



Ancient Knowledge, Modern Relevance: The Veda Pathasala Experience

TUMMALAKUNTA, TIRUPATI DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

Deeksha – Centre for Learning and Action
HYDERABAD



Divi's Laboratories Ltd.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT OF DIVI'S SUPPORT

Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Veda Pathasala, Tirupati District,

Andhra Pradesh

A CSR INITIATIVE OF DIVI'S

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Report Prepared by

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REVITALISING VEDIC EDUCATION

PREFACE

In ancient Indian culture, training in the Vedas holds significant importance, as it serves as the foundation for both spiritual and intellectual development. The Vedas, which are the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism, provide not only religious knowledge but also offer comprehensive guidance on various aspects of life, including ethics, philosophy, science, and education.

In the context of the Vedas, training (often referred to as "Vidya" or "learning") is seen as a lifelong process of acquiring wisdom, mastering self-discipline, and understanding the nature of the universe. The Vedic tradition places great emphasis on the process of learning and teaching, known as "Guru-Shishya Parampara" (the teacher-student tradition). This method involves direct transmission of knowledge from a teacher (Guru) to a student (Shishya), ensuring that the student not only understands theoretical concepts but also integrates them into practical life. The Vedic approach to education emphasizes holistic development, addressing both material and spiritual growth.

CONTEXT

Vedic education, once a central pillar of ancient Indian society, experienced a decline in the past centuries for several reasons, largely due to historical, social, and political factors. This decline was not due to a single factor but rather a combination of invasions, colonial influence, social changes, and modernization. Despite this decline, there has been a resurgence of interest in Vedic knowledge in the modern era, with efforts to revive and adapt the ancient system of learning to contemporary needs.

In this context, with a vision to revive the cultural heritage the Kalyana Venkateswara Veda Pathasala has been established in the year 2016. This institution seeks to bridge the ancient wisdom of the Vedas with modern educational frameworks, ensuring that the valuable teachings of the Vedic tradition continue to contribute to personal, social, and spiritual development.

DIVI'S CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Divi's Laboratories is a leading manufacturer of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) with a market supply to about 95 countries across the world, with its headquarters located in

Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana, India. Divi's believes and cares deeply in the Business-Society Ecosystem which forms the basis for its CSR component. Its involvement in the social welfare and philanthropic activities started within a few years of launching its business and has been actively contributing with the key objectives of enhancing quality of life and sustainable improvement in the social, economic and environmental conditions of the needy.

In this direction, the Company takes up activities for sustainable growth in the neighbourhood or partner with agencies in other places and provides support for various development activities. Some of the CSR thrust areas are *Promoting Education, Empowering women, Rural development, Preventive health care, Safe drinking water, Animal welfare, Improving the standard of living of the community.*

IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY

In alignment with the Government of India's regulations on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Divi's Laboratories has planned an Impact Assessment of its CSR initiatives. To conduct the impact study and present a comprehensive report, Divi's has entrusted the task to Deeksha – Centre for Learning and Action. Deeksha is a non-profit organization focused on child rights, adolescent issues, health, livelihoods, and gender equality, working across both urban and rural communities in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

VEDA PATHASALA

Believing that the most effective path to address and deal with the modern world complexities lies in vedic education, Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Veda Pathasala has been established. A comprehensive syllabus has been evolved integrating the relevance of vedic education to the fields of education and personal development, ensuring that these teachings remain meaningful in daily life while providing means for livelihood. However, since it is not considered as the regular formal education system there is no support from either the education department or the universities in terms of running the institution. Therefore, responding to the request of the Chairman of the trust and having faith in preserving the culture, Divi's has extended support from its CSR provision.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The fund provided by Divi's was utilised for improving infrastructure facilities in the institution, construction of individual cup-boards for students to keep their belongings safe,

and towards recurring expenses of the students. Hence, the study focuses on assessing the utility and understanding the impact of the intervention.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The objective is to study the impact of the CSR funds expended on the project and to assess the impact of the interventions on the students – their academic performance, career awareness and knowledge levels, comprehensively. The study is designed in an interactive mode to understand the perceptions of the students, teachers and the management.

