

# Change Oneself before Changing Others

- Swami Medhasananda

**T**here is a Bengali story that tells of marriage negotiations regarding a young man and young woman. An elderly relative had the idea that it may be good for the couple to make a checklist of their likes and dislikes now rather than after marriage.

The young couple sat before the elderly man who noted that food was important and asked the young man, "Do you like chillies in your dishes?" The young man answered that he could not bear hot spicy foods at all.

The young woman answered, "I require at least three chillies in my dishes."

The young man was then asked how many spoonfuls of sugar he required in his tea. "Only one," was the answer.

The young woman answered, "Three!"

The elder then enquired as to their preferred hardness or softness of a bed mattress. The young man answered that he preferred his mattress a little hard, while the woman said she desired a very soft mattress.

This story illustrates how when two such people live together with such diverse aptitudes, likes and dislikes, obviously, problems in communication arise. Also, before relationships are entered into, it may be hard to assess another's likes and dislikes. Only when a relationship is established are each other's likes and dislikes revealed. Moreover, most parents want their children to grow up in a particular way. Children, however, cannot always obey and follow the instructions of their parents, often resulting in failures and frustrations. Parents then want to reform or change them. Such troubles arise between wives and husbands, parents and children, brothers and sisters, between friends, and teachers and students.

In all these, there is an expectation to reform or change the behavior or ways of others. So when the person in question does not change as expected, problems arise in relationships. Sometimes this desire for change is mutual; the wife wants to reform the husband and the husband wants to reform the wife, as well. Friends want to change other friends. Such expectations can also be one-sided. Especially with regard to parents and children or teachers and students, the desire to change another is more one-sided. With respect to this desire to reform or change others, the expected results are very rare indeed.

The question then arises as to why this perception of changing others mostly does not work. In this connection let me tell you a story:

There was a Muslim wise-man, Mullah Nasiruddin, of present day Turkey. A unique character, sometimes he would speak like a wise man and sometimes like a fool. People respected and loved him despite his rather strange ways. One day people found him in a very pensive mood sitting near a

shopping area. Curious, one after another, the people asked him what made him so thoughtful and pensive.

Nasiruddin said, "Brothers, I see so many imperfect things in our society, and I am pondering deeply how I can change and reform this society." The people were satisfied with this answer and left him with the remark, "God speed, Mullah Sahib!"

The following year, however, Nasiruddin was found on the same spot in the same pensive mood. The people again noted his thoughtful mood and pointed out that the year before he had said he was contemplating how to change society. "What makes you so thoughtful now?" they asked. He answered that the year before he had thought to change society, but that had proved to be an impossible task. "Therefore," he continued, "now I am pondering how to change members of my own family. I see so many drawbacks in them, hence, I must change my family to become a perfect family." Again, the people wished him God's speed.

But the following year the people found him in the same place and in the same attitude. "Oh, dear Mullah Sahib, last year you told us changing society was impossible. What happened regarding members of your own family whom you wanted to change? We see you still remain in a very pensive mood. What is the matter now?"

"You are all correct," he answered. "First I had hoped to change society; then I tried to correct and change behaviors of my family members. All these attempts failed, so now I contemplate how to change myself."

This story conveys an important message. That is, it is more imperative to think of changing oneself than to change others, which is more pragmatic too. In this context let me narrate an incident. Swami Shivanandaji, better known as 'Mahapurush Maharaj', was one of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples and later became President of the Ramakrishna Order. At Belur Math, it is quite common for family members and individuals to visit seeking the blessings of the resident monks. One couple came to visit Shivanandaji and asked, "Please, Revered Maharaj, bless my child that he may become perfect." It is natural for parents to seek such blessings from monks. But instead of giving the usual blessing that the child be a good student, or a good person, etc., Shivanandaji said, "First, you should try to become perfect yourselves. Then your child can become perfect!"

How true is this advice! If the parents become perfect, there is a great probability that the child will become perfect, too. But how many of us are aware of this fundamental truth regarding our role as parents, guardians, or teachers? It is easy to see the imperfections around us, but difficult to accept our own responsibility concerning solving the problems and in mending matters. Therefore, let me change myself before attempting to change others. The problem is we want to change others, but do not want to change ourselves. What a great paradox! Finally, we only remain where we were.

If we introspect deeply over this paradox, we find the reason for our unwillingness to change ourselves is self-love, or in other words, our inflated ego. Because of our egotism, we cannot judge clearly our own mistakes and responsibility.

Here are some of the symptoms of our inflated ego. We expect that others must like the same things that we do. Secondly, we do not respect the beliefs of others. Thirdly, we want our own freedoms, but do not grant the same freedoms to others. People displaying these symptoms of ego and self-love are usually found complaining and grumbling about others. One example of this type of grumbling and complaining is when someone says, "Others do not understand me!" Such a person does not ask himself, 'If so-and-so does not understand me, what is it about me? Do I understand him?' If we think others' opinion is wrong, there is also a possibility that others will think the same about us.

It has been said that the ego is like wine. If we drink wine, our judgement becomes deluded. The same can be said of an egotistical person. Of course we all have an ego, unless one becomes a sage, but I am talking of those with excessive egos. Like wine intoxication, such people are drunk on their egos. In spiritual life as well, ego is a big obstacle. The ego is like a thick curtain, through which we cannot see God inside us. Ego is also the greatest obstacle in forming good, positive, constructive, healthy and happy relationships.

So if we find ourselves experiencing bad, unfriendly or strained relationships with others, the very first thing we should try to understand is that one of the main factors behind such improper relationships is our own ego. So, 'I must try to change myself,' should be our approach. Surely the other person also bears responsibility and may have the same problem of an inflated ego, but we know we cannot control the other person. 'At least changing myself is in my own hands!' Consequently, as Mahapurush Maharaj said, "If we can reform ourselves and work to make us perfect, obviously, an impact will appear on others." So let the process start from 'myself'.

Think of a handshake! If we always wait for the other to extend his hand first, the resulting handshake does not become smooth. Again, let the process start from oneself. Let me first extend my hand and be ready to shake the other's hand.

We may also ask, 'Why should I first try to curb my egotism, especially in relationships, rather than asking others to eliminate their ego?' The famous saying, 'Be the change you want to see in others,' gives an important answer.

The next and important question is how to curb our inflated ego which is so deep rooted in us. First we need to practice patience. We should bear with those situations we find ourselves in that we do not like. There are four important practices which are necessary to learn to have patience. These are to ignore, to adjust, to forgive, and to forget. If we apply these important practices we can achieve a 'positive patience'. There is also 'negative patience,' wherein one is bound to be patient or compelled to endure some outside influence or pressure. Positive patience should come from within. For example we can just ignore things like someone forgetting to turn off the lights once in a while, and only if it happens continuously do we need to mention it to the individual concerned. In family relationships

as well, if the wife or husband always wants to find fault with the other at every instance, then the relationship becomes bitter. Hence, let one ignore the minor things.

Let us adjust ourselves by being ready to change because the situation, the people and the place around me demand it, though we must be firm in our principles. Let us try to be like the willow tree and not like the oak tree. Let us try to combine firmness and flexibility into our character.

Next is to forgive. When we make mistakes we expect forgiveness from the persons affected by them. Similarly, we should be ready to forgive when we are affected by others' mistakes. This is mutual forgivingness, which, however, has exceptions. Another thing is not to hold on to or drag out reproaches for mistakes, but to forget about them. What often happens in quarrels is that one will recite a long list of offenses the other has done—even those committed long ago. This means we haven't really forgotten; we are keeping it all in mind—so let us try to forgive and forget the mistakes of others, so that they may also forget and forgive our mistakes. This is also helpful for enjoying our mental peace. A person with a big ego cannot ignore; he cannot adjust; he cannot forgive; and he cannot forget.

So let us remember Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's last piece of advice to a visitor in this context. "I tell you one thing," she said, "if you want peace, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own." If we have a big ego, we cannot see our own defects, we can only see the defects of others. So the way to reduce the level of my own ego is to see my own faults as it will humble us and help us to rectify, and finally, to change us. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ advises us not to judge others and we will not be judged by God. Again, Jesus reprimands us, "Why do you pay attention to the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye?"

When a person does not see others' good qualities and only sees bad qualities, and at the same time he sees only his own good qualities and not his bad qualities—this too is a symptom of egotism. An egotistic person has the nature of a fly. A fly is fond of dirty things. So let us all have the nature of a bee and only be fond of flowers, that is, other's good qualities.

The practice of humility instead of being boastful goes a long way in eliminating our egotism.

Another way to change ourselves, which also matters so much in a mutual relationship is to give more and take less—to be less demanding. An egotistic person is always demanding. His wants are always in terms of taking.

Having patience and forbearance and by ignoring, adjusting, forgiving, forgetting, by seeing the good qualities in others, by being less demanding, and finally, by the practice of humility—all these are the means to curb our egotism, which brings about a paradigm shift in our personality and makes us an ideal man, emulating others to change themselves as we have done. We should always remember the watchword: 'Be the change you want to see in others.' ■

# Waldo's Question, and Answers from Indian Scriptures

- Suneel Bakhshi

**R**alph Waldo Emerson (Waldo) was an American essayist, poet and author in the mid nineteenth century. He was strongly influenced by Indian philosophy, especially the Upanishads, and had read the Bhagavad Gita. The central message Emerson drew from his Asian studies was that “ the purpose of life was spiritual transformation and direct experience of divine power, here and now on earth. ”

In one evocative poem he posed a question which is as relevant today as it would have been in his own time.

*“Teach me your mood, O patient stars!  
Who climb each night the ancient sky.  
Leaving on space no shade, no scars,  
No trace of age, no fear to die.”*

I have been reflecting on these words, and inevitably, my thoughts turn to our scriptures. I would like to touch in this article on two points that arose in my mind, and answers to each:

How best to inculcate the strength and beauty of stars as they “climb the ancient sky ”?

Do our teachings in Indian philosophy suggest it might be possible to achieve such heights within our lifetimes?

I have continued to study with the revered Swami Nityasuddhananda Ji of Kankhal Sevasharama, Ramakrishna Mission, in Haridwar in India. Once Swami Ji recommended a book which I have also noted in a prior edition of Anjali to its readers, and which offers a perspective on the questions. This book is titled “an introduction to Indian philosophy”, was first published in 1939 at the University of Calcutta, and authored by Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta. This wonderful book notes the Space-Time background in Indian thought: “In addition to the moral and spiritual outlook, we may also note the prevailing sense of the vastness of the space-time world, which formed the common background of Indian thought and influenced its moral and metaphysical outlook...and set metaphysics on the search for the eternal. On the ethical and religious side it helped the Indian mind to take a wider and detached view of life, prevented it from the morbid desire to cling to the fleeting as the everlasting, and persuaded it always to have an eye on what was lasting, rather than momentary, value. While man's body is limited in space and time, his spirit is eternal. Human life is a rare opportunity. It can be utilised for realising the immortal spirit and for transcending thereby the limitations of space and time.”

In answer then to my first question above: “How best to inculcate the strength and beauty of stars as they “climb the ancient sky?”

One day, many years ago, on a reading of the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 5, Swami Ji said to me : “Shloka 10 is an important shloka, and one must understand it well.” In appreciation of the Shloka, I remember Swami Ji, impromptu, singing it as it is meant to be recited, in perfect rhythm and in deep appreciation of the words as he sang. This Shloka, in addition to Shloka 12 in the same chapter and several often quoted Shlokas in other chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, refer continuously to the critical importance of loosening the bonds of our hankering after the fruits of our efforts, and focusing constantly instead, on the excellence of the work itself.

I note both Shlokas from chapter 5 here:

5.10:

brahmany adhaya karmani	ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि
sangam tyaktva karat yah	सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
lipyate na sa papena	लिप्यते न स पापेन
padmapattram iva mbhasa	पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥

“He who works, having given up attachment, resigning his actions to God, is not soiled by evil, even as a lotus leaf (is untouched) by water.”

The related, beautiful and powerful Shloka in the same chapter of the Bhagavad Gita goes on to assert:

5.12:

yuktah karmaphalam tyaktva	युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा
santim apnoti naisthikim*	शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।
ayuktah kamakarena	अयुक्तः कामकारेण
phaie sakto nibadhyate	फले सक्तो निबध्यते ॥

“The well poised, forsaking the fruit of action, attains peace, born of steadfastness; the unbalanced one, led by desire, is bound by being attached to the fruit (of action).”

As my own understanding of the Upanishads has continued to grow over the years, I have come to understand the fuller import of Swami Ji's words, as well as their direct and practical applications. I have come to believe that at least for me there is no better path to sustained joy in life at a personal level, and to my mind, to peace one day at a societal level, than in following the truth of Shlokas such as Shloka 10, and the related Shloka 12, both in Chapter 5 of the Bhagavad Gita. I would go so far as to say that for people who aspire to the heights proclaimed in the Bhagavad Gita, there is no other way.

As to the second question above: “Do our teachings in Indian philosophy suggest it might be possible to achieve such heights within our lifetimes?”

I believe that there are examples from around the world and across the ages, where the heights of stars “who climb each night the ancient sky, leaving on space no shade, no scars, no trace of age, and no fear to die ” have indeed been attained.

Inspirational examples in recent history include Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, and the many, many other saints revered across the ages such as Adi Shankara and more recently the Sikh Gurus in India. Christianity has its own examples such as the direct disciples of Jesus Christ, and other saints revered through the centuries, and so does Buddhism, in the direct disciples of the Buddha, and the many saints that have followed. Many cultures around the world attest to such men and women having walked the earth.

