Annual *Review*

2023-24

10 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
ASHOKA UNIVERSITY

Ashoka University

VERSATILE

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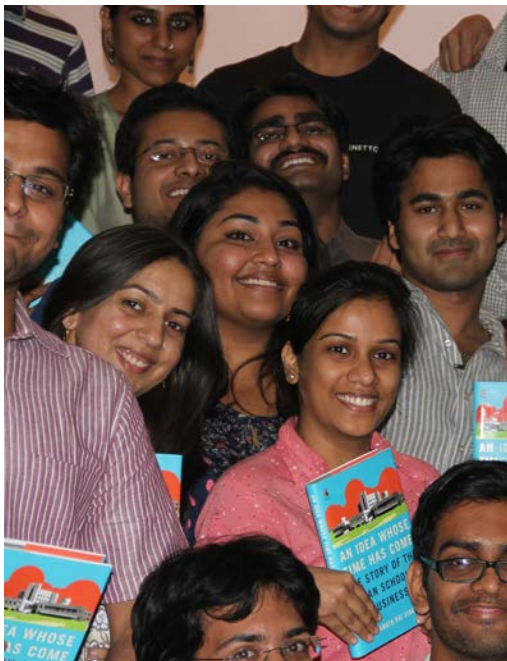
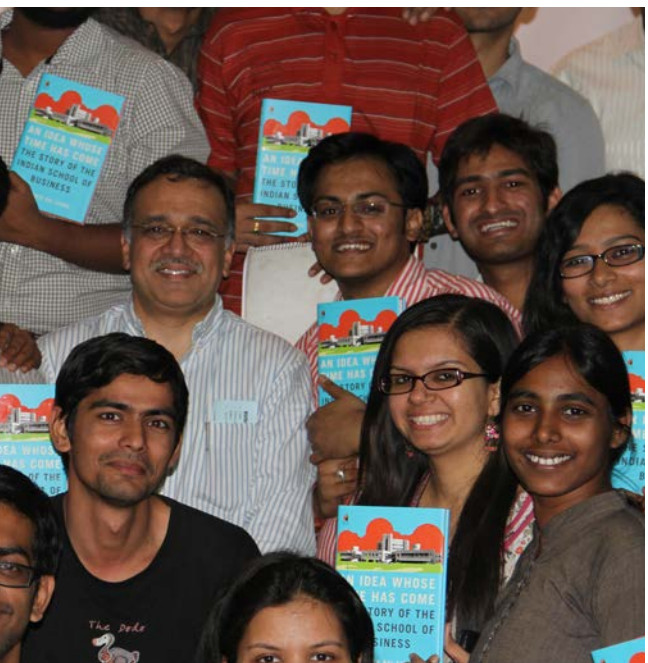



AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME
THE STORY OF THE INDIAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Our Mission

To build

an inclusive institution of excellence in teaching and research

To nurture

responsible leaders for India and the world

To be

a pioneering force for interdisciplinary higher education

Our Vision

To be the #1 university in India

and one of the leading universities in the world

Celebrating 10 years *of* *Excellence*

2011

Young India Fellowship

Ashoka's flagship programme is born

2014

Undergraduate Programme

is introduced with the inauguration of the campus

2016

First Master's Programme

in Liberal studies is launched;

Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy, South Asia's first academic centre focused on enabling philanthropy for greater social impact, is set up

2018

The Academic Bridge Programme

is introduced, to help students transition to University life

2020

COVID-19 Pandemic

Several faculty undertake research to shape policy and discourse

2021

First phase of the Ashoka campus is completed

and construction of the new campus begins

2022

Office of High School Programmes established

with new courses and programmes launched for high school students

2024

To date, over Rs 3,000 crore raised as a collective philanthropy effort

Contents

01. Young India Fellowship
02. Undergraduate Programme
03. Master's, PhD and other Programmes
04. Centres of Excellence
05. Student Life
06. Student Services
07. Faculty and Research
08. Campus
09. High School Programmes
10. Governance and Fundraising
11. People
12. University Trends and Metrics
13. Five-year financial overview

Letter from the Chairperson, Board of Trustees

2024 has been an important year for Ashoka, marking the tenth year of our University. We have reason to be proud, humbled and grateful.

We are proud to have reached this milestone with about 2,800 students studying and living on campus, and another 5,600 alumni who are out there changing the world. The progress the University has made and the reputation that it has built in a short period of time is nothing short of amazing.

We are humbled by how much more we need to do. We still have a long way to go, and we are going to need all the help that we can get from the same quarters that have supported us so far.

We are grateful to all the donors and supporters of Ashoka who have given us the resources to build what could be India's finest institution of higher education. We thank the parents who have chosen to send their children to Ashoka, students who have chosen Ashoka over other leading institutions in India and globally and faculty who have chosen to teach and build their careers at Ashoka. Together, we have to step up to take Ashoka to the next level over the next ten years, where we hope to double in size and start making a mark across the globe with our thought leadership and research, in addition to our education.

Ashoka is rapidly expanding its offerings, adding many more disciplines and degrees, as well as pioneering in research, innovation and community impact. We will need to continue to build on all these dimensions, advancing not only in line with the past but exponentially for the future. This tenth year is truly an inflection point for everything that we do at Ashoka.

Our story is a fulfilling work in progress. We are climbing difficult mountains, while discovering new peaks and setting clear goals to contribute to India's flourishing growth journey. As I always say, the best is yet to come, with many, many more decades of celebration, newness and growth ahead.

- Pramath Raj Sinha

Letter from the Chancellor

Dear Members of the Ashoka Family,

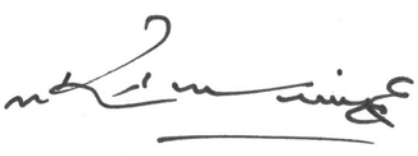
It is my privilege every year to introduce you to the Annual Report of the University. I hope you will spare a few minutes of your time to glance at the Annual Report for 2023-24.

In my letter to all of you last year, I had written that Ashoka is at the cusp of transition. The process of transition has begun. We now have a new campus and we are poised for greater expansion. While major steps have been taken to expand the reach of our teaching and research in the fundamental Sciences, plans are also underway to set up a School for Humanities. Very soon, may be in the next academic year itself, Ashoka will be introducing courses in Management Studies which will be radically different from the standard and conventional syllabi offered in this field. These courses at Ashoka will aim to marry Management Studies to Liberal Arts. All these efforts are integral parts of the ongoing endeavours to make Ashoka a top-class university that aims to provide an all-round education to its students and contribute to the world of scholarship through innovative and original research.

The growth and development of Ashoka is possible because of the work all of you put in and the generous contributions many of you make. No words of gratitude are enough for this.

Please continue to be part of the onward and upward march of Ashoka.

With my regards and good wishes,



- Rudrangshu Mukherjee

Letter from the Vice-Chancellor

Dear members of the Ashoka community,

I am delighted to present the Annual Report for 2023-24. What makes this publication even more special is, this year we look back at a decade plus of excellence at Ashoka.

The last academic year is testament to everything Ashoka stands for: a truly global model of multi- and interdisciplinary education that continues in its pursuit of excellence. We have set a benchmark for Indian higher education, influenced educational policies and set an example for other universities to follow.

Ashoka, still in its youth, has created an impact few others can claim to do.

We celebrated many firsts this year. We climbed to the top spot among private universities in the National Institution Ranking lists. We graduated our first PhD scholar in the Sciences (Biology). One of our PhD students became the only Indian to receive the American Society of Naturalists' Student Research Award. We introduced two new majors: International Relations and Economics & Public Policy. We also added two new centres of excellence: the Koita Centre for Digital Health and the Isaac Centre for Public Policy.

We welcomed more than 800 students on campus this year. They come from 138 Indian cities and 8 countries. 17 new scholars joined the illustrious community of Ashoka faculty – bringing the total number of permanent faculty to 176, in addition to 51 visiting faculty. Simultaneously, close to 400 students were recruited across ten industries, including organisations such as Deloitte, Accenture,

> We remain committed to making an education at Ashoka accessible to all. Our holistic admissions process and need based financial aid model has led to scholarships for 5,000 students over the years.

EY, McKinsey & Company, Tata Trusts and Teach for India. Others are pursuing master's programmes at Harvard University, the University of Cambridge, Yale University, HEC Paris, among others. For the second consecutive year, an Ashokan – the only South-Asian recipient – has been awarded the McCall MacBain scholarship at McGill University. Others have received similarly prestigious scholarships such as the Felix scholarship to study at the University of Oxford and the Inlaks scholarship for Columbia and Leiden.

One of the key tenets at Ashoka has been excellence in research. This year, our faculty have published numerous research articles and won grants from Pfizer, DBT-Wellcome Trust Alliance, DST-SERB to name a few. Our faculty have also been awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship, the JV Narlikar Lifetime Achievement Honor, the Omega Resilience Award Fellowship and the Kuznets Prize. We also hosted NASA's South Asian Regional Initiative – a development that places Ashoka on the global research map.

We remain committed to making an education at Ashoka accessible to all. Our holistic admissions process and need based financial aid model has led to scholarships for 5,000 students over the years. In the past decade, one in four have received a tuition free education. In the last academic year, 41 per cent of students who joined the undergraduate programme received scholarships.

Finally, we are thrilled to present to the world, Ashoka's new campus that will further enhance our academic abilities and house 4,000 additional students. The new campus will signal the start of a unique academic environment where different Science disciplines talk to each other and spark scientific inquiry in the minds of our young scholars.

I would like to end by extending my gratitude to everyone that has and continues to build Ashoka – our founders, the faculty, staff and administrators. My heartfelt thanks also to students and our alumni, who are our greatest flagbearers. Please join me as we welcome the next decade of Ashoka.

- Somak Raychaudhury

Young India Fellowship (YIF)

In 2006,

a group of like-minded individuals came together – entrepreneurs, institution-builders, industrialists – with the collective vision of redefining the Indian higher educational landscape. The idea: an education model rooted in a broad-based Liberal Arts pedagogy, moving the focus away from technical and professional degrees. A postgraduate diploma in Liberal Arts would serve as a proof of this concept. The Young India Fellowship was thus born – the precursor to Ashoka University.

As a year-long residential programme, the Fellowship was designed with the belief that an inter- and multidisciplinary approach to education would develop critical thinking, leadership and problem-solving skills. The goal was to nurture the next generation of leaders and nation-builders, thereby driving social change. Launched in 2011, the fully-funded programme welcomed 57 Fellows as part of the first cohort. They came from diverse backgrounds such as Business, Law, Social Sciences, Art, Medicine and Science.

The goal was to nurture the next generation of leaders and nation-builders, thereby driving social change.

Over the past decade, the Fellowship has invited distinguished faculty from India and around the world, allowing Fellows to interact with academics, practitioners and global achievers through events, workshops and sessions. Courses have delved into varied fields such as Shakespearean Literature, Statistics, Data Science, Economics and Public Policy, Art Appreciation, Design Thinking, amongst others, giving the Fellows a well-rounded academic experience.

The YIF also introduced novel initiatives to enrich the academic experience. The Experiential Learning Module (ELM) is one – which has now become a core component of the curriculum. As part of the ELM, Fellows work on real-world projects, applying classroom learning to solve practical challenges. Collaborating with external organisations, they tackle social, business and developmental issues – while gaining hands-on experience and valuable skills for future leadership roles. Several ELM projects have gone on to become successful ventures. Some notable examples include Ashoka's own Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality; Barefoot Edu which has now been incubated at the Harvard Innovation Labs; and Quidich, a tech company which provides cutting-edge solutions for sports broadcast.

Now in its thirteenth year, the Fellowship is recognised as a graduate programme unlike any other. In just 12 months, Fellows not just study a selection of 20 academic courses, but also work on team-based projects and learn how to think critically and write effectively. Over 2,000 YIF alumni are spread across the world. They are excelling in diverse fields. From securing prestigious scholarships to starting organisations and working with leading private and public sector institutions across the world, they serve as the biggest champions of the programme.

The Crossover Speaker series was conceptualised for industry stalwarts to visit Ashoka for interactive sessions with the Fellows.

Highlights from the last academic year

In 2023-24, the YIF cohort had 101 Fellows. They came from 22 Indian states and 62 towns and cities across India, Bhutan, Nigeria and the United States.

The cohort represented 79 undergraduate institutions and 38 unique majors. Twenty-two per cent of the Fellows were first-generation college goers. The year had multiple guest sessions, mainly through two key initiatives – the Crossover Speaker series and the Alumni-in-Residence programme. The Crossover Speaker series was conceptualised for industry stalwarts to visit Ashoka for interactive sessions with the Fellows. Guest speakers included Anil Kumar Jain, Chairperson, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board; Gaurav Shah, Founder and Director, Indian School of Development Management; Monika Halan, Financial Expert, Writer and Broadcaster; Rana Safvi, Writer and Historian, among others. The Alumni-in-Residence programme provided a platform for high-impact YIF alumni such as Garima Poonia, Samarth Mahajan, Simranpreet Oberoi, Saransh Vaswani, Rahat Kulshreshtha and Worrin Muviah, to interact with the Fellows.

Fellows also performed *Ashoka Rasa,* a cultural production that showcased India's rich cultural heritage. This was conceptualised along with students from the undergraduate programme and was performed throughout the year at key University events.

> The Chancellor's Merit Scholarship was introduced this year – with 12 scholarships awarded to Fellows who have consistently excelled in their previous academic and non-academic pursuits

Faculty

The YIF continued to have distinguished faculty from Ashoka, as well as visiting faculty from across the world, including those from partner institutions. During the academic year, 10 full-time faculty from Ashoka and 20 visiting faculty members – including eight international faculty members – taught at the Fellowship.

Admissions and Outreach

In 2023-24, the YIF outreach broadened through various digital platforms to reach a wider audience. Engagement through social media platforms such as Instagram and LinkedIn witnessed a significant rise of about 25 per cent each. Further, over 60 events and initiatives took place through college and community sessions, webinars and workshops. Word-of-mouth referrals also proved to be more impactful than in previous years.

Scholarship

Ashoka provides need-based financial aid to ensure that Fellows receive a world-class education. So far, scholarships worth Rs 80 crore have been awarded. These are given based on an evaluation of students' economic needs and family profiles. This approach ensures that financial limitations do not prevent qualified students from enrolling in the programme. In 2023-24, 68 per cent of the graduating class was supported by financial aid.

The Chancellor's Merit Scholarship was also introduced this year. Twelve scholarships, covering tuition and residence fees, were awarded to candidates who have consistently excelled in their previous academic, non-academic and professional pursuits.

Academics

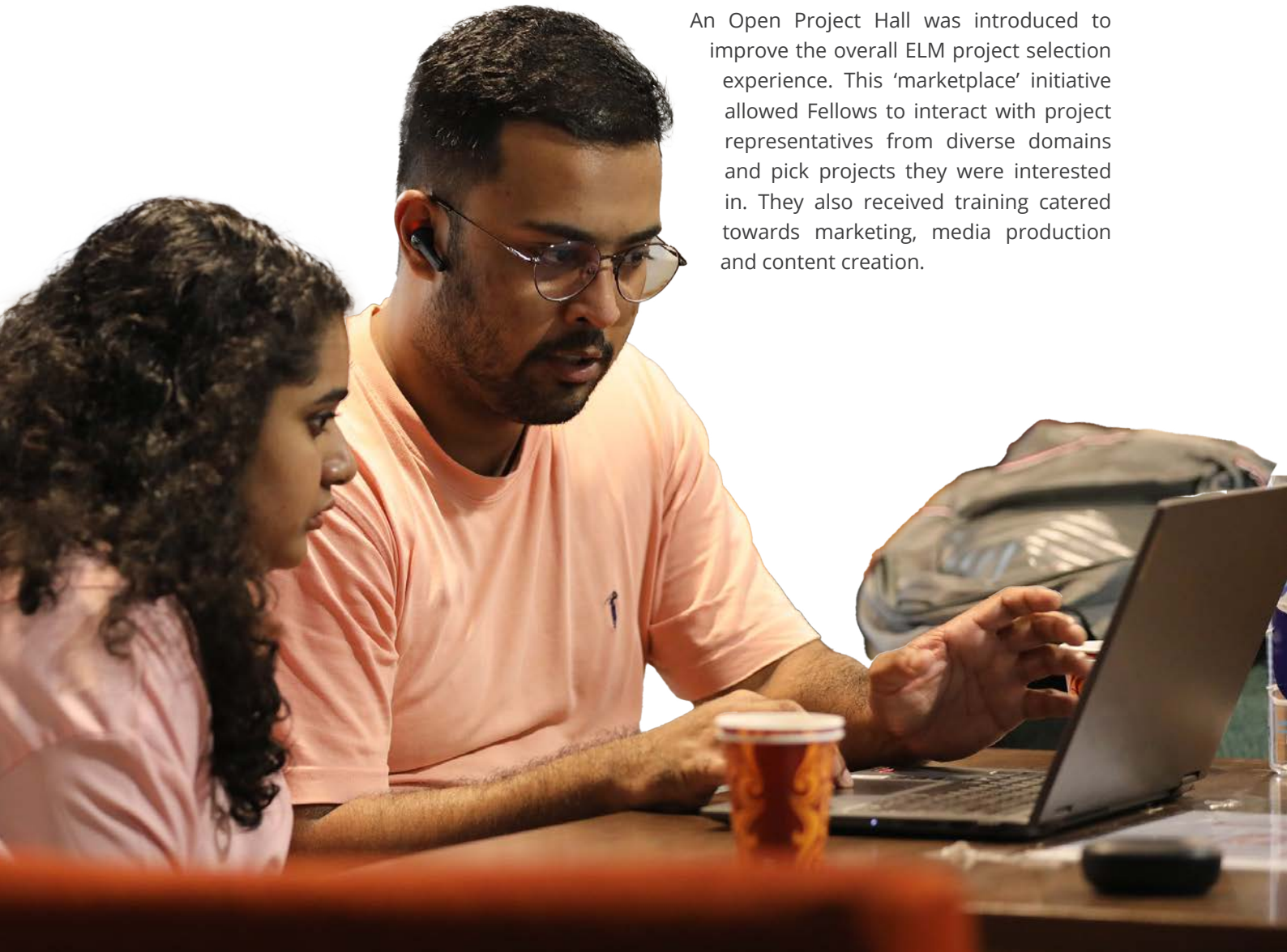
In 2023-24, twenty-eight courses were offered; five of them new. These included *Democracy and Certainty, The Welfare State, AI and Beyond: Being Human in the Age of AI, Global Mental Health, 'The Word for World is Forest': Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in an Age of Climate Change.*

Experiential Learning Module (ELM)

Over the past academic year, Fellows worked on 17 projects spanning various sectors including governance, textiles, environment and sustainability, education, amongst others. These projects were in partnership with organisations such as Pratham, Piramal Foundation, Advertising Standards of India, Quality Council of India, Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC) and Moving Images Films Private Limited, to name a few.

