

The ascent of self-belief

Premlata Agrawal's Journey Of Advocating Sustainable Adventure

Manya Aggarwal, XII A & Shreshth Tomar, XII B, AIS Vasundhara 6

Beginning her mountaineering journey at an age when many settle into comfort, Premlata Agrawal went on to become the first Indian woman to scale

the Seven Summits and the oldest Indian woman to climb Mount Everest at the age of 48. A Padma Shri awardee and proud recipient of the Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award, her life is proof that mountains don't ask your age - they test determination and courage.

The first ascent

My journey into mountaineering began with a deep inner calling to challenge myself beyond the ordinary. For me, climbing was about discovering inner strength, breaking stereotypes, and proving that determination can defy age and circumstance. I always looked up to Bachendri Pal. Reading about her journey, and later meeting her, opened my eyes to infinite possibilities. My first basic course at HMI, Darjeeling was daunting. I was married, a mother of two, and older than most trainees. Surrounded by young NCC cadets, I felt out of place - but I gave my best and was named Best Cadet. That was my first summit of self-belief.

Crossing the ridge

Balancing home and mountaineering demanded both passion and planning. With family support, I fulfilled my responsibilities while training. Discipline, to me, is the bridge between dreams and achievement, built on consistency and focus. My fitness



Premlata Agrawal, mountaineer

INTERVIEW

routine is simple but disciplined: long walks and jogs, yoga for flexibility and calm, strength training for endurance, and breathing exercises - because in the Himalayas, breath becomes your greatest ally. Age is never a barrier if you listen to your body with patience. I also accepted fear as part of the process. Once, near the summit, I lost a glove. I knew frostbite could be fatal. But I told myself - if I must fall, let it be while moving forward. Faith carried me through. Also, I carry a small idol of Maa Durga. It anchors my faith and courage.

On the summit

The feeling of standing atop the Everest was overwhelming. Tears came from gratitude, not exhaustion. For me, the summit was not just personal triumph - it was a beacon, proving that no dream is too big, no age too late. Your prime is the moment you decide to pursue your passion wholeheartedly. The honours I have received are not just personal milestones, but symbols of encouragement for countless women and young people who dare to dream differently. Everest did change my perspective. I realised success is not just reaching the top, but returning safely and sharing lessons. Everest



Premlata Agrawal with GT reporters

taught me humility and collective responsibility. Every summit whispers - "Climb with respect, not conquest". That is the dialogue I carry in my heart.

Charting new trails

The idea behind Himalayan Paths was born out of responsibility. I have seen the beauty of the Himalayas, but also the scars left by careless tourism. I wanted to create a platform where adventure and sustainability walk hand-in-hand. Himalayan Paths is not just about treks - it is about educating participants to respect local culture, minimise waste, and give back to the communities that host us. For me, it is a way of ensuring that future generations can experience the Himalayas in their purest form. My focus now is on taking students and women into the world of adventure. However, I advise you to not pursue something just because others are doing it. It must come from passion and love for nature.

Book Review

Time travel express

Synopsis: The fifth novel in Before the Coffee Gets Cold series continues with its familiar, best-selling formula - a bouquet of emotional stories about people visiting a mysterious café with the intention of travelling through time for healing and resolution. Each of the four guests gets a chapter dedicated to their poignant story: a father grappling with his daughter's marriage; a woman struggling to express love; a boy smiling through the grief of his parents' divorce; and a new mother whose husband was killed before he could meet and name their infant daughter. The book emphasises that kindness doesn't need to be big or dramatic. Even simple acts - a small

Book: Before we forget kindness

Author: Toshikazu Kawaguchi

Published on: September 24, 2024

Genre: Magical realism, time travel & contemporary

gesture, a gentle word, or a little understanding - can change people's lives. The stories reveal the characters' emotions: the fear of seeking help, the feeling of being unseen, or the tendency to forget being kind to oneself. The book repeatedly reminds readers of the power of kindness and empathy - how it brings people closer and helps them heal.

Why is it worth reading: Toshikazu Kawaguchi's writing is simple, peaceful, and comforting. His stories touch the heart because they explore real human emotions such as love, regret, fear, hope, and forgiveness. By the end, 'Before We Forget Kindness' makes us reflect on our own behaviour and inspires us to be gentler with the people around us. It gives readers the courage to find closure and embrace a hopeful future. A must-read, it caters to all ages.

Iconic quote: "In life, there are only two paths: to act or not to act. Humans must choose one."

Rating: 4/5

Review by: Lavanya Singh

AIS Jagdishpur, IX A



Before
we
forget
kindness

a novel

TOSHIKAZU KAWAGUCHI
Author of the International Bestseller Before the Coffee Gets Cold