

PREERNA

INSPIRING YOU AND ME



NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME
SHRI RAM COLLEGE OF COMMERCE



INDEX

From the Principal.....	1
From the Program Officer.....	2
From the Editor.....	3
From the Editor.....	5
From the President	7
From the Vice President.....	9
From the Secretary.....	11
Mental Health.....	12-30
Anxiety in college students	13
Harbouring unwanted thoughts	15
Conversing mental health:the need for going beyond social media	17
Body image:The snap that matters	19
The resilience cocoon	20
An open letter to anxiety	23
The night sky	25
Pyada hoon mein	26
Transformation	27
It was a different day today	28
A message to heart	30
Project Sanskaar.....	31-42
About the project	32
Rajinder's Story	34
Udaan:Ek nayi pehal	35
Feelings in words and on paper	36
Insights from volunteers	40
Prose, Poetry and Opinions.....	43-95
Monetisation of domestic work:Capitalising off patriarchal norms	44
Justice on our fingertips	47
Not just vows:Transition of dating patterns in	

INDEX

today's society	49
A perspective on humanity	51
The puzzle called life	53
Should freedom of speech be absolute?	55
Offsprings of the same mother	57
Contextualising caste in India	59
The cinematic conendrum	62
How many oscillations before it stops?	65
Kaale ko gora bana de? Ab nahi	67
The promise	69
Casteism in India:Social distancing-A thread	72
Nepotism:The big debate	74
Capital Punishment	76
The consequences of online connections	78
Lifestyle and wellbeing:Diving into psychological paradoxes	80
Behavioural dilemma of the young	82
Breaking down stigma	84
Exploring hunger in India	86
Debunking Myths	89
Period Poverty-Trivialising a necessity	91
Is it the endgame or a game that would never end?	94
Samarpan.....	96-104
Vaani - Voices ft. NSS SRCC.....	105-111
Meet The Team.....	112-135
NSS Family	113-131
Executive Editors	132
Junior Editors	133
Executive Designers	134
Junior Designers	135



FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

'The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.'
-Mahatma Gandhi

The above-stated quote aptly describes the spirit and motivation behind the working of the Team National Service Scheme (NSS), Shri Ram College of Commerce. The College has always upheld values of humanity and benevolence along with its academic rigour. It is an honour to witness the sheer determination and devotion of our students working tirelessly towards the upliftment of society. Throughout the year, Team NSS through its several laudable activities promotes the ingrained motto of 'Selfless Seva'. The diligence and courage to initiate the positive social and cultural transformation is reflected in their noble deeds, awareness spreading campaigns, and wing activities. Their selfless approach not only inspires our stakeholders but the entire society in stepping forward for humanity.

The team led under the able guidance and support of Convenor, Dr. Santosh Kumar has worked diligently in inspiring our students and making them socially responsible citizens. I whole-heartedly congratulate the team for the release of the tenth edition of 'PRERNA'- the annual magazine of the Society. This year's theme circumventing mental health is pertinent especially during the tough times of the pandemic. Hope that the insights reflected in the magazine will add value to the readers. Further, their consistent efforts in releasing three newsletters in addition to a magazine each year are truly commendable.

I wish them all the best for their future endeavours!

Prof Simrit Kaur
Principal



FROM THE PROGRAM OFFICER'S DESK



I believe that education is not worthy enough if it is not able to bring an emotion for social welfare. In today's era of competitiveness and professionalism, the purpose of education is now more focused on individual success rather than social welfare. NSS is a platform where we try to develop a sense of welfare among young minds through engagement in social welfare activities. These community engagement programs help the youth to understand the various problems in the society and eventually their solutions turn into welfare policies as many of these young people take on the baton of responsibility as key decision-makers in policy formulation.

It is my privilege to be associated with the NSS unit of SRCC. Teaching and guiding the best minds of a country is certainly a great feeling. I am proud enough to say that our volunteers are admirably adhering to the NSS Motto of "NOT ME BUT YOU" and trying their best to bring positive changes around the society through different activities. The NSS unit of the college is the most active student unit in and outside the campus; which starts from the first day of admissions and goes on till the last working day of the session; and their zeal to continue working, despite the limitations that come with the shift to digital platforms, is admirable. Today I can confidently say that the contribution of our NSS volunteers is limited to some specific celebrations; rather it has now become a daily affair.

The office-bearers and volunteers have played a very crucial role in ensuring the elevation of social contributions of NSS SRCC and I express my sincere gratitude to them for enabling the objectives of NSS to become ground realities. I would also like to congratulate the editorial team for bringing this new issue of PRERNA to the readers. I wish the volunteers the very best for their future!

Dr. Santosh Kumar
Program Officer
NSS SRCC






FROM THE EDITOR

It has been quite a while since I have walked through the corridors of our college and as I write this I cannot help but reminisce about everything, right from the anticipation of attending NSS meetings to the excitement that enveloped us during SAMARPAN! My journey with NSS SRCC began as a junior member of the editorial wing. In my first year, NSS became my haven in college; a place that not only allowed me to learn but also enabled me to flourish.

With time, NSS has taught me valuable lessons when it comes to social service. It has taught me that progressive change occurs when we question our fundamental values and belief systems. It has taught me that our diverse identities are not our obstacles, and collectively we are what the world truly looks like. It has taught me that to prosper as a society, we do not need to create alternative realities to reflect our identities, we just need to stop resisting the one that already exists. Most importantly, NSS has served as a constant reminder of my privilege and has equipped me with the social tool of active empathy to counter it. It has taught me that the treasure of life lies within us all, and all we need to do to discover it is to pause once in a while, breathe in the air and feel its warmth.

The session 2020-21 was extraordinary, in more ways than I can articulate. As the world grappled with an unprecedented health crisis, NSS also had to quickly adapt to carrying out its functions via the digital platform. Throughout the year, we as a team had to navigate through the challenges posed by the pandemic... from conducting online fundraisers to having meetings on Zoom, we somehow managed to find our rhythm. In a world where social distance had become the norm, we managed to form connections with each other, bound by our shared commitment to do our bit for societal upliftment through NSS. We may have been apart physically, however, today the team shares fond memories as well as a sense of kinship towards each other.

The pandemic has also brought the conversation around mental health to the forefront. While talking about mental health is largely taboo in our country, the uncertainty, undue stress, and constant pressure to be productive amidst the chaos have plagued our society as the pandemic tightened its grip over the country. And these challenges need to be considered more seriously in the wake of a devastating second wave, as we continue to collectively struggle to come to terms with its aftermath. This might also be the best time to explore various policy options including creating online mental health awareness. I believe that there needs to be a road map for mental health awareness, one that includes the traditional media, government programs, the education system, and social media. Hence, we found it appropriate that the theme for this year's edition of Prerna should center around mental health, serving as a reminder to be kinder to not just those around us but also to ourselves.



Prerna, the annual publication of NSS SRC, is a result of extensive research, creativity, and thoughtfulness. And of course, as is true for any endeavor by NSS, it has a lot of heart to it. I am grateful to the NSS team for their contributions to the magazine and would also like to express my sincere gratitude in particular towards the members of the Editorial Wing. It is also imperative to acknowledge that our words on paper have been alleviated to another level on account of the skills and efforts of the Technical and Designing Team. And I must acknowledge that without the constant support of our seniors, this would not have been possible. Ranjana, Ipsita, and Nikunj not only encouraged us in each and every endeavor that we undertook, but they also put their faith in us, which enabled Srushti and I to find our voices and our confidence as editorial heads. When you have seniors that uplift you in such a manner, it allows you the opportunity to truly flourish.

I hope that the articles in the magazine will enable you to gain some perspective on myriad interpretations of socially relevant ideas by individuals with varied ways of thinking. The magazine consists of both - literary pieces by members of NSS, and insights into the thoughts of the people for whom today NSS is their family. To me, Prerna represents the pinnacle of my journey with NSS - an experience of personal discovery and absolute joy... the memories of which will transcend well beyond the time constraints of my college years.

Naionika
Editorial Head



FROM THE EDITOR



When I first walked into SRCC, I was rather hesitant about the thought of spending the next three years of my life here. I was a bundle of nerves and I didn't immediately feel at home as I walked into the red bricked complex. But as I stood in line, waiting to collect my admission form, I saw a group of seniors guiding other prospective students standing in front of me. As I watched the seniors walk past me, I noticed their t-shirts said, "NSS, SRCC". I still remember being extremely embarrassed as I asked an NSS volunteer what she thought about the Generic Electives, and as busy as she was, the senior from NSS still took out the time to sit with me as I figured out what would be a good fit for me. My first interaction with NSS had left me feeling confident and in control of my future.

Ever since that sweltering summer day, NSS has continued to help me out in more ways than I can count. On rainy July afternoons of 2019, my seniors in the Editorial Wing helped me find my voice; It was in those festive October evenings, that I learned how to channel my voice for the good of the society; and over hot cups of coffee and Maggi on those cold winter mornings Naionika and I first started working on the previous edition of Prerna under the watchful eye of our heads.

So as Naionika and I embarked on our journey as the editorial heads our aim was to emulate a similar experience for our juniors. However, as the dust started settling on the lockdown announcement, it became clear that we were looking at an online academic year. Our plan of action from then on was to improvise. It was in these circumstances that working for NSS proved to be a lesson in resilience and adapting to your surroundings. We doubted ourselves at each step- were we aiming too high, were our ideas ridiculous, would we come across as unprepared for the job. Amidst all the anxiety and uncertainties, Ranjana, Ipsita and Nikunj placed their complete faith in us. They were not only sure that we would be able to handle our juniors but also that we were equipped to manage the summer interns. They guided us when required and gave us complete autonomy when necessary. It was because of their unconditional support that we were able to make Prerna a reality.

This edition owes more to Ipsita's pragmatic approach, Ranjana's words of optimism and Nikunj's effective advice than it does to me or my words. Even this year's theme is a reflection of the environment the Cabinet has strived to create. At NSS, our aim has always been to create a safe space- from our online channels to the working environment for this year's team. We believe that we can use our reach to not just raise awareness about mental health in general but to leverage our influence to provide a platform to the voices that have hitherto been relegated to the periphery of the society. We have made immense strides in this regard from our weekly 'Living Out Loud' campaigns to our publications focusing on gender and sexual minorities.



This year we bring to you new perspectives on mental health- personal accounts from the desks of those struggling with anxiety, those who saw the ugly face Covid-19 up close and those who are battling body image issues. With each essay and poem we aim to inspire a generation of changemakers that is more empathetic, inclusive and passionate. I hope you take away as much from reading this publication as I did while writing, editing and proofreading it.

Srushti Tanaya Swain
Editorial Head





FROM THE PRESIDENT


As I write this, I realize that my 3 golden years of college are coming to an end and this entire while, NSS has been my constant. From volunteering and teaching kids to heading a team of more than 300 people, I can't believe the changes that this journey has brought in me. I was never this confident, I was afraid of challenges, I had never experienced true happiness. But NSS ended up being a place where I found myself, where I found my tribe, and where I found my heart that now beats for service and humanity. I worship kindness and the people in NSS have always been very compassionate and kind. They understand the value of each other, the needs of our extended family and make continuous efforts to better their lives. I am grateful and proud when I say that even in trying times, my entire NSS family worked together and made people smile. The diverse ideas and approaches along with the will and dedication to work for others have instilled in me the belief that nothing can compare with the happiness that one experiences after serving people. Similarly, the heartwarming wishes and blessings from such people are my most treasured possessions. I will always cherish the time that I have spent here.

I would like to thank our respected Programme Officer, Dr. Santosh Kumar, who has supported us in every cause and helped us in realising the dreams of our communities. I am grateful to Principal Ma'am who has always believed in our honest work. I feel blessed to have been acquainted with individuals such as them for they have guided us and made our journey memorable.

For me, NSS is an emotion and it will never fade away from my heart. It gives me happiness and it gives me a place where I can do the things that I love without hearing comments such as "Thoda apne baare mein bhi socho". When I think of myself, I think of the things that I love to do, and working for people and making them smile are the two things that I can gladly commit myself to for the rest of my life.

This family is my home, it's a safe place, and I cannot describe the bond that we all share here. We all are different yet so close to each other. We all choose our own trajectories yet our heart beats for humanity. This very fact makes us, 'us'. I shall always carry these beautiful memories and learnings with me no matter where I go!

I have always firmly believed that the connections that NSS has formed, through its work, have enabled it to work for the society. Our Editorial and our Technical & Marketing team have put up their souls in presenting the heart of NSS to all of you. This edition of Prerna focusses on mental health, with the belief that greater discourse around mental health and increased community support would help in mitigating the mental health



crisis brought upon by the pandemic. I hope that PRERNA inspires you to come together and partake in an endeavour to speak the truths that you carry in your hearts and minds, and I hope it inspires you to uplift not only yourself, but also others.. for what ultimately sustains us are the connections that we form.

“Manzil ka pata nahi lekin safar humesha yaad reh jayega
Dil mein NSS, aur zubaan par uske logo ka zikr kuch iss kadar reh jayega”

Ranjana Verma
President
2020-21



FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

NSS has been very close to my heart. It has not only helped me do my bit for society but also groomed me as an individual. The transition from being a volunteer to Wing Head to the Vice-President has been very fulfilling. The journey was worth all the sacrifices. Be it volunteering for large-scale events, launching new projects, organizing fests, participating in competitions, or leading a team, it was here that I learned it all. Most of the beautiful memories I have of my three years at SRCC are somehow associated with NSS, and I will cherish them for life. It has been like a family for me since day one. From my seniors who guided me in every difficulty to my teammates who were more than supportive throughout the journey to my lovely bunch of juniors, who handled everything so flawlessly even during the toughest of times, I couldn't have asked for anything more.

The past year has been tough and unprecedented, the transition to everything being digitised almost overnight hasn't been a cakewalk. But what didn't change was our dedication and commitment to serve. Whether it be organizing fundraisers or providing internet services to children of Project Sanskar, our volunteers have tried to keep the motto of "Selfless Seva" above everything else. The value and role of social service in society becomes all the more important during such trying times, and it is joyous to see people take inspiration from our work.

I have seen my entire team giving their best to achieve our shared goals. I have had the privilege to witness NSS grow in the past three years. Words will never be enough to express how grateful I am to NSS and its members for giving me the best possible time at SRCC, innumerable experiences, and lifelong memories. Leaving NSS will be the toughest task for me this year but I have full faith that NSS will continue to do what it has done, and make the world a better place every day.

Our annual magazine 'PRERNA' is a reflection of the work we do, conveyed through words. We hope our words inspire you to do your bit for society.

I wish all my readers a very Happy Reading!

Nikunj Agrawal
Vice President
2020-21



FROM THE SECRETARY


National Service Scheme (NSS), as I always accentuate, isn't a society of SRCC but the lowermost, decentralized ground of working where volunteers from all spheres, assimilate to form a unit that works selflessly for value creation, value addition and valuation of the critical aspects of life.

Being in NSS for 3 years has been a wholesome journey, right from the time of induction when I was completely unaware of its constituents to being the Creative Head and now, leading the team as Secretary.

Much like everyone in the team, NSS has been a muffle for me- providing me warmth, the space to discover myself, the means to improve, the shades of positivity and satisfaction, intrinsically going through the transition while being able to add value to the causes, all under its ambit. These three years of my college life were shaped entirely by NSS and that is why we call it our "NSS Family". It is because of NSS that today I aim to serve society in a broader sense. It also helped me overcome my biggest inhibition, and raise my voice on an international stage.

Right from the seniors, who have constantly guided, inspired and supported me, to the juniors, who have been the primary component in strengthening the whole team, to the volunteers who form the basic unit of our working- it's been fulfilling in every sense.

I wouldn't call our team of 2020-21 the fortunate for they had to take up two challenges- one, the on-the-ground impact creation and two, the digital inclusion during these unprecedented times of the pandemic, but it's good to see how the team has shattered all boundaries and gone ahead to adapt, adjust and abide by the need of the hour. This feat is due to the efforts of each and every one in the team, in the front or at the background, towards bringing in new initiatives, conducting projects skillfully, carrying out collaborations- all this without giving up an inch of our commitment towards the betterment of the society as a whole. Every Project worked flawlessly without compromises on quality. Every Social Wing carried on with its activities through changed methodologies and every Support Wing ensured greater awareness and enrichment.



It's nothing short of a privilege to write here, in this column. If our team has created even the smallest positive impact in the lives of people, I'm proud because I understand that every big change begins from the smallest efforts. Leaving NSS would be difficult but I have full faith that the upcoming teams and team leaders will definitely break previous records.

Our annual magazine 'PRERNA' amplifies our achievements and successes and lets the readers get a feel of the work we do. Surely, words are mightier than swords, and the ultimate gift of life.

With this, I wish everyone, Happy Reading!

Ipsita Dhir
Secretary
2020-21

MENTAL *Health*

Your struggle is also a part of your story





ANXIETY IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

By Monica Kapur

The first day of college. The excitement in the air from the thought of leaving the past behind and finding a glorious future. New friends, new teachers, perhaps a new relationship, freedom from parental nagging, and experimentation with sexuality. All within reach of your palms.

Underlying the first day is the tension of starting a new life.

Will I make new friends? Will I find someone to be my roommate? Will I find other queers like me? Will I be able to cope with the pressure of this college? How will I manage my food allergies?

A sample shot of what can be running in the head of a teenager, now almost an adult. For most people, these initial days of butterflies pass smoothly. We make friends, go out and find our mojo in life. Yet, for others, it is a difficult journey of feeling safe and at home.

The triggers for the journey are too many to enumerate. Simple ones spoken in the media are about classmate competition and examination pressure. The grading system says we are better than others, and that will translate to income. Will that “income” guarantee us happiness? No one knows. Unlike the

west, it is not easy in India to switch majors.

Others will have issues of peer pressure and loneliness. Some will become popular, and the ones left behind wonder – What is wrong with me? I wish I were prettier. My social media page gets four likes, and my friends have hundreds. What am I doing wrong?

Sexuality and relationships in the golden world of college can be exciting. Most come unscathed, yet another feels suicidal. The relationship that was so promising did not work out. Seeing the photographs of your old girlfriend splashed on social media is not easy for anyone’s ego post-breakup.

The ones who walk away feeling happy, the ones left behind bitter and in need of closure.

Even worse are deeply personal issues from the past or perhaps present. Rape, abuse, or discovering your sexuality. Am I Bisexual, lesbian, or straight? And for others, the fear of sex, the excitement of it combined with the anxiety of it, and then another lonely group. Why can I not find a girlfriend or a boyfriend?

All these triggers can be affecting you if not addressed and if carried over long periods. These symptoms might be categorized as physical, mental,

or behavioral. Trouble sleeping, a dry mouth, sweaty hands, inability to be still, cutting classes, substance abuse, or not wanting to meet people are just a few examples of the above.

What one must do is find a coping mechanism for what is happening. Having support groups is excellent, but see a therapist if it feels unmanageable. Break the stigma, ask for professional help!



Submission by Archana Kumari

"You are confined only by the walls you build yourself.
On the other side of fear lies freedom.
The shell must break before the bird can fly." - Anonymous



HARBOURING UNWANTED THOUGHTS

By Purvi Pandita

The last few months have been hard. I've just wanted to curl up in my bed, hibernate, and wake up only after the pandemic gets over. Even now, I spend a lot of my time overthinking and overanalyzing situations. The disparate days of the pandemic have turned me into a pessimistic person.

When I was in 10th grade, there was a lot of pressure on me to score a good percentage. Just as I was nearing the much awaited session break after board exams, the stress of scoring well morphed into anxiety exacerbated by the imposition of the first lockdown. During this time, I came to know that a very close friend of mine lost a parent. When I got to know about it, I instantly broke down into tears and found myself gasping for breath. Sometimes, I wonder if that sprouted roots of anxiety in me. A year later, I have understood that death is inevitable and the only way to stay calm is to accept it. However, this realisation doesn't make it any easier to handle the emotional breakdowns when we lose our loved ones. I can't help but wonder about the thousands of people who died everyday even before the pandemic - the soldier who died serving and protecting their country, the teenager who died of suicide, the woman who was sexually abused and murdered, the cancer

patient who took chemotherapy for months but still didn't make it, or the adult who died of cardiac arrest. This number has increased exponentially because of Covid-19. Millions of people die every day and to us, they are just numbers and statistics we see in the 9 o'clock news.

It is extremely important to have empathy even for the people we don't know personally. It's impossible to know how much a person goes through on a routine basis. All this brings me to the conversation around mental health. We always talk about how a person should reach out or seek professional help when they are struggling, but I strongly believe creating that space for people to open up and talk about how they feel is extremely important too. Being judgmental or unkind hinders that process.

So, I'll start. I feel anxious sometimes and I'm trying to do my best to deal with it. I always keep a smile on my face because I cannot afford to let down my guard in front of my family. I don't want to feel this way. Am I delirious? Has the fever gone to my head? Maybe it's all in my head. I keep telling myself that it's a phase and it'll pass. Nonetheless, I hate this. These are just some of the thoughts that I've had over the

last few months.

I tested positive for Covid-19 in early April 2021 along with my mother and brother. I had all symptoms apart from major breathing issues. It's a tough task to explain how demoralizing it is to be sick but I'm going to try nonetheless. I never actually realized how important having good health is until that point. It is extremely disheartening to feel like you can't do anything. It's exhausting to eat, talk, or even laugh along with the added stress that comes with missing out on school and classes. But the worst thing, without a doubt, is seeing your parents sailing in the same boat as you. Witnessing my mother being sick broke my heart each day. Hearing my father cry because he felt lonely without his family was shattering. At one point, all three of us were so sick that we upgraded from a dosage of 12 pills to 30 pills per day. I started ignoring messages from my relatives and friends that enquired about my wellbeing. For me, responding to such texts was difficult considering it was just a reminder of the fact that I wasn't showing any signs of betterment. One day, my oxygen dropped to 92% and I could hear my mother's voice crack in panic. While the symptoms of the novel coronavirus are well documented, what doesn't get nearly as much attention as it deserves is the trauma that comes with it. The sheer helplessness and the stress caused by the uncertainties will stay with me forever. I can even say that Covid-19 messed up my mind more than my lungs.

Even after two weeks passed, I still tested positive. I didn't care this time. I just wanted to get some work done so I could feel a little less bad about myself. Amidst this tiring cycle, another close relative, my mom's brother, contracted the virus. His health was deteriorating and he was in dire need of hospitalization. We were all at our wit's end, calling up different people for oxygen cylinders and different hospitals to check if any beds were available. I'd keep telling my mother that everything would be fine soon only to receive a singular response from her: "How?". I did not know what to tell her thereafter because I had

never seen her feel this helpless. The truth is that I just couldn't bear to see my mother cry. Knowing that I could not help her only made matters worse for me and my mental health.

What was and is one supposed to do in such a situation? I wish there was a handbook on how to deal with such difficult times, but there isn't.

After going through this experience and watching people struggle for air everyday, I have comprehended the fact that life is extremely unfair sometimes and absolutely nothing in this world is everlasting. Everything is temporary - from teenage relationships to good and bad times both. Something as small as faith in God's plan might sound naive to a lot of people, but that is what has kept me going. I believe that maybe I'm going through this in order to gain an understanding of what real problems are. I also feel grateful that I may be going through a tough time but there are millions of people who have it worse and recognize my privilege. I get to continue my education while sitting at home while there are people out there struggling for basic necessities like oxygen, water and food. The only way we can deal with anything is through acceptance. Acceptance of the past, present and future. Talking to one's friends and family is important. One must never feel that they're alone because so many people go through the same things. The reason why I've shared things that are so deeply personal to me is that I know at least a few people will relate to it in some way or the other. The most important thing one should remember is that whatever life throws at you, you're tougher than you think. Even if you're alone, you're not alone in this.



CONVERSING MENTAL HEALTH: THE NEED FOR GOING BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

By Harshi Kumar

Kabir has not been in a good headspace lately. He often finds himself feeling overwhelmed, lonely and has this constant feeling of sadness lurking around in his mind, the reason for which he is unable to figure out. He is not sure about who to talk to about his feelings, feelings that he isn't very sure about either and turns towards social media, looking for answers. He finds his friends posting and talking about mental health, about how we should listen to the people around us and look out for them. All this makes Kabir feel better, even relieved. He finds some of his friends posting about going through something similar which makes him feel not alone, which is a powerful thing. When he tries to talk to these people, is not very satisfied. He does not get any answers and most of them do not even listen to him. Kabir, to his surprise, even finds some people who he knows are not very kind in real life and try to bully him and his friends, posting about caring about others' mental health. Kabir is now confused more than ever. The difference between the real personalities of some people and their presentation of themselves on social media has made Kabir very unsure about whom to trust or not.