I believe such exceptional human beings and their life stories have the potential to inspire true seekers to follow their path, as long as we bring a discerning mind to the task, and if we have the discipline to do so with rigour and with patience. I also believe that while I cite monastic leaders above, lay people and householders can equally choose to bring this understanding into daily life, and this is precisely where the Bhagavad Gita is available as a guiding light of ever increasing importance to all mankind. I will briefly elaborate:

Swami Nityasuddhananda Ji in his teachings often refers to a beautiful book on the Bhagavad Gita ( translated more than a century ago in October 1909 by Swami Swarupananda, also of the Ramakrishna Mission ) where the Swami quotes Adi Shankara's explanation of the word NAISTHIKIM\* (“born of steadfastness ” in Shloka 12 above), thus : “gradual perfection in the path of knowledge, realising the following stages of development : **(1) purity of heart, (2) gaining of knowledge, (3) renunciation of action, and (4) steadiness in knowledge.**”\*

In the Vivekachoodmani, (the Crest Jewel of Discriminating Wisdom) as also explained to me by Swami Nityasuddhananda, Adi Shankara says that ignorance can be removed and a fuller expression of Reality CAN be brought about, BUT only by our own efforts, and these take time. There are no shortcuts, instead both the discipline and patience of a “gradual perfection in the path of knowledge ”. One must be guided by the instruction of a Teacher, and the scriptures. However, once the light of wisdom has been shown, one must, with rigour and with great conviction and with patience, walk the path oneself. In verse 54 of the Vivekachoodamani there is a key to this lifelong quest to realise the truth of powerful Shlokas in the Bhagavad Gita, such as the two I quote above.

*v-54 of the Vivekachoodamani:*

vastusvarupam sphutabodhacaksusa	वस्तुस्वरूपं स्फुटबोधचक्षुषा
svenaiva vedyam na tu panditena	स्वेनैव वेद्यं न तु पण्डितेन ।
candrasvarupam nijacaksusaiva	चन्द्रस्वरूपं निजचक्षुषैव
jnatavyamanyairavagamyate kim	ज्ञातव्यमन्यैरवगम्यते किम् ॥

**“The actuality of things is to be known by a first-hand personal experience through the eye of clear understanding, and not through the report of learned men. The beauty of the moon is enjoyed through one’s own eyes. Can one appreciate it through the description by others?”\*\***

Adi Shankara’s words, elaborating on and interpreting the Bhagavad Gita, continue to resonate across the centuries since they were written. A further elaboration can be found in “Talks on Sankara’s Vivekachoodamani ” by Swami Chinmayananda, which I have chosen here to allow a natural link to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s beautiful and evocative poem. Swami Chinmayananda writes that this journey is best done at a pace similar to the gentle unfolding of moonlight, rather than to a burst of sunlight. “The beauty, the brilliance, the soft glory, the queenly dignity, the serene consolation, the message of love and leisure, of peace and quietude, which the moon sheds as it glides across the spring-time skies cannot, indeed, be captured in words but are experiences to be enjoyed subjectively only.”\*\*

I would like to close by noting my everlasting thanks to Swami Nityasuddhananda of Kankhal Sevashrama, Ramakrishna Mission, Haridwar. ■



# Indian Influence on Japanese Culture & Mythology

- Varun Tomar

*The Jetavana Temple bells, ring the passing of all things.  
Twinned sal trees, white in full flower, declare the great man's certain fall.  
The arrogant do not long endure, they are like a dream one night in spring.  
The bold and brave perish in the end, they are as dust before the wind.*  
(Tale of the Heike, translated by Royall Tyler)

The opening lines from the Tale of the Heike, a 14th century war saga, are one of the many examples that reveal the influence of Indian culture on Japan. Hajime Nakamura, a famous Japanese academician of the Vedas and Buddhism, stated in his book 'Gotama Buddha,' "without Indian influence, Japanese culture would not be what it is today."

The geographical proximity between India, China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan, along with their ancient links through Silk Road and Sea Route used by the adventurous hunters, nomads and traders facilitated the growth of a culture bearing many identical features in their social ethos and behavior. India-Japan recorded historical links go far back to the 7th century A.D. There is a mention of a woman in Kojiki from Shravasti in India (Shaeijo in Japanese) who visited Japan during the reign of Emperor Kotoku (r.596-654). The legendary Daruma san who is extremely popular in Japan is basically Bodhidharma, a Buddhist monk who lived during the 5th or 6th century A.D. Daruma doll's design is rich in symbolism and is regarded as a talisman of good luck to the Japanese.

In the 8th century A.D. an Indian monk, Bodhisena (704-60), was invited in the year 736 A.D. by Emperor Shomu (r.724-48) to perform the eye-opening ceremony of the world's largest bronze statue of the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji in Nara. Bodhisena remained in Japan until his death in 760 A.D. teaching Buddhism, Sanskrit, Prakrit and related Indian philosophical thoughts. Kūkai, also known posthumously as Kōbō Daishi, invented the Kana syllabary based on Sanskrit sounds. There is documented evidence of visits by various Japanese scholars and pupils to Nalanda University in the 12th century. A merchant-adventurer Tokubei (1612-1692) was so obsessive about visiting 'Tenjiku' (India), an ancient Japanese name for India, that he took the name of Tenjiku Tokubei out of pride and reverence for India. He travelled to the kingdom of Magadha, and in his memoir described it as a land of riches, bright-colored clothing, huge palaces and complex housing, complicate and intricate tools and many scents.

Indian culture and thought permeated deep into the Japanese mind with the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism, commonly known as *Shinbutsu-shūgō*. Indian deities like Shiva (*Daikokuten*), Brahma (*Baramonten*), Vishnu (*Naraenten*), Lakshmi (*Kichijoten*), Saraswati (*Benzaiten*), Indra (*Taishakuten*), Kubera (*Bishamonte*) etc. occupy a very important position in the Japanese pantheon. As we delve deeper into the realm of religion, the influence of Indian thought on Japan becomes quite evident. A detailed analysis suggests that the Indian and Japanese people have been following similar approaches towards the natural and supernatural phenomenon. The concept of anthropomorphism seems to be permeating through every aspect of their life. Every phenomenon in this world, animate or inanimate, appears to them having the element of the God - The Almighty. Hinduism and Shintoism both are polytheistic religions and offer their adherents the possibility of having faith in many divinities (Yaoyorozu no Kami). All forms of existence are appreciated from a religious perspective and treated as spiritual entities. In their respective pantheons, they have gods of nation, regions, villages, crossroads, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, clans and families etc. The worship of nature existed in ancient India, China, Manchuria and Mongolia and also in Japan. Like Mt. Kailash, Mt. Sumeru, Nanda Devi, River Ganga, River Saraswati of India, Mt. Fuji, Mt. Ontake, Osorezan, Koyasan, Hiesan, Nanataisan of Japan are ascribed some particular kind of spiritualism. In Japan like India, there are gods of water, fire, wind, rain, wealth and lesser gods of smallpox and cholera etc.

There are couple of divinities in Japan similar to Shiva and Parvati, Brahma and Brahmani and Vishnu and Lakshmi of Hindu tradition. The first seven generations of divinities in Japan are all couples with Izanagi and Izanami appearing in the seventh generation. God Izanagi and goddess Izanami came together as husband and wife after tying their garments into a knot and taking seven rounds of a 'sacred stone pillar' treating it as a divine entity witnessing and blessing their marriage. It finds similarity with the Hindu marriage custom where the bride and the bridegroom take seven rounds of the 'sacred fire' before the marriage is solemnized. Also, the tradition of "Gathbandhan" (tying of the Sacred Knot) in Hindu culture finds mention in Kojiki during the reign of Emperor Suinin. This custom of husband and wife tying each other's garments also finds a mention in the Manyōshū.

Another noteworthy incident recorded in Kojiki is the kidnapping of the wife of Ninigi no Mikoto by the barbarians living south of the Yamato state. To rescue his wife Saku ya Bime, Ninigi seeks help and guidance from a monkey god, Saruta Biko, in subduing the southern barbarians. This story has a striking resemblance to the story of Ramayana, where Lord Rama seeks help from Hanuman to rescue his wife. It is worthy to note that Lord Rama was a *Suryavanshi*, like Ninigi no Mikoto who was the grandson of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. Furthermore, there are also recorded cases of ordeals by fire, known as "*Ukehi*", and where boiled water and hot mud are used to discover the truth. An eminent scholar Matsumura Kazuo states, that the ordeal by fire accepted by Sita in Ramayana finds similarity in an ordeal willingly performed by Saku ya Bime to prove her fidelity towards Ninigi no Mikoto. Like Saku ya Bime, Sapo time, wife of Emperor Suinin also performed a fire ordeal to prove her innocence during 1st century A.D.

It is a common belief in Hinduism and Shintoism that ancestral spirits play a significant role in the well-being of their descendants. At the time of the funeral and subsequently, on their death anniversaries, the appropriate rituals need to be performed

for the appeasement of the ancestral spirits. Like the “Shradh” ceremony in Hinduism, “Urabon festival” popularly known as “Obon festival” in Japan, is dedicated for making offerings to the departed souls. Ancestor worship gained further strength after the introduction of Buddhism in Japan. According to a legendary tale, Mudagalyayana (Mokuren), a disciple of Buddha, dreamt his dead mother to be suffering in hell due to starvation. Disturbed by the dream he sent food and clothes for his mother, but as soon as these offerings reached his mother, everything burnt down to ashes. He was upset due to this and consulted Lord Buddha who advised him to hold a service in her name and offer food to the monks in order to pacify the spirit of his mother. He did so year after year and since then this practice has been observed.

It is believed that the spiritual entities play positive as well as negative roles in human life. If not propitiated appropriately they may get antagonized and cause hardships. Therefore timely and appropriate propitiation is necessary to obtain their blessings. It has been customary in Japan, as in India, to promise offerings to the deities if a certain wish is to be fulfilled. For example, Nihongi describes that in 6th century A.D. fearing defeat in the battlefield, Soga no Mumako no Sukune made four wooden images of the Four Heavenly Kings and made a vow that if his forces were victorious, he would honour the Kings by constructing a temple for them. After his victory Soga no Mumako no Sukune fulfilled his vow by building a temple of the Four Heavenly Kings in the province of Settsu and another one called the temple of Hokoji in Asuka. The Four Heavenly Kings mentioned here are the *Chatur Maharajas* of Indian mythology.

The Indian influence can clearly be seen during the celebration of festivals in Japan. Many Japanese festivals include a street procession of parishioners belonging to a particular temple or shrine. Like the *Rath Yatra* of Jagannath Temple of Puri, the Japanese people enshrine the spirit of their deity in a *Mikoshi* i.e. a portable shrine and move it in and around the village. Originally, carrying a *Mikoshi* through the streets, indicated spreading the purifying power of the deity and neutralising evil influence in the area. The phallic worship in certain parts of Japan, reminds of Shivlinga worship in India. It is treated as the worship of fertility and performed at the time of *Honen Matsuri* (Honen Festival) of Tagata and Komaki, both in Aichi Prefecture. It is closely connected with the sacred Mt. Nantai (The Male Form). Another example of phallic worship in Japan is the famous Kanamara Matsuri held in Kawasaki city every year. Likewise, the Ogata Festival centres on the symbol of female organ.

Shintoism, like Hinduism, emphasizes ritual purity and cleanliness. The death, bleeding, childbirth etc are treated as the causes of pollution of the environment. In olden times, people shifted to a new house in case of the death of a family member, a practice that continued for a long, particularly in the case of imperial palaces and the capital cities of Japan, where a new palace or capital was built after the demise of the emperor. Narrating the Japanese funeral customs, the History of the Kingdom of Wei (Wei-Chi) written around 298 AD records that in case of death, mourning continued for ten days during which meat was not consumed and all the family members performed the act of ablation. The custom of calling female mourners has existed in India, as well as in Japan. They are referred to as ‘Rudali’ or ‘Naki-me’ respectively. It is believed in Hinduism that if someone consumes the food from the underworld (Yamaloka or Yomi no kuni), then the person cannot return to the human world. Kojiki states that when Izanami died, Izanagi decided to undertake a journey to the underworld to bring his wife back. On meeting Izanami, he tried to persuade her to come back with him, to which she responded, “*I want to go with you, but you’re too late. I have already eaten the food of this land, and I can no longer go back with you.*”

There are some superstitions and religious beliefs which commonly existed in both, primitive Indian as well as Japanese societies. Nihongi mentions about the sound of a windblast, which cried aloud and forewarned Emperor Richiu about the death of Princess Hata. Shortly thereafter, a messenger arrived and gave the sad news to the Emperor. This incident reminds of the heavenly voice (Akashvani) warning King Kansa of Mathura about the birth of Krishna who would be the cause of his death in the future. The Japanese people avoided the cutting and disposal of nails, taking baths, and getting a haircut on certain days, a belief also common in India.

It must be noted that these deep spiritual links are very significant and have been effective in bringing the two countries together. In addition to these early linkages, Tagore-Okakura artistic and cultural collaborations, and Japanese connections during India’s independence movement through Subhash Chandra Bose, Rash Behari Bose and through the role of Jurist Radhabind Pal in the war trials of Japan are known worldwide. The list of India-Japan cultural similarities is endless. Through the above examples, it is evident that India-Japan exchanges did not begin during the 6th or 7th century as argued by many scholars. The similarity between the marriage rituals of Izanami and Izanagi and the story of Ninigi and Rama clearly show that the relations between the two countries predate any written record. The giant corpus of Indian influence hugely impacted the Japanese mind, body and soul. It can be said that without India, modern Japan would have been a very different country. In the words of Naomi Ishii, the former managing director of Toyota in India, “Japan has gained more from India across the ages than India has done from Japan in recent times.” ■

# An Indian monk in Ancient Japan

- Saroj Kumar Chaudhari

There was no direct exchange between Japan and India in ancient times. Many Indian monks went to China to spread the message of the Buddha. But only one Indian came to Japan in those ancient days. His name is Bodhisena, a monk from South India. He came together with his Champa disciple Buttetsu in the year 736. Around this time Chinese monks were playing a key role in spreading Buddhism in Japan. Bodhisena did not make any contribution to the propagation of Buddhism in Japan. Only a line or two are there about him in the history of Japanese Buddhism. His only qualification was that he was a man from the land of the Buddha. Being a man from the land of the Buddha, he was a matter of curiosity for the contemporary Japanese. The only reason for his miserable performance is that he did not know Chinese. Japanese monks of his time were very proficient in Chinese. They could communicate freely with Chinese monks. Bodhisena did not have any communication with the Japanese.

