

PEDAGOGICAL COLLOQUIUM

(Half Baked Biography)

I.VINCENT RAJA IGNATIUS



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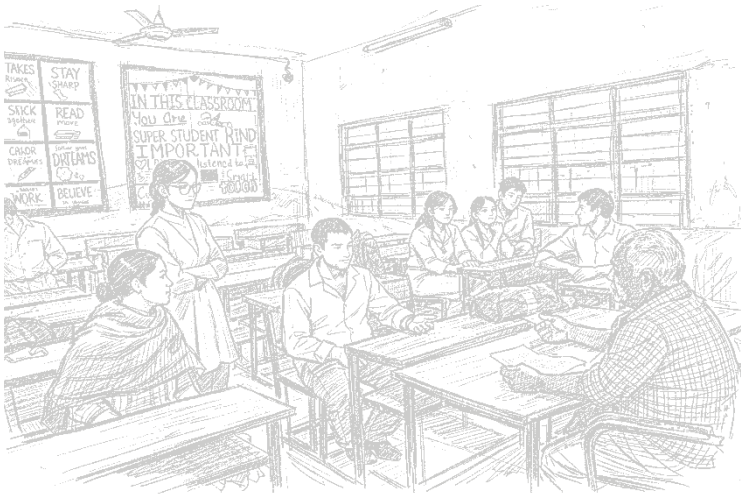
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Gratitude

With a heart filled with humility and remembrance, I place these words of gratitude before the souls and hands that shaped my life.

First and foremost, I bow my head to M. P. Ignacimuthu, my father, whose life was my first lesson. Though words were sometimes stern and expectations demanding, they were rooted in concern, discipline, and an unspoken hope that I would stand on my own feet. His voice still echoes within me, guiding me even in silence.

I remember with equal reverence R. I. Prakasi, my mother, the quiet strength of our home. Her patience, endurance, and unconditional love formed the foundation of my character. She spoke little of her sacrifices, yet lived them every single day. Her blessings continue to protect me from above.

I remember with deep emotion I. V. Antony Ignatius, my son, whose presence, though brief, left an eternal imprint on my soul. His memory is a source of pain, strength, and prayer. I believe his innocent blessings watch over me from heaven, giving me courage to move forward.

Though they are no longer with me in flesh, I firmly believe that my father, mother, and son continue to bless me from heaven, guiding my steps, correcting my course, and standing by me in moments of doubt and despair.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to I. Rani, my wife, my lifelong companion. Her patience, sacrifice, understanding, and unwavering support have been my greatest strength. She

stood beside me in uncertainty, struggle, and silence, offering care where words failed and hope where confidence faded.

My sincere thanks to I. V. Rini Ignatius, my daughter, whose presence brings light, purpose, and continuity to my life. Her love, concern, and guidance give meaning to my present and hope for the future.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to all those who have walked with me throughout my life friends, colleagues, teachers, well-wishers, and even silent supporters. Each one, knowingly or unknowingly, has contributed to my journey.

If this work has any value, any sincerity, or any truth, it belongs not to me alone, but to all these souls those who live in my memories, those who walk beside me, and those who watch over me from above.

Preface

Every book has a beginning, but not every beginning is confident.

Pedagogical Colloquium was born not out of certainty, but out of hesitation, out of doubt, memory, and a quiet inner nudge that refused to remain silent. The first spark came when I saw a slim poetry collection by Ms. Santhosh, PGT English. Watching a fellow teacher put thoughts into print awakened something long asleep within me. I realised that teaching gives us stories every day, but courage is required to gather them and call them a book.

Once I decided to write, my father's words echoed sharply in my mind. He often said that I lacked sincerity, that I never worked with complete care "One who only grazes the tip of the grass." Life, however, has taught me something he perhaps wanted me to learn early; nothing succeeds in the first attempt. For me, every meaningful effort has demanded at least five struggles. Carrying this doubt and self-awareness, I began writing not boldly, but honestly.

Even today, this book remains a quiet secret at home. I have not yet revealed the idea of Pedagogical Colloquium to my wife and daughter. Experience tells me they might react with loving sarcasm "Whatever you pluck turns out to be waste." So, I chose silence over explanation. This hesitation perhaps explains the subtitle "Half-Baked Biography." The phrase reflects my own uncertainty about whether these thoughts were mature enough to be served to readers.

The title Pedagogical Colloquium itself has an interesting journey. I first encountered these words on an invitation card from Zion Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kodaikanal. That stayed with me.

Pedagogical; relating to the art and science of teaching.

Colloquium; a formal academic gathering where ideas are shared, debated, questioned, and refined.

This book is exactly a personal colloquium, where memories, experiences, reflections, and doubts meet and converse.

I have not written this book in a neat chronological order. Teaching life rarely unfolds that way. I wrote what I remembered, when I remembered it. At times, it may read like a memoir, at others, like scattered classroom notes or staffroom conversations. I have largely avoided using the names of students and friends. Wherever names appear, they do so with respect and the belief that they will not mind.

Teaching is not an easy profession. It demands patience, sacrifice, compromise, and resilience. I do not claim perfection. If sincerity could be measured, I might cautiously say that I have been at least 25% sincere in my profession. The remaining judgment I leave to my students the most honest evaluators a teacher can have.

My parents and family stood quietly behind me, enabling me to perform my duties. My achievements, however small, often met with gentle indifference from my better half, an indifference that pushed me to believe that achievement always has another step beyond it. My daughter, on the other hand, constantly reminds me of what truly matters, "Do not punish. Teach well." Between them, I found my balance. They remain my true cheerleaders.

After completing a few chapters, I shared them with Ms. Santhosh and Ms. Alka for feedback. Their encouragement gave me the confidence to continue. To structure my thoughts better and enrich my language, I received invaluable support from ChatGPT, whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge. Some ideas were also refined with help from Google, another silent companion in this journey.

If, in these pages, I have unintentionally offended anyone and I sincerely hope I have not and I ask forgiveness. If punishment is deserved, I am ready to bear it, forgiveness, however, would be far easier.

This book does not claim greatness. It claims honesty.

It does not present conclusions, it presents conversations.

It stands as a modest attempt by a teacher who continues to learn, unlearn, and relearn.

May this Pedagogical Colloquium find resonance with fellow educators, students, and anyone who believes that teaching is not merely a profession, but a lifelong dialogue.

— I. Vincent Raja Ignatius

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Encounter with Higher Officer

During my teaching days at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kalpakkam, I was a happy and energetic TGT in Social Studies. If I remember right, Ms. Vijayalakshmi was our principal.

One fine morning, I was walking through the corridor to take my class VIII Social Studies period. Chalk in hand, held proudly between my thumb and index finger, I was in a cheerful mood, whistling a Tamil film song as I walked.

Suddenly, an elderly gentleman in khaki shirt and pant, with a stick in hand, stopped me and asked in a serious tone, "Why are you whistling?"

Without much thought, I replied, "You do your work, I'm going to class." I honestly thought he was a sanitation worker!

Ten minutes later, the peon came running, "Sir, Principal wants to see you."

I walked into the office and there he was the same man, sitting right in front of the principal!

She looked at me and said with a smile, "He is our Education Officer, here for the Scout camp."

I immediately folded my hands, "Good morning, Sir."

The officer frowned, "He whistles and walks casually in the corridor."

The principal laughed and said, "He's a young teacher. He'll learn!"

Years later, history repeated itself this time at Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalyaya, R.K. Puram, during the 1997 second term exams.

I was on invigilation duty, distributing question papers, when a man of about 56 appeared at the door and asked, "Why is this room so dirty?"

I replied, "Maybe the morning session students made it messy. Please move aside, Sir, I have to distribute the question papers."

Soon after, the principal called me again. The same man was sitting there!

She said, "He is Mr. V.K. Sharma, Deputy Director of Education."

I greeted him politely and explained the situation.

Both times, I had no idea who they were once I mistook a high officer for a sweeper, and another time for a parent!

Even today, whenever I meet a new face in the school corridor, I make sure I stop whistling just in case it's another Education Officer in disguise!

Class Work and Home Work Correction

Correction has never been my favourite task, but I tried to make it meaningful. I rarely collected notebooks, instead, I corrected work in class itself.

When students answered well, I appreciated them aloud, though I never filled their pages with routine 'Good' remarks.

I never believed in punishing children for not doing homework. For me, learning mattered more than fear.

I marked grammar and spelling mistakes, but always reminded them, mistakes are not failures they are steps to improvement.

An eraser was invented so we could correct ourselves, and the same applies to life.



I may have been a lazy corrector with pens of pink and red,
but my aim was to encourage students to write without fear,
knowing that every mistake is a chance to learn better.

Who Is He?

It was on 7th September 2013 that I lost my beloved son. The house that once echoed with laughter turned silent. Every corner reminded me of him.

After a few days, when all my relatives had left, my wife gently said, "Go back to school. You may find some relief there."

That morning, at 8:03 a.m., I entered the school gate. My heart was heavy, my steps uncertain. Suddenly, a boy in a neat, clean uniform came up to me and greeted, "Good morning, sir."

His voice was soft but confident. Then he said something that touched the deepest part of my heart.

"Sir, I heard you have lost your son. Don't worry. I am like your son. Look there, all those students standing for the assembly, they are your sons. We are with you, sir."

Before I could reply, he smiled and ran towards the assembly area.

I went to the office and signed the register. Many colleagues came to console me. They asked me to take rest and relax.

Time passed, and soon it was lunch break. Several students came to express their sympathy.

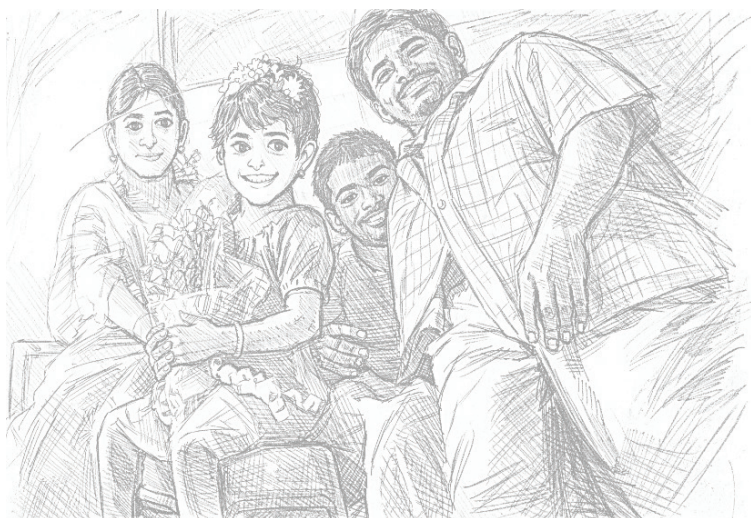
But my mind was searching for that boy, the one who had spoken those heavenly words in the morning.

I looked everywhere corridors, classrooms, playground but I never saw him again. He had vanished.

That day, I felt as if Jesus himself had come to comfort me in the form of a student.

From that moment till my retirement, I never looked at students merely as learners.

I looked at them as my sons, a gift from my Lord, who had spoken to me through that mysterious child.



Black Tongue

Working at José Martí Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, Sector 12, New Delhi, is never short of surprises, especially when I open my mouth!

Being a South Indian, dark and proudly funny, my students say I have a black tongue, not because of coffee, but because whatever I say somehow comes true!

Once, a Class X girl was absent for a few days. When she finally showed up, I teased, “Where did you die these days? Don’t you know we’re preparing for the board exam?” She laughed nervously and vanished again for ten whole days!

On the twelfth day, she walked in dramatically and declared, “Sir, your black tongue is dangerous! What you said came true, I actually fell from the first-floor stairs!”

I was speechless, though secretly proud of my predictive powers.

Now, she warns her friends, “Never let Sir joke about you, his black tongue works faster than Wi-Fi!” Even my wife agrees and says, “Better mind your words, before you make someone trip again!”

The Flying Duster

A duster may seem like the simplest object in a classroom just a cloth puff or a wooden block to wipe the blackboard clean.

Yet, in my life, it has played many unexpected roles.

As a child, I first saw the duster beyond its purpose.

When teachers failed to turn up, it became our play thing. Tossed from one desk to another, it turned into a ball, carrying laughter across the room.

Sometimes, we even used it to puff talcum powder on our friends, leaving clouds of white dust floating in the air.

Years later, when I became a teacher, the duster found a new identity in my hands. It was no longer a toy it became my classroom weapon.

A quick toss towards a talkative student or a silent warning to the inattentive, and the message was delivered.

The wooden duster, more than chalk or words, kept discipline alive.

But the duster also taught me humility.

In my Class XII Commerce class, I once aimed at a boy lost in his own world.

The throw missed.

Instead, it struck another student in the front row, leaving a large bump on his forehead.

First aid followed, but the incident left me with a lasting sense of guilt.

Even colleagues reminded me of its power.

The stern Maths teacher often frowned when she found the board not cleaned properly after my class.

A duster, after all, was not only for discipline but also for duty.

Looking back now, in retirement, I see the duster as more than an object. It was a toy, a tool, a weapon, and a witness to my life in classrooms.

A silent partner in my journey as student and teacher, it still carries the dust of memories some light, some heavy, all unforgettable.

On Saraswati Puja, My Blackboard Journey

On this sacred day of Saraswati Puja, I remember the blackboard that shaped my life.

As a little child in primary school, I sat in front of it, watching my mother, an Assistant Teacher, write with dedication. Those letters written in chalk were my first lessons of wonder.

Later, at St. Joseph's College, Trichy, I was amazed by the giant sliding blackboard, moving smoothly in all directions, carrying with it the wisdom of many teachers.

In 1984, I stepped into the classroom as a teacher myself. The blackboard became my partner, my tool for teaching, my stage for expression.

In 2007, the colour changed from black to green, but its purpose never changed.

Now, in my retired life, the longing remains. I still dream of writing on that surface, hearing the soft sound of chalk, and feeling the silent bond between teacher, student, and the ever-patient blackboard.

What is the Need for So Many Degrees?

I am Vincent Raja M.A., M.Ed., M.A., M.LIS., MBA, Diploma in Hungarian, Rashtrabhasha in Hindi.

Many might have more degrees than me, but each of mine has its own story a mix of curiosity, circumstance, and a bit of stubbornness!

I began with Pre-University in Science, bravely facing Maths, Physics, and Chemistry and the result? A glorious 50 marks! Realizing that science didn't want me, I switched to B.A. Economics and managed a first class. My M.A. Economics went quite well too.

Later, I tried for M.Phil at Gandhi Gram University, but lost my temper in the interview and lost the seat too. I took up B.Ed thinking it would be handy, and when teaching promised two increments for M.Ed, I happily earned that degree as well.

A vacancy for a Librarian in my college tempted me to do B.LIS, but I was cheated by the Priest Principal despite being selected. Then the UGC changed the rule M.LIS became the minimum qualification. What to do? I studied that too!

A priest friend once motivated me to try CAT and XLRI, but my father refused, and I couldn't put in enough effort. Still, for mental satisfaction, I completed an MBA in Marketing Management and that too with outstanding marks!

In Delhi, to pass my evenings, I took a Diploma in Hungarian, and to survive in the city, I learned Hindi, completing Rashtrabhasa from Hindi Prachar Sabha, Chennai.

Finally, I did M.A. English from Annamalai University and that degree gave me my true identity. I served as an English Teacher for 31 years.

So, why so many degrees?



Not for fame, not for promotion but for the joy of learning. Each degree was a chapter in my life, and together they taught me that education is the best way to keep the mind alive.

Tamil Films Doomed Me

When I was around ten, my father proudly took me to see Sampoorana Ramayanam. He thought I would understand the great epic. But honestly, I only remembered Hanuman flying and arrows glowing!

Later he took me to Ulagam Sutrum Valiban, thinking I'd be inspired by science and foreign lands. Poor father didn't know, I believed all those countries were just next to T. Nagar!

By Class X, I was staying at my friend's house to 'study'. Instead, he introduced me to a different syllabus 'Cinema Studies'.

We watched Mazhai Megam one evening. That night it poured heavily with thunder. His father came out to see the rain but didn't find us.

Next morning, I was asked politely not to stay there again!

Then came the golden age of Tamil cinema Sivaji Ganesan and MGR ruled the screen. I stood proudly in Sivaji's camp. Among heroines, I liked K. R. Vijaya and Jayalalithaa. I watched almost every Sivaji film available.

Later, Kamal Haasan joined the list of my cinematic heroes.

I saw Ilamai Oonjal Aadukirathu 32 times! Once, I watched four movies in a single day. And Idhayakkani I saw it nine times continuously because we screened it to raise funds for poor people.

I was half-human, half-ticket counter!

Later, I joined a Film Appreciation Course and wrote reviews seriously as if producers were waiting for my opinion! I was even drawn to advertisement jingles.

But fate had its twist

Instead of cinema, I landed in classroom drama.

Now I am not a film director, but still surrounded by full-time actors my students!

Punishment to the Girls

I was working at Zion Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kodaikanal, teaching English to Class X. It was a residential school, so students were always around us no escape for either side!

One Monday morning, a girl named Richa walked into class. New haircut, eyeliner, and a little makeup looked straight out of a Tamil movie dance scene! I thought she must have practiced expressions before coming to class.

I began the lesson and asked a few questions from the homework.

Poor girl she couldn't answer even one. My teacher's blood started boiling.

"You have time for all these hairstyles and makeup," I said, "but no time for homework? Are you coming for class or for a film shooting?"

The whole class went silent.

"Go out!" I ordered.

She stood there like a statue.

"If you don't go out, I won't teach!" I declared.

Finally, she went out. I delivered a five-minute lecture to the rest of the class about priorities and discipline.

Then I called her back and said softly, "Now sit and listen." She came in, eyes full of tears. My anger cooled down instantly.

Next day, the principal called me.

“Raja sir,” she said kindly, “You are a good teacher, but please don’t comment on student’s personal things haircuts, makeup, or eyeliner.”

I quietly nodded. From that day till my retirement, I never opened my mouth about any student’s personal style hair, makeup, or even funky socks!

Later, at Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, I faced another situation. Around fifteen students hadn’t done their homework boys and girls.

I told them, “All of you do 25 sit-ups.”

The boys started. The girls stood frozen.

I said, “No difference between boys and girls. Do!”

Just then, the principal came for rounds.

“Raja sir,” she asked, half-smiling, “why are the girls doing sit-ups?”

I said proudly, “Equality, madam!”

She laughed and said, “Please, no punishment for girls.”

From that day, I stopped giving punishment neither for boys nor girls.

Till my retirement no punishment, only encouragement.

Sometimes I think, maybe that’s why they all still remember “Raja Sir.”

Hoisting the National Flag

Every year, the Prime Minister of India unfurls the National Flag from the Red Fort. Watching him, I often wondered how must he feel? Probably like a king standing on the fort, the entire nation listening!

For a common school teacher like me, such a moment seemed impossible until destiny decided otherwise.

It was 1986, and I was working at Zion Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kodaikanal. I had joined only in June, still finding my place among seniors who spoke flawless English.

A week before Independence Day, our correspondent Mr. Kurian Abraham called a meeting. “Any of you may be asked to address the students and hoist the flag,” he announced.

That single line created a silent earthquake in the staff room. Everyone opened their English notebooks. Even the Hindi and Tamil teachers started practicing ‘Good morning, my dear students...’

Fear spread faster than patriotism.

I too prepared a short speech not the usual “we got freedom in 1947” type but something on the need for independence from various national problems. Still, I was sure they wouldn’t call a three-month-old teacher like me.

Then came August 15.

Scouts stood in line, the school band ready, students whispering. Suddenly, the announcement came “I invite Mr.

Ignatius to unfurl the National Flag and address the gathering.”

