# Let's make it a good night for all

**Much like privileged private schools, the state's night schools are turning to online lessons, but there is a hitch: not all students have smartphones. If you have a spare at home, maybe you can help**
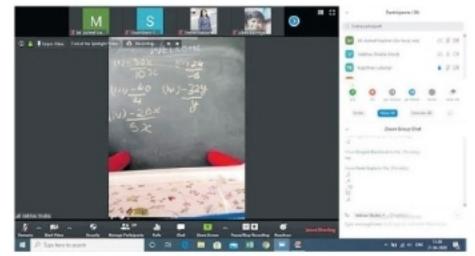
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I WORK as a bouncer. I couldn't study past Class IV, but my younger brother is an advocate. He is the one who first spoke to me about giving the SSC exam," says Nagraj Komolu, 36. The resident of Dahisar believes that his career prospects will improve dramatically once he clears the board exam, allowing him to move to a white-collar job with a little help from Masoom. The non-profit is focused on improving Maharashtra's night schools and works with 72 of them in Mumbai and 14 across Pune, Nagpur, Ahmednagar and Tuljapur. Most include self-motivated students like Komolu, who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Determined to rise above their circumstances, they work during the day and attend class in the evening.

Masoom was founded in 2008 by Nikita Ketkar, a former IAS officer, who realised that night schools were lacking in basic resources like notebooks and

# 800

**No. of students from 1,250, who have access to smartphones**



Nikita Ketkar (left), founder of Masoom, with a volunteer and the students of Mahatma Phule night school in Tuljapur, during a visit in February



A Zoom class on Mathematics, taught by Shashikant Gawas, in progress

textbooks, as well as facilities for a science lab, counselling services and career guidance. Ketkar believes that every student, irrespective of age, gender, or any other identity marker, deserves quality education. "We have been working to improve the overall infrastructure of night schools so that its students have access to the same resources their peers from day schools do." The lockdown has prompted Masoom to take its initiative online, making use of platforms such as Avanti Gurukul and Zoom. However, it has posed a challenge to the education of students who are unable to access online classes during this period.

The NGO conducts foundation courses for those who are about to move to Class X, during the summer months. "The teachers focus on Mathematics, English and Science. Some night school students return to education after a long gap. The course is a way to help them bridge the gap in their knowledge and brush up on the basics," explains Ketkar.

Attending a class on the Internet means that every student must have access to a smartphone. "I use my mother's phone but I have to hand it over now and then when she needs it," says Shivangi Pandey. The 16-year-old from Chembur wants to join the police force. Shashikant Ga-

**Nagraj Komolu**

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>
> **Nikita Katekar**

was, a Maths teacher and the head of the SSC department at Masoom, says, "As far as my teaching is concerned, my pace has slowed down because I can't rely on physical cues like the students' facial expressions, to judge if they have understood a concept."

Smruti Pawar, programme head at Masoom, tells mid-day that the NGO has piloted four batches so far. Right from training the students to creating their email IDs to coaching them on how to use Zoom, they provide the students with logistical support at every step of the way. Encouraged by the feedback, they plan to expand to run 20 such batches. Each batch contains about 25 to 30 students and lasts for an-hour-and-a-half. "Of the 1,250 students, only 800 have smartphones. We are appealing to those who have spare smartphones to donate them so that all students can attend the virtual classes," says Pawar.

## Donate a spare smartphone

Call Ramadas Alanghat (9967133001) or Kunda Shelar (9167577131)