

COMPLETION REPORT

on

VEDIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Period: From 1.4.2015 to 31.3.2020

Funded By

BRAHMANANDA SARASWATI YAGYA

FOUNDATION (BSYF)

P.O. Box 46, Fairfield, Iowa 52556, USA

Implemented By



ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE AND

REHABILITATION OF THE AGED (ASSRA)

BB-9-G, DDA Flats, Third Floor, Munirka, New Delhi – 110067

www.assra4u.org

Project background

Association of Social Service and Rehabilitation of the aged (ASSRA) is a registered not for profit organization established in the year 2002 With its head office in Delhi and field offices in Jharkhand and Odisha, ASSRA has been working towards the betterment of the marginalized in the society through its interventions in the field of education, health and livelihood.

Since 2003 ASSRA has been working in the field of education by facilitating both formal and non-formal education including vocational training. Supporting the students (tribal children from 4-13 years) with formal education, helped them integrate themselves into mainstream education besides driving out the feeling of alienation. Providing vocational training (both men and women) enabled them to earn their livelihood with dignity.

In East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand there are six educational centers running since 2003 with at least 25 children attending classes under the respective centre in In-charge, a qualified teacher. In Khunti & Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand two education centers were started since 2020. Similarly in Odisha, two educational centres are running in Khurdha district since 2020 with around 75 students enrolled in both besides running the primary school at Kandalei, Chhatabara, Odisha.

Collaboration with the Brahmanand Saraswati Yagya Foundation (BSYF) for the Vedic Education Programme gave ASSRA an opportunity to extend the educational activities to a much larger community on an exclusive aspect of intangible cultural heritage.

Importance of Vedic Education in India

Ancient India had distinct culture and civilization spread over thousands of years. In the past the great saints have played decisive role in shaping and molding the ancient heritage. The basis of Indian culture emerged out of the four Vedas, i.e *Rigveda* deals with four stages of life, *Yajurveda* is based on procedures of sacrifices, *Samaveda* on music and *Atharvaveda* deals on medical sciences.



Veda means knowledge. During this period education was divided into two kinds of knowledge – **this** worldly and **other** worldly. This worldly education dealt with social aspect, whereas, other worldly education was related to intellectual pursuits. The emphasis was not only on the outer dimensions of various disciplines but also enriching the inner dimensions of the personality.



Thus, Vedic education emphasized upon spirituality, character building, personality development, right approach towards society and nation building. Method of teaching practiced during the Vedic period was *maukhik* (oral) and *chintan* (reflection).



Gurukulas also known as *ashrams* were the residential centres of learning. Gradually monasteries and *viharas* developed and around them educational centers for advanced higher learning developed i.e ancient universities of Nalanda, Vikramshila etc. Over subsequent period this well-established indigenous education system declined giving way to British education. Presently various efforts are underway to bridge the gap by connecting the traditional knowledge with contemporary learning.



Rationale for Revival of Vedic Education

The legacy of Vedic Chanting, an age-old oral tradition declared by *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)* as an Intangible Heritage. Working towards the promotion and preservation of this Vedic Heritage necessitates an important and inevitable step.



The number of teachers and learners of Vedic education has been dwindling exponentially over the years and it is high time for likeminded organisations and individuals come together to address this issue and rejuvenate the Vedic education.

The benefit of Protection of Vedic education may not be directly perceptible but intellectual superiority of Indians attributable to genes stand as proof to that. It is highly imperative that corrective measures are taken immediately in the interest of better India and a better world future.



With the increasing discovery of scientific truths, the attention of the world has turned towards the Vedas in which such discoveries remain foretold many astounding secrets stand forgotten to us today. Many great saints have dedicated their life for the revival of this ubiquitous heritage of the past. Efforts continue, yet insufficient. It is imperative on our part to encourage the students and teachers of these divine lessons to translate the secrets to the benefit of humanity at large.



The fact that around a dozen of over one thousand Vedic recitation branches have survived over the years and with the declining trend in the schools promoting Vedic education it is all the more important to preserve the remaining Vedic recitation branches.



