



# BARCLAYS TEAM VISITS VIDYA BHARATI SCHOOLS IN BENGAL

This small write up has been prepared by Sri Prerak Bhatia, a Vice President at Barclays Wealth Management. He was accompanied on this trip by Sri Sandeep Sawaria, a Kolkata based Chartered Accountant. Both of them had visited schools built by Vidya Bharti on 5th of August 2018.

## A short report below –

I am often surprised by the amount of time being spent by some of my clients on the cause of education in rural India. These clients run large businesses but somehow end up devoting disproportionate amount of time on this particular cause. My discussions with them invariably drift towards nation building and how education is the basic building block for a stronger, united nation. It's no longer the superb quarterly result or a blockbuster product launch by their company that gets these clients excited but the latest school building that has been constructed or achievements of students who study in these schools (you get my drift). So when I got a call from one of my client's office to plan a visit to a distant city (required a 2 hour flight from Delhi and 3 hour drive from the airport) to visit two schools built by **Vidya Bharti**<sup>1</sup> – I wasn't surprised and I couldn't say no despite the trip being planned for a Sunday morning.

## MY VISIT

It took almost 3 hours to reach the small school. The ride from the airport was really scenic and beautiful with lots of greenery and acres of farms under

cultivation. The small school had been built by Vidya Bharti in areas where large school could not be built. This school had 3 staff members who welcomed us – the school principal and 2 teachers. The school principal also doubled up as a teacher. This school was basically a temporary structure with tin roof that was essentially a large hall that has been divided into 3 class rooms, where education is imparted to students up to middle school. The classrooms were sparsely furnished but were spotlessly clean. I was amazed to hear that the school was running full and charged its students a nominal sum of INR 150 per month. This small school seemed quite well organized and had complete records of its students, exams, results, etc kept safely in a small almirah.

*Vidya Bharti - Vidya Bharati, short for Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan, is a non government educational organization which runs one of the largest private network of schools in India. It is the educational wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.*

## Small school



The large school had a relatively modern building - the academic block of this school was newly built and the school had hostel facilities also. This school imparted education to students till class XIIth. Upon reaching the large school, we were given a very warm welcome and were greeted by a solid performance by the school's band. The school had organized multiple performances that included folk dance, flute performance, athletic activity by the young bright students. Despite limited resources available, the students put on a remarkable performance that gave unlimited joy to everyone present. Their excitement to perform and desire to excel was truly infectious. The students were confident, well mannered and disciplined. The students in these schools came from very humble backgrounds and in most cases their

parents could barely make end meets and yet, they were paying fees to send their children to these schools and not the free government schools. Both qualities of 'Aadar' and 'Satkar' were in full display by the students and staff of the school.

I had a few questions in mind that I raised to the faculty and Vidya Bharti team 1) why do parents send their children to these schools when government schools offer free education, meals, uniforms and books? 2) is there any religious diversity in the mix of students? In my interactions it became very clear to me that an average person in rural India is actually very smart and can separate wheat from chaff. They gave high priority to education and made rational choices based on value derived from the various

### **Academic Block, Large School**



options available to them. So what is this value prop of these schools run by Vidya Bharti? Here's my take

1. Focus on nation building
2. Focus on character building
3. High quality education

This all round development has been the key driver for parents to send their children to these schools. It was heartening to know that many alumni from these schools are today very well placed and a student recently won a medal in the Asian Games ! It is also good to note that a number of students in Vidya Bharti schools are Muslims. In my interaction with the school staff, I became aware that 90% of the fee collected from the students is paid out as salaries to the teachers. Since these schools are self-sustaining and do not rely on external funding for their day to day functioning, the teaching and admin staff are completely in sync with these pay scales and feel that this is their way of giving back to the society. My salute to these sons of India who are bringing about a revolution in our country's distant farmlands and are strengthening the youth of India.

I am sure most of us agree on the fact that primary education is a cause of concern in our country and a lot needs to be done in this area. In the recent past we have seen large industrial houses, top executives build great institutes for higher education such as ISB, Ashoka University, BML University, OP Jindal University, etc.. In a very short span of time these institutes have gained global recognition and their alumni are doing exceptionally well through the world. Similar revolution is required in the field of primary education – the impact of such a revolution would be much larger as this would involve a much larger population and would make an impact on their lives

at an age when it is most effective. In my visit to these schools, I have realized that small sums of money can make vast difference in the lives of youth living in rural areas. Primary schools can be built at very low cost but can potentially deliver very high returns to the country. We will be doing a great service to our country by supporting organizations such as Vidya Bharti that produce alumni who have the right education, values and vision to take our country forward.

I have to admit that until this trip I wasn't able to fully appreciate challenges faced by our countrymen in rural areas. After this trip I have been acutely aware of the big challenge that lies ahead of us. I have been a mere spectator until now but I plan to change that and will become an active participant in these mini revolutions happening in our country. I would encourage everyone who reads this email to plan a visit to one of these schools and see for yourself what a wonderful job institutes like Vidya Bharti are doing. **Jai Hind**

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### **Weekly News Bulletin Launched By Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwatji**

The first news bulletin in the field of education was launched by RSS Sarsanghchalak Sri Mohan Bhagwat in Jalandhar on 16th October. Speaking on the occasion Bhagwatji said that we did not need any publicity but we must reach the good work being done by us to the society. We must reach the message of our values and ethics to all. He emphasized that if our good work is not communicated, this vacant space will be used to promote the unwanted news. The Sarsanghchalak complimented the Vidya Bharti team for this excellent work.

The weekly news bulletin can be accessed on YouTube, just look for Vidya Bharti Punjab.

# VIDYA BHARATI ACTIVITIES IN USA



Vidya Bharati team at the Cincinnati stall

A Trust, to promote Vidya Bharati activities, was registered in USA in 2015 in the name of Indus Educational and Empowerment Foundation INC (IEEF) and the Tax Exemption was also received on 17.11.2015.

This year in October the Board Meeting was held on 13th October, 2018 in Cincinnati and Dr S.P. Garg Chairman of the Board presided over the Board Meeting. Shri R.P. Khaitan who is coordinating Vidya Bharati activities in USA visited USA along with his wife from 6.10.18 to 16.10.18 and visited six places namely Philadelphia, Orlando, Detroit, Dayton, Cincinnati and New York.

During the Board Meeting in Cincinnati 3 senior persons were made Advisor to the Board namely Shri Brahamji Agarwal (Orlando), Shri Raj Soin (Dayton) and Shri Nand Todi (Philadelphia). Shri Suresh Gupta was made a Board Member in place of Shri Chandra Kant Patel. Shri Brahamji Agarwal also resigned since he became Advisor to the Board.

Our Power Point Presentation was given in Philadelphia, Detroit and New York, and was well received. During this trip due to good offices of Dr Nirmal Mattoo, Dr Yash Pal Arya was appointed as President of New York Chapter. This was our 3rd visit to USA in last three years.

The main purpose of this year's visit was to give a presentation to more than 1000 Bengalis at their 34th Tri-state Durga Puja at Princeton High School, in Cincinnati OH, on Oct 13-14. A Power Point Presentation of Vidya Bharati exclusively made for this gathering was presented. The organizers also gave us a stall at the celebration venue where we displayed our banners and distributed printed literature of Vidya Bharati. These exclusive material were made emphasizing the difficult situation prevailing in West Bengal due to it being a state with boundaries touching other countries. Our presentation was well appreciated and there were lot of enquiries on our counter at the stall. Overall, this trip was very useful and fruitful.