

Saksham Newsletter, April 2021- March 2022

This informal newsletter presents a summary of activities/ events for the period since our last newsletter dated March 2021. Saksham Charitable Trust has now completed 19 years since it was registered in year 2003 and the informal school run by it has also completed the same number of years at the same rented place in Sector 31, Nithari village, Noida. It can genuinely be considered a successful attempt despite all the limitations as during this long period, a very large number of children belonging to migrant families have been able to be initiated into world of learning. Many such students are now successfully pursuing their careers and are well settled in their lives. In this newsletter we bring the stories of few of such students.

It is emphasized here that we have never received any funding from the Government and the expenditures have been sustained by the large-hearted donors and the credibility of this endeavor is borne out of the facts that most of the major donors have continued their support for a considerable period. In this respect, we first most acknowledge contribution of M/s Concentrix Daksh Services Pvt Ltd. which has been associated with Saksham since 2016 providing us major support towards salary of teachers as well as interactions by its employees with the school children by visiting the school at regular intervals and organizing various activities including donation of Computer systems. We further acknowledge support of M/s Scientific Publishing Services, M/s Shamdasani Foundation, Sr. Adv. Sri Venugopal Ji and many others for their generous donations/ support towards the cause of education of the children. We also acknowledge support of other organizations/ persons who visit us from time to time and provide us with education materials/ seminars/ interactive talks and gifts for children.

The informal classes at the Saksham School in Nithari had to be suspended after the outbreak of Covid, although the children were provided with rations and textbooks and notebooks to help them tide over the exigencies. The sponsors of the Project "Bread Meal, who are also providing the students of Saksham with Mid-day meals, had pro-actively involved themselves on several occasions during the entire phase of the pandemic. Fortunately, there were only very few cases of Covid in this locality.

Once the pandemic had started to abate, classes were resumed in a staggered manner for the senior classes at different time slots during the day, duly paying attention to the requirements of distancing, sanitation of the premises and classrooms, precautions like wearing masks and sanitizing of hands etc. Once the risk was completely behind us, classes were resumed for all the age groups throughout the day.

As the place needed some sprucing up, the teachers (most of whom were themselves former students and are now all graduates) and the children got together to paint the walls and add some colourful pictures too.



Although attendance was a little slow to pick up in the initial days, the school was soon as fully functional as before in the matter of a few weeks. Then something very sad happened. One of the teachers who was with us from the very early days, Renu Jain, passed away. She was having a heart problem. It was a big loss for us. She will always remain a part of the memories associated with Saksham.



It is almost 20 years now since Saksham was registered formally as a Charitable Trust, although the informal evening classes had commenced even before that. So, before we give you an account of the activities in which the students were engaged in 2021-22, apart from the regular classes that were held on six days of the week, in two shifts, we thought that we shall use this opportunity to introduce you to some of our students, who had joined the school in those initial days. They had continued with their education after their senior secondary and then found a foothold in the world outside or are about to. We may not be able to cover all

of them in this Newsletter and will try to include the others in our future updates. Let us start with Sony and Ankit. Their parents had migrated to Delhi from Bihari Ganj in Madhepura District of Bihar in 1997 when they were small children. When informal evening classes were started in Nithari on one of the common terraces, these siblings were the first to join. Their father was a small-time vendor in Nithari at that time. Sony was then around 8 years old, and Ankit was perhaps five or six. They have part of Saksham since then.



Sony and Ankit and their two younger siblings were enrolled in a regular school with Saksham’s support. They completed their Senior secondary and then went on to college. Sony had been engaged to teach the children in the primary levels even as she was in High School, with a small monthly remuneration, as a means of support for her education. She completed her bachelor’s degree in Social Work from IGNOU and Ankit is pursuing his graduation from the Kalinga University. Both are now working.

This is what Ankit has to say, in his own words, unedited: “My Name is Ankit Gupta and I am one in former students of Saksham. First, I will say very big thanks to Saksham who makes us Saksham in our real life and give us wings to fly to true our dreams, succeed in our career & life to catch bunch of joys. After my 12th board I continued my studies in B. Com with Sociology in Kalinga University along with my in job real estate sector. Right now, I am co-founder of Rentofur India Pvt Ltd. We are one of the leading rental furnishings company in Noida and continues trying to doing well.”



Sony had also started working in the real estate sector and was good at her job. At present she is Senior Process Associate at NetAmbit Infosource Pvt. Ltd. and Process Associate at Investor's Clinic. Both Sony and Ankit are married and happily settled with their small families.

Kiran Mishra and Raakhi Mishra are sisters. They belong to the Darbhanga District of Bihar and the family came to Noida in 1997. Their father was engaged in a small-time local business of his own.





