



**St. Xavier's College
(Autonomous), Kolkata**

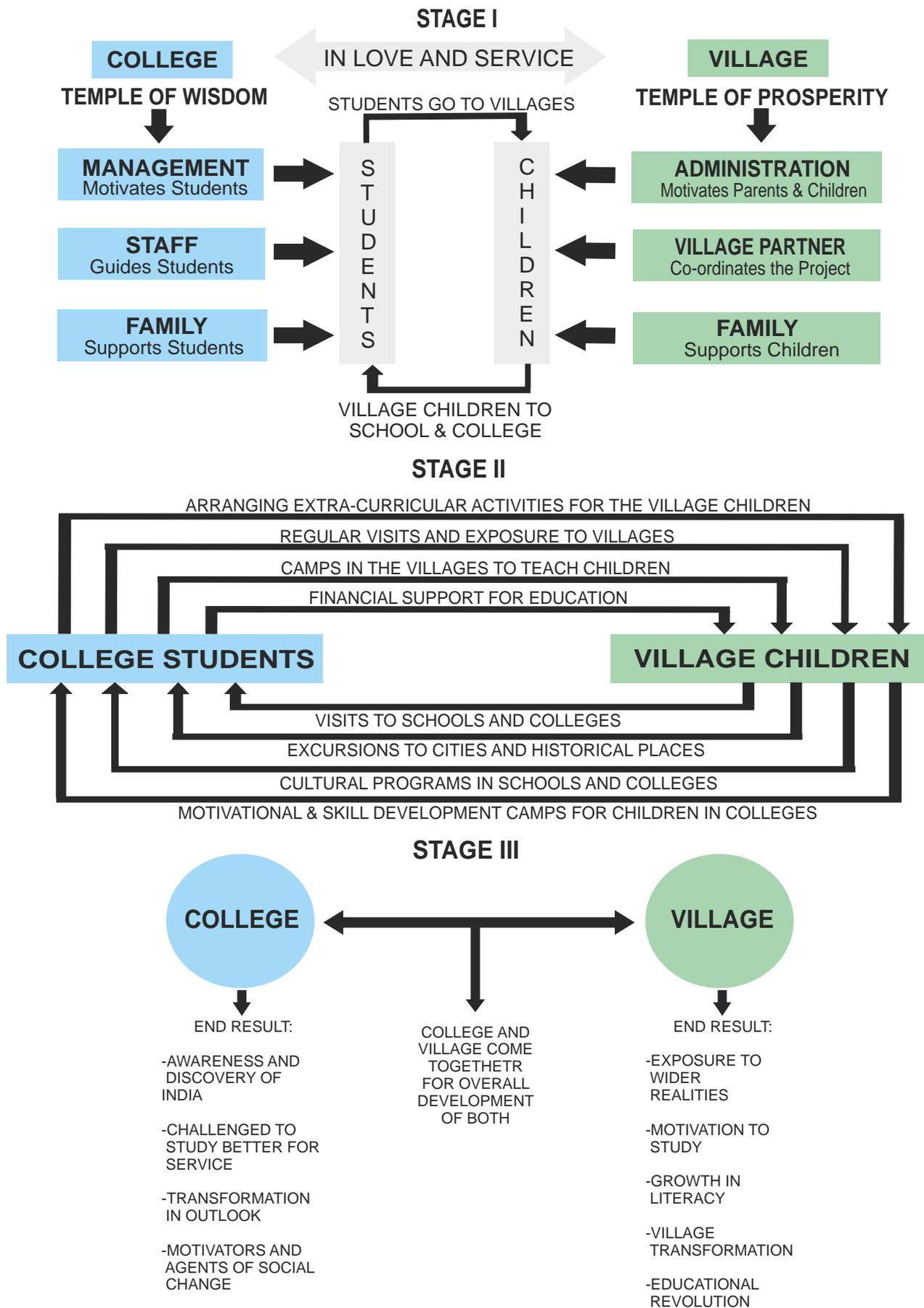
PRAYAS



COLLEGE TO VILLAGE - VILLAGE TO COLLEGE

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THE PEDAGOGY



PRAYAS - The Fruit Bearing Tree College to Village - Village to College

Prayas is an effort aimed at bringing about the complete overall development of the students, both in the college and in the villages. Prayas has proved to be a very successful venture and is no longer just a project - it is a movement! The primary objective of this movement is to provide continuous support and assistance to the less fortunate children, both academically and materially, and thereby part of the larger attempt to achieve 100% literacy by 2015. This ongoing project was initiated by Rev. Fr. Dr. J. Felix Raj, SJ Principal, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, in January 2006. He firmly believes that, "If colleges and villages meet, there will be a knowledge revolution." This simple effort has metamorphosed into a complete movement, and continues to bridge the socio-economic gap between the college and the village adopted by the college.

