

January 2007 Newsletter:

Starting from scratch and thereafter developed brick by brick, Parivaar Ashram is being continuously developed and moulded into a unique institution transforming the lives of each of its inmates (children and adults) and acting as a training ground of highly dedicated life-committed Seva-vratis for taking up multifarious service activities in future. There are 215 children and 25 resident Seva-Vratis as on 31st Dec,'06 and 40 other day-time workers.

Total no of children (as on 31st December)

Male	Female	Total
117	98	215

Total Children

School Going	85
Non – School (trained to be admitted into School)	130
	215

Parivaar has always been following this principle - A child before being admitted into Parivaar may have been an destitute child, but after being admitted into Parivaar the child is no more so. Thus, the first thing done is to de-tag and de-label this unhappy epithet of 'homeless child'. As the children before being admitted to Parivaar have had no exposure to education, they have to be started right from the alphabet and numerals level. Because of this, the first year is spent in bridging this gap through Fast Learning. Once that is done the child can be admitted into a Class that corresponds to his/her age. For example a 10 year old child after the One-Year Fast Learning can be straight admitted to either Class 4 or 5 straight. Till now we have been admitting our children into Day Schools outside where we have always maintained that each child should get admission by his own merit. Respect and self-esteem has to be earned by one's own merit and achievements and our children do so by getting admission in good schools on the basis of their merit and maintain it by their continuous good performance in their schools.

### **Excellence is the Central Theme**

Parivaar's vision of changing lives of our children is built on the theme of positivity, of infinite possibilities that are stored within each child. In our communication with external world we have therefore never focused on what the backgrounds of the children were, or never portrayed the miseries in which the children were or continued to be in had they not been in Parivaar.

**We feel we have achieved nothing of consequence by merely admitting the child to Parivaar. That was just the beginning. What we will now do with these children is all-**

## **important.**

Thus our articulation is not about 'salvation from the miserable past' but the 'infinite possibilities of the bright future'. We are therefore in the grand work of sculpting lives, lives that will excel in whatever they do, and bring out the best in whatever they do. Thus, 'Excellence' is the theme at Parivaar. The Central Theme of Swami Vivekananda was 'Divinity of Man' and in Parivaar this is the foundation on which all our activities are based. Each child and Sevak at Parivaar is essentially divine and the grand task is to continuously manifest this divinity in all activities and movements of life. Real progress for any individual can be measured only in these terms.

### **Education Excellence at Parivaar**

We have a team of 22 teachers who work very hard with each child so that each child at Parivaar can continue to excel and learn to bring out the best from within themselves. The teachers and other resident elders note each day's academic progress for each child, and it is ensured that they perform and master whatever is taught in the outside schools they attend that very day. During the last week in each month, detailed tests are taken for all subjects for all the children. This helps in continuous evaluation and correction resulting in improvement. Our Education team coordinated and monitored by our tremendously dynamic Sevavratini Nimaida has done an excellent job along with Resident Sevak Baidyanathda to monitor each child's progress and ensure that the teachers deliver their best.

