Chapter IV

ACADEMIC LIFE IN ASHRAM SCHOOLS

This chapter attempts to focus on the academic scenario of Ashram schools which includes the academic life of students, interactions between teachers and students and among students, work-schedules, and infrastructural facilities available in Ashram schools and the academic problems of the students. The analysis in this chapter is done on the basis of responses given by the students and teachers during the interviews. The opinions of the parents are also being used to supplement the views of teachers and students on certain issues relevant to the academic scenario of Ashram schools.

It is found that around thirty five percent of the students interviewed have been studying in the same schools right from their primary level. Remaining, a majority of the respondents (65.6%) had their primary and upper primary education in other schools and joined here for their high school. Most of them had their education in their respective areas upto class VII. It is understandable as there are not adequate number of high schools in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam. Further, it can also be assumed that only thirty five percent of the old students are retained for the high school level. On enquiry it is found that most of the children dropped out by the time they reach to class VIII. Main reasons for this could be failures at class VII public
examination and discouragement for girls' education beyond class VII by the parents.¹ The problems of 'drop-out' will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

The students are asked to give reason why they have joined the Ashram high schools covered by this study. Forty-five percent of the respondents said that there are no high school level classes in their previous school and only high school in that area is the one where they are studying now. Twenty-one percent of the respondents said that the standard of the school is good, when compared to other Ashram high schools and hence they chose to join here. Eleven percent of the respondents said that their fathers put them here; 7.2% of the students said that the school is closer to their home place; 5.6% of the respondents said that the education for scheduled tribes in these schools is free; and the remaining 9.5% of the respondents mentioned other reasons such as availability of guardians in these places, siblings studying in the same school, etc. However, it is significant to note that a majority of the students joined here as there are no other high schools in the tribal areas. Only 21.7% of those joined are impressed by the academic standards of these schools.

When asked what is their 'aim of education', nearly 62% of the respondents explained that they are getting educated

¹ The reasons for the incidence of drop-out rate is discussed in detail in chapter six.
to 'obtain a government job'. Only 28% of the respondents said that 'acquiring knowledge' is the aim of their education. Around 8% wanted to 'serve the society' through their education.

The students are asked to state whether they 'failed in any class previously': Around sixty two percent of the respondents said 'no' but a sizeable percent of them (38%) said 'yes'. This is a noteworthy feature as a sizeable percent of the students did not have a successful and continuous schooling before entering the high school classes. This fact reveals that the foundation at primary and upper primary levels was not sound, (which will be elaborated during the course of discussion). Further the response to above question can be cross checked with the age of the respondents as reported by them. Only 64.4% of the respondents are only having age appropriate to their class in which they are studying (base year calculation 5 years for class I). Thirty five percent of the students have reported the age which is above the appropriate age to the class at which they are studying. This clearly indicate that the responses for the questions on academic failure are more or less correct.

The students studying in Ashram high schools are asked to state the subject which they like most and the subject which they felt most difficult. Forty four percent of the respondents said social studies is the most liked subject,
Telegu is liked by 14.4% of the respondents, 12% liked natural science, whereas only 10% of the respondents liked Mathematics and another 10% liked English as a subject. The respondents are asked to give reason for their liking of a particular subject. More than thirty four percent (34.4%) of the respondents said that they like one of the subjects most because it is "easy to understand", 28.3% of the respondents said that the subject is 'interesting' hence they liked it most; 19.4% of the respondents held that the subject which they like most, would improve their 'general awareness' and hence they like it; and only 9.4% of the respondents attributed the reason, for liking a particular subject over others, to the 'good teaching'. As seen above, most of them stated that the subject is interesting. These are the main reasons in their view, to like a particular subject most. The responses indicate clear preference of students to Social Studies over Science, Mathematics and English.

Similarly, students are asked to state the 'most difficult subject' for them. Majority of them, 58% have identified 'Mathematics' as most difficult subject for them. 28.3% of the respondents have reported English as most difficult subject for them; and 8.3% of the respondents identified 'physical science' as 'most difficult' one for them. They are asked to give reason why they find these subjects as 'most difficult' compared to other subjects.
Around forty eight percent of the respondents viewed that the subject which they find most difficult, has vast syllabus and it is tough to understand and it is not at all interesting. Around thirty two percent (31.7%) of the respondents observed that they did not have good foundation in basics like calculations, spellings and grammar at primary and upper primary level, due to which they are finding it difficult to manage. These respondents feel that the high school teachers are teaching at higher level, without looking into the individual problems with 'basics' of the students, owing to their background. Remaining 15% of the respondents held the teachers and their teaching methods responsible for the difficulty with a particular subject. Many students complain that their teachers for Mathematics and physical science do not teach well.

When asked, 93% of the students said they attend to classes regularly. This is verified with the attendance registers also. Contrary to this, the teachers who are interviewed reported that there is a lot of 'absenteeism' in these schools. One of the teachers says (case S1):

"the parents who visit the students on weekly market days take them along with them. They ask for one hour's permission. But the children go home with parents and come back after three or four days".

