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Shaheen Mistri

Summary

The excerpt is from "Redrawing India" by Shaheen Mistri and Kovid Gupta, and it tells the inspirational story of Shaheen Mistri's journey from a comfortable life in Jakarta to becoming the founder of Akanksha, an organization dedicated to providing education to underprivileged children in India. Shaheen's transformation began when, at the age of 12, she visited an orphanage in Jakarta and was deeply moved by the plight of the children there.

In 1989, during a vacation in Mumbai, Shaheen had a life-changing moment when she encountered begging children at a traffic signal. This experience ignited her desire to make a difference in the lives of India's less fortunate children. Shaheen decided to move back to Mumbai, and her parents agreed, provided she got admission to a good undergraduate college in the city.

With determination, Shaheen managed to secure admission to St. Xavier's College and began her journey to understand India beyond the classroom. She ventured into the slums of Mumbai, where she encountered the harsh realities of poverty and saw the potential for positive change in the lives of the children living there.

Shaheen's connection with a girl named Sandhya, who lived in dire circumstances, inspired her to start teaching the local children. This marked the beginning of Akanksha, an organization that aimed to provide education and hope to underprivileged children. Despite facing challenges and rejection from many schools, Shaheen and her team eventually established the first Akanksha center.

Over time, Akanksha expanded and evolved, focusing on teaching English and Math, as well as instilling values, self-esteem, and confidence in the children. From its humble beginnings with 15 children, Akanksha grew into a network of 58 centers and 6 schools, benefiting over 3500 children.

Shaheen Mistri's journey is a testament to the power of determination, empathy, and a commitment to making a positive impact on society. It serves as an inspiring example of how one person's passion and perseverance can transform the lives of countless underprivileged children in India.

Analysis:

The provided excerpt from "Redrawing India" by Shaheen Mistri and Kovid Gupta is a compelling narrative that encapsulates several significant themes and elements:

1. **Personal Transformation:** The story revolves around Shaheen Mistri's personal transformation from a privileged and comfortable life in Jakarta to her dedication to improving the lives of underprivileged children in India. This transformation is triggered by a series of impactful experiences and encounters, highlighting the power of empathy and the human capacity for change.

2. **Social Inequity:** Shaheen's journey unveils the stark social inequities and disparities that exist in India, particularly in Mumbai's slums. Through her observations and interactions with children from different backgrounds, readers gain insight into the challenging circumstances faced by underprivileged communities, including lack of access to education, housing, and basic amenities.
3. **Motivation and Purpose:** The narrative underscores the importance of finding one's purpose and passion in life. Shaheen's decision to return to India and dedicate herself to the cause of education reflects the idea that personal fulfillment often comes from making a positive impact on others' lives. This can be an inspiring message for young readers who may be searching for their own sense of purpose.
4. **Resilience and Determination:** Shaheen's determination to make a difference in the face of numerous challenges is a central theme. Her persistence in seeking admission to a college in Mumbai, her efforts to secure a location for the first Akanksha center, and her commitment to teaching underprivileged children all demonstrate the importance of resilience in pursuing one's goals.
5. **Community Engagement:** The narrative highlights the significance of community engagement and grassroots initiatives. Akanksha's growth from a single class to a network of centers and schools was made possible by mobilizing volunteers and collaborating with local communities. This aspect emphasizes the collective effort required to address social issues effectively.
6. **Education as Empowerment:** Education is portrayed as a powerful tool for empowerment throughout the excerpt. Shaheen's focus on teaching English, Math, values, self-esteem, and confidence to underprivileged children underscores the idea that education can break the cycle of poverty and provide individuals with the skills and confidence to improve their lives.
7. **Cultural Context:** The narrative is set against the backdrop of Indian society, with mentions of cultural aspects, such as language and the challenges faced by people from different backgrounds. This provides cultural context and helps readers connect with the story's setting.

Overall, this excerpt offers a compelling story of personal growth, social awareness, and the transformative impact of education and community engagement. It serves as an inspirational narrative that can encourage young readers to reflect on their own potential to make a positive difference in the world and to consider the importance of empathy and social responsibility in their lives.

