

ISWAR SANKALPA'S WINTER ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

December '18 to March '19

Stories from Iswar Sankalpa

- A Simple Story of Appropriate Expression
- Family Isn't Always Blood
- A Client Embarks on a Parallel Journey of a Caregiver

Photograph by: Mrinmoyee Bose

Sanka|pa ISWAR

**The co-founder of Iswar Sankalpa
Mrs. Sarbani Das Roy participated in
Kaun Banega Crorepati as KBC Karamveer
on 26th October 2018**



SO MANY OF YOU REACHED OUT
TO US TO SHARE YOUR STORIES
AND SUPPORT US IN OUR JOURNEY

**Thank you
for your
Love!**

Naya Daur

Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme

This flagship community programme is an outreach intervention, wherein the team, along with voluntary community caregivers provide services to the homeless persons with psychosocial disabilities.

101 lives
Touched since December

88 caregivers

Urban Mental Health Programme (UMHP)

Holistic Mental Healthcare Services for Persons with Psychosocial Needs

UMHP is a programme in partnership with the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, functioning in 5 ward health units of Kolkata. The aim of this project is to integrate mental health care services into primary health care centres thereby not only making the provision of mental health care more accessible, but also addressing the stigma associated with mental health care in our society.

310
Persons with psychosocial disabilities from low socio-economic backgrounds accessed affordable mental health care and treatment

2000+
Persons reached through families of persons with psychosocial disabilities and awareness campaigns

Day Care Centre

Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Psychosocial Disability

We have 2 Day Care Centres, one at Keoratala and another at Hastings Police Station. These centres function as day-care units for persons on the streets to get food, shelter, hygiene facilities and access to rehabilitation activities.

41 lives
Touched since December

Sarbari

Shelter for Homeless Women with Psychosocial Disabilities

The shelter provides a secure and a therapeutic environment for the recovery and rehabilitation of homeless women with psychosocial disabilities.

92 Lives
Touched since December

Marudyan

Shelter for Homeless Men with Psychosocial Disabilities

The shelter was started with a growing understanding that the men on the streets are also vulnerable to abuses and are in need of a therapeutic space to be able to contribute and serve as productive members of the society. Apart from their counselling sessions the men here are involved in a variety of activities. The shelter has a capacity of 30 persons at a time.

35 Lives
Touched since December

Reintegration

From the Margins to the Mainstream

This programme aims to reintegrate clients back to the community or their family system. Keeping this in mind it looks at four broad areas:

1. Vocational and Livelihood skill building
2. Reuniting clients with their families
3. Resettlement of the clients in the community, in absence of family
4. Enabling access to entitlements like Aadhar cards, bank accounts, Disability cards, Voter ID cards etc.

14 persons reunited
with their families

6 families traced

Crust and Core

Café cum Training Unit to Rehabilitate Homeless Women with Psychosocial Disability

We organized and participated in multiple events, and created beautiful memories throughout the winter:



Acoustic Night by Davis Clymer



Folk Ensemble Matrigaan and associates

❖ **8 exhibitions participated in**

❖ **3 pop-ups organised**

❖ **Celebrated Christmas with an acoustic performance by David Clymer, a trained musician from the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music**

❖ **A folk jam session by folk ensemble Maatrigaan and friends from France and Australia brought the space alive with their fusion of Bengali and Celtic folk music.**

❖ **Two writing workshops were conducted by 'Pen, Paper and Dreams' at café Crust and Core**

❖ **Celebrated completion of one year with a token of appreciation and a Karaoke evening to boost up the motivation of all team members.**



Writing Workshop hosted by PenPaper&Dreams



Crust and Core pops-up at New Market



Jharna, our Mindchampion singing at the Karaoke

Vocational Training Unit

Rehabilitation of Homeless Women with Psychosocial Disability

- ❖ A seminar was organised as part of our annual programme. All products used like folders, notepads etc. were made by our clients.
- ❖ Organic colours were made for Holi.
- ❖ Participated in BOGSCON, Annual Conference of the Bengal Obstetric & Gynaecological Society for the first time.
- ❖ Participated in exhibitions at Bethune College, Jogesh Chandra, Loreto College, Rojgar Mela, Social Welfare Mela, Basante Srijan (rehabilitation fair), SRFTI (Saytajit Ray Film and Television Institute) and ANCIPS (Annual National Conference of Indian Psychiatric Society) in Lucknow
- ❖ The Unit received an order of 100 bags from Indian Psychoanalytical Society.



