

Asha Silicon Valley

Mahesh Pandey Fellowship - Apna Ghar Site Visit

Facility Location: Tatiyaganj, near Kanpur, U.P.

Date of Visit: January 22, 2026

Asha SV visitor: Vijay Poduri (vpoduri@yahoo.com)

Accompanied by: Raju Gaur (Jagriti Bal Vikas Samiti), Sangeeta Verma (Apna Skool Team), Mukesh Kumar (Apna Skool Team)

Apna Ghar is a residential facility for boys who are children of migrant laborers working at the brick kilns around Kanpur. It is run by Asha Trust Kanpur and has been in operation since 2006. Mahesh ji functions as the overall administrator of the facility, though its day-to-day functioning is largely handled by the boys themselves.

I visited Apna Ghar on January 22, 2026, after spending the day visiting some of Apna Skool informal supplemental education centers (another Asha Silicon Valley supported project). Apna Ghar is located in Tatiyaganj, and the facility is shared with one Apna Skool center. It also houses the kitchen where mid-day meals for Apna Skool kids are prepared.



The compound consists of a few one-level buildings. There are currently 38 boys staying at Apna Ghar. They go to a nearby privately run school called Vinyaas Public School. Typically, they stay four to a room, and sleep on bunk beds. Food is cooked in the facility, and often the vegetables are sourced from a garden in the compound that is also maintained by the kids.



Children welcoming us to the facility

The running of the hostel is remarkably democratic. Some of the older boys are given responsibilities such as meal planning, handing out stationery and basic over-the-counter medications, maintenance of hygiene etc. The most interesting part was the code of conduct put up on the notice board in the lobby. It lists a series of offenses and the corresponding “compensation” - kicking or fisticuffs results in the offender having to clean everyone’s shoes and slippers; a liar has to stay silent for 24 hours; someone abusing others has to stay silent for 24 hours *and* skip a meal.

अपना घर

"Asha Trust", 685 A Village & Post: Tatiyaganj, Mandhana, Kanpur Nagar

अपना घर न्यायलय

धारा संख्या

गलतियाँ

क्षतिपूर्ति

ए० जी०सी० ००१	किसी बात पर झूठ बोलना	२४ घंटे का मौन
ए० जी०सी० ००२	किसी से अभद्र व्यवहार	एक वक्त के जूठे वर्तन साफ करना
ए० जी०सी० ००३	किसी को लात घूँसा मारना	सारे चप्पल और जूते साफ करना
ए० जी०सी० ००४	चप्पल डंडे इत्यादि से मारना	परिसर/गाँव की नाली या टायलेट सफाई करना
ए० जी०सी० ००५	अपशब्द या गाली देना	२४ घंटे का मौन और एक वक्त उपवास
ए० जी०सी० ००६	किसी वस्तु का नुकसान करना	कम से कम २ घंटे का शारीरिक श्रम
ए० जी०सी० ००७	व्यक्ति को शारीरिक नुकसान पहुँचाना	किसी व्यक्ति या पीड़ित व्यक्ति की सेवा से कम एक दिन सेवा करना
ए० जी०सी० ००८	किसी का हंसी या मजाक उड़ाना	१०० बार लिखना की मैं किसी का मजा नहीं उड़ाऊंगा
ए० जी०सी० ००९	"अपना घर" के अभिभावकों या मानिटर की सही आदेश/अनुरोध को न मानना	एक दिन के लिए स्वराज भैया के साथ (सानिध्य) में काम करना
ए० जी०सी० ०१०	सभी के साथ बॉट कर न खाना (अस्वस्थता की स्थिति को छोड़कर)	एक वक्त का उपवास
ए० जी०सी० ०११	किसी जरूरत या अच्छे कामों में सहयोग न करना	सभी फटे कपड़ों की सिलाई करना

०१/०१/२०२६ से ये उपरोक्त कानून प्रभावी है.

नोट: निचली अदालतों के फैसलों से असंतुष्ट होने पर आप उपरी अदालतों में अपील कर सकते हैं।

