

# **THE STORY OF REJUVENATION : A CASE STUDY OF GHSS, ALA**

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## **PROFILE**

GHSS Ala is one among the oldest schools in Kerala which is affiliated to the Kerala State Board of Education. It is an institution working under the ownership of Alappuzha District Panchayath with a total number of 58 students, 14 staffs and an ICDS psycho social counsellor in the high school section in the academic year 2023-2024. The higher secondary section of the school functions in a separate building in the school compound.

## **HISTORY**

Government Higher Secondary School Ala is located in Ala Panchayat, Chengannur Taluk, Alappuzha District. The area was isolated from other areas and had no educational facilities or transportation facilities. However, the progressive minded locals influenced Shankaran Thambi, who was the ADC of Sri Moolam Tirunal Maharaja 125 years ago. And as a result, a school that was functioning at Nedumangadu was shifted to Ala along with its staffs and infrastructure. It was later named Sri Shankara Vilasam LP School and started functioning from classes one to three. Later it became a UP school with a large number of students and in 1954 it was upgraded to a high school.

About 2500 students and 80 teaching staffs were a part of this school during the time. A book binding unit also functioned for vocational training of students. Necessary notebooks were manufactured and distributed to schools in the nearby areas under the name of 'Kairali'. The school was the most advanced school at that time which made use of film projector and lab facilities. The NCC units here played a major role in developing the interest of military service among the children. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the ex-servicemen in the area were NCC cadets. The school's NCC Cadets even participated in the National parades held at Delhi up to 1990s. In 1997, the school was upgraded to Higher Secondary and started functioning by admitting the first Higher Secondary batch. The recent opening of aided schools from 1 km to 3km around the school and the preference of people towards the English medium schools has

led to a decline in the number of children in the school. Along with this, there is no public transport system in Ala even today. Due to these reasons, Govt. Higher Secondary School, Ala is finding it very difficult to keep up with the competition of other schools.

## **PRESENT SCENARIO**

### **STRENGTH**

Without a good team to support, there will never be any development anywhere. The major strength of the school is its teamwork to improve the quality education. 'Team Ala' includes only a few personalities who genuinely support for the school's development. The constant support and the motivation given by the District Panchayath is also to be mentioned. This teamwork itself have resulted in the improvement of the school as a whole. The school is unique in its own way with the adequate and proper functioning of the science lab, tinkering lab and workshop. The workshop of the school is now being supervised by an instructor under technical department. It helped in channelizing the energy of students in productive works. The school library was selected as the best school library in Alappuzha district . There are more than 22,000 books in the library including some of the precious text in the collection.

The counselling wing of the school functions in such a way that it boosts confidence and decision making skills of the students. One of the major attractions of the school is its motto of providing equal opportunities for each and every students in the school. Every student is given an opportunity to participate or to take part in the activities held at the school. This imparts a kind of confidence and self esteem in themselves. Another speciality of the school is its gender neutral uniform, which is a sign of promoting gender equality. As a part of self defence training 'Kalari' practice is also being conducted in the school weekly once. Another key feature of the school is that not even a single child in the school uses or promotes drugs. This 'anti drug campus' works on the concept of "Happy School" that promotes maximum happiness to our minimum number of students.

### **WEAKNESS**

One of the major challenges the school has faced earlier as well as even today is the lack of transportation facilities. The major reason behind this can be the level crossings near the school. This school which was once notable for its NCC units doesn't have any capacity building units like NCC or scout and Guides today.

As the school is located in the rural area, most of the children studying here are from the families from lower economic and social strata of the society. They face a lot of problems from the family like single parenting, excessive use of alcohol by parents, broken family, poor family, etc. All these can affect the child which in turn results in their academic performances. The attitude of the people is another challenge faced

by the school. Even though the school has a legacy of 125 years, it does not get any kind of recognition or support from the community as well as the alumni.

