



MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY



MOITRISANJOG SOCIETY
ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY:

Moitrisanjog has been working steadfastly for over a decade to uphold the rights and dignity of individuals from marginalized gender and sexual identities, including the transgender community. In a society deeply shaped by patriarchy, toxic masculinity, and rigid heteronormativity, these individuals often find their rights ignored, their voices silenced, and their existence denied. Our mission is to challenge these oppressive structures and create pathways toward justice and equality.

Beyond advocacy, Moitrisanjog is deeply involved in supporting the holistic well-being of the transgender community. We focus on education for underprivileged children and prioritize mental health support—particularly for transgender individuals, who often endure bullying, isolation, and violence. We are committed to standing against all forms of violence—both physical and psychological—inflicted upon the LGBTQIA+ community.

But raising our voices is just the beginning. We actively work to ensure that transgender, kothi, and queer individuals have access to the social and economic rights they deserve. Through various programs, including sustainable livelihood initiatives, we strive to empower community members with opportunities that foster independence, dignity, and inclusion.

Our core vision is to promote social, political, and economic equity, and to advocate for the civil and legal rights of transgender and intersex individuals. We work to create spaces where intersex, transgender, and gender non-conforming people can live freely, without fear of discrimination. This includes challenging systemic oppression based on race, caste, class, religion, legal status, age, and sexual orientation.

At Moitrisanjog, we envision a future where no one is excluded for who they are. Where every individual—regardless of gender identity—is seen, heard, respected, and protected.

Arindam Das (Sumi)





Background

In a society still deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms, those who do not conform to traditional gender binaries or heteronormative expectations—such as transgender individuals, gender-nonconforming people, and marginalized women—continue to face severe discrimination and violence. Growing up with dignity, equal rights, and opportunities remains a formidable challenge for those who identify outside the conventional gender spectrum or have diverse sexual orientations. Often, they are rejected by their families and communities, leading to social alienation and economic vulnerability. Many are forced into begging or sex work for survival, while others succumb to despair, with suicide becoming a tragic escape for some. The situation is even more dire in rural areas, where social stigma is harsher and resources are scarcer.

Let's
Grow
Together

Given that back in 2011, a few transgender / gender variant persons based at Cooch Behar, North Bengal used to regularly meet and share their own stories of struggle and painful lives in order to vent out their pain and find solidarity in each other. Gradually more people were added to the informal group. Their ideas and thoughts started taking shape, they got enough strength from each other to collectively fight against the discrimination and violence inflicted on them. This solidarity group eventually turned out to be a community based organization (CBO) back in 2011.

The CBO was named Moitrisanjog, meaning “a network to connect friends”. Thus, the Moitrisanjog Society got officially registered under Society Act as a NGO in the year 2011. The society is committed to protest the violence against the queer community. The main objective of our society is to provide a supportive network to ensure that everyone from the queer community gets equal opportunity, rights and entitlements to grow as a human being with dignity and respect. Our society strives to provide financial security to the community through establishing alternative livelihoods such as the craftsmanship program. We offer community members essential support services, including healthcare, counseling, and legal aid. Additionally, we advocate for equal access to education and employment opportunities. Beyond direct support, we actively organize awareness programs to challenge discrimination and combat violence in society.



Vision

Moitrisanjog Society stands at the forefront of intersectional activism, recognizing the deep and layered struggles faced by queer individuals—where discrimination is not just about gender or sexuality but also intersects with caste, class, and race. As the first organization in West Bengal's LGBT community to champion intersectional politics, Moitrisanjog is committed to amplifying the voices of the most marginalized and reaching those often left unheard.

In a landscape where feminist movements in West Bengal largely center cisgender women—often overlooking or inadequately supporting trans individuals—Moitrisanjog strives to bridge this gap. The organization is dedicated to fostering an inclusive dialogue on trans feminism, ensuring that the experiences and rights of trans and non-binary individuals are not just acknowledged but actively defended.

At its heart, Moitrisanjog is more than just an organization; it is a safe haven, a movement, and a family that stands in solidarity with those who have been pushed to the margins. It envisions a world where every queer and trans person can exist with dignity, free from oppression, and embraced in all their complexity and humanity.

Mission

The mission of the organization is to reach out to people in Cooch Behar who are transgender or gender variant and mobilize them to protest against socio-domestic violence. The mission also includes developing solidarity networks in society to sensitize them to issues faced by these marginalized communities and advocate for social protections such as access to healthcare and employment.

Contact Information:

Registered Office: Balarampur Road, Near Das Bekary, PO: Dinhata,

District - Cooch Behar, WB - 736135, India

Present Project Office: Gangaler kuthi (near boshar hat bazar) post,

Gheghirhat pin. 736134 Dist. Coochbehar west Bengal, India

Website: www.moitrisanjog.org

Contact: +91 7063418696

Email - moitrisanjog2011@gmail.com



Sources of Funding

To sustain and expand these vital initiatives, Moitrisanjog Society relies on various sources of funding:

Individual Donations: Financial support from compassionate individuals who believe in the cause and wish to contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

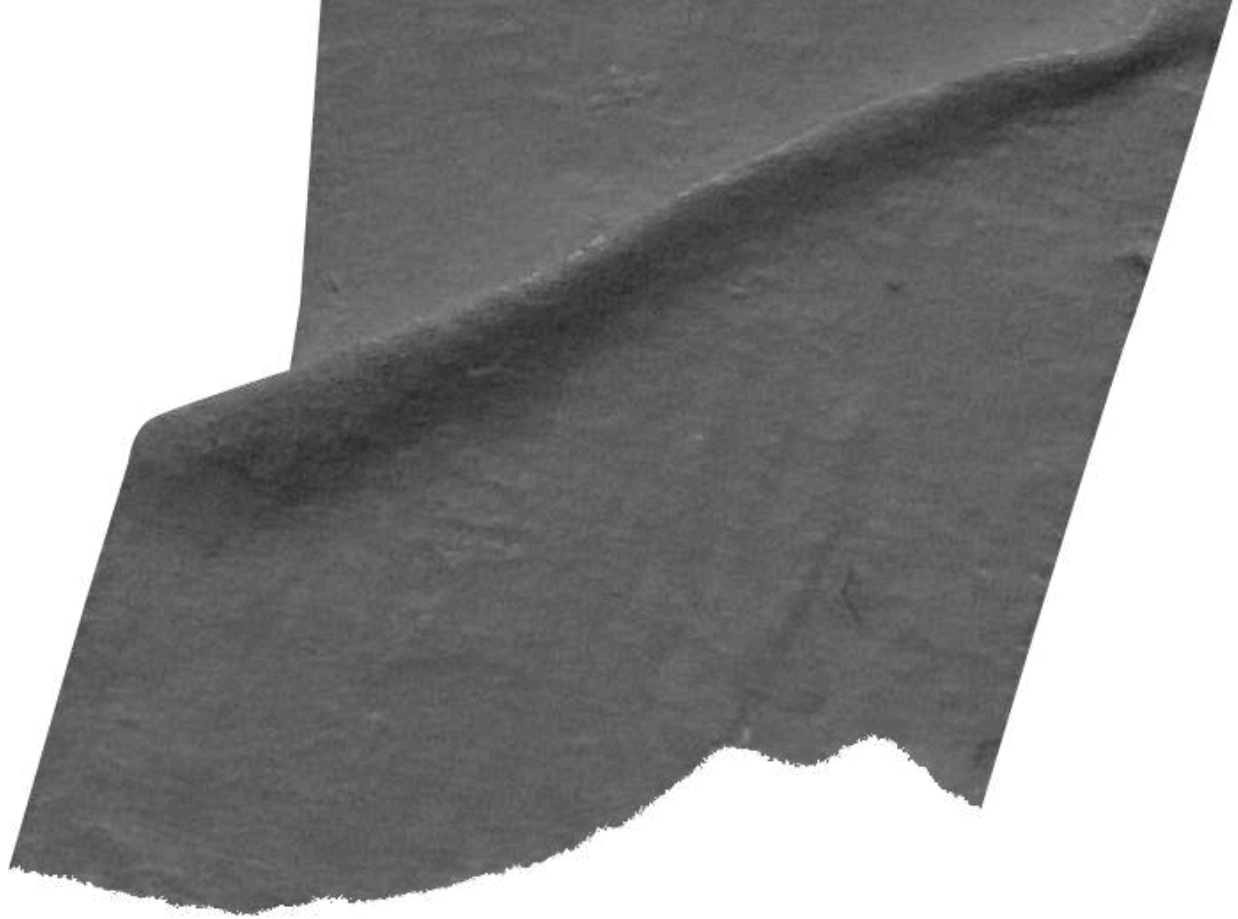
Membership Subscriptions: Contributions from the community and members who actively engage with Moitrisanjog Society's mission and programs.

Mariwala Health Foundation: A dedicated partnership with the Mariwala Health Foundation, which provides support for the organization's health and wellness initiatives.

Conclusion

Moitrisanjog Society is committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of transgender and queer individuals by providing access to education, vocational training, shelter, and a supportive community. By continuing to raise awareness, reduce discrimination, and empower community members to take on leadership roles, Moitrisanjog aims to foster a future where everyone, regardless of gender identity, can live with dignity, respect, and equal opportunities. The future of the community depends on the collective efforts of all, and Moitrisanjog Society is at the forefront of driving these essential changes.





ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION



COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

At Moitrisanjog Society, our work centers around supporting the transgender community, promoting mental well-being, and ensuring access to education for underprivileged children. One of the most meaningful ways we continue this mission is by organizing monthly Community Support Group Meetings. These gatherings are essential in creating safe, healing spaces where individuals can share, connect, and grow together.

Transgender individuals often face unique and deeply personal challenges related to their gender identity and expression—especially while navigating a society that largely centers around cisnormative norms. Whether it's a teenager seeking the courage to come out to their parents, an older adult feeling isolated in a care facility, or someone just beginning their journey of self-discovery, the need for understanding, support, and community is universal.

These meetings are designed with a trauma-informed approach, recognizing that many transgender people carry the weight of past discrimination, stigma, and emotional pain. Our support groups aim not only to provide healing but also to empower participants by connecting them with resources, sharing lived experiences, and building resilience through solidarity.

Support groups are not just about receiving help—they are also about giving it. They offer an opportunity to grow through mutual care, where each voice matters and each story finds a listener. For many, this sense of belonging can be transformative.

Our support meetings also extend to others in the community who face severe hardships. Many women have endured domestic violence within their homes—often in silence, with no one to confide in and nowhere to feel safe. These meetings offer them a supportive environment to speak openly, regain their strength, and find companionship with others who understand their struggle.

We also recognize the challenges faced by men in our community. Many are currently unemployed, while others battle substance dependency. Through these group sessions, we work to connect them with job opportunities, support services, and counseling that can help them move toward recovery and rebuild their lives with dignity.

