

An Abode For Homeless Youth

Bhanu Kumar Kopar Khairane

IT was a compact function in the last week of December 2001 at the Tarun Sadan hostel for youth, Kopar Khairane. Prateek Indwar, vice president, GE Capital Services and K Murali, director, Human Resources, India Region, GE, had come to present a sizeable donation to Vinimay Trust. Mr Murali praised the trust for making a difference to the lives of 25 people.

Vinimay Trust was started in 1978 with no clear goals. In 1980 they re-enacted the Dandi march, as it was the golden jubilee year of the march. After registration in 1989 as a charitable Trust, they got a new role of supplementing the work of the Children Welfare Institutions by affording tutorial assistance and arranging educational trips, picnics for the underprivileged children and running a play centre for the kids. Community interaction was made possible by these outings and the Bal Mahotsav, a sports and cultural meet.

The trust, sensitive to the needs of the youth, opened a transitional hostel for underprivileged youth in 1999 at Kopar Khairane. The youth at 18 have to leave the welfare centres. They felt that 18 is still an impressionable age and too

early for them to face the world. They are vulnerable in every sense of the word, and hence all the efforts of Childrens' Welfare Institution goes waste, if they go astray.

By providing a roof over their heads, Vinimay helps them grow into well-groomed full-fledged young adults. The hostel is a launching pad for the boys, preparing them for life, providing guidance, assistance for further education,



personality development, job placement, loans for acquiring a dwelling place.

The hostel, managed by a superintendent, is spick and span with simple hygienic living conditions. The ruling principles are democratic. It is all family-like, consultative system. Individualised attention is given with a major thrust on earning and saving. Most of the inmates, after

becoming self-supporting, become role models for the next generation of children. Interestingly, most of them turn out to become volunteers of Vinimay.

And that is what our society needs today. There is a large potential of voluntary manpower to be tapped and harnessed for doing good work. Institutions, small groups and individuals can help build a just and loving society.

M Venkatraman, who is like a father figure to the inmates at Tarun Sadan, says that social work is manpower intensive and direct interaction with the children and youth alone yields best results. While helping there should be no

condescension but participation. Vinimay is exchange, giving something and receiving something in return. Understanding social work in this perspective alone will bestow the necessary quality of humility in the social worker.

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