

Site Visit Report - KanyaKumari Kalai Koodam (K4)

Date: January 2, 2010 (Saturday)

Volunteer: Sivasankar M (ASHA Chennai)

Places Went: CCD office, K4 office, K4 Learning Center and Field for K4 job

Reported by: Sivasankar M

Foreword: I wished to visit the K4 learning Center, its function and the field for the K4 jobs.

I started from my native place around 4.00am on January 2nd 2010. After four and half hours of travel, I reached Nagercoil at 8.30am. Nagercoil is located at the southern tip of peninsular India. Nagercoil and its surrounding regions are hilly since the tip of Western Ghats lies in these areas and paddy fields, plantations of rubber and cardamom around Nagercoil. Mr. Natarajan Sir received me and introduced himself, he arranged a taxi for this visit, then we both had Tiffin in a hotel where he told about his career and works in CCD and K4 in Kanya Kumari District (Capital city is Nagercoil). He asked about me and I shared about myself and ASHA Chennai works.

Then we started to CCD Office about a kilometer from Nagercoil bus terminals. We reached the CCD Office, where the accountings are all taken care. Mr. Natarajan Sir introduced the CCD staffs 1) Ms. Bala & 2) Mr. Senthil and the K4 Staff 1) Miss. Roshini (she takes care of Accounting works in CCD Office itself). There he shared the details of CCD (can be found in the link <http://www.ccd.org.in/>) and gave some agriculture related hand books. Then Mr. Natarajan Sir, Ms Bala and I started by the taxi to Kanya Kumari about 22 kilometers from Nagercoil. Ms Bala explained about the CCD Federations and T-Sunami Relief and Rehabilitation activities done by CCD in 2004 and the support given to the artisans of Kanya Kumari area. There are two federation viz., 1) Sri Bagavathi Coir Federation 2) Vazhampuri Federation (under which the materials of K4 sold) she added. Ms Bala got down and went for work.

Mr Natarajan Sir and I proceeded towards K4 office. While we went in, I was informed that Miss Sangeetha (one among the staffs) was on leave that day. The total staff strength is three, when I visited there. They are, 1) Miss Pushpapiya 2) Miss Roshini 3) Miss Sangeetha. Miss Pushpapiya welcomed us and introduced herself. She started explaining the current activities being carried out in the villages of Kanya Kumari District. Then she showed the prepared designs (attaching the photos separately) and explained how to make the designs (attaching the photos separately) for sample. I enquired about her nature of work in K4. There were 3 steps, she told. Viz.,

- 1) Giving the purchased raw materials to the people

- 2) Teaching the new designs and
- 3) Collecting the finished jobs from their place by paying them compensation.

She showed raw materials, natural coloring agents and simple tools to tear and shape the raw materials. Miss Sangeetha also doing the same kind of works as likes Miss Pushpapiya. And Miss Roshini doing accounting, Mr. Natarajan Sir told. Currently, K4 is doing the designs with two types of materials, viz. 1) Out of Palm Leaves and 2) Natural Fibers (includes Banana Fiber, Talliat Fiber, Alovera Fiber etc...). The raw materials (Palm Leaves) are imported from Thoothukudi area, Mr Natarajan Sir told. They are making payment to the working people through "Vazhampuri Federation". The designs are really good (Photos attached). But only thing is the cost of those materials. Now a days lot of designs with plastic materials are present in the market with low cost. By keep on introducing the new designs into this art, the market demand can be increased on these products as well as the employment of surrounding people and last but not the least, keeping these kind of arts alive.

Then we three started to Sri Bhagavathi Learning Center about a kilometer away from Kanya Kumari town. It was not functioning, when we went there. But I visited the building and it was situated in a very calm place. It was well constructed with optimal use of resources. The windows were made up of bricks itself instead of separate window could reduce the cost of the building. The hostels and class rooms were in good condition with simplicity (no cots in Hostels). The kitchen had all facilities. The details of K4 can be found in the link www.k4arts.org.in. I asked him, "What is the purpose of this Learning Center?" He said, "It is a platform for taking this art into younger generation". Unless & otherwise, we should take steps to improve these kind of designs to some extent to meet the market demand this craft will vanish, he told. By introducing the new innovative ideas into this art, it will rise up, through which people can get continuous employment. As of now, people are getting not much work due to lack of funding, he added. Also this art can be taught to the students. For that, K4 is arranging classes on these designs by charging them 400 Rupees per day per head and the duration of courses would be 5 days, he told. Then the important thing is Environmental concern, these palm leaves and natural fiber materials are prone to early degradation. They are making materials for different purposes like playing and educational materials for children, fancy materials for women, decorative materials, general purpose materials etc... He showed the price list of each material. He told that by giving support, they may introduce the new designs into the market and hence meeting the demand, so that people can get continuous work and support.