Community Support Group Meetings are not just events—they are lifelines. They remind us all that healing begins with being heard, understood, and accepted. Moitrisanjog is committed to continuing this work, ensuring that every individual—regardless of gender, background, or circumstance—has a place where they feel seen, valued, and supported.



SENSITIZATION PROGRAM

Moitrisanjog Society regularly conducts one-day sensitization workshops aimed at inspiring and informing key stakeholders such as police officers, educators, healthcare professionals, local club members, school students, political representatives, and government officials. The goal of these sessions is to foster awareness and empathy around critical social issues, including entrepreneurship, gender inclusion, and human rights.

Sensitization, at its core, means making individuals more aware and emotionally responsive to issues that might otherwise remain overlooked. These workshops help participants not only understand the challenges faced by marginalized communities but also motivate them to act with sensitivity, fairness, and respect.

PERSPECTIVE BUILDING & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



Our perspective-building and capacity-building programs are designed to strengthen the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and resilience of both individuals and institutions. These sessions go beyond basic training—they aim to shift mindsets, challenge prejudices, and create lasting internal transformation.

In a rapidly evolving world, organizations and communities must be equipped not just to survive, but to adapt and thrive. True capacity building involves nurturing the inner resources needed for this growth—fostering leadership, empathy, and sustainable change from within.

CHILD EDUCATION PROGRAM - GURUKUL

Since 2009, Moitrisanjog Society has been a strong advocate for the rights of the transgender community, while also championing the cause of child education. As part of this commitment, we have established an educational center named Gurukul—a safe, nurturing space where children not only learn but also receive daily meals, books, and essential stationery supplies.

What makes Gurukul truly unique is that it is the only school in West Bengal run entirely by members of the transgender community. It stands as a symbol of empowerment, inclusivity, and hope—where education becomes a bridge between marginalized identities and a brighter, more equitable future.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

EMERGENCY RELIEF DRIVE (IMMEDIATE SUPPORT SERVICES)

Emergency relief refers to the immediate provision of essential support to individuals, families, and communities in the aftermath of crises or urgent situations. This includes offering life-sustaining resources such as shelter, food, and basic supplies either at the site of the emergency or directly to affected individuals who remain in their homes, schools, or workplaces rather than relocating.

Moitrisanjog Society is committed to responding promptly to such emergencies, extending help wherever and whenever it is needed. During harsh winter months, for example, we distribute warm blankets to those in need. In cases of financial hardship—such as when a young woman is unable to afford the costs of marriage—we step in to provide support, ensuring that no one is denied dignity due to economic barriers.

Whether it's a personal crisis or a community-wide emergency, Moitrisanjog Society strives to be a source of timely aid and comfort, standing by people in their most vulnerable moments.

LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

To empower members of the LGBTQ community and women from marginalized backgrounds, Moitrisanjog Society organizes livelihood training programs every quarter. These hands-on training sessions are designed to equip participants with practical skills that can lead to self-employment or job opportunities—enabling them to earn a sustainable livelihood and gain financial independence.

The training modules include:

Paper plate making

Beauty parlour and grooming services

Handcrafted mat making

Catering and culinary services



These programs have already helped numerous individuals from the LGBTQ and women's communities to find meaningful work or launch their own small businesses. The livelihood initiative is not just about skill-building—it's about restoring dignity, fostering self-reliance, and creating inclusive pathways to economic empowerment.



OUR TERM MOITRISANJOG

Governing Board List:

1. Mr. Souvik Ghosal – President
2. Mr. Nabin Roy – Vice-President
3. Mr. Arindam Das – Secretary
4. Mr. Pintu Sutradhar – Assistant Secretary
5. Mr. Jayanta Mondal – Treasurer
6. Mr. Sanjib Dey – Member
7. Mr. Raja Das – Member
8. Mr. Bikram Mahato – Member

Working Group List:

Arindam Das: Program Coordinator
Subhajit Dey: Counsellor
Iswar Chanda: Field Worker
Aprojit Mandal: Field Worker
Riya Dey:Accounts
Tamanna Dey:Gurukul Teacher
Riya pain: Gurukul Teacher





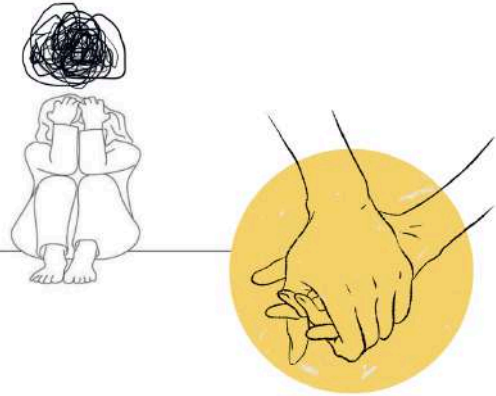
PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

2022 - 2023

ESO KOTHA BOLI



ESO KOTHA BOLI



ESO KOTHA BOLI is more than a movement—it is a safe, affirming space created specifically for transgender individuals to voice their experiences, express their concerns, and find solidarity. Our mission is to uplift, empower, and support the transgender community by fostering dialogue, mutual understanding, and collective action toward meaningful change.

We recognize the pressing need for dedicated shelters and support systems for transgender people. Many within the community face challenges that are deeply rooted in systemic discrimination—ranging from rejection by families and communities to barriers in accessing employment, housing, healthcare, and legal protection. Unfortunately, general counseling centers often fail to adequately address these needs. Worse still, transgender individuals may encounter prejudice or mistreatment in such spaces, which only deepens trauma and discourages them from seeking help.

Creating specialized support environments exclusively for transgender individuals is not just beneficial—it is essential. These spaces offer safety, dignity, and compassion, allowing people to access services without fear of judgment or exclusion.

At the heart of ESO KOTHA BOLI is the belief that every transgender person deserves to be seen, heard, and valued. We strive to build a community where no one feels alone in their struggle. By coming together, we can challenge the marginalization we face and create pathways to empowerment and justice.

Our approach is grounded in open, honest communication and mutual respect. We aim to cultivate a culture of trust where individuals feel encouraged to share their stories and connect with others who truly understand their journey.

Through ESO KOTHA BOLI, we offer a wide range of essential services—including counseling, legal assistance, and vocational training—to help transgender individuals achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and the opportunity to live full, dignified lives.

Together, we are building not just a support system, but a movement—one rooted in compassion, resilience, and the power of community.

Location: Cooch Behar, West Bengal

Date: January 30, 2023

Moitrisanjog Society is pleased to share the outcome of a recent community support group meeting held in Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Organized by our organization, which is dedicated to empowering the transgender community, the session brought together community members to explore livelihood opportunities and financial inclusion.

The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss income-generating activities such as Sital Pati (traditional mat) making, art and craft entrepreneurship, and paper plate manufacturing. In addition, a representative from Gramin Bank was present to provide crucial insights on credit access and financial schemes tailored for self-help groups.

The meeting opened with participant introductions and an outline of the day's agenda. Participants involved in Sital Pati making shared their hands-on experiences, covering essential topics such as sourcing raw materials, maintaining product quality, and production techniques. They also emphasized how maintaining high quality directly impacts customer satisfaction and sales outcomes. Marketing strategies were also a key point of discussion, with participants highlighting the growing influence of local markets and social media in boosting visibility and sales.

In the next session, the discussion turned to the art and craft sector, which holds significant potential for creative income generation. Community members exchanged ideas on handmade items such as jewelry, decorative products, and clothing. The importance of creativity, innovation, and unique design in standing out within the competitive market was emphasized.

A particularly valuable part of the meeting was the session with the Gramin Bank representative, who spoke about various credit schemes and financial assistance programs available for self-help groups. Participants gained a clearer understanding of how to access loans and other financial support to initiate or expand their ventures.

The paper plate manufacturing business was also highlighted as a promising and scalable income opportunity. Participants discussed the required machinery, raw materials, investment needs, and potential profit margins. The group acknowledged that with rising demand for eco-friendly products like paper plates, there is considerable scope for employment and entrepreneurship in this space.

The meeting successfully fostered knowledge-sharing, peer motivation, and community bonding. Many attendees expressed renewed enthusiasm to pursue or expand their entrepreneurial endeavors. The practical financial guidance provided by the Gramin Bank official added great value to the discussion.

Looking ahead, Moitrisanjog Society plans to host similar support group meetings regularly. By continuing to explore livelihood avenues and improving access to funding and credit, we aim to build a more economically empowered, self-reliant transgender community.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING





Sensitization Program:

“HISTORY OF PRIDE - A CONVERSATION ON TRANS/QUEER LIVES WITH FAMILIES”

Venue: Hotel Sovraj, Siliguri, West Bengal

Date: 24th June 2022

In collaboration with Moitrisanjog Society & Uttar Falguni

Supported by: Mariwala Health Initiative

As part of Pride Month celebrations, we gathered on June 24th, 2022, in the heart of Siliguri to honor the legacy, resilience, and lived realities of the LGBTQIA+ community. The event, hosted at Hotel Sovraj, was more than just a conversation—it was a heartfelt gathering of stories, truths, challenges, and hope.

The program began with Sumi Das from Moitrisanjog Society, who eloquently traced the roots of Pride, beginning with the Stonewall Riots on June 28, 1969—an uprising that is often cited as the spark of the modern LGBTQIA+ rights movement in the United States. But Sumi reminded us that even before Stonewall, resistance had already begun: the Cooper Donuts protest (Los Angeles, 1959), the Compton's Cafeteria Riots (San Francisco, 1966), and the Black Cat Tavern protests (Los Angeles, 1967)—all brave standpoints against relentless police brutality, especially targeting trans and drag communities.



While today's Pride parades may often be wrapped in corporate sponsorship and police protection, it's crucial to remember that Pride began as a protest—a loud, defiant stand for survival, dignity, and the right to exist authentically.

Shifting the focus to India, Sumi shared the journey of the Pride movement in our own land. The fight here has long been entwined with Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code—a colonial law criminalizing homosexuality. Although India gained independence in 1947, this regressive law remained untouched for decades. Despite the Constitution's Article 14 promising equality to all, queer people remained criminalized and marginalized.

It wasn't until 1992 that India saw its first public protest for gay rights, spearheaded by the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), after police arrested several men in Connaught Place, Delhi, on suspicion of homosexuality. ABVA's activism paved the way—releasing the groundbreaking pamphlet "Less than Gay" in 1991 and filing a PIL in 1994 against Section 377. These acts were bold declarations that queer lives matter.

In 1999, India held its first Pride March—the Kolkata Rainbow Pride Walk—marking the first such event in all of South Asia. Since then, the movement has blossomed across 21+ cities, with Pride walks held in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kerala, Pune, Guwahati, Awadh, Bhopal, Dehradun, and more. Each march symbolizes courage, community, and the ongoing fight for equality.



