

## Inspiring Stories



### **SAYERA KHATUN :**

Here we present Sayera Khatun. Sayera, an Urdu speaking Muslim, lost her vision since childhood. She comes from an extremely poor minority community of Kolkata. Her father worked as a watch mechanic but due to failing vision he had to stop the only occupation.

In 2005 Sayera passed from Calcutta Blind School, Behala, the third oldest Blind School in India. She has one elder brother who postgraduated in Urdu but was not able to find an employment. At the moment he delivers daily newspapers to homes in the morning. Her younger brother is preparing for competitive examinations but could not yet qualify for any recruitment.

Sayera would always come escorted by her mother Taheda Banu, both of whom looked extremely pale and undernourished. When Sayera was continuing her Higher Secondary studies she would give some private tuitions to Blind children here and there drawing a paltry sum.

In 2009-10 Sayera reported to us seeking educational support for her undergraduate studies in Calcutta Girls' College with Bengali Hons. Along with resource support in terms of recorded audio books, tape recorders we could arrange for her a scholarship support sponsored by the Boruka Charitable Trust, Jaipur. This scholarship support continued till Sayera completed her postgraduate in Bengali from the Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She then enrolled herself for her MPhil Course in Bengali from the Jadavpur University and continued to appear for various competitive examinations including the School Service Examination conducted by the Government of West Bengal. As there were intervals in her studies we decided to shift her with Adhoc scholarship support. One of SVH's volunteers, Miss Nita Dey, who teaches in Calcutta Blind School, volunteered to dedicate her Saturdays and Sundays to help Sayera cope up with her increasing load of studies.

Just two months back she was declared qualified for a teacher's post in a secondary school in Nodakhali, South 24 Parganas with a good salary and security of a Govt job. Sayera is very keen to complete her MPhil degree as she feels, once she becomes a teacher, her scope of taking up a research project will get restricted. With the support of the Hans Foundation, introduction of digital mode of recording of Talking Books and nano audio equipment making recorded material compact in one memory card, our volunteer recordists, took up a marathon recording to see she never has to wait for her study material. Her appointment letter will be reaching soon and we at SVH along with our Donors pray may Sayera lead a life of self-reliance and deliver knowledge to sighted students in her school!





### **Dipankar Sarkar:**

Dipankar was born on 15 August 1986 in a low income group family in a remote village in the north 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Early in his childhood he lost vision in both eyes the cause of which doctors could never diagnose. His is a family, originally belonging to present Bangladesh and they came in West Bengal as penniless refugees. Most of their possessions were usurped by their own family members and finally his parents, struggling hard against financial hardship and moving one place to another, came to live in a Govt accommodation here. Both Dipankar and his immediately elder brother Biswajit (sighted) are their parents' advanced age sons. After a lot of search and inquiries, Dipankar was admitted in the Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys' Academy, Narendrapur, a special school in the southern suburb of Kolkata.

He studied in the special school from 1994 to 2006 when he qualified in the 10<sup>th</sup> Class West Bengal Board Examination with flying colors. The Mission authorities however refused to admit in their well-reputed, elite residential College in the same premises to facilitate his higher secondary examination. So Dipankar came back to his rural home and got himself admitted in the local Dakshin Chatra High School, where there was absolutely no awareness, no infrastructure to enable a student with loss of vision to go for higher studies. Here Biswajit took the cudgels and made an all out effort to make sure his younger brother did not have to lag behind in acquiring higher education. Finally Dipankar was able to qualify with high marks in his higher secondary examination and got admission in the Jadavpur University, Kolkata for his undergraduate course of studies.

It was at this point of studies that Dipankar around 2008 landed up at our Society asking for recorded study material for his Hons in Bengali. Now there was no looking back and Dipankar completed his undergraduation in the first class while one of our volunteers, Mrs Nandini Sarkar, came forward to sponsor a scholarship for him. He then completed his postgraduation in Bengali obtaining a first class against tough competition from sighted students. This year he has enrolled himself for B.Ed , a Course for training teachers from the same University.

In the meanwhile with our resource support, which was made possible largely through the support extended by the Hans Foundation facilitating digital recording, Dipankar began appearing for various competitive examinations leading to employment. He just cracked through the School Service Commission examination conducted by the Government of West Bengal and stood qualified while thousand of sighted students could not qualify. He is awaiting his appointment in a general school where he will deliver knowledge and education to sighted kids, earn a decent salary and support his parents and brothers who shared their own meager meals to see him stand self-reliant.

He still aims high. He now prepares himself for College Service Commission examination so that he can hone up his brain with more knowledge! And the most overwhelming point to note here is that his brother Biswajit who worked day and night in a call centre to support his brother, gave up his job and oneday just landed at our Library to say that he would feel happy to work with us for the Blind and vision impaired persons with his computer skill and doesn't care whatever we pay. We tried to convince him that this is an emotional decision and that we really can't afford to hire him on a regular basis as our resources are limited.

But here The Hans Foundation stepped in like a God-send and now we are able to include him in our team of volunteers with grants that THF gives to SVH and its impact is touching lives of hundreds of Blind and Vision Impaired students who appear at our Library showing a keen interest to have education and bring an improved quality of life for themselves. Thank You, THF!