Apart from this, lack of infrastructures like a proper playground, dining hall, computer lab, auditorium are some of the major weaknesses of the school. Even though the school had a very extensive library, the lack of a reading room and the proper organisation of the books paves a greater issue

## **COMMUNITY**

Being a typical rural area, the behaviour and the mind set of the people here are not very progressive. Most of the parents of the children studying here, are illiterate. They are only daily wagers who get paid very little. The presence of several social evils, like the excessive use of alcohol ,drugs, etc and several superstitious beliefs are also very evident in the community. The attitude and tendency to support religious-based aided schools can be seen in the society.

## **THE PROBLEM SITUATION**

The major problem faced by the school in the year 2021 was its low student strength. There were only 46 students in the entire school and only 3 students in class VII. The school that once had more than 2000 students was at the brink of its decline that time. No major academic activities were being conducted. There were no specific teachers for a particular subject like Science and English. The lack of a subject expert affected the academic achievements and performance of the students. The students were in such a condition that they were unable to identify the basics of a subject. Regular SRG Meetings, PTA meetings, School assembly and school uniforms, which are considered to be the basic activities in a school were not followed or conducted. There was no uniformity or co- ordination in the school activities.

There were not at all any support from the part of staffs, society, local bodies and PTA for the upliftment of the school. Nobody genuinely wished to revive the lost glory of the school. The government, after the inspection declared the school buildings and campus as unfit. All these created a negative impact among the people. Many misconceptions about the school were prevalent in the society. Even the children from areas around the school were sent to other schools to study.

The major challenge among all was the learning gap in the students. After the reopening of this school, it was found that the students lacked reading ,writing, arithmetic skills as well as general knowledge. The knowledge gap, skill gap and motivation gap hindered the children's educational progress as well as their overall development. The abusive language used by the students was another major issue. They were totally unaware of the manners and behaviours in a society.

The lab and the workshop were not in a working condition during the time. It was surprising that the school which once had a book binding unit and well advanced lab facilities perished in this manner. The

functioning of the online classes were not done properly. Most of the students lacked mobile phones and those who had mobile phones didn't attend the classes as well. As a whole, the school was functioning with a few students who didn't even know the basics of learning.

## **PLAN OF ACTION**

After identifying the condition of the school, several meetings were conducted at different sessions and a proper analysis of the problem was done.

- A PTA meeting was conducted during the covid time at first. The meeting was named "Mukhamukham", an individual parent-child interaction. From the meeting, the major issues of the parents and the children were identified and noted.
- Next, a meeting was conducted with the local bodies and other eminent personalities in the area. After several sessions and interactions, they were convinced of the need of such a school in Ala Panchayat and also about the need to support it.
- Later an SRG meeting was summoned and a grave discussion on the topic was made. Several duties, learning plans and strategies were adopted for the betterment of the educational process. The meeting ended up with everyone's approval of the adopted duties and plans.

## **STRATEGIES**

The first step was to get joined with the Vishwa Bharathi Grandhashala in Ala. The students got registered in the 'Bala vedhi' of the library and thereby participated in the programs conducted by them. The teachers and students also took part in the vacation camp, "Koottu" held by the Vishwa Bharati library in Ala. The teachers of GHSS Ala conducted various sessions in the vacation camp. (Photos included in the annexure1)

Mobile phones were given to some of the needed families for the effective functioning of online classes. Several strategies were adopted to bridge the learning gaps of the students.

**AKSHARATHANAL** : 'Aksharathanal' is a program conducted daily at GHSS, Ala to improve the reading and listening skills of the students. In this session, all the students get gathered in front of the school premise and some of the students read the story books from the school library while others listen to it. The students who have to read in the next session is decided in advance. This program helped a lot in inculcating the habit of reading in children. It created an enthusiasm in them to sit with their friends and to read and enjoy stories. (Photos included in annexure 2)

**AKSHARAKKOOTTU** : The session 'Aksharakkoottu' aimed at improving the writing skills, vocabulary, handwriting as well as arithmetic skills in students. In the session, the students are given assistance in their activities. As a part of it, dictations, copywriting, teaching basics, etc., are promoted. The main aim is to

improve the writing ability of the students and to improve the basics of the students.(Photos included in annexure 2)

**KARUTHALODE OPPAM** : ‘Karuthalode Oppam’ is a program implemented to give mental support and needed assistance to the students of class X. Each student of class X is given a ‘parent teacher’ or ‘mentor’ to monitor them. The mentor provides essential support and guidance to his/her child. This creates an emotional bond between them and as a result, an improvement occurs in the child. The mentors examine the academic performance of the children and provide suggestions and advices if necessary. They help the students in creating study plans after analysing the potential of the child.

