



## Akshadhaa Foundation Newsletter March 2021

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**Akshadhaa Assisted Living**  
Purposeful Life



### Trustee's Desk

Akshadhaa Assisted Living Project (AALP), is the most comprehensive project aimed at enabling a gainful life to the Special needs individual (SNI), afflicted with the Neuro-developmental challenges.

AALP gets the inspiration from Akshadhaa Foundation, a parent trust, working with the affected population since 2012. We have picked the best from the long existing assisted living concepts in USA and UK, and juxtaposed the local context during the project conceptualization.

The project is currently underway in full swing with the Core Team, deeply involved in the process of Land Acquisition activity. The base plan and the project constituents have been conceived and are namely as below;

- Resource Center for the SNI
- Separate Hostel facilities for the SNI, Boys and Girls
- Living quarters for the Parents and Seniors with some adjacency
- Staff and Guest quarters
- Separate Canteen for the SNI and Seniors
- Hospital and Wellness Center
- Vocational Facilities and the related Infrastructure
- Waste and Water treatment plants for highest green ratings
- Solar and other energy generation and conservation infrastructure
- Auditoriums, Indoor and Open-air
- Meditation and Prayer infrastructure
- Landscaped Mini forest

Once commissioned, AALP will be a model to lead the concept on Assisted Living, in providing a Life in all its Fullness to its wonderful denizens.

**Anirban Dutta**

Founder Trustee, Akshadhaa Foundation



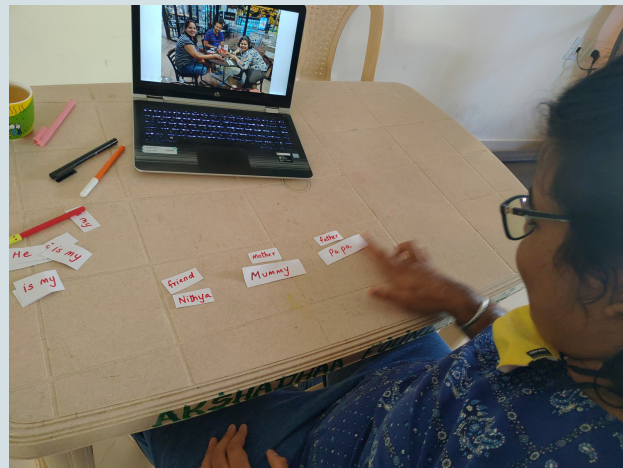
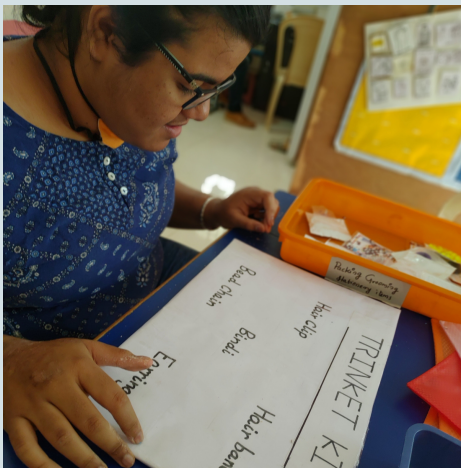
## Akshadha's online classes changed Divya's life

Divya mohan a senior student in the vocational training has been attending regular classes at Akshadha foundation since 2016. She was undertaking various skill training but the year 2020 – 2021 changed the scenario due to the pandemic. The lockdown was a serious concern as we parents were worried about 'what next' how we could move ahead? Will she regress? Will this make her feel lonely?

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Thankfully Akshadha introduced on-line classes. This kept Divya meaningfully engaged and busy, she would eagerly look forward to her class to happen on the next day. The online classes have been very good for us as it has eliminated the terrible travel on Bangalore roads. The Vocational training on digitisation program has also been conducted on-line. The team of therapists are very dedicated. Divya is kept busy practically with hands-on work assigned with clear dates marked to be submitted on a regular basis. This meaningful work and regular interaction with peer group and mentors keeps her socially engaged and active, and this is what our kids like her need. This online class makes her socially active otherwise it would leave her in a lonely vacuum. Our sincere thanks to Akshadha for continuing the on-line program. Keeping up with change and moving on with time is being dynamic and the need of the hour.

