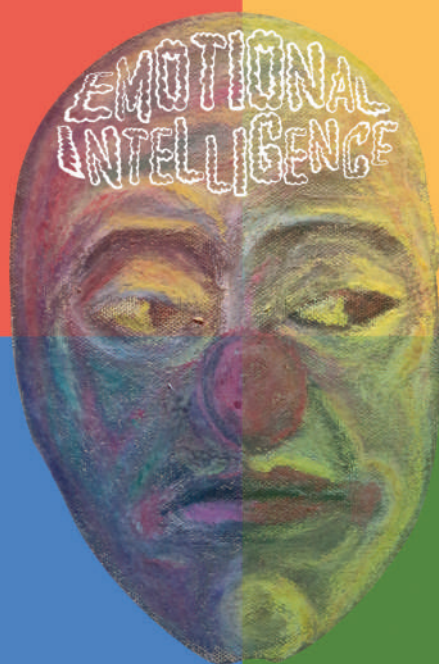


together

a national family magazine



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Together is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine **Together** is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. **Together** is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to

all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together. **Together** is an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups, that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity, are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to editor@togethermagazine.in before the 15th of every month.

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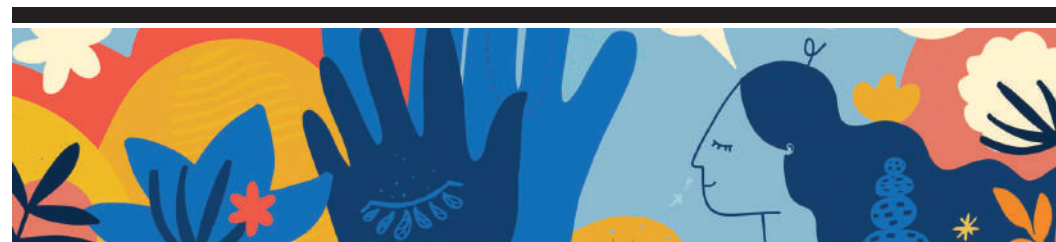
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Emotional Intelligence Boosts Productivity and Prosocial Behaviours

The tragedy of not noticing the other person, not tuning into the other person, to empathise and to understand what is going on with them makes us less human.

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, talks about a classic experiment in social psychology in a theological seminary. Each student was told that they are going to get a topic for a practice sermon. Many were given the passage of the Good Samaritan - the story of a stranger who was wounded and was left by the wayside, and the man who stopped by to help this stranger in need who was lying by the side of the road. The students were supposed to prepare the sermon and go to the next building and deliver the sermon. As each student were going over to the next building to deliver their well prepared sermon they passed by a man who was bent over and groaning in pain. The interesting question of the social experiment is, 'did they stop to help?' And the more interesting question is, 'did it matter if they are following the parable of the Good Samaritan?' The social experiment proved that it did not matter, the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan and the preparation of the sermon made no difference at all in their social behaviour; what mattered was how well they had learned the story and how well they would deliver it. This is the story of our lives.

The tragedy of not noticing the other person, not tuning into the other person, to empathise and to understand what is going on with them, and if they are in need, and there is something that we can do, like being compassionate and helping them, makes us less human. Qualities such as self-awareness, empathy and social skills are more important than raw IQ. These so-called softer skills are the ones which determine whether or not people excel at work, have flourishing relationships, be able to navigate through

► Marc Brackett, the founding director of the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, has a four-colour graph to self-check our emotional quotient

difficult conversations, and develop pro-social behaviour.

Staying on with Goleman, "Emotional Intelligence refers to how well we handle ourselves and our relationships." The competencies often spoken about are knowing what we are feeling and why we are feeling it, which would lead to good decision making; handling our stressful emotions in effective manner that they don't cripple you; getting involved and enthused in what we are doing; knowing what others are going through; and developing a skilled social relationships. Goleman proposes that we must teach kids in a systematic way, self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and social skills.

Emotional Intelligence and Productivity

The World Economic Forum published the *Future of Jobs* report in 2015. Many chief human resources officers from global companies were asked what they saw as the top talents and proficiencies required for workers to thrive by 2020. Interestingly enough there was a consensus, they said, Emotional Intelligence. Fast forward to 2022, emotional intelligence unquestionably has become an important predictor of job success. Companies are placing a high value on people with emotional intelligence for several reasons, like, they cooperate better with others, are exceptional listeners, are open to feedback, and show more empathy.

Amusingly, most of the above competencies are not taught in business schools; they are not even must have resources to start a business; but they determine your productivity. Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, which is arguably one of the most productive and successful companies of 21st century, talks about cleverness, money and competitiveness, without which one can't to businesses; but strangely he places a greater importance on being kind, which is a choice one makes; and it is a consequence of Emotional Intelligence. A quote from Theodore Roosevelt may be in place here, "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care."



Emotional Intelligence and Anti/Prosocial Behaviour

Prosocial behaviours are characterised by engagement with the other and a concern for the rights, feelings, and welfare of other people. They include a wide range of actions such as helping, sharing, comforting, and cooperating. Social scientists use this term as antonym for the term antisocial behavior.

Studies have established that emotional intelligence plays a role in promoting pro-social behaviour; and minimizing antisocial behaviours. Individuals with high emotional intelligence show better empathy, and less negative behaviours in interactions with others.

The social behaviour of people: how leaders lead, how teachers teach, how parents parent depends on their emotional intelligence. Marc Brackett, the founding director of the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence and professor in the Child Study Centre at Yale University has a four colour graph to self-check our emotional quotient. According to the degree of the emotional energy level and the pleasantness of the moment our social behaviours change. If one feels very unpleasant at a moment and very high on energy, then one could go antisocial. If one is feeling pleasant and high on energy, one could behave very prosocial. The effectiveness of life would depend acknowledging our thoughts and feelings and work on them, and build up healthy optimism which sustains high emotional energies.

Emotional Maturity

Emotions feel like truth—but they're not necessarily.

RICHARD ROHR OFM

Alcoholics Anonymous founder Bill Wilson (1895–1971) viewed emotional sobriety as where the Twelve Steps should finally lead. The goal is not simply to stop drinking, but to become a spiritually awakened person who has found some degree of detachment from their own emotional, narcissistic responses. How is it that all of us get so easily hooked, so easily snagged by often temporary or even irrational things?

Let me try to describe the process. The word “emotion” (from Latin *emovere*) means a movement. It’s a body-based reaction in the moment that snags me immediately and urgently and feels like “me.” Some people say we should call emotions “narcissistic reactions,” and we have to recognize that they largely are! Since the body carries all our shame, our childhood conditioning and memories, our guilt, and our previous hurts, the addictive patterns of our emotions can be very hard to “unhook.” Emotions feel like truth—but they’re not necessarily.

That doesn’t mean emotions should be ignored. They must be felt; their honest message must be heard. Only then can we release ourselves from their fascination over us. They are necessary weathervanes to help us read situations quickly and perhaps in depth. But they are also learned and practiced neural responses, often ego-based, which have little to do with truth and much more to do with the story lines we have learned and created. The ego loves to hold on to such emotions to justify itself, defend itself, and assert its power. There is nothing like an angry person to control an entire conversation!

Much of the work of emotional maturity is learning to distinguish between emotions that

offer a helpful message about ourselves or the moment, and emotions that are merely narcissistic reactions to the moment. I dare to say that, until we have found our spiritual center and ground, most of our emotional responses are usually too self-referential to be helpful or truthful. They read the moment as if the “I,” with its immediate needs and hurts, is the reference point for objective truth. It isn’t. The small, defensive “I” cannot hold that space. Reality/God/Creation holds that space. Persistent use of the small self as an objective reference point will only create deeper problems in the long run; it will not solve them.

If an emotion does not help us read a situation better and more truthfully, we must let it go—for our own well-being. Most of us are naturally good at attachment, but we have very little training in detachment or letting go. We must take the risk of legitimate attachment (fully feeling the emotion), learn its important message, and then have the presence and purpose to detach from that fascinating emotion after it has done its work. This is the gift and power of an emotionally mature person.

A Riverbed of Mercy

There is something in us that is not touched by coming and going, by up and down, by for or against, by totally right or totally wrong. This part of us is patient with both goodness and evil, exactly as God is; it does not rush to judgment or demand closure now. Rather, it stands vigilant and patient in the tragic gap that almost every moment offers.

God-in-us is a riverbed of mercy that underlies all the flotsam and jetsam that flows over it and soon passes away. Vast, silent, restful,

and resourceful, it receives and also releases all these comings and goings. It is awareness itself (as opposed to judgment), and awareness is not the same as “thinking.” It refuses to be pulled into emotional and mental tugs-of-war that form most of human life. To look out from this untouchable silence is what we mean by contemplation.

For me, presence is a grace offered in each moment. It allows whatever I am feeling to be transmuted into something useful, for myself, for the situation I may be in, and perhaps for some greater good...

Most of my spiritual journey has been about learning how to be present and, from that grounding in presence, learning how to allow love to be what moves me... Presence seems to be something received, that comes to us through a kind of willingness more than through some forceful effort. We come to understand that our will does not operate quite as we might imagine. There is an element of grace, of something miraculous arising in us which gives us the capacity to be awake to our experience.

This is hard enough when conditions are favorable—when we are relaxed and not particularly stressed about anything. However, when powerful emotions arise, it is generally much more difficult to find a ground in us that can be compassionately awake with what we are feeling...In this sense, we naturally come to understand the importance of practices—contemplation, meditation, and prayer—as methods to cultivate in ourselves a capacity to be with larger emotions and bigger triggers in our lives. As I often tell my students, “Practice when it is easy and it will be there for you when it is hard.”

A Mind-Heart Connection

Buddhist author and speaker Valerie Mason-John found meditation to be integral to her recovery from addiction. She writes: People say we can’t help how we feel. It’s true we can’t help unpleasant, pleasant, or neutral feelings arising when one or more of the six senses have made contact with an object. We multiply the intensity of feeling every time we move away from something pleasant or unpleasant; we create a vicious cycle of craving and aversion.

Often when people say we can’t help how we feel, they are talking about their emotions. We can help how we experience our emotions. They are created by our unconscious and conscious thinking and conditioning. When we emoter our thoughts we are habitually responding and reacting out of our emotions. We are forcibly changing our emotions all the time, by reaching out for external stimuli, or by blaming others when we feel vulnerable or upset. Before we know it, we are angry, resentful, self-righteous, and begin to inhabit a storehouse of toxic thoughts, which suppress our uncomfortable feelings of vulnerability.

By observing our thoughts and emotions, we can witness how they build on each other through our attachment to repetitive inner stories. Such witnessing begins the process of healthy nonattachment. If we are patient, our feelings will change of their own accord—some quicker than others. Our emotions will begin to deplete; they won’t dominate us, or dictate our behavior. Eventually toxic emotions will disappear and nontoxic thinking will start to arise in our hearts, and one day there will be just thoughts without a thinker. There will be sounds without a hearer, tastes without a taster, smells without a smeller, sights without a seer, and touch without a toucher. What I mean by all of this is that things will arise and we will not identify with them as me, mine, or I. There will be no judgments, interpretations, or stories about what we have just perceived. We will see the bigger picture, and not be caught by the clash of the senses, not react to whatever we have made contact with. We will feel the unpleasantness, pleasantness, neutralness, or even the mixture of all three feelings, and will turn toward it without an agitated mind. The heart and mind will accept all of it without protesting. When we protest, toxic emotions begin to emerge...

Our hearts well up with toxins because we push away our painful feelings. Many of us will do our utmost to push them down. We won’t allow ourselves to stop. Our busy lives don’t seem to give us time to feel our feelings. When we turn toward our experience, we will often find feeling tones or sensations in the body.

We turn away from the experience in the body with thoughts and thinking. If we have the courage to face the feeling tone, we will discover there is nothing there, no I or me, just a flow of sensations that may be painful, pleasurable, or neutral.

