

D I S H A

FEBRUARY | 2026

YEAR 2026 | ISSUE 1



Development through Social Work

PART 2 OF 2



GURUJI EDUCATION
FOUNDATION



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FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

DEVELOPMENT, DISPARITY, AND THE HUMAN CAPACITY TO GIVE

Human beings are among the most evolved species and are endowed with the capacity to grow across multiple dimensions of life – economic well-being, knowledge and skills, health, and spiritual development. However, in practice, most individuals and societies tend to prioritize economic progress over other dimensions.

This imbalance has contributed to growing disparities. At the global level, the top 10% own nearly 75% of the world's total wealth, while the bottom 50% hold barely 2%. In India, the top 10% hold around 65%, while the bottom 50% own only about 6.4%. While these figures are alarming, global inequality appears even more severe because of the wide gap between developed and developing nations.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INEQUALITY

Such disparity does not remain confined to economic statistics. It leads to:

- Social unrest
- Reduced social mobility
- Slower long-term economic growth
- Political instability

The wealthy – whether at national or global levels – cannot insulate themselves from these consequences indefinitely. At the same time, mere redistribution of wealth alone will not solve these structural challenges. What is needed is not just money – but sensitivity, commitment, and sustained human engagement.

THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

We need individuals who are willing to understand the realities of underprivileged communities and invest their time and energy in enabling change. These individuals work – part-time or full-time – in what we call the development sector. Encouragingly, India has roughly 3 million volunteers and professionals engaged in social and developmental work. Yet, considering the scale and depth of inequality, this number appears insufficient.

The challenge before us is not only economic – it is human.

ARE HUMANS NATURALLY INCLINED TO HELP?

Interestingly, research strongly suggests that human beings are born with an innate tendency to help others. Neuroscience studies show that helping activates the brain's reward centres. Giving to others stimulates neural circuits similar to those activated when we receive rewards ourselves. In simple terms, helping feels good because it is biologically rewarding.

However, research also indicates that this natural prosocial tendency can be diluted or suppressed by environmental influences – including cultural norms about whom to help and when. If we consciously nurture rather than dilute this instinct, we may move closer to a more equitable society.

GIVING AND HAPPINESS

We receive abundantly from nature and society. A sense of contentment can naturally lead to a desire to give back. Importantly, giving does not benefit only the receiver. Research across cultures, age groups, and income levels consistently shows that giving increases happiness. The effect is measurable and neurologically observable.

In fact, it is often said – only half in jest – that if one wishes to feel miserable, the surest way is to think only about oneself and, at most, one's immediate family. A narrow self-focus shrinks the mind. Contribution expands it.

TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE AND HAPPY SOCIETY

An equitable society will not emerge solely from policy reforms or economic redistribution. It will emerge when more individuals consciously preserve and cultivate their innate tendency to help.

If we prevent the dilution of this human instinct, we may not be far from a society marked by greater equity and deeper, more enduring happiness.

The challenge before us is not only economic – it is human.

FROM TEAM DISHA

In August 2025, we had presented to you an issue with the theme “Development through Social Work”. While working on that issue we had received a tremendous response from our students in the Social Sciences stream, and our alumni working in the development sector. The large number of articles that we received then, was a trigger for us to plan another issue with the same theme, and we are happy to now present the result - another issue of Disha with the theme of “Development through Social Work”.

Apart from the student and alumni articles sharing their experiences of social work, the issue features an in-depth interview with Dr. Rekha Mammen, an esteemed faculty member at TISS - Mumbai, a renowned name in the field of social work and development, and a valued GEF supporter.

Like the earlier issue on the same theme, the efforts on this issue too have been led by Abhijeet Waghchaure, who as a recent alumnus from TISS-Tuljapur, is himself a passionate contributor to development through social work. The design is a brainchild of Shubham Lingayat, another Team Disha member who has been consistently churning out creative designs, issue after issue. The concept for this issue - individuals moving the pulleys through social work, ultimately resulting in upliftment and development of the underprivileged.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. REKHA MAMMEN

Asst. Prof., School of Social Work,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, (TISS) - Mumbai
Distinguished GEF Supporter

Team Disha had the privilege
of speaking to Dr Rekha
Mammen, and get her
perspectives on theme of
Development through Social
Work



Team Disha (TD): Hello Ma'am. Thank you for accepting our invitation to share your insights on our theme of "Development through social work". To begin with, how would you define the "development sector" in simple terms for students and our readers?

Dr. Rekha Mammen (RM): Various people in society have sought over time to improve conditions for human beings, which is what "development" ideally means. The development sector includes all those who try to make the world a better place - individuals, groups, voluntary organisations, and government bodies who work for development.

TD: What role does social work play in shaping and strengthening the development sector in India?

RM: There are many, such as philanthropists, politicians, and others who work for people who call themselves social workers. However, social work has also been developed as a profession, for which formal training is provided at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in India, and elsewhere in the world. Such training includes classroom and practical training that prepares social workers to work in voluntary organisations, corporate bodies, and in the government on the development needs of needy people in society, and strengthen the development sector by providing professional inputs.

