



# THE NANHI CHHAAN NATIONAL SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST, 2023

## Co- host Schools for 2023



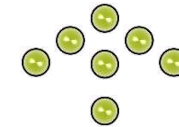
### The Nanhi Chhaan Foundation

The Nanhi Chhaan Foundation  
GP-26, Sector -18, Udyog Vihar,  
Gurgaon - 122015

## NANHI CHHAAN OBJECTIVES

The Nanhi Chhaan National School Essay Contest (NSEC) is a national competition held on an annual basis - a first of its kind initiative by Nanhi Chhaan. It is an awareness and skill building platform with the aim of spreading awareness on important social issues amongst young audiences.

Essay topics are chosen around some of the important issues on the social agenda of the country. For the **Tenth year**, the topic selected was **‘Diversity The Essence of India.’**



Save Environment



Save Girl Child



Save Humanity



## Dignitaries at the 10<sup>th</sup> Essay Contest



**Mr. Harpal Singh**  
(Chairman Nanhi Chhaan  
Foundation)



**CHIEF GUEST**  
**Dr. Karan Singh**  
(Former Union Cabinet  
Minister, MP Rajya Sabha)

### OUR JUDGES



**Dr. Sudipto Mundle**  
(Ex ADB and Member of the  
Finance Commission)



**Mr. Navtej Sarna**  
(Ex Ambassador to the U.S and Ex  
High Commissioner to the U.K)



**Mrs. Chitragada  
Raje Singh**  
(Social Worker)

### OUR SPEAKERS



**Mr. Jaspreet Bindra**  
(Founder and MD, Tech Whisperer  
Limited U.K)



**Mr. Pradeep Krishen**  
(Indian filmmaker and  
environmentalist)



**Ms. Prerna Bindra**  
(Environmental Journalist  
and Travel Writer)



**Mr. Rajendra Pawar**  
(Chairman NIIT Ltd. &  
Patron Nanhi Chhaan)

## The Chairman's Message

### Nanhi Chhaan Foundation



**Mr. Harpal Singh**  
Chairman – Nanhi  
Chhaan Foundation

Ever since we started the Nanhi Chhaan National Essay Contest in 2013, we have received an overwhelming response from schools and students across the country. This year, in the 10th edition of the Contest, what made the program particularly impressive was the fact of it being co-hosted by three of Dehradun's, and the country's, most prominent schools viz The Welham Girls School, The Welham Boys School and the Doon School.

This year approximately 50,000 students from all States of the country wrote on the topic: **“Diversity - The Essence of India”**. We envisaged The Nanhi Chhaan National Essay Contest as a platform for the youth of the country to engage on and subsequently advocate for some of the most fundamental issues facing our society today. To make such a platform effective and resonant, we will continue to reach out to a large swathe of the school-going population so that the issues we raise and debate create a strength of voice and thought that becomes difficult to be ignored.

The growth and reach that we have witnessed in just 10 years reinforces our ambition to making this essay contest a platform for change and next year we hope to substantially improve participation. The help of well wishers is acknowledged with thanks, with the hope that similar support will be forthcoming in coming years as well.

## The Chairman's Message



Some of the memorable moments of this years essay contest event began with the program at Welham Girls on the environment with two eminent speakers, Perna Bindra and Pradip Krishen, exalting students and invoking them to preserve and protect the environment, the school set the pace for the next two days. The vibrancy of students was palpable as was of all others who were present. The Welham Boys school hosting the session on AI by Jaspreet Bindra excited young minds of the power and potential of AI with students participating with insightful questions. The school's setting for the two follow up sessions with judges, Chitragada Raje Singh, Navtej Sarna and Sudipto Mandal for the competition was an ideal one as playing host came naturally to the school. The conversations with students and the finalists unquestionably provided enough food for thought for many years into the future.

