

SAKSHAM NEWSLETTER, JUNE 2015

Dear friends,

It is summer vacation time at Saksham and the premises must surely miss the chatter that made it come alive. Come July and the place will fill up again with the enthusiastic buzz of learning.

The year that went by was good. Attendance has been regular and the zest for education manifested itself very convincingly in the children. The teachers have sincerely put in their effort within the limitations of space and other factors that makes a venture like this very different from a regular school.



For one thing, as we have often remarked upon in the past, this informal school is not one where a specific group of students begin the academic year, continue together and finish it together. Nithar I is a place of migrants. Parents of these children do not have the privilege of a regular permanent job or source of income.



And this uncertainty finds resonance in all the areas of their life, including what they wear, what they eat and how much they eat, how much of medical help and from where they are able to afford it and what ailments they have to ignore. It also decides for them what rent they can pay and in which area.



They live far away from the villages they hail from and all of this affects their continuity in the place where they are presently trying to eke out a living. Understandably therefore, schooling of their children hurtles along in pace with the impediments of their economic conditions or even comes to a halt.



Saksham has been trying to help in the area of the education of the children of these migrant families and the one thing that we cannot insist on is that a child comes for enrolment only at the beginning of the academic year. For the reason that this school has been conceived as a facilitating bridge, at any point of time, we have students in the same class, who have been continuing for many months or have just joined. This requires a lot more effort on the part of the teachers than visible to the eye. To someone who casually checks on the level of uptake of a student, it may even appear that nothing is really going on.



Yet, we always have proof of the effectiveness of such a model.





Archana, one amongst the 13 children who were able to clear the Entrance exam for Navodaya Vidhyalaya, which are residential schools for meritorious students coming from economically weak backgrounds, run by the Central Government, has scored a whopping 90% in the CBSE Secondary level

Her elder brother Sunil, who was also studying in the Navodaya School, and had completed his Sr. Secondary had been selected for a year's special coaching in Kanpur for appearing in the IIT entrance exam under the GAIL Utkarsh programme.

<http://www.csrl.in/projects/gail-national-super-100-kanpur.html>

He has just finished his exams. He has also appeared for entrance exams for architecture courses and will also attempt the B.Tech entrance exam for admission to the Jami Milia University. We wish him all the very best.

The results of the Senior Secondary and Secondary exams of the Uttar Pradesh Board has recently been declared. Many of the children who had been streamlined to Government schools and had been continuing with evening classes at Saksham have done well. Even in the case of those who haven't scored exceptionally well, the fact that they have been able to reach this level in itself an achievement, because we are privy to the fact that many, many of the children who started out at Saksham have been compelled to give up their studies for umpteen reasons beyond their control.

These are the children who have completed their 12th standard:

Laxmi Uniyal- 76%
Sangita Gupta- 66.6 %
Shahid- 65%
Tanvir - 42%
Yogesh - 66%

These students appeared for and cleared the 10th standard exams:

Saurabh- 75%
Brijesh - 62%
Anuj - 76%
Avinash - 65%
Jihshan- 68%

These children face enormous difficulties in the course of their day to day life and yet have been motivated enough not to let go.

Saurabh, for example ,whose father is a lowly paid security guard, has been doing odd jobs, selling stuff on carts and working as a delivery boy during weekends and vacations. Yes, we may debate endlessly on child labour , but this is the harsh reality.





Laxmi and Yogesh too have decided not to give up. Real fighters they are. Their mother was determined against all odds, to ensure that her children continued with their schooling. She has been working relentlessly as household help and in a school to keep the home-fires burning. Saksham, on our part engaged Laxmi as a teacher to coach a group of younger ones and have also been supporting their education in the Government school by paying the required fees for the past several years.

Each of the other children have similar backgrounds. We are very proud of all these children.



Thirteen children have appeared for the entrance exam for admission to the Navodaya Vidhyalayas this year. Results are expected to be out by the end of June.

It is not just in their studies that these children have progressed. They have been as eagerly taking part in all the opportunities provided to them by patrons who have remained associated with the school.

Mrs.Rajeshwari Thiagarajan involved the children in an inter-school drawing competition as also a cultural event in the school for children with special needs, with which she is associated. Our children presented a dance number which was much appreciated. Mrs. Thiagarajan had also extended an invitation to the Saksham kids to participate in a Sports event which the kids thoroughly enjoyed and came away with prizes too.

Raakhee who has been coming to Saksham from a very young age, is a very talented dancer. She now also teaches a group of little kids in the evening session even as she continues with her Senior Secondary in a Government school in the mornings. She and her sister Kiran, along with other children won the third prize in the Basantotsav event organised by the Nithari village Pradhan , Mrs.Bimla Sharma, in which many schools participated. The item was a Shiv Tandav dance and it was power –packed.



