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Disha IISER Pune

Volume II, Issue I

Journey to Land of Monasteries.

"My prejudices got wiped out, my childhood memories were re-freshed and many more things. I got to know about Buddhism, the history and geographical aspects of the place."

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An Editor's Comments

You hear many inspirational stories about people who have struggled very hard from their childhood due to socio-economic burden; but have finally emerged successful from darkness like a phoenix bird. People like Dr. Abdul Kalam, Dr. Raghunath Mashelkar, Babasaheb Ambedkar have set up an example for many children, especially those who live in slums and are willing to work very hard to be like them.

There are many children from slum areas who lack economic stability, but still have the spirit and motivation to work very hard. But is the hard work enough? Why are only some of them able to make that jump and many remain helpless and poor?

What do they lack? What do they need? "Luck?", No. What they need is proper direction to their work. What they need is 'Disha'.

With 'Disha' you are not only helping the children, but also are helping in building a better future for our nation. We are not saying change will come straightaway, it will take time. But, as someone said, 'even if you cannot run, it is better to walk slowly rather than stop and wait for someone else to help'.

Volunteers at Disha try to motivate and spread the joy of learning in children. It is the efforts of these volunteers, that the work and contribution made by Disha is getting enormous attention by society. Many mails received by Disha, clearly ensures support and help by many people in society.

Disha is trying to create a platform for all those children who lack quality education. All we are asking for is your little help in doing that. The question is, will you help?

Suvidyakumar Homkar

9th and 10th classes

Disha is student run body that aims at the uplift of the students from Lamaan Tanda and Sanjeev Gandhi Vasahat. In the same regard we have started a venture to help the students of Class 9th and 10th in their academics as well as to build a sense of rationality in them. We started this activity from 1st of June 2014. Regular classes are being conducted by the volunteers at IISER Pune. The classes comprise of lectures on science, mathematics and some sessions to build their general knowledge and science aptitude. We demonstrate experiments for better understanding and audio visual tools are used to draw their interest in the subject. Periodic tests and quizzes are conducted in order to assess their progress cumulatively. The students are very consistent in the classes and we are getting a sincere response from them. English being a crucial language, knowledge of this subject is indispensable and in this very regard we arrange a few classes to help them improve their communication skills. We have very high hopes and expectations from these students.

Vivek Suranse

Presentation by students to President

On third convocation of IISER Pune held on 15th of July 2014, we had an opportunity to present Disha's work in front of India's President Shri Pranab Mukharjee, MHRD Minister Smt. Smriti Irani, Ma-

Along with this presentation two of Disha kids, Rohit Kale from Sanjay Gandhi Vasahat and Pimpli Khetawat from Laman Vasti also met to all the dignitaries and explained few of the scientific toys



harashtra's Governor Shri. K. Shankamarayanan and Maharashtra's CM Shri. Prithviraj Chavan. On this occasion IISER had a special program on various activities in which IISER students and faculties are involved. This program was named as Innovation Exhibition at IISER Pune. In this 10-15 min long program, Disha as IISER's outreach activity, got a chance to speak about its contribution towards society by presenting on its various activities from past and present followed by a small demonstration. One of the founders of Disha, Kaustubh Deshpande had presented various outreach and inbound activities of Disha before all these dignitaries in which he emphasized on the primary education and its requirement to the underprivileged and remote part of society. How Disha works In order to increase the joy of education and spreading science was also an important point of presentation. Basically, how Disha is growing and inspiring more and more students to take up higher education was the soul of the program.

which they learnt during our various workshops, demonstrations and activities. After the Innovation Exhibition program there was an Address speech by President of India in which he said that he had the opportunity to know about the science outreach programs of IISER Pune, which is taking science beyond the campus to enable young people to experience the thrill of science. And he is hopeful that this initiative will ignite the minds of school children and attract them towards science. Smt. Smriti Irani had especially mentioned the name of the Disha Kids and their achievements in her speech saying that these are the Future of India and Disha is doing a great work by helping them. Maharashtra's CM also appreciated our work. By these speeches all the guests have inspired us in a way that no one could forget.

