

# Rungs to Your Ladder

The Rungs to  
Your Ladder

## CHALK OUT!

### A Student-Led EdZine

Interwoven  
Identity

Unlikely  
Empathy

A Tribute to  
My Milestone

एक अध्यापक  
की बात

Teachers Ignite  
Learning

Issue 9, March '25

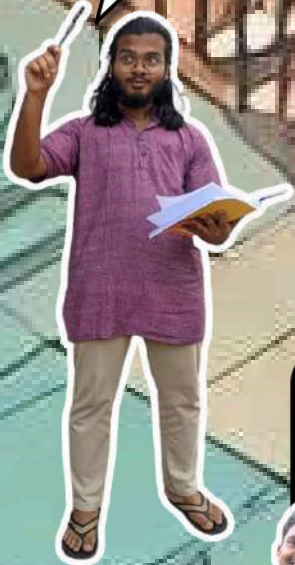
THE ROAD  
NOT TAKEN

The Little Push  
of Encouragement

Love &  
Beginnings

# MEET *the* TEAM

**Kinshuk Ghosh:** Taking it one wobbly rung at a time.



**Hi I'm Ashruti!**  
The rungs in my life are like Hogwarts' staircase, constantly shifting, yet leading me upward.



**Chaitanya:** Sliding through the rungs to achieve my goals.



**Shiva Swamy:** Rungs are always there but limited. We choose easygoing, and keep rungs closer, we won't climb higher.



**Hitika:** Rungs to one's ladder for me, is a continuous journey.



**Hi, Ruchi here.** The rungs to my ladder are the tough and kind moments we experience with our loved ones and teachers.



**Hi, I am Viral!** Rungs to the ladder for me are all the difficult moments we pass through and every moment of joy.



**Hi! I'm Aaratrika.** Interactions define my 'Rungs'.



L to R: Ruchi Mathur (Faculty Coordinator), Aaratrika Khanwalker, Viral Jain, Shivaswamy Madem, Chaitanya Sanjeev, Kinshuk Ghosh, Hitika Gilhotra, Ashruti Seventra (Faculty Coordinator)



Dear Readers,

In this latest edition of Chalk-Out, we bring to you a collection of experiences of different people through their life journeys, especially schooling. It is a journey that is unique to every individual. Through interactions with different people, we become who we are; some interactions are short, while others leave a lasting impact. The contributors to this edition have explored the latter category of individuals in their lives who made a difference to their life in school. The magazine not only features reminiscent pieces, but also has sections that explore the theme through different perspectives.

The cover page encapsulates our heightened understanding of the theme, 'Rungs to Your Ladder'; there is no one step or one person or a singular experience that transforms one's journey but a complex network of all of these. We all are climbing our own unique ladders which can act as rungs for others' ladders. A student might consider that one teacher was the most significant ladder in their life journey, but what we often miss is that the teacher too has rungs to her own ladder, and her time and interactions in school contributes to the ladder. That interaction added a rung to both the teacher and student's ladder as they crossed paths, making an intricate web of shared moments and learnings. Our journeys are deeply interconnected; every time we cross paths with someone, we exchange some part of ourselves with the other.

As you sit back and read the pieces, we hope that you also reflect and deepen your understanding of what has brought you here and made you the way you are.

With excitement from,  
The Chalk-Out Team



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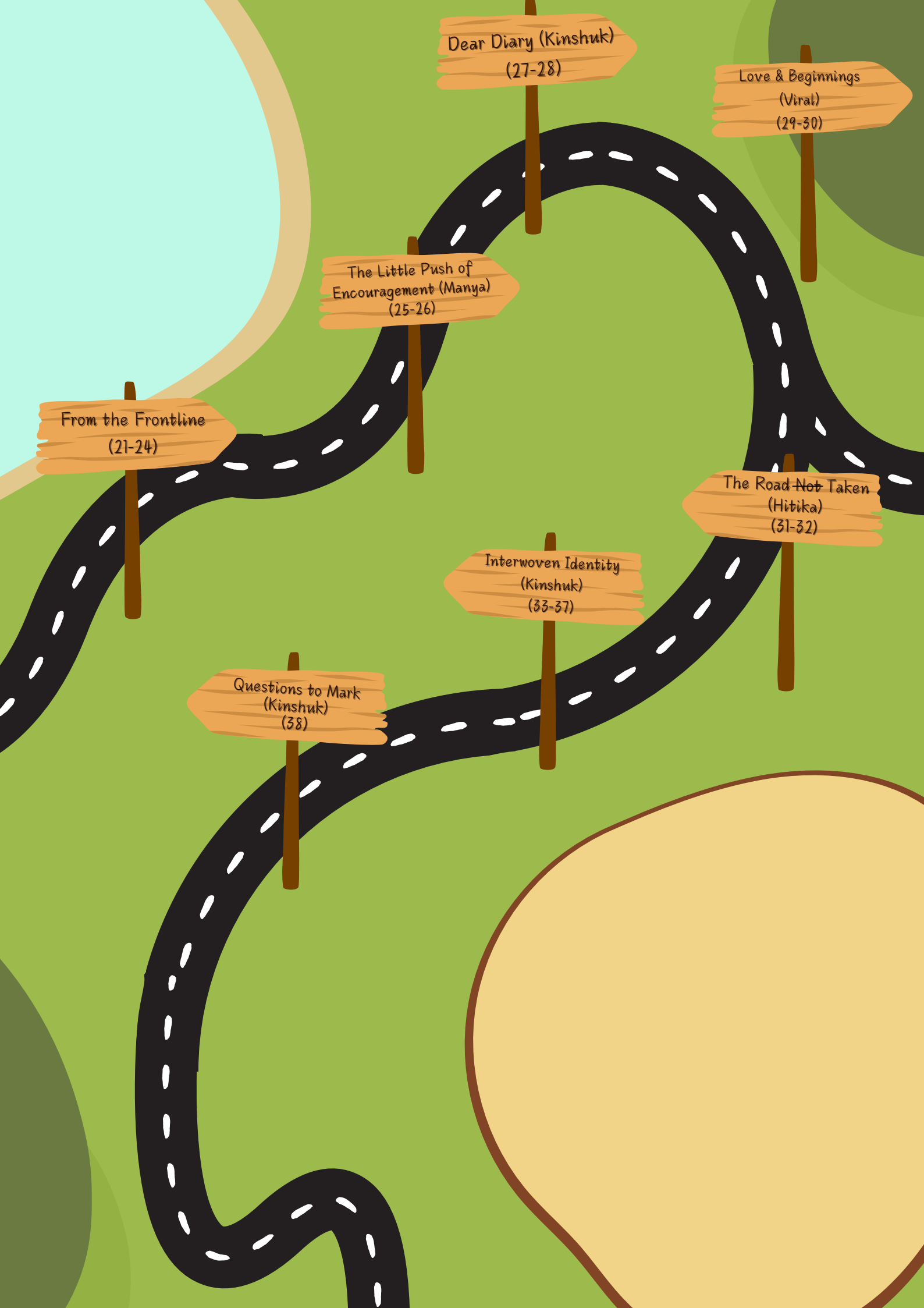
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# Unlikely Empathy

Unlikely Empathy shares how a teacher's kindness transformed a student's journey. The author, wishing to stay unnamed, offers a touching story of growth and gratitude.



