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A Constellation of Minds: Economics Takes the Stage at Filix



As the new year stretched its limbs and cleared its throat, Discover the World of Economics (DWE), Cohort II arrived in fine academic form from 3rd January to 7th January 2026, unfolding as one of the most anticipated and celebrated events of the session at Filix. What followed was not merely a programme but a five-day intellectual voyage, alive with questions, conversations and the quiet thrill of discovery. Bringing together enthusiastic students from across the nation, the programme created a vibrant space for curiosity and reflection. Guided by the belief that economics, like all meaningful subjects, must step beyond textbooks and into lived reality, DWE welcomed students from Classes VIII to XII along with first-year undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. Together, they explored economics not simply as theory, but as a lens through which society, decision-making and the many choices shaping human lives may be better understood.

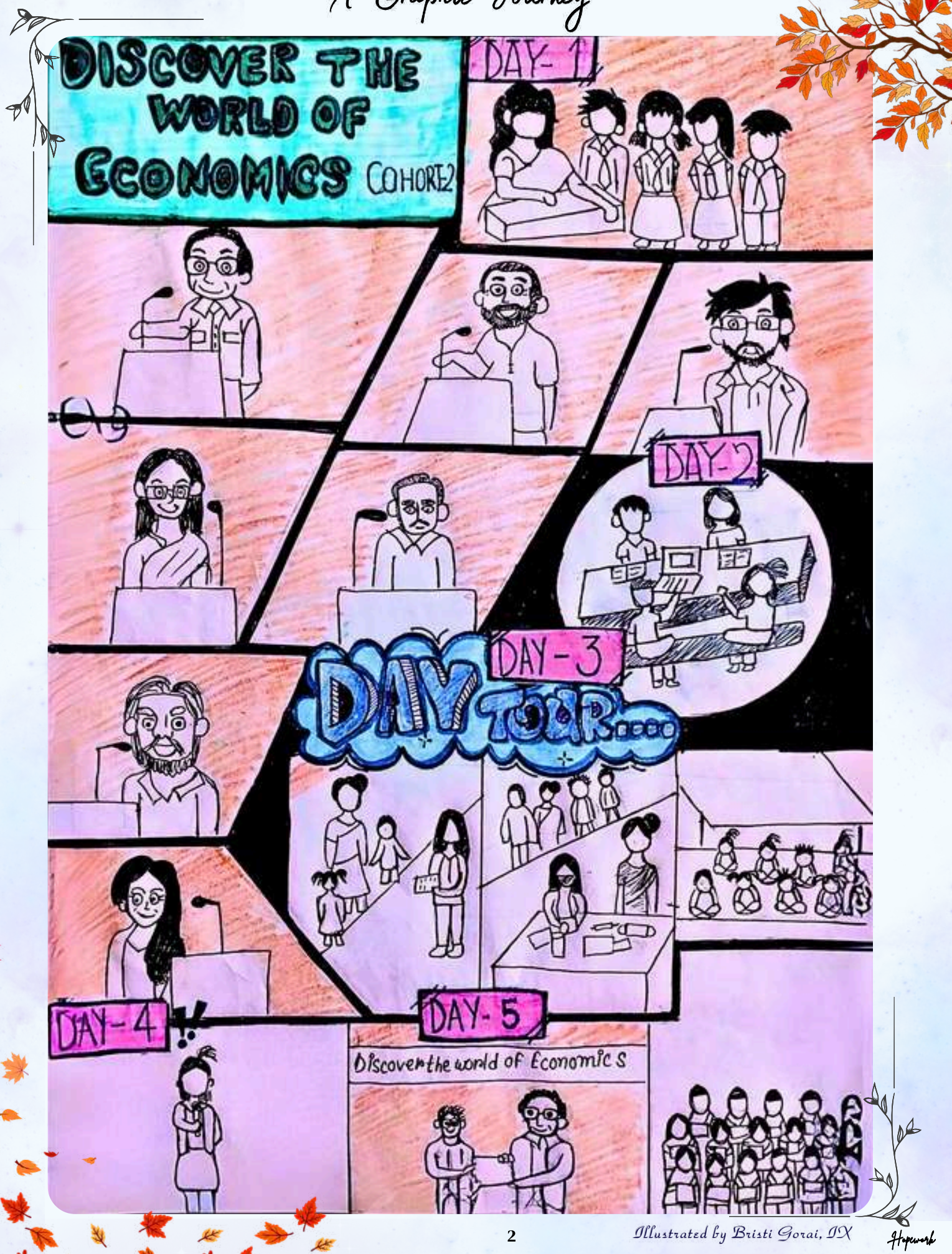
The sessions were led by a distinguished group of scholars. Professor Kaushik Basu, former Chief Economist of the World Bank, introduced students to the elegant puzzles of game theory. Professor Mahan MJ discussed the mathematical foundations of economic thought, while Professor Prabhat Patnaik examined markets and their role in global politics. Professor Abhinandan Sinha explored identity economics, and Professor Anand Kumar led lively sessions on behavioural economics. Ms Somya Bajaj, Economist at the World Bank, bridged theory and practice by connecting economic ideas to real-world development work.

