

गाँव
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PRESENTS

Teacher CONNECTION

CELEBRATING TEACHERS EVERY DAY



KHELO INDIA

TEACHERS REINVIGORATING SPORTS IN RURAL INDIA

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JUNE 2023



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GAON CONNECTION

**FOUNDED IN 2012 TO STRENGTHEN
THE VOICE OF RURAL INDIA**

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FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD Supriti Kachhap is a young athlete who won a gold medal at the Khelo India Youth Games held last June. She created a record of 9 minutes 46.14 seconds in the girls' 3,000 metre race in under-21 category.

But that is just half the story of this young sportsperson who hails from Buruhu village in Jharkhand. Supriti belongs to the Oraon tribe and lost her father when she was eight-months-old. Her mother worked as a daily wage and Supriti had to practise barefoot as she could not afford shoes. And she is now a star athlete of the country.

Neelam Pardhi's story is somewhat similar. The 20-year-old national kabbadi player from Khamtara village in Madhya Pradesh, belongs to the Pardhi community, a denotified tribe, where it is a common practice to get girls married by an age of 11-12 years. But Neelam fought her way to become a national champion.

And who doesn't know Rohit Yadav who qualified for the men's javelin throw finals at the 2022 World Athletics Championships. Rohit, a young athlete, is from Adari Dabhiya village in Uttar Pradesh, who used to run and practise his throws on the sandy banks of the Basoi river.

Like Supriti, Neelam and Rohit, the villages of India are teeming with young girls and boys who love sports, and with support and training from their teachers, these rural youth are slowly emerging as sports champions and bringing glory to the country.

Gaon Connection has been regularly documenting stories of sports stars from rural India but we also realise the importance of shining the light on teachers who identify the young talent in villages and provide them with a basic training and platform to pursue their dream of representing their district, state and country at various sports championships.

The June 2023 issue of Teacher Connection magazine is dedicated to teachers who are training and preparing future sports persons of the country. While their students shine and win laurels, these rural teachers often remain behind the scenes. But, we want our readers to see them and know more about them. Khelo India!

Nidhi Jamwal

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A close-up photograph of a person's foot, wearing a simple, light-colored sandal, resting on a soccer ball. The ball is white with green hexagonal panels and is sitting on dry, brown, textured ground. The background is a blurred landscape of dry grass and trees under a warm, golden light, suggesting a rural setting in India.

A SPORTS REVOLUTION IN RURAL INDIA

Far away from the spotlight of roaring stadia and sports channels, a silent sports revolution is underway in the villages of India where coaches nurture young athletes. Many of these players are bringing glory to their district, their state, and the country.

GAON CONNECTION

THE 2018 FIFA World Cup was around the corner, and Sampurn Kumar Nigam decided it was the perfect opportunity to form a girls' football team in the primary school where he is principal. It was a first for the primary school in Bishnupur, Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh.

Nigam did not stop at that. To encourage the young players and bring their talent to the attention of the wider community, he decided to participate in a government programme that was underway. As part of the 'My Stamp' programme being run through post offices across the country, Nigam sent a photograph of his girls team to the Indian government.

The next thing, the Department of Post of the central government issued a Rs 5 postage stamp featuring the photos of the players of Bishnupur primary school.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



For the past four decades, volley ball coach Basant Singh Mann has trained hundreds of players in rural Rajasthan. More than a thousand have played at the national level; Rakesh Kumar Vishwakarma (below) knew that apart from academics, physical education and sports were crucial for the overall development of the children.

The stamp was launched by the local MLA, and the entire village was filled with pride for their daughters.

The team has since won trophies and medals including honours from the Minister of Education.

There was a time when an interest in sports was peremptorily brushed aside: Padhoge likhoge banoge nawab, kheloge kudoge banoge kharab (Study, and you will be king; play, and you will be a wastrel) was a much touted adage. But now, both educational institutions and parents realise the importance of sports, for both physical and mental well-being.

Bollywood movies have also helped the cause of sports. Mary Kom, Bhag Milkha Bhag, Chak De India, Dangal, are based on the lives of sports stars who have emerged from the dust of the hinterlands.

Sporting culture has come to stay in the far flung villages of the country and rural India is increasingly proving to be the backbone of Indian sports.