TD: You have been associated with community development for several decades. What motivated you to work in the development sector, especially at the grassroots level?

RM: I grew up in a community of health practitioners who were selflessly committed to serving the health needs of the poorest people in the country. This resulted in a desire to also contribute to working for the betterment of underprivileged people. A senior school friend introduced me to the profession of social work and during my master's in social work, the fieldwork exposed me to grassroots realities of both urban and rural India. The programme, my teachers, and my then Director, Dr. Armaity Desai, motivated me to work at the grassroots. By the end of two years, I was convinced that rural India needs more social workers and I felt that I should contribute to rural development through my professional engagement. Though there have been many challenges, amazing colleagues, inspiring development practitioners, the struggles of communities, and their stark realities have continued to motivate me to engage with ground realities and also contribute to the training of other social work professionals.



Conducting a Food Security survey on the field along with her students

TD: From your experience in rural and urban settings, what are some common development challenges faced by marginalized communities today?

RM: The map of inequality has changed over the years, with widening differences across and within communities, as also families. It has become challenging to voice issues at the grassroots as these are often perceived as criticism of the government rather than as an appeal for support. Popular opinion is often framed by those with access and control over social media, making it difficult for those at the margins to be heard. The contours of the development sector are also being redrawn, due to changing policies regarding welfare, subsidies, and the role of development organisations, and how these are financed.

TD: Community participation is central to your work. Why is people's participation so important for successful development interventions?

RM: There are various levels at which community participation takes place, from communities being mere recipients of a development process, to being the ones who shape and control development. It is only when communities feel a sense of ownership over the change process, that it is possible to sustain it in the long term. This becomes apparent when you see positive development that lasts over many years and it is possible to build on developments for the wellbeing of the community.

“It is only when communities feel a sense of ownership over the change process, that it is possible to sustain it in the long term.”

TD: Can you share an example where community-led initiatives made a real difference in development outcomes?

RM: India has several examples of remarkable transformation that has been the outcome of sustained work, often led by visionary development practitioners. These include the Mendha Lekha village community in the Vidarbha Region of Maharashtra, whose members have worked together for the development of their village and constitute the first success story of community forest rights in the country. The Right to Information Act that benefits many people in the country today was initiated by the village communities who are part of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan.

TD: In recent years, how has the development sector changed due to urbanization, privatization, and climate-related challenges?

RM: Rapid and growing urbanisation is taking over rural hinterlands and displacing thousands from their traditional livelihoods and ways of life. The challenge is to ensure that while existing cities expand and more areas urbanise, all communities benefit with the changes taking place.

Privatisation requires extremely vigilant governance systems if they are to provide services of all. In a country where there is growing inequality, if unchecked privatisation will benefit mainly the better off people in society.



On a field trip with her students

Climate change has brought uncertain monsoons, extreme weather events, huge loss of biodiversity, and therefore rapidly changing environments that make the lives of those dependent on rainfed agriculture precarious, while bringing new challenges in protecting the health and well-being of people.

TD: What advice would you give to young students and professionals who want to build a meaningful career in the development sector?

RM: Connect with people around you to know what is happening in people's lives, stay abreast of the news on a daily basis, and find opportunities to volunteer. Engage to find a cause that you can be passionate about.



With a batch of graduating students: Grooming the next generation of social workers

TD: You have been an active GEF supporter for many years. With your extensive experience in social work, and your association with underprivileged communities, would you like to share your views on the work being done by GEF, and what more needs to be done.

RM: GEF is playing an important role in facilitating access to education for many youth across the country. The process and ecosystem are constantly evolving based on the lessons learned over time and this is truly admirable. Pradeepji and team members maintain a warm connection with the students that they support, so that it is not just a matter of financing education but also being mentored for all-round development. The GEF works on building relationships with each one, be they mentors or students. The GEF also makes efforts to document the journeys of students and help prepare them for their professional life.

With privatisation of education and new education policies, the context is rapidly changing and it would be useful for GEF to reflect on how changes in the education system are impacting access for youth in the country. The GEF is uniquely positioned to understand factors that lead to exclusion from the formal education system, and what supports students require as they go through the system. It would be wonderful if the insights gained through the work of GEF could also inform policies in the future to ensure that there is access to good education for all children/youth of this country.

“It would be wonderful if the insights gained through the work of GEF could also inform policies in the future to ensure that there is access to good education for all children/youth of this country.”

MY FIELDWORK WITH JAN SAHAS



Nagraj J Nikalje

2nd Year, M.A. Social Work (Dalit and Tribal Studies and Action), Tata Institute of Social Sciences - Mumbai

Nagraj J Nikalje writes about his fieldwork at Jan Sahas, an organization empowering marginalized communities like Dalits, women, and migrants.

