

May A Million Buds Bloom

Nitya Manoj Kumar

Project Nanhi Kali was established in 1996 by Anand Mahindra with the vision of creating a world where girls overcome the challenges of patriarchy and get empowered through holistic education.

What began as tuitions for girls through women mentors has expanded into teaching them 21st century skills, financial independence, and sports as a pedagogical tool for empowerment. Today, the Project has impacted over 870,000 underprivileged girls across India, and very soon, a million.

This book serves as an ode to recognising and appreciating the various qualitative impacts and transformative change each girl child has experienced.



Nitya Manoj Kumar is a recent graduate of International Baccalaureate program at the International School of Hyderabad, and is now heading to the University of St Andrews in Scotland to study Modern History. A closeted polyglot, who can speak 7 languages, Nitya is also a Hindustani vocalist, and plays both the piano and the tabla. If she's not lost in classical literature then she's keenly observing her surroundings to capture them in her camera, some of which she posts in her Instagram handle [nittu_photography](#)



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Preface

Growing up, I had heard a lot about Project Nanhi Kali, ("little bud" in English) and at the age of seven, I broke my piggy-bank to donate my savings for sponsoring a girl child (Nanhi Kali). From then on, I learnt more about the details of how the Project worked and what sponsoring a girl child entailed through visits to centres in the Araku Region and Mumbai. Each visit left me marveling at how the K. C. Mahindra Education Trust and the Naandi Foundation worked jointly to raise funds for supporting underprivileged girls studying in government schools across different parts of India. When the Project began in 1996, initiated by Mr Anand Mahindra, it focused on supporting girls by promoting education for the girl child through after-school tuition which encouraged more young underprivileged girls to complete schooling. Soon, the Project expanded into teaching 21st century skills like digital learning, financial independence, and also introduced sports as a part of school life for every Nanhi Kali.

In the last couple of years, it has become apparent to me that such continuous support over decades for hundreds and thousands of girls, even in one region, would reap results with profound impacts that are hard to measure. Being the same age as a Nanhi Kali, I knew how much external stimuli and surroundings could impact young girls, and I knew the power of belonging. Even being part of my school's basketball team, or choir, had major impacts on my personality and self-esteem. This led me to realise that measuring the impact of Project Nanhi Kali by attendance in schools or test scores was not completely accurate and fair. I felt it would take more than a report or survey, but a unique method of 'peer-review' to analyse how the work of the Project had helped these little buds blossom. While I was not exactly a conventional peer given my starkly different background, I felt our proximity in age would allow me to connect deeply with the Nanhi Kalis I met.

When it came to capturing my findings, I wanted to convey them through photography, a long-standing passion of mine. From an early age, I would enjoy taking pictures of life around me and subjects that intrigued me; an emotion on someone's face, a grin, or people in museums captivated by their surroundings. Friends and family members who noticed my eye for detail pushed me to hone my skills and do something useful with them. Using your capabilities to aid others through Creativity, Activity, and Service was also a core strand of my high school curriculum in the International Baccalaureate at the International School of Hyderabad. This made such an undertaking a valuable experience during my education.

Additionally, it gave me a chance to better understand how initiatives by Project Nanhi Kali to promote gender equality have impacted those they worked with, and use photography to present my findings. Photography appealed to me as a medium of communication given its breadth for direct and indirect visual narration, which when paired with accompanying essays, gave each image, girl child, and change toward equality its necessary contextualisation.

Inspired and armed with these new ideas of storytelling, I approached Ms Sheetal Mehta the Head of Corporate Social Responsibility and Executive Director at the K. C. Mahindra Education Trust. I presented this rationale for producing a coffee-table book about the Project and its qualitative impacts on Nanhi Kalis. After hearing my ideas and plans about using photography, Ms Mehta granted me the permission to carry out my meetings and interactions with the Nanhi Kalis across the centres of Project Nanhi Kali in India.