BOLLYWOOD MOVIES HAVE ALSO HELPED THE CAUSE OF SPORTS. MARY KOM, BHAG MILKHA BHAG, CHAK DE INDIA, DANGAL, ARE BASED ON THE LIVES OF SPORTS STARS WHO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE DUST OF THE HINTERLANDS

The Government of India and state governments have introduced multiple initiatives to groom athletes for professional sports. The National Education Policy 2020 offers a window of opportunity to integrate sports as a non-alienable part of the

curriculum in schools and colleges.

The network of schools and colleges across India makes a perfect platform to scale sports to reach each household. And to make this happen, teachers in village schools are leaving no stone unturned to identify and train the future champions of the country.

For instance, for the past four decades, Basant Singh Mann, a volleyball coach in Hanumangarh district of Rajasthan, has coached hundreds of players from rural pockets who have won medals both nationally and internationally. *Gaon Connection* has reported on the 69-year-old coach, who despite retiring continues to train players.

So far 1,300 of his trainees have been national medalists. Many of them have played in international tournaments, and seven of them have won several medals. No wonder Coach Mann's ancestral village Silwala Khurd is known as Khel Gaon.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



The opportunities and support that Muzamil Mahmood lacked in his childhood are what he is determined to provide to those who want to play football in the Kashmir Valley. URVATIL WUSKA

Over 700 kilometres north of Coach Mann's village in Rajasthan, another coach and a primary school teacher has established the Football Club (FC) Ganderbal in Kashmir Valley. Muzamil Mahmood from Gogjigund village holds an Asian Football Confederation licence, and has been training Kashmiri rural youth in football.

Muzamil goes from school to school in the district to tell students about football. Apart from preparing future champions, the teacher is also guiding light for the youth in the Valley.

"I am very thankful to Muzamil Sir because at a time when young people are falling prey to drugs, he gave me the opportunity to stay clean and join his academy and work hard to make my future bright," Fazil Yusuf, a 16-year-old player at FC Ganderbal, told *Gaon Connection*.

Somewhat similar is the story of hard work and dedication of Rakesh Kumar Vishwakarma who has built a team of kabaddi players at the Composite Model School, Sanaiya Jatt, in Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh.

Vishwakarma, who is now an assistant teacher, studied at Sarvodaya Vidyalaya and was good at sports. When he became a teacher and had

MUZAMIL GOES FROM SCHOOL TO SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT TO TELL STUDENTS ABOUT FOOTBALL. APART FROM PREPARING FUTURE CHAMPIONS, THE TEACHER IS ALSO GUIDING LIGHT FOR THE YOUTH IN THE VALLEY

the option to choose a school for his posting, he chose Composite Model School, Sanaiya Jatt, because the school had a large playground.

Vishwakarma knew that apart from academics, physical education and sports were crucial for overall development of the children. He started playing sports with students on a regular basis during the school hours. This not only helped the assistant teacher connect with his students, but also encouraged other children in the village to take admission in the school. Soon, the number of students enrolled at school rose from 175 to 300.

The kabaddi team of the school has earned a name for itself and wins wherever it goes for competitions, said Vishwakarma. In 2018, the players became block champions, and the District Education Department honoured these students.

These players closely watch YouTube videos to learn various techniques and get better at their game every day. Nine students from the school have been selected for the Indian government's 'Khelo India' programme. And this is not all. The government has also decided to build a sports complex inside the Composite Model School at Sanaiya Jatt village!

These are just a handful of stories of rural teachers who are silently raising an army of sports players from rural India. Sports is no more just a hobby; it is a serious career option and many young people are going for it.

Sports can be a gamechanger in rural India as it can help the youth earn a decent livelihood, and at the same time shine a light on them and their hitherto unknown villages.

Khelo India!

with inputs from **DANISH IQBAL**

Creating a level playing field in the classroom

PRATYAKSH SRIVASTAVA
GORAKHPUR, UP

ON A balmy summer afternoon, the single storeyed school building basked in the sun. In a classroom, Sultan sat on the edge of his bench, hands raised to ask a question to his teacher, Nirmala Singh, who was teaching mathematics. It was his favourite period that was underway.

Last year, when Sultan was in class three, the story was very different. He frequently bunked his classes and could grasp nothing of what was being taught in school. His school, the Government Primary School Khairaila in Gorakhpur's Piprauli block in Uttar Pradesh, was the last place he wanted to be.

