


NIWALI ASHRAM

ISSI

MS-803

NIWALI ASHRAM: A PROUD PEOPLE'S PRIDE

An Ashram Where Girls Regain Their Lost Grounds



Sponsored By  
Department of Women and Child Development  
Ministry of Human Resources Development  
Government of India.

With Assistance From  
United Nations Children's Fund  
New Delhi.

Prepared By  
Institute of Social Studies Trust  
5, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg  
New Delhi.

An Ashram Where Girls Regain Their Lost Grounds

**a**ll too often, girls are trained differently than boys within families. School education is thought necessary or secondary. This tendency is a result of a number of social, cultural and historical factors. The status of a girl varies widely between families, but some discrimination and neglect can be observed in every situation, whether it be in town or village, at home or outside, and there are significant differences in the atmosphere in which girls and boys are brought up. Our society seeks to be modern and this includes achieving through constitutional means equality of status and treatment. However, gender inequalities do not seem to be on their way out. Many questions arise: how can the dream of equality come true ? Through education, or through a social movement ? In practice, education often remains confined to formal schooling while awareness raising aims at inculcation of ideals and values which generally remain outside of educational system. Though, ideally education should mean cultivation of the intellect of the society. Such an education reinforces functionality and dynamism within the society, and thus awareness building becomes part of education. It is not so in practice though the education system claims to be such.

It must be pointed out that attempts have been made in the past to rectify this, - new curricula have been adopted,

new subjects introduced, new methods of instruction tried out and simultaneously methods of evaluation have also been changed.

Despite this, formal education is no guarantee for one's place in the mainstream.

It is debatable though what the mainstream is. To use an analogy, like a river, which is sum total of an innumerable small streams of their own identity and importance, can innumerable limbs of a society retain their value and identity while merging into making of a great stream ?

Gandhiji, even while absorbed in the quest for independence, gave much thought to the practice of education. He attempted to change the perception of education as a formal process, a means to a better job or for more money, into a foundation for better and more successful life. 'Success' was understood as nothing short of progress for a society, stemming out of individual improvement. He regarded education as meaningful only when it gave to life a fulfilment that was more than material; it was a means to independence, necessarily accompanied by the sense of society and devotion to one's duty to it, where mental and manual work were equally respected and valued.

Even today, we find some institutions and people who have tried to translate Gandhiji's teachings on education into a reality. One might well wonder whether such educational institutions have not been fair to their students by adopting different methods and perhaps setting them apart from their

peers. Have such students lost something by not following established educational patterns of Western Models ?

To examine this paradigm, Institute of Social Studies Trust selected two institutions with unique methods of instruction. These are : Lakshmi Ashram in Almora district of Uttarakhand; and Nevali Kanya Ashram in tribal district of Western Nimad in Madhya Pradesh. Through this study we wish to understand how and to what extent these schools of backward areas inspire more self-confidence in the girls so that they exercise their rights and accept their responsibilities in a manner that is fulfilling both in their family life and socially. In other words, "empower them" in truest sense of the term for selfsome and dignified adulthood. If indeed we find that this has been achieved, the manner and methods by which this becomes possible must also be studied.

### METHODOLOGY

The study of Nivali Ashram started in January 1988. However, the Institute of Social Studies Trust had occasion to become acquainted with the numerous activities of the Ashram about a decade ago. In 1980, a catalogue of selected institutions working with women in different parts of the country was prepared and a preliminary study of the Ashram was done. Two years later the Institute assisted in setting up a plantation and a nursery in Nivali. In the same year the Institute was also associated with efforts by the Ashram at encouraging tribal art and as part of this process, in 1984-85, products of local artisans were sold through the medium of Dastkar Bazaar in several large cities.

As a result of this 10 years old association it has been possible to complete the present study in a few months.

The establishment, history and development of Nivali Ashram, as well as the difficulties faced by it, were studied prior to undertaking the field work. Although it is not reproduced here at length, it has served to ensure that the researchers approach the Ashram with some information and understanding.

At the same time communication was established with the teachers, students, former students, government officials, local citizens, villagers etc.; i.e. all those who were associated with the Ashram or who studied there.

### FIELD VISITS

After the preliminaries a field visit followed. Information available in reports, school-records and in other studies of the Ashram was collected. Contact was also made with ex-students and teachers of the Ashram who are now based in Indore.

