



A Sneak Peak
August 2025- July 2026

This is the thirtieth year of Palakniti's Khelghar!

Begun in 1996, initially working with children from a neighbouring slum community within the confines of a home, this work has today blossomed and expanded tremendously. From the initial 5–10 children, the number has now grown to nearly 200. Today, about 200 boys and girls who were part of the Khelghar in the Laxmi Nagar community have received a good education and now stand on their own feet with dignity.

As we have carried on this work, our experience and study alongside underprivileged children have made the ideas behind it clearer to us, and the work has become more focused and precise. Through this, Khelghar presented a model for community level work in the field of education. It continued to refine and strengthen this model.

Since 2007, we have continuously conducted training workshops to expand the concept of "Towards Joyful Learning ..." across Maharashtra and other states. We have also provided support to various organisations from time to time, helping them establish and carry out their work effectively. Through such training programmes for grass root workers, Khelghar approach is now reaching many more children.

This work is not the work of any one or two individuals. Many like-minded volunteers have contributed to it. Many of you, too, have given financial help, valuable time, and skills to this work.

To celebrate the 30th year of this work, let's make sure we meet at this year's 'Thet Bhet' (Face to Face) programme.



A Look At Some Activities We Did During Last Year

ABOUT LIFE SKILLS

- Last year, we designed some modules to develop children's mathematical thinking and conducted many activities. Sushama Yadi, with the help of Sumitra Marathe and Sandhya Phadke, developed a module on measuring time.
- The Shop Fair: (Dukan Jatra) During the post-Diwali shop fair, alongside making goods and doing publicity, children also learned mathematical concepts such as pricing items and working out profit and loss from sales.
- Through the initiative called 'Mimansa,' Sayali Tamhane worked throughout the year with children in grades 5 and 6 to build their skills in science, mathematics, and critical thinking.
- Rubi, Rama Praveen ran workshops to help teachers overcome their fear of mathematics.
- As every year, December outings were organised for each class, the youth group, parents, and teachers to places such as Shivneri, Sinhagad, Zapurza, Someshwarwadi, Deccan College, and Panshet Dam. Carefully chosen destinations offered children new

learning experiences while activities like map reading, observation, teamwork, and expressing their experiences through drawing, writing, and photography helped develop valuable life skills.

- In February, to mark Science Day, a month-long project was carried out on the theme of nutrition with primary-level children, and on sky-watching/astronomy with older children. Afterwards, the children built models based on this work. Exhibition based on these models was organised for their parents.
- At the end of April, after children's school examinations, we organized an Art Week. This year, under the guidance of Ranjit Kokate, children created



A trip for primary-level children to Bird Valley Garden.

This Year's Achievements

- The first generation of leaders who built Khelghar's work are now moving towards retirement. It has become necessary for a new generation to step up and take on responsibility. The need to reduce dependence on Shubhada Joshi, who has led this work with initiative for past thirty years, had been keenly felt. This year, that process gained real momentum. Next generation of leaders - Priyanka Patil, Anuradha Chavan, Sushma Kolhe, and Sneha Chamale, have stepped forward and taken responsibility for various initiatives. Naturally, senior, experienced leaders will continue to mentor, support and assist as needed.
- The English classes have settled into a good rhythm. The class teacher ('tai') and assisting volunteers together run one English class every week. Children's fear of English has reduced, and they have begun genuinely moving toward learning it.
- This year, a lot of work was done around reading. One day a week was set aside specially for reading. Many activities connecting children with books were conducted to help them develop a love of reading.