The Doon school auditorium reverberated with the continuous clapping of students and invitees as the Play on “ Tansen “ drove piercing emotions through the hearts of the audience and enthralled everyone with song, dance and drama in ways that many said they had never experienced before. The final event where each school enacted a skit on one of the Nanhi Chhaan objectives of protecting girls and empowering women, planting trees and protecting the environment and of promoting inter faith harmony touched hearts like little else. You can be proud of your students, as we were, as one parent and teacher said on hearing the students, “ We are happy the country is in good hands “.

A real highlight of course was the presence of Dr. Karan Singh as chief guest for the three day event. His sharing of thoughts on his school life and of the significant events of history, of which he was a part, would have bought history to life in the minds of students. He combined childlike innocence and intellectual depth in a wonderfully disarming way, a lesson to be learnt by us all.



## The Head Master's Message



**Dr. Jagpreet Singh**  
Head Master  
The Doon School

On behalf of the Doon School and myself, I want to express our sincere gratitude for giving us the opportunity to be a part of the 10th Nanhi Chhaan National Schools Essay Contest finals. It was truly an honor to collaborate with Welham Girls' School and Welham Boys' School to create an event that left a lasting impact on everyone involved. The dedication of the students, teachers, and staff, along with the insightful sessions and powerful performances, indeed made it a memorable three days. Dr. Karan Singh's presence as the chief guest added immeasurable value and inspiration to the occasion. The magic and electricity at the events were only possible because of the collective passion and commitment of our schools and the Nanhi Chhaan Foundation.

Rest assured, we are committed to maintaining the momentum and continuing our efforts to nurture young minds who will be exemplary citizens and stewards of our planet. Your encouragement fuels our determination to make a positive difference in the world.

Once again, thank you for your thoughtfulness and for giving us the opportunity to contribute to the common good. We look forward to our continuing association with the Nanhi Chhaan Foundation and to future endeavours that align with our shared values.

## The Principal's Message



**Mrs. Vibha Kapoor**  
Principal Welham  
Girls' School

The opening venue for the final round was Welham Girls' School. The programme was initiated on 28th September with a session on "The Environment" conducted by renowned filmmaker and environmentalist Mr. Pradip Krishen and Ms. Perna Bindra, a leading environmental journalist and travel writer. Mr. Pradip Krishen is a noted filmmaker, naturalist, and environmentalist. His magnum opus on the Trees of Central India and the Stories of Delhi is a seminal work. He has directed three films, Massey Sahib, In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones and Electric Moon, all of whom have won significant Indian and international awards.

Ms. Perna Bindra is one of India's leading environmental journalists and travel writers. She is also a visiting faculty member at the National Centre for Biological Sciences and has received the Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award. Ms. Bindra was a member of the National Board for Wildlife. She is on the state Board for Wildlife, Uttarakhand, and is a founder director of Bagh Trust.

On 29 th September morning, the fifteen finalists reconvened for the Semi-Final Round of the Essay-Writing Competition. They wrote an essay on the spot on the topic 'Challenges in implementing the Women's Reservation Bill' announced at the venue.



## The Principal's Message



**Mrs. Sangeeta Kain**  
Principal Welham  
Boys' School

The semi-finals and the final rounds of the 10th Nanhi Chhaan National School Essay Writing Contest were co-hosted by the Doon School, the Welham Girls' School and the Welham Boys' School on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29th September, 2023. This not-for-profit organization is founded on the bedrock of addressing grave societal concerns. It is a clarion call for pressing reforms to save the girl child, empower women, protect the environment, and promote inter-faith harmony. One factor that struck a deep cord in all of us was the intimate connection that Nanhi Chhaan seeks to make between the girls they are committed to save and the numerous tree saplings that they have planted across the length and breadth of the country in an effort to conserve tree cover.

The girl child and the sapling will grow up to shelter and nurture lives. This essay contest is an endeavor to bring India's youth into close proximity with these issues thus creating an awareness that will impact future policy makers.

The theme for this year was Diversity – the essence of India. At a time when agitations, protests, and even violence are on the rise in our country on grounds of language superiority, regional dominance, religious fanaticism, celebrating India's Diversity was the need of the hour.

