

I visited Nishtha on 3rd July, 2006. It was a sort of surprise visit. On the day of the visit, I called Mina Das and told that I would be visiting them around noon. I was there for two hours. I took a train and then a rickshaw to reach their main office. I talked to the rickshaw-puller and it was obvious to me that local people have a very good impression of this organization.



Social workers at Nishtha

I met Mina Das at the main office. There she briefly told me about various projects undertaken by Nishtha. Then I went to see the night shelter for sex workers' children. The objective of Nishtha is to make the children of sex workers well equipped with knowledge, information, training and education. They try to retain the children of sex workers in this school, distribute educational materials and conduct sensitization meetings for local people, government school authorities and other stakeholders. I was told about a girl who is very brilliant and Mina Das was trying hard to put her into a good school of Kolkata (Loretto).

Conventional teaching techniques do not work for these specially disadvantaged children. They lose their innocence and are faced with harsh realities very early in life. It is important to bring them to a night shelter where they can stay away from the clients who come to the sex-workers. Nishtha provides some food to the kids in the evening, so that the children have some sort of incentive to spend the night there. The students were asked to come to the school on the day of my visit around 1 pm, so that I could interact with them. I have taken some photographs of the kids and behind them, the beds can be seen in the picture.

Education is imparted through songs, dances, play acting, games and various other cultural activities. Teaching and learning materials suitable for such education are designed and developed by Nishtha and teachers are provided with special training to use these materials and interact appropriately with these children. Counseling and therapy are included in the teachers' training. I met one of the teachers and the kids performed some songs and dances which I have captured in my camera.

After meeting the kids, I met some of the sex-workers and they told me how Nishtha made significant changes in their lives. For political reasons, it is difficult for them to get the ration cards, as well as some other documents certifying that they are below poverty line. Nishtha is working with local government employees to solve this problem.







