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Teachers win praise for their lessons of life

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Preeti Anand has been a school teacher for 24 years and believes that children's happiness is of utmost importance, and that this is possible if learning is fun. English teacher Aarti Agarwal scouts for books in public libraries and for interesting material on the Internet so that she has something extra to share with her students in class. In addition, she makes it a point to regularly meet their parents. Balwan Singh has an MA in English but chooses to teach in rural Narela, speaking rustic Hindi and using tools like hand-made charts, matchboxes, pebbles and bricks to help his students understand the lessons better.

Ms. Anand, Ms. Agarwal and Mr. Singh are among 23 other equally extraordinary teachers from municipal schools across the Capital who have been honoured by the Tech Mahindra Foundation for their dedication and unique teaching methods. The Shikshak Samman awards instituted by the Foundation acknowledge that schools run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi bear the responsibility of delivering primary education to thousands of under-privileged children. The third edition of the award ceremony had eminent educationists interview the shortlisted candidates, observe their classroom performances and assess their teaching principles.

"I keep visiting these schools to oversee the infrastructure....and some of these schools are so good that I am really taken aback. Sometimes I ask myself....is this really an MCD school?" said Municipal Commissioner K.S. Mehra lauding the teachers for their dedicated service.

The teachers were also praised by former Mayor Mahesh Sharma who gave a rousing speech on the Vedas, the *guru-shishya* relationship, and the values that a teacher is meant to impart to the student.

Nearly 18,000 teachers from more than 1,700 schools were eligible for the award and this year's nominations included nursery teachers, music teachers and teachers working with children with special needs as well. Applications were screened by a panel from the Foundation and then shortlisted by the selection committee. The selection criteria also included innovation in teaching, empathy for under-privileged children, continuous self-improvement, efforts made to reduce dropouts, relations with the students' parents, and interpersonal and leadership skills.

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