For a second, I thought I had misheard. My knees went weak, but two scouts were already escorting me to the dais. Drums started. My heart joined the rhythm.

Standing near the flag post, sweat rolled down my back despite the Kodaikanal chill.

The command rang out “Attention!”

The principal handed me the rope. I pulled. The flag rose, petals rained on my head, the band played, and the students saluted.

I too saluted and for those twelve minutes of my speech, I felt like the Prime Minister of India.

Only difference no Red Fort and no bulletproof glass!

Years passed.

In 2022, at Ganesh Shankar Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar, New Delhi, the rule was that a teacher about to retire would get the honour of hoisting the flag. Since I was retiring on 30th September 2022, my turn came again.

Once more, I stood before the tricolour. I pulled the rope, and the flag fluttered proudly. But this time, I didn’t feel like the PM or CM.

I simply felt like a happy teacher lucky enough to hoist the flag twice in my life, and still nervous as if it were my first day in class!

Not Fit to Be a Government Servant

It was December 2019, during the tense days of the CAA protests. Our school Ganesh Shankar Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar was designated as a centre for Patrachar students.

I was the in-charge for the Assessment of Speaking and Listening (ASL) examination.

That afternoon, a boy from the nearby area came for the ASL test. He looked poor wearing only shorts and a banyan. He had no record slip with him. I always kept a photocopy of the admission slips for such cases, but unfortunately, on that copy, the last digit of his roll number was missing. It was a ten-digit number.

When I asked, he couldn't recall it exactly. "Maybe 8 or 9, Sir," he said softly.

Without much thought, he wrote 9. I accepted it, marked his assessment, and later sent the award list to Patrachar Vidyalaya.

Months passed. The CBSE results were declared. By then, a new Head of School, Mr. Rajkumar, had joined. During the early days of the Covid lockdown, the school was almost empty.

One morning, I was alone in the building when the same boy came with his father both visibly anxious and teary eyed.

"Sir, I gave my ASL," he cried, "but in the result, it shows absent."

In that moment, I remembered everything the missing digit, the confusion, the choice between 8 and 9. The mistake was clear, and I felt responsible.

To help, I immediately wrote an explanation on the school letterhead, describing the situation truthfully.

I signed it "For the Principal," stamped it with the school seal, placed it in an envelope, and gave it to the father to deliver to Patrachar Vidyalaya.

I thought I had done my duty as a teacher standing up for a student who deserved fairness. But what followed was something I could never have imagined.

The Patrachar Principal, Mr. Rajvir, called our school and angrily reprimanded our Head of School, Mr. Rajkumar, for "sending an official letter through a parent." Soon, I was summoned.

The moment I entered, I was met with harsh words.

"How much money did you take to send this letter?" shouted Mr. Rajvir.

"How dare you sign as Principal?"

I explained calmly, "Sir, I wrote For the Principal. It was done only to help the student. There was no ill intention."

But he refused to listen. I was asked to write an explanation I wrote exactly what had happened, every detail, every truth.

Yet, my honesty was dismissed. Soon, I received a show-cause notice from Mr. Rajkumar himself.

In that notice, one sentence cut deep into my heart:

"You are unfit to be a government servant."

All because I tried to correct a small mistake to stand by a child.

Later, Mr. Rajkumar came to me and said quietly, “Don’t worry. It’s not recorded anywhere. It won’t appear in your service file.”

But the words stayed.

They echoed longer than any official remark could unfit to be a government servant.

Maybe, in that system, a person who acts with heart and compassion truly is unfit.



Chandini and Julie

Both Chandini and Julie names that sparkle with film memories. One reminds us of Sridevi's charm, the other of Lakshmi's grace. Both heroines from Tamil Nadu, both unforgettable. I too met my own Chandini and Julie not on the silver screen, but in the classrooms of Delhi.

After my transfer, I joined the Government Boys Senior Secondary School, R. K. Puram, Sector 2. On my first day, timetable in hand, I walked confidently toward a Class X room.

"Sir, this is Chandini madam's Science period, not yours," a boy announced politely.

Chandini madam! The name floated in the air like a melody. I decided to wait and see who this mysterious Chandini was.

A few minutes later, a young teacher came walking briskly along the corridor elegant, graceful, and glowing with quiet confidence. Surely, this must be Chandini!

I stepped forward, "Madam, I've just joined today. There's a small change in the timetable," I said.

She smiled warmly, "You take rest today, Sir. You can start classes from tomorrow."

"Thank you, Chandini," I said, still admiring her poise.

Her laughter was gentle but amused. "I'm not Chandini, Sir my name is Neeta Maggo."

But no matter how many times she corrected me, to me she would always remain Chandini. The name suited her too perfectly.

Years passed.

Life and time, both moved fast. Twenty-two years later, I attended a seminar for English teachers. As I stood on the steps, a car stopped nearby. A lady got down moving slowly, with difficulty. Her steps were hesitant, painful.

I went closer to help and froze in disbelief.

It was Chandini!

Her leg seemed twisted; she could barely walk. Shocked, I whispered, "Chandini! What happened?"

She smiled through the pain, her eyes still bright. "God's gift, Raja Sir," she said softly. Then, turning to her husband, she added, "Don't worry Raja Sir is here."

She placed her arm on my shoulder, and together we made our way to the seminar hall. She tried to explain her health condition, but my heart refused to listen.

All I could think of was the graceful lady who once walked the corridors with such energy.

I silently blamed fate, but later I learnt that she had improved and could walk better now. Life, after all, gives back what it takes away.

That same day, long ago, when I first joined the school, another incident took place. I was speaking with the principal when a boy came running, shouting, "Sir! Julie madam is being troubled by a student!"

We rushed to the classroom. A young, fair teacher stood there, shaken but composed. A mischievous boy had pulled her dress.

The principal scolded the boy sternly, but I stood there speechless for a moment stunned by her quiet dignity.

Later, I learnt her real name was Kusumlata. But the students had already crowned her Julie, after the heroine of that popular film.

And truly, like the song from Julie, “My heart is beating...”, she too brought light and rhythm into the school’s dull routine.

Even today, I smile when I think of those early days two radiant colleagues, two affectionate friends, two unforgettable names.

For me, they will always remain Chandini and Julie not the film heroines, but the real stars who brightened a teacher’s world.

Ode to Chalk

Born in a home where teaching breathed,
Chalk was no stranger to me.
A white companion on the blackboard,
Carrying words, carrying dreams.

As a child, I held it shyly,
When teachers placed it in my hand.
A spark lit up within me,
A future I could not yet understand.

In 1984, I claimed it fully,
No longer a child at play.
With chalk I drew lines of learning,
Guiding minds along the way.

Its dust has touched my fingers,
Its essence has touched my soul.
More than powder, more than writing,
Chalk made my journey whole.

More Than a Friend

Some people enter our lives as colleagues and stay on as companions for a season. But a few rare ones grow to become part of our very existence steady, selfless, and silently shaping our days for the better.

This is the story of one such person Alka Tamta, a teacher, a friend, and a blessing who walked into my professional life and stayed on as family.

“Alka” a name of Sanskrit origin means young and bright, beautiful, or a lock of curly hair. It also recalls Alaka, the mythical city of divine beauty and grace.

True to her name, Alka Tamta, Assistant Teacher at Ganesh Shankar Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar, embodies both brilliance and strength.

I first met her in the senior section staff room. By then, she was already well-known across the school, admired for her dedication and feared, perhaps equally, for her temper and rigidity.

Everyone had, at some point, encountered her fiery side. Yet behind that firmness was a teacher of rare precision, who demanded excellence not only from others but also from herself.

Among the primary students, she was known to be strict, but deeply respected for her clarity, commitment, and kindness in teaching.

During one Annual Day celebration, I was the programme incharge, and she worked tirelessly to prepare several cultural items. But in the vote of thanks, I accidentally forgot to mention her name.

Though I added a line apologizing in case I had missed anyone, she was deeply hurt. A volcano erupted "I did all the work, and he forgot to thank me!" she said. She even refused to join us for lunch after the event.

I went to her personally and apologised. She accepted my words with dignity but chose not to come for the lunch. Yet, strangely, that incident became the beginning of our friendship.

In time, I came to know the real Alka a woman who valued sincerity above all else. Her anger was never out of ego; it rose only when people were careless or irresponsible.

She worked with perfection and expected the same dedication from everyone around her.

She never merely sympathised she empathised.

She helped everyone who sought her support and, if she could not help directly, she always found someone who could. She was especially kind to the Group D employees, treating them with genuine affection and respect.

As Academic Co-ordinator, I often worked closely with her. She talked a lot, but her words carried warmth and wisdom. Gradually, my respect for her deepened she was no longer just a colleague, but a person I admired profoundly.

I later had the privilege to teach her son, and soon I was treated like a part of her family. She remembers every birthday mine, my wife's, even my daughter's and never fails to send a cake or a thoughtful gift.

It is truly difficult to reciprocate her affection in equal measure.

When I retired, she took complete charge of my farewell programme, ensuring every detail was perfect.

Later, when I had to vacate the government quarters, she went out of her way to find a house for me close to her own home. Now, as we travel together for my new assignment, I often feel that God sent her into my life as a blessing someone who supports, guides, and stands beside me in every moment of need.

Her help cannot be measured in words or wealth. She is not just a friend she is a rare soul whose presence gives meaning to the word friendship itself.

New Bride and the CBSE Exam

I was the Exam In charge at Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, Sector 12, in the month of March 2009. The CBSE examinations were in full swing.

It was the Home Science examination for Class XII, attended only by girl students. Around 10:05 a.m., a decorated car, evidently a wedding car, entered the school premises.

The students were entering after being frisked by the lady staff. My principal was standing beside me.

To our surprise, a newly married bride, dressed in her wedding attire, joined the line for frisking. My principal smiled and called her "the new bride." The girl looked shy yet cheerful.

The principal told her gently, "If you want to change your dress, you may go to the lady staff room."

Her groom and mother-in-law, who had accompanied her, said softly, "She will manage for these three hours."

Her friends brought her admit card and writing materials. She looked happy, mixing freely with her classmates. Soon, the exam began.

After about an hour, a lady teacher came running to me and said, "Sir, the newly married girl is crying and suffering from stomach pain."

I rushed to the room. The girl was wriggling in pain, tears rolling down her cheeks.

I said, “We shall call an ambulance.” I went outside to look for her in-laws, but they had already left.

When I returned to the exam room, she was still in distress sitting, standing, walking unable to stay still.

I asked, “Will you come with me to see a doctor?” She shook her head and said firmly, “No, I want to write the exam.”

Her make-up had mixed with tears, but her determination touched me deeply. She would write a few lines and then stop to cry.

Meanwhile, my principal conveyed the situation to the nearby girl’s school that had sent students for the exam.

I called my former student, a lady doctor residing in R.K. Puram, to come immediately. She examined the girl and assured us that there was nothing serious probably sleep deprivation and tension. S

he administered an injection, and within fifteen minutes, the girl began to relax.

The doctor stayed for about an hour to monitor her condition. The teacher from the girl’s school contacted the girl’s parents, as she didn’t have the in-laws’ phone number.

The girl continued to write.

Around 1:15 p.m., her in-laws and parents arrived. The exam ended at 1:30 p.m. She walked out slowly, her face calm and faintly smiling.

My principal and the lady doctor stood near the gate. The girl looked at the doctor and smiled in gratitude.

I returned inside to complete the counting, packing, sealing, and dispatching of the answer sheets.

In the rush of duties, I forgot to thank the doctor. Later, my principal said, "I have conveyed your thanks to her."

I never came to know the girl's result, but I believe she cleared the exam.

That day, she faced not only the CBSE examination, but also the first real test of her life with courage, grace, and quiet determination.

Answer Sheet Evaluation

My first chance to evaluate answer sheets came in 1985. My father's younger brother was an Economics Professor, and he was busy evaluating B.A. Economics (Statistics) papers for an autonomous college. One day, he called me and said gently, "You have finished your M.A. in Economics. Why don't you try evaluating a few papers with care?"

I agreed, a little nervous but curious. I evaluated one full set. Later, when he compared my marks with those of the second examiner, there was hardly any difference not even two marks.

He looked at me with quiet satisfaction. That moment gave me a strange confidence, and my journey as an evaluator began.

From then on, he would hand over full bundles of answer sheets to me. I corrected them with great care and consistency. There were no complaints, no disputes, only appreciation.

Later, the Staff Selection Commission too gave me an opportunity for a short time. Even there, when some candidates appealed for re-evaluation, my marks stood unchanged.

My speed and accuracy became a small source of pride.

Then came my long association with CBSE evaluation for Class X and Class XII English. I could evaluate about twenty answer sheets in 90 to 120 minutes. But speed never came at

the cost of attention. I marked every spelling mistake, grammar error, structural flaw, even punctuation with care.

Once, the evaluation centre was a well-known public school in Safdarjung area. I completed my work well before time. The Nodal Chief, who was inspecting the hall, looked surprised.

“What happened? Finished already?” she asked.

I replied, “Yes, ma’am. All done.”

She took my bundle and started checking sheet after sheet. After a long pause, she looked up half amazed, half delighted and said,

“Perfect!”

That single word stayed with me. From that day onward, wherever I went for evaluation, I was entrusted with the role of Head Examiner.

In school, I would tell my students to take their evaluated answer sheets home and show them to anyone they liked because I believed correction should be honest and open.

And one small secret -

I never read one sentence at a time.

I read an entire paragraph at once, and still could sense every detail, every error, every expression.

Even I find it hard to believe, but it is the simple truth.

Two Students

It was around 9:30 in the morning. The sky was clear, the sun had just started to warm the city, and the streets of Delhi were slowly filling with the noise of buses, vendors, and horns. It was a school holiday a rare, peaceful morning.

I had planned a small personal errand that day. I wanted to visit Munirka, one of those places in Delhi where I could still find Tamil magazines, Curry Leaves, Banana Leaf, and a few others that carried the flavour of home.

They reminded me of Tamil Nadu the smell of filter coffee, the calm rhythm of village mornings, and the warmth of familiar words.

From my house in Katwaria Sarai, I took Bus No. 680 Kendriya Terminal to Ambedkar Nagar. As soon as the bus arrived, I realized what a mistake it was to travel at that hour.

The bus was packed shoulder to shoulder, not even a space to put one foot. I somehow squeezed myself in and managed to stand near the conductor.

As I took out money from my pocket to buy a ticket, I suddenly felt something unusual a soft movement near my pocket. A hand.

Someone was trying to pick my pocket.

Without thinking twice, I grabbed the hand tightly.

Before I could even turn my face, the passengers around me shouted, "Chor! Chor!"

I turned quickly.

Before me stood a boy hardly sixteen. His face was pale, his eyes filled with fear. The crowd was angry, voices rising from every direction. The boy kept pleading, "Please, leave me... please."

But then, something changed. His eyes met mine. For a brief second, confusion replaced fear. And then came recognition.

"Raja Sir!" he said suddenly, his voice breaking. "Namaste, Sir... Galti ho gayi... Maaf karo, Sir."

The crowd fell silent for a moment, puzzled.

Before anyone could say a word, the bus took a sharp turn near the old campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University at Ber Sarai. The boy, quick as a flash, jumped off the running bus and vanished into the street.

That face stayed in my mind all night. I didn't know whether to feel angry or sad. He was so young a child still.

The next day, when I entered my class VIII-B there he was.

Sitting quietly in the second row, head bowed, eyes glued to his notebook.

Our eyes met briefly. He looked up for a second guilt and shame written all over his face and then lowered his head again.

No words were spoken.

But that silence between teacher and student spoke more than anything else could.

Years rolled by. Students came and went, like waves touching the shore and retreating again. But some faces, some incidents, stayed deep in memory.

One evening, many years later, around nine o'clock, I was standing in Sarojini Nagar Market. My daughter had gone for a haircut. We had gone late to avoid the usual evening crowd. Most shops were closing. The market, usually so noisy, was unusually calm.

As I stood there waiting, pacing near the shops, I saw a sleek foreign car gliding silently down the lane. It stopped gracefully near me, its engine humming softly.

From the car stepped out a tall, well-dressed young man confident, composed, carrying the unmistakable air of success.

"Raja Sir!" he said, smiling warmly. "Good evening!"

I froze for a second. His face seemed familiar, yet I couldn't place him.

Before I could reply, the car door opened again. A lady elegant and graceful stepped out, followed by a little girl who ran up to hold her father's hand. They all greeted me politely, their presence radiating dignity and warmth.

I stood there, an ordinary schoolteacher in my simple clothes, still trying to recall who this young man was.

I smiled awkwardly and said, "I'm sorry, beta... please remind me."

He laughed gently, not offended at all.

"Sir, I'm your student from Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, Sector 12. I was in Class XII when you were the exam in-charge. I cleared the administrative services exam and am now posted at the Indian Embassy in Japan. Came to India to meet my parents."

I was speechless.

The boy who once sat in my class, uncertain about life, now represented India abroad.

He continued warmly, “Sir, please come to Japan sometime. It would be my honour.”

I smiled. “I’m happy just knowing you remembered me.”

As his car drove away, the night breeze touched my face softly. I stood there, lost in thought.

Both of them the boy from the crowded bus who once slipped his hand into a teacher’s pocket, and the officer from the foreign embassy who offered me an invitation to Japan were my students.

Two lives, two paths, two lessons.

A teacher can never truly measure the direction his students will take only hope that somewhere, in some quiet corner of their conscience, a seed he planted once will bloom.

And sometimes, that’s enough.

Sir, This Dating Is Not as Expected

I was giving home tuition to a girl who lived near IIT Delhi. Usually, I went to her house in the evenings. Earlier, I had taught her elder sister as well. Both of them were students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram Sector 2.

The younger one was bright and outspoken a curious blend of innocence and confidence.

At that time, I was working in Government Boys Senior Secondary School, R.K. Puram Sector 2.

One afternoon, her mother, who worked in MTNL, called me. "Sir," she said, "could you please go to Kendriya Vidyalaya? The principal has called regarding my daughter." Since my school was close by, I agreed and crossed the narrow bridge that separated our campuses.

When I entered the principal's office, he looked surprised. "Raja Sir, why have you come?"

I replied, "Sir, her mother requested me to come. She said you had called."

He frowned slightly. "You know, her skirt length is above the knee. Despite repeated warnings, she hasn't listened.

Today, in the morning assembly, I had to cut the skirt shorter to the thigh level to set an example before the students."

I stood speechless for a moment. Later, I came to know that the girl had been suspended from school for ten days for violating the uniform rule. Her mother was also called for counselling.

A few weeks later, in the month of January, another incident disturbed the calm.

That morning, the girl's mother went to the school to pick her up, but she couldn't find her anywhere. Anxious, she entered the campus to inquire.

The principal explained, "A boy came around 11 a.m., saying her mother had met with an accident and he needed to take her to Safdarjung Hospital. We allowed her to go."

The words sent a chill through everyone. The police were informed immediately.

Teachers and students searched the premises; no one had seen her leave. At last, a cobbler sitting near the compound wall said quietly, "I saw a girl leaving in a red car."

The day dragged on in fear and confusion until evening, when the girl returned home unharmed, around six. No one knew exactly what had happened.

The next day, the school's discipline committee met. It was decided that she would be given a Transfer Certificate, though she was permitted to appear for the board examination.

When I visited her home later for tuition, I could not resist asking, "Why did you do all this?"

She smiled faintly and said, "Sir, it was my first dating... not so good."

Despite all that had happened, she scored more than 80 marks in her English board exam. I scored a little above 60.

Even now, I sometimes wonder what exactly is dating?

Years have passed, but that incident remains etched in memory like a faded photograph still clear in emotion, though time has softened its edges.

