

Cultural Differences - Nishtha

'Education is a path to dignity'

Part 1

"Before, my life was like that of a caged bird that fidgets in the cage thinking about getting out and flying."

Mina Naskar, 15, speaks for many girls in her village of Umarpota in eastern India whose lives have been changed by Nishtha. Nishtha was founded more than twenty-five years ago as a village charity club for women. The movement promotes education and basic rights for hundreds of girls and women. In a society where girls have traditionally been confined to household duties without receiving the recognition, appreciation, or opportunities afforded to the boys of the community, Nishtha has made enormous progress in changing gender attitudes that have discriminated against women for generations.

Source: www.globalfundforchildren.org

Read **Part 1** and answer the questions.

Where is Mina Naskar from?

What is the name of the movement?

When was it started?

What does this movement promote?

What was the traditional role for women and girls in these villages?

Part 2

With centres in more than sixty villages in rural West Bengal, Nishtha involves entire communities in its educational and training activities aimed at eliminating gender inequality, illiteracy, and child labour. Through an integrated program combining non-formal education, basic health care, and awareness, girls gain the skills and confidence that enable them to claim roles in their communities that are equal to those of their male counterparts.

Source: www.globalfundforchildren.org

Read **Part 2** and answer the questions.

In how many villages does Nishta operate?

What sort of serious problems is it trying to eliminate?

What do the young girls learn from this movement?

Part 3

Nishtha classes—which are available to both girls and boys and even to older women who did not have the opportunity to attend school in their youth—include reading, maths, geography, and art. Health lessons teach young women to care for their bodies, and children learn proper habits of hygiene that they then take home to their families. Both girls and boys participate equally in community development activities such as the building of roads and irrigation canals.

Source: www.globalfundforchildren.org

Read **Part 3** and answer the questions.

Who goes to Nishta classes?

What do they learn in class?

Part 4

As volunteers and teachers are in short supply here, older girls known as Kishori Bahini manage many of the activities and classes, learning important leadership skills that help diminish the traditional roles of superiority and subservience that divide genders in most communities.

Source: www.globalfundforchildren.org

Read **Part 4** and answer the questions

Are there enough teachers to teach the classes in the villages?

What do the young girls learn from managing the classes?

Class Discussion

Having read the text about Mina Nasker, what conclusions have you come to?

What type of culture does it describe?

What part of the world is this girl from?

Is life good for women in this society?

Is it good for people, men or women to live in ignorance, not to receive any education nor have any control over their lives?

How does life differ from this in western countries?

Will life ever change for girls like Mina?

Vocabulary Study

Look at the words below and put them in one of the boxes

founded	charity	recognition	appreciation
enormous	gender	discriminated	eliminating
inequality	illiteracy	integrated	roles
counterparts	participate	irrigation	volunteers
leadership	diminish	superiority	subservience

Use your dictionary to check meanings

Seen before and know their meaning	Seen before but don't know their meaning	Never seen before

