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Patriotism. Satisfaction

The Parent Trap

Bringing up social beings

The fatal push

Together we can



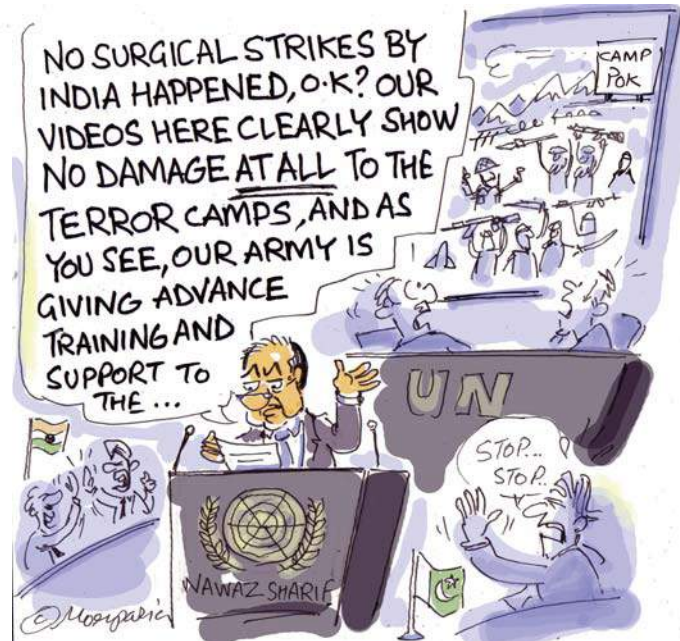
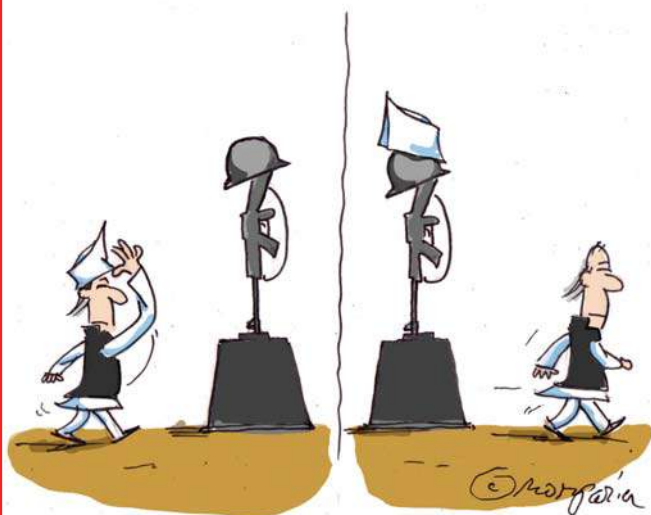
FACE TO FACE

Ashwarya Vigneshwari

KNOW INDIA BETTER

The many exiles of Mehrauli

MORPARIA'S PAGE



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Contents

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THEME:

The Parent Trap



6



23



37

Aishwarya Viswanath

Morparia's page	2
Being the lovely parent	5
<i>Nivedita Louis</i>	
Bringing up social beings	6
<i>A.S. Iyer</i>	
The fatal push	8
<i>Shoma A. Chatterji</i>	
Money matters	10
<i>A.S. Iyer</i>	
Together we can	12
<i>Sangeetha Chakrapani</i>	
Children of a lesser parent	16
<i>Shoma A. Chatterji</i>	
The hitchhiker's guide to parenting	18
<i>Gauri Kedia</i>	
The happiness quotient	20
<i>R. Priya</i>	
Know India Better	
The many majesties of Mehrauli	23
<i>Akul Tripathi</i>	
Face to Face	37
Aishwarya Viswanath : A.S. Iyer	
Features	
The election carnival	40
<i>Prof. Avinash Kolhe</i>	
Book Review	41
<i>Dr. P.M. Kamath</i>	
A place for everything	43
<i>G. Venkatesh</i>	
The easy ten	45
<i>Usha Hari prasad</i>	
A Doll's House	46
<i>Prof. Avinash Kolhe</i>	
All shades of pink	48
<i>Shoma A. Chatterji</i>	
All sound, but no sleep!	50
<i>A. Radhakrishnan</i>	
Column	52
Rural Concerns : Bharat Dogra	
Economy : Anuradha Kalhan	
Young India	54
Great Indians	56



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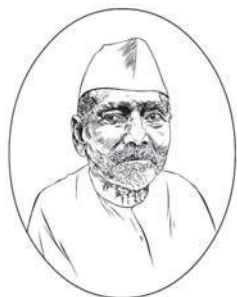
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

"Mother Teresa's selfless and untiring service"

Mother Teresa's selfless and untiring service to the poorest of the poor, orphaned and sick people on the streets of Kolkata will be remembered by every Indian. It is gratifying to note that Pope Francis, the Head of the Vatican has recognised her charitable services to humanity and declared her a saint on September 4, 2016, which was also Mother Teresa's 19th death anniversary. Mother Teresa will always be remembered for what she said and what she did while on this earth. She started her work with no money, depending only on God to help her. Mother Teresa and her followers nursed the sick and dying, taught street children, gave shelter to the homeless, cared for the unloved and the lonely and proclaimed the Word of God to one and all. Her selfless love is a powerful example of what it means to love others as Christ loved us, and a sign that God still loves the world today.

Clad in a khadi sari with its three blue line border, Mother Teresa along with her sisters of the Missionaries of Charity became a symbol of love, care and compassion for the world. Mother Teresa was a ray of hope for many, including the aged,

the destitute, the unemployed, the diseased, the terminally ill, and those abandoned by their families. Blessed with profound empathy, unwavering commitment and unshakable faith since young, she turned her back to worldly pleasures and focused on serving mankind ever since she was 18. Founder of the Missionaries of Charity, with her fervent commitment and incredible organisational and managerial skills, she developed an international organisation that aimed towards helping the impoverished. For her service to humanity she was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Mother Teresa, even though she has been declared a saint by the Catholic Church, is still a Mother to us. She will be remembered for her good deeds for years to come.

– Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

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WHO AM I?

*I am a proud Indian,
citizen of the world community,
inhabiting this lonely ...
but lovely little ... ★
planet ...*



Earth...



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Being the lovely parent

*Parenting is no longer easy. If there is something as difficult as deciding Trump or Hillary for President, it is deciding who the boss is at home – the child or the parent, says **Nivedita Louis**.*

GONE are those days when we had to cajole and coax our parents to buy a new shoe during mid-term. Our dear children just have to screw up their faces to get a PS4. It is as simple as that. The more gadget-friendly the children, tougher gets the parenting. Pampering parents never understand the fact – the needs of a child are basic. I would personally love to snatch every charger of every electronic device and sit back, watch the ‘near-desperation’ with which gadgets are handled. Cruelty factor – infinity! Money can never be traded for parental care and it is high-time we understand that as parents. The best way to discipline a child would be – be disciplined yourself. Children emulate their parents and it is imperative to place your shoes right on the rack, and not at the bedroom door.

There is this lot of control-freak parents who wake the child, feed him, send him to school, feed him when he is back and put him to sleep. The routine life of this child would be like the grandfather’s clock in the living room. A child is a child. He needs parents’ quality time. Words come free, when wi-fi is not! We would rather talk to him on anything about the Universe than sit and watch the same old soaps where the sixth heroine plans to murder the seventh mother of the fifth hero.

Our next parent will be the ‘bindaas’ parent. Nothing worries this parent – not the stock market crash, not the vegetable market crash. The person is Mr.Cool and the only worry he has is his manager’s pet puppy that needs his petting. Indifference can kill a child, dear Mr.Cool, the manager’s puppy can find a bone on its own! When the child says, “Dad...I got second in potato sack race today”, this couch potato wouldn’t bother to wag a finger and say, “well done, son”. In addition to these, we have the ‘com’pare’nt’. The only fruitful job this type of parent does is comparison. “See, Mrs. Gupta’s son is so intelligent and smart. Why aren’t

you half that smart?” Dear mother, if you had been so smart as Mrs. Gupta, your son would have gone places! Again, I have made ‘mother’ specific here and you know why! Each child is different. Each child is unique. It would be a sin to compare a rose with a daisy. A rose is a rose is a rose!

To me, the worst third degree torture isn’t the one devised by the Police or military forces. It is being the single parent. The name ‘sin’gle parent by itself is the punishment for all our sins that would be cleansed away in this lifetime. Parenting is a tight-rope walk already and being a single parent is rope walking like the proverbial nomad on the streets. Something as trivial as a whiff of air will blow you down the drain of self-wallowing and self-pity. The pressure of a single parent obviously ends up on the shoulders of the little one. In addition to the routine troubles, the kid has to ride on the roller-coaster of life hanging on to a single bare thread, the parent, who is already a superman/superwoman with the red cape.

Our society trains guns on all parents, irrespective of how the child fares in life. Accomplished son, we say – “he is so dull”, adventurous daughter – “she is a pain”, gypsy streak one – “like parent, like child” it is said! Even if you are Mother Mary with Jesus, the society will lay your parenthood bare saying you failed. Our success as a parent isn’t what the society thinks we are or we should be. It is what we feel right in

our own conscience. Raising a toast to all parents alike – “Let’s enjoy parenthood, for we get only one life and one or two children”, nah, two is a rarity, make it one! ■

Nivedita Louis is a writer, blogger and social activist by choice. Bitten by the travel bug, and smitten by nature, she loves travelling and cooking. She blogs at www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com.

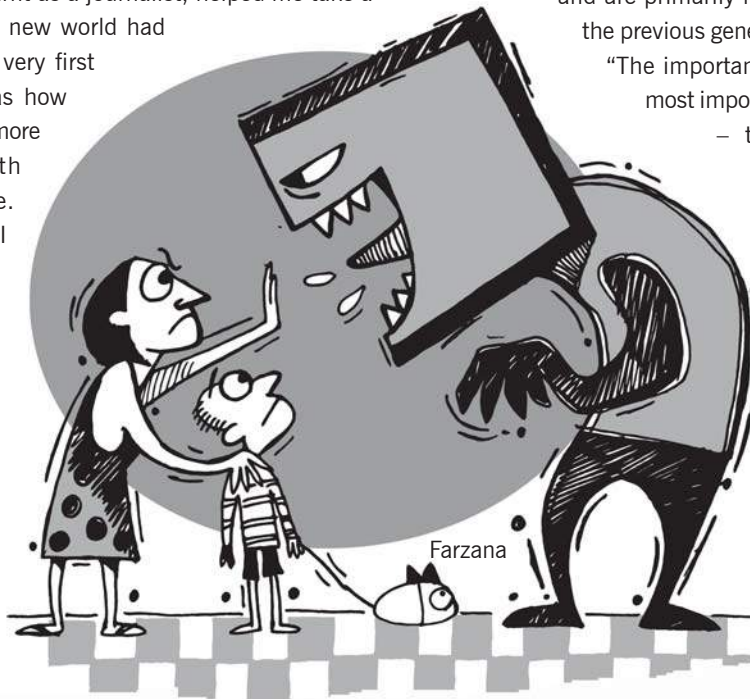


There is this lot of control-freak parents who wake the child, feed him, send him to school, feed him when he is back and put him to sleep. The routine life of this child would be like grandfather’s clock in the living room. A child is a child. He needs parents’ quality time.

Bringing up social beings

The dilemma of today's parents is this – how much technology should they allow their kids to access? Too less and they could be out of sync with their peers, and too much technology can interfere with their social and emotional development. A.S. Iyer discusses this crucial issue.

TWO years ago, my family was blessed with a baby. With my niece in tow, I had a great deal of exposure to the new world of opportunities that opened up. But observations, a skill I learnt as a journalist, helped me take a deeper look at what the new world had to offer me. One of the very first observations I made was how children today are much more comfortable with technology than people. When the fact sunk in, I could notice it everywhere, toddlers, school-and college-goers alike, were addicted to the 'smartphone'. In this article, young parents can find a way to incorporate social skills in a fun new way, when gadgetry is taking over the personal touch – quite literally!



Mahim for more than two decades now. She says that there is a significant change in the quality of kids over the years. They are sharper and tend to grasp things faster these days and are primarily more tech savvy than any of the previous generations. Moreover, she says, "The importance of a pre-school is in the most important qualities kids are taught

– to be expressive, to be outgoing and share their resources. It teaches them some of the essential qualities of being a friend."

On the other hand, Khan notices that technology in certain ways has made the jobs of teachers easier. "Children are able to grasp and understand rhymes easier these days. However, technology also poses a different set of challenges for teachers, which is to

enable the children to relate to, and with each other.

Sethi elaborates, "With ever-busy, working parents, children are often left with nannies and sometimes grandparents, which in turn restricts their circle from a very young age. Add to that the need among parents to have a single child. It often takes many children time to get used to many people around them, and becoming comfortable and a part of the crowd."

Reconnecting with roots

It is a common sight to see parents be proud of their young ones being able to navigate a smartphone with an ease they never had, in the process forgetting to teach them simple social skills that are important in the long run. Dr. Sameer Parekh, Director of Department of Mental Health and

Building the foundation

Children, as young as two and three enter their first social world in the form of playschool or a pre-school – a foundation that many parents believe is essential for good education. Mahek Khan, a Kindergarten teacher with Don Bosco School, Nerul, Navi Mumbai, says that's not all, pre-schools are important when it comes to learning to interact with others the same age, understanding and processing information, learning to express various emotions they experience. She says, social interaction is one of the primary skills they teach children in subtle ways, by teaching them to share toys, wait for their turn for the slide, etc.

Agreeing with Khan is Paramjit Kaur Sethi, who has been teaching kindergarten students in Bombay Scottish School in

Behavioural Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, explains that overuse of technology can directly impact the child's overall social and emotional development, as it would be likely to restrict their exposure to the stimuli in the real world, with a greater preoccupation in the virtual world of technology. Further, while some of the programmes could be educational in nature, overdependence and overuse could lead to social alienation and deprivation of the opportunities to interact with peers and significant others, which are vital to understanding the nature of reciprocity and socio-emotional development of the child.

He further explains how over-dependence on technology can make us excessively rely on social networking sites to communicate with others, leading to a greater probability of withdrawing from others around us. He points out, "In fact, there is a growing tendency to spend greater time using forms of social media relative to real-world socialisation. Equipping the youth with the basic life skills is a must to prepare them to deal with the world today. They need to be encouraged to acquire skills related to gender sensitivity, dealing with bullying and aggression management. Furthermore, they must learn to build their assertiveness skills and social skills, in order to be empowered to face the challenges of the world."

D is for Demands

In one of the interviews I conducted as a journalist, a parent, entrepreneur and fitness expert told me how she dealt with her daughter's demand for a mobile phone. She recalled how her daughter told her that all her classmates had a mobile. She asked her daughter instead if all her classmates had a private jet to which her daughter said 'No'. She then explained to her daughter how everyone need not necessarily have everything. Though it might sound like a temporary solution, it definitely is a start.

Closer home, we deal with my two-year-old niece by pairing her with neighbours and their children when she demands a Johnny Johnny video on YouTube. Living in a gated community also comes in handy when we arrange for play dates and let the kids share each other's toys. Of course, there are disagreements and quarrels over who gets which toy but nevertheless, better than giving into demands for a mobile phone.

That said, it is also necessary to avoid a power struggle and set reasonable limits for the child. Dr. Parekh explains, "Children are likely to compare themselves with their peers, and while you can discourage it to an extent, it is important

for you to also make some allowances for the child's preferences as well. Having a hawk's eye on your child is not even practically possible, while also not being very comforting for the child. Such a child is more likely to find opportunities to sneak away from your supervision and overindulge in the use of technological devices, thereby worsening the situation."

Defining the *Lakshman rekha*

It would be a futile attempt to disconnect from technology completely even for parents – after all, most of our essentials from paying bills to connecting with colleagues, friends and

even family, to a certain extent, have turned digital. Instead, there could be ground rules one can introduce at home. Like making technology-free zones at home, a rule that not applies just to the young ones, but also to the parents. "For instance dinner time and the dining table could be a technology free zone," says Dr. Parekh.

In this case, it is also necessary that parents practise what they preach. Dr. Parekh suggests that we as adults might make rules for the children, but we ourselves are over-indulgent with technology. While work and personal demands might make it seem difficult, it would not be a bad idea to delegate children to remind us to put our mobile phone away while at the dinner table.

Similarly, one could also look at designating certain hours for technology use, let children to use whichever technology – after all they also need to know how gadgets work to fit in with their peers.

Sethi explains how she ensures that a shy child in class is made to sit with a more outgoing one, thereby having them both learn new things, "The shy one learns to be more outgoing, while the outgoing one learns the quality of responsibility," she adds.

Dr. Parekh, however, explains that in case parents want their children to spend less time in front of television and laptop screens, it is their responsibility to find alternative sources of entertainment for children. And the best time to encourage such options is essential in the early ages.

Lastly, he says that there is a need to encourage media literacy. "Remember, the purpose is not solely to restrict the children's use of technology, but to educate the children and youth with the ability to critically understand the messages shown by the media, in order to be able to guide them towards right decisions effectively," he adds. ■

A.S. Iyer is a freelance journalist who writes about health, wellness, lifestyle and travel. She enjoys telling stories of people she meets along her way and believes herself to be a good listener.

It would be a futile attempt to disconnect from technology completely even for parents – after all, most of our essentials from paying bills to connecting with colleagues, friends and even family, to a certain extent, have turned digital.

The fatal push

*While we may laud young children doing well in competitions, whether singing, swimming, speaking, acting, we are blind to the enormous pressure brought to bear on them by their parents. This has to qualify as violence and serious abuse, avers **Shoma A. Chatterji**, as she dissects the depressingly large number of cases of parental abuse.*

ALL stories on domestic violence are focused on girls and women. All issues related to child labour are directed to employers who employ them. What happens when parents, turn into exploiters, abusers and killers? When you next see a child breaking into dimples when she sees her mother walk out of the bathroom and tells her in her lisp that her mother “looks like a little girl”, - “Mummy, aap bilkul little girl lagti ho”, or the advertisement in which two little girls gift their beautiful mother with hair dye, spend a minute to think that at that very minute, given a choice, these children might have been playing with their friends or engaging in naughty pranks instead of sweating under studio lights and missing both school and play.

How long will their song last?

On November 19, 2006, six-year-old Sania of Bhikangaon, Khandwa, created a record by singing continuously for 64 hours to get into the Limca Book of Records. She broke a record set by Indore resident Akanksha Jachak, who sang for 61 hours at a stretch. She sang around 745 songs including devotional and film songs. When asked what drove her to this feat, she said that it was her “strong desire to do something different.” Can a six-year-old think like this?

Indore’s Deepak Gupta sang for 101 hours in Coimbatore, breaking the record that was broken the day before by Sania from Khandwa. Indore’s 15-year-old Akanksha broke this record soon after. Qadir then vowed to reclaim the title by singing for 125 hours. Are they speaking in their own ‘voice’? Or are they pushed by their parents to say all this? Most of these parents wish to glow in the reflected glory of their kids’ performance, with TV cameras flashing on them 24/7. One girl fainted after rolling hundreds of *chapattis* at one go for umpteen hours and much of this was telecast on a Hindi news channel nationally. Was she an exhibit for the viewers? She had to be hospitalised for the exertion. What parental culpability makes children faint under the pressure of what appears to be ‘voluntary’ performance, but is actually coercion? What is the point in trying to set a dubious record which will be broken weeks later by some other kid forced by his parents to follow suit?



Singer Deepak Gupta on the second day of his marathon singing

Daisy Irani, once the highest-paid child star in Bollywood, related the terrible experience of her stardom. “My mother would pinch me to make me cry for a scene during a shoot. I was taken out of school after the first two years and never went back. I never saw my money nor did my parents buy me a chocolate bar. The studio hands spoilt me with chocolates to make me face the camera when I turned moody. My mother hardly cared because all she was interested in was the money. Marriage to a much older man gave me the freedom denied to me. I never forced my three kids do something they did not wish to,” she said. The late Baby Naaz, who shot to fame for her brilliant performance in Raj Kapoor’s *Boot Polish*, said her parents were forever fighting over who was entitled to the money she earned. She went hungry after a gruelling day, which ended at ten or eleven at night. Meena Kumari made her film debut at six, Sridevi at four. Were they old enough to take such decisions? If this is not child abuse by pushy parents, one really does not know what is.

