

Unprecedented in scale, unnerving in thought and uncertain in planning, this year has made every person and every sector get back to the drawing board to reconfigure and recalibrate their fundamentals. The COVID-19 virus wasn't the only thing in the air; heightened stress levels and crippling anxiety marked many weeks before one came made sense of the reality of the lockdown and its short- and long-term implications on our lives. Against this backdrop have been children who have been holed up at home, witness to their own family's distress and have had to come to terms with not meeting their friends or going to school.

Teachers - accustomed to traditional tactile & physically present teaching methodologies - were left with the gargantuan task of converting these conventional techniques into an effective online learning experience. While within the education sector itself this has been humongous, for those in the field of therapeutic learning and special needs, this transition has uprooted everything that was standard practice until the lockdown.

The Snehadhara Foundation recognised immediately that if it didn't respond early on to the crisis on hand, the lockdown would have a detrimental effect on children with disabilities. Our direct care systematically moved online, starting with the Summer School programme and one-on-one sessions, and then gradually moving into group lessons, held firmly together by our combined love and belief in the arts. Weeks on end went with trying various permutations and combinations that worked effectively as online teaching methodology. All this while, we were fully aware of how the transition to the digital medium that has not been easy for teachers in general, would be doubly harder for educators of special needs children and young adults. These factors, combined with our inherent nature to pay it forward, resulted in impART launching Digi Akshara—an online training programme for educators.

Inspired by the gratifying response to the course and fuelled by the need to take this model to many more special needs children, we actively worked at creating an online, learning experience that would be open to children across the country. As India's only arts-based virtual school for children with special needs, Ecole Illam recognises the role it plays in getting the world closer and its children better connected with each other and within themselves. With Creative Connections, we managed to successfully conduct our corporate programmes online and also facilitated our first ever E-Employee Engagement with Gartner.

Among our greatest takeaways this half of the year has been just how much our work is recognised; not just among parents of children with special needs or within Bengaluru, but also among our peers who have reached out to us to help them navigate through technology to find effective online learning methodologies, respected institutions that are constantly looking out for innovative work done by people, and the media that is looking for positive stories even in the face of much reported gloom.

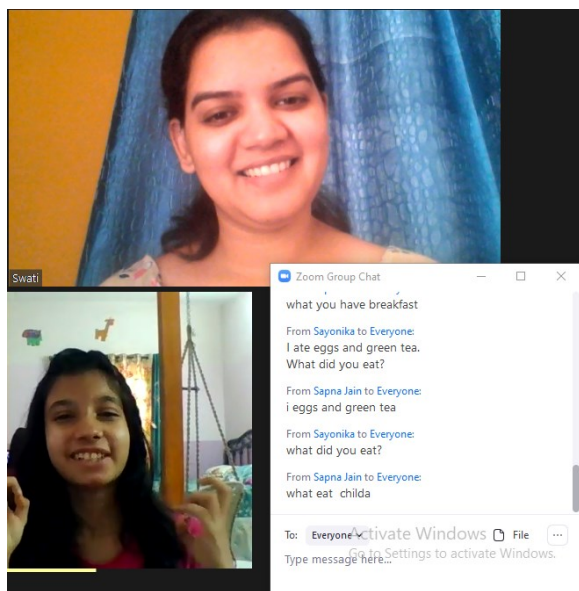


2 Direct Care

We used the first fortnight of the lockdown when all of us were home, to regroup and create the Summer School programme that would slowly familiarise our children with what was fast turning out to be a new normal. This meant having to take everything we planned for them in the real, tangible world and converting it to fit digital formats. This process wasn't just making everything virtual; it was also about creating teaching methodology that would be effective for children with special needs, especially since most of them were unfamiliar with regular gadget usage.

We systematically worked with literary pieces that served as the thread through the core areas of our curriculum: Functional academics jostled for space with Kai Ruchi (culinary sessions), Awaaz (music), Kuthoohalam (sensory integration), Thakadimitha (dance) and more. All of this was recreated for the Internet, this time with our parents playing a crucial role as well in helping us move from the real to the virtual.

As they evolved with the medium, so did our assessment and analysis techniques. We created a progress tracker sheet wherein documentation was shared live everyday with the parents on how their child performed during the session. Given how child-centred our curriculum is, it became imperative for us to consistently monitor the children's progress.



This shift to the Internet as the mode of communication and interaction has meant that the teachers, therapists and facilitators too have to frequently undergo training and assessment sessions to upgrade and update themselves with the times, the technology on hand and the efficacy of their teaching methods. Regular team meetings to share our own learnings, as well as assessing peer, child and parent feedback, have helped us build a massive database to draw inspiration from.

