



# INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND BELONGING REPORT

2023 - 24

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS  
OF ASHOKA

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WE ARE  
ASHOKA



INCLUSION  
DIVERSITY  
BELONGING  
INCLUSION  
DIVERSITY  
BELONGING  
INCLUSION



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Ashoka University's annual Inclusion, Diversity and Belonging Report is a testament to our continued commitment towards building an inclusive institution where we embrace diversity in all its forms.

This report has been written with the full consent and collaboration of those featured. The data and information used in this report are as of May 2024.

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# Contents

## 01

What we talk about when we talk about belonging 10

## 02

Coming back home 11

## 03

Foreword: Building a home, not just an institution  
Pramath Raj Sinha 12

## 04

Looking back at the last decade 14

## 05

- In conversation with Mercia Prince 18
- Paying back to the home I chose 20
- Bonds that last a lifetime 22
- A feeling of home 23
- Student speak 24

## 06

Ashoka and me 26

## 07

- In conversation with Reena Gupta 28
- Student speak 30
- Growing up at Ashoka 31
- When friends broaden perspectives 32
- Voices from and beyond Ashoka 34

## 08

Inclusion for all, not just for some 36

## 09

One leads, the other follows 38

## 10

- In conversation with Arvinder J Singh 44
- To belong is to be heard 46
- ACWB: A snapshot 47
- Notes of gratitude 48
- A place for everyone 50
- It's okay to ask for help 51

## 11

Following passions outside the classroom 52

## 12

Student speak 54

## 13

Notes from the Ashoka family 60

## 14

Afterword: A decade of listening and learning  
Somak Raychaudhury 62





**ROSHNI PATRA**  
UG 2023 Intake

# What we TALK about when we talk about belonging

“The BEAUTY OF THE  
ASHOKA COMMUNITY  
lay in its ability to  
harmonise even the most  
diverse notes.”

While the world around me may not always be in full focus due to my visual impairment, music resonates deep within. Finding a community where my voice could join the harmony became my driving force. Ashoka quickly emerged as the perfect orchestra.

Ashoka was a new crescendo – a bustling campus, unfamiliar faces and a symphony of cultures I was eager to join. Yet, a flicker of uncertainty remained – could I find my own rhythm in this dynamic ensemble?

Academics wouldn't be a problem. The professors would guide me, and the support system would become a safety net for any off-key moments. But the biggest question resonated louder – where did I truly belong?

Belonging, I soon discovered, wasn't a fixed location, but a feeling, a chord resonating within the symphony of acceptance and understanding. At Ashoka, the music unfolded naturally. Lively discussions with classmates, exploring complex ideas with professors – each interaction wove threads of connection, drawing me in.

Then, the stage of self-expression beckoned. The pool became my aquatic haven, while on the chessboard, strategies unfolded like lyrical verses, each move a testament to my sharp mind. And my voice? It soared freely in the performing arts.

Here's where the song reaches its crescendo. My dear Ashokan friends, with their unwavering support and gentle encouragement, became the chords that brought me back into tune. They didn't just try to make social gatherings inclusive, they helped me make the most out of them, something I had truly craved since my school days. This support, this sense of belonging, was the missing harmony I had been searching for.

Ashoka's melody continues to play within me, reminding me that belonging is a continuous journey, not a destination. It's a constant quest for understanding, both from others and from myself. And this quest, with its challenges and triumphs, is worth every note, every missed beat and every standing ovation.

## COMING BACK HOME

Interviews can be nerve wracking. They can also be life-changing. But, we'll come to that.

Growing up in Telangana's Sirikonda village, I always dreamt of pursuing higher education outside my state. I was aware of my responsibilities in a single parent family but my mother never stopped me from dreaming big. After doing well in Class 12, I applied to Ashoka. After completing the written tests, I was called for an interview.

This is when I started getting nervous. Having studied in a Telugu medium welfare college, my English skills were not great. I could not understand what they were asking, and they could not comprehend what I wanted to say. But despite these obvious challenges, I was put at ease and encouraged to speak. And speak I did. A few months later, I got a call. I was in!

“For me, life has  
come a full circle.  
I am home.  
Regardless of  
any culture,  
background and  
disability – I will  
always belong in  
Ashoka.”

In July 2019, I joined the Academic Bridge Programme (ABP) as part of my undergraduate journey.

During those early days, the ABP helped me immensely. We arrived early on campus and attended classes to improve our English language skills. It gave me a chance to get comfortable and become confident. At the same time, I knew I was not alone. There were 41 other students with me enrolled in the ABP. We may have come from different backgrounds but we were taking this step towards our dreams – together. And there, we found a ready-made support system.

During my four years at the University, I interned with the Ashoka Centre for Well Being (ACWB) and the Office of Learning Support (OLS). I knew I wanted to work here. Six months later, I saw an opening in the Office of Admissions and I decided to apply. And now I am here – back where it all started.

Looking back, I know that if I had missed an opportunity, I would never get it back. Like me, there are students with potential in my school in Telangana. I want them to apply, to get through and change their lives like I did.

For me, life has come a full circle. I am home.

**BHARGAVI GURUDU**  
Ashoka Alumni, 2019 Intake  
*Assistant Manager,  
Office of Admissions*







**PRAMATH RAJ SINHA**  
Chairperson,  
*Board of Trustees*

At Ashoka, the idea of a “world-class” university is not a monolithic model, but the creation of an ever-growing confluence of a thousand worlds.

As founders of the University, it is our responsibility to make Ashoka not only accessible to students from all walks of life, but also comfortable as well as valuable. In this past decade, Ashoka has redefined what it means to embark on a world-class academic journey. We started with a commitment to need-blind admissions, which grew to a range of support services towards a barrier-free learning environment. We have now built a space for learning on the bedrock of self-discovery — one that recognises, respects and celebrates differences.

# Building a home, not just an institution

This report captures some of the many strides we have made through pioneering frameworks under the umbrellas of the Office of Learning Support, the Academic Bridge Programme, the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being and many student-run initiatives. The most profound testament of this is in the one word often used by students to define Ashoka: home. The University is a nurturing space where our students find belonging, intellectual stimulation and a launchpad for discovering themselves. This sense of home also fosters a remarkable connection that extends well beyond graduation. We witness this enduring bond in the countless ways our alumni choose to give back. Many become mentors, sharing their knowledge and experiences to guide

current students on their own journeys of discovery. Others bring their innovations to Ashoka and facilitate admissions in numerous ways, ensuring that young minds from diverse backgrounds benefit from the transformative experience at Ashoka. This Ashokan ethos fills me with utmost joy. It furthers the sense of belonging to building a legacy of collective ownership of a place where one is valued and embraced for their individuality.

It is the collective effort made by Ashoka’s students, staff and faculty through which each Ashokan voice finds its melody. Within these pages, you will discover these voices, along with their personal stories and journeys in the thriving Ashokan cosmos. I hope you find glimpses of your own world within ours.



**2011**

The Young India Fellowship starts with its first batch of 57 students, all on full scholarship.

**2012**

The Mother Teresa Fellowship (MTF) is instituted to support Fellows in social sector enterprises.

# LOOKING BACK AT THE LAST DECADE

**2013**

Financial aid amounting to Rs 3.6 crore (USD 0.49 million) is given to students.

**2014**

Ashoka's first campus is inaugurated in Sonipat. First UG batch joins. The Office of Student Affairs institutes the Residents Assistants programme to create a trained peer support system.

**2018**

The Academic Bridge Programme is launched.

Ashoka University Queer Collective and the Feminist Collective are set up. The collectives create a safe space for people to talk freely, share experiences and foster a sense of solidarity.

**2019**

Over 130 full need-based scholarships given. OLS becomes a founding member of the Inclusive Universities Alliance. Rishi Krishnaswamy, Ashoka's first student with autism, joins the UG programme.

**2020**

In the UG programme, there are 17 international enrolments. A total of 108 students are on full aid. Ashoka sets up the Northeast Collective to promote the culture, history and diversity of the region.

Shakul Raj Sonker sets up a digital accessibility organisation, I-Stem. Bhavya Soni, Ashoka's first wheelchair-user student, joins.

**2021**

Inclusion and Diversity Committee created. Special diversity and intersectionality workshop hosted for all incoming students.

**2017**

Kunwar Arora, the first hearing impaired student, is admitted.

Five per cent of Ashoka's student body now comprises international students.

**2022**

Policy for off-campus housing for Ashoka University students who require assisted living is introduced.

Ashoka Women in Business and Leadership is set up to provide a platform for young women to ideate on new ventures.

**2016**

The Office of Learning Support (OLS) and the Centre for Well-Being are created.