- Children now pick up books on their own initiative; some have even started taking books home to read.
- Akash Khatravat has completed his B.Tech from IIT Kharagpur. He has received a job offer from Tech Mahindra.
- Five children, active and taking initiative in the youth group over the past five years, have earned BSc Vocational degrees.
- This year, all 12 children who appeared for the 10th-standard exam have passed. 7 of them scored above 60%. Of the 9 children in 12th standard, 4 girls are in the Science stream, 2 boys are in the Arts stream, and one girl is in the Commerce stream. In addition, 3 children have passed their ITI courses and have also found jobs. All of these children wish to continue their education after 12th, and the search and admission process for that is underway.
- Thanks to efforts made over the last three years, a team of 14–15 lead volunteers has come together. Guided by their own interests, abilities, and Khelghar's needs, they are capably taking on a range of responsibilities, and making time for the study and observation this requires.

drawings on the theme of Freedom. They also took inspiration from Raju Deshpande's picture books that encourage children to express themselves.

- In June, for children who were falling behind in reading and writing, our teachers and volunteers conducted an 11-day Remedial Workshop. Our experience has shown that providing such individualized support at the beginning of the academic year increases children's interest in learning.

Challenges We have Identified

During this year's annual evaluation meeting held in May, several challenges became evident.

- ▶ Frequent conflicts and violence at home, constant financial stress, an unstable environment in the community, polarization created around caste and religion, unhealthy competition while organising birth anniversaries of great leaders and festivals and also tensions between political groups all have a negative impact on children's personalities growing up in the community.
- In recent years, mobile phones have become an inseparable part of children's lives. Even very young

children are using mobile phones more frequently. If they do not have one of their own, they ask to use their parents' phones. Through social media, children are exposed to content that provokes emotions, excites them, and keeps them constantly engaged.

We are seeing that this situation is having a very serious impact on children.

- Children are spending a great deal of their time and attention on mobile phones. As a result, important life skills, such as paying attention to people around them, being punctual, completing responsibilities, following rules, and listening carefully, are becoming weaker.
- Since sexually explicit content intended for adults is easily accessible on mobile devices, we are noticing an increase in early romantic relationships, teasing and harassment, use of obscene language, suggestive gestures and abusive behavior among young children.
- Romantic relationships among children as young as 12–14 years old have become increasingly common, and helping children navigate these situations has become a significant challenge. As a result, children receive no guidance in coping with the negative

A class from the very start of first grade! The children had just begun attending full-day school. They were still learning through play and mischief. Sitting in one place and listening, learning - that felt hard for them. In school they had to do things properly, but in their minds it still felt like playtime was going on.

When they came into class, the children just wanted to jump around. Jameer would come to class and start doing somersault-jumps every single day. So I told him, 'once you've finished your corner work, then you can jump. Today, we're going to play a jumping game'. Then, for a while, the children got absorbed in their corner activities.

Afterward, I started playing the Duflee (Tambourine) and began a performance like a street showman. "Jamure, Ab Jamoora Udi Lagayega" ("Alright, now Jameer will take a jump"), I said. All the children found this great fun. "How many jumps will Jamoora show us?" I asked. The children immediately answered, "Ten!"

After that, the children themselves would decide the number, and jump that many times.

We got plenty of practice with numbers one through ten, and the children got to have a lot of fun and mischief along with it. Building on that, I picked up the story "Huppa Huyya's Cricket Match" to read aloud. It had pictures of monkeys and dialogue.

"The monkey came and took the ball away!". As I said this, all the children acted it out just like monkeys would. When it was time for the children to go back and sit in their spots, I said (in Hindi), "Abhi Sab Bandar Jagah Pe Aakar Baithenge" ("Now all the monkeys will come and sit in their places"), and everyone went back and sat down. They'd listen to the story, then jump around like monkeys again, acting it out. The children enjoyed the story so much. Finally, all the monkeys set off for home - except one, Kiran, who stayed behind. He climbed up onto the windowsill and said, "Hey, one monkey's still here! Now this monkey will go home too."

Yesterday's class turned out to be so much fun! I had a wonderful time, and the children did too. There was a distinctly different kind of joy on the children's faces!

— Sapna Langde

emotions that arise from being deceived, betrayed by friends, excluded from groups, or rejected.

