

# Alumni Stories

Spotlight on our  
Undergraduates



# Vision

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## *Education for Social Change*

*To contribute to the realisation of a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society.*



# Table of Contents

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<i>Hands-on pedagogy</i>	05	<i>Economics for greater social good</i>	16
<i>Gaining global perspective on education</i>	06	<i>Studying humanities for public services</i>	17
<i>An interdisciplinary approach at Leeds</i>	07	<i>Connecting researchers with critical data</i>	18
<i>Delving deep into Economics</i>	08	<i>Experiential learning</i>	19
<i>Breaking hierarchies in literature</i>	09	<i>Learning through volunteering</i>	20
<i>Evolving through diversity</i>	10	<i>Enhancing delivery of public schemes</i>	21
<i>Back like a boomerang</i>	11	<i>Divvy, a philomath!</i>	22
<i>Life under the ocean</i>	12	<i>Towards building a better community</i>	23
<i>Education for the 21st century</i>	13	<i>Monitoring the Indian economy</i>	24
<i>An enthusiastic astrophysicist</i>	14	<i>At the intersection of public policy and research</i>	25
<i>Studying unconventional intersections</i>	15	<i>Nurturing curiosity</i>	26



**September 2022**

**Dear Readers,**

We are happy to announce our new series, the Undergraduate alumni stories, where students follow our pathfinders, alumni of the University, to understand and report on the study or work they are engaged in while moving towards their larger goal. With the pandemic on and a juggle between online and offline classes, the second- and third-year students volunteered to do 2-3 stories of alumni online. What this meant for us is greater coverage, we broke the shackles of geography and location with many of our alumni studying or working abroad. 11 volunteers from the various undergraduate programmes from the Class of 2019-22 and 2020-2023 interviewed 22 alumni online.

This project that we embarked upon in 2017 and have published 5 series so far, has evolved beyond the story. Interactions with alumni to understand their contribution to the University's vision of a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society, help our students visualise their future careers and contextualise their education at the University. For the alumni, this is a great opportunity to stay connected and get a first-hand account of what's happening at the University. From all accounts, students and alumni both enjoy this interaction. Thanking the enthusiastic team of student volunteers, for fitting this into their already full schedules and taking care to compile these stories so carefully. And to our alumni out there, stay connected and thank you for sharing, your stories make us proud.

We have moved to our new campus and we at the Alumni Office hope to facilitate many more such connections in the future on campus and online.

Warm regards,

**Alumni Office,**

Azim Premji University

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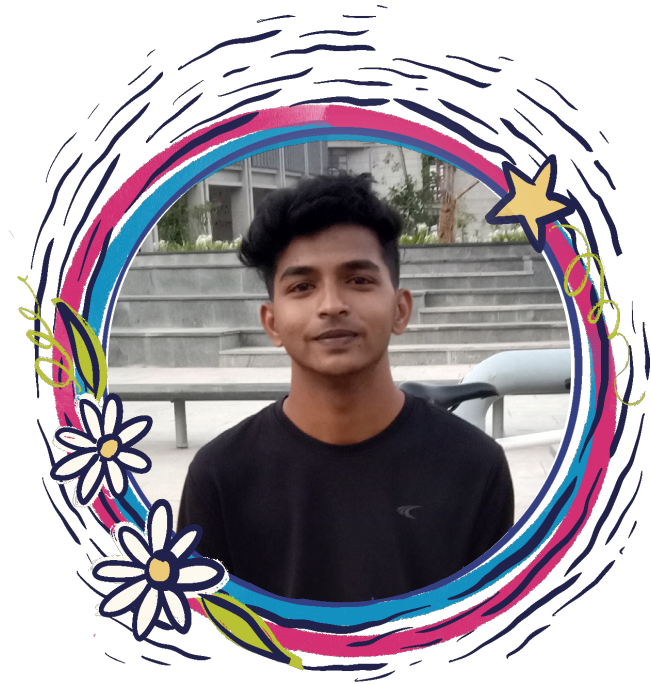


# Yogesh Chaure

*B.A. Humanities 2017-20*

## *Hands-on pedagogy*

*“The learnings from Azim Premji University helped me significantly on the field as I didn’t feel left behind even while working with experienced people.”*



After his graduation in 2020, Yogesh joined Azim Premji Foundation as a Resource Person and worked in Dungarpur district in southern Rajasthan. Here, he conducted teacher training workshops to promote teacher development which involved building better relationships, talking with teachers in the field, and holding demonstrations in class. These workshops are conducted periodically for subject specific work and better use of textbooks. Yogesh worked mainly in the pedagogical aspects of learning English and Hindi. He was not limited to these subjects though, they would have perspective forums where teachers would participate in a discussion around an issue. He also experimented with an activity-based learning approach to improve the overall learning experience. He notes that being a Resource Person has helped him have deeper insights and a better understanding of his learnings at the University.

Very recently, Yogesh joined as a facilitator at Tapas Progressive Education Institution, Bangalore which is a 100% project-based learning school which focuses on the holistic development of students through strong foundational learning.

Yogesh was always inclined to work in the social sector and the service-oriented nature of Azim Premji University further influenced him. The structure of the University itself is geared towards social sector and this has helped him to be better in his field of work. Yogesh’s background in philosophy helps him make better strategies, be critical and conduct better analysis. He plans to work for a few more years to get a better perspective on what to study next and then study further.

