

ISWAR SANKALPA'S MONSOON ISSUE

NEWSLETTER

July - September '19



Stories

Bonds Beyond Blood

Closer to God - Contributed by Shelly Pal

The Coming Together of People, Products and Perseverance

Sankalpa ISWAR



Naya Daur : Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme

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

158 Lives
Touched since July

131 Caregivers



Urban Mental Health Programme : Holistic Mental Healthcare Services for Persons Psychosocial Needs

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 making mental health care more accessible and addressing the stigma associated with mental health care in our society. 3000+ persons have been registered till April 2019.

225
New registrations
since July

749 persons
reached through
awareness events



Day Care Centre : Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Psychosocial

We have 2 Day Care Centres (DCCs), 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.

40 persons
accessed both
DCCs since July



Sarbari : Shelter for Homeless Women with Psychosocial Disability

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

104 Lives
Touched since July



Marudyen : Shelter for Homeless Men with Psychosocial Disability

This shelter was started with the growing understanding that men on the streets are also vulnerable to abuse, and are in need of a therapeutic space to be able to recover, and live as inclusive members of the society.

42 Lives
Touched since July



Reintegration : From the Margins to the Mainstream

This programme aims to reintegrate clients back into the mainstream society through these broad areas-

- a) Vocational and Livelihood skill building
- b) Reuniting them with their families
- c) In the absence of a family, resettling them in the community

8 persons
reunited with their
families



Crust and Core : Café cum Training Unit

A livelihood venture of Iswar Sankalpa, serving as a Training Unit cum Cafe to develop skills that will help towards sustainable employment

11 lives
Touched since July



Nayagram : Assisted Community Living

An Assisted community living programme in Kashipur, West Bengal for recovering homeless women with psychosocial disability

13 residents

Bonds Beyond Blood

Celebrating Raksha Bandhan at Iswar Sankalpa

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” – Mother Teresa

At Iswar Sankalpa homeless persons with psychosocial disabilities, satiate the hunger of loneliness with the care & support that is provided to them, to pull them out of obscurity. A result of this process is the creation of bonds, of belonging and attachment that help them reorient with the person they were, prior to becoming homeless – a person with relatives, attachments, belonging to groups where they were loved, and respected. During Raksha Bandhan we celebrate the relationship of oneness and unity with all the members of society who vow to look out for each other.

Himesh*, a resident of Marudyan (shelter for homeless men with psychosocial disabilities) was due to go back to his family in Akola, Maharashtra after 10 years. Just a week before the much awaited day, he happened to leave the shelter. The staff at Marudyan were taken aback for Himesh had never expressed his desire to leave the shelter. He had always participated in all the activities, been nice to fellow residents and staff members. The team at Iswar Sankalpa looked around at all possible places and even intimidated the police station and family. To everyone's surprise, he returned to the shelter after a few days with a smile on his face and a black thread on his hand.

Having breathed a sigh of relief, the staff members inquired why he had left and where he had gone. He replied, *“Didi ko rakhi dena tha, vahi lene gaya tha”* (I had to give a Rakhi to didi and I had gone to bring that). Upon probing they realised that the Didi in question was Ms. Nisha, the rehabilitation trainer who conducts vocational training at the shelter. She had been training the residents in the art of making *Rakhis* that were sold by the Vocational Training Unit of Iswar Sankalpa. In the process of the training she had explained to the residents what *Rakhi* meant, Himesh had then promised her that he would tie her a Rakhi before leaving.

Who could have fathomed the power of that promise- a promise that led him away from the shelter? Nisha says, *“In the last 10 years of being a trainer at Iswar Sankalpa - I have been a sister, daughter, daughter-in-law, aunt...to many of the residents here. They come from a place where they have lost all human connection and touch and upon receiving love, care and respect here, they end up identifying with us, recreating these important relationships in their lives. It never occurred to me that Himesh could take that promise so deeply. I am touched.”* Himesh tied Nisha a Rakhi before leaving,

offering her all his earnings from the work he did at the Vocational Training Unit.

The plight of a homeless person with a psychosocial disability is painful to understand. It means having no one. It means being abandoned and ignored by family members, friends and passer bys. It means experiencing the apathy of people, being invisible in spite of being very visible. It means being marginalised in the middle of a crowd, of having dirt, filth. It means eventual loss of sense of self. It means craving for care, protection and support. A crave for love that heals.

At Iswar Sankalpa we strive to provide the care and support that heals the wounds of a person who has faced the wrath of society, however we strive to involve as many people as we can in this process because everyone is as much a part of the solution as they are of the problem. Therefore, we celebrate the festival of *Raksha Bandhan* in a rather grand way. The festival traditionally celebrates the relationship between a brother and a sister, with the sister tying the sacred thread of *Rakhi* on her brother's wrist praying for his prosperity, while he vows to protect her in return. At Iswar Sankalpa, the bonds transcend these blood relations.

