

CELEBRATING TOGETHERNESS



After the gruesome grind all of us went through for a year and a half, it's time to celebrate. It was inspiring to see how Aseema's staff, teachers and students did not buckle under nor lose hope but learnt and evolved both personally and professionally with some degree of success too. At Aseema we have much to be grateful for especially the support and cooperation of our colleagues and families. The challenges we faced moulded us into an invincible team ready to take on everything for our children. In this edition we bring to you the experiences and thoughts of our staff and students.

'Together' was the most wonderful place we were in over the past 1.5 years. The experiences and memories we shared will be cherished for a lifetime. Despite the avalanche of bad news, it was humbling to see people go the extra mile in the most extraordinary ways and lend a hand. It was heartening to see 12 dedicated and committed individual volunteers come together to format over 200 smartphones in a day! Thereby reducing the burden on our teachers and making the distribution to our students seamless.

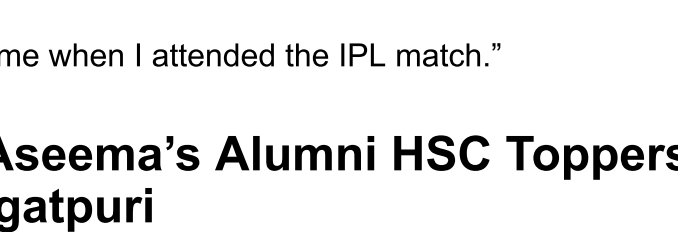
It was indeed reassuring to see our alumni students come together to help us distribute the grocery kits to our families. Our staff too worked together round the clock to equip themselves with skills to teach online as well as to make the virtual classroom as stimulating as possible for our dear students.

This festive season with all humility, we celebrate the togetherness we experienced with the unrelenting support from our donors, well-wishers, supporters, staff, students and parents.

We all come and go alone, but it is the people we meet and interact with that make life beautiful and worth the challenges we face! -Sarah Thomas, Assistant Head, Donor Relations.

Celebrating Aseema's SSC Toppers

Sagar Ughade, alumnus from Aseema Bal Shaikshanik Kendra, Igatpuri shares how he felt after he got his SSC Board Examination results. "I prepared really hard for my exam. Although in lockdown, I was able to understand online lectures as I always had the support of my teachers. I was surprised to see my results. I didn't expect to be the class topper. It's a very nice feeling and my mother's happiness is my reward. I will always cherish the memories of my school friends, the good times and the



time when I attended the IPL match."

Aseema's Alumni HSC Toppers in Mumbai and Igatpuri

Daniya Ansari has an interesting long term goal: "The happiness on the faces of my family members when my results were announced was heartwarming! That is all that mattered to me. What else does a student want? I knew I had done well but this result was a bonus earned because of the support of my teachers and family right through the lockdown. I plan to pursue a Bachelors in Management and then my MBA. I would like to work as a manager with a reputable company for some time and then to go to Eritrea and set up an NGO there and work for the poor and the needy."



Dipak Mengal's Moment of Happiness

"I was very happy when I saw my Standard XII HSC results. Because of the percentage I got, I will get admission in a good college and then I will get a good job. Thanks to my teachers who explained to me whatever I didn't understand during the online classes and without whose help I would not have succeeded."

Story Of Survival & Courage

'2020 will always be an unforgettable year for all of us across the world, a major turning point for us at Aseema particularly our students. The COVID-19 Pandemic is one of those events where there will be a 'before and after' with regards to the practices we share as a community or as a society and has changed our perspective on the definition of normalcy.



