

HELLO MERE SHER !!

27 AUG 2025 – STORY TO READ

### **Kritika: The Unseen Labor of a Teacher**

The alarm clock rings before the first light of dawn, though for Kritika, the act of waking is less a renewal and more a reluctant negotiation with her own body. Her thyroid has made fatigue a permanent lodger in her bones; the heaviness of her limbs is not the kind that vanishes with a splash of cold water. Yet she rises, because the day will not wait. The kettle hisses, the breakfast simmers, the family stirs — all while her mind calculates the seven hours that lie ahead. Seven hours of uninterrupted teaching before the unrelenting glow of a screen.

What appears, to the outside eye, as mere employment is in fact a form of endurance. Kritika's schedule is not just tight; it is claustrophobic, pressing against her like a wall. To her students, she is poised, articulate, endlessly patient. She repeats concepts, modulates her voice for emphasis, and inserts humor where silence threatens to suffocate. Behind the muted microphone, however, her throat burns, her eyes ache, and her back stiffens into protest. The rectangle of glass and pixels, her classroom, conceals the truth: that the teacher herself is at the brink of exhaustion even as she encourages her students to persist.

### **The Performance of Resilience**

Teaching online is an act of performance, and Kritika has mastered it with a stoicism that few recognize. She smiles into the camera though her body recoils from the artificial posture. She animates her voice though her spirit feels drained. She creates diagrams, crafts explanations, entertains doubts, and fills silences, all while carefully shielding her own. Her thyroid's whisper — the constant fatigue, the unpredictable dips of energy — is kept at bay by sheer willpower.

But this performance extracts a cost. Once the seven hours conclude, her day does not. For Kritika, the end of teaching signals the beginning of domestic labor. The dishes wait with silent judgment, the laundry pile grows like an unsparing adversary, the bills glare from the table, and the family expects her to transition seamlessly from educator to homemaker. Her house is a classroom of another kind, one where the syllabus is never-ending and the exams recur daily.

### **The Tyranny of the Paycheck**

The cruelest irony in Kritika's narrative is the compensation. Seven hours of screen-bound labor, punctuated by lesson planning and assignment checking long after the sessions conclude, yield a salary that is little more than symbolic. Each month, she sits with her ledger, trimming personal expenses the way one trims the edges of paper: carefully, regretfully, but with no choice. A pair of shoes postponed, a doctor's consultation delayed, a small comfort denied — this arithmetic of sacrifice has become her second profession.

To outsiders, teaching seems dignified. To Kritika, it is dignified but also diminished — a profession burdened with reverence but deprived of reward. She knows she is overqualified for the pittance she earns, but she persists because teaching, for her, is not a career to be abandoned; it is a calling that refuses to be silenced.

### **The Genesis of a Teacher**

There was a time when Kritika dreamed differently. She remembers her college days, when literature filled her lungs with possibility, when she believed her words could alter worlds. Teaching was not

merely employment then; it was an extension of her idealism, a bridge between her passion and her profession.

But idealism rarely survives the slow grind of necessity. Marriage brought domestic responsibilities; illness added its invisible tax. Somewhere between youthful aspiration and present obligation, Kritika's teaching transformed from vocation to survival. Yet even in this transformation, a spark of her old self remains. Every time a student writes a heartfelt thank you, every time she watches comprehension flicker across a young face, she is reminded of the girl she once was — the girl who believed in education's quiet revolutions.

### **The Silent Battles**

The thyroid is a strange adversary. It does not announce itself with spectacle; it chips away subtly, invisibly. For Kritika, this means mornings where her energy feels counterfeit, afternoons where her voice falters mid-sentence, nights where sleep remains elusive though weariness is abundant. She swallows her medication with ritual precision, but the body obeys in fragments, not in wholes.

Worse than the physical toll is the emotional one. To struggle silently while maintaining the façade of control is a form of loneliness few can fathom. She does not complain — not to her colleagues, not to her family, not even to her students who sometimes notice the faint tremor in her tone. Silence has become her armor, though it weighs heavier than speech.

### **The Flickers of Light**

Yet Kritika's life is not devoid of light. It glimmers in the most unexpected places: a student who emails late at night, confessing that her lectures rekindled his love for learning; a child at home who hugs her without reason; a rare compliment from a parent who acknowledges her commitment. These moments are not frequent, but they are sustaining. They remind her that behind the monotony of the screen, behind the struggle of her schedule, behind the erosion of her salary, there lies impact. Invisible, immeasurable, but undeniable.

And so, she carries on. Not because the system rewards her — it does not. Not because her body enables her — it resists. She carries on because she believes, stubbornly, that teaching is not just a profession but an act of resistance against despair.

### **The Breaking Point**

There are nights when the weight is unbearable. When the lesson plans blur into the bills, when the exhaustion mutates into quiet tears, when she questions whether the effort is worth the return. A recent incident still lingers: the school announced a salary deduction under the guise of "budget readjustments." For Kritika, the reduction was not just financial — it was symbolic. It reminded her that institutions often see teachers as dispensable, not indispensable.

That night, she allowed herself to weep. The screen that usually framed her smile reflected only her vulnerability. And yet, even in that breakdown, she was already rehearsing tomorrow's lesson in her mind. The paradox of Kritika's existence is that despair never fully conquers her; it merely pauses her before she resumes.

### **The Persistence of Hope**

Hope, for Kritika, is not grandiose. It is not the expectation of sudden fortune or recognition. Her hope is quieter: that her health stabilizes enough to let her teach without constant strain; that her

salary one day mirrors her effort; that her students, when they grow, carry a fragment of her lessons into their lives.

In her rare moments of solitude, Kritika writes. Not for publication, not for audience, but for herself. She documents her struggles with a candor she never permits elsewhere. Her diary is not a ledger of complaint but a testimony of survival. In those pages, she is not just a teacher or a homemaker or a patient; she is a woman who refuses to surrender to invisibility.

### **A Universal Reflection**

Kritika's story is not hers alone. It is emblematic of countless teachers whose labor is invisible, whose struggles are private, whose compensation is inadequate, and whose resilience is taken for granted. They are the backbone of societies that too often forget their spine.

The tragedy is not that Kritika struggles. The tragedy is that her struggle is normalized. The world applauds athletes, idolizes celebrities, and celebrates entrepreneurs, but the teacher remains an afterthought, applauded perfunctorily on ceremonial days and ignored on all others.

### **Closing Note**

Kritika is not extraordinary in the way the world defines extraordinariness. She has not authored bestselling books, nor delivered keynote speeches, nor ascended institutional ladders. Her extraordinariness lies in her ordinariness — in the sheer endurance of living a life stretched thin, of carrying responsibilities heavier than recognition, of persisting in a profession that rewards far less than it demands.

She is the teacher who teaches not because the system honors her, but because the act of teaching itself honors life. She is resilience cloaked in fatigue, sacrifice hidden in plain sight, courage woven into routine.

If one day, a student remembers her voice and finds strength in it, Kritika's invisible battles will not have been in vain.

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