As a teacher, I have met hundreds of students each carrying their own small world of dreams, confusion, and rebellion.

Some stories fade; some stay.

Hers stayed not for the mischief or the mistake, but for what it revealed, how swiftly childhood steps into adolescence, how curiosity collides with consequence.

In those moments, I understood that education is not confined to classrooms or textbooks. It is about understanding hearts in turmoil, guiding them without judgment, and standing quietly at the edge of their growing years watching them learn what life itself teaches.

Even today, whenever I pass by IIT Delhi or R.K. Puram, her words echo softly in my mind:

“Sir, it was my first dating... not so good.”

And I smile not in disapproval, but in quiet understanding of youth, its mistakes, and its lessons.

Too Much Hungry

From the day I joined, I was always curious about the school parties. In Tamil Nadu, we usually serve S.K.C. Sweet, Karam, and Coffee. But here in Delhi, things were very different.

Around 10:30 a.m., the starter begins.

Around 1:00 p.m., it's speech... speech... and more speeches.

Finally, around 2:15 p.m., lunch starts!

By then, the lady staff try to sneak out, since the school time ends at 2:30 p.m.

They rush home, leaving the food behind.

Since 1991, I had stopped eating at school parties. Whenever there was one, I quietly moved out of the eating area.

If someone insisted, I would take only a very small piece of sweet just for formality.

Some teachers even argued with me for not eating, but I never changed my habit.

Then came 31st July 2007, the day I joined Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, Sec. 12. I reported around 11:30 a.m. and that very day happened to be Party Day in the school.

Everyone was waiting in the hall for the principal. It was already 1:45 p.m., and she still hadn't come.

Our principal was known for never being on time not for meetings, not for parties. The staff secretary and senior teachers had to cajole and console her every time before she appeared.

That day, she didn't turn up even after repeated calls.

Meanwhile, Mr. D.P. Sharma and Mr. Lajpat Bhardwaj came to me and said, "Let's eat, Sir. We are too hungry!"

That moment, I decided Today, I will eat at the party.

I said jokingly, "But the chairperson hasn't come yet!"

Lajpat laughed and replied, "Chair or no chair, my stomach can't wait!"

We three walked to the buffet area, collected our plates I was the first. We filled our plates and began to eat. The moment other staff saw us eating, they too followed.

Just then, the principal entered the hall with the senior staff. She saw us with our plates full of food. Her face changed she was annoyed, irritated, and angry.

"You people have humiliated me!" she shouted, and left the hall in fury.

The staff secretary, Mr. M.S. Negi, turned to me and said, "Raja Sir! You too? Feeling too hungry?"

He belonged to my own department English. He scolded me for more than 25 minutes, then left without eating.

I quietly placed my plate on the floor near the table.

But Lajpat and Sharma kept on eating, completely unfazed!

After a while, I went to the principal's room. I apologized politely but added, "Madam, you should have come on time.

All principals do the same they arrive late for meetings and parties.

You must understand that your delay makes everyone uncomfortable.

You should have said, 'Sorry, I came late. You must be hungry, please carry on.'

That would have shown true leadership."

After saying this, I didn't wait for her reply. I simply left.

From that day onwards, I again decided not to eat at school parties ever.

Years later, on her retirement day, that same principal said in her speech,

"One day Mr. Raja told me 'Principal is never punctual for meetings and parties.'

Since that day, I changed myself."

Friends in Delhi

I have always been very choosy when it comes to making friends.

Right from childhood, my circle has been small. My father's transferable job never allowed us to stay long in one place, and as a result, lasting friendships were few.

Even at the time of my marriage, there were no friends to invite. Only my parent's friends attended.

I talked a lot, mingled easily, and people liked me but deep inside, I often wondered, Can I really call them friends?

In Delhi, I had many colleagues both male and female but till today, I have never had a fight with anyone.

Life was smooth, polite, and professional. But one incident changed my understanding of friendship completely.

I was invited to a wedding by a male colleague, Mr. Sanjeev Vashist. I was new to Delhi marriages; in fact, that was the first time I ever saw a baraat (wedding procession).

I dressed neatly for the occasion a Singapore-imported shirt with broad colourful designs and branded trousers. I didn't wear a coat and tie, thinking it unnecessary.

When I reached the venue, I was stopped at the entrance by the bride's chacha. He asked me several questions in rapid Hindi, which I couldn't understand.

I looked around helplessly for a familiar teacher, but everyone was busy dancing joyfully in the procession.

In confusion, I called out to the groom, “Mr. Sanjeev!” He was seated on a decorated horse, smiling amid the crowd. I said, “That man is asking something, but I can’t understand.”

To everyone’s surprise, Sanjeev immediately got down from the horse, walked straight toward us, and said sternly, “How dare you stop my friend?”

The entire procession froze in silence. His relatives, colleagues, and friends were all taken aback.

Within moments, he was asked to mount the horse again, but that moment stayed in my heart forever.

From that day, Mr. Sanjeev Vashist became more than a colleague he became my true friend.

He has been my counsellor and consoler offering emotional support when needed, and even financial help to those around him. Not just to me, but to anyone who needed him.

Once, when I got government accommodation in Hari Nagar, my daughter fell ill late one night.

I didn’t know there was a hospital nearby, so in panic, I called Sanjeev at 1 a.m. Within 12 minutes, he was at my door. In 25 minutes, my daughter was admitted to the hospital in Katwaria Sarai almost 20 kilometres away.

Every crisis, he has stood by me without hesitation, without complaint.

From the day he started using WhatsApp, he has sent me a “Good Morning” message every single day. I have never replied, not even once but still, he continues to send them, without fail.

We worked together in the same school for about twelve years. Because of him, I got many private tuitions; he helped me reach students who truly needed support.

He is a diligent teacher, sincere and disciplined. He worries deeply for every student and enters the classroom with full commitment. Any responsibility given to him he completes it with perfection.

Such people are rare.

Such friendships are rarer.

And I am blessed to have one Mr. Sanjeev Vashist, my friend in Delhi.



The Classified Friendship

Colon Classification (CC), the remarkable analytic-synthetic system developed by Dr. S. R. Ranganathan in 1933, fascinated me from the first day I encountered it.

To most, it was an intricate web of symbols and colons, but to me, it was something alive a coded rhythm through which one could express not only knowledge but emotion.

Each classification number was a key, unlocking the world of a book, a thought, or even a feeling.

It was the year 1990, and I was pursuing my B.L.I.S. degree at Madras University. I cherished every lecture, every exercise, every whispered discussion on the PMEST formula - Personality, Matter, Energy, Space, and Time.

My aim was modest yet sincere; to secure a librarian's post at St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai.

For our practical training, we were summoned to Madras University for intensive sessions on cataloguing and classification. I lodged at the AICUF House near Loyola College, a serene place where the rustle of palm leaves and the fragrance of damp soil accompanied one's study hours.

In that class, there was only one lady student, from New Delhi quiet, earnest, and slightly lost amidst the southern language and manner.

When she discovered that I, too, worked in Delhi, a sudden ease appeared in her expression. She began to speak more freely, and soon, a gentle friendship began to take form.

I helped her with the canteen staff, translated conversations with the library assistants, and guided her through the maze of Ranganathan's tables and schedules.

After a few days, she began to linger after class, seeking help, or perhaps simply company. On one such evening, she accompanied me to the AICUF House.

We sat outside under the mellow glow of a corridor lamp, talking about Delhi the winter mist, the crowded buses, the slow charm of Saket where she said she lived. There was comfort in that simplicity.

As our practical classes neared their end, I felt a strange impulse to convey something, something that words might make too direct, but which classification could express perfectly.

So, on the ninth day, I sat at my table late into the night and wrote ten short lines. Each line was a sentence built around a Colon Classification number, and each number represented the title of a book that carried a hidden meaning.

To anyone else, it would have looked like a jumble of numbers and punctuation. But to someone trained in Colon Classification, those numbers were whispers of emotion each book title carefully chosen to form a chain of feeling, of friendship, admiration, respect, and a subtle promise of help when fate might allow.

The next morning, as the session ended, I folded the paper neatly and handed it to her.

"Please read this," I said. "And decode it... when you find time."

She looked surprised, then smiled softly, perhaps amused by the idea. She slipped the paper into her book and left. That was the last time we spoke at length.

When the training ended, I returned to Delhi. I waited for some sign for a reply, a message, a meeting. But the silence stretched on.

Weeks passed.

The enthusiasm that had once filled my mornings began to fade into quiet wondering.

Finally, one afternoon, I decided to find her. I still had her address written on the cover of her notebook: Lane 10, House No. 1067, Saket.

The colony was elegant, lined with tall trees and identical white houses.

I walked slowly through Lane 10, searching for the number. But as I neared the end, confusion crept in. The last house read 1053. I approached a security guard and asked, "Where is 1067?"

He frowned slightly. "Sir, this lane has only fifty-three houses. There is no 1067."

For a long moment, I just stood there, the slip of paper trembling slightly in my hand. I read the number again and again it was clear, deliberate, written in her own handwriting. And yet, the house did not exist.

I walked back slowly through the quiet lanes, the evening light falling slant through the trees. Perhaps she had made a mistake. Or perhaps, as I later began to believe, the number itself was her reply a code of her own, never meant to lead to a door, but to an understanding.

That small episode, delicate and incomplete, has stayed with me ever since.

It happened long before marriage, in a time when communication had grace and patience, when silence could still carry meaning.

Even today, when I open a library catalogue and see the neat precision of a Colon Classification number, I am reminded of her and of that folded sheet filled with secret codes and book titles that once tried to speak the language of the heart.

For not all classifications are meant for retrieval.

Some are meant for remembrance.

Punishment in School

When I look back at my school days, what I remember most are not the medals, not the morning assemblies, not even the report cards but the punishments. They had their own strange rhythm, the swish of the cane, the sharp sting on the palm, the echoing scold in the corridor.

In my childhood, both my parents were my teachers at home and at school. My mother was gentle as morning dew. She believed that patience could melt even the hardest of hearts. Her punishments were mild a long look, a quiet word, or, at most, the silent withdrawal of affection.

But my father? He was a man of the old school. To him, punishment was not cruelty, it was discipline in disguise.

He believed a few tears today could save a person's life tomorrow. "A stick," he would say, "is like the pen both can shape a person." And indeed, many times, his stick shaped my character more than his chalk ever did.

Among my teachers, Ms. Prema stands out a woman of volcanic temper and lightning reflexes. Her hand could travel from her side to your cheek before you even knew your mistake. Two tight slaps one for the error, one for the explanation and your lesson was complete.

Then there was Ms. Stella, whose punishments were oddly creative. She would pull your belly as if testing the ripeness of a fruit a gesture both comic and painful. Yet, behind her frown, there was affection.

Our Headmaster, Mr. Jeyasingh, was a legend. A tall, lean man with fire in his eyes and justice in his voice. His scolding in that thick Tirunelveli slang could shake even the bravest among us. Before punishing, he would select a stick from his holy arsenal thick, thin, long, or short depending on the crime. His ritual was sacred, one clean strike on the palm. Never more, never less.

The sting would last for days, but so would the respect. We feared him, yes but we also loved him. His punishment carried the fragrance of care.

Years later, when I joined a school in Delhi, I entered a different world. Here, punishment had lost its conscience. What was once meant to reform had turned into a show of power.

Teachers no longer scolded they screamed. Words became weapons sharper than sticks. And worst of all, I began to notice a silent cruelty minority student often bore the heavier blows.

It was a mild October afternoon in 2012, at Ganesh Shankar Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar. Lunch break. The school ground was buzzing with laughter, cricket balls, and chattering boys.

Suddenly, a commotion rose near the boundary wall. At the centre stood our principal, red-faced, furious beating a student who was halfway up the wall, trying to escape the premises. Half his body was hanging outside; his legs dangled helplessly inside the compound.

The scene was shocking. The principal's stick came down again and again, each stroke slicing through the boy's shirt,

leaving angry red marks. The boy cried and screamed, but no mercy came.

“Bandar ki aulaad!” the principal roared, his voice echoing across the playground.

The boy neither climbed down nor jumped out trapped between fear and pain. His class teacher arrived, but instead of calming him, added fuel with his harsh words.

Something inside me snapped. I walked straight up, grabbed the stick from the principal’s hand, and said firmly,

“Enough, Sir.”

For a moment, the entire ground went silent. Even the crows stopped cawing.

The bell rang, ending lunch break. The crowd dispersed slowly. I turned to the boy. His face was streaked with tears and dust.

“Come down slowly,” I said.

He hesitated, then jumped. His back was crimson, his breathing uneven.

“I have to go home,” he said softly.

I asked his class teacher to sign his leave slip he refused. The boy silently handed me a folded letter. It was already written, as though he had known something like this might happen. I took it to the principal, who signed it wordlessly.

Before leaving, I told the boy, “Go home carefully.”

He said nothing, just kept sobbing the sound trailing behind him like a faint prayer.

That night, I couldn't sleep. I realized punishment, when mixed with anger, becomes violence; when mixed with love, it becomes correction.

Another incident, forever branded in my memory, took place on February 4, 2019.

That morning began joyfully. It was a student's birthday a bright, mischievous boy who loved to laugh. Somehow, his friends had managed to sneak a cake into the classroom.

During the fourth period, they placed it on the stage, singing loudly. His subject teacher even took out a phone and began recording.

Then came the playful chaos a teenage tradition. Cake on his face, cake on his hair, rolling on the floor, laughter echoing. But fun turned frenzy. In moments, his shirt was ripped, his banian torn, his chest bare under the classroom lights.

By lunch break, the video had reached the principal's office. The same joy that filled the classroom turned into dread. The boy was summoned.

What followed was not discipline it was rage. The principal thrashed him mercilessly. Then, like a tragic chorus, others joined PGT Sanskrit, Commerce, Economics, and Chemistry each taking their turn.

Perhaps old grudges found their moment of expression that day. The boy, who once sat on the Sanskrit teacher's car and ignored the Commerce sir's instructions, now faced their collective fury.

The room thundered with slaps, shouts, and the dull sound of sticks meeting flesh. But the boy didn't cry. Not a tear. His silence was his rebellion.

His parents were called. In front of them, the teachers poured their grievances one after another. The verdict was declared: suspension for ten days.

When he returned, I met him in the corridor. His smile was faint but defiant.

“How was your birthday?” I asked.

He chuckled, eyes glistening.

“Unforgettable birthday, sir,” he said softly.

And walked away.

Even today, those two scenes one boy on the wall, another on the stage replay in my mind like unfinished stories.

Once upon a time, punishment carried a pulse of love. Today, it often carries the shadow of ego. Somewhere along the way, we teachers forgot that our duty was to build lives, not to break spirits.

True punishment, I have come to believe, does not come from the hand it comes from the heart.

The hand that strikes must also be the hand that heals. Otherwise, it is not discipline it is despair.

The Three Idiots Moment

When a Student Dared to Teach the Teacher St. Joseph's College, Trichy, 1982

We have all watched Three Idiots that unforgettable scene where Aamir Khan is pulled by the professor and asked to teach the class. Something remarkably similar happened to me, not in a reel-life classroom, but in real life back in 1982, at St. Joseph's College, Trichy.

I was then an M.A. Economics student. Rev. Fr. Dr. Sebastian, S.J., was the Head of the Department a man of deep intellect, razor-sharp discipline, and old-world scholarship.

He taught Microeconomics with great passion, following the famous book Modern Microeconomics by Anna Koutsoyiannis.

Every lecture began with the soft shuffle of his neatly typed manuscripts. Then he would stride to the blackboard and unleash a whirlwind of equations, symbols, and curves α , β , γ , δ until not an inch of black was visible. His vocabulary soared far beyond our comprehension.

We, the twenty-nine students of his class, sat bewildered, convinced that Microeconomics was an art reserved for the chosen few.

I began to frequent the college library, searching for Indian authors who explained the same concepts in simpler, friendlier language. Yet, the mystery remained.

Then came the day when he taught the Cobb-Douglas Production Function. The blackboard transformed into a galaxy of Greek letters and mathematical diagrams.

The entire class sat frozen in silence, lost and helpless.

After nearly thirty minutes, I could no longer contain myself. I stood up and said, "Father, I couldn't understand the Production Function."

He paused. "Cobb-Douglas?"

"Yes, Father," I replied, and with a mix of fear and honesty, added, "The way you teach is not proper. Please make it a little more comfortable for us. While you fill the board, use simpler words."

He frowned slightly. "You are not a baby," he said sharply. "You are studying at St. Joseph's. My language is like this."

I smiled faintly and said, "Even in St. Joseph's, Father, we still need to understand what we learn."

That sentence changed the air in the room.

His face hardened. "What do you think you know everything? If you are so good, then you teach. Tell me how to teach!"

I tried to reply, but he raised his hand. "No argument. Tomorrow, you are teaching."

The Next Morning

That night, I prepared the topic with intense focus. I wanted not to challenge him but to make the subject alive, understandable.

The next morning, Father entered the class with his book and his ever-present file.

"I'm waiting," he said.

I stood up, hesitated, smiled weakly.

“No... no,” he said. “You should.”

With trembling hands, I picked up the duster and chalk, stepped onto the platform, and began.

I started with a few warm-up questions to my classmates. Then, slowly and carefully, I explained what each Greek letter meant, why Cobb and Douglas developed this function, and how it applied in Microeconomics.

Sometimes, I switched to Tamil to make the meaning clearer. I filled the board, but I made sure every student understood what I wrote. I paused, asked questions, cleared doubts.

Father sat silently throughout the thirty-seven minutes. His expression was calm, unreadable.

When I finished, the class was silent for a brief moment then, unexpectedly, applause erupted. Even another priest who studied with us clapped.

The bell rang. Father stood up, collected his duster, and left the class without a word.

From the next day onwards, Father continued in his usual scholarly style. He didn't simplify his lectures, and I never raised the issue again. But something inside me had changed.

That day gave me a new kind of strength a confidence that teaching was not about showing how much one knows, but about making others understand.

Even now, decades later, I often wonder where I found that courage.

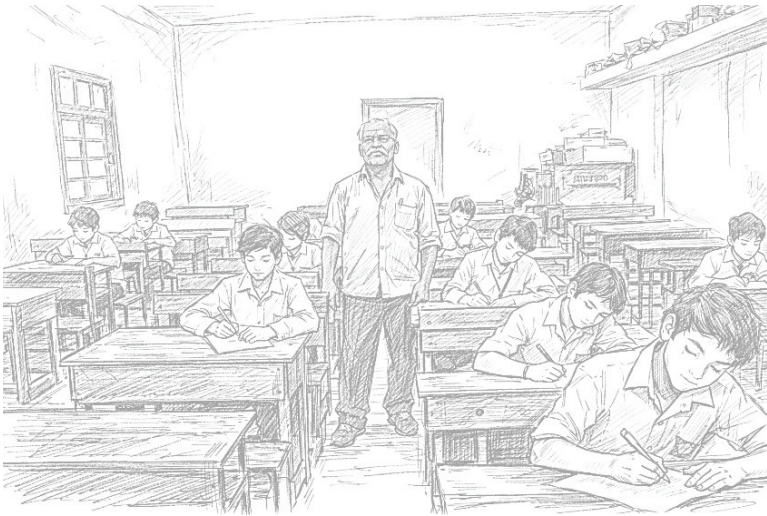
Perhaps it was in my blood. Both my mother and father were teachers. Maybe I had inherited not just their profession, but

their passion the instinct to teach with clarity, simplicity, and compassion.

That day remains etched in my memory not for rebellion, but for revelation.

Teaching, I realized, is not about towering over students with knowledge it is about bending down to lift them with understanding.