After the historical reflection, community members honored guest speakers with symbolic tree saplings, signifying growth, resilience, and a hopeful future. Among the guests was Dr. Shantanu Dey, a psychiatrist, who raised a crucial concern: the mental health needs of LGBTQIA+ people remain largely unaddressed by the government. Many psychiatrists still resort to unethical practices—like electroshock therapy or forced medication—to ‘treat’ queer identities. This, he stressed, is not only harmful but a violation of a person's right to live as their true self.

Also present was mental health professional and counselor Smt. Boishali Roy from North Bengal Medical College. She expressed gratitude to Moitrisanjog for shedding light on LGBTQIA+ populations in overlooked districts like Cooch Behar and Alipurduar. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many queer individuals lost their livelihoods and faced worsening mental health. Moitrisanjog’s digital outreach during lockdown offered a lifeline—proving that even virtual solidarity can be deeply healing.

Social worker Mr. Rakesh Das passionately spoke about creating alternative livelihood opportunities. The pandemic pushed many queer individuals back into high-risk or stigmatized forms of work like sex work, street performances, and begging. He encouraged collaborations with Moitrisanjog on skill-building projects—beautician training, mat-making, catering—so that queer individuals can not only earn but also gain dignity and respect in mainstream society.

Families of LGBTQIA+ individuals shared powerful, emotional testimonials. Many spoke of social stigma, rejection, and the heartbreak of seeing their loved ones ostracized. In a society where rigid norms dictate education, career, and marriage, lack of family support severely impacts the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQIA+ people. Some youth are forced to migrate to escape pressure to marry or conform, while others suffer silently under restrictions on their clothing, relationships, or gender expression.

In the absence of family acceptance, online platforms and collectives like Gaysi, Gaylaxy, and Queer Ink have become crucial lifelines—spaces where queer voices are heard, validated, and celebrated.



Research has shown that most LGBTQIA+ youth are born to heterosexual, cisgender parents—many of whom may hold negative biases, consciously or unconsciously. Their reactions can range from concern to abuse or even expulsion from the home. These reactions affect young people’s sense of attachment, security, and self-worth. Those with supportive parents may weather the storm with resilience, but others—especially those already in insecure attachments—may spiral into depression, substance abuse, or homelessness.

Medical experts emphasize that adolescent brains are still developing, particularly in areas of impulse control and emotional regulation. Without supportive adults, LGBTQIA+ youth often struggle to cope with external pressures. That’s why the role of parents, caregivers, teachers, and counselors is so essential. Attachment can evolve over time—if we allow room for compassion, learning, and change.

A key point of discussion was the difficulty in obtaining transgender identity certificates. Sumi Das acknowledged the bureaucratic complexities between central and state governments but reassured the community that Moitrisanjog will continue to help individuals navigate the system and secure their rightful documentation.

To conclude, the community reflected on the deeper meaning of Pride Month. While inspired by global movements, there was a heartfelt call to celebrate local heritage too—festivals like Manasha Gan, Jatra Pala, and Charak Puja. These culturally rooted traditions also hold power, beauty, and stories of resilience that deserve to be honored alongside global narratives.

This event wasn’t just a celebration—it was a space of truth-telling, healing, and collective dreaming. A step toward a more inclusive, kinder world—where every individual, regardless of gender or sexuality, is seen, heard, and held with dignity.



To foster greater awareness and sensitivity towards the transgender community, a sensitization session was recently conducted for the police personnel of Alipurduar Police Station. This initiative aimed to enhance understanding of the challenges faced by transgender individuals and equip officers with the knowledge to respond with empathy and respect.

The session saw participation from 30 police officials, including senior officers such as the Superintendent of Police, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer, and the Officer-in-Charge. Their presence underscored the department's commitment to building an inclusive and informed law enforcement system.

A central focus of the program was the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. Officers were given a detailed presentation on the key features and legal obligations under this landmark legislation. The session explained the rights guaranteed to transgender individuals under the Act, as well as the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement in upholding these rights.

To bring real-life context to the discussion, officers were also shown impactful videos and case studies that highlighted the discrimination, violence, and systemic barriers often encountered by transgender persons. These narratives served to deepen empathy and spark reflection among the attendees.

Overall, the program aimed to promote a culture of respect, non-discrimination, and accountability within the police force when dealing with members of the transgender community. It was a small but meaningful step toward ensuring that every individual—regardless of gender identity—is treated with dignity and justice.

POLICE SENSITIZATION PROGRAM - ALIPURDUAR

VENUE: ALIPURDUAR POLICE STATION

DATE: MARCH 15, 2023



TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) BILL, 2019

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 was introduced by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the Lok Sabha on July 19, 2019. This legislation was framed with the intention of safeguarding the rights of transgender individuals and providing a structured legal framework to support their social, economic, and political inclusion in society.

Under this bill, a transgender person is defined as someone whose gender identity does not align with the sex assigned at birth. The bill outlines several rights for transgender individuals, including the right to self-perceived gender identity, protection from discrimination, and equal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. It also proposes the formation of a National Council for Transgender Persons, tasked with overseeing the implementation of these provisions and advising the government on related policies.

However, the bill has faced significant criticism from the transgender community and human rights activists. A primary concern is the requirement for individuals to undergo a certification process in order to be officially recognized as transgender. This stipulation has been widely condemned for undermining the right to self-identify, and for being invasive, bureaucratic, and in violation of an individual's privacy and dignity.

In essence, while the bill represents a step toward legal recognition and protection for transgender persons, many believe it falls short of truly empowering the community in a respectful and self-affirming way.

CONCLUSION

The sensitization initiative led by Moitrisanjog at the Alipurduar Police Station marked an important step forward in building understanding and compassion between law enforcement and the transgender community. By creating a safe space for dialogue and learning, the program helped begin the journey toward more humane and respectful policing practices.

While the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, represents a foundational move toward protecting the rights of transgender individuals, it is equally important to acknowledge and address its shortcomings. The bill must be re-evaluated and revised in consultation with the community it aims to serve—ensuring that the right to self-identification, privacy, and dignity remains at the forefront of any legislative framework.

Together, with continued sensitization, inclusive policy reforms, and mutual respect, a more equitable and just future for all individuals—regardless of gender identity—can be realized.

CONVERSATIONS WITH POLICE OFFICERS

As part of the sensitization program, the attending police officers were encouraged to openly share their experiences, challenges, and thoughts regarding interactions with transgender individuals. Many officers conveyed a genuine willingness to learn and deepen their understanding of the realities faced by the transgender community. They expressed a sincere commitment to handling such cases with greater empathy, dignity, and care.

At the same time, the officers raised some valid and practical concerns—particularly around the lack of necessary infrastructure and resources. Issues such as the absence of dedicated holding cells for transgender individuals and the unavailability of gender-inclusive medical facilities were brought to light. In response, the organizing NGO reassured the officers that these concerns would be acknowledged, and pledged to collaborate with authorities in working toward inclusive, respectful solutions.



**MONTHLY
SUPPORT GROUP
MEETING**



SUICIDAL TENDENCY IN TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

The issue of suicide and suicidal thoughts within the transgender community is both serious and urgent. In recent years, awareness has increased about the unique challenges transgender individuals face—such as discrimination, marginalization, and mental health struggles. Alarming rates of suicide among transgender people underscore the need to better understand the root causes behind this crisis.

On July 29, 2022, a monthly support group meeting was held to openly discuss the mental health challenges confronting transgender individuals. The meeting brought together seven participants, including four who identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Among them, five identified as male and two as female. In addition, there were nine attendees from indigenous or tribal backgrounds. Although modest in size, the gathering served as an important forum to address the struggles faced by transgender individuals.

Dr. Santanu Dey, a guest speaker at the session, emphasized the numerous factors that elevate suicide risk in this population. Experiences of bullying, discrimination, and violence often lead to social isolation and emotional distress. Furthermore, barriers to accessing respectful healthcare contribute to a deepened sense of hopelessness for many transgender people.

Sumi Das, a member of the MoitriSanjog Society and a transgender individual, shared their personal story of self-discovery, including the emotional toll and daily challenges they encountered. Other attendees also spoke of their hardships, painting a vivid picture of the widespread nature of societal exclusion and prejudice. Despite the hardships, the stories shared also highlighted the remarkable resilience within the transgender community. This strength should be recognized and harnessed in developing supportive, inclusive suicide prevention strategies. Approaches may include increased access to culturally competent mental health care, peer-led support groups, and public awareness efforts to foster acceptance and inclusion.

In summary, suicide among transgender individuals is a critical issue that demands urgent attention and support. The support group meeting on July 29, 2022, served as a valuable platform for dialogue and strategy-building. While attendance was limited, the discussion marked a meaningful step toward awareness, advocacy, and change for the transgender community.



HOSPITAL STAFF SENSITIZATION MEETING:

A sensitization meeting was conducted by Moitrisanjog in collaboration with hospital authorities to address the protection of the rights of transgender patients. The central topics of the meeting included sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV/AIDS, discrimination, and the overall safeguarding of LGBTQ community rights. Hospital administrators, medical professionals, and members of Moitrisanjog were present at the meeting. The objective was to ensure that hospital authorities commit to upholding the rights of transgender individuals receiving medical care.

Discussion on STIs:

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to discussing issues surrounding sexually transmitted infections. Moitrisanjog members highlighted the urgent need to deliver adequate medical care and treatment for transgender individuals dealing with STIs. They elaborated on how transgender people face increased vulnerability to STIs, largely due to stigma, marginalization, and barriers to healthcare. The representatives shared specific information about common STIs prevalent within the transgender community, such as chlamydia, syphilis, and gonorrhea. They stressed the crucial role of routine testing and treatment in curbing the transmission of these infections.

Hospital representatives expressed their willingness to enhance the scope and accessibility of STI-related services for transgender patients. The hospital's leadership assured Moitrisanjog that they would undertake the necessary initiatives to guarantee adequate diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care. The conversation also included the importance of consistent check-ups and early detection to reduce the burden of STIs in the transgender population.

Discussion on HIV/AIDS:

Moitrisanjog members also brought attention to the need for greater awareness among transgender people regarding HIV/AIDS and the necessity of frequent testing. They outlined the increased susceptibility of transgender individuals to HIV/AIDS, a result of their gender identity intersecting with social exclusion and healthcare inequalities.

During the discussion, Moitrisanjog provided data and insights on HIV/AIDS prevalence in the transgender community, citing statistics on infection rates and related deaths. They emphasized the value of timely diagnosis and proper treatment as tools to control the virus and improve outcomes for people living with HIV/AIDS. Hospital authorities responded with commitments to take all required actions to offer effective and compassionate HIV/AIDS care to transgender patients. Additionally, they recognized the importance of continuous testing and counseling to minimize the spread of HIV.

Protecting LGBTQ Rights:

Another focal point of the meeting was the broader issue of protecting LGBTQ rights within the healthcare setting. Moitrisanjog members underscored how transgender individuals frequently face discrimination and dehumanization in medical environments, which in turn deters them from seeking necessary healthcare and negatively impacts their well-being.