Club Ruhi is set up to foster community development by teaching individuals from underprivileged backgrounds.

**2015**

Shakul Raj Sonker, Ashoka's first visually impaired student, joins. The University initiates steps to make the campus more accessible.

**2023**

OLS initiates an app-based navigation tool on campus. The Office also starts disability research.

**2024**

The Equal Opportunity Cell is set up.





# “People are going to either make you THINK, CONNECT or WALK AWAY”

## How did the idea for the Academic Bridge Programme come about?

In 2016, during the admissions process for the third undergraduate cohort, we admitted a small number of students who required help with the English language. Initially, we envisioned a year-long programme to help bridge this language gap and help them settle into campus. Unfortunately, we were not in a position to launch the programme.

In 2017, we restarted the conversation with the Centre for Writing and Communication (CWC), the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being (ACWB), the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) and the Office of Learning Support (OLS). We launched the Academic Bridge Programme (ABP) in 2018 with a cohort of 46 students whom we had handpicked through a detailed and thorough selection process.

Each year, with the help of the Offices of Student Affairs (OSA) and Residence Life,

we co-host the three-week ABP on campus prior to the commencement of the undergraduate programme. Our tutors from the CWC and the Undergraduate Writing Programme (UWP) helped us design the curriculum and teach the various sections of the ABP. Exciting and empowering workshops are conducted for the students by external theatre and improv groups, as well as the ACWB, OLS, OAA, Sports and Exercise Office and other teams. Depending on their financial background and need, ABP students have received laptops for the duration of their degree programme and a monthly stipend to add to their empowerment and belonging at Ashoka University.

## Is there continued support?

Some ABP students are also selected to have a year-long intervention with the CWC and take English Communications courses in the first two semesters for which they receive credits. Being closely

connected to the CWC and the UWP tutors gives them easy and regular access to academic learning support for research and assignments in various courses. Many of them also receive special help from the OLS throughout the course of their studies.

## How do students impact the culture at Ashoka?

In any space, the presence of those unlike yourself is going to either make you think, connect, or walk away. Whatever it is, you are responding. The presence of all our students – be it those from

privileged or underprivileged backgrounds, students representing diverse genders, or students with learning, cognitive or physical challenges – definitely has an impact, because everyone has to, at some point, negotiate with all these varied and diverse realities around them and respond. Advocacy comes out of this.

## What does belonging mean to you?

It usually takes me a long time to adjust to any place, space or environment. So, for me, belonging is really to be able to say that I feel at home at any given place. It is not so much about other people at first. It's primarily about being comfortable in my space. That's step one. The next step involves others. Do I feel comfortable going into a classroom with 50 other students? Do I feel comfortable sitting there? Questions like 'do I raise my hand in class to ask a question' or 'do I approach a professor for an office hour' come much later!

Owning the space is really the key. We have had students initially walk into campus very intimidated or lost. And then, we will have the same students walk in six months or a year later with confidence because Ashoka is now their home. And nobody can tell them otherwise!

**MERCIA PRINCE**  
Director,  
*Office of Admissions*







**SHIKHA YADAV**  
UG 2022 Intake

# Paying BACK TO THE HOME I chose

Shikha Yadav’s journey from Uttar Pradesh’s Athsarai village to Ashoka was in no way easy. But then, she believes in the saying, fortune favours the brave. Shikha realised early on that only hard work would help her escape poverty and the patriarchal mindset in her extended family that stops women from pursuing an education.

“I wanted to do my higher education from a well-recognised university where I could develop both my academic and non-academic skills and prepare myself for a competitive future,” remembers Shikha. Securing a 100 per cent scholarship, she joined Ashoka’s undergraduate programme. However, in the beginning, she admits feeling out of place both in terms of academics and the socio-cultural environment.

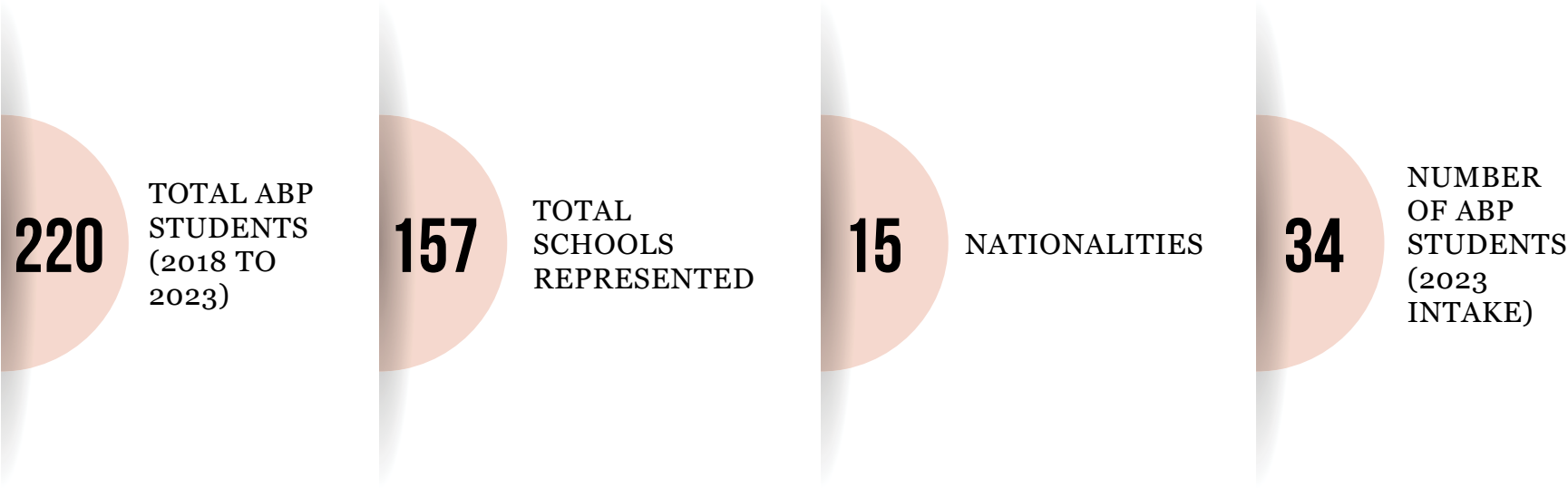
As an Academic Bridge Programme (ABP) student, Shikha got almost a month’s head start. The ABP mentors helped her to get comfortable and acquainted with campus life in general, and academics in particular. Regular interactions with student buddies for the first

semester also helped. Resident Assistants organised events that helped Shikha interact with peers on the floor. This attitude of approaching people, asking for help and interacting with them helped Shikha get comfortable with both the place and the people around her.

Today, Shikha volunteers with the Office of Learning Support and has been a campus buddy for a visually impaired student for three months. The responsibilities include guiding the student through verbal instructions to get them familiarised with the campus layout and assisting them to navigate classes, meals and other daily activities. It was also necessary to be friendly, empathetic and to have patience to understand their needs and help them accordingly.

“This experience was very unique, enriching and satisfying to me as I was just not able to help someone in need but also reflect on and improve myself in terms of strengthening patience, empathy, gratitude, optimism and being happy,” says Shikha.