The Project centres are spread across different states and various districts covering regions as remote as Shravasti in Uttar Pradesh, to urban settlements sprawling with densely populated communities in Mumbai, and even in secluded tribal villages within the Araku Region of Andhra Pradesh. This sheer diversity and range of reach that the Project had with underprivileged girls across the country brought me to the realisation that even if I visited centres at random, I would end up visiting places in India I had never ever seen. These travels consumed most of my weekends and vacations, and none of the places I visited were ever touristic or typical holiday spots. This made the whole process in every visit especially humbling for me.

I saw the environments in which people lived, and some of the aspects of life I took for granted; access to running water, a private toilet, and a bed to sleep in. Much I took for granted was an unthinkable luxury for most Nanhi Kalis. Nonetheless, their zeal for learning remained infectious and inspiring wherever I went. They would welcome me with outstretched hands into their homes, allowing me to see patriarchal fathers who turned die-hard feminists, and introducing me to communities filled with empowered women, where I truly felt, it takes a village to raise a girl child. These visits and my position with a camera also served as a stark reminder that I was no professional speaking with girls and mentors with the aim of getting statistical data or general portraits, but just another girl child, a peer, capturing images. I was trying to encapsulate the impact of the Project with a different criterion and in a unique manner.

Now, as Project Nanhi Kali transitions to focus on sports, I hope that this book will serve as a reminder of the existing gender inequalities around you, and reinforce your belief in the sheer power of initiatives like Project Nanhi Kali, who changed the lives of over 870,000 girls in the last 28 years. This undertaking of mine serves to capture the qualitative impact of the Project over the past decades across various locations. Impact is seen through Project led activities like exposure visits, the *Toofaan* Games (*Toofaan* meaning “storm”) and time spent in reshaping communities for girls. I spent time travelling across Project centres and experiencing the impact of this through first-hand interactions with Nanhi Kalis. In doing so, I found my pictures consistently showed images of a book of celebration, triumph, and hope. It is thus only fitting, to dedicate this book to the indomitable spirit of the girls of India. To each girl child, and a future where there is nothing stopping them from achieving their dreams.

The Fragrance of a Million Blooms

Gender inequality is one of civilisation's oldest problems and has remained a prevalent social issue even today. The patriarchal belief system continues to burden girls even before their birth (female foeticide), making it a prominent barricade to equality during the 21st century.

India has been taking giant strides towards the upliftment of women in society. Today gender inequality in India is not the obvious version of physical violence or social ostracisation but is far more nuanced in nature. Now, most girls are enrolled in schools and are receiving education. Continued government efforts are reflected in the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) results which show that every state has reported Female Literacy consistently increasing year after year. Similarly, the recent NFHS results also show a great increase in women owning and using independent bank accounts, overcoming problems of financial exclusion. However, despite these milestones of progress, there are other challenges of gender inequality that remain unsolved and are not easily resolved through government or state interventions alone.

These challenges can be broadly categorised into three parts— unequal opportunity, lack of self-belief, and a conducive ecosystem that can facilitate the empowerment of girls.

Unequal opportunity is always a tricky challenge to overcome. Given that girls have been systematically marginalised to particular stereotyped roles, a mere lack of opportunity is not viewed as an injustice. In reality however, unequal opportunity can take various forms. It can be as mundane as a girl not being allowed time to herself for relaxation and leisure, or as discriminatory as girls being deprived of access to common areas and public spaces. Today these

hurdles are harder to cross than the more regressive, oppressive ones that have been universally shunned. Sadly, for girls who have never been able to taste what equal opportunity can do, be it working, earning money, marrying when choosing to, the drive to live a life beyond what they have seen becomes difficult to ignite as time passes. As many laughed and told me “this is how it is for a girl *didi*, this is how it will be...” Changing such a mindset, within girls and families makes the work of Project Nanhi Kali especially critical. One way this is done is through the exposure visits organised for Nanhi Kalis to various places.

These exposure visits introduce girls to new places. Nanhi Kalis see life outside their one room homes, and are taken to museums, historical monuments, and learn of job opportunities. In the process, girls develop a new belief system and hone new life skills. Navigating through crowds as a group of girls, using pocket money to buy a souvenir or snack, and most importantly, an experience together with other Nanhi Kalis that makes education and equal opportunity worth striving for.

