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Education and social change: Role of a school in the transformation of a village

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Abstract

This article looks at the role played by a school towards the social change within a village. The involvement of the school with the students and their families has made them connect fruitfully with the community. The extent of their connection has made it possible for them to sensitise the community towards education, and through education the corresponding importance of getting rid of social ills of child labour, child marriages and early end to daughter's education. They also help in sensitizing the children about their rights. Further, through their pedagogical practices, they have made it possible to instill constitutional values of equality, fraternity and secularism along with fighting the evils of feudalism still existent in the village. This study does reflect on the role of the work done by the school and uses the ethnographic as well as semi-guided interview methods to gather data.

Keywords: Social change, education, child groups, right to education

Introduction

Social change as a concept refers to the changes brought within the normative and value system within a society. The mechanisms which trigger such change could be technological, political, and religious or it could be caused by different combinations of the abovementioned factors. Villages were thought as self-sufficient, self-contained units whose value systems were arranged on strict kinship, caste, marriage, socio-economic and political norms. They were seen as 'traditional' social structures and contrasted with modern social structures, i.e. a city; feudal mode of production contrasted with the capitalist mode of production. However, Dumont and Pocock (1957) challenged the notion of village as representative of a self-contained microcosm of India, and its unit of study. Instead they understood caste hierarchy and its related institutions as the veritable unit of study for India. Later, many theorists have found how the villages are part of different interconnections with other villages, towns and cities either for economic, cultural or social purposes. This connection with the outer world changes the outlook towards a village construed as resistant to change. Of course there would always be elements within the old social order which will try and resist change, but eventually change does take place. In this instance, the village of Dolan had undergone widespread demographic and socio-economic changes. The village where the dominant caste were the upper caste Aguris had moved out of the village after obtaining education while Muslims had become the dominant groups within the village with a large percentage of landownership. However, the lack of education among the Muslims has been one of the key reasons that the community is understood to be backward even though they have started to own land and gain access to political power. It is within this context that the case of village Dolan becomes interesting where Muslims along with Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups have benefited from the change in the educational system practiced within the village, with a generational change in achievement of higher education and a much better literacy rate.

What do we mean by social change within a village?

As mentioned above, the consideration of a village as a self-contained unit of analysis has been debunked and the connections it has with the wider social order makes it important for us to understand how change within the social structure of the village has taken place. The village was actually established to house the caretakers and subsequent owners of land of the

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landlord/zamindar. The feudal order was fraught with coercion, violence and unnecessary taxation. The land redistribution undertaken in the 70's changed the land distribution pattern within the village but not to the extent that an equitable access was probable. The feudal system of agricultural production is on the decline with a greater number of marginal, small and medium farmers dominating the production of paddy. The process of mechanization of cultivation has also been in practice for a number of years. The profits from agriculture are low. Hence, we find that even though there is landownership, the accumulation of capital is low and growth is slow if you are not a big farmer.

Still, the greatest changes came with the transformation of the information technology and transportation options available to the people. It is the improvements in transportation and access to information which has brought in changes and connected the village to the global social order. As there have been changes worldwide, the village is exploring the newness within its limited geographical territory, a kind of simultaneity experienced by its people. As part of globalized capital system, the village is effected by the pricing mechanism emanating from the market. It is here that information through education can help prepare the individuals for the newness that young and the old generation is trying to grapple within their everyday lives. The changes in the social structure, for instance, in landownership pattern

or village settlement, that happen are gradual and uneventful. However, the changes in the labour structure and culture of the village make the transformation apparent. The majority of the population in the age group of 18-35 travel outside the village to work in different states of the country majorly in the informal sector. The change in the demography of the village has brought a change in the culture of the village where there is a chasm which exists between the old and young. The old do not mix with the younger population and hence there is a lack of direction for the kind of career, i.e. education and occupation, to be pursued by the young. The result is that many of the young are truants and leave school after primary or secondary school to join work. It is here that the role of an educational institution becomes important. However, before we venture into the discussion of the role of an educational institutional in social change, it is important that we contextualise and historicise the education situation in India, West Bengal and the village in question.

