

SITE VISIT REPORT

Date of visit Oct 2023

Organization visited: Adharshila- a shelter home for underprivileged tribal people from the tribal district of Chittorgarh.

Name of the person visiting- Nehal Bandi

Name of the organization represented- Ashsha home for underprivileged children in Gujarat.

Purpose of the visit:

- Meeting with the girls
- Meeting project team Mrs Suman Ji, teachers and other staff
- Experience and counsel on project health.

Name of the person met at the organization- Ms. Suman Chohan

Observations



1. The girls performed a small street play (Nukkad Natak, a street play genre devised by Jan Natya Manch etc. and popularized by Safdar Hasmhi et al) titled "Aurat." I am amazed at the quality of the dialogues and songs and the alacrity with which the street play was conducted. This team has been, deservedly, awarded for performing this play in the recent past.

2. About 9 students are preparing for the Government boards examination at grade-V/VI for admission into KGBV (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Avasiya Vidyalaya).

3. There are over 75 students pursuing their education in Nahargarh KGBV and other Government Senior Secondary schools who graduated from Aadharshila.



4. The school continues to operate in the new building that was constructed after the rented premise has to be vacated a few years back. This new building only has a tin roof that leaks at various spots during rains, besides indoors being a little dark for want of sunlight and limited supply of electricity.



5. The school seems to have supplies of books, notebooks, and basic stationery. The reading material and books seem unchanged from when I visited them last. The school follows the state syllabus along with an open curriculum influenced by eklavya foundation.

6. The students seem engaged, happy, and healthy. Overall sanitation habits and cleanliness has improved quite a bit, although, the girls do run around without their footwear ever so often. But, tribals, especially women, are rarely known to wear shoes, and these are culturally alien practice that will take time to inculcate.

Khaat Andolan led by Khemraj Choudhary over 30 years back was a social revolt against the regressive practices of the upper casts against the tribals of the region. The tribals and lower cast Dalits were not allowed to wear any footwear while passing the house of an upper-cast person. Instead they were (and in some parts still are) required to keep their footwear on their head while passing an upper-cast person. The Dalits and tribals agitated and symbolically carried their cots (Khaat) and sat in those cots in front of the house(s) or upper cast people of the community. This was a watershed moment in the history of Southern Rajasthan that not only galvanized the tribals and Dalits but also created a mass awareness of the prevalent regressive practices. I partly blame these cast afflicted practices to explain the habits that the tribals children exhibit.

7. The school hasn't really expanded in its methodology or scale and continues to work with the relatively small batch of girls, preparing and motivating them to get into middle school. This strategy of a bridge for first-generation learners has proven to be quite effective and is something that Aadharshila school under Suman Chouhan's able leadership is excelling at.

8. Back in 2007, every single girl child, as young as 7 years, who was enrolled into the school was married. In 2020, not even one girl of the 67 present is married. This is a remarkable achievement. This is an easily overlooked aspect of this school but taking child marriage was one of the intrinsic motivations of this experiment. I strongly feel that Suman Chouhan, and Khemraj Choudhary's tireless work for over a decade has played a pivotal role in reversing this trend of child marriage.

9. A large number of people and agencies continue to visit the school and offer donations of clothing, supplied for the children, and other forms of aid. Inspecting the visitors log suggests that a group of graduate students along with their professor from Karve Institute of Social Studies, University of Pune, visited the school and wrote admirably about the school and its work.

10. School can certainly benefit from an improved infrastructure, especially the roof and improving the lightning inside the main hall.