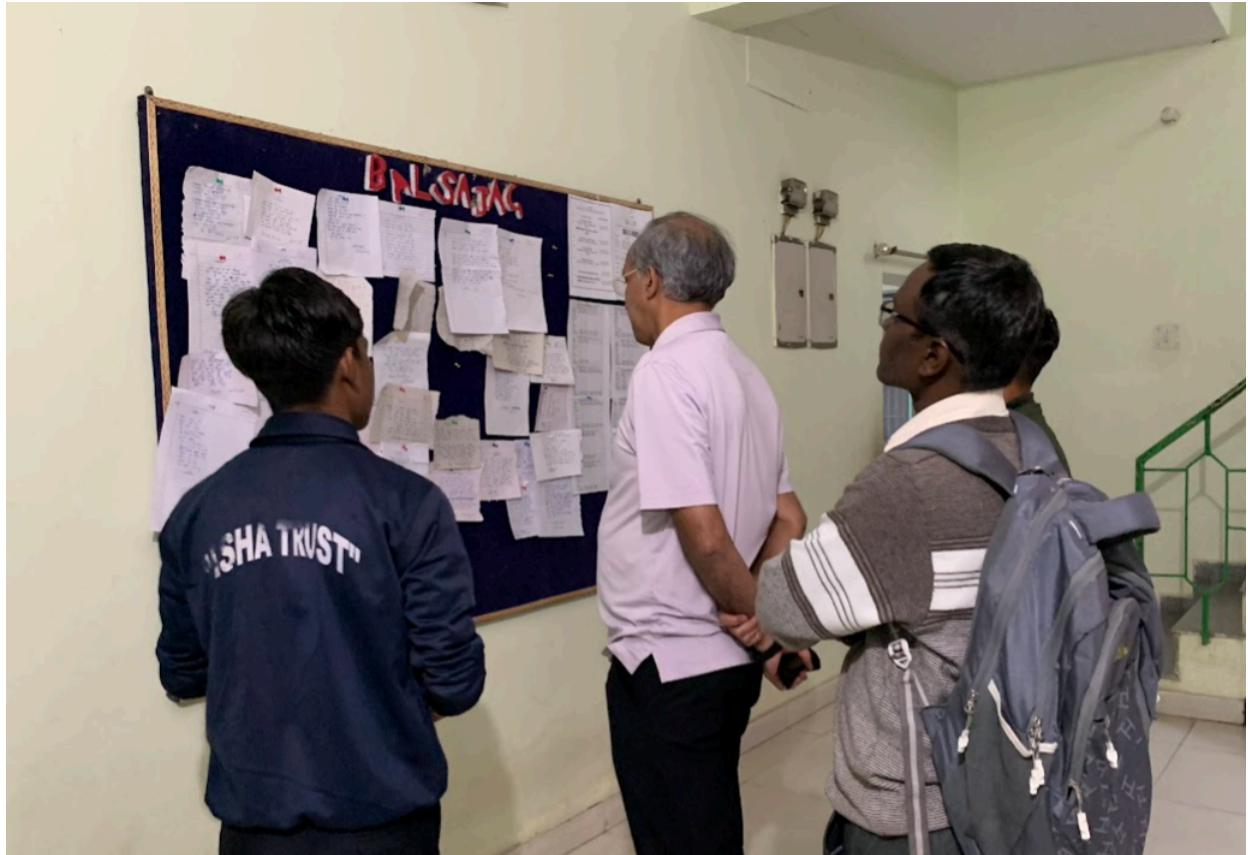
List of offenses and compensation

I visited the rooms where the children stay. These are clean and well-lighted, and have a table for study apart from bunk beds. They might seem cramped to adult eyes used to much larger

spaces, but are functional and adequate. Larger study facilities include a library room, a computer room, and a main assembly hall.



Dorm room



Display of the children's poetry. Also posted to a blog (<https://balsajag.blogspot.com/>)



Library



Computer room

After my tour of the facility, I met with the children in the assembly hall. The hall is adorned with posters and pictures of inspirational figures and quotations. The children are curious, but my impression was that they are a bit shy and restrained, especially the younger ones. Some of the older ones asked me about my life history, how I ended up in America, and about American presidential politics and foreign policy. The ones who spoke up showed an interest in the world beyond their immediate concerns. Being flooded with news and information through social media is commonplace for many schoolchildren, but I was glad to see that these children are not digitally excluded in any way.



Interacting with the children in the assembly hall

Overall, my visit to Apna Ghar was an uplifting experience. It is an extraordinary facility and it is changing the lives of the children who live there. The vision is that these children will affect the lives of their families and that thus the cycle of poverty will be broken. I sincerely hope that this vision is realized for every one of the children.

Mahesh Pandey is doing an extraordinary job at Apna Ghar. One has to visit the facility and talk with him at length to fully realize the extent of his achievement. This is in addition to all the other activities that he is involved with (see his annual reports to Asha SV for further details). I emphatically support and endorse the fellowship that Asha SV provides to him. It should be continued for as long as possible, to ensure that the impact that he has on the kids at Apna Ghar and society at large continues to be significant.