

Give up schooling? Not for all the tea in China!

New Delhi, December 11, 2017: Bhupinder Singh, son of a poor construction labourer in rural Amritsar, served tea as a little boy at construction sites in and around his tiny village of Fattubhila. Today, as a strapping young man of 20, standing tall in his shiny new army fatigues, he can't help but think of how he had never even dreamt that he would be selected to serve the Nation. At an age where he should have been learning about the wonders of the world or solving Math problems, Bhupinder was seen scurrying over dangerous steel rods, balancing tea cups, earnest in his commitment to support his family of five with his meagre income. With every cup of tea sold, Bhupinder Singh was moving a step further in to a darkness that was void of the light of education.

However, fate had another plan for little Bhupinder and the veil of darkness was lifted when the teachers of Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School, Fattubhila, Amritsar (Punjab) caught sight of this sprightly young figure at an expansion project in their school. Equipped with the training to provide remedial education, the school teachers were able to discern and resolve the gap of more than two years in Bhupinder's education from having dropped out of a Government School in Class V. Owing to their challenging economic situation, Bhupinder's father was anxious about bearing the costs of an education for his son. But he was soon brought to ease once the teachers explained that education at a Satya Bharti School is completely free of cost and that Bhupinder would also be provided with nutritious mid-day meals, free uniforms, textbooks, stationery and other welfare schemes just like over 45,000 Satya Bharti School students studying 254 schools in the villages of six states of India.

The momentous year was 2011, when Bhupinder's fortunes took a turn that would change his life forever - he enrolled into Class VI of Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School, Fattubhila. During his time at the school, Bhupinder developed a strong work ethic and through sheer perseverance and grit he overcame all the hurdles at home to accomplish his goals. Displaying a keen interest in Science, he began to bring home several accolades for his academic progress, projects and models. Donning an inimitable smile, Bhupinder joked, "From pouring tea to figuring out hydraulics, my Satya Bharti journey has been one of wonderful surprises and the happiest of memories." As a Class IX student, Bhupinder was once again faced with the dilemma of choosing between attending school and dropping out to support his family. On one end, Bhupinder's family was urging him to take up employment and on the other, his teachers were encouraging him to continue his education. His strong will power persisted yet again and he decided to stay in school!

Satya Bharti School Program, the flagship initiative of Bharti Foundation, is a rural education initiative providing quality education to underprivileged children, completely free of cost. The program envisions transforming thousands of Bhupinders into educated, confident, responsible and self-reliant employable citizens of India with a deep sense of commitment to their society. The program's multi-pronged reach, encourages active involvement of the rural community, parents of students and like-minded organizations working in the field of education in India, helping students like Bhupinder realise their dream of a quality education.

Today, Bhupinder Singh is no longer serving tea but is receiving training as a General Duty Soldier in the Indian Army. With holistic development as a core integral of the Satya Bharti School Curriculum, the aim is to ensure child development appropriate to age and grade. Towards achieving this key requisite, all interventions are designed in such a way that they have a positive



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impact on the cognitive, physical, emotional, social and moral development of the students. This approach helps each child to participate wholly, while simultaneously exploring individual creativity and developing the ability to investigate. With the recently earned badge of honour and the Indian Army's olive green on his back, Bhupinder Singh, alumnus of Satya Bharti Adarsh Senior Secondary School, Fattubhila, returned triumphant to his village, bringing pride and joy to his family, teachers and the entire community!

Reaching out to thousands of underprivileged children, the Satya Bharti School Program, through its focus on holistic development, aims to bring forth a new generation of citizens eager to usher in positive change. Bhupinder's challenging journey and his incredible transformation today bears testimony to the emphasis that the Program lays on its students' holistic development while instilling in them a sense of commitment towards their nation.

Currently*, 249 primary/elementary Satya Bharti Schools and five senior secondary schools are operational across Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal reaching out to 45,622 children and employing 1,633 teachers. Focusing on the girl child [49% girl students] and the weaker sections of society [76% of children from SC/ST/OBC Communities], the program is one of the largest end-to-end education initiatives by a corporate group in the country.

Bhupinder Singh's story is one of those stories that we don't come across every day and helps us reaffirm our belief that India is changing and for the better! After reading his powerful journey, even the most hard-hearted would be inspired to support the efforts of Bharti Foundation towards Nation-building!

**All data as of October 2017*

