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Vol. VII Issue 8 August, 2019

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PLUCK OR
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TOMFOOLERY?

IT'S NOT
THAT SIMPLE
TO BE SIMPLE

Chetan Bhagat

Caricature: Anil Nakhase

Anil Nakhase





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The day our Lok Sabha made way for the removal of Article 370, Siddhartha Gigoo, a writer and a Kashmiri, tweeted: *"This state subject certificate was under lock and key. Made me feel 'special' until today. Now I'm an equal. Am as Kashmiri as everybody else, as Indian as everybody else. Still dream of my lost Homeland. Of going back."* One can read a really long story with a completely different narrative hidden in the brevity of a tweet. This is the sort of story that one can meet in a number of places scattered all over our country... a story where the climax is finally going to experience a completion.

The journey though isn't going to end. The strange thing about being a human is that we always have a new destination following the previous one... and our travel goes on. Let me add that every destination reached becomes the starting point for yet another journey. What is happening isn't only going to give a different narrative lens to Kashmiris but to each of us. There will be changes in perspectives that will have all the elements of all the genres in which writing exists... and when I use the word 'all' I obviously mean our neighboring countries and also those that have large geographical distances to be covered if we wish to go there.

Talking about journeys, do you think the journey of a person from being a non-writer to being a celebrated one is easy? Or for that matter, is the journey of a lone maverick thought to becoming part of a tale easy? Even words travel great distances and suffer conflict in unheard of ways before finding a place in a poem or a story. But



OUR
JOURNEY
NEVER
ENDS

the story for thoughts and words too doesn't end at one destination. There is always another task assigned to them and they happily accept it and move on, leaving their mark on some narratives. This issue of 'Education Post' has such journeys in its pages and so you, as a reader, are going to have Chetan Bhagat, the Kashmir issue, and a lot more as your companion during your journey from one moment to the next.

See, even time doesn't stop. We change *the way we think about it* and place it in neat slots called the past and the present and then we wait for time to transform in accordance to our definition. Talking of definitions, we are known to have tweaked them since time immemorial to suit our needs. What was good was turned over and became not so good and the opposite is present in the same measure. Certain words too have been made to dress in different clothes and they have always sportingly agreed. Thoughts, however, are sometimes fussy because they are emerging from the human mind. It is the human mind that invariably has to be gently coaxed to discard thoughts and ideas that are no longer relevant to the new scheme of things. This needs meaningful conversations as life meanders through a new set of experiences and change slowly dawns. The night gets forgotten and every dawn is hailed as a miracle.

Read the articles and email us your opinions and suggestions... and please do not forget to share this copy with your friends. After all, even a magazine needs to travel on from one reader to another to experience salvation.

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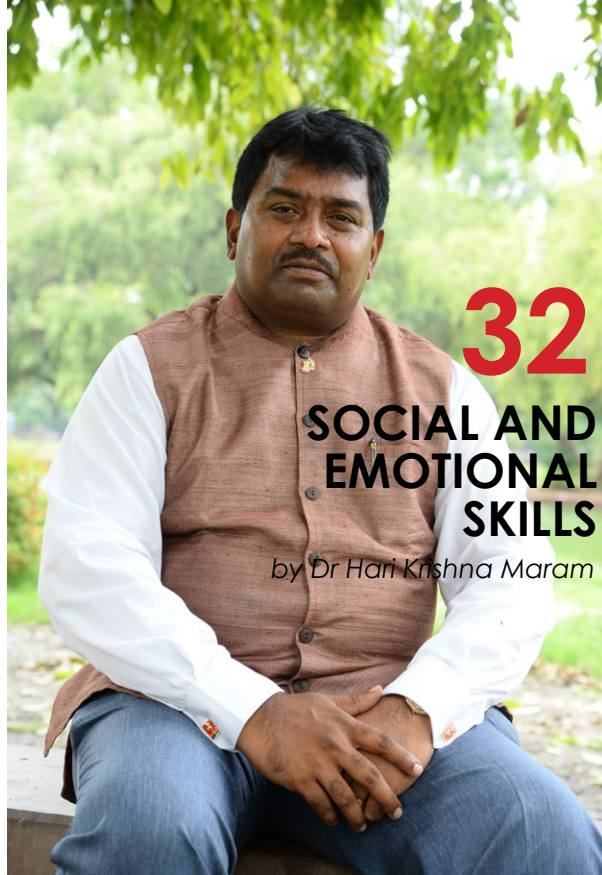
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Printed and Published by Shiv Shankar Sharma
on behalf of SAT SUKRIT MEDIA PVT. LTD.
Printed at All Time Offset Printers, F-406, Sector-63,
Noida-201301 and published from Flat No. 103, UGF,
Plot No. G-84, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110077

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CONTENTS



32
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

by Dr Hari Krishna Maram

10
EDUCATION REMAINS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT SOFT SKILLS
by Meenu Chopra



14
HUMAN RESOURCE IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY
by Prof. R.K. Shivpuri

40
THE THRILLS OF A HOME AWAY FROM HOME
by Ambica Gulati

CONTENTS

58
NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2019

by Dr. Jitendra Das

52
CREATING LONG TERM VISION IS THE CORE SKILLS OF LEADERS

by Avadhesh Dixit

36
ARTICLE 370 IS IT POLITICAL PLUCK OR INCOMPETENT TOMFOOLERY?

by Arvind Passey



CONTENTS

20

COVER CONVERSATION

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE TO BE SIMPLE

by Chetan Bhagat



48

CAREER HORIZONS IN EMERGING SECTORS

By Dr. A K Puri

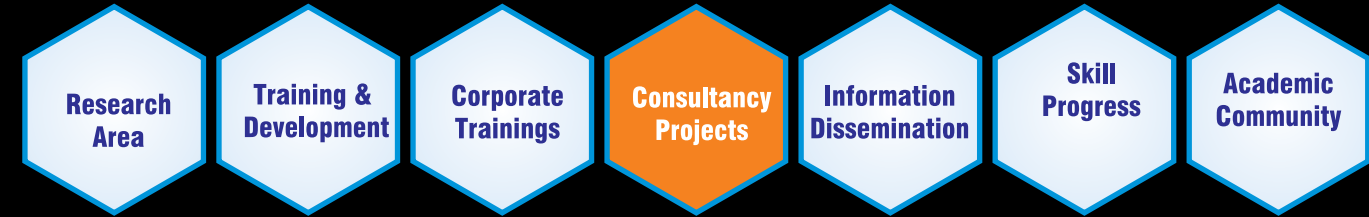
54

THE PANGOLIN HUNTED FOR HEALTH

By Madhumay Mallik



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SOFT SKILLS

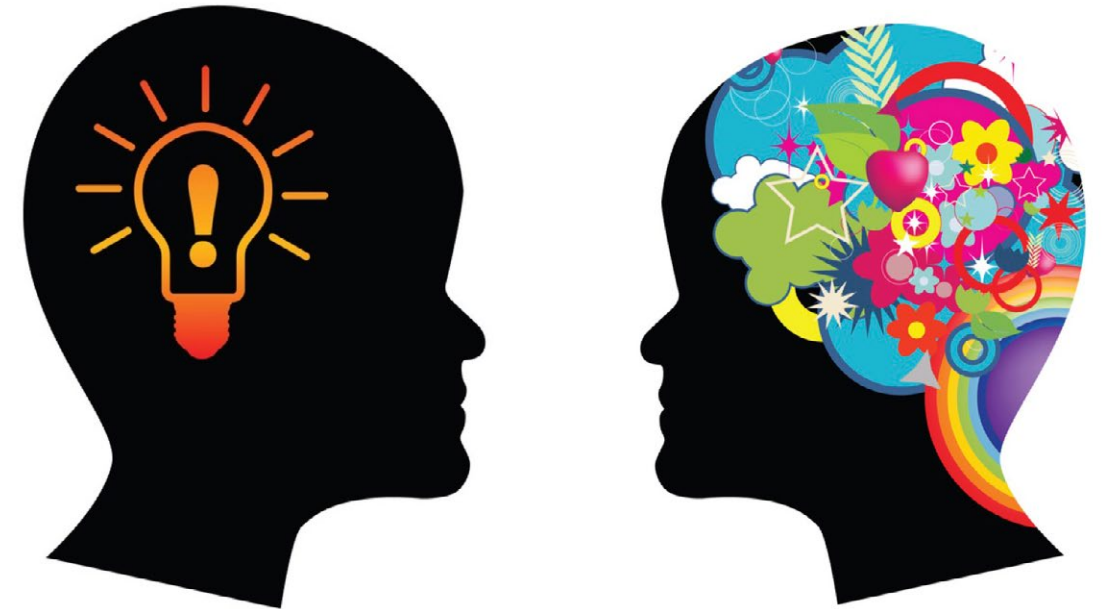
EDUCATION REMAINS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT SOFT SKILLS

E

very organization needs workplace superstars today who sail with sales and marketing, know the nuances of hiring well, and have a global perspective. Technology has made inroads in every aspect of management and even meanders seamlessly through what most know as personal 'soft skills'. Employers value technical or functional skills and place greater emphasis on less tangible qualities such as good communication skills, cooperativeness, flexibility and a positive attitude. This is because the need of the hour is to prepare future workers for an employment market that is far more volatile than we've seen in the last 50 years.

"Soft skills is a term often associated with a person's 'EQ' (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, behavior and optimism that characterize relationships with other people"

Today's corporate world looks for attributes like effective communication, adaptability, ability to embrace change, quick



IQ vs. EQ

learning, proactive initiative, an open and positive mind-set, computer literacy and presentation skills, well-rounded general awareness, an insight into proper dress sense, and lots of business etiquette.

Mark Murphy, the author of *Hiring for Attitude*, leadership trainer and CEO of Leadership IQ, has trained employees in companies like Microsoft and IBM discovered in one of his research where he tracked 20,000 new hires that 46% of employees failed within 18 months. Even more shocking was that 89% of the time it happened for attitudinal problems towards work and colleagues, and only 11% for lack of expertise. The attitudinal deficits included low levels of emotional intelligence, motivation, and temperament. Obviously then, today's fluid and interpersonal workplaces need skills such listening and learning from criticism, collaborating with others, working under pressure, presenting ideas effectively, and a having a positive, flexible attitude become all vital qualities for career success. One recent survey of recruiters found that 94 percent believe "an employee with stronger soft skills has a better chance of being promoted to a leadership position than an employee with more years of experience but weaker soft skills."

Hard skills, once learned, can be strengthened and maintained but soft skills, on the other hand, do not change unless one continues to refine and develop them. Thus your hard /technical skills will get you a job but a lack of soft skills might lead you to lose that job.

As a manager, you'll probably also find yourself more often in the position of giving presentations and speaking in public. You'll probably spend more time interviewing job candidates, too. Successful managers tend to be outstanding communicators who know what to say (or what not to say) and how to say it. Technology is reshaping pretty much everyone's job these days and automation is replacing humans in performing certain tasks, if not entire occupations. In such an environment, successful employees will be those who excel in

areas where robots and algorithms cannot. So far, computers are no match for people when it comes to critical thinking, creativity, judgment and the like. Then there are the professional skills that form the foundation of every successful career, the strengths that can take an employee from satisfactory to outstanding. For instance, there are few positions where being good at managing your time and maintaining focus wouldn't be appreciated. Both of these skills boost productivity. To your co-workers, someone with these skills is someone they can count on to meet important deadlines and deliver what's expected. Communication, both written and verbal, is another soft skill most of us could improve.

It is time, therefore, to learn strategies for finding a healthy balance in your workday, so stress doesn't undermine your performance. Some aspects of soft skills that most of those at the start of their career need to know well, are:

Your technical skill or hard skill will help you in getting the job



Etiquette and manners are your soft skills.

What keeps you climbing the ladder of success is your soft skills

Communication skills

Why you need them: Both written and verbal communication skills are of utmost importance in the workplace because they set the tone for how people perceive you. They also improve your chances of building relationships with co-workers. Communication skills boost your performance because they help you to extract clear expectations from your manager so that you can deliver excellent work.

Why employers look for them: Workers are more productive when they know how to communicate with their peers. If you can clearly express the - who, what, when, where, why, and how of a project, you'll be a hot ticket.

How to gain them: One way to hone your communication and presentation skills is to practice the art of public speaking & becoming a good patient listener.

Teamwork skills

Why you need them: A company's success is rarely dependent on one person doing something all by him/herself. Success is the result of many people working toward a common goal. When employees can synthesize their varied talents, everyone wins. (Bonus: Having friends at work can also boost your job satisfaction)

Why employers look for them: Employers look to team players to help build a friendly office culture, which helps retain employees and, in turn attracts top talent. Furthermore, being able to collaborate well with your co-workers strengthens the quality of your work.

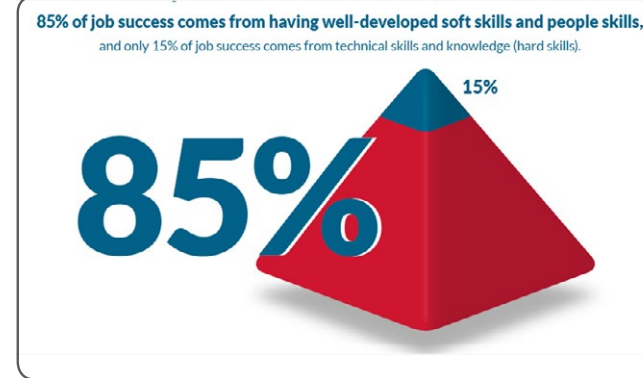
How to gain them: To generate goodwill, lend a hand when you see a co-worker in need. ("Hey, I know you have a ton on your plate. How can I help?")

Adaptability skills

Why you need them: Things don't always go as planned, and instead of digging in your heels, you need to be able to pivot and find alternate solutions.