1. What kind of problems did Shaheen face when she settled in India?

Shaheen Mistri settled in India, she faced several challenges and problems:

1. **Cultural Adjustment:** Shaheen had grown up in various countries and educational systems, so adapting to the Indian way of life and culture was a significant challenge. India's diverse and vibrant culture was a stark contrast to her previous experiences.
2. **Educational Transition:** The Indian educational system differed from what Shaheen had experienced abroad. She had to adapt to a more bookish and theoretical approach to learning, which was a departure from the hands-on and intellectually stimulating education she had received.
3. **Language Barrier:** Shaheen faced a language barrier as she did not speak Hindi, which is widely spoken in India. This made communication difficult, especially when she wanted to connect with underprivileged children in the local communities.
4. **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** When Shaheen decided to establish the Akanksha Foundation, she encountered resistance from schools when seeking space for her educational centers. Many schools were hesitant due to misconceptions and unfounded fears, making it challenging to find suitable locations for her initiatives.
5. **Social Disparities:** During her visits to underprivileged communities, Shaheen was confronted with the harsh realities of poverty, lack of basic amenities, and limited access to education. Witnessing these disparities in living conditions was emotionally challenging.

Despite these obstacles, Shaheen's determination, passion for education, and commitment to making a difference in the lives of underprivileged children led her to overcome these challenges and establish the Akanksha Foundation, which has since transformed the lives of thousands of children in India.

2. What was the 'inequity' that Shaheen found in India?

The "inequity" that Shaheen Mistri found in India was the stark and pervasive disparity in living conditions, opportunities, and access to resources among different segments of the population. When she settled in India, particularly in Mumbai, Shaheen witnessed this inequity firsthand.

She observed that while some individuals, like herself, enjoyed a life of privilege with access to quality education, comfortable living conditions, and a wealth of opportunities, many others lived in poverty and faced severe limitations. This inequity manifested in the lack of access to basic amenities, including clean water and housing, as well as limited educational opportunities for underprivileged children.

Shaheen's experiences in India compelled her to address these inequalities and work towards providing quality education and opportunities to those who were less fortunate, eventually leading to the establishment of the Akanksha Foundation.

3. Shaheen refers to the Indian education system as "bookish". Comment

When Shaheen Mistri refers to the Indian education system as "bookish," she is highlighting a characteristic of the system that places a heavy emphasis on theoretical knowledge and rote learning. This term suggests that the education system in India tends to prioritize

memorization of facts and information from textbooks rather than fostering a more holistic and practical understanding of subjects.

The term "bookish" implies that the focus is primarily on academic performance measured by standardized exams, and it may not always encourage critical thinking, creativity, or practical application of knowledge. Students often face immense pressure to excel in examinations, which can lead to a competitive and sometimes stressful learning environment.

Shaheen's comment highlights her perspective that there may be room for improvement in the Indian education system to promote a more well-rounded and experiential approach to learning, one that not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures skills and critical thinking abilities in students.

4. What is 'Akanksha foundation '? What is the basic principle of Akanksha?

The Akanksha Foundation is a non-profit organization based in India that is dedicated to transforming the lives of underprivileged children through education.

The basic principle of Akanksha is to provide quality education and holistic development opportunities to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Their core mission is to bridge the educational gap by offering children access to excellent educational programs, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values, and self-esteem needed to break the cycle of poverty. Akanksha focuses not only on traditional academic subjects like English and Math but also on instilling values, confidence, and self-belief in the students, thereby empowering them to lead successful and fulfilling lives despite the challenges they face due to their socio-economic circumstances.

5. What did the volunteers teach at Akanksha?

The volunteers at Akanksha taught a range of subjects and skills to underprivileged children. Some of the key subjects and areas of instruction included:

1. **English:** Volunteers helped students improve their English language skills, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension. Proficiency in English is often seen as a gateway to better educational and employment opportunities.
2. **Mathematics:** Math instruction focused on building foundational mathematical knowledge and problem-solving skills, helping students excel in this critical subject.
3. **Values:** Akanksha emphasized the importance of values, ethics, and character development. Volunteers imparted life skills and moral values to help students make responsible decisions and become responsible citizens.
4. **Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Building self-esteem and confidence was a fundamental aspect of Akanksha's teaching. Volunteers encouraged students to believe in themselves and their abilities, fostering a positive self-image.

5. **Holistic Development:** Beyond academics, volunteers often engaged in activities that promoted holistic development, including art, sports, and cultural enrichment.

