

## FS MEMBER UPDATE – January 2019

Hello Friends, a lot has been happening lately at FS. Following are highlights to update you.

(New format: Information is presented at two levels: first quick information on various topics, and second, if you are interested in more details for any topic, you can jump to the detailed information for it (Press “CTRL+Click” on ... [read more](#)). Or, you can just scroll through the pages and review it all)

### Quick Overview:

#### 1. New Chairperson – Jaikishan Gianchandani

We now have a new Chairperson - Jaikishan Gianchandani. Gowriben has stepped down as a Chairperson after 30 years in that role! ... [read more](#)

#### 2. Golden Jubilee Celebration / Reunion

The team has selected **Dec 28 (Sat) through Dec 30, 2019 (Mon)** for holding Shaurya and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reunion together. *DO PLAN TO ATTEND* .... [read more](#)

#### 3. Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)

Last October, Radha Misra had posted on the FS GB WhatsApp group a message about a government requirement to set up a committee to address sexual harassment complaints. Several actions were initiated as a result and we now have a program in place. ... [read more](#)

#### 4. Making FS stronger for the future

Friends Society has survived for 50 years – against all odds! We must be doing something right. However, we also had two significant downturns and once came close to being shut down. We need to strengthen FS so that it cannot only survive but thrive in the coming years and be able to adjust effectively to the changing nature of students and technology, and the pressures of changing cultural norms all around us. We, trustees and few senior members, are discussing various ideas to do just that – how to make FS stronger for the future. ... [read more](#)

#### 5. New Volunteer Service Coordinator – Meena Patel

Starting August 1, 2018 Meena Patel has joined FS as a Volunteer Service Coordinator, replacing the position held previously by Dhanada ... [read more](#)

#### 6. Two first time events

Niranjan Davé had visited FS in October 2018 and two first time activities were conducted: (1) Group lunch for staff, EC, trustees and others; and (2) ‘Youth Meet’ ... [read more](#)

#### 7. FS Brochure (for public awareness)

It was put together rather quickly to meet the immediate need of fundraising for Shaurya ... [read more](#)

#### 8. FS Brochure (for potential student members)

Similarly, another brochure was developed quickly aimed at college students and which can be used as a tool to recruit new members. .... [read more](#)

#### 9. Blood collection data for the past 49 years

At FS, one thing we do not do well is document – particularly data such as how many camps were held for blood donation and how many units of blood were collected. We do have some data here and there. So, ... [read more](#)

#### 10. Master member database is getting bigger

We now have 338 members included in our master database (they have completed the Google form). ... [read more](#)

#### 11. Back to Basics (reminder about our Mission, Principles, Unwritten Conventions) .... [read more](#)

## 1. NEW CHAIRPERSON:

We now have a new Chairperson - Jaikishan Gianchandani. Gowriben has stepped down as a Chairperson after 30 years in that role! She had wanted to resign several years ago but we kept asking her to hold off for little longer. Finally, that day has come. Images of the writeup on both are shown below. Both files are attached to the email.

Friends Society CHAIRPERSON transition: **Gowri Rajendran** stepping down

Several years ago, Gowriben had wished to resign as FS Chairperson and continue to serve as a volunteer ... her wish has finally come true. She has handed over the Chairperson role to Jaikishan Gianchandani.

*"FS is in my blood for 30 years! ... I can't stay without FS!"* – Gowriben has even spent many a nights worrying about the success of a scheduled FS programme, particularly during the early years of her association with FS. Diligent and sincere in all her endeavours, she eventually got her entire family actively involved in FS activities, either in programme execution or in fund raising. FS is indeed in her blood. She will continue to be an FS trustee, and a volunteer at Sunday School, sewing class, blood donation programme, among other activities while she is in Vadodara (around six months a year).

