which clearly mentions who all are going to eat and how much they are going to eat so that the kitchen staff is aware of how much to prepare. If somebody does not show up they have to pay a fine.

Then we were shown a new water filtration system which was designed internally since most of the out of the box solutions contained a RO system. The maintenance of this system is handled by the students and periodic checks are done to test the hardness of the water.

Next we were shown a rope washer pump system which is currently getting trained in rural areas. It works in wells which are 25ft depth and pumps around 1lt per sec. The system works using the vacuum created between the two washers. The durability of the washers have to be tested in the real wells since the water quality may differ.

Next we went to the workshop where students were working on the lathe machines, rice chaff machines etc. This time we saw students wearing shoes for better precaution as well as protective glasses. Still the workshop can remove some of the clutter, probably it is as per design.

Then we made rounds of the animal husbandry side as well home and health classrooms.
From there we went to the office room where they have also started an entrepreneurship cell. In this cell they facilitate alumni’s to get seed funds through sites like Rang De. They help them in creating project plans, reports etc.

Here are some pictures taken during the trip

New office
Pit cultivation with mulching paper
New dining area
New cooking chula
The chimney
Filtration system
The washer pump. See the knots
Rice husk machine
Now separated, the husk is used as fodder
3d printer machine
Some prototypes printed
Students working
Flowers ready for the festive season
Newly build kitchen. On the top they are planning a 2k training area with displays
Solar panel which they are planning to reengineer. Serves 12 TL.