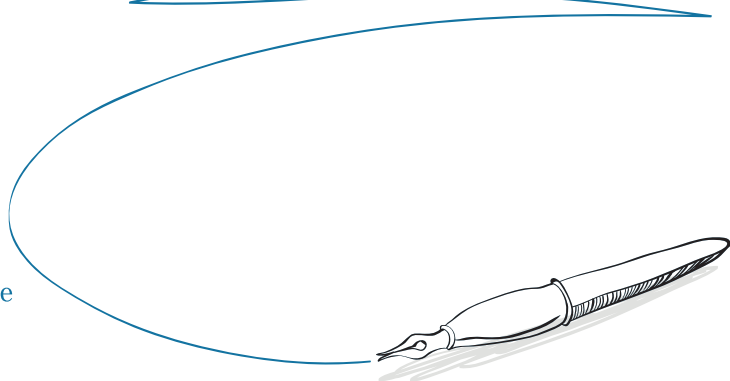


Essay Writing for School Students and for Different Competitive Exams

MODERN ESSAYS

A Collection of Top Essays on

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- Constructive Writing:
General Topics
- Environment, Ecology & Climate
- Famous, Proverbs & Sayings
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for Different Competitive Exams

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for Different Competitive Exams

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Compiled by
Swati Aggarwal
Kama Choudhary
Madhulica Malik



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PREFACE

The habit of writing essays is helpful in many ways. No matter what type of academic or professional course you may be pursuing in future, the ability to write clearly and concisely will hold the key to all your achievements. In the modern world, communication is vital.

For effective communication, development of clear and analytical writing skills in the students is required. As a student, at almost all the levels, you will be required to produce a certain amount of essay writing.

This book Modern Essays is your guide to better writing. All the essays compiled here are interesting and are structured in a way as to develop the habit of clear and step by step logical writing in the learner. The most remarkable feature of this book is its emphasis on contextual thinking which is so much important for developing a natural flow in the writing.

We take the opportunity to thank the Director, Arihant Publications (India) Ltd, Karishma Yadav (Project Manager) Aleena Zaidi (Project Coordinator), Rajeev Saini (DTP Unit), Sanjeev Mehta(Editor) Kiran Kandhol and Sagar Zaidi (Proof Readers) and everyone concerned with the Publishing of this book.

Finally, it is hoped that this book will be quite useful to the school students. Suggestions for further improvement of the book are welcome.

Authors

Writing An Effective Essay

UNDERSTANDING AN ESSAY

An essay is a piece of writing that methodically analyses and evaluates a topic or issue. Fundamentally, an essay is designed to get an opinion on a particular matter. An essay is not just a mere bunch of words, or even a bunch of paragraphs. An essay fits everything together; it points in one direction. An essay leads to one conclusion. This is what makes an essay different from, say an article. An essay tries to make a point in an interesting way. And so its goal is to make its readers interested to change their thinking, to get them involved in the ideas it presents and ultimately get them to adopt those ideas. An essay might seek to inform or to persuade or both. But to make a point with real readers, it must try to get and keep the attention of those readers.

Prepare Yourself

Sound knowledge of the surroundings, latest news helps a great deal in coming up with a great essay. Also keep yourself well informed on scientific issues like internet, sources of energy, pollution, space research etc.

If you are not at ease with the topic, then the mind would stop working. The ideas would not flow and thus points would be limited. So, always certain yourself. "Yes, I can do it!" and while writing : "Yes, I am writing good." This will boost your confidence also.

For instance, for a topic like 'Corruption' students feel good as they know they can write a lot. But when it comes to writing for a topic like 'Indian Heritage' or 'Right to Information', student's first reaction would be : "Oh no! What should I write on this now? This topic is so elaborative and not much interesting." Refrain from such habits. Instead, think of a way to make it unique and interesting. Remember regular writing would lead to good writing.

Drafting An Essay

First and the foremost is to read the topic more than once to make sure none of the important details have been missed. Also, this will enhance the comfort level with the topic. Give it a thought before going any further. No matter what the topic is, believe in yourself and write on it confidently.

Brainstorming Your Ideas

Sketch out your essay before straightaway writing it out. Jot down relevant points using short keywords in rough so that none of the details get missed while writing. Have a look at one of the sample mind map on the topic Juvenile Delinquency. Roughly evaluate the following aspects.

- *Who, what, when, why, where and how*
- *Cause and effects*
- *National and/or International Issues*
- *Social, cultural, political, economical or religious aspects*
- *Quotes, sayings, examples, proverbs*

These essentials should be focussed broadly so the points and also the essay is precise, logical and effective. It will also take care of the limited examination time.

Note Only short keywords or pointers have been used in the mind map. Do not write whole sentences in the rough work.

It is not necessary that all the points written have to be included in the body of the essay. These can be changed, modified, replaced or can even be left so that the essay is most relevant to the topic.

Sample mind map has been scribbled for you. Kindly refer page no 11.

Framework

After the brainstorming, prepare an outline/diagram of your ideas. Read the topic again and analyse the points in hand. Number the points in a sequence, however one can be flexible while writing the essay. Remember these points should be visited again and again.

An Assertive Title

Heading is like a mini mirror to your piece. It predicts the content and essence of an essay. It should be very effective and should attract the reader right away. It shouldn't be more than 7-8 words.

Quote or phrase can be used in the heading but it should be modified properly to suite the purpose of the essay.

Note If a good title does not strike before writing the essay then spare it for the last. Don't force yourself into writing just anything. Sum up the essay and then write the title in the end.

Introduction of An Essay

"First impression is the last impression." This approves the fact that the first line of the first paragraph is of great significance. It is the first impression on the examiner. Utmost care and thought process should be devoted for a perfect starting line of an essay.

After this, a precise and logical introductory paragraph is very important. The trickiest aspect of the essay writing is about hammering the nail right on its head, right in the beginning. The introductory paragraph should begin with an interesting sentence, followed by sentences that outline what you desire to express in the essay.

- The introductory paragraph could also be a brief summary of the essay in a captivating manner. A few sentences explaining your topic in general terms can lead the reader gently through your essay.
- Startling information This information must be true and verifiable, and it need not to be totally new to your readers. It could simply be an appropriate fact that clearly illustrates the point you wish to make. If you use a piece of surprising (startling) information, follow it with a sentence or two of elaboration.
- Anecdote An anecdote is a story that illustrates a point. Be sure your anecdote is short, to the point and relevant to the topic. This can be a very effective opening for your essay, but use it carefully.
- Starting with quotes or not The most common concern amongst the students is whether to start an essay with a quote or not. It is implied by the students that a quote at the start yields more marks. Indeed, a quote at the start is an added advantage, but it can also prove to be a blunder if not handled properly or if its relevance is not explained properly.

No rule book states that an essay should start with a quote only. However, if one happens to remember an apt quotation, then one should not hesitate to begin with that. But use it only if you are absolutely sure about it, otherwise a wrong connection/reference can also spoil your impression right in the beginning.

So, basically an introduction should be such that after having finished reading it, the reader ought to have a very clear idea of the author's purpose of writing.

The Body

Arrange/rearrange the points thought in a logical order so as to keep the most valuable and powerful point right after the introductory paragraph followed by others. The function of the essay's body is to fully develop the argument outlined in the introduction. So, the first paragraph of the body should contain the strongest argument, most significant example, cleverest illustration. The last sentences of the paragraphs should include a hook to tie to the next paragraph. The majority of an essay consists of multiple body paragraphs, and it is in these paragraphs where the main information is presented. In each of the body paragraphs, the ideas presented in the introduction are developed.

Body paragraphs should develop the central idea and finish with a summary of that

idea. Try to include at least two examples or facts in each body paragraph to support the central idea. Care must be taken to organise thoughts in body paragraphs into similar sized paragraphs.

Note Keep reading the topic of the essay again and again while you are done with a few paragraphs. This would check any major deviations from the central theme of the topic.

Conclusion

The conclusion brings closure to the reader, summing up of your points or providing a final perspective on your topic. A conclusion is not merely a summary of your points or a restatement of your essay. All the conclusion needs is three or four strong sentences which do not need to follow any set formula. It can vary in a lot many ways. Also conclusion is not the place in your essay to introduce new information or new idea : these should be only in the body paragraphs.

- If you wish to summarise, do it in a fresh language. Repetitive summary would reduce the impact of the argument you have developed in the essay.

A conclusion can take into consideration the following

- What is the significance of your findings?
- Are there any limitations to your approach?
- Are there any suggestions that you can make in terms of future research?
- If your essay deals with a contemporary problem, warn readers of the possible consequences of not attending to the problem.
- You can recommend a specific course of action.
- Use an apt quotation or expert opinion to lend authority to the conclusion you have reached.
- You can even return to the anecdote (short-story), example or quotation that you introduced in your introduction, but add further insight that derives from the body of the essay.
- Conclusion can be solution oriented, highlighting the way ahead.
- Try to end your essay on a positive and optimistic note.
- The concluding paragraph can be bulky and in a summarising tone. It should not be forced; it should be as natural as possible. Conclusion include the last words your reader will hear from you before passing judgement on your argument. So, gracefully exit your essay by making some memorable thought or some call to action.

Finishing Touch

You're not done with writing your essay until you've polished your language by correcting the grammar, making sentences flow, checking spelling errors and making other editing. Delete sections that are not particularly relevant. Proof-read until it reads just how you want it to sound.

Points to be Kept in Mind While Writing An Essay

- You can use one sentence to introduce every paragraph to follow. This linking to ideas further in your body paragraphs provides structure to your essay.
- Finish the introductory paragraph with a short summary or goal statement.
- Strictly avoid sms language or short forms.
- Use words or phrases at the start of each paragraph that will indicate to the reader how it relates to the previous paragraph, e.g. 'however', 'in addition', 'nevertheless', 'moreover'.
- If the accurate figures are not known avoid using them. Use round off figures or use words like approximately, estimated figure, is thought to be this much, etc.
- Put your insight to add originality and a personal touch.
- Be creative but be selective in using sources.
- Get to the point as soon as possible. A common error is to begin too broadly or too far from the topic. Avoid sweeping generalisation.
- In a science essay, explain the key scientific concepts and refer to the relevant literature. Leap up to your own contribution or intervention.

Do's

- Read the instructions and make sure you understand them before you start writing.
- Make sure your outline mind map touches on every aspect required as per the instructions.
- Make sure each paragraph is unified and in sync with the topic.
- Stick to the word limit.
- While writing a perfect start, be aware of danger of taking too much time in the introduction only.

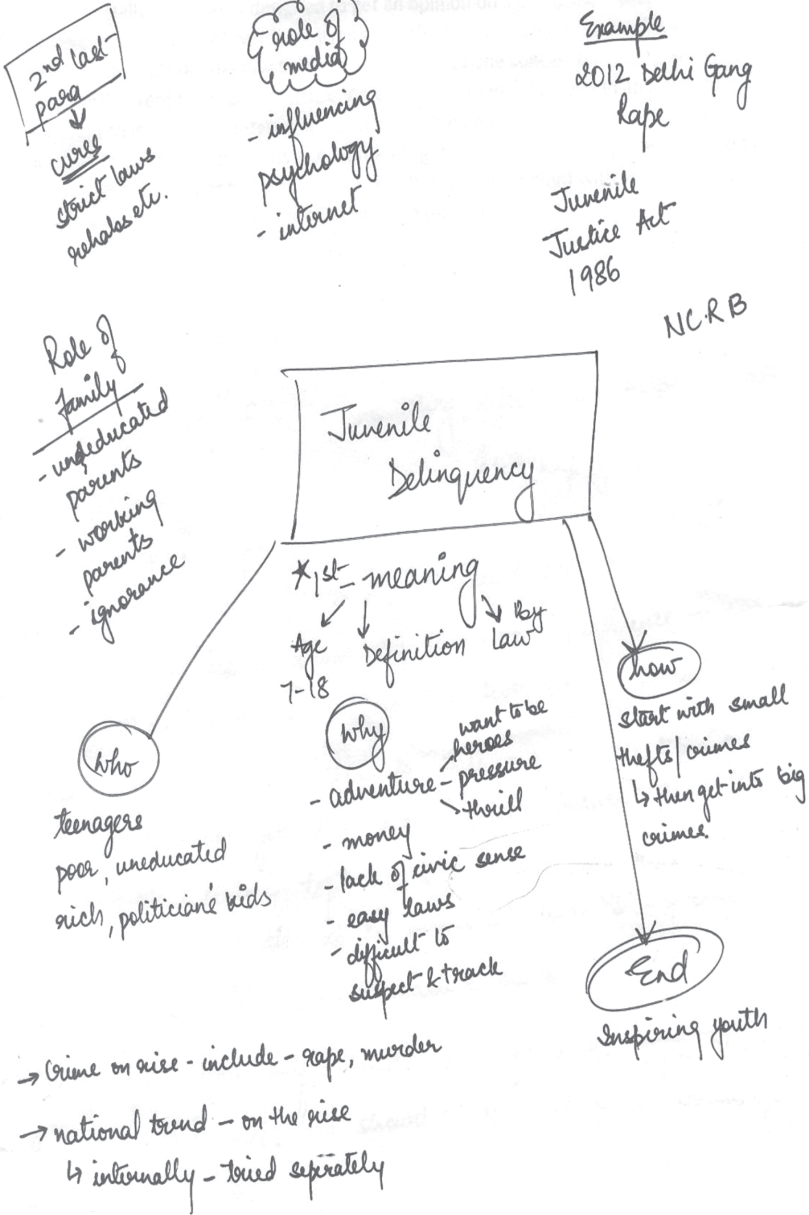
Don'ts

- Refrain from narrating long stories in the essay.
- Avoid using all capital letters in the heading.
- Don't write very long sentences.
- A mere jumble of irrelevant ideas does not make an essay. Also an essay giving less prominence to the main theme or undue importance to the non-relevant ones will look absurd.
- Avoid cluttering your sentences with unnecessary words and phrases.

“ Mind Map allows you to brainstorm all the ideas that you have in your mind. You can draw that you a rough sketch of your Essay by jotting down the relevant points, keywords and other details that are to be incorporated in your Essay. This will ensure a smooth flow of thoughts in your Essay in a logical manner, and nothing will be missed out. ”

Mind Map

Mind Map - Juvenile Delinquency



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A. Current Affairs



Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM)

Termed as third world country, popular as being a nation of snake charmers, yet India leaves no chance to amaze the world. This time Indians have surprised the world yet again by showing its expertise in Science and Technology department. Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) or Mangalyaan (in Hindi) is India's first Interplanetary Mission to planet Mars with an orbiter craft designed to orbit Mars. India has now become the first nation to reach Mars orbit in its first attempt and the first Asian nation to do so.

India not only became the country to reach the Mars in its first attempt, but also spent the least amount of money. The mission cost \$74 million (450 crore), less than the cost of making the movie Gravity (\$100 million). It had travelled 10 months, covering a distance of 420 million miles (661 million km). The remarkable thing about its success is that it was made entirely with home-grown technologies. One of the main objectives of the mission is to develop the technologies required for design, planning, management and operations of an interplanetary mission. The following statement is from NASA Administrator Charles Bolden about India's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM): "It was an impressive engineering feat, and we welcome India to the family of nations studying another facet of the Red Planet. We look forward to MOM adding to the knowledge the international community is gathering with the other spacecraft at Mars."

MOM was launched on 5 November, 2013 with the objective to explore Mars's surface, features, its atmosphere and to study various other aspects of space. After travelling a huge distance, the orbiter was inserted into Mars's orbit on 24 September, 2014. Following this, the orbiter published its first global view of Mars. The image was captured by the specially installed camera.

After its successful reach and orbiting plan, it also included covering the movement of passing comet, which was not the part of the mission initially. The mission is expected to last between six to ten months. After the attainment of the mission, NASA has announced its collaboration with ISRO for future explorations and other activities.

The Mars mission, as planned by ISRO, was a sophisticated exercise. Compared to other Mars missions, ISRO had a smaller rocket and payload. MOM weighed 1350 kg when it left the Earth's surface on 5 November, 2013, out of which 850 kg was fuel. MOM did not use an upper stage launcher. Instead, it used ISRO's PSLV and performed a series of gradual exercises to raise itself to the Earth's higher orbit by going around the Earth six times and propelling itself higher with each revolution.

One of the ways used by ISRO to hold down costs was to save on fuel by using a smaller rocket to put the spacecraft into the Earth's orbit first to gain enough momentum to shoot it towards Mars. As it goes around Mars in an elliptical orbit, MOM employs five sets of equipment that collectively weigh 15 kg to do scientific studies.

These five equipment include: Lyman Alpha Photometer measures the relative abundance of deuterium and hydrogen in the upper Martian atmosphere to understand previous presence of water on the planet. A methane sensor is looking for sources of the gas. While the Mars colour camera clicks away, a thermal infrared spectrometer studies heat emission, minerals and soil on Mars. In addition to this, NASA's recently launched MAVEN can last upto 2.5 years extendable to six more years. MOM's expected lifespan is six months, and 300 days at the maximum. MAVEN is expected to function for total of 8.5 years while MOM is expected to function for ten months only.

The mission was a test of the expertise of Indian scientist. They were more than overjoyed with its success and alongwith them lakhs of scientists around the world appreciated the effort. Millions of common Indian too felt proud to be the citizen of the nation when Prime Mininster Narendra Modi came out to congratulate everyone.

The mission will boost the foreign interests and funds in our science projects. The mission will give the world a new parameter to judge the country. Also the mission will create a spark in the minds of students to be part of follow-up missions. Though the Mangalyaan is primarily a demonstration vehicle, it is a great leap in space science, innovation and management.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **interplanetary** – being or occurring between the planets or between a planet and the sun
- ♦ **feat** – deed, achievement, effort
- ♦ **facet** – aspect, feature, side
- ♦ **comet** – a celestial body moving about the sun, usually in a highly eccentric orbit, consisting of a central mass surrounded by an envelope of dust and gas that may form a tail that streams away from the sun.
- ♦ **collaboration** – partnership, association
- ♦ **sophisticated** – refined, developed
- ♦ **propelling** – pushing, driving, forcing
- ♦ **revolution** – The movement of an object in a circular course around another or about an axis
- ♦ **momentum** – energy, motion
- ♦ **elliptical** – oval, egg- shaped
- ♦ **parameter** – factor, scale, criterion
- ♦ **leap** – dive, jump, hike



Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

“Sanitation is more important than Independence”; these words of Gandhiji have laid the foundation for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Campaign is one of its kind in the history of India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a perfect day of Gandhi Jayanti. On 2 October 2014, Narendra Modi launched this nationwide campaign that aims to clean up the country in the next five years; for he believes that Gandhiji not only fought for independence but also for a clean country.

The campaign aims to cover 4041 statutory towns to clean the streets, roads and infrastructure of the country. The campaign was launched by the Prime Minister himself by cleaning the roads in Delhi. Its inaugural proved one of the biggest campaigns when millions of students, employees and citizens participated in the event, cleaning various localities. Modi exclaimed “Is cleaning only the responsibility of the karamcharis? Do citizens have no role in this? We have to change this mindset.” He asked all the citizens including celebrities, sports legends and business tycoons to join the campaign.

Modi had invited nine public figures: Mridula Sinha, Sachin Tendulkar, Baba Ramdev, Shashi Tharoor, Anil Ambani, Kamal Hasan, Salman Khan, Priyanka Chopra and Team of Taarak Mehta ka Ooltah Chashmah—to make a contribution towards Swachh Bharat, share the same on social media, and invite nine other people to do the same, hence forming a chain. He has asked people to share their contributions on social media.

He has asked every Indian to spend 100 hours annually in this drive. He has even urged the need to build toilets for proper sanitation. Modi believes that other nations are clean not only because of the efficient clean drive, but because of the joint efforts of citizens too. The citizens over there are aware of their responsibility and thus refrain from littering.

Volunteer actor Ravi Kishan said, “...We always enforce our Fundamental Rights but we never try to carry out our Fundamental Duties. I’m supporting the Clean India campaign because just like our Prime Minister’s concern, I too share the vision of a Clean India, Green India.” Eminent people have come out themselves shouldering the responsibility. HRD Minister Smriti Irani has directed on the use of Corporate Social Responsibility funds for construction of toilets as part of the Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya Campaign.

Modi aims to fulfil the dream of clean India by the 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji. To check the progress of the campaign, Modi has himself made surprise visits to various offices. His team of ministers too, has contributed by taking up the task of cleaning. Students of Delhi University have decided to study the impact of this campaign thereby suggesting scope for improvement. After the completion of 5 years they will submit the document including success rate, problems and various other studies and findings related to the campaign.

Clean India can inevitably boost the international tourism thereby adding to country’s growth. The campaign has just started, for its success every citizen has to put in efforts. Only then our nation can become a world-class country like European countries. No matter how successfully our economy booms; if the country is not clean at the ground level, the citation of being a developed nation will also not yield result. Modi maintains Indians can do it. If Indians can reach Mars with minimum expense then they can even clean their nation.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **sanitation** – conditions relating to public health, especially the provision of clean drinking water and adequate sewage disposal
- ♦ **statutory** – permitted or enacted by law
- ♦ **legends** – an extremely famous person, especially in a particular field
- ♦ **tycoons** – a businessperson of great wealth and power
- ♦ **urged** – push, insist
- ♦ **refrain** – avoid, stop oneself from doing something
- ♦ **inevitably** – certain to happen, unavoidable
- ♦ **citation** – quote, reference a note accompanying an award, describing the reasons or it



Make in India : *Mission to Glory*

India's 68th Independence Day gave a new vision to its citizen by its new Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The vision has created a buzz among all the people and sectors alike. The inspiring vision is seen as the new formula for the success of every individual, every company, and every business. To boost the Indian economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi coined the term "Make in India". An initiative to boost



manufacturing by easing business processes. It aims at attracting foreign companies to set up factories in India and invest in the country's infrastructure. In simple terms, Modi is trying to create job opportunities for the huge population.

The mission had its origin in the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech, inviting global companies to pick India to locate factories, promising to replace hurdles with red-carpet welcomes. Make in India, an international marketing campaigning slogan was officially launched on 25 September, 2014.

The push for manufacturing could not have come at a better time as today, India needs to grow faster to increase the income level. It will create jobs for over million people who join the workforce every year. "We at the Tata Group welcome PM Modi's Make in India programme. It's an opportunity to make India truly and globally competitive," was related by Tata group CEO Cyrus Mistry. The perfect logo of the mission is personified by a lion with a mechanical body. Modi exclaimed that the logo is derived from Ashoka Chakra.

The lion in the logo stands for strength and power while the wheels are a sign of development and progress. He further said that : "My definition of FDI for the people of India is First Develop India." While inviting world-class companies to India, Narendra Modi also requested Indian manufacturers not to leave the country and supported that Indian companies too should shine as multinational companies. On this ITC chairman YC Deveshwar said : "The boldness of your vision and the simplicity with which you have communicated it is inspiring."

For the fruitful start, the new government has laid guidelines for the progress of the project. Some examples are like: reducing the paper work required for establishing companies and minimising the time required for government approvals, abolishing the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from the project cost. Guidelines have been issued for quickening clearances to projects that are approved by state governments.

Policies have been made for the easy transfer of funds while switching jobs anywhere in the country. A dedicated cell has been created to answer queries from business entities through a newly created web portal. These are some mere steps taken while the government, with the help of experts, is trying hard to improve every bit.

Analysts give the reason as to why the mission could prove beneficial for India: contrasting to farming, which employs nearly 50% of population, but contributes just 14% to GDP. The services sector contributes nearly 60% to the economy, but employs just around 27% of workforce. Indian manufacturers are becoming more competitive with respect to their product designs, manufacturing and testing facilities. Additionally, India is the third largest producer of chemicals in Asia and sixth by output, in the world. Through the last four decades, India's space programme has attracted global attention for its accelerated rate of development.

These few examples support the fact that India has every potential to compete with developed nations. However as a flip side of a coin, there are some challenges too. India's poor infrastructure and logistics shortfall with inefficient transport networks makes it tough for manufacturing companies to achieve just-in-time production. "The combination of improved transport connectivity and simplified, one point collection of taxation will go a long way in implementing the Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India'," Deutsche Bank says.

A lot of sectors have been included in the mission some of which are as automobiles, chemicals, construction, ports, railways, space etc. Make in India's success relies a lot on the fate of the newer companies. But, since its inception, a lot of reputed multinational companies have re-analysed their expansion plans. Narendra Modi is about to give the source, the tool to improve the purchasing power of the common man. The coming together of smart entrepreneurs, employees, infrastructure and know-how could over time become a durable advantage, as had happened in China's case.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **boost** – advance, improve, enhance
- ♦ **coined** – to make, originated, compose
- ♦ **hurdles** – barriers, difficulty, problem, obstacle
- ♦ **abolishing** – stop, eliminate, put an end to
- ♦ **queries** – question, doubt, inquiry
- ♦ **contrasting** – compare, weigh against
- ♦ **logistics** – the commercial activity of transporting goods to customers
- ♦ **shortfall** – a deficit of something required
- ♦ **relies** – depend, entrust
- ♦ **inception** – beginning, start



Ebola

Humans fear the natural calamity as they come unknowingly and bestow mercy on none. But in 21st century, people are afraid that death can come unto them by almost anything and everything around them. Humans have seen huge technological and scientific development. They have detected the very reason of emergence for various diseases, yet there are some that can be diagnosed but cannot be cured. Many deadly diseases can emerge from anywhere but spread like a wildfire in the whole world. One such brutal disease is Ebola virus disease. The Ebola outbreak in Africa is the world's deadliest to date.

Although it is not entirely clear how Ebola initially spreads from animals to humans, the spread is believed to involve direct contact with an infected wild animal or bat. On the basis of evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe that the virus is animal-borne and that bats are the most likely reservoir. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That time it was thought to be originated in gorillas, because human outbreaks began after people ate gorilla meat.

But the spread of the disease was not as devastating as the loss of human life was comparatively less. Dr Bruce Aylward, WHO's assistant director-general for emergency operations: "This far outstrips any historic Ebola outbreak in numbers. The largest outbreak in the past was about 400 cases."

Ebola Virus Disease, formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever is a disease which eventually kills the human who carries it if immediate treatment is not received. Broadly there are five species of Ebola, but the one currently ravaging thousands of people is the Zaire virus. Early Ebola symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, cough, stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhoea. As these could be symptoms of other diseases, it's difficult to diagnose Ebola in the initial stage.

The time it takes from exposure to Ebola to actually getting sick, known as the incubation period, is anywhere from 2 to 21 days. It completely disrupts the immune system of the patients. Later symptoms of Ebola can appear quickly. Due to internal and external bleeding, the patient's eyes may become red, and they may vomit blood, have bloody diarrhoea, and suffer cardiovascular, liver or kidney collapse and eventually leading to death. Sadly, nearly half of the cases of Ebola viral infection in West Africa have resulted in death.

One is not at risk for Ebola infection unless in direct contact with bodily fluids of someone with Ebola while they have viral symptoms such as fever, vomiting, and cough. New infections come from close contact with an infected person, especially with blood, body fluids, or contaminated needles. Recovery from Ebola depends on good supportive clinical care and the patient's immune response. It is believed that people who recover from Ebola infection develop antibodies that last for at least 10 years. President Barack Obama pacified his nation saying :

"Ebola is actually a difficult disease to catch...It's not transmitted through the air like the flu. You cannot get it from just riding on a plane or a bus."

The current outbreak of the Ebola virus mainly affects three countries in West Africa: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Around 13,000 cases and more than 4,900 deaths have been reported across these countries. To stop the spread of Ebola, the WHO is coordinating the construction and staffing of treatment centres across Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Yet one of the country's challenges has been the lack of laboratories to test Ebola. The WHO recently reported that the number of new Ebola cases could reach 10,000 per week by December. There are more than a dozen Ebola drugs in development, but none has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. Several of these have been approved by FDA for emergency use in the current crisis.

WHO has developed detailed advice on Ebola infection prevention and control. To avoid the spread of this deadly disease certain steps can be taken. First, avoid or reduce any and all contact with the infected - including animals. This can be done through protective clothing such as gloves and head-to-toe gowns. Next, people should make sure they thoroughly wash up and keep themselves clean at all times. Healthcare workers caring for patients with suspected or confirmed Ebola virus should apply extra infection control measures to prevent contact with the patient's blood and body fluids. Additionally, people involved in the burial of an infected person's dead body should properly dispose it.

Comparatively fewer cases have been reported in countries other than in Africa. Yet nations do not blindly ignore as being immune. They screen people at airport to check the infected patients are handled with care. The cold, hard truth is that Ebola is a brutally efficient killer for which there is no cure at the moment. It would not be wrong to say that nature is playing its revenge on humanity for the evil deeds done to it. The modern day practices are coming with a baggage hard to stand. Evidence of Ebola has certainly awakened the human's helplessness.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **bestow** – grant, impart
- ♦ **diagnosed** – detect, identify by examining the symptoms
- ♦ **animal-borne** – carried or transported by animals
- ♦ **reservoir** – source, pool
- ♦ **outstrip** – exceed, move faster, surpass
- ♦ **outbreak** – sudden occurrence of something
- ♦ **haemorrhage** – an escape of blood from a ruptured blood vessel
- ♦ **ravaging** – damage, destroy, destructive
- ♦ **diarrhoea** – a condition in which a lot of bowel discharge occur in a liquid form
- ♦ **symptoms** – an indication of the existence of something
- ♦ **disrupts** – interrupt, disturb, upset
- ♦ **contaminated** – infected, impure, unhygienic
- ♦ **immune** – not affected or influenced by something, resistant to a particular infection
- ♦ **pacified** – to calm down, bring peace



Bullet Train *A Dream or Reality*

In the world today, pollution is a major problem. But, with the rise of new technologies, we hope to diminish this problem forever. New inventions are on the way to tackle this major problem. Some have already been introduced, such as hybrid cars, electric scooters and other electrical machines. A big contribution to pollution is the smoke from today's cars and buses.

But thanks to a new and efficient way of transportation, that will decrease the smoke emitted by them: the electric bullet train. A bullet train is a high-speed train that is shaped like a bullet. Bullet trains are streamlined so that they can travel faster. Electrically powered bullet trains offer amazing benefits: a quiet, high-speed mode of mass transportation with low environmental dangers.

Usually, a bullet train's body has a long nose and a circular shape that offers higher aerodynamic performance and less noise. Many other designs were newly devised to reduce environmental dangers and to increase passenger comfort. For example, wing-shaped frames make much less noise than traditionally-shaped ones, and aluminium panels for the wall and floor sections of the car body help reduce the noise in cabins because the material has low sound transmissivity.

In Japan, bullet trains are known as Shinkansen, the world's first truly high speed locomotive. Japan's train travel offers the fastest point to point service of any rail line in the world. But the best addition of the trains in Japan is not their sheer speed, but their frequency. There are about six train stops in an hour; therefore you're never be late for your train and be just early for the next one.

In France, the TGV train is a speed record holder. It has achieved the high speed world record of 320 mph, 515 km/h. The name 'Train à Grande Vitesse' translated into English means high speed train.

The TGV averages a speed of 254.5 km/h or 158 mph, the second highest scheduled speed in the world. Still other TGV services often have very high average speeds often over 200 km/h or 125 mph. So, you can truly realise how fast these trains are when compared with the general average speed of a car which is 45 mph or 72 km/h. Since bullet trains are effective way of transportation, being that it is fast, almost noiseless, non-polluting, and luxurious, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed the first bullet train in India for Ahmedabad-Mumbai link covering 534 km at about 300 km/h speed.

Embracing the idea of bullet trains means the Railways will rid itself of a lobby that has always advocated enhancing train speed with minor changes.

In 2009, Railways' Vision 2020 document reiterated the need for high-speed rail corridors. But the wide range of speed - 250 km to 350 km an hour - for the proposed bullet trains cast doubts if they would stay true to character. The fastest train in India now is the Shatabdi, which runs at 140 km/h. The record was previously held by Rajdhani Express, which clocks a speed of upto 130 km/h.

The Rajdhani was unveiled in 1969, five years after Japan introduced Shinkansen, the world's first bullet train that ran at 240 km/h, at that time. The world has moved on, with France, Spain, China, Germany, Italy, South Korea and Japan too boosting trains that zip at 300 km/h. India, in sharp contrast, has been stuck in a time wrap for decades. Bullet trains (or high-speed rail) are very efficient in resource utilisation, be it time, money, land or energy. The lower limit of the proposed high-speed rail is about 300 km/h, which is much higher than the allowed road speed limit in India.

Moreover, High-speed rail can accommodate more passengers at far higher speeds than automobiles. A typical passenger rail carries 2.83 times as many passengers per hour per metre width as a road.

Generally, the longer the journey, the better the time advantage of rail over road if going to the same destination. However, high-speed rail can also be competitive with cars on shorter distances, 0-150 km (0-90 mile), for example for commuting, given road congestion or expensive parking fees. The high-speed rail is among the most environment friendly and energy efficient system of mass transportation systems. It should be noted that high-speed rail has the lowest GHG (Green House Gas) emission of all types of passenger rail transport.

By reducing the number of vehicles on the ground, and using more efficient means of mass public and freight transport, high-speed rails help directly reduce the carbon footprint. Moreover, nothing empowers people and businesses like infrastructure does. All countries that India wants to compete with in the global market are investing heavily in their infrastructure. They also have the same focus that PM Modi has referred to, namely Skill, Scale and Speed.

In many countries, e.g. Germany and China, high-speed-railways share tracks with freight trains. This can help move around goods faster. Even if the tracks are not shared, the high-speed network will free capacity for rail freight on the conventional network. As more goods are moving faster, it helps the common man by bringing down the prices, and empower businesses to scale and speed.

So over all, an investment in high-speed trains, will increase our efficiency, will be environment friendly, will be economically profitable, will empower the businesses and the common man.

However, this won't be easy. Sure there are and will be challenges. There will be challenges regarding the traffic optimisation, finances, construction, land acquisition and many more. But we can overcome them. We have done this time and again. We have succeeded on several challenging initiatives, and a few years down the line - this will potentially be just another such success.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **hybrid** – a vehicle that is powered by an internal combustion engine and another source of power such as battery
- ♦ **streamlined** – organised, made efficient
- ♦ **aerodynamic** – flowing, sleek, smooth
- ♦ **transmissivity** – a measure of the ability of a material to transmit radiation
- ♦ **locomotive** – a self-propelled driven vehicle
- ♦ **advocated** – recommended, defended, justified
- ♦ **reiterated** – repeat, restate
- ♦ **unveiled** – revealed, disclosed
- ♦ **congestion** – over-crowding, jam
- ♦ **freight** – goods carried by a large vehicle
- ♦ **optimisation** – improvement
- ♦ **acquisition** – attainment, acquirement



Asian Games 2014

The 17th Asian Games were flagged off in September 2014 in Incheon, South Korea.

The Asian Games, also known as Asiad, is a Pan continental multi-sport event held every four years among athletes from all over Asia. Post the World War II, as a number of Asian countries became independent, there was a desire among them to organise a new type of competition whereby Asian dominance was not expressed through violence, but instead, would be strengthened through mutual understanding. Guru Dutt Sondhi, the Indian International Olympic Committee representative, proposed to sports leaders the idea of having a wholly new competition that would sufficiently display and foster the spirit of unity and level of achievement taking place in Asian sports, which came to be the Asian Games. This led to an agreement to form the Asian Athletic Federation.

A preparatory committee was then set up to draft the charter for this new body. On 13 February, 1949, the Asian Athletic Federation was formally inaugurated in New Delhi, alongside the name Asian Games Federation, with New Delhi announced as the first host city of the Asian Games which were scheduled to be held in 1950.

For the 2014 series, the competition for the host city was between two cities primarily-Delhi and Incheon. The two cities had submitted their bid officially in 2006 in Doha. The referendum was held on 17 April, 2007 among the member nations, in which Incheon emerged the winner. And hence, was declared the host city for the 17th multi-sport event.

“Diversity Shines Here” was unveiled as the official slogan of the Games. The slogan was very prudently picked to highlight the significance of Asia's wonderful diversity in history, cultures, and religions. Three Spotted seal siblings were declared the official mascot of the Games in Songdo Island, Incheon.

The three seals, known as ‘Baramé’, ‘Chumuro’ and ‘Vichuon’ mean wind, dance and light respectively, in Korean language. The spectacular and extravagant opening ceremony was a three-hour show with myriad performances like piano playing, traditional Korean dance and songs.

The 2014 Games featured 28 Olympic sports that will be contested at the 2016 Summer Olympics. In addition, eight non-Olympic sports were featured: baseball, ten-pin bowling, cricket, kabaddi, karate, sepak takraw, squash and wushu. The list was finalised on 9 December, 2010 at the OCA’s executive board meeting in Muscat, Oman. This resulted in six other sports: roller sport, board games (chess, go, xiangqi), cue sports, softball, dance sport and dragon boat, which were held in previous Games being dropped from the list.

All 45 members of the Olympic Council of Asia participated, this including North Korea, who initially threatened to boycott the Games after disputes with South Korea over administrative issues concerning its delegation of athletes and officials. Saudi Arabia was the sole NOC not to send female athletes to the Games.

China led the medal table for the ninth consecutive time. Cambodia won their first Asian Games gold medal in Taekwondo. A total of 37 NOCs won at least one medal, and 28 NOCs won at least one gold medal. 8 NOCs failed to win any medal at the Games. China stood first bagging a total of 151 gold, 108 silver, and 83 bronze medals. The host nation, South Korea followed with 79 gold medals. Japan came third with 47 gold medals and India secured the 8th rank with a total of 11 gold medals in the kitty.

The games were well conducted in spite of the several initial controversies over finances, lack of public interest, transportation shortages for journalists, and several administrative decisions regarding the opening ceremony and gala show. Undoubtedly, organisers executed the duties with diligence and honesty.

Apart from a few controversies and distasteful developments during the series like the vast majority of poor judging allegations occurred in boxing, highlighted by the controversial semifinal loss of Indian lightweight boxer Laishram Sarita Devi against eventual silver medalist Park Jina of South Korea. The judging of the match, Sarita Devi’s refusal to accept the bronze medal, and her questionable behaviour at the medal ceremony received widespread international attention and sparked numerous debates.

The high volume of controversial boxing decisions led to accusations against the judges for widespread incompetence and host favouritism. Criticisms of the new scoring system were also brought up. Shooting and wrestling saw initial rulings by officials being overturned following appeals.

Similarly, the ban on ‘hijab’ that led to the withdrawing of the Qatari women’s basketball team and the disqualification of American born players from Chinese, Japanese and Korean teams did generate furore and brought under scrutiny, the organisation and management, however, the games resumed their spirit and momentum soon after and concluded peacefully on 4th October. Some 1,920 samples from 1,600 athletes were tested during the Games. Six athletes tested positive for banned substances and were sent home from the Games, including two gold medalists that were stripped of their medals.

The theme of the closing ceremony was “Our Cherished Memories of Incheon”. The sequence of events featured the performances of National Dance Company of Korea, Gugak Center Dance Troupe and Kukkiwon. The ceremony also included the segment from the next Asian Games host city, Jakarta. It started off with “The Colours of Jakarta”, featured a Javanese dance known as Ronggeng. It followed by “The Spirit of South Sumatra”, featured Malay dance accompaniment of Rampak Nusantara drums. IOC member Rita Subowo and Governor of South Sumatra, Alex Noerdin received the Games flag for the 2018 Games.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **flagged off** – began, started or inaugurated
- ♦ **foster** – strengthen
- ♦ **referendum** – a vote on a measure so submitted
- ♦ **prudently** – wisely
- ♦ **spectacular** – causing wonder and admiration, very impressive
- ♦ **extravagant** – very fancy
- ♦ **myriad** – a very large number of things
- ♦ **diligence** – perseverance and attention
- ♦ **distasteful** – not pleasant or enjoyable
- ♦ **furore** – an outbreak of public anger or excitement
- ♦ **scrutiny** – critical observation or examination



Kashmir Disaster

The highly admired, the heaven on Earth, Kashmir is famous for its pleasing scenic beauty. None would have thought that the serene beauty would take its toll on humanity and would prove so utterly dangerous. In September, 2014 when the residents of Kashmir were enjoying the pleasant weather in the valley, none would have thought that the pleasantness would be so short-lived. Jammu and Kashmir region saw a deadly flood caused due to heavy rainfall. The whole state got submerged under water which brought life to a standstill.

Hundreds of people died, millions got homeless after continuous rains that lasted for almost five days. About 400 people died in both Jammu and Kashmir and a lot of roads, bridges, houses, schools, hospitals got damaged. Flood disrupted electricity, water supply and means of communications.

Many residents lost their family members, others got parted with them. People had to starve for days and were deprived of basic necessities. The patients who needed regular dosage of medicines for diseases like diabetes, thyroid, blood pressure saw grave situations. The flood also destroyed the agriculture and handloom industry in the region. For Jammu and Kashmir, this is their worst flood in 100 years, according to the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

Monsoon is usual in the area but this time weather would havoc such devastation was not predicted. Environmentalists say that last year’s devastating flood of Utrakhhand and this flood in Jammu and Kashmir have the same cause- urbanisation, deforestation, unpredictable and variable monsoon. Satellite images reveal another contributing factor that led to floods; according to them, lakes and catchment areas of rivers are reduced to half over the decades, which left flood water with no place to go but into people’s homes. Clearly, the fact that Earth is in the midst of global warming has become acute.

Yet, time and again these calamities unite the nation in the sense that all sympathised the pain and stand as one to help generously. Following the flood, soldiers, and disaster management teams were sent to the region to rescue the victims. Food, water, medicines, blankets were provided to the people in the affected areas. They had threat of getting water borne diseases, so chlorine capsules were provided. To add to the rescue work, the army established relief camps, where the rescued people were provided food, shelter, and medical assistance.

Surprisingly, bollywood stars flew down to Delhi for ‘Hum Hain’- Umeed-e-Kashmir charity concert which was later held in many other cities. Lots of celebrities and other eminent people contributed lakhs of rupees for the cause of charity. The money generated through the sale of tickets, donations and sponsorships will see relief in restoring life in the state. Along with this state governments have also contributed towards the reconstruction of the state. Natural disasters are unpredictable but influence everyone equally. As a nation what we need is rightly put by Amir Khan “...we aren’t equipped with disaster management. We should always be prepared to deal with such calamities.” India needs preparedness and disaster management plans and effective mechanisms to ensure that all these are functional.

India needs much better rainfall prediction, flood forecasting. The other form of caution is to pay close attention to weather forecasts and act on time. Like in Odisha, when cyclone hit the coast, the government was prepared after the weather forecast. It ensured the minimum loss of life and property.

Efforts are being done to rebuild the state and restore its scenic beauty. The state profited hugely from tourism, but unfortunately it too has a gloomy future now. Citizens hope that the state which served as the perfect beautiful crown of mother India is re-established back at the earliest. Let us all reduce the burden on Earth before such mega floods and other natural calamities become ‘the new normal’.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| ♦ scenic | – beautiful, attractive, picturesque | ♦ sympathised | – agree with an opinion, understand, be supportive |
| ♦ serene | – calm, peaceful | ♦ generously | – kindly, with big heart, showing readiness to give more |
| ♦ submerged | – flooded, under water | ♦ equipped | – supply with necessary items, provide |
| ♦ starve | – have nothing to eat, | ♦ mechanism | – device, method, the structure or arrangement of parts |
| ♦ deprived | – lack of something, disadvantaged | ♦ caution | – care taken to avoid danger, warning |
| ♦ catchment areas | – the area from which rainwater flows into a river, lake etc, drainage area | ♦ gloomy | – dark, dull, depressing |
| ♦ acute | – sharp, intense, crucial | | |



Juvenile Delinquency

“In our country, children are considered a gift from heaven and if the child is a boy then nothing could be more soothing for the family as from the very beginning children are exempted from severe punishment for any wrong commitment on their part irrespective of the gravity of the act.” This one statement itself says and justifies for the social evil, our society is facing today: Juvenile Delinquency.

In ordinary terms, a child roughly between the age of 7 to 16/18 years who is involved in some kind of a ‘status offence’ such as vagrancy, immortality, truancy and ungovern ability is a juvenile delinquent. Thus, juvenile delinquency is not just about under-aged criminals, who get involved in criminal activities. In fact, the term ‘juvenile delinquency’ refers to the violation of a code of conduct or a regular occurrence of certain patterns of disapproved behaviour of children and adolescents. The well accepted age at present for juvenile delinquents is 16 years for boys and 18 years for girls.

Juvenile delinquents are mainly classified on the basis of their behavioural patterns. They range from the escapers, who keep away from school and get involved in petty thefts and armed robberies, destruction of property, violence and sexual offences. They are also classified according to the type of violation they commit.

Thus, psychologists have grouped juvenile delinquents on the basis of their personality traits as mentally defective, psychotic, neurotic, situational and cultural delinquents. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, the trend of children committing crime has an alarming echo across the country.

It is extremely hard to trace and keep a check on juvenile delinquency as of all the delinquencies committed by juveniles, only a small percentage come to the notice of the police and the courts. Traditionally, surveys suggest that delinquencies like theft, burglary, robbery, dacoity and other such offences are most commonly committed by juveniles. But recent statistics reveal that juveniles have also been found actively involved in riots, murder, rape, kidnapping and abduction as well.

Reason being that courts and juvenile rights advocates believe that second chance should be given to youth who commit crimes, so criminals are walking in the streets, living as our neighbours and in many cases committing additional crimes.

The delinquency rates are comparatively much higher among boys than in girls. Children from broken homes or disturbed families who are either homeless or living with guardians are more likely to indulge in criminal activities. Low education or illiteracy and poor economic background are major features of juvenile delinquents. But now-a-days, it’s not only street children who take to crime, even children from well-off middle and upper middle class families are turning to crime due to peer pressure and crime thrill—the hunger of adolescents to be heroes among their friends, the need to portray class and style, effect of cinema have propelled the rate of juvenile delinquency in the society.

The media plays a major role in creating bogus desires and images in the minds of the youth, for which they are willing to do anything. Moreover, unmonitored access to the internet is another reason for growth in these crimes, as many are caught swindling money from bank accounts. Children belonging to the elite class, who are either sons or daughters of politicians, businessmen are also found involved in

criminal acts. This largely attributes to criminals going scot-free in high-profile criminal cases, so the fear barrier no longer exists.

Increased exposure combined with isolation is the root cause of these behavioural issues. Children are growing up much faster, but their conscience and ability to distinguish between right and wrong isn't developing at the same rate and they don't feel the need to think things through. In most cases, the cause behind juvenile delinquency is defective upbringing or no upbringing, faulty or no family interaction. Children are not born criminals.

It's the situations and circumstances that lead them into delinquencies. Mostly all juvenile offences have deeper roots and serious situational factors which are responsible for a child behaving in a particular way. Family plays a vital role in structuring the mental, emotional and behavioural patterns of a child. Other factors that are responsible for the rise in juvenile delinquency are unhealthy neighbourhood, cinema, pornographic literature and bad company.

In UK, child between 10 to 18 years become criminally responsible for his action and be tried by the youth court or could be tried in an adult court as per the gravity of the offence committed. In our country too, the time has come to bring some reforms in the Juvenile laws. There is a steep rise in serious crimes involving youth of 16 to 18 years of age as they very well know that below 18 years is the 'getaway pass' for them from criminal prosecution. The punishment should be made a big deterrent in order to inject the feeling of fear in the mind of the criminals.

In the recent 2012 Delhi gang rape case, media too highlighted that 'Most Brutal' of all the accused person was the juvenile. For the brutalising act, he has been sentenced to imprisonment for the period of 3 years where others have got the death sentence. The principle that should have been followed for trying juvenile offenders is that Juvenility should be decided as per the state of mind and not just the state of body.

Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 was enacted by our Parliament in order to provide care, protection, treatment, development and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent as a uniform system of juvenile justice mechanism throughout our country. These days we have observation homes, reformatory schools, custody institutions, probation homes etc., to help juvenile delinquents reform themselves so that they can be gradually absorbed into mainstream of the society.

Moreover, we need to pay greater attention to improve the average condition in a society so that no child confronts such situations that force them to adopt unacceptable behavioural patterns. We need to find ways and means to pool the youthful energy of the children in a constructive and desired direction.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **exempted** – to free from an obligation or liability to which others are subject
- ♦ **vagrancy** – a person without a settled home or regular work who wanders from place to place and lives by begging
- ♦ **truancy** – the action of staying away from school without good reason; absenteeism
- ♦ **psychotic** – mentally unstable; intensely upset, anxious, or angry
- ♦ **neurotic** – abnormally sensitive, obsessive, or anxious; disturbed; irrational
- ♦ **echo** – a sound heard again and again, any repetition of the ideas or opinions
- ♦ **burglary** – theft, robbery, illegal entry of a building with intent to commit a crime
- ♦ **propelled** – drive or push something forward, to urge onward
- ♦ **bogus** – false, fake, not genuine
- ♦ **swindling** – to obtain money by fraud, to cheat for money
- ♦ **deterrent** – a thing that discourages or is intended to discourage someone from doing something



Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai, the supergirl from Pakistan who was all over the tabloids in the year 2013, for her bold stand against Taliban's oppression and crusade for girls' education. She was chosen as the 'Woman of the Year 2013' by Glamour Magazine and was in the time's list of "100 Most Influential People in the World" the same year.

*"Through education, we can fight terrorism,
not through guns, not through weapons."* —Malala Yousafzai

Malala's impassioned stance on education and women's rights can be traced to her roots, since her father is an education activist himself. Malala was born on 12th July, 1997 into a Sunni Muslim family in Mingora, Swat district in North-West Pakistan. She has two younger brothers. Her father encouraged her to pursue politics and would discuss social issues with her till late at night.

