

Shraddhanjali

Mrs. Shalini Inamdar passed away on 19th of November, 2020 at the age of 60. It was a great loss for us all.

Mrs. Inamdar played numerous roles during her lifetime; she was a supportive and loving wife, kind and caring mother and a dutiful daughter and sister. She worked as a teacher at I. E. S. V. N. Sule Gurugi English Medium School from 1984 to 2017, and in her 34 years of service, helped shape the lives of countless students through her never ending love and support. Not only was she a teacher, but was also a true life-long learner. Her zest for learning becomes apparent when one learns that she pursued and completed a Master's degree in Education at the age of 55!

She was actively involved in social service throughout her life. The 'New Way' philosophy of Swami Vidnyanand, who founded the Manashakti Kendra at Lonavala, had a deep and profound impact on her. Through Manashakti, she gained the opportunity to coach tribal children in rural Maharashtra—an experience which deeply humbled her

and she pledged to utilize all her free time to coach underprivileged children thenceforth.



While the whole world was busy focussing on personal issues during the lockdown, Mrs. Inamdar, ever so selfless, was trying to make a tangible change in the lives of destitute children. She helped Ankur Pratishthan greatly in raising donations for Project E-Gyaan and further took on the task of digitally teaching Spoken English to the girls of Shraddhanand Mahilashram despite her unfamiliarity with the digital medium! Her spirit and dedication greatly motivated all us young volunteers and gave us the confidence we needed to launch our regular activities digitally.

While our association with Mrs. Inamdar was short-lived, the inspiration she gave us, her work teaching the children, & her spirit and dedication for the work continues to live on through us. We are deeply grateful for the before time we got to spend in her association. May her soul attain sadgati.

SAMVAD

A year of transformation!

When Ankur Pratishthan approached my college to partner-up for Anubhooti 2020, our professors encouraged us to sign up for it. I was personally curious about a lot of things— how do NGOs work? What does it mean to do social work? What exactly do social workers do for destitute children? And much more. However, more than anything else, I was eager to personally experience social service, and so I signed up right away.

I supposed that our work with the children would be analogous to that of school teachers, but my guess was off by miles! While it was true that we were to teach the kids all sorts of things from languages to sciences to arts and even moral values, we were not to go there in the capacity of a teacher— we were to go there as their elder siblings. All the learning was to be in a fun-filled familial setting; the orientation itself made that clear. With a power-packed day-long training I thought, as did most of my friends, that we had it all figured out. "Teaching through fun activities should be fairly simple, right?" Or so we thought. Little did we know what lied ahead.

My very first Sunday of field work was markedly a disaster. Our team's plans made perfect sense on paper, but in practice, it all went down the drain in no time. The difference between theory and practice now became very apparent. We didn't lose hope though! We started meeting thrice a week to not only plan but also practice our activities beforehand. The Centre Heads observantly noted our shortcomings and nudged us in the right direction. Consequently, the last 2 Sundays were nothing short of magical— both volunteers and children had lots of fun. "Come back soon!", I remember the children lovingly insisting as we left on the last Sunday of the programme.

To get to the glorious end of the final day starting with an absolute train-wreck day one, we had to put in tremendous effort. In the end I felt an innate satisfaction— I had worked outside of my comfort zone for the first time ever and it was much better than I expected. This was all just great, I simply had to continue!

Barely a month later calamity struck— the first lockdown was imposed and all our work came to an abrupt standstill. We were all crestfallen for a while. But soon, things began to regain momentum as new paths started emerging from under the smoky veil of lockdown. Ankur Pratishthan conducted a unique digital Workshop on Story-Telling and I was swept off my

feet! Inspired thus, I joined my fellow volunteers in gathering all sorts of interesting stories to tell the children when things resumed— we were working on a new modular approach to activities. I gathered stories of children who had been recipients of the National Bravery Award— colloquially dubbed 'Balveer Puraskar' which further raised our spirits.