**Kinshuk Ghosh**

I chose to be anonymous because it isn't about me—it's about a teacher whose empathy helped me grow and shaped my values.



**Anonymous 3rd Year Student**

From a very young age it has been deeply impressed upon me that education is the only solution to a lot of the problems that we face. For well over twenty years I have led the student life and as I have matured I have found it truer than anything else. I have been fortunate enough to receive a good education through my school years all the way into my college time. While there are other elements at play as well, educators are the ones who craft a student's experience the most. Teachers at school and professors at college influence largely how students perceive a lot of discourses and just life generally. This is especially evident for a young student in school.

Around grade 7, my English teacher was at a crossroads with me. She could not understand why I behaved in class the way I did. Generally a sincere and hard working kid, I only created a nuisance in her class. I would not follow instructions, not contribute to group discussions or class presentations. I participated in tomfoolery and created disturbances in class. Despite having a good grip over the language I would underperform on tests. At one point in the semester she asked us for handwritten feedback on her class. I took the opportunity to write several nasty things to her in the letter, going as far as asking her to, "Go back to Bangalore where you came from."

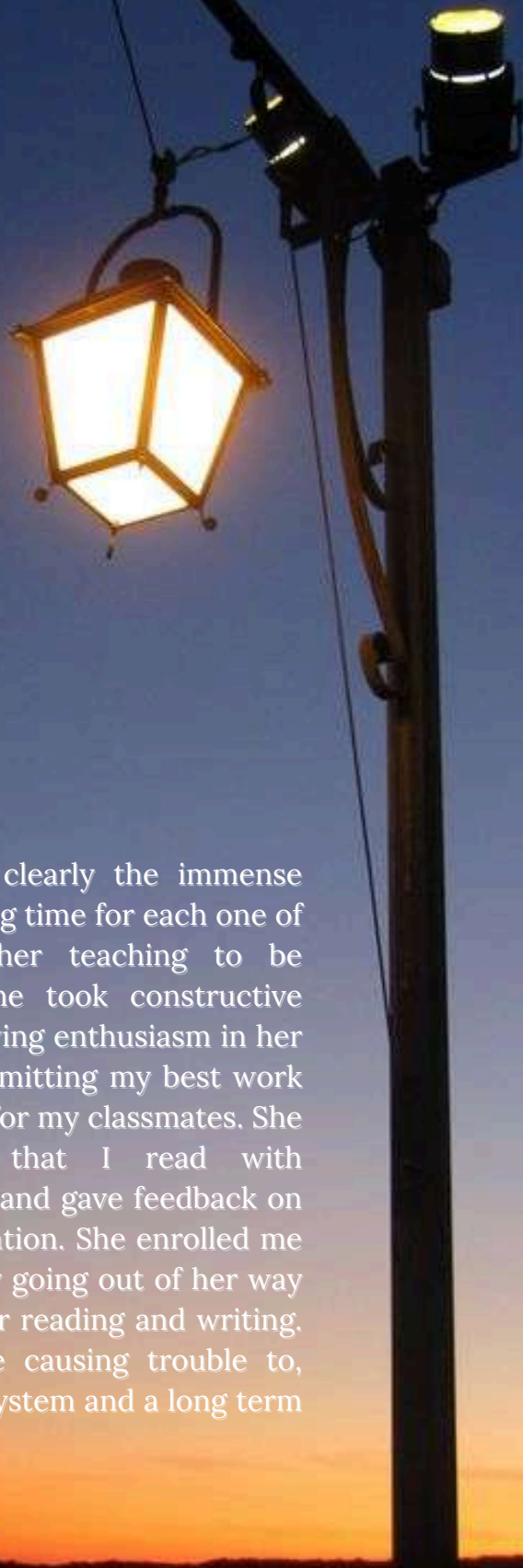


I did face consequences for these actions but hardly ever showed any signs of improvement. There was no intent to change my actions because at that point I believed that I honestly did not respect her.

The intent came during a moment of vulnerability. For a few days of the second semester, I faced relentless bullying from my classmates because I had recently shaved my head. It all came to a tipping point when I got into a violent fight with one of my bullies.

I stood right alongside him in the principal's office, with a bruise on my hand and one on my shin. Overwhelmed by how the last few days had gone, tears started rolling down my cheeks long before the principal summoned us. Blurry through those bloodshot eyes appeared someone in a pink salwar kameez. Placing a hand on my shoulder she gently asked, "Beta, is everything okay? What happened to your hand?." It was my English teacher, she wrapped her arm around my shoulder and walked me outside to talk. That day she held space for me in a vulnerable moment and I gained immense respect for her.

In the next few days in class I saw clearly the immense empathy she had for all her pupils. Making time for each one of our concerns in class, she paced her teaching to be accommodative and equitable. And she took constructive student feedback seriously. I began showing enthusiasm in her classes, participating in discussions, submitting my best work on time and like her, attempting to care for my classmates. She introduced me to several novels that I read with inquisitiveness, helped me set up a blog and gave feedback on the stories and poems I wrote for recreation. She enrolled me in additional classes with her. Essentially going out of her way to help nurture in me a deep interest for reading and writing. This teacher that I spent a long time causing trouble to, became a part of my academic support system and a long term mentor.



Her more impressive achievement though was the flicker of empathy she lit within me, not just through that singular instance but through the consistent empathy she displayed in class for all her students. Throughout her tenure as our teacher, she made it a point to emphasize how important and valuable a good education is. She played an influential role in helping build a core value I live by.

A good education is pivotal in most of our lives and it is made up of people. It constitutes educators who go the extra mile to bring safety, joy and learning into their classrooms

It truly was. I never thought someone I resisted so much could become such a strong mentor.



Absolutely. Her kindness taught me the importance of understanding others, and it's something I carry into every interaction.



I hope readers are reminded of the people who've shaped their paths too. That's what makes these rungs meaningful.



This story is so personal yet universal. That moment with your teacher must have been life-changing.



It's amazing how empathy can bridge gaps. Do you think her influence still shapes your choices today?



It's inspiring how one person's kindness can leave such a lasting impact.



# TEACHER(S) FEATURE

This time for teacher feature we, the Chalk- Out Core committee, reached out to our school teachers with a quest of finding their treasures of experience!

We sought advice from teachers who have been in the profession for a long time, and we are elated to receive invaluable insights directly from their years of experience through emails and letters which will become rungs to the ladders of novice teachers!

We would like to sincerely thank all our amazing teachers for contributing-



Mr. Raju,  
Math Teacher, Principal,  
Sri Saraswathi Shishu  
Mandir



Ms. Nikita Gupta,  
Senior Biology  
Educator



Ms. Shalini Sharan,  
Don Bosco Academy



Ms. Susy Joseph



Ms. Priyanka Priyadarshini,  
Social Science Teacher



# A Letter from Mrs. Shalini Sharan



Dear Mrs. Shalini Sharan,

I hope this letter finds you well. Looking back at my days at Don Bosco Academy, one memory shines vividly—your first day in our 8th-grade class. Holding a Sidney Sheldon book and with a warm smile, you instantly put us all at ease. I remember thinking, “She seems so cool!”

