

a monthly journal of quiet purpose

Goodness in Everyday Life

for every reader who still believes small acts add up

Volume 21 • September Issue • 2026



this month's story

The Walls That Learned to Dream

*How one teacher turned neglected walls into
classrooms — and compassion into a movement*

Written by **Sangeeta Natarajan**

There are people who enter a classroom to teach.

And then there are people who look around, see that the classroom
itself is missing, and decide to build one.

Rouble Nagi belongs to the second kind.

For years, she has walked into communities where children had little
access to formal education and asked a deceptively simple question:

*If the child cannot reach the
classroom, why can't learning reach
the child?*

Her answer came in colour.

Walls became blackboards.

Murals became lessons.

Stories became learning tools.

And neglected spaces became places where children could imagine a
different future.

What began as a small, hands-on effort in Mumbai's slums grew into a

much larger educational movement through the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation, with more than 800 learning centres established across India.

In 2026, that work received one of the world's most prominent recognitions for educators: the \$1 million Global Teacher Prize.

But perhaps the most important part of this story is not the prize.

It is the journey that came before it.

She Didn't Wait for the Perfect Classroom

We often imagine that meaningful education requires a proper building, smart boards, expensive resources, sophisticated laboratories and perfectly designed classrooms.

Rouble Nagi's work challenges that assumption. She found possibilities where others might have seen limitations.

A wall could become a canvas.

A colour could become a concept.

A picture could become a vocabulary lesson.

A mural could become a doorway into science, mathematics, history or language. And perhaps most importantly, learning could begin with dignity.

**Resources can improve
education. But imagination can
begin it.**

That distinction matters. Because whenever we say, "We don't have enough," there may still be something we can do with what we already have.

A teacher has a voice.

A parent has a story.

A young person has an idea.

An artist has colour.

A professional has knowledge.

A community has people.

And every human being has the capacity to be useful to another.

The Child Was Never the Problem

Children growing up in difficult circumstances are often described through what they lack. They don't have access. They don't have resources. They don't have opportunities. They don't have the right environment.

But Nagi's work begins from a different premise:

**The absence of opportunity must
never be mistaken for the
absence of potential.**

That is a powerful distinction.

A child may not have entered a classroom. That does not mean the child has nothing to learn.

A child may struggle with literacy. That does not mean the child lacks intelligence.

A child may live in an environment of deprivation. That does not mean the child should inherit deprivation as destiny.

Sometimes what a child needs first is not another lecture. It is someone who says:

"I can see something in you."

From Art to Education

Nagi's murals are more than decoration. They transform the physical environment into an educational resource.

Colour attracts attention.

Symbols create associations.

Stories create meaning.

Visual experiences make abstract ideas easier to approach. And participation gives children something that a textbook alone cannot always provide: the feeling that learning belongs to them.

This is where art becomes more than art. It becomes a language. A bridge. A confidence-builder. A means of self-expression. A way of saying to a child:

"Your imagination has a place here."

And perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts education can give. Not merely information. But permission to imagine.

The Power of Consistency

There is another lesson hidden inside this story.

Extraordinary work rarely looks extraordinary on Day One.

It often looks small. One child. One wall. One lesson. One afternoon. One conversation. One attempt. And then another. And another. And another.

We celebrate the 800th learning centre. We celebrate the global award. We celebrate the million-dollar recognition. But behind every visible achievement lies something much less glamorous: consistency.

The willingness to keep showing up when nobody is applauding. That is where purpose is tested.

Because intention is easy. Action is harder. Sustained action is transformative.

Goodness Is Not a Feeling. It Is a Practice.

This is perhaps the deepest lesson Rouble Nagi's journey offers us.

Many of us care. We see suffering. We notice inequality. We worry about children. We wish things were different.

Goodness begins to create change only when concern becomes action.

I care → I act.

I see a problem → I contribute a solution.

I have a skill → I share it.

I have an opportunity → I create one for someone else.

That is the movement from sympathy to service. And service, when practised consistently, can become a life's work.

What If We Stopped Asking, "What Will I Get?"

and started asking,

"What can I give?"

Imagine if every adult asked this question once a day.

A teacher

What can I give my students beyond the syllabus?

A parent

What can I give my child beyond marks?

A student

What can I create instead of merely consume?

An artist

Where can my creativity bring confidence?

A professional

Whose journey can become easier because of what I know?

A business

What problem can we solve for people?

A senior citizen

What wisdom can I pass forward?

A young person

What useful thing can I begin today?

We might discover that goodness doesn't always require wealth. It requires attention, intention and action.

The Rouble Nagi Formula

Perhaps her journey can be remembered through four simple words:

See → Care → Create → Continue

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| See | Notice what others may overlook. |
| Care | Allow another person's difficulty to matter to you. |
| Create | Use whatever you possess — knowledge, art, time, money, relationships or imagination — to make something useful. |
| Continue | Keep going after the initial enthusiasm disappears. |

That last word may be the most important. Because a good idea can inspire. But consistent goodness can transform.

And What About Us?

We don't all have to establish 800 learning centres. We don't all have to paint murals. We don't all have to win a global award.

The invitation is much simpler. Look around you.

There is probably one person whose day you can improve.

One child you can encourage.

One skill you can share.

One neglected problem you can help solve.

One idea you can turn into action.

One wall — literal or metaphorical — that you can transform.

***Perhaps the extraordinary life is
not the life in which we become
famous. Perhaps it is the life in
which our presence quietly makes
other lives better.***

Rouble Nagi's story reminds us that purpose does not always announce itself with a grand beginning. Sometimes it begins with a brush in one's hand. Sometimes with a child sitting beside a wall. Sometimes with a question:

"What if we tried something different?"

And sometimes, years later, the world notices what began as one person's act of goodness.

The Goodness Challenge

Before you turn the page, pause for a moment.

Don't ask: "*What extraordinary thing can I do?*"

Ask instead: "What useful thing can I do with what I already have?"

Your answer may be smaller than you imagined. That's okay — because every movement begins somewhere.

One person. One act. One child.

One idea. One day. And then — again tomorrow.

**You don't have to change the whole world to
make your life meaningful.
Change one corner of it — and keep showing
up.**

— *Goodness in Everyday Life*



*With special thanks and gratitude to **(late)**
Prof. S. P. Kanal — humanitarian and writer
— whose writings first inspired me to begin
this journal.*