METHODOLOGY

The study is designed in a participatory and interactive mode to gather perceptions of the teachers, the students and the management; and to analyze the overall impact. The following tools are used to assess the impact:

Tool 1 – Interaction with students

Tool 2 – Semi Structured Interview with teachers and the Pathasala Principal

Tool 3 – Interaction with Board members / Trustees / Administration

Tool 4 – Passive Observation

KEY OBSERVATIONS

The study team has made several observations during its visit to the Veda Pathasala and noted significant points while interacting with one of the Trustees, and the Principal of the institution. The key observations are presented in the following pages:

- Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Veda Pathasala is established in 2016 by Sri Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, who is passionate about reviving the ancient vedic education integrated with modern age knowledge through training in English language.
- It is located at Tummalagunta village near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, in the native village of the founder of the institution.
- It is an all-male training institute with current strength of 92 though the admissions were 120. Some students were absent due to health reasons and a few went to their homes to attend some family matters.

- There are students who studied in regular schools till they complete their primary or upper-primary education and later join here to pursue vedic education.
- The minimum age for admission is 7 years and the upper age limit is not yet fixed as the students generally join before they attain 15 years of age, as explained by the Principal.
- There are a very clear and extremely relevant criteria for admission in the school and are non-negotiable. The key eligibilities are voice clarity, modulation, pitch and the ability to listen, memorise and repeat the hymns. Though caste has not been a criterion the general trend has been only brahmin community seek admission for the courses offered in the pathasala.
- The course spans 12 years and is residential. Students are required to reside at the Pathasala for the entire duration, as there is no option for day scholars. An annual calendar is created to guide both students and teachers across all streams of the course. Students receive three to four weeks of annual holidays to spend time with their parents, siblings, and other family members.
- Aspiring students reach out to the Pathasala from across the state, as well as from other states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. With the growing demand for professionals in Vedas, Agamas, and Smarthas internationally, admissions are increasingly sought from various states.
- Currently, eight courses are offered, covering the four Vedas, as well as various rituals and practices in Smartha and Agama Shastras. Completing these courses opens up diverse employment opportunities, such as becoming priests (Archakas) in temples, Veda Pandits, or conducting important life rituals, including marriage, Upanayana, housewarming, death ceremonies, and more.
- Students are organized into smaller groups based on their abilities, as well as the capacity and comfort levels of the teachers, to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.
- Veda Pathasala has made it mandatory for all students to study English, recognizing the vast opportunities available both outside the state and internationally.
- Sanskrit is another key subject offered, and students who complete this course are well-equipped to pursue teaching as a profession.

- All students get enrolled in the 12-year course. However, only about 10% of them have been able to complete the entire Vedam curriculum, as it demands exceptional memory, vocal capacity, and intellectual ability to connect the teachings to life and the universe, as explained by the Principal.
- Most students progress to the level of Archakas, while another significant group successfully completes the education in Smartha. Overall, the course completion rate is above 95%.
- The Gurus (teachers) dedicate themselves fully to motivating students to achieve their highest potential. This commitment has resulted in a very low dropout rate and successful completion of various courses, even if not the full Vedic program.
- Traditionally, students from Archaka families learn the necessary skills from their elders to carry on their father's role in temple affairs. However, modern challenges have made this family-based education increasingly difficult. As a result, these families now encourage their sons to attend institutions and professionally pursue the Archaka course to ensure the continuation of their family traditions, as explained by one of the Gurus.
- SKVV Pathasala deposits a fixed amount of 2 lakhs in the bank as a fixed deposit (FD) for each student upon admission, with interest accruing each year. When the student completes the course, the amount is withdrawn and provided to the respective student. For students without a family tradition in the profession, this fund helps them support themselves as they transition to a stable livelihood.

