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Give tuitions & get tuitions for free

- Pass-it-forward coaching that helps poor students in Birbhum

SNEHAMOY CHAKRABORTY



Deb Prasanna Choudhury (in white kurta), who founded the Dr Deb Kalika Choudhury Foundation in Bolpur town, teaches boys. Picture by Snehamoy Chakraborty

Surya Kanta Mondal, a Class XI student of Bolpur High School, had no money to pay his tuition fees. He thought he would have to take up a job or quit studies.

Then he got into a unique programme.

He gets free coaching and gives free coaching.

At Dr. Deb Kalika Choudhury Foundation in Bolpur town, run by Deb Prasanna Choudhury, a vice-president with Tata Projects Limited, Surya Kanta gets tuition in arts subjects — Bengali, English, history and philosophy.

Back home in his village in Mirzapur, about 6km from Bolpur, he teaches five poor students who study in lower classes in local schools or have dropped out.

Surya Kanta, who now dreams of higher education, teaches them four days a week.

Choudhury's centre teaches students from Class V to XII.

It offers coaching in science subjects and computers and also provides poor students with books and slates for free.

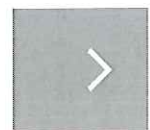
"I am grateful to him (Deb Prasanna Choudhury) because he taught me to work for others. I enjoy coaching. In future, I will always try to help poor students," Surya Kanta said with tears glistening in his eyes.

Students are grateful to Choudhury because they feel it is essential to get help from outside school to do well in exams. Yet, many of them find it difficult to afford the high fees of private

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tutors.

Like Surya Kanta, there are about 500 poor students who get free coaching at Choudhury's centre. They are requested to teach other poor students.

Although teaching others is not mandatory, most of those who come to the centre do it happily.

Gouri Dutta, a Class X student of Raipur village in Sriniketan, said: "We are not forced to teach poor students in our village. But many do it because we feel proud to do so. Villagers praise us."



Surya Kanta Mondal teaches kids near his home in Mirzapur, Birbhum. Picture by Indrajit Roy

Choudhury is the head, contracts and risk, at Tata Project Limited, Secunderabad. Earlier, he worked in an oil company in the UAE.

He holds five post-graduate degrees in several subjects, including engineering and management, and he wanted to do something for the place he came from — Panchsoa, a remote village about 8km from Bolpur town.

His father Deb Kalika Prasanna was a chartered accountant and retired as the financial advisor to the government of Kuwait.

In 2000, Choudhury opened the centre with his own funds.

"I don't take any money from any person or organisation. I request all students who come here for free coaching to teach at least four children in their own village. Like this, more social workers would be created in rural areas," he said.

Choudhury also runs a free medical unit in his Bolpur home, where, every day, at least 40-50 local poor people visit for treatment.

He has spent around Rs 4 crore on his social projects and now wants to open a large library for poor students.



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