And perhaps, that is the truest lesson I ever learned at St. Joseph's.



Who Is the Number One Chamcha?

The word 'chamcha' we all know it too well. It means a sycophant, a servile flatterer, one who bends and bows before power. Every workplace has one. But who is the number one chamcha? That, my friends, is where my story begins.

I was very close to my boss, the school principal. Not because I wanted favors, but because I could read and write English well.

After the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi, introduced computers, all circulars started arriving in English. Suddenly, the office needed someone who could decode that English maze. I became the easy target because I never learned to say 'No'.

So, I did all the work. The principals trusted me completely. They even shared their passwords and confidential details. Slowly, I became part of the administration itself.

Then came a new principal from Kendriya Vidyalaya. A very disciplined man. He said bluntly, "I can do my work. I don't need Mr. Raja." For the first time, I was kept away from office matters. But destiny had other plans.

Soon, I was transferred to Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya. There, things changed again. The principal trusted me so much that she wouldn't make any major decision without consulting me.

I became the Exam in charge, and at times, even attended principal meetings on her behalf. I was known to almost every principal in the district.

But once again, transfer orders came this time to Ganesh Shankar Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar.

Here, I found another “legend” already ruling the scene a PGT in Economics, famously known as the principal’s chamcha. He enjoyed all privileges, even a State Teacher’s Award, though he hardly taught in class.

My arrival unsettled him. Within weeks, the principal began depending on me for administrative work.

One day, in the staff room, half in anger and half in sarcasm, he stood up and declared, “From today, my position as Chamcha Number One is taken over by Mr. I. Vincent Raja!”

The staff burst into laughter. I smiled.

But deep inside, I didn’t want that title.

Still, no matter how much I tried to keep my distance, the principal kept calling me for help.

I drafted reports, handled official letters, and even wrote confidential notes.

By the time I retired, no principal had ever worked without involving me. Yet, not once did I betray anyone’s trust.

I never revealed a single word from the staff side or the principal’s side.

Ironically, the same Economics teacher whose pride I had unknowingly wounded his children became my students.

I guided both of them, and even helped his son secure an engineering seat at Chennai University. Still, every time we

met, he would grin and say, “Raja, you snatched my chamcha title!”

I just laughed. Perhaps he was right.

But if being trusted, being helpful, and being loyal makes one a chamcha, then yes, I was, and proudly remain, Chamcha Number One.

Sri Sowmya Narayana Perumal Temple, Thirukkoshtiyur

The sacred town of Thirukkoshtiyur occupies a great place of importance in the history of Vaishnavism.

Being one among the celebrated 108 Divya Desams of Lord Vishnu, the temple is adorned with the rare and divine Astanga Vimana above the presiding deity, Sri Sowmya Narayana Perumal. Only a few Vishnu temples in the world possess this unique structure.

This is also a historical and spiritual landmark, for it was from this very temple that the great Vaishnavite Acharya, philosopher, and social reformer Sri Ramanuja, the author of the Visishtadvaita philosophy, preached the sacred Narayana Mantra to everyone cutting across caste and community barriers. Sitting atop the Vimana, he proclaimed the message of equality, devotion, and liberation for all.

This divine place is more than just history to me it is home. I spent the early part of my life here, until the age of 27, in the Agraharam, where all the Iyengar families lived together. I was one among them.

My friends were truly blessed brilliant and intelligent. They studied easily and scored high marks, while students like me, who worked harder, often got less! Today, most of them live in developed nations, shining in their own ways.

The girls of the Agraharam were the epitome of grace soft-spoken, delicate, and intelligent. As they grew up and wore

the madisaar (the traditional way of draping the saree exclusive to Iyengar ladies), their beauty was beyond comparison.

The aroma of the filter coffee they made slightly bitter yet filled with warmth would fill the air. The shining dabara (the traditional tumbler) in their hands completed the picture of elegance.

The Tamil months of Purattasi and Margazhi (September and December) were our most cherished times. During the cool December mornings, the streets echoed with the melodious Thiruppavai and Thiruvempavai hymns.

The women came out early to draw kolam (rangoli) in front of their homes, their devotion reflected in every line they drew. I would ride my bicycle around the Agraharam pretending to admire the kolams, but truly, I was admiring the girls and young ladies who made them!

One unforgettable story from Thirukkoshtiyur still lingers in the hearts of the elders. Every year, in the month of April, the grand Rath Yatra (Car Festival) is celebrated with devotion and joy. A year before one such festival, many small shops sprang up around the temple.

A jackfruit seller came with a cartload of fresh fruits. After a tiring day, he slept beside his cart. But by morning, his entire load was gone stolen in the night.

The poor man wept bitterly and pleaded for justice, but no help came.

In desperation, he stood before the temple and cried out, "Oh Lord Vishnu! Give me justice!"

From that day onward, for four consecutive years, there were no rains. Crops failed, and people began whispering about the curse of the jackfruit man.

Finally, the villagers traced him, brought him back to the temple, and offered apologies. His loss was compensated in full. The moment he left the temple premises, rain began to pour washing away guilt, sorrow, and drought alike.

Years later, I went to Osmania University, Hyderabad, to get an M.A. English admission form for a friend who was working in Delhi. It was already 3 p.m., and I found that it was the last date for submission. The counter was closed, and no one was around to help.

In the office, I noticed a man who looked like an Iyengar. I greeted him in our traditional Tamil. He asked my name and native place. When I said “Thirukkoshthiyur,” he suddenly fell at my feet and said with tears,

“You are the representative of Lord Vishnu Himself. He has sent you to bless me!”

He immediately arranged for the application and ensured the admission was completed that very day.

A similar incident happened years later at Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, where I was teaching. A group of teacher trainees had come from Sanskrit Vidyapeeth University for their teaching practice. Among them was a professor a Tamil Iyengar. When we began conversing in Tamil, I mentioned that my native place was Thirukkoshthiyur.

The professor immediately stood up and touched my feet.

My principal, astonished, asked what was happening. The professor explained reverently, “Sir, he is from the sacred land

of Lord Sowmya Narayana Perumal. People from that place carry divine grace.”

My principal listened in awe, and I silently thanked the Lord for the blessing of being born in such a holy land.

Thirukkoshthiyur to others, it may be a temple town; but to me, it is the beginning of my faith, my culture, and my identity.

The Birth of Annual Day in Our School

A school's Annual Day marks the culmination of an academic year a time for joy, celebration, and reflection. It features performances, speeches, and award ceremonies that recognize students' achievements and the school's progress.

More than just a cultural event, it is a platform for students to express their creativity and confidence in front of the school community, including parents and teachers.

However, in Delhi Government schools, an Annual Day celebration was once beyond reach. Until 2005, it remained only a dream. When I joined Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, Sector 12, that dream finally took shape.

That year, the Government of Delhi made it mandatory for all schools to conduct Annual Days and sanctioned ₹25 per student for organizing the event. I was appointed as the in-charge for our first-ever celebration. A core team of dedicated teachers and students was formed.

Since our school was named after José Martí, the great Cuban freedom fighter, we decided to celebrate the Annual Day on his birthday 28th January. This tradition continues to this day.

Our preparations began with enthusiasm. We first visited Ms. Barkha Singh, MLA of R.K. Puram, who readily agreed to be our Chief Guest. The Ambassador of Cuba was also informed about the celebration. He was delighted and kindly sponsored

gifts for all primary students, marking a beautiful gesture of international friendship.

For a month, everyone worked tirelessly teachers, students, and volunteers each group performing its task with perfection.

The program began at 11:00 a.m. sharp. The entire event was managed by students themselves, from welcoming guests to the vote of thanks. The anchors one boy and one girl conducted the proceedings flawlessly.

The entire event lasted one hour and thirty-four minutes without a single break. There was no light change, no curtain delay, and no pause each performance flowed smoothly into the next.

After every segment, the next item began almost instantly, creating a rhythm of professionalism rarely seen in school programs. The event concluded with the National Anthem, leaving everyone in awe.

After the formal function, guests proceeded for lunch. Parents and students were served refreshments, and we, the teachers, finally shared our lunch together kindly hosted by our principal.

There were words of praise, and even a few suggestions for improvement. My principal called it a “unique approach” and congratulated the team.

Three days later, when the photographs arrived, everyone teachers, students, and even the principal was thrilled to see their faces captured in the pictures.

But I was nowhere to be found. The principal looked at me with concern and asked, “Where were you, Mr. Raja? You don’t appear in any photo!”

I smiled and replied, “Turn back I shall be there.”

I had chosen to stay behind the screen, letting others shine.

Later, when I was transferred to Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar, I was once again asked to organize the Annual Day.

I tried my best, but it didn’t reach the same level of perfection perhaps because a PGT in Economics interfered at every stage.

Still, my students performed beautifully and took the lead in every program.

I remained behind the curtain once again not seen, but always present ensuring that others could rise and shine.



I Contested the Election

The Government School Teachers Association (GSTA), Delhi, established in 1954, is a recognized body representing the teachers of Delhi government schools.

Its purpose at least on paper has always been noble, to protect teacher's interests, to advocate for fair working conditions, and to serve as a bridge between educators and the government.

But over the years, this purpose had faded.

The elected members seemed to forget the classroom once they held office. They worked for themselves rather than for the teaching community. They lacked courage to stand before any government be it BJP, Congress, or AAP and speak the truth.

Whenever teachers were burdened or treated unjustly whether assigned Census duty, Polio duty, or election duty carrying EVMs and VVPAT machines the union remained silent. Their voices never reached the ears of power. It became, as I often said, a "yes-union" agreeing to everything, resisting nothing.

I was then teaching at Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar. The GSTA elections were announced after a long gap.

Most teachers showed no interest. They had lost faith. "What's the use?" they said.

One day, a group called Shikshak Nyaya Manch, headed by Mr. Dagar, came to our school looking for candidates.

To my surprise, our PGT Geography suddenly said, "On behalf of our school, we are sponsoring Mr. I. V. Raja as a candidate for District Coordinator, South West-A District."

I was startled.

I replied instantly, "No, I don't want to contest."

But they insisted.

"You can change the way GSTA works," they said.

Even my principal joined in, encouraging me, "If you win, you'll help all of us. You're the right person."

Between persuasion and hope, I gave in. I filed my nomination.

My election symbol: CHAIR - simple, solid, symbolic of support and authority.

Like any political candidate, I went on a campaign.

Over 40 to 50 schools I travelled meeting teachers, shaking hands, hearing their struggles. I made promises that came straight from the heart, "If I am elected, I will change the way our union works. I will make it your voice, not a silent office."

I spent nothing on my campaign. Yet, mysteriously, my posters were printed and pasted in staff rooms, banners adorned school walls.

A day before the election, fresh posters appeared everywhere. Teachers smiled, saying, "Sir, don't worry we are with you."

Even my principal, who was the Presiding Officer in a polling booth, called me to help with arrangements.

There I was both a candidate and a helper, setting up tables and sealing boxes. No opponent objected.

When the polls closed, counting began that evening.

At my own school booth, I led comfortably. Encouraged, I accompanied my Principal to the District Headquarters, where the final results were to be compiled.

The Deputy Director of Education looked around and said, "You, Mr. Raja, sit at the computer and enter the results."

No one protested. I sat down and entered every figure candidate by candidate, school by school.

When the final totals appeared on the screen, I paused.

I had lost by a narrow margin.

For a moment, there was silence.

Then I smiled, stood up, and announced my own defeat.

Though I lost the election, I had gained something far greater trust.

Teachers from many schools began calling me, "Sir, I voted for you. I have a problem can you help?"

And I did.

For every issue that came my way, I tried my best to find a solution.

I believed I owed it to those who believed in me.

From that day until my retirement, I continued to serve teachers not as an elected representative, but as a fellow colleague who cared.

Because in the end, positions fade, but service remains.

Contesting that election was more than a political experience it was a lesson in leadership, humility, and integrity.

I may not have occupied the Chair, but I learned what it truly meant to deserve one.

The Spirit and Significance of a School Magazine

A school magazine is much more than a compilation of articles and photographs it is the living mirror of the institution's intellectual and creative spirit.

It serves as a vibrant platform to showcase student talent, foster a sense of community, and preserve the school's collective memories for generations to come.

Through its pages, the creativity, aspirations, and achievements of young minds find a voice, nurturing both confidence and self-expression.

For students, a school magazine is an invaluable medium of growth. It helps them develop their literary and creative faculties, encouraging them to write, express opinions, and share imaginative ideas.

The joy of seeing one's name in print builds a sense of pride and accomplishment, inspiring others to contribute. It also fosters teamwork and responsibility, as students work together in planning, editing, and designing learning the subtle art of collaboration and discipline.

Moreover, it cultivates the habit of reading and critical thinking, enriching the intellectual atmosphere of the school.

When I was a student, the idea of a school magazine was unknown to me. My first encounter with such a publication was during my college days at St. Joseph's College, Trichy. I still remember holding the college magazine for the first time

filled with essays, group photographs, and collages of various events. It reminded me of a festive Tamil weekly, much like a Diwali special edition, vibrant yet formal. Though it lacked the thrill of discovery for me then, it planted a seed of interest that would later bloom in my teaching career.

Years later, during my tenure at Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, R.K. Puram, I was nominated as Sub-Editor for English under the guidance of Mr. Mahilal Kain, the Hindi Editor a seasoned literary scholar with a keen editorial sense.

I must confess, his experience and confidence were overwhelming, yet inspiring. The English section soon overflowed with contributions stories, essays, poems, and reflections. I spent many late nights reading through stacks of manuscripts, selecting and polishing material for the allotted fifteen pages.

The process was arduous yet immensely fulfilling. With two dictionaries beside me, I combed through each line for grammatical and spelling accuracy.

When the magazine, titled *Manthan*, was finally released, I experienced an indescribable joy seeing my name printed I. Vincent Raja, Sub-Editor (English).

Ironically, I had not written a single article for that issue, but my satisfaction lay in the collective success of the team.

The following year, I was promoted as Editor. This time, I was determined to make *Manthan* reflect my editorial vision.

Together with Mr. Mahilal Kain on the Hindi side, we restructured the entire layout. From the Editor's Desk and Principal's Message to the Index and Acknowledgements, English found a prominent place.

We formed a Student Editorial Board, empowering students to decide what deserved inclusion. They even interviewed the principal and article that added authenticity and life to the publication.

When the magazine was released, the Editorial Team's group photograph adorned the introductory pages, and my own picture tinted in full size appeared on the Editorial Desk page, alongside the principal's. The students were thrilled, and the principal was delighted.

However, not everyone shared that enthusiasm some teachers teased, saying, "Raja has filled the magazine with his photos!" Others lamented that their articles hadn't been included.

Yet, despite the murmurs, the colourful photo collages and lively presentation captured the imagination of students across the school. It was indeed a labour of love and creativity.

Later, at Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar, I had the privilege of serving as Editor of the school magazine Umang for five consecutive years.

The Government of NCT Delhi recognized the value of such publications and made school magazines compulsory though with a modest allocation of ₹25 per student.

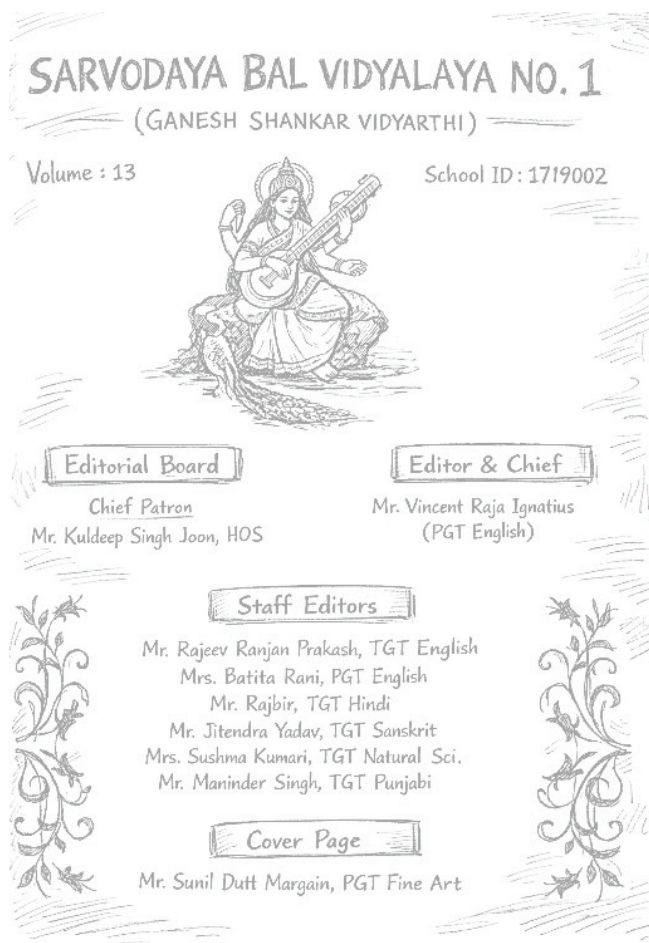
Despite limited resources, we managed to bring out a 54-page magazine, with eight pages in colour. The task was challenging but deeply rewarding.

The most beautiful part of this journey was witnessing the pure delight on student's faces when they saw their names and photographs printed.

For many, it was their first step into the world of recognition. They treasured those magazines as keepsakes of their school days symbols of belonging, creativity, and achievement.

Looking back, I realize that a school magazine is not just a printed document it is a celebration of youthful imagination, a chronicle of campus life, and a bridge between the past and the future.

For me, it was an unforgettable journey one that translated the dreams and emotions of countless students into print, giving them a voice that endures beyond their time within the school walls.



The Chief Minister's House and My Miserable Majesty

Once upon a bureaucratic time, Raja that's me lived in a Mantri's house. Not by election, not by revolution, but by pure government allotment!

My Delhi life was a long journey through a variety of roofs Katwaria Sarai, R.K. Puram, and Harinagar.

Each address had its own syllabus of survival.

Katwaria Sarai was my paradise a place where neighbours spoke louder than loudspeakers and the milkman doubled as morning news anchor. I learnt Hindi from the people, street-style masculine, feminine, and everything that Delhi grammar could invent.

R.K. Puram came next the so-called elite colony of files and frowns. The area had everything: government quarters, government dust, and government dogs. But life was peaceful schools were near, auto drivers were honest occasionally, and my rent did not demand a second job.

Harinagar, though, was an episode of pure irony. I lived on the third floor a floor so high even oxygen took the lift. The staircase was my gym, the tap was my riddle, and the electricity came and went like an unfaithful friend. Nothing ever worked, not even the doorbell but optimism kept me alive.

Then came a miracle I was entitled to Type IV Government Quarters!

My daughter and I were thrilled. We dreamed of living like Delhi royalty perhaps a big drawing room, soft sofa, balcony breeze, and a proper kitchen that respected human beings.

With high spirits, I applied for a house in Mayur Vihar Phase II.

A friendly Chemistry PGT, full of noble advice, said, "Sir, apply there! You'll get Ganga water, and the school is within walking distance!"

I thanked him not realizing I was about to experience the acidic side of Chemistry.

The day of allotment arrived and with it, a thunderbolt of pride, 49A, Pocket B, Mayur Vihar Phase II!

At last, my own government palace!

When I went to the PWD Service Centre to give acceptance, the Junior Engineer Civil smiled broadly and declared, "Sir, congratulations! You have got the Chief Minister's house!"

My heart skipped a beat. The Chief Minister's house? I had imagined such places came with fountains, silk curtains, and guards who salute your shadow.

Apparently, the then Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Manish Sisodia, had lived there for six months before moving to his official bungalow.

I puffed up with pride I would be sleeping where power once slept!

PWD promised a renovation. Four months later, I realized renovation in Delhi means "painting the old problems with new colour."

