

Ekal Abhiyan “ Ek Shikshak, Ek Vidyalaya”



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ABSTARCT

To have a feel of the impact of work done in the villages, Ekal welcomes all to witness the changes through personal visits. This is a unique concept to let the urban donor know what Ekal is doing for its rural counterparts in which villages. The visits help to empower villagers and create opportunity for bonding among the two sets of people. Our assurance is once someone is there, it is a feeling of being in a different world. This comes from the warmth of the people which leaves one spell bound.

KEYWORDS:- Ekal, Abhiyan, Ekal Vidyalayas, Ek Shikshak, Ek Vidyalaya

INTRODUCTION

The Ekal Abhiyan' Foundation (literally Foundation of Solo Schools) is a non-profit organization involved in education and village development in rural areas and tribal villages of India. It is the largest grassroots, non-government education initiative in India with presence in 51,717 villages providing free education to more than one million children. As the name suggests, the model of operation of the Foundation is a single-teacher based school, with the provision of "Ek Shikshak, Ek Vidyalaya" that means "one teacher for every school. The individual schools, known as Ekal Vidyalayas, have local teachers who teach in the regional language in various interesting ways using different modes like story-telling, folk dramas, and folk songs. The schools also impart moral education, health care education and organic farming techniques.

ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH

EVF is actively involved in fund-raising activities in several countries outside India, most notably the United States. The foundation's mission is to open 100,000 schools and eradicate illiteracy from rural and tribal India by 2015. A March 2003 report named *A Factual Response to the Hate Attack on the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF)* states that several authors, state governments and social organisations have praised EVF's role in bringing literacy and empowerment to millions of children in rural and tribal areas of India. EVF is associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The Ekal Vidyalaya schools were assisted by the NDA Government from 1999–2000 onwards. This was stopped in 2005 by the UPA Government when one of its committees reported irregularities and pursuit of anti-minority agenda in some schools. Critics of EVF have said that the schools pursue a Hindu-nationalist agenda and generate hatred towards minorities.

EVF is associated with the Hindu nationalist organisations Vishva Hindu Parishad, which is in turn a member of the Sangh Parivar, the family of organisations run by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). *A Factual Response to the Hate Attack on the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF)* points out that some who have been on the board of trustees of the foundation include B. K. Modi, the founder of ModiCorp, Justice P. N. Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of India; L. M. Singhvi, former High Commissioner for India in the United Kingdom; Abid Hussain, former Indian ambassador to the United States. The foundation was headed in the past by Subhash Chandra, the Chairman of Essel Group and the founder of Zee TV. Hema Malini, Indian actress and danseuse, has served as the global brand ambassador for the Ekal Vidyalaya movement.

INCEPTION

“If the poor child cannot come to education, education must go to the child.” This quote by Swami Vivekananda was what inspired the concept for the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation. The idea for Ekal was first conceived in the early 1980s by the late Dr. Rakesh Popli, a nuclear physics professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. He decided to leave this prestigious position to find a way to be of greater service to his country. Inspired by the words of Mahatma Gandhi and early Vivekananda workers, Popli travelled to rural areas in the Gumla District of the current state of Jharkhand in Eastern India. By working with other intellectuals also interested in transforming rural India, Popli concluded that the most effective method was through the betterment of their education. Due to the lack of accessible public government schools and pressing agricultural labor needs, the village children had very limited schooling options. Popli and his team pioneered the idea of the one-teacher school (OTC) in the Gumla District. Working with his wife, Mrs. Rama Popli, a primary education specialist, they developed the first syllabus for the Ekal school. They then began to travel within India to raise funds from interested donors in order to expand OTCs to other villages. In 1986, Dhanbad was struck with famine. Madanlal Agarwal, at the time the CEO of Coal India, generously funded 60 schools in this area, creating the first cluster of Ekal schools.