As a bookworm, I couldn't resist asking you for reading recommendations, and little did I know, you'd soon transform history—my least favorite subject—into something I eagerly looked forward to. Your energy and passion for teaching made learning exciting, and I found myself reading ahead just to contribute to your class discussions.

It's a privilege to feature you in Chalk Out on the theme “Rungs to Your Ladder.” You've always been an inspiration, and I'm thrilled for others to experience the same.

Warm regards,  
Kinshuk



Hello,

I, Mrs. Shalini Sharan have been an educator in Don Bosco Academy, Patna for over a decade. I'm honoured to contribute to Azim Premji University's magazine regarding Education- Chalk Out on the theme of 'Rungs to your Ladder', and I'm grateful to my former student, Kinshuk Ghosh for thinking of me for this write up; after all these years.

To begin with my perspective, I'd like to reiterate that Teaching is one profession that you can never be thoroughly ready for! It is a 24\*7 thing, when you're not planning classes, grading papers or planning activities, you're talking to students or parents—helping them with something, or just thinking— how to make that one life better? So, until you're not all into it and just want to do it as a temporary thing until you find something better—then Teaching isn't for you! Sorry if I'm being too straightforward, but I think it should be said especially to the youth who are about to venture into this new journey.



Teaching is just an adventure. Every child is different and you delve into it- all at once. Also there's no one right approach- every teacher is different, every teaching style is different and you keep discovering and rediscovering as you forge this path. The key is to be open to learning new things- for you cannot be a good teacher if you're not flexible, or are unwilling to accept changes. The biggest example I can give you is the pandemic where teachers had to train themselves overnight, and had to learn to take online classes.



As we are delving into the current generations, there are a lot of other challenges that need to be addressed. Students these days have evolved and are at times much more tech savvy or better informed than us. There should be no shame in accepting this, and as teaching is exchange of ideas- it can be both ways! It's better to have a lifelong learning attitude than to have the ego of being more knowledgeable or superior.

Kids these days are facing a lot of challenges- single parents, working parents, broken homes, no siblings, bullying, lack of time due to coaching and other engagements. It is too much for them to deal with, along with the hormonal changes that is inevitable due to age. Many a times they act out due to such circumstances, which is usually seen as indiscipline. As a teacher, it's of paramount importance to have 'empathy'. Treat them like you'd want your own child to be treated. Understand and connect with them, talk to them and they'll open up. It is definitely exhausting but if you do so, you'll be making kids for life, not only for an academic year.

It may sound a daunting task, but with the right work friends and a supportive management, it becomes enjoyable. I'm lucky to have found such a school with perfect management, friends and students.





So, my advise to the young people embarking on this journey is- be accessible, make that personal connect, be empathetic, be stern but also kind as needed, be keen on learning, be creative and have the passion to make a difference. You have to be a role model at all times, because young people depend on you, imitate you and look upto you as an example.



If you're in it for the money or societal acceptance, this isn't the job for you. But if you want gratification of the soul, you want to make a difference, you want to live in the lives and hearts of others and you want to become the best version of yourselves- then be a teacher! There's nothing as satisfying as the feeling, when your kids love you and make you feel special. My student reaching out to me after all these years for his magazine write-up - it's definitely an indicator that I must have done something right along the way

So yes, be a teacher and the best one at that. Make a difference , change lives- one kid at a time. Many of your students await a miracle- that miracle is YOU!

All the best fellow teachers!

All my best wishes  
Shalini Sharan, Educator,  
Don Bosco Academy, Patna



# A Letter from Raju

## Sir

Dear Raju Sir,

Hope you are doing well with your health and in your teaching career. Congratulations on being promoted as the principal of your present school of teaching. Being in your math class was a memorable one for us, learning basics of math with discussions and logic and guessing, solving, all were there which introduced us to the essence of joy in math in our classes 6 and 7th. It has paved the way for me to enjoy doing math and pursue it all the way to B. Sc B. Ed in Mathematics.

I am very excited to invite you to contribute to our education magazine, Chalk-Out, with the theme "Rungs to your ladder". You have spent good time with us, in class, during lunch, and play and no doubt you will be one of the best teachers of any student of your class. It will be a great honour for me to hear from you and share the mantra of how you developed yourself in the field of teaching. That can help us as a budding teacher, and I am sure our readers will enjoy it.

Hi Shiva

Glad to know that you chose to step into the teaching field and reached out to me after these many years. If there existed a mantra for being a good teacher, I am more than happy to learn and share. But there are no such straight cut paths or theorems for teaching. It's a steady developmental process. A teacher's main aim is to develop students not only academically but also encourage their holistic development: Physical, Psychological and Spiritual development. All this is not done in few days preparation. However, I can share with you one very ancient theory of Indian literature which discusses five ways of individual development of students.

It's the Panchakosha theory: a theory of ancient Indian philosophy and spirituality. It describes ways of achieving holistic development of humans (also for school children). It happens if the five hierarchical sheaths of humans are activated.



### 1. Annamaya kosha :

It's the outer most layer of the body. It describes the importance of keeping our body healthy. It's done by taking well-balanced diet, doing asanas, walking and regular exercise.

### 2. Pranamaya kosha :

It is of the second layer, the Prana, also called the energy force. It provides the vital connection between the thoughts and body actions. These connections flows through energy channels called nadis. Pranayama and Yogasanas are helpful to activate these.





### 3. Manomaya Kosha :

This third layer describes our thoughts, emotions and our five senses. Many thoughts come in our brain and these influence our actions. Repetition over time, forms habits. These thoughts we get will also contain a lot of negative ones. But our ability to understand consciously and regulate our thoughts influences our actions, then habits, our attitudes and character as a whole. A way of reducing negative thoughts is by listening to music, spending time with friends, family and in nature.

### 4. Vigyanamaya kosha :

This is the fourth layer, of intellectual development. Also referred to as Buddhi. It is responsible for understanding, reasoning and analyzing. It has much importance among others because it has the power to regulate what we see as right or wrong, like a manager for our body and our actions. Children who fall into drugs or other addictions suffer because schools don't focus on developing concentration and focusing skills, and thus students tend to fall for temporary desires or attractions by being unable to see long-term consequences. For achieving this, children must learn to just focus on what they do – this is the utmost important thing. Being calm, not letting distractions come around. Meditation helps.

### 5. Anandamaya Kosha :

It is the last and deepest layer of humans. It talks about being in blissful state of calmness, peacefulness or in joy, forgetting feelings of anger, sadness, ego, fear or the physical state of our body. We can try to be in such a state of forgetting ourselves by practicing yoga and meditation.

These five are different forms of energies. Understanding and developing them in students will help them grow physically, mentally and emotionally.

