

annual
report

2008-09



Akshara Foundation

Akshara Foundation

Every child in school and learning well



Akshara Foundation

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“

Of all the challenges that teachers of young children must face, the challenge of introducing children to reading is perhaps the most difficult as well as the most exciting. . . exciting because so much in a child's life depends on it, and once the child has been introduced to reading and books in a successful manner, there is no end to what the child can accomplish.”

Prof. Krishna Kumar

The Child's Language and The Teacher – a Handbook, National Book Trust

Dear Friends,

We, at Akshara Foundation could not agree more with Prof. Krishna Kumar's statement. For us, 2008-09 has been 'The Year of the Library'. First there was the challenge of setting up 366 'hub' libraries with dedicated and motivated librarians. Each librarian walks to three neighbourhood government schools on an average, taking her *bhandar* of books to the last child – giving a different nuance to the term 'mobile library'. Another challenge is sourcing enough books, in Kannada, and more so in Urdu, that are attractive, easy to read, with interesting content for first generation readers. At last count, there are 6,20,000 books available for 1,95,000 primary school children.

Sharing our joys and our challenges

We designed the library to be little hubs of learning. Shabnam is a Standard 7 student. whom we met in one of our community libraries being run in a narrow street of D.J. Halli, Bangalore. Still in her school uniform long after the end of school, she said, "I like coming here, we do so many activities. And I have finished reading most books here, we need more books." Nagarjuna, a Standard 5 student of the Government School, Byatarayanapura, said, "I hope the 'summer camp' continues beyond the vacation. We would like to know more, get more information."

This past year, the Government of Karnataka introduced 'Oduve Nanu' - a reading programme originally designed and implemented by Akshara Foundation in Bangalore, across 11 districts of the State. Under this programme, an interesting new story printed as an attractive reading card is given to every child. The children are encouraged to read aloud and the accompanying exercises like word building games and alphabet recognition take the child on a geometric progression to improve reading skills. About 4,12,000 children participated in the



government programme in 2008-09. Many of these children sent us post-cards to tell us that they 'found the cards attractive', 'could pick up reading easily' and suggested that text books should be like these cards!

Nagu Nagutha Ganitha, a math programme was conducted in all 461 schools of Bangalore North district in 2008-09 (834 schools were covered in Bangalore south district in 2007-08), and was especially useful to students who were slow to pick up basic math concepts. Under this programme Akshara Foundation distributed math kits in every school in Bangalore. We hope the kits will be useful to the teachers in conducting *Parihara Bodhane* remedial sessions with students in 2009-10 as well.

Our preschool team is ready with a well-planned learning programme with appropriate teaching-learning material for a city-wide partnership with all *anganwadis* under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in Bangalore in the academic year 2009-10.

'Intrapreneurship' is an innovative concept tried out by the Akshara Foundation teams in North Karnataka. (A new word in the lexicon of the development sector, we hope). Nine of our staff members have set out as educational entrepreneurs, raising one-third of their financial resources on their own. Some of the projects are - a Finishing School for fresh B.Ed students; Learning Well Centers for primary school drop-outs and slow learners; Consultancy Center for education research, Data Center for data management and analyses.

As we sign off, we would like to invite all people interested in promoting quality learning for children from educationally-deprived homes, to join hands with us and participate in a civil society movement towards making our motto of 'Every Child in School and Learning Well' a reality.

We would also like to thank all our donors, friends and well-wishers for their constant and consistent support without which we would be unable to sustain our efforts in our mission.



Kanchan Bannerjee
Managing Trustee



Ashok Kamath
Chairman

The Self-sustaining Preschool

Akshara's self-sustaining preschool centres, independent *balwadis*, continue to be a successful model. In Bangalore there are 114 independent *balwadis* at present, with 1916 children, run by women entrepreneurs, entirely self-dependent, enterprising and committed to quality education. Each of them has about thirty children in their centres, with fees ranging from Rs. 30 to Rs. 200, depending on the services demanded of them.

The success of independent *balwadis* has a lot to do with the positive change in the community's perceptions regarding preschool education. Parents understand the need for educating their children and when children find an educationally supportive environment at home, they perform better at the *balwadis* and display an eagerness for learning. In the community too, the independent *balwadi* entrepreneurs have standing, and their work of advancement is widely appreciated.