By weaving together learning, experience and reflection, the programme encouraged students to think more deeply, ask better questions and carry these insights well beyond the classroom, perhaps even into the choices they will one day make.

Soumili Sengupta, IX

Discover the World of Economics : Cohort II

A Graphic Journey



Maestro of the Month

Dr. Kaushik Basu



Illustrated by Adrita Sarkar, VI

Did You Know?

Though now celebrated as an economist, Dr. Basu once considered studying law to join his father's legal practice after his masters. However the lure of logic and deductive reasoning, and the intellectual gravity of luminaries such as Amartya Sen, drew him deeper into economics instead.

He invented Dui-doku, a two-player version of Sudoku, designed to introduce competition into logical problem-solving.

Prof. Basu has published around twenty books on economics and public policy. Yet his play *Crossings at Benaras Junction*, which appeared in *The Little Magazine* in 2005, remains a graceful reminder of how far his pen travels.

In his book *Reason to Be Happy*, Dr. Basu opens up about a dark and depressive period he experienced at the age of seventeen, which lasted for almost a year and a half. He writes about going through it quietly, without telling even those close to him, believing at the time that the darkness would never lift.

Professor Kaushik Basu is one of India's most distinguished economists, whose ideas have shaped how governments think about development, inequality and public policy. Over the years, he has taught at leading universities, advised policymakers and taken part in economic debates that travel easily from New Delhi to Washington D.C. He is the first Indian to serve as Chief Economist of the World Bank, placing him at the centre of global conversations about how economies work and how lives are shaped by them.

Dr. Basu grew up in a lively, affectionate household in Kolkata, where life was full of people, opinions and interruptions. At seventeen, he left home to study at St Stephen's College in Delhi, stepping into a wider world that was unfamiliar, demanding and at times unsettling.

Today, as a Carl Marks professor of Economics at Cornell University, he continues to teach, write and engage with students across the world, encouraging them to see economics not as a jungle of graphs and figures, but as a way of understanding fairness, human choices and the consequences that follow them in ways we do not always see.

One Thought, Precisely

Intellectuals urge us to think outside of the box. My worry is, if we all take the advice seriously, we will have a new crisis; that of no one paying attention to what is happening inside the box.

Dr. Kaushik Basu

AI and Me

Learning When Not to Ask for the Answer



Illustrated by Monojit Das, VII

The first time I truly noticed the power of AI, I was stuck on a calculus problem I had already failed to solve twice. Out of frustration, I typed the question into an AI system. In seconds, it returned a flawless solution—clear steps, clean logic, a perfect answer. I stared at the screen, waiting for relief. Instead, I felt an unexpected emptiness. The struggle was gone, but so was the satisfaction. That moment forced an uncomfortable question on me: if answers are this easily available, what exactly is my role as a student? AI entered my academic life as a convenience. It explained difficult concepts, summarized chapters, and corrected mistakes instantly. Slowly, I noticed a shift—not in my grades, but in my habits. I was reaching for answers before fully engaging with questions. This realization unsettled me.