Why employers look for them: "The speed of change in any given workplace is so rapid," says Joel Garfinkle, executive coach and author of Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level. Consequently, employers need workers who can adapt to industry shifts and keep the company current.

How to gain them: Push yourself to be an early adopter of change. "For example, adapting to technology without mourning what used to be true yesterday is crucial for people to be seen as someone who is capable of meeting new challenges," says Garfinkle.



Problem solving skills

Why you need them: When something goes wrong, you can either complain or take action. Tip: It's the latter that will get you noticed. Knowing how to think on your feet can make you indispensable to an employer.

Why employers look for them: Companies rely on problem solvers—their top performers—to navigate unexpected challenges & look for feasible solutions.

How to gain it: "Always approach your boss with a solution, not a problem". So when an issue crops up, sit down and think through how you're going to address it before bringing it to your boss' attention.

Critical observation skills

Why you need them: Data doesn't mean much if you don't know how to interpret it. Is there a pattern emerging? What else should you be looking for? Being a critical observer can help you perform better.

Why employers look for them: Companies need critical thinkers—people who bring a fresh perspective and offer intuitive solutions and ideas to help the company get a leg up on the competition or improve internal processes.

How to gain them: To be a critical observer, you need to be able to analyze information and put it to use. One tactic is to try to identify patterns of behavior at work. For example, does your boss actually read the weekly sales reports? What was her reaction to bad news in the staff meeting? What's the best time of day to approach your manager with a question? By observing how people respond to the constant flow of information you can better understand the critical aspects of improving business operations.

Conflict resolution skills

Why you need them: "Any time you put more than one person into an organization, there is going to be conflict," "It's human nature." Therefore, being able to resolve issues with co-workers will help you maintain relationships with peers and work more effectively.

Why employers want them: Being able to constructively work through disagreements with people is a sure indicator of maturity—as well as leadership potential. Someone like this helps to promote a healthy, collaborative workplace.

How to gain them: The best way to resolve disagreements between co-workers is to address issues directly but delicately. So, when stepping in as a mediator, let both parties air their grievances in a judgment-free environment and then work together to find a solution.

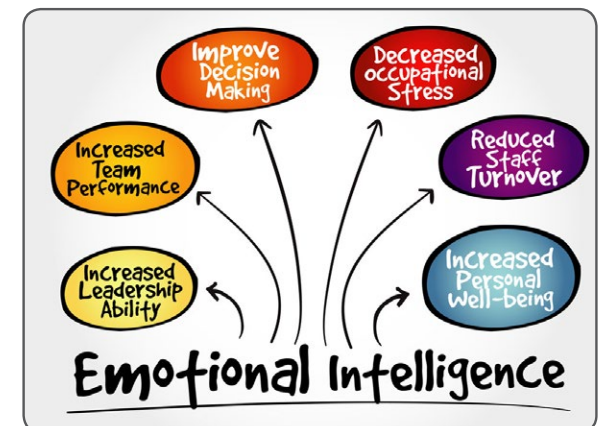
Leadership skills

Why you need them: Having confidence and a clear vision can help influence your co-workers and get them on board with your ideas now and in the future. Displaying such leadership skills helps you gain visibility within an organization, which can lead to more opportunities for promotions or salary bumps.

Why employers want them: Bosses and managers are always looking for employees with leadership potential because those workers will one day be taking over the reins and building on the company's legacy.

How to gain them: Being a leader isn't merely about getting people to do what you want. Leadership means inspiring and helping others reach their full potential. One way to do that is to become the internship supervisor, which gives you the opportunity to manage people, learn how to motivate a team, and take on more responsibility.

"Never stop learning because life never stops Teaching"





Prof. R.K. Shivpuri

HUMAN RESOURCE IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY

Prof. R.K. Shivpuri is Founder Director, Centre for Detector and Software Technology, University of Delhi and has been Chairperson, M.Tech. Committee on Nuclear Science and Technology, University of Delhi.

Introduction

The most crucial component for economic and social development of a country is energy. An increased access to electricity translates into improvement towards health, education, agriculture and economic empowerment. India has been developing fast owing to its (a) large industries, (b) a well-developed service sector and (c) an impressive growth rate. All of the above need energy to sustain, advance and compete on a global scale. Economic development is directly related to energy consumption. The larger the energy usage, the larger will be the economic development. **Fig. 1** shows the human development index vs the per capita electricity consumption for different countries. The human development index is a statistical composite index of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators. The average life span of individuals in a country also depends upon the average power consumption.

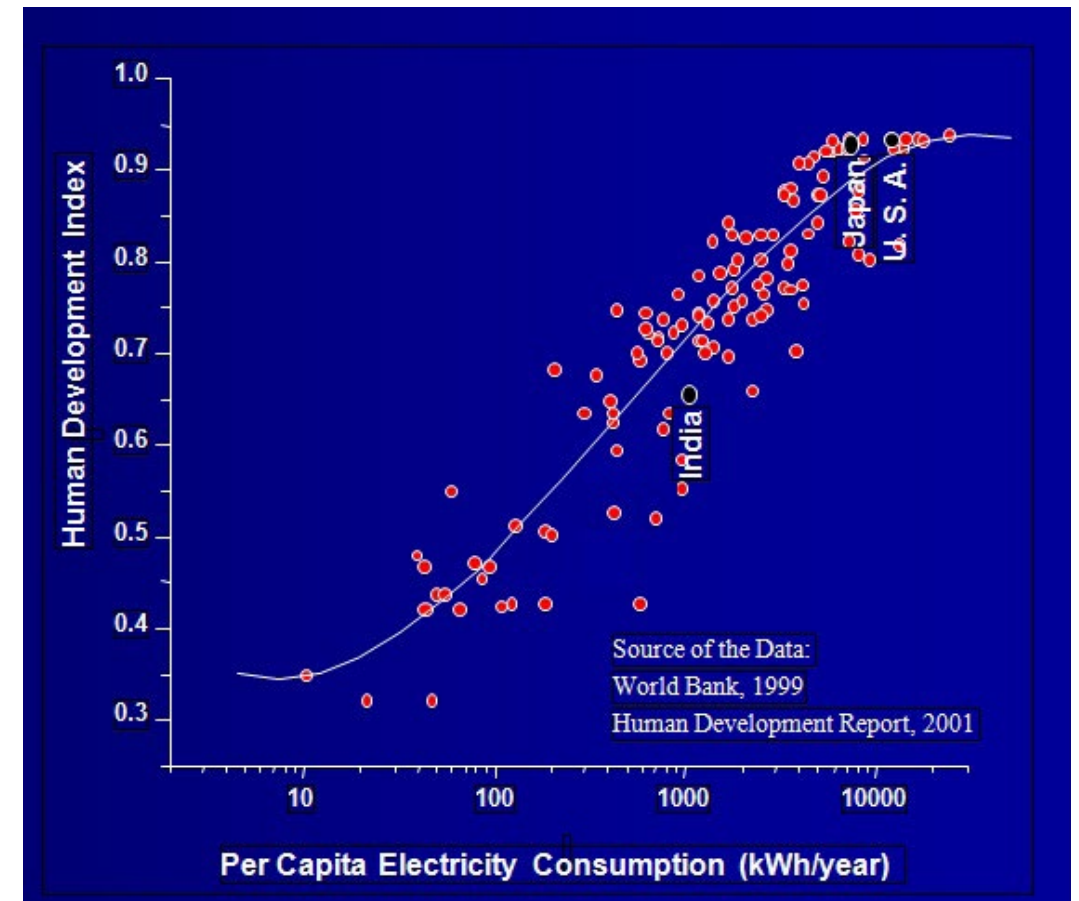


Fig. 1 shows the dependence of human development index on per capita energy consumption for different countries.

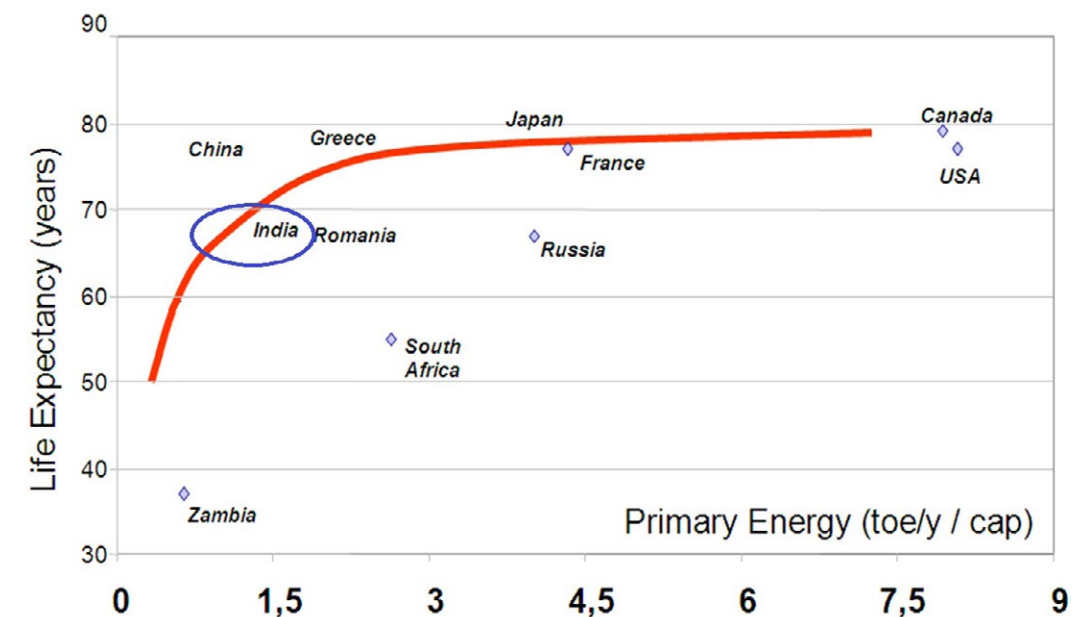


Fig. 2 Life expectancy vs the primary energy/capita.

Fig. 2 shows the dependence of life expectancy on per capita primary energy.

The unit of toe for energy is defined as the amount of energy released by burning one tonne of crued oil.

For a large country like India, with huge future energy requirements, depending largely upon import of energy resources and technologies is neither economically sustainable nor strategically desirable for energy security. India is the 3rd largest producer of electricity in the world with a total installed capacity of about 1,497,000 Gigawatt hour (GWh). The average per capita consumption is a

meagre 1,122 Kilowatt hour (KWh). The current energy sources are: Thermal: 79.4% , Hydro: 12.4% , Nuclear: 3.2% and Others: 5% .

India needs about 3% of global consumption of energy. From 2010 onwards, we have begun to fall short of our energy needs. From the year 2050 onwards, we will need an enormous amount of 700 million tons of coal in case we do not develop alternate energy sources. This is clear from Fig. 3 where installed capacity for 2010 onwards upto 2050 is shown.

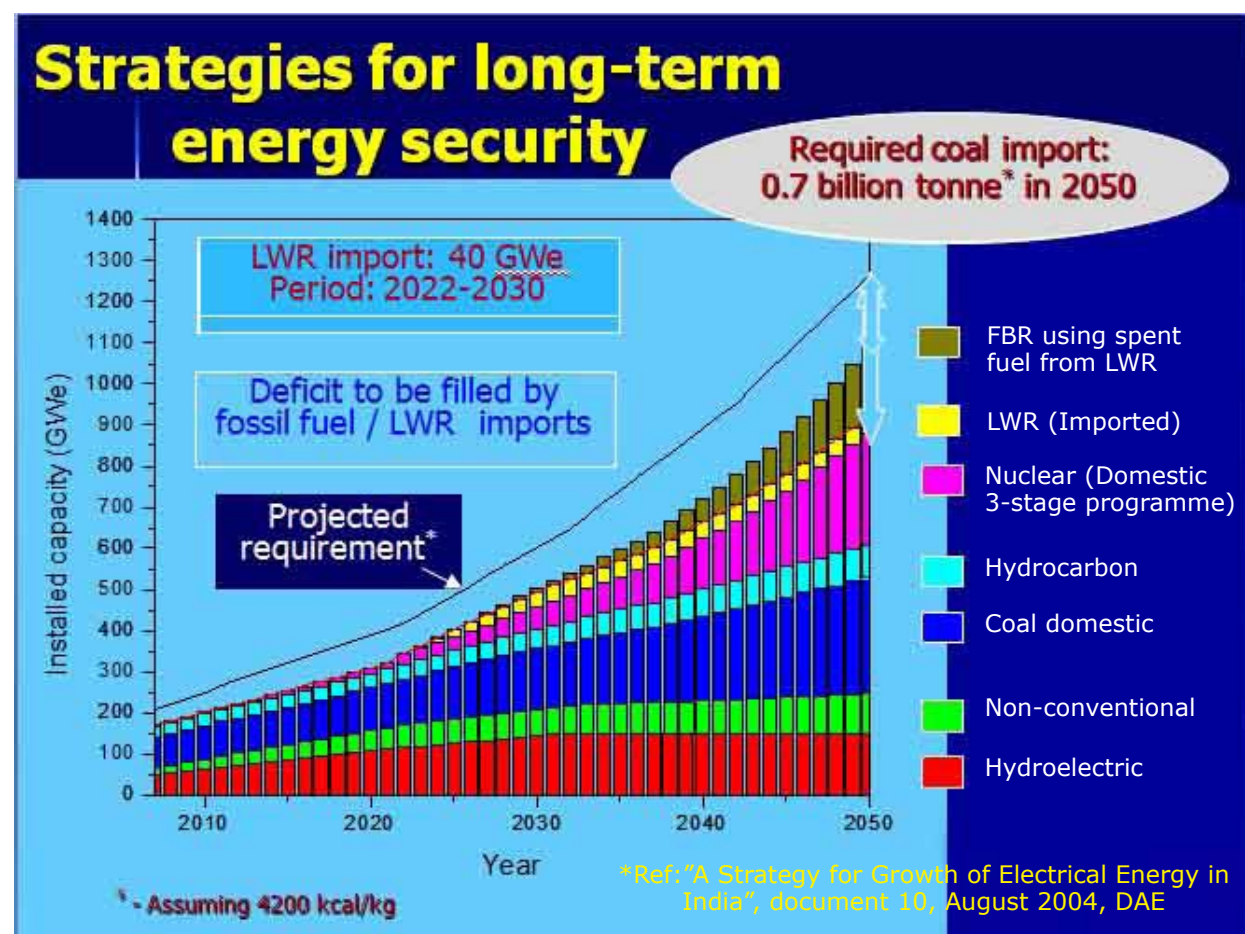


Fig. 3 Installed capacity in Gigawatt electrical (GWe) in the country for years 2010-2050.