Both had started attending classes at Saksham when they were little girls, and both were fond of dancing. At Saksham, we have always tried to encourage the hidden talents of our students and some event was always organized within the school on every occasion, whether it be a festival or a National Day celebration, to let them express their passion of whichever art form they were interested in. We would also ensure that they got to participate in events organized by other schools and NGOs in Noida.

Mrs. Rajeswari Thiagarajan has been a well-wisher of Saksham for a very long time. She runs a school for Music and Dance, “The Thyagaraja Music and Dance Academy” in Sector 33, Noida. She had happened to see the performances of some of these children on many occasions and had kindly extended the opportunity to a few of them who showed promise, to attend the Bharatanatyam classes held in her school, totally free of cost. Raakhee and Kiran had both been attending those classes for a considerable length of time.

They completed their Senior Secondary and then went on to attain their bachelor’s degree from the Government P.G. College in Noida. They also taught the younger children in Saksham while continuing with their own education. Kiran then completed her master’s degree in Political Science from Mahanand Mishan Harijan College and is currently pursuing her B.Ed. from the Noida Institute of Education and Technology (NIET).

Raakhee obtained her master’s degree in Economics from the CCS University, Meerut. In the meanwhile, she had also completed her Senior Dance Diploma from the Tyagaraja Center for Music and Dance, thanks to the support of Smt. Rajeshwari Thyagarajan.

Both the sisters now have a YouTube channel where they have started to upload and share their dance videos. <https://www.youtube.com/@rakishranritya1524>.

Raakhee has been fortunate to find a job which will help her continue with her passion for dancing. She is now employed as the Dance Teacher in the Manipal International School in Darbhanga, Bihar.



The trustees of Saksham have since engaged Kiran as the In-Charge of the Saksham School. She has been very efficiently managing her duties of supervision, maintaining the accounts, interactions with all those who are involved and who would like to be involved with the activities of the school, all the necessary regular transactions with the bank and interactions with our Chartered Accountant, allotting supervisory work to the teachers when they have to accompany the students outside the school to different venues for participating in different activities, monitoring the attendance, maintaining the discipline and keeping all the Trustees up to date on all aspects of the running of the school. She is very well versed in English and can express herself articulately. She is indeed an asset to the Saksham Trust.

Sharad and Sourabh are brothers and they too have been attending the classes at Saksham from the time they were around 8-9 years old. They originally belong to Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh and the family came to Noida in 2002-03. Their father was working as a security staff in a private company in Noida. Extremely hard-working young boys, they never shied away from their studies or in helping at home.





Sourabh, the elder one has always tried to help in whatever ways he could right from the time he was a young boy, selling colours during Holi and crackers during Diwali. Later, he took up a part-time job as a delivery boy, even as he continued with his studies. Sharad, the younger brother has always been very good in his studies. He performed exceedingly well in both his secondary and Senior Secondary Board Exams of U.P and was even awarded by the Chief Minister as reported earlier in our newsletter dated June 2018.

He joined the Engineering College at Jhansi and is now employed as a Graduate Engineer in Larson and Toubro in Mumbai. All along his brother Sourabh, who by then had earned a diploma in designing and had got a job, rendered moral and financial support to his younger brother. Their journey has really been very inspirational.



Another sibling pair we would like to introduce to you are Laxmi Uniyal and Yogesh Uniyal. They hail from Uttarakhand. Their parents had migrated to Delhi when the children were very small. Laxmi and Yogesh have both been with Saksham from their early childhood.





Both were enrolled in the local Government school, as was the case with the other children reaching the level of the 4th standard, the only reason for such parallel enrolment being that we do not have the necessary Government recognition for issuing certificates. Although the academic inputs, extra-curricular activities etc. are not lacking in any respect, we do not fulfill the parameters required for the size of the premises and our teachers do not possess the requisite degree for teaching. Most of those teaching the smaller children in Saksham are our own former students who are simultaneously pursuing their college education.

Even while she was pursuing her own studies, Laxmi had accordingly been engaged as a teacher for the evening shift in the Saksham school itself. This is the practice we have been following for many years now. It gives the students some financial support and in their turn,

they are happily passing forward what they had received from the school. The pay is more in the nature of a small honorarium than a proper salary.



The mother of Laxmi and Yogesh has been the main support and the main earning member of their family. For the most part she was employed as a help in one of the schools in Noida. They really had to struggle, and it says a lot about the determination of these two children that they completed their graduation and are now firmly standing on their own feet. Both completed their graduation and Yogesh went on to complete his post M.Com.



