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SACRED STILLNESS: A YOGIC JOURNEY AT MANDAPESHWAR CAVES : CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL YOGA WEEK

by Hriday Kulkarni

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्” — Bhagavad Gita 2.50

Yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalam: Yoga is skill in action.

Yoga trains the body, stills the mind, and awakens self-discipline. It is a system rooted in ancient Indian knowledge, structured to guide a person toward physical strength, mental clarity, and inner balance. The above verse from the Bhagavad Gita reminds the practitioner that skill in action, deliberate, controlled, and steady, is the mark of Yoga. KAASH Foundation continues to uphold this principle through its dedicated Health vertical, KAASH Swaasthya Manthan, which has conducted yoga programs across diverse communities. Over the past seven years, the Foundation has conducted yoga activities across rural and urban areas, involving more than 5000 participants and building a consistent network of wellness-focused engagements.

Centring on the vision of this year's theme - *Yoga for One Earth, One Health* - KAASH Foundation commenced its seventh consecutive International Yoga Week with a special session held on 15th June 2025 at the historic Mandapeshwar Caves, Borivali (West), Mumbai, from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. The 1400-year-old caves, featuring sculptures of Lord Shiva, offered a spiritually charged and culturally significant venue. The Mandapeshwar Caves, built around 520 CE by Buddhist monks, were located along vital trade routes through the Western Ghats in Maharashtra. These caves served as meditation centers and resting places



**KAASH Foundation's
KAASH Swaasthya Manthan**
is proud to celebrate and organize for the
SEVENTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR (2019-2025)

INTERNATIONAL YOGA WEEK

YOGA FOR ONE EARTH, ONE HEALTH

with

Mandapeshwar Utsav Samiti, Borivali, Mumbai

Date: 15th June 2025 **Time:** 8am

Venue: Mandapeshwar Caves, Borivali

Coordinators:

Dr. Avkash Jadhav, Founder-Trustee, KAASH Foundation Mr. Sunil Kapoor, Organizing Secretary, Mandapeshwar Utsav Samiti Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health), KAASH Foundation

Our Yoga Trainer for the day:
Ms. Bhumika Gohil, Certified Yoga Trainer, KAASH Foundation

To know more about us, kindly visit our website:
www.kaashfoundation.org

for both monks and traders. Named “Mandapeshwar” meaning “Hall of the Lord,” the caves featured halls, stupas, and monk chambers. Monks used them to spread the teachings of Buddha and welcomed new members into monkhood. Persian artists later painted the cave interiors, though little of the artwork survives today. By the 8th century, the caves saw a shift in religious use as Hindu sculptures were added, indicating a transformation into Hindu shrines. The site remained active until the 18th century, serving worshippers and travelers. Ruins of a 16th-century Portuguese church and graveyard above the caves show that Franciscan missionaries later occupied the area. After the battle of Bassein in 1739 between Portuguese and Maratha, the latter took over the charge of this region.

KAASH Foundation has always strived to bring these quaint Shaivite caves to the forefront of the city's heritage sites, under its Heritage Vertical. Its aim is manifested in the unwavering support that its Founder, Dr. Avkash Jadhav has showcased in the span of 15 years towards protecting the caves from further dilapidation.

Yoga is defined by Patañjali as “*citta vṛtti nirodha*” (YS I.2), the stilling of all states of the *citta*. And so the program began with prayers to Mahakaal, followed by collective chanting of Om Namah Shivay. Under the guidance of certified yoga trainer Ms. Bhumika Gohil, participants performed *Tadasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Bhujangasana*, and engaged in *Anulom Vilom* and meditation. Every effort was made to preserve the sanctity and structure of the cave. Participants also cleaned the space prior to the session. The two-hour session also included a brief discussion on integrating yogic principles into daily life, with an emphasis on consistency, diet, mindfulness, and spiritual balance.

The session concluded with a spiritually enriching address by the Guest of Honour, Shri Gajanan Ji Hegde, Sangathan Sachiv of Aarogya Bharti (Konkan Prant), an offshoot of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and a Certified Yoga Trainer.

The smooth execution of the program was made possible by the dedication of many individuals. The session was coordinated by Mr. Sunil Kapoor, who worked tirelessly to ensure everything ran seamlessly. All logistical arrangements and hospitality were meticulously handled by Smt. Rajni Agrawal, along with Rajesh Vishwakarma, Sapan Gupta, Dharmendra Chauhan, and Vaidya Vijay Gupta. Their combined efforts created an atmosphere that was both sacred and welcoming. KAASH Foundation's members present included Ms. Megha Patel (Youth Brigade Coordinator), Ms. Priti Parmar (Member), and Mr. Dharmendra Parmar (Member), who contributed actively to the success of the event.

In a world seeking unity, peace, and resilience, KAASH Foundation's Yoga Week is more than an event—it is a movement that weaves together heritage, health, and harmony. Through sacred spaces like Mandapeshwar and through dedicated individuals and communities, the Foundation carries forward the ancient yogic wisdom for “One Earth, One Health.”



