Winds of change that are making a way

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Fifteen girls from across the country who were recently awarded the DLF Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards, a school-level recognition programme for volunteer community service, have not just conquered their fear but won the battle for others also.

One of the award recipients, Rekha Meena, 14 years old, who won the bronze medal, fought against eve-teasing, which was one of the most deep-rooted reasons for girls from her community to drop out of school. “There were instances when I thought of discontinuing my education but then my teachers at Satya Bharti School encouraged me and convinced my parents to fight against eve-teasing,” says Rekha, who recently topped her class.

If Meera has shown the way to other girls, thanks to 12-year-old Arti Verma, untouchables who had never set foot in the village temple are now allowed to pray inside the temple. It started with a festival when Arti saw her childhood friend Babita with her mother witnessing puja from outside the temple. Arti felt really bad and pulled Babita and her mother inside the temple. “Thereafter, I started gathering people to educate them against the evil called untouchability. Slowly mindsets of the people started changing and they appreciated my efforts,” says Arti.

Twelve-year-old Sapna Chauhan believes change begins at home. “Child marriage ruins many young girls’ lives and when I saw my friend, who wanted to study further; being forced into a child marriage I decided to stand up against it,” adds Sapna, who prepared a play to create awareness about high fertility and unwanted pregnancies among adolescent brides.