- We are also seeing an increase in disruptive behavior among children, frequent fights, and a growing tendency for children to be drawn toward criminal elements in the community.
- The impact is reflected in attendance as well. Out of a total of 20–25 children, only 15–16 attend regularly.
- Last year, three new teachers joined the Khelghar team. We realized that they need a deeper understanding of Khelghar's philosophy and methods.
- This year marks 30 years of Khelghar's work, which is a matter of great joy. We are considering organizing a celebration involving children, former students, parents, staff members from partner organizations, friends, supporters, and former volunteers. It is currently a challenge to plan such an event, especially to get the time and financial resources while ensuring

that the excitement of celebrating does not cause our regular work to fall behind.

- At present, we still do not have sustainable funding for Khelghar's three major initiatives in Laxminagar - the Children's Program, the Parents' Program, and the Youth Program. The Shashikala Foundation, Fluid Control Ltd., and the Jathar Trust have provided financial support for certain parts of these projects. The training project is supported by the Wipro Foundation. Assistance for students to continue their education after the 10th grade comes through generous contributions from friends and well-wishers like you. If you know of any potential sources of financial support for our other programs, we would sincerely appreciate hearing from you.

Palakniti Khelghar's Shop Fair (Dukan jatra)– A Joyful Gathering

The entire period after Diwali at Khelghar was given over to the Shop Fair. It showed once again how much enthusiasm and joy a collective activity built around even a small goal can fill the air with. For the Shop Fair, a plan was worked out - first with the teachers, and then with the children, to introduce the skills needed to run a small business.

The Shop Fair is truly a golden opportunity to learn practical skills! Sumita-Tai took sessions with the teachers on how to introduce children to ideas such as mental arithmetic, pricing goods, and working out profit and loss.

Most importantly, the children took the lead on every front, learning how to make items, practicing with persistence until they gained real proficiency, producing finished goods in large numbers, and handling packing and advertising. Any boredom that usually comes with 'studying a subject' had completely disappeared here. The event itself went off very well. With close to three hundred people taking part - children, alumni, parents, teachers, social



workers, and guests - the gathering stirred enthusiasm and inspiration in everyone.

The programme was evaluated the following week. Discussions covered what worked and what didn't. Profit and loss were worked out with the children in every class. It was decided by consensus what to do with the money the children had earned through their effort. A parents' meeting was held, at which children presented what they had learned from the initiative. All the teachers worked with real dedication and took genuine responsibility. Volunteer teaching assistants also took the initiative during the event. The children of the youth group helped in every way they could - right down to the final clean-up!

Towards Solutions

- For the past two years, we have left the responsibility for children's sex education to social workers from the organization 'Sahaj.' This year, though, we decided that while we do need Sahaj's help with certain core topics, we also need to do this work ourselves, both before and after their involvement. 'My body', 'I need friendship - not enmity', values around relationships, friendship-attraction-love, managing emotions, media literacy, and gender equality, groups led by Shubhada, Radha, Jyoti, and Anuradha have begun creating content on these subjects. Teachers will be trained accordingly.
- This year, for the first time, we ran a 12-day teacher-training programme in May. Continuous work was done across all three subjects - mathematics, language, and life skills. It felt as though Khelghar's approach and outlook took firmer root among the teachers through this training. During the training, the questions and challenges teachers encounter while teaching were explored in considerable depth.
- It was decided that home visits to children, and communication with parents, should be increased.
- Teachers' hours of work with children have been increased. This will improve the chances of reaching children who are falling behind in class.

Work With Parents

Four women who were initially parents at Khelghar and later began working there as teachers are currently part of

the team. Parents are naturally the driving force behind this project.

Since the post-Covid period, a group of parents interested in the Khelghar concept and eager to learn has come together as 'Khelghar Mitra' (Friends of Khelghar). Women in this group meet every Saturday afternoon, in a format built around chatting, games, sharing, reading, and learning something new. Khelghar's teachers act as facilitators for this group.

From within this same group came the start of a book-lending (Pustak Peti) initiative. About seven –eight women they have been running a home lending library, for which Khelghar has provided them training. The purpose of this initiative is to connect other children who can not come to Khelghar.