Mr. Sunil Kapoor, Event Organizer, Mandapeshwar Utsav Samiti, addresses the gathering. To his right (seated) is Mr. Madhukar Bhandarkar, President, Mandapeshwar Utsav Samiti. To his extreme right (seated) is the Guest of Honour, Shri. Gajanan Hegde, Sangathan Sachiv, Arogya Bharti (Konkan Prant) and Certified Yoga Trainer



Ms. Bhumika Gohil, Certified Yoga Trainer, leads the session



Dr. Avkash Jadhav, Founder-Trustee, KAASH Foundation, addresses the gathering



Ms. Gohil leads a guided meditation



Participants practice some warm up exercises



Participants practice some leg stretches



Participants engage in a guided meditation



Team KAASH with the participants of the session and members of the Mandapeshwar Utsav Samiti

“

The path from dreams to success does exist. May you have the vision to find it, the courage to get on it and the perseverance to follow it.

**-Kalpana Chawla,
Astronaut**

”

THE FOUNDATION WITHIN: YOGA AT DR. BALIRAM HIRAY COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE: CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL YOGA WEEK

by Bhadra Menon

KAASH FOUNDATION, MUMBAI
 [Registered under Bombay Trust Act 1950 and NITI Aayog, Government of India.
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KAASH Foundation's KAASH Swaasthya Manthan

is proud to celebrate and organize for the **SEVENTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR (2019-2025)**
International Yoga Week

(Yoga for One Earth, One Health)
 with
Dr. Baliram Hiray College of Architecture, Bandra, Mumbai

Date: 20th June 2025
Time: 8 am
Venue: College Auditorium

Coordinators

Prof. Ar. Sunil Magdum, Principal of Dr Baliram Hiray College of Architecture
 Dr. Avkash Jadhav, Founder-Trustee, KAASH Foundation
 Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health), KAASH FOUNDATION
 Ar. Nidhi Kapri, Professor

Student Coordinator:
 Ms. Rishita Bhatkal, Architecture student
 Youth Brigade Member, KAASH Foundation

"Yoga is the unifying art of transforming dharma into action, be it through inspired thought, properly nurturing our children, a painting, a kindness or an act of peace that forever moves humanity forward."

- Micheline Berry

For the seventh consecutive year, KAASH Foundation's KAASH Swaasthya Manthan celebrated International Yoga Week by organizing Yoga sessions at several places in and around Mumbai. On 20th June 2025, the Foundation conducted a Yoga session at Dr. Baliram Hiray College of Architecture in Bandra, Mumbai. This event was not just a cultural celebration, but also an active effort to propagate and keep alive the tradition of Yoga; a practice that has already gained global recognition since the adoption of International Yoga Day by the United Nations in 2014.

The session was conducted by certified yoga trainers Ms. Dhwani Shah and Ms. Mansi Shah. The support team for the event consisted of Dr. Renuka Vyas (Joint Director for Health at the KAASH Foundation) and Ms. Nanda Shetty (Member, KAASH Foundation). Professor Nidhi Kapri and Fourth Year Architecture Student Ms. Rishita Bhatkal from Hiray College acted as Coordinators for the event. A group

of 50 students and staff participated enthusiastically in the session which kicked off on Friday morning at 8:30 am and went on for an hour.

Capturing the essence of International Yoga Day by talking about the role it plays in our history, cultural identity and global image, the trainers shared valuable knowledge regarding the art of Yoga with the participants. The participants also learnt about implementation of healthy practices like Yoga, regular movement, good eating habits, breathing exercises and so on into one's daily routine. Following this was the practical portion of the event. Demonstrations of these breathing techniques and various asanas were also conducted under the trainers' guidance. The students were eased into various beginner friendly Yoga poses that primarily concentrated on flexibility, focus and calmness. Starting from the *Sukhasana* position they progressed onto loosening positions such as shoulder stretches, rotations, backward bending and the tree pose before moving onto asanas such as *Malasana* (Garland), *Janu Shirshasana* (Head to Knee) and *Parivritta Trikonasana* (revolved Triangle). These movements were used to reiterate the holistic benefits of incorporating Yoga into daily life.

Another portion of the session focused on equipping the participants with the emotional tools they require to resolve the mental challenges and issues faced in today's world. The trainers talked at length about the importance of trust, support, and support systems, pairing it with a discussion about judging the trustworthiness of people in one's life. To understand this concept better, the participants were made to play a game surrounding this concept. They were asked to create a circle with one individual standing in the centre. This individual then closed their eyes and fell back onto the ones creating the circle, trusting them to have her back. This game achieved its purpose in demonstrating to the participants the importance of the role of trust and reliable support systems that serve in a society. This



Students practice guided meditation during the Yoga session



Students learn about daily breathing exercises



Students perform the Ardh Chakrasana (Half Wheel Pose)

implicit trust placed by the participant as the take the free fall reinforced the necessity of a sense of community. Another game played was based on the basic Yogic principle of mind-body coordination. This activity showed just how strong the connection is between our mind and body and the impact that physical and mental health have on one another. The event ended on a grand



Students perform the Vrikshasana (Tree Pose)



Students perform the Malasana (Garland Pose)



Ms. Dhwani Shah and Ms. Mansi Shah, Certified Yoga Trainers, guide the class

note with the unveiling of the 21st volume of KAASH Konnect by Principal Prof. Ar. Sunil Magdum and Vice Principal Prof. Ar. Swaroopa Sane.