**Mohandas and Latha Mohan**  
**Parents of Divya**



## Hybrid special education sessions

We have been dwelling in a period that is so novel and extremely strange and unprecedented. At the start of the pandemic Covid-19, the eventuality was so sudden. The lockdown created a situation with it being the only choice to move, with an 'on-line' mode of working.

We took up the challenging situation and with immediate force. We worked on capacity building of our trainers to move in a short period to conduct the online session, logistic arrangement of supporting trainers & therapists with digital gadgets to conduct the class was done with immediate effect from their own home. All teaching materials had to be made in digital format. As we have worked mostly with hands on teaching materials, the digital move was enormous, but we did it with a war footing and our classes began online from April 2020.

This online mode helped our children to continue their classes and therapy sessions without any gap. Parents who became our remote support in enabling our online classes were mentored on how to structure the class environment at home and how to support the child during the session.

As time evolved, knowing the pandemic is not going away quickly and it could be a long-lasting period, we gradually opened the offline working in the school premise in the month of June 2020 following all covid protocols and with the consent of parents and guardians.

Some of our children were given home programs, who were not able to take online or physical sessions.

The best part of this pandemic period is that it has opened our eyes, and made us realise how accessible this 'online' medium is. The availability of smart technology has made digital learning very doable. This has brought about many advantages and kept us connected across distances. Online working has given complete transparency to the program and empowered parents to be shadow teachers in their own house.

Some of our students have taken to this medium with an astonishing zeal. This one-on-one online mentoring has given very impactful results, but for a few this online mode has not been very conducive, especially for those who have limited sitting tolerance, hyperactivity and low focus.

Parents were approaching us to accommodate more students in the physical mode of a session in the school premises. A comprehensive compact 3 hours program was designed to accommodate more students in the physical capacity of the premise and keeping the availability of therapists time. So in a rotation timing considering the covid hygiene protocol & social distancing and maintaining the therapist ratio a 3 hour individualized program was made.

Thus, gradually evolved the 'Hybrid' culture of working. So now the parents are having a choice of both online mode and offline mode. This flexibility in choosing the mode is making the program accessible to a larger group of population.

The execution of this 'Hybrid' model is in the hands of a hardworking team of professionals, who meticulously plan the time-table and content of the program. Making the IEP and giving full scope of learning of academics, functional life skills, perception, cognition, language and communication, vocational readiness training, physical therapy, hand function activities, games, art/craft and social skills both through online and offline mode. We currently have 50% of our students in the online mode and leaving the other 50% availing physical or offline mode of learning.

This 'Hybrid' model is a novelty. The experience of handling this mode will help us evolve and tailor make the program suiting the different individual needs of every child and family in the community.

**Sumaiya Naaz**  
**Senior Rehabilitation professional**



## Internship opportunities for college students

Aksahdaa foundation with its nine years of service and networking with the community has been able to establish a good relationship with some prestigious universities in Bangalore, who regularly send their students every year for internship.

All interns are provided with experiential learning. They are given an opportunity to support in the classrooms, interact with students in different age groups at junior and senior levels.

They are encouraged to support students in special education, physiotherapy, OT and speech sessions, this gives the interns an overall understanding of the whole multidisciplinary approach at Akshadhaa Foundation.

Interns are also given the scope to make teaching learning materials (TLM), both in making tangible materials and in making PowerPoint presentations. Apart from TLMs they write reports, case studies and make presentations.

All interns are carefully supervised and mentored with hands-on training from our team of qualified professionals. Every internship opportunity gives the intern a complete “know how” of working with special needs students.

