



TRIBAL MENSA NURTURING PROGRAM

MENSA INDIA PUNE CHAPTER

Sita- Wildflower in Tribal Niche

Mensa India (Pune Chapter)

Annual Report 2010-2011

The Mensa India Pune Chapter has entered its third year in implementing the Gifted Child Program, and is seeing the evolution of a multi-dimensional center for Giftedness. Right from the inception of the Gifted Child Program, it has maintained a diversity of approaches and targets, taking small but decisive steps toward establishing a nodal center for research, development and outreach of the Giftedness concept.

Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program (TMNP)

Taking things ahead: 'Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program' is a path-breaking project under the Gifted Child Program which started as the first effort at identifying intelligence in the neglected tribal areas while combining the need for identifying and nurturing local leadership in tribal communities.

In TMNP's third year, relationship building and became the basis of the activities. The first batch of 50 Tribal Mensans identified in 2008 are now completing their school-level education and are entering junior and senior level college. This phase is crucial in deciding the progress of Tribal Mensans, especially with respect to making informed choices about their fields of education and introspecting on their future role in their communities. It was decided therefore, that all support will be extended for enabling the Tribal Mensans to start their higher education and continue mentoring through their college life.

In order to give a sense of responsibility, the approach for the Nurturing Program was changed for the first batch of students. While the TMNP was initially practiced by approaching tribal children in their schools, efforts now made to bring the students to TMNP. This approach was taken so as to enable the children to introspect and correctly identify the kind of support they required in order to develop themselves. With help from the Kher Foundation, the students were offered scholarships along with financial support for educational books, instruments, stationary, etc. The scholarship was offered to 12

Dr. Narayan Desai, Executive Council Member, Gifted Child Program

Mensa India, Jnana Prabodhini Bhavan, 510 Sadashiv Peth, Pune- 411030 Ph. No. 9822845844

E-mail: nrd1675@hotmail.com tribalmensa@gmail.com www.tribalmensa.blogspot.com



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students who approached TMNP for support, and were expected to report and discuss the expenses that were made using the scholarship. The scholarship scheme also made it mandatory for personal communication with the mentors about their academic and personal progress.

In continuance of the Karthik Kridalaya established at the Tribal Schools in 2009-2010, TMNP as established school level libraries with the support of the Kher Foundation. 8 Tribal Mensans are now in-charge of full fledged library in 4 schools. More than 500 books on various topics and languages were selected, and distributed in 6 schools. The students have found the Kher Library as a much awaited and accessible source of books. Activities like reading skills were conducted to develop interest in reading, introspecting and writing about the books in the Kher Library.

Miss. Sushama Kathe, one of the first Tribal Mensans to be identified prior to the beginning of the TMNP has been working as a teacher in the Malegaon Ashram School, after completing her HSC (12th Standard Board Exams). She has also been a great support in carrying out Tribal Mensa activities in the Malegaon school and actively participates in the programs for the younger Mensans. TMNP is now supporting her further education, and she has now started with the studies for a Diploma in Education.

Learning lessons: During the first two years, TMNP was largely a school-based activity. However, some unfortunate incidences triggered the need for communicating and relationship building with the families of the Tribal Mensans. Sundar, a Tribal Mensan had left her Tokawade Ashram school in 2009, and efforts were being made by TMNP to restart her schooling. However, when a visit was made to her house in Dhamangaon, we were informed of her sad demise due to some health issue which was not address in due course. In retrospect of our loss, the TMNP is now focusing on building stronger relationships with the families of the children in order to gain a better insight into their personal lives and needs on family levels which often go unnoticed when students are in the residential schools.

Tribal Mensa Identification Phase II: The second phase of Tribal Mensa Identification was started during 2010-11 with the support of Ipca Pharmaceutical, Mumbai, and Kher Foundation Mumbai. The schools

Dr. Narayan Desai, Executive Council Member, Gifted Child Program

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identified for Phase II include 22 Tribal & Rural Schools from the Pune, Thane and Ratnagiri Districts of Maharashtra. The Phase was started in the month of May and took 100 days to cover 5120 number of students in the age group of 10 – 15 years. 156 numbers of students were identified as 'gifted' with a 98 percentile and above score, 198 scored above 95 percentile, and approximately 600 scored above 90 percentile.