The above-described story is a classic example of most of our social media experience. The platform,

which is hailed for providing a medium of expression and facilitating conversations on almost all the topics, for all the right reasons, more often than not, ends up creating confusion in the minds of people.

Conversing Mental Health on Social Media: Impactful Conversations or Utter Confusion

Social media websites provide an easy way to connect and communicate worldwide, provide entertainment and help spread awareness regarding many issues among the masses. All these are the benefits which make social media an absolute hit among people today. But the biggest advantage which social media offers to its users is undoubtedly a free space where people can express what and how they feel about certain things and can engage in meaningful conversations with people on the internet, both known and unknown. This feature of social media which facilitates conversations goes beyond the boundaries of nations, groups, ideologies etc. has emerged as a great tool to initiate conversations about less talked about issues in the society and to a great extent has helped to destigmatize the topics. Mental health is one such topic.

Even though 1 in 5 people are affected by mental health illnesses at some point in their lives, the topic is not discussed freely in the real world. The stigma surrounding the issue is so huge that it makes conversing about mental health almost a taboo in our society. Lack of communication leads to lack of understanding regarding the issue, which makes the people who are going through the same feel alone and often ashamed of their situation. Social media has helped fight this stigma surrounding the issue substantially and has emerged as a safe place for discussing our mental health issues or generally a great platform to learn about them. However, just like every coin has two sides, social media also comes with its fair share of demerits.

One of the biggest disadvantages of social media is that because everyone can freely express their opinions, there is little check on the harms created by this activity. With anyone and everyone allowed to share their thoughts, many times people who do not have the required understanding of mental health issues tend to give their advice on it. People who are looking for help don't often realize that and believe in everything they see and hear on the internet.

Many people, who couldn't care less about others in real life, are often seen sharing posts and stories related to being kind, which creates mistrust among the minds of those who were looking for some safe space over the internet. People need to understand that mental health conversations are not just another trend initiated by their favourite celebrities. They're serious conversations which need to be applied in real life, and don't end with one Instagram story.

Moreover, high social media usage also plays a significant role in increasing mental health issues among people. The 'compare and despair effect' is a big cause of anxiety and depression among the users who constantly compare their own life with the people on the internet and fail to make correct judgements.

All this narrows down to one point, social media may be a great tool to destigmatize the topic of mental health and help in promoting conversations around it, but the conversations and actions need to exist outside of it.

The Case of Social Media Influencers

Let us get back to the story of Kabir. Kabir, as we saw earlier, is pretty confused with the mental health conversations culture on the internet. He discusses

this with one of his friends, Tara, who tells him about some of the social media influencers who spread awareness regarding mental health issues through their content. On learning this, Kabir becomes excited and decides to follow them. After following them for a few days, Kabir realizes that their content is not helping him. He understands what they are saying but just can't seem to implement it in his own life. Moreover, he feels that the engagement is only one way, that is, it is only him listening to them with no one actually listening to him and understanding his situation.

Social media today is flooded with influencers who use their platform to make people aware of mental health issues and are doing their bit to make the internet the safe space for conversing about mental health.. This is a great step towards normalising the issue. When people see other people talk honestly about their feelings, they feel empowered to do so as well. Many influencers inspire and motivate people to come to terms with their feelings and not feel guilty about them. However, the problem begins when instead of just trying to initiate conversations or building a more inclusive community, they focus on providing 'solutions' to the issues. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with helping people out by providing them with personally experienced solutions to their problems, it cannot replace a professional's advice or insight. Social media influencers are just people who can use their platform to spread awareness and hence, should not act like professional therapists nor should they be perceived that way. First of all, people need to understand that mental health issues are not just 'problems' that will go away with one solution, which is often - just talk it out. It is a much more nuanced issue.

It is not as if every social media influencer talking about the issue is a part of a problem and should just stop doing it. Not at all. One is simply saying that people need to be more responsible and empathetic with the kind of content they put up, and the audience too should be careful as to what to follow. There are mental health professionals, often called mental health advocates, who are trying to make a real difference through their social media presence. Try to look for them, understand what they are saying and look for what is best for you.

MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Mental health is a difficult topic to discuss and initiating conversations around it in schools can have a huge impact. If children are made aware of the importance of the issue from a young age and given a free space to discuss and express how they feel, they will grow up to be a much better and confident version of themselves. Taking care of students' mental health should not just end with an appointment of a school counsellor. Schools should be compulsorily made to teach the importance of mental health, the issues around it, how and when a person should ask for help, what are the resources available for help and a lot more. Initiating mental health awareness clubs, the inclusion of mental health education in schools' curriculum, promotion of a culture of cooperation instead of competition are some of the few steps which should be taken and acted upon.

BE CONSCIOUS OF THE LANGUAGE

You all must have observed that many people use the word 'depressed' for being sad or call someone 'bipolar' just because they are indecisive. This is nothing but a gross misinterpretation of mental health issues. It not only makes it even more difficult for the people who are actually suffering with such issues to understand the gravity of their issues, but also has a huge role in brushing off the seriousness of the issues. When mental health disorders are irresponsibly slipped into daily conversations, it shows how blatantly insensitive we are as a society. Mental health disorders are not adjectives and should not be treated like ones. If you see yourself or anyone around reducing mental health disorders to mere adjectives, take a moment and acknowledge the mistake. It is a small step capable of making a big change.

FOLLOW WHAT YOU PREACH YOU ON THE INTERNET IN REAL LIFE

Posting stories and captions related to mental health on your social media accounts makes little to no sense when you are doing absolutely nothing in real life to reflect upon what you preach. It makes it difficult for people to believe that they can actually reach out. It makes it difficult to believe that there are people who would actually lend an ear and help them. Don't be an 'armchair activist', make efforts, be kind, and reach out to people. If not this, just don't pretend, it is a decently good step to begin with.

DEMAND FOR POLICY INTERVENTION

Governments, both local and central, need to understand the importance of mental health and take necessary steps and actions to promote the same in their territories, after carefully examining the needs of their people. Policy intervention for the provision of socio-economic empowerment, social support, professional mental health facilities and facilitation of dialogue and raising awareness should be demanded. Governments should begin to treat mental health issues as an integral part of overall health. This will not only help people to get the required help but also normalise the issue. The recent appointment of the 'Ministry of Loneliness' in Japan is an example of how governments should take on the responsibility of mental health for their citizens for the overall welfare of society.

SPREAD AWARENESS

Spreading awareness is the best way to normalise the issue of mental health. When more people become aware of the issue, society will become more accepting and sensitive towards the people struggling with it. We need to have conversations about how normal yet grave mental health issues are. Educate yourself and others regarding the issue. Even if one person decides to talk to another person about it, the chain reaction will help us achieve huge positive results.

CONCLUSION

Social media is a great platform to initiate conversations, freely discuss topics that are considered to be taboo in society and learn. However, for a sensitive topic like mental health which requires our urgent attention, mere discussions over the internet will not help. It should be our responsibility to ensure that the words spoken on the internet get converted into actions on the ground level. Kabir's story helps us to understand how conversations related to mental health on social media may not prove to be of great help unless and until there are actual resources around us which can help. Such resources may include a good school counsellor, approachable mental health professionals, understanding and aware parents, friends etc. Discussing mental health over the internet surely helps to spread awareness and normalise the issue but real help can be provided only when concrete actions are taken too beyond the internet.



BODY IMAGE - THE SNAP THAT MATTERS

By V.Vaishnavi

How do you feel when you look at yourself in the mirror or a photograph? Have you ever noticed the kind of thoughts that cross your mind at that first look?

Yes, those very thoughts, whether good or bad, define the kind of body image you have in your mind. Those thoughts are formed and influenced by several factors such as the way people look in one's surroundings, pictures that one sees on social media, shows, and movies that one watches for entertainment, and even the way one's family member treats, standardizes, and talks about appearances. Body image is based on perceptions and is different for different people. Due to the easy availability of social media, it has a significant impact on one's perception. Social media influences body standards or body goals, and if one doesn't comply with them, it may start af-

fecting a person negatively. The kind of body image one can have a considerable impact on a person's esteem and confidence.

Having a positive body image which means embracing the way one looks despite the social standards can make a person have the confidence to represent themselves, their work, and their thoughts openly. They naturally feel comfortable in both solitude and social gatherings. Whereas, a person becomes incapable of sharing and learning openly because of low self-esteem and confidence due to a negative body image formed in their minds. Social gatherings become difficult, and a lot of times, thoughts of self-doubt take over the mind when alone. The impact of a negative body image also leads to self-harming by unhealthy diets, incompatible workouts, and the failure to meet idealized bodies

can lead to eating disorders and suicide ideations.

To eradicate such negativity, we need to build a positive environment mainly on social platforms and within families. One needs to understand the difference between a healthy body and a socially ideal body. Everyone's body is unique, hence the body index mass, which needs to be kept in check with a qualified physician's involvement. The shape of a body itself does not define the health of that body. Health is holistic, and it needs to be kept in check, inside out.

What we need as a society is to be more kind to each other, enabling everyone to embrace their uniqueness. We shouldn't need validation from others. We need to accept ourselves and love the body we have so much that we strive to keep it fit and healthy as long as we live.



Submission by Suhasini Yadav

“You carry so much love in your heart. Give some to yourself.”

- R. Z



THE RESILIENCE COCOON

By Meena Priyadarsnee K

I wake up only to find myself drowning in darkness; the depths it could reach are unknown. I am surrounded in an orbit of silence. As I drown, I am unable to swallow the unknown grief.

As I drown, I am unable to breathe in the grave melancholy. I hit rocks of vulnerability that send pain down through my spine. As I gasp for a sudden dose of closure and cure, my vision blurs. Actions seem like movements and interactions feel like remote-attack.

Voices, Background Noises.

It was too late for a recovery, I thought, in a fainted state. Sometimes suffering becomes a compulsion, not an option.

“How many times can you have a heartbreak?” I ask the waning moon in the sea of darkness, for I thought it gives us too many cracks, it’s too fragile. “Heartbreaks are spells that break a few vials,” she said.

“The vials which are caged often need a big hit to open, to leak the positivity potion in you.”

Slowly I open my eyes, my vision starts to clear, the leak slowly spreads all-over lifting me upwards. I could sense the surface, a colourful orbit now, a chrysalis I entered flapping my wings strong. I look back only to realize I tore upon a cocoon and emerged with beautiful stitches!

The resilience paints hues of strength and hope in me. I look back now, the cocoon, now a faraway land waiting to start the magic drill to someone else.



AN OPEN LETTER TO ANXIETY

By Pranjal Jain

Dear Reader,

I know you're trying to not (over) think about that thing again and wishing to have some temporary 'switch off' button to your mind. You're clueless when people ask you, "Why are you anxious?" I know at that moment there's no specific one thing that comes to you as a possible reason. It may sound stupid to other people, and you may feel silly about it yourself. But trust me, not knowing why you are anxious is completely alright.

I see you are tired of running after a string of thoughts or perhaps many strings of many thoughts. And all you wish for is a person to be there, to listen to all you have to say; instead of your friends telling you to 'stop thinking' because we all know that doesn't help a bit.

I know you're a happy-go-lucky person who likes to live in a world of make-believe, finding joy in little things, jumping around happily. But these days all you have been jumping onto is random conclusions and what-ifs.

But you know what, doubting yourself doesn't mean that you won't be successful. It may come to you as a shock that so many people behind the big screens have anxiety disorders too. They have times of self-doubt, but that doesn't stop them from reaching great heights. Oprah Winfrey, Deepika Padukone, Hrithik Roshan, Adele, Anushka Sharma, just to name a few, have been battling with anxiety and what most of them preach is 'self-love' and 'embracing your own-self'. They believe these two things have the power to help you sail through all the storms that life throws your way.

I get it how after gathering a lot of courage you finally made up your mind to initiate a conversation about your mental health and everything you're going through, with your parents. And just when you were about to explain them, they casually passed a comment which triggered you. And though it's not their fault, that they aren't able to understand what you're going through, you have convinced yourself to not talk to them again, to save it from coming back at you. Finding people to confide in has become a constant struggle, because of your anxiety issues. I

know trusting people and opening up hasn't been an easy task for you, you're always afraid of being judged by other people. And now, upon realizing that you can't turn to your parents, all your efforts towards opening-up have returned to square one. But that need not stop you from trying to look for other people- a friend, a relative, a teacher, or any person. All you need is one person, someone who understands and creates a comfortable space for you to talk.

People may also perceive you as an overachiever or a 'star' kid, but there are times when you can't meet your expectations, and that is honestly fine. Don't be hard on yourself. And don't let expectations of other people take a toll on you, they can keep their expectations to themselves. And I see you have been trying to find your calling lately, but the roadblocks are making you lose confidence? Listen, have a little faith in yourself because I know you don't give up just because things get tough. Let go of the days when you promised yourself to do something but got caught up with other things instead. Make yourself understand that not having a productive day is alright. Who's defining productivity anyway? Nobody, it's you and your expectations from yourself alone that take you down that disappointing road. So set goals but realistic ones, and make sure to give all you

have, because, in the end, it's the effort and the learning that counts and takes one a long way!

You know I understand that anxiety is not just daily worrying, that it's more. It's so much more than that. You have a pit-like feeling in your stomach, your body feels numb and at that moment, you can't do anything properly. But I also understand that anxiety is not rigid, it's different for different people, and everyone has their coping mechanisms, be it sleeping it away or distancing yourself. So just don't feel guilty about your way of dealing with it, because remember, it's okay to occupy some space, alright?

I understand that life's not been a walk on rose petals lately, it's been tough. There are thorns and bushes and only a handful of petals. And though I cannot assure you or ascertain when life will become all rose petals or if it at all will, just know that someday, you'll look back and be proud of yourself for hanging in there and not giving up. Until that happens, I'm here, we are all in this together, strong enough to get through it all. Also, don't forget that you're made up of matter, and you matter a lot. You have got this!

Love and hugs,
Someone who's always high on anxiety.



Submission by Parul Vaishnav

“She is the kind of queen that knows her crown isn't on her head but in her soul”

- Adrian Michael



THE NIGHT SKY

By Lavanya Desiraju

With pride and joy within my heart
And a smile on my face
I climb up to the terrace
Blow winds and snowy mist filling the place

I sat down on the ladder
To look up and breathe fresh air
Lifting my head up to the sky
Into the starred and moonlit room
I enter into the state of trance
Clueless about life, sweat appears on my forehead
And my limbs quiver and shiver
Tears roll down my cheeks
And I get my legs close
I lose my power
I feel feeble and chaotic
To the space that gave me the question I ask for the answer
Staring at the night sky



प्यादा हूँ मैं समृद्ध बुन्देला

सफर है ये मेरा,
अग्नि से है घरा,
प्रतशिोध की आग लपि,
कुछ यूँ चला, मैं यूँ चला।

अस्तित्व की लड़ाई है,
जीत आज उसी ने पाई है,
रखा जसिने कदम सहज के,
जय-जयकार उसी ने कमाई है।

छोटा ही सही, बड़ा बनने जब निकला,
आईने से रूठ,
मैं छवि बदलने को,
कुछ यूँ चला, मैं यूँ चला।

जरूरी नहीं शासन राजा ही करे,
तरीकों से अपने वजिय मैंने भी पाई है,
प्यादा कहकर दुत्कारा था कभी,
रूप बदल, अंत में जीत मैंने ही दलाई है।

रख छोटे-छोटे कदम,
भर-ज़दिगी चलता चला,
था मोहरा मैं खेल का,
फासले कम करते,
कुछ यूँ चला, मैं यूँ चला।



Transformation

By Lichi Sharma

Transformation is a dramatic and radical change that adds significantly to the guise of your personality. Going by the literal meaning, it is a way to go beyond one's comfort zone by creating a state-of-the-art version of yourself in life.

The transforming decision is of paramount importance as it bridges you to a different life. Indeed, it is more perilous to conduct and lead the introduction of a new order of things. However, the blistering pace of transformation is not to be feared but rather to be embraced.

After all, grapes must be crushed to make wine, diamonds are formed under pressure, olives are pressed to release the oil, and seeds are grown in darkness. So whenever you feel crushed, under pressure, pressed or in darkness, you will find yourself in a powerful process of transformation.

You can never become what you want by remaining what you are.

If you will always do what you have done, you will always get what you have always got.

It is always you who will define how to transform to reach your final destination. If a drop of water from a cloud falls in a lake, it loses its identity; if it falls in the mouth of a snake, it becomes poison; if it falls on a rose, it becomes morning dew; and if it falls in a shell, it becomes a pearl. While change is inevitable, transformation is a change brought through conscious choice coupled with due efforts, like a part and parcel of life!



It Was A Different Day Today

By Pranjal Jain

I went to the rooftop
not just to sky gaze
like I do everyday
but to experience
the world out there,
which I see daily
when I'm up here, alone,
but never really acknowledge.

I think my rooftop
is no ordinary rooftop,
it's a special one
with its own little world,
or so I believe.

Opposite my terrace
was a boy of about ten
flying his kite;
happy and excited.
I just stood there,
watching him,
scared that he may fall,
and also, longing to fly a kite.

To the left of my terrace
was a boy of about twenty
playing with a cute little puppy.
I smiled as I watched them
run around the terrace joyfully,
the boy running backwards
with his phone in one hand
and a dog biscuit in another.

And in that moment
I felt bliss and
I could realise and feel
the eternal joy of little things.

Far from my terrace,
was a thirty year old man
jogging around his small
confined terrace,
headphones in,
probably trying to block
all the beautiful (or not) sounds
and get his peace of mind.
I felt him,

for I have been trying
to find my peace of mind too,
but I wish I could tell him
about all that he was missing.

Behind my terrace,
was a lady of about forty
with her five years old daughter.
They were giggling,
laughing it all out,
playing with each other,
enjoying all they have
without a care in the world.
And I think that is exactly
what I live for, and would
want my future to be like,
a happy, satisfied one.

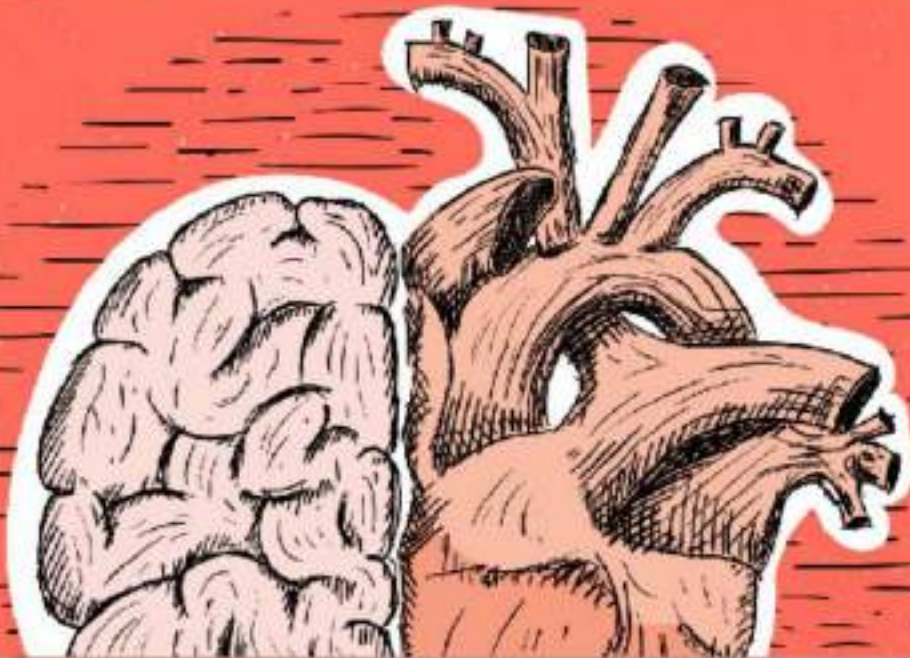
To the right of my terrace
was a man of around fifty,
he was watering his plants
when suddenly he looked up
and passed me a gentle smile.
I smiled back, sweetly.
And at that very moment,
I didn't feel alone anymore,
rather I felt strangely comforted.

And finally, there I stood,
on my own terrace,

alone but not so alone,
taking note of and observing
everything except
the sun, the sky and the clouds.
Because they had already
received enough
attention from me,
but I couldn't help
but look up once to
see the colour of the sky today.

And well, it was the most beautiful
colour I had seen,
a pretty shade of pink
with a tinge of orange,
and all I could think of
at that very moment was
maybe, just maybe
the sky is actually pink,
and the next time
I won't colour it blue.

Atlast, I felt
it was a beautiful day today,
and now it was finally time to
come back down,
and finish the poem
I started writing...
on how today was a different day.



A Message to Heart

By Aastha Gupta

Dear HEART,

Last night I felt a vibration. At first, I thought it must be you having a sleepless night. But it continued. I realized that it wasn't just a sleepless night, it was a fearful, scary night as well. So, today I've got to ask you this. Why are you so scared? What are you scared of? Are you afraid of spilling all the secrets that you have locked inside you? Don't be afraid, my friend! Stop torturing yourself. Stop getting nervous about every little thing. Don't hide your secrets from me. Let everything flow out!

By wanting too much and not getting it all, you are making me prone to 'overthinking'. Stop giving me hopes of a fantasy world out there, because I've already come to terms with the real world. Don't try to control my body by pounding too fast and making it follow you. Practicality is what works best today. Estrangement from the past is what rules success today. Don't try to hinder my success. If I succeed, you succeed too. In the same sense,

if you fail, the failure becomes mine too. Hence, we need to be in sync with each other.

All of this is not to belittle your emotions. I understand what you're going through. I also understand that it's not entirely your fault to feel such intense emotions. The world instilled a sense of hope in you and then imposed challenges in front of you. But in the end, I would only advise you to have patience. Things will fall in place for you too. Have courage. Live each moment, as if it's the last, but with a sense of reality in it. Don't wander off so far that it becomes difficult for you to come back. Cherish the beautiful past, live in the present, and let the future come at its own pace! Today, I extend my hand towards you. Let us work together without creating any confusion for each other. You must feel life and live life. Hoping to have a peaceful night ahead!

Love,
BRAIN



PROJECT

Sanskar



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The success story of Project Sanskar began in the year 2006, with teaching children of the non-teaching staff of the college. This project aims to enable the holistic development of underprivileged students by imparting quality education free of cost. The volunteers of NSS SRCC teach the students so that they prove to be an asset for their families and the country at large.

Starting with just 2 students back in 2006, the project currently has a student base of 70 students and has impacted about 100 students from classes 1st to 12th. Due to the restrictions imposed by the recent pandemic, the project is currently operating with a base of 25 students through the conduction of online classes.

The team conducts two-hour-long classes six days a week within the college campus premises. They also conduct regular tests that enable them to evaluate the progress of students and the effectiveness of teaching methods. The project focuses on the value of education of students which shapes and moulds their personality. The project aims to increase employable skills by providing computer lessons to students during holidays to teach them the basics of using a computer like sending an email, using MS office, etc.

NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME
SHRI RAM COLLEGE OF COMMERCE
presents
PAATHSHALA 2.0
a one on one mentorship program

Duration- 8 weeks with flexible teaching hours

Deadline to Apply- 9th October, 11:59pm

Certificate of Distinction
Performance Based LOR

Contact-
Raj- 9455424600
Kriti- 7906542675

TEACH FOR A CAUSE

In October, a mentorship program of 6 weeks, 'Paathshala 2.0' was organized, where volunteers who were driven to serve society through the outlook of teaching were invited to participate. It was hosted to look for interns to teach underprivileged children and subsequently ran from June to July 2020.

Additionally, a successful fundraiser event enabled the team to channel resources wisely. From providing data packages to students to providing a gadget, they tried to make a difference. An Acer tab was provided to the most meritorious student of Project Sanskar, Tamanna and her siblings who were in dire need of a device during the pandemic.

The children, therefore, get the opportunity to interact and get guidance from the best minds of the country and are encouraged to think out of the box which fosters creative thinking amongst them.

Project Sanskar is an enriching experience not only for the children but also for the volunteers who put their heart and soul into the success of this project. These children serve as a source of inspiration for them. Where there is a will, there is a way, and we have identified our way to give wings to the young minds.

Rajinder's Story

An insight into perseverance and hardwork

“Where there is a will, there is a way!”