Despite all the setbacks, we at Aseema have seen amazing stories of survival, courage and support. The experiences of Aryan and Shivam Prajapati is nothing short of a roller coaster ride in the past 1.5 years. Aryan and Shivam Prajapati students of Pali Chimbai Municipal School (PCMS) live with their parents in a tiny rented room in a slum in Santacruz. The father runs a food stall but with the pandemic, it was impossible to do so and the family struggled with both a financial crisis and several medical issues. The mother, Dimple, a heart patient was to undergo a surgery in December 2020. With a huge financial crisis, surgery was unaffordable and she felt 2020 was a time when the family had hit rock bottom. After much searching, King Edward Memorial hospital was the only one that could treat her at a subsidised rate. She said Aseema's social workers and teachers never gave up on her. Aryan and Shivam's teachers came to the hospital to donate blood for their mother, even the doctors were astonished at this gesture! Dimple is truly grateful to Aseema for the constant love, support and care. Then, the father was diagnosed first with Tuberculosis and later Jaundice, this led to liver problems. Currently, both Dimple and her husband are on medication. Both the parents continue to work hard and provide for their children. Since the lockdown has been lifted, Aryan's father has restarted his stall and works long hours. During the lockdown, the family survived solely on the provision kits provided by Aseema, using what was provided judiciously.

Despite some onerous circumstances at home over the past year and a half, Aryan and Shivam have stayed positive.

Although they both sorely miss attending school, meeting their friends and teachers they have steadily adapted to the new online classes. The smartphone and data pack provided by Aseema, has helped them both to access their online classes.

Seeing our students return to school after almost 20 months of online studies indicates that we have come a long way, proving that together we can achieve anything. The students are the warriors who have come out of this grave situation, stronger than before and at Aseema we hope to continue to celebrate this survival and togetherness in the years to come.' - Miriam Phillips is a member of Aseema's CWC team.

A Metaphoric Essay on Covid-19

'I arrived in December 2019 to celebrate and to destroy lives. I raced from individuals to societies, to nations and to the world. My fellow viruses couldn't cause the damage I could to human life and the environment. I was crowned on 12th March 2020, but my greatness didn't last long; with time my hold on people got weaker and weaker. I didn't recognise the fact that my power was being transformed from isolation into socialization, traditionalism into digitalism and degradation into forestation. Unknowingly my infectious effect strengthened medical institutions, and my threat brought governments and major international organizations like UNO, WHO, IMF and UNESCO to a common platform with the people against me.

I feel the only things I achieved were taking innocent lives and causing an economic breakdown for some years to come. I possess an immense ability to infect human cells and tissues but not to infect the human spirit. My attempts to cause psychological illness have undoubtedly failed as humans began regaining and even building their mental strength and the capacity to encounter any future pandemic. I also imposed an obstacle to learning, yet I see dedicated NGOs like Aseema coming together as a catalyst to normalize academics and reopen the gate for student success. Aseema is always at the forefront.

It's been almost two years now since I locked people in their homes and covered them with masks. Now I see people coming together and celebrating. Have you ever wondered what this celebration is for? Well! It's because of me. My rush to dominate and my arrogance blinded me to my inevitable demise. I forgot the fact that disasters are the first steps towards togetherness. I have failed miserably. I came to damage, but instead I fostered the value of togetherness and human contact. My absence is making you celebrate your presence.' -Shabanaz Shaikh is an Aseema Alumnus pursuing a Master's degree in English literature.

This I Think Is Celebration!



"In March of 2020 Mumbai locked down and my school closed. At first, we were told that it would be for a few months. Then people said it would last a long time. In the beginning, no studies was fun. But I soon felt very sad and angry; both together. I could not meet my friends I did not know what to do with myself. I faced many problems but when I think about it I realize that I had some good experiences as well. Everyone was at home. I played games like ludo, carrom etc. Even my father played with us. It was fun. I liked the feeling of all of us being together. Before each of us were busy with our own things. But now we all wanted to spend our time together. It felt good. My mother also took time away from her work and we cooked together. I enjoyed this the most. I did not know how to cook. She taught me how to cook. We both laughed together at my mistakes. The pandemic was really bad but out of it came times that were really happy for me and my family. We spent good times together that made us all close and really love one another. I came close to my mum and dad and brothers. Teacher, this I think is celebration!" -Alfiya Sheikh, Standard VII, KMS.

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Wishing each one of you and your families a very Happy, Safe and Prosperous Diwali!!



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