(Clockwise) Our stall at SRFTI; Holi colours made by our clients; Shona at the machine

Nayagram

Assisted Community Living for Homeless Women with Psychosocial Disability

Nayagram is an Assisted Community Living Program for homeless, recovered women with psychosocial disabilities. It is situated in the green fields of Uttar Kashipur in rural West Bengal. The women work on the fields and grow seasonal vegetables. They are also involved in making lentil cakes (*Bori*), *Papad*, while they enjoy the breeze and call of the birds.



Payal (Right) with her fellow resident and friend Sonal (left)

A simple story of Appropriate Expression

Payal entered into the care circle of Iswar Sankalpa in 2013 after being identified in a survey. She later narrated that she had come to Kolkata with her relatives in search of work but had fallen prey to mental illness and been left behind. She was restless, unkempt and failed to make eye contact with anyone. Long years of abuse had made her guarded in her social connections. As she improved over time, her address still remained a mystery.

Payal started her journey in Nayagram from 5th February 2018. Initially she started off with agricultural work, along with other residents. Within a few months, she started assisting fellow resident and cook, Fatema in the kitchen, helping her with grinding spices, washing utensils and cutting vegetables for the meals. There were occasional outbursts in the journey, when she wished to walk away and find her family. However, with constant

13 women

Have accessed stay here

support, she showed remarkable improvement in the area of interpersonal skills. Now she interacts with all the residents and shares a good camaraderie with everybody. She is performing consistently in both the areas of household and agricultural work. She loves dressing up and takes care of herself, indirectly sharing an important lesson on **“self-love”**.

Most importantly she always carries a smile on her face and seems to be enjoying her stay at Nayagram. Payal's psychiatric symptoms have decreased, which is visible through her body language and performance. Her stay in Nayagram has contributed immensely towards her transformation into a positively contributing and responsible member of her community. Standing in the verandah, she now looks up at the skies and sings a rendition of Rabindra Sangeet ‘ *Pagla Hawa Badol dine..Pagol amar Mon nechhe othe*’. An appropriate expression of her inner world.

The words of the song translated in English:

“On this wild, windy and cloudy day, my crazy mind awakes.

For no reason at all, it wants to go

Beyond the world of senses, where there are no roads!

Would it ever want to return home?

Never – for broken are all the walls!

On this intoxicating rainy evening, I follow the revelers.

My dreams are under the spell of drunkards.

Today, I desire what should not be desired.

Where will I get what I cannot find?

I will not get it even if I break my head over the impossible!”

A Client Embarks on a Parallel Journey of a Caregiver

Surya was brought in to our Day Care Centre at Hastings Police Station in the month of October, 2018, by local community members. Prior to that, he lived in deplorable conditions and failed to hold basic communication with anybody. He had delusions and was living in an imaginary world.

With immediate medical and therapeutic interventions like group activities and counselling sessions in a rehabilitative space, Surya started showing signs of improvement and soon shared details about his family that lived near Hazra, Kolkata. From being unkempt, homeless, suffering from Schizophrenia, Surya has undergone a remarkable journey within a span of 5 months. He now wears the hat of a care giver and also accompanies other clients in need, from their respective places to the Day Care Centre all by himself. Not only does he show signs of accountability towards others, his improvement in the space of personal hygiene, clothing and

interaction is also highly commendable. He cooks and shops for the Day Care Centre and helps others with washing their clothes. He keeps himself busy in various vocational activities like making notebooks, painting terracotta *diyas*, etc.

They say, “In healing we heal” and Surya’s story exemplifies that.



