

Palamalai tribal village and School kit distribution

Happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, pride, delight, and still I can add many more words to describe my feelings. The YFS school kit drive has crossed great heights so far, but in Coimbatore it is something different! Before going on to the formal descriptions, I'd like to express what Palamalai is all about.

Very small group of seven villages with nearly 400 families, situated at distance of 4KM from the foot of the hill and about 30Km from the core part of Coimbatore. Adventurous roads with lack of public transports, fear of elephants, lush green herbs and awesome sceneries for your cameras are some of the unique features of the Palamalai village. But real life visuals are different and pathetic. I could see many teenage girls roaming with the holy thread (Mangalyam) in their neck. It was really shocking to hear many girls are forced to get married at a very young age. Many men are addicted to alcohol and most of the youngsters being school dropouts. These are some real facts of the Palamalai tribal village.

Here is our targeted location - With so much hindrances, the Palamalai middle school is giving education to 70 students with a meager, 5 faculties.

Our crew of 20 members started the journey with 3 cars and several two wheelers to Palamalai for the distribution of school kits. On the way, many people resisted the toughness of the road and shared their experience of "romance" with elephants. We too had to face the fear of elephants in many a place, still we reacted bravely, more than that we had no other options to do! There were seven hair-pin bends to reach the destination. One of our cars (Omni) started to dance at ninth hairpin bend and its engine failed to serve from there on. Immediately all the kits in the car were shifted to other cars and we again started our relentless journey to the location. This time some of us needed to walk till the destination. Finally we reached the Palamalai middle school, but we were very late! Many parents were already waiting from morning for the 11'O clock. We reached only at 11.45 Am.

Fortunately few of our friends Pradeep, Karthick, Amal and Vinoth had already reached the place and started to coordinate with the parents. Our hopes of serving were helped out by their presence and at last we entered the school.

It was time for distribution. Formally, flex banners were pasted and Headmaster of the school started welcome address. Immediately, after his speech he told one of us to address the gathering, one strange voice from our crowd initiated my name without my permission. At last I was the victim; I started my conversation with parents and children. It is really a tough job to handle children and motivating the parents at this level. I started "How many of you are going to send your children to college?" no reply came from the crowd. Again I made them realize by stating "I am speaking to you, please reply", but there were no answers this time also. Before starting my next question, they started to chit chat! One of the faculties understood my situation and raised his voice to control them.

Finally, by collecting all my strength I started again. But this time I clearly understood their wavelength and told "Don't worry I will finish within 5 minutes", Now I witnessed full of joy in their faces. I extended my speech up to 10 Minutes but did not face any reluctance; unusually they started to acknowledge me. I am not a good orator! But conveying truth doesn't require any skill, truth always remains the truth.

Starting from headmaster all of us joined in distributing the school kits to children. That is the moment I experienced the ultimate joy, happiness and excitement in their faces. One of the kid shares its word with classmate "Yai I got a red bag same like you!!" "Yes me too" the other kid replied. I started to observe their attitude after distribution; they touched the bag gently, started the process of exploring what was in it. Whenever we clicked the camera they exhibited happiness and smile. The reaction of the parents was also different. They can be considered as big children. First time every one of them received a gift from aliens like us. Yes! That is the thought process of the children till we started our distribution. Afterwards the scenario changed completely, they started to interact with a fair amount of shyness.

Distribution happened without any confusions and error. Each and every aspect was already decided, the crew of NIN Society has already got a fair bit of experience in conducting such events systematically. In a nut shell our crew worked instrumentally to make things done.

Believe me; most of the children are going to carry the school bags first time in their life. All credits go to YFS and its volunteers. Every one of you contributed to that remote location. Your name, destination etc. might not be known to them but they would feel proud about you. You did something that they needed!

Lastly, we started our car to the famous Palamalai Renganathar temple which is on top of the hill, the priest started his chanting and every one of our eyes were closed, our mind started to pray for the children of Palamalai automatically.

Jaihind!

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