The proverb is utterly justified by one of the shining stars at Project Sanskar, Rajinder.



Rajinder, one of the most assiduous students under Project Sanskar, secured 89.5% in his best of four in CBSE Class XII Boards (2019-20). The team was filled with overwhelming joy and pride to see a bright mind being admitted to Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi, where he is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Political Science. In the future, Rajinder aspires to join the Indian Armed Forces.

His college education is being sponsored by NSS SRCC and the team looks forward to witnessing the realization of Rajinder's dreams in the near future!

“No words are enough to commend him for his tireless efforts and dedication toward his studies. He was always a dazzling gem from within but remained under confidence and down to earth and so, he hung back in touching the sky of his dreams and aspirations. He only needed a sculptor to carve his true self and that's where the NSS family played its role. He was a brilliant student when it came to studies. He left no stone unturned in accomplishing his goal. His hard work and diligence had no match. He never missed any class or extra class and with the help of the volunteers, he finally discovered his true potential.” - Devanshi Sharma, a Project Sanskar Volunteer who taught Rajinder



UDAAN EK NAYI PEHAL



“Alone we can do so little; together we can do much.”- Helen Keller

Every action begins with a desire. In lieu of Project Sanskar, NSS SRCC launched UDAAN on 8 November 2020 - a campaign aimed at equipping all the children educated under Sanskar with all that they need to soar high and touch the sky- from mentorship to financial aid. With this new campaign, NSS hopes to place the bright minds in Project Sanskar on an equal footing with children across the world. The first student to avail the benefits of this campaign was Rajinder, who was admitted to Zakir Husain College, Delhi University, last year. The campaign hopes to see the rest of the children achieving similar heights. Together, we are and will be providing wings to the dreams of these dedicated children.

FEELINGS IN WORDS AND ON PAPER

कल्पना का शहर

कोरोना तेरी औकात क्या है युवराज सोनकर, कक्षा 9

ज़िन्दगी कभी रुकी नहीं ,
ज़िन्दगी कभी थमी नहीं ,
ऐ कोरोना तुझसे भी पहले
ज़िन्दगी मे बहुत आए पर,
ज़िन्दगी फरि भी रुकी नहीं थमी नहीं ।

ज़िन्दगी लड़ी और जीती
आखरि तेरी औकात क्या है कोरोना
हम तब भी तैयार थे
और आज भी तैयार है।
हमे आता है तुझसे लड़ना

इसलिए नहीं भूले मास्क पहनना ,
रखते है दो गज की दूरी
जो की है जरूरी
इसलिए हम मलिंगे भी, काम भी करेगे
और सारे नयिम पालन भी करेगे ।

तेरी आखरि औकात क्या है ,
क्योंकि हमे पता है तेरा इलाज क्या है ।

संस्कार की कहानी, मेरी जुबानी तमन्ना, कक्षा 8

थोड़ी सी चुलबुल थोड़ी सी चंचल है
हर चीज़ को करने की उनमें एक अलग सी हलचल है
संस्कार के वालंटियर्स की सबको सराहने की आदत सी है,
हम सब बच्चों को पढ़ाने और समझाने की शक्ति सी है
हम बच्चों के साथ बच्चे बन जाते हैं ये
वक्रत आने पर हमारे सच्चे दोस्त बन जाते हैं ये
कुछ कथिया होंगी हमने अच्छा खुदा भी हमसे मेहरबान है
हम शरारत करते हैं इतनी मगर हमें डांटने की जगह समझाते हैं ये
हम सफल हो हमेशा इनकी आँखों का नूर है ये
हमें चोट लगने पर बड़े भाई/बहन बन जाते हैं ये
कोई बाबू तो कोई बच्चा कहकर पुकारते हमें अपना बना लेते हैं ये
दीदी/भईया के रूप में मिला जो हमें वरदान है
ये हमारी खुदा से मांगी हुई मन्नत है
रोज़ दो घंटे इनके साथ हमारे लिए जन्मत है!

A Poem On Unity

Tushar, Class XI

He is my almighty, my always, my armour
He is my blessing, my breath, my boldness
He is my comfort, my carpenter, my compassion
He is my divinity, my devotion, my delight
He is my earth, my eternity, my enlightenment
He is my faith, my fulfilment, my future
He is my God, my gift, my grace
He is my hope, my heart, my heaven
He is my insight, my inspiration, my inner guide
He is my joy, my judgement, my Jesus
He is my king, my kindness, my keeper
He is my light, my love, my laughter
He is my maker, my music, my morning
He is my necessity, my nurturer, my night
He is my openness, my oil, my offering
He is my purity, my praise, my peace

He is my quest, my quiet, my quivering
He is my rock, my redeemer, my rest
He is my shepherd, my sight, my sensitivity
He is my truth, my treasure, my theology
He is my understanding, my unity, my usefulness
He is my value, my vastness, my virtue
He is my worth, my warmth, my wisdom
He is my xenia, my xenas, my xenodochy
He is my yearning, my yore, my yesterday
He is my zeal, my zenith, my zest

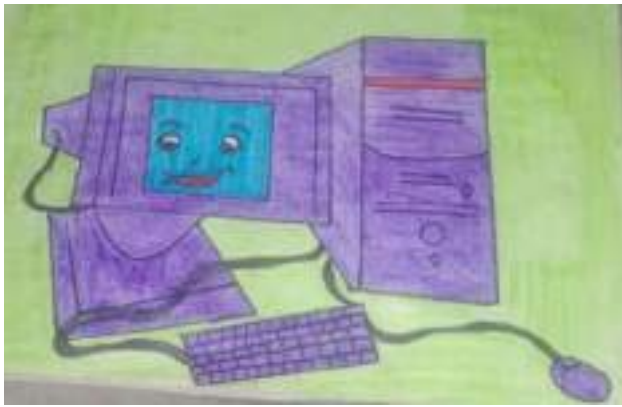
He is my Jesus, He is my God, He is my Holy Spirit
He is the One I love... He is my everything
Yesterday, tomorrow and today – always
He holds the key to death and the grave
As well as my eternity – Praise His holy name!



By Keshav
Class X



By Shiv
Class XII



By Raj
Class VII



By Pramod
Class VII



By Yuvraj
Class IX

Insights from the Volunteers



Aayush Banka, Volunteer

”

“I think working under Project Sanskar is something which I will never forget. I was fortunate to have amazing seniors, who were always ready to help me, and loving kids. Most importantly, it taught me how to be happy and spread happiness. You know what..I always waited to have Project Sanskar meetings because they always made me smile.”

”

“The biggest asset of life is to be with others - this sums up my journey as a member of the Sanskar family. From being a little selfish to now becoming a part of a social service group - a great life-changing experience for me. Whenever I felt low, I got the support of my seniors, who motivated me along the way. Teaching underprivileged students gives a sense of satisfaction that is truly difficult to express in words... It is a feeling of fulfilment.”



Ishu Chaudhary, Volunteer



Jatin Kumar, Volunteer

”

“When it comes to my experience in not only Sanskar but also in NSS, what crosses my mind is that it was mesmerising. I came across children who were facing difficulties not only in their academic pursuits but also when it came to having access to basic necessities. It has inspired me to do every little thing within my reach to help others. Over the past year, I also came across a lot of new Hindi words and created a deep bond with my students, who are passionate and curious to learn and explore new topics on a daily basis. I see faith and trust in their desire to do something in life and being a part of their journey makes me feel so blessed.”

”

“When I joined Project Sanskar, I was determined to serve my best to impart education to the underprivileged students. I loved this journey of teaching kids who have a lot of enthusiasm and aspirations. One special thing that I always learn from them is that despite any difficulties, they always keep a big smile on their faces which teaches me to stay calm and cool in every situation.”



Aanchal Yadav, Volunteer



Namita K, Volunteer

”

“Working for Sanskar under the guidance and support of the team heads day in and day out is what has given me the impetus to jump out of my bed and put my intellectual senses to work. To me, it was fascinating to meet uber-intelligent (yet somehow magically modest) people and it has been one wholesome journey.”

“

“I would like to thank NSS for providing me with the opportunity to work under Sanskar Project. I have always been very passionate about teaching and the fact that I am contributing towards social service through it makes me even more determined. The kids here are zealous, vibrant and optimistic and I really enjoy interacting with them.”



Madhav Luthra, Volunteer

POEM

AND

Prose





Monetisation of Domestic Work: Capitalising off Patriarchal Norms?

By Aastha Jha

A recurring theme in academic circles regarding feminism in the domestic setting relates to the idea of monetising domestic work. On the face of it, the idea promises to create a sense of dignity and financial independence along with rejecting the exclusionary nature of commissionable work. However, does this idea discourage gendered division of labour?

National Sample Survey Organisation's time-use survey in 2019 revealed that only about a quarter of men and boys above six years engaged in unpaid household chores, compared to over four-fifths of women. Every day, the average Indian male spends 1.5 hours per day in unpaid domestic work, compared to about five hours by a female.

According to The New York Times, if American women earned minimum wage for the unpaid work they do around the house and caring for relatives, they would have made \$1.5 trillion last year.

Thus, one can't deny the fact that women undertake the bulk of unpaid domestic work and systemically forego a sizable monetary

value. By virtue of being unpaid, this work is characterised as one's personal duty as opposed to professional duty. Cooking, cleaning, mentoring - these tasks may well constitute life skills that one must inculcate, irrespective of one's professional choices. However, when one shoves the burden of learning such skills solely on women, these skills get reduced to patriarchal norms that typecast women as caregivers. Even women who are working professionally are expected to carry out household work. The respect earned by such women is bereft of any acknowledgement of the accompanying household work since the latter is a fundamental expectation from women.

This brings us back to the idea of monetising household work. Does providing fair remuneration really dismantle problematic societal expectations? Should social problems be solved through solely economic measures? Will such a move be effective in the long run?

Let us analyse some of the issues pertaining to this policy idea.

Firstly, compensating only women for domestic work would reinforce gender stereotypes, and may deter women from taking employment outside the home. According to the Institute of Economic Growth, many women forego formal work and the associated monetary benefits due to the time they need to devote to household activities. When conditioning dictates household work as a woman's duty, adding monetary value to this duty deflects conversations around the very role that women are expected to carry out, with or without money. Household work is often described as "labour of love" in social norms. Instead of giving women the opportunity and agency to explore activities that tap into their intellectual and creative potential existing bereft of societal expectations, monetising household work would incentivise women to remain in the rut of aiding other members of their households

Secondly, this policy may lead to exclusion and inclusion errors as it may exclude women who are not full-time homemakers in low-income groups but include homemakers from higher-income groups. Many women in the lower income bracket are expected to carry out both household and professional work to sustain their families. Such women don't come clearly under the purview of domestic workers. Women married into rich families or those that have inherited great wealth might receive benefits of the policy as opposed to women working in villages. In villages, most women face an income crunch at all times, despite carrying out both household and farm work. The policy, by virtue of benefitting only homemakers, might not prove to aid such women.

Thirdly, an important sublet of the policy proposal by think tanks such as Evangelical Social Action Forum (ESAF) and HealthBridge discusses the sources of income. One such suggestion proposes men paying their wives for their domestic work. Asking men to pay for wives' domestic work could further enhance their sense of entitlement. Besides, buying domestic labour from the wife poses a serious risk of formalising the patriarchal Indian family where the position of men stems from their being 'providers' in the relationship.

Moreover, given women's limited control over

household resources, it could prove difficult to ensure that they derive benefits from this compensation; only 38% of women-owned a house/land, 53% used a bank account and 46% had a mobile phone for self-use in 2015-16.

Finally, enumerating, quantifying, and then monetizing the colossal breadth of household activities performed by women ranging from cleaning, cooking, child/elderly care and more would be complex and resource-intensive. Verifying the hours of unpaid work undertaken within the household will be difficult, for both the homemaker and the government. Moreover, the inclusion and assessment of mentorship provided by women to their children may be unfeasible in nature.

One has observed as to why our aim cannot be only to ensure "basic income" to women. Women must be supported with quality education, access and opportunities to work outside the home, gender-sensitive and harassment-free workplaces and attitudinal change within families to make household chores more participative. Indian men need to become equal partners in sharing the load of unpaid work so that Indian women can join the paid workforce and build an independent identity outside the confines of their homes. Indian women need to be exposed to alternative career opportunities and interests from a young age so that stereotypes surrounding their roles as a homemaker can be broken.

A State-supported gender-neutral income transfer at the household level should also be considered if one wishes to monetise household work. Such an announcement mustn't stereotype women into specific roles within the household.

Thus, while the core idea of recognising the value of household work undertaken by women is commendable, steps to reduce and redistribute such work are perhaps more important than asking for women's unpaid work to be monetised, even notionally. This leads to a mismatch between the problem and the solution. Patriarchal norms need to be dismantled through discourse and attitudinal change, not validated through monetary

incentives. Education is an essential tool for change, both for women and society as whole. However, the educational curriculum needs to be restructured in order to emphasize gender equality rather than reinforcing gender stereotypes, thus paving way for truer choice.



Submission by Jyoti Golia

"The only way you can conquer me is through love
and there I am gladly conquered." - Krishna



Justice On Our Fingertips

By Madhumanti Adhikary

If we ask ourselves what is that one thing that almost everybody uses their phones for, apart from calling others, it will be social media. Our generation is continuously typing, sharing, and commenting. We are a world that lives in our phones, sometimes unconsciously detaching ourselves from the outside world. The power of social media is unfathomable. We do not have to wait for newspapers to get the details of an event, such is the power of likes and shares. We read, we debate, and sometimes, we hate. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram serve as powerful tools to voice our opinions, to make us feel empowered. Wars on social media are a real thing, where battles are fought with keyboards instead of swords. And sometimes, we get so engrossed in these virtual battles that we end up ignoring the fact that someone, somewhere, can feel the hatred of the entire world. We forget to consider the intensity of the wrong that person has done. The judicial systems differentiate between punishments for various crimes, and I am sure we will hardly question that because some crimes are worse than others. But social media hardly

differentiates. After all, we all love to like, share and comment, don't we?

The first war on social media that will come to anybody's mind is the war against nepotism. Yes, we all dearly miss Sushant Singh Rajput and his talents, and we do not support nepotism. However, have we given thought to what might have truly caused the person to take such a decision? Can something as sensitive as suicide be reduced to just one issue? We will never realize what the person was dealing with, but the very natural thing to do after such an incident is to care more about the mental health of others.

And I wonder sometimes, did we mean it when we added the hashtag 'be kind' to our posts on awareness about mental health. We have boycotted celebrities, compelled them to even give up social media. How do we console ourselves when we realize that we have virtually bullied people just because they have been more privileged than others. We have trolled and spread hatred without

thinking twice, and we have taken justice into our own hands. We can stand against certain ideologies, certain practices, and we can create awareness about mental health. We can do all of this without spreading hatred, without bullying others, but we often decide otherwise.

Social media has its advantages and sometimes, we have also created positive impacts through these channels. We have created awareness, supported and empowered people, and helped them in our ways. We have raised funds, recognized talents, and spread the love with just our fingertips. We have used our internet connection for good and we should be proud of it.

Every coin has two sides, and we've often flipped the coin and landed on the wrong

side. Hatred is a choice, and we should choose against it. I might have cited just one example, but there are a million more. Be it the trolling of people using TikTok or TikTokers insulting Youtubers, be it fights between political parties or an attempt to empower one religion by insulting another, we have known no bounds online. It is almost as if we give verdicts online, and in most cases, a person is guilty until proven innocent, unlike the normal practice of a person being innocent until proven guilty, as carried out by our judiciaries.

In a world where we live most of our lives inside our phones, can we afford to take the risk of spreading unimaginable hatred? One trending hashtag can scar a person for life. Can we truly reduce justice to something like a hashtag?



Submission by Neevati Fitkariwala

“Sometimes all one needs is the melody of musical notes to get away from the harsh reality of the world.” - Avdhi Mehta



Not Just Vows: Transition of Dating Patterns in Today's Society

By Dhruv Lahariya

The modern age of dating and relationships has made it easier for millennials to reach out for companionship but at a price of shorter unions and discontent. What, in this case, will it take to live the romances we grew up reading?

Love is in the air and it has always been an essential need. Just like we left the caves and trees to live differently as 'humans' and became 'civilized', we also went beyond desires of procreation and sought love and companionship for a lifetime union of dependability on each other. All the stories we grew up reading, or the television content and cinema we consumed, portrayed their own convenient & saleable version of love, its hardships, and its final redemption.

Who has not experienced love? A desire to be close to someone we admire and care for them unconditionally is love. We love our families and friends, but what about the love which plays on celluloid? Our instinct which evokes a strong sense of desire fires up the endocrine system and hits the very basic need to find a companion, procreate, maintain, and protect—this is how we logically define those gusts of air

which send dupattas tangling in the watch of a potential mate!

Certainly, the dynamics of romance have changed over the years. From a benchmark of sexual maturity, it has penetrated our conditioning. From a time when people found a soulmate and held on to them we have entered an age where young tweens and teens flaunt their dates and the next thing we know, they 'break up' and don't see eye to eye. While the advent of technology has made life comfortable where we can fulfill our natural needs more easily than ever, it somehow seems that maintaining relationships has become harder. With too much focus on accepting one's 'human' tendencies at a face value and continuing to be imperfect rather than correcting ourselves for the better, we witness increasing divorce rates and a sudden splurge in self-proclaimed counsellors specializing in relationship therapy.

For a lot of people realizing their feelings for someone, or experiencing an urge for companionship during their teens entering relationships at a young age, pop culture

has immortalized this brutal idea of 'the one'. What does being 'the one' in terms of pop culture representations mean? Is there someone uniquely crafted for us from the heavens above, or are there a lot of them, or is there no one? The answer seems like an amalgamation of all three. It's a perspective, not an absolute reality. It is normal for people to grow, change and grow apart eventually. Teens and young adults grow holistically at a rapid rate which makes it natural for them to grow apart in such cases, and yet this very natural concept is frowned upon. 'Love' has become result-oriented and we forgot to live in the present. This hardbound destination is given so much importance at a young age that the journey becomes brutally exhausting.

Romance and love are overtly glorified as an escape, or for filling a void. This is tricky as just 'being in love' can't offer any redemption or a solution to persisting problems. People's lives are created by their consistent habits and thought processes over the years. So your mental, emotional, or material problems can't be changed by someone, their presence, or a feeling they generate in you. Rather, a conscious effort would be required for the same. What helps is a positive company that persists when you are going through a tough time - be it friends, family members, or a partner.

The constant need for someone to many extents is perpetuated just like an exuberant need for 'breakfast', to kick start the day, was promoted by cereal companies. A plethora of dating apps and coaches make it seem you are desperately missing out on things, which you are not. With sexist ways to 'grab a girl', love is a new market for such coaches who make one believe they have been unlucky in love and will be rescued by this new-age Cupid. It is just a part of life that should be left to people for themselves to figure out at their own sweet time.

A need for validation through social media acts as an added pressure to maintain your relationships. Gone are the times when photos were only supposed to capture a moment shared

between people, meant only to be revisited by them later. The perfect life you may try to paint on social media, where everyone is fawning over you may become a pressure to maintain an inertly toxic relationship. Letting many people into your personal life, and then trying to please each one, makes one feel more vulnerable.

The only way to stay sane in this chaos is to take your own sweet time and let love happen to you, rather than you trying to ride through ice and fire to feel the dopamine rush.



A Perspective on Humanity

By Gaurav Chakraborty

Mother Teresa became one of the most famous humanitarians in the world because of how she greatly contributed to the good of humanity. She provided food to the poor in India and with time her projects started reaching overseas to help fight hunger in Africa, with her earning a Nobel Peace Prize for exceptional deeds for the sake of humanity. This brings us to a very important question, what is humanity? What does it imply? What does it stand for? It certainly is a point that one must ponder over. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, Humanity means 'understanding and kindness towards other people.' The dictionary also provides an additional meaning - 'the condition of being human'.

Humanity is a very noble concept and indeed extremely pious. However, in recent tough times brought by the outbreak of the global pandemic Covid-19, humanity seemed to be lost somewhere. Humans breached almost every established norm of humanity. Scores of scenes that exposed the fact that humans are no different from animals came into the limelight. Poor migrant workers including pregnant ladies, infants, small children, and senior citizens walking hundreds and hundreds of kilometers without food, water, or any support

from anybody establishes the above fact quite clearly. This crisis has been termed as the largest exodus of people in India since independence.

Our present industrial civilization which is based on ruthless competition has, in less than 200 years, devastated almost everything natural on earth- the rivers, the oceans, the forests, the wildlife, various species, the climate, and above all morality. Universal Moral Principles and Natural Laws govern the animal world and in fact, the entire universe. While the animal world of which humans are a part follows Natural Laws and Universal Moral Principles, humans have completely deviated from them and have been the victims of all vices. Swami Vivekananda said, "Those who serve living beings are serving God". Lord Mahavira and the Jain sects extend the concept of non-violence to an extreme extent where even the insects cannot be harmed. Gandhiji said, 'We have no right to kill if we cannot give life.' Humans have to decide now whether the indiscriminate killing of animals for food and the infinite cruelty committed against them should stop.

Humans are humans only because of humanity.

This is a universally accepted fact and undisputed to a large extent. However, we have slowly and gradually destroyed the basic foundation of Human Civilisation, the same civilization about which the intellectuals used to and continue to boast with a systematic dismantling taking place over many centuries.

Inevitably and inexorably, the industrial civilization is in a destructive mode. Humans are one of about nine million known species living on earth. Whether God has created them or Nature has made them, all species have a right to live and have space on this planet. Who is to decide whether they should live or not? There could have been 1 trillion life forms on planet earth but more than 99 percent of the species that ever lived on earth are believed to be extinct. In a recent incident in Kerala, a pregnant elephant consumed a pineapple filled with firecrackers due to which she was severely wounded. She suffered burn wounds and died a couple of days later. A similar incident came to light from a village in Himachal Pradesh where a pregnant cow had become the victim of growing inhumanity and decimating humanity.

Some intellectuals believe that nature has its ways of taking revenge as and when 'combined pain' is inflicted upon it. It is however not a proven theory and many debates have taken place but a common viewpoint has not been established. The theory further states that revenge can be in the form of earthquakes, diseases, and disasters. True or not, it is high time that the entire mankind revisits 'HUMANITY' and together form a future roadmap to ensure that humans can remain humane. In the poem, "Keeping Quiet", the poet Pablo Neruda, a Chilean poet has beautifully expressed the need and importance of the entire mankind together being still and introspecting. The important takeaway is that we all must come together and introspect so that we can sustain this extravagant planet by refreshing all the values of humanity and thus giving ourselves a fresh start.

When darkness surrounds you, even a ray of sunshine can give you a large amount of hope. The onus is completely on us now. We all have to unite and induce self-determination

in ourselves. The earlier we start, the better it will be for every known and unknown living organism. We all have to pledge to bring humanity back to this society. HUMANITY must remain alive otherwise everything in the living realm will become meaningless.



The Puzzle Called Life

By Samyak Garg

The cosmos came into being 14 billion years ago when a single singularity (initial speck of unlimited heat and density) exploded and gradually kickstarted the events that led to the present-day world. There are billions of galaxies and each contains millions of stars. The Sun is one of those 100 billion stars present in our universe. And Earth is one of the billions of billions of planets. Still, we haven't come across any other planet which contains life.

Our planet came into existence approximately 4 billion years ago, and it went through a drastic transformation in these years. According to scientists the earliest undisputed evidence of life dates from at least 3.5 billion years ago. The purpose of life at that time was sustainability. To prevent itself from extinction and to keep the species alive. It started as a microorganism and then multicellular organisms came into being. After millions of years, organisms with eyes developed in the oceans which evolved further and further and led to Homo Sapiens.

The earliest findings of modern Homo Sapiens skeletons date to nearly 200,000 years old. We started developing tools and methods to write, we built the Stonehenge and the Pyramid of Giza. We discovered gravity and explored

the universe, we built the printing press and the computers, the airplanes, and artificial intelligence. Humans have travelled a great journey from nothing to everything, from gravity to vacuum, from darkness to light. We transcended the Earth and went beyond. But why?

Life is what this is all about. According to the Oxford Dictionary - "the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death." It is the thing that everyone lives through each day... it consists of hardships and pitfalls, it contains happiness and sorrow, sometimes we like it and other times we don't. But that is just the definition of the word life. For all we know the historians would have named life, 'death' and we would be trying to find the meaning of death.

