

**Jana Sanskriti - Theatre in Education programs
District – Purulia (Dealing with Patriarchy through theatre)**

Purulia is one of the most backward districts of West Bengal and has mostly tribal population and scheduled tribes. This experiment started as a pilot with **12 high schools in Pancha block in 2014**. We started Theatre in education program in a different way here – dealing with Patriarchy through theatre.

We have addressed children ranging from 14 – 18 years of age. Volunteers/performers of this project were all high school and under graduate level students from government schools and colleges. Plays on patriarchy related issues were made in a workshop with these students. The same play was repetitively performed in front of the same audience for at least three times within an interval of 15 – 21 days. Performances were planned in these 12 high schools, villages of the volunteers, and the areas around these villages.

In areas like these where child marriages are a natural feature, these performances have **created a ripple effect**. There are **strong interventions** during forums. Young girls have started voicing out their opinion. It has brought the children and their parents to a rational stage through reflection and is bridging the gap between them. Interventions of the children and parents have been documented (The documentary movie of this program can be shared on request – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vchBZeulQ80>). Thus we used theatre to humanize the humane student community and provided a platform for inter-generational dialogue in the communities.

This initiative has noticeably increased the enrolment of girl child into schools and reduced the cases of dropouts and child marriages in Pancha block of Purulia. Teachers of these 12 high schools are of the view that, continuous exposures of their students to these plays, where they see their fellow classmates acting, have increased participation in class which in turn is having a positive impact on their academic performance.

After a year now, students associated with this program who are the theatre performers are getting a different **identity in their society**. Community also perceives them in a different light. Their confidence levels have increased thus impacting their versatility and academic performance. This year we are scaling up this program to cover 50 high schools in 3 additional blocks in Purulia.

Now it is gradually becoming possible for the girl child to disagree with their parents on the question of early marriage. There are some cases reported already. There was a case in our area of operation in Purulia where a priest refused to carry out rituals in a marriage where both the bridegroom and the bride were under age. Jana Sanskriti will soon start forming women forum and responsible citizen's forum in each village adjacent to the 50 higher secondary schools from the beginning of the year 2017.