In essence, Akanksha volunteers worked to provide a well-rounded education that not only improved students' academic knowledge but also equipped them with essential life skills and the confidence to pursue a brighter future.

6. **What kind of difference, do you think, Akanksha must have brought in to the slums of India?**

Akanksha has likely brought about a significant and positive difference in the slums of India. Some of the notable impacts and changes that Akanksha could have made include:

1. **Access to Education:** Akanksha's presence in the slums would have provided access to education for children who may not have had this opportunity otherwise. This access is a crucial step in breaking the cycle of poverty.

2. **Improved Academic Performance:** By focusing on subjects like English and Mathematics, Akanksha may have improved the academic performance of students, enabling them to compete more effectively in a knowledge-based economy.

3. **Enhanced Life Skills:** Akanksha's emphasis on values, self-esteem, and confidence-building would have equipped students with essential life skills, including decision-making, communication, and problem-solving, which are valuable beyond the classroom.

4. **Community Upliftment:** By engaging with the local community and providing educational support, Akanksha may have contributed to the overall upliftment of the community, instilling hope and aspirations for a better future.

5. **Role Models:** The volunteers and educators at Akanksha serve as positive role models for the students, inspiring them to pursue their dreams and believe in their potential.

6. **Reducing Inequity:** Akanksha's efforts likely contributed to reducing the educational and socio-economic inequities that often exist in slum areas, promoting a more inclusive and equal society.

In summary, Akanksha's presence and work in the slums of India have the potential to bring about transformative changes by offering education, instilling values, and empowering young individuals to break the cycle of poverty and lead more fulfilling lives.

7. **You get an opportunity to interview Shaheen Mistri. Prepare a set of six relevant questions to interview her**

1. What inspired you to start the Akanksha Foundation, and how did your personal experiences shape your vision for the organization's mission?

Could you share some key milestones and challenges you encountered while establishing and growing Akanksha? How did you overcome these challenges?

2. Can you elaborate on the impact Akanksha has had on the lives of underprivileged children and communities in India? Are there any specific success stories that stand out to you?
3. Education plays a central role in Akanksha's mission. Could you discuss the significance of holistic education, including values and character development, in the context of empowering underprivileged children?
4. Akanksha has grown significantly since its inception. What are your future plans and aspirations for the organization? How do you envision its role in addressing educational inequalities in India?
5. Your journey from a comfortable life abroad to dedicating yourself to social causes in India is inspiring. What advice do you have for young individuals who aspire to make a positive impact on society, especially in the field of education and social welfare?

8. You are one of the students of Shaheen Mistri. You were very much impressed by her efforts at Akanksha. You decide to write an e- mail expressing your gratitude. Draft the e- mail.

Subject: Expressing Gratitude for Your Inspiring Leadership

Dear Shaheen Mistri,

I hope this email finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for the incredible impact you have had on my life and the lives of countless others through your dedication and leadership at Akanksha.

Being a student at Akanksha, has been a transformative experience for me. Your unwavering commitment to providing quality education and instilling values in underprivileged children has not only changed the trajectory of my own life but has also given me a sense of purpose and direction.

Your vision, resilience, and tireless efforts in the face of challenges have been a constant source of inspiration for me. Your belief in the potential of every child, regardless of their background, has taught me the true meaning of inclusivity and equality.

I have witnessed firsthand the positive changes that Akanksha has brought to our community. Your holistic approach to education, focusing on not just academics but also values and self-esteem, has made a profound difference in our lives. You have empowered us to dream big and work towards a brighter future.

As I continue my journey, I carry with me the valuable lessons and values instilled by Akanksha. I am determined to pay it forward and make a positive impact on society, just as you have done.

Once again, thank you, Shaheen Mistri, for being a beacon of hope, a mentor, and a role model. Your legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

With heartfelt gratitude,

[Your Name]

9. Shaheen wanted to stay back in India but her parents were not quite willing to let her stay in India. Prepare a likely telephonic conversation between Shaheen and her mother.

Shaheen: (answering the phone) Hello?

Mother: (concerned) Shaheen, it's me, your mother. I hope you're doing well in India.

Shaheen: Hi Mom, yes, everything's going fine here. In fact, there's something I have to talk to you and Dad about.

Mother: (curious) What is it, dear? Is everything alright?

Shaheen: Well, Mom, you know how much I love it here in India, and I've found a way to make a real difference in the lives of underprivileged children through education.

