

## Toddlers at Work

*The photo series introduces the Young Children's Community (14 months to 2.5 years) and their slow paced environment filled with enriching opportunities for movement, language, and existing in a microcosmic society.*

### Child making marks with chalk



*Photo Courtesy: Navadisha Montessori School*

## Indian Montessori Foundation's Seventh National Montessori Conference Saparya 2026: Serving One, Serving All



*"The Saparya Conference 2026 was filled with fresh ideas and renewed motivation. Montessori philosophy truly believes that education should serve not only the individual, but humanity as a whole—and Saparya beautifully highlighted this spirit of service. The speakers truly showed us Montessori beyond the classroom, demonstrating how small, mindful steps can help us practice this service every single day." - Sonal Mistry, Ubuntu Montessori, Mumbai*

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Indian Montessori Foundation IMF

With over 500 people in attendance, the Seventh National Montessori Conference by the Indian Montessori Foundation commenced on the 23 and 24 of January 2026 in Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai. The conference was inaugurated by illustrious chief guests, actor and social justice and environment advocates, Dia Mirza and Nandita Das. IMF Trustee and the founder of Sketches Montessori School, Nishant Gupta welcomed the delegates by delivering an overview of Montessori education, from how it was to where it is now. The gathering featured a diverse group of people interacting with children in different roles such as trainers, parents, students, school founders, and teachers, all seeking a profound experience of offering to one another.

The inaugural address by Dia Mirza was an apt beginning to the two-day convention where she spoke heartily about love and learning. The keynote speech was given by Nandita Das where she drew from many experiences as a parent and from her own life as a child, stressing on creating an environment where children can question, leave fear out of the equation and exist without judgement.



The Conference officially began with the lighting of lamp by guests and IMF Trustees



Dia Mirza then released the e-booklet for the conference followed by felicitating AMI Trainer Zarin Malva for her longstanding contribution to the Montessori community and therefore, children.

This was followed by AMI Primary Trainer Irene Fafalios from Greece, throwing light on how children build their sense of self through social interactions and how community is central to existence. Neelima Mhaskar, AMI Primary trainer brought the audience to the basics, her thoughts revolving around the areas in a primary environment and how the very design and thought behind each aspect of it promised service, truly touching upon the philosophy of 'Education for Life'. The delegates witnessed an interesting conversation between Rukmini Ramachandran and Zarin Malva, where the former asked the latter questions about her life as a trainer.



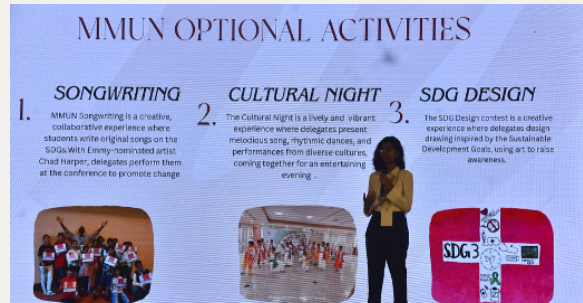
AMI Trainers Irene Fafalios and Neelima Mhaskar offering some food for thought to the rapt audience



AMI 6-12 & 12-18 trainer Jenny Høglund came all the way from Sweden to take us through how adolescent Montessori communities are an embodiment of the sentiment of service, to themselves, to others and the world through responsibilities, purposeful work and co-existing harmoniously in a community

Packed with humour and insight the conversation between trainers left everyone inspired to always come back to serving the child and holding on to the idea that materials alone isn't Montessori

The day ended with children from four different Montessori environments - Blue Blocks, Anthea, Harmony and Davinci, performing skits, a contemporary dance, sharing their firsthand perspectives and exhibiting their accomplishments with an engaging, well-prepared, and commanding presence on the stage. *"I came from so far to attend it and I feel like every step of my journey was worth it",* shares a thrilled Mende Lama from Darjeeling



From movements that beautifully flowed to building satellites to, representing Mumbai’s tiffin heroes, to being there for a friend who stumbled, everyone was enthralled by the children’s confidence and collaboration.

Day two began with Anuradha Shankar’s views on Gandhian values programmes empowering both women and children. She focused on the idea of service without expecting reward and this was possible only with a large heart. This was followed by Rebecca Dallam, an AMI Elementary trainer revisiting Maria Montessori’s Cosmic Vision in depth, urging educators to embrace the vision of harmonious interconnectedness so children can have a thorough understanding of their planet, their neighbours and most importantly, come to realise their cosmic role, joyfully. *"The warning against distortion—starting the day only with language and mathematics, keeping subjects separated, and disconnecting learning from real life—was timely and necessary",* introspected Pratima Jori from Nasik



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**AMI Elementary Diploma Course (6 - 12 year olds)**  
Trainer: Ms. Prabha Narayanan, Director of Training  
Ms. Meenu Sahi, Founder and Executive Director, VHMI  
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The Director of Vigyan Ashram, Pabal, Yogesh Kulkarni shared stories and anecdotes from their residential school, where children use productive work as a medium of education. With many pictures and videos of children at work, Yogesh elucidated that we must equip children with a strong attitude and the foundation of the very technology to support their creative forces.

