

Shishu Mandir - Changing the lives of the downtrodden

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THE kids of 'Shishu Mandir' were recently busy with preparations to celebrate the birthday of a person they fondly call 'mamma'.

The person who has managed to conquer their hearts with love is Dr Hella Mundhra, a German by birth and an Indian by heart.

Hella, who wanted to bring about a change in the life of the downtrodden, has, with immense conviction and courage, devoted her entire life for the well being of several destitutes.

Being interested about India from childhood days, her marriage to an Indian student brought her here.

"I was always attracted to this



Dr Hella Mundhra

exotic land of India and Hinduism, as I consider it to be a religion of great tolerance," she says.

"When I first arrived in this City three decades back, I was shocked to know that medical facilities were not available round-the-clock. My husband and I, being doctors, made it a point to treat patients from all strata of society during any time of the day," she said.

Sundays, then were dedicated to treating slum dwellers by a team of 15 doctors from Hella's nursing home.

Explaining how Sishu Mandir, a home, had been founded at Ulsoor, she said: "I noticed that many of these kids didn't want to go back home, once they recovered. So, I thought of opening a home in 1983."

This also marked the beginning of Hella's journey as 'mamma'.

"There is a great difference in the condition of these kids when they come to us and when they depart," she said.

About Sishu Mandir

"I believe in value education and want to make learning meaningful for my children. We need to infuse a zeal for learning in them," Hella remarked.

Shishu Mandir is like a dream come true for Hella.

Shishu Mandir also has a school which is located at K R Puram. The school has 11 villages in its vicinity. Children belonging to families that have a monthly income of less than Rs 1,000 from all these villages, representing different religious communities, come to make

their future here.

"Only a limited number of students are admitted to each class, as these children need more individual care and attention," Hella explained.

The school, comprising 80 per cent girls, emphasises more on value education. The funds for running the school are through donations made by philanthropists in Germany.

Hella stays here for two months every year. She spends the remaining period at her native place, trying to gather funds.

"We also conduct programmes in the villages to reach out to children who can't attend classes here," she added.

Besides, the school gets volunteers from Germany who serve in the institute.