❖ **Facilities in the Institution**

- The Pathasala was initially established in a small shed behind the Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Swamy temple. As the number of students grew, the old shed was demolished to make way for a double-storied building, but it still proved insufficient to accommodate the increasing enrolment. Recognizing the need for more space, the Chairman sought support from various sources to build a larger facility. Consequently, a new three-story building was constructed next to the existing one during the Covid period, with connecting ramps for optimal utilization of both structures.
- The funds received were not enough to provide all the necessary facilities for a residential setup. At this point, Divi's generous support played a crucial role in

completing certain civil works, creating wooden wall-mounted cupboards for individual storage, and purchasing essential equipment, as shared by a Trustee.

- The newly constructed dormitories are designed for multifunctional use. They serve as classrooms and also as spaces for performing '*Sandhya Vandanam*'. In addition, the new building includes six extra classrooms to accommodate the growing number of students.
- The kitchen has restricted access; only the cooks, teachers, and students are allowed entry, and outsiders are not permitted. Similarly, the 200-seat dining hall is exclusively for students, teachers, and cooks, so the study team was unable to visit these areas.
- Generally, students use normal water for their daily needs, but during the winter, water heaters are used. There are three large water heaters, each with a 200-liter capacity. Additionally, six washing machines are available for washing bedsheets, blankets, and the clothes of young children. However, in keeping with tradition, all students wash their own clothes.
- Yoga is an integral part of the students' daily activities, with some students achieving remarkable milestones, such as elevating themselves up to 2 feet in the air. To ensure their safety and prevent any accidents, suitable mattresses have been provided to support their practice and encourage further achievements.

❖ **Students make Informed Choice**

- At SKVVP, students are encouraged to make informed decisions about their education and personal growth. By providing them with the necessary resources, guidance, and exposure to various options, the school ensures that students can make thoughtful choices aligned with their interests, values, and aspirations. This approach empowers them to take responsibility for their learning journey and future paths.
- Despite these efforts, a few students may drop out for various reasons, but the numbers remain minimal. Unlike in typical residential schools, no students attempt to escape from the Pathasala. If a student is struggling, they communicate their difficulties to their teacher, who then discusses the situation with them to help make the right decision.
- It is noteworthy that, while the methods and formats of Vedic education may have evolved over time, its core remains grounded in the Guru-Shishya Parampara. In this system, a knowledgeable teacher (Guru) directly imparts wisdom to the students

(Shishyas), fostering a deep and respectful relationship. This bond is built on trust and fairness, with the teacher often assuming the role of a father figure, guiding the student not only in academic pursuits but also in making right decisions in life along with moral and spiritual growth.

- This enduring tradition is clearly evident in the relationship between the teacher and the student at SKVV Pathasala, where the Guru-Shishya Parampara continues to thrive, nurturing both the intellect and character of the students.
- When the student decides to withdraw from the course, his parents are informed about the decision. If, after this discussion, the student still wishes to leave, they are allowed to do so. At that point, the student will receive a certificate of course completion based on their knowledge level, and the deposited amount will also be given to them.
- Students who complete their education here leave with the skills necessary to pursue regular income-generating work, such as priests, Archakas, Purohitas, Ghanapatis, and other related roles.
- **Examination Process for Students:** Each year, in addition to regular assessments of progress, six days are designated for final exams. These exams include 6 to 12 hours of testing, covering oral, practical, and ritual performance components. Based on their results, students are promoted to the next level of the course.
- **Certification:** A certificate is issued with affiliation to SV University. The syllabus is of high quality, comparable to that of an Oriental College.
- The Annual Parents' Meeting is considered a key event and is held prior to the annual vacation. During this meeting, students have the opportunity to perform in front of their parents, showcasing their learning and achievements over the year.

❖ **The Teachers**

- The Vedic tradition places great emphasis on the process of learning and teaching, known as "*Guru-Shishya Parampara*" (the teacher-student tradition). This method involves direct transmission of knowledge from a teacher (Guru) to a student (Shishya), ensuring that the student not only understands theoretical concepts but also integrates them into practical life.
- Having a strong belief in this tradition, SKVVP follows a meticulously structured system for teacher recruitment. The appointment process is rigorous and highly

practical, lasting an entire day. This thorough approach ensures that only those who truly embody the principles of the Guru-Shishya Parampara and possess the necessary skills and knowledge are selected to guide the students.

