

Empower the Children



Fall 2018

Dear Friends,

Special Women's Issue--Empower The Children has proven that progress is possible! In a society that has historically treated female children as inferior, **ETC** has made women empowerment a priority. Statistics show that India is ranked as the fourth most disadvantaged country for a female child in terms of education and health inequality. In spite of this, female student enrollment in **ETC's** schools has steadily increased each year. In addition to a growing enthusiasm among young women for vocational training, a variety of professional careers are now possible through **ETC's** college fund. In a turnaround, mothers who witnessed their children's academic progress requested master tailoring classes for themselves, so they too could achieve a measure of financial independence.

Education for Change! An Indian male child's birth is regarded as a blessing; a female's birth is often not celebrated and sometimes considered a burden. Due to gender sex selection, the Indian population has been skewed so that there is a disproportionate number of men to women, leading to an increase in sex trafficking and rape.

ETC's educational programs break this cycle of discrimination by teaching young girls and boys the value of human rights. More importantly, this generation of future parents will be able to change the perception of how their children regard one another in the home, and later in the workplace.



Sharing ideas! Women empowerment now takes "front and center" in many places around the world, and **ETC** has been supportive of this movement by partnering with other organizations. Workshops focusing on self-expression, confidence building and independence have enriched the lives of students. **ETC** plans to continue this work, enabling both girls and boys to share their aspirations and ideas within their schools, families and communities.



Through the continued generosity of our supporters, the doors to education open even wider. We are grateful that **ETC** has been able to shape the lives of two generations of students. We thank you for making this possible.

Love,

Rosalie

*"If you educate a boy, you educate an individual. If you educate a girl, you educate a community."
African Proverb*

Empower The Children's *Annual Inclusion Drama*

took a serious turn as teenagers from Preyrona 1 Vocational School used narratives from Hindi and Bengali poems to portray young women who are thrust into circumstances beyond their control. These four skits artistically and creatively dramatized the plight of young Indian women who are unable to escape centuries-old traditions of forced marriages, cruelty, disappointment, and despair. Students conveyed the need for women empowerment in order to alter their situations, not only for themselves but for future generations.

A Life Sentence

Prepubescent girls are betrothed to men many years their senior. When forced to consummate marriages at a very tender age, childhood is stolen from these young girls as they assume adult responsibilities to serve their husbands, children and extended families. In the event of a husband's early demise, the wife further loses her identity. Tradition calls upon her to discard her colorful saris and to wear white for the remainder of her life, which is a symbol of her diminished status within the family and society.



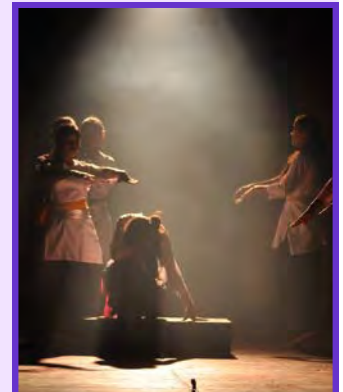
Domestic Violence

This heartbreaking tale shows the depth to which one woman falls when not given the choice to love, to grow and to share in life's joys. When repeatedly raped by her own husband, she chooses to prostitute herself. *"If I'm being raped, I might as well make money."* Education and empowerment programs provide options for women who seek to live a secure and fulfilled life.



Shattered Dreams

Life without an education is like living in a room without windows. A young girl's dream of becoming prime minister is shattered when her family forces her into an early marriage, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that thrusts future generations into the same milieu. Investing in a child's education becomes the catalyst that infuses light into new possibilities, turning dreams into reality.



Extreme Measures

It is difficult to imagine that a precious child becomes a commodity in order for her family to survive. When a young Indian girl is sold into prostitution by her parents to pay off a debt to the land owner, she writes a letter to her parents begging them... *“Educate my younger sister and marry her to a loving man or else kill her.”* Education is the catalyst that furnishes hope and drives away desperation, thus allowing parents to realize that educated children will ultimately lead the family out of poverty.



Coming from humble beginnings, 20 year old Yasmin Khatun lives in a two-room brick and cement “pacca” house with her father, mother and two siblings. Although lack of finances prohibited her siblings from seeking higher education, Yasmin became hopeful of a different outcome when she joined ETC’s Tutorial Centre in Dankuni. There she received support with her studies along with the news that she was eligible for ETC’s college fund. Today, with her sights set on completing a Bachelors of Arts degree, her aspiration is to become the family’s first college graduate. ETC continues to support Yasmin’s career path as she completes her second year at Raja Peary Mohon College. Undoubtedly, her hard work and dedication will provide her with the teaching skills she will need to inspire the next generation of young students. Congratulations YASMIN!



YASMIN KHATUN

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES



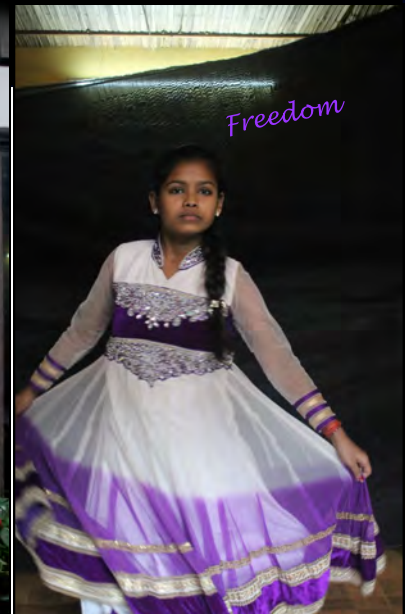
ANNASHYA ROY

At 18 years of age, Annashya Roy has had her share of challenges. With physical and emotional limitations as well as a harsh home environment, she reluctantly enrolled in Empower The Children’s special needs program at Duttapukur. Wary of new surroundings, this young student sat silently for three days until ETC teacher, Meheub Hasan, gave her a gentle nudge. To his surprise, Annashya displayed an aptitude for math. His recognition and support so inspired her that she slowly developed interest in all of her studies, and today she describes this learning as a *“flower in my life”*. Annashya gives credit to ETC and her teacher’s encouragement for her success in passing the Class X Board exam, a wonderful achievement for a young woman who has shown great courage in meeting her challenges. Congratulations ANNASHYA!