I learnt these when I was new to the teaching field and I have got great use of them. In classes, preparing good period plans, lesson plans and using teaching learning materials, planning activities – keeping in mind these five layers of human energies will help the complex system of humans like body, mind, intellect and bliss function greatly and help bring the overall development of children.

S. Raju  
Math teacher, Principal  
Sri Saraswathi Shishu Mandir





**From:** nikita.gupta@school.edu.in

**To:** hitika.gilhotra22ug@apu.edu.in

**Subject:** Seeking your advice for APU's in- house Ed-Zine: Chalk- Out!

Dear Hitika,

*I hope my email finds you in the best of health. I am glad to receive an email from you. Here is an email welcoming a budding teacher to the community!*

1. As a science teacher, I always tried to **bring out curiosity** in my students and try to answer things as simply as possible. Because you see how one teaches comes a lot from their experience of learning. Since this was something which was missing when I used to study in school, so many ***questions were left unanswered*** because we were not encouraged to ask and seek help. When I grew up, I had to search for answers to those questions myself (on Google, YouTube) which felt like building my foundation after growing up or after completing school and college. **I didn't want my students to say this when they grow up.**
2. Try to **build rapport with your students** first and get to know them. You can't treat all the students in the same way. You'll have to be strict with some, super strict with some, and very very gentle with some students.
3. There will be times when you will be confused about your boundaries as a teacher. So always understand the context, make informed decisions by negotiating possible options. For instance, though as a teacher you should be a well wisher for all your students, you will still have to ignore some students and stop worrying about them because in today's time the parents have become very sensitive towards their children. They don't want their children to be scolded even though they are wrong. So remember in that case, you are just a teacher for them whose work is to teach them, nothing else.
4. **Never go unprepared for your class.** Students are very smart these days. They can identify what kind of teacher you are just by your body language and confidence. So preparation is good to also boost your confidence in class.
5. There might be time when students ask you something and you are not able to explain the answer to them at that moment, or may be you don't know the answer (because you are a person, not google). **So take time. Ask them also to search for answers** and tell them that you will discuss that next day or after few hours. But do remember to solve their query. Never leave it unsolved.

Warm Regards,  
Nikita Gupta





**From:** priyanka.priyadarshini@school.edu.in

**To:** hitika.gilhotra22ug@apu.edu.in

**Subject:** Seeking your advice for APU's in- house Ed-Zine: Chalk Out!

Dear Hitika,

*I hope my email finds you well!*

*It is lovely finding out that one of my own students decided to become a teacher. Here are a few pieces of advice that I believe are helpful for everyone in life.*

I always wanted my students to know 2 things. Firstly, that no student is extraordinary. It's just that the student who tames **24 hours of a day judiciously** moves two steps ahead of other and is seen as super intelligent.

I use the word tame as I want my students to have full control of each hour.

In fact this point is universal whether you are studying or working or an entrepreneur. If you want to be ahead of others or to achieve more it's always having full utilization of 24 hours in the best possible way.

Secondly **there are no shortcuts to life**. You either work hard now and enjoy your life later or enjoy now and work hard later. Although hard work does not mean one needs to punish oneself by restricting to books. As **relaxation of mind is equally important**, so take short breaks to enjoy your interests.

Hydration and meditation are equally important for every student to be focused and motivated.

It seems that the path is very difficult but trust me, consistent effort makes the journey smooth.

So remember, “Zindagi ka yahi usool hai na ya to samay barbaad karo ya samay ka sadupyog karo”

ज़िन्दगी का यही उसूल है ना या तो समय बरबाद करो या समय का सदुपयोग करो.

Warm Regards,

Priyanka Priyadarshini





New Message

**From:** susy.joseph@school.edu.in  
**To:** aaratrika.khanwalker22ug@apu.edu.in  
**Subject:** From a teacher to a future teacher! :)

*Dear Aaratrika,*

*I am so glad to receive your email!*

*I am elated to find out one of my own students is doing a B.Ed degree. I am so glad you reached out to me to ask for advice for a student-teacher like you!*

**The most important thing for new teachers is to build good relationships with their students and other teachers.** Get to know your students, make your classroom a friendly place, and set clear rules. Learn how to manage your classroom effectively, teach in a way that helps all students learn, and give students helpful feedback.

Always think about how you teach and look for ways to improve. **Learn new things about teaching and take care of yourself** so you can be the best teacher you can be. Teaching is a journey with ups and downs, so be patient with yourself, celebrate your successes, and ask for help when you need it.

Warm Regards,  
Susy Jose



Now we have Shireen, who through a beautiful poem, talks about the teacher that made a difference in her life. Shireen, tell us more about your poem.



My teacher was a guiding light for me. She held my hand, and helped me come forward. She provided the scaffold that I was looking for. I will forever hold her close to my heart. This is what I have expressed through my poem.



# A TRIBUTE TO MY MILESTONE

In a school of sprawling grounds  
where young dreams soar,  
a gentle teacher entered  
making hearts grow.  
In a classroom of strangers  
where my courage fell apart,  
stands a teacher who bloomed  
strength in my heart.  
In the world of math,  
she showed its beauty and  
I fell in love with its rhyme.  
With chalk in hand,  
she drew the path  
to this lost child.  
More than a teacher,  
she was my family,  
whose love brightened my world.  
In the journey of learning,  
she turned my dullness into brilliance.  
For this one little soul, adrift in dismay,  
she walked by my side, lighting the way.  
So here's to the teacher  
whose faith never swayed.  
In the tapestry woven,  
she remains as  
My "MILESTONE"  
forever and more...



Shireen  
B.Sc. BEd. Biology 2023

**हितिका-** और अब हमारे साथ है आशा, जो अभी अभी अपना फील्ड वर्क पूरा करके आई हैं। आशा हमें बता रही है एक teacher का नज़रिया, class में और class के बाहर।

और कैसे सिर्फ teachers ही बच्चों के लिए एक प्रभावाशाली इंसान नहीं होते, बच्चे भी एक teacher को आगे push और motivate करते हैं।



**आशा-** बिल्कुल, अपनी कविता के ज़रिये मैं दिखाना चाह रही हूँ की कैसे मेरे छात्रों का ख्याल, उनके syllabus की चिंता एक शिक्षक के रूप में मेरी पहचान को सशक्त करते हैं। अध्यापिका बनने के सफ़र में, कैसे मेरे विद्यार्थियों और उनकी विद्या का ख्याल मुझे रास्ता दिखाता है और सही मार्ग पर चलने के लिए प्रेरित करता है।



## एक अध्यापक की बात

मैं एक अध्यापक हूँ,

वो अध्यापक जो हर दिन सुबह उठता है और सोचता है बस अपनी कक्षा के बारे में। क्या आज मेरे सारे बच्चे उपस्थित होंगे या आज भी अनुपस्थिति दर्ज होगी?



क्या कभी ऐसा दिन होगा जब पूरे बच्चे उपस्थित होंगे?

क्या आज शुरू कर पाऊंगा मैं नया अध्याय या नहीं?

किस किस कक्षा की कॉपियां जांच पाऊंगा मैं ?