A second visit was made at the end of March 1988 and interviews with students of varying ages, teachers, the directors of the various activities of the Ashram and students at the Government Higher Secondary School were conducted. On this trip slides were taken of the different activities of the Ashram.

### TRIBAL GIRL: NO BURDEN TO THE FAMILY

This report is based on all the information so collected. Nivali Ashram, as we describe it here is an institution imparting education to tribal girls. Tribal society is known for its openness and tribal girls are far more independent and self-reliant than girls in other societies. Birth of a girl is a joyful news: at no time does a girl represent burden to her family. At every age and in every sphere of life, men and women work together, shoulder to shoulder. There is no system of dowry; festivals such as 'Bhagauriya' are an occasion for free selection of her mate, and while there is payment of bride-price this too is voluntary.

Such an open, free society has had to face many crises over the last few decades. The forests, upon which their lives depend, are no more under their command.

To provide education, and one that is appropriate to the society, is not an easy task. It is very likely that there would have been some shortcomings, some lost opportunities. But it would be unfair to place the responsibility for these wholly on the Ashram; so much depends on how those who see themselves as the mainstream view those who are not - a note which takes us into the realm of politics.

#### A SMALL BEGINNING

In 1952, on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi held a camp at Mandav in M.P. Women social workers came from long distances. During the camp they witnessed the difficulties faced by tribal women. Among these women were the young Kanta Bahen and Lila Bahen Bhandari. Deeply affected by the poverty and injustice they resolved to work among them. It was thus in Nivali village that an Ashram was established on 27th March 1953. Kanta Bahen's work is a saga of triumph of devotion, selfless service of the Ashram over all sorts of scarcities and uncompromising conditions. In the field of education, particularly among tribal women, Nivali Ashram's contribution stands out prominently as one of more important experiments in the country.



NIWALI : AN INTRODUCTION

Surrounded by the Satpura hills, the tribal area of Nivali is situated along the Indore-Khetiya road at a distance of approximately 185 kms. from Indore. The small village of Nivali was once a part of the Western Nimad district and until recently was surrounded by dense forest. Over the last few decades unchecked felling of trees has destroyed the forest and denuded the hill sides. The misfortune of the forest has been accompanied by similar worsening of the situation for the tribal people. Not only the mainstay of their lives, the forest, is destroyed but the exploitation by their own people shook the very foundation of confidence in the new structures. An outsider was viewed by the tribal society with suspicion, for, ever since colonisation of India, non-tribal had become an outsider, as his chief purpose it had become to act as an agent of cultural, spiritual and economic enslavement of tribals and to dispossess them. Obviously therefore a pre-conditioned scenario awaited Kanta Bahen.

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

At the time of the establishment of the Ashram in 1953, there was no land available to them. However, a sympathetic Government official obtained permission for Kanta Bahen and Leela Bahen to house their organisation in a dak-bungalow in Nivali. Outside the dak-bungalow the sign-board 'Kanya Ashram' was put up. Kanta Bahen and Leela Behan began their service initially in the field of health and education of tribal women. However, the people of

neighbouring villages were suspicious and resistant to the very idea of sending their daughters to the residential school, and a few, four or five, who came, did not want to stay. Gradually the situation changed for the better and the Ashram was able to win their confidence.

Gardhi, a tribal, whose old age was the mark of the vicissitudes of his community, unwillingly, but very naturally voiced, slowly but firmly, the mind of his fellow men and women. He would, on his own, comfortably squat at the door of the dak bungalow every morning, and go on satisfying through conversation, various sorts of genuine queries and questions, with dignity and simplicity. Kanta Bahen would answer every question with patience and concern. Gradually Gardhi Bhai started appreciating ideals of the Ashram and the inmates. Gardhi Bhai became the admirer and a proponent of the cause of Ashram. He would go from village to village, from house to house, and tell people about the Ashram, persuading them to send their daughters there. On one occasion Gardhi Bhai invited the workers of the Ashram to his village. He sent an auspiciously decorated bullock cart to bring them. At the time, only four girls lived in the Ashram. This small but intimate gesture of honour erased that day the wall of distrust between the Ashram and the tribal community. Something that had held them back had disappeared. The dak bungalow, so far vacant became a smaller place as the number of intimates started

fast growing. The Ashram was then moved from that little hillside to the valley, where a larger space was made available in a Public Works Department building.

