



Driven by Courage

Facing the mass was Pabitra's greatest fear. But she has now recovered that fear. She emceed her college program last month, which was one of the biggest. This made her more assertive about her future. Pabitra discovered a new self in the past two years.

was a reluctant child. She would avoid mass gatherings and meeting people. She used to lock herself away if she had to meet a stranger. Currently, Pabitra is doing a bachelor's in business studies at the Siddhartha Gautam Buddha Campus.

Pabitra, competent in her studies, resides in Banganga-10, Khurhuriya, Rupendehi with her father, mother, elder brother, and sister. Her father works as a trowel, and her mother is a stay-at-home mom. Her brother is in Malaysia on a foreign assignment, and her sister is enrolled in tailoring classes.

Pabitra's parents always encouraged her to work toward her dreams. They were the ones who suggested the shy and introverted Pabitra join the SAMBAD. But Pabitra remained reluctant. Later, she decided to join the SAMBAD after learning about the significant changes she observed in her friend's understanding. Pabitra also learned that the SAMBAD program provides life skills lessons using a reflective approach. Pabitra's confidence advanced after learning that the program targets adolescent girls from Dalit, marginalized communities, and poor families. Hence, she joined the SAMBAD group in 2018. She is now an active member of the Kalika Graduate Forum, located in Michkuri, Rupendehi.

In SAMBAD, Pabitra met adolescent girls similar to her age. She made new friends. Moreover, she learned how social concerns, child marriage, drug abuse, and gender-based violence were impacting her community. She understood the laws regarding the identified matters in her community. She also had the opportunity to speak out on those issues. "It feels amazing to share your learnings with the younger ones, and I will always do that," she said.

Pabitra, who usually remained silent, started sharing her opinion in public. She now desires to become a public speaker. She saw her seniors speaking fluently and addressing the crowd without hesitation. This fascinated Pabitra the most. In SAMBAD, she learned public speaking techniques. She also took extra training from the Maya Devi Training Center to master her abilities. The different pieces of training taken at different times motivated Pabitra. She started sharing her opinions freely.

Pabitra, who used to get nervous during public speaking, now handles it with ease. She had made mistakes multiple times but never gave up hope, as she believes in learning by doing. Every day's practice groomed her. She has emceed numerous programs and led numerous discussions.

The same public-speaking nature has mastered Pabitra's self-esteem. She has not only been able to speak up for herself but also for her friends. She has saved many of her friends from getting married at a young age. When her grandparents teased her about getting married, Pratibha questioned them, which was the positive impact of the SAMBAD program. Pratibha believes every girl child reserves the right to decide for herself. "She can make choices for herself, and the only thing that parents and society need to do is give her space to work," she said.

Pratibha feels content when her friends and younger children approach her about her public speaking techniques. She now feels proud of herself. Her parents, who always encouraged her, are gleeful about what she has transformed herself into.

