

# Site Visit Report

Project: Kalyania – Prayas Center (<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=896>)

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Acknowledgement

New Classroom



Students preparing for 26<sup>th</sup> January Cultural Programme



Students in the classrooms

I was in India in early December of this year 2012 and thought it will be worthwhile to visit Kalyania and particularly its Suhasini Sisu Shiksha Kendra (Suhasini primary for children of the poor and the deprived) with the hope to observe what qualitative and quantitative changes, if any, that might have occurred after three years of partial support from us (Asha for Education, Atlanta Chapter). Knowing Kalyania's single-minded devotion for the upliftment and providing better ambience to the poor and the old, I was naturally expecting some new developments and I was not disappointed.

Before going into what exactly I observed at Kalyania, it is better to introduce in a nutshell the Society named Kalyania and its workings. Kalyania was initiated by a group of motivated scientists, Doctors and professionals to provide support and succor to the children of the poor along with the rather lonely but significant population of senior citizens. Its present Mission and range of activities can be briefly enlisted as follows:

## Mission of Kalyania

- Kalyania pledged to live up to its motto, '*Making Life Better*', through free or almost free services to the poor directed to change their life-style from one of hopelessness to one with hope. Simultaneously, it planned to provide a congenial '*Home*' for the Old and the Helpless at par costs. This has been largely achieved, albeit on a small scale, cutting costs at all levels, with the active support of the senior volunteers.
- ***NOW, THERE IS NEED FOR GROWTH AND EXPANSION AT ALL LEVELS***

## Approach

### **A HOLISTIC APPROCH FOR SUPPORTING AND SERVING THE POOR & THE OLD**

#### CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

- The Primary School, Suhasini Sisu Niketan (Est. 2003)
- The Kamala Sengupta Memorial Computer Training Centre (Est. 2006)
- School of Visual Art & Drawing (2001)
- School of Performing Arts (2003)
- A well stacked Library. (2004)

#### HEALTHCARE INITIATIVES

- Out-door Clinic (1998-) and Epilepsy Club (2003-)
- Various other health related services as elaborated elsewhere.(ca.2001-)
- Home services through medical instruments at minimal cost (ca.2002-)
- Health check-up for the old & ambulance service (2004)
- Need-based awareness programs related to health, child-care, maternity (2009)
- Health care for the school children and the residents of Old Age Home

#### OLD AGE HOME

- For gerentologically advanced
- Providing them a congenial 'HOME AWAY FROM HOME' atmosphere(1998--)
- Special care with respect to their food, health care & other mental props (2000-)

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Home nursing services through allocation of trained Sevikas (2001-)
- Providing vocational training in stitching to women of backward classes (2010)

## SOCIETAL COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Kalyani Reformatory Prison Contract that includes sports, Rabindra Jayanti celebrations and Drawing Classes. (2008)
- NCC- Kalyania partnership (2006)
- Andhya Alok Samity, 2005-) - medical and other assistance for blinds
- Merit-cum-means fellowships.

Given this rather broad platform, I tried to restrict myself to the School whose activities we from Asha for Education (Atlanta Chapter) were supporting over last three years while touching cursorily on other aspects of Kalyania's activities given that most of them were linked and complimentary.

### ➤ **Suhasini Sisu Shiksha Kendra:**

- This continues to be located at B-1/398. Initially the School building was jointly shared by the Office of the Kalyania but now the Office has been shifted to a new construction. But more about it later. The School consists of a Head Mistress's Office, teacher's room and a class room (Kg I & II). The first floor provides rooms for the rest of the classes and a covered space has been created for ancillary activities of the children of the School. The administration is looking forward to fabricating a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to provide a Hall space for vocational training.
- Number of students is growing gradually and only recently 20 (in lieu of earlier 15 have been admitted in the coming session. Present number of students has grown to 80. The number of teachers involved in formal teaching is now 10 and their salaries have been raised from the initial Rs.500/- pm to Rs.900.00 largely through the support of Asha for Education. The School administration is trying hard to raise this to at least Rs.1000/-pm, given continued support from the patrons. The number of support staff has increased along with their monthly remuneration and the Tiffin being served to the children continues to be healthy and hygienic. A new toilet has been created especially for the girls along with a general toilet for boys. A shed has been created where cumulative activities of the children like daily prayers, exhibitions and other social activities involving only the children of the School are held.

### ➤ **Other education-related activities for the children:**

For holistic development of body and mind of the School-going and other children of the poor who unfortunately could not be absorbed into the Schooling system provided by Kalyania, several supportive modules have been made available. These include:

- **Educational and spiritual activity:** All through the year a large number of such activities including sit-&-draw competition, children's sports etc. keeps the children and their guardians

to be involved with the Suhasini Primary as also the institution Kalyania all through the year. Details of such programmes are normally listed in the Annual Report of Kalyania which is produced with clock-work regularity each year.