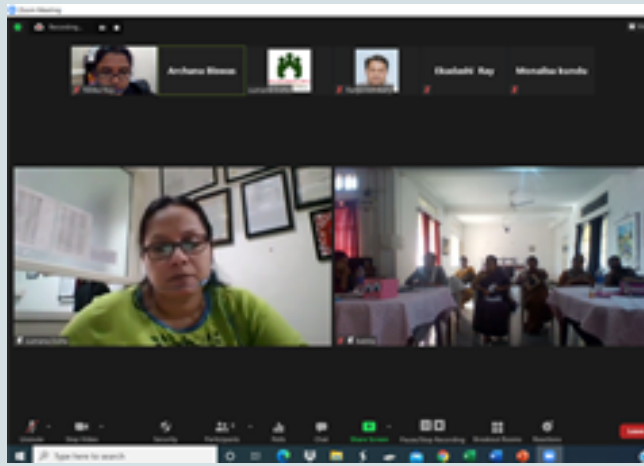
On completion of an internship, a carefully assessed report and certificate are given to all interns, this adds value to their professional profile. This credit of having gained a fully rounded exposure adds ace to their resume, and helps to make a choice of working with special children in the future.

We have college students interning at our premise from

- Kristo Jayanthi College
- St Joseph College
- St Annes College
- Mount Carmel College.
- Garden City College

It is our endeavour to spread knowledge and also to bring practical awareness, inclusion among college students.





## A new chapter added in Akshadhaa during lockdown

Equip the Special Million (ETSM) is one of the creative and fruitful project that evolved during the covid time. The project is envisioned to impart research and protocol based Early Intervention strategies to empower parents and teachers working with children with developmental challenges within the age group of 5 months- 5 years. This integrated approach of intervention strategies are designed to support home based intervention for the parents and up skill the special educators and community workers with newer techniques and strategies to work effectively with the children with developmental challenges. Under the project, different modules are divided for different populations and understanding levels. For the parents the training modules had simpler content with less technical vocabulary, more pictorial and appropriate to apply and provide stimulation at home environment.

From the time of lockdown our resource professionals including special educators, speech therapists, physiotherapists etc. have invested 1200+ hours on online intervention with children, their parents and trainers. This online exposure has made us confident and a robust organization has emerged with thousands of resource learning galleries, which can bring immense benefit to more parents and trainers across the country. This was the seed of thought from which ETSM evolved and in the last 4 months, we have worked with 7 NGOs in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Panjab. Total 126 trainers and 41 mothers were successfully trained through this program. While working with these NGOs we have realised the different needs in terms of disability condition specific challenges, age specific challenges, behavioural challenges and the understanding they are looking for. We have taken up only Early intervention part in last 4 months. This project will continue in the year 2021, would incorporate more elements of training and intervention modules and would bring more families and NGOs under the training program.

**Sumana Dutta**  
**Founder Executive Director**



## Sherin's new journey

If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself

Akshadhaa foundation, a place where every individual is unique and shines, Everyone has their wings to fly high, Where all souls meet their passion for creativity, A place for learning, a place where we get together as a team, An abode where all individuals are valued and each child gets a unique blend of learning.

As a new member to this Organization, I was not able to explore my potential and my mentors here always provided me with a helping hand. Whenever I feel that I am not capable of performing well, my mentors would push me forward telling me that there is always a way to it and stretch guidance to a new mode of learning and teaching. Whenever I felt I am not able to perform well my mentors would tell me, Each Day is a New Learning and to take each day as a new challenge. Our mentors here rather than being a boss and authoritative, are leaders who walk alongside giving guidance and providing feedback to improve our methodology. Teaching and learning always go hand-in-hand as working with special children always requires an exceptional teaching approach.

Being alone will not give us away, but we are a team here. A group of young minded professionals, brainstorm and work together for the betterment of each child that steps into the Akshadhaa Foundation. We are an exceptional group that gets together to have fun and work with a team spirit.

"The asset of the team is each individual member, The strength of each member is the team"

**Sherin Alfred**  
**Rehabilitation professional**



## Akshadhaa Buddiz Virtual Social group for children

'Being social is being happy' when we work with special needs children. Lockdown would have made us apart physically but not emotionally.

Akshadhaa Buddiz club took the initiative to bring all our children to one platform and get the school environment to their homes virtually. It worked to be a medium where our children could meet and greet each other from different distances.

