



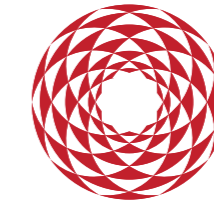
ASHOKA  
UNIVERSITY



INCLUSION,  
DIVERSITY  
&  
BELONGING  
REPORT

2022-23





**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

# INCLUSION, DIVERSITY & BELONGING REPORT

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2022-23

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# Letter from the Chairperson

We have steered the past 10 years at Ashoka with a lofty vision: to become the top university in India and one of the leading universities in the world. University reputations are built on the back of the transformative effect they have on the lives of their students, faculty and communities. It becomes our collective responsibility as an institution to dignify as many shades and hues of human experience as possible.

## Pramath Raj Sinha


Chairperson  
Board of Trustees

Ashoka has cultivated a 360-degree approach towards extending learning support and well-being through outreach, academics and placements, as well as residential life. That we have had an increasing number of students from all walks of life enrolled in the university in its very incipient stages goes to show that we are serious about creating an environment of equity, inclusivity and diversity on campus.

This report captures 10 stories from the Ashokan spectrum that fills us with pride and spurs us on to do more. These not only exhibit the power of inclusion, but also exemplify it. They found their roots in the culture we have built where inclusion isn't an afterthought, but the foundation for action – to recognise, respect and respond to diversity. I hope you feel the richness of this culture as much as we do, and that it leaves you with the most important feeling of all: happiness.







# Being the change

Inclusion, diversity and equity are central to Ashoka University's mission, vision and values. In the last 10 years since the university's inception, we have, and will continue to work towards building a community that reflects the diversity of our students, faculty, administrators and founders.

Creating a campus culture that embraces, values and respects diversity and inclusivity lies at the heart of everything that is Ashoka. This is reflected in our people who come from across India and the world, from unique backgrounds, and with different experiences, expressions and points of view.

In this report, we bring you stories of 10 individuals who embody Ashoka's philosophy of inclusion, diversity and belonging. People who make the university a better place.

While we have a long way to go and many bridges to cross, we look forward to the journey ahead. And to building a better institution with your support.

*Ayush, a visually impaired student at Ashoka, guides a new student around campus. He is also visually impaired.*

# First among equals

“When I went back home, people from the village, even outside my community, came up to me to ask about Ashoka. Suddenly, they were no longer afraid to talk to us,” says Sachin Kumar.

## Sachin Kumar

Undergraduate 2025  
Goai village, Bihar  
Bajaj Finserv Scholar

“From being invisible, my family and I have become the centre of attention. Studying at Ashoka has helped uplift the image of my community in the village,” he says.

Most of Sachin’s friends work as daily wage labourers. But he has other plans. After graduating from Ashoka, Sachin wants a corporate job that will help his family pay off their loans.

Sachin is from one of the most marginalised communities in India. His mother never saw the inside of a school. His father only studied till the 10th grade and Sachin’s sisters, much like the other women in the village, were married off at a young age. However, Sachin decided his story would be different. He is the first in his family to step out of his village to attend college.

Sachin Kumar is today Goai’s poster-boy, a tag the 19-year old wears with immense pride.





## Uplifting people. One and all.



For more than a decade now, Ashoka University has been committed to providing world-class education to deserving students, regardless of their socio-economic background.

To date, 4,200 students have received financial aid amounting to Rs 418 crore (USD 51 mn).

In the academic year 2021-22, Ashoka's School Outreach Team reached out to over 150 academic institutions, such as government schools, army schools, those for children with special needs and schools run by non-governmental organisations. These include, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas, Akanksha Foundation, Him Jyoti, Vidyagyan, Awasara Academy, Sobha Icon and Bharti Schools.

## More than just numbers

**Rs 90 cr**  
(USD 11 mn)  
awarded in  
AY 2022-23

Since inception,  
1,700 students have  
received a tuition-free  
education at Ashoka

