

Mosamat Budhiya Shiksha Nirman Sangathan (MBSNS)

Annual Report 2017-18

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Introduction

The Mosamat Budhiya Shiksha Nirman Sangathan (MBSNS), was registered under the Trust Act on 11th October, 2017. The Board of Trustees include Magsaysay awardee Aruna Roy, Retired General Manager of Indian Railways Sri. Ashutosh Swami, Dalit Mahila activist Radha Devi and JJSS founding members Ashish Ranjan and kamayani swami. Though the registration is new, this educational initiative itself is born out of a ten year old struggle that started in Araria district of North Bihar. The struggle was a humble attempt to ensure that people’s entitlements under laws like the NREGA were met. In the process we committed ourselves to building a better world, “nyay samanta ho aadhaar aisa rachenge ham sansar!”

However, even in the early phase of our struggle we understood that the struggle was as much within as outside. The hierarchies that we saw outside had made their homes in our hearts and minds. And we have in our own limited ways tried to keep our caste, class, gender, religion and minorities lenses on to ensure that we worked with justice in our heart and in our actions. This education initiative is to

strengthen what we have instinctively known, as Dr. Ambedkar said “Shikshit Ho! Sangathit ho! Sangharsh Karo! Sangharsh Karo!”

The MBSNS Centre

The MBSNS centre is a space which is accessible to all interested in building a better tomorrow. Initially we wanted to run an after school programme at this centre, but in the absence of resources, we have only been able to accommodate a few children, at the middle school level. But, this centre is open to all interested in hosting trainings and workshops for a better world. We have hosted workshops of the JJSS, Project Potential and Centre for Health and Resource Management (CHARM) at this centre. We have also ourselves organized workshops, a description of the same is in the activities described below. The centre is also available to women in distress.

Youth Workshop

After MBSNS volunteers Sohini and Tanmay returned from Brazil, sessions with young people and older activists from sister organisation Jan jagaran Shakti Sangathan (JJSS) were held to share their learnings from their travels. In these sessions, the workshop participants collectively built a socio-economic and political analysis of the current world we live in, by identify, naming and understanding the structures of oppression that bind us, in order to design concrete actions to take to liberate ourselves from an unequal, unjust world. This workshops was held in the first week of October, 2017.

Workshops and Blackboard to the village with Nasir Bhai

Nasiruddin ji is a senior free lance journalist, he is also a friend of the Trust. He spent the last week of October with us in Araria. He organized a workshop to help young people learn ways that would lead them to bring out a newsletter that would bring out the state of affairs in their own localities. This was then followed up with a youth workshop on issues of gender, religion and discrimination.

During this week, Nasir bhai also conducted black board to the village meetings on issues of gender based discrimination in Plassey (Araria), Choti Bathnaha (Katihar) and Garighat (Katihar). Each of these village level meetings were attended by 50-60 people.

Theatre Workshop

Effie a theatre activist from England, spent around four weeks with us, doing theatre workshops in different districts namely Saharsa, Araria and Vaishali. These workshops were an effort to engage with young people through theatre and make them think about the society around them. All the workshops had an initial phase of warm up games and exercises to get participants feeling comfortable and expressive. Following this, the workshops worked in different ways like use of Image Theatre.

Day Camps

Youth who have got associated with us through the internship programme find it easy to visit us at the centre and even stay for residential workshops and trainings for 2 to 5 days, but, to reach out to those youth and children, who are not so closely associated with us, we go to the village and organize a day camp there. In this camp a group of 20 to 30 children and young people in the age group of 13 to 18 are pre-registered by a local contact. The participants are then engaged in a discussion on gender, through their own experiences and through short films from the UNICEF meena series. Three such camps were held in the first week of January.

Social Justice Film Festival

MBSNS was part of organizing a two day film festival and workshop in Patna. There were about 50 participants, who watched around ten documentary films in two days, with each film followed by a discussion facilitated by documentary film maker Amudhan R P (from Chennai) and local film buffs including but not limited to Mona, Tanmay, Udayan bhai. Each film was made in it's own distinctive style and engaged the audience beautifully. (February 17-18, 2018).