As part of my Master of Social Work (Dalit and Tribal Studies and Action) fieldwork requirements, I completed one month of fieldwork with **Jan Sahas**, an organization working towards justice, dignity, and empowerment of marginalized communities, especially Dalits, tribal communities, women, survivors of violence, and migrant workers.

This 1-month fieldwork aimed to provide practical exposure to grassroots social work, rights-based interventions, and survivor-centered approaches, with the objectives of:

- Understanding the working methods of Jan Sahas at the grassroots level
- Gaining exposure to survivor-centered and rights-based social work practice
- Understanding caste, gender, and class-based inequalities
- Learning documentation, fact-finding, and community engagement skills
- Observing coordination between NGOs and government systems

FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES

During my fieldwork, I was actively involved in observation, participation, documentation, community interaction, and institutional visits across Dewas and Sonkatch areas. In the initial phase, I was oriented about the vision, mission, and structure of Jan Sahas. I learned about the **PR3 Model (Prevention, Response, Rehabilitation, and Reform)** and how the organization addresses issues such as sexual violence, caste atrocities, bonded labour, trafficking, and migrant distress.

I actively observed and participated in **Balika Panchayat sessions**, which focus on adolescent girls' leadership, gender equality, and rights awareness. These sessions helped adolescent girls build confidence, express their views, and understand issues such as early marriage, education, safety, and gender discrimination.



I had the opportunity to attend **Survivor Forum meetings**, where women survivors of violence collectively shared experiences through songs, storytelling, and group discussions. These forums play a vital role in emotional healing, leadership development, and collective empowerment. I assisted in documentation and observed how collective spaces strengthen survivor voices.

I participated in **fact-finding visits** related to cases of sexual violence and atrocities in areas such as Bagli, Uday Nagar, and Mahigaon. During these visits, I observed survivor interaction, case documentation, safety assessment, and coordination with legal systems. These visits deepened my understanding of caste-based violence, power dynamics, and barriers to justice.

**“THESE VISITS
DEEPENED MY
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BARRIERS TO
JUSTICE.”**

I also observed the functioning of the **Majdur Helpline Center**, which supports migrant workers facing wage theft, exploitation, trafficking, and unsafe working conditions. I learned how cases are recorded using a CRM system and how follow-up is done through coordination with field teams and legal systems.

The fieldwork gave me an opportunity to visit and observe the functioning of several government institutions such as Sakhi One Stop Centre (OSC), District Legal Services Authority (DALSA), Police Station (Women Cell & Juvenile Unit), Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Primary Health Centre & District Mental Health Programme (DMHP), SC/ST Azaad Thana. These visits helped me understand the practical implementation of laws such as POCSO Act, SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and Domestic Violence Act.

I also visited **Skill Centres** where women were trained in skills such as stitching and driving, with the aim to promote economic independence and confidence among survivors and marginalized women. I observed training processes and interacted with participants.



CHALLENGES

While the fieldwork gave me an opportunity to practically experience the realities on the ground, there were some challenges too. These included:

- Emotional intensity while interacting with survivors
- Limited mental health resources at the district level
- Logistical challenges during field visits
- Delays and gaps in institutional responses

Despite these challenges, continuous guidance from field supervisors helped me adapt and learn effectively.

LEARNINGS

The 1-month fieldwork with Jan Sahas was a great experience, which has helped me:

- Develop a practical understanding of caste, gender, and class-based oppression
- Strengthen my skills in observation, documentation, and fact-finding
- Gain exposure to survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches
- Get first-hand knowledge of legal, health, and protection systems
- Improve my communication, empathy, and teamwork skills

This deeply enriching learning experience strengthened my understanding of social justice, human rights, and professional social work practice. It helped me understand the realities of caste-based oppression, gender violence, labour exploitation, and systemic challenges faced by marginalized communities. The exposure to community work, survivor engagement, legal processes, and organizational functioning enhanced my skills, sensitivity, and commitment towards working with marginalized communities.

This fieldwork has significantly contributed to my academic learning and professional development as a student of Dalit and Tribal Studies and Action.



MY FIELD EXPERIENCE UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT FROM THE GROUND REALITY



Gauri Thawri
MA (Development),
Azim Premji University,
Bangalore

Gauri Thawri shares her insights gained from her fieldwork experiences across rural, tribal, and urban contexts

Development is often understood through visible markers such as roads, schools, hospitals, water supply, and government schemes. These indicators are commonly used to measure progress. However, my field experiences across rural, tribal, and urban contexts showed that the mere presence of infrastructure does not ensure development. The real question lies in who has access to the development. Repeatedly, I observed that caste, gender, occupation, and local power structures shape access, turning development into a privilege rather than a shared reality.

During my field visit to **Kukalgaon village in Maharashtra**, this paradox became further evident. Although water taps and hand pumps existed, the Scheduled Caste community lived on the outskirts, in rocky areas far from the main settlement. SC women had to walk long distances to collect water, and during limited supply hours,

higher-caste women filled their containers first, often leaving very little behind. On paper, the village appeared developed, but on ground, social hierarchy decided and denied access. Infrastructure alone, I realised, is not a great enough.