### **Character-building and Value Education**

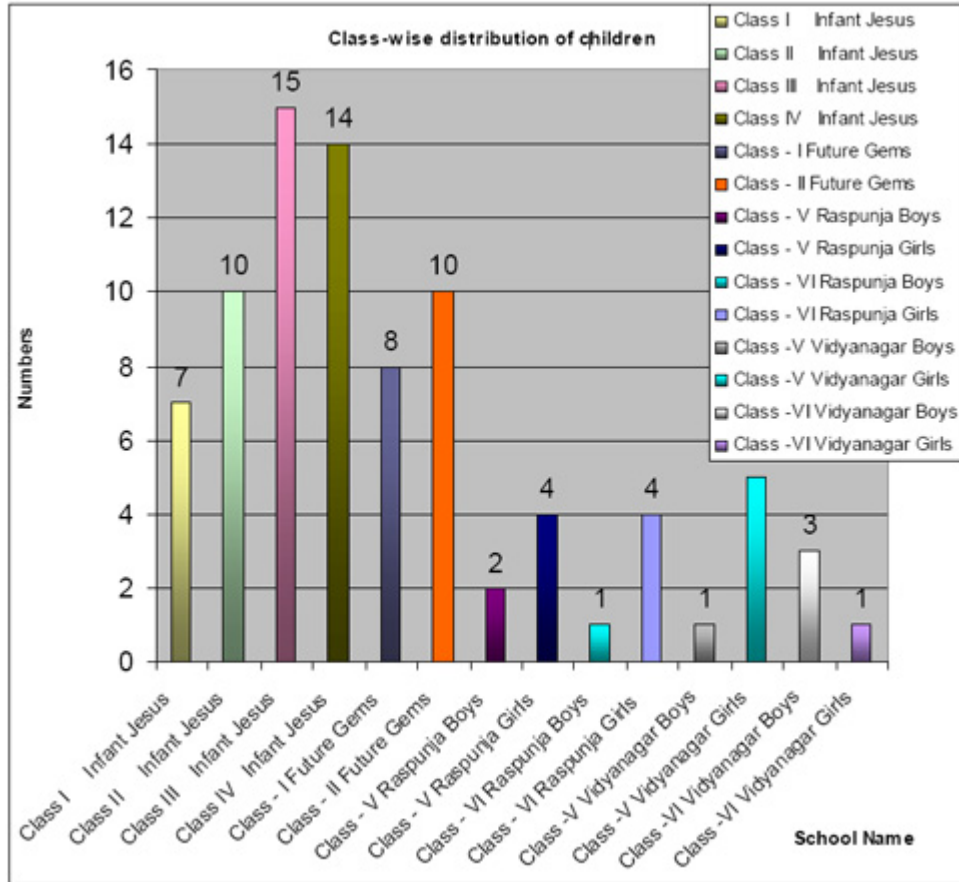
The life-vein of Value Education is personal constant, co-living, and intimate relationship between elders / teachers and students – Guru-Shishya Sang. Without imbibing from the personal life of a teacher, character-building ideas can never be imbibed. Children in Parivaar are being moulded right from their childhood with elders who are living examples of higher ideals. Certain principles that we follow in child development are based on Swami Vivekananda's ideal of 'Manifestation of Divinity Already in Man':

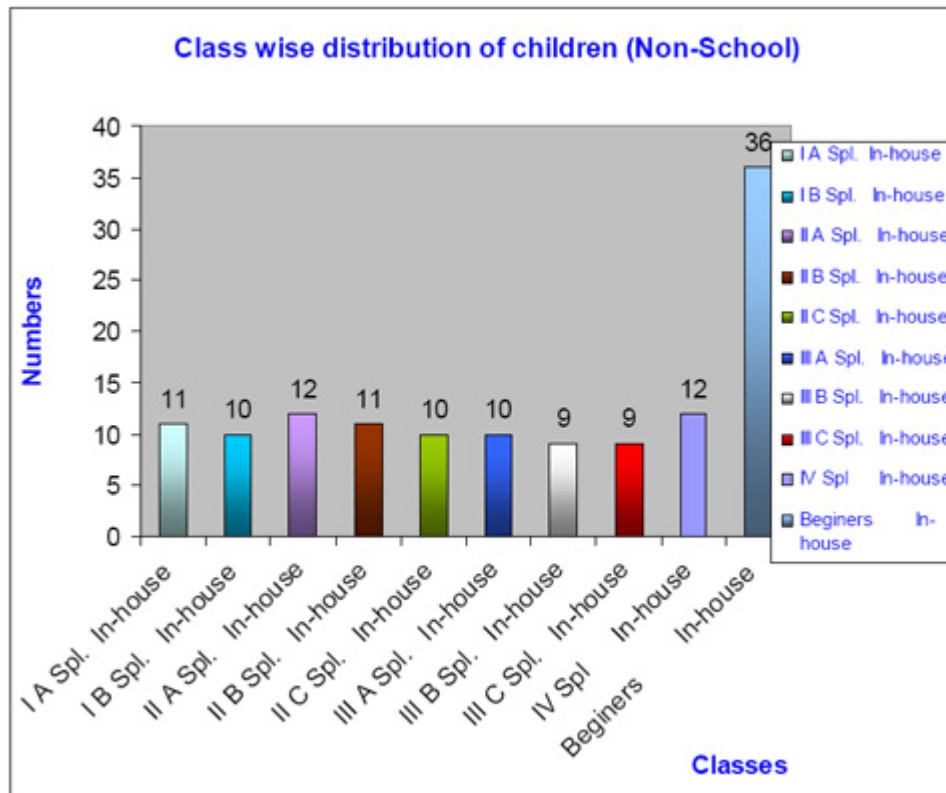
1. Cultural training and grooming should point out to the infinite self within each person, and not pander to the tastes of Deha-bodha or the 'lower self' in man.
2. It should be continuously ingrained within each child / student that each human being has infinite divine nature and the ideal of life is to manifest this in each movement/activity of life. Therefore inward education which can be termed as value-education or character-building has to be imparted by persons of sterling character who are embodiments of spirit of dedication, selflessness and service, and who have infinite capacity of giving love that strengthens one from within.
3. Every child / student should be taught and made to imbibe that Infinite Power is latent in each one of them, the difference is only in manifestation. The power manifests as soon as it gets the opportunity, right place and time. This is what is called 'Shraddha' and has to be invoked within all.
4. The education which does not help in individual to equip himself for struggle for life, does not arm a person for facing with strength and equanimity the crises in life is not worth the name.

