

Atm Chut
Gaash

Vol 2

Beyond the Horizon of Knowledge

JAMMU & KASHMIR



"Learning Beyond Textbooks: Redefining Education in the Valleys"

Education is not confined to classrooms; it thrives in the stories of people, the rhythm of their lives, and the challenges they overcome daily. In the remote valleys of Jammu & Kashmir, students learn resilience from icy winters, creativity from limited resources, and unity from diverse communities.

Imagine a curriculum that integrates traditional wisdom with modern learning—students weaving local tales into history lessons or calculating snowmelt rates in math class. Education here is an ecosystem where nature, culture, and curiosity intersect, creating a model that teaches survival, empathy, and innovation.

The future of education lies not just in what is taught but in how it connects to life itself. Can we create a system that celebrates these hidden classrooms of the world?

Foreword

Education, at its core, is not just about knowledge. It is about shaping character, building understanding, and sparking the quiet courage needed to face the world. At the School of Education and Systems Change, we see learning as something deeper: an experience that changes the way we think, feel, and act. It's not just about teaching facts. It's about shaping people.

In today's world, where change is constant, our work is anchored in a simple but profound idea: education must nurture the whole person.

It is not enough to train the intellect alone; the future demands creativity to imagine new possibilities, emotional intelligence to navigate relationships, ethical reasoning to make wise choices, and resilience to persist through uncertainty. These are the skills that define 21st-century readiness and are central to how we build the capacity of individuals and systems alike.

This vision comes to life through our work on the ground, where ideas are translated into real change at a systems level.

In Jammu and Kashmir, we aim to nurture learners who are grounded, expressive, and responsive to the world around. Whether it's discovering one's voice through story and image, or practicing empathy in moments of challenge, these capacities are not add-ons - they are essential. They shape how individuals engage with themselves, others, and the systems they are part of.

This journey is not without challenges, but it is worth every step. Because in every child who learns with joy, in every teacher who leads with heart, in every fellow who stays the course, we see the future taking shape. A future built not just on systems, but on people.

And so, we continue. With hope. With resolve. And with the quiet belief that transformation, like learning, begins one step at a time.



Zeeshan Hassan
Senior Program Director
SOESC PSL J&K

Editor's Note

**"Don't wait for opportunity.
Create it with your actions, passion, and perseverance."**

The journey of change is challenging yet meaningful. The Gandhi Fellowship embodies the values of Sewa Bhav, Nirman, Pragati, and Leadership, shaping future nation-builders.

In Jammu & Kashmir, we live by the proverb '**Alim Chui Gaash**'—**Beyond the Horizon of Knowledge** "Education is Light." This guiding principle leads us to illuminate the future of education. Through Community Immersion, and Field Visits, we transform ourselves and our communities, making progress one step at a time.

As part of this dedicated team, we strive to bring light, knowledge, and hope, inspiring a brighter tomorrow for all.

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PICTURES GALLERY

*I'm Sneha, let me introduce,
 A heart that smiles, light and loose.
 With friends like stars, shining bright,
 Each one a gem, a pure delight.*

*Akansha - beauty wrapped in grace,
 Her calmness feels like a warm embrace.
 Eyes that hold unspoken dreams,
 Her heart's as kind as morning beams.
 A sister strong, who stands so tall,
 With her, life feels easy for all.*

*Aditya - bold, stylish, and clear,
 Truth in his voice, nothing to fear.
 Though quiet, his actions speak,
 Strength and courage when times are bleak.
 His smile rare, yet when it shows,
 It brightens paths where darkness grows.*

*Darshana dances with life's song,
 Her laughter echoes all day long.
 A heart so free, with dreams that glide,
 In every step, she walks with pride.
 Through little things, she spreads her cheer,
 Making each moment feel near and dear.*

*Faizan bhai - cool and wise,
 A silent thinker with gentle ties.
 His words bring calm when storms arise,
 A steady hand, with thoughtful eyes.
 With patience deep, he listens close,
 A friend whose wisdom only grows.*

*Raj - a melody, talent untold,
 His voice is silk, pure and bold.
 Strings and notes, his soulful play,
 Can turn the dulllest night to day.
 A gift we treasure, forevermore.*

*Sachin - quick, always bright,
 A spark of hope, a beam of light.
 His energy lifts us when we fall,
 His gentle words comfort all.
 Through his eyes, the world feels kind,
 A rare soul with a brilliant mind.*

*Sartaj bhai - your poetry flows,
 Like rivers where soft wind blows.
 Each verse he writes touches deep,
 A magic in words we long to keep.
 His love for art, his heart so wide,
 In every craft, he stands with pride.*

✦ ✦ ✦
**The
 Bond
 We
 Share**
 ✦ ✦ ✦

*Shahid bhai - oh how you strive,
 With restless passion, dreams survive.
 His hands build more than stone and clay,
 They shape the light that paves our way.
 Through every task, his focus stays,
 A fighter's heart that never sways.*

*Shivam - wisdom like the sky,
 Thoughts that soar, reaching high.
 His words cut sharp, his mind so clear,
 A guide who stands when doubts appear.
 A friend who leads without a sound,
 With quiet grace, he holds his ground.*

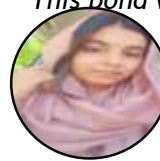
*Swikriti - new yet feels like home
 Through every hall, her warmth will
 roam.
 Her kindness blooms, her heart's so pure,
 In her presence, we feel secure.
 She carries light in all she does,
 A soul of gold, full of love.*

*Tejal - our Teju, sweet and true,
 With hands that craft and dreams that
 grew.
 Her strength's like steel, but soft as snow,
 Her dedication gently glows.
 In every task, she gives her all,
 A friend who stands firm and tall.*

*I'm Sneha
 A heart full of passion, ready to stand,
 Always there with a helping hand.
 I work with care, I give my best,
 Lifting others, no matter the test.
 Quiet yet strong, I shine through,
 In all I do, I stay true.*

*Together we rise, together we grow,
 Through storms and sun, through high and
 low.
 A family woven heart to heart,
 No force in life can pull apart.
 Each one a thread, a bond we weave,
 A circle of trust, where all believe.*

*Here's to the souls who light the way,
 With love and strength, come what may.
 No matter how far, no matter how near,
 This bond we share will persevere.*



Sneha Kumari
 Batch 17



Bringing Joy and Engagement to Schools through Aesthetic Literacy



Aesthetic Literacy: The Art of Understanding Beauty in a Visual World

In an age where images, sounds, and digital aesthetics flood our senses, the concept of "aesthetic literacy" has become increasingly relevant. As we navigate through the visual and sensory landscape of modern life—whether through social media, advertising, design, or art—we encounter constant stimuli that shape how we perceive and engage with the world around us. Aesthetic literacy refers to the ability to recognize, interpret, and critically analyze the aesthetic elements in these sensory experiences. It's a skill set that goes beyond surface-level beauty to include deeper cultural, emotional, and intellectual understandings of how we make meaning from visual and sensory forms.



What is Aesthetic Literacy?

At its core, aesthetic literacy is the capacity to understand and appreciate the visual, auditory, and sensory dimensions of art, design, and everyday life. This involves not only recognizing beauty or artistic quality but also understanding how aesthetic elements communicate meaning, reflect cultural values, and elicit emotional responses. Aesthetic literacy empowers individuals to decode the symbols, colours, compositions, and designs they encounter, and to appreciate the intentional choices made by creators in visual and auditory media.

In a world dominated by image-driven communication—where Instagram, TikTok, and other platforms reward visually engaging content—the ability to critically analyze and appreciate aesthetics is essential. It is not simply about enjoying what is beautiful, but about understanding *why* something resonates or feels compelling.