Digital activities began in the month of August and along came a few more surprises. My team and I had so far only worked at Anand Kendra, Worli. We were now instructed to join the team working at Family Home, Dadar. We were very glad; our family had just gotten a lot bigger!

In the first phase of our digital work, we started by selecting a special day, event or festival from the corresponding week to base our activities on. On occasions such as National Sports Day and International Day of Sign Languages, we even invited respective field experts to interact with the children and throw light on those subjects. In the second phase of our work, starting around the month of October, we shifted our attention towards conceptual learning. Once again, we started meeting thrice a week, though digitally, to plan and practice our activities. Since then we have covered a wide range of topics under diverse themes using each and every resource possible— from PPTs, to interesting Audio visuals, to puppet shows, to digital plays— we did it all. We noted the children's keen interest in arts & craft and craftily wove elements of drawing, painting & craft into each Sunday's activities to make the children enjoy learning! We even assigned homework and nurtured friendly competition. The support we had from the staff of Family Home throughout has been crucial to all our work for which I am deeply grateful.

From importance of team work to effective & creative thinking, I have learnt a lot working with Ankur Pratishthan over the past year. I joined thinking I'd be doing the teaching, but unknowingly, I became the learner! This year hasn't been kind to us, but rising up to the task amid it all has been exhilarating. All we await now is for things to soon return to normal so that we may once again meet our beloved children. Meeting them after such a long vacation is surely going to melt all our hearts and we eagerly look forward to it!

– Mrunmayi Yadav

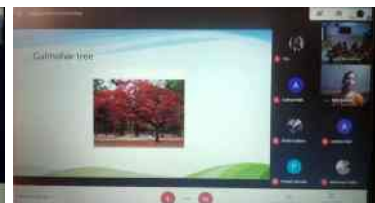
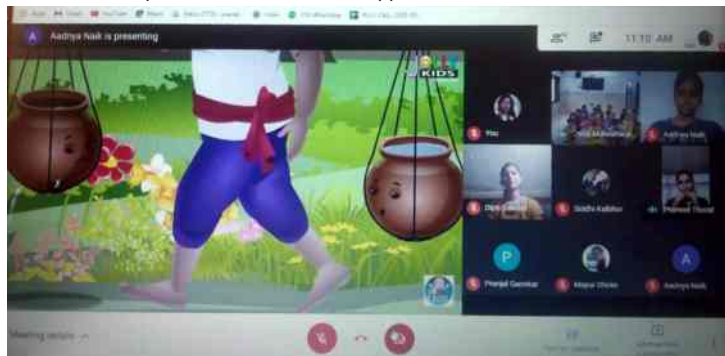
Annual Report of Regular Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unusually long pause in our regular activities until August 2020. Activities were resumed digitally one by one at Family Home (Dadar), Balikashram (Dadar), Jeevan Samvardhan Pratishthan (Thane) and Nandadeep Foundation (Kalyan) once necessary permissions & arrangements (through E-gyan) were made.

The digital medium of instruction imposed several restrictions on the nature, form and delivery of content; but our volunteers showed considerable initiative and innovation in designing activities so as to avoid monotonousness. The themes and sub-themes were chosen thoughtfully to avoid stagnancy & to retain children's interest while also meeting their needs.

The eagerness for, and participation in activities by our beloved children has been excellent beyond all our expectations. The response was observed to be particularly positive for recreational as well as art-based activities across all centres. Fun & Learn activities were also received positively by the children with many of them displaying remarkable ability to recollect the topics taught in the previous sessions. Wherever homework was assigned to the children, timely completion of the same was observed. Special guest interactions were also conducted at some centres throughout the course of the year to provide the children with exposure to various career opportunities.