**51%**  
students on need-based aid

**Rs 7.12 lakh (USD 8,700)**  
average need-based scholarships for Undergraduate 2025

**Rs 5.9 lakh (USD 7,200)**  
average need-based scholarships for Young India Fellowship 2023

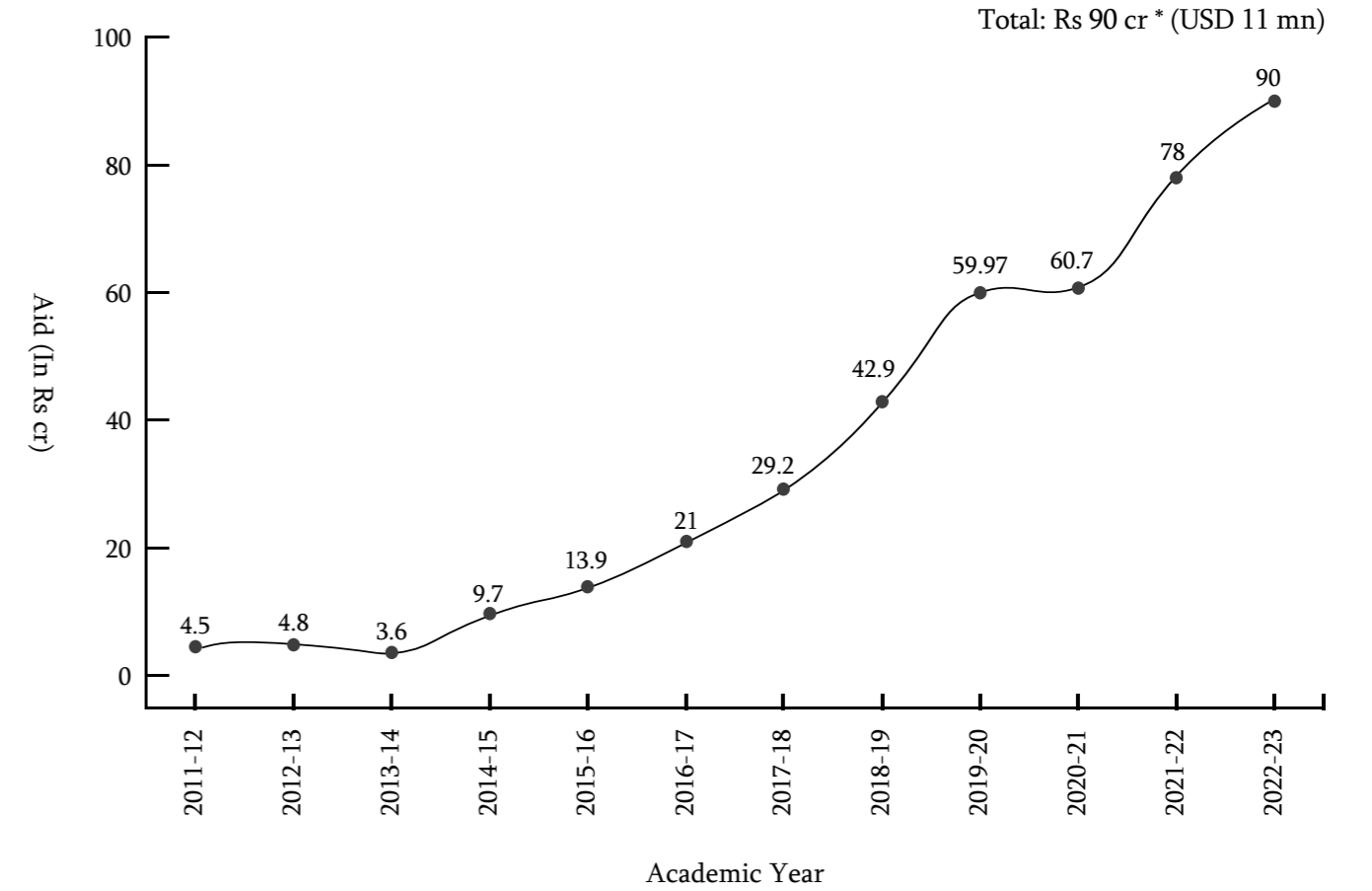
**23%**  
of Young India Fellows have family incomes under Rs 5 lakh  
(USD 6,100) p.a.

**46%**  
applications from lower-income households

“Education is a great equaliser, and at JLL, we firmly believe in creating and nurturing equal opportunities for all. Our association with Ashoka University gives us an opportunity to make college education accessible to those who cannot afford it, with the hope that they too, will make an investment in future learners. JLL is proud to be associated with Ashoka.”

**Sandeep Sethi**  
Managing Director,  
JLL Work Dynamics, West Asia

## Annual financial aid



\*excludes PhDs

“I come from the countryside and am a first-generation college goer. The joint family I lived in separated recently. As our finances were unstable, the financial aid office extended support and ensured that my journey at Ashoka was not hampered.”

**Karandeep Gill**  
Undergraduate 2025  
Ludhiana, Punjab  
UTI AMC Scholar



# Unbreakable, undefeatable, undaunted

Laila is a survivor of child abuse. When she was seven years old, her world changed forever. Unlike other children, she could not attend school or lead a life that was remotely normal.

Rescued by an NGO when she was 10 years old, Laila was put through a rehabilitation programme which brought her into a classroom for the very first time. She found her way to India through the Kodaikanal International School and subsequently to Ashoka University in Sonapat. She graduated with a major in Political Science and then went on to study at the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai.

