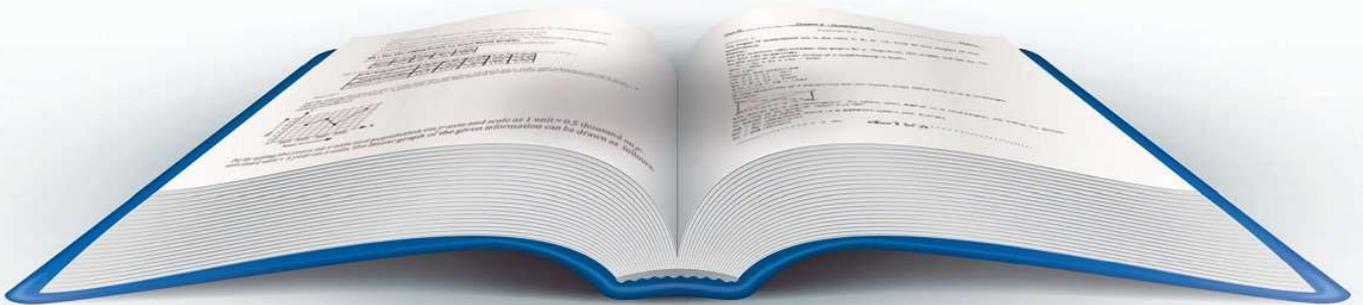
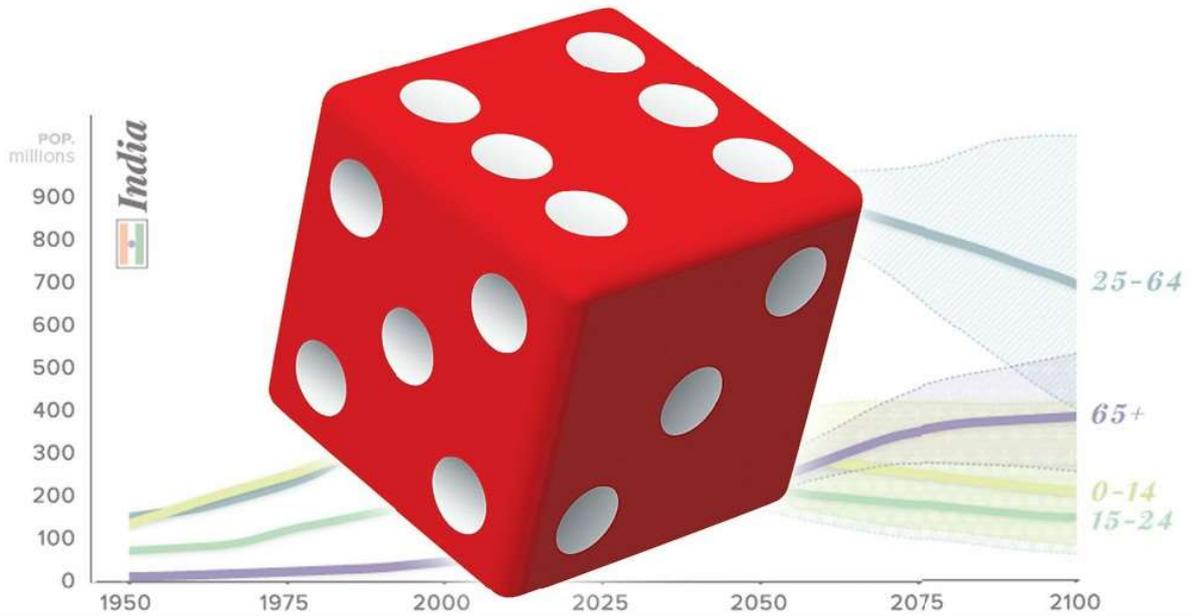


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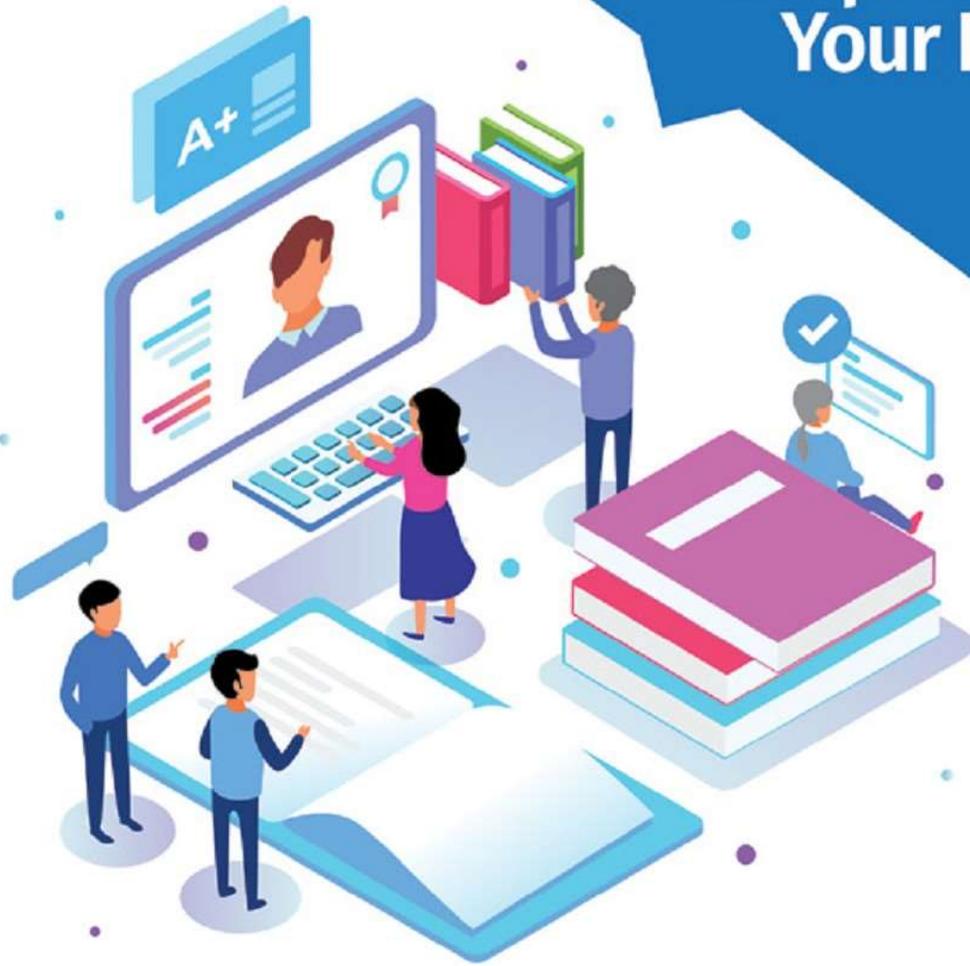
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Gambling Away the Demographic Dividend



The Covid lockdown since March has affected 300 million children in India who were unable to attend regular classes in school. Even as online learning was launched many couldn't get any benefit out of it as children lacked digital gadgets, television and internet connectivity. The increasing number of suicides by children who couldn't continue learning on online mode calls for rapid policy interventions on the part of the government which is sadly lacking.

India may fail to cash in on the demographic dividend with half of the population below the age of 25 if they fail to get quality education and in turn fail to get job opportunities. The AI revolution, robotics and machine learning are expected to take away the redundant jobs.

Even as government machinery was unable to address the problems in disruptions in learning, several schools in remote areas and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were innovative enough to help children continue with their learning activities. Most of the NGOs were faced with financial crunch as corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds of the industry had to be donated for PM CAREs.

This issue of *Pallikkutam* takes a look at the impact of Covid lockdown and lack of appropriate policy interventions that took the rights of every child to have access to quality and undisturbed education. The 64th Rajagiri Round Table Conference International titled "NGOs and Inclusive Learning in Pandemic" held in association with Societree, a social venture, discussed the methodologies adopted by NGOs to ensure learning for the marginalised and disadvantaged sections of society and the challenges they face in moving to a blended learning format.

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India would be able to reap the demographic dividend if only its young population is provided with quality school education and the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated bridging the digital divide as fast as possible.

GUEST COLUMN



TIME FOR ACTIVITY TECHNOLOGY

Digital technology must be used by educators to teach but children should be less dependent on them. Activity based lessons can help them utilise their mind and physique

RAJAGIRI ROUND TABLE



NGO'S AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have done some outstanding work in inclusive education in India and during the Covid pandemic they continued to sustain their activities despite funds crunch and lack of digital devices and connectivity



PRIORITISE REOPENING

Ensuring access to education in remote areas and safety of children in the virtual world has to be given prime importance in the pandemic times

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Inviting Articles for Publication

Pallikkutam invites articles/blogs from stakeholders in education-teachers, school and college leaders, policymakers, students and parents on various aspects related to education for the magazine and webportal. Artworks (drawings, paintings, caricatures) that depict some contemporary themes of national importance may also be considered. The submissions should be original and must contain a declaration that it was not submitted elsewhere for publication. Email: editor@rajagirimedia.com or Whatsapp [9497711010](tel:9497711010) for clarifications.



QUEST FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

The digitisation of grama panchayats across the country will pave the way for citizen-friendly services and improve the welfare of common man



THE ART OF NUDGING

Disciplining is not curtailing freedom but making children responsible for life



MINDFULNESS IN THE MUSEUM

Museums can provide space for reflection, experimentation, inspiration and creativity of students

“ My chief grievance was that my birthday came so rarely. Indeed, I tried to start an agitation for more frequent birthdays. I did not realize then that a time would come when birthdays would become unpleasant reminders of advancing age
- Pt Jawaharal Nehru



 AUSTRALIA

Australia Public Schools Underfunded

Australia public schools may face a funding shortfall of about \$19 billion over the next four years, according to analysis of federal government data by education economist Adam Rorris. On the other hand, Australia's private schools are overfunded by about \$1 bn. The shortfall for public schools may be \$1800 per student and that has a direct impact on a school's capacity to be able to address every child's individual learning needs. The new data has prompted the Australian Education Union to increase pressure over funding for schools. 

 CHINA

China Plans Education Reform



The Communist Party of China Central Committee has issued a guideline for deeper reform of its evaluation system for students, teachers and schools. This is to facilitate the cultivation of young people with moral, intellectual and physical capabilities. It also aims at improving artistic appreciation as well as a healthy work ethic and work skills. The guidelines also stressed the need to adhere to scientific evaluation principles and eliminate long-term problems in education evaluation standards. Teachers' ethics should be the most important criterion in the evaluation of their performance and qualification for professional titles and awards, it said, adding that teachers who have seriously violated teaching ethics might be banned from working in the education sector. Universities should set a minimum number of classes that professors need to give undergraduate students, and experience studying abroad should not be used as a condition when hiring university teachers, it said. 

 JAPAN

Child Bullying Soars in Japan

Child bullying cases soared in Japan in 2019 to 612,496 cases, 60,000 more than the previous year. This is an all-time record and there has been a sharp increase in cases in elementary schools. An anti-bullying law was passed in 2013 in response to a high-profile bullying and suicide case involving a junior high school boy in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture. Fights and teasing are now counted as bullying cases in line with the law. In fiscal year ending 2020 March, bullying cases at elementary schools rose by some 50,000 to 484,545. Bullying cases stood at 106,524 at junior high schools, 18,352 at high schools and 3,075 at special-needs schools. Schools that detected bullying cases accounted for 82.6% of all schools, up 1.8 percentage points. By type of bullying, jeering, teasing and name-calling were the most common cases at elementary, junior high and high schools. The number of bullying cases involving personal computers and mobile phones was significant at high schools. 



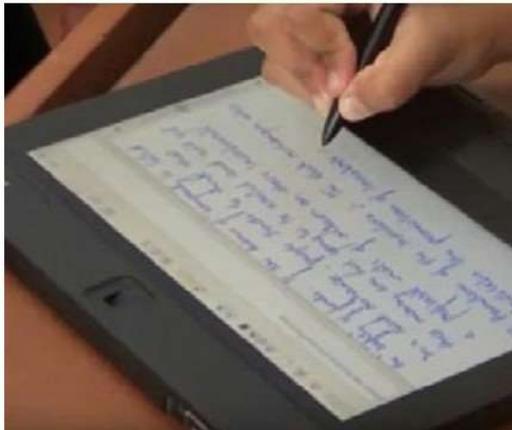


Punjab to Set up Sports University



Punjab is setting up its first dedicated sports university in Patiala with an investment of Rs 500 cr. The initial investment will be towards development of academic and administrative blocks and hostels in the campus. It will be named after Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and focus on scientific training for sportsmen and coaches. The land for the project was provided free of cost by the panchayat and people of Sidhwal. The new campus will be ready by 2022 and benefit from the university's multiple courses adopted from UK's Loughborough University.

Electronic Ink Pads for University Exams



Electronic ink pads will be used instead of paper for college and university examination in Kerala. The question bank containing questions and answers will be prepared by teachers and computer would select the questions for students. Since the answers are available on database, the evaluation will be done immediately after the examinations. Tabulation and result announcement will be done within days using an instant evaluation machine. The recommendations regarding digitisation of university examinations were submitted by the Kerala State Higher Education Council. Dr Rajan Gurukkal, Vice Chairman of the council said that the machine given to students would start functioning at the time of commencement and would stop when the stipulated time is over.



Gujarat Tops in DIKSHA Usage

Gujarat has topped the states in usage of DIKSHA, the online learning portal of the Union Government with 1.75 cr 'direct plays'. DIKSHA stands for Digital Infrastructure for School Education. The 'direct plays' shows the number of times all initiatives of the state government covering live as well as online learning sessions was accessed. While, in other categories, like ETB-Energised Textbooks that have QR code, which is aimed at providing access to digital content for various topics in physical textbooks, and 'course plays', it ranks at fifth and fourth position, respectively. 'Course plays' is the count of online course content accessed by students. The state records over 6.76 crore course plays while Madhya Pradesh with over 10.28 crore is at the top. It shows the number of times all initiatives of the state government covering live as well as online learning sessions was accessed. Gujarat has over 1.75 crore 'direct plays'. Thus, in the total plays or clicks or number of times all this digital content was accessed by the students, Gujarat was in second position after Madhya Pradesh. The number of times learning activities undertaken using Diksha infrastructure by students is over 5.41 crore.



Chats in Google Workspace

Users of Google Hangouts will be brought under Google Chat under the re-branded Google Workspace (previously G Suite) in the first half of next year. Google Workspace brings Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Meet and now Chat, within an integrated, unified space. Google Chat was available only for premium G Suite customers. It is now set to become a free service within Gmail and as a standalone app. Google Workspace now available for business customers will be open for general users. Google Chat will have direct and group messaging taken from Hangouts. Links and attachments sent via Google Chat will automatically run through real-time data from Google Safe Browsing and flagged if malicious. User data in Hangouts including conversation history and contacts will migrate to the Google Chat.



Samsung Galaxy F41

Samsung has introduced Galaxy F41 for GenZ and millennials in the country. It comes with two variants-6 GB RAM + 64 GB internal memory variant and a 6GB RAM + 128 GB internal memory-priced at Rs 16999 and Rs 17999 respectively. It has 6000mAh battery, 15W fast charging with a bundled fast charge. The large battery enables voice calls upto 48 hours, video playback upto 26 hours, web browsing for 21 hours and music playback for upto 119 hours. It features large 6.4-inch full-HD+ sAMOLED Infinity-U display providing an immersive viewing experience. It enables enjoyable favourite TV shows, movies, mobile games, and even multi-tasking with ease. The display offers peak brightness of 420 nits, making it easily readable outside. It offers a contrast ratio of 78960:1 and brings rich vivid colours, making it easier to enjoy viewing photos and videos on the go.



Coconics Student Laptop



Low cost Coconics Laptops made with public-private initiative in Kerala was launched for sale on Amazon as part of Great Indian Festival. The Ubuntu Linux version is priced at Rs 15,980 while Windows 10 Pro laptop is priced at Rs 17,478. The Enabler C1C11 model has Intel Celeron N 4000 processor with 19 cm width, weighing 990 gram, 64 GB memory, 4 GB Ram. The companies collaborating in the public-private initiative are Keltron, Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation, UST Global and Acceleronlabs (an Intel maker India Maker Lab accelerated startup). The models named Enabled, Xtreme and Gymnast are competitively priced. The venture expects Work from Home situation to provide good demand for laptops and tablets in the coming months.



Nokia 215 4G & Nokia 225 4G

Nokia has launched 215 4G and 225 4G feature phones in China. Both the phones have wireless FM radio, flashlight, bluetooth support. The phone is targeted at the entry level and evokes nostalgia factor among customers. It is priced at CNY 289 (approximately Rs 3,140) and it comes with Turquoise and Black colour



options. It is also listed on Amazon but India launch date not revealed. The dual-SIM (Nano) Nokia 215 4G and Nokia 225 4G features 2.4 inch LCD displays surrounded by thick bezels. It features a 3.5 mm audio jack, wireless FM Radio, an MP3 player and a flashlight. The primary difference between the two phones lies in the optics. While Nokia 225 4G features a VGA snapper on the back, Nokia 215 4G doesn't come with any camera. 



Raspberry Pi Compute Module 4

The Raspberry Pi Compute Module 4 has been released which is meant for deeply embedded computing applications. It will be offered in 32 variants with several RAM options and priced approximately at Rs 1,833. It features the same 64-bit 1.5GHz quad-core BCM2711 processor as the Raspberry Pi 4. It supports dual HDMI interfaces at resolutions up to 4K and a single-lane PCI Express 2.0 interface. It has dual MIPI DSI display, and dual MIPI CSI-2 camera interfaces. It has 28 GPIO pins. It is available in 1GB, 2GB, 4GB or 8GB LPDDR4-3200 SDRAM, and has optional 8GB, 16GB, or 32GB eMMC flash storage. Coming to videos, it has VideoCore VI graphics, supporting OpenGL ES 3.x, 4Kp60 hardware decode of H.265 (HEVC) video. It has supports 1080p60 hardware decode, and 1080p30 hardware encode of H.264 (AVC) video. The Raspberry Pi Compute Module 4 has optional 2.4GHz + 5GHz 802.11b/g/n/ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5.0 wireless connectivity. It also has Gigabit Ethernet PHY with IEEE 1588 support. 