Life's main purpose is to reproduce and ensure the continuation of a species. This is done by passing the information important for survival to the next generation and by passing on the genes to the offspring. For aeons, this method ensured the continued existence of those

species with the best genes-survival of the fittest.

Homo Sapiens are the most intellectually advanced multicellular species in this universe (as far as we know). Even though we are just a blip in the time scale of the universe, we have the power to think, learn, and understand. With this power, we changed the whole world in just centuries. We landed a man on the moon and we even launched a space probe (Voyager) that has flown beyond our solar system and is drifting through interstellar space. Humans have everything at our disposal. However in our race to invent and excel we also ended up harming nature itself, these are the effects that are extremely difficult to reverse, like global warming and ozone depletion.

According to Viktor Frankl (Neurologist and Psychiatrist), there is no constant meaning of life. There is no single purpose to the entirety of life, but many parts of life that make it meaningful. The meaning differs from person to person and even from day to day. So what matters is not the general meaning of life common for everyone, but the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment.

To put the question in general terms would be comparable to the question posed to a chess

champion, "what is the best move in the world?". There is no best move except for the best move corresponding to that specific situation of the game. Similarly, in life, there is no all-pervasive meaning. Everyone has their mission to carry out or an assignment that demands fulfilment.

There will come a time when it will be difficult to understand the importance of all this and will lead you to question "why is this happening?" At that time, we have to understand that just because we are at a tough spot and cannot realize its importance, it doesn't mean that there isn't any. We live life one a time and in this sense, forget to grasp life in its totality.. because everything looks like chaos up close; it is just a matter of scale. If you pull back and wait for long enough, then order emerges. Maybe your universe is just taking longer to form.

Life is a grand jigsaw puzzle and we are its creators. We have two abilities: We can choose any piece we want from the infinite number (choices) and then we can place it anywhere in our puzzle. This means that whatever we do.. when we would have done enough, we would be able to see the full picture and admire it. We have enormous power and the meaning of life is whatever we make of it.



Submission by Pooja Pareek

"Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished." - Lao Tzu



Should Freedom of Speech be Absolute ?

By Ayush Madhogarhia

"Freedom of expression without limitations is like a car without brakes,"

Consider the MeToo movement for once. A huge step towards women empowerment and social justice wasn't it? However, what about hearing the other side of the story. Imagine waking up one day to find that you are trending on Twitter for all the wrong reasons. Being labelled as a rapist by society takes less than one minute, but to prove one's innocence may take an entire lifetime. Shouldn't there be checks on this tremendous amount of power that a person's words hold?

In the contemporary world, freedom of speech and expression have become basic human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations states -

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Now if we come to the nature of this freedom, it is not absolute, even in the modern era. Various activists all over the world have protested against this. They argue that lack of absolute freedom impedes the creativity of artists and our fellow human beings, thus denying them their fundamental rights. This system deliberately suppresses their ideas, hopes, and aspirations, and denies them "meaningful existence" as promised by the Constitution of several countries.

However, absolute freedom of speech and expression would have harmful implications, which would hurt the democratic machinery, rather than protect it. It would result in open slander, defamation, sedition, obscenity, and intolerance. Keeping this in mind, absolute freedom was inhibited to protect the citizens of the country against the reckless actions of others.

John Stuart Mill, one of the most influential thinkers in the history of classical liberalism put forward the 'harm principle', which effectively explains the underlying problem

with absolute freedom of speech. The harm principle holds that the actions of individuals should only be limited to prevent harm to other individuals. He argued that "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

One particular issue which has surfaced in recent times is the rights of the media and free press. Freedom of speech and expression also empowers the right to a free press. However, there are restrictions such that false news and inaccurate statements are excluded from the definition of 'free speech'. That being said, it is the responsibility of the media to ensure correct, unbiased, and reliable information to the people. However, the press has become so powerful, that whoever controls the media, controls the minds of the people. Therefore the right to a free press is also not absolute.

There is a growing concern in India, that freedom of expression is under attack and, along with it, values of pluralism and tolerance. Such concern is not unwarranted as one can witness an increasing erosion of creative freedom, attempts to silence the media, growing instances of sedition and defamation cases, hate speech and censorship, and many other manifestations of shrinking freedom of expression. Therefore there must be legal restrictions on this freedom.

The Supreme Court of India in a judgment ruled -

"Freedom of speech and expression has to be given a broad canvas, but it has to have inherent limitations which are permissible within the constitutional parameters."

From birth, we have all been endowed with fundamental human rights. The freedom of speech and expression allows us to constantly learn and grow through the exchange of ideas. However, with the great power we have been given, there also comes great responsibility.

The same freedom of speech that allows a Prime Minister to lead their nation to glory, can also be used by an unethical preacher to corrupt

young and innocent minds into terrorists. We can use this freedom to hurt our fellow human beings and their sentiments or use it to make this world a better place through our actions. The choice is ours. Hopefully, by making the right choice we will be able to achieve a society in which no one is left unheard.

One thing we should never forget is that absolute freedom can also absolutely corrupt.



Offsprings of the Same Mother

By Himasweeta Sarma

Emerging from the oval-shaped cocoon of India are the different strands of raw silk, her children disguised as states which are spun together to weave a fine, luscious cloth of the nation. An amalgamation of cultures and languages, India has always adopted each guest to her nation with a heartwarming smile coupled up with hands gracefully folded in a Namaste. Stretching from the coconut kingdoms of South India to the marble adorned Taj Mahal in the North; from the houses filled with the mesmerizing aroma of Dhokla in the West to the land of the rising sun, Arunachal Pradesh in the East, the hearts of the people beat for their nation out of patriotism and love. However, do their hearts beat for one another?

By building over 200 nests to accommodate more than 200 tribes, North-East India has acted as an enthusiastic contributor to the menu of the diversity of India. Breeding in the easternmost part of the country, it shelters 8 states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim. Each state of North-East India brews its own culture, music, and language but exists in solidarity giving rise to the nickname of "The

Land of the Seven Sisters' with Sikkim being termed as their only brother. An individual cannot comprehend the evocative and authentic cultures of this heaven in just a page or two, such is their distinctiveness from each other.

Globally known as the multifariousness validated by our country, but it is also indeed quite engrossing to know about the unexplored lands of the sister states of our country-The North Eastern States. They are not just any ordinary composition of non-identical divisions of the land but a propitious harmony set by different ethnic groups residing in these parts of a country.

This paradise of India is popular for its distinct culture and traditional lifestyle. The North-eastern region blends different people from unlike religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. People of these parts have their traditional colourful attires, which manifest their close resemblance to the land. The major hill tribes are Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia. Though the lifestyle of people is contingent on the place they live

in, the cuisines of these states reflect the vast diversity of the same. The cuisines include meat, leafy vegetables, and fish in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura, while Sikkim and Nagaland have a dissimilar staple diet consisting of dairy products and steamed vegetables respectively with rice being the common foodstuff in all the states.

With such a profusion of ethnic groups, it is without any uncertainty that its festivals will also contribute to the diversity of these states. The major festivals of North-East India are Bihu, the Brahmputra Festival of Assam, Hornbill and Sekrenyi festival of Nagaland, Torgya Monastery Festival Arunachal Pradesh, Shillong Autumn Festival, Chapchar Kut from Manipur, Ningol Chakouba Festival Manipur, and Kharchi Puja from Tripura.

Northeastern states also have a rich resource of music and dance. It not only offers a completely different world of traditional music and folk dance but also has emerged as one of the prime industries of rock music. However, this life-like cloth of heterogeneity gets hidden by the shrug of isolation carried out by the rest of the country on inhabitants of North-East India.

Being tied up to India through the narrow Siliguri corridor known as the 'Chicken's Neck', North-East India has faced seclusion both due to historical matters and geographical terrain. On the historical podium, the heavens of North Eastern India have always been a warm host to the migrants from the surrounding countries of Tibet, Myanmar, and the Indo-Gangetic.

The geographical front has also been unfavourable to the North-Easterners which mostly compromise hills except for the Brahmaputra, Barak, and the Imphal valley. This restricts the region from having access to high-technology-based transportation and results in segregation from mainstream India. Born out of this isolation were the devils of racism and discrimination which instilled fear among the residents of heaven. These devils fed on the fear between them and were nurtured by the prejudiced minds of many.

'Bestowing' the people of North-East India who

move to the other parts of the country for better future opportunities with comments such as 'Chinkis', 'Hakka Noodles', 'Chinese', the journey of racism has just sparked off. These comments which are derogatory in their existence itself find their roots in the minds of those who discriminate against North-Easterners for their Mongoloid features. Students who move to other places for their higher education are not given accommodation in the context of them being 'outsiders' or more precisely, 'Non-Indians'. People from North-East India usually find themselves quenching the curiosity of their fellow 'Indians' on their food habits with the most common question being, "North-Easterners eat insects and dogs, right?" which follows sarcastic laughs and giggles. Even amidst the global pandemic of COVID-19, the devil of racism didn't sleep. Girls from North-East India were allegedly attacked and assaulted for being 'Chinese' and being agents for bringing the virus to India. Nido Tania, a student who hailed from Arunachal Pradesh was murdered to death in Delhi. Such is the severity of the racism that prevails, but most people turn a blind eye to it.

The North-Eastern people are slurred to hear and bear discrimination. The government has taken the initiative of jailing a person for five days who comments Chinki on any North-Easterner; but how far will this prevent such racial teasing, only time holds the answer to that. Even though it has been eight years since the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 has been reinforced, the current scenario demands more proper implementation of it.

In face of the predicament, the North-Eastern people should also step forward to break these walls of differentiation topped with the portrayal of a more welcoming attitude from the rest of the Indians. Along with our hearts beating for our Mother India, it should also beat for our fellow citizens irrespective of their origin. Unity in Diversity will only be upheld if Unity among Indians is followed!



Contextualizing Caste in India

By Mehak Talwar

The concept of caste remains a highly contested topic in India. Some are unaware of its existence, whereas others live blissfully in ignorance. Many feel that caste is prevalent only in rural areas. Of course, the relative anonymity and invisibility of the vast crowd in cities provide relief from the label of caste. However, at the same time, reservations make it persist in areas of employability and education amongst others.

How did such an institution come into being? Does it have a specific historical origin? What is the present and the future of caste in India?

Firstly, it would suffice to note that caste is drawn from the Portuguese word *casta* which roughly translates to 'pure breed.' Nowadays, caste is increasingly replacing the ancient Indian terminologies used to describe it; namely *varna* and *jati*. The former is the infamous four-fold classification of the society into four castes - Brahmanas (brahmins),

Kshatriyas (soldiers), vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (slaves). It also includes a fifth category called *panchamas* which means that the individuals in this category do not belong to any of the four castes.

Varna first came into origin around c. sixth century BCE. At that time, there was an intermixing of populations and sharing of beliefs, which threatened the homogeneity of the society. Therefore, the Brahmanas committed themselves to write the *Dharmasutras* and *Dharmashastras* which acted as a code of conduct for the Indian society. Although some concepts of caste had existed earlier, in the Late Vedic period, the conception was not that rigid. However, the formulation of the sutras and the shastras concretized this notion. One way of doing so was claiming the divine origin of the *varna* system.

An oft-cited verse was the *Purusha Sukta*

from the Rig Veda, about Purusha, the Primeval Man. It claims that the varnas originated from the various body parts of the Purusha, where the brahmins, soldiers, merchants, and slaves originated from the head, the arms, the thighs, and the feet respectively. The sutras also relayed the work that each section of the society had to do. For example, the brahmins had to conduct sacrifices, warriors had to fight, and so on. Members of the same occupations were classified into guilds, whereas the people who did not fit into any classification came to be classified under jati. Now, the term jati is extensively used to refer to caste in India.

Later, colonialism contributed to making the till then rigid boundaries of caste even more watertight. The 1901 Census conducted under Sir Herbert Hope Risley led to the collection of caste-based data, in order of social hierarchy. This led to people providing documentation of their precedence over others, including historical claims. Furthermore, land and revenue-based settlements were beneficial for the upper castes. The Government of India Act (1935) recognized schedules of castes and tribes for special treatment. This led to the existence of Scheduled Tribes and Castes.

Our nationalists and freedom fighters grappled with this system even during the struggle for Independence. There were many advocates for the rights of the untouchables and depressed classes, like Gandhiji, Periyar, Ambedkar, and Jyotiba Phule amongst others. Caste was transformed into a purely colonial construct which the nationalists had to fight against. However, after 1947, insecurity was rife amongst the upper castes concerning the special treatment of the lower castes. This led the Government after Independence to operate in a 'caste blind manner', to ensure that everyone had an equal ground for competition. However, the lower castes lacked the cultural and educational capital of the upper castes, who were able to outperform and consolidate their position among generations. This led to further denudation of an already weakened section of the society.

In Sociology, there is a theory of social deprivation that states that sections of a

society mobilize collectively and protest if they feel that their needs are being deprived. The term Dalit (downtrodden) was coined by the ex-untouchable communities to show their dejection and fight for their rights. In the early 1970s, the Dalit Panthers used this term to mobilize and fight for the recognition of their identity. Dalit writers have strived to make a mark for themselves, especially in literature which enables them to have a wider reach and make people aware of their situation. Moreover, caste has also been heavily politicized and many political parties such as Bahujan Samaj Party owe their origin to such identities.

After analyzing this pastiche of stories, it would suffice to conclude the existence of caste even now. Newspapers run abound with stories about Dalit grooms who are stoned for riding on horseback. Even my house helper tells stories about how her family had to pay a huge sum of money to get her married, just because she was of a lower caste. Wedding food has to be prepared by members of upper castes, otherwise, the community would not partake in the meal. The mere touch of a lower caste person is seen as defiling and they are still forced to do menial jobs like manual scavenging or playing the drums at a wedding.

The Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 sought to allow people to convert to other religions or castes, however, they made the caste identity even more visible. This identity is not restricted to any religion. Dalit Muslims or Dalits who have converted to Islam are shunned by Muslims as well as Hindus.

Although Article 17 of the Indian Constitution abolishes Untouchability, the matter is far from resolved. The introduction of Other Backward Classes has further complicated this precarious situation. The disparities are stark if the economic conditions are compared. Brahmins and Upper Castes still earn more per capita income than Dalits and Other Backward Classes according to a 2018 study. As caste becomes more and more visible, there is an innate sense of frustration among the people. Moreover, leveraging caste and religion for political interest makes the situation worse.

Even Kerala is not spared, as 7 cases of mob lynching were reported there in 2018. The victims were usually migrants, women, or 'lower' castes.

In 2018, Manoranjan Byapari won the Hindu Prize for non-fiction for his book, *Interrogating My Chandal Life - An Autobiography Of A Dalit*. As a rickshaw puller, a chance meeting with Mahasweta Devi changed his life. He says, "From a person, I have become a subject. I want to take my story far and wide. Many, many people can get the energy to fight their battles, that way."

As the downtrodden fight for their rights, it becomes imperative to recognize their suffering.

Its seriousness cannot be negated. Although affirmative action has helped to reduce the decades of injustice meted out to the victims, legal reforms alone cannot help solve the problem. Awareness at the community level is needed to address the resentment, as well as strict action against those who abuse their situation for unnecessary benefits, should be initiated.

Such practices not only disallow the real sufferers to benefit from the policies but also generate more contempt against them amongst the masses. Caste sensitization is the need of the hour, especially when it remains deeply entrenched in 21st Century society.



Submission by Prateeksha Upadhyay

"Those who teach the most about humanity, aren't always humans."
- Donald L Hicks



The Cinematic Conundrum

by Arya Roy

Due to its status as one of the largest film industries in the world, Bollywood has often been credited with creating and producing films that are inclusive and narrate challenging stories that often reflect and question the values prevalent in Indian society.

One of the most recent films that directly confronted caste-based discrimination through its narrative was Anubhav Sinha's *Article 15* (2019), starring Ayushmann Khurrana as a morally upright IPS officer who attempts to highlight the problems associated with the caste system after they are dismissed in rural India. The title of the film was derived from Article 15 of the Constitution of India, which prohibits any form of discrimination based on race, religion, caste, sex, or place of birth, while the story of the film itself was inspired by real-life events of Badaun gang-rape allegations of 2014, and the Una flogging incident of 2016. The film has largely positive reviews from film critics due to the performances of the cast and the sensitive portrayal of its subject matter.

However, a certain faction of critics and viewers have criticized the film for its upper-caste perspective on the issue it aimed to address.

Displeasure was voiced particularly for Khurrana's character, Ayan Ranjan, whose role as a Brahmin officer from a seemingly cast-blind community investigating a case of three missing girls has been viewed as a portrayal of the "Brahmin saviour." Such narratives that rely on the "saviour" trope often chronicle the lives of a certain minority demographic but centres on the actions of a privileged but benevolent protagonist. In the case of *Article 15*, Ranjan is depicted as a strong-willed and optimistic non-traditionalist who risks being ostracised by his more prejudiced community to help people of lower castes.

Since Ranjan is the main focus of the film, the story may eloquently discuss the notions of unity and fairness. However, the various characters of the lower castes end up becoming side-lined. Furthermore, the movie concludes on a largely feel-good note, which provides viewers with a false sense of security that the continuous and complex problem of casteism is essentially solved by the end of a 2-hour movie.

As well-intentioned as the film may be, its

critical acclaim and recognition in the form of numerous prestigious accolades – winning 10 awards out of 22 nominations, including the Critics Award for both Best Film and Best Actor – detracts from other stories grounded in the perspectives of lower castes and their first-hand experiences of casteism, such as those that are created by filmmakers who themselves are members of lower castes, particularly the Dalit community. These include Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry* (2014), Neeraj Ghaywan's *Masaan* (2015), and Pa. Ranjith's *Kaala* (2018), to name a few. However, none of these films were inducted into mainstream culture to the same extent as *Article 15*.

Other films like *Article 15* that fall prey to not allotting a sufficient proportion of its narrative to first-hand lower-caste perspectives include Franz Osten's *Acchut Kanya* (1936) – a film that is considered a reformist period drama due to its address of the social position of Dalit girls – Bimal Roy's *Sujata* (1959) – a story of an inter-caste marriage – and Prakash Jha's *Aarakshan* (2011) – which discusses the policy of caste-based reservations, among others. The sheer ubiquity of such stories indicates how committed our culture is to centre privileged and upper-caste characters in stories about caste-based discrimination, which is further highlighted by the fact that many of the actors who are part of such projects are members of higher castes themselves. These films continue to receive esteemed awards and nominations – with *Sujata* winning a National Film Award and even being nominated for the Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival – over films depicting the same themes made by Dalit filmmakers.

Hence, the fundamental issue is that upper-caste creators dominate a conversation where Dalit voices must be featured most of all. Meanwhile, these movies can frequently lack complexity in their portrayal of Dalit characters, who end up becoming one-dimensional and largely representational of their demographics, while the upper-caste characters have storylines involving a love interest, familial and societal conflicts, and complex character development.

They also risk being portrayed as passive in their own stories. In the case of *Article 15*,

various caste-based incidents encountered by Ranjan motivate him to investigate the deaths and disappearance of three Dalit girls. These include not being able to buy water from a local Dalit-owned shop, and being given a fresh plate at a dinner party while trying to eat from someone else's plate, whereas in reality, members of the Dalit community have been eager to narrate instances of casteism from the own perspective. Therefore, this simplified narrative centered on an upper-caste officer suggests that without Ranjan's involvement, the Dalit characters in the film would never even have encountered the struggle for caste equality.

One of the most central problems with such narratives is that while casteism is known to be deeply systemic, these movies often explore it solely on the level of the individual. Such stories can depict compelling and inspirational lower-caste characters, and might even feature real instances of violence and trauma experienced by them.

However, they rarely spend much screen time investigating the underlying systemic structures that lead to these characters being disenfranchised and victimized in the first place. As a result, audiences are not usually presented with concrete ideas for structural change, but are instead left with vague messages of unity and kindness. Viewers are made to feel that complicated, deeply entrenched problems can be eliminated by an individual who simply cares enough, exemplified by Ranjan in *Article 15*, Dr. Prabhakar Anand in *Aarakshan*, and Upendranath Chowdhary in *Sujata*. The hyper-focus on casteism on the individual level also creates the illusion of either binary good and bad upper-caste characters, who either choose to be discriminatory or choose not to be.

In the end, such protagonists are positioned as relatively selfless, and the resolution almost always involves them being rewarded with some form of personal fulfilment. In *Article 15*, Ranjan proves successful in his investigation of the missing Dalit girl. In *Aarakshan*, Dr. Anand is made the principal of the STM

Remedial Center, and in Sujata, Chowdhary readily accepts an untouchable woman as his daughter-in-law after she saves his wife's life. Crucially, all of these movies end with a heart-warming resolution. While society may still not be perfect in the end, the implicit message is that general progress is possible, mainly because of what these individual characters are capable of.

By contrast, in movies about casteism made by filmmakers of the Dalit community – such as *Fandry*, *Masaan*, and *Kaala* – the emotional message is frequently the opposite, as audiences are left feeling challenged, confused, or even confronted. *Fandry* ends ambiguously with its lower-caste protagonist, Jabya, grabbing a rock and throwing it at his oppressors, which represents him destroying his quest to be assimilated within the higher castes. In *Masaan*, the two main characters, Devi Pathak and Deepak Kumar leave their oppressive societies towards an uncertain future. Meanwhile, *Kaala* ends with its titular protagonist seemingly dying, following which many slums in Dharavi – the setting of the film – begin to revolt and protest to protect their neighbourhood. These pessimistic and ambiguous endings remind viewers that the fight against casteism is still ongoing. The films force us to reckon with the reality that caste-based discrimination is not some distant past, but rather, a pernicious reality that continues to be a part of all our lives.

When attempting to establish a personal stance that is against caste-based discrimination through creating or watching stories on screen, it means seeking out narratives that challenge us, instead of ones that make us feel comfortable. It means actively looking to confront our own bias against those of so-called lower castes, understand ways in which we are involved in a system that is responsible for caste-based discrimination, and hold ourselves and others accountable.

Meanwhile, as more filmmakers of lower castes have gained a platform to reach audiences, their films have been able to show characters of low castes grappling with how to best exist in a society that inherently works against them,

sometimes conflicting with each other in their views on their complex issue, such as the ideological differences between *Kaala* and his youngest son, Lenin. More importantly, these filmmakers increasingly have the opportunity to tell stories that include the challenges of casteism but are not solely about that. Stories about lower castes must reflect a diversity of individuals and stories, in which confronting caste-based prejudice is one part of a complex lived experience. One must understand that a monolithic experience of lower castes does not exist. Instead, akin to the upper-caste population, they are diverse within themselves, an aspect of their community that must be realized and portrayed in mainstream cinema.



How Many Oscillations Before It Stops?

By Saniya Sood

"Something as small as the flutter of a butterfly's wing can ultimately cause a typhoon halfway around the world" -chaos theory.

The history of drugs is a pendulum swing between devil and healer. Two sides of the same coin, the result happens to be in the hands of the person who tosses it. Depending on stability, balance and control, the prevention of falling into the rabbit's hole - in a wonderland of hallucinations, where everything seems magical - can be taken by referring to the 'no-one-size-fits-all' approach. Not insulting the caterpillar but rather taking his advice can prove to be fruitful.

As early as classic antiquity, the relaxing effects of plants like opium and coca, disguised as beautiful roses came with thorns of addiction. The potion used by Helen of Troy to treat the Greek Warriors could lull all pain, anger and make one forget every sorrow. Earlier considered a medication used for pain relief and anaesthesia, opium is now a substance associated with abuse and dependence. Traditionally, the coca leaf was chewed by miners to diminish fatigue. At the other extreme, smoking crack cocaine produces short-lived, intense effects felt immediately after smoking.

Is addiction solely caused by a substance or by an individual's vulnerability, psychology and social factors?

The answers vary, especially in the contemporary world where substance use has merely become a trending hashtag in the lives of so many. It is a danger for each person walking on the earth today, directly or indirectly.

Every mind craves calm, unable to achieve it, during stressful times and periods of distress, the mind craves it more than ever. Drugs as the magic trick seem perfect, being calm is achieved but every magic trick has a third act, the hardest part, called 'The Prestige'. Making something disappear isn't enough the magician has to bring it back; meaning to bring back the person from a world of fantasy. The magician is incapable of performing this act and the subject is trapped.

The north star can be anyone solicitous enough. Rehabilitation should be considered for each one who gets tricked by the drug magician. The sand slips from one part of the hourglass to the other, the sooner the realisation, the more the time for treatment. Strategies for treatment vary depending on

intensity, duration and nature of behaviour during addiction.