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation provides functional literacy to the children of the villages through single teacher schools called Ekal Vidyalayas. “Ekal Vidyalayas” are non-formal schools with a focus on providing basic literacy skills

with an emphasis on the 3 R's: Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. The curriculum consists of the following subjects: language, mathematics, general education/science, moral values/storytelling, healthcare, handicrafts, yoga and physical education.

HEALTHCARE EDUCATION

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation activities are extended to provide healthcare education to villagers. The most common diseases that are found in the villages are malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and skin diseases. The Ekal teacher collects data of the villagers, healthcare facilities, disease incidences and common health issues of the village. These are then reviewed by upper level management teams of the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, and a plan is designed to provide healthcare education, services and access to facilities to the village. The teacher is then trained to provide education and awareness in the following areas: personal hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, diseases such as malaria and diarrhea, and maternal and child care. The health care education and awareness activities are done through training camps, charts, healthcare awareness programs and health centers (Chikitsa Kendra) in the villages or at the block or district levels. The trained teacher provides several levels of education or awareness to the children, the villagers, and the housewives to take care of their own and their families' health. In many cases, the teacher takes an active role in leading the change towards cleaning up the village, constructing toilets, or creating other sanitation facilities. Depending on the requirement, the teacher is also trained as the primary health worker to serve the villagers in the time of need. In addition to the teacher, there is also a Village Health Worker who is responsible for the health care of the village. At the Project Area level there is a health worker that takes care of the training, and at the Central level, there is a "Central Healthcare Training Team."

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Through development education, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation's objective is to make villagers self-reliant and utilize local resources. The focus of the development education is to train the villagers on agricultural and natural resource management activities. Some of our projects include vermicompost, plantation, herbal and fruit bearing, water management, vegetable cultivation, and cattle care. This program also helps the villagers create self-help groups that aid in development activities.

- Economic Development Program training
- Role of NGOs

EMPOWERMENT EDUCATION

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation believes in empowering the people to establish "Gram Swaraj" or "Self Governance," as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi. To enable this, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation volunteers and executives try to provide information about local government functionary and awareness about the "Right to Information" Act to villagers. To enhance their participation in the governance, Ekal teachers emphasize the importance of voting to villagers. In many villages, the Ekal Foundation has been a catalyst to revive the Panchayat System of the village, or to make the system functional and effective towards the village development.

The impact on women empowerment has been a powerful side effect of our program. For girls in villages like Rampur in the Madhubani district in Bihar, female education was non-existent. Now women are even going on to college! The teachers and the workers are trained and become influencers in their villages. Over 70% of our teachers are women and thus we have nearly 41,000 women who are powerful influencers in their community

CHILD FOLLOW-UP

- By developing the interest for education among the parents and villagers
- By encouraging the children to go to the nearest govt. school
- By encouraging the village committee to start their own school (self sufficient)
- By the active involvement of the villagers through the village committees, pressure is created on The govt. schools to improve the management
- The schools are irregular and very little education is imparted. And even if education is Imparted, the non-formal method of teaching attracts the children to our schools
- Regular Competitions
- Special prize schemes to encourage - like Sidharth Prize Scheme in Jharkhand state
- Through schools run by "Vidya Bharati".

EKAL ABHIYAN J&K ORGANIZES MEETING OF BHAG CHANDERBHAGA

The two days half-yearly meeting of Ekal Abhiyan's Chanderbhaga Bhag was held at Bhartiya Vidya Mandir Bhaderwah. Prabhari Karyakarta Vibhag Surya Parkash was the chief guest on this occasion while Shri Shri 1008 Swami Divyanand Saraswati Mahamandleshwar was the guest of honour on this occasion. All the mission incharges (Abhiyan Pramukhs) of Bhaderwah, Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban along with the Aanchal and Sanch level volunteers and Smitti members were present in the meeting. Neeraj Thakur Sambhag Pramukh gave the details of aims and objectives of Ekal Abhiyan and also announced the future course of action in Jammu and Kashmir. He also exhorted the Bhag, Aanchal and Sanch Smittis to work with zest and dedication and ensure the implementation of various schemes aimed at creating awareness and welfare of people living in rural areas at grass root level.