Sony Alpha 7S III Model

Sony has launched Alpha 7S III Full-frame Mirrorless camera meant for professional users. It features BIONZXR image processing engine with eight times more processing power and a brand new 12.1-megapixel (effective) back-illuminated full-frame Exmor R CMOS image sensor, significantly reduced rolling shutter effect. In addition to improved image quality, this new image sensor includes a focal plane phase-detection AF system for the first time in an S-series camera. BIONZXR image processing engine that provides up to eight times more processing power, minimizes processing latency, and enables many of the hallmark still and imaging features of the camera. 





AI Chatbot for Students at Korea's CAU

Chung-Ang University (CAU) of South Korea has launched a conversational AI chatbot as part of its learning innovation support program. It provides tailored information for students for their 'Cognitive Campus Life' providing features such as greeting messages, quick menu and autocomplete search. It also provides necessary information about campus life, from academics and classes to grades, scholarships, enrollment and campus amenities, which is the most outstanding attribute of its system.

The Chatbot was developed by the AI Support Team of the Da Vinci Institute of Learning Innovation under the leadership of Paik Joonki, Director. Along with the launch of the chatbot system, the Da Vinci Institute of Learning Innovation is planning to



organize a chatbot naming contest and an event where students can suggest ideas to improve the system, which are intended to encourage student participation to promote their interest in the chatbot. Based on the event results, the institute will continuously optimize system performance.

The chatbot enables easier access to

information for students, according to Song Hae-deok, Director of Learning Innovation Committee. It is multi-purpose providing online class guide and Covid-19 response guideline to students. More information and languages are being added to contribute to University's full-fledged AI-based education system.

Kovai School Harvest Organic

The teaching and non-teaching staff of St. John's Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Coimbatore has set an example by finding time to do organic farming in the school premises during lockdown period. They have cultivated ten different types of crops including groundnut, sunflower, tomato, corn and pumpkin. Ground nut and sunflower cultivation was carried out in nearly 0.75 acres of land while other crops were cultivated in 40 cents of land. The school had started terrace farming in 2016 to educate students in farming practices, according to Mr P Bhaskar, Principal. Since May when they began organic farming, the school has harvested 200 kg of cucumber and 40 kg of oyster mushrooms. The seeds were collected from the surrounding areas and 11 volunteers were involved in the farming process. Teachers who were



stressed out after online classes in the morning could de-stress and feel healthy by involving in farming activities. The ploughing of the grounds had started in May. The school was established in 1999

and recognised by Government of Tamilnadu. It offers several skill oriented extra-curricular programmes for the allround development of students.

Schools and colleges may send activities to be featured here to editor@rajagirimedia.com

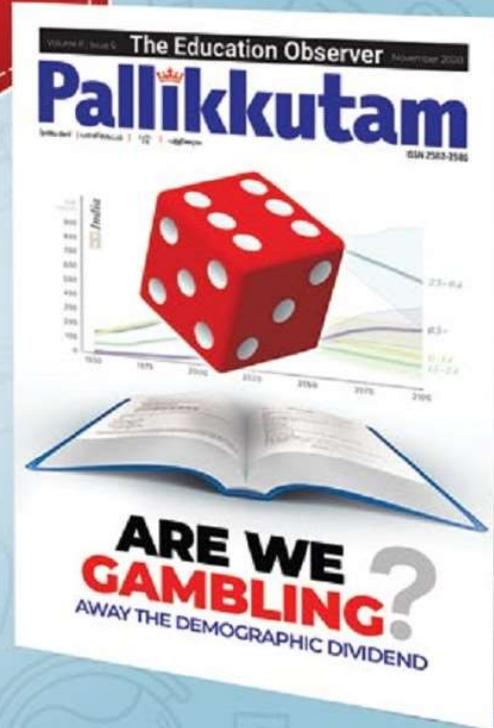
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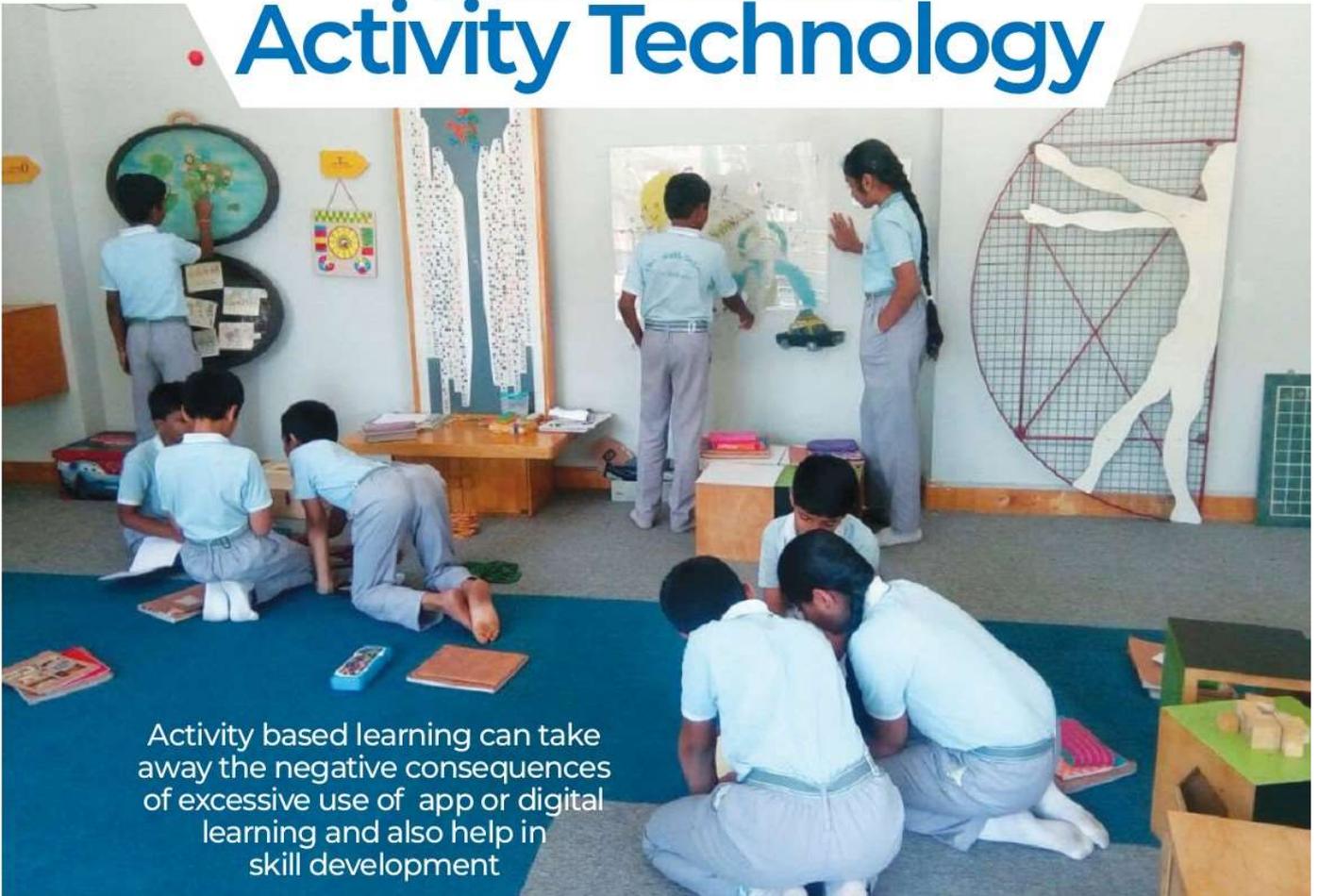
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Time for Activity Technology



Activity based learning can take away the negative consequences of excessive use of app or digital learning and also help in skill development



Fr Loyola Antony

Principal of St. Christopher School, Chessore, Nagaland, winner of Pallikkutarn National Golden Award for Innovation in Education 2020



Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purpose. Since the word 'technology' is of recent origin, probably, it is widely used almost synonymous with digital technology. So, when it comes to using the word 'technology,' we can't afford to limit it to the digital aspect alone. This is only one area of technology. In fact, it will be an injustice to use the term 'technology' to the modern gadgets and apps alone. Technology is vast. Technology is beyond mere gadgets and apps. Technologies are things created by humans that make our

lives easier or solve problems, not necessarily digital, it can be activity-based too. In this sense, even the invention of fire and axe are examples of technology.

EdTech in Covid Era

According to RC Richey, “Educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources.”

In this Covid era, every educational institute and educational startup firm is trying to innovate various ways of reaching out to the students. And almost every educational institute and educational startup firm is in a high pursuit to be more relevant.

And as the situation has compelled, there has been undue importance given to the digital technology by the educational institutes and mushrooming of Edu-startup firms who claim to provide attractive packages of digitized educational services to the educational institutes and the children. It’s a welcome thing. However, the Edu-startup firms need to first of all understand the real need and the objective of providing such service to the children. The service should wholly benefit the overall development of the children and not just profit making endeavor. This applies to all the educational institutions too more than ever.

We should use digital technology in education in so far as it enables the educators to be better prepared to teach the children. But we should refrain from using digital technology purely for the students.



We are in a very critical juncture wherein if we focus on too much on digitized technology, we might lose the crux of education: holistic growth of the children. App-based learning can definitely ensure monetary benefits, but

it should not be to the total neglect of the real growth of children.

Even though we might gloriously claim to provide different teaching apps and devices to teach our children, yet, can we ensure total learning? How many of our children are really sitting in front of the computer or mobile till the end of a particular online session or for that matter, do they concentrate at all? Most of the times, it is the parents who become the real victims in writing down all the notes and do the assignments of their children.

Practical Approach

The educational institutes as well as the educational startup firms need to have a practical and practicable approach towards education. This is to ensure uninterrupted education for all during Covid era and beyond.





Practical technology can refer to a person, idea, project as being more concerned with or relevant to practice than theory. And practicable technology can refer to a project or idea as being capable of being done or put into effect.

Before starting any new initiative, it is always good to have assessment criteria. This will give us clear and unambiguous standards of achievement for learning outcome. And more importantly, the assessment criteria should be purely student-oriented and not just profit-oriented. If not, the history will not be kind to us.

Today our world is vociferously running after wealth, name and fame. And people choose their profession with this singular aim in mind. But those in educational sector cannot be caught up in this dangerous milieu.

Digital Technology

In fact, when we give undue importance to digital technology in education, more than the benefit, there are harms. First of all it adversely

The true purpose of education is to appreciate life, teach us values, understand tolerance, make us responsible and contribute to the growth of the human society.

affects the health of the children who are forced to sit in front of a mobile or other device. The financially poor children can't benefit from the digital technology. And those students will start developing a sense of inferiority complex.

There are dangerous side effects such as undue stress, obesity, eyes and other health problems, poor internet, self-centered, relational, psychological, and we can't ensure full participation.

Activity Technology

We should make a concerted effort to reclaim the value based education that is gradually on the decline with the sudden surge of digitized technological interventions in education, especially during this Covid era.

Let us give activity-based lessons to children that would enable them to utilize their mind and physique. These lessons can be developed keeping in mind the children's age and subject, to develop their skills and to inculcate attitudes and values. After all, the true purpose of education is to appreciate life, teach us values, understand tolerance, make us responsible and contribute to the growth of the human society.

And so, instead of concentrating so much on the app-based or digital based teaching-learning which can't actually ensure holistic learning. Let's give importance to activity-based learning that would bring out the best in the children and better prepare them to face the realities with values and real skills.



Equity, Access and Success!



Inclusive learning concept is quite new to India and the passage of Right to Education Act along with the Constitutional provisions have paved the way for ensuring access for a large community of marginalised people. With active participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working hand-in-hand with government schools, quality education is now reaching the remotest corners of the country. But much more needs to be done in the context of the digital divide that has emerged in the Covid lockdown phase.



Striving for More Inclusivity



There is an urgent need to ensure that blended learning becomes more inclusive so that marginalized children don't get sidelined in education and NGOs are ready to collaborate with government schools to make it happen



India will have the largest number of young people in the world by 2030 and this can be a boon only if they are properly skilled to join the workforce. However, large section of children especially in rural areas are unable to go to school and among those who attend school, the dropout rates are quite high.

With government expenditure on education remaining at 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for a long time and the effort to raise it to 6% not yet achieved, it remains doubtful how the nation would be able to take advantage of the demographic dividend. The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the crisis in education sector as large

numbers of disadvantaged or marginalised families were unable to provide education for children as they didn't have digital gadgets or internet connectivity.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a relatively new concept in India and the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD) by India and the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 has given new hope for enabling large sections of people denied the right to education so far. Over the years, India had several programmes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Literacy Mission to expand elementary education in the country.

Notably several rural schools and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) played a stellar role using limited technology and providing more activity based learning. But the NGO's face a major crisis as corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding is being donated to PM Cares.

"With changes in Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) and CSR funds committed to other larger projects of the government, securing funding at this point of time is very difficult. Partnerships are what can really sustain us whether it is with universities or schools. We need more support in setting up online education and running it," according to Manjusmita Bagchi of Ektara, a Calcutta based NGO working for empowerment of the girl child and women in slums in Kolkata.

NGO's and Govt Schools

"Millions of NGOs are there in India and many of them are not doing something great and hence the need to bring them under FCRA. But if we can go hand in hand with the Government, then results can happen. Most of the government schools teachers are paid well compared to private school teachers but they aren't trained enough," said Savitha Ranganathan, Secretary, Mitraz Foundation. She felt that if government schools improved in quality of education imparted then rural sector would be benefited. At the end of the day funding is the most important requirement for NGOs as parental participation, community participation and the need to fill gaps in formal education are always there, she added.

"There are large number of NGO's who have worked on Public Private Participation (PPP) models with government and they could scale up their activities with the result that government is taking them seriously. Government schools are located in the best places in urban areas and the

best infrastructure. We need to look at working hand-in-hand with the government and not create a parallel system," Manjusmita Bagchi said.

A Niti Aayog report on educational activities in Siliguri in Sikkim, mentioned NGOs handholding the efforts of teachers in government schools and using innovative techniques such as role play to foster learning.

"Our focus is on providing high quality English medium education to girls living in the slums in Calcutta. Pre-Covid pandemic we had our own education facility and we ran programs from early childhood to pre-primary to middle school. We also facilitated sending high school students to other schools in the city, taking care of finance aid and taking remedial classes. Our emphasis is to provide high quality education to those who can't afford and to enhance the capacity of the families to sustain the learning of the child. Capacity building of families is also a very important part. We work with first generation learners and most of them are migrant minorities or those who have come from neighbouring states. We never imagined doing remote classes with these children. But the pandemic forced us to work with new options," according to Manjusmita Bagchi.

NGOs should find a niche area to work on. They are already working in rural areas, for dropouts or some specific purposes. These purposes may define these NGOs. It is perhaps time for NGOs to reinvent themselves and overcome funding and technology problems, according to Dr Varghese Panthaloorkaran, Professor of Engineering at Rajagiri School of Engineering and Technology (RSET).

Unicef India has also underscored the need to bring literacy to large sections of underprivileged and has already done some outstanding work in the lockdown period.

Policy Interventions

The Union Government has launched the Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) with a project cost of Rs 5718 cr of which the World Bank funding is to the extent of Rs 3700 cr. The project covers 6 states namely, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha. The STARS project seeks to support the states in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving interventions with direct linkages to improved education



outcomes and school to work transition strategies for improved labour market outcomes. The overall focus and components of the STARS project are aligned with the objectives of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of Quality Based Learning Outcomes.

At a global level, in early September, government leaders, business executives and heads of United Nations organizations and multilateral agencies renewed their commitment to connect every school and community to the internet by 2030.

At a high-level virtual meeting, Generation Unlimited: Connecting Half the World to Opportunities, they pledged to also reach 3.5 billion children and young people with quality education, including world-class digital solutions, distance learning and relevant skilling. 



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NGO's and Inclusive Learning



The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in third week of March 2020 paralysed the economy and education sector was one of the worst affected. Apart from the trauma of being confined to home for days together, our children were unable to go to school on reopening of the academic year. Online learning required the simultaneous use of gadgets such as mobiles, laptops and TV apart from cable or internet connectivity. The digital divide in the economy came to the forefront. Many children unable to bear the shame of not able to attend online classes committed suicide.

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) played a stellar role in ensuring education for marginalised communities during pandemic.

The 64th Rajagiri Round Table International was organised on 24th October from 3-5 PM via Zoom on the topic 'NGO's and Inclusive Learning during Pandemic.' It was attended by over a dozen NGOs in the country, corporate trainers and teachers. Societree, a Bangalore based social venture of students of RV College of Engineering was the Knowledge Partner for the event. It is a free, one-stop platform where NGOs, organisations, initiatives, volunteers and donors can all interact.



The Covid-19 had taken everyone by surprise and NGOs were unprepared to carry on teaching activities. The situation was not conducive to learning as parents only had a mobile device and they went out for work.

Mitali Bose, Executive Program Manager, Ektara

Children responded positively to activity-based learning. The projects were given over phone as voice message, SMS or Whatsapp. The activities stretched for five days a week. Each day the teacher would call up the students at a specific time and explain the project to be completed on that day. In case they had problems, they would call up the teacher. The activity based learning were child friendly although it was very stressful for teachers. Gradually, when some of the children of mainstream schools had to undergo online classes it was very difficult without devices. Soon we opened up our facility and allowed children to come in a staggered way and use the computers to continue learning.

Manjusmita Bagchi, Associate Director, Ektara

We never imagined doing remote classes with the children under our care. But the pandemic forced us to work with new options. We are a grassroots level organisation and doesn't specialise in designing curriculums. And we partnered with an organisation called 'Education Above all' and used their internet free education research bank to take on different project based learning methods (PBLs) and modified or adapted it to suit the needs of our children.