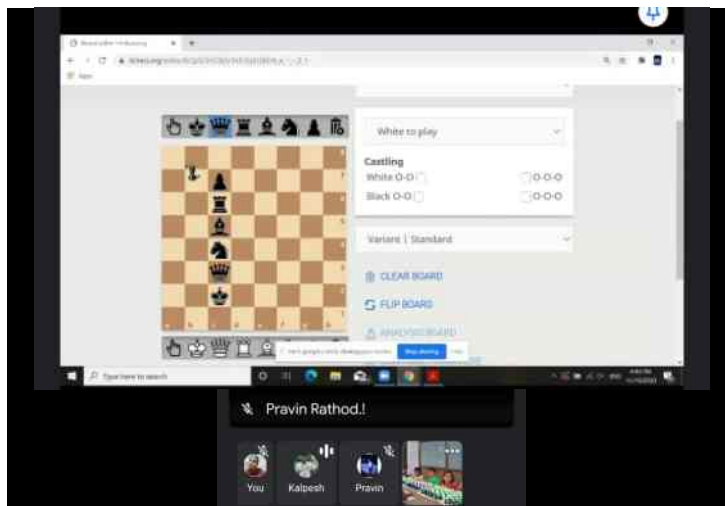
Barring occasional connectivity issues and shortened attention spans of children due to digital medium of instruction, our volunteers did not face any problems either in bonding or in delivering content. It is of utmost importance to note that this has all been made possible due to the excellent cooperation of our partner CCIs and their staff.



Recreation	Fun & Learn	Personality Development	Value Education	Health & Hygiene	Art & Craft
Story Narration	Science	Concentration	Honesty	Personal Hygiene	Origami
Group Song	Mathematics	Creativity	Compassion	Social Hygiene	Drawing
Interactive Brain Games, Puzzles, etc.	History	Verbal/Non-verbal Communication	Patriotism	Health & Nutrition	Paper craft
Digital Plays, Puppet Shows, etc.	Geography	Decision Making	Responsibility	--	--
General Knowledge Based Activities	Spoken English/ Linguistic Development	Management of Emotions	Environment Preservation	--	--

Centre Name	Number of Beneficiaries	Number of Volunteers engaged (Includes Centre Heads)	Number of Sessions Conducted (In Year 2020-21)
Family Home, Dadar	15	15	24
Balikashram, Dadar	44	9	17
Jeevan Samvardhan Foundation, Thane	15	6	12
Nandadeep Foundation, Kalyan E.	28	3	11
Total	102	33	64

Project Vikas



Project Vikas had been abruptly halted in 2020 due to the pandemic; but a decision was taken to experimentally launch it digitally in the second half of the year and special camps were organized under the initiative. Project Vikas was launched for the first time in two centres— Balikashram, Dadar and Jeevan Samvardhan Foundation (JSF), Thane.

Chess & drawing were taught at Balikashram; while Chess, drawing, and singing were taught at JSF. 20 girls from each centre (Total 40) participated in this special 10-day workshop. The focus of this workshop was on introducing the subjects to the girls and testing their aptitude and interest towards the same. Thanks to excellent cooperation from managing committee & concerned staff of both centres, as well as the excitement shown by the participant girls, the workshop went along smoothly and effectively.

We will now dedicate our efforts to try and continually provide these girls with training in these subjects through offline/online medium.

Project Saksham

We inaugurated our new group home at Sahakar Nagar, Wadala in the month of January 2021 for the beneficiaries of Project Saksham.

Shivkumar Gouda (Beneficiary) who was previously residing in the premises of Ram-Janaki Trust, Saphale shifted to our group home in January itself and has been continuing his college studies preparing for the upcoming H. S. C. exam. In view of his all-round development, basic computer training is being provided to him covering MS Office, basic use of internet, emailing, etc. Given his excellence in athletics as a former beneficiary of Project Vikas, he is now being trained further as an athlete.

In light of the success so far, we aim to gradually increase the number of resident beneficiaries of Project Saksham over the coming years.



