

1

Education

Literacy Mission

Our district was among those the Government of India had picked for an intensive adult literacy campaign in 1991-92. Many of our members participated at various levels in the programme in their respective areas. Niranim Paik at Uttar Kolsur was a much sought after master trainer, to train the volunteer teachers, at various centres locally and- in other panchayats. Prasanta Mandal of Fatullyapur was one of the main organizers in his panchayat, running campaigns, producing plays, monitoring and supervising the progress of the literacy mission in most of the schools in his area. Many other members of our youth groups acted as volunteer teachers.

Supplementary Schools

This year we decided to 'start a few supplementary schools for the children of illiterate (and they are usually very poor) parents who were already going to regular government-run primary schools. Our experience was that such children absorb very little from their schools and remain functionally illiterate even after finishing the full four-class course in primary schools. Many parents keep private tutors for their children in the circumstances, but our target group was one too poor to afford that.

Our idea in these supplementary schools was to use material aids and activities based on text books. We sent six teachers for training to Vikramshila, an organization in Calcutta with experience in training rural teachers in the Montessori method. The original training was in September- October 1991, followed by two refresher courses in December 1991 and January 1992. After the first training the teachers carried out a survey of families from which the students had been selected. Classes began in November 1991. Three more schools were opened soon, and at the end of March, 1992 the picture in the nine schools was as follows.

Place	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Others	Total
Bajitpur	8	3	2	6		19
Fatullyapur (Daspara)		5	3	2	10 (non school goers)	20
Fatullyapur (Daspara)			10	12		22
Fatullyapur						

2

(Raibanshipara)	12	8				20
Andharmanik (Kalakarpara)	3	6	5	2	2	18
					(Class V)	
Andharmanik (Kazipara)					24	
					(pre-primary)	
Uttar Kolsur	3	4	9	5		21
Chandalati	10	8	6			24
Kurulgachha	4	5	4	4.		17

Our teachers do make learning an interesting experience, but so far we have not been able to use too many innovative techniques, mainly because they take time to devise. We have finalised a programme that will involve a number of resource persons holding regular monthly workshop with our teachers to develop aids, plan experiments and other activities. In three years' time we should have a much more interesting and effective teaching programme which can be replicated in the regular government schools.

Along with the school curriculum we have already started some socio cultural extra-curricular activities for these children. Here we have a four-fold aim: first, entertainment, second, to realize the creative potential of these children (and may be, of the teachers, too); third, to provide a link with their 'heritage; and, finally, to instil a value system that transcends transient temptations. The activities we have is mini include music, dance, drama, sports and games, recitation, yoga anti bratachari, painting and some crafter.

On 25 and 26 January 1992 we held two sports meets, at Fatullyapur and Chandalati respectively, for the children in our supplementary schools in the clusters there. These were a great success. On both evenings the well-known group, Living Alternative Theatre, performed plays on contemporary themes to great popular acclaim.

There is some likelihood that we shall be starting four pre-primary schools on an experimental basis in the coming year.