

1

### 3. Education

As in health, here too we did little new or spectacular but instead concentrated on consolidating on the groundwork laid in the past years. We ran five pre-primary schools in five villages. Each had two teachers, and altogether there were 150 children, 80 of them girls. After their initial reservation the parents have now not only reconciled themselves to “bookless” learning for their 3-5-year-olds but are also demanding more such schools. Generally speaking primary schools in certain areas have said they found children from these schools of ours way ahead of those who join Class I straight from home.

Our coaching centres for primary school going children continue but we are not too happy with the progress of learning there. We ran five such schools this year in four villages, with five teachers and 100 students in all, among them 60 girls. One reason we persist with them is that the children come from families who will find it very difficult to pay for a private tutor, and for parents who are not equipped to help their children with studies, these tutors, of extremely dubious efficacy, are the only way to make up for the very poor quality of education doled out at the primary schools. Another reason is that we continue to provide our students with various extra-curricular facilities, and these too have a certain value for a growing mind.

Every month a day-long review meeting-cum-workshop is held at Andharmanik for the pre-primary teachers, the coaching centre teachers, and cultural workers of Swanirvar. Sometimes there are special workshops also. This year we held 18 such meeting with 289 participants. An innovation this year was to take all the pre-primary teachers to one school and have an on-the-job workshop. Five such workshops were held with altogether 56 participants.

In every village we hold regular meetings with guardians, mostly mothers. The agenda is not restricted to education. We want the guardians to be involved in their wards' well being as also in our work. Altogether 24 such meetings were held in five villages with 486 people attending.

Since both types of schools run on special lines it is necessary for the teachers to have refresher trainings regularly. There were three weeklong trainings for pre-primary teachers, with eight participants. Four coaching centre teachers attended a five-day course for primary teachers: There were four participants from Swanirvar at two educational leadership trainings. All these were in Calcutta.

There were regular theatre workshops for children. Three of these were held centrally at

2

Andharmanik, with 54 participants from all the villages. In three villages there were six-workshops for local children. Our children are in great demand when festival time comes. This year they were invited to perform on 16 occasions in nine villages,

Our yoga-bratachari-mass drill instructor held 43 trainings in four villages during the year. On 26 January there was a gathering of children from six villages at Andharmanik. They went around the village in procession and performed physical exercises at several places on the way.

We took children on day trips to extend their -horizons; 45 children from Fatullyapur went to a circus, and 22 from there and Bajitpur attended a day-long fun fair organized by CRY in Calcutta. There were two trips to the zoo and other places in Calcutta. In one there were 76 children from Andharmanik, Kolsur and Chandalati and in the second there were 80 children from Fatullyapur and Bajitpur.

Books worth almost Rs. 10,000 were bought for the children's library, and a considerable number of books and magazines were received as gifts: This year, the library was restricted to Andharmanik, but we shall soon divide the books among all the villages.

CRY (Child Relief and You), a Bombay-based organization, has borne a major part of the expenses of our educational work and Vikramshila has trained our teachers. Both have been of great help in other matters too and we express our grateful thanks to them.