Biswadip Bhattacharjee, 14, collapsed and died on the terrace of his house in a Kolkata suburb while practicing table tennis with his father on January 8, 2007. A week later, Sampali Midya, 20, committed suicide at Bengaluru by jumping off a

running train at Tumkur station. Debabrata Roy, 13, a Class VII pupil of Rose Bud School in Ghosury, Howrah, West Bengal, ran away from home after his father scolded and beat him up for spending more time on cricket than on studies.

These three cases are just the tip of a massive iceberg, because many such deaths and abuses go unreported or are sensationalised at that point and then forgotten. Besides, they are representative of a single state – West Bengal. The rest of the country is no exception. The family unit in India is conditioned to keep up pretenses of togetherness, often at the cost of the children. So, no mother of a child being tortured by the father will report it at the local police station. Nor will she approach a counsellor to counsel the entire family that is placed under pressure when one of them is being tortured. The legal statutes offer no provision in our country to protect children from parental pressure, cruelty and abuse.

The tragic stories

Biswadip played table tennis since the age of five and represented the state at various levels. But he failed to satisfy his father, Dipak Bhattacharjee. On the day he died, Biswadip came home after practice at 6.00 in the morning. After a quick breakfast, he was pushed into further practice with his sister Neha, till 10.30. Following this, he was forced to practice with his father. When he missed a return serve, his father threw a plastic object at him. But he continued to play. He fell unconscious at 12.30 pm and by the time they took him to Bangur Hospital, he was dead. The post mortem report revealed a blood clot that could have been caused by an injury from a blunt object or from a rain of blows from the father. Biswadip's mother Papiya filed a F.I.R. (First Information Report) after the incident based on which, the police arrested Dipak the next day.

Sampali, daughter of a science teacher at Kurmul School in Burdwan, was a student of computer science at Bengaluru's Alpha Engineering College. She was not doing well in her exams and took her own life because she felt she was failing to meet her father's expectations. It was her father who wanted her to study engineering and she felt she was not up to it. She explained her failure to rise to her father's expectations in her suicide note. Debabrata's father, Rambahadur, a milkman who runs a cowshed in Belur near



Biswadip Bhattacharjee, a tragic victim of his own father's abuse

Kolkata, had high aspirations for his son and wanted him to become a vet one day. He got the son admitted to an English medium school. Asit Sen, inspector-in-charge of Bally police station, said that they had discovered that Debabrata had left home once when he was in Class V. The police said that he ran away now because he wished to avoid pressure from his father.

In their detailed study, *The Madness of Modern Families*, Meg Sanders and Annie Ashworth have classified pushy parents under different categories, trying to lighten a very serious problem as follows: (a) the Helicopter Mummy who hovers constantly by her child's side, not allowing him/her out of her sight; (b) the Touchline Dad who is forever nagging his reluctant son to keep working at his football. (c) the Touchline Mom sits by the swimming pool timing the child's backstroke laps on the

stopwatch on her mobile phone; (d) The Eco Mummy keeps herself in a state of constant worry over feeding the kids on "biodynamic falafel and organic mushroom pate; and (e) The Craft Mummy carefully hands her kid a collage of leaves and grasses, not exactly dry, drilling the child to create something aesthetic and utilitarian at the same time.

They have put forth other data that are scary. They add that even normally sensible, well-educated British middle-class parents are resorting to insane measures to outdo other families and give their children an edge over the rest. "From mothers who secretly train at home for the grown-ups' egg-and-spoon race on school sports day, to those who follow the school bus on its trip to France in case any harm might come to their offspring, parents are taking it to the extreme," write Sanders and Ashworth. There are parents who play foreign radio stations in the bedrooms of their children so they can learn languages in their sleep. These are not pushy parents. They are violent parents. ■



Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.

Money matters

*Catch em' young, should be the catchphrase to inculcate financial discipline in kids. Start with small steps and see your child become financially responsible, says **A.S. Iyer**, after speaking to a cross-section of parents.*

*"It's not about the money, money, money
We don't need your money, money, money
We just wanna make the world dance,
Forget about the price tag..."*

THUS, go the lyrics of the song released a few years ago called *Price Tag* by Jessie J. To refresh your memory, the song talks about the futility of money and brand names and all that matters is making the world a better place to live in for everybody. Though the song is some five-odd years old, its meaning doesn't seem to have been diminished with time.

In fact, we are in a kind of a double burden situation, where on one side there are many money-minded individuals, while on the other, there are individuals who do not know and understand the value of money. Here, we try to introduce ideas to you that might help you let your teenage children make better financial decisions and grow up to be financially responsible individuals. After all, the best way to make independent and responsible individuals is by starting young and nipping the problem in the bud.

Baby steps

There is a growing need among parents and teachers alike to introduce their child to financial matters early in life, for a plethora of reasons. For starters, many parents say they don't want their child to take things for granted and want them to learn to value the privileges they enjoy – most of which come from hard-earned money. And so, most parents opt to take their children out to shopping trips, often to grocery shops which form the first of the many lessons for the kids in financial matters.

Radha Shivakumar, mother of 14-year-old Vaishnavi and a Chartered Accountant with a multi-national, says shopping trips were some of the first ways of introducing her daughter to the concept of money – of giving and taking. Radha says, "I told her how if we give a certain amount of money, we get a particular thing when we go out on shopping trips." Similarly, Radha shares, every time her daughter asked her to take a holiday from work, she would explain to her how only when she works in office does she get money.

It remains important that finances are introduced in the



Sitara and Reju Nair with their daughter Sasha

early years of childhood says Clinical Psychologist and Counsellor, Varsha Patkar. "Though there are theories that put an age cap that suggests most of an individual's personality is developed by the age of seven, I'd not necessarily subscribe to it. That said, it is necessary to start from a young age."

Need v/s wants

A concept that's hard even for the adults to deal with at times, however, is one of the most important steps in being financially independent. Reju and Sitara Nair, parents of five-year-old Sasha say they introduced the concept via toys. Reju, who runs a travel portal, explains, "Sasha is fond of toys and every time we go out, she buys a new one. Though initially we would give in to her demands, she is now of an age where the value and importance of money can be inculcated. So now every time she demands a toy, we ask her why and what happened to the similar one she already has. We have also taught her that only because we go to work do we get money to buy her toys, and if we don't, then there is no way to buy all that she wants." The questions also instil in her a certain sense of responsibility.

Reju further says that how he has now using the most dreaded word that invites tantrums, 'No'. "Sasha at times when denied something says 'You are a bad dada', and though

I would normally be hurt, I now say it's okay even if I am bad, but you aren't getting it (a toy), because you didn't take care of the one that you were already given."

On the other hand, Radha says whenever Vaishnavi asked for something that is not a necessity, she would explain that to her. "Sometimes I try to postpone the purchase just to make her understand how important that particular thing is. This also helps her understand whether it is a want or a need," she says.

Saving up

Sitara narrates how she set up a piggy bank for her daughter who puts in the change she finds at home or she is given on regular intervals. "Now that she is growing up and when I or Reju tell her we do not have the money to buy her what she wants, she says she has the money in her piggy bank. It has in a certain sense taught her to appreciate the value of the things she has."

As for Radha, she suggests, "Saving is an important concept which I have taught her. So if she desires to buy something, she starts saving little money to spend it in the future. I am still to teach her the importance of education and money and saving for education. I plan to teach her when she turns 16."

On the other hand, Tanvi Dave, a 29-year-old banker and mother of a two-year-old explains how her father taught her the importance of saving up by setting up a Public Provident Fund for her and her sister at the age of 13. "It was one of the early introduction to managing finances and learning how 'not spending' the extra money that I earned via a system called 'interest' can help me earn more. It was then that my father introduced the concepts of simple and compound interest which I was learning in school alongside," Tanvi says.

She also explains that most of her decisions would be based on how to make the most out of the least amount of money I can spend. "I was taught the 'value' of money at an early age. I remember as a kid I wanted a cycle, but I was told that I would get it only if I passed my final exams with a certain score and was promoted to the next class. I studied hard and did all it took to get my cycle, and that taught me to use my cycle with care and caution. Moreover, it was also the same time when I was taught by my mother, who is also an LIC (Life Insurance Corporation) agent, the concept of insurance. Although it is not hard cash, I learnt that I could always liquidate the money I have given as premium, when in need."

Meanwhile, Varsha says, "I guess teenagers understand the value in terms of price factors. Most of them have weekly pocket allowances and therefore, spend accordingly. However, does this translate into understanding its "value"? Not really. They would not hesitate to ask their parents for an iPhone!"



Tanvi (extreme right) with her two-year-old daughter, parents and sister

Daily challenges

With the world a global village, and social media taking over teenagers' lives like never before, Radha notes that there is a need among children to sport branded clothing and accessories, despite knowing to a certain extent how important money is. She says, "Teenagers are very smart and are aware of everything due to social media. But it has also created a lot of peer pressure for using branded products. Though they understand the importance of money, these items have become a necessity for them."

Varsha addresses the demand among kids for branded goods and says that she has come across several cases where kids demand expensive things like mobile phones and branded clothes as presents. However, she points out that the issue there was that the kids were trying to fit into a system, often out of peer pressure.

She further adds, "It is extremely necessary to have open conversations with the child about finances. A parent needs to keep the child informed through everyday conversations about how money works. It is not something that is a part of everyday conversation, but nevertheless needs to be had at regular intervals so the child is well aware – and that (awareness) should be the purpose of the conversations." "For instance," Varsha says, "Explain to them the cost of eating out versus the cost of a home cooked meal. But ensure you don't come across as complaining about the fact, instead let the children have enough knowledge so they can make informed decisions." ■

A.S. Iyer is a freelance journalist who writes about health, wellness, lifestyle and travel. She enjoys telling stories of people she meets along her way and believes herself to be a good listener.

Together we can

*There is a unique initiative in Mumbai called 'together life skills centre', which is training youngsters with autism to prepare for adulthood and independent living. Documenting the venture and the lives of her quadruplets, two of whom are experiencing autism, is co-founder **Sangeetha Chakrapani**.*

WE are quadruplets. We are four twins, born within one mother. We all like to run around when we go down to play except Lakshmi who likes to sit. For Jayanthi, the tab is her life. We often fight for things to eat and play with. We all love to play with electronics. We like to write. One of us has met Aishwariya Rai. Our friend Jordan has met Naseeruddin Shah. Lakshmi loves to eat. She likes to listen to 'kaja' her code word for songs. She loves to hold Dad's hand when she comes out.

We all do crazy things. We like to rag each other. When we go out on vacation, my mother goes on taking photos. It is very irritating to hold Lakshmi and Jayanthi together and make them pose, as if it is an animation movie.

Krishna can never help in finding something so Appa has made a little poem for him - "What anybody can find, why should I find. What nobody can find, why should I find?"

Jayashree has invented her own version of the English language. She says things like 'My teacher has taughthen me'. She asked Ganapati for his phone number before visarjan.

Jayanthi throws things from the terrace when she is bored; things like the TV remote, Appa's Blackberry, katoris, spoons. Now Appa is planning to put a mesh on all the windows.

Lakshmi removes the regulators from the fan switch and plays with them. Now Appa has got them permanently fixed so we can't adjust the speed of the fan.



Baking cookies, making memories



Who we are!

Thus begins the story of the quadruplets – Krishna (boy), Jayashree, Jayanthi and Lakshmi – who are closely bonded, and are today at the centre of a unique initiative, 'together', founded by their parents Sangeetha and V. Chakrapani. Jayanthi and Lakshmi are experiencing autism while Krishna and Jayashree are regular children. Instead of worrying herself sick about the future of her two children with autism, Sangeetha first embarked on a 'cookie making journey' with her kids, with help from professionals. Soon after came the social inclusion programme at Arya Vidya Mandir school, which opened its arms wide and invited them to speak on issues related to disability and inclusion.

Sangeetha, who aims to create an inclusive world for special needs people and is committed to creating facilities for people with special needs to work and live meaningfully in a safe and secure environment, co-founded the 'together life skills centre'. It was founded with a team of parents, professionals and special educators and was born out of the need to help young people in the autistic spectrum to prepare for independent living beyond the lifetime of their parents. The centre has also tied up with the state-of-the-art bakery at the corporate headquarters of Puratos India Ltd., where the students bake regularly. They draw, paint, make *diyas* and *rangoli*, and the cookies they bake are packaged well and sold.



The adorable four as newborns

Sangeetha also stands out in her unique ability to document her kids' daily struggles and joys, with a lot of humour, on facebook. Below is a selection of her heartwarming posts, in her own words and sometimes in her kids' words, from their facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/togethersee>

What is autism?

Krishna - "Autism is a neurological problem but it can be solved in many ways. But that does not mean we give them too much of ease, they can do lot of things. My sisters, Lakshmi and Jayanthi are diagnosed with autism but autistic children are very innocent."

Dec.6, 2014

Sports Day at school. As usual the Chakrapani family excitedly discussed which snacks would taste better on the field, whether muffins are better than sliced cake, Lays v/s Bingo chips, "no, that's not enough, let's take chocopies also", while the head of the family sarcastically reminded us to clap hard for those who actually run, jump etc., and I defended my children by quoting the Bible - "They also serve who only stand and wait". Jayashree brought her siblings home 'together' in style with four gold medals and one silver medal!

Dec.7, 2014

At 60 smiles an hour, the only sound to be heard was the gnashing of my teeth as I egged her on (David Ogilvy anyone?). Jayanthi made an entire tray of choco chip raisin chewy cookies all by herself for the first time today – the world's most nonviolent cookies, each cookie took approximately seven and

a half minutes to cut, accompanied by melodious humming, chanting of Sai (the only word in her vocabulary).

Dec.9, 2014

'Cinnamon by Tomato' – these buttery vanilla and cinnamon flavoured cookies are made with whole wheat. Lakshmi and her siblings had to wait two months to be named formally as we had to camp in Bombay Hospital that long to be sent home. Tired of waiting for us to name our babies, the sisters in the N.I.C.U. named her 'Tomato' for her beautiful glowing skin. Even today, you enter our home and shout 'Tomato' and you will find her by your side. ₹160 a dozen for 'Cinnamon by Tomato'.

Dec.23, 2014

The kids, CP and me (or is I more grammatical?) were at dinner today. I was at the food counter when a young man walked up and asked me, "Excuse me, are those your children?" I said 'Yes, all of them' to forestall the next question. He took me by surprise and asked me, "Are any of them special needs kids?" I said "Yes, two of them". "Then, if you don't mind, may I buy some goodies for them? My sister is special needs too". I smiled and replied, "Sure, but I would like you to buy goodies from them rather than for them". I puffed up with pride (not sure if that is physically possible given my girth) at the amazement on the young man's face. Not to be outdone, he said 'My sister is also earning. She earns ₹1000 a month for beading work'. We exchanged numbers and bolstered by the strength we had drawn from each other, went our own ways.

I hope to remain strong in the years to come, I hope that



When Jayashree brought the quadruplets 'home' with elan, at a school sports meet!

as parents and supporting members of society, we encourage special needs people to strive for excellence and quality in the work they do so that together we reach at least halfway up the mountain. Let us never, ever give up.

Oct.25, 2015

We all need a reason to be tired during cookie baking!

Lakshmi is tired after eating a samosa.

Divya is tired because she was late for the session.

Umang is tired of talking and singing simultaneously while

we get him to listen to us.

Vikrant is tired because Satyam for whom he is a co-worker is not present.

Saatvik is tired of teasing Sabya, his sister and co-worker.

Sabya is tired of being civil to Saatvik.

Jayashree is tired of being praised for her hard work.

Krishna is tired of being hauled up by everyone for increasing the noise level in the session single-handedly.

Jayanthi is tired of chasing us for sympathy for a mosquito bite.

A mother speaks

I wanted my children to be perfect. When I was diagnosed with quadruplets, my mother swayed with shock and the sonologist rushed to help her sit down, but my heart sang with joy. When the doctors advised options, I was steadfast. When I was told that I am too short at slightly less than 5 feet to be able to bear four children simultaneously, I refused to play 'inky pinky ponky' between my children and challenged everyone who stood in my way that I will do it and my babies would be fine. When I was wheeled into the operation theatre on D day, one of the doctors asked me 'Mrs.Chakrapani this is the first time this hospital is seeing a quadruplet delivery. For learning purposes, will you allow us to film the process? He had to lean to hear my feeble voice 'Doctor, you can even bring the watchmen in, please just give me my children safely'. After regaining consciousness in the recovery room, I was told 'three girls and a boy. How are you going to manage?', one of the nursing aides asked. I remember each word of what I said - 'My children will be a gift to this world. Each of them will give something back that will make this world a better place. I will bring them up in that manner'. I could not take it at all when Krishna, followed by Jayanthi and then Lakshmi presented serious challenges. My world collapsed, but slowly my words began to come true. My children indeed showed me that challenges don't stop people from living life, disability can be overcome and joyful co-existence is possible. Today, when I see Jayanthi and Jayashree in different school uniforms, my heart does not ache with sadness anymore, but races ahead with possibilities and opportunities.

Dec.24, 2015

We are a very boring family. We don't give exciting parties. Gaggles of friends come home and poor things, get converted into volunteers. Some get the kids to sit around Sai Baba and sing *bhajans*. Some who want to eat have to make their way to the kitchen to help rustle up something. The really unfortunate ones are those who get pulled into a project that has to be submitted in school tomorrow. All of them in any case have to play ball with Jayanthi.

Those who are not friends – people who come to deliver stuff for 'together' etc., are not spared too. Three days ago, a person was nice enough to deliver the X'mas gifts we had ordered for 'together' and I was out at that time. When I walked in, I was appalled to see him being bullied by Jayanthi into playing ball. Krishna and Jayashree were noisily arguing over the tab and Lakshmi had taken advantage of the situation and was busy gobbling cheese slices. He asked me 'so many children?' in a politely horrified manner. I was reminded of the Aquaguard service guy who asked me if I was running a daycare centre. Since then, I make it a point to hastily introduce the children at entry point itself.

Merry X'mas everyone!

February 2016

Children are like animals and accept each others' disabilities and all, instinctively. Jayashree the other day was trying to sing a song while Jayanthi standing by her, shrieked with happiness about something. Impatiently, Jayashree caught her by the shoulders and said, 'Jayanthi, just shut up for some time'. I immediately intervened 'Jayashree don't say that, particularly since Jayanthi does not talk'. Jayashree replied 'Who says she cannot talk. She talks but in a different language. She is saying something all the time...how can you ever say that she cannot talk?...so if she irritates me, I will say shut up just like I would with Krishna'.

February 2016

The together team grandly announces the launch of BOOTIFUL BUTTER cookies-shortbread cookies dunked in butter and sprinkled lavishly with chocolate chips.

We also dedicate today's session to the many moods of Satyam – first at his hardworking best. Just when we began to look at him admiringly, he decided to dump a bowlful of milk into the cookie dough and was promptly banished. After a heartfelt apology he was re-inducted and proceeded to make giant cookies, forcing us to convert a box of 12 into a box of 6. Generous Satyam...he even sacrificed his sample cookie for another student. A unique chef in the making!

June 2016

Together Life Skills Centre for people in need of special



Travelling with the four is always eventful, says Sangeetha, their mother

care has opened. Designed by a parent along with special educators, we offer an intensive 'Transition to Adulthood' programme which comprises:

- Planning and participating in meal preparation
- Routine chores both self and around the home
- Meaningful use of leisure time
- Vocational training

Together was born out of the need to help young people in the autistic spectrum and other intellectual impairments to prepare for independent living beyond the lifetime of their parents. We seek to walk in their shoes and foresee the kind of hurdles they are likely to face in terms of living their lives. The programme is conducted in a specially created, informal living environment, conducive for learning.

Location: 12, 13 & 14, Poonam Kirti CHS, Poonam Nagar, Andheri East, Mumbai-400093

Call : 9930358173/022-28398173



Email at: togethersee@gmail.com
Our blog-www.togethersee.org
www.facebook.com/togethersee

Sangeetha Chakrapani has derived great inspiration from her four children for founding 'together', which aims to create an inclusive world for special needs people. She regularly blogs at www.togethersee.org. You can also visit her [facebook](http://www.facebook.com/togethersee) page: www.facebook.com/togethersee for more news about 'together'.