It was an honour for us at Welham Boys' School to partner with an organization pursuing such a noble vision. We hope and pray that the Nanhi Chhaan will continue to touch and transform lives.



# Winners of 10<sup>th</sup> Nanhi Chhaan Essay Writing Competition



**Ayaan Shah**  
**Scindia School, Gwalior**

Cash Prize (Student) – INR 30,000  
Cash Prize (School) – INR 15,000  
NGO (Selected by Student) –  
15,000



**Arijit Sandhu**  
**The Doon School, Dehradun**

Cash Prize (Student) – INR 20,000  
Cash Prize (School) – INR 10,000  
NGO (Selected by Student) –  
10,000



## Essay by Ayaan Shah - The Scindia School



### **Diversity the Essence of India**

Do you know when you're filling out a form and it asks for your nationality? You automatically scroll to the Indian tricolour and as you click it you hear the voice of every single person who was animated by this culture before you, and the weight of the world entombs you in the existential dread of living through the incredibly nuanced and messed up concept of India. Maybe that's just me. Like a resident doctor, I stare in lurid fascination at the awry mess that is the corpus of the Indian people unable to do anything but examine the entrails of something that is so much greater than I will ever amount to.

Then I click submit, and instantly I am a million kilometres away in a Bombay high-rise, the scent of the ocean indiscernible mixed with my stress-induced perspiration. I type this on a borrowed laptop, on borrowed time from people lost to history who probably deserve to talk about this subject more than I ever will. Huddled up in my Bombay high-rise, even in the firing of my neurons I taste the grit of Bombay air, the salt spray, and the spatter of hot oil. When I lie down at night, I explore the familiar avenues of my city; churches, Goan bakeries, Tamil fast food joints and Gujarati corner stores fit themselves like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle as I travel these endless alleys.

In this amalgam of languages and cultures, I place myself, a mark in a sea of change. It's easy to lose yourself in the chaos. Born to a Gujarati family in Bombay, who bought at the right time, with enough to school both their children in a Cambridge board school and raise them in English, I hold the world in my hands and yet I am the farthest from understanding my place in this world. My diaspora is an insidious one, seeking refuge in their own land, unable to claim ownership over it. My tongue, a flapping muscle inept in my mother tongue, and every word that it fashions makes me a bigger fraud.



## Essay by Ayaan Shah - The Scindia School



The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb and I lack the taste for both. Diversity does necessitate equity. In a city where the contour of privilege puts mountains and valleys to shame, I was born into privilege, in the soft sheets of a hospital close to home, in the absence of worry. Diversity is in our blood, a nebula of clashing colours united by the intangible spirit of India. Diversity does not guarantee harmony nor tolerance. Diversity is as bloody as it is beautiful.

The bus reaches my stop, I pull out a single coin and utter a single word, twenty minutes later I've reached. I often spend time around Fort; a colonial-era district spread like open arms across the ocean. My Bombay belongs with the Irani cafes and newspaper vendors, in every glass of Badshah's faluda and every college vada pav.

My eyes are trained to discern mandirs from mosques, from churches to derasars, from the eyes of a believer to those who wish they could. In a commercial district, caste, creed and kin are embossed into its very fabric. Even in the most desperate of times, people are sorted into mental divisions, prejudice comes back tenfold although swept under a rug. Yet, the city prevails. In a game of colours and combinations, languages ooze and religion greases the wheels of the world; India is as dazzling as ever. Like a lotus in a muddy pond, people are of the world not from it; the ever-enticing vines of British-born xenophobia, colourism and colonial hardship-induced mistrust all fail to trap the common man.

Splash, oil sizzles and splatters, and chai drips from aluminium kettles into paper cups. Life is motion, unsuited for empty musing on a bustling street. I order a bun maska, complete with chunks of tutti frutti and butter that makes me nauseous. I live in parallel worlds, one tinted sepia and saturated with all the colour of the world and the other scented with mildew and sewage, its clarity almost cruel.