#### GROWING TREE

The Ashram organised a camp that year so that men and women could get better acquainted with the Ashram. 20 days of intimate living and sharing with Ashramites brought them close. The people came to hold the Ashram in higher esteem. <sup>The</sup> fame of the Ashram spread and from all around people began to send their daughters and once again the premises proved to be inadequate, and in 1960, building was extended. The Ashram which started with 4 girls has approximately 500 girls today. The number increases each year. New activities are also added at the same time. The seed planted in 1963 has grown like a banyan tree, its many branches achieving an independent life and supporting the parent tree.

From the beginning the Ashram did not follow basic education. It followed the normal Government curriculum. Growth of education among the tribals, specially among the girls, has been the acknowledged aim. The Ashram has been markedly more successful than others. Though the Ashram has endorsed the current educational system and follows in every respect the prescribed state educational criteria. Despite this, it has opened up new vistas for the tribal girls.

#### AN NGO INFLUENCING GOVERNMENTAL SCHOOLS

There may not be many such educational efforts by non-governmental agencies that would influence neighbouring govern-

mental organisations so much that the latter, of its own volition, should hand over its own schools to an NGO. In the district, both the non-governmental Kanya Ashram and the Government School followed the same curriculum. If there was any difference, it was probably with regard to the facilities. The Ashram had fewer students in comparison with the Government School. However, students the Ashram school was able to produce were certainly the better ones. Gradually this was acknowledged by the Government too. Today, a Government run school at Varala (67 kms. away) and also a school and hostel about 37 kms. from there, at Dhanaura village, are in the process of being handed over to the Ashram authorities. It is not through any new experiment in education, but due to its acceptance by the tribal community that the Ashram is reputed. Its various activities and honest and careful book-keeping and social accountability has earned the Ashram its place among the tribals of the area.

#### SELF RELIANCE VERSUS FINANCIAL STRENGTH

Financial strength or self-reliance is a distant dream. And there are number of reasons for this. The girls come from the community which is thoroughly dispossessed of its property and wealth. Poverty, misery and helpless and insecure life conditions is their reality. It is almost their destiny in the present order of things. One can be prosperous financially and otherwise while living among them, if only one represent those whose prosperity has grown out of dispossession of such and other communities and social groups. It was a difficult task to run a school on its own. So Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust and various Government grants provided the needed support for the Nivali Ashram.

In an area described as backward there was no opportunity for girls to get education. Today, because of the Nivali Ashram, the situation is completely different. Between 1953 and 1967 about 2500 girls were educated and they have been enabled to participate in a number of various activities and in different fields (See Table 1). They have found their place in various professions as well; in legal profession, in teaching, in various Government services and in social welfare work, etc. Those who made full use of Ashram facilities and in a spirit of self confidence continued their studies, successfully went into higher education as well. (Table 2).

As stated earlier the Ashram follows curriculum prescribed by the Secondary Education Board of Madhya Pradesh Government. So from the very beginning tribal girls start learning the 3 R's. But this formal structure is once again supported by a stronger base of the basic education. That is why the girls coming to Niwali Ashram are not like those who join different Government schools. In a strict but homely discipline they wake up at 4.30 in the morning and upto 10 in the night they are busy with their number of activities. In addition to the regular education activities, the Ashram has several other activities for the all-round development of the students. These include sanitation, gardening, farming and forestry, crafts, social work, padyatra, awareness building.

The tribal girls have the qualities and potential, the Ashram only provided required environment, resources and discipline. The atmosphere in the Ashram stimulates the

spirit of self-reliance which has remained for generations in young girls, and amply demonstrates the virtues of cooperation.

With such a large number of students, ranging from 3 to 16/17 years of age, about 500 in all, the Ashram could not function smoothly without self-reliance. For cleaning and other jobs in the Ashram including daily household chores, girls are divided into 34 groups and the work is shared. Each group has 15 girls. Each girl is given appropriate duties according to her age.

The work entrusted to each group is changed by rotation every 15 days. It is in this way that all work -- such as washing, cleaning, cooking etc. relating to the Ashram, as well as some farming, nursery, gardening, gets done. The number of guests and visitors to the Ashram has increased considerably, as the Ashram gets better known, and the job of looking after these guests, and cooking for them, is also done by the girls. One among them is selected as guest-in-charge with the help of others in her group, looks after special, if any, requirements of the guests.

