

Pragati

Women-led Social Transformations



Foreword

The/Nudge is an action institute working towards creating resilient livelihoods with the mission of achieving a "poverty-free India within our lifetime."

We collaborate with social entrepreneurs, women, farmers, tribal communities, and youth on rural development, agriculture, skilling, and economic inclusion, alongside numerous central and state government partners.

India faces significant and complex social and developmental challenges, including unemployment, income inequality, and limited access to financial services. These issues require dedicated entrepreneurs to commit their lives to finding solutions. In recognition of the unique potential of women entrepreneurs to drive transformative change, the Pragati initiative was launched in 2019 by Meta and The/Nudge Institute.

With the ambition to encourage the adoption of technology at the last mile, Pragati incubates and accelerates early-stage women-led non-profit organizations that primarily work in the areas of women's entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Pragati has supported 29 organizations that are addressing social challenges and paving the way for a more equitable future. This book celebrates our Pragati entrepreneurs whose passion and vision are driving meaningful social impact.

Subhashree Dutta

***Managing Partner, Centre for Social Innovation
The/Nudge Institute***



Atul Satija
*Founder and CEO
The/Nudge Institute*

Pragati is a one-of-a-kind catalytic CSR initiative that has enabled women entrepreneurs to work on some of the most pressing challenges using technology as a lever for social change.

We are grateful to Meta for supporting innovative solutions that are driving real impactful change on the ground in the communities.



Sandhya Devanathan
*Vice President & Managing
Director, Meta India*

At Meta, we're deeply committed to inclusive innovation and achieving gender parity in the digital world. We believe the way to address this is by focusing on livelihoods and entrepreneurship, by bridging the technological divide in the last mile. This is exactly what the Pragati program by Meta, in partnership with The/Nudge, aims to do. We are truly inspired by these social cause driven "she-entrepreneurs" who are uplifting livelihoods and communities at scale.



The Inauguration of Mitti Cafè at the Supreme Court in 2023

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Picture Credit: VigyanShaala

Pragati Convening



February 2024, Mumbai

About Pragati

Meta Pragati is a CSR initiative of Meta powered by The/Nudge Institute to incubate and accelerate, early-stage women-led non-profits that are working on some of the most critical challenges and enabling technology at the last mile.

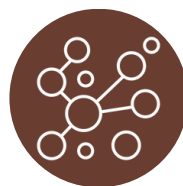
Program overview



innovation
grant
₹15-200 lakhs



1:1 dedicated
mentoring from
distinguished
leaders



ecosystem
connects



1:1 portfolio
support



developing
pitching and
fundraising
muscle



visibility
through PR &
social media



virtual
masterclasses



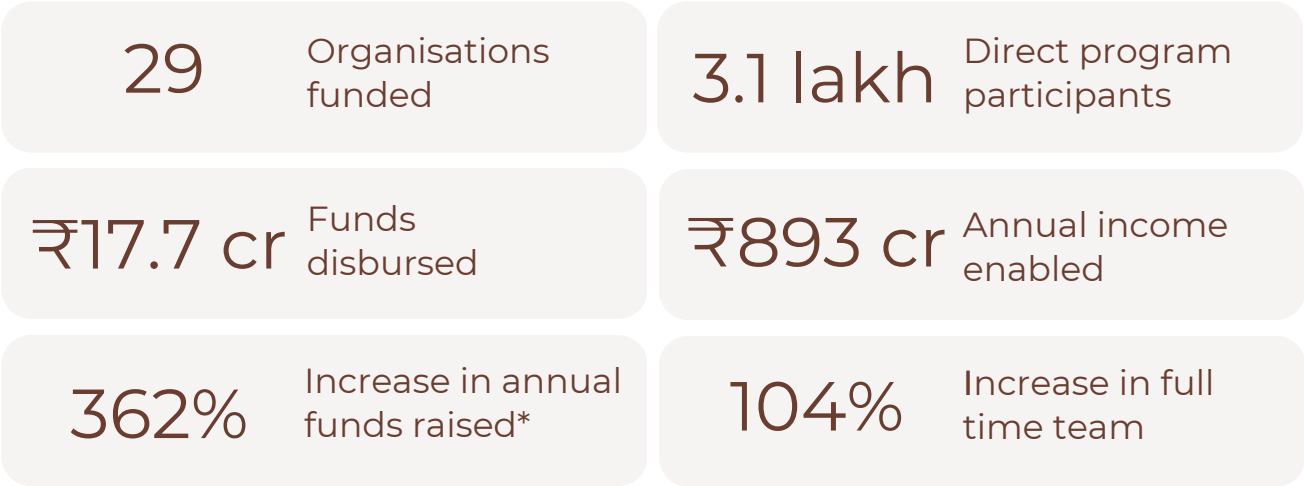
in-person
& virtual
bootcamps



access to the
alumni
network

Pragati: Impact At a Glance

Impact presence across all states & union territories



Movement in organisational readiness on a scale of 5



Source: Deloitte Impact Report on the Pragati program. Out of 29 organisations, 23 organisations had graduated by March 2024.

*One year after graduation from the Pragati program.