Another teacher (case-S2) explains:
"They stay for a long time during festival and harvest seasons. If there are three days' holidays for a festival, they stay for one week. Usually, they cite sickness as the reason for their absence. Even when they have a real health problem, they don't consult the doctor. Instead of meeting the doctor they go home and consult some 'Guruvu' (traditional medicine man)."

Despite all these, the students are given attendance. One of the headmasters explains as follows (case S3):

"We try to give attendance to students even if they are irregular... because they require a record of minimum attendance to be promoted to higher class. Moreover, if we try to punish them, they may drop out of the system".

The teachers attribute the students academic problems to latter's irregularity in attending school. Some teachers have a preconceived notion that the tribal students have less grasping power.

One mathematics teacher points out (case S4):

"These children are good at drawing and sports. But, their grasping power is less and that's why they face difficulties in learning. Moreover, the 'single teacher' primary schools have spoiled the system, as the children were not given sufficient inputs at primary school level. Here we try to
make them learn by repeating lessons and by giving impositions".2

Another teacher who teaches Hindi says (case S5):

"We conduct study hours in the evening after the school hours, as this is a residential set up. The students can clarify their doubts but many of them do not ask us. They study for 2 or 3 extra hours everyday. Even then their comprehension is only average".

Thus, the teachers mainly held the students' educational and cultural background responsible while assessing the academic problems of the students.

When the students are asked whether they follow all the subjects in the classroom, 50.6% of the respondents said 'yes' and 49.4% said 'no'. This means nearly half of the students reported that they can not follow the lessons taught in the classroom: this is an alarming trend in the academic achievement of the students in these schools. Nearly sixty percent (59.5%) of the respondents who said that they can not follow all the subjects in the classroom express that "the syllabus is vast and tough"; 32.5% of them said that their teachers do not teach well; and the remaining 7.8% of the respondents who said 'no' to the above

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2 Impositions refer to punishments in the classroom which are usually academic in nature. For instance if a student makes spelling mistakes the teacher instructs him to write those words fifty times each.
query feel that it is due to the medium of instruction, as many of the respondents have their mother-tongue other than Telegu.

To cross check the above responses, respondents are asked whether any of their teachers take special care of their problems in the classroom. Around forty eight percent of the students interviewed stated that no teacher take special care of them. This is an indication for the level of student-teacher interaction and relationship. Respondents are asked to tell whether they ask any of their teachers to clarify their doubts or to explain the lesson taught again when they can not understand. Fifty six percent of the respondents ask their teachers if they have any doubts in the classroom. Around four percent of the respondents said 'no' because the teachers do not encourage such things. Remaining respondents - a sizeable percentage, forty percent said they 'hesitate to ask' as they are 'scared with teachers. The above discussion reveals that the teacher-student relationship is not at the expected level considering the fact that these schools are in a residential set up. The interaction between students and teachers should have been better than the ordinary Government day schools. A student of class X (case S8) narrates:

"After explaining a lesson the teachers as a formality ask us whether we have any doubts. But they do not expect us to ask in the classroom."
They show their irritation and ask us in reverse
'what have you understood so far'?

Another respondent of class IX explains (case S7):
"We are scared of our teachers. They may scold us
if we tell them that we did not understand. The
teacher would ask us 'Were you sleeping when I was
explaining the lesson'?"

Interestingly most of the teachers interviewed said that not
more than 10 students feel free to consult them in their
difficulties. One Hindi pandit who teaches from 6th class to
10th class, explains (case S8):
"The tribal children are generally shy. They
hesitate to ask us even if they have doubts in the
classroom. We try to encourage them to take
initiative... but they do not. This is more so
with girl students".

Around 52% of the teachers who interviewed consider their
students as "studious", and rest of them consider the
students as "negligent". One science teacher comments (case
S9):
"Frankly speaking these tribals are 'negligent'
towards education. Most of them try to pass the
years here because all the facilities are provided
free and their parents joined them here. They are
good at sports because their tribal background
enables them to bear physical strain but they are
not good at mental work".
These are the different views expressed by the teachers. Interestingly, some of the teachers who consider their students as "studious" also express a negative opinion on students' interest in academic participation. One social studies teacher who belongs to scheduled tribe (case S10) clarifies:

"We have some intelligent students but they waste time... we have to keep instructing them continuously. Some teachers teach rapidly. Students cannot understand if we teach fast. If we teach them slowly, they understand well".

Thus, most of the teachers consider their students as "negligent" towards education despite some difference of opinion among scheduled tribe and non-scheduled tribe teachers regarding the capabilities of their students.

The teachers working in the Ashram high schools are asked whether they consider their students as 'disciplined' or 'indisciplined'. Majority of the teachers feel that the pupils are 'indisciplined'. They explain that the students behaviour in the classroom as orderly and calm. But teachers express that as long as teachers are around, the students behave well. Otherwise they are indisciplined and go out to market place or to movies without any permission. Some of the teachers complain that the grown up boys and girls in class IX and X create tension with their overt sexual
behaviour. The Headmaster of one of the high schools studied explains (case S11):

"Sexual contacts are the real problems. Even a seventh class student shows more interest in sexual relationships. Some of the students received love letters from outside by post. These students write love letters among themselves frequently. This is one of the important reasons for their diversion and ultimately dropping out. Last year a boy of class X and a girl in class IX eloped. Then the parents lodged complaint with the police and finally they got married elsewhere and returned. These incidents cause much tension for us..."