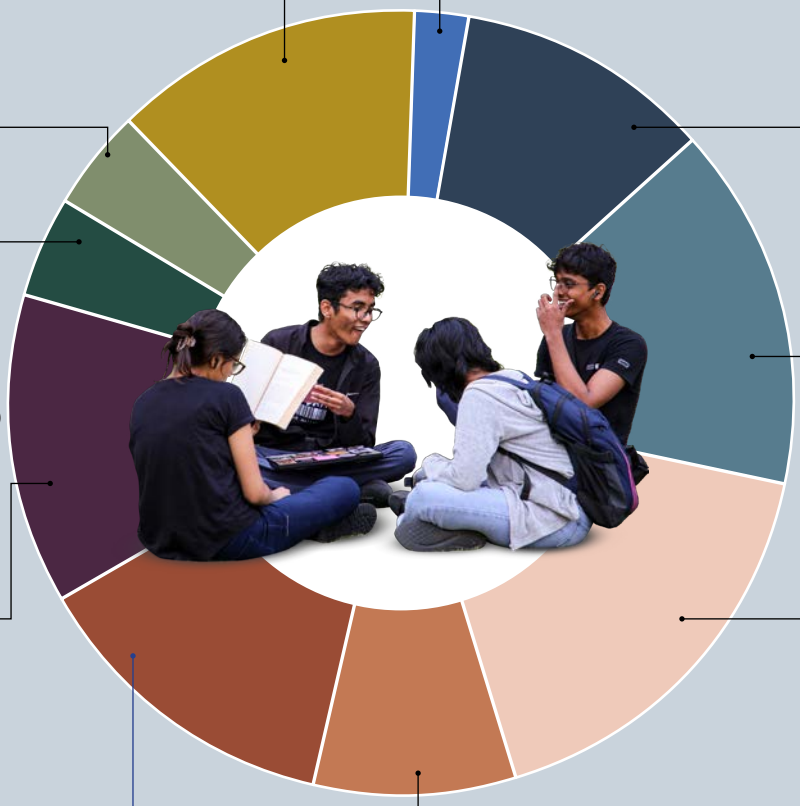
They also worked on four self-designed projects – which delved into areas such as the preservation of language and culture in India, e-waste recycling as well as preservation of water bodies like the Yamuna. One of the groups also worked on developing sensitisation workshops for high school students using independent cinema.

An Open Project Hall was introduced to improve the overall ELM project selection experience. This 'marketplace' initiative allowed Fellows to interact with project representatives from diverse domains and pick projects they were interested in. They also received training catered towards marketing, media production and content creation.



Sectoral Representation *for* ELM Projects

This year, Fellows worked on ELM projects across 10 industries.



12.8%
Culture, Heritage and Media

2.1%
Healthcare and Wellness

4.3%
Agriculture

10.6%
Education

4.3%
Business and Entrepreneurship

14.9%
Academic / research

12.8%
Technology

17.0%
Community and Livelihoods

12.8%
Governance and Policy

8.5%
Environment and Sustainability

ELM project domains

Mentorship Programme

The Mentorship Programme allows Fellows to connect with mentors on various aspects of work and life. Sixty-six Fellows chose mentors who aligned with their specific interests and aspirations.

This Programme witnessed significant growth in 2023-24. Six new mentors joined, taking the mentor pool to 43. They came from diverse fields such as academia, entrepreneurship, finance, healthcare, media and journalism, policy and culinary arts, amongst others. They include Praveen Donthi, Former Deputy Political Editor, *The Caravan* and Senior Analyst, India, International Crisis Group; Dr Ramya Subrahmanian, Chief of Child Rights and Protection, UNICEF-Innocenti and Thomas Zacharias, Chef and Restaurateur.

> Sixty-six Fellows chose mentors from diverse fields such as academia, entrepreneurship, finance, healthcare, media and journalism, policy and culinary arts, amongst others.

Graduation

The convocation ceremony was held on the University campus in June 2024. Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, Population Foundation of India, was the keynote speaker.

In the academic year 2023-24, over 260 organisations participated in Ashoka's Fellows have begun new stints with various organisations such as Convergence Foundation, Deloitte, Dr Reddy's Foundation, Educational Intitiatives, Hindustan Unilever Limited, McKinsey & Co, Michael Page and many others.

Many Fellows are also continuing their educational journeys with various globally renowned institutions. These include the Erasmus Mundus Programme, the University of Pennsylvania, the London School of Economics, Sciences Po, HEC Paris and IIM Kolkata.

Road Ahead

The Class of 2025 welcomed 95 Fellows at the time of enrollment, of whom 11 are recipients of the Chancellor's Merit Scholarship. Overall, 81 per cent of the cohort has received scholarships. The Fellows come from 22 Indian states and 62 cities and towns across 4 countries.

As part of a continuous effort to expand the curriculum, a few Fellows can now also cross-register for courses offered by different departments at Ashoka and get credits towards their diploma.

As the YIF prepares to strengthen itself as Ashoka's flagship programme, the Class of 2026 will offer partial or full scholarships to all Fellows.

Cohort Composition and Diversity

95 Fellows

81% on Scholarship

From **79** Undergraduate Institutions

Gender diversity

61% Women

34% Men

05% Non-binary

Geographical Backgrounds

62
Cities and Towns

22
Indian States and Regions

04
Countries

Educational Attainment

40%
Undergraduate Freshers

22%
First-Gen College Goers

26%
Postgraduates

Educational Backgrounds (Undergraduate majors)

- Commerce & Management
- Design & Arts
- Economics
- Engineering & Applied Sciences
- Geography & Pacific Studies
- History
- Law
- Literature
- Media & Journalism
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Social Sciences
- Social Work & Sciences
- Sociology

Undergraduate Programme

The early success of the Young India Fellowship was a testament to the potential that interdisciplinary education held for India. The Fellowship also offered an insight into what the Ashokan educational experience was. This momentum laid the ground for further growth. In 2014, the first undergraduate batch stepped into campus – also signalling the establishment of Ashoka University.

The University, today, offers a multidisciplinary, four-year undergraduate programme – which became the blueprint for the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020. The curriculum is structured around foundation, major and co-curricular courses, complemented by mandatory internships. This comprehensive design ensures that students gain not just academic knowledge but also essential skills for today's dynamic workplaces.

Ashoka's undergraduate students emerge not only as well-rounded thinkers but are also ready to navigate the complexities of a 21st century workplace.

The undergraduate programme was designed to provide students the opportunity to explore a multitude of disciplines, while also pursuing co-curricular interests. Unlike traditional undergraduate degrees, students are not required to declare their majors until the second year. This gives them the chance to discover new avenues and potentially reshape their academic journeys, fostering a spirit of exploration.

In the past decade, Ashoka has ensured quality education is accessible to all, through its robust scholarships programme. As a result, over the years talented students from diverse backgrounds have benefited from this transformative learning environment.

In the inaugural year, the University offered majors in nine disciplines. These included Sociology and Anthropology, Economics, English, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Mathematics and Computer Science. In 2017, Ashoka launched the Sciences programme with Physics and Biology. Chemistry was introduced as a pure major in the academic year 2019-20. Staying true to its Liberal Arts ethos, the University has also introduced several interdisciplinary majors through the years. These bring together diverse subjects, such as Politics and Philosophy, Economics and History, or Computer Science and Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Today, the programme offers 13 pure and 11 interdisciplinary majors. Ashoka also offers minors in all pure majors and 10 additional minors. Students study nine mandatory foundation courses, including *Critical Thinking, Literature and the World, Mathematical Thinking and Principles of Science,* among others. These courses are designed to introduce students to various styles of thinking and also to inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

Ashoka's undergraduate students emerge not only as well-rounded thinkers but are also ready to navigate the complexities of a 21st century workplace. Many of them pursue higher education at some of the best institutions in the world – including Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, Yale and the London School of Economics.

Students must also complete nine foundational courses, including the mandatory course, *Introduction to Critical Thinking.*

Highlights from the last academic year

In 2023-24, Ashoka introduced two new majors – International Relations and Economics & Public Policy.

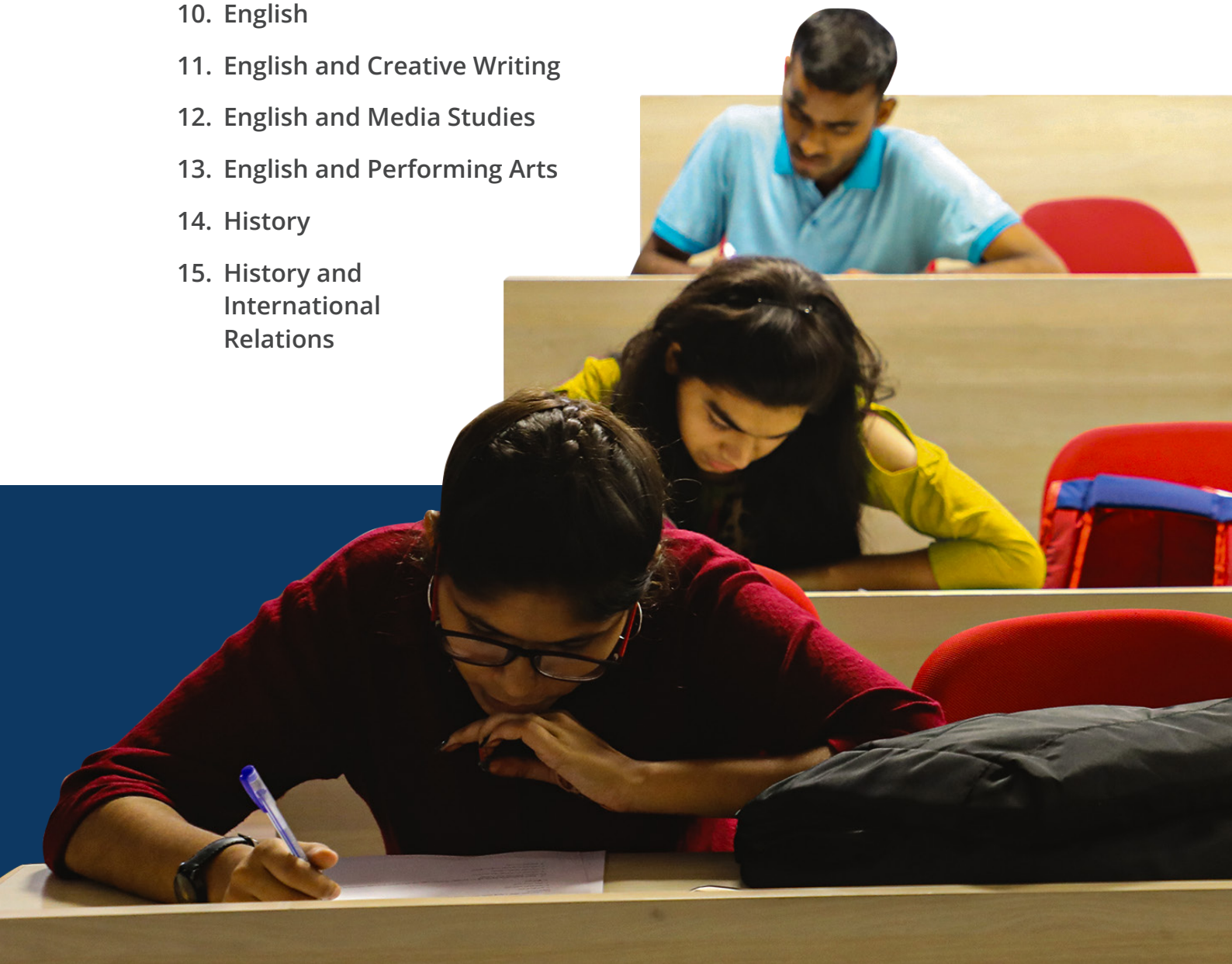
The University now offers a cumulative of 640 courses, including 147 new ones, to cater to diverse student interests and career goals. Additionally, 217 courses were offered under the Independent Study Module – which allows students to assist faculty members on specific research projects, or even chart their own research path.

Academics

To graduate with a bachelor's degree, students are required to complete the specified number of credits. A major demands a minimum of 18-20 courses, while minors require 6 courses or 24 credits in a field outside the major. Most courses are worth 4 credits, while co-curricular courses have 2 credits. Internships can be valued at either 2 or 4 credits, with a minimum of 2 internship credits required for graduation.

Majors

1. Biology
2. Chemistry
3. Computer Science
4. Computer Science and Entrepreneurship
5. Computer Science and Philosophy
6. Economics
7. Economics and Finance
8. Economics and History
9. Economics and Public Policy
10. English
11. English and Creative Writing
12. English and Media Studies
13. English and Performing Arts
14. History
15. History and International Relations
16. International Relations
17. Mathematics
18. Mathematics and Computer Science
19. Philosophy
20. Physics
21. Political Science
22. Politics, Philosophy and Economics
23. Psychology
24. Sociology and Anthropology



Minors

1. Astronomy
2. Biology
3. Chemistry
4. China Studies
5. Computer Science
6. Creative Writing
7. Economics
8. English
9. Entrepreneurship
10. Environmental Studies
11. History
12. International Relations
13. Mathematics
14. Media Studies
15. Performing Arts
16. Philosophy
17. Physics
18. Political Science
19. Psychology
20. Sanskrit Studies
21. Sociology and Anthropology
22. Visual Arts

Admissions and Outreach

In 2024, a total of 806 students enrolled in the undergraduate programme. They come from 10 countries and 132 Indian cities and towns.

The Outreach team reached out to 1,163 schools across 130 cities and 28 states. In addition to schools, the Office of Outreach also conducted thematic webinars such as Scientifically Speaking, Meet the Professors and the UG Webinar Series. Over 100 campus tours were organised for more than 2,500 prospective students and parents throughout the year.

Faculty

In the last academic year, 17 new scholars joined as permanent faculty, bringing the total to 164. In addition, there are over 50 visiting faculty.

Notable senior appointments include, Arindam Chakrabarti (DPhil, Oxford University), a renowned scholar in the philosophy of Language, Logic, Metaphysics and Indian Philosophies. Projit B Mukharji (PhD, SOAS University of London), a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow, joined the Department of History. Sandeep Juneja (PhD, Stanford University), joined the Department of Computer Science, along with Sandeep Sen (PhD, Duke University) and Lipika Dey (PhD, IIT Kharagpur). Vidya Avasare (PhD, IIT Bombay) joined the Chemistry faculty and Anurag Agrawal (PhD, University of Delhi), former director of the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, was appointed as a permanent faculty member.

Additionally, 10 assistant professors were granted tenure and promoted after experts in their fields rigorously assessed their work.

Scholarship

Ashoka offers need-based financial aid. All students are eligible to apply for full and partial scholarships. In the last academic year, 41 per cent of students enrolled in the undergraduate programme received financial aid. Out of the 757 students admitted, 308 were scholarship recipients. This includes various slabs of tuition and residence waivers.

Some students also received exceptional aid which includes tuition, meals, residence costs and an additional stipend. An amount of INR 86.47 crore was given by way of financial aid to undergraduate students during the academic year.

2019-20
Rs 47 Cr

2020-21
Rs 52 Cr

2021-22
Rs 69 Cr

2022-23
Rs 83 Cr

2023-24
Rs 86 Cr

Graduation

The Class of 2024 graduated in May. Over thousand students, from both the undergraduate as well as postgraduate programmes, received their degrees at the Convocation ceremony.

There were two keynote speakers for the event – Manish Sabharwal, Vice-Chairman, Teamlease Services and Shaheen Mistri, Social Activist and CEO, Teach for India.

