



Digantar Shiksha Evam Khelkud Samiti, established in 1978, is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to improving education. Digantar operates two schools — a primary school in Kho Raibariyan with 50 students and 2 teachers, and another in Bhavgarh Bandhya with 180 students and 10 teachers. These schools not only provide quality education to underprivileged children but also serve as training sites for education professionals and student-teachers. They act as practical sites where innovative educational practices and theoretical perspectives are implemented and observed. TARU, a core part of Digantar, conducts training programs for teachers and educational workers, organizes short-term courses and workshops, and engages in research and material development. Through capacity-building initiatives, TARU promotes meaningful educational practices, contributing to educational theory, discourse, and teacher professional development, drawing from its extensive field experience.

Vidyalyaya

Children and Books : A Growing Bond

A total of 1,400 books were borrowed by 180 children across both schools, reflecting good engagement with the library in the month of July and August. It was good to see the long queues of children at the library, eagerly waiting for their turn to borrow books. Often, when children see a book in someone else's hand, they immediately request the librarian to reserve it for them. Some times, disputes arise over who gets to borrow a particular book, which are resolved through discussions. The number and the nature of engagements both are encouraging, showcasing the children's enthusiasm for reading. This also suggests that the library is succeeding in fostering a good relationship between children and books.



Spending a day with Trees



On a day-to-day basis, children engage in a variety of activities, and there is always so much happening that it's hard to capture everything here. However, one activity that we all thoroughly enjoyed was this: Children were asked to choose a tree they liked, observe it carefully, and notice what was happening around and on the tree.

The children then visited the campus, chose their trees, sat by them, and wrote down their observations. As an extension, they were asked to

imagine what the tree might be thinking if it had the ability to think. Some of their imaginative responses included: "Why is it raining so much this year?" and "Why are children sitting on me?" "Sometimes, all my leaves fall off, and sometimes, I remain completely green, why?"

They observed how thick or thin the trunk was, how the branches spread out, and which birds had built nests in its foliage. They also checked whether the tree was green or drying up. By observing closely, the children discovered many things that cannot be imagined by simply reading a book or sitting at home or in school. Some of their observations on leaves:

"When leaves are new and fresh, they are red in color. As they age, they turn green. Some trees have thin branches, while others have thick ones. The shape of the leaves varies; in some trees, the leaves are clustered together, while in others, they grow individually. Some leaves have a long, ribbed structure, while others have a net-like pattern."

Sports and Games



fitness, it also aims to teach the students basic skills of Games, foster a healthy interaction with teammates.

At *Bhavgarh*, approximate 75 children participated in self-defense activities, regularly learning judo and karate three days a week. Additionally, they practiced playing football every day.

The Sports Academy was activated in the month of October 2023. The idea behind activating the sports academy in the name of Founder President of Digantar, John Singh was to give students an opportunity for getting good coaching in various sports and games activities, like football and in self-defense (Karate). In addition to getting a good physical



Workshop on Early Childhood Care and Education

As part of our Vidyalaya's vision to introduce a pre-primary section, a two-day workshop on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was held at Digantar Vidyalaya, *Bhavgarh*, from July 2nd to 3rd. All teachers and coordinators participated, with Ms. Kinnari Pandya from Azim Premji University (APU) as the resource person. The workshop covered key topics including:

1. Perspectives on ECCE
2. Creating learning environments for early years
3. Curriculum for the foundational stage: socio-emotional, physical development, cognition, early mathematics.

Several important questions and discussions emerged during the workshop, including:

1. **Shift in Starting Age for Schooling to 3 Years:** Traditionally, it has been recommended that children start school after the age of 5, to allow them more time to enjoy their childhood. So, why is the trend now moving toward starting education at 3 years?
2. **How is modern technology impacting children's mindsets?** There was significant discussion around the influence of current technologies on children's cognitive and emotional development.



3. **Is morality innate?** The group unanimously agreed that children are born with the ability to learn. However, there was a debate about whether morality is something innate. Ms. Kinnari shared a video to address this question, but it did not fully convince the teachers, leaving some unconvinced about the innate nature of morality.
4. **Criteria for the selection of learning materials for pre-primary children:**
Another key discussion centred on how to choose appropriate learning materials for young children and how to provide opportunities for them to engage with these materials meaningfully.
5. **Is children's scribbling and drawing the beginning of writing?**
There was considerable debate on whether children's scribbling or drawing should be considered the start of writing. The concept of emergent literacy suggests that all of children's work with pen and paper could be seen as early writing. However, many teachers were not fully convinced by this idea. They felt that drawing serves its own purpose and should be distinguished from writing, which they believe begins when children start forming recognizable shapes of objects and later letters.

Vidyalaya Sthapna Diwas (School's Foundation Day)

On July 20, the day the Vidyalaya was established at its current location, students and teachers celebrated the Vidyalaya's *Sthapna Diwas*. The event focused on understanding the history and development of both Vidyalayas. Students, with the help of teachers, performed skits depicting the school's journey. Former students from the community also visited and shared their experiences. This celebration provided an opportunity for new teachers and students to become familiar with the Vidyalaya's journey so far.



Organisation of the 28th Bal Panchayat



To ensure the participation of children in all school-level activities, *Bal Panchayat* is formed twice a year at Digantar Vidyalayas. The primary function of this is to make decisions regarding school management and interpersonal behaviors, as well as to implement these decisions. This process gives importance to children's opinions and encourages their active participation. It not only introduces them to the complexities of decision-making in a democracy but also helps them learn how to deal with diversity of opinion.

With this in mind, the *Bal Panchayat* was formed in August. The members of the previous *panchayat* played the role of the Election Commission and successfully implemented the voting process. All the children actively participated in the election, using their votes. On election day, there were long lines at the polling stations, with children discussing among themselves whom to vote for and why, and their faces clearly reflected excitement and curiosity. During the campaign, there was a moment when children were seen promoting their candidates with slogans like "Vote Do, Vote Do, Ek Kachori Ek Samosa, Soheli Par Karo Bharosa," and so on. The role of campaigners and candidates in attracting votes was evident. Finally, five members were elected.



New Teachers in the Vidyalaya



Finally, three teachers joined the Vidyalaya for upper primary in the first week of July: Ms. Ashwini Salunke for Social Science, who is from Dhule, Maharashtra; Ms. Sarita Choudhary for Science; and Mr. Jitesh Rewani for Mathematics, both from Jaipur. Both the teachers and the students are working on building rapport with each other through the teaching and learning processes in the classroom.

Independence Day Celebration

On August 15th, Independence Day was celebrated at both the Vidyalayas. Due to heavy rains in Jaipur, schools remained closed for most of the days leading up to the event, which impacted the preparations for activities with the children. As a result, only the flag hoisting and the singing of the national anthem were conducted on this day.



Central Coordination Unit

Finance Aspects

TLM worth a total of 32,284/- were dispatched to Asha Trust, Pune, and Book well, Delhi and purchased by Udan and two schools in Jaipur. Meanwhile, orders for 2,128 and 570 books from the Digantar Pedagogy Package (*Ganit Bodh*, *Pothi* etc.) were received from Muslim Girls' Senior Secondary School and Udan School, Jaipur respectively at the end of July.

Income in CCU with donations and Sundry (house rent etc.) totals Rs. 31,997/-. In these months, Rs. 10,23,500/- are received from individual donors and organisations for the Vidyalayas; and Rs. 61,080 as course fee from participants in the Perspective on Learning Course. Thus, the total income in the two months for Digantar is Rs. 11,48,861.

Digantar Vidyalaya Vision

A meeting was held on August 17 at Digantar Vidyalaya to share and discuss the findings of the Feasibility Study conducted from December 2023 to June 2024, marking the first phase of the Digantar Vidyalaya Vision. The meeting was attended by several Executive Committee members, esteemed guests, and Digantar members, and was chaired by Mr. Sunny Sebastian, the president of the of Digantar. Notable attendees included Smt. Prafulla Kumari, Dr. Meeta Singh, Ms. Kavita Shrivastava, Prof. Kanchan Mathur, and Ms. Richa Mittal. Mr. Ramnik Mohan and Mr. Dharendra Mishra from Life Educare also participated, offering valuable support in developing the financial plan for the preparatory phase on a pro bono basis.



During the meeting, members expressed optimism about the vision while also raising pertinent questions regarding the findings. Concerns were voiced about the potential challenges of integrating children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds within the learning environment. The discussions underscored the importance of addressing these challenges as the vision progresses, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach to education at Digantar Vidyalaya.

The Academic Resource Unit (TARU)

Workshop with Upper Primary Teachers of Digantar Vidyalaya



A seven-day residential workshop was held at the main campus from July 7th to 13th for upper primary teachers of Digantar Vidyalaya, providing orientation for three newly appointed and two existing teachers.

The workshop began with a focus on Digantar Vidyalaya's Vision 2030, highlighting its motto, vision, learning principles, and educational goals. Participants explored themes of equal opportunity, rational autonomy, and accessible education, while understanding learning outcomes across subjects. A major emphasis was placed on using the modified Bloom's taxonomy to evaluate NCERT learning outcomes and apply them to classroom teaching. Teachers analyzed chapter one of the 6th-grade textbooks in their respective subjects - Science, History, Hindi, English, and Mathematics - mapping learning outcomes to the taxonomy. The workshop also introduced a guided-self-learning teaching plan aimed at fostering independent learning through structured learning experiences that progressively build understanding.

By the end, teachers developed learning cards for classes 6, 7, and 8, though further refinement was needed. An action plan was established, including progress tracking, card refinement, and evaluation over the next three months with weekly reflection meetings, self-analysis reports etc. It was also considered that this process could be viewed as action research, where the pedagogical principles of the primary grades-freedom of pace in learning and ungraded learning groups - would be extended to upper primary levels by merging the 6th, 7th, and 8th classes together.

Upcoming Courses

The 14 week-long online course, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, concluded in July. The final feedback session was held on July 5th, during which participants shared their thoughts on the course and offered valuable suggestions for improvement. A course-end assignment was given to the participants, focusing on relevant issues in education, where they were tasked with writing an academic article. Certificates will be awarded after the assignments are reviewed.

Two residential courses, *Perspectives on Learning* (Sept 9-14) and *Critical Understanding of NCFSE'23 for Implementation* (Oct 14-20), are scheduled. Registration has begun, and promotional flyers have been created and disseminated across various platforms. Online orientation sessions covered course objectives, structure, prerequisites, and logistical details, with facilitators addressing participant queries. For Perspectives on Learning, 16 participants, including 8 from Wipro partner organizations and 8 from other institutions, have confirmed after completing fee payment.