Surya helps another client at the Day Care Centre at Hastings Police Station

Family isn't always Blood

Chandana Paul, an elderly woman aged approximately 60 years was found lying on the footpath of P.M Roy Road, Kolkata- 27. She was brought to ‘Sarbari’, our shelter for homeless women with psychosocial disabilities, on 4th March, 2018 and was diagnosed with Psychosis. With continued care and support, she started recovering. However, her disorientation continued and she failed to share her family details and address. Her interactions started improving and she started participating in activities of the shelter. Initially Chandana shared her residential address somewhere in Bangladesh. However, with time it was found out to be in ‘Naktala’, ‘Bidhanpally’, where she was restored by our restoration team. She reunited with her family - a family not by blood ties, but by mere love and affection.

After being abandoned by her husband and sons, Chandana has been staying with Mr. Samir Das and his family in the same neighbourhood for more than a decade. Chandana and Samir share a unique relationship and she considers Samir as her own brother. He along with his family has been taking care of her all these years. It was found out that

Chandana got lost in a wedding ceremony and the family’s unyielding search to trace her failed.

Chandana and her family are elated to reunite. She is presently, engaged in household chores and her role as a loving grandmother. The family has been visiting Iswar Sankalpa for regular follow-ups. Her story inspires us to believe that there can be relationships larger than one’s own kins!



Chandana Pal with her family; her grand-daughter is most fond of her, and was ecstatic when Chandana reached home.

EVENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



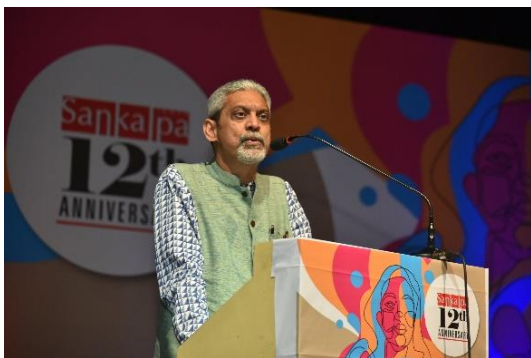
Inclusion: Creating spaces where persons with psychosocial disabilities interact with other members of society on an equal platform, as sports persons, crafts-persons, salespersons and humans who have the freedom to enjoy under the open sky



Annual Picnic: The Residents of the shelters (Sarbari and Marudyan) along with the staffs of Iswar Sankalpa enjoyed a winter's afternoon at a picnic, indulging in food, fun, games and happiness.

Annual Sports Meet: This event saw our clients and community members coming together, where everyone finished at the same line being equal members of the community.

Rehabilitation Fair: We saw organisations working with vulnerable populations set up stalls to display works made by their beneficiaries. Because, we believe skill building is key to empowerment of marginalized group.



Debate, Discussion, Dance and Drama: On the occasion of Iswar Sankalpa's 12th Anniversary a Seminar on 'Delivering Community Care For Persons with Severe Mental Illnesses – Bridge The Care Gap' was held. Experts from the field of mental health were present to discuss and debate the issues pertaining to Persons with Severe Mental Illness under the purview of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017. Dr. Vikram Patel (founder, Sangath), Dr. Suresh Bada Math (NIMHANS), Prof. Pushpa Mishra, Mr. Banibrata Basu, Ms. Durga Khaitan (State Legal Services Authority), Dr. Ajoy Chakraborty (DHS) were a few of the speakers.



The Residents of the Shelters performed an adaptation of '**Shapmochan**', written by Rabindranath Tagore, which is a story that celebrates the uniqueness and inner beauty of a person. Weeks of relentless practice and excitement culminated into this beautiful performance.



