



Writing gave me a voice: Teen author on turning challenges into conquests

Author, youth advocate and India Book of Records achiever Debadrita Sarkar reflects on her journey from childhood struggles to becoming a published writer using literature to address issues that matter to young people.

Hans INTERVIEW

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At just 17, Debadrita Sarkar has emerged as a young author and social advocate, using the power of words to raise awareness about issues ranging from mental health and environmental conservation to disability inclusion, girl child rights and Indian heritage. An India Book of Records achiever, she has authored and co-authored nine ISBN-registered books and seen her work published in nearly 20 periodicals across six countries. Her journey, however, has not been without challenges. From facing bullying and self-doubt in childhood to finding confidence through writing, Debadrita has transformed personal struggles into a platform for advocacy and inspiration.

As she prepares her profile for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026, she speaks to The Hans India about overcoming setbacks, writing with purpose, the achievement she values most, and why she believes age should never be a barrier to creating meaningful change.

Q. Your journey began with bullying and self-doubt. What helped you transform those experiences into motivation to become an author and advocate?

As a child, I was often ridiculed and called "fool" or "stupid." My mother would encourage me by calling me "Fool Kalidasa," reminding me of the legendary scholar who overcame adversity through learning.



Debadrita Sarkar

That thought stayed with me.

I began writing in Bengali during the COVID-19 lockdown after being inspired by nature. Initially, very few people believed in my writing, but my grandfather encouraged me to continue.

Later, I started writing in English, even while dealing

with anxiety, academic pressure and self-doubt. Writing became my way of expressing emotions and finding peace.

When my article Marks Mania was published in The Hindu, followed by my story in The Statesman, I realised my voice could reach people and create an impact.

Q. Among all your achievements, which one means the most to you and why?

My India Book of Records recognition is the achievement I value the most. While writing books is itself challenging, this recognition was unique because it acknowledged

my publications in nearly 20 periodicals across six countries within a single year.

For me, it represents the acceptance of my work by editors around the world. It showed that meaningful writing can connect with readers beyond borders and encouraged me to continue writing with greater confidence.

Q. Many of your books focus on environmental conservation, mental health, disability inclusion and girl child rights. What inspired you to write about these issues?

Most of my books are inspired by real-life experiences and issues that matter to me.

My own struggles with mental health encouraged me to write poetry that helps young people understand and express their emotions.

My love for nature inspired books on environmental conservation, while the achievements of para-

archer Sheetal Devi motivated me to write about disability inclusion. As a girl, I also felt strongly about education and equal opportunities for girls. Through my stories, I want to highlight the challenges many girls continue to face and encourage society to support their dreams.

I have also written about Indian history and culture because I believe many inspiring stories deserve wider recognition among young readers.

Q. What impact do you hope your books, blogs, magazine and campaigns will create?

I hope they inspire young people to believe in themselves and contribute positively to society. Whether it is protecting the environment, supporting mental well-being, preserving our culture or standing up for equality, every young person can make a difference.

If my work motivates even a few students to pursue their passion or start an initiative for social

good, I will consider it a success.

Q. As a candidate for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026, what message would you like to share with students across India?

Things are never easy, and everyone faces setbacks. I have faced rejection, self-doubt and criticism, but I never stopped writing. You don't need the best resources to begin. I wrote my books without a computer or laptop, using only my phone. More important than resources are consistency, patience and the willingness to keep learning. Most importantly, don't compare yourself with others. Everyone grows at their own pace. Age should never stop you from chasing your dreams. You don't have to wait until adulthood to write a book, launch a project or create positive change. Believe in yourself, keep improving every day, and your efforts will eventually make a difference.

UoH faculty and research scholar awarded prestigious royal society international exchange fellowship

HYDERABAD

The University of Hyderabad (UoH), an Institution of Eminence (IoE), has strengthened its global research profile with Dr. Pratap Kollu, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Electronics Science and Technology (CASEST), School of Physics, receiving the prestigious Visiting Fellowship from the Royal Society, UK.

The fellowship recognises promising researchers and promotes international scientific collaboration by enabling scholars to work with leading global institutions. As part of the programme, Dr. Kollu, accompanied by his PhD research scholar Prajakta Dange, completed a 10-day academic exchange visit to the University of Glasgow, where he also served as an



(From L to right): Prof. Duncan H. Gregory, University of Glasgow with Prajakta Dange and Dr. Pratap Kollu, University of Hyderabad

Honorary Faculty Member.

