

EKAL PRAYAS

A Family Magazine With Social Concern

May-June, 2026

Vol-17

No. 2

एकल प्रयास

सामाजिक सरोकार की पारिवारिक पत्रिका

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Awake, Arise and Achieve



प्रिय पाठक,

'एकल प्रयास' के इस अंक में हम एकल अभियान की उस अविश्वसनीय यात्रा को रेखांकित कर रहे हैं, जिसने पिछले 37 वर्षों में 'अंत्योदय से राष्ट्रोदय' के संकल्प को सिद्ध किया है।

आज एकल का प्रभाव केवल भारत की सीमाओं तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि 'एकल ग्लोबल' के माध्यम से इसकी गूँज अमेरिका, कनाडा, यूरोप, ऑस्ट्रेलिया, न्यूजीलैंड जैसे देशों में भी सुनाई दे रही है। 'ग्लोबल फुटप्रिंट ऑफ एकल' के तहत प्रवासी भारतीयों का अपनी मातृभूमि के प्रति समर्पण और सेवा भाव इस अभियान को नई ऊँचाइयाँ प्रदान कर रहा है जिसके चलते 1,00,000 एकल विद्यालयों के लक्ष्य को प्राप्त करना सामूहिक शक्ति का जीवंत उदाहरण है।

इस अंक में प्रवासी भारतीयों के एकल से जुड़ाव, उनके अनुभवों एवं उनके समर्पण भाव को रेखांकित किया है।

किसी भी संगठन को गतिशील रखने के लिए 'मंथन' की आवश्यकता होती है, ताकि उससे निकले विचारों के अमृत से संगठन को प्राणवायु दी जा सके। 'एकल संस्थान' द्वारा सभी सहयोगी संगठनों के साथ एक मंच पर आकर किया गया 'मंथन' इसी दिशा का पहला बड़ा कदम है। इसी के साथ 'एकल को जानो' समाज के शिल्पियों के बीच एकल के सामाजिक प्रभाव को पहुँचाने का उपक्रम है, जो पूरे देश में श्रृंखलाबद्ध रूप से आयोजित होगा।

एकल का मूल मंत्र 'स्वावलंबन' है। हम केवल शिक्षा ही नहीं दे रहे, बल्कि ग्रामोत्थान केंद्रों (GRCs) और 'एकल ऑन व्हील्स' (EoW) के माध्यम से ग्रामीण युवाओं और महिलाओं को कौशल संपन्न बना रहे हैं। सूरत में आयोजित 'एकल रन 3.0' और अयोध्या में संपन्न 'राष्ट्रीय सत्संग प्रतियोगिता' इस बात का प्रमाण हैं कि समाज अब राजसत्ता पर निर्भर रहने के बजाय अपने स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व और कर्तव्यों के प्रति जाग्रत हो रहा है। इसके इतर, वनयात्राओं, ड्रीम इंडिया टूर ऐसे आयोजनों ने भी एकल अभियान को सतत जीवंत रखा है। शेष, अगले अंक में आपसे पुनः भेंट होगी।

आपकी

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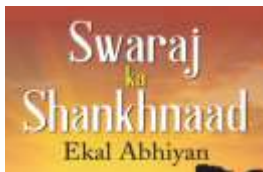
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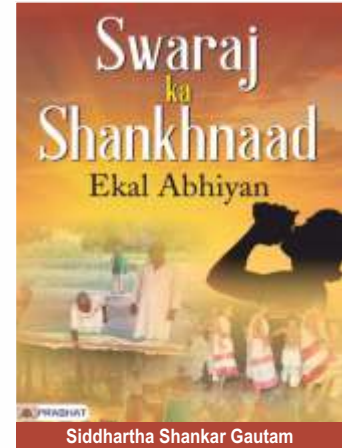


Continued...

To introduce self-sufficiency among its cadres, the Ekal decided to make its full-time volunteers self-sufficient as an experiment. Generating self-sufficiency in volunteers was imperative to prepare them to mould the society into a self-sufficient unit. For this purpose, Ekal launched a movement called Anudaan Parv (Donors' Cultivation). It ran for about three years. Then, the Udyoga Parv (Celebration of Efforts) took place for

available money could nip the efforts for self-sufficiency in the bud and mar the substantive brilliance of the Ekal mission. Keeping these fears in mind, Ekal announced that it would become self-reliant in every sense of the word. None of its units would depend on outside support and the mission to complete self-dependence would be achieved as soon as possible.

Here, it is also noteworthy that only



for the planned task and then collect resources for its execution. All the fulltime volunteers deputed in the village must be able to bear expenses of their budget from their own efforts. The budget of an Ekal unit must be borne by the Ekal committee. This scheme has three easy parts. First is the budget of the Ekal School in the village. It is the remuneration for the teacher, study material, and necessary items for the school. It overall becomes Rs 12,000 per year. This money must be raised through donations from the village itself. Three ways were invented



Expansion through self-dependence

Self-Sufficient Full-Time Volunteer

another three years. Both then merged to turn into another phase called Aashirvaad Parv (Blessing of Supporters). Some prosperous families of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata helped in fundraising events but Ekal ensured that such assistance should be within limits so that it does not lead to continuous dependence on outside sources for existence. The easily

those Ekal volunteers who demonstrated genuine dedication for their mission were trusted and supported by the society.

In simple terms, self-dependence indicates that a village should muster all resources on its own for every entrepreneurship it wishes to perform. The village should formulate a budget



A girl student writing on the blackboard





A teacher engaging students during a classroom session

for this collection. First, donations will be collected from the family of the student enrolled in the Ekal School. There was a purpose behind this collection. Such donation generates the evil practice of bhiksha (begging) in our society. The Ekal survived on outside help for some initial years, but it did not allow itself to become a government school that thrives on government crumbs. The government school merely teaches Children, which the Ekal school shapes the personalities of its students. It teaches them values along with education. Thus, Ekal sought the participation of the children's parents in the Ekal mission so that they could also be aware of and avail the facility of education.

EKAL SCHOOL BELONG TO THE ENTIRE VILLAGE.

The second stage of self-dependence is the mushti bhiksha (fistful of begging). This step was designed to make every household realise that they

were contributing for the education of their children. So, parents were encouraged to separate a fistful of food grain or its worth of money before every meal for the education of their children. Such contributions were intended to allocate ownership of the Ekal school throughout the village. The Ekal school would become a school run by the village itself.

The third and last stage of self-dependence is anna sangrah (collection of food grains). It was decided that whenever it would be harvesting time in the village, the students would accompany their teacher and beg at every doorstep in the village. They would tell every villager that the school belonged to them and that they had to take care of its economy. The tribal society may be poor materially, but their hearts will outsize even those of tycoons living in big cities. It is true that they will not be able to donate Rs 1,000- 2,000. But to assume that they will not give even Rs 5 is an insult. You only must approach them and make them understand your

mission and the advantage of education for their children. They will at once open their hearts and shell out whatever they can. They in fact donate for every activity organised in the village. You only must win their confidence.'

The Aarogya Yojana (Health Scheme) run by the Ekal is based on self-dependence. The Ekal charges a nominal fee for the medicines distributed to the villagers. It is called registration fee. There is a psychology behind this experiment. It has been observed that when patients pay for their medicine, only then they feel cured. If they do not have to pay for the medicine, they feel they are not being treated properly. So, we have seen that some doctors only sell water in the name of medicines, yet their patients get well. Ekal is not in favour of distributing water or fake medicine, it only wants patients to pay something, even if it is a nominal amount so that patients feel responsible and relieved. That is why it started charging registration fees at its rural clinics. ■

(To be Continued...)





EKAL VIDYALAYA FOUNDATION OF INDIA (EVFI)

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GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF EKAL

EKAL BEYOND BORDERS ONE MISSION, GLOBAL VISION



In the first week of October 2025, I attended the Annual Conference of Ekal Foundation USA in Orlando, Florida—my second visit to the United States. Back in 2006, I had been entrusted with representing Ekal Abhiyan across all sixteen regions of Ekal Foundation USA, as well as in Toronto, Canada. During that Pravas, I had attended the Annual Conference in Detroit and delivered a presentation on Ekal Abhiyan, followed by an engaging question-and-answer session.

Nearly two decades later, returning to the conference in Orlando, I was struck by the remarkable transformation and phenomenal growth of Ekal USA. The organisation's strategic shift from a primary focus on Ekal Vidyalayas to a broader emphasis on Gramothan projects reflected the spirit of an aspirational Atma Nirbhar Bharat. Equally inspiring was the strong focus on women's empowerment. Ekal USA has indeed made a tremendous contribution to the larger Ekal Movement. I was particularly happy to see the exponential increase in the participation of youth and women at the frontline, demonstrating exceptional leadership and organisational skills.

In my address on the first evening, I spoke on the theme "The Historical Journey of Ekal." My opening remark, "Those who forget their history lose its significance for the future," was met with resounding applause. On the concluding day, I was overwhelmed by a deep sense of connection and pride. I felt compelled to express: "Here in Ekal USA, I see and hear the same heartbeat of devotion to our मातृभूमि Bharat that resonates across India."

That moment inspired me to write about "Ekal Overseas," to convey the shared dedication, compassion, and commitment of the Indian

diaspora in the United States toward the Ekal Mission. This is the bond that unites the global Ekal family—from supporters across the world to grassroots volunteers, and Gram and Nagar Sangathan members throughout India. For me, this experience was a profound realization of the spiritual strength that underpins the Ekal Movement.

With this purpose, I reached out to several founding members and guiding lights of Ekal Foundation USA requesting them to share their lived experiences. Through their memories, I have attempted to trace the journey of Ekal USA over the past 28 years, weaving together their reflections into a cohesive narrative.

I am aware that it is nearly impossible to capture every moment, milestone, and achievement in a single account. Some memories may have faded, and some contributions may remain undocumented. Nevertheless, this is my humble effort to preserve the history and enduring spirit that continues to connect and inspire the Ekal Parivar across the globe.

Manju Srivastava
Co-Founder, Ekal Abhiyan
Chairperson of Ekal Sansthan





BACKGROUND - One teacher school was started under Friends of Tribal Society in Bharat. Late Sri Madanlal Aggrawalla was instrumental in starting One Teacher School (OTS) in Dhanbad, Jharkhand (South Bihar originally). Smt. Poonam Agarwal wife of Sri Anand Agarwal was first secretary of FTS Dhanbad. Sri Anand Agarwal, son of Ma. Madanlal Aggrawalla, was an active Karyakarta with VHP of America in New Jersey. Ma. Madanlal Aggrawalla used to visit him in the USA. Ma. Mahesh Mehta, Founder of VHPA, met him and discussed Tribal schools. Sri Mahesh Mehta visited schools in Jharkhand. Since VHPA was well established and Hindus in USA became successful because of education, VHPA requested Ma. Madanlal to talk to Ma Ashok Singhal of VHP Bharat to take OTS to National level and work with VHP of America. Ma. Ashok Singhal also used to visit USA to guide VHP of America. Sri B K Modi who was external President VHP Bharat at that time. Ma. Ashok Singhal requested the leaders of VHP of America to take up fundraising efforts for OTS. Ma Singhal described this project as "Brahmastra" to change lives of Tribals in Bharat. VHPA took up this project in 1997 and started fundraising efforts in 1998. Sri Ramesh Shah was assigned for the Project along with issuing receipts and banking activities for this project.

HISTORY

and Sri Ramesh Shah as secretary/ Treasurer. Initial Directors were: Sri Jyotish Parekh, Dr. Yash Pal Lakra,

OF EKAL VIDYALAYA FOUNDATION, USA



During this time Late Sri P. D. Chitlangiya also came from FTS (Friends of Tribal Society, Kolkata) and Sri Ramesh Bhutada, USA organized a meeting in a Restaurant to promote the Tribal education in India.

Establishing Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA: Meanwhile, at the direction of Ma. Ashok Singhal, VHP Bharat, took up this project at National level in Bharat. VHP Bharat and VHP America started to think about taking this project further in USA. Sri Shyam Gupt in India lead the effort to establish Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India and in USA. Dr. B K Modi with Sri K L Chug was assigned to lead the effort to establish Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA. VHP USA discussed almost for 3 years to create a separate organization basically to educate rural Vanvasi Bharat and get support from larger Indian community.

In year 2000 Ma. Ashok Singhal, Dr. B K Modi, Sri C K Chug came to USA. Sri Mahesh Mehta of VHPA and Sri Jyotish Parekh president of VHPA

were with them. They discussed and established Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA in Silicon Valley, California with kind support of Smt. Sucheta Kapuria, an entrepreneur from San Francisco. Smt Kapuria was very much involved with the TIE group, an Indian entrepreneur technology organisation. Smt. Sucheta Kapuria in San Francisco was instrumental in registering Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA as nonprofit 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization. Smt. Kapuria was also the initial President of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA. They assigned seven people as permanent directors

Smt. Veena Gandhi, Sri Ram Nehra, Sri Basant Tariyal, Smt Sucheta Kapuria and Sri Ramesh Shah. We also had nonvoting members from Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India attend the out-board meeting. Initially people from EVFI who contributed are: Sri Santyendra Prakash, Sri Rajendra Khetan, Sri Pradeep Goyal and Smt. Sangeeta Gupta. We also created Bylaws for the organization.