## Essay by Ayaan Shah - The Scindia School

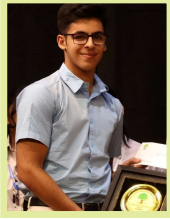


But hey, I've romanticised it, colour-corrected, perfectly cropped, postcard-ready photos line my mind. I can admire the polish of a whip without flinching at the knowledge that it whipped my forefathers. I've sanitised it, and perfectly scrubbed it to fit a Eurocentric narrative complete with a saviour complex on a humanitarian exchange student. I role play as the anthropologist with a heart of gold, a benevolent *firangi* whose basic human decency entitles me to an award. My English is my greatest privilege no matter how much I distance myself from it. Now I've reached the Asiatic Society of Mumbai; my *kaaba*, and my eyes flick over the inscription in silent prayer. Once again at this nexus of thought and ignorance, I am privy to the etymological chaos of any and all words related to India. Or should I say, Bharat, Hindustan, *Meluha*, *Nibhavarasa* or *Jambudweep*? Do I count the indentured labourers of Africa, the Caribbean and Fiji or is India something washed by oceans crossed and lines drawn? Who gets to decide, where Indians are no longer Indians?

The audacious double standards of immigrants against immigrants like mulch that is unaccepting of newly fallen leaves is ridiculous from afar, yet a matter of life and death up close. India is Greek, Bharat- Sanskrit, and Meluha- Sumerian, *Which one is mine?* I want to cry out. Exonyms are hurled at me like stones meant for the devil, I would counter, but my throat produces no name that would do the essence of India justice. It's a texture I run my fingers over, trying my hardest to memorise its every crevice and relief. Its people are a blend far greater than the sum of their parts. India exists in the past, present, and future simultaneously. It's here and there, both abstract yet jarringly concrete.

Often I look around at the tsunami of strangers that envelops me. Strangers, all of them. Yet I know them innately, we lock eyes, and a feeling of safety washes over me. Diversity is more than the essence of India, it is all we truly share. Our differences unite us.

Street lamps flicker, the sky is but a haze of amber. Bombay is a city of a million different creeds, the air a cacophony of a hundred languages, but none of us sleep.



## Essay by Arijit Sandhu - The Doon School

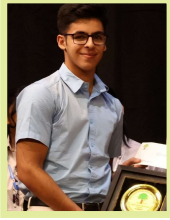


### **Diversity the Essence of India**

Contrary to an average civilian who is introduced to the concept of Diversity through formal schooling via pedagogues or through books and a myriad other forms of Media, I, owing to the itinerant nature of my Dad's job in the Indian Army have been privileged enough to witness this diversity first hand. I have seen, heard, read, experienced, internalised and celebrated the Diversity our country has to offer ever since I was born.

A great deal of my understanding of India's diverse cultural milieu has been shaped because of my Fauji background. A sense of belonging and a simultaneous appreciation of diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions and languages came to me through Indian Military traditions.

The entire Fauj is a profoundly diverse community, a huge old military family – bereft of divisions on the basis of caste, class, creed or religion; united by shared love for the nation and the army community. Sentiments of respect and embracement towards all faiths is demonstrated in the fact that most cantonments have a common worship place for people from all beliefs. We all celebrate Janmashtami, Holi, Eid, Gurupurab, Christmas – all with equal zeal and fervour. Originally, I am from Punjab, but today I am capable of speaking a multitude of languages, though languages are not exactly my cup of tea, but I was able to learn many local prayers and songs that I picked up from the different schools I had the privilege to study at. I have successfully memorised the Assam Regiment's song "Badlu Ram ka Badan Zamin ke Niche hai" line by line, Irrefutable to say I have seen, heard, experienced, internalised and celebrated the Diversity our country has to offer ever since I was born.