Hospital management gave assurances that they would implement measures to prevent any form of bias or prejudice against transgender patients. They discussed plans to introduce sensitivity training programs for healthcare staff to ensure that transgender individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and appropriate medical attention.

Ensuring Safety for Transgender Patients:

The concluding segment of the meeting centered on strategies to protect and support transgender patients within healthcare institutions. Moitrisanjog representatives stressed the necessity of cultivating a secure and inclusive atmosphere where transgender patients feel safe and respected. They spoke about the importance of using affirming language, acknowledging individuals' gender identities, and providing healthcare that meets their specific needs.

In response, hospital leadership affirmed their intention to develop policies and practices that promote a more accepting and protective environment for transgender patients. They committed to offering educational programs for healthcare workers to help them better understand and address the unique experiences and health requirements of transgender individuals.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the meeting between Moitrisanjog and hospital representatives marked an encouraging move toward strengthening protections for transgender patients' rights. Discussions covered essential areas such as STIs, HIV/AIDS, anti-discrimination practices, and patient safety, helping to outline critical action points.

The hospital leadership reiterated their dedication to improving healthcare access, quality, and safety for transgender patients and to fostering an inclusive environment. This collaborative effort is expected to enhance awareness, promote sensitivity among healthcare providers, and trigger meaningful progress in supporting the healthcare needs and human rights of the transgender community.



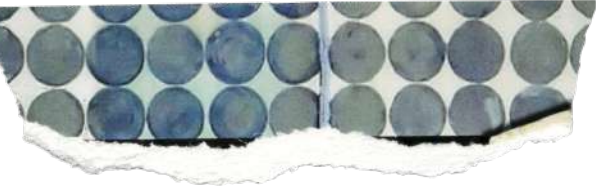
Conclusion:

To sum up, the meeting between Moitrisanjog and hospital representatives marked an encouraging move toward strengthening protections for transgender patients' rights. Discussions covered essential areas such as STIs, HIV/AIDS, anti-discrimination practices, and patient safety, helping to outline critical action points.

The hospital leadership reiterated their dedication to improving healthcare access, quality, and safety for transgender patients and to fostering an inclusive environment. This collaborative effort is expected to enhance awareness, promote sensitivity among healthcare providers, and trigger meaningful progress in supporting the healthcare needs and human rights of the transgender community.



SANITARY PAD
DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM
FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN
RURAL AREAS:



Introduction:

The absence of proper access to menstrual hygiene products poses a serious threat to the health and dignity of adolescent girls. Without essential menstrual care, many young girls are left vulnerable to reproductive tract infections, urinary tract complications, and other health concerns. Beyond the physical risks, the silence, shame, and stigma that still surround menstruation in many rural areas often result in emotional distress, isolation, and hindered educational progress for these girls—limiting their potential before they've even had a fair chance.



Workshop Agenda:

On March 25, 2023, Moitrisanjog, a compassionate and community-driven NGO, stepped forward with a meaningful initiative: a free sanitary pad distribution program for adolescent girls living in the rural heartlands of Cooch Behar, West Bengal. This heartfelt effort was designed to reach those who, due to financial hardship, go without the most basic menstrual hygiene essentials. The initiative received a warm response and was able to touch the lives of many girls in need.

The program opened with a gentle and empowering introduction by the organizers. They spoke earnestly about the importance of menstrual hygiene, and the often unseen struggles girls in rural areas endure to manage their periods with dignity. They addressed these deeply personal challenges with empathy and understanding, setting the tone for an open and supportive space.

In the first half of the workshop, girls participated in interactive, trust-building sessions focused on menstrual hygiene. A kind and knowledgeable facilitator guided the conversations, gently teaching the girls how to care for their bodies during their periods. Topics included the safe and proper use of sanitary pads, the importance of hand hygiene, and the health implications of neglecting menstrual care. The facilitator created a space where girls could ask questions freely, without fear of judgment—an experience many of them had never had before.

The second part of the program was perhaps the most touching: the actual distribution of free sanitary pads. With kindness and humility, Moitrisanjog volunteers visited homes in several villages, offering not just products, but also warmth, education, and compassion. They met each family where they were—both physically and emotionally—sharing not only supplies but understanding. Despite the logistical challenges of going door to door and the cultural hesitations that sometimes surfaced, the volunteers remained patient and respectful. Some families were initially unsure or shy, but many soon expressed heartfelt gratitude for the gesture.

Though the path wasn't without obstacles, the team's determination and empathy helped overcome them. By personally engaging with community members, Moitrisanjog gained invaluable insight into the lived realities of these girls and their families. This approach allowed the organization to respond more meaningfully to the community's needs and lay the groundwork for deeper connection and sustained support.

Conclusion:

In the end, this menstrual hygiene outreach program was more than just a distribution drive—it was a step toward restoring dignity, health, and hope in the lives of young girls. Those who took part not only received the products they urgently needed but also knowledge, reassurance, and the understanding that they matter. Moitrisanjog's work serves as a powerful reminder that access to menstrual hygiene is not a privilege, but a fundamental human right. May this be just the beginning of many such efforts, ensuring that every girl—regardless of her circumstances—can navigate her period with confidence, care, and pride.



Our Health Our Rights: Free Health Camp:



LGBTQ youth often face distinct challenges both in schools and within their families. As such, immersive interventions like overnight summer camps designed specifically for LGBTQ youth have proven to be an effective setting for developing life skills and resilience. These camps create a supportive, inclusive environment that fosters growth. Previous reports on LGBTQ youth camps suggest that such approaches hold great promise for supporting these young individuals.

In the state, there are approximately 25,000 members of the third gender, according to a survey.



However, many transgender individuals cannot afford treatment at private hospitals, and as a result, have been advocating for designated wards for their care in government hospitals. Often, transgender

patients are uncomfortable being admitted to male wards, while female patients object to their presence in female wards. Adding to the complexity, some transgender individuals suffer from conditions like tuberculosis or HIV, leading to further stigma. Many report that doctors are hesitant to provide treatment, and a staggering 75 percent of transgender individuals are denied preventive care due to discrimination in hospitals.

The findings show that public hospitals typically offer only male- and female-focused facilities, with no provisions for transgender or hijra patients. Hijra individuals face verbal harassment, blame for their health conditions, and are often denied equal treatment. Additionally, the facilities for prevention, testing, and treatment are inadequate and inconsistent. Many service providers lack an understanding of hijra culture and are reluctant to engage with hijra patients effectively. Hijra individuals are often perceived by both service providers and non-hijra patients as "panic-makers" or exhibiting "poor" social manners in hospital settings. These challenges highlight the gaps in healthcare services for the hijra community, with many expressing hope for improvements in the future.

On November 11, 2022, the Moitrisanjog Society, supported by the Mariwala Health Initiative, organized a medical health camp in Boiragir Hat, Mathabhanga, Cooch Behar. The camp benefited 27 members of the hijra community. Dr. Miraj Khan (MD) was present at the event, providing



consultations and performing essential health checks, including blood sugar and blood pressure tests. Following the consultations, each participant received prescriptions tailored to their specific health issues. Common medicines were distributed on-site, while those not available were sourced by the participants from other locations.



Pinki Barman, the head of the Boiragir Hat hijra community, expressed her gratitude for the health camp. She shared how her community faces ongoing bullying and discrimination, which makes it difficult to gather the courage to visit government hospitals. The stigma they face in these hospitals often discourages them from seeking medical attention. However, the health camp provided a safe space where the hijra community could freely consult a doctor, helping them access the care they need.

Challenges Encountered:

1. **Bringing Doctors to the Community:** One of the most significant hurdles was getting healthcare professionals to visit the hijra community. The government health sector has shown little understanding of the unique needs of the hijra population, making it nearly impossible to organize such a health camp within the community itself.

2. **Lack of Health Awareness:** Many members of the hijra community have dropped out of school, and as a result, they lack basic knowledge about the importance of routine health tests, such as blood sugar and blood pressure checks. This gap in understanding made it challenging to emphasize the importance of regular medical visits and preventive care. Educating the community on the need for at least monthly check-ups was a significant part of the health camp's efforts.

This health camp was a critical step forward in addressing the healthcare needs of the hijra community, providing them with essential medical services and creating a welcoming, non-judgmental environment for care. It highlighted the importance of such initiatives in building trust and encouraging health-seeking behavior among marginalized groups.





Perspective building and capacity building
Workshop:



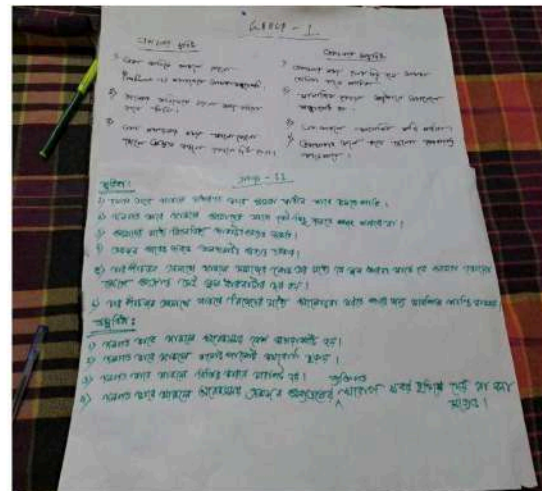
To achieve success, individuals must collaborate, learn from each other, and build trust and mutual reliance. With this in mind, The Center places significant focus on fostering a strong, supportive community where individuals can offer support, exchange knowledge, collaborate, and inspire one another.

The Center organizes and hosts various activities and events aimed at engaging LGBTQ individuals of all ages, fostering inclusive communities for everyone – including lesbians, gays, transgender individuals, bisexuals, queer people, and those who are gender non-conforming.

This drop-in social and networking space offers a welcoming and friendly atmosphere where LGBT adults and allies can come together without a set agenda. We believe it creates the perfect environment for engaging conversations, building camaraderie, and generating exciting ideas. Drop by, have some fun, and connect with others!

On November 23, 2022, a capacity-building meeting took place with LGBTQ community members at the “Eso Kotha Boli” drop-in center in Alipurduar district. The meeting brought together 19 community members to promote unity and enhance their collective capacity. Ratul Biswas, the secretary of the well-known local NGO Manobik Mukh, discussed the importance of team-building within the community. He kicked off the meeting, followed by Sumi Das from Moitrisanjog Society, who emphasized the significance of capacity building. She explained how strengthening the community would empower members to stand up to bullying and ensure they can live freely and confidently, exercising their fundamental rights as guaranteed by law.

After the meeting, all attendees participated in a collaborative activity, creating a chart that highlighted the positive and negative effects of unity within the community. Each person contributed their ideas, and everyone engaged in the process. The group discussed how lack of unity could lead to bullying in public spaces, schools, and beyond, which could result in individuals dropping out of school. However, they also agreed that when the community stands together, society is more likely to think twice before harassing or bullying an LGBTQ individual.