Sensitizing women on gender inequality, patriarchy etc. through movies

In **Pimpalgaon Matha**, I observed women-led initiatives such as community seed banks and food processing units that improved household income and food security. Women were actively involved in seed preservation, kitchen gardens, and processing work, reflecting economic progress. Yet, men continued to dominate decision-making spaces. At one instance, while a woman Sakhi explained the seed bank in detail, a male coordinator repeatedly interrupted her. This showed that even when women are economically active, social equality does not automatically follow.

My visits to the tribal villages of **Bhandardara Pajare** and **Savarkute** in the Sangamner block further highlighted uneven development. In Bhandardara Pajare, the absence of a nearby Public Health Centre forced elderly people and pregnant women to travel long distances for medical care, often delaying treatment. In Savarkute, despite mid-day meals in the government school, lack of transport, toilets, and household responsibilities led to high dropout rates among girls. These observations revealed a wide gap between development policies and ground realities.

Fieldwork in the **urban basti of Dubagga in Lucknow** challenged the assumption that proximity to cities guarantees better living conditions. Residents faced poor sanitation, overcrowding, and safety concerns, especially for women and adolescent girls. While working with the Humsafar Support Centre, women shared experiences of domestic violence and harassment, yet many were unable to access legal support due to stigma, lack of awareness, and social pressure. Existing provisions, for many, felt like *climbing a mountain without a rope*.



Breaking barriers: Getting women from different strata, religions, and castes to come together, share stories, and have a meal together

Similarly, during a community survey in **Khushmaura** village, women reported that despite being eligible for government schemes such as ration cards and housing, access remained limited. Missing documents, lack of information, and corruption among local middlemen—especially the Pradhan—meant benefits were often diverted to relatives and associates. Consequently, lower-caste and economically weaker households were systematically excluded, leaving the most vulnerable out in the cold.



Creating awareness regarding various government schemes



Through these experiences, I realised that development is not neutral; it is shaped by caste, gender, and power relations. A village may have infrastructure and schemes, but without equity, dignity, and equal access, development remains incomplete. True development lies not only in building facilities but in ensuring that everyone should be empowered, aware enough to be able to enjoy the fruits of development. Real development should be of humankind, not restricted to few chosen entitled section of the society.



A workshop on harassment and safety for girls

“TRUE DEVELOPMENT LIES NOT ONLY IN BUILDING FACILITIES BUT IN ENSURING THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE EMPOWERED, AWARE ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF DEVELOPMENT.”

MY FIELDWORK

UNDERSTANDING MIGRANT LABOR



**Mahesh Nagnath
Kamble**

4th Year, Bachelor of
Social Work,
TISS - Tuljapur

Mahesh Nagnath Kamble
writes about the challenges
faced by migrant daily wage
laborers, based on his work
with labor addas

This summer, I along with a few of my classmates, got an opportunity to carry out fieldwork at the Council for Social Development (CSD), Hyderabad. CSD is a premier autonomous research institution that puts equality and justice at the core of social development. It was established in 1962 under the leadership of legendary freedom fighter, social activist, academician and planner, Dr Durgabai Deshmukh.

The objective of the internship was to get a practical and in-depth understanding of research methods. The internship started with sessions on research methods, sampling methods, and data, following which our Supervisor assigned us a project to conduct a study on “**labor addas**”. Labor addas are locations where informal workers assemble everyday morning, looking for work for the day.

OUR WORK AND MY EXPERIENCE AT THE LABOR ADDAS

We started visiting nearby labor addas, and finally identified the **Tolichowki labor adda**, which had a good number of laborers for carrying out our study. We began with framing a questionnaire, which was then approved by our supervisor. Following this we moved to data collection stage. In addition to gathering data through the questionnaire, I also had to explore and find out about provisions by the Government of India for unorganized laborers.



A view of the Labor Adda

My theoretical knowledge in the field with respect to social work methods, values, and principles, turned out to be valuable. Because of my familiarity with the local language, I used to take the lead during the interviews. This helped in building trust with the population, and also in smooth data collection. The entire process was a great experience which helped me learn innovative research approaches, and also to deal with challenges such as no response from the field. Ultimately I realized that this is the actual process of research, and as a research scholar, one has to be patient and humble to accept and utilize the challenges and opportunities.

This fieldwork helped me improve my communication skills, observation skills, perception, and research skills. It also helped me develop a better understanding of migrant labor.

ISSUES OF MIGRANT LABOR

A majority of the people were from Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh, who had come to Hyderabad for employment, so that they could live a better quality of life. I could understand the causes that lead to migration, and the challenges of working in the unorganized sector. I noticed that while the laborers were diverse in terms of their native place, language, culture, and skills, what bound them was the common hope of getting work for the day. Unfortunately due to the large number of laborers, it was not possible for everyone to get a job and earn each day.