Further he says:

They are more active in extracurricular activities (going to movies, etc) than studies. If there is an Oriya drama staged, the students will be ready to go even if it is at 10 kilometers away. Some students have stolen the new bulbs put up in the school and hostel buildings and sold them at half the cost outside to find money for such entertainment".

Another teacher opines (case S12):

"These students acquire bad habits so quickly. Many grown up boys smoke beedis and cigarettes."
Some boys even drink. The tribals have a culture of smoking and drinking - even women among them are habituated to drink and smoke. So it is natural for them and our students also venture into these things. We keep an eye on them - but somehow they slip from our eyes and do all these mischief".

Another teacher, a matron in the girls' hostel, says (case S13):

"It's very tough to manage with these girls. They have loose morals by nature. The grown up girls bunk the classes and go out for movies etc. When they go out they contact the youngsters outside. They make a pass at them and naturally these boys respond positively to their passes. Despite severe warnings, these girls don't change their behaviour. By evening several youngsters gather at the hostel building and exchange smiles etc...

Teachers who consider their students as "disciplined" also express their feelings in the similar manner on the character of the students. However, the high school teachers feel that the students come out openly and accept their mistakes. If any incident happens one or the other student comes forward and informs the teacher, as to who is responsible for such an incident. One physical education master explains (case S14):
"Tribal students are more sincere than those of non-tribals. These students don't have deceiving mentality. In some controversial situations they themselves come out and accept their mistakes. They may even be ready for some punishment - when we make all of them stand up and ask the guilty to come forward. They come forward... But the problem with these students is that they repeat the same mistakes time and again particularly with respect to smoking, going to movies, writing love letters etc."

Thus, it is found that there exists a wide socio-cultural gap between teachers and students from the responses to above questions and the field observations. The teachers are complaining against the students passive and inactive academic participation and their "indisciplined" life style. Most of the teachers attribute these aspects to the cultural and economic 'backwardness' of the tribal students and their parents' attitude.

The teachers are asked whether they "find parents sufficiently interested in the educational progress of their children". Nearly 64% of the teachers interviewed, state that 'not many' parents show interest in the educational progress of their wards. Both the teachers and students confirm that the parents do come regularly, particularly on shandy (weekly market) days. However, they do not meet the
teachers and enquire. Only when there is some problem, they meet the Headmaster but not individual teachers.

One Telegu pandit explains (case S15):
"the tribal people have a lot of affection for their children... they are more attached to their children. Whenever they come to this place they do meet children. Some parents bring some food for their children and others would give them some pocket money. They are not bothered to ask the Headmaster or teachers about education. Moreover, they shy off when they see teacher".

Hindi teacher at school one opines (case S16):
"Earlier parents were not showing any interest in academic progress of their child. Now many parents have realised the importance of education. Some of the parents do enquire about their ward's performance".

Another teacher at school two says (case S17):
"Nowadays they (parents) are aware of job prospects. Parents of class X students do ask us whether he/she gets through the SSC exam".

It is evident from the above discussion that the parents are becoming aware of the importance of education and the job prospects for scheduled tribes. Some of the parents keep enquiring about their children's academic performance. However, one should not expect the non-literate tribal to go
near Headmaster/teachers and enquire the progress of their wards. They might have felt shy due to their economic, cultural and educational background. One interesting feature is that most of the parents do come on a regular basis and meet their children; thereby the former give a lot of emotional support to the latter who are studying in a residential school setting. It is upto the Headmaster and teachers to utilize the opportunity to brief them up on the academic progress of the student during the parents' visit.

In this connection, the teachers are asked as to 'how often they are in contact with the parents of the students'. Ninety percent of the teachers interviewed, say they would contact the parents only when an occasion arises. Only 10% of them state that they are in touch with the parents 'regularly'.

One of the teachers at School one says (case S18):

"When there is a serious problem like ill health or misbehaviour of the student we inform them (parents) about their ward... they come and discuss with us".

Another teacher at School three adds (case S19):

"We meet the parents twice in a year during the Parents' Association meeting".

This shows that the initiative from the teachers side is lacking in involving parents with the system. One of the officers of ITDA, in-charge of Ashram schools, substantiates
the above observation (case S20):

"Why should teachers wait for the Parents Association meeting and then discuss the issues. Teachers must go to the villages and meet the parents... this would improve parent-teacher interaction. Moreover, parents will be more interested if the teachers take initiative".

Another officer, in charge of developmental activities of ITDA, also expresses similar views (case S21):

"In tribal areas parents have no ambition and achievement motivation. They have a limited vision... free food and shelter are the main attractions. They lack information on children's education. On the other hand, teachers feel that tribals have less mental capability. Basically parents are not demanding. So the teacher must play a vital role and take initiative and involve parents... they can also bring discipline among students by doing this".