Child Education Program

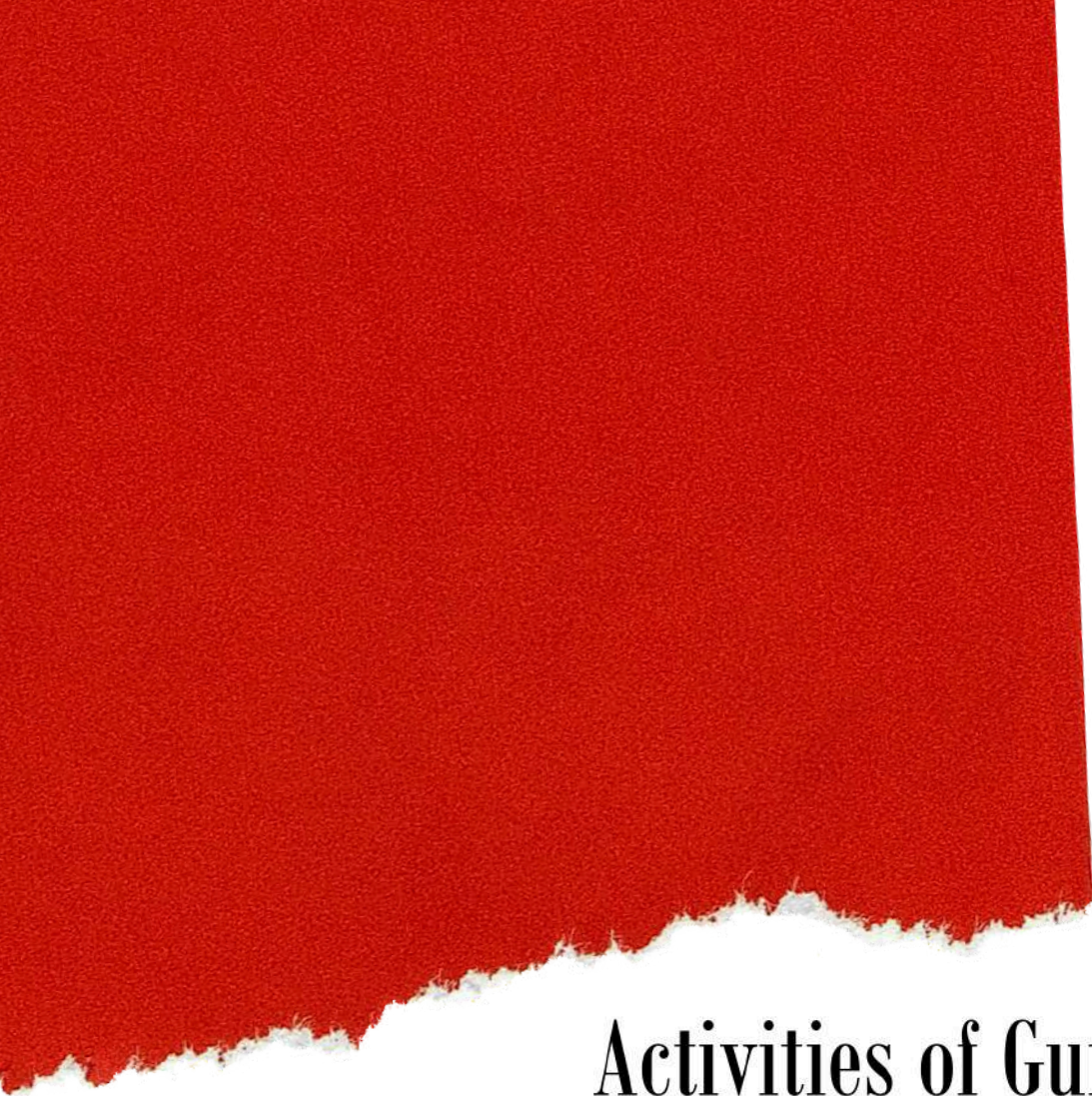
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Child Care Center Background

Moitrisanjog Society was founded in 2009 with the primary goal of advocating for the rights of the transgender community. Members of this community have long faced bullying and discrimination, often struggling to find employment simply because of their identity. The society was created to address these issues and stand up for the rights of transgender individuals. After receiving formal registration in 2011, Moitrisanjog Society has been committed to improving the lives of transgender people and fighting for their inclusion in society.

Recognizing the challenges faced by transgender individuals in education, Moitrisanjog Society became aware that many had not had the opportunity to attend school. Even those who did attend often dropped out due to constant bullying from peers. This experience led transgender individuals to feel that society was unjust and unequal, catering only to those in power.

To address these issues, Moitrisanjog Society, alongside transgender community members, established an educational center for children. This center was created to support children who may experience bullying in schools or whose parents lack the financial resources to send them to school. Since transgender individuals cannot biologically become mothers, Moitrisanjog Society also launched a "Gurukul" initiative to ensure a brighter future for children, while challenging the narrow-minded views present in today's society.



Activities of Gurukul

Moitrisanjog Society operates 24 hours a day to serve the transgender community and those in need. However, the Gurukul is open from Monday to Friday, from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM, and on Sundays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Many of the children attending Gurukul go to nearby government schools, but due to their home environments lacking an educational focus and their parents being less educated, these children need a better educational environment. The Gurukul provides this by offering not only a supportive learning atmosphere but also two meals a day. Children can also learn computer skills and participate in extracurricular activities.

Currently, there are 24 children attending the Gurukul, all from disadvantaged backgrounds. These children were previously removed from government schools by their parents, but with the encouragement of Moitrisanjog Society, they are continuing their education in government schools. The children receive full support from the Gurukul at no cost. When they first joined the Gurukul two years ago, some were in class 2, while others were in class 6. The Gurukul aims to guide these 24 children until they complete their 10th grade, taking the state board exams.

As the Gurukul is run by members of the transgender community, who understand that they can never be biological mothers, they are committed to giving their all to ensure the children have a bright and successful future.

The Gurukul was started during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and for the first two years, it was funded by local donations. However, with businesses reopening and people returning to work, the level of donations has significantly decreased. As a result, the Gurukul is facing financial challenges and is struggling to maintain its operations. We are seeking your support through donations to help continue the Gurukul's work. Attached is an estimated budget for the next year to support the 24 children attending.



**1st Anniversary Moitrisanjog Gurukul
(Child Education center) &
Independence Day Celebration**



Moitrisanjog Society, based in Cooch Behar, has been working to support the LGBTQ community since its inception in 2009, with a primary focus on advocating for the legal rights of transgender individuals. The society has also implemented various supportive initiatives, such as beautician courses, mat-making courses, catering courses, and more, aimed at empowering transgender individuals. Currently, Moitrisanjog Society has taken on the responsibility of providing for the education, food, and clothing of 22 underprivileged children, who, like the transgender community, often face neglect and exclusion due to their background.

As transgender people, we have never had the opportunity to pursue education due to the bullying and discrimination we faced in schools. Since transgender individuals cannot biologically become mothers, the child education project gives us the chance to experience the joy of motherhood by supporting these children. The project was launched in August 2021, providing

these children with two meals a day, free clothing, and school supplies.

The children come to the Gurukul in the morning, where they are provided with breakfast at 9 AM, before heading to their respective schools. In the afternoon, they have their mid-day meals at school. After school, they return to the Gurukul for extra study time, including homework and extracurricular activities, and then have dinner before going home.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of India's independence, and various programs are being organized under the theme of "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" to commemorate the event and pay tribute to the freedom fighters. One of the key initiatives is the "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign, launched by the Government of India, which encourages every citizen to hoist the national flag at their homes in celebration of the country's independence.

On August 15, 1947, India gained freedom after over 200 years of British rule. The journey to independence was marked by numerous non-violent struggles led by freedom fighters, many of whom sacrificed their lives for the country.



Independence Day is celebrated every year with great enthusiasm as a national festival, remembering the sacrifices and invaluable contributions of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Chandra Shekhar Azad, among others.

This year, we celebrated the 75th Independence Day at our Gurukul with the children and other dignitaries. Members of the teaching profession and social work sectors were invited to the event. The program began with the singing of the national anthem, followed by activities performed by the children, such as dance, drawing, and other presentations on the theme of Independence Day.

The children's parents were also present and expressed their gratitude, sharing how, during the lockdown, they were uncertain about their children's educational future due to financial constraints. They

mentioned that the Gurukul has provided a supportive and equal environment for the children, offering them the chance to thrive in their studies and activities. The founder of Moitrisanjog Society also delivered a speech reflecting on the 75 years of India's independence and its significance.



Maitrisanjog Gurukul's Approach to Mental Health and Education Through Art





The Importance of Art in Child Education and Mental Health Support

Art plays a crucial role in the overall development of children, offering a wide range of benefits. Not only does it foster self-expression, but it also helps children better understand the world around them. Art is a hands-on, enjoyable experience that aids in cognitive development, and studies have shown that for low-income students, arts education has long-term academic and social benefits. These students, in particular, have shown significant improvement in both their academic performance and social skills, thanks to the inclusion of art in their educational experience.

Moitrisanjog Gurukul's Approach to Mental Health and Education Through Art

On 18th July 2022, Moitrisanjog Gurukul, an educational and support initiative, hosted a session for students struggling with mental health issues. The focus of this session was on providing a safe space for children to express their struggles, especially given the sensitivity surrounding mental health among young people. Recognizing the challenges children face in expressing their emotions verbally, the Gurukul introduced Creative Courage—a program designed to help children address their mental health through nonverbal tools. These tools, such as mindfulness, journaling, and art activities, encouraged children to identify and express their emotions in a healthy and creative way.

Mental health in childhood is just as essential as physical health, as it supports children in achieving developmental milestones, both emotionally and socially. Mentally healthy children are more likely to function well at home, at school, and within their communities, laying the foundation for future success and happiness. Conversely, poor mental health during childhood can have profound effects



on a child's learning abilities, behavior, and emotional management. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted children's mental health worldwide. The widespread challenges brought on by the pandemic, such as grief, fear, uncertainty, social isolation, increased screen time, and parental fatigue, severely disrupted children's mental health and well-being.

The Global Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Mental Health

The global lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic put the mental health of millions of children at risk. Over 330 million children were forced to stay at home for extended periods, and many experienced significant psychological and emotional distress. The challenges faced by parents, such as stress and uncertainty, made it even harder for them to address their children's emotional needs. Children often worried about when schools would reopen, when they could go outside to play, or when they could visit their favorite places—questions that stemmed from the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.



Negative emotions such as fear, disappointment, sadness, anxiety, and anger became common as children navigated this period of disruption. The prolonged nature of the pandemic intensified these feelings. Increased screen time, strained family relationships, and a sedentary lifestyle at home added further complications to their mental well-being. Children with pre-existing mental health issues or those who had experienced trauma or loss were particularly vulnerable to more severe mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and even suicidal tendencies.