I changed how I used AI: attempting problems first, reasoning through mistakes, and only then using AI to challenge my thinking. When I began asking why instead of what, AI stopped being a shortcut and became a mirror—exposing gaps in my understanding rather than hiding them. Even today, I sometimes pause before typing a question, reminding myself that discomfort is not failure; it is evidence of learning. In daily life, AI works quietly—curating what I see online, predicting what I might buy, and shaping which information reaches me first. Its influence is subtle but immense. I realized that the real power of AI is not intelligence, but scale. A small design flaw, when multiplied across millions of users, becomes a societal problem. Technology is never neutral; it carries the values, assumptions, and blind spots of its creators. In a country like India, where access, language, and opportunity are uneven, this amplification can either reduce inequality—or silently deepen it. The next breakthrough in AI, I believe, will not be defined by faster models or higher accuracy, but by restraint. Systems that can explain decisions, acknowledge uncertainty, and respect context will matter more than raw computational power. Efficiency without fairness is not progress. An AI that performs well in controlled environments but fails diverse real-world users is not intelligent—it is careless. The future of AI depends not on how powerful it becomes, but on how responsibly it is limited. AI's risks are often discussed in terms of job loss or bias, but I see a deeper danger: intellectual dependency. When machines remove struggle from learning, humans risk losing patience with complexity. Creativity, innovation, and research are born from friction, not convenience. The most dangerous AI is not the one that replaces jobs, but the one that quietly replaces effort. When schools reward AI-generated perfection without asking how it was produced, we are not modernizing education—we are outsourcing thinking. Trust in AI, therefore, cannot be blind. It must be earned through transparency, accountability, and education. I trust AI most when I understand its limits. Just as a calculator does not replace mathematical reasoning, AI should not replace human judgment—it should sharpen it. This belief is why I am increasingly interested not only in using intelligent systems, but in understanding how they are designed, evaluated, and governed. I want to help build systems that respect human reasoning rather than quietly overriding it. Today, AI is part of my life, but it does not define my thinking. I deliberately choose when to use it and when to struggle without it. That choice matters. When institutions like IIT Hyderabad ask students to reflect on "AI and Me," they are not testing our knowledge of technology, but our readiness to handle power responsibly. If AI can answer everything, then the future will not belong to those who know the most answers—but to those who still have the courage to struggle with difficult questions when answers are easy.

Zeeshan Hussain, XI

Choices, Chances and the Human Thread: In Conversation with Prof. Kaushik Basu



An Indian boy growing up in a lively, affectionate Kolkata joint family, surrounded by interruptions and an excess of love; a boy who quietly battled despair and found his way back; a boy uncertain, like so many others, about which path to choose when the future first demanded a decision. Up to this point, his story feels comfortingly familiar. Where it begins to surprise the world is in what followed.

That boy went on to become one of the most humane and intellectually distinctive economists of our time.

A worthy companion and student of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, yet emerging unmistakably a thinker in his own right, Professor Kaushik Basu has served as Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, as Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, and is currently the Carl Marks Professor of International Studies and Professor of Economics at Cornell University, where he also directs the Centre for Analytic Economics. In recognition of his distinguished public and intellectual service, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2008, one of India's highest civilian honours.

Deeply rooted in his Bengali culture, happiest speaking his mother tongue except when economics insists on English, Professor Basu reminds us that economics, at its best, is about people long before it becomes about numbers. For him, reason is not cold machinery but a moral instrument, a way of thinking honestly so that life, however complicated, may be lived a little more wisely and a little more kindly.

He is, for us, our very own Professor Kaushik Basu, someone Filix feels profoundly grateful to have as its chief mentor. When he visits Para, the village that cradles our school, he arrives not as a distant academic but as an attentive wanderer, exploring its lanes with curiosity and affection, knowing its turns and stories almost as if they were his own; because, in a way, through his care and presence, they are.

