

## Why should all of us become teachers?

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Long ago (late 1970s) I was a student in [U.S. doing Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering](#). A very popular program on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) channel that we used to watch was Carl Sagan's "Cosmos-A personal voyage". [Carl Sagan was a famous astrophysicist and a distinguished professor in Cornell University](#). In 13 part series he explored the cosmos, solar system and universe. It is reported that this series, first broadcast on PBS in 1980, has been watched by 500 million viewers in 60 different countries! Carl Sagan became a very popular TV personality and was generally looked down by mainstream scientists who thought that his fame was because of his penchant for-self-promotion. However today the general trend world over is for scientists to engage with public and popularize science no matter how esoteric it is.

In one of the interviews that Carl Sagan gave, after his Cosmos series, he said that his interest in cosmology and science was awakened by a lecture he attended when he was in high school. That interview always remained at the back of my mind and I always felt that children can be inspired for doing greater things in life during their school going age. The impressionable age together with a powerful mind is a sure-shot recipe for creating wonders in a child's mind if exposed to great ideas.

In my own case the desire to go to U.S. was kindled by a film that I saw in school when I was 12 or 13 years of age. The film was a documentary on New York's International Fair of 1939 and showed the wonders of U.S. industrial might.

I therefore feel that those who have done great and wonderful things in life should make it as their duty to talk and give regular lectures in high schools in the city they live. By doing so they might inspire children and help in creating better citizens of tomorrow.

There are lots of schools who have a program of inviting such distinguished persons to give lectures to the students. However for schools which do not do so we should ourselves get invited so that the students benefit from our experience. It is also not necessary that the lecture or speech is always given by a great or important person; what is important is to expose the children to great ideas.

One of the aspects of exposing them to a world of ideas is also to [impart education about ethical behavior](#). Children need to be continuously instructed, cajoled and inspired to follow ethical behavior in their lives.

In Phaltan, a rural town in Maharashtra, where I live we started a school for our children in early 1990s. The school called Kamla Nimbkar Bal Bhavan (KNB) has classes from kindergarten to 10<sup>th</sup> class. My younger daughter Madhura who passed her 10<sup>th</sup> standard in 2001 from this school, did her Masters in education from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and now teaches in KNB and runs its [“School in the Cloud”](#).



Teaching one of Madhura's class

She arranges occasional lectures of mine for her eighth and ninth standard class. In these classes, I talk about things in Science which are not covered in their syllabus and explore together the romance of research. We have also slowly introduced these

kids to [TED talks](#) and sometimes we discuss in detail one of the TED talks. They see these TED talks on the school's internet.

In a small rural town in Marathi medium school, these children's exposure to TED talks opens up a whole different world for them and their horizons broaden. I feel that some of them may be inspired by these talks to do wonderful things later on in life.

Madhura provides great example of what a teacher should be. She is very passionate not only about the subjects she teaches but also about her students. Even when her students have graduated and left school she keeps in touch with them and they turn to her to share their experiences and ask advice. Unless we have more teachers like Madhura, we cannot expect students to have passion and desire for learning.

It is not necessary that all the students are inspired by such talks and exposure but even if one of them is then he or she later on in life may do great things. We on our part would have given back to society and helped India.

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