Pragati Cohort 5

8

Organisations
funded

23,900+

Direct program
participants

₹6.36 cr

Funds disbursed

₹ 120 cr

Annual income
enabled

₹77.8 cr

Total funds raised
by orgs*

34%

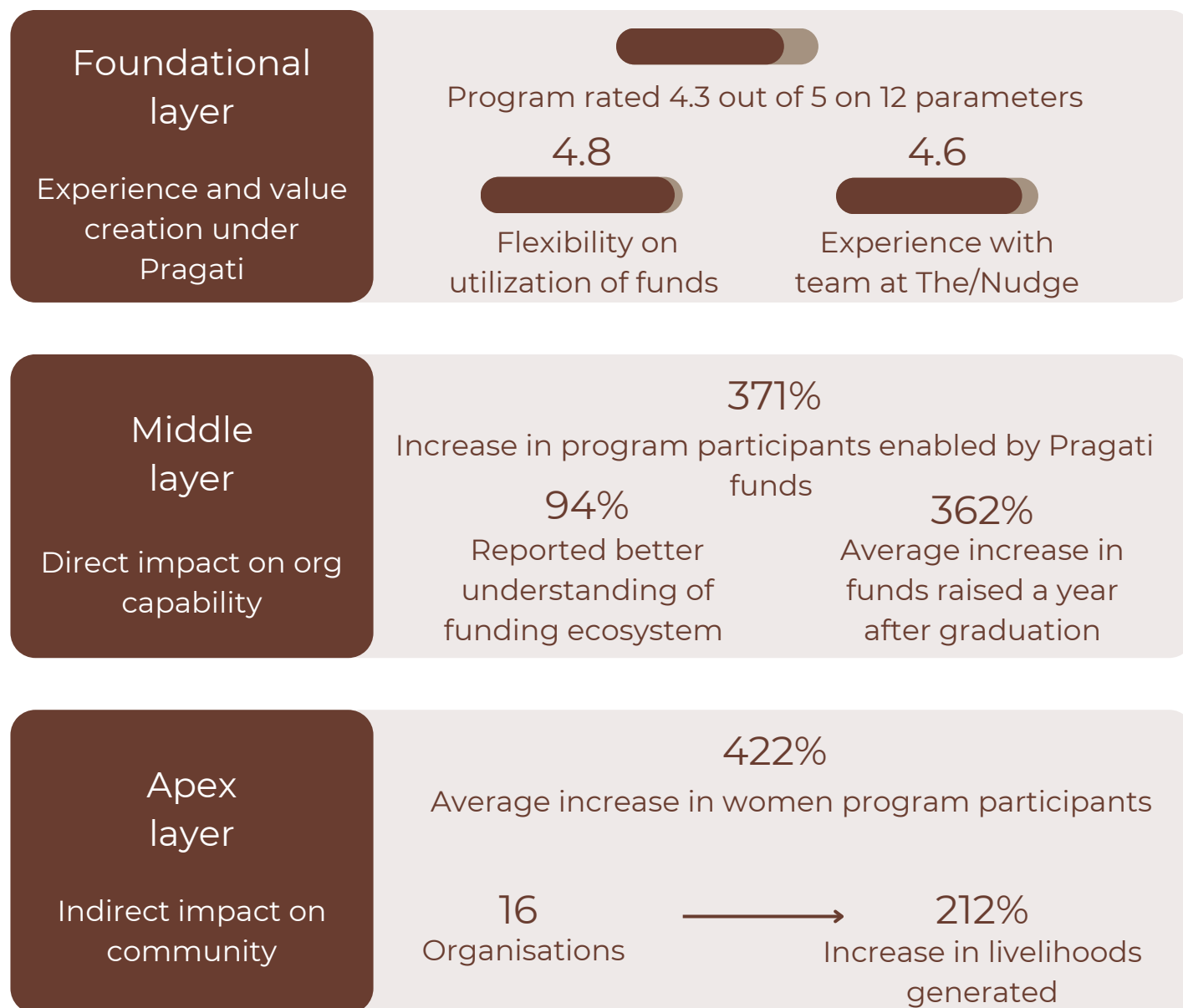
Increase in team
working full-time



Source: Secondary impact data for the period June 2023-March 2024 as reported to The/Nudge Institute.

*One year after graduation from the Pragati program , inclusive of the Pragati grant

Pragati Program Impact Pyramid



Source: Deloitte Impact Report on Pragati

Sectoral Analysis

Livelihoods | Non artisans

1.05 lakh

Direct program participants

INR 953.75 cr

Annual income enabled



Livelihoods | Artisans

14,538

Direct program participants

INR 56.96 cr

Annual income enabled



Entrepreneurship

1,463

Direct program participants

INR 3.04 Cr

Annual income enabled



Health | Technology | STEM

200,000

Families impacted

1,500

NGOs helped with tech solutions

3,000+

Kalpana fellows



Data self reported by the organisations, pertaining to the year after graduation from the Pragati program for the respective organisations.
For Cohort 5, the numbers pertain to the period of incubation under the Pragati program.

Awards and Recognitions

Alina Alam



- Frontier Awards in Cannes | 2024
- Nina Sibal Memorial Award | 2024
- NITI Aayog 75 WomenPreneurs of India | 2022
- NITI Aayog Women Transforming India | 2021
- Commonwealth YouthAwardee | 2021
- Intercultural Innovation Awardee | 2021
- Forbes 30 Under 30 | 2020
- Helen Keller Awardee | 2019



Dr. Darshana Joshi



- F5 Women and STEM Award | 2024
- Echoing Green | 2023
- NITI Aayog Women Transforming India | 2021



Deepa Pant



- WomenLeaders India Fellowship- Reliance Foundation & Vital Voices | 2022
- Star Women's Group Award | 2020
- Runner-up Social Entrepreneur Award, Tie Global Summit | 2019
- NITI Aayog Women Transforming India | 2018



Divya Hegde



- 60 SDG Entrepreneurs of India by Atal Innovation Mission | 2024
- Acumen Fellow | 2024
- Women Climate Collective | L' Oréal Foundation | 2024
- UNESCO Green Citizen | 2022
- UN Leadership in Climate & Gender Justice | 2020, 2021



Gauri Malik



- Acumen Fellow | 2024
- Social Impact Awards India | 2021
- UN Women Generation Equality Award | 2021
- NITI Aayog Women Transforming India | 2021



Dr. Megha Phansalkar



- MBillionthAward for Tech Innovations | 2023
- Ek Nari SabPeBhari Award | 2023
- SouthAsia IT InnovationAward | 2020



Nivedita Rai



- 60 SDG Entrepreneurs of India by Atal Innovation Mission | 2024
- Acumen Fellow | 2019



Noopur Kumari



- 60 SDG Entrepreneurs of India by Atal Innovation Mission | 2024
- Changemakers of India Award | 2023



Awards and Recognitions

Priya Krishnamoorthy



- 60 SDG Entrepreneurs by Atal Innovation Mission | 2024
- Future Forward Female Award, CNBC-Tv18 | 2023
- SoCap Entrepreneurship Scholarship | 2021
- Fulbright Nehru Master's Fellow | 2017