The number of female workers was lesser. Additional challenges of lower wages, abuse, and social norms often forced female workers to quit the labor addas. Most of the workers were from minority and lower castes, which leads one to think about why only these sections face difficulties in managing their livelihood?

The laborers also face great uncertainty and insecurity at the labor adda, as the locals often oust them from the place. Weak enforcement of laws causes exploitation of unorganized laborers, with compromises made on issues related to safety, fair wages, health, education, pensions, and more.

These are the unsung heroes behind building and developing our nation, and it is important to have robust policies for the welfare of laborers, and a strong enforcement of the same.



The authors and his colleagues with one of the laborers

SUMMING UP

Overall the fieldwork was a great experience, and I gained a lot of insights for my further journey in research. I now have greater clarity on the methods and importance of research. Additionally, this fieldwork provided me an exposure to the unorganized sector, the dynamics of labor addas, migration, development, exploitation, diversity, gender & caste issues, insecurity, and enforcement. I'm thankful for this opportunity and to everyone who contributed to this journey.

THESE ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES BEHIND BUILDING AND DEVELOPING OUR NATION, AND IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE ROBUST POLICIES FOR THE WELFARE OF LABORERS, AND A STRONG ENFORCEMENT OF THE SAME.

A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

NSS SPECIAL CAMP



Kaveri Dhage

2nd Year BTech
(Electronics),
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Technology
(SGGSIE&T), Nanded

Kaveri Dhage shares her experience as a volunteer of National Service Scheme, a program that aims to develop student personality through community service.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”. This timeless adage truly captures the essence of the National Service Scheme (NSS) 7-Day Special Camp organized by Shri Guru Gobind Singhji Institute of Engineering and Technology, Vishnupuri, Nanded, under the theme “**Youth for Sustainable Development**”. The camp was successfully conducted at **Balgram Anathalaya**, Govindwadi Village, Georai Taluka, Beed District, with the objective of nurturing social responsibility, leadership, discipline, and community awareness among students.

The camp commenced with a formal inauguration ceremony in the presence of faculty members, NSS coordinators, and enthusiastic volunteers. During the inaugural session, the objectives, schedule, and significance of the camp were clearly explained, emphasizing the crucial role of youth in nation-building. Each day began with yoga, physical exercise, and meditation, which helped improve physical fitness, mental well-being, and concentration among the volunteers.



The team of NSS volunteers from SGGSI&E, Nanded

Throughout the camp, a variety of awareness programs and community service activities were conducted. Health-oriented sessions focusing on women’s health, self-regulation, first aid, disaster management, and self-defence were organized to enhance awareness about safety, health, and emergency preparedness. In addition, a cleanliness drive under the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** was carried out to promote hygiene, proper waste management, and environmental consciousness.

I actively took part in school outreach activities, where we visited nearby schools to conduct sessions on examination preparation, study planning, and effective time management. I also contributed by explaining basic mathematical concepts using simple and interactive methods, making learning more engaging and easier for students.



The team with the children of Balgram Anathalaya

Furthermore, at Balgram Anathalaya, I guided 10th-standard students by sharing practical study strategies, preparation tips, and motivational guidance, helping them build confidence and plan their studies effectively for upcoming examinations.

The camp also featured career guidance and higher education awareness sessions, offering valuable insights into future educational opportunities, skill development programs, scholarships, and career planning. Sports events and interactive group activities were conducted to foster teamwork, leadership qualities, and self-confidence among participants.



The team engaging with the children

In conclusion, the NSS 7-Day Special Camp proved to be a deeply enriching and transformative experience. It strengthened the connection between students and the local community while instilling values of service, responsibility, and discipline. The camp played a vital role in my personal development by enhancing my communication skills, confidence, and understanding of social issues, truly embodying the NSS motto: **“Not Me, But You.”**

MY EXPERIENCE

A JOURNEY OF PERSONAL GROWTH WITH NSS



Molika Sharma

BA Honours, Applied
Psychology,
Amity University

Molika Sharma writes about her learnings and the impact of the NSS program on her own development

I remember the day I was auditioning for NSS with my two friends. We decided to almost walk out, we nearly did, but then something in us said let's give it a shot, although one of my friends had already left. The two of us gave the group interview, then were selected for the personal interview and I remember one thing I had said in the personal interview when the interviewer asked me how am I going to push myself out of my comfort zone? And I replied with "Haven't I already by giving this interview?"

That's how my NSS journey started, nervous, unsure and out of my comfort zone. Over the course of my tenure in NSS I have met the loveliest people that I never want to lose contact with, done things that I would've been too self-conscious to do, talked to people I only saw at a distance, etc.

One of the people whom I will never be able to forget are the three kids I went to teach in a nearby village. I used to teach them spoken English with my friend. These kids had the most amazing jokes, the innocence, the drive, the hard work. Teaching them was one of the most

satisfying things I have ever done. Unfortunately, they had to move to the city and we had to stop our classes but fortunately we are still in contact with them.