When she was only 11 years old, she gave her first speech at Peshawar, where she asked "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" Thereafter, she started writing a blog anonymously under the pseudonym of 'Gul Makai'.

A documentary was also filmed on her life. She grew popular and openly gave her views on television and newspapers. She was nominated for International Children's Peace Prize by South African activist Desmond Tutu. Seeing her worldwide growing support, Taliban felt threatened. A gunman shot at her on 9 October, 2012. She was sent to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in England, where she recuperated. On 12th October, a '*Fatwa*' was issued against Taliban for attempting to kill her.

Her assassination bid only strengthened her cause. A UN petition 'I am Malala' was launched with the aim to put all the children in school by the end of 2015. This helped in the ratification of Pakistan's first Right to Education Bill. She also won her country's first Youth Peace Prize and contended alongside Nelson Mandela for the Nobel Peace Prize (2013).

She was again nominated in 2014 and this time she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and became the youngest person ever to win the nobel prize. She was given the honour to open the world's largest library—the Library of Birmingham.

She met Queen Elizabeth and Barack Obama and his family. She was conferred Europe's most prestigious human rights award - the Sakharov Prize. She also received a honorary degree from University of King's College, Canada in 2014.

On her birthday in 2013, observed as 'Malala Day', she spoke using the UN platform for education for every child in the world. Currently, she is involved in mobilising

support and help for ‘Malala Fund’, which is being raised to help girls come out of poverty and illiteracy. She has also actively voiced her concern to bring back the kidnapped girls in Nigeria.

Her name literally means ‘grief-stricken’, but she chose not to lead a life of subjugation and offered a ray of hope to millions of girls like her. She can rightly be called an ‘incarnation of Malalai’, a Pashtun female warrior, whom she is named after. We salute her vision and courage.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **tabloid** – a newspaper whose pages, usually five columns wide, are about one-half the size of a standard-sized newspaper page
- ♦ **crusade** – any war carried on under papal sanction
- ♦ **anonymous** – without any name acknowledged
- ♦ **pseudonym** – a fictitious name used by an author to conceal his or her identity, pen name
- ♦ **oppression** – to exercise power in a cruel or unjust manner
- ♦ **ratification** – the act of ratifying, confirmation, sanction
- ♦ **mobilising** – to bring together, prepare for action, especially of a vigorous nature
- ♦ **incarnation** – an incarnate being or form, a living being embodying a deity or spirit



Kailash Satyarthi

Kailash Satyarthi is a modern day Christ in the lives of poor children. People bestow mercy on poor children by offering money, some by employing them, some by giving food. Kailash Satyarthi changed the very label tag of kids from being uneducated poor kids to lawyers/ professionals in the mainstream. He has not only changed the lives but has also saved the childhood of the underprivileged kids. Satyarthi has campaigned for 34 years to end child labour. He is the first Indian citizen since Amartya Sen in 1998 to win the esteemed Nobel. With the dedicated efforts of his association Bachpan Bachao Andolan, he has rescued the lives of more than 80,000 children from virtual slavery.

Born on 11 January 1954 in Madhya Pradesh, Satyarthi is a renowned leader in the global movement against child labour. He is associated with large number of international organisations located in 140 countries. Additionally, he has successfully headed a countrywide movement to make education a Constitutional Provision which subsequently paved way for the Right of children for free and compulsory education in 2009 in India.

He has transformed more than 350 Indian villages into places where children can receive an education rather than be sent out to work. Satyarthi by all means proves Nelson Mandela’s word: “Safety and security don’t just happen; they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.”

Illegal employment of children has emerged as a huge source of illicit earnings and corruption. These children are employed not just because of parental poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, but due to the fact that employers benefit immensely from child labour as children come across as the cheapest option sometimes even for free. So, Satyarthi’s group works with law-enforcement agencies to rescue child workers and help them rebuild their lives. The shelters run by the organisation offer schooling and teach children about their rights.

His team works with the police to reunite children with their parents when possible. In cases where parents sold their children, or when the child's origins can't be determined, they are transferred to a long-term halfway house. There, in addition to funding a child's schooling, they offer vocational courses in stitching, welding and gardening.

Kailash Satyarthi is the leader of two of the largest civil society movements: the Global March Against Child Labor (GMACL), a worldwide coalition of NGOs, Teachers' Union and Trade Unions, and the other being Global Campaign for Education. The GMACL campaign was instrumental in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) decision to change its outdated policy on child labour. With his strategies, he is now working on bringing child labour and slavery in the post-2015 development agenda for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In addition, to the GMACL, other organisations he has founded and or led include Bachpan Bachao Andolan, and the Goodweave Foundation. Satyarthi is a member of a High Level Group formed by UNESCO on Education for all comprising of select Presidents, Prime Ministers and UN Agency Heads. He has addressed the UN General Assembly, International Labour Conference, UN Human Rights Commission, UNESCO, etc and has been invited to several Parliamentary Hearings and Committees in USA, Germany and UK in the recent past.

"The end of labour is to gain leisure", Aristotle. Satyarthi seem to strongly believe in this quote as he has survived numerous attacks on his life during his battle to end child labour. Yet his commitment to stand tall for the cause of child slaves has been unwavering. He has set up three rehabilitation-cum-educational centres for freed bonded children that resulted in the transformation of victims of child servitude into leaders and liberators. His life and work has been covered in hundreds of programmes on television and radio channels including Wall Street Journal, BBC, Austrian News, etc and profoundly featured in several magazines like Reader's Digest, New York Times, Times London, Los Angeles Times, Guardian, The Times of India, etc.

Satyarthi points to their success stories: one rescued teenager is studying to be a child rights lawyer; another counsels kids. He made the issue of child labour a human rights issue, not a welfare matter or a charitable cause. He has established that child labour is responsible for the continuation of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, population explosion and many other social evils. Satyarthi has indeed proved messiah for the poor kids by giving them a new and better life.

VOCAB HELP

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|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| ♦ messiah | – a leader regarded as the saviour, the place of Jesus Christ | ♦ consensus | – a general agreement, majority of opinion |
| ♦ bestow | – grant, impart, give | ♦ illicit | – unlawful, dishonest, banned |
| ♦ mercy | – kindness, sympathy, showing compassion | ♦ coalition | – association, partnership, union |
| ♦ underprivileged | – poor, neglected, deprived | ♦ leisure | – relaxation, recreation |
| ♦ rescued | – saved, freed, released | ♦ unwavering | – firm, untiring, solid |
| ♦ virtual slavery | – having the essence or effect but not really naming it slavery | ♦ child servitude | – the state of being a slave or completely subject to someone more powerful |
| ♦ subsequently | – successively, afterwards, later | ♦ liberators | – rescuers, a person who frees others from oppression/ imprisonment |

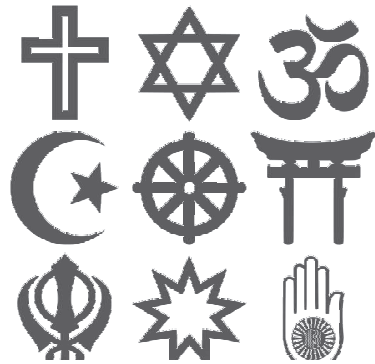
B. Society and Social Issues

Communal Harmony

“A house divided against itself cannot stand together” is an old saying and it holds true in the present context of increasing communal disharmony in the society. These dividing forces weaken and mutilate the society.

The culture, civilisation and tradition of India is approximately 12,000 years old. The spirit of tolerance and assimilation has made it possible for our civilisation to survive the test of time. But with the passage of time, the growing attachment to one’s own ethnic, religious, racial or cultural group rather than being a part of a wider circle of the entire social milieu, has posed one of the gravest problems of modern times. Somehow with the increase in science and technology, the man

who should have opened up to assimilation and integration has instead receded into his own cells and has become more conservative and protective towards his culture and community.



Fear, suspicion and a sense of insecurity towards the other communities have given rise to hatred, which acts as fuel, feeding the flame of communalism. Communal harmony can be achieved by making people realise the significance of oneness. People should be awakened to the fact that the differences of ethnic and religious origins have no foundations at all and these feelings should be discouraged if a nation has to survive, and on a larger scale if humanity has to survive. Roses alone cannot make a garden. It is the variety of different coloured and perfumed flowers that lends beauty to a garden.

Fostering the spirit of brotherhood and mutual trust is the most challenging task that our country needs to accomplish. We have to make every possible effort to eradicate vestiges of communal hatred and prejudice. One way of accomplishing this huge task in India is by promoting scientific temperament and removing the cobwebs of caste and religious prejudices.

We also need to encourage the educated strata to continually participate in the work of social integration by educating the masses. It is the illiterate masses that fall an easy victims to the anti-social forces as they are gullible and in turn render the entire society vulnerable. India has had a long and proud history of mutual cooperation and trust. People belonging to various ethnic groups, races, religions, creeds, cultures have come and settled on this land and since centuries have made it their home.

But the divide and rule policy that took its roots deeper than what the colonial masters could have imagined, shows its predatory signs time and again. These seeds of communal divide, sown to meet short-term selfish political ends, are now deep-rooted and threatening to uproot the century-old harmony and unity of the country.

This hatred was at its worst during the ill-fated partition of the country. The articulation of two-nation theory and creation of the state of Pakistan implied that the enmity between the two communities was so great that it was virtually impossible for them to live together in peace as one nation.

Even today India's fragile peace is shattered by communal riots every now and then. During the British rule, riots were triggered to either distract the attention from the growing freedom movement or else to dilute and weaken the unity of Hindus and Muslims who were fighting jointly against the British. In the history, Hindu-Muslim unity has always been one of the essential pillars of any progressive national movement.

India's valiant attempt to build a secular polity in a desperately impoverished nation was a step of profound importance and key to the rehabilitation of the Indian people. But the task of reconstruction has not been easy at all and from time to time the unity of the Indian people has been challenged by the anti-social and anti-secular elements of the society. They feel their purpose is defeated in the face of growing unity and understanding among people of different communities and cultures; hence they try to instigate the hatred of a common man to serve their own selfish and ulterior motives.

The recent communal violence of Gujarat, the anti-Sikh campaigns during the mid-80s, the Mumbai Riots, the Ayodhya episode, the evacuation of Kashmiri Pandits, the attacks on the pilgrims on their way to pilgrimage are all blots on the secular fabric of the country. Now-a-days, any controversy even if it happens in a remote village reaches all over the world due to the advanced communication technology and vibrant media. Social networking sites, mass messages etc., proves both a boon and a bane to the society in the times of riots. But the nation should take lessons from its past and pledge not to let the demon of communal violence ever rise again.

We, as responsible citizens, should continuously and ferociously guard our great secular heritage. Communal differences should be nipped in the bud itself and not be allowed to rise and flourish. The children should be taught to appreciate the diversity of the country. They should be taught to learn divergent cultures and ways of living. Also, youths are the country's power, whose participation is very important. They are the strong forces in the movements, who recognise problems and solve them. Religious snobbery, fanaticism and conservatism should be discouraged and scorned at.

One cannot and should not make a sweeping judgement about India's secular nature just by browsing through a few shameful incidents of hatred, which are registered on the pages of history. One cannot ignore that in difficult times the secular minded citizens of the country have joined hands together to fight against the forces of dissension. Media, which is known as the fourth pillar of society, has always played a significant role for the betterment of society. Role of media in the coverage of Communal Riots in the past, riots of late 60's, the violence of 1980-81, the separatist movement of mid 80's and early 90's, the incidents at Ayodhya, Mumbai, Gujarat can't be ignored by any means.

Media always moulds the public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need of friendly and harmonious relations between various communities and religious groups and thus has promoted national solidarity. Although, a handful of anti-social elements try to create an atmosphere of turmoil, turbulence and fear, yet time and

again, the entire nation has risen against those handful to guard and protect the peace and harmony of the country. Moreover, a few power hungry political parties, sects and communities, for their vested interests try to use diversity as a weapon to maintain their status-quo. Their greed makes them so short-sighted that they fail to see that they are in turn digging their own graves.

The road to peace and harmony can never be smooth. Every nation has had its share of violence in order to create a society where all can have equal rights and can live with respect and dignity. Who can forget the bloody Civil War of America, the division of Germany and Korea, the Bolshevik Revolution, the violence after the French Revolution, the prevailing disturbances in the Middle East, Israel-Palestine problem etc, the list is endless and the instances bloodier and more violent than the other.

India has emerged as a stronger nation, every time these communal forces have tried to test their secular foundation. One cannot sit back and relax at such times rather one has to work persistently against such forces that pose danger to the idea of a United Nation. This cannot happen by waving a magical wand.

It is we, the people of the nation, who have to rise above these forces of dissent and division, so that India becomes a nation where religion of humanity is superior to every other religion.

According to the Census data 2001, India is the home to 80.5% Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.9% Sikhs, 0.8% Buddhists, 0.4% Jains and 0.7% people of other religions. These are the other major religions followed by the people of India. Yet, as Mahatma Gandhi said :

“All great religions of the world inculcate equality and brotherhood of mankind and the virtue of tolerance”.

India being the largest democracy in the world with a civilisation more than 5000 years old, boasts of multiple cultural origins. Despite multiple religious, linguistic, cultural, regional and caste identities, modern India presents a picture of unity in diversity where people of different faiths and beliefs live together in peace and harmony.

VOCAB HELP

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|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| ♦ mutilate | – to make imperfect, to damage, injure | ♦ enmity | – hatred, feeling of hostility |
| ♦ assimilation | – to completely understand, to absorb, accepting and using new ideas | ♦ valiant | – worthy, brave |
| ♦ fostering | – encourage the development, nurture, promotion | ♦ impoverished | – poor, lacking strength |
| ♦ vestiges | – the smallest amount, trace | ♦ rehabilitation | – restore (someone) to health or normal life by training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness, healing centre |
| ♦ prejudices | – preconceived opinion that is not based on reason, biasness, preconception | ♦ blots | – a dark mark, a shameful act, stain |
| ♦ gullible | – easily persuaded to believe something, easily cheated, innocent | ♦ nipped | – to take off, to check the growth, compress |
| ♦ vulnerable | – exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally | ♦ dissension | – strong disagreement, difference in sentiment or opinion |
| ♦ predatory | – seeking to exploit others, exploitive, brutal | ♦ status-quo | – the existing state of condition, especially regarding social or political issues |

Social Evils

Social evils are the issues that directly or indirectly affect the members of a society and are considered a point of controversy or a problem in regards to moral values. Common social evils include: caste system, poverty, dowry system, gender inequality, illiteracy etc. The social evils and superstitions that dominated the society over the centuries made social reforms imperative for the development of the society and the masses. In the 19th century, the newly educated increasingly revolted against the rigid social conventions and outdated customs. They could no longer tolerate irrational and dehumanising social practices. Moreover, the backward features of Indian society, such as the caste system or inequality of the sexes had religious sanctions in the past. Therefore, it was necessary to reform religious practices as well.

The condition of women was pathetic. The various religions practiced in India as well as the personal laws based on them consigned women to a status inferior to that of men. Polygamy, Purdah system, Sati, Ban on widow remarriage, No education for female child, Female infanticide and Child marriage were some of the evils that had a strong grip over the society. It, thus became necessary to take women out of this degraded position and help her to realise her true potential.

The problems of female foeticide, sexual harassment at work place and their lack of education are still prevalent; these are mainly responsible for marginalised status of women in the society. Futile glorification of Sati practice and role of women confined to the four walls of the house, should be checked to combat evils like dowry system, female foeticide, decline in sex ratio, harassment of women etc. This can be achieved by educating women and making them financially independent. Dowry in India, the practice of endowing gifts to the groom by the bride's family, is a tradition which changed its meaning from willingly offering gifts to demanding astronomical amounts. It not only puts immense pressure on the parents, but also brings them under the burden of huge debt. The inhumane circumstances created by groom's family push many girls to resort to suicide or murder.

All these factors together, has only worsened the inequality between the sexes. To overcome these, government had put forward a number of steps for women empowerment like the passing of Women Reservation Bill in Rajya Sabha, laws against female foeticide, Dowry Prohibition Act etc.

Our society is facing rapid criminalisation of the polity, which could also be termed as corruption. This could be the result of the fact that criminals have understood the mechanics of the electoral process and have themselves become contenders for power. Earlier, politicians patronised criminals and provided them protection from the law-enforcement agencies in exchange for the use of their muscle power during elections.

And now it is the opposite, with the criminals themselves taking over the reigns of power to meet their selfish ends and patronising the politicians and their parties. Our freedom fighters and national leaders had set high ethical and moral standards in public life and they scrupulously followed those principles. This tendency, it is painfully observed, is now on decline. There has been a wide and critical collapse of moral values in all walks of life which is adversely affecting our global, political and trade relations, and national economy.

Barring this, the caste system, is another curse in society. Though not so rigidly in urban areas, it is still practiced in rural areas with the same degree of rigidity. Caste decides man's marriage, social circle and profession. The untouchables suffer from numerous disabilities and restrictions. Their dress, food, place of residence, all are in degraded state. Not only it is humiliating and inhuman, and against the democratic principle of equality by birth, it is also a cause of social disintegration. It is believed that the 16th century Babri Mosque was destroyed by the members of Hindu nationalist and Bajrang Dal in 1992, resulting in nationwide religious riots. Constitutionally, India is a secular state, but large scale violence have periodically occurred in India since Independence. In recent decades, communal tensions and religion based politics have become more prominent, coinciding with a rise in Islamic terrorism.

A large section of the Indian society is suffering from poverty. Poverty is a phenomenon which is objective as well as subjective. Objectively, poverty implies a dehumanising condition in which people are unable to look after their basic needs. Subjectively, poverty stands for perceived deprivation. Poor people lack the necessary resources and capacity to satisfy basic needs like food, shelter, health and education. Around 27 crore people live below the poverty line in India. Poor people live under difficult conditions which are not conducive to development of their human potential. Poverty interferes with development in many ways. For instance lack of or inadequate nutrition arrests mental development during early childhood. A large section of poor children do not go to school. Even if they go, they become drop outs and fail to complete their education.

Apparently, illiteracy is the root cause of all the social issues in our society. It is a hurdle to the social, political and economic growth of the country which keeps people chained to ignorance. Illiteracy leads to over-population which is the basis of all the existing social problems. Firstly, the illiterate people do not know the value of family planning. They give birth to many children. In some Asian societies, it is very preferable to have a son in the family. They think that their son would be the lord of their property and family name. Secondly, poor people think that if they have a number of children they would earn a lot of money. Therefore, their big family would be beneficial for them. In addition to this, female literacy rate is very low. And when the female literacy rate is low in a country, then the growth of the country is sluggish because woman's education impacts every member of the family.

Illiteracy and lack of education give birth to another social evil that is 'superstition', which is still prevalent in the Indian society, even in this modern era. Superstitions like, one should not leave home if anyone sneezes or if a cat crosses the path, seeing a one eyed person or a widow early in the morning is sure to bring a bad day, hooting of an owl and the howling of a dog are all signs of ill luck or even death are quite common in our society. Sacrificing animals in the name of 'offerings to God', treating natural calamities as 'weapons of destruction', the list of superstitions is endless.

Other social issues include lack of proper sanitation wherein statistics provided by UNICEF have shown that only 31% of India's population is able to use proper sanitation facilities as of 2008. Another being employment issue. In the rural economy, both unemployment and under-employment exist side by side. Increasing population in rural areas implies immense pressure on land. A general inelasticity of occupational structure prevents any large movement to the other occupations in period of slack demand.

Other issues include female foeticide, female infanticide, drug abuse, prostitution, child labour and child abuse. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru strongly believed, : “It is science alone that can solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition...”

To check all the issues, the first and the foremost step should be to educate people. Government too has taken constructive measures like making primary education free and compulsory for children from 6-14 years and child labour has been banned. ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ is one such initiative. Government has also taken steps to reduce poverty by small farmer’s development programme, drought area development programme, minimum needs programme, assurance on employment and many other developmental schemes. A lot needs to be done to eradicate the shreds of a number of social evils still haunting our society. The citizens should strictly follow the rules as considered in the Constitution and should not perform the nefarious acts like female foeticide, bride burning, dowry, racism, gender discrimination etc. Youth, which is the strength of our nation, should strengthen the organisations having the agenda to eradicate these social problems in India by spreading awareness and by holding demonstrations. Nothing can be done sufficiently until many people understand the problem and take actions to bring a revolutionary change. Or in Albert Einstein’s words :

“The world is dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are evil but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **imperative** – vital, crucial, important
- ♦ **consign** – to confirm, pack off
- ♦ **polygamy** – the practice or custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time
- ♦ **infanticide** – the act of killing an infant, the practice in some societies of killing unwanted children soon after birth
- ♦ **fruitless** – unimportant, pointless,
- ♦ **combat** – to fight, oppose
- ♦ **contenders** – compete with others in a struggle to achieve, to contest
- ♦ **scrupulously** – very concerned to avoid doing wrong, precise, exact
- ♦ **disintegration**– the process of coming to pieces, collapse, the process of losing strength
- ♦ **conducive** – favourable, helpful
- ♦ **sluggish** – slow, inactive, lacking energy
- ♦ **slack** – slow, negligent, loose
- ♦ **shreds** – a very small amount, scrap



Curse of Dowry System

In a patriarchal society such as ours that accords sub-ordinate status to women, the position of a girl child is indeed vulnerable. In case of financial difficulties, it is the girl child whose education is sacrificed in order to manage the household and take care of the other younger children at home. The dowry system, deeply rooted in the culture and customs of most communities in India, is a cause of harassment for most women. This has led to a situation where the girl child is treated as a guest in her own home.

Dowry means the demand made by the bridegroom’s family from the bride’s parents for the payment of money as well as other costly gifts like land, house, clothes and jewels, a condition precedent to the alliance. Dowry, in fact, is not a recent development. History is full of examples where daughters have been married off with immense wealth given to them at the time of wedding.

Gifts, presents and things given to the daughter in marriage are nothing bad in itself. It is a token of her parent's love and happiness. Even the Bible preaches :

*Ask me never so much dowry and gifts, and I will give according
as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife."*

When the groom's family tries to extract the expenses made by them on their son's upbringing and education from the bride's family, it takes the shape of dowry. Dowry thus smears the sacred relationship of marriage and converts it into a base, mean and cheap financial deal.

There are several reasons for the occurrence of the dowry system, but the core reason is that it is considered a necessary pre-condition for marriage. Other being that, female based inheritance was not legal in India until law reforms in the 1950's, so dowry may have begun as a form of legal inheritance for daughters. However, as the system evolved, dowry has become a greater financial burden on bride's family. The price tag for the groom is now bigger and bolder. 'No dowry, no marriage' is a widespread fear. Dowry as a phenomenon has gone beyond the ritual of marriage. Pregnancy, childbirth and all kinds of religious and family functions are occasions when such demands are made. A more sophisticated public image of an extended gifting session has replaced the old system. Now there is demand for exclusive reception or destination wedding. The trousseau includes designer wear for the bride and groom's family. Chefs are flown in for multi cuisine wedding dinners. The bride's family usually pays for all this.

Another major reason for the existence of dowry system and its atrocities is the lack of women's education. They remain unaware of their rights. The lack of education also leads to their lack of empowerment. They remain economically dependent on others and fail to be the masters of their own life. Another cause of dowry is the rigid caste system prevalent in our society. Parents are determined to marry their daughters to a boy of their own caste, they are left with restricted choice of suitable boys and thus parents are compelled to subdue to the demands of the groom's family. This ends up like choosing between many evils. Moreover, the tendency of marrying daughters at an early age without paying attention to their education and career, pushes them to a bleak future without any self-confidence and education. The tendency of parents to get a rich boy to marry their daughter off further increases the pressure of dowry on them.

Shockingly, even after so much gifting and exchanges, one woman dies every hour due to dowry related reason on an average in the country, which has seen a steady rise between 2007 to 2011, according to official data. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics show that 91,202 dowry deaths were reported in the country from 1st January, 2001 to 31st December, 2012. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh record the maximum number of dowry crimes, but Bengaluru, India's fastest growing city also shows an alarming rise where four women reportedly die every day because of dowry harassment and domestic violence. The cases of dowry torture are the highest accounting for 32.4% of crimes against women in the country.

Even the social reformers like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Dayanand tried their best to create a social consciousness against this practice. Dowry became prohibited by law under the 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act in Indian, Civil Law and subsequently by Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) with the purpose of prohibiting the demanding, giving and taking of dowry. To stop offences of cruelty by the husband

or his relatives against the wife, Section 498A was added to the IPC and Section 198A to the Criminal Procedure Code in 1983. Although providing dowry is illegal, it is still common in many parts and sections of India in lieu of government regulated equal rights for girls in parental property.

Time and again, women groups have protested against many cases of dowry deaths. A national campaign focussed on humiliating and socially boycotting the families in these cases was held. The campaign also demanded that mysterious deaths be presumed to be murders until investigated and proved otherwise by the police. To counter this social menace, group compromising 15 to 16 NGOs have been created. Independent social workers working in localities have also been roped in for the project. Volunteers, hailing from the Mahila Panchayats and other such committees have also been incorporated in the project. Serious activism, special police cells for women, media support, heightened awareness of dowry being a crime, has been done.

Other life-saving mechanism includes—Womens Action Research and Legal Action for Women (WARLAW) : led by Attorney Rani Jethmalani of New Delhi, this is a group of dedicated attorneys, who provide free legal protection and assistance to the dowry victims in India. There are many specialised centres which help women to be self-supporting by training them in crafts, like knitting, sewing etc. Other groups run small shelter homes for helpless women.

Despite the amendments made to the Dowry Act in 1983, there are certain loopholes that need to be checked. There is an urgent need to promote mass communication and education programmes to publicise anti-dowry ideology through drama, street plays, music, movies, radio and television programmes, books, periodicals, journals, handbills and other audio-visual media. Methods like interviews, group/panel discussions, meetings, seminars, conferences, internet discussions, legal, psychological, spiritual and social remedies should be adopted to wipe out the evil of dowry and bride burning.

Women should be encouraged and educated, so that they become self-reliant. Time is now changing. Educated girls have now taken upon themselves to combat this evil in our society. Girls like Nisha Sharma, Farzana and Vidya Balasubramanian have been courageous enough to call off their weddings at the last moment because of the dowry demands, yet a lot needs to be done. It is high time that the society should realise the dignity of a woman, the sacredness and sanctity of marriage and unite to fight against the evil custom of dowry.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **vulnerable** – exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally
- ♦ **smear** – to spread a substance across a surface by rubbing
- ♦ **inheritance** – property passing at the owner's death to the heir or those entitled to succeed
- ♦ **trousseau** – the clothes, linen, and other belongings collected for marriage
- ♦ **atrocities** – an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving physical violence or injury
- ♦ **bleak** – not hopeful or encouraging; unlikely to have a favourable outcome, miserable
- ♦ **prohibited** – banned, prevent, hinder
- ♦ **boycott** – shun, reject, withdraw from commercial or social as a punishment or protest
- ♦ **menace** – a threatening quality, dangerous
- ♦ **amendment** – a minor change or addition designed to improve a text, piece of legislation, etc, an alteration of or addition to a motion, bill, constitution, etc
- ♦ **combat** – to fight, oppose
- ♦ **sanctity** – quality of being holy, sacred, ultimate importance, purity

Female Foeticide

In the land where we worship Goddess ‘Durga’ as ‘shakti’, thousands of innocent girls are killed in the wombs of their mothers, for the selfish greed of having only a male child.

Female foeticide is a matter of “deep shame and a cause of great concern”, these were the words of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he spoke on the occasion of the ‘International Day for the Girl Child’ i.e. 11th October 2014.

Equality of rights becomes secondary, when primarily females are not even allowed to enter into this world. The evil of female foeticide is deeply entrenched in our society and pervades all classes and castes of the society. A family does not think twice before killing a girl-child, though they would ceremoniously pray to Goddess Lakshmi, Kali and Durga four times a day!



While it is often believed that such ill-practices are largely part of the lower strata of society, shockingly, the recent trend reveals that many wealthy Indian couples are flocking to neighbouring countries like Thailand to escape laws here, as gender-detection is illegal in India. According to a recent report by a national daily : “A growing number of couples are finding a way around the ban by going to Thailand where there are no laws against it.

Doctors use Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD), a method that involves producing embryos through IVF and implanting only those of the desired gender (male) into the womb. At around \$ 8500, excluding flights, it’s not cheap, but it seems a price couples are willing to pay.”

It is interesting to analyse the reasons that lead to such a biased mind-set. Some believe that boys are an investment as they would grow family’s lineage and would secure their parent’s future, in comparison to girls who are considered liability as they need to be warded off with enormous dowry.

Furthermore, there are others who believe that in a male-dominated society, female safety issues are immense and since bringing up girls involves trouble, boys are an easy option.

Interestingly, a lot of measures have been taken to fight against this crime. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India has targeted education and media advertisements to reach clinics and medical professionals to increase awareness. The Indian Medical Association has undertaken efforts to prevent prenatal sex determination by promoting ‘Beti Bachao’ (save the daughters) during its meetings and conferences. The Beti-Bachao campaign uses media to raise awareness of the gender disparities creating and resulting from sex-selective abortion.

Beti-Bachao activities include rallies, posters, short-videos and television commercials, some of which are sponsored by state and local governments and other organisations. Many celebrities in India have publicly supported the Beti-Bachao campaign.

Aamir Khan devoted the 1st episode ‘Daughters are Precious’ of his show Satyamev Jayate to raise awareness of this widespread practice. Rapid responses were shown by local governments after airing of this show, showing the effect of media and nationwide awareness on the issue.

Other recent policy initiative adopted by many states in India, attempts to address the assumed economic disadvantage of girls by offering support to girls and their parents. These policies provide conditional cash transfer and scholarships only available to girls where payments to a girl and her parents are linked to various stages of her life, such as when she is born, childhood immunisation, school and her marriage past age 21.

Some states are offering higher pension benefits to parents who raise one or two girls. Different states have been experimenting with various innovations in their girl-driven welfare policies. It is mentioned in Quran “Kill not your children on a plea of want. We provide sustenance for you and for them. Come not near shameful deeds, whether open or secret. Take not life which Allah has made sacred.”

Today, women have reached the Moon and Mount Everest, but on Earth her situation is much the same. From Saina Nehwal to Kalpana Chawla, from our 1st woman President Pratibha Patil, to business woman Naina Lal Kidwai, females have left no sphere unturned to prove their worth and credibility to the society. However, much is left desired.

There is a great need to empower women, so that they become self-reliant and capable of taking their own decisions, rather than getting influenced and pressurised by in-laws or husbands or other social pressures. Through greater awareness, consideration and understanding, we can bring a shift in the perception of the society to give equal space to the girl-child. A little change in our attitude is all that is needed to welcome daughters in our hearts and in this world.

VOCAB HELP

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|---------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| ♦ skewed | - not uniform, distorted, twisted | ♦ strata | - section, major subdivision |
| ♦ dismal | - depressing, bad, pitiful | ♦ lineage | - Direct descent from an ancestor, ancestry |
| ♦ eloquent | - clearly expressing or indicating something, fluent | ♦ prenatal | - before birth; during pregnancy |
| ♦ entrenched | - well- established, deep rooted, fixed | ♦ immunisation | - an exposure to a substance to strengthen the resistance against it |
| ♦ pervades | - be present and apparent throughout, spread through | ♦ self-reliant | - independent, dependent on one's own powers and resources rather than those of others |

Women-Rising Against Violence

Women have always been the most vulnerable and oft-exploited section of the society in any age, time, place and society. In ancient times, due to the lack of opportunities and health facilities, low status of women became a vicious circle that needed to be broken to enhance the development of India. Since ages, women have been the victims of humiliation, torture, exploitation and violence.

Violence does not merely mean application of physical force, it can be mental, psychological and emotional as well. Violence in its broadest sense has been described as an act of a person, which encroaches upon the freedom of another. But with the passage of time, society is now awakening to its responsibility towards women. “She means the world”— promoting empowerment of women may seem just one of the goal, but this aspect is crucial for the success of several other reforms.

Violence can be an overt threat or an overt application of force, which aims at harming or destroying a person or his reputation. Even the intent of causing harm and injury to someone is considered as an act of violence. The other problems being bias in job, sexual harassment, domestic violence, marital discord which hamper the women’s development. Juxtaposed to this ‘Women Empowerment’ is the need of the hour, which means increasing the power of women: socially, economically and politically.

The enactment of appropriate laws to improve the status of women is today’s burning need. For it was said by Jawaharlal Nehru :

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”

Violence against women can be categorised under three broad categories:

(i) Criminal Violence as rape, abduction or murder (ii) Domestic Violence which includes dowry-deaths, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of widows or elderly women and lastly (iii) Social Violence which includes forcing a wife or daughter-in-law to go for female foeticide, eve-teasing, refusing to give a share to women in property, forcing a woman to commit Sati, forcing her into marriage for business interests or family honour or harassing a woman for any other reason.

The Police Research Bureau, Delhi divides crime against women under two categories—crimes under the Indian Penal Code and crimes under local and special laws. Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), seven crimes such as rape, kidnapping, abduction, homicide for dowry, physical as well as mental torture, molestation and eve-teasing are covered. Forcing Sati, harassment for dowry, immoral trafficking and indecent representation of women fall under local and special laws.

In fact, it has been seen that women are abused and victimised mostly by men known to them. According to a recent survey, India is the fourth-most dangerous place for women in the world, primarily due to a high number of female foeticide, infanticide and human trafficking cases. As per the UN Population Fund, up to 50 million girls were thought to be ‘missing’ from the country over the past century due to female infanticide and foeticide.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (India) statistics on crime against women in India, a total of 2,44,270 incidents of crimes against women (both under IPC and other laws) were reported in the country during 2012 as compared to 2,28,650 in 2011. About 24,923 were the cases of rape alone, out of which offenders were known to the victims in as many as 24,470 (98.2%) cases.

The statistics are alarming and shocking. One must acknowledge that these are the reported cases. There are a host of other instances of violence, which go unreported due to fear of further violence, social stigma or even death. Violent crimes against women have been on an increase. It is ironical that in a land where goddesses are worshipped, the crime rate against women is so high.

Indian women who increasingly refused to be trapped in a bad situation and were shedding silent tears reflect the long overdue empowerment of women. Law is a tool for women empowerment and their better representation, which is must for a social change. There are various examples to prove that the laws have made women eligible for different roles in the world affairs.

Today, Hindu women have options to walk out of a bad marriage rather than live unhappily. Several provisions of 'Hindu Marriage Act, 1955' laid down provisions of divorce and empowered the women to say goodbye to their long sufferings. The Act has several provisions relating to registration of marriage, restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation and various grounds of divorce.

Now, women can get a share in the ancestral property due to an amendment in 'Hindu Succession Act, 1956'. There are other laws as well for strengthening the women power, such as 'Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956'. As per the 'Muslim Shariyat Act, 1937', a Muslim woman can opt for divorce according to her will and can get maintenance in the form of '*Mehar*'.

Dowry is another stark reality. An ever increasing number of women in the urban areas are openly coming out against it.

A new provision of free education for girls from primary to higher studies has been made for those girls who are single child of their parents. It aims to increase the literacy rate as well as sex ratio of girls. Also, with changing times, for empowerment of women, a number of laws have been amended and formulated such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987; Protection of Women from Domestic Violence, Act 2005; Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005 and the Prohibition of Sexual Harassment of Women Bill, 2010. However, despite the existing laws much is left desired.

Women Reservation Bill, which proposes to reserve 33% of the seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament of India, Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is yet a pending bill. Though the laws are said to grant justice to the innocent, sadly it is not wholly true in many cases involving crime against women. Cases linger on for years and in many cases, due to political influence, criminals get away scot-free. Example being Jessica Lal murder case, wherein Jessica was shot dead by Manu Sharma in front of 300 guests.

However, Manu, the son of a wealthy politician, was acquitted by the court due to 'lack of evidence!' It was only after the public and media's pressure that the case got reopened and the culprit was given life imprisonment. Delhi gang rape of December, 2012 became a turning point in the prolonged history of violence against women. In the aftermath of this crime, media has increased such reporting's and has helped people to unite against a cause.

Nationwide protest has forced the judiciary to improve vigilance, speed up trials and reform laws. These are just some of the several incidents that the country watches every day where women—be it a 3 year old girl or a senior citizen—are the helpless victims.

Today, women always have to be on their guard—be it in park, public transport, cinema hall, educational institute or work place. The condition of the rural women is even worse as in the absence of education and awareness, they are greater victims of the injustices meted out to them.

The government ushered in the new millennium by declaring 2001 as the 'Women Empowerment Year'. True, with economic independence women are making their mark in many areas like sports, literature, science, arts, journalism, politics and business world.

Economic independence has added to her confidence to march ahead and conquer the world, but the daily battles that she fights everyday on this journey are not only painful, but disgusting. It is only by creating awareness among women and society at large that the growing rate of violence against women can be stopped in all sections uniformly and India can actually become great, by Nehru's standards.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **vicious circle** – a situation in which one problem causes another problem, that then causes the first problem again, so that the whole process continues to be repeated
- ♦ **encroaches** – advance gradually beyond usual or acceptable limits, to trespass
- ♦ **overt** – done or shown openly, unconcealed
- ♦ **marital discord** – disputes/fights related to marriage
- ♦ **abduction** – kidnap
- ♦ **battering** – rough treatment, beating, violence against somebody
- ♦ **molestation** – to make indecent sexual advances, abuse sexually
- ♦ **trafficking** – the action of dealing or trading in something illegal, to trade (human beings) for the purpose of exploitation
- ♦ **stigma** – a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, shame
- ♦ **restitution** – compensation, the restoration of property or rights,
- ♦ **conjugal rights** – relating to marriage, marital rights
- ♦ **scot-free** – without suffering any punishment or injury, get free of blame
- ♦ **acquitted** – free (someone) from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty
- ♦ **vigilance** – the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties

The Menace of Terrorism

Terrorism is a problem which many countries have been continuously facing for decades, but now it has emerged as a 'global' problem against which an internationally united battle has to be fought incessantly. Violent behaviour in order to create an atmosphere of fear in the society or for misplaced political ends is generally termed as Terrorism. It is an organised and systematic use of violence to achieve an unrealistic end. Many a times words like terrorism, insurgency, Civil War, Revolution, Guerrilla War, intimidation and extremism are often used interchangeably. Though they differ in kind and meaning, one thing is fundamental to all—the word 'Violence'. For instance, great practitioners of fear and violence like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao etc., cannot be called Terrorists.

Moreover, violence used for personal gains like dacoity or robbery cannot be termed as Terrorism. Terrorism, as understood in the simplest sense always aims at a target group for killings and destruction of property through acts of violence. It is also illegal and unlawful in nature, as such acts are done with a purpose of creating fear and panic in the minds and psyche of people at large, to make the masses feel impotent and helpless, to discourage rational thinking and to lead to a reactionary tendency amongst the people.

Terrorists resort to various ways to accomplish these aims like—planting crude home-made bombs, hand-grenades or other explosives in shopping centres or a crowded place like a railway station or a bus stand or even in a bus, train or aeroplane; kidnapping, assassination or hijacking. Different terrorist activities all over the world may have different aims, but a few goals, common to all, may be underlined. It may be because they want a regime to react to their demands or they intend to gain mass support by creating fear and panic, or to eliminate their opponents and enemies, or to further their cause.

Other reasons for this ongoing and increasing terrorism are : many young people often join a terrorist organisation because they are looking for an identity for themselves. Having a traumatic experience as a youth in particular is a motivating factor in deciding to become a terrorist. Georgetown professor Bruce Hoffman has said that terrorist recruiting based on perceived injustices, especially by saying that West is hostile toward Islam, is a point terrorist recruiters drive home. Also in many ways internet serves as a virtual training camp. Internet can instruct how to build bombs, join an organisation, fund terrorism and share information.

Terrorism in India, is essentially a political creation. The cross-border militancy in Kashmir, the Naxalite violence in Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh—all have their narrow and distorted political goals. The problem of identity led to terrorism in Nagaland and Mizoram, vengeance became the cause of terrorism in Manipur and Tripura while 'class enmity' erupted Naxalite violence in different parts of Bengal, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The blowing up of the Air India Boeing 'Kanishka' killed nearly 300 innocent people, the violence against common Kashmiri populace, the Naxalite insurgency are all ugly faces of the demon of terrorism. May 2014 Chennai train bombing, February 2013 Hyderabad blast, June 2013 Srinagar attack were all handiworks of terrorists. 26/11 or 2008 Mumbai

attack which continued for four days targeted more than 10 locations across Mumbai and killed 164 people, Samjhauta Express bombing in 2007, the endless list indicates the severe threat to humanity. These attacks are intended to capture National and International attention. This inhuman massacre of innocent human beings has made Tony Blair say : “This mass terrorism is the new evil in our world today.”

The terrorist attack on World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in USA on 11st September, 2001, the siege of innocent children as hostages in Russia etc indicate the growing magnitude of this problem. However, to combat terrorism, US conducted a firefight attack in Pakistan in 2011 and killed Osama Bin Laden, the most hunted man in the world and the mastermind of the devastating 9/11 attack on America.

All the members of States of United Nations have agreed to a common strategic and operational framework to fight terrorism. The strategy forms a basis for a concrete plan of action to strengthen the role of the United Nations in combating terrorism and to ensure the respect of human rights while countering terrorism. A number of intelligence, military and police organisations within the Indian Government also contribute to counter terrorism efforts. India has several intelligence agencies that monitor terrorist activities. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is the external intelligence agency and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), a division of the Home Affairs Ministry, collects information inside India.

David Hackworth has rightly said : “Fighting terrorism is not unlike fighting a deadly cancer. It can’t be treated just where it’s visible every diseased cell in the body must be destroyed.” Hardly a week goes by without an act of terrorism taking place somewhere in the world, indiscriminately affecting innocent people, who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The world has to unite in order to face this growing menace of terrorism. The world cannot survive with prosperity under the continuous threat of fear, violence and bloodshed. Thus, strict measures and serious efforts should be made to end violence and shedding of the innocent blood.

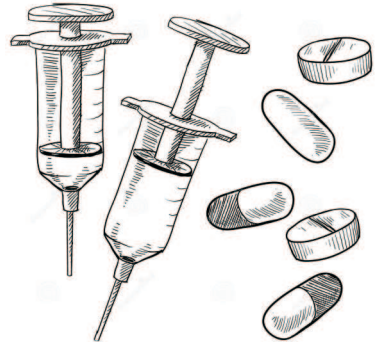
VOCAB HELP

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|------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| ♦ insurgency | – a person fighting against a government or invading force, a rebel or revolutionary | ♦ naxalite | – a member of an extreme Maoist group in India that originated in 1967 in West Bengal and which employs tactics of terrorism and direct action |
| ♦ intimidation | – pressurise someone, especially in order to make them do what one wants, terrorization | ♦ vengeance | – the desire for revenge, retaliation, |
| ♦ extremism | – holding of extreme political or religious views | ♦ massacre | – an indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of many people, mass destruction |
| ♦ dacoity | – gang robbery; violent robbery by dacoits | ♦ siege | – the act or process of surrounding and attacking a fortified place in such a way as to isolate it from help and supplies, for the purpose of lessening the resistance of the defenders and thereby making capture possible. |
| ♦ perverted | – lead away from what is considered acceptable, distort or corrupt the original course | | |
| ♦ impotent | – powerless, weak, unable to take effective action | | |
| ♦ hand-grenades | – a small bomb thrown by hand or launched mechanically | | |

✧ Drug Abuse

Among many other problems, modern society today, is faced with the problem of 'Drug Abuse'. Drug abuse is a misuse of, or over indulgence in drugs resulting in physical or psychological harm to the individual involved in it.

The drugs may vary from prescribed medications, to narcotic drugs such as cocaine, hashish, heroin etc. The use of these substances produces a craving or a physical addiction, which leads to regular intake of these drugs and is called 'Drug Addiction'. In severe cases the drug addict can neither lead a normal life nor survive without these drugs.



Kate Winslet once said : "I'm afraid that I'm not a very good example. I smoke." Drug addiction or drug abuse is a widespread and critical problem not only for the Western countries

today, but has emerged as one of the major point concerns for Indian society as well. India, today, has not only become a key transit of drugs, but also a large consumption centre.

According to official figures, India has about 7.5 crore drug addicts and the number is going up significantly, especially in semi-urban and backward areas. The monthly drug sales in India varies between ₹ 100 crore to ₹ 125 crore. The use of illicit and prohibited drugs today is not just confined to street urchins and lower classes, but is fast spreading to middle and upper class youths of the society.

Drugs are of various kinds such as alcohol, sedatives, stimulants, narcotics, hallucinogens and nicotine. Sedatives relax the nervous system which if given under medical supervision is used for curative purposes, but can be misused by addicts. On the contrary, stimulants activate the nervous system. Caffeine and cocaine, popularly called 'pep-pills' fall under this category.

Narcotic drugs are psychotropic products which produce feelings of pleasure, strength, superiority, reduce hunger and lessen inhibitions. Opium, Marijuana, heroin (smack), morphine, pethidine, cocaine and cannabis such as charas, ganja and bhang are all narcotics. They are either smoked, sniffed or injected. Hallucinogens, as the name suggests, produce distortion of perception, example LSDs. Cigarettes, bidis, cigars, snuffs, tobacco etc and Nicotine, the frequent use of which can cause heart attack, lung cancer or bronchitis.

The most vulnerable part of the society are the adolescents—the students in high schools and colleges. In order to merely try new and adventurous things or under peer pressure or many a times imitating the actions of their favourite celebrities—children get caught into the vicious cycle of drug intake unknowingly and innocently. Gradually, they become habitual, and what had initially started off as fun and adventure becomes their need and compulsion. The addiction becomes chronic because the adventurer starts hiding it due to parental fear and social stigma. Thus, the addict struggles all alone even if he/she wants to break free, thus fails in all his/her attempts.

To curb this menace, India has braced itself to face drug trafficking through innovative changes in laws and their enforcement. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, with stringent provisions to curb this menace, envisages a minimum term of 10 years' imprisonment extendable to 20 years and a fine of ₹ 1 lakh extendable to ₹ 2 lakh for the offenders.

Comprehensive strategy involving specific programmes to bring about an overall reduction in the use of drugs has been evolved by various government agencies and NGOs, and is further supplemented by measures like education, counselling, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

Media too has been doing its bit to tackle this problem. To spread mass awareness, there are repeated advertisements on TV showing the root cause of cancer being smoking or usage of tobacco.

Aamir Khan's television show 'Satyamev Jayate' also dealt with the concept of alcoholism amongst Indians, especially the youth. It came out with a brilliant example of reputed lyricist Javed Akhtar, who confessed his obsession for alcohol he had for almost 27 years. He confessed that it spoiled his life and was happy to have come out of it. Hollywood celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, Charlie Sheen, Angelina Jolie too publically came out with their addiction habit and how with strong will they have changed themselves. Unfortunately, there were others like famous singer Michael Jackson who died because of acute drug intoxication.

Today, there are many rehabilitation centres which help people cure their addiction through means like medication, counselling, yoga etc.

On the personal front, to control the drug abuse, children should be educated about drugs and their harmful effects from an early age. Here, role of families, parents and teachers become very crucial. Healthy dialogue should be encouraged between adolescents and their parents or teachers.

Merely observing 26th June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is not enough. All measures or compulsions even punishments should be laid to check the evil of drug addiction from spreading and paralysing the society.

VOCAB HELP

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|------------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| ♦ legitimate | - lawful, rightful, genuine | ♦ inhibitions | - a feeling of shyness that stops you doing or saying what you really want |
| ♦ illicit | - banned, unlawful | ♦ chronic | - persisting for a long time or constantly recurring |
| ♦ sedative | - tending to calm or soothe | ♦ stringent | - strict, precise, tough |
| ♦ stimulants | - something that temporarily quickens some vital process or the functional activity of some organ or part | ♦ comprehensive | - of large content or scope; wide-ranging |
| ♦ hallucinogens | - a substance that produces illusion or false impression | ♦ intoxication | - a high excitement of mind which rises to frenzy or madness |

Child Exploitation

Today's child is the citizen of tomorrow. The condition of a child foretells the future of any society or nation. Children are the real mirrors of the society—the quality of life of a child reflects how progressive a society is. With the dawn of the 21st century, child exploitation is one of the biggest problems of the planet, which is increasing constantly. Child Exploitation primarily includes Child Abuse and child labour.

WHO defines child abuse as : “Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

Millions of children in the world have been forced into child labour owing either to non-schooling or due to dropping out from the school at an early age. So, child labour may be defined as one who has not yet attained the age of 14 years and whose physical, mental and social development has suffered due to his pre-mature employment. Both child labour and abuse are the most heinous and inhuman crimes.

Children make up 36% of our country's total population. We might boast of being the largest democracy on account of numbers, but we definitely don't seem to be the greatest one. Due to various circumstances, young children are exploited and are deprived of the pleasures of childhood. At the age when children should be going to schools or playing at playgrounds, they are burdened with the hardships of life and denied their childhood.

According to the National Child Labour Project 2001 Census, there are 12.6 million working children in India. It is not only in few selected states, but across the length and breadth of the country. A large number of children are employed in various hazardous and non-hazardous activities in the agriculture sector, glass factories, carpet industry, brass industries, match-box factories, on streets as beggars and in hotels.

According to a recent ILO report, about 80% child labourers in India are employed in the agriculture sector. The children are generally sold to the rich moneylenders to whom borrowed money cannot be returned. More than 60,000 children work in extremely inhospitable conditions in the glass and bangle industry under conditions of excessive heat. Almost 4,20,000 children are employed in the carpet industry of India, and more than 70,000 work in match-box factories.