After many planning meetings between VHP Bharat and VHP of America teams, detailed plans were formulated to reach out to the 3+ million



Lt. Sri Ashok Singhal



Dr. BK Modi



Lt. Sri Madanlal Aggrawalla



Sri Shyam Gupt



FOUNDER TRUSTEES OF EKAL FOUNDATION, USA



Sucheta Kapuria



Dr. Veena Gandhi



Praveena Danda



Jyotish Parekh



Ramesh Shah



Basant Tariyal



Dr. Yash Pal Lakra



Ram Nehra



Dr. Chandresh Saraiya

Indian Diaspora in USA (1999 census). By this time VHP of America was well established in USA with over 25 years of work, with over 30 chapters across USA, and hundreds of committed and dedicated Karyakartas. One of the strategies was to separate this project from VHP of America and make a separate foundation. VHP of America was involved in many "Hindu Sangathan" activities. "Having a separate foundation with a sole objective of educating rural Vanvasi Bharat is likely to appeal many in the Indian community in USA" was the team thinking behind that approach.

VHPA leadership assigned the coordination work to Sri Ramesh Shah with the overall coordination responsibility of this Foundation. And in a joint meeting between VHP Bharat, and VHP of America team, "Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA" was the name decided for new foundation. The organization in Bharat would be named, "Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India" (EVFI).

On Sept 14, 2001 we had a meeting in San Francisco and decided

to move the operation to Houston and used 15455 Empanada Dr. Houston, Texas, 77083 as the registered address until 2005. We selected Dr. Chandresh Saraiya as President in 2002 and Sri Ramesh Shah as secretary and treasurer. Later we selected Smt. Praveena Danda as the first Treasurer. We also added a non-voting Director from the Ekal Vidyalaya foundation of India. We ran Ekal office from Sri Ramesh Shah's home till we established an office in 2005. Sri Ramesh Bhutada and Sri Jujal Malain offered spaces for the office. We opened account at Morgan Stanley which is still operating. Sri Subhash Gupta, who was a president of VHPA Houston chapter, also joined Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA.

The initial thought was to have a permanent board, and the executive committee can be rotating. During initial years many obstacles had to be overcome. Also establishing credibility and good-will took time. We had to bring one more VHP of America stalwart, Sri Subhash Gupta in 2004 to the foundation to coordinate the growing operation. By 2010, the foundation

was well established with many chapters across USA. We had crossed \$ 5 million mark for annual fundraising. Many new volunteers had joined, and many new leaders had also demonstrated great commitment for the Hindu Cause. So, it was decided by the existing board that the Ekal board could be made a rotating board, a further encouragement for the leaders of the Hindu community at large in USA.

For fundraising purpose, the initial directors started doing programs in their area or cities. To reach out more people across USA Sri Ramesh Shah Travelled almost every weekend to different cities across USA where there were people of Indian Origin. We established Ekal Chapters in almost all the major cities. At present about 65 chapters are active. All initial Board of directors contributed in that effort. We started with raising funds \$295,146 in the year 2001 to \$2,344,933 in the year 2005. We crossed \$10,000,000 in the year 2020. ■

Ramesh Shah
Past General Secretary Treasurer
Jyotish Parekh
President, VHPA





EKAL'S GLOBAL CLARION CALL AND MA. SHYAM GUPT'S FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA



In Indian culture, pravās (sojourn) is not merely about traversing geographical distances; it is a form of spiritual endeavour—that of sowing the seeds of ideas. The year 2001 stands etched as a golden chapter in the history of the Ekal Abhiyan, when, under the directive and guidance of Ma Ashok Singhal, Ma Shyam Gupta embarked on his first journey to the United States. This journey was not simply about crossing the seven seas; it was a mission to establish the Indian philosophy of Antyodaya (upliftment of the last person) and Gramotthan (village development) in the rational and analytical society of the West.

A Journey from Scepticism to Trust: When we look at Ma Shyam Gupta's experiences from a writer's perspective, we find that the initial path was extremely challenging. For Indians settled in America and for many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) there, the very concept of a "Pracharak"—a selfless worker dedicated to social service—was almost unimaginable. The idea that someone could work internationally while living a life of total dedication, without salary or personal assets, was beyond their conventional reasoning.

The greatest obstacle was distrust. Past betrayals by a few pseudo-saints had left deep scepticism in the minds of the diaspora. For Ma Shyam Gupta, the challenge was not merely about explaining budgets or curricula—it was about establishing credibility. When he was asked, "What proof do you have

that this is not a fraud?" he chose humility and integrity as his response rather than confrontation. He said with clarity: "First visit India and see the schools yourselves. Examine the truth with your own eyes, and only then place your trust in us." This confidence could come only from a person of deep conviction someone who prioritized the value of uniting people to the cause and earning their trust over merely collecting funds.

Presenting Ekal's Vision to the World: During his stay in America, Ma Shyam Gupta explained the working methodology of Ekal to the intellectual community in a remarkably logical and compelling manner—an approach that remains a roadmap for the organization even today. He described the forest-dwelling communities as "children of nature" and emphasized that the work of Ekal is essentially the work of Lord Ram. Just as the army of Maryada Purushottam fought without any expectation of wages or personal gain, thousands of Ekal Acharyas and Sevavritis serve with a similar spirit of dedication in the task of nation-building.

A Defining Ideological Turning Point: A significant intellectual turning point during this visit came when the discussion centred around the concept of the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of the Ekal Abhiyan. Ma Shyam Gupta explained with great clarity that while many organizations seek support merely to run service projects, Ekal's objective is to make villages self-reliant through such support. He illustrated this through the concept of Panchmukhi Shiksha (five-fold education)



integrating education, health, development, values, and awareness to build a strong and self-sustaining rural India. His analogy of the tree remains deeply relevant even today: if we wish to see the tree called India flourish and blossom, we must nourish its roots the tribal and rural communities which remain largely unseen.

Legacy of a Transformative Journey: Ma Shyam Gupta's journey succeeded because he responded to arguments not with counter-arguments, but with truth, sincerity, and compassion. Those who were initially sceptical eventually became pillars of the Ekal movement. Today, the vast banyan tree of Ekal that stands tall on foreign soil carries within its roots the dedication, integrity, and tireless effort of that historic journey of 2001. ■

Siddhartha Shankar Gautam
Co-Editor, Ekal Prayas





MY JOURNEY WITH EKAL VIDYALAYA



My name is Ram Nehra. I was born and raised in Kenya. In 1955, I passed the Senior Cambridge University Examination and went to India for higher education. In 1961, I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy from the University of Bombay, Department of Chemical Technology. I returned to Kenya and worked as a medical representative for several pharmaceutical companies.

In 1969, I immigrated to the United States, where I began a long and fulfilling career as a Retail Community Pharmacist.

In August 2001, Ma. Shyam Gupta, the visionary founder of Ekal Vidyalaya, and Sri Prem Ji, a respected Member of the Indian Parliament, arrived to introduce Ekal to the Indian diaspora, there was little indication of the extraordinary journey that lay ahead.

Following their initial visit, Ma Shyam Gupta and Sri Prem Ji embarked on an extensive journey across the United States, traveling to major cities over a period of nearly two and a half months. They met families in their homes, spoke at small community gatherings, and patiently explained the vision and grassroots model of Ekal. Their words were not just informative—they were deeply inspiring. They ignited a sense of responsibility and connection among members of the Indian diaspora, many of whom began to see, perhaps for the first time, how they could directly impact lives in distant villages of India.

During our visit to India, we travelled to Palwal, a small village about 100

kilometres from New Delhi. There, we saw Ekal schools in action. What we witnessed was not just education—it was hope taking root. The children we met were innocent, bright, and full of enthusiasm. Their eagerness to learn, despite limited resources, was deeply moving. Their smiles carried a quiet determination; their curiosity reflected a hunger for opportunity.

When we returned to the United States in October 2001, we took the first step by establishing Ekal in New England. What began as a personal commitment soon grew into a collective effort. Around the same time, Ekal's presence in the United States began to take shape in a more organized way. Our first Board meeting was held in Atlantic City, bringing together twelve dedicated individuals who shared a common vision. Among them were my wife Nishi and me; Smt. Sucheta Kapuria, who became the first President of Ekal USA; Sri Ramesh Shah and Smt. Kokila Shah; Sri Basant Tariyal and his wife Smt. Neelam Tariyal; Smt. Veena Gandhi; and others whose early dedication laid the foundation for what Ekal USA has become today.

The growth of Ekal USA has been fuelled by tireless volunteerism and strong community engagement. Partnerships with temples and cultural organizations have strengthened outreach and created a robust support system. Across the country, chapters have organized countless events—from cultural programmes and music concerts to community gatherings—each one bringing people together in the spirit of service.

In 2017, a group of eighteen tribal girls from India visited the United States. Through their performances under the banner "Ekal Sur, Ekal Taal," they shared their culture, talent, and stories with audiences across the country. Their grace, confidence, and authenticity touched hearts everywhere, serving as a powerful reminder of the transformative impact of education. Another defining moment came on December 5, 2020, during one of the most challenging periods in recent history. Ekal hosted a virtual gala titled "Future of India." Under the leadership of Sri Mohan Wanchoo, Chairman and CEO of EC Infosystems, the event brought together supporters from across the nation and raised an extraordinary \$6.5 million. It was not just a fundraising success—it was a testament to unity, resilience, and unwavering belief in the mission.

As we reflect on this journey, we must also express our deep gratitude to the leaders and visionaries in India whose guidance and encouragement have been invaluable. Ma Shyam Gupta's visits have always been a source of inspiration. Along with him, Ma Ashok Singal, Sri Mahesh Mehta, Dr. B.K. Modi, Sri K.L. Chugh, Dr. Subhash Chandra of Zee Media, Dr. Satish Kumar, Sri Bajrang Bagra, Sri Pradeep Goyal, Sri Naresh Jain, and Smt. Manju Srivasava, have all played significant roles in nurturing and expanding Ekal's presence in the United States.

Yet, for me, this journey is also deeply personal. My beloved wife, Smt. Nishi Nehra, was at the heart of Ekal's early growth in New England. Her unwavering support, quiet strength, and tireless dedication made so much of this





possible. She helped organize events, welcomed guests and artists from India, and created a sense of warmth and belonging that brought people together. I lost her nine years ago, but her presence continues to guide me. Her spirit lives on in the work we do, in the community we have built, and in every child whose life is touched through Ekal. Ekal's mission is simple, yet profoundly meaningful: to

bring light where there is darkness, and opportunity where there is limitation. Over the years, it has been a great honour to contribute to this noble mission. I was humbled to be featured on the front page of the Providence Journal on August 9, 2010, highlighting the work we were doing for rural education. Later, on August 15, 2021, His Excellency, Governor Daniel McKee of Rhode Island, recognized my

efforts in promoting education through Ekal Vidyalaya and honoured me with a certificate and a commemorative plaque. Even in retirement, I remain actively involved in supporting this mission. It has been one of the most meaningful and fulfilling journeys of my life. ■

Ram Nehra

Co-Founder Member, Ekal USA

THE FIRST EKAL LADY



My journey with Ekal Vidyalaya began in 1999, rooted in five decades of leadership across Silicon Valley and, later, greater

Los Angeles. As a corporate attorney turned entrepreneur, I founded and led four successful hardware and software companies, was profiled among top entrepreneurs in Fortune Magazine (1993), and served three terms as President of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Northern California. I helped establish the first Hindu Temple in the San Francisco Bay Area in Fremont, CA, in 1982, serving as its chairman for six years. My civic contributions also include a role in creating the South Asian Studies Chair at UC Berkeley (1994) and board service with the Dharma Civilization Foundation, Vidya Bharati Foundation of USA, and the President's Circle of the University of Ottawa, Canada.

When renowned industrialist Dr. B.K. Modi and ITC Chairman Emeritus Sri K.L. Chugh visited Silicon Valley in 1999 to launch a US chapter of Ekal Vidyalaya, the community unanimously turned to me to lead the effort. I agreed.

We made the strategic decision to separate Ekal from Vishwa Hindu Parishad and establish it as an

independent entity: the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA. I then spent two years navigating the incorporation process, drafting bylaws, and obtaining 501(C) nonprofit status; a prerequisite for even opening a US bank account.

I started my outreach — speaking at community events, attending gatherings of every kind, and tirelessly spreading Ekal's message. My dedication became so well known that people across the Bay Area began calling me the Ekal Lady. To make the name more accessible to American audiences, my volunteers and I began shortening "Ekal Vidyalaya" to simply "Ekal" — a change that Ekal India leader Ma Shyam Gupt formally embraced during his 2003 US visit.

That same visit proved pivotal. When I learned that Ekal's long-term vision was to establish 100,000 schools across rural India — up from 2,000 at the time — I responded with characteristic boldness: with over three million Indians living in the US, I believed that reaching just 100,000 of them, one school at a time, could make it possible.

As Ekal USA's founding President and one of seven national board members, I helped build a grassroots fundraising culture centered on a

simple, resonant message: one dollar a day — \$365 a year — could bring literacy to 30 to 40 children. Our fundraising events featured food, entertainment, art auctions, and family participation, with children running bake sales and lemonade stands alongside their parents. The board met annually across the country at our own expense, rigorously reviewing progress and refining strategy. After a decade of service, my fellow founding board members and I stepped aside in 2010 to make room for new leadership — by then, Ekal had become a household name in Indian-American communities nationwide.

I have donated more than 150 schools and have been retired from active leadership of Ekal for over twelve years. Today, I take great pride in the fact that the organization I built from my home — whose founding address still appears in Ekal USA's bylaws — has helped achieve the once-audacious goal of 100,000 schools, bringing literacy to millions of children in remote corners of India. Ma Shyam Gupt once called me the mother of Ekal USA. Looking at what it has become, I can think of no greater honour. ■

Sucheta Kapuria

Founder President, Ekal USA





THE EKAL USA ODYSSEY

Turning Diaspora Devotion into Rural Transformation



This is Subhash Gupta. During 80s and 90s, I was president of VHP, Houston chapter and often received many high-profile guests from RSS and VHP. In 1990's I attended a VHP governing council meeting near Boston. Dr. BK Modi VHP Internation coordinator flew from India to attend this meeting. He explained the concept of Ekal Vidyalaya and asked who would take up this work. Sri Ramesh Shah of Houston stood up and said he would take up this challenge. In 2001 Ma Shyam Gupt came to Houston and talked about raising funds to run Ekal Vidyalayas. I had arranged a meeting at my home with Houston's noted Aggarwal's brothers who were considered Subway Kings. They were excited with the concept of education and agreed to fund all the new schools in their home district in India. This was the biggest jackpot for Ma Shyam Gupt in the whole USA. Ma Gupt got money for hundreds of schools initially with a promise to fund as many schools as Ekal could start a new in their district.

