

# RAJGHAT EDUCATION CENTRE

## Community Engagement

**"Do you want to do social work because in your heart there is love and therefore you are not concerned with your own fulfillment? Or is social work a means of escape from yourself?"**

**J Krishnamurti**

### Rajghat Besant School

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), a philosopher and sage, had a profound impact on human consciousness. He founded the Krishnamurti schools with a view to bringing about a radical transformation in human consciousness. Among the oldest of them, Rajghat Besant School, was set up in 1928 in the ancient city of Varanasi, overlooking the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Varuna.



### Healthcare

According to a National Health Mission, 2013 survey, Uttar Pradesh has infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate and sex ratio that are all significantly more adverse than those of the rest of the country. Timely health intervention through curative and preventive services can alleviate the living conditions within the social and economic context.

### Education

Born out of his deep compassion for the underprivileged, Krishnamurti invited his friend and the doyen of the socialist movement in India, Achyut Patwardhan to engage with the impoverished villages in and around Rajghat. The outcome was what is now known as Achyut Patwardhan School (APS) which has been providing educational opportunities to needy community for over 60 years, APS is one of the oldest such schools in the country.



### Empowerment

Empowerment amounts to enabling a person to claim his or her due rights. The social and economic milieu prevailing in the surrounding villages has been taking a particular toll on women. To emancipate them, the Unit for Women Empowerment (UWE) was set up in 1994 with a modest objective of creating livelihood opportunities for them.

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## Education

Uttar Pradesh has a culturally flourishing hub in the ancient city of Varanasi. It is known throughout the world for producing fine silk and Banarasi saris. Apart from this, carpets, durries, copperware, wooden and clay toys, handicrafts and gold jewellery also feature as prominent export products. However, lately, traditional occupations are facing a serious challenge because of cheaper Chinese mill-woven fabrics, leaving the weavers and their families stranded without a secure livelihood. Alcoholism, poor health and caste system wreak havoc on an already impoverished community. Provision of education and health services can break the vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty.

### Achyut Patwardhan School

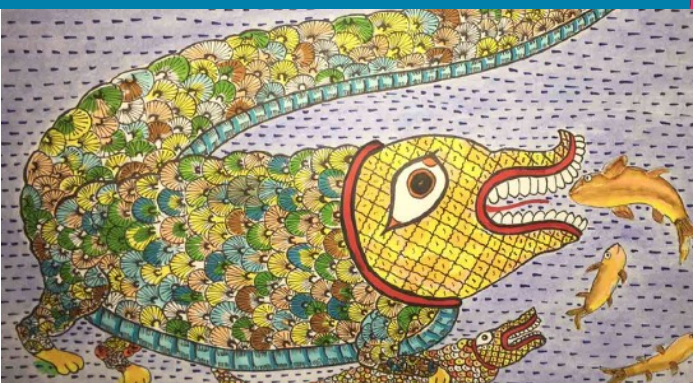
APS currently has about 315 children from nursery to class VIII. The gender mix is maintained close to 50%. Special attention is given to continued attendance of girl children in order to overcome rampant gender discrimination.

The team of 14 teachers in APS has spent over a decade with the institution. Over the years, the teachers have developed a keen understanding of the social issues in the villages and its causal linkage to school performance. Thus personal attention to the child is possible so that specific causes can be addressed and contact at the parent level established for their resolution.



### Arts

In addition to being an effective learning tool, art can promote creative expression of the feelings of children. At APS, art finds a place in everyday teaching, be it in the curriculum, local events, health campaigns or fun events. Environment, health and culture are dominant themes in the sphere of art at APS.



### Sports

There is strong emphasis on sports in the school with a dedicated Physical Education teacher at hand all the time. We realize that sports can not only bring out the best in the children but can also heal psychological wounds. The school has a large play ground which provides a ready outlet for games. APS also conducts its own annual sports events, participates in the Rajghat Besant School sports events and also competes in local events.



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## Health

Lack of health awareness and adequate preventive measures in the decades gone by has resulted in severe disease burden on the surrounding villages. While curative intervention may address current issues, only preventive measures especially at a young age can forestall the rise of diseases. It is more so as the young generation needs sound health to capitalize on the educational and livelihood opportunities.

**Sanjivan Hospital**, our vehicle for curative services has been treating as many as 30,000 out-patients a year. The communities are treated for tuberculosis, asthma, heart diseases, ENT problems, skin diseases, gynecological problems and others. The hospital is equipped with a pathological laboratory, X-ray unit, dispensary and an ambulance.



Our preventive health services are centred around the rural school. At Achyut Patwardan School (APS), health initiative takes two forms: (1) Interventions that address acute deficiencies that may lead to learning difficulties (2) Creating health awareness among children and their parents.

## Cleanliness

The students of APS live in challenged habitats that expose them to high risk of water, waste and food contamination. The school conducts regular cleanliness and awareness programs, art workshops, plays and music to increase awareness.



## Nutrition

We provide nutritious mid-day meal to children including eggs and milk. Further, regular reviews of deficiency are conducted and where needed, supplements provided.



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## Empowerment

In the deprived communities of Varanasi, women play a pivotal role in carrying out household responsibilities, economic sustenance and child rearing. Studies have shown that empowering women socially and economically leads to improvement in living standards for the entire community. The Empowerment activities are focused on imparting livelihood skill sets in the areas of stitching, weaving and handicrafts to women in the adjoining villages of Rajghat.

Product design, markets and fulfilment are integral to success of any enterprise. We are expanding market access through focused efforts. Design assistance from RBS Art department has helped improve the quality of products.

To emancipate their conditions, in 1994 we set up the Unit for Women Empowerment (UWE) with a modest objective of creating livelihood opportunities for women. The Stitching unit focuses on imparting stitching skills to rural women.

In addition, handicraft products are made by trained women under the guidance of REC employees. Simple products such as key-chains, wall-hangings, hand-bags, purses, cushion covers etc. are hand-made. The idea is to use the production to train as many young women as possible so that they can go onto create livelihood opportunities for themselves.



## Get Involved

We serve the community in the areas of education, health and empowerment. You can contribute by volunteering your time. You may also donate by sponsoring a child/children, a project or by running a fund raising campaign on our behalf. For Indians, tax exemptions are available. If you wish to participate, donate or discuss ideas, kindly reach us at [community@rajghatbesantschool.org](mailto:community@rajghatbesantschool.org).