## Laila Rasekh

Undergraduate 2020  
Kabul, Afghanistan

Laila is currently pursuing a Masters in International Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. As a next step, she wants to pay it forward. Laila plans on setting up an organisation to help rehabilitate Afghan girls.

“Though painful, my experiences have shaped my worldview and made me realise the importance of education, especially for girls. I intend to pursue my dream and help other girls pursue theirs.”

“My journey has been long and arduous. In Afghanistan, I couldn’t complete my education because my life was in danger due to my family, so I moved to India. I came to Ashoka with a basic understanding of English. When I started attending classes, I struggled to cope. But that didn’t last long as the university has a huge support system. Ashoka became my second home, the place that gave me the courage to come out of my comfort zone,” says Laila.



# We are the world

Ashoka is deeply committed to supporting a student community which celebrates diversity in thought and opinion, and inclusivity.

Our 2,700 students, enrolled in Undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral programmes, come from a broad spectrum of society. Five per cent are first-generation college goers.

They come from all 29 states in India, from across 287 towns and cities. The Ashoka student community also extends to 21 countries across the globe.



## Undergraduate programme

1,978 students\*

57%  
women

48%  
of the Class of 2025 on financial aid

6%  
international students

*\*includes late graduates from the class of 2020, 2021 and 2022*

## Young India Fellowship

100 students

62% women

65%  
of the Class of 2023 on financial aid

60%  
students from Tier II and Tier III cities

“When you travel to a new country, you want to feel a part of it. You want someone to welcome you, you want to have a friend, or someone just to grab lunch with. But you don’t know if this is possible, if they will accept you.

But Ashoka was different. People here are so approachable, they make you so comfortable. I felt I was already a part of the university, and not a new student.”

**Seydou Demon**  
Undergraduate 2025  
Lomè, Togo  
Bajaj Finserv Scholar



# It takes a village. And a girl named Anitha

Anitha would cycle five kilometres to attend school. Higher education seemed a distant dream as her parents were unable to afford the fees. Further, as a woman, she was told she couldn't have the same opportunities as the boys in her village.

Bodhi Tree Foundation (a non-profit founded by an Ashoka alumna) helped Anitha with the Ashoka application process and interview; Anitha couldn't fill her application form in English as she was taught in Tamil in school. Once she was admitted, Ashoka's faculty took the shy Anitha under their wing. They encouraged her to speak up in class and Anitha learnt English while conversing with her friends and classmates over meals in the university canteens.

## Anitha Eswari

Ashoka Scholars Programme 2022  
Kurippankulam village, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu  
HDFC Bank Scholar

Anitha is now working with J-PAL as a Research Support Assistant.

She even enrolled for writing courses with the Centre for Writing and Communication (CWC) at the university, while her peers stepped in as reviewers for her work.

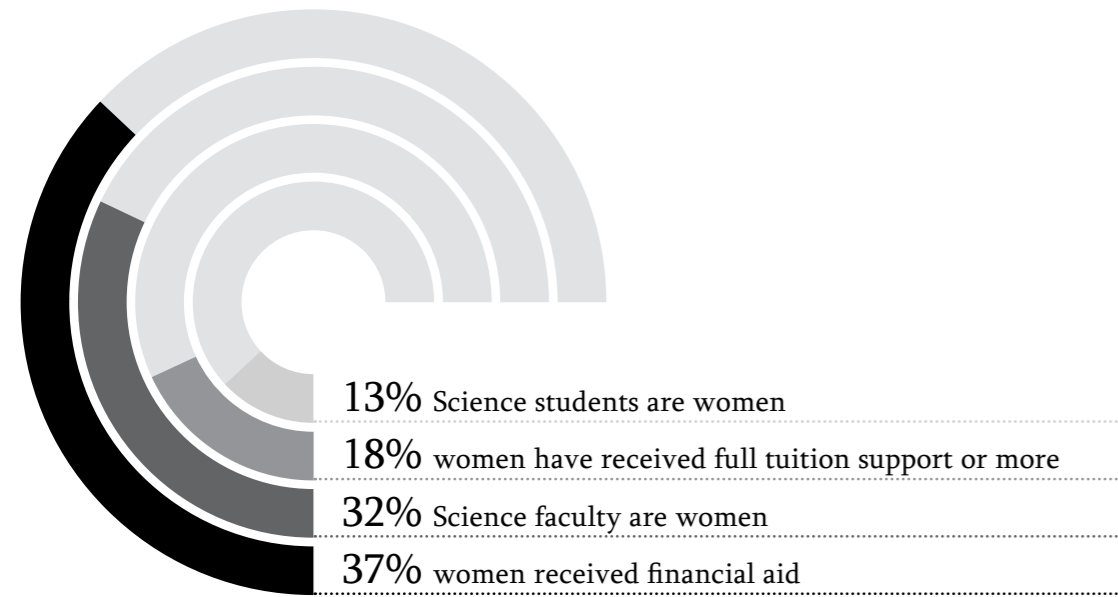
"The daughter of a farmer from a small village, who had never set foot outside her village, received an opportunity to study at Ashoka, graduated in Biology, got a job in an international organisation at a salary unheard of in my village. I am grateful for the opportunities I have received, and glad that I made use of every single one!" she says.