Tribal Mensa Tests, Test Norms and Research: Although it is assumed that the standardized intelligence tests used by Mensa India do not discriminate or are unbiased to the socio-cultural and environmental background of the persons undergoing the test, there are several challenges which were observed during the Tribal Mensa testing. Unlike average Indian school students, tribal students are not used to appearing for different kinds of tests and the stress associated with testing procedures is found to be higher. The tribal residential school children live in challenging conditions, where basic facilities like tables and chairs, pens and pencils, sheets of papers, etc. are often unavailable and there is a sense of novelty when such instruments are provided during the tests. There is also a possibility that the children feel stressed with the test conductors, who are often from the urban background have different speed and tonality in their language. It is quite possible that these seemingly small problems translate into poor performance in the test.

Besides this, there is also a need to identify the aspects of intelligence that get nurtured in the typical environment where the tribal students grow. Aspects such as their association with the natural environment and surroundings, proximity to high biodiversity areas like forests, rivers, etc. need to be recognized through the intelligence tests.

Taking these issues into consideration, Mensa India Pune Chapter started its primary research on developing new norms for Tribal testing and evaluation. The Mensa India Pune Chapter has also proposed to initiate fundamental research in developing tools for identifying intelligence in Tribal communities.

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In 2009-10, TMNP had entered into collaboration with the Belin Blank Centre, University of Iowa, United States. The Centre is one of the few research and nurturing institutes in the world which focus on Giftedness. During 2010-11 (dates) Mrs. Devasena Desai visited the center in order to discuss the line of action and methodologies to follow while developing standardized for Tribal and Urban students.

Wisdom Mensa India Nasik Centre: Mensa India has been keen to branch and promote its activities in different cities; under this project Wisdom International school of Nasik was initiated in the year 2009. The main objective was identification of gifted students from standard 5th onwards and introducing the nurturing program for children and building awareness among parents was started.

Identification of giftedness: Mensa began conducting its screening regularly each year for classes from 5-6th std. More than 200 students were tested and 73 students were qualified as Mensans and given certificates. The school psychologist Mrs. Sucheta Kulkarni was trained in testing and was encouraged to assist in the testing procedures and later was able to test independently with a co-observer from Mensa Office. The scores were done by the mother institution Jnana Prabodhini Institute of Psychology (JPIP) pune. Qualified students were given the option to join regular nurturing classes conducted by Dr. Narayan Desai at the school premises each month for one whole day.

Visit to Belin Blank, IOWA University: Mrs. Sucheta Kulkarni received an opportunity and fellowship to attend the Belin Blank summer workshop on gifted education in 2010 summer. She received her certificate on gifted education.

Parents Orientation: Selected students parents were given orientation about mensa and its activities. Parents doubts or queries were addressed at Nasik. Dr. Devasena Desai, Psychologist and Parent counselor participated in conducting a parenting workshop on giftedness for some parents. She also met few parents who needed individual attention and were counseled to handle children who were different

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and parents had difficulty in coping with them. Individual counseling was available for parents while the nurturing program was being conducted.

Addressing Socio-emotional development of gifted students: As gifted children have several psychological issues with regards to being emotional, withdrawn or interpersonal problems Dr. Devasena Desai conducted individual counseling for each child so that they could have a rapport and share their concerns with her. The observations during the nurturing program or workshops were discussed with the school counselor. A personal profile of each child was maintained and submitted to the school.

Gifted Nurturing Program: Dr. Narayan Desai who is gifted and has 14 years of experience working with gifted children conducted the monthly nurturing programs for students. The main objectives were

1. Developing creative thinking and openness in expressions.
2. Challenging their conventional thinking styles to become more creative and bold in expressing their new ideas
3. Building their self confidence and promoting cohesiveness as a group
4. Addressing their socio-emotional needs as a gifted person
5. Building vision for themselves as leaders.

Methodologies adopted were: Discussions, dramas, physical activities, games, debates, lectures, audio visual movies, documentary discussions, group activities, project methods and poetry expression. Children were encouraged to think out of box and come with creative ways of expressing. Appreciation among fellow participants through praise and encouragement was used.

Eco Tours: Thirty five students participated in the residential camp organized by Mensa in Jan 24-27th at Kaivalayadham, Lonavala. (Detail report enclosed). Children who had been nurtured during the previous

Dr. Narayan Desai, Executive Council Member, Gifted Child Program

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academic year participated with a few new students. They had the opportunity to apply all their learning into practice during their residential camp. The learning outcome was huge and significant as seen by the tests conducted by the psychologists before and during the program. Children learnt to use all their talents and skills or learnt to improve in the areas of weakness.

Future Projects:

1. Collaboration between Wisdom school, India and Belin Blank to attend the summer of 2012 for 15 gifted students at Belin Blank, IOWA University has been proposed. Dr. Laurie Croft's visit to Nasik in September, 2011 will further strengthen and bring a continued interaction between the two organizations.
2. Eco tour for the new students.
3. Regular monthly one day residential camp on nurturing has been proposed.
4. Regular parenting workshops for parents of gifted.