One-on-one monthly meetings with parents of each child has plugged-in the void that the COVID-19 lockdown had created when it curtailed our face-to-face interactions with parents to discuss a child's progress. Using stories from across India as well as literary classics, we used book-based storytelling as themes which served as pivots for activities across the arts and sciences. Charming children's story books such as The Magic Fish, The Onion Shawl, The Peacock Who Would Not Dance, Who will be Ningthou?, The Magic Vessels and Norbu ke Naye Joote, formed the basis of the children's exploration across cultures and languages, concepts and ideas, during the lockdown.

Alice In Wonderland

Houseful

We had crafted our Summer School to be a series of sessions that used literary works as broader themes to be applied through various art forms, starting with Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. Our facilitators engaged with the children individually, and over the course of six weeks, slowly familiarised them with the technology on hand and this new method of learning. Short, recorded video messages from our teaching and our non-teaching staff, comforted the children that the Snehadhara family may not be on campus together, but they're still with them in spirit. The six-week session ended with the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. We celebrated not just the end of this theme but also how we've all navigated through this first phase of the lockdown together and emerged stronger. We dressed up like characters of the book, flaunted props and eye-catching makeup to soak in the spirit of Alice in Wonderland.

Like everything else, our Houseful sessions too went digital, continuing to give our children a space to partake in creative experiences, both passively and as engaged listeners.

R. Devanathan enthralled our children and parents in May with a delightful violin recital, while Dr Geetha R. Bhat's veena performance was nothing short of therapeutic. In July, Bindhumalini Narayanaswamy presented a one-hour multilingual, musical travelogue with our children yearning for more by the end of it. Sneha Kappanna, a pioneer in bridging the nuances of tradition, theatre, dance and culture, effortlessly demonstrated her expertise at the August session of Houseful. Bringing his inimitable vocal prowess and infectious energy to September's Houseful was Vasu Dixit, who has found much acclaim and admiration through his eponymous collective as the frontman of Swarathma and his various musical outings.



Parents Study Circles

Bringing Science to the Arts

Started in April 2020, the Parent Study Circles on Thursdays, gave us the comfort to access our own vulnerabilities, and the strength to understand that if we can discover this journey for ourselves and find the calm and ease to deal with it, then it will better our relationship with our children. Interestingly, our circles have had more fathers joining in.

Lockdown-triggered anxieties and meltdowns of children were discussed, as were matters that do not conventionally become conversation topics. We spoke candidly of sexuality education for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities through games, dance and group journaling activities, as parents shared personal journeys, perceptions and situations involving the making of choices.

While our Parent Study Circles have been a space for parents of our direct care children, seeing how much they stand to improve parent-child relationships, we intend to slowly open it up for parents of children across all our programmes.

The idea of learning science through the arts gave us the opportunity to tap our children's scientific temperament, thus inspiring "Scienstory", our collaboration with Science Hoppers, an IIMB-NSRCEL incubated company.

We believed that the ability to begin using scientific vocabulary that they comprehend, would give inclusion a whole new meaning. After piloting a few sessions with the children and seeing the wonder in their eyes while processing its fascinating nature, Scienstory has been made a vital part of our Direct Care curriculum.

Our pioneering effort to take science curriculum to children with special needs, is a carefully thought out syllabus, made incredibly interesting through videos and live demonstrations. Scienstory gives the children a chance to create their own experiments so as to satiate their curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Our children had a great time learning about the water cycle and concepts of evaporation, condensation and precipitation, with the help of easily available shaving foam.

Various syllabi have had to be rewritten in the lockdown, keeping in mind how the children would respond to the digital medium and how engaging it would be, even as teachers have had to undergo a sea change in their methodologies.

This process has reiterated the need to constantly train teachers and support staff, who will then have the responsibility to put in practice this new pedagogy. Our Digi Akshara programme has been a humongous success in this regard. Our interactions with the direct care children also helped us formulate a curriculum that could be beneficial for children across the country, while simultaneously aiding their parents in this difficult experience of home-schooling. This was the idea that led to Ecole Illam.



Admissions Open

Recognising which online platforms are most effective for their children, learning how to optimise apps and Internet tools to make learning more fun and engaging, apprising oneself with the latest in digital teaching methods and creating experiences that don't let monotony set in; these are all among the added responsibilities on teachers today. From our own experiences and honest assessments of what works and what doesn't for children with special needs, we realised that we could share our best practices with other educators who are grappling with similar issues. The Digi Akshara course is the outcome of that massive requirement that remains in the online therapeutic learning space. The intent of the programme has been to replicate as far as possible the environment of a physical classroom.