Once a month, in the evening, a parents' meeting is held for all parents.

Alongside building connections among parents, conversations range across many subjects - communicating with children, positive discipline, the effects of excessive mobile-phone use, addiction, children's education, and family violence.

This year, it has been decided to work on what has been termed 'planned home visits.' Sneha Chamle has taken responsibility for coordinating this group, and Vaishali Vahikar Tai will serve as the resource person. Sneha Chamle has taken responsibility for coordinating this group and Vaishali Vahikar-tai will be the resource person for the initiative itself.



A workshop for parents.

A small change brought about at home can make a real difference to a child's development - it is this belief that drives this work forward.

Khelghar Expansion Project

Since 2007, with support from Tata Trust, and now since 2021 with support from Wipro Foundation, Khelghar has been training facilitators at the community level. Through this project, a total 15-day course combining online, offline, and an action learning project is conducted in Hindi each year for about 25 teachers from across India. This is the fifth year of this course. Along with this, some organizations are also being given close mentoring. This year, we are working with 'Samavesh' from Gujarat and 'YSD' from Odisha.

In addition, we have also provided training to organizations such as Vidyodaya, Vardhishnu, Pro Action Foundation, and Yardi Foundation. The three-day workshop on life skills organized by Khelghar last year received very encouraging response from participants across Maharashtra.

Work With Volunteers

At different stages, like-minded friends who feel a desire to contribute to society have become associated with Khelghar. They now take responsibility for many aspects of the work.

A meeting is held every month with such Volunteers at Khelghar. In this meeting, decisions are made about what work volunteers can do based on criteria like their interest, capacity, and the need of the work. After that, they are expected to do some study, classroom observation, and communication with the concerned teachers. Through this, they get to know well the approach of Khelghar, 'Towards Joyful Learning...', and they are able to work more effectively. They are encouraged to bring up in the meeting the difficulties, questions, and moments of joy they encounter in their work. Besides this, the plan is also that in every meeting, these volunteers should get to learn something new. We tell them that it is acceptable even if they are unable to participate directly in the work, but they should attend the meetings regularly. The relationship with Khelghar that develops through these meetings is extremely important to us.

Through this work over the past two-three years, 15-20 volunteers have become well connected with Khelghar.

“Swapnil has been coming to Khelghar since he was in 4th grade. He is the youngest of three siblings. His mother goes to do housework and his father does masonry work. Swapnil is studying in 6th grade in the secondary section.

In the beginning, he was irregular. He was also a bit behind in his studies and couldn't sit in one place for very long. He had no capacity at all to listen to others. He wouldn't speak freely with the class Tai. Every now and then he would come to class, but he would end up disrupting the entire class. He liked breaking and destroying toys/games. He wanted Khelghar to mean nothing but fun, mischief, and rowdiness. He constantly tried to draw attention to himself.

Once, he broke things that others in the class had made. Because of this, I got upset with him. For a few days, I told him not to come to class. But he wanted to come to class. After I went to his home and built a personal connection with him, he started coming back to class. I decided to have a personal conversation with him for 10 minutes every day. As he talked daily about what he did throughout the day, what happened at school, what was good or bad, and if he had a fight with someone, he began to feel a sense of belonging, and on his own, he started telling me about fights that happened at school or with friends outside, and about good and bad things that happened

.I realized that his communication skills were good, so I started giving him the opportunity/responsibility to speak up in class on his own. He began to like this. He became regular from the time of the shop-fair (dukaan-jatra). He started coming to class regularly on time. He knew that children who were good at math and could calculate would get to actually stand and sell items at the shop-fair. From then on, he started turning toward his studies. He began trying to do his classwork daily. He started channeling his extra energy into drawing pictures and making various things.

Now he also very much likes getting my help to read books and to draw pictures based on the books he has read. Now he listens to what I and others say, gives other children a chance to speak, shows stability in his behavior compared to before, and stays in class for the entire duration. Class has become 'his', and he has come to feel that class belongs to him.”