The appeal of education is very mesmerizing and compelling. Hence Ekal started growing. Sri Ramesh Shah with modest means flew red night flights in the weekends to try to open new chapters in different cities in USA. We started bringing music artists for 2 to 3 months to perform in the fundraising galas in different chapters. The audience was brought together with the promise of Bollywood performance while the appeal was made for donations. We started collecting the funds. The programs could be held only on the weekends. We had over 60 programs and lasted almost 3

months. We started having national conference of all the volunteers annually. The leadership teams from India would come and explain how the schools are running and why is it so important to raise funds. The conference still serves to motivate the volunteers to raise awareness in public as that inspires donors to donate. This tradition continues.

Some of the big donors wanted to make a bigger impact in the life of villagers. The team in India and US thought of starting Tailoring centres, computer centres, Ekal on wheels, skill Development centres who empowered the villagers economically. This work was done under Ekal Gramothan Foundation known as EGF. In 2026 March end, EGF runs over 900 projects to uplift the farmers and villagers economically. Ekal USA supported GRC, Known as Gramothan Resource Centre. The GRCs has acres of land for training to Farmers in Crop Management, Vermi Compost, nutritional gardens etc. A large training centre with residential facilities to cover a minimum of 100 villages. Since 2020, Ekal USA decided to go with IVD known as integrated village development. IVDs were started in rental places instead of our own buildings and were half the cost of GRC. Today we have over 30 IVDs.

The Arogya Foundation; Anaemia was the biggest problem in ladies. Doctors used to provide tablets to boost iron. Health work expanded in India as we in USA collected more funds. The concept of ARC known as Arogya resource centre was started in India,

where one lady would serve as Arogya Sevika in each village. She was trained in ayurvedic and desi (domestic) treatments. Later, in 2015 an experiment of telemedicine was started by Dr Satpathy in Orissa. That experiment was very successful and led to massive deployment of telemedicine in thousands of villages. Ekal USA started collecting funds for TEA, known as telemedicine, enhanced Arogya. Ekal USA provides all the funds to run Arogya foundation of India and EGF Ekal Gramothan Foundation.

The Ekal USA is very successful in raising funds in USA. We are in the top 10 Indian charities by dollar amount in USA. The primary reason is a motivated volunteer base. The officials keep motivating and charging the volunteers. The senior officials lead the volunteers by example. Ekal's cause is very resonating among Indians, especially in senior citizens. In the early years of Ekal, we had Sri Ramesh Bhutada and Sri Braham Ratan Aggarwal, who provided big some sums of funding. Sri Bramh Ratan provided close to a million dollars and helped start 3,000 schools. Sri Ramesh Shah provided office space to Ekal as well as hundred thousand dollars initially. A sum of hundred thousand dollar was a huge amount at that time in early 2000s. Ekal USA started with just one employee and grew to six employees today. Ekal got its first executive director in 2010 and since then we have an executive director who is building connections with high-net-worth donors. ■

Subhash Gupta
Past President, Ekal, USA





GLOBAL FOOTPRINT OF EKAL

A Journey of Growth, Service, and Global Commitment

Ekal's global movement, rooted in the powerful vision of one teacher, one school, one village at a time, has transcended geographical boundaries to emerge as a worldwide force for grassroots transformation. It has been nurtured and propelled by the compassion, cultural connect, and unwavering commitment of the global Indian diaspora—individuals living thousands of miles away yet deeply anchored to Bharat's ethos. From vibrant chapters in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and across Europe, this collective spirit has translated into sustained support for education, healthcare, and self-reliance initiatives in rural and tribal India. In this journey, Ekal's presence at the USA has emerged as a defining milestone positioning it as a torchbearer of community-driven development and an inspiring model worthy of replication across global platforms. These international chapters have not merely extended financial support; they have become active partners in nation-building, carrying forward Ekal's mission with a shared sense of responsibility and pride, thereby weaving a seamless bridge between the world and the villages of India.



Ekal Overseas represents the awakening of the global Indian conscience uniting the diaspora to empower the last village through education, health, and self-reliance.

Ekal in the United States: In the USA, Ekal began with just a handful of passionate supporters. Today, it has grown into a network of 65 chapters across EIGHT regions, powered by approximately forty thousand of volunteers, donors, and community leaders. What makes this growth remarkable is not just the numbers—it is the spirit of organized volunteerism and the strong sense of community that drives every chapter.

How the Chapters Work: Ekal USA thrives on a simple but effective structure that keeps things organized while staying close to the communities it serves:

- National Leadership oversees the big picture—setting goals, guiding strategy, and ensuring every chapter stays aligned with Ekal's mission.
- Regional Coordinators connect the national vision with local action, mentoring chapters, sharing resources, and helping bring initiatives to life in communities across the country.





- Local Chapters are the heart of the movement. They organize events, mobilize volunteers, and engage local communities, all while staying true to Ekal's vision.
- Volunteers Everywhere make it all happen. From planning events to spreading awareness, their energy, skills, and dedication turn ideas into real impact.
- Making a Difference: Together, volunteers and donors across the USA support schools, health programs, women's initiatives, and youth programs in India positively affecting tens of thousands of villages.

By combining strong leadership with hands-on volunteer energy, Ekal USA remains organized, connected, and impactful—without losing its personal touch.

Rising Leadership of Women: One of the most inspiring aspects of Ekal USA's journey is the growing role of women. Volunteers have stepped up as chapter leaders, programme coordinators, and national team members, bringing vision, organizational skills, and ownership that strengthen the movement's outreach and fundraising.

Engaging the Next Generation: Ekal USA also invests in the future. Young members of the Indian diaspora are stepping forward to become active participants in the movement:

- Yuva Udaan Movement – mobilizing youth for leadership



- Internships, youth forums, and service visits
- Organizing events and digital campaigns
- Volunteering in fundraising and community outreach

Through their energy and ideas, the next generation ensures that Ekal's mission continues to inspire and grow.

Fundraising Through Community Engagement: For Ekal USA, fundraising is not just about money - it is about building community, awareness, and participation. Chapters host a wide variety of events:

- Cultural shows and musical concerts
- Community galas and charity dinners
- Walkathons and local events
- School sponsorship drives
- Digital and online campaigns

These activities bring together families, volunteers, and community leaders, creating both support and connection for rural development in India.

Experiences that Inspire: Programmes like Vanyatra allow donors and volunteers to see Ekal's impact firsthand. Visiting villages, meeting teachers, students, and families often sparks a deep emotional connection to the mission.

National and regional conferences also offer volunteers the chance to share experiences, celebrate achievements, and renew their commitment to service.

A Global Message from America: Through its growth and engagement, Ekal USA shows how collective action, volunteer spirit, and community generosity can transform thousands of villages and millions of lives. As the movement continues to expand, it carries a simple but powerful message: empowering rural India through education, health, and self-reliance is not just a national mission—it is a global responsibility for Indians everywhere. ■

Madhu Bansal
Ekal USA Secretary
and Social Media Co-Chair





Ekal Canada

*From a Spark in 2004
to a Nationwide Force for Change*



Ekal Canada journey started in 2004 summer. Ma Shyam Gupta, the founder of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, India and

Sri Ram Nehra, the board member of United States and founder of Ekal Vidyalaya in New England visited Toronto, Canada. They met the top community leaders and explained the need to bring education to the most underprivileged people in the most remote villages in India. Most of these villages never had any school and children had no access to formal education. In such circumstances children grew up in total illiteracy and poverty. Ekal Vidyalaya set out to change that reality - one village, one school, one teacher at a time. After a couple of months Sri Ram Nehra again returned to Toronto. A meeting was held at the residence of late Sri Sabharwal. Among eighteen well-known members were chief editor of India Abroad Canada edition, Sri Ajit Jain, Dr. Rajesh Bhatia anchor of an Indian broadcast, activists Sri Yash Kapoor, Sri Ashok Kapoor, Sri Sat Wadhwa, Sri Pyush Sharma, Smt Preeti Sharma, and Sri Narender Bhalla and his wife Neelam. At the meeting everyone felt the need to have Ekal Vidyalaya chapter in Canada. Following year Ma Gupta and I went to Canada again. At the residence of Sri Ashok Kapoor, we elected Sri Ravi Verma as the president of Canada Ekal, Sri Ashok Kapoor as the secretary and Smt Preeti Sharma as the volunteer. There was lot of excitement and every one pledged to support Ekal.



Ekal Canada volunteers in action

Sri Ravi Verma and his wife Smt. Sheela Verma decided to visit India. December 2004 - March 2005 - visited India and participated in Ekal programme in Mumbai and visited Ekal school in Ajmer area in Rajasthan.

In 2005 Applied for registration of Ekal as Charitable organization and to obtain tax exempt status in Canada for donations received. In 2007. First application rejected by Canadian Government for lacking sufficient control from Canada for funds sent by Ekal Canada, on second attempt with revised package, our application was accepted and donations to Ekal Canada became tax exempt. In 2008 Sri Ravi / Sheela Verma participated in Ekal school visit in Assam and Chhattisgarh area and in 2009 Ekal Kumbh in New Delhi. First few years, it was slow progress, however with help from Ekal USA. they started to move on.

In 2011, after four years, Sri Ravi Kumar decided to hand over Ekal Leadership to someone else. Sri Ram

Nehra went to Toronto again and asked Sri Parin Kothari, a young energetic dynamite to lead Ekal. Sri Kothari suggested that we should get some mature well known Indian Community leader for such a unique movement. We went to New London to meet Sri Parshotam Gupta. He was aware of Ekal and was very eager to lead Ekal. Sri Parshotam now the chairman of the Canada Ekal Board had very successful programmes every year to raise funds for Ekal. Gradually Ekal Canada started to expand in other areas as well, now they have chapters in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and Ottawa. Canada Ekal's striking feature is 100% of funds collected go to Ekal, no promoting or administration expenses.

Today Canada Ekal is one of the strongest contributors in the progress of Ekal Vidyalaya and they are willing to wipe off the scourge of illiteracy from the face of India.

■
Ram Nehra





Ekal International Outreach Trip in Europe *Strengthening Global Engagement and Expanding Networks*



During a six-week outreach trip across Europe and the Middle East, we engaged with Ekal supporters in six key cities Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich, Milan, Bahrain, and Dubai.



The objectives of the visit were to:

1. *Connect with and motivate existing Karyakartas.*
2. *Establish local teams in regions without formal Ekal chapters.*
3. *Engage business leaders and explore avenues for support.*
4. *Plan awareness and branding initiatives for the next 12–15 months, particularly across Europe.*

Bahrain | April 5–7

Ekal's Bahrain Coordinator, Sri Mahesh Dev a highly respected community and business leader organized a series of impactful meetings. We interacted with members of the Gujarati Samaj and presented Ekal's work through a detailed presentation, covering the Ekal Vidyalaya program as well as skill development initiatives under the Ekal Gramothan Foundation. On April 6, we



Sri Kishor Fruitwala presenting Ekal's mission to attendees

were invited to the Vaishnodevi Temple for Ram Navami celebrations. Addressing several hundred devotees, Sri Kishor shared insights into Ekal's mission and grassroots impact.

Frankfurt | April 29

Sri Bala Govinda Rao, the Frankfurt Coordinator, convened a meeting of Ekal supporters attended by nine participants, including several new members. The discussion focused on Ekal's mission, operational model, and impact. We also highlighted Ekal's work in India and its growing global outreach.

Zurich | April 30

A meeting organized by Sri Mangesh Desai saw participation from four attendees (both in-person and online), all of whom were already

familiar with Ekal's education initiatives (EVFI). We introduced them to Ekal's broader portfolio, including skill development programmes. The team demonstrated strong enthusiasm and commitment.

Paris | May 5

Paris marked the fourth stop of our journey, where the Ekal chapter is already registered in France. The meeting, hosted at the GOPIO office and organized by Trustee Sri Sachin Sadh, was attended by over 20 highly engaged professionals and business leaders. Most attendees were well-acquainted with Ekal's work. A key suggestion was to translate Ekal's brochure into French to enhance outreach within the local community. As in other European cities, there was a strong consensus on organizing a major awareness and fundraising event.





Sri and Smt. Kishor Fruitwala with distinguished well-wishers of Ekal

Milan | May 9

Sri Bitthal Maheshwari, Trustee of the Ekal Global Foundation, hosted a well-attended meeting at his residence, bringing together 28 participants including community leaders, corporate representatives, TCS leadership, young students, and a representative from the Indian Consulate. The audience was highly engaged during the presentation. Several long-time residents of Milan were already familiar with Ekal, and some donors shared their enriching experiences from participating in annual Vanyatras. Once again, the importance of organizing cultural outreach programmes was strongly emphasized.

Dubai | May 13

Sri Balkrishna, the Dubai Coordinator, arranged multiple

meetings at the offices of Ekal supporters. We interacted with diamond merchants and business leaders, presenting Ekal's skill development initiatives and exploring avenues of collaboration. In addition to financial support, several business leaders expressed interest in sponsoring the distribution of the Bhagavad Gita to every Ekal school—or potentially to each student.