मैं एक अध्यापक हूँ,  
वो अध्यापक जिसकी बातों में उसके छात्रों का ही चिक्र होता है...

क्या मेरे बच्चे इस विषय में  
अच्छा कर पा रहे हैं? या करनी  
होगी मुझे और मेहनत ?



क्या समय पर कर  
पाऊंगा मैं syllabus  
पूरा?



क्या लेनी होगी मुझे  
उनकी extra class?

किस बच्चे की किताब  
फटी है और किसकी कॉपी  
पर जिल्द नहीं।

इन सभी चिंताओं में डूबा हुआ अध्यापक हूँ मैं, वो अध्यापक जो सोचता है  
सिर्फ अपने बच्चों के बारे में।



**Asha Singh**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed.**  
**Biology 2021**



Scan the QR  
or [click here](#)  
to read the  
English  
transcript.



Now we have Chaitanya who is sharing his experience of his 11th and 12th class physics subject teacher who made all the difference

Through this article I want to share that it's not the subject which is hard; it is the subject teacher who makes it either boring or fun.



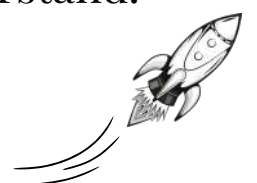
LEARNING ISN'T JUST ABOUT BOOKS-IT'S ABOUT THE TEACHER WHO MAKES THE SUBJECT COME ALIVE.

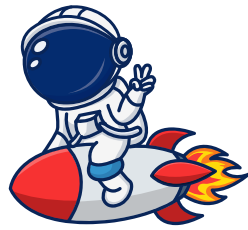


Everyone has that one teacher who leaves a lasting impact on their life. For me, it was my physics teacher during my 11th and 12th grade coaching classes. Preparing for the NEET examination was a challenging time, and physics, in particular, felt like an insurmountable hurdle. No matter how much I tried, the concepts seemed elusive.

I attended three or four demo classes from different coaching institutes, but none of them helped me grasp the subject. The teachers often stuck to textbook explanations and lacked the ability to connect with the students or make the subject engaging. That's when I attended Khushwant Sir's class.

At the time, Khushwant Sir was relatively new to the coaching field. However, what he lacked in experience, he made up for with creativity and a fresh approach to teaching. Instead of relying solely on textbook examples, he brought in unique, real-life scenarios that made complex concepts more relatable and easier to understand.





For instance, instead of simply explaining Newton's laws with the same overused examples, he would use everyday situations, like balancing while riding a bicycle or observing objects on a moving train.

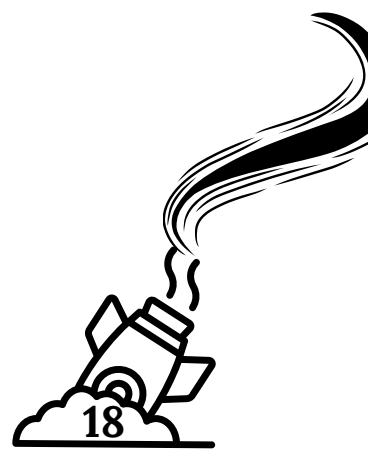
While physics as a subject can sometimes feel dry or difficult, Khushwant Sir's energy and positivity brought a new life to the classroom. He never let us feel discouraged, no matter how many questions we asked or how often we struggled. His belief in our potential and his ability to break down tough topics made me realize that physics wasn't inherently boring—it was the approach to teaching that made the difference.

More importantly, Khushwant Sir inspired me. His enthusiasm, optimism, and ability to connect with students created an environment where learning felt possible and even enjoyable. He taught me that a teacher has the power to transform a subject and ignite a student's curiosity.

To this day, I credit Khushwant Sir for changing my perspective on physics and for showing me what great teaching truly looks like. He reminded me that no subject is impossible to learn when it's taught with passion and creativity.



***Chaitanya Sanjeev***  
***B.Sc. B.Ed Biology 2022***



In *The Rungs to Your Ladder*, Garima reflects on the influence of a teacher who goes beyond the classroom to guide, support and inspire. Over to you Garima!



B

Mr. J isn't just on the ladder—he's the hand that steadies it. His kindness shows how small acts leave lasting impacts.



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# THE RUNGS TO YOUR LADDER



Have you ever heard of Mr. J, Supportive, equanimous, and a guiding light as you might portray. An aura that makes you want to stay, as his smile never fades away, but, “Go on, make your life” is what he will always say.





As friendly as the warmth of a ray,  
a conversation with him, will take you miles away.  
Contrary to an authoritarian headmaster,  
he radiates love and positivity, making bonds grow faster.

With open dialogue, he invites every voice,  
because he is the best person for advice.

He's not fond of "Sir, may I step in?"  
As formality with his students, he outrightly avoids.

He preaches knowledge, discipline, hard work, and  
curiosity,  
yet makes exams feel like a breeze, a sweet simplicity.  
Never has anyone faced corporal punishments for their  
mistakes,  
and I know it's this kindness that shapes who I am today.

In the end, he's just a call away,  
all you need is a simple "Hi, Mr. J."  
He'll remember your name and the tantrums you've  
thrown,  
proud of your journey, with a smile that's grown.

-Garima Jain



# From the Frontline: Stories That Inspire

The climb is never solitary; it's the inspiration from others that keeps us reaching higher. And hence we reached out to our 4th years who have just returned from their field work for some inspiring stories!

# GASP!

From the Frontline features contributions from individuals working directly on field at the grass root level.

And for the first time in Chalk out, we have received stories from the frontline in the form of videos!



As one of the articles in the edition says- "rungs are all around you, you have seek them and integrate them in your journey", Kalyani, a 4th year Biology and B.Ed student shares how, whenever you feel stuck, you should actively seek out help and assistance.

One may choose to stay on that same level, scared, anxious or even lazy- but it is on us to either stay on that same level or be curious, be active and be ready to go to our next level by placing the rungs in place for YOURSELF, by YOURSELF

Kalyani Pawar, who went to Uttarkashi shares things that assisted her during her IiT. She emphasizes adaptability and perseverance. Kalyani encourages us not to give up, no matter what. Connect with your peers, professors or teachers in school and keep going forward by taking feedback from them.

Experiment with new teaching methods and find the one that works the best for you and your students. Leverage your prior course knowledge and remember to enjoy the IiT journey with teachers, student- teachers and students for a positive and fulfilling experience.



[Click here to watch](#)- wisdom from the field!

Scan the QR code here to watch Kalyani share her insights through a video!

B. Lalitha is a 4th year Mathematics and B.Ed. student who just completed her liT.

Here, Lalitha shares an anecdote that she remembers from her teaching days which her absolutely amazed her.



We often assume that children cannot learn or express in ways that adults do, but that's where Lalitha shares her side of the story - when students in her mathematics class were able to think of a concept in just the same way as she would have.

This is a great example of how children can make connections between things, just like our theme this semester, the rungs on to a ladder!

[Click here](#) to watch - wisdom from the field!  
You can also scan the QR code here to watch Lalitha's video.

