



Peter N Varghese with students



Suman



Kiran Martin

Bringing change

In 1988, Kiran Martin, a pediatrician at Maulana Azad Medical College decided to step in to help out those poor children for whom primary education remained a mere dream.

"Without primary education there is no purpose of education. I realized its importance and made sure that more and more children got access to primary education," says Kiran. She is all praise for these youngsters who overcame insurmountable odds to achieve something positive in life. "These children studied by candlelight since most of them didn't have even electricity in their dingy rooms. But they didn't lose their confidence and with single minded determination, finished their schooling and went on to pursue further studies in the university," says Kiran while paying tribute to the indomitable spirit of these children who think the world of her. They look up her as their mentor.

According to Kiran, in the next five years, 5,000 such children are expected to enroll themselves in universities.

They defied odds to achieve their dreams

They may have been buffeted by the winds of adversity, but these youngsters never gave up hope and went on to pursue higher education

Aditya Mukherjee | TNN

They have suffered the slings and arrows of adversity but have only emerged stronger. Dismissed as the flotsam of society, they have faced hard knocks to make education their ultimate goal in life.

Diwakar Thakur is one of these youngsters from a Delhi slum who once lived in a small, dingy room with a wooden sheet as a roof. His father couldn't afford his education. He had no option but to take up some menial jobs to supplement the family income. And Diwakar gradually started losing confidence in himself. Dismayed and dispirited, the young man met Kiran Martin, founder of Asha, an NGO, at a workshop and expressed his desire to study and go to college. The only impediment that came his way was that he didn't have the monetary support to do so. Diwakar is now studying at Ram Lal Anand College of Delhi University and wants to pursue his MBA. It is all because of the moral and financial support of the NGO that is changing the lives of many youngsters from economically underprivileged sections of society by helping them to stand on their feet.

Suman, who lived in a slum in Zakira, is now a student of Deen Dayal Upadhyay College of Delhi University. She also led a life of quite desperation in a slum where

she would watch kids from well-off families going to school with access to all the amenities. She even felt her dream to become a teacher would never be fulfilled. But with the support of the NGO, Suman now doesn't find it difficult to work towards achieving her objective. Not only that, she wants to teach kids from poor families who can't go to school due to their financial limitations.

This year 170 youngsters from slums have overcome extreme poverty and social pressures to be admitted to Delhi University and other reputed private colleges, an extraordinary feat that has been made possible thanks to this NGO's higher education initiative. The NGO is a community health and development society that works with over 400,000 people in nearly 50 slum colonies of Delhi.

Meeting these youngsters at a function hosted by the Australian high commissioner Peter N



Diwakar Thakur

EDUCATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE KEY TO CHANGING LIVES AND I BELIEVE IN ITS TRANSFORMATIVE POWER

— PETER N VARGHESE

AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

Varghese to celebrate their mission into Delhi University quite a revelation. Varghese interacted with these youngsters who spoke about their new experience of studying in a prestigious university.

"The NGO is doing a tremendous job in revolutionizing lives of poor children from slums. What is equally praiseworthy is how this movement has led to a sense of confidence, a sense of empowerment among these kids. Education has always been the key to changing lives and I believe in its transformative power," says Varghese. Working in partnership with Asha, the Australian High Commission has provided funding to support children through their final years at school, including expenses for textbooks and tuition. Varghese presented the NGO with a donation of ₹2 lakh on behalf of the Australian athletes who participated in the Commonwealth Games.

