

VAHANI NEWSLETTER

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Issue 8



• The official Newsletter of Vahani •



Webinars



Virtual Graduation ceremony



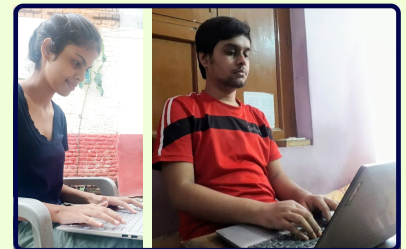
Online meets



Team's work from home



New additions in Team



Scholar's work from home

Covid-19 Special Message

In these unusual and testing times, the whole world has had to deal with new guidelines and norms. It may well be that these norms will become a way of life but Vahani Scholarship's ethos has remained unchanged as its work has carried on with a slightly different approach.

We have innovated using new ways to engage with our scholars scattered across different locations all over the country. Needless to say, our Mentors have been a wonderful support in this endeavor. The wellbeing of each Scholar remains our primary concern and the Team has been in regular contact to ensure that their education and home lives have not suffered.

We truly feel like a family, bound by the warmth and spirit of the Vahani Scholars, the Vahani Team, Board Members, Mentors, English Tutors and friends of Vahani. A warm thanks to all who have helped us get through this difficult time.

2020 Scholars - Results and Admission

Colin Powell has rightly said that "a dream doesn't become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work" and our new batch of 2020 Scholars has proved this right.

Amidst the uncertainty of exams during the lockdown period, and the delayed results, the new scholars stayed strong. We are very pleased to announce that all our new scholars fared very well in their board exams. The highest marks were scored by Devesh Sharma who got 99%, followed by Indrajit Sharma, Manoj Shukla, Meenakshi Yadav and Ishaan Mithadiya with 97% and Shalini C E, Madhu Kumar, Anjani Gupta and Anshul Porwal with 96%. Our average 12th Board Examination score has grown from 91.3% to 93.4%. Despite the pandemic and the lack of conducive environments at home to study, the will of these scholars to overcome all odds and achieve their best is truly laudable. [Read More](#)



Online Meets



On the eve of 25th March, a nation-wide lockdown was imposed to curb the spread of Novel Corona Virus. March-April is the time when most of our scholars are either preparing for their college graduations or applying for summer internships. Amidst these challenging times, with a countrywide lockdown and global social distancing, the Vahani Family adopted the 'techno social' way to stay connected. It has been heart-warming to see our Scholars staying strong together - in full lockdown for over 16 weeks, confined to their homes/pg accommodations/hostels with limited outdoor space. Their smiles online are truly infectious. Soon after lockdown was announced, the Vahani Team collaborated with Vahani's band of Mentors to ensure that the situation did not affect the mental wellbeing of our Scholars. With the guidance of our Chairperson, we were able to run a very successful programme of online meets called #StrongerTogether which carried on till the very end of the full lockdown period. [Read More](#)