## ACADEMIC BRIDGE PROGRAMME



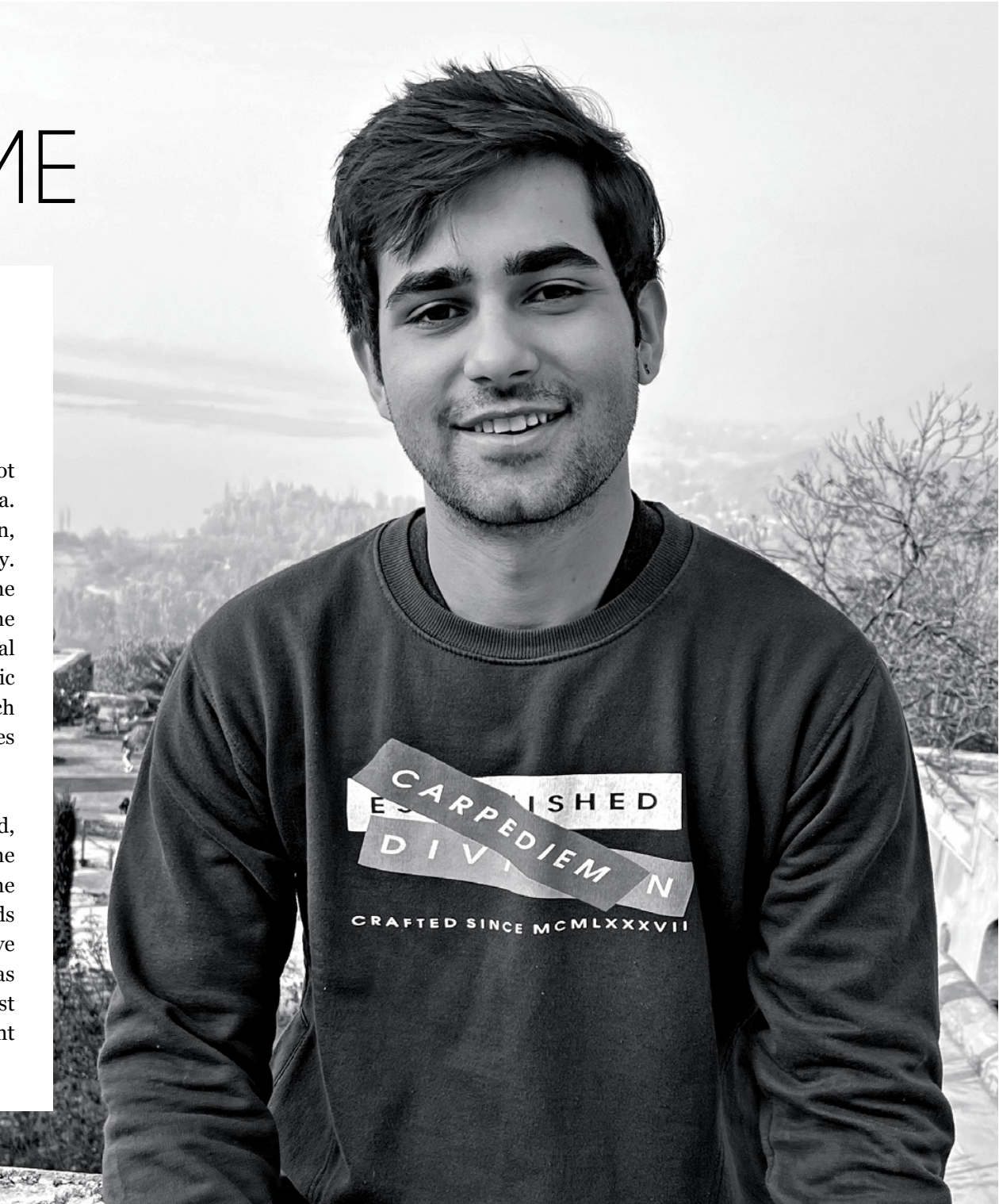


# BONDS that last a LIFETIME

**PRINCE DHAKA**  
Ashoka Alumni, UG 2018 Intake  
*Finance Rotation Programme*  
*Analyst at Microsoft*

“I went to school in a small town. I was not exactly predisposed to excel at Ashoka. Much of the journey to explore, learn, grow and re-evaluate was a self-discovery. But ABP helped me a great deal. The programme gave me early exposure to the pedagogy at Ashoka through the critical thinking seminars and the Socratic method, among others, all of which helped me understand my weaknesses and provided me a path to follow.

To me, belonging is to feel connected, accepted and valued. ABP helped me adjust to the Ashokan setting without the pressure of academics and formed bonds which would later come in handy. It gave me a good perspective on where I was coming from and what I was up against — which helped me define significant aspects of my identity.”



**VEDANSH PRIYADARSHI**  
Ashoka Alumni, UG 2018 Intake  
*Head of Engineering, NoCap Meta*

Homeschooled for the greater part of his life, Vedansh Priyadarshi was curious about learning in an interdisciplinary environment. He aced the Ashoka interview, secured financial aid and arrived on campus with some trepidation.

Initially, Vedansh was self-conscious about his stutter, but realised soon enough that he didn’t need to be. He started off as an observer, taking everything in – the culture, the foundation courses, the people. Until then, his worldview had been pretty much shaped by just his experiences. But being at Ashoka, surrounded by so many different perspectives, he knew he could be anything.

A huge support during this initial process of learning and unlearning, as he calls it, was the ABP. This was a turning point. It helped him not just with academic writing but also allowed him to transition easily and effortlessly to university life.

Vedansh has always been a keen learner. Having picked up skills from the Internet, he soon started dabbling in machine

learning and graduated with a major in Mathematics and Computer Science. Over the years, his curiosity has led him down a path involving all sorts of things – math, music, data, art and code. He currently heads the Engineering department at NoCap Meta, a software company.



# A FEELING of HOME



PRIYANSHI SINGH  
UG 2023 Intake

“Education has transformed my life in a huge way. I studied in a low-income private school till sixth grade and then got a scholarship to join Avasara Academy, Pune.

As a first generation college-goer, I have challenges which might be unique. It is very difficult to explain to my parents what I want to study, or what might be making me anxious about deadlines and other things. For them, these are alien concepts. Thankfully, I have found the support in Ashoka — especially in my ABP peers. They listen without judging me which makes me believe I belong here as much as the next person. They are my safe space.”

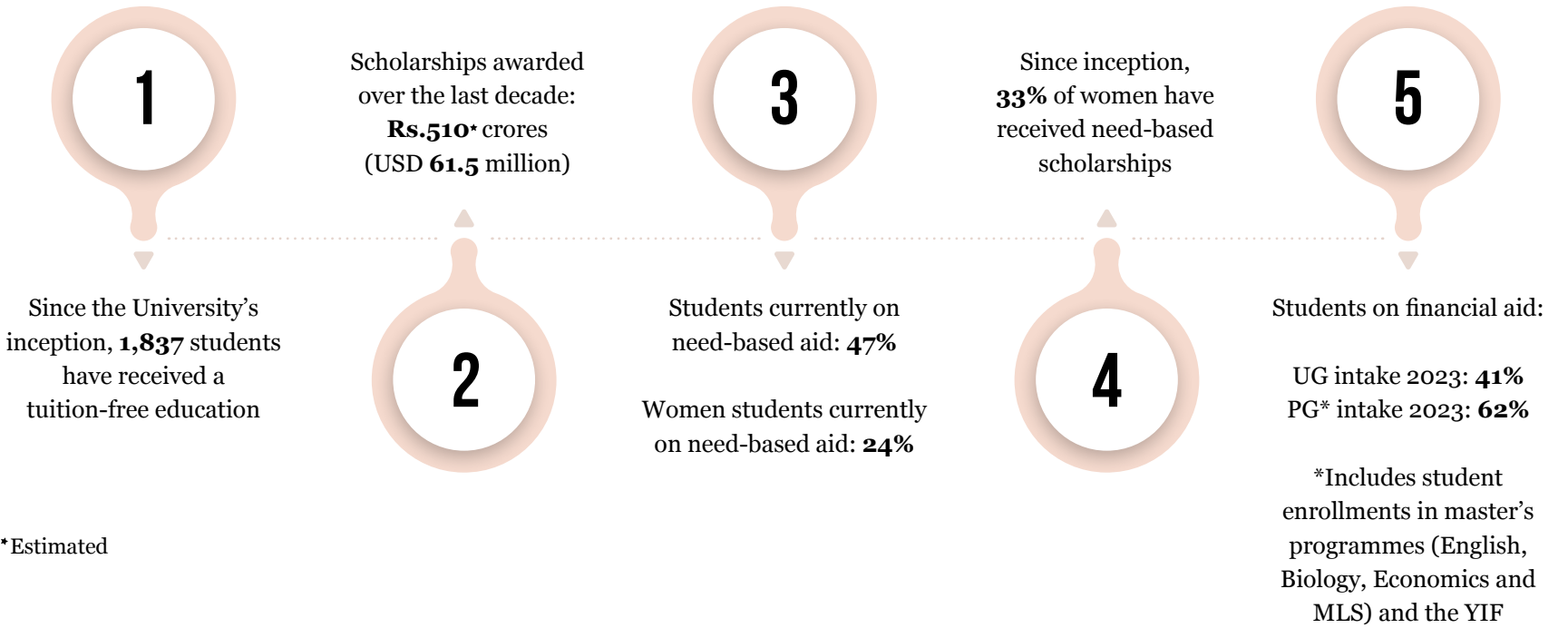


TITHIBRATA PAL  
UG 2023 Intake

“I found the Academic Bridge Programme very helpful. It didn’t just give us exposure to campus life, it also made us more confident and prepared for further challenges. Through engaging activities and interactions, I have had the opportunity to explore diverse paths and cultivate meaningful connections with peers and mentors alike. Every day brings new opportunities for growth and learning, and I am grateful to be part of such a dynamic environment. I am now looking forward to learning more. With a keen interest in Neuroscience, I would like to explore innovative solutions for motor neuron diseases such as ALS.”

