



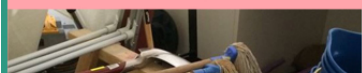
Purkal Bulletin - August 2020



**'Small acts, when multiplied
by millions of people, can transform the world.'
- Howard Zinn**

Since its independence, India has made leading progress in every field. Scientists, doctors, educationists, farmers, engineers, soldiers, social, health and sanitation workers and such like are contributing in their own ways to building up the pillars of our nation.

This month's bulletin highlights the collective efforts of individuals contributing competently in small ways to make our country more buoyant.





As he looks back, he wonders what he would have done if it hadn't been for the school

LOUNGE HEROES | THIS EDUCATOR CHANGED LIVES IN UTTARAKHAND VILLAGES

Avantika Bhuyan
Avantika.bhuyan@live.com

In 1997, economist G.K. Swamy shifted from Mumbai to the village of Purkal, 20km from Dehradun, in the Himalayan foothills. He moved there with his wife on retirement, seeking a more relaxed pace, and volunteered with the John Martyn Memorial School, started in Bhagwantpur in 1985 in memory of a former headmaster of Doon School.

That is when he started noticing the problems dogging children from the less well-to-do sections of society. For while the institution would impart education till class V, mostly in Hindi, to students from the villages nearby, the children would have to go to schools in the city if they wished to study further. They didn't have access to as many opportunities as their well-off peers. The girls would be married off early and alcoholism was rampant among boys.

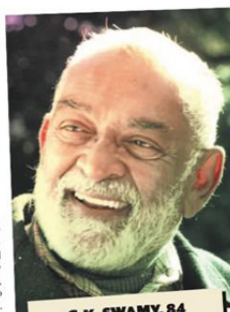
And if they did make it to a good school, these children of mostly daily-wage workers would find it hard to fit in. "The kids from John Martyn began to be sent to English-medium schools in Dehradun on scholarship but would find it difficult to cope. So, I started taking after-school classes in 1999 in English and maths to ease the transition," says Swamy. Today, that small beginning has transformed lives, making way for a full-fledged English-medium school with 560 students and 75-80 teachers.

Initially, the classes, which would start at 3pm, were held in cattle-sheds, garages and houses under construction. "I was the first student of this

class—registration No. 1," says 32-year-old Ashwani Sharma, who was joined by four others. "Mrs Swamy would serve us healthy snacks." At the time, the area around Bhagwantpur and Purkal didn't have many good schools. "The area was home to casual labour and carpenters who couldn't afford to send their kids to the city. But then things changed when Swamy Sir started his classes," says Sharma, who is part of a 42-member joint family.

Every year, a new group would join the existing ones for the free after-school programme—even those who had to travel to city schools. Swamy would devise unique lessons, allowing them the freedom to leave if they didn't enjoy them. By the third year, he had 90 students. Families were encouraged once they saw how confident the children were becoming. Swamy also began to raise money for bus fare, uniforms and shoes for the children in city schools.

"My aspirations grew too," he laughs. "I began to take them to the Forest Research Institute and various other institutions in the area. Then, every year I would take them to Delhi, Amritsar or any other city for 10 days and talk about Mughal architecture and colonial history." Gradually, he began thinking of starting a school. In 2003, he started a primary school, adding classes VI-IX soon after, with his savings and donations. In 2003, he registered the Purkal Youth Development Society Deh-



G.K. SWAMY, 84

This retired economist established the Purkal Youth Development Society Dehradun to make English-medium education accessible to children from the local villages

radun (PYDS) and established a fully-equipped school.

Getting government approval, however, was an uphill task. The authorities even questioned the need for an English-medium school. "Bhasha schools inculcate pride in the mother tongue for sure. But English is required as well to get access to jobs in the global market," says Swamy. Finally, he got permissions; Central

Board of Secondary Education approval came in 2008. The pre-primary section, however, remains his primary concern, with the focus on enhancing sensorial and motor skills. "The teacher student ratio is 1:3. We take them to ice-cream factories and more. Children should enjoy their education," says Swamy.

Today, the alumni of PYDS is spread far and wide. A recent media report mentioned Jyoti Mangain, the daughter of an employee in PYDS' Stree Shakti division—a self-employment wing for women—who has won a scholarship for a four-year university programme in the US, while some others are now Kennedy-Lugar fellows and Brown University scholars.

Some, like Sharma, have returned to Purkal. "After my graduation, I moved to Delhi for six years, where I worked with a travel company. Now that I am back in Purkal, I am working in the school's resource team," he says. Yet another former student, now involved with the school, is 32-year-old Meena Khatri, who is pursuing a master's in public administration from The Indira Gandhi National Open University. "When I spend time with the children in the school, *muhe lagta hai ki main apna bachpan phir se jee rahi hoon (I feel I am reliving my childhood)*, Swamy Sir is like a parent to me," she says.