There is only one line about him in *Shoku Nihongi*, an official history of Japan. It says: 'The emperor gave him a set of winter dresses on the second day of the ninth month of 736'. In folktales, we find that he presided over the eye-opening ceremony of the Great Buddha of Nara. The oldest anthology of poems *Manyōshū* has a poem that says 'The eyes of a crow have swollen after eating vegetables in the garden of a Brahman. It is now resting on a flagpole'. Scholars say that the Brahman in this poem is Bodhisena. Besides, Gigaku, a form of mask dance, was performed in the imperial court during this time. Brahman's masks were also used in this dance form.<sup>1)</sup>

I am giving below the information on Bodhisena recorded on his tombstone.<sup>2)</sup>

Bodhisena was a South Indian Brahman of the Bharadvaja gotra. His virtues were well-known in the sixteen kingdoms of India. The ninety-nine non-Buddhist sects of India held him in great esteem. We do not know anything about his activities in India. He was very studious since his childhood. He was of quiet disposition. We all highly respect his spiritual depth. His knowledge is a matter of great inspiration for us. Following the example of the monk Lokakshema of Scythia and the monk An Shih-Kao of Parthia, he came to China after crossing the Himalayas and the southern seas. He faced many hardships on his way to China. In China, he was loved by all for his sweet nature.

The emperor Shōmu of Japan sent an embassy to China around this time. Seeing the popularity of Bodhisena, the Japanese ambassador invited him to come to Japan. Bodhisena agreed after seeing the sincerity of the ambassador. He embarked for Japan along with his disciple Buttetsu of Champa. On the way, their boat met with a severe storm and was about to sink. The storm subsided after Bodhisena prayed to the Buddha. After this storm, the party reached Japan without any more trouble. The emperor lodged him in a temple in the capital. He never showed his feeling on his face. He was given the rank of head of monks. He passed away in 760 at the age of fifty-seven.

## Siddham in Japan

Siddham is the name of the Indian script with which Sanskrit was written in those days. By extension, it also meant the Sanskrit language. The Japanese monk Annen wrote *Shittanzō* around 800 AD where he describes Siddham as it was known in Japan during his time. Here Annen says that Bodhisena brought a Siddham book with him to Japan. He has quoted just one word *samyakṣabuddha* from this book in his *Shittanzō*.<sup>3)</sup> Annen does not mention the name of this book, nor does he give any other quotations. Buttetsu brought a Siddham primer *Shittanshō* together with him. This book is lost, but we have a brief review of the book by the monk Annen in his *Shittanzō*. It has a strange resemblance with the *Varṇaparichaya* with which we enter the world of education in Bengal. We will see the contents of *Shittanshō* and compare it with our *Varṇaparichaya*.

Annen writes about Buttetsu's *Shittanshō* as follows: 'It starts with the line *namaḥ sarvajñaya siddham*. After this, there are sixteen vowels starting with /a/. Next, there are twenty-five (explosive) letters starting with /ka/. After this, there are eight letters starting with /ya/. Following this there is /kṣa/.' Then Annen writes, 'After this there is /ka/'. Then Annen writes, 'Next we have /kya/, /kra/, /kla/, /kva/, /kma/, /kṇa/, /kṅa/, /kna/, /rka/, /ska/, /krya/, /klya/. The thirty-four consonants also come in such compound forms. All these compounds have twelve vocalic forms each.' Then Annen gives a note. It says 'in modern commentaries, we do not have letters like /krya/, etc.'<sup>4)</sup> Annen has given the above letters in Siddham script. This is the oldest description of the contents of the Siddham primer in *Shittanshō*. It should be noted that in China and Japan the consonants (*vyāñjana varṇa*) themselves were considered to be one of the vocalic forms of the consonants. There was no special sign for it, as in the case of other vocalic forms. Because of this they persistently say 'twelve vocalic forms'.

The sixteen vowels of *Shittanshō* are the vowels /a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, r, ṛ, l, ḷ, e, ai, o, au, aḥ/ of the *Varṇaparichaya*. The twenty-five (explosive) letters starting with /ka/ of *Shittanshō* are /ka, kha, ga, gha, ṅa, ca, cha, ja, jha, ṅa, ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa, ta, tha, da, dha, na, pa, pha, ba bha, ma/ of the *Varṇaparichaya*. The eight letters starting with /ya/ mentioned in *Shittanshō*, are /ya, ra, la, va, śa, ṣa, sa, ha/ of the *Varṇaparichaya*. *Shittanshō* says that the last consonant is /kṣa/. Next *Shittanshō* says 'after this there is /ka/'. By it *Shittanshō* means the vocalic combination like /kā/, /kī/, etc. of consonants. Next *Shittanshō* says about the compound letters and their vocalic combinations. I think, it will not be an exaggeration to say that the basic framework of the modern day *Varṇaparichaya* is a carbon copy of the *Shittanshō* of Buttetsu.

It is to be noted that Annen just mentions the number of vowels and consonants given by Buttetsu. I have given the vowels and the consonants themselves on the basis of the *varṇamālās* given by Fa-hsien in 417 and by Dharmakshema in 426 AD in their translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*.<sup>5)</sup> The *varṇamālās* given in these two translations are considered to be the oldest recorded versions of the *varṇamālā*. The only exception is that after the consonant /ha/ there is the consonant /laṃ/ and not /kṣa/ as stated by Buttetsu. I will designate these two oldest *varṇamālās* as the standard *varṇamālā*. I am giving them below.

Standard *Varṇamālā*

Vowels : a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ, e, ai, o, ou, ṁ, ḥ

Consonants : ka kha ga gha ṅa cha cha ja jha ṅa ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa  
ta tha da dha na pa pha ba bha ma  
ya ra la va śa ṣa sa ha ḷaṃ

We find this format of the standard *varṇamālā* also in the account of the famous Chinese visitor I-ching and in Hsi-t'an-tzu-chi of Chih-kuang, the standard textbook of the *varṇamālā* published in China around 750 AD.<sup>6)</sup> Hsi-t'an-tzu-chi was used widely as the standard textbook of the *varṇamālā* in China and Japan. Again, the *varṇamālās* given by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed in his *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* published in 1778 and by Raja Ram Mohan Ray in his Bengali grammar *Gauriya Byakaran* published in 1833 also come practically in this format.<sup>7)</sup>

Dharmakshema is an Indian. Fa-hsien travelled across India between 400 and 410. Although he came across the *varṇamālā* while translating the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, it seems that he could not fathom the importance of the *varṇamālā*. The reason for saying so is that nowhere in his works he has discussed the *varṇamālā*. I-Ching came to India in 671 AD and lived in India for the next twenty years. He was very conscious about the significance of the *varṇamālā*, and he has recorded the *varṇamālā* as it was used in India in his days. These records and the *varṇamālās* of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed and Raja Ram Mohan Ray clearly show that the tradition of this standard format of the *varṇamālā* continued in Bengal till 1833.

It must be mentioned here that the two oldest *varṇamālās* of Fa-hsien and of Dharmakshema have one exception. It is that the vowels ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ are placed after the consonants.

Before ending this paper, I want to mention that the famous scholar Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was the first writer of the text book for Bengali beginners, the *Varṇaparichaya*, to break from the age old tradition of the Standard *varṇamālā*. For instance, he showed the last two vowels /ṁ/ and /ḥ/ as the last two consonants. ■

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(TSDK: Taishō Shinshū Daizō Kyō, T: Top row, M: Middle row, B: Bottom row)

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Chinese Characters of the Japanese Words

Annen 安然 Buttetsu 佛哲 Manyōshū 万葉集 An Shih-kao 安世高  
Shittanshō 悉曇章 Shittanzō 悉曇藏 Shoku Nihongi 続日本紀  
Shōmu 聖武

# Random Thoughts

- Gunjan Verma



Fuji-san; Acrylic on canvas; 2021



On way to Fuji-san; Acrylic; 2020

There was a real feeling of excitement when I got to know that it was going to be Japan this time. Took me back to a book gifted to us when we were really small. I think it was called Children from Other Lands or something like this. I don't remember the exact name of the book but it was red and hard bound and had a chapter on Japan that was about Hina Matsuri. Fascinating story, I believe my journey towards Japan started right there and then.

Generally the first car ride from the airport to my new home, in a new country is always memorable. The first sight leaves an impression which sets the tone for the rest of my stay. I can honestly say that every posting has been equally positive and very good to me. Here in Japan, the first view of my garden was exhilarating. It was as if the cogs in my brain started turning, ideas were popping. I firmly believe that it was God's gift for me. Since that first moment, I have spent countless hours in the garden. The feel of soil on my palms relaxes me. I love nurturing my plants; I love the way my tending to them leaves them groomed and clean, something beautiful to behold; I feel they get space to breathe and be happy. I tend to lose track of time when I am in the garden. The garden becomes an extension of me, I easily flow in and out of it. Besides bringing me immense calm and tranquility, it also makes me feel closer to my grandfather and father who had green fingers that resulted in beautiful gardens. My family garden now, overlooked by my mother is a riot of flowers and fruits, a great inspiration..

Creativity is something that I have imbibed from my family. In Japan I see so many people creating, learning... Everyone is so eager to learn, I feel humbled. Everyone has that special something in them. For me, Art is immensely therapeutic. I try to learn the painting style of each country, same goes for Japan. The dribble of paint, the swipe of the brush, a thrill and then a calm descends on me, I feel lighter. I am in my zone. I strive to do something everyday, watercolor, a sketch, oil, acrylic or a few stitches of temari, a speech..see a temple or just anything. And yes, reading too. Something has to be done, keeps me connected to my inner self.

The loss of creative time in Covid period has been a bit of a blow to the creative process. But though slow, the process still goes on. I am sure that I will leave a little bit of India with my Japanese friends and carry a great bit of Japan with myself when I leave. ■

# Understanding the Conflict and Importance of Peace Education

- Dr. Vandana Singh

The word conflict conjures up associations of tension, disruption, and violence with the expectation of anything from uncomfortable to life-threatening situations. From such a perspective, conflict is something to be avoided or even suppressed. However, there is another side to the bringing of an unjust situation to the surface or public arena, the stimulation to look for creative solutions and the challenging of outmoded ideas and patterns of thinking. So, conflict in itself is not to be eliminated but ways need to be developed to handle conflict.

A common definition of conflict is a situation in which two or more individuals or groups perceive, that they possess mutually incompatible goals. Conflict isn't the problem - it is when conflict is poorly managed then it's a problem. Conflict is a problem when it:

- Hampers productivity
- Lowers morale
- Causes more and continued conflicts
- Causes inappropriate behaviors

The possible sources of conflict are poor communication, competition for common but scarce resources, incompatible goals, and the like. The frustration of the basic needs becomes a source of social conflict. It is suggested that there are six sources of conflict:

1. Limited resource
2. Interdependent work activities
3. Differentiation of activities.
4. Communication problems.
5. Differences in perceptions.
6. The environment of the organization

Conflict can also arise from a number of other sources, such as:

- Individual differences (some people enjoy conflict while others don't)
- Unclear authority structures (people don't know how far their authority extends)
- Differences in attitudes
- Task symmetries (one group is more powerful than another and the weaker group tries to change the situation:

Conflict resolution skills/Strategies resolution and poor mediation programs are often promoted as a way, to reduce violence (and destructively managed conflicts). Management of conflict is a human relations concept long recognized in business and industry as a necessary component of the developmental process.

Since conflict is seemingly unavoidable it is obviously necessary for administrators to be able to recognize the conflict. To view it as constructive as well as destructive

potential, to learn how to manage conflict, and to apply conflict management strategies practically, the training for constructive conflict handling is inevitable, which would include:

- Strengthening self-esteem
- Developing reflection skills
- Improving communication skills
- Sharpening analytical skills
- Stimulating creative thinking and encouraging a problem-solving orientation

Peace education is meant to understand and manage conflicts and is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge, and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. In other words, peace education is the deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace-making skills in homes, schools, work, organizations, and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. It implies therefore that education for peace is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence of different scales ranging from the global, regional, national, local, industrial, and personal levels.

Thus, peace education is a global phenomenon that pervades all the regions and countries of the world. This is evidenced by the diversity in the focus and terminology, which peace education is given in the different regions and countries of the world. Peace education encompasses the spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, existence, and gender equality, among others.

Peace education typically focuses on the social behavioral symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve interpersonal disputes through techniques of negotiation and peer mediation, learning to manage anger, fight fair and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions.

We all face conflicts and handle them the best way we can when they arise but Peace education can help us to be more effective and constructive in our approaches. Through a combination of increased self-awareness and skills training, we can learn to be more effective and constructive in our approaches. Through a combination of increased self-awareness and skills training we can learn to be more effective agents of conflict transformation or possibly even make useful interventions in conflicts in which we are not directly involved. Therefore, it is highly pertinent to introduce the studies of Peace education in our school system to create a much more harmonious world. ■

# Strange Obsession

- Tapan Das

'The mad professor is always obsessed with his pea-plants in his small kitchen garden,' the students remarked sarcastically. 'He never allows us to enjoy the green peas in his kitchen garden nor does he eat them himself; we should teach him a lesson,' they added. Mr. Bob Cotton was a well-known professor of English in a small college in Pragjyotishpur, in Northeast India. He lived there with his wife, Jassi, a Sardarni by birth, who has devoted to her 'Cotton Sahib'. After retirement, they decided to spend the rest of their lives in their rented cottage near the mighty Brahmaputra river at Kamrup,

Mr. Cotton was an impressively well-built personality with a hawk-beaked nose and almost resembled a Sumo wrestler. His sharp eyes beamed through his spectacles, ever keen to find naughty students, and were always waiting to vent his acid tongue to demand the usual respect he expected as a professor. But after retirement, he was a transformed man. Perhaps the acid tongue in him sobered quite a bit after he retired. The professor and Jassi alias Jaswinder Kaur, made a lovely couple almost as if two religions were co-existing peacefully. While one had the Bible in his hand, the other had the Guru Granth Sahib. Bob Cotton was a good storyteller. He used to dramatize stories which Jassi enjoyed. There was no dearth of stories in their life. The Professor's story-telling was always convincing. He enjoyed Indian spicy food which Jassi prepared especially the 'green pea masala', 'pea stuffed kulcha' and 'peas pulao'. He also liked 'Sarso da sag' and 'Makki da roti' but 'peas' were like heaven to him. Cleaning utensils was another chore which he did not allow Jassi to perform. Most of the time, he would take up the role of the dishwasher. Jassi would lovingly call him 'my firangee dishwasher'.