On April 14, the Tamil New Year, we stepped into the grand residence with high hopes and a bag full of mosquito coils.

The reality hit us immediately.

The house had four doors, none of which agreed to close. They either jammed in rebellion or opened on their own to welcome dust.

The kitchen window remained shut forever perhaps cemented by destiny itself.

The cupboards were ruled by White Ants United, who had eaten more property than any scam in Delhi.

The park in front looked inviting green, calm, and peaceful until I discovered it was actually a monkey conference centre. These furry politicians held regular sessions, with bananas as refreshments. They had no hesitation in entering our kitchen, opening the fridge, and taking what they liked from fruits to biscuits. One of them even seemed to inspect my gas connection with bureaucratic curiosity.

Evenings in Mayur Vihar were a mix of drama and democracy.

The teachers from nearby schools gathered in the park tea in one hand, gossip in the other.

Conversations floated around like breaking news: the principal's new sari, the Education Officer's surprise inspection, the latest government circular all discussed with the seriousness of Parliament.

And in between, someone would chuckle and say, "Raja sir, you're living in the Chief Minister's house! You must be having all comforts!"

I only smiled a tragic smile like a hero in a black and white movie.

The water bill arrived soon thick enough to be mistaken for a novel. I rushed to the Jal Board office hoping for mercy. The officer there chuckled, “Sir, Chief Minister’s residence! Why discussion? Please pay from your salary we can’t question democracy!”

And I, the humble taxpayer, obeyed.

One day, I decided to host a candlelight dinner a romantic evening of peace and elegance. The mosquitoes heard the plan before my wife did. They arrived in full attendance uninvited but unstoppable.

We spent the evening not with candles, but with mosquito bats and regret.

Even the moonlight supper we planned later became a myth clouds and power cuts teamed up against us.

Then came Covid-19 the grand lockdown. The entire world was trapped in their homes, but we were trapped with leaking taps, creaking doors, and self-respecting termites.

Every week a new problem was born a tap leak, a door jam, a burnt wire. It was like living in a quiz show where every round had a new household challenge.

Though the house had three rooms and a servant quarter, we lived mostly in the hall the only space that did not collapse, leak, or bite. My daughter joked, “Appa, this is not a house it’s a survival training centre!”

Still, I must admit that house gave us stories, laughter, and a PhD in patience.

Even now, when I pass by 49A, Pocket B, I pause and smile.

The gate still creaks, the monkeys still rule, and I still wonder

How on earth did the Chief Minister live there?

Maybe he didn't. Maybe he just inaugurated the problems and moved on.

But as for me I lived, laughed, and learned that in Delhi, even a Chief Minister's house can teach you the art of humble survival.

The Day of Inspection

School annual inspection the very phrase was enough to send shivers down the spine of every teacher and student alike.

It is that one day in the academic calendar when the entire school transforms into a stage, and every teacher becomes an actor performing their best rehearsed act before the stern eyes of the Education Officer.

When I was a child, those inspection days were nightmares at home. My father, the headmaster of the school, would turn the entire house into a war room of preparation.

The moment the inspection date was announced, our household slipped into a strange kind of tension. Even dinner conversations revolved around lesson plans, registers, and cleanliness drives. The school records were dusted, charts were redrawn, and warning bells rang for teachers to polish their lessons and sharpen their smiles.

For at least two weeks before D-Day, life in school resembled a military camp.

Teaching aids were rechecked, teachers were reminded to avoid any 'creative deviation', and office records were verified with almost sacred reverence. Education Officers were treated like mythological monsters their arrival dreaded, their remarks feared, and their departure celebrated.

If the inspecting officer happened to be a lady, the anxiety doubled! But once the ordeal was over, a wave of relief swept across the campus.

The next day was often declared a holiday a silent thanksgiving for surviving the storm.

Years later, when I became a teacher myself in a Delhi government school, I found myself on the same side of the fence yet with the same sense of agony and anticipation.

Some things never change! One of our Yoga teachers would conveniently go on leave every inspection day, while I would sit revising my lesson plans like a student before an exam.

The first instruction was always clear “Lesson Plan first!”

So, I prepared detailed, class-wise lesson plans and kept them neatly stacked in my cupboard for future use.

The same questions were drilled into students for nearly ten days. “Intelligent ones sit in the middle row,” I would whisper. “No hand raising unless I signal. And if the officer asks a question, silently pray to God!”

The teacher’s diary, oh, what a boring yet sacred document that was!

Every subject expert accompanying the Education Officer would flip through it as if decoding a secret. On the inspection day, teachers arrived in their best attire, armed with colour chalks, charts, and a nervous yet confident smile a pure drama smile!

When the observing principal entered, I would immediately switch to my “British mode.” Only English no bilingual hints. My accent improved miraculously that day!

I usually chose a poem for demonstration, as poetry gave enough room for expression and performance. Poetic devices were already well-rehearsed with the students.

The inspection would begin with my favourite smile, a few confident lines, and soon the classroom turned into a stage of controlled perfection.

Once, during one such inspection, Mrs. Sharma, the Principal of Rashtra Pradipa Vikas Vidyalaya, Vasant Kunj, was the subject expert. After observing my class, she asked my principal to send me to her school the very next day.

I obeyed the command. When I entered her school, I found the last row occupied by English teachers both TGTs and PGTs. Mrs. Sharma smiled and said, "Please teach the same poem you taught yesterday."

I started the class as usual warm-up activity, introduction, poetic devices, and appreciation. For the first time, I completed a full forty-minute session without interruption. After the class, students were asked to leave, and I was given a chair at the front.

The teachers came forward, and Mrs. Sharma addressed them, "What did you observe? This," she said, "is the perfect way to teach an English poem."

At that time, I was just a TGT. Her words were worth a certificate.

Another unforgettable inspection was by a Central Team from the Ministry of Human Resource Development. On the blackboard, I had neatly written "Adjectives Class VII."

One of the officers entered and asked in Hindi, "Aapka subject kya hai?"

I replied, “English.”

He asked again, “Aap kya padhate hain?”

I said, “Adjectives.”

He frowned and repeated the question once more.

Then, realizing the situation, I said, “Sir, Visheshan!”

He nodded, wrote something in his report, and quietly left the class.

From that day onwards, no officer ever entered my classroom again. On seeing me, they would just smile and say, “Good, Raja Sir,” and move on to the next room.

Am I a good English teacher?

Perhaps yes, perhaps not.

Ironically, my major subject in college was Economics yet English became my identity, my comfort, and my stage.

Sometimes, I think of those inspection days with a smile. They were tense, tiring, and terrifying but they also brought out the teacher in me.

How Seasons Shape Education in Delhi

In my native place, the year had only one dependable season, a sweaty morning, a hot and humid day, and a breezy evening.

For hardly ten to twenty-five days, there would be a slight variation called the rainy season. Beyond that, I never noticed any dramatic difference. Life and learning moved uniformly.

Words like *loo*, blazing sun, sunrise at 6 a.m., desert cooler, chilled water, soft drinks, quilt, heater, sweater, muffler, and many more were completely unheard of in my life. They never entered my vocabulary, let alone my daily routine.

Then I landed in Delhi.

The temperature itself felt threatening. The weather was no longer a background condition, it became a force almost an authority deciding how people lived, dressed, behaved, and slowly, how they studied.

I realised that in Delhi, education does not run according to the academic calendar alone, it runs according to the seasons.

From April, a new academic session officially begins. In reality, learning begins at a snail's pace. The learning cycle moves painfully slowly. Students do not look attentive; concentration is fragile. Teachers keep pushing the syllabus, knowing fully well that minds are elsewhere.

By April 15, both students and teachers start drifting towards summer vacations mentally, emotionally, and physically.

On one side, teachers worry about Leave Travel Concession journeys and remedial classes; on the other side, the temperature rises mercilessly. No teacher, however sincere or committed, can concentrate on teaching when the classroom feels like a furnace.

By the beginning of May, teaching does not stop on paper but in practice, it collapses.

Schools reopen in July, but the dry summer continues its rule. Students return to classrooms, but learning refuses to return with them. Books open, but minds remain closed.

Then comes the famous Delhi monsoon loudly announced, rarely punctual. One fine day, rain suddenly pours. Students and teachers get drenched alike. Teaching is suspended not by order, but by nature. Tea and pakora replace textbooks and lesson plans. Rain and sun perform a dramatic duet till August 15.

Real education in Delhi runs only from 15th August to 26th January from one flag hoisting to another, “Jhanda to Jhanda.”

This is the golden phase.

The climate is moderate, the air is breathable, and minds are cooperative. Students study a bit, teachers teach a bit both sincerely. First-term examination pressure slowly grips the system, and education finally gains momentum.

By the end of November, winter announces its arrival. Surprisingly, studies reach full swing as if both teachers and students are truly meant for academics only in winter.

December, however, brings a different story. The mercury drops sharply, joined by fog and smog. School activities go haywire. Everyone covers themselves from head to toe. No one is ready to take their hands out of winter garments. Writing on the blackboard becomes an adventure, chalk trembles in frozen fingers. Students are ready to write but with shivering hands.

Pre-board students shake while answering questions. Most students feel far more comfortable under their quilts than under classroom desks.

Absenteeism increases gracefully.

I still remember an incident from Class VIII. A student normally active, alert, and above average suddenly became silent during winter.

A little chubby boy, he stopped answering questions. When asked to stand, he stood and smiled strangely. This continued for several days during severe cold. Finally, I sent a note and asked his parents to meet me.

When they came, I asked the reason for this sudden change. His father casually replied,

“Sir, to escape from cold, I give him two capfuls of brandy doctor told.”

Doctor, apparently, was more concerned about temperature than textbooks.

Winter days also bring colourful woollen garments into classrooms.

Annual Day and Sports Day pull schools in different directions.

Farewell preparations and CBSE practical exams force teachers to concentrate only on-board classes.

December becomes a strange mixture of celebration, examination, and freezing silence.

Winter vacations arrive, but remedial classes continue making both teachers and students equally lazy and equally unhappy.

The most entertaining drama unfolds during the transition between winter and summer the great fan war. Some want the fan on, others want it off.

One day, a girl confidently walked up and switched off the fan, declaring, "It's cold." Immediately, a boy switched it on, announcing, "I feel warm." The girl jumped from her desk and slapped him twice fan off. Boys united to attack her, girls united to defend.

A beautiful exchange of colourful vocabulary followed.

The principal and teachers rushed in. The classroom looked like a war zone. A few girl's hair was disturbed, a few boy's shirts were torn.

Girls, clearly, were more powerful.

The entire class was suspended for a week education defeated by climate yet again.

Thus, in Delhi, seasons do not merely change the weather. They decide attendance, concentration, discipline, enthusiasm, and ultimately, learning.

Here, education is seasonal.

Books open and close not by dates, but by degrees Celsius. And perhaps, that is the real hidden syllabus of Delhi schools.

Recognition Without a Medal

My father retired as a Headmaster not with celebration, not with applause, not with a medal pinned to his chest. He deserved every honour the system could offer.

But he never received even one.

He had sacrificed his entire life for students his time, his strength, his youth. He shaped lives silently and walked away quietly.

My mother, a dedicated assistant teacher, was no different. Chalk dust on her fingers, tired feet, worn-out sarees, and a heart that never complained.

Both of them gave their best years to classrooms, not to ceremonies.

One day, my mother asked me gently, “Thambi... why haven’t you received a teacher’s award? You truly deserve one.”

Her question did not disturb me immediately. But it stayed.

I explained to her how the system works.

For a State Award or National Teacher’s Award, one has to apply. And applying alone is not enough.

One must also know someone in the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT Delhi.

I did not know anyone. Many teachers and even principals encouraged me.

“Raja, you must apply. Your work should be recognised.”

So, for the first time in my life, I tried.

A thick file was prepared. Achievements were recorded. Photographs attached. The file That Carried My Life.

Vigilance clearance obtained.

Every activity, every contribution, every success story documented.

Each category was given marks.

Weeks passed.

Then months.

Finally, the result arrived.

I was not selected.

Later, I came to know the reason. I had missed the award by just two marks.

Two marks.

Not two failures.

Not two mistakes.

Just two numbers.

Strangely, I did not feel anger. Only a silent pause settled inside me.

Ironically, I later used the same file, the same structure, the same documentation method, to help prepare applications for five other teachers.

All five received the award. I congratulated them with a genuine smile.

And learned something quietly.

In England, they say “Sir” is the greatest honour. My award was not on a wall. It was behind my name.

For 35 years, students never called me simply Raja.

They called me, “Raja Sir.”

In buses, markets, hospitals, streets.

Even today, somewhere a voice still calls out, “Sir!”

That single word has followed me through life with greater dignity than any certificate.

Over time, I watched as many ‘Outstanding Teachers’ received honours.

Some of them had never truly entered classrooms.

Some had never wiped sweat after six continuous periods.

Some had engineered documents.

Some had manufactured photographs.

Their stages were bright.

Their applause was loud.

Their photos were glossy.

The classrooms remained silent.

Then I understood something painful yet true,

Awards are not always given to those who serve. Sometimes they go to those who present.

Life has a quiet sense of humour.

Later, I was invited to be part of a selection team in a leading government organisation to choose the Best Teacher Award in Economics.

I, the unawarded one, was now asked to judge others.

As I examined files, performances, presentations, I often saw my father's-tired eyes, My mother's bent shoulders...

And my own countless evenings inside classrooms.

Like them, I too remained unawarded. But I also remained undiminished. With time, I understood something deeper.

An award is an object.

Teaching is a relationship.

An award is received on a stage.

A teacher is received in a heart.

An award lasts for a photograph.

A teacher lasts for a lifetime.

If I had truly desired an award, the pain of not receiving it would have poisoned my teaching. It did not.

My classes remained the same. My effort remained sincere.

My voice did not lose strength because of two missing marks.

That means one truth is certain, I did not teach for recognition, I taught because teaching was my nature.

My father never waited for an award.

My mother never asked for one.

And I, their student before being a teacher, unknowingly followed the same path.

Yes, I once applied not because I was hungry for a medal

But because the system told me that this was how merit is measured.

Now I know better.

Merit is not measured in files. It is measured in lives.

So, if I walk without a medal on my chest, I walk without bitterness, because I walk with something far heavier.

The invisible weight of hundreds of grateful lives. And that weight does not bend my back, it strengthens my spine.

Ordeals of a Teacher in Achieving 100% Results

The celebration of 100% results has become a new ritual in schools. Banners, garlands, and certificates mark the supposed victory of an institution.

But behind those perfect percentages hides an untold story the anxiety, humiliation, and exhaustion of teachers compelled to transform fragile students into flawless statistics.

I lived that story once, and it left an imprint too deep to fade.

It began around the year 2000, when schools across Delhi were seized by the fever of 100% results. The Education Department started analysing performance subject-wise, and with it came an innocent-looking table that changed everything.



Teachers were no longer names we were colours.

Green meant you were successful.

Orange meant warning.

Red meant failure.

When the list came, my name glowed in red.

It felt like a public verdict, a scarlet letter against my years of honest work.

The next thing I knew, a circular ordered all red and orange category teachers to report to Khalsa College Auditorium.

We sat row after row, arranged according to our shame. The air smelled of fear sweat, chalk dust, and hopelessness.

The Secretary of Education entered, her presence slicing through the silence. Her voice carried a weight that made even the ceiling fans pause.

"Shame," she said. "You are teaching in the heart of Delhi. If you don't know how to teach, resign."

Her words cracked like a whip.

She looked around and asked, "Where are your children studying?"

Someone whispered, "Public school."

The room erupted with fury.

"So, you want your own children to study in English medium, but you refuse to teach your students properly? Can't you even get 33 marks out of them? Hypocrites!"

The final blow came cold and clear, "This is your last chance. If you fail again, I will send all of you back to B.Ed. college."

We left the hall like prisoners released after sentencing technically free, but burdened with an invisible chain.

From that day, school no longer felt like a school.

It became a pressure cooker, where every teacher was forced to guarantee 100% results. The principal transformed into a commander, pacing through corridors with files clutched tight.

Meetings multiplied. Memos circulated. Strategies were designed as if we were planning a corporate takeover, not an education.

The staff room buzzed with one word – ‘target’.

Anxiety became my constant companion.

I woke up at night thinking of exam papers. I dreamt of mark sheets. My heart beat in percentages. I had stopped being a teacher, I had become a mechanic assembling students into marks-producing machines.

In desperation, I created what I called my “mad plan.”

I began calling the weakest students an hour before school began. Their sleepy eyes carried the burden of my fear.

I simplified English into survival codes:

If you see if and were → write ‘would’.

If the question carries one mark → write ‘may’.

If the verb is past → just add ‘ed’

One boy wrote ‘beed’.

I asked, “What is this?”

He said innocently, “Sir, you told us to add ‘ed’.”

I laughed to hide the ache in my chest.

Comprehension became a game of matching words. They no longer read passages they hunted for identical phrases and copied them blindly.

Letter writing turned mechanical, copy the question, change you to I, end with Thank you and Yours faithfully.

Essays became ready-made masala recipes, only the name of the event changed.

I wasn't proud, but I was desperate. I was no longer teaching to educate, I was teaching to survive.

The evaluation room became an extension of our fear.

Every teacher turned generous, every mistake forgivable. Spelling errors vanished, grammatical slips were ignored. Students hovering near the pass line were gently pushed over it.

One student wrote two possible synonyms. "If even one is right," I said to the evaluator, "give marks."

She laughed and did.

When the final result came, my subject English had achieved the impossible: 100% pass.

For the first time, my name appeared in green.

The principal beamed. The district office sent me a letter of appreciation.

On Annual Day, I was called to the stage, garlanded, photographed, and praised. The applause thundered, but in my heart something cracked.

That night, I sat alone with my certificate and whispered to myself, "I have succeeded in numbers but failed in purpose."

Months later, when a new batch entered Class 11, I gave them a simple task write a Leave Application.

Every letter had five to seven mistakes. These were my 100% achievers, my perfect products.

I realised then that my methods had won a battle but lost the war.

Before this obsession with numbers, my students wrote gracefully and spoke with confidence. They played with words, understood meaning, and took pride in expression.

Now, they stared at blanks waiting for instructions. Their confidence had been replaced by dependence.

In our pursuit of results, we had produced educated illiterates.

Looking back, I understand that the system, not the teacher, was the real culprit.

Fear breeds shortcuts, pressure kills creativity.

Teachers who once nurtured curiosity were turned into drill sergeants.

Students, once learners, became test-takers.

We all played our parts in the illusion of perfection.

Today, the system is slowly awakening to quality over quantity. But it came too late for a generation that learned to pass without learning to think.

I am retired now, but that chapter of my life remains open a reminder that a teacher's true triumph is not 100% results, but 100% learning.

Private Tuition Odyssey

Along with my regular school teaching, I slowly stepped into another world home tuition, or what people proudly call private tuition. At that time, I never imagined that this side journey would one day become a powerful chapter of my life.

My introduction to home tuition happened in 1990, at Kendriya Vidyalaya, JNU Campus. One of the Maths teachers introduced me to a Malayali family to teach English. The fee was ₹60 per hour. That amount looked handsome to me in those days. It felt like an easy way to earn money.

Today, that same boy is working in Luxembourg in a very high position and that thought still fills my heart with quiet pride.

I had to teach both the brother and the sister. It was not easy to teach a South Indian family the mother was always moving around me, watching every word, every explanation. Still, the carrot of money was always in front of me. I worked sincerely. Both children scored very good marks. That was my first breakthrough.

After that, there was no looking back.

My tuition world spread rapidly across South West Delhi. I taught students in Katwaria Sarai, Munirka, Ber Sarai, Lado Sarai, Vasant Kunj, and Humayunpur.

