

& SOME DARE TO DREAM

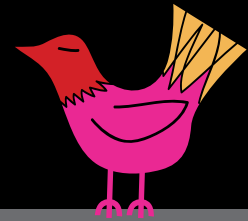
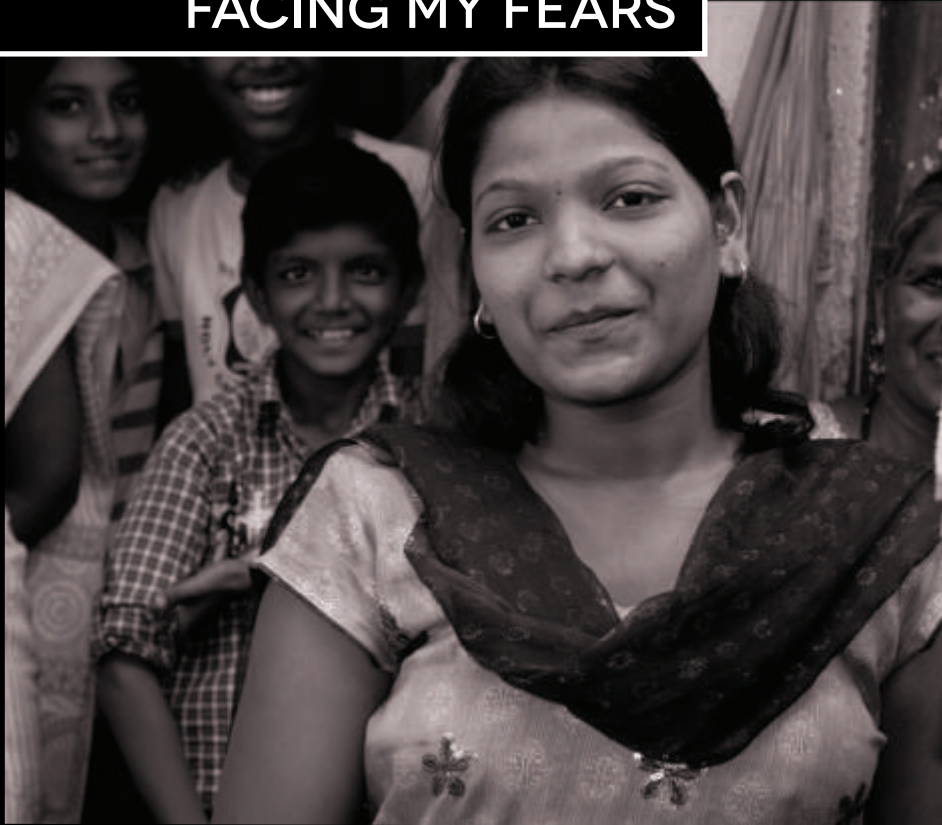


IT IS SAID THAT LIFE HOLDS SPECIAL MAGIC FOR  
THOSE WHO DARE TO DREAM; AND WHILE SOME MAY  
ARGUE THAT THIS IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE,  
THE STORIES THAT WE HAVE WITNESSED RIGHT IN OUR  
MIDST GIVE US THE FAITH TO BELIEVE.

CHANGE IS FRUSTRATINGLY LONG, INFURIATINGLY  
SLOW AND INVOLVES NEGOTIATIONS AND MISERY.  
YET THERE ARE SOME WHO PERSEVERE BEYOND  
HINDRANCES, FIGHT ALL ODDS AND STOP AT NOTHING  
TO ACHIEVE WHAT IS TRULY THEIRS.

THESE ARE STORIES WHICH **INSPIRE...MOTIVATE...**  
**PROVIDE COURAGE...**AND MOST OF ALL THEY SHOW  
THAT “SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW, SKIES ARE  
BLUE...AND **THE DREAMS THAT YOU DARE TO**  
**DREAM REALLY DO COME TRUE.**”

# FACING MY FEARS



Ankita Kakade

I COME FROM A LARGE FAMILY. I WAS SO SOFT SPOKEN AND SHY THAT I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN INVISIBLE! NO ONE COULD SPOT ME IN A CROWD. I WOULD WATCH THE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN MY BROTHERS AND US SISTERS BUT COULD NOT VOICE IT. OF COURSE THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF MY GOING TO COLLEGE. BUT WHEN I DID MANAGE TO GO, IT WAS LIKE ENTERING A NEW WORLD. I LEARNT SO MUCH AND WAS DETERMINED TO DO SOMETHING WITH MYSELF. I INTEND TO GO BEYOND MY FEARS AND DISCOVER ME. I KNOW I CAN STUDY, BE A LEADER AND MOTIVATE PEOPLE NOW.