Children of a lesser parent

*The Indian family system is changing today as never before. In fact, the very concept and definition of 'family' is up for substantial reconstruction, asserts **Shoma A. Chatterji**.*

THE average Indian with a traditional mindset still believes that a family with both parents is normal or predominant and single parent families are somewhat away from the mainstream. This is not because one parent has had an untimely demise, but because the parents are either separated or divorced. Or, perhaps, one parent has deserted the family and gone his/her way, never to come back. This is the reason why there has been a sharp rise of single parent families in India that accounts approximately for 49% of children. The social stigma, though it is fading away ever so slowly, maintains that children suffer backlash in schools and among friends and families as the "odd ones out", which is a sad reflection of our failure to cope with social, filial and spatial changes in the lives of separated, divorced, deserted or even widowed parents.

The parent trap

Ajita Jabal Shah, in her article 'The Parent Trap' (*Times News Network*, 1st July, 2005) writes: "The short term effects of divorce vary, depending on the age and sex of children. Boys and girls handle break-ups with different emotions. Some get angry, some feel sad, and some may experience feelings of rejection. Pre-school children, aged three to five, react with feelings of anger and sadness. Many will regress after the initial shock of the separation. Signs of regression could be represented in asking for a security blanket, bedwetting, returning to thumb sucking, needing help feeding themselves, or hitting their siblings. The children in this age group are more anxious and insecure than their counterparts in an unbroken home."

The nuclear family appeared to offer a better alternative to the extended family in urban metros. But it remained patriarchal and male-dominated. Everything within the family is seen as private and presumed to be in the best interests of those who were part of it. The women's movement in the 1970s drew attention to another aspect of the family – the



Being a single parent need not be a losing game either for the child or the parent

The nuclear family appeared to offer a better alternative to the extended family in urban metros. But it remained patriarchal and male-dominated. Everything within the family is seen as private and presumed to be in the best interests of those who were part of it.

family as an institution that perpetuates violence. Newspaper reports speak volumes of the nature and extent of violence that takes place within the family. The social pressure on the woman to conform and hold the family together makes it necessary for her to suffer in silence and resign herself to her fate. In urban India however, the situation is changing.

The educated, working wife has a lower threshold of tolerance, which leads to early break-ups, separation, or divorce. What happens to the children? They are forced to grow up with the parent who wins the custody of the children, forced to spend the weekend with the other parent who may have 'visiting' rights, or spend weekends with him/her. The fragmentation of the family leads to the fragmentation and decimation of the child's physical, emotional and psychological growth. Divorce and separation are subjects that have received considerable media attention. Little

attention, if at all, has been focussed on the effects of the single-parent family on the children who grow up within it.

But all is not lost. One needs to look around to discover that being the child of a single parent is not always a losing game either for the child or for the parent. Leander Paes, Pooja Bedi, Meghna Gulzar, Lata Mangeshkar, Satyajit Ray and Varun Gandhi are all children of single parents, either because their parents broke up, or because one of them died an untimely death. Indra Gandhi was a single parent herself to sons Rajeev and Sanjay. Lata Mangeshkar is a single-parent child. Satyajit Ray lost his father at the age of two-and-a-half and had no living memories of this parent. Their lives show that though we agree that being the child of a single parent can be more stressful than a child with both parents living under the same roof, success holds no bias against them. They can become as famous, as successful and as powerful as children with both parents.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen is not a single parent child, but for all practical purposes, he was brought up by his mother Amita Sen and maternal grandfather, renowned scholar Khsitimohan Sen, because his father Ashutosh Sen worked away from home, first with the West Bengal Public Service Commission, and then with the Union Public Service Commission, and travelled a lot. His first wife, Nabaneeta Deb Sen, Professor of Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University, and a scholar, columnist and author in her own right, remained a single mother to their daughters Antara and Nandana, till they grew as successful individuals, one as a journalist and editor, and one as an actress, filmmaker and activist.

However, in a survey by the National Opinion Research Centre, US in 2005, researchers discovered that children from divorced families are more likely to go through a divorce themselves. The research showed that female children of divorce were 60 percent more likely to undergo divorce or separation in adulthood than a similar population from intact families. The divorce rate for male children of divorce was 35 percent higher. They found that post-divorce difficulties were more severe when children of divorced parents became adults because their search for commitment, for a relationship they could belong to, became increasingly important and crucial.

Actor Gulshan Grover who has been a single parent says, "It gets difficult when your child hits the teens. He begins questioning the whole situation. Why am I different? What went wrong with my universe? It's easy to say you can be

both father and mother to your kid. But the truth is, you are constantly running against the tide. The pressure is tremendous, both in terms of the time you can give him and the emotional security he needs. It is like an added dimension to your life, which is stressful to begin with." Way back in 1995, Y.B. Parikh, Chief Marriage Counsellor, Family Court, Bandra, Mumbai, commented, "If Coke, Madonna, MTV are here, can divorce, child molestation, AIDS, wife-swapping, sexual promiscuity be far behind?"

Not much is known about how the child of a single parent reacts to an environment in which one parent is missing when the child began his life with both parents. The child begins to unwittingly compare his situation with his classmate who lives with both parents. When the media gave front-page priority to domestic violence in print and on television following reports that O.J. Simpson battered his wife Nicole to death, psychologist Peter Jaffe, co-author of *Children of Battered Women*, found the coverage quite frustrating. "There has been such a focus on him and very little on the two victims and the children," he said.

The growing divorce rate

Mumbai's Tata Institute of Social Sciences' (TISS) research on troubled marriages points out that divorce rates among young couples have grown in magnitude. TISS, which receives over 50 cases a day, blames modern lifestyles, materialistic pursuits and unreasonable expectations as the three key reasons for this disturbing trend. "It is not father-absence versus mother-absence that moulds the child's outlook, but the personality and the attitude of the parent left behind. The way the parent copes with the absence gets easily communicated to the child and determines the way he will cope with it," says Neerja Sharma, lecturer in child development in a Mumbai college, commenting on children who have lost one parent to death.

Smita Gupta's M.Ed. dissertation (Mumbai University) titled *A Psycho-Social Study of School Students Coming from Single-parent Homes in Relation to their Performance at School*, opens up a small world of information offered through similar studies undertaken by Western scholars. F.D. Breslin says that maternal deprivation can lead to listlessness, loss of appetite and retarded mental development. Inadequate mothering can lead to deficiencies in the way a child is held, fed and responded to.

(Continued on page 19)

**Mumbai's
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The hitchhiker's guide to parenting

Ah, so you think you are a super sensitive, evolved parent, do you? Here's a teenager telling you that 'what should be' in your head, may not have a mirror image in theirs.

Gauri Kedia tells parents when to step in, and when to er, step back!

I'm not great at the advice. Can I interest you in a sarcastic comment?

– Chandler Bing

What's good parenting?

Sure, ask a teenager that. What could possibly go wrong? She definitely knows what she's talking about. It's definitely not counterintuitive to ask a child (yes, teenagers still count as children) this. Wisdom comes from unexpected places, as you say. So stop expecting things from me!

As far as I can tell, it doesn't matter if you don't do the voices in Peter Pan or conveniently fall asleep while reading Harry Potter. In fact, that may just make your kid want to read it him or herself. And reading is a good thing, right kids?

Just be

What matters is the big stuff (for kids, I mean. Most of our 'big stuff' is downright miniscule when put into perspective). Like when they don't get the role they wanted in the school play, or didn't get to play at a football match. Just being there is usually enough; we don't need a big motivational speech, it'll probably go straight over our heads. But just knowing that help is there if we need it, is plenty. Throw in a hug or two, maybe a nice dinner, and you're set.

At a younger age, it's probably better to keep it simple with the advice – children work in mysterious ways. At the same time, it's better if they understand why they shouldn't touch a kettle on the stove rather than just being told to stay away. Otherwise the more rebellious ones may decide to get adventurous. As for punishments, all I can say is to not make them stand in a corner near a window - it's too distracting, and the birds on the wires outside make you

forget you're being punished at all, which somewhat diminishes the whole 'think on your sins' idea.

The first few years are good for filling the family album, and while they come with temper tantrums and runny noses, they're a walk in the proverbial garden compared to what comes next.

The premonition of the teenage years

Enter the teenage years. (Imagine your favourite apocalypse music playing in the background). Now, you might just get lucky and your kid may not have a rebellious phase, or like most parents, you spend your time wondering how kids of this generation got so snarky and cynical. You weren't like this when back when, were you? It's hard not to roll your eyes, especially when we do it so much. And then there's the whole "nobody understands me phase", that you can't even begin to comprehend. Now, you can either give them space, or you can get involved. I have it on good authority that option two is what we in teenage terms call a bad idea. That's basically a regular idea, only the light bulb that just popped into existence over your head glows red and makes "game over" sounds. Best case scenario, you find out what's bothering them. And there'll be pigs replacing aeroplanes as well. But, more likely, you'll hear a whole lot of "NOTHING, I'M FINE!" (imagine the whiny tone). It's probably going to be hard to refrain from saying "One day you'll realise how stupid you sound."

Again, I've heard that doing what we teenagers call 'backing off' may help. This may seem simple, but it's harder than it looks, depending on the moodiness levels of said teenager. Consider a scale of one to ten for the moodiness meter. Now, discard it. Teenagers don't often go

At a younger age, it's probably better to keep it simple with the advice – children work in mysterious ways. At the same time, it's better if they understand why they shouldn't touch a kettle on the stove rather than just being told to stay away.

below levels of twelve or thirteen. Now, backing off doesn't mean just not asking how their day went. It means no subtle involvement either: don't suggest books like "chicken soup for the blah blah blah" or find a convenient opening at dinner to talk about this great article you read about teenagers doing great things before they hit college. Or the next thing you know, they've locked themselves in their room and you can hear them breaking the 'don't panic' sign you surreptitiously hung in their room. Pretty scary huh? Well, at least they're getting their protein, right?

While the teenage years of your child are the worst of your life, the bright side is that you can stock up on ammunition to blackmail them with, in fact, realise how stupid they sounded. However, the worst thing you can do to your child, toddler or teenager, is to compare them to another kid. They really couldn't care less how well the next door neighbour's kid did in their board exams. While you sit across them at the dinner table, telling them how great that other kid is, there are a thousand things your kid isn't telling you, like how (ahem) 'irresponsible' said prodigy is. I say irresponsible, but you can replace it with just about any curse word you like. That won't even be close to the curse words your teenage son or daughter is saying in their head. Yes, all of the kids know curse words, and no, it isn't because of all those doggone video games they play these days.

But I digress. The point is, comparing your children to others puts unnecessary pressure on them, and I'm sure you don't want them to resent you more than usual, so lay off (this can be used interchangeably with 'back off'). If they're in their teenage years, this will especially rub them the wrong way. How can they be special snowflakes if the kid next door is always one upping them? It's probably hard to do this, seeing as you've been doing it for a while, but at some point you have to stop back seat driving. At some point, you have to stop 'helping', because, though you have the best intentions, I don't think it means what you think it means. Put simply, "help" = "interfering" = omg, leave me alone. You'll have to stop sooner or later, and sooner is often better. Sometimes a 'hang in there' is better than a heart to heart, but not always. Sometimes, you do need to step in and find out what's wrong, but for the most part, teenagers can go solo as long as they know whose side you're on. (Just to be clear, it's theirs.)

And if you think you're doing it wrong, join the club. ■



Gauri Kedia is a 16-year-old student living in Mumbai. Her passions are reading and writing.

Children of a lesser parent

(Continued from page 17)

Such children are more prone to allergies, emotional disturbances and poor motor or intellectual development. Agatha Bowley says maternal deprivation can lead to bedwetting in a child unless he accepts his present guardian as his 'mother' even if it is the father.

But given the huge number of single parents in India and growing by hundreds every day, it is impossible to draw any definite conclusions about the child of a single parent and the impact it has on his psyche, his upbringing and his achievements and failures, or neither. The family as a living, evolving social institution, is facing its most difficult challenge in the history of man as a social animal. One of its major challenges is a total redefinition of the term 'family' in the light of changes in marriage as the social institution that forms the very base of an integrated family unit. Apart from the death of the spouse within the first ten years of marriage,

desertion, separation, divorce of both or either parent are the elements that demand a redefining of family values and a shifting of parental responsibilities towards the children. It is, therefore, necessary to respect these diversities and changes, without always questioning them without logic, and to promote concepts based on family rights and responsibilities.

Gupta laments the lack of research on the effects of parental break-up on the development of the child. "What little research there is," says she "is largely confined to self-selected, atypical groups, namely those seen in psychiatric wards and child-guidance clinics. We do not know for example, whether it damages the child the least to grow up in an unhappy home with both parents, or, alone, with one parent where there is no remarriage, or with one natural parent and a step-parent." ■



Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.

The happiness quotient

*Parents go through a range of emotions when they realise their child's disability, whatever it may be. But everything has a silver lining, says **R. Priya**, whose son lives with borderline Asperger's. Her son has taught her to take life a day at a time and be happy, she says.*

OUR bathroom at home has apart from sundry toiletries, little bottles of different, coloured liquids. I dare not tamper with them though they occupy precious real estate. Coloured liquids? If my nine-year-old read this, he would indignantly correct me, "These are magic potions, mama"! A lot of effort has gone into making these, er, potions. The blue one is a mix of various inks sourced from decapitating a number of ballpoint pen refills and also some soap water. The green one I suspect and hope (!) is some green paint along with some liquid soap and toothpaste. To my son, each of these represents some hours of testing various colour palettes and coming up with the winning mixture. Who am I to disturb these wonders of alchemy?

My son has proven me wrong on so many things that if he wants his magic potions to be left undisturbed till the end of eternity, that's exactly what I will do. I am not about to question his wisdom. His wisdom is infinite. Who says that paints and toothpaste and soaps and yes, perfumes are intended only for their specific, boring purposes? He once told me, as a very tiny tot, "I just want to laugh and be happy". These experiments of his make him happy. So there.

My son has been different from the word go. He met all his developmental milestones with flying colours, but insisted on doing things his own way. He could very well recognise his alphabets as a three-year-old, but would show them to me by contorting his body! One can imagine his little figure twisting up to depict a C or a Y. But in my haste to make sure that he was on par with his peers, I ignored these mostly and used my blinkered vision to insist he put pencil to paper. The completely insensitive playschool he went to also insisted on the same. In fact, they once called me for a meeting, where they gravely informed me that he wasn't really getting the phonetics! He was barely two and half at that time! My regret? Instead of laughing in their faces, I pushed my son hard to 'excel'. But no one could dispute that he was well-spoken. I remember his Jr. Kg. teacher telling me how he turned to his desk partner who



Children living with Asperger's are often bullied

wouldn't speak, and said matter-of-factly, "I think he has lost his voice!"

His fantasy land

He was and still is, often in his la-la land. As a toddler, he insisted the swimming pool was full of sharks and whales which he had to battle. The sticks in the garden were easily turned into various weapons with which to protect everyone. But most people who spoke to him, exclaimed over his speech. 'How well he speaks', is something we heard often.

But being in your own world has its own repercussions. As he grew, and while around him, his peers were avid participants of organised games and sports, mine only wanted to play 'chor police', 'sword fight' and 'let's find the owl' games. Often, he was shunned by his peers for disrupting their games. He wanted to be in the company of kids, which child wouldn't? But since he wasn't much interested in following rules, he ended up disrupting.

In the time-honoured way of people who

He was and still is, often in his la-la land. As a toddler, he insisted the swimming pool was full of sharks and whales which he had to battle. The sticks in the garden were easily turned into various weapons with which to protect everyone.

like to isolate anyone even remotely different, my son was quite often bullied, called 'dumb' for not following the rules while playing sports like cricket and football. It would break my heart to see him playing alone, though truth speaking, he seemed just fine by himself, looking for owls in the garden corner and writing about the same. Each day differed though. There were some days when the others played unstructured games and he would come home glowing with happiness. Each evening that I watched him go down, I marveled at his enthusiasm and eagerness. Never mind that he could be badly isolated and rejected. Going down to the garden was a given. I also marvelled at his ability to remain so positive and happy in the face of such antagonism. While playing with his peers made him happiest, he was almost equally happy playing with much younger kids. Everything was a journey of discovery. A small pebble with a smooth surface could excite him as much as a Luke Skywalker light saber. He managed to convert at least 4-5 kids into fans of Star Wars and now, Minecraft. I thanked the higher powers for giving him the temperament to live each day as it came.

Seeking help

Yet, we sensed, he needed some help. His academic record was never great, despite his obvious intelligence and knowledge. We decided to seek professional help. A clinical edu-psycho analysis finally suggested that he could be experiencing borderline Asperger's Syndrome, which is part of the Autism spectrum. He was recommended Occupational Therapy (OT).

We learnt that Asperger's affects the social skills of a person, their interaction with their peers and society, and can cause low self-esteem due to constant isolation and lack of friends. Since they aren't very good at following instructions, kids experiencing this are often scolded in class and don't do well in assessments, further bringing down their confidence. We shared the diagnosis with our son's school, which fortunately, has very empathetic and experienced counsellors. Our son's counsellor spoke to his class teacher and put in place certain rules which would help him in class like being made to sit in the front, where there is less distraction, writing his assessments separately, repeating of instructions and so on.

Simultaneously, we started his OT too, which focused on exercises to tone his body, making him less fidgety as also listening, interacting and following instructions, one of the most critical elements of group play. We can already see this

bearing fruit. He is learning to forge his way in groups, even where there are bullies. He tries to win over at least a few friends by talking to them about Minecraft or carrying some sweets to share. When he brings his friends over on a weekday to play on the ipad, I never have the heart to remind him that it is not Sunday ipad day. I just quietly hand over the gadget with a strict reminder about time.

Perversely, I feel happy when I hear him expressing indignation to a friend or arguing about which game to play. I feel he is finally learning to negotiate his way around, instead of being summarily thrown out of play groups and taking it in the chin. Having said that, even today, he is often alone in the garden. He seems quite fine with that too.

The one big lesson I have learnt through my son is – being alone is fine! The dictum of 'love your own company' applies not just to adults, but it applies to young kids too. Any kid who can spend time on his own, can amuse himself for an hour or two without resorting to crankiness, is a star kid.

My learning

The one big lesson I have learnt through my son is – being alone is fine! The dictum of 'love your own company' applies not just to adults, but it applies to young kids too. Any kid who can spend time on his own, can amuse himself for an hour or two without resorting to crankiness, is a star kid. The grandmother of one of my son's playmates expressed shock and horror at my son playing on his own. She labeled him 'a very lonely child'. I was taken aback. My son, despite all his travails, has always been happy and full of beans. I replied to her that if he can spend time on his own, he is sorted, an answer which didn't seem to satisfy her!

Life will throw various adversities at us. Perhaps in my son's case, the bullying and rejection by his peers, has taught him something. Or perhaps it hasn't. My son is not a robot. I know that he is hurt by some of the behaviours. But he lives one day at a time. A gift of his Asperger's I think. He doesn't

share many of his concerns with me. But when he shares his joys, more infrequent than I would like, I realise how the presence of injustices are left unsaid.

As a mother, it has been a pain in the very soul to see my son struggle. But finding help for him has not just helped him, but has helped us to see his seeming 'disability' in a truly positive light. Also, he shows us everyday that happiness can be sought in the most mundane situations and events. You don't have to wait for happiness to come to you. You can make it happen, any day, any moment, and everywhere. ■

R. Priya is a freelance journalist and a proud mother to a child with borderline Asperger's. Her son has taught her to live life one day at a time.

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The many majesties of Mehrauli

Delhi, as we know it, has several layers and nuances, not immediately apparent to the unseeking eye. One of the layers, a very distinct one, is the Mehrauli Archaeological Park which has tombs, palaces, stepwells and loving tributes of monuments to great kings of dynasties and long-forgotten paramours. Open your eyes and your heart to this region in Delhi which should be eagerly sought and devoured, but rarely is.



