

Eyewitness



NANDHA GOKULAM LIFE SCHOOL, NELLORE

PATHBREAKING PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVE

Ideated and masterminded by entrepreneur-philanthropist Chinta Sasidhar, Group Chairman of the Vishwa Samudra Holdings, NGLS is a progressive new-age school that provides free-of-charge high-quality boarding school education to male children from economically underprivileged households

Priyanka Edupuganti

Sited on a verdant state-of-the-art 18.52-acre campus in Edagalli village in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, the fully residential all-boys Nandha Gokulam Life School (NGLS, estb.2025) is emerging as a pathbreaking philanthropic model for providing high-quality premium education to economically disadvantaged children from across the country. A progressive new-age school, NGLS provides free-of-charge boarding school education to 200 students in classes III-VI mentored by highly qualified teachers with teaching-admin experience in schools affiliated with national and international boards. Students are

selected from economically underprivileged households with monthly incomes not exceeding Rs.10,000, drawn from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Delhi and Bihar. The intent is to add a new class each year until class XII with a full strength of 500 students.

OBJECTIVE & MOTIVATION

NGLS has been ideated and masterminded by Hyderabad-based entrepreneur-philanthropist **Chinta Sasidhar**, Group Chairman of Vishwa Samudra Holdings (VSH, estb.2000, annual sales: Rs.3,950 crore in 2024-

25), a diversified business conglomerate with interests spanning infrastructure and engineering, logistics, ports, and maritime activities. A civil engineer and business management alum of the University of Bath (UK), Sasidhar's entrepreneurial career began in the mid-1990s with the launch of an IT company before he ventured into ports and marine infrastructure construction. Among his most notable achievements is swift commissioning of the greenfield Krishnapatnam Port, a major private deep-water port sited in Nellore district — completed in record time of 18 months.

With VSG quickly establishing itself as a major force in ports management and engineering services, in 2022 Sasidhar registered the **Chinta Sasidhar Foundation** with the objective of “giving back to society” and creating “a compassionate world, in which young humans are nurtured along with plants and animals that form an integral part of their schooling experience”. Several projects of the foundation including NGLS were inaugurated on October 10 last year by Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Though NGLS is the foundation's first major education initiative, it's



Andhra Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu inaugurating NGLS

pertinent to note that the group had promoted and managed three K-12 schools for children of employees of Krishnapatnam Port, 35 km from Nellore city. NGLS is Sasidhar's attempt to employ best business management practices to address one of India's most enduring social deficits: quality education for all.

“The prime objective of Nandha Gokulam Life School is to provide high-quality school education to children from low-income households — equivalent academic environ-

ment, discipline and opportunities available to children from economically well-to-do families – without the burden of cost. I firmly believe education should never become a privilege determined by income or geography. Moreover, NGLS is unique in that it's a ‘life school’ which will equip underprivileged children with the confidence, values, capabilities and aspirations required to become financially independent, socially responsible and productive citizens,” says Sasidhar.

Chinta Sasidhar: "equivalent academic environment, discipline and opportunities"



PEDAGOGY AND LEADERSHIP

While Sasidhar provides the strategic vision and financial commitment that drives NGLS, the task of translating that vision into daily pedagogy is entrusted to **Nisha Bhakar**, Chief Executive Officer (Education), Vishwa Samudra Holdings.

An alumna of Rajasthan University with over two decades of teaching and administrative experience in top-ranked schools including Heritage Xperiential Learning School, Gurgaon, Sancta Maria International, Hyderabad, and GEMS International School, Jaipur, Bhakar is architect of the school's academic philosophy and pedagogy rooted in inquiry, storytelling, project and activity-based learning, and knowledge

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Nisha Bhakar: question, explore & learning applications goals

application. “Our education philosophy encourages students to question, explore, and apply their learning in meaningful ways. The goal is to nurture self-aware, responsible, and capable individuals anchored in traditional culture and values while preparing them for a rapidly evolving digital world,” says Bhakar.

According to Bhakar, the school’s admissions process reflects the management’s commitment to equal educational opportunity. “The admissions process is designed to ensure that students are not only economically deserving, but also capable of benefiting from the rigorous and immersive residential learning environment at NGLS. The admissions team strategically does an outreach to rural areas across different states reaching out to village panchayats, and often children directly through references. Moreover, NGLS is an all-boys school because we believe there is an urgent and often overlooked need to work deeply with young boys from economically weaker sections and help shape them into progressive, responsible, and compassionate individuals. By promoting a free-of-charge premium education model, our aim is to transform not only individual students

but also their households and entire communities. At the heart of our work is not the belief that one gender matters more than the other, but the recognition that meaningful social change sometimes requires focused intervention in areas where the need is especially urgent,” says Bhakar.