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# Abitha Chakrapani

*B.Sc. Biology 2015-18*

## *Gaining global perspective on education*

*“I chose the path of education because there are many opportunities and ground for development in the Indian education system, but it needs people to bring about changes.”*

Abitha Chakrapani is doing an M.Sc. in Educational studies at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, widely known for its teacher education programme. She is an alumna of the first batch of the biology undergraduate programme at Azim Premji University. Abitha wanted to pursue a masters degree with a global perspective on the issues of education, the common challenges faced by educators and how to approach them. She chose Finland to understand the education system and many aspects of the Finnish educational system have intrigued her. The highlights are equal access to education, irrespective of one's socio-economic background, focus on students' holistic education across years of school life, an inclusive special education for every child, highly skilled teachers, pedagogic autonomy provided to teachers and respect for teaching as a profession. Most of all, cooperation by the whole society and different stakeholders – teachers, principals, parents, students, and government officials bringing excellence to the education system.



After this rich experience accelerating her growth, Abitha plans to return to India and work as a teacher.

Abitha admires the diversity and empathetic culture of Azim Premji University. Her curiosity to connect her learnings with field experiences made her join the Azim Premji Foundation as a teacher before pursuing her masters. The three years' experience with the Foundation at Yadgir, teaching English to middle school students was a challenge for her due to the constraints of not knowing the local language. But Abitha's desire to bridge the learning gap, led her to collaboratively work with teachers and students to learn a new language and the overall engagement was quite satisfying.

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# Bhakti Kelkar

*B.A. Economics 2018-21*

## *An interdisciplinary approach at Leeds*

*“I wanted to study something with an interdisciplinary approach.”*

Bhakti is pursuing her Masters in Ecological Economics at University of Leeds. She studied Economics with a minor in Sustainability and Development at Azim Premji University. After her bachelor's, Bhakti wanted to pursue an interdisciplinary course that included environment, development as well as economics. She had a choice between studying Development Economics at the University of Manchester or SOAS, University of London as well as Ecological Economics programme at the University of Leeds. Her decision making was made a lot easier with the inputs from her professors at Azim Premji University. “I spoke with Anand and Amit, and their advice motivated me to choose Ecological Economics at Leeds.” Ecological Economics is a heterodox field in economics that considers the ecological boundaries and challenges the mainstream economic thought of perpetual economic growth.



Bhakti shares that the software and research skills she gained, the diverse readings, the continuous assessment pattern and learning python during her bachelor's is now helping her navigate her packed masters schedule more comfortably. Bhakti fondly remembers the personal relationships made at Azim Premji University, be it with fellow students or with professors. She reflects that it's almost the same at Leeds, but the huge campus makes it a bit harder. Beyond academics, Bhakti plays frisbee at Leeds, something she carried on from the Azim Premji University campus. Post her master's, Bhakti wants to work for some years, after which she may consider a Ph.D. enrolment.

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# Priyanshu Krishnamoorthi

*B.A. Economics 2017-20*

## *Delving deep into Economics*

*“Diversity among the student population at University and having friends from different socio-economic backgrounds helped me in my fieldwork as I took up a community engagement role.”*



Priyanshu is a field coordinator for India Working Survey (IWS) – Voices. IWS is a collaborative project between Centre for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and University of Western Australia. Voices is a qualitative study that seeks to closely engage with a selected group of around 30 women over a year for a deeper interaction to understand some of the constraints and challenges in their economic lives. Priyanshu collects information on time spent by them on different activities, their wages, and earnings, engages in conversations with them around various themes - their employment activities, their personal experiences and their aspirations about work and employment.

Earlier, after completing her under graduation in 2020, Priyanshu joined the India Fellowship, a 13-month social leadership programme. She worked at Gogunda in Udaipur district, Rajasthan

under Basic Healthcare Services, a partner organisation of Aajeevika Bureau, which works actively with migrant workers in the largely Adivasi populated villages. Here, she worked as a community outreach coordinator, working with a team of health workers and local women volunteers.

About her years at Azim Premji University, Priyanshu expresses that the student and faculty body at the University were quite impactful and appreciates the design and structure of the undergraduate programme as her courses in economics and development really helped her after graduation. She has also been actively engaged in theatre and music for many years and likes to bring them into her work, she is also an avid traveller.

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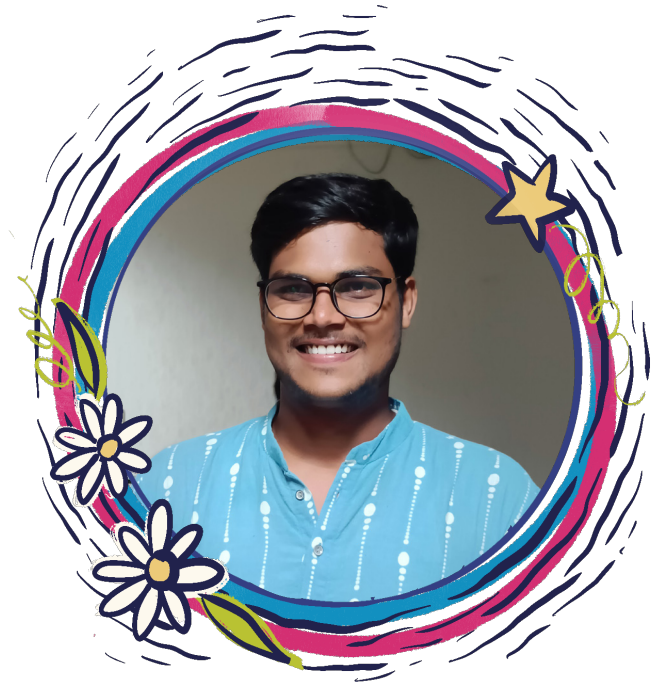
# Jagadish Mala