People say that after they had lost their only son Paul they had become very lonely. However, no one had ever seen Paul. When he was not obsessed with his pea-plants in the kitchen garden, he would watch the students of the nearby hostel playing basketball or Volleyball on the nearby ground.

During Christmas, the couple invited all the students of the hostel and distributed a particular sweet-cum-chocolate known as 'butter fudge, specially imported from England. This chocolate was Paul's favorite. Mr. Cotton used to place orders at the Farrah's Sweet Shop in London so that they could get the parcel well before Christmas. John Farrahs Harrogate, London sent the parcels to him with unfailing regularity.

Sometimes, Mr. Cotton would turn into a beast when he found students stealing peas from his garden. He would never allow anybody to even look at those plants. The day the students played the mischief with the pea-plants he would go berserk and beat anyone who would come near him. Only Jassi could cool him down. He would break down and cry like a child near the portrait of his late son Paul. Addressing the hostel students, she would plead, 'Please take any other fruit or vegetable from the garden but for Wahe Guru's sake don't hurt him by stealing the peas.'

People had not seen his son Paul. Paul, presumably, was his son by his first wife in England. He did not like to discuss his son at any point of time and kept close secrecy

about it. Anything planted by the professor grew up so well that people would talk about his father Sir Benjamin Cotton who came to India with his family to take charge of the tea plantations in the North East, India. Sir Benjamin was a tea planter par excellence. After completing his studies, young Cotton went back to the UK for some time for higher studies. The unfortunate death of his father, mother and sister from malaria compelled the young Cotton to return to India. He did not like the tea plantation job. He was fond, rather, of academics. While his father liked the green valleys of Assam and Darjeeling and considered them the best for the plantation of tea, young Cotton was drawn towards books and gardening. He took up a teaching job.

His colleagues were bewildered by his obsession with the pea-plants but did not dare ask him why. 'He is a sheer mad man,' quipped one of his colleagues, 'I don't agree,' retorted another colleague. 'The way he explains the use of sound in phonetics, is simply amazing,' countered James. It was 24 December. The professor was, as usual, in his shorts and was watering his garden. The pea-plants grew so well that he was very happy as if he could see his son laughing. After that, he headed towards the hostel to invite students for Christmas celebrations the next day morning. Some students were at his place till late at night to help him decorate the Christmas tree. A new portrait of Paul was put up in the drawing room. Even the portrait of Guru Nanak was cleaned and put into place. The students were timidly eyeing the packed boxes of the tasty 'butter fudge which had already arrived from London.

That night on Christmas Eve, Mr. and Mrs. Cotton kissed each other and decided to retire to bed. Mr. Cotton wanted to sleep in the drawing room so that he could keep an eye on his kitchen garden. 'If only our Paul was with us we would have gone back to our old cottage in London,' lamented the old professor. Jassi was silent. She had decided to wake up first in the morning and wish her husband a merry Christmas.

It was morning. Jassi tiptoed eagerly towards the drawing-room keen on surprising Mr. Cotton. But alas! Mr. Cotton was not in his bed. She peeped into the garden. He should surely be there! But what a sight! Was something wrong? She wanted to be the first to wish Mr. Cotton a merry Christmas, but there were people all around him! She ran to the garden and found Mr. Cotton lying on the ground with his eyes open. All the pea-plants had been uprooted! Mr. Cotton's garden was totally ransacked! Oh Lord, how could this happen! She quickly touched the forehead of Mr. Cotton. But his body was very cold. She now understood what had happened. Mr. Cotton was no more. 'Wahe Guru, don't be so unkind,' she cried. 'Don't leave me alone, Cotton Sahib' cried Jassi. 'What if the pea plants were Paul's favorite? These boys are also like Paul. Forgive them.'

The crowd now guessed the reason for the professor's obsession. Green peas were Paul's favorite! Paul presumably had sent this special variety of seed from the UK before he died.

People say that Jassi did not live long either after that perhaps. Her forefathers were Sikh soldiers brought by the Mughals to Kamrup.

The people of the North East and Professor Cotton's students did not ever forget their old professor and his obsession with pea-plants. We can see the great Cotton Institute standing in its majestic grandeur reminding us of Professor Cotton even today.

Kamrup, like the rest of the Northeastern region, attracts plenty of foreign tourists. It was great news when people came to know that Professor Cotton's youngest brother, Sir William from Trinity College, London, was planning to visit the Northeast along with a group of other British tourists to pay their homage to some of their relatives who were British soldiers of the Second World War. Their memories were preserved in the war memorials at Kohima- Nagaland and at Manipur.

Sir William Cotton decided to visit his brother's grave too. The visit coincided with the annual day celebrations of Cotton Institute, where his brother had taught. A grand function was organized with Sir William as the chief guest.

Speakers spoke about Professor Cotton and his strange obsession with the pea-plants and his son Paul. But Sir William was disturbed! His eyes were glued to the two portraits in the corner. His brother's portrait was recognizable but what about the other portrait? It was familiar but he could not be sure. People said it was Paul's but who the hell was Paul? His brother was not married when he left the UK. Then suddenly, he got it! It was his (Sir William's) own photograph which he had sent to his brother from London!

He had to spill the beans: 'Ladies and gentlemen, you are committing a huge blunder. Mr. Cotton, my elder brother, did not have a child at all. And the portrait standing over there is my own portrait which I sent to him.' The whole crowd stood stunned. He added, 'Let me tell you, I did like the story that you have all said about his son Paul and also about his obsession with pea-plants. But the fact is, my brother was very fond of green peas. When he was a child he did not allow us to even share any dish made from green peas. It was a strange obsession, almost a disease. He would do anything to have green peas. In many of his letters, he had written how

he managed to save the pea-plants from the students and boarders. In fact, he resorted to this drama to enjoy the green peas all by himself. He died of a cardiac arrest but the story that you all have narrated, though interesting, I am afraid I am unable to digest.' The crowd sat struck. As Sir William was getting down from the dais and walking towards his vehicle, there was mirth in the air and suddenly he could see some commotion near the gate. An old lady was forcing her way towards Sir William and she was holding a turban-clad young white man. 'Mr. William!! Can you guess? Can you recognize me or this young man?' she asked. In the meantime, the organizers had rightly guessed what was happening. They cordoned off the area. Sir William, taken aback at first, calmed down. His thought process ended with a small flash on his face. How could he not recognize the familiar face, familiar nose! He asked the lady. 'If I am not mistaken, am I speaking to Mrs. Jaswinder Cotton? And if my answer is right, the young man should be Cotton Junior.' The smile on the lady's face was enough for Sir William to react. He put his step forward and hugged the young white Sardar. He said, 'You look exactly like my brother but how come we did not know?' He paused a bit, tears rolling down his cheek. 'Yes, it was our fault we did not keep in touch with you and Bob was to be blamed too.' The old lady took Sir William by his hand and asked him to sit on a nearby chair. 'Yes! We had sent him to Canada, where my eldest sister lived.' 'He is Jeetpaul Cotton; we call him Paul,' she added. 'People do not know much about our son as Bob did not want that. His family thought he had become a priest. He wanted to keep it a secret as he married me against the wishes of his uncles and brothers in London,' said the old lady. 'I was also in Canada. We came here last week so that we could participate in his death anniversary function. On reaching India, we got the news from the newspapers yesterday that you would be the chief guest for this function. That is why we are here,' she said. The reunion was worth witnessing. The crowd was happy to see the young white Sardar whose father Sir Cotton was a well-known professor.

People say Paul and his mother went back to England and stayed with his uncle. It was also believed that Paul married a local tea planter's daughter Junemoni whom his mother had selected. Both were in the teaching profession in England and they were a happy family. ■

*Disclaimer: Strictly fiction. Resemblance to names and places could be just coincidence.*

# The Foundations of a Great Education

## The Finnish Education System

- Sofyani Tatipamula

It is not surprising that most high schoolers are not happy at school. A 2020 Yale study surveying more than 20,000 high schoolers in 50 US states, shows that nearly 75% of high schoolers report negative feelings toward school. If you ask students how they feel at school, most would likely say “bored,” “stressed,” or “tired.” But, should students feel like this? This is certainly not how Finnish students feel.

While most schools often neglect the overall well-being of students, the most successful education system in the world does not. Finland has ranked number one in the UN’s 2020 World Happiness Report for the third time in a row. It also has consistently remained at the top in the PISA results. PISA tests the skills and knowledge of 15-year olds in dozens of countries to evaluate education systems worldwide. It assesses reading, mathematics, and science. In 2018, it placed sixth overall out of 79 nations, second in reading literacy, and third among OECD countries in science literacy. It is not a coincidence that the happiest country happens to have the best education system. There are ten elements of the Finnish educational philosophy that contribute to its success and the happiness of students:

1. Inclusive and equal opportunities
2. Learning through play
3. Personalized learning
4. Lack of standardized testings and more focus on learning/self-assessment
5. Less strenuous environment
6. Minimal homework and later start to school
7. Independence and freedom of students
8. Flexibility
9. Lifelong learning
10. Autonomous and highly qualified teachers

The Finnish education system guarantees equal learning opportunities regardless of the person’s social background. Most schools in Finland are public with the exception of a tiny handful of independent schools. Education from preschool, upper secondary to university is free for all citizens in Finland, but also citizens from countries in the EU, EEA, and Switzerland. Additionally, special needs education is heavily embedded in Finland’s national education system. The focus is on supporting all students with special needs in a mainstream class and when necessary, providing special needs in small teaching groups. Students may have an individual study plan that can be integrated or partly integrated into mainstream class or they may also receive part-time special needs education. Very few children are made to repeat a year or be segregated from their classmates. The objective of special needs education there is to support all students with special needs by providing equal opportunities to complete compulsory education in accordance with their abilities, and alongside their peers.

In the early years, learning through play is strongly emphasized before children enter schooling. It has been proven by numerous research studies that “The Power of Play,” in the short and long run, fosters cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. It may come off as shocking that Finnish children do not start schooling only until they are 7 years old. Before then, they spend most of their time learning through play. Even when Finnish children begin first grade, students

are provided with ample opportunities to play. First and second graders on average have 3 hours of classroom instruction interspersed with short recesses. After school, they usually attend an after-school club to engage in lots of self-directed play. Finnish daycares and preschools follow the national Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) curriculum that strongly believes in letting children be children, by focusing on play, health, and the overall wellbeing of the child. All activities are planned around the holistic wellbeing of the child, supporting their overall development and learning journey.

There is no cutthroat or toxic competition as students are not ranked based on exams, but instead more of an environment of cooperation. Schools also start from 9:00 to 9:45 am and end earlier by 2:00 to 2:45 pm. Not to mention, Finnish students only have a couple of classes but are longer with 15-20 min breaks. Thus, there is generally a relaxed and low-stress environment for students and teachers, promoting good well-being for students. It creates an environment for holistic learning so they can perform the best. This has also been proven by the 2016 NCBI article, “School Start Times, Sleep, Behavioral, Health, and Academic Outcomes,” that early start time is detrimental to student’s well-being, health, and maturation. This study and countless others have provided evidence that later starts times increase weeknight sleep duration and thus, improved attendance, less tardiness and falling asleep in class, and better grades.

There are two assessments in the Finnish education system. One is the final comprehensive assessment of the student’s progress at the culmination of basic education: the student portfolio. This determines whether the student earns a certificate of completion and can proceed to secondary school. It contains yearly reports and diverse evidence of student’s works from 8th and 9th grade. The second one is the National Matriculation Exam, the only standardized test in Finnish schooling. This is a voluntary test for students who want to continue on to higher education at the end of secondary school. Often when preparing for standardized tests, students cram to just pass the test rather than to *really* learn. This may be why there is a lack of standardized tests here and more of a focus on formative assessment (progress of learning and overall development of students) than on summative assessment. Test scores are not accepted as the sole criteria for assessment. For example, students are assessed through their work over the years, which provides feedback to the students about their progress in learning, strengths, and areas of improvement. This is to promote self-evaluation so students learn how to evaluate their own performances, set their own goals, and reflect on their own progress. Finnish students are therefore nurtured into independent and self-aware thinkers. On top of this, teachers communicate regularly to parents about the student’s progress, which allows for better communication between the child and parent. Teachers also give exams in the classrooms but avoid presenting the situations as a test so students see this as a ‘learning experience’ rather than a summative assessment. The tests are also graded qualitatively with a scale from “very good” to “needs practice,” which fosters a growth mindset that is more encouraging and less pressurizing to students.

It must be clear by now that learning is prioritized by Finnish schools. Each student’s progress is followed through the national curriculum’s learning outcomes: *‘Learners have an active role in what and how they learn and truly hold a key*

to unlocking their own potential.’ Learning is personalized for each student by empowering their strengths and supporting their challenges. They are encouraged to follow their own paths that maximize their growth and learning. The structure of the education system in Finland, therefore, promotes lifelong learning and allows all students to reach their full potential without anyone being left behind.

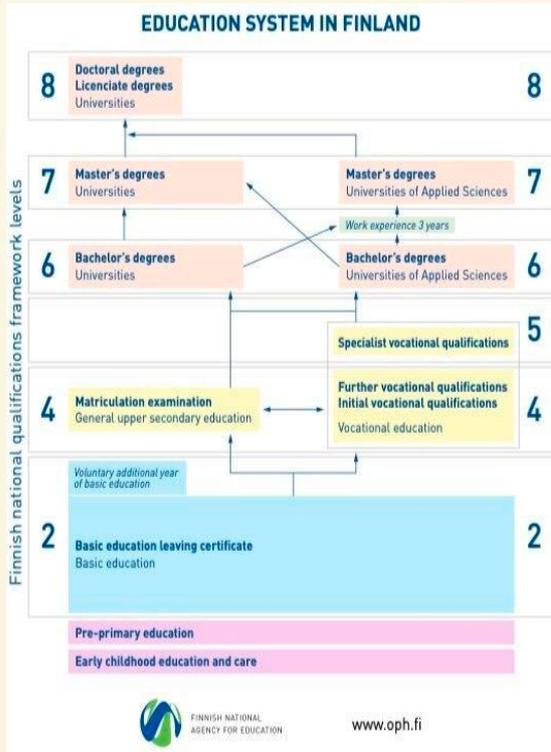


Figure 1: Basic Structure of Finnish Education System

Furthermore, only 9 years of schooling are compulsory for Finnish children. Everything past ninth grade is optional. Finland allows more freedom in this way for children to prepare for the real world if they desire. In America, the UK, and many countries in Asia, each grade in school is preparation for the next, all in grand preparation for university, which then prepares you for the next grand thing. It is never-ending and exhausting due to how incredibly immutable it is. Many students do not really need to attend university and get a worthless degree or flounder around trying to figure out what they really want to do with their lives and incur massive debt. Finland however is flexible in this aspect shown by the figure above as they offer other options that are equally advantageous for continuing education. One is attending college by taking Upper Secondary School, a three-year program that prepares students for the Matriculation Test that determines their entry into a university. The other is attending vocational/trade school.