Balwadi Programme



Working with *Anganwadis*

One of the highlights of the year 2008-09 was the partnership with the *anganwadis* under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). A small team from Akshara was deputed to five ICDS projects in Bangalore with over 200 *anganwadis*. They worked alongside the *anganwadi* workers to strengthen the system of preschool education in the centres. They shared their knowledge and experience of bringing 3-6 year old children in the community into preschool and also forming and strengthening the community around the *anganwadis*. Various bodies like Bal Vikas Samithis and Friends of *Anganwadis*, groups of community women, self-help group members, parents and local leaders worked for the welfare of *anganwadis*.

The Akshara team organised a sports event for *anganwadi* workers and helpers which saw active participation at all levels. The team resourcefully went into local areas, making people aware of the *anganwadi* worker and the work she does, telling them how she is inextricably linked to the community and its fabric of life. The team members convinced people to donate for the cause.

Akshara's collaboration of three years with *anganwadis* have brought change and new energy. Akshara volunteers have significantly strengthened the preschool learning component in *anganwadis*. *Anganwadi* workers have been trained in community interaction. This synergy has marked a new direction showing what can be achieved through a partnership of this nature.

Akshara tied up with Sesame Workshop India (SWI), a non-profit, educational organisation that designs creative learning experiences for children to promote early childhood education. The collaboration with Akshara focuses on 68 *anganwadis* in Bangalore. Together, SWI and Akshara conduct capacity building workshops for *anganwadi* workers and initiate advocacy measures to influence parents to send their children to preschools and inculcate in them ways by which they can enable a learning atmosphere at home.

A New Initiative

A new initiative this year was the opening of Balwadi Resource Centres. These are nodal centres in communities that are much more than *balwadis*. They survey and understand the needs of the community and develop a range of programmes to fulfill the community's education needs. At some Resource Centres, libraries have been set up for children and the community. In another, volunteers are preparing 22 drop-out children for mainstream education.

Expanding Reach

The cycle of growth continues. In the new academic year Akshara Foundation plans to expand its *anganwadi* collaboration by making it more broad-based, more in-depth and also extend its reach by working with 1552 *anganwadis* in Bangalore under ICDS's Urban Project.

New Ideas

Nagu Nagutha Ganitha (NNG) is a basic mathematics programme for children of primary classes, designed and developed to make the subject interesting for children who struggle with elementary concepts. While it is compatible with the school curriculum, NNG is also open-ended, allowing room for imagination and creativity. The concept of fostering thinking strategies in children, the focus of the programme, is bolstered by an innovative kit and creative ways of teaching.

NNG is a tried and tested programme based entirely on the syllabus for primary schools. Its methodology and kit have successfully been proven when it was piloted in 834 government primary schools in Bangalore South last year.

Mathematics Programme

The Programme Unfolds

The programme was implemented in 461 schools in Bangalore North District in 2008-2009, covering nearly 18,000 children of Std. II, III, IV and V. It started with the training of 1100 teachers, many of whom said they had never seen a programme like this, with so much possibility. As Vani S, mathematics teacher at a Government Lower Primary School said, "This training has shown us that teaching math need not be a blind method. We used to teach the traditional way for want of anything better. It has shown that our bookish knowledge of math can be replaced with NNG's practical method of explaining math concepts." 450 head teachers were also trained, a significant feature of the programme. They became a motivational force in schools, encouraging teachers to conduct NNG. Their active involvement heightened programme efficiencies.



$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 3 \\ \hline 5 \end{array}$$

Experiencing Mathematics

Children were happy to be doing NNG. They felt they had experienced mathematics. They had never seen such material before, they said. This was the first time they had been exposed to the workings of a clock or to handling money with understanding, they said. NNG strengthened their grounding and most of them revelled in their new-found ability in mathematics, honed through the use of work-books.

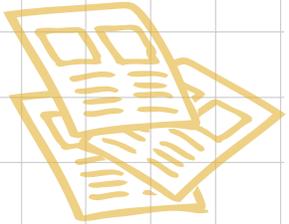
Looking ahead after the successful implementation of NNG , teachers have expressed an interest in the programme as a support for higher classes. Akshara has, through joint consultations, identified the concepts of fractions, decimals and percentage that will be covered in an NNG pilot for children of Std. VI and VII in 100 schools in the first semester of the next academic year.

