**Site Visit Report – conducted August 5th, 2012**

I along with my wife, daughter and a relative who has just joined IISER in Pune headed out to Pabal on 5th Morning. The newly laid road from RajguruNagar to Khel SEZ greatly helped our drive to Pabal and restricted the total time to 90 minutes or so.

As soon as you enter the Ashram, the first thing that strikes you is the Finishing School which is build with the support from GKN plc. This building was inaugurated on November 30th 2011 by Sir Kevin Smith.

This building is a massive one which houses the finishing units, energy and environment section, the fab lab, the offices and in the basement contains the home science and health units.

The building has added a different dimension to the ashram, it has given an excellent environment for the kids to learn, and practice whatever they have learned within.

As usual, Mr. Anand gave us a quick tour of the Ashram. Apart from the Finishing school, a few changes we could see were:-

1. A bathroom built exclusively by the girls of last year.
2. A usual box type rooms to be used as Staff quarters getting build using the fund given by the local government. When asked why you are not building the cost efficient cool homes that the kids have built earlier, Mr. Anand said that it is built by the local government and will not go with any other design. The budget has over shot and he was not sure when it will get done with (need clarification on it). Unfortunately we did not take some pictures of this structure.
3. We also saw some new Turkeys in addition to the farm animals. The ashram has sold few of the Turkeys to local populace.
4. The rain water harvesting tank was bereft of water due to poor rainfall received this season.

In the fab lab, Mr Pawan a BE Electronics graduate gave us a demo of a water pump controller, hearing aid and solar battery charger built in the fab lab. These are low cost units, not having a good finish but will be particularly useful for the village folks.

We also saw an Oil extraction (Thel Ghaani) unit invented by Ashram alumni Vishwesh Soneji from Gujarat. His parents, he and his brother live in a farm in Gujarat where they cultivate and eat of that cultivation. The unit extracts oil out of the peanuts using hydraulic pressure. The oil extracted peanuts lack in taste but as per Anand are used for making chikki and also can be used for making Sabzi.

Anand also showed us the sari fall making unit they are making for a business man who does not want to stitch the fall instead wants to use glue to make the fall.

We also saw the vegetable cutter, the vegetable dryer machine and a few more units.

As requested, we were able to speak with the only girl student, Asha from Indore. Initially 2 more girls joined but due to home sickness they have left. Asha, is enjoying so far in the ashram. She’s eager to learn as much as she can in the Ashram and the teachers have given her all the encouragement she needs.

After around 90 minutes in the ashram, we left for Pune. It was a fruitful visit. I’m hoping to make more than one visit per year to the Ashram.

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