The Role of Aesthetic Literacy in Contemporary Culture

1. Art and Design

Aesthetic literacy is foundational in art and design fields. Artists, graphic designers, fashion designers, and architects rely on their ability to communicate through form, color, texture, and composition. Being aesthetically literate means being able to analyze how these elements work together to convey a specific message or evoke a particular emotion. A well-designed logo, for instance, may not just be visually appealing; it may also encapsulate the identity of a brand, communicate its values, and connect with its audience on a deeper level.

2. Digital Media and Social Platforms

In today's media-saturated environment, where platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube shape much of our visual culture, aesthetic literacy is crucial for both content creators and consumers. With billions of images and videos shared every day, understanding the visual language of social media—such as trends in color palettes, composition, and visual storytelling—is key to engaging meaningfully with digital culture. For content creators, being aesthetically literate can help them craft more impactful and shareable posts, while for users, it encourages a deeper engagement with the content they consume.

3. Advertising and Marketing

Aesthetic choices in advertising—whether through color schemes, typography, or imagery—are carefully designed to influence consumer behavior and emotions. Aesthetic literacy allows individuals to become more aware of these strategies and to critically evaluate how advertisements manipulate perceptions and desires. Understanding the role of aesthetics in marketing helps consumers make more informed decisions about the products and services they choose or challenge societal norms, power structures, and ideologies.

4. Cultural Appreciation and Critical Thinking

Aesthetic literacy also contributes to cultural understanding. Different cultures have distinct aesthetic traditions and visual languages that reflect their values, beliefs, and history. By being aesthetically literate, individuals can better appreciate art and design from diverse cultural contexts and gain insights into how aesthetics shape our worldviews. Furthermore, it promotes critical thinking—encouraging individuals to consider how aesthetics are often used to perpetuate



The Components of Aesthetic Literacy

Aesthetic literacy involves a combination of skills and sensibilities that allow individuals to navigate the sensory world with awareness and understanding. Some of the key components include:

1. Visual Perception

This refers to the ability to identify and interpret visual elements such as color, shape, line, texture, space, and form. Recognizing how these elements work together to create compositions or communicate specific meanings is a foundational aspect of aesthetic literacy.

2. Emotional Awareness

Aesthetic experiences often evoke emotions, whether joy, nostalgia, awe, or discomfort. Understanding how aesthetic choices trigger these emotional responses is central to appreciating art and design at a deeper level.

3. Historical and Cultural Context

Aesthetic literacy also requires an awareness of history and culture. Certain aesthetic choices may have specific meanings depending on the time period or cultural context in which they were created. For example, the use of certain colors or patterns might carry different connotations in different cultures.

4. Critical Thinking

Being aesthetically literate involves not just passively consuming beauty but actively engaging with and critiquing it. It requires questioning why certain aesthetic trends emerge, how they influence societal perceptions, and how they can challenge or reinforce existing power dynamics.



5. Interdisciplinary Connections

Aesthetic literacy often involves drawing on knowledge from other fields, such as philosophy, literature, psychology, and sociology. For instance, the study of how aesthetics affect human behavior can benefit from insights in psychology, while understanding how art movements reflect political changes can involve knowledge of history and sociology.

The Benefits of Aesthetic Literacy

1. Enhanced Creativity

Aesthetic literacy nurtures creativity by enabling individuals to experiment with different forms of expression. By understanding the principles of design, color theory, and composition, individuals can refine their own artistic or creative practices, whether in writing, photography, fashion, or other fields.

2. Improved Communication

In both professional and personal contexts, being aesthetically literate helps individuals communicate more effectively through visual media. Whether designing a presentation, writing a blog, or curating a personal Instagram feed, understanding how to convey messages through visual aesthetics can strengthen communication.

3. Deeper Engagement with Art

For art lovers and collectors, aesthetic literacy enriches the experience of viewing and interpreting artworks. It allows one to move beyond the surface-level appreciation of beauty and engage with art on a more intellectual and emotional level, connecting with the artist's intentions and the historical and cultural context of the work.

4. Social Awareness and Advocacy

Aesthetic literacy can foster social consciousness, encouraging individuals to recognize how visual culture influences societal norms and issues. By becoming more aware of the role aesthetics play in shaping perceptions of race, gender, identity, and politics, individuals can use their aesthetic literacy to advocate for positive social change.

Furthermore, by engaging with aesthetic principles, students gain skills that are increasingly valuable in the modern world, such as innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability. These skills help them navigate complex problems creatively and view challenges from multiple angles. As they grow, these attributes contribute to a more enriched and purposeful life, where they not only excel academically but also thrive as compassionate, creative, and socially aware individuals.

In essence, aesthetic literacy transforms students by helping them become more reflective, expressive, and empathetic, equipping them with the tools to approach both academic and life challenges with a creative and open mindset.

As an advocate for Aesthetic Literacy, I have the unique privilege of witnessing the immediate impact this approach has on students' lives. Each time I enter a school to share these activities, students' faces light up with genuine excitement. They know that the experience awaiting them goes beyond traditional learning—it's a blend of creativity, reflection, and connection.

Each activity is an invitation for students to view the world around them—and themselves—in a new light. By fostering an environment where imagination and curiosity are celebrated, students not only build skills but also find a renewed sense of excitement in their learning journey. The smiles and enthusiasm I see reaffirm the value of Aesthetic Literacy, showing that when education is infused with creativity and empathy, it can truly change lives.

Conclusion:

Aesthetic literacy is not just about recognizing what is beautiful; it is about understanding the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the forms we encounter every day. In an increasingly visual world, the ability to interpret and analyze aesthetic elements is a vital skill that enhances creativity, communication, and critical thinking. As we continue to interact with an image-driven culture, developing aesthetic literacy will allow us to navigate, appreciate, and contribute meaningfully to the sensory and visual world we inhabit.



My Learning Journey

As I began my journey in Kashmir, I found myself in a completely new environment. Adapting to the fellowship processes while immersing myself in the local school system and education department was both exciting and challenging. One of the initial hurdles I faced was the language barrier, along with the difficulty of surviving in a culture so different from my own. However, overcoming these challenges helped me grow, and I gradually developed new skills and valuable insights.

In schools, I have been working on helping children develop 21st-century skills through the Aesthetic Literacy Program. This experience has given me deep insights into how children perceive learning and interact with educators. I have observed a noticeable shift in their approach toward me—my friendly behaviour has made them more eager to engage, and I often find them waiting for my arrival, excited to interact.

Beyond the school environment, my interactions with the community have also shaped my perspective. Living closely with people from diverse backgrounds has taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of meaningful connections. Each day presents new learning experiences that push me to grow personally and professionally.

So far, I have realized that my understanding of the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge is still evolving. However, each experience brings new learning opportunities that help me nourish my skills and perspective. This journey is shaping me not just as a facilitator but as a lifelong learner, continuously adapting and growing with the community I serve.



Sachin valvi
Batch 17





A Place to Belong

When I first arrived in this unfamiliar place Kashmir, I felt completely lost. Everything about it was new and overwhelming- the people, the culture, the surroundings. I found myself constantly questioning whether I could really survive here. The thought of giving up crossed my mind every single day. I even started packing my bag, ready to leave, thinking that maybe I just didn't belong here

But deep down, I knew running away wasn't the answer. I was here for a reason, and I couldn't let fear dictate my future. There was something inside me that still to stay, to see things through, to build a future. I didn't know exactly what that future looked like, but I knew it wasn't in giving up.

One day, as I was settling into my rented home in Awantipora, I noticed something that caught my attention- a gurudwara was being constructed nearby. It wasn't finished yet, but just seeing it in the process of being built gave me a sense of hope, something I hadn't felt in a long time. I began telling my roommates about it, about how I felt connected to this place, this project. I made a promise to myself: I wouldn't leave this fellowship until the gurudwara was completed.

