

BAZAM-E-KHAWATEEN



A Hyderabad NGO dedicated to the welfare of disadvantaged women.

It's a hot sultry June afternoon in Hyderabad ;there is no sign of the monsoon .I feel listless and uncomfortable listening to the burqa and hijab clad Muslim women reciting the Quran .It is the daily session in Quran teaching taking place at the AC Guards centre of the Bazam –e Khawateen , (Women's Association)a society registered in 1973 with the objective of promoting the cause of the cultural , religious and educational welfare of women and contributing towards the growth of strong and healthy citizens .

The centre is housed in Siratul Hamid, the residence of the General Secretary Mrs Amtul Ghafoor Sadiqa, a retired Professor of Arabic and the main force behind the setting up of the association.

“Actually it was my father and his elder brother who inspired and encouraged me .They wanted women to be able to read and understand the Quran and its teaching and also to become economically and financial self reliant.”

Though initially the association had started in 1961 with the purpose of reciting the Quran , holding Quran recitation competitions , it soon realised that for living a righteous life enjoined in the Quran, women needed to be educated , have access to books and also acquire necessary skills to earn their livelihood if the need arises . Hence the aims of the society registered in 1973 envisages

Establishment of following:

Educational Institutions at all levels , Reading Rooms ,Libraries ,Science Clubs ,Study Circles and Coaching centres ;Sewing ,tailoring , Coaching and Food products ;Handicrafts ,Carpentry ,Book binding ,Cane Works , etc; Hostels, Health centres ,Clinics ,Health and Sports clubs etc

It also envisages providing financial assistances for scholarships to deserving students , run religious educational institutions , encourage calligraphy printing and distribution of books and periodicals , organise and participate in seminars conferences etc and undertake any such activity in accordance with its aims and objectives .

An ambitious and inspirational agenda! I am curious to know how many of their objectives have materialised. Have they been able to establish the institutions envisaged in the memorandum of the association? What is the source of their funding?

I am informed that their main work is in the poorer areas of Hyderabad – among slum children and marginalised sections of women. For carrying out their activities they have seven centres. In all the seven centres they hold classes in Arabic and Urdu but in five centres where they have sufficient space they also have classes in Maths and English and computers .For women they have machine embroidery , sewing and stitching and henna class .In the AC guards centre , which I happened to visit , on the first floor a class in stitching and sewing was going on .A large number of sewing machines (more than the number of students) were placed .It seems the centre also provides ex -students and poor women the facility to stitch their clothes at the centre when the classes are not in operation .Most of the centres have forty to fifty students but the one in Noornagar ,Banjara Hill has 400 hundred girls (including women).The in-charge of the center Mrs Sitwat Jehan had made available a complete house for running the centre and also provides the afternoon meal to the trainees . To create awareness of these courses in the slum area, the Bazam has an annual gathering in the slums.

The above training sessions are of six months duration at the end of which there is a test and certificates are provided .The Arabic and Urdu students have external qualifying examination managed by the Urdu Daily Siasat and at the higher stages by the State Boards .

Besides the above courses the Bazam also holds summer courses for girls in stitching and sewing, machine embroidery, painting and henna. It also conducts competitions in various fields: poetry, essay writing, elocution and Qirat or recitation of Quranic verses.

When I congratulate Mrs Amtul Ghafoor and her Association for the pioneering work being undertaken among the poor, she sighs and says that the effort is not sufficient to cover the poor and needy in the city .Though they have volunteers, they do not have sufficient financial resources. Their funds are meagre – from donations and membership fees and the sale of products made by the trainees such as embroidered linen, children's clothes, woollen clothes and skull caps etc.

When I suggest that they should approach the government for funds , she shakes her head and says that there are too many conditions and too much paperwork and instead of spending so much energy on it they prefer to go on their own .

The Bazam has an excellent website -www.bazmekhawateen.org.Do visit it .It is inspiring.