B.A. Humanities 2017-20

## Breaking hierarchies in literature

*“I want to explore the literary aspects of translations, of how we represent the ‘uniqueness’ of the original texts in translations.”*

Jagadish is pursuing a masters in Comparative Literature and India Studies at English and Foreign Language University, Hyderabad. This course allows learners to look at literary text along with its cultural particulars, and studies Indian ancient, medieval, and modern literary traditions. Post this course, Jagadish wants to pursue translations in depth and wants to make it an integral part of his Ph.D. thesis that's starting soon. He is interested in studying the methods, practices, and ethics of translation and wants to pursue translation studies in the Indian context. He is interested in exploring the nuances of translations and wants to understand how the cultural location of a literary text undergoes a severe transgression in the name of translation. From a young age, Jagadish was interested in Telugu literature and aspires to translate many such Telugu works that the world needs to read. Currently, he is translating a set of Telugu short stories called Aaru Saara Kathalu (Six Arrack Stories),



written by Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry and he has approached many publishing houses for this.

For Jagadish, studying at Azim Premji University was a remarkable experience as it was a transformation from studying in a boy's school, to living in a diverse community. While at University, he started Vismayam, a club for sharing and learning about the South Indian literature which helped him explore his interests and gave opportunities to work with faculty with similar interests. He also explored his other interests such as yoga and singing and discovered his strengths, through teaching and learning. And the University helped him break the ideas of hierarchy greatly, one of the key takeaways for Jagadish.

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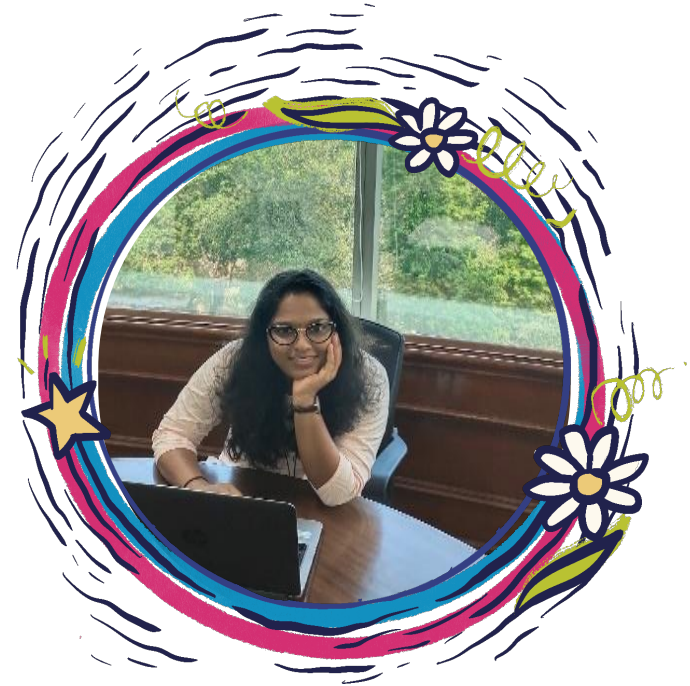
# Vineetha V

*B.Sc. Physics 2015-18*

## *Evolving through diversity*

*“What I am today or going to be in the future is not decided overnight. It is being chiselled by the introspection through multiple lenses.”*

After Azim Premji University, Vineetha joined Raman Research Institute, Bangalore assisting Ph.D. students in the laboratory. She went on to join the Young India Fellowship, a one-year Postgraduate diploma at Ashoka University, a liberal arts programme covering a wide range of disciplines. This opened her mind to different possibilities of implementation, beyond the mundane. She enjoyed working with professors from different departments, ranging from science to arts, and with students from India and abroad. Vineetha expresses how grateful she is to Azim Premji University for moulding the best version of herself. An amiable campus environment and faculty are some cherished memories of her undergraduate years. Coming from a semi-urban setting and adjusting to the diverse environment of the University was only possible with the support



of faculty and resident mentors. This experience also helped her adapt easily to the diverse environment at Ashoka University and enriched her experience.

Vineetha now works as a Human Resource (HR) Manager at Essar in Mumbai, one of the leading multinational companies in India. She claims that she is in HR by accident after being exposed to the role as a management trainee at Essar where she designed a programme for HR and employee engagement. She says, “When you are given a chance to be creative yet practical in a corporate setting then you would go for it.” Vineetha cherishes the happiness that she derives from her new experience.