The pedagogy of Prayas works on Three Stages. The college along with its Management, Faculty and Family is the 'temple of wisdom'. The village along with its administration, village partners and family is the 'temple of prosperity'. Stage One is the Planning stage.

A collaboration of both leads to the second stage which is the implementation stage. Here the the college students go to the villages and work with the children. They conduct classes and extracurricular activities, surveys, camps etc. They also provide financial assistance to the very needy children to continue their education. Twice a year the village children are brought to the college. They are taken for city tours, college campus tour, etc. College students conduct educational sessions, sports and other activities for the children.

Students of St. Xavier's college contribute Rs. 1 per day to support the education of these village children. This collection is sent every month to 7 villages of Bengal: Devipur, Gurap, Jhantipahari, Mirga, Salpukur, Bolorampur and Ghostomat. More than 1000 children have benefited from this project in the last 5 years. "The children learn a lot. It is very useful for them, especially English. They do not learn so much in their village schools", said Mrs. Uma Majhi, the village animator.

↓ College student teaching the children at Gurap



↓ Bholakhali students at BITM



↓ College students teaching the children at Paikhala



Prayas

The third stage is the outcome of the Prayas. College students and the village children, both benefit from this project. As the college and village come together there is an overall development of both. On one hand this project helps college students in discovering the true India, in being more aware of the harsh realities and in transforming their outlooks. For every student it is a challenge to study better and develop a sense of service. On the other hand the village students are given an exposure to wider realities and motivation to continue their education. The village undergoes a transformation and there is growth in literacy. It is the progress of this project that makes one believe that someday, every child from a village would go to college and if every college reaches out to at least one village then the millennium goal of 100 percent literacy by 2015 can become a reality.

The Prayas project is not demanding in its nature, yet it is effective. It does not cruelly pinch the pocket of a student, yet it has helped to improve the lives of a thousand other children. Prayas has not simply illustrated a cause left to be fulfilled by the richer sections of society, it has changed the mindset of a thousand college students, who work together to bring about the change - a knowledge revolution!



↑ Bholakhali students at College Central Library



↑ Bholakhali students at College



↑ Fr. Felix Raj with the childrens at Salpukur



↑ Children enjoying breakfast in College



↑ Bholakhali students at BITM

Tête à Tête with Rev. Fr. Dr. J. Felix Raj, SJ -The inspiration behind the movement



1. Father, what does Prayas mean to you?

Prayas is an effort to take college to village and bring village to college. I envisage a cordial meeting between these two. This meeting will generate growth and quality among both college students and village children. If colleges and villages meet, there will be a knowledge revolution leading to total development. And this is what I hope for.

2. What was your main objective behind this effort?

In a country where you have large percentage of dropouts, where gross enrolment in higher education is 12 to 15 percent, we need to promote access and opportunity for education. The system is such that children are coming to school. Now the school needs to go to the children and meet them in their homes. Colleges are centres of higher education, centres of knowledge and villages are centres of prosperity and meeting of the two will help the country to grow. Prayas is thought of in the context of our country.

3. How did you determine the general attitude of students while you proposed the programme?

Students and colleges like St. Xavier's are generous and open to projects like this because such projects challenge the students and make their learning more meaningful. Every college student whether rich or poor, is part of the large Indian family. So his/her formation must be contextual. The purpose of his/her education must be collective. Through this project the college aims to give a holistic perspective of education and if every student is made to understand this, he/she will be able to opt for it.

4. Do you think that the general awareness has increased?

The perspective of college students has changed and the quality of village children has improved. The people of the village are very happy with the outcome. It has tremendous amount of impact on both college students and village children and on both units – college and villages. The contacts have created a lot of concern for the rural people. Many students have told me that they went to the camps to fulfil the credit requirements, but returned with love and transformation of their hearts.

5. What is the future of the Prayas movement?

The future of Prayas is in the hands of our students. I am confident it will continue. As one student mentioned in one of our sharing sessions, "Prayas is not a project, but a movement". A project like this must be carried out by every college. There are about 30,000 colleges in our country. If every college adopts one village it will be a tremendous contribution to nation building. Yes, we are doing good work out of love and concern. It is God's work and so it will definitely continue.

6. What is the involvement of faculty members?

It is very encouraging, but they must also be given some orientation about this project. Faculty support is a must for the success of this project.

7. Any message to readers?

Every reader is a participant in this project and must promote this project wherever it is possible. All of us have a role to play as human beings and as Indian citizens in the development of this country so that all of us may live in peace and harmony. We are born in an unjust society and we should be determined not to leave it as we have found it. The world is divided. But, let us put our hearts and minds together and stretch out hands to heal the wounds and bridge the divisions to build a united world.