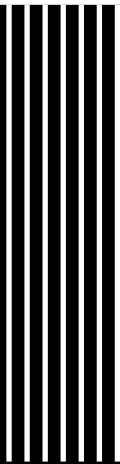
## NOW I HAVE A DREAM



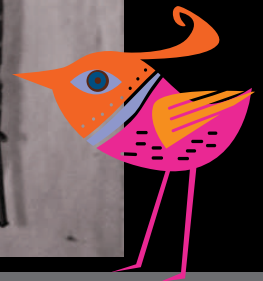
Apsana Bobade

“MY FAMILY HAS BEEN MY BIGGEST SUPPORT. THEY HAVE DONE EVERYTHING IN THEIR MEAGRE MEANS TO HELP ME – GIVE ME FREEDOM, AN EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT. BUT THEY CANNOT GIVE ME A DREAM. I NEEDED ONE TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING WITH MYSELF. THE SCHOLARSHIP HELPED ME TO GO TO COLLEGE AND THAT EXPOSURE HELPED ME TO THINK ABOUT MY FUTURE. I REALISED THAT ORGANISING CAME NATURALLY TO ME. I LOVED TO DRAW. PERHAPS THAT’S MY DREAM TO BE AN EVENT ORGANISER OR A DESIGNER? ALONG WITH SOME OF MY FRIENDS, I STARTED AN EVENT MANAGEMENT GROUP WHICH ORGANISES EVENTS AND PERFORMANCES. I WILL LEARN DESIGNING TOO. HOPEFULLY I WILL BE ABLE TO REALISE ONE OUT OF MY TWO DREAMS.”

# ALWAYS GRAB AN OPPORTUNITY



“PERHAPS DEEP DOWN THERE WAS BURIED DESIRE TO ACT WITHIN ME. BUT BEING THE DAUGHTER OF A WORKER, SHY AND UNCERTAIN, I COULD NOT EVEN THINK OF IT! WHEN AKSHARA WAS ORGANISING STREET PLAYS TO HIGHLIGHT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, SOMETHING PUSHED ME INTO VOLUNTEERING. BEING WITH OTHER GIRLS, REHEARSING, AND PERFORMING ON THE STREETS HELPED ME OVERCOME MY FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING. HERE I WAS, PERFORMING IN THE MIDST OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE ! I PLAN TO TRY MY LUCK WITH MARATHI TV SERIALS NOW. I KNOW IT’S A DIFFICULT THING, SO I PLAN TO WORK FOR A BANK WHILST PURSUING MY DREAM.”

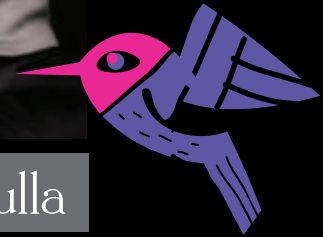


Archana Gawli

## THINK POSITIVE



Hifza Mulla



“I COME FROM A BIG FAMILY OF NINE WITH A HUGE EXTENDED FAMILY. YOU CAN NEVER GET PARTICULAR ATTENTION WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER CHILDREN AROUND. I USED TO THINK MY FAMILY WAS DOING ME A FAVOUR BY GIVING ME AN EDUCATION. BUT EDUCATION, ESPECIALLY COLLEGE GAVE ME THE RIGHT EXPOSURE AND KNOWLEDGE. SCIENCE FASCINATES ME. IT ALSO TAUGHT ME TO THINK POSITIVELY. I STARTED LOOKING AT MY PROBLEMS AS EXERCISES THAT HAD SOLUTIONS. AKSHARA’S WORKSHOPS WERE THE FIRST PLACE IN WHICH I COULD TALK AND THINK ABOUT HANDLING PRESSURE AND LEARNING THE SKILLS TO NEGOTIATE WITH MY FAMILY. I AM CONFIDENT THAT I CAN LEARN, DEVELOP AND BE SOMETHING NOW.”

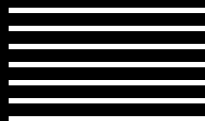


## IT WILL BE A FIRST



Sonal Chikne

“NO GIRL IN MY EXTENDED FAMILY HAS LOOKED AFTER HER FAMILY. I HOPE TO BE THE FIRST TO DO IT. WHEN MY MOTHER FELL ILL, I TOOK CHARGE OF TAKING CARE OF HER, OF OUR HOUSE AND MY YOUNGER BROTHER AND SISTER. I PROVED I COULD DO IT. NOW I AM THE ONE WHO TAKES DECISIONS AT HOME. BUT IN ORDER TO TRULY MANAGE MY HOUSE, I NEED TO FINISH MY EDUCATION AND GET A GOOD JOB. IT IS MY WISH THAT MY ELDERLY PARENTS CAN SIT BACK AND RELAX.”