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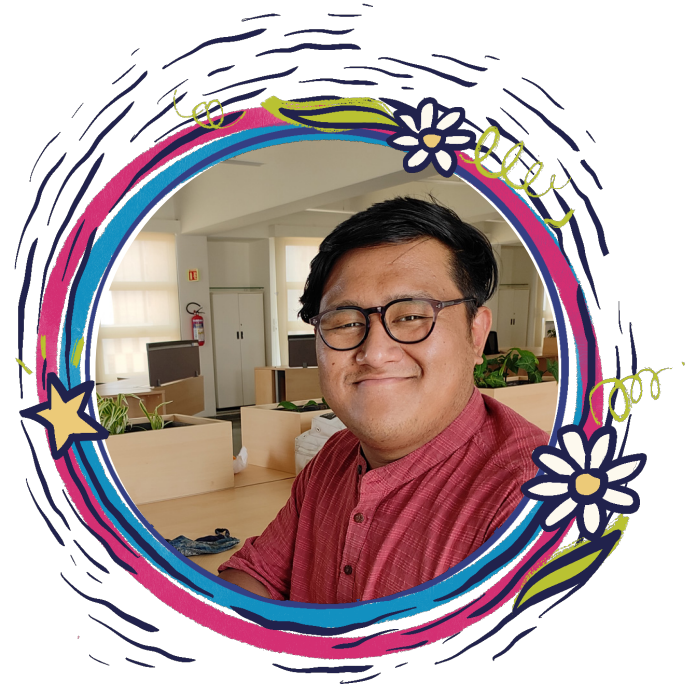
# Daanish Gurung

*B.A. Humanities 2015-18*

## *Back like a boomerang*

*“It was quite interesting to do a combined disciplinary course in English, history, and philosophy under the canon of B.A. Humanities. However, the new separation of disciplines is welcoming as it would allow students to go deeper into specific disciplines.”*

Daanish is an Academic Associate in history at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He assists the faculty to teach and conduct academic activities and helps them organise tutorial sessions, club activities, seminars, and outreach programmes. He wishes to engage with students and do multiple discourses related to history that would interest them. Besides all of these, he is free to follow and do his own research under the supervision of members of the history group. Recently, he has started immersing in reading on his area of interest. When Daanish got an opportunity to work at the University, he did not hesitate to take it and shares his immense pleasure at being back on campus. His area of interest lies in education and universities and the impact of students’ movement on universities. He is content with being back on campus like a boomerang and in an amicable environment.



Daanish reflects that the three years at the University for graduation encouraged him to delve deep into the discipline of history and the courses - Intellectual and cultural aspects of modernity, drew him closer to modern history. He completed his masters in history from the University of Hyderabad and pursuing Ph.D. is his next goal. But being unsure about the topic of his Ph.D. thesis, he is engaging in opportunities that will help him frame his thesis properly. Daanish has also briefly interned with the Academics and Research team as part of the PEAK Urban project at the Indian Institute of Settlements where he was entrusted with the work of transcription, qualitative analysis, and archiving of data.

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# Neeharika Verma

*B.Sc. Biology 2017-20*

## *Life under the ocean*

***“At Azim Premji University, we were taught how to ask good questions, how to communicate our science, and most of all how to be informed and intuitive.”***

Neeharika, a student of Marine Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, has always been fascinated by marine life. She is currently studying physical, chemical, and biological oceanography with a focus on satellite-derived and ship-board ocean colour data to understand the kind of phytoplankton present on the surface of the ocean. The University of Massachusetts has a great intercampus Marine Science graduate programme with a campus dedicated to oceanography on the coast which provides for amazing field work opportunities and collaborations amongst various oceanographers. Neeharika plans on continuing in this field by applying for a Ph.D. and being a part of academia.

Neeharika joined the biology undergraduate programme at Azim Premji University, so that she could pursue research in her field of interest, biophysics, and developmental biology. From asking a question to designing an experiment, her thesis project on the regeneration of Hydra channelled her to identify her path of research.



Neeharika shares that the University community was very helpful, and the student-faculty dynamics are unparalleled. Further, the diversity of courses offered constructive guidance in her current field of study. One thing Neeharika loves about the University is the diverse campus where everyone knows each other well. Excitingly, she also holds an international scuba diving license, certified off the coast of Karnataka. Moving to USA due to the lack of marine science programmes in India, she eventually wishes to come back to India. She believes that her learnings from the research she has been doing in the North Pacific Ocean can surely be applied in the Indian Ocean.

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# Sheetal Harumalani

*B.A. Humanities 2015-18*

## **Education for the 21st century**

***“The values learnt at Azim Premji University that will stay with me forever are integrity, desire to help the underserved, critical thinking and empathy.”***

Sheetal is working as a Learning and Development Specialist at Early Steps Academy, an ed-tech start-up in Bangalore, which provides education to students aged 8-18, that is relevant and fun in the 21st century. Here, she makes curriculum on topics like cryptocurrency, climate change, personal finance, etc. and on skills like critical thinking, empathy, collaboration, communication, and confidence. It is a rigorous process involving weeks of research, age-appropriate content, and using pedagogical tools to make the overall teaching-learning process fun and engaging. She also facilitates classes for students from across the globe and trains other facilitators. Training other facilitators is both fun and challenging for Sheetal as she experienced that empathy, inspiration and having an open ear to fellow facilitators are some of the most effective ways to train them to deliver in truly global classrooms. Before joining this tech start-up, she has worked with Azim Premji Foundation in Rajasthan for a year.



Sheetal was always interested in bringing social change through education and during her study at Azim Premji University, this realisation became more distinct, and she decided to pursue a career in education. The University helped her understand education, especially in an Indian context and embedded skills like empathy and resilience which she practices. She realises that it is a challenging journey, and much commitment and conviction is needed to bring about social change. What Sheetal is doing to help youngsters adapt to the 21st century is remarkable and the way she and her colleagues are trying to accomplish it is quite unique and radical.