- **The Kamala Sengupta Memorial Computer Training Centre** (Est. 2006): This Centre, sponsored by the benevolent initial funding from Mr. Prasanta kr Sengupta has now 3 computers and 3 tutors available for the children of the School providing them with basic skills in handling computers along with a few specialized courses for adolescents from different walks of life with the single common criteria of poverty. More computers and skilled tutors (remunerative) are needed for expanding the activity of this Centre which is in high demand. The immediate need is to have enough computers (immediate target 10) so that the children are given hands on training. The Centre also envisages expansion for providing at par cost training to adolescents from poor families that will require a different set of hardware and more importantly, soft wares. Finally, Kalyania envisages the entire management to be under computerized database given its commitment to RTE and RTI and this will require more computers at each programme level and /as also laptops for office use and linking weekly video shows for the children through audio-visual projections.
  - **School of Visual Art and Drawing (2003):** This School was started on Sunday through the enthusiastic pursuance by the recognized artist Shri Panchanan Pal who wanted to introduce the techniques of drawing and painting among the slum dwelling students inclusive of the School children. Nobody realized at that time the enthusiasm it was going to generate among the young slum dwellers. It started as a pilot project on Sundays and continues to be held on that date. Other than the Suhasini Primary students more than 150 outsiders have joined this camp and now the authorities are forced to divide them in two batches resulting in one student getting to interact with their Art mentor only twice a month instead of four times a month. The expenses of this Centre has also grown rapidly as Kalyania still pursues with the practice of providing free drawing kits to all children, professional training , and a healthy Tiffin. All this now costs over Rs.2,50,000/- annually. Making the School run twice a week (Saturday & Sundays) for one batch at a time will require an additional funding to the tune Rs.1,50,000/- annually. The dilemma is likely to continue till this additional fund is resourced. Some samples of the output from these students are reproduced in the online Annual Report of Asha for Education, 2010. The Centre continues to operate in the serene atmosphere under a huge Banyan Tree in the Park adjoining the School.
  - **School of Performing Art:** This School, started in 2003, continues to operate in a modest scale inspite of demand. This could be attributed to lack of space, equipments and funds to run it on a larger scale. However, the quality of output is quite satisfactory and these children, being groomed in the art of dancing, singing and oration-narration, are doing exceedingly well and small groups are often invited to perform in fetes, Melas and exhibitions.
- **Expansion of available Floor Space:** One of the major constraints was the availability of floor space for expanding the existing activities. Fortunately, some funds became available for the purpose through significant donations particularly from Mr. Sukhomoy Chakraborty. Once the premises, B-1/275, was finally registered in favour of Kalyania, with the available free space inclusive of temporary constructions, a building plan for a five storey construction was planned and the GF and first floor constructed. This new construction, elegant and well planned, now accommodates the Outdoor Clinic, the Library and a small but suitably furnished Seminar Room which was designed to serve multiple purposes, in the Ground Floor. The First Floor provided for six rooms with attached bath for the Old-Age Home. At this stage the available funds for constructed is fully exhausted.

Furtherance of the plan requires more funds. This facility enabled the Administrative Office to be shifted from the existing School Building (B1/398) to the one (B-1/396) which previously housed the Outdoor Clinic. The School Building is now fully available for School purposes only including of course the Computer Lab.

➤ **Other Activities in a Nutshell:** The major additional activities are already enlisted under the sub Head – **Approach**. The major activities include:

- **Old Age Home:** The Old Age Home has now 22 inhabitants spread over four buildings and new space created has already been fully occupied. If you ask any tenant how they feel in these surroundings, they have the unanimous view of being a happy and a satisfied lot of senior citizens. The weekly get-togethers and many other celebrations including Durga Puja now being held in the cozy comfort of the Seminar Room is an attraction for the old. Many participate in Kalyani's regular activities through part-time voluntary service at the different Centres provided for by Kalyania.
- **Women's Empowerment:** This is an agenda that languors at its initial levels primarily due to lack of suitable sponsors for its various projects. Yet, the Sevika Training programme for Home Nursing for the old and the infants is a roaring success. Kalyania now has 30 trained Home Sevikas deployed for the purpose providing synergy between the well off and the poor. The tailoring and stitching sections have been initiated but are yet to take off on a significant scale.
- **Pecuniary Help for Students:** Through corpus funds received through donations from several benevolent members, it is now possible to offer 20 Scholarships to pass outs and other ranging from class V to graduation level. This has become a much sought after programme for the poor aspiring for middle level and higher education and is also convenient for the benevolent as it requires lesser corpus support to sponsor such scholarships.
- **Social & Co-operative Activities:** Kalyania continues its close association with other Organisations like the NCC Battalion located at Kalyani, Andha Alok Samity working for the blinds, Indian Medical Association, Kalyani Chapter and the Kalyani Reformatory Prison to name a few.

By the end of the day I felt strongly that Kalyania is making the best use of funds provided to them from various sources including Asha for Education, Atlanta Chapter, USA and a small but totally motivated core group continues to pilot the activities strictly within the frame work of schedules proposed from time to time. During all the interactions, Dr Partha Pratim Dhar, Secretary, Mrs. Kabita Basu, Suhasini primary in-charge, Mr Sailendra K Ray and Prof Chitreshwar Sen, Vice Presidents of Kalyania patiently accompanied me and answered all my queries . I was humbled by the sincerity and selfless service of these professionals and seniors and felt Kalyania was a safe harbor for those who want to help the poor and the down-trodden, as well as the senior citizens especially of those who for professional reasons are dissociated from their parental families.

Good luck to Kalyania and best wished for their success in their endeavours.!