Thumbs Up !!!

"Your little sacrifice each day, so that our children could have better tomorrow, is a sign that you are truly part of our wider family. Thank you very much therefore for your contributions each month for the welfare of our children. You can be sure that every paise that you sacrifice for our children is received with heartfelt gratitude and reaches the children, and you will see that when you visit our village. We believe that you too cherish the joy of sacrificing something for this little children, so that they too taste and see the beautiful things in life."

-Fr Jullian Das, SJ
On behalf of all the children in Jhantipahari

"St. Xavier's College students come to Debipur regularly. The concern they show for them by coming and giving their energy and time for these children is praiseworthy and we are grateful to them for this. I believe that we poor people will want to study more and progress in life. Our children have learnt a lot from these Dadas and Didis specially English and Maths."

-Uma Majhi
Debipur, Village Animator

"This is a great initiative taken by St. Xavier's College, we will make sure to keep up this initiative and by spreading awareness among the fellow friends and relatives, we want to ignite the same fire that is now burning in us."

-Bibhu Das
B.Com (M), Student

"Eikhane Ese amra didi dada der songe khub anando korlam. Tara amader ke bhujhitei deyani je amra tader moto sahorer chele meye noi, tader moto Englishbolte parina, tader moto bhalo jama kapor amader nei....dada didi ra amader dike bondhutter haath bariye diechilo....tader byabohaar amar khub bhalo legeche....jani naa St.Xavier's College e asar abar sujog hobe kina....but ei teen din ami konodin bhulbo naa."

(We enjoyed to the fullest with our 'dadas' and 'didis' after coming here. They didn't make us feel that we are not urban-bred boys and girls like them neither we can speak in English like them. Moreover, we don't have nice dresses like them....Dada and Didi extended their friendship lovingly....I am touched by their behaviour....I don't know that whether we'll get the opportunity to come in St. Xaviers College again...But these three days I will never forget...)

-Rinki Pal
A Bholakhali Student

↓ College students enjoying with children at Gurap



↓ Fr. Felix Raj being felicitated by a children at Shalpokur



↓ Bholakhali students entering BITM



PRAYAS

Facts and Figures

No. of Villages under PRAYAS : 9

<u>Year of Inclusion</u>	<u>Name of Villages</u>
2006	Gurap, Jhantipahari
2007	Debipur, Mirga
2008	Shalpurkur, Ghostomath
2009	Bolorampur, Bholakhali
2011	Nurshikdarchowk

No. of Children benefitting from this project : more than 1,500

No. of Camps held :

Village to College			
Year	Name of Village	No. of Children	No. of Volunteers
June, 2007	Gurap, Pandua	55	25
Dec, 2007	Raghavpur, Debipur	60	19
Dec, 2008	Gurap	50	32
June, 2009	Ghostomath	50	20
Dec, 2009	Bholakhali	60	22
June, 2010	Shalpurkur, Debipur, Paikhala	65	38
June, 2011	Bholakhali	55	30
June, 2012	St. John Berchman's Inter College, Jharkhand	50	30
		445	216

College to Village			
Year	Name of Village	No. of Camps	No. of Volunteers
2006	Gurap, Jhantipahari	3	32
2007	Jhantipahari, Mirga, Raghavpur, Debipur, Paikhla, Gurap	13	126
2008	Ghostomath, Gurap, Paikhala, Raghavpur, Pandua, Debipur	12	135
2009	Gurap, Shalpurkur, Debipur, Bholakhali	4	140
2010	Gurap, Bolorampur, Paikhala, Bholakhali	4	170
2011	Nurshikdarchowk, Ghostomath, Debipur, Bholakhali	4	115
2012	Bholakhali	1	70
		42	788

An overview of Academic Performance of 2010-11 at 5 Rural Extension Centres :

Total percentage of females passed : 91.96%

Total percentage of males passed : 90.10%

Rural Extension Centres	Paikhala			Devipur			Shalpurkur			Ghostomath			Bolorampur		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
No. of Children appeared	73	110	183	44	43	87	25	36	61	20	13	33	20	22	42
No. of Children promoted	67	101	168	38	38	76	25	36	61	17	11	28	17	20	37
No. of Children not promoted	8	9	15	6	5	11	-	-	-	3	2	5	3	2	5
No. of Children Main Streamed	10	20	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

30 students were mainstreamed to Government Schools

Awards & Accolades : Dr. P.S.Job Memorial Award for the most innovative educational effort for 2010-11 by AIACHE (All India Association for Christian Higher Education)

"Children are living beings - more living than grown-up people who have built shells of habit around themselves. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love."

? Rabindranath Tagore

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