Women's workshop and Women's Day

The MBSNS celebrated its first international women's day (8th March) and death anniversary of Savitri Bai Phule (10th March), with a two-day women's workshop at the MBSNS centre. About 30 women from rural areas of Araria, Katihara and Vaishali came together understanding the women's movement and celebrating its achievements. The workshop involved a lot of singing, dancing and enjoying our solidarity.

Staging of Abrodh Basini

Rokaiya begum, probably the first feminist in South Asia who is famous for her short story Sultana's dream and other write ups was brought alive in araria on the eve of the International Women's Day (7 March, 2018), by a wonderful team - nutan, mona, nivedita, chandrakanta di, nasir bhai, roshan and gulshan. This dramatized reading of the writings of Rokaiya Begum, is a presentation of Gender Jihad with support from IPTA. Over 200 residents of Araria Town watched the 70-minute presentation in rapt attention.

Participation in Yuva Samvad

Yuva Smavad is an initiative of the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) to engage youth in building a better world. The MBSNS also sent its active members to participate in the National Yuva Samvad, held in Benaras, contributing and gaining from the collective learning.

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A detailing of the Objectives met through the after school residential programme:

1. Strengthen children's school education – Ensuring that children are able to get the 3 Rs (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic).

It has been well demonstrated by the ASER reports that quality of education is questionable in both Government and private schools alike, with the exception of some elite schools. It is in this context that our work would be such that the young people we work with we will try and ensure that they meet the basic 3R requirement that tally with their age. For example the ASER survey points out that across states it has been found that first graders are unable to read simple sentences the young people we engage with, we will use the PRATHAM booklets to ensure that they meet age specific requirements regarding reading, writing and arithmetic. However we acknowledge that school education is not only about the 3Rs and will work on other aspects of education as we move forward.

2. Personality development, which would go beyond giving a career oriented education.

In the present societal context education has become a means of getting ahead in the rat race for jobs and acquiring personal material comforts. But we would like to help evolve a larger understanding of education where it is not just a mean of getting a job but will translate into overall personality development, where a person learns to question, where they are able to debate what is right and what is wrong and come to their own conclusions, where they develop a value framework beneficial for the betterment of society.

3. Introduce innovative pedagogy which would not capitalize on fear and corporal punishment

- It is indeed true that even today corporal punishment is seen as a means of disciplining and self-restraint and internal discipline are not inculcated from an early age.
- We will work on developing and building on existing pedagogical methods which help children and adults learn alike through play, activities and joy, where fear is not the driving force, where internal desire for learning and inquisitiveness will help people learn.
- We will not try to re-invent the wheel we know that many organisations and individual have worked on innovative learning and we shall tap into their resources and learn from their experiences even while we will carry out our own experiments and learnings.

4. Develop morality and values which will ensure changes within oneself and in the society around us.

As discussed in point 2 for us education will not be limited to career advancement but will focus on developing a framework which would contribute to the development of society and upholding some basic principles like non-violence, dignity to all irrespective of caste, class, gender, race, ethnicity etc, democratic and participatory decision making etc.

5. Develop scientific thinking

India is still marred by a lot of superstition and unscientific practices. These interfere with an individual's growth to their full potential. And our initiative will try and find ways to engage people with scientific and rational thinking.

6. **Strengthen Government education system**

Though we continue to be torn between schooling and de-schooling society. As a group taking this initiative, we would like to see a just and equitable education system which is easily accessible to all children. It is in this context that if given a chance we would like to engage with the 'sarkari school'. But this will be contingent on the Government's openness to give us such a space.

7. **Develop strong leadership qualities in the younger generation**

Children need to learn more than 3Rs, and our initiative will try its best to focus on overall personality development of the child. It is in this context that children would be encouraged to learn through doing, engaging in sports, theatre and various forms of learning and self expression and not limit learning to the classroom setting.

8. **Access to learning resources:** Ensure that children from under-privileged backgrounds get the same opportunities, as the middle classes for example computer education, proper sports facility, reading room-library, interactions with people from different walks of life.

9. **Develop our own understanding of what education means.** It is true that even as we write this proposal to start an intervention in the field of education, we are constantly challenged by what our understanding of education is, whether we believe in monitoring and standardized testing, whether play way of learning can be sustained in the present schooled education and other related matters. It is for this reason that we will have a space to learn from other initiatives and listen to educators and their experiences.