The Qutub Minar, the most famous resident of the Mehrauli (Photo: Rangan Datta)

I wish I could paint...draw, even if only in monochrome, outline the world around me and the several others I have had the good fortune of visiting. With illustrations would come pictures of places. Yes, yes; there are photos, I know, but my sketches would not just be representations of how these places are to an impersonal, robotic, optical eye. They would be how my eye sees them. Not just light reflected through lenses but light filtered through memories and understanding and then mixed with all the other senses, culminating in a visual that is more than just colourful dust and metal.

But, alas! The fates in their incomprehensible wisdom have restricted my sketching skills to mere characters – only 26 inscription strong – which permit only so many variations of which I know so few; rendering me ill-equipped to describe or depict the grand adventure of being alive in this world.

It is with this forewarning, that everything you are to read does only a fraction of justice to the experience of being there and treading these paths, that I shall take you on a walk within what we today call as Delhi - a geographic region that has come to represent the capital of India for over a millennium.

The many Delhis

Plurality is encountered in Delhi as frequently as one does

VIP cars. Its name is itself a testament to the pluralities that thrive here. Its many meanings speaking of its many histories and in that one word encompassing the many immortal *avatars* that coexist simultaneously, often overlapping in a coalescing symbiosis, rendering them indistinguishable at the seams; moulded together as one continuous entity.

Its oldest ancestry derives from records so ancient that it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. The first city to have been founded in the region of Delhi is equated by those with the belief, to be the Pandava capital of Indraprastha. As per legend, the Pandavas burnt and cleared the Khandavaprastha forest and established a city there. This city was modelled on the heavenly city of Lord Indra and is said to have surpassed even that in beauty and grandeur. Despite excavations in the area considered to be where Indraprastha would have been most likely built, no archaeological evidence of an Indraprastha were unearthed, relegating the Pandavas and its capital to realms of fantasy.

The oldest inhabitation archaeologists have uncovered are from the Lower Palaeolithic era or the old stone age, which are conservatively estimated to be 200,000 years old, could be as much as 3.3 million years old! Whatever be its ancient origins, human civilisation in the area is universally accepted to have existed by the 6th century BC. Since then, it is



The Jahaz Mahal (Photo: Rangan Datta)

acknowledged through archaeological remnants that at least seven major cities existed in and around the region of Delhi with the present capital of New Delhi, being the eighth Delhi in human memory. Yet, whence the name Delhi or its phonetic similes came in being and how, is a matter of greatly disputed yet riveting debate.

As per one school of thought, Yudhishthira of the Mahabharata was succeeded by 30 generations of his brother Arjun's descendants before the last of the line was overthrown by his minister – Visarwa. Visarwa was ousted by the Gotamvanas dynasty who were subdued by the Mauryas in the first century BC. A common view is that the name originated from Raja Dhilu or Dilu of the Mauryan dynasty, who reigned in the first century BC and founded a city in these environs and the various names by which the city has been known – Dhilika, Delhi, Dilli, Dillipur and Dhilli have been corruptions of the king's names. Ashokan edicts found in the area lend weight to this hypothesis.

The history of Delhi, however, may be said to begin with Anang Pal who founded the Tomar dynasty in the eighth century CE. It is said that in his reign, a learned brahmin disclosed that the foot of the pillar was driven deep into the earth, such that it rested on the head of the serpent Vasuki, the king of serpents who holds the world on his hood. To verify this, legend says that the king had the pillar dug up on and on finding blood, tried to refix it but it remained loose or *dhila* and from this comes the name Dhili.

It was the Tomars who built the first of the seven medieval cities of Delhi when Anang Pal II built the Lal Kot – the first fort of Delhi; presently situated between Sanjay Van and Mehrauli. Another school of thought believes that it was Anang Pal II who brought the iron pillar from Udaygiri in Madhya Pradesh and affixed it outside his fort and since it was not fixed properly, it began being called *Dheeli Killi* - (loose nail). Another



A signage at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park (Photo: Rangan Datta)

Rajput clan – the Chauhans defeated the Tomars in the 12th century CE and Prithviraj Chauhan (1149-1192) popularly known as Rai Pithora, extended the old city of Lal Kot. This extended city came to be known as Qila Rai Pithora.



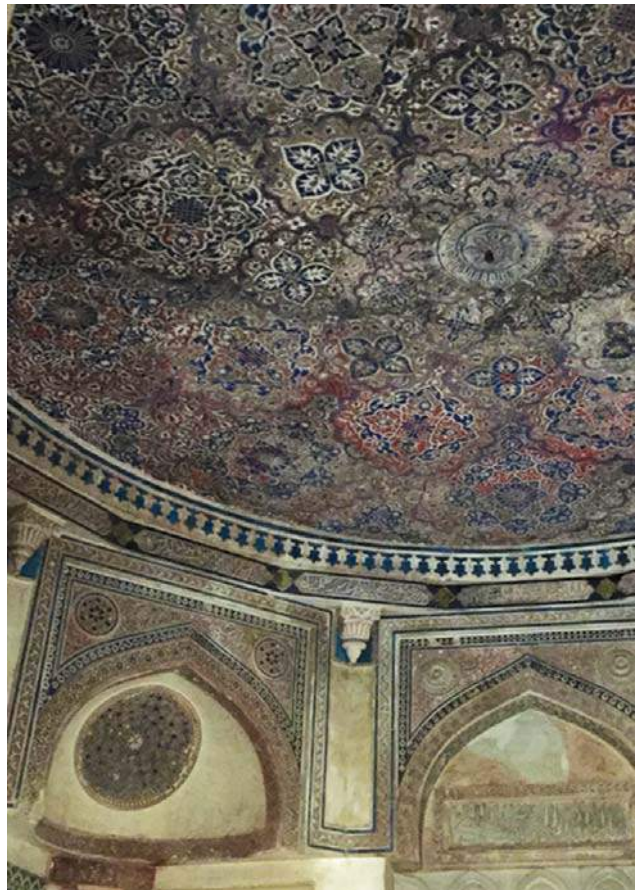
Tomb of Quli Khan

From Qila Rai Pithora, Delhi became a Sultanate of the Mamluks and the Siri of Allaudin Khilji. The first Tughlaq – Ghiyasuddin made it Tughlakabad, and his son Mohammad bin Tughlaq walled in the suburbs between Siri and Qila Rai

Pithora creating Jahapanah. Firoz Shah Tughlaq then built Firozabad. The city around Purana Qila housing Dinpanah built by Humayun, and Shergarh of Sher Shah Suri. The Muhgals added their own touch with Shah Jehan founding



Khan Shahid Cenotaph with true arch and Balban tomb in background



Inside Jamali Tomb

Dimensions : 20 x 27 cms



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MATCHSTICK



Tomb of Ghiyasuddin Balban, the last ruler of the Slave Dynasty, which contains the first true arch constructed in India (Photo: Rangan Datta)

Shahjahanabad – the current Old Delhi. The British made it the capital of the Indian Empire in 1911 and Edwin Lutyens designed a capital for the empire – New Delhi.

Though this cannot be said officially, since whatever be the reason, Delhi was destroyed so often, it could have been called *Dahal Uthi* or *Dahali*; meaning 'shook up'. Or it can be as simple as having derived from *Dehleez* or *Dehali* - 'threshold' - and symbolic as the city that is the gateway to the Indo-Gangetic Plain.

While today, Indraprastha is banished into the twilight of fan fiction and confined to a vague closet of mythology, the other cities of Delhi poke out from its earth obstinately, driven perhaps by the fear of being locked in the same closet. Amongst all of these, there is one plot of Delhi's earth that holds within its loosely defined boundaries a piece of every Delhi from known antiquity – Mehrauli.

The many Mehraulis

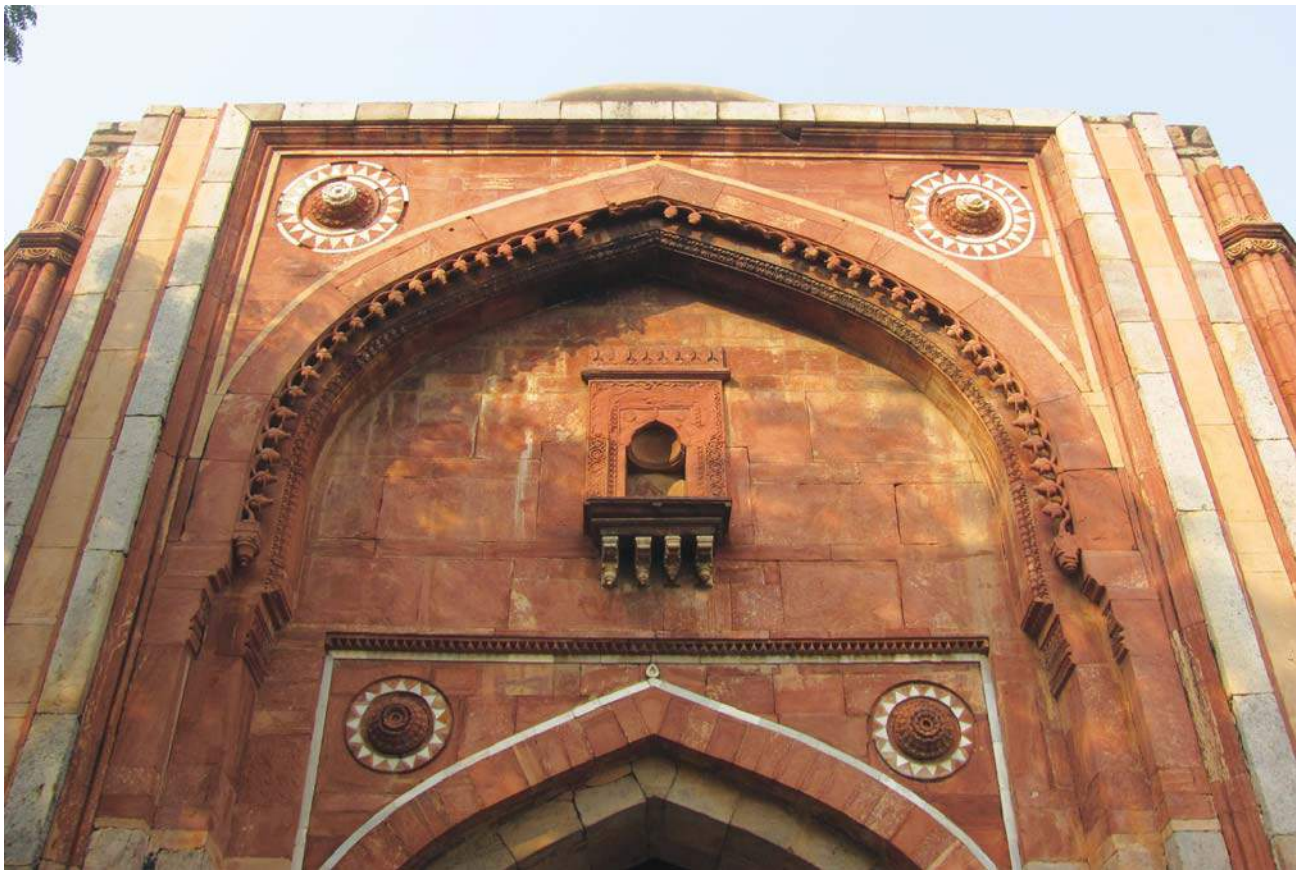
Mehrauli village is probably the oldest continuously inhabited area of Delhi, evolving over several centuries. In a continuing vein of plurality of opinion and views, Mehrauli too holds its own with several attributes attempting to justify its name. While one holds its name as having derived from a settlement of Mihirawali – Home of Mihir, founded by King Mihir Bhoja, probably contemporary to the Tomars. Another belief points to the Qutub Minar – the most famous resident of Mehrauli – being an astronomical observatory to the famous astronomer

Varahmihir from where the area gets its name. Still another legend is that the name is derived from the Mehrawali Mai (Mehr = blessings), whose temple is close to Adam Khan's tomb. Yet another interpretation credits the name to be a corruption of 'mehr-e-wali' (wali = custodian, helper) indicating perhaps the residence of a holy man who conferred blessings.

Mehrauli, as a current geographical entity lies in the south-western district of Delhi and represents a constituency in the legislative assembly. Within its thinly guised veil of a suburb of a modern day capital city, is a sprinkling of monuments which appear to be placed randomly, but are in fact the setting of a game as simple and ingenious as join-the-dots, and when correctly looked at, build a road map of Delhi's history.

Temples, mosques, tombs, step-wells, palaces and forts form the dots that serve as time warps. Along with the Yogmaya temple, Meherawali Mai temple, Adam Khans tomb are tombs of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II and his son Akbar II. The Bagichi Ki Masjid, Madhi Masjid, bastion of Lal Kot, Gandhak ki baoli, Zafar Mahal, Jahaz Mahal and innumerable such relics of time remain the landmarks that serve as local GPS and as sieves of an incredibly plural identity.

Within the larger puzzle of Mehrauli is another smaller puzzle which forms on joining its dots, the picture of an earnest custodian of the past. And like with all earnest custodians, their labour of love often lies in the shadow of more flamboyant neighbours. So while Mehrauli is a name one immediately



Entrance to the Jamali Mosque

associates with the environs of Delhi and the Qutub Minar, it is within the radius of that great shaft that lies – eloquent in its earnestness, a sanctum sanctorum of Delhi’s heritage – a microcosm of its history - the Mehrauli Archaeological Park.

The many within Mehrauli Archaeology Park

The Mehrauli Archaeological Park (MAP) is the name given by the Archaeological Survey of India to the area near the Qutub Complex in Mehrauli which contains over a hundred historically significant monuments representing each era of Delhi’s history. It is a woody area spread over a couple of hundred acres abutting the World Heritage Site of the Qutub Complex, and in relative seclusion allows the present to walk in freely and mingle with the past, letting yet another level build on its multi-layered offering.

On first thought, the MAP would strike a picture of many monuments huddled together like peas in a pod, it is only once inside that one can gather just how big 200 acres can be! While one can drive through some parts, especially the arterial path that runs the length of the site, the park is best explored on foot; and though it seems that one can explore by oneself, it is easy to get lost as well as miss out on many interesting and significant details. The best way is to have someone who knows the lay of the land, to walk along. In my case, I chose the good people at India City Walks, who guided me through the wormholes of time travel in the park. While the highly recommended walk in the park is designed by them

to keep visitors’ legs happy over chronology, this narrative would be better understood through a linear ride down time.

The Rajput era

The oldest surviving city of Delhi – the Lal Kot of Anang Pal II is known mainly by its fortifications which have stood for over a millennia. Expanded further into Qila Rai Pithora, the original city has faded into traces of forgotten memories, sections of its once snaking walls crop up in the most unlikely of places. One such section of the wall stands guard within the premises of the MAP, hidden away from sight in the foliage just as it stays elusive from memories of those who live in the vicinity.

The Delhi Sultanate era

The area of Mehrauli came into its own during the rule of the Delhi Sultanate – five unrelated dynasties that ruled from Delhi till 1526. This was especially true in the era of the first of these – the Mamluks. The word Mamluk literally means ‘owned’, and finds its roots in the slave trade industry. Children would often be sold into slavery and a soldier of slave origin who had converted to Islam would be called Mamluk. The first king of the Mamluk dynasty was Qutb ud-din Aibak, whose name garlands the Qutub Complex.

After finding himself spared by Prithviraj Chauhan, Muhammad Ghori returned and defeated the Rajputs in the second Battle of Tarain. After conquering the Qila Rai Pithora, Ghori left again for Khorasan in Persia, leaving the provinces in



The beautiful Jamali-Kamali Mosque (Photo: Rangan Datta)

the Northwest India under Qutb – his slave general – for consolidation. It is said that Muhammad Ghori treated his slaves like sons and trained them in military practices and in administration. In 1206, Ghori was assassinated and being issueless, it was almost willed that his slaves would take over his many dominions. In such manner, the north-west Indian part of Ghori's kingdom fell to his slave Qutb who soon received manumission and proclaimed himself emperor. Qutb ruled from Lahore, where he died due to injuries sustained in a polo accident.

After Qutb, Aram Shah – whose relationship with Qutb is unclear – assumed rulership in Lahore. However, the powerful nobles invited his son-in-law Iltutmish to take charge at Delhi. Iltutmish ascended the throne at Delhi and defeated Aram Shah in battle, making himself Sultan. While Qutb ud-din Aibak was the first to use the title of Sultan, the Slave Dynasty is believed by many to begin from him as he received the Caliph's investiture and consolidated power in the region for the Mamluks. The tomb of Iltutmish, which is the first Muslim mausoleum built in India, is also in Mehrauli.

The Mamluks were in a lull after the death of Iltutmish and it was after five short reigns that Ghiyas-ud-din Balban ascended the throne. A slave bought by Iltutmish, he had advanced swiftly in his career and at the age of sixty, he proclaimed himself Sultan. He ruled with an iron fist and was



The notorious Adham Khan's tomb (Photo: Rangan Datta)



Tomb of Jamali and Kamali



so effective that he is spoken of in the same breath as Iltutmish. He construed a theory of kingship to suit his ends, and titled himself as *zil-i-ilahi* or shadow of God.

He maintained a magnificent court to impress and awe the people who called on him. In public and private, he maintained a sober, even temperament so that he was never seen in a non-serious mood. He even gave up drinking for the same reason. He also insisted on the ceremony of *sijada* (prostration) and *paibos* (kissing of the monarch's feet) in the court. The legacy he left behind after twenty years of rule was of greater power in the monarchy, which would set the customs and practices for many years to come.

The Tomb of Balban is situated within the MAP. It's a square building with spacious rooms on either side. It is approached through an entrance gateway with column and beam structure, which is commonly seen in pre-Turkish Indian architecture. Architecturally it is seen as an important structure, as it represents the first in the amalgamation of features of Indo-Islamic architecture. It is almost unanimously accepted as the first major monument where a true arch and a true dome were built for the first time in India. The dome however hasn't survived and it is only within walls of true arches that Balban today lies buried. The stone sarcophagus that must have once stood over the grave has also disappeared. The royal tomb today lies forlorn, surrounded by the ruins of an urbanised late medieval settlement.



A view of the Rajon ki Baoli

It is believed that the building was not designed as a royal tomb, but was in fact a monument called Dar-ul-Amaan or House of Refuge built in 1280 AD. Ibn Batuta describes it thus:

‘One of his acts of generosity was this: he built a house to which he gave the name, “Abode of Security”. All debtors who entered it had their debts discharged, and whoever in fear fled there for refuge found safety. If a man who had killed another took refuge there, the Sultan bought off the friends of the deceased; and if any delinquent fled there he satisfied those

who pursued him. The Sultan was buried in this building and I have visited his tomb.’

In a room adjoining the burial chamber of Balban, lies a large cenotaph covered with red sandstone. It is believed that this is the grave of Balban’s eldest and favourite son, Muhammad who died fighting the invading Mongols. After death, he was praised as a martyr and given the title of ‘Khan Shahid’. Folk memory remembers Khan Shahid as a very pious prince. Balban however, is remembered as a very cruel man whose way to the throne was fraught with violence and bloodletting. Many see this as a reason why Balban is cursed with an afterlife under the sky with no stone to mark his grave. While the grave of his son Khan Shahid is visited by many and worshipped by leaving offerings of incense, money, fragrant oils, sweets and marigold flowers

Muiz-ud-din Qaiqabad, the grandson of Balban was the next and last Mamluk Sultan and he moved the capital from Mehrauli to Kilkori on the banks of the Yamuna. Even though the slave dynasty ended in 1290 with the murder of Qaiqabad, the other dynasties contributed significantly to the architecture of Mehrauli. Qaiqabad was murdered by Firuz-ud-din Khilji who came from the line of Bakhtiyar Khilji and were vassals since the time of Qutb-ud-din Aibak up to Balban. Ala-ud-din Khilji, the second Khilji ruler built monuments in the Qutub complex and Firoz Shah of the ensuing Tughlaq dynasty writes in the Futuhat-i-Firozshahi that the four arches of the entrance are all that remain of the tomb. Firoz Shah carried out extensive repairs in the area and especially at Balban’s tomb where he writes he had sandalwood doors and curtains installed.