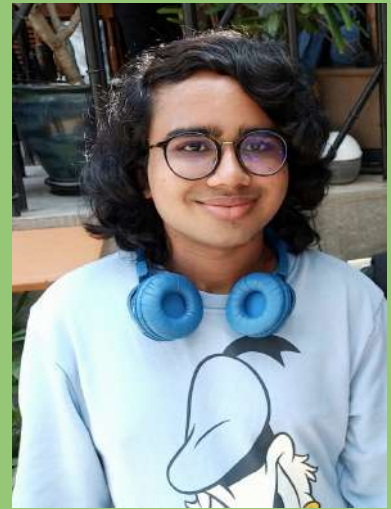


Math<sup>♥</sup>



Here we have Achinthy, a 4th year Biology and B. Ed student.

They taught in Titan School, Hosur, Tamil Nadu as part of Induction into Teaching and have turned up to share their experience with us.



Achinthy has shared with us an audio message of how they used feedback received during induction on “being aware of moving in class” which they had to work on.

They also have advice for us from their experiences of handling kids behaving in a volatile manner.



Scan this QR code to here to listen to the audio message by Achinthy

[Click here](#) to hear Achinthy sharing their experience.



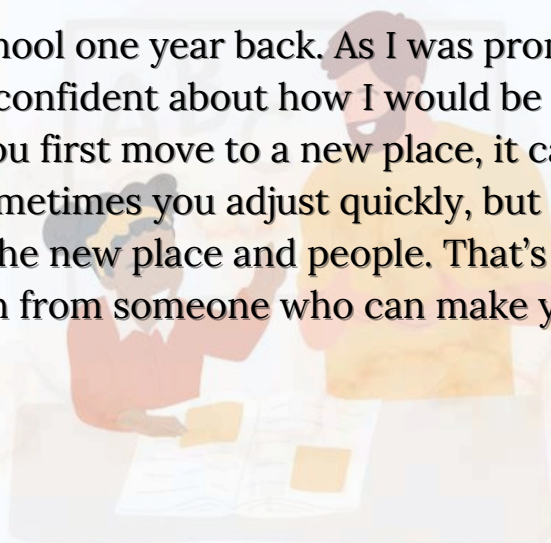
**Shiva:** "Let's travel through Manya's words as she explains about a new place where she found herself lost. But then how she stood up, came back stronger and other stories of her climbing up!"



**Manya :** Life is hard when we are lost in a new school, around new people, right! Now imagine how hard will it be for children who are just in primary school. It was scary, anxious and hard for me when I was in my class 6. But, let me tell you about that little push of support I got and how that stood as a significant rung of my ladder.

## The Little Push of ENCOURAGEMENT

I moved to my new school one year back. As I was promoted from class 6th to class 7th, I was not confident about how I would be able to fit in the new environment. When you first move to a new place, it can be scary and anxiety-provoking. Sometimes you adjust quickly, but sometimes it takes longer to get used to the new place and people. That's when you need that little comfort and push from someone who can make you feel welcomed and good about yourself.



It had been a year since I had moved to this new school which was completely alien to me. Not just the school, but the place and culture were also very different. I found it challenging to get used to the way things worked here and there was no special help from the teachers as well.

But then I met my English teacher, he was kind and funny. He taught so well that after some time I started scoring well not just on his subject but other subjects as well! Not sure if it was his impact or something else. Along with teaching he used to encourage us to get involved in different hobbies. This idea intrigued me and that's when a little, not-so-great poet in me was born. Whether good or bad, rhyming or just some random words put together, I showed him everything I wrote.

He used to carefully listen to those and give me feedback. If they were good, he used to recite it to the class which used to boost my confidence x10 (10 times). It used to make my day. Now that I look back, I think that was the reason I started scoring well in other subjects as well. I am pursuing Education now; I hope I also give my students the little push of encouragement.

**Interesting fact:** Apparently, he had a YouTube channel where he taught English for competitive exams and my mother used to refer to that for her preparation. Both of us were learning from him at the same time without knowing.



**Manya Thakur**  
**B.Sc. B.Ed. Mathematics, 2023**

# Dear Diary

Sometimes, we forget that the grown-ups in our lives -- parents, grandparents, even teachers -- were kids just like us.

In this fun and thoughtful piece, Charu (Class 5) discovers this surprising truth in the most unexpected way. Through his innocent yet philosophical lens, Charu reminds us that every generation leaves behind invisible rungs for the next generation to step on. Let's read his diary entry and see the world through his eyes!



Kinshuk Ghosh

## When Grown-Ups were Kids

Imagined by Kinshuk  
Ghosh



Dear Diary,

I went to dadi's house today after school because papa and ma are out of town. It is fun here – dadi always makes the best aloo ke parathe, and her house smells so good!

While she was in the kitchen flipping parathas, I was poking around in the old drawers in her room (because treasure hunting is obviously important). That is when I found it.

A photo.



In the picture, dadi looked younger – like, way younger! Her hair was all black, and her face did not have any of those tiny lines she calls “laugh marks,” But the weirdest part? She was holding a boy! A small boy with chubby cheeks and a toothy grin. And this is the crazy part – the boy looked exactly like me but...wasn't me.



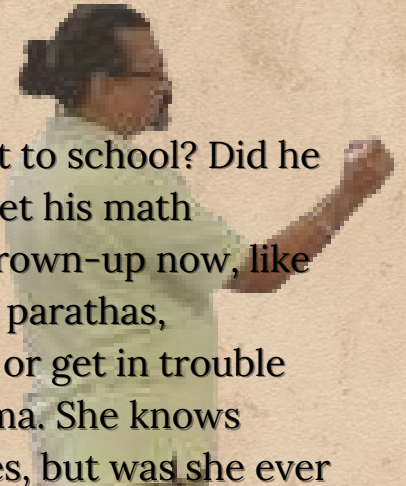
I ran to the kitchen waving the photo like it was proof of a big family secret. "Dadi, who is this kid?!"

She turned around, wiping her hands on her saree, and laughed. "Aree, beta! That is your papa when he was your age!"



Wait. What? My papa? That cannot be true. Papa is.... papa. He is the guy who tells me to stop playing video games and to finish my homework. He is the one with a scratchy beard and a "serious voice." This kid in the photo was small. And smiley. And did not even look like he could yell, "Switch off the lights when you leave the room!"

It got me thinking, Diary. Was Papa like me once? He went to school? Did he also get scolded for talking too much in class? Did he forget his math homework at home? And what about dadi? She looks so grown-up now, like someone who has always known how to make the perfect parathas, but she was also a little girl once? Did she play hopscotch or get in trouble for spilling milk? And then there is my teacher, Mrs. Sharma. She knows everything. She probably even invented the alphabet series, but was she ever the kid who stared at the clock waiting for the lunch bell?



It is so weird to think about. All these grown-ups – parents, teachers, even dadi – they all had their own little adventures and struggles before becoming who they are now. Maybe everything that I am doing – school, homework, and all the confusing stuff in between – will make sense one day.

But for now, Diary, I think I will stick to figuring out how to eat one more paratha without dadi noticing.