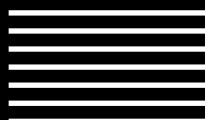


## BE A REBEL



Sonali More

“WHENEVER I REBELLED I FACED SEVERE OPPOSITION FROM MY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY. NOBODY LIKED THAT I LEFT MY STUDIES TO TAKE UP A JOB. BUT I WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FAMILY INCOME. MY MOTHER WANTED ME, THE ELDEST DAUGHTER, TO GET MARRIED. I REFUSED AND FOUGHT WITH HER. THE SCHOLARSHIP HELPED ME GET BACK TO COLLEGE AND I WAS NOT A BURDEN ON THE FAMILY. THE WORKSHOPS HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THAT FAMILIES HAVE CONSERVATIVE VALUES AND WE NEED TO CHANGE THEM GRADUALLY. BEING A REBEL IS GOOD BECAUSE YOUR VIEWS ARE DIFFERENT BUT WE ALSO NEED TO EXPLAIN THEM AND DISCUSS THEM WITH OUR NEAR ONES. NOW MY MOTHER IS MY BIGGEST SUPPORTER!”





# WALK BEFORE YOU RUN



Soniya Mitke

“IN THE LAST ONE YEAR, I HAVE MADE MANY MISTAKES BUT I REALIZE THAT IT’S OKAY TO MAKE MISTAKES IF I LEARN FROM THEM. NOW I KNOW THE FIRST STEP IS TO DREAM, THE NEXT ONE IS TO WORK TOWARDS FULFILLING THEM. THE TURNING POINT IN MY LIFE WAS ATTENDING AKSHARA’S SELF DEFENSE COURSE. IT HAS MADE ME PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY STRONG. I FEEL CONFIDENT TO HANDLE FAMILY PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL ISSUES. I LOOK FORWARD TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPING MYSELF FURTHER.”

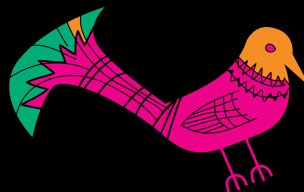
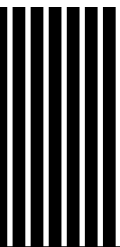
## NO LONGER THE SAME



Uma Rapolu



"IN ONE AND A HALF YEARS, I HAVE COMPLETELY CHANGED. EARLIER I USED TO ALWAYS TALK IN A SOFT VOICE AND MY TEACHERS WOULD ASK ME TO SIT ON THE FIRST BENCH. TODAY THEY ASK ME IF I'M THE SAME GIRL THEY ONCE KNEW. AKSHARA'S SCHOLARSHIP HAS CHANGED MY LIFE. I CAN NOW TAKE MY OWN DECISIONS. IT WAS SOMETHING I JUST COULD NOT DO EARLIER. EVERYONE HAS GUIDED MY LIFE AND CHOICES. BUT NOW I KNOW IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO MAKE UP MY OWN MIND. I WANT TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION AND PERHAPS DO A MASTERS. I ALSO WANT GUIDE YOUNGER GIRLS BY SHARING MY EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE WITH THEM."



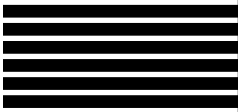
WHAT THESE AND MANY OTHER YOUNG  
WOMEN ARE SAYING IS...

“I NEED A FOOTHOLD TO HOIST ME OUT OF THE CIRCLE  
OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND FEAR.”

“I NEED YOU TO INVEST IN MY DREAMS SO THAT I CAN  
MAKE THEM A LIFE-CHANGING REALITY.”

“I WANT AN EDUCATION SO I CAN DREAM OF EARNING  
MY LIVELIHOOD.”





THE OVERALL LITERACY RATES ARE GOING UP AND THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION. THE LITERACY RATES, AS OF 2010, FOR PEOPLE AGED 15–24 YEARS WERE 74.4%, WHILE THAT FOR YOUNG MEN WAS 88.4%. HOWEVER, ONLY 29% OF YOUNG WOMEN HAVE COMPLETED 10 YEARS OF EDUCATION.

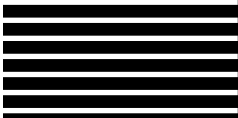
NO MATTER HOW MUCH PROGRESS WE MAKE, A HOST OF YOUNG WOMEN ARE STILL DISADVANTAGED. THEY ARE ROBBED OF THEIR BASIC RIGHT TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS. IT IS HENCE NO SURPRISE THAT THEY THEN WIND UP JOINING THE HUGE, ILL PAID AND INSECURE INFORMAL SECTOR. THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT ESTIMATES THAT THERE WILL BE APPROXIMATELY 63.5 MILLION NEW, YOUNG ENTRANTS TO THE LABOR MARKET BETWEEN 2011 AND 2016.