Jamali tomb courtyard



The mosque above Rajon ki Baoli

The Sayyid dynasty followed that of the Tughlaqs. Khizr Khan was the governor of Multan under Firoz Shah Tughlaq and when Timur attacked Delhi, he sided with the Mongols against the Tughlaqs. Timur sacked Delhi in 1398. Claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali, the Sayyid ruled for a short period from 1414 to 1451 when Alam Shah abdicated the throne to Bahlul Lodi.

Bahlul Lodi began the last dynasty of the Delhi Sultanates – the Lodi dynasty. The family of Lodi had served under the Tughlaqs and then the Sayyids. Bahlul Lodi had a long reign and was a vigorous leader. His son ruled as Sikander Lodi after his death, followed by his youngest son Ibrahim Lodi, and it is in his reign that a major monument was built in the area of the MAP – the Rajon ki Baoli.

Rajon ki Baoli, as the name suggests, is a four level stepwell with steps at one end and a circular well at the other. There are long covered corridors along the length of the step well and rooms behind the arcade that would undoubtedly have given shade and shelter to visitors. It is quite an elaborate affair with decorative features and an attached mosque and tomb. While the name suggests it was built with by masons (Rajon) or for masons, an inscription on the tomb tells us that it was built by Daulat Khan during the reign of Sikandar Lodi in 1506, over the remains of one Khwaja Mohammad. The tomb is in the form of a *chhatra* or pillared kiosk. Daulat Khan himself is buried in the tomb.

However, in the late 19th or early 20th century, a group of masons started living in it as places like this afforded good

shelter. They were eventually evacuated by the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1920s, their short stint is perhaps responsible for this nomenclature. Just as remarkable as the oddity in the nomenclature is the very digging of the well in an area like Mehrauli which is within the Delhi Ridge of the Aravali mountains, and digging through sheer rock to get at water is definitely a commendable effort. If only more could be done to honour it with clean water.

The Mughal era

The reign of the headstrong Ibrahim Lodi was one filled with rebellions from various parts of his empire. In addition was the threat of the Mughal Babur harassing his north-western borders. Finally, in the First Battle of Panipat, Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi and won Delhi from him. The Mughals would go on to form an empire that would rule for almost three and a half centuries. While the world was changing without, it couldn't have done so without leaving a mark in the MAP - the mosque and tomb of Jamali-Kamali.

Jamali (meaning good looking) was the nom-de-plume of Hamid bin Fazlullah – a merchant turned Sufi who lived through the end of the Lodi and beginning of the Mughal period. Jamali was a well travelled poet and favourite of four successive rulers of Delhi. From Sikander Lodi to Babur's son Humayun, he found favour at all courts. He accompanied Humayun during the conquest of Gujarat, and died there in 1535.

As was common practice in the medieval era, the place where the saints lived would become their tombs. The chamber in which Jamali lived was converted into a tomb and he was



Metcalfe's retreat called the Dilkusha

interred there in 1536. The tomb, however, was built in the period between 1528 and 1529. While very plain looking from the outside, stepping into the tomb is like entering a veritable jewel box. The ceiling comes alive with tile ornamentation in a burst of colour. Immediately under the ceiling are two *ghazals* penned by Jamali himself. Verses from the Quran are also inscribed on the walls of the tomb. Along with Jamali is another tomb thought to be occupied by Kamali, who by various accounts is known as his brother, spiritual guide, fellow poet and even lover.

The Jamali Mosque is situated adjacent to the tomb in another walled enclosure. While larger congregational mosques were the feature of the earlier Delhi Sultans, they gave way to smaller single aisle mosques in the Lodi period – a style that was continued by the Mughals. Hence, the Jamali mosque is unique to have been built in the Lodi style with features that appear in mosques earlier yet considered the first example of Mughal architecture in India. Somewhere along the way in time, the two monuments started being called by the rhyming expression of Jamali-Kamali.

Approximately a century later, within the precincts of the MAP, at the very edge of what was Lal Kot, is built a tomb of Muhammad Quli Khan – the brother of Adham Khan; both of whom were sons of his wet nurse Maham Anga, and foster

brothers of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

The British era

With Shah Jahan building his capital of Shahjahanabad much further north than the historic Delhi settlements, and then the prolonged campaign of Aurangzeb in the South, the attention moved away from Delhi for a while – until it came back, that is. During the time when the British were wanting to extend their toe-grip over the subcontinent, Sir Thomas Metcalfe was the last British Resident at the Mughal Court of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II.

Sir Thomas Metcalfe purchased from the descendants of Quli Khan his tomb and had it renovated into a retreat which he also rented out to honeymooning couples. This retreat of landscaped terraces, gardens and guesthouses came to be known as Dilkusha (Delight of the Heart). In what seems like a strange choice of residence, Sir Thomas removed from the main tomb the cenotaph, and used the chamber as a dining room. Additionally, he added several rooms to the outside of the tomb chamber. Landscaping was done by introducing water channels. Other old buildings were converted into guest rooms, staff quarters and stables. Within the grounds, he also built follies. One of them is within the MAP, opposite the Jamali Kamali mosque.



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The Folly at Dilkusha

Many more Delhis

While the seven cities of Delhi are widely spoken of, many authorities take smaller towns and strongholds into account and with that they claim that it changed site as much as 15 times. And this is just from what we know. Yet.

Imagine how many more Delhis could be lurking within...waiting to be discovered..to jut out from the layers of forgetfulness carrying with it another mystery....another Delhi.

India City Walks is organising the Mehrauli Festival in the third week of November 2016. To know more, log on to www.indiacitywalks.com

Former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru spoke quite apt words in a description that is as true for the Mehrauli Archaeological Park as it is for Delhi -

“We face the good and the bad of India in Delhi city which has been the grave of many empires and the nursery of a republic. What a tremendous story of hers! Here the tradition of millennia of our history surrounds us at every step, and the procession of innumerable generations passes by before our eyes”■



The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.

Our Last Six Issues

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“I was heartbroken when I saw how dairy cows were made to deliver a baby in order to keep producing milk and that every time they did, their babies were taken away from them to keep them lactating at maximum yields.”



When **Aishwarya Viswanath** saw the cruelty cows are put through to provide us with the so-called essentials like milk and *ghee*, she turned into a vegan overnight – a concept that’s slowly but steadily gaining popularity and acceptance in the Indian society. The 27-year-old, however, did not stop there

and went a step further to establish ‘The Real Green Café’, Pune’s first ever vegan café, **A.S. Iyer** finds out more about her journey.

Tell us about your childhood, what was your perspective on vegetarianism all along before you turned vegan.

My childhood has been a very dynamic and vibrant one. Coming from a defence family, it’s been full of travelling from one city to another. I have lived my childhood in different air force stations across different cities which has helped me a lot in terms of being a liberal and open-minded person. We, as a family were vegetarians and followed a pretty simple diet all along.

I have been into animal adoptions as well as carrying out animal rescue operations for the past eight years now. My interest and passion towards animals brought me in touch with several animal activists across the globe, thanks to Facebook and other social media platforms. It was one of these days that I happened to stumble upon a facebook post shared by a friend that highlighted, through an undercover investigation,

how cows were treated in the dairy industry in the United States of America. I was appalled and disgusted to say the least. But there was some faith still left in me in the Indian dairy industry. I was sure that Indians would definitely be more compassionate towards cows, after all many of us worship cow and call her Gau Mata. And to find that solace that cows are treated with kindness and compassion, I conducted my individual research on the Indian dairy industry.

I was heartbroken when I saw how dairy cows were made to deliver a baby in order to keep producing milk and that every time they did, their babies were taken away from them to keep them lactating at maximum yields. Their reproductive organs were grossly misused by means of artificial insemination where workers used their bare hands to perform artificial insemination. These are, by the way, industry norms and accepted by the animal husbandary departments. Once



The Real Green Café, Pune

they have outlived their profitability, these cows are sent to slaughterhouses. A cow's average life spans about 20 years, but due to the severe trauma that they are put through, their average life span is just about four years, after which they are sent away to slaughterhouses.

Furious and depressed, would be understatement to express what I felt at that point and I decided to give up on all milk-based products and turn vegan overnight. I couldn't live with myself if I would have continued to be a part of such holocaust of animals. Since then, there has been no looking back. It has been five years now.

What was your family's reaction to your decision to turn vegan overnight? What were some of the immediate repercussions of your decisions in terms of daily home food?

Luckily, the transition to veganism happened while I was in United Kingdom to pursue my education, where I could embrace the vegan way of life pretty easily as there were many options available. However, my parents were shocked and not happy about me turning vegan, they felt it was some fad and that I would get over it very soon. I did have severe cravings for some of my favourite dishes, but I somehow controlled it knowing

I enjoyed everything which was vegan without bothering if it was good or bad for me health-wise. But it definitely has given me a lot added benefits in terms of high levels of energy, good immunity, and great, glowing skin.

Have you managed to turn any of your family members vegan?

Except my younger brother Vaibhav, others in my family remain vegetarians. I guess family is the last and hardest to convince sometimes. Though the consumption of milk has greatly reduced in my house, it has not completely stopped. My family enjoys all the food I cook, but still haven't reached the stage where they can give up milk completely. However, I feel I should continue with my work and slowly they will change too. Forcing them will definitely not help in this case.

What kind of changes has veganism brought about into your life?

I turned vegan only for animals, so I really didn't bother much about the healthy aspect of veganism. I enjoyed everything which was vegan without bothering if it was good or bad for me health-wise. But it definitely has given me a lot added benefits in terms of high levels of energy, good immunity, and great, glowing skin.

How did you come up with the idea of setting up The Real Green Café?

From the time I turned vegan, I had a growing need to explore cruelty free alternatives for all of my favourite foods. I was already very fond of baking desserts, and I used to experiment

the truth behind it. When my parents realised that my shift to veganism was serious business, they often used to not tell me or hide about the food they had eaten thinking I would feel bad about it.

The major challenge awaited me in India, about six to eight months after I returned and my dairy-free, UK-imported pantry dried up. Fortunately, most of the dishes my mom cooked were vegan in nature and whatever was not, I would try cooking them myself. Most of my experimentation with food begun during this phase where I was trying to veganise all the dishes.

a lot of baking vegan alternatives. I have a good share balance of some good and some complete disasters in the kitchen while trying out various vegan recipes. Plus, over the years, I developed the desire to own a vegan business, however the idea and inspiration to come up with a vegan food joint came up purely because of the lack of it in Pune. It was not only my struggle to find food devoid of cross contamination but also of many other fellow vegans who experienced similar daily struggles. Well-settled in my corporate work life, I used to do a lot of outreach programmes to educate people about veganism as I believed being vegan alone was not enough, and that I should educate more people. Many people like me were shocked to see how animals were treated and the ill effects of milk on health, but not strong enough in terms of will power to make the switch. However, many fell back to vegetarian alternatives eventually, because of the lack of many vegan options. That is when I decided to start a cafe where everything is vegan and people can enjoy everything without missing out on anything.

With that, I established The Real Green Café in 2014. The name of the café too was thought out consciously after coming to an understanding that by being vegan, you not just help yourself in terms of health, but also the overall environment, help reduce world hunger and a set of issues related to the environment. Thus, being green in real sense from every aspect. Moreover, I truly do believe veganism is the future of food, and it's a passion that's close to my heart for a variety of reasons.

What were the challenges of setting up your café?

I am a Management Accountant by training. The Real Green Café was born purely out of my passion. Having no formal background in the hospitality business was sure a challenge, and the biggest challenge was related to operating a full-fledged cafe. Cooking for friends and family is completely different from doing the same thing on a commercial scale, and that was a daunting task initially. But my training as a management accountant helped me solve any problems related to operation of the café, when they cropped up.

A common misconception that procuring raw materials must be difficult is also not true, because there are no real challenges in procuring the raw materials required in the café since we use the freshest of vegetables and fruits. Moreover, everything in terms of butter and cheese is made in-house using some of the most innovative ingredients, to ensure that we have



all the dairy free alternatives required in preparing a variety of dishes in the café.

As for the market, it is still very new in Pune. People are still unaware of the concept and learning about the difference between vegetarianism and veganism. Luckily though, due to various awareness programmes and a growing concept in the west, veganism is picking up in this part of the world too at a steady pace. The silver lining however, is that many are willing to try out veganism as an alternative.

It's been over a year and a half since you opened the first ever restaurant, how has the experience been, tell us about some of the most important lessons that you learnt over this period.

The experience has been beautiful for me. The Real Green Café is my baby project and a learning journey. Every day has been a new day for me with its own set of challenges and merits. The cafe itself has evolved in this period as a hub for activists, vegans, health freaks and more important, that a 100% vegan food joint can exist and can be successful. Many customers have turned vegan after the cafe started, mainly because they now have an alternative and are not compromising anything in terms of their food.

Plus, I have been able to carry on my work about spreading the word on veganism by hosting a variety of events in the cafe related to health and nutrition, vegan cooking workshops and other eco-friendly

workshops. Most of these events are aimed at helping people choose alternatives to switch to a more sustainable way of living.

What are the other initiatives close to your heart?

Working for animals, all animals including farmed animals and helping people be aware that every animal, and not just their pet, has a right to live respectfully. Once the cafe is well set, I want to start a farm sanctuary where I can work on rescuing all animals including cows, chickens, goats, sheep etc.

Spreading awareness on different eco-friendly alternatives especially recycling and upcycling existing products, has been an initiative close to my heart, besides working for animal rights. ■

The election carnival

*It seems like it's forever election time in India, with state, central and panchayat elections being held at different times across the country. **Prof. Avinash Kolhe** makes a case out for holding elections simultaneously to save cost and effort. Is it feasible?*

LIKE it is in the US, it is election time in India round the year. Elections are being held at some level or the other in some part of the country or the other. We just had Assembly elections in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, etc. Now we are getting ready for Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat.

In addition to Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, Indian voters are called upon to vote in elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). While a super power like the US can afford it, can a developing country like India afford such round-the-year elections?

Simultaneous elections?

This is the issue that was raised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi sometime ago, which needs serious consideration. He said that there is a powerful case for holding the Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and PRI elections on the same day. This would ensure tremendous savings in terms of money and effort. During elections, each party and each candidate has to spend astronomical sums for canvassing. According to one estimate, nearly ₹ eight crores are spent per Lok Sabha constituency in our country. Multiply this amount by 545 seats that we elect, and one gets an idea of the amount involved. Then there are Vidhan Sabha elections and PRI elections which are only slightly less expensive. This is the amount spent by the party and the candidates. Let us add the cost incurred by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to

hold these elections. Due to 73rd and 74th amendment 1993, now each state has its own State Election Commission to hold elections to the PRI bodies. If we add all the relevant figures, the cost is indeed sky-high! In a way, there is nothing new in this suggestion. In fact till 1967, the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections were indeed held on the same day. Only when former PM Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha in 1970, the first mid-term poll had to be held in March 1971. Since then, there has been a disconnect between the time-table of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, adding to the cost of holding them separately. And hence, there is some merit in Modi's suggestion that they should be held on the same day. Let us understand the pros and cons of the issue.

It is admitted that democracy comes at a price. But it should not be prohibitive, which it is today. This is why one has to reconsider the present system and look for less expensive alternatives. On one hand, we have been improving our electoral system with every general election. Now we have Voters' ID cards, EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) for faster vote counting, powerful laws against booth capturing, etc. However, one must also note that there is a Model Code of Conduct which is enforced by the ECI, a good three months before voting takes place. This means, the government of the day cannot take any important, policy-oriented decision. This cripples the government, as it cannot take any important decision.

Also India being a federal polity, the election results in one state affects the mentality of the people in the other state. This is why the Union government shies away from taking any hard decisions like increasing the prices of petrol or kerosene. Though such decisions would be economically sound, they may prove politically suicidal. Even prices of ordinary items like onions can make or mar a party's fortune at the hustings. All parties have learnt these lessons the hard way and keep postponing important decisions for the fear of losing votes. But if elections for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha were to be held on the same day, such issues will not come to bedevil the Union government.

The counter-view

Some, however, are not convinced about these reasons. Former Chief Election Commissioner Mr. S.Y. Quraishi wrote an article in a national daily and argued strongly against this proposal. He wrote that while simultaneous elections to Panchayat, Assembly and Lok Sabha may be desirable, they are not feasible. While admitting that normal work comes to a standstill, he argued that the cost can be brought under control by ensuring that the legal cap on expenditure of candidates is followed by all parties. He further wrote that the normal election routine also keeps the politicians on their toes and enhances accountability, and more important, local and national issues don't get mixed up to distort priorities.

(Continued on page 42)

A Machiavellian diplomat

HENRY Kissinger held teaching posts in history and government in Harvard University for 20 years. He became a celebrity after he became the National Security Adviser (NSA) to Richard Nixon (1969-1974), and continued under Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford (1974-1975). He also held the post of the Secretary of State (1973-1974) under Nixon and under Ford (1974-77).

Beginning from the Kennedy administration in 1961, there have been pernicious conflicts between Secretaries of State in the State Department and President's NSAs in the National Security Council (NSC). This has been highly damaging to the product and process of foreign policy. Madeline Albright, Secretary of State under Bill Clinton wrote in her memoirs: "It is a standard observation in Washington that the only time the NSC and the State Department worked together well was when Henry Kissinger was in charge of both." That was the period from 1973 to 1975 when Kissinger held both the posts. During the period Kissinger used to tell journalists enquiring how should they address him - Mr. Secretary of State or the NSA - he enjoyed telling them to call him simply, "Your Excellency!"

Henry Kissinger in 2014 came out with the voluminous work of 420 pages – *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (published by Penguin, New York, in 2014, pp.420). What does he mean by 'world order'? When we read so much about disorder everywhere, is it an aspiration or a reality? What does he mean by character of nations? Do nations have a collective character? How can we speak of nation's character

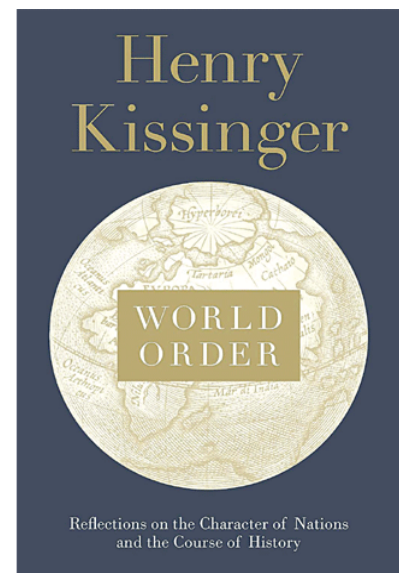
when individuals wielding power of a nation, as in the case of Richard Nixon for instance, use power to shut dissent or assassinate the character of individuals opposing him?

The world order that Kissinger speaks of does not truly embrace the entire world, nor has it ever seen one global world order. Since there isn't a universally accepted world order, he speaks of historically evolved world orders in major regions in the world.

Kissinger's roll call of nations

Europe gets the maximum coverage. Kissinger has devoted two chapters to the European World Order that covers from its formation in 1648 to his reflections on the future of Europe. European scholars – Kissinger as a German immigrant to the United States (US), is more European than American – when they speak of world order, they speak of the Westphalia System that emerged in Europe in 1648 after the end of the Thirty Years of Religious Wars (1618-48). Kissinger has been an admirer of the European Balance of Power. Balance of Power refers to a perception of distribution of power, in a pluralistic world order, in a manner that no one nation by itself or in alliance with others can disturb peace. Britain often acted as a balancer to maintain peace or punish a nation that disturbed the Balance of Power.

Middle East dominated by Islam and Iranian statecraft form the next two chapters. Kissinger argues that Middle East under Islam is a world in disorder. He is predictably correct in stating that "Middle East seems destined to experiment with all of historical experiences simultaneously – empire,



World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History

Author: Henry Kissinger

Published by: Penguin, New York

Pages: 420

holy war, foreign domination, a sectarian war of all against all – before it arrives (if it ever does), at a settled concept of international order. He doesn't treat Iran in the chapter on Islam, but clubs it with the US. Reasons for it are not far to seek. He knew about the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran while serving under Nixon and Ford.