The United Nations General Assembly decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, an expression of determination, strengthening action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse.

There is no resting equilibrium on unanimous beliefs. As illustrated by a dialogue in

Shakespeare's Othello, with reference to every addiction

Cassio- "O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by let us call thee devil"

·
·
·

Iago- "Come, come. Good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used"



Submission by Muskan Saini

"It is better to live your own destiny imperfectly than to live an imitation of somebody else's life with perfection."

- Bhagavad Gita



‘Kaale’ Ko ‘Gora’ Bana De? Ab Nahi.

By Vidhi Taparia

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.” - Martin Luther King Jr.

This dream remains unfulfilled for many.

Whilst the world is tuning itself to the Black Lives Matter movement, there was an ongoing struggle for my maid's daughter to find a groom agreeing to her complexion. Colourism is dyed in the same wool as racism. It is shocking to realize that in a country like India - as diverse cultures as colours are present - white is considered to be the most suitable of all. The television advertisements promoting 'glow' and 'fairness', the portrayal of actresses in the cinema industry, the matrimonial commercials of newspapers for marriages, etc, are testaments to the grave reality of colourism.

Analyzing how it all started, the Indian society had not always been colour-oriented since always, and it was because of its colonial oppressors that the society was into this practice of harassment. The 'white skin' superiority was imposed by European colonizers for they were

fairer than Indians. This shaped the common man's association of white-coloured skin with the ruling class, with power, desirability, and also with beauty. British engraved this idea further when they stratified entry to restaurants, areas, settlements (Fort St. George settlement "White Town" and their Indian Settlement "Black Town"), and worked to prove that race was proportionate to intelligence. This westernized aspect of colour was advocated even by Churchill (remarking Indians as "beastly" creatures) and Kipling in his quote in *The Undertakers* (remarking that English men were uniquely fitted to rule 'lesser breeds without the law').

Beauty ideals of the media are propagated by lighter-skinned models and not by darker-skinned models. Rarely will one find products like clothing, jewellery, and even home appliances being advertised by darker-skinned models. The fact that media is involved in skin tone stratification is established by the market size of "fairness" creams and lotion in India approximating to US dollar 450 million, dominated by Fair and Lovely of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (76%) and Fairever of Calvin Klein (15%). There

are innumerable examples of products like these - "Fair and Handsome", "Garnier White Complete", "Olay Natural White", "L'oreal White Perfect". The evolution of actors shown in these ads using these "fairness" products from dark to white is usually depicted with the evolution of emotions too, from sadness to happiness as if colour is the sole source of happiness.

The media isn't the only place where colourism is practised. The typical referencing of skin colour being 'pinkish white' or 'peach' in the crayon boxes of children is percolating this idea in the newer generations as well. A petition in Bangalore was filed against the colourama crayon series of Hindustan Pencils, for the same, despite it not being the most prevalent skin colour of most Indians. In a Hindustan Times survey on marriage classified advertisements, only 2.8% of men mention their complexion while 13.5% of women mention theirs. The majority mention skin tone only if the skin is fair. According to a 2012 survey by matrimonial website jeevansathi.com, 71% of women prefer fair men for marriage. This demonstrates India's obsession with skin tone even in choosing their life partners when all that should matter should be the character of the person.

Colourism is a coinage of 1982 and it has not lost its relevance to date. This is because of 'pigmentocracy' - derivation of power and wealth from the superiority of 'skin tone'. This leads to a reduction of opportunities for darker shaded classes. This was observed in many types of research done in the field. A University of Kansas analysis found that skin colour influenced the chances of employment (among men). Asian male immigrants were particularly affected, because of this. Another study by Vanderbilt Law School highlights the income gap between light and dark skin immigrants in the USA which was about 25% higher in the former in comparison with the latter. Four out of ten women in Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, and South Korea used a skin whitening cream according to a survey. A popular phrase in Sudan is 'al-Husnu ahmar' - "beauty is red"; whiteness is the ideal colour in most Arab societies, with a hierarchy defined for different shades. Skin bleaching is popular

in Senegal and all across West Africa, especially among women.

In recent times, the colourism issue has gained momentum because of the announcement of Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) (Amendment) Bill, 2020 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which penalizes advertisements over fairness creams, reverse ageing lotions, and other 'magic' remedies. 'Women of Worth', an organization working towards the empowerment of women, started an awareness campaign called 'Dark is Beautiful' that drew attention to the unjust effects of skin colour classification and also promoted the diversity of all skin tones, a movement that was backed by activists worldwide.

It is interesting to find colourism being present in every aspect of human life and mainstream conditioning. However, now is the time for a change. It is time the brown of my face stops dictating the position and power I hold. It is time to change the rules of beauty and believe in the energy we all possess within.



The Promise

By Eknoor Singh

Rain battered the underside of the overturned car. It had been raining relentlessly, and it seemed that the night would get no reprieve. Everything was still, and the silence in the air was disturbed only by the pattering of raindrops against the wet tarmac. During the last ten minutes, the fresh scent of rain had intermingled with that of the malodorous fluids leaking from the car's engine, and the resulting stench made the boy in the passenger seat nauseous. The fact that he was strapped to his seat upside down did not help.

He took a deep breath and gulped some air, desperately trying to control his urge to throw up. He was tugging at the belt, trying to get free of its clutches, but to no avail. The blood rushing into his head made him disoriented, and as he flailed his arms around, he finally found the release for the seat belt. There. The belt gave way, and the boy landed on the upside-down roof of the car with a loud thud. He groaned loudly, wriggling out of the smashed passenger window.

The rain-drenched his clothes instantly, and the water stung in places, he noticed, as he slid out

of the car. He shook his head, trying to get rid of nausea, and looked down at his legs. His right knee had swollen. The blood coming out from his injury was getting washed away by the rain and was slowly colouring the puddle around him crimson. He winced when he touched his injured knee, his shaking hand immediately pulling back when it came in contact with what felt like a bone jutting out of his flesh. Ignoring the pain, he put his right hand on the car's body for support and tried to hoist himself up.

His left side was on fire, but he slowly got to his feet, putting the entire weight of his body on his left leg. He stood there for some time - using the car for support - and let the water trickle down his face, trying to remember what had happened. He bent his head forward to let the cool water run down his neck, and that's when the flashes came.

It had been raining mercilessly, and despite his father's warning, mother had decided to go for a drive. He had childishly agreed to accompany her. Mother had always gone for a drive whenever she fought with father, and today

had been no different. She said it calmed her, but her father had begged her not to go. He had asked him to help convince mother, but he had chuckled and said they would be alright. They were coming back when it happened - a black sedan had swerved past them from the right, mother had jerked the steering to the left, and the wet roads had done the rest. The boy suddenly snapped out of his reverie, his breath ragged, tears flowing out of his eyes. He sobbed, squinting in the darkness, looking for mother.

'M - mama?', he stammered, his voice drowned out by the sound of the rain. 'Mama?', he called out again, screaming this time. Tears welled in his eyes. Unable to see, he wiped his eyes and started to walk around the car to the other side. His heart was beating faster now, his chest heaving as he gasped in between sobs. Broken glass crunched under his feet as he leaned onto the car and limped his way to the other side. What he saw on the other side was not what he had planned on seeing.

'Mama!', he yelled as he scrambled over to the driver-side door that stood ajar, swaying with the wind. The pain that shot up from his right knee was unbearable, making his eyes water once more. He grunted as he shifted the weight to his left side, desperately trying to stay conscious.

His mother had struggled out of the car and was now lying crumpled at her side. There was blood everywhere around her and on her clothes. The boy sat down by her side. His roving eyes, moving up and down her body, unable to comprehend the source of all the blood. Mother's going to be okay, isn't she? He thought as he wrapped his small hands around hers. He noticed that her chest was moving up and down irregularly as if she was having trouble breathing normally. Her eyes were closed, and she looked like an angel who was resting. He wept as he put his head down on her chest.

'Mama?', he asked again, softly this time. What if she's asleep, I shouldn't wake her up. He looked up at her face, her eyes were open now, and she was smiling, albeit with great effort.

'Mom, are you okay?', the boy asked her, wiping tears from his eyes, and the water away from hers. Her smile widened, and she nodded, squeezing her son's hand. She tried to say something but couldn't.

'We'll tell dad we're sorry,' the boy continued, his expression filled with regret. 'We won't ever fight with him again, okay?'

Mother nodded, took a deep breath, and coughed, her face contorting with pain. She tried to speak once again but sputtered blood. The boy could sense something wrong, and tears started welling in his eyes. Mother raised her hand and wiped his tears away, shaking her head to tell him not to cry. She rested her hand on his cheek and summoned the last of her energy to speak.

'It's okay Kanwar,' she spoke, struggling to breathe. 'Don't be afraid. Everything is going to be okay. You trust me, don't you? You trust mama, right?'

The rain had ceased, and everything was silent. Kanwar could feel his heart beating furiously in his chest, and he thought he could feel his mother's heart giving up. He was furious at God for making his heart beat so fast while slowing down his mother's. He wanted to shout at Him, to ask Him to stop his heart, and make his mother's beat faster instead. But he swallowed his anger and nodded.

'I trust you,' he said softly.

'Good,' said mother, coughing more blood. She didn't have much time left, and she knew it. With one last spurt of energy, she pulled her son to her bosom and held him tight.

'I want you to promise me something, Kannu', she whispered in his ear.

'Okay,' he said, hugging his mother's dying body.

'Promise me, you will tell dad that I love him,' she said in between jagged breaths. She felt Kanwar nod.

'Promise me. You will stay strong and be a good boy and keep your father safe'.

'I promise'. Kanwar spoke softly.

'Promise me. You won't blame yourself?'

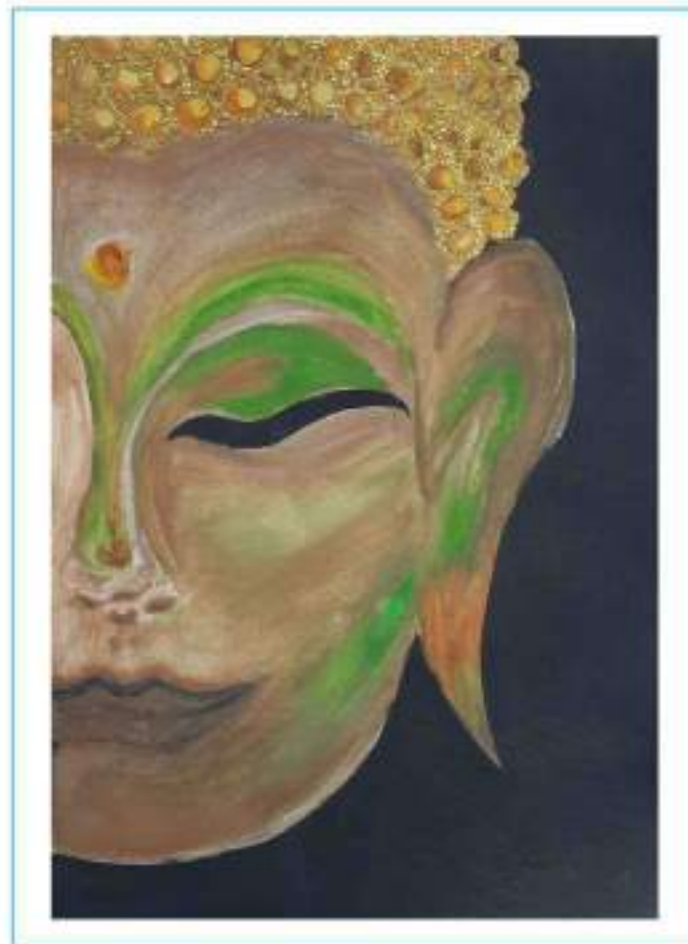
'Blame myself for what, mama?' Kanwar asked, but somewhere deep down inside him - something told him that he would never get his answer.

The eight-year-old boy held back his tears, desperately trying to keep the promise he had made to his mother only moments ago. He got up,

and as her lifeless arms let go of his body, he looked at her face. Mother's face had gone white, as life had seeped out of her body. Kanwar sat there, looking at her. Her face was as pretty as it had been the first time he had seen her as a baby, but now her bright dark brown eyes were still, out of focus, staring up at the sky. The boy softly closed her eyes, and as he held back tears of his own, he saw one trickle down his mother's cheek.

Promise me. The words now echoed in his ears.

'I promise'.



Submission by Suhasini Yadav

"Teach this triple truth to all: A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service and compassion are the things which renew humanity." - Buddha



Casteism in India: Social Distancing- A Thread

By Saniya Sood

COVID- 19- a virus and social distancing- the precaution. Today, the world is at a halt, lockdowns have jailed so many lives. It is suffocating for some because the atmosphere surrounding them isn't peaceful, but where can they go? Temples, mosques, offices, schools, restaurants, etc., all are closed. People have no choice but to stay within the four walls of their homes. However, for many in India, this is something they have been practising for years to survive in society. The virus of casteism has been torturing people and its mutation is so rapid that unknowingly thousands have been affected by it every year. Its victims have been choking because of constant and continuous restrictions.

1947- the year of India's independence from the British. Finally an independent nation after years of struggle.

Article 17 - Untouchability stands forbidden and punishable by law.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar won the battle against discrimination but did he?

"You can't enter this temple. The one for Dalits is there, near the outskirts of the village/town." Even after 70 years, these words can be heard from well-educated and settled citizens of the country. Easily said by the elites in the caste hierarchy, incidents like these crush people's self-esteem. Be it by a friend, a colleague, a teacher, a co-worker, or any person directly/ indirectly involved in the lives of 200 million so-called lower caste people, each one of them comes across people labelling or intentionally discriminating against them more than once in their lives.

Recently, stigma has been attached to those working at the forefront. Doctors, para-medical staff, nurses, domestic workers in hospitals and public places, drivers transporting goods, and all others in the essential services. They have faced a new form of discrimination spreading swiftly wherein people have stopped accepting them as a part of the same society they have lived in for years and started marginalizing them because of the genuine and understandable fear of being infected by the coronavirus which is rapidly transmitting across the globe. However, those facing the

same have been hurt at various emotional and psychological levels.

Similar to this were the logic and ideas that the caste system is based upon, where mobs have been easily convinced and influenced. The way one's destiny and karma were affected by coming in contact with another human being termed to be 'ashudh', only because they belonged to a lower caste, escalated the speed in vigorously spreading the belief of maintaining a certain distance from them as a precaution to being infected. As a result, a society that normalized such discrimination was established years ago.

Today, the mental health of so many is at stake

as the environment inside and outside isn't safe. Jobs, businesses, careers, education, marriages, healthcare, sanitation, housing... everything has become an issue of concern. The need is to realize that a lot of people forcibly have not been allowed to do many activities in India since ancient times.

As claimed by authorities that the virus does not discriminate between rich and poor, it becomes hard to believe the same in the current scenario. Though each life is precious, how can a person with the least opportunities, resources, and the label of being a lower caste not be more vulnerable in contemporary India?



Submission by Thupstan Palmo

"Every portrait painted with feelings in the portrait of the artist,
not of the sitter." - Oscar Wilde



Nepotism: The Big Debate

By Saina Suri

Ever since the traumatic news of the sudden demise of celebrated actor Sushant Singh Rajput broke out, the nepotism debate has been creating quite a lot of buzz. In light of the recent events, it becomes necessary to understand nepotism, its existence across various industries as well as the repercussions and remedies.

Nepotism as a phenomenon means the practice of using one's influence or power to favour a relative or close one, usually for a job. The debate, at large, revolves around extremely established and powerful individuals using their influence to pave the road of a smooth career for their family and friends. But what is often ignored is the fact that the seeds of nepotism are sowed deep within the roots of our society and it's not just something rich people do. Recollect the last time a relative of yours called you up and asked you to recommend them for a job. Happens all the time, right? THAT is nepotism too. Intentionally or unconsciously,

we've all been a part of it. It's not just the film industry that promotes this practice, it exists everywhere from politics to corporations.

It is extremely evident that nepotism exists at all levels and in all industries, so let's delve deep into it. Think about it from a parent's perspective, if you could, you would move oceans to give your child a beautiful life with all the amazing opportunities. Moreover, anybody would love a prospect to get an easy entry into their field of work, which of course, is not a guarantee of success.

Can we hold people investing in entertainment answerable, for bidding their money on star kids, who already have a fan following and would rake in huge numbers at the box office with their very first release? No. Because profit earning is the primary goal of a business and social responsibility is a choice rather than an obligation. As aptly reflected in the movie *Luck by Chance* (2009), Bollywood

is a capitalist industry where self-interest is above all. People are used as resources to earn profits and human values are mostly of secondary importance. So these big names in the industry are justified in their own way giving the audience what it wants.

So, when does nepotism cross the line of being a general tendency to favour individuals and become an alarming problem in desperate need of addressal? It is when incompetent people constantly get opportunities and not just a headstart, when they take these opportunities for granted and block the space for people who actually deserved to be in their place. When skilled individuals are unable to get due credit and recognition for their work due to lack of resources and accessibility, it takes a toll on their mental health, leading to depression, anxiety and even suicidal tendencies in some cases.

It is important for us to realise that we are a part of the equation too, the biggest part of the problem and the solution as well. It is our undying interest in the lives of starkids and our unnecessary obsession with big names that waters the plant of capitalism.

It's time to rethink the structure of our organisations, the way they function and the corruption and bias that exists in their very foundations. We, on a personal level, can help eradicate the negative side of nepotism by promoting and supporting talented individuals, being mindful of the opportunities we provide due to personal commitments and supporting people solely on the basis of their abilities, regardless of status, influence or power.



Submission by Karishma Pandey

"You should go out once in a while, appreciate the environment and indulge in small activities and it'd definitely bring a smile on your face."

- Avdhi Mehta



Capital Punishment

By Asheer Asiwaj

Prolonged detention of death row convicts in prison and international human rights law activists demands to end capital punishment, time and again forces countries to review the applicability of it, in the current time. Killing anyone in cold blood is the most heinous and abominable crime in any civilized society, and there ought to be a reasonable punishment for the crime. However, what is 'reasonable'?

Britannica defines capital punishment as "the execution of an offender sentenced to death after conviction by a court of law of a criminal offense". India is among the 56 countries in the world that have retained the provision of capital punishment, while 142 others have abolished it by practice or law. It is necessary to understand the objectives and the theories of capital punishment.

The objectives for the punishment can be spread out to three branches - retribution, reformation, and deterrence. Retribution lays the idea that criminals should pay for their wrongdoings, reformation emphasizes the change in attitude and behaviour of the criminal in a better way, while deterrence prevents future crime by frightening the would-be criminals.

However, under capital punishment, the second

objective is completely defeated, while the third doesn't have any empirical evidence that the death penalty imposes greater deterrence than life imprisonment. Amnesty International well establishes it through its report which stated that in the USA, the average murder rate for states that used the death penalty was 5.71 per 100,000 of the population as against 4.02 per 100,000 in states that did not use it. The rationale? When the crime is pre-planned, the perpetrators usually concentrate on escaping detection or arrest and believe that they'll outsmart the entire judicial system. Moreover, there are cases when people are willing to die for a cause that will only validate their commitment rather than enforcing the deterrence measure.

Additionally, most crimes are committed during moments of great emotional stress or under the influence of drugs or alcohol when it is not backed by any logical thinking. In such cases, violence is inflicted by persons who are not themselves in the correct state of mind. For these cases, medical assistance combined with life imprisonment would be the better option, giving them time and space to reform.

The term 'justice' has various connotations in society and has been construed in every possible manner suiting an individual's

conscience. And this is essentially why there exist conflicting theories of punishment - retributive vs restorative justice. In retributive justice, crime is considered as against the state and as a violation of law, and the criminal justice system controls the crime with the belief that punishment has to be proportional to the crime committed. While the other school of thought, restorative justice, considers crime as an act against the community and believes that crime has both individual and social aspects of responsibility. It thus provides for the reformation of society by awakening their morality and ethics. The non-applicability of the deterrence measure on capital punishment as was cited earlier leaves restorative justice as the only option available at hand. Moreover, if punishment proportional to crime is concerned (retributive justice), we cannot give a proportional punishment to the criminal who has murdered more than one person.

Crimes are much more about social failures than individual responsibility. By capital punishment, we are denying our role in crime perpetration and simplifying crime prevention. Also, the judicial system is not properly geared to identify the rarest of the rarest cases and most of the cases are being acquitted during the appeal process. Even constitutional remedies like judicial review, and provision under Article 21 (right to life), Article 7 (pardoning powers of the president), etc, are not able to safeguard the offenders from arbitrary capital punishment.

Between January 2000 and June 2015, the Supreme Court ordered 60 death sentences and subsequently admitted that it had erred in 15 of them. This arbitrariness goes against the rule of law. The weaker and marginalized sections succumb to these punishments in most cases, as they do not have the means to fight the case with the best of lawyers or legal aid. This justifies the statement that "those without capital get the punishment." Moreover, specifically in the Indian context, prisoners have to wait for a long time, even 20-30 years for their turn to come and they have been subject to double punishment, i.e., the trauma of the death penalty and life imprisonment.

Amnesty International claims that the death

penalty 'is a symptom of a culture of violence, not a solution to it'. It holds that the death penalty breaches human rights, in particular, the right to life and the right to live free from torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Across the world, countries are moving away from the death penalty and India stands out if it continues.

A former Governor of California Mr. Newsom once said, "I know people think an eye for an eye, but if someone kills, we don't kill. We are better than that." The best way to establish justice is to give rigorous life imprisonment instead of the death penalty and provide the perpetrator with a reasonable opportunity to be a better person in the remaining life.

"Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars." - Martin Luther King, Jr.



The Consequences of Online Connections

By Avdhi Mehta

George Sand once said, “There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved.” and in this competitive world, one thing that everyone lacks is affection. After a long tiring day, when we feel the need for a friend, we give in to social media as everyone, and in this pursuit of finding someone who would listen to us, we tend to forget what we have. The blue light that illuminates our faces while making connections with people online, is one of the reasons for the slowly diminishing sparkle in our real-life relations.

Similar to a coin, technology also has two faces. On one face, it connected us with those who were separated by distance, however, it also took away the people sitting right in front of us. It’s human nature to give more value to what we don’t have rather than appreciating what we have. Albert Einstein rightly predicted that technology will surpass our human interaction and the world will have a generation of people looking for comfort in other places.

The world is based on the concept of survival of the fittest. If we don’t adapt quickly we will be eliminated and while trying to survive we

forget to live. We overlook the importance of human interaction and the attention one requires to live life happily. Virginia Satir, a world-renowned family therapist, once said “We need 4 hugs a day for survival, 8 hugs a day for maintenance, and 12 hugs a day for growth.” However, as the saying goes, “Life is a race, agar tez nahi bhagoge toh koi tumhe kuchal kr aage nikal jayega” and we run as fast as possible to become the champion without knowing what we are leaving behind. By the time we realize what we left, the damage is already done and it’s not repairable.

Instead of regretting the mistakes we already made, we should emphasize the importance of small things, for example spending quality time with the family, because in the end it’s the little things that matter the most and if we don’t fix the little things how do we plan to correct the big things? Rather than always running after achieving the goals and shifting to social media to get self-validation and attention we should take a break at times and retrospect. We should first analyze the opportunity cost of neglecting the people we have in real life before making any hasty

choices that we regret 10 years down the lane.
In the end, it is not how much we have, but how
much we enjoy that makes us happy.



Submission by Nitya Bhardwaj

"She looked at her fears
directly in the eyes challenging them to stop her.
However her determination made them disappear."
- Avdhi Mehta



Lifestyle and Wellbeing Diving into Psychological Paradoxes

By Rinkle Saxena

Life is like going the wrong way on a moving sidewalk. Walk and you'll stay put, stand still and you'll go backward. To get ahead, you have to hustle." ~ Casey Neistat in *Life in 27 Seconds*

Growth and change are pivotal to the very existence of life and in the present times, fast-paced lives and technological advances have shrunk the world, and have brought about a new trend of idealism, setting new benchmarks for success. The magnitude of the holistic impact of minor lifestyle shifts has raised a question on the human ability to keep up with this pace of change. The fear of falling behind in the race while also wanting to stand out from the crowd has enabled the greed for instant gratification and radical change. There is a shift in our approach from sustainability to faster returns, with a natural inclination to look for the shortest possible route rather than to have the patience to find a sustainable path.