But, one day, Sultan was taken aback to see his teacher Nirmala Singh, accompanied by some of his classmates, come to his house, and brooking no protests, took him back with them to the school. Ever since then, the teacher has been working closely with Sultan to ensure he grasps concepts in class and finds



PRATYAKSH SRIVASTAVA

Nirmala Singh endeavours to bring all the children to a level playing field.

learning a joyous experience.

Nirmala Singh endeavours to bring all the children to a level playing field. "Each child is different, and they have a different pace of learning. The classroom is as much for the

slow learners as it is for the others. The extra time we spend with such students is what is called remediation," she said.

A hearing impaired teacher's silent crusade

ANURADHAN SHARMA
SILIGURI, WEST BENGAL

LOKNATH CHHETRI teaches at a special school in Bagrakote Tea Estate, in the sub-Himalayan Dooars region, some 50 km north-east of Siliguri in West Bengal. "Deaf people can do anything except hear. They can think and write, and gain knowledge, if they get an opportunity to do so," said Chhetri. But, what happens is that in the remote villages in the



There are 13 students enrolled in the school at the moment. ANURADHAN SHARMA

Dooars, parents don't know about deaf and mute schools. So, the children remain uneducated, he added.

The Niswarth School for Deaf and Mute, where Chhetri teaches in Bagrakote, is the first English-medium

school for the deaf in the Dooars. It has 13 children in the age group of five and 18 years, who mostly come from the tea garden workers' families.

"My dream is to spread education amongst the deaf and mute children. So, I have chosen to be a teacher and teach children like me," said Chhetri. Apart from being a teacher and computer instructor at Niswarth, he is also an activist working for the rights of deaf persons as the vice president of Jalpaiguri District Association of the Deaf.

"We want to make sign language the 23rd official language of India. It is time to educate people on the Indian sign language," said the hearing impaired teacher.



BEFORE



AFTER

From cruise ships to trains, a teacher is on a mission to give schools a facelift

RAJESH KHANDELWAL
ALWAR, RAJASTHAN

STANDING ON the deck of the 'Education Cruise', Megha Meena, a student of class 12th of the Government Upper Secondary School in Alwar district's Haldina village, looked pleased as punch. After all, how many students of her age could boast about their school being built like a ship!

"Our smart classes are held at the upper portion of the ship and we study there using modern technology on a projector," said Meena, an 18-year-old student. "Even neighbouring villages know all about our 'ship school,'" she grinned.

Elsewhere, in Alwar's Railway Colony's Upper Secondary School, Bhoomika,



a class eight student is excited that the school's corridors resemble a train. "I am thrilled to be studying in a school that is so unique," she told *Gaon Connection*.

The school buildings where Meena and Bhoomika study are the product of the imagination of Rajesh Lavniya, a 57-year-old engineer in the education department of Rajasthan.

He has designed a school in Al-

In total, 12 schools in Alwar district are either painted or modified in the form of cruise ships, trains and aeroplanes.

war to look like a train and a railway platform. In Indergarh village, Alwar district, the school looks like an aeroplane, while in Haldina village, in the same district, another school is a two-storeyed cruise ship. In total, 12 schools in Alwar district are either painted or modified in the form of cruise ships, trains and aeroplanes.

A teacher teaches students to make 'eco-bricks' to save the environment

LARAIB FATIMA WARSI
LUCKNOW, UP

Pankaj Kumar, a teacher at the Upper Primary School Semri in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh, is on a mission to reduce plastic waste pollution in his Gopalpur village. And he has involved his school students in this noble cause by teaching them to convert discarded plastic bottles into 'eco-bricks' and using them in the school premises.

"We use snack wrappers, plastic bags, chips packets, and one week's worth of plastic waste to make 'eco-



The teacher's environment-friendly measures are being applauded by the parents and the students alike.