Freedom from Our Passions

Emerita Cynthia Bourgeault writes of the difference between our modern understanding of emotions and the teachings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers: In the psychological climate of our own times, our emotions are almost always considered to be virtually identical with our personal authenticity, and the more freely they flow, the more we are seen to be honest and “in touch.” A person who gravitates to a mental mode of operation is criticised for being “in his head”; when feeling dominates, we proclaim with approval that such a person is “in his heart.”

In the Wisdom tradition, this would be a serious misuse of the term heart. Far from revealing the heart, Wisdom teaches that the emotions are in fact the primary culprits that obscure and confuse it. The real mark of personal authenticity is not how intensely we can express our feelings but how honestly we can look at where they’re coming from and spot the elements of clinging, manipulation, and personal agendas that make up so much of what we experience as our emotional life today...

In the teachings of the Christian Desert Fathers and Mothers, these intense feelings arising out of personal issues were known as the “passions,” and most of the Desert spiritual training had to do with learning to spot these land mines and get free of them before they did serious psychic damage. In contrast to our contemporary usage, which tends to see passion as a good thing, indicating that one is fully alive and engaged, the Desert tradition saw passion as a diminishment of being. It meant falling into passivity, into a state of being acted upon (which is what the Latin *passio* actually means), rather than clear and conscious engagement. Instead of enlivening the heart, according to one Desert Father, the real damage inflicted by the passions is that “they divide our heart into two.”

An Enormous Freedom

In a dialogue about spirituality and the Twelve Steps, Father Thomas Keating (1923–2018) identifies the role of emotional sobriety in recovery. Emotional sobriety is the same as detachment from our own ideas of happiness and also from our over dependency on the group to which we feel we belong, along with our cultural conditioning, education, personality traits, and emotional patterns.

In other words, all of these interior tendencies and outside influences added up to a false self based on our traumatic experiences from early life that we were trying to run away from... rather than face. Now, through the Twelve Steps, you face them all, and as a result they have been relativised...

An enormous freedom has begun to be experienced, expressed in the ability to serve others... We cannot do this without an ever-deepening awareness of the motivation that lurks in our unconscious, since the unconscious energy is stored in the body and secretly influences our behavior and decisions. We have to find out what this is in order to be able to let it go...

As we become aware of the shadow side of our personality and how much energy we put into programs for security, power and affection, esteem and approval, we real that we cannot manage our own lives. In other words, the first step has become an experience even deeper than the original one. Only now it is not a desperate state of mind, but self-knowledge that has grown to include parts of our personality that we didn’t know because often we had projected the shadow side of our personality onto someone else. Now we are confronted with who we actually are with all our brokenness and our weakness.

Responding Instead of Reacting

I believe we are made for love, that our natural abiding place is love, and that we in fact are love. Our absolute foundation is communion with God and others. This is the “deepest me” to which we must return before we act. From this foundation, we know we must act, and we are able to act from a place of positive, loving energy. Unfortunately, when “triggered” by strong

emotions, it is very difficult to come from that deep place of “yes.”

The next time you are offended, consider it a “teachable moment.” Ask yourself what part of you is actually upset. It’s normally the false or smaller self. If we can move back to the big picture of who we are in God, our True Self, we’ll find that what upset us usually doesn’t amount to a hill of beans in objective reality! But we can waste a whole day (or longer) feeding that hurt until it seems to have a life of its own and, in fact, “possesses” us. At that point, it becomes what Eckhart Tolle rightly calls our “pain-body.”

Tolle defines this “accumulated pain” as “a negative energy field that occupies your body and mind.” In this space, we seem to have a knee-jerk, self-protective reaction to everything—and everyone—around us. I emphasise the word reaction here because there’s no clear, conscious decision to think or act in this way. It just happens and we are seemingly powerless to stop it. By doing healing work and by practicing meditation, we learn to stop identifying with the pain and instead calmly relate to it in a compassionate way.

For example, in centering prayer, we observe the hurt as it arises in our stream of consciousness, but we don’t jump on the boat and give it energy. Instead, we name it (“resentment toward my spouse”), then we let go of it, and let the boat float down the river. We have the power to say, “That’s not me. I don’t need that today. I have no need to feed this resentment. I know who I am without it.” This is the beginning of emotional sobriety. Many of us think we are converted to Christ, but without the conversion of our emotional reactions, we remain much like everyone else.

If we’ve been eating a regular meal of resentment toward our spouse, our boss, our parents, or “the world,” the boat’s going to come back around in the next minute because it’s accustomed to us filling our plate. But we must be able to ask and to discover, “Who was I before I resented my spouse? And even before that?”

This is the primary way we learn to live in our True Self, where we are led by a foundational “yes,” not by the petty push backs of “no.”

Detoxing Our Hearts

Buddhist author Valerie Mason-John encourages us to remain emotionally sober by practicing a detox of the heart, allowing ourselves to experience waves of emotion and let them go.

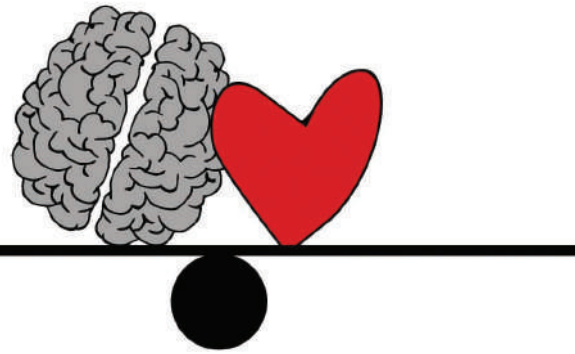
Our hearts could be described as huge muscles that open and close, shrivel and expand, soften and harden, love and hate. We have to work diligently to keep our hearts open, just as we have to work to keep other muscles in the body strong. Purifying our hearts is an ongoing process, like physical exercise...

If we are to detox our hearts, build up our heart muscles, and become happier, we must cultivate mindfulness in everything we do... With the presence of awareness we can see there is no need to hold on to or push away our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. They will come and go of their own accord. If we push them away or cling to them they will stay in our hearts and accumulate. Similarly, if we allow our thoughts to be like clouds in the sky, they will pass. Even the dark, heavy clouds eventually pass.

How is your heart feeling today? Awareness begins in the heart. This turning inward can be a revolutionary act. We might ask ourselves how we feel when we wake up in the morning... Befriend your feelings and see them as a warning to take care of yourself throughout the day. Try not to eradicate or block the experience. Only acknowledge them, then let go. Let the muscles of your heart soften, let your tears dilute your toxins, let the heart stay open.

If you remember, ask yourself in the middle of the day how your heart is. This will help to keep it open, and you may find that what you were feeling in the morning is quite different from what you are feeling at midday. This is impermanence: the universal law of change.

The Power of Emotional Intelligence



Every day, you are surrounded by examples of emotional Intelligence in action, and without even realising it, you navigate relationships and everyday events using your Emotional Intelligence.

Sr STILIYA JOS K

We deal with all sorts of people: students, parents, teachers, friends, facilities personnel, superintendents, and local politicians on a daily bases. We come across different emotions of people, like, anger, happiness, fear, mood states, preferences; and these bodily states influence how people think, make decisions and perform different tasks. We must be prepared to deal with complex situations. Each situation demands a particular response that must be handled swiftly and appropriately. Often, the demands placed on us, to improve or learn a new condition, are stressful and can cause resistance. They require not only intelligent quotient (IQ) but also Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Spiritual quotient (SQ), etc.

Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and former writer for the *New York Times*, in his book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), used, for the first time, the term Emotional Intelligence. Salovey and Mayer's white paper on EI (1990) defined EI as 'the ability to monitor one's and others' feelings and emotions'. Accurate awareness and acceptance of emotions would help individuals balance their behaviours. Emotional injuries are plentiful, and most people do not have the emotional strappings to manage them. Emotions are not universally experienced, and we

each have to understand that our emotional behaviour is our responsibility. Dr Joan Rosenberg, the creator of Emotional Mastery and Emotional Mastery Training, is highly regarded for expertise on psychology, and as master clinician, trainer, and consultant, who states that the more we become aware of emotional Intelligence's importance, the better would be the world we create. Improving self-confidence by responding to unpleasant feelings with intention, patience, and choice can help emotional wellbeing. Emotionally intelligent individuals with a solid moral compass are less easily manipulated.

Benefits of Emotional Intelligence

There are moments in life when you may wonder, 'How does she always seem to have everything under control?' Whether it's a co-worker who handles challenging work situations without offending anyone or a buddy who instantly makes strangers feel at ease. Their Emotional Intelligence, or their capacity to keep track of their own and other people's emotions, hold the key. Every day, you are surrounded by examples of emotional Intelligence in action, and without even realising it, you navigate relationships and everyday events using your Emotional Intelligence. For instance, a friend who comes to you and shares his anxiety issues and anxiety-related marital relationship problems might want to share his feelings with you. You listen empathetically and objectively; then you may explain the possible reasons for the anxiety and relationship problem. After you may advise your friend on how to avoid this in the future. And you may do all this without upsetting or of-

fending your friend. This is a classic example of using your Emotional Intelligence in daily life.

Emotional Intelligence is a key to having a successful intra and inter-personal relationship. In social functioning, Emotional Intelligence is postulated to promote positive social functioning by helping individuals to detect others' emotional states, adopt others' perspectives, enhance communication, and regulate behaviour. Several studies have found EQ to be a good predictor of psychological wellbeing and work performance. EI is not the only determinant of people's wellbeing but profoundly impacts leadership effectiveness and success. EI influences organisational results, the functioning of a group and a team, organisational change, potential sustainable growth etc. Employees' tactics for handling stress and conflict, as well as their overall job performance, are said to be influenced by their emotional Intelligence. As a result of these contributions, EQ training is now recognised as one of the essential therapies for assisting individuals in successfully coping with various personal and professional stressors.

How to Improve Emotional Intelligence

One is advised to develop emotional Intelligence to prioritise thoughts and be able to control emotions in anxiety-inducing situations. Mayer and Salovey (1997) suggested that EQ consists of four functions. First, appraisal and expression of emotion in the self, referring to understanding one's deep emotions and expressing them naturally. Second, appraisal and expression of emotion in others, referring to the ability to perceive and understand other people's emotions. Third, regulating emotion in the self, referring to the ability to control one's emotions, which is crucial for an individual to recover quickly when experiencing a negative emotion. Fourth, using emotion to facilitate decision-making, referring to the ability to direct one's emotions to help improve performance. For example, "I have a good understanding of my own emotions" (emotion appraisal of self), and "I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others" (emotion appraisal of other). I am

quite capable of controlling my own emotions (emotion regulation), and "I would always encourage myself to try my best" (use of emotion). Emotional Intelligence can help us understand why some people who might be very successful in their profession face problems in their marital or other intra or inter-personal relationships; why some teachers are not efficiently able to lead students in a class; and why some leaders would experience depression and struggle with managing their emotions, as well as numerous other similar situations.

Being mindful allows individuals to focus better on how other people around them are feeling. This is so that one may appropriately concentrate on a work that might be accomplished better when a particular feeling is in place and to avoid committing to a task that cannot be performed successfully under such emotions. Being aware of one's own emotions, both positive and negative, is a valuable skill. Emotions are part of human biology. They are chemicals that support the regulation of our minds and bodies and help us deal with the challenges of decision-making, social interaction, and life navigation. We experience emotions to aid in our ability to focus and pay attention. Though they might be difficult at times, emotions are a natural part of who we are and can be controlled. EQ is a skill that can be learned, measured, and supported by science.