What better way to explore one's hopes and dreams than through *Self-Exploration!*

ETC students were given a unique opportunity to work with renowned American Photographer Brooke Shaden whose improvisational skills helped each participant to create a self-portrait that best expressed their inner motivation to fly...either toward or away from something momentous in their lives.





Day One: Introduction through movement eased everyone's jitters, and soon these young women were looking forward to the two exciting days ahead. Students were given the opportunity to discuss the stories, elements, props, and colors represented in Brooke's personal work, transferring some of these ideas to their own self-portraits. They learned camera basics, including aperture, shutter speed, exposure, composition and natural lighting along with the use of the body, face and hands to express emotion.



"If I Could Fly" is a joint program between U.S. based non-profit Blossomy and Kolkata Sanved, a local non-profit in India, in partnership with U.S. fine art photographer, Brooke Shaden.

Visit: www.Blossomy.org, www.BrookeShaden.com, www.KolkataSanved.org


If
I
Could
Fly


Day Two: Feeling more comfortable in their space, the girls demonstrated a stronger sense of belonging to the group by sharing personal stories in conversation and drawings. Using all the elements discussed the day before to illustrate their real or imagined themes, they proceeded to focus on a particular emotion. These dramatic photographs illustrate that they were successful in their goals!



Fond farewells marked the end of the *Self-Exploration* workshop as ETC students gathered around Brooke for information on *The Light Space*, an advanced training program which would give our ETC budding photographers the skills to become professional photographers.

Women Empowerment Workshop



Namrata Kanuga

Kolkata Sanved, a collaborative partner of Empowerment Institute USA, provided a four-day workshop for women in ETC's tailoring program in which they were shown how to develop a comprehensive vision for life. Through intense introspection, they were asked to search beyond their positive and negative experiences to name their greatest desires. Namrata taught a variety of techniques to create and manifest their dreams, seeking the right balance to help them *ride their wave to empowerment*.

Who Am I?



Where Am I Going?



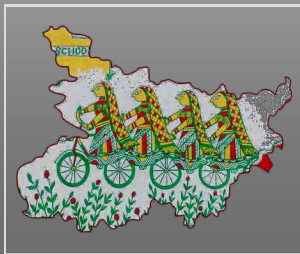
The Inner Journey

Getting Ready
Crafting Reality with Thought
Personal Power

Core Beliefs

Body
Work
Spirituality
Sexuality
Relationships
Money
Emotions

Returning Home:
Always Growing,
Making Your Passion Happen



How Do I Transform Myself?



Celebrate The Vision



Mental Clearing



Identifying Fears



Affirmations



Creativity



Self-Motivation

Women of Substance



Many Thanks to Laura Price

Laura Price founded Blossomy in 2004. Her journey, from a community project volunteer teaching basic computer skills to organizing international empowerment workshops that focus on storytelling, music, dance, and theater, is nothing short of astounding. Teaming up with both traditional and modern artists, and partnering with local non-profits, Laura has been instrumental in awakening the healing process for women scarred by human trafficking, domestic violence and illiteracy. *“If I Could Fly”* infuses women with a new confidence called *“Empowerment.”*

*Be a woman of substance.
Be a real woman. It is
difficult to break down a real
woman because she will learn
from her mistakes, gather her
strength from her struggle
and overcome the obstacles
courageously.*



Many Thanks to Brooke Shadenaden

Photographer Brooke Shaden loves to create images; that she is a force of nature through her artistry is undeniable. Through storytelling and themes, Brooke encouraged ETC students to share their dreams. Brooke’s skill, inspiration and remarkable talent help participants to discover the perfect medium to freely express themselves through self-portraiture—an *empowering* moment for these young women.

Many Thanks to Sohini Chakraborty

Bridging the gap between dance and sociology was a challenge for Sohini Chakraborty when she decided, in 1996, to work with sexually abused women. Combining movement and compassion, she has been able to instill in them new confidence, which helps these women come to terms with their past and be pro-active in their own right. Sohini founded Kolkata Sanved in 2004: *“What I fight for is not just to teach women dance, but make them strong individuals in society with dignity and self-respect.”*



*A woman of
substance is a
woman of power, a
woman of positive
influence and a
woman of meaning.*

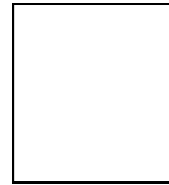
Many Thanks to Namrata Kanuga

As a creative project manager, Namrata enjoys helping young women survivors of sex abuse to realize their goals and purpose in life. She accomplishes this through workshops in Dance Movement Therapy, working under the aegis of Kolkata Sanved. She is currently enrolled in a scholarship program to receive her master’s certification as a facilitator from the Empowerment Institute. Namrata is also a film maker, having completed her masters at Kingston University, UK. Namrata enjoys her work *“Breaking down barriers through dance movement restores confidence and well-being which allows these women to re-enter mainstream society on an equal footing.”*





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E = encourage
M = motivate
P = protect
O = opportunity
W = wisdom
E = educate
R = rejoice



THE CHILDREN



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