She learnt about FS from her late husband, Babu. During the early 70's, FS volunteers would often approach him at his canning factory seeking donations. The volunteers and their commitment impressed him deeply and he spoke about the Organisation at home. Gowriben started helping by selling FS raffle tickets. Furthermore, as Secretary of the Racecourse Ladies Club, she was instrumental in donating Rs. 5,000 to FS for building the green house. Amina aunty (then Chairperson) and Sagun Desai visited Gowriben to thank her, and Sagun casually asked when she would join FS. Well, once her children were older, in 1985, she did join as a volunteer in the CHCC and MHCC programmes. In 1986, she became in charge of fundraising and organized a dance program to raise funds. In 1987, she became the Vice Chairperson and in 1988, she was made the Chairperson.

Gowriben holds FS in high regard – *"straight forward and simple organizations like FS can be trusted to do the right things,"* and she likes the fact that it is a non-religious and non-political



Gowriben with Amina aunty (1<sup>st</sup> Chairperson) and few FS volunteers (1986)

Friends Society CHAIRPERSON transition: **Jaikishan Gianchandani** - new Chairperson

Jaikishan is now the Friends Society Chairperson taking over from Gowriben. He becomes the third Chairperson in the 49-year history of FS (first was Amina Tyabji for 19 years and then Gowri Rajendran for 30 years). He is also the first FS Chairperson from within FS and is the first male Chairperson.

Jaikishan has said that "FS is in his veins" – and everyone who knows him will readily agree. The beginning was different, however. He was a room partner in a hostel of a FS member (Durgadas Chellani) and thought that Durgadas was ignoring studies due to FS involvement. Out of concern, Jaikishan joined FS in 1975 to help his friend not get too involved. And, the magic of FS happened! Jaikishan would spend 3 to 4 hours every day at FS for the next 11 years. He will not go home during vacations, so he can continue being at FS. Before marrying in 1986, he had made a deal with her wife's family that she will let him spend time at FS and not demand curtailing it. His initial jobs were in sales and there were tremendous work and time pressures – so, he would work with colleagues until 1 or 2 in nights. However, he convinced his college to take a break in the evenings, so he can go to FS and then work late in the night. Upon graduation, he had six job offers and he selected the one that was in Vadodara – even though the pay was low, just so he can be at FS. After retiring a year ago, he has settled in Vadodara for the same reason. To say that FS is in his veins is clearly an understatement!

At FS, Jaikishan has assumed many different roles over the years: he has served as an in-charge for many groups: self-development, hospital services, blood donation, fund raising, library, and others. He then became the Honorary Secretary of FS in his sixth year at FS and had received "Friend of the Year" award. He is proud of the fact that when he was in charge, the blood donation group collected 1,027 units in a year and was happy to receive, on behalf of FS, the Asha Parekh Trophy for the largest no. of blood units collected in Gujarat that year (Note: FS has received this award two other times as well).



## 2. GOLDEN JUBILEE REUNION / CELEBRATION:

The team has selected **Dec 28 (Sat) through Dec 30, 2019 (Mon)** for holding Shaurya and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reunion. **DO PLAN TO ATTEND.**

Tentative outline of the plan includes:

28<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 (Sat) – preparations for Shaurya followed by an informal get together and a dinner – open to all members past and present

29<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 (Sun) – Shaurya competitions (6 AM to 2 PM) – lunch for beneficiaries and volunteers; then, a dinner for volunteers and final preparations for the Reunion next day

30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 (Mon) – Reunion starts at 9 am, ends around 6 pm: formal gathering, introductions, short video on the journey of FS over the 50 years, and team building games; lunch; entertainment program by volunteers and sharing of experiences at FS; tea break; a guest speaker; informal games; and Gala Dinner to end the day.

Member Directory project: Several members have requested contact information of other members. It will be great to publish a directory of FS members during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We have been looking into this idea. More to come on how it will be organized. Meanwhile, know that when you are contacted, please provide information about yourself and be a part of this project.

Last October, the GJCC (a temporary team set up to have initial discussions) and the EC held a joint meeting and a new team was formed that includes student volunteers and past members. Swati Sharma (EC member) is a leader of this team. Other members include: Alay Dhabhi, Ami Patel, Bharat Mehta, Falguni Gupta, Nisheeth Desai, Vijender Rathore (Hon. Sec), and Zaiba Dabhoiwala (last year's Hon. Secretary)



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## 3. INTERNAL COMPLAINT COMMITTEE (ICC)

We have issued a policy to protect volunteers, staff as well as beneficiaries from sexual harassment during FS activities conducted on or off premises. Posters to place on Bulletin board are also prepared.