Educational indicators of India and West Bengal

India as a country has achieved a phenomenal change in terms of the literacy rate. This is reflected in the percentage increase in female literacy rate from the 2001 figures as well as the total literacy rate in table 1. However, there still remains a palpable gender gap in the literacy rates as represented below

Table 1: Tabular representation of Literacy rates in Post-independent India

Year	Rural			Urban			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.02	12.1	22.33	45.6	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.1	34.3	22.5	40.5	66	54.4	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	15.5	48.6	27.9	48.8	69.8	60.2	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.7	49.6	36	56.3	76.7	67.2	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36	64.05	81.09	67.2	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	46.7	71.4	59.4	73.2	86.7	80.3	53.67	75.26	64.83
2011	58.75	78.57	67.8	79.92	89.67	84.1	65.46	82.14	74.04
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	26%	10%	14%	9%	3%	5%	22%	9%	14%

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India

Table 2: Literacy rate in West Bengal in the last Three decades (in comparison with the national level data)

	1991			2001			2011		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
India	39.3	64.1	52.2	53.7	75.3	64.8	65.5	82.1	74.1
West Bengal	46.6	67.8	57.7	59.6	77.0	68.6	70.5	81.7	76.3

Source: 2011 census data, GoI.

In the state of West Bengal, the literacy rates have perpetually been above the national average. We find that there has been a remarkable improvement, in the last three decades, in the state literacy rate with the average touching 76.3% in 2011. Even though the state average is high, our focus is on the district of Bardhaman, and specifically the villages within the area of the Monteswar block. The district of Barddhaman has a population of 7,717,563 according to the 2011 census. The sex ratio 945 females per 1000 males which is an improvement from 922 in 2001. The literacy rate stands at

76.21 in the census 2011, which is an improvement from 70.18 in 2001. The male literacy rate stands at 82.42% while female literacy rate stands at 69.63%. In comparison, the Manteswar block has a population of 2, 37,398 with a sex ratio of 962.9 per 1000 males. The literacy rate stands at 64.8%. The male literacy rate is 69.2% while female literacy stands at 60.2% (the calculations for the block of Manteswar have been calculated from the raw data available). We find that the average figures for the block are dismal in comparison to the figures displayed for state and the district. While the district and state averages are similar averaging 76%, the figures for the block stand at 64.8%. In the next set of tables, we have provided a comparative assessment of the villages covered within the project. These villages have received support in different forms depending on the categorisation. In table 3, we find a comparison of the population of the villages along with the sex ratio. We find that the sex ratio is close to 1 or the same if not more for 8

villages. The lowest sex ratio is to be found in the villages of Mousa and Purba Khanpur followed by Bamunpara.

Table 3: Comparative Representation of Villages within the Manteswar Sub-district (Population and Sex Ratio)

Name of the village	No. of households	Population	Males	Females	Sex Ratio
Putsuri	1522	6806	3448	3358	(1002.9)
Dolan	451	2169	1069	1100	(1028.9)
Giriganagar	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Hatdanga	103	414	204	210	(1029.4)
Sonadanga	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Bamunpara	978	4314	2230	2084	(934.5)
Gulita	208	867	433	434	(1002.3)
Shahzadpur	527	2460	1230	1230	(1000)
Denur	920	4082	2013	2069	(1027.8)
Dhenua	774	3555	1801	1754	(973.9)
Golatun	539	2508	1241	1267	(1020.9)
Bhurkunda	93	415	213	202	(948.3)
Patun	352	1542	757	785	(1036.9)
Mousa	12	1483	791	692	(874.84)
Dausdanga	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
PurbbaKhanpur	124	565	300	265	(883.33)

Source: Census 2011, Government of India. Village level distribution of Population and number of literates. The data for three villages, Giriganagar, Dausdanga and Sonadanga, was not available in the census records.