Next Steps

1. Establish formal chapters in Frankfurt, Milan, and Zurich, and support their NGO registration processes to enhance credibility and enable tax benefits for donors.
2. Plan major cultural programmes across European cities to significantly increase awareness and engagement among Indian and local communities.

3. Explore partnerships with Indian Embassies in Europe for hosting “Sur Ekal Taal”-type cultural showcases.
4. Distribute printed tri-fold brochures at Indian events and translate them into French and German for broader outreach.
5. Strengthen engagement with business leaders in Bahrain and Dubai to secure sustained financial support.

This international outreach trip proved to be a significant step toward strengthening Ekal's global presence, building committed local teams, and expanding partnerships for long-term impact. ■

Kishor Fruitwala
Past President, Ekal Global
Smt. Kalpana Fruitwala





Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation Sydney

Two Decades of Impact



Built on Vision, Sustained by Dedication: Ekal Australia's journey starts with its founders: Dr Nihal

Agar, Sri Jayendra Shah, Sri Anil Yadav, and Sri Devendra Gupta with Sri Sudesh Gupta joining soon after. Their vision set the course — and their continued involvement two decades on speaks volumes. Smt Savita Gupta has served as Treasurer since the very beginning, a quiet but powerful symbol of the continuity that defines this organisation. Now, a new generation — Sri Ganesh Luharuka, Sri Pravesh Babhoota and Smt Trupti Shukla — are stepping up, bringing fresh energy while honouring that founding spirit. And, behind every dedicated volunteer stands an equally committed family, and the silent, steadfast support of the spouses has been an invisible but indispensable pillar of this organisation's strength.

From One City to a Nation: For many years, Ekal Australia was a Sydney story. That is now changed. Adelaide chapter started in 2021, Melbourne chapter came on board in 2022, and Perth chapter in 2023. We are now a coordinated, coast-to-coast community — and still growing. A pivotal moment came in July 2007 when the organisation was granted Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, making all donations fully tax-deductible and opening the door to significantly broader community support.

Community, Culture, and a Mission Renewed: Ekal Australia does not just raise funds — it brings people together. Sydney led the way with a proud tradition of annual fundraising events: “Rhythm of Bollywood” (2015) and the Sri Shankar Ehsaan Loy Live Concert (July 2019) built real momentum. Then Covid-19 struck, halting gatherings and breaking that hard-won rhythm. Even through the lockdowns, the spirit endured — Singer Sanjivani Bhelande kept the community connected with a virtual musical event in 2020.

The road back came with renewed inspiration in the form of our own Smt. Manju Srivastav — a founding pillar of the Ekal movement whom we fondly address as Manju Didi. Her visits to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth reignited the spirit of volunteers across the country, personally connecting the newer chapters to the deeper purpose of the Ekal mission. Ekal Sargam (2023) marked a triumphant return to the stage, and the next milestone “Sangeet Se Sewa” in May 2026 continues that renewed momentum.

Today Australia has four chapters. They are highly motivated and deeply aligned — raising awareness, growing school sponsorships, and spreading the Ekal message from coast to coast. These are not just events. They are proof that when culture, community, and cause come together, extraordinary things happen.

Ekal Australia events bringing community and cause together across Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney



Executive Committee members, Ekal Sydney

Two Decades, Thousands of Children: From 40 schools in the early years to hundreds today, Ekal Australia's growth is steady, meaningful, and deeply human. Ekal Australia stands shoulder to shoulder with chapters around the world, contributing to Ekal's mission. From a single city to a national network, our community has shown that distance is no barrier to impact. Each sponsorship from this community — however far from those village classrooms — sends a teacher, opens a door, and changes a life. It is a testament to what a committed diaspora community can achieve from the other side of the world.

Number of schools supported by Ekal Australia, 2004–2025

With four active chapters, a proven community outreach model, and an unwavering commitment from volunteers across the country, Ekal Australia has never been better placed to take on its most ambitious target yet: 1,500 Ekal schools by 2027. The journey from 30 schools to a nationwide movement is already remarkable. ■

Trupti Shukla
General Secretary, Sydney



Adelaide Chapter, Australia *Strengthening Roots, Expanding Ekal's Reach*



The Adelaide Chapter of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation has grown steadily since its inception in 2020, under the guidance of Smt Manju Srivastava, Trustee, Ekal Global and with the support of Sri Chirag Trivedi, our guiding force.



What began as a small presence within local community spaces has, over the years, evolved into a more organised chapter with greater clarity of purpose, growing impact, and strengthening leadership. The evolving leadership has further driven the growth of Ekal's Adelaide chapter. Ms Vijayta Srivastava, President from 2022 handed over the reins to Sri Sanjay Patel in 2024.

Early Years: Laying the Foundation - In its initial years, the Adelaide Chapter focused on introducing Ekal's vision to the Indian diaspora in South Australia through participation in community forums and gala events such as those organised by South Australian Indian Medical Association (SAIMA). These early engagements were important in building awareness and forming relationships with individuals who resonated with Ekal's core values of Seva, Sanskar, and Shiksha.

Expanding Visibility and Community Connect: The year 2023 marked a clear shift in the chapter's outward engagement. With a stronger internal foundation and the formation of a local committee in Adelaide including office bearers (Vice President, Sri Kuldeep Mishra, Secretary, Sri Devesh Upadhyay), the structural groundwork for the chapter was set. With this support in place, the Adelaide Chapter increased its participation in other forums increasing access and engagement with the wider community. This included setting up an Ekal booth in the Indian Mela and facilitating presentations with leaders of other Indian community organisations. The focus of these interactions was on sharing Ekal's grassroots work, its reach across rural India, and ways in which community members could get involved as volunteers or supporters.

Adelaide's Biggest Indian Festival - Deepavali Mela: A Thread of Continuity: Throughout its journey, one constant for the Adelaide Chapter has been its participation in the Deepavali Mela organised by Hindu Council of Australia, South Australia (HCA) chapter. From 2021, Ekal has been a primary participant in this event with renewed commitment, gradually improving both preparation and execution.

What initially began as an awareness-focused presence evolved over time to include better volunteer coordination, deeper community engagement, and eventually more structured fundraising initiatives. This consistent engagement not only

strengthened community trust but also reflected the chapter's growing organisational maturity.

Renewed Leadership and Growing Impact: A significant milestone in the chapter's journey came in 2025, when Sri Sanjay Patel took on the responsibility of President of the Adelaide Chapter. His leadership, along with the continued support of the team, brought renewed momentum, direction, and visibility to the chapter's activities.

At the HCA Deepavali Mela on October 4, 2025, the Adelaide Chapter conducted a charity raffle that raised AUD 5,120, along with sponsorship for two Ekal schools. All raffle prizes were generously sponsored by community well-wishers, highlighting the trust and goodwill Ekal enjoys locally. During this same period, the chapter began broadening its fundraising approach. Members participated in smaller, targeted initiatives, including a fundraising effort at Magill Campus, while individual school sponsorships long supported through the personal efforts of the team were further strengthened under the new leadership.

With ongoing mentorship from Chirag ji and focused leadership under Sri Sanjay Patel, the Adelaide Chapter today enjoys a clear identity, growing respectability, and increasing visibility within the community. ■

Vijayta Srivastava
Past President
Devesh Upadhyay
General Secretary, Adelaide



Core Team members, Adelaide Chapter



Melbourne Chapter

Transforming Mission into Ekal Movement



The Melbourne Chapter of the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation continues to support the mission of providing education and holistic development to children in rural and tribal regions of India through the Ekal One-Teacher School model.

Driven entirely by volunteers, the chapter focuses on fundraising, community engagement, and awareness building within the Indian-Australian community. The Melbourne Chapter contributes to the Ekal mission by mobilising resources and support to sustain Ekal schools and village development initiatives.

Under the Leadership of Dr. Rahul Gupta - Melbourne chapter currently get sponsorships of 120 schools and ramping up its support by creating an annual fund-raising event (planned this year for August 2026). It will also revisit the current donors for renewal and further support after April 2026.

Key Activities: During the year, the Melbourne Chapter organised several initiatives to support the Ekal movement:

- **Community Engagement:** Outreach activities strengthened awareness within the local community about the need for rural education in India. It is co-sponsoring events such as Coles group (Diwali), Hindi Niketan



Executive meeting at the residence of Dr. Rahul Gupta

(Diwali), Hindi Niketan (Holi), Uttar Pradesh Association of Australia (UPAA)-Diwali events etc to raise sponsorship as well as awareness of Ekal.

- **Events to Highlight:** 8 children decided to make Easter holidays not just fun but also great cause for community work. They sold cake pops on different platforms through community groups and raised money to adopt 2 Ekal schools, which was commendable.
- Further encouragement received a great boost in Marathi community when Sri Abhijit Bhide, shared his experience of vanyatra in India on January 7, 2026. Sri Abhijit Bhide, a well-known activist for Hindu awareness and rights in Australia visited Ekal Vidyalaya near Nagpur in Village Lingti, under Runjha Cluster, Pandharkawda Anchal.

Community Support: The success of the Melbourne Chapter is made possible by the generosity of donors, few sponsors, volunteers, and community organisations. Their continued support reflects a shared commitment to improving educational opportunities for underprivileged children of India.

Looking Ahead: The Melbourne Chapter aims to expand its outreach, strengthen partnerships, and increase support for Ekal schools in the coming years. By engaging more volunteers and community members, the chapter hopes to further contribute to the vision of education for every child and holistic village development. ■

Dr. Rahul Gupta
President

Smt Kanchan Joshi
General Secretary, Melbourne



The Evolving Story of Ekal Perth Chapter *Collective Effort, Lasting Impact*



The Perth Chapter of the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation was established by Smt Manju Srivastava under the patronship of Sri Dam Bhai Koria; the senior member of HCA in Perth. Driven entirely by volunteers, the chapter focuses on fundraising, community engagement, and awareness building within the Indian-Australian community for holistic development to children in rural and tribal regions of India through the **Ekal One-Teacher School model**.

Mission: The Perth Chapter contributes to Ekal's mission by mobilising resources and support to sustain Ekal schools and village development initiatives. Ekal Perth chapter has 9 - member of executive committee and led by Sri Yatin Panchal as president.

Currently around 110 schools getting sponsored by Perth team. They started their mission with 5 schools and reached a milestone of

110+ schools. We are also revisiting the current donors for renewal and further support after April 2026.

We have arranged another fund-raising event in mid of May to raise funds for Ekal. It will also revisit the current donors for renewal and further support after April 2026.

Key Activities: During the year, the Perth Chapter organises a fund-raising event to support the Ekal movement:

- **Community Engagement:** Outreach activities strengthened awareness within the local community about the need for rural education in India. We reach to the people and explain the works of Ekal to raise sponsorship as well as awareness of Ekal.
- **Volunteer Participation:** Dedicated volunteers supported event organisation, fundraising campaigns, and donor engagement.

Programmes Supported: Funds raised by the Perth Chapter contribute to a range of initiatives under the Ekal movement:

Community Support: The success of the Perth Chapter is made possible by the generosity of donors, few sponsors, volunteers, and community organisations. Their continued support reflects a shared commitment to improving educational opportunities for underprivileged children.

Looking Ahead: The Perth Chapter aims to expand its outreach, strengthen partnerships, and increase support for Ekal schools in the coming years. By engaging more volunteers and community members, the chapter hopes to further contribute to the vision of education for every child and holistic village development. ■

Yatin Panchal
President, Perth



Executive team members and donors with Manju Didi





Auckland Chapter First Milestones in Advancing Ekal's Mission



The Ekal Auckland Chapter marked a significant year of growth and community engagement during 2025–2026, beginning with the visit of Smt Manju Srivastava from Adelaide. Her visit aimed to establish Ekal chapters in Auckland and Hamilton and raise awareness about the Ekal Abhiyan.

The inaugural event, held on February 8, 2025 at the New Lynn Community Centre, was attended by the Consul General of India in Auckland, Dr Madan Mohan Sethi, as Chief Guest. The session featured an engaging presentation on Ekal's mission by Manju Didi, followed by an interactive discussion. During the event, Smt Shivani Aurora was appointed President of the Auckland Chapter, with Sri Niranjana Kirtikar as General Secretary and Sri Ashish Goyal as Organising Secretary.

On June 22, 2025, Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation NZ, in collaboration with Gopio and the Consulate General of India, hosted International Yoga Day in Auckland. The event featured a song, youth engagement, yoga and meditation sessions, and a presentation on Ekal's work. It was well received by the community and helped further promote Ekal's mission.



The chapter also partnered in a cultural programme, "Khamoshiyan Gunguna Rahi," a Bollywood musical concert that provided an effective platform to engage with the Indian diaspora and raise awareness about the Ekal Abhiyan.

The leadership team was further strengthened with the appointment of Sri Sunil Das as Vice-President. Continuing its outreach efforts, the Auckland Chapter hosted a community awareness event on 22 March 2026 at the New Lynn Community Centre. The event brought together community leaders and media representatives, featuring presentations on Ekal's impact in rural India and insights from field visits. Attendees were encouraged to support and engage with the initiative.

The event concluded with networking and refreshments by Shivani Restaurant. ■

Shivani Aurora
President
Niranjana Kirtikar
General Secretary, Auckland



Hamilton Chapter *Laying the Foundation for Impact*



The Hamilton Chapter was established by Smt. Manju Srivastav during her visit in February 2025 —planting the first seeds of Ekal's mission in the Waikato region. At the Hamilton meeting, Dr Sneha Sadani and Smt. Usha Gaddam stepped forward to take responsibility for growing Ekal's presence and impact across the Hamilton community.

Since then, Dr. Sneha and Smt. Usha Gaddam have been steadily building awareness through their networks— Ms Sneha by sharing Ekal's story within the medical fraternity in Hamilton, and Smt. Gaddam by championing the cause in business forums. With every conversation, more people are discovering Ekal and the momentum is growing—turning interest into involvement and goodwill into action.