Going forward, the NNG methodology has been incorporated into *Parihar Bodhane*, the government's remedial education programme.

The Engagement with *Oduve Nanu*

Oduve Nanu, the government's Reading Programme, which was designed on the basis of Akshara Foundation's reading programme began in approximately 16,000 schools in 11 districts of Karnataka. It covered around 4,12,000 children.

The Reading Programme



A small unit of Akshara Foundation opened this year at the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) State Office in Bangalore to support SSA with all the administrative and academic aspects of *Oduve Nanu*.

Akshara's roles and responsibilities were clearly defined.

- Participate in all training programmes till the Block level
- Develop tools for Baseline and Final Assessments
- Visit schools to ascertain the status of the programme
- Collect statistics and information from the districts for analysis
- Support the posting of analysis reports on the website
- Prepare and consolidate reports
- Support external evaluation

Akshara teamed up with SSA at the state-level to train Master Resource Persons (MRPs). In turn, approximately 32,000 teachers were trained, the training focused on the use of reading cards as a method to develop the reading habit among children.

Oduve Nanu ended in February 2009.

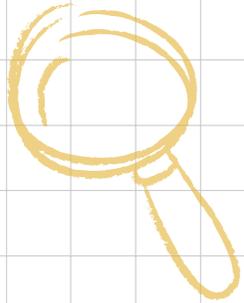
A Fresh Thrust

Akshara also partnered with Pragati, a US-based non-government organisation to train teachers to pilot the reading programme in 20 government primary schools in Kanakapura Taluk. The programme was a success and it inspired Pragati to replicate the model in the entire Ramanagara Taluk . This was a larger initiative covering approximately 7000 children in 419 schools in 21 clusters.

Sinchana of Standard 5, who is in the programme, told the team how happy she is with the story cards. Her grandmother is usually her storyteller, after dinner when the sun goes down. Now that she is in the Reading Programme, she has stories of her own to tell, a sleep-time ceremony, she said, as she lies down in the forecourt of her little village home, gazing at the night sky and the stars.

Establishing Capability

Encouraged by the positive impact of *Kalika Andolan* in 2007-08, the government decided to continue the remedial education programme this academic year under the name, *Parihar Bodhane*. The programme was implemented in approximately 45,000 government schools in Karnataka.



Monitoring of Parihar Bodhane



Akshara Foundation was asked once again to monitor the programme. The terms of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) said that Akshara would visit 10,000 schools through a network of nearly 200 partner organisations. It would provide weekly quantitative data on implementation, besides which it would also provide qualitative feedback on the programme from teachers, School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) members, parents and children.

The monitoring maintained an intensive tempo right through from September 2008 to January 2009, the mandated period. The team visited 15,247 schools in 202 Blocks. Of the 4,70,173 children selected for the programme, they found 3,84,412 children present at the time of their visit. A unique feature of monitoring was the partnership Akshara forged with organisations across Karnataka to take the process forward.

Akshara has completed quantitative monitoring, the first part of its engagement with *Parihar Bodhane*. The team embarked on the equally significant second segment of qualitative monitoring, undertaken in partnership with universities, and completed in all 29 Revenue Districts of Karnataka. Qualitative monitoring had two crucial components – focus group discussions with teachers, parents and SDMC members to garner a cross-section of opinions about the programme and tracking children's learning improvement.

This assignment establishes Akshara's capability to take up state-wide monitoring of programmes.

Exponential Growth

Akshara's School Library Programme saw exponential growth in 2008-09. The 366 libraries, of which 100 were added this year, serve all 1400 government schools in Bangalore. It had 1,95,000 children as members and 6,20,000 books in the system.

School Library Programme



The scope and scale of the programme was large and expansive. The key objectives were:

- To encourage the reading habit in children
- To promote thinking and an intelligent curiosity through activity-oriented methods
- To link library books and activities to children's minimum levels of learning in the classroom
- To spark talents embedded in children

A Place of Fun and Learning

The programme aims to make every library a space of fun-filled activity and exploration, stimulating the intellectual growth of children and nurturing personality.