The energy challenges are due to increase in demand of energy mostly due to population increase, rise in the living standards and also due to increased expectations of the people. There will be 3 billion more people on earth by 2050, many of them in India. The economic growth in developing countries like India, China, Brazil etc. drives the energy demand apart from other countries which are aspiring at better living conditions. Growth in developed

countries inspite of improvements in energy efficiency, widespread use of computers, air-conditioning, etc. are pushing demand.

The only attractive option to meet the increasing energy demand in India is to produce it from Nuclear source. Of course, there are several challenges in this area: Resources-material (Nuclear Fuel) and human i.e. manpower. Regarding the Nuclear Fuel, situation eased

after Indo-US Nuclear deal and we are now in a position to import Uranium and have already started that process. Several countries who had put embargo on us for export of nuclear fuel have now agreed to let us have nuclear fuel for our energy needs.

Former President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam stated that, "energy independence is India's first and highest priority. India has to go for nuclear power generation in a big way using thorium-based reactors. Thorium, a non fissile material is available in abundance in our country." Work on this type of reactor is going on at present at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalapakkam, Chennai.

Need of Skilled Manpower

Success of any Nuclear Power project depends mainly on availability of qualified manpower, which can ensure the success of various stages of a nuclear power project such as planning, construction, operation, safety and power production. Safety of nuclear plants is of greatest concern (three mile island, Chernobyl and Fukushima are sad reminders!). Skilled and qualified manpower can help in preventing accidents or help in proper handling if they do occur. The shortage of skilled and qualified manpower is a major limiting factor in the development of nuclear technology particularly in developing countries.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) has explored seven activities related to nuclear generation of electricity: Front-end, Back-end, Plant Operation and Maintenance, Design, Manufacturing and Construction, Regulation, R&D, Education and 'Others'. Occupations in these major sectors were further classified as: Engineers (nuclear and chemical), Scientists, Managers, etc. For all of the above, we need qualified manpower. Shortage of skilled manpower is the main problem facing the expansion of Nuclear Program all over the Globe.

India is planning to add several more reactors to the presently available 22 reactors.

Fig. 4 shows the active and planned nuclear power plants in the country (Ref. Wikipedia)



Fig. 4 Nuclear power plants in the country.

There is a serious shortage of skilled manpower worldwide and India is no exception inspite of being over a billion people! According to OECD study for UN, we need 900 technical/scientific personnel for each nuclear reactor. Where do we get such numbers for our reactors? The only option is to follow an aggressive strategy to increase the Nuclear Engineering Manpower. The implementation of a training program requires: Financial support and Organization for strengthening the educational infrastructure. This is true for developed and developing countries.

Manpower Development

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) Training Schools and its affiliates conduct one year Orientation Course for Engineering graduates and Science post-graduates (OCES). Under a new scheme, called DAE Graduate Fellowship Scheme, M.Tech students are admitted with the twin objectives of human resource development and collaborative research. Understanding the dire need of the manpower shortage, and utilizing the vast potential

of human resource at Universities, some universities such as Mody Institute of Technology & Science (MITS), Rajasthan and Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, Gandhinagar etc. have started a new course in Nuclear Technology during the last few years. However, this effort is not enough to answer our manpower needs.

Issues & Solutions In Nuclear Engineering

The major problems in Nuclear Engineering course in any University are listed as under.

Huge gap between supply and demand :

Enrollments and other key metrics for Nuclear Engineering (NE) departments and programs do not show any sufficient increase while demand from industry and government is expected to increase. This gap needs to be quantified and addressed.

- The number of new Nuclear Engineering/ Nuclear Technology departments and programs has increased to four in last five years.
- The future need for nuclear engineers is neither well understood nor well-articulated.
- The looming manpower crisis needs to be communicated to the Govt; Industry and Universities.
- There seems to be a lack of urgency among decision-makers regarding the manpower crisis that is impending.
- There is need for nuclear engineers since new reactor plants are coming up.

Supply vs. demand :

There is an increasing demand for nuclear engineering graduates in industry, Govt. and Universities.

- First point is that we must increase the number of institutions – Universities & National Institutes of Technology (NIT's) where we should start the nuclear engineering program.
- Secondly, we must think in terms of actions to address infrastructure needs for the short-term (1 – 5 years) and the long-term (6 – 15 years).
- Image of the discipline :Nuclear engineering is not perceived to be a new emerging area with great opportunities for people who enter this field.
- Nuclear Engineering departments are perceived to focus on nuclear power, even when the students

are trained in diverse areas such as Nuclear Plant Design, Nuclear Operations, and Nuclear Waste Management etc.

- There is a poor image of the discipline of nuclear engineering among the general public, students and parents.
- Placement offices at engineering schools do not assist graduating students looking for employment. This could be a result of ignorance of available opportunities.
- There is a perception of insufficient opportunities in the nuclear industry to attract new employees and prospective students into the field.
- Compared to other areas such as Business Management, Finance, the “glamour factor” is working against nuclear energy as it is perceived to be a field with a limited future and dim prospects for responsible and high paying jobs.

Cooperation :

There needs to be more cooperative activities among the major constituencies (industry, universities, government) in nuclear engineering and related fields.

- There is a lack of Govt. and industry support for research in Nuclear Engineering departments.
- The manpower requirements and employment opportunities should be better articulated.
- There is a need to harness the vast available manpower in the Universities to meet the projected demand in this field.

Need for a Nuclear Reactor :

There is a great need to have a nuclear reactor at a central location which will be used for students practical training. There is no research reactor in the country in any University/ Institute. A sub-critical Nuclear reactor for teaching and training is greatly needed. Several universities in USA are having subcritical nuclear reactors which are used by students for study and training purposes.

Nuclear Engineering Curriculum :

Nuclear Engineering departments should attempt to follow a uniform course curriculum and also maintain their core competencies in nuclear power.

- High school textbooks and curricula should include a balanced treatment of nuclear power and radiation.

- One of the methods to make the course attractive to students is by adding the options such as opportunity to pursue course work and internship in our reactor sites for extended period, and also in world-wide renowned Institutes in this area (by creating exchange programs). Exchange of students & faculty with foreign universities will make the program interesting. This will enlarge the vision of the students.
- There is a need to integrate both theoretical and practical aspects with the demands of the employment agencies also clearly understood.
- Offering summer internships to college students is also very important for attracting students into a department.
- Further, campus placements from the Industries and other interested parties need to be encouraged.
- Communication and outreach: The nuclear community must be proactive in an outreach program to inform the public the need for nuclear energy. The prospective students must be informed the wide array of challenging career opportunities in industry, research, and government that are available today and will continue to be available for the foreseeable future.
- The nuclear community must start early by reaching high school students. Marketing plays an important & key role.
- High school teacher workshops in nuclear energy must be conducted. Such workshops are important. Involvement of the industry, government and university is most desirable.
- The prospective engineering college students should also be tapped.
- B.Tech students are a large and readily available source of qualified students.
- Nuclear Engineering departments should consider proactive programs to encourage undergraduate students to get involved in real research projects.
- Nuclear Engineering departments should consider highly visible events such as popular talks by eminent scientists, colloquiums etc. to help improve public perception for nuclear energy.
- Nuclear Engineering faculty and nuclear professionals should participate in science fairs.

- The benefits and opportunities presented by nuclear energy need to be articulated and marketed.
- The security concerns and corresponding solutions should be clearly and transparently communicated.
- The advantages and viability of the Nuclear Power option over other alternative energy resources should be explained, both qualitatively and quantitatively,

What we need to do

Train many more engineers and technologists each year and thus use the vast human capital of the country in a meaningful way. In every field the surest way to attract the best students is to be innovative, daring and relevant. Some degree of renewal and of new vision is certainly needed. Keeping this aim in view, it would be desirable to start M.Tech/B.Tech courses in Nuclear Science and Technology in Universities and in National Institutes of Technology (NIT's).

In order to give the benefit of International experts to our students, we could send our students to countries like France, U.S.A for course work/dissertation and invite foreign experts in workshops and symposia. This will widen the vision of students, give them international exposure and provide them a high quality education.

Summary

- The internet should be exploited for linking potential employers with prospective employees in nuclear engineering. Employment opportunities need to be communicated to all graduating students. One could consider developing a central jobs/graduates website for potential employers and graduating students.
- There needs to be concerted action by leaders of industry, national laboratories, universities and institutes and the government to support actions to address this manpower crisis.
- The industry and academia should work together such as through their advisory boards. They could develop the course curricula to suit the industry requirements.
- The central government should be urged to recognize and accept its critical role to nurture and sustain for long-term an adequate supply of expertise in nuclear-related fields, including nuclear energy, nuclear plant design, waste management, health physics, and nuclear operations. ■



COVER CONVERSATION > CHETAN BHAGAT & ARVIND PASSEY

IT'S
NOT
THAT
SIMPLE
TO BE
SIMPLE

CHETAN BHAGAT

CHETAN BHAGAT
Novelist, Writer & Motivational Speaker

I

saw him from a distance and waved. He smiled and waved back. No airs. No snooty looks thrown at anyone. Chetan Bhagat loves to retain his easy and communicative personality... and I guess this is exactly how he has shaped his writing through the years. As we walked around the poolside area in Hyatt Regency in Delhi, I could sense that I was with a writer of tales who not only read a lot but had chosen to also write on burning issues.

The day we met was one that was over-flowing with news about the abrogation of Article 370 and on such a day even ripples in the pool wonder how much and how well will different minds perceive and accept this bold political initiative. This was also the day that TOI carried his article in the edit section and I obviously began by asking: *Your article in today's TOI is all about the anti-vocation courses mindset. Your article is about changing mindsets vs doing away with sub-standard education. Which do you think is easier?*



Abha Iyengar

Why do so many writers love to voice unflattering thoughts about Chetan Bhagat?

“Chetan Bhagat is considered an intruder in the elitist literary space. Many Indian writers writing in English find his writing commonplace and ordinary. Yet he reached out and tapped an ignored market; of the largely ‘Hinglish’ speaking Indian youth who love and relate to his novels. His success is a difficult truth to swallow.”

Abha Iyengar - an internationally published poet and author with 5 published novels and collections to her credit. She is also an independent editor and a British Council certified creative writing teacher. Website: www.abhaiyengar.com

Chetan Bhagat smiled and answered, “I would actually be promoting this article a lot today but I guess today’s historic day of news about the abrogation of Article 370 is what everyone will talk about. So far as education and changing mindsets is concerned, I must say that degrees which do not focus on skills, and they could be about learning to be an electrician, a plumber, or even a computer operator, do not increase employability at all.” I nodded and told him that his article carried the example of an electrician in Bandra earning far more than would a graduate from a college that is run-of-the-mill. “Yes,” he replied, “and changing mindsets isn’t easy at all. But **I think people like me, with such a big reach, have a role to play.** How do mindsets change? See, you can change policy, you can create a skill development ministry, and you can keep opening colleges that award a BA or an MA. What are you learning at the end of it? Nothing. Nothing is really learned. It’s just an additional three years when you’ve already gone through twelve years of schooling and have learned all the calculus, history, and English that you need. This realization needs to come fast.”

The most important question that one can ask a writer is about writing... and maybe, reading. I know that when



John Dayal

How would you introduce Chetan Bhagat to a group of politicians?

“Haven’t read him at all. Don’t like his politics. Surprised he is not in the Rajya Sabha.”

John Dayal, a veteran journalist who now writes on his social media profile: ‘Gloriously unemployed, perhaps not employable’.

people ask others about their reading lists, the answers will necessarily include titles that one may want to be associated with and so such questions do not interest me. I decided to ask:

Reading more vs writing more – can a writer just choose one? Does reading interfere with one’s developing one’s own unique writing style?

“When you’re writing then yes, the focus must be entirely on writing,” said Chetan Bhagat, “But otherwise you should read because without reading you will not get a sense of things as they are and as they need to be expressed. However, I think you have to read a lot. Even when I’m writing a column, for instance, on Kashmir, if I don’t read up on all contemporary issues, will I be able to do justice to what I write?” This writer, I thought, loves turning his answers into incisive questions. However, having read quite a few of his published articles I asked something connected to his query but one that turned back into the domain of writing skills:

Your column in newspapers isn’t about stories and writing. It is about issues that concern the nation and covers everything from education to politics. What I want to ask is if this happens when story-tellers lose their way? I mean, do they then hop from creative writing to activism, politics, and preaching?

He smiled and said, “It’s an interesting question. I’d say it is about a writer’s own journey. Some people are perfectly happy to be storytellers and story-tellers alone. But **I am my agenda that makes me different** and may have given me more prominence or a stronger voice. I am a story-teller will use stories to create some change, whether it’s the plight of people in some region, about the way we perceive relationships, or whether it’s Two States or a centre community, I always pick an issue. And therefore I write about issues. **My approach is to write to create change.** So for me it works. But for some people who think writers must not write on politics or question me about my approach, are missing the point about writing. The books and the movies are giving me popularity which means there are people listening to me. So, but I don’t judge people. If you want to just be a storyteller, that’s great. If you wish to be an opinion writer, fine. Most people pick one and it’s their choice.”