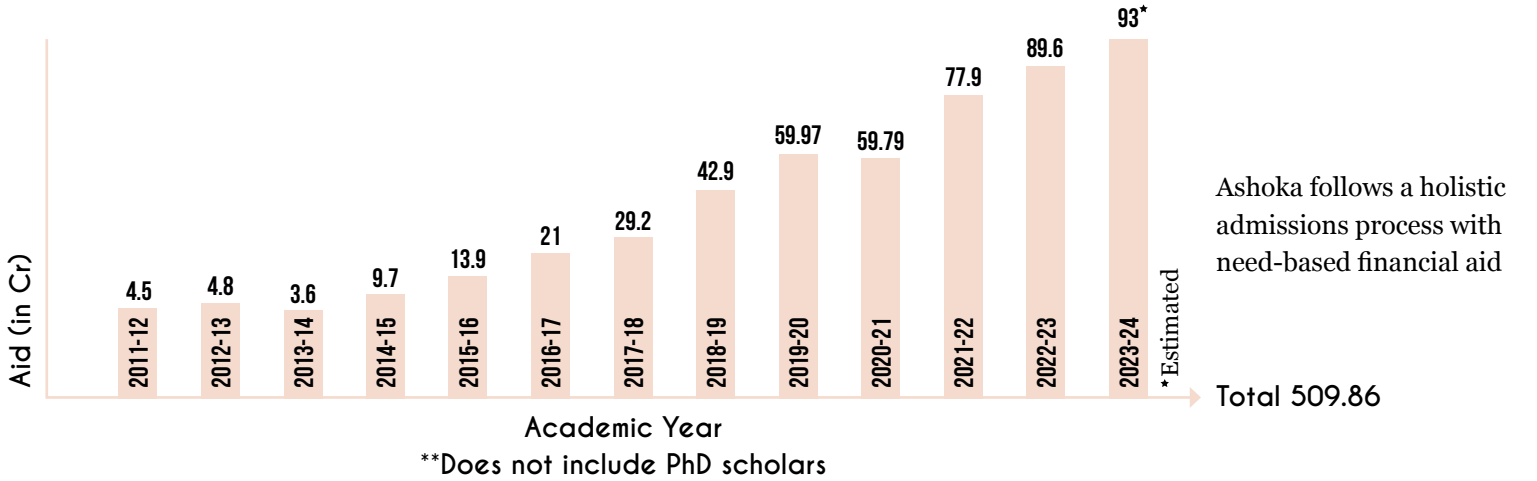


SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED IN 2023-24: RS 93\* CRORE (USD 11.21 MILLION)



\*Estimated

FINANCIAL AID OVER THE YEARS\*\*







**ANULYA P**  
UG 2019 Intake

# ASHOKA AND ME



## 2019

In the first week of January, I received my results and was granted the required financial aid. In August, my journey at Ashoka began, as part of the two-week Academic Bridge Programme



## 2018

Ashoka's outreach team conducted a session in my school where they explained the Liberal Arts education and interdisciplinary pedagogy. This further fueled my enthusiasm to apply

In December, I applied for the undergraduate programme in the first round

## 2017

In 10th grade, I got to know about Ashoka for the first time. A senior from my school was the first person to apply at that time and was accepted into Ashoka

## 2022

I graduated with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Economics

I decided to come back to Ashoka for my fourth year as an Ashoka Scholars Programme (ASP) student.

The same year, I chose to become a Resident Assistant (RA). This role significantly contributed to my personal growth, enhanced my leadership qualities, improved my social interactions and made me an active participant in the community

In the Spring semester, I became a Teaching Assistant (TA) for a Mathematics course

## 2023

I completed my ASP with a deeper exposure to Economics. I decided to come back to Ashoka to pursue my Master's in Economics

In May, I started working as a research assistant with Professor Aparajita Dasgupta



## 2024

I will be working as a Teaching Fellow for the Lodha Genius Programme. I am incredibly happy to be back and looking forward to exploring more opportunities here







“AWARENESS  
AROUND VISIBLE  
AND INVISIBLE  
DISABILITIES HAS  
INCREASED  
MANIFOLD”

**Why was it important to have a dedicated office supporting students with disabilities?**

When we started the conversation back in 2015, the need was for students with invisible learning conditions to be understood and supported beyond their school years in India itself. To make the invisible visible and understood well, a dedicated office was proposed to advocate for these students and guide the faculty members. However, that same year, Ashoka also enrolled a student with visual impairment. This student had left a prestigious university because of a lack of support there. That triggered the expansion of scope for work for the Office of Learning Support (OLS). We decided to have a dedicated office that would be open to any student who needs help with their academic journey at Ashoka.

Today in 2024, the Office works with students with a varied range of specific needs. Awareness around visible and invisible disabilities has increased manifold and more students are advocating for support. We are now able to help them with the diagnosis too — a requisite step to curate a formal support system for them.

**Ashoka is also the only university that has a College Readiness Programme (CRP), which opens OLS support to students outside of Ashoka as well. Tell us about the CRP.**

The CRP is very close to my heart, mainly because I have spent most of my professional time with school students. I’ve seen their struggles very closely, their parents being clueless and educators being helpless. Seeing why some of these students thrive in a college environment while others continue to struggle to even get admission at institutions of their choice, I was able to design the CRP in a way that alleviates those struggles and guides them towards a more proactive approach while they are still in schools.

I strongly feel that the students need to take charge of their own learning. The CRP gives them the tools to do exactly that. It’s hugely satisfying for me to see a student sitting on the other side of the screen advocating for themselves and seeking strategies to manage their learning difficulties.

**How are we changing the narrative?**

We are changing the narrative by doing exactly what was not being done – speaking about special education in higher

education loud and clear, and backing it with full action. OLS is working with every stakeholder possible – students, parents, school systems, higher education institutions, corporates, researchers, disability experts, technology experts, policy makers, among others. We’ve been told that higher education institutions look up to Ashoka when they plan for inclusion at their respective institutes. While the roadmap has been created, it’s a long journey for us as a community.

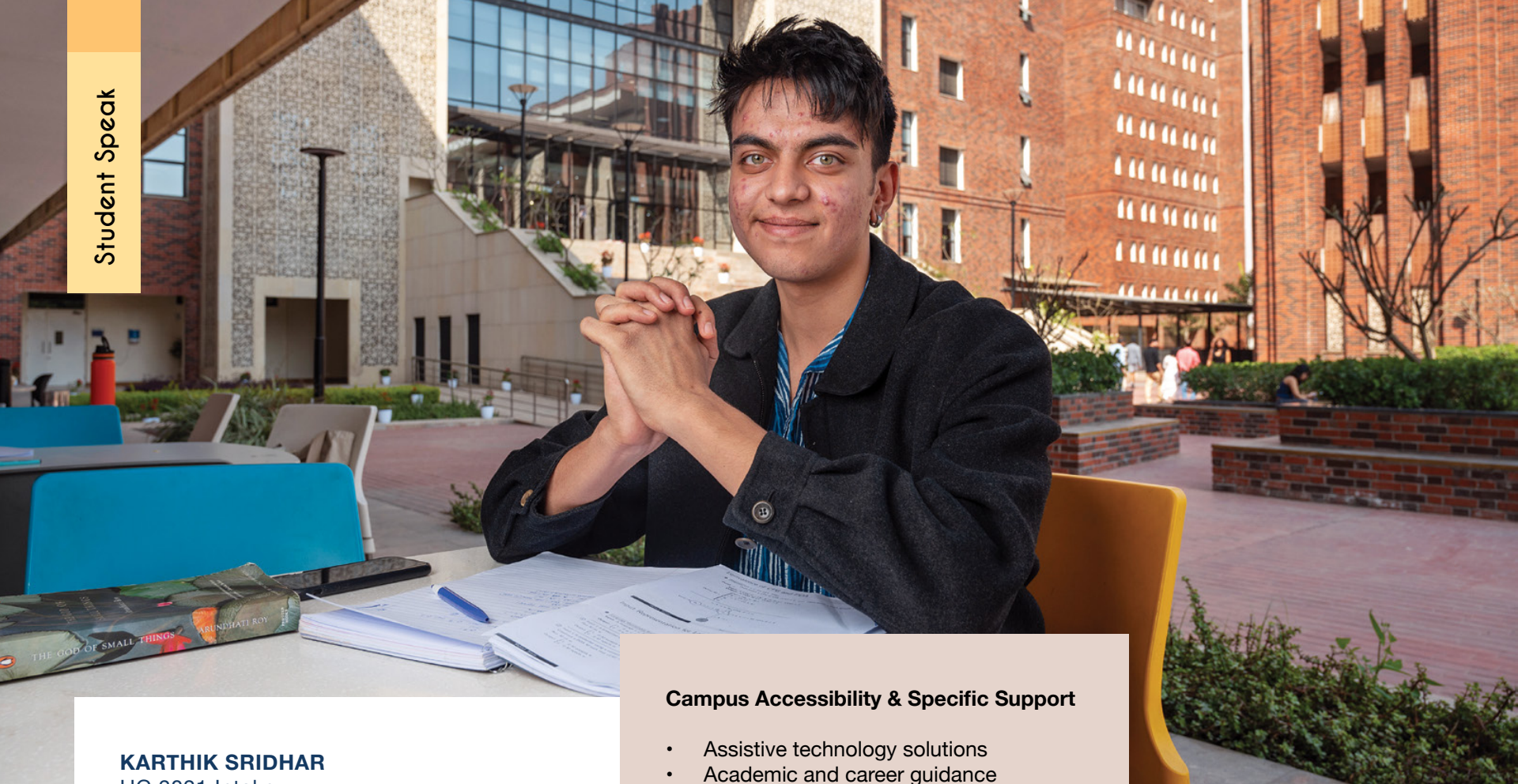
“STUDENTS  
NEED TO  
TAKE CHARGE  
OF THEIR OWN  
LEARNING”

