

Site Visit Report on Sankalp Special School Kanpur

By [Rajaraman Krishnan](#)- volunteer Asha Chennai. On 19-9-25

I visited Kanpur on 19th Sept 2025 primarily to see the activities of Asha Kanpur. This is the first time I have ever visited Kanpur. I got to visit the Sankalp Special School as well as Apna Ghar on that day. I travelled with Mahesh Pandey, a volunteer of Asha Kanpur. We reached Sankalp around 12:00 noon and met Dr. Dipti Tiwari, the founder and Coordinator of Sankalp Special School. She started the school in 2007 when she couldn't find a school for her son who is affected by Mental Retardation. Asha funded the school partially at that time. Then in 2015, it became a fully funded part of Asha Kanpur. It is currently being funded by Silicon Valley chapter.



The school supports 60 students with moderate to severe retardation. These are students typically from Lower Middle Class background. They pay fees ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 1500 per month. This is enough to cover about 40% of the total funds required to fund the school. The school functions from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

The students are managed in batches of 6 with one teacher for each batch. The total staff at the school are,

- 10 teachers.
- 2 Physiotherapists.
- 2 Psychologists.
- 1 Speech Therapist.
- And Dr. Dipti who is the Coordinator and does not draw a salary.

Seeing the School

Dr. Dipti took me through the school. It has been operating at a rented facility. The owner of the facility also has a child with mental retardation and has therefore given the place for a reduced rent. It is the entire ground floor of a large building. While there are some rooms, the rest of the rooms have been created using partitions. These can also be removed when required to make a bigger space for events.



We first went to the physiotherapy room. We could see the physiotherapists working with some children. The parents of some children were also there. Some very young children are also brought in for physiotherapy alone. They insist that the parents also come for the first few months. They also train the parents on physiotherapy exercises so that they can also do these exercises at home. They work better if done more often.



We then saw the speech therapist's room. At that time there weren't any children there. They work on basic exercises for strengthening the tongue and muscles in the mouth, exercises for controlling the lips etc. We then went to all the classrooms, each of which is just one large table with 5 or 6 children sitting around them with their teacher. Some of the children who are difficult to control were seated in a chair that prevented them from running away. When we went, the children were having their lunch. There was a wide range in the ages of the children: from 6 to about 30.



After that we also saw their vocational training area. They have facilities to train the students to work in a restaurant (operate ovens and commercial stoves), tailoring, basic craft work etc. Depending on the aptitude/ability of the student, they are trained in these. One of their students who is about 30 years old mans their stall selling craft works (they have one permanently in the school and often put up ones in fairs etc.). They have been able to get some of their students to help with their family business or get some local employment through these initiatives.



Talk with Dr. Dipti

I spent about ½ an hour talking to Dr. Dipti after that. She explained how they assess the children. They use the BASIC-MR (Behavioural Assessment Scales for Indian Children with Mental Retardation) scale developed by NIEPID for these. They maintain a detailed file on each student. These assessments are done on an annual basis. Every 6 months they do a less detailed evaluation of the progress of the students and develop a plan for the next 6 months. These are done individually for each student by the teacher along with Dr. Dipti.



We also talked a little about the teachers and their training. The salaries of the staff are below the market rates and therefore they often have to train the staff in their jobs. These staff have stayed with them for years and acquired the skills required.

There were also two students doing MPhil in Child Psychology at Kanpur University working there with the children. Sankalp/Asha Kanpur has signed an MOU with Kanpur University to allow their students to train here. On a 45 day rotational basis, they always have two students there working at Sankalp.

Recently the government has started requiring that the teachers at these special schools have RCI certification. Two of the teachers currently have it. The rest including Dr. Dipti herself are working on getting that certification. Dr. Dipti, in addition to her MBBS, has diplomas in Mental Health, Child Psychology and Counselling and Behaviour management. All the teachers including Dr. Dipti are keen on improving themselves for the benefit of the children they serve.

We talked about what other options are there for these children/families. There is not much. There are very few options for children with CP/MR in Kanpur. Spastic Society has one other facility in Kanpur. The government has a scheme for organisations that run such centres. But these do not work that well. Like in Tamilnadu and other states, the government envisions an integrated approach to incorporating these children also into normal schools. But these do not work well at all.

We finally talked about the future for these children and their families. Almost all of the students really cannot manage without life-long support. Joint families and communal living provide more opportunities for taking care of such children. But with the present nuclear families, it becomes very difficult. Even rich families do not have many options for making arrangements for taking care of such people after the death of the parents. Options are non-existent for even middle-class families. They have to unfortunately hope to survive longer than their children whose life expectancies are typically only about 40 or so. Most parents including Dr. Dipti herself experience deep anxiety about the future of their children.

It was a pensive way to finish the visit. The challenges are immense and Sankalp is doing its bit to make life better for these children and their families.