Events like these serve not just to teach Yoga as a series of poses but to reintroduce it as a way of life. For many of the participants, this session was a way to gain deeper understanding of themselves, their bodies, and the way they interact with the world.

In today's world where fast-paced living, academic stress, and mental health issues have become increasingly common, the values and practices embedded in Yoga provide a much-needed refuge. The KAASH Foundation has managed to turn International Yoga Week celebrations into more than just an event; it is now a community ritual that fosters growth.

This year's event stood out for its unique blend of tradition and modernity. By combining classical asanas and breathing techniques with relatable games and conversations around trust, mental wellness, and emotional intelligence, the trainers and organizers created an impactful session. Such initiatives prove that Yoga, far from being an outdated practice, is adaptable to the needs of each generation. The emphasis on trust and community through interactive games was part of this. A game centered around something as simple as a trust fall reminded people that true strength comes from unity and togetherness. Similarly, the game that demonstrated mind-body coordination emphasized that wellness is a holistic goal that cannot be achieved by just mental or physical fitness but rather a harmonious combination of both.

The unveiling of the 21st volume of KAASH was also symbolic. It was a reminder of the consistent efforts made by the organization to give back to the community through events like this. Each volume documented the months of hard work and dedication by its members, upholding values that are holistic to mind and spirit, like Yoga. It is more than an activity; it is a philosophy of life.

The trainers, staff, students, coordinators and participants who made this event possible are proof of the passion people feel towards their culture and traditions, and their unending commitment towards preserving the same. This celebration not only honored the spirit of International Yoga Week but also set the stage for the future, just as the efforts of previous years paved the way for this meaningful session.

PHOTO GALLERY



Students find focus through meditation



Students perform the Janu Shirhasana (Head-to-Knee Pose)



Students perform the Vrikshasana (Tree Pose)



Students perform the Parsva Sukhasana (Seated Side Stretch)



21st Volume of KAASH Konnect is unveiled



Organisers and students pose for a picture

HARMONY WITHIN: YOGA FOR TRIBAL YOUTH AT ARTS, SCIENCE AND COMMERCE COLLEGE, ONDE, VIKRAMGAD

by Shreya Solomon

"Yoga does not just change the way we see things; it transforms the person who sees."

- B.K.S. Iyengar

On 21st June 2025, KAASH Foundation's KAASH Swaasthya Manthan celebrated International Yoga Day with a meaningful and refreshing session at Onde College of Arts, Science and Commerce, located in the quiet and green surroundings of Vikramgad, Palghar District, Maharashtra. This event marked the end of our Yoga Week and proudly added to our journey of seven years of yoga outreach, from local communities to international platforms. The session began at 11 AM, with over 20 teachers and professors from the college joining in. What made this session stand out was not just the yoga asanas, but the focus on breathing techniques, stress management, and numerous small things that make a big difference to our daily lives.

Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health) at KAASH Foundation, led the event with

warmth and clarity. Certified yoga trainer Mrs. Sneha Gawde guided participants through stretches, postures, and breathing practices that could easily fit into a busy lifestyle. Many teachers, who travel long distances by bike or bus, learned how to manage stress on the go, how to stay centered during travel, and how to calm the mind before beginning the day. Many later shared that while they had been practicing yoga before, this was the first time they truly experienced the power of proper breathing and alignment. There was a special segment on Omkar chanting, where three different types of 'Om' sounds were taught, and its importance in bringing oxygen to even the smallest cells in our body was beautifully explained.

The event was more than just Yoga. A Plantation drive was also organized by the NSS unit of the college, adding a touch of green to the day. The volunteers, teachers, and students showed great enthusiasm and



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INTERNATIONAL YOGA WEEK

YOGA FOR ONE EARTH, ONE HEALTH

Date: 21st June 2025
Time: 10am

Venue: Arts, Commerce & Science College, Tribal Village of Onde, Tal. Vikramgad, Dist. Palghar

Coordinators:

- Dr. Avkash Jadhav, Founder-Trustee, KAASH Foundation
- Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health), KAASH Foundation
- Mr. Milind Patil, Chairman, S.G.V. & S.S.G.S
- Dr. Santosh Dhamone, Assistant Professor in Mathematics, Arts, Commerce & Science College, Onde

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even expressed interest in continuing such wellness activities throughout the year. KAASH Foundation would like to convey special thanks to Mr. Milind Patil, Chairman of S.G.V & S.S.G.S and Prof. Dhamone,



Mrs. Sneha Gawde, Certified Yoga Trainer (grey kurti) and Mrs. Preeti Parmar, Member, KAASH Foundation (green kurti), guide participants through simple breathing exercises for daily wellness



Participants perform the Parvatasana (Mountain Pose)



Participants perform the Ardha Matsyendrasana (Seated Spinal Twist)



Capturing smiles and solidarity after a successful yoga session



The NSS Unit from Arts, Commerce & Science College proudly join hands for a plantation drive on Yoga Day

Assistant Professor of Mathematics, and the entire faculty for their wholehearted support. The Foundation was also supported by its member, Ms. Priti Parmar and youth brigade members, Meet Chavan and Meer Chavan, who helped make the event smooth

and energetic.