Wisdom High International School, Nasik

Gifted Nurturing Camp: Kaivalayadham Lonavala January 2011

Introduction: Giftedness and nurturing go hand in hand. A few gifted children from Wisdom High have been identified and since last 2 years nurturing program has been conducted by Dr. Narayan Desai. Several areas and topics have been addressed during the past year like creative expression, thinking scientifically, interpersonal skill development, and group cohesiveness and communication skills. It was essential that all these skills are tested in a different setting under residential environment away from their regular environment. A four day residential nurturing camp was organized in Lonavla for 35 students. It is said that children need to play and do activities to utilize their skills as play is unrestricted and open for children to express themselves in an unbiased environment.

Objective:

1. To observe physical, mental, emotional and social skills of gifted children.
2. To challenge their mental abilities into creative and other expressions.

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3. To help them understand and accept their strengths and weakness as a gifted child.
4. To enhance their thinking skills and motivate them to continue to aspire for excellence.

Activities: The activities that were conducted were only a means to meet the objectives set for the entire camp. Therefore while each activity was being conducted the children were guided into exploring their physical, mental, emotional and social challenges. The entire group of 35 students were divided into groups of 7 namely, ecology, tribal, yoga, spiritual and history. Students were to adorn the role of ecologist, tribal etc. while participating in the activity. Example when the children visited the Bhaja Caves the history and the tribal students were able to make observations based on their given group. They had to work with their resource persons who were (Ms. Mamta, Ms. Mansi, Ms. Sucheta, Ms. Shilpa and Dr. Devasena along with Dr. Narayan Desai who headed the entire team).

Children had a food in charge whose duty was to ensure that all the members were feed and then have his meal. The group leader and assistant were encouraged to lead the group in each activity and arrive at the final presentation in the form of collage, drama or poetry. There was a member who was water in-charge and common food in-charge. The leaders also had to look into the well being of their members like provide juice, biscuits and snacks during the day and while travelling locally.

Resource Persons: Had to guide the students motivate them to participate and work along and within the group. They also had to maintain some discipline and observe children when they had to go for dinner or lunch, have their bath and report in time. They also had to sit along the students and encourage them to work on their projects and help them to work in their groups and inspire them to show all their potential. Maintaining discipline was also one of the roles and be a role model of a leader for their group.

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Drop Outs & ILL health: Yatin had to leave due to ill health on the 2nd day by evening. Nidhi was sick for half a day, Ahmed was home sick and attention seeking for 1 ½ days. Mansi and Sucheta had head ache during day 1 & 2 respectively (therefore they had to utilize the break period for a nap to get better).

Children's Performance:

Day one: All the children took much time to get into the routine. They were more looking at the entire trip as a holiday and camp of enjoyment rather than learning. There were many distracters within the group were either a girl or boy used to disturb the entire group by either doing a misbehavior or not participating in any activity. This could be unable to settle into a new environment or compete with each other or draw attention toward self to be a part of the group. More energy physically therefore had to do a lot of physical activities and games to calm them.

Day Two: Both the groups of boys and girls were up by 6 am and were active in taking a bath and be ready after drinking milk by 6.45am for yoga. Bhaja caves which was a good experience for the children to observe a historical place and see it through other eyes like Tribal, Ecology etc. To discuss within a group write their observations and work around probing for clues, cues about the caves. Children were working in their groups at the campus discussing and arguing within groups and amongst each other. They were found challenging each others' ideas and thoughts for their group presentation later the following day. Ahmed was moving lonely and at times not at all participating, Mihir and Prasad were their naughty best, so was Rane. They could have been more focused instead of being playful but it is quite possible they were looking at the camp as just a fun place rather than learning.

Day Three: Republic celebrations the children participated in the campus celebrations and sang some patriotic songs. This was followed by the tribal school visit. Each group was allotted a teacher from the school who escorted them around the campus and oriented the group about the life of a tribal student in this school. Children could discuss with the teacher and gather information as per their group objectives like Historical, tribal, ecology etc. some children found it difficult to relate to such

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impoverished children while others were curious and wanted to know how they lived without parents and would their parents visit or call them, who provides them food and other amenities.

Ahmed and Prasad were found to be more casual and non participative, they were not keen to interact but just moved around and not being with the group either. Each group had to work on their presentations for the night. It was found that the leaders Ranvir, Nidhi, Zara, Saiyali and Akhil were learning to manage and mostly be more responsible than their team members.