It wasn't just about the gurudwara itself. It became my symbol of perseverance, a reminder that things take time, but they do get completed. Every day, on my way back from the field, I'd catch sight of it, still under construction, and it gave me peace. It was a constant in a world that felt uncertain, and it filled me with a sense of belonging I had been searching for. There were days when everything felt difficult-when I wanted to give up, when the challenges seemed too big. But I would remember that gurudwara. I would remember the feeling of hope it gave me. That's when I realized that sometimes all you need is a reason to keep going. For me, that reason became the gurudwara, a symbol of the light at the end of the tunnel.

As the days passed, I began to see things differently. The struggles didn't feel so insurmountable anymore. I had found something to believe in, something to hold onto. The

gurudwara, still unfinished but always standing strong, became my ray of hope. It reminded me that no matter how tough things get, there's always a chance to find peace and purpose.

And just like that, I knew I couldn't leave before seeing this place through. The gurudwara wasn't just a building- it was a testament to perseverance, to the journey from struggle to strength. It was a reminder that, like the structure being built piece by piece, I, too, was building something inside of me strength, hope, and a sense of belonging.

"Success doesn't come from avoiding challenges; it comes from embracing them and pushing through with resilience and heart."



Swikriti sharma
Batch 17



The Ripples I Create

I stepped into this journey, unsure, untried,
With hope in my heart and doubts by my side.
In schools where silence and structure prevailed,
I sought to bring stories yet unheard, unveiled.

Teachers resisted, they questioned, they sighed,
“Aesthetic Literacy?”—they cast it aside.
But I spoke with patience, with stories, with grace,
Until curiosity took hesitation’s place.

In CEO halls, where files stacked high,
I walked with purpose, I dared to try.
Not with demands, but presence and trust,
Building bridges, making change a must.

In workshops, in classrooms, with chalk and with art,
I saw transformation, I felt it start.
A child once voiceless, now sketches her past,
A fear once unspoken, now fading at last.

Through Pulwama’s fields, in Shopian’s air,
I wove dreams with colors, with love, with care.
From system to soul, from policy to heart,
I learned that true change is a work of art.

Not loud, not sudden, but steady and true,
With each step I take, the ripples grew.
For leadership, I learned, is not to command,
But to listen, to guide, to hold a hand.

And so I go on, with lessons in tow,
A fellow, a learner, still eager to grow.
For the change I create is not mine alone,
It lives in the seeds that I have sown.



Ishrat Manzoor
Batch 16



Finding Strength in Struggles—My Fellowship Journey

Life often places us in unfamiliar territories, pushing us beyond our comfort zones. When I joined the Gandhi Fellowship in Kashmir, I knew it would be a transformative experience, but I never anticipated the depth of struggles I would face. From adapting to a new environment to navigating emotional and professional challenges, this journey tested me in ways I never imagined.

A New Place, A New Reality

Coming from Bihar, settling into Kashmir was not easy. The cold climate felt harsh, the cultural nuances were different, and every day came with its own set of challenges. I had to build relationships from scratch, understand the local dynamics, and find a sense of belonging in a place that felt distant at first. But beyond the external struggles, my body, too, was battling a war I hadn't anticipated.

A Battle with Pain and Isolation

Winters in Kashmir were not just cold; they became a season of silent suffering for me. I started experiencing severe pain in my back and side, just above my waist, accompanied by breathlessness. It always struck in the dead of night, around 3 AM—when the world was asleep, and I was left alone with my pain.

There were multiple times when I had to rush to the doctor for injections and medicines just to find relief. But one night, the worst happened. The pain started creeping in, slow at first, then unbearable. I reached for my phone and called every immediate person I could think of, but no one answered. Desperate, I searched for medicine, but there was none. My body was betraying me—I felt suffocated under the blanket, yet the cold outside was unbearable. The pain intensified, minute by minute, until I was curled up, crying, helpless.

For two long hours, I wept in silence, feeling like my body was shutting down. And then, in a frantic search through my wardrobe, I found a strip of **Zerodol**—just two tablets left, the expiry date smudged and unreadable. In that moment, I didn't care. I swallowed one, risking whatever consequences it might bring, because anything was better than this agony.

Half an hour passed, and the pain began to dull. That night was a **nightmare** I will never forget. If something had happened to me, no one would have known. I was truly alone. It was only after this experience that I finally told my family what I had been going through. Until then, I had kept my suffering a secret, fearing they would worry and ask me to quit my fellowship.

Facing Rejection in the Field

Just as I was battling physical pain, professional struggles tested me in different ways. When I was transferred to Srinagar, it was winter, and schools were closed for the three-month-long vacation. My field visits were now focused on building relationships at **DIET (District Institute of Education and Training)**, but instead of collaboration, I was met with resistance.

Each time I stepped into the office, I could sense their unspoken words—“**Arey, yeh phir se aa gayi**” (**Oh, she's here again**). Their cold indifference stung. I felt invisible, like an outsider forcing my way into their space. Sometimes, I wondered if my presence was unwelcome simply because I wasn't from Kashmir. Would they have treated me differently if I were a Kashmiri fellow? The thought lingered, fueling my doubts and making me question my role in this place.

I felt useless. What was I even doing here?

But I refused to let rejection define my journey. Instead of stepping back, I pushed forward. Visit after visit, I showed up. I observed. I listened. I offered my help—whether it was **facilitating workshops, drafting content, or creating PowerPoint presentations**. Slowly, I started breaking through their walls. Their attitude softened. They began to acknowledge my efforts, and over time, respect replaced indifference.

Now, the same people who once dismissed me **welcome me wholeheartedly**. My liaisoning is so strong that if there's an urgent need, a simple phone call is enough for them to extend their support. This transformation didn't happen overnight—it was the result of persistence, patience, and proving my worth through actions, not just words.

A Moment of Prejudice in School Visits

As summer arrived, I finally began my school visits. One of my initial assignments in Srinagar was conducting a **three-day cascading workshop on Aesthetic Literacy** at GHSS Amirakadal. Around 30 participants from different schools were attending, and on the second day, an elderly female teacher approached me during a break.

She asked me about myself—my name, my state, my work, and about the organization I was associated with. At first, it felt like a normal conversation, but then she said something that left me speechless:

"Yahan to bahut Bihari log kaam karte hain. Bihari log to mazdoor hote hain. Tum to padh likh ke bhi yahan aa gayi Kashmiriyon ko darbadar karne." (So many Biharis work here. Biharis are laborers. And you, even after being educated, have come here to ruin Kashmiris?)

Her words stung. I had faced subtle rejections before, but this was the first time someone had so directly questioned my presence—not my work, not my skills, but my identity. I was shocked. I didn't know how to respond, so I didn't. I just stood there, letting her words sink in.

For a moment, I felt small. Was this how people saw me? No matter how much effort I put in, would I always be an outsider?

But that moment also strengthened my resolve. I wasn't here to prove anything to people who doubted me—I was here to do meaningful work. And I knew that my work would speak for itself.

Work Challenges and the Pressure to Deliver

Despite my personal battles, I had responsibilities to fulfill. Working with students and teachers came with its own set of difficulties. Resistance to change, the slow pace of transformation, and the constant need to prove myself tested my patience. Balancing documentation, fieldwork, and emotional resilience was exhausting at times. Yet, in those struggles, I found growth. Each challenge became a lesson, and every hurdle strengthened my resolve.

Moments of Breakthrough

Amidst the struggles, there were moments that reaffirmed my purpose. A student confiding in me, a teacher acknowledging the impact of my work, or simply realizing how much I had grown as a person—these small victories kept me going. I learned to embrace discomfort, to trust the process, and to find strength within myself.

