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GOLFING TO SUPPORT SOMEONE'S EDUCATION

Have you ever been to a rural school? Yes, those schools with no electricity, broken benches and missing roofs. Well, you're in for a surprise with the Isha Vidhya rural schools. Krithi Sri, a 9th grade student of Isha Vidhya takes pride in showing visitors around in her school and explains the minutest details in fluent English. Until she tell you that she is a first generation learner, you might mistake her confidence for a convent student who's lost her way into this remote rural school. The spark in the students of these schools is infectious. Kanishka and Hanishka, twin sisters from another Isha Vidhya school scored more than 90% in their board exams but are not satisfied with their performance. Their father runs a tea shop. He could not complete his education because of financial reasons but history won't repeat itself as one of his daughters is now on an Isha Vidhya scholarship making it easier for him to afford Isha Vidhya's subsidized fee for his other daughter. Both the daughters aspire to become doctors one day. Isha Vidhya opened its first school in 2006. In the past 13 years,

several thousand first-generation learners have passed through its doors. Though the medium of instruction is English in all schools, Isha Vidhya employs bi-lingual alternative learning techniques that are creative, fun and enhance the learning process. The focus on English language and computer skills will equip students to explore mainstream employment opportunities, their only chance at lifting themselves out of poverty and improving living standards.

Volunteers from across the country are pitching in to make this possible by raising funds through sport. However, the major attraction is the annual golf event. Since 2012, Isha Golf Jaunt has been raising awareness and funds for Isha Vidhya, a rural education program that targets the most disadvantaged communities to offer quality education to children, giving them a genuine chance to break the cycle of poverty. Isha Vidhya schools and intervention programs in government schools touch close to 200,000 children in rural Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. It is a much-needed effort.

Combining his love for the game and his keenness to bring quality education to rural India each year, Sadhguru, Founder, Isha Foundation who has never taken formal lessons in golf joins top golfers and celebrities for day long rounds of golf. "We are hoping playfully by hitting a golf ball or doing something else we will somehow inspire people to make this happen", said Sadhguru. It is an opportunity hard to pass up – golfing for a cause. Professional and amateur golfers come together to make a difference to someone's life. Amongst the well-known players who have supported Isha Golf Jaunt is Anirban Lahiri, an Indian professional golfer who currently plays on the European Tour, Asian Tour, and PGA Tour. This will be his second year in a row and he feels proud to be associated with such a noble cause. Not just golfers but a cricketer too joined in to swing the irons to raise awareness and funds to change the landscape of rural education in India. Ajit Agarkar, former India cricketer and last year's participant said that with the kind of population we have, it's important for everyone to contribute to make a difference. "Isha Foundation has been doing that for a while now," he said

adding that the extent of Isha Vidhya' reach is incredible.

"It was very emotional, as a duty to society, we do a lot of things, this is something I would like to encourage all of you to get into - Isha Vidhya. We are honored to host the Isha Golf Jaunt", said Mr. Anil Seolekar, Owner of Oxford Golf resort.

As Isha Golf Jaunt, enters its 7th year there are already students who have graduated from Isha Vidhya's first batch. Subhiksha, a B. Com student and an alumni of Isha Vidhya tutors students the evening and contributes a part of her income to the school. She feels indebted to Isha Vidhya. On the verge of dropping out from the school in 10th standard after her father committed suicide because of financial loss, her teachers supported her to the hilt, not just to complete school but also to secure admission in a private college for her graduation. She is the first person to pursue graduation in her family and is already taking care of family's financial needs.

At the jaunt, fundraisers know their support is crucial but that doesn't mean they can't have some fun! The mood is festive, the conversation easy and friendly, the hospitality impeccable. There are special yoga sessions and fun activities planned for spouses. The game is followed by a fun and laughter filled evening. After all, joy is what Isha trying to spread.

Isha Golf Jaunt will return this year to the Oxford Golf Jaunt in Pune on 1st December 2019. Because it has made a commitment for a better tomorrow to a little child somewhere in a remote rural school in India. And it's steadily gaining new followers. This year popular actor Rakul Preet Singh has volunteered to play golf once again – all of whom have the same goal: to do their bit in promoting high quality education in rural India which is the only passport to a better life for the citizens of tomorrow. [@](#)