Apart from such shared responsibilities for the work of the community, the girls also do by themselves all that is required for meeting their personal needs. They do by themselves cleaning of their rooms in the hostel, washing their clothes etc. All such activities are scheduled in the daily time table. At such times, each of the Ashramite gets together near a small well, as though with one simultaneous effort, all the clothes are washed.

Eight tribal women are employed in the kitchen. This is because cooking four meals (two light and two heavy) would take too much time if the girls were to do it all by themselves and there would be insufficient time left for them to study. This is clearly given in the daily routine of the Ashramites (See Table 3).

Seven out of about 16 hours are spent on formal schooling. Given this busy schedule it was a wise move not to insist upon self-reliance in cooking. The employment given to 8 tribal women should also be noted as positive point.

With 500 girls, there are obviously instances of minor illnesses and other health problems. Simple and easily digested food is made for these girls. The supervision and care of such girls, their diet and other needs, is the responsibility of the Health-in-charge and her group.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

As pointed out earlier the Ashram was initially founded partly by the Kasturba Trust and partly by Government. But the tribal community has been increasingly interested and involved in the affairs of the Ashram. The extension of its activities has been made possible because of the local population's generosity, for example, when the increasing number of students made an extension necessary.

Shri Hasan Ali, a Muslim resident of Nivali, donated to the Ashram 3 acres of adjoining piece of land. This amply shows the support that other communities have given to the

Ashram. In the same way, 5 kms. from the Ashram is a place called Talav, which was given to the Ashram by the State Forest Department for the construction of a school and a hostel, and for farming. This is an act without precedent because forest land is never given for farming. In fact, in many States we find growing tension between the tribals and the Forest Department on the issue of forest land used for cultivation by the tribals. Another example is found in the action of Shri Bhai Singh, a tribal of Jhakkar village (3 kms. from the main Ashram) who voluntarily donated his valuable land to the Ashram.

This generosity of State and the society has been repaid by the Ashram through its efforts to accomplish its work well.

The improvement of the health and education of tribal girls were two initial objectives of the Ashram. Today, the Ashram is engaged in a wide range of Activities.

The cost of education and living expenses are met through donations. But, so as to enable the older girls to earn while learning, sewing and knitting are also taught. Older girls stitch clothes for the younger ones and are able to earn between Rs.15/- to Rs.20/- per month. Lessons in stitching/knitting are open to other local residents too. This activity is supported by M. P. Government. In this way these girls earn while they learn.

In the same way the women living nearby are organised into groups for making and selling badi, papad, spices, etc.



now handled by a women's cooperative society, known as the 'Shanti Mahila Grih Udyog', which today has 500 members. This activity has helped many women to earn something to support their household. The Ashram kitchen also buys spices and other things from the same cooperative. In this way the cooperative has an assured bulk buyer and the Ashram also gets pure things for the kitchen.

#### ANOTHER BEGINNING

The loss of valuable forest produce and of lands has resulted in considerable poverty. The once healthy and contented tribal community is now given to many diseases. The number of polio victims for example is large.

On one occasion some women from the Ashram visited Jogbad village. There they saw a small 4-year old child who had lost the strength and vitality of both his legs following an attack of polio. Kanta Behan felt that there must be something the Ashram could do for the child. The parents agreed to send the child to the Ashram. He was kept in the nursery and brought up there. But as he grew up, Kanta Behan was worried, as according to the rules, no boy was kept anywhere other than in the nursery. This boy, Prakash, would soon be too old for the nursery. There was a choice between abiding by rules, or keeping him in the Ashram until he could stand on his own. Kanta Behan decided that 3 kms. from the Ashram, in Jhakkar, she would open a new Ashram for such handicapped children.

A prosperous merchant of the area, Vasant Bhai Aggarwal came to the help of the Ashram, and undertook to help 8 handicapped children.

This small but beautiful Ashram is known by the name 'Puja Vatika'. Today, there are 50 handicapped children who are brought up and educated here. The Ashram had these children examined by specialists from Indore and Delhi and has had them treated with some success.

Despite being handicapped, these children are able to do much of the work, cleaning etc. in the nursery and have thus achieved a measure of self-reliance. Today, with the help of everyone, there is a flowering garden, nursery and fields here. Among the barren, brown hillsides this greenery can be sighted from very far away.

The health facilities started right at the outset, have today taken the form of a local hospital. The sympathy and understanding with which the sick are tended, the affection with which they are cared for, attracts more people than the large Government run hospital which is located next door. Often, if necessary, the doctors at the Government hospital come to examine the seriously ill and give their medical advice.

