

Site Visit Report: Anwasha Kolkata

Garfa, Jadavpur

by

Abhyuday Mandal

Asha for Education, Athens Chapter

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Introduction

The bond between a well-wisher and a grassroots organization is forged over years of watching dreams quietly transform into reality. My journey with Anwasha Kolkata began in 2023 when I first visited them at their cramped, rented space in Bagha Jatin. Even back then, amidst physical limitations, their profound impact on deaf children's lives was visible..

I was in the loop when the purchase process of a building to run Anwasha's activities were going on and finally in 2024 that the NGO had finally purchased its own permanent building with the generous support of Asha for Education, I was overjoyed. They relocated and officially commenced operations at the Garfa facility in January 2025. Though I deeply wished to see the new center last year, severe paucity of time kept me away.

That waiting finally ended on 7 May 2026. Boarding the car from Kalyani, I set out for my long-awaited third visit to Anwasha Kolkata, my heart carrying a unique blend of eager curiosity and deep gratitude.

First Impressions: A Canvas of Belonging

Stepping into the lane at Garfa, the structure immediately caught my eye. As captured in Figure 1, the building stands proudly as a two-and-a-half-storied structure, beautifully painted in distinct yellow and brown vertical stripes. Knowing beforehand that this permanent home houses seven functional rooms and an accessible roof was one thing; seeing it stand independent and strong in reality was entirely another.

Figure 1: New Building



Wall art



Plaque of gratitude

The warmth of the organization enveloped me before I even crossed the threshold. Ms. Snigdha Sarkar, President of Anwesha Kolkata and one of its founding pillars, was right there at the entrance. She opened the gates herself, welcoming me with the genuine cordiality that defines the soul of this institution.

Before stepping inside, two striking details demanded my attention:

1. **The Boundary Wall Art:** The exterior wall features vibrant, expressive paintings crafted by talented young artists from the Bondhu Group (a self advocacy group of young adults who are deaf or hard of hearing). The artwork, depicting communication, growth, and alphabets, immediately signals that this is a space where expression knows no boundaries.
2. **The Plaque of Gratitude:** Fixed near the main entrance is a commemorative plaque dedicated to Asha for Education, honoring their pivotal role in building this vibrant center.

The Pulse of the Center

Step by Step: Murals, Milestones, and an Emotional Encounter

After the warm welcome by Ms. Sarkar, I followed the familiar custom and put off my shoes before stepping further into the building. The moment I crossed the

threshold, my eyes were immediately struck by an unexpected architectural feature on the ground floor: a striking wall adorned with Egyptian murals, complete with figures reminiscent of ancient pharaohs and pyramids, as captured in Image 3. It was an intriguing aesthetic choice, and I couldn't help but silently appreciate the distinct artistic sense of the building's previous owner, who had left behind such a unique canvas.

Turning away from the ancient stone figures, I entered the first room, which is currently dedicated to the center's reception. The space immediately felt alive with the energy of the children. Hanging on a soft board was a large chart paper, vibrant and bursting with colors, as seen in Figure 2. I learned it was a collaborative piece made entirely from the creative impressions of the children of Anwasha Kolkata during their Basanta Utsav (Spring Festival) celebration earlier this year.

Figure 2: Murals and paintings



Murals



Chart paper painted by children

A Legacy of Selfless Service

On another wall in the reception area, a prominent glass showcase caught my attention. The shelves inside were heavily lined with mementos, trophies, and plaques. These honors stand as a powerful testament to Anwasha Kolkata's selfless service spanning more than two decades. Each award represents years of relentless advocacy and hands-on welfare work dedicated entirely to children who are deaf or hard of hearing, alongside the families who support them.