## Daring to discover

Women who dream of making a name for themselves in the Sciences need women leaders in Science as role models. Ashoka not only has a stellar group of women scientists as faculty, it is fast becoming a preferred institute for Science education.

A majority of the university's Science students come from small towns and districts like Sri Ganganagar, Kamrup, Araria, West Kameng, Ramanagara, Jind and Baghpat. They have gone on to pursue fully-funded PhDs in Carnegie Mellon University, New York University, the University of Geneva, the University of Reading, the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg.



*Sciences include Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Mathematics and Psychology*



“Science has no gender. Science is for everyone. It is just the ability to ask questions and find out the answers. It only requires curiosity and the passion to explore things. So, men, women or any other gender have the same right to pursue Science.”

**Susmita Saha**

Assistant Professor of Physics

Awarded the Ramanujan Fellowship, 2022



# Transforming lives

One of Ashoka's key founders and architects of growth, HDFC Limited, through its philanthropic arm H T Parekh Foundation, has not just supported the new Library and Archives at the University, but has also provided scholarships to over 300 students in the last eight years.

## Ziaa Lalkaka

CEO  
H T Parekh Foundation

“With Ashoka we have walked a journey of understanding inclusion and weaving it into our core areas of philanthropic support. Every aspect of the university, from its outreach efforts to its operations and infrastructure, is dedicated to fostering a sense of ‘belonging’. With Ashoka we found a strong resonance of our ethos of inclusion, where admissions to the university are needs-blind and a robust financial aid programme ensures that no deserving student is excluded due to financial constraints,” she says.

Ziaa's nine-year journey in philanthropy has been driven by empathy rooted in practicality with inclusion at the forefront.

“Diversity and inclusion reflect a forward-thinking approach of a mature institution. Ashoka's brief but significant history truly reflects this,” she adds.





## Our pillars of support



Ashoka has 190 founders and 63 donors. Their continued support has enabled deserving students from low-income families to pursue an exceptional higher education.

The university has received Rs 418 cr (USD 45 mn) in financial aid commitments to date. The Annual Fund for scholarships helps us offset the cost of students' tuition and living expense, thus supporting a more diverse student body that is rooted in equity.

“The Deshbandhu Gupta scholarships honour the legacy of a self-made entrepreneur who rose from the villages, to create a transnational healthcare company.

A globally benchmarked undergraduate education, grounded intellectually and physically in India, taught by global faculty, through content from around the world, in an interdisciplinary mode, would have been unimaginable a decade ago. This unique Ashoka experience would have been incomplete without a student community that represents the real India, from her villages to cities, something only a bold financial inclusion vision can create. Through these scholarships we hope to encourage many more Deshbandhu Guptas.”

**Kavita and Manish Sabharwal**

Kavita, Director, Neev Academy

Manish, Chairman, Teamlease

“In today's dynamic work environment, a diverse workforce is not just desirable, but absolutely essential. As the manufacturing sector evolves and requires a broader range of skills, women are poised to play a pivotal role in its growth. Sona Comstar believes that empowering women in STEM is not just a social responsibility, but a strategic imperative.

Our association with Ashoka University represents a meaningful step forward towards empowering women to contribute their unique skills and talents to the workforce.”

**Sunjay J Kapur**

Chairman

Sona Comstar

# Learning for all

Shakul Raj Sonker was Ashoka, and Kumarjit's, first visually impaired student. When he joined in 2015, the university was still finding its feet and trying to understand how best to teach students like him. Kumarjit Saha, who was his Mathematics professor, took it upon himself to make course material accessible to Shakul.

"One of the main challenges that these students faced (and still do) is that the screen reading software is unable to read mathematical files properly. There are other advanced challenges, such as making sense of graphs or figures", he says.

## Kumarjit Saha

Assistant Professor of Mathematics  
Kolkata, West Bengal

And so, he began to manually convert his notes and teaching material into LaTeX (a typesetting programme used for mathematical and scientific writings). This made it easier for Shakul as it was compatible with a screen reader which would convert text into speech. It took him a significant amount of time, but Kumarjit was determined to make it work. He would also read aloud his notes to Shakul.

In 2018, Shakul completed his undergraduate degree with a major in Mathematics, the subject he loved. Kumarjit has taught two more visually impaired students since then, painstakingly converting his material into accessible formats.