During the visit, the University of Hyderabad team collaborated with Prof. Duncan H. Gregory, Chair in Inorganic Materials at the School of Chemistry, University of Glasgow. The researchers engaged in discussions and explored collaborative opportunities in several emerg-

ing areas of science and technology, including advanced functional materials, smart instrumentation systems, and next-generation energy storage technologies.

These research areas are considered critical for addressing future challenges in sustainable energy, advanced manufacturing and

high-performance materials. The exchange provided both institutions with an opportunity to share expertise, discuss ongoing research and identify areas for future collaboration.

The fellowship is supported by the Yusuf and Farida Hamied Foundation, established by noted scientist and philanthropist Dr. Yusuf Hamied, Chairman of Cipla. The foundation supports international research partnerships aimed at advancing scientific solutions in areas such as clean energy, healthcare and advanced materials by fostering collaboration between researchers in India and the United Kingdom.

According to the university, the visit has laid the groundwork for long-term academic cooperation between UoH and the University of Glasgow. Both institutions are expected to explore

joint research proposals, collaborative publications, faculty interactions and bilateral exchange programmes for students and researchers.

University officials said such collaborations provide valuable exposure to cutting-edge scientific research and help strengthen interdisciplinary learning while creating opportunities for young researchers to engage with global experts.

The fellowship also reflects the increasing participation of Indian universities in international research initiatives. By building partnerships with globally recognised institutions, UoH continues to expand its research network and contribute to scientific advancements with potential applications in energy, materials science and other technology-driven sectors.

Students to showcase mental math skills at regional prodigy championship 2026



HYDERABAD

More than 3,200 students aged between 4 and 14 years from across Telangana will participate in the 22nd Telangana Regional Prodigy Championship 2026 on July 12 at Classic Convention Three, Shamshabad, highlighting the role of mental arithmetic and cognitive skills in children's learning. Will be organising by SIP Abacus, the annual championship will feature competitions in mental arithmetic, memory, concentration, visualization, speed and accuracy. Participants will solve mathematical problems mentally without using calculators, paper or electronic devices. One of the key attractions of the event will be the Concentration Round, where students will attempt mental arithmetic problems

while loud music plays in the background.

The activity is designed to assess children's ability to remain focused and accurate despite distractions, a skill considered increasingly important in today's technology-driven environment.

The competition will bring together children from different age groups, including participants as young as five years old, who will demonstrate mental calculation techniques developed through structured abacus and mental math training.

According to the organisers, the championship aims to encourage children to view mathematics as an engaging and enjoyable subject while helping them develop cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, logical thinking and problem-solving.

The event will be attended by GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan, V.P. Gautham, Special Secretary to the Government of Telangana in the Housing Department, and Pannuru Prabhakar, Principal of ARCA Global International School.

The Regional Prodigy Championship is SIP Abacus' flagship annual event and is expected to attract students, parents, educators and child development experts from across the state.

With increasing emphasis on skills such as critical thinking, concentration and analytical ability in the age of artificial intelligence, the championship seeks to provide young learners with an opportunity to demonstrate how mental math training can contribute to overall cognitive development beyond classroom learning.

How small acts of kindness can renew hope

In today's fast-paced world, loneliness often goes unnoticed. While students are busy balancing academics, extracurricular activities and social media, many people around them—including classmates, neighbours, grandparents or relatives—may be silently struggling with isolation. Taking a few moments to reach out can make a meaningful difference in someone's life.

Cheering up someone who feels lonely does not require grand gestures. A simple phone call, a thoughtful text message, a short visit or even asking, "How are you doing?" can brighten another person's day. These small acts of kindness remind people that they



are valued, heard and remembered. For students, practising empathy is as important as academic success. Reaching out to someone who may

be feeling left out helps develop emotional intelligence, communication skills and compassion—qualities that contribute to personal growth

and stronger communities. Students can write letters to senior citizens, spend time with elderly neighbours, check in on friends who seem

withdrawn or volunteer with local organisations supporting vulnerable groups.

Research has consistently shown that social connections improve emotional well-being and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. Equally important, those who offer support often experience greater happiness and a stronger sense of purpose themselves. Kindness is contagious. One thoughtful action can inspire others to do the same, creating a ripple effect of positivity throughout schools and neighbourhoods. In an increasingly digital world, genuine human connection remains one of the most valuable gifts we can offer.