Cooking simple recipes, cognition/visual perception, alphabet and number drawing, learning different shades of colouring, crafting color papers, going around a virtual visit to places, playing fun games, celebrating festivals, playing word puzzle and riddles, music and rhythm, storytime, academics games, concept games, hand function and sensory activities, growing plants and etc are the elements that went in the creative planning for the sessions with lots of fun. This gave an exposure to our children to learn in a different medium among a wide range of elements.

The learning outcomes are; the children got exposure to the virtual medium of learning, getting to meet their friends, enjoy different elements of learning, application the learning in their real life and maintaining the stability in learning through the same medium.

The social group brought the whole community of Akshadhaa; the children, teachers and the parents together to enjoy oneness and stay connected. Akshadhaa's Buddiz club created a unique platform for the children where they could enjoy learning new things virtually.

The more we connect, the more we learn at Akshadhaa Buddiz club.



### **Challenges during lockdown**

During the lockdown period, our therapy departments were not opened, all our therapy equipment was not available instantly. Sorting this out took some time for our therapists, since it's an online therapy session the preparation had to be in many domains as mentioned below.

1. PREPARATION ON CONDUCTING SESSIONS THROUGH ONLINE MEDIUM(ZOOM)
2. CHANGING THE THERAPY MODEL
3. USING A THERAPY MEDIUM
4. CREATING/USING HOUSE HELD MATERIALS FOR THERAPY
5. DELIVERING EFFECTIVE THERAPY.

By considering these domains we have started setting the plan of carrying out therapy. Initially, we had many Online demo sessions and practice and usage of same. And after the continuous usage of Online medium, it was easier for us to go ahead easily. Next comes the therapy model, we have totally changed the therapy model since it's online, the holistic approach of therapy has been changed and made a simpler and step by step approach.

While carrying out the therapy based on these particular therapy models we need a medium to deliver the therapy in an effective way under our expert's guidance. So we thought of involving and utilizing parents as an effective therapy medium and deliver the therapy effectively. The parents were really helpful and supportive in carrying out the therapy.

Carrying out in this way gave great learning to the parents and it was very useful for the parents with great effectiveness. Overall it was a great experience.

**Rajkumar MP**  
**Pediatric Neuro Physiotherapist**



## **Achal's abilities and challenges in a better way**

In this new normal situation, we as parents worried initially as to how our child is going to adapt to this online mode of teaching. Achal has adapted well to this new learning environment which was a huge transition for him.

His interest in gadgets and taking visual inputs made him comfortable sitting in front of the laptop and attend to sessions. As the timetable for a class is set,

he is prepared well in advance about the session, once the laptop and materials are set on the table, he understands it's time for his online class. This structure and routine helped him to be organised and also during the session he gets a few minutes breaks of rhymes which are shared by the teacher.

When coming to the new responsibility of shadowing him as a mother during online classes initially it was a challenge as there was no household maid, I plan and prioritise my household work and make myself available for sessions, in fact, I am free of guilt these days as I am able to spend constructive 2 hours with Achal and shadowing him during session enabled to understand more about his abilities and challenges in a better way.

Special educators and therapists guided in breaking down the goals in steps and work towards those goals in a collaborative manner. The preparation of material with models shown from teachers helped during the session and the lesson plan was designed to fit into the online mode of teaching by teachers was very much useful.

Achal enjoys social group classes as he gets to see his friends on screen, Attention was given to all children in a group. Setting the materials ready for the session made easy as the list was shared well in advance and the use of available material at home was also encouraged by teachers.

Benefits of online teaching Session is more interactive from both sides Knowledge sharing by both parents and teachers Uniform method of working with designated materials on both sides help to teach the concept easily which inturn avoids confusion in a child.

The collaborative approach of both parent and teacher helps to understand the child's abilities and challenges.

**Viji Naresh**  
**Mother of Achal**

### **Dear Well Wisher,**

We here at Akshadhaa Foundation are so proud of the recent work that we did last quarter, and we'd like to thank you for being a part of our community.

We need your continued support this quarter as well because "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

**Your one click can make a big difference.**

**DONATE NOW**