Graduate Studies

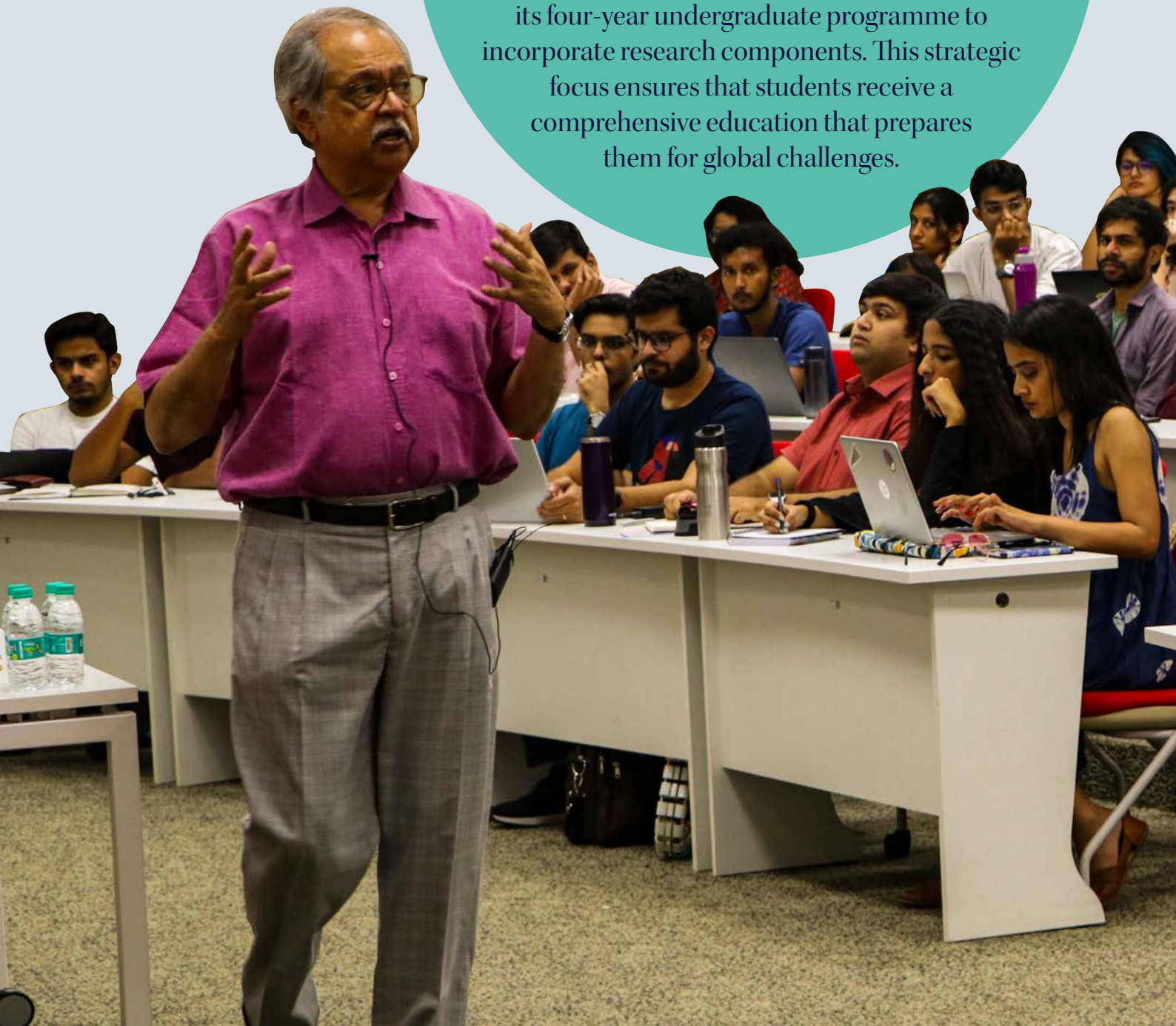
The Office of Post-Graduate Studies supports students seeking admission to universities across the world for higher education. In 2023-24, over 150 students got admission and received scholarships from Harvard University, the University of Oxford, the London School of Economics, Yale University, the University of Cambridge, the University of Chicago, HEC Paris, Columbia University and several others. Subject areas students are headed to study include Public Policy, Integrated Immunology, Economics, Business Analytics and Psychology, among others.

Kiran Sahani (ASP ‘23) became the second Ashoka student to win the McCall MacBain Global Scholarship. Anjali Madangarli (ASP ‘24) was awarded the Inlaks Shivdasani Scholarship to pursue her Master’s in Cosmology from Leiden University. Aditya Tiwari (ASP ’24) and Sanjna Kartik (UG ’23) were awarded the Felix Scholarship for graduate admission to the University of Oxford. Additionally, Saina Suri (ASP ‘24) was awarded the Havells Family Scholarship. This is a first-of-its-kind scholarship instituted by the Havells Foundation, which provides students from Ashoka the opportunity to pursue a fully funded business master’s degree at the Wake Forest University School of Business.

Road Ahead

The undergraduate programme continues to evolve, focusing on expanding academic offerings and enhancing student experiences. With the introduction of two new majors this year, the University is further diversifying its curriculum to meet emerging academic and career interests.

Ashoka is also committed to integrating the National Education Policy (NEP), which includes expanding its four-year undergraduate programme to incorporate research components. This strategic focus ensures that students receive a comprehensive education that prepares them for global challenges.



Ashoka Scholars Programme (ASP)

The Ashoka Scholars Programme is a one-year postgraduate diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR) offered to undergraduates who complete their three-year bachelor's degree with at least 92 credits.

ASP prepares students for postgraduate studies globally, meeting the requirements of 12 years of secondary education and four years of university study. Students apply in their third year and can choose advanced academic pathways, including an advanced major, minor, concentration or Second Major Equivalent (SME), which require additional courses in their chosen fields. Following the introduction of the National Education Policy and the transition to a four-year undergraduate programme, Ashoka is hosting the last batch of ASP this year.

Master's, PhD & Programmes

In 2015, Ashoka took a step forward in its mission to reshape India's higher education landscape by launching its master's programme, just a year after the first undergraduate cohort was welcomed on campus. The master's programme was crafted to emphasise a rigorous, research-oriented pedagogy – starting with a postgraduate degree in Liberal Studies that complemented the YIF programme.

Through a combination of interdisciplinary approaches and rigorous scholarship, the University fosters an environment where research scholars can thrive.

As the programme evolved, the University expanded its offerings. Currently, Ashoka offers master's degrees in four disciplines. The graduate programmes also laid the groundwork for the introduction of PhD programmes in 2017-18. These advanced programmes were established to meet the growing demand for specialised knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing global landscape.

In six years since its inception, the PhD programme has grown to a strength of 200+ research scholars, across 11 disciplines. Among them, two PhD scholars – from the departments of Economics and Biology – have successfully graduated, with several others in the final stages of their theses.

In its mission of building an institution of teaching and research excellence, Ashoka aims to cultivate the next generation of researchers and thinkers. Through a combination of interdisciplinary approaches and rigorous scholarship, the University fosters an environment where research scholars can thrive, pushing the boundaries of knowledge while preparing to tackle the complex challenges of the future.

EPSON

Highlights from the last academic year

Master's in Liberal Studies (MLS)

The MLS programme is offered to graduates of the Young India Fellowship, who have been accepted by a faculty member to work on a specific research project. To date, 114 students have successfully completed the programme, undertaking intensive research projects under the mentorship of faculty across diverse disciplines, including Philosophy, English, Visual Arts, Computer Science, Sociology and Anthropology, Entrepreneurship and History. Many MLS alumni are pursuing PhD programmes at leading universities in India and beyond or have established successful careers in their chosen fields.

> Currently, Ashoka offers four master's programmes – these advanced programmes were established to meet the growing demand for specialised knowledge and skills.

Master's in English

In 2019-20, Ashoka started the master's programme in English. The two-year course offers an intellectually rigorous immersion in the study of Literature, framed by Ashoka's distinctive Liberal Arts vision.

The degree is capped by a research project, which students pursue under the mentorship of different faculty. In addition to traditional academic literary criticism, students have undertaken projects such as authoring critical translations and autoethnographies. Since the inception of the programme, 50 students have graduated, with the third cohort graduating in May 2024.

Master's in Economics

Launched in 2017-18, the programme brings together economic theory and rigorous data analysis. At the end of two years, students are expected to have state-of-the-art quantitative skills, valued both in academia and in the corporate world.

The sixth cohort of 18 students graduated in May 2024. Students from this cohort have been placed in both corporate firms and policy research organisations. This includes Deloitte, Dunnhumby, Genpact, Future's First, the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) and the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP).

Master's in Biology

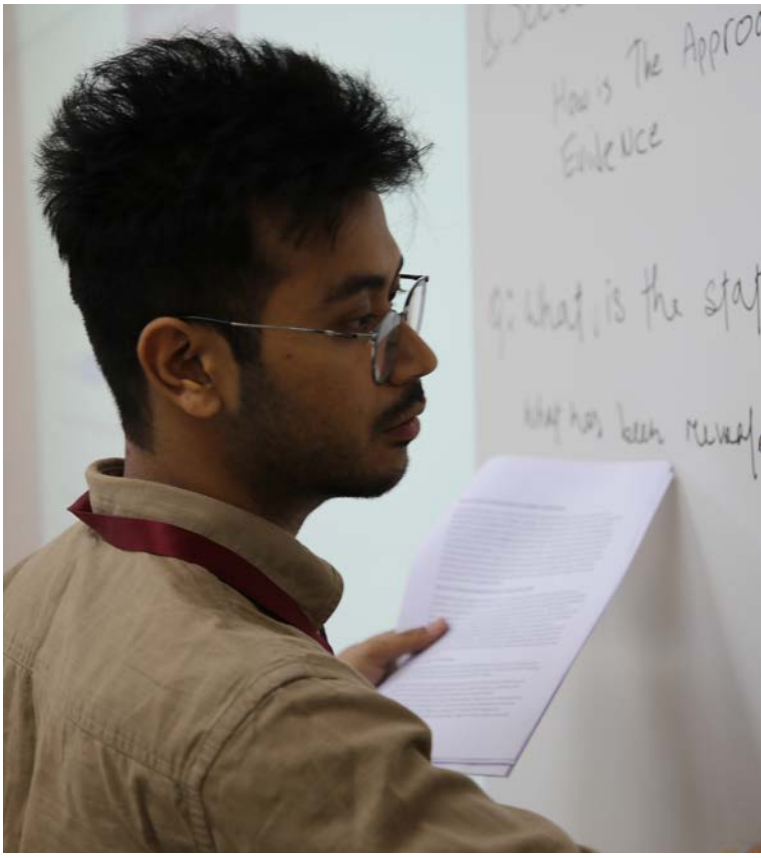
Launched in 2021-22, the degree in Biology was the first master's offering in the Sciences. The programme is designed to impart holistic training in the fundamentals of physical, chemical and mathematical principles of Biology. This includes diverse yet interconnected areas ranging from Evolution and Organismal Biology to Cell-Molecular and Computational Biology.

The programme allows hands-on training aided by contemporary pedagogical methods and extensive independent research. Students can also customise their learning based on individual interests. Nine students from the first cohort graduated this year. Some areas of their specialisations include Behavioural Neuroscience, Applied Genomics and Structural Mechanobiology, among others.

PhD Programme

Ashoka offers a fully-funded PhD programme across 11 disciplines. This includes Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English, Environmental Studies, History, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. In the first two years, scholars concentrate on coursework and formulating research questions before progressing to work on their theses. In the academic year 2023-24, fifty-three scholars were enrolled across disciplines, taking the total number of scholars to over 160.

Raghvi Garg, from the Department of Economics, was the University's first PhD graduate in 2023. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economic Sciences at IIT, Kanpur. This year, Basabi Bagchi, from the Department of Biology, became the first Science PhD graduate. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Montana.

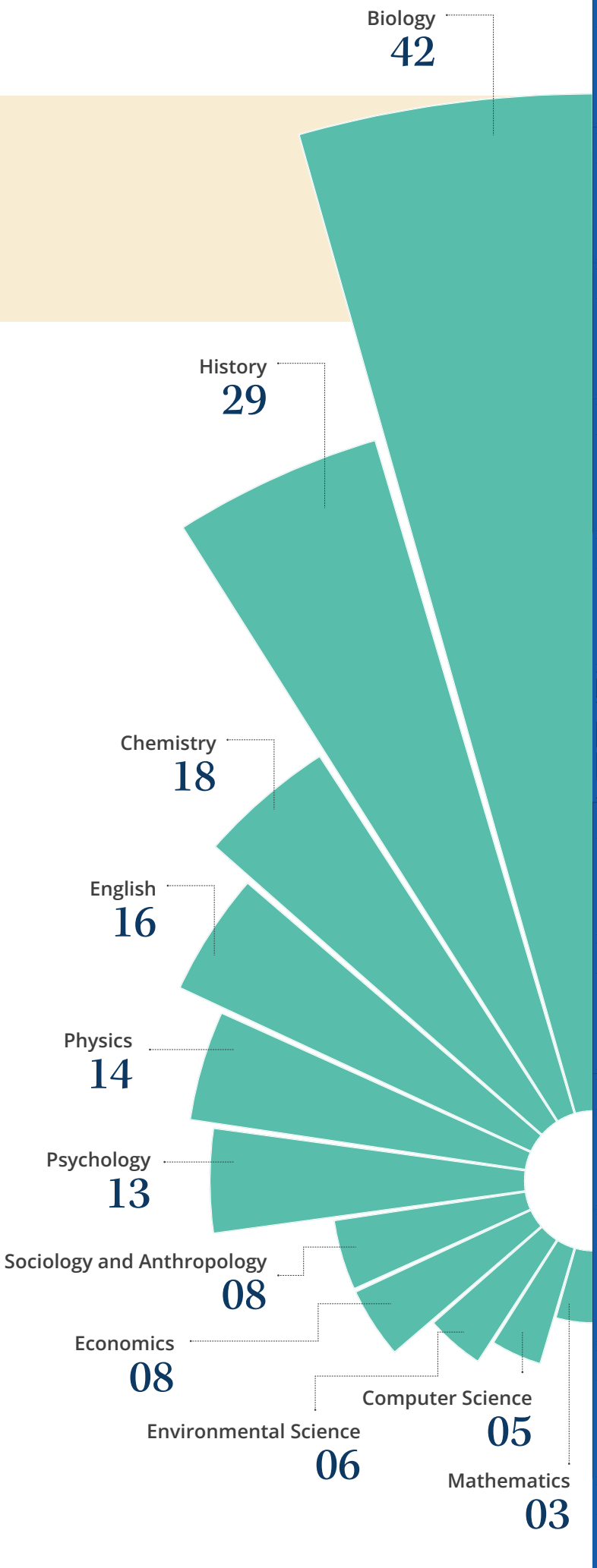


Basabi Bagchi became Ashoka's first Science PhD graduate, in 2024

Discipline-wise distribution of PhD scholars

Gender Breakup

75	87
Women	Men



> To date, CMGGA has shaped more than 160 leaders, who have contributed to sectors such as health, education, impact consulting, policy reform, academia and research.

Chief Minister's Good Governance Associates (CMGGA) Programme

Started in January 2016, the Chief Minister's Good Governance Associates (CMGGA) Programme was a strategic collaboration between Ashoka University and the Government of Haryana. The initiative was designed to work with young professionals and place them across 22 districts in Haryana to work directly with state and local administration. The goal: streamline government systems, revamp existing structures and provide seamless last mile delivery of government schemes and services. With a focus on promoting transparency, efficiency and citizen-centric service delivery, the programme sought to mentor and train the next generation of thought leaders equipped with critical thinking and analytical skills. Associates have undergone a one-year immersive fellowship experience, working on real-world challenges and gaining insights into public policy and governance.

Over the last eight years, the programme has made significant contributions to several high-impact government schemes and flagship projects, driving meaningful change across sectors. Some of its notable achievements include *Antyodaya Saral,* a one-stop digital platform providing access to over 650 government schemes. This won the President's Award for Best E-Governance Initiative in India. Other initiatives include *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao,* a targeted intervention to improve the sex ratio in Haryana, which saw a significant rise from 832 in 2012 to 916 in 2023.

To date, the programme has shaped more than 160 leaders, who have contributed to various sectors such as health, education, impact consulting, policy reform, academia and research. CMGGA has supported over 20 major government initiatives and 50 pilot projects, aligning with 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2023-24, the seventh cohort admitted 24 young professionals from various disciplines such as Public Policy, Engineering and Social Sciences. They have made notable strides in driving the success of various state initiatives. *Mukhya Mantri Antyodaya Parivar Utthan Yojna* is one of the many schemes designed. This aims to improve livelihoods of *Antyodaya* families through income-generating activities and enhanced access to government schemes. The Associates have played a crucial role in organising large-scale *melas* to promote and distribute the benefits of this programme to its beneficiaries.

Under the *Nirogi Haryana* initiative, which provides health checkups and hospital referrals for *Antyodaya* families, the Associates have focused on strengthening the programme's capacity and improving its quality. As a result, more than 7 lakh citizens have undergone health screenings. In addition, over 1,400 health officers - ranging from Community Health Officers to Senior Medical Officers - have been trained, significantly improving the healthcare system and expanding access to quality services.

The final cohort of the Chief Minister's Good Governance Associates Programme

Simons-Ashoka Early Career Fellowship

The Simons-Ashoka Early Career Fellowship in Quantitative Biomedical Sciences is an innovative initiative launched by the Trivedi School of Biosciences in collaboration with the Simons Foundation. This fellowship is the first-of-its-kind introduced by the Foundation outside the United States and in a developing country. The broad areas of focus include developing Mathematical and Computational methods for big data analysis in health and addressing fundamental questions in Biomedical Sciences that directly impact health. The programme also aims to incubate pioneering initiatives in personalised medicine, serving as a model for similar efforts at institutions worldwide. Additionally, it seeks to address healthcare needs in low- and middle-income countries.

Fellows can work independently while being co-mentored by an Ashoka faculty member and a globally renowned expert in their chosen research area, either from India or overseas. Currently, the programme has four scholars, whose focus areas include Precision Medicine, Digital Healthcare, Fundamental Biology, Astrophysics and Computational Biology.

