I visited JBV$\text{-MLP}$ project on April 3rd, 2013 (Wednesday). I had contacted Vijaya Didi a day before and she picked me up at IIT Kanpur gate. We visited 4 centres. Along the way to our first centre, Vijaya Didi gave me a brief background on Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti and its origin in IITK campus, along with the projects run by JBV$\text{-MLP}$ and Swami Vivekanand Vidyalaya at Lodhar.

MLP is primarily focused on children of migrant labours in brick kiln factories around Kanpur. MLP runs centres at different brick kiln factories named “Apna Skool”. Our first visit was to “Apna Skool” at Tatyaganj. This centre is also the location for a hostel being built to accommodate 100 students. The first phase of the hostel (50 students) is scheduled to be operational by July/August. (This hostel has been inaugurated in June). The funding for this hostel has been primarily through Mala Foundation. At Tatyaganj, 17 students were present. Some of the students go to nearby Adarsh Vidyalaya and come to centre after school. Students were divided into 2 groups. Students also showed me some of their science projects based on magnetism and water pressure. Small children were taken outside for play.

After Tatyaganj centre and a visit of the upcoming hostel building, we left for Kalra centre. About 30 students were present at this centre. The centre is housed housed in a mud-brick house with very poor lighting. Students showed me their science project works similar to the other centre and also some crafts work. Student played a game of counting numbers and also recited poems.

After Kalra centre, our next stop was Saran brick field centre. There was water-logging problem at the door of the mud-brick building in which centre is run and children have made a brick passage through the water. Some of the water has also gone inside the room. Children played games, reciting poems and stories. Students also showed me their science project works including a rocket made of balloon. It was time for lunch and children gathered their plates to go for lunch in a nearby building (a mud-brick enclosure). Lunch was rice and curry made of potatoes, and other seasonal vegetables. Usually a different assortment of vegetables is cooked together everyday. 18 students were present at this centre.

Our last stop was Panki Padav centre, which is slightly far and on the other side of IITK campus. On the way to this centre we also stopped at a computer centre, where older students of different centres come to learn basic computer skills. Panki Padav centre caters to the children of rag-picking community. Children also usually go for rag picking and come to centre afterwards. Some of the elder children go to govt. school nearby, some of the younger children also go to school. This rag-picking community has no legal standing.
without proper identification documents and face several problems. Sometime their huts have been demolished, but they soon come back. Due to hot weather children were not going for rag-picking these days. Children performed a skit and dance. The community is mainly Asamese migrants. About 20 students were present.

On the way back to IITK campus I had discussions with Vijaya didi about teachers training and retention. She told me that teachers get training through Eklavya training for teachers on rotation basis. Teacher-retention is a problem. Some of the old teachers have continued with centre for a long time. Some of the new teachers leave after 1-2 years (for the reasons of marriage etc.) and a few come back.

Overall, my impression of the students was very positive. They were confident and forward (not shy) with a bit of natural leaning towards more play and less learning. However, centres approach towards learning through games, poems, songs and dances is good to retain students’ attention. Some of the children who leave continue some sort of education in their native places. Most of them come back with their migrant parents and continue at the centre. In this are the new hostel would be very helpful for older students to continue their studies. Teachers were engaging in class and knew all students by their names. I feel the Apna-Skool and Apna-Ghar (hostel) are filling in some capacity a very big void in the lives of these children. According to labour laws, brick kiln owners are required to provide crèche and schooling facilities for the children of labours at their site, the labour commissioner can only request them to follow law. Though a better impact can be made by engaging district administration and labour commissioner, through administrative channels, the project people after several years of trying seemed to resigned to the fact that they can help in whatever they can through these centres.

Some pictures from my visit:
Hostel Building (Apna Ghar)
Saran Brick Field Centre
Panki Padav Centre