"I was very nervous in the beginning. But now I can look back and say that it has been a very rewarding experience," he says.

Shakul has, today, developed his own software that converts STEM content to accessible formats using artificial intelligence. That is now being used by Ashoka to help other students with disabilities.





# Building inclusive classrooms

An Ashoka classroom aims to foster an environment where all learners can flourish. With students ranging from people with disabilities and neurodiverse learners, to first-generation college goers and English language learners, and those with mental health challenges, inclusive and equitable teaching is essential.

## The process

Meeting between the OLS and the teaching team before the semester starts

01

02

Individualised support plan to ensure the overall accessibility of course is discussed

Specific modifications made to make content, assessments and lecture delivery inclusive

03

04

Collaboration and communication with the student, teaching team and any volunteers

Continuous feedback and adaptation till the semester ends

05



“Inclusive classrooms can encourage a productive environment. The discussions are more vibrant; the sense of belonging becomes stronger; and a culture of allyship is developed. With an increasing number of students from varied backgrounds and abilities, we strive to support our faculty who interact with them. We help design their lectures and content in accessible formats and modify their evaluation methods based on the needs of students. Universal Design for Learning is one approach that we promote to make our classrooms more inclusive.”

**Reena Gupta**  
Founding Director, Office of Learning Support



# The best of both worlds

Dimitry was born in Kazakhstan to a Ukrainian father and a Jewish mother. His family moved to Israel when he was a boy. His love story with India started at a young age, with a heady dose of Indian culture – Hindi films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Shree 420*, and reading the *Bhagavad Gita*.

## Dimitry Shevchenko

Assistant Professor of Philosophy  
Haifa, Israel

At Ashoka, that love story continues. Dimitry teaches Indian philosophy at the university. His scholarly interests centre around the major classical Brahmanical philosophical traditions, such as *Sāṃkhya*, Yoga and *Advaita Vedānta*. His areas of specialisation include philosophy of the mind, epistemology, comparative philosophy and philosophy of religion in India.

“During my graduate studies in Philosophy, I was lucky to learn in a department offering courses in analytic, phenomenological and Indian philosophical traditions – a remarkably rare coexistence for an American philosophy department!”

I am happy that the Department of Philosophy at Ashoka maintains the same pluralistic approach, and the students have an opportunity to learn Indian, analytic and Chinese philosophies,” he says.

Dimitry is also fond of Indian food – and can often be found at the *Shudh Desi Dhaba* – an iconic eatery on the Ashoka campus.



## From Netaji Bose to nuclear architecture

Ashoka's 273 faculty members are distinguished scholars and researchers renowned in their fields of study. They hold PhDs from leading universities across India and the world, bringing with them an array of professional perspectives and scholarly interests.

Our faculty come from Australia, Belgium, Israel, Singapore, Netherlands, New Zealand, UK and USA. Their work ranges from research on personalities such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose to nuclear architecture and neuroethology of temporal pattern recognition in insects. These varying backgrounds promote a lively classroom environment and campus culture.

156 full  
time and  
117 visiting  
faculty

39%  
women (full time)

17%  
international faculty

11  
countries

318  
non-teaching  
staff

50%  
women

58%  
women in leadership positions

4 countries, 24 Indian states and UTs



“Ashoka’s Performing Arts department is variegated in spirit and practice. Working with the premise that diversification is the veritable core of arts and languages, our faculty criss-crosses manifold categories.

Older, younger, female, male, Indian, European, American – including Americans from Asia and Asians from the Americas – the various hues of the professors are matched by the multiple disciplines they represent. In such an environment, students see borders for what they are: transient, shifting, temporary ways of looking at the world.”

**Justin McCarthy**  
Director, Performing Arts  
United States of America



# Life comes a full circle

Monika is a first-generation college goer. She joined Ashoka in 2015 as an undergraduate student on full financial aid. After graduating in 2019, she was placed with the Office of Learning Support.

“I lacked the nuanced linguistic skills of my peers. The help that I received from the Ashoka Centre for Well-being, OLS and the CWC is the reason I have reached here! They helped me realise my academic and personal strengths and guided me, tackling one challenge at a time.

## Monika Bhalvani

Ashoka Scholars Programme 2019  
Deputy Manager, Office of Learning Support  
Sanosara village, Rajkot, Gujarat  
Hemendra Kothari Scholar

Slowly and gradually, from being a very shy, reticent student, I started to speak up and began my journey to becoming more confident!” she says.

At the Office of Learning Support, Monika liaises with various stakeholders such as students, parents and faculty to enable inclusion of students with disabilities and learning needs.

“It has been more than three years here – the dynamic nature of work, the complexities of challenges, and the constant push to perform better has helped me become a skilled professional,” Monika adds.

It’s these skills that have helped her give back to the community and help other young Monikas find their feet.



