

Prema Raghunath

This book outlines the education policy that the Delhi Government has espoused under the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) during its first tenure.

Education is, has been and will continue to be an issue that arouses universal participation, be it in the form of opinion or outrage. Everyone has opinions on what should be taught, how, when and why. Schools advertise their success rates and some schools are more popular than the others for their ability to produce 'cent per cent results', without quite knowing or caring what happens to the students in the process.

However, the success of an educational system of a country - any country - lies in the hands of its teachers and the training they receive to create an inclusive and equitable society; the manner in which they interpret the textbook; and, the way these textbooks are created. Another all-important aspect is the significance the government gives to the composite idea of education: not just lip service, but by actually validating its intent in walking the talk.

This book by the then Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister, Manish Sisodia, describes how AAP placed Education at the heart of its agenda, by firmly demonstrating how they placed all their belief in the value of education as a breaker of existing barriers.

The book is divided into two parts: *The Foundation of Education and Education as a Foundation*. The first part deals with the actual conduct of government schools. Placing happiness as the most important component in the growth of a human being and her/his ability to prosper and flourish as a person first and as an instrument of economic growth only next, the author works through the aspects of infrastructure, teacher recruitment, training, principals and parents. The start of the section is the increase in the budget, as money is required to make possible the will for change to be

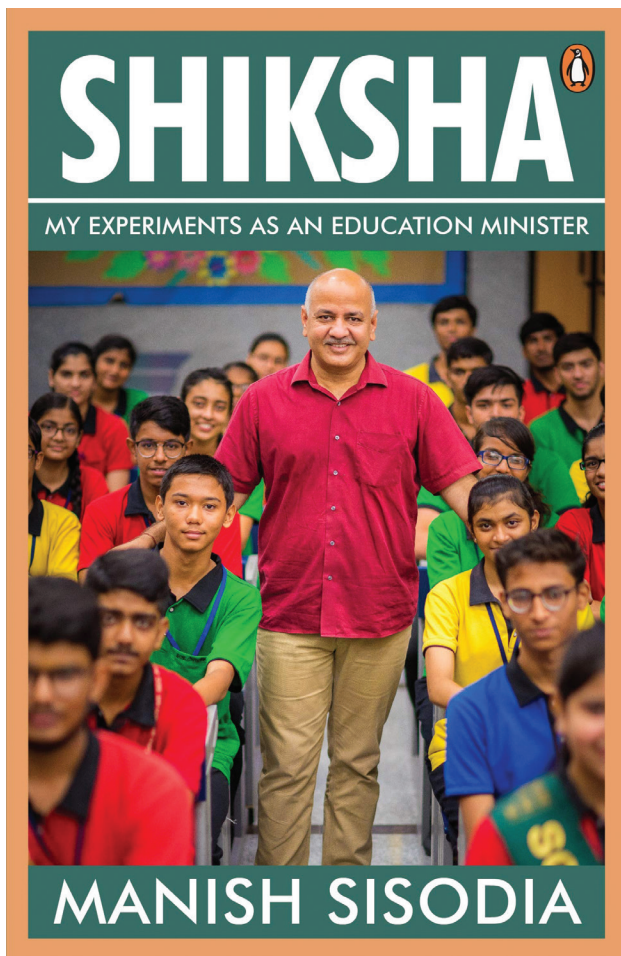
put into actual practice.

The result is a very positive, optimistic account of the education scenario in Delhi government schools at both the physical and operational levels. For example, run-down, non-inspirational classrooms have been given a facelift so that the people who spend the most time in them - the teachers and students - are put into the right frame of mind for learning.

Manish Sisodia's account of improvement includes increased salaries, respect for and deeper involvement in the system by all the stakeholders - teachers, students and their parents.

The second part - Education as a Foundation - emphasises the role of spiritual advancement in the process of citizen-building. Courses such as *Jeevan Vidya* and *Vipassana* meditation are being described as being instruments of instrumental change. Then, there is the Happiness Programme, which teaches children the vital skill of accepting oneself and realising that true wealth is inner joy and learned optimism. This has enabled children to change their perspectives from narrow, self-seeking goals to being the best they can be.

The book is an interesting description of an ideal education programme and, if achieved and replicated across the country, promises future citizens who are resourceful, reliable and conscientious workers to create a new India. The style of writing is conversational: one wonders if it were spoken to an interviewer. Be that as it may, *Shiksha* is a good read and all the better if practised.



**Title:**

Shiksha: My Experiments as an Education Minister

**Author:**

Manish Sisodia

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