In Table 4, we find a representation of the literacy rates among the population of the villages in the project. The 2011 census does not provide block wise representation of literacy data. The tables have thereby been compiled from raw data and the literacy rates have thus been compiled for the entire population of the respective villages. Still it is representative of the situation in the villages, and the work which needs to be done there. In the data given below, we find that the villages of Mousa (67.7%) and Patun (65.62%) have highest literacy rates among the villages. However, the total population of these villages are not as high as some of the other villages. Putsuri, Dhenua, Denur, Bamunpara and even Dolan have large population numbers. However, when it comes to literates, Putsuri has the highest number of literates given that it has the largest population as well. Still it has managed to achieve 60% literacy, though the female literacy stand at 56%. A similar trend is also visible in the other villages where the literacy rate is close to 57% while the female literacy rate stands at just a tad above 50%. The most alarming numbers are to be found in the village of Bamunpara. Here the number of illiterates far outnumber the number of literates, and the literacy rate stands at 44%. There are 1214 male illiterates as compared 1016 literates, while the number for the females stand at 1184 illiterates to 900 literates.

Table 4: Comparative Representation of Villages within the Manteswar Sub-district (Literate and Literacy Rates)

Name of the village	Total no of literates (literacy rate in brackets)	Male literates (male literacy rate in brackets)	Female literates (female literacy rate in brackets)	Illiterates (total)	Male illiterate	Female illiterate
Putsuri	4120(60%)	2235(64.8)	1885(56.13)	2686	1213	1473
Dolan	1342(61.8)	732(68.4)	610 (55.45%)	827	337	490
Giriganagar	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Hatdanga	282 (68.1)	149 (73.04)	133 (65.19)	132	55	77
Sonadanga	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Bamunpara	1916 (44.14)	1016 (45.5)	900 (43.18)	2398	1214	1184
Gulita	556 (64.12)	303 (69.9)	253 (58.2)	311	130	181
Shahzadpur	1255 (51.01)	664 (53.98)	591 (48.04)	1205	566	639
Denur	2311 (56.6)	1238 (61.5)	1073 (51.8)	1771	775	996
Dhenua	2053(57.7)	1109 (61.57)	944 (53.8)	1502	692	810
Golatun	1339 (53.38)	684 (55.11)	655 (51.69)	1169	557	612
Bhurkunda	305(73.49)	172(80.75)	133(64.84)	110	41	69
Patun	1012(65.62)	526(69.48)	486(61.9)	530	231	299
Mousa	1004(67.7)	560(70.79)	444(64.16)	479	231	248
Dausdanga	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Purbba Khanpur	283(50.05)	162(54%)	121(45.66%)	282	138	144

Source: 2011 Census data, GoI. The data for three villages, Giriganagar, Dausdanga and Sonadanga, was not available in the census records.

The low levels in the sex ratio indicators and literacy highlight the need for development/uplift in these villages. These are mostly populated by Muslims who are dependent on agriculture for their sustenance. Paddy is the staple crop sown twice a year with a few farmers trying their hand at other business and self-owned enterprises. There are many from the younger generation who travel to other states to work as masons for hire. There is a definite need for improvement in the literacy level of the population. Coupled with the monetary hardships of the majority of the population given their socio-economic condition, it becomes difficult for the children to gain a meaningful learning. The villages are part of various development policies such educational scholarships for children from primary to high school, Kanyashree schemes for girls and even cycles are provided

for the girls travel some distance to attend higher secondary schools. However, without much information on the availability of these schemes and how to apply for them, they would go unused and benefit none.

Vikramshila School: Philosophy and Practice

The Vikramshila School in Dolan was started under a special programme launched by the Ministry of Human Resources Development in the year of 1996 under the "Innovative and Experimental Scheme". Vikramshila was chosen as one of the organisations to start a school to implement their pedagogical practices, of forming an intrinsic connection between a child's context and the text which she reads. This emerges from the theories of cognitive development found in the writings of John Dewey¹ and Lev Vygotsky². It informed

¹ Dewey, John. 1899. School and Society. University of Chicago: Chicago

² Vygotsky, Lev. 1987. The Collected Work of L.F. Vygotsky.

the constructivist understanding towards education. According to this theoretical understanding, the premise for an effective and efficient learning lies in the empowerment of the child, in arming the child with the capability to understand her strengths and weakness, to explore what she can do with such capacities. Through a well formulated pedagogy which brings in the experiences of the children into the learning process, the knowledge of one's capabilities can help in realising a child's potential facilitated by the teacher and other stakeholders. The pedagogical practices within the school has been able to instill the values which are important to practice in everyday lives.