I literally ran from house to house like a madman with a mission. Students from the most reputed schools started coming to me.

Sansanwals, Tomars, Tokas, Singhs entire families trusted me with their children. Miracles began to happen. Many students scored excellent marks year after year.

Today, my students hold remarkable positions,

Economic Forecast Planners in MNCs, Officers in American banks, Legal Advisors to international organisations, RBI officers, Doctors in reputed hospitals

Not a single one remained at a lower level. I also taught the wards of my colleagues.

Slowly, my fee rose to ₹1000 per hour, and I was regarded as a specialist in Economics and English.

And with tuition came hospitality

Different flavoured teas, juice, milk, chaach.

In a single day, I drank five different types of tea from five different houses.

My private tuition graph was truly at its peak.

Every student was unique.

Once I went to teach the daughter of a reputed doctor. On that very day, a brand-new revolving chair arrived at her house along with me, at the same time. She sat on the chair and began spinning clockwise at full speed. I waited for the class to begin. After some time, I called out, "Shall we start?"

She simply raised her hand and said, "Wait."

She continued spinning for 30 minutes.

In between, her mother arrived she herself was a very famous doctor in Delhi. She said, "Raja Sir is waiting. Come on!"

The girl stopped for one second, then started rotating again this time in the anti-clockwise direction for another 20 minutes. After one full hour, she finally stopped and declared, "I am tired. Tomorrow we can have class."

Today, that same girl is a top cartoonist in print media.

Another student from a famous school in Chanakyapuri had a strange habit he used to dance behind the English teacher in the classroom. His mother was an officer in one of the most powerful ministries. She requested me, "Please make him clear Class XII."

Today, he is a leading legal advisor for corporate firms.

Once, I jokingly told a parent,

"I will take ₹100 for every mark your daughter scores."

Her father calmly gave me a blank cheque.

She scored 98 marks. He asked me to fill in any amount I wished. That girl is now working as an economic forecast planner.

I never filled that cheque.

In one house, the grandmother used to sit in the next room while I taught. The boy scored around 65 marks. The grandmother immediately said, "If I write the exam, I can get more than 80. I understood you very clearly."

Today, that boy is working in the Reserve Bank of India.

Once, a science teacher from my school introduced me to a family in South Extension to teach Economics. At the gate, I was welcomed by a person whom I assumed to be a lady. I politely said, "Please send your daughter."

After a few minutes, the same person returned with a notebook and said,

“I am the student.”

I was shocked. But within one minute, I normalised and started teaching in my own style.

The next day, when I went again, at the gate itself I was given an envelope with ₹1200 and a message:

“Mam ne bola nahi aana.”

Perhaps the misunderstanding was too heavy.

There were two brothers in Swami Nagar. I taught them for nearly two years. I never met their parents even once. Before my arrival, they were always ready with their books. Every month, the fee came punctually. Only once a month, their mother spoke to me on the phone.

They studied in a very reputed school with all modern facilities. Still, they came to me. I often wondered why.

Perhaps the system had squeezed them too much.

Perhaps my way of diluting and simplifying the subject, the same method I used in government schools, worked for them.

My private tuition journey went extremely well. But one day, I suddenly realised

All the money I earned had gone waste.

Branded shirts, branded trousers, roaming around India...

I enjoyed life but I saved not even one penny.

Once I took money from students, some showed no emotions. Some stayed attached. Some bought services and left. Relationship ended.

I think I expected more from a few of them.

Later, when I approached an AIIMS doctor and a Fortis doctor for my friends, through my reference, I never received help. Still, I never approached anyone for my personal work.

Every year, as the exam time came closer, I started coughing badly.

After the 2013–14 academic year, I gradually stopped home tuition. If someone compelled me, I taught but I stopped taking money. If they were persistent, I accepted only a very small token amount.

After Covid-19, private tuition lost much of its shine.

While the demand for tutoring is still there, preferences have completely changed.

Parents and students now prefer technology-driven learning, big coaching centres, online platforms, recorded lectures

Traditional home tuition did not disappear but it now faces strong competition from tech-enabled education and the post-pandemic shift in learning habits.

The personal bond between teacher and student, the human presence, the tea breaks, the grandmother's comments all have slowly faded into memory.

Looking back, I realise that private tuition was not just about money.

It was a parallel life filled with dreams, discipline, disappointment, dedication, strange incidents, silent sacrifices and unexpected success stories

I may have forgotten many details. But I cannot forget the spirit of those years when I ran with books in one hand and hope in the other.

We-The Teachers

We.
We, the teachers.

A fraternity bound not by uniform, but by responsibility.

A community rarely celebrated, often misunderstood, yet always present.

Though scriptures and philosophies place us just below God, we know the reality that hides beneath those flattering words.

Are we truly revered?

Respect arrives in fragments, in passing moments, in hurried acknowledgements. But true reverence is rare.

Still, we work, we endure, and we rise again, each day.

No two teachers are alike. We are a mosaic of personalities, temperaments, strengths.

Put us into any unfamiliar assignment, disrupt our routines, load us with new expectations we first protest, analyse, discuss.

We compare global systems, examine policies, weigh merits and demerits.

Then, once the decision is made, we step forward with quiet determination.

We do not look back.

We finish.

We return to normal.

During Census duty, one enumerator is assigned nearly 300 houses. A single “house” often contains five floors, each floor eight to ten families, each family three to five people.

Yet a 55-year-old teacher, with tired knees and a fading voice, completes the data collection before the February 28 deadline.

No newspaper headline. No public applause.

Only the silent commitment.

This too is my duty.

Teachers become Booth Level Officers, EWS surveyors, polio-duty volunteers often with no training, no clarity, no prior notice.

Yet we do it. Every time.

Presiding Officer today, Polling Officer tomorrow.

A notice arrives, “Report one day before polling.”

A teacher’s toddler, an elderly parent, an unwell spouse all placed in careful preparation before she leaves.

Meals cooked.

Medicines arranged.

Instructions given.

Goodbyes whispered.

At the Returning Office, personal worries dissolve. Booth numbers, voter rolls, material packets these take over. Teachers are herded into buses like anonymous cargo.

Dropped at polling stations in darkness.

Suddenly, the teacher becomes a sweeper, a labourer, a technician.

We clean the booth, paste charts, test machines, label wires, ensure perfection.

One ventures out to get evening tea.

Night settles.

A garbage truck drops our “sleeping kits.”

We talk...

We pretend to sleep...

At 4 AM, we rise.

EVM or VVPAT failure? A restless crowd?

We face it.

After polling, we carry heavy machines sometimes two EVMs, multiple voting units up staircases to the strong room.

Physical exhaustion mixes with mental numbness.

Only after receiving the acknowledgement slip, we become human again.

Hunger returns.

Family returns.

The longing for home returns.

By the time we reach home, the clock shows 2 AM.

TA?

Maybe next year. Maybe never.

Next election?

We go again.

When the world shut itself inside, teachers stepped outside.

Ration distribution, street-side food supply, home visits,
phone calls, airport screening teams

We became the bridge between fear and survival.

We faced crowds. We faced infection.

Some of us fell.

Some of us never returned.

Yet we continued to teach online, offline, hybrid, improvised,
distorted, adapted.

We stitched hope into lessons.

At 10:40 AM, after four continuous periods, a teacher finally
opens her lunch box.

Just then “Sir... head broken... blood is coming!”

Lunch closes, five teachers rush. Three goes to the hospital.
Cold lunch waits until evening. God alone knows how many
lunches our profession has sacrificed.

At 2:25 PM, when school is about to close, a young man of 30
arrives, “Sir, I need my Class XII marksheet and TC... I must
reach Lucknow for a job.”

Twelve-year-old files.

Dust-laden shelves.

Old registers.

TC handwritten.

Marksheet found by 4 PM. We hand it over with blessings.

Try visiting any office during lunch or closing hours, you will
be turned away.

But in a school, there is no “timing.”

A teacher’s service never closes.

Anyone can scold us.

Anyone can complain.

A light punishment, given only to correct a child, becomes a weapon against us.

Yet, when that same child falls into trouble, we stand at the front.

Curriculum changes? We adapt.

New education policy? We learn.

Competency-based exams? We prepare.

We bend but never break.

People say, “If you want more holidays, become a teacher.”

But winter break means remedial classes. Summer break means Buniyaad, summer camps, admissions.

We practically live inside the school. Some teachers, tragically, even breathe their last on duty.

If my students are happy, I am happy.

Teaching is like walking on a tightrope, balancing discipline with kindness, firmness with compassion, authority with empathy.

We cannot show our personal sorrows. We cannot collapse in front of our children.

We stand upright, wiping our tears unseen.

We are teachers.

Not saints.

Not machines.

Not magicians.

But human beings with extraordinary endurance. Human beings who do the work of many professions in one lifetime. Human beings who make thousands of lives possible.

We are teachers.

And that is our pride.

My Journey as a Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC)

When SCERT introduced the Teacher Development Coordinator Program in 2017, it carried a powerful vision, to build a vibrant, collaborative learning culture across all Delhi government schools.

The idea was noble reignite intrinsic motivation, strengthen peer learning, and nurture a system where every child, every teacher, and every official grows together.

Across Delhi's 13 districts and 1024 schools, a single intrinsically motivated teacher from each school was chosen as TDC. The role was meant to support teachers academically, encourage professional dialogue, and help schools evolve into true learning institutions.

It sounded inspiring at least on paper.

I was deputed as the TDC from Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Sarojini Nagar.

The reason was almost humorous nobody else wanted the post.

The earlier TDC, a PGT Sanskrit teacher, retired. After that, the position stood vacant, gathering dust and disinterest. The initial charm of the program had faded.

Ironically, I had actually wanted to become a Mentor Teacher.

I attended the interface confidently.

But perhaps I questioned too directly, or my tone carried too much experience the panel may have felt I was “not fit for the Mentor role.”

So, I was offered something “one step below” Mentor:

Teacher Development Coordinator.

I had to be guided by young facilitators enthusiastic, confident, and very new to the system. Many of them were younger than my years of service alone.

It was a moment that required humility, patience, and a sense of humour.

I initially said no.

But my principal insisted, “You can go to Singapore and Finland. Manish Sisodia ji is sending teachers for training. You should get a chance.”

The earlier TDC also said, “You must go. Only then the Mentors will start respecting you.”

I realised slowly, I was becoming the chosen ‘escape goat’.

But life has its own way of assigning roles.

And eventually, the baton landed in my hands.

Interestingly, teachers who attended the mentor interface with me are now mentors, resource persons, and suddenly, authority figures.

They greeted me warmly, “Mr. Raja, welcome as TDC. Your experience will benefit all of us.”

I smiled. Experience teaches patience.

The Learning Improvement Cycles (LICs) were well-designed professionally. The structure was meaningful.

The intentions were sincere.

However, every LIC started with a “warm-up activity.”

These activities often felt childish or irrelevant more suitable for a picnic than for senior teachers. Sometimes I quietly stepped aside until the activity was over. I could never imagine doing such activities in my school.

Then came the ‘Bulb Moments’ where we shared our achievements between LICs.

Some spoke theatrically. Some with nervous enthusiasm.

I simply smiled, because I knew the ground reality too well.

The lunch that followed was legendary in its own way, Early-morning cooked food, curd that tasted proudly sour and sweets that travelled freely across rice, sabzi, and salad. A complete culinary experience whether you asked for it or not.

When I conducted my first ART meeting, the entire staff gathered.

The principal announced, “Now you are our TDC. Something extraordinary must happen.”

Teachers asked, “Raja sir, what will you get for us?”

I arranged samosas and coffee not tea. As a South Indian, coffee isn’t just a drink, it is an identity. Teachers happily accepted the snacks, then politely said, “Raja, you relax. Give us the photocopies. We will read.”

My Mentor Teacher did not turn up.

The next day, I began classroom observations.

Primary teachers tried sincerely. But in classes XI and XII, teachers said openly, “LIC is not for us.”

Senior teachers resisted new methods. Younger teachers pretended to follow only when I was present.

By the time I left the room, things returned to the old ways.

The only thing that kept evolving was the snack menu for ART meetings from samosa - to vada - to pakora - to something else.

Mentor changed.

Principal changed.

But teaching practices remained exactly the same.

Despite all this, our school consistently performed well. We remained one of the best Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in South West A, and proudly stood 13th in Delhi across all streams.

People said, "Raja brought the miracle!"

I listened quietly.

Because I knew the truth no grand pedagogical transformation had happened. But I never complained.

Maybe patience was my silent contribution.

The international training trips created great excitement.

At first, my name wasn't in the list.

Someone told me, "Unless you meet Mr., your name will not come."

But I never went.

Later, my name suddenly appeared. Passport ready.

Visa approved. Bags mentally packed.

For a moment, the dream felt real.

And then the world changed.

Covid- 19 entered silently.

The Singapore trip was cancelled. All plans vanished overnight.

But yes, In the name of Singapore, I spent a fortune on samosas.

My TDC journey was filled with gentle humour, small disappointments, unexpected moments, and quiet hope.

I realised, Teachers may resist change fiercely. Yet they are deeply committed to their students.

Systems move slowly. But sincerity leaves its mark.

And sometimes the best contributions are the ones no one notices.

Through every LIC meeting, every ART gathering, every observation round, and every samosa bill I learnt more about patience, understanding, and the beautiful unpredictability of schools.

Perhaps that is the true essence of the TDC program even if the system doesn't transform overnight, we keep the spirit of learning alive, one small moment at a time.

The Examination Pressure Factory

Student anxiety.
Parent anxiety.

Teacher's tension.

Sleepless nights.

This is not a horror film script. This is the annual academic calendar.

Somewhere in another chapter I may have touched this fire lightly. But here, I say it openly and without varnish, Examination, in my view, is nothing but a well-organised, government-approved torture camp.

Whether it is the Tamil Nadu Board or CBSE, the question paper may change, but the pressure cooker remains the same.

Same syllabus ocean.

Same expectation mountain.

Same fear factory.

Once upon a time, teachers were not worried about a few students scoring distinction or a few failings.

We understood a simple truth that policymakers still struggle to accept, children are born with different speeds, different strengths, and different destinies.

Result day was just a day. Not a verdict. Not a battlefield.

Then one fine year, the Government discovered a magical number '100%'.

From that day onward, teachers stopped being teachers.

They became percentage-producing machines.

The Annual Confidential Report got married to the result sheet. Promotion, MACP, increments everything stood on a single fragile leg called pass percentage.

Show-cause notices became as common as class tests.

And the most dangerous twist?

Students started threatening teachers, "Give us marks... otherwise you will be punished or transferred."

That was the day the examination stopped testing students.

It began testing teachers.

From the first of April itself, Class X and XII teachers are officially declared emotionally unavailable human beings.

They "take to their heels" not to escape, but to run behind slow learners, attendance registers, and invisible targets.

High-scoring areas are rushed through before vacation.

Teachers chase students for one-to-one teaching like sales agents chasing customers.

Weak students are declared weak officially like a medical diagnosis.

And summer vacation?

Only the calendar enjoys it. Teachers don't.

Weak students are forced to attend special classes.

Teachers forget their families, forget weddings, forget rest.

Black coffee replaces sleep.

Parents are called. Furious faces are displayed like official uniforms.

“No admit card.”

“No roll number.”

“No mercy.”

Some parents cry. Some parents shout. Some parents silently curse destiny.

A few even think, “Why did we ever have a child?”

In the middle of this storm stand the JEE-NEET-CLAT parents beaten from coaching centres on one side and schools on the other. Everyone is chasing rank.

No one is chasing peace.

Exam halls turn into high-security prisons.

Bull dogs? Sorry, strict invigilators guard every bench.

Flying squads hover like vultures.

Principals patrol like army generals.

No turning the neck.

No whispering.

No borrowing.

No breathing loudly.

Students understand the meaning of fear not from textbooks, but from silence.

When results come, marks drop mysteriously by 15–20%. Teachers distribute marks as if they are cutting pieces from their own flesh.

The Parent-Teacher Meeting resembles a three-way funeral

Teacher cries.

Parent cries.

Student cries.

Some students decide, "Enough. I will not study."

But teachers never surrender.

Weak students are bundled together and injected with the life-saving drug called 33%. Above-average students are left to manage their own fate like senior citizens.

Pre-Board.

Pre-Board-1.

Pre-Pre-Board.

Answer sheets lie on the staffroom table like accident victims. Every paper undergoes post-mortem.

"Two marks less than 100?!"

"Can't you score 75?"

"If 20 teachers sit with you, even you will get 33!"

Teachers start visiting temples, mosques, churches not for moksha, but for moderation and mercy.

On the exam day, teachers reach the centre as if they themselves are writing the exam.

Pens, last-minute tips, flowers, blessings, spare admit cards everything is stuffed into our bags like survival kits.

Once a girl went missing at 10:05. The gate was about to close. Parents said calmly, "She left at 8:30, sir."

At the bus stand, a stranger said casually, "Sir, go look between two buses."

There she was with her boyfriend revising life, not literature.

At 10:25 she entered the exam hall after half the city blessed her with scolding.

At 1:30 p.m., I stood again outside the centre, waiting like a worried father, did they attempt all questions? Did they faint? Did they remember what we taught?

All teachers gather before one computer screen like devotees before a temple.

First the weakest students are checked.

Once one clears, we clap. BP shoots up. Hands tremble.

Only after the last child passes, we begin breathing like humans again.

Then suddenly, we become children ourselves, "Raja sir, I have more above 90 than you!"

Neighbouring school results are checked secretly. If theirs are lower, we feel national pride.

When 100% appears on the screen, we feel like soldiers returning from war wounded but victorious.

And Then the Government Panics

Once we finally achieve 100%, the Government becomes suspicious,

"This is not possible," they say. And immediately invent a new bomb, 'quality index'

The machine is replaced. The pressure is not.

A teacher today lives in permanent emotional crossfire:

If students fail, he is blamed

If students pass easily, he is suspected

If results are low, he is punished

If results are high, he is investigated

We live between fear and hope, sympathy and strictness,
humanity and paperwork

We teach children, "Don't be afraid of exams."

But we ourselves sleep with one eye open from January to May.

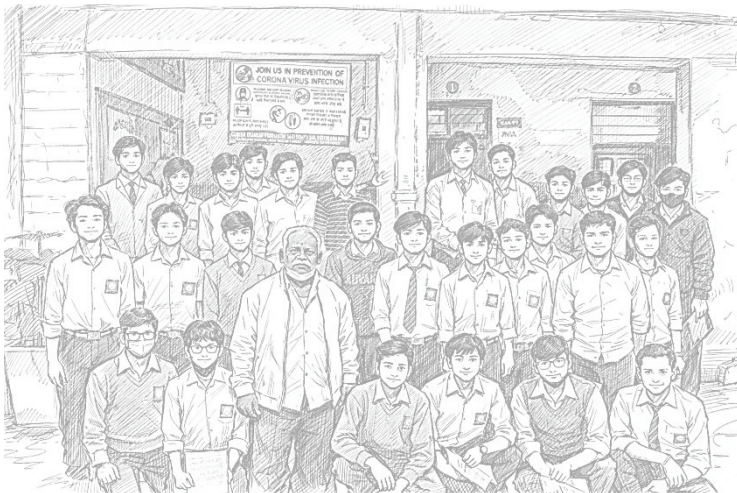
The world calls it evaluation.

We teachers call it slow psychological execution.

And yet when a trembling child stands at the exam hall gate,
we still smile and say softly,

"Don't worry. You will surely do well."

Not knowing whose heart is beating faster at that moment the
student's...or the teacher's.



Miracle

Miracle a word I used often, long before I fully understood its weight.