**How does this translate to action?**

We are doing everything that these students need – be it in daily academics or in their daily campus life. Depending on the severity of the condition, the support is tailored to the extent possible, but at the same time, we pull out the support temporarily as and when we feel they can manage things on their own. We are very mindful of the need to prepare them for the world after Ashoka too. And that’s a tight rope for us and students to walk on.

OLS runs special programmes, hosts webinars and conferences to help decision-makers understand these special minds. We have also initiated the creation of specific courses for high school students to prepare them for college and to be independent learners. These courses will be rolled out June 2024 onwards.





**KARTHIK SRIDHAR**  
UG 2021 Intake  
*Content remediator*

“The decision to become a content remediator stemmed from my desire to contribute to inclusive learning environments. I recognised the importance of accessibility, especially for young adults with various predispositions embarking on their college journey, and wanted to make a positive impact by ensuring that educational content was accessible for all.

The content remediation I do involves adapting digital content to make it accessible for students with visual disabilities. A lot of what I do includes converting mathematical formulae into text-to-speech-friendly formats; adding alternative text to images, graphs, tables and diagrams (for example, a network topology); and ensuring proper document structures for easy navigation. Essentially, it’s about making sure that information is presented in a way that accommodates various learning needs.

Belonging to me is the feeling of being valued, accepted and included in a community.”

**Campus Accessibility & Specific Support**

- Assistive technology solutions
- Academic and career guidance
- Accessible infrastructure
- Accessible admissions process and academic content
- Academic adjustments
- Assessment of learning needs

**Support Services for All**

The Office supports all Ashoka students with or without disability. This includes training for the following:

- Time-management skills and planning
- Self-advocacy skills
- Providing technological solutions
- Effective academic learning strategies

Tejas remembers feeling intimidated by the diversity on campus. Born in Karnal, it was a whole new world for him. The high energy on campus made him feel like an imposter for the first few weeks, he says. It took time for him to realise that he was not the only one, and there was some comfort in this thought.

Tejas had his work cut out for him. As a child growing up with hearing impairment, he would be too self-conscious to ask for help. He often blamed himself for not being able to pay enough attention in class, zoning out and being fidgety – not realising that this was because of his hearing impairment.

At Ashoka, the OLS team worked with him proactively. They helped him get over his initial awkwardness and made him feel more confident. This was evident even in smaller things, like being able to ask to sit in the front of the class during a lecture or asking professors to repeat what they had said, without hesitating.

Belonging, Tejas believes, is a feeling of being accepted, supported and of mutual respect. It’s about having a space where one is able to freely express themselves.

“My experience at Ashoka has been very fulfilling. To an extent, that is because people here actually treat you like an adult, fully capable of making your choices and decisions,” he says.

# Growing up at Ashoka

**TEJASDEEP SINGH SEHGAL**  
UG 2023 Intake







**AAYUSHI SINGH**  
UG 2021 Intake  
***Content remediator***

# When FRIENDS broaden PERSPECTIVES

Aayushi Singh remembers first hearing about the Office of Learning Support through an email. The 21-year old from Kurukshetra, was immediately interested. Aayushi decided to apply for the position of a content remediator – where she would make digital content, such as graphs, tables and equations accessible to visually impaired students.

“This experience opened up an entirely new perspective within me. Working with OLS provided me with the privilege of being part of a solutions-driven framework. Several measures are being taken to ensure equal learning and growth opportunities for every student, irrespective of physical differences,” says Aayushi.

It was only after working as a content remediator that she began to notice how tiny mindful infrastructural additions can be so crucial in instilling a sense of comfort and acceptance towards a person’s differently-abled body. She believes that steps like introducing well-

maintained ramps alongside every staircase, floor numbers embossed in Braille inside lifts “help shatter any feeling of helplessness that one can associate with an impairment and makes a person reach their full potential”.

Aayushi has also become a support for her visually impaired batchmate and friend, Ayush.

“I vividly remember my first meeting with Ayush. We delved into topics beyond work, discussing courses, life at Ashoka, and our experiences before joining the University. Subsequent meetings only deepened our bond, and through the process of content remediation, I realised this was not just a responsibility, but the start of a friendship. While I may not be certain of the impact on Ayush’s sense of belonging, one thing is clear – the conversations we share and the genuine connection we built have become an invaluable part of my journey at Ashoka,” says Aayushi.

STUDENTS SUPPORTED OVER THE YEARS

	2016 - 17	2017 - 18	2018 - 19	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2021 - 22	2022 - 23	2023 - 24
Students without disabilities requiring academic assistance	12	34	71	86	92	103	85	92
Students with undocumented disabilities	6	13	20	22	27	31	42	33
Students with documented disabilities	15	23	24	29	26	43	54	86





**SAURAV PHULE**  
Housekeeping

Many of us may have never noticed Saurav Phule in Ashoka. And yet, to the two students he guides around the campus, he is probably the most dependable voice and a trusting hand to hold.

Saurav came to Ashoka from Haryana's Samalkha village in 2022. Six months ago, he was officially assigned the responsibility to help two (male) students with visual impairment. His manager believes that he has proven himself to be capable of guiding them, and is very much a part of their daily lives.

"I have helped them around campus, taking them to classes and for their meals. But I also try my best to help them if they need something from the tuck shop, or if they misplace something. I feel good about being able to do a little extra than what has been asked of me," says Saurav.



"OLS DEFINITELY PLAYED A BIG PART in Rishi's positive experience. Having Monika and Kriti (OLS staff members) around, helping him navigate the communication and liaising with the University was a big help to him. Both the OLS representatives have been marvellous. REENA HAS TAKEN IT UPON HERSELF TO BE RISHI'S GUARDIAN ANGEL AND DEFENDER — she pushes him when he needs it and steps back when she knows he can do it. OLS HAS ALSO ALWAYS KEPT US IN THE COMMUNICATION AND CONVERSATION LOOP. We have a wonderful working equation and Rishi is at the centre of it. This has really helped him belong there."

**—DR PRIYAMVADHA SUBRAMANIAN**  
Homeopath, Mental Health and Wellness expert  
*Parent of Ashoka student, Rishi Krishnaswamy*





# INCLUSION FOR ALL, NOT JUST FOR SOME

**UPASANA RAVIKANNAN**  
UG 2021 Intake

Upasana Ravikannan's journey at Ashoka University during the COVID-19 pandemic had been one of adaptation, empowerment and advocacy. Despite the challenges posed by the online learning environment, her experience at Ashoka has been marked by inclusivity and a focus on her abilities rather than her disability.

Having cerebral palsy, Upasana was initially concerned about how her wheelchair would be perceived on campus. However, upon

joining Ashoka, she found that her disability never became her defining characteristic. Instead, conversations revolved around academic pursuits, goals, shared interests and fostering an environment where her wheelchair was simply a part of her identity rather than the focal point.

This inclusive atmosphere empowered Upasana to not only thrive academically but

also to become an advocate for inclusion both within the University and beyond. Drawing from her personal experiences and driven by her passion for empowerment, she has actively contributed to discussions on accessibility and inclusivity, both on campus and in panel discussions across the country.

Moreover, Upasana's involvement in initiatives such as Ashoka Young Changemakers and her NGO, GoPaadhai, exemplifies her commitment to creating positive

change. Through her NGO, she has provided educational resources to thousands of underprivileged children, demonstrating her dedication to empowering others and fostering inclusion on a broader scale.