Manjula, a Standard 6 student of the Government Kannada Model Primary School, Link Road, Seshadripuram, Bangalore, says she likes the library period very much. There are so many activities that she gets to do. She gets to use the computer too. She is keen on the creative arts like drawing and painting, but likes a good story. Her own ideas go into the stories she tells. Manjula says she can learn better in class because of her library activities. Project work gets easier. She finds it easier to read her textbook; lessons do not seem as dense as before. Topics in science like day and night are simpler, now that they have been taught at her library.

Reaching Out

Through its programmes, Akshara Foundation in North Karnataka reaches 86,390 children in educationally under-developed regions, where literacy and socio-economic indices are low and school drop-out rates high. It catalyses education in the 34 Blocks and 545 villages it works in, through cost-effective and imaginative strategies.

Innovation and entrepreneurship, watchwords for the organisation, begin from within. It has nine staff members who are "intrapreneurs" or educational entrepreneurs, planning, managing and evaluating their programmes, and raising one third the resources for them on their own. They are resource people with initiative and enterprise, striving to reach out to more children every month.

Karnataka Catalytic Programme

A Significant Landmark

Akshara Foundation launched a unique new project in North Karnataka, the Finishing School for Teachers. Formally inaugurated in Gulbarga on the 19th of January, 2009 the course gives finishing touches to the professional aptitudes of B.Ed graduates and unemployed teachers. Participants are trained for 75 days and this holistic rounding of career skills improves their employment prospects. The first batch started with English as the medium of instruction. Plans to introduce a programme in Kannada will fructify soon.

'Learning Well' Centres

3 education centres have been set up under the 'Learning Well' Project. Akshara Foundation started the centres last year to get children from remote villages into school and give them an education. Children's learning is assessed at every stage with weekly tests in reading, writing and arithmetic. Those who reach the highest level are brought into the mainstream of education and a fresh batch of academically under-performing children enter the centre.

The 'Learning Well' School in Muttagi, a village in Bijapur district, is now a Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)-approved centre. The first batch of children has successfully completed its course in the Learning Well centre in the village of Matakki in Gulbarga district, where it has been running exceptionally well. Another batch of 35 children has registered for the next course.





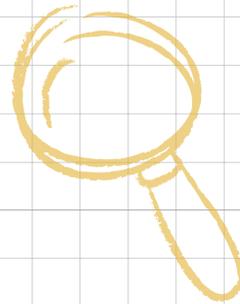
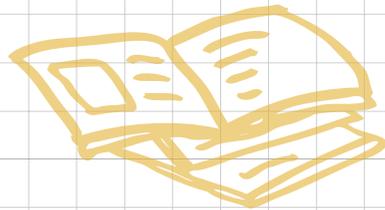
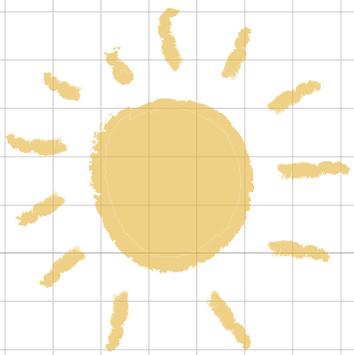
Transparency information for Annual Report 2008-09

1. The Chairman, the Managing Trustee and other Trustees who spend a significant amount of their time on the activities of the Foundation are not remunerated . No member of the Board of Trustees has received any remuneration during the year.
2. The highest compensated person in the Foundation received a total of Rs. 6,60,012 for the year and the lowest paid out for the year is Rs.18,000.
3. Given below is a table of remuneration paid out to volunteers, consultants and others involved in the activities of the Foundation:

Slab of gross monthly remuneration paid.	Female Members	Male Members	Total
Less than Rs. 5000	67	380	447
Rs. 5000 - Rs. 9999	11	21	32
Rs. 10000 - Rs. 24999	10	6	16
Rs. 25000 - Rs. 49999	5	3	8
Rs. 50000 and above	1	1	2
TOTAL	94	411	505

4. No costs have been incurred by the Foundation for the international travel of the Trustees.
5. The Foundation spent Rs. 2,84,197 on National Travel including Rs. 20,015 for Chairman and Rs. 15,646 for Managing Trustee.
6. The Foundation has a well-defined policy for purchase of assets. Quotations for purchase are called for from at least three independent vendors for the purchase of products in excess of Rs. 5000. Selection of the vendor is done on the basis of cost quoted and the quality of the product or service and the reputation of the vendor with regard to performance and support. Assets costing upto Rs. 10,000/- are approved by the Director of Programmes. Assets costing over Rs.10,000 need the additional approval of the Managing Trustee.
7. During the year 218 items of CPUs, Monitors and other computer peripherals have been identified by M/s. Value Point engineers as scrap and the same have been disposed off. An amount of Rs.10,000 has been realized.
8. The Foundation does not have any investments.

