

A promise is a promise.



I first met Ruchika Bhat when she was in class 6 at Government Senior Secondary School, Sakroda. She was a vivacious, stubborn, clever, and argumentative girl. I often saw her outside the classroom for punishments. Then I left the institute in 2017-18, and when I returned after two years, I was pleasantly surprised to see her in class 9. I never expected her to rise till class 9 as she was the most neglected student of her class, even by me because of her habits.

This reminded me my old days when I used to teach her in class 6. She used to tell me stories of her *dadi* and her mother who used to beat her for studying. She was very scared of her mother as told to me by her friends. I still remember the day when I was issuing library books to all the students. She was continuously roaming around me but didn't ask me directly for the book she wanted, Finally, I gave her one book and she became very curious to go through it. She didn't know how to read that book but still insisted to read it the second time. I asked her what she will do with the book if she can't understand its content. She innocently answered to me, "*Aap mujhe sikhaodo.*" (*Please teach me*). That day, she made me to talk to her mother who was filled with her complaints. However, for the very first time, I saw a real interest in her to read and understand that book.

The very next day, I took Ruchika again to Class 6. I was extremely ecstatic to see that she could write my name and her friend's name in English. I tried to follow her test scores and class behaviour and I observed that all teachers do pay attention to her but are forced to send her outside the class due to her talkative nature.

Nevertheless, today when I see her, I am reminded of the promise that she made to me in class 6 to work hard and learn. Today, she again promised me that she will not talk too much in class and will focus on her studies. I am sure she will stay true to her words this time too...