FIRST ANNUAL EKAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2009 SUCCESSFULLY HELD IN ROCKVILLE, USA

The First Annual Ekal Youth Conference 2009 was held in conjunction with the Ekal Annual National Meeting at Rockville, MD from 19 - 20 September 2009. The conference theme was Bringing Tomorrow into Today's Choices and was focused on engaging the youth volunteers with newer ideas to strengthen Ekal Foundation's vision for village development, education, and civic empowerment. This is first time where the youth volunteers of Ekal had come together to share and discuss their work, ideas, and plans to enable Ekal activities with better prospects. There were more than 12 papers and presentations - including some very interesting ideas such as, how to implement web

based social networking tools for Ekal activities, and deploying a new slate in the schools for students to learn alphabets easily.

SRI M.K. SHUKLA NARRATES HIS EXPERIENCE OF DUBAI VISIT

The local Ekal committee utilized this opportunity to meet us. A full meeting of the committee was arranged in the office of the Chairman Sri Harshad Mehta. In a brief private meeting, Sri Mehta discussed about the work done by the Dubai centre. Later, we addressed the whole committee. The Secretary, Abhimanyu gave a brief about the activities and future plans. In the evening a meeting of the Indian community was arranged which was attended by a large number of people. I addressed them on the status of education in rural India and Asha gave an impassioned speech about the Ekal Movement and the contribution that Indians living abroad can make for empowering the Vanvasis through the Ekal's integrated education system and why it is necessary for them also. The audience heard us with rapt attention for over an hour and so touched were they that many from the audience offered support for the Ekal movement. Sri Harshad Mehta hosted a private dinner. Next day a lunch in meeting with selected people was organized by Sri Bharat bhai in India Club. Earlier we celebrated Rakshabandhan with the Indian fraternity in the labour area where Asha tied rakhi. We stayed with Sri Mittal. We got an affectionate welcome everywhere. The interaction in the meetings was very fruitful. It was a very pleasant experience of meeting our Ekal colleagues and other members of the Indian community.

CONTROVERSY AND CRITICISM

In 2005, a report prepared by an enquiry committee of the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development found that in some Ekal Vidyalaya schools the names of enrolled students had been copied from registers of government-run schools. The schools did not provide reading and learning material, and used funds to "generate hatred toward minorities, and condition the minds of children". The report said the FTS was "misusing these funds, and using the grants for creating disharmony amongst religious groups and creating a political cadre". In May 2005 the Indian government stopped grants to the schools based on this report. Quoting from the report in *The Milli Gazette*, Mukundan C. Menon noted that the English booklet used to teach second year students in Jharkhand omitted six letters of the alphabet. Menon said the reason was names of Hindu Gods beginning with these letters are not common.

AWARDS

- 2009. The 7th *Meri Dilli Award* (My Delhi Award) in the field of literacy by the NNS Media Group, conferred by Yoganand Shastri, the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.
- 2008–09. *Best NGO Award* for transparency and administration.
- 2007–08. *Utkrishtata Samman* (Highest Award) by Bharat Vikas Parishad (India Development Council), conferred by retired Indian judges "for excellent services towards empowerment of Vanvasis and villagers."

CONCLUSIONS

Education is “life-sustaining” because it offers structure, stability and hope for the future. Educational environments, formal and non-formal, are one of the most important social structures in young people’s lives. In the midst of loss and change, absence of learning and schooling intensifies the impact of conflict. Children in schools or safe spaces will have a safe place to go and thus will not leave the camp. This would thereby reduce the risk of abuse, harm and exploitation, violence, and neglect. Children in schools or child friendly safe spaces will have other young people and adults to talk to and share their experiences with. They will also have a chance to participate in recreational and creative activities through play, drawing, sports, story, song/music, dance and help them get their minds off of the trauma of the emergency.

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