Priyansha Singh



- Village Capital's Financial Services for Migrants Accelerator | 2023
- Build for Billions- RBIH and DLabs | 2023

Dr. Ruha Shadab



- Echoing Green Fellow | 2023
- Barbara Jordan Award for Women's Leadership- Harvard University | 2020
- Cheng Fellow | 2019

Safiya Hussain



- Mulago | 2024
- Fast Forward Acceleratee | 2023
- LSE Impact Accelerator | 2023
- Winner, iF Social Impact Prize | 2023
- Data for Good Exchange India Empowerment Challenge | 2022

Sandhya Gupta



- UN Women India - contribution to women in STEM education | 2024

Shruthi Iyer



- 60 SDG Entrepreneurs of India by Atal Innovation Mission | 2024
- Acumen Angels | 2023
- Mulago | 2023
- Data for Good Exchange India Empowerment Challenge | 2022
- Acumen Fellow | 2016

Ruchi Mathur



- Listed on Social Stock Exchange, Bombay Stock Exchange | 2023

Sonali Saini



- Data for Good Exchange India Empowerment Challenge | 2023
- Nexus of Good Annual Award | 2023





AUG. 14, 2023



Karya's feature in the August 2023 issue of Time Magazine

Manu Chopra, Founder of Karya was awarded Times 100 most influential people in AI and Echoing Green in 2023

Awards and Recognitions

Krutika Ravishankar

Arti Dhar

Jaspreet Kaur

- FastForward | 2024
- Mulago | 2023

All awards won by Krutika





Samina Bano

Shipra Srivastava

- LSE Impact Accelerator | 2024
- Mulago | 2023
- IIM Bangalore Distinguished Alumni | 2023
- Acumen Angels | 2023
- Chevening Gurukul Fellow | 2023
- NITI Aayog Women Transforming India Award | 2021
- Acumen Fellow | 2018

All awards won by Samina






Rinju Rajan

Akhila Somnath

Anusha Bhargava

- Rinju | Digital Women Awards- Impact category | 2023
- Akhila | Finalist, Social Entrepreneur of the Year at the Namma Bengaluru Awards | 2023




Surabhi Yadav

- Acumen Fellow | 2024
- GP Birla Fellowship-Women's Leadership | 2024
- Distinguished Alumni- UC Berkeley | April 2024





Jyotika Sehra

Vaishali Gandhi

- 51 Most Impactful Social Innovators (Globally) by World CSR Day | 2019




Vishpala Naik

- NEST Artisan Sustainability Accelerator | 2023
- Global Ambassadors Program Virtual Summit - Vital Voices | 2023



Picture Credit: Srujna

Pragati

Stories of Impact





Kula Conclave, an initiative by 200 Million Artisans, is a first-of-its-kind networking forum that facilitates dialogue between investors, industry leaders, and passionate innovators building impact-led solutions in India's cultural economy, particularly in the creative manufacturing and handmade (CMH) sector.

200 Million Artisans (200M) accelerates 'Handmade in India' by enabling inclusive entrepreneurship. It bridges gaps in knowledge, networks, and capital for craft-led brands, social businesses, and startups through three platforms: Business of Handmade, Kula Conclave, and Kula Innovate.

The women-led team empowers India's craft enterprises to drive dignified employment, gender inclusion, and positive climate action for an equitable future.

I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?' - George Bernard Shaw

"Traditional metrics often miss our true impact as an ecosystem enabler for the cultural economy. The first Kula Conclave in July 2023 changed this. Although a second edition was not planned, overwhelming support after the Kula website launch in August 2023 led us to organise Kula Conclave 2024. Over 20 craft-led founders and sector experts are co-creating it. Our research, "Business of Handmade - 2nd Edition," downloaded over 1,000 times globally, sparks key conversations around craft and capital. These successes reaffirm our commitment to supporting India's creative industries, starting with the handmade ecosystem."



**Priya
Krishnamoorthy**

Year founded: 2020 | 200millionartisans.org



Diksha, a graduate from the 1st cohort of the Women Math Educator Program in 2021, shares, "Students in my class look forward to Math lessons and the activities I introduce. I now know how to present a topic so that children can understand the concept. I earn ₹16,000 every month. I take care of my own expenses and also support my family."

Aavishkaar trains teachers to create active-thinking Math & Science classrooms. Since 2016, it has partnered with governments, nonprofits, and schools, impacting over 2,00,000 students through 10,000 teachers.

Its Women Math Educator Program, launched in 2020, trains young women from marginalised communities, enhancing their independence and career prospects. Aavishkaar has created livelihood opportunities for 860 women, and aims to train 30,000 women as primary Math educators by 2030.

Breaking the Math Ceiling - One Woman at a Time

"Aavishkaar was founded with the aim that students should enjoy Math & Science and not fear it. During the pandemic, school closures led to a learning gap. At the same time, many organisations requested our support to engage high school graduate women who were locked in their homes with no hope of any career pathway. In our effort to solve these two problems, we came up with a moonshot solution, which then became our dream and mission - 'Educate, equip, and enable women to create an army of excellent Primary Math Educators.' These women support themselves financially and, in the process, contribute to the economy."



**Sandhya
Gupta**



**Sarit
Sharma**



In the past three years, Baeru Collective has impacted 3,500 women. Suni bought gold earrings, Geetha became a panchayat president, Srilatha bought a bike for commuting, Radhamma and Vanajamma found companionship among colleagues, and Sabeena funded her daughters' education and weddings. These stories highlight the transformative effect of steady employment, collective mission and teamwork in their lives.

Baeru Collective drives community-led climate action through education, coastal livelihood enhancement, and government partnerships. Supported by Karnataka's Government, Baeru encourages fisherfolk to collect ocean plastics, which are then segregated to generate income for local women.

Baeru has diverted 1,50,000 tonnes of plastic, created 1,000 coastal livelihoods, engaged 2,000 fisherfolk and trained 3,500 women. Its goal is to work towards a waste-free world by 2050.

Driving circularity to build sustainable coastal communities through a three-pronged approach: human, technological, and environmental.