The astounding response to our first batch soon saw us conducting many more batches subsequently, making us grateful for all those practitioners and facilitators who reached out to us to upgrade their existing skill sets and teaching tools. In just a few months, 30 persons have trained through the programme as educators, psychologists, students, health workers and arts practitioners, participated in a course that brought together Arts, Psychology and Technology. The purpose of this training programme is two-fold: working on oneself as well as equipping oneself to facilitate classroom learning using creative interventions. Digi Akshara has given us the opportunity to bring together people from Assam, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai etc.



Admissions Open

The word Illam ((written as இலம்) is Tamizh for home, and it ties beautifully with the French école for school. With the facilitators on hand to helm the learning experience that puts the child firmly at the centre of the process, the idea of école இலம் was to take the Snehadhara way of learning to more households. Specially crafted arts-based courses are being conducted online for children with special needs who want to sample our work without signing up to be with the Foundation full-time. Although there are counselling sessions still available online, there has been a dearth of direct, knowledge-enhancing engagement through the Internet for children with special needs in India.

We had radio jingles and interviews preceding the launch of the e-school, generating a great deal of interest in our curriculum. Children from across the country have started to enrol for the programme. Structured as Basic, Intermediate and Advanced, our courses have been formulated to cater to varying therapeutic requirements.

September saw the first two Basic batches roll out with admissions rolling in for intermediate and advanced programmes as well. Over the course of our sessions, we're already seeing how children are gaining more confidence to join in and be part of a newer space.



Through the ethos of our impART programme, we take our arts-based therapy practices and solutions to those in the social and corporate worlds, thus creating mutually enriching collaborations. Another of our pioneering efforts has been the Prajñādhara division's certificate course in Arts Practices for Inclusion (API) that looks at therapeutic practices and social inclusion through the arts. With the COVID-19 imposed lockdown, all our efforts have had to move to the digital platform.

TRAINING WITH VANA

The “Vakshana – Collaborative Mindful Leadership” programme, an intensive certificate course for the top tiers of management, works towards creating a collaborative, compassionate leadership environment. A year-long engagement, it was inaugurated with Vana Sabha leaders in Dehradun. This year has been our second year with Vana and their team. Through stories and visual art, we have found innovative ways to broach topics such as change management and conflict resolution, among others in an online format.

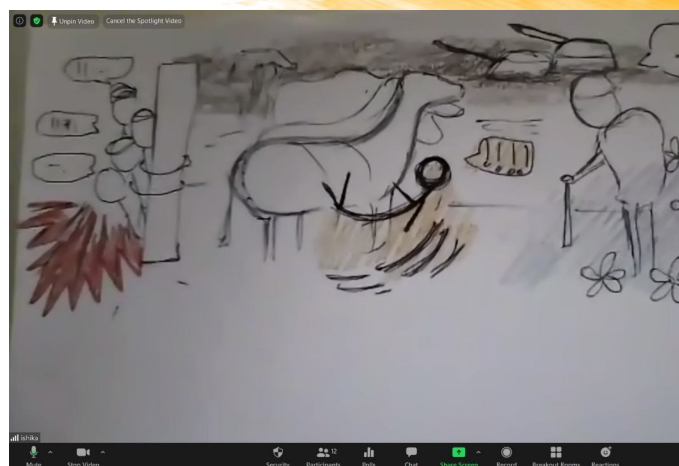


CREATING A STRENGTH POOL WITH PRAMEYA

Part of a 12-week program SAHAI Reboot your life by Prameya Health that is curated to help cancer survivors get back to “their normal” routine, our sessions look at the Functional, Emotional, Nutritional and Spiritual approach to wellbeing. Our one-hour session *Kathaa Kaathi* witnessed the narration of a story and the association each one made with the characters in it. In September, we conducted a musical dialogue session called *Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*, where many of us found artistic expression through sounds, words and songs.