#### ASHRAM : A FOCAL POINT

Today, the Ashram has become a focal point in the district for many organisations and activities that exist there. From time to time various government departments hold camps, meetings etc. to make their programmes known to the tribals. On such occasions, large number of tribals, men and women, old and young, present to the Government officials their various problems and difficulties.

LOK ADALAT

This institution, established 35 years ago to spread education in surrounding villages, has become a good mediator for obtaining justice for the local people. The Lok Adalat in the Ashram, presided over by Kanta Behan, is able to settle disputes. The idea of a Lok Adalat (People's Court) is that all these cases of conflicts, which are usually referred to police or courts of law should be referred to it for peaceful resolution. After a report has been lodged, Lok Adalat makes an enquiry and then summons both the parties, statements are invited and if necessary witnesses are called. After considering all aspects of the case a verdict is given. The main power is based upon love, persuasion and goodwill. In referring cases to Lok Adalat, no one has to spend any money.

The Lok Adalat of Nivali/<sup>Ashram</sup> has played a major role in freeing people from the usual exploitation and harassment by the police, money lenders and lawyers. According to a detailed study done by B. B. Chatterjee about 25 percent of the cases are related to loans from money lenders. 25 percent are of corrupt practices by Government employees, some 30 percent are related to land disputes, mostly connected with revenue department, 12 percent are of personal quarrels and fights, another 8 percent are related to women.

Though the 'Lok Adalat' covers the entire district of West Nimad, but it is largely confined to Nivali block. The 'Lok Adalat' has played a very important role, not only in terms of saving money but also in terms of eradication of long-standing enmity.

The girls of the Ashram value this 'Lok Adalat' as an instrument of love and justice, which reaffirms their faith in a caring institute.

#### WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Of late, the Ashram has also attempted to form Mahila Mandals. The aim is to create women's groups in each village, to understand their difficulties and help them to get work that interests them. In the beginning these Mahila Mandals were formed to establish close contacts with tribal women and their membership was drawn from the wives of sympathetic Government employees and a few tribal women. Later on, only tribal women were admitted to these Mahila Mandals. The main objectives of these Mandals were to create a favourable and sympathetic attitude towards the Ashram and its activities, and to motivate parents to send their children to the Ashram, but gradually these Mandals have become an important instrument of around development of the Tribal Women.

A year ago, an Anganwadi was opened. 50 women are undergoing training here.

#### CONSERVING TRADITIONAL ARTS

Since last 3 years, the Ashram is also trying to serve traditional crafts which are slowly disappearing. Many skilled craftsmen are attracted to the facilities offered by the Ashram, and they make and sell their goods. The Ashram has arranged for these goods to be sold in the Dastkar Bazar and linked-up tribal economic activities with the non-tribal market structure, though in an informal way.

In the last 3 years the Ashram has sold their goods in Delhi, Bombay and Madras. They have participated in 6 Dastkar Bazaars. The bamboo products in particular, baskets, bow and arrow, and ornaments made from local material have been immensely popular. By putting a price tag on the dying art, the Ashram has once again showed that it is not limited to tribal girls' education, but to the welfare of tribal society itself.

#### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Along with education, an all round development of the students is attempted. On important festivals and celebrations such as Kalidas Samaroh, Republic Day, Independence Day and so on, the students of the Ashram have been winning awards for their performances. In sports as well, despite alien nature of such sports and inadequate facilities, they perform well. Shanta Badhda, who is in class VIII has been very successful in the game of shotput and has participated in state and national level competitions. Thus culturally also the Ashram has been able to link-up the tribals to non-tribal culture and expressions.

The Ashram maintains a close contact with the neighbouring villages as a result of these various activities. But to establish a specially close relationship with the families of students, parents are invited to the Ashram once a year. Various activities of the Ashram are explained to the parents, the progress of the student is discussed, and at the same time the various programmes for tribal welfare are also brought to their notice. The occasion is also used to organise people

to fight against social evils. About 500 parents attend such meetings.

While on the one hand the Ashram attempts to carry to the people the knowledge of Government programmes, it also on the other hand mobilizes people into protest actions against such programmes as are not conducive to their welfare.

#### SPREADING ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS

A good example is the Narmada Dam. Over the past year the Ashram has been organising the people of nearby villages which would be submerged. Six workers of the Ashram are engaged in compiling information about the assets and the property of the community of the villages which will be submerged, to ensure appropriate compensation. Ashram is associated with the 'Narmada Ghati Nav Nirman Samiti' in this task.

