

Ekal Vidyalayas empowering tribals economically and socially



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Mission of Friends of Tribal Society (FTS) is to eradicate illiteracy from rural areas, particularly tribals, so that a literate population simultaneously gets access to primary health, child care and gainful self-employment to empower them economically and socially. The Society established in 1989 along with likeminded organizations, has now spread to nearly 38,120 villages as on June,30,2012, in 23 states of India, where 10,76,691 students and lakhs of adults in villages are getting benefit of the Ekal's education programmes. In the North East Ekal has its presence in 3,060 villages with about one lakh children being given support education. The society has evolved a cost effective support education system where the one teacher school functions in a village under a tree or in open space provided by the inhabitants of the village.

A local tribal youth from the same village or a neighboring village is associated to function as the Acharya of the school following induction training and recurring training support for effectively transacting the curriculum. He is also provided with necessary teaching aids to run the school for three hours a day at a time convenient to the students. Syllabus of three years--- comprising seven subjects would enable a child to get admission in class 3 or 4 of a formal primary school. Teachers are also motivated during their training to guide the students to develop consciousness about personal hygiene, healthcare, village sanitation and to free themselves from the age-old habit of alcohol consumption which is a bane of the tribal society. To make the tribals healthy, strong and gainfully employed, Ekal Vidyalaya runs a four pronged programme of education as primary education, healthcare education, development education and the empowerment education.

Besides motivating them to go to school daily, Ekal Vidyalaya imparts support education for three hours daily to children of the village who do not go to any school or even those who go to other schools.

Through health care education programme the vidyalaya disseminates information about health hazards and preventive measures through community participation. The emphasis is on hygiene, sanitation, nutrition, first aid, maternal and child care and information on common diseases prevailing in the local area.

Under development education providing information on various income generating programmes, the objective of the Ekal Vidyalaya is to make the village self-reliant by utilizing local resources. For sustaining development, small projects like vermin-culture, tree plantation, vegetable plantation, water management, animal husbandry etc, are pursued.

Ekal Vidyalayas educate villagers about various government schemes meant for their benefit. Modalities of using 'Right to Information Act' are also in the curriculum under empowerment education. Through four-pronged functional education program, the Ekal Vidyalaya wants to realise integrated village development to help marginalized population become literate, healthy and economically well-off to lead a dignified life.

Ekal Vidyalayas work is being recognized globally. Besides having support in Indian cities it has a strong support base in eleven countries like Australia, Canada, Dubai, Hongkong, Newzeeland, United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA), where it has 40 chapters. Besides many other recognisations and service awards, Ekal Vidyalaya had the privilege of being selected by the organizers of Petrotech Society and ONGC as their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partner for Petrotech 2010.

Recently Ekal has been selected to receive the National Award for 2011 for its contribution in spreading literacy among tribals inhabiting interior areas of India by Lala Dewan Chand Trust, Delhi. Over the years programmes run by Ekal Vidyalayas have shown positive impact on the villagers. These are registering of Indian Sansakar on young minds, eradication of drinking habits, mutual co-operation, greater interest in education, greater awareness about hygiene and cleanliness and striving for self sufficiency.

The Guwahati chapter of the Friends of Tribals Society was formed in the year 2005 and since then it has been responsible for expanding and the smooth running of the Ekal Vidyalayas in the entire north east region. The whole northeast has been divided into 16 districts for the convenience of effective administration and each district has a full-fledged district committee with its own office to look after the functioning of the Ekal Vidyalaya in its respective area. The committees are supported by a team of about 600 full time workers, who have voluntarily come forward to spare their lives for the National cause.

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BY DAYA NATH SINGH

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