As regard with child abuse, in 2010, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights received 75 cases of child abuse in India up till 31st October, including cases of corporal punishment. Especially, those in the age group of 5-12 years reported higher levels of abuse. Ranging from incest, rapes, sexual abuse, sodomy, inappropriate touch to sexual assaults, India has an extreme category of child sexual abuse than other kind of abuses. The worst part is that a stunning majority of these cases go unreported. Also, reasons like shame, plain depravity and family honour contribute towards shunning and covering the cases of child abuse. According to a government commissioned survey, more than 53% of children in India are subjected to sexual abuse, but most of them don't report the assaults to anyone.

Various surveys also bring into light that harmful traditional practices like child marriage, caste system, discrimination against the girl child, child labour and devadasi tradition impact negatively on children and increase their vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Children on street, children at work and children in institutional care reported the highest incidence of sexual assault.

Exploitation traumatises a child in various ways. From not providing required environment for a healthy growth, inflicting physical torture, mental trauma to sexually maltreating a child in any possible way, child abuse stunts the physical and mental growth of the child. While choking, burning, hitting and striking comprise physical abuse, any kind of sexual association in any form between a child and an adult results into sexual abuse. Emotionally, depriving a child, hurting his self-esteem or inflicting any other kind of mental trauma is a physiological abuse against the child. Child abuse may also include not providing required food, shelter, clothing, education and an environment to the child that is necessary for an overall development of his personality.

Young children are being made the prey as they can be paid less or befooled easily. Poverty, illiteracy and insufficient resources in family, force the parents to send their children to work. Also cultural norms, unsuccessful marriage and drug addiction of parents comprise as the main cause of child abuse. Sometimes a child might also be inflicted to exploitation without it being in the notice of the parents, e.g. at school, at the hands of some relatives, the immediate neighbourhood or lured by broker. It can be both intentional or unintentional.

Presently, though India has the highest number of sexually abused children in the world, there is no special law in India dealing with child abuse and child sexual abuse. However, as recent as in 2011, Union Minister of women and child development has introduced the Sexual Offences Bill in Rajya Sabha, to fight against this heinous crime. It aims to provide for stringent punishment of up to 10 year's jail term, which may even be extended to life imprisonment, if warranted.

Various articles of the Constitution prohibit the employment of children in factories. Under Article 24, it has been stated that no child below the age of 14 shall be employed in any factory or mine or any other hazardous occupation or work. Similarly, Article 31 provides that the state shall ensure that adolescent children are not forced to accept an employment detrimental to their age and physical ability owing to economic compulsions.

Children should be provided opportunities to develop in a healthy manner and in a free and respectful environment in which they are protected against exploitation of their childhood and adolescence. The Government of India formulated the National Child Labour Policy in 1987 to tackle this problem.

It aims at rehabilitation of child labour, implementation of the National Child Labour Projects, grants-in-aid to the voluntary agencies and promoting international programmes for the elimination of child labour. For the rehabilitation of working children, special schools and rehabilitation centres have been established where there is a provision of informal education, vocational training and nutrition for the children.

Through expansion of National Child Labour Projects to various districts, it is focussing towards linking the child labour elimination efforts with the Scheme of ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’. It ensures that children in the age group of 5–8 years get directly admitted to regular schools and that the older working children are mainstreamed to the formal education system through special schools functioning under the NCLP Scheme.

The problem of child exploitation is an intense socio-economic issue in India that requires long-term multi-pronged strategies to be carried out on a continuous basis. A strong enforcement of the legal acts needs to be done to ensure strict action against those who indulge in exploitation. The government, media and NGOs have to unite to play their respective roles in this demanding task—only then the evil of child exploitation can be effectively curbed.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **foretells** – predict, forecast
- ♦ **heinous** – monstrous, terrible, wicked, wrongful act
- ♦ **depravity** – moral corruption; wickedness
- ♦ **shunning** – avoid, ignore, or reject
- ♦ **traumatises** – subject to lasting shock as a result of a disturbing experience or physical injury
- ♦ **inflicting** – cause something unpleasant to be suffered by someone, imposing
- ♦ **stringent** – convincing or forcible, strict
- ♦ **detrimental** – tending to cause harm; unfavourable



The Joint Family System

The joint family system is the traditional family system. This family system has been prevalent in India since ancient times. Under this system, the entire family—grandparents (paternal) and their male children with their families stay under a single roof. Each member of the family shares the household chores, thus the work is divided and the burden of the work is lessened.

The joint family system not only lessens the burden of housework, it is also a safety net when financial difficulties, accidents or calamities arise. The family, as a single unit shares the load together till the storm of difficulties gets over. During times of difficulties, the family provides strong emotional support as it is always there to give patient hearing to the problems of all members. It does not matter whether these problems are significant or not—the important part is that all problems are heard out and advice, whenever necessary, is dispensed with a warm heart.

“A happy family is, but an earlier heaven” : quoted George Bernard Shaw. But it seems, it is losing its base in today’s time. People today no longer prefer to live in the joint family system. Smaller family units provide the freedom to live life as one pleases and the privacy is achieved—both of which cannot be possible under the joint family system. In today’s world, people want to live life on their own terms. Women, especially, have realised that life is not all about keeping everyone happy. They have started caring about their own comfort too.

Women today are not merely housewives, they go out in the world to earn a living. They do not spend much time inside the house and thus the household chores are neglected. But in a single family unit, it is easier to tailor one’s chores to suit the needs and adjust the chores around the free time. In single family units, men also chip

in to help in daily chores. Many married men have come to realise that in a single family unit, with both man and woman working, it is necessary to lend a helping hand to their wives.

However, with changing times, there is an emergence of extended family system. People have come to realise that the grandparents can be of great help in single family units. Selfish though this motive may seem, grandparents can be of help when both parents are away at work—taking care of children, bringing them back from school, seeing to their homework, being around when the maid comes in as well as the valuable advice which they give proves to be of immense help, as they have greater experience in life. Grandparents are the ones who teach kids the right conduct and good things about life and steer the life of children in proper direction. According to a popular Burmese proverb :

“In time of test, family is the best”.

An old fable too proved this proverb wherein an old-ailing farmer, on his death-bed, preaches his sons the importance of unity and living together. He uses wooden stick to show how one stick can be easily broken as compared to the bundle which was impossible to break. Lastly, with most families going the nuclear way, grandparents, in-laws, do stay along with the family as a single unit. The joint family system binds the members of the family in love and affection and teaches them to be tolerant towards other people’s mistakes, by developing the attitude of sharing with and caring for others.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **chores** – everyday jobs or duties
- ♦ **calamities** – disaster, tragedy, misfortune
- ♦ **dispensed** – to give, to provide
- ♦ **chip in** – contribute, put in efforts
- ♦ **fable** – story, tale
- ♦ **proverb** – a short, well-known saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice

Generation Gap

Generation Gap is a term, which is given to the gap between two generations; the younger generation and their elders, especially between children and their parents. Everything is affected with the change of time—the age, the culture, mannerism, morality etc. It is a fact that this difference affects everyone.

Generation gap is an everlasting social phenomenon. Every generation lives at a certain time under certain condition. So, different generations have their own system of values and views. And every side wants to uphold the principles they believe in. We can find a lot of examples in literature such as ‘Fathers and Sons’ novel by Ivan Turgenev and ‘Woe from Wit’ by Alexander Griboyedov or taking other set of examples of popular movies like ‘Baghban’, ‘Ek Rishta’ etc. This problem has remained unresolved throughout ages.

The gap between the old people and the young is called generation gap. It is the difference in attitude or lack of understanding between younger and older generation. This generation gap has always been there, but these days it has reached

an explosive stage. The values and patterns of life have changed to a great extent. Today, everybody likes to live and behave in his own way. This attitude has enlarged the generation gap, which is becoming wider day by day.

It is now disrupting the family life completely. The elders look after the children and make all sorts of sacrifices to bring them up. Parents want children to follow their instructions as they believe it is for the benefit of children and would do them good. On the other hand, children face immense pressure of exams and cut-throat competition, and think that parents know nothing about the demands of this fast paced world. In the end, despite love and affection for each other, both are drained of energy and are unable to comprehend the other. Consequently, there is lack of communication between the two, that with time, develops into a larger rift. George Orwell, a famous novelist quotes :

“Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it and wiser than the one that comes after it.”

Elaboration to this quote is that one generation believes the following generation is missing essential values and belief, and is becoming less productive over time. Psychologists believe that most young people experience conflict during their adolescence. They are neither children anymore nor yet adults, but individuals, who are desperately searching for self-identity. As they grow up, they adopt values that differ from those held by their parents and develop an unfavourable attitude towards the adult world.

In earlier times, two or three generations lived in the same lifestyle and environment as the development was very slow. But today, nearest past is very much outdated and the world is more advanced each day. Parents do not even know many of the modern technologies and equipment children use. Conflicts actually arise because young people feel that they have a right to be independent. They look at parents as ‘enemies’ who do not let them live the way they want like by staying out late, wearing fashionable clothes or choosing their own friends. What makes things even worse is that teenagers suffer a sense of incapability and rage as they realise that financially they still depend on their parents.

Unlike West, in India, this problem is yet in the initial stages, but the gap has appeared and it is going to grow bigger day by day. “If you want happiness for a lifetime help the next generation”, says a Chinese proverb. So, it is not only the responsibility of the younger generation, but also of the elders to fill this gap with their love, affection and trust. The problem, in fact, has grown and intensified due to rise in complexities of modern life.

These complexities have arisen in the wake of modernism as faster industrialisation with increasing population has led to greater competition. The problem arises when parents begin to take things too seriously and forget that as children they had themselves loved adventure and freedom. On the other hand, children too are in the blind race of enjoying life and following their friends. Whether, it is health, political, social or cultural issues, it seems the older generation always forgets they were disobedient and rebellious too, in their youth. History is a proof which shows that time and again, modern thought process of the youth has brought a revolutionary change in society. This change has primarily helped the growth of human race altogether. In India’s context, they include abolition of Sati System, equality of sexes, rising above the shackles of caste system, among many others.

Evidently, grandparents can play a constructive role in order to bridge the gap of thought, attitude and approaches to life. Generation gap would not be that serious a problem if families learn to sit over dinner and amicably settle things by ironing out differences and sharing experiences. When this communication barrier is transcended and the ice broken, the problem does not remain that serious anymore. Talking it out calmly and coolly, with the idea of sorting things out, changing for each other and changing for better can be the most helpful instrument in bridging the generation gap. Family outings, vacations, tours, picnic-outings could be effective ways to initiate intimacy between parents and children. Watching movies and discussing them, putting forth different viewpoints can be a beginning to inculcate the habit of a healthy dialogue between members of the family. Such small things and steps can do wonders in initiating a healthy family atmosphere and reducing friction between two generations that are both right from their perspectives. Their only folly is that they are viewing the same thing from opposite directions. Age, time and experience or the lack of it, forces them to do so.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **unresolved** – unsettled, unanswered, in doubt
- ♦ **disrupting** – disturbing, distracting, unsettling
- ♦ **drained** – exhausted, empty, run-off
- ♦ **comprehend** – understand, know each- other
- ♦ **rift** – gap, split, break
- ♦ **rage** – anger, aggression
- ♦ **complexities** – complications, difficulties
- ♦ **rebellious** – resisting authority, engaged in opposition
- ♦ **transcended** – surpass, go beyond the range or limits
- ♦ **ice broken** – to initiate conversation, to get something started
- ♦ **intimacy** – understanding, closeness

Is Caste Based Reservation Justified?

Dr BR Ambedkar, Mayawati, Abhijeet Sawant, PT Usha, we all know these notable people of society. They all are known for their distinguished effort and hard work. But do their caste or social backwardness has to do anything with their work as they all belong to the weaker sections of society? Are they at their stature because their caste had a reservation? Indeed the answer to all these questions is ‘no’.

Reservation in India is the process of setting aside a certain percentage of seats (vacancies) in government institutions for the members of backward and under-represented communities. Reservation is a form of quota-based affirmative action. Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policies under the Constitution. The concept was enshrined in the Constitution to allow the so-called deprived classes to come at par with the so-called privileged ones.

Initially, the reservation policy was only for 10 years after the independence to uplift the socially and under-privileged to stabilise them economically. Yet, even after 68 years of independence the Government has failed to truly uplift the backward sections properly.

The reservation system finds its origin in the age-old caste system of India. The caste system at its birth was meant to divide people on the basis of their occupation like teaching and preaching (Brahmins), kingship and war (Kshatriya), and lastly business (Vaish) etc, but soon it became an instrument to divide the society on caste-basis, creating various walls between different sections of the society. After independence, the primary objective of the reservation was to uplift the untouchable who were the most marginalised.

But today we stand divided widely into Hindu, Muslim, SC, ST, OBC with newer reservations coming up from different sections of society like Christians, Jats, Pandits, Tribals etc. Unfortunately, the policy has failed to achieve the desired aim of bringing the non-privileged classes into the mainstream. It has instead marginalised them all the more and has deepened the rift created by the caste system even more. Moreover, today it is not taken as a right but it is considered more of a privilege by people, provoking unending debates.

The 93rd Amendment and the recent declaration of the government for reservation in institutions of higher education has stirred the anger of the youth in general all over the country. The UGC cell helps universities implement the reservation policy in student admission and staff recruitment process for teaching and non-teaching jobs. Protests from various sections of society had come stating that development of one section of the society should not be at the cost of the other section.

They have argued caste category cannot decide whether he/she is eligible for admission or not, what matters is merit. Further some have argued that in some cases children belonging to the backward classes do not even possess the necessary merit, thereby snatching away one seat, just because they come from a particular religion or caste for which our government provides reservation.

Recent 'Women's Reservation Bill' passed by Rajya Sabha in 2010 got majority support but it has not been voted on the bill as yet. Its opposers say gender cannot be held as a basis for reservation alone. True, as Pratibha Patil, Meera Kumar, Sonia Gandhi and other women do not hold their position merely because of their gender reservation.

If one takes a look at the issue objectively, one will realise that the intention behind reservation is not faulty at all but it is the implementation and application that has proved ineffective. The benefit of reservation has failed to trickle down to the lowest section of the society. Also, it has killed the spirit of brotherhood and healthy competition.

India can take a lesson from the United States in this regard. For instance, US has long abandoned the quota system for affirmative action. They have put in place a point system under which candidates from Blacks, backward regions, immigrants etc., are given a few extra points in admission and appointment procedures. Caste of a person cannot be the sole criteria for ascertaining whether a particular caste is backward or not. Determinants such as poverty, occupation, place of habitation could be the relevant factors to be taken into consideration. All sections of the society that need development and financial aids should be clearly identified. Then to uplift them with free-education or incentives and financial assistance should be provided. And if a class reaches the state of progress where reservation is not necessary then government should delete that caste from the list of backward classes.

With time, people have started misusing this policy. There are many examples of people making false documents just to get a seat in a college or a job. Politicians are playing a major role in fueling reservation policy. The reason behind this is that SC and ST make upto 33% of the population of our country. Politicians fear losing out on their vote bank if they make changes against SC and ST.

Let us not do such that these policies hinder the growth of our economy. Need of the hour is to remove this evil. Making education mandatory and free for all till the age of 15 is one good resolution that has been adopted. Other could be proposing reservation based on economic status and providing opportunities to students to earn while they study. Also from time to time such laws must be evaluated by experts and their impact on the development of under-privileged, and over-all society must be assessed. Let us believe in what Mahavira has said :

“If you want to cultivate a habit, do it without any reservation till it is firmly established... .”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **affirmative** – positive, confirmatory
- ♦ **beneficiaries** – receiver, a person who derives advantage from something
- ♦ **enshrined** – place, preserve
- ♦ **deprived** – disadvantaged, poor
- ♦ **marginalised** – treat as insignificant
- ♦ **privilege** – freedom, license, benefit, advantage
- ♦ **trickle** – gradually benefit the poorest
- ♦ **hinder** – delay, hamper, obstruct
- ♦ **resolution** – decision, formal expression

Capital Punishment

Right or Wrong?

Capital punishment or death penalty as means of giving justice has become the most controversial issue, which pertains to the laws that govern our society. Capital punishment is a legal process whereby a person is put to death by the state as a punishment for a crime. With the rise in demand for human rights, taking away a criminal’s life has become the most controversial, talked about thing not only at the national level, but also at the global platform. Interestingly, the use of this execution extends to the beginning of recorded history. Most historical records of various civilisation and primitive tribal practices indicate that the death penalty was a part of their justice system.

The prison system was evolved keeping in mind that people, who have done wrong in their life and have started proving harmful to the society should be kept in confinement for some time and be given a chance to change and reform themselves. The idea works well in cases of theft, robbery and other minor offences. Complications and problems arise, when the offence involves brutal and inhuman acts like murders, rape, mass-killing etc. So, the controversial part is the gravity of crime, which is the deciding factor for execution.

The 20th century was a violent period wherein tens of millions were killed in wars between nations or states. Also, modern military organisations employed capital punishment as a means of maintaining military discipline. Although, death was

prescribed for crimes in many sacred religious documents and historically was practiced widely with the support of religious hierarchies, today there is no agreement among religious faiths on the morality of capital punishment.

Now capital punishment stands in great controversy over the right of society at large to deny a person's right to life. Some people are of the view that no one has the right to take away anyone's life for any reason. Man cannot play God's role nor should ever try to. When one cannot give life, one has no right to take away anybody's life. On the other side, people also take into consideration victim's right to life. The criminal too has no right to take away anyone's life for any reason at all. So, if he could go to the extent of taking away someone's life, he too has no right to live in a civilised society. Various arguments on both sides can be cited to support viewpoints that are poles apart.

Those who favour death penalty states that imprisonment is simply not a sufficient safeguard against the future actions of criminals because it offers the possibility of escape. Also, the punishment for the culprits that fits the crime would soothe the victim's family and society would be relieved of such a criminal. More timely enforcement of capital punishment would help to reduce the crime rate by instilling a sense of respect and fear for law. In fact, some people consider execution to be more humane than life imprisonment because it is quick and instantaneous. Life imprisonment makes the prisoner suffer by rotting in jail for the rest of his life, which is more torturous. Another argument against the death penalty is that it costs more to imprison someone for life than to execute him/her.

The strongest argument against using capital punishment is that it is very cruel and completely inhuman. The methods by which executions are carried out involve physical torture. Many a times electrocution needs more than one application of electric current to kill the condemned. No one, not even the state, has the authority to play God. Contrary to the popular belief that the death penalty reduces the crime rate, various surveys have shown that the threat of the death penalty does not in any way reduce the occurrence of violent crimes. Capital punishment is discriminatory because at times some innocent people are executed due to a faulty judgement. Another argument against the death penalty is that where does the difference lie between the criminals and the society? The society in turn commits the same offence of killing, when it punishes the criminal for taking away life.

Currently, 58 nations actively practice capital punishment. Although, many nations have abolished capital punishment, yet over 60% of world's population live in countries where execution takes place. Followers of Judaism and Christianity, for instance, have claimed to find justification for the death penalty in the biblical passage, "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Officially, 52 people have been executed so far in Independent India, though some democratic rights activists think it is more. This data clearly shows that as far as India is concerned, the law is not outrightly strict and quick on giving capital punishment. Infact, after the award of death sentence by a Session Court, the condemned convict has the option of appealing to the Supreme Court.

If the Supreme Court turns down the appeal, then the condemned person can submit a 'mercy petition' to the President of India and the Governor of the State. The basic intention behind any punishment in general is that a criminal deserves punishment so

as to set an example for other would be criminals and to maintain the decorum of civilised human society. Henry Ford aptly puts that “Capital punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty”. So, instead of debating over this, society should rather find ways of lowering crime rate to maintain peace.

“I have said repeatedly that I think that the death penalty should be applied in very narrow circumstances for the most egregious of crimes”, quoted US President Barack Obama. In context to Indian Mythology also, it has been seen that time and again Gods have incarnated as humans to give punishments to demons like Deviki’s brother King Kansa, King Ravana or Holika. Gods gave them enough time and chance before executing them with punishment, but their crime/action proved more heinous than their character.

For the same reason on 3rd May, 2010, Ajmal Kasab was sentenced to death for attacking Mumbai and killing 164 people. He was found guilty of 80 offences, including waging war against the nation, which is punishable by death penalty. In another instance, all the accused of Delhi gang rape of Nirbhaya were given death sentence for their brutality. In such cases, famous people like Narendra Modi, Anna Hazare and Bollywood celebrities, have all appreciated the decision.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ♦ penalty | - punishment | ♦ soothe | - ease, calm, pacify |
| ♦ pertains | - be appropriate, related, or applicable to | ♦ instilling | - establishing, to put in |
| ♦ confinement | - imprisonment, detention | ♦ electrocution | - the electric shock |
| ♦ reform | - improvement, development, restructuring | ♦ discriminatory | - unfair, biased |
| ♦ execution | - the death sentence | ♦ abolished | - stop, put an end to, eliminate |
| ♦ hierarchies | - a system in which members are ranked according to status or authority. | ♦ appealing | - pleasing, pleading, requesting |
| | | ♦ decorum | - good behaviour, respectability |
| | | ♦ egregious | - shocking, extremely bad |
| | | ♦ heinous | - monstrous, shocking, wicked |

Corruption in India

There was a time when Gandhiji would say : “My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God and non-violence is a means of realising him.” Such were the principles of our political leaders at one time. Today what is more astonishing is that India has been ranked 94 on the Corruption Perception Index among 177 countries. While India is at the threshold of becoming superpower, the progress of the country is getting eaten up by the corrupt people of the country. Corruption is closely associated with bribery which means to give or to take profit for some illegal work. Corruption has progressively involved in every sphere of Indian society. Corruption is a cancer that is not restricted to any particular political party. It infects the whole society.

Largest sources of corruption in India are entitlement programmes and social spending schemes enacted by the Indian Government. Examples include Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or National Rural Health Mission. Many of the biggest scandals involve high level government officials, including Cabinet Ministers, Chief Ministers in cases like 2G Spectrum Scam, 2010 Commonwealth

Games Scam, Adarsh Housing Society Scam, Coal Mining Scam or Cash for Vote Scam. Shockingly, all these scandals drained several hundred billions of the honest tax-payers and of Indian economy. Other daily sources of corruption include India's trucking (heavy transport) industry which is forced to pay billions in bribes annually to numerous regulatory and police stops on its inter-state highways.

In government hospitals, corruption is associated with non-availability/duplication of medicines, getting admission, consultation with doctors and availing diagnostic services. There have been several cases of manipulation of officials of the Income Tax Department of India for relaxed prosecutions in exchange of bribes. Corruption is prevalent on a large-scale during election times and votes are bought with the help of money.

According to a report (in 2008), 120 of India's 523 Parliament members were accused of crimes. Politicians and criminals are the main cause of corruption in every country. Lack of ethical qualities and morality among administrators and politicians, illiteracy among people, poor economic infrastructure—all these have tightened grip over corruption. Artificial scarcity created by people, vast size of population, complex laws and procedures to eliminate corruption discourage the people for taking steps against corruption.

Tolerance of people towards corruption has indeed fueled the strength and greed of wrongdoers. This was aptly quoted by Arshad Warsi, "Dealing with corruption and staying calm is a talent most of us in India have mastered and learned to live with".

The causes of corruption in India include excessive regulations, complicated taxes and licensing systems, numerous government departments each with opaque bureaucracy and discretionary powers, monopoly by government controlled institutions on certain goods and services delivery and the lack of transparent laws and processes. These are significant variations in level of corruption. Even media has widely published allegations of corrupt Indian citizens stashing trillions of dollars in Swiss Banks.

Corruption is not only restricted to India, but is prevalent or to be precise is growing in many other countries today. The scams and scandals have caused Eurozone crises, the melting down of U.S. Economy and deflating politicians in the United Kingdom. Politicians advertise hugely at the time of elections, which are usually publicly funded campaigns.

The US military budget is bloated but perhaps half of it is spent on outsourced services, not on the military. The developed nations can still sustain this misfortune as they have strong economy, developed science and technology. But India is only crumbling and deteriorating under the burden of corruption.

While speaking on corruption and other related problems Arvind Kejriwal once quoted : "Political Revolution in India has begun *Bharat jaldi badlega.*" True, India has and is taking steps to tackle this problem as they feel cheated for their valued contribution of funds and taxes. Under the leadership of Anna Hazare, who began 'fast unto-death', the mass movement of people saw an expression of their collective anger against corruption.

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act came into force from January 2014 to inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries. The Right To Information (2005) Act that requires government officials to provide information requested by citizens has reduced corruption in some areas or atleast has opened up avenues to redress grievances.

Another Whistle Blowers Protection Act, provides a mechanism to investigate misuse of power by public servants, has received the assent of the President of India. But unfortunately is pending for notification by the Central Government. Role of media cannot be ignored especially in today's times. Media can play a significant role to abolish corruption by exposing the scams and scandals, thereby awakening the citizens. Other measures are—strict laws should be made; power to make policies in public interests should be vested with independent commission, people should have a right to question the elected representatives and get answers; funding of elections should be banned and persons with criminal records should be denied to contest elections. More and more courts should be opened for speedy justice. Lokpals and Vigilance Commissions should be more powerful and of independent nature so as to provide speedy justice.

India has every ability, talent and resource to be a developed nation, just some corrections here and there are needed. In one of movie 'Nayak' also this idea was emphasised wherein one person at the top political position was corrupt, he made his whole party full of corrupt people. Whereas another person with right intention, not only eradicated corruption, but changed the whole face and fate of his state.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **prosecution** – trial, action
- ♦ **discretionary** – mandatory, unrestricted
- ♦ **monopoly** – exclusive possession or control, full domination
- ♦ **stashing** – store secretly, put away, hide
- ♦ **bloated** – excessive in size, blown up
- ♦ **crumbling** – breakdown, collapse
- ♦ **deteriorating** – worsening, weakening
- ♦ **avenues** – opportunity, possibility, way
- ♦ **grievances** – complaints, objection
- ♦ **vigilance** – the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties

Population Explosion

Next to the People's Republic of China, India is the most populous country in the world. According to 2011 Census, India with 1.21 billion people is very close to China's 1.35 billion population. India occupies 2.4% of the world's land area and supports over 17.5% of the world's population, thereby meaning one out of six people on this planet is an Indian. It is estimated that India is all set to leave China behind by 2030 in terms of population. But, it is interesting to note that India is not ignorant towards the problem of population explosion as the latest census shows that 2001-2011 is the first decade which has actually added lesser population as compared to the previous decades (with exception of 1911-1921).

Kautilya, a political philosopher considered population as a source of political, economic and military strength. But today, population explosion is considered as the burden on planet Earth. Evidently, largest contributors to population are the poorer nation or developing countries to be precise. Among Indian States and Union territories, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state and Lakshadweep is the least populated.

The major cause of this population explosion is the widening gap between the birth rate and the death rate. Earlier, there was a balance between the birth and death rate due to limited medical facilities, people dying in war and others.

The whole ethos in poorer nations is that the more children one has, the more people will be able to provide for the family and look after the parents in their old age. This notion has primarily arisen due to illiteracy.

Illiteracy is the problem which our country and other poorer nations are facing today. Low literacy rate leads to traditional superstitious and ignorant population. This is evident from the fact that Kerala which has a very high literacy rate forms only 2.76% of Indian population as compared to Uttar Pradesh having maximum number of illiterate population constituting 16.49% of the population.

Poor people are illiterate and see a child as a “gift of God” which directly leads to population explosion. They fail to understand or estimate the adverse effects of such explosion which are as follows: Increasing population has led to declining Man: Land ratio. There is also food scarcity problem as it is very hard to keep pace with the demands of the fast growing population. Common properties such as forest and water are over-exploited. This results in deforestation and desertification with permanent damage to the renewable resources.

Along with population explosion, the total number of illiterate people are also increasing every year which is an indication of the wastage of human resource. Facilities such as housing, transportation, health care and education become inadequate giving rise to problems like unsanitised localities, traffic congestion, crowded hospitals etc.

To tackle this problem, lots of countries have taken corrective measures. The most significant population control system is China’s ‘one child policy’ wherein having more than one child is discouraged by imposing taxes. In Iran, mandatory contraceptive training courses are required for both males and females before a marriage license can be obtained. In the United States, the Public Health Service Act provides access to contraceptive services, supplies and information to those in need. Priority for services is given to people with low incomes.

India too has applied some of these measures to curb this problem. “Hum do, hamare do” slogan meaning one family, two children and “Chhota Parivar, Sukhi Parivar” meaning small family, happy family has been hugely promoted by the government to reinforce the message of family planning.

To spread awareness, hoardings with such slogans have been put up in hospitals and in public places. Government has also introduced the concept of contraceptive vending machines at various places along with repeated advertisements by the means of media. Even NGO’s are being involved to spread awareness and education among the masses. Former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam once said :

“Almost half of the population of the world lives in rural regions and mostly in a state of poverty. Such inequality in human development have been one of the primary reasons for unrest and in some parts of the world, even violence.”

Population explosion is a massive problem and there are no easy solutions. Action plans and strategies should be developed to increase public understanding of how rapid population growth limits the chances of meeting basic needs. Effective provisions in taxation should be made that favour families with limited number of children. The spirit of open communication and empowerment of women will be the key to a successful solution to many problems. Sex-education needs to be made a mandatory subject in schools, so that students at the early age of their youth know the advantages of contraceptives and understand the importance of family planning. The road may seem long for India but it is not an impossible destination to arrive at.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **philosopher** – theorist, thinker
- ♦ **ethos** – the characteristic spirit of a culture, or community as seen in its attitudes
- ♦ **desertification** – the process by which fertile land becomes desert, the rapid depletion of plant life
- ♦ **congestion** – jamming, overcrowding
- ♦ **curb** – control, limit, reduce



Poverty in India

Poverty is one of the major problems in India. It is the root and cause of many socio-economic problems including population explosion, unemployment, child labour, rising graph of crimes, etc.

“Poverty is the worst form of violence”, said Mahatma Gandhi. Over the years, poverty has proved to be the biggest hurdle in the way of success of India’s development. Poverty is that condition in which a person fails to not only fulfil his basic physiological needs, but also fails to protect himself from diseases, get balanced nutrition, maintain good health etc.

In simple terms, a person in order to survive should have proper food, clothing, shelter, health care and education. Thus, poverty refers to a person failing to acquire these minimum levels of subsistence and in turn suffer from starvation, malnutrition, and diseases.

Poverty has been an inevitable problem since the time immemorial. From late 19th century through early 20th century, under British colonial rule, poverty in India intensified, peaking in 1920s. Over this period, the colonial government, de-industrialised India by reducing garments and other finished products’ manufacturing by artisans in India.

They instead imported these from Britain. These colonial policies moved unemployed artisans into farming and transformed India as a region increasingly abundant in land, unskilled labour and low productivity, capital and knowledge. Moreover famines and diseases killed millions each time.

Recently, in 2013, the Indian Government stated 21.9% of its population is below official poverty limit. In other words, India with 17.5% of world’s total population, had 20.6% share of world’s poorest in 2013. A large proportion of poor people live in rural areas. Poverty is deepest among members of scheduled castes and tribes in the country’s rural areas.

On the map of India, the poorest areas are in parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. In fact, the story of our prolonged poverty and tyranny attached has got so much fame that a foreign director (Danny Boyle) produced a whole movie on the issue. This movie is *Slumdog Millionaire* which got worldwide acclamation through Oscar Awards.

Statistics reveals that economic prosperity has indeed been very impressive in India, but it is the distribution of wealth that has been uneven and has caused the grave problem of poverty. Other major causes of poverty are illiteracy alongwith uncontrolled population growth, unemployment and under-employment, dependence on agriculture, caste system and corruption. The causes of rural poverty are manifold including inadequate and ineffective implementation of anti-poverty programmes.

The over-dependence on monsoon with non-availability of irrigational facilities often results in crop-failure and low agricultural productivity forcing farmers in the debt-traps. The children of poor families are forced to take up jobs at a tender age to fend for their large families, thus are not only deprived of their childhood but education too—adding to the illiterate bulk of the country.

Central grants for programmes like Indira Awas Yojana and others, which was aimed at providing housing to the poor, have been utter failures due to lack of proper implementation. Massive transfer of ‘Black Money’ overseas and under-utilisation of foreign aid have also contributed to the deepening of poverty in India. Nelson Mandela once quoted :

“Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings”.

Interestingly, the incidence of rural poverty has declined somewhat in the past years as a result of rural to urban migration. In order to combat the grave problem of poverty, first and foremost, there should be a strict check on population increase. Creation of employment opportunities, spread of education, elimination of black money, decentralisation of planning, helping women and youth to become self-reliant are some other ways to combat this problem. Empowering the weaker and backward section of society is also expected to contribute to the alleviation of poverty. It is not due to lack of resources or technical assistance that we are failing in achieving our goals but more so due to lack of execution of these plans and programmes.

Since the 1970s, the Indian Government made poverty reduction a priority in its part of planning. Policies focus on improving the poor standard of living by ensuring food security, promoting self-employment through greater access to assets, increasing wage employment and improving access to basic social services. The Indian Government and non-governmental organisations have initiated several newer programmes to alleviate poverty, like increased access to loans, improving agricultural techniques and price supports, and promoting education and family planning. These measures have helped eliminate famines, cut absolute poverty levels by more than half and reduced illiteracy and malnutrition.

The participation of civil society organisations in poverty reduction efforts, especially those directed to women, has increased social awareness and encouraged government to provide better services. These civil society organisations have not only contributed to women’s material well-being; they have also helped to empower them socially and politically.

The problem of poverty persists because of a number of loop holes in the system. The encouragement of non-governmental organisations and private sector individuals in tackling poverty is imperative, as the state cannot do everything alone. Poverty is more of social marginalisation of an individual or group in the society rather than inadequacy of income to fulfil the basic needs. Economic growth will not reduce poverty unless it is inclusive.

Poverty alleviation programmers should also address the issue of poverty from broader social and economic perspective. The most recent “Make in India” campaign of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is being foreseen as a sure shot method to eradicate poverty, by giving employment opportunities to the masses.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **subsistence** – the action or fact of supporting oneself, especially at a minimal level,
- ♦ **starvation** – hunger, lack of food
- ♦ **malnutrition** – lack of proper nutrition, underfeeding
- ♦ **immemorial** – very old, extending back beyond memory
- ♦ **intensified** – increased, deepen, strengthen,
- ♦ **tyranny** – cruel, harsh, severe
- ♦ **acclamation** – applause, praise
- ♦ **apartheid** – a system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race
- ♦ **combat** – fight, take action against something, to prevent
- ♦ **subsidising** – pay part of the cost of producing (something) to keep the selling price low
- ♦ **famines** – extreme and general scarcity of food in a large area, shortage of food
- ♦ **imperative** – crucial, commanding, unavoidable

Unemployment in India

Creating new jobs is a crucial task and plays an important role in the economy. The economic crises has become a social crises for most countries leading to a high unemployment rate. Unemployment is a state when people have the potential and ability to work and earn but finds no remunerative work. It can also be stated as “condition of involuntary idleness.”

The recent trillion dollar meltdown of US, the Eurozone crises have changed the economic landscape of the world. Many developed countries that were doing well, suddenly are grappling with pilling debt, a banking crises and a slowdown. So, unemployment which is bothering India, is infact a global issue effecting lots of countries together.

Unemployment records in India are kept by the Ministry of Labour and Employment of India. From 1983 till 2011, unemployment rate in India averaged 7.6% reaching all time high in December 2010 and a record low of 3.8% in December 2011. A large pool of youth in the age group of 18-25 years, despite being skilled, are facing unemployment since there are not enough opportunities for them. Interestingly, the gap between rural and urban employment rate is also not very wide. But since India has the largest population of youth in the world, the impact of declining financial market is worst in India.

Unemployment may be classified as—rural, urban, seasonal, cyclical or technological. Seasonal unemployment is found mostly in the agricultural sector and manufacturing units like sugar or ice factories. Cyclical unemployment is caused due to the ups and downs in trade. When the entrepreneurs compensate their loss by cutting down on their number of workers, it is termed as cyclical unemployment.

As the term itself suggests, technological unemployment occurs when introduction of technology displaces manpower. Factors like lack of capital, lack of investment, low production, decline in business cycle, dislocation of industries, deflation, use of technology etc., are the basic causes of unemployment. Besides these economic causes, unemployment can be caused due to various social factors too, like geographical immobility, rapid growth of population, defective system of education, lack of experience, lack of vocational training, illness or disability. Another very important social factor is the demand for certain white collar jobs and the attitude of the society to look down upon certain jobs such as teaching or salesmanship, which also causes unemployment. The desire for social acceptance through made-up social status too causes unemployment.

Unemployment, thus causes disillusionment, frustration and dissatisfaction. This gives rise to cynicism and dissipates the energy of the youth in destructive directions. Thus, they resort to crime, violence, anti-social activities or even worse they try to take a short cut to achieve the much sought after social status. This explains the number of bank robberies, online money/financial frauds etc.

Even suicidal tendencies are on a rise due to social humiliation and deprivation. These crises have taken its toll so much that various movies on this subject have also been produced. Movies like ‘Wolf of Wall Street’, ‘Badmaash Company’ and ‘Desi Boyz’ are examples of such movies depicting how market slowdown has taken people to wrong places, even to committing crimes. Though education level in recent years has increased but skill development is still a crucial issue. Moreover, poverty, limited access to skill based education, work experience are some of the major factors that lead to unemployment and under-employment. Current Prime Minister Narendra Modi too has emphasised on skill development of youth so that they would be able to fulfil the mission of nation building.

Government should set-up their efforts to support skill and retraining activities to address the gaps between demand and supply of work skills and qualifications. The country needs to take a serious look at its present scenario and think of some serious remedial measures to face the mammoth problem of unemployment.

The society has to change its outlook on white collar and blue collar jobs, along with a change in education system and needs to create more opportunities of self-employment. Stress on vocational training is needed urgently. Then only we can overcome the growing problem of unemployment in the country.

The Government of India has taken several steps to decrease the unemployment rate like launching Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which guarantees a 100 day employment to an unemployed person in a year.

The scheme of unemployment allowance was launched by Samajwadi Party wherein Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav distributed allowance of ₹ 1000 per month to the unemployed youths in the age group of 25-40.

Drought Prone Area Programme proved fruitful particularly in removing seasonal unemployment in about 13 states. Self-employment training was also given to young men along with which financial assistance from the bank was also extended. Government also helps people to get employment abroad. With the recent development, wherein Prime Minister Narendra Modi is calling foreign investors to set up industries in India, soon the problem of unemployment would be seen as a thing of the past.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **remunerative** – financially rewarding, earning a salary
- ♦ **involuntary** – unintentional, done without will
- ♦ **grappling** – engage in a close fight, struggle without weapons
- ♦ **entrepreneurs** – a person who organises and manages any enterprise, an employer
- ♦ **compensate** – balance, reduce or correct by exerting an effect
- ♦ **disillusionment** – lack of expectation, disappointment
- ♦ **cynicism** – an inclination to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest, doubt,
- ♦ **dissipates** – waste, drive away, scatter
- ♦ **depravation** – to make morally bad or evil, corrupt



Regionalism in India

A Threat to Our Unity

Regionalism means excessive attachment to a particular region or state as against the country as a whole. Regionalism is a feeling or an ideology among a section of people residing in a particular geographical space characterised by unique language, culture etc., and the feeling that they are the sons of that soil and every opportunity that exists in their land must be accorded to them first and not to the outsiders. In the post-independence era, India has been witnessing a varying growth of regionalism and struggles.

Regionalism in different forms has also been accompanied by different degrees of violence. The subsequent redrawing of Indian map by the creation of new states rather encouraged more people belonging to various ethnic communities to fight for new states on the basis of their language or ethnicity.

Three major factors contribute to the rise of regionalism. Firstly, regional inequalities have been responsible for this problem to some extent because the economic development has been differential. Some areas are more developed than the others. Therefore, it gives rise to the feeling of being left out from the mainstream. Secondly, even linguistic differences play a vital role in this regard. Language corresponds with culture, tradition and literature. In India, such age-old loyalties actually outdo national loyalties. Thirdly, the most unfortunate factor that intensifies the problem of regionalism is the political factor. Unfortunately, our country has produced only politicians and not statesmen after Independence, who have encouraged regionalism for their own vested interest of staying in power.

The first manifestation of regionalism was the demand for reorganisation of states on linguistic basis, but the most effective play of regionalism was the victory of the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) against Congress in Tamil Nadu in 1960s. A little spark gave rise to an infinite chain reaction of petty demands for separate identity.

As a result at the time of Independence, there were 11 provinces that are today divided into 29 States and 7 Union Territories. The tribals demand for Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and the recent Telangana—the list is endless. This kind of an unwanted tendency could have been checked by promoting national unity and integrity, keeping in mind the history of the country.

But the selfish ulterior motives of a few politicians have actually and successfully resulted in further disintegration of the nation with the creation of new states.

Regionalisation does not come about unless the states in a particular region want it. It may come about through a political regime, economic policy or security, but often one can identify a triggering political event which sets the process in motion. Naturally, this political event is related to the main players in the region, the policy-makers. Increasing interference by the centre in the affairs of the states has also led to regional feelings. But this regionalism has some advantages too. Some of the advantages are like : Small states give better benefits to the masses and help to create wealth as well as help in nation's development. There will be an end to exploitation of resources. Regionalism is shortcut to attain the political ambitions by emotionally exploiting the sentiments of the people. As long as the political leaders thrive for regional development without discriminating against outsiders, regionalism is not that bad for India.

Some measures to eliminate regionalism are as follows : Promoting even development of the nation. The neglected areas must be given more importance so that they also feel being a part of the national mainstream. A proper law should be passed to check the political leaders supporting regionalism just to gain political attention. Problems of people must be solved in a peaceful and constitutional manner. Politicians must not be allowed to misuse the issue of regional demands. The Central Government should not be biased with any state. Funds, packages, allocations should be equally distributed.

“We are Indians, firstly and lastly”, said Dr BR Ambedkar. The Constitution of India guarantees the right to every citizen in the country to live in any part of India and take up a job for his living. Let politics be a healthy exercise to unite and not to divide. Good schemes for the development in terms of industrialisation, modernisation, agriculture, finance, should be introduced by the government in the neglected areas. Today non-government organisations are playing a significant role in reaching out to masses closely.

They come forward to promote idea of nationalism among people. They should also spread awareness highlighting ‘unity in diversity’. If every state starts adopting the concept of son of the soil then the days are not very far, we may have to take VISA to travel to another state in India. So, we must make sure that the feeling of an Indian is more powerful than these regional or caste feeling.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **ethnicity** – traditions, state of belonging to a social group that has a common national
- ♦ **linguistic** – relating to language
- ♦ **loyalties** – faithfulness, devotion
- ♦ **outdo** – beat, surpass
- ♦ **vested** – personal reason, personal gains
- ♦ **disintegration** – breakdown, collapse, coming to pieces
- ♦ **thrive** – to grow or develop, prosper
- ♦ **allocations** – portion

Harnessing the Power of Youth

India, now aged 68 is one of the largest reservoir of youth population. ‘Youth’ refers to the age group of 16-30. This age group in India constitutes more than 40% of India’s population which is indeed a large force. Leadership of Adolf Hitler proved the importance of youth in nation building. The youth plays a significant role in today’s time. Today, the entire world is eyeing India as source of technical manpower. They are looking at our youth as a source of talents at low costs for their future super profits. Indian youth has the power to transform our country from developing nation to a developed nation.

On one side our history is full of examples of young people whose mere mention fills every Indian with pride; such as Prithviraj Chauhan, Swami Vivekananda, the great sacrifices of Chandra Shekhar Azad, Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Mangal Pandey. We owe our present to the youth of the previous generations who forsook their lives for the freedom of India. On the other side, today’s shining stars such as Mary Kom, Abhinav Bindra, Vijendra Singh are amongst some to bring India back the glory in the Olympic Games. Sachin Tendulkar, Kalpana Chawla, Subir Chowdhary, Satya Nadella, all have shown their charisma to the world.

Narendra Modi once said, “It is important how we view the youth of our nation. To simply consider them new age voter is a big mistake, they are the new age power!” The advantage with India’s big population is that it has huge number of youth population. By 2020, the working age population in India is expected to grow by more than 47 million people, the number far ahead to that of China or US. If we can harness this powerhouse of the nation in the right direction, then the country can reach untold heights. The creative potential of the younger Indians coupled with their zeal, enthusiasm, energy and versatility in the field of information technology, management and science have already proved wondrous to the world.

Sadly, our youth is losing touch with a sense of right and wrong or good or bad. This is because, as a nation, we have failed in our duty to capture their energy and mould it in the right direction. Due to increasing unemployment, we have been unable to keep them busy in constructive work. Some of them are ignorant or are aspiring for their personal goals. The result is that nothing inspires our youth except short cuts to make money. Our politicians too have failed to harness the power of youth in a productive way. Youth is the best medicine to cure the social diseases, like corruption, casteism, regionalism etc. It would be a great national wastage of human resources if these strong hands are not allocated some suitable jobs. Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, our former president once exclaimed : “youth without relevant skills and knowledge can actually derail the economy and create more trouble for the country”.

Therefore, its high time that the policy planners of the country make plans to nurture the youth and their aspirations. In times of acute modernisation and innovation quest of knowledge of each youth will prove to be an asset. Education should prepare our youth for life. Youth of India must be able to come up with new ideas of entrepreneurship which is very vital for the country’s growth. Development of India should be their utmost priority. The example of Tata Tea’s Jago Re’ advertisements showcasing a young student’s fight against corruption, made him a ‘youth icon’ of the country where he makes the fellow youth aware of the reasons of corruption. In the same way films like Rang de Basanti revolutionised the thinking of youth of our country. The power, youth can wield was recently on display during the general

elections when they played a crucial role in boosting the UPA's campaign alongside Rahul Gandhi. During the riots against Mandal Commission in India, it was thousands of college students who agitated on the streets of the cities.

Youth has underplayed itself in the field of politics. They should become aspiring entrepreneurs, scientists, innovators rather than mere workers. They can play a vital role in elimination of terrorism. Indian youth has never lagged behind when called upon to meet a challenge. Being given a little dose of incentive, encouragement and support, they can make the great responsibility of fulfilling the targets. For this, certain steps need to be taken which should be more than tools and programmes, it requires role models who inspire. In the absence of any real model, youth feel lost and confused.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **transiting** – the action of passing through, change, conversion
- ♦ **charisma** – appeal, charm
- ♦ **versatility** – able to adapt or be adapted to many different functions, flexibility
- ♦ **agitated** – excited, feeling or appearing nervous

Brain Drain

A Need for Reversal

Brain drain refers to the situation when highly qualified and trained people leave his/her own country to permanently settle down in some other country. It is also referred to as human capital flight. Brain drain is a global phenomenon that refers to flow of human resource in bulk from one country to another. With the beginning of globalisation, ideas, opinions, skills in the form of labour started being exchanged between nations. The term emerged in 1960's when the skilled workforce started emigrating from the poor or developing countries to the first world countries (or developed countries) in search of better job opportunities. This is primarily due to the fact that developing countries like India have failed utterly in providing the right kind of opportunities to its youth.



This, in turn, is leading to a great loss of national wealth. In the past few decades, a lot of Indian professionals too migrated to other countries. The human capital in terms of skills, ideas, labour and intelligence is being transferred to countries abroad from India since ages. This has become a characteristic more of the intelligentsia of the nation—the doctors, engineers, scientists, MBA's, CA's, lawyers and other professionals. Today, India constitutes majority of large organisations like NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration), California Laboratory etc. Additionally, studies show that Indians are one of the most hard working, dedicated and sincere workers. That is why various countries and companies readily take our nationals.

Countries like USA, UK, Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Japan etc., have developed greatly in their technology, science, electronics, computers, astronomy etc. Thus, these countries provide greater opportunities—quality as well as quantity-wise. The facilities, packages, scholarships etc., provided by these nations are far better than what India can provide them. While this is the case of young students/ professionals, the academically well qualified people prefer going abroad for a higher research because they don't get the best chances, resources and facilities for research in India. The cut-offs for admissions have become close to 100% in the best Indian Institutes. While the institutes are in the race of getting the best students, the ambitious youth fail to occupy seat in any of the prestigious Indian Universities. This leads them to explore the scope of higher education abroad.

Most of these students prefer staying back in the host country due to better work opportunities and heavy pay packages. A part from good earnings, those in the US and Europe are aware of the public services, social security system and retirement benefits. So, after getting global exposure and getting introduced to the high quality life and facilities, the students become reluctant to go back to the home country.

There are many Indians at top posts in global firms and companies like Sabeer Bhatia, founder of Hotmail email, Satya Nadella, now Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft, Indra Nooyi, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo. As many as 12% scientists and 38% doctors in the US are Indians, and in NASA, 36% or almost 4 out of 10 scientists are Indians. Awakening to this fact, Indian Government is putting the best foot forward to curb brain drain. In lieu with consistent economic growth, India will see robust hiring and there is an expected double-digit salary increase across all sectors—IT, manufacturing, finance, insurance and real estate.

Both, government and private firms are aiming towards a better and friendlier atmosphere to create better conditions for their employees. Discrimination and bias at work places are checked by making laws and strictly implementing them. Incentives are given to stop youngsters from going abroad in search of work.