Love,  
Charu  
03/10/24





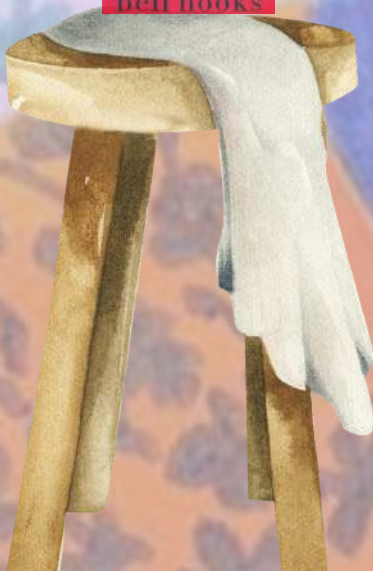
Viral - When we talk about the steps to our ladders, we sometimes forget one of the most essential things, love. Viral talks about love as a crucial part of one's childhood, how we define love and what it means to be loved.

**Viral Jain**  
B.Sc. B.Ed.  
Biology 2022


## Love & Beginnings

bell hooks writes in her book 'All About Love' about how unknown the idea of love is to us. Most of us talk about love in our everyday lives, but are we sure we understand what love is?

Now, there is an important distinction hooks talks about which is often ignored. The distinction between love and its individual components. Just care alone is not love, affection alone is not love, nurturing or respect alone is not love. She provides us with an important definition of love which involves care, but also affection, trust, respect and "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" and more.




Our current idea of love is somehow very puzzling. It can include violence and still be love. It can violate our rights and still be love. Abuse can be easily disguised and presented as love and care, that is why we need to look deeper into our idea of love. The faulty definitions of love we follow mostly harms the less powerful in society, be it women, queer people, children etc. We need to be loved as children, to grow that love among ourselves and pass it on to others.



**Often, we confuse the definition of love with abuse and neglect. It's possible that maybe we are too afraid to face the fact that what we have experienced might not be love at all. It could be a dimension or a part of it, but not love itself. Children coming from dysfunctional families only give what they have been offered. That is also why so many parents continue to behave in the same patterns that their parents have followed. Any amount of change requires discomfort and willingness and we should be ready for that.**

**Many of us grow up in loveless surroundings where we are confused about this idea of what being loved even means. An emotion called shame starts to build up in many, in response to how they are made to feel about themselves. And, wherever there is violence and abuse, it always undermines a person. It is a way of telling someone that they have lesser rights, lesser power and somehow also makes them a lesser being too.**

**This is not to say that parents don't love their children. They certainly do, and so do the children. But what we count as love, is to be looked at. Hence, from the start, children need to be provided with sound definitions of what love is and what it is not.**



**The way we are raised and loved is crucial to how we turn out as adults and navigate this world. So, it is imperative that we teach our children setting boundaries and taking responsibility, even in the smallest of ways.**

**This, of course, is hard work. It is not easy to not pass on what we have received, to not follow the patterns we have been taught and made to follow for years. But, change is uneasy. It takes time. We just have to remember, make efforts and unlearn everyday.**

**Kinshuk:** We think we have seen many examples of experiences that have acted as rungs to someone's ladder.

And now we have Hitika who is wondering where do these rungs come from? How do you meet or experience these things that one can label as 'rungs'?

**Hitika:** Exactly! While we were thinking about this theme as the core team, I wondered what exactly counts as a rung and what doesn't? You never know at what point something becomes the missing step of your journey, like I became one for my sister when I taught her exponential power calculations (a grade 8th topic) which she understood only during her CUET preparation! My reflection says that rungs are all around, every time, all the time!

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



Rungs to my ladder? Do I even have a ladder? If I do, does it have a direction? Are the rungs already there, waiting to be discovered, or are they placed randomly by someone or something? One thing is certain: I've been walking on these steps so far. But where did they come from?

After thinking long and hard, I realized that everything around us can teach us something- each experience adds to the "you" in you. But here's the thing: the rungs don't just come to you; you have to seek them. And when you keep doing it and then look back, you see the rungs forming a journey.



But how can I ever say I've climbed 'up' the ladder? To me, it has always felt like I'm just moving- directionless. Isn't that a valid question? Shouldn't the journey have a direction? Or maybe it doesn't have to. We are conditioned to believe that things should have an aim, a direction, a pattern. Perhaps the direction of my ladder is unique to my voyage and not always apparent in the moment. "Where is this taking me?!" is the adventure called life!

Be it my grade 4 Social Studies teacher who inspired me to become a teacher hence shaping one rung and giving my journey a sense of direction, or my grade 8 Biology teacher, who sparked my love for the subject and led me to pursue Biology and a B.Ed. course here. Be it the thought of receiving free chocolates on students' birthdays as a teacher or satisfying my hands' itch of putting tick marks on notebooks. These together determined a certain direction.



**Hitika  
Gilhotra**  
B.Sc. B.Ed.  
Biology 2022



Be it the lecture on air pollution by my vice principal before Diwali or the time I overheard

my parents saying, "Or kuchh bane na bane, har manushya ko ek achha insaan banna chahiye" ("Whatever else one becomes, everyone must strive to be a

good human being") during a casual conversation. These small, often overlooked moments inevitably shaped me, my ladder, and my journey.

## Seek your Rungs

These became the rungs to my ladder- a ladder as unique and fresh as it can get. This ladder is mine. We all have our own ladders in our unique directions. The rungs are all around us; it's up to us to place them in our

journey as the next step. My Social Studies teacher taught the whole class, but I sought that rung in a way that defined my journey. My vice principal addressed the entire school, but her words resonated with me, shaping my aims, purpose and course of action.

**BUT WHAT I STILL WONDER IS WHETHER THESE RUNGS LEAD US TO DISCOVER OUR "CALLING"? OR IS LIFE LESS ABOUT A CALLING AND MORE ABOUT CREATING A PATH AS WE ENCOUNTER MOMENTS THAT INFLUENCE US? AND THAT I LEAVE FOR YOU, MY DEAR READERS TO PONDER UPON!**



# INTERWOVEN IDENTITY

## KINSHUK GHOSH



Hello everyone! I am Kinshuk Ghosh -- although depending on who you ask, I might also be Charu, Tushti, or Teertho. Yes, I have been named more times than a Bollywood sequel. In this piece, I try to untangle the messy web of my identity, or rather the complete lack of 'one'. I attempt to understand what makes me, me. Spoiler: the answer involves a lot of other people's doing and very little of my own doing.

But how is identity related to our theme 'Rungs to Your Ladder' ? I am kind of confused, walk me through it!



This piece connects to the theme because life isn't a neat climb up a ladder with defined rungs. For me, my journey is rather a collection of ladders from many people, intersecting with mine forming a woven fabric.



As the final piece in this magazine, consider it a mirror: a reminder that we all are walking stories written by people whom we meet and the moments we live through. And maybe, just maybe, the beauty lies in being a mosaic of everyone who touches our lives.



The sound of tiny fragments clicking together fills the room. A figure stands before a mirror, its surface rippling like water. The figure, a patchwork of colors, shapes, and textures, tilts its head, studying the reflection.