Last October, Radha Misra had posted on the FS GB WhatsApp group a message about a government requirement to set up a committee to address sexual harassment complaints. Several actions were initiated as a result and we now have a program in place. This program is the right things to do, regardless of the regulation.

ICC: An Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) is set up at FS and has nine members. Rizwana Jamshed is the presiding officer. Other members include: Ami Patel, Vanisha Nambiar, Meena Patel, Nikita Mirchandani, Akash Bhadoria, Aayushi Shah, and Samir Parikh. One external member is Prof Namrata Luhar (from the law faculty at MSU).

DOCUMENTS:

- Policy:** a 12-page document is created [“Sexual Harassment Prevention, Prohibition and Redress: Policy & Program” - December 2018 (v.2)]
- Posters:** two posters are created for posting [“FS - ICC poster - Dec 2018”] – everyone should review this file.
- Additional key points from the Act** [“Key Points from the Sexual Harassment Act”] for those interested in detailed requirement of the Act itself

All these documents are posted on our website:

<https://www.fsvadodara.org/our-publications/>



KEY POINTS:

This subject is very important for everyone – whether FS member or not, and whether in India or elsewhere. While researching the subject, few points became apparent as very important:

- **It is the impact that matters – not the intent**
- Experiencing sexual harassment is a **subjective experience**
- The policy protects three groups: volunteers, staff and beneficiaries of our activities.

- May start off innocently but may escalate to harassment
- May be experienced as a single event or a series of incidents over time
- It is not only compliance, but to go beyond remediation by establishing strong **focus on prevention**

Friends Society  
Sexual Harassment Policy

Friends Society will ensure work environment that is free from sexual harassment for its volunteers, staff and beneficiaries. This applies to activities at the Petit Library or elsewhere.

“Sexual Harassment” includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behavior (whether directly or by implication):

- Physical contact or advances
- Making sexually coloured remarks
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature
- Showing pornography
- A demand or request for sexual favours.

KEY POINTS

It is **sexual and unwelcome**  
The experience is **subjective**  
**It is the impact that matters, not the intent**  
It may **start off innocently**, but could escalate to harassment  
It may be experienced as a **single incident or a series of incidents** over a period of time

If you are wondering if it's sexual harassment, it probably is

Friends Society has set up an **Internal Complaints Committee (FS-ICC)** to address complaints of sexual harassment. It will address all complaints following the procedures outlined by the Government of India (Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013) – this include maintaining confidentiality. FS has also published a “**Sexual Harassment Prevention, Prohibition and Redress Policy & Procedures**” manual which is available at the FS office (ask any staff). It provides detailed information about the process.

**To file a complaint:**

- Talk to any FS trustee or staff you are comfortable with. You can also directly contact a member of “Internal Complaint Committee” (FS-ICC). List of ICC members is posted on bulletin boards at FS. You will to make a complaint within three months of the incident (or the last incident if there were more than one).
- You will be asked to prepare a written complaint and give that to the ICC.

EXAMPLES:

Using power to demand sexual favours

Improper touching

Hovering over / standing too close

Staring

Spreading improper gossip

Offering benefits for sexual favours

Stalking

Sexual Harassment – MYTHS & FACTS

**if you ignore harassment, it will go away.** [FACT: It will not. Harassers generally will not stop on their own. Ignoring such behavior may even be seen as agreement or encouragement. The problem may get worse.]

**Harassment requires touching.** [FACT: Sexual harassment does not need to have a physical component.]

**Harassment is always verbal.** [FACT: Verbal comments may or may not be a part of sexual harassment.]

**It can't be harassment—he was only joking.** [FACT: Even though a person intends their conduct to be funny, it may still be offensive to others.]

**The behavior must be repeated to be sexual harassment.** [FACT: Sexual harassment could consist of repeated actions, or may arise from a single incident, if it is serious.]

**Sexual harassment requires that the harasser act with cruel intentions.** [FACT: In some cases, sexual harassment is the result of a person's ignorance of their own offensive behavior. However, it is not the harasser's intent that is important, but the effect on the victim.]

