

# Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

Taktse International School  
PO Box 90, Gangtok  
Sikkim, India 737101  
[www.taktse.org](http://www.taktse.org)

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The Marion Institute, Inc.  
202 Spring St., Marion, MA 02738  
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## “Hope for the Best. Expect the Worst. Don’t Get Surprised In Between.”

by Ms. Sagun Limboo, Grade 5 Homeroom Teacher and former Taktse student

The sun shines harshly and the air is crisp. Exactly the way I remember it from years ago. Exactly how I spent my six growing years here at Taktse. Climbing up the stairs to the lower and middle school, I am familiar with the surroundings yet I find them alien. It’s like returning home after years have passed to think ‘wow, was the place always this small?’ Everything is the same and yet everything has changed.

I hear terms such as ‘classroom management’, ‘behavioural issues’ and ‘lesson plans’ as I pass by some new, some old faces in the hallway, the resource room, the dining room, in whispers. Standing on their side of the table now, I look up to my former teachers to continue to guide me but not for Checkpoints and A levels, instead, to walk eight blocks in their shoes every day and if I am lucky enough, to walk as effortlessly as they do.

*Am I good enough? Qualified enough? Am I personable? **Just** personable or **Too** personable?*

*Will I scare them or will they look at me and easily take advantage of me? Do I look scary?*

*Oh god, I can’t really hide my emotions well. Will they sense my nervousness? I really want them to like me... but also take me seriously. Gosh, are they as tall as I am?*

I take a deep breath. Actually, I take three deep breaths, and walk into the classroom that once used to be a teachers’ resource room. Toothy smiles and curious eyes stare at me as I introduce myself to a group of 15 energetic, sharp and shy 5th graders. The classroom is already buzzing with energy that I know my introverted self will struggle to match. I pause and after a second of calming my nerves, I project my “I am here and I mean business” voice and slowly state my expectations for the year. I ask them in return what they expect out of me. We agree on treating each other respectfully and promise to not leave the windows of the classroom open, as we do not want the monkeys to invade our space, which is totally normal at Taktse.

It’s an uncanny feeling to stand on this side of the table, to be the one leading, and hoping and praying that in my inevitable trials and errors to come, I am able to make even the tiniest bit of difference, to do it gracefully and with patience. Looking at their cheerful faces, I also understand what it’s like to be in their shoes. So, with Dr. Maya Angelou’s wise words, I hope for the best, expect the worst and promise to not be surprised by what happens in between. I got this.

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*Thank you Mr. Namgyal, and to all who contributed to this newsletter!*



Teacher training with Shakespeare expert Maria Fahey

## No Fear Shakespeare

by Ms. Bhawna Thapa, Upper School English and Geography Teacher.

On a misty April morning, ten English teachers sit around a huge oval wooden table, eyes fixated on the computer screen which is playing Act 1 Scene 1 from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Lysander, one of the characters, says, "The course of true love never did run smooth." All heads in the room nod in accord with Lysander.

Even though the course of love might not run smooth, our course of exploring and unraveling Shakespeare with Ms. Maria Fahey, has been nothing but smooth and enlightening. For the past seven weeks the Humanities affinity team has been eagerly attending online classes on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* led by Ms. Fahey, who herself has authored many guidebooks on Shakespearean dramas.

Ms. Fahey is a passionate educator from Friends Seminary, New York. An old friend and supporter of our school, she visited us in 2016 as a resource person. During her stay, she conducted various workshops on exploring and understanding character traits, metaphors, mood, and tone using picture books such as *The Best Nest* and *Antigone* from Greek mythology. And we are glad to continue the collaboration despite the adversity.

Reminiscing about my school days, I remember I was one of those students who was lost reading all of the thou's, thy's and thee's. At the time, I found analyzing Shakespeare's work not only complicated but arduous and daunting. However, thanks to Ms. Fahey's engaging classes, I have grown to love and appreciate literature as it rightfully deserves. My favourite part of these classes is when Ms. Fahey asks us to represent certain quotes and lines by drawing them. Though at first instance, it might sound like a frivolous activity, it has in fact helped us enhance our reading comprehension, even though most of the drawings are amateur. It is these pedagogical approaches that we can take back to our classes and implement, which has multiplied the value of these classes.