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# Siddharth Bhatnagar

*B.Sc. Physics 2016-19*

## *An enthusiastic astrophysicist*

*“I believe that networking and communication are as important as learning the subject matter, be it astrophysics or economics.”*

Siddharth has been pursuing his Masters in Astrophysics at the University of Geneva in Switzerland since 2020 after his under graduation. His specialisation is in exoplanetology, the science of planets found outside our solar system, with courses about detection and characterisation of exoplanets, the dynamics of planetary systems, planet formation and evolution, planetary atmospheres and methods of data reduction and analysis of exoplanet data. He is presently in the final semester, working on his thesis for his masters, which is about climate modelling of exoplanets and trying to find ways of extending the theoretical habitable zone around stars. Siddharth chose this topic as the prospect of finding life on other planets fascinates him and is also one of the leading motivations in the professional world of astrophysics

Space, stars, and planets fascinated Siddharth even as a pre-schooler. His love for physics began in middle school, maturing



into a desire to study astrophysics by the end of high school. The research-oriented interdisciplinary courses offered at Azim Premji University enticed him to pursue the B.Sc. Physics programme here. During this, he worked on research projects both inside and outside Azim Premji University, facilitated by the faculty. Siddharth says, “Through the faculty at University, I was fortunate to get in touch with experts in varied fields of interest. I was able to foster my social and communication skills during my time in here, which is very helpful for me even now in Geneva.” Siddharth is currently looking forward to starting his Ph.D. in astrophysics at the University of Geneva this September.

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# Revathi Srinivasan

*B.Sc. Biology 2015-18*

## ***Studying unconventional intersections***

***“At the intersection of biology, maths and computation, something truly wonderful happens.”***



Revathi is a Clinical Programmer at Novartis, a frontier global pharmaceutical company involved in drug development and designing gene therapies. Her role includes analysing sequence data, developing and documenting clinical databases, and creating data visualisations. One of her current projects involves building a COVID surveillance dashboard. She draws attention to the growing need for updated and inclusive research, along with pharmaceutical accessibility for the world. Her work contributes to producing innovative medicines for generic as well as life-threatening diseases.

After completing her undergraduate degree at Azim Premji University, Revathi pursued her interests in computation by completing her Masters in Bioinformatics from the Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology, Bangalore. The course equipped her with computational tools to capture and analyse

biological data. The interdisciplinary combination of biology, math, and data science courses at Azim Premji University opened a world of multidimensional perspectives, and she has never looked back. The curiosity-driven nature of the courses at the University empowered her to smoothly transition from her undergraduate degree to postgraduate education and then the workplace. Revathi reflects that collaborating with peers at Azim Premji University helped her immensely to explore new perspectives. She hopes to raise awareness and encourage more students to traverse paths of unconventional subject intersections.

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# Advait Moharir

*B.A. Economics 2016-19*

## ***Economics for greater social good***

***“It is about being at the right place at the right time. The diversity at Azim Premji University shaped a lot of our formative experiences about understanding social issues.”***



Advait is pursuing his masters from the University of Siena, with courses ranging from standard Micro and Macroeconomic theory to subjects like Competition Law and Economic History. This course has strengthened his foundation in basic principles, while developing broad competencies in data analysis, academic writing and conducting economic research. Interestingly, Advait continues his relationship with the faculty at Azim Premji University as a part time Research Assistant on two projects: India's Flow of Funds and Measurement issues in India's GDP. His work involves data cleaning, visualisation, and analysis, conducting literature reviews and contributing to the final research output. Advait has also worked for the Curriculum Open-Access Resources in Economics (CORE), a project of a UK based organisation including economists from different countries for developing a new introductory textbook that is open-source and open-access.

From not having a clear idea of the plurality of economics to designing a curriculum for economics textbooks with the CORE project, the B.A. Economics programme at Azim Premji University gave Advait the confidence and a strong base for a career in economics. The various perspectives and the experience gained during the course proved to be a transformational experience for him. Azim Premji University's culture and diversity is something that has always been significant to Advait, from changing him as a person and his unidimensional perspective, to developing a broad set of ideas with which he sees the world, to the student-faculty dynamics. The non-hierarchical dynamics between students and faculty has enabled him to build a lifelong connection with them. Post his masters, he plans to work for a couple of years in a research or field-based setting and then pursue doctoral studies in economics.

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# Amme Shirisha

*B.A. Humanities 2017-20*

## ***Studying humanities for public services***

***“For someone who is aspiring to work in civil services, learnings started from Azim Premji University.”***

Shirisha is currently pursuing her M.A. in Society and Culture at IIT Gandhinagar. The course provides an analytical lens and theoretical perspectives in various disciplines. Its curriculum combines core learnings in theory and methods with a range of advanced electives in specific disciplines. Through this Shirisha has been able to examine concepts through the interdisciplinary curriculum. This further helped her to critically engage with the contemporary body shaping the humanities and social sciences intellectual traditions. Post her masters, she wishes to continue working for the public in any capacity possible and would like to work in a Non-Governmental Organisation.

An aspiring civil servant, Shirisha’s interest to serve in the social sector was furthered at Azim Premji University through the various clubs and organisational activities. Through volunteering within



and outside the University, she was able to develop a better understanding of people. The University’s association with several societal issues and the exposure of students to real-life issues and outside-the-book learning helped her hone her interests and pave her career path. The faculty played a major role in this process of holistic development.