## Various Moods – Pictures









## Health, Diet, Hygiene and Medical System

The diet at Parivaar for all inmates has been set by specialists dieticians, making the diet for all the members of the community very healthy and balanced. Food is cooked in the spirit of giving 'Bhoga' to the Lord and partaken by all the inmates (children as well as elders) as Prasada. Meals are the same for all the inmates of the Ashram (children and Seva-vratis). The work of the kitchen starts from 5 AM in the morning and finishes at 11 PM (after washing and cleaning of the kitchen and dining hall). Our Kitchen team led by Dining Operations Supervisor Papanda has been putting this tremendous hard work day in and day out, all 365 days.

We have aqua-guards in each Bal-Sadan. So the water consumed by all the inmates is Aqua-Guard filtered. All plates, dishes are washed twice, first manually and then collectively in hot boiling water. These measures largely take care of many potential water-borne ailments. Special emphasis is given to hygiene and cleanliness.

We have doctors visiting every week. Two 24 hour Resident Nurses (Reenadi and registered medical practitioner Pranabda) live at the Ashram as residential members of the community thus ensuring 24 hour medical care. Their task is to administer routine drugs like those for cold, cough, skin infections, cuts/bruises, stomach ailments etc, do preliminary treatment while keeping under observation during fever, illness. Beyond the point till which the Resident Nurses can take care, the child is admitted to the Hospital and no risk is taken in this regard. A vehicle (Maruti Van) is stationed 24 hour at the Ashram premises and used as an Ambulance to meet any exigencies. All the members of this community, children as well as Resident Sevaks are covered under Group Insurance, and thus the hospitalization in any hospital is done cashlessly

with the Insurance Company bearing the costs. Many children and staff have undergone critical operations. Two of our children underwent plastic surgeries because they had suffered major burns in their early life (before being admitted to Parivaar). A lady worker has undergone a monthly hospitalization for life-saving operation for tumour, and more recently a senior worker was admitted and treated after Heart attack.

### **Detailed Medical Documentation for each child**

Each child at Parivaar has a separate medical file in which all periodic inspections by the doctors are documented in a standard template and maintained in that child's file. All prescriptions, hospitalization documents, ailment histories, allergies / susceptibilities are also documented and appended in this file. Thus, a continuous health and medical history of each child and inmate is being continuously developed and recorded. As a result, any new doctor can be consulted and just by going through the respective Health File he gets the exact snapshot of the health status and health history of the child.

### **Parivaar Ashram Infrastructure Update**

Parivaar has been continuously developing Infrastructure after purchasing land at Village Barkalikapur, P.O. Bakhrahat, 30 Km from Kolkata city. After operating for more than a year on the rented premises at Bonogram on the outskirts of Kolkata, we purchased land in an interior area (off the nearest motorable road) at village Barkalikapur near Bakhrahat in 24 Parganas (South) district.

Land worth Rs 34 Lacs has been purchased in 3 phases, first in December '04, then in Jan '06, and most recently in Jan '07. From Jan '05 construction work has continuously been in progress and suitable infrastructure being developed. Hitherto unknown, unrelated persons as if in a divinely schemed way, have become bonded into ties of love with Parivaar and contributed to this 'labour of love' in diverse ways.



### **Infrastructure Work accomplished till now**

**Three Bal Sadans (each 1030 sq. ft. in area )**having a Living Hall, Study Hall, Caretaker's room, store, bathrooms and toilets. Cost incurred 3.75 Lacs x 3 = Rs. 11.25 Lacs.