KAASH Foundation aims to bring awareness, health, and sustainable habits into people's lives. Events like these remind us that yoga isn't just a one-day activity, it's a way of

life. By reaching out to people, sharing simple knowledge, and staying connected to wellness, the Foundation hopes to keep making a positive difference every step of the way.

PHOTO GALLERY



Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health), KAASH Foundation (at the center) leads the session on Pranayama and breath awareness



Participants are calm and composed in Sukhasana (Easy Pose) before the session begins



Participants perform the Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute Pose) to enhance posture



Participants practice the Parsva Sukhasana (Side Stretch Pose) to improve flexibility and lung capacity



Participants perform the Paschimottanasana (Seated Forward Bend) to help in stretching the spine and calming the mind



Participants perform the Shirsha Sparsha Nyasa (Head-Touch Relaxation Technique) to relieve mental fatigue

“True yoga is not about the shape of your body, but the shape of your life. Yoga is not to be performed; it is to be lived. Yoga doesn't care about what you have been; it cares about the person you are becoming. Yoga is designed for a vast and profound purpose, and for it to be truly called yoga, its essence must be embodied.”

-Aadil Palkhivala, Yoga Guru

STRETCH, SMILE, SHINE: YOGA FOR YOUNG MINDS IN VIKRAMGAD

by Rhea D'Souza

"Yoga is the art of awareness on the canvas of body, mind, and soul."

- Amit Ray

On 21st June 2025, in continuance of its of International Yoga Day celebration, KAASH Foundation's KAASH Swaasthya Manthan travelled to the Onde Government School and Anganwadis at Vikramgad, in the Palghar District of Maharashtra. It also marked the conclusion of the week-long series of yoga sessions conducted in and around Mumbai. This event marked a significant milestone, seven successful years of conducting yoga camps, reaching various communities, since 2019.

Organized in coordination with the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), under the Government of Maharashtra, the program was held at Onde, where two educational units were combined for the day's activities: the BMC Government School (catering to students from 1st to 7th standard) and the two Anganwadis (with children aged 2 to 5 years), all from surrounding tribal regions.

The session began at 9:30 am and despite an early downpour of rain, the enthusiasm remained high. Although the weather limited some of the planned activities, our team modified quickly, conducting standing yoga postures and stretching exercises suitable for the conditions. The younger Anganwadi children were also included in the programme, with simpler exercises such as a variety of breathing techniques, clapping games and movement-based activities designed to keep them engaged.

Each session was tailored to each age group. For the older students, the focus was more on discipline, posture, breathing and stretching, with insights on how yoga helps improve concentration, relieves mental fatigue and supports overall physical wellness. For the Anganwadi children on the other hand, playful breathing techniques, light stretches, and songs kept them interested and involved, even if they were too young to fully grasp the

concepts.

Our hour-long session began with chanting the OM mantra, the Gayatri Mantra and the basic Pranayama, followed by gentle stretching exercises and concluded with collective chanting and mindfulness. The event was much more than just a yoga session; it was also a joyful, community-building experience for the children and the teachers alike.

KAASH Foundation expresses its gratitude to Ms. Smita Bhoy, ICDS Supervisor, and Ms. Nanda Pawar, the School-in-Charge, for their unwavering support. The efforts of the Anganwadi staff, Principal, Mr. Chaudhary and the entire teaching faculty ensured the programme ran smoothly and successfully. The children were guided by the Foundation's Joint Director for Health Dr. Renuka Vyas,





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INTERNATIONAL YOGA WEEK

YOGA FOR ONE EARTH, ONE HEALTH

with
Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Tal. Vikramgad, Dist. Palghar

 Date: 21st June 2025

 Time: 9:30am

 Tribal Villages of Khadaki, Saarshi, and Malwada in Vikramgad

Coordinators:

Dr. Avkash Jadhav
Founder-Trustee,
KAASH Foundation

Dr. Renuka Vyas
Joint Director (Health),
KAASH Foundation

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Member Ms. Priti Parmar, Certified Yoga Trainer Ms. Sneha Gawde, and the spirited



Students perform the Parsva Tadasana (Standing Side Stretch)



Students perform the Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute)



Dr. Renuka Vyas, Joint Director (Health), KAASH Foundation presents a token of gratitude to Ms. Nanda Pawar, School-in-Charge



All students from the school attend the yoga session

youth brigade: Meet and Meer Chavan, who played a key role in managing the sessions and energizing the participants.

In total, over 150 school students and 50

Anganwadi children participated in the yoga sessions at Onde.

As the Foundation reflects on seven years of impactful work, this day served as a beautiful

reminder of why it began: to bring the benefits of yoga to every individual. With continued commitment, the Foundation looks forward to reaching more communities in the years to come.