Then Miss Pushpapiya and I started to Agathesewaram village about 5 kilometers away from the town. The lifestyle of the people was not bad. They all depended on agriculture & Beedi rolling and at the same time they are also doing other works like craft, coir work etc... At first, we went to Miss Pappa's House who is doing bangles by using palm leaves. Miss Pushpapiya told that she was special in doing bangles and explained about the demand for bangles in the exhibition, among college students etc... I asked about herself and her work. She expressed the interest in K4 works. She told me that she is getting continuous salary irrespective of market demand. Also another main work in that area is sea shell art (under Vazhampuri Federation), Miss Pushpapiya added. The finished sea shell arts would be sold in between November and

January (3 months tourist season in Kanya Kumari area). During this period only people would get continuous employment other times as said above people are doing Beedi rolling, Agri works, Miss Pushpapiya told. From my point of view, by doing these kind of works by their mean time, they can see some money. And also they may introduce the innovative designs into the market, so that this art will sustain. And they can up their lifestyle little bit. The below photo was taken in her house.



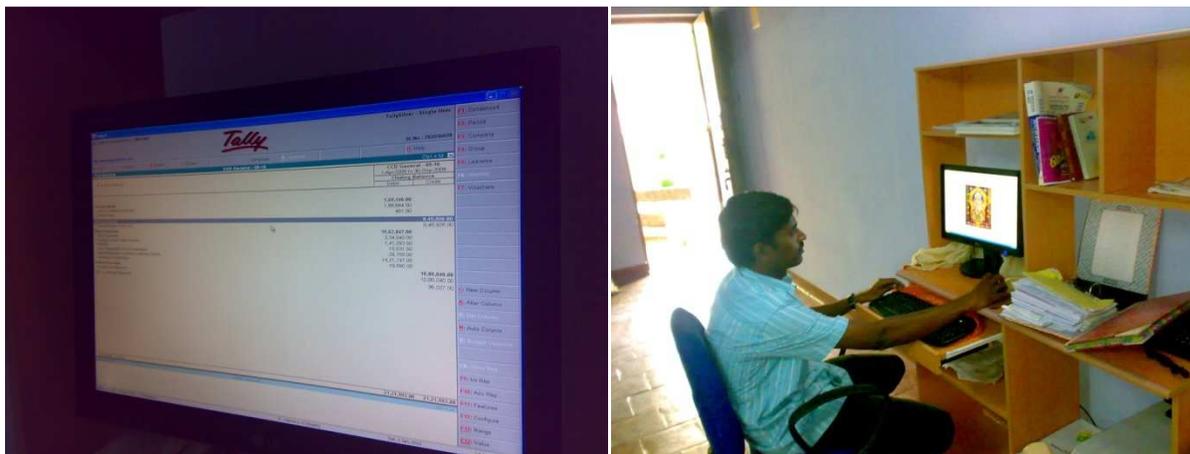
Then we moved to Ms Rajakani's House about a kilometer travel in a very narrow road. Miss Pushapriya told her, intension of this visit. There she showed a lot of materials she made including stars, Bangles and the other materials which all are made out of palm Leaves. Those designs were looking good and attractive. She expressed the co-operation given by K4 organization and staffs. She told that her work was very smooth, since the techniques taught by K4 staffs are very extensive and the compensation too. Even though the peak work time would be between November and January she is getting jobs in very regular manner throughout the year, she added. The below photo is taken from her home with the materials she made.



Then we moved to Ms Esther's house. She welcomed us and Miss Pushpapiya told her about this visit. As like others, she also showed the designs to me. I asked about her duties and the way of work. Usually, she does this work in free time and continues doing it throughout the year, she added. The below photo is taken from her house.



Miss Pushpapiya shared two and half years of work experience in CCD and K4. Then Miss Pushpapiya got down and returned back to Nagercoil where Mr. Senthil and I had Lunch. Then we started to CCD office and visited the accounting section. Mr. Senthil explained about the accountings (Accounts are well maintained) he is doing reconciliation, monitoring and K4 marketing works. All the bills were arranged in a good manner in a file and also maintained in a computer. The below photo is taken from the CCD Office with the computer.



Then Mr. Senthil and I started in the same Taxi to Bus stand about evening 4 o' clock. I started to my native.