**7000 Sq. Ft Residential Block for children** : This new Bal-Sadan Block is now providing accommodation to 100 children and has been built at a cost of Rs. 26 Lacs. It is divided into 8 halls (4 Study halls and 4 Bed-halls) and has 32 toilets / bathrooms within it.

**Two-Storeyed Balika Sadan No. 1** : (2300 sq. ft in area ) has been completed and is currently housing 30 girls. Its costs were Rs 8 Lacs.

**Two-Storeyed Balika Sadan No. 2**: (2300 sq. ft. in area) has been completed and is currently housing 30 girls. Its costs were Rs 8 Lacs.

**Annapurna Bhavan ( 1825 sq. ft. in area )**. It is composed of spacious dinning arena for more than 200 diners, Kitchen arena, and Kitchen & accessories store. Cost incurred = Rs. 6.5 Lacs.

**Prathana Bhavan** [ 1650 sq. ft. in area ] Cost incurred = 5.7 Lacs.

**Sevak Sadan (Double-Storeyed)**: Single rooms for resident gent workers. Cost incurred = 8 Lacs.

**Guest Rooms (2 rooms with toilets – total 750 sq. ft. in area)**. Cost incurred : Rs 2.75 Lacs.

**Education Complex** (2500 sq Ft. in area) : It has 8 spacious Class rooms, boys' toilets, girls toilets, teachers' toilets (separate for ladies and gents) and has cost Rs 11 Lacs.

**Computer Laboratory** : The area of this Hall is 1800 sq. ft. and has been constructed at a cost of Rs 7 Lacs. 20 PCs in good condition were donated by Cognizant technology Solutions and 10 machines by Tata Consultancy Services.

**Multi-Activity Hall** : Its area is 1600 Sq. ft. and has been built with a cost of Rs 6 Lacs.

**6 Room Block serving as Sick-Bay, Medical Section and for Resident Sister-Workers of the Ashram.** Costs Rs 4 Lacs.

**Cost of Land Premises : Rs 28 Lacs.**

**Total Expenditures in Construction till date: Rs 103.20 Lacs.**

### **North India Tour and Durga Puja**

29th September to 2nd October was the festival of Durga Puja, the main annual festival in Bengal. The eldest group of children who are in Class 4,5,6 (age-group of 9 to 12) went for a 11 day excursion to Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur-Sikri, Mathura and Vrindaban. The tour party had 25 children and 6 elders. This Annual Tour is the first execution towards the idea of 'Bharat-Parikrama' in which Parivaar children will be taken to different parts of our country, to get a glimpse of our vast country, and to develop this Deshatmabodha (oneness with the nation and everyone in our country). This will give an exposure towards outward differences in ways of living, food-habits, languages of our country, but orient them towards capturing the oneness of the inward spirit of the nation, the 'Amar Bharat', the immortal spirit behind the outer body of the nation which has sustained it for the last thousands of years and made it 'ever-aging but never old'.

The other children who were residing at Parivaar, went to local excursions on all 4 days of the festival. On the first day they went to Science City (probably the premier Science Amusement



Park in whole of India), Alipore Zoo, Indian Museum, and Botanical Gardens, and also visits to various Puja Pandals in Kolkata city.

**North India Trip pictures**



## **Durga Puja time – Local Excursions (Science City, Nicco Park etc)**



## **Annual Swami Vivekananda Seva Prashasti Awards**

On 13th December, Annual Swami Vivekananda Seva Prashasti Awards were given to 13 Sevavratīs. The function like most of our functions was an internal function with only Parivaar children, Sevavratīs, other close well-wishers.

The following persons were honoured for their continued dedicated service:

1. ‘Spirit of Parivaar Award’ was given to Shri Nimai Saha and Shri Pulak Banerjee for being embodiment of the ideals of Parivaar and also being an inspiring example to all other Sevavratīs.
2. Best All-round Performance Award to Shri Baidynath Maity
3. Best Children caretaking (girls) to Sandhya-di (Ms Sandhya Nag).
4. Best Children Caretaking (boys) to Shri Gopal Das.
5. Best Teacher Award to Ms. Moumita Mukherjee.
6. Best Office-work Award to Shri Somshankar Dutta.
7. Special Service Awards were given to Shri Soumen Sinha, Shri Nirmal Modal, and Shri Tahir Sheikh.