Based on the above discussion, it is observed that 'the role expectations' of the respondents and their 'role performance' are having wide gap. This results in the lack of 'mutual trust/confidence' among the respondents. The students in general complain that the teachers are not upto their expectations in teaching or while interacting with them. By contrast, the teachers find their students as
'negligent' towards education and 'indisciplined' in their behaviour. The teachers feel that the parents are not performing the expected role - by not enquiring about the academic progress of their wards; whereas the officials expect the teachers to take initiative and involve the parents in the system. Here again, there appears a normative disjunction among various categories of respondents. The role expectations of various categories of respondents (students, teachers, parents and officials) are mutually contradictory. The role expectation of one category of respondents against another, is determined by their socio-cultural background and normative pattern.

The students studying in Ashram high schools are asked whether they like such schools at all. Around forty percent (39.9%) of the respondents express that they like their school. There is a uniform response from all the three high schools covered by this study. Further there is a uniformity in responses if we analyse sex-wise also. Most of them reasoned that they like the School because it is better than their previous school. Further, except 17.8% of the total respondents, all other students have complaints against the facilities provided. It is better to present here in brief, the facilities available in three Ashram high schools and then assess the students’ opinion on these facilities.

School - One: The school is having 11.6 acres of land. Out
of this 2.6 acres are being used as playground. The school building is having 12 class rooms, one office room, one staff room and a big hall. This school is located on a hill top around 1.5 km away from town. All the rooms are covered with asbestos ceiling. The rooms available are sufficient for the purpose. The school complex is an exclusive place and not being used for any other purpose. Only three classrooms are having furniture and the rest do not have any furniture. There is adequate furniture for teaching and other staff. The school is having a borewell and kitchen garden is taken up in one acre. The school has electricity. There are no toilets for students at the school complex. Headmaster, warden and some teachers are provided government accommodation around the school complex. This school has an attached hostel complex for boys with 6 halls, 2 dining halls, a big kitchen and toilets. The school is equipped with a sufficient number of blackboards, laboratory, library and sports materials. Girls are provided a separate accommodation in town. This school is 4 km away from railway station.

School - Two: This school is also located in a pucca government building and situated in the center of the village. The school is having 6 acres of land and one acre of it is used as playground. There are rooms in the school building and 9 rooms in the hostel building. Though there is no compound, the school maintains its own exclusive area.
Only class IX and class X are having exclusive class rooms with furniture. Remaining class rooms do not have any furniture. Moreover the classes for 1st to 8th are being conducted in the hostel complex itself. They are used as classrooms during day time and as hostel during nights. There are blackboards sufficient in number for all the classes and furniture for all the teaching staff is available. There are no toilets and the problem of drinking water is acute. The hostel is meant for only boys and no hostel facility for girls. Electricity is provided. No government accommodation is provided for teaching staff here. There are 14 male and 2 female teachers and 2 office staff. There is no laboratory, library. Some sports material is available. There are no adequate number of trunk boxes, blankets for children and plates and glasses available. There is no compound wall and the entry of cattle is a nuisance. This school is located in a village, 25 km away from railway station.

School - Three: This is having three acres of land located in a government building and situated in mandal headquarters. The school building has 12 rooms in total and 8 rooms are used for conducting classes. Only from class VIII to class X, the students are provided furniture. The school premises is not being used for any other purpose. There is a playground for the students. Furniture for all the teaching and non-teaching staff is available. There are
a sufficient number of blackboards and a few books in the library. Sports material is not provided in this school. There are two bore wells and hence no water problem. There are 10 male and one female teachers and 4 office staff. There is a separate hostel building with 10 rooms and dining hall. But there are no toilets. It has electricity facility. Total strength of the school is around 440 - but the hostel capacity is only 200. This school is 120 km away from the railway station.

All the above three residential high schools are provided with budgetary support by the ITDA. Salaries of the staff are the main expenditure and some amount is provided for contingent expenditure, electricity charges, etc. There is a separate budget for the maintenance of the hostel along with the boarding expenses for the inmates. At the time of study the budget released towards the boarding facilities was at the rate of Rs. 5/- per day, per boarder. The teachers complained that this was not at all sufficient to provide reasonably good food. For instance, school two used to get approximately Rs. 12 lakhs per annum during 1994-95, towards salaries of staff - 25 staff members including teaching, non-teaching, cooks and others - whereas the amount released towards maintenance of hostel including food charges was Rs. 7.5 lakhs per annum for 430 inmates.

In addition to the boarding charges, the students studying in Ashram high schools are provided with two pairs
of uniform yearly and free textbooks and notebooks. The students are provided with cosmetic charges every month and a trunk box and blanket at the time of admission. There is no provision for excursions and educational tours.

The daily routine in all the Ashram high schools is uniform. The students have to wake up at 6.30 am and get ready by 8.15 am. There is a breakfast gap of half an hour. The classes are started at 8.45 am. There are eight periods in a day. The first session completes at 12.10 and a subsequent lunch break for one hour and twenty minutes. The second session is in between 1.30 pm to 4.10 pm. Then the children are left free for one and half hour. There is 'supervisory study' from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm and from 8.30 pm to 9.00 pm. Dinner time is from 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm. A fixed time table for all the classes has been prepared by the staff. One or two teachers attend in shifts for 'supervisory study' (more appropriately 'study under supervision') in the evening time. One among the teaching staff has to manage the affairs of the hostel as there is no separate Warden. Due to some complaints of mismanagement and misappropriation the rotation system has been introduced, whereby teacher volunteered to be in charge for a limited period of two or three months and manage the hostel within the budget provided for.

