



## Shishukunj International Education Sammelan Dec 2006



- Venue:** Swaminarayan Gurukul, Charodi, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> December 2006
- Objective:** To provide a platform for Shishukunj International supported centres to share their efforts, progress, challenges and aspirations;  
To network with fellow organisations in the special needs and/or mainstream education;  
To bring forth awareness of need for Educational support for disadvantaged children

### **Centres Represented:**

Shree K S Dedhia Mukbhadir Vidya Mandir, Ahemdebad	Residential school for hearing impaired children
Sucheta Kriplani Shiksha Niketan, Johdpur	Residential school for physically challenged children
Dhanvantri School, Bhuj	Education & training centre for hearing impaired, mentally challenged & Cerebral Palsy children
Shri Bhairav Seva Samiti & Shri Nakoda Vidhyalay, Sarovali, Mumbai	Residential school for hearing impaired children
Veerayatan Vidyapeeth, Jakhaniya (Mandvi)	Education for orphans & economically disadvantaged children
Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Kanya Sanskar Dham, Bhuj	Residential cultural & social activity facilities
Bhagvatinandji Education & Health Trust, Charpada & Adhoi	Residential school for orphans & rural children
Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh, Bangalore	Residential school for orphans & disadvantaged children
Dhangadhra Shishukunj	Children education school
Indore Shishukunj	Nursery to Secondary education schools
Bhavnagar/Nakuru Shishukunj	Baal Pravuti Kendras
Ahemdebad Shishukunj	Baal Pravuti Kendra
London Shishukunj	Baal Pravuti Kendras & International Projects

### **Summary:**

This first ever Shishukunj International education sammelan was organised for one day with following activities:

- Educational Display Exhibition ~ Shishukunj child psychology & parenting exhibitions; Shishukunj Life for Children initiative; Participating organisations articles and artefacts
- Key note speakers from various organisations
- Blessings & guidance from Swami Mahadevpriyadas (Swaminarayan Gurukul) & Swami Muktananda Babu (BEHT)
- Questions & answers, Brief open discussion session
- Cultural programme by children/members from various centres and students of Swaminarayan Gurukul

### **Key Message:**

- **Even if children are physically challenged they still have brains, heart and courage - they have a right to education and the opportunity to learn so they can fend for themselves**
- **Training of parents is also important to support children in their family environment**

## Key Note Speakers and Discussion Points

1. Shree K S Dedhia Mukbhadir Vidya Mandir (KSD), Ahemdebad by Shree Kokilaben G Shah
  - Briefed about the capacity of the school, children and the work being carried out at the project. All children have hearing and visual impairment
  - An older child who cannot be accepted in other schools joins KSD
  - Only 5 ear machines are in use for supporting children with hearing impairment
  - 55 children in one room. This room has served all the children as a school, dinning hall and sleeping room for the past 18 years
  - On entering KSD, the child comes with nothing physical with him i.e. no possessions. The child brings love
  - The members of staff have to teach the child from personal hygiene to cleanliness to sharing
  - The child is not able to lip read. Therefore the staff talks to the individual child and by physically showing what the staff is saying. For example drink of water
  - It is Kokilaben's view that she does not believe in integration of these children in the normal school. This is because of the children's needs not being met in the normal school.
  - Kokilaben and the staff at present have 70 children. They are very happy that the provision for 100 girls will be opened soon. She is very thankful for the support from the Shishukunj International for their support
  - Finally Kokilaben thanked her husband, Gunvantbhai for standing besides her at all times. She acknowledged that Gunvantbhai is a quiet worker
  - She feels privileged to be working with children and she thanks god for giving her the opportunity to do so
  
2. Sucheta Kriplani Shiksha Niketan, Johdpur by Shree Snehji Gupta, Executive Director & fellow members
  - The school has 500+ Physically Challenged children. They had only 20 wheel chairs to share.
  - Snehben recalled her visit to Shishukunj London. Since then she has developed a strong relationship
  - Shishukunj has helped with food for children need
  - Recently a container full of toys, play equipment, crutches, wheelchairs and more was received. For which she is very grateful. Now that they have more wheelchairs in the school which will be able to make more children independent