PHOTO GALLERY



A group of tiny toddlers from the anganwadi for the yoga session



Students stretch themselves at the beginning of the session



Students warm up before practicing the asanas



Ms. Sneha Gawde, Certified Yoga Trainer and Ms. Preeti Parmar, Member, KAASH Foundation, lead the session



Students chant the OM mantra



Students intently observe the session

EDITOR'S DESK



April is the period of exams followed by vacations in May. June brings relief to the hot weather with the showers of monsoon. It is also the month of International Yoga Day. Though Yoga was introduced to the world gradually, the pronouncement of 21st June as International Yoga Day in 2015 under the campaign of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi significantly boosted its global awareness and practice. While its roots are steeped in our ancient culture, involving spiritual discipline and harmony for mind and body, its journey to the international stage involved increased cultural exchange and widespread recognition of its physical and mental benefits.

Since Yoga has been considered to be one of the most essential means for bringing peace and unity among the nations of the world, KAASH Foundation believed that it should be celebrated to the widest extent possible. This tribute was paid by holding week long sessions of Yoga at three different locations. Beginning with the Heritage vertical, we celebrated it at Mandapeshwar Caves before moving on to Dr. Baliram Hiray College of Architecture and finally ending it at Onde Government School and Anganwadi at Vikramgad. The whole activity was carried out by KAASH Foundation's Swaasthya Manthan.

As we delve further into our fifth year of service, we believe it is our duty to disseminate the virtues of Yoga to the coming generations. Practice of Yoga is said to bring harmony between mind and body and in this stressful world it is certainly the need of the day.

We have much more of coming events and memories of the past in this issue. So my dear Readers, let me bid you Happy Reading!

KAASH KONNECT TEAM

Founder :- Dr. Avkash Jadhav
Editor-in-chief :- Dr. Geeta Ajit

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 Sahil Jahagirdar

Senior Reporter:-
 Pamela Dhone (Head)

Junior Reporters:-
 Shreya Solomon
 Rhea D'Souza
 Hriday Kulkarni
 Bhadra Menon

FOUNDER'S DESK



आत्मनं रथनि विद्धिशरीरं रथमेव तु
 (Ātmanam rathinam viddhi śarīram rathameva tu)
 Source: Katha Upanishad 1.3.3.

It means "Recognize the self as the charioteer and the body as the chariot."

Understanding the self and its relationship with the body is a key aspect of Yoga, emphasizing the journey of self-discovery.

As part of the Sixth year KAASH Foundation successfully organised series of events for promoting the culture of healthy lifestyle emphasizing on yoga and Nutritional diet plan.

We made the Pioneering attempt and perhaps the first time we organised and inaugurated our yoga camp at the ancient shiava caves of mandapeshwar which dates back to 6th century BCE. The series of events at other places was provide consistency to our commitment in the health sector.

Our expert trainers were equally enthusiastic in engaging with all the age groups.

The Yoga camps in the city college to the tribal areas were well received by the participants. Special commendation to Ms. Bhumika Gohil, Manasi Shah, Dr. Renuka Vyas, Priti Parmar and other team members for holding the sessions on Yoga.

KAASH foundation is heading to celebrate its Sixth year by October 2025, and We all are planning to launch some new annual flagship event unlike Kritagya: Empowering Women, which is celebrated for the last five years

We would like to thank all our well wishers and allied bodies for being part of this long standing journey and hope to receive the same encouragement in the future as well.

To conclude this shlok describes our commitment to our society in a apt way.

“कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुरभुर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणी॥”

By Lord Krishna:

"You have the right only to act, but never to the result. Do not be the cause of the result of action, and do not have any attachment even to inaction."

Source: (Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 2, Verse 47).

LATEST UPDATES AT KAASH FOUNDATION



Congratulations to our Founder-Trustee, **Dr. Avkash Jadhav**, on being awarded the prestigious Associateship (2025-2028) of the University Grants Commission's Inter-University Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences (IUC).

The IUC is an Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, and is housed at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) Rashtrapati Niwas, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India. We are extremely proud of Dr. Jadhav's achievement and wish him great success further on in his career.



Heartfelt congratulations to our Joint Director (Education) and Editor-in-Chief, **Dr. Geeta Ajit**, on her retirement from V. E. S. Institute of Technology, Mumbai, as a senior faculty member of English at the Department of Humanities and Applied Sciences.

Established in 1984, the V. E. S. Institute of Technology (VESIT) is one of Mumbai's leading engineering and technology institutions, known for its commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and holistic student development. Dr. Ajit's dedicated service and impactful teaching have left an indelible mark on students and colleagues alike. We wish her a fulfilling and enriching post-retirement journey.



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Members, **Sahil Jahagirdar and Shreeraj Jadhav**, on successfully completing their LLB from the prestigious Government Law College (GLC), Mumbai!

Established in 1855, GLC is Asia's oldest law college and has produced some of India's most eminent legal minds, including judges, jurists, and public leaders. We are proud of Sahil's and Shreeraj's achievement and wish them continued success as they begin their journey in the field of law and justice.



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Member, **Megha Patel**, on joining the National Stock Exchange (NSE) in Mumbai!