Ruchi Wasnik

Appreciation Certificate

Disha - a voluntary social organization of IISER,Pune, is working for kids in slum areas since last 4 years. Among the other activities of IISER,Pune, Disha is known as one of the prestigious activity. Every year IISER Pune celebrates its Foundation Day with an invited talk by an eminent personality in science and technology, the release of the annual student magazine *Kalpa*, and presenting appreciation awards to members of the IISER Pune community. This year IISER Pune celebrated its 4th foundation day on 2nd April, 2014. Prof. Balaram (IISc, Bangalore) was invited as a chief guest for the program. He gave his guest lecture on research at chemistry and biology interface and also presented academic awards to students of IISER, Pu-

ne. At the end of the program Prof K.N.Ganesh, Director, IISER, Pune came to the stage and showed a documentary on various activities of IISER,Pune. Then he said, apart from these activities, there is one very spe-

“...Director showed a short documentary on Disha to everyone. Everyone over there was congratulating us after the program was over.”

cial activity which is being run by some of the students of IISER, Pune which is Disha. He appreciated our work in front of all the staff, students and eminent scientist who came for the program. Dr.Anirban Hazra, fac-

ulty advisor of Disha, spoke a few words about Disha and also admired our work. He then invited Disha team to come on stage and felicitated us with an appreciation certificate by the hands of prof. Balaram. He also congratulated us and gave best wishes for future. I was really feeling proud to be a part of such a prestigious organization. After the felicitation, Director showed a short documentary on Disha to everyone. Everyone over there was congratulating us after the program was over.

I think this appreciation has motivated us to work more better for social cause. I thank IISER, Pune for admiring our work on behalf of whole Disha team.

Abhijeet Petkar

Weekend Program



Children attending Weekend program this semester are mostly of 8th and 9th standards. The activities of first weekend program i.e., on July 6th, included a brief introduction of Disha by Ruchi Wasnik followed by talk on career guid-

ance by Saurabh Kadam and Abhijeet Petkar and ended with a tour of IISER Campus. The sessions in the next weekends were Bernoulli's principle and Arvind Gupta toys on Bernoulli's principle, marking all the states on India map. There was a session by Harsha Kumar, where students were taken out and told about the plants in our campus. Also there were ses-

sions on mechanism of blood flow by Dnyanesh Dubal and Chemistry of acids and bases by Saurabh Pushkar. Group activity sessions conducted till now were English conversation session and an introduction to mathematical shapes. Apart from the above activities, we also had a 1hr. Refreshment session, where sports and arts sessions were conducted alternatively. The last weekend so far i.e., August 17th, there was an origami session in the refreshment session by Mangesh Sonawane.

Pranavi Reddy

Resource team activities

"There is no friend as loyal as a book"-Ernest Hemingway

Behind every stack of books is a flood of knowledge. Books give a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, Flight to the imagination and life to everything. Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.

When we look at those children in *abhyasikas* we see the sparkle in their eyes that clearly shows that they too want to study and learn. Understanding the importance of books to help them grow towards betterment, Resource team of Disha organized a 'Book donation drive' for the kids where volunteers contributed various types of innovative books which is a good collection of fiction, nonfiction, religious, historical, general knowledge and curricu-

"Understanding the importance of books to help them grow towards betterment, Resource team of Disha organized a 'Book donation drive' for the kids .."

lum books. We also got some interesting story books and craft books that can inculcate the art of creativity. For this, I thank all the volunteers who contributed books as a precious gift which is a valuable source of knowledge that consists of various benefits.

"DARE TO REACH OUT YOUR HAND INTO THE DARKNESS, TO PULL ANOTHER HAND INTO THE LIGHT..."

With this desire, we hope to continue various activities for children and help them in their overall mental, psychological and physical development.

For all the goals we have achieved we have got boundless support and help from IISER, Pune. Recently we were allotted a room for all the Disha activities including storage of books and other resources. Disha team thanks IISER Pune for all the support.

Sukanya Jogdand

Disha: "School Chale Hum"

One more praiseworthy initiative is sprouting up from IISER's own voluntary organization *Disha* called as "School Chale Hum". This programme aims at helping students who are doing their 10th grade to understand the concepts that are taught in the school. The motivation for taking 10th grade students is to improve their score in the upcoming board exams and make them ready for the next undergraduate level by teaching the basic concepts crystal clear. The programme is currently running with 9 students from Govt. school, Pashan at 8.30 am every day except Sunday at LHC building, IISER-Pune. Sunday sessions are optional in which a platform is created to discuss essential current affairs happening around us. Priority is given to Mathematics, English and Science.

Teaching sessions are made different from school by creating an interactive environment among students

and letting each one of them come on stage to express their ideas. Any suggestions and queries can be communicated to the main coordinator Nishad Mandlik (Ph. 09403420011).

Nishad Mandlik

If you're interested in joining the editorial team, or sending in contributions, feedback or suggestions, please email :

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Door Step school (DSS) at IISER PUNE



Door Step School is an NGO, which is trying to address literacy problems amongst the marginalized sections of society. The school provides education and support to the often-forgotten children of pavement and slum dwellers, construction site families and many other underprivileged families.