The schools headmaster Shree Modibhai Patawat shared a few words:

- Most of the children have polio therefore unable to mix with others
- There have been no medication for polio
- The government aid for food and upkeep for the children is 80%. The school has to look for the remaining 20%
- The monies from govt do not come on time for the children. When the staff enquires with the government for the money, they do not liked being asked
- The school is in a poor area therefore unable to afford food, books and clothes
- Children activities includes playing volleyball, football and malkombe .
- Modibhai invited all present to visit their school

Following was said by Narendrasingh (NS), Social Worker for the school:

- NS explained that once he was invited to a wedding and standing in the driveway of the home of celebration, he saw that the brides uncle did not allow the brother of the bride to attend. This is because he was physically

challenged. Then NS realised that those with physically challenged are seen as an omen in the family who are not allow to have a relationship nor any education

- Thereafter he decided to work for those with disabilities and made it a priority that the children with disabilities should receive education so that they do not become a burden to their parents
- The reason for this was that those with disabilities face exclusion from the society. It's a stigma and a curse to the parents for producing such children
- Originally the school started with 15 children with board and lodging. This was because those with disabilities were unhappy and crying at normal school

Sai Ram (SR) – Student shared the following:

- He began attending SKSN at the age of 10 years. He has been there for 11years altogether.He attended between 1 to 2 times a month as the school was 1km away from home. He did not have any friends
- Presently SR is attending teacher training institute in Johdpur. He recently achieved 81% in the institute
- SR is aiming to turn the table round and wants to support his family
- SR concluded by saying that although they are physically challenged, they have brains and courage and it is their right to achieve and receive education just like any other child. He added that each child should be given an opportunity to learn so that they can fend for themselves

### 3. Dhanvantri School in Bhuj by Dr Shantuben Patel

She thanked Shishukunj and expressed that it was a privilege in getting connected to Shishukunj and realised its dedication for the welfare of the children. Dr Shantuben explained the following about the school and the children:

- Facilities for children with disabilities such as polio
- The school is run on private basis and it does not receive any government grants
- The school opened on 11th September 2006 in a room of a hospital. It began with 19children. They found that there were 450 children with disabilities. Many came from poor conditions
- Dr Shantuben first met a patient, Rozminben with her 3 children in the outpatients
- Dr Shantuben dedicated her services for 3 years at a medical care free for the welfare of these children. She believed that whatever the disabilities, it should be caught before the ages of 3 so that early intervention can benefit the child. She added that along with the intervention it was vital to train the mothers so that the intervention with the child can continue at home
- She has trained and qualified team of professionals from Bombay, whom she can contact for further input
- At the school there are dedicated trained Occupational Therapist who work with the children
- Dr Shantuben's intervention for the children with Autistic Spectrum and those with Mental Health difficulties is "Dhyanam" rather than medication. The team also work with the parents through counselling which benefits the children. The Dhayana is called "Annapana Meditation". This is done 10 minutes everyday
- Whilst the children at the school, their diet is monitored for the purpose of their nutrition's intake. For example potatoes, biscuits are not allowed. Only cooked hot food, fruits, salads should be sent with their children in their lunch box
- The school has done a cultural programme - helped to publicise their works in the cities such as Nairobi, Birmingham, Liverpool and of course Kutch
- Since after the earthquake the school is run in a very small space. The new building is under construction where there will be suitable toys and other upgraded facilities for the children. The new accommodation will be able to

accommodate the volunteers who come and give their Seva for free

- The school's aim is to include all those with the disabilities in the community and their local environment
- At present 128 children attend the school from the villages. Dr Shantuben has also acknowledged that some families from Mumbai and Mehsana transfer to Bhuj for the benefit of their children

Please note that Dr Shantuben was one of those who dedicated her time and profession when the earthquake struck Bhuj.

4. Bhairav Seva Samithi, Mumbai by Mahendraji Talele

- The school is for children with Hearing Impaired (HI)
- The admission started in 1986. In 1995 they had 116 children
- The school provided everything for free including their clothing
- The school caters for both males and females
- The passing rate up to the SSC is 55%. There is 100% 1<sup>st</sup> class achievement. On passing the children take up work in the beauty parlours, tailors, photographers and in computers
- Special therapy is available too
- One of the child has gain Silver Medal internationally

Mahendraji thanked for the support by Shishukunj.