Wide differences exist in these three Ashram high schools with respect to the infrastructure and other
available facilities. School one is having adequate number of class rooms, teaching material, hostel facility, required number of staff and other facilities such as drinking water etc., whereas the remaining two schools are lacking in some facilities which are essential to run the school effectively. It is observed that the facilities in Ashram schools and the importance given to these schools by the authorities vary with the location of these schools. Ashram schools which are located in Divisional headquarters are having better facilities and budgetary support for maintenance, than those located in villages/hamlets. As we could see, School one is having better facilities and maintenance than school three which is located in Mandal (sub-divisional) headquarters. Further, School three is having comparatively better facilities and maintenance than School two which is located in a village.

During discussions with the officials, it is observed that they give more importance to those Ashram schools which are located in administrative centres such as Paderu, Araku valley, Ananthagiri etc., than those located in villages. As pointed out by some teachers, the official visits are more to the schools which are located in either divisional administrative centres or which are well connected and nearer to the district headquarters. This results in less emphasis on Ashram schools located in villages due to which teachers and students show less interest in participation.
Students are asked to express their opinion on the facilities available in the school. Thirty seven percent of the respondents express a positive opinion about the school. However, the remaining 63% of the respondents have expressed a negative opinion on the facilities available in their school. Seventy five percent of those who have expressed a negative opinion complain on inadequacy of basic amenities such as drinking water, absence of toilets and insufficient classrooms and furniture. Most of the students who complain on basic amenities are from schools two, three and one in that order. Rest of them expressed negative opinion due to delay in the supply of books, for not supplying essay books, graph papers etc., ill-treatment of teachers and their teaching.

Another interesting feature is that only 40% of the respondents in School one where there is library reported that they are aware of it and rest of the respondents are not aware that there exists a library in their school. Here again it is the teacher who should initiate action to inform the students about the facility as well as to inculcate a habit of utilising the facility.

The students' complaints regarding the infrastructure or basic amenities can be understood in the light of the brief description of three Ashram high schools given earlier. However, some of these complaints on amenities are considered as genuine, even by the teachers and
administrators.

The Headmaster of School two, informs (case S22): "We have requested for additional rooms for the school as it became very difficult for the students to use same rooms for classes and to sleep. By morning they all have to shift their trunk boxes to one room and bring them back in the evening... water is not sufficient here. Some days we face acute problem".

Another teacher complains (case S23): "There is a provision for supply of textbooks and notebooks only. But the students also require graph papers, essay books, drawing sheets, science records - particularly for classes IX and X. We are forced to ask the students to buy outside".

One administrator puts it clearly (case S24): "Textbooks issued by the government do not come in time they come after the quarterly exams are conducted in the schools... uniforms are provided towards the end of the academic year - there are bureaucratic delays at various levels".

Thus, the above comments throw light on the academic problems and other problems of students in the school setting.

The respondents are enquired about the facilities provided for them and the problems they are facing with
respect to the boarding and lodging. Here again, there are several complaints from the students which are more serious than the problems they have reported in school setting. Most of the students (81%) are boarders in the hostels. While the remaining students are day scholars who stay with their parents or guardians. Further, some girls are staying in rented buildings as there is no hostel facility for girls at School two and three.

When enquired about the problems, majority of the respondents have expressed more than one problem. Forty eight percent of the students complain on two problems, 21% of the respondents complain on more than two problems and 12% of the respondents are complaining about one particular problem which they are facing. On the whole, more than eighty percent of the boarders in the hostels complain on one or more problems. The main problems expressed by the students are that: the food quality is bad; there is water shortage, the rooms are not sufficient, no hygiene - which result in mosquitoes, skin diseases etc., shortage of trunk boxes and blankets, ill-treatment by the warden, lack of medical facility near the residential school and complaints on the quality of dresses supplied.

First major problem expressed by many residents of Ashram schools is the inferior quality of the food provided for them. This seems to be an universal complaint of the students in the Government residential schools and hostels
everywhere. However, it is expected that the complaints on food would be less in Ashram schools considering the fact that administration in ITDA areas emphasize more on delivery of services than elsewhere. Contrary to this expectation, the Ashram schools are also having all the maladies of other government hostels. The menu in these schools is to be prepared well in advance for one week schedule. The students are provided with three meals a day, which includes a rice preparation for breakfast; 'rice' with 'dal' and either 'rasam' or 'butter-milk' for lunch, and 'rice' with 'sambar' and 'rasam' for supper. Though menu is prepared systematically with minute details of allocation of various provisions per day, per meal and per boarder, the quality of the food prepared is not good. The researcher has observed and tasted the food prepared and served on several occasions. More emphasis is on and caution is taken in preparing and maintaining the stock and issue registers, cash book and bills and vouchers related to the hostel.

Several students are explaining that the quality of the food varies depending on the person who is in charge warden. Previously only one teacher used to look after the hostel affairs under overall supervision of the headmaster. There were several complaints to officials on their system as many wardens were misappropriating funds.