After witnessing a huge brain drain of doctors, the government was persuaded to take actions. Now, the medical students going abroad for higher studies will have to sign a bond with the government, promising to return to India after completing their studies. Policies to nurture higher education, better public service delivery and better sharing of data with the public (RTI) needs to be promoted to encourage a reverse brain drain. Moreover the government of the day needs to ensure good employment facilities for students by encouraging domestic and international investments in manufacturing, research and development. 'Our IT professionals and IIM graduates are the best in the world. Countries welcome them with open arms. We can use the best potential of the country to accelerate our own progress in socio-economic fields. We need to give deserving jobs to students, who return to India after completing their education.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **intelligentsia** – highly educated people as a group, especially when regarded as possessing culture and political influence
- ♦ **prestigious** – influential, esteemed
- ♦ **robust** – strong and effective in all or most situations and conditions



Naxalism

Biggest Threat to India's Internal Security

India, having one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and being the most populous democratic country, has great potential to become a future superpower. However, in this increasingly globalised environment, India faces several threats to its security. Naxalism has been identified as the biggest internal security threat to India by the former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The complex and structural causes of the problem support this proposition.

The Naxal movement also presents the greatest overall concern to India in the future, as it highlights various underlying weaknesses of India's governance, political institutions and socio-economic structure. Naxalism is the biggest problem that India is facing today because it affects several areas including the economy, security and foreign affairs, its citizens and rule of law. Because of the multi-dimensional aspect of the Naxal problem, a three-pronged approach should be taken in dealing with the threat. It calls for a balance between military forces, social and economic development, as well as dialogue between all parties.

The Indian Maoist movement, popularly known as the Naxal movement, arose from the broader communist movement in India. The words Naxal/Naxalism/Naxalite owe their origin to the Naxalbari village of the Darjeeling district in the state of West Bengal, from where the peasant insurgency led by the Maoists began in 1967. The Naxal uprising was led by Charu Majumdar (chief ideologue), Kanu Sanyal (peasant leader) and Jungel Santhal (tribal leader).

Chinese media described the Naxal movement as a 'spring thunder' which quickly spread to other parts of the country and caught the imagination of the nation. The movement nevertheless subsided after the death of Charu Majumdar and the arrests of Kanu Sanyal and Jungel Santhal in 1972. However, the movement was revived in the 1980s by the Peoples' War Group (PWG) in Andhra and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar. The Naxalites are currently considered to be the most radical groups among the Indian communists.

The success of the Maoist movement is deeply rooted in the weakness of some parts of the Indian state to fulfil its ideally functions and responsibilities. Although India, in comparison to other former colonised states, was able to develop a powerful apparatus of state, state control remains in large parts precarious in terms of its conception. State administration is especially in those areas sparsely developed which are most affected by Naxalite violence.

This fact is reflected inter alia by small state budgets, low bureaucratic efficiency as well as prevailing corruption. There are even some remote areas where state domination is almost completely absent. In these regions that are characterised by weak governance, traditional types of rule were able to persist. Social elites like high castes, landlords and loan sharks dominate the rural population and benefit from their exploitation. State-aided rural development programmes in these areas have often not reached the bottom of the society and instead contributed to the persistence of landlordism.

In 2013, the government identified 26 districts in the country as highly Naxal-affected with 80% violence in the last three years being reported from there. The districts are spread over seven Maoist-hit states - Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. There was some debate in India on number of districts or the area in the country that is affected by Naxalism.

These numbers have been varying from 60 to 200 plus depending on the intensity of violence. At the same time allotment of special funds for development and security by the Planning Commission as well as the Ministry of Home Affairs had led to declaration of even less affected districts as under Naxal control by states, 83 such districts in the country had been identified, mainly in the seven most affected states as mentioned.

The complexity of the causes of the Naxalite problem as well as its implications both for internal and external security reflect a solution that is multi-dimensional and calls for a synergy between the central governments and the states. In order to comprehensively dissolve the Naxalite threat, the government has to address its root causes. Socio-economic alienation and the dissatisfaction with the widening economic and political inequality will not be solved by military force alone, which seems to be the main instrument employed by the government. Keeping in view the fact that the Naxal groups have been raising mainly land and livelihood issues, it is important that land reforms are taken up on a priority basis. States have also to focus on physical infrastructure like roads, buildings, bridges, railway lines, communications and power etc. There is no room to brook any delay on this account.

Unfortunately, the several rounds of talks held with the Naxals hitherto and the announcements of amnesties and attractive rehabilitation schemes have not worked so far. Some states like Andhra Pradesh have a good rehabilitation policy and it has achieved some success, but a lot more remains to be done. The Government, indeed, is committed to addressing the Naxal problem in right earnest. It is focusing on improving intelligence set up at the state level, providing help to the states to modernize and train their police forces and accelerate development in the affected areas. What is needed is better coordination both on security and developmental fronts to meet the challenge posed by the Naxals. We must realise that the Naxal movement is not a secessionist movement like the Northeast or Kashmir insurgencies. These are our own people asking for their own deserved rights and dues.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| ♦ threat | – hazard, menace, risk
blackmail | ♦ bureaucratic | – official, administrative,
governmental |
| ♦ democratic | – relating to or supporting
democracy, popular,
representative | ♦ efficiency | – ability, expertise, performance |
| ♦ pronged | – point, tip, spike | ♦ prevailing | – prove more powerful or
superior, gain the victory |
| ♦ precarious | – insecure, risky, hazardous,
unpredictable | ♦ persistence | – endurance, stamina |
| | | ♦ landlordism | – property owner, proprietor |

C. Economy & Infrastructure



Agriculture in India

Agriculture has existed in India, since the Vedic times. Rigvedic treatise describes various agricultural activities, such as, ploughing, irrigation and cultivation of fruits and vegetables. Even rice and cotton were cultivated in the Indus Valley.

Agriculture is the means of livelihood of almost two-thirds of the workforce in the country. It has always been India's most important economic sector. Before 1947, Indian history was replete with famine, drought and food shortages. Between 1770 and 1880, as many as 27 food scarcities and famines were recorded. At least 20 million lives were lost in India in about 20 famines that had struck since 1850. Much of this loss was because of the wrong colonial policies, which aimed to derive maximum economic gain at the cost of human suffering and misery.

After the British had created a transport infrastructure in the first half of the 19th century, they began encouraging farmers to grow crops that could be exported. The boom in export and trade accompanied by rising prices forced farmers to shift to cash crops like cotton, indigo, poppy and sugarcane. The area under food grains subsequently shrank. In other words, efforts to improve agriculture in colonial India were directly linked to the needs of the British industries.

After Independence, India made rapid strides in the agricultural sector. Dependence of India on agricultural imports in the early 1960s, convinced planners that India's growing population, as well as concerns about national independence, security and political stability, required self-sufficiency in food production. This perception led to a programme of agricultural improvement called the Green Revolution, to a public distribution system and price support system for farmers.

The growth in food grain production is a result of concentrated efforts to increase all the Green Revolution inputs needed for higher yields : better seeds, more fertilisers, improved irrigation and education of farmers. Although increased irrigation has helped to lessen year-to-year fluctuations in farm production resulting from the vagaries of the monsoons, it has not eliminated them.

Non-traditional crops of India, such as summer mung (a variety of lentil, part of the pulse family), soyabeans, peanuts and sunflowers are gradually gaining importance. Steps have been taken to ensure an increase in the supply of non-chemical fertilisers at reasonable prices.

There are 53 fertiliser quality control laboratories in the country. Though the Green Revolution increased yields greatly, it aimed at the better-endowed regions. For millions of farmers languishing in the drylands, constituting more than 70% of the cultivable lands, it continues to be a futile struggle. Despite emphasis on dryland farming during the past several decades, the scenario still remains grim.

The undulating topography and the irregular rainfall patterns have combined to aggravate the situation. Out of 141 million hectare of cultivated area, dryland area constitutes 85 million hectare *i.e.*, 60% of the total cultivated area.

The dry lands produce about 42% of the country's food which shows that the future of farming lies in these areas. A large quantity of many nutritious crops like wheat, ragi, pulses, fruits, oilseeds grown in the country come from these areas. The poor yields and the fluctuations in production are indications of the scant attention dry lands have received from policymakers and the planners.

The problem of increasing productivity on dry lands has serious socio-economic implications. With every passing year, the gap between the farmer's yields in irrigated areas and in the dry farming regions is widening. One year of drought is enough to push a farmer into a deep well of poverty for another two to three years. Drought is a recurring phenomenon in arid and semi-arid areas. Fifty years after Independence, life for millions of people somehow surviving in the dry lands continues to be worse than ever before.

India's topography, soils, rainfall and the availability of water for irrigation have been major determinants of the crop and livestock patterns characteristic of Indian agriculture. The monsoons, moreover, play a critical role in determining whether the harvest will be bountiful, average or poor in any given year. In the absence of sufficient irrigation measures, the areas receiving scanty rainfall suffer.

India is among the top global producers of staple food crops. But even then, the productivity of its fields is far below that of Brazil, US and France. This is due to small size of their landholdings, their fragmentation, high cost of technology and lack of awareness. Many agricultural lands are also being diverted for commercial exploitation.

A recent study by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations concludes that there has been hardly any change in the volume of exports. Tariff peaks or high import duties continue to block exports from the developing countries. Tariffs still remain very high, especially in the case of cereals, sugar and dairy products. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures, which were enforced to ensure the quality of imported products, actually continue to be a major barrier in diversifying exports in horticulture and meat products.

Realising the importance of Indian agricultural production for economic development, the Central Government has played an active role in all aspects of agricultural development. Planning is centralised and priorities, policies, and resource allocations are decided at the central level. Food and price policies also are decided by the Central Government. Thus, although agriculture in India is constitutionally the responsibility of the states rather than the Central Government, the latter plays a key role in formulating policies and providing financial resources for agriculture.

The Budget 2014 gave a new lease of life to the agricultural sector. Firstly, the budget aimed at the stabilisation of the prices of farm products. Secondly, farming markets' growth would be encouraged. Thirdly, the operation of middlemen in the supply chain would be checked.

More number of agriculture and horticulture universities would be opened, especially in Tamil Nadu, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh. Kisan Television and rural internet network are also on the planner. Warehousing facilities would be escalated. Landless farmers would be allocated financial aid through NABARD. A rural credit fund will also be set-up within NABARD.

If declining food grain production and access to food remain the two biggest problems confronting the country, there must be something terribly wrong with the way we look at the agriculture. With more than 70% of the population still engaged in agriculture and allied activities and an equal percentage of farmers tilling an average of 0.2 hectares of land and somehow surviving against all odds, the time has come to set the balance right.

Whether we accept it or not, India is gradually moving back to the Pre-green Revolution days of a 'ship-to-mouth' existence, when food was largely imported to feed the hungry. It was the political maturity of the then leadership that led to self-sufficiency on the food front.

Few will still question what Jawaharlal Nehru once said :

“Everything else can wait, but not agriculture.”

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| ♦ treatise | – a formal and systematic exposition in writing of the principles of a subject, generally longer and more detailed than an essay | ♦ topography | – the detailed mapping or charting of the features of a relatively small area, district, or locality |
| ♦ colonial | – of, concerning or pertaining to a colony or colonies | ♦ languishing | – lacking of vigour or spirit |
| ♦ infrastructure | – the basic, underlying framework or features of a system or organisation | ♦ livestock | – the horses, cattle, sheep, and other useful animals kept or raised on a farm or ranch |
| ♦ vagaries | – an unpredictable or erratic action, occurrence, course of instance | ♦ tariff | – an official list or table showing the duties or customs imposed by a government on imports or exports |
| ♦ undulating | – to have a wavy form or surface, bend with successive curves in alternate directions | ♦ horticulture | – the cultivation of a garden, orchard, or nursery, the cultivation of flowers, fruits, vegetables, or ornamental plants |



An Indian Farmer

*“Happy the man, whose wish and care,
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground.”*

—Alexander Pope (Famous poet)

An Indian farmer is one of the most important member of the society. He is the provider of food to the people, to all practical purposes. A farmer’s life is simple. He goes to the fields early in the morning with his cattle when the rest of the world is sleeping comfortably in their warm beds. He rarely cares for the heat or the rains or the cold. He faces all the climatic hardships without any complaint. He continues to work through the day’s heat, sometimes with his entire family helping him. It is only at noon that he thinks of taking a few minutes off to eat his meagre lunch and rest for a while under the cool shade of a tree.

But soon he gets back to his hard labour and toil. Sometimes he works late, otherwise he usually returns to his humble hut at dusk to his family where his loving children and wife eagerly await his return. After washing and playing with his children, he finally lies down in his cot to rest for a while till dinner is served. After having food with his family, he goes to the village *chowpal* to entertain himself and socialise. This is his time for recreation after a long day’s hard work. After spending an hour or two with his friends, talking and gossiping, he comes back home to sleep under the star studded sky.

The real India resides in its villages. About 70% of India’s population lives in rural areas and earns its livelihood there. The major occupation of these people is agriculture. Thus, Indian economy is totally an agrarian one. However much industrialised India may become, farmers will remain an integral part of the economy, contributing to 26% of national GDP.

Farmers fulfill our food requirements and also produce raw materials like cotton, jute, sugar, oilseeds etc., for the industries. Farmers are also engaged in several agro based activities. Farmers contribute to foreign exchange, by producing various products for export such as, tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco, spices etc. It’s been due to their sheer hard work that farm productivity of India has increased manifold over the years.

However, agriculture in India is dependent solely upon rains. As soon as the monsoon season starts, the expectant eyes of the farmer keeps slipping to the horizon to spot the first rain clouds darkening the sky. If the rain fails, then the crops fail too. Thus, our hard working farmer and his fate is always at the mercy of the quality and quantity of rains. Sometimes, droughts and famines play havoc in his already tough life and many a times it is the floods that wash away his toils.

This is not all. Diseases, sorrows, sufferings, hunger and death are his regular visitors. He often falls ill and dies uncared for. If not him, it is sometimes his child, who is already suffering from malnutrition, surrenders to death. City-dwellers cannot even imagine the hardships of a poor farmer. Thus, it is a matter of grave concern for all of us. The food provider of our nation, the true son of the soil who feeds millions of hungry people by his endless efforts, himself remains hungry and dies uncared for.

Governments do not adequately support them so that they can buy fertilisers, pesticides and other technologies. Most of the agricultural land is diverted for commercial uses. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) do not support farmers, as subsidised land, cheaper credit and excise duty relief is instead made available to industries.

The financial condition of Indian farmers is miserable. The monthly income of a farming household is not more than that earned by domestic helpers in metro cities or daily wage labourers. Drowned in heavy debts, farmers commit suicide. Who doesn't know about the large number of suicides committed by the farmers in Vidarbha, films like 'Kisan' and 'Peepli Live' brought this serious issue into limelight. If economic progress is to be accelerated, interests of farmers can't be neglected. Government introduced the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme in 2008. Kisan Credit Card was also a part of this scheme. In 2013, Government launched the Diversify Income Sources Package, which aimed to generate income sources for farmers from allied sectors.

It's high time that the government stops playing the vote-bank game and works out some substantial measures and reforms to improve the living as well as working conditions of the farmers of our country. We have to work unitedly for the upliftment of our farmers. We need to train our farmers in scientific farming and the modern methods of irrigation. We also need to educate the children of our farmers, provide better healthcare, sanitation, clean drinking water and power supply so that their socio-economic conditions can be improved for better.

The government has been trying to do a lot and a lot has been accomplished, yet much needs to be done. We have to make sure that the farmers come out of the clutches of poverty and break free from the chains of debt and illiteracy, so that the hands that feed millions do not go without food. Farmers should also get a monthly take home package that will take care of their families and the surplus can be used for next crop sowing. They must also be awarded pensions, annual increments, medical allowances and quick financial loans. By providing them with proper incentives, good quality seeds, irrigation facilities, fertilisers, pesticides and subsidies, we can ensure that farmers of India flourish.

"Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan."

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **meagre** – deficient in quantity or quality, scanty
- ♦ **agrarian** – rural, agricultural
- ♦ **manifold** – numerous and varied
- ♦ **expectant** – having expectations
- ♦ **havoc** – great destruction or devastation, ruinous damage
- ♦ **malnutrition** – a lack of adequate nourishment
- ♦ **grave** – serious, important
- ♦ **excise duty** – an inland tax on the sale, or production for sale, of specific goods or a tax on a good produced for sale, or sold, within a country or licenses for specific activities
- ♦ **limelight** – the centre of public attention, interest, observation, or notoriety
- ♦ **substantial** – fundamental, basic or essential
- ♦ **sanitation** – the hygienic disposal or recycling of waste
- ♦ **increment** – an amount by which something increases or grows



Water Resources in India

Water is the most important and valuable natural resource on Earth. It sustains all life and life itself originated in water. Before the discovery of traces of water on Mars, Earth was the only planet in the solar system to contain water. About 71% of Earth's surface is covered with water, but only 3% of the available water is freshwater. About two-thirds of the freshwater lies frozen in the form of glaciers and ice caps. The rest of the small portion is available in the form of groundwater and surface water.

Water is used in the agriculture for irrigation of crops. In industries, water is used as a coolant, solvent and in manufacturing processes. Hydroelectricity is electricity generated with the help of water. Water is also used for navigation and transport of goods.

India covers 2.45% of the world area and possesses 4% of world's water resources. Precipitation contributes about 4000 cu km of water to the country. India has a large number of surface water resources, in the form of rivers, lakes, ponds, tanks and other small bodies. The three main rivers of North India are Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra, which carry 60% of the total surface water in India. The flow of India's rivers constitutes 6% of discharge of all the rivers of the world.

Being an agriculture-centric country, India has developed a number of irrigation schemes. Irrigation projects of Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, Damodar Valley, Nagarjuna Sagar and Indira Gandhi Canal have featured prominently in Five Year Plan.

The land area between Punjab and Brahmaputra Valley has abundant groundwater resources. The technology for identification of more aquifers can be developed further, as has been done in Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. India also has more than 600 km long coastline. Lagoons exist in the states of Kerala, Odisha and West Bengal, where the coastline is indented. This water, known as brackish water, is used for the cultivation of paddy, coconut etc., and for fishing.

Unmindful use of groundwater has led to the lowering of the water table. Excessive quantity of water used in irrigation increases soil salinity, affecting the crops.

Disputes also have arisen where water bodies are shared between two states and distribution of water is in question. For example, in the absence of Cauvery Agreement, Karnataka developed some irrigation schemes, which affected Tamil Nadu's rice delta.

"Water, water, everywhere, not a drop to drink."

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner —By ST Coleridge

Hydroelectricity can solve a part of India's energy crisis, triggered by hike in oil prices. It is generated by the use of gravitational force of falling or flowing water. It is the most widely used form of renewable energy, with production in 150 countries.

India has one of the greatest hydroelectric power potentials in the world. Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) has installed a hydel power grid in North India. Hydroelectricity is cost-effective. Once a hydroelectric complex is constructed, no waste is produced and carbon-dioxide emission is also less as compared to fossil fuel powered plants.

Water of the rivers and other natural sources is getting polluted due to industrial chemicals, pesticides, oil slicks and household wastes. Around 75% of surface water in India is polluted. Rajasthan and Maharashtra have high fluoride content in water, while arsenic has been found in water of West Bengal and Bihar. There are 14 river basins found to be most affected by dumping of sewage. For example, leather factories in Kanpur pump around 5.8 litre of waste water into Ganga everyday. Yamuna is also known as 'Open Drain'.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) along with the State Boards monitor water quality at 507 stations. Some of the legislations passed by government include water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, Water Cess Act, 1977, Environment Protection Act, 1986 and National Water Policy, 2002. Ganga Manthan dialogue was initiated recently, to discuss measures to check pollution of Ganga water. Placing portable toilets and small scale water treatment plants along the river can go a long way in halting pollution.

Other than these, efforts of NGOs and citizens have also counted in the cleaning of lakes such as Puttenahalli lake, Dal lake, Agara lake, Rankala lake etc.

Maintenance of water quality and water conservation are the needs of the hour. Villages can collaborate to form watersheds, so that wells and other water reservoirs can be recharged with water. Ralegan Siddhi is a village in Maharashtra which successfully implemented this approach. Rainwater harvesting has been made mandatory in Tamil Nadu.

India's water resources are in ample amount, but what is available freely, shouldn't be wasted. Let us be more responsible and emulate successful models like that of Ralegan Siddhi in every part of India.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **coolant** – a substance, usually a liquid or gas, used to reduce the temperature of a system below a specified value by conducting away the heat produced in the operation of the system
- ♦ **solvent** – a substance that dissolves another to form a solution
- ♦ **lagoon** – an area of shallow water separated from the sea by low sandy dunes
- ♦ **coastline** – the outline or contour of a coast, shoreline
- ♦ **indented** – to form deep recesses in
- ♦ **salinity** – containing, or resembling common table salt, salty or saltlike
- ♦ **renewable energy** – any naturally occurring, theoretically inexhaustible source of energy, as biomass, solar, wind, tidal, wave, and hydroelectric power, that is not derived from fossil or nuclear fuel
- ♦ **fluoride** – a salt of hydrofluoric acid consisting of two elements, one of which is fluorine, as sodium fluoride, NaF
- ♦ **arsenic** – a grayish white element having a metallic lustre, vaporising when heated, and forming poisonous compounds
- ♦ **watershed** – the dividing line between two adjacent river systems, such as a ridge



Mineral Wealth of India

“The development and management of mineral resources plays a major role in the industrial growth of a nation.”

—Tenth Five Year Plan

A mineral is a natural substance of organic or inorganic origin with defined physical and chemical properties. Minerals are unevenly distributed on Earth. Good quality minerals are available less in quantity and are also non-renewable resources, which once exhausted, can't be replaced immediately. Minerals are of two basic types—metallic and non-metallic. Metallic minerals, like iron, nickel, manganese, tungsten etc., are ferrous, since they have iron content. Some non-ferrous metallic minerals are gold, silver, copper, tin etc.

The non-metallic minerals may or may not contain organic matter. Coal and petroleum are organic in nature, while mica, limestone, graphite and gypsum are inorganic. Minerals such as coal and iron are of industrial importance; mica, manganese, copper, lead and zinc are of economic importance; and coal, petroleum, thorium and uranium are of national importance.

India is the leading producer of some of the minerals and contains a diverse and significant store of these minerals. Of the 89 minerals produced in the country, 4 are fuel minerals, 11 metallic, 52 non-metallic and 22 minor minerals. India is the largest producer of mica blocks and mica splittings; ranks second in the production of chromite, baryte, talc and steatite; ranks third in the production of coal, lignite, and bauxite; fourth in iron ore, fifth in steel, seventh in zinc, eighth in copper, tenth in aluminium and eleventh in mica.

Iron ore, copper ore, chromite ore, zinc concentrates, gold, manganese ore, bauxite, lead concentrates and silver account for the entire metallic production. Limestone, magnesite, dolomite, baryte, kaolin, gypsum, apatite, steatite and fluorite account for 92% of non-metallic minerals.

India has a large number of economically useful minerals and they constitute one-quarter of the world's mineral resources. About two-thirds of its iron deposits lie in a belt along Odisha and Jharkhand border. Other haematite deposits are found in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa. Magnetite iron ore is found in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Himachal. Bituminous coal is found in Jharia and Bokaro in Jharkhand and Raniganj in West Bengal.

Lignite coals are found in Neyveli in Tamil Nadu. Next to Russia, India has the largest supply of manganese. The manganese mining areas are Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand—Odisha area. Chromite deposits are found in Jharkhand, Cuttack district in Odisha, Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh and Mysore and Hassan in Karnataka. Bauxite deposits are found in Jharkhand, South-West Kashmir, Central Tamil Nadu, and parts of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Belts of high quality mica are Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. Gypsum reserves are in Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. Nickel ore is found in Cuttack and Mayurbhanj in Odisha. Copper ore bearing areas are Agnigundala in Andhra Pradesh, Singhbhum in Jharkhand, Khetri and Dartiba in Rajasthan, and parts of Sikkim and Karnataka.

The Ramagiri fields in Andhra Pradesh, Kolar and Hutti in Karnataka are important gold mines. The Panna diamond belt is the only diamond producing area in the country, which covers the districts of Panna, Chhatarpur and Satna in Madhya Pradesh, as well as some parts of Banda in Uttar Pradesh. Petroleum deposits are found in Assam and Gujarat. Fresh reserves were located off Mumbai Coast. The potential oil bearing areas are Assam, Tripura, Manipur, West Bengal, Punjab, Himachal, Kachchh and the Andamans. India also possesses the all-too-valuable nuclear Uranium as well as some varieties of rare Earths.

The mineral wealth of India at present comprises an adequate range of useful products that are necessary for the industrial development of the country. An appraisal of the reserves shows that while in respect of minerals essential for basic industries—coal and iron—the reserves are ample, the country is deficient in a fairly long list of vital minerals like ores of copper, tin, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt and in sulphur and most important of all, petroleum.

The position with regard to aluminium ore, refractories, abrasives, limestone etc., may be considered as fairly adequate while in respect of titanium and thorium ores and of mica, the country has considerable reserves.

Until recently, mineral exploration and their utilisation in the country received little attention. Except for coal, iron ore and petroleum required for internal use, the majority of minerals were extracted in India for the purpose of bulk export without any processing and fabrication. These exports brought but a small return to the country.

Nearly a hundred minerals are known to be produced or mined in India, of which nearly 30 may be considered more important and the rest seem to be capable of material development in future with the expansion of industries.

It should be made clear at the outset that though progress has been made in the survey of mineralised areas in recent years and the principal mineral regions have been ascertained, exploration of mineral resources has not been thorough or complete in most cases and present estimates are just rough guesses. The power resources in India comprise coal, oil and hydroelectricity. India's coal mining is centered mainly in Bihar and West Bengal.

The total workable reserves of coal down to a depth of 1000 ft are estimated at 20000 million tonnes, of which the good quality coal would amount to 5000 million tonnes. The reserves of coking coal, however, are small, amounting to only 2000 million tonnes. As against relatively meagre resources of coal and oil, the hydroelectric resources of India are considerable with estimates varying from about 30 to 40 million horse-power. India possesses large quantities of high grade iron ore

and may be classified as one of the countries which can reasonably expect a long continued development of heavy industry; though, in proportion to the population, these reserves are lower than the main ore regions of the world.

Incessant mining and plundering of mineral resources has disastrous effects on the ecosystem of a region. Water scarcity has increased, river beds are getting damaged and even the biodiversity is getting hampered.

In India, over the years, a national mineral policy has evolved. The policy addresses certain new aspects and elements like mineral exploration in the sea-bed, development of proper inventory, proper linkage between exploitation of minerals and development of mineral industry, protection of forests, environment and ecology from the adverse effects of mining, enforcement of mining plan for adoption of proper mining methods, optimum utilisation of minerals, export of minerals in value-added form and recycling of metallic scrap and mineral waste.

The Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 lays down the legal framework for the regulation of mines and development of all minerals other than petroleum and natural gas. The Central Government has framed the Mineral Concession Rules 1960, for regulating grant of prospecting licenses and mining leases in respect of all minerals other than atomic minerals and minor minerals. The State Governments have framed the rules in regard to minor minerals.

The Central Government has also framed the Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 1988 for conservation and systematic development of minerals. These are applicable to all minerals except coal, atomic minerals and minor minerals. New regulations from 2012 onwards have stated that any mining activity would, at first, require clearance or permission from the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Thus, our policymakers should ensure that they create no more 'ecological refugees', people who are rendered homeless due to mindless mining in their dwelling places. Only then can minerals provide rich returns to the economy and strengthen it.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **organic** – pertaining to a class of chemical compounds that formerly comprised only those existing in or derived from plants and animals
- ♦ **adequate** – barely sufficient or suitable
- ♦ **appraisal** – an estimate or considered opinion of the nature, quality, importance, etc
- ♦ **fabrication** – the act or process of fabricating, manufacture
- ♦ **biodiversity** – the diversity (number and variety of species) of plant and animal life within a region
- ♦ **ascertain** – to find out definitely
- ♦ **incessant** – continuing without interruption, ceaseless

Transportation Systems in India

Existing and Emerging

“Transportation system is the lifeline of any country.”

Transportation systems are indispensable to any country’s progress. Without proper means of transport, the raw materials can’t be transported to industries, agricultural harvest cannot reach city godowns and finished goods can’t be deposited in markets. People also can’t commute to their place of work or study.

The earliest means of transport in history were simply walking and swimming. After animals were domesticated, human beings used them for riding and carrying load. Invention of wheel laid the foundation of the modern transport systems. The steam engine revolutionised rail transport, while the first aircraft designed by Wright Brothers in 1903 gave an impetus to air transport.

In India, a number of transport systems, both obsolete and new, co-exist simultaneously. In Kolkata, hand driven carriages are still prevalent, despite attempts to ban them. Animal transport includes use of animals such as donkey, horse, mule, buffalo etc. These are more common in villages. In hilly areas, mule and yak are used to climb to higher altitudes. Road vehicle transport includes bus, auto-rickshaws, taxis, cars, scooters, bikes and bicycles. Well-developed bus services are known to operate only in few Indian cities. Over 80% of road traffic is occupied by personal instead of public transport.



However, with the advent of air-conditioned and low floor buses in most cities, people are preferring to use them, over their personal vehicles. Bengaluru was the first city in India to introduce Volvo buses in 2006 and it is also the first to establish an air-conditioned bus stop. Chennai house is one of Asia’s biggest bus terminus. The oldest Indian state transport system is that of North Bengal State Transport Corporation and is still in operation.

Taxis also run in a number of cities. The older ones used, were the Padmini or Ambassador taxis. In Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad, they are hired through phone, while in Kolkata and Mumbai, they can be rented on the roads. Since 2006, radiotaxis have become quite popular owing to the safety they confer.

Auto-rickshaws or three-wheelers are also common in several cities, like Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad. They may be colour-coded as black or green depending on whether they use petrol or CNG, respectively. Metro rail network is one of the latest introductions in several Indian cities. Kolkata Metro is the oldest metro, followed by the Delhi Metro, which started in 2002. The Namma Metro in Bengaluru is India’s third metro system, which began in 2011.

These metro rails have been highly successful, carrying lakhs of passengers per day. They have not only eased road traffic, but have made travel cheaper, safer and convenient. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is the national body that regulates the aviation industry. Air India plays a major role in connecting India with the world. IGI Airport, Delhi is the busiest airport of India in terms of passenger traffic.

India also has an extensive network of inland waterways in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks. There are 12 major ports in India. Vishakhapatnam Port is one of the busiest ports on the East Coast of India.

Many changes brought about in India's transport systems of late, guarantee safety for women. These include all women taxis, autos, metro rails, buses and trains. Also, more number of RPF personnel should be deployed at station premises.

Transportation is certainly becoming fuel-efficient with the use of CNG. Delhi was one of the first cities of the world to introduce CNG buses.

One area that needs amends is in the friendliness towards the disabled. More vehicles should cater to the needs of handicapped, paralysed and blind people, as they are an integral part of our society.

Pedestrian safety should be ensured. Recently, the 'Rahgiri' initiative was launched in Delhi to encourage the habit of walking. Walking and cycling would go a long way in reducing air and noise pollution, and conserve petrol and CNG fuels too.

The rail transport was facilitated greatly in Lal Prasad's regime as Railway Minister, with the introduction of trains such as Garib Rath for the economically weaker sections of society. Under PM Modi's leadership, Asia's highest rail bridge has been constructed between Jammu and Katra. A proposal is also underway for bullet trains between major cities of India.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **indispensable** – absolutely necessary, essential, or requisite
- ♦ **pedestrian** – a person who travels on foot
- ♦ **simultaneously** – existing, occurring, or operating at the same time, concurrent
- ♦ **advent** – beginning
- ♦ **aviation** – the design, development, production, operation, and use of aircraft, especially heavier-than-air aircraft
- ♦ **impetus** – a moving force, impulse
- ♦ **extensive** – great in amount; comprehensive
- ♦ **creek** – a stream or channel in a coastal marsh
- ♦ **integral** – necessary to the completeness of the whole

Banking in India

“Money plays the largest part in determining the course of history.”

—Karl Marx

A bank is a financial body that accepts deposits and channels them into lending through loans or capital markets. Banks thus, connect customers with lack of funds and those with extra capital.

The word ‘bank’ was borrowed from European languages, literally meaning ‘bench’ or ‘counter’. Banking system evolved in the 14th century in Italy. By the 18th century, merchants of London had started storing their gold with goldsmiths who charged a fee and issued receipts.

A banker is a person who discharges his duties in the form of operating customer accounts and, paying and collecting cheques.

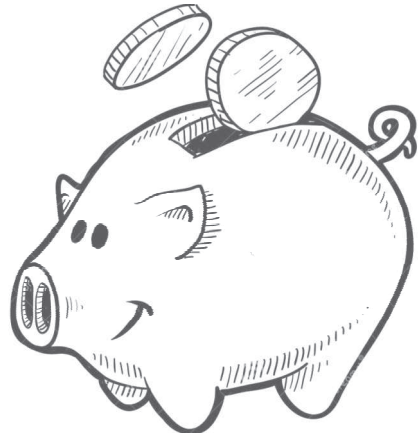
Banks borrow money by accepting the money deposited in current accounts, by accepting term deposits and issuing securities on banknotes and bonds. They also create new capital by giving loans. Banking activities can be for retail, in which the customers and small businesses are involved directly with the bank; for businesses; for large corporate houses and for investments.

There are various types of banks such as commercial banks (which are engaged solely in banking activities), investment banks (for capital market activities), cooperative banks (non-profit banks), postal savings banks (associated with postal systems) and private banks (managing the assets of high net worth people).

In India, banking has its origin in the Vedic period. It is believed that the transition from money lending to banking must have occurred even before Manu, the great Hindu Jurist, who laid down rules relating to rates of interest. During the Mughal period, the indigenous bankers played a very important role in lending money and financing foreign trade and commerce.

The first bank in India, though elemental, was established in 1786. From 1786 till today, the journey of Indian Banking System can be segregated into three distinct phases. They are—Early Phase from 1786 to 1969 of commercial banks; Nationalisation of Commercial Banks upto 1991, prior to Indian banking sector reforms and New Phase of Indian Banking System with the advent of Indian Financial & Banking Sector Reforms after 1991.

The General Bank of India was set-up in the year 1786. The East India Company established the Bank of Bengal (1809), Bank of Bombay (1840) and Bank of Madras (1843) as independent units and called it Presidency Banks. These three banks were amalgamated in 1920 and Imperial Bank of India was established which started as private shareholders banks, for mostly European shareholders. For the first time



exclusively by Indians, Punjab National Bank Ltd was set-up in 1894 with Headquarters at Lahore. During the first phase, the growth was very slow and banks also experienced periodic failures between 1913 and 1948. There were approximately 1100 banks, mostly small.

To streamline the functioning and activities of commercial banks, the Government of India came up with the Banking Companies Act, 1949 which was later changed to Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as per amendment Act of 1965 (Act No. 23 of 1965). Reserve Bank of India was vested with extensive powers for the supervision of banking in India as the Central Banking Authority. RBI is the Central Bank of the country since 1935. It regulates and controls credit, issues licenses and functions as the banker of all banks and the government.

During those days, public had lesser confidence in banks. As an aftermath, the deposit mobilisation was slow. Instead of banks, the savings bank facility provided by the Postal department was considered comparatively safer. Moreover, funds were largely given to traders.

Government took major steps in the Indian Banking Sector Reforms after Independence. In 1955, it nationalised Imperial Bank of India with extensive banking facilities on a large scale, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. It formed the State Bank of India, to act as the principal agent of RBI and to handle banking transactions of the Union and State Governments all over the country.

It was on the efforts of the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi that 14 major commercial banks in the country were nationalised in 1960s. The second phase of nationalisation, with Indian Banking Sector Reforms, was carried out in 1980 with the nationalisation of seven more banks. This step brought 80% of the banking segment in India under government ownership. After the nationalisation of banks, the branches of the public sector banks in India rose to approximately 800% in deposits and advances took a huge jump by 11000%.

Banking in the support of government ownership, gave the public implicit faith and immense confidence about the sustainability of these institutions.

The third phase has introduced many more products and facilities in the banking sector in its reforms measure. In 1991, under the chairmanship of M Narasimham, a committee was set-up to suggest measures for banking sector reforms. Today, the country is flooded with foreign banks and their ATM stations. Efforts are being put in to give a satisfactory service to customers. Phone banking and net banking have been introduced. The entire system has become more convenient and swift. Time is given more importance than money. The financial system of India has shown a great deal of resilience. It is sheltered from any crisis triggered by external macroeconomics shock, unlike other East Asian Countries that had to suffer. This is largely due to flexible exchange rate regime, high foreign exchange reserves and reforms in the capital markets and banks.

Presently, in India, the banking sector is segregated as public or private sector banks, cooperative banks and regional rural banks. Bouquet of services are available at the customer's demand in today's banking system. Different types of accounts and loans, have been facilitated with the advent of plastic money and money transfer across the globe. The last decade experienced a complete change in the financial and banking sector. The capital and financial markets, banking and non-banking institutions and financial instruments were redressed towards development.

Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) is the tenth largest bank in the world in terms of development. With the advancement of technology, banking sector has become easier, faster, accurate and also timesaving. ATMs, Mobile Banking, SMS Banking and Net Banking are only the tips of an iceberg.

The enhanced role of the banking sector in the Indian economy, the increasing levels of deregulation along with the ascending levels of competition have facilitated globalisation of the Indian banking system and placed numerous demands on banks. Operating in this demanding environment has exposed them to various challenges. The last decade has witnessed major changes in the financial sector—new banks, new financial institutions, new instruments, new windows, and new opportunities—and along with all this, new challenges.

While deregulation has opened up new vistas for banks to augment revenues, it has entailed greater competition and consequently greater risks. Demand for new products, particularly derivatives, requires banks to diversify their product mix and also affect rapid changes in their processes and operations in order to remain competitive in the globalised environment.

Developing countries like India have a huge population. Banking must reach out to people even in the remote fragmented locations. Banks are also suffering from diminishing employee satisfaction. Losing out on potential and valuable customer base would be one of the consequences. Top level executives and human resource departments of various banks need to spend time and effort towards retention of their key employees.

Banks have also come under the scanner recently, due to various scams and malpractices. The arrest of the Chairman of Syndicate Bank is the latest case in sight.

The banking sector also introduced the All-Women's Bank, known as Bhartiya Mahila Bank, in New Delhi. It was inaugurated by the then PM Manmohan Singh on 19th November, 2013, to commemorate the 94th birthday of Indira Gandhi. India will be the third nation after Pakistan and Tanzania, to have a bank dedicated to women. The bank will offer concession on loan rates to women. It would also motivate people interested in entrepreneurship to locally train women in vocational skills. The other goal is to promote ownership of assets among women customers, as assets serve as a back-up in cases of domestic violence.

However, the present governor of RBI, Raghuram Rajan has assured that this case shouldn't be extrapolated to the entire system. Banks shouldn't be just money-lending institutions, they should be 'banks with a conscience'.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **channel** – a course into which something may be directed
- ♦ **retail** – the sale of goods to ultimate consumers, usually in small quantities
- ♦ **indigenous** – originating in and characteristic of a particular region or country
- ♦ **segregated** – to separate or set apart from others or from the main body or group
- ♦ **distinct** – different in nature or quality, dissimilar



Economic Reforms

“An underdeveloped economy is characterised by unutilised manpower on one hand and unexploited natural resources on the other.”

—First Five Year Plan

India is a developing economy. The stagnation of the economy in the beginning and the evil cycle of poverty, which were evident before Independence, have paved the way for rapid economic growth. Economic reforms are the changes in a country's economic policies, that are crucial for reviving a sluggish economy and accelerating the pace of development.

Rajiv Gandhi took oath as the Prime Minister of our country in 1985. In his regime, various changes were attempted in the country's economic sector, which included improvement in productivity and adoption of modern technology. It called for greater participation of the private sector.

The economic reforms of deregulation and liberalisation began in 1991. Since then, there were noticeable fundamental and irreversible changes in the economy, government policies, outlook of business and industry, and in the mindset of Indians in general. From a deficit economy of goods and foreign exchange, India became a surplus one; from an agro-based economy, it emerged as a service-oriented one. The process of economic reforms was essentially crisis-driven and was adopted in order to mitigate the economic bankruptcy of the 1980s.

A quick survey of the various reforms introduced so far by the government revealed that their components aimed at common ends—of reducing fiscal indebtedness, trade liberalisation and trade policy reforms. These required removal of quantity restrictions, rationalisation of taxation, public sector disinvestment and restructuring of the public expenditure.

The introduction of the 73rd to 74th Amendments of the Constitution (1995) increased the scope of decentralisation of political and economic power and devolution of fiscal authority to the local bodies such as the ‘*panchayats*’ and ‘*nagarpalikas*.’ This enabled the economy to be sensitive to the local needs of the people and let the benefits of the reforms to trickle down to the lower strata of the society. Moreover, with the outstanding performance of the software industry, changes in the skilled labour market are also evident.

Not only is the skilled labour in this sector able to meet the high quality standards of the advanced nations, it is also able to command salaries which commensurate with its abilities. The emphasis in the present times of the economic reforms in India must be on resources, creation and management rather than demand management. Public sector disinvestment would raise current revenue besides reducing government liabilities. At the other end, restructuring of expenditure would curb the unnecessary consumption liabilities and make them more sensitive to public investment needs.

The results of liberalisation reached the peak, when India recorded its highest GDP growth rate of 9% in 2007. This made India, the second fastest growing world economy, after China.

In 2010-11, the Indian economy registered a growth rate of 8.5%. Although, the agricultural sector has shown fluctuations, the Industry and Services have continued to expand steadily and have acted as twin engines propelling the overall economic growth. Despite spiraling global crude prices, the inflation has been modest and rapid growth in exports and imports have been seen. India's food production also increased considerably. After the initiation of economic reforms, a faster development of physical infrastructure has been achieved. The cycle of growth and savings has been virtuous over the years and is to continue for years to come. Poverty has reduced considerably.

However, a comparison of the pre-reform and post-reform periods showed that there was a decline in the trust that labour had reposed with the authorities. The number of workers' strikes and lock-outs increased. This happened because workers were afraid of loss of jobs due to privatisation and liberalisation.

The present BJP government led by PM Narendra Modi promises to promote economic sustainability, while simultaneously targeting a 10% growth rate. By 2020, India will become the youngest country of the world, with 64% population in the working age group. The government will work towards clearing pending proposals. It will also liberalise foreign investment across key sectors. The Prime Minister has also assured of a "maximum governance and minimum government" approach.

After 67 years of Independence, if we scale the performance of India against other countries of the world, especially with those in Asia, we note that though a lot has been achieved, yet we need to do a lot more. We need to learn from our past follies and frame our future strategies accordingly.

Our own people excel outside the country in various sectors but we fail to optimally use the best talent of the nation for the growth of our own economy. We need to find ways of providing better opportunities to our people within the country and stop brain drain, which in turn creates all sorts of other drain-outs from the country and nullifies its progress. India has achieved many milestones, yet not enough has been done to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and other major issues. We often fail to use the best effective human capital for running the country, both for public as well as private sectors. This needs serious re-thinking. As APJ Abdul Kalam has rightly said :

"India will only truly shine, when it shines for one and all."

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| ♦ stagnation | - a failure to develop, progress or advance | ♦ fiscal | - of or pertaining to financial matters in general |
| ♦ crucial | - involving an extremely important decision or result, critical | ♦ taxation | - the revenue raised by taxes |
| ♦ sluggish | - lacking in energy, lazy | ♦ expenditure | - something expended, such as time or money |
| ♦ commensurate | - having the same measure, of equal extent or duration | ♦ fluctuation | - continual change from one point or condition to another |
| ♦ liberalisation | - to make or become liberal | ♦ virtuous | - conforming to moral and ethical principles |
| ♦ deficit | - the amount by which a sum of money falls short of the required amount | ♦ devolution | - the transfer of power or authority from a central government to a local government |



Decentralisation

Decentralisation can be defined as “the dispersion of decision making governance or distribution of functions and powers from a central authority to regional and local authorities.”

There are various forms of decentralisation. Privatisation is a type of decentralisation. Privatisation and deregulation means shifting responsibility for functions from the public to the private sector. Privatisation can range from public-private partnerships to allowing private enterprises to perform functions that had previously been monopolised by the government. Usually, though not always, privatisation and deregulation are accompanied by economic liberalisation and market development policies.

India’s fiscal deficit during 1990s, spectacular growth by economies of Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia due to the indulgence of private sector; integration of world trade, changes in China and dissatisfaction with the performance of public sector—all factors collectively contributed to the initiation of privatisation in India.

To begin with, in 1992, India opened up cellular and basic services to private players and then the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was constituted in 1997 as an independent regulator in this sector. Till 1986, telecommunication was a public utility owned by the Government of India.

Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) was created in 1986 as a Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) to facilitate telecommunication services in the cities of Delhi and Mumbai. In all other places, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) was formed as a PSE on 1st October, 2000 as a telecom service provider.

These state-owned incumbents with a large existing subscriber base dominate the fixed line service. However, with the entry of private players, today the Indian telecommunication industry is the world’s fastest growing industry with 826.93 million mobile phone subscribers, as of April, 2011, as liberalisation led to the entry of private players such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Communications, Tata Teleservices, Idea Cellular and Aircel.

Privatisation of banks began in 1994 when the Reserve Bank of India issued a policy of liberalisation to license limited number of private banks, which came to be known as New Generation tech-savvy banks. Prior to this, SBI was in existence since 1955, apart from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) established in 1935, which controlled the central banking responsibilities.

Thus, Global Trust Bank was the first private bank after liberalisation, which was later amalgamated into Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) and Housing Development Finance Corporation Limited (HDFC) was the first bank to receive an ‘in principle’ approval from the RBI to set-up a bank in the private sector. At present, there are many private banks in India including leading banks like ICICI Banks, ING Vysya Bank, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Karnataka Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, SBI Commercial, Dhanalakshmi Bank, Federal Bank, HDFC Bank, Karur Vysya Bank, UTI Bank and YES Bank.

Privatisation of insurance sector in India happened around the year 2000 when the government allowed private players to enter the Indian market. Although in the year 1993, a road map for privatisation of the life insurance sector was laid, but it took another six years before the enabling legislation to pass the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act in the year 2000.

Resultantly, the newly appointed insurance regulator—Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA)— started issuing licenses to private life insurers. At present leading private sector life insurers are SBI Life Insurance, Metlife India, ICICI Prudential, Bajaj Allianz, Max New York Life Insurance, Sahara Life Insurance, Tata AIG, HDFC Standard Life, Birla Sun Life, Kotak Life Insurance, Aviva Life Insurance, Reliance Life Insurance, ING Vysya, Shriram Life Insurance, Bharti AXA, Future Generali, IDBI Fortis Life Insurance, AEGON Religare and Star Union Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co. Ltd.

In the electricity sector, the new wave of policy reforms designed to promote private participation has been driven by the need to expand the capacity and increase the reliability of systems, public sector budget constraints and the positive results of the private participation in other countries. Although in India electricity sector is still largely under the domain of public sector, but the inclusion of private sectors for capacity additions has also begun.

Major PSUs involved in the generation of electricity include National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCI). Besides PSUs, several state level corporations are also involved in the generation and intrastate distribution of electricity. In the private sector, major capacity additions are planned in Reliance Energy, Tata Power and RPG Group-CESC.

Decentralisation is an answer to the problems of the centralised sector.

Decentralisation in the government sector helps to solve problems of economic decline, lack of funds, performance issues and reservation for minorities. In the area of politics, its objective is to vest more power with citizens or elected representatives. Economic decentralisation brings about privatisation of public institutions, through deregulation, abolition of restrictions on business competing with government services, such as postal services, school etc. Decentralisation has also been executed in various technologies like water purification, waste disposal, agricultural technology and energy technology.

Internet is a good example of a successful decentralised network. Wikipedia, the online Encyclopaedia, storing information on a plethora of topics, is also decentralised as it allows users to add, modify or delete content via the internet. Social networking sites are also decentralised systems that have greatly changed our lives. Information technology used to facilitate interactions of the government with the citizens, is referred to as e-Government.

It is indeed a good initiative to boost democratisation. Education, health care and petroleum are some of the other sectors that have been decentralised and are among the fastest growing sectors of the economy today. Thus, decentralisation of public sector enterprises that began with the economic reforms of the 1990s has yielded tangible benefits to the country.

However, dangers of decentralisation loom large. For example, if the technical capacity or functioning of a system is weak, it will definitely result in poor quality products and services. Coordination for national policies can become complex and resource distribution can become uneven. A few local elites can grab power and hindrances in proper decision-making can surface. In the absence of a higher competent authority, monopoly and anarchy can give way to chaos and suppression of public interests.

Thus, decentralisation is both a boon and a bane to the economy. It is to be used as an ‘instrument of change and empowerment of the masses’ and not to earn quick money by few individuals pursuing their selfish interests.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| ♦ dispersion | – an act, state, or instance of dispersing or of being dispersed | ♦ constraint | – limitation or restriction |
| ♦ monopolised | – to obtain exclusive possession of | ♦ democratisation | – transition to a more democratic political regime |
| ♦ incumbents | – holding an indicated position, role, office etc., currently | ♦ tangible | – definite, not vague or elusive |
| ♦ reform | – the improvement or amendment of what is wrong, corrupt, unsatisfactory etc | ♦ elites | – persons of the highest class |
| | | ♦ anarchy | – a state of society without government or law |



Indian Economy

“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.”