## Essay by Arijit Sandhu - The Doon School



India's highly complex and diverse ethnography can be attributed to our immense commitment to the values of "Atithi Devo Bhava" and "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", being preached and passed down since times immemorial. Us Indians have always been very accommodating and have always welcomed foreigners and allowed them to assimilate in our cultural fabric. Especially the northern half of the country has been heavily toured, conquered and at several instances even looted by multiple great powers. Be it the West Asians, the Aryans, the Greeks, the Turks, the Afghans, the Mughals or the European traders – all these groups ventured this land, were captivated by its riches and cultural legacy, brought in their culture, imbibed certain ethos of our ancestors and continually influenced the construction of the identity of India.

A comprehensive understanding of our culturally and racially complex lineage becomes extremely important, especially in today's context of growing rifts between ethnically diverse communities. The baseless conflict over the identity of a "True India" falls flat the moment one realises that our identities as Indians didn't emanate from a singular culture or faith. People migrated in and out of the country, the subcontinent boasts of having been scaled by eminent travellers and philosophers like Ibn Batuta, Fa hein, Hieun Tsang and plenty more, new religions and new faiths were conceived on this land, divisive identities were created not just horizontally in the form of different religions and faiths, but the society was also segregated into a vertical hierarchy of the caste systems. The Idea of India was very fluid until the Freedom struggle gained momentum.

The real consciousness of a common national Identity or the actual conceptualization of Bharat only came about post the awareness wave on cultural revivalism and inspiration for a collective pursuit of "Swaraj" reverberated throughout the nation. The freedom movement not only strived for political sovereignty but also shaped the aspirations for a post- independent civil society. The founding fathers of our nation and the freedom struggle leaders were well aware of India's heavily diverse domestic population and realised the importance of constructing the idea of India that suited all, and not a national identity designed on the lines of religious affiliations.



## Essay by Arijit Sandhu - The Doon School



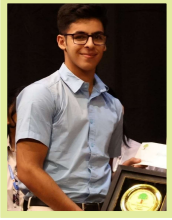
Countrymen during the freedom struggle were mobilised on the basis of realising that the true essence of India lied in embracing and celebrating our diversity – an outcome of our rich historical legacy. This is also implicit in the way crowds were brought together through the means of revolutionary and patriotic hymns. Urdu – today considered as the language of the enemy or the ‘pariah’ next door nation was the language of the radical call to “Inquilab”.

***“Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai,  
dekhna hai zor kitna baazu-e-qatil mein hain”***

(We passionately desire to lay down our lives, let’s see how much strength the enemy possesses), a poem composed by Bismil Azimabadi remained on the lips of every revolutionary and was popularized by Sardar Bhagat Singh. To mitigate undertones of communal tensions building up among certain sections many poets continued to write on Hindu-Muslim unity and brotherhood. Around the same time Muhammad Iqbal’s verses from ‘Saare jahan se acha’,

***“Mazhab Nahi Sikhata, aapas mein bair rakhna,  
hindi hain hum, watan hai hindustan hamara”***

(Religions don’t preach hatred, we are Hindustanis, Hindustan is our homeland) became the anthem form actualizing unity in Hindustan. “Inquilab Zindabad”, coined by Moulana Hasrat Mohani became the rallying cry for March to Revolution for Hindus and Muslims alike. The very languages and cultural elements that united us to fight off the Imperialists seem to plague communally sensitive areas within the country today, making us fight each other. No other country can boast the kind of diversity we offer in terms of religions, cultures, languages, cuisines, and identities. We have people practising Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Tribal religions, Buddhism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. The ultimate goal of all these faiths isn’t establishing superiority over the other. These are just means to an end of harmonious living, collective good and spiritual awakening.



## Essay by Arijit Sandhu - The Doon School



Owing to India's history of exposure to repeated foreign invasions, it's a no-brainer that our traditional cuisines exhibit a significant impact of Persian, Afghani, Mughal, Portuguese and British influences. From intensely flavoured curry dishes in North India – Chole Bhature, Chaat; to spicy, bold and all-time favourites – Vada Pav, Pav Bhaji from west; Idli, Dosas, Uttapam with coconut chutney from south; savoury dishes of Bhel Puri from east; to momos, from the north east – we have an exceptionally phenomenal variety of dishes in our street food menu itself. Our country is definitely a surreal sanctuary for all foodies.