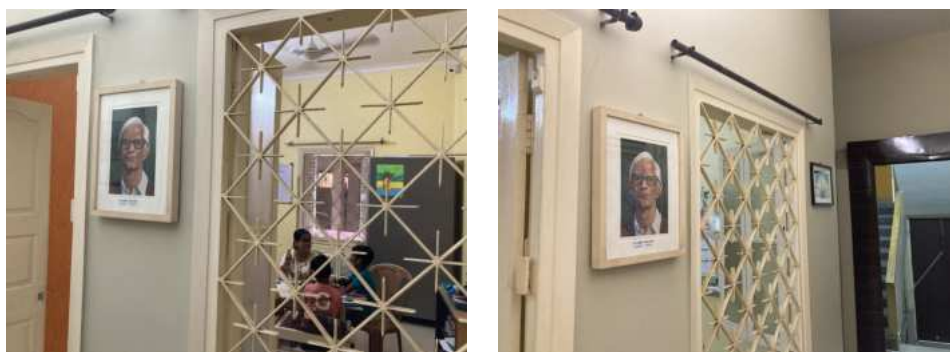


Figure 3: Award Gallery

An Emotional Encounter

Leaving the reception room, I proceeded along the corridor toward the second room. Between the two doorways, I noticed a framed portrait of my father displayed on the wall. The portrait was created by Mr. Souradip Chakraborty, a deaf young adult associated with the center. Rather than being a standard photograph, it was a hand-painted artwork that reflected his artistic ability and the organization's commitment to encouraging creative expression among deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Seeing the portrait also reminded me of my parents' longstanding support and association with Anwasha Kolkata.

Figure 4: Portrait of my father



Rooms of Resilience: Lessons, Legacies, and Lifelines



Figure 5: Nasima and Arpita teaching deaf children

Deeply moved by the portrait of my father, I gathered my thoughts and quietly moved forward, entering the second room. The transition from personal memories to the vibrant reality of the center was seamless. Inside, a scene of profound human dedication unfolded before me. Sitting at a small triangular table was a parent of a deaf child, Ms. Nasima Paik - focused and deeply sincere, was guiding three young children through their lessons. Working in perfect tandem with her was Ms. Arpita Sen Gupta, an Indian Sign Language (ISL) teacher. I watched with quiet admiration as Ms. Sen Gupta used expressive visual signs to bridge the gaps, helping the children grasp concepts quickly, accurately, and with absolute confidence. It was a beautiful reminder that language is far more than spoken words; it is connection.

Babita di: Honoring a Guardian Angel

Leaving the classroom behind, I stepped into the adjacent room, where the atmosphere shifted into something deeply tender. My eyes immediately found a beautifully framed photo collage hanging on the wall, captured in the left panel of Figure 6. It was a tribute to Late Ms. Babita Ghatak, a popular and remarkably dedicated special educator whose sudden passing from a cardiac arrest in March 2024 had left a massive void in the Anwasha Kolkata family.

Figure 6: Driving force of Anwasha



Late Ms. Babita Ghatak



Ms. Kaushani Ghatak and Ms. Sutapa Samanta

In that very room, I had the privilege of meeting two people who carry her memory forward every single day: her long-time assistant, Ms. Sutapa Samanta, and her daughter, Kaushani Ghatak, who are pictured together in the right panel of Figure 6.

Learning about Ms. Samanta's journey filled me with immense respect. She has been working as a special educator with Anwasha Kolkata for 12 years. Without a single day of hesitation, she commutes all the way from Budge Budge, a staggering 26 kilometers away from Kolkata, driven entirely by her love for these children.

A Quiet Introduction

Ms. Sarkar walked over and gently introduced Kaushani to me, a moment captured in Image 11. Knowing that Kaushani is a deaf young adult, Ms. Sarkar intentionally slowed down her rhythm. She shared my name and explained my role with slow, clear speech, ensuring her lips and expressions could be read perfectly.



Figure 7: Snigdhati and Kaushani

As I spoke with Kaushani, a deep sense of hope stirred within me. She had recently and successfully completed the Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) program. This specialized certificate course is designed to train grassroots-level rehabilitation workers—also known as Divyang Mitras. Hearing her story, I realized that Kaushani isn't just surviving her mother's loss; she is actively stepping into her shoes, preparing herself to support Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) right within their own communities. The legacy of care here simply refuses to end.