*(PS. Many more thoughts were presented but due to language we were not able to capture in these notes)*

5. Veerayatan Vidyapeeth by Vigora Bhanji Dhanji (teacher)

- He began with blessings for the parents, teachers, sant, lord
- Seva, sadhana, shikshan is true from teachers representation. To win ones heart is vital
- Sadhviji has kept monavrat for 12 years. There is a need for such women in this world
- Rudrani has a school and hostel. There is a Pharmacy College in Kutch this year
- In the society the success is because of the truth

*(PS. Many more thoughts were presented but were not able to capture in these notes)*

6. Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Kanya Sanskar Dham by Hemlataben

- This school is part of the mainstream. It's been running for 19 years with 1353 children. There is no hostel and no grants for support
- The schools aim is to teach Jeevan Ghadhtar
- There is no school for girls. Their aim is to have a co-educational
- The school runs from 8 to 12 Dhoran
- Other trust is under Prathmik Shala
- There is a concession on medical fees
- For qualitative studies the children need to go to other institute. For this the cost would be Rs 9,000 for girls and Rs 12,000 for boys
- Example of a child called Khushbu who has hearing impairment and unable to speak. This child is in the 9<sup>th</sup> standard. She also has polio from birth. She is taught yoga, pranayama and exercise. Through this she is able to understand others. She is able to clean her own room
- Tribute to Mawjibhai Ruda was acknowledged

7. Bhagvatinandji Education & Health Trust, Charpada & Adhoi by Shree Muktananda Swami (Bapu) offered these blessings:

To run a successful school one should have the following:

- Buddhijiv – To have correct information and the truth
- Shrump Ape – to have Utsaha
- Dhan Ape – to have Niraviman – No Ego
- Raksham Ape – to have faith or to be faithful

With these in mind if you are on top of the Shikhar you should not sleep. If you do then you will fall from the top.

With this Shree Muktananda Swami wished every one well and thanked Shishukunj for its works. He blessed all and added for Shishukunj to continue its works

8. Questions and Answers, Comments

- Babubhai from Bangalore project asked that in their school there are 150 children. In his opinion he said that out these 150 it is likely that 50 children will never make it in terms of their development educationally or otherwise despite all the given resources. He asked if he should screen before taking on a child? Dr Shantuben answered that who are we to judge the child. Perhaps another professional such as a sychologist, counsellor or a special needs educator could assist.
- Dr Shantuben said that the words “Deaf and Dumb” should be removed. It is only an hearing impairment.
- Virendrabhai asked why can we not expand around the world?
- Exhibition from the schools which expressed the works from children and staff were enjoyed by all
- Shishukunj International School (Indore) - Dhirenbhai Davey read a letter from one of the parent’s. The letter states that the school goes up to the 5th class. Her child Trisha Salocha has a medical condition which has ratio of 5 million:1. Trisha has been attending for the past month and a half. Trisha has flourished well in the short time. She is given opportunity to be like any other child in the school despite her losing memory with the other conditions. Trisha is a normal child and that she is given unconditional love. The parent expressed her gratitude for the school and that the school can make a huge difference to a child’s life however short that life may be.
- Due to lack of time and intended purpose of giving non-Shishukunj organisations the platform to share their work, Shishukunj centres and their representatives present were part of the audience. An opportunity to allow them to present their work, thoughts to be sought for at future sammelan events.
- There was a visit to Shree K S Dedhia Mukbhadir Vidya Mandir school for the opening of their new building. All attending the sammelan went to the opening – seeing the new construction, school children performed variety of dances. This showed the works and dedication of the staff and children
- Event concluded – acknowledging the value of education for a child and to continue with all our efforts with renewed vigour
- Post Event – feedback from most of the participants was very positive and they wished this event was held over 2-3 days on annual/bi-annual basis. Indore Shishukunj has offered to host the next Sammelan

*(PS. Many more thoughts were presented but not all have been captured – apologies for any omissions or incorrectness in our understanding)*

**“Let Every Bud Bloom”**

**BAAL DEVO BHAVA**