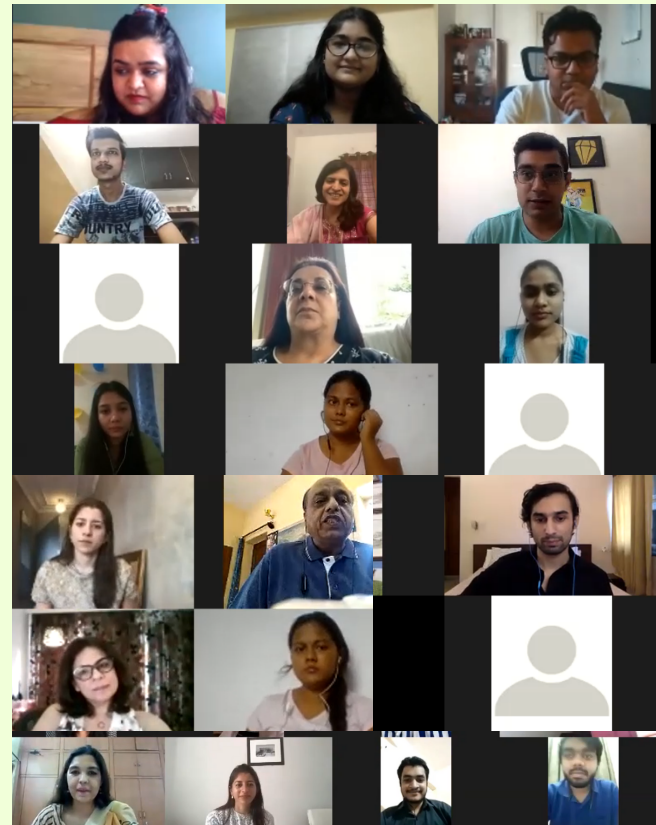
Webinars

After successfully wrapping up the Vahani Online Meets #StrongerTogether, we launched a series of special live conversations to help #BEAT2020 and adapt to the changing paradigms in world post #Covid19.

The Vahani Webinar Series featured trailblazing speakers who shared their diverse journeys as they themselves navigated this changing world. Again, Vahani Mentors played a huge part in leading these Webinars as they recounted their fascinating stories of overcoming various challenges in life, achieving a balance between creativity and reality, building self-confidence, and, finally, giving valuable advice on surviving a global change.

Our first session "Change is the Only Constant in Life" featured Board Member, Pervin Malhotra, Mentors Dhara Seth and Neyamat, and was moderated by Vahani Managing Director, Rashmani Singh.

Next up was a very thought-provoking session focusing on mental wellbeing and managing time efficiently during quarantine. "The Only Journey is the Journey Within: exploring the importance of mental health during periods of global crisis" featured Board Member, Dr Bhavna Bharmi, along with guest, Dr A Bhalla and Mentor, Ankit Jhamb, and was moderated by Vahani Chairperson, Reeva Misra. [Read More](#)





A Helping Hand

As lockdown measures begin to ease in other countries, the situation in India is reaching its peak. Corona cases are rising sharply and India's unemployment rate is now at a record high of 27.1%, according to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE). However, Vahani Scholars teach us new lessons in resilience and hope every day. Many of our Scholars have volunteered as helpers to pack rations and make masks for those living with daily uncertainty. Scholar Shivam Sachdeva (2017) and Aarti Manchanda (2018) are currently working closely with an initiative called #AaoKhilayein, (started by Mentor Ankit Jhamb), a Corona helpline to help families in need of medicines, food supplies and other essentials.

The prolonged lockdown is adding a new layer of poverty. Even people who were doing well pre-pandemic are now struggling to pay for their day-to-day essentials. Whilst our daily work of caring for, teaching and mentoring our Scholars continues, the Vahani Chairperson and Founders offered a stipend to support the basic needs of the Scholars. As we hear heart-breaking stories of struggle from the Scholars' families, we shall continue to find ways to provide relief.

We want to thank our Founders for their commitment to the Vahani family by offering thoughtful support to our work in this challenging time.



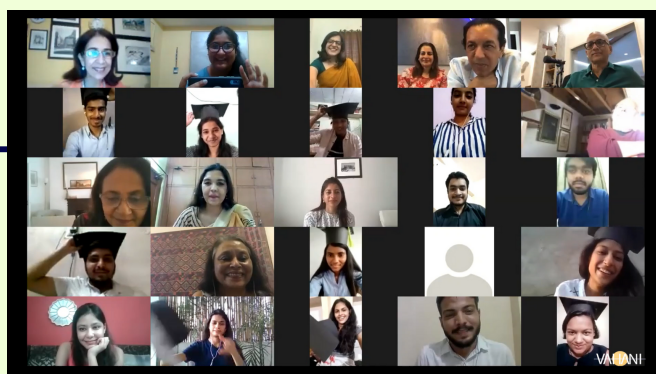
Virtual Graduation Ceremony

“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe.” Anatole France.