Prior to coming to Azim Premji University, Shirisha studied in a government school till 12th grade where the medium of instruction was Telugu. At the University, she found her peers and faculty to be very helpful and encouraging in breaking the language barrier and working on her English. She has also been able to develop a keen interest in poetry.

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# Preetha Kaniyamkudy Joseph

*B.A. Economics 2016-19*

## **Connecting researchers with critical data**

***“The opportunity of working with researchers from different fields who are experts in their own way and talking to them about the work they are doing, is interesting and inspiring.”***

Preetha works at the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) as an Engagement Specialist. She introduces CMIE data about the socio-economic aspects of people in India to clients and helps them work with it. She conducts orientation sessions for researchers, faculty, students, corporate clients etc. Preetha also supports researchers by answering their queries about the data and data collection methods. She also writes R code (a programming language for statistical computing) to help researchers generate estimates and further develop the code for their research needs. She appreciates how CMIE is addressing the lack of data in the country.

Preetha did her Masters in Health Economics from the National University of Ireland. This interdisciplinary masters experience gave her exposure to economics, dealing with the quantitative skills associated with it and how it could apply to real world situations, especially in health. Prior to this, she did her graduation from Azim



Premji University with a major in biology and a minor in economics. Preetha believes that the University shaped her thoughts about how concepts apply to larger contexts and affects different kinds of people and places. It also helped build her statistical and coding skills as well as her writing skills which she brings to her part-time work at ‘One Health, India’ as an internship coordinator, involved in science communication activities. She happily recalls how she first heard about CMIE and their work as a student in the unemployment reports published by Azim Premji University. Preetha also writes for ‘Research Matters’, an organisation that brings scientific research to people.

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# Jijitha Rajan

*B.Sc. Physics 2015-18 and M.A. Education 2018-20*

## **Experiential learning**

*“We cannot teach experience, only teach how to experience.”*

Jijitha works in UAE as a science teacher for grades 6 to 10. She is working as a physics facilitator, making lesson plans, getting resources, and helping children with laboratory activities. She loves learning by experimenting and would like to pass on what she has learnt and encourages students to experiment. Jijitha reflects “Teaching is a process that should be done in the right way, to help students find their passion in life.” After M.A. Education, she got interested in science education and wanted to know more about science curriculum and pedagogy. She would like to do a Ph.D. in science education and this experience as a science teacher will help her. Jijitha is curious about the interlink of science education and gender and is trying to connect her experiences and the theory she learnt, before applying to the Ph.D. programme.



Jijitha has had a long journey of 5 years at Azim Premji University filled with innumerable memories, fun and motivational moments. It helped her find her passion which in turn was directed by the faculty and her learning. An awareness of the meaning of education helped change her passion into her profession. The skills acquired at the University have helped her get where she is now. She has worked with Azim Premji Foundation as an associate for a year, immediately after completing her post-graduation. Interestingly, Jijitha doesn't confine herself within boundaries and keeps expanding her opportunities.

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# Prakriti

*B.A. Humanities 2018-21*

## *Learning through volunteering*

*“Volunteering made me realise the dangers of self-righteousness in social work, which sparked an active attempt to dismantle my preconceived notions.”*

Prakriti is pursuing her Masters in Gender Studies at Ambedkar University, Delhi. It is a 2-year programme which includes thesis writing along with internship which will give her clarity about her area of work. She is currently interning with Breakthrough Trust which works on gender norms formation and how to change it; she is writing field stories for them. Prakriti’s interest in understanding gender, sexuality, and its various dimensions began at Azim Premji University during discussions with friends and faculty and participation in the ‘Gender discussion forum’, a space for students to discuss gender.

While at University, Prakriti volunteered at Jharconnect with its gender team. The experience taught her about research, integrity, and good work ethics. She was also part of the Social Enterprise Cell at University, a platform for students to find and discuss innovative solutions to complex social problems. After University,



Prakriti worked on a project related to schooling of children in the villages of Laos, a country in Southeast Asia. Her role included data analysis and consolidation of interviews conducted with educators and principals aimed at understanding how the education system affected by COVID would benefit from educational schemes or funding. One of the most profound experiences for Prakriti was helping at a legal relief camp after the Delhi riots of 2020. Assisting people with their FIRs and compensation forms and a chance meet with a lady claiming compensation for her shop, left her with a mixture of emotions - helplessness, a great sense of responsibility, and immense gratitude. Going ahead, she wants a career that supplements research with field work. Her interests lie at the intersection of gender, politics, labour, and technology. Prakriti plans to work for a few years before going abroad to study further.

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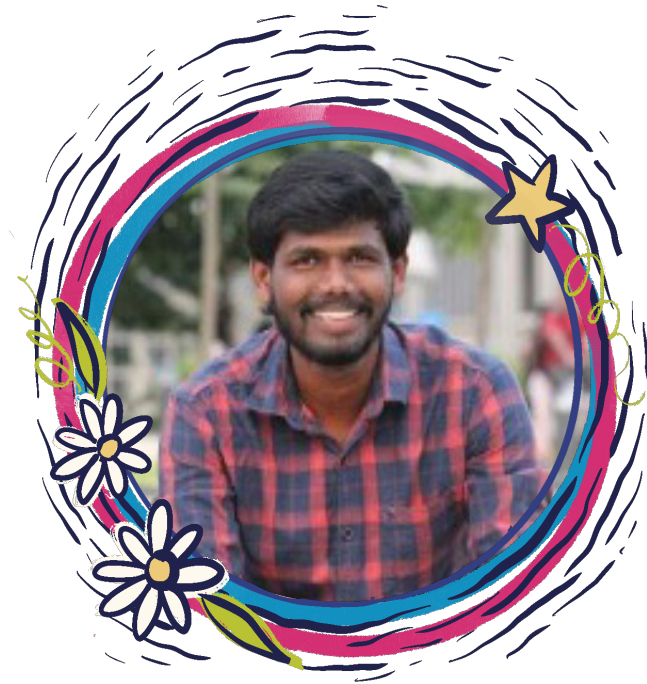
# Naveen Gajjalagari

