

## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

**What made you leave your job and take up promoting education?**

Education has always been my passion. In 2001, I accidentally came across night schools and the problems faced by them.

It was at this point that I decided to do something about the problem.

The self-motivated night school students, who aspire to study, made me feel strongly about giving back good quality education to these students. It was what they deserved.

**Who were your inspirations or guides?**

The self-motivated student with energy and the will to attend night school after a day's long work.

**How do you feel with the impact your intervention has made to the**

Nurturing dreams: Nikita Ketkar

**children?**

The students feel more confident and learning has become enjoyable.

**When things do not go as per your plan, what keeps you going?**

When things go wrong I am upset, but it is the ultimate vision to reach out to the night

schools that keeps me going.

**Any experience you would like to share?**

When students come and speak out confidently about the impact of Masoom on their lives, I feel overwhelmed.

**What is the hope you have for yourself and for Masoom?**

I want to develop the necessary skills to manage a programme that will scale up. As far as Masoom is concerned, I hope it is instrumental in the makeover of night schools.

With her grit and record of accomplishment, her dream of studying much further seems real and palpable.

**The genesis**

"How difficult it is for these children to continue studying. I don't know if I could have done it," Nikita had thought when she first studied the conditions there. Her project was done through a PUKAR fellowship in 2006-2007, and she could have moved on.

However, her anguish at the conditions there remained. Issues

of nutrition, counselling and motivation were starkly obvious. She had laid them all out painstakingly. But was that enough?

The admiration at the heroic efforts of the children, who overcome all odds to continue studying, coupled with her distress at the conditions kept gnawing at her. She never could feel the project was complete though her report was submitted. She kept thinking, "There is no use of this report if it is going to just be filed as an academic project."

With this, came the next step. After all, who could be better at taking the concrete steps that were required than her?

**Masoom – the beginning**

Thus was formed Masoom, an NGO that works with the night schools in Mumbai.

Today, Masoom is a full-fledged organisation providing counselling, holistic growth, and nutrition for the children. It has a presence in six schools in Mumbai.

Characteristic of her inclusive nature and the need to get to the root of the problem, the team members are educated through night school and college themselves, and hence know exactly what they wish to address.

Nikita's dream now is to reach all night schools in Mumbai. Knowing her grit and record of accomplishment, it would not be long before this happens.

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We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article.

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