

The Vision of Antyodaya

Documentation & Compilation of the Best Practices of Sustainable
Development As Propounded by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya



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Indian Social Responsibility Network



*“If we want to real peace in the world,
we should start educating our children”
-Mahatma Gandhi*



Organisation behind the practice:
Vardhishnu

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Saving india's future from picking rags

Vardhishnu brings schools to child labour and rag pickers

Every 11th child in India is condemned to work. Away from schools, these children toil in menial tasks like rag picking, cleaning, construction helpers etc. In them a significant proportion of India's demographic dividend remains without any hope of a decent future. It is these children that Vardhishnu in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, works to bring into mainstream education with its specially designed community learning centres called 'Anandghar'. At Anandghar, volunteers not only develop an interest for learning in underprivileged children, but they also persuade the children's parents to let their children go to school. Anandghar brings up these children to a basic level of academic education and then helps them into mainstream schools.

Lost childhoods

Every 11th child between 5 and 18 is working in India. Children make about 5% of the entire working population in Maharashtra. Maharashtra, along with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh houses more than half of the country's working

children. Latest global estimates suggest that 120 million children between 5 and 14 years are forced into child labour, with boys and girls in this age group almost equally affected. This persistence of child labour is rooted in poverty often resulting from lack of opportunities for adults, little social protection, and a failure of states to ensure that all children attend school upto the legal minimum age for employment. Many child labourers do not attend school at all. Others combine school and work but often to the detriment of their education. Childhoods that are lost to work have little hope of doing well in adult lives as well. Failure to get these children into education propagates the vicious cycle of poverty.

To get these children away from their work, which often contributes significantly to family incomes, needs an empathetic approach that is based on their realities and constraints.

Bridging education gap with empathy

Inspired by emotional lofty goals of providing safe and happy childhood to street children, the young volunteers of 'Anandghar approach' the subject with objectivity and scientific rigour.

The volunteers first befriend the target communities and make a rapport with the children as well as their parents. This helps break the barriers of class and removes suspicions that these communities usually hold outsiders in. The group studies help collect baseline data on the children and the community.

The children are categorised in groups based on their level of education. Special conditions like health issues or substance abuse habits are also made a note of.

Each group gets a dedicated tutor. The tutor takes the responsibility of educating his group as well as of reforming the children's social skills under his watch. A myriad of techniques ensure that most of the children develop an interest in learning and gain exposure to the world as well. They are taught academics as well as soft skills through games and other activities; visits to old age homes, parks, cultural events, factories and workshops, etc widen their horizons.

The volunteers keep their contact alive with the families of the children by regular home visits, parent teacher meetings, and family events. This ensures that the parents do not stop their children from going to Anandghar.

Coming from compromised, mostly unhygienic surroundings, these children have a higher propensity to fall sick. Anandghar organises at least three medical camps every year for free checkups of all its students. For adolescent girls, special menstrual hygiene modules are run that include group discussion, study, survey, games, puzzles, slide shows, and other tools to dispel stigma around menstruation as well as to teach personal hygiene.

The organisation actively liaisons with schools to persuade them to enrol its students. Once students at Anandghar achieve a minimum level of education, they are helped securing admissions at mainstream government and private schools. The organisation helps the families collate documents, get the necessary certificates and go through the admission process.

Once admitted to schools, the organisation keeps regular tabs on the admitted students' performance to ensure they do not lose interest in education.

Children that may never fall to Rag Picking again

In just 4 years, Anandghar has grown into 3 centres with over 125 regular students each year. The organisation has lifted over 100 children out of child labour. 250 Anandghar alumni are now regular students at government schools.

Children's health has improved markedly and over 80% students have given up chewing tobacco.

These children have tasted the fruits of education. There is every likelihood of them never falling back into rag picking or labour. A regular education shall find them employments better than before for sure.

Using subscriptions and scrap to help scrap pickers

Anandghar is financially sustained by organisational as well as individual donors. Their innovations in fund raising are worth emulating. Since individual donors may not donate a lot in one tranche, the



our life was only about papers, plastic and dumping grounds, but Anandghar changed lives of our children. Now they see dreams and we believe that they will work hard to fulfill those!"

- Asha Borse, mother of Pratiksha and Samadhan (children of Anandghar)



organisation accepts small monthly donations from them. This keeps the donors in regular contact with Anandghar and earns the organisation precious publicity as well growing the number of donors. Anandghar encourages people to donate their paper scrap to the organisation that they sell and raise additional funds from.

Vardhishnu runs a sister project to Anandghar called Saksham. Saksham tries to provide sustainable livelihood to women from economically disadvantaged communities, specially mothers and elder siblings of children attending Anandghar. These women stitch cloth bags that are sold to supermarkets in Jalgaon. The money raised from the sale funds Anandghar too.

Vardhishnu's model of delivering education to

street children mostly only needs motivated young people. The organisation has been actively seeking and preparing the next batch of leaders to keep up the good work. Organisations from other towns are also learning the system from Vardhishnu.

It is these motivated, innovative young people who may save India's future from rag picking ■