

**REPORT ON WORKSHOP ON WATER
CONDUCTED BY BICHITRA PATHSHALA
21-25 MAY 2018**

After the popularity of the “Water” workshop conducted by Bichitra Pathshala in March this year, Disha Foundation requested a similar workshop on the same theme with about 35 children during the summer break.

Planned for the week beginning 14th May, the workshop was shifted to the following week which posed a challenge for the Bichitra Pathshala team as we had a workshop on film making for 38 students from different schools and NGOs. However, with the support and active cooperation of our members we were able to successfully conduct a 5 day workshop aided by the enthusiasm and the joie de vivre of the kids who attended. Though there were less than the anticipated 35 participants, the mentors were happy to have a smaller group of 20, which led to more one on one communication and more space for drawing and other hands-on activities. The participants were children in the age group of 7-12 years with some senior students from classes VIII and IX.

The workshop was conducted at Disha Foundation from 10am-12:30 pm on 21-25 May.

Day 1 was dedicated to raising awareness about water through different films and interaction thereafter, while Day 2 was exploring the different properties of water through interesting experiments. On Day 3 the focus moved to life in the water, especially freshwater, explored through various games after which students settled down to drawing a character sketch of some of these water creatures. On Day 4 and 5 the children developed a cartoon strip based on their knowledge about water, its scarcity, pollution and how we need to each play a role in water conservation.

DAY I: The first day’s activities were conducted by Rupali Sachdev, a senior English teacher at MBWA and a Bichitra Pathshala member.

Ms Sachdev enjoyed the interactive session which she began by asking for a glass of water to drink and leading up to questions on how the water reached the fridge. Discussion ranged from different sources of water, scarcity of water and finally rainwater harvesting. The films used to generate discussions were

- Abak Jalpan, a Bichitra Pathshala animation film based on Sukumar Ray’s famous play, which through a play on words explores the sources of water, water in the human body, water borne diseases and the composition of water.
- Jal: a thought provoking Vigyan Prasar film on water wastage and individual action to save water
- H₂O: a film by students of Alia University on Kolkata’s water supply and how despite there being water water everywhere, residents of Sundarbans faced a drinking water crisis.
- CSE film on rainwater harvesting

Ms Sachdev recounts, “I even made them sing songs from Hindi films which had words like ‘*megh, saawan, rimjhim, barish,*’ etc, to lighten the atmosphere and introduced terms like evaporation, condensation, rainwater harvesting, groundwater, with illustrations.” At the end of day 1, each child had drawn a water source and coloured it and also written a slogan in Hindi on water conservation with an appropriate illustration.”

DAY II: Activities were conducted by Sharmistha Bhattacharya, retired Principal of Ananda Ashram Balika Vidyapeeth, and national awardee for innovations in activities and incorporating technology in classroom teaching. Her session aimed to provide the participating students with an understanding of the importance of water in human life and to help them learn preliminary techniques regarding water management and quality assessment. This helped in creating an understanding that water is an essential part of our existence and not only is water the major constituent of our body composition, it is also a critical part of our nutritional needs.

The following hands on experiments were done by the participants during the workshop:

- * With the help of a globe, participating students discussed the percentage of water that covers the Earth and understood how little of it is actually usable by the human beings.
- * Discussion took place with the help of pictures why and how much water every one needs.
- * The participating students measured how many litres of water different utensils or buckets can hold using 200ml, 250ml, 500 ml and 1 litre bottles.
- * The students performed pH test of water collected from different sources.
- * Participants were taught how to identify suspended particles in drinking water.
- * Discussion was carried out on how contamination spreads without our knowledge.
- * The students understood some characteristics of water and the difference between water pressure and air pressure through discussion and experiments.
- * Students were taught how to siphon logged water from a room during rainy season or clean an overhead tank.

DAY III: Activities were conducted by Devika Kar, whose area of work is environment education. She was helped in her activities by Sharmistha Bhattacharya.

After a brief recap on the sources of water and our human dependence on water, the discussion shifted to how other life forms are also dependant on water : for drinking, for reproduction, for movement and basically for survival. The students present were then involved in a few games. In the first game "Who am I" a student had to identify which water creature she was by asking questions that could only be answered by Yes or No. Through the game they explored where the character lived, how she moved, what she ate, etc. The next game "Web of Life" was used to understand the tenuous link between all living things and the primary elements of air, water, soil and Sunlight. Each child was given a name card like air, water, Sun, frog, tree, crab, fish, mosquito, and even a dhobi! The web began from the Sun, source of all energy and proceeded by throwing a ball of yarn symbolizing energy between the characters explaining what the link was: same habitat, food, friend or foe? The game proceeded with a lot of laughter and involvement from the children. After a point when all were tied to the Sun and the web it was explained that the survival of certain creatures that we may consider unimportant affects the health of the web of life.

At the end of the game, each child was given a sheet of paper and asked to write a few lines about any of the animals or plants in the earlier game as the activity over the next few days would be to draw and write their very own comic strip.

DAY IV & V: Mr S Shankar, artist, animator, designer and teacher of visual arts helped students conceptualize cartoon characters and develop a six frame story revolving around water. He demonstrated how simple drawings can be made using shapes like circle, triangle and a few lines or even an alphabet! Each student was given a sheet of art paper and asked to draw six boxes and then think of a story related to water and draw it in the boxes. The cartoon strips which emerged from this exercise ranged from a farmer's dependence on water, a sailor on the high seas, the need to conserve water especially in the desert, and how one can save water through rainwater harvesting.

The cartoon strips will be scanned and printed in the form of a small booklet.

The Bichitra Pathshala members who conducted this workshop were happy with the response from the students and we look forward to more such opportunities to interact with the Disha students.

Report prepared by Devika Kar

With inputs from Rupali Sachdev and Sharmistha Bhattacharya