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## **MOULDING LIVES**

From a storehouse in Mangalwar Peth to a heaven of hope  
'Swa-Roopwardhinee is changing the lives of the underprivileged.

The five story building of 'Swa-Roop-wardhinee stands tall in sea of tin shanties in the congested Sadanandnagar, Zhopadpatti in Mangalwar Peth like a beacon of hope indeed, a likely metaphor for the role that 'Swa-Roopwardhinee plays in the lives of those in the area.

For K. L. Patwardhan, the initiative he spearheaded in 1980 has been a labour of love. "As the principal of a school where many of my students were from the slums. I had seen the kind of influences that shaped their lives. Our national wealth was in jeopardy, I felt compelled to do something about it." What he did was start a public charitable trust with the primary objective of bringing about the all-round-development of children in lower income groups through informal education. What started as a small gathering of students after school in a storehouse in Mangalwar Peth has today grown to accommodate about 400 children in its nine branches in the city.

" Besides extra tutorial instruction in English, Science, and Mathematics in the evening, the centre also helps children in all-round development by organising curricular activities, all at a nominal cost. They are at an age when their impressionable minds could easily take to bad influence. It's important to get their minds to turn to productive ways of spending their time." says Patwardhan.

What difference has the organisation made in their lives? Patwardhan points to one such boy who used to stay in a dingy room under the stairs in a congested area of the old city. Today, he is an engineer, who having built house for his mother, has now given up his job to devote all his time to the organisation.

Says Pushpa Nade, a member of the executive committee who has worked with the organisation for the past 12 years. " We go to various schools in the city, conduct an IQ test and select deserving but poor students to attend 'Swa'-Roopwardhinee while the primary objective of the organisation is to ensure the all round development of children from a lower income group, in a bid to approach social reforms in a holistic manner we are also involved in other supplementary work. Chief among them are the programmes specially meant for women says Nade. " Women are an important influence on the family, in fact they have the power to shape their children. However we came across many women from the lower strata of society whose education had been stopped either due to parental pressure to marry young or whose parents couldn't afford it. Some of them had been abandoned by their husbands and were living a miserable life at the mercy of their relatives. Initially, I would go to their houses to convince them that by learning some vocational training they would be

able to stand on their feet and face their problems better."

It was not easy. Facing stiff opposition from some of the houses that she visited, Nade nevertheless managed to convince women about the benefits of such training. Today they train women for tailoring, fashion designing and a balewadi instructor's course.

Among the other programmes that the organisation runs are one on an adult education, a family planning and counselling, aajole, a foster home for children of working parents- who may not be able to give their child attention

throughout the day. In order to allow the benefits to trickle down to the rural poor as well, 'Swa'-roopwardhinee has started a mobile science laboratory any grants from the government, one would think it to be a near impossible task. But Patwardhan avers that his problems is one of finding dedicated manpower, not money.

"We need more dedicated individuals willing to give their time to social service." he says, Meanwhile Patwardhan's humane vision continues to hold out hope.

Aishwarya Mavinkurve

## ‘सम्पूर्ण रूपवर्धिनी’

पांचजन्य या नवी दिल्ली येथील साप्ताहिकाने दिनांक १९ मार्च २००० च्या अंकात ‘स्वरूपवर्धिनीच्या कामासंबंधी ‘अच्छे काम’ या सदरात प्रसिध्द केलेले स्फूट -

‘शिक्षित होना व्यक्ति के अन्दर निहित परिपक्वता का प्रत्यक्षीकरण है’ - स्वामी विवेकानन्द के ये विचार ‘स्व’ के विकास और उसके बाद आत्म प्रत्यक्षीकरण की स्थिति को प्रतिध्वनित करते हैं। इसी विचार से प्रेरित होकर पुणे की स्वैच्छिक संस्था ‘स्वरूपवर्धिनी’ ने बच्चों में ‘स्व’ के विकास और भविष्य के नागरिक तैयार करने का बीड़ा उठाया है। ‘स्वरूपवर्धिनी’ का मुख्य लक्ष्य निर्धन और विपन्न परिवारों के बच्चों को शिक्षित करना है, जिससे उनके अन्दर पारिवारिक मूल्यों के प्रति उत्तरदायित्व की भावना और नैतिकता का विकास हो। संस्था द्वारा बच्चों के चयन में विशेष सतर्कता बरती जाती है। चयन के लिये बच्चों का मानसिक परीक्षण और साक्षात्कार लिया जाता है। इस समय लगभग ४०० बच्चे संस्था द्वारा संचालित विभिन्न केन्द्रों पर व्यक्तित्व विकास का प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर रहे हैं। बच्चों के सर्वांगीण विकास के मुख्य लक्ष्य के अतिरिक्त संस्था अन्य कार्यक्रमों- बाल विद्यालय ‘पाकोली, कुटीर उद्योगों में कार्यरत महिलाओं को

शिक्षण कार्यक्रम, प्रौढ़ शिक्षा, महिलाओं और बच्चों के लिए स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र परिवार नियोजन सलाह केन्द्र का संचालन भी किया जा रहा है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले बच्चों के लिए एक सचल विज्ञान प्रयोगशाला भी है। यह प्रयोगशाला पुणे जिले के विभिन्न गांवों में छात्रों के प्रयोग के लिए उपलब्ध रहती है। उल्लेखनीय है की लगभग ७०० बच्चे इससे लाभान्वित हो रहे हैं। परिवार नियोजन एवं स्वास्थ्य केन्द्र भी कार्यरत है। इसके अतिरिक्त संस्थाद्वारा पशुपालन एवं कृषि संबंधी समस्याओं के बारे में समूचित सलाह उपलब्ध कराई जाती है। संस्था के सुसंस्कृत स्वयंसेवक गत २० वर्षों से निष्ठापूर्वक सेवा कार्य में रत हैं। कुछ पूर्णकालिक स्वयंसेवक अरुणाचल प्रदेश के वन क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले वनवासियों के शैक्षिक और सामाजिक विकास के प्रकल्प चला रहे हैं। ‘स्वरूपवर्धिनी’ का पता है -

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पुणे . ४ ११ ०११ (महाराष्ट्र)