There were many moments that the audience honoured by rising, one such occasion was after witnessing the kind of work that children undertook at Vigyan Ashram, and learn through experiences that there is no menial work, only menial attitude! g attitude and the foundation of the very technology to support their creative forces.

A panel discussion on 'Montessori Beyond The Classroom' occurred with AMI Board Member Anuradha Shankar, Vigyan Ashram Director Yogesh Kulkarni, Geeta Subhedar from Aseema Trust, Caroline Paul from Teach for India and Thommen Ollapally and Sachinkumar Rathod from Nani Housing, all doing phenomenal work with taking Montessori principles to economically challenged avenues.

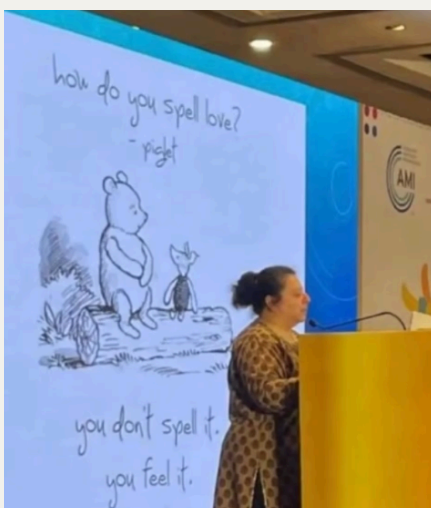


Geeta Subhedar stressed on how education must go beyond preparing for exams as life doesn't ask what we memorised but if one can think and withstand pressure while Caroline addressed the importance of being in close proximity to ground reality while working with underprivileged

The conference was brought to an end by AMI Trainer Teenaz Reporter's sincere offering to the delegates on the varied different ways in which service can show up that left everyone with a determination to keep our love for the child at the forefront of our work.

***“Teenaz’s words strengthened my commitment to creating an environment where service arises naturally from gratitude, wonder, and responsibility and to nourish the flame already burning within each child”- Mukhil J, Elementary Guide***

Many exciting and useful stalls were set up that offered a wide range of products, including books, furniture, didactic materials and a few stalls were also run by adolescents, selling their produce. *“Representing Nienhuis Montessori, I was pleased to see our materials widely appreciated and enquired about by Montessorians and schools across the country”, shares Priyesh Vijayan from Kerala*



# Scenes at Saparya

Breaks were the time to take some snaps with friends from the community, buy goodies from stalls and enjoy sumptuous meals.



*"The more you interact with others, every tea break, coffee break, lunch break, more than what food you're eating, it's about that one new idea that you pick up" - Kritika Chaudhary, Kolkata*



It was a lovely time for AMI trainers to gather, share and meet students from across courses



The IMF volunteers, who mostly comprise of Montessori teachers, behind the logistics and execution of the conference



Participants gathering at the installation with contributions of art from children on their interpretation of service



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**Register Now!**

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The conference was honoured by the presence of IAS Kailash Pagare, Commission Integrated Child Development Service Scheme and Vaishali Veer, Education Inspection South Zone



*“A profound reassurance of my grounding truth, attending SAPARYA 2026 felt less like a conference and more like coming home to a shared belief. The experience was profoundly relatable; the use of multiple languages, childhood references, and lived experiences made every session feel personal. It was a vivid reminder that Montessori is universal, speaking across cultures and backgrounds. Neelima Mhaskar’s Gujarati address added a beautiful layer of warmth. Zarin Malwa’s session was a highlight; her unmistakable zeal and deep sense of belonging, even after decades in the field, underscored why the early years require both heart and conviction. Yogesh Kulkarni’s perspective on community service reminded us that learning cannot exist in isolation, and Anuradha Shankar’s speech on Sarvodaya and Ahimsa tied Montessori philosophy to values that remain urgently relevant.”*

Shobha Goyal, NIDO – A Montessori Preschool



# Stay tuned to this space for an exciting events schedule for the year 2026-'27

## Experiencing Montessori

Swathi Raghav

Yazhini joined Montessori at the age of 3 and is now 9 years old. Soon after Yazhini began school, her mother Kasthuri Priyadarshini noticed that she began speaking confidently in English and looked forward to going to school each day with genuine enthusiasm. She also developed a strong sense of order, returning items after use.



Reflecting on their long journey in the Montessori community, Kasthuri notes that one of the most meaningful outcomes has been Yazhini's growing independence and her ability to make thoughtful decisions on her own. She always observed the trust and respect she had for her teacher and the absence of fear. There was also a deep sense of commitment and a desire to give her best in everything she did.

One Montessori principle that deeply inspires Kasthuri is its child-centric approach. She appreciates how Montessori education truly understands each child's unique needs and capabilities, guiding them toward their goals with empathy and purpose.

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