A normal day in the life of a student from Vikramshila School, Dolan, starts with her arrival in the school. It is followed by a process of cleaning their immediate environment. While some pick up leaves from the compound, others clean the classrooms and the places where they sit. The seating arrangement is novel in its own way. Students are made to sit in circles and are encouraged to discuss among themselves. They refer to their class teacher as "bondhu" or friend. It is a playful environment with learning happening at pace amenable to such beautiful minds. There are no textbooks for the students. Instead they are provided with a number of workbooks and other supplementary reading materials. The textbooks and uniforms are provided while no fees are charged. Most importantly there is a simplicity in the approach to learning: from the use of assembly to make students share important events that have happened around them, to the option of singing any song they feel like singing; compulsory time provided for them to play within the school compound; and the use of learning material in the pictures, charts as well as narratives to keep the student engaged and facilitate unprecedented learning. There is a freedom of movement within the class, smiles overwhelm and young eyes engages one to put in their best. The teacher-student relationship is one of equals. There is no table or chair separating or distancing the student from the teacher or privileging the position of the teacher. The bureaucratisation and rationalisation of education is altered and refurbished with a simple philosophy of proximity: a proximity to the student, to the family and to the community. A teacher is appointed a class starting from standard 1 which he/she has to teach until standard 4. The teacher needs to maintain a Child Profile for each student in her class. There are no subject teachers. The teachers form a particularly strong bond with the students, and become the best facilitator for improvements in a child's learning over such a long period of engagement. The teacher also has to make regular visits to students' homes in order to inquire about their absenteeism. The visits are also made to know if there are other pressing family issues which might affect their retention in school. Along with this, the organisation of cultural and sports events encouraging the participation of the community only emboldens the process of learning even further. The students find a voice even beyond the classroom when they are encouraged to shout slogans. An example of such an event is the vociferous participation of the children on World Education Day when they took out a march throughout the village along with their teachers. This was done to encourage parents to send their children to school, to ensure that the right to education of a child is ensured and, au fond, engage in an activity which made them feel important, as making a change and contributing to something.

The above practices described in detail point to number of practices which make the learning of ideals such as equality in terms of caste, class and religion, fraternity among the peers, secularism, disruption of the power equation between student and teacher, and the freedom to speak their minds. As we will learn later, the children also come to know about their rights, and while they grow up, they also start affecting changes within their family, community and their village. The practice of making a high caste Hindu or a high class Muslim student sit with a poor Schedule Caste student gives a positive basis for the growth of a lower caste student. It also provides a feedback mechanism where any wrong done to them can be addressed in a democratic manner where everyone has a say and the right to study.

The school started in a small thatched two room hut in the village. The entire community had come in and contributed to its building. The primary function of the school was to provide primary and pre-primary education to the children of the village. It would also serve as an example for other neighbouring schools to learn from during vacation camps. The school had other major functions such as providing remedial teaching to upper primary children and conducting workshops as well as teacher training. The other important intervention the school provided was to form eco-groups to sensitise the children to the environment. This was conducted through planting of trees within the school compound (in the new space donated by the village) and naming the trees after themselves. This would not only instil a sense of ownership, it would impart a sense of responsibility towards the tree. It was also decided that the trees which were planted would be sold, and the proceeds were to be divided between the panchayat and the children, it was to be used towards their education. This ecological intervention was not limited to the school premises. The faculty went further and intervened in the process of agricultural production. They conducted a successful campaign in which the use of chemicals was completely stopped while some took up vegetable farming as a successful and more profitable alternative to paddy farming. The school has come a long way from being just a model school. It has become an actor as well as an agent of social change within the community, which includes the neighbouring villages. However, there has always been a suspicion against the school which has percolated into the community psyche. This is not without precedence as the number of Muslims who worked there have either lost their jobs or have been demoted to a lower level job. Nonetheless, it has helped in bringing progressive and widespread changes within agriculture and has as a result affected the lives of the people involved with it. Further, the community also looks up to the organization for providing its children with an education which is not possible in a government school.