We had conducted a Tribal Youth Exchange Program in our university via My Bharat and NSS. I had the privilege to be one of the organising committees for this event. I had interacted with many tribal students from all over the states, hearing their stories, hearing their dreams and ambitions and interests was a very new and raw experience for me. One of the student's father was a Naxalite and he had given a speech on his journey navigating his life from being a Naxalites son to a student. Hearing him be so proud of himself and so confident made me realise how we take our privileges for granted.

After this event I reflected on everything I had gotten that had made me who I am right now. I appreciated the education that I have gotten and also the people that support me and my dreams.



A performance from the Tribal Exchange Program

One of my biggest fear is speaking in front of a large crowd. NSS gave me opportunities to anchor events. I remembering the nerves, the fast heartbeat, the sweaty hands, but I persevered. I anchored and was praised for my dialogue delivery, I now don't fear crowds as much as I used to before.

NSS has been a life changing part of my life. I will always remember these moments of my life and cherish them. If you are an introverted student, NSS can be a great way to open up to new people, learn about yourself and enjoy college/university life.

HIGHLIGHTS

DR. PRERANA RANE EXCELLENT TEACHER AWARD

The Dr. Prerana Rane Excellent Teacher Award was instituted by Guruji Education Foundation and its phase 1 was completed in the month of December.

The Award was rolled out on a pilot basis, to 10 schools actively participating in various GEF ADP programs. From the 28 applications received, a set of teachers were shortlisted based on predefined criteria, by a jury panel comprising Mr Avinash Kulkarni and Mrs Neeta Arsule.

The shortlisted teachers underwent a detailed evaluation process, which included personal interviews, and collection of structured feedback from multiple stakeholders – students, peer-teachers, school management, and selected parents. Two independent judges went to each location to carry out this process. Based on this comprehensive assessment, the following 9 teachers were selected to receive the award:

- Mr. Abhijeet S. Dhure, Janata Vidyamandir, Trimbak
- Mr. Ghanashyam G. Varade, Kai Y. D. Patil Madhyamik Vidyalay, Tandulwadi
- Ms. Geeta G. Mandaokar, Dnyanada High School, Satefal
- Mr. Mahadev P. Pawar, Pragat Vidyamandir, Ramgad
- Mr. Milind M. Kadu, N. M. Ghatwal High School, Wadner
- Mr. Mohan V. Jagdale, Mitra Vidyalay, Malegaon
- Mr. Netaji T. Bhosale, Tulsidas Jadhav Prashala, Vairag
- Mr. Sandeep Singh Mandloi, Ramkrishna Sarada Niketan, Lepa Punarvas
- Mr. Suraj S. Ganapati, Dnyanada High School, Satefal

Awards were presented at the hands of Mrs. Elizabeth Mehta, founder of Mukhtangan, at an award ceremony held on 10th December 2025 at Mukhtangan, Mumbai.

HIGHLIGHTS

DR. PRERANA RANE EXCELLENT TEACHER AWARD (CONTD.)



GEF is proud of the winners (Standing L-R: Suraj Ganapati, Sandeep Mandloi, Ghanashyam Varade, Mohan Jagdale. Sitting L-R: Geeta Mandaokar, Netaji Bhosale, Mahadev Pawar, Milind Kadu)

The award process includes capacity-building. The awardee teachers and their respective school principals were therefore invited on a study tour of two well-performing schools - Mukhtangan school in Mumbai, and another school located at Hiwali, Taluka Trimbakeshwar, District Nashik. During these visits, the teachers and principals observed innovative and child-centric teaching methodologies being practiced in these schools. The tour left a strong positive impact on the participants, and they evinced keen interest in adopting and implementing several of the observed practices in their own schools.

HIGHLIGHTS

DR. PRERANA RANE EXCELLENT TEACHER AWARD (CONTD.)



A snapshot from the award ceremony. Dr. Elizabeth Mehta presenting the award to Shri Netaji Bhosale

For the second phase of the award process, the awardee teachers with the help of their principals have submitted project proposals outlining initiatives they plan to implement in the coming academic year, with the sole aim of developing their students. They will complete the projects in the coming year after which the best projects will be awarded.

The first phase of the second iteration will start in the first term of the next academic year, and will cover more schools.

HIGHLIGHTS

“GOOD TO GREAT” - A WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY

GEF conducted a workshop titled “Good to Great”, for students of D. Ed, B.Ed., M.Ed. and Ph.D in Education pedagogy. The 2-day workshop was conducted by GEF’s Mr. Sunil Dodeja and Dr. Lalita Deshpande, and comprised theoretical and practical sessions interspersed with each other.

With an underlying motto of “One can give only if one has”, the workshop encouraged the attendees to empower themselves so as to mould and empower the next generation. Possession of adequate knowledge, application of the knowledge to show intelligence, and habits of Gratitude, Resilience, Achievement Orientation, Positivity, Emotional Intelligence, and Sophophilic Orientation (GRAPES) are the prerequisites for teachers to move up the ladder of “Good to Great”. These prerequisites were emphasised upon the attendees in practical ways.