Progress:

Shower and Food: Children were seen very energetic throughout the entire camp. They participated and were alert and active during early morning duties like bath and shower, no one complained the early hours but boys were found to wait until the late night at times to shower and had to be monitored. Food was also enjoyable and the children co-operated especially Shivam who was the food in charge used to eat last after serving everyone including the resource persons. A few kids would skip either roti or rice based on their likes and dislikes but resource persons ensured that each child had atleast one roti and some rice with compulsory vegetables. Again it was noticed that the children were used to more choices and were not happy to have less choice while eating inspite of sweets and drinks were served every 3 hours by the group leader who had the stock of food for his entire team.

Group cohesiveness: Most of the boys were playful and being naughty, some were more keen to do new things and work with the group, girls were sincere and keen to participate in all activities some were also in cliques and were found wanted to just chat or talk about other girls and incidents. It was difficult in day one to get them to do things together but slowly by day 3-4 they were seen as a group and were found interacting and helping each other with the presentations. The resource persons had to continuously question and challenge them to keep the focus and listen and absorb all the learning.

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Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program Wish List 2011 - 2014

WISH No.01 Principal Investigator Sustenance

Summary: Principal Investigator is overall responsibility for managing and running the various projects of Tribal Mensa Nurturing Program. His role is to design and execute the projects, establishing national and international collaborations, fund raising and designing stewardship plan, concept promotion and publication and also maintain legal and ethical standards towards all the projects. The main area of focus will be identification of giftedness in tribal areas and promotion of the same.

Financial Requirement: Professional fees and requirement would be Rs. 14.4 lakhs for three years.

WISH No.02 Tribal Mensa Nourishing Project

Summary: Tribal Mensa Nourishing Project will focus on objectives such as 1. To nourish tribal gifted children to enhance their potentials, 2. To impart training in the areas of science and math talent 3. Provide guidance towards career goals

This project will look into the holistic development of the identified gifted child by imparting vocational guidance, competency in the area of science and math along with English proficiency. To help them sustain in their own environment, natural resource management training will be given so that they are able to transfer the skills to other fellow members of the society or to initiate entrepreneurship projects in the community.

Requirement: Resource persons in the area of science, English language, math, vocational training and natural resource management and resources such as Books, multimedia, educational materials and software's.

Financial Requirement: 10.50 lakhs per year

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WISH No.3. Tribal Giftedness Nurturing services

Summary: Mobile services: As the cost to bring tribal gifted students from their various tribal areas to the centre for coaching and mentoring programs proves to be very costly. A novel method to ensure that the programs continues but in their own schools on a monthly basis where the resource person travels along with the resources like books, toys and science lab equipment's and engages the tribal students in activities and games as a part of the nurturing program.

Beneficiaries: 45000 students and 1200 teachers per year.

Requirements: Tempo traveler Vehicle, scientific lab (Agasthya organization Model), purchase of books and games for enrichment.

Financial Requirement: 29.66 lakhs for three years

WISH No.4. Publicity

Summary: To enable a wider reach of awareness into gifted education especially towards tribal students the following are essential.

Requirement:

1. Website development and updating
2. Media coverage
3. Newspaper/ electronic media advertisement for Mensa testing (fund raising activity).
4. Brand ambassador (Sachin Tendulkar. Amir Khan, Vishwanath Anand)
5. Giving Tribal Mensa web site link to different Corporate websites
6. Project endorsement
7. Marketing firm or organization (Mensa testing, life membership as fund raising activity).

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Proposed Projects:

A. Project Title: Ecological Priest

Aim: To identify and nurture tribal leadership for the protection, conservation, ecological restoration and sustainable development of Natural Resources.

Project Site: The Project will be implemented in the tribal residential schools in Taluka's of Junnar, Ambegaon, Khed, and Maval of Pune District (Maharashtra State, India). This region falls in the Western Ghats, which have been identified as a world biodiversity hotspot.

Ecological Priest Concept: The project attempts to identify gifted tribal students and nurture their personality skills and leadership qualities with help of Panchakosha Human Development model narrated in Taittiriya Upanishad. The Ecological Priest will adopt science and techniques in ecological conservation and natural resource management. The identified and nurtured tribal leadership will be motivated in protection, conservation, ecological restoration along with sustainable utilization of natural resources. Thus, the project attempts to provide stewardship model for natural resource conservation and exploration. Proposed model will also serve as economic empowerment tool at grass root level. The term Ecological Priest signifies scientific and spiritual platform of leadership development at grass root level. The identified and nurtured tribal gifted will have ecological knowledge of the landscape and relates himself or herself to the natural resources on spiritual platform i.e. faith, believes, and values. Thus, the ecological priest therefore is scientifically, morally and spiritually committed to the well-being of the natural landscape. The Ecological Priest project envisages a spiritually rooted, tribal ecologist, who is a leader in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Need for an Ecological Priest: Many areas in India, which are rich in natural resources, are inhabited by tribal populations. Despite having surplus of resources, the tribal communities are found to be underdeveloped and poverty stricken. These problems arise primarily due to the ignorance about the value of these resources. This in turn leads to exploitative use and degradation. Many governmental and non-governmental agencies are trying to address the problem. Legal, financial, educational and social approaches are being implemented in tribal areas. However, a major hurdle to these approaches is the