Through widening of horizons by exposure visits, and excelling in after-school classes, girls develop an ability to demand agency for themselves. Girls are able to demand money for their contributions to family businesses and use that for their own pleasure, be it sharing a *jalebi* or *samosa* with a friend on the way back from school or storing it away in a piggy bank with goals of eventual financial independence. Once girls learn to be self-sufficient, they begin to exercise their rights—whether it is seeing a movie, sharing an ice cream, or going shopping to buy bangles and trinkets. Upon utilising their rights to agency and having experienced the benefits of travel through exposure visits, there is a collective strength that seems to engulf them to demand more equality.

In the famous Jehangir Art Gallery in Mumbai, I was photographing a group of Nanhi Kalis dwarfed by a canvas of a painting done by a woman artist (whose biography was displayed outside). Suddenly, I felt a gentle tug on my sleeve and found a Nanhi Kali who whispered, "If I keep drawing will they put up my work too?" While we were leaving, another Nanhi Kali shared with me while smiling, "My little sister draws, I will go home and tell her, there is a huge hall where your work can be displayed, keep drawing."

The power of gathering cannot be underscored.

I put my camera down for a minute. There was something magical about the group of little schoolgirls huddled together, starry-eyed, occupying a hall filled with paintings while excitedly pointing at images and reading out text. It was, I realised that evening, a first hand glimpse of the seeds of aspiration being planted in a girl child. The very possibility that talent and passion can be nurtured even beyond an educational initiative like Project Nanhi Kali kindled their little buds of hope. "If I study hard enough..." or "If I go to school more..." allowed conjunctions to overwrite wired statements of "no use studying anyway" or "that's just how things are for girls." Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" flitted across my mind.

Through such visits, the reclaiming of the commons be it playgrounds, parks or sidewalks is one such major achievement I witnessed with an infectious pride. For the same reasons, the introduction of football was a true game changer. I saw places where boys and men were watching and cheering girls playing football in playgrounds that were hitherto never accessible to girls. These stories of reclaiming commons by girls in one neighbourhood spread like wildfire to another, stoking the hopes and optimism of Nanhi Kalis.

Once the hurdles of unequal opportunity and lack of self-belief are addressed by Project led activities, an infinite set of possibilities bloom. Project Nanhi Kali went about creating a proper ecosystem required to sustain such blooms. For many girls this means gaining the support of elders at home, parents, siblings and an innovative curriculum of learning that hones their talents. Project Nanhi Kali has worked to sustain this ecosystem by ensuring the Community Associates assigned to each location have regular meetings to connect with the parents of every girl child. This helps the girls find a mentor to look up to, as all Community Associates hail from their own districts and streets, modelling the benefits of a changed environment to people around them.

In numerous instances, these Community Associates are key players in pushing Nanhi Kalis outside their comfort zones. These young women watch the girls grow up and are more like older sisters and family to every girl child, introducing them to initiatives like the *Toofaan* Games and the new sports curriculum of the Project. Parents too, are now more willing to test out a progressive idea like letting their girl partake as a member of their district team in the sports and *Toofaan* Games programme.

The daily sports activity introduced at school for Nanhi Kalis opens into the opportunity for selection and competition with other Nanhi Kali athletes at the *Toofaan* Games. These *Toofaan* Games are a progressive chain, beginning at the village level, then moving to district competitions, then state and eventually, a national level. For most parents and Nanhi Kalis who would have never imagined themselves to be a part of such a programme, the women mentors become the wind beneath their wings, supporting them along their journeys. Sport like this is an effective solution to a lack of self-belief,

arising only from a changed environment created by the Project. Girls are taught simple drills like the standing long jump, the shuttle run, and team games like football. These activities are also within the Nanhi Kali curriculum, to prepare them for their selections into the annual *Toofaan* Games. This was a big shift from a world where girls never accessed or played sports.

As a lucky visitor to the finals of the *Toofaan* Games held in Benaras 2024, I found myself standing in front of 200 of the most top-notch Nanhi Kali athletes from across the nation who had qualified in heats and were the best in their respective events. Girls who a few years ago were never encouraged to run, told to dress properly and forced to stay indoors were grinning in shorts, sporting jerseys with districts and names on them.