AshokaX

Designed for lifelong learners and working professionals, AshokaX is revolutionising access to world-class education, bridging the gap between academia and real-world impact. By offering flexible formats – online, in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous – AshokaX meets the needs of today's dynamic learners, equipping them with skills to create real-world impact.

Recent milestones include the introduction of transformative programmes like *India@75, How to Change a Life: Certificate in Applied Behaviour Science, Writing for the 21st Century, Data Science for Social Impact and Demystifying the Regulatory Landscape for the Financial Sector*. In collaboration with the Environmental Defense Fund, AshokaX is fostering climate leadership through the Ashoka-Environmental Defense Fund Climate Corps Fellowship. Upcoming programmes in advanced fields such as Artificial Intelligence, Behavioural Science, Digital Healthcare and Language & Writing are on the anvil.

Centres *of* Excellence

Ashoka's commitment to hands-on learning extends to research. Since its inception, the University has been driven by the vision of becoming a leading hub for research and innovation in India and beyond.

This ambition materialised early on with the establishment of Centres of Excellence, designed to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and address critical global challenges. From Behavioural Sciences to Economic Data, Translation, Archaeology and Public Policy, these Centres reflect Ashoka's dedication to advancing knowledge and finding actionable solutions for complex global issues.

The University's first research-oriented Centre, the Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality, emerged from an Experiential Learning Module project spearheaded by a group of YIFs, in 2015. In the following years, Ashoka became home to several other pioneering Centres of Excellence – including the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy in 2016 and the Centre for Social and Behaviour Change in 2017. That same year, the University established the Archives of Contemporary India, aiming to build a rich and diverse collection of archival resources while promoting the use of primary sources for research on contemporary Indian history.

A hallmark of Ashoka's Centres is their emphasis on fostering collaboration.

A hallmark of Ashoka's Centres is their emphasis on fostering collaboration. By bringing together experts from diverse fields, these Centres transcend traditional academic silos, encouraging meaningful dialogue and the co-creation of knowledge. Faculty, researchers and students work together across departments and disciplines, leveraging the University's ethos of interdisciplinarity to address pressing global challenges.

Ashoka continues to evolve as a space where ideas converge to shape the future. Today, Ashoka proudly hosts 21 Centres of Excellence, each contributing to the University's growing reputation as a global academic leader. These Centres not only enrich the academic experience but also make tangible societal impact through groundbreaking research, partnerships and public engagement.

An undergraduate class at Sewali, the closest archaeological mound to Sonipat.

Highlights from the last academic year

Centre for Interdisciplinary Archeological Research (CIAR)

CIAR, launched in early 2021, is a distinctive initiative that brings Archaeology and the Sciences together to offer new perspectives on Indian history. As a result, it hosts two components that support each other: field-based courses and laboratories for teaching and research.

The Centre continued its forest-centric work in Bandhavgarh, Madhya Pradesh, which began in May 2023, along with its locality-centric surveys and teaching around Sonipat, Haryana. A course titled *Sonipat and its Surroundings: Sites and Sights* was offered to undergraduate students. This was a field-based course that involved immersive learning modules at sites ranging from prehistoric localities to those associated with the 1857 rebellions.

This year, three post-doctoral fellows were appointed to work on the archaeology of Gujarat, Assam and Himachal Pradesh. Scholars and faculty associated with the Centre have published their work in journals including *Lithic Technology* and *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences.*

Centre for Social and Behaviour Change (CSBC)

The Centre for Social and Behaviour Change (CSBC) was established in 2017 through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since its inception, CSBC has been at the forefront of advancing public policy through the application of behavioural science. By combining rigorous research, capacity building, and large-scale interventions, the Centre has successfully implemented transformative projects across diverse domains such as health, water, financial inclusion, sustainability and rural livelihoods.

CSBC's strategic partnerships with the governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been pivotal in driving meaningful change. Notable initiatives include the development of training modules for nearly 1.7 lakh frontline workers and a comprehensive coaching toolkit benefiting two lakh women entrepreneurs. The Centre has also played a critical role in the Jal Jeevan Mission by collaborating with the Ministry of Jal Shakti to craft behaviour change strategies and communications guidelines aimed at promoting sustainable water use.

The first China Studies minors graduated in 2024

In addition to its work in India, CSBC has strengthened its research capacity through collaborations with esteemed institutions like Collegio Carlo Alberto and the University of Michigan. These partnerships have yielded valuable insights into behavioural science applications in the Indian context.

Capacity-building remains a cornerstone of CSBC's mission. The Centre has conducted specialised training sessions for officer-trainees at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration and the National Academy of Direct Taxes, equipping future IAS and IRS officers with tools to apply behavioural insights effectively in governance.

CSBC's academic contributions are equally noteworthy, with recent publications in prestigious journals such as Nature Communications, Cerebral Cortex, and the Journal of Development Economics, reflecting its commitment to advancing the global discourse on behavioural science.

Ashoka Centre for China Studies (ACCS)

Established in 2021, ACCS strives to build interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary areas with a particular focus on the Mandarin language. It works on China-related research and collaboration to foster a greater understanding of the country across academic, policy-making and public audiences in India.

In 2023, in collaboration with the HDFC Library and the Archives of Contemporary India, the Centre launched the Roderick MacFarquhar personal collection with a one-day conference. Undergraduate students, postdoctoral fellows and a visiting PhD student presented research using English and Chinese sources within the collection. Prof Elizabeth Perry (Director, Harvard Yenching Institute) was the keynote speaker for the event.

> The Centres of Excellence at Ashoka transcend traditional academic silos, encourage meaningful dialogue and the co-creation of knowledge

Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP)

Established in 2016, CSIP is India's first academic centre focused on enabling strategic and robust philanthropy for greater social impact. It provides philanthropists and civil society organisations with evidence-led knowledge and training to enhance their scale and effectiveness.

In 2023-24, CSIP released the second edition of the report, *How India Gives* and launched a public microsite for its talent study. The Centre gained international recognition at the Asia Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organisations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). The convening on 'Philanthropy and its Myriad Avatars' attracted national and international scholars and practitioners.

CSIP also designed and delivered an 'Unwrapping the Social Sector' module for Ashoka students and high school students who were part of the Lodha Genius Programme. Several inaugural capacity-building initiatives for Ashoka students were launched, including a six-day rural immersion and a guided summer internship.

Prof Ashwini Desphande at the Women In India Inc. Summit

Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA)

CEDA was established by the Department of Economics in 2020. The Centre publishes original research that provides insights into socio-economic issues with data-rich analyses. It aims to facilitate informed debate and discussion about economic and social developments in India. This is done by making data accessible to a wide range of audiences through various data and editorial offerings.

In addition to its routine research-driven work, the Centre is also undertaking an investigative research project titled 'Partnering with the Private Sector for Women's Economic Empowerment'. This project aims to address demand-side barriers that prevent women from participating in the workforce on an equal footing. It includes research studies, partnerships with the private sector and data-driven advocacy on the subject. Additionally, it seeks to create opportunities for students to engage with and learn from this work.

Ashoka Centre for a People-Centric Energy Transition (ACPET)

ACPET is an interdisciplinary energy policy research centre that supports a sustainable and equitable energy future for India and the global South. Launched in 2023, the Centre studies a range of energy transition issues, including clean energy technologies, financing mechanisms, energy markets and policy frameworks. With a focus on people-centric solutions, ACPET attempts to contribute towards sustainable development across economic, social and environmental dimensions.

In the last academic year, the Centre completed impactful projects on financing energy transition, critical minerals and transition of coal mining communities towards sustainable life and livelihood.

> ACPET received due recognition from its partner energy ministries, NITI Aayog, PSUs, private sector players and think tanks in India and abroad.

Former Coal Secretary, Anil Kumar Jain, speaking at the event India@2047 - The Energy Story

Screening of the documentary 'All That Breathes' at Healing Earth 3.0

Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability (3CS)

3CS is committed to raising awareness, conducting research and advocating on climate change and sustainability. Established in 2019, the Centre collaborates with faculty from various departments, students and research staff to study and mitigate the impacts of future climate change on our society, health and environment.

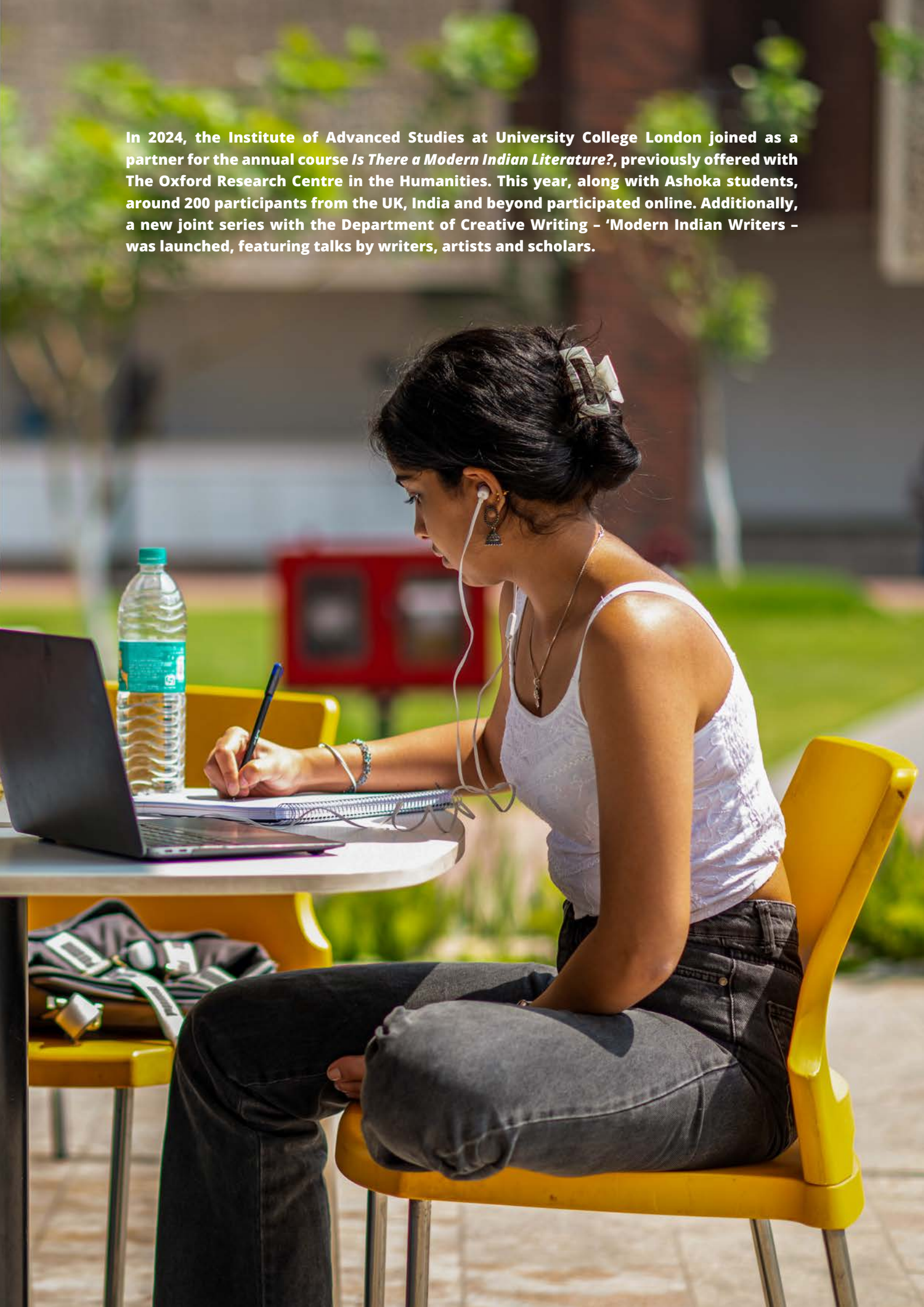
In the last academic year, the Centre continued supporting 13 major projects and hosted its annual conference, Healing Earth 3.0. The first day featured a panel on the subject, 'More Than Human: Cities as Animal Ecologies'. It also included a screening of the award-winning documentary *All That Breathes*, followed by a student panel with Nadeem Shehzad and Mohammad Saud. The second day showcased a panel of distinguished academics and scientists from the Indian National Science Academy, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Indian Institute of Science and Princeton University, discussing ecological responses to global warming and their relevance to human society.

The Live Green project, initially incubated at 3CS, launched several effective initiatives to promote sustainability on campus.

Centre for the Creative and the Critical (CCC)

The CCC provides a forum to raise and address questions on creative practice and critical argument. It unites writers, translators, artists, scholars and publishers with different traditions and histories from around the world. By doing so, the Centre fosters intercultural and extra-disciplinary discussions about creative practice.

In partnership with Westland Books, the Centre launched a new imprint, 'Literary Activism' and published four books in the series. This includes Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *Book of Rahim & Other Poems,* Amit Chaudhuri's *On Being Indian,* Vinod Kumar Shukla's *Treasurer of Piggy Banks,* translated by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and *Against Storytelling,* edited by Amit Chaudhuri. The 9th symposium in the Literary Activism series was organised – independent artists, authors and publishers from the UK, US and India presented their talks on the theme, 'Bust Traditions'.



In 2024, the Institute of Advanced Studies at University College London joined as a partner for the annual course *Is There a Modern Indian Literature?*, previously offered with The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities. This year, along with Ashoka students, around 200 participants from the UK, India and beyond participated online. Additionally, a new joint series with the Department of Creative Writing – 'Modern Indian Writers – was launched, featuring talks by writers, artists and scholars.

Ashoka Centre for Translation (ACT)

ACT was established in 2021 to foster, nurture and foreground India's multilingual ethos. Through a variety of texts, it connects practitioners and students of translation at Ashoka and beyond. These include literary, political, scientific, oral and popular domains.

The Centre announced its second publication series – Chronicles, a groundbreaking non-fiction series comprising 10 books translated from nine Indian languages into English under the aegis of the Manju Deshbandhu Gupta Fellowship. It is being published with Penguin Random House India.

The Centre organised events with writer-scholars such as Khalid Jawed and Christi A Merrill. It also hosted a translation workshop in partnership with the South Asian Literature in Translation (SALT) project at UChicago, which included sessions with award-winning translators and online public lectures by distinguished scholars in collaboration with the Murty Classical Library of India and Harvard University Press.

Prof Rita Kothari in conversation with Khalid Jawed

Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality (CSGS)

Inaugurated in 2015, CSGS works on the issues of gender and sexuality through an interdisciplinary lens. These are addressed through academic research, student engagement and public workshops.

To understand the intersectionality of sexuality with politics, performance and cinema, the Centre organised events with scholars and performers such as Zuleikha Chaudhuri and Brahma Prakash. A new research section titled 'Sex, Sexuality and the Law' was inaugurated on the online resource directory, *Mapping Sexuality*. This research module maps legal judgments over the past five decades as they have contributed to the development of sexual justice in India.

The Centre also published new issues of *Qurbatein: A Gender and Sexuality Biannual,* featuring academic and creative work by emerging writers and poets. It also concluded its second year of Transformative Arts and Research Initiatives Fellowship (TAARIF), India's first fully funded fellowship for trans* scholars. The Fellowship received the Antipode Rights to Discipline Grant to expand for its third iteration.

> Since its inception, ICPP has produced numerous policy briefs and case studies and has launched various research projects.

Isaac Centre for Public Policy (ICPP)

The Isaac Centre for Public Policy, launched in December 2023, focuses on transformative economic policies tailored to India's unique challenges. It aims to foster inclusive and sustainable growth of the Indian economy. The Centre's initial research focuses on the rural and agricultural economy, employment, Indian regulators and public finance.

Since its inception, ICPP has produced numerous policy briefs and case studies and has launched various research projects. It hosted launch events in Delhi and Bengaluru, featuring speakers such as NK Singh, Uma Mahadevan, KP Krishnan and V Anantha Nageswaran. It has also conducted multiple policy events in Delhi and on campus and offered its first executive education course, *Demystifying the Regulatory Landscape for the Financial Sector* with speakers such as D Subbarao, KV Kamath and Justice Somasekhar Sundaresan.

In collaboration with the Department of Economics, ICPP introduced an undergraduate major in Economics and Public Policy.

Centre for Data Science and Analytics (CDSA)

Established in 2023, CDSA is a one-stop shop for storing, managing, analysing and combining data across Ashoka's departments and centres. The CDSA has built and made available a Datalake infrastructure to all Ashoka researchers and currently hosts the Lok Dhaba data (previously collected and curated by the Political Science researchers at Ashoka). Further, CDSA has initiated collaborative discussions with the Trivedi School of Biosciences, the Centre for a People-Centric Energy Transition and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Archaeology Research to ingest their data into the Datalake and apply various data analytics and visualisation.

CDSA is actively involved in multiple research projects including the "Food Knowledge Graph" to model Indian food, its nutrition and impact on health. The project is funded by Ashoka Mphasis Lab and is being developed in collaboration with University of California, Irvine and Ashoka's Centre for Health Analytics Research and Trends. Further, under its outreach activities, the Centre has been offering Professional and Executive Development Program (PEDP) on "Data Science for Social Impact" in collaboration with data.org, J-PAL SA, and AshokaX.

Centre for Digitalisation, AI and Society (CDAIS)

In 2023-24, CDAIS initiated several research projects, including studies on digitalising elections, Aadhaar seeding in India's Public Distribution System and the privacy and security properties of India's Unified Payments Interface.

The Centre's faculty also conducted three courses on digitalisation, privacy, computer security and information studies, and supervised five independent study projects on related topics.