The Role of Art in Addressing Children's Mental Health Needs

Art has a critical role to play in addressing the physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of children. It provides a creative outlet for expression, helping children develop key skills such as problem-solving, design, abstract thinking, vocabulary development, and understanding cause and effect. These skills are essential for overall cognitive development and can enhance children's ability to communicate and learn.

For some children, particularly those learning English or children with special needs, expressing themselves through writing can be challenging. Art provides a non-verbal form of communication that helps these children explain their thoughts and feelings. Drawing, painting, and other forms of art can bridge the gap between their inner experiences and the external world, enabling them to communicate more effectively. Art also helps students understand written content better, as visuals can provide context and deepen their comprehension.

Additionally, engaging in role-playing or acting out stories and events can significantly improve students' understanding of the material. Acting out parts of a text or conducting a "readers' theater" activity helps students gain confidence and a deeper understanding of the narrative. Incorporating props and settings further enriches the experience and adds an element of fun and creativity to the learning process.

The Impact of Arts Education on Academic Performance

While not every student may consider art their favorite subject, studies consistently show that integrating the arts into a school's curriculum can lead to significant academic improvements. Schools that emphasize arts education tend to see better performance in subjects like math, English, and critical thinking. The arts nurture creativity, which in turn boosts problem-solving abilities and fosters an innovative mindset—skills highly valued by employers.

Moreover, arts education prepares students for future careers by developing valuable skills such as time management, teamwork, and resilience. In the arts, students learn to work both independently and collaboratively. They gain experience in managing deadlines, navigating challenges, and learning from

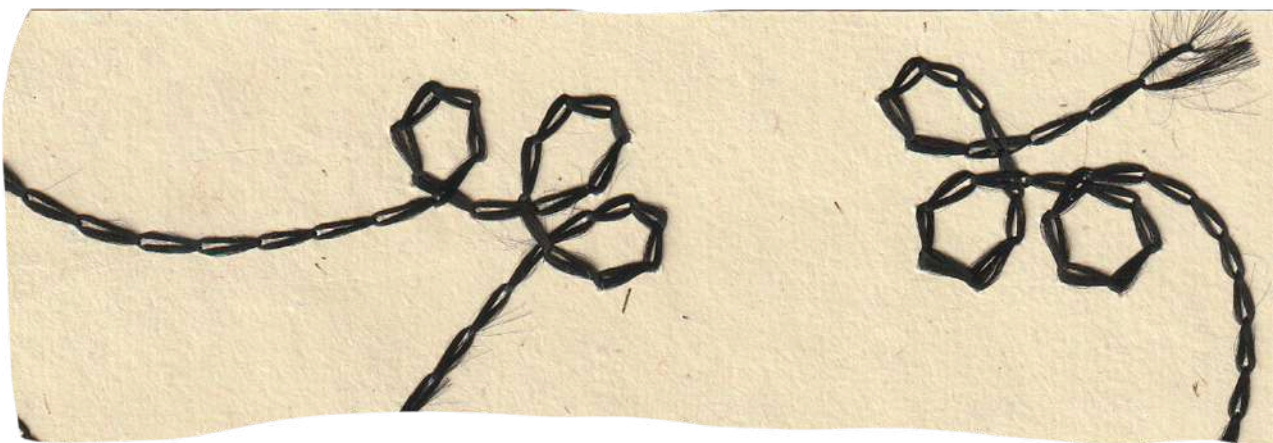
mistakes. As a drama student from King Ethelbert's School in Kent put it, "It has taught me that if I work on it, I will get there eventually. It is determination and commitment." This attitude of perseverance is something that students can carry with them into any career, providing them with a solid foundation for future success.



The Long-Term Benefits of Arts Education

The benefits of arts education extend beyond academic performance. It instills important life skills, including creative thinking, collaboration, and resilience—qualities that employers look for in candidates. Art fosters determination, teaching students that failure is a natural part of the learning process and that persistence will lead to eventual success. These qualities, developed through engagement in the arts, can set students on a path to success in whatever field they choose.

In conclusion, art plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of children, particularly in addressing their mental health and enhancing their cognitive, emotional, and social skills. At Moitrisanjog Gurukul, we have seen firsthand how art-based activities, combined with support for mental health, have helped children express their emotions and thrive despite the challenges of the pandemic. As we continue to support these children through the arts, we are building a foundation for a brighter, more resilient future, both academically and personally.



Report on the Activities of Moitrisanjog Society and Gurukul Celebrations

Introduction

Moitrisanjog Society is an organization dedicated to supporting the transgender and minority communities. After years of working with these marginalized groups, the society expanded its mission by establishing an educational center called "Gurukul." The Gurukul provides education to children from extremely underprivileged families, where parents are unable to afford education due to their financial constraints. Many of these children come from households where fathers work as daily laborers in distant cities and mothers engage in menial jobs like housework or daily wage labor. These families struggle to meet basic needs, and education for their children often becomes an afterthought. Moitrisanjog Society plays a pivotal role in offering these children the opportunity for an education they would otherwise never receive.

Gurukul's Educational Initiatives



At Gurukul, Moitrisanjog Society ensures that the children receive proper education along with three meals a day. The center is staffed with 3-4 dedicated teachers who work to provide a nurturing and supportive learning environment. Many social



activists and well-wishers have taken notice of the initiative and have visited the Gurukul to offer additional classes and support. Social service organizations also frequently visit the center, joining in the celebrations of various occasions with the children. Despite coming from impoverished backgrounds, the children at Gurukul are never deprived of the joy of celebrating significant cultural and religious festivals.

Cultural Celebrations at Gurukul

Bengal has a rich cultural and religious history, with many temples dedicated to gods and goddesses like Kali, Shiva, and Radha-Krishna. Durga Puja, in particular, has become an integral part of the cultural fabric of Bengal. The festival, dedicated to the worship of Goddess Durga, is celebrated with great enthusiasm, attracting people from all walks of life, including Muslims and Christians, who actively participate in the festivities. Durga Puja is marked by community gatherings, long queues at pandals (temporary installations for Durga), and celebrations that span several days and nights.

In line with this tradition, Moitrisanjog Society ensured that the children at Gurukul could also celebrate Durga Puja. On 25th September 2022, the society distributed new clothes to all the children, a gesture that holds great cultural significance, as it is customary to wear new clothes during Durga Puja. For many of these children, receiving new clothes during the festival would have been impossible without the support of Moitrisanjog Society. The celebration was made possible not only through financial contributions but also the physical presence of many supporters and volunteers who helped make the occasion special for the children. Moitrisanjog Society hopes to continue this tradition and bring joy to the children during every Durga Puja.



Holi Celebration: A Message of Unity in Diversity

Moitrisanjog Society also celebrated the festival of Holi with the children of Gurukul, emphasizing the diversity of India and the inclusive spirit of the occasion. Holi is a festival that transcends religious and cultural boundaries, symbolizing the victory of good over evil and the arrival of spring. In a unique and meaningful gesture, the children were

encouraged to embrace this diversity by participating in a playful and symbolic celebration. For instance, a Muslim boy dressed as Lord Krishna, and a Muslim girl dressed as Radha, showcasing the unity and harmony that transcends religious lines.

Through its educational and cultural initiatives, Moitrisanjog Society is making a meaningful difference in the lives of underprivileged children at Gurukul. The organization not only provides education but also ensures that the children



This inclusive celebration sent a powerful message to the society about the beauty of India's diversity and the



importance of fostering unity. After the festivities, the children were provided with tiffin, and they returned home with happy memories. Moitrisanjog Society hopes that such events will leave a positive impact on society, promoting greater understanding and harmony among people from different backgrounds.

Conclusion

experience the joy and significance of cultural celebrations, regardless of their financial background. The distribution of new clothes during Durga Puja and the celebration of Holi reflect the society's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all children. These efforts, made possible through the support of the local community, volunteers, and social service



organizations, continue to enrich the lives of the children and contribute to their emotional and social development. Moitrisanjog Society is dedicated to maintaining these traditions and ensuring that every child at Gurukul receives the education and joy they deserve.



Raksha Bandhan: A Celebration of Protection and Bonding

Raksha Bandhan, which translates to “the bond of protection,” is a meaningful Hindu festival that celebrates the loving and caring relationship between siblings. This festival emphasizes the special bond that exists between brothers and sisters, and though siblings may argue and disagree throughout the year, Raksha Bandhan serves as a reminder to cherish and acknowledge the significance of one another. It is a day that reinforces love, care, and mutual respect.



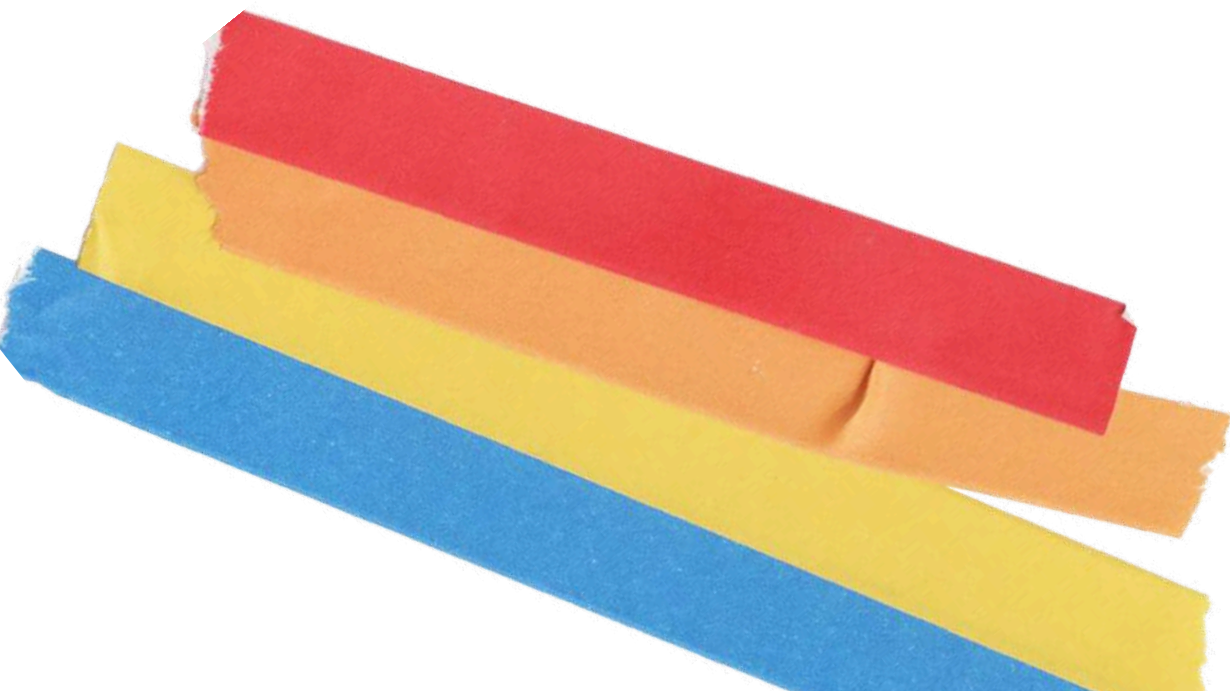
Raksha Bandhan symbolizes not just the connection between biological brothers and sisters, but also celebrates the broader concept of familial love and protection that transcends bloodlines. It is a celebration of any form of brother-sister bond, whether it is between individuals who share a biological connection, or those who are close in spirit, such as cousins, friends, or community members. This inclusivity strengthens the message that the bond of protection and care is not limited to family ties alone but extends to all relationships built on love and trust.