## First-gen first

There is a growing number of first-generation learners at the university.

From full financial aid, to laptops, to academic and English language support, Ashoka is committed to making their higher education journey, as smooth and successful as possible. The Office of Student Affairs at Ashoka is also establishing a First Scholar Programme which will work across departments to help these students achieve their full potential.

Jyoti Antil, a recipient of a full scholarship, completed her bachelor's degree with a major in History and minor in Entrepreneurship. The university provided her with additional financial support to pursue a summer abroad in Sciences Po in Paris. She is the first student from her village to study overseas.

### Jyoti Antil

Ashoka Scholars Programme 2023

Sonepat, Haryana

Ajay Vohra Scholar



“The Student Success Office and the First Scholar Programme in particular reflect Ashoka’s commitment towards supporting first-generation learners navigate their transition to, and through their university experience. By cultivating a sense of belonging and empowerment, we hope to facilitate the personal growth and professional aspirations of these students starting from orientation up until their graduation.”

**Deboshruti Roychowdhury**  
Dean, Student Affairs



# A place where I can be me

While applying to universities, Rhea came across Ashoka, which offered gender-neutral washrooms. While that was not the primary deciding factor for her choosing Ashoka, she liked the ideology – it meant that the institution was thinking of ways to include marginalised groups.

## Rhea

Undergraduate 2023  
Bengaluru, Karnataka  
H T Parekh Scholar

“The application process for Ashoka itself was enjoyable. After two years of JEE preparation, it was nice to sit down and talk about things that truly reflect who you are. Once I got the offer of admission and financial aid, I was set on Ashoka,” she says.

Settling in has been easy. In fact, on most nights you can find Rhea in the midst of long conversations with her friends and peers, that often end only when the sun rises over Sonepat.

“At Ashoka, thankfully, you’re not a trans person. You’re just a person who is trans.”



## Moving beyond the binaries

Ashoka is committed to creating a safe and welcoming space for individuals irrespective of gender identities or expressions.

The university has introduced the following initiatives for its growing LGBTQIA+ students, staff and faculty community.

- Introduction of TAARIF, India's first exclusively trans research fellowship. TAARIF aims to examine arts, policy, law and society from trans perspectives and publish cutting-edge research in a transnational academic journal
- Revamping the election process for the Internal Complaints Committee to include nonbinary/trans-identifying students



50  
trans students on campus\*

7  
trans students in the Undergraduate Class of 2025

*\*estimated*

“As a nonbinary person, it is always a challenge to make people understand what pronouns they should use for me. But at Ashoka, people have been mindful. Not only do they address me with my correct pronouns (they/them), but they also educate others. In a supportive and accepting environment where one doesn't have to worry about being judged, we can dedicate our efforts in being more productive.”

**Rahul Upadhyay**  
Deputy Manager, Alumni Relations



# Driven to succeed

Bhavya is a wheelchair user but has never let it slow her down. She is pursuing a Bachelor's in Science with a major in Psychology and a minor in Entrepreneurship. She has been on the Dean's academic list for three consecutive semesters.

Bhavya has been placed at Accenture as a Strategy and Consulting Delivery Associate. She will be joining under the Accenture Graduate Programme.

## Bhavya Soni

Undergraduate 2023  
Gurgaon, Haryana

"I am thrilled about having made it to Accenture on Day Zero. Ashoka's Career Development Office (CDO), along with the OLS, is working to ensure that we facilitate a system wherein all students get an equal platform during placement cycles, and no merit goes unacknowledged because of societal barriers such as disability, gender, or socio-economic background," she says.

Bhavya believes being an Ashokan has made all the difference – such as bringing in recruiters who are committed to making workplaces as inclusive as possible.



## Celebrating diverse abilities

The CDO makes dedicated efforts in engaging with recruiters who practice DE&I in workspaces. The office has a targeted placement approach to ensure that no merit goes unacknowledged due to socio-economic background, gender or disability.

In collaboration with the Office of Learning Support, the CDO has identified students who seek support and is working to ensure they receive equal representation in the placement process. The office also upskills and mentors them through various career preparatory programmes. In the 2022-23 placement season, three students with disabilities have been placed in leading organisations such as Accenture, Genpact and 1DigitalStack.

**18**  
students with physical disabilities

**36**  
students with invisible disabilities\*

**26**  
students will graduate in 2023

*\*students registered with the OLS*

“What has impressed me most about Ashoka University is the inclusion of people from all backgrounds and a clear programme to enable funding of their educational journey. Students should be taught in an environment which is very diverse as that brings in varied perspectives. It also inculcates values of inclusion which carries forward in their professional journey.”