Thresholds of Hope: Shared Spaces and Pillars of Support

Stepping out of the room where Late Babita's legacy felt so tangible, I moved down the corridor to another vibrant pocket of the building, captured in Image 12. Here, a group of children and their parents sat waiting for their scheduled sessions. There was a unique, quiet dignity in this waiting area. I watched a young boy clutching his backpack, his mother standing protectively behind his chair, while another student with a visible hearing aid chatted softly. There was no anxiety here—only a shared, patient understanding. This space acts as a communal harbor where families facing the same joys and challenges can draw strength simply from sitting side by side.



Figure 8: Students

Seeing them there, Ms. Sarkar gently pointed out the thoughtfulness embedded into the building's layout. Just beyond this point, she showed me a dedicated seating bench specifically arranged so parents and children could rest comfortably between interactive sessions. Every micro-detail spoke of deep empathy and practical care:

- **Climate and Safety:** The area is fully equipped with its own dedicated light and fan to keep the humid Kolkata air at bay.

- **Hygiene and Comfort:** Essential toilet amenities are seamlessly integrated and safely protected by safety nets.
- **Health and Sustenance:** Clean drinking water is readily available via a dedicated water filter system, ensuring no child or parent goes thirsty during long training hours.

Climbing Upwards: Signs of Shared Strength



Figure 9: Students

Having thoroughly explored the welcoming maze of the ground floor, Ms. Sarkar warmly requested that we head upstairs to view the next level of the facility. As my feet found their rhythm up the staircase, I was guided toward a beautifully finished wooden door set against the textured green brick accent wall, beautifully documented in Figure 9.

Affixed directly to the door are three laminated posters, serving as quiet, powerful acknowledgments of the collective pillars sustaining Anwesha Kolkata’s daily mission. The names printed on them carried an undeniable weight of gratitude:

1. Asha for Education
2. Fundación Colores De Calcutta
3. Rotary Club of Calcutta West Ridge (specifically noting their vital contribution to meals for the children)

Looking at those three signs side by side, a profound feeling of reassurance settled over me. It takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a global community of open hearts to sustain a center of excellence like this. These organizations aren’t just names on a door; they are the continuous lifelines that ensure the rooms below remain filled with light, learning, and love.

Rising Upwards: Words That Mesmerize, Walls That Teach

As I continued my ascent up the stairwell, my journey was paused by a series of framed certificates adorning the wall. Among them, one particular Certificate of Appreciation held my gaze, as you see on Figure 10. It was presented by the Bondhu Group on the milestone occasion of Anwesha Kolkata’s 20th Foundation Day. Standing on the steps, reading through the elegant script, a profound warmth mesmerized my heart. The text spoke directly from the children themselves—a collective voice thanking the institution for giving them “resilience, patience, understanding, and love,” and for

helping them find their voices and sense of belonging. To read such deep gratitude, preserved in a simple frame, makes you realize that the work done here leaves a permanent script on human souls.

Figure 10: Walls That Teach



Gift from Bondhu Group



Wall painting

Turning the corner of the landing, the physical space itself seemed to mirror this internal growth. My fine sensibilities were instantly captivated by a vibrant yellow wall featuring a silhouette of a large, sprawling tree with birds in mid-flight, as captured in Image 15. It felt less like simple decor and more like a "Wisdom Tree"—a visual metaphor for nature, rooted strength, and the ultimate flight of independence that these children are preparing for.

The Pillar on the First Floor

Reaching the first-floor corridor, I was greeted by another architectural marvel left behind by the building's previous owner. As shown in Figure 11, a massive, intricately sculpted pillar dominates the landing, featuring rows of beautifully carved figures playing traditional instruments and dancing. It felt entirely fitting that a house now dedicated to harmony and developmental rhythm should possess a pillar celebrating the collective joy of human movement and art.