In any situation, raising emotional Intelligence will improve the degrees of human comprehension and functionality. Everyone will benefit from improvements in empathy, social skills, self-awareness, motivation, and self-control. Being intelligent is lovely, but using your Intelligence effectively has a more significant impact. Feelings shouldn't be discounted; instead, they should be emphasised as cues for the right action and behaviour. Imagine the possibilities if a culture accepted emotions as information to help people make better decisions rather than as a source of indulgence.

Sr Stiliya Jos K is an Augustinian sister, and a PhD scholar in Psychology.

The Broader Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

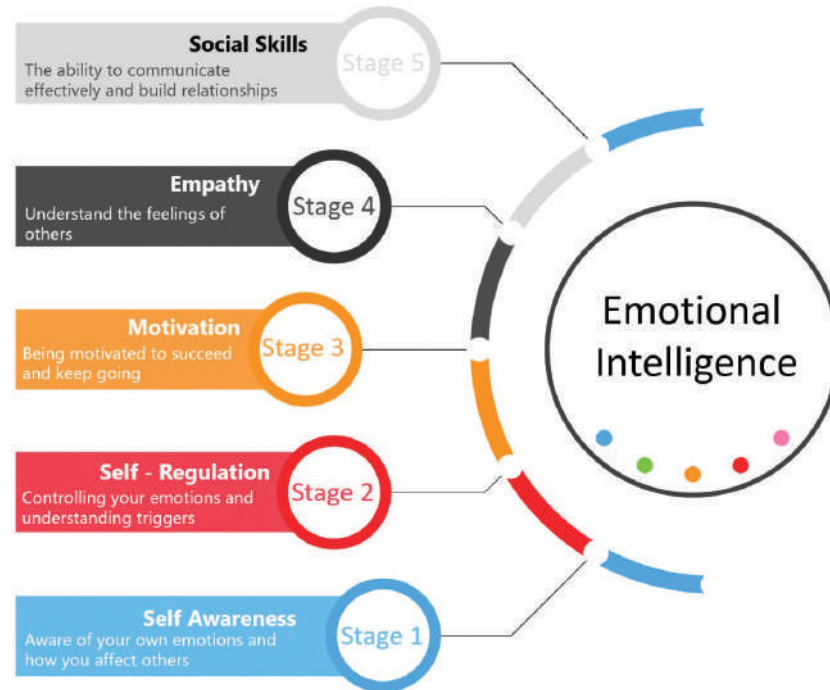
A FRANCIS OFM

As parents, and educators, how do we assess the intelligence of our kids? Do we associate it with 'the ability to learn, understand and think in a logical way about things, a traditional takeaway meaning from dictionaries? If so, it is high time we shopped around and broadened our understanding of the term intelligence, particularly, in the intersections of the burgeoning theories of emotional intelligence.

In the popular understanding of intelligence, the ultimate axiom is still anchored around a set of mental abilities, such as, cognition (understanding and storing information), logical thinking (reason and logic), problem solving etc. Caught in the whirlwind of this kind of thinking, we journey blindfolded along the directions indicated by the British psychologist Charles Spearman who introduced the theory of general intelligence, popularly called the 'g factor' and the German Psychologist William Stern who coined the term 'IQ' (intelligence quotient). In any of these, mental abilities rule the roost in defining what intelligence is.

It is no secret that the kind of the IQ-based thinking has misguided us, leading us to wrongly categorise a vast number of individuals in the society, that includes our kids, family and friends, as unintelligent and therefore incompe-

tent to acquire higher education, and incapable of assuming leadership roles. In this regard, I have a tangible case, a moving testimony of a dear friend, to present (permission obtained): my friend was considered to be an unintelligent, a 'potential drop-out student' by her teachers during her lower primary school years. Her only saving grace was that she had a mother who was aware of her quiet but persevering personal abilities for success in areas of her play and friendship with other kids. Being convinced of her indefatigable spirit, her mother stopped sending her to school, and alternatively provided her with homeschooling. Saved by the



ingenious action of her mother, she grew up to become an artist and an educator. She has established herself so reputably, that many artistically-oriented individuals compete to join her on the regular art and culture expeditions she undertakes to distant countries and continents of the world. Currently, she is working as a professor in a renowned International University, teaching art. She certainly knows and earnestly believes, in her interactions with students, that intelligence exceeds the parameters of the IQ tests, just like Daniel Goleman, who gave a jump-start to the proliferation of the concept of emotional intelligence.

Fortunately, we today don't have to repeat the same mistake of assessing intelligence by the theoretical standardisation of the general intelligence (g factor) and the IQ. There is more to a person's intelligence than his/her mere mental abilities. This is the good news which the invention of emotional intelligence promises to us.

Emotional Intelligence, a Household Phrase

By the end of the twentieth century, Peter Salovey and John D. Meyer, two American psychologists introduced the theory of emotional intelligence. In their original explanation of the theory, they defined emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, understand, use and regulate emotions.

The concept was widely popularised by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and the former science journalist of The New York Times, through his internationally bestselling book, "Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ."

Goleman explained emotional intelligence as our ability to handle ourselves in relationships particularly, on four different domains such as self awareness (knowing our feelings -what we are feeling and why we are feeling), self management (handling our emotions, especially the distressing ones that could cripple us from functioning, and being ourselves), empathy (knowing the feelings of others) and finally

the social skill of putting all of these together in promoting prosocial behaviours.

Mastering these skills is not easy for many as we tend to mask our emotions. But with effort and repeated practice one could master these skills. A lot of our difficulties, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, could be avoided, handled well and learned to live with if not fully resolved, when we are able to master the skills of emotional intelligence. Besides the emotional regulation of the self and others, emotional intelligence enhances our ability to think well because emotions precede thoughts. With better management and regulation of emotions, we learn to equip ourselves with clarity of thoughts and decision-making skills.

Since Goleman's publication of the book that made emotional intelligence a 'household phrase' as expressed by Camille Chatterjee, author, there have been numerous studies linking it with positive indicators of better self-awareness, better interpersonal relationships, better teamwork, better job performance and satisfaction, retention at work, and easy disposition to accepting changes. Studies also suggest that couples with high emotional intelligence are able to enjoy better marital satisfaction.

One of Goleman's ground-breaking theoretical premises favouring emotional intelligence over IQ is that it isn't genetic, but could be learned at any phase of one's life. IQ on the other hand, is genetic and therefore there is a static quality to it. Contrary to one's privilege of being born with high IQ, which is not the case with the majority of human beings, emotional intelligence is a learned skill that improves the quality of our personal, interpersonal, social and professional living.

If we understand this broader dimension of emotional intelligence as proposed by Goleman, we will perhaps stop going after our kids (ourselves and others, too) with a narrow yardstick built on the merits of mental abilities for measuring intelligence. We will certainly appreciate everyone's potential to be intelligent.

Intellectual Giants, Emotional Pygmies

KENNETH LEAN

High academic grades, Ivy League alumnus, sophisticated language, clear articulation of thoughts, member of an affluent family and what else is required to hire a new employee? After a few years spent in the corporate rollercoaster, what happens when some of them start leading? Many of the CXOs that I interact with worry a lot when their high potential talent doesn't show up when times get tough. This particularly leads me to wonder – what actually happens in the journey of these young prospective leaders? The real differentiation I speculate thus between the fulfilled and unfulfilled talent is, (the) emotional stability. Intellect can take you to a certain distance, but what offers you wings to fly through uncertain climatic conditions are emotional quotient (EQ) and experience. Usually, the best experience is harboured when you have a mind and heart to face the setbacks.

A friend of mine while sharing a retreat experience coined the title of this post for me. He was sharing the respective facilitator's view of the trauma of handling high expectations that many kids go through in the short span of their formative years. This made me think, and led me through various leadership development conversations. I came across a first group of individuals who were cautiously led on an academic intellectual highway that had only green lights and not even a single pothole; life to them was like a fixed formula. The second type was those who chose the dirt track circuit of life,

which had potholes more than anything else. On further inquiring these two categories of people, the ones who chose the dirt track, were the ones who climbed the slippery corporate ladder with relative ease; the emotional quotient (EQ) was evidently more important the intellectual quotient (IQ). Still not so convincing? Well, have you not seen many an intellectual giant shudder and shiver and shrink to being an emotional pygmy when asked to confront the real life situations at the work place? The easy way out of such situations, have resignations ceremoniously in order; because their big certificates are the surety for the next job. But unfortunately, this drama also has a short life span. Most popularly parents/institutions still focus on spoon-feeding that tends to generously equip their kids with intellectual skills, but forget to impart the much-needed invaluable life coping skills. This certainly pans out to be the difference in a competitive workspace. Leaders are born to those who are ready to give that life coping skills that emotionally equip their kids/wards.

Conflicts, confrontation, bad news, failures, bad markets, market commotions and work life balance are some of the tough situations that a leader routinely encounters in the work place during VUCA times. Under examination of the above tough situations, doesn't the leader need to be more than well equipped? Don't we take these tough situations for granted at times? Well, imagine the mental strength and emotional stamina required to wade

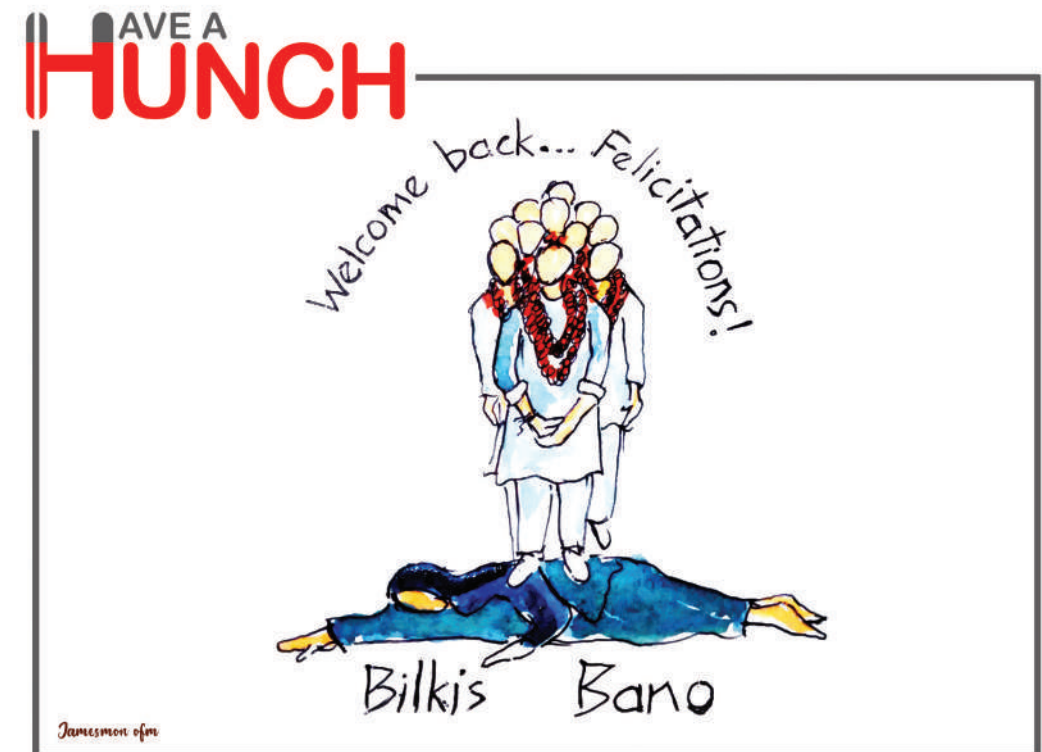
through this emotional jungle all in one day. I am sure you agree with me that it takes a lot out of a person to make things happen. However, simplifying complex issues, empathy, ambiguity management, influencing skills, self-confidence, self-awareness, emotional balance, healthy competitiveness, adaptability and so on, might be handier than those intellectual certificates. The value of the academic degrees become null and void when one does not equip oneself with the just said personality traits that are waiting to be applied. Homes and universities need to take cognizance of these aspects of growth.