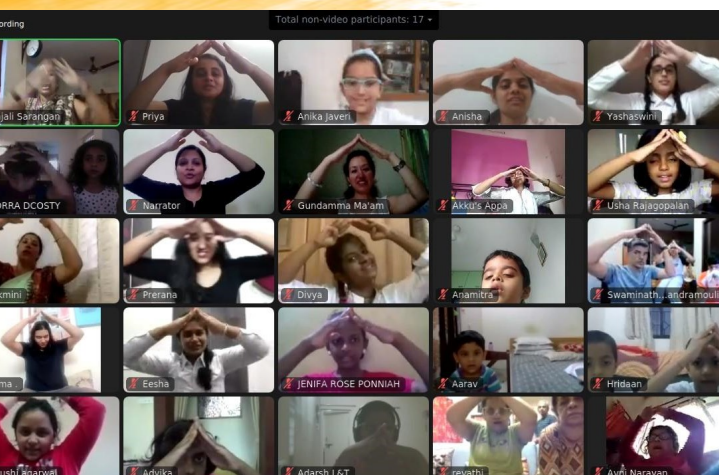
CONNECTING CREATIVELY

Our Creative Connections programme engages with corporations to work with diverse audiences using the Arts. One of our key focus areas is to build lifelong partnerships with compassionate individuals by introducing corporate citizens to the goals of a socially inclusive society. The initiative also offers tools and techniques to improve leadership skills and reach team building goals. Our programme is now tailor-made for the Internet and we've been conducting it for several companies who wish to find better ways to interact with their employees in these unprecedented times.



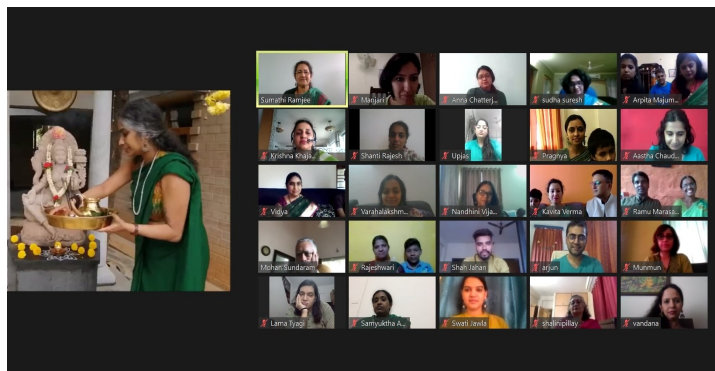
PRATHAM EVENT

The Snehadhara Foundation in September, participated in what has been one of the biggest, most inclusive online classrooms: the One Day One Story event with PNLIT. Our team of immensely entertaining and engaging storytellers breathed life into two of Pratham's most delightful stories. The event was open to children from all over, who learnt how to process big, complex emotions, while also quite literally falling off the chair, laughing. Our team worked with mainstream children as well as those with special needs, thus creating an inclusive session.



ONLINE CERTIFICATION CEREMONY

Prajnadhara certified 23 Arts-Based Therapy practitioners in a virtual certification ceremony that celebrated the creativity and imaginative engagement in this batch's ABT work. Their work has reached 11 locations, from Mumbai to Kolkata and Delhi to Bangalore; where they have brought shifts in social and emotional health, learning and mental health for the children and adults who are beneficiaries of their ABT work



Arts Practices for Inclusion

API SUPERVISORS TRAINING

Due to nationwide lockdowns and restrictions, case studies on social inclusion of the special needs populations as well as certain neurotypical groups, were introduced in monthly calls with supervisors. The introduction of e-sessions where supervisors brought together a group of children to support through arts practices saw them apply the learnings from video conferencing in facilitating learning, social and emotional communication through arts practices sessions for these children. In September 2020, the textbook for the certificate course on Arts Practices for Inclusion was shared with the supervisors. For the rest of the year 2020, there will be study circles to enable the supervisors to learn from the textbook. Facilitation of arts practices sessions will continue. Finally, from October to December 2020, supervisors will be overseeing sessions of other arts practitioners so as to be ready to supervise students on the Arts Practices for Inclusion certificate course come February 2021.

BLOGGING FOR A CAUSE

A series of blog posts on inclusion and what it entails, has created multiple conversations and thought processes on our Prajñādhara website. Through vlogs and print interviews, personality profiles, excerpts from books, reviews of movies, plays and books, poetry and more, we are committed to giving inclusive ideals a space to find expression. Now more than ever, it's the need of the hour.



ADMISSIONS TO OUR FLAGSHIP COURSE OPEN SHORTLY

API is a first-of-its-kind course which looks at therapeutic practices and social inclusion through the arts. Based on Prajñādhara's experience in training over 62 ABT practitioners, a need was felt to design and implement a course that looks specifically at social inclusion through the Arts. API is a result of this vision and it facilitates creation of inclusive spaces for children and adults with special needs through student led projects. API can be applied in an intersectional way between neurodiverse & neurotypical communities, but also solely for neurodiverse communities.