Neeraj Naidu, Shiksharth

We faced the same problem as other NGOs with respect to gadgets and connectivity. We created lot of worksheets and books for children to be read and completed independently or with the help of parents or village volunteers in Chattisgarh. We had college students volunteering to teach children in their own villages. We felt that it is alright if children don't learn too much about what they learnt in school rather practice what they learnt.

Problems with Virtual Learning

As the education sector was suddenly pushed into full-fledged remote learning all of a sudden, teachers couldn't cope with the new technologies and pedagogical requirements of virtual learning. Most often they tried to replicate an offline experience into an online experience.

Janani Ramanathan, Research Analyst at Mother's Service Society

We can use these challenging times to give education the much needed overhaul. Some of you will remember when Doordarshan began TV news used to be pretty much like radio news. There was just a news reader reading out the news. Apart from the audio we were just seeing the news reader. Now in TV we get the picture in picture, graphics, tickers scrawling and flashnews. The same happened with Information Communication Technology (ICT)-instead of a teacher teaching in class, they were delivering through internet. There is so much more potential in online learning.



Mitali Bose



Manjusmita Bagchi



Neeraj Naidu



Janani Ramanathan



Savitha Ranganathan



Shivi Pathak



Philip Daniel



Thomas George



Prashant Abbi

Community and Parents

NGO's benefitted immensely from participation of the communities in which they worked for. Lot of high school and college students volunteered to teach children. Parents were involved in a major way. It was earlier thought that education can happen only with teachers and schools. But NGO's worked closely with parents during lockdown to make them part of their child's learning process, according to Neeraj Naidu of Shiksharth.

Blended Learning

One of the best things about online learning is that it promotes independent learning. Only a small number of students in the country are going to benefit from and large number of children will fall back in this system of edtech revolution, Neeraj Naidu said. Now it is uncharted territory for everyone. "Until now we never looked at parents as educators. The pandemic pushed us into understanding this and involve parents or train them. We need to think of bringing their experience and skills in the learning of children," Manjusmita Bagchi said.

Online learning helps us enter a new world - how visually impaired children can create music, using their heads and fingers - these are just underutilised, Neeraj Naidu said. Online is not just a medium and there is lot more we can do with it by way of creativity while imparting lessons, he added.

NGO's and Curriculum Building

What NGO's do in education has to be in sync with what government schools are doing or in tune with education policies in vogue. Students have to be comfortable when they return to their normal school whether it is a CSBSE, Government or ICSE School. NGOs need expertise in developing proper blended learning curriculum. It is not just about teaching methodologies but how children can look forward to their higher studies, Mitali Bose of Ektara said. While Manjusmita Bagchi was of the view that NGOs were providing skilling to students as per the New Education Policy but if there is an overarching guideline which they could follow, the results would better. There is need for organisations to brainstorm and find what works and what doesn't work. Government can then think of what will work in rural areas, what in urban areas.

Savitha Ranganathan, Secretary, Mitraz Foundation

We should be involved in curriculum development and we skill rural people in Puttaparthi in Anantpur district in Andhra Pradesh. We have partnered with Tata Strive and there are times when we tweak the curriculum to meet the needs of the rural youth around. It would be good if we are involved in curriculum



design because we understand their requirements and we are actually hands on with them rather than policy makers in state capital or in Delhi. We train graduates or pass outs of 10th standard- we train them and give job opportunities such as in Banking Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI), Tally etc.

Neeraj Naidu:

How can children do more to connect with school and curriculum? We at Shiksharth contextualise a lot on what is already there in the curriculum. Our children know a lot about trees and insects. For eg they can name ten ants which is connected to EVS learning. And that is how we begin the learning process in each lesson.

Shivi Pathak, External Affairs at Societree

We should go hand in hand with the government but the hierarchy system is so much that we can't reach them and increase the productivity. NGO's can get into the community and if community, parental participation increases, school dropout rates can fall

Fund Crisis

NGOs have found the going tough with corporate social responsibility funds (CSR) mostly going to PM CARES fund and other forms of donations declining. Some NGOs like Ektara said they are able to provide infrastructure support, but needs help in meeting the running costs of internet charges or teacher salaries.

Philip Daniel, Corporate Trainer

Government is strapped of resources, there are lot more controls on the NGOs by the government. And in this scenario, the ability of NGOs to address the educational issues will become limited. And government needs to clarify on which NGOs to be controlled and which are not. We have to avoid the crisis of large part of students will be left behind in learning.

Thomas George, Corporate Trainer

I think the government should allow CSR funding for development of online resources – wi-fi, routers can be setup in villages. For the next one year lot of children will be lagging behind others because of lack of technology access. There is need for urgent CSR funding

Prashant Abbi,

Co-Founder, Societree:

Two main things we do for NGOs – one is connect volunteers with NGOs for skill based volunteering opportunities. We have opportunities like content writing and graphic designing, web development social media marketing. We provide them volunteers for them. Second is that we try to connect different organisations to each other working on similar interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

-  NGOs need huge requirement of funds to sustain their activities and hence government should enable flow of CSR funds to NGOs in education
-  NGO's need expertise in blended learning curriculum and Edtech start-ups can help
-  NGO's can be involved in curriculum building especially for rural schools as they are closely connected with stakeholders and know their requirements
-  More volunteering support is needed for NGOs
-  Parents and the community should be involved in education of children
-  Retired armed forces personnel, teachers, doctors, engineers can be inducted as volunteers to teach disadvantaged sections.
-  Volunteering for students can be part of AICTE grading
-  NGOs should work hand-in-hand with the government to provide support to needy students

Prioritise Reopening

Priority should be given to reopening of schools in phases, more inclusive remote learning and community learning initiatives in the country



Job Zachariah

Chief of UNICEF Office in Chattisgarh and former Director of Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India



COVID-19 is the biggest threat to the humanity, since the end of second world war in 1945. Directly, children have not been much affected by Covid as a disease. However, indirectly, it has affected the education, health, nutrition, safety, protection, and wellbeing of children.

United Nations says that children are the biggest victims of Covid. The pandemic could be catastrophic for children, as it could wipe off all gains achieved on wellbeing of children in the last 30 years. Covid is a health crisis, but it could turn into a crisis of child rights, if the adverse impacts are not prevented or mitigated.

In education, closure of schools since March 2020 and the lockdown have affected 1.6 billion (160 crore) children in 192 countries in the world. In India, it has disrupted learning of about 300 million (30 crore) children of 3-18 years. UNICEF

describes the current situation as a 'global education emergency', because of the disruption of learning and the adverse socio-economic impact of COVID on education.

Consequences

Besides affecting the learning outcome of the children, school closure has the following socio-economic impact on children. These damages on children could be life-long and irreversible.

School drop-out: Longer the children remain out-of-school, the less likely they will return to school. Before Covid, about 6 million (60 lakh) children of 6-14 years were not attending school in India. This number would increase. UNICEF estimates that 24 million children in the world would drop-out from schools due to Covid.

Digital divide in learning: This has widened, as children in vulnerable households have no access to internet. As per UNICEF study, 76% of households in India do not have internet connection to access online classes and material.

Child marriage: Global evidence shows that the number of child marriage increases after every disaster. This could happen in the current pandemic too. Already, 15 lakh girls of less than 18 years are married every year in India.

Child labour and child trafficking: Children faces higher risk of child labour and child trafficking, when they are not attending school. Studies reveal that 1 percentage point decrease in GDP growth rate leads to 0.7 percentage point increase in child labour. Covid has caused contraction of the economy and GDP growth rate, which in turn would increase the prevalence of poverty and child labour.

Child sex abuse: During and after every disaster, it is seen that the incidence of child sex abuse and gender-based violence increase



substantially. The 50% increase in number of complaints to the ChildLine number 1098 during April-June 2020, is an indication of this.

Physical and emotional violence: Children have been more exposed to more violence, due to closure of schools

Mental health: Mental health of children could be affected due to lack of socialization, peer contact, restriction in movement and less time for play. There are reports on increase in the number of suicides by children in the last 6 months in India.

GDP: There is strong inverse correlation between the level of education and economic growth. Low level of education would adversely impact GDP growth rate of the country, which has multiplier effect in all sectors.

Poverty: when GDP growth rate declines, the rate of poverty would go up. Besides, the vicious cycle of poverty will continue unbroken, as people with low level of education would get only low paid jobs.

Life-long impact: Low levels of learning due to COVID would have life-long impact on children, as it would affect their earning during adulthood.

Health and nutrition: Closure of schools have disrupted the delivery of health and nutrition services at school level like the mid-day meal, supplementation of IFA (iron tablets) and other programmes.

If children are affected by these adverse impacts, it would be the biggest disaster of humanity. Therefore, these should be prevented and mitigated.

UNICEF estimates that **24 million children** in the world would drop-out from schools due to Covid.



76% of households in India do not have internet connection

15 lakh girls of less than 18 years are married every year in India.



1 percentage point decrease in GDP growth rate leads to **0.7 percentage** point increase in child labour



Seekh classes

School Reopening

Most of the countries have re-opened schools in phases, taking all precautions. However, 872 million students (half of the world student population) in 51 countries (including India), are not able to attend schools. Government of India has permitted states to re-open schools from 15 October 2020 and detailed guidelines have been issued. However, most of the schools in the country remain closed. UNICEF has urged governments in countries to prioritize re-opening of schools, when restrictions are lifted.

Continued Learning

Every country in the world have taken measures for remote learning of students by on-line classes through internet, television, radio and mobile phones and by making available class-specific online material in the internet. Some countries, including some states in India, conduct face-to-face classes for students at community level, with the support of volunteers.

In the Maoist affected Chhattisgarh in India, UNICEF supports the state government in conducting community classes for students in 6,700 forest and tribal villages in the state. Referred to as 'Seekh classes', over 14, 000 volunteers take classes for 2-3 hours daily, with the support of subject-specific videos shared with them. Seekh classes are unique because: a) it is activity-based and joyful learning; b) classes are taken in local/tribal languages; c) has strong community and parental participation and; d) support of teachers and the education department.

Reopening Schools

Considering the catastrophic impact of closure of schools and disruption of learning on students, following six measures should be taken.

Re-open schools: State governments should prioritize on re-opening of schools in phases, taking all precautions to mitigate the risks of Covid, as suggested in the guidelines issued by Government of India.

Continue remote learning options: As all students may not be able to attend school, remote learning may continue even after schools re-open

Continue community classes: Especially for children in vulnerable households in forest and tribal villages, even after schools are re-opened

Open catch-up classes: As closure of school has disrupted learning of students, 'catch-up classes' should be conducted on foundational competencies of students in the first 100 days, when schools re-open. Teachers cannot begin classes from Lesson-1 of textbook, as if nothing has happened.

Mental health: In the first 100 days of school, address the mental health aspects of children and teachers

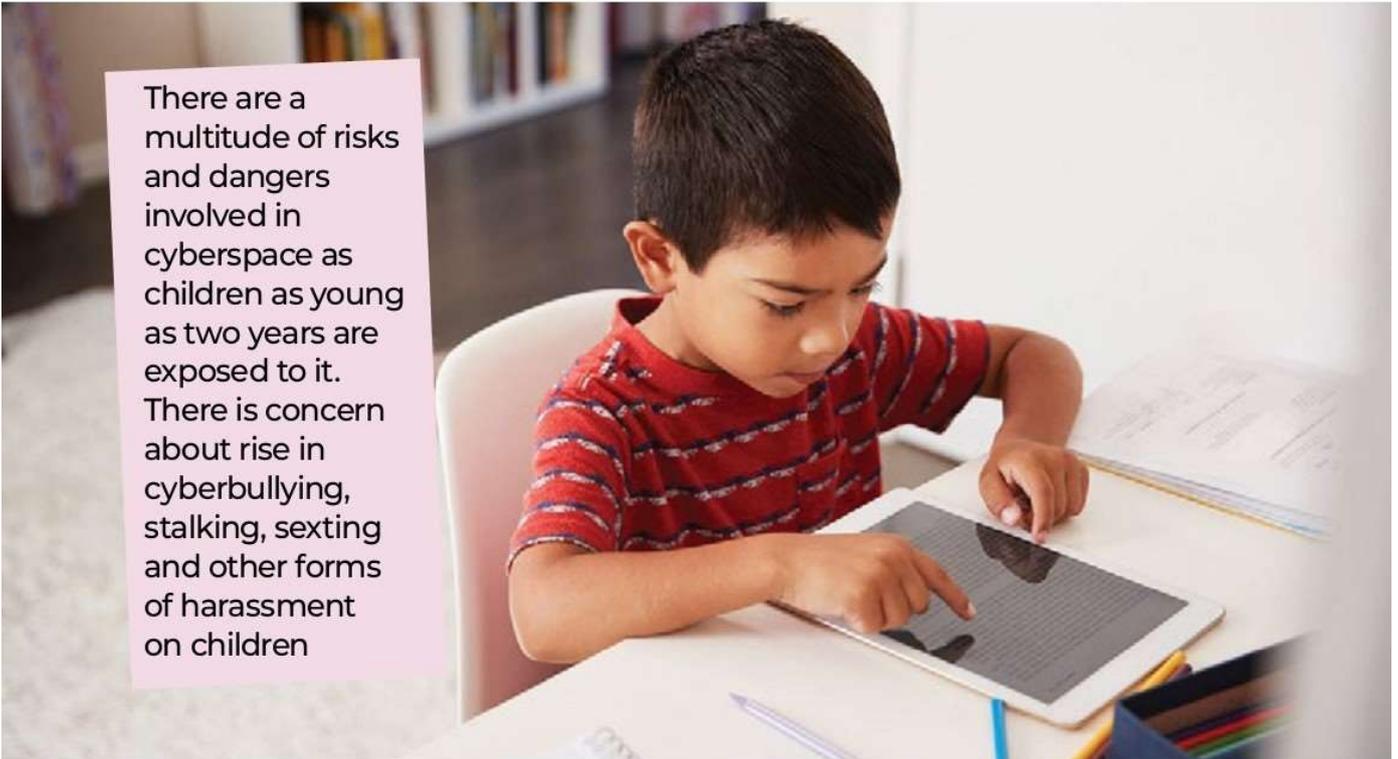
Strengthen monitoring and reporting systems: at all levels to prevent child marriage, child labour, child trafficking and school drop-out





Keeping Children Safe in Cyber World

There are a multitude of risks and dangers involved in cyberspace as children as young as two years are exposed to it. There is concern about rise in cyberbullying, stalking, sexting and other forms of harassment on children



Neha Pradhan Arora & Joyita Ambett

Co-founders at Mudita Foundation



With school closures and social distancing measures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many children have now been spending more time online than usual. The internet has become one of the best tools to learn new things, enhance knowledge and understand the world while sitting in the safety of one's home. Children are using Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, gaming platforms, emails and many other apps for education and entertainment. Children are online for long hours attending school classes, viewing videos online for entertainment and using apps for socialising with friends and relatives. They live largely in a digital community. But like any community, there are risks and dangers.

Unsafe Cyberworld

The internet isn't the safest place for a child. Internet frauds and malicious happenings can happen to anyone, even us adults. But keeping children safe on the World Wide Web (www) is more important, considering that children as young as two years of age can now use and operate phones. Teenagers are the most at risk. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI - 2019), children between the age of 5 and 11 years account for nearly 15 percent of India's active Internet users which is almost 66 million Internet users in the country. They access the Internet often on the devices of family members. The more recent India Internet Response 2019 suggested that in India, two in three internet users (60%) are between 12 and 19 years of age.

There is also a correlation between the time spent online and the increased risk to abuse or bullying online for teenagers. According to the Online Study and Internet Addiction conducted in February 2020 for respondents in the age 13 – 18 years, 22.4% respondents who used the Internet for more than 3 hours a day were vulnerable to online bullying and 28% who used the internet for more than 4 hours a day faced cyberbullying.

In India, **two in three** internet users (**60%**) are between **12 & 19 years** of age.

In India, children between the age of **5 & 11 years** account for nearly **15 percent** of India's active Internet users.

28% who used the internet for more than 4 hours a day faced cyberbullying.

Threats

Threats to children's internet safety include invasions of privacy, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, sexting, harassment and abuse. Several reports are also saying that the searches for 'child porn' have multiplied during the lockdown period. Grooming (a process of winning over the trust and establishing a relationship) of children

by perpetrators, abusers or traffickers happens through gaming platforms, social media sites and chatting platforms. This leads to online abuse and exploitation of children by exposing them to inappropriate online content, having sexual conversations or actively asking them to indulge in inappropriate sexual activity. Trafficking of children is also happening via the internet these days as children are targeted and observed before being trafficked. All these activities are identified as cybercrime punishable by law which target children as well.

Around 9.2% of 630 adolescents surveyed in Delhi-National Capital Region had experienced cyberbullying and half of them had not reported it to teachers, guardians of the social media companies concerned, a recent study by Child Rights and You (CRY), a non-governmental organisation, found. One in four adolescents also reported seeing a morphed image or video of themselves, and 50% of these were not reported to the police, the study found.

As per a recent study conducted between October 2019 to February 2020, by Responsible Netism and Cyber Peace Foundation supported by Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (MSCERT), 80 per cent school students in Maharashtra between the age groups of 10-17 do not report cybercrimes they face online to their parents, teachers and the police; 33 per cent preferred to delete their content while 31 per cent informed their friends about it.

Lack of Awareness

Given the host of threats in the online world, the lack of awareness to identify these threats and low reporting of the crime, it is important that we practice responsible and safe behaviour online and talk to our children about the same. While there are technological options to protect children which include parental controls, apps and





tracking software, no parental controls or filtering options are 100 percent effective.