"The turning point in my journey as a founder was witnessing parallel issues in India's coastal areas: climate change and the repressed economic rights of coastal women. These interconnected problems are often overlooked.

I realised my work in community-led climate action could address both. For effective nationwide climate action, our strategies must be comprehensive and inclusive, integrating diverse voices. This has become a key focus with Baeru."



**Divya
Hegde**

Year founded: 2020 | baeru.org



Chalo Network has trained over 50 agents and 2,000 community members in financial well-being and awareness in Bihar's Begusarai district.

Chalo Network improves financial well-being and inclusion for migrants through its 'Pravasi Money' platform, offering loans, savings, insurance, and credit insights.

The Chalo Saathi program has trained 150 field agents who facilitated over 150,000 transactions. Additionally, Pravasi Money has conducted financial well-being sessions with 1,000 international migrant workers. Chalo Network aims to be the leading financial services solution for migrants globally.

Keep at it. We know there is a problem to be solved; we just need to push ourselves and the ecosystem to keep moving and improve financial services for migrant communities.

"In 2020, when we witnessed firsthand the gaps identified through our research manifesting in real-world scenarios, it solidified our commitment. That moment drove us to transition from research to actionable interventions, laying the foundation for the Chalo Network."



**Priyansha
Singh**



**Varun
Aggarwal**



In 2019, Prashant Vaidya from Bhaimala village, Alibag, Maharashtra, stopped copper enamelling due to reduced orders. He and his family have been working with EkiBeki since 2022. They now have a team of 15 artisans, including 10 women, and have secured a recurring contract for the Catalyst 2030 Award trophies.

EkiBeki empowers rural and peri-urban artisans, focusing on women and youth through sustainable handmade products and ownership models. It connects over 500 artisans to consumers, working with 60 crafts and creating 650 new designs, generating ₹ 17.5 million in direct business.

EkiBeki aims to upskill 50,000 artisans in the next 10 years, transforming traditional crafts into contemporary lifestyle products.

Financial growth, respect, and dignity for our artisans are at the centre of everything we do.

"The artisans themselves did not believe they could earn a steady livelihood through their craft and skills. The younger generation started migrating to cities after seeing their parents' struggles, doubting they could make a living with the same skills. However, by paying artisans what they deserve and showing that their craft and talent matter, we have changed the minds of the younger generation. In two of our clusters, the children of the artisans have reverse migrated to the village and are able to grow the cluster much faster than their parents."



**Vishpala
Naik Hundekari**



**Neelesh
Hundekari**



After her father's demise, Rachna Vuthunur from Nizamabad, Telangana, supported herself and her ailing mother by tutoring children while pursuing an undergraduate degree. The Esther Foundation's fellowship provided job readiness training, which helped her secure a role at Accenture as an Application Development Associate.

Esther empowers young women from marginalised communities by bridging education and career readiness through life skills, career preparation, mentoring, and on-the-job experience. Its program has seen 98% of participants gain confidence, 100 women create LinkedIn profiles, and 50% secure job interviews.

Focusing on tier 2 and tier 3 towns in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, Esther plans to expand its reach in the coming years.

We want women to have more voice and choice in their lives.

“We aim to amplify the voices and choices of women, enabling them to make informed career decisions and transform their aspirations into reality. Our focus is on women from marginalised backgrounds in South Indian towns and villages. While we initially began in Tamil Nadu, our primary efforts are concentrated on college students in Telangana, many of whom are first-generation college-goers from farming or daily wage working families.”



**Ravali
Pidaparthi**



**Agneta
Venkatraman**



Vithal Dhakad faced challenges due to low rainfall, which left his two acres of land fallow. Farmers for Forests assisted him in transitioning to agroforestry. Instead of growing wheat and onions, he now cultivates mangoes, lemons, bamboo, and Indian gooseberries. This change ensures a guaranteed yield and income. On average, farmers see a threefold increase in income after F4F's intervention.

Farmers for Forests (F4F) helps farmers boost India's forest cover to combat climate change and poverty. Using the payment for ecosystem services (PES) approach, F4F offers conditional cash transfers to farmers and landowners to grow or protect forests.

These transfers, monitored via satellite and GIS, have created over 17,000 days of rural employment and restored 6,000 acres in Maharashtra. F4F aims to convert 5,00,000 acres of degraded land into forests.

We have a 10-20 year window to act on climate change or face a future of fires, floods, and pandemics.

"We launched Farmers for Forests in 2019 amid intensifying Australian wildfires, record cyclones in India, and rising infectious diseases like COVID-19, partly due to ecosystem destruction. India's poorest communities, including farmers, faced rising temperatures and depleting groundwater. It became clear that extreme climate events were signals of worsening conditions if climate change was left unchecked. Thus, we committed to mitigating climate change and enhancing community resilience."



**Krutika
Ravishankar**



**Arti
Dhar**



**Jaspreet
Kaur**



Rita, a young mother who lives in the Phule Nagar community, initially lacked knowledge about health and nutrition, leading to frequent hospital visits and high expenses for her older children. She trusted village remedies for her newborn baby until she spent a week at FMCH.

Noticing positive changes in her child's weight, she and her husband began to trust the program. Rita continues to attend FMCH, valuing the preventive care that reduced hospital visits and saved money.

Foundation for Mother and Child Health (FMCH) works to end preventable child malnutrition by empowering Anganwadi workers with digital tools and 1:1 nutrition counselling.

Operating in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka, FMCH impacted over 2,00,000 families, with 80% of children overcoming malnutrition and notable improvements in institutional deliveries, breastfeeding initiation, antenatal care, and Iron-Folic Acid tablet use.

FMCH has evolved over the years. From a clinical model to community driven interventions, now we are building systems strengthening approaches.

“The frontline workers identify families who are in the first 1,000 days of a child’s life. They go out and collect data about the women—who are malnourished, who are at high risk, whether there is domestic violence in the communities, and based on the information collected, they counsel the families. The fourth and most important task is to consistently follow up until the child is two years old.”



