



Education & Development of Orphaned and destitute children Mrs Tula & Mr. Sanjay Bhavsar



Innovation Brief : Tula and Sanjay Bhavsar is a couple that has formed Vishwagram, an NGO, and built a large orphanage with 18 children. Unlike most of their friends who moved to USA, they chose to settle down in Gujarat's Basna village and invested their education, dedication and entrepreneurial skills for shaping a better future of unknown kids. They decided to live in a small village, work with school and college teachers, and teach children themselves.

Innovation Detail : Tula and Sanjay got together several years ago to bring about a change in the world through initiatives such as 'Vishwagram', 'Yuvagram', and 'Karunagram'. They decided not to seek any funds from private or public sources, national and international agencies.

Name: Tula Bhavsar and Sanjay Bhavsar

Age: 48 and 52 years

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Homeless kids aside, Sanjay and Tula organise workshops for teachers at very low costs. They also work with youth and organise camps for them.

They floated Vishwagram, an NGO in 1993, which began by serving the poor and the youth. Then in 2006, they decided to take up the cause of the orphaned children. They tracked down some with the help of NGO Childline, and with a large donation, built an orphanage at Basna. Before Tula and Sanjay christened these kids with a common surname 'Bhartiya' and gave them a common birth date (25th December), these kids spent their childhood begging on streets and stations, carrying drugs, witnessed gory crimes and suffered harshest of thrashings and brutal sexual exploitation.

Their orphanage is unique as they transform lives through innovative festivals and camps. Here, children attend festivals of films, books, theatre and sculpture that showcase wholesome classics, and are organised in collaboration with artistes. Some such workshops for Art, Music, Film, Agriculture, Reading, Clay, Drama, Science, Creative Arts, Puppets, Origami, Games, Story, Weaving, Health, Carpentry and Cooking. Some other workshops are organized for awareness such as Coastal workshop, Monsoon Flora Walk workshop, Labour workshop, Bird watching workshop, River Workshop, Travel workshop, getting rid of superstitious beliefs, Vipasana workshop among others.



Apart from the orphanage they are engaged in five main activities like:

(i) Karuna Gram (Compassion Village) : This a term used to describe the work that is done to provide relief and support to the people affected by natural calamities such as earthquakes, tsunami and floods. Tula &

Sanjay have been working for relief in various parts of India during such difficult times.

(i) Yuva Gram (Youth Village): Vishwagram has been working continuously with the youth of Gujarat for last 14 years. It organizes different kind of camps to inculcate values of social integration, non-violence and peace. It attempts to train the youth, especially the young teachers to spread a non-violent life style.

(ii) Shanti Gram (Peace Village): Shanti Gram means work conducted by Vishwagram to help distressed people after riots and working for communal harmony.

(iii) Kitab Gram (Book Village) : This is an effort made to popularize literature and books through dissemination of knowledge among today's generation.



(iv) Jeevan Gram (Life Village): This is an experiment to create a new lifestyle where the distances are reduced among men, humans develop closeness to nature and develop organic farming.

Vishvagram has no paid worker. All are friends work voluntarily for the institution and all of them are young which is the peculiarity of Vishvagram. Today nearly 500 school children and collegians are invited in its activities every year. More than three hundred teachers are actively associated with the Vishvagram activities.

Vishvagram is an institution that works without any govt. grants or financial aid from any funding agency. It believes that a public welfare activity should be run from people's own resources. So Vishvagram activities are run by the people from people's financial help.

All the activities of Vishvagram are audited by eminent, upright people engaged in different activities every year.

“When we rescue such a kid, she initially looks at us with doubt, distrust and disbelief. After a few days, while taking a Nature walk or doing innovative art activities suddenly she starts opening up, and the distrust gradually melts away. The feelings of curiosity, eagerness and pleasure...begin. And being able to see that lost spark restored within those tiny eyes – is the reward,” informs Sanjay.

Gradually a strong relationship with these children has developed. Tula and Sanjay strive to bring back their wonderment to them and for they are putting in

commendable efforts to give them a new home, a new sky, a new land, new relations, new dreams and a new life.



Today, after hard work of more than two decades in villages near Rajkot, Surat, Ahmedabad, Mehsana, Patan, Kutch, the couple has been able to build up their mansion – Vishwa Gram and their precious possession – big fat Bhartiya family. They reside in Mehsana with four and half year-old Bharti – Gujarati, seven-year-old Shobha – South-Indian, ten-year-old Nikhil -Bengali, nine-year-old Puja – Rajsthani (9) and fourteen-year-old Vipul – Gujarati and many such children.

“Being able to restore a gleam of hope and a smile within those tiny frightened eyes is the reward which keeps us going,” says Sanjay.



Awardee's Background : Sanjay Bhavsar, 52, and his wife Tula, 48 both attended village schools. When they met in Ahmedabad, Sanjay was pursuing BTech, while Tula was studying commerce. They fell in love and got married, united in their desire to serve rural India.