They were torch bearers of their hometowns.

They now belonged.

They became leaders.

Girls banned from playing since it was a “boy thing to do” were kicking off a football game in front of spectators, many of whom were boys riveted by such an open rebellion to patriarchy, and the impressive athleticism each unsuspecting girl had.

From being the inhabitant of a place you wouldn't easily find on a map, these girls are making an impact, and marking these places with their determination and skill.

The parents and communities of Nanhi Kalis surely felt the same. A huge crowd at the Games was the supporting siblings and parents who came to see their daughters or sisters compete. This aspect of encouraging parents to be a part of their girls' education and journey as a Nanhi Kali was revolutionary.

I noticed the importance of this unbreakable bond between a Nanhi Kali and her parents on my visit to the *Dhobi Ghat* in Mumbai, and it left the deepest impression on me. During my day at the *Dhobi Ghat*, I met mothers who spoke endlessly about their daughters, proudly brandishing notebooks, drawings, and listing their achievements. The sons, to my amusement, even when tugging at their mothers' sari or staring from afar, were not even mentioned.

This is a huge change and pivotal condition for equality, especially when, in many traditional households it is the grandmothers and women in families who insist on continuing to raise daughters the way they had been raised, confined by patriarchal boundaries. The very start of girls being accounted for, is a huge indicator of change in society. A son won't defy his mother, even if he does his wife, which makes the gaining of elders and grandmothers as major allies in the movement of gender equality especially important.

As I was leaving the *Dhobi Ghat*, I was reminded of an anecdote from a close journalist friend. She narrated how during a visit to Barmer, Rajasthan, she asked the lady of a house about how many children she had. The woman proceeded to list only her sons, refusing to even count her daughters as children. It made me so proud and happy to have seen just the opposite in Project Nanhi Kali communities.

Such a change in mindset was not just within mothers, but even the men of the family. Fathers and grandfathers turned from patriarchal figures to inspired and supportive feminists for their daughters. Fathers who would have opposed their daughters leaving the house, or spending time aside from doing household chores stood proud and beaming as they cheered on their daughters.

The Project succeeded in a trailblazing feat. It managed to instill pride among families, especially for the fathers, in having a daughter. As awards are handed out at the end of the *Toofaan* Games, applause and cheers fill the ground from proud parents, and mentors. They are clapping for each district that participated in the event, and each Nanhi Kali athlete that put her determination on display by making it to the finals. Each Nanhi Kali leaves the ground a little more tired than when she first arrived, but far more hopeful and eager for the next Games, the next try out, the next outing.

This leads to the crucial seed of ambition, “What next?” Nanhi Kalis now supported in an ecosystem of equality and experts of their capabilities on and off field, look to their journeys onward with hope. They are taught to question, “What next? How far can I go?”

The impact of these overcomings cannot be captured by mere statistics and requires first-hand discussion with those experiencing these changes for the first time. I guessed Project Nanhi Kali may have been struggling to capture such qualitative changes and decided to attempt to go and spot them. Most of these changes and impacts are intergenerational, making the current Nanhi Kalis some of the first in their entire bloodlines to be mentored and supported in order to truly gain equal opportunity, instill self-belief within themselves and exist in newly created ecosystems which irrespective of caste or religion, choose to support their daughters.

Sometimes, I saw these changes in moments, sometimes in facial expressions, sometimes in the firm handshake and smile I was given after getting their permission to use their photos and stories in the book. A number would not equal the twinkle in the eye of a girl, her ability to stand up strong

against teasing boys across a street nor her confident and clear voice speaking to her father or an elder in the family. No test can quantify how much has changed, or how influential it has been for a girl in transforming her role within society.

For me, photography gave me the canvas of my stories, while words allowed the necessary contextualisation and personalisation to come forth. I could think of no other medium to do equal justice to what my camera and experiences revealed to me, and I was not wrong.

My pictures left me completely baffled at how incredibly tangible change towards equality and empowerment was in each meeting with Nanhi Kalis.

Each meeting was a chapter in this book of triumph, this book of celebration that Nanhi Kalis were only growing in number, and their obstacles to equality were decreasing with every initiative put forward.