**Sandeep Bharihoke**

Principal Director, Technology Strategy & Advisory  
Global Strategy & Consulting  
Accenture India

“School wasn’t a pleasant experience given my visual impairment. I never felt I belonged. At Ashoka, I feel accepted, like any other student who is here to succeed. After a year here, I feel I am one step closer to my dream of working at Google.”

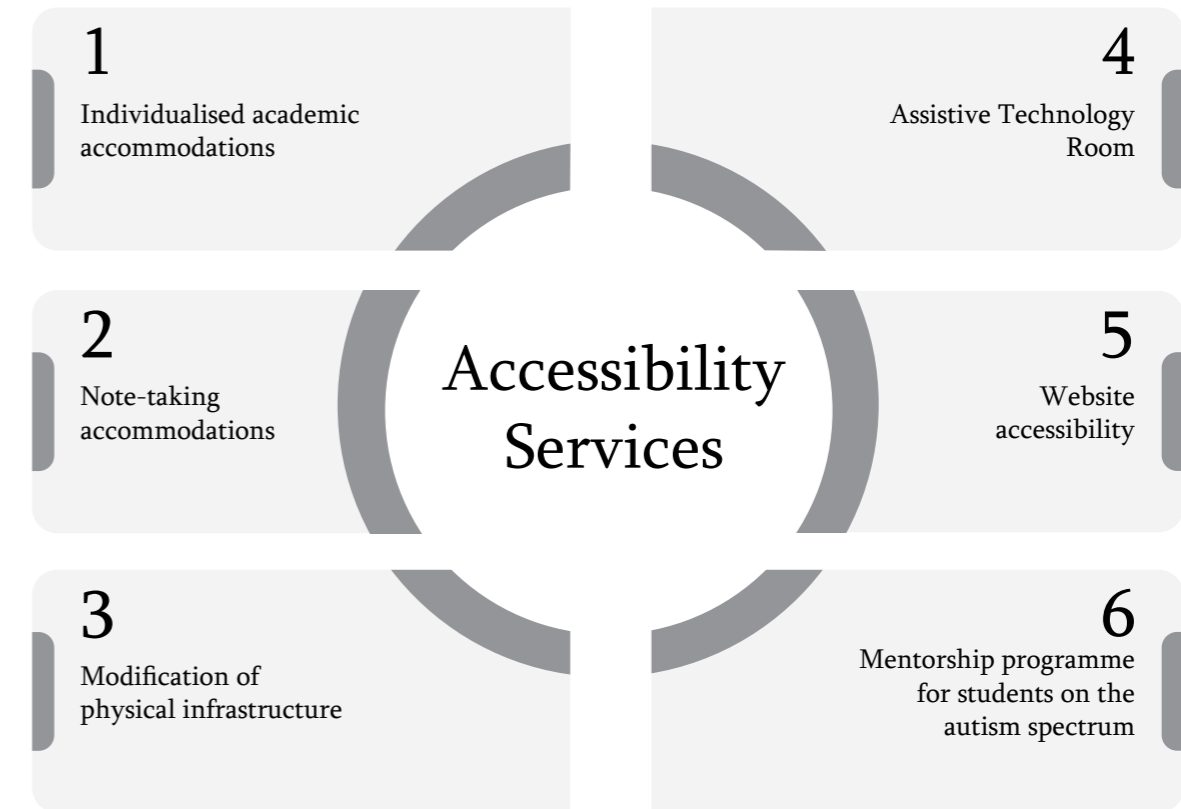
**Aarushi Raika**

Undergraduate 2025  
Raipur, Chhattisgarh

## Making Ashoka accessible for all

Ashoka is committed to achieving a barrier-free campus environment for people with disabilities. The university wants to focus on helping students succeed by providing facilities and accommodations which makes their overall experience a little bit better.

The university’s support system currently covers the following:



“Losing my arm in a factory accident at 19 was devastating. With my family’s financial circumstances, I just could not give up. I went back to work, just as soon as I was physically able to.

My career would have taken a very different trajectory had it not been for my handicap. Despite my work experience and capability, I lost out on good professional assignments. I am happy that Ashoka has not judged me. They treat me like any other person doing their job.”

**Ashwini Antil**

Housekeeping Supervisor



## With you, every step of the way

Ashoka's centres and offices provide critical support to students, faculty and staff to make them feel more connected, engaged and included.

### ➤ Academic Bridge Programme

Conducted by the Office of Admissions, the ABP assists students of the incoming undergraduate batch academically and socially transition into the university. The class comprises first-generation and low-income students and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Apart from English grammar and vocabulary, students are introduced to critical thinking and academic writing.

### ➤ Ashoka Centre for Well-being

ACWB offers counselling and psychological support in a confidential and non-judgemental space. With a focus on well-being, the centre concentrates on the preventive aspect of mental well-being.

