



Pratyay

Mon er moto ghor

ANJALI

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“Who will look after her? She has no family and we, as distant relatives, are already overburdened. Besides, we don’t think Minati has recovered and really, the hospital is the best place for her.”

Minati, who is now 45 years old, had been admitted to a state-run mental institution in Kolkata several years ago, and continued staying there for some more years despite having recovered. Each time her relatives were contacted, they came up with excuses to shirk any responsibility towards her. Even though Minati’s relatives gave up on her, Anjali did not, and finally, she found a place in Pratyay (meaning resolve), an assisted living space for people with psychosocial disabilities. Currently working as a caregiver, Minati has not just taken charge of herself but is caring for other people as well. A dedicated carer, Minati is determined to start earning substantially so that she can gradually leave Pratyay and live independently on her own terms.



Sukhen had been a resident of a state-run mental institution in Kolkata for over eight years. Even after several years of his recovery, his paternal family, including his brothers, have refused to take him back. 'We are a family of 10 and live in a small house. We are busy day in and day out, earning our livelihood, living pay-cheque to pay-cheque. We cannot afford to take care of Sukhen. Who will pay for his medicines, food and other essentials? We don't have a room in our house where he can stay. Also, to be honest, given his history of violence, we are not sure whether we will be safe around him. I will never be at peace knowing he is around my family.' Sukhen's brothers, whom he grew up with, abandoned him and his paternal home couldn't spare a corner for him. Sukhen joined Pratyay, and after just a few months, landed a job as a security guard at an establishment dealing with valuables worth crores.

Rukhsana often talked about her home, her desh (village), where she grew up with her parents and five sisters. She was married in a neighbouring village where she experienced severe domestic abuse. A few years later, she ran away from the torture and found herself stranded at a railway station from where the police escorted her to a mental institution. Rukhsana lived in the institution for about two years where she gradually recovered from the mental distress and subsequent mental health issues that she experienced following her ordeal. When her natal family was being traced, Anjali found that neither of her parents was alive and all her sisters had moved away. Her husband could not be traced either. She mentioned having a daughter and pined for her. Now at Pratyay, Rukhsana is deeply engaged in doll making and has made some unique dolls, one of which she keeps with her as it reminds her of her childhood as well as of her daughter. Rukhsana hopes to work in doll making and set up her own enterprise some day.

There are so many similar stories of abandonment, of persistent discrimination and marginalisation; however, all the residents of Pratyay—people with psychosocial disabilities, who have been perceived as a burden, dangerous, and worthless—have refused to let this define them. They have not allowed their stories to end here. Their grit, resolve, and resilience are what have redefined their journey and will redefine their

THESE ARE POWERFUL STORIES OF HOPE, ASPIRATION, AND DESIRE.

THEY GIVE US HOPE.

SO, WHAT IS THIS HOPE?





For us at **Anjali**, we do not interpret hope as being passive; rather, we have observed that it is a state of being that encourages one to take agency and to act. Irrespective of how 'grand' or ordinary the act may be, and regardless of the outcome, that act makes sense for the individuals involved. And when that happens, hope draws us on and keeps motivating us. Until gradually we realise that hope is but a renewable resource that recharges itself with even the smallest steps of progress.

Pratyay is the incubation for that hope.

Along with that, Pratyay is several other things too. It is a significant step towards the hope of an inclusive world. It is also a community that challenges the concept of normalcy and what a family is or can be. It is a space where independence dances seamlessly with interdependence.

Let us now introduce you to **Subhash**, who came to Pratyay in August 2022 after spending several years in a mental institution. Despite all his struggles, what amazes us is his resolve.

'I know what the reality is, what everyone thinks about people like me, but what they don't know about is my determination. I am not afraid to feel vulnerable, to make mistakes, or fail. I will keep learning and pushing myself. I am absorbing new things every day at Pratyay, all of which are helping to untangle certain knots within me. I know I will make something of myself one day.'

Similarly, **Asha's** grit has been a huge stimulus for us. She has been a resident at Pratyay for a few months now. She has only one hand and does all her work herself, including making dolls and soaps. Her ability to persist and persevere despite obstacles is inspirational:

'I don't consider not having one hand as a barrier. In fact, this disability motivates me to push myself every day so that I can live independently on my own terms. Learning the craft of soap making is not only a skill that I have learnt, but I also want to challenge the stigma that we experience on a daily basis. I want to challenge the misconceptions people have about us.'