Compared to schools in Asian countries, students in Finnish schools are given more independence and freedom. Inside classrooms, teachers are comfortable providing students with ample freedom such as assigning open-ended projects. This practice encourages creativity but also pushes children to develop stronger critical thinking skills.

Moreover, especially during the first years of school, homework is minimal and school days are short. According to the OECD, compared to an average high school student in the US who spends 6 hours on homework and outside work, students in Finland only spend 3 hours a day. As the focus is on learning through play, this leaves students with more time to spend after school to play, on their hobbies, and develop soft skills outside of the classroom. This contributes to the happiness of children as they are not always under high pressure, worrying about grades. They learn and grow as human beings. As a result, they outperform cultures that have toxic and stressful school-to-life balances.

Notably, Finnish teachers are highly qualified. They are highly trained and have to obtain a mandatory master's degree. Teaching programs are also the most rigorous and selective professional schools in the entire country. The bar is set so high that teachers automatically have great responsibility and accountability. Therefore, teachers are given lots of autonomy to plan their own teaching and resourcing. As personalized learning is the focus, a large part of a teacher's role especially in Finnish schooling is to learn how to tailor teaching to different kinds of learners. Research also suggests that teacher autonomy is linked with happiness at work and retaining educators in the teaching profession.

One last distinguishable feature is that students in Finland often have the same teacher for up to six years of their education. During this time, teachers can take the role of a mentor or even a family member, and build a stronger relationship with mutual trust and bonding so both parties really get to know, understand and respect each other. This also allows for teachers to accurately track, evaluate and care for their progress and help them attain their goals.

While it is not possible to perfectly replicate the Finnish education system, perhaps what other countries and schools can take away from the success of the Finnish education system is their simple mindset to return back to basics, that is: **providing a learning environment that promotes students' wellbeing**. This is the most important foundation of a good education. However, many school systems are too concerned with qualitative scores and assessments that they tend to forget what constitutes a happy, harmonious, and healthy student and learning environment. However, Finnish schools focus on maximizing and making learning fun for every student and school a more equitable place. Therefore, it is only true that Finnish students are the happiest in the world. ■

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## Nolen Gurer Nadu

- Piali Bose

**M**aa was never so confident about making **narkel nadu** as she was baking a cake, it was Baba who learned the art while participating in the ritual in his large joint family of helping Maa, Kakimas while they shaped the perfect round shapes of coconut mixed with the winter delicacy of **nolen gur** (the date palm jaggery so quintessential to winter in Bengal).

So Baba, the perfectionist that he was, started; and Ma helped like every season. Sometimes the roles reversed and she gave the inputs while they made those aamer jelly **aamer squash, achhar, or aamsotto**. Their evening partnership stretching to weekends, dishing out traditional delicacies, was something Kushal could never understand. Not that he cared much.

He cared however for the **Nolen gurer Nadu**—stacked in the refrigerator.

Studying alone now in a distant land, the scene of two middle-aged people sharing a common bonhomie, one quietly instilling confidence into the other, one grudging smilingly over the shapes and texture not coming perfect, unfurled like scenes of perfect friendship, love, and the aroma of home.

Baba was startled by the mid morning phone call while during his University classes, “**Next time bari aashle, amaye Nolen gurer Nadu banano sikhiye debe Baba?**” (Next time when I come home, will you teach me to make those perfectly round narus, baba?) ■

# My Ego (1993-2021)

- Shoubhik Pal

This year, I buried my ego, once and for all. But it didn't just die all of a sudden - it has been slowly weakened over the years by 5 pivotal events. Let's deep dive...

## Event #1:

It was 2008, and smartphones were just starting to become a thing. I was in the movie theatre watching Dostana with my family, and I totally fell in love with Priyanka Chopra. Delusions of grandeur followed, as I imagined far-fetched situations like meeting & charming her at a random party, and then asking Father Chopra for her hand in marriage.

Guess what? None of this happened. (Thanks a lot, Nick Jonas.)

## Event #2:

Let's move to 2013 when I was trying to play the role of a cool kid who didn't study much in college. I gave this final exam for a class I didn't go to for most of the semester. Right before the results came, I did a prolonged prayer to whichever God will hear me, demanding a good grade for my (little to no) efforts. You can probably guess what happened...

Hey, at least it wasn't as bad as my schoolmates during our 10th grade exams - many of them didn't even pick up their books for it. During the summer break, right before the results came out, a lot of them went to Tirupati and shaved their heads in the hopes of passing.

They didn't, and now some of them are balding.

## Event #3:

2017, and I'm full steam ahead in my work life. I had this awesome idea for a brand I was working on - for validation, I told all my friends about it, and all of them liked it. But when I told my boss about it, he trashed it and gave me flimsy reasons as to why it didn't work. When I reverted with my views, I was given an hour-long lecture by him on how I was being arrogant by speaking back to him.



Here, I realized that not everyone is going to think the way I do - so when your bosses rip on your idea, let it go for the time being and keep it in the bank. Who knows, that idea may come of use in a different company or a different project.

## Event #4:

It's 2018, and I'm in Delhi. One morning, I get a call from my parents - and like many calls with parents, there was some shouting and arguing involved. In this particular one, a lot of that arguing was with my father, over silly matters that could be resolved in the next call.

That next call never came - 4 days later, he passed away. During that time, I felt haunted over that phone conversation being possibly the last time I spoke to my father. I tried to do irrational things, like moving him to a different hospital in an attempt to save him - just so I'd have the chance to talk to him again.

When they declared him dead, the finality of it dawned upon me - I can't change my last conversation with him. The only option I had was to move past it.

## Event #5:

It's 2021, and I'm 28. I always had a vision that I'd work very hard in my early 20s and spend my late 20s traveling more and pursuing my true passions. Well, as it turns out, a deadly global pandemic doesn't care about your plans.

I had no choice but to make the most of a bad situation - I put those plans on hold so I could learn as much as possible in the WFH era and use those learnings in a future job in something I'm totally passionate about. As for travel and turning 30, a) those places aren't going anywhere, and b) age is just a number.

**So that's it.** These different events have given me guiding principles to move forward: don't overthink things, take it a day at a time, and the only thing you truly have control over is your actions. I know you've probably read this in some self-help book somewhere, but no harm in reading it again.

Till next Anjali, then... ■

# How gender norms are holding us back in the 21st century!

- Dr. Prachi Gupta

Growing up in India, I thought women's education inevitably leads to women's empowerment. For why women occupied such few positions in offices, boardrooms, or parliament, I observed well correlated with their low educational status in our country. I assumed if we could provide good quality education to all our womenfolk (and men of course) they would step forward and claim their rights in decision making whether at homes, workplaces, or governance.

One of the primary hurdles in educating women in a country like India is high rates of poverty. Research suggests that women are more likely to be poor, less educated, less healthy, lowly paid than men everywhere, and more so in developing countries. If poverty is the reason, can economic growth be the solution? Economic growth (provided it is equitable) gives us a way out of poverty as it solves the problem of lack of resources for which women often must make the first sacrifices as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. Based on all these scattered observations, the amateur economist in me concluded that economic growth via the education route can solve the problem of empowerment of women in India.

And then I came to Japan- a rich and developed economy. I observed women as secretaries, part-time workers, or on 'mamachari' bikes disproportionately higher than men. It became evident that women were clearly missing in leadership roles at workplaces and in politics. They did not appear to be equally empowered in this 'developed' country. Why?

The 2021 Global Gender Gap report helps us find some answers to such questions. The gender gap is high in a country if there are big differences between the economic, social, and political status of men and women. Japan ranks at a dismal low of 120 out of 156 countries. The rich Nordic countries like Iceland (1), Finland (2), and Norway (3) rank amongst the top with the lowest gender gaps. However, the ranking is a mixed bag of a variety of rich and poor countries. Rwanda (7) and Philippines (17) rank above the United States (30), Mozambique (32) and Mexico (34) are above Australia (50) Zambia (56), Kenya (95) and Nepal (106) are above China (107). India stands miserably low at 140, just above Qatar (142) and Saudi Arabia (147).

Clearly, high economic growth and the size of the GDP aren't narrating the story of what is happening with women's life in the countries. The Global Gender Gap compares countries' gender gaps across four dimensions namely- economic

opportunities, education, health, and political leadership. While GDP growth does improve the health and education of women across groups, it does not guarantee equitable economic opportunities and political participation. Why?

Consider Japan. Women in Japan are highly educated and very healthy – almost the same or even better than men, they are still missing on the leadership front. Japan is an outlier amongst the OECD countries to have such a dismal rank. Two key factors related to social factors explain this phenomenon in the case of Japan - Gender norms and conformism.

Gender norms are social principles that govern the behavior of men and women in society. For example, who should earn more, who should cook, who should handle money, who should play with cars, who with dolls etc. Gender norms are often based on tradition and may largely apply to how people choose to behave. However, strong gender norms affect society's ability to allow men and women to freely move into each other's gender-defined roles. For example, should women work as electricians or should men be kindergarten teachers? Evidence suggests that gender norms restrict women's empowerment by limiting their access to networks, information, assets, and jobs. When a society lacks the capacity to address gender norms, women irrespective of their skill and education may not be able to reach places that have been traditionally perceived as a man's job like being a CEO or a politician. Bringing a change in a conformist society like Japan has been a big challenge as voicing one's opinion against the status-quo is often regarded as 'ill-informed' or 'selfish' as it goes against the values of the society.

What lessons can we draw for India?

The essence is that women's empowerment may not come naturally with rapid economic growth unless there is a conscious effort in addressing change in gender norms both at home and in offices. Unless men and women share the spaces equally in the boardroom and the kitchen the dream of equality will continue to remain so. The gains in liberating our boys of the pressure to be primary breadwinners and our girls to be their 'good wives' may be difficult to perceive and unsettling at first, but economic theory guarantees its worth. Unless, the entitlement, talent, and skills are distributed randomly across all humanity and the capabilities of half of humanity are utilized, the losses to society will remain immense. India, the land of Durga deserves better. ■

# Where The Mind Is Without Fear

- Mandar Ponshe

I relocated to Japan towards the end of 2019. This is not my first move here, having had 2 long stints in the past. So, I was certainly looking forward to a good enjoyable stint in the country which has given me much joy and more importantly taught me much. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed much of those experiences, expectations though... and not surprisingly. We are in the pandemic now for 18+ months. And the societies are still in the firm grip of the fear. Early sporadic reports caused fear of the unknown, which quickly turned into real concern/fear. That turned then into all uncertain equations, unknown situations for all families/countries by 2020 end with vaccination news arriving on the horizon. Now the vaccinations are largely administered, we still find ourselves in the unknown territory of vaccination effectiveness, new strains on the rise, cross-border travel restrictions, and whatnot.

It's quite surreal that while everyone was busy playing wars, economies, and greed, the virus and its fear have crippled the globe for close to 2 years now! Astounding! The medical experts, environmentalists will have all the answers, and rightfully so. So the need of the hour is perhaps putting it all together to alleviate the confusion.

In the last 4-5 months, the uncertainty has certainly gripped the societies and governments as well. How do you live through this? Especially as expats with family & friends spread out, how do we get our purpose of this life aligned with what's going on? How do I ensure that I go about day-to-day life without meeting our family, our parents, friends for such a long time? Sure, there were small windows of opportunities; however most have missed those travel opportunities to meet up, and some have simply imploded with fear and anxiety. That's the question at the forefront of my mind.

At an individual level, the answers are not as much scientific as those are in our thought process. Vaccinations will take care of making the community immune to some extent until news screens new irises appear on the horizon. In the meanwhile, every individual is part of the society, which is part of the world community/earth as our abode. The answer may be in our ancient wisdom. A good starting point would be with us "Where The Mind Is Without Fear" as Rabindranath Tagore said. Such profound and inspiring words of Gurudev (selected few below):

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action*

Without fear is the only way we can progress as individuals and as a society. The fear rational or irrational is going to stop us as a society from progressing. Hope can spring only from fearlessness. It can turn into a vision by combining fearlessness with risk acceptance & compassion. As an Indian community, as countrymen originating from the land of that ancient wisdom, we need to exhibit that compassion and fearlessness. It should be visible in all our spheres of our action. As leaders in the community OR at the workplace, we need to show acceptance of new normal in positive traits through our behaviour. While Japan government has all politically correct directives out there, Japan did manage to get the Olympics done. That tremendous courage, the forcing economic arguments notwithstanding. We need to be the change agents and build on top of it. Our behaviour should be aimed at reducing fear, reducing anxiety, forward-looking actions to restore our human touch and compassion. The organizations & governments are all bound by looking at the downside in opening up the society. However, the Indian community (which I would like to believe as better off than others financially) has the responsibility to speed up the normalcy restoration. To play down the fear and purposefully taking actions everyone deems fit.

I desire us to be fearless. To be alert. To be compassionate but forward-looking to bring life back to normal. Bhagwan Shri Krishna enumerates divine attributes in Bhagavad-Gita chapter 16. He gives us 26 divine characteristics in total. The foremost thought is fearlessness (ABHAYA). It's not a mere coincidence. Other good attributes simply cannot blossom until ABHAYA takes root. So here is my wish for all of us to stay safe and look forward to rational next steps.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः। सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु। मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः॥

Let it remain a mere wish. Let us all resolve to show that strong, mental fortitude to make the world a better place sans recklessness, greed, disrespect that may have caused the pandemic to start in the first place. Godspeed! ■



**M**y interest in following the Formula 1 world peaked after deciding to study in the field of mechanical engineering. I would have kitchen mates who would gather on the weekends to watch the races, whether they be in the middle of the night or the day before an exam. In the beginning, it all felt a little confusing to me as I knew nothing about it beforehand, but after talking about it with friends, listening to the commentaries, and watching YouTube videos about the sport, I've learned to appreciate it. Although the cars may not be the fastest in a drag race, they are the fastest cars to go through turns and chicanes. A disclaimer beforehand, a lot changes in this sport year to year, so what I'm about to mention is not accurate to the early times or the future; it is more about the present.