Open communication, continuous conversations and close supervision of children online is very important to keep them safe. The optimal safeguard for children is to facilitate their access to the internet, protect their identity, and ensure they can recognise potential dangers and know what to do about it. Digital Citizenship means the responsible use of technology to learn, create and participate and includes how we should be conducting ourselves online and how and what we should be teaching our children.

Teaching children/students about digital citizenship and internet safety is more important now than ever. One of the best ways to do this is for adults to be role models with their digital practices through disciplined use of technology for everyone. Regular conversations with children helps to build strong relationships and open communication channels based on trust. This gives children the strength to come and share their anxieties, doubts or experiences. Every child must have a circle of trust with a few trusted adults at home or in school who they can reach out to. Every adult must be aware and alert so that any consistent change in the child's behaviour or indication of possible risk, distress or abuse may be identified quickly and addressed.

Checklist

- ✓ Incorporate child online safety in the child protection policies of the school/ organization and establish protocols for reporting offences and supporting children who have been victimized or are at risk
- ✓ Organize periodic sessions on online safety for children, teachers and make available information, education and communication materials like posters and the NCPCR Handbook, CBSE guidelines, UNICEF's Covid 19 protocol.
- ✓ Appoint counsellors/focal points who can provide immediate assistance to children in need
- ✓ Engage children in regular activities for promoting child online safety, e.g. IT club, online safety champions, hackathons, etc
- ✓ Have adequate technical measures in the devices and internet connection being used on campus

The purpose is to help children become self-resilient to prevent harm and abuse against themselves. Despite all our efforts, our children may still become victims of cybercrime in any form. It is important then to take the necessary steps to report the crime to ensure that the perpetrator is caught and the virtual world becomes safer. Ensuring that evidence of the crime is saved (screenshots, messages, images or emails) will help the criminal justice system work effectively. One can use the following resources to report -

www.cybercrime.gov.in
Complaint Portal

Email on complaint-
mwcd@gov.in to report to the Ministry of Women & Child Development

National Cyber Crime
Reporting Number: **155260**
(9:00 AM - 6:00 PM)

File a complaint to police
(**Call 100**)

While the Government of India and its law enforcement continue to take stringent steps to prevent, detect and resolve cybercrimes targeting children, it should be every individual's effort to increase their own awareness on being a responsible digital citizen and to safeguard our children from cybercrimes.

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Quest for Good Governance



Dhanya AK



In 1997, Arundhati Roy introduced Aiymanam to the world through her Booker-prize winning novel *The God of Small Things*. Twenty years later in 2017, Aiymanam gram panchayat in Kottayam district in the South Indian state of Kerala was in the news again as India's first fully digitalised panchayat ward. It was among the first panchayats to get ISO certification.

The person behind all such bold initiatives was Mr Arun Kumar N, former Panchayat Secretary of Aiymanam and presently secretary of Manarcaud Panchayat. He says all his efforts are rooted in his dream of establishing a seamless good governance practice in our country. He was in the news again as he along with the panchayat vice-president put on a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to repair a damaged water pipe at Covid First Line Treatment Centre (CFLTC) to restore water supply to patients as no plumber was available despite being offered Rs 10,000.

Motivation

"The motivation to implement people-friendly good governance came to me when I faced some disappointing incidents in government offices. I wanted to change it. I learned more about the best practices and successfully implemented it," says Arun Kumar.

The Aiymanam Grama Panchayat has now become a role model for good governance. The front office begins functioning at 9 am as people don't have to take leave to avail services. A checklist of documents is given with all applications. To prevent corruption, applicants are given details of the panchayat president, secretary, deputy director, and vigilance in case the service is not provided within the stipulated time. The public can evaluate the performance of all officials and they are analysed weekly. Complaints or suggestions are discussed and solutions found.

Attitude Change

Arun Kumar says, a change in the attitude of government servants will make a big difference in society. "Every government employee should try to look at situations from the point of view of people who come before them with applications or requests. If they could put themselves in their shoes, their attitude will change automatically. A transparent grievance or feedback mechanism is the core of this change process. The general public should get a chance to share their feedback on the government services they use. And the government employees should be open to correct their flaws. For that, the employees should get the right training.

Along with general modules they should also be taught how to handle people, develop positive attitude and stress management. Training provided to them should be related to local environment.

"Employees should be allrounders to offer different services. For eg. if an officer who is in charge of sanctioning a birth certificate is on leave, applicants are forced to wait until he or she is back. If another officer is able to offer the same service this could be avoided. Moreover, when a particular power is vested in one person, the chances of corruption are too high."

"You don't need to bribe government servants or use agents to enjoy the benefits of being an Indian citizen.



Arun Kumar

Always be brave enough to share your honest feedback," he advised.

Arun Kumar says digitalisation of government offices is not yet complete. Government employees spend 70% of their working hours in search of old files.

In a decentralised system, the gram panchayat is the lowest yet most powerful unit of governance in India. They are the first to reach out to people in times of disasters. Hence, their systems have to be citizen-friendly and flawless. 

Digital Panchayati Raj

Two years after Aiymanam Panchayat went digital, the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj signed an MoU with Common Service Centre SPV to convert 2.5 lakh gram panchayats to 'digital' to provide speedy delivery of services in rural areas and promoting rural BPO. In September 2020, the Panchayati Raj Ministry has set up a unified tool e-Gram Swaraj portal for effective evaluation and monitoring of works done by grama panchayats. e-Gram SWARAJ unifies the planning, accounting and monitoring functions of Gram Panchayats. For the year 2020-21, around 2.43 lakh Gram Panchayats have finalized their Grama Panchayat Development Plan on e-Gram SWARAJ.

Among states, Haryana has announced a digitisation initiative for 6,197 gram panchayats under 'Gram Darshan Scheme' to ensure all activities of villages are co-ordinated in a single digital platform. Gujarat launched Digital Seva Setu involving 14,000 grama panchayats to provide government services online. All villages are being connected through optical fibre network

Dr Varghese
Panthaloorkaran

The Charity Chromosome of the Nations

Mother Teresa introduced
a new genetic information
into Indian ethical system

T

he five principles (*Yamas*) of Indian ethics as we read in Rigveda, Verse 5.61.2 are: *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (Truth, Non-falsehood), *Asteya* (Non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (Celibacy if unmarried and non-cheating on one's partner if married), and *Aparigraha* (Non-possessiveness). Here, ethics is perceived as a moral restraint, just like that a charioteer has over his chariot. Ethical behaviour is essential to preserve the cosmic order or *rita*, and it applies to both physical and social worlds. In the modern terminology, ethics and morality of this kind is denoted by deontology (Greek: *Deon* means obligation, necessity or that which is binding). Classical Indian ethics is thus an ethics of dutiful life.

This is quite similar to the 10 Commandments of Moses given to the Jews in olden times. The ethics in both these systems is act-based and describes moral correctness of certain action or non-action. Such ethics is practiced in view of salvation (*Moksha*) of the subject of such action or non-action, which



simultaneously ensures the sustenance of the cosmic order. However, here there is no concern over the subject of this action or non-action, namely the other person. Action in disregard of the effect (*Nishkama karma*) is sought after here. Here, ethics is not driven by love for the person in need. Charity is a foreign concept to such ethics. Everybody has to work alone for salvation, and nobody can help each other or shall not help each other to steer his/her destiny. The destiny of a person is determined by one's own prior actions, the *karma*. Charity is irrelevant. Each one has to fend for his salvation, all alone.

Summarization of the 10 commandments into the Law of Love Jesus of Nazareth brought about a paradigm shift in the theory of ethics. The new theory also explains the "why" of ethics. Thou shall love each other, because all humans, the rich and poor, the healthy and sick, the learnt and ignorant are but children of the same Heavenly Father. Mother Teresa, as a true messenger of Jesus of Nazareth, added a new dimension to the existing ethical system of India. She ushered in a new genetic information, the charity chromosome, which was foreign to traditional Indian ethical systems. The charity chromosome will cross with the Indian ethics to give birth to a radically new and human ethical system for modern India. It was a story of great disruption and Mother Teresa was the champion of the same.

Origins of the Mother

Anjezë (Albanian: Agnes) Gonxhe (Albanian: Little Flower) Bojaxhiu was born to Nikola and Dranfile Bojaxhiu on 26 August, 1910 in present-day Skopje in North Macedonia, which was once part of Albania. Her father died in 1919 when she was just eight years old and it was her mother who singlehandedly raised



her up thereafter. In 1928, at the age of 18, Agnes left her family to devote her life into social service and missionary work. She joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland and started learning English, in preparation to work in India. She came to India in 1929 and remained there till the end of her life. After completing her spiritual training, Sr. Agnes started her career as a teacher at St. Teresa's School, a catholic school for girls, in Kolkata. At the same time, she was deeply disturbed by the poverty of people in Kolkata. On September 10, 1946, on her way to the Loreto Convent in Darjeeling from Kolkata, Sr. Agnes received, what she later described, a "Call within the Call", to serve the poorest of the poor.

Sr. Agnes heeded to the inner call and committed herself fully to this call till the end of her life. She started working among the abandoned and the poorest of the poor in the streets of Kolkata and came to be popularly known as Mother Teresa. In the place

of the traditional dress of the Loreto sisters, she preferred to wear a simple white sari with three blue stripes on the borders, one thicker than the rest, similar to the sari worn by the women who swept the streets of Kolkata. This habit was to later on become the symbol of the Missionaries of Charity, which she founded in 1950. The members of Missionaries of Charity were to take a special vow "to give wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor." The selfless works of Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity were appreciated by the people of Kolkata and eminent people of the society came up for their support. Mother Teresa was granted citizenship of India in 1951 and in 1979, she was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitutes a threat to peace". Mother Teresa was canonized at a ceremony on September 4, 2016 as Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

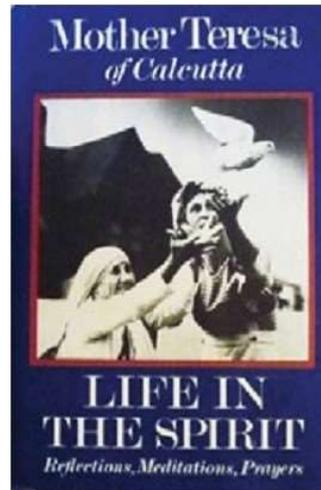
The Missionaries of Charity, Mother Teresa founded grew in faith,



service and in numbers around the world. In 1997, when Mother Teresa passed away, there were already 3,914 sisters and 363 brothers serving the poorest of the poor, which grew to 5183 sisters and 500 odd brothers in 2018. They feed the hungry and shelter the homeless, naked, lepers and the unwanted in about 140 countries round the globe today.

Profound Disruption

Mother Teresa was an absolutely disruptive leader. She introduced radical modification to the self-righteous and deontology-based ethical system of traditional India, which rationalized the neglect of the poorest of the poor in the society. She gave birth to an ethics based on the Law of Love, which was preached by Jesus of Nazareth long ago. She successfully broke the existing definition of ethical living, which depended on the observance of certain laws for self-realization. She placed the service to the poorest of the poor as the focus of new Indian ethics. The poor shall not be abandoned to their own destiny, she prescribed. Rather, their lives shall be redeemed through sacrificial love of the ethical people. Thus, Mother Teresa, bore witness to the teachings of her spiritual *guru*, re-incarnating it within the Indian realities.



It was a missionary work with a different flavor! Mother Teresa did not want to convert anybody to Christianity through her works of charity. Rather, she developed a new definition of the missionary work: to make one a better person. She said: “Yes, I convert. I convert you to be a better Hindu, or a better Muslim, or a better Protestant, or a better Catholic, or a better Parsee, or a better Sikh, or a better Buddhist. And after you have found God, it is for you to do what God wants you to do.” It was the perfect statement of her policy,

which did not require her to dilute her personal faith and at the same time well synergized with the Indian ethical system, which appreciated unity in diversity. A profound ethical disruption!

Clarity of Mind

Mother Teresa carried a simple and consistent message. She believed in doing something beautiful for God with own life. She said: “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love”. She suggested: “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love”. She commanded: “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then feed just one”. She reminded: “The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread”. In all, she had a singular message: A call to love the poorest of the poor.

She also remained consistent in her message through and through. She gave a legible clarion call for action, which was heard by the people of good will, who joined her in the works of charity.

It does not mean that she was left un-criticized by her contemporaries. She was regularly criticized both by Christians and by Fundamentalist Hindu groups. She was criticized by the Christians for downplaying the meaning of missionary work and espousing universality of salvation. They preferred to believe that salvation requires adherence to the Catholic Church. However, Mother Teresa took a clear stand on this matter, which found expression in her book, *Life in the Spirit: Reflections, Meditations and Prayers*. She writes: “Our purpose is to take God and his love to the poorest of the poor, irrespective of their ethnic origin or the faith they profess. Our discernment of aid is not the belief but the necessity. We never try to convert those whom we receive to Christianity but in our work we bear witness to the love of God’s presence and if





Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, or agnostics become for this better men – simply better – we will be satisfied.”

Similarly, Mother Teresa took a radical position against abortion, to the great dissatisfaction of the modernists. Mother Teresa reiterated her stand on the issue in her Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech: “Many people are very, very concerned with the children in India, with the children in Africa where quite a number die, maybe of malnutrition, of hunger and so on, but millions are dying deliberately by the will of the mother. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today. Because if a mother can kill her own child – what is left for me to kill you and you kill me – there is nothing between”. An uncompromising voice of the Mother, which modern minds cannot afford to completely sidetrack.

Everlasting Endurance

Mother Teresa exhibited everlasting endurance. In fact, she was fighting

a constant interior war, to convince her of her own precepts. The Letters she wrote throughout her life manifest her inner struggles. She even doubted the existence of God and frequently felt His absence in her life. She bemoaned the “dryness,” “darkness,” “loneliness,” and “torture” she was undergoing. She was led through the dark valleys of the hell and at one point she even doubted the existence of heaven and even of God. She was acutely aware of the discrepancy between her inner state and her public demeanor. “The smile,” she writes, is “a mask” or “a cloak that covers everything.”

Mother Teresa did not pretend herself as a God-Woman, rather lived the life of an ordinary faithful, a life of doubts, trials and tribulations. Her endurance was awesome and her commitment to the “poorest of the poor” was absolute through and through. Mather Teresa was a Mastermind par excellence!





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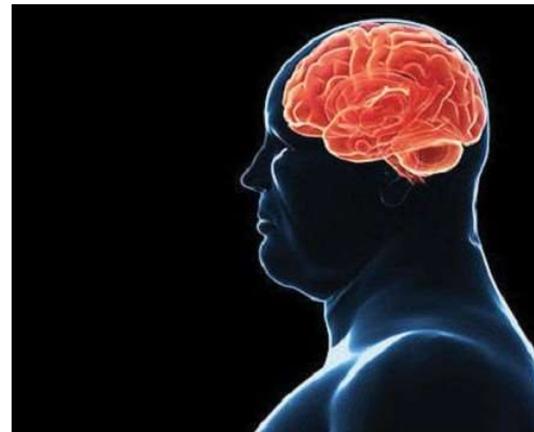
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Humans 'prewired' to Read



Human beings are 'prewired' to read according to researchers at Ohio State University. Infants are born with the gift of being receptive to seeing words and letters, making them ready to read from birth. Brain scans of newborns revealed that this part of the brain-- called the 'visual word form area' (VWFA) is connected to the language network of the brain. It was earlier believed that VWFA is specialised for reading only in literate individuals. This has been disproved based on scans of 40 newborns. Even in newborns the VWFA was different from the part of the visual cortex that recognizes faces, primarily because of its functional connection to the language processing part of the brain. Now scientists are learning more about individual variability to understand differences in reading behaviour which could be useful in the study of dyslexia and other developmental disorders



Obesity Impairs Brain Plasticity

Brain plasticity is likely to be impaired in people who are severely overweight according to a study by University of South Australia. This makes it difficult for such people to learn new tasks or remember things. The findings are based on analysis of 15 obese people aged between 18 and 60. Repeated pulses of electrical stimulation were applied to the brain to see how strongly it responded. The healthy-weight control group recorded significant neural activity in response to the stimulation, suggesting a normal brain plasticity response. In contrast, the response in the obese group was minimal suggesting its capacity to change was impaired. An adult who has a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight. Anything above that is obese. BMI is the ratio between height and weight to determine body fat.



Perfectionism and Helicopter Parenting

Perfectionists are likely to adopt over-parenting or helicopter parenting. Such parents hover over their young adult children and taking care of tasks that the children should be able to do themselves, such as cooking, cleaning and paying bills. Overparenting may cause psychological distress, narcissistic behaviour, poor adjustment, alcohol and drug use in young adults in the 18-25 age group. A new research done by Texas State University and University of Nebraska has found that perfectionist parents may see their children's success as a reflection on them and may engage in over-parenting in an effort to achieve 'perfect' results. For perfectionism-driven helicopter parents to change their ways, they first need to recognise their own value, independent of their children, according to researcher Chris Segrin.