**Conduct must be sexual in nature to constitute sexual harassment.** [FACT: While sexual harassment certainly does include unwelcome advances of a sexual nature, it could also be in a different form. For example, if a male coworker constantly uses demeaning or inappropriate (unwelcome) language when addressing a female coworker (e.g. "Babe," "Honey," "Sweetheart").]

**Sexual harassment is rare.** [FACT: Sexual harassment is widespread. It touches the lives of 40 to 60 percent of working women, and similar proportions of female students in colleges and universities.]

**Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers.** [FACT: It is estimated that in most (80% to 90%) cases, the victim knew the attacker – a boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, classmate, co-worker, acquaintance, even a family member.]

**Sexual harassment only happens to women and is perpetrated only by men.** [FACT: Both men and women can be victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment. A survey has shown that 10 percent of men reported experiencing sexual harassment at work.]

**Women provoke sexual assault when they dress provocatively or act in a promiscuous manner.** [FACT: Studies have found that victims of sexual harassment vary in physical appearance, type of dress, age, and behavior. Women dress to feel comfortable and attractive. Perpetrators are responsible for their actions.]

**The most so-called harassment is trivial and harmless flirtation.** [FACT: Sexual harassment can be devastating for the victims. Harassment is offensive, often frightening and insulting, victims often experience serious psychological and health-related problems.]

**Only young, pretty women are assaulted.** [FACT: Sexual assault is a crime of power and control. Offenders often choose people whom they see as most vulnerable. Men and boys are also sexually assaulted, as well as persons with disabilities. Sexual harassment is more about dominance and power than how attractive the victim is.]

**If a person did not scream or fight or has no injury, it could not have been a sexual assault.** [FACT: Most people do not scream or fight because they freeze or become paralyzed with fear; they respond in many different ways: calm, hysteria, withdrawal, anxiety, anger, apathy, denial and shock. Reaction to the assault and the length of time needed to process through the experience vary with each person.]

Friends Society  
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Office: +91-0265-275-0629

Two posters

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#### 4. MAKING FS STRONGER FOR THE FUTURE

Friends Society has survived for 50 years – against all odds! We must be doing something right. However, we also had two significant downturns and once came close to being shut down. We need to strengthen FS so that it cannot only survive but thrive in the coming years and be able to adjust to the changing nature of students, technology, and the pressures of changing cultural norms. We, trustees and few senior members, are discussing various strategies to do just that – how to make FS stronger for the future. (Photos are of the Oct meeting; on the phone were Gowriben, Anuj Agrawal, and Jayendra Patel).

It is amazing and surprising that FS would last so long despite challenges which are faced by voluntary and student-based organizations - floating student population and having to start over every year with a new EC, and facing ever-present challenge of raising funds. We do need to learn from the past. We need to know which factors have contributed to its survival and which are responsible for its difficult times.



After informal discussions with more than 40 past and present members and review of several documents, six needs were identified to make FS stronger. We are systematically addressing these strategic needs. The Trustees and few

senior members had a meeting in Vadodara in October 2018 for three hours discussing these ideas and proposed approaches. This discussion will continue in another meeting to be held in a few weeks. Once key agreements are made, they will be shared with all members for comments.

FS is very vibrant and active now-a-days. It is great time to be around at FS. We will solidify this momentum to ensure stronger future for FS.

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1. Need to ensure continuity in activities and operations year after year.
2. Everyone needs to know and understand their role and scope (- what they can and cannot do)
3. Decision-making occurs at multiple levels – need to provide a formal structure to make this happen in more efficient and predictable manner
4. There needs to be direction provided for , and oversight / overseeing of, all activities and operations.
5. Need to organize FS operations: documentation, archiving of information, correspondence, accounts, regulatory compliance, facility upkeep and maintenance / repairs, etc.
6. Need to ensure that the checks and procedures, while necessary, are as few as possible. This is to ensure continuing the spirit of freedom given to volunteers to act, develop and implement ideas, and even make mistakes and learn from that.

#### 5. NEW VOLUNTEER SERVICE COORDINATOR – MEENA PATEL

Starting August 1, 2018, Meena Patel has joined FS as a Volunteer Service Coordinator, replacing the position held previously by Dhanada. Meena has been associated with FS for many years as a volunteer and now she has a staff position. Since assuming this role five months ago, she has provided good coordination with volunteers, EC group, and has served as an intermediary between the student volunteers and trustees. She has a responsibility to monitor all volunteer-based activities and identify the needs for improvements. She also has a responsibility to gather activity reports from group in charges, summarize the data into a monthly activity report and send to Niranjan Davé (for now) for use in preparing quarterly activity reports. Meena also helps with various other tasks. We are glad that Meena has joined us in this role.



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#### 6. TWO FIRST TIME EVENTS

Niranjan Davé had visited FS in October 2018 and two first-time activities were conducted: (1) Group lunch for staff, EC, trustees and others; and (2) ‘Youth Meet’:

(1) GROUP LUNCH: This provided an opportunity for the FS staff (all 23), trustees, EC members and few other members to meet as a group for the first time. This event has likely brought together everyone at FS and provided better understanding of the roles of each other. Pictures here are of everyone introducing themselves before the lunch.





(2) YOUTH MEET: Niranjana had conducted a two-hour discussion session with almost 50 student volunteers who had joined FS since 2011. The objective was to better understand today's youth – what they like about FS, what they enjoy and what they do not enjoy. There were no big new ideas learned, however, the better understanding that was gained will help us integrate them more effectively in the FS. Ultimately, FS belongs to these younger volunteers. Zaiba and Vijender had done lots of work to coordinate this event and helped with coordination during the event itself. Jaikishan and Meena had also helped and had served as observers. Other 'old timers' were not allowed as this was a meeting for the young people only.



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And, a **General Body meeting** was also held in October:



From left to right: Aman Sharma (Treasurer); Zaiba Dabhoiwala (past Hon. Secretary), and Nisarg Shah (current Joint Secretary) presenting reports



## 7. FS BROCHURE (for public awareness)

It is available on the FS website.



This brochure (1 page) was developed rather quickly to meet the immediate need of fundraising for Shaurya. It needs to be developed properly and more professionally in the future.

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## 8. FS BROCHURE (for potential student members)

Similarly, another brochure (2 pages) was developed quickly aimed at college students and which can be used as a tool to recruit new members. This file is also available on the FS website.

file:  FS brochure for potential volunteers - Dec 2018

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## 9. BLOOD COLLECTION DATA FOR THE PAST 49 YEARS

At FS, one thing we do not do well is document – particularly data such as how many camps were held for blood donation and how many units of blood were collected. We do have some data here and there. So, after painstaking task of reviewing several past issues of ‘Involve’ and the past souvenirs, a table was created for this blood donation related data. It is available in the file posted on the FS Website [“Blood donation data 1969 thru 2017-18”]

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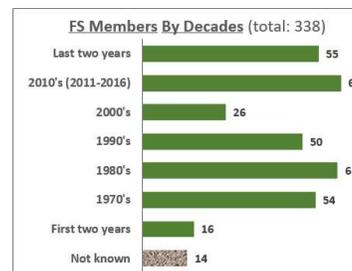
Blood Donation activity at FS 1969 to Jun 2018			
Years for which no data is available are estimated as 50 unit x 3 camps			
	No. camps	No. Units	Average Units/camp
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>19,204</b>	<b>50.8</b>
1969-70	0	0	0.0
1970-71	12	630	52.5
1971-72	9	836	92.9
1972-73	17	975	57.4

## 10. MASTER MEMBER DATABASE

We now have 338 members included in our master database (they have completed the Google form). This far exceeds the expectation that we had initially when Anuj Agrawal started this effort a year ago. It is quite encouraging to see that full one-third (33%) are younger members - have joined FS since 2011. And, most are residing in Vadodara - 183 (54%).

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Total 338		
COUNTRY	Count	
India	271	80%
Vadodara	183	54%
USA	30	9%
Canada	8	2%
UAE	6	2%
Singapore	3	
Australia	4	
UK	3	
Other countries (7)	9	



## 11. BACK TO BASICS

There are a few basics that we all need to be familiar with. They include our mission, principles and unwritten conventions. This is a periodic reminder asking you to review and refresh your minds. And, there are several new members who may not have seen these before.

### OUR MISSION

What we are all about, our reason for existence

Help young volunteers realize self-development through participation in activities for providing service to the people in need.

### OUR PRINCIPLES

Guidelines for how we do things, core values we do not deviate from

#### 1. Believe in each person’s potential to achieve better things

Explanation for FS members: We should help both volunteers and beneficiaries grow and reach higher levels, and believing in their potential to do so is necessary for achieving that. Everyone at FS should believe that each person can reach greater heights from where they currently are. We believe that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness and that disability does not mean absence of ability.

#### 2. Members realize self-development through service provided

Explanation for FS members: “Self-development through service” has been our motto from the beginning of FS.

At FS, we bring youth closer to less privileged sectors of society and realize integration of youth and society. Young people can make difference in the lives of people, and while serving them, the volunteers come to realize that they are really uplifting themselves.

FS provides a platform for actions and growth. This platform is based on the beliefs of team building and building from what you have. By directing energy of youth for constructive work, FS helps develop better future citizens. FS is a stepping stone for future leaders.

Commitment and being responsible are the traits that FS helps develop by insisting that it is voluntary at the time of making a commitment, but once a commitment is made, that commitment is expected to be kept.

### 3. As custodians of other people’s money, we spend it judiciously

Explanation for FS members: Everyone at FS has a responsibility for spending money wisely and are held accountable for doing that. Volunteers are involved in fund-raising efforts, so they can better appreciate the value of money and responsibly become the custodian of money; we value small and large contributions; we believe that big is blessing but small is beautiful.

### 4. Treat each other with respect

Explanation for FS members: This is a cardinal principle that must always be followed . We believe that beneficiaries are our friends and we treat them accordingly; we believe in, “Help me grow, don’t pity me.” Respect for all is shown by treating everyone equally as a valuable person and no one is considered indispensable.

### 5. Safety and well-being of the people we serve through our activities are important

Explanation for FS members: We ensure safety and well-being of all the beneficiaries while they are participating in FS activities or are at the FS campus.

### 6. Safety and well-being of volunteers participating in our activities are important

Explanation for FS members: We strive to ensure physical, emotional and mental well-being of volunteers and ensure that no harm occurs to them. We want their parents to be able to trust FS when they send their daughters and sons to FS activities. We insist that studies and family come first, before FS.

### 7. Avoid duplication of activities carried out by other organizations

Explanation for FS members: FS is not in competition with other service organizations and we do not duplicate the services they provide. Instead, we identify gaps in service available in the City and strive to provide missing services. (Note: this ‘no-ego’ approach also applies to how we treat each other and our belief in “selfless service.”)

## **UNWRITTEN CONVENTIONS**

Everyone at FS has been guided by unwritten rules (conventions) over the past five decades. They are passed on by word of mouth from more experienced volunteers to the newer members. Last year, we took on the task of documenting them and asked the past and present members to submit their thoughts. Around 60 to 70 items were submitted. After removing duplications and combining some of them, 47 are left. See the file, “Unwritten Conventions August 2018” available on the FS website. These 47 items are grouped in three categories: (1) Slogan / motto / idiom, (2) Belief / conviction / essence, and (3) good (best) practice.

Following are six ‘unwritten conventions’ that we see as most critical. (Note that these are in addition to the seven principles listed above).

1. Beneficiaries are our friend.
2. We keep politics and religion out of FS.
3. Big is a blessing but small is beautiful.  
Through large number of small donations, we reach many more people and it increases our accountability to many.
4. We believe in self-less service; member do not seek personal publicity
5. Service for sure, but not at the cost of studies or family.
6. We don’t have elections, we select EC members based on member performance.  
The outgoing EC selects the incoming EC every year.

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*Don't we have awesome volunteers! We all are very proud of them.*

Current volunteers →

Preparations  
for Shaurya  
2018

New volunteers who had  
joined FS just days before 🙌

