

GANATAR

GANATAR, a voluntary organization registered in 1992, is actively working and advocating for the fundamental right to Education, Health and eradication of Child Labour.

With its administrative office in Ahmedabad and three regional offices, Ganatar has its operations in almost 80 villages in 6 blocks of 3 districts. The regions covered include: Nalsarovar region of Ahmedabad district; Villages on the periphery of Little Rann of Kutch (LRK) of Patidi & Dhrangadhra blocks of Surendranagar district; Santalpur block of Patan district.

Amongst its various initiatives, Ganatar provides access to education to the children of Agariyas (saltpan workers) in the vicinity of salt pans in the midst of the mud desert of the little Rann of Kutch. The Rann Shalas operate during the period of seasonal migration starting from October through the month of May, the next calendar year. The geographical conditions are extremely harsh in the mud desert with not even a blade of grass or a small source of fresh water anywhere around and mirages appearing right from the morning with very wide changes in the temperatures within 24 hours.

In view of the above, no person from outside the region was likely to stick around on a teaching assignment in the Rann Shalas. Ganatar thought of selecting some of the promising youth from the agariya community or belonging to the same area, who are not qualified teachers with a diploma or a degree in education, but have been through the high school education and are committed with a passion to work for a cause serving their own fraternity, and training them to become teachers for primary education. These youth teachers known as '**Bal Dosts**' are guided on an ongoing basis by Ganatar.

The Rann shalas conduct classes up to 7th grade, as supplementary to the mainstream government schools running in the villages. The students at the Rann Shalas are enrolled at their respective village schools and on migrating with their parents to the salt pans in the mud desert; they continue their respective grade education at the Rann Shalas run by Ganatar. The attendance sheets of these children at the Rann Shalas are sent every month to their respective village school. At the end of the year, these children appear at the annual examination conducted at their respective village schools, thereby passing on to the next grade.

Prior to the access to Rann Shalas, the children had to leave the school in the villages and eventually join the swelling masses of illiterate and poor people getting initiated in the back breaking drudgery as child labour.

On developing the above model of Rann Shalas and demonstrating its feasibility over a period of time, Ganatar conducted persistent advocacy with concerned stakeholders including the State Government machinery for replicating / adapting the model in other socioeconomic situations and geographical conditions particularly with reference to the children of Agariyas and other migrant population in the state.

As a result for the first time in the history of the state, there has been a provision for 50 supplementary schools (based on Rann Shala model) for lower primary grades and 50 seasonal hostels (based on the model of seasonal hostels run by Ganatar with participation by local community in villages around Nal Sarovar.

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