

**NAARI SHAKTI: AN INITIATIVE AIMED AT EMPOWERING YOUNG
GIRLS AT SIES HIGH SCHOOL.**

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Education is a basic human right that must be exercised fully in all nations. Our Indian law too makes it clear that both boys and girls have an equal opportunity to attend school from the age of six through fourteen and that primary education is a fundamental right (Article 21 of the Indian Constitution)Despite the Indian Constitution guaranteeing equality before law and non discrimination on the basis of gender, India remains a patriarchal society. Male inheritance and property ownership, early marriage, dowry, honour crimes, lack of girls' education, witch hunting, violence against women and trafficking are all serious obstacles in the development of the country.

Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development. Women's empowerment and achieving gender equality is essential for our society to ensure the sustainable development of the country. Therefore , SIES High School aims at empowering the young girls – the Naaris of future INDIA through various programmes. We have started with the School cabinet where girls are trained to hold leadership positions with self confidence. The School Cabinet comprises of both boys and girls. Different portfolios to the cabinet are assigned to both girl and boy students, purely on merit. Girl empowerment takes place, as they hold important positions in the school and take part in the decision-making process. This training instills a feeling of equality in them which they carry ahead for life.

During the Bi- annual exhibitions organized by us , the girl students are encouraged to take up a leading role in explaining the different projects and thus show the world that they are no less than their male counterparts. Before facing a massive crowd of 50,000 each day, they learn to research and present facts to the public . This instills in them a sense of confidence to speak up. These girls then go ahead to become our future Kalpana Chawlas.

A cultural fiesta called Talentia is held every year which has witnessed a large chunk of girls participating in various programmes and nurturing their innate talents thus creating an awareness in them that they have a much hidden potential within them. This helps them in recognising themselves and building self identity.. Even boys enthusiastically participated in 'Cook without fire' competitions. Here we teach boys, that they too must participate in household chores and other activities at homesending a strong message that there is nothing called inferior or superior. We are all EQUAL.

The Work Experience and Social Service classes in school , both boys and girls participate in cleaning classrooms and creating beautiful articles out of waste. Boys and Girls are taught basic stitching techniques. All these lessons go a long way in helping them look at Life with a broader outlook.

We have a cell called 'Centre for Excellence' where women get an opportunity to earn a livelihood by imparting knowledge of the skills they possess to young students. This definitely is a step towards women Empowerment.

Our teachers Ms Reema and Mrs Subhashini have been trained to prepare boys and girls to face challenges in life. Our boys and girls are given special sessions on Life Skills that teach girls how to face the various challenges in Life and boys are made to realise their responsibility towards society. These sessions are given to students from grade 4 to grade 10. A NGO called HEAL has also been roped in to create awareness

amongst our girls and boys so that they are in a better position to face Life. The girls are also given a session by gynaecologists who speak to them about being committed to their family and society. They are made aware about the need to participate in household chores and other activities at home. They are briefed about giving equal treatment to boys and girls and respecting women. This is a regular feature that takes place annually.

The Matunga Police has been kind enough to conduct session for girls on the dangers involved in operating social media and cyber crime. They were also made aware about the laws existing for safety of women.

Sessions are conducted regularly girl students and their mothers wherein Competitions are held involving mothers and daughters encouraging them to build a better rapport between them realizing the need of the hour.

Thus SIES High School believes in providing holistic education thereby empowering the aaris of the future. Thus keeping in line with the aims of the Indian Government, SIES High School strives to incorporate programmes through every subject taught to ensure that justice is done to the girls of our society. The Indian government has realized the need of the hour . It has recognized women’s empowerment, gender equality, and access to education as central to its social policy agenda. This commitment is reflected in a variety of national policy documents—from the 1950 Indian Constitution to the 2009 Right to Education Act—and through India’s commitment to international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. For international and national policies alike, India has affirmed gender equality to be: (a) a core value of democratic India and (b) a social policy priority for the central government.

However, in rural India, one can still see a lot of obstacles in bringing about this much needed equality. New literacy efforts are evolving via NGO’s like Pratham, whose mission is “every child in school and learning well,” while Round Table India claims to have built one classroom a day for the last 10 years, including a new community school serving an isolated tribal village. A summer coding camp is introducing Indian girls to computers, while new performance-based contracts known as social impact bonds are being introduced to improve learning and get more girls in schools. The government is also taking steps to provide additional non-school support (like bicycles to help students get there), and is moving toward new partnerships and private takeovers aimed at improving teacher training and school conditions. Another example- CARE India’s Girl Education Programme (GEP) focuses on improving the conditions by which girls, especially those in the marginalized communities can access quality education. Education is an important tool that enables women and girls to participate in decisions that affect their lives and in improving their social status. GEP provides technical support while working through the formal school systems as well as through the integrated programmes of CARE India. It is a well known fact that schools are powerful sites for change and social transformation. The roots of gender equality needs to be sown in the minds of girls and boys right from the beginning. If every school takes up this issue of inculcating a feeling of oneness and conducive environment of gender equality, this nation will be a heaven on Earth.

References:

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