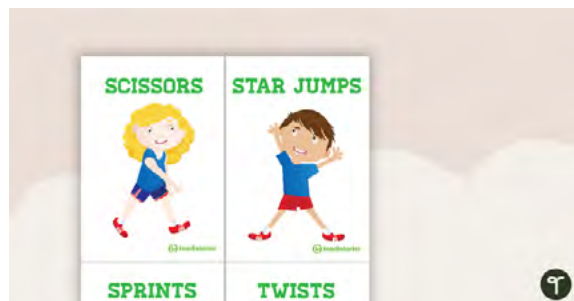
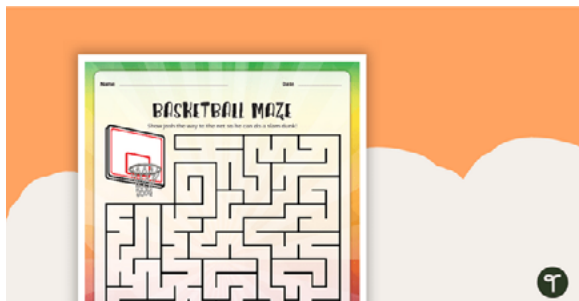
bricks' out of it. We stuff this plastic waste into plastic bottles which are now abundant in the village. These bricks are used as tree-guards as of now and they help protect the plants and ensure their optimum growth," Kumar told *Gaon Connection*.

When asked about what motivated Kumar to make students conserve plastic, he stated that it was after he came across a YouTube video about a year back in which he saw the creative use of plastic bottles to construct houses, tree guards, mats, table, and pots that he tried to implement the same idea in his village.

So far, as many as 100 students taught by Kumar in the Gopalpur village are actively involved in the production of these plastic bricks.

RESOURCE ROOM

ARE YOU AN EDUCATOR, A TEACHER, OR A SPORTS TRAINER? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SPORT ISN'T JUST GOOD FOR CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL HEALTH BUT ALSO HAS PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS, AND TEACHES THE YOUTH IMPORTANT LIFE SKILLS. HERE ARE SOME ONLINE RESOURCES THAT YOU MAY FIND USEFUL.



TEACH STARTER

TEACH STARTER'S sports section is a collection of sport themed teaching resources to use when participating in and learning about physical education. The resource platform provides display materials to theme a classroom with sporting decorations, as well as exercise cards, worksheets, activities and awards.



PLAY SPORT

PLAYSPORT IS an online activity-based resource designed for educators, recreation providers, coaches and physical activity promoters. PlaySport helps children and youth

develop competency with skills and strategies associated with physical activities and a wide range of sports. The activities in PlaySport can provide experiences for participants to help them build physical literacy, health literacy and the skills for healthy active living.

TEACHERS FIRST



TEACHERS FIRST'S resource collection connects sports to the curriculum. The platform includes activities and lesson ideas for all grade levels. Depending on the season, find a way to connect current sports with your classroom activities.



1

Warm up

Balloon keepie up

How to play

- Each player is given a large balloon.
- Players move around the playing area, every few steps they stop to throw the balloon up in the air and then catch it with both hands.
- Once the balloon is caught, players move to a new space and repeat.

Equipment

- One balloon per person (plus a few spare balloons)
- Large playing area



activity
alliance

disability
inclusion
sport

Disability
Sport
for all
Be active. Be the best!

GOVERNMENT OF
WYOMING
SPORT
WYOMING
CYMRU WALES

Scottish Disability Sport

YOUTH
SPORT
TRUST

Paralympic
Games
Tokyo 2020

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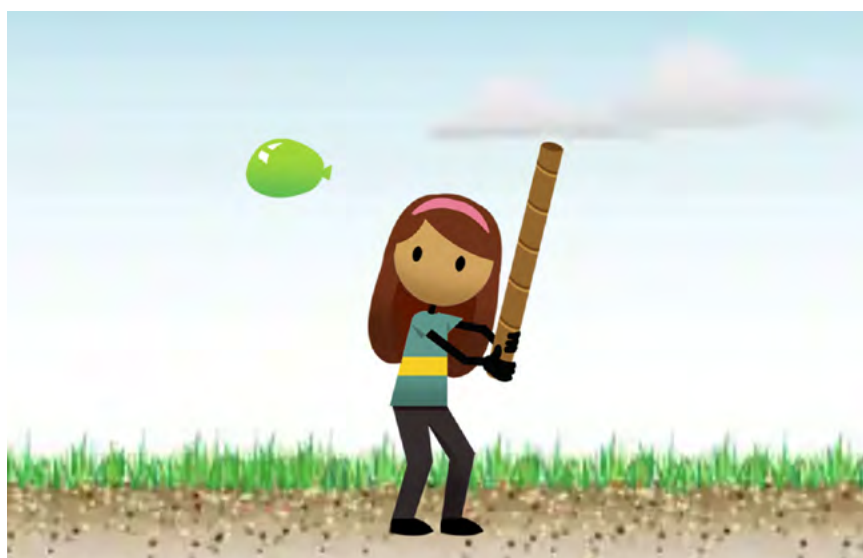
ACTIVITY ALLIANCE

ACTIVITY ALLIANCE has developed inclusive physical education activity cards to equip teachers and school staff with the necessary knowledge,

skills, and confidence for inclusive and accessible physical education sessions.