I might not have known its dictionary definition then, but I had heard it echo many times during Sunday sermons in church. The word stayed with me, not as theology, but as hope.

Gradually, almost unconsciously, it found its way into my classroom.

“You can do miracles.”

This was a sentence I repeated often especially to students who were weak, hesitant, or silently defeated. I said it not as a declaration of greatness, but as a gentle nudge. Many of my students carried invisible burdens, fear of failure, repeated rejection, and a deep belief that English or learning itself was beyond their reach. When they felt cornered, when they refused to write a sentence or speak a single line, I used this sentence to console them.

“Come on,” I would say, “make mistakes. I am here to correct you. You can do miracles.”

At first, I did not realise the strength hidden in those words. To me, it was simply encouragement perhaps even borrowed faith.

The reactions, however, were telling. The boys usually stared at me in disbelief. Some smiled faintly, some looked away, and most walked back to their seats in silent contemplation.

The girls often laughed lightly, almost dismissively.

The sentence sounded too large, too dramatic, too distant from their reality. I did not blame them. When hope has been denied repeatedly, belief feels unrealistic.

Years passed.

One ordinary day, I received a phone call.

A woman spoke on the other end. Calm, confident, unfamiliar, "I got your number from a teacher R. K. Purani, Section 12," she said.

Then she added, "I was your student at Jose Marti School."

She reminded me of a sentence I had once said in my XII class, 'You can do miracles'.

She paused and continued, "Today, I am a Microbiology Scientist, working with the Government of India in the Ministry of Environmental Science. That sentence pushed me to this height."

For a moment, I was silent. I listened again not to the words, but to their journey.

I could not recognise her face. Time has a way of erasing images while preserving impact.

I asked her to send her photograph, not out of doubt, but out of disbelief quiet, overwhelming disbelief.

What I felt then was not pride, but humility.

I had used that sentence casually, almost instinctively, to encourage a struggling student. I had never imagined it would stay with someone for years, shaping decisions, strengthening resolve, and slowly turning effort into achievement.

I realised then that words, when spoken at the right moment, do not disappear they settle somewhere deep and wait.

To be honest, my intention was never heroic. I used those words mainly to help students clear their English examination.

Perhaps there was even a selfish motive to secure a hundred percent pass result in English.

I wanted them to write, to attempt, to stop fearing failure.

That was all.

Many students might not even remember the sentence.

Many may not have felt they performed any miracle at all.

But some perhaps a few might have used that belief as a small lamp while walking through their darkness.

If that helped them loosen the shackles of fear, even slightly, it was enough.

I remembered my own teacher's words from long ago. When I scored poorly, he would say, "This time I will water and nourish you. Next time you must give fruits otherwise I will cut the tree and throw it into the fire."

The metaphor stayed with me.

When my students did not perform well, I did the same I waited, watered, encouraged, and believed. I allowed time to do its quiet work.

I still believe miracles are not sudden explosions of success. They are slow, silent processes built from patience, belief, effort, and timely words.

Sometimes, miracles are nothing more than someone believing in you when you have stopped believing in yourself.

I believe it happened.

I believe it happens.

The Lesson plan

Lesson Plan.
Notes of Lesson.

Teacher's Diary.

Three names, one grand illusion.

For decades, these three items were projected as the pillars of 'professional teaching', as if a teacher's success depended on how gracefully she could fill pages not on how effectively students learned.

During my B.Ed. days, these words were spoken with such reverence that I felt I was being trained to become a scientist of education.

We were introduced to a gallery of theorists Pavlov, Thorndike, Bloom, Maslow each presented as if their theories were magical keys that would open every classroom door.

The Psychology Parade We Were Made to Memorise

Pavlov taught us how learning happens through associations.

If he rang a bell, dogs salivated. If I rang a bell in class, students simply stood up to go home.

Thorndike showed us that learning strengthens through satisfying outcomes. If that were true, lesson plans should have strengthened with repeated practice.

Instead, the only thing that strengthened was my frustration.

Bloom constructed a majestic pyramid of thinking skills - Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate, Create.

A beautiful structure, worthy of being painted on every B.Ed. classroom wall.

But inside a government school, students often operated on a level below 'Remember'. Sometimes they didn't even remember that English period existed.

Maslow climbed his pyramid of needs physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, self-actualisation.

But I discovered a hidden level below all these, Students must be in the mood to listen."

Without this invisible foundation, no pyramid stands.

We were fed these theories with such seriousness that I believed they would shape every minute of my teaching career. I imagined entering classrooms like a trained educational psychologist, analysing students with scientific precision.

But reality welcomed me like a cold bucket of water.

For each lesson, we were expected to prepare:

General Objectives

Specific Objectives

Teaching Points

Learning Outcomes

Teaching Aids

Methodology

Pre-reading Activities

While-reading Activities

Post-reading Activities

Evaluation Questions

Reinforcement

Follow-up Assignments

All this for one single lesson. We wrote 3 to 4 pages for each lesson. And if the handwriting was not beautiful, the B.Ed. lecturer's eyebrows went up.

We corrected, rewrote, redrew margins, underlined headings, matched colours. I spent more time beautifying the lesson plan than preparing the actual lesson content.

By the end of the B.Ed. course, I had a thick bundle of lesson plans a proud, decorated monument of theory and imagination.

I believed I had mastered the art of teaching.

But the first day of teaching practice shattered that belief like glass.

I entered the government school for my practice teaching with confidence.

My lesson plan was perfect.

My diagrams were colourful.

My joke for the introduction was rehearsed.

My sequence of Bloom's verbs was neatly organised.

But I had forgotten one tiny detail students are not part of the lesson plan.

My Pre-Reading Activities fell flat

I began with enthusiasm, “Students, do you know what happens when...?”

Silence.

Not even a head tilt.

The entire class looked at me with the expression of people attending a court hearing.

I tried again.

Another question. Another silence.

In my plan, I had imagined lively responses, nodding heads, enthusiastic hands raised. Instead, I got the silence of a meditation hall.

My first joke entered the room, died, and was buried immediately.

Not a smile. Not a whisper.

Later I learnt that the previous batch had warned them, “Don’t laugh at any joke during teaching practice. They repeat the same jokes every year.”

So, my ‘icebreaker’ melted before it even started.

My Expected Answers Never Appeared

The lesson plan had a section titled ‘Expected Responses’ beautifully written, logical, neat, predictable.

Actual responses? Absolutely nothing.

At one point, I doubted whether I was teaching English or conducting a funeral.

I became confused, embarrassed, slightly sweaty, and completely stuck.

My guide teacher, a veteran of classroom wars, whispered kindly but firmly, “Forget your lesson plan. Just teach. Use the lecture method.”

Broken inside, I asked, “What about Bloom’s Taxonomy, Pavlov, Thorndike...?”

He didn’t even blink.

His answer was a lifetime truth,

“If you think of all that, you can’t teach.”

That one sentence dismantled my entire B.Ed. foundation.

From that day onwards, I realised that theories remain in classrooms where students are imaginary.

In Tamil Nadu, the 3-4 page plan shrank into a ready-made 200-word paragraph.

Teachers just copied it. No one used it.

It had no connection with real teaching.

In Delhi, the “Teacher’s Diary” arrived.

A slightly more polished disguise for the same non-functional concept.

The first few pages felt like writing my horoscope; Name, address, date of birth, subjects handled, blood group, hobbies...

After that, only simple notes like, “Lesson 3 to be completed today”.

This diary was useful only when the Education Officer walked in. Otherwise, it gathered dust on the staffroom shelf.

Every time I attempted pre-reading strategies again, the pattern repeated.

Students either gave unpredictable answers or no answers.

Their silence had its own cleverness. They waited for me to struggle, and I did.

My lesson plan became a beautiful theory that could not enter the noisy, unpredictable, living organism called “a real classroom.”

Even jokes had to be reinvented each year.

If I reused one joke, the entire class sat with serious faces as if they were cooperating in a silent protest.

Whenever I tried to follow the lesson plan with devotion, the syllabus ran away like a fast train.

I struggled.

I stressed.

I rushed.

I panicked.

Finally, I realised, Either I follow the lesson plan or I finish the syllabus.

But I cannot do both.

So, I chose the syllabus.

The lesson plan became ceremonial something to write because the system demanded it, not because it helped teaching.

After years of experience, failure, trial, adjustment, improvisation, and survival inside classrooms, I discovered one timeless truth,

Lesson plans look beautiful outside the classroom.

Theories shine in textbooks.

Diaries look impressive on the inspector's table.

But inside the classroom...

Students do not behave according to Pavlov, Thorndike, Bloom, or Maslow. Teaching is not built on pyramids, flowcharts, conditioning, or connectionism.

Teaching is built on:

Patience

Adaptability

Emotional reading of students

Quick thinking

Instant improvisation

Classroom survival instincts

Real human connection

I spoke to many brilliant teachers from reputed schools. Every one of them quietly admitted what I knew too well,

Lesson plan is a wonderful theory. But in real classrooms, it is mostly useless.

The Day I Wanted to Quit Teaching

People often ask teachers, “Was there ever a day you wanted to quit?”

In my case, the truthful answer is simple and yet difficult to explain:

That day never arrived.

Not because my journey was smooth. Not because teaching was easy.

But because by the time teaching finally came to me, life had already trained me in endurance.

I completed my post-graduation in Economics in 1994, from St. Joseph’s College, Trichy a Jesuit institution known for discipline and intellectual rigour.

Yet degrees do not guarantee dignity. For nearly seven long years, I remained underemployed, unemployed, and temporarily employed, moving through uncertainty with quiet persistence.

I worked wherever opportunities appeared leave vacancies, ad-hoc positions, short-term assignments.

Each job arrived with hope; each departure left behind unanswered questions.

Though my parents were teachers, teaching did not initially attract me. My learning style was unconventional slow, reflective, questioning. I could not visualise myself fitting into the ‘ideal posts’ that society admired.

Still, I tried.

I waited.

I endured.

I believed the Society of Jesus priests might guide me. I narrowly missed chances PGT Economics, Librarian.

I moved from place to place, convinced that stability was just one step ahead. It never came until teaching finally did.

My mother herself a deeply committed assistant teacher never revealed her disappointment. Her silence was not indifference; it was patience. She allowed time to teach me what lectures could not.

My father, on the other hand, never stopped instructing. His advice flowed generously sometimes repetitively right up to a day before his retirement. That was his language of love.

By then, I understood something essential, Waiting had to end.

Staying had to begin.

When teaching entered my life, it did so without ceremony. No trumpet was blown. No celebration followed. It simply arrived like responsibility often does.

I made one clear decision, If I teach, I will teach with simple sincerity.

Teaching gave rhythm to my days.

Teaching gave stability to my life.

Teaching even gave me the confidence to marry and settle. From that moment onward through every high and low the thought of quitting never crossed my mind.

No Principal ever questioned my integrity. No Education Officer ever corrected my classroom conduct. No student ever accused me of not teaching well.

In fact, students argued with me not in complaint, but in demand. Many insisted on attending my class even when I was not assigned to them.

Beyond teaching, I did everything the system demanded clerical work, note sheets, RTI replies, administrative duties. Files weighed heavier than textbooks, yet the classroom remained my anchor. My Disagreements Were Never Personal

Yes, I opposed certain chapters.

Yes, I questioned methods.

Yes, I was frustrated with curriculum overload.

I disagreed with NCERT, SCERT, DIET, and at times with the Directorate of Education. But never, not even once, did I resent teaching itself.

I taught English not as a syllabus to be completed, but as an experience to be lived. I cultivated curiosity. I encouraged enjoyment. I wanted learning to feel natural, not forced.

Like my father, I taught on my final working day 30/09/2022.

No farewell speeches.

No emotional spectacle.

Just one more class. Many colleagues stopped teaching weeks before retirement.

I could not.

Leaving a classroom without teaching felt incomplete.

Today, as a consultant, I once observed a young English teacher during her substitution period. She asked students to show their notebooks. Only four responded and even those were incomplete.

She smiled and said, "Sir, you look serious, but you are not strict with children."

She was right.

I never believed in homework for appearance's sake. I disliked correcting copied answers. I preferred engaging students in the moment assigning work, observing progress, correcting instantly.

I believed interest produces discipline, not fear. But systems prefer evidence. Systems demand notebooks. Systems reward strictness.

I smiled and replied, "I don't know how to be strict with my children."

And I meant it.

Yes, there were difficulties.

Yes, there were disagreements.

Yes, there was exhaustion.

But quitting?

Never.

Because teaching was not something I merely performed. It was something I gradually became. After surviving years of uncertainty, teaching did not feel like employment.

It felt like arrival.

And once you arrive, you stop searching for exits.

Some people leave teaching because the profession disappoints them. I stayed because teaching never betrayed me.

It corrected me when I erred.

It humbled me when I grew rigid.

It kept me relevant when the world changed.

Teaching did not promise comfort, fame, or wealth. It promised purpose. And purpose, once found, does not ask to be abandoned.

So, if anyone asks again, "The day you wanted to quit teaching?"

I will answer calmly, that day never came, because teaching never gave me a reason to leave.

The Road That Found Me

I grew up in places where dreams were never spoken aloud. In my childhood, no one asked, “What would you like to become?”

Perhaps I too never imagined becoming anything. Life was simple a quiet rhythm of living, studying, playing, eating, and sleeping.

My parents worked in the remote villages of Sivaganga District, Tamil Nadu. There were no career plans, no motivational talks, no maps for the future. Life came as it came.

At Meenakshi Sundareswarar High School, Kilasevalpatti, I was an ordinary student, neither brilliant nor hopeless. The noble Chettiar community guided the school, and my teachers worked tirelessly to instil values, discipline, and a love for Tamil.

I respected them, but I lacked the fire.

I walked out of school with average results and a surprisingly good hold on English perhaps the first hint of the road that would later claim me.

Like most hopeful parents, mine placed me in the Science stream at St. Xavier’s College, Palayamkottai. But I was allergic to formulas and theories, drawn irresistibly toward Tamil cinema, hostel laughter, and the newness of city life.

Science rejected me.

I fell narrowly passing PUC, but falling all the same.

Thrown to St. Joseph's College, Trichy for B.A. Economics, I entered confused and unprepared. The first semester was a storm. But slowly the subjects unfolded, and I discovered a strength I never knew I had.

I scored 90 in Statistics and Mathematics.

Micro, Macro, Monetary, Agricultural everything felt surprisingly easy.

Somewhere inside, a quiet voice whispered, "You can do this."

I completed M.A. Economics, and for the first time in my life, I began to think ahead. IAS attracted me. Advertisements dazzled me. But there was no one to guide, no mentor to shape my dreams.

I attempted Bank Clerk, Probationary Officer, TNPSC Group I and II and failure greeted me repeatedly. Ironically, in Micro Economics, the very subject I once topped, I scored only 34 marks.

Life seemed to say, "Your strength is different. Find it."

So, I turned toward teaching and completed my B.Ed. from Madurai Kamaraj University.

My life as a teacher began at St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, as an ad-hoc Lecturer in Economics. Young and overflowing with energy, I taught with sincerity. Students loved my spontaneity.

Then I moved to St. Xavier's Higher Secondary School again ad-hoc, again with hope. A vacancy arose, but I was overlooked. The chosen ones were relatives of priests.

My heart cracked a little.

I refused the next ad-hoc offer.

A priest I knew from Sacred Heart College, Vellore sent me to Don Bosco School, Okha, Nagaland as PGT Economics. The place was a painting wooden classroom, green hills, innocent students, warm smiles.

I worked with love, and the land loved me back.

But my father asked me to return.

With a heavy heart, I left that beautiful, gentle world.

I tried for the Indian Air Force at Pankode, Kerala, as Education Officer.

I tried for a translator job at Mysore Macmillan.

Somewhere within me a fear grew maybe I am not intelligent enough to rise.

So, I returned to my strength - teaching.

At Zion Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kodaikanal, I lived one full year as a residential teacher. Cold mists, drizzles, silence, and sincere work.

Then one morning, a simple sentence ended everything, "Your service is no more required."

I stood stunned, carrying my books and my hurt, wondering what to do next.

Kendriya Vidyalaya, Karaikudi called me for TGT Social Science. They interviewed me in Hindi, a language I did not know.

So, with determination, I learnt Hindi from a private teacher.

I was posted at KV Kalpakkam, and within a year transferred to KV New Mehrauli Road, JNU Campus, Delhi.

There, the Principal changed my life. He suggested applying to the Directorate of Education, Delhi, and guided me through registering at the Employment Exchange.

I was selected as TGT English and TGT Social Science.

I regret not writing the PGT Economics exam but destiny had already chosen my direction.

I joined as TGT English on 12 December 1991 at Government Co-Ed Middle School, Tigri, New Delhi-62.

Then R.K. Puram Sector-2, Sector-12, Sarojini Nagar and finally retirement.

Now I serve at Atal Adarsh Vidyalaya, Lodhi Road, NDMC.

My Delhi children thousands of them shaped me into the person I am.

I lived with them, taught them, scolded them, laughed with them.

Much like the Delhi Police slogan, I too became:

With You, For You

Always

They still call out affectionately, "Raja Sir!". And in that one name, all my struggles melt like mist.

I did not become an IAS officer.

I did not become a banker.

I did not climb the ladders I once dreamed of.

Instead, I became a teacher who walked through failure, uncertainty, and heartbreak yet kept moving, guided only by sincerity.

I became the kind of teacher who lives in the hearts of children years after they leave school.

Perhaps I did not choose teaching.

Teaching chose me.

And I accepted it fully, faithfully, with all my heart.

Whom I Met – The Real Faces of My 34 Years in School

For almost thirty-four years, I lived and breathed inside the school system. I met countless people.

Here, I am not talking about my students, but about those whom I met in the school the teachers, staff, and administrators who formed the daily landscape of my working life.



I categorise them like this:

1). Primary Teachers

I met many primary teachers, the real teachers, the true moulders of childhood. They hold tender hands, wipe tears,

tie shoelaces, correct notebooks, jump, laugh, cry, and grow along with their tiny children.

They practically become mothers to the kids. Beautiful handwriting, interest in studies, neat notebooks, stories, songs, and all-round development all this bloom under their care.

This side of teaching is usually considered appropriate for married ladies. But I met many unmarried primary teachers too some venting frustration, some struggling under pressure, some feeling the work was below their status.

Men rarely survive here.

Most told me clearly, “Sir, this is not your cup of tea.”

Yet, primary teachers remain the best.

Even IAS, IPS, senior officers, or wealthy parents stand respectfully in front of them.

After office hours, the same highly placed parents must sit with their children and do the homework the primary teacher has given.

Primary teachers are very strict with parents. They don't bend easily.

And because of this discipline and affection, primary children fall deeply in love with their teacher.

For many boys, their very first 'girlfriend' is their primary teacher.

2). Language Teachers

Most Indian-language teachers Hindi, Tamil, etc. can be identified instantly by their look, their walk, and their manner.

They carry rich vocabulary, sarcasm sharper than needles, and a deep love for poetry.

They quote from epics like the Iliad, Odyssey, and from local classics with remarkable ease.

They mesmerise students with poetry, rhythm, and oratory. Only a few teach language in a dry and mechanical way.

Teachers of God's language – Sanskrit speak surprisingly good English. Their chanting reminds me of the temples of my hometown, beautiful rhyming, chorus repetition, and divine vibration.

But even here, human nature shows itself. A few of them could scold in shocking language totally opposite to their scholarly appearance.

The English teachers deserve a separate category. Their arrival is announced by the sharp click of heels.

Their accent is polished, some speak, some write, and some scold in such sophisticated English that nobody including the one being scolded understands.

They behave as if they have come straight from England. Their speech is filled with Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, and lines from sonnets.