8. Best Housekeeping Awards were given to Shri Sandeep Samanta, Smt. Namita Ghnata, and Smt. Kanak Panja.



**Pulakda receiving ‘Spirit of Parivaar Award’ and Nimaida speaking after receiving ‘Spirit of Parivaar’**



**Sandhyadi speaking after receiving ‘Best Girls Caretaking Award’ and Baidyanath da receiving ‘Best Allround Performance Award’**



**Gopalda speaking after receiving ‘Best Boys Caretaking Award’ and Somshankarda receiving ‘Best Officework Award’**

**Parivaar children win Inter-School Drama Competition at Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda’s Ancestral Home and Cultural centre.**

On 13rd January, a team of Parivaar children staged their play ‘Amjader Ma’ (Amjad’s Mother) at the Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda’s Ancestral Home and Cultural centre. The Drama Competition was a part of a 4 day celebration at the Center on the occasion of Swamiji’s Birthday. In all 8 teams had participated which included teams from top Kolkata schools like Don Bosco etc. The age of students from other teams was also much higher (about 15-16). Our team had 6 characters and they were all students of Class 5 and 6 (age about 12-13). But their tremendous performance won them the Best Drama Award in Bengali Drama Category (English

Drama Category was also there). A more tremendous achievement was that from amongst 80 actors from all 8 teams that staged their plays, Parivaar child Krishna Sardar on the Best Actor Award for his role of Amjad. The play was based on the divine love that Holy Mother Sarada Devi had for the ghastly dacoit and murderer Amjad and how Amjad's life got blessed as a result. The Play was directed by our Office Administrative staff Shri Somshankar Dutta who is well accomplished as a playwright and director. Our Class 6 student Ritu Das had played the role of Sarada Devi.



**Parivaar team receiving Best Drama Award and Krishna Sardar in his role of Amjad which won him Best Actor**



**Sanjana and Ritu (in role of Sarada Devi)**



**Shubham and Santosh in the play**



**Krishna showing his 'Best Actor' prize**

### **Other Important Occasions**

Other celebrations like Diwali, Christmas, and Id-ul-Fitar and Saraswati Puja were also observed along with national occasions like Independence Day, Republic Day. On all these occasions, elaborate discourses are always given to all inmates of the Parivaar community, in order to put forth the deeper meaning behind these festivals so that learnings from these can be character-building tools and that festivals do not get reduced to only fun and play.







## **Sports Events**

One important feature in Parivaar is the same life that elders as well as children at Parivaar inmates have and participation of both elders and children in all facets of Parivaar life. Sports are a regular activity and conducted systematically at Parivaar. An acre of land (about 40,000 sq ft) (Worth Rs 7.5 Lacs has been recently acquired and is been used as a cricket field. Regular competitive matches are held between Parivaar team and teams from local youth clubs from adjoining areas. In Parivaar team, a mix of our young workers and children play. Almost every week there is a match. Practice is also held for upping the performance in these matches.

Volleyball court has also started in Parivaar Ashram and each evening volleyball is played (again a mix of children and elders). A separate field for girl children and a play-garden comprising swings, slips, see-saws etc has also come which is relished mostly by girl children and other smaller children.

Also, a couple of table-tennis tables have been placed at the Multi-Activity Hall. Children are being coached in this game too.



## Monks Visits

As a practice, at least once in two months, there is a visit of monks from the Ramakrishna Order to Parivaar Ashram to further guide and energise our Seva-vratīs in Mantra of ‘Tyaga and Seva’ (Renunciation and Service).

On 22nd September, Swami Sivapradananda, editor of the Ramakrishna Order’s Bengali Journal Udbodhan, visited Parivaar. On 13rd October was the visit of Swami Suparnananda, Principal of the acclaimed Ramakrishna Mission Narendrapur Residential College, on 23rd November was the visit of Swami Satyabodhananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Polytechnic at Belgharia, and on 15 December was the visit of Swami Nikhilatmananda, the Head of a very grand tribal service project conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission at Abujhmarh tribal area in Bastar, Chhattisgarh.