**EZHUTHPETTI** : ‘Ezhuthpetti’ is yet another interesting strategy employed in GHSS,Ala in accordance with Chengannur Taluk Library Council. A letter box is placed in the school and the students have to leave the appreciation note of any book that they have read recently. After analysing the appreciations, a reward is given to the best one from them. This inculcates an interest in reading and creative writing among the students.( Photos included in annexure 2 )

**FORMULATION OF CLUBS** : Several clubs were formed and were made active. Some of the notable club activities of GHSS, Ala include herbarium and exhibition of Science Club; Study tour, Map reading and exhibition of Social Club; English magazine, Spelling Bee and skit of English club and the Abacus class of Maths Club..( Photos included in annexure 4,12 )

Street play conducted by the counselling wing based on “Drugs and its Adverse Effects” became very popular among the people. ( Photos included in annexure 7) The functioning of the counselling wing is also very effective in the school. Individual and family counselling, awareness classes and social campaigns are conducted as a part of it. ( Photos included in annexure 13)

**Chandalabhikshuki**, a short film produced by the Film Club is also remarkable. ( Photos included in the annexure 6) English movies, cartoons , short films, etc., are shown as a part of film club activities

**CONFESSION BOOK** : A confession book was introduced in the school to prevent the students from using foul languages. In the book, the students confessed their mistakes and vowed not to repeat them again. This is highly a confidential book which is not made public.

**AKSHARAPRIYA** : It is an award given to the student who has read the maximum number of books from the library in a month. ( Photos included in annexure8).

**CELEBRATIONS:** National days and festivals were celebrated with the active participation and support from the students and teachers. ( Photos included in annexure3)

The activities at the workshop have been reactivated with the help of an instructor from the technical department. The buildings that were deemed as unfit were demolished. English and Malayalam assemblies are also conducted. Additional classes were also given to the 10th standard students for their improvement.

Practices and trainings were given to the children for the scholarships like USS and NMMS. The students were given proper training for participating in Mela and Youth Festival. Social Media platforms such as Facebook profile and YouTube channel were created and made active. The major activities held at the school is included in it.

## **OUTCOMES**

It was possible to see the progress of the school very clearly through the activities conducted at the school. The mind set of children, locals and parents about the school has changed and the students started to take responsible roles for it's improvement. There were a lot of improvement in the academic performance as well as the behavioural pattern of students. The use of abusive language by the children in the school premises was much reduced as a result of the practice of confession book. The activities conducted in the school helped them to create a good sense of citizenship.

Due to the incessant activities in the school, it was possible to bridge the learning gap in the children. The writing, reading, listening, speaking and arithmetic skills of the students improved. General knowledge quizzes were being frequently conducted to make the students get familiarised in current affairs. Introducing general knowledge questions in the assembly also helped in achieving the same. The strategies, **Aksharathanal** and **Aksharakkootu** seemed to be a huge success as it resulted in the improvement of various learning skills in the students. The continuous co-ordination of camps held by Viswabharathi GrandhaShala helped to acquire a position in the society. There was constant support from the Viswabharathi Grandhashala and they even provided learning materials to the students.

By involving all the children in the activities conducted in the school, the stage fear of the children as well as their reluctance to communicate has changed and they have gained a confidence from this. Equal opportunities are provided to each and every student in the school. Their active participation in all the activities conducted in the school created self esteem in themselves and thereby resulted in a positive outlook towards life.