He must have also anticipated that relations between the Sunni kingdom led by the Saudis and the revolutionary Shia Republic of Iran led by Ayatollahs since the 1979 overthrow of Shah of Iran, could only deteriorate further. After all, during his eight years in the American government, both Saudis and Iranians were very close allies of the US. But two of these American friends were also historic rivals. While Iran ceased to be an ally, Saudis may be on their way out. Are they now turning enemies? Recently, Saudi chief cleric, Al al-Sheikh stated that Iranians "are not Muslims...". Iranians have boycotted

Hajj as during the last Hajj season hundreds of Hajjis, including Iranians were killed in a stampede.

Be that as it may, Kissinger devotes two chapters - 'Multiplicity of Asia' and 'Towards an Asian Order...' with the focus mainly on China and whether the emerging Asian world order is one of confrontation or partnership? The current trend is one of China's confrontations with every nation in Asia and beyond. He devotes about 20 pages to India. Much of his description of Indian history can easily be skipped by anyone in India deeply interested in his writings. But he says that Britain saw itself in India, funnily, "as a neutral overseer and civilizing uplifter of multifarious people and states!"

It is undoubtedly true that Britain played a role in unifying India and creating a political sense of nation. However, that was possible because despite all diversities exhibited by Indians then, as they exhibit today, there was and there is, an underlying bond of common civilisation – historically, more than 10,000 years

old. He appreciatively refers to the work of Kautilya (fourth century B.C.), and admits his Arthashastra provided "circle of states", the Mandala theory, which was "analogous" to balance of power, though conceived "millennia before European thinkers developed factson the ground into a theory of balance of power..."

But, while in government, Kissinger excelled in running down India and Indians, especially during the Bangladesh War in 1971. Kissinger found Hindus "complex" while Muslims simpler and more direct. He went to the extent of meeting Chinese Ambassador in a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) hideout in New York to urge China to do something instead of merely criticising India! But Mrs. Gandhi excelled in Kautilya's statecraft and Kissinger lost despite his pursuit offoreign policy devoid of ethics in Machiavellian style.

Three more chapters consider the US and its concept of World Order, as an ambivalent Super Power and one area in which it still excels – superior

technology, before he reaches his conclusions on "World Order in Our Time." Kissinger sees American history through the prism of balance of power. I had the unique privilege of meeting all NSAs in the US since the formation of NSC in 1948 until Jimmy Carter (1977-1981). Some of them like Kissinger's predecessors, McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow and his successors, Brent Scowcroft (1975-1977) and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977-1981) were great minds. But Henry Kissinger successfully dodged me following a combination of tactics described by Kautilya and Machiavelli! ■

Dr. P. M. Kamath was formerly Professor of Politics, in Department of Civics & Politics of Mumbai University. He specialised in the American Politics, Foreign Policy, and National Security. Currently he is the Chairman and Director, VPMs Centre for International Studies affiliated to Mumbai University. He continues to reflect on his academic areas of interest.



The election carnival

(Continued from page 40)

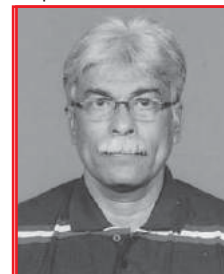
While there is lot of merit in these arguments, one must also keep in mind the fact that no political party or candidate would abide by the cap on election expenses. This is the real worry, and one way to control flow of black money in our economy is to hold these elections together.

In fact, our ECI recommended this as early as 1983. It reiterated its recommendation once again last year. Not only this, even the Law Commission of India headed by the renowned Justice B.P.Jeevan Reddy, in its 170th Report on 'Reform of Electoral Laws' clearly articulated the need for simultaneous elections, given the cost of continuous election cycle. Again, this is not a new idea. In the 1960s, the renowned socialist economist Dr. Ashok Mehta

argued that in a poor country like India we should not waste enormous money on holding elections. Let us work out a national agenda to be implemented by an all-party government. He called this suggestion as 'compulsions of backward economy'. In a backward economy, holding general elections is a luxury which we can ill-afford.

In countries like South Africa, elections to national and provincial legislatures are held together every five years. In Sweden, elections to the national assembly, provincial assemblies and local bodies are held with a fixed time-table, which is second Sunday of September every four years. Even the mother of democracy like UK, has come out with Fixed Term Parliament Act in 2011, for holding elections to Parliament on a pre-determined date to lend stability.

Of course, this is easier said than done. It is no joke to hold elections for 545 Lok Sabha seats and assemblies of 29 states on the same date. But on the other hand, the cost of holding staggered elections is too high to let it prevail. The electoral tradition of 21st century India needs some drastic reforms, and this should be one of them. Since many bodies have favoured this change, we should move fast towards putting this into practice. In fact, we should aim towards holding the 17th Lok Sabha elections to be held in 2019, with as many Assembly elections as possible. A national debate should be



initiated with this purpose in mind. ■

Prof. Avinash Kolhe Asst. Professor in Political Science at D. G. Ruparel College, Mumbai.

A place for everything

We know a lot about discarding trash and going green. Yet, even educated people throw used bottles and plastics into marshes and water bodies! What is the solution? The solution can start with even one person, exhorts G. Venkatesh.

PERHAPS readers would be tired and bored reading articles like this one. Maybe it does not make any sense anymore, this persistent greenwashing without being able to change anything 'on the ground'? Gandhi said, 'Be the change you wish to see'. He was, but perhaps he could never see that change he wanted to see? Nothing has changed, not even a little, forget talks of full measures? Hence, all talk of respecting Mother Nature will just go down as dreamy, poetic, armchair-idealistic, ivory-tower, romantic nonsense? If all this were true, I would not have wasted time in putting pen to paper to convey this message to readers.

Take a look at the photographs. These were taken by the writer in three different continents – in 2007, 2013 and 2015. In North America (Raleigh, North Carolina, USA), Asia (Kumarakom, Kerala, India) and Europe (Karlstad, Värmland, Sweden). What is common to all these? Surely not water, as the one from the USA does not have any water in it. Yes, you would have guessed it. It is just about things being in the wrong places. Two of these pictures are from the rich Western World, and one is in a developing country. Certainly, one cannot look at the water body in India and say that people in the developing world do not care for the environment, right? It is not that Raleigh, Karlstad and Kumarakom have not created places for these things which are floating on the surface of the water (or resting among the bushes). Everyone knows where those things



Gatorade in the grass...picture taken in Raleigh, NC, USA

need to be consigned to. It is only that many of us have not created the interest or inclination in our minds and hearts to do so. 'A place for everything and everything will be in its place', they say. But is that true? Even if there is a place for something, why does it float around on the surface of a river? Unless Homo Sapien wants to do something, having a place for something will not ensure that that thing is put in the proper place. The Kumarakom observation had prompted me to write a poem, which goes as under:

*Floating towards an unknown destiny,
intruder, encroacher, unwanted
sojourner.*

*This is not where I wish to be,
languishing, purposeless, cast-away by
a reveler*

*drunk on New Year's Eve,
frolicking in a rocking houseboat.
I cause harm without intending to,
eyesore in the backwaters, as I float.*

*Unwelcome alien spoiling the peace,
grudgingly obliged by anchored leaves,
when I rest awhile on my lonesome
journey*

*to waste away in the open seas.
Hope someday a friendly boatman
hauls me up from the wet wilderness,
rows me ashore to my rightful place
and a reincarnation into usefulness.*

The verdure of the biosphere and the azure of the hydrosphere and ecosystems where the latter supports the former, are treats to the human eye, veritably so. Why toss eyesores into them? Here, I am not meaning to condemn the plastics and paper, for these waste products have value...I condemn as 'eyesore' the act committed by man.

The hypocrite's way

I intend not to write about recycling technologies or the harm which plastics cause to life in the waters, as all that is

known to most of us these days, and in fact some of the 'tossers' are university students or educated people who know quite a lot about biology, ecology, environmental engineering etc. In fact, one should not be surprised if highly-educated environmental engineers and industrial ecologists themselves insult Mother Earth thus! Hypocrisy is rife, in society and politics world over. 'It is not enough to know, one ought to apply the knowledge. It is not enough to think and speak, one needs to act,' wrote Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the great German writer, poet and philosopher.

Often I hear people telling me, "Well, what difference will it make if I decide to follow in Gandhi's or Goethe's footsteps?" They need to be reminded that it takes just a single match to start a forest fire. Long journeys begin with the first step. It does not matter where the step is taken and how...it had better not be delayed and must be taken as



Unwanted sojourner – photo taken in Kumarakom, Kerala, India, in 2007

soon as possible! The true story about the 'cascade of good' that resulted with the introduction of wolves into the Yellowstone National Park in the USA with the primary motive of controlling the population of the deer, is well-known. Revolutions have begun with the ideas and actions of one man often – Jesus Christ and Christianity, Martin Luther and Protestantism, Gandhi/Mandela and non-violent resistance, Edison and the electrical revolution, Ford and the automotive industry....the list is long.

You could someday want to pick up that bottle floating on a river and consign it to a recycling bin. A dozen people may watch you as they pass by and perhaps just ignore you and not even bother to see and learn. But one conscientious man/woman may perhaps emulate you from the next day, and he/she would then inspire another equally-conscientious individual to follow suit. Unbeknownst to you,

a change would have started...I am reminded of the Salman Khan-starrer Jai Ho, in which he exhorts each of his beneficiaries to not say 'Thank you', but instead promise to be a benefactor to three other people in need. What the protagonist expects in the film is a groundswell of goodness...and that happens towards the end of the movie.

Cleanliness, they say, is next to Godliness. Here, one is not referring in a narrow context to taking bath and wearing clean clothes, combing your hair and brushing your teeth, and vacuum-cleaning your home and washing the floors. It is the 'corpus' of Mother Earth, we are talking about, and the Home is Terra Firma...■

The writer is Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Health, Science and Technology, Karlstad University, Sweden. He is also a freelance writer for several magazines around the world.



Garbage languishing among the leaves in the river Klara in Karlstad in southern Sweden

The easy ten

Here are 10 easy-peasy ways to help our planet, while also keeping us physically and mentally fit. **Usha Hari prasad** says, *Get, set, go!*

"Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."

THIS quote by Jim Ryun is perhaps what is required to promote sustainable lifestyle. All of us may have this grandiose notion of creating a greener planet. But we seldom do so either due to lack of planning, social norms or simply due to cumulative habits. Though social norms may be difficult to address, habits can be changed for the better. Bad habits can be replaced with new ones that leans more towards environment-friendliness. Here is a quick peek into some of them.

Bike to work

This is a habit you can easily form. You burn calories, feel fitter and leave no carbon footprint getting to work. Apparently, just a 30-minute low intensity cycling can burn 120 calories for a person weighing 60kg. Combine cycling with a work buddy and see the difference it brings to health plus your mood levels. With proper brakes, helmet and a mask if you are living in a city, you are good to go.

Keep indoor plants

Green is good for the eyes, so say many posters floating over the net, and it is true. Getting up and viewing a bit of greenery always relaxes the eyes. Keep some in your home not just for relaxation, but also to purify the room. Keeping indoor plants can reduce pollutants in the room. Aloe vera, ivy, cacti, areca palm are some great plants to remove indoor toxins such as carbon monoxide, chemicals from household



The composted wet waste is black gold for your plants

cleaners etc. These are low maintenance too and come in stylish colourful pots to brighten your mood.

Segregate dry waste and recycle

Paper, bottles, plastics can be easily segregated and sent to recycling units or turned over to your local *kabaadiwala*. According to a 2015 Mid-Day report on India's trash problem, the countries generating the highest amount of waste were China and US, followed by India. The report further states that though 1,33,760 tonnes of garbage was generated in the country, only 68% of this is collected, out of which only 28% is treated.

Waste is valuable. So set a remainder, do this daily task of segregating and you will have the happy feeling of reducing the burden of the transport dump vehicle (fuel and space both), contributing less

to landfills and supporting the livelihood of your local *kabaadiwalas*.

Compost wet waste

Don't be thwarted by the smell or the fear of maggots. Composting is black gold for your plants. When handled properly, composting gives a deep sense of satisfaction as you see leftover food, vegetable peels, egg shells turning into rich earthy soil. Using straw, sawdust and dry leaves, you can easily turn the organic matter into earthy soil within 60 days or so.

Avoid plastics

One friend I know used to take *dabbas* or containers to whole sale shops to bring groceries like wheat, rice, pulses etc.

(Continued on page 47)

A Doll's House

The play A Doll's House, recently staged in Mumbai's iconic Prithvi theatre, brought to the fore issues of women's freedom and emancipation. These are issues which are as relevant today as they were more than a century ago, when the play was first staged, says Prof. Avinash Kolhe.

MUMBAI-based theatre group, Surnai Theatre and Folk-Arts Foundation (STAFF) has been regularly holding Ibsen's Festivals in Mumbai. This is the third edition of the festival based on plays by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), which were staged at Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai in the first week of October 2016. Ibsen is rightly known as 'father of realism'.

Surnai Theatre organised 'Women's Voices, from Ibsen's Ink', a festival that included, among other plays, the all-time great *A Doll's House*. Historically, this play was staged for the first time in December 1879, but is relevant even today. It had raised and continues to raise some basic issues about the status of women in society, whether the society is Western or Eastern. The problems, the traps, the blocks faced by women all over the world are perhaps the same. *A Doll's House* forces us all to think afresh a fundamental question: has women's status improved today? Or are these changes only superficial and nothing much has changed at the basic level?

Theatre at its best

Surnai's production was directed by Pushan Kripalani. It was minimalist theatre at its best. As it is, the intimate theatre of Prithvi does not offer much physical space for actors' movements. Kripalani has used the available space to its maximum extent and directed a brilliant performance. He had equally



A still from the play *A Doll's House*

The play depicts story of Nora and her husband Torvald. It is about a marriage that superficially seems happy, but a critical turn of events reveals what a sham their relationship is. Torvald and Nora had some financial struggles. The play opens when they are delighted because Torvald has got a major promotion at the bank where he works.

brilliantly cast Ira Dubey (Nora) and Joy Sengupta (Nora's husband Torvald and two other characters). These two fine actors have made *A Doll's House* a memorable experience.

The play depicts story of Nora and her husband Torvald. It is about a marriage that superficially seems happy, but a critical turn of events reveals what a sham their relationship is. Torvald and Nora had some financial struggles. The play opens when they are delighted because Torvald has got a major promotion at the bank where he works. But Nora, behind her lightheartedness and childish behaviour – encouraged, always, by Torvald, who calls her diminutive, vaguely (or sometimes explicitly) insulting names like “my sweet tooth” and “little spendthrift” – is hiding a major secret.

She borrowed a substantial sum of money a few years ago to finance a trip to Italy to help Torvald recover from a major illness. She told Torvald then that the money was left to her by her father, but it was actually loaned to her by a Nils Krogstad. She has been slowly paying it back. But now Nils is threatening to tell Nora's husband, especially since he realised that Nora forged her father's signature as co-signer of the note. This was necessary for Nora because back then a woman could not raise loan unless there was a male as co-signer. Nora had no option but to forge the signature of her father, now dead.

Nora is a mother of three children and been married for eight years. In this version produced by Surnai, the children don't come on the stage and remain essentially a moral obligation. Nora is working overtime to keep her husband from finding out about her crime. But

then such secrets never remain a secret and in due course Torvald finds about it and expectedly rips her apart. This leads to the most famous face-off in literary world, the face-off between Nora and her husband which eventually leads to that equally famous door slam, heard all over the world!

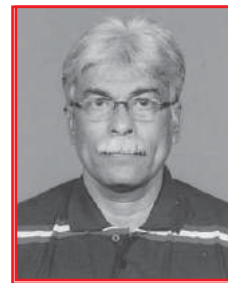
A political and feminist play

Many argue that at heart *A Doll's House* is a political play. Written in the 19th century Norway, when women had no choice, practically no legal rights about property, Ibsen focused on these burning issues and forced society to think of women as human beings. No wonder *A Doll's House* is hailed as one of the early feminist plays.

This Surnai production, directed by Pushan Kripalani, is an edited version and lasts 90 minutes. The two actors have done a brilliant job. Joy Sengupta

plays the roles of Torvald, Nils Krogstad and Nora's female friend. And in all these he is superb. A domineering husband, a crooked clerk and a lady friend of Nora, Joy is convincing in these characters. And then there is Ira Dubey as Nora. This girl is a competent actor and moves on stage with supreme confidence. Music is by Pushan Kripalani who also plays the guitar. There is effective use of lights handled by Arghya Lahiri and Asmit Pathare. With these professional elements, Ila Arun's Surnai brought to Mumbai audience and lovers of Ibsen a performance of *A Doll's House* that will

stay with them for months to come. ■



Prof. Avinash Kolhe
Asst. Professor in
Political Science
at D. G. Ruparel
College, Mumbai.

The easy ten

(Continued from page 45)

She avoids plastics like the plague. If you cannot do this, at least take a cloth carry bag with you or keep a cloth bag in your vehicle so that you will always have a non-plastic alternative.

Another great way to avoid packaged plastics is to prepare snacks at home; good for health and great for the planet when you start avoiding these unhealthy fried snacks.

No standby mode please

You can save money, a minimum of ₹ 400-500 annually if you unplug that computer, set top box, DVD Player as reported by an *Economic Times* article that appeared in March 2015, about five ways to keep power bills low. It also mentions that appliances in standby mode contribute to 2% of electrical consumption. So unhook the appliances before hitting the bed. Most

mobiles keep charging throughout the night. Is this required? Do they require eight hours of charging? Most batteries perform well with frequent top-ups rather than leaving them to charge overnight completely.

Avoid sanitary pads

Plastics, bleach, chemicals in the pads can cause problems of reproductive organs. Tampons too can cause infections. Besides this, pads are not bio-degradable, nor are they recyclable. They end up in landfills or clog sewers if flushed in the toilets. A better alternative is to go for reusable pads, cloth pads or menstrual cups. Uger, Eco Femmemanu manufacture some amazing cloth pads that are comfortable and effective.

Save water

Recycle grey water, fix dripping faucets and taps, take shorter showers,

save rain water, and install a water meter; these things are some of the major water saving measures. If you don't want to invest much, at least save rain water by attaching your downspouts with rain barrels, and use grey water for gardens or flushing the toilets. This way, at least 50% of the water that we use daily in kitchens and the bathrooms can get reused.

It is these little steps that add up to become significant. In the words of Vincent Van Gogh, the great Dutch painter, "Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together." ■

Usha Hari prasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at Citizen Matters. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.



All shades of pink

*The film 'Pink' has set the cat among the pigeons, so to speak. Cleverly cast and well-conceptualised, it argues that a woman has the right to say 'No' at any point in a physical relationship. And the movie argues this point well, even if some have a quarrel with the wispy title, says **Shoma A. Chatterjee**.*

Pink is not only a commercial mega-hit, but is also the most-discussed film among all mainstream Indian releases this year. It is a powerful film in every sense as it raises significant questions on why changing values in urban India in an age of modernisation, economic liberalisation and globalisation, should continue to question and judge and define lifestyles of women and associate them directly with the morals they live by.

The gender divide remains, never mind whether the woman is educated, modern, liberated, economically independent or whether she is unlettered, dependent, oppressed, marginalised and rural. Sixty-nine years after Independence, the women in *Pink* are forced to position themselves as victims in a court of law, a public

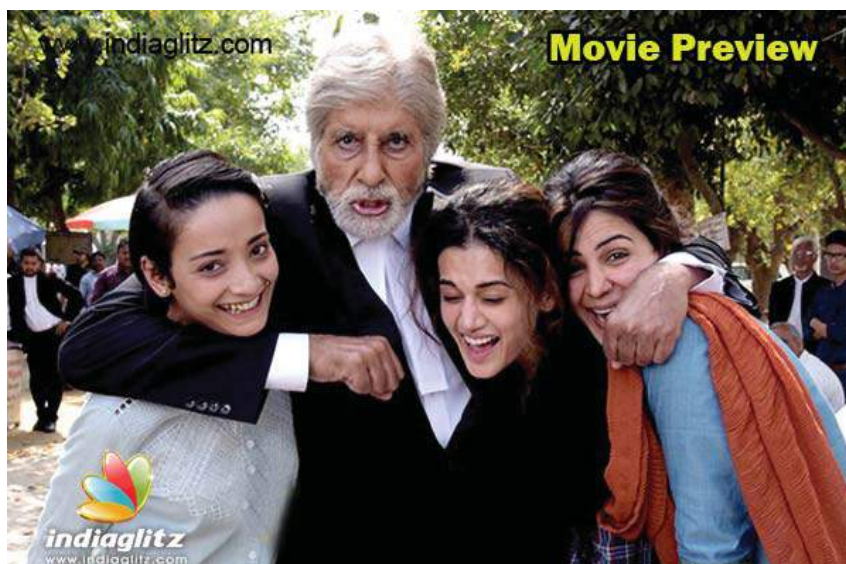


Amitabh Bachchan as the eccentric defence lawyer in *Pink*

domain where both the defence lawyer and the prosecution attorney 'molest' them all over again after they have been ostracised already by their neighbours, society, the police, and everyone

concerned.