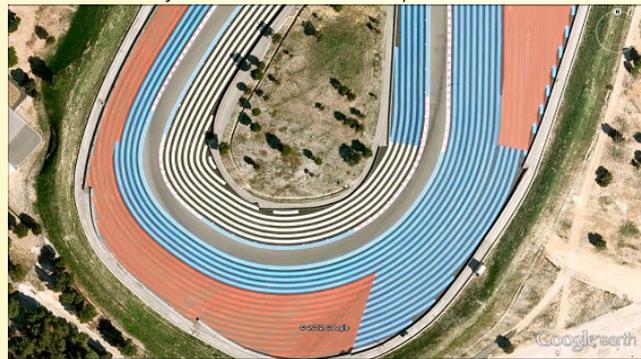
## Structure

Every year, Constructors (companies that make the chassis of the car) sign on two drivers for their team. Recently, there have been 10 teams, so 20 drivers. They race around 20 times in the course of one year, and almost every one of them is in a different country. In every race, the top ten drivers receive points, with first place receiving 25, second place 18, then 15, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, and 1 point for 10th place. Additionally, the driver with the fastest lap time in the race is awarded another point. These points are tallied up through the season, and the driver and constructor with the most points win the world championship. Although it is common that the winning driver's constructor also wins the constructor championship, it is not always the case. On a race weekend, what usually happens is that drivers can practice twice on Friday, which is called Free Practices 1 and 2. On Saturday, they have Free Practice 3, and then Qualifying. In Qualifying, the grid order is determined. It happens in three stages. The three stages Q1, Q2, and Q3 are not clear to me, but it happens in some form of elimination, starting with all 20 drivers in Q1, then less for Q2, and even less for Q3. Sunday is race day. The driver with the fastest lap time from Saturday's qualifying starts at the front of the whole pack.

## Circuits

Most people, after watching several years of the sport, tend to prefer some circuits over others. The races I find most interesting are the ones on blocked off public roads (Baku, Singapore, Jeddah, etc.) and the ones with high elevation changes (Spa, Monaco, Suzuka, etc.). F1 races happen on circuits that are given the highest grade by the FIA. As for the length of the circuit, tracks that are shorter cause a lot of overlapping between the fastest and slowest driver. Long tracks can be expensive to host as more run off areas, more stewards for safety, and in general, more of everything is needed.

Run off areas are usually in turns with a high speed entry. They are often made of gravel, to slow down the car, and have walls made of tyres to minimize the impact to the driver in the



event of a crash.

## Parts

An F1 car consists of parts made by their own constructor, borrowed from another constructor, or is standardized between teams. Aerodynamic related parts are usually made on their own by every constructor. The engine is usually borrowed from either Honda, Ferrari, Renault, or Mercedes. For example, of course, Mercedes uses its own engine, but it also lends its engine to McLaren, Aston Martin, and the Williams teams. One of the most important standardized parts is the tyre.

## Tyre



Pirelli supplies all the teams with tyres. The team can make a very little adjustment to what they are given. There are seven tyre compounds that Pirelli makes. Five are for dry weather, and two are for wet. The first five differ by hardness. Pirelli chooses three out of the five to be used in every race. They are named soft, medium, and hard. The softer the tyre is, the better grip it has. However, it comes with the drawback that these tyres quickly degrade calling for a pit stop. Hard tyres are the opposite; they can last for a long time but provide less grip. In wet conditions (rain), the two tyre types differ in terms of how much water they evacuate. The intermediate tyre evacuates 30 liters per second, whereas the full wet tyre does 85 liters per second. The intermediate is perfect for when the ground is still a bit wet, but is drying up.

## Pitstops

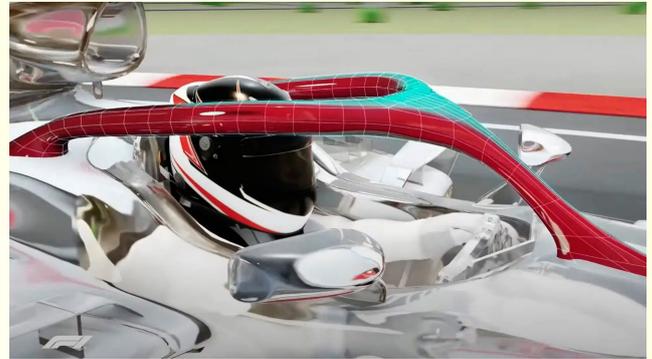


As mentioned before, tyres have to be changed mid race when the tyres are degrading, or even to change the front wing of the car in the case of a light crash. If only tyres need to be changed, these stops can be done in less than two seconds! The Redbull team holds the record for the fastest pitstop at 1.82 seconds at the 2019 Brazilian Grand Prix.

## Rules

Winning is almost guaranteed for the team with the most money. With more money, a team can research and develop numerous new ideas and do not have to hold back on any aspect of improving the car. If it weren't for the rules that are set by the FIA, F1 would be a very different sport. It's in the name itself, Formula 1 because of all the formulas the teams need to follow. Tire management is very important, and drivers like Sergio Perez can manage hard tyres to last the whole race. The FIA, however, requires drivers to use at least two different compounds (e.g. medium tyres switched to hard tyres halfway through). Lewis Hamilton and his team introduced a

mechanism where pulling/pushing the steering wheel resulted in the front wheels to toe in or toe out. The FIA banned this mechanism shortly after. Like this, if the FIA considers an innovation to be inappropriate in any form, they can add a new rule to the rulebook. In the past, cars tried to change the semi-automatic transmission to fully automatic, but this was probably considered as taking away from the driver showing his or her skills. Another interesting rule is that a certain amount of gas needs to be left in the gas tank for an inspection post race. Also, after a driver exits his or her car, he or she must reinstall the steering wheel, or can be disqualified for such a simple action. The rules are not only there for creating a level



playing field, but also a safe one.

Recently, the “halo” was introduced in the cockpit which provides crucial protection to the driver in the case of projectile-like debris, the car rolling over, and also crashing into side rails head on. F1 races also don't start in certain weather conditions so that helicopters can take drivers to the nearest hospital in the case of an accident.



## Conclusion

Now is such an exciting time to watch this sport. Records of the past are being broken due to drivers of the current season. Lewis Hamilton has the most race wins ever, and is going for his 8th world championship title. If he pulls through, this will beat Michael Schumacher's record. Sebastian Vettel dominated in the beginning of the decade. He has a lot of records for being the youngest driver to achieve many accomplishments. Kimi Raikonen is a true veteran having started and finished the most F1 races ever. Racers are true athletes feeling four to six times their body weight in corners, four times their body weight when braking, and two times when accelerating. They sit in sauna-like conditions right in front of the car's fuel tank for a couple hours, losing 4kg of body fluids in one race. Watching regular citizens in an F1 car is humorous as they have very weak neck muscles and cannot support their heads during any kind of acceleration. Netflix has covered the past few seasons, so watching Drive to Survive may help one to appreciate the sport. ■

# Impact of COVID Pandemic on Business and Industry

- Manikchandra Ghosh

In December 2019 when Coronavirus disease 2019 called COVID -19 was identified, the entire world became terrified, because of its manifestation as a deadly virus. Its uniqueness in spreading, transmitting, and infecting people made the world nervous. The World Health Organization subsequently, declared the COVID -19 outbreak as a pandemic.

Since the outbreak of the deadly COVID-19 virus, it has been not only disrupting our normal activities and our businesses but also claiming several lives on a daily basis. Such unprecedented loss can be compared only with the damage due to World War II. To prevent the spreading of COVID-19 and minimizing the damage several difficult but unavoidable measures and restrictions become mandatory to follow in addition to the implementation of a strong vaccination program worldwide. Such measures include maintaining social distance, wearing a facemask in public, disinfecting surfaces appropriately, implementing travel restrictions, following strictly the rules for lockdown and quarantine, etc. These mandatory measures for containment of the virus or avoiding the transmission of the virus from one person to another, however, have a profound impact on an individual's lifestyle, business, and economy worldwide.

In this article, an effort has been made to summarize how the business has been being disrupted globally since the outbreak and explains what kinds of changes in business culture may be included in the near future.

Due to COVID -19 pandemic, Industries broadly have been experiencing disruption in both supply and demand sides. The upset on the supply side weakens the industry's ability to produce goods at the given market price. Supply-side upset is triggered by several factors. The most important ones include the industry's inability to adopt alternative routes in running the production while maintaining the rules for personnel safety in general and disruption of feed material supply, and /or breakdown of supply chain due to lockdown in the restricted COVID environment in particular.

Mandatory OSHA Standard strongly encourages employers to provide time off to workers for the time it takes for them to get vaccinated and recover from any side effects. In addition, it suggests that employers consider adopting policies that require employees to get vaccinated or to undergo regular COVID-19 testing, in addition to mask-wearing and physical distancing, if they remain unvaccinated. People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID-19 two weeks or more after they have completed their final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

authorized for Emergency Use Authorization.

To fulfill the above requirement, it becomes necessary for the industry as a minimum to consider limiting worksite access to only essential workers, implementing flexible or staggering working hours, maintaining social distance, and hygienic conditions at workplaces with constant monitoring of the employee's health and accepting remote work. However, implementing these measures is not straightforward, as it requires an additional change in infrastructure, administration, and change in work culture. This adds additional expenditure that many industries find it difficult to absorb. As a result, it dampens productivity.

Lockdown is another kind of measure that has been opted by several governments worldwide on several occasions based on the severity of the COVID -19 pandemic and the perception of the public health risk. When a lockdown is applied, a large proportion of the workforce is instructed to stay home and continue to work remotely, if the nature of the activities permits them to do so. This forces the industry to build massive infrastructure suitable for remote- work/telework on one hand and pushes the industry towards digitalization on the other hand. If any manufacturing unit fails to orient towards this new situation, it has no option but to pause production that often triggers an increase in unemployment. This phenomenon sometimes disrupts the supply chain. On several occasions, the imposition of these lockdowns makes it harder for the industries to fulfill their contractual obligations. For instance, when Wuhan, a major automotive manufacturing hub, was under lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it impacted supply chain and production lines for domestic and international automakers, and it continues to do so. In South Korea, Hyundai has shuttered assembly lines and canceled overtime at a plant in Ulsan city that manufactures passenger cars- sedans and sport utility vehicles after its suppliers in China suspended production amidst the public health emergency.

The upset in demand side is mainly because of the reduction of consumer's ability to purchase goods and services at a given price. Because of the requirements of maintaining social distance, restricted people movement, and/or imposition of lockdown, service sectors businesses such as travel, restaurant, and entertainment are highly affected. Loss of earnings contributes to the decreasing trend of demand for the purchase of a home, cars, other appliances, etc. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions can be seen as one of the factors for the current crisis for oil, gas, and chemicals companies. A decrease in oil price results from slowing down of demand of the finished petroleum-based product and

less consumption of oil due to the travel restrictions in the wake of this global pandemic.

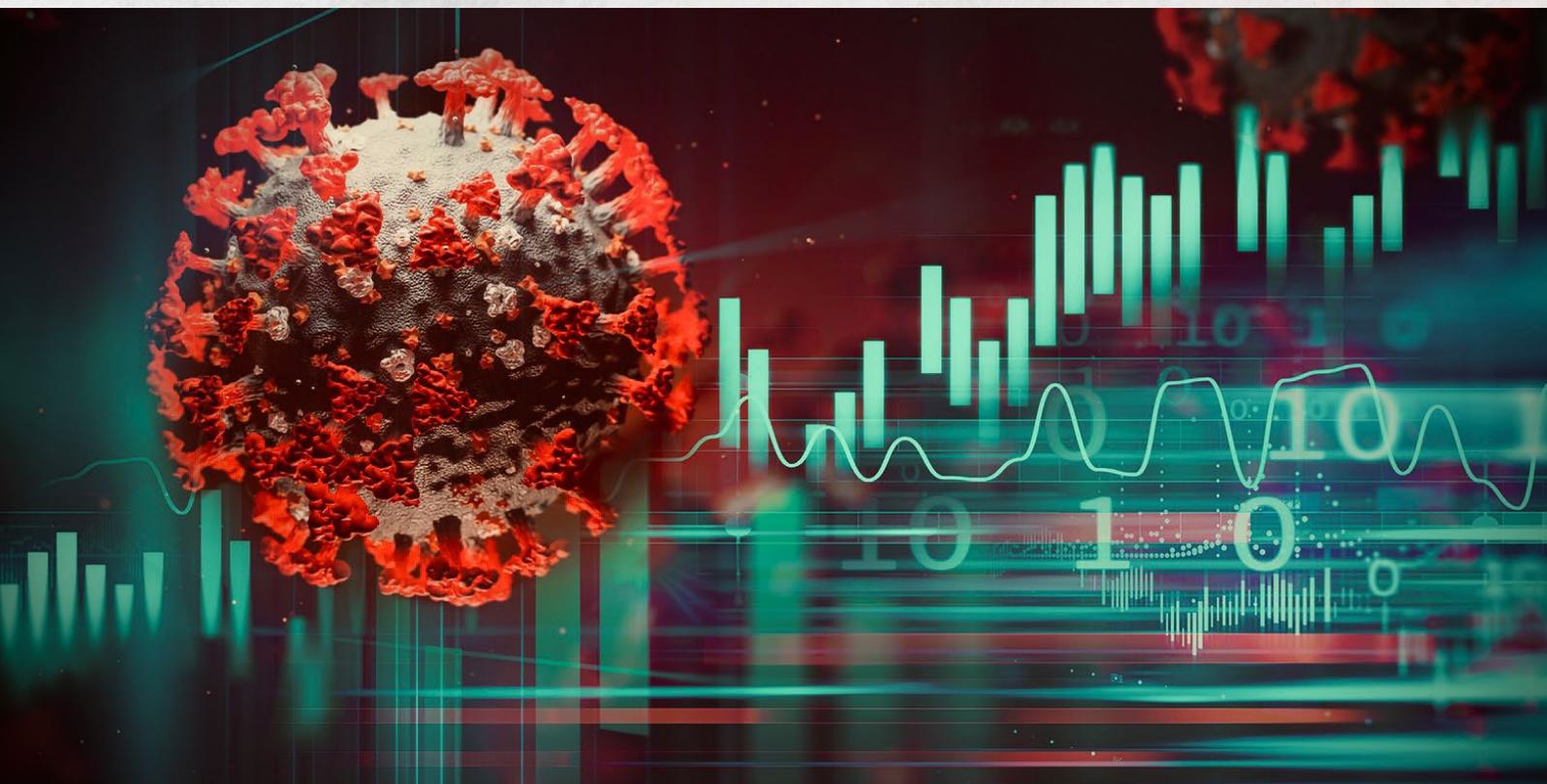
Although the COVID-19 pandemic is seen as a threat to civilization and terrible to major businesses and industries as explained above, there is no doubt that this pandemic acts as an accelerator of the health care industry and digitalization.