These cards provide creative and

adaptable activities, catering to diverse abilities and enabling active participation and enjoyment for all students.



YOUR ATA LIBRARY

THE ALBERTA Teachers' Library collates the physical activities, games, yoga and exercises for teachers, to train elementary school students. It offers a comprehensive collection of information, lesson plans, and educational materials to enhance the teaching and learning experience in physical education. With its user-friendly interface, educators can easily access a wide range of content to support their instructional needs.

Gaon Mitras bring drop-out tribal kids back to school

PRAGATI PRAVA
MALKANGIRI, ODISHA

GUPTA MAJHI was in class eight at the Dhungiaput Upper Primary School, when the COVID lockdown happened in March 2020. His father, who worked as a labourer in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh, returned to Dhungiaput village in Malkangiri in Odisha. There was no work at the village and the family from the Dora community was cash-strapped.

In order to help out, Gupta who was 13 years old then, became an agricultural labourer to support his family of six. Two years later, when his school reopened in February, 2022, he was in no mood to resume his studies.

But the teenager is now back to school and has resumed his education. Like him, several other village children who had dropped out of school during the pandemic, are now pursuing their studies. All thanks to Geeta Pradhani, a Gaon Mitra in the community learning centre in Dhun-



A year ago, 15 learning centres were established in 45 Mathili block villages, accommodating 1,238 students.

giaput village.

A year ago, 15 learning centres were set covering 45 villages that came under the Mathili block of Malkangiri. Educators were selected from the respective communities and designated as Gaon Mitras, meaning friends of the village, to visit rural households and encourage

children to get back to studying.

These learning centres are providing a second chance to drop-out kids to pursue education and bridge the learning gap left behind by the pandemic. There are about 1,238 students in the 15 learning centres.

Hunar Ki Pathshala for children of the Korku community

SATISH MALVIYA
BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH

THERE IS a spot on the way to the goat pastures, where seven-year-old Savita always stopped and stared. It fell on the way to the place where she and her grandmother took their goats to graze. Savita is from Mehlu village in Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh, and she always made her grandmother stop too and they watched a bunch of children singing, dancing, playing and sometimes reading and writing.

Jyoti Dhurve, a teacher accompanying the children, observed Savita's keen interest in what the rest



The children at the Hunar Ki Pathshala are slowly being encouraged to dream and think big.

of the children were doing. One day she approached her and asked her why she was not in school. "I left because I was scared I would be hit by

the teacher," the little girl responded.

Dhurve asked her if she would like to join the other children too and soon Savita was able to become one of them. "I will come every single day. It looks like a lot of fun and I also want to study," she told the teacher firmly.

The little girl did not know then that the children she watched with so much longing belonged to a community learning centre called Hunar Ki Pathshala, in Khandwa district catering to 14 villages of the Khandwa Block. It is run by a non-profit called Musht Samaj Seva Samiti that works for the welfare of the Korku Adivasi Tribe.

"We started Hunar Ki Pathshala in 2014. Since then, we have managed to bring back 4,000 children like Savita who had dropped out of school, back into learning," Chauhan told *Gaon Connection*.



Friendship goals in this rural school in Cuttack

PRACHI RATHI
CUTTACK, ODISHA

TRUE FRIENDS can move mountains and the Arjun Subudhi High School in Tigiria block of Cuttack, Odisha is a classic example of it.

A government school run by three childhood friends is the lifeline of sev-

eral nearby villages whose children this institute has been educating for the past six decades. Sushant Kumar Sahu, Kailash Behera, and the principal of the school (who wishes to remain anonymous) have been friends since childhood and belong to Tigiria. Now in their mid-40s, they continue to work together to run the school and

Established in 1962, the Arjun Subudhi High School is not only a symbol of learning and knowledge but also what friends can do to bring about a positive change in society.

make it a centre of excellence.