Pink is the story of three young working women living together in Delhi and how they fall victim again and again, all because one of the girls, Meenal Arora, repeatedly says "No" to the physical advances made to her by a young, London School of Economics graduate, Rajveer. When he continues to touch her, she hits him with an empty bottle in self-defence and the three girls flee in a cab. The next 'mistake' she makes is to file a FIR (First Information Report) with the local police station. Her friends back her up and support her when she is arrested, though she is the one who filed the complaint. Meenal is charged with causing grievous injury not amounting to murder, and all three are charged with soliciting, extortion and prostitution. "Raped" and "molested" all over again in the courtroom by both



A still of the *Pink* cast

the prosecution lawyer and the defence attorney, they insist that their “no”, means “no” and must be accepted as an unequivocal “No.”

Colour us pink

Why should such a significant film be titled *Pink* which is associated with everything that is feminine, delicate, fragile and girlish? Would it not be asserting the stereotype that goes completely against a film that is defying the stereotype? Director Aniruddha Roy Choudhury says, “*Pink* is an attractive colour that suggests beauty and youth. But through my film, it also suggests power, freedom, sympathy and strength. It is not the frilly colour that is often understood to be fragile and delicate. I think this has come across in the film.”

Taapsi Pannu, who plays Meenal Arora, the central character among the three girls, says, “Till I heard the script of the film and my role in it, for me, pink meant what it meant to everyone else. It has been a colour associated with girls in pink ribbons playing with Barbie dolls, a soft, feminine colour that denotes softness, gentleness and grace. This film has changed all our notions about this colour completely and radically, almost turning it on its head, so to speak. For me and for the rest of the *Pink* team, including the boys who play the bad cards in the pack, it now stands for courage, power, strength and so on, for girls and women and take note, also for men.”

When asked how she prepared herself to play such a difficult and controversial role, Taapsi who is a much-in-demand star in the South, but hails from Delhi, says, “A precondition both Aniruddha and Shoojit Sirkar had



Poster of the film *Pink*

placed was that I had to actually “be” that character and then alone would I be able to emote it realistically on screen. It was difficult really because

Why should such a significant film be titled *Pink* which is associated with everything that is feminine, delicate, fragile and girlish? Would it not be asserting the stereotype that goes completely against a film that is defying the stereotype?

I had to prep myself every single day before the shoot which was not only stressful, but emotionally disturbing. Then, I thought to myself, ‘What the hell, I am a Delhi girl and I know that there is probably not a single girl in Delhi who has not been touched inappropriately or felt or groped while travelling in DTC buses or other modes of public transport.’ The work was so stressful that after the shooting was over, I took a holiday for a week”.

Chayanika Hazra writes: “*Pink* shows that even after 69 years of independence, the mentality of men has not changed. Some men still consider an educated, liberated and independent woman “available” and “easy.” Each girl has a Meenal, a Falak and an Andrea inside her. When a woman says ‘No’ it means NO. Period”.

All said and done, while many may not agree with the clichéd title of the film, the fact remains that it has turned out to become one of the biggest box office grossers of the year, and at least in terms of luck, it has left many ₹ 100-crore films behind. Whether one likes the title or not, doesn’t really matter, does it? ■

Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for ‘commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues’ among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.



All sound, but no sleep!

*A person's snoring often evokes laughter and is brushed aside as something one has to live with. **A. Radhakrishnan** tells us about the serious health implications of snoring, and why it has to be treated.*

GOOD similes for someone who snores loudly range from 'snores like a buzz saw'; 'snores like a wart hog'; 'elephant in heat, now there's a blast from the past'; 'snores like a chainsaw fighting a grizzly bear driving a bulldozer'; 'snoring like a trouper'; 'snoring like a freight train'; 'snores like a congested walrus'; 'snores like a fire-breathing dragon with a head cold', etc.

An article I recall beautifully put it... 'Like musicians, snorers are judged on range and projection. Many have only one note, but make up for the lack of variety with volume, while others have an extensive repertoire of sound. They can go from a barely perceptible hiss to the standard grunting to squeaks, squawks and high-pitched whistles and many are capable of making sounds only a barn animal in distress could replicate.

'They have a perfect sense of timing, which is extraordinary. It is almost like they wait to start up at the exact moment that the snoree is about to fall asleep. No self-respecting snorer however will readily admit that they snore. Every once in a while the snorer is so loud that he/she will wake him/herself up, followed by a few seconds of semi-conscious embarrassment!'

It is also a verified fact that two snorers will never find one another. If you snore, it is unlikely you will find yourself another snorer spouse or partner to love and cohabitate with.

Snoring, sleep apnea et al

A study conducted in Britain found that the average married adult loses



A good night of undisturbed sleep is a blessing

around 730 hours sleep a year because of the partner's snoring and fidgeting. Husbands and wives are typically deprived of two hours a night – four years over a 50-year marriage as a result. It was traditionally believed that snoring indicated sound sleep, but it is now proven that 'it is sound, but no sleep'.

When we fall asleep, muscles in the upper airway relax and this causes the breathing passage to become narrow, as air tries to pass through the narrowed upper airways. They vibrate, making the sound of snoring. When it worsens, these passages get blocked – often hundreds of time every night... this is Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA).

Often there is confusion between snoring and OSA, which we are discussing here, and can be a potential, life-threatening disease. Twelve adults in 100 in India suffer from it and are found in all age groups and genders.

Snoring is a loud sound made while breathing during sleep. Sleep apnea is a

true breathing obstruction, in which the sleeper can wake up in the middle of the night choking or gasping for breath. He/she has to wake up to begin breathing again. Such a person wakes up many times a night to regain breathing. Snoring is a common symptom of sleep apnea. Snoring by itself does not involve the cessation of breathing.

Thus the OSA sufferer often is not aware of the apnea episodes during the night, and it is often family members who witness those periods. Starting with snoring heavily soon after falling asleep, which gets louder, it is then interrupted by a long silent period during which there is no breathing. This is followed by a loud snort and gasp, as the person attempts to breath. The pattern repeats. Many people wake up unrefreshed in the morning and feel sleepy or drowsy throughout the day, and this is called Excessive Daytime Sleepiness (EDS).

When muscles are too relaxed, oxygen levels drop. Children have larger tonsils and adenoids; stuffy or blocked

nose requires extra effort to pull air through. Poor muscle tone in the tongue and throat and nasal deformities like a deviated septum, etc., can cause obstructed breathing. Snoring can also be hereditary.

Snoring lowers oxygen supply to vital organs of the body during sleep which results in irregular heart functions, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, depression and stroke, morning headaches, increased daytime tiredness, waking up from sleep gasping for air, unexplained weight gain, etc.

The fallout of disrupted sleep

Disrupted sleep can increase psychological problems. Poor sleep has adverse effects on relationships with diminishing positive feelings,, causing indifference between individuals. Hence, Sleep Divorce has become a growing trend, as more couples are choosing to sleep in separate rooms for a number of reasons. This robs them of intimacy, sexual and emotional bonding.

Children too get affected by one's snoring habit, if you are co-sleeping, disrupting their sleep which results in poor memory, concentration, academic and sports performance, underachievement and changed behaviour.

People in stressful jobs are prone to sleep apnea syndrome. They may also act grumpy, impatient or irritable, be forgetful, fall asleep while working, reading or watching TV, feel sleepy or even fall asleep while driving and have hard-to-treat headaches. They also tend to wake up frequently to urinate, have dry mouth or sore throat on waking up, and suffer from insomnia, depression/anxiety, increased blood pressure and frequent heartburn.

Complications of untreated OSA are that it will lead to uncontrolled hypertension, heart failure or other heart diseases, diabetes, stroke, weight

gain or obesity, depression or sexual disorders and accidents.

Snoring is an irritant and it has to be controlled. It is critical to create and maintain strong, healthy and compatible sleep habits and adjust your lifestyle to get better and soundless sleep. Losing weight; exercising regularly; sleeping on your side - the tongue does not fall back; avoiding alcohol and sleeping pills (these increase relaxation of throat and tongue muscles, which makes snoring more likely); clearing your nasal passages through nasal and throat sprays; using a device that resembles a baby's pacifier that works by pulling peoples tongues forward while they are asleep so that their airways remain clear, yoga, behavioural therapies, machine and dental appliances surgically removing tissues and blocks and radio frequency and laser treatment.. all help. If your snoring is nose-centric, nasal strips are needed.

There are websites with details of a variety of treatments you can try at home, including pillow, snore calm

products, mouth guards, nasal strips and dilators, as well as mouth breathing devices. The practice of Neti, an ancient method practised for centuries by yogis does purify the path right from nostrils to the throat. Maintain a healthy weight and diet, avoid alcohol before going to bed, and quit or cut down on smoking.

Surgery of the airway is advised in younger patients and those with congenital airway defects. A proper detailed diagnostic workup which includes Polysomnography (sleep study) followed by DISE (Drug Induced Sleep Endoscopy) to find the type and site of airway obstruction during sleep, is mandatory.

So do not take snoring lightly. Be aware and get rid of it. ■



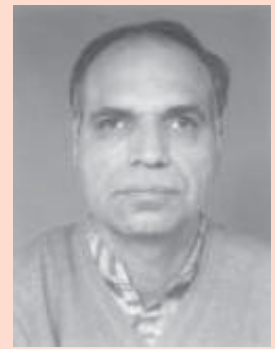
A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer who loves to make friends and make them smile.

Some sleepy stories

- Sleeping on the job can prove costly. A burglary suspect in the U.S blew his cover when he got so comfortable in his hiding spot the he dozed off and began snoring, loud enough for the police to find him inside a restaurant.
- To 37-year-old Mumbai resident and builder, Amit Verma, snoring became a public, not private nuisance and turned out to be an embarrassment. He would alternate between flying and travelling by train to his projects several times a month. Most journeys would turn into a nightmare for his fellow passengers. When he dozed off, often they'd shake and jerk him wake. His constant victim, his wife, admitted to it being a sundown misery which she grudgingly accepted. But one night she found him gasping for breath. 'The thought that he may suffocate and never wake up scared me', she recalls. This coupled with growing fatigue, convinced Verma he needed help. A victim of OSA and at 104 kilos, he was at a higher risk. What saved him was the Coblation therapy method.
- Tired of choking in his sleep due to apnea, 35-year-old Raipur Vikas Kalia underwent a highly rare and unconventional surgery, to remove the extra flesh from his tongue.
- The wife was complaining that she couldn't sleep with my snoring. So I went to the Pharmacist and bought this new snoring mask, it's great! You can wrap it on your wife's face and you can't hear her complain.
- 'My snoring kept me awake last night' complained a man. His friend replied, 'You silly man why didn't you sleep in another room?'

Modify us not!

The topic of Genetically Modified crops keeps rearing its ugly head in India. What's the politics and economics behind efforts by certain big agro-chemical companies to introduce GM crops here?



Bharat Dogra

is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who writes on social concerns.

A trend of recent years has had serious impact on farmers and food and farming systems. This trend has three components. Firstly, it is very clear that there is increasing concentration in the seeds and agri-chemicals industries. In other words, big companies have been buying up or displacing smaller companies so that a bigger share of the business is concentrated in just a handful of giant companies or their subsidiaries. Secondly, the seed and agri-chemical businesses are getting integrated. In other words, the company which sells seeds, or its subsidiary or affiliate, is also likely to be the one which sells the pesticides and the weedicides. Thirdly, these giant companies are increasingly involved in selling genetically modified or GM seeds, as these are more suitable for control by a few giant companies compared to seeds obtained from conventional methods. These trends can be seen in the recent \$ 66 billion purchase of Monsanto by Bayer.

Here, in India, we have witnessed in recent times, stringent efforts to introduce GM food crops in the form of a GM mustard variety called transgenic mustard hybrid DMH-11. It is surprising that such efforts are being made so soon after the case against GM food crops was made out so convincingly at the time of the very broad based inquiry on Bt. Brinjal. The opinion of many eminent scientists as well as specially constituted panels and groups of scientists on the many-sided hazards of GM foods and crops is easily available. In such a situation, if efforts to introduce GM food crops are being stepped up in a big way, then this needs to be understood in the context of the wider international situation of GM crops and seeds industry.

It is well known that while the European Union has always been very cautious and suspicious about GM crops and seeds, the USA has emerged as the biggest centre of GM crop cultivation, particularly in the case of soybean and corn. But even the American farmers seem to be now turning

away from GM crops. This growing disillusionment is linked to renewed and desperate efforts for the introduction of GM food crops in India, for the sake of maintaining the powerful business interests of the world's big GM seed companies.

However, the supporters of GM mustard say that this has been developed by India's university scientists, and multinational companies are not directly involved. But it is well known that the technology of GM crops at the world level is controlled by just a very few big companies, and any approval for GM food crops in a big and important country will ultimately benefit only them as they are just waiting with their own GM varieties and seeds.

At this stage we need to establish another important linkage – the linkage of the experiences of US farmers with the recent \$ 66 dollar agreement for the German chemical conglomerate Bayer to purchase the biggest GM seed company Monsanto. The US Department of Justice may raise some tough questions, and the European regulators with their distrust of GM crops may be even tougher, but at least for the time being, this is the most discussed deal in the seeds and agrichemicals market.

Again, this deal also has relevance for high power efforts to introduce GM food crops in India. It is becoming clearer with Bayer Monsanto type of deals that these interests are becoming more and more powerful. They are trying to combine seeds (increasingly GM seeds) and agri-chemicals in such a way that the same interests will control seeds and agri-chemicals. These dominant companies are now not confined to Western countries alone, but also include China, as is evident from another recent deal in which Syngenta AG agreed to a \$ 43 billion sale to the China National Chemical Corporation. So it is now all the more important to carefully resist the increasing control of the food and farming system by a few giants. ■

Financial inclusion goes digital

Financial inclusion has been the mantra of our economics for some time now. Add digital to the mix, and it is a new ball game altogether.



Anuradha Kalhan

is an independent researcher. She was earlier a Fellow at NMML, Teen Murti.

FINANCIAL inclusion, which is, increasing the number of citizens who have access to bank accounts, credit and other financial services, is an old campaign in India. It began quite robustly back in 1969, with bank nationalisation and branch expansion into rural India, to finance farmers at subsidised rates of interest. This helped farmers to adopt high-yielding variety seeds and fertilisers needed for the Green Revolution.

In the 1980s, there was a similar drive to extend bank credit to small industries by nationalised banks, and by 1990, SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) was created, "To facilitate and strengthen credit flow to Micro Small Medium Enterprises (MSME) and address both financial and developmental gaps in the MSME eco-system". Later in the 1990s, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) supervised the linking of women in self-help groups (SHG)/thrift/credit/productive societies to banks, as part of public policy to get rid of predatory usury, and augmenting incomes for poverty alleviation. At about the same time, for-profit private micro finance companies also entered the scene providing consumption loans to what marketing gurus call the 'bottom of the pyramid'.

More recently, the financial inclusion crusade took a hysterical turn with a policy called 'Jan Dhan Yojana', of creating bank accounts based entirely on unique digital identification called Aadhar cards. Nationalised banks pitched in once again, 125 million new accounts were created within six months. We are not sure how many were first time account holders. But reports did suggest that a majority of these accounts had zero balances when they began and a year later. Popular demand to create this account had grown from the government promise of direct credit transfer of subsidies and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA) wages to these account holders.

However, high dormancy rates notwithstanding, there is no doubt that the proportion of citizens with bank accounts

has risen dramatically over the last ten years. In fact, according to the World Bank, between 2011 and 2014 alone, the proportion increased from 35% to 53% (125 million people were added after that). Increasing numbers have also have accessed bank credit for housing, cars, consumer durables and other consumption needs, while bank credit for productive activities has lagged.

By September 2016, financial inclusion had a digital stamp. With the expansion of bank accounts, cell phone and internet users in India, the launch of the Unique Payment Interface (UPI) was considered timely. UPI is an online payments solution which will facilitate a cashless settlement of transactions by the transfer of funds instantly between person and person (or peer to peer) using a smart phone. The system was launched by the last Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan.

Only 39% of all account holders use cards and ATMs (Automatic Teller Machine). The inability of small account holders to obtain cards had limited their access to cash less transactions. The most essential use of this facility will be by migrant workers for remittance followed by general bill payments. In UPI, a user just needs to download the UPI app, offered by 17 banks so far, from the Google Play Store on an android phone, register details, and create a virtual address. This can be your mobile number or any unique mail address. After that, you can send or receive funds up to ₹ 1 lakh to or from another person or establishment. This is done instantly, with the bank authenticating it.

Financial inclusion in its current digital avatar will also make big data bigger, such transactions generate digital footprints which can be mapped for various purposes like credit history, rating, taxation, predicting consumption behaviour and strategic marketing aimed at the bottom of the pyramid. To what use this technology will be put and who will benefit most from it will depend as always, on the political economy of the times. ■



SPOTLIGHT

YOUNG

Green Crusader

SAALUMARADA Thimmakka is a simple villager from Karnataka who is now widely feted as an environmentalist.

She was born in the village of Hulikal in a poor family. She did not receive any formal education. At a very young age, she began working as a labourer in a quarry. She was married to a cattle herder Chikaaiah. They did not have children so they decided to do their bit for society.

The stretch of road between Hulikal and Kudur was dry and barren, and people who had to traverse the road everyday had a tough time. The couple took on the responsibility of planting saplings along the road. Since peepal trees were common in the area where they stayed, they grafted saplings from these trees and planted them along the road, 10 in the first year, 15 in the next and so on. They personally nurtured the saplings carrying pots of water over 4 km to water them. They planted trees in the monsoons and they would grow by the end of the year. Eventually, this became a part of their routine. After Chikaaiah's death in the early 1990s, Thimmakka continued the task on her own. Today there are more than 300 trees along the road. They provide a respite for the villagers, and have also led to an



improvement in the climate of the region. The state government has now taken up the responsibility for these trees.

Thimmakka's efforts were recognised and the tag 'Saalumaraada' meaning 'row of trees' in Kannada was added to her name. She has also been known by other names such as Vanamitra, Vrikshashri, Nisargaratna and so on. She has got a number of awards such as the Nadoga award by Hampi University, Karnataka Kalpavalli Award, Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Award and the National Citizen's Award. A well-known organization for environmental conservation in the USA has been renamed Thimmakka's Resources for Environmental Education in her honour.

In addition to her afforestation projects, she has been instrumental in constructing a rainwater tank for her village. Her dream is to build a hospital for the village.

Now more than 100 years old, Thimmakka is an inspiration as an illiterate person from a humble background who rose above her circumstances to make a significant contribution to her village and to the environment at large.

AMAZING LIVING WORLD

Macaws are brilliantly coloured species of parrots that are found in Central and South America. The hyacinth macaw found in Brazil's Pantanal region is the largest macaw and the biggest flying parrot (the kea, a flightless parrot belonging to New Zealand outweighs it).

A bright blue in colour with yellow eye patches, the hyacinth macaw measures around 1 metre long with a wingspan of almost 5 feet or 140 cm! It has a super-strong hooked beak capable of cracking even coconuts.



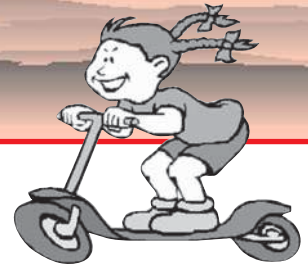
Largest Flying Parrot

For a long time, the birds were prized as pets and for their feathers, which local Indians collected to make tourist souvenirs. In the 1980's some 10,000 were captured and sold on the black market at \$12,000 each! The forests where they lived were destroyed for agriculture and pasture. Soon, only 1500

of these beautiful birds were left in the wild.