Safexpress Centre for Data, Learning and Decision Sciences (SCDLDS)

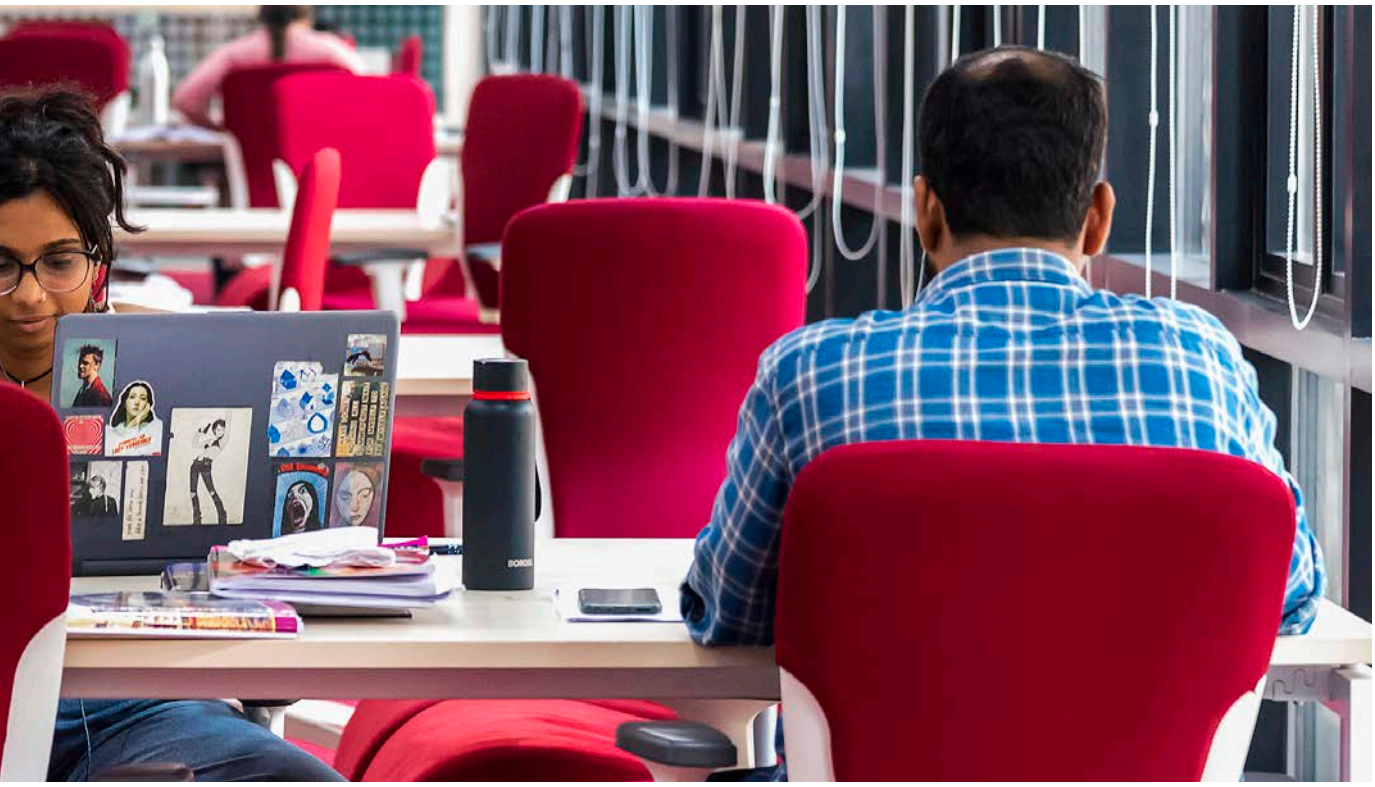
SCDLDS, launched in 2024, is dedicated to advancing data science through cutting-edge research that informs decision-making on complex societal challenges. The research aligns with the rapidly evolving fields of data science, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

The Centre's current research initiatives include weather modelling to predict monsoon rainfall and heat waves in India and financial fraud detection in collaboration with leading Indian banks.

Koita Centre for Digital Health at Ashoka (KCDH-A)

Established in 2023, KCDH-A is an interdisciplinary initiative by the Trivedi School of Biosciences and the Department of Computer Science. It aims to advance digital health by integrating healthcare, genomics, information technology and artificial intelligence.

The Centre fosters innovation through education and research by collaborating with internal departments and external organisations such as Max Hospitals, AIIMS and Johns Hopkins. It supports over 20 researchers and mentors students of the Ashoka Health and Research Club (AHRC). KCDH-A also offers courses on Digital Health and is planning to contribute towards an interdisciplinary Health Sciences programme at the undergraduate, master's and PhD levels.



Archives *of* Contemporary India

Captain Lakshmi Sahgal

Subhas Chandra Bose with members of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. 1st Row: Lieutenant Colonel Chatterjee, Lieutenant Colonel J.K. Bhonsle, Captain Lakshmi Sahgal, Subhas Chandra Bose, Anand Mohan Sahay and S.A. Ayer. 2nd Row: Lieutenant Colonel Gulzara Singh, Lieutenant Colonel Shah Nawaz Khan, Lieutenant Colonel Aziz Ahmed, Lieutenant Colonel M.Z. Kiani, Lieutenant Colonel N.S. Bhagat, Lieutenant Colonel Ehsan Qadir, Lieutenant Colonel Loganadan

Ringing the tocsin

THE INDIAN ECONOMY AT CROSSROADS: ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES

Frontier Lecture at Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, 25 February, 1993

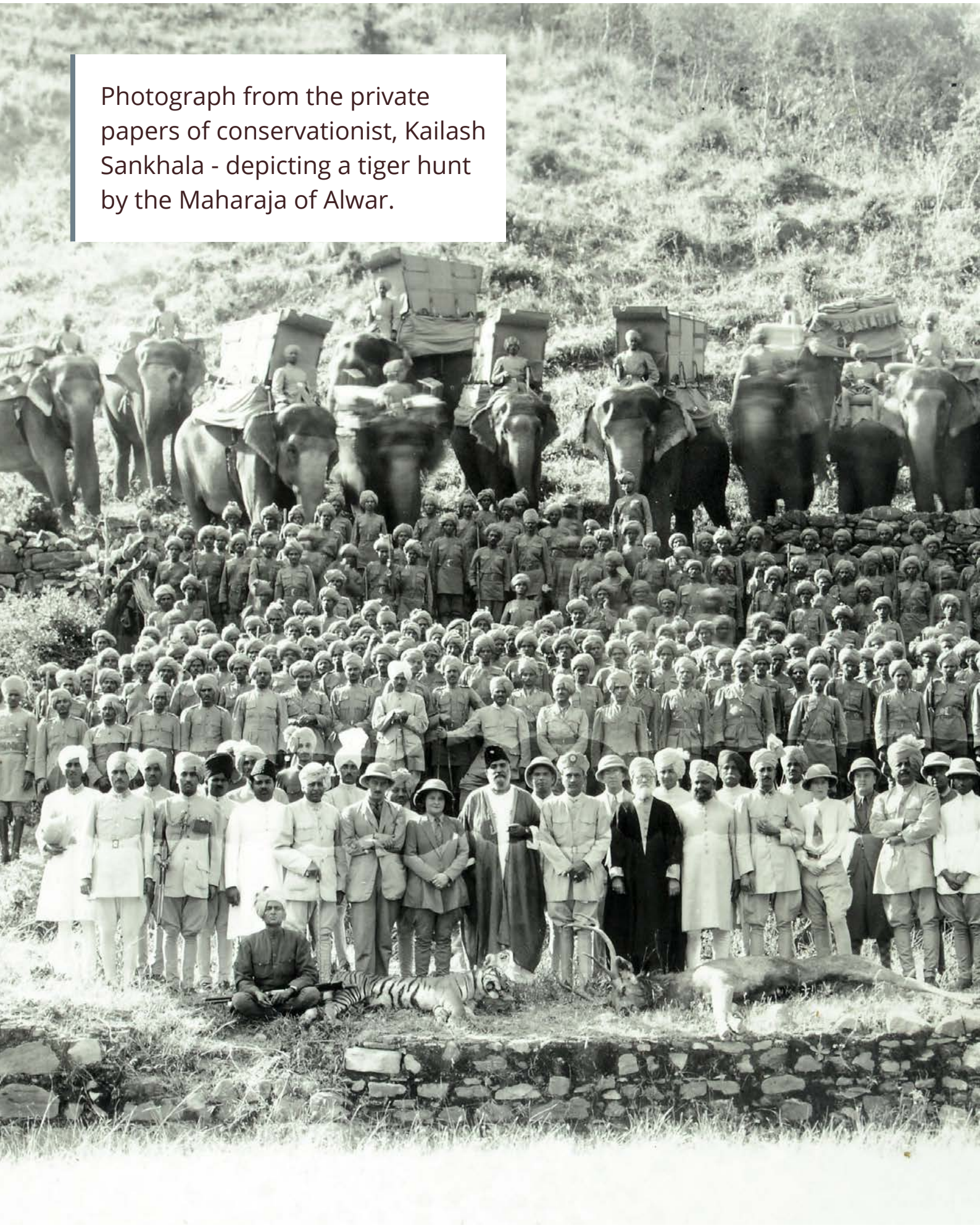
From Not noted

Ashis Nandy

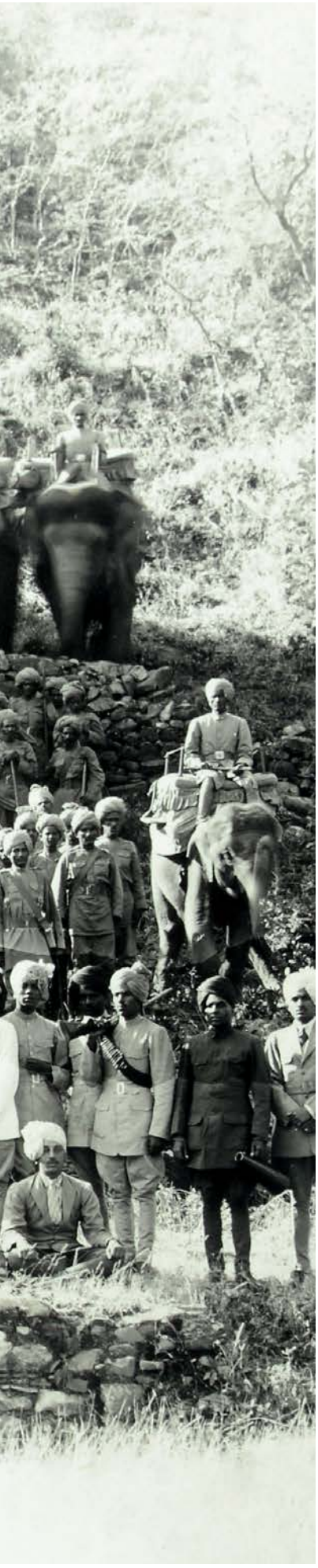
The Archives of Contemporary India at Ashoka came into being in 2017. The purpose behind its establishment was two-fold – to preserve documents from India's contemporary history, and in doing so, making these available to scholars and students alike. From the very beginning, the Archives focused on a broad range of subjects – with collections from personalities belonging to the worlds of civil society to journalism, the women's movement and environment, theatre, Literature and Science.

In a short span of time, the Archives has been able to collect the original papers of former President Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan; former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh; playwright and veteran actor Girish Karnad; environmentalist Chandi Prasad Bhatt; freedom fighter and activist, Captain Lakshmi Sahgal, amongst several others.

Today, Ashoka is the only private university in India to house an archive of this magnitude and stature. Looking ahead, it aspires to become one of the foremost centres for historical and social science research in the country – building an indispensable repository of public affairs.



Photograph from the private papers of conservationist, Kailash Sankhala - depicting a tiger hunt by the Maharaja of Alwar.



Highlights from the last academic year

The Archives acquired significant collections of eminent personalities. This includes the papers of Sai Paranjpye (film director and screenwriter), Chandrashekhar Dasgupta (scholar and diplomat), RL MacFarquhar (China scholar), Jagat Mehta (scholar and diplomat), Prem Shankar Jha (journalist and economist), Adil Jussawalla (poet and editor), Lakshmi Chandra Jain (writer and journalist) and M Ali Manikfan (marine biologist and ecologist). It also acquired archival issues of *Nainital Samachar*, *Uttara Mahila Patrika* and *Aniket*. The collection at the Archives now stands at 81.

Preparation of catalogues and metadata continued throughout the year. Collections of RL MacFarquhar, N Raghavan, PN Haksar, Kiran Nagarkar, Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, Prosenjit Dasgupta, Adil Jussawalla and Dr S Radhakrishnan (1948-52) were documented. Approximately 50,000 rare documents and photographs were digitised, of which 35,000 images were uploaded to the website. These included those from Dr S Radhakrishnan, Dileep Padgaonkar, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Girish Karnad, SH Vatsyayan and Kuldip Nayar. The Archives website attracts scholars from across the world.

Interactive sessions, workshops and guided tours for students were also organised. Some of the speakers for these events included Dilip M Menon (Professor of History and Founder-Director, Centre for Indian Studies in Africa, University of Witwatersrand), Joseph S Alter (Professor of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh), Jahnavi Phalkey (Director, Science Gallery Bengaluru) and Monia Acciari (Professor in Film and Television History, DeMontfort University). Digital exhibitions were also organised on India's Independence Day. On September 5, an exhibition was held on 'The Early Writings of Dr S Radhakrishnan on Indian Philosophy'.

Student *Life*

As the first few cohorts arrived from all corners of India and the world, Ashoka welcomed them to a fully residential campus, buzzing with promise and potential. From the very first day, the University made a commitment – to guide, support and empower students through every stage of their journey.

For many students, the transition to college marks the first time they leave home and settle in a completely new environment. Recognising the different challenges that come with this transition, the University introduced the Academic Bridge Programme (ABP) in 2018.

This three-week programme helps bridge the gap between students' previous academic experiences and the rigorous demands of the university curriculum. It also provides students with adequate time to adjust to the campus environment before their undergraduate courses begin. The ABP includes specialised sessions on subjects such as English, Critical Thinking, Writing and Research Methodology. Since its inception, the programme has supported over 220 students from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds – playing a crucial role in Ashoka's mission to make world-class education accessible to all.

Ashoka has also established a network of student-centric offices, dedicated to nurturing every aspect of student life.

In a constant effort to create a safe and supportive environment where students can thrive academically, socially and emotionally, Ashoka has also established a network of student-centric offices, dedicated to nurturing every aspect of student life. The Office of Learning Support has been creating an inclusive environment for students with physical, sensory and learning disabilities since 2016. This is achieved through collaborative efforts, academic accessibility initiatives, assistive technologies, personalised support and community sensitisation. In the same year, the Ashoka Centre for Well-Being was also established to cater to the emotional and psychological needs of students, faculty and staff. With a holistic approach, it provides services such as individual and group counselling, crisis intervention, walk-in hours as well as a dedicated helpline number.

The University also encourages social engagement through clubs, events and activities. With over 20 student-led clubs and societies, Ashoka ensures that students have the chance to participate in activities that nurture their personal and intellectual growth. Among these clubs are Neev, the community engagement club; the Northeast Collective; Ashoka Women in Business and the Leadership Club, to name just a few. These not only allow students to pursue their passions but also offer them a chance to make meaningful contributions to campus life and beyond.

With the inauguration of the Sports Block on campus in 2016, sports began to take on a more structured presence on campus. Ashoka provides comprehensive training across a wide range of sports – with state-of-the-art facilities for football, cricket, squash, volleyball, basketball, badminton and tennis. The University also houses a running track, shooting range and a fully-equipped gymnasium. Additionally, there is a well-maintained swimming pool, along with facilities for billiards and pool.

As students grow into their ambitions, Ashoka's Career Development Office helps them take the next steps. Established in 2014, the Office assists students with various programmes that make them job-ready and connect them with internship and placement opportunities. Starting with just 180 job offers from 85 organisations in the first year, the number has grown to over 3,000 job offers from 500 organisations. In addition to career support, the University also offers students the opportunity to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. Set up in 2015, the InfoEdge Centre for Entrepreneurship offers a wide range of academic courses as well as incubation and acceleration programmes – encouraging students to adopt an entrepreneurial approach not just in business, but in every field they pursue. To date, over 120 start-ups have been incubated.

Highlights from the last academic year

The last academic year was marked by vibrant student activities and events on campus. Notable highlights included Banjara, Chakraview and the Ashoka Literary Fest, which attracted over 2,000 external participants from across India. These events showcased the University's dynamic and inclusive spirit, drawing attention to its diverse community.

Students excelled in inter-university competitions, winning more than 100 awards, at events such as IIT Bombay's renowned Mood Indigo festival and IIT (BHU) Varanasi's Model United Nations. On campus, the clubs and societies organised close to 250 events through the year. These initiatives not only enriched student life but also promoted sustainability, with projects like *Karigari* and Pulp standing out as examples of creative and environmentally conscious student efforts.

> Like every year, hallmark events like the Dorm Olympics and The Great Ashokan Weekend had over 2,000 students participate in more than 50 activities.

In individual achievements, Harshit Amarnani secured the second position in the Prague Chess Rapid competition. Roshni Patra earned a gold medal in the 50-metre freestyle event at the 23rd National Para Swimming Championship, further cementing Ashoka's legacy of excellence in sports. A variety of cultural tours were organised to offer students immersive experiences of India's rich heritage. One such initiative, *Safarnama*, took students on tours to historical sites like Rakhigarhi and Qila Rai Pithora.