Library at Doorstep



We have launched the pilot project of our signature initiative 'Library at Doorstep' in the vicinity of our Executive Office in Sahakar Nagar, Wadala since February 2021. Several families living in the area are from a lower economic background. Free access to our library with over 800 titles in English and Marathi has received an overwhelming response from the children as well as their parents. We have already made 100+ new members through door-to-door publicity as well as word of mouth.

Circulation of books began from Day 1 and significant number of our members have shown keen interest by reading more than 1 book per week. Members have been divided into locality-based clusters. Our representatives conduct weekly visits to each cluster for book return/issuance. Several members are so eager that they visit our office themselves to read or exchange books!

The success of our initiative reflects in the fact that several parents came forward to donate new books to our library or offered to help in other ways such as volunteering! Such great support to our initiative has motivated us to continue working harder to increase our membership and also the collection of books over the coming years.

Career Counselling Workshop

On 20th November, 2020 a Career Counselling Session was conducted at Bal Kalyan Nagari, Mankhurd by Smt. Madhura Bhonde, Counselling psychologist & Co-convenor (Admin Team) of Ankur Pratishthan, which saw the participation of 40 girls from the centre.

It was an approach building session in which the subject of choosing a career was presented interactively by highlighting interconnectivity of school

syllabi and career paths. The key idea effectively conveyed to the children by Smt. Madhura was that a career choice is not a mere choice of a source of income, but rather a choice of subject to pursue life-long excellence. The response to the session has been overwhelming. In future, we intend to conduct similar sessions in other centres as well.

Seva Vrat Yojana

This ambitious initiative was conceptualized to motivate our volunteers to look at Ankur Pratishthan's work as a living dream and dedicatedly take it up as a shared life goal.

Our Regional Secretary for Navi Mumbai, Shri. Mayur Dhoke has taken up Ankur Pratishthan's work as a 'Sevavrat' for a year since January 2021 and has set a great example of dedication before all our volunteers. After a daylong of tiring work as an engineer, he returns to our office and gives the remainder of his day to our work. He has been actively involved in Ankur's work at multiple levels for the last few years and as a Sevavrat he has dedicated even his free time to our work.

Hats off to his spirit! We heartily thank him for setting a wonderful example before us all. It is hoped that many more volunteers will take inspiration from him and take our work to new heights.



You Are, So We Are!

The past year was full of challenges for all of us. While the COVID-19 pandemic put physical distance between us all, our hearts and minds were as close as ever. On one side, the needy were stretching their arms out asking for help but on the other side, the extended hands of altruists far outnumbered those of the needy. Ankur Pratishthan has experienced this philanthropy first hand.

Volunteers of Ankur Pratishthan expressed their desire to continue working even after the lockdown was announced. At the time, some of our partner institutions were in urgent need of essential supplies. In response to their call for help, our volunteers provided the necessary aid to 7 of our partner CCI's. Further, in order to ensure that the children's education continued seamlessly, we installed video conferencing systems at 6 partner CCI's. While all of this was underway, several of our volunteers were facing unforeseen challenges in their personal lives, but due to their dedication to our work, they directed their attention to self-improvement and got through it all unfazed.

Eager for the company of our beloved children, we restored the regular

activities in a digital form in the next phase of work. Through the endless ideation of our volunteers & unending excitement of the children, we managed to conquer even the limitations of this novel digital medium. When things began to normalise after Diwali, we relaunched our signature initiatives— Project Vikas, Project Saksham, and Library at Doorstep. This year also marked the inauguration of Ankur Pratishthan's first office since its foundation 12 years ago.

Indeed, Ankur Pratishthan continued to work in full capacity only due to the unwavering resolve of its volunteers, excellent cooperation from its partner CCI's, and the neverending support of its donors. While several voluntary organisations were facing hardships in raising donations, the large-heartedness shown by our donors has greatly energized us. Ankur Pratishthan has gotten so far thanks to the love and support of each and every one of you; and we are sure that our work will continue to reach further heights through our continued association.

—Team Ankur Pratishthan

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