Right there on the first floor, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet a trio of extraordinary parents: Ms. Simanti Ray, Ms. Mithu Ghosh, and Ms. Pubali Guha. Speaking with them, I felt a deep surge of respect. These mothers are working tirelessly behind the scenes, pouring their personal energy into improving and refining the remedial education framework for the children. They don't just drop their children off; they have become active architects of the curriculum, ensuring that the learning environment constantly evolves to meet the children's unique needs.



Figure 11: Pillar of faith

Looking around the corridor, another reassuring realization came to mind. While the building is absolutely alive with beautiful artwork, functionality and critical safety measures have not been compromised in the slightest. Just beside the ornate pillar, the bright red cylinder of a fire extinguisher stands ready and easily accessible. It is a comforting testament to the organization's mindset: while they nurture the souls and minds of the children with art and education, they remain rigorously protective of their physical lives.

A Sanctuary: Play, Positivity, and Fearless Minds

Leaving the first floor behind, I made my way up to the highest level of the building. Before entering the room that opens directly onto the roof, I paused, completely captivated by what lay before me. What could have easily been a plain, concrete terrace had been transformed into a well-covered, vibrant, and thoroughly child-friendly wonderland, as beautifully detailed in Figure 12.

Figure 12: The Terrace



Front part



Back part



Side part

The entire space was alive with color, thanks to the mesmerizing murals painted along the walls by the talented deaf young artists of the Bondhu Group, visible

Figure 13: All work and no play makes jack a dull boy



across Figure 11. They had painted a bright blue sky filled with fluffy white clouds, a charming little house, a picket fence with blooming flowers, and even a cheerful scene of children flying a kite under a wide green tree. Potted plants lined the edges, adding a touch of living nature to the artistic landscape.

Key Activities Witnessed

During my visit, I observed several core components of their multi-level intervention program as discussed below.

Early Intervention and Pre-school Support

I witnessed the Early Intervention (EI) and Pre-school Support Program in action. This program is critical as it utilizes the residual hearing of children through amplification devices. I observed instructors working closely with young children to develop listening skills, acquire language, and build oral communication skills. This foundation is essential because, unlike hearing children, deaf children do not naturally acquire language from their environment, leading to a gap that Anwesha Kolkata strives to bridge before they reach school age.

Remedial and Need-Based Support

For children who have already moved into primary education, Anwesha provides remedial language and educational support. I saw older students receiving guidance to help them cope with the challenges of mainstream education, alongside speech and counseling support designed to build their confidence for “the journey called life”.

Figure 14: Teachers working with pre-shool students



Anindita and Shreyan



Babu and Jibon with Nasima



Sutapa and Debdutta with students



Mithu and Jannatun

Figure 15: Teachers working with school-going students



Pubali with Juin and Haider



Simanti and Ananya with Simi and Ishan

Nutrition and Wellness

A heartening aspect of the visit was seeing the children enjoy a nutritious meal together—consisting of milk, eggs, bananas, and bread. This holistic approach ensures that the children are physically nourished, which is vital for their cognitive development and focus during intensive listening and language training.

Figure 16: Healthy food, happy hearts



Neat, clean, and nutritious food



Students eating tiffin

Figure 17: Parent Training and Capacity Building: Listening, learning, and building a supportive community together



Parent Training and Capacity Building

The Power of Parents: Anvesha Kolkata's mission is rooted in building a committed parent group. I observed a vibrant interaction between parents, where they shared experiences and supported one another.

The Parent Training Course is a pillar of the organization, helping families accept their child's condition, understand their role, and learn about their child's rights and potential. By motivating parents to "renew their dreams," Anvesha Kolkata transforms the family unit into the child's primary advocate.

Technology-Enabled Learning: The Impact of the Smart TV and laptop

A standout highlight of the visit was witnessing the effective use of modern technology in the classroom. With the generous support of Asha for Education, Anvesha Kolkata has acquired a Smart TV and laptop, which is being utilized exclusively for infotainment and educational purposes.