Just as the title of Shakespeare's play suggests an atmosphere of magic, imagination and etherealness, our classes too are a concoction of all these.

## Educators Wanted

Are you an experienced educator?

Contribute to progressive education in a breathtaking Himalayan setting!

For more information, contact:  
Rinchen Pakhrin at:  
[rinchen.pakhrin@taktse.org](mailto:rinchen.pakhrin@taktse.org)

## Newsletter Archive

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## Interactive Digital Whiteboard

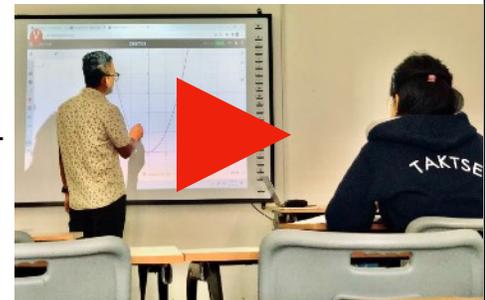
by Mr. Gyan C. Gurung, Upper School A-Level Math Teacher

At Taktse, we embrace technology in our classrooms to make learning fun and impactful. The pandemic opened up opportunities for us to explore digital tools and enhance our technology learning curve.

Using different strategies such as visual simulations to convey abstract concepts, and integrating various interactive whiteboard features adds an engaging dimension to teaching and learning.

I have recently started using an interactive white board in my Math Lab. I no longer have to spend time annotating diagrams, graphs, and maps. The whiteboard's interactive screen features allow students to relate to the learning material in a more dynamic manner. Teaching with the aid of analog and digital tools certainly improves the way our students learn. Check out the video by clicking the red arrow in the photo.

We would like to thank our director for providing this technology to the Math Lab.





## Speech Competitions

Communication forms the backbone of society, allowing us to connect with each other for constructive change. Without communication skills, progress in the working world and in life itself becomes nearly impossible.

Public speaking is one of the most important forms of communication. It is a vital skill to have and hone. It affects everyday interactions among students and teachers, employees and bosses, and marketing professionals and clients. It can have an enormous impact on the career path and level of success in a person's life.

Benefits of public speaking include:

- building confidence
- making social connections
- enhancing one's leadership skills
- developing vocabulary and language fluency
- professional recognition

However, speech anxiety – or glossophobia – is a common fear. At Taktse, we hold Speech Competitions to help our students overcome this anxiety, by developing their public speaking skills.





## Monkey Invasion!

Hello, my name is Aayan Pradhan from Grade 7. I want to tell you about the horde of mischievous monkeys that have invaded our school. I've observed a mother monkey with her baby climbing near my classroom. Once in a while we get a good laugh seeing them on top of the library, or scampering around the campus.

The monkeys showed up in March. They have been knocking things over and making noise in the toilets and the library. They use the wires across the middle school as pathways. Sometimes they can be seen fighting over territory near the senior building.



The monkeys are mischievous and cunning. Our teachers have warned us to be careful to stay away from them. Personally, I enjoy seeing them when I go to and from the art room or ICT room.

Taktse staff attempted to capture the monkeys to take them back to the jungle, using see-through traps. Unsurprisingly, these traps have failed. Any primate can easily figure them out.

So until these foreign invaders decide to leave our campus, we'll just observe them during our breaks and keep the doors and windows shut during classes.



## Writing Workshop

by Ms. Dawa Lahmu Yolmo, A-Level English Teacher

The list of different kinds of love we need to cover as we read the 30-odd poems in our syllabus in grade 11 – familial love, filial love, self-love and so forth – is endless. It almost worries me that I am sometimes teaching these young adults just too much about love, stirring these young hearts with a little too much of it. Yet the exposure is inevitable.

But what do they have to say about love themselves? What poems can they string together with threads of words and phrases? Perhaps the curriculum did not pay much heed to this, leaving us with little room for creative expression.

Returning to campus after the long Covid quarantine, my young writers from grade 11 and 12 have just begun to find normalcy while sitting in tight circles. Hence, we jump at the opportunity to express our creative spirits during our weekly Writing Workshops when we write poems, prose poems, and personal essays.