Financial Statements



$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 3 \\ \hline 5 \end{array}$$



Balance Sheet as on
March 31st, 2009

(Figures in Rupees)

Particulars	Sch No.	As at March 31, 2009	As at March 31, 2008
Corpus Fund		2,997,724	313,441
General & Project appropriations:			
Balwadi Programme	1	1,678,808	-
Catalytic Programme	2	-	-
Accelerated Math Programme	3	3,183,620	-
Library Programme	4	8,670,296	6,922,037
ASER Survey Programme	5	92,267	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	6	7,386,085	-
Outreach Programme	7	-	-
PROOF Programme	8	-	-
Bal Vikas Training Programme	9	-	-
Give India Programme	10	55,726	55,726
Remedial Teaching Programme	11	-	-
SSA Programme	12	-	-
CEE Programme	13	186,216	-
Current Liabilities	14	15,179,745	776,333
Swasth Plus Project		87,625	87,625
TOTAL		39,518,112	8,155,162
Fixed Assets	15	1,699,467	1,163,505
Funded Fixed Assets	16	2,269,712	2,388,256
Deposits	17	962,400	1,028,648
Other Current Assets	18	641,289	249,176
Cash and Bank Balances	19	33,945,244	33,25,577
TOTAL		39,518,112	8,155,162

(Figures in Rupees)

Income and Expenditure
account for the year
ended March 31st, 2009

Particulars	Sch No.	Year ended March 31, 2009	Year ended March 31, 2008
Income			
Donations Received	20	21,409,155	189,878
Miscellaneous Income	21	1,517,742	592,594
Sub Total A		22,926,897	782,472
Programme & other income received:			
Balwadi Programme		4,581,648	4,626,892
Catalytic Programme		-	10,937,700
Accelerated Math Programme		8,074,410	12,311,639
Library Programme		26,003,068	23,336,307
ASER Survey Programme		1,030,000	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme		10,636,450	357,000
Outreach Programme		-	939,493
PROOF Programme		-	144,629
Bal Vikas Training Programme		-	38,500
Give India Programme		-	55,726
Remedial Teaching Programme		-	113,760
SSA Programme		-	65,450
CEE Programme		232,500	-
Sub Total B		50,558,076	52,927,096
TOTAL (A + B)		73,484,973	53,709,568

(Figures in Rupees)

Income and Expenditure
account for the year
ended March 31st, 2009

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Particulars	Sch No.	Year ended March 31, 2009	Year ended March 31, 2008
Expenditure			
Administrative Expenses	22	706,204	389,605
Donor Relation Expenses	23	684,186	219,809
Training Monitoring Reporting	24	-	18,452
Prior Period Expenses		138,457	24,810
Depreciation	15	977,157	876,974
Research & Evaluation Expenses		88,104	-
Sub Total C		2,594,108	1,529,650
Programme expenses:			
Balwadi Programme		7,713,748	4,876,099
Catalytic Programme		-	13,548,018
Accelerated Math Programme		9,303,448	15,861,207
Library Programme		27,206,478	18,981,421
ASER Survey Programme		1,242,971	835,479
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme		8,418,398	3,551,695
CEE Programme		46,284	-
Outreach Programme		-	984,948
PROOF Programme		-	172,366
Bal Vikas Training Programme		-	38,500
Remedial Teaching Programme		-	113,760
SSA Programme		-	65,450
Sub Total C		53,931,327	59,028,943
TOTAL		56,525,435	60,558,593

(Figures in Rupees)