Recently during a development session, a leader told me the change that he wanted to see in his life, is his manager. On asking him about what about his manager worries him so much, he promptly cited various incidents on how the manager could be rude, insincere, judgmental, provocative, sarcastic and what not. This individual is not alone; many of us encounter such managers in our work places. But, what makes these managers so defensive and arrogant? Is

there enough of space and time to accommodate such damaging managers? In this sense, the saying of people leaving their managers, then the organisation is so true. Some of the people leave the organisations under the pretext of better opportunities but the unsaid reason is usually their manager. Isn't it?

The above described managers usually take a shield of their experience and fat degrees to occupy those valuable seats, but with little EQ they make the seats so small. These emotional pygmies not only stifle growth of people below them but also erode organisation brand and direction. Organisations need to be careful while hiring people for their academics (and academics alone). Thorough assessment of their formative years – college life, hobbies and personalities are vital filters to consider.

There is a difference between learned men and studied men. Plato said, "All learning has an emotional base"; so, we can prudently infer that EQ is one of the most important elements that align leaders to an organisation.



Vitamin N(O): Prescription for Character Building

Character building and resilience is not possible without failures, difficulties and hardships.

GABRIEL MATHIAS OFM

“**C**lass IX student in Madhya Pradesh commits suicide after missing the school bus.” “Unable to join online classes, Kerala school girl commits suicide.” “Student allegedly kills himself over losing classroom leader election.” “Upset over poor performance in exam class XII teen commits suicide.”

Headlines like the above in the newspapers are all too frequent to be passed off as normal. Parents are often at a loss to understand as to how to deal with their school going children and are alarmed at some of these news items. They also remark that it was not like this in their youth, implying, this is a serious phenomenon of the present age.

What could be the reasons for this “pandemic” of suicides and what can the parents do to prevent this from affecting their children? There cannot be simplistic answers to these questions. However, one of the reasons for this

“pandemic” seems to be lack of frustration tolerance due to over-indulgence by the parents of the present generation.

I am reminded of an article I read long ago trying to explain the phenomenon of “hippies” in the 1960s. The beaches in Goa were filled with youth from the west with long unkempt hair; hardly any clothing on their bodies, and what they wore was rather dirty. Hordes of youth from the West came to India in search of spirituality and adventure, doing risky things.

One of the relevant explanations I read about this phenomenon was that these were the children of parents who had suffered deprivation during and soon after the Second World War, often having nothing to eat for days on end. In their turn they did not want their children to be deprived of anything and pampered them with not just their needs but all their wishes and wants. As one of the results, these children had no challenges to face in their



The challenge is to provide tasks that are just a little above the person's present capacity so that s/he is challenged and builds up confidence by successes.

life. Everything was provided. They did not have to work for anything. They came to the East in search of challenges and did risky things such as trying all kinds of drugs and undertaking adventurous and at times dangerous journeys. Quite a lot ended up with serious, mental and even criminal problems rather than enjoying the happiness they were searching for.

Many of today's city- children in India, too, face a similar situation. While their parents come from large, often joint families with many siblings, who often had to do with handed down clothes and books from the older siblings, the present generation of children in the cities hails from nuclear families with one or two children. They grow up with the “instant- coffee” and “use and throw” mentality of today. The parents want their children to be happy and are willing to make any sacrifices and provide them with not just their needs but often all their wishes and wants. As a result the children live in a make believe world of unreality and are not used to failures and hardships. They have very low frustration tolerance. No wonder they give up when they face hardships and even ordinary failures.

Over-indulgence often produces children who are manipulating, whining, and adults who are depressed, emotionally stunted, and selfish.

What is the solution? Professor John Rosemond of the Prager University, an author and

a family psychologist proposes prescription of Vitamin N(O) as the solution. He says that more and more children today suffer from Vitamin N(O) deficiency. They are not used to hearing the word “NO” from elders. Parents should learn to say NO especially when they are faced with whimsical desires of their children.

Character building and resilience is not possible without failures, difficulties and hardships. Strangely, it is when we fail and meet hardships that we learn about life and discover our strengths and weaknesses. Self-knowledge is acquired only through experiences of the reality of life which is a combination of successes and failures.

In psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy one of the pre-suppositions is that the root cause of many personality problems is too much frustration of needs or over-indulgence. The solution proposed is “optimal frustration”, or the principle of “benign deprivation”. The method is to find out the ego-strength of the person and then provide the right level of frustration. Permissiveness will not provide the person with challenges and will keep the person weak as before. Too much frustration will lead to the person resorting to primitive defenses.

The challenge is to provide tasks that are just a little above the person's present capacity so that s/he is challenged and builds up confidence by successes. Children should not be protected from the usual demands, challenges and failures of life. Failures at this age are not a catastrophe because they do not involve life-long choices. They are the stepping-stones for character building and greater success. Optimal level of frustration will lead to character building and resilience.

According to professor John Rosemond, the most character building two-letter word in the English language is NO. He says, “Vitamin N(O) deficiency is the cause of many of the ills of the present youth. Dispense it frequently and you'll be happy in the long run and so will your child.”

Emotional Intelligence and Higher Educational Institutions

ROSELINE FLORENCE GOMES

As an educator, counselor, and community worker in the 2022 Indian system, I substitute the emotions of all my students, my clients, young, old, and all others who are part of my integral social system. Let me start with some contexts with hypothetical names depicting real-life emotional struggles. Ravi Mehrotra, a 19-year-old aspiring engineer jumped off the building as he was heartbroken after a breakup. Monisha V, a 22-year-old took an overdose of substances to cope with mental health concerns. Sunil, a 14-year-old battles with discriminatory remarks by classmates, teachers, and family as he is a special learner and is unable to think like others. Deepak a 53-year-old is given two meals a day as he is unable to provide for the family. Shilpi a 35-year-old is invisible in her workspace as her department thinks she is not worthy to be a part of the system. Prarthana an 80-year-old experiences sexist remarks and is age-shamed whenever she goes on a pilgrimage trip from her church. Yes, these are some of the lived experiences of the members of our community. The question is how could someone with emotions, thoughts, and feelings create situations for another irrational individual. Thus, are we all emotionally intelligent residing in the 75th year of Independence? What is our EQ, Emotional Quotient? Are we able to motivate ourselves and sail through our conflicts? Can we control our impulses? Can we regulate our emotions and work on distressing thoughts that stop our ability to think?

Emotional Intelligence revolves around all our cognitions, which are the processes of understanding oneself and others through motives, habits, insights, and nonverbal communication. It then interlinks with our feelings and finally our actions. There are a few steps in understanding whether we are emotionally intelligent:

DO I KNOW MY EMOTIONS? The pathway to self-awareness is where we can recognise our feeling as it takes place. It provides a skywalk towards the ability to monitor these feelings from every moment that enhances our mental insights and personal knowledge about ourselves. When we are unable to notice our affective state, we become uncertain about our past, present, and future. This further lowers our skillsets of decision-making and problem-solving.

AM I ABLE TO MANAGE MY EMOTIONS? We need to be able to handle our feelings whenever it's inappropriate which strengthens our self-awareness skillset. The capability to soothe one's frustrations by overcoming distress through resilient thoughts, feelings, and actions will evolve self-sufficiency.

CAN WE MOTIVATE OUR SELF? Marshaling feelings through a goal-centric vision is needed for developing creativity, attentiveness, and mastery. Emotional self-control is the capacity that needs to be grown. The process of delaying one's gratification and impulsivity generates accomplishment. The ability to get into a state

where we can flow with all the activities that we undertake helps in improving our performance. This evolves our power of productivity and self-efficacy.

CAN WE IDENTIFY OTHERS' EMOTIONS?

Is the concept and action of empathy known to us? Can we take the perspectives of others? If yes, then we can put ourselves in the lens of our social comrades which will create altruistic actions or acts of kindness. The more we are inclined to the needs of others we can recognise their gestures as social signals. It grows the seed of nurturance in our professions. Thus, we will be able to nurture a team if we are empathetic.

CAN WE HANDLE RELATIONSHIPS? The ability to be socially competent and have leadership skills. The need for interpersonal efficacy and capacity to interact with others by negating all the differences of others as personal strengths.

All of the above is a need of an Independent India and as the main protagonists of a Higher Educational system, we need to expand these skillsets. India stands as a majestic superpower with its structural educational principles and the newer generation of dynamic thinkers that emerge as world leaders. We need to create schooling on emotional intelligence where it becomes part of our experiential curriculum both for staff and students. Improvisation, recognition, and naming of individual emotions

need to be normald in Higher Educational units. Every stakeholder has to be taught the ways of identifying the dynamics of emotions and their outcomes. The workshop-based model of educating tolerance of conflicts, time, and anger management capacities would lead to lowered disruptions. This will expand greater self-expressive skills and curb self-destructiveness, anxiety, stress, and other mental health concerns. We need to be more socially responsible by being able to mindfully pay attention to our tasks which will further help us in self-control and lower impulsivity by increasing accomplishment. The ability to read others' emotions will increase our social sensitivity and listening power. We will then be able to develop our capacity to analyze and define our relationships. It will help in resolving conflicts and empower problem-solving abilities, assertiveness, communication, friendliness, prosocial acts, and peer relations.

Emotional literacy is an urgent capacity in today's unrealistic world. Higher Educational institutions have to come up with preventative programs where one can educate the management and students about affective, cognitive, and behavioral skillsets. Affective skillsets will guide our people in defining their emotions, participating in self-expression, analyzing their intense emotions, experiencing self-control, managing impulses, and battling stressors by also differentiating between emotions and actions. Cognitive skillsets will teach self-appraisal where every individual will have a personal dialogue with themselves to help themselves cope with environmental stress and reward one's actions. This will flourish abilities to view social signals and develop empathy and a favorable outlook. Behavioral skillsets will educate about both verbal and nonverbal interactions. Therefore, social-emotional learning for Higher Education systems is a practice in making our youth leaders more socially responsible, assertive, helpful, and most importantly independent in their own emotions, thoughts, and actions. Let's all remind each other to empower the needy who lack the emotional skillsets that are needed for our holistic growth.





Synesthesia

Union of the Senses

MRUDULA BATTULA

Imagine a world in which our senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch were all intertwined. What if we could physically see the colour of the song we were listening to? Or if we could taste a word or a sound in our head? What if every day of the week had a colour and a shape? Imagine being able to taste the words of this article as you read it. Sounds crazy, doesn't it? If you're one of the readers who said, "Duh, isn't that how it works?" to any of the sentences above, then congratulations! You belong to the lucky 4% of the population who share a rare neurological condition called synesthesia.

Synesthesia occurs when two or more senses are crossed or blended, in which one sense triggers or stimulates an automatic involuntary experience in another. The word *synesthesia* is derived from Greek words *syn* meaning *union*, and *aesthesis* meaning *sensation*. Therefore, *synesthesia* is a union of sensations. Different synesthetes show different symptoms—some can hear colours, some can feel sounds, others can taste shapes, etc.

One in 2,000 people experience this trait. Sounds like a magical ability, doesn't it? Many synesthetes don't realise that they have the condition. They assume that everyone around them possess the same sensory mixtures. Research shows that people with synesthesia are

born with this trait or develop it early in their childhood. This condition can be genetically inherited. It has also been suggested that children who intensively engage with abstract concepts in their early childhood tend to develop traits of synesthesia. So, what is the science behind this one-of-a-kind condition? Scientists are still trying to figure out the cause of it, although many believe that synesthesia occurs when there are excess neural connections between parts of the brain responsible for sensory stimulus. Where there is normal segregation of neural connections in non-synesthetic individuals, there exists a kind of abnormal or atypical cross-wiring of neurons in synesthetes.

Simon Baron-Cohen, a researcher who studies synesthesia at the University of Cambridge, proposed that, 'synesthesia results from an overabundance of neural connections. Usually, each of the senses is assigned to separate modules in the brain, with limited cross-communication. In the brains of people with synesthesia, the walls are broken down, and there is more communication among the modules.'