Conclusion: A Journey of Resilience

The struggles of this fellowship did not break me; they shaped me. They taught me resilience, patience, and the power of perseverance. As I near the end of this journey, I carry with me not just memories of hardship, but a deep sense of fulfillment. The challenges were real, the pain was excruciating, but so was my ability to endure.

I once feared that my struggles would make me weaker. But now, I know they have made me stronger.

نہیں آسان اس سفر کو کچھ لفظوں میں سمیٹنا

الجہن میں ہوں اتنی کہ بتاؤں کیا کیا

(It is not easy to capture this journey in mere words,

I am tangled in so many thoughts—what should I even express?)



Gul Afsana parween
Batch 16



एक पुरानी डायरी और एक सवाल

एक दिन अचानक मेरी नज़र अपनी पुरानी डायरी पर पड़ी, जो कई किताबों के नीचे दबी हुई थी। उत्साह से मैंने उठाया, साफ किया और पहला पन्ना खोला—उसपर लिखा था, क्या मैं एक नेता हूँ?

तारीख देखी तो वही दिन था जब मैंने गांधी फेलो के रूप में कश्मीर की वादियों में कदम रखा था। मैं सोचने लगा—क्या मैं सच में एक नेता हूँ?

इसी बीच फोन बज, स्क्रीन पर एक पुराने दोस्त का नाम चमक रहा था—वो भी एक गांधी फेलो था। बातों-बातों में मैंने पूछ लिया, क्या एक गांधी साथी नेता हो सकता है?*

वो हंस पड़ा, साहब, आप तो पहले से ही नेता हैं!

मैंने कहा, पर एक नेता तो वही होता है जो लोगों की समस्या सुलझता है, उन्हें सही रास्ता दिखता है।

उसने मुस्कुराकर जवाब दिया, आजकल तो वही नेता है जो झूठ बोल सके और भ्रष्टाचार कर सके!

मैंने तुरंत कहा, ऐसा नहीं है! हम भी तो गांधी साथी हैं, तो हम नेता क्यों नहीं हैं?

उसने कहा, आप स्कूलों में जाते हैं, बच्चों और शिक्षकों को नए तरीके सिखाते हैं, समुदाय से जुड़े रहते हैं। जो अपनी परेशानियों को भूल कर दूसरों के लिए काम करे, वही असली नेता होता है!

उसकी बातें सुनकर मेरी सोच बदल गई। मैंने धीरे से कहा, तो मैं भी एक नेता हूँ!

उसने मुस्कुराकर कहा, बिलकुल! और वो भी गांधी जी की तरह.

फोन रखा, डायरी की तरफ देखा—अब उसमें कुछ नया लिखने का समय आ चुका था _



"Reflections of Growth: Advice and Insights for Emerging Change makers"



Dear Emerging Change makers" ,
Welcome to a journey that will challenge you in ways you never imagined. The fellowship will test your patience, adaptability, and consistency, but it will also reveal your true potential. There will be moments when you feel demotivated—when you ask yourself, 'Why am I here?' or wonder about the kind of work you're doing. You might even think, 'I'm just going to leave this work.' But let me tell you, the key is to believe in the process, trust in yourself, and have faith in your team. Keep going, even when it seems tough. Stay patient, loyal to your work, and build resilience. Most importantly, be consistent and keep reflecting on your journey. These small moments of persistence will eventually lead to growth and fulfillment. Let me share a story from my own experience that highlights how consistency, connection, and staying true to your purpose can lead to unexpected and rewarding outcomes."

"Unlocking Potential: How Consistency, Persistence, and Connection Created Impact"

During my Community Immersion, I experienced a moment that perfectly highlighted the power of consistency, connection, and persistence. One day, while returning to the CI house after running an errand, I noticed a middle school where students were singing a Bal Geet song. This caught my attention because it was the same school that had initially hesitated to implement activities without an official order.

Curious, I entered the school and saw two students leading a session confidently and joyfully. The teachers shared that the students were thoroughly enjoying the activities and even wanted to include the songs in their morning assemblies.

Building on that momentum, I created the SEEL Tree and initiated the Emotion Box, activities aimed at engaging students with their emotions and fostering empathy. For the creation of the SEEL Tree, the funds were provided by the school itself. In this way, I succeeded in unlocking funds from a non-nominated school through my consistency, persistence, and communication skills, further extending the reach and impact of our efforts.

That moment reaffirmed my belief in the power of small, steady actions over time. Consistency in our work, the connections we build, and the persistence to continue despite challenges can truly create lasting change.

"The most surprising part? This school wasn't even one of the 72 nominated schools where we had an official mandate to work. Yet, the impact of our work had reached them organically, and they embraced it wholeheartedly. That moment reaffirmed my belief in the ripple effect of our efforts and the importance of leading with sincerity and commitment."



Advice from my past experience

Be Consistent in Your Efforts: "Even when results seem slow or uncertain, stay consistent. Over time, your dedication will create lasting change."

Be Open to Unexpected Opportunities: "You may not always know where your efforts will lead, but trust the process. Even small actions can create meaningful ripples."

Build Trust Gradually: "Relationships matter more than rules—once people see your genuine intent, they will support you."

Celebrate Small Wins:

"Moments like this, where you see your work making a difference are the true rewards of the fellowship."

Conclusion:

"Remember, the impact of your work may not always be immediate or visible, but it is there. Stay consistent, committed, and patient, and trust that every little effort contributes to a larger change. Your journey will be full of such surprises and moments of joy—embrace them wholeheartedly."



Faizan Zakir
 Batch 17



“Marching Towards the Horizon”

*I am Akanksha, carrying a dream so high,
With dedication and resolve, I aim to fly,
Marching forward towards success, I try.*

*In the valleys of Srinagar, where fragrances flow,
A world of young dreams begins to glow.
Gandhi Fellowship shines, guiding the way,
Each small effort makes a big story stay.*

*Laughter echoes in classrooms, so bright,
Blending studies with joy, hearts take flight.
Not just in books, but emotions too,
Building bonds strong and true.*

*In rhythms of beauty, learning takes form,
Colors and tunes spark a new norm.
Childhood dreams soar to the skies,
Every little one writes their own ties.*

*With Gandhi's ideals, they march ahead,
Sharing joy, painting dreams widespread.*

*From Srinagar's gardens to lessons' embrace,
Every moment brings a hopeful trace.*

*Small steps lead to dreams so grand,
Each effort builds a confident stand.
In Kashmir's soil, let happiness bloom,
Where learning and hope chase away gloom.*

*I am Akanksha, from a rural town in Madhya Pradesh,
Now working in the vast urban space, so fresh.
With diverse cultures and languages around,
Finding my own way, where success is found.
With dedication and resolve, I aim to fly,
Marching forward towards success, I try.*



Akansha Pandey
Batch 17



From Outsider to Change-Maker: A Journey Through Budgam

A New Path: The Train

One day, as I waited on the roadside for over an hour for a sumo (sharing cab) that never came, frustration bubbled to the surface. I sat down on a cold bench, feeling defeated. A man nearby noticed me and said, “Why not take the train?” “The train?” I echoed, confused. I hadn’t even realized there was a train service in Budgam.

The next day, I decided to give it a try. Stepping onto the train, I was nervous but hopeful. What I discovered was nothing short of life-changing. The train was clean, fast, and incredibly affordable. As it sped through the valley, I watched the snowy peaks give way to lush green fields and quiet villages. The rhythmic hum of the train felt almost therapeutic. That train ride wasn’t just a logistical breakthrough; it was a mental shift. For the first time, I felt resourceful, capable of navigating this unfamiliar world.

