

With Regard to Re-Opening of Schools in India.

These days we are all with worry and pain constantly speculate about when the schools will re-open and that our orphanage will start functioning as a regular orphanage with children running around, laughing, playing, joking and going to school as usual.

A) Regulation From the Government:

Our first worry is with regard to the government regulation and the behaviour of the enforcement authorities. We worry a lot about what kind of guidelines and regulations the government is going to promulgate with regard to orphanage functioning. We expect detailed guidelines with regard to space, infrastructure such as toilets, cottage facilities and medical facilities etc. We also expect rigorous guidelines with regard to staff structure, food provision and health care. In addition to all these there will be a big demand of maintaining several records. I am foreseeing that these guidelines and regulations will be aggressively implemented by the government authorities and they will also frequently visit and cause us lot of problems. I am also expecting that these demands will escalate our orphanage budget and cost wise our orphanage running cost will increase multi fold. Anyway we have already started to paint and repair and maintain all our buildings. We are also planning to create additional space for our children to move around and play etc.

B) With Regard to the School:

There are many questions remain unanswered with regard to school reopening and functioning. When they will re-open? What kind of social distance based class room arrangement they will make? What kind of health care facilities they will provide? For example now when a child fall sick they immediately call us to come and pick up the child. But with regard to present scenario of covid-19 the school needs to provide atleast the primary health care before we can reach the child!!!

In addition the big question is whether all the classes will commence at the same time or phase wise classes will be started? Whether all the classes will held simultaneously or they will divide the school schedule into two sessions where some classes function in the morning and some others in the afternoon. Transporting our children from our orphanage to school by bus going to be another area of concern for us. What kind of seating arrangement the government is going to demand regarding our children transport vehicles. This also will have cost consequences. We are also worried about what kind of impact these decisions will have upon our orphanages. As of today we are very sure that the school expenses will also escalate multiple times which will bring upon a cost escalation factor upon our orphanages.

C) With Regard to Children's Academic Performance:

Few days back the government announced that the 12th standard children who could not write the last final exam were to appear for that exam in order to release the final exam results. As you know this exam result is very crucial for them to advance to the college studies. 30,000 +2 students missed their exams but only 175 school children wrote the exams. This shows that many children lost interest in academic studies. The children's response to re-opening of the schools will be another challenge we may have to face. Many children naturally may like to avoid schooling. Specially for primary school children back to school after six or seven months gap will be a big challenge. From a very unstructured free life to a structured discipline life will cause lot of problems to the children as well as to our orphanage staff. We need to handle this issue delicately. For the adolescent teen age girls to receive learning and back to a more discipline life is also going to be a difficult experience.

However we from our side are preparing our staff to handle these forth coming problems with care and concern. We are also constantly advising the girls inside our orphanage campus now as well as children at home that they should already start thinking about school and draw up a time table and try to follow the same.

D) With Regard to Learning Skills:

In our educational system memorising play a very important role. Poem memorising, essay memorizing, theory memorising etc play a very crucial role in our exam system. In all our text books memory portions if we calculate will fill up almost 70% of the text. After gap of six months re-awakening the memory capabilities will be a very big challenge. This is why during these holidays once again we are insisting all our children memorise atleast some portion everyday and share it by video to us. So that we can correct them on the phone. For the children who are in our orphanage we are already organizing classes by dividing them into groups and designating different staff for each group. Which staff to teach them and to give them memory exercises?

E) School Academic Final Exam Question:

As of this year all the children were declared passed and automatically moved to the next class. Many of our own children taking this as presides, ask whether this automatic pass policy will also continue next year. The children want and desire to move on to next class without any exams. Even some of our children were saying that it will be good that every year we have some health problems. So that they can automatically move on to the next class without facing hard work of writing the annual exams. This I foresee can cause children to expect easy life with regard to their studies. We are trying to explain to all our children that this year's automatic pass is due to an extraordinary situation of pandemic covid-19 spread. The children should be desire to work hard next year to ensure their academic pass.

F) Episodic Memory:

All human beings will have a lasting episodic memory and it is all the more will have serious consequences on the children. These pandemic episodic memory will definitely have a lasting impact on all our children of this generation. For almost seven months children were kept at home not allowed to go out and to play outside and to meet their friends and hang around. This is indeed very strange for the children to understand. All that children hear from parents and from media, television is how many are covid-19 infected today, how many have died, how many have been hospitalized etc. Many children really wonder when the schools will re-open and when they will get back to their regular life. Recent survey report from Kerala gives us an alarming information. Within last three months sixty six children committed suicide in Kerala. This gives us a glimpse of what emotional turmoil the children go through. This pandemic episodic memory will take long time to diminish and will have a very lasting impact on all our children especially in our orphanages. We are already preparing ourselves to handle this fear psychosis that will continue to haunt our children. We are preparing ourselves to train the children to face this reality and come out of the painful memories.

G) Medical Requirements: I am sure the government is going to come out with strict regulation with regard to medical facilities and health care policies. We are really worried what will happen if any of our children get infected with covid-19. In spite of all our efforts to keep the place clean, disinfected and try to ask them to maintain social distance still they can bring the infection from the schools. In this case if one child gets infected it can spread like wild fire to the other children. We keep our finger crossed and hope that the covid-19 infection is brought to zero level before the schools re-open.

H) Conclusion:

As we narrate the above realities, apprehensions and questions, we also hope that our authorities will develop a well thought out plan for re-opening of the schools. We from our side are making all possible preparations.

Yours Fraternally in Christ

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