

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA KANYAKUMARI

(ANANDALAYA – The Flagship Odisha Seva Prakalp)

Vivekananda Kendra was started as a spiritually oriented service mission in 1972 by Shri Eknath Ramakrishna Ranade, as the living memorial to Swami Vivekananda with the twin objectives of **man-making** and **nation-building**. VK is an extra-ordinary organisation of non-monastic order, and through its 1200+ activity centres across India, it has taken up projects in the field of education, rural development, natural resource development and healthcare with focus area in geo-politically remote and sensitive regions. In 2006 VK created Odisha Seva Prakalp (OSP) - a special drive service project for the tribal and the rural people of Odisha. OSP plans and executes the **Anandalaya** service in Odisha in addition to various other social service activities such as Samskara Varga, personality development camps, cultural examinations, organizational leadership, village interaction meetings, Vivekananda Jayanti celebration, health camps, support for under-privileged youths for pursuing higher education and mobile library- cum-audio-visual vans.

Anandalaya is an 'education supportive service' of Vivekananda Kendra (VK) to improve the educational status of the tribal and the socially disadvantaged children in the age group of 3-9 years.

OBJECTIVES OF ANANDALAY

Anandalaya attempts a holistic preparation of body, mind, and spirit, as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda. The main objectives behind the Anandalaya mission are to

- create education supportive atmosphere in interior villages,
- impart education through play-way method (learning through play) and increase interest for studies among village primary school students,
- reduce the rate of drop-outs and thus improve the status of education,
- give value-based education (man-making) and thus improve the quality of education,
- enhance patriotic feeling among villagers,
- create health awareness among children and through them among villagers, and
- work for the all-round development of the village (nation-building).

The key principles of these objectives are **Shiksha** (Education), **Samskara** (Rites of passage), **Swasthya** (Health), and **Swabhimana** (Self-esteem) that aim at bringing about perceptible changes in the holistic development of the children. All learning methodologies and pedagogy employed in Anandalayas revolve around these four important aspects of man-making process in order to provide a solid foundation for children's future. In a simpler term:

- Shiksha develops the 'aptitude' to perform an activity or action
- Samskara develops the 'attitude and approach' to perform an activity or action
- Swasthya prepares the readiness of 'body and mind' to perform an activity or action
- Swabhimana teaches to perform an activity or action with a belief and in a respectful manner

HOW ANANDALAY FUNCTIONS?

In an Anandalaya, a group of 30-35 children are enrolled. There are two sessions in a day – one in the morning and the other in the afternoon – two hours per session. The classroom functions in the place provided by the villagers normally in community centres, schools, and Panchayat buildings free of cost. There are teachers (most of them are female) called **Acharyas** who belong to the same village or nearby villages and are trained by the Vivekananda Kendra for effective discharge of their roles. The Acharyas are college students or pass-outs having passion for teaching and voluntary service. They develop close bonding with the children and are held in high esteem by one and all in the villages. The *Karyakarta* of the VK supervises smooth functioning of the Anandalayas.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

The Acharyas are aware of the importance of a good pedagogical approach to ensure children receive the best possible learning experience. In the absence of a real classroom setting, the teachers and the children spend more time outdoors and engage with Nature. The Acharyas guide and tutor the children not solely in academic sense but in moral and spiritual aspects too.

Different pedagogical approaches help stimulate a child's development and motivate them to keep learning. Apropos the name 'Anandalaya' (that means the abode of joy), joyful activities such as play, music, songs, dance, games, activities, story-telling, conversations and above all yoga practices are fundamental to achieving the **4S** learning objectives – ***Sikshya, Sanskara, Swasthya*** and ***Swabhiman***.

EVALUATION OF ANANDALAYA

Verbal feedback from students, parents, villagers, acharyas and school teachers, has been video graphed. Many benefits accrue to the participants and their family members with a positive impact on the entire village ecosystem. The following outcomes are observed from the ongoing Anandalayas.

- The children show interest towards study and inquisitiveness develops among them.
- They go to school regularly, successfully participate in different school activities and meritoriously pass all examinations.
- The children become humble with enhanced self-confidence.
- Positive changes in the attitudes of the family members and villagers are seen.
- The villagers take the assistance of the Acharyas, volunteers and other office bearers of Vivekananda Kendra in solving their problems.
- The villagers become aware of clean and healthy environment and preservation of natural resources.
- Congenial atmosphere is seen in the villages cutting across different thoughts and ideologies.

ANANDALAYA IN THE LIGHT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (2020)

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** is a transformative initiative to usher India to prepare itself to meet the challenging demands of a 21st century knowledge society. One of the key components of the NEP is the **National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF)**. The Foundational

Stage envisions an integrated approach to **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** for children between ages 3-8. As per the NCF, high-quality care and education during this period have a lifetime of positive consequences for all individuals and thus, the nation. This is very much in tune with Vivekananda's vision of man-making and nation-building – that is shaped through the bold social intervention called Anandalaya.

