

Report on reb Visit to Two Villages of Nawada Districts

Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti works for children's education and welfare. It runs some non-formal education centre for the children of migrant workers who come to Kanpur to work in Brick-kilns and construction sites. Almost all of them are totally illiterate. We aim to help them to become at least literate during their stay in Kanpur. But the main problem is that we remain in touch with such children only so far as they are in Kanpur. In this way they are able to study only for about 7 months (approximately from 15 November to 15 June). We were constantly thinking for the last couple of years of continuance of their education even when they return back to their native place. How this could be materialized, was the big question.

In the season that ended in June 2004, there were more than 60 children of Nawada district of Bihar who were working at brick-kilns in Chaubeypur and Mandhana block of Kanpur. We came in contact with Mr. Siddhartha of Niranjana Public Welfare School of Gaya. He promised to help us in our mission. So we decided to visit the two villages of Nawada from where majority of children came.

25th August 2004: Shri Laxmikant Shukla and I boarded in Mahabodhi Express in the night of 24th August 2004 and reached Gaya next morning. We straightway went to the village Bakrour (also known as Sujata Village) in Bodh Gaya where Shri Siddhartha had asked us to come. Siddhartha Ji is the Director of Niranjana Public Welfare Trust, which is running a school in the same village for the poor and needy children. The Japanese and other European country tourists who came in contact with Siddhartha Ji on their tour to Bodh Gaya support this school.

We found a British girl named Tony there in the school. She was volunteering for some days in the school. Siddhartha told me that very often foreigners come to volunteer here in the school. Tony works in a Non-government Organization in England. I had a long chat with her. She is really very enthusiastic. She had a good collection of exercises from Internet, which she had taken for the students of the school. But she was helpless, as students were not able to understand her English. I volunteered to translate some of the works in Hindi for the kids. She was not feeling good for the way the students were taught there and also in other schools where she had visited in her stay in India. I informed her in full detail the way of teaching in our schools in Kanpur. She

showed great interest in our interactive and new approach of teaching. She was very much impressed with our 'Learn through Fun' approach of teaching.

26th August 2004: In the morning at about 4.50 AM, we left by car for the two villages of Nawada districts. We had to take a car as we were told by the local persons that situation of Nawada is not good so far as law and order situation is concerned. So we must return back to Gaya before it was dark. We were five persons; Laxmikant Shukla and myself, two teachers of NPWS and a driver. We had requested Siddhartha Ji for sending someone to accompany us to our Nawada Trip. We felt it to be handy for us if a local person accompanies us.

It was 9.00 AM when we reached the village named Hathiyari (Po. Barinawa, Distt. Nawada). There were 28 children from this village who studied in our centre at Mera brick-kiln in Kanpur. All the children were found playing in the dust. None of them were going to the village school. We talked to their parents and the elder persons of the village regarding the education of their children. All of them felt that it would be in their favour if the children went to school. But they said that they were helpless, as children themselves did not go to the school. Five children were such whose names were enrolled in the school register, but they never went to the school. Most of the parents complained that teachers did not teach to the children as we were doing in Kanpur. They expected the same kind of quality and attention from the teachers as they had found in Kanpur. We said that it could not be made excuse for not going to school. Every child had to go to school at any cost. They realised what we were trying to make them understand. We asked the children to go back, take a bath, dress properly and then come back at the earliest. People there could not believe to see when those children came back quickly after having dressed quite neatly and hair properly combed.

In the meantime, a teacher of the primary school Mr.Surendra Paswan came to our meeting place. He was working as a Shikshamitra in the school. We discussed all the matter with him and requested him to help in the admission of these children. He seemed to be very cooperative. He said that he would do his best to ensure that these children should be able to continue their education.

We along with all the children (totaling 35 including some more children of the village) went to the school. School was not in good shape. One room was locked and the other

did not have any door. Walls were demanding repairing. There was no black paint in the blackboard. About 50 children were sitting in the open room when we reached. It was 10 O'clock. Mr. Paswan arrived shortly. We initiated talks with the children there. We had songs also. By that time we had prepared the list of children who did not have admission. Mr. Paswan told us that he did not have any right to take any new admission. It can be done only by the principal. It was 10.40 AM by that time. Prayer was held. There were in total 93 children including those who had come with us. After prayer all the children sat in the open room. The school was from class I to class V. All children sat in the same room. We remained there till 11.30, but head master did not come. Then we gave the list to Mr. Paswan and requested him to take admission. We also requested him that he being the resident of the same village should have a look at these children so that they should go school regularly. He promised to do his best for these children.

List of the children whom we took to school is given below;

1. Neetu	7. Sunita	13. Anu	19. Rusba	25. Vimli
2. Ajay	8. Rajkumar	14. Reeta	20. Sweta	26. Rekha
3. Manohar	9. Dukhani	15. Laso	21. Kranti	27. Uday
4. Rajababu	10. Chandan	16. Brijkumari	22. Runka	28. Anay
5. Shailender	11. Goori	17. Ranju	23. Kaari	
6. Santosh	12. Soni	18. Pinki	24. Rinku	

When we left that village it was 12.15 PM. We came back to Pakrivanwa and took some refreshments. From there we proceeded for another village named Tilari. It was about 25 kms away from Hathiyari. But the road was in a very bad shape. It was about 1.45 O'clock when we reached the village. We had to cover more than 2 kms on foot to reach the village. In the way we crossed through the primary school, but it was closed. We met with 18 children who had studied at the Kalra centre in Kanpur. All of them were found playing. We had a long chat with their parents and the elder persons of the village. Since school was closed we could not take them to the school. We requested their parents and the elders to take the children to the school tomorrow when the school opens. We also had a very interactive talk with the children. They said that they wanted to go to the school but their parents did not do anything. Parents informed us that since the upper caste people dominated that village, the teacher did not allow these children to sit in the school. We could not meet the Pradhan of that vilage. We requested the

parents to take the children to the school tomorrow in any case for admission and then inform us about what happened. We left the village at about 3.15 PM.

List of the children of Tilari village is as follows:

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| 1. Samri Devi | 6. Sakinder Kumar | 11. Reeta Devi | 16. Rajjan Kumar |
| 2. Ranjeet Kumar | 7. Gyani Kumar | 12. Laxmi Devi | 17. Reshma Devi |
| 3. Mako | 8. Jitender Kumar | 13. Aarti Devi | 18. Shanta Devi |
| 4. Upendra Kumar | 9. Aaso Devi | 14. Barti Devi | |
| 5. Jeera | 10. Shanta Devi | 15. Sulekha | |

One notable thing that I would like to mention here is that most of the children were able to read those Hindi words that they had learnt in Kanpur even though it was more than two months since they left the centre. This was really a boost for us.

We had lunch in Nawada. We reached Bodh Gaya at about 7.00 PM. I requested Siddhartha Ji to have a follow up of these children at least within 10 days. He consented for it though for him also, it is not an easy task.