They have been operating in IISER PUNE for the past year. If any of you have seen a little white temporary structure at the parking lot near Mendeleev block, that's their workstation.

First Impressions of Disha

I joined Disha in very first week after my admission to IISER-Pune. Intention behind joining Disha was to help part of our own society which lack better educational facilities. I joined 9th and 10th program in Disha. I taught science subject to 9th standard students.

First time when I interacted with students, I realised that these children were lacking basic knowledge about what they study. They just learn the stuff to get good grades in exam. Disha is a platform which

Construction workers face the worst of difficulties that anyone can ever face. This is because they have to keep moving from state to state and from city to city in search of work. When they do, their family goes with them. The children don't get to stay in a place for more than 6 months. This snatches away the chance of them going to a school. Disha used to teach kids of construction workers working at IISER PUNE in the evenings. Door Step School has now taken over.

The school now runs for a full day. The children are given full opportunity for overall development. Although the mode of teaching is Marathi, the

school is effective.

And the teachers there are very regular and knowledgeable. They have a curious way of controlling noise in the class room. The teachers start dancing and singing if there is too much of noise. I am surprised to find that this technique works beautifully.

If you have free time on your hands, please go to this place anytime during the day and lend a helping hand.

Harsha Kumar

helps them understand the basics of what they study at school. Through Weekend program these children get to learn lots of new things which helps them to understand world around them in better way.

I feel very satisfactory when I utilise my time for this very noble purpose. It is worth doing and I would encourage others to join Disha and be a part of this organization.

Yashwant Chougale

Fellowship programs in India

Many of us in *Disha* wonder, what next? How do I go about contributing after my ties with IISER end? Are there professionals from whom we can learn to lead? There are a lot of fellowship programs in India giving us opportunities to become leaders and help people live better lives. Here is a list of some such programs:

Teach For India Fellowship: Teach for India is a part of 'Teach for All' global network. The Teach for India Fellowship program is a 2 year full-time paid commitment in which the most promising graduates and professionals are placed as full time teachers in under resourced and low income schools. Students and professionals with a bachelor's degree at the time of joining the Fellowship are eligible to apply.

For more information visit: <http://www.teachforindia.org>

Gandhi Fellowship: The Fellowship is an intensive 2-year residential program. The fellows are challenged to support primary school headmasters to transform their schools. During the 2 years of the Fellowship, the fellows will be assigned 5 schools each.

For more information visit: <http://gandhifellowship.org/>

Prime Minister's Rural Fellowship: PMRD Fellowship is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) where the focus is to reduce poverty and improve the lives of people in rural India. During the two-year duration of the Fellowship, PMRD Fellows will work closely with

District Magistrates of backward and remote districts in improving programme delivery and interface with marginalized sections, aiming to reduce the developmental and governance deficits. Immediately after successful completion of the two year fellowship, a PMRD Fellow is required to spend one year in public service as a paid full-time employee of the State Rural Livelihood Mission in the state she/he is assigned to.

For more information visit: <http://pmrdfs.tiss.edu>

Gyan-setu Fellowship: This one is the closest home and many volunteers from *Disha* have already been a part of the Kashmir-Ladakh program. This one year full-time Fellowship program (extendible up to two years) will provide an opportunity to up to 5 fellows to be a part of this unique program aimed at working towards "national integration" in remote areas of India through "science-based education" using "hands-on activities".

For more information visit: <http://gyansetuerc.wordpress.com/apply-for-fellowship/>

This article has been compiled from searches from the internet.

Shreenidhi P. M.



Talk For Twenty

Talk For Twenty is a part of DISHA which started in Fall semester of 2013. Motive of T-f-T is to give a platform for students to talk about and discuss the great Ideas which have pushed the human society forward. Adding to this also it is a chance for individual to share their views, what they think about their immediate society, how it is impacting to our lives.

Since past one year, T-f-t has seen the diverse topic from Governance, Copy right, Naxalism, Tamil Eelam Struggle and Civil war, Story of Room to Read it's work and how it grew and so and few more.

In this fall semester 2014 T-f-T organized two talks. One given by Kaustubh Deshpande one of the founding member of DISHA. He talked about a Pune based organisation Gyan Setu (Making a Bridge of knowledge) that aims to connect the various parts of the country through Knowledge exchange. He started his talk by some questions like "Why was Nido, a 19-year old student from Arunachal Pradesh, brutally beaten to death in



can I do from my side to minimize these pseudo but existing gaps of understanding between us and them.