The students participated in the Mela 2023 and bagged several grades in it. They excelled in various categories in Science, Social, Maths and Work experience Mela. They achieved a total score of 85 points in the Mela. They also proved their potential in the youth festival as well. Midhuna Suresh got the NMMS Scholarship. The proper functioning of the clubs also created a positive impact among the students. The activities held in the Science lab helped the students in handling the apparatus and in getting proper knowledge of the apparatus. The making of the short film helped the students in getting a proper knowledge in the technical side as well. ( Photos included in the annexure 9)

There was a positive impact of celebrating National days and campaigns and conducting various programmes related to it. **Mahatmavinodoppam** , a programme conducted on October 2, as a part of

Gandhi Jayanthi received much acclaim. The programme focussed on presenting the books related to Gandhi Literature included in the school library. ( Photos included in the annexure 5)

Social Service Scheme was sanctioned in the school in 2023. The awareness classes and dry day conducted in the school as a part of it helped the students in creating social commitment. ( Photos included in the annexure 10)

Mobile addiction in children got reduced. They realised that the life itself is an addiction. The social support from the local bodies and PTA also paved a way for the improvement of the school.

## **ROLE OF LEADERSHIP**

School improvement rarely occurs without effective leadership. A good leader is someone who leads their team even in the adverse situations. The vision, ideologies, and adaptability of a leader clearly reflects in the functioning of an institution.

When I joined the school in 2021, the condition of the school was quite pathetic. It seemed quite difficult to uplift such a school from its decline. There were only 46 students in the school. The school was not functioning properly. As a leader, I first assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and took measures to compensate this weakness by boosting the strengths. The major strengths of the school like the library, workshop and lab facilities were restored. Proper SRG meetings were conducted at regular intervals to assess the opinions and views of the staffs. Creating a culture of open communication helped to create a climate of trust and respect. Duties and tasks were given to the teachers and the students on the basis of their potential. The perfect guidance and motivation rendered, helped them in improving confidence and self esteem.

The social interactions and the engagements helped a lot in promoting the school to some extend. The leader is the vital cord of communication between the society and the school. The interactions with the eminent personalities around the area helped to change their misconceptions of the school and it also helped to acquire their support and service to the school. Fostering positive relationships helped in creating a positive school community in which students can learn. The activities done in collaboration with Vishwa Bharathi Grandhashala and Shastra Sahitya Parishad paved the way for this.

Problem-solving and mediation skills are crucial for the variety of challenges that arises in the educational workspace. Timely interventions and the finding of best solutions helped to resolve many disputes in the school. The resources which remained unused in the school were utilised to promote better learning atmosphere and experience. Child friendly activities and practices were encouraged to make the learning atmosphere more lively and appealing. With proper leadership and guidance, a school can be restored back to its golden days. The constant efforts and dedication towards achieving the goal helped in the progress. Moreover, we worked as a team with unrelenting passion to pursue our vision and goal.

*As a leader, I find satisfaction in being able to lead a group of people from a path shrouded with darkness to gleam.*

## **SUCSESSES AND FAILURES**

Within a span of two academic years, a lot of improvement was built from the constant efforts and strategies employed. One of the major success was the observable changes in the behavioural pattern of the students the cell friendly approaches adaptive restarted in such a huge impact in student. It was found out that the practice of confession book and the child friendly approaches were beneficial than giving punishments. The friendly attitude and the support rendered by the teachers created a bond with the students. As a result of all the systematic process and reading activities held at the school, several changes in the behavioural pattern of the students were observed.

The communion with the local library, Vishwabharathi Grandha shala was one of the remarkable initiative that led to the improvement of the school. The strengthening of the library and lab facilities and the proper utilisation of these resources helped in providing better learning experience to the students. The channelling of energy in the classroom, tinkering lab, workshop activities and in vegetation diverted the students from addiction in mobile phones and games and even in minimising the use of foul languages. ( Photos included in the annexure 11 )

The tension free and friendly atmosphere in the school created a feeling of ‘second home’ in the students. The celebration of festivals, national days and fests in the school fostered the student’s excitement and elevated participation.

Even though the school and its team strives hard to improve its quality, one of the major challenges facing is the lack of support from the people around the area and even from the alumni. Several attempts were made to get support from the former students of the school but all the efforts ended up in failure. The lack of co –ordination of the parents is yet another failure. But these failures could never stop Team Ala from achieving its best. We are sure that with all the possible efforts and vision for a bright future, we certainly will progress.