One of nine siblings, she was extremely weak as a child, wracked with bouts of tuberculosis and jaun-

dice. "Swamy Sir helped not just with my education but also with my medical bills. If he hadn't been there, I would have been a daily-wage worker somewhere," says Khatri.

It hasn't been an easy journey for Swamy. To meet the rising costs of running a school—up from ₹1.5 lakh in 2003 to ₹6.2 crore last year—his team and he have been raising funds through charity, with individuals as well as companies coming forward to help.

Swamy, now 84, has decided to take a back seat. He formally retired from the PYDS eight months ago. "Anoop Seth, a financial services professional and a long-time donor and volunteer, will now be actively running the school. He has taken voluntary retirement and will be moving from Gurugram (Gurgaon) to Purkal shortly," says Swamy.

But his second retirement isn't stopping him from thinking of new education models. A big proponent of progressive learning, or student-driven learning, Swamy believes trusts and foundations such as the Krishnamurti Foundation Schools, rather than the government or private sector, should initiate quality education models. "I am thinking about new schools. They need not be expensive but accessible to all," he says.

As he looks back, he wonders what he would have done if it hadn't been for the school. "The energy and enthusiasm that I witnessed there has kept me alive," says Swamy. "I gave my life meaning. My wife has always been by my side as a great support. I still want to be useful to the world. Let's see how that goes."

Our Founder, Mr. G. K. Swamy recalls his journey of Purkal, that started as small after-school classes to help village children with English and Maths and grew into a full-fledged English Medium School,

**'Freedom is not the right to do as you please,
but the liberty to do as you should.' -
Ralph Waldo Emerson**



Like every year, PYDS Family came together to celebrate our 74th Independence Day. All staff and students residing in the hostel attended the celebration in person, while others joined on Zoom call.

The celebration was in line with the hygiene and safety protocols mandated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It began with the hoisting of the National flag by the Principal, Mr. Reginald Missal.



This was followed by a cultural program of melodious patriotic songs and poetry recitation.

A Step-Forward to New Ways of Volunteering

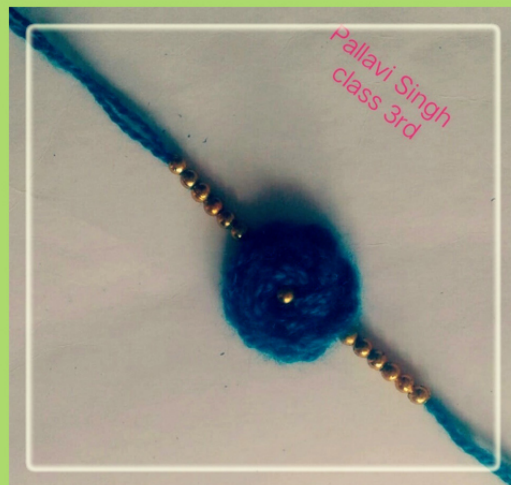
A virtual volunteering session was conducted by Staff Members of Max Life Insurance on 14th August for Classes V to IX on Environment Protection. The session was conducted in three parts; Importance of Tree plantation by Mr. Anurag Chauhan, EVP, Legal, Importance of Water Conservation by Mr. Amit Wadhwa, AVP, Legal and a fun quiz session on environment conservation by Ms. M. Mariyam, AVP, Operations.

We are thankful to them for conducting this insightful session on environment protection that has sparked many new ideas amongst all of us. A vast majority of our students are from villages

all of us. A vast majority of our students are from villages located near the School campus, which is on the foothills of the Himalayas and rich in flora and fauna.

We believe that such initiatives would help them take conscious steps towards preserving the environment.

Putting Forth the Best Within You



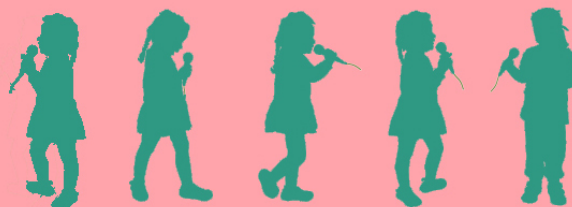
Art and Craft Club organised a Rakhi Making Competition for the students of Classes III to VIII

In Classes III to V Category

- 1st – Pallavi Singh of Class III
- 2nd– Ishika Bhardwaj of Class IV
- 3rd – Manav Khatri

In Classes VI to VIII Category

- 1st - Abhishek Kumar of Class VI (A)
- 2nd – Muskan Chettri of Class VIII (B)
- 3rd– Vedika Semwal of Class VI (A)



Inter-House Singing Competition was organised in two different categories and results were as followed

In Junior Category

- 1st Dhak House, Swastika Rawat, Class IV

- 2nd Amaltas House, Nisha Rashmi, Class III

In Senior Category

- 1st - Gulmohar House, Saloni Pundir, Class VII (A)