In his book 'The Power Of Self-Discipline', Brian Tracy explains the concept of 'The Path of Least Resistance' as "a natural tendency of

people to follow the fastest and the easiest way to get things they want in the short term with little concern about the long term implications of their behaviours." The myth of radical change and overnight success is pervasive and preaches along the lines of 'if you want massive results, then you have to take massive action.' often tend to lose their real essence as we link it to rapid goal-setting rather than sustained actions. Rapid growth contradicts the stabilizing forces in our lives as it's the natural tendency of life to find stability, a normal pace, and a typical rhythm. Whenever this equilibrium is lost, we tend to restore it.

Likewise, when we are pushing beyond the boundaries of our normal performance, the forces will work to pull us back whether we are trying to change for better or worse. Hence, the faster we try to change, the more likely we are to backslide since the very pursuit of rapid change prickles a wide range of counteracting forces that are fighting to pull us back into our previous lifestyle. We might be able to beat equilibrium for a little while, however, pretty

soon our energy fades and the backsliding begins.

The quest for radical change has far-extending impacts on our physical and psychological well-being and people often confuse 'hustle' with 'burnout'. While building proactive and healthy habits have golden strata of benefits lined up, we must remember that a healthy life stands on the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. To exemplify the difference between the two, let us draw a cross-reference to Zeno's Dichotomy Paradox. Suppose that I wish to visit a museum and hence I divide the distance such that to reach the museum, I have to first cover half of the distance i.e. that half of the distance will be my first goalpost. and then further I'll have to cover half of the remaining half distance. Hence, theoretically, there will be infinite mid-points and infinite goalposts and I will never reach my destination, even though practically the distance is finite.

This paradox highlights an important psychological belief where we feel that building habits leads us closer to a healthy lifestyle. However, lifestyle changes which are relatively gradual but consistent are more sustainable than building radical habits that probably won't last. Be it the glorification of overtime work in corporate work culture or long hours at the gym to get the ideal body, extreme exhaustion might be perceived as a quick solution to our needs, however, it often overlooks the crucial aspect of how feasible and sustainable that change is to us and what value does it add to our paradigm?

The power of small gradual shifts is enormous. For instance, using phones and gadgets immediately after waking up directly affects our brain wave frequency as it kicks our brains into sudden alertness, thereby disrupting the natural transition to awakening. The rationale behind quoting this example was to highlight the fact the lifestyle is made up of several small everyday acts. An impactful act starts with the simplest of things and when we cannot do the small things right, we cannot possibly do the bigger things right either. When you accumulate small wins and focus on one percent improvement, you nudge your behavioural equilibrium forward, similar to building muscle through consistent

effort. Complexity does not always translate to increased effectiveness and long-lasting change can only be achieved through consistency.

The paradox of behaviour change is that if we try to change our lives all at once, we will find ourselves returning to the same patterns as before. However, when we focus on changing our everyday routines, we will find our lives change naturally as a consequence. The latter option demands consistency and perseverance and one of the pitfalls to consistency is the pressure to stick to resolutions that we are no longer engaged with, hence making it the harder road to take. Dr. Louis Newman explains the impact of small changes as "... think about this in terms of a 360-degree circle if you're headed in one direction and you turn only one degree to the right, over a long period — it may be a very slight turn, but over an extended period if you now walk in that direction, you'll end up in an utterly different place than if you extend that line outward infinitely..."

Here is the impact of simple everyday changes on our well-being according to statistics. Research conducted by BMC Public Health in 2018 proved that small changes like striving to maintain the right Body Mass Index, having quality sleep, exercising, and limiting screen time have reduced the risk of mental health-related issues significantly.

There are times in our professional or social lives when we find ourselves juggling with our routines and personal space, and creating a boundary to ensure our well-being becomes harder, especially when our niche is highly dynamic and subject to uncertainty. However, the importance of building boundaries is undeniable. There's a famous saying that says "You must learn a new way to think before you can master a new way to be." and this is exactly where our paradigms come into play. Ultimately, it is our perspective and beliefs at the micro-level, embedded in our subconscious mind that control our habitual behaviour.



Behavioural Dilemma Of The Young

By Sheen

The lockdown brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has been a difficult phase for all of humanity, creating a detrimental impact on the mental health of most. However, the segment of the demographic that is the most deeply affected by the sudden change in the circumstances and way of life is the young generation.

At this age, the body, along with your brain, goes through a myriad of changes. Most of which the person is unaware of and is unable to cope up. As per various reports and observations, the adolescents have increasingly wanted more attention, become more adherent, and have been getting irritated at slight discomforts. Some parents even observed that their children have been experiencing feelings of fear, anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty. These developments are not only restricted to their mental activity as they seem to have pervaded their daily routine. Certain studies suggest that children now more than ever have developed unhealthy sleep patterns, with a loss in appetite and a tendency to constantly fidget and experience more nightmares on average.

In a normal situation, some issues at home are kept out of the children's sight to provide them with a "regular" and safe home environment. However, now, the lack of space, in most cases literally, has had kids become aware of these problems as they have become more conscious of the happenings around them. Additionally, the closure of the physical schools and colleges and the shift to online mode of education has been a considerable change to adapt. While earlier they were habituated to daily life with a set pattern and time of doing different chores, suddenly, that schedule became meaningless.

As per a study conducted by the 'Mental Health Organisation' in the UK, children became anxious during this period because of the lack of certainty about the future. With schools and colleges closing down as students, they had no clue of what would happen next. Those about to graduate from high schools fretted about the mode of examination or the metrics of evaluation. Similarly, due to the hiring freeze in MNCs in the last year, college students were unsure of their chances of getting placed. Hence, children were in a position wherein they had to get used to the changes at a pace that might have triggered

their natural growth and caused a detrimental impact on their well-being.

Previously, in addition to studying, children were also able to engage in meaningful one-on-one conversations with their mentors and peers; something has most likely become impossible and ineffective in these times. Another critical yet untouched issue is the different kinds of violence these children might be subjected to at such a tender age. As per statistics released by the Center for Global Development, there is a 65% rise in the number of children being 'maltreated' when not at school. And the scary part is that violence isn't just restricted to its physical definition but has extended to encompass the emotional and mental aspects, as well, which is even more damaging and harder to recover from. The concern is that these kids have nowhere to seek emotional, remedial, and legal help from, let alone getting help for the added mental trauma they might be going through, mainly due to the pandemic.

So, what steps can be implemented that can

minimize these psychological effects?

"When it comes to having a painful feeling, the only way out is through." We need to provide children with spaces that enable them to fully accept and process their feelings of sadness, isolation, or annoyance. They can pen it down, say it out loud or confide in someone they fully trust, as ultimately, acceptance is the first step towards healing. And moving forward, the children need to be encouraged to focus on their growth and evolving into a better person with more positives while connecting with people who they care for and who help them thrive.

The truth remains that "It's easier said than done.", however, with every little effort and each passing day, it does get better. To heal collectively, we need to, as a close-knit network, listen, help, confide and protect each other. Let us all strive to make our minds healthy and let us be kinder and more receptive to the children.



Submission by Lavanya Jain

"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter." - Rachel Carson



Breaking Down Stigma

By Aayushi

Have you ever cried in front of people and then cursed yourself for not being strong enough? Has anyone ever told you that being expressive with your emotions would make you a self-publicist? Have you ever clenched your fists and pulled a poker face, when you were about to feel those outpouring emotions? Breaking down in front of strangers often makes us feel fragile and self-disgusted. However why, why do we associate an emotion as inherent as crying with being incapacitated? And what exactly triggers tears in humans? What's the science associated with this behaviour?

Human beings are the only creatures whose tears can be triggered by their feelings. To delve into the mechanics, science says tears lubricate the eyes, and it is a proven fact that crying helps in removing the toxins from the blood, which is built up during times of stress. Biologically these are branched into three kinds- basal, reflex, and emotional. Basal tears flow continuously from the lacrimal glands, reflex tears are those that happen subconsciously when dust or an irritant gas enters, or maybe while you're cutting an onion and emotional tears are the ones that are triggered by human emotions. These may be a result of sadness or even due to empathy or compassion. Physiology

offers many explanations for the mechanics of crying, but we all know it transcends far beyond these conjectures.

As of 2015, on a global level, over 322.48 million people worldwide suffer from some form of depressive disorder and as of 2017, more than 14 percent of the total population in India suffers from variations of mental disabilities and now the pandemic has brought its share of fear, worry, anxiety, and uncertainty, with issues ranging from unemployment, job loss, isolation, changing work and school spaces, etc. Here is the question we need to ask ourselves -are we coping the right way? These circumstances are fragile and hence it becomes crucial to acknowledge our mental health, our emotions, and crying or venting out forms a comprehensive part of our predicament.

From a nascent stage, we have been conditioned to believe that crying is unhealthy, and crying in public spaces especially at work or school equals losing power. According to psychologists, there are five main assumptions in emotional intelligence- self-perception, self-expression, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and stress management.

Those who have mastered these aspects of emotional intelligence can control their impulses and deal with situations in a regulated way, such as preventing weeping in front of strangers, teachers, or bosses. On the other hand, quite a lot of us find it difficult to characterize our emotions and channel them in a certain manner. However, the question which boggles the mind is why is it considered a sign of weakness? Crying is an inherent human emotion, however, the way it is internalized and subjected, creates an entrenched stigma around it in our society.

Was weeping a taboo throughout the ages, or is it a societal construct that we have developed over time? History has numerous evident examples that suggest that crying was considered a sign of weakness, often associated with the weaker gender. The widely believed view in Western traditions that men do not cry, including the embodiment of the 'massive heroic weepiness' was scorned contemptuously. To cry is to fall from a position of power that patriarchy bestows on men. There is nothing anatomically natural about men being immune to pain (both physical and emotional), so it's a social construct that has been perpetuated to drive the point into our collective consciousness. This differential treatment is still meted out to different genders and has invincibly been normalized by us.

We have gotten used to phrases like 'women cry more often than men', 'don't cry like a girl', 'real men don't cry etc. Studies are projecting women cry more frequently and tend to report more positive crying experiences across cultures than men. While one may not be sure of the exact science behind it, some say it is probably due to hormonal levels. Testosterone, more common in men, would inhibit crying, while prolactin, more common in women, could help promote crying. However, these findings are not just based on nature and we are used to dividing our experiences of crying into binaries. This tendency at its core is sexist and toxic as it pressurizes men by discouraging them to freely articulate their emotions. Additionally, popular assumptions have equated crying with femininity which is considered to be more frequent in women. New studies show women's

pain is routinely underestimate due to gender stereotypes, such as false beliefs that women are oversensitive to pain. The fact that there are relatively fewer depictions of men crying in movies and popular culture does not help negate this perception.

Thus an urgent necessity to challenge and amend these notions lies on our shoulders. Often as kids, we are subjected to toxic narratives of how boys don't cry and how if you cry in public, you are weak and timid. This portrayal is soon internalized and impacts our psyche and how we process emotions, deeming some appropriate while suppressing others. Our emotions are scripted according to how our culture permits, sustains, and reproduces them and these experiences give birth to traumas and accelerate psychological deterioration in individuals. They scar our development, build anxiety, stress and inhibit our growth, thereby ruining the mental progress of the entire civilization.

Today we witness many non-profit organizations, charitable trusts, and support groups coming together to fight the stigma we have collectively built around emoting and more specifically crying. Crying should not be stigmatized, as it is an ingrained human emotion that reflects our sense of vulnerability. Sometimes letting go of the emotional turmoil piling up inside, makes one feel light. Simply put, it heals us and acts as a channel that enables catharsis from prolonged stress. Many western countries including America have registered a rise in peer groups that are formed with an intent to allow people to cry, and by that effect, heal together.

In these daring, tumultuous times filled with hopelessness and passivity let yourself loose. Shedding tears does not make you vulnerable, it is just another form of expression. If we are stopped from crying heartily then how will our laughs ever be wholesome?



Exploring Hunger in India

By Anshul Garg

"Hunger does not breed reform; it breeds madness, and all the ugly distempers that make an ordered life impossible".

-Woodrow Wilson

Indeed, hunger implies a want of bread. However, its satiation isn't in the fortune of several people in states such as Bihar and Jharkhand since they suffer in penury and eventually die of hunger.

Despite being one of the fastest growing economies in the world, hunger in India remains ignored despite requiring urgent attention. It is a matter of shame and acts as an impediment to progress in any civilised society.

On the one hand, our headlines boast of achievements such as the Mars landing. On the other hand, one reads about malnourishment induced deaths. Increasing birth rates pose a problem when trying to eradicate hunger. Most people are either uneducated about reproduction or do not have access to

contraceptives. If this gap were to be filled, family planning and economic freedom would improve.

A lot of schemes, initiatives and policies have been set up by the government and various NGOs, which need the collective effort of society as a whole to help those in need. For example, underprivileged must be made aware of the social safety nets that the government has come up with such as the Public Distribution System, the Antodaya Anna Rozgar Yojana, the Mid Day Meal Scheme, MGNREGA, and most recently in 2013, the Food Security Act which aims to provide subsidized foodgrain to upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of urban households. Another large development is the rise in digital platforms. For example, the web application 'Saathealth' is making India's children live a healthier life, with a vision to equip India's next-generation parents with the necessary resources and knowledge to bring up their own children such that they remain healthy.

According to FAQ estimates in 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020' report, 189.2 million individuals are undernourished in India. 51.4% of women of the reproductive age between 15 to 49 years are anaemic. Such issues are often erroneously assumed to be rooted in a lack of food. However, if we probe the root cause of hunger, the answer is far more complicated.

40% of the food produced in India is lost or wasted every year due to inefficient supply chains. India wastes about 7% of its total annual food production and almost 30% of the fruits and vegetables because of inadequate warehousing facilities and cold storage. Hunger is increasingly a product of processing, storage, supply chain and logistics challenges.

The National Centre for Cold-Chain Development (NCCD) estimates that the country has only 15% of the required temperature - control transportation facilities and less than 1% of warehouse facilities required for transporting pre-conditioned agricultural produce. The lack of infrastructure means that only 4% of the country's food is moved through cold chains. Cold-chains not only reduce post-harvest losses but also allow farmers to earn more by tapping into well-functioning remunerative markets while maintaining the quality of their produce. Moreover, resilient transportation will allow food to be transported from surplus to climate stressed areas.

Many poor countries have progressed in the last few decades and outranked India in the Global Hunger Index. The global index rank of India is 117 at present. Awareness among the general public, acceptance of the reality and dedicated steps from the Government are urgently required to fight against starvation in India.

Moving to the year 2020, the crisis of coronavirus affected India's poor and hungry the most. According to the surveys conducted by India's nutrition NGO 'Save the Children, families across India were faced grave challenges when it came to obtaining nutritional and healthy meals. The other challenges were in the form of food price

hikes, unemployment, restricted mobility and disruption of health and social services – regardless of whether they were directly affected by the virus or not – their nutritional intake, and therefore their overall health suffered significantly due to the pandemic.

The three major challenges that rural India faced in the times of coronavirus were the following- Firstly, the households had restricted cash for day to day activities and food supplies. Secondly, it was noted that under the government schemes and services, the beneficiaries did not get a constant supply of their rations during the pandemic rise.

It was observed that one in every three households did not receive their take home ration (THR), close to two-fifths of the households reported that their children are not receiving mid day meals and are therefore becoming weak.

Other than domestic issues, COVID-19 also left its footprint on India's trade. India, which was earlier planning to export US\$100 billion worth of agricultural products by 2025 and expecting a record harvest of 295.7 million metric tons in the preceding years, faced a turning down of tables and thus, the situation took a 180 degree turn. According to a UN report, for India, the trade impact is estimated to be the most on chemical sector at 129 million dollars, textiles and apparel at \$64 million, the automotive sector at \$34 million, leather products at \$13 million, metals products at \$27 million and wood products and furniture at \$15 million. As a whole, COVID-19's impact on India's trade is estimated at \$348 million.

The pandemic amplified the vulnerabilities of the national food system. It disrupted local, regional and national supply chains which further affected food waste problems. Also since most of the migrant workers were stuck at home, labour shortage delayed the mid-April wheat harvest by 2 weeks which resulted in a 9% hike in wholesale prices and an 11% hike in retail prices.

India hadn't even begun to deal with this

tragic period when a new problem of Locust invasion arose which made the matters worse for rice cultivation. In mere hours, a 1km swarm containing about 40 million locusts ate as much food as 35,000 people in one day.

While everything seemed dim in the prospects of Mid Day Meal (MDM) programme, a new ray of hope emerged when HRD announced an additional expenditure of about Rs.1700 crores for the smooth functioning of MDM.

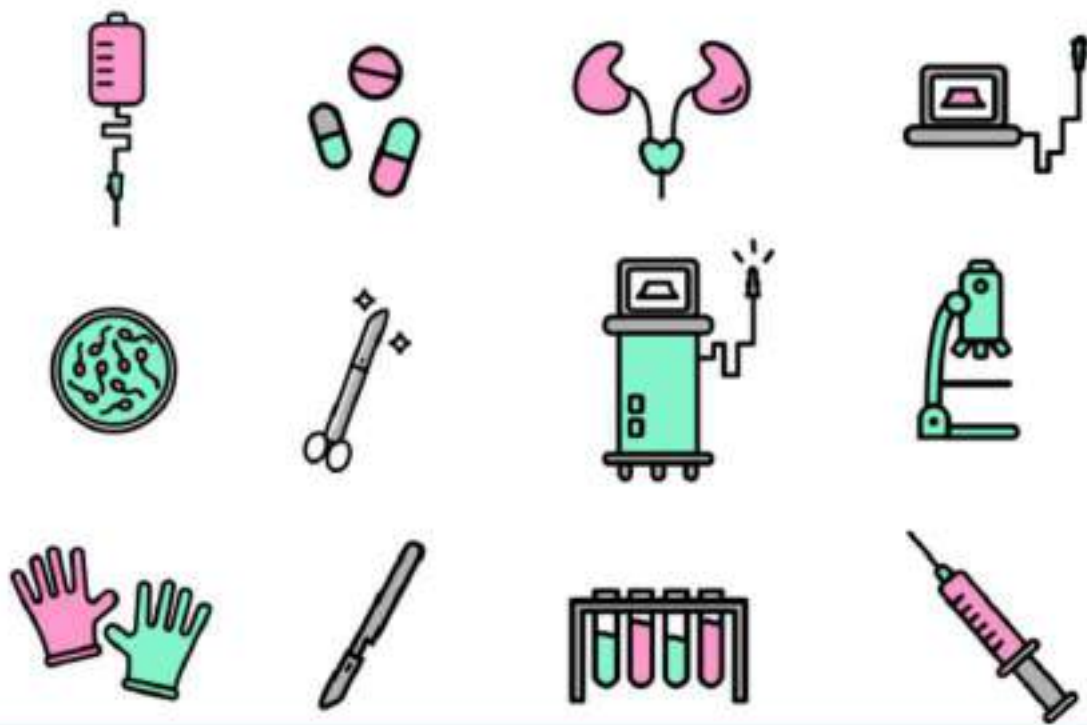
HRD proposed its implementation in three different ways: either serve hot meals to children's doorstep, provide them with monthly ration kits or provide them with the money conversions also known as Food Security Allowances.

However, the proposed plan wasn't actualised. Across 15 states, 40% of the eligible children didn't receive mid day meals during the lockdown. Also, a country like India which is full of bureaucratic web and political parties, the focus remains on reach instead of the quality of food. Political parties use this tool to toot their party's horn regarding their contributions. They don't bother to check whether the scheme is implemented properly or not. Another reason for this loophole is the prevalence of the deadly worm within: corruption which led to the diversion of funds worth Rs.23.29 crore, as found in CAG's performance audit report.

According to Fleme Varkey (India News), there are still states like Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh afflicted with large scale caste and gender-based discrimination where SC/ST/Dalits are still made to sit separately from others, where children of upper caste deny to eat food cooked by SC/ST women. Another failure discovered was the fact that the oil used for cooking food was kept in a pesticide store. All this results in malnutrition, stunted growth among children and sometimes, deaths.

All the schemes introduced to combat hunger in India should be made effective and efficient by addressing target groups more specifically. The officials should ensure that all provisions are distributed among people in need, thus eradicating instances of starvation.

Developing and upgrading rural infrastructure, training farmers in post-harvest practices that minimize losses, integrating small scale enterprises into value chains, organizing smallholder farmers into farmer producer organizations, investing in agricultural research, and last-mile marketing channels are extremely important to achieve the zero-hunger challenge. This is also important for ensuring social equity, gender inclusivity, and reducing agriculture's carbon footprint.



Debunking Myths

By Saina Suri

On one hand, society has progressed and become more tolerant and modern. On the other hand, we still shy away from talking about a lot of essential topics that are considered 'taboo'. While this attitude has persisted in society for a long time, its ramifications were not taken into account until now. Today, abstinence-based sex education is widely accessible, yet sexual health remains taboo. Some may argue that sex education has been assimilated into the academic syllabus in our schools and unlike our parents, we are more exposed to the idea of exploring our bodies and discussing our concerns and insecurities regarding their sexuality. However, has this answered all our questions and produced well-informed and self-aware young adults? There's one way to check! Following are some common myths surrounding sexual discourse.

MYTH 1: Too much information during teen years is not important

It has been a common belief that talking to teenagers about sex will harm their mindset

and will make them more prone to indulging in injudicious sexual practices at a young age. Although, studies have shown that lack of proper sex education leads youngsters to resort to inapt sources like pornography, which has been identified as one of the top stimulants of rape mentality due to its interpretation-based nature. It is very common for porn to portray women as objects meant to derive sexual pleasure from, rather than individuals worthy of respect. Adolescence is the time when one experiences an overwhelming amount of physical and psychological changes and thus, it is the best time to educate young people about their bodies and empower them to make informed decisions.

MYTH 2: Menstruation is impure

A process as natural as menstruation is projected to be impure. Young girls are told not to visit temples or step inside the kitchen during periods, and they are taught to deal with menstruation in secrecy, hiding pads, tampons, or menstrual cups in opaque bags.

No wonder a majority of young boys tend to be insensitive towards the process and would usually laugh at a girl if she gets a period spot. Most girls don't even know what menstruation is until they get their first period; leading to anxiety, confusion, and shame. Lack of knowledge and resources causes numerous health issues like vaginal infections, pelvic inflammatory disease, etc. Educating everybody about the normalcy of this process will help create a safe and supportive environment for menstruators.

MYTH 3: Sexual harassment can only be physical in nature

Most people associate consent with just sexual intercourse, however, consent is also a moral value. Respecting others' boundaries is a very vital principle that should be imparted at an early age. Any form of invasion of privacy, be it physically, verbally or through technology, constitutes harassment. Slut-shaming, body shaming, sexting crimes, etc. are commonplace because the severity of the impact that they have on a person is often neglected. Consent is a shared responsibility and one should learn to be sensitive about sexuality at large.

MYTH 4: Contracting STIs is a matter of shame

The notion of considering people with STIs unworthy of indulging in any form of sexual activity in the future promotes silence, which can cause further damage. Most STIs are curable by either external procedures or the immune system and shaming patients only traumatizes them and reduces their chances of fighting the disease with a strong will.

These were just some of the millions of myths regarding sexual intercourse and reproduction. Determining how many of these you believed to be true is a great way of ascertaining the level of sex education you have been imparted. Despite continual efforts of the government, there has been strong repulsion from citizens to educate youngsters about their bodies which has led to countless problems. It is time to break the silence and say yes to comprehensive sex education.



Period Poverty- Trivialising a Necessity

By Saumya

Period poverty is the inability to afford period products due to lack of access and financial resources. Menstrual products are some of the most frequently requested items in homeless or refugee shelters, but least frequently donated. Globally, 2.3 billion people live without basic sanitation services and in developing countries, only 27% of people have adequate hand washing facilities at home, according to UNICEF.

People experiencing period poverty are forced to use rags, toilet paper and other unsafe alternatives to menstrual products. This often results in serious health issues like thyroid problems, Uterine fibroids, bleeding disorders etc. Menstruation is something that we hide, something that we keep to ourselves and discussions on menstrual hygiene are swept under the rug. This idea of menstruation as something 'impure' is at the root of why we have problems like period poverty today. The fact that we as a society don't prioritise women's concerns is it health, safety or equal pay has led to poverty being viewed as an issue far removed from poverty and often less serious than it.

The reality is that just as some people might not be able to fully afford necessities like food and shelter, similarly there exists a section of the population that cannot afford to buy necessities like pads or tampons. Many countries like Spain and Switzerland still impose sales tax on period products considering them luxury non-essential items meanwhile products like Rogaine, Viagra and penile pumps are considered essential goods, necessities.

A taxon Tampons or menstrual pads, also known as 'pink tax', doesn't affect the people who are well-off but it does affect the people who live on the periphery of society. The condition of homeless, refugees and imprisoned women is far more concerning. So, tampon tax is the trojan horse that we have to scuffle with before we can address overall period poverty. Inadequate menstrual hygiene affects populations in the developed and developing world, and women living in poverty are especially vulnerable.

In countries like Thailand, there are tax laws introduced by the Government of Thai, where menstrual products are subject to a 40% tax rate which means no rigorous studies are examining the state of period poverty by limiting access to information and leaving people in Thailand with a huge knowledge gap. Poverty in Venezuela means that many women are forced to buy menstrual products in the black market at prices that equal roughly 1/3 of their monthly incomes because of the crises of hyperinflation and lack of basic resources. The Government of Venezuela isn't accepting any foreign aid, so many women are looking to newspapers and other paper products as menstrual substitutes. In India, an estimated 70 per cent of all reproductive diseases are caused by poor menstrual hygiene. Women often use dirty rags as a replacement for sanitary pads. Diseases like Urinary tract infections prohibit women from reaching their full potential when they miss out on opportunities vital to their growth.

Period poverty creates a huge challenge for the education of young teenage girls. On average girls miss six days of class each due to shame surrounding their period days. Contributing to this every year around 23% of girls drop out of school. Girls that leave school are stunted in their careers and are more likely to become child brides. India has the highest number of child brides in the world, with 15.5 million children being married by the age of 18. The barriers to adopting hygiene practices are three-fold i.e lack of awareness, a lack of acceptance and a lack of access.

A lack of awareness leads to girls having no prior information about their periods until they experience it for the first time. According to an article published in the World Economic Forum, 71% of adolescent girls remain unaware of menstruation until their first cycle. Also, owing to a lack of awareness, they do not prioritize it as an 'essential health need'. Even when we talk about Affordability the big question is about the relevance- mothers and daughters think that a sanitary pad is 'good-to-have' rather than a necessity. As a result, household spending on essential menstrual hygiene is just a small fraction of what is spent on other items, such as cosmetics.

A lack of acceptance leads to the term being negative for women, associated with fear, anxiety and embarrassment. Add to that the widely prevalent taboos also force women to stay indoors, skip school, be relegated to a certain part of the house and not allowed to enter the kitchen or temple. Lack of acceptance means most of the women want to keep periods a secret, which results in them not using sanitary hygiene products and missing school as a way to manage menstruation.

A lack of access to quality hygiene products continues to be a barrier to achieving 100% coverage for menstrual hygiene. Studies indicate that most girls do not have consistent access to good-quality menstrual hygiene products with 88% of women and girls in India using homemade alternatives such as old clothes, hash, rag, or sand. In addition, women also lack access to appropriate sanitation facilities.

The first and foremost step to terminate period poverty is to break the shame and stigma surrounding periods. Menstruation should be normalized and policies should be made to provide menstrual products easily accessible and affordable. Government plays a salient role in the same as they have the efficiencies of scale within the system. It's heartening to see the Indian Government considers menstrual hygiene as a 'priority'. They have the most extensive reach and improving acceptance and access through their machinery can create a mass-scale impact.

Corporates and brands have the power of advertising and a media voice that have the potential to shape society. They must use this voice to break the societal taboos that exist today. An excellent example comes from 'Touch the Pickle Campaign' from P&G in which any brand in India took on the taboos surrounding periods on a mass scale. The campaign not only sparked conversations on period taboos but also drove acceptance of these conversations. NGOs and individual change-makers have a crucial role in mobilizing communities and creating

a change at a grassroots level. The Entertainment and media industry has always influenced society and can be the catalyst in the menstrual hygiene of the country.

Health and education systems are very salient to driving change. There is a salient need to educate the menstruators about the hilarious outcomes of not possessing menstrual hygiene. Countries should abolish tampon tax as Menstrual products are a necessity and a right, not a 'privilege'.



Submission by Manya Gupta

"The splendour of Rajasthan - old world' charm and beauty."
- Saumya Yaduvanshi



Is it the end game or the game that would never end?

By Vanshika Anand

The shining rays of the sun-kissed me on my forehead while the chirping birds cheered my morning. The sublime air filled my lungs with happiness as I was breathing in positivity. It was the epitome of a perfect day and seemed like hope had personified itself. Nevertheless, I realised why the day was so aesthetic, it was because the virus was out there, alive. The news headlines despairingly reported cases in India and the world was at a threshold, begging for help. Well, soon the cases arose and our biggest nightmares came true. We were forced to lock ourselves and were had to cut off from our lives that hitherto seemed so 'normal' and accessible. A new chapter, rather a new story was about to inscribe itself in the history of mankind. A story so dreadful, that it could shake the generations to come. The initial 21-day lockdown looked like a possible solution, but who knew it would get so dreadful.

Kudos to us for ruining the natural imbalance of this planet. We often say mother Earth is punishing us for our deeds. It is possibly nature's

way of giving us a taste of our own medicine. But is it the case? Mothers know the importance of life, they experience it inside them, protect their children while consistently enduring pain. Similarly, our mother Earth keeps us safe and no matter what, even she can't see her children dying and gasping for breath. So, before we blame nature, we must introspect and see what we've done wrong. From killing thousands of animals to slashing hundreds of trees and destroying the habitats of millions only to create the so-called 'home sweet home' for ourselves. Our selfishness has reached the pinnacle. However, why should we bother? We aren't the only stakeholders, right? Perhaps because the water has surpassed the level of danger. Now, this water isn't potable and the air isn't breathable. Where are the greatest achievements when our lungs are gasping for oxygen? These questions continue to boggle my mind.

The social distancing seems challenging while, on the contrary, we've always stood

poles apart mentally and emotionally. All it took was microscopic bacteria to make us more humane. To see the silver lining, maybe this is the time to put everything at a halt and introspect. However, this contemplation has brought our anxiety, insecurities and vulnerabilities to life. Perhaps this is the reflection of our real, honest and brutal selves.

The response of the crumbling system to this crisis has been decadent and immoral. The centre and the states are arguing, blaming and playing classic politics. All this at the cost of its citizens. The political rallies were an abysmal display of the failure of promises and responsibilities. We need to come to terms with the fact that the wobbling legs of the government will not take charge of any fatalities. The onus of being vigilant lies on us.

It is difficult to say whether these politicians would find salvation anywhere from what they do. All we have got is to be there for each other.

The home and the world are nearing an apocalypse, and our only refuge lies in phrases like 'this too shall pass' These words give us hope, they keep us driving through these arduous times. They offer a recipe of elation that is unique in itself. It paints the canvas of life with its various hues. We must remember these strenuous times for the rest of our lives. For they will remind us of the catastrophe, what we went through and what it taught us. Because covid is neither the first nor the last virus to affect us, so be kind, be responsible and be there for each other.

SAMARPAN



“Some people look for a beautiful place. Others make a place beautiful.” - Hazrat Inayat Khan

With a heart for service and an intention to spread endless joy and warmth, NSS SRCC organized “SAMARPAN’21 - Ek Kadam Aarohi Ki Ore”, its annual fest on the 27th and 28th of February, 2021. The fest offered its participants an opportunity to experience selfless love, up-close! The fest was held in collaboration with AAROHI, an organization that works considerably for the cause of community development in the rural Himalayan regions and all the proceeds from the funds raised through SAMARPAN’21 have been channeled towards providing quality healthcare and education, empowering local women, prompting sustainable development and reviving traditional culture and practices.



The opening ceremony was held on 27th February 2021. The ceremony was graced with an address by our Principal Ms. Simrit Kaur and our Programme Officer, Dr. Santosh Kumar. Ms. Ayushi Chand, an Indian Economic Service Officer, who is currently serving as the Deputy Director, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and Dr. Pankaj Tewari, Executive Director at AAROHI, truly illuminated our two-day festival.

In an endeavour to positively influence the thinking of individuals, NSS SRCC organized **CONVERGENCE 5.0**, a celebration and confluence of NSS units across India, as its flagship event under Samarpan'21. The event aimed to connect volunteers pan India with the hope to have constructive discussions around social issues that require our agency including mental health crisis, old age abandonment, sex education, etc. After weeks of ideation, preparation, and planning, the event finally concluded successfully and the NSS unit of Usha Pravin Gandhi College of Arts, Science, and Commerce in Mumbai emerged as the winning team.

“It was our first time when UPG NSS represented itself in a national-level competition. We would like to thank the entire organizing team for providing us with this opportunity to network with such dedicated NSS volunteers throughout the nation.”

- Team UPG NSS, Winners



SOCIO-BEE 7.0, serving as a platform for ideas that can positively impact the world, was organized to enable budding social entrepreneurs to come up with innovative business plans centred around issues of social significance and providing them with a platform to present feasible solutions to pragmatically address social problems that plague our society. With teams of both schools and college students from all over India, the event witnessed diverse, practical, and extremely thoughtful action plans to tackle social problems and great entrepreneurship skills.

“Working in and pulling off a business plan competition was an incredible experience. Socio-Bee has allowed me to encounter students of different colleges,

who have presented their business plans with a motive to selflessly help and create change in society. Leading this event has enhanced my ability to think unconventionally, yet be flexible to open ideas, which could not be possible without the zestful team of juniors, co-heads, and seniors.”

- Sri Vaishnavi, Co-Head of Socio-Bee

“Participating in Socio Bee was an enriching experience. The event, as a whole, was well-organized and all the rounds were enthralling. I learned how one can pitch effectively and present their idea more efficiently. Looking forward to participating in similar events in the future!” - Devesh Maniramka, Winner

“My experience has been a memorable one; both in terms of this being the first college event I was part of as well as learning the dynamics of making case studies as we were asked to make them for the participants. Also, I could understand the meaning of the line that the real test of critical thinking is in making case studies.”

-Sanjana Dixit, Organising Member



RURAL RE-TALE 5.0, a social case study competition, aimed to bring together participants pan India who have a drive not only to address social issues but rather managed to come up with practically feasible solutions for the same.

“It felt great to be a part of such a virtual event where we could give suggestions regarding the problems of Aarohi. During this event, I learned a lot of new things. I enjoyed interacting with the members of NSS and the staff of Aarohi. It was a new experience for us where we could participate from our home during the lockdown.” - Akshita Singal, Participant



PRIVATE EYE, a fun event that involved solving a murder mystery was also organized to ensure that the amusement of the fest remains intact. The event not only had the participants laughing and puzzled but also questioned the social dilemma that one goes through, while simultaneously being involved in the investigation to solve a nail-biting mystery.

“Private Eye was aimed towards a righteous cause and was also a great learning experience for me. It gave me a chance to get acquainted with the skill of event organization, how to put forward your suggestions, and definitely how to deliver the best. We successfully crafted a nerve-wracking story, curated forms, and even posed as actors for different characters... full of adrenaline rush and suspense, a super engaging and exciting event was pulled off.” - Shruti Garg, Organising Member

“Murder Mystery was a great game, and I participated in such a competition for the first time. The communication was top-notch, so was the story of the game. Would love to participate again!” - Sadhvi Pandey, Winner



There is no such thing as too much creativity. NSS SRCC also organized a **DOODLE ART COMPETITION** to address social issues through creative artistry skills. Vanshika Anand emerged as the winner of the competition for her beautiful artwork aimed at empowering the cause of body positivity, a social movement initially created to empower overweight individuals, while also challenging how society presents and views the physical body.



Stereotypes trap us and often the need to conform to them prevents us from spreading our wings and instill fear in us to fit into boxes. Acknowledging the need to combat stereotypes and providing a platform enabling students to freely express themselves, **SEIZE THE STEREOTYPE** was an event aimed to tackle the detrimental impacts of stereotypes concerning various people of the society and break free from the pressure to conform that stereotypes often evoke in people. The winner for the Seize The Stereotype was Shrestha from the School of Open Learning (Delhi University)



‘WEAVE THE CAUSE’ was an event for budding writers providing them with an opportunity to unleash their creativity. The participants were required to complete a story based on a prompt given.

“I had to complete the story based on a prompt given in the registration form. It was quite challenging as I had to write a story in about 250 words and submit it in 2 days. The competition provided me with a platform to express my thoughts and improve my creative thinking. I never thought of winning the competition, I just took part in it because I love writing. It gives me immense pleasure to have won it.”

- Muskan Saini, Winner



The pandemic robbed all of us of the smallest of joys, be it meeting our friends, or going out with our loved ones. However, we ensured that it did not stop us from experiencing the magic and joy of Samarpan. Promising an evening full of soulful music, dance and spell-bounding performances by artists from different fields, **FITTOOR- THE CULTURAL EVENING** was organized on the 28 of February 2021. The evening was filled with performances of people dancing to the rhythm of their hearts, singing along to the music of life, reciting words from the depth of their hearts, and much more. The evening became even more memorable with the presence of Ms. Vanika Sangtani, a famous slam poet and the founder of ‘AGED DENIED’, an organization that works to provide education to all age groups. We also had the pleasure of hosting Ms. Shreyasi Walia, a law graduate from the UK who works as a Professional Meditation Trainer and

Spiritual Influencer. Her take on spirituality not only made us fall in love with meditation but also encouraged us to become a better version of ourselves.

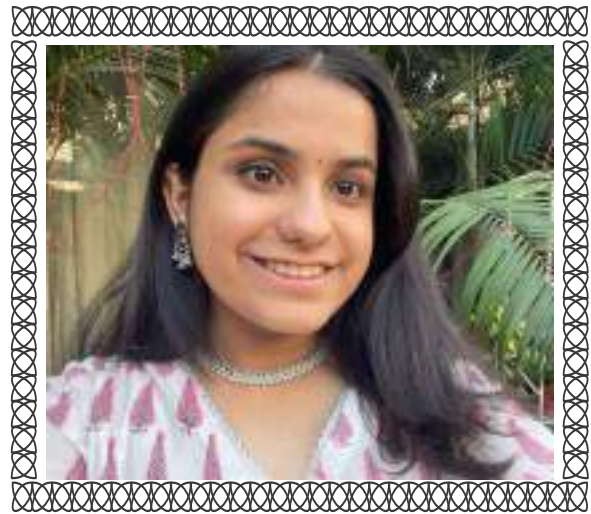


“It was wonderful to be part of Fitoor. The excitement and enthusiasm of the students were palpable and infectious. Everyone’s performances were great and it was so good to see that people were confident and comfortable while performing which says a lot about the kind of environment NSS created for their participants. It felt like we were all friends and part of the same circle. Those 2 hours were full of laughter and smiles. It was wonderful to be part of it!”

- Shreyasi Walia

“I had a great experience being a part of Fitoor. To be able to perform in an environment that is so full of warmth and joy is a dream for any performer. Adding to it was the cause that Samarpan stood for, testament to NSS members’ selfless service and endless warmth!”

- Vanika Sangtani



Samarpan means dedication and devotion. Carrying forward the legacy of NSS SRCC and living up to the name of our event, SAMARPAN 2021 was all about devotedly addressing the social issues present in the society through the means of our creatively built events and selflessly serving the society with the help of our collaboration with Aarohi. However, most importantly it was about the shared love, warmth, and joy of our NSS family. NSS SRCC truly believes that social service is a great way to find our happiness and SAMARPAN is its biggest testament, for it provides us with endless joy and truly cherishable memories for life.



VAANI

Voices Ft. NSS SRCC

"You find yourself when you lose yourself in service of others".

"You recognize your privilege only when you're forced to engage with grassroots stakeholders".



Khyaati Bhati

Social Health Head (2018-19)



When I think of my life at SRCC, I only remember NSS. The best of friends and the best of experiences were with the members of the NSS team. This team gave me opportunities and experiences that no one else could have. From running around Chandni Chowk to buy award trophies to visiting slums, from organising health check-up camps to leading a team of over 30 volunteers and making them run around for 'hours'...all the work was carried out with the hope of it translating into marginal societal changes, and this gave me an innate sense of peace. Getting to know such talented members, both seniors and juniors, helped me grow every single day.

I have met some of the brightest and most compassionate people at NSS during these two years, and I will cherish these memories forever.

Charu Garg

Project Sanskar Head (2018-19)



It has been 2 years since my journey with NSS marked its culmination, however, it feels like yesterday since all memories flood my mind every now and then. Having been a volunteer and subsequently the project head of Sanskar, NSS formed an integral part of my time at SRCC. In teaching little chirpy kids, so full of life and enthusiasm, I grew myself, and in organising fun activities for them, I relived my childhood. It was a concoction of countless emotions and today, I am proud of the current team for adapting quickly to the pandemic and ensuring that the progress of NSS and Project Sanskar remains on track.

Khwaish Verma



Project Kali Head (2019-20)

My journey at NSS SRCC has been one of the biggest turning points in my life. I learnt to approach existing issues through different perspectives. Each day that I spent at NSS was enriching and full of new opportunities and experiences. Situations changed, surroundings changed, hurdles changed but one thing that was constant throughout the journey was my team - The Cabinet. I might never be able to express in words what the NSS team has taught me in my personal and professional life. NSS SRCC always strives to serve society in as many ways as possible and tries to brainstorm innovative ideas to help various communities through various projects. The team not only sets goals but ensures delivery of the same. That is what makes it different. I wish I had a time machine to relive my journey at NSS SRCC.

Mehak Bodh



Volunteer (2019-20)

In my first year, I was asked about my commitments in a society interview. On mentioning NSS, the interviewer told me there were other “better” societies involved with social work in the college. And honestly, even though it had been only a week since I had joined NSS Sanskar Wing, the comment did not sit well with me. It’s surprising how fast NSS becomes a part of your identity, occupying a major chunk of your head and your heart. More than the work, it’s the people you get attached to; the talks, the smiles, the shared feeling of being able to make a difference and do better for people around you. NSS makes you want to stay, and trust me, even though I’d completed my tenure, I so desperately wanted to continue. Whenever any post comes up on its social media handle, the content makes me smile and warms my heart. That is what NSS is about, bringing joy into people’s lives, and a smile to their face.

Danish Mahajan

President (2018-19)



When I joined the college in July, the entire campus was brimming with different society orientations. It's very typical of SRCC students to sit for the recruitment process of all societies and my decision to apply was fairly influenced by the general environment. I was not particularly conscious of doing good for society as my formative years in school hadn't provided me with that sort of exposure. In our first semester, NSS conducted a lot of sessions on issues of youth, drug addiction, etc, and even though these sessions were interesting, it was only towards the end of the semester that I grew attached to NSS. This was due to a visit that NSS conducted to a rehabilitation centre. It was an eye-opening experience for me and exposed me to the various cognitive and social difficulties intertwined with substance abuse. It acquainted me with the strength and conviction present in all of us and helped me understand the concept of privilege on a much deeper level. And further, as I understood more about the positive impact created in Project Sanskaar and Vishwaas, my love for society continued to grow. Over time, I grew extremely connected to the children... There was one specific child whom I was especially close to and he, too, would run towards me as soon as he saw me.

In my second year, I was faced with the tough choice of being Sponsorship Head at the cost of cabinet positions in other societies. I realized that the kind of role NSS had played in my development was paramount as it had pushed me to think of more than just myself and had given me bonds that I continue to cherish. As President in the third year, I worked on the overarching vision of the organization, tackled meetings, and collaborated with various NGOs on projects connected to the theme of NSS. When I track my growth, I feel extremely pleased with the varying learnings. As cliché as it sounds, you might exit NSS but NSS doesn't stop being a part of you. I hope I have done justice to the organization and today it warms my heart to see it grow at an exponential rate.

Grassroot work is indispensable if you hope to bring about change in society. When you've worked with like-minded people with a positive vision for society, it builds lifelong connections. It's important to remain conscious of your privilege and contribute in the smallest ways you can. Even if you can't create tangible impact, empathizing requires consciousness. When I forward requests of plasma to NSS, I always receive responses asking about the wellbeing of the particular

individual. It's important to care. When I now see posts about mental health, marginalized communities' rights, women empowerment on various handles of NSS, I automatically feel so connected and proud.

My feelings for NSS are too vast and dynamic to reduce it to one word. But it's the most wonderful and amazing environment in every sense. You're going to be constantly surrounded by caring people and you'll develop everlasting bonds.

Anusha Kaul



Project Sanskar Head (2019-20)

At the time of my admission, I saw NSS carrying out their initiatives and helping everyone around; I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of their team. When I started college, I saw Sanskar kids coming in for their classes, and that caught my attention. Social service in itself is very exhilarating and I was excited to be a part of the team. The first semester is emotionally and physically draining. You are trying to find a place for yourself in college, making new friends, and trying to figure out academics. I was involved with Project Sanskar almost every day. I knew if something was wrong, I could go back to my kids and they would cheer me up. These kids played an important part in my first semester and NSS provided me with that space in college. In my second year, when I was selected as the head of Project Sanskar, we were supposed to stay in college for quite some time, but eventually one got used to it .

NSS in its totality is a wholesome experience. It teaches you about the kids, their backgrounds, and their families. You learn a lot about yourself as an individual, your limitations, your strengths, your weaknesses. It teaches you about team dynamics, and the sacrifices and compromises you have to make. My batchmates and teammates helped me throughout this journey. We got to spend so much time together and grew into a close-knit family. One incident I vividly recall is celebrations on children's day. We decorated a whole room for them, and that made the kids really happy. That day I realised that we can all make a tiny difference, in

whatever capacity. And that motivates me to keep contributing positively in some way. Before leaving college, I hope to be able to see sanskar kids in person as I have seen them only once or twice since the lockdown last year.

Once you become a part of NSS and are committed to helping people out, you stick with it. The one word to sum up my NSS journey would be “beautiful”.

Ranjana Verma

Project Sanskar Head (2019-20)



It all began when I was thrust upon a society culture that I was previously unaware of. “Every student must be a part of a society, it helps you in developing skills.”, echoed batchmates and seniors. I missed my initial interview with NSS, but later a notice was circulated regarding a final chance to those who had missed their interviews for whatever reason. Last chance kaho ya phir pehla kadam..I gave my interview and got admitted as a volunteer in Project Sanskar.

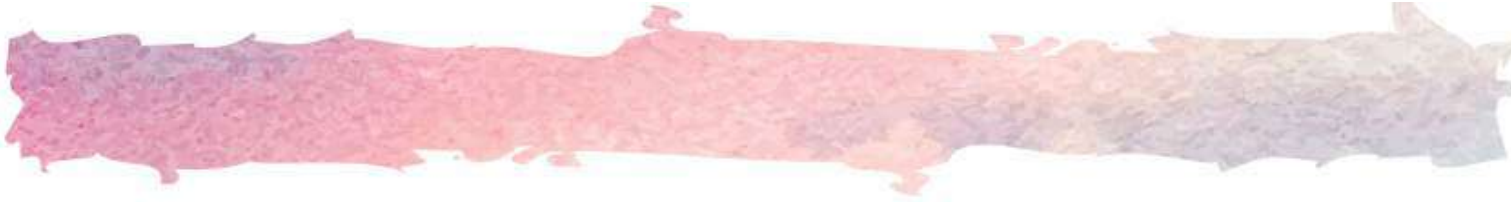
“Arey yeh kya celebrate karna, NSS mein toh sabka ho jata hai.”

Haan sach hai ki sabka ho jata hai, lekin har koi kar nahi pata!

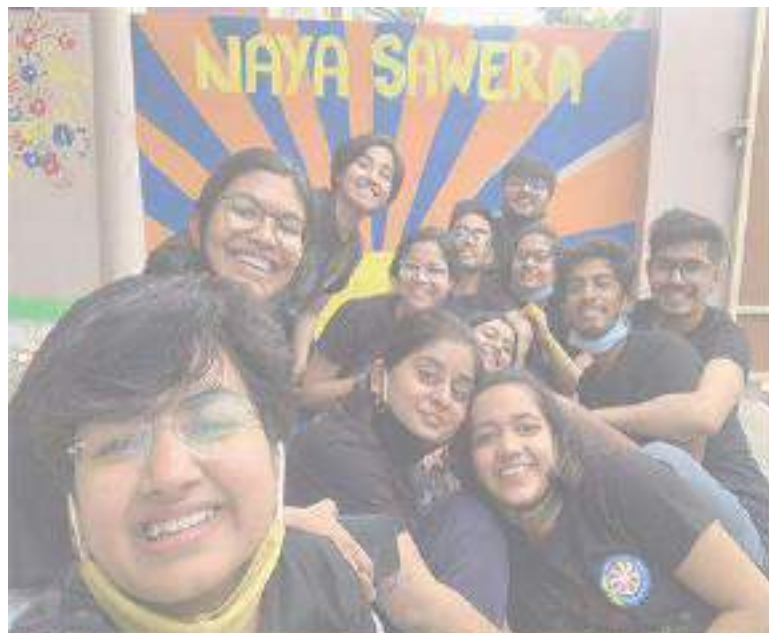
Mere pankhon ko udaan mere unn baccho ne di jinki ankhon mei kuch bada karne ki chaah hai... “didi aaj na hum reasoning karenge kyuki pata hai aapko jab madam humse aage naukari ke liye pucchengi na toh sawaal yeh books mein se hi pucchengi.” Yeh sunkar mein thehar gayi, ummeed aur lakshya yeh do shabdo ka asal matlab mujhe unn baccho ne hi sikhaya hai, padhate beshak hum hain unhein, lekin humko sikhatein humesha vahi hain!