With the flow of the interview established, I decided to dig in and pursue writing skills a bit more. So I asked: ‘

The girls in room 105’ meanders through the Kashmir issue, ‘One Indian girl’ has relationships and corporate life flowing through it, ‘Revolution Twenty-20’ has corruption in education highlighted... and they must surely be wanting to change certain thoughts and norms. However, your books, most readers believe, are easy read books. Can an easy read fiction lead to social things? Or is it only literary fiction that scores here?





Madhulika Liddle

How will you choose to define the writing style of Chetan Bhagat to a group of wannabe writers?

“Chetan Bhagat’s writing is simple, the language and style aimed at people who want a story that mirrors things they see around them. His writing doesn’t take you to unfamiliar places or show you circumstances you may not have already seen or heard of.”

Madhulika Liddle - a novelist and award-winning short story writer. Although best-known for the Muzaffar Jang, featuring a detective in Shahjahan’s time, she also writes in several other genres.

“Complex writing has its place, and maybe the connoisseurs of literature may admire such books... but look at poets”, said the writer, “Poets throughout history who have made an impact are those that have been understood. I mean, you have to use language that reaches people. For instance, between Sharatchandra and Tagore, it is the former who has been read by more people. Both have created an impact, but easy language wins hands-down. **I believe one can create more change by writing in ways that the common man understands.** Look at Karunanidhi who wrote scripts for movies and became so popular that he ended up being a leader amongst politicians. Same is true for Jayalalitha... its usually the popular ones who become the voice of the state.” This was my chance at knowing if Chetan Bhagat had any political ambitions, and so I asked:

So what you are hinting at is that people who are popular in the creative arts stand a better chance of being people’s representatives. When do we see you in active politics?

“All I’m saying is that writers who are understood by many are able to touch people’s heart with their art. If they are able to channel this talent and convert it into politics...” he said and then after a pause, Chetan Bhagat answered, “So far as I am concerned, **I am very happy to have earned my freedom to comment on things and to judge each government fairly.** I think the moment you join a party, you have to tow the party line. And I’m not prepared to lose my independence.”

So you believe in judging each government fairly and independently. Does this make you anti-establishment?

“Sometimes. But sometimes, like today, I am pro-government action. I’ve been writing on Article 370 since long. For me, the abrogation of Article 370 is what was needed. It’s not easy to do what they’re doing. So **I’m pro-establishment today. But tomorrow if they double the GST rates, I will be anti-establishment.** Though I don’t think they are going to...”

I know someone who writes thrillers and he

said that he lowers his level of writing as this is what makes his books sell more. He believes literary fiction neither sells as much nor is read. Is this a correct perspective to have?

After asking this question even I realized how silly it might be seeming to Chetan Bhagat because even I believed that masking your real writing style is virtually impossible. But then, I wasn’t sure of the kind of reply CB would give. Therefore, I waited until he said, “I don’t think it works this way. I think your writing-style is like your handwriting. It is like your personality. What you write is what you write and I don’t think you can do otherwise. You can, at best, make your writing simpler by a few notches or make it that bit more complicated. But broadly, either you have it in you or you don’t. Some people criticise my ability to write in a simple way. I consider it my forte and obviously it is not that easy to write simply otherwise, after me there’ll be hundreds who do the same. But **it’s not that simple to be simple.**”

You’re right. It’s not that simple to be simple. Language must connect to all sorts of readers.

“Yeah”, he replied, without a pause, “It’s actually very complicated. To be simple in expression takes a lot of effort to put forth your argument It is almost like the case of Article 370 where a lot of experts were talking in a complicated language, not solving the problem. The problem was that all this complication was creating power centres which was sometimes similar to legalizing a gangster-like penchant to take advantage of everyone all the time.” I didn’t quite understand the gangster metaphor and so decided to switch over to organisers of Lit Fests who have anyway been hailed as everything from gangsters to jokers to Shylocks and even snooty sobs, and asked: *Let us have your opinion on Lit Fests. They seem to be mushrooming like Durga Puja pandals.* To be frank I wasn’t expecting him to be forthright in his answer as we were here into the slippery domain of networking and no author wants to antagonize anyone from the Lit fest community, but he replied, “I go very few. The one’s I go to are because of personal relationships and where I have a personal regards for the organisers.



Madhur Nangia

How would you introduce Chetan Bhagat to a group of students aiming to become leaders in the corporate world?

“For anyone who is a non-reader and plans to enter Corporate Sector needs to realise the very importance of reading. If one would have to read any where between 1000 to 5000 words per day as a professional compulsion, one can’t escape the inclination to read. One amazing way to turn into a voracious reader is to binge on Chetan bhagat Books. These are simple, effective and guaranteed to turn you into a reader for life.”

Madhur Nangia - A Verbal Trainer by profession and inclination. A bibliophile by passion and a traveller by choice.



Ruchira Mittal

How essential for school children aiming to learn creative writing is reading a Chetan Bhagat book?

“One can’t say it is essential for school children to read Chetan Bhagat. It is unfair to compare him to the stalwarts of English literature or even pop fiction. I am not saying he is better or worse than Shaw or Salinger. But in his own context, he has made a sizeable contribution to the culture of reading fiction in India.”

Ruchira Mittal, Founding Editor Quill Club Writers, a publishing house for schoolgoing writers.

Like the Time Lit Fest or the Bengaluru Lit Fest that is organized by my editor. I don’t fancy these fests so much. So I go to only a few ones, when an organisation calls me with a lot of respect, and I have a long relationship with them. But otherwise, see, I think they’re good as, like Durga Puja pandals, they keep people away from the screen. Anything that keeps people, especially the youngsters, away from the screen is good. Fests, like Durga Puja festivities, not only keep people away from the screen but also gets them interested in reading. Reading books is so much better than social media chatting, watching too many videos... and a Lit fest is the right break for those who are over-influenced by the screen. But sometimes a Lit Fest and the sort of content the organisers promote, tends to become elitist... and then they’re not really connecting themselves to the public.” This surely wasn’t the sort of answer that was attempting to go round the perimeter or was safe-guarding some vested interest, but I persisted:

Do you think it is ok to charge a fee for attending Lit Fests or any other event where an author is called?

Again, without pausing to rearrange his thoughts or hopping on to a patch of dry ground, CB answered, “Very valid. Nothing comes for free in this world. And I think **it’s become a fashion to expect writers to do everything for free.** When we see a businessman we expect him to be rich, but when we come across a writer we expect him to be poor. And I don’t believe in poverty. I think if you call a singer or a dancer, you pay them for a performance and the same must be true for a writer. Sometimes I do charge a fee. No, not always for the money but only to promote the notion that nothing comes for free. But I think some writers attend events because they just want to promote themselves. So they’re getting value in terms of the stage and platform. **For that matter even book reviewers need to get paid.** Publishers can have a system where a pool of, let’s say, a hundred bloggers are listed



In conversation: Chetan Bhagat & Arvind Passey

and releases with a certain payment from the marketing budget can be allocated for this activity.”

We were sitting in the club area of the hotel, and he was occasionally taking small gulps of diet cola but I cannot attribute his cool answers to a beverage of course. My next question:

A certain section of readers as well as writers feel that we now have simply too many publishers and the quality of books being published is sliding. What do you think?

“I think the costs of production and the cost of production have gone down because it’s easy now to produce a book even in small numbers. This explains the increasing number of those entering publishing.”

With publishing your book on Kindle or any other online platform becoming easy, most analysts believe that it isn’t just the quality of writing that is suffering but it is becoming increasingly difficult for readers to choose the right book to invest in. This can be rather disconcerting.

“But then earlier just these many books were getting rejected. The online platform is free and is obviously more attractive. With the entry barriers gone even quality control is gone. I agree that there is a lot of publishing and readers might be getting confused. The role of bloggers and reviewers come in to help readers zero-in on the right sort of books.”

What I have not mentioned so far is that I had also messaged a few writers and other eminent personalities a few unique questions related to Chetan Bhagat and though a few kind souls replied, many simply backed out. Some refrained from replying because he



Youngsters waste their time on screen. They are spending hours on screen every day. If you have to do screen, use it to learn something. Not just like watch puppy videos, you know. It is such a waste of life. So far as writing is concerned, find and then follow your style."



did not like CB's writings and some because they simply wanted to play safe. So the next question simply had to be this:

What message do you have for Chetan Bhagat haters?

CB smiled and answered with a twinkle in his eyes, "A lot of people say all sorts of things for Modi ji but he does what he wants. **Haters don't matter.**"

How important are short-duration workshops in creative writing?

"Are they meaningful?" he said, "I haven't done this sort of thing ever. I guess there are a lot of them and the social media announces a new one every other day. People must check who is conducting a workshop and what sort of content is planned. Otherwise, a lot of content is available on the internet as videos and audio-books. **It is better to write, read, write, read...** this is the cycle that is more productive than anything else. But workshops help as motivators. It is like going to a Yoga camp by Baba Ramdev where getting introduced to yoga is easier as it is in a group. Ultimately you need to head back home and continue with your practice... and the motivation from group participation helps."

Your message for the readers of Education Post?

"EP is an education magazine. I think education is really important. Don't waste your time on screen. Youngsters are spending hours on screen every day. If you have to do screen, use it to learn something. Not just like watch puppy videos, you know. It is such a waste of life. So far as writing is concerned, find and then follow your style." Chetan Bhagat is indeed a person who pays attention to details, never minces his words, prefers remaining plain and simple in his expressions, and is obviously the soul of any conversation. We at Education Post wish him luck with whatever he decides to do next. ■

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Dr Hari Krishna Maram
Chairman, Vision Digital India
Vice Chancellor
Universal Digital University

IN CONVERSATION > DR HARI KRISHNA MARAM

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

are not taught in schools and colleges.
In India lack of emotional hygiene and
mental well-being is an epidemic, shares
Dr. Hari Krishna Maram with Arvind Passey



How does 'achieve beyond expectations' apply to higher education today?

Today Indian Higher Education system is the world's largest with 985+ universities, 39,500 colleges, 2,98,700 schools with closely 37 crore student population. The reality is still no Indian Higher Education institution is able to reach world class institutions or even in top 200 rank globally.

To achieve beyond expectation we have to work hard to meet the expectation of all the stake holders of the system by giving value for the time, money and industry- ready students.

Do you think the draft NEP 2019 is poised to help students as well as the industry achieve beyond expectations? If no, why? If yes, please elaborate.

Draft in NEP is very well drafted and answers pertinent questions for a robust education policy. However, all of this will be of no use if there is no implementation on the ground. The crux of the matter is implementation. Vision without action is a shallow thought. One of the fundamental aspects to achieve the NEP goals is quality of teachers. Perhaps having a strong minimum wage policy along with qualification can bring rigor.



We have numerous private universities that offer bad quality academic training but do great advertising claiming a great placement record but in reality only 5-10% students will be getting good salary and great company.

What do you think have been the major flaws in education policy in the past decades? Do you think NEP 2019 is attempting to address at least some of them?

National Education Policy ignores the ground realities of research quality in higher educational institutions but sets enormous goals for the country. The policy envisages that all higher education in India will become multi-disciplinary by 2030. The new education plan will give us graduates who are creative and adapt in critical thinking. Their multi-disciplinary training will ensure that they always remain employable even as single-disciplinary jobs become automated.

We have numerous private universities that offer bad quality academic training but do great advertising claiming a great placement record but in reality only 5-10% students will be getting good salary and great company. The real story is that most of them are understaffed in terms of faculty and the quality of existing faculties is poor. The learning outcome is truly terrible.

Education in India has focused on learning of facts all these years. William Butler Yeats wrote: “Education is not filling a pail but the lighting of a fire.” What sort of changes in the system do you recommend to switch over to training of the mind to think?

My belief: Good education is about encouraging the student’s natural tendency to explore, experiment and experience. It is about igniting the fire that will spread light globally.

Malala Yousafzai wrote: “One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.” In India where more than 60 kids are taught by one teacher (sometimes, only a part-time replacement) and where book stores are closing faster than you’d want to believe, do you think real education is even possible?

Technology is going to play a very important role in classroom teaching in future. In this Google era, “Guru” role is becoming tough because all the information today is available in Google search. Then why students need to attend the class and learn from Guru. To overcome this, Guru should become smarter than Google.

You have completed a course from IGNOU as well. We know that open universities, correspondence courses, and even weekend classes are not powerful enough to teach and our students are not willing enough to learn. In such a scenario, do you think it will be wiser to have ONLY regular options in higher education? Do you agree to the ‘limit seats only where merit demands’ concept?

The issue is not about a choice between Open University and regular university. IGNOU is by far a very high quality university than most regular universities. The issues is about the quality of curriculum and execution excellence be it open or regular universities. The future is online and executive education. Globally leading universities already are making huge enrollments with good revenues in India and also it will be having a great future for the convenience and economy to the students.

When I recommended B.Voc in automobile engineering to a student, his father angrily told me that he wouldn’t want his son to be a roadside mechanic. Do vocational courses have a long and tough fight ahead? What is the best way to promote our vocational courses?

One example is that many of them don’t represent the entire industry. The vocational courses are very effective and there is a need for trained staff in the industry. Skill based programs are most popular across the world because this will create immediate opportunity unlike degrees but still in India, we believe degree is more important than skills. The future is skill based programs especially in India where we are unable to provide jobs to youth which is largest in the world. So only skill based programs can able to save our nation.

College is for partying and a vacation for both students as well as teachers. Does this effectively sum up the education system in India as it exists today?

