

# Report on the Site Visit to Mukti Coaching Centres

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I, Sabyasachi Das, made a site visit to the Mukti Coaching Centres near Raidighi, West Bengal on 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2011. I was accompanied by Mr. Debabrata Halder from Mukti, and Mr. Anjan Ganguli, President of Mukti, Qatar. In the paragraphs that follow I detail the experience and issues that came up during the visit.

Raidighi is a small town located around 110 km away from the city of Kolkata. The Mukti Coaching Centres are located in Konkondighi and Nagendrapur Gram Panchayats near the Raidighi town. There are 8 such Coaching Centres where underprivileged students are given coaching on primarily English and Mathematics from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. on weekdays, before their normal school hour begins. We visited two of these coaching centres on the day of our visit. All along our visits to different centres the head coordinator of all the centres, Mr. Subimal Guriya, accompanied us.

The first Coaching Centre we visited is the Konkondighi Babujan Sephi Coaching Centre. Mukti has two coaching centres merged together in this one, with close to 300 students. It is housed in a High School in that area. We visited individual classrooms and met the students. The students spoke about how helpful the Coaching Centre has been for their learning. They also talked about the need to put some focus on other subjects such as Physical Science and Life Science along with English and Math.

We then moved to the second Coaching Centre, called the Jata Jogendrapur Coaching Centre which has approximately 130 students. We met the students here as well and they also seemed to be in favor of the idea of having Science subjects coaching along with English and Math.

We then had a meeting with the teachers and the coordinators of the Coaching Centres where we discussed different issues and problems faced by the teachers and the Coaching Centre in general. The most important issue that came out in the discussion is the problem of not having Mukti's own land on which they could build their own coaching centres, and as a consequence they have to house the centres in other school premises which leads to different problems (the school administration complaining about property damage by the centres' students, or school toilets being in very bad conditions and the Mukti's inability of repairing it as it is a school property etc). So the primary demand of Mukti, as was expressed in the meeting, is to help them get some pieces of land where they could start and operate the coaching centres on their own, and not be answerable to some other school

authority. The coaching centre coordinators mentioned three main centres for which land can be purchased as a start. These centres are Konkondighi Babujan Sephai, Jata Jogendrapur and Eat Sridharpur. Incidentally it was mentioned that approximately 3 bigha of land has been donated by a local villager for a coaching centre in Doctor's Heri.

Another demand that came out in the meeting from the teachers was that there is need for resuming the teacher training for better and more efficient teaching for them. It was proposed that one teacher or professor from Kolkata could be asked to come down to one of the Coaching Centres and he or she could give some training for a day or two to the Coaching Centre teachers and this way the teachers in the coaching centres can be more efficient in their techniques. There was also the demand for few more books for reference purposes so that the teachers can get better perspectives on the subjects apart from what's available from the textbook itself. Mr. Ganguli of Mukti, Qatar though promised that this would be taken care of by them.

After the meeting with the teachers we visited the Nagendrapur High School where we met students who are getting books from the book bank. The students talked about how the book bank is helping them in terms of saving the money every year of buying textbooks. The appeal from Mukti's side to Asha was that even though the Book Bank funding was raised after Cyclone Aila devastation, which happened in 2009, the level of contribution should be maintained as the families have still not recovered from the devastation and removing the help in terms of free textbooks to the school going boys and girls of those affected families would not be desirable.

The next visit was to the Mukti building where we first had the parents meeting. They mostly expressed satisfaction with the help received by their children from Mukti. A lot of them were asking for further help in terms of providing resources for their children to carry on with their higher education, which needs to be dealt with in a case-by-case basis, something that Mr. Ganguli, President of Mukti, Qatar, assured that they would take up and hence is not a primary concern that Asha may engage in now.

After that we had a brief discussion with teachers of other Coaching Centres who were there. The primary concern expressed by them was again the problem of doing the classes in some other school and they also urged us to help Mukti get plots of land to build Mukti's own centres.

All in all it was a very successful visit which helped me as an Asha member to understand and appreciate the work Mukti is doing with regard to its Coaching Centre program, and also made me aware of the day to day problems faced by those involved with it. I have tried to express some of the concerns and issues that were raised by the stakeholders during the visit and hope that this report would push us towards a better resolution of them.