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## In India, access to quality education is still afar

**F**rom tribal to urban India, Sister Susan Matheikal, secretary and correspondent of Stella Maris College, has experienced life in all its different shapes and sizes. Now, for her outstanding achievements and remarkable roles in the field of education, International Institute of Education and Management awarded her Bharat Vidya Shiromani Award and a Certificate of Education Excellence on 27 September in New Delhi. However, Sister Susan says that she is pleasantly surprised about the award. "I seriously do not know how I got selected or who proposed my name. In August, the International Institute of Education and Management sent me a form. I simply filled it and sent it back to them. Three days later, I heard from them that I've been selected for the award," she says with a smile.

Meanwhile, her profile looks quite impressive. She has played various roles from that of a hostel warden and dean of students' affairs to the head of the department of Mathematics, vice principal, secretary and correspondent. "Overall, I have worked in 25 institutions across north India in different capacities and that gave me the chance to travel around the country." On the other hand, she is filled with memories of her days working among the tribals. "Back then, most of the villages had no roads and no vehicles. On a rainy day, it would be impossible to reach home after work. Many a time, I had to find shelter in strangers' homes," she recalls. While sharing her thoughts on the current education system, she says, "The quality of education varies in each state in India. Our literacy rates have definitely gone up, but access to quality education is still afar."

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Johan Sathiyadas

**Sister Susan Matheikal**