The Waiting Game

My next challenge was navigating the bureaucracy of the education system. As a Gandhi Fellow, I had to meet with the Chief Education Officer (CEO) to initiate my work in the district. On my first visit to the CEO’s office, I carried my file filled with project proposals and plans. The waiting room was packed, buzzing with teachers, parents, and officials. Hours passed before my turn came. I stepped in with high hopes, but the CEO glanced at the clock and said, “Come tomorrow.” I still remember my first morning in Budgam, Kashmir. The cold mountain air seeped through the cracks of the windows, wrapping around me like an uninvited guest. The gentle chirping of birds harmonized with the soulful Azaan that echoed through the valley. It was breathtaking—a serene beauty that could almost make you forget how far away you were from home. Yet, beneath this mesmerizing scenery, my heart felt heavy with unease.. “How am I going to fit in here?” I wondered, staring at the snow-capped peaks in the distance

The Sumo and the First Step

The first challenge didn’t wait long to introduce itself. I had to figure out transportation. The bustling market, filled with voices speaking in Kashmiri and Urdu, felt overwhelming. I approached a man standing beside a row of sumo , taxis, trying to sound confident. “School jaana hai, Shamasabad side,” I said in broken Hindi, unsure if he’d understand. He stared at me for a long moment before replying in rapid Kashmiri, gesturing vaguely toward one of the vehicles. I didn’t understand a word but decided to climb in anyway. The ride was far from comfortable—cramped, bumpy, and silent. The driver barely acknowledged my presence, and the fare felt steep. By the time I reached the school, exhaustion had already set in. This became my daily routine for weeks—waiting endlessly for sumo rides that left me drained physically and mentally. I walked out, deflated but not defeated. The next morning, I returned, prepared and determined. I waited again, rehearsing my pitch and mentally preparing for rejection. This time, the CEO listened. His response was cautious but positive. “Let’s see what we can do,” he said. It was a small step, but it marked the beginning of my journey.

Resistance and Resilience

The schools presented a new set of challenges. My project focused on introducing aesthetic literacy—an approach to learning that encourages creativity and expression. However, many teachers were skeptical. “Art and creativity won’t help

them pass exams,” one teacher remarked dismissively. Others were resistant to change, viewing my ideas as unnecessary or impractical. Their negativity was disheartening, but I reminded myself of why I was here to inspire change, however small. I began by building trust, engaging with students, and showcasing the impact of aesthetic literacy through small activities. Slowly, some teachers started to see its value.

Bridging the Gap

Over the next six months, Budgam began to feel less foreign. I learned to navigate the community’s rhythm—its customs, its people, and its unspoken rules. The locals initially viewed me with curiosity, their stares making me feel like an outsider. But as I visited homes, shared tea with families, and listened to their stories, those stares softened into smiles and conversations. I worked closely with students, encouraging them to express themselves through art, music, and storytelling. Their enthusiasm reminded me of the transformative power of education. Each small success felt like a victory— not just for me, but for the community.

A Lesson in Persistence

Through every obstacle—the intimidating sumo rides, the cold waiting rooms, the skeptical teachers—I learned the value of patience and persistence. Change doesn’t happen overnight. It requires showing up every day, even when the odds seem stacked against you. As I marked six months in Budgam, I realized this journey was far from over. I was no longer just an outsider—I had become a part of the community, a bridge between two worlds. The snowy peaks and lush valleys that once felt distant now seemed like companions on a shared path. This chapter of my journey was only the beginning. The work I had started in Budgam had planted seeds—seeds of change, of creativity, of connection. As I continued my role as a Gandhi Fellow, I knew there was so much more to learn, so much more to contribute. The unknown, I realized, is not a destination to conquer but a path to walk with an open heart. Each step forward revealed not only new challenges but also new possibilities.

This journey of discovery wasn’t ending; it was evolving, and I was evolving with it. This journey, which had begun with uncertainty and doubt, ended with a lesson I would carry forever: when you dare to step into the unknown, you don’t just discover a new world—you discover yourself.



Tejal Shinde
Batch 17



Kashmir: Where the Journey Became the Destination

I am Shivam Kumar from Uttar Pradesh and My journey in

Kashmir began with a workshop in the Kupwara district, where I was introduced to my work and began to immerse myself in the ongoing sessions. Initially, it was challenging, and I felt nervous, but as time passed, I gradually adapted to the environment. Soon after, I moved to Baramulla district to take on my responsibilities, marking my first experience with stakeholder management. This was both challenging and rewarding in ways I hadn't expected.

The long travels through the field were exhausting, and there were moments of mental frustration. Despite these struggles, I gradually became more immersed in the school system and the CEO office. As my relationships with teachers and officials improved, I began to feel more confident in my role. I organized workshops across 18 zones in my district, which provided me with an even deeper understanding of the Community Immersion process in Kashmir.



The Community Immersion process was truly eye-opening. It allowed me to connect intimately with local communities, learning about their culture, customs, and the struggles they faced. I spent time engaging with both the Pahadi and Kashmiri communities, gaining a deeper understanding of their lives. A key highlight of my journey was organizing a successful campaign in Matipora Drugmulla to raise awareness about drug addiction.

Throughout my time in Kashmir, I faced countless challenges and surprises. I learned invaluable lessons from the field, the schools, the teachers, government officials, my teams, seniors, and batchmates. Every day brought a new lesson in patience, resilience, and growth. I also had the chance to experience the harsh, bone-chilling winter of Chilai Kalan, which further tested my patience and adaptability.



Reflecting on my seven-month journey, I can confidently say that my time in Kashmir was truly transformative. It wasn't just about the work—it was about the people, the culture, and the stunning landscapes. In the end, I glimpsed what can only be described as heaven on Earth.



Shivam Kumar
Batch 17



"Through Struggles and Triumphs: The Heart of a Gandhi Fellow"

"To the future fellows stepping into this journey, I want you to remember one thing—this is more than just a program; it is a life-altering experience that will test you, change you, and shape you in ways you can't yet imagine.

When I first set foot on this path, I was filled with excitement, yes, but also a deep sense of uncertainty. There were so many questions in my heart:

Would I be able to connect with the students? Would the community accept me? The weight of responsibility felt heavier with each step, and yet, it was in those moments of doubt that I found my true strength.

Your journey will not always be smooth. There will be days when you feel out of place, when the challenges seem insurmountable, and when you question whether you're making any difference at all. But let me tell you this: Change doesn't always show up immediately. Sometimes, it's the smallest gestures, the quiet conversations, the listening ear, and the patience you show that leave the most lasting impact.

I learned that it is okay to feel unsure, to feel vulnerable. It is okay to stumble and pick yourself up. It is okay to feel vulnerable. It is okay to stumble and pick yourself up again. I remember the first day I met the students—it was a moment of awkwardness for me, but also a turning point. I was nervous, but when I let go of my fears and connected with them through simple games and activities, I saw their eyes light up. In that moment, I realized that it wasn't just about teaching; it was about forming a bond, building trust, and creating a space for them to dream.

To you, the future fellows: Be patient with yourself and with the process. Know that growth takes time, not just for the community you serve, but for you as well. Embrace the uncertainty, because that is where the magic happens. You will be stretched beyond what you thought you could endure, but on the other side of that stretch will be a version of yourself that you never thought possible.

There will be moments of joy—like when a student proudly shares their work with you, or when you see a teacher's dedication to their students despite the odds stacked against them. And there will be moments of frustration, when things don't go as planned, or when you feel like you haven't done enough. But always remember: even the smallest step forward is still progress.

"The work you do may seem small, but it's the small moments that create the ripple effect that leads to real change.

"My advice to you is simple: Keep your heart open, your mind curious, and your spirit resilient. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, because in those mistakes lie the lessons that will guide you forward. And above all, trust in the process. You are not just shaping the community; this journey will shape you in ways you cannot yet see. Keep going, even when it's hard, because at the end of it all, you will realize that you didn't just change others—you transformed yourself.

Good luck, future fellows. You've got this."