Additionally, Ashoka *Haats* was organised to showcase the work of local artisans and entrepreneurs, creating opportunities for students to support the craftsmanship of nearby communities. The inaugural SPIC MACAY performance featured renowned violinists Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi.

Student Service Centres & Offices

Ashoka Centre for Well-Being (ACWB)

ACWB works towards building a thriving campus culture by enhancing mental health literacy.

The Centre conducts programmes such as Gatekeeper Training and internships for students, Well-Being at Workplace for professionals and specialised courses for Young India Fellows and high schoolers.

Over the past year, the Centre has worked with several higher education institutes to build mental health awareness and literacy. These include IIT Gandhinagar, IIM Udaipur, Shiv Nadar University, IIT Jammu, Delhi University and IC3 (International Career & College Counseling). Going forward, the Centre in collaboration with Aikyam Foundation seeks to address the gaps in mental health in higher education institutions by conducting a comprehensive state of sector survey and developing actionable resources to improve mental health services across universities in India.

Centre for Writing and Communication (CWC)

The CWC works closely with the academic community at Ashoka to develop critical thinking, writing and communications skills. It provides support across disciplines through lectures, workshops and one-on-one sessions.

In the last academic year, the Centre launched various workshops that addressed fundamental aspects of academic work at Ashoka – focused on effective listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, the Centre focused on embedding reading, writing and communications modules in existing courses at Ashoka, including those in the Sciences and Mathematics.

The CWC is also advancing research on pedagogy and the potential of writing centres to intervene in higher education in South Asia. A significant milestone is the publication of *Inclusive Pedagogies: Teaching & Learning Practices in Higher Education in India,* edited by Kanika Singh, which emerged from the Centre's work at Ashoka.

InfoEdge Centre for Entrepreneurship (CfE)

In the last academic year, the Centre expanded its offerings, deepened industry and startup ecosystem engagement, and widened the reach of events. The Centre offered 51 courses, attracting over 990 students in areas such as strategy, decision sciences, marketing, finance and social impact. Additionally, students experienced holistic learning through industry and market field visits to organisations such as Info Edge, Inov8, Pidilite, Perfetti, Havmor, Hawkins and Chrys Capital. The Centre facilitated student participation at startup events like Startup Mahakumbh, Vibrant Gujarat, TechSparks and TiEcon Delhi-NCR. As part of the social entrepreneurship courses, students visited public schools and NGOs in Delhi.

The Centre organised speaker sessions and interactions with notable figures like Sanjeev Bikhchandani (Founder, Info Edge & Ashoka University), Ravi Kant (Former MD, Tata Motors), Vineeta Singh (CEO, Sugar Cosmetics), Samar Bajaj (Director, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation India) and Niti Kumar (COO, Starcom) to name a few. The Centre also organised the Entrepreneurship Weekender – a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit of Ashokans – featuring CfE's flagship events such as Startup Ashoka, Entrepreneurship Haat and an inter-university business simulation event. The Centre incubated 27 'Ashokapreneurs' across the undergraduate, YIF and alumni cohort.

Office of Academic Affairs (OAA)

OAA oversees all aspects of the University's undergraduate academic experience. Its responsibilities include course management, student advising and support, academic record-keeping, policy implementation, facilitating faculty feedback and managing the degree check process to ensure students meet graduation requirements. The Office provides guidance on planning course trajectories and collaborates with various departments to support students' academic performance. Additionally, it assists faculty in developing academic programmes. At the end of each semester, the OAA releases the Dean's List to honour students with outstanding academic records.

In 2023-24, the Office hosted events such as the Academic Society Mixer and financial aid sessions for international students. Various training sessions were held to help departments navigate the Academic Management System, making it easier for students to submit queries and schedule appointments.

Career Development Office (CDO)

The Office's flagship Career Preparatory Programme aims to strengthen student profiles and enhance career readiness among young graduates joining the workforce. In the last academic year, over 1,600 students participated in the programme. It also offered one-on-one mock interviews, soft skills training and resume review sessions for every student. In the last decade, the University has placed almost 3,000 graduates in over 500 organisations.

Placements

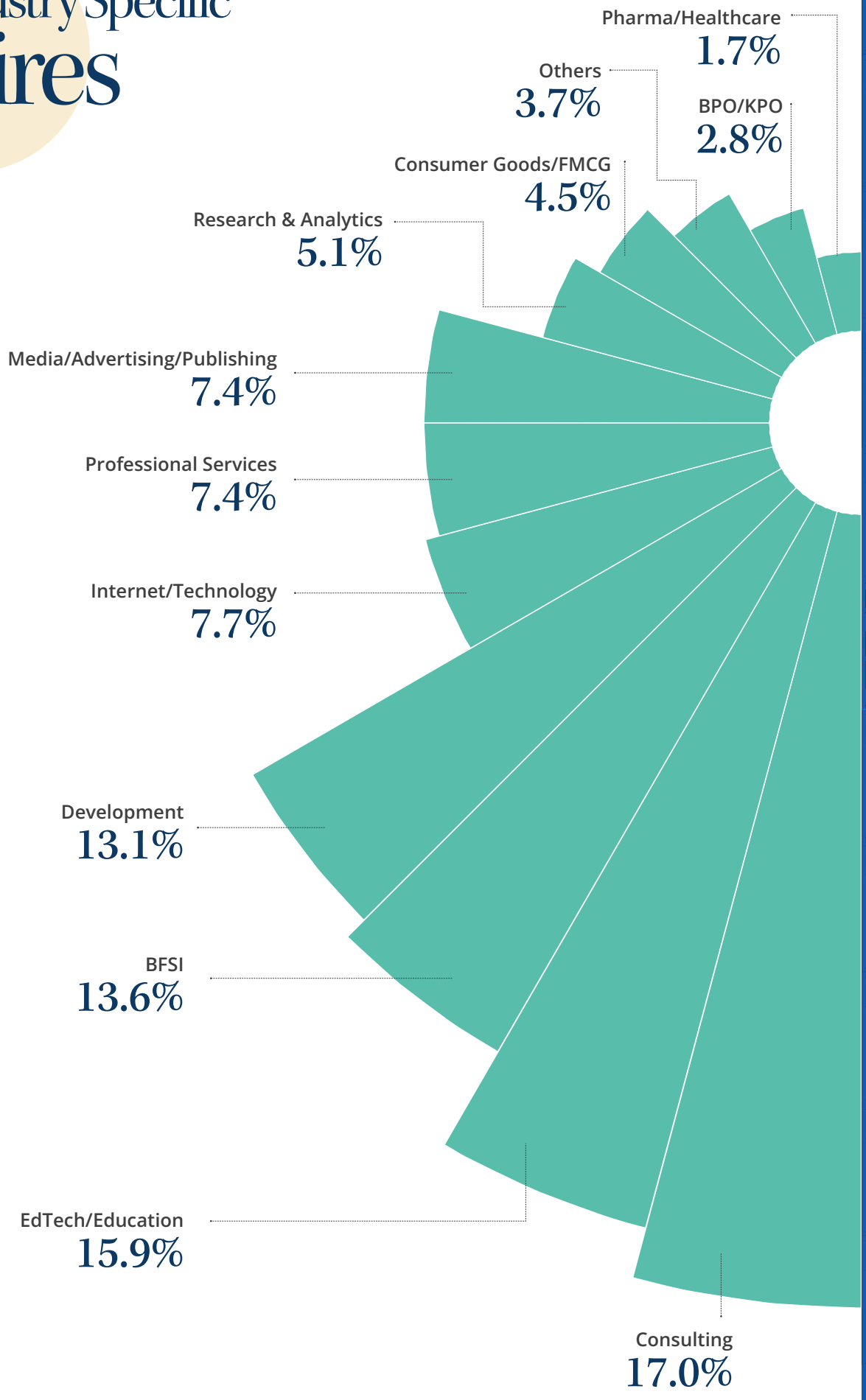
In the last academic year, the highest CTC offered in the corporate sector was Rs 35 lakh, while for the development sector, it was Rs 20 lakh. Over 150 recruiters hired across different industries. These include McKinsey and Company, Boston Consulting Group, Foundation for Interoperability in Digital Economy (FIDE), Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), Samagara Governance, HSBC, DE Shaw and Co, Adobe and EY, among others.

Office of Learning Support (OLS)

In the last academic year, the Office hosted various events during Dyslexia and Autism Awareness months. The ***Calling the Shots*** newsletter series, which focuses on executive functioning – an area where many students face challenges – was launched. The Office also expanded its range of support services for students, adding psycho-educational assessments and counseling services. New assistive technologies, including Pictures In A Flash (PIAF) and Graphiti, were acquired, easing STEM education for students with visual impairments. Ashoka is the first institution in India to implement such technologies.

OLS' impact extends beyond Ashoka, influencing broader conversations on disability inclusion in higher education and serving as a model for accessibility initiatives across the sector. The Office delved into extensive research projects that enquired about the gaps faced by students with disabilities in accessing higher education as well as placement opportunities and proposed solutions to address these. These initiatives engage diverse stakeholders like universities, policymakers, disability experts and corporations to take collaborative action towards inclusion. A significant milestone was the 'Future of Disability Inclusion in Higher Education: Conclave 2023' which culminated in the release of a white paper providing actionable recommendations for the government. This year, OLS launched the first-ever College Readiness Cohort (CRC) for high school students with disabilities, following the development of the 'Becoming an Independent Learner' course. Another course under the CRC banner, covering Assistive Technology, was also developed.

Industry Specific Hires



> The Parents Handbook, produced by the APO, is given to parents of all new undergraduate students. It outlines key academic and residence policies. The Office works closely with parents for support with internships, placements and fundraising.

Office of Student Affairs (OSA)

OSA plays a key role in driving student experiences outside the classrooms, ensuring a well-rounded and enriching campus life. It continues to foster a vibrant, inclusive and supportive environment for all students. The Office supports students through its four verticals: Residence Life, Student Care, Student Life and Sports and Exercise.

In the last academic year, OSA launched the Student Dashboard, an innovative tool designed to help new students on campus – a centralised space to access vital information, resources and updates, making their transition to campus life seamless and efficient.

Office of Dean of Faculty (ODF)

The ODF oversees the functioning and welfare of Ashoka's faculty. The Office coordinates with academic departments to recruit new faculty and administers the University's rigorous tenure and promotion process. It is responsible for managing faculty leave, annual research grants, office and housing allocation and faculty-related data management. The Office also addresses the collective and individual concerns of the faculty. The ODF has taken the lead in academic planning and faculty development in light of Ashoka's expansion.

Alumni Relations Office (ARO)

The ARO connects Ashoka's 5,600-strong alumni with the University. Following a successful Alumni Council election last year, the Office and the Council have conducted various alumni engagement activities since then.

The Alumni Weekender which was held on campus in June 2024 had over 160 alumni participating. The number of alumni chapters have also increased. There are now 27 Indian and 15 international chapters. Through the year, over 40 chapter meets were held. Honouring the spirit of giving back, Ashoka's alumni continue to contribute to their alma mater in various meaningful ways. This year, Mahesh Jakhotia (YIF '12), became the second alumni founder. Jairaj Bhattacharya (YIF '11) was the first.

Ashoka Parents' Office (APO)

Ashoka's Parents' Office is the first of its kind in an Indian university, offering a unique support system for parents. The Office addresses queries and concerns that parents may have, conducts outreach and keeps parents informed of the University's activities.

The Parents Handbook, produced by the Office, is given to parents of all new undergraduate students. It outlines key academic and residence policies. The Office works closely with parents for support with internships, placements and fundraising.

Office of Global Education

This Office spearheads global mobility programmes and international partnerships. It also supports students with summer and semester abroad programmes with some of the leading universities in the world. In 2023-24, more than 180 Ashoka students took part in summer and semester programmes at universities such as Stanford University, King's College London, UC Santa Cruz, the London School of Economics, the National University of Singapore and Columbia University.

In the last academic year, Ashoka focused on strengthening strategic partnerships throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The University secured Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with several institutions, including Monash University (Australia), the University of Otago (New Zealand) and Lingnan University (Hong Kong). Ashoka also established partnerships with UC San Diego and UC Santa Cruz in California, as well as with the University of Birmingham and the University of Manchester. Currently, Ashoka has over 50 global partners, 31 of whom are ranked among the top 200 global universities by QS.

This year also saw the launch of the Ashoka International Summer Research Programme, which welcomed 15 international participants from renowned institutions such as Cornell University, New York University and UC San Diego. The University also hosted 13 students for its semester-long visiting student programme.

Ashoka students at the London School of Economics for summer

SIMBA
PUMA

Faculty & Research

Since inception, Ashoka has fostered a community grounded in intellectual exploration. At the core of the University's mission is its faculty – a group of scholars, writers, artists and thinkers who bring expertise, passion and an unwavering commitment to research.

Starting with just a handful of educators, Ashoka's faculty has now expanded to a formidable community of over 160 distinguished members, each dedicated to advancing knowledge across disciplines. This growth, in both numbers and breadth, reflects Ashoka's vision of developing a pioneering research culture in India, one that not only nurtures curiosity but constantly contributes to global discourse.

Ashoka's vision of developing a pioneering research culture in India, one that not only nurtures curiosity but constantly contributes to global discourse.

Research at Ashoka is not confined to traditional academic boundaries. It is a collaborative endeavour that spans the Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, reflecting the University's interdisciplinary ethos. Faculty and students work side by side, engaging on some of the most pressing issues of our time, from social justice and economic policy to environmental sustainability and technological innovation. Through this approach, Ashoka has created a space where intellectual pursuit meets societal impact, enriching the academic journey and reaffirming the University's role in shaping a better world.

A key driver of this research-centred culture is Ashoka's Research and Development Office (RDO). The RDO plays an instrumental role in empowering faculty and researchers, providing the support and resources they need to achieve their goals. From securing essential funding and overseeing grant applications to enhancing lab facilities with state-of-the-art equipment, the RDO has established itself as a vital resource within the University. It also manages Ashoka's growing PhD programme, ensuring that the next generation of researchers has the foundation to carry forward the University's mission of inquiry and impact.

Central to Ashoka's vision is the network of global partnerships that has flourished over the years. Today, Ashoka collaborates with renowned institutions across the world, including the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, Carl Zeiss India, Université Côte d'Azur, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Geneva. These partnerships connect Ashoka's community with a diverse array of resources as well as perspectives, fostering a culture of shared learning.

As Ashoka continues to grow, it remains steadfast in its commitment to being a leader in research and interdisciplinary education in India and beyond. With a faculty dedicated to pushing the boundaries of knowledge, a robust infrastructure for cutting-edge research, and a vision grounded in societal impact, Ashoka stands as a beacon of academic and research excellence.

Highlights from the last academic year

In 2023-24, the RDO facilitated more than 105 extramural grants from 50 funding agencies, including 21 domestic and 29 international sources.

Over Rs. 27.07 crore was disbursed in extramural research grants during the last financial year. The extramural grants are instrumental in building research capabilities and encouraging researchers to pursue targeted initiatives. Research areas supported by these grants include drug-resistant pathogens, creating safer workplaces for female workers, understanding immune responses, developing vaccines, improving maternal health and exploring the environmental and health benefits of organic farming, among others.

Faculty Research

Ashoka is home to some of the finest intellectual minds in the country and the world. Each of them have contributed to relevant and high-quality research in their respective fields. Pedagogy at Ashoka emphasises interdisciplinary research and provides support to faculty members, visiting scholars and students to pursue rigorous and collaborative research endeavours. This support enables faculty to publish papers, write books, participate in conferences and represent the University at various fora. Many faculty members are recipients of prestigious grants, fellowships and awards.

> To date, Ashoka's faculty and scholars have over 800 Scopus-indexed publications to their name

Publications *(2023-24)*

Abir Bazaz's (English)

book ***Nund Rishi*** explores Nund Rishi's poetry, revealing its philosophical depth, existential politics and its connection to mystical poetry across South Asia and the Indo-Persian world.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee (History)

co-authored a book titled ***A New History of India: From Its Origins to the Twenty-first Century***. It offers a detailed narrative of India's rich and diverse heritage.

The Best of Tagore, edited and introduced by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, is a collection of Tagore's poems, songs, stories, essays, novellas and novels.

Seema Alavi (History)

authored ***Sovereigns of the Sea: Omani Ambition in the Age of Empire,*** a book on the Sultans of Oman. It provides a historical account of their battles, expeditions and politics in the 19th century, highlighting their role in shaping the geopolitics of the Western Indian Ocean.

Janice Pariat's (Creative Writing)

We Come From Mist is an offering – of prose, poetry, musical lyrics and visual art – by the women of Meghalaya in Northeast India.

Aparna Vaidik's (History)

Revolutionaries on Trial provides the readers with a profound understanding of the complexities surrounding the Lahore Conspiracy Case.

Mukul Sharma's (Environmental Studies)

book, ***Green and Saffron: The RSS, Modi, and Indian Environmental Politics*** explores how Hindu nationalist ideologies intersect with environmental movements in India.