- 2nd- Amaltas House, Rashi Pundir, Class VII (A)

3rd Gulmohar House, Tanvi Thapli,
Class II

3rd – Kachnar House, Kashish Thakur,
class VII (A)



Junior Dance Competition was organised on the theme,
'Krishna Janmashtami'. Students participated enthusiastically
and winners were declared class wise

Class I

1st – Aradhya Bhardwaj
2nd – Arohi Dhiman
3rd – Nitika Pundir & Alia Khan

Class II

1st – Pihu Joshi
2nd – Vedansh Mangain
3rd– Ojaswini Singh

Class III

1st – Pihu Dhiman
2nd – Manvi Kumari & Ananya Pal
3rd – Nisha Rashmi

It's our great joy to share with you that Suniti Thapa of Class XII (Science)
stood First in Inter-School Senior Category Dance Competition on the theme,
'Patriotism' which was organised virtually by Maa Anandmayee Memorial
School, Haridwar.

Links to some of the performances are at the bottom of the bulletin.

Nurturing the Young Techies

N

C



SOF NATIONAL CYBER OLYMPIAD

We are delighted to share that our team of talented teachers of the Computer department, led by Ms. Geetanjali Jaggi was bestowed the award of “The Best Teacher – UP & UTTARAKHAND ZONE” for SOF NATIONAL CYBER OLYMPIAD for the year 2019-20 by the Academic Council of Science Olympiad Foundation.

Under their competent guidance and varied initiatives, students of our School collectively performed very well among more than 56,000 schools from across 32 countries in the SOF NATIONAL CYBER OLYMPIAD exam, conducted during the academic year 2019-20. We are very proud of them all.

SAMVAD: A Dialogue with Our Key Stakeholders



To sustain the learning of our students and make their parents equal contributors along with the teachers in their journey of education and learning, we conducted Parent-Teacher-Student Meetings from August 1-15, 2020 for Classes IV and above. All of these were conducted virtually but it didn't inhibit the level of participation in any way of either the students or their parents. This foundational interaction provided answers to many questions that parents have been asking about the working process and teachers' approach during the current phase of distance learning. It also gave us detailed insights into parental expectations and needs during these times of uncertainty and emotional duress.

We have taken these on board and would be implementing changes so as to improve the deliverables and outcomes

implementing changes so as to improve the deliverables and outcomes of our efforts.

We have also decided to host such sessions more often, and use the learnings so gained to enhance the efficacy of our programs.

Practicing Our Motto- Life is for Giving

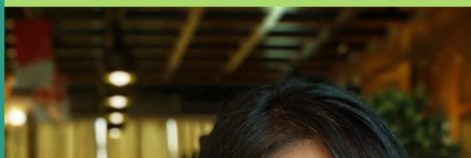


Thanks to support of our generous donors, we were able to continue with COVID-19 relief efforts for the families of our students hit hardest by the pandemic. Our teams delivered essentials to 58 families from 32 villages/areas in our extended vicinity. We also took the initiative of refilling LPG cylinders as well as recharging phones so that students could continue with their distance learning.

Our COVID-19 relief team shortlisted another 60 needy families of our students through Samvad and re-assessment surveys. These families will be helped in the third phase of our relief support during September. With the abatement of rains, we will try and enhance our geographic outreach as well.

Clear Skies Up Ahead

Hailing from a marginalized family of Purkal village, Vaishali Thakur joined us in 2004. Keen to study, she excelled in school and completed her Bachelor's in Pharmacy under our On to Life Program. This program helps with both securing admissions/scholarships as well as covers the financial needs of our students by providing interest and security free



loans to meet tuition and living expenses during the course of study. These loans are interest free and repayable on soft terms from future income. Vaishali is currently



from being a student to currently working as Senior Drug Safety Associate performing pharmacovigilance activities with Bioclinica. She has repaid the entire sum loaned to her from her earnings. In addition to this, with a view to helping future generations of her community grow and succeed, she has now chosen to become a donor to the Society. We feel immense joy in her success and empathy, which are also a great reaffirmation of our ideals and efforts.

Unconditional Giving



We are grateful to all our donors whose benevolence helps us grow every day. Even during these times of uncertainty, your contributions continue to enable distance learning and well-being of our students.

Each contribution by yourself lightens the burdens of another, thus influencing an individual, society and a country as a whole.

Click here to Donate!

[Click here](#) to read the article from our Founder, Mr. G.K. Swamy!

[Click here](#) to watch the performances of the Inter-House Singing Competition and Junior Dance Competition!



©2020 Purkal Youth Development Society | Purkal Village, P.O: Bhagwantpur, Dehradun - 248009

[Web Version](#)

[Preferences](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by **Mad Mimi**®

A GoDaddy® company