"The school was started by the government some six decades ago. We decided to work in the school and work towards imparting education to the village children to break the stereotype that people have towards villagers as being only laborers or poor farmers," said Sahu, who teaches science at the Arjun Subudhi High School. The school has 350 students from class 6 to 10.

The three college friends decided to work together at the school as they realised the significance of their united purpose. Whereas the principal oversees the entire operations of the school, Sahu, who is a Science teacher, diligently supports the student's learning journey. Kailash is a member of the multi-tasking staff to ensure the smooth functioning of the school.

It takes a village to raise and educate a child

MANOJ CHOUDHARY
WEST SINGHBHUM, JHARKHAND

IT TAKES a village to raise a child, and that is exactly what is happening at Tangrain village. The Utkramit Madhya Vidyalaya is in the remote hilly and forested tribal-dominated area of Potka block in East Singhbhum district in Jharkhand, and as if echoing the surrounding profusion of trees and flowering plants, its walls are also painted in a burst of colours.

The children from the 200 families living in the village, which borders Mayurbhanj district in the neighbouring state of Odisha, have a school they are immensely proud of.



The school has built up such a reputation that several students decided to quit the private schools they were attending to join this village school.

But things got difficult during the pandemic years and when the school reopened after the lockdown, not many children joined back school. The drop out rate was high, said Arbind Kumar Tiwary, the headmaster in-charge of the school. "This is a tribal area and getting village children back to the school was the real challenge and we adopted a multi-pronged approach and villagers chipped in too," he added.

The school undertook to paint the classrooms to make them look like train coaches and the students were delighted. Each classroom was provided with a dustbin to encourage cleanliness. And, the outdoors was cultivated into a garden with an open library made of bamboo, straw and earthen pots.

Dayawati

WHEN I joined as a trainee teacher at a primary school in Bahadurpur village in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district, I found that the girls were usually married off at a very young age. As part of my responsibilities as a trainee, I was tasked with going door to door to convince children to come to school regularly.



Khushi, a 14-year-old student in my class, was coerced to marry by her parents. When I came to know about it, I intervened and tried to convince them to not marry her so soon to which they replied, "We will marry her now but the gauna will take place after five years".

Since they were adamant about getting their daughter married, I explained to them that if they do so, they will have to face the consequences and chances are that they might also be put behind the bars. I asked them to let her study and marry her later when she is ready for it. Finally, after a lot of persuasion, they agreed. Small victories.



Rakhi Agarwal

OFTEN, BEING a teacher in a rural setting challenges you to go beyond the call of duty. This is because I as a teacher cannot expect the students to be disciplined in the classroom if their social background is full of daily struggles which keep them from focusing on their studies.

In 2013, I was appointed as the principal of Primary School Janeta in Sambhal district's Baniya Khara block in Uttar Pradesh. The condition of the school was far from academic and its premises were prone to unlawful assembly, encroachment, misuse by anti-social elements, and was marred by neglect.

I worked with the local community and once the villagers began respecting the school, they ensured that nobody vandalised the school property or misused its premises.



Sunil Kumar

I TEACH at Shahjahanpur East Secondary School in Kajiinorpur, Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh. I remember how once the girls from the school had to be taken to Saharanpur district for a sports competition on kabaddi. Other teachers of the school gave up on the idea fearing that the families

of the girls would not agree to send their daughters. But due to my persistence, nine girls agreed to participate in the kabaddi event, with the support of their family members who came to drop them off. That day I realised the positive change I was able to bring in.

The girl students, for the first time in a Basic Shiksha Department school, participated in an event. They didn't win, but continued to participate in other games like badminton. Their participation itself was a feat.



Amit Singh

I AM a teacher posted at Kendriya Vidyalaya in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur district. In today's digital age when most of our correspondence tends to be through email and WhatsApp, my former students choose to write letters to me whenever they have something to communicate.

I decided to teach them the art of writing letters because it makes our loved ones happy if they get to receive a message in a tangible form. Although it might not be a very popular mode of communication, it has an essence which is unparalleled.

Initially, the students were not interested in writing letters but when they tried writing, they were happy with the outcome. And one fine day they finally wrote actual letters to their family and friends.

**NOTE: IF YOU HAVE AN INTERESTING STORY/ INCIDENT TO SHARE,
WHATSAPP US AT 95656-11118**

