



## One word at a time

— Jaslene Bawa

**HERE** is a woman who not only makes a living as a financial analyst, but also spends her time teaching underprivileged children. With double post graduate degrees — MBA and MCom — in her kitty, Jaslene Bawa works with GREAT Foundation on weekends through their volunteering initiative, Pehel and has been nominated for the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards. Bawa talks to **CQ** about managing a career and making a change in the society:

### **What kind of social initiative have you taken up?**

At Pehel, we teach underprivileged children via assisted learning, since the children are already studying at the cantonment board schools. We help them in clearing their basic concepts and learning conversational English. These are the two subjects that we found most students lacking in. It is not possible for the teachers to concentrate on a class of 60 and these children can't afford expensive tuitions like public school children. Since we had done our post graduation and been through the grind, we found that these two subjects are primarily required even for clearing any entrance exam or getting through a job interview. Hence, we began this initiative so that we can provide a level playing ground to these kids.

### **From MBA to teaching. What brought it on?**

Right since my graduation days, I have been a part of a number of social service activities where I used to visit old age homes and orphanages. However, post MBA and securing a job, I was well-settled into a routine. But I felt something missing in terms of community service and giving back to the society. I would make some material contributions to the underprivileged kids, but it didn't make any lasting impression. This prompted me to get into teaching. Through teaching I try to help strengthen their concepts and share my experiences. Basically, I want to expose them to a world other than the slums they live in. All one needs is 12 hours in a month.



How do you measure the kind of impact you are making? Teaching underprivileged kids is a responsibility. Since you are investing their time, you have to continually assess if your intervention is helping or not. You have to be consistent, well-planned, and have to come to their level to teach them. In fact, you become a role model and that is hard work. They look up to you, they want to be like you, behave like you, so you have to be careful that you don't fire their imagination too wild (in terms of career aspiration since most of them don't have funds to attend college,) however, you have to help them set realistic goals. We have to keep alternating between being a teacher and a friend.