Mother: (worried) Yes, we've heard about your work with the children. It's commendable, but we always thought it was a temporary thing for your vacation.

Shaheen: I know, Mom, but it's more than that now. I believe I can have a more significant impact by staying here and continuing this work. I want to make it a lifelong commitment.

Mother: (concerned) Shaheen, we understand your passion, but living in India is very different from your life here. It can be challenging, and we worry about your safety and well-being.

Shaheen: I understand your concerns, Mom, and I promise I'll take every precaution to stay safe. But I feel that this is my calling, and I want to fulfill it here in India.

Mother: (thoughtful) Shaheen, we love and support you in everything you do. We just want you to be happy and safe. If this is your true calling, we'll stand by your decision, but we'd like you to complete your education in a reputed college first and then pursue your passion back here.

Shaheen: (relieved) Thank you, Mom. That means the world to me. I'll complete my education as we discussed and then continue my work here in India, making sure to make you both proud.

Mother: (smiling) That's all we want, dear – for you to follow your heart and make a difference in the world. Just promise to keep in touch and visit us whenever you can.

Shaheen: (grateful) I promise, Mom. Thank you for understanding and supporting my dreams.

Mother: (with love) You're welcome, Shaheen. Take care, and remember, we're always here for you.

Shaheen: (with warmth) I love you, Mom. Goodbye for now.

Mother: (affectionate) We love you too, dear. Take care and stay safe. Goodbye.

[End of the conversation]

10. A grand function is organised by the authorities of St. Xavier's College to facilitate former student Shaheen Mistri. The principal introduces her to the audience. Draft the speech for him.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening and a warm welcome to this special occasion. Today, we gather here not only to celebrate the achievements of one of our most distinguished alumni but also to honour a remarkable individual who has dedicated her life to making a profound impact on society. It is with great pleasure that I stand before you to introduce our esteemed guest of honour, Ms. Shaheen Mistri.

Shaheen Mistri is not just a former student of St. Xavier's College; she is an embodiment of the values and principles that we strive to instill in every individual who walks through our doors. Her journey from being a student in our institution to becoming a visionary leader in the field of education and social service is truly remarkable.

While here at St. Xavier's, Shaheen exemplified qualities of compassion, resilience, and a deep commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of others. Little did we know that these qualities would lay the foundation for her inspiring work with the Akanksha Foundation.

Under her leadership, the Akanksha Foundation has transformed the lives of countless underprivileged children, providing them with access to quality education, nurturing their values, and instilling in them a sense of self-worth and confidence. Her tireless efforts have not only bridged educational gaps but have also ignited hope and aspirations among those who needed it most.

Shaheen's story reminds us that an individual with a strong sense of purpose and unwavering determination can be a catalyst for change. She has shown us that education is not merely a means to secure a job but a powerful tool to empower individuals and uplift entire communities.

Today, as we honour Shaheen Mistri, let us also reflect on the profound impact each one of us can have on the world around us. She is a living testament to the idea that the seeds of change can be sown in the most unexpected places, including the classrooms of St. Xavier's.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in extending our heartfelt gratitude and warmest congratulations to Ms. Shaheen Mistri for her outstanding contributions to education and social welfare. We are immensely proud of her achievements and the difference she continues to make in the lives of countless children.

Thank you.

11. Inspired by Shaheen Mistri you want to join Akanksha foundation as a teacher volunteer. You are a post graduate in English literature with good command of English. Being a socially responsible person you are willing to share your knowledge and skills for the benefit of the under privileged. Prepare an application letter and a resume to be sent to the foundation.

[Your Name]

[Your Address] (City, State)

[Your Email Address]

[Your Phone Number]

[Date]

The Managing Director

The Akanksha Foundation

[Foundation Address] [City,
State,]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my strong interest in joining the Akanksha Foundation as a volunteer teacher. After learning about the inspiring work and mission of Akanksha, I am deeply motivated to contribute my skills and knowledge to support the educational development of underprivileged children.

I hold a postgraduate degree in English Literature and have a strong command of the English language. My educational background has equipped me with a deep understanding of literature, language, and effective teaching methodologies. I believe that quality education is a powerful tool for empowerment and social change, and I am eager to share my passion for English literature and language with the students at Akanksha.

