

BARSHA: the little dancer

Barsha fights against all odds to dance with spring in her step

SE Shagun: A policy intervention to uplift elementary education system

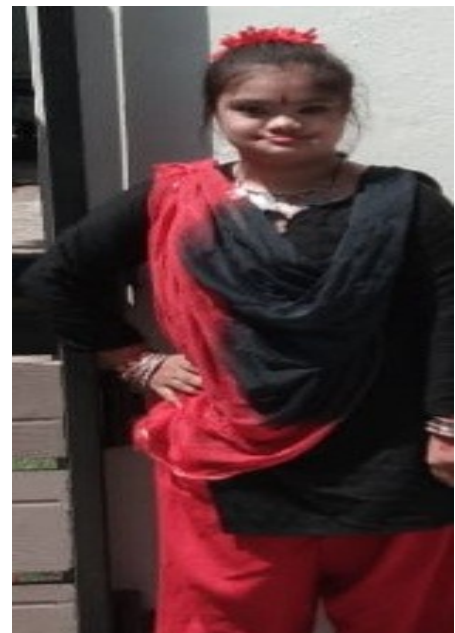
School Education Shagun (SE Shagun) is an all-encompassing scheme with the aim to improve the school education system. The initiative is conceived to provide an overreaching access to all the portals and websites involving the Department of School Education in the Government of India and all States and Union Territories (UTs). The word 'Shagun' is coined from two different words – 'Shala' meaning Schools and 'Gunvatta' meaning Quality. The 'ShaGun' Repository and online monitoring websites are launched in order to scale up and fine tune the existing elementary school education system with desired innovations. All the activities and schedules under the initiative are monitored continuously based on the standards set by the government sponsored seminal educational scheme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The scheme has a noble goal to provide the students belonging to underprivileged section with equal opportunity for schooling and equitable and efficient learning outcome.

Down syndrome: Impediment to normal growth

In accordance with the objectives of the SE Shagun initiative, here we are putting up the predicaments of Barsha Mondal, a girl student in her tender age, who has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. Down syndrome is a congenital genetic disorder due to abnormal cell divisions that hampers normal physical and mental development in a child and it is almost incurable till date. It is named after John Langdon Down, the British physician who first noticed and explained the syndrome in 1866. It results in serious learning disability. With the timely intervention by the trained professionals, Barsha has overcome her shortcomings and disabilities to a great extent with the developments and improvement of some much-needed skills to carry on in her life. Her success and achievements can be the substance of a story full of grit that has the potential to inspire many.

Barsha emerges as a winner

At the age of seven, Barsha was admitted to Barisha Vivekananda Girls' High School. It was at that stage she was diagnosed with Down syndrome and as the fallout, her father Prabir Mondal left the family. Her mother took



1) Barsha Mondal

refuge in her paternal home with her daughter Barsha and her younger son. Life then was full of hardships and struggles for the family. Barsha's disability was initially detected with the help of special educators. At that point of time she had an acute problem in communicating with others and could only utter some gibberish sounds. Her speech was seriously impaired. She had problem in swallowing foods, could only shout to express her hunger, thirst or other feelings. She was completely dependent on others for her daily activities. Moreover, Barsha had some behavioral problems. She used to throw tantrums occasionally by throwing objects without being provoked, spitting on others to express her anger. She had mild to moderate cognitive impairment. Her language skill was delayed and her motor skill was also underdeveloped.



2) Barsha clad in a yellow saree in an upbeat mood with her mate gets ready to take part in a school programme

At this juncture, Barsha's mother was completely helpless and emotionally shattered. The special educators of Samagra Shiksha Mission, Kolkata showed her some silver linings. After several assessments and diagnosis, some activities were scheduled and set for Barsha to improve her skills to carry on in her daily life. The girl started her schooling at Bramhachary Paresh Kumar Vidyamandir. At the beginning, to get accustomed with the school environment, Barsha started attending school for few days a week. After a while her routine was made regular. Her acceptance among the peers got enhanced and consequently she started taking much interest in her studies which improved her academic

performance. Besides her regular schooling, she started attending speech therapy classes. Additionally, the special educators worked hard to modify and better her behavior. They held regular counseling sessions and tried to bring her back to the mainstream.

At present, Barsha is studying in class IX of Barisha Vivekananda High School for girls. Few years back she met with a fire accident and had some serious burn injuries. She had to be hospitalized, but faced the situation bravely, recovered soon and crawled out of the crisis with a broad smile on her face.

In the course of time, another interesting facet in Barsha's character has been revealed. Barsha has a natural flair for dancing. She has participated in various cultural programs and competitions. Her performances have been appreciated by many and she has received awards and prizes from the sponsors. Besides her studies, Barsha seriously wants to continue with her dance. In a very few days she is going to participate in a national level cultural event entitled 'Divya Kala Shakti' organized by Divyagjan to be held at Patna. Barsha has already proved with her grit and mettle that limit can be pushed to surmount any kind of disability, impairment and challenges in life with positive energy. Now, everyone starting from her family members to her

teachers and special educators has invested immense hope and expectations in Barsha. It is hoped that she would achieve all her dreams and overcome the hurdles in life to be an exemplary winner in the long run.

Target achieved

The story above shows us that with proper and scientific backups provided by the able teachers and special educators, a specially abled student like Barsha can achieve her or his goal in life breaking the glass ceiling and that is the coveted policy objective of the School Education Shagun, designed exclusively to achieve equal opportunity for schooling and equitable learning outcome with efficacy.

Barsha Mondal: Parent – Prabir Mondal (Father), Pratima Mondal (Mother)
Age: 14 years, Class: IX (Barisha Vivekananda Girls High School)
Address: 83 Sister Nivedita Road, Kolkata 700063, West Bengal
Phone: 6290209507
Special Educator: Ms Shibani Mitra (Phone: 9830373795)



3) Barsha Mondal in her dancing attire