

Visit to Tihar Jail

Date: Monday, 23 December 2013

Venue: Youth Offenders Prison, Jail No.7, Janakpuri

HATE CRIME, NOT CRIMINALS

On 23 December 2013, 27 ITL students of psychology and the wellness club, along with two teachers, visited Tihar Jail to celebrate Christmas with inmates aged 18 to 21. This was an exhilarating and enriching experience for everyone who was lucky enough to be a part of the excursion. The students not only enjoyed entertaining and providing food items for the inmates, but also gained valuable knowledge from them.

The preparations for the visit involved coordinating and organizing several tasks in order to make the experience as memorable as possible, both for the inmates as well as for the students. Donations were collected from each class and teachers were given the opportunity to purchase products from TJ's, an initiative that aims to channelize the inmates' energy toward something positive by manufacturing a number of food and art items. A cultural event was also rehearsed to provide entertainment for the youth.

The visit itself was highly informative in terms of educating the students about conditions in prison and about life. The first impression received of Tihar Jail was that it was tightly secured. However, the moment Jail No.7 which housed the young inmates was entered, it was clear that a lot of importance was given to the well-being of the inmates. It was evident that human rights were of topmost priority and that a number of measures were taken to educate the inmates. There was an 'each one, teach one' programme run by IGNOU and an 'Art of Living' program by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Furthermore, awareness was raised about saving water which could be seen by a bamboo water harvesting plant. There were also programs for skill development and for promoting computer proficiency.

After these observations, the students finally got a chance to interact with the inmates and present their cultural programme. There was an abundance of singing and dancing, primarily on the inmates' behalves. The students presented a short skit to uplift the mood of the young offenders and then distributed chocolates, chips, biscuits and juices among them. The inmates also had the opportunity to impart some knowledge on the students. They did this by sharing their experiences and by revealing their emotions. Among the lessons learnt were to always heed one's family and be wary of bad company, and to stay calm and not give in to impulses that arise as results of fits of anger or rage. The students concluded the visit with some cheery Christmas carols and wished the inmates the best of luck in the future.

The visit to Tihar Jail was a highly memorable experience for everyone involved in the project. The preparations carried out by the students were duly rewarded by the warmth and gratitude expressed by the inmates. In turn, the students had an opportunity to empathize with offenders of around the same age as them and to understand that it is crime that must be detested, not criminals.

The students extend their thanks to the Principal for providing them with the opportunity to undertake this project wholeheartedly. Her compassionate and altruistic nature motivated the students immensely.