**Swami Sarvapriyananda**



**Swami Nikhilatmanandaji**



**Swami Sivapradananda**



### **Swami Vivekananda's Birthday (12th January)**

On 12th January, one of the most important days in Parivaar's Annual Calendar was observed – Swami Vivekananda's Birthday. For about 90 minutes discourses, were given on the ever-strengthening, ever-purifying, ever-igniting and lifechanging message and teachings of Swami Vivekananda, its deeper spiritual significance and practical applications. The abovementioned play "Amjader Ma" was also staged on the occasion and enjoyed by our 270 strong audience comprising children and Sevaks. Devotional



**Ritu speaking**



**Lipika speaking**



**Nimaida speaking**



**Firoz speaking**



**Rintu speaking**



**Pulakda speaking**

### **Village Service Activities**

Education Excellence Program has been taken up for 100 meritorious students from Barklikapur-Bakhrat area in the 5 Km radius of the Ashram. This will scale up considerably as a separate project thus benefiting hundreds of other students from villages. Welfare work for medical help, emergency pecuniary help, organizing sports events for village youth, and education support to the villagers in the area has continued. Hepatitis Camp in 3 rounds has been organized in which 565 persons took Hepatitis B vaccination in 3 rounds (each after a monthly interval).





## **Books and Stationery Material Distribution for Village students**

### **Some Recent Visitor Remarks**

**Shri Ashim Bhowmick (Dec '06 visit)**

**Shri Ashim Bhowmick works at Microsoft headquarters at Redmond, WA and is an IIT Bombay, IIM Calcutta (Class of '90) alumnus.**

My association with Vinayak and Parivaar began as what I call a "chance-encounter" and I count by blessings every day for the wonderful world that he has introduced me into.

When I received my first email from Vinayak it roused a bit of curiosity and it also felt good to think that a young man, an alumnus of my school, has chosen to forego the glitters of the corporate world to embrace a life of sacrifice and service. In my mind, I was prepared to see a "home" for destitute children; children, who have learnt to lead their lives in pity and through kindness of others; a holding cell for potential delinquent juveniles. "Shame on me", I said to myself, on my way out from Parivaar -- this wealth-hugger, elite and educated mind of mine could not overcome the stereo-types even now! Parivaar is a home alright, a home with parents, brothers, sisters, just like yours and mine, only magnified; a home with unconditional love, affection and concern for one another, big, small and even the tiny ones, only more contagious.

It's not an NGO in the typical sense of the word, as Vinayak rightly points out – it's what goes on in your home; as in one's own home you can't take a day off just because you feel overwhelmed with kids, neither can you confine your concerns for your children in the 9-5 work-day schedule. Same at Parivaar. Simply out It's life, 24X7 – its school, prayer, game, family dinner time, medical check-ups, listening to your child, reading before bedtime, the

goodnight kiss and all.

My trip was short-- just for a few hours. Even then, Vinayak and Nimai graciously showed me the place around – all the while a bunch of little angels, holding our hands, jumping on us, or on our laps. It's indeed heartening to see the capacity they are building up anticipating the future, judicious use of recycled building material to save cost and at the same time extreme quality control when it comes to nutrition, food and diet. It's also encouraging to see our alumni from IITs & IIMs are coming forward support this great endeavor. More than 50 dedicated workers have owned up this mission and this is their collective crusade. I am confident that this is a story that captures the theme of Hope for better society and Stronger future generation, and marked with a Promise that we will not let our children down.

### **Shri Anjan Das (Dec '06 visit)**

**Shri Anjan Das works at Microsoft headquarters at Redmond, WA and is an IIM Calcutta alumnus (Class of '97)** Parivaar has been very close to our hearts over the past few years. Last time we visited was in Jan '05 when the new Ashram was just in its initial phase of construction. Back then, most of the children were in the leased facility near Thakurpukur and the new ashram had about 25 children who had just moved there that week.

We visited Kolkata after about 2 years. Meanwhile, I did not let go of any opportunity to spread the word about the great family that is Parivaar - amongst colleagues @ Microsoft, IIM alumni and friends here in Seattle. The entire building that used to be the Home initially is now converted to the Administrative office - many visitors to the Ashram can quickly get here from anywhere in the city. We reached the Ashram in Barkalikapur in Parivaar's van with Mr. Nimai Saha (a senior member of the Ashram team who has been around from almost the beginning) in about 15-20 mins from the Administrative Building.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted with warm hugs and tender touches of the kids - this was the most memorable experience of our last visit, so we were aching to get the same warmth again. We had tried to capture as many happy faces I could last time - many of them had grown up and were in upper classes in school. The amount of progress made in the Ashram's construction in such a short span was amazing. When we last saw it there was just one old building with an adjoining kitchen at this site. At that time, Vinayak had shown us the blueprints of the planned construction. Now there are several multistoreyed Sadans for boys and girls, a nice playground, playgarden, separate kitchen and Dining Hall (Annapurna Bhavan), Prayer Hall, Sevak Sadan, and Guest accommodation - all well laid out in a functional plan.