- After a preliminary interview, the applicant must conduct both oral and practical classes with a group of students in the respective subject. Based on their performance, the selection and placement of teachers are made. Following this, students are assigned to each teacher accordingly.
- Currently, there are 12 teachers teaching all the subjects. There are exclusive teachers for English and Sanskrit subjects. All the students learn these two subjects along with other specific courses in Vedas.
- A residential facility is available for the teachers; however, the current accommodation is insufficient to house all the teachers along with their families. As part of their future plans, the management is working on the construction of a dedicated quarters complex for the teachers and is actively engaged in fundraising efforts to support this initiative.

❖ **Other personnel**

- In addition to the teachers, a senior male staff member serves as the warden, overseeing day-to-day maintenance and supporting the principal.
- A senior staff member with experience in office administration and accounts management assists with the Pathasala's administrative responsibilities.
- The school has dedicated staff for traditional cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the premises, while senior female *Aayas* assist young children with washing clothes and taking showers.
- Security guards are stationed around the clock, monitoring the premises and assisting the administration in maintaining safety and security.

❖ **Future plans**

- SKVV Pathasala receives no support from the state or central government and relies entirely on funds from individual philanthropists and corporate CSR contributions.
- The Principal mentioned that, on numerous occasions, the Chairperson had to pool personal resources to cover even routine maintenance expenses.

- Given this situation, the Chairman plans to raise a corpus fund of at least 100 crores, with the interest accrued to be used for the school's maintenance, as shared by one of the trustees.
- Recognizing the need for entrepreneurial skills in today's job market, the management intends to integrate traditional Vedic courses with modern computer skills. They are seeking support to establish smart classrooms and a computer lab, equipped with 10 to 15 computers and a dedicated instructor.
- To foster a reading habit and enhance students' knowledge, there is an urgent need for a well-equipped library that can cater to current and future demands, the administrative officer informed.

❖ **Future vision**

- To suit to the today's modern context, the education in veda pathasala needs focus on key aspects of the Vedic corpus—*mantras* (sacred chants), *brahmanas* (ritual practices), *aranyakas* (meditative teachings), and *upanishads* (philosophical insights). These teachings will facilitate a well-rounded understanding of life, fostering intellectual growth, ethical integrity, and spiritual awareness.
- While learning to recite and understand Vedic hymns is still an integral part of the curriculum, modern Pathasalas also incorporate contemporary tools and methods to make the learning process more accessible and relevant.
- In this direction, the Chairperson and the Trustees envision expanding the Veda Pathasala. The goal is to increase the number of courses offered from the current 8 to 20. This expansion will also include raising the student capacity to 500.
- The new, integrated campus will feature smart classrooms, a computer lab, and a library. Additionally, there will be a well-equipped space for yoga, a playground, a student hostel, and staff quarters.
- The campus will also include space for natural farming, where vegetables and fruits will be grown for the students' consumption. This initiative will be complemented by a dairy farm with cows to provide milk, ghee, and other dairy products for daily use. Cow dung and kitchen waste will be repurposed to create manure for the vegetable garden, fruit trees, and other crops.

- To support this, the trust has already acquired 25 acres of land near the present school building. They are now awaiting funding to turn the vision of reviving traditional culture while integrating modern practices into a reality.

VOICES

- "Divi's timely contribution played a crucial role in the survival of the Pathasala. The company's responsiveness and no-nonsense approach are highly appreciated. SKVVP remains deeply grateful to Divi's for its unconditional support during difficult times." – Smt. Lakshmikanthamma, Trustee
- "The building was constructed with external support, but funds were exhausted by the construction phase. There was no money left to develop internal facilities. At that critical moment, Divi's support came through, and it was truly a blessing. We will forever be indebted to Divi's for its generous contribution." – School Principal
- "I am passionate about Vedas and have always aspired to excel in them. I feel fortunate to have gained admission here, I am progressing the course step by step. There was uncertainty during epidemic, but thanks to the unwavering efforts of Sir (Chairman), we were all able to return and continue our education. I recently learned about Divi's contribution... they might not realise how important it is to me, but I will be forever grateful to Divi's" – A student in his fifth year of Vedic course.
- "When I first joined, I didn't like the room, it was filled with trunk boxes lined up along the walls, personal belongings left open, clothes hanging from the boxes... it all looked clumsy. But everything changed after we got individual cupboards... Now the rooms look neat and cool, with nothing lying around outside. Divi's support in this regard has been incredible for me. Thanks to them..." – A student from the Pathasala.