The NSE is India's leading stock exchange and one of the largest in the world by trading volume. Known for its cutting-edge technology and role in transforming India's financial markets, the NSE plays a vital role in the country's economic growth. We are proud of Megha's achievement and wish her continued success in her endeavours.



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Member, **Kishan Singhania**, on joining ICICI Bank as Manager – Offshore Custody!

ICICI Bank is one of India's largest and most trusted private sector banks, known for its innovation, global presence, and comprehensive financial services. With a strong focus on technology and customer-centric solutions, the bank plays a key role in India's banking and investment ecosystem. We are proud of Kishan's achievement and wish him great success in this exciting new chapter of his professional journey.

LATEST UPDATES AT KAASH FOUNDATION



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Member, **Rohan Hegde**, on securing admission to Griffith University, Australia, to pursue his Master's in Marketing and Business Analytics!

Griffith University is one of Australia's leading research and teaching institutions, renowned for its forward-thinking programs and strong industry connections. With campuses across Queensland, it consistently ranks among the top universities globally for its innovation, student support, and career-ready education. We are proud of Rohan's accomplishment and wish him all the best as he embarks on this exciting academic journey!



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Member, **Shreya Solomon**, for ranking first in the TYBA History Batch of 2025 at St. Xavier's College (Empowered Autonomous), Mumbai, with an exceptional CGPA of 9.68.

St. Xavier's College, established in 1869, is one of India's premier institutions of higher learning, known for its academic rigour, distinguished faculty, and a long-standing tradition of excellence in the liberal arts. Shreya's accomplishment is a testament to her dedication, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to the discipline of history. We are proud of her achievement and wish her continued success in all future endeavours.



Congratulations to our Youth Brigade Member, **Tirtha Samant**, on successfully completing her Master's in Public Administration with a specialization in International Political Economy from the prestigious London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom.

LSE is one of the world's leading social science universities, renowned for shaping global leaders and policy thinkers. We are proud of Tirtha's remarkable achievement and wish her continued success in creating meaningful impact through public administration.

“

“There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.”

-Ernest Hemingway

“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

-John F. Kennedy

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. GEETA AJIT – JOINT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION VERTICAL, KAASH FOUNDATION & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, KAASH KONNECT

Personal Life & Academic Career

Could you share a little about your childhood – your family, upbringing, and any early influences?

I grew up in a normal South Indian family where academics took precedence over everything else. My father was an aircraft engineer and was posted first in Singapore and later in Malaysia. With parents living abroad, my brothers and I were sent to a boarding school in Panchgani. I must say that this was among the most exciting days of my childhood. Life in boarding school was always filled with fun and adventure. Later I went down south and lived in hostels there to complete my Bachelors and Master's degree.

Growing up, did you always wish to become a teacher/professor, or did that interest develop later?

It was a tradition in my family where women were teachers and men took up professional jobs. My aunts were schoolteachers even during the pre-independence era - at a time where very few women were educated. So, I guess we were lucky! It was only during the 80s that women in the family ventured into other professions – medicine or engineering. However, I continued with the family tradition of teaching, while my cousins went on to become engineers and doctors along with the boys.

What inspired you to choose English as your subject of study and later specialise in it?

Reading was not just a hobby for me; it was a passion. I would read every book I could get hold of. I could speed read and had great concentration. I finished reading most of the classics before I finished high school, - school libraries were a treasure chest. Growing up in the 70s and 80s, with limited TV, you only had books as your friend. Thus, it was natural to follow a path that would allow me to earn a degree and continue my passion. So, choosing English language and literature was the natural choice. Even today, I always have a book by my bedside as I cannot go to sleep without reading.

You took a 15-year break from your career to focus on your family. How did you take that decision, and what was that phase like?

It's important for children to have a secure and comfortable environment during their formative years to grow into responsible human beings. It was only after my youngest was 10 years old that I stepped out to build a career. Initially, it was very difficult, especially that everyone had got used to me being around for 15 years. However, I took it slowly for the first few years, till we all got used to it, including me!

After the break, what encouraged you to return to academia and pursue MPhil and PhD studies?

I always knew that I wanted to do my Ph.D, but the 15-year gap put me at a loss! So, I decided to take one step at a time. I was also lucky during this phase. I first completed my B.Ed. and immediately got a job at Somaiya College. A year later, I applied for my M.Phil and during this period I joined St.Xavier's College. After my M.Phil, I continued with my Ph.D. Having cleared my NET exam, I later joined VESIT as Assistant Professor. Not soon after, I went to present and publish many research papers both at national and international level. It was a journey that never stopped. I still enjoy research and have many likeminded friends all throughout the world, where we keep discussing and debating new points that evolve.

Association with KAASH Foundation: Beginnings

How did your journey with KAASH Foundation begin?

It was a catching chat phone call with Avkash during lockdown where it all began. Avkash was a dear friend from Xavier's and it was some time since we last spoke to each other. During this call, he narrated the one event that KAASH had done the previous year and how well it was received. He wanted to do more. He described his dreams and plans for KAASH Foundation and how he hoped to reach out to each section in society where



each can fulfil their dream without having to worry about money. My grandson was just a few days old and was sleeping in my arms when I was listening to him unfolding his dreams and vision. It resonated with the principles that I had always believed in – giving back to society, in whatever way you can. I looked at my sleeping grandson and knew that if I wanted to make the world a better place for him, I should also work towards it. I don't remember the date, but I do remember the long conversation we had, but that was the beginning of my journey with the KAASH Foundation.