COVID-19 pandemic increases our awareness of how important it is to keep oneself clean. People understand that being hygienic is no longer just a good habit, but essential for survival. It also points out how poor the country's healthcare systems are, and the country's overall readiness is in handling virus outbreaks. Public health surveillance programs and available infrastructures are found inadequate in some countries in handling the pandemic. This great realization acts as a transformation catalyst, accelerating the implementation and adoption of changes in the public health care system. It gives birth to a new model of healthcare delivery with more emphasis on preventive measures, remote care, and substantial technological dependence. This trend of rapid growth in the public health care sector is likely to continue even in the post COVID era worldwide.

As mentioned above, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the world moved online and discovered the amazing strength of internet-based telecommunication. Nearly overnight, as per COVID restriction, a large gathering was prohibited. People were asked to work from home remotely as much as possible.

During these times, businesses discovered internet-based technology as a useful communication tool and a helpful means of engaging with customers and other colleagues. Indeed, the industry quickly accepted and integrated remote-work/telework as a part of office work culture for performing tasks remotely by utilizing various collaboration platforms and video conferencing facilities to remain engaged with their colleagues, clients, etc., while working from home. This added a new dimension to the business and introduced workplace flexibility. The realization of this positive outcome has ultimately led to tremendous growth in the digital transformations and is expected to do so in the foreseeable future.

In fine, it can be concluded that business setback due to pandemic is temporary. Therefore, there is no doubt that every industrial sector will recover and see growth again once the current pandemic is over. The positive changes that have been initiated in business culture due to the COVID-19 pandemic will continue even in the post COVID era. Lots of research will focus on the improvement of the healthcare system and related infrastructure for prevention, control, and management of any kind of an outbreak like the one COVID -19 in the future. In addition, the growth of healthcare infrastructure is expected to rectify the shortcomings that were already identified. Due to the integration of remote work/telework, digitalization, and internet-based communication, it is expected that there will be a groundbreaking change in office culture. It will add flexibility in Office work. Business and employment opportunities will no longer be local but global with working hours being flexible. This integration is bound to give a much needed boost to productivity. ■



# My Journey of Normal

- Sougata Mallik

I am looking at the time span from 2019 end to the current days of 2021. During this period - like you, like him and like her, I have also spent a lot of time indoors.

Throughout our lives, we have had a distinct compartment of time as 'going to work time' and 'coming home from work' time. The morning whirlwind busy time was always for going to work. The relatively relaxed time was for coming home. When we reached home that was our time to unwind and relax. This was the hegemony we grew up with, this was the dominance we practiced in our lives and this was the governance we were teaching our children.

Come 2020, all the set divisions disarrayed - and innovative supremacy of new normal time crept in.

You, I and most of us had to regulate our time to stay at home and work from home.

When you are working from home, employers don't know exactly how you are doing the work. To keep personal contact with all workforces, they organized frequent Zoom meetings, one-on-one weekly updates, Teams' virtual face-to-face discussions etc. The idea was perhaps to keep all employees on track, retain productivity level, so on and so forth. That is a good thought. The more we are aware of everything, the more efficiency we can maintain at all levels.

My organization was no exception in this regard. To start with they introduced several online workshops and training modules. While they were trying to get us all together on the same platform, I can also guess they were struggling to find ways and means to do this. The first workshop that was sprung on us right at the onset of work from home was called 'Ergonomics Human Factors Functional Designs'. That was a big name certainly! From all corners of the city, my colleagues and I gathered on Zoom gallery. After the initial screen display of the workshop title, presenter's name, company logo, we saw the external presenter with exhibits of numerous drawings, structural models on her worktable. She stationed herself on her work chair and demonstrated various devices, methods and means to be comfortable at work-from-home. It was fascinating to be convinced that whether we are overweight or underweight, a chair can make us comfortable. I learned the tricks of what angle the shoulder and arm should be to operate a computer mouse, how thick the mouse pad should be to impose less pressure on the arm end, what length and expanse the keyboard should be from the monitor. We all know the basics and operate according to our convenience. But going through this workshop I realized I had been doing it wrong all along. The length, breadth, width, angular measurements were important not to strain the muscles, so it does not affect us in the years ahead. Every dimension that was mentioned were in error to what I had practiced so far. And the funny part was that I never comprehended it earlier. No one whether a friend or family nor my employers had ever pointed out this fault! It is now that I learn of the accountability of the right posture of working at the worktable.

Few weeks have rolled by since then. We were struggling to capture the time, ethics, integration of working from home. My nature of work had always been topical, but I could never imagine being away from my cubicle desk and accomplishing

any task. But here I am at home now, and the task must be completed. I realized the new normal time has thrust me onto a weighing scale of effective vs efficient., that is getting more things done vs getting the right things done. When applying this to my time and work at home, surprisingly I could not separate the vital few from the trivial many.

When I say this, I mean a comprehensive workout of time and work. We must remember that most family members were working from home too. They needed cooked food to eat, online grocery requisitions needed to be sent out in time, the pet puppy at home needed attention, outdoor garden and flowers droop under the summer sun and needed watering, etc. If I juggle these, I do not have time to complete office work by 5 pm. If I do not attend to these the household will be in chaos since none of us are designed to be home during the morning hours. It reminded me of the Pareto Principle and the 80/20 rule. I recollected watching a speech on television rendered by Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon company. Bezos was elucidating the concept of the highest value use of your time in any given moment. I have achieved a minuscule in life compared to what Jeff Bezos has accomplished in recent times. Yet I was thinking of his principle during the new normal time. A wow for me, definitely!

But it also occurred to me that if 80/20 suggests efficiency and productivity, then there also must be a downside to it. This became clear to me in the most unusual time and manner. I was watching television, an Audrey Hepburn classic in her famous creation of "Roman Holiday". As I saw her glide through this unique role of a princess spending a day as a commoner, it befell on me about her notable time of work. The years that saw her distinguished talent in 'Roman Holiday' / 'Wait until Dark' / 'My Fair Lady' / 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' show immense efficiency as an actor or as a creator. While at the helm of her career, we had learnt that Audrey Hepburn chose to quit acting and dedicate her time in serving humanity. Audrey Hepburn found herself effective in her service to Unicef, utilizing her time in addressing social issues for children, in supporting the needy and deprived. She wanted to help in a different way. No judicious scrutiny of her glorious era in cinema could have proposed that to volunteer as an unpaid worker for Unicef was the utmost effective usage of her time. So, what seemed efficient to the world did not seem meaningful to her. Hepburn applied the time, willpower, courage to turn around an effective time in her own way.

We all know that Audrey Hepburn had earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her immense service to the humanitarian cause. She made herself effective in optimizing the present, rather than augmenting the future. Audrey Hepburn proved that anything that may seem vain at first can become very effective because we can get good at what we practice wholeheartedly. Audrey Hepburn was a great figure, a splendid personality who turned life and time to the utmost use as she wanted. I am an ordinary simple resident of this world - I also try to be effective in my work, but I also function as I have been told to do. I start work at 9 am, follow through email and notification guidelines, take up tasks that I have been assigned and walk through it without questioning. So I will never be able to triumph on the 80/20 analysis. I am a commoner - I will lead

an ordinary life, take up ordinary responsibilities and try to be effective in the completion of duties. I will not have the courage to give up a stable income, I will not have the courage to think beyond the box, I will not have the valor of assigning myself the exceptional task. This is the marked difference between an extraordinary and ordinary, between an effective figure like Audrey Hepburn and a regular person like me!

about Jeff Bezos's time through his speech, Audrey Hepburn's time through her work. I have increased stimulus through their feats, and achievements, their effective influence on this world. In a very ordinary circumference of my life, I have also tried to gain inspiration, impetus from them. I wanted to think that a better formulation and better organization is possible to comfortably sail through the new normal time. Or should I say it's my audacity of hope, perhaps.....?! ■

Yet in the wake of a new normal epoch, I have thought



# Indian Railways on Fast-Track to Sustainable Mobility

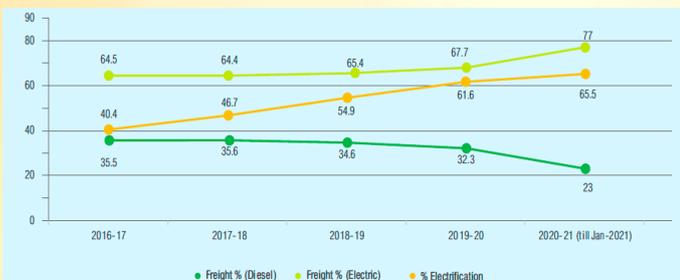
- Ravindra Verma

Railways are recognized as one of the most energy-efficient modes for mass transit of passengers and freight. They are also among the major drivers of sustainable socio-economic development for many countries around the globe. Amid rising concerns about climate change and global warming, rail systems worldwide are striving to reduce their carbon footprints. Indian Railways (IR) have the world's 4th largest Rail network, spread over 67,956 route Km. IR is the lifeline of the country carrying nearly 23 million passengers every day making it the 2nd largest in terms of passengers carried per year. It is also the 4th largest freight transporter in the world moving 1,232 million tonnes of freight in 2020-21, as it traverses the length and breadth of the country. Rail-based transport is the most environment-friendly mass transport system due to the inherent gains it provides in terms of energy efficiency and resource optimization. Railways are about 12 times more efficient in freight traffic and 3 times more efficient in passenger traffic as compared to road transport. As the Indian economy transitions, with economic growth and sustainable development as twin goals, green mobility will play a key role. It has been estimated that for the sustainable development of the Indian Economy, the inter-modal share of freight traffic by rail should go up from the current share of 36% to 45% by 2030. Accordingly, IR is gearing up for massive growth to achieve such an increase in inter-modal share by augmentation of its network infrastructure.



**Approach & Impact of Green Initiatives:** IR has envisioned to become a Green Transporter by reducing its carbon footprint. The energy consumption in FY2020 was around 18.4 Billion Units for traction and 2.4 Billion Units for non-traction load. IR has taken significant strides to reduce its carbon footprint & fuel cost and is committed to become the world's first 'net-zero' carbon emissions Railway by 2030. Some of its key initiatives towards decarbonization are 100% electrification of Railways broad gauge network, reduction in energy consumption & meeting energy demand through renewable energy (RE), Energy Efficiency, Hydrogen Fuel Cell based train, Water Conservation, Afforestation, Waste Management and Green Certifications. IR already has 220 Megawatt (MW) capacity of RE power, with nearly 3,450 MW capacity in the pipeline.

**Railway Electrification:** A total of 45,881 route Km (71%) has been electrified by March 2021 and the target is to electrify all Broad Gauge (BG) routes of IR by December 2023. Due to its increased electrification, IR has witnessed a significant reduction in its diesel consumption thus lower dependency on fossil fuels.



**Rolling Stocks:** Railways have completely switched over to the production of energy efficient 3-phase electric locomotives, Metro trains and EMUs with regenerative features i.e. there is a provision of regeneration of electric energy while braking of the train and regenerative energy is either consumed by other trains or fed back to the grid. All Metro rolling stock have the feature of regeneration of energy.



New generation Train-sets are highly energy efficient. They are provided with 3-phase under-slung propulsion equipment, have advanced regenerative braking systems and the need for power cars has been eliminated. Such features help in energy saving to the tune of 30%. Further, the aerodynamic profile of the train also helps to reduce air drag and thus reduce energy consumption. The Delhi Metro has been certified by the UN as the first rail-based system in the world to get "carbon credits for reducing greenhouse gas emissions" and helping in reducing pollution levels in the city by 630,000 tons every year.

**Solar Plants Installation:** IR has continuously been installing solar panels on the rooftops of its various stations and service buildings for meeting its non-traction power requirements. More than 1000 stations have been covered with solar panels on rooftop and more are in pipeline. It has planned to utilize 51,000 hectares of unused vacant land parcels for setting up of Land Based Photovoltaic Plants for its traction power requirement. Plans are already underway to deliver 20GW of solar-powered electricity to match the demand for energy to move trains.

Converting all current diesel traction to electric modes would initially cause an increase in emissions due to reliance on coal based electricity, however, this will be mitigated with the supply of clean energy from solar and wind generators connected directly into the rail network. The direct supply of solar energy to railway lines without the need to connect via the grid would save almost seven million tons of carbon a year whilst also powering at least one in four trains on the national network on competitive terms, as per the recent study.



Considered as one of the busiest railway stations in the country, the Howrah railway station has now emerged as the one with the largest commissioned solar capacity on IR. Two state-of-the-art pilot Land Based solar projects for powering the railway traction network have been completed. 1.7 MW pilot solar project for powering traction network of IR directly through solar power has been

commissioned in Bina, Madhya Pradesh in June 2020. 103.4 MW wind-based power plants have also been installed.

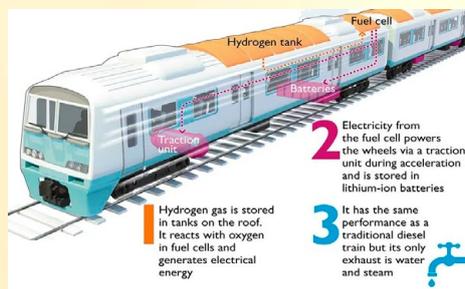
**Technological Developments:** IR has taken major steps to move towards sustainable development, such as Head-On-Generation systems, Bio-Toilets, LED lights, automatic coach washing plants and water conservation. Currently, the Railways is developing Dedicated Freight Corridors (Eastern DFC and Western DFC) in the form of a low carbon green transportation network with a long-term vision of sustainable mobility. Green certifications are allotted to stations that are constructed keeping in mind the sustainable development goals such as, energy conservation measures, use of renewable energy, Green House Gas emission reduction. So far, 19 stations have been given Green Certification including three Platinum, six Gold and six Silver ratings.