1. Your association with Filix is spoken of with great affection. How did your journey with the school begin?

Prof. Basu : My first proper interaction with Nanritam, the NGO that founded Filix School was in 2012. There was just the eye hospital at the time. The school was just an idea, but I had one of those intuitive feelings that it would grow into something quite major. Even with that optimism, the school has outdone my expectations. What was once a few rooms in the wilderness is now a modern school complex.

In life, one needs these positive surprises. At a time when the world is going through a difficult phase and many problems are our own creation, initiatives like the Filix School offer hope. They spread not just education, but also the idea that we owe something to the world. Seeing the enormous campus today, with students coming from different parts of India and carrying something back with them, feels deeply satisfying. My association with the school genuinely makes me happy.

2. You have served in global institutions like the World Bank and Important national roles in India. What inspired you to pursue a career in economics in the first place?

Prof. Basu : Much of it was chance. Life, after all, is full of chance. When I first took up economics, I knew almost nothing about it and chose the subject quite randomly. For the first few years, I studied it simply to pass the exams, thinking I would complete the degree and move on.

Somewhere along the way, I discovered parts of the subject, especially those related to deductive reasoning, that genuinely gripped me. Looking back now, I feel I have been very lucky. There were other paths I might have taken, but that I eventually found myself teaching and doing research was a pure stroke of luck. I believe I have enjoyed this far more than I would have enjoyed any of those other career options.

3. Looking back at your own school years, was there a moment, a teacher, or an experience that first nudged you towards curiosity about society, numbers, or how the world works?

Prof. Basu : Some teachers spark an interest that would otherwise never be discovered. In Class Four, I had such a teacher, called Miss Crassey. At that time, I was not a good student and had no serious interest in studies.

In Class Eight at St Xavier's in Kolkata, there was Mr Vienna, an admirable teacher. For the first time, I felt energised and genuinely excited about learning.

My biggest gratitude is to my Class Eleven mathematics teacher, Mr Bhowmik. He was very traditional, with a marked Bengali accent, had a crystal-clear mind and a deep love for the mathematics. From him—and, I must add, also from my father—came my love of geometry and logic. Later, seeing Professor Amartya Sen in his prime, working on deductive reasoning and proving theorems, became another powerful influence.

4. Working with the World Bank meant engaging with issues that affect people across the world. Could you share one unforgettable insight or lesson from that global experience?

Prof. Basu : Much of the work in Washington was routine, running a large organisation and managing people. But the most memorable moments came while travelling. I remember meeting the head of the police in Managua, an elderly woman known for her kindness. She worked with criminals and fallen women, trying to bring them back into

Prof. Basu : society. When she heard I was from Kolkata, she showed me a photograph of Mother Teresa that she said she always kept on her table. What stayed with me was how she inspired the police to see their role as helping people return to normal life, and not just enforcing the law.

I saw similar resilience in very poor parts of Senegal during floods, seeing people trying to organise life again, to get out of the trouble. These visits were often brief, but the people and their struggles remain with you long after you leave.

5. Economics challenges often appear complex. What mindset or habits do you think young people should cultivate now to prepare for future uncertainties?

Prof. Basu : I am a great believer in free thinking. In the end, you have to reason for yourself and reach your own conclusions. Do not take anyone's lessons or teachings as the final word. They are there to train your mind to think and to question.

Question everything you are taught. Some ideas you will retain because they are valid, others you will not. That clarity of mind, the habit of reasoning honestly with yourself, is a lifelong asset.

6. Many of our students come from rural backgrounds but carry global dreams. What would you like them to believe about their own potential?

Prof. Basu : It is important to remember that the first steps into the wider world are often difficult. Even for me, coming from a traditional Kolkata household, going to Delhi and meeting students from all over was a major challenge.

Gradually, however, you develop an inner confidence. You realise that you are who you are, and you can still engage with the world. I saw this clearly during my time at the World Bank. You may go to a small village in Africa where people look completely different, but when you sit down and talk, you find the same worries, the same anxieties, the same hopes. Human beings, deep down, are very similar. Once you recognise this, the world begins to feel like home. Today, when the world is so small, we must learn to treat it as our common heritage, and relate to people everywhere.