The warm little room resonates with their enthusiasm. The quiet is broken by the swift movements of their pens and pencils across the blank pages. They break into smiles as they listen to each other's expressions of love, heart and everything in between. Our aim is definitely to read and learn more about what Blake or Arnold or Dickinson had to say about love, but we also aim to see what Dechen and Madhabhi and Kelsa and Palden have to say about it.

And to give you a glimpse of what we are up to, we proudly present some examples of our creative expression on the next page.

Donations to Taktse can be made at: <https://www.taktseeschool.org>. The Friends of Taktse UPDATE newsletter is edited by Lonnie Friedman & Paul Lauenstein. To subscribe or add a friend, email Lonnie Friedman at: [lonnie.friedman@comcast.net](mailto:lonnie.friedman@comcast.net).

## Dechen Wangmo Tamang, Grade 11

*This piece is a rendition of the poem "The Cold and the Pebble" by Blake which we read in our literature class. Having read his poem about love, students wrote about their own perspective on what love means to them.*



When love arrives, there are no drastic tolling of bells, nor are there any cracks of lightning in the darkened sky. When love arrives, there is no startling revelation, no moment of sudden epiphany. There are no racing scenes of pursuit and no heart rendering confessions of love under the mighty roar of the skies- skies that have begun to open up. There are no stars falling from space, no galaxy springing to life, no trembling birth of something new. Rather, when love arrives, it is more like her returning. It is more like

meeting a friend after a long time- more like the warmth of milk and honey pooling low in my gut-more like slipping under the sheets after a long day. When love arrives and takes me by my hand- when love returns and pulls me into her arms, it is like the universe is cradling me. It is like I am home – bone, muscle, skin, soul – all home again.

## Sera Choden, Grade 11



*This piece is a rendition of the poem "Growing Old" by Matthew Arnold which we read in our literature class.*

What is it to grow old?  
It is the gradual yet immediate process of aging crammed with sore backs and forgetful memories.  
It is the bringing about of grandkids with an overwhelming amount of responsibility and, sometimes, respect.  
It is the slow weariness of our bones, the stiffness of joints and fingers feeble with age.  
It is the understanding and coming to terms with the gruesome idea of death and realizing it is not as gruesome as we thought.  
It is not the dream we thought of in our golden years.  
It is simply about growing old...

## Madhabi Deuri, Grade 11

*This poem is an 'abecedarius' wherein the first letter of the first word in each line is in alphabetical order.*

Ardour  
Be it fate, be it  
Coincidence;  
Dearest, your  
Everflowing, mirthful laughter  
Finds its way into my soul  
Glorified as it may sound, this is  
How  
I am bound  
Junction-ed within you, watching  
Kites and  
Loving, loving, loving  
My dearest cuckoo  
Never retiring away  
Often in search of closure  
Peeking into others' niches, hoping  
to find my own  
Quiet –  
Remains of roses  
Slowly cascade down the stem  
garnished with thorns  
Tussling alongside margosa leaves as  
Unique as you and your  
Velvet smooth voice  
Wondrously wording perfection as if  
it were the art of  
Xylography; crafting  
Your own eyes like a  
Zardozi adorned veil upon a bride





Taktse graduate Pemma Lhazin has just completed her senior year at Endicott College in Beverly, MA. She majored in International Studies and minored in English and Conflict & Peace Studies.

## Providing Healthcare in War Zones

by Pemma K. Lhazin

Conflict and war is nothing new. The world has witnessed countless wars, the rise and fall of empires, and revolutions across borders and cultures. However, the conflicts that we see today are fueled with indiscriminate weapons, global politics and financial interests.

During my four years as an International Studies major with a concentration in International Governance, Policy and Security, I became interested in learning about conflicts. Understanding the human rights abuses, international law and legal struggles, I then started to look into the health aspect of conflicts. Health is often overlooked and overshadowed by national security. For instance, many governments spend more money on war than on healthcare, even in countries that aren't involved in conflict.