Sneha Kumari
Batch 17



Seeds of Change: Nurturing Education and Sustainability in Nagarada

Change is not just a matter of ideas but also of action. The effectiveness of any transformation depends on how well it aligns with the community's circumstances and needs. As I progressed in my Community Immersion (CI) journey and became more comfortable with my CI host family and the Nagarada CI community, I made a conscious effort to understand the community's needs, particularly in the areas of education and environmental sustainability.

Some key observations stood out: the highest level of education in the village was only up to 8th grade, with no one pursuing education beyond that. Additionally, illegal mining and deforestation were rampant. To raise awareness about education, I engaged in discussions with the former village head, school staff, and local residents. With their consent, I provided information on education and government schemes available to the Gujjar community. The goal was to dispel misconceptions about the financial burden of education and encourage students to continue their studies beyond the 8th grade.

While raising awareness about education was relatively straightforward, advocating for sustainability was more challenging, especially when it threatened the interests of those benefiting from environmental exploitation. The issue was critical, as rapid deforestation—driven by illegal timber trade and sand mining in Nagarada—posed a significant threat to the region. To address this, I decided to conduct awareness campaigns in schools, ensuring that at least the younger generation received the message while also prioritizing the safety of my CI host family and myself.

Beyond programs and interventions, this journey was a profound learning experience that deepened my understanding of the nuances and sensitivities involved in community initiatives. However, the most valuable lesson was realizing that when the community and changemakers work together, the hope for transformation remains alive.



Raj Kishor Mahato
Batch 17



MP Girl in Kashmir: A Journey Beyond Comfort Zones

When I first learned about being placed in Kashmir—specifically Pulwama—for my Gandhi Fellowship, it was a moment of mixed emotions. My family’s immediate reaction was one of concern. Kashmir’s name alone brought a wave of fear, and they hesitated to send their daughter to a place often portrayed as unsafe. But I was determined. I convinced them to let me at least go and see for myself, promising that if I found it uncomfortable, I would request a location change. Reluctantly, they agreed, and that’s where my journey truly began.

The First Glimpse of Reality

After completing our induction in Rajasthan, we headed to Srinagar for the state induction. I vividly remember our stop in Jammu. At a washroom, I noticed bullet marks on the door. For a few moments, fear gripped me, and I questioned if I had made the right decision. But I reminded myself of my resolve and moved forward. This was just the beginning of many firsts—seeing armed forces up close, navigating uncertainty, and stepping into a world so different from my own.

Settling into Pulwama

Pulwama, with its serene beauty and warm-hearted people, has slowly become a second home for me during my journey as a Gandhi Fellow. However, adapting to this place was not without its challenges. Initially, the most common questions I faced when venturing out were about my purpose and role.

“Why have you come to Pulwama?”

“Are you working in a school or an office?”

These questions often arose in the market, on the streets, or during casual conversations with strangers.

At first, I felt unsure of how to explain my role here. Over time, however, I learned to respond with a confident smile, sharing about my work with schools, students, and the community. As I interacted more, these queries became opportunities to build trust and connect with the people of Pulwama.

Challenges and Growth

Life in Pulwama tested me in ways I never imagined. From handling day-to-day tasks without family to managing work in an unfamiliar environment, every moment was a lesson. For instance, when my co-fellow fell ill and had to take sick leave, I took on the responsibility of finding a house on my own—walking through Pulwama’s narrow lanes, speaking to strangers, and handling it all independently. It was daunting but immensely rewarding. These experiences taught me resilience and built my confidence in ways no comfort zone ever could.

Experiencing Kashmir's Beauty and Culture

Kashmir's beauty was undeniable. For the first time, I saw snowfall—a serene, magical experience that words cannot capture. I learned about the culture, like the use of kangris (traditional firepots) and pherans to combat the harsh winters. I marveled at the simplicity and warmth of the people. One unforgettable moment was when I picked an apple directly from a tree and ate it—a joy so pure that it still makes me smile.

The hospitality of Kashmiris is unmatched. During our community immersion, I stayed with a family for 30 days. They welcomed me with open arms, and despite being strangers initially, they soon felt like a second family. The grandfather would share stories of his youth, and the bond I formed with them remains precious. Adjusting to a new culture, eating different food, and learning a few Kashmiri phrases like "Tuhund naav kyah chu?" (What is your name?) were experiences that enriched me deeply.

Heartwarming Bonds

One of the most memorable incidents involved a student from a school I hadn't visited in a while due to scheduling issues. When I finally returned, she ran to me, her face lighting up with joy. But then, she pouted and expressed her disappointment: "Why didn't you come earlier? I missed you!" Her words reminded me of the genuine connections I had formed with these children—connections that transcended barriers of language, culture, and background.



A Journey of Self-Discovery

This fellowship has been a journey of immense self-growth. From someone who couldn't stay at a relative's house for more than a few days, I learned to adapt to any situation. Whether it was surviving the freezing winters, documenting Kashmiri culture, or facilitating sessions that touched lives, every experience shaped me.

My parents used to say, "Duniya dekhi nahi hai abhi tumne." Now, I can confidently say I've seen a world they never imagined—a world in the "paradise on Earth" where I grew not just as a professional but as a person.



Darshana Purohit
Batch 17



A Journey of Discovery in Kashmir Valley

As I stepped into the picturesque Kashmir Valley for the first time, I was beset with questions. How would I adapt to a place so far from home? How would I navigate the challenges of a different religion, language, and culture?

But as I settled into my new surroundings, my team members welcomed me with open arms and provided a comprehensive induction that answered many of my questions. As I immersed myself in the local culture, my remaining doubts slowly dissipated.

Whispers of the Valley:-

Snowflakes kissed my cheeks so light,
A wonderland draped in purest white.
Forty days of Chillai Kalan's embrace,
Harsh yet beautiful—a test of grace.

With every step in Kashmir's land,
I felt its warmth, its guiding hand.
A language foreign, yet close to heart,
A connection formed, a world apart.

A Fellowship of Growth and Learning:-

This fellowship has been a transformative experience, allowing me to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. I feel grateful to have been a part of this journey, which has broadened my understanding of the world and its complexities.

Visiting schools, I saw the excitement in the eyes of young girls as they asked, "Didi, what did you study? Can I do a fellowship too?" Their curiosity and determination inspired me every day. Building bonds with teachers, understanding their struggles and triumphs, made me realize the profound impact education has on shaping futures.

Snapshots from the Journey:-

A warm cup of kahwa shared with locals in a quaint village, stories unfolding like delicate petals.

A breathtaking sunset over the snow-capped mountains, where the sky painted poetry in hues of gold and crimson.

The joy of learning to understand bits of Kashmiri, each word a bridge to deeper connections.

The pride in answering when someone asked, "How is Kashmir?" and replying, "More beautiful than paradise."

Reflections and Takeaways:-

As I reflect on my time in Kashmir Valley, I am reminded of the power of empathy, understanding, and connection. This experience has taught me that even in the midst of uncertainty, there is always the potential for growth, learning, and transformation.

I have learned that education is not just about books and lessons—it is about inspiring dreams, fostering confidence, and breaking barriers. It is in the laughter of children, the resilience of teachers, and the beauty of a place that speaks in silence yet tells a thousand tales.

A Lasting Legacy:-

As I carry the memories of this journey with me, I am filled with a sense of wonder, gratitude, and awe. The Kashmir Valley has left an indelible mark on my heart, and I know that this experience will continue to shape me in the days to come.

From snowfall to warm smiles, from harsh winters to heartfelt connections—this fellowship has been nothing short of magical. And as I move forward, I do so with the belief that every journey, no matter how unfamiliar, holds the promise of transformation.

Kashmir, you are not just a place, but a feeling, a story, a melody that will always echo within me.