The rotation system of wardens is introduced to check the malpractices. Under this system the teachers who are
interested to manage the hostel are given a chance for a few months. Again the students feel that the uniformity is lacking. A resident of the hostel explains (Case S25):

"Rotation of wardens has further spoiled the system... Some are good at managing and some are not capable. When the person can't manage - the cooks could play mischief, every month we get a different quality..."

Another student of class X reports (Case - S26):

"Even now wardens try to swindle money... earlier only one person used to get chance - now more people get chance to swindle. Headmaster has his own share. Nobody should question them".

Students residing in these hostels have several complaints on their wardens. It is observed that some teachers who are in charge wardens maintain a clique of resident students. In one Ashram school the social studies teacher has been a warden for several months before introducing the rotation system. After that he could get a chance for only two months. He used to have a clique of some twenty grown up boys who always tell the visiting officer that the mess is managed well during his period. Other residents, have explained that those boys belonged to his "group" support him and when they misbehave he ignores. It is observed that the teachers in charge of the hostels do favours some boys who are vocal and grown ups; who in turn back them during
occasions like officials' visits etc.

The in-charge wardens are enquired about the quality of food. Most of them argue that the budget provided i.e. Rs.5/- per boarder, per day is insufficient to provide quality food. Moreover, they point out that the cooks are not trained and the boys eat more, so it is difficult to maintain quality. One in-charge warden says (Case-527):

"The budget released by the government is not sufficient to provide three meals a day. They (officials) expect us to run the mess and maintain the quality... how is it possible? Moreover the tribal boys are habituated to eat more quantity of food... so it's difficult to manage".

Another warden expresses (Case-528):

"Everyone blames us - the officials who visit come with a preconceived motion that we pocket the money. We are answerable to many... nobody understands that it is an additional headache, as the cooks are not trained, they do not work systematically."

One teacher, and an in-charge warden says (case-529):

"these fellows (students) don't get rice to eat at home... they magnify the problem... The more you feed them the more will be the complaints."

The ITDA official, in-charge of these schools argues (case S30):
"the budget provided to the Ashram schools is quite sufficient. The menu was prepared by the National Institute of Nutrition. Their study proved that Rs.5/- per day is sufficient for the students up to 15 years age... provided good planning and management should be there". He further adds...

Most of the cooks are not trained. So what? The children require well prepared rice and sambar... that's all. We supply sambar powder, rice, dal etc., it's mainly the problems of management. I have never seen a warden who prepares a menu for a week in consultation with the inmates. They lack interest and initiative. Wardens and cooks blame each other. I want to dispense with the present system. There should be full-time permanent wardens which might bring some positive result. There were several complaints of corruption. Corruption will come down only through institutional reforms...

There are several problems with regard to the structural adjustment in managing the hostels, apart from the budgetary constraints as discussed above. Whatever the reasons for mismanagement, it is the residents who bare the brunt of it. Much of these problems could have been solved with administrative initiative, interest of the teachers and the
involvement of boarders in the management of the affairs.

The respondents also complain about the water problem. The residents require water both for drinking and bathing/washing purposes. In school one there is a borewell but at the time of this study the electric motor fixed to it was not functioning. This was not rectified for several months due to budgetary and bureaucratic delays. School-two has one borewell but the water is insufficient for the inmates. It is observed that the children go to a nearby stream to wash their clothes. The boarders have to help the kitchen staff in fetching water for cooking. School-three has also been facing with water scarcity problem as the capacity of the motor is less to cater the needs of hundreds of inmates.

Another complaint from the students is on the dirty surroundings, and that the warden does not show interest, resulting the breeding of mosquitoes and houseflies which cause several cases of malaria, diarrhea etc., regularly. It is observed that several children have vitamin deficiency and skin diseases. General personal hygiene of the students is also not satisfactory. There is a genuine problem of availability of medical facility at all the Ashram schools. School one is located in a town so there is not much problem in this regard. The other two schools have no immediate access to a doctor. For school two the accessibility of doctor is 10 km away. As there are several children,
everyday there arise some health problem for somebody. When there is an emergency the Headmaster or some teacher has to give bus charges and send them to the nearby place where there is a doctor. It is felt that the teachers should have taken steps to prevent diseases by advising the students about the maintenance of hygiene in and around the school. Students should have been made more responsible as they are the cause for much of the unhygiene.

The respondents have several complaints on the supply of materials. Some of them have not received the blankets and boxes. During winters, the temperature in agency areas come down and usually winters are unbearable without blanket. At the time of field visit (January to April) it was observed that some of them had a tough time to manage the cold temperature of January for want of blankets. Teachers blame administrators of ITDA while the latter held the bureaucracy at higher levels responsible for shortfall and delay in supply. Many respondents complained that the dresses supplied to them are not of their size, usually of lesser size. Several students, particularly the girls complained on this issue. As mentioned earlier, the students studying in Ashram schools are being given two pairs of polyester dresses. Usually the cloth purchased by the government through tenders is supplied to the concerned Headmasters, who get them stitched according to the measurements of the students. At the time of field visit,
brisk stitching was going on at School one. The stitching rates were fixed for boys and girls separately. The tailors who got the contract for stitching used to take an average measurement of one or two students in the class and stitch 50 or 60 pairs with same measurements. Some students felt that the Headmaster was getting some momentary advantage in collusion with the tailors. Headmaster complained that the cloth is issued on the basis of standard measurement for boys and girls separately. He stated that this cloth would not be sufficient for all, yet he was taking precautions to see that all the students get the dresses.