They adore poems, poetic devices, figures of speech. They become furious for small grammar errors.

They are allergic to American English.

If they step on stage, even the public address system trembles. Their lectures are long, dramatic, and unforgettable.

They never give marks easily. A few teach English in Hindi medium not out of expertise, but purely to earn a living.

Yet they teach sincerely.

Many people come and teach English. But true English teachers are rare.

Mathematics teachers behave as if they are close relatives of Srinivasa Ramanujan.

They are nightmares for students.

They humiliate not only students but even fellow teachers if they get irritated.

Female Maths teachers are very strict.

Many have forgotten to smile.

They rarely speak in the staff room. If someone approaches them, they come back from their private mathematical universe slowly and reluctantly.

3). Subject Teachers

Science teachers form the elite class of the school.

They hide inside laboratories and behave as if they have daily contact with scientists and aliens.

To understand their explanations, we need support materials, diagrams, references, and sometimes divine grace.

Chemistry teachers are God's own creation, unique, unpredictable, and explosive.

Physics teachers teach as if they created the universe themselves.

Biology and Zoology teachers explain flora and fauna with such confidence that even God may ask them a doubt or two.

Students fear them.

Teachers fear them.

The whole school fears them.

They rarely visit the staff room, and if they do, they talk only among themselves.

For them, other subject teachers are “not up to the mark.”

Social Science Teachers are large in number and even larger in voice.

Most school-related decisions somehow go through them.

Their speeches are endless. Give them one word they can talk for hours.

World politics, economics, wars, revolutions everything stays in their hands. They fight among themselves based on politics, philosophy, and ideology.

They can solve any world problem with words.

Female Social Science teachers are quieter, speak less about politics, and carry better emotional balance.

Students score well in their subjects, compared to others.

Art Teachers are the real Picassos of the school.

They teach little but decorate a lot.

They turn dull walls into colourful exhibitions.

They talk less, observe a lot, and are very difficult to understand.

4). Physical Education Teachers

They are extremely busy and sharp until morning assembly is over.

During Zonal or District sports meets, they become the most active people in the school.

Once the meets are over, they quietly wait for the next sports season.

5). Office Staff

Here, I speak the plain truth, I never met a genuine person in the school office.

From my first LTC to the last,

I had to pay bribes even though my tickets were from government agencies.

For every GPF withdrawal, I had to pay money.

During every election duty, 10% of the travelling allowance went into someone's pocket.

Even for medical reimbursement, I had to give huge amounts.

At the time of retirement, again I had to pay.

There was no escape.

Corruption ran like blood through the veins of the school office. Most of them lived a pathetic life unhappy yet never ready to change their habits.

This is the bitter truth.

Not polished, not sweetened

just as I experienced it.

6). Group D Employees

Group D workers constantly complained, yet they somehow completed the work.

Sometimes they had clashes with teachers and students, but sanitation workers and gardeners worked sincerely, quietly, and with dedication.

They are the invisible hands that keep a school alive.

7). The principals

Above all,

I met principals and, in my experience, they all belonged to one category:

Selfish.

They want teachers to work and work and work.

Some praise selectively,

others squeeze teachers like lemons.

If they find someone expert, they hold that person close only for benefit, mostly financial work or event management.

Once the work is done, they drop that teacher within seconds.

Use and throw.

Most principals I met were narrow-minded and called their manipulative nature “tactics.”

This is the truth I witnessed.

These are the people I met.

I am not generalising.

I am simply writing my truth.

Thirty-four years brought me teachers, staff, office people, and principals of every type the inspiring, the dramatic, the

hypocritical, the hardworking, the corrupt, the brilliant, and the unforgettable.

This is my lived experience.

Not fiction.

Not imagination.

Just the truth of a teacher's long journey inside the Indian school system.

My Students Through Three Decades

My journey as a teacher in Delhi is a long pilgrimage of learning not just for my students, but for me as well.

Each decade wrote a new chapter in my understanding of what it means to teach, to endure, and to remain relevant in a world that changes faster than chalk turns to dust.

It began in the crowded lanes of Ambedkar Nagar, where our middle school functioned under a canvas roof a tent that fluttered with dreams and dust.

The noise of children mixed with the wind, and that noise became the first music of my teaching career.

English was an alien tongue to my students, and my Hindi was still a stranger to me. Every time I stumbled between masculine and feminine genders, the students corrected me with innocent laughter.

Gradually, I became their student, and they became my teachers.

My vast knowledge and interest had to be compressed into words small enough for little minds to grasp. I carried a Hindi dictionary like a weapon of survival. The evenings were spent in discussion with fellow teachers, decoding how to teach English in a Hindi medium environment.

I resorted to the bilingual method, often using direct translation something I disliked but soon realized was the only bridge to their hearts.

When my students began to smile at my lessons, not fear them, I knew I had arrived. That day, under that tent, I was born again as an English teacher.

My transfer to R.K. Puram, Sector 2, a Senior Secondary School, gave me my wings. I was assigned to teach Classes X and XII and suddenly, literature opened like a stage, and I became both actor and director.

When I taught *The Solitary Reaper*, Wordsworth's voice echoed through my classroom. My students understood that poetry could cross borders.

They searched for the Scottish dialect, explored its melody, and one student, after returning from England, said, "Sir, I remembered *The Brook* and I searched for that Scottish girl who was reaping and singing. I think I found her spirit in a field."

During Julius Caesar, when Brutus struck Caesar, the classroom turned into Rome. My students felt the invisible splash of blood on their imaginations. When Antony spoke, they became the mob emotional, angry, alive.

They cried, laughed, travelled through ages with me. They learned irony, sarcasm, satire and even wrote love letters in English. I punished not their emotions but their grammar. English became not a subject, but a sensation.

Then came the digital storm slow at first, then merciless.

The blackboard turned green, then smart. The chalk that once sang on slate was silenced by the click of a mouse. The

teacher's handwriting once a symbol of authority became a forgotten art.

I stood helpless as technology marched into classrooms like an invading army. The soft hum of fans was replaced by the cold buzz of projectors.

The smell of chalk dust, the rustle of notebooks, the trembling hand of a child writing his first essay all were replaced by screens glowing with artificial confidence.

Computers promised efficiency but stole intimacy.

The keyboard began to think faster than the human brain. The cursor blinked where once eyes blinked in thought. I tried to adapt, but every software update made me feel older.

Students who once listened with curiosity now stared into pixels, their minds drifting between windows. The classroom lost its soul.

The television revolution colour TV, cable networks, cricket matches invaded their evenings, draining study time. My students' imagination, once fertile, now turned mechanical. The government piled more non-teaching duties; endless surveys, photo uploads, online forms.

Education became a performance, not a process.

The corridors of schools echoed with new words: NISHTHA, Prathiba, Mission Buniyaad, Mental Maths, Spoken English, PAHAS, Core Group, Mentor, SMC, VKS, Mindfulness, Desh Bhakti Curriculum, Business Blasters...

Each sounded like a slogan, not a solution.

Teachers were drowning in paperwork and photographs, not pedagogy.

And yet, some students still came from other sections, quietly requesting, “Sir, may we just sit and listen?” Those moments kept the flame alive.

Then, the unthinkable happened COVID-19.

My classroom shrank into a rectangle on a screen. I became a faceless teacher speaking to nameless listeners. Cameras were turned off, microphones muted, and only silence answered me.

Sometimes, a mother listened in place of her child. I could not see eyes, could not sense understanding, could not feel connection.

When the class ended, I no longer knew whether I had taught or simply spoken to the void.

And when schools reopened, I was not the same teacher, nor were they the same students. Something essential had vanished.

The post-COVID generation had lost personal interest. Their curiosity had become mechanical, their learning transactional. The thirst for knowledge had been replaced by the hunger for marks. YouTube became their mentor; shortcuts became their philosophy.

When I said, “Open your book, page number -” they yawned. Their eyes were fixed on invisible screens, not on words. My humour went unheard. My lessons lost their fragrance. The very chemistry of the classroom had evaporated.

They said, “Sir, give full marks if you want us to listen.”

And I knew the teacher’s era had ended.

Entrance exams, CUET, JEE, NEET, CLAT redefined learning. Marks were not milestones, only tickets. Two days of online

coaching could fetch 70 marks in English. The art, the emotion, the poetry all were reduced to slides, reels, and shortcuts.

The romance of education had died.

Today, when I look back, I realize I have lived three educational centuries in three decades.

From chalk to chip, from face-to-face to faceless.

My students once wrote love letters, now they write abbreviations. They once felt language, now they swipe it away. PUBG replaced playgrounds, TikTok replaced drama, and AI replaced imagination.

And yet, deep within me, I still believe a true teacher never retires.

We may fade from classrooms, but we live in memories, accents, and unspoken gratitude.

My exit may be silent, but my voice will remain in the corridors where a child once whispered, “Sir, English is not difficult it’s beautiful.”

God save my community for teachers still know the meaning of survival.

Teacher's Day

When I was a student, Teacher's Day meant very little beyond its name. I only knew that it was Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's birthday, and we were taught a few lines about him in our B.Ed. classes.

I still remember how, during my school days, a special Teacher's Day stamp was sold for ten paise. His framed photograph adorned the principal's room that was all I knew about it.

But after joining the Government of NCT Delhi as a teacher, I witnessed an entirely different and lively version of Teacher's Day.

By the time August arrived, excitement began brewing among the Class XII students. They would urge the Academic Coordinator to start preparations early. In co-educational schools, it was mostly the girls who took the lead planning every little detail, from new sarees and matching blouses to hairstyles and accessories.

The air of the school filled with anticipation. By the end of August, one could hear a common question echoing through the corridors, "Who will play which teacher this year?"

It was amusing when a student proudly announced, "I'm going to be Raja Sir!"

If it was a boy, he would try to copy my style the way I dressed, spoke, or even walked. If it was a girl, she would step

into the classroom trying to teach like me, often imitating my gestures with charming exaggeration.

Finally comes the most awaited day 5th September, the day every student-teacher dream of.

That morning, they arrive at school looking like stars straight out of a movie set. Many girls, fresh from the parlour, look radiant and graceful, while the boys, neatly dressed, carry a new air of confidence.

Every year I remind them, “No one should bring flowers for me!”

But my words fall on deaf ears. Before long, my table is overflowing with roses, pens, and chocolates.

Classes usually end after three periods, followed by a short cultural programme. Lady teachers swing gracefully to cheerful music while cameras flash from every corner. After the arrival of smartphones, another custom began, “Raja Sir, one photo with you!”

I never say no.

Boys and Girls gather around, smiling, laughing, and capturing those fleeting yet precious moments.

But what touches me most is what happens after school, the students, still dressed in their festive attire, go out together, celebrating friendship, youth, and life a continuation of the joy that began in the morning.

Farewell Day

In my school days, we never had a Farewell Day. When we finished Class X or XII, our teachers simply wished us well over a cup of coffee, with a bit of sweet and karam. That was it.

In Delhi schools, though, farewell is an emotional festival in itself. Before the main event comes something unique the Scribbling Day.

Students move around with permanent markers, asking their teachers and friends to sign on their school uniforms. Some signatures are funny, some are emotional, and some unforgettable.

I remember one student who bought three new shirts, just so her favourite teachers could sign on the front.

One year, a girl approached me with a pink marker and said softly, "Sir, please sign near my heart."

I hesitated.

"No, that's not right," I said.

But she looked at me with moist eyes and whispered, "Sir, you made me strong. You must sign on my heart."

How could I refuse? I signed gently, near her heart and that moment, I realised the depth of a teacher's bond with a student.

When the Farewell Day finally arrives, the Class XI students host a beautiful programme for their seniors. The auditorium

is filled with colour, laughter, and nostalgia. Students come dressed in their best sarees, suits, and ties ready to celebrate the end of a chapter.

During the function, teachers are called to the stage and felicitated. When my name is announced, the hall usually bursts into thunderous applause and joyful shouts of “Raja Sir! Raja Sir!” My entire section rushes towards the dais a sight that fills my heart every single year.

Once, a gentleman from an NGO who attended the event asked me, “Are you Raja Sir?”

When I nodded, he smiled and said, “I knew it the moment the students cheered. That kind of applause is not ordinary.”

That day, I wondered, Am I really popular, or is it something else?

Later, I realised it wasn’t about popularity. It was about love, respect, and the silent bond that connects a teacher with every student whose life he has touched.

And that, to me, is the real celebration far beyond flowers, chocolates, and applause.

I owe it all to my students their affection, their innocence, and their endless energy that make every Teacher’s Day and Farewell Day worth remembering for a lifetime.

Faces Behind My Chalkboard Years

A classroom remembers only one face the teacher standing near the chalkboard.

But every time I lifted the chalk, many faces stood silently behind me.

They were never visible to my students, yet they shaped every word I spoke, every hesitation I allowed, and every conviction I carried.

My pedagogical journey did not begin with my first appointment letter.

It began much earlier, in my college days, under the quiet influence of Rev. Fr. Tagore, S.J., the hostel warden who introduced me to AICUF - the All India Catholic University Federation. Through him, leadership ceased to be a concept and became a lived ethic.

He taught me that leadership is not about occupying the centre, but about widening the circle.

When I entered the teaching profession uncertain, untested, and still forming Rev. Fr. Antonysamy, S.J., Vice Principal of St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, guided me with quiet firmness. His guidance reminded me that teaching is not performance; it is presence, patience, and accountability.

At St. Joseph's College, Trichy, Dr. Mariaraj made Economics feel human. Under his teaching, complexity softened, fear dissolved, and understanding took root. From him, I learnt a

lesson I carried into my own classroom that clarity is an act of kindness.

My years in school education placed me under administrators who shaped my professional spine.

Mr. Ram Sewak, Principal of Government Boys Senior Secondary School, R.K. Puram, embodied gentleness in authority. His kindness never diluted discipline; instead, it gave it meaning.

At Jose Marti Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Ms. Vinay Verma entrusted me with independence an uncommon gift in institutional spaces. She believed in my voice, my judgment, and my intent. That faith steadied me at moments when self-doubt was louder than experience.

Though opinions about Mr. Kishan Pal Singh differed, he saw my worth clearly. During his tenure, I was entrusted with writing the Annual Confidential Reports of fellow teachers. That responsibility taught me discretion, balance, and moral courage lessons no syllabus ever mentions.

I also remember Mr. Kuldeep Singh Joon, Vice Principal, with whom I shared mutual respect despite differences. His passing left behind an unspoken pause a reminder that staffroom relationships, though ordinary in appearance, carry extraordinary weight.

Teaching unfolds alongside colleagues who share corridors, duties, fatigue, and hope. I carry with me the presence of Mr. Dileep Kumar Bhardwaj, Mr. V. S. Malik, Mr. S. Chauhan, Mr. Kirpal Singh Yadav, Ms. Karunasree, Mr. Narender, Mr. V. K. Sharma, Mr. Mahilal Kain, and Mr. Surender Saha whose companionship made teaching bearable on hard days and meaningful on ordinary ones.

A special space in my memory belongs to Mr. Rajbir Singh. He helped me repeatedly, without calculation or expectation. When I offered to support his daughter academically, he declined with gentle dignity. His generosity taught me that the purest form of help asks for nothing in return.

This book may carry my name on its cover, but its spirit belongs to many.

These faces stood behind my chalkboard years steadying my hand, softening my voice, and reminding me, again and again, why teaching must remain human.

Beyond the Syllabus, Echoes from the Classroom

Teachers rarely witness the moment when belief alters a life. We teach lessons, correct answers, and move on often unaware of which words stayed, which silences spoke, and which moments quietly changed direction.

The voices in this chapter returned to me across years and distances. They were not written for recognition. They arrived as memories honest, unguarded, and deeply human.

I place them here not as praise, but as proof of what teaching becomes when it moves beyond instruction and enters life.

“You Believed When I Couldn’t”

— *Yashi Dass*

Sir, I don’t even know where to begin, but I have carried this gratitude in my heart for a very long time. You were never just a teacher of subjects to me you were a teacher for life.

When I was in the eleventh standard, even my parents had begun to believe that maybe I wouldn’t make it. For them, it was enough if I simply passed. Somewhere along the way, I had accepted that expectation for myself too. I never imagined anything beyond that.

I still remember the day my parents asked you,

“She will at least pass, right?”

You smiled and replied,

“Pass? Don’t worry. She will score 90+ for sure.”

Ninety plus.

I had never imagined such a number for myself not even in my wildest dreams.

But you believed in me when I couldn’t believe in myself. Slowly, quietly, that belief became my strength.

When I finally scored 92, I cried not because of the marks, but because, for the first time in my life, someone had trusted me so deeply. I didn’t want that trust to go to waste.

I truly believe I reached there only because of your faith in me.

Not everyone is lucky enough to find a teacher like you. I will always be grateful to you, and to my parents for bringing you into my life as the best teacher I could have had.

Wherever I am standing today, you are the biggest reason behind it.

Thank you, Sir. I will carry this lesson with me for life. And I hope that, someday, I am able to pass on even a small part of what you gave me.

“A Father Figure in the Classroom”

— *Anmol Dua*

You taught me far more than what was written in the syllabus. You taught me how to live a beautiful life.

You nurtured me from a child into the person I am today by sharing not only knowledge, but experience. You never treated me like a student you treated me like your own daughter.

Your belief in me was the greatest gift I received. Thank you for being a father figure who taught subjects, values, and the courage to become a better human being.

“Learning That Shaped the Way I Think”

— *Anurag Kaushik, AM Global Command Centre, Saxo Bank, Denmark*

Your teaching went far beyond books. You focused on clarity, values, and real understanding rather than surface learning.

With patience and practical examples, you made concepts meaningful and lasting. You didn’t simply teach a subject you shaped the way I think and approach challenges.

You welcomed questions, allowed mistakes, and guided us without judgment. Because of that, learning felt purposeful rather than pressured.

The sincerity and care you brought into teaching helped me grow not only academically, but personally. Your lessons stayed with me long after the classroom ended.

“Education Beyond Marks”

— *Khushali, Consultant*

It has truly been a pleasure knowing you.

You understood my level in Economics and English and tailored your teaching accordingly, building patiently from where I stood. It was never about chasing marks.

Your lessons went beyond the classroom and stayed with me long after. Learning felt thoughtful, practical, and humane.

“Finding My Voice”

— *Mahendra*

Your influence on my life extends far beyond the classroom walls of high school English and Social Studies. You reshaped my relationship with language itself.

You taught me that writing is not an exercise in mechanical perfection, but a way to let thought and feeling breathe. Write from the heart first, edit later that single lesson changed everything.

By valuing creative flow over immediate correctness, you freed me from the fear of imperfection. That philosophy remains the foundation of my professional communication today.

Whether drafting an article, a white paper, or a complex email, I still hear your voice reminding me to let ideas arrive honestly before refining them. Your mentorship gave me the courage to find and trust my own voice.

Reading these voices, I am reminded that teaching is an invisible act.

A sentence spoken with conviction can alter a future.

A moment of belief can become a lifelong anchor.

Examinations end.

Syllabus change.

Classrooms empty.

But belief once planted continues to grow. And that, perhaps, is the truest lesson a teacher ever teaches.

I do not know whether this book is complete.
Teaching itself never felt complete.
Every year a new syllabus arrived.
Every batch of students changed the meaning of experience.
What I believed yesterday was questioned today.
These pages were written between duties, doubts, and delays.
Some thoughts matured, some remained half-formed.
I chose not to polish them too much
because classrooms rarely allow perfection.
If a few lines felt familiar,
if a few moments reminded you of your own staff room,
then this book has done enough.
Tomorrow the bell will ring again.
Another lesson will begin.
So will learning.

- I. Vincent Raja Ignatius