**Shruthi
Iyer**



Aslam Khatri, a traditional bandhani artisan from Kutch, set up his own business after joining the Kaarigar Clinic business wellness program. Within a year, he has earned revenues of over ₹1 crore, with half of that coming from a 100 km radius.

Kaarigar Clinic, India's first rural business clinic for artisans, mentors local artisans to strategically grow their traditional craft practices into self-sustaining businesses.

It has nurtured over 100 artisan entrepreneurs, creating livelihoods for 30,000 artisans and positively impacting the lives of 300,000 individuals. It envisions developing 1,000 Kaarigar entrepreneurs by 2028, positively impacting the lives of 1 million artisans.

Kaarigar Clinic empowers artisans to become entrepreneurs by giving them identity, value and recognition.

"Kaarigar Clinic began with a vision to empower artisans as self-reliant entrepreneurs, preserving tradition and dignity. After engaging with over 5,000 artisans, we realised that what the artisans truly sought was identity, recognition, and value beyond just financial compensation. Inspired by Gandhiji's village economy, Kaarigar Clinic helps artisans reclaim their identity through financial assistance, market linkages, digital upskilling, and business training, thereby fostering a supportive ecosystem for traditional crafts."



**Dr. Nilesh
Priyadarshi**



**Noopur
Kumari**



Rajalakshmi, once burdened by unpaid loans and struggling to afford her children's school fees, found new confidence after completing the tailoring course. Joining Sura, she began working steadily, transforming her life. Now reliable and self-assured, she proudly supports her children's dreams.

Kanavu bridges skill and opportunity gaps by empowering rural schools to offer holistic education and supporting community development through skilling and livelihood programs for rural women.

Sura, Kanavu's social enterprise, provides dignified livelihoods to rural women by selling lifestyle products globally. It has trained over 150 certified tailors in rural Cuddalore, and has facilitated 5000+ hours of volunteering with over 400 volunteers.

Kanavu (கனவு) means 'dreams'. A small team with big dreams, we dream of an India where circumstance does not dictate destiny.

"We focus on two key areas: Education and Community Development. Our vision is of an India where every rural school offers affordable, holistic education, giving every child the opportunity to achieve their dreams. In education, we enhance people, curriculum, and school environments. In community development, we aim to build a thriving, inclusive network of women, empowering each one with skilling and livelihood opportunities—transforming villages, one woman at a time."



**Nisha
Subramaniam**



**Shivranjani
Ramasubramaniyan**



**Dravina
Seenivasan**



**Gowtham
Reddy**



Mamta Choudhary, a creative entrepreneur from Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh, sold about 3,500 meters of self-designed fabrics through Karghewale and other platforms in FY 23-24. This achievement resulted in an average annual revenue of ₹9.5 lakhs, marking a 300% increase from her baseline revenue before starting her incubation journey with Karghewale.

Karghewale incubates artisan-designer-entrepreneurs (ADEs), benefiting 92 weaving artisans and 95 ancillary workers, impacting 561 households. In 2023, with 43% women artisans, it facilitated a ₹11,167 average monthly income for its program participants. Through their incubatees, Karghewale has impacted the lives of 750 individuals through the value chain at the household level.

Its 20-member team, 80% from the artisan community, works across four States, fostering a stable crafts ecosystem since 2020.

Real change takes time. Believe in the vision and work towards it patiently and relentlessly.

“After living and working for five years with artisan communities, I realized that despite decades of efforts, artisans' average monthly income remains ₹5,000, and we lose a million artisans every decade. This troubling reality led me to seek an alternative model that offers more than subsistence wages, aiming for an aspirational lifestyle for artisans and their families. This dual perspective drove my search for new solutions.”

- Nivedita Rai



**Nivedita
Rai**



**Sourodip
Ghosh**



By recording her voice and speaking her language, Baby Tai made it easier for technology to be built for her community. In the process of doing so, she earned 20 times the minimum wage from the comfort of her home.

The AI revolution creates extensive digital work around data generation, labelling, and enrichment. Karya's mission is to bring AI-based earning and learning opportunities to low-income communities globally.

Karya's unique platform divides AI-data tasks into microtasks for individuals needing supplementary income. Karya has distributed over 40 million tasks to 40,000+ people in India, providing high wages—nearly 20 times the Indian minimum wage—and flexible, digital work.

We believe that low-income communities globally are excellent builders of AI and excellent beneficiaries of AI.

"A notable impact of our work was observing how our RCT results with JPAL show that changing who holds wealth in society can also change who has the power."



**Manu
Chopra**



**Vivek
Seshadri**



**Safiya
Husain**



Shaiza Suhail's journey through the LedBy Fellowship marked a pivotal moment in her career. It not only introduced her to a completely new field of expertise but also gave her the opportunity to lead diverse teams as a senior manager for the first time. While the fellowship sharpened her leadership abilities, Shaiza also found an inspiring community of resilient Muslim women.

LedBy Foundation transforms Indian Muslim Women's education into empowerment by equipping them with real life career skills, fostering a supportive ecosystem and access to the right opportunities and networks. Its mission is to increase the representation of Indian Muslim Women in the workforce from the current 1% to 8%, helping to build a more equitable and integrated India, where everyone can contribute to contribute to the country's good.

To date, LedBy Foundation has enabled livelihoods for 1200 women, driving meaningful change in their personal and private lives.

Mission above all else.

"One of the most significant challenges I faced was the pressure to expand the scope of our work beyond its original focus, specifically to include other marginalised groups, such as Dalits, or to broaden it to encompass all women. While these causes are undoubtedly important, we were faced with a critical decision: either dilute our core mission of focusing on the visibility and voice of Indian Muslim Women (IMW) or remain committed to our principles and make a deep, targeted impact. Ultimately, we chose to stay true to our focus."



**Dr. Ruha
Shadab**



Altaf Sayyad grew up in Pune's Indira Vasahat slum. Initially working as a door-to-door eyewear salesman, he earned a meagre income. Introduced to the Lighthouse program, he improved his skills and was offered a trainee position at Infosys. He later became a Lead Associate at WNS Global Care, earning five times more. Altaf has moved his family out of the slum and mentors local youth in pursuing education and careers.