These famous words were spoken by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru on the eve of India’s Independence. India, the land of all riches and abundance, once known as ‘Sone ki Chidiya’ was plundered to poverty under the ‘British Raj’. Famines and epidemics were common. However, after Independence, India made progress by leaps and bounds. Today, as we stand after completing 67 years as an Independent nation and 64 years as a sovereign Republic, India can proudly assert that it has come a long way in the development scenario. Since 1991, Indian economy has practised liberalisation, openness in trade and investment in infrastructure. However, many black areas still remain to be addressed. These certainly are great obstacles to the prosperity of our nation.

In general, every economy faces few common problems. First is the problem of allocation of resources, which raises the question of which needs should be fulfilled and which limitations are not much important to be fulfilled.

More production of a particular good directs raw materials meant for the production of some other goods into the former’s production process.

Second problem is that of the efficiency of utilisation. Since resources are scarce, their production, distribution and utilisation must be as efficient as possible. Third problem is that of productive capacity. The economy would be able to grow only if its productive capacity increases.

Corruption not only maligns the image of a country but is also detrimental to its own citizens. You would often have heard the words :

“He is that official’s nephew, so he secured this job.”

Relation politics mars the opportunities deserved by many worthy individuals. Inefficient bureaucracy and ‘babudom’ suffocate the working processes of an otherwise smooth system.

The rapidly escalating per capita income, property and food costs have stalled even the basic tasks of everyday routine. Inflation is currently running at 8 to 10% and has been high even during economic decline. This indicated that inflation is not actually due to excess demand, but due to cost pushing factors like impediments in the supply chain of agricultural commodities. This hits especially the poor adversely, who are the most vulnerable to price rise.

One of the reasons behind inflation is the hoarding of essential commodities and then selling them at sky high prices when demand surges. This is known as ‘black-marketing.’ The boom in real estate sector has increased lending. The rise in the prices would cause RBI to increase interest rates. Thus, those in debts, would face difficulty in paying back loans.

India’s budget deficits are burgeoning, amounting to almost 8% of GDP, excluding subsidies. This restricts investment in public services like education and health. India has large reserves of foreign currency, but there has been running a current account deficit. Also, imports are growing faster than exports. The wide chasm caused a giant fall in the value of rupee between 2012 and 2014.

The disparity between rich and poor sections is increasing by the day. Economic growth has failed to benefit the poor. Recently, callous remarks were made about the poverty index. The ‘below poverty line’ definition still stands debated. Many poor still live with less than \$ 1 per day. The 2013-14 period has seen a slowdown in economic growth. Unemployment rates have to be brought down. India is behind China, which has comparatively a better developing economy.

Poor quality and limited outreach of education is another hurdle. We can’t underestimate the role of education in raising the living standards of the population. Over 50% of Indian women are still illiterate.

Till today, many rural Indians lack basic amenities, like sanitation and water. Due to inadequacy of transportation, over 40% of farm produce degrades before reaching markets. Labour laws are rigid and politically exploited. Certain laws don’t encourage foreign investment. Agriculture sector needs a boost due to very low productivity, inspite of 60% of population engaged in this.

A few amends would bring the Indian economy back on track. To reduce fiscal deficit, direct transfer of subsidies should be mediated across India. Subsidies for diesel and urea should be scrapped. The retail sector should be opened to FDI. This would lessen the pangs of inflation.

Overseas bonds are an option to strengthen the rupee. To resolve the power sector crisis, the state electricity boards must be reorganised.

The oath of putting the nation on the path of development rests not merely upon the government, but also on citizens, who should be socially and morally responsible. The goal of economic security and sustainability is challenging. But can be achieved once a balance is established among the various dynamic sectors of economy. As Vivekananda said :

“Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **plundered** – to take wrongfully, as by pillage, robbery, or fraud
- ♦ **epidemic** – a temporary prevalence of a disease
- ♦ **assert** – to state with assurance, confidence, or force, state strongly or positively
- ♦ **allocation** – the act of allocating, apportionment
- ♦ **malign** – to speak harmful truths about, speak evil of
- ♦ **detrimental** – damaging, harmful
- ♦ **escalating** – increasing in intensity magnitude etc.
- ♦ **hoarding** – the act of a person who hoards
- ♦ **burgeoning** – to grow or develop quickly
- ♦ **chasm** – gap

Automated Teller Machine (ATM)

An evolutionary trend from cash economy to cheque economy and now to plastic card economy is witnessed in the introduction of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). An automated teller machine is an electronic telecommunication device that enables the customers of a financial institution to perform financial transaction without the physical need for a human cashier, clerk or even the customer in its premises.

With more and more people using banks today, the business of banking is basically about efficient and convenient service delivery. ATM has become an important issue, not only in retaining consumers, but also as a competitive advantage while boosting the overall profitability. ATMs have gained prominence as a delivery channel for banking transactions in India. Banks have been deploying ATMs to increase their reach. ATM provides banking services for 24 hours.

For this reason some people also call it ‘All Time Money’ Machine. On most modern ATMs, the customer is identified by inserting a plastic ATM card with a magnetic stripe with a chip that contains a unique card number.

The card usually have the name of the holder, its type and other information. Authentication is provided by the customer by entering a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Then the customer can avail its various services like cash withdrawal, checking balance etc. ATM or Cash points was first introduced in 1961 by the City Bank of New York on a trial basis. It allowed banks to provide their consumers with a convenient way, round the clock, to carry out varying transactions. However it was not appreciated much at that time and was removed after a period of 6 months.

After various modifications it was re-introduced in various countries and saw an extensive usage. With regard to India, HSBC Bank was the first bank in India to



offer ATM facility in 1987. Presently, almost all the banks are offering ATM facility adequately in cities as well as in rural areas. ATMs have revolutionised the banking industry. It would not be wrong to say that outwardly Automated Teller Machine appears like a human weighing machine. Huge usage and user-friendliness makes the comparison even more prominent. But ATM's have alternate purpose to serve. Today's ATMs are placed not only near or inside the banks, but in locations such as shopping malls, airports, metros, railway station, petrol station, grocery stores or any other place frequented by a large number of people. ATM also provide the best possible exchange rates for foreign travellers and are widely used for this purpose.

If the currency being withdrawn from the ATM is different from that in which the bank account is denominated, then the money will be converted at an official exchange rate.

ATMs eliminate the need for the customers to travel to the branch at which his/her accounts are maintained if the machines are conveniently located and networked. For this reason, the number of customers visiting the bank has reduced tremendously. This in turn has resulted in huge savings in the employee-related costs for the banks. The cost incurred in servicing a customer through the ATM is one-third of the cost incurred otherwise. As the transactions are handled through softwares, scope for human error or misappropriation is reduced. With all these benefits, banks all over the world are making huge profits.

Like other modern technologies, ATMs too usually come along with some limiting factors. Kids are seen misusing the hard-earned money of their parents often withdrawing more money than needed. Banks levy some extra charges while using the machines of other banks of which customers are totally oblivious. CCTV cameras installed at various ATMs can become a medium to collect passwords (PIN) of the users. Robbers are guaranteed sure cash from the consumers visiting the money machines. Very recently a newspaper report reported about a robber forcing an innocent person to withdraw more cash at the gunpoint. Moreover, ATM often do not have adequate funds leaving the client with no alternative during non-banking hours. Damaged machine is another problem.

Despite the problems, it is universally agreed that the benefits derived from the ATMs cannot be ignored. Infact latest development are being tried to transform it further. Latest in news is India's first 'talking' Automated Teller Machine for visually impaired in Ahmedabad. More such renewing would be done to place it deeper in the busy lives of people.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| ♦ evolutionary | – the process of developing | ♦ avail | – utilise |
| ♦ automated | – made automatic, done by machine | ♦ authentication | – validating the correctness |
| ♦ teller | – a bank clerk who receives and pays out money | ♦ frequented | – to visit often |
| ♦ retaining | – to maintain possession of, to keep in one's service | ♦ denominated | – to denote, to issue or express in terms of a given monetary unit |
| ♦ prominence | – fame, importance, notability | ♦ tremendously | – extremely, hugely |
| ♦ deploying | – set up, to bring into action, to arrange | ♦ misappropriation | – theft, embezzlement, stealing |
| | | ♦ levy | – to impose or collect |
| | | ♦ oblivious | – unaware, ignorant, careless |
| | | ♦ renewing | – reviving |

Inflation

A sustained rise in the prices of commodities that leads to a fall in the purchasing power of a nation is called Inflation. Although inflation is a part of the normal economic phenomena of any country, any increase in inflation above a pre-determined level is a cause of concern.

The causes of inflation are many. While it is often cited that a drop in India's agricultural output lead to the decline in supply, figures tell a different story. India's food production crossed 235 million tonnes during years 2010-11 as per the latest estimates and this is the highest since Independence. The previous highest production, at nearly 233 million tonnes, was achieved in years 2008-09. Agriculture recorded a 5.4% growth in years 2010-11 compared to the 4% growth achieved all these years, according to S Ayyappan, Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.



However, inflation reflects overheating : the supply capacity of the economy is simply unable to match the demands on that capacity. Moreover, purchasing power of consumers is increasing and hence demand is accelerating. Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for agriculture have also been increasing. The MSPs for various varieties of paddy during the years 2009-10 was between ₹ 950-980 per quintal and during the years 2010-11, it increased to ₹ 1000 to 1030 per quintal.

Moreover, for pulses such as Arhar and Moong the MSPs in years 2009-10 was ₹ 2300 and 2760 respectively, while in years 2010-11, it increased to ₹ 3000 and 3170 respectively. Another major cause of inflation is the increase in the prices of fuel internationally, which is contributing to the overall price inflation. There has been a steady increase in the international prices, with the Indian crude basket priced at \$113.09 per barrel, as on May 2011. Any change in price of diesel immediately impacts price of food items, since most of them are dependent on transport through several 100 km.

Inflation, in short, is “too much money chasing too few goods”. According to analysts, corruption, mafia operations, greed for money by politicians and industrialists, counterfeiting of currency notes etc., also contribute to corruption as they add to the availability of liquidity in different forms, which in turn adds to inflation.

High level of inflation distorts economic performance. It has added pressure on the Central Bank to raise rates despite signs of slow growth in the Indian economy. Thus, high inflation and rising interest rates are crimping domestic demand and slowing down the economy. Inflation also affects investment as higher long-term inflation adversely affects growth and investment. High inflation is pushing up the cost of credit for firms as well as escalating their input costs by inflating their spending on raw materials and wages. Corporate investment is affected by cost escalation of inputs, and inflation is waning the confidence in the economic growth.

Food inflation adversely affected the country in 2013 and 2014 consecutively. Curbing the prices of goods is essential in order to attain revival from the slowdown in economic growth. Food bills already consume 35% of household incomes. Inflation, as pointed, out by economists, occurred due to weak monsoon needed for the cultivation of summer crops. Despite being the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables after China, India suffers from shortages, owing to the lack of efficient cold storage and transport facilities. RBI Governor though, has promised to cut down inflation to 8% by 2015. All measures to curb inflation would be successful only if the middle men in the supply chain are barred from carrying out their nefarious activities. Only can then we not lose out on onions and tomatoes on our dinner plates.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **output** – the material produce or yield, product
- ♦ **escalating** – to increase something in extent
- ♦ **accelerating** – to cause faster or greater activity, development, progress, advancement
- ♦ **crude** – lacking finish, polish, or completeness
- ♦ **counterfeiting** – made in imitation so as to be passed off fraudulently or deceptively as genuine
- ♦ **distort** – to give a false, perverted, or disproportionate meaning to, misrepresent
- ♦ **crimping** – to check, restrain, or inhibit; hinder
- ♦ **escalation** – increase in intensity, magnitude, etc
- ♦ **waning** – decreasing in strength, intensity, etc
- ♦ **revival** – restoration to life, consciousness, vigour strength, etc
- ♦ **nefarious** – extremely wicked or villainous



Swift Plastic Money

Since the time immemorial, in all the ages, money has always been regarded as an important medium of exchange and a tool of payment. When we did not have monetary system, we had barter system which was used as the mode of payment. Over the years, money has transformed from coins to paper cash. With the rapid expansion and exponential growth in the technology field, the use of plastic money has evolved to a great extent. Clumsy and expensive to handle coins and notes are replaced by efficient electronic payments initiated by various types of plastic cards with a tantalising prospect for the twenty first century. Plastic money was introduced in 1950's. It is an alternative to cash. This term is used more precisely to indicate Credit cards, Debit cards and other such money cards.

Plastic money is one of those inventions that have completely changed our lifestyle. Thanks to it, that we can transact money more safely. Now, when you are to travel to a far off land, there is no need to carry hard cash with you and likewise, there is no fear of it getting stolen. Due to the technological revolution in financial sector, the payments in banking system have undergone a tremendous change. The number of innovative products for making payment has developed after the privatisation and globalisation. Before the advent of Credit cards and Debit cards a major portion of the business transactions were carried on through cash. Since the cash is replaced by plastic cards it is called plastic money. Through the use of plastic money, banks and many other businesses approach the maximum customers inspite of having less physical branches. The use of plastic money has become such familiar feature of the lifestyle in the world that now it is difficult to imagine an economy functioning without it.

Spending through plastic money has increased tremendously in India. It is now becoming a much preferred mode of payment for retail products. Over the years, Indians have been averse to plastic money. This is primarily because they believed that spending through credit is a sure shot way of getting into a debt trap or fraud. But with recent security upgradations, its usage is increasing especially among women, students and small business owners. In fact it is gaining acceptance in rural India too. HDFC Bank, the second largest private lender in the country exclaims that 25% of its Credit cards are now sourced from rural and semi-urban market.

The plastic money brings with it a huge advantage of availing a credit facility from almost everywhere without actually exchanging money or visiting the bank. Travellers are saved from the plight of carrying and securing huge cash wherever they go. With a debit or credit card they pay easily and also get the best exchange rate for currencies. Plastic money is accepted everywhere, anytime. One can even get instant cash from the nearest ATM even at the wee hours of night. Life has been made simple wherein one can buy everything online from the comfort of home. It saves a lot of travelling and searching time. One can avoid the long queues to book movie tickets/ shows well in advance using plastic money. Reservation and booking of flights, railway, hotels is just a click away. It is convenient for both the buyer as well as the seller. Infact, people are getting discounts with use of online payments. The use of plastic cards has been increased because banking industries have provided the 24 × 7 customer service for their customers.

Security of these cards is also not a big issue these days as the banks or financial institutions have managed that too. So it is 100% safe and without any tension. Today, people even transfer the amount of EMI or loans through cards only.

However, extensive use of plastic money has posed problems for both the business community as well as for the individuals. There are numerous shops/sites which accept particular cards of a specific company only. In such a situation cash is the only way of payment for those who otherwise use cards only. The magnetic strip of a card can get worn out due to massive use.

If such a condition occurs while travelling and this is the only way of cash the consumer has, then he or she has to wait till the time a new card is received. Credit card companies charge high interest rate which has to be paid within the set time. Even with usage of Debit cards, banks levy service charges which sometimes consumers are unaware of. Theft of these cards means theft of huge amount of money altogether. In today's technical intelligence it is also possible to get a clone of any credit or debit card, which works like original and can result in heavy financial loss. Latest studies regarding the use of plastic money shows that demographics, age, income level play a vital role in the selection of type of card. Another latest development is that banks in India are looking at deploying biometric ATMs targeted to reach the rural India. Voice guidance and thumbprints reduces literacy requirements while using cards. Banks are coming up with money cards for kids too. Infact, some school use personal money cards with which they formulate the expenses of stationery, food etc of the students. It would not be wrong to say that use of plastic money has become latest fashion today or a thing to boast in front of others. But its usage along with the delivery channels like net banking, mobile banking etc have created a win-win situation by extending great convenience and multiple options for customers.

However, it is said that many people fall into a debt trap. But if we are careful with our expenses, plastic money can be a handy thing to have around. Hence, we need to consider the term ‘responsible usage’ and understand the actual significance of living on credit. If we use the cards carelessly, we will really fall into a debt trap. Now it is upto us how we use them. We must not forget that plastic money is a boon if we handle it with care but a bane in absence of our sensibility.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **Barter system** – to trade by exchange of commodities rather than by the use of money
- ♦ **tremendous** – vast, huge, enormous
- ♦ **advent** – the coming or arrival
- ♦ **averse** – strongly disinclined, opposed, reluctant
- ♦ **upgradation** – the act or process of improving the quality of something
- ♦ **debt** – the condition of owing, liable to pay
- ♦ **exclaim** – declare
- ♦ **wee** – very early
- ♦ **worn out** – useless, tattered
- ♦ **levy** – to impose or collect, demand
- ♦ **clone** – reproduction, copy
- ♦ **deploying** – to bring into action
- ♦ **biometric** – relating to digital scanning of the physiological or behavioural characteristics of individuals as a means of identification



Globalisation

Globalisation is the process by which the businesses or other organisations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale.

Contrary to the general view, globalisation dates back to many thousands of years. For thousands of years, people-and, later, corporations-have been buying from and selling to each other in lands at great distances, such as through the famed Silk Road across Central Asia that connected China and Europe during the Middle Ages.

However, policy and technological developments of the past few decades have spurred increases in cross-border trade, investment, and migration so large that many observers believe the world has stepped into a qualitatively new phase in its economic development. Since 1950, for example, the volume of world trade has increased by 20 times, and from just 1997 to 1999 flows of foreign investment nearly doubled, from \$468 billion to \$827 billion.

The current rage of globalisation is attributable to policies that have opened economies domestically and internationally. Many international commerce-friendly policies have caused an astounding surge in world trade.

Post the Second World War, and especially during the past two decades, many governments have adopted free-market economic systems, vastly increasing their own productive potential and creating myriad new opportunities for international trade and investment. Governments also have negotiated dramatic reductions in barriers to commerce and have established international agreements to promote trade in goods, services, and investment. These conducive measures gave birth to opportunities for global trade. Taking advantage of these new opportunities in foreign markets, corporations have built foreign factories and established production and marketing arrangements with foreign partners. A defining feature of globalisation, therefore, is an international industrial and financial business structure.

Globalisation is deeply controversial. However, proponents of globalisation argue that it allows poor countries and their citizens to develop economically and raise their standards of living, while opponents of globalisation claim that the creation of an unfettered international free market has benefitted multinational corporations in the western world at the expense of local enterprises, local cultures, and common people. Resistance to globalisation has therefore taken shape both at a popular and at a governmental level as people and governments try to manage the flow of capital, labour, goods, and ideas that constitute the current wave of globalisation.

Globalisation is a fascinating spectacle that can be understood as global systems of competition and connectivity. However, an increase in integration has not brought increased equality. Globalisation creates winners and losers among countries and global corporations, making competition the beating heart of the globalisation process.

A closed economy by choice, India formally adopted globalisation when the new economic policy of 1991 came into force. Mounting debts and pressure from IMF had left the nation with no other choice but to go global. The process of globalisation has been an integral part of the recent economic progress made by India. Globalisation has played a major role in export-led growth, leading to the enlargement of the job market in India.

One of the major forces of globalisation in India has been in the growth of outsourced IT and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) services. The last few years have seen an increase in the number of skilled professionals in India employed by both local and foreign companies to service customers in the US and Europe in particular. Taking advantage of India's lower cost but educated and English-speaking work force, and utilising global communications technologies such as voice-over IP (VOIP), email and the internet, international enterprises have been able to lower their cost base by establishing outsourced knowledge-worker operations in India.

There is no denying the fact that globalisation India and its citizens have realised many gains from globalisation. Access to umpteen number of brands, billions of jobs that have emanated from the establishment of multinational companies and the increase in forex reserves of the country are all effects of globalisation. Indian citizens have also experienced an increase in the standard of living by opening up of the country's trade routes to the world. However, there exists a contrary argument to that.

The domestic producers fear marginalisation and pulverisation due to the entry of foreign and often better quality products. It was to safeguard the domestic producer from foreign competition that India had initially adopted a closed economy stand with very limited access to foreign producers into Indian markets. However, despite the fact that we are a nation that had embraced globalisation long ago, there is still a debate in the country over permitting FDI in some sectors.

Just about a year back, FDI in retail was rolled back because of huge resistance against the move from many political parties who sought to protect the interests of domestic retailers.

Globalisation has had both desirable and undesirable consequences for India and the world. Where it has accelerated progress in some countries, it has also widened the gap between the rich and the poor in others.

Thus, globalisation has the fair and rough share of its impacts and thus we can surely hope for more advancement in the global economy due to this process.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **contrary** – opposite in nature, direction, or meaning
- ♦ **spurred** – a thing or an incentive that prompted or encouraged someone
- ♦ **attributable** – capable of being related to a particular cause
- ♦ **astounding** – causing astonishment or amazement
- ♦ **surge** – to suddenly increase to an unusually high level
- ♦ **myriad** – a vast number
- ♦ **mounting** – rising to a higher point
- ♦ **emanated** – to flow out, issue forth; originate
- ♦ **marginalisation** – putting or keeping (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group
- ♦ **pulverisation** – destroying completely, demolition



E-Commerce

Market Trend of the 21st Century

Even today, some considerable time after the so called ‘Internet revolution’, Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce) remains a relatively new, emerging and constantly changing area of business management and information technology. Speaking in layman’s terms, E-Commerce refers to the entire process of marketing, selling, delivering goods and servicing customers over the Internet. It has revolutionized the way companies do business. Consumers can buy almost anything online 24 hours a day.

In the 21st century, the rapid development of information technology and the rapid increase in information exchange have brought new drives and innovative ideas to the whole society. The wide adoption of information technology by the community has led to great changes. These changes are not simply in the context of data processing or computing. They are changes which affect how we communicate with each other, how we organise our daily activities, how we educate the younger generation, and how we run business. The great development and acceptance of information technology, computer network and Internet have transformed the mode of operation of many businesses, and at the same time have brought along unprecedented business opportunities. Businesses are now able to conduct transactions across geographical boundaries, across time zones and at a high efficiency. E-Commerce has become the market trend of the Century.

Life has become very busy these days. Odd working hours, hectic schedules and time constraints have changed how people shop these days. Hence, E-Commerce has become the preferred method of shopping for many people. They love the ease with which they can shop online from their home at any time of the day or night. Purchasing options are quick and convenient with the ability to transfer funds online. Consumers save time and money by searching for items and making their purchases online. It can take several days of physically going from location to location, costing

time and fuel, to purchase a hard-to-find item. Moreover, E-Commerce is an efficient retail method for business transactions. Start-up costs for establishing an E-Commerce business is far less than expanding your business with more brick and mortar locations. Fewer licenses and permits are required to start an online business than that of a physical store location. You will also save money by using fewer employees to perform operations such as managing inventory and billing customers. You won't have to search for an appropriate geographic location or worry about paying high utility costs for the facility.

Advertising done well on the web can get even a small firm's promotional message out to potential consumers in every country in the world. A firm can use electronic commerce to reach narrow market segments that are geographically scattered. The web is particularly useful in creating virtual communities that become ideal target markets for specific types of products or services.

The prospects are, in no doubt, great for E-Commerce and its followers. But still, there are some consumers who are reluctant to embrace E-Commerce because of privacy issues. Making an online purchase often requires disclosing personal information such as an address, telephone number and banking or credit card account information. While many people feel making an online purchase does not compromise their personal information, some still prefer not to take a chance of having their account information accessed by a third party, and will only make their purchases at a storefront operation.

Then there is the issue of inability to feel the product physically or check it with your own hands while buying. When making a purchase at a brick and mortar business, you get the product when you pay for it. On the web, there may be a time lag from purchase to actually being able to consume. The consumer will have to wait for delivery of physical goods.

Also, some businesses are less suitable for electronic commerce. Such businesses may be involved in the selling of items which are perishable or high-cost, or which require inspection before purchasing. Most of the disadvantages of electronic commerce today, however, stem from the newness and rapidly developing pace of the underlying technologies. These disadvantages will disappear as electronic commerce matures and becomes more available to and accepted by the general population.

Not only the new generation, but also the older generation is getting a hold of technology. They are adapting to the changing technologies and try to be up-to-date. Therefore, E-Commerce is also making its way into their lives. It is true that going to markets or malls to shop will never go out of fashion but E-Commerce is also here to stay and become more and more popular as people realize its advantages and get comfortable with it.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **layman** – normal person
- ♦ **innovative** – creative
- ♦ **acceptance** – approval
- ♦ **transformed** – changed
- ♦ **unprecedented** – exceptional/unmatched
- ♦ **mortar** – cement
- ♦ **potential** – possible
- ♦ **scattered** – spread
- ♦ **embrace** – adopt
- ♦ **perishable** – liable to decay



Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) can be understood as an investment made by a company or entity based in one country, into a company or entity based in another country. Foreign Direct Investment plays an extraordinary and growing role in global business. These trans-national investments have become the major economic driver of globalization, accounting for over half of all cross-border investments.

Historically, FDI has been directed at developing nations as firms from advanced economies invested in other markets, with the US capturing most of the FDI inflows. While developed countries still account for the largest share of FDI inflows, data shows that the stock and flow of FDI has increased and is moving towards developing nations, especially in the emerging economies around the world.

FDIs not only provide foreign capital and funds, but also equip domestic countries with advanced commercial skill sets (due to transfer of technology and knowledge), information and expertise, job opportunities and improved productivity levels.

FDI is attracted into a country for different reasons. At a general level, in order for a country to be more attractive to investors, there is a need to create a conducive environment by reducing the so called hassle costs.

An enabling environment for FDI has several components. First of all, political and macroeconomic stabilities are an absolute pre-requisite for any kind of private investment, including FDI. Numerous studies have amply demonstrated that political and economic stabilities, along with the prospect of growth, are the most important determinants for FDI. Only in extreme cases, such as the existence of crucial natural resources, would a foreign investor go to a war zone or where there is rampant inflation. Secondly, a sound policy and regulatory framework and efficient supporting institutions to enforce the relevant laws and regulations are imperative for FDI to enter and thrive.

Especially in a globalised competitive market, the difference between countries in how conducive their investment climate may be, including how an investor is received, how many administrative and regulatory obstacles an investor has to overcome to enter and operate, and how commercial disputes are handled through the judiciary system have a huge impact on where the investor will go and how much contribution the investment will make to the host economy. Finally, an adequate physical and social infrastructure complements a good policy and regulatory framework to create the necessary environment for attracting FDI. These include the quantity and quality of roads and communication systems, skilled labour, as well as the efficiency with which public services are delivered. They are also important if the full potential benefits of FDI presence are to be realized.

There are mainly three major modes through which firms undertake foreign direct investment (FDI) – merger and acquisition, joint venture, new plant. Mostly, the investment is into production by either buying a company in the target country or by expanding operations of an existing business into that country.

FDI was introduced in India in 1991 under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) as a part of the new economic policy. An Indian company may receive Foreign Direct Investment under the two routes namely Automatic route OR

Government route. In automatic route, FDI is allowed under the automatic route without prior approval either of the Government or the Reserve Bank of India in all activities/sectors as specified in the consolidated FDI Policy, issued by the Government of India from time to time. Whereas in the Government route, FDI in activities not covered under the automatic route requires prior approval of the Government which are considered by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

The Indian government undertook a series of steps to open and thereby enlarge the scope of investments through FDI. In 1997, FDI in cash and carry (wholesale) with 100% rights allowed under the government approval route; In 2006, FDI in cash and carry (wholesale) was brought under automatic approval route, upto 51% investment in single brand retail outlet permitted, subject to Press Note 3 (2006 series). In 2011: 100% FDI in Single Brand Retail allowed'. In 2012 government approved, the allowance of 51 percent foreign investment in multi-brand retail, [It also relaxed FDI norms for civil aviation and broadcasting sectors].

However, FDI in multi-brand retail continues to be a bone of contention amongst policy makers and political parties.

Today, FDI is approved in all sectors except atomic energy, lottery business, gambling and betting, business of Chit Fund, Nidhi Company, agricultural (excluding Floriculture, Horticulture, development of seeds, animal husbandry, pisciculture and cultivation of vegetables, mushrooms, etc. under controlled conditions and services related to agro and allied sectors) and plantations activities (other than tea plantations), housing and Real Estate business (except development of townships, construction of residential/commercial premises, roads or bridges to the extent specified in notification, trading in Transferable Development Rights (TDRs), manufacture of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes, of tobacco or of tobacco substitutes.

India is the third largest economy of the world in terms of purchasing power parity and thus looks attractive to the world for FDI. Even Government of India, has been trying hard to do away with the FDI caps for majority of the sectors, but there are still critical areas like retailing and insurance where there is lot of opposition from local Indians / Indian companies. The fear that small domestic retailer will be pulverized due to the entry of foreign players, leaves the Indian Parliament divided on the decision of whether to open FDI in those sectors.

For growth, FDI is essential for India which is also an attractive destination for the same because of cheap labour here and it being an intensively consumer FDI based economy. The government also welcomes FDI and has instituted many measures to encourage foreign investment via tax exemptions and increasing or removing caps and ceilings.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **entity** – a thing with distinct and independent existence.
- ♦ **equip** – supply with the necessary items for a particular purpose.
- ♦ **expertise** – expert skill or knowledge in a particular field.
- ♦ **conducive** – making a certain situation or outcome likely or possible.
- ♦ **hassle** – irritating inconvenience
- ♦ **acquisition** – an asset or object bought or obtained
- ♦ **consolidation** – to bring together (separate parts) into a single or unified whole
- ♦ **contention** – heated disagreement.
- ♦ **pulverised** – to reduce to nothing
- ♦ **instituted** – established



Emergence of Organic Farming

Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves the usage of natural sources of nutrients (such as compost, crop residues and manures) and natural methods of crops and weed control. It is averse to using synthetic or inorganic agro-chemicals.

It is a method of farming system which primarily aims at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, so as to keep the soil alive and in good health. Unlike the conventional methods it is in complete harmony with the environment without harming it or the people. Interestingly, organic farming does not mean going 'back' to traditional methods. It takes the best of traditional methods and combines them with modern scientific knowledge.

The world market for organic food has grown for over 15 years. The main reasons for wanting to farm organically are mainly the concerns for the environment. Conventional farming systems rely heavily on fossil fuels which are exhaustive. Organic farming maintains biological diversity within the system by minimising soil degradation and erosion, and decreasing pollution.

It aims at recycling materials and resources to the greatest extent possible. Additionally it involves careful use of water resources. It is also more economical than the other farming techniques. Organic farming results in less nutrient contamination, since it stays away from the artificial pesticides.

Conventional intensive agriculture causes many problems such as: artificial fertilisers and herbicides are easily washed from the soil, polluting the rivers and lakes. The prolong use of artificial fertilisers degrade the soil quality and also require great amount of money.

Artificial pesticides can stay in the soil for a long time and enter the food chain where they harm the bodies of animals and humans, thereby causing health problems. The organic food instead is claimed to taste better. For these reasons, people worldwide are shifting to organic food.

In India, organic farming has grown many folds and a number of initiatives at the Government and Non-Government level have given it a firm direction. National centre of organic farming promotes organic farming by providing quality biological inputs. It spreads awareness and publicity through print and electronic media. They also look into research and development in the field along with market development. India organic is a certification mark for organically farmed food products manufactured in India. It certifies and conforms the products to National Standards for Organic Products.

With the phenomenal growth and increasing demand, India has achieved the status of single largest country in terms of total area under certified organic harvest collection. To make food toxin free, organisations across India have been advocating non-pesticides farming. Some have even gone a step further by setting up centres to train farmers in organic farming.

Famous chains like Godrej's Natural Basket roped Karishma Kapoor to endorse its organic food. Infact, the evil of conventional farming was highlighted by the enlightening show of '*Satyamev Jayate*'. It named the episode as '*Khane Ki Thali Me Zahar*' (Poison on your plate) wherein it brought to attention how excessive use of pesticides have led to many problems. In the show, doctors and scientists present proved that pesticides can trigger diseases as dangerous as cancer.

Organic food is becoming popular in Europe and America though it is not at all easy farming. Each crop and crop variety has its own specific needs. It has also been concluded that organic methods gives small yield when compared to conventional farming methods and thus is expensive. In spite of these minute drawbacks organically farmed food surely has miraculous qualities because of which actors like Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif, Shilpa Shetty are promoting its use.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| ♦ conventional | - established, traditional | ♦ phenomenal | - extraordinary, remarkable |
| ♦ exhaustive | - thorough, detailed, extensive | ♦ toxin | - poison |
| ♦ contamination | - poisoning, adulteration | ♦ endorse | - promote |
| ♦ firm | - fix and definite | ♦ trigger | - cause, generate, activate |
| ♦ conforms | - to act or be in accord or agreement, comply | ♦ miraculous | - extraordinary, amazing |

D. Education

Right To Education (RTE)

Education is the most effective tool and medium for human development. Education changes the mindset through a continuous process involving, research, experiment and innovation. Without such practices a nation cannot expect the future citizens of its country to be informed and creative.

“Education is a must thing” quoted modern political activist Malala Yousafzai. This quotes further justifies Aristotle’s words, “The educated differ from the Uneducated as much as the living differ from the dead.” These two quotes show the importance of education in everybody’s life. According to the Indian Sages, the aim of education is second birth.

We are born into the world of nature and necessity, we must be reborn into the world of spirit and freedom. This significance gave rise to Right To Education. The Right To Education is a Fundamental Right and is accorded the same legal status as the right to life as provided by Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 is “An act to provide for free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years”.

The right of children to free and compulsory education came into force from 1st April, 2010. According to the Act, every child in the age group of 6 to 14 years will be provided 8 years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his/her neighbourhood.

According to the Act, any cost that prevents a child from accessing school will be borne by the state which shall have the responsibility of enrolling the child as well as ensuring completion of 8 years of schooling. No child shall be denied admission for want of documents; or shall be turned away if the admission cycle in the school is over and no child shall be asked to take an admission test.

This would apply to all schools, private or even Navodaya schools. The act restricts schools to claim special category status because it indulges in screening procedures at the elementary level. Moreover, if the number of children applying to a school exceeds the available seats, an open lottery system shall be used to fill the seats. This applies to all categories of schools.

Children with disabilities will also be educated in the mainstream schools. Section (10) of the Act makes it the duty of the parents to ensure that their children go to schools, without prescribing any punishment. Special provisions are laid for children not admitted to school or who have not completed elementary education; a child so admitted to elementary education will be entitled to completion of elementary education even after 14 years.



“Tens of millions of children will benefit from this initiative ensuring quality education with equity,” said Karin Hulshof, UNICEF representative of India. This right will propel India to greater heights of prosperity and productivity. However, for child labour and street children, the government would have to ensure that they are not compelled to work and schools are provided to them, along with residential facilities to provide them with an appropriate environment to enable them to continue their education.

This means parents and communities who traditionally forbid their adolescent girls from going to school or indulge in child marriage would have to be persuaded, or the child marriages act would need to be invoked against them.

On the basis of the Act, no school, governmental or private, can detain, fail or expel any child at the elementary stage. On 7th April, 2010, the Delhi High Court gave a verdict against St. Xavier’s School, Delhi, which had to take back all the children they had declared failed and expelled from the school. Moreover, all private schools shall be required to enroll children from the weaker sections and disadvantaged communities in their class to the extent of 25% of their enrolment, by simple random selection. While no seats in this quota can be left vacant, these children will be treated at par with all the other children in the school and would be subsidised by the state at the rate of average per learner costs in the government schools.

The act also prescribes norms and standards for all schools and any school that does not fulfil these standards within 3 years will not be allowed to function. All private schools will have to apply for recognition, failing which they will be penalised up to ₹ 1 lakh and if they still continue to function, they will be liable to pay ₹ 10,000 per day as fine. In addition, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been mandated to monitor the implementation of this right.

It has been observed that the Hindi speaking states—Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have been the most half-hearted when it comes to implementation of the RTE (Right To Education) Act, despite the fact that most of out-of-school children (upto 67%) are from these states. Regarding this Indian Constitution clearly says that it cannot be left to the states to provide people their rights. It is clearly not lack of funds that is a hindrance in the implementation of RTE Act, but lack of intent and political will. To effectively implement the RTE Act, the Human Resource Development Ministry, Labour Ministry, Women and Child Development Ministry, Panchayati Raj Ministry and Rural Development Ministry have to work together to reach towards this goal. School management committees should take it upon themselves to spread awareness about the Act at the community level so that people are encouraged to send their children to school.

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”, said Nelson Mandela. So it is important for the country to nurture their children and young talent with the right education, so that India emerges as a strong and prosperous country.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **innovation** – advancement, a new method or idea,
- ♦ **sages** – (especially in ancient history) a profoundly wise man
- ♦ **elementary** – basic, starting level
- ♦ **mainstream** – typical, normal
- ♦ **propel** – drive or push something forward, to urge onwards
- ♦ **prosperity** – success, being wealthy,
- ♦ **forbid** – stop, ban, prevent
- ♦ **expelled** – disqualified, officially make (someone) leave a school or other organisation
- ♦ **mandate** – directed, go- ahead, commanded
- ♦ **hindrance** – barrier, obstacle, difficulty



Indian Education System

The Time for Change

Visit any school in the country. You will find loads of books in bags and bulky answers in the notebooks, waiting to be crammed. Will the students studying in this manner become our future leaders? Certainly not! The paradigm needs to shift its focus from 'captive' to 'creative studies'.



The education sector in India is divided into primary, higher secondary, senior secondary and vocational education sections. Schools are regulated by NCERT. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for curriculum related matters for school education in India. It provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India.

Other curriculum bodies that govern school education system are

- The state government boards.
- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). CBSE conducts two examinations, namely the All India Secondary School Examination, AISSE and the All India Senior School Certificate Examination, AISSCE.
- The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).
- The council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations. (CISCE)

There are government run Kendriya Vidyalayas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and independent schools. The higher education system encompasses 700 universities and 35500 colleges. Vocational Training is conducted by private Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) and government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

Despite this robust network, the foundation of Indian education is shaky. It is lacking in both its outreach and content.

Primary education has been made free and compulsory for all children upto the age of 14 years, under the Right To Education, but many children in rural and remote areas still don't have access to it. In schools that have been established, appropriate infrastructure is lacking. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme of the government was a good initiative to lure rural children to schools, but in some areas, the quality of food provided was found to be sub-standard.

According to a recent survey, it was also found that a majority of teaching posts are lying vacant in government schools. In private schools, though both the infrastructure and teaching recruitments are good, the admission process especially for nursery, is a big challenge for parents.

With time, the school curriculum also needs to evolve. Our ancient language, Sanskrit has made it to the British school curriculum, but still it's not taken seriously in India.

As with other subjects, like Science, we lay more stress on mugging up facts, rather than understanding the concept. We want our students to score 'high marks', without trying to find out where their talents lie. Also, students are being dealt with, harsher than ever before. Recently, students in Kolkata and Bengaluru, were beaten up brutally, as if they were hardened criminals.

In the higher education sector also, a number of faculty positions are unoccupied, because of less job security. Also the minimal fellowships awarded for research is the reason for students not pursuing doctoral and post-doctoral studies.

All these grey areas exist notwithstanding that Indian students and professionals are considered one of the most hard working and intelligent in the world. However, if the present state of Indian education is not improved, we would lose the top honours among the best in the world, in various fields. For that, firstly students must be encouraged to ask, 'Why?' and 'How?' Remember, the 2009 movie, 3 Idiots. In that 'Rancho,' the character played by actor Aamir Khan, taught us that a subject can become interesting if applied practically. There should not be any involvement of rote learning.

Secondly, students must be made 'all-rounders' by laying equal emphasis on sports. Thirdly, as PM Modi said in his Independence Day speech, girls' toilets and other basic facilities must be ensured in all schools. Fourthly, sex education's inclusion is the need of the hour. Fifthly, action must be taken against man handling of students. Sixthly, efforts must be directed towards bringing up female literacy rates.

Last, but not the least, tolerance to different faiths and communities, along with patriotism, must be essential ingredients of the education we impart. Value education should be the 'raison d'etre' of every institution. As Nelson Mandela said :

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **captive** – kept in confinement or restraint
- ♦ **robust** – strong and effective in all or most situations and conditions
- ♦ **paradigm** – an example serving as a model or pattern
- ♦ **brutally** – inhuman, cruel
- ♦ **notwithstanding** – in spite of the fact that
- ♦ **fellowship** – an association of persons having similar tastes, interests, etc; the status of a fellow of a college or society
- ♦ **raison d'etre** – reason or justification for being or existence

Vocational Education

Education is the fundamental right of every Indian citizen. It is an important pre-requisite for the progress of an individual and of the nation. Takshashila and Nalanda Universities were the earliest universities of India. In India, education is provided by both the Government and private sectors. Other than the primary and secondary education, vocational education is also catching up fast with today's generation.



Vocational education refers to a system or course of study which prepares individuals for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities.

The plethora of opportunities available in diverse fields today means that exams are not the end of the world. Gone are the days when students only opted for a traditional career in engineering or medical courses. Today, youngsters look for satisfaction in the jobs they do and thus they prefer to pursue a career or field of their interest.

Vocational education basically consists of practical courses through which one gains skills and expertise directly linked to a career in future. Moreover, with Indian economy expanding, different sectors are growing and so is the demand for professionals in various fields. Professions like hair cutting, fashion designing, jewellery designing, palmistry, salon, boutique, footwear designing, advertising, public relations, catering, interior designing, lighting, wedding planning, gift packing, candle making, card designing, toy making, paintings and flower making, bag designing, tourism industry, mobile and gadget repairing, music and dance, acting, nutrition and fitness industry, gym culture and many more, have witnessed a surge in demand by the people availing these services, and has resultantly pulled a large number of aspirants into these vocations.

Not only these professions offer umpteen opportunities and glorious career most of the time they do not require any major academic qualification. All that is needed, is the honed skill required for the profession, the enthusiasm to learn and the passionate desire to create something new and unique. Then sky becomes the limit. In fact, through hard work and creativity one can be far more successful and famous in the world than those pursuing the regular field of study. There are endless personalities who did not fare well in exams but by choosing the career of their own choice and working hard in the field they loved they have made a distinguished name for themselves. Pablo Picasso, Walt Disney, Shiamak Davar, Lata Mangeshkar, Bill Gates, Jawed Habib, Ritu Kumar, Sachin Tendulkar and many more have not pursued an academic career, yet are extremely successful today.

The growing demand of professionals has led to the opening up of institutes and training colleges to provide training for the same. While some promise excellent dance courses, others guarantee a perfect course in cooking. A formal vocational training follows a structured training programme and provides certificates, diplomas or degrees, recognised by State/Central Government or other reputed concerns; in-formal vocational training helps in acquiring some marketing expertise, which enables a person to pursue the profession of his/her choice.

The prescribed training also lays down standards in respect of syllabi, equipment, scales of accommodation, duration of courses and methods of training. It also conducts tests in various trade courses and lays down standards of proficiency required for passing the examination leading to the award of the certificate.

In 1976-77, the Vocational Education Programme (VEP), under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), was started in general education institutions. While Vocational Education is a part of formal education system and the courses are offered in school grades 11 and 12, Vocational Training is outside formal education system and is open to students who leave school anywhere from grades 8 to 12. The purpose of the programme is to enhance individual employability, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide an alternative for those pursuing higher education without particular interest or purpose.

The All India Council for Vocational Education (AICVE), under MHRD, is responsible for planning, guiding and coordinating the programme at the national level. State Council for Vocational Education (SCVE) performs similar functions at the state level. There is a need to focus on the skills for the informal sector as it is estimated that the largest share of new jobs in India is projected to come from the unorganised sector that employs up to 93% of the national workforce and produces 60% of GDP.

“Educate a woman, and you educate the whole family.”

With regard to women’s education, it can be said that educating or providing practical training to women can go a long way in making them independent. DGET (Directorate General of Employment and Training) launched Women’s Vocational Training Programme, which aimed at bringing more women as skilled employees in the organised sector.

If all the sectors of India join hands in providing the different education patterns under one roof, it can boost India’s employment rates greatly. Vocational education will not only provide jobs, but give many a reason to live a worthy and independent life.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **plethora** – overabundance, excess
- ♦ **honed** – to make more acute or effective, improve, perfect
- ♦ **umpteenth** – innumerable, many
- ♦ **enthusiasm** – absorbing or controlling possession of the mind by any interest or pursuit, lively interest
- ♦ **proficiency** – ability, skill, competence
- ♦ **purview** – the range of operation, authority, control, concern etc
- ♦ **employability** – a person’s capability for gaining and maintaining employment
- ♦ **boost** – to increase, raise



Use of Technology in Education

For a long time we have been criticising our education system for lacking effective learning techniques or skill based learning. Technology based education seems one step towards revolutionising education for the better. Technology and education is a great combination if used together with a right reason and vision. Toddlers these days have an early introduction to technology when they start using their parents smart phones, tablets, laptops even before they learn to speak. Therefore, imparting technology based education from their early stage is definitely a positive idea.

A typical classroom was once characterised by students sitting through hour-long teacher lectures. Now it is changing gradually. Recently more than 12000 schools across 560 districts in India have adopted smartclasses. This means that classrooms are adopting technology by having digital learning tools, such as computers, printers, projectors etc. 'Eyes work more than ears' is the mantra behind the widespread usage of these tools. The digital learning is user- friendly, self explanatory and makes the process more interesting . Use of graphics simplify the concepts of difficult subjects like Maths, Biology, Chemistry, Physics. It increases the student's engagement and motivation and accelerates learning.

Even for toddlers, digital learning/technology involves the use of all their senses while learning in a very playful manner.

With technology, educators, students and parents have a variety of learning tools at their fingertips. Here are some ways in which technology has improved education over a span of time. Technology supports learning 24 × 7 and builds 21st century skills. It expands course offerings and learning materials. Teachers can now communicate with others across the world, meet the shortcomings of their work, thus providing their students with the best. Technology gives students immediate access to abundance of quality information which leads to learning at a much quicker rate than before.

The internet provides a variety of knowledge and doesn't limit students to one person's opinion. Explaining a lesson with the help of audio or visual aids helps in deeper understanding and better clarification.

Online education is now accredited and has changed the way we view education. Students, even professionals can take it as a part-time, or full time course for their progress from anywhere and at anytime. Popular in such education is a practice, in which students watch videos of already recorded teaching and creates extended classroom communities for discussions or virtual classrooms etc. It eliminates the travel time and travel costs of students.

In India more and more companies are coming forward to provide technology based education with customised settings. To name a few are like NIIT, IL&FS, HCL Infosystems, Tata Interactive Systems etc. Even parents want the best for their wards and are not averse to paying a little extra. They see value in these initiatives by schools to modernise the way teaching is imparted today. Technology in education is preparing the students for the future or more precisely 'next generation'. Indian government is not ignorant to the development and so has come up with a National Mission on Education through information and communication technology.

It aims to eliminate digital illiteracy by distributing the Aakash tablets to students across India at very low rates. In India, illiteracy is one of the biggest problems. Lack of easy access, lack of teachers, poverty, lack of infrastructure are the common reasons which are holding back the progress in rural education.

However, with the use of technology, mass education can be provided and the prevailing situation can be changed. Classroom courses at one place, can be recorded in real time and can be used for teaching the students who cannot attend these classes. This could be a good option as rural people are more attracted to technology and drop-out rate could be reduced.

Some non-profit organisations, like Aziz Premji Foundation, run by Wipro group has been actively working towards this issue. This foundation works by assisting computer aided learning. In another examples, schools in the states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, etc have received computer-assisted education through collective efforts by NIIT and government. These have given positive results. In this super fast jet age, it is required that the notebooks and textbooks be replaced by laptops and presentations. The world is changing, so should the education system. Although there has been a tremendous improvement in the quality, yet it still needs to cater to a wider audience to keep pace with the developed world.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------------|
| ♦ toddler | – a young child | ♦ averse | – opposed, reluctant |
| ♦ accredited | – authorised, recognised, certified | ♦ prevailing | – widespread, established |
| ♦ eliminates | – remove, to get rid of, stop | ♦ jet | – to move very quickly |
| ♦ customised | – make to specifications, make according to requirements | ♦ tremendous | – enormous, vast |
| | | ♦ cater | – provide for, supply |



Sex Education in School

One of the much debated topics across the world is the importance of sex education in schools. Sex education refers to a broad programme designed to impart knowledge/training regarding values, attitudes and practices affecting family relationships. The real purpose behind sex education is the transfiguration of a male child into manhood and of a female child into womanhood.

It is the education that provides knowledge on physical, social, moral, behavioural and psychological changes and developments during puberty. It teaches the adolescents about the role of boys and girls in family and society, responsibility and attitude of boys and girls towards each other, etc within social context.

Sex education is never the most pleasant of the conversations for an adult and child to have. Yet, it is an essential one that many feel should happen in a responsible and safe environment. Due to increasing incidences of HIV/AIDS, RTIs/STIs and teenage pregnancies, there is a rising need to impart sex education. Parents and counsellors in Delhi argue that banning sex education is not a solution and will prove disadvantageous instead, given the exposure kids have to the internet.

There is an ocean of distorted information available at the click of a button on the internet. It hardly throws light on issues like gender equality, marital sexual relationships or even violence or abuse on sexual grounds. That is why schools should take up these classes starting from as early as class VI, so that the students are comfortable approaching their teachers before turning to unreliable sources of information online.

The sole aim of such an education would be to teach children to establish and accept the role and responsibility of their own gender by acquiring the knowledge of sex. Understanding the differences and similarities between two genders; in terms of body and mind will set up a foundation for the future development in their acquaintance with friends and lovers and their interpersonal relationship. It will also help to develop emotionally stable children and adolescents who feel sufficiently secure and adequate to make decisions regarding their conduct without being carried away by their emotions.

A study on child abuse in India, conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, reports that a good percentage of boys and girls surveyed, have faced some or the other form of sexual abuse. Therefore, sex education might help the vulnerable young population to be aware about their sexual rights and empower them to protect themselves from any undesired act of violence, sexual abuse and molestation. India's National Population Policy also reiterates the need for educating adolescents about the risks of unprotected sex. It has been seen that various schools across different cities in India are organising workshops to create awareness among students on issues like health and hygiene. Unfortunately, a complete sex education drive on a regular basis is still to be introduced in the Indian schools.