Here, is an encapsulation of the changes these girls felt. Here, is an ode to where girls learn they matter, where girls continue to flourish in a society that values them, and here, is to wishing, “may a million buds bloom.”

Leisure

Leisure is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as the “opportunity afforded by free time to do something.” Leisure is arguably also a *Right*. To indulge in an activity of leisure, is to exercise the freedom to pursue what you like. Be it cooking, playing, or going to the library. This seemingly simple concept appeared to be a complex one for most of the girls across India. Project Nanhi Kali however, has brought the concept of leisure back, making it almost a ‘social right’ for the girl child.















Agency

Women in patriarchal societies are often unrecognised, and undervalued. Even those working and earning, are deprived of financial and economic independence. However, the Project has eradicated this for the Nanhi Kalis. Girls I met were already earning money from their parents for household work or family businesses, often getting the same amount as their brothers! This teaches girls early on about financial independence and demanding their fair share. Many girls also stored money, using their agency to save, venture, and explore. This agency to move from their houses, visit friends, and buy food are examples of freedom and empowerment noticeable across Project locations.



Bathshuba
Gabriel
Sergeant Tony
Dorset

Smoking
laughing
talking

































Aspirations

Historically, due to the gender divide, girls have been raised not to dream and aspire. Today, this has been cemented by gender stereotyping their roles to sibling care, household chores, and marriage. As an antidote, Project Nanhi Kali has modules inbuilt for making girls aspire to break these stereotypes. This is the circuit breaker that takes them towards gender equality. The Nanhi Kalis I met were transformed with realistic aspirations of becoming teachers, army officers, dancers or singers. These girls were equally adept at searching for information and opportunities through the Internet.



















Ecosystem

It was humbling to see the habitats of Nanhi Kalis. From cramped one room settlements in Mumbai where a dozen sleep at night; to modest mud-walled tribal habitats in the Araku Region. Almost all of them did not have assured tap water, electricity or toilets. More than this privation, the real challenge lay in getting girls to mobilise as groups and take a stance against traditional practices of patriarchy. In these circumstances, the young women Community Associates have played a pivotal role in influencing opinion leaders like *sarpanches* (village heads), fathers, and grandmothers.























































Exposure

Seeing is believing, and experiences are long-lasting. Therefore, travel and exposure opens new vistas of knowledge. For Nanhi Kalis, the outside world is bustling with opportunity. The Project has been taking girls in small groups to picnics, boat rides, football matches, art galleries, a hospital, or bank, as an extraordinarily useful method of confidence building and gaining life skills. One could see these vistas every time I took pictures of girls on such trips. This kind of holistic education centred around experiential learning and self-discovery has made a world of difference on each Nanhi Kali's outlook on her roles and opportunities.



























PFFD

Fathers are critical in creating a gender balance within homes. As a young girl, it is extremely heartening to see how successfully the Project has mobilised the roles fathers play for the Nanhi Kalis. As I captured the moments of Proud Fathers For Daughters (PFFD), it was clear as day that there has been an extraordinary bond of affection and care instilled between the fathers and the Nanhi Kalis. Fathers were brimming with pride in their girls, eagerly introducing themselves as “her father.” Girls were seen now not as liabilities, but as knowledgeable and treasured assets in their families.









महाराष्ट्र शासन
संघालय संघालय संघालय
संघालय संघालय संघालय













Toofaan

Sport transcends race, language, and gender. The benefits are limitless. From fostering talent to uniting communities. Through the *Toofaan* Games and the Football Programme I saw this collective power of sport. Girls across the nation came together representing their districts. That they didn't know to run just months ago, that they're the first girl in their family to play a sport, such inhibitions are left behind at the starting line. The Project has reached 1000 girls' football teams in the last two years. Girls once confined now boldly take over dressed in attire for sport. The result? Nanhi Kalis: 1, Patriarchy: 0.







VAR



RANASI



Is Learn they matter





















Together

Everyone wants to belong. For Nanhi Kalis, from their introduction to sports, activities at school, and partaking in experiences together, they realise that they belong to a movement. This realisation of how the Project opens up opportunities to unlock their potential, has encouraged them to dare and strive for excellence together. I also perceived higher emotional intelligence amongst these girls, a likely result from the creation of occasions to be together as often as possible. The Project has long passed half a million girls, and I could envision more than half the sky being held up when this movement reaches every girl in India.