Lighthouse Communities



Lighthouse Communities Foundation has impacted 1.8 lakh youth since 2016 by providing agency, career choices and the pathways to those careers, as well as the ability to make informed decisions.

In 2023, over 8500 youth were placed in employment opportunities, through the Lighthouse program. Lighthouse Communities aims to equip 1 million youth with sustained livelihood opportunities and demonstrate socio-economic transformation in 1,000 communities.

Scale with Depth. It is possible to have both, and this is the credo of Lighthouse Communities.

“Youth from low-income communities tend to face adversity and negative influences, often resulting in struggles with anger, hopelessness, and negative self-image. The Lighthouse program was created to address this by empowering youth to discover their agency and build sustainable livelihoods. Our unique public-private partnership model ensures scalability with government-funded facilities and corporate-sponsored operations. Our vision is to enable youth to realise their full potential through sustained livelihoods and fulfilling lives.”



**Ruchi
Mathur**



**Dr. Ganesh
Natarajan**

Year founded: 2011 | lighthousecommunities.org



Ashish, a 2022-23 fellow from Champawat district in Uttarakhand, started his organic honey business just before joining the Swarozgar Fellowship. During the fellowship, he established his brand 'Et Aevum', scaled his operations, signed up other beekeepers and launched products like beeswax and wild berry infusions.

Margshala (formerly India & Bharat Together - IABT) empowers the next generation with local livelihoods.

Through the Swarozgar Fellowship and Khojshala workshops, it helps youth and rural entrepreneurs build skills, confidence, and self-employment opportunities. Margshala has engaged over 4,000 people, supported 87 rural businesses, and aims to directly impact over 3 million youth by 2040.

The best way to predict the future is to create it.

"As someone from a small town whose aspirations were sidelined by gender barriers and societal norms, it has been incredible to witness the beginning of a mindset shift. The rural youth we work with are challenging the status quo of urban migration and vying for government jobs by creating their own local livelihoods. Margshala fellows have earned respect within their communities, gained confidence and grown their revenues and profitability. Our alumni have transformed into role models, paying it forward by mentoring other youth and creating livelihood opportunities for others."



**Aadya
Singh**



Dakshayani, an employee of Mitti Cafe, earned ₹1,80,000 during FY 2023-24 for her exemplary work. Previously, she had no income.

Mitti Cafe provides training and employment to adults with physical, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities. Managed by people with disabilities and from vulnerable communities, it operates 40 cafe across India, employing more than 250 individuals.

The organisation has trained over 4,000 people and served over 11 million meals, raising awareness about inclusion and disability rights. It also conducts over 1,000 sensitization drives annually through the Mitti Mobile Cafe Model.

Empower every individual, create equal opportunities, and ensure dignified livelihoods for all.

“My commitment to Mitti Cafe’s mission was solidified in college while studying a case on Nero. I realised that teaching skills means empowering individuals to find their voice and pursue their dreams. This insight transformed my efforts into a mission to change lives and build an inclusive community. Supporting and advocating for persons with disabilities became central to my work from that moment on.”



**Alina
Alam**



Motivated by his father's struggles, Ishwas Pandey from Prayagraj completed ITI training but faced job rejections. With RightWalk's support, he secured a cashier position at City Kart, and now aims to become a senior manager. He credits RightWalk for reigniting his belief in his potential.

RightWalk aims for an inclusive society by focusing on education, livelihoods, and health. It has catalysed key policy reforms relating to Right To Education Act and Apprenticeship Act in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Kerala granting 8,00,000 disadvantaged children access to quality education and facilitating 90,000 apprenticeship opportunities.

It leverages each philanthropic rupee into ₹100 of public funds, and has unlocked about ₹1,000 crores of public funds. With 64 team members, it seeks to uplift 50 million people by 2030.

My dream is to help create a world that is more equal, just, and happy, when everyone's needs are met

“RightWalk strongly believes that a level playing field which ensures equal access to the opportunities to everyone brings in the maximum benefits for the people, and hence, forms the basis of an equitable, inclusive, and socially just society.”

- Samina Bano



**Samina
Bano**



**Shipra
Srivastava**



Saloni's mother is proudly showcasing her daughter's achievements. Employed for three years, Saloni is her family's sole earner. She has built a house and bought goats for her mother. Her success in Peethan , Uttar Pradesh, has sparked a local trend where young women are taking up careers, marking the beginning of a revolution.

Sajhe Sapne empowers rural Dalit, Adivasi, and Bahujan women to excel through education and employment.

Its STEM and management courses have impacted over 100 women in 80+ villages, promoting education and employment after 12th grade. With the Sapna Centers model, Sajhe Sapne aims to create a movement amplifying rural women's agency through learning, earning, and collective action.

हर एक सपनेवाली चार का ज़िम्मा उठा ले तो बस अलग ही लहर दौड़ जाएगी क्यूकी साथ में पढ़ने और बढ़ने का मज़ा ही कुछ और है।

If every Sapnewali takes responsibility for four others, a unique wave of change will sweep through. There is a special joy in learning and growing together.

"Sajhe Sapne empowers young rural women from marginalised groups to take bold steps. We track progress in mobility, personal expenses, family matters, and delayed marriages. For example, Asha from Jharkhand trained with Sajhe and became a Communication Associate. She was the first in her neighbourhood to pursue a career after 12th grade. Many Sapnewaalis delay marriages and excel in various professions."



**Surabhi
Yadav**



Johnny, a self-taught guitar maker from Garo Hills, Meghalaya, deepened his understanding of operations, marketing, and finance through 's PRIME Rural Entrepreneurship Fellowship, which enabled him to increase his income threefold.

Sauramandala improves development indicators in vulnerable communities through a platform approach. Its three flagship programs combat poor implementation or poorly designed solutions in the system by giving agency back in the hands of the people.

It has created 20 community learning spaces with the Government of Meghalaya, registered over 2,500 learners, published 45 contextual storybooks for children, and supported 160 rural entrepreneurs. Its mission is to foster iterative, problem-based approaches to societal problem-solving.