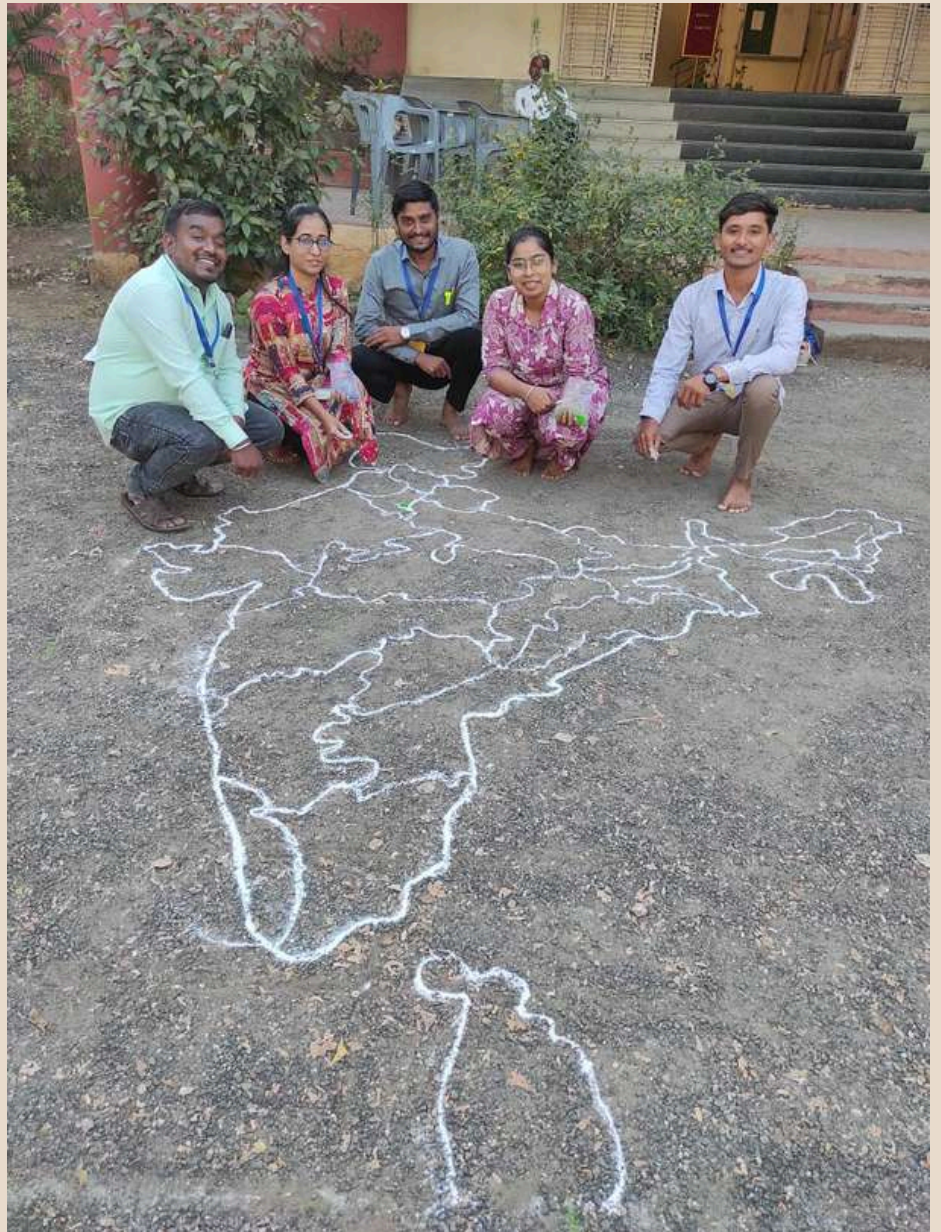
Attendees collaborated and participated in practical sessions to learn team building skills, as also to achieve the impossible! The participants formed teams with new friends, and made 10 feet x 10 feet rangoli sketches of the map of India, Mahatma Gandhi, and Lord Ganpati. Such practical application of ideas coupled with moving out from the fear zone into the learning zone was much appreciated by all participants.

HIGHLIGHTS

“GOOD TO GREAT” - A WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY (CONTD.)

The importance of games and activities in the teaching-learning process was demonstrated through practical examples. Usage of games to assess student learning outcomes in a way that outcome on all fronts is positive, was also illustrated.

The cumulative experiences of modern teaching methods and pedagogy helped participants realize the quality and amount of work that could be achieved through effective group collaboration.



All smiles! The team seems justifiably pleased with the amazing rangoli that they created together!

HIGHLIGHTS

MATHS TEACHERS WORKSHOP FOR JANJATI KALYAN AASHRAM TEACHERS

Janjati Kalyan Aashram, Nashik, has an educational program running in the tribal hamlets of Nashik district. They have identified around 25 tribal hamlets where there are children going to schools. They have also identified daughter-in-laws from the same hamlets, who are educated till 10th or 12th standard, as local teachers. These teachers run a Study Centre for the school going kids after school hours in the school premises. Teachers get periodical inputs from their mentors, and through workshops conducted once in 3 months.