Multiple stakeholders come together to protect the rights and dignity of homeless persons with psychosocial disabilities. Community members who are caregivers and well wishers, ward officers, Medical officers of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and staff members of the organisations, contribute in their own way to protect those who are suffering.

Himesh's moving gesture redefined the significance of this festival. We learnt the transformation that can come about, when a person devoid of human connection, love and care- receives the same.



(Clockwise top) Nisha, rehabilitation trainer ties Himesh, resident of Marudyan a Rakhi; Counsellor of Naya Daur program ties Rakhi to homeless person who receives mental health services from Iswar Sankalpa; A community member from Prembai's area ties her a Rakhi, Prembai is a homeless person who receives mental health services from Iswar Sankalpa;

(Side - left to Right) Nilanjana a supporter of Sarbari gives Lakhi, resident of Sarbari a Rakhi hug; Social worker of Iswar Sankalpa ties a Rakhi to Janab AmiruddinBobby, Councilor of Ward 54, Kolkata

(Bottom - left to right) Rimpa, resident of Sarbari ties Sukumar Malik her Yoga teacher a Rakhi; Shikha a resident of Sarbari ties a Rakhi to Medical Officer of Ward 74, Kolkata



Closer to God

'Iswarer Kachhachhi' is a poem written by Mrs. Shelly Pal
(ex-teacher, St. John's Diocesan School), Friend of Iswar Sankalpa.

Inspired by the journey a homeless person with psychosocial disability, embarks upon at the shelters of Iswar Sankalpa, Mrs. Pal penned this beautiful, heart touching poem. 'Iswarer Kachhachhi', the title of the poem, literally translates to 'Closer to God'. The title refers to Iswar Sankalpa and the journey that restores dignity in the lives of the persons, thus bringing them Closer to God.

ঈশ্বরের কাছাকাছি..

- শেলী পাল (প্রাক্তন শিক্ষিকা)

ছিন্ন বসনের আবরণ, শরীরের নগ্নতা হয়তো
খানিকটা অনাবৃত,
লুপ্ত চোখের কামান্ন দৃষ্টির অগ্নিতে ক্ষতবিক্ষত।
একমাথা শুষ্ক রুক্ষ চুল, কতোকাল তেলের সুগন্ধি
পরশ বঞ্চিত --
অথহীন ভাষার প্রলাপ,

না বোঝা শব্দের মাঝে দু-চারটি অর্থের
গৌরবে ভূষিত।
অগনিত মন্দের মেলায় এক উর্দীধারীর
আন্তরিকতায়
এসেছে ঈশ্বরের কাছাকাছি।
সেখানে অচেনার গভী অতিক্রম করে
কারা যেন এসে পড়ে চির চেনা জগৎ-এ।
ঘর থেকে পথ, আর পথ থেকে ঘর--
অদৃশ্য হয় অমার্জিত এলোমেলো শব্দগুচ্ছ।
বিস্মৃতির অতল তল থেকে ভুলে যাওয়া শব্দের
আধো-আধো জাগরণ,
শব্দের কঙ্কালে অর্থের মেদ হয় সঞ্চারিত।

মনে পড়ে টাপুর টুপুর বৃষ্টি ঝরা হারানো এক গান,
অনুশীলনের পরিচর্যায় জেগে ওঠে সেই যেতার
প্রাণ।
আজ আর অপরিচ্ছন্নতার অন্ধকারে বিলীন নয়--
পরিচ্ছন্ন আঙ্গুলে গাঁথতে থাকে একটা একটা করে
পুঁতি,
একটা একটা করে পুঁতি।

গাঁথা হয় এক নবীন মালিকা,
জীবন মাণ্ডে সঞ্চারিত হয় অনুপম বর্ণাঢ্য স্পর্শ।



Closer To God

Translated by Indraneel Bhattacharya,
Capegemini

Pieces of tattered clothes
do not even aim to cover her shame
Parched by the lust of the sane
her existence is an excuse but lame.
Her tresses have forgotten
the love of oil and care,
she utters a few words
reason or a meaning is rare.

But look, she has been touched
by the angels clad in clothes of care
after a long night of cold and despair
She is back to light of warmth and care.
Way to the heaven of awareness
even for the sane, that is so rare...
She starts her way back
step by step
Her fingers weave her way back
bead by bead....

The Coming Together of People, Products and Perseverance

Haat

The Haat is a unique event held every month at Café Crust and Core - a café cum training unit of Iswar Sankalpa. In this event three livelihood program of Iswar Sankalpa converge to present to community members products made by persons who have persevered, fought great battles to stand oriented and motivated to put thread to needle, batter into the mould and sickle to soil. With the sale of every product they get further motivated and empowered to rebuild their lives and develop the skills.

The seed of the HAAT was sown on the occasion of World Environment Day, 27th June 2019 at Café Crust and Core. We pledged to “Go Green” and therefore started preparations in alignment with the theme. The HAAT was initiated with the primary objective of converging all the livelihood programs of Iswar Sankalpa.