Parental Response to Infant Distress Innate

A new study done by NIH/Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has proven that parents have an innate capacity to respond to an infant's cries for help and this capacity may serve as a foundation from which a parent learns to adjust to an infant's changing needs. A study done on mice showed that when housed with mice who have given birth, unmated female mice will assist with the care of the newborn pups. An evaluation was done on the ability of such babysitter mice to respond to a variety of recorded newborn distress cries. It was found that experienced baby sitters responded to typical distress cries 80% of the time, compared to the 33% initial rate of the novice baby sitters. Administering Oxytocin improved the rate at which the mice responded to the cries. 🏆



Hugs Reduce Interpersonal Conflicts

Receiving hugs may help reduce mood changes associated with interpersonal conflicts, according to a study done by Michael Murphy of Carnegie Mellon University and others. Individuals who engage more frequently in interpersonal touch enjoy better physical and psychological health and improved relationships. Researchers interviewed 404 adult men and women having interpersonal conflicts. Receiving a hug on the day of conflict was concurrently associated with a smaller decrease in positive emotions and a smaller increase in negative emotions. While more research is needed to determine possible mechanisms, the findings suggest that hugs may be a simple yet effective method of providing support to both men and women experiencing interpersonal distress. 🏆

Mother's Hypothyroidism and Child's ADHD



Reduction in chemicals or hormones produced by thyroid gland in early stage of pregnancy may influence the fetal growth of the child, according to a new study by NYU School of Medicine. Disruptions in production of hormones known as hypothyroidism may contribute to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children. Among the study findings were that once a pregnancy had reached the second trimester, a woman's hypothyroidism had little effect on her children. A possible explanation is that by this point, the fetus has begun to produce its own thyroid hormones and so is less vulnerable to its mother's deficiencies. Results are strong enough to warrant careful monitoring of pregnant women with low thyroid hormone levels in the early stage of pregnancy. 🏆



The Art of Nudging



Parents and teachers should not consider disciplining as a method of curtailing freedom or making a child blindly obey but it is a strategy to make them responsible for life



Dr Arun B Nair

Psychiatrist, Govt Medical College,
Trivandrum



he term disciplining is understood by children as a sword to curtail their freedom and parents perceive disciplining as a process by which they can enforce their restrictions on children, regulate their behaviour so that they become more obedient. Is this what is disciplining? An answer is a firm 'No.' Disciplining is not just curtailing the

freedom of the children or restricting their mobility or making them more obedient.

Disciplining is a long-term process by which a person is made more responsible to take care of his day to day activities in life. The concept of disciplining has to be introduced to children atleast by the end of childhood or beginning of adolescence – the age group between 10-19 as defined the World Health Organisation (WHO). It should be introduced in such a manner as not intended to restrict the freedom of children but as something which is meant for the safety and security of children. It can be given as a real example. On a holiday you are going to a distant place with a few of your friends to play. The child is not mentioning

to the parents where he is going and with home he is going. On the way to the destination, God forbid, you met with an accident. Nobody knows where you are, where you have gone and what has happened. Even after it is time for you to return in the evening, you don't return. Your parents have no idea where to come in search of you. They are absolutely in the dark. Instead, if you had mentioned you are going with friends and the places you are planning to go, parents can search or connect with your friends' parents in case you don't return in time. Even if they are clueless, the parents have an idea where to search you in times of such crisis. The concept of discipline should not be taught with notes or lectures or advising but by role modelling. The parents have to set an example for the child.

Parents have to inform the approximate time in which they may return from office. In case of an emergency, they should call home and inform they may be late by an hour or so. If parent has the habit of informing the family members of where they are going, with whom they are going and when they may return, they become role models for the child.

Responsibilities

Another purpose of disciplining is for the child to understand the responsibilities and become adequately empowered to face them in different situations. This can be started at the age of 5 by giving certain responsibilities at home such as arranging glasses in the table during dinner time. When it is done regularly by the child, such behaviour should be reinforced with appreciation before others. Gradually more such responsibilities may be given and every month newer tasks can be assigned appropriate to the age of the child. When the child responds negatively by not undertaking responsibility, the parents can punish to reduce the frequency of undesirable behaviour.

Strategies

Positive reinforcements are a method of increasing the frequency of desirable

behaviour by appreciation and rewards. There are three kinds of rewards you can give a child- the material, emotional and the social reward. A material reward is a gift for taking up a responsibility but ideally it is not good to give reward for every small activity. Instead parents can prepare a star charting. There should be five tasks a child should do on waking up and before going to bed. This includes the time spent on studies and household work etc. If the child does all these without prompting from parents, a star rating can be provided in the chart at the end of the day. When the child earns 5 stars for five days continuously, he or she can be rewarded by taking out to destination of his choice or buying him something he likes. The child develops a habit of anticipating a reward on a long-term basis for demonstrating positive behaviour.

Emotional Reward

The second type of reward is the emotional reward. Parents can display affection when the child is seen to be responsible. You may kiss, hug and tell the child how much he or she means to you. Never give a blanket praise for the child by telling him or her that you are the best. Specify the tasks for which the parent is appreciating the child. In social rewarding, you appreciate the child in front of others for a task or set of tasks done well at home may be in front of neighbours or relatives. Social and emotional rewards should be given more than material rewards which should be done only on long term basis based on star-charting.

Punishment

Negative reinforcement is a method by which the parent withdraws a negative stimulus on the basis of a positive behaviour. For eg, the child is studying in 10th standard and everyday the father gives a motivational speech in the evening about how he used to tackle poverty and study well during his younger days. It is the most irritating experience for the child. But the next day the father is told that the boy has studied continuously for three hours without prompting. On

learning about this from the mother, the father may tell the child to relax or play. This gives a positive message to the child that if he studies, he can get rid of the motivational speech of father.

Punishment is the method of reducing the incidence of undesirable behaviour. There is both active and passive punishment. Passive punishment is withdrawal of a privilege consequent to an undesirable behaviour. If the child had agreed to study for two hours and then play



mobile games or watch TV but he refuses to study one day. In such cases the privilege of watching TV or playing with mobile should be withdrawn.

The final step is active punishment- scolding, criticising and beating. However, the Child Protection Laws state that corporal punishment should be avoided. Parents and teachers should refrain from beating children. If ever it is resorted to it should be done for a specific reason and not a blanket statement on his character or behaviour such as 'You are the worst child in the world.' If the above strategies are followed from a young age, the purpose of disciplining which is to make the child responsible can be fulfilled. Disciplining is to empower the child to take care of his life. 


PHYSICS

Black Hole Hunters



The Nobel Prize for Physics was shared by three scientists - one half awarded to Roger Penrose, University of Oxford for the discovery that black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity and the other half jointly by Reinhard Genzel, Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics, Garching, Germany and University of California and Andrea Ghez, University of California for their finding that extremely heavy object governs the orbit of stars at the centre of our galaxy. In January 1965, 10 years after the death of Einstein, Roger Penrose proved that black holes can really form and described them in detail. Using the world's largest telescopes, Genzel and Ghez developed methods to see through the huge clouds of interstellar gas and dust to the centre of the Milky Way. Their pioneering work has given us the most convincing evidence yet of a super massive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way.



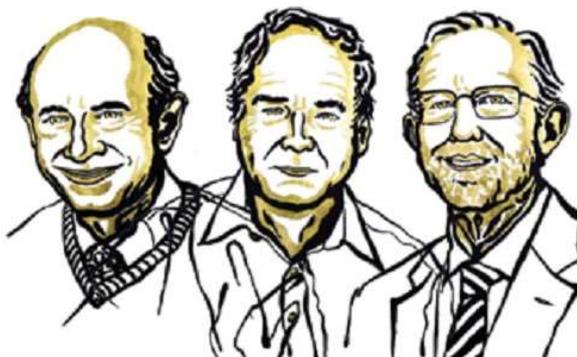
CHEMISTRY


Makers of Genetic Scissor

Emmanuelle Charpentier, Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens, Germany and Jennifer A. Doudna, University of California, USA were awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for their discovery of CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors, one of the sharpest tools of gene technology. It is possible for researchers to change the DNA of animals, plants and microorganisms with extremely high precision. It has contributed to cancer therapies and may pave the way for curing inherited diseases. Charpentier's studies of *Streptococcus pyogenes* lead to the unexpected discovery. She discovered tracrRNA the part of bacteria's ancient immune system, CRISPR/Cas, that disarms viruses by cleaving their DNA. She published her discovery in 2011. The same year, she teamed up with Jennifer Doudna, an experienced biochemist with vast knowledge of RNA and recreated the bacteria's genetic scissors in a test tube and simplifying the scissors' molecular components so they were easier to use.


MEDICINE

A Viral Discovery



The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was jointly awarded to Harvey J. Alter, Michael Houghton and Charles M. Rice for their discovery of Hepatitis C virus. The Swedish Academy of Sciences noted that the scientists made seminal discoveries that led to the identification of a novel virus. After the discovery of Hepatitis A and B virus, majority of blood-borne viruses remained unexplained. The new discovery revealed the remaining cases of chronic hepatitis and made possible blood tests and medicines that save millions of lives. In the 1970's significant number of those receiving blood transfusions developed chronic hepatitis due to an unknown infectious agent. Harvey J observed the phenomenon and discovered a distinct form of chronic viral hepatitis. Michael Houghton and team undertook the arduous task of isolating the genetic sequence of the virus. Through genetic engineering, Charles M Rice generated an RNA variant of Hepatitis C virus that included the newly defined region of the viral genome and was devoid of the inactivating genetic variations.





LITERATURE

The Triumph of Achilles

Loise Glück was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal. She has published 12 collections of poetry and essays on poetry. Among the themes dominant in her works are childhood and family life, the close relationship with parents and siblings. In her works, the self listens for what is left of its dreams and delusions, and nobody can be harder than she is in confronting the illusions of the self. She found growing acceptance in USA and abroad after publishing the collections *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985) and *Ararat* (1990). The topic of family life, austere intelligence and a refined sense of composition can be seen in *Ararat*. Glück has also pointed out that in these poems she realized how to employ ordinary diction in her poetry.



ECONOMICS

Art of Auction



The Nobel Prize in Economics was jointly awarded to Paul R. Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson both of Stanford University for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auctions formats. They developed auction formats for goods such as minerals and radio frequencies that are considered difficult. They have a common value but can't be ascertained beforehand. Wilson showed why rational bidders tend to place bids below their own best estimate of the common value: they are worried about the winner's curse – that is, about paying too much and losing out. Paul Milgrom formulated a more general theory of auctions that not only allows common values, but also private values that vary from bidder to bidder. He analysed the bidding strategies in a number of well-known auction formats, demonstrating that a format will give the seller higher expected revenue when bidders learn more about each other's estimated values during bidding.



PEACE

Combating Hunger for Peace



The Nobel Peace Prize went to World Food Programme (WFP), the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security. The WFP plays a key role in multilateral cooperation on making food security an instrument of peace, and has made a strong contribution towards mobilising UN Member States to combat the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict. The organisation contributes daily to advancing the fraternity of nations referred to in Alfred Nobel's will. As the UN's largest specialised agency, the WFP is a modern version of the peace congresses that the Nobel Peace Prize is intended to promote.

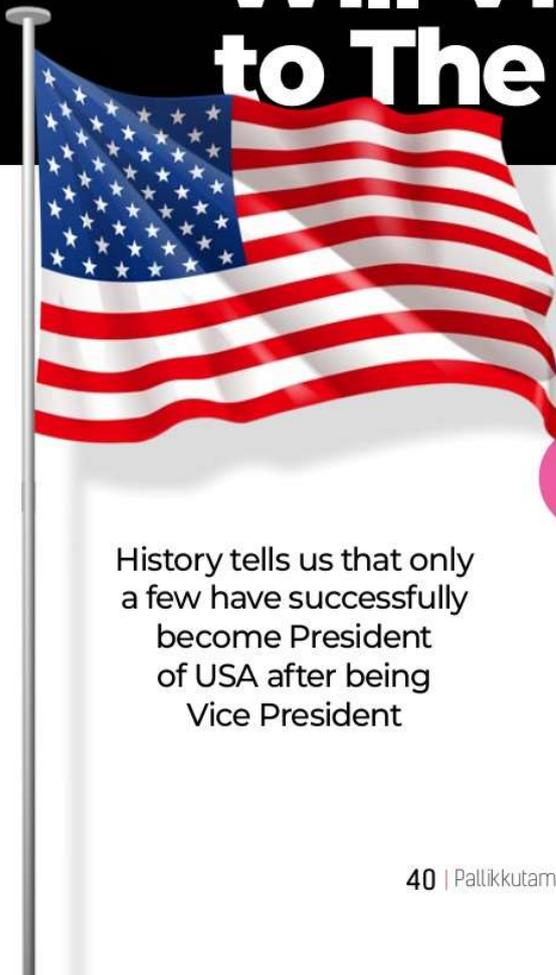




EXPERT COUNSEL



Will Vice Make it to The President



History tells us that only a few have successfully become President of USA after being Vice President



Dr K N Raghavan

Chairman and Executive Director of Rubber Board



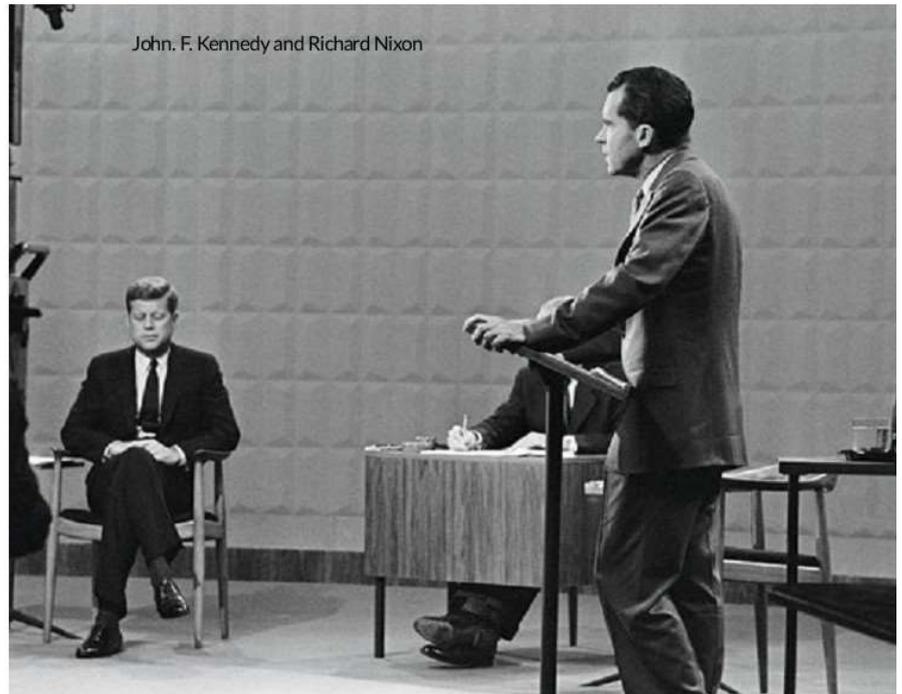
ebate in front of a nation-wide television coverage between candidates contesting for the post of President is a unique feature of United States of America (USA). This practice which commenced in 1960 between the two young contenders, John. F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, has become an integral part of the election roadmap and is watched round the globe by observers of international politics. Convention has it that there are three debates between the aspirants for White House and one between Vice President hopefuls.

The first debate between Donald Trump, the incumbent President, and Joe Biden, the chal-

lenger from Democratic Party, held on 29 September 2020, turned out to be a public relations disaster. These two senior citizens, both well into their eighth decade of life on planet earth, squabbled like a bunch of school boys in front of a global television audience. In his characteristic aggressive, no holds barred style, Trump threw to the winds all norms and semblance of gentlemanly conduct by repeatedly interrupting his opponent. At one stage, these inferences by Trump so irritated Biden that he asked the President to “shut up”!

Dignified Affair

In contrast to this, the debate between Mike Pence, the sitting Vice President and Kamala Harris, the running mate of Biden, was a much more civilised and dignified affair. Both candidates responded to the questions, sparred on a wide range of topics ranging from Corona pandemic to international trade to violence against the minorities. Though the matters discussed were contentious and neither of them yielded an inch from their professed stances, they ensured that there were no personal attacks and the comments did not descend to the level of nasty and acerbic at any stage.



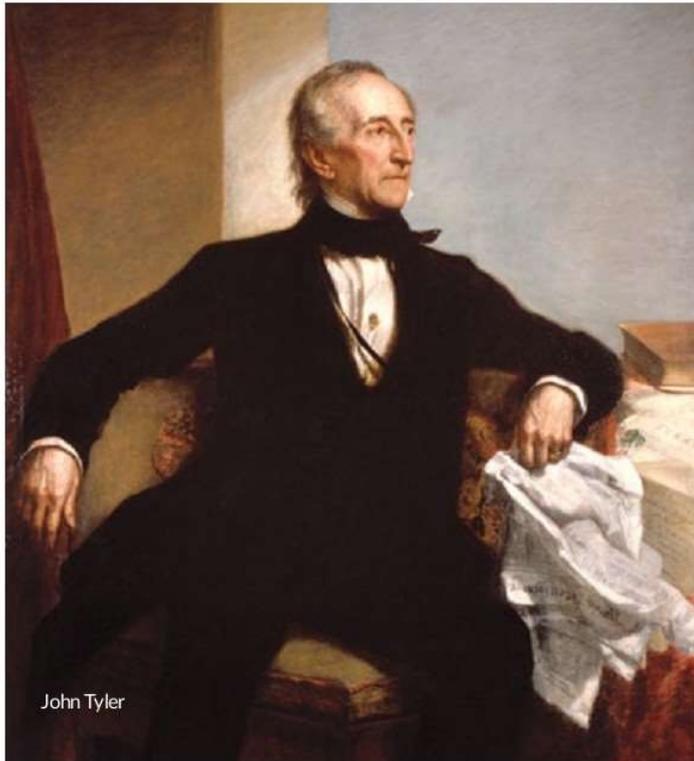
This election has brought an added focus on the candidates for the post of Vice President, perhaps on account of the advanced age of the two main opponents for the top post. The fact that Kamala Harris is black woman with

Indian roots has added more zest and visibility to this contest taking place on the sidelines of the main one. The selection of the running mate is prerogative of the Presidential candidate and he normally makes his choice based on a strategy to influence certain sections of voters. Thus, in 1960, Kennedy chose Lyndon Johnson as his partner in Democratic ticket with an eye on winning the southern states, especially Texas, from where the latter hailed. Similarly, Kamala Harris won the nod from Biden to send a message to the black and latino community that interest of these minorities would be safe in his regime.