**Alternate Fuel and Clean Energy initiatives:** The use of Biofuels (fuels produced from organic sources, i.e. crops, waste organic material or oil) is currently being promoted as a transport fuel, as they have the potential to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, gases that contribute to climate change. They can also increase energy security, i.e. reducing a country's reliance on imported energy products.

**Head on Generation system:** The Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) trains running on End-on-Generation (EOG) configuration require power cars equipped with Diesel Alternator (DA) sets for feeding air conditioning, train lighting and other electrical loads in the coaches. Each such train has two power cars, each power car having 2 DA sets. This system has the inherent disadvantage of air and noise pollution. In the Head On Generation (HOG) system, power is drawn through traction converters provided in locomotives. The electrical power drawn by the locomotive is suitably converted and supplied for air conditioning, train lighting and other electrical loads in the train. With the removal of power cars from the train, passenger carrying capacity has increased without increasing the train length.

**LED Lighting:** 100% LED lights have been provided in all railway stations (more than 8,000) and all railway installations & buildings (more than 20,000). Passenger coaches are also being provided with suitable LED lights.

**Use of Natural Gas:** An MoU has been signed between IR and GAIL to streamline the system and develop infrastructure for use of Natural Gas in IR workshops and production units. Transport of such gases by railway is the greener way to move forward. Trains are more efficient and cost-effective, if the distance is more than 200-250km, since larger quantities can be transferred at once.



**Fuel Cell Technology:** 'Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Batteries' and 'National Hydrogen Mission' are two flagship programs to meet the targets of reducing Green House Gas emission and 'Mission Net Zero Carbon Emission Railway' by 2030. Indian Railways Organization of Alternate Fuel (IROAF), Green Fuel vertical of IR, has recently invited the bids for Hydrogen Fuel Cell based Train on Railways Network. The use of hydrogen as an alternative rail fuel brings many potential benefits, the most noticeable being that it is a clean energy source that supports zero-carbon strategies. Hydrogen fuel cell technology also provides a more powerful and efficient energy output compared to fossil fuels.

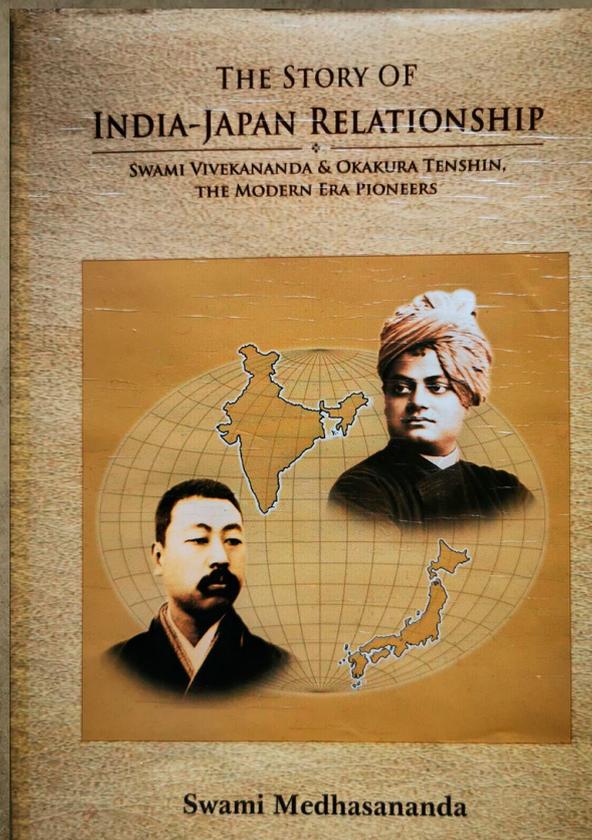
**Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC):** As railway systems around the world start confronting the climate challenge, India's Dedicated Freight Corridors program provides an inspiring example of pro-active adaptation. The ambitious program will change the future of transport in the country by creating freight-only railway lines. The Eastern and Western Corridors are currently under construction. In a bid to anticipate and minimize the impact of weather events, climate considerations have been factored into the project right from the design phase. The implementing agency and its partners have paid special attention to three types of risks that are of particular concern along the alignment: fog, temperature variation, and flooding. These corridors

will allow railways to adopt more energy-efficient as well as carbon-friendly processes, practices and technologies.

**Way Forward:** With the mega initiatives being undertaken, the IR is holding the flag high for India's commitment and vision to fight climate challenges. The seemingly large strides undertaken by the IR thus far are however small steps towards the mega plan of being a net-zero carbon emissions organization and meeting India's Nationally Determined Contribution targets. Going forward, the IR will continue to master green energy developments. It is clear that today's challenges can only be met with rail as the backbone of a seamlessly connected sustainable mobility system and a central pillar to transformative climate action in transport. It is the fastest and most energy-efficient way to decarbonize people's daily mobility and logistics chains. Unleashing the full benefits of rail for decarbonization will be key to significantly cut emissions from the transport sector. Initiatives are being taken to encourage research and development of energy-saving and emission-reducing technologies, and support research institutions, universities & companies to innovate and produce products suitable for achieving sustainable mobility.

References: Environmental Sustainability Report of IR, PIB Release and IBEF report

[Ravindra Verma is Counsellor Railway Adviser, Embassy of India, Tokyo]



# Ayurveda: Nature's Gift For A Healthy Life

- Dr. Reeta Sharma

**A**yurveda is the ancient Indian system of medicine and is a part of Vedas which are one of the oldest available literature in the world. Each of the four Vedas has its own upveda. Ayurveda is the upveda of Atharv Veda. There are several topics related to health in Atharv Veda where body organs, medicines, cure of diseases, surgical applications, and treatment are described. Charaka who is the father of medicine in Ayurveda explained Ayurveda as eternal science and Sushruta, who is the father of surgery considered Ayurveda as beginning-less and eternal.

Ayurveda is the science of life, AYUR means life and VEDA means knowledge. Ayurveda's concept is based on a practical approach and scientific attitude. According to Ayurvedic methodology body or 'Sharir' is made up of *Panch-mahabhootas*.

All living and non-living things are made up of *Panch-mahabhootas*.

**"Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande"**, which means - whatever is there in the microcosm is also there in the macrocosm.

According to Acharya Sushruta :

The state of health is-

**"Samdoshah samagnishcha samdhatumalkriyah I prasannatmendriya manah swasthya ityabhidhiyate II"**

a person whose 3 doshas, 7 dhatus, and agnis are balanced and the Malas (waste products) is expelled out from the body at the appropriate time. Whose soul, sense organs and mind are in happy mode then it is called a completely healthy state.

When there is an imbalance in these tridoshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha), a person becomes sick, but when these are in equilibrium, then health is attained.

**"Vikaro dhatu vaishamyam samyam prakriti ruchyate"**

*Concept of vat pitta and kapha*

According to Ayurveda causative factors of all matters existing in this universe are *Panch Mahabhootas* or basic five elements. *Aakash, Vayu, Agni, Jal, Prithvi*. These five elements are responsible for the origin of tridoshas.

*Vata dosha* is made up of air and space, *pitta dosha* *Agni and water*, and *Kapha dosha* *Prithvi and water*.

The physical composition of a human being would have been different based on the excess and deficiency of these doshas. According to the concept of Ayurveda each individual is genetically different, there are three types of bodies based on these doshas, *Vataj, Pittaj, and Kaphaj* body. Therefore different types of diet have a different effect on every human being because their *Prakriti* is different. Doshas are responsible for all physiological and pathological activities in the body. It depends on the amount of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha present in that person's body. Some people are allergic to a particular diet, but some have no effect. The reaction of the body is different to the people living in the same environment even they are on the same type of diet and activities. Equilibrium (*smayavastha*) in doshas is a dynamic and constantly changing phenomenon and changes according to the season, age, and constitution of the body (body type).

When a particular dosha exceeds its normal range it

disturbs the normal activities of different systems of the human body resulting in some pathological changes. These changes called Imbalance (*vaishamyam*) and depend on depletion and increase of doshas. To maintain equilibrium in these doshas Ayurveda describes *dincharya* (daily routine), *ratricharya* (night routine), *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen), *aahar* (food), *nidra* (sleep), *brahmcharya*, etc.

Let's understand about *ritucharya* here.

**"Ritu means season and charya means regimen or discipline."**

Ayurveda describes the seasonal regimen to keep the doctor away. A seasonal regimen helps to prevent diseases from seasonal changes. To understand the effect of the season we must look at the chart given below.

Dosha	Accumulation	Increase	Normalcy
Vata	Grishma (summer)	Varsha (rainy)	Sharat (Autumn)
Pitta	Varsha (rainy)	Sharat (Autumn)	Hemant (early winter)
Kapha	Shishira (winter)	Vasanta (Spring)	Grishma (summer)

Rash eating and irregular habits without following the defined seasonal regimen lead to many diseases based on the accumulation, increase and depletion of doshas. Let's have a look at given chart for the summer regimen.

## Summer regimen

Recommended diet	Recommended lifestyle
<b>Food;</b> Sweet, cold, liquid, light Sattu, ghee, milk, chhachh (butter milk), rice, cauliflower, Torai (snake gourd), lady's finger, sweet potato, carrots, turnip Raw mango chutney/syrup, Draksha (grapes), raw coconut and coconut water, Mishri etc.	During day time – stay in cold places At night – moonlight is good Apply sandalwood powder (Chandan), useer, karpoor (camphor powder), wear white clean cotton clothes with natural fragrance. Ornaments- pearls, corals Visit hill stations with cool green forest, waterfalls, rivers, etc. Cold bath with lotus flowers. Use earthen pots for food.

Following the instructions given in Ayurveda for all seasons one can attain a completely healthy, happy, and disease free life which fulfills the objective of Ayurveda: **"swasthya swasthya rakshanam, aaturasya vikaar prashmanam cha."**

1. to help the healthy person to protect & maintain his swasthya (wellness).
2. to help a diseased person to become healthy & to stay healthy forever. ■

# Small Wishes

- Soumitra Talukder

What would be the finesse in being in the league,  
Where avarice to opulence feign the true self of radiance!  
And the thirst to reign with lust to influence,  
leads to the contempt of probity.  
The life in between the nascence and the oblivion  
Could we not just create a few moments of joy,  
In the glow of sparkle of a heartfelt smile!

It was not long ago that I had craved for the Midas touch,  
An idler being in essence of quietude,  
I would be the child with a toothless glee,  
Nescient of the dilemmas in life,  
His only piety is to merely to relish the repose in an embrace,  
The gaze, the warmth of care and the feel of love.  
And be lost in the bliss of grace.

I still long for the aura to get lost in abeyance,  
And be the same bairn, gleeful and born free.  
As the azure offered the canvas to colour my wishes  
In the laze of a timeless day, I could conceit your angelic face,  
Guiding me to pursue the euphoria,  
It is within your heart wherein lies the heavens of thy providence.

# Everything's Going To Be Alright

Translation of Tarapada Ray's -সব ঠিক হয়ে যাবে

- Utso Bose

I'd thought until just yesterday,  
everything's going to be alright,  
When, when and how, in what way,  
And whether they really will be alright  
And if they don't, what then,  
Of these things, though, I never thought,  
I never even had such notions.

I had just held on to  
A loose belief somewhere, a conviction  
That one day, everything's going to be alright.

The way  
the wind and its sounds filter through  
Tamarind leaves on forgotten nights,  
The way,  
a lemon leaf rubbed on the hand  
Carries the scent of a lost forest,  
The way,  
after hatching, little sparrows chirp for their mothers  
In scattered nests  
The way,  
even a letter with the wrong address,  
will,  
Somehow, somehow or the other, reach someone, someday  
The way...  
I'd carried a feeble conviction,  
until just the other day,  
That the way these things happen, the way they continue to happen,  
That's how, one day, everything will be alright.  
I wouldn't have to raise a finger; I had nothing to do but wait.

I still think,  
One day, everything will be alright.  
And this too: what will be alright?  
And if they don't, what then?

# Let the faith not shake

- Arjyama Choudhury

When the time is tough  
Let the faith not shake!  
When the tide is rough  
Just hold on to the brake!

Your life you must know is an illusion  
Just a vision of your imagination!  
What you have is all so transient  
Do you really have time to lament????!!!

Let the time unwind on its own  
When you reap what you have sown!  
A better world isn't built with an arrow  
But with a mind so calm that never lies low!

Your instinct is your strength  
Your doubt your weakness!  
The world is burning to sustain  
Won't you pour her some rain????!!!

I know you need to survive  
There is a tough competition!  
But do not let humanity take a pause  
Let your kindness be at the foremost!!!

# Strangers in the City

- Joyita Basu Dutta

Flung together into the deep end  
Second guessing thoughts  
That run through each other's minds  
Impenetrable struggles, hopes and fears  
Rigid lines that separate two kindred hearts.

Unheard apologies and unsaid kind words  
Pounding heartbeats that no one calms  
Cautiously treading each other's paths  
Tormenting thoughts too dark to share  
Clinging on to secrets no one must prise.

Masks concealing more than meets the eyes  
Shrouded behind make believe glee fearful to reveal  
Unwilling to acknowledge wounds and scars  
Loathe to heal the cracks that threaten to destroy  
To have it all, only to become unfamiliar strangers.

Streaming tears of helplessness  
A longing to tread the same path  
That brief spell of tumultuous happiness  
Glimpses of a short lived blissful journey  
Encased in frames that adorn stark walls.

No comforting clasp of a hand to guide  
No warm embrace to drown your fears and hide  
Throbbing emptiness behind soothing smiles  
Pain and anger blinding us to thoughtful kindness  
Forgotten joys stacked away in bookshelves.

Lost in cityscapes forlorn  
Embraced by destinies unknown  
The rapid churning of time  
The silences that drive apart  
The miles together that bind the heart.