Sri Nandan Modak and Sri Sanjay

Joshi—the founder trustees of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of New Zealand—continue to provide guidance, mentorship, and direction to the Hamilton Chapter as it takes its next steps forward.

On June 21, 2025, International Yoga Day, the Hamilton Chapter organized Yoga Day celebrations in association with the Office of Consulate General of India. The Hamilton community participated with great enthusiasm, bringing together people from different communities—offering a meaningful opportunity to experience the timeless practice of Yoga and to learn about Ekal Vidyalaya and the transformative work it is doing.

Sri Nandan Modak and Sri Sanjay Joshi—the founder trustees of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of New Zealand—continue to provide guidance, mentorship, and direction to

the Hamilton Chapter as it takes its next steps forward.

On December 14, 2025, Ekal helped organize a musical concert with Moksha Base featuring renowned singer from Southern India, Srinivas (Srinivasan Doraiswamy). The event was well attended and created a wonderful platform to celebrate culture, build community connection, and share the inspiring work Ekal is doing.

With these early milestones, the Hamilton Chapter is building a strong foundation for the year ahead. As awareness deepens and more community members join hands, we look forward to expanding Ekal's reach in the region—creating more opportunities to serve, to educate, and to uplift. ■

Nandan Modak
Patron, New Zealand



Members of the newly constituted Hamilton Chapter with Manju Srivastava





FROM KNOWING TO SEEING A JOURNEY THAT TOUCHED MY SOUL



After many years of working for Ekal from across the ocean, December 2025 finally gave me the opportunity to walk the land, touch the soil, and look into the eyes of the people whose lives we speak about so often. This visit to India was not just an official tour of projects—it was a deeply personal journey that reaffirmed my faith in Ekal's mission and strengthened my emotional bond with the work we do. From the moment I landed, every place I visited welcomed me not as a guest, but as family. The traditional tilak, garlands, folded hands, and warm smiles were humbling reminders that Ekal is not an organization operating for communities it is a people's movement that lives within them.

Seeing Impact Beyond Reports:

At the Delhi, Ranchi, and Calcutta Head Offices, meeting the dedicated teams that anchor such a vast grassroots operation filled me with respect and gratitude. Behind every data point and report is a human being working tirelessly to ensure that resources reach the last mile.

I also had the great fortune to meet Ma Shyam Gupta, the founder of Ekal. Spending time with him and learning from his vision, simplicity, and unwavering commitment was deeply inspiring. His thoughts and life journey reaffirmed the soul of Ekal—service rooted in values, humility, and long-term societal transformation. That interaction will stay with me as a guiding light in my own journey of service.

As I travelled to Gramothan Resource Centres, IVDs, Adarsh Sanches, schools, telemedicine-enhanced health centres, and training centres across states, the real meaning of integrated development came alive. Education, women empowerment, livelihood, agriculture, and health are not isolated verticals here—they are threads woven into the daily lives of people.

Faces I Will Never Forget: One of the most moving moments of my visit was meeting Ms Sonika in Gajraula—a former WEC trainee who today earns over 1 lakh per month through her tailoring business. She now has 16 sewing machines, has employed girls from her village and taught them sewing and takes online orders for retail and wholesale garments. Sitting in her home, listening to her journey from uncertainty to confidence, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride. This is what empowerment truly looks like not dependency, but dignity and self-reliance.

Across Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Ranchi, Karanjo, Purulia, Parasnath, Shikharji, and Giridih, I met countless women who now speak with confidence, youth who navigate computers with ease, farmers who proudly explain organic practices, and children whose bright eyes reflect hope and values. These interactions moved me far more than any presentation ever could.

The Spirit of the Villages: Walking through nutrition gardens, vermi-compost units, Haldi processing



centres, mango orchards, and mushroom farms, I saw how thoughtfully designed interventions can transform rural economies. Farmers did not just explain what they were doing—they explained why it worked. That sense of ownership is Ekal's greatest success.

The cultural programs by children—the songs, the dances, and the quiet discipline in Ekal Vidyalayas—reminded me that these are not just schools; they are Sanskar Kendras, nurturing character, culture, and confidence.

Carrying India Back with Me: I came to India expecting to review projects. I returned carrying stories, faces, emotions, and a deeper conviction that Ekal is not just changing lives it is shaping futures. This journey will stay with me for a long time. It has reaffirmed why we do what we do, and why this work matters so profoundly. ■

Manisha Jain
Executive Director, Ekal Vidyalaya USA





॥ एकल ॥

भारत लोक शिक्षा परिषद्

(एकल अभियान से संबंधित)



विश्व का सर्वश्रेष्ठ सामाजिक शिक्षा संगठन



मात्र ₹ 30 हजार में एक एकल विद्यालय
एक वर्ष तक संचालित होता है, जिसमें 20-25 बच्चे पढ़ते हैं।

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ONE SCHOOL	30,000/-
50 SCHOOL (PARAMVEER)	15,00,000/-
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1000 SCHOOL (MAHASHATAKVEER)	30,00,000/-

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सेवा और समर्पण की अनूठी मिसाल 51वीं वर्षगांठ पर शिक्षा का उपहार

“चलो जलाएं दीप वहां, जहां आज भी अंधेरा है” इन्हीं पंक्तियों को चरितार्थ करते हुए, एकल अभियान के सेवा कार्यों में एक और स्वर्णिम अध्याय जुड़ गया है। हाल ही में आदरणीय किरण दीदी के निवास पर ‘सत्संग प्रतियोगिता’ की व्यवस्था हेतु आयोजित एक महत्वपूर्ण बैठक में भक्ति, चर्चा और सेवा का अद्भुत संगम देखने को मिला।

इस अवसर की सबसे विशेष उपलब्धि रही **प्रो. नलिनी राठौर दीदी** (संभाग उपाध्यक्ष) का अनुपम त्याग।



अपनी 51वीं दाम्पत्य वर्षगांठ के पावन अवसर पर, दीदी और उनके जीवनसाथी श्री अजय सिंह वर्मन ने अपनी व्यक्तिगत प्रसन्नता को वंचित बच्चों के भविष्य के साथ जोड़कर मानवता की एक नई परिभाषा लिखी है।

नलिनी दीदी ने एकल ग्राम संगठन को 96,000 की सहयोग राशि का चेक समर्पित किया। यह दान उन सुदूर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के बच्चों के जीवन में शिक्षा का उजियारा फैलाएगा, जो आज भी बुनियादी सुविधाओं के लिए संघर्ष कर रहे हैं। दीदी का यह उदार

हृदय हम सभी के लिए एक महान प्रेरणा है कि “सच्ची खुशी वही है जो दूसरों के चेहरों पर मुस्कान ला दे।”

इस प्रेरक क्षण के साक्षी बने प्रभाग एवं संभाग के समर्पित पदाधिकारी, जिनमें डॉ. मंजू शर्मा, प्रभाग प्रतिनिधि, श्रीमती किरण अग्रवाल, संभाग अध्यक्षा, संस्कार शिक्षा, श्रीमती छाया अग्रवाल, समिति सदस्य, श्रीमती किरण नारायण, अंचल कोषाध्यक्ष, महिला समिति तथा अन्य समस्त निष्ठावान कार्यकर्ता। ■

डॉ. मंजू शर्मा

प्रभाग सह-प्रभारी (P3), ग्राम संगठन महिला समिति एवं उपाध्यक्ष, कार्यकारिणी, दक्षिण बिहार संभाग

THE KHARGONE STORY



Guests are being welcomed at GRC

In the heart of Khargone, more than a structure was inaugurated—it was a vision taking root in the soil of rural Bharat. The newly constructed building at the Gramothan Resource Centre (GRC) stands as a testament to purpose-driven development, where leadership and community converge to create lasting change. The occasion was graced by Sri Ramesh Kanodia (President, Ekal Gramothan Foundation), Dr. Aradhana Sharma

(General Secretary), Dr. Smita Chaudhary (Secretary), and Ms. Sneha Singh (WEC Coordinator), along with key field leaders including Sri Dilip Wadiwa.

The inauguration began with a sacred puja, invoking humility and intent. The GRC emerges not merely as infrastructure, but as a vibrant ecosystem featuring a Gaushala that upholds tradition and sustainability, residential facilities fostering deeper community engagement, and skill development spaces that translate rural potential into meaningful livelihoods. A defining highlight was the visit to the Women Empowerment Centre (WEC) at Bothiyapura, Maheshwar. The experience went beyond formality, reflecting warmth and belonging.

Through interactions with trainees, a compelling narrative unfolded—of women gaining confidence, skills evolving into livelihoods, and aspirations finding expression. The visit to the government-run Handloom Centre further reinforced the importance of linking heritage with opportunity. It affirmed that the future of rural Bharat lies in strengthening its roots while embracing new pathways. These two days were not just about observation they were a realization. When vision meets the ground, it becomes action; when communities are empowered, change becomes sustainable. In Khargone, this is not merely about building centres it is about building futures. ■

Social Media Team, GRF





छोटे कदम, बड़े इरादे सूरत चैप्टर द्वारा आयोजित एकल रन 3.0

सूरत चैप्टर द्वारा आयोजित एकल रन 3.0 सामाजिक समरसता, साक्षरता एवं जन-जागरण के सशक्त संदेश के साथ अत्यंत सफलतापूर्वक संपन्न हुआ। प्रातः वीर नर्मद दक्षिण गुजरात विश्वविद्यालय से प्रारंभ हुई इस भव्य हाफ मैराथन को सूरत के पुलिस आयुक्तश्री अनुपम सिंह गहलोत ने हरी झंडी दिखाकर रवाना किया।

कार्यक्रम में विश्वविद्यालय के कुलपति डॉ. किशोर सिंह चावड़ा तथा वनबंधु परिषद के राष्ट्रीय कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष श्री त्रिभुवन काबरा की गरिमामयी उपस्थिति ने विशेष प्रतिष्ठा और ऊंचाई प्रदान की।

एकल रन 3.0 ने अपने बहुआयामी प्रभाव के माध्यम से उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धियाँ हासिल कीं। इस आयोजन के परिणामस्वरूप 15 नए दाताओं ने 1-1 एकल विद्यालय के लिए अनुदान देने का संकल्प लिया, वहीं ऑनलाइन पंजीकरण के माध्यम से भी एक विद्यालय का सहयोग प्राप्त हुआ। सोशल मीडिया के प्रभावी उपयोग से एकल अभियान की पहुँच कई गुना बढ़ी और व्यापक प्रचार-प्रसार के चलते सरकारी अधिकारियों, चार्टर्ड अकाउंटेंट्स, वकीलों, डॉक्टरों, शैक्षणिक संस्थानों, कॉर्पोरेट्स, उद्यमियों सहित समाज के विविध वर्गों तक इसका संदेश सशक्त रूप से पहुँचा, जिससे सूरत में एकल एक

विश्वसनीय सामाजिक ब्रांड के रूप में स्थापित हुआ।

इस आयोजन में 6,000 से अधिक रनर्स एवं पेसर्स की उत्साहपूर्ण भागीदारी रही, जिनमें लगभग 500 प्रतिभागी सूरत के बाहर से आए। परिवारों, मित्रों और सभी आयु वर्गों की सहभागिता ने वनवासी समाज की शिक्षा के प्रति एकता और प्रतिबद्धता का संदेश दिया। विशेष रूप से युवा टीम ने प्रत्यक्ष फंड कलेक्शन, डोनर एंगेजमेंट, नेतृत्व, इवेंट प्रबंधन एवं समन्वय के माध्यम से अपने संगठनात्मक कौशल और आत्मविश्वास में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि की। आयोजन के दौरान अन्य कार्यक्रमों की तुलना में अधिक समय तक निरंतर ऊर्जा और उत्साह बना रहा।

इसके अतिरिक्त, शहर के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में 200 से अधिक कार्यालयों में व्यक्तिगत संपर्क स्थापित कर भविष्य के लिए एक सशक्त नेटवर्क तैयार किया गया। इस

पहल ने स्वस्थ जीवनशैली को बढ़ावा देने के साथ फिटनेस के प्रति जागरूकता भी बढ़ाई। इंस्टाग्राम, व्हाट्सएप चैनल और वर्ड-ऑफ-माउथ के माध्यम से व्यापक प्रचार हुआ, जबकि मीडिया कवरेज ने इसकी पहुँच को कई गुना विस्तारित किया। इवेंट स्पॉन्सर्स श्री विशालभाई बुधिया, श्री राजेश गुप्ता एवं श्री अरविंद कोठारी सहित अन्य सहयोगियों के सशक्त समर्थन से आयोजन को मजबूती मिली और भविष्य के लिए एक सुदृढ़ आधार निर्मित हुआ। साथ ही, एकल रन के चेयरमैन श्री श्रीनारायण पेड़ीवाल द्वारा एकल रन 4.0 की तिथि फरवरी 14, 2027 घोषित किए जाने से इस अभियान की निरंतरता और विस्तार का स्पष्ट संकेत भी प्राप्त हुआ। वास्तव में, "छोटे कदम-बड़े इरादे" की भावना इस आयोजन में पूर्णतः साकार होती हुई दिखाई दी।