You are whole not because you are untouched, but because you carry the essence of everyone who has shaped you.

How can I call myself whole when every part of me belongs to someone else?

But if I am only a vessel for others, where do I begin? Is there a 'me' beyond the echoes of those who have shaped me?

You begin where the echoes converge, where their influence becomes your choice. You are not merely a reflection; you are the meaning you give to the pieces.





I do not exist in isolation. I cannot exist in isolation.

I was named **Kinshuk** by my grandmother which means the blooming of the Gulmohar tree, the season when the Gulmohar flowers turn bright orange red. I do try to live up to the name but the tree only blooms for 2 months out of the year.



I was named **Charu** by my father as a joke because of my obsession with the Bengali actress Charulata as a child. That obsession faded, like many others, but the name remains attached to me.

I was named **Tushti** by my aunt, which means a person who is always satisfied. I turned out to be quite the opposite. A constant dissatisfaction, a constant hunger for something more, something else.



Then I was named **Teertho**, a name given to me by my great grandmother before she passed away. Teertho means a warrior, but in moments of weakness, the name mocks me. It is a role that I still have not learned to play

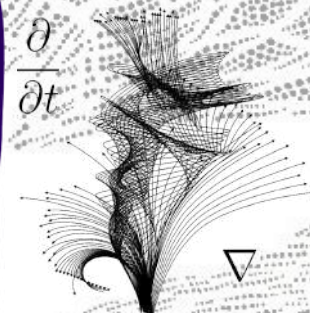
Each name assigned to me carries its own weight. Each name ties myself to a different relationship and a meaning of who I am.



My existence is like a complex differential equation, influenced by unseen variables and forces beyond my control. I am affected by everything around me.

I am here because of everyone else. The nurse who gave birth to me, the autowala who took me to the hospital when I broke my arm, the doctor who gave me polio drops, the teacher who believed in me when the Teertho in me could not, the professor who took my interview and set me on this path. My life is a collage of other people's decisions, actions, and beliefs.

$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}$



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I am equally affected by the things I cannot see or perceive. There are no rungs to my ladder, but rather a slope. My life has not been about ascending along fixed rungs but moving along a gradient. A continuous shift shaped by countless factors.

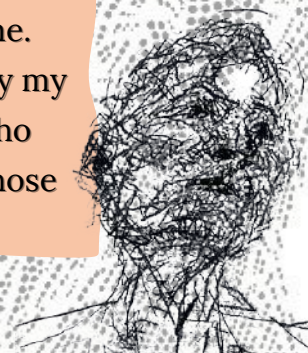
”


Ever since I came into existence, I have been defined and redefined by everyone around me. I have understood, forgotten, and re-understood myself in contrast to others.

My thoughts are not of my own but of everyone around me. My interests, my hobbies, my likings and dislikings, my career or choice of music is also influenced by everything else. There is no me, but a perception of myself.




I am a stranger in my own body. Twenty one years of inhabiting this flesh, and yet I am still unfamiliar to myself. I carry a part of everyone in me. When I laugh, I carry my mother's toothy laugh, when I shout, I carry my father's anger, when I love, I carry the words of poets and writers who taught me how. Nothing I do is of my own. I carry fragments of all those who have crossed my path.







The language in which I speak, the clothes I wear, the philosophies I relate to, the food I eat—none of it is truly mine. Everything I experience at this moment is an amalgamation of countless other lives and creations.





I sit at a desk crafted by someone else, typing on a secondhand laptop imagined by unknown inventors. The coffee I sip, the scent of my skin, even the words I use—these are not solely my own. They are the outcomes of processes I did not shape, yet they shape me.

Even my body, the most personal thing I own, is not mine. It is a product of chance—a random meeting of a sperm and an egg, biology taking control from there. Millions of cellular divisions happened without my will, and on the 4th of August, 2003, I entered a world I had no part in creating.





From that moment, I was shaped by others—socialized, taught, and given a perception of myself that feels inherited, not chosen.

My senses, too, are not mine alone. The colors I see, the sounds I hear—are they what they truly are, or are they shaped by the limits of my biology? Can I ever encounter the world as it is, unfiltered by my existence?



The theory of emergence suggests that complexity arises from simple interactions, and I am nothing if not the product of an interconnected web of life. Just as I am shaped by others, I leave fragments of myself behind in their lives.

There is no singular 'me.' My identity is a shifting reflection, rewritten by every person I meet and every experience I live.



Authenticity, perhaps, is not about being untouched but about choosing how to weave the influences around me into who I become. I am not a fixed entity but a narrative—a living story constantly edited and revised by countless hands.



**I do not exist in isolation.  
I cannot exist in isolation.**





Kinshuk Ghosh

If I met my younger self, what advice would I give—and what would they teach me?

What does success mean to me, and has my definition changed over time?

Am I climbing the ladder I truly want, or one someone else chose for me?

When I look back on this climb, what moments will I cherish most?

What is the one step I've been avoiding, and why?

What does it mean to truly live, rather than merely exist?

Who has been a guiding hand in my journey, and have I thanked them?

How do I ensure that my climb uplifts others along the way?

How do I balance ambition with contentment?

What is the cost of the dreams I pursue, and am I willing to pay it?

**As you climb the rungs of your ladder—be it personal, professional, or spiritual—it's essential to pause and ask questions that shape the journey ahead. These reflections not only ground us but also illuminate the paths we might not have considered. Here are ten questions to ponder as you take your next step:**

What do I owe to the past versions of myself who carried me here?

How do I ensure that my impact is lasting, even if it's unseen?

If I could ask the universe one question, what would it be?

If I were to strip away all labels, who am I at my core?

As you delve into these questions, let the fractals in the background remind you that life is both complex and beautiful, with patterns that repeat yet offer endless possibilities for growth. Use these questions not just to mark where you are but to chart where you wish to go.



# THAT'S WRAP



(for you - you must be tired after climbing ladders and stairs and what not in this edition.)

We would like to thank all of our *amazing contributors* for making this magazine a reality! We are glad that this gave you a chance to reflect and thank the rungs of your ladder. We are also grateful to receive contributions from our *school teachers* who blessed us with their enlightening experiences over the years.

And to you, our *lovely readers* who pumped vitality into these pages by reading them.

## Design and illustration credits-

**Aaratrika:** Note to readers, A Tribute to my Milestone, Teacher Feature emails, Contents page

**Chaitanya:** The Rungs to Your Ladder, Learning isn't about Books, From the Frontline cover page

**Hitika:** Meet the team, Note to readers, Teacher Feature cover page, From the Frontline, The Road Not Taken, Thank you page.

**Kinshuk:** Cover page, Dear Diary, Teacher Feature letter 1, Interwoven identity, Unlikely Empathy, Questions to mark, Thank you page.

**Shivaswamy:** A Little Push of Encouragement, Teacher Feature letter 2, From the Frontline

**Viral:** Love and Beginnings, From the Frontline, Contents page

**Cover page design:** Kinshuk

**Cover page illustration:** generated using AI by Hitika  
**Illustration on page 34 :** Created by Aaratrika