### ➤ Centre for Writing and Communication

CWC works to develop writing and communication skills in students. It provides pedagogical support across disciplines through lectures, workshops and one-on-one sessions. Its unique English Language Training (ELT) programme trains students in critical thinking.

### ➤ Office of Learning Support

OLS supports students with physical and learning disabilities. In the last seven years since its inception, the office has expanded support to those facing academic challenges as well as to neurodiverse learners.

### ➤ Office of Student Affairs

OSA encompasses student and residence life, dining and sports. The office works towards creating a robust learning and living environment outside the classroom. Through its Resident Assistants programme, OSA has created an inclusive residence space.



“Mental health and well-being are at the core of human existence. Within higher education, it is imperative that we prepare young adults with skillsets that will serve them for a lifetime. This comes into greater focus considering WHO’s 2022 report which states that nearly one billion people in the world live with some form of mental disorder; which translated to the young adult population would include 1 in 7 teenagers.

The need of the hour is to embed mental health and well-being in the curriculum, rather than think of it as a supplement to university services.”

**Arvinder Singh**

Director, Ashoka Centre for Well-being



## Lending a hand

Ashoka has over 50 student-led clubs and societies which not only provide unique learning opportunities, but also make the campus a better place through the support they provide to their peers. Seventeen of these clubs focus on diversity and inclusion. A majority are led by women or nonbinary people.



- **The Northeast Collective (NEC)**  
Organises events to promote an appreciation of culture, history, diversity and socio-political realities of the region, with inclusivity at its core.
- **Ashoka University Queer Collective (AUQC)**  
Aims to create a space on campus that is queer-affirmative, sensitive, inclusive and politically relevant. It advocates for the needs and rights of queer individuals and works towards tackling civil rights issues.
- **The Feminist Collective**  
Facilitates discussions on feminism and gender on campus, creates a safe space for people to talk freely, share experiences and foster a sense of solidarity.
- **Special Olympics Bharat Ashoka Chapter (SOBAC)**  
Aims to promote social inclusion through sports. Creates awareness about unified sports where individuals with and without intellectual disabilities (people with IQ below 70-75) can compete together as sports teams.
- **Kintsugi**  
Creates a community that actively engages with mental health concerns within the university and fosters a healthier community.
- **Ashoka Women in Business and Leadership (AWIBL)**  
Aims to provide a platform for young women to brainstorm, discuss and ideate. Fosters meaningful mentorships, thus building a community of women leaders across industries and academic domains.



# Where there's a will, there's a way

Ever since he set up Rasaananda, a juice stall on the Ashoka campus, Samundar was clear that one day his children would study here.

His daughter, Ritoo, an MPhil from JNU, is a Young India Fellow – Ashoka's flagship postgraduate programme. His son, Kapil is an undergraduate student. Unlike most people from his community, Samundar never differentiated between his daughter and his son. He ensured Ritoo received a good education. He even took a loan to pay for her studies, much to the ire of the family elders.

## Samundar Antil

Proprietor  
Rasaananda  
Asawarpur village, Sonapat, Haryana

“My community's opinion of Ashoka has changed over the years. When Ashoka was established, we would think it's a rich people's university. We could never afford to send our children there. Today I see several students on scholarships. That is a big step forward. It will help uplift and empower the country.

I hope more and more students from our village will get the opportunity to work at Ashoka, and that too in white-collared, senior level jobs. But for that, a high-quality education is the need of the hour. I hope people will realise that,” he says.

Samundar's dreams for Ritoo are far from over. Eventually, he wants for her to pursue a career in academia, at Ashoka.



# Afterword: Looking ahead

Ashoka is a young university; we are just 10 years old. From the time when Ashoka was being imagined and the ideas assembled, inclusion, diversity and belonging have been central to our mission.

## Somak Raychaudhury

Vice-Chancellor

As an aspiring global university, and based in a country as diverse as India, a strong foundation in inclusion is an important element of our journey. It is our responsibility to provide opportunities to students from all walks of socio-cultural and economic diversity. We have walked a considerable distance during this brief journey. Every individual is treated as an equal and with dignity. We are also aware that while much has been accomplished, there is more that we can do. As the university grows, we will continue to listen, learn and adapt. And we will continue to take steps that are needed to make the campus an inclusive space for all.

Ashoka is a unique institution in the Indian context, with the creation of a dedicated Inclusion & Diversity Committee. The Committee has been tasked with the responsibility of identifying ways where we will continue to maintain and grow the inclusion and diversity facet at the university.

Finally, I hope you enjoyed reading the 2023 edition of Ashoka University's Inclusion, Diversity & Belonging Report. This report is special in many ways. The 10 stories are a testament to our commitment to the university's mission. These are also stories of courage and determination and braving the odds.

Most importantly, these stories are about us.







Thank

you

for

your

support