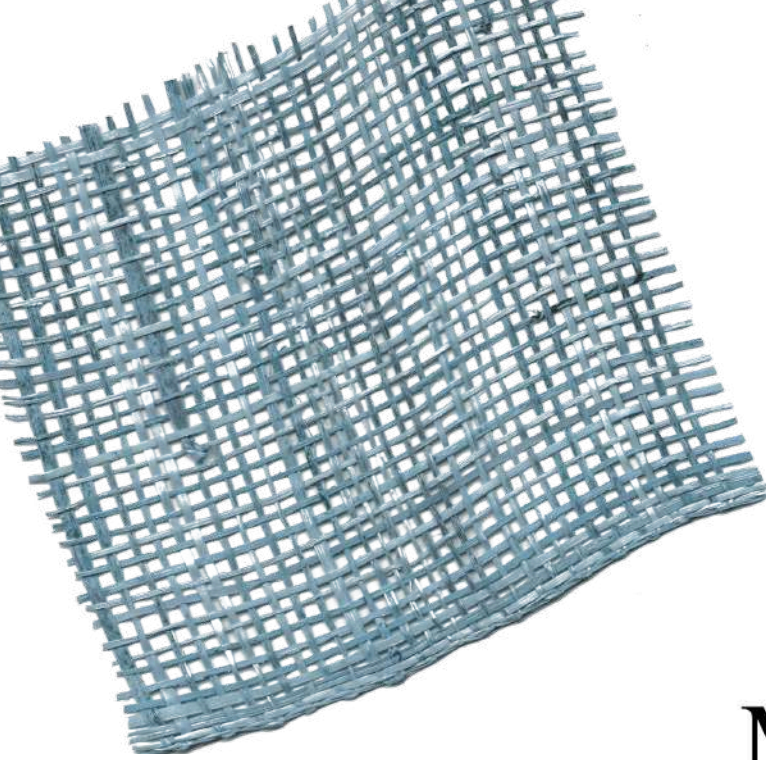
On this auspicious day, a sister ties a rakhi, a decorative thread, around her brother's wrist, symbolizing her wishes for his well-being, happiness, and success. In return, the brother expresses his gratitude and promises to protect his sister from harm, offering her gifts as a token of his commitment. This exchange of love, responsibility, and protection is central to the festival's meaning.

Raksha Bandhan also brings people together, regardless of gender or familial connection. It celebrates the essence of protection and care, fostering a sense of unity and belonging within the community. It encourages individuals to look out for one another, not only within their immediate families but also within their extended social circles.



In today's world, Raksha Bandhan can be celebrated as a reminder of how we all play important roles in safeguarding and supporting each other, especially in diverse communities. It is not limited to one traditional interpretation, but rather it reflects the shared responsibility of looking after one another, promoting peace, and strengthening the ties that bind us all. Through this festival, we can embrace the values of protection, love, and mutual respect, regardless of one's background, and recognize that these bonds are integral to the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole.





Blanket Distribution Initiative by Moitrisanjog Society



Moitrisanjog, a community-based organization located in Cooch Behar, North Bengal, has been steadfast in its mission to advocate for the rights and dignity of the queer community, particularly transgender and gender variant individuals. Established in 2011, Moitrisanjog initially began as an informal solidarity group where members of the transgender and gender-diverse communities would gather to share their experiences, challenges, and find mutual support. As the group's reach expanded and its work gained recognition, it was formally registered as a society under the Society Act in 2011, marking the formal establishment of Moitrisanjog as a community-based organization (CBO).

The core aim of Moitrisanjog is to create a safe and supportive network that ensures equal rights, opportunities, and entitlements for everyone in the queer community. With a focus on promoting dignity, respect, and human rights, the organization seeks to provide financial security and economic opportunities through programs like craftsmanship training, alongside offering vital services such as health care, counseling, and legal aid. Moitrisanjog also advocates for better access to education and employment, while running awareness campaigns to combat discrimination and violence



against marginalized communities.

In the winter of 2022, Moitrisanjog launched a crucial social initiative to address a pressing issue faced by members of the queer community: inadequate shelter and insufficient warmth during the harsh winter months. Recognizing that many transgender individuals, elderly people, and marginalized groups lacked access to proper clothing or blankets, the organization initiated a warm blanket distribution program. This initiative aimed to provide warmth and comfort to individuals who were struggling to survive in the winter cold, particularly those without stable homes or regular incomes.

The blanket distribution program proved to be essential for a number of community members, including migrant workers, transgender individuals, and the elderly, many of whom had limited access to basic necessities. Moitrisanjog successfully distributed 50 blankets in Bairagirhat Block 1, Mathabhangra, and 200 blankets in Ghughubari Block 1, focusing on the elderly who were most vulnerable during the colder months. The initiative went beyond merely providing material support; it reaffirmed Moitrisanjog's commitment to ensuring that marginalized individuals, especially those from





the queer community, are afforded their basic rights to live with dignity and respect, regardless of their economic or social circumstances.

Among the recipients of the warm blankets were individuals like Rama Paul, who had spent her entire life in the Hizra Dera. Rama was forced to leave her home at a young age, and despite a desire to become a dancer, she was unable to pursue her dream due to the harsh realities she faced. Rama survives by begging, and the warm blanket provided her with comfort and relief during the freezing winter nights. Another recipient, Kanika Sutradhar, an intersex child abandoned by her family at the Boiragirhat Dera in Cooch Behar, currently earns her livelihood through sex work. Kanika, too, received a warm blanket that helped her stay warm during the cold months.

These personal stories highlight the immense challenges faced by many individuals within the queer community, whose basic needs are often overlooked. The distribution program, supported by Moitrisanjog's friends and well-wishers, brought warmth to 36 community members, offering them a sense of dignity and compassion in a time of need. Many people were unaware of the stark reality faced by so many individuals in India who are without basic warmth in the winter. Through this initiative, Moitrisanjog brought attention to these hidden struggles and garnered support to alleviate them.

The success of the blanket distribution program was made possible through the kindness and generosity of supporters who recognized the importance of this initiative. Moitrisanjog hopes to continue receiving such support in the future to extend its outreach and help more individuals in need. The organization remains dedicated to its mission of creating a more inclusive and supportive society, where every individual—regardless of their gender, identity, or background—has the right to live with dignity, comfort, and security.





Free Tree Distribution Initiative by Moitrisanjog Society

Moitrisanjog Society, with the generous funding support from Dr. Sankar & Mrs. Suzanne Dasgupta, and in collaboration with The Community Foundation (TCF), has successfully launched a tree distribution initiative aimed at supporting impoverished communities in Cooch Behar. The program, led by the Moitrisanjog Society (MSS), distributed jackfruit saplings to 5000 villagers, including members of the Rajbangsi Dalit community, in various regions such as Cooch Behar Block 1, Ghughumari GP, Basarhat Village, and Ganger Kuthi Village.

Jackfruit, an essential tropical fruit, has been a staple food source in India for centuries. Known for its unique appearance and name, it is an important food resource, especially during times when staple food supplies were limited. Referred to as "poor man's food," jackfruit has been a significant contributor to the nutrition of both people and livestock. Over time, jackfruit has gained further recognition for its versatility, particularly among vegans and vegetarians who use it as a substitute for meat in various dishes.

Nutritional and Health Benefits of Jackfruit

Jackfruit is an extraordinary tropical tree with numerous health benefits due to its rich nutrient content. The fruit is packed with carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber. Some notable health benefits associated with jackfruit include its anticancer, antimicrobial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, wound-healing, and blood sugar-regulating properties. Jackfruit is also an excellent source of several vitamins such as vitamin A, vitamin C, and various B vitamins, and contains significant amounts of essential minerals like iron, potassium, magnesium, manganese, zinc, phosphorus, and calcium.

In terms of antioxidants, jackfruit contains potent compounds such as lutein, zeaxanthin, and beta-carotene, all of which are beneficial to overall health. The fruit is high in calories and water content (roughly 80%), while being very low in fat. In addition to the fruit itself, jackfruit seeds are also highly nutritious, containing dense levels of protein, minerals, and dietary fiber. This makes the jackfruit tree an incredibly valuable resource for those who cultivate it, providing both immediate and long-term benefits for both sustenance and economic gain.

Impact of the Jackfruit Sapling Distribution

The distribution of jackfruit saplings to the villagers is a forward-thinking initiative with lasting benefits. Within two years of planting, community



members will be able to harvest jackfruit from their own gardens, providing them with a sustainable food source. Additionally, they will have the option to sell any surplus jackfruit at nearby markets, generating potential income to improve their economic conditions. The branches of the jackfruit trees, often referred to as "lakri," can also be utilized by the villagers for various purposes, such as cooking or other practical needs, thus adding further utility to the tree. This initiative not only benefits the people of these villages but also contributes to environmental conservation. The planting of trees has a significant positive impact on the local ecosystem by improving air quality, reducing soil erosion, and promoting biodiversity.

Role of the Transgender Community in Environmental Awareness



The transgender community has been playing a vital role in advocating for social and environmental change. Despite facing discrimination and marginalization, the community has actively engaged in efforts to improve society and the environment. As part of this initiative, members of the transgender community are leading the charge in promoting awareness about the importance of environmental sustainability. Many transgender individuals within Moitrisanjog

Society have pledged to adopt one tree per person, demonstrating their commitment to environmental protection and community development.

Through these actions, the transgender community not only strengthens its position within society but also actively contributes to a larger collective effort to protect the planet. This initiative aligns with the values of Moitrisanjog, which consistently strives to empower marginalized communities, ensuring their participation in both environmental and social reforms.

Conclusion

The distribution of jackfruit saplings to the villagers of Cooch Behar represents a significant step towards improving the livelihoods of impoverished communities while contributing to environmental sustainability. This initiative, supported by Moitrisanjog Society, provides immediate benefits through the provision of a nutritious food source and long-term economic opportunities through the sale of jackfruit. Furthermore, the active involvement of the transgender community in this project highlights their ongoing commitment to social and environmental causes. Moitrisanjog remains dedicated to empowering marginalized communities and fostering greater inclusivity and awareness in the fight against environmental degradation.