## **THE MANTRA OF TRANSFORMATION**

The foundation of undertaking every venture or task lies in the determination and the optimistic view of the persons involved. The change or transformation may not be evident from the starting itself. It may take days, weeks or even years. The thing is, we have to patiently wait for the outcome. The outcomes depend on the efforts and hard work that we put in it.

There is a quote by the famous Brazilian novelist, Paulo Coelho in his novel, **The Alchemist**

*"When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."*

This quote itself is the foundation or the mantra behind all the transformations that happened to us. Against all the adversities, we, the **Team Ala** fights together to achieve our goal. There are a lot of limitations in the school. The lack of computer labs, auditorium, playground, dining hall, etc., are some of them. But even within these limitations we strive hard to make our limited students best in quality and in academics. The ultimate goal of the school is to raise a new generation in Ala, who are socially committed and personally developed.

## ANNEXURE

### Annexure1-Vishwabharathi Grandhashala

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/ePh54ufN94odLrXy/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/XueYLLvDqJAqr3V8/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/fo3AxWcTJcLCumg7/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Cb3yP5NqthGcHt2P/?mibextid=hIIR13>

### Annexure2-Aksharathanal, Aksharakkoottu, Ezhuthupetti

- [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NVvVv9q7jy9RbMaTFxLmX6sqMGWehuvP/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NVvVv9q7jy9RbMaTFxLmX6sqMGWehuvP/view?usp=drive_link)

### Annexure3-Celebrations

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/bRS9oVK4acatuck9/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/btVaFTM1aGjYZQoc/?mibextid=jmPrMh>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/M6hVzTDMHSyZBDpJ/?mibextid=qi2Omg>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/45NjtE4iXaqnUQQh/?mibextid=qi2Omg>

### Annexure4- Science exhibition

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/9Ptx72s8LgiCbE53/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/JheuAh6XtBfup4p1/?mibextid=hIIR13>

### Annexure5- Mahatmavinodoppam

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/U6m7viisiQGjLtXw/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/yQnUzs6f3CWhVnWK/?mibextid=hIIR13>

### Annexure6- Short film

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/SFLefCRPdTESQJ2D/?mibextid=hIIR13>

### Annexure7-Street play

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/51Qdm6obZaPQFcBD/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/CGhk93tCnBvPs89u/?mibextid=hIIR13>

### Annexure8- Akshara Priya

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/zNr3zcQyMxf9zWPR/?mibextid=hIIR13>

#### Annexure9- Outcomes

- [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=316914780616109&id=100068927676968&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=316914780616109&id=100068927676968&mibextid=Nif5oz)
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/khRnMmKGKR8Cfo7r/?mibextid=hIIR13>
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- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/TckDp7jrL75vydif/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/m18mVfJNKHQGkcYf/?mibextid=hIIR13>

#### Annexure10-Social Service Scheme

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1NhZSc8s6g4F5PmA/?mibextid=hIIR13>

#### Annexure11-Tinkering lab, Vegetation, Workshop

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/gb9FKw8kSxEpcWWm/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/u6Agwp1zMtfmNJVS/?mibextid=hIIR13>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/dXSnXVjCvKwnmJbH/?mibextid=xfxF2i>

#### Annexure12-Study tour

- <https://youtu.be/UJxObxBcJUM?si=CXiWVWYpqOS3-FEQ>
- <https://youtu.be/SZX19G8q9uo?si=-n0KOpcjlrGa9hXO>
- [https://youtu.be/ea4jm8\\_0sr0?si=rFAion5iFwk8Xx43](https://youtu.be/ea4jm8_0sr0?si=rFAion5iFwk8Xx43)
- <https://youtu.be/QJSuR9b8WDo?si=RuRbkH63C4JR7QKh>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/dXSnXVjCvKwnmJbH/?mibextid=xfxF2i>

#### Annexure 13- Counselling Wing

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/bba4y2gjo13cXtuP/?mibextid=qi2Omg>

#### Facebook page of GHSS,ALA

- <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/dXSnXVjCvKwnmJbH/?mibextid=xfxF2i>