ADMISSIONS OPENING OCT 15, 2020

7 Presence and Accolades

LEAPS WEBINAR

The Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education (PUE) hosted the Leading Educational Advancement in Progressive Schools (LEAPS) webinar, bringing together six experts from five different countries to address some of the effects of the pandemic on schools globally. Leaders from progressive schools around the world highlighted how children and their parents have taken the lead in shaping their own learning environments as the COVID-19 lockdowns have changed the way educational experiences are created. Our presence at this prestigious webinar was a recognition of our avant garde pedagogical practices, which in these unprecedented times, have worked to hold our children in good stead.

النهوض بالتعليم عبر المدارس التقدمية ندوة عبر الإنترنت Leading Educational Advancement through Progressive Schools Webinar (LEAPS Webinar)

Join leaders from progressive schools around the world to discuss the challenges and lessons learned during the current crisis.

12 May 2020
4:30pm - 5:30pm (India Time)

انضموا إلى رؤاد المدارس التقدمية من شتى أنحاء العالم لمناقشة تحديات الأزمة الحالية والدروس المستفادة منها.

2020 مايو 12
2 ظهرا - 3 عصرا

جيتانالي سارانجان
"Snehadhara" مؤسسة
Gitanjali Sarangan
Founder of Snehadhara Foundation



THE MILLENNIUM ALLIANCE AWARD

Being recognised by the Millennium Alliance again is a humbling validation of the work we do and the values we espouse. Founder and Executive Director, Gitanjali Sarangan was lauded for the project Kala Samvaad: Arts Practices for Inclusion, in Nepal. Owing to the COVID-19 lockdown, the Millennium Alliance awards ceremony was held online.

I(M)NCLUSION TALK

Gitanjali Sarangan reminded us that being human and humane is the very least we can do in a fascinating discussion hosted by QTLearn. Deconstructing the habitual labelling and slotting of children and adults, Gitanjali said that in the absence of this behaviour, inclusion is par for the course. While it may seem a simplistic view in these times, the notion certainly needs to be spoken about more freely and practised more committedly.



MASTER CLASS WITH GITANJALI SARANGAN

In a riveting session as part of Future School Leaders' Masterclass webinar series, Gitanjali Sarangan spoke passionately on the need to integrate the arts into teaching methodologies within institutional settings. Gitanjali explained that infusing learning protocols with artistic interventions, will help us understand better how children learn. Organised as an invitation-only webinar for heads of schools and teachers across the country, Snehadhara Foundation's presence was an acknowledgement of FSL's eye for spotting individuals who are making a holistic difference in the world of school education.



FIRSTPOST.COM ARTICLE

Firstpost.com, in an extensive, exhaustive piece on how those of us in the disability sector have had to transition to online sessions even as we do not fall under the conventional purview of the education industry, highlighted the pathbreaking work of the Snehadhara Foundation in the space of therapy, healing, education, nurturing and counselling...areas that go well beyond what education conventionally stands for.

Snehadhara Foundation (SF) is a registered non-profit organisation based in Bangalore. The pioneers of Arts Practices for Inclusion, Snehadhara Foundation believes that inclusion is the bedrock of a more compassionate and empathetic society. SF advocates inclusionary spaces where arts practices form the primary methodology of teaching and learning. SF aims to create an environment which welcomes, acknowledges, affirms and celebrates the value of all learners.

We have crafted three initiatives in pursuit of this goal: Direct Care, impART and Prajnadhara. The major thematic area of the organisation's work is service and community based. We directly work with the beneficiaries in our Direct Care space and also in other organisations working with children at risk. impART and Prajnadhara look at capacity building, training, certifications to re-imagine classrooms and learning facilitation in schools and colleges, and building lifelong partnerships by introducing corporate citizens to the goals of a socially inclusive society.

Join hands with us as we work towards creating an inclusive world, a world where we are able to re-look at ourselves and are inspired to live differently and compassionately, a world where everyone belongs.



Gartner



HT Parekh
FOUNDATION

An Initiative by



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WEBSITES

<https://snehadharafoundation.org>
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<https://impART.snehadhara.org>

Facebook Pages

www.facebook.com/SnehadharaFoundation
www.facebook.com/snehadharaconnect
www.facebook.com/impARTsnehadhara

Youtube CHANNELS

www.youtube.com/user/

LEGAL STATUS

Karnataka Trust Registration Act

Reg No: BK IV BNG-BMH 470/2012-2013
Date of Establishment: 05.12.2012

Registered under Section 51,52 of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995

Reg No: #125
Date of Establishment : 25.03.2013

Registered with National Trust of India

Reg No: KSNE16512252414

Registered under section 12AA of the Income-tax Act, 1961

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AAMTS2250A/ITO(E)-3NOL. 2012-13. DTD 06-03-2013.

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