Laxmi is now employed as Back Office Co-Ordinator at Alufine International, a group company of SM Engineering and dealing with products like glass doors, glass windows cladding etc. She is married and has a sweet child.



Yogesh is working as Assistant Manager in Kotak Mahindra Bank. He says he is also learning about the Stock Market. Meanwhile he is also indulging in his passion which is singing. He has a You Tube channel and regular uploads his songs there: <https://www.youtube.com/@yogeshuniyal7042>.

Hanika Gupta, whom we fondly call Priya, is the little girl in the mauve-grey frock, sitting on the grass on the foremost right of the first picture. This was perhaps the first outing for the students, after Saksham had rented a small premises in 2004-2005 and had started evening classes for three whole hours instead of the one-hour class in the courtyard of the Sharma family.



As in the case of Sony, Laxmi, Raakhee, Kiran and Laxmi , Hanika was also engaged to teach the smaller children in Saksham even as she pursued her college education. She completed her graduation (B.Com) from Delhi University. Hanika is very fond of and good in art and craft . She was also working part-time in an Art and Craft Company based in Sector-26,Noida, “Little Pumpkins” for nearly 8 years. The company, unfortunately closed down during the Covid pandemic. She has since joined in a company named Motherson Sumi Wiring India Ltd. as a trainee.

Hanika continues to be associated with Saksham as a craft teacher. She comes to the school every Sunday and gets the students of different age groups involved in some craft work.



So, these were the profiles of only some of our former students. We do feel happy that the efforts of Saksham have in many ways helped in giving a direction to these children and made them “Saksham” or capable. We will be adding more “Saksham” profiles to our future updates.

Now for the events that took place in the school since our last Newsletter:

In November 2021, a team from the Quokka Labs, Noida, an IT company dealing with digital products visited the school to celebrate Children's' Day with the students. They distributed schoolbags and other gifts to all the children.



A team from M/s **SSSI** (www.ssi.in – a leading online tutoring service provider) visited the school and held a workshop on Mental Health in November 2021 for the benefits of the children.

A team from M/s **FabAlly** (www.faballey.com – an online Fashion Store) conducted quiz competition for the students of Saksham in the school premises in November '21.

The **Concentrix** team have been a solid patron of the school run by the Saksham Trust for the past many years. Apart from being a major donor, they have also organised events from time to time both in their premises and in the school. Here they are on Christmas 2021 with gifts for the children.



Students from Saksham won the first prize in the jewellery making competition held by the Apna Ghar Social Welfare Society on the 9th of December, 2021.



A discussion was held in Saksham school on the topic, “The role of the Government and the role of the people during Covid -19.” The participating teams spoke very well.



The NGO, “Naya Savera” took a group of students on a trip to the Hotel Red Fox to



acquaint them with the Hospitality Industry. They were taken around to see the different areas of functioning for themselves, served delicious food and engaged in several other activities, which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

The annual drawing competition is one of the many activities that is organised by the “Society for Sports and Cultural Advancement”, Noida, to encourage unseen talents in Noida. The students of Saksham have been regularly participating in these events. Many of the children had taken part and won several prizes, including the group prize.



In the event held recently on the occasion of The World Disabilities Day, by the same organisation, Khushboo won the first prize.

Diwali, this year was special because some of the old students Ankit Bhagat, Nitin Dubey, Shubham Mishra, M.D. Altaf, Sachin Kumar and Sourabh Kumar had turned up at the school with sweets and snacks for the children. They all are progressing well in life in different fields and it indeed was a great joy to see them.



The organisation BREAD/Noida distributed dry rations (10 kgs. of wheat flour, 1 kg pulses and 1 litre of mustard oil) to the students of Saksham on the 3rd of December 2021



As is the custom, Parents –Teacher’s meetings are also held at regular intervals.



Shruti Bhardwaj, wife of Dr. Bhardwaj, Noida spread warmth again as she has been doing for the past several years with the gift of woolen sweaters for all the children.



Tailoring classes are also being held on a regular basis.

We are extremely grateful to all our supporters. As you can see from the progress of our former students, we can say that these collaborative efforts are not going in vain. A big thank you to Shri Madan Jha who has been auditing our accounts free of any kind of remuneration for the past several years.

We request all our well-wishers to spread the word to get others involved and continue supporting us as our funds are now depleting and without funds towards the rent of the premises and the salary of the teachers, we will not be able to take this forward for long. The donation to Saksham may be made by check/ direct transfer in name of “Saksham” and such donations are made exempt under section 80G of the IT Act. The bank details are as: HDFC Bank, IFSC Code 0000651, Savings Account no. 50100021209977.