VP to President

History tells us that only very few incumbents moved to the White House during their term as Vice Presidents. From 1776 onwards, only nine out of the 48 Vice Presidents have ascended to the post of President, while serv-



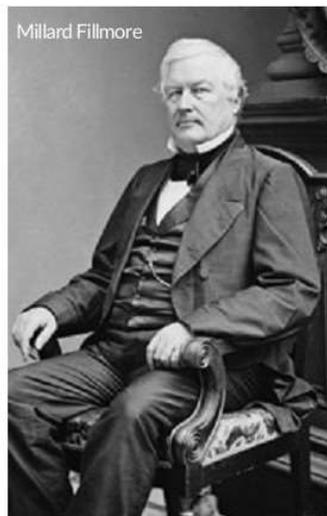


John Tyler

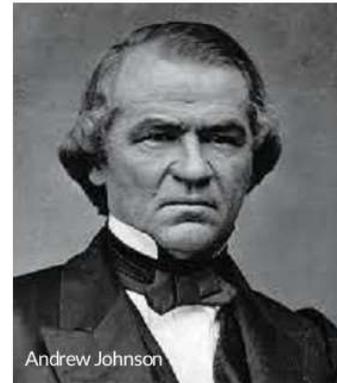
ing as the deputy. The first amongst them, John Tyler was sworn in as President in April 1841, within a month after taking office as Vice President as the incumbent President William Henry Harrison succumbed to pneumonia. Since this was the first time that a serving President was dying, there was considerable confusion as to how the situation was to be tackled. Cabinet met and initially decided that Tyler could only function as “Vice President acting President”. However, Tyler acted decisively and got himself sworn in as President without any delay, thus laying the foundation for a strong precedent, which has ensured smooth transition ever since. Tyler chose not to stand for election in 1844, thus becoming the first person to hold office of President of USA without contesting for it even once.

Millard Fillmore took office as Vice President in March 1849 under

President Zachary Taylor of Whig Party. After spending almost a year without any role in administration of the nation, he suddenly found himself



Millard Fillmore

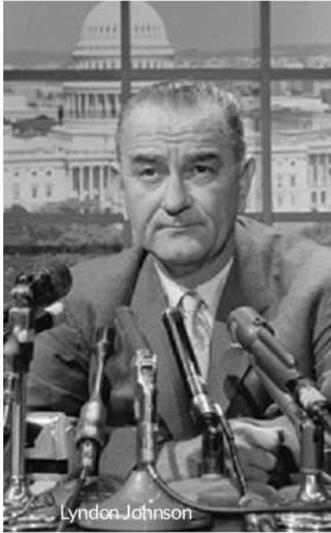


Andrew Johnson

holding the top office when Taylor passed away suddenly, following an attack of acute gastritis. Having been marginalised by the members of his predecessor’s cabinet, Fillmore was not keen on retaining them. Thus, he remains the only President who, after rising to this post on account of death of his predecessor, chose not to retain the cabinet of the latter. He could not win the Whig nomination for contesting the 1852 Presidential polls. He contested the 1856 elections as a candidate of a newly formed American Party but could finish only third at the hustings.

Andrew Johnson was sworn in as President in April 1865 when Abraham Lincoln was shot dead by an assassin. He has gone down in history as the first President to be impeached by House of Representatives, which occurred over the sacking of his Secretary of State. He narrowly escaped conviction in Senate, by a single vote, and remained in office till the end of his term. Chester Arthur became President in September 1881 when the incumbent James Garfield succumbed to the bullets fired on him 11 weeks ago. He had a rather colourless term in office and did not attempt to seek the Republican Party ticket in 1884.

In September 2001, Theodore Roosevelt became the youngest President of USA at the age of 42, when he was forced to take this office following the



assassination of William McKinley. He won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1906 for his efforts to bring peace after the war between Russia and Japan, thus becoming the first President to win this coveted award. He won the election for a full term in 1904 and served as President till 1909. Calvin Coolidge was serving as Vice President under Warren Harding when the latter passed away in August 1923, catapulting the former to the top office of USA. He won the next election which took place one year later and served out a full term before announcing his retirement.

Harry Truman was the third Vice President to serve in this office during the 12 year long tenure of Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) as President. When FDR passed away April 1945, Truman took office and presided over the dropping of atom bombs and the closure of World War II. He was not expected to win the elections in 1948, but surprised one and all by coming from behind to snatch a surprise win. The 22nd amendment of US Constitution, which forbade a person from contesting for a third term or a second term after serving more than two years of the term of a previously elect-



ed President, ensured that he could not contest the 1952 elections.

Lyndon Johnson was seen as a dour and serious deputy to the glamorous and charismatic John F. Kennedy. When Kennedy fell to assassin's bullets in Dallas in November 1963, Johnson was sworn in as President. He capitalised on the nation wide sympathy and shock to win a landslide win in the elections that followed less than a year later. However, he would be more remembered as the President who intensified involvement of USA in Vietnam leading to huge loss of lives and wanton destruction in that country.

Gerald Ford remains the only Vice President to make it on account of resignation of a President, which happened when Richard Nixon put inches papers in August 1974. Incidentally Ford was not the running mate of Nixon during the 1972 elections, but was drafted into this post when Spiro Agnew resigned as Vice President in the wake of Watergate scandal. He was serving as Minority Leader in the House of Representatives when he was chosen by Nixon to become his deputy. He invoked his powers for issuing "Presidential pardon" to Nixon, thus saving the latter from the ignominy of facing a jail term. Though



he won the Republican Party nomination for the 1976 Presidential election, he lost the polls to Jimmy Carter.

Though, in theory, Vice Presidents are just a "heart beat away from Presidency" less than one fifth of them ascended to the top post on account of demise or resignation of the President. It has been almost five decades since a serving Vice President stepped into the Oval Office as the President of USA. This is a record that citizens of USA expect their leaders to maintain and improve as they vote to elect the President and do not expect to be governed by his running mate 



The elderly who suffer from loneliness, health issues, helplessness, restrictions on movement need more support in the times of pandemic. Children and youth can provide the much needed help for them to tide over the crisis

“The Old can Go Through Every Plague”



Seniors are the most vulnerable section of the population and are said to succumb early to the infection. The elderly, who ironically are susceptible to both the infection and the lockdown imposed to control it. Many older adults follow strict precautions to protect themselves from the corona virus. The ‘new normal’—for those 65 and older—is a very different and fearful social order. Months into the corona virus pandemic, older adults are having a hard time envisioning their ‘new normal.’



Dr Jose Cletus Plackal

Clinical Psychologist, Jeevas Kendram,
Jeevas Kendra, Kerala

India has about 140 million over 60 years of age. Covid-19 and the effort to prevent its spread pose unique challenges for this category of the population. Seventy percent of older people live in rural areas where health services are limited. In addition, the availability of geriatric services in the country is scarce. However, it is not just the direct effects of the virus that increase morbidity and mortality among the old. The biopsychosocial implications of the pandemic need careful and serious attention.

Here are some sample responses of a group of seniors discussing their plight in the face of Covid 19: “I envision conditions for seniors being restrictive until we have a vaccine,” Thomas said. “That makes me angry because I don’t have that many years left. And I would like to do the things I want to do,” retorted Moses. “All we see are statistics that lump all of us together, the healthy with those that have multiple issues,” complained Mrs. Sumathy. “This pandemic has given me a greater appreciation of how precious family and friends are,” said Mrs. Mariam. “I think it will cause older people to examine their lives and their purpose a little more carefully”, said Dr. Mathews. And he continued, “We’re all having a traumatic experience—an experience of collective trauma. As the future unfolds, the main thing is self-care and compassion. That’s the way forward for all of us.”



Covid Blues

- The prime source of such blues comes from the knowledge that we are the most vulnerable segment of the population, the ones with the 20 percent and plus mortality rate. We cannot take the pandemic lightly. We don’t feel invulnerable; we don’t party on. And we get that our very presence, our continued existence into ripe old age, as we walk among you, is a drag on the economy. Without us, the young and the healthy could be left to their own devices, getting the virus, sure, transmitting the virus, no doubt, but many asymptomatic and if sick, eventually recovering at least most of their health. The narrative we hear is that the economy would bounce back if only the productive—that’s not you, senior citizen—didn’t have to shut down to protect those vulnerable old people.
- The senior version of Covid Blues also comes from our

acute awareness of the shortness and hence, the preciousness of time. We don’t live under the illusion that we have endless amounts of it. In low moments we wonder if we will ever hug our grandchildren again. The mundane pieces of ‘normal’ life in the Before Times are gone—going to the movies, browsing in a crowded store, wandering through a museum etc. The days and weeks and months lost



to Covid isolation subtract from our dwindling stock of days.

- The Stigma of Ageism- Often, the elderly are a marginalized population. Even though traditionally humans are taught to respect and take care of the older generation, the innate fear of “aging,” “losing vitality,” and death have made ‘ageism’ a prevalent ‘social evil.’ The WHO defines ageism as “the stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination against people based on their age.” Society equates aging with loss of ‘charm and beauty’ of the youth and hence has given the risk to various forms of old-age abuse. Such stigma and abuse can flare up at times of an outbreak which has an age-specific vulnerability.
- Senior Covid Blues comes with a special dose of helplessness. We see the struggles of our adult children, desperately needing child care,



unable to juggle remote learning with remote work and ending up just feeling remote. Of course, Covid Blues senior style shares with other variations, across all age groups, similar feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, boredom, and loss.

- Existential Issues of 'what after me' and 'what about my family' due to the fear of death are common in older adults. Self-neglect can result from a willful surrender to pandemic situations, misconstruing the risk of infection and overestimating the threat. The other concern in older adults is that of a dignified death, which is threatened during the ongoing lockdown, travel restrictions, and social distancing. Spirituality is an important coping factor for the elderly, and the interruption of religious rituals as a part of last rites for the demised can prevent healthy grieving
- Psychosocial vulnerability, especially at times of lockdown

and quarantine: loneliness, anxiety, and uncertainty can give rise to depressive disorders, insomnia, and chronic stress. Grief and bereavement due to loss or distancing from their loved ones can be significant and chronic. They are also at increased risk for post-traumatic stress syndrome if the stress is prolonged. Alarmingly, suicide risk is also two to three times more in the elderly population and is often underreported.

- *Difficulty in Digital Connectivity:* Due to various reasons such as lack of familiarity, cognitive or sensory deficits, and difficulties in adapting to a the new practice, many senior citizens might not be proficient enough to stay in touch with their loved ones through social networking (WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.) and video-conferencing methods, which are recommended worldwide during the COVID-19 crisis for social connectedness.

Intergenerational Co-operation

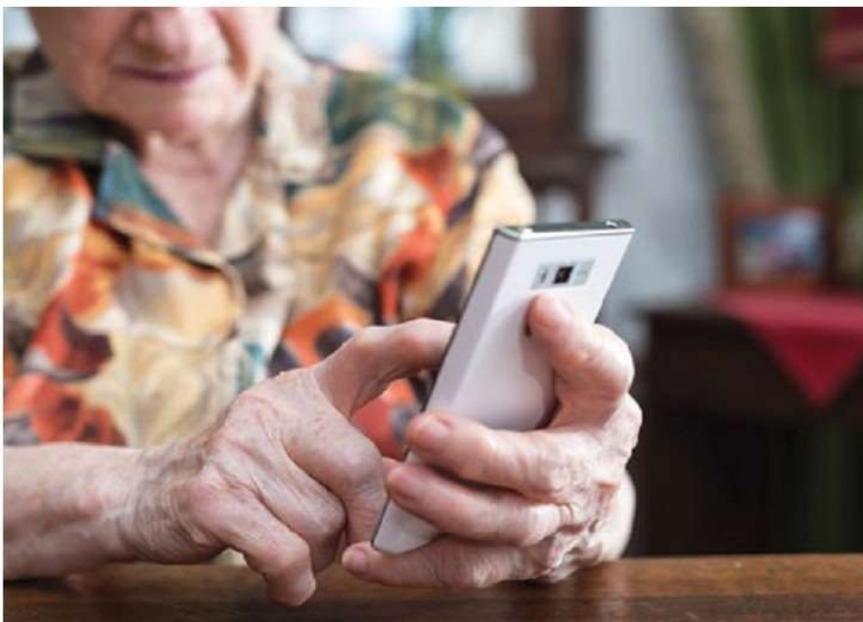
Any meaningful attempts to mitigate the ill-effects of the pandemic affecting our older citizens must be carried out collectively and in a socially inclusive manner. Since at the core of this suffering lies a deep sense of loneliness, isolation, and helplessness, the intervention must reach out to reassure and energize the seniors. What we want to help people understand is, "You're not done yet. You still have the ability to redirect your life, and we are with you through the thick and thin of this pandemic". In fact, one must compliment and acknowledge the role played by the residents and neighbours in ensuring that the Communities remain socially engaged while maintaining the distancing necessary under the circumstances. 'Ensure healthy physical distancing, enhancing healthy social connectivity, is the watchword.

Younger family members and neighbours can help reduce stress for the elderly during this time in many ways:

- Run errands for them (eg. grocery shopping, bank work, etc) thereby reducing their exposure to the virus
- Check up on them regularly through phone or skype call, a no-contact visit, or a WhatsApp message
- Constantly reiterate safety measures needed to fight Covid-19
- Prepare healthy, cooked food for those who are sick or unable to fend for themselves
- Discuss contingency and emergency response plans, if the elderly loved one stays alone
- Engage them in fun games, light exercises and activities at home - either in person or through social media platforms.

Healthy, Innovative Practices

In order to survive the ill-effects of the pandemic, we need to promote innova-





tive and creative practices that enhance connectivity and solidarity. Zoom Family Gatherings on Sundays is gaining momentum. These family get-togethers provide a sense of oneness and solidarity, and the warmth it engenders promotes health among the seniors. These global and intergenerational meetings are extra nourishing and reassuring to our elders.

TribeCa Care, a Senior Community care service, launched three innovative initiatives for their residents. The co-founders (Sen & Dutta) explained their motivation in creating these new services. They observed the problems the seniors were facing with healthcare; difficulty in purchasing medicine, ordering blood tests at home, attending doctor consultations, non-critical surgeries, etc. And also they noticed problems in everyday life such as difficulty in purchasing groceries, arranging cooked food or even visiting ATMs. With this aim in mind, the duo launched three new initiatives for their residents - “Dare to Care” - a service for senior citizens struggling to get essential services, such as groceries and medicines, delivered home; “Talk to Me” -- a service for all seniors needing doctor advice on non-critical illnesses or counseling support over phone and “Happy at Home”- free access to recreational

activities through their WhatsApp groups and Zoom sessions (e.g. crosswords, sudoku, book reading, quizzes etc) - to combat loneliness.

Health App

Healthcare remains a primary concern of the seniors who live alone and their loved ones, especially if they live far away. In order to help combat this vital issue, many communities and individuals are making use of the benefits of the health App, Dozee. This is a contact-free health monitoring device to track the health of their residents and flag off any deterioration in advance. The device is a thin sensor sheet that goes below the mattress and tracks heartbeat, respiration, sleep, and stress-recovery. Children living away from their elders can also remotely monitor their health on the App.

Whether it's a parent, a grandparent, a relative, a friend, or even we ourselves, the new challenges and changes that come with aging require our flexibility, openness to change, and acceptance of a new way of life. Instead of focusing on the negatives we may associate with our senior years and long-term care (any decline in health, physical mobility, cognitive ability, and social isolation), we need to take a non-

judgmental attitude to the natural changes our bodies go through and focus on what we can do during our later years. Indeed, the ability to stay in one's home in our older years instead of a nursing home is a positive and empowering concept and, in this day and age, it is becoming more and more of a preferred and achievable lifestyle choice.

Technology advances, home modifications, myriad care giving services, and the involvement and engagement of our family members make aging at home a realistic goal for many. The seniors might be vulnerable and frail due to age, but they are not weak. To quote Albert Camus, “The old can go through every plague” from his classical, *La Peste* (The Plague), the resilience of the elderly can be amazing, if adequately cared for and the young can borrow from their strengths. How one treats their seniors during a disaster, shapes what treatment they receive in future crises. COVID-19 delivers yet another opportunity for the same. A robust approach is highly essential that requires an integrated emergency preparedness by addressing geriatric care, during and post pandemic era. 



Mindfulness in the Museum

Museums can provide a range of experiences for children of all age groups and instill a fascination about history, cultures, science, arts and even virtual museums can provide experiential learning



Sunila Athley

Principal Amity International School,
Vasundhara



Would today's millennial child like to visit a museum on a holiday or even on a school day? We can all try our luck! In all probability, they'll make excuse, most of the time. Which child would want to trade places of trudging along winding staircases and long corridors looking at old dusty stuff of a bygone age? It might indeed be boring, tiring and uninteresting for the young minds who would probably prefer playing their favourite video games. A part of you wonders if the

kids are actually right. Are museums just dusty old places? No matter how genuinely fascinating the artefacts and exhibits are, they don't generate a connection with the young minds. Big, beautiful, impressive museums housed in grandiose buildings with manicured lawns and gardens just don't attract children any more.

I once asked my class why they hated going to museums. The reasons they put forth, quite honestly and in

confidence was an eye opener. “We go there because we are told to do so, we’d be happier doing something else, the atmosphere is funereal, dark and dingy, the displays are useless and not in order, we’ve no idea what we’re looking at, it’s all on the Internet anyway, the teacher would mark us absent if we didn’t participate in the educational excursion…… the reasons were varied and come to think of it, quite true.”

Cultural Centres

A museum is a temple of the Muses. Yes indeed! But, they need to come out from being mere storehouses for collections, preservation and display. They have to be more than just cultural centres for the community. A child of today whose many an hour is spent on and filled with the reality of a virtual world, how can we make our museums ‘kid friendly’? Since the early twentieth century there has



been an increasing acknowledgement on the importance of the educational function of museums.

Way back in 1952, UNESCO staged a seminar in Brooklyn, USA on its role and effectiveness. A beginning was made way back to harness its educational potential.

We all agree that museum visits can provide memorable, immersive learning experiences that ignite imagination. They offer dynamic opportunities to expose children to experiences and explore new cultures, customs, heritage, people, historical periods in a rich educational environment. Children can take ownership of their own learning and spark their curiosities.