A biology student launched the Hyacinth Macaw Project in 1989. The population recovered and today, there are more than 3000 of them in Brazil.

Old Habits Die Hard



A wealthy man requested an old scholar to wean his son away from his bad habits.

The scholar took the youth for a stroll through a garden. Stopping suddenly he asked the boy to pull out a tiny plant growing there. The youth held the plant between his thumb and forefinger and pulled it out. The old man then asked him to pull out a slightly bigger plant. The youth pulled hard and the plant came out, roots and all.

"Now pull out that one," said the old man pointing to a bush. The boy had to use all his strength to pull it out.

"Now take this one out," said the old man, indicating a guava tree. The youth grasped the trunk and tried to pull it out. But it would not budge.

"It's impossible," said the boy, panting with the effort.

"So it is with bad habits," said the sage. "When they are young it is easy to pull them out but when they take hold they cannot be uprooted."

The session with the old man changed the boy's life.



CURIOSITY

Which cartoon hero popularised spinach?

Popeye, the Sailor Man who is a hero to America's spinach industry.

The palak-guzzling cartoon influenced the eating habits of the Americans to such an extent that spinach became the third most popular food after turkey and ice cream in the 1930s. In gratitude, the US spinach capital, Crystal City in Texas erected a statue to honour Popeye.



There is a statue of Popeye in the town of Chester, Illinois too. Chester is the birthplace of Elzie Segar, creator of the character.

Spinach is a good source of vitamin A, B, C and folic acid. It also contains a fair amount of potassium, calcium and iron but because of its oxalic acid content, the calcium and iron are not well absorbed by the body. It has a large amount of fibre.

SPARKLER

The forgetful host

One day a visitor arrived at the house of Leonard Liebling, former editor of Musical Courier, just as the family was about to sit down to dinner.

Liebling, annoyed that the man had come at dinner time, told the maid to ask him to wait. After they had finished eating, Liebling went to the hall.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he said to the visitor. "But we always eat at seven."

"I know," said the man. "You told me that when you asked me to come to dinner tonight."



PUZZLE

Teaser

What's the difference between a boxer and a man with a cold?



Answer: One knows his blows, the other blows his nose.

USTAD ALLAUDDIN KHAN

A music teacher par excellence (1862-1972)

Allauddin Khan or Baba Allauddin Khan, born in 1862, was a Bengali *shorodi* and multi-instrumentalist, composer and one of the most renowned North Indian music teachers of the 20th century.

A descendant of Mian Tansen of Emperor Akbar's court, this native of East Bengal enjoyed a financially secure childhood. His father Sadhu Khan played sitar, while an older brother, Aftabuddin Khan, played many other instruments. As a child, he would sneak into the family's music room and try out his brothers' instruments.

Despite his obvious talents, Allauddin was discouraged from playing music by his father, which made him run away from home at the age of eight. A group of itinerant musicians heading toward Dacca accepted him as he pretended to be an orphan. He soon learned to play Indian drums including tabla, dhol, pakhawaj, and wind instruments including clarinet, cornet, and trumpet. After six years, he apprenticed himself to a Bengali singer, Nulo Gopal in Calcutta (now Kolkata). After his *guru's* death, he became a pupil of Amritlal Dutt, with an aim of becoming a sarod artiste.

Later, as a tabla player in the orchestra of the Star Theater, conductor Robert Lobo mentored and introduced him to the Western classical music tradition. Allauddin struggled financially though, often eating one meal a day at food dispensaries for the poor.

Travelling to Muktogacha in eastern Bengal in his early twenties, he was awestruck by a performance of Ustad Ahmad Ali, a sarod player in Raja Jagat Kishore's court. Convincing Ali to become his *guru*, for the next four years, he devoted his full attention to learning the sarod, and soon his skills were such that he was instructed to go solo.

Later, at Rampur, the centre of Hindustani classical music, of the 500 musicians serving in the court of the Nawab of Rampur, he managed to convince the most

important Wazir Khan, to become his *guru*. For two years however, he served as a servant and errand boy. However, a letter intercepted by Wazir Khan revealing the suicide of Allauddin's wife, who he had left the day after marrying, blew up his tale of being an orphan. Instructed to make amends with his family, upon his return to Rampur, Wazir Khan made him his chief disciple and revealed the secrets of music. Following Wazir's death, Allauddin began performing on his own.

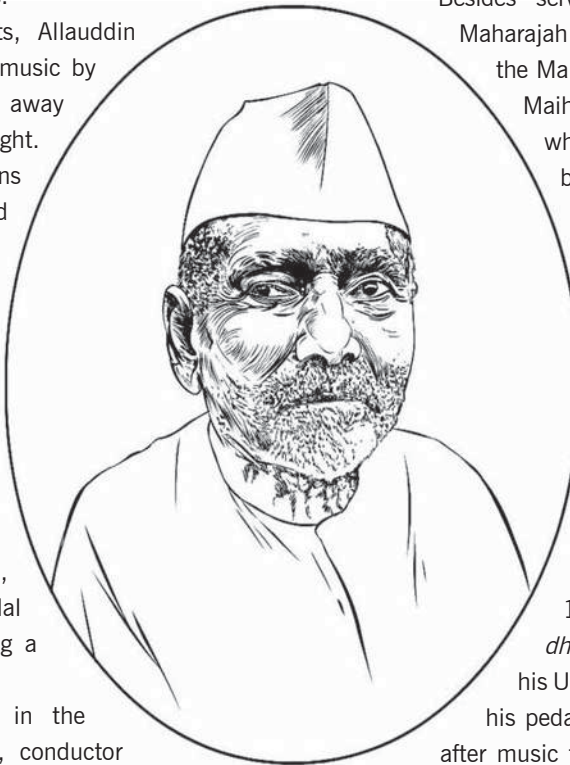
Besides serving as a court musician to the Maharajah of Maihar, he was also the Principal of the Maihar College of Music, and formed the Maihar Band with 100 orphaned children whom he taught to play strings, brass, bagpipes, and drums.

A great master of rhythm, he created some unique and complex timeless pieces of music, including innumerable *ragas*, like Arjun, Bhagabati, Chandika, Dhankosh etc. He also mastered several Indian classical instruments, such as the sitar, surbahar, sarod, pakhawaj, tabla and a wide variety of percussion instruments. He could demonstrate nearly 1,200 compositions of nearly 3,000 *dhrupads* and *dhamars* collected from his Ustads, which expanded and developed

his pedagogy and made him a most sought-after music teacher. He was a hard task master and deliberately maintained a tough image, as he was 'always worried that soft treatment on his part would only spoil his pupils'.

A mentor and teacher to Ravi Shankar, son Ali Akbar Khan, daughter Annapurna Devi, Nikhil Banerjee, Vasant Rai, Pannalal Ghosh and others, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1958, the Padma Vibhushan in 1971, and earlier in 1952, he was conferred the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship for lifetime contribution to Indian music. He passed away at the age of 91 years, on 6 September 1972 leaving a rich legacy for posterity. ■

– A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer.



DR. D. JAVARE GOWDA

A man of letters (1915-2016)

THE world of Kannada literature lost one of its outstanding stalwarts in the demise of Dr. D. Javare Gowda at the age of 101, known to his fans and the literary circuit simply as De Ja Gow. The prolific writer who was also a pioneering educationist, served as the Vice Chancellor of the Mysore University after joining the University as a Kannada professor in the year 1946.

Hailing from a village named Chakkere in Channapatana district of Karnataka, he passed out with a Masters degree in Kannada from the Mysore University, and thereafter embarked on a career as a teacher creating new benchmarks in the field of education. During his tenure as the Vice Chancellor of the Mysore University he was instrumental in the university being entrusted with the prestigious project of bringing out encyclopedias in Kannada. As a writer he was influenced by the likes of K. V. Puttappa (Kuvempu) and T.N. Srikantaiah, and specifically opted for Kannada literature as his main subject for graduation as Kuvempu taught the subject and Gowda was keen to be his student. Later, he was to hail Kuvempu as the driving force behind his academic and spiritual enrichment.

De Ja Gow served as the Vice Chancellor of the Mysore University consecutively for two terms from 1969-1975, and during this period he brought into the curriculum several new disciplines like Sciences, Criminology, Law and Journalism (Post Graduate courses), that had hitherto not been taught in the university. The litterateur had a penchant for penning biographies and published nearly forty biographies including inter alia those of eminent personalities like the architect of the Indian Constitution Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the famous socialist leader Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, freedom fighter Motilal Nehru, social reformer Basaveshwara and several others. He also endeared himself to the younger generation by writing books on the great scientist Albert Einstein, India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Nobel Prize winning poet Dr Rabindranath Tagore, scientist and Nobel laureate Marie Curie etc. His autobiography in two parts written in Kannada titled *Sahithigala Sankadalli*

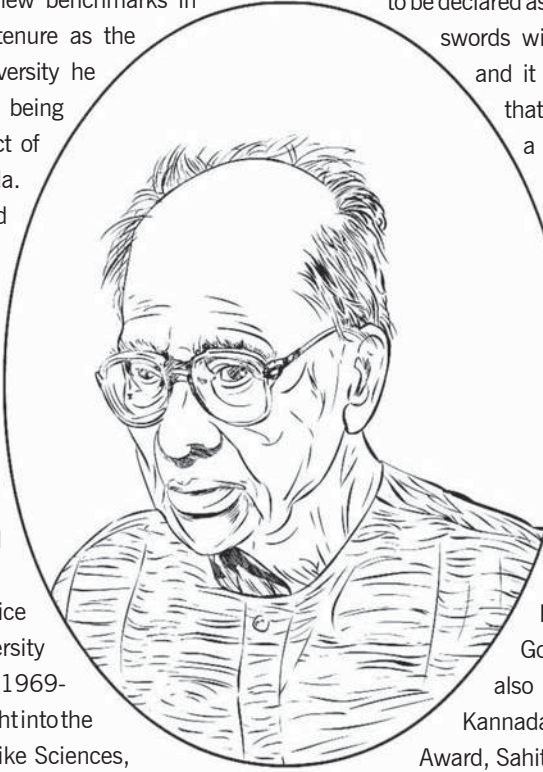
Horatada Beduku and his anthology of poems *Nenapini Butthi* added considerably to his popularity as a writer. Among his notable works were Kannada *Kanmani*, *Kulapathi Sadhanagalu*, *Lakshmishana Jaimini Bharata*, *Kanakadasare Nalachantri* and *Andayyana Kabbigara Kavya*. A marked feature of his biographies and his books (he wrote more than 130 books) were that they were all extremely well-researched and documented. He also recounted his experiences with Kuvempu in a book titled *Soundarya Yogi Kuvempu*.

The writer was a relentless crusader for the right of Kannada to be declared as a classical language, and often crossed

swords with the establishment over the issue, and it is in no small measure to his efforts that Kannada was conferred the status of a classical language. Gowda also was responsible for the introduction of Kannada as a medium of instruction in schools across Karnataka. A documentary on the writer brought out to commemorate his centenary titled *Kannada Kattaalu* made by Kesari Haravoo highlighted the contribution of Javare Gowda to the language and its literature. Javare Gowda was the recipient of several state and national honours during his lifetime. Apart from the Padma Shri conferred on him by the Government of India in 2001, he was also honoured with the Karnataka Ratna, Kannada Rajyotsava Award, Pampa Prashasti Award, Sahitya Academy Puraskar, Nadoja Award, Gorur Award and many others. A number of prestigious doctorates were also conferred on him.

A simple man with spartan habits, Javare Gowda was an inspiration to several writers of his generation and his works have always been bestsellers. His son Shashidar Prasad followed his father's footsteps as an educationist and like his father also became the Vice Chancellor of Mysore University. Kannada literature has seen a number of outstanding writers like Kuvempu, Shivarama Karanth, Ananthamurthy, Poornachandra Tejaswi and so on. Dr. Javare Gowda who served both the language and its literature with great distinction too, should find his name in this august list. ■

– C. V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.



GENERAL TAPISHWAR NARAIN RAINA, PVSM, MVC

Soldier of integrity and courage (1921-1980)

GENERAL Raina was born on 21 January 1921, in Ludhiana. After early education at Ludhiana, he studied at Foreman Christian College, Lahore. He was commissioned into the Kumaon Regiment on 12 April 1942, and took part in the Burma Campaign in the Second World War. He was mentioned-in-dispatch for gallantry. During the war, he was injured in a grenade accident and lost one eye. He commanded 14 Kumaon from September 1957 to September 1959, and was then posted as Commander 114 Infantry Brigade in Ladakh, which was responsible for the defence of Chushul.

Chushul village is situated at a height of 14239 feet in a narrow valley about 25 miles long and four miles wide. The flanking mountains are above 19,000 feet. It touches a 100 miles long salt water lake, the Pangong Tso and the Spangur gap in the mountains leads to another lake, the Spangur Tso which extends into Chinese territory. The Chinese had made roads, capable of carrying tanks, right upto the Spangur gap. The Chinese had an advantage and were able to overrun our posts from Karakoram Pass to Demchok in October 1962.

Initially, the Brigade had only two battalions- 1/8 GR and 5 Jat. 13 Kumaon was also inducted and 3 Infantry Division was formed for the defence of Ladakh. One company of 13 Kumaon was deployed at the pass, Rezang La. Preparation of defences and construction of bunkers was difficult due to terrain. Thin air and extreme cold made it even more difficult. No artillery support could be given to Rezang La due to an intervening feature. Half a squadron of tanks had also been air lifted to Chushul. Both the sides prepared for the impending attack which came on 18 November. The Indian soldiers had 303 rifles while the Chinese had self-loading rifles, machine guns, mortars and recoilless guns to break bunkers. Brig (later General) Raina commanded the troops with great courage and leadership and stuck to Chushul against heavy odds. Major Shaitan Singh fought to the last man and last bullet. He was awarded the PVC and Raina was awarded MVC for outstanding leadership qualities.

After several staff and command appointments, he commanded 2 Corps in the 1971 war. It was deployed in the Khulna Sector and he was awarded Padma Vibhushan. He took over as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on 1 June 1975. Emergency was declared on 26 January 1979, and people expected him to toe the line of the Prime Minister (PM), since he was a Kashmiri. Much to the surprise of these people, he kept the Army completely apolitical. Some of the bureaucrats had started talking of a committed civil service, but not the Army.

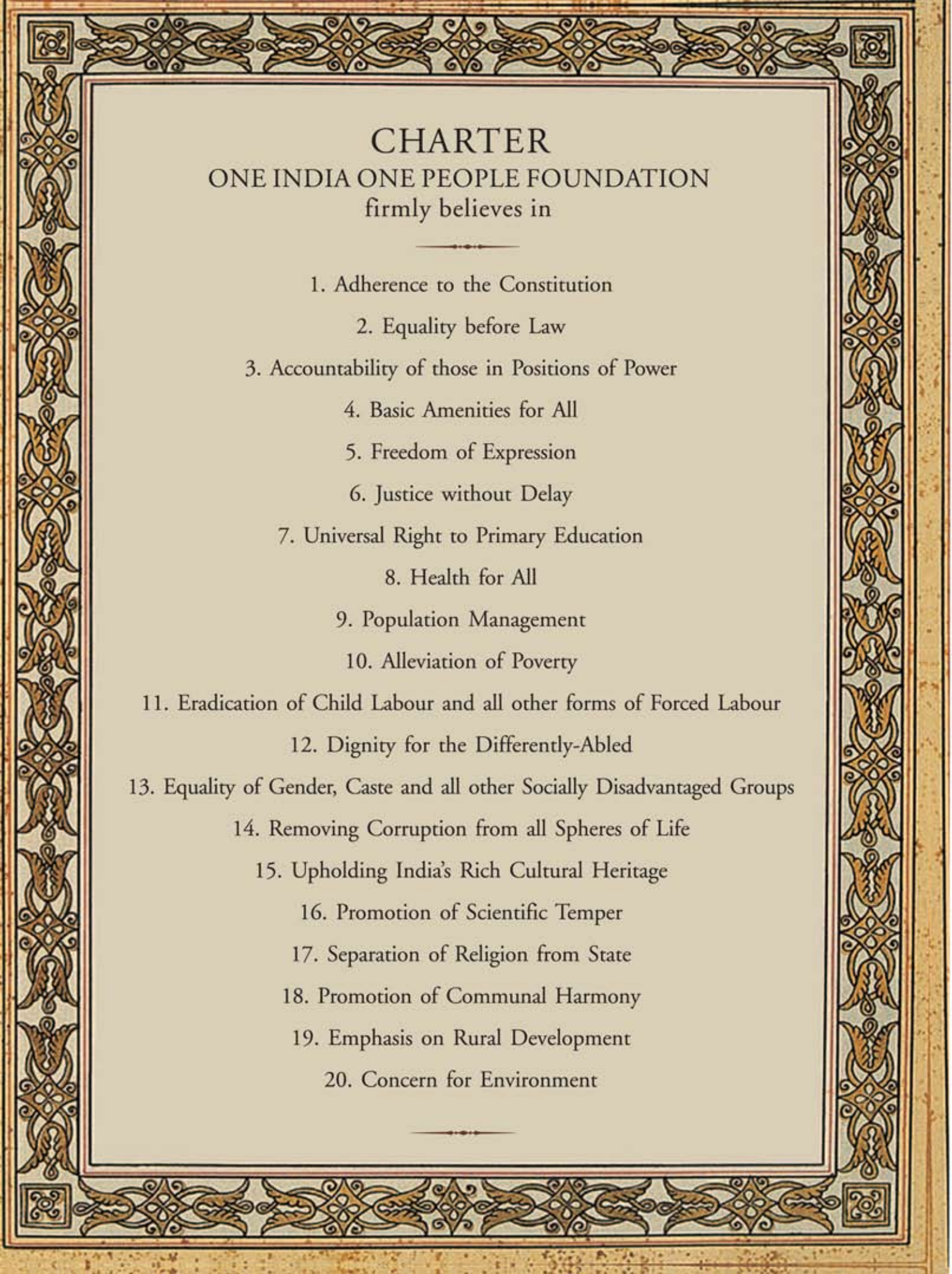
Raina was soon put to test. When the then PM Indira Gandhi asked for the Army's support, General Raina told her that the Army could not be used for promoting the interests of a political party and could carry out the orders of only a legally constituted government. When the Defence Minister Bansi Lal wanted the Army to provide drinking water at Indira Gandhi's rallies and to provide tents for the Congress session at Guwahati, Raina said it could not be done unless the facilities were made available to all the political parties. The Punjab Government had invited Sanjay Gandhi for the inauguration of the Anglo-Sikh War Memorial at Ferozepur and had given him the protocol of the PM by organising a Police Guard of Honour. All

Army officers in Punjab and Delhi were invited to come in uniform. The Army HQ gave verbal instructions not to attend and nobody went to the function. When the Congress lost the elections, General Raina called on Indira Gandhi to talk about the election results. Sanjay Gandhi walked in and suggested re-imposition of Emergency with the cooperation of the Army. General Raina ignored his remarks and told Indira Gandhi that history would honour her for respecting people's verdict. The Army remained apolitical due to the clear stand taken by General Raina. He retired on 31 May 1978, and was posted as India's High Commissioner in Canada in February 1979. He passed away on 19 May 1980 in Ottawa, Canada. ■

— Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)

(Sketches of Great Indians by C.D. Rane)





CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

1. Adherence to the Constitution
 2. Equality before Law
 3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power
 4. Basic Amenities for All
 5. Freedom of Expression
 6. Justice without Delay
 7. Universal Right to Primary Education
 8. Health for All
 9. Population Management
 10. Alleviation of Poverty
 11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
 12. Dignity for the Differently-Abled
 13. Equality of Gender, Caste and all other Socially Disadvantaged Groups
 14. Removing Corruption from all Spheres of Life
 15. Upholding India's Rich Cultural Heritage
 16. Promotion of Scientific Temper
 17. Separation of Religion from State
 18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
 19. Emphasis on Rural Development
 20. Concern for Environment
-

WHO AM I?

- Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?*
Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?
Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?
Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?
Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?
Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?
Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?
Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?
Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?
Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?
Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?
Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?
Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?
Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.*



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE