



A Mall With Vision

(A report on Antarchakshu™ - Viviana 2015)

Compiled by XRCVC

Ever tried eating or playing football in pitch darkness? Or shopping in a mall with a blindfold on?

Nearly 1,800 visitors to Viviana Mall on February 21st and 22nd, 2015 enjoyed participating in these unique activities at an enriching experience called Antarchakshu™ - The Eye Within. Antarchakshu™ was inaugurated by the mayor of Thane, Mr. Sanjay More, and Thane leader Mr. Pratap Sarnaik.

During the approximately 45-minute experience, student volunteers assisted each participant through various blindfolded activities, exploring the world of the visually impaired. The participants were taken through the experience of walking around barriers, counting currency, playing football, etc. Shoppers were allotted scores at the successful completion of each activity.

The activity area was also designed as a shopping zone, so that participants could empathise with the experiences of the blind while shopping.

The event took on interesting ideas related to accessible shopping and mall experiences, fulfilling Viviana's endeavours in creating an accessible and enhanced shopping experience for all its customers, irrespective of their physical condition.

After completing the shopping experience, the blindfolded participants were escorted by volunteers to the food café where they experienced what it meant to dine in the dark. Participants were given a fully accessible (audio-tactile) menu card from which they had the option of selecting their refreshments using their fingers (with Braille) or ears (using an audio input).

They were then ushered into the exhibition area, where a huge array of assistive devices including screen reading software, handheld magnifiers, a smart cane, accessible daily



The colourful entrance to the Antarchakshu™ zone at Viviana Mall



A volunteer using Maths-Science Teaching-Learning aids



A volunteer helping to blindfold a participant



A blindfolded participant plays football with a ball that jingles!

living devices, accessible board games and playing cards, and audio described movies, among others, were on display. They were also oriented on how maths and science can be made accessible to visually impaired students through Teaching-Learning Aids like 3D models of animals, a Geoboard, Cubarithm, etc.

Among the highlights in the exhibition area was a demonstration by Bhavesh Patel, a blind photographer, on how he shot an advertisement with movie star Katrina Kaif for Lux.

By now, the participants were very eager to share their experiences and clarify doubts about disability, so each of them got an opportunity to interact with a visually impaired person at the sharing zone and give feedback about their experiences.

As they prepared to leave, they were given specially printed Braille bags with a calendar-cum-Braille tutor as a memento. A large number of the participants at Antarchakshu™ were service providers at the mall.

The experience left an impact on all participants—be they casual shoppers, service providers or shopping mall staff, and reactions were myriad.

While some described it as an eye-opening experience with their eyes shut, others said it had changed their perspective completely about persons with visual impairment. “I look forward to working to keep building a better today,” said one participant, while another requested the XRCVC to help him make a popular retail chain completely accessible for the blind.

Viviana also set up a kiosk for eye donation registrations at the venue in partnership with the Eye Bank Association of India (EBAI), which recorded a large number of registrations.

The event was ably managed by a tireless team of over 180 volunteers. Apart from 10 teacher trainees from SNDT Women’s University’s B. Ed. (Special Education) course in Visual Impairment, most of the volunteers were students of St. Xavier’s College (Autonomous), Mumbai.

The event was widely publicised through the social media, the press, outdoor hoardings and special teams constituted by Viviana Mall.



A blindfolded participant shopping for pens



Depositing purchases into a shopping bag blindfolded



Visually impaired persons play Ludo, and Snakes and Ladders too!



Participants interact with a visually impaired volunteer



Dr Sam Taraporevala (left), director, XRCVC, interacting with participants

“We have been associated with this cause since the inception of the mall and it gives me immense pleasure to be the first mall in the country to partner with the XRCVC in holding Antarchakshu™ which is aimed at eliminating the delusions and myths about the competences of the visually impaired,” said Mr. Ashwin Sheth, Managing Director, Sheth Developers & Realtors (India) Ltd. “With this and our many other efforts for the visually impaired—such as accessible/audio-tactile menu cards, audio-tactile labelling systems etc., we hope to enhance the shopping experience of such persons and instill a sense of freedom and independence in them.”

Dr. Sam Taraporevala, Director, XRCVC added, “For the XRCVC, it is a great privilege to be associated with Viviana to bring our prime sensitisation event Antarchakshu™ to the people of Thane. Awareness is a prerequisite for an inclusive mindset and activities such as these at prime locations help transmit the key message to a large number of people.”

While the XRCVC conducts Antarchakshu™ every year at St. Xavier’s College (Autonomous), Mumbai, and has successfully taken this event twice to Delhi, this was the first time that it was being conducted inside a shopping mall.

Antarchakshu™ – Viviana 2015 was powered by Tata Housing, Microsoft India, TATA Capital, SBI Mutual Fund, Shriram Housing Finance, SBI CAP Securities, Lifebuoy, Tech Mahindra Foundation, Sightsavers, and the Dhun Pestonji Parakh Discretionary Trust.

Writing about Antarchakshu™ in the *Times of India*, Freny Fernandes said, “A young boy was seen teaching a 37-year-old woman to play football at a mall in the city. Unusual sight, but all the more unusual fact was that the boy was visually challenged and the woman was blind-folded.”

Nithin Belle wrote in *Khaleej Times*, “The mind-altering experience gave thousands of visitors to the mall an insight into the lives of the visually impaired.”

A blogger, Naveen Hinduja, shared this experience, “It’s a different world. We name it dark, we make it dark, but on the contrary, it is full of life. When one of the senses stop working or feebly work, the others take responsibility of the completing the task. Unbelievably intelligent is the human body!”



A menu which you can read with your eyes, ears or fingers!



Bhavesh Patel (centre), a blind photographer



Many participants stopped by at the eye donation registration desk



Demonstrating the Perkins Braille



Inviting visitors to the mall for the Antarchakshu™ experience

Appended below is a list of media reports that covered Antarchakshu™ - Viviana 2015.

Sr. No.	Date	Publication	Headline	Pg. No.
1	22.02.2015	Hindustan Times	Blind folder visitors feel their way to the wall	13
2	22.02.2015	DNA	Seeing through eyes of blind	07
3	22.02.2015	Khaleej Times	Eye-opener for clear sighted human beings	10
4	05.01.2015	Know your Town	Viviana Mall takes the first step to sensitize towards visually impaired	07
5	3.3.2015	Neotajarba.wordpress	Light Within (https://neotajarba.wordpress.com/2015/03/03/light-within/)	
6	26.02.2015	Loksatta	Blind folded humans experience the life of blind	01 & 05
7	24.02.2015	Thane Vaibhav	Viviana mall organizes workshop for Blind	03
8	26.02.2015	Sanmitra	To experience the world of blind Viviana mall organizes 2 day workshop for blind	03
9	22.02.2015	Janadesh	To experience the world of blind Viviana mall organizes 2 day workshop for blind	02
10	26.02.2015	Dainik Sagar	Blind folded humans experience the life of blind	03
11	24.02.2015	Prathista Thane Times	To experience the world of blind Viviana mall organizes 2 day workshop for blind	04
12	28.02.2015	Vrutta Dinak	Viviana Mall takes the first step to sensitize towards visually impaired	06
13	28.02.2015	Jagaruk Times	Viviana mall organizes workshop for Blind	02
14	25.02.2015	Apla Sahyadri Times	To experience the world of blind Viviana mall organizes 2 day workshop for blind	01
15	25.02.2015	Gavkari Thane	Viviana mall organizes workshop for Blind	03
16	24.02.2015	Times of India.com	Shoppers wear blindfold to gain insight on blindness	-
17	24.02.2015	Times of India, Mumbai	http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Thane/Seeing-the-world-through-the-eyes-of-the-visually-impaired/articleshow/46326416.cms	

18	23.02.2015	http://www.khaleejtimes.com/	Eye-opener for clear-sighted human beings	-
19	22.02.2015	http://dnasyndication.com/	Seeing through eyes of bind	-
20	19.02.2015	http://instantpublish.blogspot.in/	Viviana Mall takes the first step to sensitize towards visually impaired	-
21	21.02.2015	https://rukspad.wordpress.com	Viviana Mall takes the first step to sensitize towards visually impaired	-
22	22.02.2015	http://mumbainewsnetwork.in/	Viviana Mall takes the first step to sensitize towards visually impaired	-
23	21.02.2015	The Indian Express	Antarchakshu at Viviana	18
24	21.02.2015	Lokmat	Antarchakshu at Viviana	06
25	22.02.2015	Lokmat	Antarchakshu at Viviana	02
26	20.02.2015	Lokmat	Antarchakshu at Viviana	06
27	21.02.2015	Loksatta	Antarchakshu at Viviana	07
28	21.02.2015	Mumbai Mitra	Experience World of blind at Viviana	02
29	20.02.2015	Prahaar	Experience World of blind at Viviana	02
30	21.02.2015	Sanmitra	Experience World of blind at Viviana	02
31	20.02.2015	Tarun Bharat	Experience World of blind at Viviana	05
32	19.02.2015	www.mail-archive.com	Invitation for Antarchakshu at Viviana Mall, Thane	-
33	19.02.2015	www.asklaila.com	Step into the world without vision at Viviana Mall	-
34	20.02.2015	accessindia.org.in	Invitation for Antarchakshu at Viviana Mall, Thane	-
35	21.02.2015	www.buzzintown.com	Step into the world without vision at Viviana Mall	-