Sensory Experiences

Art gives a truly wholesome experience, a chance to connect the present with the past, and the future.

Museums can provide that space for reflection, experimentation, inspiration, interpretation, creativity and enjoyment. It can also give a broader understanding of time and space. Hence, it becomes imperative to bring in museums into our school curriculum in a way that is enjoyable and meaningful to our students. They need to be powerhouses and powerful instruments of education rather than merely being houses of display of

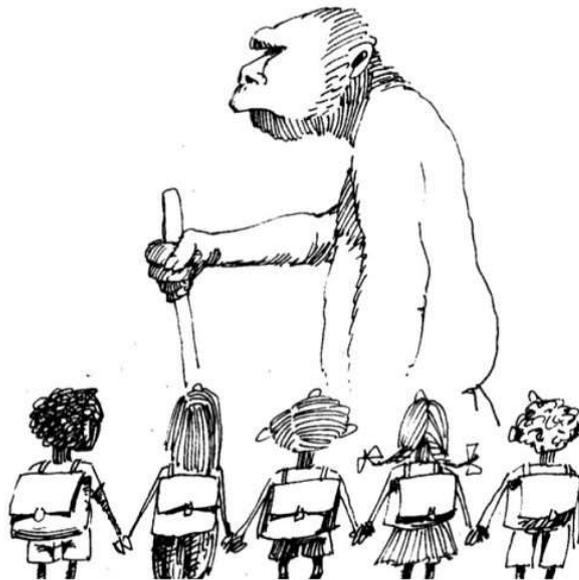




valuable objects. Children should relate to them with joy and eagerness, rather than awe and wonder. They should have the same spring in their step and twinkle in their eye as they do when visiting Disneyland or a Zoo or even the circus. Visits to museums with the family or classmates should be looked forward to as exciting trips. Even if the exhibits don't attract them, they could be allowed to play around in the premises. They can soak in the ambience and partake in the contextual mapping inadvertently. Such a visit represents a collection of experiences. Any information obtained is likely to include social related, attitudes related, cognitive related and sensory related associations which are embedded in memory. Any recollection of any facet of such a visit can facilitate the recall of the entire experience.

The Local Flavour

In India, we can conceptualise small local museums which are easily accessible. Tedious long distance travel can be avoided. Such museums can highlight local history, folklore, art and crafts, flora and fauna,



mythology – concepts that children identify and are familiar with. Many years ago, I was fascinated seeing one such unique museum in Slovenia dedicated to the craft of handmade laces. It came across as unusual, because it recognises a 300 year old tradition of bobbin lace-making, indigenous to the small mercury mining town of Idrija . For decades, people have been taking pride in

their local skill -- intricately woven delicate laces that were a part of royal European households for centuries. Every year, in June, workshops, demos, competitions are held to promote the town's lace making tradition and legacy.

We can have such a museum in Kashmir that is dedicated to the colourful kashida and Pashmina embroidery – the delicate thread work that also reflects the life, customs, flora and fauna of the local landscape. Or, we can also have a mini museum housed in tribal huts, Dhokra non-ferrous metal, lost wax figurines .The primitive simplicity and enchanting folk motifs using eco-friendly materials like beeswax, sand and husk would connect children to the tribal craftsmen of Central India who have kept alive a 4000 year old indigenous casting technique.

Our country has a rich tradition of art and artisans, craft and craftsmen, folklores and heritage in every corner. Children learn best through personal exploration and hands on experiences, so curated museum visits by schools will foster partnerships and life-long learning expeditions.





They can ask questions, make observations, reflect on experiences and draw their own conclusions. Senior children and teachers can also work as part time guides during weekends. This will give them a sense of belonging to their local heritage, history and culture.

Virtual Tours

Museum learning brings a true understanding of subjects rather than asking them to memorise facts.

Kids can be challenged to recreate paintings, sculptures and artefacts through creative role plays and make believe imitations using their bodies and simple props. They'll have fun contorting themselves, clicking each other's pictures and posting it on an e-album. Another fun activity could be giving each child 3-4 photos or pictures post cards before the museum entry and letting them hunt for the displays on their own. Let them take charge of



their own learning, almost like a treasure hunt. Even textbooks can have in small boxes with names and locations and e-links of museums pertaining to a certain theme or topic. Children can visit them when they go to the place during vacation or they can even take a virtual tour. For example, while studying Einstein's theories in Physics, a link to a virtual tour of a museum in Bern, Switzerland can be

added. This museum not only offers an account of his genius and ground breaking discoveries, but illustrates the history of the time, the horrors of the Holocaust and an e-tour of the exhibition space which houses 550 original objects and replicas, films, photographs and animations -- a tribute indeed to the man behind the genius.

This mode of experiential learning will also pave the way for a multidisciplinary approach to concepts. The activities thus conceptualised can effectively complement formal education. Being flexible, it satisfies the needs of both individuals and collectivities and takes into account local variations of culture, economy and society. Thus, learning in and learning through museums can strengthen the pedagogic role of non-formal education spaces. 🏰



How to be a Level 5 leader?



Passion, people skills, learning from mistakes and humility are some of the important skills required for Gen-Next leaders



Dr. Manu Melwin Joy

Asst Professor, School of Management Studies, CUSAT



What makes leaders unique? Is it their audacity? Their business intelligence? Their expert knowledge? Their capacity to organize? Truly great leaders have a specific combination of skills. But they also own something else; certain qualities which are harder to define. If you're in a leadership role, then you've likely pondered how you can push yourself to the 'next level,' going

from good to great leadership. The idea of Level 5 Leadership was shaped by business consultant, Jim Collins. He discussed about it in a popular Harvard Business Review article published in the year and shared his research in his best-selling book, Good to Great.

The thought of Level 5 leadership is exceptional because it is based on first-hand evidence. Over a five-year period, Collins piloted a research project to determine what differentiated the so-called 'good' firms from 'great' ones. According to Collins, great enterprises were those that made at least three amazing leaps in stock returns during a time span of over one-and-a-half decades. By matching data from more than 1,436 establishments, he found that only 11 concerns fit these criteria. These 11 firms were all spearheaded by what Collins called 'Level 5 Leaders.'

Jim Collins categorized leaders into five levels.

Level 1 leader is an extremely skilled individual. He plays a crucial role in the success of his business through his own capacity, knowledge, skills, and exceptional work habits.

A Level 2 leader is a perfect team player. He is very adept at working with his team members and guarantees that his team meets its allotted goals, and fulfils the core objective.

A Level 3 leader is a proficient manager. He is capable of organizing manpower and resources towards achieving key goals of the organization.

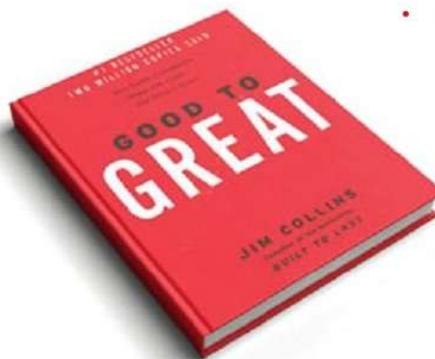
A Level 4 leader is an effective leader who sets high level performance standards. He is incredible at inspiring his workforce and leading them towards achieving his vision for the company.

A Level 5 leader alters the firm into a great institution. He exemplifies personal humility and professional will.

Becoming Level 5 Leader

It takes a lot of time and determination to evolve as a Level 5 Leader. But the good news is that it can be done, particularly if you are passionate about trying. Again, it's key to comprehend that you don't have to grow through each level in turn in order to reach Level 5. But you do need the competences identified in each level in order to accomplish Level 5 status. Here are some approaches that will help you build the characteristics of a Level 5 Leader:

- **Lead With Passion** – Steve Jobs was a master at both leading with passion and empowering and inspiring his staff to complete tasks on their own. He became a role model for his employees by displaying qualities he wished to see them exhibit, like his particular attention to detail.



Every good organization has a mission statement. But every great organization has a labour force built up by people who are aware about that mission statement by heart and use their every working hour to drive it ahead. By continuing as a vital part of Apple from beginning to end, frequently dropping in to check up on his employees and chipping in with innovative concepts, Jobs ensured that mission statement will permeate across the entire workforce.

- **Find the Right People** - Level 5 Leaders are heavily dependent on the people around them. They spend time finding the right people, and helping them reach their full potential. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, is well known for his hiring practices. In the early days of Amazon, Bezos was infamous for making interviews very tough for the candidates and examining every detail of their background. He had a vision and was looking for individuals who would go on to make Amazon what it is today. One of the favourite mottos of Bezos was that every time Amazon hires an individual, he or she should raise the bar for the next hire so that the general talent pool was always getting better.
- **Learning from Mistakes** - Looking at Microsoft's dominating presence in the market, one wonders how it managed to outlive the many skittering competitors that arose in the periphery through the years. This became a reality

Level 5 Leadership



only because Microsoft has always stressed learning from mistakes. Gates had to deal with with anti-trust lawsuit claiming that Microsoft was a monopoly that led to a two decade long legal battle. Likewise, a lot of Microsoft's products have been a point of

dispute for its many users, and some of them failed dismally in the highly competitive market. But Gates has always been obstinate about learning from his failures and, sure enough, succeeded to come up with a billion-dollar idea to resolve it each time.

- Develop Humility** - Level 5 Leaders are down to earth individuals. They understand why humility is significant, and comprehend – at a profound, emotional level – why arrogance is so damaging. Warren Buffett lives a modest lifestyle despite his net worth of around RS 60, 430 crores. Despite that Buffett lives in the same Omaha house since 1958 that he originally bought for \$31,500. The house is a simple five-bedroom and 2 bathroom house Buffett love using his Nokia flip phone, a device that was outdated for most at the time. In an interview



with Forbes, Buffett shared that whenever he flies, he forgoes the comforts of first class to sit in a crate alongside the luggage and pets underneath the plane. The 90-year-old investor elucidated that his choice to move in the small cargo was not about saving money—he's absolutely happy with the simple things in life.

Even though reaching Level 5 leadership is really challenging, it is not without a dividend. People who accomplish Level 5 leadership in their careers are rewarded with remarkable responsibility, respect and perhaps best of all, a legacy of astonishing influence on their organizations. 



P S Antony

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NRI Quota is not Sacrosanct



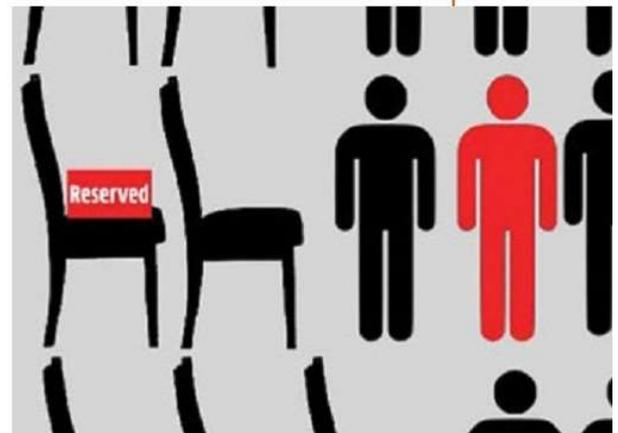
In a recent ruling, Supreme Court has held that the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Quota for admission to private medical colleges is neither sacrosanct or inviolable in terms of existence in any given year, or its extent and the same can be done away with it by the State Regulating Authority by giving reasonable notice of such a decision to enable those aspiring to such seats to choose elsewhere, having regard to the prevailing conditions.

The judgement was rendered in the context of the NEET Post Graduate (PG) Medical & Dental Admission/Counseling Board of Rajasthan excluding the NRI Quota of 15% from the final matrix published dispensing with the original earmarking for NRI candidates. A notification was issued by the Board stating that the seat matrix for the current year would not contain the NRI Quota in the private medical colleges of Rajasthan. The candidates who applied for allotment on NRI seats were to be considered based on their remaining eligibility criteria.

The students argued that having held out to all NRI candidates about the availability of seats, at the penultimate hour, the Board could not have decided unilaterally to withdraw the NRI Quota altogether. The private colleges urged before the Court that the decision not to offer an NRI Quota in medical colleges in Rajasthan was voluntary and consciously taken, given the extraordinary and unusual situation created by the pandemic.

The Supreme Court referred to the T.M.A Pai Foundation case and the verdict in PA Inamdar Vs State of Maharashtra in

2005 and held that there is nothing in PA Inamdar case to say that a 15% NRI Quota is an unqualified and unalterable part of the admission process in PG medical courses. The court noted that the combined effect of the provisions of the Medical Council



of India Act and regulations with respect to admissions and the decisions of the Court is that private colleges and institutions which offer such professional and technical courses can decide whether and to what extent, they wish to offer NRI or management quota subject to judicial precedents and enacted law. The Court concluded that in the present case the decision of the management is perfectly valid and the said decision to abolish the NRI Quota was exclusively within the scope of the private institutions' decision making

In short, NRI Quota is part of the management quota and that it is not mandatory. 🏰



The Desert Pitch

Now almost every country has their own T20 league. The Indian Premier League (IPL) is the largest and best organised of them all. Now all eyes are on Sharjah



K Pradeep

Sports writer and Former Senior Deputy Editor, The Hindu



I'm not a great fan of cricket's Twenty20 (T20) format. I feel that these T20 leagues are not an evaluation of skill, wits, expertise but rather a four hour smash-a-thon. It is simply entertainment where cricket is a medium. It is something more than a one-night stand and less than a holiday romance.

Cricket has evolved over the times from covered pitches that helped standardise playing conditions to some extent, to the one-day game, the World Cup in 1975, Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket (WSC) with coloured clothing,

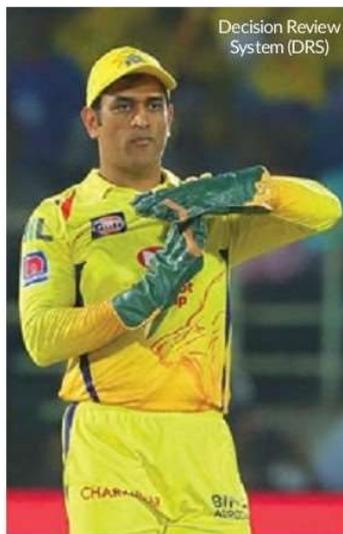
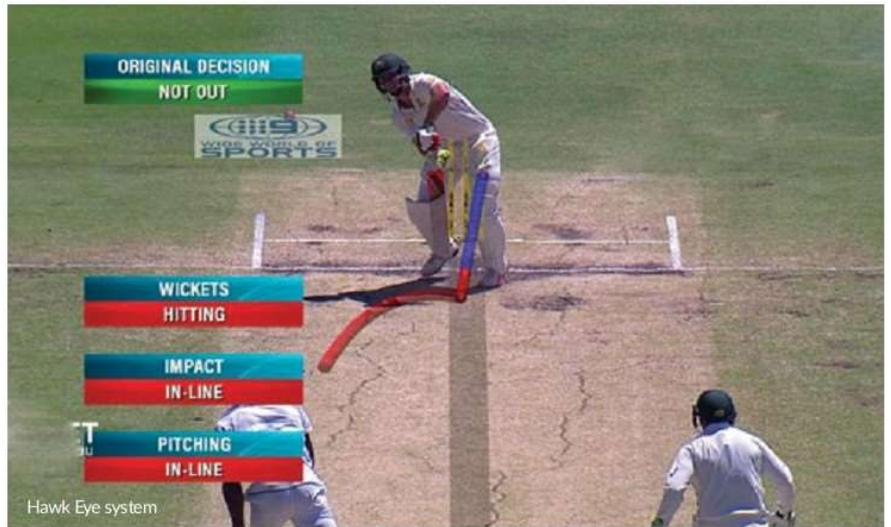
floodlights, white ball, use of effects microphones, on-screen TV graphics grabbed people's interests. The WSC revolutionised TV coverage, brought more money, cricketers turned full-time professionals, placing greater emphasis on fitness and protective helmets for batsmen became the norm.

Newer Technologies

The last decade saw changing technology used in cricket. It started off with ball-tracking technology, the Hawk Eye system was first used as the Decision Review System (DRS) on a trial basis in 2008-09 to refer decisions to a third umpire over LBW decisions, to decide if the ball pitched in line, hit the batsman's leg in line and whether it would have hit the stumps. The Snickometer or 'Snicko' and Hot Spot were integrated to create the latest version of DRS.

And then the T20 came! What began as a desperate move by the England and Wales Cricket Board, has taken over the game. The idea was to attract a younger audience and stem a serious decline in crowd numbers for the longer version. Cricket was altered significantly with fielding restrictions, batting and bowling powerplays, the 'free-hit' for overstepping...it was a departure from 'normal' cricket, with batsmen coming off a bench rather than out of a pavilion, emerging to the sound of loud music and cheerleaders adding to the glitz.

Today, almost every country has their own T20 league. The Indian



Premier League (IPL) is the biggest and best organised of them all started in 2007. This time UAE is hosting it.

Cricket in the desert

Initially, the plan was to host just one exhibition match in Sharjah. Way back in 1981 the now Sharjah Cricket Stadium was a barren piece of land, with a concrete pitch. A benefit match for Pakistan legends Hanif Mohammad Asif Iqbal was planned. Iqbal was assigned the task to get the Indian and Pakistan teams on board in a one-day match featuring Gavaskar's XI and Miandad's XI.

Iqbal contacted Madhav Mantri, former Test cricketer and Gavaskar's



uncle, and pitched this idea. Mantri promised to help. Eventually the match was held and Miandad's XI won. Abdul Rahman Bukhatir, the chief patron of the one-off match handed over cheques worth \$50,000 to Hanif Mohammed, Iqbal and \$20,000 as a token of appreciation to Mantri.

And beneficiary matches became an annual event giving birth to Cricketers Benefit Fund Series (CBFS). In no time, there was a full-fledged stadium in the middle of a desert, one that found a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for hosting the most ODIs in a single venue.