For my senior thesis, I decided to look into global health crises in conflict zones. I went through case studies, country reports, peer-reviewed articles and NGO databases to understand what the main barriers were in alleviating health crises in conflict zones. I decided to focus on specific conflict zones to answer these questions.

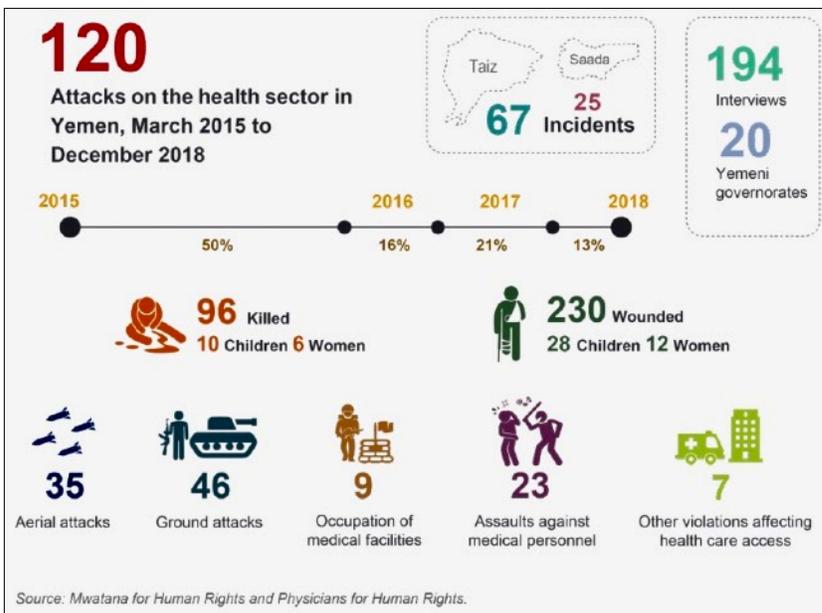
During this time, Russia had invaded Ukraine and I considered using Ukraine as one of my case studies. However, I noticed that the media was paying so much attention to Ukraine and everyone around me was talking about it. I saw that countries were donating millions to Ukraine. On the other side of the world, countries like Yemen and Afghanistan were also suffering, and these conflicts are rooted in foreign intervention from the very countries that condemn Russia for their actions. The hypocrisy infuriated me and because there was nothing I could do about it, I decided to use Yemen and Afghanistan as my case studies. I wanted to shine light on the other issues in the world besides America and Europe.

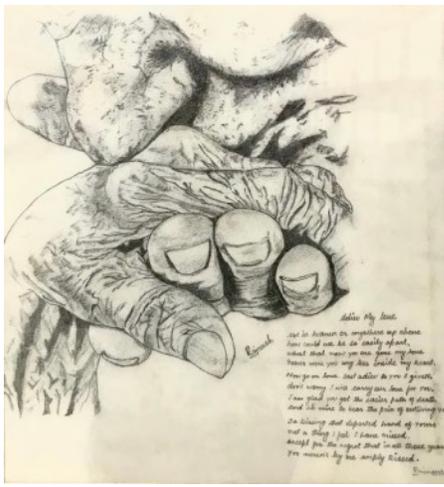


My research led me to question whether the international community was to blame for failing to alleviate health crises in conflict zones or whether local and national governments were to blame. However, by the end of this project, it became evident that we are experiencing a “system failure” where states fail to look after their citizens, and international law and diplomatic institutions fail to regulate how wars are fought and limit their impact on civilians. The humanitarian system that is supposed to come in and fill in the gaps is

breaking down. However, the politicization of aid and funding issues exacerbate the issues.

Writing this senior thesis was challenging. It required much research and writing, but the hardest part was constantly going back to make edits and working on one project throughout the year. I was so grateful for my senior thesis advisor - Dr. Alana Tiemessen, for being the most patient, therapist-like advisor and for making all thesis meetings seem like easy conversations. I wouldn't have been able to come up with the topic without her guidance the past four years and for molding me into the person who became interested in humanitarian issues. Although my senior thesis is done, I look forward to continuing this research to see what methods can work best to alleviate health crises in conflict zones.





# Art Fest – May 2022