As she completes her third year of undergraduate studies, Upasana remains steadfast in her vision of empowerment and inclusion. By leveraging her platform and advocating for marginalised communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, she continues to shape conversations on inclusivity both within the campus community and other platforms.

Ultimately, Upasana's story underscores the transformative power of inclusive environments and the importance of leveraging one's voice and platform to drive meaningful change. Through her advocacy and actions, she embodies the spirit of true belonging and serves as an inspiration to others striving to create a more inclusive society.

“Students  
form the  
core of the  
ASHOKAN  
ethos”



**SAMIK CHAKRABORTY**  
MA 2021 Intake

When asked about his first impression of Ashoka, Samik Chakraborty – a master's student at the University – remembers being awed by its infrastructural splendour. His first memory however, is not of the University, but of its students. He remembers being helped by his peers – strangers then – during his first shuttle ride to the campus. A seemingly small act of helping him with his luggage gave him the reassurance that the Ashokan crowd would be welcoming.

“For me Ashoka is Ashoka, not because of its faculty, but its students. The students form the core of the Ashokan ethos. For me peer-to-peer learning was a valuable takeaway

from Ashoka. That is also the reason why I felt a sense of belonging and attachment to this place. The crowd is warm, welcoming, polite and largely inclusive unlike many other universities that I have had the opportunity to visit. Despite people coming from various economic strata, I feel one finds like-minded people here because of the liberal ethos that this University has been founded on.

Samik was a panelist in the first Queer Political Assemblages – a Queer studies research conference in India and has also participated in international debates. “This in turn gives me visibility, which makes me known to other queer people as a symbol of hope, as someone they can come and talk to, and maybe share their problems with,” says Samik.



# ONE LEADS, THE OTHER FOLLOWS

**MOHIT JOSHI,**  
UG 2022 Intake



**RADHA POKHARIYA,**  
UG 2023 Intake

When Mohit Joshi and his father stepped down from the shuttle in front of Ashoka's entrance, he held his father's hand and said, "This is real, papa. I've made it here." Coming from Nanakmatta, a small town in Uttarakhand, Ashoka was a dream for him and his family.

Being the first one from his town to come to Ashoka, Mohit was not sure if this would be the right place for him. "Before coming here, I had my doubts. But I received all the support I needed on campus. Whether it is the Academic Bridge Programme, the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being, the Centre

for Writing and Communication or the Resident Assistants assigned to us, people here are willing to help you with everything you need. This support system helped me settle in and become a part of Ashoka."

Mohit says Ashoka is a place for everyone. "If you're willing to learn and grow, the University will provide you with all the opportunities that you need to succeed. It is not limited to getting placed, but also about getting to know yourself better and working on your skills."

Ashoka's pedagogy, culture and most importantly, the support system inspired Radha Pokhariya, Mohit's junior from Nanakmatta Public School, to come here. Radha is the first in her family to move out of her town for higher education.

"My family was very happy when they got to know about the admission offer. What pleased them the most was the scholarship I'd got. I've always been sure that Ashoka will not only help me excel in academics but also look after my mental, emotional and physical well-being," says Radha.

She adds, "Every time we speak about Ashoka, it's not the University that we are referring to; it's also about us. We too, are Ashoka — we are actively building this institution, just as it is shaping us."





WHAT STARTED AS AN  
AUDACIOUS  
DREAM AND JUST  
58 STUDENTS HAS  
TODAY GROWN  
TO A FAMILY OF  
OVER 7,000.  
WITH MANY MORE JOINING US EVERY YEAR.

IN 2022-23, ASHOKA RECEIVED APPLICATIONS

FROM MORE THAN  
**400**

INDIAN TOWNS AND CITIES

Anantnag Ujjain Panaji Kangra Leh  
Vijayawada Sitamarhi Ambala Dhanbad  
Madanapalle Tonk Bhagalpur Srinagar  
Dharamshala Bhadradi Pulwama Vikarabad  
Mathura Kothagudem Chikmagalur  
Surat Bilaspur Bokaro  
Ooty Solan Hassan  
Jalna Kulgam Lalitpur  
Alwar Alappuzha Akola  
Mohali Madurai Mahe  
Churachandpur Pala  
Imphal Dibrugarh  
Haldwani Silvassa Khordha  
Aligarh Puducherry Cachar  
Cuttack Howrah Shillong Jorhat  
Erode Bhilai Kottayam Nizamabad  
Agartala Jhansi Sikar Coimbatore  
Bahraich Hanamkonda Pauri  
Mussoorie Karnal Garhwal Rohtak  
Sitapur Sangareddy Rewari  
Murshidabad Rajanna Secunderabad  
Siliguri Sircilla Warangal Jagadhri



# HOME TO ALL

2023 INTAKE

## UG

Female: 59.5%

Male: 40%

Those who self-identify as trans/non-binary/non-confirming/fluid/queer: 0.5%

Students with disabilities: 56

## YIF

Female: 56%

Male: 40%

Those who self-identify as trans/non-binary/non-confirming/fluid/queer: 4%

Students with disabilities: 56







**ARVINDER J SINGH**

Founder and Director

**Ashoka Centre for Well-Being (ACWB)**

**What is the role of the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being at the University?**

At ACWB we care, share, empower, engage and counsel. We focus on well-being rather than on diagnosis or labelling. And here I must say — it's not that diagnosis

is not important. The problem with labelling is that we often limit ourselves and start seeing ourselves through that label and through that limitation.

The Centre looks into preventive and promotional aspects of mental health. This means that we have a 360-degree approach. We empower individuals to be in a better space, such as identifying the signs and symptoms of stress and addressing them. To help people identify these signs

we have workshops along with individual and group sessions.

**How is the Centre working on building mental health literacy?**

Mental health literacy is very important, especially when there is a huge gap in understanding what it means. Everybody has an idea about physical health, but when it comes to mental and emotional health, it's not clear. Investing in mental health is no longer optional, it is for everybody.

“INVESTING IN  
MENTAL  
HEALTH IS  
NO LONGER  
OPTIONAL”

Through psychoeducation, we are spreading awareness about mental health. A simple yet fundamental understanding of common mental health terms like anxiety and depression can ensure timely intervention. This literacy isn't for psychologists only, it is for everyone. For example, recently we organised a workshop on '*tension se raahat*' for the *didis* and *bhaiyas* in Ashoka's housekeeping department, so that they are also aware of what stress is and how they can overcome it.

**What are some of the mental health awareness programmes at ACWB?**

We have multiple programmes for capacity building and mental health literacy. Given that we look at mental health and wellbeing at all levels — students, parents, staff and faculty, we aim to build capacity across the board. There is an acute shortage of mental health professionals in India, with not even one psychologist or psychiatrist per lakh of the population. It is important to note that the highest number of mental illnesses show up between the ages of 17-25 — considered as a time of high stress.

It is important to have programmes or initiatives to spread awareness and train people about well-being. We need to create a bridge between people who need help and those who can provide it.

Peer support is a very important part of our work at the Centre. We believe that training of the peer support members is extremely important and we've been recognised internationally for it by the Ruderman Family Foundation and Mary Christie Institute. Ashoka is the only university in India that looks at peer support as a resource for mental health.

**How is ACWB different from other such programmes in educational institutes?**

The key differentiator of the Centre is the collaborative approach to well-being that joins faculty, staff and students into integrating mental well-being into the day to day life at Ashoka. This collective approach is the key factor in driving systemic change and building a culture that promotes resilience and thriving.

“With the rising stress levels and growing number of mental health concerns particularly among the youth, it is imperative to make mental health ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE. We do this through a multi tiered approach to mental health and well-being”



# TO BELONG is to be HEARD

Arvind Yadav is the first in his family to move out of his town to pursue higher education. Born and brought up in Ambedkar Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh, Arvind was initially hesitant because he feared his lack of fluency in English might hinder his progress at the University.

“I was fortunate to study English in school, but I wasn’t confident about myself. However, after coming to Ashoka, I had all the support I needed to settle in,” says Arvind.

Like most others in his school, Arvind didn’t know what academic writing was or what citation meant, but the Academic Bridge Programme helped him learn how to read, write and think critically. “Even as I settled in, I felt the stress and pressure of academics. To

deal with my anxieties and academic stress, I reached out to the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being. It provided me a space where I was heard without judgment and was free to be myself. They suggested simple day-to-day activities that helped me clear my mind and focus on my studies. All it took was a space with compassion and understanding to help me find my ground here,” he adds.