The staff has expanded to handle the growing scale of operations and infrastructure. We did see almost the entire initial staff still engaged and committed to the Parivaar's mission. Its very well organized with resident full-time house- brothers and house-sisters residing with the children in each Bal-Sadan or Balika-Sadan. There are resident and visiting teachers who teach in the Ashram classrooms (in the same setup as a regular school). We spent several hours going to each room, each floor and each Sadan in the Ashram, meeting the kids and the house brothers and sisters. The day starts at 5:30 am or earlier for most kids and the Sevaks. They get ready for school and have breakfast in the dining hall. There is a large playground, a playgarden full of

swings, see-saws etc. and several open areas for the kids. After the evening snack, all the inmates (kids and Sevaks) assemble at the Prayer Hall. There is a library, games room (with table tennis tables), caroms, and other indoor games, and a computer lab onsite too. The Ashram is gated, fenced and well-lit and feels very secure even at night. Vinayak da (everyone's favorite role model) and several resident members of the Sevak team are onsite with the children day and night all 365 days. The ideals of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda can be experienced within the entire premises and within children and workers as the keynote. Vinayak and other senior Sevaks have done an awesome job in instilling higher human values in all of them.

We felt the sadness creep in when we had to say goodbye to the kids and stop answering their cute questions about how far we stay and why is night for us during their daytime! Till we meet them again next time - we'll carry their warmth in our hearts. We'd like encourage all of you who have been working for the worthy cause that is Parivaar, to visit the Ashram as often as you can - there is hardly a better way to energize yourself than this.

### **Lalit Kumar and Sreedevi Menon (Nov '06 visit)**

**(Lalit and Sreedevi are based in Austin, Texas and work in Dell Corporation.)**

Nov 2006 was our second visit to Parivaar and each time we stay there, it is an extremely energizing and a humbling experience.

With construction almost complete now at the Ashram premises, Parivaar looked more settled than in Dec '05 when construction was in full swing. It was comforting to see the familiar faces around and a whole many new ones. The kids were at first shy, then inquisitive, at all times friendly to see us again and finally extremely sad to see us go. It was also pleasing to see most the older kids start to take a leadership ("dada"/"didi" or elder brother/sister) role and serve as role models for the younger ones.

Any place with 220+ children can never sit quiet. And so is the case with Parivaar. It is a place of intense activity – kids are on the move most of the daytime, innovative games are being played (this being the kite-flying season added extra excitement), the kitchen is full with activity, someone or the other is crying and complaining against some other child, and being comforted by others, one can hear the chorus of multiplication tables and alphabets being repeated aloud in classrooms etc.

If there is one scene that will forever be etched in my memory, it is that of the newly constructed playgarden. It is modest in area by any standards, 4 swings, couple of slides, and see-saws. Now imagine those swings and slides being swamped by 50-60 kids at the same time and the air filled with incessant, lively chatter of kids giggling, shouting, crying and talking. That is a typical scene at the playgarden every evening. Kids discover happiness in the simplest of activities – be it running after one-another, flying kites, feeding pigeons, jumping into a pond to retrieve lost cricket balls etc.; and you wonder how addicted have we become to the so-called sophistication of the world – the latest video games, the internet, movies etc.

Living with and talking to the Sevaks of Parivaar and listening to their extraordinary stories of Parivaar life and the struggles they put in, is a humbling experience in itself. Being a parent to 200+ children everyday can be exhausting, yet all the Sevaks I met with enjoy the experience and in fact felt blessed to have the opportunity to transform the lives of each one the kids. These Sevaks truly embody Swami Vivekananda's ideal of "Selfless Service to the Divine in Man".

The intensity, commitment and devotion of the Parivaar Sevaks, the smiling faces of our children, the physical transformation of the place in just a year - exude an energy that is elevating – an energy borne out of positivity and hope. This is the energy that sustains us till the time we can come back next year to renew ourselves.