Graduation was a little different this year as we were not able to gather together for the usual dinner. Instead, the Vahani Family hosted a Virtual Graduation Ceremony for our freshly anointed Graduates who had to toss their caps collectively over the Internet while sitting in their own homes. The 2020 graduating batch is special and we at Vahani were determined to celebrate their achievements, applaud their hard work, congratulate them for their efforts and wish them a bright future ahead. It was a bittersweet moment and a memorable one. Our Founders and Board Members shared some encouraging words which will inspire our Graduates for life. The scholars had prepared their graduation speeches and we could see in each one of them the leadership and the fire to make a change as well as a strong desire to give back. In a fun activity, a riddle was prepared by the Team on each graduating Scholar. We were not at all surprised to see how they guessed all the names correctly as they indeed know their peers well and share a strong bond with each other. In the end all the Founders, Mentors, Team members and Scholars raised a toast to our amazing class of 2020 and their bright futures. We wrapped up with the Scholars tossing their Graduation Caps in the air, finally ready to leave the nest.

We are happy to report that many of the graduating batch has been placed at well-known companies all over India, such as Bank of America, Unskool, Microsoft, YaRaS, Ernst & Young and Aasraa Trust. Virtual Internships were also bagged by the Scholars in companies like Reliance, Techneel, Detel, KPMG and Paytm to name a few.

The graduation ceremony is available on our YouTube channel, as well as a Hall of Fame on our social media handles #Instagram #LinkedIn #Facebook #Twitter.





The Vahani Alumni Association

The second batch of 16 Vahani Scholars has graduated this year, and with that the numbers of Alumni has grown. Vahani Scholarship Trust has created an Alumni Association and elections were conducted to select office bearers. We are pleased to announce the office bearers for the year 2020-21.

President – Ritu Chauhan

Vice-President – Suraj Sharma

Treasurers – Sagar Sharma and Shivam Sachdeva

Jt. Secretaries – Kajal Srivastava and Swati Kaithura

The need for an Alumni Association was becoming apparent as our graduating scholars wanted to stay connected with the Foundation. The objectives of the Association are to support the strongly bonded network of former graduates who will, in turn, help to raise the profile of Vahani Scholarship. Raising awareness about this unique Scholarship is key to the Alumni Association so that many more children across the country avail of the opportunities we offer.

The office bearers of the Alumni Association plan to organize events to include career networking, recreational opportunities, workshops and reunions. The connection with current Scholars will remain a focal point too.



English Program

In March 2018, UDAAN started a one year English language programme for Vahani Scholars, led by Programme Director, Prof. Veena Sethi. We are happy to report that the programme is now in its third year and a new batch of fourteen Scholars has signed up for it.

Their work is being monitored by eight Tutors who correct their essays and also provide feedback on pronunciation and presentation of the audio versions.

This year we have made major changes in the course curriculum. With more emphasis on reading, Scholars now have to read and review newspaper articles on six different topics. Further, they listen to a selection of TED talks and review them. We are hopeful that, as and when possible, Scholars will make presentations on books or movies of their choice at a future workshop. Our compliments once more to the Scholars and grateful thanks to the Tutors who are so generous with their time and attention.



Work from Home - Message from team

Work from Home was previously well-known in the lives of software programmers in only a handful of MNCs. For many other professions, Work from Home never existed as an option.

As the pandemic struck the world, forcing lockdown, restrictions on movement, and social distancing, offices and businesses had to shut down.

All these years, I was used to working from an office, connecting face to face with my teams and every other direct and indirect stakeholder. Connecting remotely was not just taboo but felt very ineffective or distanced. So, who would have thought that connecting virtually could be also so effective, full of energy and vibrant.

At Vahani we were quick to adopt this 'new normal'. We took care not to miss connecting with the Scholars, Mentors and Tutors. Our team connects virtually daily in order to plan the day.

- Preeti Bhatia - CEO, Vahani Scholarship Trust

Work from Home was not a novel experience for me as my home was the Vahani office until January 2020. In fact, what was new for me was going to work in an office, which actually turned out to be a really pleasant experience as the workplace had a nice buzz about it.

Work hours became defined. Conversations and bonding over lunch at the cafe was fun and enjoyable and a strong bond developed between the team. Unfortunately, the pandemic changed everything and suddenly it was Work from Home again! It took a little time getting used to, since I missed having Mariya with me this time. Work demographics changed as the Team was scattered all over the country. Ritu's welcome treat is pending.

