

- A life of joy and happiness is possible only on the basis of knowledge and science.
- Books are the means by which we build bridges between cultures.
- A literary genius, it is said, resembles all, though no one resembles him.

- The end-product of education should be a free creative man, who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities of nature.
- When we think we know, we cease to learn.

- Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

# Teachers

# Day



SPECIAL

## Why do we celebrate Teachers Day?

**D**r Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (September 5, 1888 – April 17, 1975), an Indian philosopher and statesman, the first Vice President of India and the second President of India from 1962 to 1967 is widely loved even today. When he took charge as the President of India, some of his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday. To which, he replied, "Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if September 5 is celebrated as Teachers Day."

**D**r Radhakrishnan was awarded numerous prestigious awards during his life, including a knighthood in 1931, the Bharat Ratna in 1954, and honorary membership of the British Royal Order of Merit in 1963. He was also one of the founders of Helpage India, a non profit organisation for elderly underprivileged in India. Radhakrishnan believed that 'teachers should be the best minds in the country'.

## Classroom on a street!

ANKITA DESHKAR

**T**he footpath on the stretch of road from Maharajbagh Zoo to University Library has become a classroom of a different kind, where two dedicated teachers hold lessons for underprivileged kids, unbothered by the continuous honking of vehicles zipping past. The NGO UPAY (Under Privileged Advancement by Youth), founded by Varun Shrivastava, is not new to the people of the city now. With over 11 centres running in the city, UPAY has played a vital role in educating the underprivileged kids, for whom, going to school has always been a dream.

Out of 9 teaching centres, Lokmat Times visited the Maharajbagh centre of UPAY and spent an evening with the bright kids. The first thing that could be easily spotted was children greeting their teachers as soon as they 'entered' the centre, which is literally a

small space on footpath. Some greeted the teachers with a Namaste, some with a 'good evening' while some touched their guru's feet. This is a sight which would easily amaze the first-timer but Kiran Kalantri and Divya Belekar are now used to it.

"I have been teaching the students here for now around a year. We along with our family celebrated my nephews birthday at the Yashwant Stadium UPAY centre and since then I wanted to do something for the kids. Being a teacher myself at Madan Gopal Agrawal High School, teaching was easy for me. I teach them all the subjects and in return also learn a lot from them," expressed a cheerful teacher Kiran Kalantri.

Divya, who has joined UPAY recently just as a volunteer, enjoys with the kids and while they treat her as a teacher, her fun bond with the kids can clearly be sighted. Divya is a second-year student at

Shivaji Science College and joined the footpath school out of curiosity.

Apart from studies, these kids indulge in fun outdoor activities such as jumping race, slow race and karate. They have Sunday activities wherein some teachers devote their time in the mornings and make learning enjoyable. Showing their timetable, Kiran expressed that they have recently taught the kids to make paper bags and in return have learnt to make caps of paper, making it clear that arts and crafts is also a part of the curriculum of the kids.

Bright students who are of appropriate age are also enrolled into schools and Kiran proudly states that a

## A number of people of all age groups are coming forward through the medium of NGO UPAY (Under Privileged Advancement by Youth) to teach the kids who are away from 'school'.

few kids now are students of 10th, 7th, 6th, 5th and 4th at various schools. One of them will also recite the importance of Teacher's Day at his school today.

"We also make sure that students do self-study, hence we have incorporated in them a habit of studying before coming to the UPAY centre. They have now been coming to the centre with their homework completed and a curiosity to learn further," added Kiran.

Being at UPAY centre is a happy experience, Kishan will enthusiastically recite, 'ek raja ki beti', while Kavita will everything she learns.

The proud teacher Kiran however, does not shy away from hiding a proud smile.

**Z**onal director of UPAY Nagpur, Neetu Mishra is an engineer, a lawyer and works at GPO, Nagpur. She says that the bad habits of the underprivileged kids, who come to UPAY classes, have decreased.

"I am not saying that the change has been brought, but yes, there is a positive change in the students who come to the centre. When they come to the centre, they are well dressed, remove their footwear and also wash their hands," expressed Neetu Mishra.

Some kids at UPAY ate Gutkha, Tobacco, Kharra, however now that they know that all these things would only harm them

they are trying to stop it's consumption. Earlier they used to abuse, used bad language but now even that has come to an halt, added Neetu.

When asked if their parents protested to their studies, Neetu narrates an incident at the Cotton Market centre, where a 2.5 year-old kid used to visit the centre, one day his mother thrashed him and took him along with her. After the situation calmed a little and his mother went for her regular chores, the kid came back to centre, held a slate and chalk and started scribbling.

"The kids have the interest to learn, it is just that they do not have

access to the basic learning tools that we have," adds Neetu.

When asked if the volunteers at UPAY are trained to teach the kids, Neetu informs that the selected volunteers undergo an induction programme, because their are different activities for kids that have to be taken. In the induction programme the volunteers, who would then become teachers are even taught how to talk to the kids.

Neetu also proudly states that the volunteers are not just youngsters but also people of all age groups. "We have senior citizens, working professionals and students who come and take the responsibility of teaching these kids. They are the ones who take all the pains and adjust their

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schedule to interact with these children, for whom studies were earlier a matter of concern," opined Neetu.

Neetu, who was earlier a volunteer at UPAY is now a zonal director and visits all the UPAY centres in the city. Apart from that, the NGO has also started skill development centres for the ladies, wherein the women are taught sewing.