Akansha Pandey
Batch 17



A Journey of Resilience and change

I am the quiet architect of change, working diligently behind the scenes to rebuild lost dreams. In a world where many see obstacles, I see opportunities. My mission goes beyond education; it's about restoring hope to children who have been overlooked due to circumstances beyond their control. Whether it's the loss of parents or the burden of financial struggles, I step in where others might turn away, determined to make a difference.

I don't just collect data; I listen to stories. I don't merely analyze problems; I search for solutions. Through door-to-door campaigns, heartfelt conversations, and persistent outreach, I have encouraged families to give their children another chance at learning. My impact is not measured solely in numbers but in the smiles of children returning to school, in the relief of a guardian who no longer feels isolated in their struggle, and in the gradual transformation of a community that begins to believe in education once more.

My work goes beyond advocacy—it is deeply personal. I recognize that behind every dropout statistic is a child with potential, a family facing challenges, and a future waiting to be reclaimed. My persistence is quiet yet unwavering, my impact subtle but enduring. I am not just tackling a problem; I am reshaping lives. In every conversation, every step taken, and every child guided back to school, I am demonstrating that change doesn't have to be loud—it just needs to be relentless.



Shahid Gulzar
Batch 16



"My Transformation Through Gandhi Fellowship: From Fear to Confidence"

When I joined the Gandhi Fellowship, I lacked confidence. I used to struggle with presenting my thoughts in front of people. The fear of speaking would hold me back, and I often hesitated to express myself. Standing before an audience seemed like an impossible task.

However, as my journey in the fellowship progressed, I faced various challenges that pushed me beyond my comfort zone. Through regular interactions, fieldwork, and mentoring sessions, I gradually started overcoming my fears. I learned to communicate effectively, structure my ideas, and present them with clarity.

Now, as my fellowship journey is coming to an end, I can see a significant transformation in myself. I have developed the confidence to present my thoughts without hesitation. I no longer fear public speaking; instead, I embrace it as an opportunity to share and inspire. Gandhi Fellowship has truly been a life-changing experience for me, shaping me into a more confident and capable individual.



Santosh Kumar
Batch 16



The Tale of "tear"

Suddenly, my grandmother called out, "Sartaj!" I quickly ran to her. She handed me a cup of tea. Just as I was about to say something, she suddenly said, "The 'tear' is very dangerous!"

I didn't understand what she meant, but I nodded as if I did. My mind was filled with questions—Was there something dangerous outside? Should I go out or not? Was there some unknown danger waiting for me?

By evening, I saw some people sitting around a fire, talking. Gathering courage, I went near them, but their Kashmiri conversation went over my head. Then, one uncle took a deep puff from his cigarette and said, "The 'tear' is very dangerous here."

Now, my fear grew even more. The cold winter and this mysterious word made me anxious. My mind kept asking—What exactly is this 'tear'? Is it some wild animal? Is it more dangerous than a bear?

Scared, I ran back home. At dinner, I couldn't even eat properly. Seeing my condition, my grandmother got worried. She touched my forehead—I had a high fever! She quickly took out a yellow pill from her old pouch and gestured for me to take it. After taking the medicine, I went to my room, but sleep was nowhere near.

Throughout the night, I kept hearing faint sounds near the window. Every little noise made me jump. It felt like some unknown shadow was lurking outside, waiting to attack me. My mind kept wondering—Will the 'tear' attack me? Is it really a monster? Our village had seen bears before, but people seemed more scared of this 'tear' than the bears. What was its secret?

The next morning, I prepared myself well. I put on thick clothes and even kept a sharp knife in my bag—just in case the 'tear' attacked me. Holding a wooden stick, I set out to explore the village.

After walking a bit, I saw a crowd gathered at a corner. My heart started beating faster—Had the 'tear' attacked someone? Gathering courage, I went closer. But to my surprise, it was just a vegetable seller, surrounded by customers!

Throughout the night, I kept hearing faint sounds near the window. Every little noise made me Still, my fear didn't go away. I asked a woman for directions to the PHC center. She said, "It's near the school, but don't go there. The 'tear' is very dangerous there!"

Now, I was terrified. I quickly rushed back home. My breath was heavy. I kept thinking—Today, I escaped death!

At night, my grandmother's nephew, who had come from the city, was chatting in the other room. But I was lost in my own fear. I tried to sleep but kept wondering—Why did I join the Gandhi Fellowship? Why did I come to this village? Why do I have to face this 'tear'? Lost in these thoughts, I finally dozed off.

The next morning, my grandmother and her nephew came to wake me up. Just as I was about to get out of bed, he said, "Stay inside! The 'tear' is very dangerous outside."

I screamed, "Save me! The 'tear' will kill me!"

Seeing my condition, he burst out laughing and called everyone, "Look how scared he is of the 'tear'!"

Then, a woman said, "Even my little daughter isn't scared of the 'tear'." This surprised me even more. She added, "The 'tear' will go away in March, and then summer will come."

Now my curiosity was at its peak. "Where will it go?" I asked.

My grandmother's nephew smiled and said, "'tear' means cold! In Kashmiri, winter is called 'tear'!"

I blurted out, "Oh...!"

Suddenly, everything made sense. I felt a strange relief and laughed at myself—how one misunderstood word had ruined my nights!



Mohd. Sartaj
Batch 17



How the Gandhi Fellowship is Changing My Life Journey

Life is a continuous journey of learning and transformation, and the Gandhi Fellowship has been a catalyst in reshaping my perspective, aspirations, and purpose. Through this immersive experience, I have gained invaluable lessons that go beyond traditional education, deeply influencing my personal and professional growth. The Gandhi Fellowship has been a transformative experience for me, one that has reshaped my perspective on leadership, education, and social change. Through its immersive, hands-on approach, I've gained a deep understanding of the challenges faced by rural communities and schools. It has pushed me beyond my comfort zone, encouraging personal growth and self-awareness. The program's focus on problem-solving has not only honed my skills in tackling real-world issues but also strengthened my resilience and adaptability. Most importantly, the fellowship has instilled in me a sense of purpose and a commitment to driving sustainable change. By interacting with diverse communities and learning from experienced mentors, I've developed a deeper empathy and a stronger drive to contribute to the betterment of society.

The Gandhi Fellowship has pushed me out of my comfort zone, encouraging me to navigate uncertainty with confidence. I have learned to adapt to different environments, handle unforeseen challenges, and develop resilience. The fellowship has strengthened my problem-solving abilities and helped me cultivate a growth mindset. The fellowship has refined my leadership abilities, allowing me to take initiative and drive impact. Leading social campaigns on education awareness and drug addiction helped me build confidence in public speaking, stakeholder engagement, and team coordination. Working with community members and a youth leader strengthened my ability to inspire and mobilize people toward a common cause. Attending various workshops, including one on February 3, 2025, has broadened my knowledge in leadership, social development, and sustainable change. These sessions have equipped me with practical tools and strategies to address community issues. Writing workshop minutes has also improved my documentation and analytical skills, making me more detail-oriented. Beyond external experiences, this fellowship has been an inward journey. It has deepened my self-awareness, helping me identify my strengths and areas for improvement. I have developed emotional intelligence, patience, and the ability to empathize with diverse perspectives. Each challenge and milestone has been an opportunity to refine my character and clarify my future aspirations. As I continue this journey, I am excited about the possibilities ahead. The Gandhi Fellowship is not just shaping my career but also nurturing my ability to create meaningful change. Each experience is a stepping stone toward becoming a more effective leader and a compassionate change-maker.



Shahid Ahmad Wangnu
Batch 17



"Touched by Kashmir: Beauty, Warmth, and Wisdom"

Kashmir has deeply impacted me and changed the way I see the world and its beauty. The culture, the people, and the way of life there have left a lasting impression on me.

