

Text of the letter to CM Rajasthan from Prof. Rama Kant Agnihotri

Rajasthan has always remained in the forefront of pedagogical innovation and its dissemination. Organizations like Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur and Digantar, Jaipur have played a leading role in bringing fresh perspectives on education for a very long time now. Whenever any state or national educational agency has felt the need to update its philosophical assumptions, curriculum design, syllabus, textbooks, teacher training modules or classroom transactions, they have turned to these highly professional NGOs. I have been working with different NGOs across the country and abroad for several decades now. I would without any hesitation rank Digantar as one of the best not only in India but also in the whole world.

To the best of my knowledge, the credit for providing a serious philosophical dimension to educational theory and practice in India must to a large extent go to Digantar. The credit for running several innovative schools in which the focus is not on 'class, level and assessment' but on real peer group learning with extremely carefully managed inputs from the teachers must also go to Digantar. There are in fact several reports that highlight the quality of education Digantar provides to the poor and underprivileged children. Digantar schools don't have linear and additive 'classes' in the usual sense; that's not how knowledge is conceptualized at Digantar. It is seen as a creative process that demands a lot of serious work on the part of both students and teachers. Children work in small groups and move from one group to another depending on the level of their cognitive growth and not on how much they have committed to their memory.

We have now been told that one such school, the Bandhyali school, is facing a complete closure threat by the JDA. How strange and painful! Built with MHRD money and approval, this is a school that caters to over 300 children from extremely poor backgrounds, several of them being girls. As a member of the academic community that has worked for decades with school children and teachers, I strongly protest against this irrational move. How can the administration and judiciary of Rajasthan let this happen.

PLEASE STOP THIS.

Yours sincerely,