Having studied at the fully residential Vidyagyan School in Sitapur, Arvind loved being around people. Seeing his friends as Resident Assistants (RA) at Ashoka, he too was inspired to be one. “As an RA, I get to interact with a diverse set of people, whether they are students, wardens, *didis* or *bhaiyas*. They help me understand what is happening on campus, and being a student, I believe I understand what our needs are. So, as an RA, I feel my voice is heard and my opinions matter when it comes to making decisions for the benefit of the students. It makes me responsible for their well-being. Just like I have found my place here, I try to help others find theirs.”

—  
**ARVIND YADAV**  
UG 2020 Intake  
*Resident Assistant*



**Gatekeeper programme** - Teaches faculty and staff to be first responders in mental health crises. They are trained to identify signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety or any kind of panic attack.

**Internship** - Offers a holistic understanding of mental health issues, counselling and research. This includes skill-building workshops, creation of mental health advocacy campaigns and research projects.

**Mental health advocacy** - Aims to promote positive mental health on campus and through social media. The Centre trains mental health advocates to build awareness about breaking stigma and encouraging open conversations.

**Resident Assistants training** - RAs are the biggest resource close to, and part of, the student community, trained to deal with mental health emergencies on the hostel floor.

**Well-being at workplace** - Aims to look into the well-being of people across all levels at the University by organising various workshops to promote a positive and inclusive work culture.

**Mental health for high-schoolers** - Empowers adolescents during their crucial development phase when they face numerous external pressures and internal challenges. The Centre collaborates with the Office of High School Programmes to conduct sessions on campus.

**Course for the YIF** - ‘Living with Purpose and Giving Back’ is designed to integrate lessons from Neuroscience, Cognitive Well-Being and Psychology.

## ACWB: A SNAPSHOT What the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being does



# NOTES OF GRATITUDE

"I feel confident and capable of navigating my future on my own. A large part of this confidence comes from the conversations we had and I'm very grateful for your support so far."

"I am slowly able to work on my things. I am able to identify my patterns. I smile more often."

"In essence, the course (Living with purpose and giving back) has been a transformative journey of self-discovery, introspection and growth. It has equipped me with valuable insights into the power of self-awareness and communication, guiding me towards a deeper understanding of my narrative and the choices that shape my life. Through reflection, journaling and exploration of core beliefs and values, I have embarked on a journey of self-discovery and personal development, paving the way for a more authentic and purposeful existence."

"The Gatekeeper Programme allowed me to recognise the thin line between respecting someone's privacy and managing one's anxieties by comforting them. Trust is the cornerstone of this effort."

"An important lesson for me during the course (Living with purpose and giving back) was to focus on active listening, not just listening. Sometimes the act of listening can be a gift or even an act of saving someone. Along with active listening is the ability to observe and take note of someone who is stressed or even in distress. It is true that we are not responsible for saving someone, but what we can do is at least try to lend a helping hand."

"The counselling room (in ACWB) served as a space where I could say things without having to fear any judgement. My counsellor helped me think more rationally about some of the negative, self-destructive beliefs I held. I figured things about myself which I wouldn't have otherwise. I am glad I pushed myself to seek counselling. It helped."

"For just listening to me when I needed to get things off my chest, thank you."





**FOUZIA FAYAZ**  
UG 2021 Intake  
*Resident Assistant and Former ACWB intern*

Fouzia, during her internship at ACWB focused on exploring the formation of friendships, examining their patterns and the role of personal characteristics in this context. She also conducted a campus-wide survey that yielded over 70 responses. “Engaging in this research helped me comprehend the underlying reasons for mental health issues, fostering a heightened awareness personally as well as in my role as a Resident Assistant (RA). This experience also helped me become more empathetic,” says Fouzia.

As an RA, Fouzia tries to make herself available to everyone, especially to new students. “Being listened to and feeling understood can make a world of difference in combating feelings of isolation. With new students, I’ve emphasised the importance of authenticity and have made efforts to support them in all the ways I can. This includes connecting them to ACWB, fostering a sense of community and sharing valuable resources on mental health and

self-identity. There was one particular incident where a student reached out to me, overwhelmed with emotions and in need of someone who could listen. They simply wanted validation for their feelings and reassurance. I’m glad I could help them.”

“I wanted to intern at the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being (ACWB) because I’ve seen how effective their processes are. Many of my friends have sought help and seen visible differences. ACWB is a one-of-a-kind centre in India, especially at the university level. We’re not just talking about inclusivity and belonging or transforming the education system, we’re actually making a difference. This is a unique fact about Ashoka and interning at the Centre was a truly valuable experience.

I worked on various advocacy projects – awareness drives, interacting with the counsellors, discussing mental health scenarios, among others. Interns were also responsible for conducting surveys to see how students would like the Centre to operate or what improvements could be made. I feel you can truly belong somewhere when you know there’s a place for you. This is what ACWB is working towards – building a place for you.”



**TANISHA AGRAWAL**  
UG 2021 Intake  
*Former ACWB intern*

## A PLACE FOR EVERYONE



## IT’S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP

**LAKSHYA SHARMA**  
UG 2020 Intake  
*Mental Health Advocate*

“Mental health literacy is something that we need in India, especially for people of my generation, as they transition from one phase of life to another. As peer advocates, we assist them to find their ground here. We inform people that anyone, at any point, can walk into the Centre for Well-Being and seek help.

During the orientation week, we set up stalls about the Centre and the kind of work that is done there. A lot of people are not aware of what distress means, so we help them understand that one does not have to be in a complicated situation where all your roads are blocked or you are too overwhelmed with emotions to seek help. Asking for help does not have to come at the last stage. If you want to talk to someone, the Centre is there for you.”





“Beyond academia, the diversity of opportunities available on campus has been equally transformative. Interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds and cultures has broadened my horizons and deepened my understanding of the world. Through meaningful exchanges and collaborations, I have had the privilege of learning about different ways of life and perspectives, and fostering a sense of cultural appreciation.”

**NENE ONYEDI IBEZIM**  
Young India Fellowship  
2023 Intake

I grew up in a small community on the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria. My upbringing was shaped by the determination of my parents, who relocated to pursue better employment prospects. Raised as the third of four siblings, I navigated the challenges of a public secondary school with an overwhelming class size of 400 students. However, a turning point emerged in my final year when I won an academic competition, granting me a rare glimpse into the stark disparities between low and high-income communities and their access to educational opportunities.

Driven by a passion for equity in education, I pursued a degree in Education and English Language. My studies delved deep into effective teaching methods, particularly tailored to under-resourced schools with sizeable class populations. Through engagement with local education stakeholders, I have honed the ability to mobilise communities towards achieving significant learning outcomes for their children. My journey has led me to a profound interest in the connection between educational policy formulation and implementation, with a keen focus on identifying the barriers hindering effective execution.

Ashoka resonated deeply with a longstanding desire — to embark on an educational journey that embraces the breadth of my interests, rather than confining me to a single disciplinary path. The Young India Fellowship at Ashoka emerged as a reflection of this aspiration. I was also drawn to the prospect of joining a global community of emerging leaders and change-makers for the 21st century.

My journey has been nothing short of transformative. From the moment I stepped foot on campus, I was enveloped by an atmosphere of academic excellence and holistic growth. The University boasts of top-tier educational resources and facilities, ensuring that every aspect of my learning experience is of the highest standard. What sets Ashoka apart is its unwavering commitment to nurturing not just scholars, but well-rounded individuals. Beyond the confines of traditional academia, I have had the privilege to delve into my passions outside the classroom. For the first time in my academic journey, I am not limited by my specialisation. At Ashoka, there are no limits to what I can study, allowing me to explore every facet of my curiosity and intellect. It is an experience I will forever cherish, as it has not only shaped my academic journey but also transformed me into a more enlightened and empowered individual.

# FOLLOWING PASSIONS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM







**RAUNIT SINGH**  
UG Intake 2021  
*Former Captain, Men's Badminton Team*

"I always wanted to play a sport. Before college, due to lack of opportunities and inadequate infrastructure, that wish never materialised. After coming to Ashoka, however, I started playing badminton. Through this sport, I rediscovered myself here and made life-long friends. My seniors and the sports department helped me learn and excel in the sport.

Gradually, I developed a passion for badminton, which helped me become disciplined and punctual, understand my weaknesses and consistently improve."

## Office of Student Affairs



The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) is dedicated to enhancing students' experiences beyond the academic setting. It aims to provide a comprehensive university experience while fostering their learning and growth.

This is done through three verticals – Residence Life, Student Life and Sports & Exercise. Each department establishes and cultivates a collaborative environment.

The Residence Life Office fosters a safe, comfortable and vibrant residential campus experience for students. Various programmes such as the Resident Assistant programme, Dorm Olympics, the

Great Ashokan Weekend, among others, provide opportunities for students to interact with each other beyond the classroom.