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lack of tribal leadership. **There is a dire need for an indigenous approach for sustainable development of tribal areas. Such an approach can only emerge from a tribal leader, who understands the needs of the tribal community as well as the need for conservation of natural resources.** In a time when tribal areas are still struggling to receive formal education, emergence of tribal leadership seems distant. **However, the Ecological Priest is a novel approach, which will try to identify and nurture leaders from tribal schools, so as to catalyze this process.**

Phases of Ecological Priest Project:

Phase A: Identification of Tribal Giftedness: There is a strong correlation between intelligence and leadership skills. Decision-making in natural resource management, development planning etc. requires highly developed problem-solving abilities. There is constant requirement of creative approaches when dealing with the dynamic environmental conditions. Therefore, internationally standardized, non-academic, non-verbal intelligence tests will be administered to tribal school students (10years to 15years), to identify gifted tribal students. The same protocol was implemented in the year 2007. Over 50 Gifted tribal children were identified from 2000 tribal students belonging to eight tribal schools of Pune District (Maharashtra State). These Gifted tribal students are undergoing a nurturing program and will also participate in the project.

Phase B: Nurturing of Tribal Giftedness: The identified tribal gifted students will undergo series of nurturing workshop based on Panchakosha Model of Human Development narrated in Taittiriya Upanishad (Annamaya Kosha, Pranamaya Kosha, Manomaya Kosha, Vidhyanamaya Kosha and Anandmaya Kosha). These workshops will be conducted at the Nishta Tribal Mensa Nurturing Centre (Special nurturing centre developed at Kamshet with financial assistance of Kher Foundation) and at school level. Diverse psychological assessments tools will be applied to evaluate the effect of nurturing program.

Phase C: Value Addition Training: Besides nurturing workshops the tribal gifted will undergo specialized training program will includes subjects like English, Math's, Science, Personality

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Development, Soft Skills, Vocational training based on Natural Resource Conservation and Management (Flora, Fauna Identification, Scientific data collection, Seed collection, Indigenous Plant Nursery etc.)

Phase D: Nourishing of Tribal Giftedness: To get desired outcome of the project it is necessary to provide sustenance to the tribal gifted (up to his or her graduation/ post graduation). Nourishing phase will extend up to 8 to 10 years.

Phase E: Natural Resources Management Tasks & Activities: The tribal gifted (Ecological Priest) will earn his nurturing, value addition training and nourishing benefits by applying his or her leadership qualities at school level and landscape level. The Ecological Priest will be given tasks and activities related to natural resource conservation and management. The tasks and activities include:

1. Collection of scientific data of the landscape, sacred groves, flora and fauna
2. Collection of indigenous plant seeds
3. Developing Indigenous Plant Nursery
4. Providing protection to the sacred groves and other landscape features
5. Motivate peoples' participation in grass root education, health and landscape management activities
6. Apply creative and unique ideas for problem solving

Deliverables of the Project:

1. 50 Ecological Priests (tribal gifted)
2. Conservation and Ecological Restoration of the Sacred Groves
3. Model for Tribal Leaderships identification and nurturing
4. Ecological Scientific data
5. Indigenous Plant Nurseries
6. Stewards for Natural Resources

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B. Project Title: Web Based Nurturing Activities

Mensa India Pune in association with Bangalore & Pune based software team is developing 1000 web based nurturing activities for Mensa Members from all over India. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 12,00,000.

C. Project Title: Bal Yogesh Project

In association with Kaivalayadham Yoga Institute Lonavala, Mensa India Pune is developing Bal Yogesh Project. In this project, gifted students will be trained in Yoga Practices at Kaivalayadham. These Bal Yogesh will educate others in Yoga.

D. Project Title: Giftedness Identification in Navodhay School

In association with Kaivalayadham Yoga Institute, Mensa India Pune is conducting Giftedness Identification drive in 940 Navodhay Schools spread across the country. The project proposal will be submitted to NCERT, New Delhi.

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