

Finding Rafts In Rogue Waves

Dear Dr. Pallavi Patel,

Imagine standing in an open field during a thunderstorm and you're the tallest object in sight. Even though you know it's coming, each loud "*Boom*" of thunder rocks you to the core until lightning finally strikes you. This is how 2020 feels like for many people around the world. From COVID-19 to social and political disparities, the events in 2020 have affected the lives of citizens around the world. Through all of the trials and tribulations endured this year, you have inspired me to bring about positive change in the lives of others.

Not only do you help people with challenging physical ailments daily, but you have also launched a project to educate Indians about HIV/AIDS. Your commitment to these causes motivated me to do my part by launching a project to sew masks for those who may not be able to afford them. After successfully sewing 100 masks, I gave them to a local church to distribute to people in need. Your contributions to saving lives kindled a desire in me to help others.

Your passion to improve adolescent self-esteem compelled you to donate five-million dollars so that children could pursue their dreams of a career in music or the performing arts. Recently I learned that music and drama successfully help people suffering from mental health issues. COVID-19 has severely impacted many people's mental health, no matter the age. To fill the loneliness vacuum, I created a virtual Sing-A-Long session for the elderly in the local nursing home along with my church choir friends. Your desire to improve mental health for others convinced me to make a difference in my community as well.

You have shown your sense of gratitude and patriotism towards India and America by helping to create hospitals and schools in both countries. Due to COVID-19, I was unable to visit my home

country, Sri Lanka, this past summer. In collaboration with my cousins, we joined together to help Sri Lankan students learn English. Of course, I cannot forget my American friends so I decided to volunteer as an online math tutor too. Your actions in helping both countries inspired me to become more involved with the two countries I love.

This year has been like a ship sailing in rocky waters with unexpected rogue waves tossing our vessels in every possible direction. COVID-19 has impacted almost every aspect of my life, and the lives of many people around the world. As Dodinsky, a New York Times bestselling author, once stated, “We are the captains of our own ships sailing the sea of life, but in times of stormy weather, you will discover true friends when they don’t hesitate to be a lighthouse.” Thank you for lighting the way. May your good works be a beacon to others, as it is to me, that we all have the power to make a difference in the lives of others along the way.

Respectfully,

An Inspired Young Woman