Our rich diverse legacy, multicultural roots and the ability to thrive in a heterogeneous community helps us acclimatise better in foreign places and appreciate the multifaceted aspect of the world community more. But India's nature of historical tolerance and welcoming nature today hangs by a precarious thread that in recent times has been growing weaker. There have been attempts by hyper nationalism and religious fundamentalists to repaint the idea of Hindustan on religious lines. Our diversity is not behind this evil of communalism that plagues India, but exploitation of religion as a political ploy which poisons the mind of a common man towards fellow citizens.

In the 18th century, when Britishers started the process of colonising our homeland, Divide and Rule was successful because of how the imperialists could play with the insecurities of our rulers, incentivize betrayal towards their own men by dangling the bait of power. The partition bloodshed, 1984 anti-sikh riots, Ram mandir dispute, 2002 Godara riots, 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, instances of mob arson and violence never stemmed from our ethnic differences, but were all results of seeds of communal hatred sowed by power hungry political players for their own mileage. Our Diversity has never failed us, albeit, our morality and greed for subduing others, seeking utmost sovereignty has.





**Prizes for all the Participants - Titan Smart Watch**

**Prizes for 30 of the best – 4 Days Personality development programme sponsored by NU (NIIT University) at their Neemrana Campus.**

2014 - Dowry is illegal & immoral

2015 - Gender equality is the only way forward

2016 - Refugees are our collective concern

2017 - Child marriage – it must be stopped

2018 - Empowering women – will society benefit?

Our  
Journey  
In **10**  
years

(Essay  
Topics)

2019 - How to promote greater harmony amongst different religions?

2020 - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Society and Environment

2021 - How can compassion heal humanity and the planet

2022 – Indian Culture What does it Mean

2023 – Diversity is the Essence of India

2014 – Maneckshaw Centre –  
New Delhi

2015 - Vasant Valley School –  
Vasant Kunj

2016 - Vasant Valley School –  
Vasant Kunj

2017 - Sri Sankara School -  
Chennai

2018 - Sri Sankara School -  
Chennai

Our  
Journey  
In **10**  
years

(Host  
Schools)

2019 - The Kalyani School -  
Pune

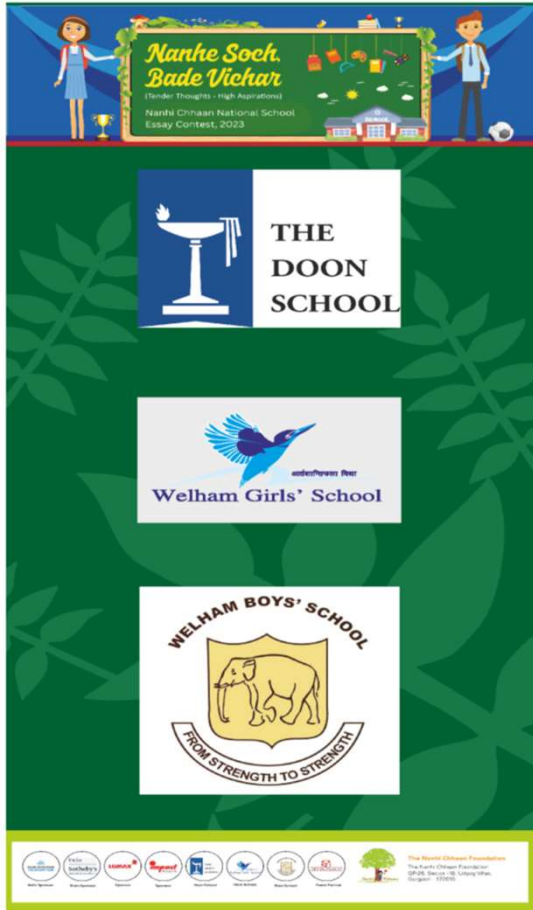
2020 – The Kalyani School –  
Pune Online