Raakhee's group also presented a dance item in the event organised by the HCL, Noida , who have made several visits to the school and have helped with books , stationery etc.

A group from The Times of India had also visited the school and donated stationery and books for the children.

Help in kind, by way of stationery items, textbooks and notebooks have also been received from Mrs.Archana Bhandari, Mrs. Pooja Jain and from Shri Haridas who have remained constant supporters.

Four wall fans had been donated by the students from Amity school, Noida.

Sattu nutritional supplement is continuing to be sponsored by the organisation Mary's Meals.

Bananas are being given once a week or fortnightly as per the budget available for the same.

This is being organised by Shri Vinod Poddar /Rotary Delhi South.

Three computers had been delivered to the school. This was made possible through the efforts of Mr. Immanuel, who has been involved with Saksham as a part of the St.Vincent Society. Their visits and supply of nutritional supplements continue at regular intervals.





This Diwali came with a lot of warmth to Saksham. Chitra Venkatesswalu and her husband Mohan from Coimbatore sent cartonfuls of new clothes for all the children. This couple had previously extended financial help very large-heartedly. A big thanks to both of you.

We are very grateful to everyone for choosing to remain a part of the Saksham family.

The Shamdasani Foundation had continued with their support to Saksham with a very generous donation of Rs.1.5 lakhs in June 2014. For us, the Trustees of Saksham, this is also a recognition of the genuineness of our efforts and faith in the continuity of the project. We are very grateful to Shri Ramesh Shamdasani, who have kept the interests of these children in his heart even from oceans away.

Friends of Saksham in the Railway Board have continued with their financial support. A big thank you.

Shri Krishnan Venugopal, has generously contributed a total of Rs.75000/- during this year, in three instalments of Rs.25000/- each. It cannot be reiterated enough, that all intentions in this direction would remain just that and not become reality without the empathy and unstinted help from individuals like him.

Saksham has been fortunate to have Shri Pavan Jain of the Educare Foundation based in U.S.A, visit us and see for himself the work on the ground and be satisfied that the help that they had extended to us previously, have not been in vain.



This year too, they have donated Rs.88, 250/- towards this cause in January 2015. We are hopeful that they will continue to support us.

Pushpa Pai Shenoy, a friend of Saksham based in U.S.A donated an amount of Rs.60,310 /- in September 2014. Thank you Pushpa for your big heart and the love coming this way.

Monika Arora, sister of our Trustee Mrs.Anita Arora, has donated an amount of Rs.67353 / in November 2014 for the purpose of providing milk once a week to the children.



Mrs. Monika Arora is based in U.S.A and had come to know of this school and the needs of the children through her sister. It is a matter of great happiness when the Saksham family keeps growing and spreading love.

Shri Anil Kumar, son of our Trustee Shri P.C.Jain , has continued with his generosity and had contributed Rs.50000/- in December 2014. We are grateful that Saksham always remains in your thoughts.

The children attending classes at Saksham are not required to pay any fees. Textbooks and notebooks and stationery are also provided to them free of cost. Many of Saksham's well-wishers choose to provide the same in kind at intervals. Shri Akhil Chandra, a resident of Noida, had given us a handsome amount of Rs. 17200/- towards the cost of notebooks and stationery. He has supported Saksham in the past as well. Thank you Sir.

A bonus of Rs.1500/ each was paid to the teachers in October. It goes without saying that it is the sincerity and empathy with which they approach the children , which is far beyond the and much above the small salary that we are able to pay them, that makes this school different from the local schools. The Trustees of Saksham wish to put on record our appreciation to all of them.

Our funds have not permitted us to take the children for any outing this year. We hope to make up for this in the coming months, depending of course, on the goodwill of our supporters.

A few interest free loans of Rs. 5000/ each continue to be given to the parents of the children studying in Saksham to help them tide over some urgent need that may crop up. Loans taken from moneylenders are a common occurrence here and the rate of interest that they have to pay are exorbitantly high i.e to the tune of 10% or more per month. It's not much that we are able to help in this area, but we're doing what we can, given our limitations.

Medical check-ups and supply of free medicines have been going on uninterrupted.

We do not intentionally wish to exclude anyone who has been part of this project and has helped us with moral support, help in kind and through donations. Please accept our thanks and we hope that your support will continue in the future as well.

A copy of the detailed accounts for 2014-15 will shortly be sent to you. Accounts have been submitted for audit to our C.A, Shri Madan Jha, to whom also we are grateful.

Thanks and good wishes to all.

Nadira Razak