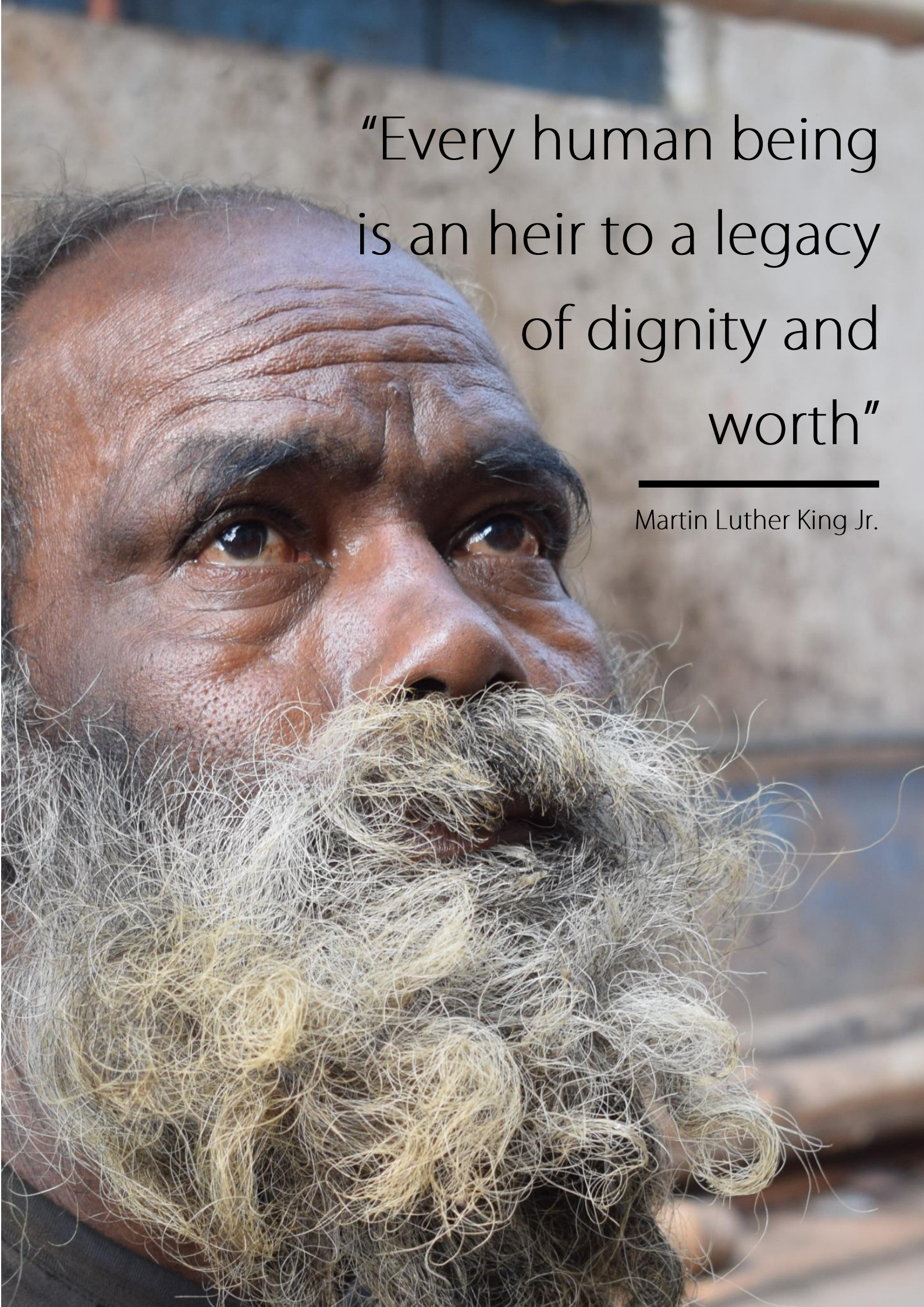
Community Caregivers of the Naya Daur programme were felicitated for their service to society. They also shared their knowledge and experiences.



Art Therapy was started at the Day Care Centre at Keoratala. This helps persons with psychosocial disabilities to explore their emotions.



The Functional Literacy Programme conducted Exposure visits for clients of the Day Care Centre at Hastings Police station. The clients planned the budget for the trips.

A close-up, low-angle portrait of an elderly man with a long, thick, white beard and mustache. His skin is dark and wrinkled, particularly around his eyes and forehead. He is looking upwards and to the right with a serious, contemplative expression. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a stone or brick wall.

“Every human being
is an heir to a legacy
of dignity and
worth”

Martin Luther King Jr.