Second talk was given by Darshini Ravishankar (3rd Year BS MS) on "Little steps towards greener society". Darshini beautifully communicated her idea that drastic changes can be brought about if all of us do the little part of ours to save the environment. She gave her real life experiences, the studies she did in her school and its impact. It was astonishing to know that an act as simple as fixing aera-



Delhi? Why do visitors to Kashmir valley often get the question "Aap India se aaye ho kya? "Why a tribal lady in Dantewada has to travel 30-40 km on foot through hills and forests, just to sell a small fruit vegetable in a weekly bazaar? India is a country of tremendous diversity; geo-physical, socio-economic and cultural. This has created huge barriers for communication across different communities resulting into isolation of some of them; particularly those in remote, rural and tribal areas. A healthy dialogue facilitating knowledge exchange needs to be established with these communities, to form a cohesive society and thus realize "National Integration". He shares his experience to the audience about his visit to Dantewada. These questions forced the audience to think, and asked ourselves what

tors to the taps in her school saved lakhs of rupees and lakhs of litres of water per annum for her school. Funny part was we were all asked to make paper rockets and throw them in random directions. In the end we were all made to pick our paper rockets. Room was clean again in a matter of seconds. Now this is called 'to do our little part'. The talk was followed by discussion which concluded with the decision that Disha and Prutha club would together work to solve open defecation problem in construction site in campus by helping setup toilets for workers.

That's how you bring change, by talking!

A quote of Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only things that ever has.

Talk For Twenty Team

My journey to the land of monasteries

Ladakh – when we hear it, our mind starts wandering on the serene yet majestic mountains standing next to fast flowing transparent rivers, the numerous monasteries established on rough hills, the Buddhist monks, the never ending



prayer flags, patchy vegetation – a symbol of hard work and endurance on the immense and never ending barren landscape. This is the beauty of Ladakh and to be honest, my initial reason for joining Gyan Setu. It is a programme aimed to connect people from different parts of the country, through knowledge exchange. Just as you need materials to build a bridge, Gyan Setu uses science demonstrations and activities as the building blocks to connect people. Presently, the programme operates in several remote areas of the country including Assam, Sikkim, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. A team of volunteers visits an area and interacts with students, teachers and locals alike by demonstrating interesting science activities which can be related to their daily lives.

We visited Ladakh during the month June, which is the best time to visit the place since the schools there do not have summer vacations. The weather was welcoming and so were the people. We covered as many government schools as we could in a span of five days. These schools are efficiently managed, and have a holistic approach towards teaching and sports. The teachers

are very supportive and the students are enthusiastic. It was fun teaching the students simple physical principles through innovative demonstrations. Personally, it particularly felt great when I saw them chirp or gasp in amazement. It became a two way process where both the parties learnt from each other.

The time passed swiftly and soon it was time to leave, time to leave the caring people, the children and the beautiful land of the Lamas. I asked myself what I learnt from this trip. The answers are many. I got a new and hopefully a different perspective of life. The

“The time passed swiftly and soon it was time to leave, time to leave the caring people, the children and the beautiful land of the Lamas.”

life there is much tougher than our luxurious lives in the cities and yet the people are kinder, more honest and happier. This is ironical but true! The life there is a glorious example of human endurance and our ability to conquer and successfully thrive. It teaches you that you can be happy if you choose to be, no matter how hard your lives are. Moreover, I understood the creativity and simplicity of children. I realised no matter which place we visit, children are always curious and very active.

Initially I viewed this trip as my chance to teach them. This is true but it is only a very small fraction of the reality. I did my best but I am not sure whether I inspired those young minds. I hope that my presence was serviceable. But one thing will stay as an axiom in my head that those people in the remotest part of the nation made the difference to my life. I am unquestionably sure that I learnt way more than I taught them. My prejudices got wiped out, my childhood memories were refreshed and many more things. I got to know about Buddhism, the history and geographical aspects of the place. Also, I will never forget the breath-taking beauty of Ladakh. I am thankful to the members Gyan Setu who gave me a platform to explore myself, an opportunity to share our cultures, make new friends and a chance to create a small difference in the society. I am very sure that my friends also have similar thoughts floating in their minds about Ladakh. I did my part and I feel content about it. This is very general and associated with any journey we relish. And when we go to a place with a motive, a cherry is added to the experience. I have realised that even the most selfish person should undertake such journey. We all should understand the diversity of our nation and bridge it together for a better future. In the end, we belong to a single family.

Agrim Saini