THE SOLUTION:

TRUE EQUALITY WILL ONLY PREVAIL WHEN WE EQUIP WOMEN WITH THE RIGHT SKILLS TO MAKE IT ON THEIR OWN AND EARN THEIR LIVELIHOOD.

“I WANT A CHOICE OF WHEN AND WHO TO MARRY.”



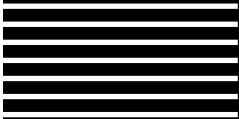
47% OF THE YOUNG WOMEN IN OUR COUNTRY ARE MARRIED BEFORE THE AGE OF 18. THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION IS ABANDONED AND THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE CYCLE OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND DOMESTIC CHORES. OWING TO PRE-DATED SOCIETAL NORMS THEY HAVE NO CHOICE IN WHEN AND WHO THEY MARRY.



THE SOLUTION:

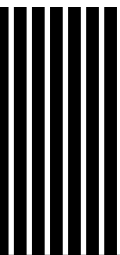
BETTER INTER GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE WILL PREVENT RUN AWAY MARRIAGES AND TEEN PREGNANCIES. YOUNG WOMEN NEED THE CONFIDENCE FOR SUCH NEGOTIATIONS. PARENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE CONVINCED IF THEY PROVE THEIR WORTH BY EDUCATING THEMSELVES FOLLOWED BY A JOB.





AS A SOCIETY WE NEED TO  
GIVE OUR ALL TO UPLIFT AND  
EMPOWER THE VULNERABLE,  
UNDERPRIVILEGED AND  
DISCRIMINATED GROUPS.  
YOUNG WOMEN ACROSS  
LOWER INCOME GROUPS,  
CASTES AND RELIGIOUS  
MINORITIES SUFFER HUGE  
DISPARITIES IN JOB  
PLACEMENT, COMPENSATION  
AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.  
MANY A DREAMS HAVE BEEN  
SUBMERGED DUE TO SOCIETAL  
PRESSURE, BACKWARD  
THOUGHTS, DISPARAGEMENT  
AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION.  
IT'S HIGH TIME WE WORK  
TOWARDS HELPING YOUNG  
WOMEN REALIZE THEIR RIGHTS  
TO HIGHER EDUCATION, TO  
DECENT WORK AND TO  
CHOICES IN LIFE.





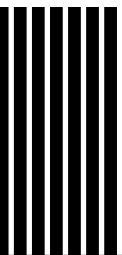
## AKSHARA'S EMPOWERING DREAMS PROGRAM

WE SUPPORT FORMAL DEGREES AND QUALIFICATIONS AS WELL AS PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION.

WE WORK WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH GROUPS IN SLUMS AND TENEMENTS TO IDENTIFY YOUNG, POOR WOMEN MOST IN NEED OF HELP AND SELECT DESERVING APPLICANTS USING MULTIPLE CRITERIA AND WELL-ROUNDED EVALUATION. MOST YOUNG WOMEN SEEK HELP TO STUDY SCIENCE OR COMMERCE, TO TAKE UP VOCATIONAL COURSES OR TO FINISH THEIR SCHOOLING.

THE NON FORMAL EDUCATION GIVES THEM THE CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS TO NAVIGATE THROUGH LIFE IN A WHOLESOME AND FITTING MANNER.

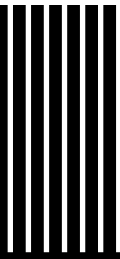
ALL DONATIONS ARE EXEMPT FROM INCOME TAX UNDER SECTION 80G. CHEQUES SHOULD BE DRAWN IN THE NAME OF FREA INDIA



## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP.

REMEMBER THAT EVERY DROP MAKES THE OCEAN AND EVERY LITTLE STEP WILL LEAD TO A HUGE LEAP.

- YOU CAN FINANCE A SCHOLARSHIP COVERING A YOUNG, UNDERPRIVILEGED WOMAN'S FORMAL, COLLEGE FEES AND NON FORMAL LIFE AND JOB SKILLS COURSE. ALL IT TAKES IS RS. 15,000 TO GIVE THEM THIS START TO A BETTER LIFE.
- YOU CAN ALSO GIVE YOUR TIME & MENTOR THESE YOUNG WOMEN
- YOU CAN VOLUNTEER IN TEACHING THEM DIFFERENT SKILLS



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US:

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Thanks to Zulifiya Hamzaki for the photography, Nandita Gandhi for the text,  
Kruti Saraiya for design and Praachi Raniwala for editing.



*akshara*

**"Towards Gender Equality"**