गौतम प्रजापति
मंत्री, सूरत चैप्टर

भक्ति और संस्कार का महाकुंभ

अयोध्या में संपन्न हुई एकल श्रीहरि राष्ट्रीय सत्संग प्रतियोगिता



‘एकल अभियान’ के अंतर्गत ‘संस्कार शिक्षा’ की दिशा में एक स्वर्णिम अध्याय जोड़ते हुए अयोध्या की पावन धरा पर दो दिवसीय राष्ट्रीय सत्संग प्रतियोगिता का सफल आयोजन संपन्न हुआ। श्रीराम जन्मभूमि तीर्थ क्षेत्र के ‘तीर्थ क्षेत्र पुरम’ (बाग बिजैसी) में आयोजित इस महाकुंभ में देश के 22 विभिन्न प्रांतों और नेपाल राष्ट्र से आई सत्संग मंडलियों ने अपनी संगीतशिल्प और भक्तिमयी प्रस्तुतियों से एक लघु भारत का दृश्य उपस्थित कर दिया।

आयोजन का उद्देश्य और वैचारिक अधिष्ठान

प्रतियोगिता का मुख्य उद्देश्य ग्रामीण और वनवासी क्षेत्रों में संस्कार शिक्षा के माध्यम से सांस्कृतिक चेतना

का संचार करना है। कार्यक्रम को संबोधित करते हुए श्रीराम जन्मभूमि तीर्थ क्षेत्र ट्रस्ट के महासचिव मा. चंपत राय ने अत्यंत गूढ़ बात कही कि “जो समाज शत-प्रतिशत राजसत्ता पर निर्भर हो जाता है, उस समाज का अंत निश्चित है।” उन्होंने इस बात पर बल दिया कि समाज का अपना स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व और कर्तव्य होता है। एकल अभियान के माध्यम से आज वनवासी क्षेत्रों के अंतिम छोर तक रामकथा और सत्संग की धारा पहुँच रही है, जो भारत को पुनः विश्वगुरु बनाने की दिशा में एक ठोस कदम है।

सह-कार्यवाह मा. आलोक कुमार का पाथेय

राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ के सह-संस्कारवाह मा. आलोक कुमार ने प्रतियोगिता के सत्रों को

संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि ईश्वर के स्मरण की स्वतंत्रता सार्वभौमिक है। उन्होंने प्रसन्नता व्यक्त की कि आज पूरी दुनिया में हनुमान चालीसा को 500 करोड़ से अधिक बार देखा और पढ़ा गया है। उन्होंने मीरा, तुलसी, कबीर और नानक की परंपरा का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा कि संगीत की साधना ईश्वर तक पहुँचने का सुगम मार्ग है।

सहभागिता और प्रतियोगिता का

स्वरूप: इस दो दिवसीय आयोजन में असम, बंगाल, उड़ीसा, झारखंड, बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, मध्य प्रदेश, महाराष्ट्र, गुजरात, राजस्थान, हरियाणा, पंजाब, हिमाचल, जम्मू, उत्तराखंड, कर्नाटक, आंध्र प्रदेश और तमिलनाडु सहित 22 प्रांतों की कुल 231 मंडलियों ने भाग लिया।



साथ ही, लगभग 500 से अधिक प्रतिनिधियों और 600 प्रतिभागियों ने अपनी उपस्थिति दर्ज कराई।

प्रतियोगिता का परिणाम अत्यंत कड़ा रहा, जिसमें निर्णायक मंडल ने अंकों के आधार पर विजेताओं का चयन किया:

1. प्रथम स्थान: उत्तर हिमाचल
2. द्वितीय स्थान: मध्य उत्तर प्रदेश
3. तृतीय स्थान (संयुक्त):
महाकौशल एवं छत्तीसगढ़

शेष 18 मंडलियों के उत्साहवर्धन हेतु समिति के राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष श्री महेश मित्तल ने उन्हें वाद्य यंत्रों के सैट प्रदान करने की घोषणा की।

हृदय परिवर्तन की प्रेरक गाथा

शास्त्र से शास्त्र तक: इस आयोजन का सबसे भावुक और प्रेरक पहलू झारखंड से आए दो युवाओं; श्री शिवनाथ सिंह और श्री देवकी नंदन दास की कहानी रही। एक समय था जब ये दोनों बंदूक और बारूद की राह पर चलते हुए नक्सली गतिविधियों में सक्रिय थे। जंगलों का हिंसक जीवन ही उनकी नियति थी।

बदलाव की बयार

एकल अभियान की 'हरि सत्संग समिति' के संपर्क में आने के बाद इनका हृदय परिवर्तन हुआ।

अयोध्या में प्रशिक्षण

इन्होंने अयोध्या आकर एक वर्ष तक रामकथा का मर्म जाना और प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त किया।



अयोध्या जी में आए देश भर से उपस्थित प्रतिनिधि

समाज सुधार

आज ये दोनों युवा शस्त्र त्याग कर हाथों में शास्त्र (रामायण) थामे हुए हैं। इन्होंने अब तक 15 नक्सलियों को मुख्यधारा (रामपथ) से जोड़ा है और 500 से अधिक लोगों की सत्संग टोली तैयार की है, जो गांव-गांव जाकर शांति और सदाचार का संदेश दे रही है।

संगठन की शक्ति और सम्मान

आयोजन को सफल बनाने में डॉ. अनिल मिश्रा (अध्यक्ष, आयोजन समिति) और श्री उमाशंकर मिश्र (संयोजक) की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका रही। कार्यक्रम के दौरान उन संतों और कार्यकर्ताओं का भी सम्मान किया गया जिन्होंने 'कथाकार प्रशिक्षण केंद्र' योजना को मूर्त रूप दिया है।

डॉ. सुनीता शास्त्री ने बताया कि इन केंद्रों के माध्यम से तैयार कथाकार आज वनवासी क्षेत्रों में

घर-घर जाकर संस्कार की अलख जगा रहे हैं। पिछले 32 वर्षों में 5,500 से अधिक कथाकारों का निर्माण किया जा चुका है। समापन समारोह में अयोध्या के महापौर महंत गिरीश पति त्रिपाठी, महंत प्रेम शंकर दास, सुश्री साधना मोढ़ और डॉ. लल्लन शर्मा सहित कई गणमान्य जन उपस्थित रहे।

यह आयोजन मात्र एक प्रतियोगिता नहीं, बल्कि सांस्कृतिक राष्ट्रवाद का एक जीवंत उदाहरण था। जैसा कि कार्यक्रम में वक्ताओं ने दोहराया, 'हम केवल भारत के नागरिक ही नहीं, इस धरती के पुत्र हैं।' 'एकल श्रीहरि सत्संग समिति' का यह प्रयास आने वाली पीढ़ी को अपनी जड़ों से जोड़ने और समाज में सकारात्मक ऊर्जा का संचार करने में मील का पत्थर साबित होगा। ■

खेमानंद सापकोटा

सह-अभियान प्रमुख
एकल अभियान



EKAL SANSTHAN MANTHAN

Strengthening Collaboration within Ekal Abhiyan



The Ekal Abhiyan has long stood as a powerful collective working toward the holistic development of rural and tribal India through its unique Panchmukhi Shiksha model—an integrated framework encompassing education, health, economic development, social awareness, and moral values. At the heart of this expansive ecosystem lies Ekal Sansthan, the Abhiyan's knowledge partner and think tank,

entrusted with shaping research, policy direction, innovation, and capacity building across its diverse initiatives.

In a significant step toward deepening institutional synergy, Ekal Sansthan on 22nd March 2026, convened the Ekal Sansthan Manthan—a first-of-its-kind collaborative forum designed to bring together all constituent and Ekal organisations on a single platform.

The objective:

to foster open dialogue, understand shared expectations, and chart a more coordinated path forward for the Abhiyan's growing network. The Manthan witnessed active participation from members of the Executive Committee and the Trust Board, along with distinguished representatives from key Ekal organisations, including Friends of Tribal Society, Ekal Gramoththan, Ekal Vidyalaya





Foundation of India, and Bharat Lok Shiksha Parishad.

What differentiated the Manthan was its emphasis on participatory dialogue rather than top-down direction. Stakeholders candidly shared insights on operational challenges, emerging opportunities, and the evolving needs of rural communities and volunteers alike. The discussions focused on identifying how Ekal Sansthan can better support and amplify the work of its partner organisations whether through research-backed interventions, training frameworks, technological innovation, or policy advocacy.

One of the most impactful outcomes of the Manthan was the formation of multiple cross-organisational teams, each tasked

with addressing specific thematic areas and action points. These teams represent a shift toward more integrated working, enabling organisations to pool expertise, avoid duplication, and create scalable solutions. By aligning efforts across verticals, the Abhiyan is better positioned to respond to complex challenges with agility and coherence.

The event also underscored the importance of institutionalising such collaborative engagements, leading to a consensus on conducting the Manthan periodically - not only to ensure continuity in dialogue but also provide a structured mechanism for reviewing progress, sharing best practices, and refining strategies in a dynamic development landscape.

In essence, the Ekal Sansthan Manthan marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Ekal ecosystem. It reflects a growing recognition that the scale and diversity of rural transformation efforts demand deeper collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective ownership. As Ekal Abhiyan continues to expand its reach and impact, such platforms will play a critical role in reinforcing its foundational ethos—working together to empower every village, every community, and every individual. Through initiatives like the Manthan, Ekal Sansthan aims to actively shape a more connected, responsive, and future-ready framework for rural development in India. ■

Adv Jyotsana Sinha
Member, Ekal Sansthan

KEY THEMATIC AREAS IDENTIFIED FOR ACTION INCLUDE

No.	Action areas	Timeline
1.	Comprehensive Impact Assessment Framework	Q2 2026: organisation specific frameworks
2.	Unification of Digital Tools across Organisations	Q2 2026: Assessment report
3.	Volunteer Training Programs and Certification; skill development programs	Q2 2026: comprehensive whitepaper
4.	Unified Vision & Policy and Governance convergence across Organisations	Q3 2026
5.	Curriculum enhancement to address social and technological advancements.	Q2 2026: Assessment report Q3 2026: SME engagement
6.	Unique Student Identification code for granular monitoring	May 2026



INVIGORATING EXPERIENCE OF DIT

BY AVICHI COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE, CHENNAI

The Dream India Tour (DIT) undertaken by students of Avichi College of Arts and Science proved to be an enriching and transformative experience, offering a glimpse into rural life and the impactful work of Ekal Vidyalaya in remote villages. Organized in collaboration with the Ekal Campus Study Circle, the initiative aimed to help students understand grassroots development and the spirit of community-driven education.



As a prelude to the tour, a thematic interactive programme titled “A Day in a Village – Ekal Perspective” was held at the Avichi College campus in Chennai. The session was addressed by Sri Madhavan, Prabhag Prasikshan Prabhari, who shared a practical and insightful overview of village life and the transformative role played by Ekal Vidyalaya in rural India. He elaborated on the concept of Panchmukhi Shiksha, the Ekal on Wheels initiative, E-Shiksha programmes, and the efforts taken to promote productive livelihood opportunities for women in villages.

Students listened with keen interest as Sri Madhavan explained how Ekal’s initiatives strengthen education, health awareness, social harmony, and self-reliance in remote communities. The screening of an Ekal video further deepened their

understanding and enthusiasm. The lively question-and-answer session, moderated by Ms. Vidhya and Dr. Gowri Ramachandran, encouraged students to reflect on how their own ideas and academic learning could be applied in rural development.

Recognizing the students’ enthusiasm, the college management arranged a preliminary field visit to Kollimalai Hills, Tamil Nadu, in the month of January 2026. During this visit, the students observed the functioning of Ekal Vidyalaya and the E-Shiksha programme in the hill villages. Guided by Ekal volunteer Sri Karthikeyan, they interacted with local children and teachers and witnessed firsthand the innovative methods used to impart education in challenging terrains.

Encouraged by this exposure, the full Dream India Tour was conducted

from March 12 to 17, 2026. The tour included 19 students and three faculty members, accompanied by the college Principal Dr. N Bhuma and Trustee Dr. Anisha Shanmugam.

Over five days, the participants experienced village life closely, interacted with Ekal teachers and students, and observed the unique ways in which learning and community engagement are nurtured in rural settings. The visit not only broadened the students’ understanding of rural realities but also inspired them with valuable life lessons on service, resilience, and the importance of grassroots development. The Dream India Tour thus became a memorable journey of learning, empathy, and inspiration for all who participated. ■

Dr. Gowri Ramachandran
Chairperson, Ekal Sansthan’s
Study Circle, Chennai



एकल को जानो

श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता में
श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता के माध्यम से
भगवान श्रीकृष्ण अर्जुन से कहते हैं-

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज...