7. In moments of doubt or difficulty, what values or habits have helped you stay grounded through a long and demanding career?

Prof. Basu : I place great faith in reasoning, even within one's own mind. In difficult times, it helps to pause and try to think with clarity. When you feel angry at someone or at their behaviour, remind yourself that this person has his or her own history and experiences, and is shaped by them.

Once you do that, you begin to take a kinder view, even of someone towards whom you initially feel anger or hatred. The capacity to empathize and to understand other human beings stays with you, and serves you well, as you move through life.

8. For many of us not acquainted with economics, the word 'game' sparks curiosity. Could you help us understand it in the context of everyday life and the choices we make?

Prof. Basu : There are actual games like chess or bridge, and then there are games in life, war, diplomacy, or competition between corporations. At one level, all of these share a common core.

Game theory studies this fundamental commonness in the entire structure of human interaction, from chess to war. Some game theorists have proved theorems about chess, while others have advised countries on strategy in wartime situations. It is this shared logic of choices, responses and consequences that game theory is all about.

9. Is there a book, idea, or thinker that shaped your worldview and that you would recommend to young readers?

Prof. Basu : When I was in high school, perhaps Class 10 or 11, I discovered the writings of Bertrand Russell through an older friend in Kolkata who told me to read some of his books. What influenced me, however, was not Russell's beliefs, but his insistence on being honest with oneself, reaching conclusions with the best of one's mind and being willing to give up prior beliefs if needed. I consider myself to be a skeptic and Russell did play a role in this.

Later, as an economist I had many influences in economics, the most prominent being Amartya Sen. His writings mattered greatly to me, and my interaction with him is really what led me to choose economics. Another very different kind of reading that I am drawn to is Swami Vivekananda's letters. They belong to a very different time, yet they reveal Vivekananda's human side. When you place him on a pedestal, you imagine he had no weaknesses, but the letters speak of physical struggle, health problems and mental anguish. His human side comes through, and that has stayed with me.

10. Is there a work of fiction you especially cherish, one that has remained a companion through different stages of your life?

Prof. Basu : I read very little fiction now. Earlier I used to read a fair amount of all the standard writers, including the Russians like Dostoevsky. But when I was your age my favorite was Sherlock Holmes. I guzzled the stories.

Then there is P.G. Wodehouse, for funny stories.

My reading in Bangla is limited, but three writers meant a great deal to me. Rabindranath, I read across the board. I read a lot of Bankim, and Sharatchandra was also a strong influence. As far as poetry goes, Rabindranath and Kazi Nazrul Islam mattered greatly.

Now, I mostly listen to songs. Rabindrasangeet of course, but also Atul Prasad and Bhupen Hazarika's Bangla songs.

11. Your favourite song?

Prof. Basu : Ganga tumi, Ganga boichho keno?

(বিস্তীর্ণ দুপারের, অসংখ্য মানুষের / হাহাকার শুনেও, নিঃশব্দে নীরবে, / ও গঙ্গা তুমি, গঙ্গা বইছ কেন?)

It was originally written for the Brahmaputra. The song reflects on a river that keeps flowing, bearing witness to life, sorrow and everything in between. At its heart, it is a question addressed to the river itself: how can you keep flowing so calmly through all of this?

12. As we conclude, what would you like your students to carry with them as they step into the wider world?

Prof. Basu : Be true to yourself. A lot of our sorrows come from muddled thinking. Calm down and train yourself to think clearly. I believe strongly in having a moral wiring. Of course, you must work for yourself and try to do better, but you should maintain a moral compass to guide you. In life, you have to be concerned about others. I am a non-believer. I do not believe in a conventional God. But I do believe in morals and compassion. One reason I connect to many people who are deeply religious is their kindness, morality and compassion.

Interviewed by Ayushi Banerjee, VI



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