The Student Life Office oversees extra-curricular activities, student development programmes, performing arts, volunteering opportunities, among others. The Office promotes maximum student participation by encouraging student-led organisations, clubs and events.

The Office of Sports & Exercise focuses on the principle of participation more than winning, making sports an integral part of the Ashoka experience.



"Ashoka is not just a place of learning; it is a diverse and vibrant community that fosters intellectual growth, personal development and the pursuit of knowledge. Building a sense of belonging involves creating an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated, open communication and empathy are encouraged and everyone is valued through mutual support."

**POOJA MANAKTALA**  
Director, Office of Student Affairs



# Campus EVENTS forge strong BONDS



**PRAYAG RAJ PANDEY**  
UG 2021 Intake  
*Resident Assistant*

Prayag, a third-year Computer Science major, was drawn to Ashoka for its multidisciplinary pedagogy. The University's commitment to interdisciplinary learning perfectly aligned with Prayag's interests in Computer Science, Mathematics, Literature and Philosophy.

Prayag strongly believes that Ashoka emphasises collaboration and an inclusive culture, which provides a platform for expressing oneself. This helped him cultivate a sense of belonging. "Participation in fests like *Banjaara*, The Great Ashokan Weekend, Dorm Olympics and *Agneepath*

has brought me closer to people with shared values and interests. Similarly, the vibrant campus life, student-led clubs, societies and interactions with peers from different cultural, social and geographical backgrounds have helped me understand various issues," he says.

Prayag's role as a Resident Assistant (RA) requires him to address various concerns raised by his peers, checking on them,

organising floor events, making sure things are accessible to everyone and promoting a safe and inclusive environment.

For Prayag, a sense of belonging transcends mere recognition. It encompasses feeling valued and accepted for who they are. As a Resident Assistant, Prayag actively works on creating a supportive and welcoming environment that fosters a sense of belonging among students, thereby easing the transition, particularly for first-year students and others.

"AS A RESIDENT ASSISTANT (RA), I have the opportunity to not only help students know Ashoka better, but also CREATE A SPACE WHERE THEY ARE FREE to establish their own culture and own it. Being an RA, I am responsible for dealing with emergencies, organising fun floor events and creating a community where everyone can mingle and appreciate each other. THIS HAS HELPED ME ESTABLISH A SENSE OF RELIABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY. Being an RA has certainly been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

All of these experiences have led me to truly believe that Ashoka has a place for everyone."

**MANSI CHAUHAN**  
UG 2020 Intake  
*Resident Assistant*







# PILLARS OF SUPPORT

Ashoka has 250+ founders and donors. Their continued support has enabled deserving students from low-income families to pursue an exceptional higher education.

The University has received Rs 510 cr (USD 61.5 million) in financial aid commitments to date. This helps us offset the cost of students' tuition and living expenses, thus supporting a more diverse student body that is rooted in equity.



# Notes from the ASHOKA family

## RUDRANGSHU MUKHERJEE

Chancellor

Ashoka must continuously and consistently strive to do better and better...because with every achievement we raise the bar for the next one. That is the only vista to excellence. Ashoka strives to seek, to find, never to yield.

## RAMA MALIK

Pro Vice-Chancellor

Committed to one of the core founding principles of inclusion and diversity, the Ashoka campus is alive with hues of vibrant diverse backgrounds. Here, authentic expression finds its form through a culture of acceptance, listening, belonging, respect and celebration. Moving forward, our commitment to these values will deepen further creating an intrinsic value system of impact amongst our stakeholders and communities through connections made by an Ashokan in the world they live in.

## VENKAT ESHWARA

Pro Vice-Chancellor,

Development, Careers and Alumni office

Inclusion and diversity are core values at Ashoka. As Chair of the Inclusion and Diversity Committee, I have seen first-hand that this institution's commitment has only become stronger over time. Our quest to make Ashoka highly diverse and inclusive across students, faculty and administrators, continues to accelerate in this journey of building an institution that will outlive all of us.

## GITANJALI GANDHIK

Vice-President,

Development

It is heartening to see our donor community being aligned to Ashoka's goal of making quality education accessible to all. Their support has made it possible for us to support students with visible or invisible challenges, get more women to our laboratories, and allow many more students to follow their dreams. Breakthroughs in cutting edge research and innovation will only be possible if this continues to be a shared goal.

## ALI

Vice-President,

External Engagement

Ashoka offers a remarkably open environment. Through inclusive and thoughtful Admissions, Outreach and Financial Aid processes as well as numerous support systems, we have managed to create a unique space in which every single person can be themselves. However, we must ensure this message reaches all Ashokans through constant communication.

## PRIYANKA CHANDHOK

Vice-President,

Career Development Office

We are committed to fostering a profound sense of belonging for every Ashoka student. We prioritise I&D internships and placements through a customised outreach strategy for recruiters, coupled with tailored upskilling sessions for students. These efforts have resulted in our students securing positions at esteemed organisations. Moving forward, we are dedicated to partnering with organisations, in sensitising them and making them more empathetic towards I&D students, and encouraging them to offer diverse opportunities.

## BHASKAR MISHRA

Vice-President,

Administration

We go above and beyond to make the campus accessible to all, such as introducing the latest amenities and maintaining the existing ones such as the ramps on campus. Ashoka has always strived to have an inclusive campus. We want students to

not only be a part of Ashoka, but have Ashoka also become a part of them.

## VIKRAM BAWA

Senior Director,

Office of Outreach

At Ashoka University, we believe a world-class education should be for everyone. That's why our outreach programmes focus on creating equal access and opportunity for students from all walks of life. This commitment to inclusivity is reflected in our vibrant campus community. At Ashoka, you'll find a diverse range of students and perspectives, all working together to learn and grow.

## ANU SINGH

Director, Office of Parent

and Alumni Relations

A true sense of belonging is nurtured through small gestures such as making sure that no one is eating lunch alone every day in the mess. Feeling valued and recognised while at Ashoka will determine if alumni will remain connected or move away

## AMBICA CHATURVEDI

Assistant Vice-President,

Human Resources

Over the last decade, Ashoka has made concerted efforts to create an inclusive work environment where staff from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected. That said, there still is room for improvement in increasing the representation of underrepresented groups within its staff. It's our promise to prioritise and invest in creating an equitable and inclusive workplace where all members can thrive and contribute to the institution's success.



**SOMAK  
RAYCHAUDHURY**  
Vice-Chancellor

# AFTERWORD: A decade of listening and learning

The year 2024 is very special for all of us at Ashoka. We turn ten this year. Back when Ashoka was just an idea taking shape, there was one fundamental feature of the University on which Ashoka's founders would not compromise. It was the notion that this University would be an inclusive institution of higher education of world-class excellence in teaching and learning, and in knowledge creation through research. It was obvious to all that on the Ashoka campus we would welcome, embrace and respond to diversity in all its forms. It was a given that we would build an institution where all students, staff and faculty could rightfully feel they belong – no matter who they are, where they come from or what their circumstances are.

We have remained consistently resolute in this commitment. This is exemplified in each of the stories you would have read in this report.

The Office of Learning Support, the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being, the Academic Bridge Programme and the College Readiness Programme are some examples of this commitment. Each one of these is unique in its construct and function, and is an integral part of the University and critical to its functioning. These dedicated programmes are today being emulated by other institutions – with our teams guiding them in several instances.

We also firmly believe in equitable access to education. Our admissions process is holistic while our financial aid model is need-based. This means that for all meritorious students who deserve to be at Ashoka, we will try and remove the financial barriers that stand between them and the exceptional higher education programmes of Ashoka University. Each year, over half our student body has received financial aid. The years ahead are not likely to be any different.

This is a milestone year for us, as our tenth anniversary is a cause for celebration on all fronts. We are immensely proud of where we stand now, as a young university, where we have already been able to establish the kind of diversity in our classrooms that many mature institutions can only dream about, supported by exemplary offices that form the backbone of the University. As a buzzing residential campus, we are also home to more than 3,000 people including students, staff and faculty, who come from all corners of India and many parts of the world, for a life-changing experience that has resulted in bonds that outlive their time here at Ashoka.

Completing the first decade also calls for reflection. What have we done well, what can we do better, what do we need to start doing now. These are questions we keep asking ourselves as any young institution must, to grow, evolve and do better.

The quest to build India's finest Liberal Arts and Sciences university is an ambitious project. One that cannot be made possible without having inclusion, diversity and belonging at the centre of our mission.

The most important thought that stood out for me while I was reading this report – one that came from several people quoted here – was that Ashoka is home. Belonging is a choice. That Ashoka belongs to so many people today means we are doing some things right.







A S H O K A  
I S U S









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