Book *Chapters*

'Health informatics and data science for pandemic preparedness' in *Genomic Surveillance and Pandemic Preparedness* by

Anurag Agrawal (Biology)

- 'Components of density functional reactivity theory-based stabilisation energy: descriptors for thermodynamic and kinetic reactivity' in *Chemical Reactivity: Volume 2: Approaches and Applications* by

Sourav Pal (Chemistry)

'Climate change and river waters in South Asia: Scarcity, security and the avoidance of zero-sum approaches in the Anthropocene epoch' in *The Routledge Handbook of South Asia: Region, Security and Connectivity* by

Ananya Sharma (International Relations)

- 'Past Continuous: Munshi, Gujarat, and the Patan Trilogy' in *Indian Modernities: Literary Cultures from the 18th to the 20th Century* by

Rita Kothari (English)

'India: Employment and inequality trends' in *Tasks, Skills, and Institutions: The Changing Nature of Work and Inequality* by

Kanika Mahajan (Economics)

- 'Buddhism, Animal Ethics and Environmentalism' in *Capital and Ecology: Developmentalism, Subjectivity and the Alternative Life-Worlds* by

Swargajyoti Gohain (Sociology and Anthropology)

'Homeland, cows and climate change: The visualisation of environmental issues by the far right in India' in *Visualising far-right environments: Communication and the politics of nature* by

Mukul Sharma (Environmental Studies)

Faculty *Achievements*

Somak Raychaudhury

Vice-Chancellor, was awarded the JV Narlikar Lifetime Achievement Honour for his contributions to the fields of Cosmology and Astrophysics.

Anurag Agrawal

Dean of Biosciences and Health Research, Trivedi School of Biosciences, was awarded the JC Bose Fellowship, an initiative by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India.

Projit B Mukharji

Head of Department and Professor of History, was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship 2023. Projit will also serve as one of the editors of The History of Science Society's main academic journal.

Sourav Pal

Head of Department and Professor of Chemistry was appointed the Chairperson of the Chemical Council of the Bureau of Indian Standards.

Gautam Menon

Dean of Research and Professor of Physics and Biology, has been appointed as a Commissioner on the Lancet Commission on "Strengthening the use of Epidemiological Modelling of Emerging and Pandemic Infectious Diseases". Gautam was also appointed to WHO's Technical Advisory Group on Embedding Ethics in Health and Climate Change Policy.

Amit Chaudhuri's

Professor of Creative Writing, first three novels have been reissued by New York Review of Books.

Sumana Roy

Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing, was awarded the Omega Resilience Award (ORA) for her outstanding contributions to the field of plant humanities.

Sramana Majumdar

Assistant Professor of Psychology, won the best paper at the annual convention of the National Academy of Psychology 2024 for her research on COVID-19.

Bittu Kaveri Rajaraman

Associate Professor of Biology and Psychology, with their team, discovered three new cricket species on the Ashoka campus.

A team from Ashoka won the Innovation Award at the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Data Challenge. The team, including

Shraddha Karve (Faculty Fellow, Biology) and Rintu Kutum (Faculty Fellow, Computer Science)

was among the five winners of the Vivli AMR Surveillance Open Data Re-use Challenge.

Research *Grants*

Lalit Contractor (Economics):

Research was sponsored by the Center for Economic and Policy Research's Structural Transformation and Economic Growth initiative

Anurag Agrawal (Biology):

A part of his research is supported by Pfizer Inc. Additionally, his project on 'Digital Transformations of Health Lab (DTH-Lab)' is sponsored by Foundation Botnar

Kumarjit Saha (Mathematics):

Research sponsored by the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research

Hiroshi Hamada (Biology):

Research sponsored by RIKEN

Poornima Prabhakaran (Trivedi School of Biosciences):

Research sponsored by DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance, Karolinska Institute/FORMAS and the University of Edinburgh

Srijita Ghosh (Economics):

Research project sponsored by the Suzanne and Hans Biäsch Foundation

Meghna Agarwala (Environmental Studies):

Research project supported by the Swedish Research Council, The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Amita Baviskar (Sociology and Anthropology, Environmental Studies):

Research funded by the University of Cambridge and Cornell University

Mitul Baruah (Sociology and Anthropology, Environmental Studies):

Research was sponsored by the Center for Economic and Policy Research's Structural Transformation and Economic Growth initiative

Debayan Gupta (Computer Sciences):

Research supported by the Mozilla Foundation

Anisha Sharma (Economics):

Research project funded by IZA - Institute of Labor Economics, Germany

DST-SERB

sponsored 12 research projects in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Psychology

Harish and Bina Shah Foundation

provided a grant to support teaching and research excellence in Humanities and interdisciplinary initiatives in Social and Natural Sciences

Ashoka announced the

Breakthrough Research Grant,

co-funded with the Gupta-Klinsky India Institute at Johns Hopkins University. The winners for the first round included Debayan Gupta (Computer Science) and Rintu Kutum (Computer Science) along with two principal investigators from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine

Campus

Nestled within the Rajiv Gandhi Education City in Sonipat, Haryana, Ashoka's campus, which started as an ambitious dream is today a landmark of modern, interdisciplinary education in India. When Ashoka first opened its doors, the University's vision was reflected in every detail of the 25-acre campus: a meticulously designed space, seamlessly blending Indian aesthetics with global sensibilities that would foster intellectual curiosity, collaboration and a deep commitment to societal impact.

The architectural firm Perkins-Eastman, known for designing campuses such as Columbia and NYU, brought this vision to life, creating an innovative layout with iconic red brick façades and intricately crafted stone *Jaali* - a feature now distinctive and definitive as Ashoka architecture. This unique design not only embodied Ashoka's values of transparency and inclusivity but also encouraged a sense of community by merging academic and residential spaces in a concentric circle. Here, formal and informal learning environments flowed together, inspiring a holistic educational experience.

As Ashoka's reputation grew, so did its mission. Now, with a flourishing student body and a broadened academic scope, the University is expanding its campus by an additional 27 acres.

As Ashoka's reputation grew, so did its mission. Now, with a flourishing student body and a broadened academic scope, the University is expanding its campus by an additional 27 acres. This new development marks a pivotal phase for Ashoka, reflecting both the growth of its community and its commitment to advancing diverse fields of study. Alongside new academic buildings and residential spaces, this phase is driven by a strengthened focus on the Sciences, mirroring the University's commitment to bridging disciplines and addressing complex global challenges. Central to this expansion is the newly established Trivedi School of Biosciences, which underscores Ashoka's belief in an interdisciplinary approach to scientific research and its application in understanding and solving real-world issues.

Research initiatives such as the Koita Centre for Digital Health at Ashoka University and the Centre for Health Analytics Research and Trends are poised to push the boundaries of inquiry and innovation further. These Centres strengthen Ashoka's dedication to research that addresses pressing societal challenges while offering students hands-on learning experiences that extend beyond traditional academic boundaries.

Aligned with Ashoka's values, sustainability remains at the heart of this new development. The expanded campus incorporates eco-friendly construction methods, solar energy systems and water conservation technologies. In every aspect, Ashoka's growth reflects a dedication not only to academic and research excellence but also to sustainable resource management.

This campus – built on a vision of intellectual freedom, ecological responsibility and meaningful engagement – continues to serve as an inspiring space for students to think boldly, act ethically and contribute to a world that needs well-rounded, forward-thinking leaders.

Trivedi School of Biosciences (TSB)

The Trivedi School of Biosciences was founded in 2020 with the vision of bridging the gap between Natural and Social Sciences and fostering a stronger connection between Science and society. As a pioneering space for research and education, the School focuses on emerging and frontier areas of Biosciences. Faculty at TSB are drawn from multiple scientific streams, ranging from fundamental biology to public health, with an equally broad range of activities ranging from field studies to modeling synthetic populations in silico.

TSB aims to bring together research and teaching across diverse scientific disciplines to address basic and applied challenges in Biology. There is an additional emphasis on promoting Health Science at the intersection of Natural and Social Sciences; an increasingly important challenge during a time of parallel ongoing revolutions in genomics and computing. TSB contains specialised centres, designed to engage with multiple stakeholders for addressing complex problems that do not fall into any single domain. The Simons-Ashoka Fellowship programme encourages quantitatively inclined researchers to solve biomedical problems. The School offers state-of-the-art facilities to support cutting-edge research. These include shared laboratory spaces for Biosciences, Chemistry and Computing in the new TSB building that also contains faculty offices and student areas. Among the advanced research facilities are the Zeiss-Ashoka Imaging Lab with some of the most advanced microscopes in India, a high-powered computational facility, and facilities for multi-omics as well as Spatial Biology.

The School currently houses the Department of Biology, the Koita Centre for Digital Health at Ashoka (KCDH-A) and the Centre for Health Analytics, Research and Training (CHART). Upcoming centres at TSB include the Centre for Glycans, Metabolism and Immune Programming (CGMP) and the Precision Biology Centre (PBC).

TSB is dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary research and education to address real-world challenges. The University aims to collaborate with both national and international research communities, facilitating knowledge exchange and joint initiatives in research, education and student programmes. Through its innovative facilities and interdisciplinary approach, TSB is committed to creating a world-class environment for advancing Biosciences research and education – shaping the next generation of scientists and thought leaders.

Centre for Health Analytics Research and Trends (CHART):

A collaboration that started between TSB and the Department of Computer Science, CHART has now grown to encompass diverse aspects of population health ranging from air pollution models to impact of organic farming. The Centre has on-ground presence through public health cohorts and additionally leverages data analytics to explore health trends and inform public health strategies.

Koita Centre for Digital Health – Ashoka University (KCDH-A):

The Centre serves as the central hub for digital health initiatives at Ashoka and supports the student led Ashoka Health Research Club. Seeded by the Koita Foundation, the intent at KCDH-A is to nurture a new generation of Digital Health thinkers, innovators and implementers, via fresh pedagogy and deep research engagement. The Ashoka cohort, where wearables with open APIs are being used to advance health and health data science capacity, is a notable first of its kind community digital health effort in India. Also, via the Digital Transformation for Health Labs, a collaboration with University of Geneva, the Centre is exploring how digital transformation relates to wellness of young people.

High School Programmes

In 2022,

Ashoka took a significant step to reach young scholars across India through the establishment of the Office of High School Programmes – opening the doors to a Liberal Arts and Sciences education for students in grades 9-12.

Designed to inspire curiosity, critical thinking and a passion for learning, these programmes invite students to explore the world through an interdisciplinary lens, introducing them to the essence of Ashoka's academic spirit.

The programmes also provide students with an exceptional opportunity to work on diverse fields, where they are encouraged to pursue their interests and interact with distinguished faculty and industry experts. This approach not only enhances their intellectual horizons but also helps them understand their interests and passions and shape their individual pathways with clarity and purpose. Through Ashoka's unique approach, young minds cultivate a nuanced perspective towards complex issues, developing a capacity for thoughtful engagement and impactful leadership.

The Young Scholars Programme (YSP) is a summer residential experience that spans seven courses, including Sciences, Economics, Technology, Data Science, Psychology, Behaviour, Policy and Writing with Impact. Students gain hands-on experience, accessing world-class research resources and state-of-the-art labs, where learning goes far beyond textbooks. Complimenting this is the Ashoka Horizons Achievers Programme, a year-round online programme offering courses that cover essential 21st-century skills across an array of subjects, from analytical thinking to life skills. Students participate in interactive sessions, collaborate with peers on real-world scenarios and complete capstone projects under expert mentorship. In just two years, YSP and Horizons have seen participation from students from over 500 schools from across the country and around the globe.

Inspired by the success of these initiatives, Ashoka launched the Lodha Genius Programme in 2023 in collaboration with the Lodha Group.

Inspired by the success of these initiatives, Ashoka launched the Lodha Genius Programme in 2023 in collaboration with the Lodha Group. This fully funded, month-long summer residential programme, the first of its kind in India, focuses on the Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The programme aims to identify academically exceptional students and provide them with a nurturing environment and long-term guidance to unlock their potential. They are mentored by Prof K VijayRaghavan, Chairman of Ashoka's Science Advisory Council. In its inaugural year, students had the opportunity to learn from distinguished achievers in their respective fields: Jack Szostak, Nobel laureate in Biochemistry, Priyamvada Natarajan, Professor of Astronomy and Physics, Yale University and Susmita Mohanty, Director General, Spacesport SARABHAI, amongst others.

Beyond academics, Ashoka's high school programmes cultivate a sense of community where students support and inspire one another. This collaborative spirit nurtures teamwork and collective problem-solving — skills essential in today's interconnected world. Armed with knowledge, purpose and a commitment to contribute meaningfully to society, these young scholars leave Ashoka equipped not only with academic prowess but also with a profound sense of social responsibility and a drive to contribute to nation-building.

Highlights from the last academic year

Young Scholars Programme (YSP)

In the academic year 2023-24, nearly 1,500 students, including learners with special needs and students on financial aid from 500 schools across 120 cities participated in the Young Scholars Programme. This was the largest cohort of the YSP, to date.

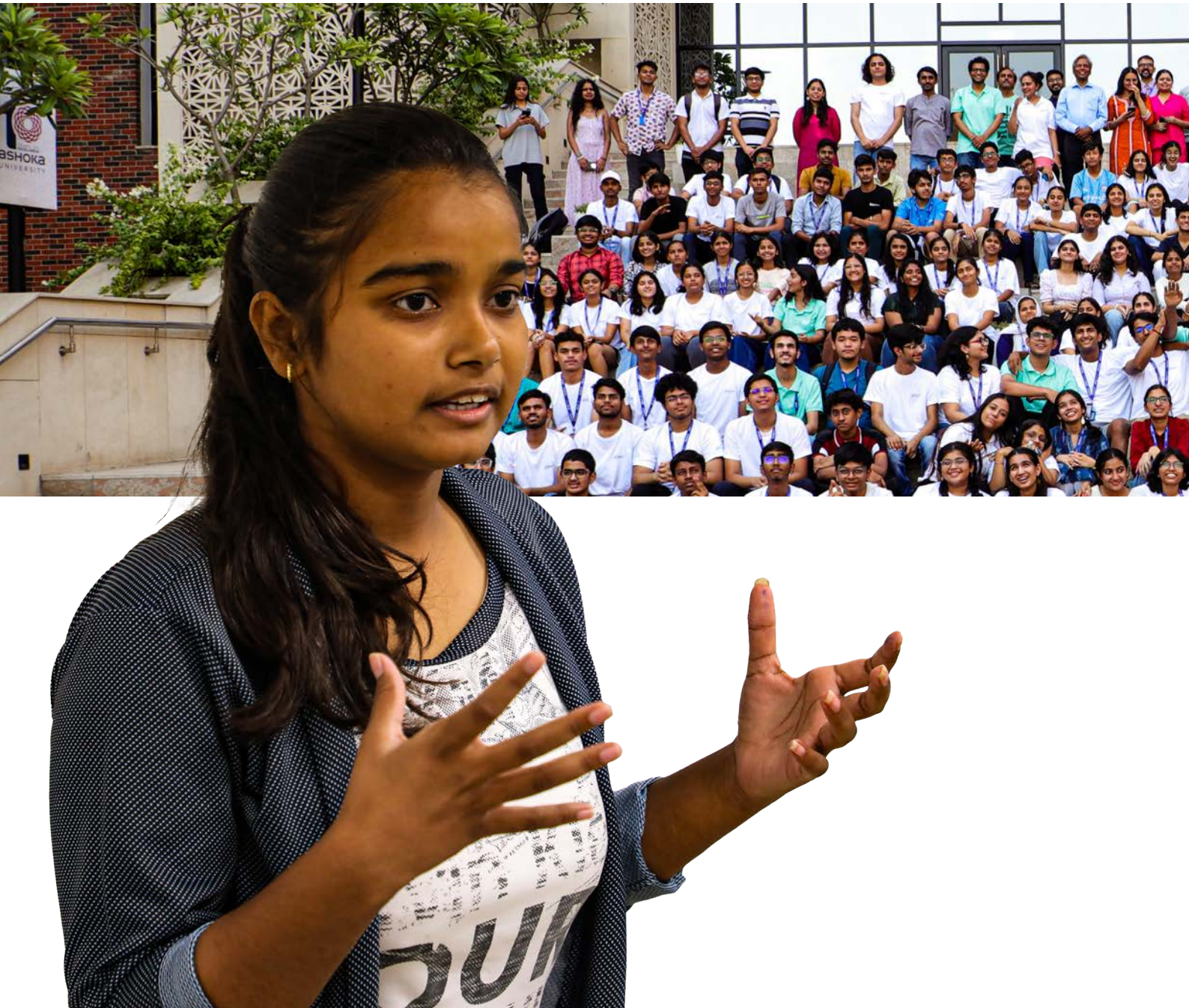
This year, for the first time, five programmes were offered, across two editions - YSP Foundation, YSP Frontiers of Science, YSP Tech, Data and Computer Science, YSP Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Impact and the newly launched YSP Economics, Policy and Society. The academic sessions covered a wide range of subjects – from exploring sustainability through the applications of AI to understanding the significance of diplomacy, seamlessly transitioning from concrete concepts to abstract ideas.

Ashoka Horizons Achievers Programme

In the last academic year, over 240 students from more than 40 cities across India, as well as from the UAE, Singapore and the UK participated in the programme.

The programmes offered as part of Horizons are one of a kind – certified, immersive, micro courses offering personalised mentorship, specially curated for curious and ambitious high schoolers in grades 9-12. Taught live by global faculty and industry experts, the unique Horizons model gives students a chance to dive into specific subjects or skills of interest, enriching their knowledge and strengthening their profiles for better college outcomes.

In 2023-24, sixteen courses were offered, including Literature, Data Science, Astrophysics, Game Theory, Biosciences, International Relations among others. Additionally, a variety of skills-building workshops were held, covering areas such as critical thinking, entrepreneurship and filmmaking. The average student rating for Horizons courses was 4.6+ on a 5-point scale with very positive feedback from educators and parents.