Daphne Maurer, a psychologist at McMaster University in Ontario suggested another theory, that, 'everyone has these connections, but not everyone uses them. Those who use the connections are the ones who experience synesthesia.'

There are over 80 types of synesthesia. Grapheme-colour synesthesia is the most common form of synesthesia, where alphabetical letters and numbers appear to be shaded with a colour. For example, the letter 'A' is associated with the colour 'blue'. Chromesthesia, or 'coloured hearing', is another common form of synesthesia where individuals automatically see flashes of shape and colour when they hear a sound or a musical note or vice versa, i.e. they can hear sounds when they see a particular colour.

Mirror-touch synesthesia involves feeling sensations that other people experience, such as pain and touch, as if it were happening to you. For example, when you see two people shaking hands, you physically feel like you're the one shaking hands with them. People with this condition are said to have higher levels of empathy as compared to the general population. With only 0.2% of the synesthete population having it, lexical-gustatory synesthesia is one of the rarest forms, in which certain tastes are experienced when a person hears a word or a sound. For example, the word *baggage* might taste like a sausage. Synesthetes are also seen to have superior memory, particularly towards items related to their synesthetic experiences. For instance, they can remember phone numbers based on number-colour associations, or remember musical

notes based on the colour they see. Another fact shows that synesthetes are more likely to follow a creative profession.

Billie Eilish, Kanye West, Beyoncé, Pharrell Williams and Lorde are some of the famous music artists who have synesthesia and all of them claim that synesthesia has enhanced their creative ability. You might think that being bombarded with so much sensory stimulation could be overwhelming to those who experience it, and yes, you are right. But such instances are rare as many synesthetes say that the condition is more of a boon than a bane.

This neural diversity proves how different and unique each person's sensory perception of the world is. It's crazy how two people can see the same object quite differently. It makes us think about the endless possibilities of diverse perspectives out there. Sometimes we become ignorant, forgetting that there is a world beyond our own eyes. Why do we restrict ourselves in the way we perceive the world? What if we opened our minds, and asked others, 'what does it feel to be you?' Think about how much we could learn! We have grown so comfortable seeing the world only through our own eyes. Why not take a step back, and see the world through the eyes of another? Let us embrace empathy and a new understanding!



IN PICTURES

Ladakh – Land of Mountains, Monasteries and the Mystic

Dr RUPA PETER

As a South Indian who has spent a major part of her life living close to the Western Ghats with lush green, tree-covered mountains all around, Ladakh was indeed a wake-up call of sorts. How can something so stark, simple and almost nude be so beautiful! Mountains so threadbare that clouds cast vivid shadows over them. Time-worn hills and rocks that lay bare their very soul. Pristine blue waters with no life in them. Skies so clear that you can actually see a little bit

of heaven. Ladakh simply took my breath away like no place else.

If the dramatic landscapes soothed my weary soul; then, the monasteries, the prayer wheels and the colourful, religious flags added the much-needed spiritual vigour to my wandering heart. I spent my days in this wondrous land of mountains and monasteries, awe-stuck by the unadorned beauty that surrounded me and marvelled at the handiwork of the Divine Creator.





Pursuing a life of instant gratification, of success measured in material terms, seems great for a short while. But how long will it last?

MONICA FERNANDES

Try to make at least one person happy every day. If you cannot do a kind deed, speak a kind word. If you cannot speak a kind word, think a kind thought. Count up, if you can, the treasure of happiness that you would dispense in a week, in a year, in a lifetime.

– Lawrence G. Lovasik

Happiness is not a destination. It is a journey. Since time immemorial we humans are trying to find the secret to this complex state of mind and action defined as 'Happiness' or the joy of living. Broadly speaking, happiness could be broadly divided into two types.

Living an eudaimonic life was suggested by the 4th century BC philosopher Aristotle. It means living an authentic, meaningful life. It is a quality which we must work towards and it must be intrinsically motivated from our choices. It involves living up to personal goals, fulfilling responsibility, looking out for others. Volunteering for such an individual is more fun than watching TV. It comes when we enjoy what you are doing. Victor Frankl said that human beings cannot be happy until their lives are meaningful. Reaching out to others using our talents enriches our lives. We have to work towards happiness. 'Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions,' said the Dalai Lama.

We cannot reach out to others unless we first love ourselves, accept our capabilities and know our limitations. Psychologists suggest that we practice gratitude thereby attracting goodness. Appreciate and thank the Almighty for small and big blessings. They suggest that when we succeed, we should be modest and acknowledge those who have supported us in our journey towards success. Prof. Sara Algoe stated that those who express gratitude when receiving a gift are more likely to make friends.

An experiment was conducted where volunteers were asked to close their eyes and think of somebody who really influenced their life for the better. They then had to write it down. Some were asked to phone up the person and express their gratitude. Their happiness was then measured. The happiness of those who only wrote down about how thankful they were increased between 2% to 4% whereas those who phoned their benefactor scored an increase between 4% to 19%.

It is suggested that we should be present in the moment and take life as it comes. Be positive and believe that bad times do not last forever. Prof. Ed Diener from the University of Virginia studied the brain scans of different people and found that happy people remember happy occurrences better than bad ones. Their brain scans reveal prefrontal activity and increased levels of serotonin and cortisol. They are close to family and friends. They are serene, had a sense of humour and reacted positively to a set back.

Studies show that those who were happy at the age of eighteen or twenty were more likely to become happy adults. Yet happiness could be attained by anyone who reframed negative thoughts and replaced them with positive ones. Psychologists say that we should be open to new experiences. Happy people cultivate a hobby. They are open to constantly learning and expanding their horizons.

Working towards happiness implies eating right, being creative with our food so that it

looks and tastes good without compromising our health. We sleep for eight hours in order to recharge your batteries. We should not neglect exercising. In contrast to Eudaimonic happiness is selfish and short lived happiness. It is the result of pursuing 'apparent goods' according to Aristotle.

We may fall into the trap of hubristic happiness, of feeling superior to others. We are motivated by extrinsic factors such as a false feeling of superiority. We count our happiness in terms of a bigger paycheck, a larger car, a bigger house, and expensive holidays. Money, fame and status motivate us. Alas! These are but fleeting illusions and are not authentic. The Managing Director of a company is a nobody once he retires. We are happy only for a short while with new possessions and strive constantly to increase our material wealth. We are obsessed with success and are down in the dumps when we fail. Some employ devious methods as Lance Armstrong did in his craving for superiority. We end up being self centered, hollow and lonely.

It is unfortunate that today the Western notions of living way beyond one's means has taken root in our country as well. We fall easy prey to advertisements promising instant happiness dependent on our buying the goods they advertise. Our bank balance may not be great but banks offer attractive loans and monthly payment terms which enable us to live far beyond our means. What happens when the bubble suddenly bursts, when we lose our jobs as happened during the pandemic? We are no longer in a position to pay off the loans and the banks happily acquire our homes and our fancy cars. A very unhappy, desperate, stressful situation indeed.

Pursuing a life of instant gratification, of success measured in material terms, seems great for a short while. But how long will it last? "We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of getting something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have", says Frederick Keonigarcus.

The Kaali Poster Controversy

Dr T N VASUDEVA MURTHY

Religions play a major part in moulding the reason and the passion of individuals. The problem erupts when a religion neglects the interests of individuals and starts manipulating the society or community. Such kind of endeavour will cause the depreciation of religious values and such religion becomes belligerent.

The newly released poster of a documentary named *Kaali* has created a storm as the mother Kaali in the poster is holding a cigarette and an LGBT flag in her both hands.

It cannot be denied that the producers of the documentary have deliberately have used this mischievous poster as a tool for publicity. Controversies can also turn into profitable and beneficial in this era of information technology. The cunning producers of the documentary might have thought that a spark of controversy is enough to save crores of money on publicity. It's really worrying that the religious fundamentalists are behaving like puppets in the hands of the sly producers and fuelling the controversy.

Using Hindu gods and goddesses as a device of publicity is not a new trend in India. During the colonial era, the British companies did not find a way to enter inside the huge market of India, as every necessary household items were available locally, besides, local Indians were not acquainted with the foreign products and its benefits and usages. The colonial mind thought of using the mythological images of Hindu gods and goddesses as a tool to reach them.

For example, they used the image of infant Krishna to promote Gripe Water, which was quite unfamiliar to Indian mothers. Today the old advertisement pictures of infant Krishna, holding the gripe water bottle in one hand and the tail of the serpent in the other hand and dancing on the hood of the *Kaalinga Sarpa* (King Cobra) can be seen on Pixel, Pinterest and other Internet sources. This kind of depictions attracted and appealed the Indian mothers. A

message that "Just as Sri Krishna fought with the Kaaling Sarpa and won the battle, the child that drinks the gripe water, which is in the hands of Sri Krishna, can also overcome from the infantile ailments" was communicated to the Indian minds successfully.

The foreign entrepreneurs and capitalists began the trend of using the pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses in their advertisement calendars. The local people retained such calendars on their walls for years and thus helped them indirectly for the promotion of their products. During the British era many commodities viz., soaps, textiles, match boxes, cigarette packets and many more carried the mythological and sacred images of India without any controversies. In the beginning of 20th century 'Kaali brand' cigarettes were one of the most popular Swadeshi commodities.

But today the situation is not the same. Soon after the release of Kaali poster, TMC MP Mahua Moitra reacted to the controversy and stated "We have a tradition to offer liquor and meat to the mother goddess. Hence liquor loving Maa Kaali is my deity". This statement is not at all a controversy; however it is made as a controversy.

The statement of Mahua Moitra is not untrue. Ancient scripture *Svatantra Tantra* depicts Kaali as 'Madyapana Pramattikanga' (inebriated in liquor). In another important script, Sri Lalita Sahasranama, she is described as *Madhvee Panalasa mattaa maatruka varna rupini* (She is exhausted due to liquor). In the mythologies she kills Mahishasura. Durga Saptashati narrates the incident thus: "She was very angry, drank the liquor again and again her eyes became red and she was laughing loudly before killing the demon" (3.34). Many such examples can be quoted from the scriptures.

Of course, there are no references in the mythologies and scriptures about Kaali smoking. However her devotees (e.g.: Shakta and Siddha traditions) consume weed as a part of ritual. In



many temples inside and outside Bengal liquor is offered to Kaali as a part of worship. TMC, though quite aware of this tradition, has maintained distance from Mahua's statement and has said that it is her personal opinion. Politicians don't hesitate to compromise with the cultural sanctity and uniqueness of their own land for the sake of votes. It is said that since two years the TMC has started Sri Rama Navami and Hanuman Jayanti festivals, which are alien to Bengali culture, to appease the Hindus.

Today each and every cast and community have their own gods, goddesses and leaders; then why the LGBTQ community should be deprived from this privilege? Why to prevent LGBTQs, if they decide to start worshipping Kaali. Can such prevention be called religiousness?

Living religions always transform themselves, such religions have auto correction mechanism in themselves. Religions that are born in India have never concluded anything based only on scriptures. Scholars say that Hinduism gave up meat eating and started practicing vegetarianism under the influence of Buddhism. In *Yashodhara Charite*, a Kannada poetry of 11th century "Chanda Mari, a demi-goddess listens to the sermon of two Jain monks (Abhayaruchi and Abhayamathi) orders her devotees not to offer meat in future".

But today the situation is not the same. Some communities are trying to bring 'change' through force and aggression. Particularly, Hindus have

started arguing that when the other communities have privilege to revolt when their religious feelings are hurt, why we should keep quiet?" A religion that gives in to become exemplary and begins to imitate other religions can never attain the *Vishwa Guru* position.