স্বনির্ভরতার উড়ানে রূপান্তরকামীরা

শিবশংকর সূত্রধর

কোচবিহার, ২৩ মার্চ : ওঁরা প্রত্যেকেই রূপান্তরকামী। সমাজের আর পাঁচটা মানুষের থেকে খানিকটা আলাদা। সমাজ তাঁদের বাক্যে দেখলেও মাথা উঁচু করে বাজার লক্ষ্যে রীতিমতো পরিশ্রম করে, মাথার ঘাম পায়ে ফেলে ব্যবসা করছেন রূপান্তরকামীরা। কারও উপর নির্ভর করে নয়, নিজেরাই কাগজের থালা-বাটি তৈরি করে কোচবিহারের নানা বাজারে সরবরাহ করছেন তাঁরা। কোচবিহারের রূপান্তরকামীদের এই কাজকে সুনির্দিষ্ট জানিয়েছেন অনেকেই।

কোচবিহার শহর সংলগ্ন ঘুমুয়ারির বশেরহাটে কাগজের থালা, বাটি তৈরির একটি কারখানা রয়েছে। লকডাউনের পরবর্তী সময়ে রূপান্তরকামীদের নিয়ে কাজ করা 'মৈত্রী সংযোগ সোসাইটি' নামে একটি সংগঠনের উদ্যোগে সেই কারখানাটি তৈরি করা হয়। দু'তিনজন ছেলে সেখানে কাজ করলেও বাকিরা রূপান্তরকামী। মেশিন দিয়ে



কাগজের মেট তৈরির কাজ করছেন এক রূপান্তরকামী। ছবি : জয়দেব দাস

কাগজ কাটা, রং করা, থালা তৈরি, প্যাকেট করা এমনকি মার্কেটিংয়ের কাজও তাঁরাই করছেন। বিভিন্ন প্রতিভুলতার মধ্য দিয়ে গেসেও বর্তমানে প্রত্যেকেই প্রতি মাসে কিছু টাকার মুখ দেখতে পারছেন। রূপান্তরকামী শুভ দাস বললেন, 'আগে তো আমাদের রোজগার বলতে কিছুই ছিল না। অন্যের উপর নির্ভর

করে থাকতে হত। আমরাও যে কিছু করতে পারি সেই চিন্তাভাবনা থেকেই কারখানায় কাজ শুরু। এখন প্রতিদিন এখানে কাজ করি।' রাজা মণ্ডল, মকবুল হোসেন, রহিমা খাতুনদেরও একই বক্তব্য। জানা গিয়েছে, ওই কারখানায় মোট ন'জন কর্মী রয়েছেন। তার মধ্যে পাঁচজনই রূপান্তরকামী। বিজি, দুর্গাপুর থেকে কাগজের রোল

নিয়ে আসা হয় কারখানায়। সেখানে কাগজের থালা, বাটি তৈরির পর কোচবিহারের বাজার জো বটেই সিনহাট, তুফানগঞ্জ, মাখাভাপার বাজারেও সেগুলি সরবরাহ করা হয়।

মৈত্রী সংযোগ সোসাইটির সম্পাদক সুমি দাস বলেন, 'আমাদের কাজের শুরুটা সহজ ছিল না। প্রথমে আমরা যখন বাজারগুলিতে মার্কেটিংয়ের জন্য যেতাম কেউ আমাদের অর্ডার দিত না। আমরা যে অর্ডার অনুযায়ী পণ্য সরবরাহ করতে পারব, সেই বিশ্বাসটাই কেউ করত না। অল্প অল্প করে কাগজের থালা, বাটি তৈরি করতে করতে এখন জেলাজুড়েই ব্যবসা বেড়েছে।'

তিনি আরও জানান, কোনো পরিস্থিতির সময় প্রত্যেকেই মতো রূপান্তরকামীদেরও আর্থিক অবস্থা খারাপ হয়ে পড়ায়। রোজগার বন্ধ হয়ে যাওয়ায় বিপাকে পড়েন তাঁরা। পরবর্তী সময়ে 'জুজু' ও 'সেবা ইন্টারন্যাশনাল' নামে দুটি সংগঠনের আর্থিক সহযোগিতায় তাঁরা কারখানা শুরু করেন।

উত্তরবঙ্গ সংবাদ

উত্তরবঙ্গের আত্মার আত্মায়

মনের কথা শুনবে রূপান্তরকামীদের সংস্থা

তুষার দেব

দেওয়ানহাট, ৩১ মার্চ : আধুনিকতার সঙ্গে পাল্লা দিয়ে সমাজে ক্রমেই বাড়ছে মনের অসুখ। পাশাপাশি থেকেও একেজজন মানুষের মধ্যে যেন কত না দূরত্ব! নিজের সমস্যার কথা, একান্ত অনুভূতির কথা বলব কাকে? এ প্রশ্নের উত্তর খুঁজে বেড়ান অনেকেই। তাঁদের জন্য এবার এগিয়ে এল রূপান্তরকামীদের নিয়ে গঠিত 'মৈত্রী সংযোগ সোসাইটি'। কোচবিহার-১ ব্লকের ঘুমুয়ারিতে ওই সংগঠনের উদ্যোগে শুরু হয়েছে 'এসো কথা বলি' কর্মসূচি।

সমাজের অনেকেই রূপান্তরকামীদের বাক্য চোখে দেখেন। কিন্তু তাঁরাও যে সমাজের হিতার্থে নানা কাজে অংশ নিতে চান তা বারবার প্রমাণ করেছে 'মৈত্রী সংযোগ সোসাইটি'। রূপান্তরকামী সুমি দাস তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের বেশ কিছু মানুষকে একত্রিত করে বছর কয়েক আগে এই সংগঠন তৈরি করেন। কারও উপর নির্ভর করে নয়, মাথা উঁচু করে বাঁচার লক্ষ্যে তিনি তাঁদের জন্য পাটি, কাগজের থালা, প্লেট তৈরি সহ নানা হাতের কাজের ব্যবস্থা করেন। এতে আয়ের পথ খুলে যায়। এর পাশাপাশি গ্রামীণ মহিলাদের মধ্যে স্যানিটারি ন্যাপকিন বিলি, স্কুল গড়ে এলাকার শিশুদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করে সোসাইটি। এবারে তাদের কর্মসূচি



এখানেই চলছে 'এসো কথা বলি' কর্মসূচি। সামনে সুমি দাস।

'এসো কথা বলি'।

ইতিমধ্যে ঘুমুয়ারি রেলগেটের পাশে একটি ভাড়াবাড়িতে শুরু হয়েছে এই কর্মসূচি। প্রতি সপ্তাহে সোম, বুধ ও শুক্রবার দুপুর ১২টা থেকে রাত ন'টা পর্যন্ত যে কোনও মানুষ এখানে এসে সম্পূর্ণ বিনামূল্যে সুমি সহ অন্যদের সঙ্গে মন বলে কথা বলতে পারছেন। সুমি বলেন, 'সমাজে বহু মানুষ যেন একটা বুকের মধ্যে রয়েছেন। নিজের সমস্যার কথা, মন খারাপের কথা কাউকে বলতে পারছেন না। এই জায়গা থেকেই আমরা আন্তরিকভাবে তাঁদের কথা শুনতে চাই। তাই এই

কর্মসূচি।' তিনি জানান, ইতিমধ্যে বেশ কয়েকজন এসে ব্যক্তিগত জীবনের বহু সমস্যা, একাকিত্বের কথা তাঁদের সঙ্গে ভাগ করে নিয়েছেন। তাঁরাও সাধামতো দিয়েছেন পাশে থাকার আশ্বাস। তবে এখানে যারা আসছেন সকলের পরিচয় সম্পূর্ণ গোপন রাখছেন সুমিরা। এই উদ্যোগকে অনেকেই মুক্তকণ্ঠে কুনিশ জানিয়েছেন। দেওয়ানহাট কলেজের অধ্যাপিকা দীপ্তি রায় বলেন, 'এটি ভীষণ ভালো এবং মানবিক একটি উদ্যোগ। বক্তব্যব্রিকতা যখন আমাদের ঘিরে ধরেছে তখন এর প্রয়োজনীয়তা অপরিসীম।

Future Plans of Moitrisanjog Society

Moitrisanjog Society remains committed to empowering the queer and transgender communities while addressing the critical issues they face. The organization has outlined several key initiatives for the future, aiming to provide more opportunities for growth, education, and acceptance for these marginalized groups.

A) Vocational Training and Market Linkages

Moitrisanjog Society plans to expand its vocational training programs for the community, equipping members with skills that can enhance their employment prospects. The organization intends to link the output of these training programs to various markets, trade fairs, and cottage industries. By doing so, they will create sustainable livelihood options for the community and ensure that the products and services created by the transgender and queer individuals reach a wider audience. This will enable them to gain recognition, earn a steady income, and establish a stable economic foundation for themselves.

B) Reducing Drop-Out Rates in Education

One of the primary obstacles faced by transgender and queer individuals is a lack of proper education, often due to societal stigma, discrimination, or limited access to educational resources. Moitrisanjog Society recognizes that a low academic background is a significant barrier to employment opportunities. Therefore, one of their future goals is to reduce the percentage of dropouts from educational institutions. The organization plans to work closely with schools and local education authorities to create an inclusive, supportive environment that allows young people to stay in school and successfully complete their education.

C) Development of a Comprehensive Shelter Home

Homelessness is a pervasive issue for many members of the transgender community, as many are expelled from their families due to their gender identity. Their situation worsens as they grow older, with limited support networks or safe spaces to turn to. To address this urgent need, Moitrisanjog Society aims to develop a full-course shelter home for transgender and queer individuals. This shelter will provide not only a safe place to stay but also access to essential services like healthcare, mental health support, education, and vocational training. The goal is to create a self-sustaining, safe environment where community members can thrive.

D) Mass Awareness Campaigns

Moitrisanjog Society understands that creating a truly inclusive society requires widespread awareness and understanding. Therefore, the organization plans to organize various events and programs to educate the broader public about the challenges faced by transgender and queer individuals. One of the key strategies is involving men and boys in these initiatives, encouraging them to speak out in support of the community. The organization believes that the youth are the strongest pillars of society and that their advocacy can have a significant impact. When the youth take a stand, the message of acceptance and inclusivity will resonate more deeply across generations, fostering a

society where transgender individuals are accepted and respected.

E) Creating a Bias-Free Social Environment

Another major goal of Moitrisanjog Society is to create a social ambiance free from gender-based biases. The organization envisions a world where transgender and queer individuals do not feel alienated or marginalized due to their identity. This would extend beyond the local community, impacting districts and potentially reaching further regions. The aim is to establish a safe and inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of gender identity, can live freely and without discrimination.

F) Developing Leadership within the Community

Building strong leadership within the transgender community is a cornerstone of Moitrisanjog Society's long-term strategy. Empowering community members to take on leadership roles will allow them to guide others, organize local initiatives, and sensitize more people to the challenges faced by transgender and queer individuals. To achieve this, the organization plans to offer a range of workshops, group discussions, and training programs aimed at cultivating leadership skills and building a network of advocates who can drive change and provide support to other community members.