Today, the Ashram has a secure position in Western Khargawn. But few people are aware that Kanta Behan, who has been working here for the last 35 years, does not belong to this region. She comes from Meerut in U.P. and was drawn into social work through the influence of Thakkar Bapa. In her younger days she worked with families in Punjab, Haryana & Delhi, who had been uprooted by partition. It was then that she decided to spend her life as a health worker and joined the Kasturba Trust. This contact took her to Nivali and we have recounted what followed.

#### NIWALI: A MODEL FOR ALL SEASONS

Thirty five years ago when she left the security of a regular job to work in a remote and isolated area, she also

became the centre of controversy. The organisation did not wish to take the responsibility of sending a young and un-experienced girl to such a difficult place. Despite this Kanta Behan would not be persuaded to change her mind, and gradually her persistence won her the support of late Shri Krishnadas Jajuji, a well-respected Gandhian constructive worker and the Mahatma's associate. Over the years, the innovative approach to reach the tribal communities with the deep affection and diligence of Kanta Behan has added to the growth of the school. Educationists concerned with girls' education seek inspiration; whether it is formal or non-formal, nursery or adult education, basic or Government curricula, whatever their primary interest, all find in Niwali a model.

#### IMPACT OF THE ASHRAM

On the face of it, those who are in search of an alternative to the prevailing system of education might not find anything new in the Niwali Ashram. Yet even while subscribing to the prevalent formal educational system, this small organization has been responsible for some remarkable changes in the surrounding areas. The influence of the Ashram is visible among the girls who have graduated from it; in their homes, their villages, and in the blocks and districts in which numerous departments of Government have their offices.

That girls educated at Niwali have been able to pursue their studies further has already been noted. Importance

is not given to education alone. As the Ashram has grown in strength and established itself, and the number of girls has gone up, the link between the Ashram and the villages from which the girls came has become strong and durable. The most noticeable influence of this is the decrease in consumption of liquor. Although this has not been the subject of any special study, it is reported that in 1972 in 9 neighbouring villages there was a 60% fall in liquor consumption. In some areas the drop is even greater. This is all the more striking when we find that the Ashram has made no special efforts on this front. In the first few years the Ashram did make a few attempts to spread an anti-alcohol awareness but the greater influence has been indirect, stemming from the growth of the Ashram and the extension of its activities.

#### NOT A 'SCHOOL' ALONE

The villages nearby do not regard the Ashram simply as a school, or a hostel. To quite an extent they see it as an organisation that is their own which assists them in any difficulty. Whether their quarrel is with the patwari or the Forest Department were frequently resolved. In fact, it seems as if the development of the Ashram and its influence has reduced the incidence of injustices by the Forest Department towards the tribals.

In the same way, police excesses have gone down, again because numerous families asked the Ashram to intervene on their behalf and on many occasions senior officials as well as junior ones admitted to being in the wrong.



There is less room for corruption or injustice in other departments of Government too, due to the vicinity of the Ashram, as compared to other places. False debts attributed to the villagers by the bank also stopped with the intervention of the Ashram, and subsequently an inquiry into this was also conducted. In the course of this study an incident was observed in which a tribal took a loan from a merchant of 'Poha' (a rice preparation) and 1 quintal of bajra. The merchant put a price of Rs.1800/- to this, and was about to take away in repayment a pair of valuable bullocks. The farmer came to the Ashram in distress. The Ashram summoned the merchant and the influence of the organization is so great that this man too came to tell his side of the story.

The ashram then correctly evaluated the loan and had the bullocks given back to the farmer.

It is hard to estimate how incidents of injustice are stemmed by the existence of such a place where each small incident is fully investigated and justice meted out.

TABLE - I : Ashram Girls working in different Government and Non-government Organisations.

1.	Sub Judge	1
2.	Accountant	14
3.	Clerks in Districts, Forests, Gram Panchayats and Social Welfare Departments	11
4.	Telephone Operator	3
5.	Lecturer in Degree Colleges	3
6.	Secondary Teachers	10
7.	Principal, Middle Schools	3
8.	Teacher Primary and Middle Schools	72
9.	Women and Child Development Officer	2
10.	Gram Sevika	3
11.	Warden	7
12.	Supervisor	2
13.	Health Workers - Government & Non-government	22
14.	Anganwadi Workers	67

TABLE - II : Number of Ashram Girls gone in for Higher Education.