GEF was invited to conduct one such Workshop on Basic Mathematics, involving understanding of numbers and the 4 basic mathematical operations. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Lalita Deshpande and Ms. Rashmi Karale of GEF, and focused on activity-based learning through games, and the use of simple teaching-learning materials.



Participants deeply engrossed in the workshop activities

HIGHLIGHTS

MATHS TEACHERS WORKSHOP FOR JANJATI KALYAN AASHRAM TEACHERS (CONTD.)

The workshop was attended by 25 teachers and 10 mentors. The workshop started with an ice-breaking session and a few interactive games which were enjoyed by all the teachers and mentors. This was followed by group activities where teachers shared three things that they liked and felt confident doing, and three things that they did not enjoy. This exercise revealed that most teachers genuinely enjoy interacting with children and teaching them. Subsequently, various methods, activities, and games for teaching numbers were demonstrated. The four basic operations were taught using hands-on learning materials, with teachers actively participating in the activities. The sessions were highly engaging, and the teachers expressed enthusiasm about using these methods with their students. From a teacher development perspective, pictorial exercises were also given in groups, requiring observation skills and

problem-solving to complete puzzles.

The workshop concluded with a consensus that teachers would practice these methods over the next three months, after which additional mathematical concepts would be introduced using a similar activity-based approach.



Dr. Lalita Deshpande keenly observing the participants

STUDENT STARS

Gayatri Mene, who is a 4th year Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering student at Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT), Alandi, has been selected for placement as a Workday Graduate Engineer Trainee at Strada Global, Mumbai.

Gayatri has an excellent academic record with a current CGPA of 9.1

Umesh Jakune, who recently completed his B.F.Sc. (Bachelors in Fisheries Science) with a CGPA score of 8.2, has qualified for admission to the M.F.Sc. (Masters in Fisheries Science) program at College of Fisheries, Ratnagiri.

Nikita Patil, who recently graduated with a B.Tech. (Artificial Intelligence & Data Science) from Padmabhooshan Vasantodada Patil Institute of Technology, Budhgaon, has been selected for placement at Zensar Technologies, as a Junior Associate Process Executive.



Sakshi Ghadge presented her research paper “Empathy and Homonegativity Among Gen Z Individuals” at the International Conference on Social Transformation in the 21st Century.

The paper is shortly going to be published in the reputed IIP: World Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Ritesh Gonde, 3rd Year student of Civil Engineering at Shri Guru Gobind Singhji Institute of Engineering & Technology (SGGSIT&E), Nanded, topped his batch in the 5th Semester exams, with an SGPA of 9.91.

Shivam Yadav, Final Year student of Computer Science & Engineering at Shri Guru Gobind Singhji Institute of Engineering & Technology (SGGSIT&E), Nanded, completed a remote internship as a Backend Engineer with StayAccom.

Shivam has also received an internship and placement offer from Raja Software Labs, Pune.



Maitreyi Bhumbar was a member of the team that won the C-zone Volleyball Tournament. Based on this performance, she has been selected for the state-level Ashwamedh Sports Event to be held at Nanded, and for the Inter-University Volleyball Tournament to be held at Paten, Gujarat.

Maitreyi is presently a 2nd Year Mechanical Engineering student at Shri Guru Gobind Singhji Institute of Engineering & Technology (SGGSIT&E), Nanded.

Veda Khandekar was selected to represent the Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded team, at the Inter-university basketball tournament held at Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior.

Veda is currently in the 2nd year of her Instrumentation Engineering program at Shri Guru Gobind Singhji Institute of Engineering & Technology (SGGSIT&E), Nanded.

Vishal Nikam, who is pursuing a postgraduate course “Writing for Film, Television, and Web Series”, at the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, won the 2nd prize for his script titled “Navra Nako Ga Bai”, at the university level in Chhatrapati Shivaji University, Kolhapur.



Sharvari Patil, First Year student of the BS+MS program at IISERR, Thiruvananthapuram, was a part of her college team that won the 2nd prize in a dance battle held as part of the Inter-IISER Cultural Meet.



ALUMNI STARS



Kalyan Garde is now a certified Happiness course teacher, and is eligible to conduct Pranayam (Sudarshan Kriya) and Guided Meditation sessions.

Kalyan is BE (Mech), and MA (Education), and works as a teacher at Jnan Prabodhini Gurukul, Nigdi.



Pooja Raut, who is a Graduate Engineer Trainee at Atlas Copco, has been recognized with a Star Award, in appreciation for her performance in the Flutter Mobile Application Development project.

Pooja graduated in 2025 with a BTech degree in Computer Engineering, from Rajarambapu Institute of Technology, Islampur.

We would love to hear your feedback on this issue of Disha

Team Disha

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