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'SWA'-ROOPWARDHINEE EXPERIMENT

Education is a life long process. It can change beliefs, attitudes and practices. It can be formal (from school) or non formal means learning of new skills, strengthening of old ones and adaptations to changing life situations taught outside class rooms. Formal education is uniformly geared towards achieving more successful working careers. Non formal education including moral, cultural and spiritual topics are conspicuous by their absence in the curriculum. Of Senior Citizens it is said that the society ought to recognise their roles as wise men & experienced guides, as active tutors, mentors, instructors, organizers and as resource persons either for or with lenders of their own generation or of different generations. They can play model roles for the young. When they are involved in educational cultural and social activities along with the younger persons, they enhance conviviality and cordiality among two generations.

Many social service agencies like Rotary also work among youth. But they seem to prefer elitist youth coming from middle class or upper class social backgrounds. The poor youth who grow up in the slums in an environment of poverty & illiteracy find few opportunities for education or employment, and no recognition whatsoever from social service agencies.

Swa-Roop Wardhini is a successful experiment in enrichment of the latent qualities of young, intelligent and capable children from the unprivileged section of our society. It was founded in 1979, in the International Year of the Child, at Gurudeo Ravindranath Tagore Vidya Niketan, Pune by a few Senior Citizens like Shri K. L. Patwardhan, Shri R. P. Desai and others.

Children from the slum areas nearby join Swaroop Wardhini. They have a daily three hour schedule round the year without holidays, consisting of one hour of physical activities (games exercises etc.) and

two hours of indoor activity to fulfil academic and emotional needs of the pupils. Special camps are arranged during vacations. All the pupils have to pay 50 paise per head per month. Fifteen out of 20 staff members work in a honorary capacity.

In the five year period the achievements of Swaroop Wardhini are noticeable. The Children have performed better in the classes. Several scoring more than 80 % at SSC. The greater success is in the development of their personality. There is a remarkable change in their attitude manners, and general behaviour and also improvement in their confidence, expression and capability. These Children have been able to impress upon their parents and neighbours in the slums and shanty towns to improve their life-styles.

Wardhini recently opened another centre named after Swami Vivekanand at Modern High School Pashan Road, near Poona University where 30 pupils from a nearby hutment colony have been enrolled for the classes.

Shri Patwardhan a retired Headmaster and a pioneer in implementing this novel concept of utilizing Senior Citizens as teachers

in developing self image of underprivileged children and making them into social assets, nearly sums up the objective of his institution through this poem.

When lights go out all around.

It is such a comfort
to have a lone candle
burning cheerfully.

Candles are nor difficult to get
Nor matchsticks

What is often missing is
A willing heart and a helping hand
to light the candle.

We need more Swaroop Wardhini in India. We have plenty of Patwardhans in our midst who can draw inspiration from Shri K. L. Patwardhan 428/20 Shivaji Nagar Pune 16 (Tel 55835). Rotary Clubs can help to provide Vocational guidance and placements for these reformed children from under-privileged society. Each child so helped will mean one family brought about poverty line. Rotary District Governor Shri. Kalyan Varde and DGN Joel Delvis should be proud of this new experiment in service by Swaroop Wardhini from Pune. Fescom is also proud of their member Swaroop Wardhini who will enrich its resource.

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