L. L. M.	1
M.A.B.Ed.	2
M. A.	19
B. A. B. Ed.	2
B. A.	41

TABLE - III : Daily Routine

4.00 a.m.	Morning - First Bell
4.30 a.m.	Wash
4.30 to 5.30 a.m.	Study
5.30 to 6.00 a.m.	Morning Prayer
6.00 to 7.00 a.m.	Collective Cleaning of School
7.00 to 8.00 a.m.	Breakfast
8.00 to 9.30 a.m.	Bath. Later students are divided into teams for stitching and gardening.
9.30 to 10.30 a.m.	Lunch.
10.30 to 5.00 p.m.	School
5.00 to 5.30 p.m.	Free time for personal work.
5.30 to 6.30 p.m.	Supper
6.30 to 7.00 p.m.	Evening Prayers
7.00 to 8.00 p.m.	Play and Personal work
8.00 to 10.00 p.m.	Study
10.00 p.m.	Sleep

SUNDAY : Students indulge in personal cleaning and washing clothes. They also sift pulses, rice, wheat barley and spices in team.

TABLE - IV : Details of Vth Class

YEAR	No. of Girls	No. of girls who appeared for Examination	No. of girls passing the examination	Percentage of successful girls/students
1973	27	27	23	85
1974	23	22	20	90.9
1975	31	31	29	93.55
1976	32	32	27	84.36
1977	32	32	29	90.62
1978	23	21	16	76.00
1979	24	24	23	95.83
1980	27	27	24	88.88
1981	27	27	22	81.05
1982	31	31	27	87.00
1983	34	34	28	82.35
1984	34	34	33	97.00
1985	36	36	36	100.00
1986	38	38	30	78.94
1987	40	40	33	82.05

TABLE - V : Details of VIIIth Class

YEAR	No. of girls	No. of girls appeared in Examination	No. of successful students	Percentage of successful students
1973	36	36	27	75.00
1974	40	40	29	72.5
1975	33	32	24	75.00
1976	32	32	13	40.62
1977	25	25	5	20.00
1978	37	37	13	35.13
1979	26	26	18	69.23
1980	28	26	13	50.00
1981	46	45	24	53.33
1982	46	46	27	57.17
1983	43	43	18	41.86
1984	68	68	41	60.3
1985	53	53	29	54.71
1986	39	39	30	76.92
1987	66	66	24	36.36

TABLE - VI : Status before 1973

YEAR	CLASS	NO. OF GIRLS
1952-54	I	13
1954-55	I	17
1955-56	II	24
1956-57	III	24
1957-58	IV	40
1958-59	V	40
1959-60	VI	45
1960-61	VII	45
1961-62	VIII	45
1962-63	VIII	45
1963-64	VIII	65
1964-65	VIII	83
1965-66	IX	100
1966-67	X	133
1967-68	XI	129
1968-69	VIII	178
1969-70	VIII	191
1970-71	VIII	209
1971-72	VIII	253
1972-73	VIII	282

TABIE VII : Status of Students (Girls) 1987-88

CLASS	NO. OF STUDENTS
I	117 (two sections)
II	45
III	49
IV	74
V	55
VI	92 (two sections)
VII	59
VIII	69 (two sections)
IX	25
X	14
XI	8
XII	1

NOTE : The decrease in number of students in higher classes indicates problem of drop outs which is associated with circumstances of the family. Also from IX onwards the number indicates girls living in the hostel only. Some of the students also join other services and carry on their studies as private students, which is evident from the Table No. VI where 41 girls have graduated.



We were fortunate to receive invaluable cooperation in preparation of this study from the staff members of the Kasturba Vanvasi Kanya Ashram of Niwali in West Nimad of Madhya Pradesh, and from a number of its present and past students as well as from the people of the area. We are specially indebted to Kanta Behan, Ram Pyari Behan, Kala Behan, Usha Joshi, Gomati Behan, Manorama Behan, Kalindi Behan, Manorama Menon and Pushpa Sinha. Without their cooperation and assistance, the study could not have been possible at all.

Originally written in Hindi by Manjushri Mishra, this paper was translated by Ratna Pandey and edited by Shri Rajiv Vora.

Institute of Social Studies Trust, 5, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi - 110 002 (India)

September 1988