If we were to go by the data published by WHO, sex education should be imparted to children who are 12 years and above. It has also been seen that it is the age group of 12 to 19 years that counts for some 34% of the HIV infected persons in the world. Experts claim that "Youth in India needs sex education more than the youth in any other country since child marriage ensures that one not only have sex at a young age, but girls also have teenage pregnancy".

Basically, it seems that the taboo is in the head of the leaders, not teachers. This negative approach towards the concept of sex education starts from the authorities and through the trickle-down effect reaches the students also, who then approach it in a similar way. In lieu of all the controversies, several states including Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh etc declared that the course content as suggested by MHRD was unacceptable and thus banned the programme.

On the contrary, there is more to sex education than simply dumping facts on students, which is why many schools have hired counsellors, who deal with the topic more effectively than the teachers. And all this talk about vulgarity, it is because of how the system is approaching the topic - it's all in the head.

If a regular teacher tries to talk about this topic with students, it can get awkward and uncomfortable, but it can never be vulgar. These sessions are always held by people who are trained to do it. Counsellors who can talk about these subjects without blinking an eyelid, are the ones who help in making the students confident too.

Sex education is a part of the syllabus from class VIII onwards anyway, when the students learn about the reproductive system in their biology classes. There are so many other issues that kids of this age group face and need to be sensitised about - dealing with rejections, getting too serious in relationships - topics that parents want the school staff to guide their kids through.

Such guidance is much needed in the present times of information overload. In fact, parents feel that it is the schools that have to be proactive and arrange for classes and sessions like these, so that the day the child is curious, he gets the answers from trained professionals and not from some anonymous website.

The biggest advantage of sex education in India is perhaps, it will help the country fight against the tremendous spread of AIDS. Also sexual exploitation is spreading at a high rate wherein the small kids are the highest prone to such incidents.

If we go back to the history of sex education in India, we'll find that spread of awareness was started as a result of the concern for population growth. Hence, family planning programmes were launched during the 1950s; but it was in the 1980s that the government launched the National Population Education project. The project saw textbooks promoting the idea of a small family and highlighted the fact that increase in population leads to poverty.

Evidently, a comprehensive sex education can help the present generation live a secured life. Sex education cannot be a typical educational practice in school; it should cover all psychological, physiological and social issues that can force a person to think about the urgency for this kind of awareness among school goers.

Children reaching the teen phase, starts showing peculiar behaviour that can grow up into bigger problems in future, if not given the right knowledge at the right time. An effective sex education at school along with adequate communication between parents and children at home can bring about a lot of change.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **transfiguration** – a marked change in form or appearance
- ♦ **puberty** – adolescence, teenage
- ♦ **banning** – to prohibit, especially by official decree
- ♦ **acquaintance** – relationship, association
- ♦ **vulnerable** – liable to succumb, as to persuasion or temptation
- ♦ **trickledown** – to be distributed to someone or something in little bits at a time
- ♦ **awkward** – embarrassing, difficult
- ♦ **anonymous** – unknown, unidentified
- ♦ **peculiar** – odd, strange, unusual



Choosing A Career

A Crucial Decision

Preparing young adults for success requires a different educational experience than it did even a generation ago. Gone are the times when fields such as medical and engineering were the only options available for a respectable career and income. Now, life is very complex and these are the days of specialisation. Today, the world is changing or rather evolving with each passing day. In today's age innovation holds a lot of importance. Globalisation has led the world to one big nation where different cultures and people come together. For this reason, newer career options are emerging, primarily seeing a lot of scope in India. Even the traditional fields have diverted to emerge into newer aspects to cater to the needs of the generation of tomorrow. There is an infinite variety of professions and jobs to cater to the varying interest of the students.

The movie '3 Idiots' shows the consequences of a situation when one starts a course of study due to some kind of external pressure. And it is universal that a lot of students end up in a situation like that only. The lack of proper guidance and counselling worsens the situation. Consequently, students are seen getting puzzled in the dark and making wrong career-choices. The ever-increasing number of job-seekers, ill-equipped to make right decisions on this matter, has generated a lot of frustration, hopelessness, alienation, unrest and acts of indiscipline. It also means wastage of human resources and national wealth.

A child is merely a teenager and he/she knows so little of the world. With so many choices and so much to consider, finding the right career path becomes a herculean task. Inevitably, the kind of education, educational institution, friends, surroundings, environment and parents, all play a major role in choosing the career of a student. Choosing a career also involves considering the amount of money one can invest, the time one is willing to give to the college and the place to attend the college. Additionally, the various latest trends should not be ignored.

With all these factors involved, selecting a career path is an elongated process which should be processed wisely and intelligently. Selecting the right option involves various steps. A good way to start is by some self-examination. First of all one should analyse their own self or what could be their talents. These are the things that one is naturally good at. They can be discovered and developed, but not taught. It can be followed by conducting some research. Researching is about being well informed to make one of the most important decisions of life. If one has the information, one can select from the different courses that offer a balance between the abilities and interests.

As a final step, compare all the different options. One needs to wisely consider variables such as the college, job offers or scholarships. Also students should make sure that while choosing the options they should zero down to more than one option. So that in case plan A becomes unachievable then student can work upon plan B without wasting time or getting disheartened.

What is also needed is that the school should involve in counselling sessions for the students wherein all the options are discussed in detail. The pros and cons of each option should be kept opened in front of the the students. An ability assessment can also be taken to highlight the strength and interest of the students. Online career assessment websites are also available which gives students the opportunity to answer the questions relating to students interest and then giving an immediate feedback about the career option that fits best with their personality.

Recent developments have shown that career opportunities are available in abundance. Choosing a career is no more a matter of one's likes and dislikes. Today number is not restricted to accounting. It could be banking, statistics or any other financial sector. Humanities have opened up numerous options like mass communication, hospitality, travel and tourism, animation or designing. Science does not only mean engineering or medical. Streams relating to aircraft maintenance, marine related courses, food technologist are seeing lot of opportunities. Infact, one can take to politics if one has an aptitude for public life and skills to make the people listen and follow.

With an increase in the population and advancement in science and technology, newer streams have opened up. The right and timely choice of a career is of fundamental importance. In deciding career one has to be practical, logical, rational, and shrewd. A correct choice of career may lead to success, happiness and prosperity, while a wrong and late one may lead to sorrow, repentance, failure and lifelong frustration. So for selecting the right career path, one needs to be proactive about their decision because this choice will change the entire life! Also one should know that everyone has a unique set of skills and talents, so one should focus on them and then think about where and how to apply. Casual approach in choosing a career or profession can prove very harmful.

VOCAB HELP

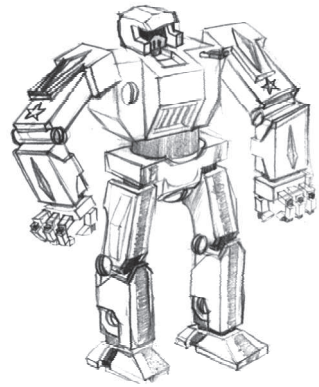
- ♦ **inevitably** – surely, certainly
- ♦ **elongated** – extended, long
- ♦ **marine** – of or relating to the sea
- ♦ **shrewd** – calculating, cunning, clever
- ♦ **repentance** – regret, guilt, grief

E. Science & Technology

Robotics *The Future is Here*

What do you think of when you think about ‘robots’? If you think they are only the stuff of space movies and science fiction novels, then think again. Robots are the largest growing technological device in the world. They perform many functions ranging from space exploration to entertainment.

Robotics technology is increasing at a fast rate, providing us with new technology that can assist with home chores, automobile assembly and many other tasks. Robotic technology has changed the world around us and is continuing to impact the way we do things. Robotic technology transformation from the past to present surrounds almost everyone in today’s society and it affects both our work and leisure activities.



Robotics is the branch of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and computer science that deals with the design, construction, operation, and application of robots, as well as computer systems for their control and processing. These technologies deal with automated machines that can take the place of a human in various kinds of work, activities, environments and processes.

The definition of the word robot has a different meaning to many people. According to the Robot Institute of America, 1979, a robot is a re-programmable, multi-functional manipulator designed to move material, parts, tools, or specialised devices through various programmed motions for the performance of a variety of tasks. The use of robots continues to change numerous aspect of our everyday life, such as health care, education and job satisfaction. Robots are going to be a major part of the world economy, they help ways to make our daily life easier and assist in producing more products.

Robotic technology is becoming one of the leading technologies in the world. They can perform many functions. They are used in many different ways in today’s society. The use of robotic technology has made an immediate impact on the world in several ways. As technological advances continue, research design and building new robots serve various practical purposes, whether domestic, commercial or military. Many robots even do the jobs that are hazardous to people such as defusing bombs, mining and exploring shipwrecks.

There are numerous uses of robots which not only give better results but also help in saving money as well as time. The robots can provide high quality components and finished products, and do so reliably and repeatedly even in hazardous or unpleasant environments. There are various industry segments which are making use of robotics to improve their production capabilities.

Much of the research in robotics focuses not on specific industrial tasks, but on investigations into new types of robots, alternative ways to think about or design robots, and new ways to manufacture them.

Recently, Apollo Hospital group installed the world's most advanced CyberKnife robotic radio surgery system at the cancer speciality centre in Chennai, India. Although it meant substantial price for the hospital, Apollo decided to go ahead with the project due to the new-found enthusiasm for robotics in India.

From the Chandrayaan I project for sending robots to moon, to biomedical engineering and the auto industry, India has been using robotics on a wide scale. In an increasingly technology-driven country, robotics has fast assumed significance not only for industrial applications, but also in various day-to-day human activities.

Presently, robotics is the pinnacle of technical development. Though robotics in India is at a nascent stage, but industrial automation in India has opened up huge potential for robotics. Innovation coupled with consolidated research and development has catapulted India's scientific position in robotic technology.

The country is soon to become a major hub for the production of robots. The global market for robots is projected to rise by an average of about 4%, while in India, the industry is expected to grow at a rate 2.5 times that of the global average.

In medical field, the importance of robotics has been growing. Robotics is increasingly being used in a variety of clinical and surgical settings for increasing surgical accuracy and decreasing operating time and often to create better healthcare outcomes than standard current approaches. These medical robots are used to train surgeons, assist in difficult and precise surgical procedures, and to assist patients in recovery. The automobile industry is equally dominated by robots.

There are multiple number of industrial robots functioning on fully automated production lines especially the high and efficient luxury and sports cars. The use of industrial robots has helped to increase productivity rate, efficiency and quality of distribution. Another major area where the use of robots is extensive is the packaging section. The packaging done using real robots is of very high quality as there is almost no chances of any human error. Another example where robotics is used is the electronic field. These are mainly in the mass-production with full accuracy and reliability. With these varied usages of robots Bill Gates has said :

“Robots will be the Next World-Changing Technology”.

Robotic has spread like an infection to an extent that so many movies and serials are also based on its theme. Some popular movies include Star Wars, Robocop, Ra one, Transformers etc. With such acclaimed popularity India too has come up with the Robotics Society of India (RSI). It is an academic society founded on 10th July, 2011, which aims at promoting Indian robotics and automation activities. The society hopes to serve as a bridge between researchers in institutes, government research centres and industry. India has also come up with specialised programmes in robotics field in IITs and other universities. Also, it has moved beyond the traditional areas and entered newer domains of education, rehabilitation, entertainment etc. Robotics has helped handicapped people by replacing their (damaged) limbs with artificial parts that can duplicate the natural movements.

Like a coin has two sides, robotics too has a flip side to it. The biggest barrier in the development of robots has been the high costs of its hardware such as sensors, motors etc. The customisation and updation is also an added problem.

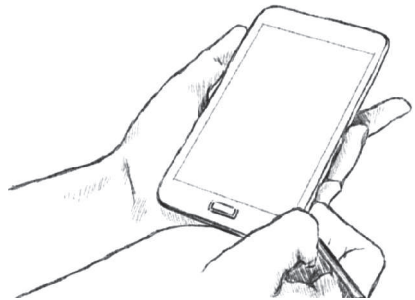
With new advancements taking place each passing day, new product introduction is a problem for the existing users. Robots cut down labour, thereby reducing the opportunities of employment for many. In many developed countries, scientists are making robotic military force that can prove dangerous to others. As the power and capacity of computers continues to expand, revolution is being created in the field of robotics. Imagination is coupled with technology. It would not be wrong to say that in near future there will be a time when robots will become smarter than the human race.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **shipwreck** – the destruction or loss of a ship, the remains of a ruined ship.
- ♦ **defuse** – the act of deactivating, terminating or making ineffective
- ♦ **substantial** – of ample or considerable amount, significant
- ♦ **pinnacle** – the highest or culminating point, as of success, power, etc
- ♦ **nascent** – developing, beginning, budding
- ♦ **consolidated** – united, combined
- ♦ **catapulted** – to move quickly, suddenly or forcibly
- ♦ **reliability** – dependability
- ♦ **domain** – field, area, sphere
- ♦ **flip side** – opposite side, reverse side
- ♦ **customisation** – modification, alteration

✿ India *A Software Super Power*

Two mighty streams flow through India– the spiritual and the technological, indeed! Many developed countries today feel threatened with the Indian Brains taking up leading positions in their country. India is fast becoming the boiling pot of all the IT and software professionals. For a country that lagged behind in the industrial revolution, this rapid catching up with the technology is nothing short of a miracle. It is a country that is being increasingly identified with the high quality IT products, services and processes as well as wealth of skilled manpower that ranks among the best in the world.



The country is forecasted to become the ‘software superpower’ of the world by 2020. It has thus acquired a foremost position in the map of the IT world. India’s progress in this sector is quick and influential, providing the economy a boost.

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, manufactured the first computer in India, in 1966 and since then there has been no looking back. India has emerged as a great reckoning force and a dynamic nation at the dawn of this century.

The year 1985 is said to be the year which is the generator of the software and IT revolution in India. India declared its IT policy under the leadership of late Rajiv Gandhi who saw computer as a powerful instrument of modernising the country. The IT policy of 1985 stressed on the fact that electronics and software would be the answer to the problem of unemployment in near future. Indeed computers are spreading in the country at a rocketlike speed.

Today, software revolution is at its peak in India. Computers are common in every home, with small children playing games, to generating businesses. Computer consciousness and awareness is fast-developing amongst the youth of today. At present, the United States is considered the leader in IT software, with giants like Microsoft, Apple, Hewlett Packard etc. Today even India is among the top rankers in software industry with over 150 of the fortune 500 companies existing in India.

The world's top software firms such as Microsoft, Motorola, Intel, IBM etc already have set-up centres for research and development because of globally recognised quality standards of India. For instance, Guillermo Wille, head of GE's India Research Centre noted that GE's Indian scientists and engineers are working in leading edge fields such as nanotechnology, hydrogen energy, photonics etc. Moreover, while complimenting Indian talent, Oracle co-president Charles Phillip said :

“The kind of intellectual figure you people have is phenomenal.....”

The success is 'phenomenal' and has been achieved because of various reasons. Strong steps by the government have been taken to improve infrastructure led by revamped policies to attract global foreign direct investments. There is a huge base of English-speaking graduates that supports the extensive ITES-BPO industry. Additionally, there is a ready supply of professionals with relevant IT skills from both formal and informal sector.

Infact, to further boost the literacy in this sector, Indian Government has launched low-cost-tablet called 'Aakash' which will link about 25000 colleges and 400 universities to an e-learning programme.

Bengaluru is popularly known as India's Silicon Valley. It is the hub of IT companies specialising in R & D, electronics and software production. Leading Indian software companies like Infosys, Wipro Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL hold the world ranking in terms of revenues.

Infosys is the third-largest Indian IT service company by 2014 revenues. Wipro's founder, Azim Premji was claimed to be the richest man according to Forbes 2011 list of billionaires. Sabeer Bhatia, founder of hotmail e-mail services, recent Satya Nadella, Microsoft's new CEO (succeeding Steve Ballmer in February 2014) are the examples of India's excellent might in this sector.

A 21 years old Indian engineering graduate won a reward of ₹ 8 Lakh for discovering a bug which enabled the users of facebook to remove pictures from other accounts without the approval of the owner. Truly, India's software whiz kids have won world-wide acclaim in rectifying the millennium computer bug. They are less prone to committing mistakes than their Western counter parts, especially in writing long and complicated software programmes.

And they take advantage of the 24-hour clock, while European and American multinationals sleep, Indian experts fix their software glitches overnight. Every third of Bill Gates' employees is of Indian origin and upto 50000 Indian technicians make their way to US Silicon Valley each year.

Indian politicians are eager to back the IT revolution. They are making the concessions so that the infrastructure and the sector as a whole can flourish. With such incentives India's IT sector is getting stronger with each passing day. With a 1.2 Billion people, India has the world's largest pool of technical talent and is the top global technology services outsourcing destination.

Moreover, the increasing demand of Indian software engineers is a sure signal that even the world accepts India as a software super-power to reckon with in the present era.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **lagged** – to fail to keep up a pace, falling behind
- ♦ **manpower** – the power of human physical strength, workforce
- ♦ **forecasted** – predicted, estimated
- ♦ **reckoning** – the act of counting, calculating
- ♦ **photonics** – the scientific study or application of electromagnetic energy
- ♦ **phenomenal** – extraordinary, outstanding, remarkable
- ♦ **revamped** – restore, renovate, reconstruct, revise
- ♦ **rectifying** – correcting, repairing
- ♦ **glitches** – a minor malfunction, mishap, technical problem
- ♦ **outsourcing** – obtain (goods or services) by contract from an outside supplier



Internet Boon

The internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that link several billion devices worldwide. It is an international network of networks that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business and government packet switched networks, linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies. The internet carries an extensive range of information resources and services, such as applications of world wide web (www), the infrastructure to support email, peer to peer networks for file sharing and telephony.

Internet can be reckoned as the discovery of man which has revolutionised his style of working and living. It has totally reduced distance, broken all man-made barriers and made our world a small place. It has brought information at our doorstep opening before us what is known as 'Information Superhighway' at the click of a button.

The internet didn't just happen overnight— rather it was the end result of a search that had been in place since the late 1950s. By the time the world started to get online in the mid-1990s, the net had been almost 40 years in the making.

The internet revolutionised the computer and world of communication like never before. The invention of the telegraph, telephone, radio and computer set the stage for this unprecedented integration of capabilities. The internet has a worldwide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location.

The internet has changed much in the two-decades since it came into existence. It started as the creation of a small band of dedicated researchers, and has grown to be a commercial success with billions of dollars of annual investments. According to a survey, as of June 2012, over a third of world's human population have used the services of the internet. This made Bill Gate say : "The internet is becoming the town

square for the global village of tomorrow". It is changing to accommodate yet another generation of underlying network technologies with different characteristics and requirements from broadband residential access to satellites. New modes of access and new forms of service will spawn new applications, which in turn will drive further evolution of the net itself.

The internet boom in India has become one of the major contributors of the economic growth of the country. The use of internet has increased more than 11 times in the last seven years. The internet boom has equally affected the metros, the towns and villages. Internet has revolutionised the access of information, telephony, television, sharing ideas among other things. With the strike of a button, all is done. The internet boom in India has also contributed to the generation of employment. The rise in the use of internet has led to the growth of cyber cities, cyber cafes and internet parlours throughout India. With the rise in its popularity in India, there is a need for professionals who would feed the information into the web. Content writing and management, web page designing, internet advertising have become booming sectors within the IT industry in India.

Some of the ways the internet is being used are for finding people, place or information. One can use the directory services to search the phone books of any country together with zip codes. Businesses and potential businesses research their competition over the internet. In education field, school teachers co-ordinate projects with classrooms all over the globe. College students and their families exchange e-mails to facilitate letter writing and keep down the cost of phone calls. Students do researches with the help of their home computers. Moreover, the latest encyclopaedias are available online.

In the field of travel, cities, towns, states and countries are using the web to put up (post) tourist and event information. Travellers find weather information, maps, transportation schedules and tickets, and museum hours online. In marketing and sales, software companies are seen selling software and providing updates via the net. Companies are seen selling products over the net. Online shopping enables people to browse online, choose titles, and pay for stuff over the net. Not just for students, internet is an incredible tool for job finders too. One can distribute his/her resume online to prospective employers.

Furthermore, people are even finding romance on the net. Singles ads and matchmaking sites vie for users. Patients and doctors keep up-to-date with the latest medical findings, share treatment experience, and give one another support in medical problems around the globe. Some practitioners exchange e-mails directly with their patients. Also people do financial research, buy stock, and invest money. Some companies are online and they even trade their own shares. Churches, NGO's and other community organisations put up pages telling about themselves and inviting new people. With so many varied and extensive usages, Bill Clinton once said :

"The internet has become an integral of America's economic, political and social life."

However the internet boom has some setbacks too which is a threat to the whole humanity. Some people are getting addicted to the internet and thus causing problems to their health. People are also seen wasting a lot of time surfing internet. Internet and television together are adding to the busy lifestyles of people further making them lazy. Internet hackers are on the rise, creating havoc in the world of business and communication. They are creating a lot of problems by creating viruses, using it for identity theft or even misusing the confidential information of the

government. There are a lot of thefts, frauds unscrupulous businesses that have sprung up on the internet to take undue advantage of the innocence of the people. The problem of pornography is widespread and is thus ruining our youth. Anti-social elements of society like terrorists are also using internet against the humanity. During the times of riots or unrest in a nation, fast spreading information proves difficult to be tackled. Internet is a great tool which man has invented. Its potential is still not fully tapped. More and more uses of Internet are being discovered as days go by. It has made our life easy, comfortable, pleasurable and luxurious. Internet has ushered in the cyber age. However, it is high time that its wrong use and negative impact be minimised. If not put an end to, it will strangle our younger generation and lead them to moral abyss.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **array** – an impressively large number
- ♦ **telephony** – transmitting speech at a distance
- ♦ **reckoned** – considered, supposed, viewed
- ♦ **unprecedented** – unparalleled, extraordinary
- ♦ **integration** – incorporation, blending
- ♦ **dissemination** – distribution, diffusion, transmission
- ♦ **spawn** – generate, produce, give rise to
- ♦ **facilitate** – further, promote
- ♦ **incredible** – unbelievable, extraordinary, brilliant
- ♦ **vie** – compete, contest, strive
- ♦ **practitioners** – someone who practices a learned profession
- ♦ **varied** – diverse, miscellaneous, wide-ranging
- ♦ **unscrupulous** – corrupt, dishonest, unethical
- ♦ **havoc** – chaos, devastation, violent and needless disturbance

Do Modern Gizmos Make Us Lazy?

Wheel was among the first human inventions to cut down the human labour. Since then, men's curiosity and meticulous efforts have helped him for new inventions and discoveries in every field. In today's modern age of technology, new gadgets or gizmos are being introduced almost each day to make our lives simple. But in this rage of making life simpler, gone are the days when the built and strength of a human body was comparable or in some way more than that of the strongest animals. Modern gadgets are indeed making the human kind lazy and more disease prone.

A gadget is a device or appliance having a unique purpose and function. Right from the time we open our eyes in the morning, till the time we sleep, we use endless number of gadgets. Such is the way these have entered in our lives that nowadays, human beings cannot do a simple work without taking help of a gadget. No one wants to go back to the days when there was no television, no washing machines and certainly, no mobile phones. True, modern gizmos have made our lives better, but it can also ruin our lives if we allow them to.

Instead of running or jogging in fresh air, today people prefer to run on a treadmill. The joy of getting soiled in playground during football session has been taken over



by joysticks of playstations. Walking a short distance to meet a friend or to buy things from grocery stores have been replaced by use of big sedan cars. Most of the field research has been taken over by a click of a button. Libraries are losing their identity.

Nutrient-rich diet has been replaced by tinned, canned or preserved food. All these things have one thing in common: mellowing down the labour done by man. Besides physical laziness, modern gadgets have also led to mental laziness.

Today's so called 'smart generation' seems to be oblivious of the disability rendered by these gadgets. Even for simple calculations, one cannot do without using a calculator. Instead of engaging in physical activities, one would prefer to spend long hours sitting comfortably on the couch watching television. Social media has made communication so easy that one doesn't feel the need to actually speak to a person. The shortcuts of communicating through networking sites like Facebook and Twitter have done away with our traditional social obligations. All the household chores are now done by gizmos or machines be it washing clothes or utensils. Infact the day is not far when all the household work will be done by robots or machines and people will have more time to do nothing and become more lazy.

In the past, children and young people utilised their free time by reading books, socialising, or engaging in active or creative play. A fixation on gadgets reduces participation in all of these, especially the aspect of creativity. Digital worlds can be vast, but they are always structured, not requiring the imagination and inventiveness of unstructured play. Some children become less creative and less able to entertain themselves. Their minds become numbed by the constant onslaught of varied and useless information.

Also most of the people are unaware of the fact that almost all the modern gadgets powered by electric, electronic or battery sources produce electromagnetic field or EMF. According to the scientists, radiations from the EMFs can be disruptive to the human body. Like X-rays these waves are not blocked or weakened by objects in their way. These radiations are emitted from most of the things like laptops, computers, mobile phones, electronic or battery employing toys causing headaches, tiredness or even immune system disorders. Additionally a recent study by a Finnish scientist found a 40% increase in the risks of brain tumour for those who use mobile phones extensively for more than 10 years.

Evidently human being are becoming addictive to these modern gizmos. All the adults as well as toddlers need therapy to kick the habit and get their lives back. To sum up, although, the countless advantages of modern technology can't be denied, we should exercise moderation to avoid countless disadvantages of our cherished gadgets.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **meticulous** – very careful and precise, painstaking
- ♦ **gizmos** – gadgets, appliances
- ♦ **prone** – having a tendency, inclined
- ♦ **mellowing** – relax and enjoy oneself
- ♦ **oblivious** – unaware, ignorant, unconcerned
- ♦ **rendered** – to give or make available, provide
- ♦ **numbed** – emotionally unresponsive, indifferent
- ♦ **onslaught** – flow, outpouring
- ♦ **disruptive** – disturbing, troublesome
- ♦ **toddler** – a young child
- ♦ **moderation** – calmness, mildness, coolness

Television of Smart Generation

One of the greatest inventions of the scientific world that has contributed immensely to the development of mankind is the invention of television.

It is a great source of information and entertainment brought to the comfort of our households. It is a boon for the lonesome, elderly people and proves bane for the innocent kids. It is informative but addictive. It keeps one up to date but is rather disruptive. It is a mixed blessing.

The history of television comprises the work of numerous engineers and inventors in several countries over many decades. Television in India was introduced with an experimental telecast in Delhi in September 1959 when UNESCO gave the Indian Government some TV sets and financial support. Until 1975, only seven Indian cities had the television service.

Colour TV was introduced in 1982 in the Indian market. At that time there was only one national channel Doordarshan. TV programmes were broadcast twice a week from an hour a day on topics such as community health, citizen's duties and rights etc. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were the first major television serials produced. Since then, television has travelled a long way. From Doordarshan to MTV; from one channel to hundreds of channels, from 1 or 2 hour programme per week to 1000 programmes running simultaneously 24 × 7. From huge box it has now turned to an ultra-slim flat screen on the wall; from black and white world it has been converted to high-definition 3D technology, from remote control system to the latest being the gesture control system. TV has and is seeing complete reversal in advancement with each passing day. Starting with just news and mythological serials, TV today entertains us in every possible way; be it lifestyle, health, food, science and technology, fake cinemas or music or cartoons, literally everything.

The most obvious and important advantage of television is news. News that took months to travel from one place to another now takes just a fraction of second, minus the distorting factor of human messengers. The impact of this improved communication on our lives is great indeed. We are not only better informed of current events all over the world but we are also exposed to a multitude of different cultures and ways of life. These days news is telecast in different regional languages so as to reach the maximum. TV is matchless source of entertainment. It provides hours of fun and enjoyment to young and old alike. Video games are wonderful tools for developing hand-eye coordination.

Channels like National Geographic, Discovery Channel, History TV18 are highly informative. It really makes us aware of the real wonders of our earth and universe. Apart from news and music channels, lifestyle channels like NDTV Goodlife, and cooking/food channels are also gaining momentum amongst the viewers. Pertaining to the viewership, TS Eliot once quoted that :

“Television is a medium of entertainment which permits millions of people to listen to the same joke at the same time”

Through the medium of TV, manufactures are able to reach out to consumers more effectively. The advertisements on TV serve to inform the consumers about new products. However, now-a-days we are literally overwhelmed by dozens of advertisement clips on TV all vouching for how good their products are. Apart from this TV is an invaluable education tool. It enables the educational planners to coordinate and inform the school children about the requirements of various subjects. Kids can learn so many activities, craft work, rhymes and games through channels like Pogo.

These days even cable network providers like TATA Sky too have been telecasting smart kids programmes to enhance the general knowledge of the kids. On the other hand cartoons like Shin Chan, Doraemon, which lack morals and values, and are banned in their origin countries are being widely watched by Indian kids.

Elsewhere, TV is used both as a surveillance tool and an ‘eye’ at inaccessible places. e.g. in banks and other large commercial centres, TV serves to maintain security. In deep-sea exploration, TV is used to reach places where no man can go. To go into details on every use and abuse of TV would require volumes of books. How we make use of this wonderful invention is entirely up to us. Used with care, it is a boon to mankind. Used at abandon, it can be a curse instead. Steve Jobs has rightly said :

“There are downsides to everything; they are unintended consequences to everything. The most corrosive piece of technology that I’ve seen is called television—but then, again, television, at its best, is magnificent.”

Television comes with a lot of drawbacks too. Foremost being the health issues. It deteriorate one’s vision. The thinking process can get so muddled up that one would not be able to think clearly.

Viewing TV at high volume has been seen as hampering the function of ears. It is highly addictive too. Other than this TV provides no educational benefits for a child under the age of 2. Worse, it steals time for activities that actually develop their brain by interaction with others.

Watching soap operas, violence, explicit shows, superflows habits, horror shows render teenagers with bad behaviour. TV provides counter images to reality and supplies visual forms for fantasies and day dreams and in some cases have even given rise to anti-social activities.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **lonesome** – isolated, lonely
- ♦ **disruptive** – disturbing, troublesome
- ♦ **compromises** – to reduce the quality, value or degree of something
- ♦ **multitude** – great number
- ♦ **pertaining** – to have reference, relate
- ♦ **overwhelmed** – upset, disturbed
- ♦ **vouching** – give surety or assurance, guarantee
- ♦ **surveillance** – observation
- ♦ **deteriorate** – worsen, degenerate
- ♦ **muddled** – confused, unclear
- ♦ **explicit** – specific
- ♦ **superfluous** – serving no useful purpose

✿ Blossoming of Social Media

The generation of 21st century stand at a point where we are fortunate enough to witness some of the most amazing technological advancements ever in history. Every now and then some innovation is built or an amazing idea is built which creates a craze equally all over the globe. This made Bill Gates say : “The PC (Personal Computer) has improved the world in just about every area you can think of.

Amazing developments in communications..... New kinds of entertainment and social media. Access to information and the ability to give a voice people who would never have been heard.” Social media is the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.



Furthermore, social media depend on web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms. Social media has gained worldwide momentum because of its better quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. It has grabbed so much popularity and usage today as it has moved from laptops/computers to mobile phones. The access is thus easily available and at reach.

Some important tools of social media are social networks, blogs, social wikis, reviews and travels, videos, music social, social gambling, photo sites, conferences, B2B social, podcast, social couponing and life casting. While social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and videos like YouTube have reached mass adoption, with the help of B2B social and reviews and travel, one can also shop in interesting and easy way by discussing things that other people or your friends are buying. Sites like Blippy and Groupon offer collective buying offers to give consumers a fun-filled shopping experience.

Today, every second person is addicted to social media and that too at a glaring speed. Sites and blogs like Orkut, Facebook, Twitter, Ibibo, Myspace, LinkedIn, ConnectIn, BigAdda, Fropper and many more are erasing differences of age and class. Social networking sites are not only catching the attention, but are hooking young and old alike. These days most of the celebrities have their blog or communicate through social media.

Latest being Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking on an issue through his blog. Moreover, the country kept track of Anna Hazare’s hunger strike even during wee hours, at 3 am when team Anna tweeted about the latest developments. Even Barack Obama, the President of US, begun the re-election campaign for 2012 elections through popular online mediums such as Facebook and Twitter.

Social Media is also a big hit among many companies who use these sites as a networking tool to promote their product or services. Social media enables companies to generate awareness about their product, promote their brand, win over customers and thereby increase their sales.

It saves their cost of marketing and advertising. Consumers can directly communicate with sellers and are offered better services. Together all this has given rise to a different term called E-commerce. E-commerce business refer in social media as consumer-generated media.

Social media is beyond and above the barrier of distance, colour, creed, age, culture or income level. Indulgence in social media is highly addictive. As Bryan Adams has put “Social media is a giant distraction to the ultimate aim the time is better spent on a clever lyric than a clever tweet.”

As a matter of fact, these days popularity or fame of a person is determined by the number of associations one has with one of these social media sites. However, the use of social media increases the risk of people falling prey to online scams that seem genuine, resulting in data identity theft. It opens up a possibility for hackers to commit frauds and launch virus attacks. With the wide usage, employees even at work are in a habit of indulging in social media sites. It hampers their productivity. Also negative comments from employees about company hampers its image tremendously.

In fact, students too are highly active on social media sites so much so that sometimes school has to intervene to resolve the disputes. The sites like Facebook, Twitter are also used to express personal anger/dispute around which a lot of chaos is created.

Social media targets a wide audience, making it useful and effective tool for the society. It reaches to people even in the remote areas and the information is spread like a jungle fire. The benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building reputation and bringing in career opportunities by being content contributor. The emergence of social media has led to the democratisation of media.

It enables to form communities and foster relationships and conversations through interactive sharing. Social networking sites have facilitated the creative re-mixing of cultures across the world. Although at times information and social networking overload creates problems in finding the best content and annoys the user, but there is no denying in the fact that social media has changed the definition and culture of media, where common man is no more a passive recipient, but has become an active responder.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|
| ♦ virtual | – unreal, imaginary | ♦ tweeted | – a short message posted on the Twitter website |
| ♦ momentum | – power, strength | ♦ scams | – fraudulent business scheme |
| ♦ casting | – selection, choice, option | ♦ hampers | – prevent, slow down, hinder |
| ♦ hooking | – to take strong hold of; captivating | ♦ foster | – develop, promote, encourage |
| ♦ glaring | – outstanding, glowing | | |

Is Science a Boon or Curse?

Man has risen from the lowest position of a caveman to the highest position of a spaceman. He has conquered time and space and has tamed all the forces of nature. But as every coin has two faces, so is the case with science. The science which has been of such great assistance to mankind has another face too. There is evidently a drastic change in the lives we are leading today and that we had some years ago. Science which has bestowed us with development, progress, expansion and growth has also rendered us with hostilities, violence, ruin, devastation and bloodshed. George Bernard Shaw has rightly said :

“Science... never solves a problem without creating ten more.”

Gone is the age of steam. We are now in the age of hydrogen bombs and electricity. The most fantastic dreams of HG Wells in his novel : “The Dream” have come true. In this space age, where the wonders of science excel the wonders of nature, science affects our day-to-day life. Science has surpassed the old cobwebs of mythology and yesterday’s faith has proved to be today’s superstition in the crucible of science.

Yet the problem is whether science is a boon or bane to society. Science nurtures intelligence but leaves the will and emotions uncared for. As Helen Keller has quoted :

“Science may have found a cure for most evils, but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all- the apathy of human beings.”

Science triumphs in automating processes but now it reigns over man. Automation is the order of the day. The specter of war and destruction haunts the world and nobody is safe. Controlling scientific knowledge with moral judgement may be a solution to this dilemma. Audio-visual appliances annihilate times and distances. But more valuable than these concrete achievements is the spirit of science. Science means systematised knowledge. It finds the causes of phenomena, and works through observation and experiments. Science is the torch-bearer of the civilisation.

Is science really a bane? As religion is a Matter of Faith, in the same way science is a Matter of Fact. Modern warfares are destructive beyond the wildest dreams of our unscientific predecessors. Machine guns, shells, submarines, the atom hydrogen bombs and nuclear weapons can destroy the world in the twinkling of an eye. Aeroplanes in war act as engines of mass destruction. Not only in times of war but in times of peace also man lives in the midst of diseases. Though cures are being invented, diseases are multiplying too.

If the former is in arithmetic progression, the latter is in geometric progression. That is why peace lovers blame science as a curse. It is said that Mathematics makes man subtle and history makes man wise. Likewise, science upgrades the human intellect. It supplements him with acute knowledge and adds to his comforts. It should be refined by the philosophy of love, by a desire to tolerate others and then only man will be able to avert the evil effects that may follow from the misuse of science. An integrated educational pattern, which makes a scientist aware of his social responsibilities, may be a solution to the present turmoil. The extremely genius Albert Einstein once quoted :

“To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.”

Indeed, since his times, science has advanced manifolds. More than ever, science has brought hope to the lives of many with its medical advances, genetic engineering, biotechnology, various inventions and discoveries. Science has made it possible for man to live for longer time, decrease the death rate, increase the life expectancy etc.

Moreover, life has become extremely easy only with the help of science. Going places is easy, staying connected with people is convenient and keeping updated with the latest in world, and being entertained are all the blessings of science. Today even a child cannot imagine his life without cartoons. Latest technology toys that can fly, dance, move around, talk etc, mobiles, television, video games, movies and latest clothes are the boon of science. Doubtlessly, we cannot live without electricity. An hour's power cut at our homes and offices drives us mad and makes our routine and work go haywire. Telephones, television, radio, kitchen appliances like mixer, grinder, LPG, refrigerator, ovens, microwaves etc make our lives easy, comfortable and enjoyable. And who can forget computers! Life has never been the same ever since the IT revolution took the world by storm. The entire world has been reduced to one global village. Any kind of information is just a click of mouse away. There has been an explosion of knowledge and wisdom.

The leap of science in aeronautics and space research is commendable. One cannot think of life without the satellites hovering over the earth for a variety of reasons. They make so many things of our daily life possible like—weather forecasts, communication, entertainment etc. Nuclear power can do wonders if used for the betterment of mankind. But the tendency of man to tread the forbidden paths leads him into the black hole of death, destruction and decay.

Man has manipulated deserts, hills, mountains, oceans, ice covered regions, all of them, in accordance with his needs; and has exploited animals to their extinction. Man has constructed whole new islands for himself; but global warming is a big threat to the already existing lands. Man has invented radiations and lasers only to prove harmful to human body than being beneficial. Science has made modern man's life simpler but has loaded it with huge tensions and threats.

Science is the greatest blessing that man could ever receive. It is indeed a boon and a blessing, if used for the benefit of mankind and for constructive purposes unless it becomes a tool in the hand of a few selfish and evil-minded people. When used as a weapon to destroy, create fear, spread violence and annihilate people, then science becomes a double-edged sword destroying even the perpetrator.

It is thus in our hands to make science a blessing for humanity or to convert it into a curse, a bane and destroy even the footprints of mankind on this planet.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------------|---|
| ♦ tamed | – manipulated | ♦ annihilate | – destroy, eliminate, extinguish |
| ♦ hostilities | – enmity | ♦ subtle | – hard to grasp, not obvious or easily understood |
| ♦ devastation | – destruction, ruination | ♦ acute | – important, serious |
| ♦ surpassed | – overshadow, to go beyond the limit | ♦ avert | – prevent, avoid |
| ♦ cobwebs | – confusion, disorder | ♦ turmoil | – confusion, chaos |
| ♦ crucible | – a severe test, as of patience of belief, a trial | ♦ manifolds | – numerous, many, diverse |
| ♦ apathy | – passivity, indifference | ♦ hovering | – remain in one place in the air |
| ♦ triumphs | – dominates, prosper | ♦ tread | – walk on, over or along |
| ♦ reigns | – predominate, prevail, influence | ♦ perpetrator | – culprit, offender |
| ♦ specter | – ghost | | |

✿ UFO : *Reality or Fiction*

A United Nations report stated that there have been over million UFO sightings since 1947 all over the world; and over thousands documented landings on the surface of earth. Yet it is considered a make believe story of science fiction.

Unexplained aerial observations have been reported throughout the history. Sighting of 'UFO' or 'Unidentified Flying Objects' of varying sizes, shapes and other characteristics have been recorded all around the world.

Some were undoubtedly astronomical in nature such as comets, bright meteors, one or more of the five planets that can be seen with the naked eyes. But there are others like a flying saucer or a triangular shape flying machine, whose identity and happening is a big mystery.

The appearance of these space crafts have some oddity. They can fly silently, they can do seemingly impossible manoeuvres and suddenly disappear at an incredible speed. When they are tracked on radar, they have been found to be doing acceleration which no human could survive.

And that can only be possible if and when they can be tracked as most of the time they cannot be tracked on radar due to their much advance technology. They are presumed to have a stealth type technology which is currently unavailable to human.

None of the current publicly known man-made aircrafts are completely invisible. These UFOs are peculiar in other ways as well, like they usually involve some sort of exceedingly bright lights. Moreover, there are occasions when electrical equipment has ceased to work while the UFO is in the vicinity. And when the UFO disappears, the electrical equipment start working again as if nothing has happened. No explanation has ever been found for this.

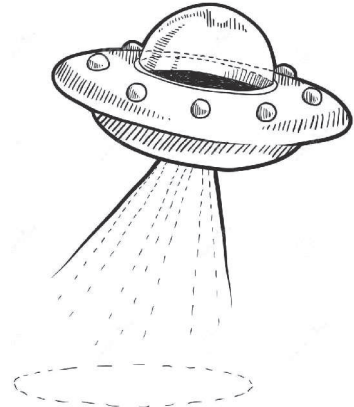
Other supporting theories too explains the reasons why these UFOs are from different planets and not from this world. Einstein's theory of relativity claims that to travel between two stars one needs an aircraft with a speed more than that of light.

Light travels at the fastest speed and no such aircraft has been built by the humans that can travel faster than the speed of light. So definitely the technology developed by aliens somewhere else is much more advanced and humans are unaware of it.

Niel Armstrong has himself stated :

"We have no proof, but if we extrapolate, based on the best information we have available to us, we have to come to the conclusion that other life probably exists out there and perhaps in many places".

There have been so many movies in different languages based on the stories of these UFOs and their pilot aliens. These movies show both the aspects of these aliens and UFOs where they prove a blessing as well as disastrous to mankind. A TV serial named 'Ancient Aliens', with its expert logical reasoning proves how these aliens have helped the humans on the earth.



They claim that aliens coming through these flying saucers/UFOs have a major role in all the scientific and technological advancements in the past. They even go on to claim that the mythological gods could in fact be these aliens in reality who would descend to earth from time to time. According to the experts these aliens possess better technology than any developed country in this world, all throughout the past till now.

Contrary to all this, some have claimed that all these unidentified objects in the sky could in fact be experimental or advanced military aircrafts. Many religious extremists also deny their presence or relevance as they believe that any proof of extra-terrestrial life would invalidate their holy books. Yet people from various parts of the world have given descriptions about the appearance of the UFOs.

There are concrete instances where UFOs have been reported as landing on the Earth. After its departure, holes in the ground, or depressions in sand or disturbed vegetation pattern have been described. Although there are some residues which were left behind but they are not backed up by any meaningful laboratory analyses. Professor Stephen Hawking has gone a step further in commenting “Of course it is possible that UFOs really do contain aliens as many people believe and the government is hushing it up”.

There is of course the possibility that an advanced alien civilisation has achieved tremendous speed that they are able to travel faster than light and are visiting us? However, we equally do not know if there are at all any civilisation out there. The question is thus open ended at the moment. We simply do not know whether we are alone or not. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Recent discoveries on potential fossils from Mars and the presence of certain molecules on the moons of Jupiter do however seem to point at the existence of life in the rest of the universe.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------|---|
| ♦ fiction | – imagination, fantasy | ♦ vicinity | – area, around, near |
| ♦ saucer | – something with a round shape resembling a flat circular plate | ♦ extrapolate | – infer, conclude |
| ♦ manoeuvres | – action, movement | ♦ extremist | – a person who holds extreme views |
| ♦ incredible | – unbelievable, extraordinary | ♦ extra-terrestrial | – a form of life assumed to exist outside the Earth or its atmosphere |
| ♦ stealth | – avoiding detection by moving carefully | ♦ concrete | – specific, definite |
| ♦ peculiar | – strange, unusual | ♦ hushing | – to make silent or quiet |

Health Advancements

Modern medicine has gained prominence and widespread acceptance as the preferred method of curing diseases. Today, we know more about the human body, how it works and about its diseases. The advances in modern medicine have made clearer the physical and psychological causes behind various diseases. Advancements in the field of health and medicine has been there in every civilisation. But, today it is more researched and revised in form of chemicals. These advances in medicine have opened up possibilities beyond what doctors thought was possible years ago. Today's techniques, surgeries, therapies and drugs have decreased the overall death rates, placing doctors equivalent to God.

Due to the advancements in modern medicine, newer and more effective methods of cure and treatment are available that will help humans to live longer, healthier and with more satisfaction. Medical advancement has shown various wonders like achieving the impossible task of separating bodily attached twins. After the accident, people were bound to live a handicapped life with amputated body part. But now they are given a second life with a help of a substitution part. People born with diseases or any defects as such being blind, deaf or any other bodily defects can now be cured with the help of advanced technology.

Moreover, doctors have been successful in transplanting various body parts like heart, liver, kidney, etc and have performed various brain surgeries too. Not only this but they have also treated people with acid burns etc by providing them with new faces. And it has all been possible due to the advancement in cosmetic surgeries. Medicine are now available for psychological disorders also. Even the gender of people in some cases, can be changed nowadays. Such is the power and might of modern day medication.

Medical sector is thus proving miraculous every day and coming up with refined development each time. Some important ones amongst them are : Robotic surgeries, which are happening on a daily basis and in growing number of centres. Doctors are using more of robotic technology in complicated surgeries to improve the accuracy of procedures. Because of the combination of drug therapies, the rate of death due to HIV and cancers have come down.

Today treating heart attack is not about doctor's perfection. It is about the speed with which the patient is brought to the hospital so that the clot that blocks the heart can be cured. The most recent stem - cell research has proved a laboratory breakthrough for doctors. This is likely to be the future of regenerative medicines. About so many life-taking diseases can now be cured using embryonic or adult stem cells.

India is also not behind in its medical advancements. It is a promised land offering much in the medical and scientific research. In medicine, India has not only put research efforts in traditional medicine, but also in herbal medicine. It has thus adopted a holistic approach. India has formulated the drug against tuberculosis called 'Risorine' which has drastically cut short the duration of TB treatment. India is now a home to some great hospitals like Medanta the Medicity, Apollo Hospitals, NIMHANS (The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences), Fortis Hospital chain and others serving patients from foreign countries too.

The bright Indian minds leading various research projects are making news every day. Thousands of years of accumulated medical knowledge is now available at a click of a mouse. Even doctors need to study and be up to date. For that, Ministry of Health has come up with the world's first digital library on traditional knowledge comprising ayurveda, herbal and other such medicinal formulations. Government, private and even some non-profit organisations are coming forward to boost the sector even more.

According to a Chinese Proverb : “Good medicines, tastes bitter” which implies medicines comes with side effects too. Today, it seems that people just don't want to bear even a slightest amount of pain because they have a medicine available for every pain. In response to this, they undergo a number of tests, and request for unnecessary care for themselves. Doctors see the human body as a machine with separate parts that can be treated independently rather than as an integrated whole.

Medicines give quick results but have to be continued for long. People suffering with same disease are treated the same way irrespective of their uniqueness and emotions. Medicines have several side-effects too. For instance, over dose of medicine can hamper the immune system, the therapy for cancer leads to baldness, several surgeries need extensive after care, and so on. That is why Buddha's quote holds meaning as he said :

“Every human is the author of his own health or disease”

In the earlier time, people would die pitiably, without any known reason. One would feel helpless in front of a small illness. People would accept their disease as their fate. In lieu of this fact, the benefits of medical advancements has outweighed their drawbacks. A lot has been achieved in this field, yet a lot needs to be done for the betterment of mankind.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **prominence** – fame, importance, reputation
- ♦ **amputated** – cut off or remove surgically
- ♦ **transplanting** – to transfer from one body to another
- ♦ **miraculous** – extraordinary, unbelievable
- ♦ **clot** – a lump or mass
- ♦ **breakthrough** – step forward, progress
- ♦ **regenerative medicines** – refers to a group of biomedical approaches to clinical therapies that may involve the use of stem cells
- ♦ **holistic** – relating to the medical consideration of the complete person
- ♦ **formulated** – devised, developed
- ♦ **accumulated** – to gather or pile up

A Flat on Moon *Dream or Reality*

Throughout the history till now, poets have admired the beauty of moon in highly praised words. Glaring at it for hours together they would not tire from appreciating and cherishing its beauty. Years later technological and scientific advancements showed that its surface actually had a desolate beauty.

And this is the reality. Another dream which is yet to be turned into reality is a 'flat on moon'. Buying a house on man-made island seems a thing of the past. The latest dream in the eyes of the people is of residing on the moon. The dream is significant as these people would include people other than the scientists.

The Moon Mission or the Lunar Mission started in the late 1950s when the Soviet Union was ahead of United States of America in space explorations. Therefore in 1961, US President John F. Kennedy gave an inspiration and hope to American people. He claimed the landing of man on moon and his safe return back to the Earth before the end of the decade.

