

Sabeeha Masood

From a small, cramped house in Delhi's bustling slums, children walk to Sabeeha Masood's home, where she is hard at work. For the past ten years, she has dedicated her time and energy to educating underprivileged children from the community, preparing them for the entrance exams of some of the city's top schools for more than a year.

Masood's home has become a makeshift classroom where she teaches children of all ages and backgrounds for a year, despite the challenges of teaching and mentoring students. Every day, from 2 to 4 PM, she can be found working with students, helping them reach their full potential, and providing the education they need to attend formal schools. Last year about six students made it to formal schools after Sabeeha tutored them.

Masood is dressed modestly in a traditional Indian salwar kameez and a headscarf that framed her face. She speaks softly, using simple props like small toys and handmade flashcards to help illustrate her points. The children listen carefully, asking questions and repeating the lessons to the woman as they absorb new knowledge and skills.

The small room is simple and sparsely furnished; only a few pieces of worn furniture and basic supplies are scattered around. Despite the cold winter day outside, the room is warm and cozy, thanks to sunlight through the window. In the corner of the room, a group of about ten children sits cross-legged on a thin, threadbare carpet.

They range in age from about six to twelve years old, and they all wear simple, worn, and warm clothes; some are too big for them. Their faces are bright and eager as they listen to Masood sitting on a bed at the front of the room. For Masood, the desire to give back to her community stems from deep gratitude for the blessings she has received in her life.

"I am lucky to have received an education and had the opportunities many of these children do not have. I am glad God has chosen me to help these kids," she said. "It is my duty to help them in any way I can.," she added.

Masood's work has been noticed. Her close friends and family have rallied behind her, donating clothes, money, and stationery to help support her cause.

When the children succeed in gaining admission to school, Masood still helps - she is there to provide them with everything they need to succeed - from textbooks and school supplies to uniforms and other essentials. Masood's efforts have profoundly impacted the community, and her work has been praised by all who know her.

"Her dedication and commitment to these children is something we should all aspire to," said a neighbor

For Masood, the rewards of her work are not measured in accolades or recognition. It is the success of her students that brings her the greatest joy. "When I see a child who was once struggling in school now thriving, it fills my heart with happiness," she said. "These small victories make it all worthwhile," she added.

Everyone in the housing complex knows that Masood teaches from 2-4 PM daily, and she is open to teaching anyone wanting to get into schools. There is no distinction between caste, class, or religion. Everyone is equal in her eyes and deserves a chance to succeed.

Masood's Falak's husband, Hussain, is an integral part of her efforts to help the children of the community. She said he is a constant source of encouragement and support for her and is always eager to help in any way he can.

Hussain's involvement in Masood's work extends beyond just moral support. He has also been instrumental in spreading the word about her cause, reaching out to his close friends and business associates to help donate finances, clothes, and other supplies for the underprivileged children.

But Hussain's contributions don't stop there. Despite physical challenges, he is always willing to lend a hand, doing the literal heavy lifting when he brings school supplies and donated clothes to their second-floor apartment. Their building has no lift, and the stairs can be daunting, but Hussain perseveres, driven by his dedication to the cause.

Having Hussain by her side has been a source of immense comfort and strength for Falak. "I could not do this work without him," she said. "He is always there to support, help, and lift me up when I need it," she added.