Unfortunately social and emotional skills are not taught in schools and colleges. Incidentally most organizations choose candidates for their attitude and character. In India lack of emotional hygiene and mental well-being is an epidemic. Everyone in the industry and society complains lack of civic sense, social responsibilities, negativity and permission in the society but there is no effort towards building right skills. A focused approach on developing skills for emotional, social and mental well-being can not only mitigate most of these issues but also gives overall development.

All higher education in India will become multi-disciplinary by 2030. The new education plan will give us graduates who are creative and adapt in critical thinking. Their multi-disciplinary training will ensure that they always remain employable even as single-disciplinary jobs become automated.



Arvind Passey

ARTICLE 370

IS IT POLITICAL PLUCK OR INCOMPETENT TOMFOOLERY?

T

here is an old joke where a tourist's car got stuck in a muddy patch and raising acceleration didn't help. A local on a bullock cart was passing by and helped him in exchange for a certain favour. This seemingly helpful local told the politician that he assisted many such people who regularly got stuck somewhere on the stretch.

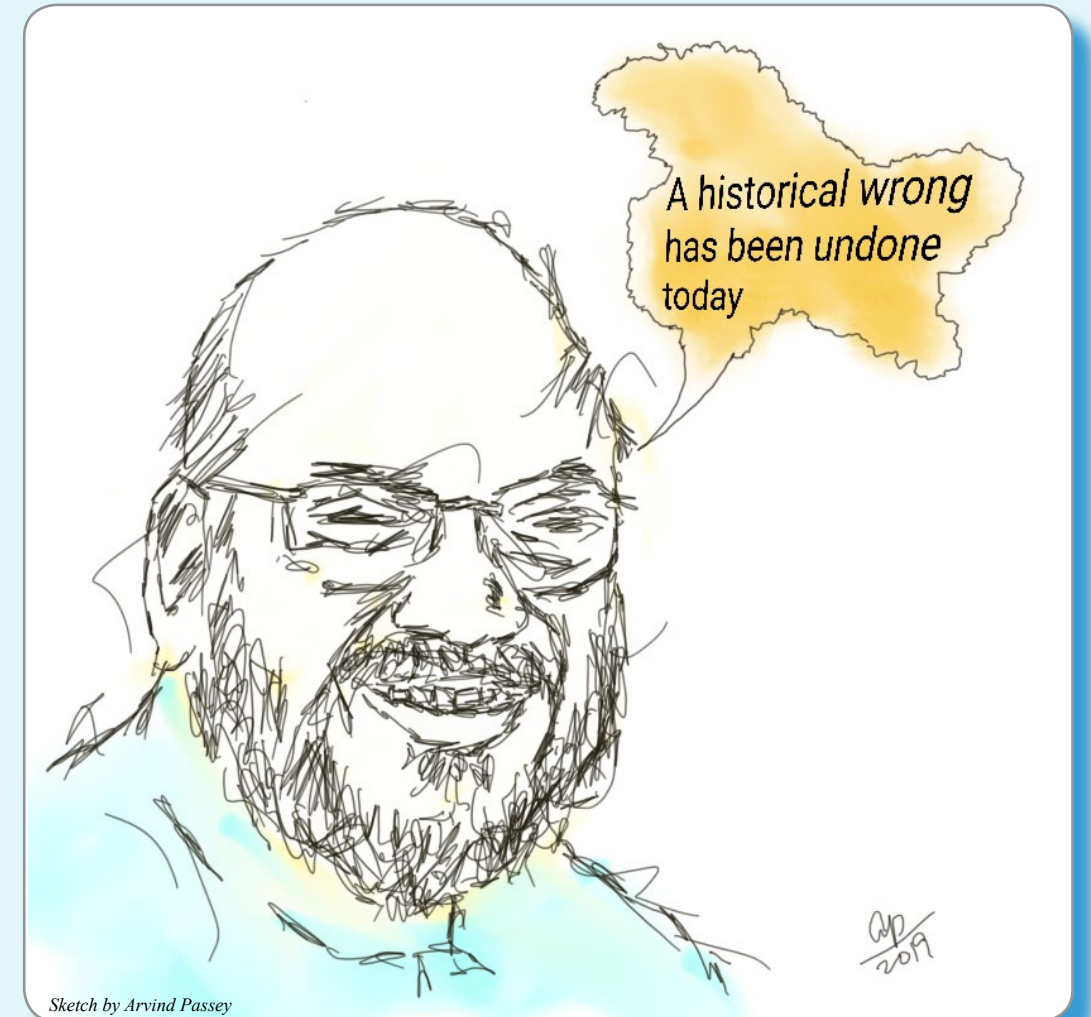
'So when do you go for work?'

'At night.'

'At night? So far away from everywhere?'

'You see, someone has to make sure that this stretch remains slushy.'

Well, some believe that if Kashmir were that slushy patch, there must be some locals intent on keeping things slippery there. As a corollary to this joke, let us assume that Modi happened to drive by, noticed and understood what was happening, and... well, we all know about the declaration on the 5th of August this year.



Sketch by Arvind Passey

The above is simply a humorous interpretation of a joke that I read on whatsapp a few days back. However, if newspapers are to be believed, the political command in the state has so far been in the hands of the Abdullahs, the Muftis, and the Shahs and their fiscal interest (sometimes in ways that may need intervention by investigating authorities, feel some political analysts) is evidently obvious in businesses spread across the board. Amit Shah has specifically mentioned that "earlier Jammu and Kashmir was ruled by three families" and even the PM has tweeted: "For years, vested interest groups who believed in emotional blackmail never cared for people's empowerment. J&K is now free from their shackles."

The social media is brimming with stories connected with Article 370 but what really matters is what Faizan Mustafa explains in an article

in Indian Express. He writes that "Monday's Presidential Order has extended all provisions of the Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir, including the chapter on Fundamental Rights. Therefore, the discriminatory provisions under Article 35A are now unconstitutional." However, there are many who erroneously assume that this abrogation makes J&K an integral part of the country. These people do not realise that it was already so under Article 3 of the J&K constitution and the preamble there lays no claim to sovereignty. What this 'abrogation' has actually done is to withdraw some autonomy that was there for the state as integration was already live and kicking. Besides revoking Article 370, this order also means that the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be bifurcated into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir (with a legislature) and Ladakh (without a legislature). Business Today

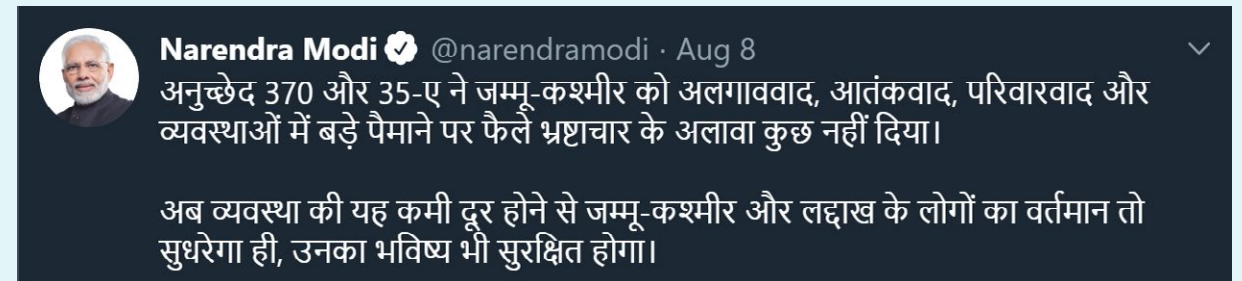


reports that “Home Minister Amit Shah said that revoking Article 370 is necessary as it undermines the parliament of India.” Shah had reportedly said that “the law of the nation does not reach Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan uses this to instigate separatism in the hearts of people there.” Yes, it is also a fact that corporates and individuals will be in a position to purchase land in J&K. Those who are not from the state may also be eligible for jobs there.

There are thousands of irresponsible updates bobbing around in the borderless oceans of the social media platforms and they have the potential of undermining and damaging whatever good any responsible action by a government can be capable of. What the two new UTs actually need is positivity in every sense of the word. Unnecessary rhetoric must obviously be questioned. When an eminent politician like Chidambaram says that the day as being the “the worst day in the Constitutional history of India” and the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad proclaims that he “had never imagined that the head of the state which is India’s crown will be chopped off”, one wonders if this is the right way to go about even in the murky

world of politics. Mehbooba Mufti called it as “the darkest day in Indian democracy” that will have “catastrophic consequences” and Omar Abdullah said it was a total “betrayal of trust” of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Countering all these notions, Amit Shah has simply stated that “a historical wrong has been undone today. Article 35A came through the back door without following the procedure under Article 368 of the Constitution of India. It had to go.” It has gone and so must all thoughts of disorientated naysaying.

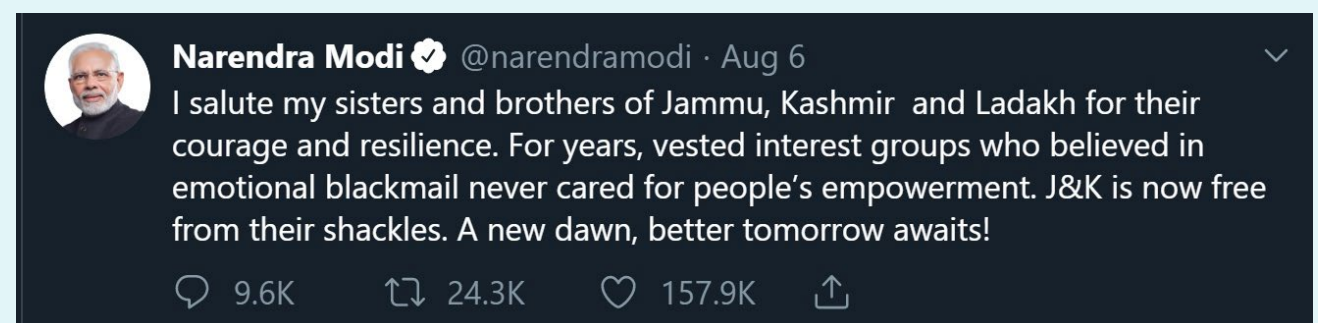
The entire J&K chapter is worth exploring and examining and must not be man-handled by those who are bent upon behaving like juvenile delinquents. There is no one who has won or lost as the abrogation of Article 370 is neither a battle nor a track and field event. The two UTs (Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh) have a lot to look forward to. There are issues related to education and employability of the youth, setting up of industries and restructuring employment quotients, empowerment for women, ensuring that every government scheme including those related to reservation and protecting the rights of the under-privileged reach and are implemented in the right spirit. There are



issues related to corruption and economic offences that have to be dealt with. The areas needing encouragement include tourism and infrastructure development. The entire area is brimming with a lot of potential that has perpetually been rendered recessive for decades by issues that have done no one any good. LiveMint reports Kanwal Sibal as saying that “the international community would not have any problems investing in Ladakh in solar energy that the Prime Minister talked about, or in Jammu. But for investments to

flow into the Kashmir valley, it will take time with people waiting to see how the situation pans out. Pakistan will try to raise tensions to keep the pot boiling.” The point is that our primary aim must be development through harmony... despite all the destabilizing notes that our neighbor to our West may attempt to sing.

Article 370 – is it political pluck or incompetent tomfoolery? No one has as yet a definite answer to this question though the voice vote of the entire nation says “Aye!”



TRAVEL EXPRESSO



Ambica Gulati

THE THRILLS OF A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

NO

hustle-bustle, no boundaries, no formalities, just a cosy, relaxing place like home, sans the daily chores. “Resorts and hotels are good, but homestays have that personalised touch and they always give the holiday a special feel,” says Pooja Prasad, cultural affairs advisor with the Embassy of Mexico in India. “More so, when you decide to take a holiday to an off-beat place—there is fresh food, clean beds, the local experience, tranquility, exotic views.” And this is why when taking off with friends to the lesser known village of Hallan, near Manali in Himachal Pradesh, she booked at PossiVille. The website shows that this homestay has dormitories and rooms, grows its own fruits and vegetables. The volunteer programme includes gardening, artistic creations and more.



Going by Prasad’s experience, homestays are lucrative with affordable rates, home-cooked food, local and unique experiences, better localities and for the environmentally conscious ones, there is lower carbon footprint. Homestays are also advantageous for students studying outside their home towns or abroad. Homestay owners call it a true blue ‘athithi devo bhava’ (Guest is god) experience. Nishiraj A Baruah, who owns ‘Homestay by the Tea Garden’ in Dibrugarh, says: “Most important is to get the basics right: clean linen and bathroom, nice home food and happy service.”

As reported by travelnewsdigest.in, the World Travel Trade & Tourism Council has listed India as the seventh largest travel and tourism economy in the world. “Overall, the total contribution of the sector to the economy was INR 15.2 trillion (USD234 billion) in 2017. This forecast aims to more than double to INR 32 trillion (USD492 billion) by 2028,” it said in a 2018 report. “World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) India will employ around 10 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector by 2028.” This is precisely why the government has special guidelines for bed and breakfast units and homestay establishments. The main objective “is to provide a clean and affordable place for foreigners and domestic tourists alike including an opportunity for foreign tourists to stay with an Indian family to experience Indian customs and traditions and relish authentic Indian customs.”

While opening a homestay is probably a dream for many, sustaining it over a long period requires some skills. “Homestays are a lot about relationship management. Be friends with your guests. Most people like to come back to a place they are familiar with. My helpers are happy, friendly and chilled out folks like me, which is why we get repeat guests,” explains Baruah.

Certified training might not be the absolute necessity, but a natural inclination towards hospitality helps. “I probably inherited this from my parents. I have always loved having friends and guests over. A good host has to be caring and sensitive enough to know every little detail about the guests. Sometimes I volunteer to pick up their luggage and have even picked them up from the airport. Everything isn’t about money in homestays, unlike hotels, where they will charge you for every little extra.”