I have to say that being at separate locales did not deter the team from connecting and productivity reached an all-time high. Team calls and meets kept us coordinated and motivated. A laugh and joke over coffee (or Preeti's favoured drink of chai), plotting how to keep the Scholars engaged, getting busy planning interesting sessions that would be helpful/interactive and everything interspersed with a few lighter moments. The only downside perhaps was the blurring of work hours.

- Rashmani Singh - Managing Director, Vahani Scholarship Trust

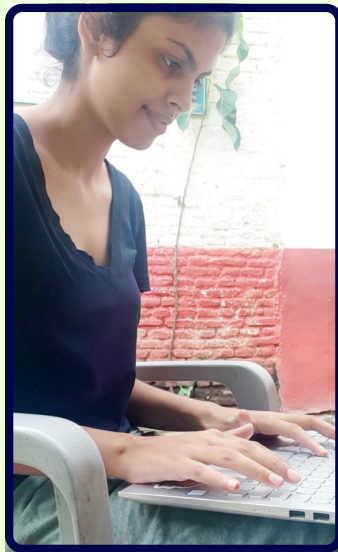




Work From Home - Message from Scholars

Sejal Agnihotri

Last year during my summer internship with Policy Bazaar, I went to office every day, and had projects and deadlines with project leaders to guide me. The idea of a virtual environment to learn was quite foreign to me. Even during college, I preferred handwritten notes over pdf files. When the quarantine phase started, I was a bit worried about the productivity of what I learned online. I took a leap of faith and signed up for a virtual internship with Techneel IT Services in the field of business development. I was taught my role from the very basics and I realized I was given more attention as an intern than I got when my work was offline. I learnt different technicalities of the field and applied them to help my team.



Vikash Kumar

I recently completed my virtual internship. For security and privacy reasons, companies usually use their internet in their offices and provide their systems (desktop, laptop) to the employees. But since the internship was virtual, I was allotted a remote desktop. The remote desktop gave me access to the organization's internet with all the necessary applications I required. Remote desktop had security protocols that prohibited any transfer of data between remote desktop and my PC. All meetings including daily scrum meeting were conducted using Skype/Ms Teams. I was expected to stay online during the office hours. For virtual internship a good internet connection and consistent electricity is a must. There were times i got disconnected in middle of a meeting or presentation due to internet/power issues. I also faced some issues due to lack of space at the house as compared to a dedicated space at office. However I was able to complete my internship successfully.



What's New

1

Masters Degree

Vahani Scholarship has introduced a Masters policy this year with a view to offering a scholarship for those graduating Scholars who aspire to pursue a Masters degree. The policy sets forth the process that Vahani will follow for receiving applications and approving scholarships for the most deserving students. Vahani will offer this scholarship every year.

To be eligible for the Masters scholarship applicants should either currently be a Vahani Scholar or an alumnus. The scholarship will be approved after a successful round of applications and interviews by the selection panel.

Vahani is looking forward to this new addition to our scholarship program. We are grateful to the Founders of Vahani Scholarship for this new benefit to the Scholars. We look forward to announcing the names of those Scholars who will be awarded this coveted Masters Scholarship.

2

New additions



Ritu Chauhan
Strategy Manager

We are excited to bring on-board Ms. Ritu Chauhan, an alumnus of Vahani, as Strategy Manager. Ritu hails from Kota, Rajasthan. She graduated from H.R. college of Commerce & Economics, Mumbai. Prior to Vahani, she served as a Tax Analyst in Ernst & Young, Mumbai. [Read more](#)



Pavvana Varun Parwani
Advisor

It is a great privilege to bring Pavvana into the Vahani team in the capacity of an advisor. She believes that work towards education is imperative in our lives to create brighter futures for those who truly deserve it. She is dedicated towards creating impactful content online as well as on social platforms for Vahani.

The idea is to take current achievements to the right audience that motivates new mentors, sponsors and students to join our community.

3

Social Media

Vahani Scholarship is now available on YouTube and Twitter as well. Our digital presence is expected to grow manifold in congruence with the current world scenario, so stay tuned and be surprised!

Till then check out our pages to stay updated.