My commitment to social responsibility has been a driving force in my life. I have previously volunteered as a tutor and mentor for underserved communities, and I have witnessed the transformative impact that education can have on young minds. I am dedicated to fostering a nurturing and inclusive learning environment where students can not only excel academically but also develop values, confidence, and a love for learning.

Enclosed is my resume, which provides a comprehensive overview of my educational background and relevant experiences. I am confident that my qualifications align with the requirements for a volunteer teacher at Akanksha, and I am eager to contribute to the organization's mission.

I am excited about the possibility of becoming a part of the Akanksha family and working together to create a brighter future for underprivileged children through education. I am available for an interview at your convenience and look forward to the opportunity to discuss how I can contribute to your valuable work.

Thank you for considering my application. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Enclosure: Resume]

12. Shaheen Mistri comes to your school as a part of the Teachers Day Celebrations. Prepare the script of a likely speech that she would make on the occasion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to all of you. It's a true honor and a privilege to be here today, celebrating Teachers' Day with all of you. I'd like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the school administration and teachers for inviting me to be a part of this special occasion.

Teachers' Day is a time when we come together to acknowledge and appreciate the incredible role that teachers play in shaping our lives. It's a day to celebrate those individuals who not only impart knowledge but also inspire, mentor, and empower their students.

I stand before you today not just as a speaker but as a proud product of the education system. I am an alumna of this very institution, and it's here that I imbibed some of the most important values that have guided me throughout my life.

When I look back at my own journey, I realize that I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the remarkable teachers who nurtured my curiosity, encouraged me to dream big, and instilled in me the belief that education is a powerful tool for change.

Teaching is not just a profession; it's a vocation, a calling. It's about lighting the lamp of knowledge in the hearts and minds of our students. It's about nurturing their potential and helping them realize that they can achieve anything they set their minds to.

As we celebrate Teachers' Day, I want to urge all of you, both students and educators, to recognize the immense responsibility that comes with the role of a teacher. Each of you has the power to make a lasting impact on the lives of your students. You have the ability to ignite a passion for learning, to foster creativity, and to instill values that will guide them throughout their lives.

Remember that education is not just about academic excellence; it's also about building character, empathy, and resilience. It's about preparing students to face the challenges of the world with confidence and compassion.

I also want to encourage the students here to be active participants in your own education. Take ownership of your learning journey, ask questions, seek knowledge beyond the textbooks, and remember that your teachers are here to guide and support you.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the teachers here for your dedication and unwavering commitment to the betterment of our society through education. You are the unsung heroes who are shaping the future of our nation.

Happy Teachers' Day to each one of you, and may your passion for teaching continue to light up the path for generations to come.

Thank you.

13. 'A more bookish form of education system followed in India'. Write four points supporting and opposing the statement

Supporting the Statement - A More Bookish Education System in India:

1. **Rote Learning:** The Indian education system has traditionally been criticized for its heavy reliance on rote learning, where students memorize information from textbooks without truly understanding the concepts. This approach can lead to a superficial understanding of subjects.
2. **Emphasis on Exams:** The system places significant emphasis on high-stakes examinations, such as board exams and entrance tests. These exams often prioritize memorization and regurgitation of facts over critical thinking and practical application of knowledge.
3. **Limited Practical Application:** Many Indian schools have limited practical application of knowledge. Students often spend more time in classrooms with theoretical lessons rather than engaging in hands-on learning experiences or real-world problem-solving.
4. **Pressure and Stress:** The competitive nature of the education system can create immense pressure and stress on students, pushing them to focus on scoring high marks rather than fostering a love for learning or developing a well-rounded skill set.

Opposing the Statement - Diverse Educational Approaches in India:

1. **Emergence of Progressive Schools:** In recent years, progressive schools in India have adopted innovative teaching methods that emphasize experiential learning, critical thinking, and creativity. These schools prioritize holistic development over rote memorization.
2. **Some educational boards have introduced reforms to reduce the burden of exams, promote continuous assessment, and include practical components in the curriculum.**
3. **Increasing Focus on Skills:** Indian education has recognized the importance of skill development. Initiatives like the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) aim to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, promoting a more balanced approach.

4. Diversity in Educational Philosophy: India's vast and diverse education landscape includes various educational philosophies and alternative schools that focus on creative and holistic education, catering to a wide range of student needs and preferences.