Like Baruah, Kunal Sharma too did not have any classroom training on running a homestay. But driven by passion and love for the mountains, he recently opened a homestay called G Villas in Manali. “I fell in love with the idea of staying in a cottage during a trip to Bhimtal in 2016. Back in Delhi, I did a lot of research and discovered that Manali did not have many homestays.” And now he hosts guests along with his wife Mansi and 11-month-old son Aadyat.

Location plays a crucial role too. “We are located in Simsa Village, considered really posh in Manali. Actor Kangana Ranuat’s luxurious cottage is in the same tranquil neighbourhood and visible from all our rooms. Every room offers a view of the snow-capped mountains, apple orchards and picturesque landscape,” adds Sharma.

Baruah’s homestay is just 3km away from the congested zone of Dibrugarh, making it a quieter and greener option. A native to the place, he left his journalism job in Delhi to redesign his parental home, “The house faces a tea garden and has a fantastic view. I designed the top floor to open the premises to guests.”

Commenting on pricing and running a homestay, Baruah got a first hand experience during his long Delhi stay. “A friend had a 4-bedroom house in Noida’s plush Sector 15A. She was always travelling for work



“Normally I am tolerant, but there are times when guests expect too much. However much you give them, it’s less. I normally step in, offer them a drink, ask them about their work, offer a traditional gift, and slowly they become happier.”

Where the future is headed, both owners are unanimous in their approach. The travellers are looking for unique yet authentic experiences, and the hospitality sector is continually reinventing itself to meet these expectations. “Guests know they are staying in somebody’s home and don’t expect 5-star facilities. They are

chilled out, don’t expect fancy food, most are happy with simple dal-chawal-sabzi. They often do their own things, are less fussy, have a creative bent of mind. And if they aren’t chilled out, they become one once they stay at a homestay,” smiles Baruah.

Sharma firmly opines. “Foreign tourists prefer to stay at a homestay as it is so much safer and reliable living with the owner.” Assimilating the experience, Baruah asserts that “once you stay in a homestay, you will be addicted. You won’t be able to stay anywhere else”.

but paid a huge rent. Then we checked out the guidelines at Airbnb and listed an extra bedroom there, pricing it for Rs 1500 per night.” That’s where he also learned about the analytics tool ‘Smart Price’ which he uses to compare prices of hotels and other accommodation around. Online Tour Operators like MakeMyTrip are other places he tracks pricing on. “Initially, it’s better to start at a lower price. Once reviews and trust is established, it becomes easier.”

However, nothing ever comes without challenges. For newbie owners, loyal customers are important. “Our home was always the pivotal point for hosting family get-togethers. My mom did the cooking and dad entertained. Every time I cook chicken for my guests, I still call my mom for her secret recipe. I always want to replicate the home experience with my guests,” says Sharma.

As compared to a hotel or resort, a homestay is usually more economically viable for tourists. “The best part about a homestay is one is not worried about the fixed rent that hotels and resorts need to pay. So, the price of accommodation decreases. We are able to offer a beautiful experience, give 24X7 room service, provide a doctor on call, parking facilities, home-cooked food,” adds Sharma.

There are good days and there are bad days. There are good guests and there are difficult ones. “It’s a part and parcel of the industry. We have made many friends who are like family now. We stay humble and behave patiently with all the guests. Word of mouth is the game changer here. Everyone wants to feel special and homestays do offer that feeling, good reviews follow and business carries on.”

Baruah steps in with perks when he find the staff hassled by the guests.



With over 20 years of experience in journalism, Ambica Gulati loves to find extraordinary stories. Weaving words with pictures and videos, she goes through life like a student. She has worked with prominent magazines such as Swagat, Outlook Traveller. She blogs on medium.com/@ambicagulati and atravellerswishlist.com

DON'T MASSACRE YOUR RESUME



Jyoti Arora

It is said that nobody can be perfect. That is not correct. People often achieve perfection in their resumes and self-appraisal forms. As resumes come before the appraisal forms, let's talk about them.

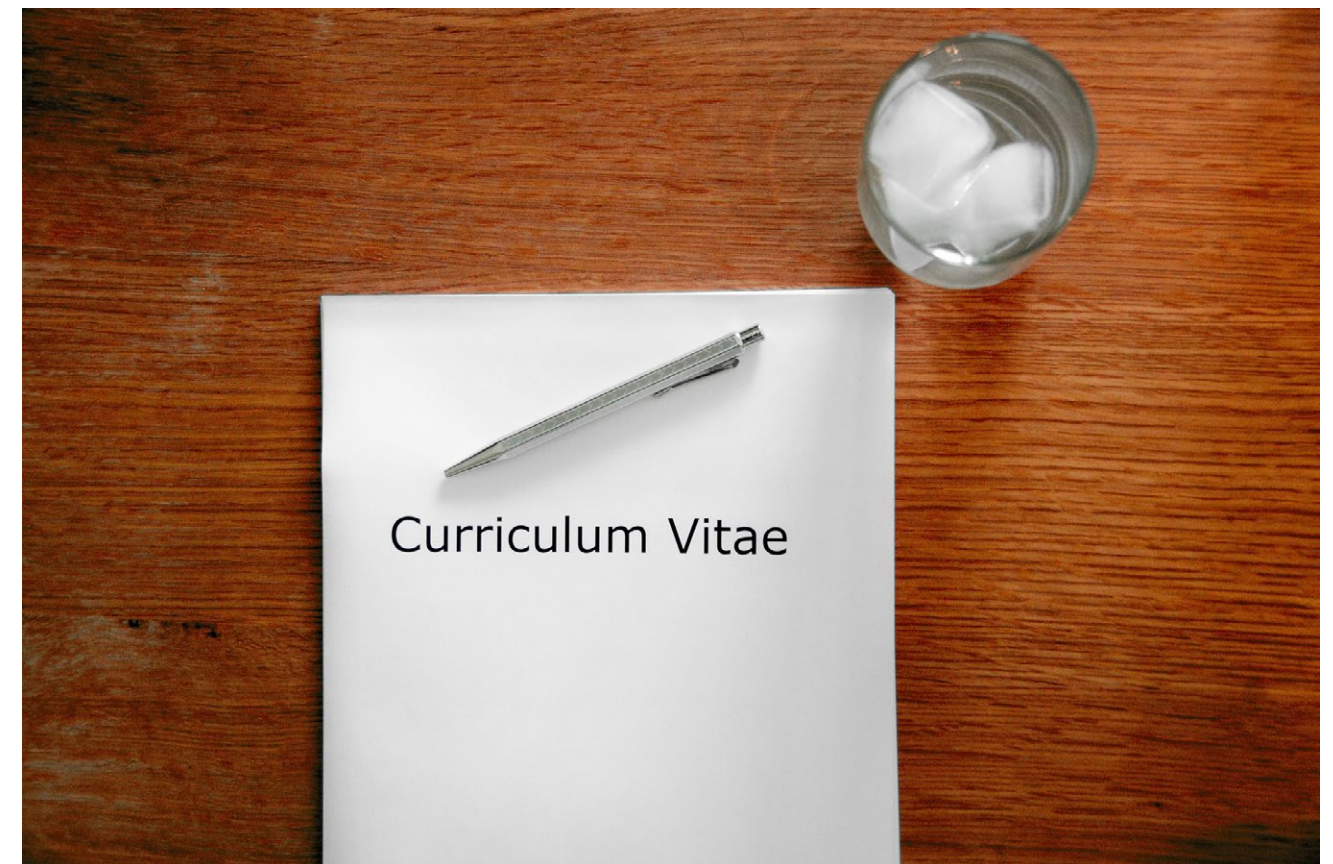
Well, the first thing you need to remember is that the perusal of your resume should demand minimal effort. Whether your resume goes directly to the employer or passes through a recruitment agency, nobody wants to spend time on it. Everybody is too busy and has too little time. If you send a resume that takes up more time than necessary, it is likely to win more curses and less favour.

So, here's what you must never do in your resume:

Don't be difficult

Be it font type, size, page setting, or document format, don't make things difficult. These days, many people circulate their resumes in PDF or image files. Totally unnecessary. **Such file types waste time of people who have to process your resume.** Suppose, a recruiter needs to copy highlights of your resume to send to their manager or make a summary, a PDF or image will make it harder to do it. Mind you, both these formats can be converted to text. So, they are no more secure than a Word document unless you encrypt them or password protect them. In case you any of these you are doing yourself more harm than good. Your resume text should be easily accessible to the people and automated systems that will process it.

Using font or styling only makes resume harder to read. No matter how long your resume is, a font size 8 is still a big NO. Font size 10 to 12 is your best bet. Don't use capital letters to highlight text. That's considered shouting. Don't divide a word across two lines by putting a hyphen (-) between it. That is outdated writing.



Also, tables, charts, statistic graphs, logos, images are best avoided. Columns can be included for skills, client list etc., but please don't create them using Space Bar or Tab. If you are using MS Word, use the Columns tool in the Layout tab.

The thing is, most recruitment agencies clear away the original formatting of the resumes and serve them to the client in a clean, simple and agency or client-specified format. So, all the stylistic elements you put in will be cleared away. It will waste your time, and it will waste the time of people or systems processing your resume. So, stick to the text. Avoid all stylistic elements. Even avoid fancy bullets, borders and fonts. Keep your resume plain, simple, and easy to read/copy-paste. Avoid using abbreviations too. A resume too full of abbreviations or shortened words is irritating.

Don't be confused or confusing

Make sure your resume has clarity and consistency. If you write 10 years of experience with PowerPoint in Technical Skills, don't make it 8 years or 12 years in Summary. If while mentioning your job duration, simply put the month before the date, you need to follow the same

format for all jobs. And if you mention date as 5/4/2019, the recruiter might wonder whether it is May 4th or 5th April. So, check your resume carefully to make sure all information is clear and updated. Different countries use different date formats. Better to check out the preferred date format of the country of your prospective employer. Also, don't put your experience in a continuous stream without a separation between two jobs. It will be harder for the recruiter or the hiring person to see where one job ends and another begins. It looks careless and untidy too. There should be a line's space between two jobs or sections. Don't go to the trouble of creating this space by adjusting Line Spacing. Use Enter to create a line's space. Use Ctrl+Enter to create page breaks. Talking about page breaks, don't put Orphans or Widows in your resume. That is, don't let a single line or word hanging on one page while the rest of the paragraph is on another page.

And since our aim is to remove all confusion, try to put similar information in one section. For example, don't put a section of Expertise on top of the resume, don't put Skills in the middle, then Special Skills, Personal Skills, Other Skills at the end. It just creates clutter. Bring them all together under Skills or Expertise with subheadings.

Don't clutter

Clutter is never a welcome sight. So, don't add clutter in your resume. Add nothing that is unnecessary. This includes objective, images, charts, headers, footers, your social media links, salary, hours per week worked etc.

Don't make your page margins too narrow. Set your page margins to Normal. Don't use font and font size that makes the resume appear cluttered. Don't make your resume colourful. Black text on a white page works best. Don't shout by using unnecessary capital letters or big font size.

Don't add unnecessary information like your present employer's contact details (never!), reasons you left previous jobs, irrelevant experience or achievements like 'won a milkshake drinking competition.'

Don't puncture the punctuation and grammar

Bad grammar can kill even an exceptional resume. So, always check your resume carefully. I have seen even highly qualified engineers and doctors leave silly spelling and grammar mistakes in their resume. That raises a red

flag about their carelessness.

Make sure you use present tense for your current job and past tense for your previous jobs. It's best to avoid personal pronouns, especially first person - I, we, me, my. Be sure of singular and plural. And if you don't know the spelling of a technical word, Google it.

And be careful with the punctuation, especially commas and full stops. For example, WORD , WORD is wrong. WORD ,WORD is wrong. WORD,WORD is wrong. A word is immediately followed by a comma and then there is a space before the next word (WORD, WORD). Also, never use a semicolon (;) in place of a full stop. Don't add space before a full stop. And please, don't omit a full stop from your text! Otherwise, *your paragraph will make little sentence And it will be too hard to read and process*

Don't be arrogant, or too humble

Our words can reveal our truth, even if they are lies. So, be very careful about how your personality is reflecting in your resume. If you stretch your name from margin to margin in big, capital letters, it won't just look ugly, it will make you seem arrogant too. Same, if you start every sentence with your name. For example, 'Jyoti Arora has twelve years of experience as a content developer. Jyoti



Arora has an amazing experience with MS Word. Jyoti Arora has exceptional typing speed. Did you notice how ridiculous and arrogant that sounds? Now, sample this: "I am the One you are Looking For - Honest, Responsible, Integrity, Loyal and a Self-Starter!" This pompousness will do you no good.

On the opposite side, don't be too humble. It is a good thing to be honest, but you need not reveal your weaknesses in your resume. For example, 'Has 12 years of content development experience but has worked only with fiction writing. Knows MS Word but is not familiar with Excel. Has 35 WPM typing speed, trying to be faster.' Now, if you yourself show that you lack the required skills and abilities, the hiring manager will think so too. So, don't be too humble. Mention your strengths in a clear and honest way, don't spoil them by adding ifs and buts.

Don't be smugly creative

I am a novelist. So, I love creativity. I am an admirer of all creative arts. But a resume is not a place to show your creativity. Keep it simple, easy, and straightforward. Avoid tables, they create clutter and difficulty in processing. Avoid all design elements like borders, page colours, font colours, images, text boxes, and other graphics. It's best to use only text, without any underlining or italics. Just put the headings in Bold text. Also, don't get too creative with your words. If your resume uses words like 'amazing experience, profound

experience, awesome skills, superlative ability, stupendous success, it will only appear ridiculous. Don't get creative in stuffing your resume with lies either. The recruiters and the hiring person will probably sniff them out.

