

They get a kick out of teaching Taekwondo

Meghana Choukkar, Bengaluru, Oct 22, 2016, DHNS 1:53 IST



Students staying back after classes in the evening to learn martial arts is a common sight in private schools in the city.

Now, even children from slums in Malleswaram and Binnypet are learning to punch and kick, thanks to an initiative by Taekwondo master H L Muthappa, class 12 student Neha Srivathsa and Makkala Jagriti.

After the Nirbhaya rape in Delhi in 2012, Neha wanted to arm young girls from underprivileged backgrounds to defend themselves with the power of Taekwondo.

Collaborating with Makkala Jagriti, the 3rd Dan black belt-holder started the initiative 'Bhairavi' with her younger brother Ved and began training students at a government school in HSR Layout. "Taekwondo is beyond fitness and health. It develops your personality. Some of my students were shy in the beginning, but now they come forward and volunteer to train others," she said.

Recognising the need to reach out to more children, Srivathsa got her mentor Muthappa on board. Since August this year, they are training about 400 children aged between five and 15 years at a government school in Aduodi and two community centres in Malleswaram and Binnypet.

An international master instructor and former state coach, Muthappa is not a stranger to social service. At his Deccan Taekwondo Academy, he takes in underprivileged children from the area and provides them free training. Many have stayed on to become instructors in the academy. "Children from such backgrounds are often misled. Taekwondo teaches them discipline and it offers them opportunities for employment."

Since August, an instructor from the academy has been visiting the four centres once a week and coaching the children. Muthappa identifies children who show natural talent for the martial art and gives them extra training during the weekends, even providing them food. "These children are my family now. If I succeed in making their lives better with Taekwondo, that is all the satisfaction I need," Muthappa said. He has promised uniforms and belt exams to the best performers. Murali M, chief functionary at Makkala Jagriti, appreciates Neha and Muthappa for the dedication with which they teach.

"The children are now able to access training in physical education and sports which ensure their holistic development. Because of their backgrounds, they did not have much exposure."