Then there are some students who felt insulted by the ill-treatment of Wardens. A boy of class IX complains (case S31):

"He (warden) always abuses us with bad words and repeats everytime that we are fattened like pigs with free food. If we ask anything about the quality of the food or changes in menu, he would say you won't deserve even this."

Another girl of class X, a boarder in the hostel (in a separate building with attached residence for matron) says (case S32):

"She (matron) asks us to do all the domestic chores in her house. We've to fetch water, clean the vessels, sweep the house... she abuses us very badly. If any one of us go out and come late, she
would ask, 'with whom you slept outside'?

Some other girls who stay in this hostel have also complained on similar lines. The Headmaster reacting to this says (case S33):

"These girls are also equally bad. They go out and have flings with other boys... if something happens the parents and officials blame us. They must be dealt with strictly, otherwise they would sit on our head".

One girl student of class X had complained to the authorities against two male teachers in one of the schools that they were making sexual advances with her. There were a few such complaints on teachers in other Ashram schools in the agency which are not covered in this study.

An officer in-charge of developmental activities in ITDA points out (case S34):

"We do receive allegations of misbehaviour from a few girl students. There were complaints from two girls from different schools recently against their teachers' misbehaviour. One of them reported it to the press which published it in the newspaper. The teacher was arrested and an investigation is going on."

After analysing the responses discussed above, it appears that the root cause of most of these problems is 'mutual mistrust' between students and teachers on one side and
between teachers and administrators on the other side. Further, it is observed that the teachers are lacking any motivation to take interest/initiative required to solve some of these problems. Besides there are the bureaucratic hurdles and budgetary constraints.

As part of academic life, this study attempts to find out the leisure time activities of the students and their inclination for sports and other cultural activities. Main aim of this section is to analyse how students spend their time during leisure hours and their interest in extracurricular activities and the encouragement given by the Ashram school to such activities. On enquiry it is found that majority of the students (83%) take part in sports and games. Out of these respondents sixteen percent have won prizes for excellence in sports and games at inter-school level and above, around fifty two percent of them have won prizes at school-level on various occasions in different events, and the remaining (32%) of them have participated in events but won no prizes. If we analyse the participation in sports and games class-wise, there is a slight reduction in the percentage of participation from class VIII to class X. It is 85% for class VIII, 83.3% for class IX and 81.7% for class X. The data reveal that both boys and girls have shown similar interest in sports and games.

As far as the infrastructure for sports and games is concerned, only one school has equipment and the remaining
two schools do not have any material. Despite this there is no school-wise variance in the participation of students. Students felt that only on the insistence of officials the school conducts competitions but otherwise there is no encouragement on daily basis. One of the respondent explains (case S35):

"...daily we are left free for some time in the evening, no training is being given to us. Only to play games on some occasions like Children's Day, August 15th and School Day. The teachers conduct some training for a few days."

The teacher in-charge for physical education in School one explains (case S36):

"the tribal children are good at sports and games... they have natural skills and potentials in athletics... they show lot of interest... if we train them properly we can easily send a few of them to national level events. However, since the material supply is limited we do not give them everyday as they may be damaged by the time we conduct major events in the year. Moreover, the officials put pressure on headmasters to show good results in academics which led to the introduction of supervisory study in the evening and neglect of sports."

Respondents are asked whether they participate in cultural
activities, considering the natural and universal interest of tribals worldwide in song and dance. Surprisingly, only 31% respondents said that they take part in dances, group songs, drama/skits etc., and remaining 68.3% said that they do not take part in the school. Nearly 20% of the respondents won prizes at school level in cultural events. All others who take part in cultural events have only participated without any prizes/merit certificate. None of them participated or won the prizes at inter-school level.

It is observed that most of the students studying in these schools like their tribal folk dances and are also having fascination for movie songs and dances. Most of them said, they like 'dimsa', popular group dance in the tribal area. Even girls also actively participate in these folk dances, during festival season in their villages. Students reported that their schools have never conducted competitions in cultural events. But in every school the teachers prepare two or three items of folk dances and group songs to display before officials during the latter's visit (inspection to the school) or to make these items part of the Independence day function, etc. A student of class X says (case S37):

"When some officials visit our school we are asked to present a group dance or a song. Otherwise, no such events in the school. When we go home for festivals like 'Sankranti', Sivratri, Diwali,
dance is a must".

Several teachers and headmasters also accept that tribal children like to participate in cultural events and they have required ethnic background for that. However, they express difficulties in taking up such events on a regular basis. The students are further asked whether the school encourages tribal songs, dances and other art forms, 52% said 'no' to the above question. This kind of feeling among the students may increase the cultural gap between students and teachers. The very purpose of Ashram schools is to educate and integrate them into the mainstream, without discouraging their cultural and ethnic interests. However, many students in these school feel that the school does not encourage their ethnic art forms, except to show them as exhibits in front of officials. This psychological distance would have a definite impact in teacher-student interaction.