Together, we embrace the journey of solving great challenges, knowing we don't have all the answers. Through collective effort, we create a future where philanthropy and social good thrive as a united force in solving complex problems.

"In 2021, upon moving to Meghalaya, we saw significant disparities. With ₹3.5 crores (\$420,000) in support, we unlocked over \$15 million in public funds, demonstrating substantial impact. This success, coupled with insights gathered from projects, confirms our vision for collaborative social change. It motivates us to seek new challenges and refine our solutions continuously."



**Nagakarthik
MP**



**Neil
Kamat**



**Archana
Tomar**



First-time earner Gauhar Fatma, 28, bought her first piece of land for ₹2.5 lakhs in her name from the income she earned working with Skilled Samaritan Foundation

Skilled Samaritan



Skilled Samaritan Foundation (SSF) empowers women from artisan clusters by providing market opportunities, increasing their earnings by up to 40%. SSF's tech-based design training enhances product quality to align with global standards.

SSF works with 750 artisans from 5 states, has handcrafted over 50,000 products, and reduced migration by 70%. SSF aims to create craft-based livelihoods for 10,000 artisans by 2030.

Empower yourself before empowering others around you.

"My mother held a master's degree, but despite her education, she remained financially dependent on my father, which profoundly affected me. I realised that financial dependency was a widespread issue for women in my city, regardless of their education. After earning degrees in Economics and Finance, I volunteered in Peru, where I worked with single mothers and was inspired to pursue a career in development. In 2019, I founded Sirohi to empower women artisans. Today, my 62-year-old mother works with us, no longer financially dependent, and encourages other women to do the same."



**Gauri
Malik**

Year founded: 2019 | sirohi.org



Jayanti Bhai, who is now the President of the Mujkuva Divyang Producer group, has increased his income twofold and is also one of the leaders in the community for the rights of PwDs. More than 50% of PwDs who were trained in livelihoods in Mujkuva have shown a 2x-5x increase in their income.

Sol's ARC develops scalable, inclusive solutions for persons with disabilities (PwDs) through educational and livelihood programs. Its rural model empowers PwDs in Gujarat's Mijkuva by providing community mobilisation, access to social security schemes, and skill training in organic farming, vermi composting, and sticky strap creation.

Since 2020, it has trained 75 PwDs in its pilot rural livelihoods program, and 411 PwDs in its urban livelihoods program. In 2024, Sol's Arc signed an MoU with the Government of Meghalaya for statewide expansion.

You didn't come this far to only come this far.

"I founded Sol's ARC in 2003 to work with children and young adults with disabilities. After a decade, Sanskar, a child with autism we had supported since childhood, was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. He replied, "I want to grow up, go to the office, and get married." While we smiled at his innocent answer, we realised that nothing we did at our centres would allow him to lead a life where he is accepted and given opportunities to learn and work. That was my turning point—I needed to work with the ecosystem to enable those opportunities for Sanskar and millions of children like him."



**Sonali
Saini**



Kumari Rao, a semi-literate woman from Andhra Pradesh, moved to Mumbai after her marriage at 16. Joining Srujna's livelihood unit in 2019, she learned textile production and became a leader through the SuperDidi project. She transformed the unit into a micro-production centre and has since started a similar unit in her native village. Kumari now serves as a role model for her daughter, employees, and community.

Srujna empowers underprivileged women in India to achieve financial independence and become changemakers. It supports grassroots organisations through capacity building, enabling income generation, and impacting 1,50,000 women across 30 locations.

In 2023, its SuperDidi initiative developed 158 leaders who employed 369 women and generated income of ₹40 lakhs. By 2030, Srujna aims to create an ecosystem that equips women affected by poverty with the skills, tools, and resources to earn a respectable income and bring positive change to its communities.

To create an army of courageous women in India who act independently to uplift their communities.

"After being in the sector for a decade, we observed that livelihood improvement would require interventions at the skills level, community level, and mindset change. This inspired us to develop a training and coaching program focused on women's leadership aimed at inspiring other women in the community to work and bring about change. Thus, the vision of Srujna was redefined as developing an army of powerful women changemakers who independently uplift themselves and their community."



**Jyotika
Sehra**



**Vaishali
Gandhi**



STEP, in partnership with Parivartan, launched the Green Ribbon Fest to build a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs developing solutions in the mental health space. The first edition took place in Mumbai in March 2024, featuring pitches, product showcases, investor interactions, and networking opportunities. This unique event focused on mental health and awarded grants of up to ₹47.5 lakhs to 10 startups.

STEP supports early-stage women entrepreneurs through a comprehensive 4-month incubation program, offering skill development, mentorship, and funding. Operating in 16 tier-two cities with FICCI-FLO, STEP has empowered over 500 startups with ₹2.5 crore in funding and impacted 2.5 million lives.

These startups have attracted an additional ₹30 crore in follow-on funding. By 2030, STEP aims to support 10,000 women entrepreneurs and impact 10 million lives.

For founders, especially women founders, 'NO' is never an option.

"Starting in the private sector, I sought to contribute to social good. After sponsoring two children from a financially struggling family, I was inspired when Mukesh, the eldest, shared his class 10 score of 79.6% and revealed that nine more children joined the school. This led me to start Koseli, a school for underprivileged children in Kathmandu, and later, STEP to support women entrepreneurs. STEP has helped over 500 women-led organisations. Today, Mukesh has a master's in public health and works in social impact."



**Reinu
Shah**

Year founded: 2019 | step.in.net



Chandu, who has been working with Svatanya for over 8 years, used her earnings to support her daughter's studies in hotel management. Her daughter now works at Radisson Hotel, earning five times her father's salary.

Svatanya upskills underprivileged migrant women in urban slums to craft sustainable products for conscious consumers. It aims to create a socially and environmentally responsible society with financially independent women.

Svatanya has trained over 1,100 women across 12 states, up-cycled 4+ tonnes of material, saved 100+ tonnes of CO2, and gifted 5,000+ toys to underprivileged children, promoting circularity and empowerment through craft.

We embarked on our journey with a bottoms-up approach that led to not only the empowerment of underprivileged communities but also led to their evolution from being beneficiaries to change agents.