Onward

In Hyderabad, Project Nanhi Kali ended in 2015. I met the alumnae. Young women who had graduated and were furthering education or careers. I learnt from them that the skills they gained as Nanhi Kalis became their best assets. Their main resume. It was evident that the Project continued to support them and their indefatigable drive to become self-reliant. It was a beautiful sight to see the love instilled through the Project. A community of girls being there for each other continued years after the programme ended. Women supporting each other's dreams, and overcoming obstacles. Women, who had learned they mattered.















Only I can change my life...
no one else can help me.

Don't wait for the
opportunity
create it

Golden Rule of
Marketing







Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible on my own. There were many mentors and guiding lights along the way who helped my little bud of an idea manifest into what you are reading right now. I would like to offer my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have made this possible. To begin with, thank you to Mr Anand Mahindra who initiated Project Nanhi Kali, gave me the opportunity to carry out this undertaking, and blessed me for my endeavours. Ms Sheetal Mehta, for readily agreeing to my idea of this unique 'impact study' through my meeting Nanhi Kalis and for always encouraging my creative aspirations.

I wouldn't have dared to dream about a book like this without my photography mentor, Mr Nevin John, who has designed innumerable such coffee table books himself, and kindled my love for photography with his eye for detail, patience, and creativity. Thank you for seeing the potential in me, helping me choose my first camera, and teaching me to capture all that is present in my photographs. For sitting long hours to edit, shortlist, recap photographs, and also being present for guiding my initial shoots in remote locations. For selecting from my cache of frames, for designing this book, and overseeing its production till the very end, thank you so much.

Let me also place on record my appreciation of the teachers at my school, the International School of Hyderabad who encouraged, supported, and granted me leave on days I had to travel for this book. Many kept cheering me as I updated them every time I got back from school breaks. My parents have also been constant supporters all throughout, and I owe it all to them.

When I finished my numerous community visits, I realised this book is also a tribute to the inspiring women mentors—the Community Associates who are the “*didis*”, the army that wins the battle against patriarchy for the Nanhi Kalis. They were always on the field with me. They took me to homes, slums, walked by my side, treating me also as a Nanhi Kali amidst narrow alleyways, crossing crowded traffic jams on foot, running with me on football fields. While doing so, they kept telling me stories of how they helped Nanhi Kalis overcome hurdles. Hats off to all the *didis*.

Likewise, a big shout out to all the women football coaches, the game changers, and all other support staff involved at the *Toofaan* Games who made me experience the incredible storm of the finals in Benaras.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to each and every one at Naandi Foundation who supported me with schedules when capturing important events, linked me with Community Associates, helped me get the requisite permissions for my shoots, and more.

Finally, to those who let this book blossom.

Thank you to all the Nanhi Kalis, for giving me your consent to be a part of this process of visiting your homes, asking about daily chores, and the tipping point for a changed outlook on empowerment. I was very touched by the openness and trust bestowed upon me. Each one of you taught me something. You made me humbler, wiser, and resilient. You all inspired me with the optimism, laughter, and kindness you had to share with me when I met you.

Thank you. 

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Mariyam Begum from Old City, Hyderabad, making bangles after school.

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Young boys from Chinnalabudu, Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, sitting in front of a basket of drying mango pulp.

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A little tribal girl from Chinnalabudu village, Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh.

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A tribal woman from Chinnalabudu village, Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, carrying her daughter as she heads out for the day.

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Nanhi Kalis from Gondivalasa village in Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, performing a dance.

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A tribal grandmother from Chinnalabudu village in Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh.

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A tribal woman from Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, applying cow dung on her mud floor as an insect repellent.

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Exposure

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A Nanhi Kali learning how to wash hands from a nurse at a children's hospital, before entering the intensive care unit.

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Nanhi Kalis peering through a microscope.

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A Nanhi Kali speaking to a doctor about health and hygiene.