*B.Sc. Physics 2016-19*

## ***Enhancing delivery of public schemes***

***“Helping to solve the loopholes in schemes that help society seems minor but can bring about major changes in the lives of people.”***

Naveen works at Libtech, Andhra Pradesh as a Data Surveyor and Coordinator. He and his team work on public schemes like MGNREGA and PM Kisan and try to find out if there are loopholes in the schemes, and write reports and articles based on the analysis which helps improve the Direct Beneficiary System in public schemes. He coordinates with the programme team, field team and engineering team by giving them the data and analysing it, taking inputs, and then preparing the reports. He took time to understand the work details and work with the team. Now, Naveen also finds time to learn new things and skills along with his job role and is happy about it. After his undergraduate degree, he briefly worked on an Azim Premji University project with a faculty for a labour force survey in Karnataka and Rajasthan, creating a dashboard and generating weekly reports of enumerators performance.



The atmosphere of the University, classroom activities and interaction with a diverse community from all over India helped change Naveen’s perspective. He enjoyed being with friends with similar interests and learning many new things like gender equality and communication skills which are basic for changing ourselves and the society. The discussions that happened around him on gender made him realise the necessity of breaking gender inequality. By making use of the opportunities provided by the University, he did a minor course related to data science which is helping him in his current role at Libtech. Naveen is happy to help society through his profession.

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# Divvy Ramesh

*B.Sc. Biology 2015-18*

## *Divvy, a philomath!*

*“Don’t be afraid of taking calculated risks in life.”*

Divvy, a biologist, is exploring herself through her research work. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Systems Biology at ETH Zürich. Here she is studying the evolutionary dynamics of microbial communities in spatially structured environments, using a combination of laboratory experiments and mathematical models in her research. Divvy did her Masters in Life Sciences on scholarship from the University of Paris, wherein her thesis on an evolutionary biology project with Harvard University got her interested in evolution. Being awarded the competitive École Normale Supérieure (ENS) masters fellowship for a one-year specialisation in Ecology and Evolution post her masters, further strengthened her foundation. After her Ph.D., she wants to do postdoctoral research and plans to continue in academia. According to her, giving back to the society that nurtured her, is the essence of education. She believes that exploration in academic as well as personal life is equally important. From her experience, Divvy’s advice to students interested in



pursuing higher studies is, not to be afraid of taking risks in life and to research well before taking a decision.

Reflecting on her years at Azim Premji University, Divvy says, “Its holistic education focuses on academics as well as students’ overall development and social needs. Courses like Understanding India and Creative Expressions were useful and interesting as they created multiple opportunities for me to interact extensively with non-science students and that was invaluable. The flexible nature of the programme allowed me to study a variety of subjects. The honours programme gave me an opportunity to design my own research project and learn good research practices. I am thankful to my teachers at the University for mentoring me during my transition from bachelors to masters.”

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# Nithya R

B.A. Humanities 2016-19

## *Towards building a better community*

***“The use of the word ‘family’ for the students and faculty at Azim Premji University is not an overstatement, rather, the bonding that happens on campus is something that is unusual yet comforting, and makes campus life enjoyable.”***

Nithya was always interested in the distributed minor courses that she did in education and development at Azim Premji University. She went on to get a campus placement at a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) based in Chennai, called Pudiyador, which focuses on community development. Here, she undertook an interesting activity with her colleagues, to create a youth advancement fellowship for students in their final years of school. While doing so, she continued to focus on community development, women’s empowerment, and health outreach programmes.

During the lockdown, Nithya resigned her job at Pudiyador to prepare for the Civil Services Examinations, while simultaneously working shortly for Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), an organisation that focused on solving the migrant labour crisis, which had ensued, during the time.



The diverse student culture which Azim Premji University offered, exposed her to a plethora of life experiences. Getting exposure and being able to interact with people of different backgrounds was a source of learning. An avid sportsperson, Nithya believes that the sports field is a bonding space for students, where privileges are balanced out. She believes that NGOs, which work alongside the government is where she would find herself and would love to continue working in sectors concerning health, education, environment, and infrastructure.

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# Vijeta Ananth Kumar

*B.A. Economics 2015-18 and M.A. Economics 2019-21*

## *Monitoring the Indian economy*

*“Azim Premji University gave me the time and space to study and explore subjects and helped me keep an open mind towards the opportunities that I took up.”*



Vijeta is an economist who works as a Research Community Specialist at Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Her role requires her to maintain a dashboard, write analytical pieces, understand what researchers need about data and help them use the data. Apart from this, she is also a gender policy and gender economics researcher. Her tryst with economics started early on, from opting out of B.Sc. Biology to pursue a B.A. Economics degree and later a Masters, and still continues. Opting out of the placement cycle at University to apply to a wider gambit of research organisations and think tanks, Vijeta joined CMIE and initially worked on their household data research project called Consumer Pyramid Household Survey (CPHS). It was a huge learning experience as she had opportunity to work with Mahesh Vyas who heads CMIE. It also helped her to see policy and economics from a wider perspective. Her experience at

University came in handy here, and it helped her understand, take ownership and responsibility for the project.