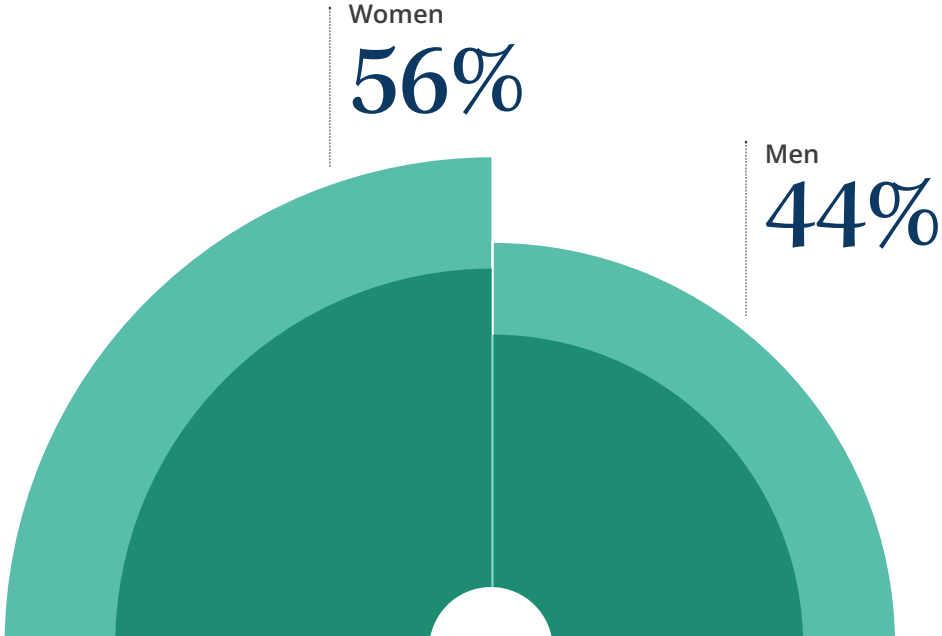


Lodha Genius Programme

The Lodha Genius Programme continued to excel in its second year, welcoming a diverse cohort of 196 students from 20 states across India. This year, the programme introduced dynamic workshops and project tracks, tailored to the specific needs of 9th-10th graders and 11th-12th graders, respectively. Key partnerships with organisations such as Foldscope Instruments and Zeiss have enriched the curriculum, offering innovative workshops and in-depth capstone projects.

Although the programme is a month-long residential experience, it is designed to provide long-term and sustained training and mentorship to students throughout their early careers.

Since September 2024, the Continued Learning phase will further extend the programme's impact through structured learning and development, mentorship and access to opportunities, ensuring ongoing academic and professional support for all students.



Fundraising & Governance

Since its inception, Ashoka has stood as a beacon of hope and innovation in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education. The University's journey began with a bold vision: to create a world-class Liberal Arts and Sciences institution, homegrown in India.

The dream to redefine the landscape of higher education in India began to take shape in 2011, when a core group of philanthropists, led by some of India's most visionary leaders, pledged their support. This marked the beginning of an extraordinary funding journey. Their contributions both financial and intellectual, laid the foundation for Ashoka's first campus and academic programmes.

Ashoka's existence owes much to the 113 founders who, in the first five years, believed in the collective power of building a new institution for India.

Ashoka's existence owes much to the 113 founders who, in the first five years, believed in the collective power of building a new institution for India. While collective philanthropy in the education sector is not new, Ashoka's initiative was, and remains, the largest of its kind in the country. Even before Ashoka was officially recognised as a university in 2014, these founders and donors were already on board, supporting the expansion of the idea and the construction of a campus designed to house excellence in every form. The infrastructure included world-class facilities, residential halls, faculty housing, classrooms, a library and sports complexes- spaces where students from all over the world would find a home.

The support for Ashoka came from people across all walks of life. Some gave in their individual capacity, others through their organisations or corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The donor community is diverse: first-generation entrepreneurs from various industries, people supporting women in the Sciences and some championing first-generation learners, among others. Today, Ashoka alumni are also part of the founder community, embodying the University's philosophy of giving back to society and contributing to the multiplier effect of collective philanthropy.

Ashoka was officially recognised as a university in 2014. The same year it enrolled its first cohort of undergraduate students. The milestone was not just academic; it marked a significant achievement in the fundraising journey, securing enough funds to build the University's campus in Sonipat. Each year since, Ashoka's infrastructure has expanded, with state-of-the-art facilities and an ever-growing number of centres of excellence, academic departments and schools. The philanthropic support has continued to evolve, with donors not only contributing funds but also offering mentorship and strategic guidance.

Highlights from the last academic year

In the last academic year, the funds raised were strategically deployed to support scholarships, research initiatives and the development of the University's physical infrastructure.

This year also saw the launch of several new Schools and Centres, including the Harish and Bina Shah School of Humanities and the Isaac Centre for Public Policy.

As of November 2024, Ashoka has over 250 founders and donors who have collectively raised approximately Rs 3,267 crore (USD 384.35 million). This support has enabled Ashoka to strengthen its position as one of India's leading Liberal Arts and Sciences universities.

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Over the past decade, Ashoka has emerged as a place for young, bright talent seeking a meaningful and purpose-driven career in higher education. Our commitment to fostering an inclusive and vibrant community is reflected in our growing regional and gender diversity across not just students but also staff.

Ashoka's diverse community draws individuals from every corner of India, representing a rich tapestry of cultures, languages and perspectives. This regional diversity enhances the University's collective ability to innovate, problem-solve and empathise with the varied challenges of the rapidly changing world. Gender inclusivity remains a cornerstone of Ashoka's ethos, with balanced representation and ongoing efforts to ensure equity at all levels of leadership and decision-making.

The University has become a sought-after destination for professionals who are passionate about higher education and committed to meaningful work that creates lasting impact. Ashoka offers an ecosystem where talent is nurtured, ideas are valued, and individuals are empowered to thrive.

As Ashoka moves forward, our people remain our greatest strength.

The University's HR initiatives continue to focus on capability building, organisational design, and driving performance. With programmes like the Ashoka Certification for emerging leaders and career-level learning plans, Ashoka is actively developing a pipeline of future leaders. Furthermore, the HR policies promote well-being, inclusivity and flexibility, ensuring employees are supported and motivated. As Ashoka moves forward, people continue to be the University's greatest strength.

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Ashoka in the News

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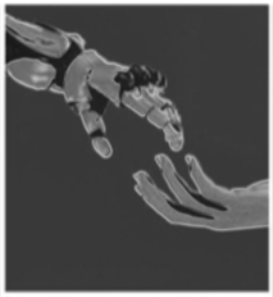


Multidisciplinary education bolstering out-of-the-box think

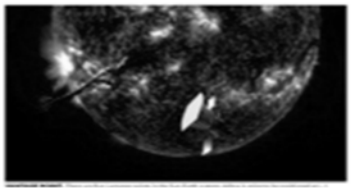
Educators reflect upon the interconnectedness of diverse streams, claiming it instils confidence among students to pursue their own interests and career trajectories

Greater degrees of self-esteem

Embracing

Why Aditya L-1 is unique in many ways

CORONAL KAVACH, India's first space observatory can act as a warning system against solar storms that can damage satellites, power grids



THE HINDU

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

INSOMNIA

World in middle of sleep loss epidemic: Researcher

PURAN CHOUDHARY @ Bengaluru

SLEEP is so ubiquitous, but little is known about the subject and what drives it. Research demonstrates that even non-mammalian organisms modify their sleep behaviours according to ecological and neurobiological demands.

Krishna Melnattur, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Biology, Ashoka University, is currently studying sleep in non-mammalian organisms in his lab, specifically the fruit fly genus, Drosophila. In a conversation with TNIE, he revealed how mammals and non-mammals have so much in common when it comes to sleep that can help develop better sleep therapies and cognitive behavioural therapies, and advance drug discovery.

the middle of what's been called a global sleep loss epidemic. They should," said Melnattur. He added that this was one of the major reasons of research to find solutions for insomnia.

Melnattur also said the subject of sleep is quite interesting as it is "intellectually stimulating with a lot of avenues where studies can be conducted."

A recent study co-authored by him argued that sleep's function and structure are not exclusive to mammals. It highlighted that even nematode worms, with a mere 300 neurons, also exhibit the need for sleep. His body of work shows that sufficient sleep plays a critical role in the recovery of bodily functions, memory consolidation, motor skills and spatial recognition across species.

"Declarative memories are important in our lives. We are aware of the fact that when we to study how sleep benefits declarative memories in humans," Melnattur added. His research showed that when an aged fly's sleep is enhanced by a couple of days, the fly's memory improves and it travels better.

The professor is also exploring the impact of various factors, such as starvation and social interactions, on sleep across different species. This holistic understanding of sleep behaviours across diverse organisms could lead to new possibilities, he said. His research also talks about how sleep is plastic in nature and many animals dispense it from time to time, depending on situations and consequences, including humans, dolphins and pectoral sandpipers.

Melnattur's lab is currently

ashoka UNIVERSITY

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND BELON
2023 - 24

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

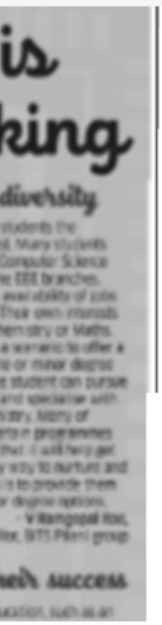
'We need to stop the fear mongering on vaccines'

We Need the STEAM Engine

A holistic education that bridges the STEM-liberal arts divide is not a luxury but a necessity

Somak Raychaudhury

THE HINDU | जागरण | The Tribune | दैनिक



NGING REPORT

the pioneer

Social barriers in shifting towards sustainable mobility

India must incorporate the needs of excluded communities to ensure all have access to affordable transportation

ASHALI BHANDARI

RONIKA POSTARIA

NEP 2020 emphasises on reviving diverse arts

We need to teach a gamut of learnings across a spectrum of subjects that endows wisdom and not just knowledge, writes **Sonak Raychaudhury**

Education must teach the student to be critical and discerning in order to effectively use all the information available around us

The just transition to a decarbonised economy

Union Budgets have, over the years, evolved beyond the role of being mere fiscal book-keeping exercises, often heralding key policy announcements to spur demand and ebb market sentiments. The canvas today is wider than ever with the Budget signalling significant policy priorities. With the coming year's Budget exercise underway, a key question is: Can it traverse the entire carbon 'canvas' in a more impactful manner?

A recent publication from the Ashoka Centre for a People-centric Energy Transition (ACPET) discusses both the challenges and opportunities arising from India's energy transition goals and observes that as much as policy calibrations are desirable in several ongoing schemes to help meet the 2070 goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions, there is also an urgent need to squarely address the aspect of 'just transition'.

A look at the ongoing 'green' electrification of the country's energy systems reveals that the effort to fast-track its pace over the past decade or

need to be implemented/strengthened and calibrated to align with the global goal. For example, to maximise EV penetration, a powerful decarbonisation pathway, the government needs to formulate the optimal mix of credit-linked subsidies provided to consumers and production-linked subsidies to automobile manufacturers. Currently, most of the benefits are placed in the hands of the manufacturers.

An overarching approach to addressing the above challenges lies in: One, the creation of markets for price discovery; two, rationalising and streamlining subsidies in the interim; three, devising adequate payment security mechanisms and; four, strengthening the capacities of various institutions/entities/markets to cope with the preceding changes, among several other measures.

The first three of the above, and the totality of them, could lead to either an increase in retail prices hurting consumers and/or,

Leena Srivastava

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Unprecedented challenge

AI powered in the near future by quantum computers, could have billions of times more 'OODA loop' than a human.

The greatest yet unprecedented challenge for humanity – machines move from 'doing things that it is asked to' to 'doing things that it decides needs to be done'. There is a common lesson from diverse geniuses of humanity over the centuries: at the core of human progress has been the very human ability to take command of technologies, by taking decisions based on a broader understanding of the world around.

Role of education

Here lies the sub of why education needs to, and must transform, and re-mentioning. We will have more and more power of information and knowledge. How good we get at managing the information and knowledge will be based on how our 'education' is enabling us to overlay data, information, trivia, and automatically processed conclusions with morality and ethics, in the backgrounds and context of history, climate, environment and various resources, together with internalised knowledge of human psychology and subjective value systems. This is not a new thing. It is as old as Nalanda and Taksashila, or Al

Nurturing critical thinking

With all the information at one's disposal, the most important skill that one has to learn is to learn to and not disregard/overlook/ignore the ugly. To be effective, education has to teach the student how to be critical and discerning in order to effectively use all the information that is available. Take for instance, the biggest bugbear of doctors faced with knowledgeable patients who have diagnosed their own symptoms and had recommendations on prescriptions after diligently browsing the net with Google, or more advanced AI/tools.

here, where grammar and arithmetic, geometry and philosophy, rhetoric and ethics, music and poetry were taught. Madrasas of Baghdad, for instance, developed his own system of infinite series and calculus in order to understand not just the textures of planets but many aspects of quantitative philosophy. Pythagoras of Samos later also went to Egypt to learn geometry and astronomy. Even the Buddha's teachings, Guru for the right-angled triangle. As a nation, we have set out an initiative in the NEP 2020 which calls for bringing back to Indian education "knowledge of many arts or what in modern times is often called the liberal arts." The challenge for education, prominent today will be to transition to the era where we accept that knowing is less important than being able to "manifest knowledge, much of which will be accessible to us on demand, very high IQ machines, to take decisions in every sphere of our lives.

Securing the future

We need to grasp the existential reality of less than a decade from now where every device would be a philosopher's stone that also carries Midas' curse. We need to learn to teach a gamut of learnings across a spectrum of subjects that endows wisdom and not just knowledge so that planetary researchers are able to discern if their AI machines need to be hyperspecific in creating molecular drugs that endow existing longevity at a great cost to humanity. We need specialists who can build, manage and develop further the machines that will be smarter than us, but are also used to advance those scientists to weigh the scales of progress. We will soon be coping with intelligence that is far smaller than the smallest human ever has been.

(The author is vice-chancellor, Ashoka University, Sonipat.)

HUMANS OF BANDHAVGARH

ANCIENT TREASURES L-R: Prof. Nayanjot Lahiri with her team 2. Ascending an Ghughwa fossil park 3. Purna Kamtha event. 3rd c. AD 4. Horse rider, 2nd c. AD

to the state's historical richness. Such tools have previously been found in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.

"Forests had a much bigger footprint than settled spaces in the past.

By Rahul Noronha

ARCHAEOLOGY

SCHOLARSHIP

Sonepat: Ashoka University (AU) has partnered w
Family Foundation to institute Havells Family Sch
designed to support students who wish to pursu
master's degree at the School of Business in Wa
University, United States. It includes a stipend to
expenses, books, other fees throughout the dura
programme and international airfare.

The Tribune Thu, 20 July 202
https://epaper.t

businessline. podcasts

AI in Astronomy: Understanding artificial intelligence in astronom

BusinessLine Podcasts

The Moon is Now Open for Business

The grant takes the total commitments received by the private university in the NCR to ₹2,606 crore

Ashoka University founders Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal. In 2021, it received $10 million (about ₹75 crore at the time) from Anant Vardi, president of US-based Yardi Systems.

Last year, Sushmita and Subroto Bagchi and Radha and NS Parthasarathy, who were part of the founding team at IT services firm Mindtree, pledged ₹425 crore to Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, to build an 800-bed multispecialty hospital along with a PG medical school. Quess Corp founder Ajit Isaac and wife Sarah later announced a ₹305 crore

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

University Trends and Metrics

METRICS	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Undergraduate + ASP			
Number of students enrolled	1,833	2,203	2,500
Diversity			
Percentage of women	56.08%	56.60%	58.36%
Percentage of students from non-metro cities	37.32%	39.13%	40.04%
Percentage of international students	6.93%	4.63%	5.60%
Postgraduate (MA/MSc, MLS)			
Number of students enrolled	104	105	61
Diversity			
Percentage of women	51.92%	59.05%	55.74%
Percentage of students from non-metro cities	56.73%	57.14%	59.02%
Young India Fellowship (YIF)			
Number of students enrolled	190	100	101
Diversity			
Percentage of women	54.21%	62.00%	58.41%
Percentage of students from non-metro cities	62.11%	61.00%	62.38%
PhD			
Number of students enrolled	67	121	169
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	**2,194**	**2,529**	**2,831**

METRICS	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
FINANCIAL AID			
Percentage of students receiving financial aid (UG)	48%	49%	46%
Percentage of students receiving financial aid (PG)	58%	64%	65%
Percentage of students receiving financial aid (YIF)	65%	68%	81%
Cumulative amount of aid (Rs Cr)	328	417	511
ALUMNI			
Number of alumni	4,150	4,747	5,602
Percentage in India	96%	96%	78%
Percentage in other countries	4%	4%	22%
PLACEMENTS			
Number of recruiters who hired	126	145	158
FACULTY			
Number of faculty	268	248	227
Full-time faculty	152	154	176
Visiting faculty	116	94	51
Percentage of women (includes only full-time)	43%	40%	38.77%
STAFF			
Number of employees	307	444	524
Percentage of women	49%	54%	47%
INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS			
Number of partnerships	30	52	54
Countries of partner institutions	14	18	18
Number of partners from 200 institutions	16	32	31

METRICS	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
FUNDRAISING			
Total commitments raised (Rs Cr)	1,789	2,279	3,087
Commitments raised during the year (Rs Cr)	297	442	807
Number of founders	165	190	207
Number of donors and annual contributors	43	57	68
INFRASTRUCTURE			
Total constructed area (in'000sq ft)	1,204	1,204	1,204
Student housing capacity	2,548	2,548	2,548

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