
DIGANTAR SHIKSHA EVAM KHELKUD SAMITI, RAJASTHAN

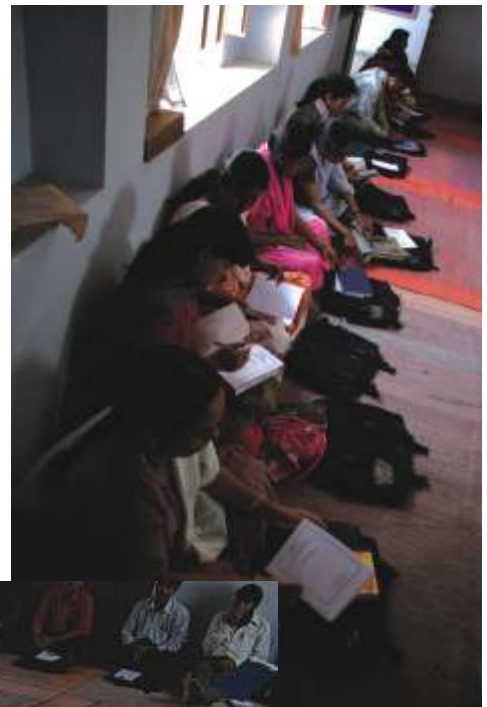
Despite massive enrolment efforts, education remains a serious problem where tribal children are concerned. Sixty five percent drop out between class I and V and among girls it is as high as 85 percent. Many educationists believe this is so because the needs, socio-cultural milieu and traditional knowledge environment of the tribals have not been factored into the curriculum and way of teaching.

Digantar Shiksha Evam Khelkud Samiti has launched an innovative research project among the Bhils and Sahariyas of Rajasthan, through which it studies the various factors that alienate tribal children from the mainstream of education. In this 'learning' process, the team is looking at how the use of Hindi as a medium of instruction impacts tribal children who speak only their own language. It is also examining the attitudes of teachers and an education system that is essentially middle class with societal and caste-ist biases which make the tribal children feel excluded or ill at ease with their own socio-cultural environment.

Digantar is exploring ways of bridging the divide so that tribal sensitivities and ethics can be incorporated into the curriculum. For example, the tribal sensitivity to the environment and to animals may be considered as a value that can be built into the education process. Can lessons in hygiene go hand-in-hand with the tribals' admirable love and care for their animals?

Based on the research projects, Digantar is developing an effective package of educating tribal children and will also set up resource schools. These schools will function as laboratories where ingenious methods and approaches will provide quality education. Thus, a tribal child can bring his own unique vision of what a tree really means in his ethos to a classroom that is really just discovering its value and worth. Using the innovative practices and learnings of the resource school, Digantar hopes to bring about pedagogic reform in government schools.

A grant of Rs 19.56 million was sanctioned in 2006-2007, for three years.



Teacher training in progress at the Digantar Campus





Interacting with other participants at the training workshop



Innovative teaching methods in practice