The so-called progressive people also have to behave with common sense. If at all they want to critic a religion they should focus on the basic problems of that religion (for example, caste system, untouchability, etc., of Hinduism. The directors of new generation in Tamil and Malayalam are experimenting on those lines). The efforts of a creative person should be constructive, his efforts should not go in vain in ridiculing the faith of innocent people.

If one faction of Hindus feel hurt if Kaali is offered liquor. That faction should express that with the other faction, who offer liquor and resolve the problem. There is no use in attacking the people who merely inform public of such practices. Today if the people in power start insisting that nobody should offer meat and liquor to Kaali, or, the devotees who worship meat and wine consuming Kaali may come to power in future and order to follow their tradition in all Kaali temples, across India. Such situation will definitely cripple the distinctiveness of Indian culture. Only Mahakaali has to reincarnate and protect us from such conditions.

Modality of Total Politics

“Modality of total politics,” is how Yogendra Yadav, prominent political critique and socio-political activist, accurately characterises the political governance in the country without mincing words. Anyone who has vigilantly perceived the flow of politics in India will agree with Yadav, without reserve. What does he mean? In recent times no space is given for an independent media or for any creative thinking, by the ruling demagogues. The sovereign body at the helm of affairs determines all truth posing as it were the sole criteria for deciphering and discerning matters that concern the citizens. If any organisation or think-tank critiques and questions the veracity of facts, it will invariably face penal threats. A thinking citizen has been observing the slow process of “total politics” leading to a central autocracy in the country. Retribution method is meted out to any opposing voice that does not incense and pay homage to policy statements aired from the seat of power.

It is in this sort of environment of “total politics” the former Chief Justice of India, N. V. Ramana, as a concerned and responsible citizen had been quite straightforward in several of his public interventions stating: “opposition space is diminishing,” “political opposition is translating into hostility,” “politics has become acrimonious,” “mutual respect between the government and the opposition is diminishing,” and that “this trend is not a sign of healthy democracy.” Ramana believes in a strong opposition which is vibrant and active for the furtherance of good governance. Will it ever be a reality when more and more intolerance of dissent is taking place in our nation? Instead one witnesses the so called “operation Kamala” every now and then in order to destabilise the legitimately voted in governments by offering huge money, the aim being the elimination of the opposition. According to Yeshwanth Sinha money was even used in the election to the highest office

A large amount of time is spent on personal attacks, on dress code of members, on the bag one carries, on the names, on the certificates, on verbal expressions and what not.

GERRY LOBO OFM

of the Republic in the recent past. One gets the impression that the ruling regime is almost scared to face the truth made plain by the opposition in the legislative institutions, and shying away from responsibilities towards the welfare of the citizens as laid down by the Constitution. It is also possible that a slow elimination of the opposition could pave the way for the establishment of an autocratically ruled empire. This process could eventually bend citizens to the practice of one religion favourable to the emperor at large. In every way, today the modality of total politics does work at all levels and spheres of life. When mutual respect and a decent exchange between individuals are lost, everything else is lost. Total politics, however, pierces through one's bone and the marrow!

In the words of Kapil Sibal, “Vendetta politics has reached a new low.” As a result we know the Investigating Agencies are actively immersed these days in harassing political leaders. These Agencies, pressured by the government, from out of the blue as it were, are loyally executing the orders from on high, as if the biggest crime is committed by concerned persons because of which the country is under threat by external forces or the country is on the brink of economic depression and on the

verge of total collapse. Today the Investigating Agencies have “become the long arm of the government,” remarks Sibal. The attempt at large is to eliminate as much opposition as possible so that “total politics” can govern the populace with an iron fist. Clever modalities as ploys are put in action by the rulers of an Independent nation to demean political oppositions and individuals who are reluctant to curry favour with the government. In this manner the Indian mainstream media is grabbed by the government, the human right activists are closely policed and those who languish in the prisons for the sake of right are denied a new breathing space. So large is the fear of the opposition that the rulers think no end of their “total politics.” Indeed, politics without limits, politics that has hardly any concern for humans is certainly threatening humanity today with grave insecurity, depression and death as witnessed in Sri Lanka these months. The malaise of “total politics” by the top leader rulers in that Island nation has sadly enough brought in dreary darkness not only over the human lives but also over the charming mother earth.

“Politics is more about social change rather than about seeking power,” believes Nithin Gadkari, who himself is part of the incumbent government as the Union Minister of Roadways and Transportation. Perhaps such a belief of a member of the same political ideology might sound quite inimical to the heads of that family. If so it only indicates that there are wise and discerning leaders who go with the opposition shunning the “modality of total politics” for the sake of social change rather than the benefit of a power place. The exercise of “total politics” benefits only those who crave for power and those who can establish camaraderie with the crony capitalists in the country but not with the intellectual critiques and academic visionaries who go beyond the “narrow domestic walls” (R. Tagore). Total politics rises only from petty minded leaders who align with anything that favours their pockets. Such ones create furor over insignificant remarks in the Parliament or it is a clever tactic to divert one's attention from the existential national issues. Sadly enough,

these are positioned in the honorable places only to swallow the bread of the poor widows! A large amount of time is spent on personal attacks, on dress code of members, on the bag one carries, on the names, on the certificates, on verbal expressions and what not, while in the mean time, down the lane a hungry needy person is in search of his daily bread as he or she relentlessly hunts from pillar to post for a job that could keep his family alive. This is the irony and scandal of the modality of total politics. Total politics is indeed, a deaf, a dumb, a blind and heart-less philosophy. Those who run after it are murdering democracy and diminishing a renowned nation.

The sweet platitudes which are routinely sung by our honorable Prime Minister, particularly from the soil of other nations on his visits there to soothe the conscience of people and leaders are: importance of free speech, Gandhian values, robust nature of Indian democracy... Is it, however, the ground reality? All we experience today is “majoritarian authoritarianism” in the words of Raguram Rajan. In an address he states: “We need a learning government, not that says, ‘I know.’” He fears that the Indian democracy is “marching towards authoritarianism under the garb of pluralism.” Total politics is “turning minorities into second class citizens,” (Rajan). This will also divide the country and create internal resentment. What happened in Sri Lanka, according to Rajan, is that by targeting the minorities, the country brought in itself deep economic and human crisis. Hence it is not the “total politics” that will save the nation but a liberal democracy where the opposition plays an outstanding role in shaping its numerous institutions and the people they serve.

Romila Thapar, an outstanding historian, who was fifteen year old when India gained Independence, in her recent interview on *The Wire* says, “Modi's India is too narrow and too limited.” And that India does not represent today the fulfillment of the dreams and expectations people had when they embraced freedom then. “Modality of total politics” serves hungry politicians, not the hungry mother on our street!

Is Your Body a Reflection of Who You Are?

ADITI SRINIDHI GOPAL

The preoccupation with our bodies was non-existent until someone decided to offer us some unsolicited advice or made a backhanded comment about our appearance. Thus, we were forced to open our eyes to the unwarranted reality which has defined, shaped, and reinforced our concept of body image. Since then, we have come to understand that society has set standards for the s, shape, and colour of our bodies.

These standards glorified an unattainable body and demonised the 'imperfections' that make us human. Body image is a broad term that encompasses an individual's beliefs about their appearance, feelings about their body (shape, type, weight), and how they experience their body. The urge to be part of the mob and adhere to what society deems worthy is ingrained in our minds which unconsciously manifests in our everyday language and behaviours.

A good example would be the need to go on a diet after a festive season to make up for the consumption of 'bad' food. The feeling of guilt after eating something we have been told is bad is normalised to the extent that most readers do not find anything out of the ordinary with my previous sentence. Ideal representation

As of 2021, research suggests that an average person comes across 6,000 to 10,000 advertisements per day. Our perception of how we should look stems from our encounters with these ads that consist of the 'ideal' woman or man. People with flawless skin and curvy or muscular physiques (depending on the gender they are representing) frequent our screens leading us to create unrealistic standards of how we must look. Anyone on social media is privy to the art



and science of editing. The problem arises when we perceive the edited version of something as real.

Ever wonder why there are times when you look in the mirror and find fault with every part of your body? As we frequently come across ads and posts with the 'picture perfect' people, we unconsciously compare the ideals depicted by the media to our very real bodies. The media regards the journey of weight loss of a celebrity as newsworthy. Accompanied by a before vs after picture, they present a new and supposedly improved person to the world, propagating the idea that thin is healthy.

The fixation on how the celebrity in question appears to be more beautiful, healthy, and desirable when compared to her previous body is where the notion that fat is ugly, otherwise known as fat phobia, is imprinted in our minds. Notice the usage of the pronoun 'her' in my previous sentence; celebrities who identify as female are more often than not the model in a beauty or fashion advertisement or are the centre of the public eye when they gain or lose weight. The fact is that women are more likely to be judged and reduced to their appearance

than their male counterparts. These weight loss stories zero in on how a celebrity is more worthy of the spotlight and stardom post weight loss than when they were living in a big body. Therefore, it is no surprise that these stories circulate the concept of relating our bodily appearance to our sense of self-worth.

In recent times, the media has shifted its radical mindset from portraying thin as an ideal (for women) to including and embracing diverse body types. Clothing brands like H&M and Fab Alley and beauty brands like Dove and L'Oréal have initiated conversations of body acceptance through their body-inclusive campaigns. Furthermore, many social media influencers advocate for the Body Positive Movement, which has become a trend today. The downside of this Movement is that it has created its own beauty standards that still disregards the realities of a human body.

Additionally, the Movement has resulted in the hyper focus on our appearance and has inadvertently caused us to associate our self-worth with our bodies. Acceptance of diversity We are all guilty of writing off a person living in a big body as unhealthy, unhappy, and unsuc-

cessful. Although all humans belong to the same species, the appearance and functionality of our bodies are unique.

The influence of nature (sex, genetics, biological functioning) and nurture (lifestyle, culture, geography) on our bodies can account for its uniqueness. Hence, even if all humans ate the same type and quantity of food and exercised for the same amount of time, our bodies would still look different. We are multi-faceted beings; there is more to us than what meets the eye. Living in an image-driven society has led us to believe that our body, as an individual entity, is an image, a reflection of our being. Since the part of us that is painfully tangible is susceptible to manipulation by external factors, it cannot possibly define who we are as a whole person.

Instead, simply appreciating its work for our survival will leave us with more time and energy to spend on other facets of life. In a world that capitalises on our insecurities that are created by those around us through the skillful obstruction of flaws that make us real, it is an act of rebellion to accept and see beyond our physical appearance.



Anti-social Personality Disorder

PRIYANKA SB

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is a deeply ingrained and rigid dysfunctional thought process that focuses on social irresponsibility with exploitive, delinquent, and criminal behaviour that is committed without remorse. This personality disorder manifests symptoms such as failure to conform to the law, inability to sustain consistent employment, deception, manipulation for personal gain, and inability to form stable relationships.

All the ten existing personality disorders are classified into three groups by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5), based on what were thought to be common symptoms between the disorders in each cluster. The three clusters are Cluster A, Cluster B and Cluster C. Antisocial personality disorder is one of four cluster-B disorders, which also include borderline, narcissistic, and histrionic personality disorders. Each of these disorders is distinguished by dramatic, emotional, and unpredictable interactions with others.

The only personality disorder that cannot be diagnosed in childhood is Antisocial Personality Disorder. To justify diagnostic criteria for ASPD before the age of 18, the patient must have previously been diagnosed with conduct disorder (CD) by the age of 15 years old.

Many researchers and clinicians disagree with this diagnosis, citing significant overlap with other disorders such as psychopathy.

Others, however, argue that psychopathy is simply a more severe form of antisocial personality disorder. According to recent literature, individuals with ASPD must be characterised biologically and cognitively to ensure more accurate categorisation and appropriate treatment, despite being a heterogeneous construct that can subdivide into multiple subtypes that share many similarities and are often comorbid but not synonymous. Individuals may seek therapy to learn how to behave and interact with others.

