

Site Visit Report: **Kalyania**

Kalyani, District Nadia, West Bengal

Project URL: <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=896>

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I went on a site visit to Kalyania twice – the first day Dr. Partha Dhar took me there. However it was the end of the exam week and the students had gone home after writing their exam. So it was arranged that I go back for a second time the next Monday.

I met with Dr. Chaturvedi first and then the headmistress of the school. The headmistress introduced me to the school teachers. Talking to them, it was easy to see that they were very serious about their jobs, that they were dedicated about it and that they fully understood the importance of what they did. The teachers were all qualified, some with many years of teaching experience.



They showed me around the school and classrooms. I talked to some of the students while in class. Their grasp of the lesson being taught was good, as was their ability to speak clearly and succinctly in front of everyone, though some of the students were shy. They were clean and tidily dressed in the uniforms provided by the school. The school has started Std. VI this year and already had 3 students in it. The school aims to prepare the students so that they are able to pass the entrance exam in government schools to Std. V. The syllabus is prepared by a sub-committee overseeing education.



Dr. Charurvedi showed me the kitchen and arrangements for the midday tiffin that is given to all the students.



Dr. Chaturvedi himself supervises the cooking. The groceries are bought and the actual cooking is done by two helpers. This is also one of the areas where the parents of the students play an active role in the education and care of their children. They help in cleaning and cutting the vegetable, and cleaning the kitchen. The thought is that if the parents see how much the school is benefiting their children, they will encourage their children to come to school. This morning's tiffin was khichidi. Dr. Chaturvedi gave me some – it was nourishing, full of vegetables and very tasty. Dr. Chaturvedi is a very good cook.

Another area where the parents actively participate in the school is in the maintenance of the grounds in front of the school. In quite a remarkable achievement, Kalyania has come to an agreement with the Kalyani Municipality that the small park in front of the school could be used by the school as long as the school took responsibility for its maintenance. The parents regularly come and clean the grounds in a schedule made up and maintained by the school headmistress. They are very happy to help as much as they can with their children's education.



Parents bring their children to school in the morning usually on cycles or by foot from the town and its surrounding slums.



Morning at school starts with assembly under the big banyan tree in the middle of the playground in front of the school. The children line up by class and after singing the national anthem, are instructed in some basic yoga by the PT teacher.





Every Saturday, Kalyania has arranged art classes for their students. The students spend 2-3 hours under the banyan tree drawing from the environment around them. Every class, the two art teachers chalk out a drawing for the smaller kids and one for the older kids. The students reproduce these drawing to the best of their ability. I was amazed to see the talent that some of the students showed, even at the early age of 8-11 years.





Speaking to the students, their joy in the drawing classes was clear. The very impressive improvement that many students showed from their first attempts at drawing, showed the success of these classes.

Another program being started by Kalyania is the annual medical checkup of each student and his/her family. It is an enormous undertaking as one can imagine all the many illnesses that children can and do fall prey to as they play, but also as a consequence of the disadvantaged homes that they come from.

Budget and Future Funding:

From the activities and classes and their success, the dedication and the knowledge and experience being called upon by the teachers was very clear. The contributions of personal property, money, expertise and time that various members of Kalyania have made can only be called inspiring. However, the one problem that clearly arises is that need for outside assistance for the continuation of the program. Dr. Sen gave me the interim budget that had been drawn up to show the allocation of funds. I have attached the budget reports that Dr. Sen gave me.

- Dr. Sen discussed some areas which Kalyania feels require urgent attention:
1. Pay Raise : Rs. 100 per teacher : The teachers are paid a very low salary relative to the local payscale. Despite that they do a very good job, though some of them depend on the salary for their livelihood. A small pay increase is important to be able to retain the staff and to improve the morale of the teachers.
 2. Park Improvement- The grounds in front of the school are open to stray animals and anti-social elements in the town. A fence around the park is required to keep the park clean and cared for.
 3. Semi-covered roof for the prayer etc.- The banyan tree in the small park in front of the school is used for Physical Education and morning assembly. However in the case of rain or other inclement weather, it cannot be used. This becomes a big problem especially during the monsoon and summer months. It is essential that the school provides a covered area where assembly and other activities can take place even when the weather is bad. The roof of the school is large enough to accommodate the students and staff of the school, and can provide a suitable area if covered.
 4. Enlargement of computer facilities – Kalyania provides classes in basic computer skills for children from the slums surrounding the town. However, due to the small number of computers available, only a small number of students can be accommodated. If a few more machines could be obtained, a larger number of students can be trained.

My conversations with the members of Kalyania especially Dr.Dhar, Dr.Chaturvedi and Dr. Sen and my visit to the Old Age home and the Dispensary that is also run by Kalyania were very convincing of the efficiency and dedication. I am sure that any effort by them will prove to be as much a success as possible. I hope that ASHA will be able to continue this stupendous effort.

Some more Photographs (provided by Dr. Sen) –



Inauguration of Computer Center



Students on for Independence Day Celebrations



Dance Performance for Independence Day



March Parade



NCC presentation of kits to students