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A Nanhi Kali learning from a nurse about the health care needed for small babies.

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Nanhi Kalis learning about the human body from a dummy set up on the bed.

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A Nanhi Kali athlete going up against Marlene Harnois at the *Toofaan* Games finals in Benaras 2024, in a friendly opening match.

PFFD

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Nanhi Kali Riya and her father playing jump rope together at a park.

Plate No. 76 "Skipping" Page 92

Nanhi Kalis having fun at a park, one of them strikes a pose while skipping as her friend watches amused.

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Nanhi Kali Shayba's father touching up her hairdo.

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Nanhi Kali Shayba and her father after enjoying an evening out.

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Nanhi Kali Reetika reading out her report card to her father.

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Nanhi Kali Shayba and her father playing frisbee at the park.

Toofaan

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A Nanhi Kali competing at "standing jump" event of the *Toofaan* Games finals in Benaras, January 2024.

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Nanhi Kalis crossing the finish line of the 50m sprint at the *Toofaan* Games finals in Benaras, January 2024.

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Nanhi Kalis meeting the 2012 London Olympics Taekwondo Women's Bronze medal winner Marlene Harnois at the *Toofaan* Games, Benaras 2024.

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The feedback and message board at the National Level *Toofaan* Games final in Benaras, filled with notes from each athlete.

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Nanhi Kali athletes rushing to the notice board to see how many of them qualified for the next round.

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A Nanhi Kali athlete with her certificate speaking to her older brother who had travelled to support her.

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Nanhi Kali athletes at the *Toofaan* Games final in Benaras, 2024, warming up with music and exercises.

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A Nanhi on the run up to take her penalty as a warm-up at a friendly match in Andhra Pradesh.

Plate No. 90 "Hip Hip?" Page 110

Nanhi Kalis representing their football teams and cheering after a team huddle during a match.

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The Nanhi Kali match referee getting ready to take out the yellow card at a player during a football match.

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A Nanhi Kali goalkeeper ready to defend her goal. The crowd in the back awaits eagerly.

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A Nanhi Kali from Team Jambusar kicking off the game.

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A Nanhi Kali from Team Jambusar as she scores her penalty.

Together

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Nanhi Kalis from the Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, performing a dance together in unison and with evident gusto.

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Nanhi Kalis on an exposure visit to the Gateway of India in Mumbai running towards the camera.

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Two Nanhi Kalis sharing their food from a lunchbox during their lunch time.

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The end of the Toofan Games final in Varanasi concluded with the release of balloons to signify the dreams of Nanhi Kalis soaring high and far.

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Nanhi Kalis striking a pose full of confidence and swagger.

Plate No. 100 "To School" Page 123

Nanhi Kalis heading into school with their arms wrapped around one another chatting with each other.

Plate No. 101 "Reading Together" Page 124

Nanhi Kalis reading from their books, and helping each other out when stuck.

Plate No. 102 "I Can" Page 125

Alumnae of Project Nanhi Kali at their Project centre for a visit, raising hands to participate in the discussion.

Plate No. 103 "Sisterhood" Page 126

A Nanhi Kali carrying her sister up to their house.

Plate No. 104 "Goal!" Page 127

Nanhi Kalis running toward the camera, chasing both the football and their newfound love for sport opened up by the Project.

Onward

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Nanhi Kali alumnae at the Teen Age Girls centre in Hyderabad.

Plate No. 106 "Pride and Perseverance" Page 130

Nanhi Kali alumna Hajera Begum holding up her old and worn out Nanhi Kali school bag from her days in the programme.

Plate No. 107 "Between the Trees" Page 131

Nanhi Kali alumnae in Araku Region, Andhra Pradesh, at a pepper and coffee plantation helping pick out cherries for the day.

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Portraits of Nanhi Kali alumnae, from Hyderabad and the Araku Region of Andhra Pradesh.

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A Nanhi Kali alumna describing how the Project helped her gain valuable skills.

Plate No. 113, 114, 115 "Marching On" Page 136-137

Nanhi Kali alumnae proudly holding up certificates of job offers and acceptances. They are all working, earning and breaking through patriarchal society.

S —————

to school.

Nanhi Kali³

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