For Vijeta, the years at Azim Premji University were inspiring and motivating. “The common curriculum with its theoretical and fieldwork component largely helped me understand the vast field of economics. The internships during the summer and winter breaks gives an immense exposure and learning unlike other Indian universities. The classes are always engaging and lively due to the spotlight on students and the connect with the faculty. And the sense of belongingness and community that the University offers is quite unique,” reflects Vijeta.

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# Shubhankar Bajpai

*B.A. Economics 2015-18 and M.A. Economics 2019-21*

## *Intersection of public policy and research*

*“Take along integrity and work ethic wherever you go.”*



Shubhankar is currently engaged in a collaborative research project between IIT Delhi and IIT Kanpur, centred on gender and mobility. His role is to review existing literature relating to the subtleties of gendered mobility. He supports principal investigators in identifying research gaps in discourse on gender and mobility, in isolating algorithmic biases and in scrutinising data on the matter. It intersects public policy and research and is immensely immersive in scope. Prior to this, Shubhankar worked as an analyst at the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). He supported the Economic Outlook and States of India team by closely following trends and developments in national accounts, banking and money for analytical pieces for CMIE, which is widely read by industrialists, academicians, and government agencies.

Shubhankar’s fascination with macroeconomics keeps him constantly engaged. He relates to a macro working group of students

and faculty at Azim Premji University, where they explore the uncharted possibilities of research and study in this area. He shares his joy at being part of Azim Premji University. Shubhankar was a part of the group that started the economics club at University and is happy to see it blossoming now. He says “The supportive environment of the faculty and institution, the component of undergraduate research, the diversity, not just in the socio-economic background of students but in the wide array of subjects available, makes the experience quite unique. An open space for dialogue is the University’s spirit and culture.” Shubhankar plans to do a Ph.D. in the future but he is content with exploring and expanding his research horizons.

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# Nishant Narayanasamy

*B.Sc. Biology 2015-18*

## *Nurturing curiosity*

*“I am unendingly curious about a lot of things!”*

Nishant, a first batch graduate of biology at Azim Premji University, is currently pursuing an integrated Ph.D. degree at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore. His thesis concerns metabolic and nutritional scaling with respect to the organism's body size. His other projects involve studying the thermodynamic efficiency of metabolism and developing a cost-effective method to measure glucose levels. Nishant's work requires him to design rigorous experiments from scratch, and he enjoys letting his curiosity guide him.

Microbes, the microscopic yet powerful organisms, were his field of interest during his undergraduate years. Although Nishant has shifted to a biophysics laboratory for his doctoral studies, he considers the spirit of inquiry as the driving force. He suggests having a strong

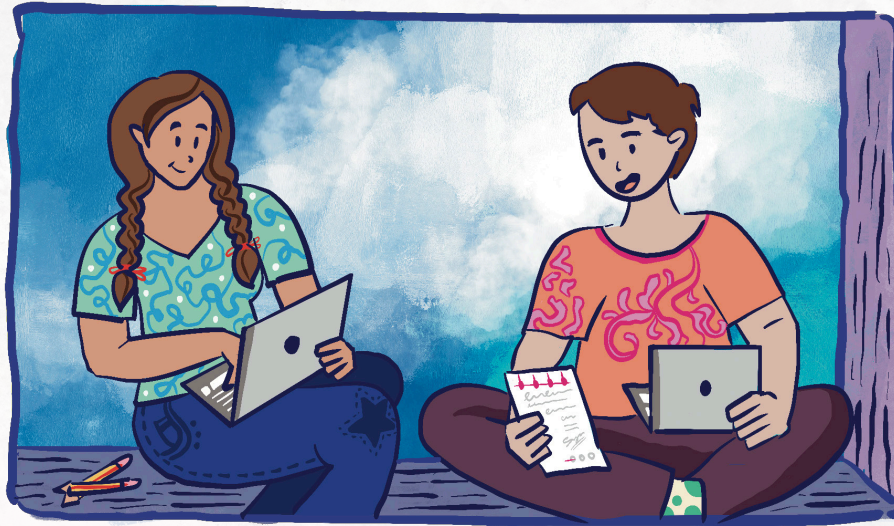
sense of self-motivation and commitment to pursuing questions for pursuing higher education in the research field.

Joyfully, he reflects on his time at Azim Premji University as being dynamic and tumultuous. He believes that the course format at the University equipped him to think critically for designing experiments, a skill that textbooks rarely facilitate. While his hopes for the future are open ended, he is sure to find a path that'll keep him curious and critically engaged.

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**A big thank you to our student volunteers of the Class of 2018-22 and 2020-23 who wrote these wonderful stories.**

Anima S | Abdul Fathah Nazar | Durga Machavallavan | Drissya MV | Devaki | Krishna Priya V | Manasvi Ghonge | Rohith Sony |  
Shasvitha Kumar | Suchitra Sridhar | Yazhini A S

**Thanking Sakhil PS, Reecha Gali and Rushikesh Biradar without whom this compilation would not have been possible.**

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