Just eight years later, US accomplished this goal by sending Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin on the moon. The first step was difficult and risky. But after the first step, many steps followed naturally, which included many exploratory missions to study the surface of moon and the universe as a whole.

On 20th July, 1969 Neil Armstrong touched the lunar surface and said "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind". His mission included collecting the samples of the moon surface for further studies. Little was thought that one day they will prove to be the base for the construction of buildings there.

It was in 1972 the last time when man set foot on the moon. Since then scientists are busy developing high-end technology to transport more people to moon. Many countries like China, Japan, Soviet Union/Russia and ofcourse USA are in a race to privatise moon.

China claims to have completed the 'world's highest resolution 3D map of the moon'. This map, they claim is a step towards their objective of landing people on the moon in a decade. In 2004, then President Bush too announced plans to return to the moon by 2020.

NASA feels that travelling to moon could help us to evaluate the mystery behind this huge universe. They believe that valuable resources on the moon can be used for other space missions also. Particularly, liquid oxygen is a major component of the propellant needed for current space travel and other future missions. Also moon mission will lead scientists to the manned mission to Mars by 2030.

Some experts also maintain that suborbital tourism will take off, and over 1000 people will be reaching space by 2020. Evidently such a tourist spot would cost millions or billions possible only for the super rich people. So the housing would be that of only the billionaires. Also it will be followed by mining on moon to use its resources.

The tremendous speed with which population and pollution is increasing has forced us to look for other planets to live in. But when we look at the ground reality, we still can't imagine living at a place which would be desolate, with hardly any people and vegetation around. We think about how it would be with having to move with oxygen masks all the time. Compared to the lush and lively life of Earth, going on a vacation for some days to moon seems a good adventure, however planning to reside there seems rather difficult at least as of now.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **desolate** – uninhabited, ruined, deserted
- ♦ **propellant** – a compressed inert gas that serves to dispense the contents of an aerosol container when the pressure is released
- ♦ **manned** – operated by a human
- ♦ **lush** – green, flourishing

Mobile Phones *Fourth Basic Necessity*

Today, a kid who barely knows to speak well, knows what a mobile phone is literally. A mobile phone or cell phone is an electronic telecommunication device with the same basic capability as a conventional fixed-line telephone, but which is also entirely portable and is not required to be connected with a wire to the telephone network. Most current mobile phones connect instead to the network using a wireless radio wave transmission technology.



In addition to the standard voice function of a telephone, a mobile phone can support many additional services such as SMS for text messaging, packet switching for access to the internet, and MMS for sending and receiving photos and videos. In less than twenty years, mobile phones have gone from being rare and expensive pieces of equipment used by businesses to an all pervasive low-cost personal item. In many countries, mobile phones now outnumber landline telephones, with most adults and many children now owning mobile phones.

A mobile phone itself has become a fashion statement wherein the brand, cost type of handset, colour, added accessories reflect the personality of a person. People have made mobile phones a status symbol instead of necessity. This has thus given rise to an increase in criminal and antisocial activities in order to have money to satisfy this growing need to show off.

It's tough to fit a music player, digital camera, phone, GPS all in the pocket at the same time. Fortunately, today's cell phones come with all these features and thus it is not a problem anymore.

Today, cell phones have built in calculator, flashlight or torch, radio among other things. Phone is also an eBook reader, currency converter, handheld gaming device, e-mail checker, internet, video calling, 3G facilities, downloads, songs, movies, pictures, payment of bills, shopping, learning foreign language, health regulator, are the wonders of this small size gadget.

Mobile phones have shrunk the world into a global town wherein one person sitting in one continent can easily and instantly talk to the other residing in another continent.

The mobile telecommunication is one of the largest in the world. People in cities, semi-urban areas and even in rural areas find its use essential to their life. Internet penetration in India is largely driven by mobile phones, with some of the most basic hand-sets offering access to the internet. About 70% of rural India's active internet population access the web *via* mobile phones as they are easier to use than accessing PCs. Hillary Clinton has once said :

“There are 4 billion cell phones in use today. Many of them are in hands of market vendors, rickshaw drivers, and others who've historically lacked access to education and opportunity”

However, with new technologies in the mobile phones, concerns have arisen about its effects on the health of the users. Scientific evidence also states an increase in certain types of rare tumours (cancer) seen in long-time, persistent heavy users. More recently, a study provided significant evidence of genetic damage under certain conditions.

Evidently, it has also been seen that there is a steep decline in the population of some birds due to the radiations emitted from mobile phones and its network towers. Especially the population of sparrows are seen to be migrating to less populated areas.

It has also been observed that recently most of the accidents on roads occur because of distractions via mobile phones. Motorists have a much higher risk of collisions and losing control of the vehicles while talking on the mobile phones while driving. Apart from this, mobile phones are used by criminals to inform one another about their filthy ideas. The recent example can be taken of the movie 'Holiday' where it is made clear that how crime strategies are invented by the criminals using this technology in majority of the cases.

Mobile phones have altered our way of life to an unbelievable degree. The charm of a long, hand written letter has been replaced by a short text message. The beautiful greeting cards have been replaced by small animated pictures. Moreover, its widespread usage has made the Idea cellular Company come up with a brilliant idea of being environmental friendly. Through their advertisements they campaigned: “Use mobile save paper” to replace and minimise the use of paper in several forms.

They are also an easily available help in case of an emergency. They save a lot of time and energy in making multiple calls to track a single person. Thus, they increase direct one-on-one relationship. The SMS is also a convenient way to keep in touch with your loved ones when no one has the time for writing long drawn letters which take days to even reach.

Mobiles are also a great source of entertainment. You can listen to songs, play games, get live cricket scores, market-updates and even the headlines. No matter where one goes, cell phones are the only hope of keeping families connected without any hassle. Technology is here and it is here to stay. With the advancement happening almost every day Steve Jobs said :

“What we want to do is make a leapfrog product that is way smarter than any other mobile device has ever been and super-easy to use.....”

So we are going to reinvent the phone :

“There is surely a lot more that future holds with regard to mobile revolution.”

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| ♦ conventional | – traditional, common | ♦ persistent | – continuous, constant |
| ♦ portable | – convenient, movable | ♦ steep | – sudden, extreme |
| ♦ pervasive | – widespread, prevalent, universal | ♦ filthy | – dirty, nasty, foul |
| ♦ instantly | – immediately, urgently | ♦ hassle | – trouble, problem |
| ♦ penetration | – invasion, entry | ♦ leapfrog | – advance |



Cloning *Good or Bad*

Long ago, a novel by Mary Shelly grabbed a lot of attention. The name of this novel is Frankenstein, wherein a scientist creates a body by combination of chemistry, alchemy and electricity. He literally created a human being by unnatural means though without ill-intentions. Today’s doctors and scientists seem to be doing something of the same kind. The keen desire and curiosity to overcome nature has led man to indulge in a lot of new ventures. Cloning is one of them.

The term cloning describes a number of different processes that can be used to produce genetically identical copies of a biological entity. Clones are organisms that are exact genetic copies. Researchers have cloned a wide range of biological materials including genes, cells, tissues and even entire organisms. Cloning has been tried on cattle, sheep, other mammals like cat, deer, dog, horse, or rabbit, rat etc. With the successful cloning of ‘Dolly’, the sheep in 1997, it is anticipated that sooner or later, scientists would be able to clone human beings, too or it could be that they already have, but are concealing it from the world.

There are three types of cloning. First is the Therapeutic cloning, which creates embryonic stem cells. Researchers use these cells to grow healthy tissues to replace injured or diseased tissue in the human body. Second is Gene cloning, which is also DNA cloning. And the third and the most controversial is the reproductive cloning, human cloning to be specific. Human cloning is the creation of a genetically identical copy of a human. Human cloning is believed to be unethical and immoral and so it is banned in most of the countries and is equally shunned by religious institutions. It is also so because cloning humans is more difficult than other mammals and the success rate is relatively low. Human cloning, being a new and unexplored concept can prove to be uncertain depending on the kind of the mental and physical development of the cloned offspring. Thus, it also puts a great psychological burden. Human cloning also creates questions about the soul, the role of God in society and even the quality of life that a cloned person would have.

The process converts a natural and sacred process of human procreation into a mechanised and beastly human manufacturing industry. That is why George W Bush firmly disapproves it saying :

“I strongly oppose cloning as do most Americans”.

On the other hand therapeutic cloning does not attempt to create an offspring unnaturally. It is the process in which stem cells are taken from human embryos which are in turn used to generate tissues and organs which again in turn can be used for transplantation. So, therapeutic cloning is a much better technique.

Human cloning would create the opportunity for an infertile couple to experience the joys of having a family without enduring the painful infertility procedures. However, the birth of deformed children, inheriting crucial diseases would be an unbearable burden. Infact, the production of ‘Dolly’ the sheep required at least 276 failed attempts. No one knows why these attempts failed and how one succeeded.

Human cloning therefore could not become a reality without extensive human experimentation. Though 276 ‘failed’ lambs may be an acceptable loss, the ethical implication of failed or partially successful human experiments would be unacceptable. To restore the peace even the United Nations is in favour of banning all types of human cloning.

Even in the blockbuster movie named Krish-3, it was shown how a cloned character suffered from paralysis or inactive body parts below chin area. And due to this problem he was shown to hate humans and in return avenge all the mankind. And there are many more examples of such movies illustrating the havoc of cloning.

Cloning, thus as a new branch of knowledge and biotechnology, is still in its primary stage. It will have to be explored more deeply and tested more rigorously to become acceptable. Thus wisely so, human reproductive cloning is banned for the time being due to its dangerous impositions, inefficient processes and ethical irresponsibility.

Though till date, a number of species have been cloned successfully, yet human cloning poses a big dilemma and due to its primitive nature it seems to be more prone to failure than success. Even in the novel ‘Frankenstein’ after the creation of an ‘abnormal’ human being the scientist himself felt scared and disgusted and abruptly ran away from it, thereby abandoning it.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ♦ ventures | – project, task | ♦ rigorously | – strictly |
| ♦ concealing | – hiding | ♦ impositions | – application, introduction |
| ♦ sacred | – holy, divine | ♦ primitive | – undeveloped, early |
| ♦ procreation | – to produce or create | ♦ disgusted | – offended, sickened |
| ♦ avenge | – revenge, retaliate | ♦ abruptly | – suddenly, hastily, all at once |
| | | ♦ abandoning | – leaving, deserting |



Supercomputers

The Future of Mankind

Since its invention in 1948, electronic computers have changed the way world works. It is undoubtedly one of the top ten greatest inventions of mankind. Today, we cannot even think to live without computers. Originally designed for defence purposes during World War II, the machine called computer has become an indispensable part of our daily lives, and its uses are almost beyond comprehension itself. Present day computers are used to work, to play, to have fun, to shop, to study, to talk, to date and to generally do anything one can think about.

Since its inception, the computer technology has improved manifolds. We no longer talk about simple computers that are able to perform a few tasks at a given time, but we have developed Supercomputers- computers so fast that they can carry out millions of calculations in a matter of seconds. A supercomputer is defined as a mainframe computer that is one of the fastest and most powerful computer. Supercomputers have grown and changed throughout their history. Their speed is unparalleled, their future is exciting, and their uses are nearly limitless.

In 1943, the first supercomputer named Colossus was made in England. It was only able to handle five thousand characters per second. Also in England in 1950, the Manchester Mark I was produced and was able to handle 500 instructions per second. In 1975, the “father of supercomputing,” Seymour Cray earned his nickname for creating the first completely transistorized supercomputer.

Cray founded Cray Inc. when he began designing and creating supercomputers. He named his first supercomputer Cray-I. It was a single electronic computer. Cray-I was sold in 1976 to Los Alamos National Laboratory for \$8.8 million. The Cray-1 recorded a speed of 160 million floating-point operations per second (160 megaflops) and contained an 8 megabyte main memory. That means it could hold one million words.

Even though the world got introduced to the computer technology in late forties, India bought its first computer in 1956 for a princely sum of ₹ 10 lakh. It was called HEC-2M and was installed at Calcutta’s Indian Statistical Institute. It was nothing more than a number crunching machine and was huge in size. The dimensions of this monster were 10 ft in length, 7 ft in breadth and 6 ft in height. It played a critical role in formulating annual and five-year plans by the planning commission, and in top-secret projects of India’s nuclear programme.

Moreover, it went on to turn out India’s first generation of computer professionals. It was at least ten thousand times slower in solving even simple problems than today’s machines. But it set the stage for the development of computers in India. India’s supercomputer era began when our former Prime Minister, Shri VP Singh, dedicated to the nation, country’s first super computer, ₹ 15 crores US made, CRAY-X-MP 14 on 25th March, 1989. The main application of this super computer is in medium range weather forecasting to agro-meteorology programmes to agricultural operations to water resource management. It is established at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), a constituent unit of the DST (Department of Science and Technology), New Delhi. India’s first home-developed

supercomputer was PARAM 8000. PARAM stood for Parallel Machine. This computer was developed by the government run Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) in 1991. Today, India is certainly giving the western countries a run for their money where supercomputing is concerned. India has been ranked number four in the world, in a global list of countries with the most powerful supercomputers. Only the US, China and Germany are ahead of India in the first, second and third slots.

The benefits and uses of supercomputers are used in many different fields. For example, supercomputers can predict weather. Every time you check the weather, you are actually seeing the output of a supercomputer. You can also use supercomputers for mathematical calculations, seismic activity (earthquakes), nuclear energy research, fluid dynamic calculations, submarine tracking, pattern matching, graph analysis, cryptology (the study of codes in which the key is unknown), data collection, and researching anything on the internet.

All data goes through supercomputers and that's why you can find 62,600,000 results of the word 'dog' in .04 seconds. Scientists are already figuring out what the future for supercomputers is going to be like. They are going to be using them more and more for creating stimulus, building airplanes, creating chemical substances, making new materials, and doing crash tests on cars without actually having to crash the car. One may easily foresee that supercomputers are the need of tomorrow. They have been making our lives easier and will continue to do so. Our future depends on how we use their capabilities for the greater good.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--|
| ♦ indispensable | – necessary | ♦ critical | – very important |
| ♦ comprehension | – understanding | ♦ agro-meteorology | – relating to study of climate and crops |
| ♦ inception | – beginning | ♦ constituent | – component |
| ♦ manifolds | – in numerous ways | ♦ stimulus | – stimulant |
| ♦ unparalleled | – unmatched | ♦ foresee | – predict |
| ♦ princely | – very huge | | |
| ♦ crunching | – grinding | | |



E-Waste

The Wastes of the 21st Century

In modern times, every household owns a computer, i-pad, television, cell phones. In short 'screens' of myriad sizes, are in front of our eyes all the time. Today, three out of four Indians possess mobile phones. One out of every five people has access to computers. The unavoidable consequence is that the nation of more than a billion individuals is generating tonnes of dangerous 'electronic waste'. E- waste or electronic waste refers to discarded electronic products ranging from computers, equipment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), home appliances and peripherals of these devices.

The rapid boom in the IT industry has led to a surge in the usage of electronic gadgets. The latter get out-of-fashion and redundant at a fast pace, as a result of which they are discarded more frequently. This generates large amounts of toxic e-wastes.

E-wastes comprise a witch's mix of hazardous chemicals like cadmium, lead, mercury, poly-chlorinated biphenyls, besides plastics and glass. These contents leach into the soil from landfills and contaminate water bodies. E-wastes when burnt, also release poisonous gases in air.

E-wastes if not handled properly, can cause serious health hazards. According to National Centre for Biotechnology Information, these risks include silicosis, cuts from Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) glass, inhalation of mercury, tin and lead compounds from circuit boards, acid contact with eyes and skin, and circulatory failure.

E-waste has woven a large informal sector in Indian cities that is involved in segregation and dismantling electronic items. Lamington road or Crawford market in Mumbai, SP market in Bengaluru and Nehru Place, Seelampur or Seemapuri in Delhi, all are hubs of e-waste disposal sites. Mumbai tops the list of e-waste generating cities, followed by Delhi and Bengaluru.

Ten states in India generate 70% of the total e-waste. Among developing nations, India is one of the largest producers of e-waste. Also, India is the destination for many developed nations to ship out their own e-wastes. However, it has been found that dismantling units in India are poorly equipped, as a result of which less than 5% of the e-waste gets recycled. Also, workers here work in dangerous conditions, without any protection or safety measures.

In 2012, Government passed the E-waste Management and Handling Rules Law, which states that agencies must have licenses and comply with pollution standards, and labour laws. A fine of upto ₹ 1 lakh and jail of upto 7 years would be announced on the violators. The consumers must also take responsibility for their own old electronic goods. They must ensure that their e-waste is deposited at authorised collection centres, or recyclers certified by Central Pollution Control Board and Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Education, awareness and safety gears must be provided to the poor workers, who earn their livelihood in this sector. E-wastes is one of the most harmful of all wastes that we generate. It is the inevitable and unwelcome gift of modern technology. Let us pledge to dispose them in the most environment friendly way, so as to cause least damage to Mother Earth.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **myriad** – of an indefinitely great number, innumerable
- ♦ **consequence** – the effect, result, or outcome of something occurring earlier
- ♦ **peripheral** – near the surface or outside of, external
- ♦ **surge** – rise
- ♦ **redundant** – being in excess
- ♦ **dismantle** – to disassemble or pull down, take apart
- ♦ **hub** – a centre around which other things revolve or from which they radiate, a focus of activity, authority, commerce, transportation, etc
- ♦ **pledge** – a solemn promise or agreement to do or refrain from doing something



Cloud Computing

In today's scientifically advanced and all IT dominated era, cloud computing is the term du jour.

Cloud computing is computing in which large groups of remote servers are networked to allow the centralised data storage, and online access to computer services or resources. Clouds can be classified as public, private or hybrid.

As a metaphor for the Internet, 'the cloud' is a familiar cliché, but when combined with 'computing,' the meaning gets bigger and fuzzier. Cloud computing encompasses any subscription-based or pay-per-use service that, in real time over the Internet, extends IT's existing capabilities.

In a cloud computing system, there's a significant workload shift. Local computers no longer have to do all the heavy lifting when it comes to running applications. The network of computers that make up the cloud handles them instead. Hardware and software demands on the user's side decrease. The only thing the user's computer needs to be able to run is the cloud computing system's interface software, which can be as simple as a Web browser, and the cloud's network takes care of the rest.

Cloud computing is typically defined as a type of computing that relies on sharing computing resources rather than having local servers or personal devices to handle applications.

In cloud computing, the word cloud (also phrased as 'the cloud') is used as a metaphor for 'the Internet,' so the phrase cloud computing means "a type of Internet-based computing," where different services — such as servers, storage and applications — are delivered to an organisation's computers and devices through the Internet.

Cloud computing is comparable to grid computing, a type of computing where unused processing cycles of all computers in a network are harnessed to solve problems too intensive for any stand-alone machine.

The goal of cloud computing is to apply traditional supercomputing, or high-performance computing power, normally used by military and research facilities, to perform tens of trillions of computations per second, in consumer-oriented applications such as financial portfolios, to deliver personalised information, to provide data storage or to power large, immersive computer games. It relies on restricting sharing of resources to achieve coherence and economies of scale, similar to a utility (like the electricity grid) over a network. At the foundation of cloud computing is the broader concept of converged infrastructure and shared services.

To do this, cloud computing uses networks of large groups of servers typically running low-cost consumer PC technology with specialised connections to spread data-processing chores across them. This shared IT infrastructure contains large pools of systems that are linked together. Often, virtualisation techniques are used to maximise the power of cloud computing.

Cloud computing will become even more prominent in the coming years, with the predicted rapid, continued growth of major global cloud data centres.

Cloud computing has been around for quite some time, and goes as far back as the birth of email. But it's only in recent years that companies have started renting servers and storage instead of purchasing hardware and running it at huge costs. And with more organisations—especially those that rely on India's outsourcing infrastructure—transferring some of their IT work onto the cloud, companies such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys and Wipro have stepped up to facilitate that shift. They have positioned themselves as enablers between owners and renters.

A report published by IT research and advisory firm Gartner estimates that in India alone the market for cloud-based services will rise by a third to \$557 million this year, and more than triple by 2018.

India's IT giants are becoming experts at going in early, at the planning stage, and defining what their corporate customers ought to be doing to take advantage of emerging technologies. "They are playing to their strengths, which is services. Even in the cloud, they are in the services [area], specifically focussed on services brokerage," says Arup Roy, research director at Gartner. They have the advantage of being experts at managing IT back-end for global customers, which will play a crucial role in the shift to the cloud.

Users access cloud computing using networked client devices, such as desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones. Some of these devices – cloud clients – rely on cloud computing for all or a majority of their applications so as to be essentially useless without it. Examples are thin clients and the browser-based Chromebook. Many cloud applications do not require specific software on the client and instead use a web browser to interact with the cloud application. With Ajax and HTML5 these Web user interfaces can achieve a similar, or even better, look and feel to native applications. Some cloud applications, however, support specific client software dedicated to these applications (e.g. virtual desktop clients and most email clients). Some legacy applications (line of business applications that until now have been prevalent in thin client computing) are delivered via a screen-sharing technology.

According to Gartner's Hype cycle, cloud computing has reached a maturity that leads it into a productive phase. This means that most of the main issues regarding cloud computing have been addressed to a degree that clouds have become interesting for full commercial exploitation. This however does not mean that all the problems listed above have actually been solved, only that the according risks can be tolerated to a certain degree. Cloud computing is therefore still as much a research topic, as it is a market offering. What is clear through the evolution of Cloud Computing services is that the full form of CTO is a major driving force behind Cloud adoption. The major Cloud technology developers continue to invest billions a year in Cloud R&D, in 2011 Microsoft for example committed 90% of its \$9.6bn R&D budget to Cloud.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **du jour** – of the day, current
- ♦ **metaphor** – a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else
- ♦ **cliché** – something that is used very often
- ♦ **encompasses** – includes comprehensively
- ♦ **fuzzier** – more difficult to perceive; indistinct or vague
- ♦ **harnesses** – controls and makes use of (natural resources), especially to produce energy
- ♦ **legacy** – something left or handed down by a predecessor
- ♦ **prominence** – the state of being important, famous, or noticeable
- ♦ **evolution** – the gradual development of something.

F. Great Personalities

Ashoka The Great

In the annals of the world history, there have been many kings, but none greater than Ashoka. Popularly known as ‘Devanampriya Priyadarsi’ (He who is the beloved of the Gods and who regards everyone amiably), he reigned over most of India, South Asia and beyond. His story tells us that religion can act as a powerful force for the redemption of a human being. According to Buddhist traditions, Ashoka was born as the son of the Mauryan emperor Bindusara by a relatively lower ranked queen named Dharma. The Avadana texts mention that his mother was queen Subhadra. He was the grandson of another great king and the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, Chandragupta Maurya. But defying all odds, young Ashoka excelled in military and academic disciplines. There was a great deal of sibling rivalry, especially between Ashoka and his brother Susima, both as warriors and as administrators.

An impeccable warrior general and a shrewd statesman, Ashoka was very popular. He was a fearsome hunter, and according to a legend, killed a lion with just a wooden rod. His growing popularity made his elder brothers wary of his chances of being favoured by Bindusara to become the next emperor. The eldest of them, Prince Susima, persuaded Bindusara to send Ashoka to Takshashila to quell an uprising.

But as news of Ashoka’s visit with his army trickled in, he was welcomed by the revolting militias and the uprising ended without a fight. Some more incitements from Susima led his father to send Ashoka into exile. So, he went to Kalinga and stayed there incognito for many years. Meanwhile, there was a violent uprising in Ujjain. Emperor Bindusara summoned Ashoka back. Ashoka went to Ujjain and was injured in the ensuing battle, but his generals continued the fight. Ashoka was treated in hiding by Buddhist monks and nuns. This is where he first learnt the teachings of Buddha. In the meantime, Ashoka’s father was taken ill. A clique of ministers led by Radhagupta, summoned Ashoka to take the crown. As the Buddhist lore goes, in a fit of rage, Ashoka attacked Patliputra and killed all his brothers and threw their bodies into a well. At this stage, many called him ‘Chandashoka’ meaning murderer and heartless Ashoka.

Brave and full of valour, after ascending the throne, Ashoka expanded the boundaries of his empire. At this point, he was called ‘Chakravarti’ which means ‘he for whom the wheel of law turns’. However, the conquest of Kalinga turned the wheel of fortune for him. As the tale goes, Kalinga gave official refuge to Ashoka’s enemy (probably one of his brothers). This enraged Ashoka and he asked Kalinga’s royalty to submit before his supremacy. When they defied this dictat, Ashoka sent one of his generals to make Kalinga submit to his supremacy. However, Ashoka’s general and his forces were completely routed. Baffled by this defeat, Ashoka attacked with the greatest invasion ever recorded in the Indian history till then. The whole of Kalinga was plundered and destroyed. After this devastation, Ashoka was left speechless. While he was walking through the battlefields of Kalinga after his conquest, he saw thousands of dead bodies lying there and the wailing of people. He was constantly haunted by his deeds in Kalinga.

The repentance at the brutality of the conquest led him to embrace Buddhism. He undertook a 256-day pilgrimage to holy places of Buddhism in North India. From that point, Ashoka, who had been described as ‘the cruel Ashoka’ (Chandashoka) started to be described as ‘the pious Ashoka’ (Dharmashoka). He propagated the Vighajjavada School of Buddhism and preached it within his domain and worldwide from about 250 BC.

Emperor Ashoka, undoubtedly, has to be credited with the first serious attempt to develop a Buddhist policy. He built thousands of stupas and viharas for Buddhist followers (about 84,000 such monuments were built). The stupas of Sanchi are world famous and the stupa named Sanchi Stupa I was built by Emperor Ashoka. During the remaining period of Ashoka’s reign, he pursued an official policy of non-violence called ahimsa. The unnecessary slaughter of animals was immediately abolished. Moreover, rest houses were built throughout the empire to house travellers and pilgrims free of charge. Egalitarianism became a norm for the society. Slavery was non-existent in ancient India. Ashoka amalgamated Buddhism with material issues of concern, thus fulfilling Buddha’s wish of alleviation of people’s sufferings. To that effect, Ashoka had wells dug, irrigation canals and roads constructed. Other than rest houses, he also built hospitals, gardens and plantations of herbs.

To propagate his faith, the great Ashoka who believed in ‘dharma’, built many edicts. The Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath is the most popular relic left by him. Made of sandstone, it records the visit of the emperor to Sarnath in the 3rd century BC. It has a four-lion capital, which was adopted as the emblem of modern Indian republic. Ashoka ruled for an estimated 40 years, (273BC - 232 BC) and after his death, the Maurya dynasty lasted just 50 more years. But Ashoka’s greatest legacy is the first written language in India. Rather than Sanskrit, the language used for inscription was one of the current spoken form called Prakrit. One of his monument’s inscription read :

“All men are my children and I, the king, forgive what can be forgiven.”

He modified his foreign policy from that of expansionism to a peaceful co-existence with neighbours. He avoided any further conquests of territories and announced that conquests should be of human desires. He strived to spread ‘right conduct’ among his people. Ashoka’s loftiness and his prowess can be gauged from the fact that it was not until some 2,000 years later under Akbar and his great-grandson Aurangzeb, that a portion as large as the sub-continent could be again united under a single ruler. Science fiction novelist HG Wells rightly says :

“Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousness and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines and shines, almost alone, a star.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **annal** – a record of events of a particular year
- ♦ **redemption** – an act of redeeming or atoning for a fault or mistake or the state of being redeemed
- ♦ **impeccable** – flawless
- ♦ **quell** – to suppress, put an end to
- ♦ **incitement** – the act of inciting
- ♦ **incitement** – the act of inciting
- ♦ **devastation** – edicts a proclamation of law
- ♦ **egalitarianism** – belief in the equality of all people, especially in political, social or economic life
- ♦ **edict** – a proclamation of law
- ♦ **alleviation** – the act of alleviating
- ♦ **loftiness** – eminence, exalting in rank, dignity and character
- ♦ **prowess** – exceptional valour, bravery or ability, especially in combat or battle

✿ Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

The Great Patriot

Subhash Chandra Bose was fondly called 'Netaji'. He was one of the most important freedom fighters of India. Even though Gandhiji and Nehru are given the credit for India's Independence, the contribution of Subhash Chandra Bose can't be undermined. 'Patriot of Patriots' as described by Gandhiji, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was born on 23rd January, 1897 at Cuttack, in Orissa. He was born to Janakinath and Prabhavati Bose and was the ninth child among the fourteen children. Rai Bahadur, Janakinath Bose was a public lawyer by profession. He was a public prosecutor in Cuttack and later became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council.



The family of Subhash Chandra Bose was a large one consisting of eight brothers and six sisters. During his school days, he was always serious, reserved and did not take much interest in sports. The sadhus and pilgrims visiting Puri, the famous shrine near his dwelling place, fascinated him. He was an intelligent kid and stood second in the school examination and took admission in Presidency College, Calcutta. In 1916, he beat an English professor because of his racist attitude towards Indians. As a result he was expelled from the college. But his father refused to admit him to another college. Over the course of time he got re-admitted in the same University in Philosophy. He passed with flying colours and achieved first class Honours in Philosophy.

Recognising his son's intellect, his father was determined that Bose should become a member of high ranking Indian Civil Service (ICS). So, he sent him to England for further studies. In 1920, Bose passed the Civil Service and secured the fourth position. But, by this time the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre had taken place, which had disturbed him greatly.

Even though he passed the ICS, he was not interested in serving the colonial masters. By this time, Gandhiji had established himself as a leader of the masses. Like many others, Bose was also influenced by Gandhiji. So, he went to Gandhiji and offered himself to work for the Indian National Congress. Gandhiji was not able to turn down this humble request and sent him to Calcutta to work under Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. During the period 1921-25, he was mainly involved in the activities around Calcutta and was arrested on numerous occasions. This led to his being imprisoned. Later, he was again imprisoned along with Deshbandhu and the two lived together in jail, where Bose served his leader humbly, even cooked his food. From this time, Bose considered Deshbandhu as his guru.

When Deshbandhu became the Mayor of Calcutta, Bose became his Chief Executive. While holding this office, Bose freely mixed with revolutionaries, which made the British Government arrest him and deport.

Now he had ample time to think for his future course of action and he decided to go on the path of open revolution. In June 1925, Bose was deeply struck by the sudden loss of his leader Deshbandhu. But he continued to work. In 1928, during the

Congress meeting the main agenda that was presented was to get a Dominion Status for India. This was prepared by Motilal Nehru. But the Youth leaders rejected this. Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru wanted complete freedom for India at the earliest, whereas the Congress Committee wanted it in phases, through a Dominion Status. To avoid any problem, Gandhiji suggested to give the British Government a time period of 1 year to give Dominion Status to India, failing which he himself would present a bill of complete freedom.

Everybody accepted this. Gandhiji tried very hard to get the Dominion Status for India, but failed miserably. So, at the next meeting the Bill of Complete Freedom (Purna Swaraj) was passed.

On 23rd March, 1932 Shaheed Bhagat Singh was hanged. Bhagat Singh's martyrdom and the inability of the Congress leaders to save his life made Bose very angry and in a sense this made him realise that aggression was the best form of defence. Bose was arrested in 1931 for visiting the disturbed parts of Bengal. He was re-arrested on 2nd January, 1932 and subsequently exiled from India. In 1932, he went to Vienna and there he was deeply influenced by Vithaldas Patel, another Indian freedom fighter.

They recognised the need for collaboration between Indian nationalists and countries opposed to Britain and in their joint manifesto, they proclaimed, "Non-cooperation cannot be given up but the form of non-cooperation will have to be changed into a more militant one and the fight for freedom waged on all fronts." In October 1933, Vithaldas Patel died.

After the death of Vithaldas Patel, Bose fought against the injustices. He organised students' association. In November 1934, Bose published a book on Indian Nationalism called "The Indian Struggle". During the period of 1932-36, he met reputed personalities like Mussolini in Italy, Felder in Germany, De Valera in Ireland and Roma Rolland in France. Some reports suggest that he also met Hitler, a meeting which provided no support to Netaji. The Irish nationalist leader De Valera in Dublin impressed him. He was arrested and was later released on 17th March, 1937.

By that time, Subhash Chandra Bose had become very famous and Gandhiji proposed him to become the President of the Congress. In 1938, he became the President of the Indian National Congress and presided over the Haripur session, a post he held for 2 years. During the period, he was honoured at Shantiniketan by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore as 'Deshnayak'.

At the end of this term, the elections for the Tripuri Congress session took place in 1939. He was re-elected defeating Dr Pattabhi, who was supported by Gandhiji. Bose resolved to give 6 months to the British to free India, otherwise there would be a rebellion. His opinion was opposed. So, he resigned and formed a group called Forward Block.

In 1939, when the World War II started, Gandhiji and other leaders were against doing anything anti-Britain. But Bose thought differently. He knew, for instance, that the fall of the Roman Empire had led to the freedom of its colonies. He decided to seek foreign help for his cause of freeing India. He was arrested and kept in his house under detention. On 17th January, 1941 while everyone was asleep, Bose slipped out of his house into a waiting car.

Disguised as a Muslim religious teacher, Bose managed to reach Peshawar 2 days later. Bose went to Italy, Germany and even Russia to seek help, but without much success. He decided to organise Indians on his own and he landed in Singapore and became the commander of the Indian National Army or the Azad Hind Fauj and declared himself the Prime Minister of India. The whole of India rejoiced, as he raised the popular slogan “Give me blood and I will give you freedom”.

The INA marched to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, liberating and renaming them as Shaheed and Swaraj Islands. On 18th March, 1944, it crossed the Burmese border and reached Manipur where free India’s banner was raised with the shouts of ‘Jai Hind’ and ‘Netaji Zindabad’.

But heavy rain prevented any further movement and the units had to fall back. Even then Netaji was determined. He wanted to go to Russia to seek Soviet help to fight the British. But the ill-fated plane, in which he was flying, crashed in Taipei on 18th August, 1945 resulting in his death. For this brave leader, Bhagvad Gita was a great source of inspiration. Swami Vivekananda’s teachings also had a deep impact on him since his heydays. He loved to read fresh interpretations of India’s ancient scriptures.

Bose strongly disliked ‘Nazis’ racist practices. However, when he failed to contact Russians for help, he knocked on the doors of Germans. His stand was that in order to free India, even if he had to befriend the devil, he would do that. Thus, he will always be remembered and revered as the great patriot who risked his life, career, name, fame and everything else for one sole cause in which he believed passionately—the freedom of his country.

On 23rd August, 2007, Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe visited the Subhash Chandra Bose Memorial Hall in Kolkata and said to Bose’s family that Japanese are moved by Bose’s strong will for independence from British rule, and that Netaji is a much respected name in Japan. Bose will continue to inspire posterity to lead the nation to greater heights and make it the India of his dreams. Concluding with the slogan that he gave :

“Jai Hind.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **prosecutor** – a person who prosecutes
- ♦ **racist** – a person who believes in racism, the doctrine that a certain human race is superior to any or all others
- ♦ **humble** – not proud or arrogant, modest
- ♦ **ample** – plentiful
- ♦ **martyrdom** – the conditions, sufferings, or death of a martyr
- ♦ **aggression** – the practice of making assaults or attacks
- ♦ **expelled** – to drive or force out or away
- ♦ **detention** – maintenance of a person in custody or confinement, especially while awaiting a court decision
- ♦ **heyday** – the stage or period of greatest vigor, strength, success etc; prime
- ♦ **posterity** – all descendents of one person

Bhagat Singh

Shaheed-E-Azam

One evening, a 3 years old boy was walking besides his father along the edge of a field. Looking and pointing at the vast field, he said, “Father, I shall grow guns all over the field.” This little boy was Bhagat Singh, whose heart was soaked in patriotism even at that tender age. He grew up to become one of the foremost heroes of the freedom struggle who laid down his life happily for the sake of his country.

Bhagat Singh was the third son of Sardar Kishan, who himself was a revolutionary and Vidyawati. He was a brilliant pupil, and cordial by nature. He used to say, “Everyone in the village is my friend.” He would ask his classmates what they wanted to become when they grew up. And he would state his wish as, “I will drive the British out of India.”



In the year 1919, when he was only 12 years old, he got deeply disturbed by the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. He brought home a bottle of mud soaked in blood of the victims and worshipped it. He dropped out from school and took part in the Congress Movement. He actively supported the Swadeshi Movement. He would wear only Khadi and burn foreign clothes.

When Gandhiji withdrew the movement due to Chauri Chaura incident, his faith in non-violence weakened. He wondered where were the supporters of non-violence when a 19 years old revolutionary Kartar Singh was hanged by the British. He started believing that armed rebellion was the only way out. He studied the lives of revolutionaries of Ireland, Italy and Russia, and was convinced of his stand.

He joined National College which was patronised by great patriots like Lala Lajpat Rai. In the day time, he would attend classes and in the evening he would discuss about the revolution with his friends.

He established contacts with the leader of Bengal revolutionary party, Sachindranath Sanyal. The condition to join the party was that the member should be ready to leave home when called. He agreed and left home in the wake of his impending marriage. He reached Kanpur and sold newspapers for a living. A revolutionary Ganesh Vidyarthi got him a job at his periodical office.

He had to return home due to his grandmother’s illness. He supported Akali Dal’s meetings. He went to Lahore and became secretary of Naujawan Bharat Sabha. He was arrested as police suspected his hand in the Dussehra bombing case. Two wealthy men bailed him out. After running his father’s dairy for a while, he left for Delhi. Here, he met Chandrashekhar Azad. He shaved his beard and kept short cropped hair. Thereafter, he learnt bomb making from Jatin Das at Kolkata. At Agra, they set-up a bomb factory. They themselves starved, but continued with their activities.

In 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai died in a Lathi charge. Bhagat Singh and Rajguru shot Sanders to avenge his death. In 1929, he and Dutt threw a bomb at the Legislative

Assembly Hall in Delhi, but they did not intend to kill anyone. Chanting “Inquilab Zindabad”, they surrendered. In Mianwali jail, he witnessed discrimination between European and Indian prisoners and led other prisoners in a hunger strike to protest against this. They demanded equality in food standard, clothing etc. . Finally, he, Sukhdev and Rajguru were ordered to be hanged on 24th March, 1931, but the schedule was preponed and they were hanged on 23rd March 1931 at 7:30 p.m in Lahore jail.

Even on that day, they were fearless and competed with each other to be hanged first. Kissing the rope, they died with the chant of ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ on their lips. So in this way the three champions of the freedom struggle sacrificed their lives. That day, no one in jail touched food. Everyone cried. Their bodies had been secretly burnt on the banks of Sutlej. Even today, the undying spirit of Bhagat Singh is a source of inspiration for the youth of the nation. His unflinching dedication to free his nation, would be embossed in golden ink in the history of freedom struggle.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **revolutionary** – of, pertaining to, characterised by, or of the nature of a revolution, or a sudden, complete or marked change
- ♦ **cordial** – courteous and gracious, friendly
- ♦ **rebellion** – resistance to or defiance of any authority, control or tradition
- ♦ **impending** – about to happen
- ♦ **periodical** – a magazine or other journal that is issued at regularly recurring intervals
- ♦ **undying** – unending
- ♦ **unflinching** – unshrinking
- ♦ **embossed** – to decorate (a surface) with raised orname



Mahatma Gandhi

The Angel of ‘Ahimsa’

It wouldn’t be difficult for anyone to identify the great yet humble personality of Mahatma Gandhi. The man who faced one of the world’s biggest superpowers, the British Raj with daunting courage and perseverance through his principle of non-violence, was indeed a force to reckon with.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October, 1869, at Porbandar, a small town on the Western coast of India, which was then one of the many tiny states in Kathiawar. He was born in a middle class family of Vaishya caste. His grandfather had risen to become the Prime Minister of Porbandar and was succeeded by his son Karamchand who was the father of Mohandas. Putlibai, Mohandas’s mother was a saintly character, gentle and devout and left a deep impression on her son’s mind. She was Karam Chand’s fourth wife, the first three having died in childbirth. Mohandas went to an elementary school in Porbandar, where he found it difficult to master the multiplication tables. He had two brothers and a sister and was youngest of all.



He was seven when his family moved to Rajkot. There he attended a primary school and later joined a high school. Though conscientious, he was a 'mediocre student' and was excessively shy and timid. The stories of Shraavan and Raja Harishchandra had a great impact on him. While he was still in high school, he was married, at the age of 13, to Kasturba who was also of the same age. A friend of the family suggested that if the young Gandhi hoped to take his father's place in the state service, he had better become a barrister, which he could do in England in 3 years. Gandhi jumped at the idea. The mother's objection to his going abroad was overcome by the son's solemn vow not to touch wine, women and meat.

Gandhi went to Bombay to take the ship for England. In Bombay, the people of his caste, who looked upon crossing the ocean as contamination, threatened to excommunicate him if he persisted in going abroad. But Gandhi was adamant and was thus, formally excommunicated by his caste. Undeterred, he sailed on 4th September, 1888, for Southampton at the age of 18.

Having passed his examination, Gandhi was called to the Bar on 10th June, 1891 and sailed for India two days later. When he reached Bombay, he learnt to his profound sorrow that his mother had died. The news had been deliberately kept back from him to spare him from the shock in a distant land.

An offer from Dada Abdulla and Co. to proceed to South Africa on their behalf to instruct their counsel in a lawsuit, was a God-sent opportunity to young Gandhi, Gandhi jumped at it and sailed for South Africa in April 1893. It was in South Africa that this shy timid youth of 24, inexperienced, unaided, alone, came into clash with forces that obliged him to tap his hidden moral resources and turn misfortunes into creative spiritual experiences. After about a week's stay in Durban, Gandhi left for Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, where his presence was needed in connection with a lawsuit.

A first class ticket was purchased for him by his client. When the train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 pm, a white passenger who boarded the train objected to the presence of a coloured man in the compartment and Gandhi was ordered by a railway official to shift to a third class. When he refused to do so, a constable pushed him out and his luggage was taken away by the railway authorities. It was winter and bitterly cold. This was the turning point in Gandhi's life.

He extended his stay in South Africa to protest against the bill that denied Indians the right to vote. In 1910s, he established the Tolstoy farm for peaceful resistance. After the rights of the blacks were restored, Gandhi was hailed as a hero.

In January 1915, he finally returned to India, Mahatma, with no possessions and with only one ambition to serve his people.

At the end of his year's wanderings, Gandhi settled down on the bank of the river Sabarmati, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, where he founded an Ashram in May 1915. He called it the 'Satyagraha Ashram.' The inmates, about 25 men and women, took the vows of truth, ahimsa, celibacy, non-stealing, non-possession and control of the palate and dedicated themselves to the service of the people.

It was the Rowlatt Act with its denial of civil liberties which finally brought Gandhi into active Indian politics. From 1919 to his death in 1948 he occupied the centre stage of the Indian politics and was the hero of the great historical drama which

culminated in the independence of our country. Like a magician, Gandhi roused a storm of enthusiasm in the country with his call for non-cooperation. He began the campaign by returning to the Viceroy, the medals and decorations he had received from the government for his war services and humanitarian works.

The anti-climax came suddenly in February 1922. An outbreak of mob violence in Chauri-Chaura shocked and pained Gandhi that he refused to continue the campaign and undertook a fast for five days to atone for a crime committed by others in a state of mob hysteria.

On 12th March, 1930, after having duly informed the Viceroy, Gandhi, followed by 78 members of his ashram, both men and women, began his historic 24 day march to the sea beach at Dandi to break the law which had deprived the poor man of his right to make his own salt. The rest is history how a single man shook the foundations of the British Empire and how at his single call the entire nation rose from slumbers to fight for their rights unanimously, forgetting all their differences. In 1942, he launched the Quit India Movement with the slogan 'Do or Die'.

"An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind." — **Gandhiji**

On 15th August, 1947, India was partitioned and became free. Gandhi declined to attend the celebrations in the capital and went to Calcutta where communal riots were still raging. And then, on the day of independence, a miracle happened. A year old riot stopped as if by magic and Hindus and Muslims began to fraternise with one another. Gandhi spent the day in fast and prayer.

Unfortunately the communal frenzy broke loose again on 31st August, and while he was staying in a Muslim house, the safety of his own life was threatened. On the following day, he went on a fast which was 'to end if and only if sanity returns to Calcutta'. The effect was magical. Those who had indulged in loot, arson and murder amidst shouts of glee, came and knelt beside him and begged for forgiveness.

On 4th September, the leaders of all communities in the city brought him a signed pledge that Calcutta would see no more of such outrages. Then, Gandhi broke the fast. Calcutta kept the pledge even when many other cities were plunged in violence in the wake of partition. On 30th January 1948, ten days after the bomb incident, Gandhi hurriedly went up the few steps of the prayer ground in the large park of the Birla House. He had been delayed due to a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and was late by a few minutes.

He loved punctuality and was worried that he had kept the congregation waiting. 'I am late by ten minutes, he murmured. 'I should have been here at the stroke of five'. He raised his hands and touched the palms together to greet the crowd that was waiting. Everyone returned the greeting. Many came forward wanting to touch his feet.

They were not allowed to do so, as Gandhi was already late. But a young Hindu from Poona forced his way forward and while seeming to do obeisance fired three point blank shots from a small automatic pistol aimed at the heart. Gandhi fell, his lips uttering the name of God (Hey Ram). Before medical aid could arrive the heart had ceased to beat—the heart that had beat only in love for humanity had 'stopped'. Thus, died the Mahatma, at the hands of one of his own people, to the eternal glory of what he had lived for and to the eternal shame of those who failed to understand that he was the best representative of the religion for which he suffered martyrdom.

The nation's feeling was best expressed by Prime Minister Nehru when with a trembling voice and a heart full of grief, he gave the news to the people on the radio.

"The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere".

He was fondly called 'Bapu' and is the Father of the Nation. His birthday is a national holiday. His image appears on Indian currency notes. His death day is observed as Martyr's day. For some, he was a saint or 'fakir', some called him a 'leader' and some a politician. But, he was in reality an extraordinary soul in an ordinary mortal's body. That's why he was called 'Mahatma'.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **bespectacled** – wearing eyeglasses
- ♦ **agile** – quick and well-coordinated in movement
- ♦ **daunting** – to lessen the courage of, dishearten
- ♦ **conscientious** – careful and painstaking, meticulous
- ♦ **docile** – obedient
- ♦ **excommunicate** – to exclude or expel from membership or participation in any group, association, etc
- ♦ **undeterred** – persevering with something despite setbacks
- ♦ **profound** – intense
- ♦ **intrigue** – a plot of crafty dealing
- ♦ **lawsuit** – a case in a court of law involving a claim, complaint, etc., by one party against another, suit at law
- ♦ **intelligentsia** – intellectuals considered as a group or class, especially as a cultural, social, or political elite
- ♦ **palate** – the sense of taste
- ♦ **atone** – to make amends for an offense or crime
- ♦ **fraternise** – to associate in a fraternal or friendly way
- ♦ **arson** – the act of intentionally or recklessly setting fire to another's property or to one's own property for some improper reason
- ♦ **congregation** – a gathered or assembled body
- ♦ **obeisance** – deference or homage



Swami Vivekananda

The Monk Who Inspired the World

The Indian philosopher and social reformer, Swami Vivekananda, or Narendra Nath Dutt nicknamed by his mother as 'Vireshwar' was born on 12th January, 1863 at 3, Gourmohan Mukherjee Street, in Shinila Pally Calcutta (now Kolkata), West Bengal during the Makar Sankranti festival to Viswanath Dutta and Bhauvanswari Devi.

He belonged to the Bengali Kayastha caste and had eight siblings. His father was an attorney at Calcutta High Court, while mother was a religious housewife. His grandfather was a Sanskrit and Persian scholar, who renounced the world at the young age of 25 years. Thus, his family background was both radical and spiritual, which shaped his thoughts. Even though he was young, he showed a precocious mind and keen memory. He practiced meditation from a very early age. While at school, he was good at studies, as well as games of rowing and other sports. He also studied instrumental and vocal music. He was a leader among his group of friends.



At an early age, he began to question the validity of superstitious customs and discrimination based on caste and religion. In 1879, Narendra entered the Presidency College, Calcutta for higher studies. After one year, he joined the Scottish Church College, Calcutta and studied Philosophy.

During the course, he studied Western Logic, Western Philosophy and History of European Nations. There started the disturbing questions about God in young Narendra's mind. This made him associate with Brahma Samaj, an important socio-religious movement of his time, led by Keshab Chandra Sen. But the Samaj's congregational prayers and devotional songs could not satisfy Narendra's zeal to realise God.

He would ask leaders of Brahma Samaj whether they have seen God. He never got a satisfying answer. It was during this time that professor Hasties of Scottish Church College told him about Sri Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar. Narendra met Ramakrishna for the first time in November 1881. He asked Ramakrishna the same old question, whether he had seen God.

The instantaneous answer from Ramakrishna was, "Yes, I have seen God, just as I see you here, only in a more clear sense". Narendra was astounded and puzzled. He could feel the man's words were honest and uttered from depths of experience.

Narendra's father passed away in 1884 and the family was threatened to be evicted from their ancestral abode. To find solace, he started visiting Ramakrishna frequently.

Though Narendra could not accept Ramakrishna and his visions, he could not neglect him. It had always been in Narendra's nature to test something thoroughly before he could accept it. He tested Ramakrishna to the maximum, but the master was patient, forgiving, humorous and full of love.

He never asked Narendra to abandon reason, and he faced all of Narendra's arguments and examinations with infinite patience. In time, Narendra accepted Ramakrishna, and while he accepted, his acceptance was whole-hearted. While Ramakrishna predominantly taught duality and Bhakti to his other disciples, he taught Narendra the Advaita Vedanta, the philosophy of non-dualism.