RtE Act and Quality Education

The school started practicing and implementing the tenets of RtE Act for a long time and have been promoting the best practices throughout the country. RtE or the Right to Free and Compulsory Education of all children within the age group of six to fourteen years is our youngest fundamental right passed in 2009 and came into effect from April, 2010 across the country except the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The act defines every concept attached to it in adequate details. The most commendable part of the act is that it speaks about quality education. It defines the quality aspects of education; how it should be fear-free and burden-free for a child and the

curriculum should be designed in alignment with the constitutional values of the country. Education should aim at the all-round development of a child and the facilitation process should involve building new knowledge upon the previous knowledge of the learner. It prohibits certain things like capitation fee, detention till grade VIII; mental, physical and sexual harassment/ abuse or punishment of a child and finally denial of admission to any child or conducting admission tests before enrolling a child to a school. All these measures are taken to make education child friendly and prepare the future generations with certain lifeskills that will enable them to bring about positive changes in the society.

Importance of Vikramshila in the village

“They call Vikramshila a math, that it belongs to Hindus, but is that right? We should be thankful for what they have done since in the entire Manteswar block there is no NGO like this. The project under which they are constructing toilets also has the philosophy of an NGO but they are charging 10,000 for constructing one toilet. However, they are making a profit of 3000Rs by using materials for 7000Rs to make the toilet. An NGO is supposed to stand for the truth and good of people, how are they saying that they are providing materials worth 10,000Rs, and making a profit of 3000Rs? Compared to that, the people of Vikramshila have gone around the world and are empowering the children from their own resources and providing them the abilities which they would otherwise lack. For example, our Nator master (Nazrul Mondal), who was at a precipice and did not know what to do. Or for that matter, Ador (Sudipta Samanta) who used to fight with his wife every day. However, gradually he started to withdraw himself from hurling abuses as he thought what the parents of the students would think if they heard him doing so. So they received a social push from the school to improve their lives. I don't fast during the month of Ramzan so I can always smoke a bidi near the mosque. However, when the month of Ramzan ends then I can always sit in the courtyard of the mosque and smoke if I wanted to. Similarly, those who work in that school have to be vigilant against doing the wrong things. If I have to show respect to an institution it should happen through changes within my own being and make it my own. The reason for someone's attachment to an institution should be through the work that institution does, how it is showing the path towards an effective education and at the same time binding people to it by providing them with work. If we were able to send 50 individuals to work somewhere or could have formed a factory with 50 of them, or engaged them to work in a hatchery or cattle grazing, then there would not have been a need for institutions like a mosque or Vikramshila. It is when one sits idle that it is worse for an individual. If you notice where do most of the fights start from, tea shop or at the market place, mostly it is the tea shops where the genesis of a majority of fights happen in rural Bengal, 5 people indulging in criticism of someone and then that person, and a melee is in store.” (Interview with L Sk, dated 18th May, 2015)

Here, L highlights the crucial role played by Vikramshila in not only promoting education at the primary level, but affecting the lives of the individuals associated with it. It has made a difference in the way agricultural production took place in the village. It also helped promote a sense of civility and curbed the violence which has come to dominate the villages nearby. It does so by keeping the individuals busy and the children associated with different activities, thereby

promoting cohesiveness. Vikramshila has thus become one of the harbingers of mobility through the use of its various programs within the village. One of the highlights of their activities in and around the Manteswar block is the community mobilization program to curb different ills of the society such as child marriage, dowry and the need for education of daughters. They are also important in reduction of the dropout rates.