However, due to the disorder, they are unable to communicate effectively. Individuals with this disorder are typically irritable, aggressive, and appear to be unconcerned about responsibility.

However, not everyone with antisocial personality disorder is a psychopath. Emotions, as with all personality disorders, are the primary focus. There is no one-s-fits-all treatment for ASPD. Medication or psychotherapy, on the other hand, may aid in the control of specific behaviours.

According to studies, symptoms of ASPD are most severe between the ages of 24 and 44, and then begin to improve after the age of 45.

HOW TRAVELLING BENEFITS OUR MENTAL HEALTH

REEMA N

Travelling is connected to human psychology and has a major impact on our ability to learn and our behaviour. People have loved travelling for generations — it is part of life.

People love to explore the world with each of their reasons for travelling being different. A favourite place can do wonders for your mental and emotional health. This article investigates how travelling benefits our mental health and provides insight into new, unknown, and fascinating facts regarding how our feelings are binded into nature. Have you ever felt an inexplicable peace while walking alongside the sea or observed an improvement in your mood?

The reality is that the majority of the population experience a sense of calm, relaxation, and well-being when they are close to the water or when they take a stroll on the beach on a sunny morning. These activities can awaken our innermost feelings of happiness and peace. Staring at the ocean alters the frequency of our brainwaves and puts us in a mild meditative state. Travelling reduces the chance of growing sight troubles like hypermetropia and myopia, improves psychological wellbeing, helps with emotional regulation, improves memory functions, and benefits people suffering from depression.

Studies have shown that people with mild to severe depressive disorders show a marked improvement in mood when exposed to nature. Not only that, but they feel more motivated, focused, and energised to recover. Recent research has shown that outdoor living reduces stress by lowering the stress hormone cortisol.

People who exercise outdoors are less fatigued and less likely to suffer from obesity and other related conditions. Spending more time amongst nature and less time on our electronic devices can increase our problem-solving skills and improve our creative abilities.

Staying close to nature cures physical conditions like hypertension, cardiac illness, and chronic pain. A sturdy connection to the herbal surroundings complements emotional well-being and alleviates emotions of social isolation. A study discovered that subjective emotions of happiness and wellness have been correlated with travelling.

Such studies provided critical proof of how travelling improved mood, enhanced respiratory functioning, regulated hormonal malfunctions, and impacted the thought structure of people as a whole.



The Dancer Within

Fr KM GEORGE

Every child is born to dance just like every bud and any sprout of life. A new born child that lies flat on its back raises and jiggles its tender legs and arms in the air in pure delight. With the playful movements of the cute little limbs the baby's whole body pulsates in a joyful, vibrant mood. It seems the child yearns to levitate and break forth into dance. But our adult culture soon begins to suppress the dancer within. Little by little we become stiff like statues.

In India in the classical dance forms like Bharata Natya, dance is performed on stage by individuals, and the audience (*rasikas*) watch it from a distance while they themselves are seated. The spontaneous folk dance seems to be alien to the upper social strata. In most African and tribal cultures it is different. There is no dance that divides people into onlookers and performers. At the slightest sound of a drum beat, bodies of people, from very young to very old, begin instinctively to assume dancing gestures.

Daya Bai, the compassionate social worker among the Adivasis and tribal people related her experience during the Covid lockdown. One evening she went out of her hut and looked at the vast expanse of the multicoloured sky.

Overwhelmed for a moment by the cosmic beauty, the octogenarian started singing an old melody and broke out into dancing. Her dog too, a constant companion, danced with her as he imitated her body movements and the sound of her singing in his own way. See the power of dance that radiates energy, movement and rhythm all around. No wonder cosmic creation, protection and destruction are understood as dance movements in the Saiva tradition, and Siva the all-powerful deity is called Nataraja, the Lord of Dance.

At the subatomic micro levels of the material universe, particles are in unceasing dance movement. At the macro level of ever expanding cosmos, planets, stars and galaxies are in unending cycles of dance. In between, for us even a slight awareness of the dancer within may liberate us from the many woes of existence.

Being Conscious of One's Own Mortality

BOBBY JOSE KATTIKAD OFM CAP

“I want somebody who can do the job gently, somebody who can break the news without breaking hearts.” Victor Linus' character is looking for someone to go to inform the mother of her daughter's death. The lot fell on such people who were entrusted with breaking such news.

It seems that the first memory related to death is the story told by a relative who came home very early and took my father a stone throw away and spoke in a grave manner. Aunt's elder son had drowned in a river. Everyone had the common sense to understand that something was at stake. Grandfather screamed and passed out before the relative stepped out of the compound. It was a bad moment.

At some point, we are bound to witness the demise of our loved ones. Everyone prays for the long life of their loved ones. Yet death surrounds us in many ways. David prays for his sick child. For seven days he fasted and prayed, not even rising from the ground. The baby died all the same. The servants were afraid to tell David. They said to each other: “How shall we tell him? He may kill himself.” When he saw what the servants were saying, he realised that the child had died.” “Is the child dead?” They said yes. Then David got up from the floor, bathed, changed his clothes, went to the temple and prayed. He returned to the palace and asked for food and he ate. The servants asked, “What have you done? When the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when it died, you got up and ate.” David answered: “Why do I fast now? He will not come to me unless I go to him.” Consciousness of one's own mortality is the driving

factor in logically coping with the death of loved ones. It can also be read that he went to the temple. The Hebrew word for ‘worship’ also has the connotation of ‘prostration’. ‘You keep the account of life; do as you will.’ And life goes on. Accept obituaries nobly—that's what David did. The practice of the East was to fast and mourn for at least four days. After that, relatives and friends forced them to take a bath, put on new clothes, forced them to eat, and brought them back to normal life. Here, all that David did in an instant was exactly what was in practice.

One would not think that he did so because he was not sad and did not mourn the emptiness that the absence of loved ones can create. There is a ‘yes factor’ in life. The key to that ‘yes’ is not so easy to come by. One can reach it from deep faith. After that life resumes its old rhythm. “Thinking that the mist is mine, the weight on the hat is lightened”, says Nishiyama soil.



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Lesson from the Butterflies

FRANCIS XAVIER OFM

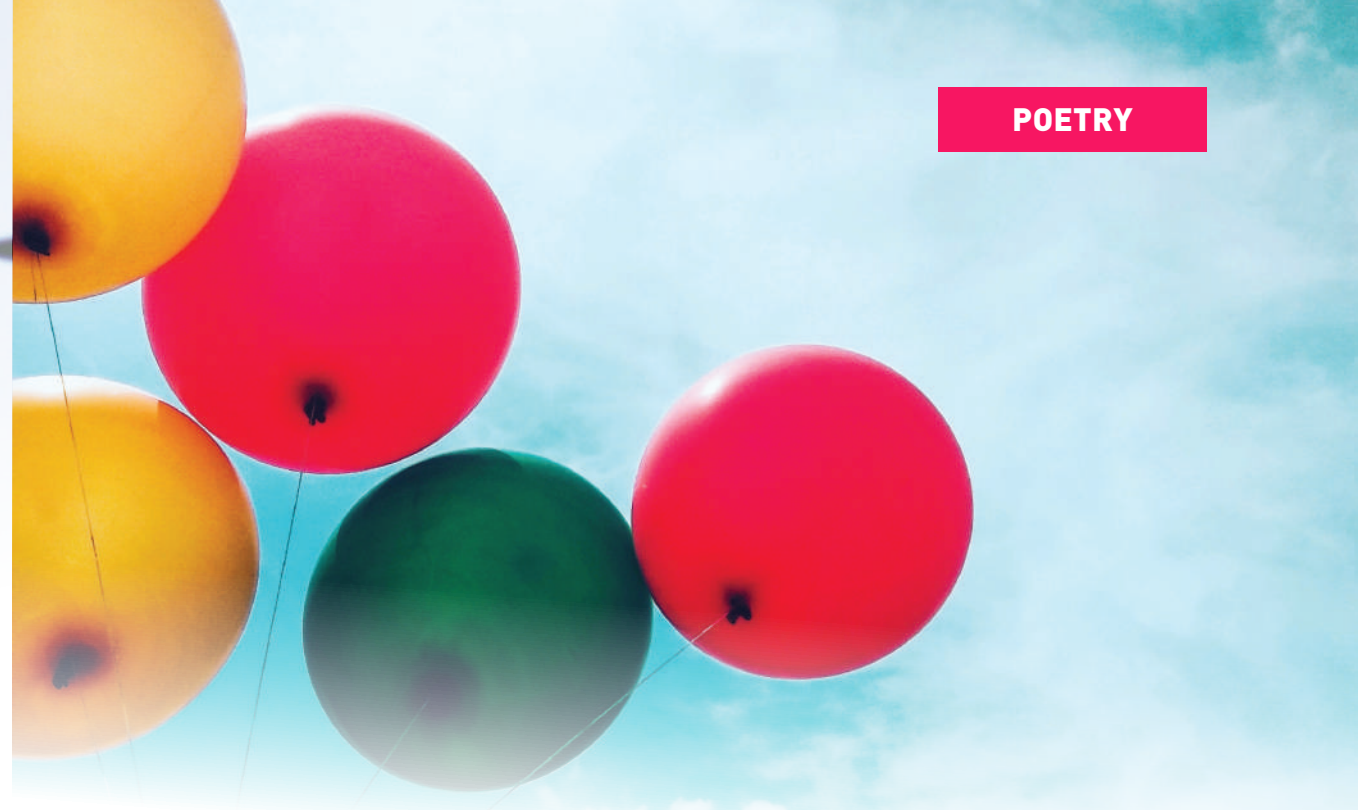
*Sitting by my window I watch the daily parade
Of worm-eating birds in all their grade.
From dawn to dusk relentlessly they stride
Where the little worms hatch and hide.*

*The wagtails arrive long before dawn
As night-hunters like, bats already gone.
Ashy prinia, tailor birds are always there
Flycatchers, bulbuls, too, patrol for their prey.*

*Fantails, drongos, cinerous tits and robins
Make their appearance in the afternoons.
Hoopoes, white-eyes, woodpeckers and babblers
Arrive as well, like ones in a way travelers.*

*Every bird finds mercy under God's eyes
So do the billions of splendid butterflies.
Haunted and hunted all through the day
To outwit and survive they find a way.*

*Plagues, cholera, SARS, Covid and what not
Ravage the humanity leaving us distraught.
Observe the butterflies and what they have taught.
We too can overcome the present onslaught.*



POETRY

The Balloon!