CAMPUS AS CURRICULUM

The NGLS campus is meticulously designed to enable children’s holistic development and progression. The

lush green campus, landscaped with fruit trees, shrubs and plants, houses two aesthetically designed academic buildings — Block Nandhi and Block Guru — with well-ventilated, spacious classrooms. The library, housing over 3,000 volumes in English, Telugu, and Hindi, is christened ‘Huddle’ and serves as the heart of the school focussing on developing children’s reading habits. Every child’s development is mapped through periodic reading fluency tests with data analysed to bridge the gaps in reading and language skills. Additionally, AI-based adaptive learning tools are used to develop students’ independent thinking and monitor their learning. Two computer labs ensure digital literacy is acquired through hands-on experience rather than passive observation.

Evidently a believer of the adage *mens sana in corpore sano* (healthy mind needs healthy body), Sasidhar has invested generously in NGLS sports facilities. Basketball, volleyball, lawn tennis and pickleball courts, a large synthetic turf football field, and dedicated spaces for art, craft, dance and instrumental music demonstrate a school-wide commitment to development of the whole child. The school has partnered with

NGLS children: whole child development objective



a Mumbai-based sports education company to provide professional coaching during and after-school hours.

Especially distinctive is the school's *goshala* (cow shed), where each child is assigned the care and responsibility of an indigenous breed of cow or bull from early age — a deliberate curriculum design choice to instil empathy and sensitivity towards animals and nature, accountability, and a sense of ownership. Each student works in the *goshala* tending to his pet cow/bull thrice a week. Students also work thrice a week in large fruit orchards that grow 11 varieties of local fruits and over 200 medicinal plants.

A highlight of the school's co-curricular activities programme is the NGLS Weekend Studios, offering students of class V and above an immersive learning experience in nature, literature, art, and music. Designed as consecutive three-month modules, these studios encourage students to explore vibrant civilisations of Bharat and the wider world.

Residential accommodation also testifies to the school's holistic development philosophy: creating micro-communities within the hostels where collaboration, discipline, and coexistence are practised as daily realities rather than abstract virtues. Rooms are intentionally purposive — spacious and well-ventilated, but free of distraction. Meal plans are curated under the guidance of a qualified nutritionist, ensuring balanced and wholesome daily fare. Class V students are encouraged to manage hostel activities together with the wardens and pastoral teams.

The typical school day begins at dawn with physical exercise and yoga, followed by a healthy breakfast and morning assembly with Saraswati puja — a structured blend of physical well-being, spiritual grounding, and academic rigour. Classroom instruction proceeds according to time-tables with intermittent breaks to refresh minds and well-being.



NGLS children at play: immersive learning experience. Inset: Chandrakala Dabas

“Our teachers are handpicked not merely for subject expertise but for their commitment to the cause of educating underprivileged students. Professional development throughout the year focusses on training teachers in experiential and activity-based pedagogies and pastoral mentoring of every child in their care. Learning at NGLS continues beyond the classroom through various student projects. The main curriculum of every class is built around the school's core 7 Cs framework — communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, character, culture, and compassion — which guides every activity of our teachers, inside and outside the classroom,”

Although novel and ambitious, this barely year-old school has got-off to a promising start. Most vernacular-medium students now fluently converse in English with others demonstrating improvement in academic outcomes and emotional resilience

says **Chandrakala Dabas**, Head of School, who also heads the mathematics department

EARLY OUTCOMES & FUTURE AMBITIONS

Although novel and ambitious, this barely year-old school has got-off to a promising start. Most vernacular-medium students now fluently converse in English with others demonstrating significant improvement in academic outcomes, self-discipline and emotional resilience.

“NGLS’ objective is not merely to prepare students for academic success but to also serve the broader purpose of students personal growth, making them ready for life. As the school evolves and expands, it will emerge as a replicable model for providing equitable, high-quality education to underprivileged children. I am pleased with the progress our teachers have made thus far — early learning outcomes are indicative not only of the effectiveness of this model but also of its scalability. I’m looking forward to achieving our full capacity of 500 children in the next few years,” says Sasidhar with the quiet confidence of a disruptive education leader with a proven track record.