It opened at the portico of the Café with handmade and hand grown products by homeless persons with psycho-social disabilities. Everything exhibited in the HAAT was produced after a relentless period of training under able supervision. While there were products like freshly baked breads, savouries, refreshment drinks, etc from our café, the HAAT also exhibited handmade products from our vocational unit made by our clients and agricultural and poultry products from Nayagram, our assisted community living program at Uttar Kashipur.

With the objective of instilling environment consciousness and bringing a shift, the women from the vocational unit were hand held to make bags from newspapers and old clothes. This initiative gave us the opportunity to promote the hard work of these people and encourage them to strive, thereby creating continued livelihood

opportunities, building self-reliance in turn.

Every HAAT has been a step towards ensuring more community participation and empowerment of homeless persons with psycho-social disabilities. The empowerment must be seen in context of the harsh realities marginalised persons with psychosocial disabilities face. Often the state in which they begin their journey at Iswar Sankalpa does not allow them to execute complex tasks, but

gradually they do with intensive care and multi-disciplinary mental healthcare services. They make products, earn incentives and wages, stand behind counters to sell them and through the process realise that a better, brighter life lies ahead of them.

Within a short span of time it has created a new dimension and platform for our livelihood programs. Scheduled on the second Friday of every

month, in no time the HAAT has turned out to be a buzzing space for people to come together, to meet and share, join hands and sing together. We rejoice new people dropping in as much as those who come back time and again to encourage and help our string of connectedness gather more beads.



The concept of the Haat



Events and Achievements

The participants of the Vocational Training Unit achieved a monumental feat by producing 1500 specially designed notebooks in 3 months. This was the first time the Unit delivered a bulk order. We are grateful to Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) for collaborating with us for the 33rd AICC RCOG Annual Conference. This was indeed a learning opportunity for us, and our team and participants are now ready to take a leap and do more bulk orders.



Street plays on mental health were conducted in ward 26 by youth theatre group Natakkiya in the month of September. The play was well received by the residents of the region even though mental health is a taboo issue, but something that is integral to everyone's life.



The social workers of the Naya Daur program had conducted an awareness session with the community members of Tiljola at Park Circus a few months ago. The community members over the next few months kept a close look on persons in their community who were homeless with mental health concerns. On 28th July, along with Iswar Sankalpa, the community members



provided support to these vulnerable persons at a medical camp.

In the medical camp, 14 homeless persons were given basic medical and hygiene care. 3 out of these 14 persons have been enrolled into our outreach program now. The community lent a helping hand in every possible way: provided the space for the camp, food and also helped the team, provide hygiene services to the homeless persons. We thank the members of community for their support and acceptance.



10 residents at Marudyan received residential certificates from Ward 70. Homeless persons with psychosocial disabilities lose all proof of identity, and often take months to remember their names too. The residential certificate at the Ward level enables them to apply for an Aadhar card, Bank account, Ration cards and other identity proofs that allow them to assert their rights as citizens and, access entitlements and schemes that aid their reintegration. The journey from abandoned citizen to a recognized citizen officially begins here.

How You Can Help?

Donation options	Details
Support Medicines for a Client ₹1200	Covers medicines for one client for 3 months
Meals for Male Shelter Clients ₹10,000	Covers breakfast and dinner for one week for 30 residents
Special Occasion Lunch (Non vegetarian) ₹ 24,000	Special lunch freshly cooked and served in our shelters for 120 clients in celebration or in memory of an occasion
Festival Dresses ₹36,000	Covers new dress for 120 clients
Supporting a Client towards Independent Living in the Community ₹13,500	Supports living expenses for 3 months for one client working on an organic farm land owned by Iswar Sankalpa
Corpus Fund ₹50,000	Provides financial stability to the organisation and aids in sustaining the projects

No Strings Attached

Any amount of your choice can be donated through online transfers, cash or cheque, for the cause of supporting homeless persons with psychosocial disability.

You can also contribute through kind donations

Contact:

nayanika@isankalpa.org or +91 88269 01112

for more details

Volunteer & Internship Programmes

Iswar Sankalpa provides a vast range of internships and volunteering opportunities in different ongoing programmes. We invite you to lend your skills and expertise to our cause.

To find out more, drop a mail at hrdebapriya@isankalpa.org

Society Registration No. S/1L/42976

Date of Registration : 06.03.2007

IT, Section 12A Registration : DIT(E)/S-27 8E/436/08-09

IT, 80G, Registration : DIT (E)/2997/8E/436/08-09

FCRA Registration : 147120892

PAN : AAAAI1966N

All Donations are exempted from tax under 80G

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*We sincerely
thank everybody
who has come
forward to put a
smile on the faces
that go unseen,
and for
supporting us in
all your capacity.
Your support
gives us the faith
to move forward!*