One of the first things that amazed me was the valley. Surrounded by the tall Himalayas and peaceful lakes, the beauty of Kashmir is like no other. Whether it's the green meadows in spring, the bright autumn leaves, or the peaceful snow in winter, the valley offers a special kind of calm. Places like Dal Lake, with its quiet boats, and the Jhelum River, flowing gently through the land, are memories I will always carry. These places have helped me see how important it is to appreciate the simple beauty of nature around us.

The winter season in Kashmir stands out for me. The cold can be harsh, but it's beautiful in its own way. The snow covers everything, creating a quiet, peaceful world. To stay warm, people in Kashmir use a kangri, a small firepot made of wicker that keeps you warm by carrying burning embers. Carrying a kangri during the cold helped me understand how warmth is not just physical, but emotional too. It made me realize how important it is to stay warm and find comfort, even in tough times.

Kashmir's culture has also shaped me. One of the most unique parts of the culture is the ferrañ, a woolen cloak worn by men in winter. The ferrañ is not only warm but shows how connected the people are to their land and its cold climate. When I wore it, even for a short time, it made me feel connected to the history and traditions of the region.



Noon chai, or pink tea, was another experience that stood out to me. This tea, with its salty, creamy taste and pink color, has become a symbol of Kashmiri hospitality. Sharing a cup of noon chai with someone made me understand that offering a drink is more than just a gesture; it's a way of sharing and connecting with others. It was a small but meaningful way to experience the warmth of the people there.

The natural beauty of Kashmir has influenced me in ways I can't fully explain. Dal Lake, with its floating gardens and houseboats, felt like a dream. The Jhelum River flowing through Srinagar, with its peaceful bridges and quiet banks, is one of the calmest places I've ever been. The beauty of Kashmir's land makes me appreciate how nature can feed and soothe the soul.

Above all, it's the people of Kashmir who have made the deepest impact on me. Despite the challenges they've faced, they are kind, warm, and welcoming. Their strength and kindness have taught me that no matter how hard life gets, there's always room for generosity, understanding, and connection. Their way of living has reminded me that kindness is a powerful force.

Kashmir has changed me in ways I can't fully describe. It's made me appreciate nature, the little things in life, and the connections we share with others. The experiences I've had there, from the calm beauty of Dal Lake and the Jhelum River to the warmth of the kangri, the ferrañ, the taste of noon chai, and the kindness of the people, continue to shape who I am today.



एक गाँधी साथी की जुबानी"

एक छोटा बच्चा टीचर से मासूमियत भरे अंदाज़ में पूछता है, "मैम, ये काले बादल क्यों आते हैं?" शिक्षक हंस कर कहते हैं, "जो बच्चे नहा कर नहीं आते, उन्हें नहाने के लिए!"

बच्चा टूरंट बोलता है, "मैं तो रोज़ नहा कर आता हूँ!" पूरी क्लास हंसने लगती है. मैं चुपचाप सब देख रहा हूँ, तभी टीचर मुझसे पूछती हैं, "आप कौन हैं?"

बिना सोचे मेरे मुंह से निकलता है, "मैं गांधी फेलो हूँ." टीचर हैयरन होती हैं और पूछती हैं, "ये क्या होता है?" मैं उन्हें बताता हूँ कि गांधी जी ने दक्षिण अफ्रीका में सत्याग्रह किया था और मैं भी स्कूलों में जाकर बच्चों को नए कौशल सिखाने का काम करता हूँ। पहले मुझे शिक्षक और प्रिंसिपल मिलने नहीं देते थे, लेकिन मैंने धैर्य रखा, जैसा गांधी जी ने किया था।

शिक्षक समझने लगती हैं और कहती हैं, "तो क्या आप भी गांधी जी के रास्ते पर चल रहे हैं?" मैं मुस्कराकर हाँ कहता हूँ.

तभी स्कूल की घंटी बजती है, शिक्षक अलविदा कहकर चली जाती हैं। मैं भी बहार आता हूँ, तभी बारिश शुरू होती है। पानी की बूंदें चेहरे पर गिरती हैं, और मैं आसमान की तरफ देखकर मुस्कराता हूँ, "मुझे और धैर्य रखना होगा... क्योंकि मैं गांधी फेलो हूँ।"



Mohd. Sartaj
Batch 17



TO OUR GUIDING STARS

In the valleys where mountains stand tall,
You are the pillars that guide us all.
Through every twist, through every bend,
You've been our light, our trusted friend.

Zeeshan ma'am, with wisdom so bright,
Your words turn darkness into light.
Jahangeer bhai, calm and wise,
Hope and strength reflect in your eyes.

Wasim bhai, steady and true,
We grow stronger, thanks to you.
Nishant bhai, your laughter heals,
Teaching lessons the heart feels.

Amir Rahim bhai, firm but kind,
Your strength leaves no one behind.
Zahoor bhai, your patience flows,
Like rivers beneath the mountain snows.

Amir Sultan bhai, with hands that build,
Dreams and plans that fields have tilled
Showket bhai, with endless grace,
Leading us at every pace.

Aishwarya dii, with care so deep,
You hold the dreams we dare to keep.
Irfan bhai, your voice, a song,
Guiding right when we go wrong.

Pramod bhai, with lessons rare,
Your presence shows how much you care.
And **Sajad bhai**, our silent shield,
Ensuring every tool we wield.

To our leaders - present, past,
Your wisdom makes our shadows cast.
From Program Leaders to Directors high,
You shape the wings with which we fly.

At times we falter, at times we stray,
But you remind us of the way.
With gentle hands and voices strong,
You've kept us steady all along.

Thank you for the paths you pave,
For every lesson that you gave.
In this journey, near or far,
You are our guides, our northern star.

A family, not by blood but grace,
You've given our dreams a home, a place.
May we grow with what you share,
And rise with you always there.



Sneha Kumari
Batch 17



A Note of Gratitude

Dear Readers,

We want to express our deepest gratitude for taking the time to explore and engage with this magazine. Your curiosity and support are the heart and soul of what we do, and we are truly thankful for every moment you spend with us. It is not just the pages that bring this magazine to life; it is your attention, your interest, and your willingness to connect with the stories, ideas, and perspectives we share.

As we put each issue together, we aim to inspire, inform, and evoke thought, and knowing that it reaches you and resonates with you fills us with immense joy. Every article, every image, every word is crafted with you in mind, and your feedback and encouragement keep us striving to improve and evolve.

We are so grateful for this shared journey and for the opportunity to contribute to your world in some small way. Your support encourages us to continue creating, learning, and growing together.

We hope that the content you've read has touched you in some meaningful way, and we look forward to bringing you more stories, ideas, and inspiration in the future.

Thank you once again for being part of this experience. We truly appreciate you.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Sneha



Sneha Kumari
Batch 17









"Ink, Effort, and Endless Nights: The Heart Behind Every Page"

My fingers shake a bit as I open another document. Every new piece of writing, every photo feels like unwrapping a gift. As someone making their first magazine, I find myself lost in a world of endless possibilities and nervous energy.

My desk has become a creative nest - sticky notes everywhere, folders full of ideas, and my screen glowing with open files at 2 AM. Sleep? That can wait. There's this burning need to get everything just right.

The joy comes in waves - that perfect moment when two stories flow together beautifully, or when a photo matches the text like they were made for each other. But then the doubts creep in too. Is this good enough? Will people understand what I'm trying to create? Am I making the right choices?

Each page feels like it holds a piece of my heart now. I wake up with new ideas, scribbling them down before they fade. Sometimes I stare at the layout for hours, moving things around until they feel just right. It's exhausting and thrilling all at once.

This isn't just a magazine anymore - it's become my story too. And even with all the nervous butterflies in my stomach, there's this quiet excitement that maybe, just maybe, I'm creating something beautiful.

**Editor, Design, Cover, Magazine Name, Calligraphy:
Sneha kumari**