Income and Expenditure
account for the year
ended March 31st, 2009

III

Particulars	Sch No.	Year ended March 31, 2009	Year ended March 31, 2008
Excess of Income over Expenditure/ (expenditure over Income) for the year		16,959,538	(6,849,025)
Add:			
Opening Balance in Funds			
Opening Balance in Corpus Fund		313,441	7,849,508
Balwadi Programme		-	2,135
Catalytic Programme		-	2,610,318
Accelerated Math Programme		-	578,148
Library Programme		6,922,037	2,567,151
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme		-	505,232
PROOF Programme		-	27,737
Give India Programme		55,726	-
		24,250,742	7,291,204
Appropriated to			
Balwadi Programme	1	3,132,101	247,072
Accelerated Math Programme	3	1,229,038	2,971,420
Library Programme	4	2,951,669	-
ASER Survey Programme	5	305,238	835,479
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	6	5,168,031	2,689,463
Outreach Programme	7	-	45,455
Excess of Income over Expenditure/(expenditure over Income) after appropriation			
General Funds		2,997,724	313,441
Balwadi Programme	1	1,678,808	-
Catalytic Programme	2	-	-
Accelerated Math Programme	3	3,183,620	-
Library Programme	4	8,670,296	6,922,037
ASER Survey Programme	5	92,267	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	6	7,386,085	-
Outreach Programme	7	-	-
PROOF Programme	8	-	-
Bal Vikas Training Programme	9	-	-
Give India Programme	10	55,726	55,726
Remedial Teaching Programme	11	-	-
SSA Programme	12	-	-
CEE Programme	13	186,216	-
Excess of Income over Expenditure/ (expenditure over Income) after appropriation		24,250,742	7,291,204

(Figures in Rupees)

Receipts & Payments
account for the year
ended March 31st, 2009

Receipts	Sch No.	For the year ended March 31, 2009	For the year ended March 31, 2008
Balance brought forward			
-Cash on Hand		22,971	22,243
-Cash at Bank		2,804,534	11,015,004
Fixed Deposit		498,072	301,272
Donations Received	20	21,292,435	189,878
Donations received in advance		14,465,520	-
Miscellaneous Income	25	1,365,214	447,228
			-
Programme receipts			
Balwadi Programme	1	4,581,648	4,626,892
Catalytic Programme	2	-	10,937,700
Accelerated Math Programme	3	8,074,410	12,311,639
Library Programme	4	26,003,068	23,336,307
ASER Survey Programme	5	1,030,000	-
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	6	10,636,451	357,000
Outreach Programme	7	-	939,493
PROOF Programme	8	-	144,629
Bal Vikas Training Programme	9	-	38,500
Give India Programme	10	-	55,726
Remedial Teaching Programme	11	-	113,760
SSA Programme	12	-	65,450
TDS Collected during the year		1,721,249	1,128,194
Deposits received		-	20,000
Sundry Receivables		-	207,044
Advance receivable	35	-	183,683
TOTAL		92,495,572	66,441,642

(Figures in Rupees)

Receipts & Payments
account for the year
ended March 31st, 2009

II

Payments	Sch No.	For the year ended March 31, 2009	For the year ended March 31, 2008
Administrative Expenses	26	265,077	376,583
Donor Relation Expenses	27	710,927	346,904
Training Monitoring Reporting		-	18,452
Programme Payments			
Balwadi Programme	28	7,752,849	4,890,418
Catalytic Programme	29	-	13,547,677
Accelerated Math Programme	30	9,270,105	15,901,320
Library Programme	31	27,254,640	20,500,588
ASER Survey Programme	5	1,242,971	835,479
Karnataka Learning Partnership Programme	32	8,334,095	3,289,760
Outreach Programme	7	-	984,948
PROOF Programme	33	-	164,045
Bal Vikas Training Programme	9	-	38,500
Remedial Teaching Programme	11	-	113,760
SSA Programme	12	-	65,450
CEE Programme	34	129,102	-
Prepaid Expenses		33,748	9,837
Research & Evaluation Expenses		88,104	-
Advance Paid	35	63,864	117,731
Fixed Assets		1,397,169	627,365
Stamps purchased		(121)	515
TDS paid during the period		1,836,589	1,056,723
Prior period expense		135,208	24,810
Other Deposit made	36	36,000	205,200
Balance Carried Forward			
-Cash on Hand		27,056	22,971
- Cash at Bank		4,534,625	2,804,534
Fixed Deposit		29,383,564	498,072
TOTAL		92,495,572	66,441,642

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Akshara Foundation

Every child in school and learning well