"When a global multinational entrusted us, for the first time, to design, create, and deliver over 7,000 handcrafted gifts for their female staff on International Women's Day, we knew we were stepping into something far greater than we had imagined. In just 26 days, we successfully delivered to 33 locations across India, all while training 150 marginalized women from Delhi NCR slums. This experience confirmed that we were on a journey of greater impact than we had imagined."



**Deepa
Pant**



**Nimish
Pant**



Tanushree Narain Sharma, Director of Operations at Transform Schools, People For Action, has worked in the nonprofit sector for 12 years and has always been excited by the use of tech tools. She was ecstatic to discover an organisation like Tech4Good, which gives back to the community in a unique way by enhancing the tech capacities of nonprofits to help them achieve their goals.

Tech4Good Community was set up to support small and remote NGOs in India to access technology-based solutions to scale their operations. It positions itself as an enabler in the nonprofit ecosystem that humanises technology and harnesses its power.

Today, it collaborates with over 1,500 NGOs across the country, empowering these organisations by raising awareness about tools for improving nonprofit efficiency. Through deep support, capacity building, and access to essential resources, Tech4Good helps NGOs enhance their operations and scale their impact.

Technology should empower, not overwhelm.

“Our mission is to identify and analyse NPOs' tech needs, configure customised FOSS systems, partner with tool makers for training, advocate for tech discounts and mentor NPOs to build capacity.”



**Rinju
Rajan**



**Akhila
Somanath**



**Anusha
Meher Bhargava**



The workshop of TOAM introduces participants to 3D printing, covering design, software, materials, and post-processing. Their sessions also feature Proto Print, a social impact project using recycled plastics to empower waste pickers, which includes an engaging design thinking approach and brainstorming session.

The Art Of Making



The Art Of Making (TOAM) Foundation aims to empower women in science and technology worldwide. TOAM has recently built the first ever 3D printing school to create an ecosystem in the Additive Manufacturing Industry to foster growth, and collaboration, to drive a self-dependent and innovative workforce.

TOAM tackles the gap of women's workforce participation ratio by providing training in STEM and generating jobs in the sector. Since 2022, TOAM has trained more than 250 individuals from marginalised communities.

My journey as a women in 3D printing has taught me the importance of resilience, determination and strong support network
- Swati Suman

"As time changes and new technologies come into the market, the workforce adapts to the new skills required. We believe that Indian women from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds are no less talented and all they would need is a chance to get acquainted with the skills needed to be in the workforce. We aim to equip women with the knowledge of 3D printing to be able to come up with consumables and eventually build their own businesses, thereby becoming self-dependent."



**Shweta
Thapa**



**Swati
Suman**

Year founded: 2020 | [theartofmakingfoundation](https://theartofmakingfoundation.org) | [Linkedin](#)



Jayanti Mahanta earns between ₹3,000-₹4,000 per month through her part-time work, which significantly contributes to her family's financial stability. Despite the modest earnings, her work has brought a sense of self-sufficiency and pride to her household.

Tisser fosters sustainable livelihoods by integrating supply chains, empowering artisans, and enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Operating in 50+ art forms across 18 Indian states, it supports over 12,000 artisans with 900+ products.

Its expansive network spans South Asia, aiming to empower rural artisans, drive economic growth, and preserve traditional crafts, making a significant impact on both local communities and the broader craft sector.

Empowering rural artisans through innovative, sustainable, and inclusive enterprise models

“In 2014, I recognised the struggles faced by indigenous weavers and artisans who lacked design and marketing support, leaving them vulnerable to exploitative middlemen and unstable livelihoods. To address this, I founded Tisser Artisans Trust. The organisation focuses on modernising traditional skills, supporting product design, and using IT innovations to enhance artisan connectivity and develop clusters.”



**Dr. Megha
Phansalkar**

Year founded: 2016 | tisserindia.com | tisser.in



VigyanShaala has trained 6,000 girls across India in career development, STEM skills, and networking—key factors for thriving in the future STEM workforce. Approximately 20% of these fellows gain admission to top national and global universities or secure positions in leading tech companies.

VigyanShaala makes STEM education accessible to marginalised youth in India through training, mentoring, and hands-on projects. It has provided over 200,000 mentoring hours to 6,200+ mentees across 22 states and established three community innovation spaces in Uttarakhand.

VigyanShaala has engaged 15,000+ young people through STEM workshops. They are partnering with Uttarakhand and Telangana to integrate STEM skills for girls into the curriculum. Next in line are Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh.

Building communities at scale for closing the gender gap in STEM

“While pursuing our PhDs, Vijay and I started VigyanShaala as a volunteer movement to bring frontier science to Indian classrooms. Within three years, we engaged over 10,000 students in STEM workshops. Recognising the need for systemic change, we decided to transform VigyanShaala into an organisation dedicated to creating STEM career opportunities for marginalised youth.”

- Dr. Darshana Joshi



**Dr. Darshana
Joshi**



**Dr. Vijay
Venugopalan**



**Dr. Anushila
Chatterjee**



Rama had never worked or earned any money before. She spent her time at home raising her two young boys. As her children grew, so did their financial commitments. Two years ago, she joined YellowBag. Today, Rama contributes to 50% of her family's income. Her children proudly introduce her to others as a manufacturing supervisor.

Yellow Bag Foundation (YBF) aims to provide employment opportunities to women from underserved communities by facilitating a space for making sustainable products. YBF designs cloth bags from cotton, jute, and other eco-friendly materials for international brands.

In 2023, YellowBag helped 35 women gain financial independence through dignified work opportunities.

Business is a powerful tool for creating employment opportunities, ensuring fair earnings, and providing financial security for women in low-income communities.

“During Diwali in our early years, a tailor from one of our units shared, ‘For the first time, I took my children shopping and bought clothes for my family with my own money.’ Her words deeply resonated with us, reminding us of our mission to uplift low-income women. Although the dress shop is close to her home and employs many local girls, it took her years to make this purchase. We aim to empower more women to break their barriers and step into financial independence.”



Gowry RG



Krishnan NS



Picture Credit: FMCH

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Photo Credit: Sajhe Sapne

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