2021 - The Kalyani School –  
Pune Online

2022 - The Scindia School  
Gwalior

2023 - The Doon School,  
Welham Girls' School, Welham  
Boys' School

# Essay Event - Dehradun 2023



**Tansen Play at Doon School by The Trialogue Co.**





Dance Performance at The Doon School



Play on Girl Child at The Doon School

**Nanke Soch,  
Bade Viehar**  
(Tender Thoughts - High Aspirations)  
Nanhi Chhaan National School  
Essay Contest, 2023

**THE DOON SCHOOL**

**Welham Girls' School**

**WELHAM BOYS' SCHOOL**  
FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

**The Nanhi Chhaan Foundation**  
The Nanhi Chhaan Foundation  
GPO, Sector - 16, Udyog Vihar,  
Gurgaon - 122002



Group Song by Welham Girls' School



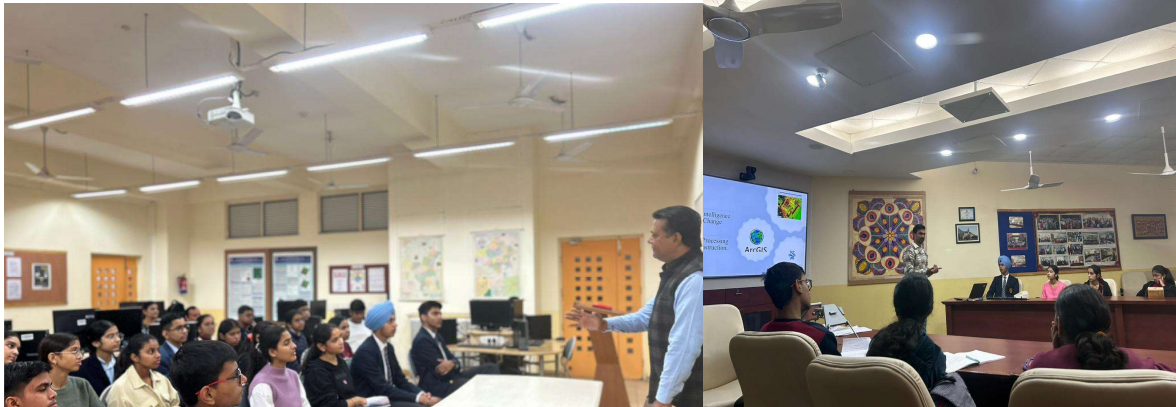
Group Song by Welham Boys' School



**Rajendra S Pawar**  
**(Chairman & Co – Founder**  
**NIIT Ltd.)**

Top 30 Participants got the opportunity to be a part of the 4 Days NIIT University Personality Development Programme at Neemrana





## Interactive Sessions by NIIT University Professors

### Highlights of the Session

- **Electronix**
- **Project Session - IMAGICA**
- **Language Skills Enhancement**
- **Leadership Skills**
- **Bio Futures: Life & Technology**





Interaction with Mr R.S Pawar (Chairman, NIIT Ltd. & Patron, Nanhi Chhaan)



SAVE GIRL CHILD  
SAVE ENVIRONMENT  
SAVE HUMANITY

[www.nanhichhaan.com](http://www.nanhichhaan.com)



Save Environment, Save Girl Child, Save Humanity

## Anti- Dowry Pledge

*I promise never to give and take dowry and pledge that*

*-I will not accept dowry or extravagant wedding gifts or favours even if they are offered to me or my family*

*-I will not give any dowry or wedding gifts that are demanded of me and my family and I will not associate with any family that makes such a demand*

*-I will not marry/marry my daughters in to a family that gives or takes dowry in any form.*

*-I will not attend or support any weddings where I am aware that dowry and/ or extravagant gifts have been demanded and given*

*I take this pledge of my free will and seek internal strength to live up to my commitment.*

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[www.nanhichhaan.com](http://www.nanhichhaan.com)



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Event Partner



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