JAMESMON PC OFM

*He loved its color and shape,
Surprised that it could keep growing
Growing and growing, becoming a giant balloon;
Carried it everywhere, to work place;
On the streets, the shopping mall,
Not worried people talking,
An older man carrying a balloon!*

*Carried it even to bed, clutching it
As though it meant everything.
It interfered in everything, though!
Friends broke up, family loathed it;
Children kept themselves away,
But come what may, he clung to it,
Though it came in the way all the time.*

*One day it happened, all of a sudden,
On a bus he sat, clutching the balloon,
A nuisance though, in the crowded bus,
A child kept staring at him and the balloon,
In a sudden movement, the little one launched forward,
Grabbed the balloon with her tiny fingers;
Digging into the soft material, with her nail*

*Tupp!!! It burst with a loud noise...
All turned in a unified diabolical movement,
He, of all, in a rude shock and bewilderment
With his eyes and mouth wide open to an impossible stretch.
He looked in anger and humiliation at the child
The child offering a disarming, innocent smile
He stared for a moment, lost in an uncanny rush of thoughts.*

*A moment, but an eternal one
A change came over him, to his own surprise,
His eyes shrinking to two slits like,
His cheek muzzles relaxing from that eternal strain
His forehead, free from its constant frown
A volcano of laughter erupted, after a long time,
Even had forgotten to laugh or lost the skill.*

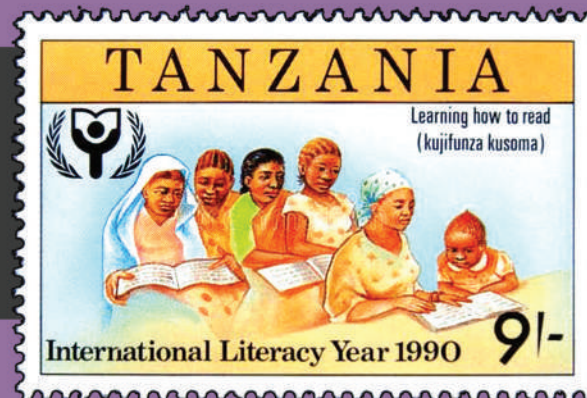
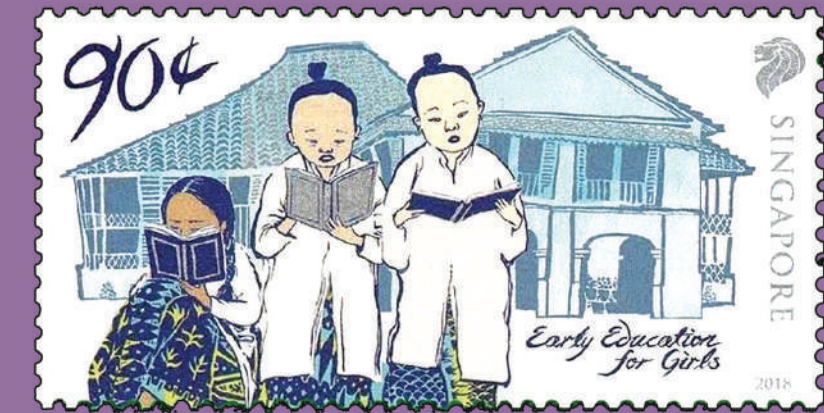
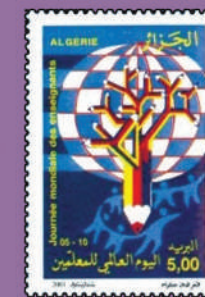
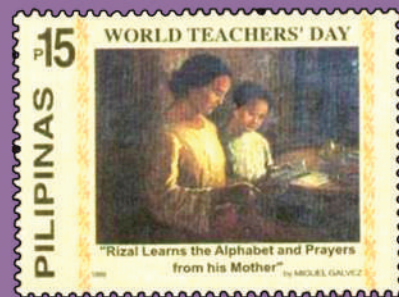
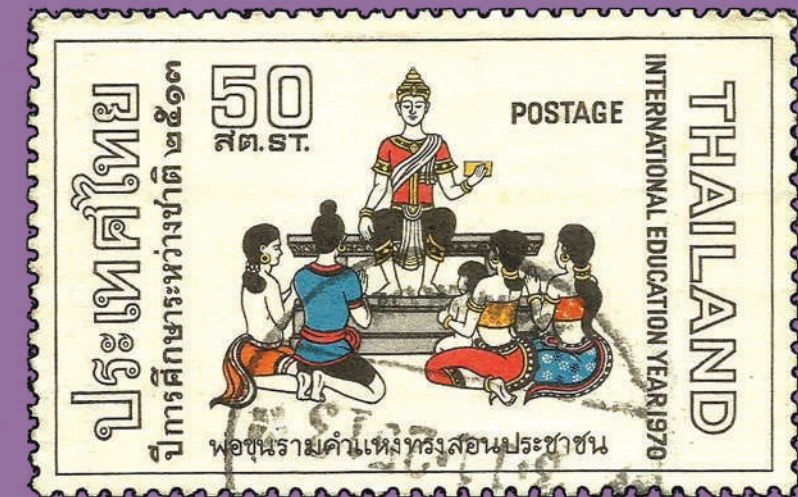
*Throwing his head backward spontaneously,
All in the bus joining in the chorus,
Him, relieved from the burden of his giant balloon
Childlike once again... free at last!*

IN STAMPS

5 September
Teachers' Day

September 5 marks the Teachers' Day in India; and the World Teachers' day is celebrated on October 5, exactly a month after the National Teachers' Day. Both the days dedicated to teachers are celebrated on different dates to mark two events. For India, Teachers' Day is celebrated on Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's birthday to commemorate his work as teacher, something he is believed to have considered a "proud privilege". World Teachers' Day marks the anniversary of the adoption of the 1966 recommendations regarding status, teaching practices and rights of teachers.

Tom John OFM



Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers.

JOSEF ALBERS

Jana Gana Mana

Casteism in educational institutions to trial-by-media, you name it, the number and range of genuine problems portrayed realistically in *Jana Gana Mana* is simply staggering!

Dr M N PARASURAMAN

It was with some trepidation that I agreed to write a critical review of Dijo Jose Antony's *Jana Gana Mana*. Indian popular movies are one sphere of existence where I do not look for any kind of political correctness. Moreover, I am an old fogey who believes that the first and last purpose of a film is to entertain. I leave the heavier and trickier business of educating and enlightening people to the likes of myself (teachers) and to documentary films.

However, we live in strange times, when films and series have become teachers and teachers are supposed to have become performing monkeys and hence, the present review.

If we look at *Jana Gana Mana* as an entertainer alone it would score pretty high: 4.5/5 in my estimation, despite having little explicit violence, almost no sex and no romance. It is high on suspense, the screenplay is excellent, the scenes are well crafted, the BGM is good and the performance of all the male actors is very good.

Getting to its story we find that *Jana Gana Mana* is a film that is bursting to the seams with social and political relevance. Saba, young Muslim faculty member of a leading central university, is run over with a car by a senior coworker, who, with his casteist behaviour and slurs, had driven a Dalit research scholar to suicide.

A Hindu right-wing Home Minister, who is determined to become Chief Minister at all costs despite being under a cloud of a mining scam and a helicopter scam, can ill afford to

face the backlash of this fresh incident. An ambitious additional commissioner of police connives with him to shift the body, have it partially cremated and then pass off the hit and run murder—committed by a senior, upper caste professor for personal motives—as a rape and murder committed by a gang of four who turn out to be small time criminal hirelings of politicians. (Significantly, three are from a lower caste background and a Muslim is thrown in for good measure).

The part-cremated body is “discovered” at an isolated spot on the day after the crime, the police float a rape-murder-and-part-cremation theory and a vague post-mortem report suggesting the possibility of rape seems to consecrate this as the gospel truth. The media and social media alike go ablaze with outrage and protests erupt in campuses across the country. In a college in Kerala where students—very rightly, in the reviewer's opinion—sit for a class, an irresponsible (if not Machiavellian) young assistant professor calls them spineless and actually orders them to go out and agitate. Saba's family is also convinced beyond reasonable doubt that Saba was raped and murdered by four men. So is the chairperson of the National Women's Commission.

The initial response of the police to the outrage is one of savage repression—more on that later—but the game begins to change when the ACP Sajjan Kumar (played by Suraj Venjaramoo-



If we look at *Jana Gana Mana* as an entertainer alone it would score pretty high: 4.5/5 in my estimation, despite having little explicit violence, almost no sex and no romance.

du) goes to the campus of the central university in question exuding gravitas and succeeds in convincing the agitating students that he is one of those rarest of rare police officers who wears the khaki uniform “not merely to draw a salary, but primarily to enforce the law.” Sajjan Kumar also visits Saba's bereaved mother and sister and promises to catch the culprits of the crime within a month. Soon enough, the small time hirelings alluded to earlier are arrested and taken into custody. Much to the pretended displeasure of Sajjan and the real displeasure

of his DIG superior, the news leaks out to the media. While some respond with surprise and admiration to the prompt prima facie results of the police investigation, at the central university that was the late Saba's workplace, there is impatience over the slow pace of the trial. The frustration with our country's notoriously slow and inefficient criminal justice system surfaces in aspersions cast upon Sajjan's integrity.

At this point there is a further setback when Sajjan receives a call from his DIG ordering him to transfer the

“culprits” to another jail and relieving him of his leadership of the investigation team enquiring into the case. In another phone call from the Home Minister-waiting-to-be-CM, Sajjan receives orders to eliminate the four in an encounter. Much to the bafflement of his immediate subordinates the encounter is carried out. Overnight, Sajjan becomes a hero and the media, social media and campuses are ablaze once again, this time with euphoria. The National Women's Commission Chair tweets about justice delivered. Students on the university campus go into a dramatic display of contrition. All seems set for a fairy tale ending until the National Human Rights' Commission decides to play spoilsport and files a case over the blatant illegality of the encounter killing.

Sajjan is ordered to appear in court, but everyone except the dog-in-the-manger NHRC is solidly behind him. The state engages a Special

Prosecutor called Raghurama Iyer (played to perfection by Shammi Thilakan), a formidable advocate against whom the cases of opponents have never survived long. The Defence Counsel, Aravind Swaminathan, (played by Prithviraj Sukumaran) is ranged against this giant, who is initially patronizing and mildly contemptuous. However, a few minutes into this thrilling court scene, the giant killing begins. Witness after witness is interrogated by Aravind and the entire prosecution case unravels.

What emerges is an ugly tale of the institutional murder of a Dalit research scholar, followed by the murder of Saba who threatened to fight for an enquiry into it, followed by the murder of four small-time criminal hirelings who had outlived their utility in life, followed by a trial by media that was about to drive the last nail into the coffin of due process in this country. By the end of the film, Sajjan is prosecuted for his crimes and his political handler, who becomes CM, is threatened by Aravind Swaminathan who tells him that his turn isn't far away.

Casteism in educational institutions, the criminal-politician nexus, trial-by-media, class bias in media coverage of crimes, the erosion of ethics in the legal profession, communalism, a spineless police force constantly conniving in atrocities with the powers-that-be, you name it, the number and range of genuine problems portrayed realistically in *Jana Gana Mana* is simply staggering! The entertainment value of this film, as I noted earlier, is admirably high. So where does the film go wrong?

One gets the whiff of this film's weakness even before it begins, in the statutory disclaimer about the events, people, etc, not bearing anything other than a purely coincidental resemblance to anything in past or present reality. The disclaimer is unusually elaborate, indeed laboured.

As the film progresses one sees a clear anti-BJP bias in numerous little visual and verbal cues scattered throughout the film and

several open allusions to the calamities that might be argued to have happened with the support of the government at the Centre since 2014. So, this reviewer may well be asked "What is wrong in taking an anti-BJP political stand? Film makers, thankfully, are not bound by the conduct rules that gag government employees."

The answer to that question is simple: this film manages to take so many social, political and systemic evils into account and present them with faithful, if depressing, realism, barely giving in to the temptation to exaggerate or overly dramatise anything. In a deep sense, at many levels, this film is truthful. Thus, when it wears an unabashed party bias it sends out a very wrong impression that all these evils came into existence with the coming into power of the BJP, whereas, any honest student of post-Independence Indian history knows that they have been in existence long before the BJP became a party to be taken seriously.

Caste is 2,000 years old. Let us not kid ourselves! The murderer-professor in the film is only a slightly less subtle version of Drona of the *Mahabharata*. And it wasn't the BJP that named the award for the best coach after him. Every political party uses the services of criminals and no political party in the country has been willing to heed the recommendations of numerous commissions of reform that have sought to insulate the permanent executive and the police from misuse by ruling parties. The encounter killings in the film and the approval they received from the well-heeled chatterati of this country are clearly a reminder of the killing of the alleged killers of Disha, the young veterinarian, who lived and worked in a non-BJP ruled state. And no political party can claim to have never unleashed police repression against students.

Given all this, while I would pronounce the film as a "Must Watch", stand by my praise of it and happily confess to having enjoyed both my viewings of it, as a critical reviewer, I cannot refrain from calling it a work in bad faith.



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