Respondents are asked to state whether they have participated in science exhibitions. Only three percent of them had participated. Most of them are from School one. Compared to other schools, the participation from these schools in 'science exhibitions' is very less. Here again, it is the teachers who should have taken interest and encouraged students for such activities.

Most of the students studying in Ashram schools like to watch movies with or without the permission of the school authorities. Nearly seventy nine percent of the students who
watch movies are asked to tell the frequency of their interest. More than half of the students (51%) informed that they go for movies 'once in a week', 17% go for movies 'once in a fortnight', 16% prefer to go 'once in a month', 11.3% would go for movies 'occasionally' and the rest 4.7% of the respondents said they watch movies 'twice in a week'. It is understood from the above responses that a majority of the respondents watch movies once or twice in a week. One wonders as to how they manage to get money for this kind of entertainment activities.

The students are enquired to reveal whether they take money from their parents/relatives for their pocket expenses. Fifty percent of the respondents agreed that they take money from their parents. Irrespective of their father's occupation and family income, the respondents take money from their parents. Usually when parents visit them at the school, they give some money for their ward's immediate expenses. Some respondents get money when they go home for festivals and other such occasions. The teachers inform that the students tell their parents that they need money to buy some books, pens etc., otherwise the teachers won't allow them into class. One teacher explains (case S38):

"Parents do not know the genuine requirements of the children. Whenever the children ask money for books etc., they give without any question. They do not even cross check with us. Some boys, if
their parents do not give money, stay at home till they get money."

Lack of parental awareness encourage the students to get into bad habits as the teachers have reported earlier, about the habits like smoking and pan chewing. Regular parents meetings and better interaction between teachers and parents may bring positive changes in these things.

Summary and Analysis:

This chapter outlines the academic life of the students studying in Ashram schools and their interactions with teachers in various situations. The problems of students both academic and residential, are analysed with the help of responses of various categories of respondents and the quantified field data. An attempt is being made here as in other chapters to strike a balance between quantitative and qualitative data from the field. Importance is given to get cross sectional views on several issues. As part of academic life analysis, we have also focussed on the extra-curricular activities, leisure time activities of the respondents to give a holistic picture of students' life in Ashram schools.

As presented earlier in this chapter, students studying in Ashram high schools find the syllabus as vast and difficult to manage. Some of them pointed out that the teachers do not take any special care of them. Moreover, the style of teaching also observed to be very formal, and at a higher level than the students' comprehension. Further
students have a weak academic foundation during their primary and upper primary levels of schooling. Students studying in these schools have also opined that the teachers do not encourage them to ask doubts and for clarification (refer cases: S6, S7). Most of these are due to the preconceived notions and the attitudes of teachers with respect to the students’ ethnic background and intellectual capabilities. This is explicitly shown by some teachers who do not treat the students well (refer cases: S31 and S32).

It is also observed that there is a socio-cultural gap in the interaction between students and teachers on one hand and parents and teachers on the other hand. Further, it is observed that the teachers lack motivation as they are not showing the required or expected level of initiative and interest to strengthen the system. It is also observed that the Ashram schools are not providing congenial atmosphere where the students can show their exceptional skills, like sports and cultural activities.

The above discussion clearly shows that the teachers working in Ashram schools do not accept or approve the behaviour of the tribal students. The main reason for this could be the normative background of the teachers which is far different from the normative background of the tribal students. These differences in perceptions and attitudes are mainly due to their differential socio-cultural background. Most of the teachers are urban educated and belong to non-
tribal-middle class, socio-economic background. Their middle class norms and values related to social behaviour often seem to be contrary to the tribals' behaviour. This makes them feel that the tribals are indisciplined with loose morals (refer cases S9, S11, S12, S13). The teachers consider the tribals as background people. Further, many teachers opine that the tribal students lack mental capabilities and they are studying for the 'free' facilities provided by the Government (refer case S9). Teachers working in Ashram schools, with all the above preconceived notions and opinions on tribal students' behaviour, impose their urban-middle class behavioural norms through the hidden curriculum. Teachers' assessment of students' capabilities and character are observed to be determined by the students' cultural capital.

Further, the students feel that the school and the teachers are not encouraging their cultural arts and skills (refer cases: S35 and S37). This indicates a cultural gap and a psychological distance between tribal students on the one hand and non-tribal-urban educated school teachers on the other hand. It is observed that similar cultural gap and psychological distance exist between parents and teachers, due to which, the interaction between these two groups is not at the expected level (refer cases: S1, S18, S19, S33 and S38).

Lastly, it appears that there exists mutual mistrust
and inconsistency in role expectations of one category of respondents against another. Each one blames the other for all the maladies. The teachers are critical about their students (refer cases: S2, S5, S8, S9, S11, S12, S13, S28, S33). The students are not satisfied and are critical about their teachers (refer cases: S6, S7, S25, S26, S31, S32, S35 and S37). The officials and teachers seem to have contradictory perceptions of the problems and blame each other for the state of affairs (refer cases: S20, S21, S27, S28, S30, S33, S34, S36).

The discussion in this chapter reveals that there exists 'mutual distrusts' among various groups of respondents i.e. teachers, students, officials and parents which hinders the betterment of the system.