

**Community Outreach experience with  
SANDESH  
A Home for people with Special needs**

## **Background**

Sandesh was founded in 2008 with the vision of 'Creating a community that empowers and dignifies intellectually disabled individuals.' They are located in one of the poorest slums neighbourhoods of Bangalore. Over the years they have cared for children and adults with severe disabilities, wheelchair bound and intellectually impaired in multiple ways. Their families have no means or resources to care for them. Often there are single mothers working as labourers or domestic help. Leaving their children to be cared for in Sandesh is a lifesaving option for them.

## **Scope of my involvement**

I started going to Sandesh as a child, accompanying my parents when they visited the home in the early years of its set up. Something about the founders Jenny and Seby and their commitment to dedicating their lives to this work, stayed with me. As I grew up, I started visited Sandesh regularly on Saturdays and during my term breaks. From a small unit housing 10 people, Sandesh has grown into a spacious centre for 100 people with dedicated areas for care and occupational therapy – Art, making candles, stitching bags, papier Mache and various products that they are now known for throughout Bangalore. Primarily I spent time with the members in the following areas:

- **Occupational Therapy:** This is the cornerstone of Sandesh's methodology to keep their members physically and mentally engaged. Motor skills are very useful in filling cognitive gaps and as I worked with them, I found that even the weakest members are able to do simple tasks like attaching beads to a string or tying ribbons together. Over time I worked with them on more complex tasks like painting diyas (small mud lamps) and using a sewing machine. I was surprised to see that some of them are very gifted artistically and spent hours immersed in these activities. I also volunteered under the 'Pre-Vocational Programme' , engaging patients in yoga and speech therapy.
  
- **Music:** I created Music lesson plans & taught 25+ Children simple activities with music – singing and playing the keyboard. I prepared the group for performing on Christmas and their annual day.

- **Outreach and exhibitions:** One of the unique things about Sandesh, is that the products made in the workshops are sold for Diwali and other festivals at exhibitions and in apartments and corporate offices. I have been a volunteer at many such events, helping showcase their products and selling them to customers. The best part is that the members who make these products are paid for their work and this truly gives them the dignity to work, earn and live like a regular member of society.

### Some glimpses of engaging with the Sandesh members



With Nawaz, aged 12 playing a math game



With Mohan (deaf and dumb), aged 30 at the sewing machine he is now adept at operating



At the diya and coaster making table with Aman, 25 and Viraj 27 yrs old.



Aman painting a decorative Diya





Hours painstakingly spent by Dheeraj, aged 26 making dots on Diyas



Azgar, 15 is happy gluing paper for making a basket



Vani, aged 45, loves stringing colorful beads into strings of necklaces



Simi, aged 14 counts beads with concentration





Spending time with Sandesh founders Jenny & Seby always a learning experience