Students groups and social change

There are 6 dedicated workers from the school who are tasked with holding meetings with different stakeholders, students, parents and panchayat members. This is important to improve the infrastructure, i.e. repair of roads to improve access to roads, ensuring the efficient delivery of midday meal schemes etc. however, the most important achievement has been the formation of student groups to act as vanguards of change within their respective villages. It is the same with Dolan as well where a student group acts as the watch dog and has helped bring down child marriages to zero, and reduced the dropout rate at least in the primary level. The next interview with P explicates the changes brought in by the child groups. “146 students have been divided into 10 groups in the target villages. There are many aspects to their role in education and child rights. In terms of education they are the group which has been effective in stemming the tide of dropout rates. Even though it is at a very nascent stage, they have become aware of some of the issues related to child rights and the importance of education in their lives. Even though not everyone has been able to attend our workshops, the majority of them have been sensitised to the program's potential. An example is of the girl who raised an alarm when an under-aged girl was being married by her parents against her will. We were able to intervene, not through law or police, but through informal mechanisms to make the parents understand the necessity of education and how it can be detrimental to the life of the girl. Another side to this endeavour is the collateral gain of knowledge of the parents of the children participating in the project. They become aware of what child rights are and how important it is to provide a child with a proper childhood. When the children come for the workshops, often there are parents who accompany the children or come to pick them up. It is here that they also participate and learn about the tenets of the project. It is important to point out that the children can become agents of their own betterment. This can be possible if they can come to know about their rights. The workshops therefore are of great help here and our work with them in the villages helps a lot. In a year, even if 75 students of the 146 come to know about their rights, what is understood as child labour, what is available to them in the form of scholarships and other implements to aid their studies, what is understood by child marriage and the appropriate age of marriage designated by law, we think our work has been successful.” Here P highlights the importance of the groups at different levels of interventions. Even though we live in a world where the information of various subjects and rights are easily available through the internet, the existence of information in the digital world does not ensure that it is reaching the intended population or bringing in the desired changes. Thus we see that the need for the children's group becomes important in not only learning about their rights, but to reach with that information to different generations of the population. This will ensure a more stable change in the

practices of child labour, child marriage, education of daughters and the need to respect the environment. "The role of the children's' groups is indispensable to the task of arresting the dropout rate. These children can intervene at a level which is impossible for us to reach; in the most interior of places and villages, at a more intimate level they can interact with the children and gain access to their reasons for dropping out of school. It is never the case that children stop coming to school randomly. These reasons could be a result of a protracted problem gradually developing over time. Thus the knowledge of such a problem faced by children could help us in addressing it in a specific manner. Their help is indispensable but we have not been able to fulfil the potential of this project until now. We have a target of orienting them in child rights in the coming years. The existence of such a group also helps in providing the children with someone to talk to when they are on the verge of dropping out. This becomes important as the children working in a group will be vigilant, would not drop out while working for the group and will also ensure that their friends in the village don't do it either."

One of the more important issues or problems faced by the villages is the high dropout rates due to various reasons emerging from the difficult socio-economic circumstance in which their lives are embedded. It is through peer pressure that the school has been able to ensure that the children come to school regularly. But even though their reach is limited to the primary and preprimary students, they do keep a tab on the educational achievements of their students within the village. Some of the students are not able to achieve the educational status that they are capable of, and the teachers and the school work with them to help them realize their potential.

"We do not find high dropout rates at the elementary level since it has been our endeavour to ensure universal education at the primary level since the start of the school in Dolan. The dropout rates increase at the higher levels but there are a number of reasons for that to happen. The ward repeats the class and the books often change the next year. It means that the parent has to buy new books almost every year which is seen as a waste of money. Often the child looks older than his/her age, thus prompting a reaction from their parents to employ them in the farmstead, or send them for employment elsewhere. Firoj is a good example of a student who indulges in occasional migration to cities like Delhi to learn vocational work like repair of a refrigerator after appearing for his 10th exam. He came back when he was informed that he had passed the 10th examination. However, he left to finish the course in the company after appearing for his 12th exam, and returned again after news of passing the 12th standard had reached him. Now he is finishing college. This has been the trend for students who have seen money, know the value of money and what it can do. (taka chinte sikhe geche)" Here A points to the trend among the parents to send their children into employment; and the students who grow up to venture into work as it ensures money and prosperity at a very young age. The problem emanates from the necessity of money within the family, and the inability to afford the investment that higher education requires.

Conclusion

The article highlighted the role of a school in bringing about a change in the social order of a village. I have shown how there has been an improvement in the literacy levels of

different villages within a block in Bardhaman. Still the changes are there to be seen. Here the role of the school, Vikramshila, has been crucial. Then I went on to describe the history of how the school was made and highlighted the pedagogical practices of the school. I related the pedagogical practices to learning of different constitutional values through everyday practices at the school. This is something that has also been highlighted by the RTE Act, and Vikramshila has been practicing it for a long time. Then I went on to show how the children are empowered themselves to form watch dog groups, and protect children of their age or older than them from social ills like child labour, child marriage and to educate their peers about their rights. This was done through interviews with teachers from the school. Even though there are socio-economic circumstances which make it difficult for the children to study, still the school has been able to fight the tendency of young children joining work. There are failures to the process but the efforts still remain.

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