Vengsarkar Deported

In 1982, Indians (Sunil Gavaskar's XI) were to play Pakistanis (Intikhab Alam's XI) as part of the CBFS. It was



Dilip Vengsarkar

a benefit game for veteran cricketers Subhash Gupte, Nazar Mohammed, Intikhab Alam and surprisingly Gavaskar.

Indian cricketers and Bollywood stars landed in Dubai. Cricketers those days were not superstars like today. Immigration officials allowed the film stars to jump the

queue, which upset the cricketers. A young Dilip Vengsarkar protested. The officials took exception to his remarks, refused entry and deported to Mumbai. K R Wadhwaney in Indian Cricket Controversies wrote that Vengsarkar made an observation, which should have been laughed at; probably a joke with a touch of sarcasm. None of his team members stood by him.

Ironically, spinner Dilip Doshi was also on this flight, on a business tour. He was inducted and played in borrowed gear, picked up four wickets, guided his team to victory, and became Man of the Match.

Since that first game, Sharjah turned into a perpetual source of glamour, cash and controversies. Many like Doshi did not approve of it. He wrote in Spin Punch, his autobiography, that organisers laid out fabulous hospitality with lavish gifts thrown in and that senior players should take a call on what to accept and what to turn down.

The annual Sharjah series almost always featured either India or Pakistan or both - understandable, given the country's vast expat population. Memories of some of those matches and memorable moments are etched in the minds of every cricket lover --Javed Miandad's last ball six to seal victory for Pakistan against India in 1986, celebrities in retro shades and sun hats, commentator Henry Blofeld's penchant for spotting dazzling earrings in the crowd, neutral umpires - made it a cricket experience well ahead of its times.

Here's my pick from those desert duels.

Pakistan vs. Sri Lanka (October 1999)

Chasing 197 to win Sri Lanka were in on track at 173-2 off 40 overs. However what followed in the next 45 minutes was evidence of what Pakistan bowlers could do when



Sachin Tendulkar

the ball began to reverse swing. Shoaib Malik and Wasim Akram got rid of Russell Arnold and Sanath Jayasuriya. Abdul Rassaq sliced through the middle order in an exquisite spell of bowling. In a space of 53 deliveries Lanka crashed from 177 for 5 to 196 all out in 49.1 overs with Razzaq accounting for four of the victims, three of them clean bowled. The fast bowler finished with figures of 5 for 31 and picked up the Player of the Match award.

India vs. Australia (1998)

This was the match where Sachin Tendulkar transcended from a cricketer to a demi-god. Those visuals of him hitting Shane Warne to the top of the corrugated roof of the stadium is still fresh in memory. It was the final of the Coca Cola Cup that also featured New Zealand. Aussies set India a target of 273. In an earlier match of this tournament they had set India a total of 285 which India failed to reach despite a stunning 143 by Tendulkar. This time the Master Blaster carved the Aussie bowling to score 134 off 131 balls. When he got out India needed just 25 runs from 33 balls, which were knocked off easily. Tendulkar's 'Desert Storm' is unforgettable.

India vs. Pakistan 1985

India squared up with Pakistan in the first match of the Rothmans Four Nation Cup that included England and Australia. The script went horribly wrong for the Indian batsmen as Imran Khan blasted through the top order leaving India reeling at 34 for 5. A 46-run partnership between Azharuddin and Kapil Dev took India to 125 with Imran finishing with 6 for 14. A Pakistan win was a foregone conclusion especially when they were 35 for 1 at one stage. Spinners Ravi Shastri and Laxman Sivaramakrishnan

reduced Pakistan to 41 for 5. But the match was still Pakistan's as they moved to 85 for 6. What followed was a collapse. Pakistan was bowled out for 87 giving India a memorable 38 run victory. India went on to win the cup beating Australia in the final.

Sharjah has witnessed many thrilling finishes and special performances. Afghanistan squeaking past Canada by one run in 2010, Jayasuriya's 189 against India (2000), Wasim Akram's hat-tricks, Muttiah Muralitharan's 7 for 30 against India (2000), Brian Lara's 153 vs. Pakistan (1993) and 169 vs. Sri Lanka (1995) are some that come to mind.

Bukhatir's Vision

Bukhatir's vision for Sharjah unfortunately was to blend glitz and glamour to cricket. Plenty of celebrities thronged the stands for the matches there. But it wasn't just them in the galleries. Several grainy videos and photographs will show Dawood Ibrahim, India's most wanted terrorist, seen lapping up the fun for almost every game. There were stories then of him seen in the Indian dressing room and one that claimed that he offered every Indian player a Toyota car if they won.

Everything turned topsy-turvy in March 2000 when the Delhi Police revealed details of their investigation into the biggest match-fixing scandal in the sport, involving, among others, India captain Mohammed Azharuddin and South Africa captain Hansie Cronje. Incidentally, when the news broke, Cronje was playing his last ever match in Sharjah. Then, in April 2001, a week before India were to fly to Sharjah for a tri-nation series involving Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the Indian government prohibited BCCI to send its team to non-regular venues for at least three years.

Lost Glitter

Though Bukhatir tried to mend things by setting up a committee to look into allegations of fixing, the damage had been done. Sharjah was condemned

as a venue where 'everything evil' happened. Between April 2003 and February 2010, the venue didn't get to host a single top flight ODI. The stadium fell into decay. Cricket picked up in other parts of the UAE with new stadiums coming up in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Sharjah did return to the fold once Pakistan made UAE their base. But the jewel had lost its glitter. And now the IPL, a part of which was played in the UAE in 2014, returned for a full version in 2020.

IPL is a gilt-edged voluntary retirement scheme for seniors. For



promising youngsters it has done more harm than good to their cricketing skill sets other than making them rich. By bowling four tidy overs or batting a few more you are hailed a champion. Leagues such as these are like money-fuelled monsters that has upturned a value system of a beautiful game. And the game moving to the deserts the betting, match-fixing syndicate became active again. For India's betting industry, the IPL has always been the golden goose. 



With increasing incidence of breast cancers in the country, institutions may think of free mammograms for women above age 40

A Case for Free Mammograms



Dr. Teena Sleeba

Consultant Radiologist – Breast imaging and Interventions, Rajagiri Hospital.



It's only once in a blue moon that I have lunch at our hospital canteen. Checking on social media, while having a homemade snack in my own cabin, works out quite convenient for me. Very shortly I intend to buy that diamond necklace, which my radiology colleagues believe, is what I should have saved for by now -after years of skipping paid lunches.

Speaking of our canteen, the largest clusters are inevitably female doctors. Divided by specialties they are united by the need to make most of the 45 minutes allotted luncheon. Naturally this space is buzzing with exchange of information. And it's amusing to see how my occasional

entry has resulted in a shift of topics-from the more interesting ones to breast cancer.

"That lady was only 40 right? So sad...so very scary"

"It's so common these days...so many cases in their forties ...isn't it?"

"Oh good! Seeing you reminds me I have been postponing a scan for so long now"

"It's high time I got a mammogram done...I have some family history too"

"By the way...what are the charges of mammogram?"

Well many a times I have been tempted to say "The same charges as when you last enquired ...a couple of years ago".

Isn't it quintessentially feminine – to enquire the cost of something we don't intend to buy!

Screening & Awareness

A good 99% of those interactions with doctors have never materialised into a mammogram. I am also aware of staff

lower down in the rung who enquire about charges from the radiology reception and leave without getting one done.

Women will continue doing complex mathematics of cost and time and at the same time cringe when someone known to them is diagnosed with breast cancer. This is what got me thinking – why can't we offer free mammograms for our own staff.

Women constitute a good 60% of our 2500 plus hospital workforce. And only a third of these women are over forty. Meaning we needed to screen about 500 staff or so on an annual basis. This is definitely not a huge number if spaced and accommodated into regular work.

Thankfully for this endeavour, I had the support of our social service department. They I must say, they have been doing an amazing job already, analyzing and understanding stressors in working women across of all ages. The management too was very receptive and proactive about the whole idea.

On a personal note it feels great to add some action to the whole "screening and awareness" talk that we do. It definitely takes some extra effort and time, but the gratitude expressed by our staff pays for it all.

Multi-Disciplinary Approach

Breast cancer continues to be the number one malignancy among women according to cancer statistics in India



for the year 2020. Several population based registries have revealed that the highest burden of breast cancer was amongst women in metropolitan cities. With steady increase in the number of cases, breast cancer is steadily increasing to proportions where it poses to be a health challenge to women in India.

Only a multidisciplinary approach to breast cancer which includes awareness programs, preventive measures, screening programs for early detection, and availability of treatment facilities can reduce both incidence and mortality of cancer in Indian women.

How wonderful it would be if we could promote breast awareness and screening for just very "small" subsets of female populations. Institutions, industries, banks, educational establishments and hospitals – anyplace where women constitute a sizeable number of the workforce could go an extra

mile to show they care for their women. Ensuring they have some kind of basic knowledge about breast cancer, arranging a session for them to interact with a trained medical personnel, getting their queries and apprehensions addressed, arranging screening facilities with a hospital are all possible ways to show appreciation to our women.

We now have a successful programme running in place, where we screen our women hospital staff for breast cancer on an annual basis. This wouldn't have been possible without very receptive and concerned people at the top running this institution.

"Just as a drop of water creates countless ripples, so does a gesture of kindness or concern change countless lives".

Wouldn't it be great if this act of care and concern for women work force was replicated by others too...some food for thought. 



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Testing Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is an important indicator of child's literacy skills which is often overlooked, according to researchers at Michigan State University (MSU). They have developed a software called Access to Literacy Assessment System (ATLAS) which can help parents, early childhood teachers and paraeducators more accurately measure phonological progress for children with a range of skill levels. The software was effective when tested with over 1100 children between the ages of 3 and 7 both with and without speech and language impairments. The software provided free of charge enables children to understand what they know even if they struggle to answer questions verbally. This ensures their skills are accurately assessed, and that they receive the right support to keep them on track to meet literacy milestones.



School Closures to Lower Learning Gains



School closures due to Covid-19 will have the impact of an extended summer break for children and students are likely to have started school this fall with approximately 63% to 68% of the typical annual gains in reading and 37% to 50% of the typical annual learning gains in maths, according to an assessment by American Educational Research Association. The projections were based on a prediction model developed by the researchers. They said that losing ground during the school closures was not universal, with the top third of students potentially making gains in reading. The projections imply that educators and policymakers will need to address that many students are substantially behind academically as a result of extended school closures, particularly if many schools remain disrupted throughout periods of the 2020-21 school year.

Accountants Seek Communication Skills



Accountants need communication skills as technology is transforming how accountants work and changing client's expectations of the services they provide. A study done by Prof Rahat Munir, Head of Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance at Macquarie Business School among 315 accountants under age of 30 and 175 managers found that effective communication skills were valued by both early-career accountants and their managers, followed by problem solving and professionalism. All these skills go hand-in-hand to make an accountant a trusted business advisor. The researchers said that accounting students cannot complete a course and become an accredited accountant with all the skills for a successful accounting career if they lack problem solving and communication skills.

Blended Learning Makes Science Alive



Blended learning is effective in science education at high school levels and activities in science textbooks should be adapted and designed according to blended learning, according to a study done by researchers at College of Humanities and Sciences, Ajam University, UAE. The study was conducted in over 112 ninth grade students in UAE using a quasi-experimental approach of which 51 were in control group. They were taught motion using traditional teaching methods while the experimental group were put on blended learning mode. The pre-test and post-test scores of both the groups were evaluated. It was found that there was significant different difference in understanding and knowledge of science subjects between the experimental and control groups showing that blended learning had a positive impact on students. Students in experimental group had positive attitudes towards blended learning. 

'Eye Closed Learning' Impactful

Eye closed learning (iCLOL) was found to be impactful in a sample study done by Fujita Eye Clinic, Tokyo Medical and Dental University and others. The researchers studied iCLOL and interblink interval (IBI) during listening, writing and reading sections of an English examination. The 19 Japanese subjects were asked to close their eyes whenever it did not interfere with their responses to the examination. Their eyes were video recorded with a video camera. It was found that iCLOL time was greater for students with IBI significantly shorter for listening and writing than for reading. The results suggest that iCLOL may be applied as a method during learning. The percentage and frequency of iCLOL differed depending on the examination content. At times during the examination when the iCLOL time percentage and frequency were greater, the IBI was shorter. 



Tweets Predict Student Outcomes

The tweets posted by students can be used to create a prediction model of academic outcomes, according to a study done by researchers at Laboratory of Computational Social Sciences at the Institute of Education of HSE University. The prediction model uses a mathematical textual analysis that registers users' vocabulary (its range and the semantic fields from which concepts are taken), characters and symbols, post length and word length. An abundance of emojis, words or whole phrases written in capital letters, and vocabulary related to horoscopes, driving, and military service indicate lower grades in school whereas scientific and cultural topics, English words, words and posts longer in length are indicative of good academic performance. 





Who Shall Cast the First Stone



Jose Panthaplamthottiyil

A

man was caught stealing bread from a bakery. He did it because of gnawing hunger pangs and he had no money with him. Moreover, nobody was willing to give him a helping hand. Immediately he was brought before the king who was known for very strict punishments even for the slightest of offenses. When the

king interrogated the thief he immediately acknowledged his guilt. In no time the king sentenced him to capital punishment.

The poor man was aghast as he heard the verdict of the king. As he requested for mercy with folded hands tears welled up in his eyes. The king was in no mood to show him mercy. He was sent to the dungeon to await his punishment. While he was there he came up with an idea to escape his punishment. Accordingly, he said to the guard, "I would like to convey a secret to the king before I am executed. It is about planting an apple seed which can grow overnight into a fruit-bearing apple tree."



The guard was fascinated with the story and conveyed the message to the king. The king too was captivated by what he heard. However, he had his doubts. Hence, summoning him to the royal court the king asked, "If you knew this secret why did you steal bread instead of growing apples and making a living out of it?"

"But I could not do it," the man explained. "For the seed to grow overnight into an apple tree it should be planted by someone who has never lied, cheated or stolen anything in his life. Unfortunately, I have lied and stolen in my life. If the apple seed is planted by a truly virtuous person it will grow into a fruit-bearing tree overnight."

The king was suspicious of what the man said. However, he wanted to test whether the apple seed would grow into a fruit-bearing tree overnight. Hence, he called his prime minister, explained the situation and asked him to plant the apple seed. When he heard that the seed should be planted by someone who has never lied, cheated or stolen anything in his life, he became frightened. "I am sorry your Majesty, if I grow the apple seed it will not grow as I am guilty of lying and cheating in my life."

When the prime minister could not plant the apple seed the king turned to his finance minister. The finance minister was horrified when he was asked to plant the apple seed. Knowing not what to do or say he stood there speechless perspiring. "So you too have lied and cheated in your life?" the king asked. Nodding his head, the finance minister continued to stand there silently. "Have you ever stolen from the royal treasury?" the king asked. He again nodded his head acknowledging his guilt.

The king then asked other members of the royal court to plant the apple seed. But nobody came forward. They all stood there in silence. Then the man in chains said, "If there is no-

body else who is willing to plant the seed, I request your Majesty to plant it." Immediately the king's face fell as he remembered he was also not a virtuous person always in his life. Many occasions of lying and cheating flashed across his mind. "No, I cannot do it," the king said without explaining further.

"If your Majesty as well as all others here are guilty of lying, cheating or stealing at some point in your life," the man said, "what right do you have to

During the Sermon on the Mount Jesus condemned this attitude by asking, "And why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye, but not notice the beam in your own eye?" (Mathew 7:3). When the woman caught in adultery was brought before him to be stoned to death, Jesus asked, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Yes, we need to be aware of our own sins before we begin to condemn others for their sins.



condemn me to capital punishment for stealing a piece of bread to satisfy my hunger?" The king was impressed with his smartness and sent him home giving him many presents.

We are not always virtuous as we do not always uphold high moral standards and principles in our life. In fact, many of us often break many of the rules and regulations of the society as well as of religion. However, we are often quick in judging and condemning others even for their minor faults. When it comes to the question of our faults our tendency is to make light of them and find out all kinds of excuses. But when the question is about the faults of others, often we are eager to mete out severe punishment.

But it doesn't mean that we should not punish people guilty of breaking the law. It means, we should judge others justly and the punishment given should be in proportion to the crime committed and it should help them to reform their life. Also, we should never have the impression that only those who are brought to justice are guilty of breaking the law. Even if we are not caught for committing a crime we are still guilty of it. Moreover, we should not wait to repent of a crime until we are caught; if we have ever committed a crime or a sin, we should always have genuine repentance and the willingness to amend our life. If that is the case, we will never rush to throw stones at others. 



Spare the Rod, Befriend Your Child



In childhood, our house in 10 cents of land was a biodiversity hotspot. Coconut, jackfruit, mango, guava, areca nut trees, plants such as banana, hibiscus, jasmine jostled for space. It was really fun to spend the holidays in such surroundings with neighbourhood friends. One day I climbed a jackfruit tree, sat on its branch and made a small cut on the bark with a knife out of curiosity but it became prominent enough to be noticed. When my father came back from office, he questioned me and my brother. I lied that our neighbour Raju did it. It was out of intense fear of corporal punishment. I lost a friend as Raju refused to talk to me for a long time before we patched up.

As we celebrate the Children's Day on November 14, I recall this incident as it was an important lesson in parenting. Children should never be afraid or fearful of their parents as it will prevent them from openly admitting their mistakes or discussing problems. We should behave like a friend to our child. The modern parenting practices and Child Rights Laws do not approve of corporal punishment which I tried to religiously follow in the case of my two children. But my wife sometimes judiciously used the stick on my son as he started turning too

mischievous in adolescence. She explained it was for a specific wrong doing and he had no complaints!

Of-quoted Kahlil Gibran is being echoed everywhere – 'your children are not your children... And though they are with you they do not belong to you.' But are our parents listening?



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