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## Lessons to girls for doing well in life, from Kiran Bedi

- Kiran Bedi, Hindustan Times

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“Since I wanted them to be aware, happy, safe and self-reliant, I gave them the three sets of mantras, in a manner that they will always remember.” (HT File )

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How does one feel seeing over 2,000 cute, round, black-haired heads with curious eyes, all in the age group of 16 to 20, sitting cross-legged and you have the task to address them?

Truly electrified, responsible and caring — that is how I felt when I was in front of an audience of the girl students at Stella Maris College, Chennai. It was an experience that none of us will probably ever forget.

I decided to prepare them for life ahead, just like a parent prepares a daughter, provided the daughter is listening. And these girls with ears and eyes focused on me, were listening.

It was a colossal inspiration and a responsibility. What do I give them...that they could keep with themselves as an addition to their toolkit of life skills.

Since I wanted them to be aware, happy, safe and self-reliant, I gave them the three sets of mantras, in a manner that they will always remember.

First Mantra was the 'ABCD of Freedom'. What does freedom mean? It meant 'Ability' to flourish. Ability comes from the appropriate use of opportunities.

This is within 'Boundaries' to be adhered to, based on the one's own 'Conscience', with a sense of 'Duty'.

I explained how important at this age was for them to focus on improving their abilities and make the best of opportunities available. The fact that they were enjoying good health, by making use of 'five wonders' (five senses), they must understand the value of this gift of nature.

On 'Boundaries', I meant self-imposed regulations or discipline based on their own reflection and sense of duty, as students and citizens.

I then took them to the second mantra. It was about the 'Three Ws' that can change the world — Women, Weather, and Web.

First 'W' was they themselves. It was how they shape their lives and perform. It was in their own hands. The second 'W' was the Web or technology. The use of that too is in their hands. How well they use it, how much they train themselves in it and make it as a part of their growth is crucial.

The third 'W' is weather, over which none of us has any control. But we need to be prepared to take on its vagaries and volunteer as responsible citizens to check the environment degradation.

I then came to the third mantra, of 'Three Ms', which, I believe, change the lives of women in particular.

The first 'M' being money. I explained to them that without financial independence, there will be no empowerment. They must grow up to be self-reliant in all respects. Financial independence will make them secure substantially.

Second 'M' was marriage. I told them the kind of life partner they choose will make or mar their idea of journey called life, as an incompatible marriage is stressful and may stop their growth. But it still is reversible. Marriage is not mandatory.

It is the third 'M', the motherhood, that will change their life forever. Once a child is born, the mother relives her life. It is not reversible.

Hence they must know what they want, when they want, and how will they fulfil their responsibilities. What kind of support system is available for them to nurture their child along with fulfilling their professional pursuits is important.

In the end I explained to them, all these mantras demand energy from them.

How will they generate it? There is no instant recharge as is there for batteries in electronics. They have to have the skills to recharge.

I made them shut their eyes and go within. I made them experiment that by looking inside with eyes closed in the wee hours of the day, they could generate energy to go that extra mile to achieve self-reliance.

I explained to them how I learnt this art and how without that I would not have been able to serve long hours in all my demanding assignments. The students practised meditation for 10 minutes and learnt to tap the inner energy.

I won't forget this experience. Nor should those daughters forget the ABCD, the 'Three Ws' and the 'Three Ms'.

God bless them.

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***(The writer, India's first woman IPS officer, is Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry. The views expressed are her personal)***

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