**THE COMMONALITY IN ALL THESE STORIES IS
HOPE, RESOLVE, AND GRIT.**

**THERE IS NO GRIT WITHOUT HOPE AND NO
RESOLVE WITHOUT GRIT.**

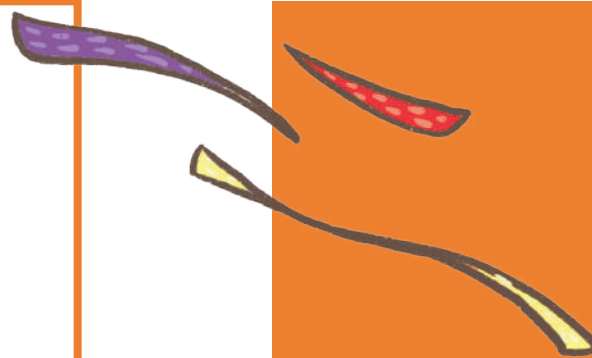


The thrust points of Pratyay are:

- **Deinstitutionalisation**
- **Destigmatisation**
- **Employment and participation of people with psychosocial disabilities in the labour force**
- **Independent living**

Set up by the West Bengal state government in a collaborative initiative with Anjali, Pratyay (meaning resolve) is a Kolkata-based assisted living facility for people from vulnerable and marginalised socio-economic backgrounds who have psychosocial disabilities, and who have lived in state-run mental institutions, namely, Calcutta Pavlov Hospital and Lumbini Park Mental Hospital. Individuals who have recovered from mental health conditions and who have no family or home to return to, and who have the capability to participate in the labour force and, most importantly, have consented to living in Pratyay, are selected following a systematised screening process set up by the state government in collaboration with Anjali.

After the selected persons enter Pratyay, they are gradually engaged in a variety of engagement sessions and dialogues to further enhance their capacities, skills and to also nurture their 'self', their desires, hope, fears, pain, and love. They are also engaged in a variety of skill training sessions aimed at enterprise building.



Being in a mental institution often takes away an individual's perception of well-being—the integration of the emotional, social, and the physical. Sessions on dance movement, art, and hobby pottery at Pratyay are milestone steps aimed at encouraging the residents to look inward, to feel, to rediscover their voice, their agency, and self-expression. These sessions are mediums that are used to tap into the inner subjectivities of the residents in order to encourage and motivate them to believe in themselves and reclaim their narratives. At Pratyay, independence and interdependence merge seamlessly with each other and these mediums enable the residents to gain that perception.





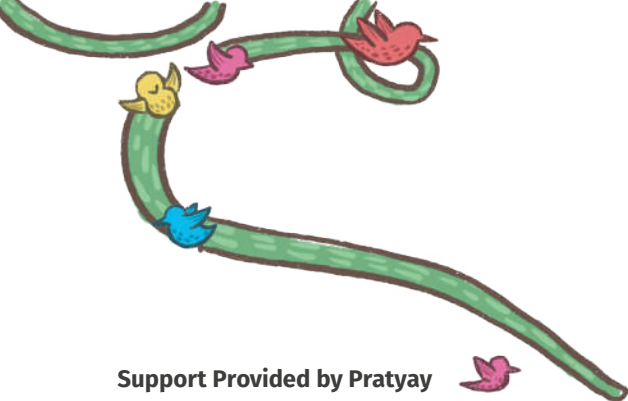
Doll making at Pratyay initially began as a means to engage the residents in creative expression but soon grew into a potential enterprise. The name, Tuki Dolls, as given by the residents, is derived from the Bengali word tuki which means ‘hide and seek’. It is also a metaphor for people with psychosocial disabilities whose lives have been a constant struggle between being ‘hidden’ or invisibilised and ‘seeking’ as they strive to find and rediscover themselves every day.

Soap making at Pratyay too was a deliberate initiative to literally wash away the stigma that people with psychosocial disabilities experience in their daily lives. Sohag, a Bengali word meaning ‘adore’ in English, and in everyday Bengali, ador or bhalobashapurno jotno, is a unique handmade soap collection and is a reminder of what touch means and can do to us. Skin is the largest organ of the body, yet one that is often ignored. Soap making at Pratyay was a deliberate step to challenge the skin hunger experienced by people with disabilities, for whom sporsho or touch is very limited.



Individuals who have been incarcerated in the dingy wards of mental institutions are often compelled to perceive a colourless world devoid of any hope. **Block printing** at Pratyay was initiated to help the residents of Pratyay to rebuild their world, block by block, into a world filled with hope and colours.

Creative expression is deeply interconnected with a person’s well-being. **Baking** - known to enhance communication skills, time management, focus, and concentration—is yet another step towards engendering well-being, while at the same time developing a marketable skill. This activity also provides space for the curation of a baked product from scratch, thus developing accountability and responsibility.



Support Provided by Pratay

Engagement Sessions for Capacity Building

- Art
- Hobby Pottery
- Dance Movement

Skills Training for Enterprise Building

- Doll Making
- Soap Making
- Block Printing
- Baking

Other Support

- Home Tracing
- Home Visits
- Reintegration
- Counselling Sessions:
 - Individual counselling and group sessions
- Legal Support

Pratay is housed in an iconic building which belonged to Dr Girindrasekhar Bose, an early 20th-century Indian psychoanalyst, the first president (1922–1953) of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society.

Pratay, meaning resolve, has been named by the Honourable Chief Minister of West Bengal, Miss Mamata Banerjee.

Pratay is a tripartite arrangement involving the West Bengal Department of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, and Anjali.

Previously a state-run asylum, the building for Pratay has been architecturally refurbished and renovated by the Department of Health and Family Welfare. The project has been financially supported by the Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare and the space is managed by Anjali, a pioneering mental health rights organisation.