Figure 18: Smart Board: Exploring new worlds and ideas through visual learning



Because deaf children do not naturally acquire language from their environment, visual aids are paramount to their development. This digital tool has revolutionized the way subjects are taught by:

- **Visual Reinforcement:** Enabling children to understand complex subjects through high-quality visual content, which is significantly easier for them to process than purely oral or text-based instruction.
- **Engagement:** The integration of "infotainment" keeps the students motivated and curious, bridging the language gap that often widens as they approach school age.

- **Facilitating Inclusion:** By mastering literacy and numeracy through these visual tools, the children are better equipped for “school readiness” and eventual mainstreaming into society.

This effort by Anweshha Kolkata, supported by Asha for Education, mirrors successful technology-driven models seen in other specialized centers and is a critical step in ensuring these children become “responsible and contributing citizens”

Impact of Medical Equipment



Figure 19: Early detection, brighter communication. OAE test going at Healthcare Centre.

With continued support from Asha for Education, the team has been equipped with OAE (Otoacoustic Emission) equipment and Otoscopes. These tools are currently being deployed at various Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs) under the Rajpur Sonarpur Municipality and Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Seeing this equipment in action—and hearing the analysis of the 800 screenings—confirmed that Anweshha Kolkata is not just a support group, but a leading technical partner in the state’s efforts to ensure every child has a fair start at life through early detection.

Advancing the UNHS Mission

The organization’s commitment to early identification is truly professional and data-driven. I attended a presentation by Ms. Srija Mandal, PhD, who analyzed the hearing screening data of 800 babies from the 2025-2026 financial year and drafted the report. This project has been supported by Asha for Education and Dr Srija Mandal has been appointed for this piece of work.

- **Expert Oversight:** The session was held in presence of Ms. Snigdha Sarkar (President, Anweshha Kolkata), with Mr. Sourajit from the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) joining online to provide technical insights.
- **Quality Improvement:** The presentation was excellent, not only showcasing the reach of the program but also identifying critical areas for improving data accuracy and reporting standards for the future.

Dr Prajamitra Bhuyan of IIM Calcutta and Dr Abhyuday Mandal of Georgia University are expected to be co-authors of the academic paper published from this study.

Figure 20: Abhyuday, Sourajyoti (on zoom) and Ms. Sarkar are listening to Srija's presentation



What Stayed with Me

- Children learning to listen, speak, and read—not by chance, but by design.
- Parents becoming educators and leaders at home.
- Teachers blending patience with clear goals.
- Simple, steady tools—meals, visuals, routines—doing heavy lifting.
- A community that is both caring and technically equipped.

Since 2004, Anwesha Kolkata has stayed true to a simple promise: hearing impairment should not limit a child's potential. They make that promise real through early intervention, school support, parent training, smart use of technology, and rigorous screening work with the health system.

As I walked through the main door, the atmosphere felt remarkably familiar yet beautifully evolved. While the location had changed, the core ethos remained wonderfully intact.

There was a calm, purposeful rhythm to the day. I watched as teachers greeted the children warmly by name, and parents sat together chatting comfortably like old

friends in a space they clearly trusted. It is a sanctuary where steady, hands-on work is shaping futures daily – not through grandstanding, but through quiet, dedicated perseverance.

Having now seen their permanent home with my own eyes, I am more certain than ever that Anweshha Kolkata’s new chapter at Garfa is just the beginning of a profound, lasting legacy for deaf children and their families.

Figure 21: With the President, Secretary, Parents and students at Anweshha Kolkata



Conclusion

The synergy between compassionate care and technical excellence is what sets Anweshha Kolkata apart. From the nutritious meals provided to the children to the sophisticated data analysis of newborn screenings, every activity is geared toward one goal: ensuring that hearing impairment does not limit a child’s potential.