What inspired you to take on the roles of Joint Director of the Education Vertical and Editor-in-Chief of KAASH Konnect?

It was not an inspiration, it was a necessity. There was just Renuka and me and very soon Kavita, Milred, Rehan and the others joined in.

As for the KAASH Konnect, I was already running a monthly newsletter in my college for the past many years, so using that experience we began a newsletter letter. This would help to document all our work done by the foundation and reach out to a larger audience. Pamela and Sahil joined in with a huge group of young students and thus began the next journey at KF. It was a very exhilarating and exciting time. Initially, I had to ask my engineering students to help out, but Sahil soon mastered the art and the rest is history!

In the beginning, what did you think about the Foundation's vision and approach?

Being a part of the Foundation at the very initial stage we knew what the vision was. The mission was to put it into action!. The team had hours of discussions on how to go about and finally we decided to take the first plunge. The first international conference had us spending many sleepless nights. But that's where the calming factor of Avkash came in. He assured us that nothing could go wrong. We all worked very hard and ultimately it was a huge resounding success. One must also remember that we all had a full-time job too!

How was the support and teamwork during your initial days with KAASH Foundation?

KF was always about support and teamwork. There was never a time without it. And that's one of the things that I admire about Avkash. He does 90% of the work and gives the credit to the whole team. Then we have Renuka and the Health team who do incredible work all through the year. If it wasn't for them, I doubt we would have much to report in our newsletter. Pamela is the most hard-working person behind the scenes. It's hard to imagine the number of hours she puts in just to see that all goes well. Many times, I've felt that she put the KF work even before her family and health. Any time of the day or night you call her, and she is there to assist you. We are indeed so lucky to have her with us.

What were your first experiences like when you started working here?

It was the beginning of a new venture that was just conceived, and we were working towards materializing it and putting it into action. The team was falling into place, and we were all getting to know each other from remote distances. It was exciting. That's when I got to know Renuka, Kavita, Mildred – the first joint directors of the verticals brought together by Avkash. It was also the time when the whole world was on lockdown. So, sitting in the comforts of our home encouraged us to do more to connect the world around us, before the isolation drifted us apart.

Growth & Learnings Over the Years

Over the years, how have you seen the Education Vertical and KAASH Konnect evolve under the Foundation?

The Education Vertical was founded just six

months after the KAASH Foundation was born. The fact that we are just five years old and yet grown so exponentially, speaks for itself. Having connected states, countries and continents through our various conferences, symposiums, seminars was something unimaginable and we did it!

But this phenomenal growth wouldn't have been possible without the infusion of life by its ardent supporters. The foremost among them is Lippika and Mayank Poddar, who have been the staunch supporters of every scheme and event, ever since they joined us. When their baby was born, they even started contributions in her name. In fact, the whole family joins in whenever we have any event. I must extend my special gratitude to Mayank's parents for their contributions. I feel they all have contributed much more than I ever have.

KAASH Konnect came into the picture much later. The ideation grew from the need to document our activities and share with our well-wishers and friends. This is another wonderful extended family. Most of the credit goes to Pamela who actually gets the work done and Sahil, who despite his heavy schedule, single handedly does the designing. I feel, without them, this paper would be handicapped.

What do you think have been some key milestones or achievements in your time here?

Every step we took at KF, every trip we made, couldn't have been made without the team. The KF Youth Brigade works leaps and bounds under their leader Pamela and the other members: Sahil, Megha, Roshan, Kishan, Titiksha, Shreya, Pranati, Rhea, Vanya and many more.

Avkash and his family too contributed to the various events. His mother, Vijayalakshmi Jadhav, is usually a favourite among everybody when she is around. She is a very warm person who has many interesting tales to tell. She is always singing praises of the foundation and of course the 'apple of her eye', Avkash. We also have his beautiful wife, Shilpa, and even his daughter, Aapulki, would join in whenever she was between exams.

KF is a family within the family. For long distance events we would have children of the members joining us to help with the events. Even Renuka's son would be there during his holidays. Everybody letting go of their personal work to come together to

make the event a successful one is what I call milestones and achievements. It is than invisible line that threads us all together towards our common goal.

How has working with KAASH Foundation contributed to your personal and professional growth?

When you are working the only thing to remember is that the Foundation always comes first. The self gets eliminated when you work here. Everything is by the team for the Foundation. We grow together as a team and as a family. Having an extended family with Renuka, Alpa, Alkesh, Pooja, Lippika, Mayank, Nandita, Rehan, Pamela, Sahil, Megha, Kishan, Titiksha, Rohan, Anuja, Maria, Samiksha, Ruchira, Shoumik, Anuja is what I would call my personal growth.

Can you share a moment or project here that had a deep impact on you?

There were so many over the years. Every event that I attended had a lasting impact. Each occasion was a point of new learning and new experience. Whether it was behind the screens, virtually or being there physically for the event, it was always a joyous moment.