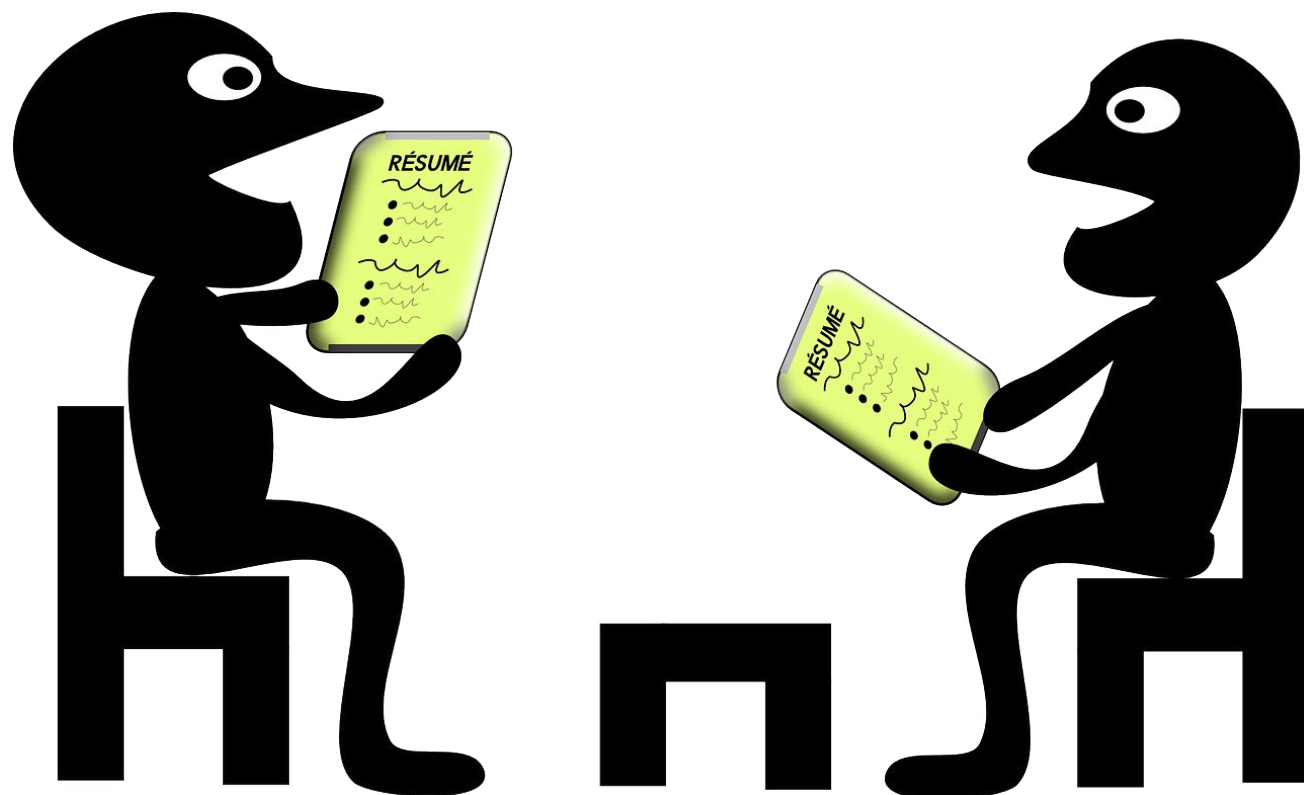
Don't be daft

What might appear fun at home or college might not appear so in a resume. Be very careful about what you are putting in your resume. Sometimes, even email addresses can become a cause of rejection. So, avoid using email addresses that don't sound professional. *Cuteluv4u* might sound fun to you, but perhaps not to the employer desiring a serious candidate for a responsible position.

Hobbies are usually not required in a resume. But if you do put them in, please make sure they don't include things like *ghost-busting* or *playing PUBG*.

If you copy paste your 'experience' from some website or use a resume creator, make sure you read what you have put in your resume. If your resume contains text like 'for more information, *click here,*' or 'put your experience here,' your brilliant Googling is not likely to work.

To summarize, remember that your resume must be Clear, Concise, Consistent and Correct. Don't make it Complex, Cluttered, Creative, and Confused. Be simple, be direct, concentrate on the content, not the stylishness. And check your resume from the objective point of view of a stranger. Then send it out. ■



Jyoti Arora is a novelist and blogger from Ghaziabad, UP. A Content Developer since 2007, Jyoti has so far authored three novels, abridged 30 English Classics and developed several books for kids. She manages two blogs and also possesses 7 years of experience in the Recruitment agency. Jyoti loves creative writing and also enjoys writing about technology, books, and social issues. Sample her novels and articles at jyotiarora.com

Dr. A K Puri



SMART CAREER OPTIONS FOR GEN Z

We all aspire to move up in life. Our career provides an opportunity to grow and contribute to society that adds value to the life of people around us. A successful career brings along its rewards by way of money, position, name and fame to all those involved in creating and making the product or service available.

An exponential career growth can be achieved in career and profession through innovation and picking up fields of activity which have the potential to be more in demand in future. This applies to both entrepreneurial initiatives and service seekers. Innovations in approach and an astute sense of observing needs of people in emerging times offers the way to identify newer pastures for growth and prosperity.

Technological advancements are opening horizons of activities that were not perceived just a few years back. There is huge potential of career growth in careers involving technological advancements like Blockchains, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence. The core of all these advancements is Information Technology. The application and adaptation of these technologies is going to create opportunities in other spheres in a big way. Every significant technological advancement brings in its vogue a disruptive development in the applied field.

India is witnessing an upsurge in entrepreneurial activity. With globally accepted edge in Information Technology development and application, the domestic market is in a buoyancy to lap up technology and is deeply involved in devising new products and services. The Union Government is supporting the

entrepreneurial initiatives to explore newer horizons of wealth creation. Some of the sectors with higher potential of growth for job seekers follow.

Solar Energy

Generation and adoption of solar energy to supplement and eventually replace the power generation using hydrocarbons is among the top priorities of the Central Government. In a short span of last four years, India has achieved a leadership position on a global scale in solar energy generation. The sector is destined to register an accelerated growth in the near future and holds promise of business and job opportunities in a big way.

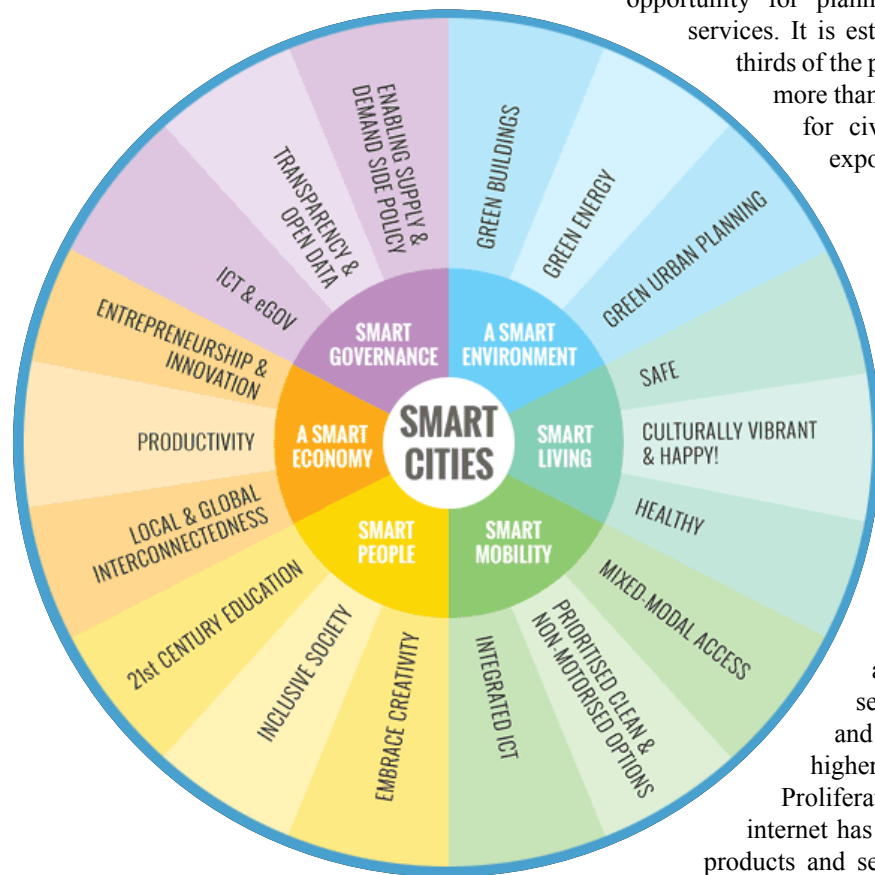
Medical Tourism

India has made great strides in healthcare facilities of global standards in the private sector as well. A good number of hospitals and nursing homes are well equipped to provide quality medical care to non-Indians. On purchasing power parity basis cost of getting medical treatment in India is cheaper than similar procedures in many countries, even after taking in to account travel costs. This has led to a creation of business opportunities in offering composite services of travel, stay and medical treatment as a package for destination India. Attracting prospects and taking care of their travel, stay and medical needs has a huge job potential waiting to be tapped.



Smart City Planners

India has identified a staggeringly large number of habitats to be eventually converted into smart cities. These cities will have planned IT based services to be provided to its residents comprising of all the civic facilities one can think of in an advanced city. This is a mammoth task as it needs to conceptualise and execute each sub-section of basic infrastructure like power generation and distribution, water, transportation, wi-fi, housing and sanitation in an integrated manner. There exists a huge opportunity for planning and executing systems for these services. It is estimated that in two decades India's two thirds of the population will be living in cities which is more than double of the present numbers. Demand for civic services in these cities will grow exponentially.



Food Processing Technology

With a large proportion of agro produce getting wasted or destroyed between stages of harvesting and reaching the consumer, India's focus on developing and adapting food processing industry will contribute to self-sufficiency in food production and also helps farmers achieve higher income. The union government has promised to take effective steps to double the farmers' income by 2022. This will require huge investments in storage, processing, transportation and marketing of processed foods. India needs a large pool of food scientists who can develop nutritious food. Developing food technology requires food scientists to conduct research, hold experiments and clinical trials to create safer foods and preservatives and to come up with better food-processing techniques. They may specialize in areas like

Rural Sector Development

For Indian economy to leapfrog at \$5trillion of GDP by 2022 there is a strong need to create demand of products and services in rural areas. It has a vast untapped potential for growth. The last five years have witnessed a rise in aspiration of youth across all segments of economy. The future holds promise to convert this desire for acquiring life style and comforts to be made available for rural population which were hitherto available to city dwellers only. Many sectors including automobiles, FMCG and white goods have witnessed persistent higher growth in demand in the rural sector. Proliferation of mobile phones and availability of internet has further fueled the desire to get and use products and services of global standards as available to their urban counterparts. Rural management experts are required in large numbers to study and develop planning, organising and controlling all types of businesses including agribusiness and allied fields to bring about a positive change in the life of rural folk.

developing new products, enhancing manufacturing processes, or coming up with better packaging solutions.

Environment Protection

With growing concern about the well-being of the planet there is an all-round awareness and demand for measures that will conserve our environment. A whole new breed of professionals is required to push the agenda of conservation of natural resources. Green Marketers promote green, organic, environment friendly and renewable services. Environment Economists focus on enhancement of environment around us and suggest steps to keep it safe, while ensuring health and well-being of individuals. Disaster Management specialists handle and manage any natural or man-made disaster. Recycling Coordinators manage recycling process of solid and hazardous waste.

Social Media

Social Media has opened up tremendous opportunities for brand enhancement and reputation management. Social Media Managers strategise and implement the content and engagement strategy on various social media platforms for individuals and organisations to create and nurture brands. Online Reputation Managers are responsible for branding on the web. They use creative writing, social media, and other web tools to manage the reputation of an organization. Online Advertising Managers oversee advertisements for businesses in online format. Digital Marketing is a buzz word among business executives of present times. Video Producers and /YouTubers create content and amplify dissemination of content on the internet for mass consumption. There are a lot of people who make money out of producing videos for YouTube. Bloggers publish blogs or



articles online to influence consumers and opinion makers. They research and write on various subjects and issues to draw attention of readers.

Ethical Hacking

With data theft, frauds and system failures being reported more of a routine than exception, ensuring cyber security of systems is emerging as a top priority of all businesses and governments. They are dependent on the safety of a myriad network of IT systems for their smooth operations eliminating the possibility of unauthorised intrusion. Solution lies in the skills of ethical hacking. An ethical hacker is an IT professional who is paid to legally hack into organizations' computer and network systems. It is an ethical hacker's job to find weaknesses in an organization's information technology systems in order to prevent malicious hackers from gaining access. They will report on any vulnerabilities and provide recommendations for fixing them. With the increasing use of technology and the fast pace at which it develops, ethical hacking has become critical in helping organizations stay one step ahead of unethical and malicious attackers. Protecting private data is more important than ever now.

Robotics

Robotics is often used to automate processes or complete work that humans cannot, or prefer not to do. Robot technology can improve safety, productivity, and efficiency. Robotics engineers look at what a robot needs to do. Then, using computer-aided design software, they create a design and bring the robot to life. Robotics engineering jobs range from fun to serious. Many robotics engineers are involved in making robotic toys, special effects equipment for the entertainment industry, specialized robots for manufacturing, or robots that are used for deep ocean and outer space exploration. Skilled robotics engineers are valued in several industries; from aerospace and mining to manufacturing and medicine. With a deeper insight into these emerging growth sectors and a little bit of innovation one can catapult one's career to dizzying heights of success. Let the journey begin! ■

Career Conversations

with Avadhesh Dixit

Avadhesh Dixit is Head HR (India Region) at Moody's corporation. He is a global HR leader who has led HR function at GE Capital, TCS and CMC Ltd both in India and outside India.



