Vidhyodaya School Visit

July 1, 2025

The Vidyodaya School comes under an umbrella along with two other entities, all serving the Tribal communities of the Gudulur area.

Along with this school, there is the ASHWINI Tribal Hospital & Nursing Training Centre as well as the Just Change India. The Tribal Hospital, setup in 1988, serves as the principal multi speciality hospital, primarily for Tribal communities but now open to the general public as well. It covers disciplines such as Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Orthopaedic, General Medicine, ENT & Dental along with Labs and special programs for Sickle Cell Anaemia and TB Vaccinations.



The Just Change India initiative is an attempt to bring direct sourced forest and farmed Tribal produce to the market through Fair trade practices. Presently the initiative is focusing on locally grown Coffee, Pepper (both wild and farmed) and Wild Bee Honey. A website with e-commerce is presently underway with other sources of marketing being explored.



The Vidhyodaya School itself presently serves kindergarten through grade 5 for Tribal children. These children essentially come from the tribal communities in a fifteen (15)-kilometre radius of the school. Nearly a dozen jeeps ferry these children to and from the school on a daily basis on school days. Given the challenges of terrain, viz. narrow dirt roads, forested terrain and forest stream crossings, attendance during the monsoon months from April through July remains erratic for many children, despite transportation being facilitated by these Jeeps.





The present school strength is about 120 pupils, but they usually see a consistent 90 to 98 children during these monsoon months. Post this period, attendance is apparently very good as children seem comfortable and happy in this school environment and the structure of learning.



What I observed is that whilst they follow a mix of a teaching curriculum set by them as well as what is prescribed by the State Government, teaching is carried out in a very informal environment and is multi-lingual for the benefit of differently abled learning groups of children within. Most, if not all, teachers spend time on the floor seated amidst the children irrespective of the subject matter. The Mathematics Teacher mentioned that she has many children of different abilities in her class as some tribal children come from second generation educated tribals whilst some come from homes that aren't and hence cannot offer any support to their children outside of the school. Hence she handles mathematics in clusters of varying abilities for them.

Reading seems highly encouraged and the school has a very decent library and collection of books with a lot of books focussed on rural themes, tribal cultures and customs as well as a good mix of other educational and fictional content.

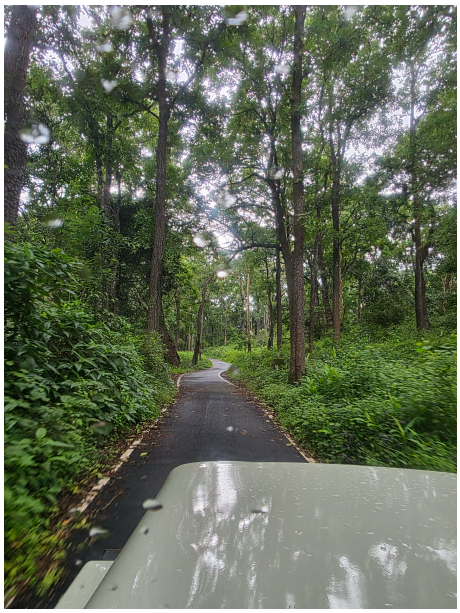
The lower classes, viz. kindergarten (both levels of lower and upper kindergarten) seem to have a good focus on cognitive and motor skills development as I noticed structured time given and spent on blocks play, etc.

All children are offered a mid-morning snack around 10 am after the first class of the day with a supplement of fruit during the non-monsoon months. All Children bring their own packed lunches from home and eat together in a common hall.









Mr. Ramdas, the school Trustee, mentioned about their plans of two-fold expansion over three construction phases. One is to shift the entire school block





and expand the number of classes from the present Grade 5 through to Grade 10. The other is to setup a residential block for children who are keen to be boarded as they potentially live upto fifty-kilometres away, often in inhospitable and wild terrain, making daily commuting impossible.



We visited this proposed site and I met with the Architect who is working with them on the layout, plans and ultimately the building and commissioning phase of this project. In terms of timelines, they expect to begin sometime late in 2025 and be ready with the entire School Block by the end of 2027. The residential block is only expected to commence post the commissioning of the school block. From what I understood, they are still in the process of gathering the requisite funding to break ground and complete phase 1.