What skills or qualities have you developed through your journey with the Foundation?

The qualities of teamwork, cooperation, collaboration, taking collective decisions, working in conjunction and consensus with the group. Above all, the solidarity with which we conduct ourselves during each event is worth taking a dekko!

Reflections, Memories & Future Vision

What are the most pressing challenges in the education and publishing space that KAASH Foundation addresses effectively?

KF addresses the lacunae in today's education system and approaches it from ground level. If the curriculum does not meet the industry needs and standards, we will continue to churn our 'educated' youth who will be misfit in society because they lack the skill. KF continues to strive to bridge that gap and under Avkash's leadership I'm sure we will be going miles with each step successfully conquered.

What are your hopes and aspirations for the Education Vertical and KAASH Konnect in the coming years?

My prayers and hopes are that it continues to grow and reach every corner of the world- Touching lives of children, adults, teachers, students, professionals and many more.

Are there any events, projects, or memories from your time here that you value the most?

Every event had been an addition to the album of beautiful memories. Spending more time with the KF family, meeting new people, making new friends; everything just adds on. My last journey was to Gwalior, where we celebrated our last Foundation anniversary. I made many new friends along with meeting old ones. The train journey was really memorable – I thoroughly enjoyed it.

What more do you feel can be done to increase the Foundation's impact?

One should understand that every member, who works for this Foundation, also has a full-time job to which they are responsible. So, the time devoted here is very precious. Avakash does his very best to convene everything possible in the most limited time and optimize all limits. Everyone from the team, Renuka, Alpa, Alkesh, Pooja, Lippika, Mayank, Pamela and the youth brigade, all of them make personal sacrifices to sacrifice a lot to be able to devote their time for this common goal. I feel each one of them is stretching to their optimum to serve this

family. What more can we ask! I've also been told that Prof Sunil Magdum has agreed to head the Heritage Vertical. The future does sound promising!

Looking back at your journey in academia and KAASH Foundation, what final message or thought would you like to share with our readers?

Final message would be when I am leaving, but that is not so now. All our decisions are based on our collective thoughts. We share it, discuss it and then materialize it. Otherwise, it would not have been such a great place to work!

“Life is your artwork. Create it! No one else can do it for you. You create it by seeing life, and living it to its fullest.”

-Max Ehrmann

“In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on.”

-Robert Frost

“And in that time of tranquility, he found many things which were good and many more which were not.”

-Buddha

KAASH CREATIVE CORNER

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF WOMEN'S SELF-HELP GROUPS IN RURAL INDIA

-UTKARSHA KESARKAR

Across rural India, Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as powerful engines of social and economic transformation. These community-based organizations are revolutionizing the landscape of women's empowerment by providing platforms for financial independence, skill development, and collective action.

The SHG movement began as a grassroots microfinance initiative in the 1980s but has since evolved into a comprehensive development approach. The basic structure involves 10-20 women who pool their savings to create a community fund from which members can borrow at reasonable interest rates. This simple yet effective model has grown exponentially, with over 10 million SHGs now operating across India.

Financial inclusion stands as the cornerstone of these groups. Many rural women previously had no access to formal banking services or credit facilities. Through SHGs, they can secure loans without collateral requirements or complicated paperwork that would otherwise exclude them from the financial system. This access to capital allows women to invest in income-generating activities ranging from livestock rearing and agriculture to handicrafts and small retail businesses.

Beyond economic benefits, SHGs function as powerful social institutions that challenge traditional gender norms. Regular meetings provide forums where women discuss community issues, share knowledge, and develop leadership skills. Women who were once confined to household responsibilities now actively participate in community decision-making processes and local governance structures.

The impact on rural development has been substantial. SHG networks often tackle community challenges such as improving sanitation, ensuring children's education, addressing health concerns, and enhancing local infrastructure. Their collective voice carries significant influence in gram panchayats (village councils) and other local administrative bodies.

Government support has been crucial to scaling the SHG movement. Programs like the National Rural Livelihoods Mission provide training, capacity building, and financial assistance to these groups. Several state governments have developed specialized initiatives that link SHGs to larger markets and government procurement systems.

Digital literacy has further accelerated the impact of SHGs. Many groups now use mobile banking, digital payment systems, and online marketplaces to expand their economic activities. This technology adoption not only improves efficiency but also connects rural women producers directly to urban markets.

The intergenerational impact of SHGs is particularly noteworthy. The visible success of SHG members provides powerful role models for younger generations, expanding their aspirations beyond traditional boundaries. As India continues its development journey, the SHG movement represents a proven model for inclusive growth—one that recognizes women's potential as economic contributors and community leaders. By building financial capacity, social capital, and collective strength, these groups are quietly but profoundly reshaping rural India's social and economic landscape.

"I am no bird and no bird, and no net ensnares me. I am a free human being with independent will."

-Charlotte Bronte

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Renuka Vyas
29th April



Geeta Ajit
7th May



Aishwarya Harish
15th May



Avikash Jadhav
15th May



Jaanhavi Malkar
3rd June



Sahil Jahagirdar
30th May