As per the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for the Foundational Stage based on the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, early education and child care (ECCE) from 3 to 8 years of age includes continued attention to health, safety, care, and nutrition; but also, crucially, self-help skills, motor skills, hygiene, the handling of separation anxiety, physical development through movement and exercise, expressing and communicating thoughts and feelings to parents and others, being comfortable around one's peers, sitting for longer periods of time in order to work on and complete a task, ethical development, and forming all-round good habits. Supervised play-based education, in groups and individually, is particularly important during this age range to nurture and develop the child's innate abilities and capacities of curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, cooperation, teamwork, social interaction, empathy, compassion, inclusiveness, communication, cultural appreciation, playfulness, awareness of the immediate environment, as well as the ability to successfully and respectfully interact with teachers, fellow students, and others.

ECCE during these years also entails the development of early literacy and numeracy, including learning about the alphabet, languages, numbers, counting, colours, shapes, drawing/ painting, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, art, craft, music, and movement. The aim is to build on the developmental outcomes in the domains mentioned above, combined with a focus on early literacy, numeracy, and awareness of one's environment. This becomes particularly important during the age range of 6-8, forming the basis for achievement of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). It may be noted here that FLN is also attempted in the Anandalaya learning processes.

This NCF emphasises the importance of 'play' at the core of the conceptual, operational, and transactional approaches to curriculum organization, pedagogy, time and content organization, and the overall experience of the child. The term 'play' in the context of ECCE includes all activities that are fun and engaging to the child. This can take the form of physical play, interaction, conversation, question and answer sessions, storytelling, read-aloud and shared reading, riddles, rhymes, or other enjoyable activities involving games, toys, visual art, and music. Play - of any kind free, guided, or structured - can be enabled and facilitated by various methods (e.g., activities, tools, artefacts) that engage children.

Learning through Play can be achieved through Art, Craft, Music, Movement, Conversations, Poems, Stories, Material, Toys, Using the Immediate Environment, and Outdoor Play. Within this broad idea of fun and play, children also learn by observing, doing, listening, reading, speaking, writing, thinking, and practicing. They learn new concepts, interpret them, and connect this newly introduced knowledge with their existing knowledge.

The NCF takes its inspiration from the ***panchakosha*** development of the child – a keystone in Indian tradition. The child is a whole being with *panchakoshas* or five sheaths. The layers are *annamaya kosha* (physical layer), *pranamaya kosha* (life force energy layer), *manomaya kosha* (mind layer), *vijnanamaya kosha* (intellectual layer) and *anandamaya kosha* (inner self). Each layer exhibits certain distinct characteristics. The holistic development of a child takes into account the nurturing and nourishment of these five layers.

The *Panchakosha* concept and imagination maps into the different **domains of development** envisaged in ECCE which are the basis of the Curricular Goals under NCF.

- **Physical Development (*Sharirik Vikas*):** Age-specific balanced physical development, physical fitness, flexibility, strength, and endurance; development of senses; nutrition, hygiene, personal health, expansion of physical abilities; building body and developing habits, keeping in mind one hundred years of healthy living in a human being.
- **Development of Life Energy (*Pranik Vikas*):** Balance and retention of energy, positive energy and enthusiasm, smooth functioning of all major systems (digestive, respiratory, circulatory, and nervous systems) by activation of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Emotional/Mental Development (*Manasik Vikas*):** Concentration, peace, will and will power, courage, handling negative emotions, developing virtues (moral values), the will to attach and detach from work, people and situations, happiness, visual and performing arts, culture, and literature.
- **Intellectual Development (*Bauddhik Vikas*):** Observation, experimentation, analytical ability, abstract and divergent thinking, synthesis, logical reasoning, linguistic skills, imagination, creativity, power of discrimination, generalization, and abstraction.
- **Spiritual Development (*Chaitisik Vikas*):** Happiness, love and compassion, spontaneity, freedom, aesthetic sense, the journey of ‘turning the awareness inwards.’

Panchakosha is an ancient explication of the importance of the body-mind complex in human experience and understanding. This non-dichotomous approach to human development gives clear pathways and direction towards a more holistic education.

It is noteworthy that most of the curricular goals envisaged under the NCF are predominantly achieved at the Anandalaya through the **4-S** objectives of **Sikshya, Samskara, Swasthya, and Swabhimana**. The Anandalaya model is a paradigm shift from the traditional education system towards the play-and-fun education model at the foundational stage and adheres to the basic requirement of children’s positive engagement with strong elements of fun and play while inculcating the spirit of samskara into the child’s mind.