- It is significant to make all efforts for the revival of the Vedic education as Vedic mantras are vanishing with the passage of time. Preservation of what is left for posterity paves way for prosperity.
- Synchronization of Vedic knowledge with modern sciences will ensure national growth.
- Peace and harmony lost due to commercial exploitation of scientific discoveries can be best restored by Vedic culture and implementing codes of conduct enunciated in Vedas.
- Eternal peace can reign in the world Vedic incantations became all pervasive. Vedic community needs to be encouraged to tread the life with dignity.
- Secrets hidden in Vedas need to be culled out to understand the fundamentals of



life science and to make the human life meaningful and mutually beneficial.

Moreover, it is significant to work towards the revival of Vedic education because of its exclusive content and ingenious technique engaged by the *acharyas* in teaching students which helps to preserve the ancient text through generations.



Activities undertaken by ASSRA in promoting Vedic Education

With financial support from BSYF in 2015, ASSRA started various activities in Varanasi. During initial survey it was observed that Brahmins, who are hereditary caretakers of Vedic tradition, are forced to engage themselves in petty jobs in absence of non-availability of suitable employment. The younger generation lack the requisite skill like proper chanting with accurate pronunciation. In order to up-skill the younger generation interested in taking up Vedic education to make use of it in professional level, applications were invited for a residential course at the *gurukula* with the following programme objectives.



Aim of Vedic Education Programme

- Realise the supreme and achieve supreme consciousness
- Inculcate the spirit of piety and righteousness
- Preservation and spread of ancient culture
- Unfold spiritual and moral powers of the individual
- Perfection of physical, mental and intellectual personality of the resident student
- Building up moral characters and inclusion of social and civic duties
- For the development of vocational efficiency healthy, positive attitude and dignity of labour were fostered



Thus Vedic education as a tool was applied under the guidance of twelve *acharyas* with a developed curriculum for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. With the success of the programme at Varanasi several other centres were also opened at Allahabad, Mathura in UP, Kamroop in Assam and Haridwar in Uttarakhand.



Oral method was used to memorise the mantras, emphasising on grammar, correct pronunciation. This was done to ensure that the mantras are preserved in their original form. The learners were given a monthly stipend as an incentive to continue the course till the end. Each learner was expected to complete the two-year course. The regularity of attendance was given high priority. The course involving training and meditation had periodic evaluation as well. Upon the successful completion of the course the candidates were given a certificate by ASSRA.



The Assam centre had a successful stint with around 300 learners. Most of them had left the village in search of menial jobs to earn their livelihood. But after they heard about the potential of the course



they all came back to their native place and completed the course.

The monthly stipend also helped them to focus on training as the needs of their families were already taken care of. The



livelihood opportunities availed made the village prosperous which

brought praises from the representatives of the district administration for the efforts of ASSRA.



While the residential centres imparted training to Vedic scholars, yoga and meditation classes were conducted in different schools at Varanasi and Assam. Around 40 schools were tied up for yoga and meditation classes which benefited nearly 5000 students over

a period of 2 years. Simultaneously, public groups were also imparted the meditation classes in various localities as per their requirement. For the sustainability of the programme “training the trainers” was emphasised, whereby the scholars were initially got trained further went ahead to train others. Institutional partnerships were built upon on “knowledge sharing arrangements”, where professionals from different institutions shared the latest advancements in ever evolving educational programmes.



Large portion of total budget being spent on payment of honorarium and stipend, all transacted online helped to the build-up transparency in the programme.

Indicators of Success

- Providing skill training to learners allowed them to earn a dignified livelihood upon the completion of studies.
- The residential schooling system involving Students from very poor and marginalised sections of the society attended the *gurukul* from age of 8 to students in their early 20’s. At the end of their course, each student was able to earn their livelihood with dignity.
- Many of the students after completing their Vedic studies are able to migrate to other countries and maintain a decent life.
- Meditation and yoga classes in schools has resulted in greater satisfaction and benefit to the students and increased deeper understanding of the principles of Yoga in terms of their daily lives and well-being.
- Regular mediation and Yoga classes led to an ideal and happy environment for both students and teachers. Teachers reported behavioral changes of



the students towards betterment. 5000 students benefited from Assam across 40 schools over a period of two years.

- Conducting advanced courses for teachers resulted in deepening and advancing their knowledge at a practical level.
- Financial support to students for course and training acted as an incentive ensuring their commitment to the programme.



- Specialized courses and curriculum on traditional knowledge enriched the students and communities at large.
- With the recent proposal of the central government to set up Vedic board blending both Vedic and modern education, the pool of professional resources created under the programme of ASSRA stands to play a significant role in the coming days.