CREATING LONG TERM VISION IS THE CORE SKILLS OF LEADERS

Leadership in times of disruptive change

In the last issue, we talked about great conversations that lead to finding great jobs. In the current issue I want to touch upon another important topic that is relevant to managers and leaders in the organization. The world is going through an interesting phase of its development and change. This change is marked by a rapid advancement in technology across Industries and businesses. Technology is causing wide ranging disruptions in business models and the way companies operate. There has not been a single management function that has not been impacted by technology. Some of this while on one hand is quite exciting but on the other hand is leading to considerable anxiety around future of jobs and careers. Managers and leaders in the organization are faced with newer challenges every day to keep pace with the external environment and to keep adapting to newer challenges. All this has led to yet another debate on what kind of skills and competencies are needed in today's leaders who are operating in a world that is changing every day.

Here we go!

Visioning has gone short term:

Leadership literature is incomplete without the mention of "Creating Long Term Vision" as one of the core skills of leaders. While this skill is still valid, its dimension has undergone a significant shift. The pace of disruption is so quick that it's almost impossible to think and plan long term. It will be a big mistake to plan for a long term assuming that the plan is going to unfold in a manner as conceived by leaders. Today's leaders should have a long term orientation but have better insight on how things will pan out in short term. Unfortunately, short term could be as short as 1-3 years. Gone are the days when Technology used to take years to have meaningful impact on business models. Technology now has power to disrupt businesses in weeks and months.

'I alone cannot change the world, but I caste a stone across the waters to create many ripples' - Mother Teresa

This has led to change in the popular belief that leadership is all about creating long term visions. In the long term you only get disrupted. **Bigger picture is not enough.**

Navigating Change Vs Creating Change:

Managing Change is another very important dimension of leadership and here too the narrative is changing. There are going to be two kinds of organizations - those that will disrupt and the others that will get disrupted. Those who will get disrupted will be required to manage (reactionary) the change and those who disrupt are actually creating the change (Proactive) for self and others in ecosystem. No leader can afford to wait to be hit by sudden change any more. The imperative has changed and **'leaders must create the change rather than navigating the change'**. **The choice is very clear, either disrupt or get disrupted.** This requires tremendous change in thinking at the end of today's leaders. It's all about being in change ready mode. There is more responding to change and this is what I call change ready leaders.

Ability to identify blind spots: When continuous disruption is the order of the day then continuous environment scanning should also be the order of the day. In many organizations, environment scanning is an yearly affair at the time of annual business planning exercises. Each unit is expected to look at the market and scan it for challenges as well as opportunities. Once the business plan is submitted, not many take out time to keep looking at the business environment proactively. This is where the trouble lies as something somewhere is being done that has ability to knock you out of the market in no time. Hence, leaders of today have to be much more outward-looking and keep identifying blind-spots and bring them to table for discussions. **So go out there and keep a constant vigil.** You never know what will change when you get up next day.

Understand and recognize the changing work system design:

With the advent of sophisticated tools and technology, the nature of work is undergoing tremendous change. Even the way the work is being delivered is changing rapidly. It's not uncommon for employees to work from home, cars, hotels and airports. This significantly changes the definition of workplace. Nature of employment is also undergoing change. Traditionally there was only one form of employment i.e. Full Time employment. With technology, people are opting to become part

time workers as large variety of work can be delivered from anywhere in the world. Technology has enabled the 'Gig Economy' to expand. There are experts who do not work for only one employer but would rather prefer to offer their expertise to multiple employers. Some of these changes have led to a rethink on how the work system should be designed. **The concept of loyalty is never the same as a lot of organization's core work may be getting done by people who are not its employees.** Some of this also as serious implications on how the reward and employee engagement practices should be structured. It is in this context that leaders of today must be evaluating the most effective work system designs all the time. Traditional 9 to 6 job from a physical location is already fading fast in tech enabled world of services organizations.

Self-Awareness: Some of these rapid changes and state of constant flux can be a daunting task to cope up with. That is why the extent of 'self-awareness' of today's leaders is going to be a critical differentiator in who wins this game of **'being on toes all the time'**. The leader is also entrusted with the responsibility of managing the team and its anxieties. **Leaders who do not attempt to invest in knowing self can possible never understand others.** Courage and strong conviction to change things proactively rather than waiting to be disrupted is not going to be easy and it will require a stable head and a stable heart.

Next decade or so (possibly earlier) is going to remain disruptive as some of the technologies like artificial intelligence, block chain, robotics etc. gain more momentum. Quality of Leadership in organization will decide who will disrupt and who will get disrupted. ■



Madhumay Mallik

THE PANGOLIN HUNTED FOR HEALTH

T

he pangolins have roamed this earth for nearly 8 million years now. It is about the size of a house cat and covered in scales from head to tail, making these creatures among the most unique species living on this planet. Mostly out in the night, they live on small insects, mainly ants and termites. They go on minding their own business and when they come across a predator, like lions, tigers or leopards, they just coil into a ball, with their hard scales acting as a shield to protect their tender underside. But that defense mechanism hasn't worked against humans.

Over the past decade, more than 1 million pangolins have been poached, and that's just the number of reported cases. The trade of pangolin is so massive that we don't really have an estimate of their numbers in the wild. We can however, comfortably say that their numbers have been fast declining, making it among the most threatened species on this planet today. The IUCN (International



Indian Pangolin_Photo by Vivek Sharma

Union for Conservation of Nature) lists the Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) as a Red List species and the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972) puts it in the Category 1 of protection. Yet, the pangolin is now known for being the "Most Trafficked" mammal on earth.

Knowing the animal

Across the globe there are 8 different types of Pangolins – Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*), Palawan Pangolin (*Manis culionensis*), Temminck's Ground Pangolin (*Smutsia temminckii*), Sunda Pangolin (*Manis javanica*), Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*), White-bellied Pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*), Black-bellied Pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyle*) and the Giant Ground Pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*). Covered in big overlapping scales, it's the only means of defense for the animal. The pangolin has evolved to live on

a diet of small insects. In the wild, you will see it hunting near termite mounds, using its 'larger than body' tongue, to slurp up ants from below the surface. Though the animal has a set of four legs, it predominantly walks on its hind pairs, making it look like a dwarf dinosaur! They don't really chew their food (don't have teeth either) but digest in their stomach by grinding. Largely solitary, they will only get close to one another to find and mate, reproduce or raise their young. In most cases, pangolins will only give birth to a single offspring and the gestation period is between 140 and 300 days, depending on the species. Also, they are pretty good swimmers and will move between forest patches in search of food.

The desire to kill

The most interesting aspect of the animal is however their scales. That's what make their look so exotic and out of

the world. That's what they are getting hunted and killed for. The market for pangolin scales lies mainly in China, where users believe it to have medicinal properties. They use it as an aphrodisiac in their stews but technically, the scales are nothing but keratin, the same material that our fingernails are made of! Roasted and ground scales are also believed to stimulate lactation, improve blood circulation, heal menstrual problems, and sometime even cure cancer. However, there is no scientific proof behind any of these claims. It is just superstition that makes a whole species so vulnerable and on the brink of extinction. Along with the scales, the pangolin meat is also a delicacy among high-paying customers. The meat is worth about \$600 per kilogram and believe me, there are pretty many people willing to pay for it.

The superstition and the global market serves the needs of the pangolin hunters. It's a whole network of people, right from the tribal in the forest to the trader, the smuggler and the restaurant industry. A single catch of pangolin will bring enough money for a tribal family for a whole week.

Pangolin hunters, mostly locals, will set off in the morning with only a gunny bag and will sometimes be accompanied by a well trained dog. Being forest dwellers, they know where to search and once an animal is located, they are easy to catch. Sometimes the pangolin lashes about trying to break free from the human hands but most times, it's just an act of picking up the innocent animal and putting it into the bag. Once, the hunter gets home, he will slice up the neck of the animal with a sharp blade and the exploit is ready to be harvested. To get out the scales off the animal, the pangolin is sometimes boiled whole. This loosens the scales off the skin. The meat will either be eaten by the family or sold to the trader who will put it in the freezer and send off to the restaurant. The scales are weighed on site and paid for by the trader to the hunter. Making money off pangolins is as easy as picking up mangoes from the tree!

According to a publication by **Rajesh Kumar Mohapatra, Sudarsan Panda, Manoj V. Nair, Lakshmi Narayan Acharjyo and Daniel W.S. Challender**, in the Indian context, "Pangolins are caught when sighted or are dug out of their burrows using different techniques including smoking the animals out and pushing them out with water; pitfall traps and hunting with dogs are also reported to be used to hunt and trap pangolins. The animals are then killed by being placed in boiling water or with the use of a club to render them unconscious. The scales are then typically removed by skinning the dead animal or peeling off the scales."

Further, "there have also been reports

of the involvement of tribal communities such as Padhis, Saperas, Bawarias and Mongias in the capture of pangolins (Sharma, 2014). Pangolin scales were reported to be sold for Rs1000/kg in Mizoram in 1996 and increased to Rs12000–13000/kg in different parts of Mizoram in 2013. Despite the apparent decline in the volume of scales seized, trade is nevertheless persistent and can be attributed to high demand from China primarily, where scales are used in traditional medicines, and to increasing prices, which are driving the illegal trade in pangolins from South Asia, as well as from Africa and South-east Asia."

The trade of pangolin makes up for



Indian Pangolin_Photo by Rajesh K Mohapatra

nearly 20% of all the illegal wildlife trade across the globe today. It's not just the Chinese who are on the lookout, but people in Africa too believe the scales to have spiritual and medical properties. It's the same kind of story across the world. In fact, pangolin scales were insured under health plants in Vietnam!

Some people even fashion coats made out of pangolin scales. The Royal Armouries in Leeds in fact exhibits a coat made out of the scales of the Indian Pangolin that was gifted to King George III, back in 1820. Consequently, the problem is not new. In the black market of Asia, one kilogram of cleaned and roasted scales can fetch up to \$3000.

Other than the meat and scales, pangolins also give rise to other exotic (but illegal) products like the pangolin wine. To make the wine, a baby pangolin is boiled with rice wine. The wine is again believed to heal skin diseases and help patients suffering from asthma. Also, pangolin blood too is drunk raw for its supposedly medicinal value. No part of the pangolin goes to waste, but just the animal – all to get healthier.

The conservation initiatives

Governments across the globe have been initiating a variety of efforts to curb the illegal killing of the pangolin. We have organizations like the IUCN, WWF and the CITES working across the globe to address the trade as a global problem. Even local wildlife NGOs have been working together to address the supply side of the problem. However, until and unless, the demand is stopped, this animal will continue getting picked up and boiled. Though legal measures across countries ensure high degree of punishment for pangolin trade, it continues to happen. The only possible way out is perhaps a global awareness, particularly targeting the Asian countries that pay for pangolin products. It is only when the demand stops that the supply will. Hunting will still exist to suffice the traditional bush meat needs of locals but the expanse of the problem will be then manageable. ■



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EXPERT COLUMN

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2019

The call for reforms in the Indian education space has never calmed since the very first Education Policy which came out in 1968. Since then, several changes have taken place, both in the education policy and in the country to reflect the ever-so-dynamic circumstances.

The draft of the National Education Policy 2019 (NEP) was released in the public domain on June 1, 2019, and gives us a fresh understanding of how the policy makers look at the current educational landscape, and the path ahead for the country. The draft Policy provides for reforms at all levels of education from school to higher education. It is a welcome step that the draft acknowledges that there are still major gaps in our current education setup, and that it bases itself on the pillars of Diversity, Quality, Inclusion and Accountability. It is also a first when we have an 'India-centred' educational model.

However, the real challenge lies in the execution of the plans, and the timely achievement of the targets. This is more so the case with the recommendations regarding higher education, given that the government has given itself a deadline of 2020 to transform higher educational institutions.

A significant recommendation in the NEP pertains to the four functions of higher education – Regulation, Standard Setting, Accreditation and Funding; and mandates that these activities be undertaken by separate entities. As per this, the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) shall become the sole regulator for all higher education; the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) would function as the top level accreditor and shall assess higher educational institutions every few years. There is also a National Research Foundation (NRF) which shall support, mentor and fund quality research in these institutions. It is also recommended that a board of governors be formed for these bodies, who shall then formulate Institutional Development Plans.

As per the draft, this entire structure shall be led by a super-unit in-charge of policy making for the country – the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA), which shall be headed by the Prime Minister. This has caused concerns about increased bureaucratisation in the educational institutions; and also on the autonomy of these bodies.

There is still room for improvement in the draft – especially to address the concerns of autonomy. It would be prudent to incorporate more voices from academia, or even increase the direct participation of the students and academicians from the institutions themselves.

Further, it has to be ensured that the proposed NHERA, NRF etc. do not recapitulate the practices and perceptions of the current regulatory authorities in Higher Education.

Another unaddressed issue relates to the employability and skill development in the graduates. Much has been said about the skill-gap where despite many degrees, graduates are still lacking in the skill-sets required by the industry. There is an urgent and important need to revise the course content, and teaching methodologies to make higher education more employment-oriented. This would also necessitate a mechanism to set common standards and rigour across institutions offering similar degrees. For this, both private and government run institutions must have their roles and orientations set clearly in the NEP as their output objectives are same; variations will be only on account of their sectoral differences. Thus, the driving force and the guiding principles of this NEP must be driven by output expected or delivered. This output ought to be clearly stated.

The current NEP proposal must be made absolutely transparent, objective and efficient in its intent and actions. While pertinent issues like consolidation of regulatory bodies are welcome, 'wish list' items like the establishment of new institutions, restructuring old ones, use of technology, and boosting vocational education need clearer roadmap. ■

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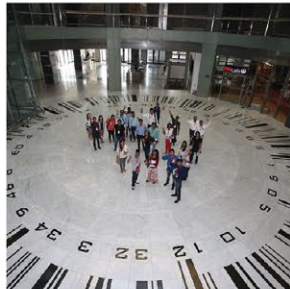
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