अर्थात् सभी कर्तव्यों का त्याग कर परम
सत्य की शरण में आओ,
निश्चित हो जाओ।



कुछ इसी भाव का जीवन्त रूप है एकल अभियान, जहाँ राष्ट्रसेवा, भारतीय संस्कृति के संरक्षण और अंतिम व्यक्ति तक पहुँचने का संकल्प ही सर्वोच्च कर्तव्य बन जाता है। यहाँ सेवाव्रती स्वयं को अर्जुन और संगठन को श्रीकृष्ण मानकर राष्ट्रनिर्माण की दिशा में समर्पित भाव से कार्य करते हैं। इसी विचारभूमि को सशक्त बनाने हेतु "एकल को जानो" कार्यक्रम का आयोजन नई दिल्ली के इंडिया इंटरनेशनल सेंटर में, एकल अभियान ग्राम संगठन के तत्वावधान में सम्पन्न हुआ। कार्यक्रम की शुरुआत एक प्रेरक डॉक्यूमेंट्री एवं ओंकार के साथ हुई, जिसके पश्चात अतिथियों का परिचय कराया गया।

मुख्य वक्ता के रूप में एकल अभियान की जीवनव्रती कार्यकर्ता सुश्री सीमा अजगांवकर ने अपने उद्बोधन में कहा कि एकल की शुरुआत किसी बड़ी योजना से नहीं, बल्कि वनवासी क्षेत्रों की पीड़ा को देखकर हुई। उन्होंने स्वामी विवेकानंद के विचारों का उल्लेख करते हुए कहा "यदि बच्चे विद्यालय तक नहीं पहुँच सकते, तो विद्यालय को बच्चों तक पहुँचाना होगा।" उन्होंने आगे कहा कि एकल केवल शिक्षा



नहीं, बल्कि जागरण, स्वावलंबन और राष्ट्रभक्ति का अभियान है, विशेषकर उन क्षेत्रों में जहाँ वर्षों तक विकास की किरण नहीं पहुँच सकी।

लेखक एवं संचार रणनीतिकार श्री शांतनु गुप्ता ने एकल की पंचमुखी शिक्षा की सराहना करते हुए कहा कि यह शिक्षा केवल विषय ज्ञान नहीं, बल्कि शरीर, मन और आत्मा के समग्र विकास का माध्यम है। उन्होंने कहा कि एकल गुरुकुल परंपरा की आधुनिक अभिव्यक्ति है।

प्रोफेसर डॉ. निरंजन कुमार ने ग्रामीण और जनजातीय भारत को विकसित भारत की मुख्यधारा में जोड़ने की आवश्यकता पर बल देते हुए कहा कि एकल इस दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रहा है। उन्होंने प्रेरक पंक्तियों के माध्यम से चुनौतियों से जूझने की भावना को व्यक्त किया।

श्री बिनय कुमार सिंह ने विचारधाराओं की शक्ति पर प्रकाश डालते हुए कहा कि एकल एक ऐसे विचार परिवार का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है, जिसने समाज को आदर्श और दिशा प्रदान की है। वहीं, राष्ट्रीय प्रभारी



श्री राजेश गोयल ने बताया कि "एकल को जानो" कार्यक्रम को देशव्यापी स्तर पर ले जाने की योजना है, जिससे यह विचार जन-जन तक पहुँचे।

एकल अभियान आज देशभर में एक लाख से अधिक एकल विद्यालयों के माध्यम से पंचमुखी शिक्षाकृशिक्षा, आरोग्य, ग्राम विकास, जागरण एवं संस्कार का कार्य कर रहा है। इसके अंतर्गत समेकित ग्राम विकास, जैविक खेती, कौशल प्रशिक्षण, आरोग्य शिविर, योग कार्यक्रम तथा संस्कार शिक्षा के माध्यम से ग्रामीण जीवन को सशक्त बनाया जा रहा है। निस्संदेह, एकल अभियान केवल एक संगठन नहीं, बल्कि एक जनांदोलन है जो भारत के अंतिम व्यक्ति तक विकास, संस्कार और आत्मविश्वास की ज्योति पहुँचाने का सतत प्रयास कर रहा है।

संजय मालवीय
केन्द्रीय प्रचार विभाग प्रमुख,
एकल अभियान



A Meaningful Engagement & Positive Impact

A Vanyatra was organized in the Wada Anchal by the National Patron of Friends of Tribals Society, Smt. Nayantara Jain. The vanayatra was attended by FTS Yuva members Smt. Ishita Jain and Varenya Jain. The new distinguished guests included Smt. Ginhee Rancourt, Founder of Future Prize, Sri Reed Garber, Filmmaker, and Smt. Ruchi Garber, Set Designer. Additionally, staff from INOX and FTS Mumbai, as well as the Anchal Toli Karyakarta, actively participated in the Vanyatra.

During the Vanyatra, two schools were visited, where villagers warmly welcomed the guests. The participants visited the schools, and the students presented a welcome song. Various educational and co-curricular activities were also held.

During the Vanyatra, Smt. Ginhee Rancourt (Founder of Future Prize) and Smt. Varenya Jain interacted with the students. They provided guidance



on the use of the Internet, proper use of smart phones, and how these tools can benefit students in their daily lives. This was followed by a drawing activity, in which the children participated enthusiastically.

At one of the schools, INOX installed solar panels. Smt. Nayantara Jain explained the importance of solar energy to the students and engaged them in a discussion about sustainable energy use.

The Vanyatra then continued to Gargaon, where a meeting was held with members of women Self Help groups. They were informed about the use of the Internet and its benefits.

During the Vanyatra, interactions were held at the Gramothan Center with EST staff and women participants of the Skill Development Center. During this session, Smt. Ginhee Rancourt and Smt. Varenya Jain distributed certificates to the participants. Gifts were also provided to all women and children, and pressure cookers were given to all Karyakartas.

The event concluded with a 'Sneh Bhojan' shared among the Karyakartas. In this manner, the Vanyatra was successfully completed with meaningful engagement and positive impact. ■

Team Social Media
Mumbai



Ekal students receiving appreciation certificates alongside Vanayatri volunteers



TOWARDS INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Journey of Service, Empowerment, and Commitment

The serene landscape of Shamlaji in Gujarat recently became a vibrant confluence of purpose, participation, and progress as the Integrated Village Development (IVD) Centre welcomed a distinguished delegation from EVF USA. Led by Sri Kamlesh Shah, Former Chairman of the Board of Directors, and graced by Smt. Dina Shah as Chief Guest of Honour, the visit brought together committed donors and development practitioners in a shared spirit of service.

From the very outset, the atmosphere reflected warmth and deep-rooted cultural ethos. Local committee members and beneficiaries extended a traditional welcome, symbolizing not just hospitality but also a heartfelt expression of gratitude and belonging. The visit was not merely ceremonial—it was an immersive

journey into the heart of grassroots transformation, where development is lived, experienced, and co-created.

Accompanied by important dignitaries including Sri Rasik Patel, Smt. Pushpaben Patel, Smt. Jyoti Seth, and Sri Jayenth Seth, the delegation engaged closely with the initiatives being implemented under the IVD framework. Representing the Ekal Gramothan Foundation were Sri Kumar Bhaskar Sharma, Executive Director, and Sri Dilip Wadiwa, Sah-Yojana Pramukh, who facilitated the visit and shared valuable insights into the integrated model of development.

The day began with an in-depth interaction at the IVD Centre, where the delegation was briefed on the operational framework and the interconnected nature of various

development verticals. Conversations with field teams highlighted the strength of coordination, the robustness of monitoring systems, and the genuine engagement with local communities. During the formal welcome programme, dignitaries addressed the gathering with inspiring reflections on education, self-reliance, discipline, and the vision of holistic village development.

One of the most impactful segments of the visit was the interaction at the Women Empowerment Centre (WEC). Here, the transformation was both visible and palpable. Women engaged in skill-based training spoke with confidence about their journeys—how new skills had not only enhanced their economic contribution but also strengthened their self-belief. The structured training



Donors from the USA with the GRC team at the Shamlaji IVD centres



Visitors being warmly welcomed

modules, coupled with consistent mentoring and post-training support, stood as a testament to the programme's thoughtful design and execution.

At the Computer Training Lab (CTL), a different dimension of empowerment unfolded. Young learners demonstrated their digital skills with enthusiasm, reflecting a readiness to step into an increasingly technology-driven world. Trainers elaborated on the curriculum, emphasizing employability and digital inclusion. The visiting dignitaries underscored the critical role of digital literacy in shaping future opportunities, encouraging students to continue their pursuit of knowledge with dedication.

Health and well-being formed another vital pillar of the visit. Interactions with Arogya Sevikas revealed the depth of community-level engagement in promoting hygiene, nutrition, and preventive healthcare. Their efforts in spreading awareness and ensuring healthier lifestyles were complemented by simple yet effective innovations, such as an indigenous water filtration model. This blend of

traditional wisdom and practical solutions left a lasting impression on the visitors.

The Ekal on Wheels (EoW) initiative showcased the dynamic outreach capabilities of the programme. Designed to reach remote and underserved areas, the mobile unit exemplified last-mile delivery at its best. The delegation observed the meticulous planning behind routes, schedules, and community coordination, along with the use of educational materials and monitoring systems. It was evident that EoW plays a crucial role in bridging gaps where physical infrastructure is limited.

The journey continued to Etawa Village, where the Nutrition Garden—or Poshan Vatika—offered a living example of sustainable development. At the residence of Sri Vinod Kuamr, the delegation witnessed the integration of nutrition, livelihood, and environmental stewardship. Vermicomposting units and diverse crops such as turmeric, fenugreek, sandalwood, and chilli reflected a conscious shift towards organic farming practices. Farmers shared their experiences with pride,

highlighting the long-term benefits of sustainable agriculture.

In Antoli Village, the visit to an Ekal Vidyalaya brought the focus back to the foundational pillar of education. The classroom was alive with energy as students actively participated, recited lessons, and confidently interacted with the guests. Teachers shared their approach to value-based education, emphasizing not only academic learning but also character building. The dedication of the educators and the enthusiasm of the children together painted a hopeful picture of the future.

Across every interaction; whether with women trainees, young students, health workers, or farmers a common thread emerged: a sense of ownership and empowerment. Beneficiaries openly shared their experiences, successes, and challenges, while trainers provided valuable insights into on-ground implementation. The dignitaries acknowledged this collective effort, encouraging continued collaboration, innovation, and commitment to excellence.

As the visit ended, it left behind more than just observations, it created a renewed sense of purpose. The presence and engagement of the EVF USA delegation served as a powerful source of motivation for all stakeholders involved. It reaffirmed the shared vision of building self-reliant, empowered, and sustainable rural communities. Their involvement not only strengthens ongoing initiatives but also inspires a collective resolve to expand the horizons of integrated rural development. ■

Team GRC
New Delhi





Roots and Professional Foundation

Sri Maheshkumar Navani's journey began in 1962 in Koliwada, Mumbai, within a close-knit Sindhi community of approximately 400 households, a community that was imbued by a culture of enterprise and mutual support. From an early age, he imbibed

education. Its key initiatives include the Green Energy and Sustainability Hub (GESH) at IIT Bombay, a 100-bed state-of-the-art hospital in Palghar, and the MaNaS School of Brain, Body, and Behaviour at Rishihood University—all designed to strengthen foundational support for underserved communities.



MAHESHKUMAR NAVANI

A JOURNEY OF SEVA FROM KOLIWADA TO THE HEART OF RURAL BHARAT



the values of hard work, humility, community responsibility, and a deep respect for his roots. His parents instilled in him a firm belief that education is the most powerful catalyst for systemic transformation—an ideal that guided him to pursue a five-year Integrated M.S. in Chemistry at IIT Bombay, which he completed in 1987. Building upon this strong academic foundation, Sri Navani went on to earn his two master's degrees- in Manufacturing Engineering from Boston University and in Finance from Boston College. This multidisciplinary education enabled him to seamlessly integrate scientific rigor with strategic and financial insight.

As co-founder and COO of eClinicalWorks, Sri Navani has consistently leveraged technology to advance global healthcare while generating high-value employment opportunities for thousands across Bharat. Yet, for him, professional success has always been a means to a greater end—advancing inclusive, values-driven development in rural India. This deeper commitment led to the establishment of the Janki Foundation, which works across climate action, healthcare, and

**The Ekal Genesis:
A Legacy of Seva**

Sri Navani's association with Ekal began in the early 2000s when he was introduced to Shri Ram Nehra. Sri Nehra's vision of a literate, healthy, and self-reliant rural Bharat resonated deeply with Sri Navani's own convictions that were rooted in seva and dharma. What began as sponsorship gradually evolved into strategic involvement and long-term leadership. Over time, Ekal has become one of the defining commitments of his life, culminating in his role as Chairman of Ekal Vidyalaya, USA.

**Vision as Chairman:
The Future of Ekal Vidyalaya USA**

As Chairman, Sri Navani envisions a future where India's civilizational wisdom is harmoniously integrated with modern technology and institutional excellence. Working in close alignment with the Ekal Gramothan leadership, he ensures that efforts remain cohesive—from national strategy to last-mile village implementation. At its core, this vision seeks to build a self-sustaining ecosystem that empowers youth, farmers, and women through three transformative pillars.

1. Leading the Digital Orange Economy

Recognizing the global shift toward an "Economy of the Cloud," where livelihoods are increasingly shaped by digital assets and creative enterprise, Sri Navani emphasizes the urgent need to include rural Bharat in this transformation. He envisions a strategic partnership with the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT), Mumbai, to transform Gramothan Resource Centres (GRCs) and Ekal on Wheels (EoW) into satellite hubs of the digital economy.

These "IICT-Ekal Rural Creator Labs" would equip rural youth with skills in AI data annotation, AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics), and digital storytelling. In doing so, they would enable the monetization of tribal folklore and local narratives, thereby fostering both cultural preservation and economic empowerment. To ensure equitable value distribution, a 40-30-30 revenue-sharing model is proposed: 40% for youth creators, 30% for the local Village Samiti, and 30% for sustaining and scaling GRC infrastructure.





2. Ekal Yuva Udaan: Roots in Dharma, Wings in Seva

For the next generation of the Indian diaspora, Sri Navani envisions a dynamic movement that reconnects youth with the spirit of Bharat through service, identity, and dharmic values. The Ekal Yuva Udaan USA National Playbook (2026–2028) serves as a structured framework to nurture confident, compassionate, and values-driven leaders.

Grounded in the principles of Satya (Truth), Ahimsa (Non-violence), and Atma Vishwas (self-confidence anchored in the Divine), the initiative promotes both personal growth and community engagement. Youth are encouraged to lead cultural programmes, spearhead fundraising initiatives such as “Run for Ekal,” and participate in immersive rural experiences through the Bharat Exchange Programme. The goal is to send 200 youth annually by 2028 to regions such as Songadh and Wada, fostering meaningful, long-term connections with village communities. Complementing this is a structured leadership pipeline that enables volunteers to grow into Chapter and National Coordinators through targeted bootcamps and mentorship programs.

3. Precision Village Empowerment through AI-Driven GRCs

In collaboration with Sri Bhaskar Sharma and the Gramothan team, Sri Navani envisions the evolution of Gramothan Resource Centres into advanced hubs for precision village empowerment, seamlessly linking rural communities with the rapidly expanding AI ecosystem.

This transformation begins with agriculture, where AI-driven tools can enhance every stage of the farm

lifecycle. Initiatives include precision organic farming using biochar to both sequester carbon and also enrich soil health, alongside the use of drones for targeted organic fertilization. Additionally, drip irrigation systems integrated with high-sensitivity soil moisture sensors would enable precise water management, resulting in an increase in agricultural productivity while conserving vital groundwater resources.

Beyond agriculture, the model introduces forward-looking vocational skills such as AI-enabled supply chain management and predictive maintenance for rural solar micro-grids. For instance, sensor-based alerts at GRCs could prompt locally trained youth to conduct preventive maintenance, reducing downtime. Simultaneously, AI-powered demand forecasting could guide village artisans in optimizing the timing and distribution of products to urban markets such as Ekal Marts.

These GRCs would function as high-tech incubators, each empowering approximately 2,000 families to transition from manual labour to technology-enabled livelihoods. By integrating rural production with urban consumption through the Ekal Social Enterprise and leveraging platforms such as Ekal Mart and Ekal Kart—this model seeks to eliminate intermediaries, ensure fair last-mile earnings for tribal households, and build a sustainable ecosystem rooted in dignity and economic self-reliance.

Institutional Excellence and Professional Operations

To achieve impact at scale, Sri Navani emphasizes the importance of combining the spirit of volunteerism with the rigor of professional institution-building. He advocates for an operating

model that integrates a committed volunteer base with a focused cadre of professional leadership, supported by robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Equally important is the preservation of core values. As the organization scales, ethical guardrails—such as a Digital Sanskar Filter and a central review board—will ensure that all outputs, whether creative, educational, or economic, remain aligned with Ekal’s foundational ethos.

Conclusion: A Unified Path Forward

Sri Navani’s vision is rooted in the principles of radical compassion and digital inclusion. He imagines a world where a young individual in Boston feels as deeply connected to the soul of Bharat as a student learning at a GRC in Jharkhand. Through close collaboration with the Ekal Gramothan leadership as well as with the broader ecosystem, he seeks to ensure that Ekal remains firmly grounded in its values while embracing the opportunities of a self-reliant, technology-driven future.

Ultimately, this effort goes beyond extending aid—it is about building enduring institutions that uphold dignity, foster self-reliance, and create a shared sense of purpose for the global Indian community.

**Samgacchadhvam samvadadhvam
sam vo manāmsi jānatām
Devā bhāgam yathā pūrve
sañjānānā upāsate**

“Move together. Speak together. Let your minds be in harmony, just as those who came before, united in purpose, fulfilled their sacred duties.”
— Rig Veda 10.191.2 ■

Manju Srivastava
Chairperson, Ekal Sansthan



संताल हूल

औपनिवेशिक शोषण के विरुद्ध वनवासी अस्मिता का महान संग्राम



संताल विद्रोह (1855-1856):

संताल विद्रोह, जिसे सोंताल विद्रोह, संताल हूल या संताल क्रांति के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, भारत में औपनिवेशिक शासन के विरुद्ध वनवासी समुदायों द्वारा किए गए सबसे प्रारम्भिक और व्यापक जनविद्रोहों में से एक था। यह विद्रोह वर्तमान झारखंड तथा बंगाल प्रेसीडेंसी के अंतर्गत आने वाले आसपास के क्षेत्रों में हुआ और इसका मुख्य लक्ष्य ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी (EIC) की शोषणकारी नीतियों तथा अत्याचारी जमींदारी व्यवस्था का विरोध करना था।

यह आंदोलन जून 30, 1855 को प्रारम्भ हुआ, जब हजारों संतालों ने चार वीर भाइयों – सिद्धू मुर्मू, कान्हू मुर्मू, चाँद मुर्मू और भैरव मुर्मू के नेतृत्व में संगठित होकर विद्रोह का बिगुल बजाया। इस संघर्ष में उनकी दो साहसी बहनों फूलो और झानो ने भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। उनका उद्देश्य आर्थिक शोषण को समाप्त करना और आत्मशासन की स्थापना करना था। यह विद्रोह

शीघ्र ही पूरे क्षेत्र में फैल गया और औपनिवेशिक प्रशासन के लिए गंभीर चुनौती बन गया।

संघर्ष की तीव्रता को देखते हुए ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी ने नवम्बर 10, 1855 को मार्शल लॉ घोषित किया, जो जनवरी 3, 1856 तक लागू रहा। अंततः कंपनी की सेनाओं ने इस विद्रोह को दबा दिया, किंतु यह आंदोलन भारत के औपनिवेशिक विरोधी संघर्ष के इतिहास में अमिट छाप छोड़ गया।

पृष्ठभूमि और कारण: संताल विद्रोह का मूल कारण ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी द्वारा लागू की गई शोषणकारी प्रशासनिक और आर्थिक नीतियाँ थीं। इनमें अन्यायपूर्ण राजस्व व्यवस्था, अत्यधिक ब्याज पर आधारित सूदखोरी, तथा जमींदारों और महाजनों जैसे मध्यस्थों का प्रभुत्व शामिल था। परंपरागत रूप से संताल समुदाय हजारीबाग से लेकर मिदनापुर तक, सुवर्णरेखा नदी के आसपास फैले वन क्षेत्रों में रहता था। वे मुख्यतः कृषि करते थे और अपेक्षाकृत आत्मनिर्भर जीवन

जीते थे। किन्तु वर्ष 1770 के भीषण बंगाल अकाल तथा अंग्रेजों द्वारा नई कृषि भूमि की खोज ने इस क्षेत्र की परिस्थितियों को बदल दिया।

वर्ष 1832 में ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी ने वर्तमान झारखंड के दामिन-ए-कोह क्षेत्र को चिह्नित किया और राजमहल पहाड़ियों के पहाड़िया जनजाति को जंगल साफ कर खेती करने का निमंत्रण दिया। जब पहाड़िया समुदाय ने यह प्रस्ताव अस्वीकार कर दिया, तब कंपनी ने संतालों को भूमि और आर्थिक अवसरों का लालच देकर वहाँ बसने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया। परिणामस्वरूप ढालभूम, मानभूम, हजारीबाग, मिदनापुर तथा अन्य क्षेत्रों से बड़ी संख्या में संताल वहाँ आकर बस गए।

इस प्रवास के कारण संतालों की आबादी तेजी से बढ़ी। मात्र तेरह वर्षों में उनकी संख्या वर्ष 1838 में लगभग 3,000 से बढ़कर वर्ष 1850 के दशक के मध्य तक लगभग 1,20,000 संताल इस क्षेत्र में बस चुके थे। उनके कृषि कार्यों के कारण कंपनी की आय में भी उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि हुई। किन्तु औपनिवेशिक प्रशासन द्वारा किए गए विकास के वादे शीघ्र ही कठिनाइयों में बदल गए। वर्ष 1793 के स्थायी बंदोबस्त (Permanent Settlement) ने जमींदारों और अन्य मध्यस्थों को अत्यधिक शक्तियाँ प्रदान कर दीं। महाजन और साहूकार ऊँचे ब्याज पर ऋण देने लगे। जब संताल ऋण चुकाने में असमर्थ होते, तो उनकी भूमि छीन ली जाती और उन्हें बंधुआ मजदूरी करने के लिए विवश किया जाता।

संताल नेताओं ने इन अन्यायपूर्ण परिस्थितियों के विरुद्ध कई बार





प्रशासन से शिकायत की, किंतु उनकी शिकायतों को अनदेखा कर दिया गया। धीरे-धीरे असंतोष बढ़ता गया और अंततः यह खुले विद्रोह में परिवर्तित हो गया।

बढ़ता असंतोष और संगठन: विद्रोह से पहले के वर्षों में कंपनी के अभिलेखों में कई स्थानों पर प्रतिरोध और लूटपाट की घटनाओं का उल्लेख मिलता है। कुछ संताल नेताओं ने जमींदारों और अंग्रेज अधिकारियों के विरुद्ध सशस्त्र समूहों का संगठन किया। इनमें बीर सिंह मांझी जैसे नेता भी शामिल थे, जिन्होंने अपने कार्यों को दैवी प्रेरणा से प्रेरित बताया।

विद्रोह का आरंभ: जून 30, 1855 को सिद्धू और कान्हू मुर्मू ने लगभग 10,000 संतालों को एकत्रित कर घोषणा की कि उन्हें संताल धर्म के सर्वोच्च देवता ठाकुर बोंगा से आदेश प्राप्त हुआ है। उनके अनुसार देवता ने उन्हें महाजनों, जमींदारों और अंग्रेज अधिकारियों जैसे शोषक बाहरी लोगों को बाहर निकालकर संताल शासन स्थापित करने का निर्देश दिया है। सिद्धू, कान्हू, चाँद और भैरव ने स्वयं को "सुबा" (नेता) घोषित किया और इस प्रकार एक संगठित विद्रोह का प्रारम्भ हुआ। इसके तुरंत बाद संताल योद्धाओं ने जमींदारों, महाजनों और सरकारी अधिकारियों पर हमले शुरू कर दिए। सिद्धू ने समानांतर प्रशासन की स्थापना भी की, जिसमें कर वसूली और कानून लागू करने की व्यवस्था शामिल थी।

विद्रोह तेजी से फैलने लगा। जुलाई 1855 की शुरुआत तक विद्रोहियों ने लगभग 1,000 सदस्यों के हमलावर दल बनाए, संचार मार्गों को काट दिया और औपनिवेशिक चौकियों पर हमले किए। जुलाई 11 तक वे कोलगोंग (वर्तमान

कहलगाँव) पहुँच गए और जुलाई 17 तक भागलपुर से सड़क और रेल संपर्क बाधित कर दिया।

प्रारम्भिक सफलताएँ: संतालों की सबसे उल्लेखनीय जीतों में से एक नारायणपुर की लड़ाई थी, जहाँ उन्होंने ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी की सेना को पराजित कर कई सिपाहियों और अधिकारियों को मार गिराया। उस समय ब्रिटिश सैनिकों की बंदूकों में तकनीकी समस्या उत्पन्न हो गई, जिसे संतालों ने अपने नेताओं की दैवी शक्ति का प्रमाण माना।

सिद्धू और कान्हू ने अपने आंदोलन को अधिक संगठित बनाया और "सुबा ठाकुर" तथा "नाजिर" जैसे पद देकर प्रशासनिक ढाँचा विकसित किया। उनका उद्देश्य ऐसी भूमि व्यवस्था स्थापित करना था जिसमें आदिवासी और गैर-आदिवासी किसानों से अपेक्षाकृत कम लगान लिया जाए।

ब्रिटिश प्रतिक्रिया और संघर्ष का अंत: विद्रोह के विस्तार से चिंतित होकर ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी ने ए.सी. बिडवेल को विद्रोह दमन का विशेष आयुक्त नियुक्त किया। विभिन्न स्थानों से सैनिक टुकड़ियाँ भेजी गईं और ग्रैंड ट्रंक रोड जैसे महत्वपूर्ण मार्गों की सुरक्षा बढ़ाई गई। जुलाई 24, 1855 को महेशपुर के पास कंपनी की सेना और लगभग 5000 संताल विद्रोहियों के बीच निर्णायक संघर्ष हुआ। इस युद्ध में संतालों को भारी क्षति हुई और विद्रोह की दिशा बदल गई।

इसके बावजूद संतालों ने गुरिल्ला युद्धनीति अपनाकर संघर्ष जारी रखा। अंततः नवम्बर 8, 1855 को मार्शल लॉ घोषित किया गया, जिससे सशस्त्र विद्रोहियों को तत्काल

दंडित करने की अनुमति मिल गई। धीरे-धीरे विद्रोह कमजोर पड़ने लगा। सिद्धू मुर्मू को अगस्त या अक्टूबर 1855 के आसपास पकड़ लिया गया। शेष नेता; कान्हू, चाँद और भैरव भी दिसंबर 1855 में पहाड़िया रेंजर्स द्वारा पकड़े गए। जनवरी 1856 में मार्शल लॉ समाप्त कर दिया गया और विद्रोह पूरी तरह दबा दिया गया।

विरासत और महत्व: अपने चरम पर इस विद्रोह में लगभग 60,000 संताल योद्धाओं ने भाग लिया। उन्हें ग्वालों (दूध विक्रेताओं) और लोहारों जैसे अन्य समुदायों का भी समर्थन मिला। इस संघर्ष में 15,000 से अधिक लोग मारे गए, अनेक गांव नष्ट हो गए और हजारों लोग विस्थापित हुए।

हालाँकि विद्रोह को दबा दिया गया, लेकिन इसने ब्रिटिश प्रशासन को आदिवासी समस्याओं की गंभीरता का एहसास कराया। इसके परिणामस्वरूप वर्ष 1855 का संताल परगना अधिनियम पारित किया गया और बाद में वर्ष 1876 का संताल परगना काश्तकारी अधिनियम लागू किया गया, जिसका उद्देश्य आदिवासी भूमि की रक्षा करना था।

वर्ष 1855-56 का संताल विद्रोह आज भी भारत में आदिवासी प्रतिरोध का एक शक्तिशाली प्रतीक माना जाता है। यह उस अदम्य संकल्प का प्रमाण है जिसके साथ आदिवासी समुदायों ने अपनी भूमि, सम्मान और परंपरागत जीवन शैली की रक्षा के लिए औपनिवेशिक शोषण का सामना किया।

स्रोत

विकिपीडिया एवं इंटरनेट



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