Fast forward to second year when I got selected as the Head of Project Sanskar - “Ranjana, you are focussed towards Sanskar, but NSS is not about just Sanskar... if you get selected you will be the executive member of NSS.”

Jante ho mein akeli kuch na kar pati, meri team hi mera aainaa bani, mujhe meri galtiyan dikhayi, mera hath pakad kar mujhe sahi raah ki taraf mera rukh krvaya. Mujhse kaha jata hai ki mein NSS- NSS bahut karti hu, aaj mein batati hu- mere



vajood ko ubhara hai, mujhe itna sawara hai, iske kaam ne, iski community ne aur sabse badi baat NSS mei jo log hain unhone... they have seen me crying, and if they have celebrated my achievements, they have also been there for me in my lows. Samay ka kanta ghumega aur main jaanti hu ki iska sath bhi mujhse chuth jayega, par dil mein humesha iske liye ek alag jagah rahegi, yaadein rahengi, aur woh safar rahega jisne mujhe asal mein ek insaan banaya.
NSS is my family, the place where I found myself.



MEET THE TEAM



NSS FAMILY



2020-21



Deepanshu Jindal Project Vishwas Head

NSS means different things to different people. For some, it is a bundle of happiness, service, satisfaction and gratitude. For me, it was a journey of learning, improving and contributing. NSS not only gave me an opportunity to understand issues and problems present at ground levels but also an opportunity to bring about a change through my actions. Undoubtedly, it has helped me become a better person both personally and professionally.

I had the privilege of working with the NSS of SRCC, first as a volunteer in Project Sanskar and then as the Project Head of Project Vishwas. While working as a volunteer, I had the opportunity to teach students, help them with their issues and have fun with them. As the project head, I worked with specially abled people, marketed their produce, collaborated with various self help groups and much more. Both were different yet great learning experiences of my life, ones that I will always cherish. As is rightly said, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. NSS, SRCC helped me take that first step. It wasn't easy, it never is. But if you have a heart for service, you can make it happen and NSS helps you in making it happen.

We are committed to the mammoth task of changing the lives of the underprivileged, the mindset of the society and the perceptions of the people. We aim to achieve this with our small yet significant steps.

Custom dictates that wealth is measured by possessions. At NSS, we disagree. We believe that the more you give, the richer you are.



Deepshika
Project Vishwas Head

NSS has been one of the best things that has happened to me in SRCC. I feel extremely grateful for each and every experience I have gained through NSS in 2 years. I have learned significant life lessons from this beautiful journey. I admire each and every person in this team a.k.a. my family. I feel so happy that I got an opportunity to contribute my bit in impacting the lives of hundreds of people, being a part of this wonderful team.



Devika Chaudhary **Project Vishwas Head**

In my opinion, one of the most impressive things about social work is being present in people's lives during moments that are generally undisclosed to others. It is truly humbling and gratifying. My association with NSS has made me realise that community service has a therapeutic impact, unmatched by any other activity. This journey has taught me to be selfless, altruistic, resilient and patient. NSS has provided me with a one of a kind exposure and unmasked different facets of society like adult disability, child development, mental disorders, gender inequality, sanitation among several others.

In my freshman year, NSS played an important role by instilling in me values like compassion, commitment and consistency. NSS is family to me and I am so glad that I got to be a part of this community that is so solicitous and caring. During these trying times, NSS has consistently and relentlessly worked towards social welfare and made the unachievable achievable. The strong bond our team shares makes us believe that we are together even in times of distress. I am thankful to all my seniors and teammates who have supported me in this journey. From being a junior team member to leading an integral project of NSS, the process has encouraged me to grow as an individual. It has allowed me to explore and learn about the different socio-economic factors of life and helped me in bringing a tangible change in the lives of underprivileged people. I am extremely proud to head a team that has managed to work so efficiently and gracefully. All this wouldn't have been possible without their efforts. It is rightly said that family isn't always blood and NSS truly justifies it. I can say with full confidence that the past two years have made my life more meaningful, substantial and rewarding.



Kriti Joshi **Project Sanskar Head**

NSS has never been just a college society to me. It has always felt like a family. Right from volunteering to heading the project, Sanskar became my happy place in college. The innocent faces of the kids would always bring a smile on my face. The experience surely broadened my horizon as the kids at Sanskar have contributed a lot to my growth, as much as I have contributed to theirs.

I can proudly say that joining NSS was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

It has helped me grow as a person and discover my true calling.

NSS has and will always hold a special place in my heart. I am forever thankful and beyond grateful for all the memories I've made in these past two years with my NSS Family. From running in the corridors looking for an empty classroom to taking extra classes for the kids even on Sundays to celebrating Children's Day with them to playing with paper boats in the rain; from dancing with them at Kiddo Fest to managing Zoom meetings and organising virtual events for more than a year now; from volunteering at Aarohi and Naya Sawera NGO even during the pandemic to living every single moment and making the best out of it, it's been a wholesome journey.



Raj Kesarwani Project Sanskar Head

The 26th U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt famously stated, "It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed". Truer words have never been spoken. Especially in these difficult times. In March last year, the future didn't look very sunny. We were stuck at home, still are in fact. But we are standing our ground like any other animal with survival instincts would do. Beginning with lighting candles and banging utensils to actually developing vaccine shots, we made it this far.

Overnight our focus shifted from where to go for parties to immunity, sanitizers and face masks. The nation owes everything to the brilliant and selfless efforts of our doctors and nurses who worked tirelessly forsaking their own health and lives in this heroic battle. We lost many doctors and nurses and the sacrifices they made are of paramount reverence. Apart from physical health, the pandemic also taught us a lot about the importance of mental health. Pessimism, stress and anxiety seemed to reach an all time high.

Now as any sensible person would try to see, what did the pandemic teach us? There is a tendency amongst us, the most intelligent species per se, to think that we know everything. Could anything be further from the truth? We are literal fools. We aren't the ultimate genetic combination as most people think. We don't know how important it is to appreciate freedom, to appreciate familial bonds, to appreciate friendship or companionship and to say this for the nth time, we don't appreciate this planet enough.

This fight must go on. We cannot afford to lose it. My own strife with these uncertain times was succoured by the most socially aware and emotionally receptive people who I can easily call a family. NSS was a haven not just for me but for many who were mentally torn and devastated during the pandemic. While working with NSS, I too found in me an innate desire to help people and live up to my own principles and I can say that I am becoming a better person each day.

And the best way to keep up is to always cling to the positive side, for again everything has a happy ending. But simultaneously we must be realistic and aware of the woes of this world. We must not run away from them. And in times like these, we have a responsibility too. Remember what NSS has always been saying all along: we are all in this together.

"RUN TO THE RESCUE WITH LOVE AND PEACE WILL FOLLOW" – River Phoenix



Tenzin Kalsang Project Sanskar Head

Dear Future Tenzin, consider this message not only for Purna but also a note to yourself, your future self. The times you walked the corridors in the hopes of finding an empty room to the times you decorated an empty room later used in a now-forgotten, once famous South Indian movie, you will miss it all. It's crazy how we spent two years with NSS, SRCC and still don't have enough words to describe our experience, to describe how it felt teaching those innocent yet extremely naughty kids of Patel Chest, to describe how we took hours to get dressed in proper ethnic wear for Samapan, to describe those endless Zoom and Google Meet sessions, to describe how far we have come in such short time. The journey from sitting in room no. 16 for an interview to become a volunteer to sitting here now, sipping tea and writing a sort of eulogy for NSS as a cabinet member, we have come a long way! Well, if you have forgotten anything about it, let me remind you, that you met the most awesome people here and made some amazing memories, you traveled to gorgeous places and did the craziest things during an intense lockdown with them. They made you laugh like none other and definitely cared for you deeply. NSS gave you hope despite the gloomy times and taught you to be bigger and better. Always be grateful to Anusha, Dhruv and Ranjana for believing in you and not only letting you volunteer for such a good cause but also for thinking you were worthy enough to be in the cabinet. So Tenzin, one day when you open Purna which I know you will because that is what you do, you keep your favourite memories sealed so that they're never forgotten and just know that NSS played a huge part in the person you have become today.



Mansi Parmar
Project Kali Head

NSS has been one of the most incredible things that has happened to me in college. I feel extremely grateful to be a part of it. It has helped me connect with the finest people and encouraged me to grow personally. It taught me crucial lessons in leadership along with instilling different perspectives on how to serve society. Heading Project Kali has been challenging yet adventurous. NSS has allowed me to work closely with the unprivileged and weaker sections of society. Being able to help in uplifting people's lives, is altogether a different experience. NSS provides one with an interesting angle on the problems of the society, it's not simply focused on discussing and implementing things, rather it ensures that the gap between the haves and the have nots is filled. I believe making a difference in others' lives emanates joy. I never imagined that my life at college would turn into such a beautiful motivation to live and work for society. Sometimes the most unexpected things give you the best experiences in life. I'll always cherish these years and thank each and everyone who supported me in this journey.

Best wishes to everyone!



Chestha **Project Kali Head**

When I was all pumped to have fun and explore Delhi, the pandemic hit us. All those unchecked bucket-list boxes and planned meet-ups came crashing down. It felt like a long three-month break similar to the one after the board exams, and all that kept me connected to college was NSS.

Being a part of Project Kali as a first-year student, gave me reality checks on everything. I put this project as my first preference in the application form because I wanted something new, something that is challenging and doesn't confine me to any particular role. After my first visit to the Shadipur slum, I couldn't process what I had witnessed. Their plight made me realise that the actual luxuries in life are- to have a roof over your head, three meals a day, enough clean water to drink, a family that cares about you and is able to afford standard education. It disturbs me to date how they've accepted this as their fate and are unwilling to do anything simply because they're tired of trying. Heading this very project in the second year has been very challenging but losing touch with the community wasn't an option. We as a team have paved our way through and will continue to do so.

Already having bonded with the NSS family virtually, our visits to Jaipur and Nainital were a treat to my soul especially after months of home confinement. It often makes me wonder what I did to deserve this whole package- the learnings, the people, the organisation. It is because of NSS that I can say that I have 'lived' college and 'evolved' even though the major chunk of it has been online. All I wish is that these cherished memories forever remain etched onto my heart.



Muskan Khichi **Project Ankush Head**

My journey with NSS is one of the best things that has happened in my life. It not only added so many memories to my college life but also added values of social service, integrity, and empathy to my life. In the first year of my college, I got the opportunity to work for the Social Health wing and volunteer for Project Ankush. Every evening, the smiling faces of children gave a feeling of immense gratification. We'd be surrounded by the voices of kids saying "Didi aaj sabji mein kya hai? Didi chawal bhi hai aaj?". The feeling of being able to bring a smile to those innocent faces is beyond this world. All thanks to NSS for giving me this opportunity to serve the people and the society.

From working as a volunteer to being part of the NSS cabinet, I can see how much I have evolved as a person. NSS has taught me nothing can stop you from succeeding as long as you believe in yourself. In the past year, with all the negativity around, NSS remained our safe place to share anything and everything and remain positive. The togetherness and support of the whole team made impossible things possible even in these uncertain times. Working with the team and the seniors' support made this bond so strong that I will always cherish these years. When I look back I can see how much NSS has given me and it will always live in my heart wherever I'll go. The motive of serving society and spreading smiles will forever continue throughout my life.



Adriana Kashyap **Social Empowerment Head**

2020 was a year of trauma, paranoia, loss, and heartache for everyone, including me. Life felt grim. With the college shut, we were confined to our rooms. Things became extremely difficult, especially for a person like me with mental health issues. However, NSS came to my rescue. Today when I look back, I can happily say that NSS has given me more than I could have ever asked for. It has given me a loving family and courage, it has given me a ray of hope amidst all the negativity. It provided me with memories along with a boost in self-confidence. Just a year back, I was an underconfident person, with excessive self-doubt, fear in speaking up and taking responsibility. However, this has changed and I owe this transformation completely to NSS, SRCC. With the help of encouraging seniors and a very supportive team, I developed a new version of myself. As I write this, I am overwhelmed with emotions. I have always been inclined towards social work and have always believed that the satisfaction we get from serving society is unparalleled and that's the only reason I joined NSS in the first year of college. I never knew that a college society could create such an impact on the society, the environment, and the world. NSS has helped me in giving back to the world. The experience has been nothing short of pure bliss. I feel extremely grateful, blessed, and privileged to have been a part of this revered society and for doing my bit for society as a whole.



Shreya Raj **Environment Head**

Mahatma Gandhi once said, " Be the change you wish to see in the world". Everyone has a spark of social service and support in their hearts, but for lighting the same, a platform is required. NSS provided me with such a platform. I joined NSS in my first year as a volunteer in Project Sanskar and participated in various activities, sessions, group discussions and visits conducted by different projects and wings throughout the year. Little did I know about the bond that I'll develop with those underprivileged kids and the kind of impact it would create. Sharing our knowledge with underprivileged communities ultimately improves our own knowledge with regards to the ground realities of our world. As I carried on with the responsibility of leading a team in my second year, it allowed me to explore various opportunities and manage several responsibilities. These two years at the National Service Scheme have strengthened my belief that there is no greater joy or reward than to make a difference in someone's life. At the same time, the organization has helped me in developing qualities of leadership, teamwork and hard work. From not believing in myself to understanding the 'Hope for Humanity, the two-year journey has been enriching. The tenure here, as a volunteer and as a cabinet member has kindled a sense of gratitude in me, helped me understand the socio-economic aspects of livelihood and sensitised me more towards the environment, people and society. The sense of achievement that I get as I reflect on our work will forever keep me inspired and motivated to continue helping others whilst growing with them.



Deepali Jain Social Health Head

For anyone associated with NSS, it is not just an organisation or a society but an emotion. I have been associated with NSS for 2 years now and my experience here has been beyond amazing. While working, when you talk to a little kid and he replies with innocence, you get unparalleled satisfaction.

In the past year, NSS has dealt with a variety of issues including mental health, the stigma attached to menstruation, gender discrimination and much more. The projects and wings of NSS, SRCC cover almost all domains of social service. As a student run organization, I feel it is doing supremely well in terms of its activities, camps, series etc. The wholesomeness of this organization is what sets it apart from others. Be it through Project Kali, Project Sanskar or Project Ankush, NSS has always tried to impact lives, even in the times of Covid-19 pandemic. Before joining NSS, I was told that anyone can get into NSS as it's not that difficult but no one told me about the experience of actually staying and living this journey with the amazing people I have as my co-heads and seniors. In my first year, I was part of Project Ankush wherein we distributed food collected from the PGs to those in need. Every single day came with a new experience because we found naughtier kids every single time. When we look at a little child eating food we served, the happiness we got can never come from materialistic things in the world.

I feel honoured that I was given the opportunity to be a part of the NSS family in my second year as well. NSS has now become a part of my daily routine and I feel everybody should opt for NSS at least once in their student life to experience this wonderful journey.



Tanish Soni Social Support Head

I always say NSS is my "Nanha Sa Sansaar". Growing up, life gave me many opportunities to serve the society but NSS is where my passion met my compassion. The different wings of NSS are not mere departments, they are organs which are vital for its functioning. Being a part of NSS, I've had a plethora of opportunities to work at the grassroot level of issues and problems and impact lives.

As a volunteer and then as a Head of the Social Support Wing, I participated in numerous visits, sessions and workshops. All this taught me to use my privilege for the betterment of society. I even had the opportunity to work outside Delhi and meet the people who are pushed to the periphery of the society. Meeting and helping cancer patients, orphan children, specially abled people and others helped me to become a better human being and understand my real motive in life. NSS has helped me realise that life is not the same for everyone and it is our responsibility to come out of our comfort zones and help. It has helped me realise that above all, being a good human being is what matters. Even in these testing times, we never missed a chance to create physical impacts. From Nainital to Jaipur, we are working in different states, different cities and different cultures. NSS has become an important part of my life and here we share an endless bond which we'll cherish for the rest of our lives.

NSS has come a long way but we still have miles to go. As a team and a family we grow, learn, serve and strive to create a life which is fair for all. I want to thank each and everyone who has been a part of my two year journey with NSS with these beautiful lines -

ज़िन्दगी में जीने का उद्देश्य इसी ने दिखाया है
हर पल को अच्छे से जीना हमें NSS ने सिखाया है।



Srishti Soni Creative Head

I can't express how positive my life became after joining NSS. I joined NSS in my first year just for the sake of joining a society. Little did I know then about the great influence it is going to have on me! NSS not only helped me grow as an individual but also as a socially conscious citizen. It provided me a platform to inspire social consciousness by working among people and for people. Working for the society and bringing a smile to people's faces give me immeasurable pleasure, one that I can't describe in words. Pearl S. Buck rightly said, "To serve is beautiful, but only if it is done with joy and a whole heart and a free mind".

NSS gave me that joy and whole heart which selflessly aimed towards the betterment of society. My mentors at NSS have been really helpful. I understood the real meaning of togetherness, being kind and helpful. When I was in my first year, I was in the creative team wherein the activities that were conducted helped me brush up my creative skills as well! As I stepped in my second year, I was given the responsibility of leading my team where I was required to show my juniors the path which was shown to me by my seniors. I am content that I have lived up to the task of being a leader through and through. NSS is indeed my happy place, my family, where I can rant about anything and everything wholeheartedly.

NSS has indeed given me memories to cherish for a lifetime and I'd like to thank god for helping me meet such wonderful people.



Rubal Jeanwal **Technical and Marketing Head**

My journey with NSS has been one of the best experiences of my life. My motive to join NSS in my first year was to get an opportunity to serve society. From being an NSS volunteer to heading the Marketing and Technical Wing, it has been an extraordinary journey. As the Wing head, I had the opportunity to continuously put my skills to test and become more creative in my approach towards work. With the advent of the covid-19 pandemic, as everything shifted to the online mode, my Wing faced many challenges but each time our team came out stronger and better.

In tough times of the pandemic, our will to work and serve society did not dim down. The whole team worked day and night and continues to do so to make the working of the society as smooth as it was prior to the pandemic. Be it field visits, fundraisers or the annual fest; everything happened as it did in the normal days, often even better. Even the inevitable distance that came with the pandemic did not stop us from making strong bonds with each other. I have met some of the best people in my life here at NSS and I feel really lucky to have them support me through this time.

The working environment here at NSS is unparalleled. NSS has given me a safe space to be who I am without any fear of judgement. I have become a really different and improved version of myself. NSS has given me a family that has always supported me in my highs and my lows.



Dhruv Seth
Technical and Marketing Head

There are no words to express my love for NSS, but I would say NSS has helped me grow as a person and understand where my true interest lies. I have been very fortunate to be a part of this amazing family. Working with the juniors, colleagues and seniors has been a great learning experience. A lot of love to everyone who supported me throughout my tenure and I wish nothing but the best to NSS. I'll cherish it forever as a key part of my college life. I've learnt that it's important to be a good person above everything else because what you give, comes back to you. I got countless opportunities to learn from divergent personalities that have helped me improve as a person. I would like to thank this family for being supportive and encouraging me, even in harsh times.



Aakanksha Jain Sponsorship Head

I know in my heart that whenever I will think about my college life down the line, the first thing that will come to my mind will be NSS- all that I learnt here and the people I met through it. It has always been my happy place and allowed me to be myself. Back in school, I didn't even know that such organisations existed. But in my first year at college, I got to know about NSS. I was deeply inspired by NSS- the projects, the wings, the fest and the goodness of the people here. So, I filled the application form without thinking twice. It was in my first year that I got to know about NSS but it was in my second year that I got to know myself because of NSS!

Being the Sponsorship Head, I not only got the opportunity to communicate with corporates and finalise deals but I also got the opportunity to serve the society in a way I had never imagined.

Unlike many others, I loved to do the task of corporate calling because I feel it makes you more confident, spontaneous and improves your decision making skills. There were times when I didn't get any responses and nothing actually worked out but then determination and the desire to serve the society helped me in working harder and consistently motivated me. Also, handling a junior team helped me learn a lot about leadership and team development which I am sure will help me a lot in future.

NSS covers a diverse range of topics, be it education, community development, fighting hunger, mental health, LGBTQ+ community or menstrual health. We have been able to impact thousands of lives through our social media posts, activities, offline drives and visits.

The people I met through NSS have such pure hearts. I haven't felt alone in these testing times because of their comforting presence. NSS has helped me find a bunch of like minded people who I know will always be there for me and motivate me no matter what the situation is .

In all, I got to learn about the different social issues present in society and how we as individuals and as a group can contribute to improve the situation.

NSS turned me into a better person, a person who wants to listen to others and help them heal. It made me sensitive towards people, their views and their choices.

NSS gave me a heart for service, a family and thousands of memories to cherish forever. NSS will always have a special place in my heart.



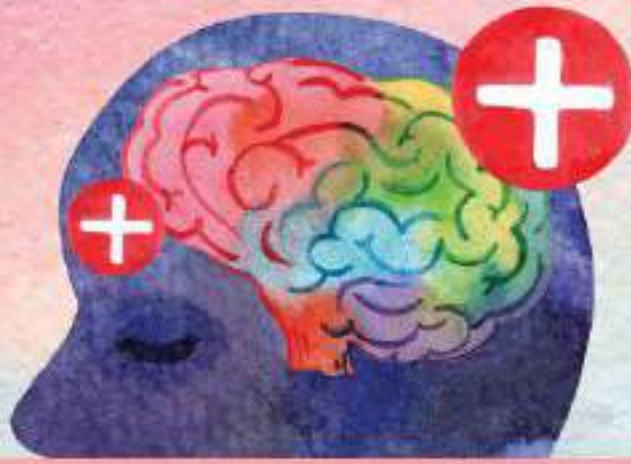
Vaishnavi Sponsorship Head

I have had two magnificent years at NSS. I believe in the value of determination and discipline and undoubtedly NSS taught me these two things. Like many others, my main motive to join NSS was to serve and change society. While doing that, we all ended up helping and supporting each other too, knowingly or unknowingly.

My journey here began as a member and I worked hard throughout to become the Sponsorship Head. Being a cabinet member of NSS has made me push my boundaries and made me aware of my strengths .

I have also learnt that a work environment is never perfect but we have to make it better. Coming to the members, from the seniors to juniors and my fellow mates, they have all been compassionate, kind and amazing co-workers. Seniors have been very patient and helpful while juniors who joined with inspiring views for community service have been a delight to work with throughout. I wo;; forever be grateful to be a part of this amazing family. Everyone in our NSS family has been equally responsible for the success of the society.

Nothing would've happened without my NSS team. Every event, big or small, is worth celebrating with my NSS family. Especially during these tough times, everyone has been so patient in helping each other out, no matter what the need is. We, the NSS family, have not only shared work, we have shared memories and emotions, and these memories are to be cherished forever.



EXECUTIVE EDITORS



Naionika

Srushti Tanaya Swain





Avdhi Mehta



Sheen Bujoo



Rinkle Saxena



Aastha Jha



Harshi Kumar

JUNIOR EDITORS



Aayushi Nauhwar



Saumya Yaduvanshi



Anshul Garg



Saurav



Ashee Asiwat

EXECUTIVE DESIGNERS



Rubal Jeanwal

Dhruv Seth





Ishita Srivastava

JUNIOR DESIGNERS



Bhavika Goyal



Ayush Palawat



Kramank Garg



Sneh Dhanuka



Mudit Jain



Urvika Pandita



Kishan Kumar

You can feel



**NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME
SHRI RAM COLLEGE OF COMMERCE**

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
NEW DELHI- 110007

Email: nsssrcc2020@gmail.com
Website: nss-srcc.org