— Sapna Raut



Khelghar's youth taking part in the Narmada Balmela.

'Laxmi Hedagi' - A Bright Girl!

Laxmi scored 72% in her 10th-standard exams. Given how difficult things were at home, she had already decided in school that she would pursue an education that would let her find a job quickly.

After 10th, she took admission in the Mechanical Draftsman course at an ITI. She completed the two-year course scoring 75%, and soon after began a paid internship at Tata Motors. Even while working, she wants to keep improving her own English.

Until now, Khelghar's girls used to hesitate about taking admission in ITI courses. But this year, three girls have taken that step. Laxmi's example now acts as an inspiration for them!

Balmela - Khelghar's Youth at the Narmada Navnirman Abhiyan!

One young person from Khelghar put it this way: "For the first time, we stepped outside our comfort zone. Seeing how people in conditions even harder than ours cope gave us a real understanding of our own society."

The Narmada Andolan runs 'Jeevan Shalas' (Life Schools) for children from villages displaced by dams along the Narmada river. A Jeevan Shala is, in essence, a joyous festival of learning for hundreds of tribal children, their parents, teachers, and fellow villagers. The Balmela (Children's Fair) includes rallies, exhibitions, and competitions in various games and sports. This year's third Balmela was held in Nandurbar from 19–22 February 2026. A total of 12 children from Palakniti Khelghar's youth group took part as volunteers.

These children travelled 18 hours to get there - without any Khelghar teachers accompanying them. Some of the children themselves took charge of organising the trip. For many of them, this was the first time they had gone so far away from their own families. They were prepared beforehand for the Balmela, learning about the Narmada Bachao Andolan and the Jeevan Shalas. At the Balmela, Khelghar's youth taught origami and various games to the local children, and also put on cultural performances. During their stay, they lived in the homes of local villagers and ate meals prepared by them. The warmth and affection shown by the villagers deeply moved them. The time they spent with Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan was also a source of great inspiration for them.

— Sushma Kolhe

Youth Project

This year, the youth group has more than 45 children. The goal of the youth group's work is for children to receive guidance and financial help from Khelghar to continue their education beyond 10th standard, counselling to help them through difficult mental states, and a range of opportunities and inspiration to help shape their own future.

Besides the weekly planned sessions for children, they are also given opportunities to take part in social initiatives happening across Pune, and in workshops run by organisations such as the Narmada Bal Mela, the Lokshahi Utsav, the Bebak Collective, and the Sarvoday Yuva Manthan. This year, children were set the challenge of choosing, planning, and completing a project of their own — learning English, learning music or dance, or building a love of reading, among other things. Some children rose to this challenge with real enthusiasm; others weren't able to carry it through. How to build in children the capacity to complete something with focus and consistency remains an open question.

The good news is that, this year, Sushma Kolhe has taken on responsibility for coordinating youth group, while Priyanka Patil is helping children choose the right courses and providing them educational support.

This year we are also working to make Khelghar better known through social media. Do stay in touch with us!



Invitation

This year marks thirty years since Khelghar's work began. Our companions on this journey are Khelghar's former and current students, and its volunteers! We have decided to celebrate this milestone together with all of you.

On Sunday, 2nd August, from 5 to 8 pm, a face-to-face ('Thet Bhet') programme has been planned in the 1st Floor Hall of the S. M. Joshi Foundation.

You are warmly invited to join us!

From 5 - 6 pm, you'll have a chance to chat with the children over tea. From 6 - 8 pm, there will be a felicitation ceremony for the children, together with a chance to learn about the journey and milestones of Khelghar's thirty years.

Khelghar Team

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Khelghar - An Initiative of Palakniti Parivar

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Account Name - **PalaknitiPariwar**

Bank Name : State Bank Of India

Account NO : 35689944253

Type of Account: Current

IFSC Code: SBIN0001110

Branch Code : 01110

Branch : Deccan Gymkhana



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