**Prof. Rajesh Chakrabarti (August '06 visit)**

**Alumnus, IIM Ahmedabad (Class of '93) Currently Professor of Finance at Georgia Tech, Atlanta (USA) I**

I had first visited Parivaar in 2004. At that time it was it was a lively hive of happy children, about 50 at that time, and a few workers housed in a simple but clean three-story rented building. I had the opportunity of visiting Parivaar again in August 2006 and was amazed with the changes. In addition to the old building, Parivaar was in the process of creating its own campus, in the village of Barkalikapur. In the simple and scenic settings of rural Bengal, around a little pond, ceaseless activity was on, with buildings sprouting up all around. Residential quarters, a library, a health center (not just for Parivaar inmates but for the villagers too), and a computer center were all coming up together. The number of children had increased manifold since my last visit and I met several of them studying in small groups under the supervision and guidance of a much larger Parivaar staff. Clearly, Parivaar had blossomed from a courageous experiment to a major force and a trend-setter in child-care, education and overall development. While the extent of changes and the rate of growth were nothing less than daunting, as I sat down for lunch with the children and Vinayak like I did during my earlier visit, I realized that the spirit of Parivaar had remained unchanged. Rapid growth and the administrative challenges that such growth entails, have failed to dampen the spirit of familial love that I had found at Parivaar a couple of years ago. The children were just as naturally inquisitive, friendly and uninhibited as I had found them to be the first time around. Vinayak and all the workers know each child with extraordinary intimacy, and as a visitor it was clear to me that I was once again visiting a "Parivaar" rather than an institution. Parivaar has grown at an exponential rate but not at the cost of the love that bind the hundreds of little ones as well as workers. I was honored to visit this Parivaar and look forward to returning to it. In some strange way, I feel, I too am part of this magic family.

**Shri Amit Jain (Jan '07 visit)**

**Shri Amit Jain is an IIM Calcutta Alumnus (Class of '01) and works for Credit Suisse at Singapore**

Jan 12th was my second visit to Parivaar and first to the new Parivaar Ashram at Barkalikapur village. I remember visiting the place in December of '04 when Vinayak and his team were in

the process of sourcing funds to acquire the land and hearing his team talk about the plans that they had for the place. Today, close to 220 kids have found a home in Parivaar's new Ashram. Parivaar is also home to Parivaar Seva-vratis (as the men and women who live and work at the Ashram are called) and the full time and part time staff makes it an almost 60 people strong, dedicated and extremely committed community.

Managing a child is a challenge for most new parents so it's something of a miracle how Parivaar team is able to manage these 220 odd kids and is still able to provide the personal attention that a kid would get anywhere else. The comprehensive planning that has been put in place at the Parivaar Ashram is most impressive and obvious in the smallest of the tasks and the biggest of plans, from personal and collective hygiene, to meal timing and ensuring proper nutritional diet in the form of regular snacks and meals, to spiritual and formal education, physical well being, extensive medical coverage in the form of regular check ups, vaccinations, doctor visits, instituting group insurance to provide comprehensive medical coverage for all inmates and maintaining in-house full time nurses to take care of routine health issues and round the clock exigencies. A 40 KVA Generator ensures illumination and power supply round the clock, thus ensuring safety level of little kids.

The wood that has been sourced for making furniture, doors and windows all around comes from old buildings being demolished in the city. It is renovated and put to use and none can name difference in quality as well appearance after that. This exercise ensures a cost saving of more than 50-60% over regular priced wood and has saved Lacs of Rupees in building the new infrastructure.

Having an institution nestled in a village brings its own sets of problems in terms of infrastructure and to this end Parivaar's team has been very successful in being able to plan things from scratch like putting together an intuitive, low cost waste disposal system (both for liquid and solid waste) to engaging the local community to help develop facilities like improving road infrastructure. Besides its core Residential Institution at Parivaar Ashram, Parivaar acts as a guardian and prime well-wisher of the villages nearby and not many know of its Education Excellence Program for 100+ village children to increase education excellence level in the region and substantially reduce the school drop out rate in the region.

Challenges are there always, the most important factor in the growth function of Parivaar being finding the dedicated workers who are willing to commit their years to the ideal of Seva and shaping up the lives of the Parivaar children. There are other no less daunting responsibilities like ensuring the right values to be instilled as children grow older, and continuously ensuring that there's always enough resources for the children to carry them right through to college and professional lines.

To me these responsibilities and tasks ahead appeared tough, in fact mind boggling in a way, but when you speak to the Parivaar team, you see hope. They know their work is not easy, but they know that is the reason why they are there - to accomplish difficult work. And seeing Parivaar, I too know for certain, they will get there and keep on marching ahead to newer milestones.