CONCLUSION

The need for Vedic education in the current era lies in its ability to offer a balanced, holistic approach to education, blending intellectual knowledge with ethical values and spiritual wisdom. It provides valuable life skills and perspectives that can help individuals navigate the complexities of the modern world while remaining connected to their cultural and spiritual heritage.

Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Veda Pathasala's dedicated efforts to revitalize Vedic education, blending ancient knowledge with contemporary relevance, are praiseworthy. Divi's generous contribution in providing the necessary facilities has played a pivotal role in supporting this noble cause, ensuring that students can pursue Vedic education with both success and fulfilment. The collaboration between traditional wisdom and modern support paves the way for a brighter, more balanced future.

PHOTO GALLERY



Pic 1 – Arch at the entrance of Veda Pathasala



Pic 2 – Students assembled in the shed outside the Pathasala



Pic 3 – Students reciting the hymns



Pic 4 – Interaction with representatives of the Teachers, Trustees and the administration



Pic 5 – A view of the classroom with neatly set wall-to-wall cupboards



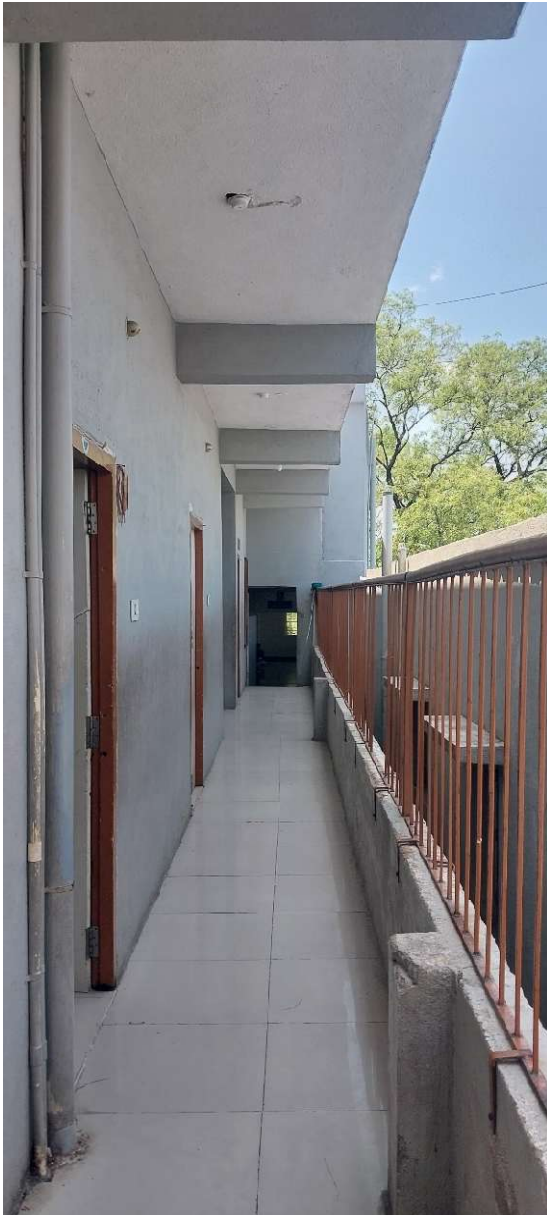
Pic 6 – Students using their personal cupboards



Pic 7 – Students practicing their learnings in performing rituals



Pic 8 – Study team observing the premises along with the Trustee and office authorities



Pic 9 – Corridors and view of the rooms



Pic 10 – Mattresses provided in the yoga room

The Vedas are the greatest source of knowledge, providing insights into the nature of life, the universe, and the ultimate truth

– Aurobindo Ghosh

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