



THE BAREFOOT COLLEGE

The state of Rajasthan in northwest India is one of the poorest regions in India. Forty-five million people live there. 45% of men and 80% of women are still illiterate. In the villages these figures are even higher. Many families support themselves by farming small fields. The whole family works in the fields and many children never go to school. There has been a campaign encouraging poor farmers to send their children to school. Very often farmers will allow their boys to go to school but keep their girls at home to do the work.

About thirty five years ago, the Barefoot College founded the first Night Schools. There, children are taught in the evenings, after their day's work. They learn reading, writing and basic mathematics. Children also learn about things which are useful in their daily lives, like irrigation and how to cultivate the soil. Today there are 150 Night Schools in Rajasthan with almost 3,000 children. Two out of three pupils are girls.

The Barefoot College came up with the idea of a Children's Parliament so that children could learn how a democracy functions, the importance of the vote, standing up for your rights and not letting yourself be exploited because you are poor. The children elect their own Parliament and their own Ministers. They can make decisions about the running of their schools and even about matters concerning their villages, such as the supply of water and electricity.

All across India and even beyond, organizations have copied the Barefoot College way of giving the children influence over things that are important in their lives.

Read the text and say which of the following subjects are mentioned in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| delinquency | poverty |
| democracy | sport |
| family life | school |
| illiteracy | violence |
| pollution | water shortage |

Read paragraphs 3 and 4 and find out :

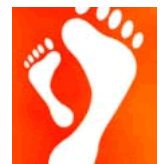
- Give the 4 reasons why the Barefoot College created a Children's Parliament.
- What is the role of the children?
 - The children elect...
 - They can make decisions about...
- Was the Barefoot College a good idea? Justify.
- Does the text end on a positive or negative note? Justify.

Read paragraphs 1 and 2 and find out :

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of state | |
| Country | |
| Population | |
| The proportion of illiterate people | |
| Principal job of inhabitants | |
| Their standard of living | |
| The purpose of the campaign mentioned | |
| Why girls do not go to school | |
| What the Barefoot College did 35 years ago | |
| When the children go to school, and why? | |
| The subjects that are taught | |
| How many of these schools exist | |
| How many children go to these schools | |
| The proportion of boys in these schools | |

Match the equivalents.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. running | a) choose |
| 2. higher | b) created |
| 3. poor | c) functioning |
| 4. illiterate | d) more important |
| 5. figures | e) permit |
| 6. whole | f) not rich |
| 7. useful | g) people who cannot read and write |
| 8. functions | h) numbers |
| 9. matters | i) cultivating |
| 10. supply | j) distribution |
| 11. field | k) entire |
| 12. farming | l) necessary |
| 13. allow | m) subjects |
| 14. elect | n) works |
| 15. founded | o) land for cultivation |



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Want to find out more and compare with your life! Go to

<http://www.barefootcollege.org/Women%20Barefoot%20Professionals.pdf>