In 1885, Ramakrishna developed throat cancer. Narendra and other disciples received holy robes and in August 1886 Ramakrishna passed away.

During the course of five years of his training under Ramakrishna, Narendra was transformed from a restless, puzzled, impatient youth to a mature man who was ready to renounce everything, and started living in a dilapidated house in Baranagar. They took alms to satisfy their hunger and Ramakrishna's richer disciples took care of their other needs. In December 1886, Narendra took formal vows in Antpur and also the name 'Swami Vivekananda'.

In 1888, Narendra left the monastery to live the life of a 'Parivrajaka' (wandering monk). His first place of visit was Varanasi, where he went to places where Buddha and Adishankara preached. While on his way to Haridwar, he met Sharat Chandra Gupta, a station master, who soon became his disciple. Thereafter, he walked till Rishikesh and travelled far and wide.

Some of the notable places were Allahabad in the North, Alwar, Khetri in the Rajputana, Ahmedabad, Kathiawar, Pune in the West and Bengaluru, Mysore in the South. At Kanyakumari, he meditated on the last Indian rock and had a ‘vision of one India.’

Then on, Vivekananda went to Madras and spoke about his plans for India and Hinduism to the young men of Madras. They were impressed by the monk and urged him to go to the United States and represent Hinduism in the World Parliament of Religions. Thus, helped by his friends at Madras, Raja of Ramnad and Maharajas of Mysore and Khetri, Vivekananda set out on his famous journey to the USA where he ‘stole the show’ at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Illinois. It was here that he earned wild applause for beginning his address with the famous words, “Sisters and Brothers of America”!

After four years of constant touring, lecturing and retreats in the West, he came back to India in the year 1897. On returning to India, he delivered a series of lectures, and this set of lectures known as “Lectures from Colombo to Almora” is considered to have uplifted the morale of the leaders of the ensuing National Movement in India. “Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached”, these words by Swami Vivekananda motivated millions of Indians.

He founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1st May, 1897. Despite ill-health, he once again turned to the West from January 1899 to December 1900. During this time, he established Vedanta Societies in San Fransisco and New York.

He was 39 when he passed away in Mahasamadhi on 4th July, 1902 at Belur Math near Kolkata. Thus, his saying that he won’t live for 40 years, came true. He was cremated on a sandal wood pyre on the banks of Ganges, opposite to where his Guru was cremated, 16 years earlier.

Swami Vivekananda belonged to the branch of Vedanta which held the belief that no one can be truly free until all of us are free. Even the desire for personal salvation has to be given up, and only tireless work for the salvation of others is the true mark of the enlightened person.

He founded Sri Ramakrishna Mission on the principle of Atmano Mokshartham Jagad-hitaya Chah (for one’s own salvation and for the welfare of the world.)

Vivekananda advised to be holy, unselfish and have pure faith. He encouraged the practice of Brahmacharya.

His writings inspired a whole generation of freedom fighters in Bengal in particular and in India at large. Most prominent were Subhash Chandra Bose, Aurobindo and countless others.

Many years after his death, Rabindranath Tagore (a prominent member of the Brahma Samaj) had said:

*“If you want to know India, study Vivekananda.
In him everything is positive and nothing negative”.*

Another contemporary, Sri Aurobindo, actually considered Swamiji as his mentor. While in Alipore jail, Sri Aurobindo used to be visited by Swami Vivekananda in his meditation. Mahatma Gandhi who, strove and did a lot to bring about reforms in Hinduism himself had once said, “Swami Vivekananda’s writings need no

introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal". His influence abroad can be seen in Max Muller and Romain Rolland.

The latter also wrote a book in 1930 on the life of Vivekananda. His birthday is observed as National Youth Day. His 150th birth anniversary in 2013 was celebrated world over. Thus, Swami Vivekananda will continue to symbolise the ideals of the vedantic ways of life, with which India has enlightened the West since ages. He will be a continuous source of inspiration to the youth of his beloved country.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **philosopher** – a person who offers views or theories on profound questions in ethics, metaphysics, logic and other related fields
- ♦ **reformer** – a person devoted to bringing about reform in society
- ♦ **contemporary** – from the same time period
- ♦ **renounce** – to give up or put aside voluntarily
- ♦ **precocious** – unusually advanced or mature in development, especially mental development
- ♦ **congregational** – of or pertaining to a congregation
- ♦ **astounded** – to astonish greatly, shock with wonder or surprise
- ♦ **evicted** – to expel from land, building, etc
- ♦ **applause** – hand clapping as a demonstration of approval or the like
- ♦ **morale** – emotional or mental condition with respect to cheerfulness, confidence, zeal, etc., especially in face of hardship
- ♦ **pyre** – a pile of wood for burning a dead body



Nelson Mandela

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

— Nelson Mandela

He spent 27 years of his life in prison, and that too, in one of the most terrible places in the world. Many people have spent their lives in confinement but to come out of it with your principles intact, is an entirely different story. It is the story of Nelson Mandela.

It's surprising to note that he had once supported violence as an answer to all issues in South Africa, but later emerged as a nation-builder on the foundations of non-violence. He served as the President of South Africa from 1994-1999.

Mandela was born as Rolihlahla Mandela on 18th July, 1918 in the village of Mvezo in South Africa. 'Rolihlahla' literally means 'pulling the branch of a tree' or 'troublemaker' in the native Xhosa language. He became the first member of his family to attend school. He then enrolled at Fort Hare University for B.A. But he was forced to leave college for leading a student protest against the university's policies.



Mandela's political journey began with the African National Congress (ANC), after the election of pro-apartheid National Party in 1948. Mandela developed ANC's Defiance Campaign and Congress of the people in 1955. In 1961, he led ANC's armed wing. He was arrested in 1962 and sentenced in 1964. He was to spend

27 years in prison and 18 of them in more hostile conditions at Robben Island. He was released in 1990 owing to mounting international pressure.

In 1994, the country's first elections incorporating both the Blacks and Whites were held. ANC triumphed and Mandela was inducted as the country's first Black President. He played an important role in advocating trial of suspects in Pan Am Flight bombing. He retired in 1999 and dedicated the rest of his life to social causes.

On 5th December, 2013 he passed away, aged 95, at his home in Johannesburg. In centuries to come, he will be a source of inspiration and courage under difficult conditions. He stood up to an unfair system and garnered support from all over the world. He got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

Other honours included Order of Merit and Presidential Medal of freedom. In describing his life, Mandela said : "I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances." He was a leader in the true sense, who led by example, and lived for his countrymen.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **confinement** – the state of being confined
- ♦ **intact** – not influenced or swayed
- ♦ **literally** – word for word
- ♦ **apartheid** – any system or practice that separates people according to race, caste, etc
- ♦ **hostile** – unfriendly, antagonistic
- ♦ **advocating** – to speak or write in favour of
- ♦ **garnered** – to gather, acquire, collect



Dr BR Ambedkar

The Architect of the Indian Constitution

"A great man is different from an eminent one, in that, he is ready to be the servant of the society." Dr BR Ambedkar

Respect follows his name everywhere. The leader who tried to turn the wheel of the law towards social justice for all and the architect who played a great role in framing the Indian Constitution-Dr BR Ambedkar's name is an example of steely grit and iron-willed character. A well-known politician and an eminent jurist, Ambedkar's efforts to eradicate social evils like untouchability and caste restrictions were remarkable. Appointed as the first Law Minister in the free India, he was posthumously awarded with India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.

Popularly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ambedkar was born to Bhimabai Sakpal and Ramji on 14th April, 1891 in Madhya Pradesh. He was the fourteenth child of his parents. Since childhood, Ambedkar was a victim of caste, discrimination. His parents hailed from the Hindu Mahar caste, which was viewed as 'untouchable' by the upper caste.

Due to this, Ambedkar had to face severe discriminations from every corner of the society. The discrimination and humiliation haunted Ambedkar even at school as untouchable students were often asked by the teacher to sit outside the class. In 1894, Ramji retired and the family moved to Satara after two years. In 1897, the family moved to Bombay. In 1906, his marriage was arranged to a nine year old girl Ramabai. In 1908, Ambedkar got the opportunity to study at the Elphinstone College becoming the

first from the untouchable community and later went for higher studies to the USA. He acquired numerous degrees to his name, including four doctorates.

After returning to India, Bhimrao Ambedkar decided to fight against the caste discrimination that almost fragmented the entire nation. This led to the upsurge of Dalit Movement through which he favoured the concept of reservations for Dalits and other backward communities.

For two years, after 1935 he served as the principal of Government Law College, Mumbai. He constructed a house, which consisted of a library, stocking more than 50,000 books. In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party which initiated his political career. In 1937, in elections to the Central Legislative Assembly, his party won 15 seats. Ambedkar oversaw the transformation of his political party into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation.

He published a book the same year—‘Annihilation of Caste,’ which strongly criticised orthodox Hindu religious leaders and caste system.

“You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste.

You cannot build up a nation. You cannot build up a morality.”

He served on the Defence Advisory Committee and Viceroy’s Executive Council as the minister for labour. His reputation as a scholar led to his appointment as free India’s first Law Minister and as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. He was also a noted scholar and an eminent jurist. Ambedkar emphasised on the construction of a virtual bridge between the classes of the society. According to him, it would be difficult to maintain the unity of the country if the difference among the castes were not met. Around 1950, Ambedkar wrote a book on Buddhism “The Buddha or Karl Marx” and soon converted himself to Buddhism, in the backdrop of his disgust towards Hindu caste divisions.

During 1954-55, Ambedkar suffered from serious health problems including diabetes and weak eyesight. On 6th December, 1956, he breathed his last at his home in Delhi. A Buddhist-style cremation was organised for him and the ceremony was attended by hundreds and thousands of his supporters, activists and admirers.

On his birth and death anniversaries, and on Dharma Chakra Pravartan Din (14th October) at Nagpur, millions pay homage to him. He was voted as the ‘Greatest Indian’ in 2012 by TV channels polls.

The leader, throughout his life, fought for the rights of Dalits and other socially backward classes. Framing the Constitution and guiding it through to adoption was his greatest political achievement. Owing to his immense contributions, Dr BR Ambedkar’s name is firmly imprinted on the sands of history.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **architect** – a person who engages in the profession or architecture, the deviser, maker, or creator of anything
- ♦ **grit** – firmness of mind, unyielding courage
- ♦ **eradicate** – to remove completely
- ♦ **eminent** – high in station, rank or repute
- ♦ **posthumously** – arising, occurring, or continuing after one’s death
- ♦ **upsurge** – increase, rise
- ♦ **annihilation** – total destruction
- ♦ **orthodox** – pertaining to, or conforming to beliefs, attitudes, or modes of conduct that are generally approved
- ♦ **jurist** – a person versed in the law, as a judge, lawyer, or scholar
- ♦ **virtual** – being such in power, force, or effect, though not actually or expressly such
- ♦ **cremation** – to consume by fire, especially a funeral site



S. Radhakrishnan

A Philosopher, A Teacher & A President

“When we think we know, we cease to learn.”

These words motivate us to seek higher learning in each phase of life, since learning is a life-long process. The student in us would never fail if we have a teacher-par excellence, like Dr S Radhakrishnan.

An academician, a philosopher and a statesman— these are some of the many hats that Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan wore. He is, undoubtedly, one of the most recognised and influential Indian thinkers in academic circles of the 20th century. Radhakrishnan was born on 5th September, 1888 in a middle class Brahmin family in a small town of Tamil Nadu. His father’s name was Sarvepalli Veeraswami and was a revenue official with a local zamindar. His mother’s name was Sitamma. His father didn’t want him to learn English and wished that he become a priest instead. But seeing his God-gifted intelligence, he was allowed to pursue school and higher education. Being from a financially weak family, he sustained his studies by borrowing second hand books from a cousin. Between 1900 and 1904, he attended the Elizabeth Rodman Voorhees College in Vellore, a school run by the Reformed Church in America. But, he switched to Madras Christian College and graduated with a Master’s degree in Philosophy. It was here, that he was introduced to Western thought. In 1918, he was selected as the Professor of Philosophy at University of Mysore.



In 1921, he was appointed to the most important philosophy chair in India, the King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science at the University of Calcutta. Later in 1929, Radhakrishnan was invited to take up the job of a teacher at Manchester College, Oxford. This gave him the opportunity to lecture the students on Comparative Religion. He was Knighted in 1931 and thereafter, worked as the Vice-chancellor of Andhra University, till 1936.

In late 1939, Radhakrishnan took up his second Vice-Chancellorship at Banaras Hindu University (BHU). He resigned from there in 1948. A brilliant scholar, he was named the Chairman of the University Education Commission. His hand can be felt especially in the chapters on the aims of university education and religious education. During these years, the question of nationalism occupied his attention. For Radhakrishnan, a university education that quickened the development of an individual as a whole was the only responsible and practical means to the creation of Indian solidarity and clarity of national vision. He envisioned an India built and guided by those who were truly educated, by those who have a personal vision and commitment to raising Indian self-consciousness. The years following Indian independence marked Radhakrishnan’s increasing involvement in Indian politics as well as in international affairs. The closing years of the 1940s were busy ones. Radhakrishnan had been actively involved in the newly incorporated UNESCO. He also served for two years, immediately following India’s independence, as a member of the Indian Constituent Assembly. However, the favourable opportunity for

Radhakrishnan to put into practice his own philosophical political ideas came with his election to the Rajya Sabha. He served as India's Vice President (1952-1962) and later as the President (1962-1967). Radhakrishnan, a great visionary, who saw during his terms in office an increasing need for world unity and universal fellowship. The urgency of this need was pressed home to Radhakrishnan by what he saw as the unfolding crisis throughout the world. The Korean War was already in full swing. Political tensions with China in the early 1960s followed by the hostilities between India and Pakistan dominated Radhakrishnan's Presidency.

Radhakrishnan belonged to that genre of the intelligentsia which believed in international peace and cooperation. So, he challenged what he saw as the potential and dominating character of self-professed international organisations such as the League of Nations. Instead, he called for the promotion of a creative internationalism based on the spiritual foundations of integral experience. Only then could understanding and tolerance between people and nations could be promoted. Though he did not have an active political background, he kept an impassioned guard for the Hindu culture against 'uniformed Western criticism'.

His philosophy was simple but effective. He argued that Western philosophers, despite all claims to objectivity, were biased by theological influences of their culture. In one of his major works, he also showed that Indian philosophy, once translated into standard academic language, is worthy of being called 'philosophy' by Western standards. His main contribution to Indian thought, therefore, is that he placed it "on the world map", thereby, earning Indian philosophy a respect in the West that it had not had before. In his major work on the idealist view of life, he laid emphasis on the importance of instinctive thinking as opposed to purely intellectual forms of thought. According to him, there were five kinds of experiences associated with intuition—cognitive, psychic, aesthetic, ethical and religious. He reinterpreted Advaita Vedanta on a contemporary context. He was one of India's most eminent scholars of religion and philosophy in the 20th century.

Radhakrishnan is also the impetus behind celebrating Teachers' Day. When he was the President of India in 1962, his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday, 5th September. He replied, "Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my privilege if 5th September is observed as Teachers' Day". Finally, this illustrious representative of Hinduism to the West retired from public life in 1967. He received the Bharat Ratna in 1954, and was the first person to be conferred upon the Sahitya Akademi fellowship. He also received the Peace Prize of German Book Trade in 1961 and Templeton Prize in 1975. He donated the award money of Templeton Prize to Oxford University. He spent the last eight years of his life at the home he had built in Chennai. Radhakrishnan breathed his last on 17th April, 1975. Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru said about him :

*"It is India's peculiar privilege to have a great philosopher,
a great educationist and a great humanist as her President."*

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **revenue** – the income of a government from taxation, excise duties, customs, or other sources, appropriated to the payment of the public expenses
- ♦ **hostilities** – a military action
- ♦ **integral** – complete
- ♦ **impassioned** – filled with intense feeling or passion, ardent
- ♦ **fellowship** – friendly relationship, companionship
- ♦ **instinctive** – a spontaneous action without thinking



Mother Teresa *The God Mother*

Who does not love one's mother? In times of need or distress, we look up to our mother for that much-desired warmth and love. But who cares for the abandoned, distraught people, languishing in misery and disease? A God-sent 'mother' did.

Mother Teresa or the 'Saint of the Gutters' as we know her, was named Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu at birth. She was born in Skopje, Macedonia, on 27th August 1910. She was the daughter of humble Albanian parents - a grocer and his wife. As a public school student, she developed a special interest in overseas missions and by the age of 12, she felt strongly the call of God.

At the age of 18, she left her parental home in Skopje and joined the sisters of Loreto, an Irish community who runs nuns missions in India. After a few months' training in Dublin she was sent to India, where on 24th May 1931, she took her initial vows as a nun. Here, she took the name 'Sister Teresa'. However, in 1946, her life changed forever.

After falling ill with suspected tuberculosis, she was sent to the town of Darjeeling the 'poorest of the poor', she had said. The misery, suffering and poverty that she saw around haunted her day and night. Finally, she realised that her real calling was with the forsaken and with the downtrodden.

"The other day I dreamed that the gates of heaven... and St. Peter said, 'Go back to Earth, there are not slums up here'".

In 1948, she received permission from her superiors to leave the convent school and devote herself to working among the poor in the slums of Calcutta. She adopted a white cotton sari with blue border, in place of her loreto habit. She spent a few months in Holy Family Hospital, Patna to receive a basic medical training.

She initially opened a school in Motijhil in Kolkata, and thereafter tended to the needs of the destitute and the starving. In the beginning of 1949, she was joined by a group of young women and it paved the way for the creation of a community to help the 'poorest of the poor'.

Through the years Mother Teresa's name grew, as did the magnitude of her deeds. On 7th October 1950, Mother Teresa received permission to start her own order. 'The Missionaries of Charity' whose primary task was to love and care for those persons whom nobody was prepared to look after. In 1952, she established a home for the homeless people — uncared for and unacceptable at other institutions were washed, fed and allowed to die with dignity.

*"A beautiful death, is for people who lived like
animals to die like angels — loved and wanted."* *— Mother Teresa*

Soon the mother opened a home for leprosy patients called 'Shantinagar' and a children's home in 1955. When the walls of the Eastern Europe collapsed, she expanded her efforts to communist countries that had shunned her, embarking on dozens of projects.

Even today, the volunteers of the missionaries of charity provide effective help to the poorest of the poor in a number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and they undertake relief works in the wake of natural catastrophes such as floods, epidemics, and famine and for refugees.

The order also has houses in North America, Europe and Australia, where they take care of the shut-ins, alcoholics, homeless and AIDS sufferers. By the 1990s, there were over one million co-workers in more than 40 countries.

In 1982, Mother Teresa persuaded Israelis and Palestinians, who were in the midst of a skirmish, to ceasefire long enough and rescue 37 mentally-handicapped patients from a besieged hospital in Beirut. In 1991, returning to her home country, she opened a home in Tirana, Albania.

She offered to resign her position as head of the order. A secret ballot was carried out and all the nuns, voted for the Mother to continue. Her own vote was the only vote against herself. Mother Teresa agreed to continue her work as head of the Missionaries of Charity.

On 13th March, 1997 she stepped down from the head of the Missionaries of Charity and died on 5th September 1997, just 9 days after her 87th birthday. At the time of her death, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity had over 4000 sisters, an associated brotherhood of 300 members and over 100000 strong volunteers, operating 610 missions in 123 countries.

These include hospital and homes that provide facilities like soup kitchens, children and family counselling programmes, orphanages and schools for people suffering from HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis.

Mother Teresa was granted a full state funeral by the Indian Government, an honour normally given to Presidents and Prime Ministers in gratitude for her services to the poor of all religions in India. Her death was widely considered a great tragedy within both secular and religious communities.

Mother Teresa's work has been recognised and acclaimed throughout the world and she received a number of awards and citations, including the Padma Shri (1962), Pope John XXIII Peace Prize (1971) and the Nehru Prize for promotion of International Peace and Understanding (1972). She also received the Nobel Peace Prize (1979) and the Templeton and Magsaysay Awards. She was awarded the Bharat Ratna, the Highest Civilian Award in 1980.

Navin Chawla, a civil servant, wrote her biography in 1992. In 1996, she was made the honorary citizen of America. She was the first and the only person to be featured on an Indian Postage stamp while still alive. Other awards bestowed upon her include Kennedy Prize (1971), the Albert Schweitzer International Prize (1975), the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom (1985) and the Congressional Gold Medal (1994).

On 28th August, 2010, to celebrate her centenary birthday, the government issued a special five-rupee coin, in her honour.

The level of her compassion and magnanimity is difficult even to imagine, let alone practise. The former UN Secretary General Javier de Cuellar, praised her with the words — “She is of the UN. She is peace in the world”. Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan said that Teresa was “a rare and unique individual who lived long for higher purpose. Her life-long devotion to the care of the poor, the sick and the disadvantaged was one of the highest examples of service to humanity.” She was beatified by Pope John Paul II in October 2003, hence she may be appropriately called Blessed Teresa.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **languish** – to undergo neglect or experience prolonged inactivity, suffer hardship and distress
- ♦ **vow** – a solemn promise, pledge, or personal commitment
- ♦ **haunted** – inhabited or preoccupied with an emotion, memory, or idea, obsessed
- ♦ **forsaken** – deserted, abandoned, forlorn
- ♦ **destitute** – without means of subsistence, lacking food, clothing and shelter
- ♦ **magnitude** – extent, size
- ♦ **catastrophe** – a sudden and widespread disaster
- ♦ **epidemic** – a temporary prevalence of a disease
- ♦ **besieged** – to surround with military forces to bring about its surrender, to crowd round
- ♦ **centenary** – completing a period of 100 years
- ♦ **beatified** – blessed by the Church to enter heaven



Sir CV Raman

The Intellectual Gem

Steeped in intellectual thought with an illustrious eye for detail, he represented India’s scientific temper. He is the first Asian and the foremost Indian to win the Nobel Prize in Physics. Most importantly, he did this at a time when India was little known in the field of Sciences. A man of immense calibre and a pool of talent, he can be none other than Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman.

Born at Trichinopoly in Tamil Nadu on 7th November, 1888, his father was a lecturer in Mathematics and Physics, in Mrs AV Narasimha Rao College, Visakhapatnam, and later joined Presidency College, Madras. His maternal grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar, well versed in ‘navya nyaya’ or modern logic.



So, from an early age, he was immersed in an academic atmosphere. He was a diligent student. He entered the Presidency College, Madras, in 1902, and in 1904 passed his BA examination, winning the first place and a gold medal in Physics. In 1907, he gained his MA degree, obtaining the highest distinctions. His earliest researches in optics and acoustics—the two fields of investigation to which he dedicated his entire career were carried out while he was a student. Since at that time a scientific career did not appear to offer the best possibilities, Raman joined the Indian Finance Department in 1907. Though the duties of his office took most of his time, Raman found opportunities for carrying on experimental researches in the laboratory of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences at Calcutta.

In 1917, he was offered the newly endowed Palit Chair of Physics at Calcutta University, and decided to accept it. Raman's main research was focussed on acoustics and musical instruments, and led to his election as fellow of the Royal Society in 1924. It was during a trip to England in 1921 that he was fascinated by the blue colour of the Mediterranean.

With a very simple experiment, he convinced himself that the blue colour of the sea was not only due to the reflection of the sky, as proposed by Lord Rayleigh, but mainly due to the scattering of light by water molecules. On his return to Calcutta, he began a systematic study of the scattering of light by different liquids, culminating in the discovery of a totally new kind of radiation, predicted by the quantum theory and named after him.

These Raman radiations carry vital information about the internal structure of the scattering molecules, and have proved to be of immense importance in studying molecular structures. His efforts finally paid off when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930, the first to be ever won by an Indian. Thereafter, he became the Honorary Secretary of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences. After 15 years in Calcutta, he became Professor at the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore (1933-1948) and in 1948, he became the Director of the Raman Institute of Research at Bangalore, established and endowed by himself. He also founded the Indian Journal of Physics in 1926, of which he was the Editor.

Raman sponsored the establishment of the Indian Academy of Sciences and served as its President since its inception. He was also the President of the Current Science Association, Bangalore, which publishes Current Science. (India)

Raman has done credible work in his field and his early memoirs appeared as Bulletins of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences. These dealt with the maintenance of vibrations and the theory of musical instruments of the violin family. In 1922, he published his work on the 'Molecular Diffraction of Light', the first of a series of investigations with his collaborators which ultimately led to the discovery, on 28th February, 1928, of the radiation effect, which is named after him. This work bagged him the 1930 Nobel Prize in Physics.

Some other investigations which propelled the world of science during his time were the experimental and the theoretical studies on the diffraction of light by acoustic waves of Ultrasonic and Hypersonic frequencies. In 1932, he and Suri Bhagavantam discovered quantum photon spin. During his term at IISc, he admitted the talented electrical engineering student, GN Ramachandran, who went on to become a recognised X-ray crystallographer.

In 1948, Raman, through studying the spectroscopic behaviour of crystals, approached fundamental problems of crystal dynamics in a new manner. His laboratory has been dealing with the structures and properties of diamond, the structure of optical behaviour of numerous iridescent substances like opal and pearls.

This luminous star in the firmament of the scientific fraternity has been honoured with a large number of honorary doctorates and memberships of scientific societies. He was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society in 1924 and knighted in 1929. In 1941, he was awarded the Franklin Medal. In 1954, he was conferred upon, the Bharat Ratna. He got the Lenin Peace Prize in 1957.

Another big honour was that the American Chemical Society and IACS recognised his discovery as an International Historic Chemical Landmark. India celebrates National Science Day every year on 28th February to remember the discovery of Raman effect that took place in 1928.

At the end of October, 1970, he collapsed in his laboratory. Doctors gave him four hours to live. He survived and asked to be shifted from the hospital to the gardens of his institute. He passed away on 21st November, 1970. His life was a testimony to hard work, patience and perseverance for achieving one's goals. One should also be level headed and not go overboard on attaining success. With him, dawned an era of high quality science, and he showed the light for others to follow.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **illustrious** – very famous and much admired, especially because of what you have achieved
- ♦ **diligent** – showing care and effort in your work or duties
- ♦ **optics** – the scientific study of sight and light
- ♦ **acoustics** – the shape, design, etc. of a room or theatre that make it good or bad for carrying sound
- ♦ **endowed** – to give a large sum of money to a school, a college or another institution to provide it with an income
- ♦ **inception** – the start of an institution, an organisation, etc.
- ♦ **propelled** – to move, drive or push something forward or in a particular direction
- ♦ **diffraction** – breaking up of stream of light into a series of dark and light bands or the different colours of the spectrum
- ♦ **spectroscopic** – a piece of equipment for forming and looking at spectra
- ♦ **iridescent** – showing many bright colours that seem to change in different lights

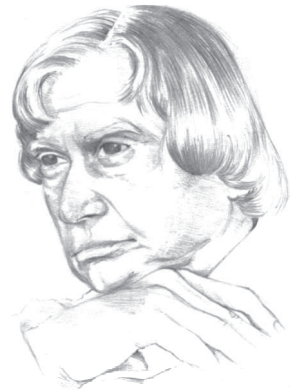


Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

The 'Missile Man' Who Ignited Young Minds

Reverberated was a jam-packed hall in Kolkata on 21st January, 2003, when the 11th President of India inspired thousands of school children to dream, to dream big and let those dreams culminate into thoughts and actions.

One of India's most adored Presidents, APJ Abdul Kalam, worked as an aerospace engineer with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) before his presidential term. He is known as the 'Missile man' for his work on the development of ballistic missiles and launch vehicles. Dr Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, was born on 15 October, 1931 at Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu. He is the son of a humble fisherman who owned a boat. In order to supplement his father's income, he used to distribute newspapers after attending school. In school, he was an average student, but hardworking and with a keen desire to learn.



He studied at Schwartz High School in Ramanathapuram where he found an ideal teacher in Iyadurai Solomon. From him, Kalam learnt the key to success in life.

“To succeed in life and achieve results, you must understand and master three mighty forces—desire, belief and expectation.” He did his BSc from St Joseph College, Tiruchirapalli oblivious even to the option for higher education.

He did a course in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Engineering College in 1954-1957. Here, he was fascinated by the sight of two decommissioned aircrafts displayed for demonstration. Fascinated by the desire to fly, when he had to opt for a specific branch, aeronautical engineering became a natural choice. Once, his Dean gave him a deadline of three days to finish a project, owing to his lack of progress. But unexpectedly, he finished it on time by working sincerely day and night.

He missed becoming a fighter pilot, as there were only eight seats available and he stood ninth. He started his career with DRDO in 1958. Here, he designed a small helicopter for the Indian Army. He also became a part of the INCOSPAR Committee under Vikram Sarabhai.

He went ahead to join ISRO five years later where he was the project director of SLV III. It was due to the team effort under his leadership that ‘Rohini’ was successfully launched in 1980. This was the beginning of India’s aerospace programme. Kalam initiated an independent work on an expandable rocket project in 1965. In 1969, he received government’s nod to incorporate more engineers in the project.

During 1963-64, he visited NASA’s Langley Research Centre in Hampton. Between 1970s and 1990s, he worked relentlessly to develop Polar SLV and SLV-III, both of which garnered success. He was invited by Dr Raja Ramanna to preside over the nation’s first nuclear test, Smiling Buddha. In the 1970s, he supervised two projects, Project Devil and Project Valiant, for the development of ballistic missiles. Despite disapproval of Cabinet, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi allocated him funds for these projects. Due to his success, the government decided to initiate advanced missile programme under his leadership.

In 1982, he was entrusted with the development of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme. Dr Kalam henceforth plunged into developing ‘Prithvi’, the surface to surface weapon system ‘Agni’, ‘Akash’ and ‘Nag’. He is also responsible for the completion of the long delayed ‘Arjun’ anti-tank project and also worked upon an indigenous aircraft engine ‘Kaveri’.

‘Akash’ too was test-fired successfully. In 1998, nuclear tests were conducted and thereafter he was appointed the principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India with the rank of a Union Cabinet Minister in November 1999, a position in which he continued to be until November 2001.

In 1998, Kalam developed an inexpensive coronary stent, along with Dr Soma Raju. It was called ‘Kalam-Raju Stent.’ In 2012, both of them again came up with an innovation, a tablet PC for healthcare in rural areas. This was known as ‘Kalam-Raju Tablet’. On 25th July, 2002, he took the oath as the 11th President of India. Kalam had won the elections by a huge margin against Lakshmi Sehgal. He was the first scientist and the first bachelor to occupy Rashtrapati Bhawan.

At the end of his term in 2007, he wished for a second term. However, he declined to contest citing lack of support of the left parties, Shiv Sena and UPA constituents. In 2012 also, he denied to contest.

Presently, he is the fellow of the Indian Academy Society of Sciences, Bangalore, Vice-President of the Astronautical Society of India, fellow of the National Academy of Medical Sciences, India, Honorary fellow of the Institution of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers and an ISRO distinguished professor.

Dr Kalam has a literary bent of mind as well. ‘Wings of Fire’ is his autobiography wherein he describes his humble journey, shares his life experiences and aspirations with the people. As he shares his life’s experiences in this book, we weep with him and we celebrate with him. Every Indian should read his autobiography in today’s time. He has also written ‘Ignited Minds’ and ‘India 2020– A vision of the New Millennium’. India 2020 is his pathway of developing India into a Developed Nation by 2020. ‘Ignited Minds–Unleashing the power within India’ is dedicated to Snehal Thakkar who had questioned Kalam on 12th April, 2002 ‘Who is our enemy?’. The book is a must-read for every citizen especially children and the youth of the country. Dr Kalam is a poet too and enjoys music.

He is also fond of playing veena. Despite being a great and honoured man, he is simplicity personified, extremely down to Earth, kind and gentle. His love for children is revealed in the fact that even after holding the highest constitutional title he has been touring the entire nation, meeting school students, talking to them, lecturing them, interacting with them and inspiring them. All he wants to do is to open a small school in Rameshwaram and teach the children there, once he retires.

In 2012, he launched a mission for youth against corruption, titled ‘What Can I Give Movement.’ Kalam’s 79th birthday was honoured as World Student’s Day by the United Nations. He has bagged honorary doctorates from 40 universities across the world. In 1997, he received the Bharat Ratna. In December 2000, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, KC Pant conferred the ‘Lifetime Contribution Award’ to Dr Kalam. To mark Kalam’s visit, Switzerland declared 26th May as Science Day, in 2005.

All Indians are proud of his great achievements and humble persona. He observes strict discipline, practices vegetarianism, teetotalism and celibacy. He reads both the Quran and the Bhagwad Gita and his book ‘Guiding Souls’: Dialogues on the purpose of life’ reveals his spiritual facets too. Due to his open, approachable nature, he was referred to as ‘People’s President’. He showed that money can’t be a barrier to dreams, as he himself was from a poor family. He will continue to be a source of inspiration to one and all.

VOCAB HELP

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|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| ♦ aerospace | – the industry concerned with the design and manufacture of aircraft, rockets, missiles, spacecraft, etc., that operates in aerospace | ♦ relentlessly | – unyieldingly severe, strict, or harsh, unrelenting |
| ♦ ballistic | – of or pertaining to the science of designing projectiles for maximum flight performance | ♦ indigenous | – native to a place |
| ♦ decommissioned | – dismantled or removed from service (a nuclear reactor, weapon, ship, etc., which is no longer required) | ♦ coronary | – of or pertaining to the human heart, with respect to health |
| | | ♦ unleash | – set loose to pursue or run at will |
| | | ♦ teetotalism | – the principle or practice of total abstinence from intoxicating drink |



MS Swaminathan

The Father of Green Revolution in India

It is so heartening to see the lush green fields of wheat, paddy, maize etc. But if there was not a phenomenon, which had the power to create a 'food bowl', then it would not have been so pleasant. Called as the father of India's Green Revolution, MS Swaminathan is the pioneering force behind the change. His vision is to see a world free of hunger and poverty. He supports the concept of sustainable development through sustainable agriculture, food security and conservation of biodiversity. This, according to him, is 'evergreen revolution'.

He was born in Kumbakonam on 7th August, 1925. He was the second son of surgeon Dr MK Sambasivan and Parvati Thangammal. He learnt from his father that the word 'impossible' existed only in the mind. After his father's death, when he was only 11 years old, he was looked after by his uncle. He earned a B.Sc degree in Zoology. He enrolled in TNAU for another B.Sc degree, this time in agriculture. He was inspired to help farmers after the outbreak of Bengal famine. In 1949, he obtained post-graduate degree with distinction from IARI. He appeared in UPSC exam and qualified for IPS. He accepted UNESCO fellowship for research in Netherlands. There he standardised procedures for transferring genes from wild to cultivated species of potato.

He is modest about his own achievements, but forthright about his work's impact on his native land and planet Earth. 'Our history', he says, "changed from that time." Swaminathan had, since the beginning thought that India should be free from the tutelage of importing food grains.

An incident from childhood shows how self-reliance was seeped into him. His physician father was an ardent follower of Gandhi and the young Swaminathan was brought to a rally in which British cloth was burned. It was a lesson for life. Says Dr Swaminathan, "I believed I had to serve the nation". In 1952, he earned his Ph.D from Cambridge University. He turned down an offer for professorship. "I asked myself, why did I study genetics. It was to produce enough food in India. So I came back."

India at that time, was importing vast amounts of grain to feed its teeming masses. He says that importing food was like importing unemployment because 70 % of the Indians were involved in agriculture and importing means supporting farmers in other countries. By 1966, Swaminathan was the Director of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in New Delhi, spending his time in fields with farmers trying to improve their productivity.

Agriculture was in a very bad condition. Fertilisers were not being effective. When the wheat plant's pod grew more seeds, its stalk collapsed under the weight. With help from the Rockefeller Foundation, Swaminathan found a cross-bred wheat seed, part-Japanese and part-Mexican, that was both fruitful and staunch. He later bred this plant to an Indian variety to produce the golden-coloured grain favoured by Indians. This was a breakthrough in Green Revolution.

But a lot of work was still left. Indian farmers, immersed in traditional ways, had to be convinced to grow the new wheat. In 1966, Swaminathan set-up 2000 model farms in villages outside New Delhi to show farmers what his seed could do.

Then came the hardest part. He needed government to help to import 18000 tonne of the Mexican seed at a time of fiscal hardship. Swaminathan lobbied the Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. Since, famine was imminent, there was everywhere a willingness to take risks and, so Shastri agreed. The first harvest with new seeds was three times greater than the previous years.

But the revolution was still incomplete. Only Punjab had the facilities of irrigation, for the new technologies, the state-run food collection and distribution networks were inefficient and new fertilisers and pesticides were needed, along with credit lines for small farmers. Political leadership was vital to solve these problems and Shastri's successor, Indira Gandhi, bluntly asked Swaminathan that how could India be free of imports. She gave him a free hand to organise a new agricultural programme.

Today, as a result of the Green Revolution, India recorded an estimated production of 84.27 million tonnes of wheat in 2011, compared to 12 million tonne in the early 1960s. Apart from Green Revolution, he contributed in a wide variety of research areas, of agricultural and environmental importance. In 1988, he established the Iwokrama Centre for Management of Rainforests in Guyana. In 1990, he founded International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems.

Between 1988-98, he chaired various committees for drafting legislations for farmers' rights. He co-chaired millennium task on hunger till 2005 and has been the chairman of the National Commission on farmers'. In 1987, he received the first World Food Prize. In 1989, he was conferred upon, the Padma Vibushan. Recently in 2013, he got Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration.

Swaminathan ardently believes that farmers must adopt more eco-friendly methods. Although population continues to mushroom, he maintains that still greater harvests are possible. In his own words, he says, "all that is needed is inspiration, perspiration and luck". However, it would not be an anomaly to say that the greatest stroke of luck for hundreds of millions of Asians has been Swaminathan's revolution!

VOCAB HELP

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| ♦ biodiversity – diversity among and within plant and animal species in an environment | ♦ teeming – abounding or swarming with something, as with people |
| ♦ famine – extreme and general scarcity of food | ♦ staunch – firm or steadfast in principle |
| ♦ forthright – going straight to the point, frank, direct | ♦ imminent – likely to occur at any moment, impending |
| ♦ genetics – the science of studying genetic properties and phenomena of an organism | ♦ ardently – characterised by intense feeling |
| | ♦ perspiration – a salty, watery fluid secreted by the sweat glands of the skin, especially when very warm as a result of strenuous exertion, sweat |



Stephen Hawking

Defeating the Odds

Stephen Hawking is a physicist, author and Director of Research at Centre for Theoretical Cosmology. He worked with another scientist, Penrose on gravitational theorems. He predicted that black holes emitted radiations. He also authored a book— ‘A Brief History of Time’, which was on British Sunday Times best sellers list for 237 weeks, making a record.

And he achieved all this and more, notwithstanding that he is almost fully paralysed and communicates through a speech generating device.

He was born on 8th January, 1942 to Frank and Isobel Hawking in England. They lived in High Gate, but as London was under siege those days, his mother went to Oxford to give birth to him. He has two younger sisters, Philippa and Mary and an adopted brother, Edward. His father wanted him to attend West Minster School, but Hawking was ill on the day of scholarship exam. His family couldn't afford that school without scholarship, so he had to remain at St Albans School.

He did his BA from University of Oxford and doctorate from Cambridge. At the age of 21 years, his motor neuron disease was diagnosed. Doctors told him that he would live for only two years. He became depressed. He got engaged to Jane Wilde and returned to his work with renewed energy.

He obtained his Ph.D Degree in 1966. His essay, ‘Singularities and the Geometry of Space-Time’ and the one by Penrose, won Adams Prize that year. Their joint essay was the runner-up in the 1968 Gravity Research Foundation. In the late 1960s, he started using crutches. He lost the ability to write and visualised equations in the form of geometry. However, he was independent and refused to accept any relaxations for his disability.

Soon after 1970, Hawking, Bardeen and Carter proposed the four laws of black hole mechanics. In 1974, he showed that black holes emit radiation, now known as Hawking radiations. The same year, he was inducted as fellow of the Royal Society, one of the youngest to be honoured.

He got a job in Cambridge as a reader in 1975. Don page, a graduate student came to live with the Hawking family to assist Hawking. The latter and Jane campaigned for improved facilities for disabled in the campus. In 1977, he was appointed as a professor in gravitational physics.

During a visit to CERN, Geneva in 1985, he got afflicted with pneumonia. Nurses were hired and he started using a computer programme to generate speech. Hawking brought science to the masses. After the release of his book, ‘A Brief History of Time’, the same was adapted as a film in 1992.

In spite of his debilitating disease, Hawking is mentally strong. He is not afraid of voicing his opinions, be it science or politics. In 2002, he was included in the list of 100 Greatest Britons. He was awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 and Russian Fundamental Physics Prize in 2012.

Several buildings are named after him. He has successfully guided 39 Ph.D students. He is a living example of sheer grit and courage to beat one's physical illness. He showed us that inner motivation and the zeal to excel can make the impossible possible. He rightly says :

*"We are all different, but we share the same human spirit.
Perhaps it's human nature that we adapt — and survive."*

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **physicist** – a scientist who specialises in physics
- ♦ **underseige** – a place undergoing a seige
- ♦ **doctorate** – doctor of philosophy
- ♦ **neuron** – a specialised, impulse-conducting cell that is the functional unit of the nervous system, consisting of the cell body and its processes, the axon and dendrites
- ♦ **renewed** – to begin or take up again, resume
- ♦ **crutches** – a staff or support to assist a lame or infirm person in walking, now usually with a crosspiece at one end to fit under the armpit
- ♦ **afflicted** – to be distressed with mental or bodily pain
- ♦ **debilitating** – to make weak or feeble
- ♦ **cosmology** – the study of the physical universe, its structure, dynamics, origin and evolution
- ♦ **grit** – firmness of character, indomitable spirit



Kalpna Chawla *Space Queen*

Each one of us wants to touch the sky. But very few of us persevere to chase our dreams. We abandon them due to the fear of the unknown and apprehension over the uncertain. Indian woman astronaut Kalpna Chawla fulfilled her dreams by becoming the first Indian woman in space.

She was born on 17th March, 1962 in Karnal. She did her B.E. in Aeronautical Engineering at Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh in 1982. She finished her Masters from University of Texas in 1984. She did another masters and then a Ph.D from University of Colorado.

In 1988, she started working at NASA Ames Research Centre as Vice-President of Oversight Methods. She researched on fluid dynamics of landing and take-off.

She held Flight Instructor and Pilot certifications also. She became a US citizen in 1991. So, she applied for NASA Astronaut Corps. She joined in 1995 and was selected for her first flight in 1996. In the weightlessness of space, she said :

"You are just your intelligence."

She had covered 10.67 million km, which was equivalent to travelling around the Earth, 252 times. Her first space mission commenced on 19th November, 1997, as part of a six member crew aboard space shuttle Columbia. In this mission, she spent 372 hours in space. She was assigned the task of deploying the Spartan Satellite.

After finishing this project, she assumed technical duties in the space station. Her work was lauded by her peers. In 2000, she was selected for her second flight, as part of the crew of STS-107. On 16th January 2003, she and other members boarded the



flight. She conducted some experiments studying Earth and space science, technology development and astronaut safety and health. Unfortunately, the shuttle disintegrated over Texas, while re-entering the Earth's atmosphere on 1st February, 2003, with the loss of all seven members.

She was posthumously awarded Congressional Space Medal of Honour, NASA Space Flight Medal and Distinguished Service Medal. The Kalpana Chawla Outstanding Recent Alumni Award at University of Colorado, was renamed after her. An asteroid, a hill peak on Mars, an Indian series of satellites, a NASA supercomputer are all named after her. Government of Haryana established Kalpana Chawla Planetarium at Kurukshetra. A medical college was named after her and opened in her birthplace in 2013. She died young, and left an indelible imprint on the minds of aspiring youngsters to live a life of quality. Her spirit encourages us to take risks and not be afraid of the challenges. She was a gem the vacuum created by her death can never be filled. As her brother said :

"She is a permanent star in the sky. She will always be up there where she belongs."

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **persevere** – to persist in anything undertaken
- ♦ **apprehension** – anticipation of adversity of misfortune, suspicion or fear of future trouble or evil
- ♦ **fluid** – pertaining to a substance that easily changes its shape, capable of flowing
- ♦ **deploy** – to arrange in a position of readiness, or to move strategically or appropriately
- ♦ **disintegration** – the act or process of separation into parts or lose intactness or solidness, break up
- ♦ **posthumously** – after death
- ♦ **asteroid** – any of the thousands of small bodies of from 480 miles (775 km) to less than one mile (1.6 km) in diameter that revolve about the sun in orbits lying mostly between those of Mars and Jupiter
- ♦ **planetarium** – the building or room in which a device representing the planetary system is housed
- ♦ **vacuum** – emptiness, void



Albert Einstein

The Father of the 'Theory of Relativity'

In popular culture, his name has become synonymous with, 'genius'. Named 'The Greatest Physicist of All Time', he has been voted as 'Time magazine's 'Person of the Century'. His brain was kept in preservation in hope that the neuroscience of the future would be able to discover what made him so intelligent. He can be none other than the one and only 'Albert Einstein'.

Born into a Jewish family on 14th March, 1879 in Germany, Einstein had early speech difficulties—still, he was a topper at the elementary school. His father, Hermann Einstein was a salesman and engineer, who with his brother, founded an electrical equipment manufacturing company. Albert had a sister, Maja, two years younger to him. When Albert was five, his father showed him a pocket compass. Albert realised that something in empty space was moving the needle and later stated that this experience made 'a deep and lasting impression' on him. In 1889, a family friend named Max Talmud introduced the ten year old Albert to popular science and philosophy texts. These included Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' and 'Euclid's

Elements'. From the latter book, Albert began to understand deductive reasoning, and by the age of 12, he learned Euclidian geometry from a school booklet. In his early teens, Albert attended the new and progressive Luitpold Gymnasium. His father intended him to pursue electrical engineering, but Albert clashed with the authorities and resented rote learning. According to him, the spirit of learning and creative thought were lost in rote learning.

In 1894, when Einstein was fifteen, his father's business failed and the family moved to Italy. During this time, he wrote his first scientific work, 'The Investigation of the State of Aether in Magnetic Fields'. Now rather than completing high school, Albert decided to apply directly to the ETH (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule) it's in German language that's why not written Zurich, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland.

He did not pass. So after completing his secondary school, he got enrolled in the Mathematics programme at full ETH.

In 1901, Einstein published a paper in the prestigious 'Annalen der Physik' on the capillary forces of a straw. He graduated from ETH with a diploma in teaching.

The year 1905 was very fortunate for Einstein. While working in the patent office, he published four papers in the prestigious journal 'Annalen der Physik'. All the four papers are today recognised as tremendous achievements and hence, 1905 is known as Einstein's 'Wonderful year'.

These were on photoelectric effect, Brownian motion, special relativity and equivalence of matter and energy. He deduced the well known equation, $E = mc^2$, implying that tiny particles of matter could be converted to huge amounts of energy. This later laid the foundations of nuclear energy.

At first, his papers were not taken seriously. But soon they grabbed the attention of Max Planck, who was impressed by them. Max invited Einstein to give lectures at international meetings.

In 1906, the patent office promoted Einstein to technical examiner second class, but he did not give up academia. In 1910, he wrote a paper that described the cumulative effect of light scattered by individual molecules in the atmosphere, *i.e.*, why the sky is blue? In 1911, Einstein became an associate professor at the University of Zurich.

However, shortly afterwards, he accepted a full professorship at the Charles University of Prague. Here, he published a paper about the effects of gravity on light. This paper appealed the astronomers and they started finding ways of detecting the deflection during a solar eclipse.

Einstein completed the theory of relativity in 1915. British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington confirmed his theory during the solar eclipse of 1919.

Einstein continued his research works and finally, in 1921, his efforts bore fruits. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, for his services to Theoretical Physics, and especially for his discovery of the Law of the Photoelectric Effect.

Einstein also gave impetus to the science of cosmology. His equations proved that the universe was dynamic, either expanding or contracting. This refuted the opinion of the time that the universe was static. In 1929, astronomer Edwin Hubble found that the universe was actually expanding, as Einstein's equations had predicted.

When Einstein's popularity grew, he became the target for Nazi Propaganda. They called for physicists to shun Einstein and his 'Jewish Physics'. He came to know that he was on Nazi hit list when a magazine published his photo with the caption, 'Not Yet Hanged' on its cover. So, in 1932, he left Germany and joined Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey.

The greatest physicist that he was, Einstein was very vocal in his views. When asked from where he got his scientific ideas, Einstein explained that he believed scientific work best proceeds from an examination of physical reality. One also has to search for underlying axioms, with consistent explanations that apply in all instances and avoid contradicting each other. He also recommended theories with visualisable results.

Einstein's research on General Relativity consisted primarily of a long series of attempts to generalise his Theory of Gravitation in order to unify and simplify the fundamental laws of Physics, particularly Gravitation and Electromagnetism. Although he continued to be lauded for his work in theoretical Physics, Einstein became increasingly isolated in his research.

It will be apt to mention here a famous quote by Einstein which portrays him as a great visionary. He said, "I do not know how the Third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth-rocks!" He was thus, aware of the potent effects of the war. In his later years, he lobbied to stop nuclear testing and future bombs.

On 17th April, 1955, Albert Einstein experienced internal bleeding and died at the ripe age of 76. He had taken along with him to the hospital, the draft of a speech he was preparing for a television appearance, commemorating Israel's seventh anniversary; but he did not live long enough to complete it.

Einstein refused surgery and said : "I want to go when I want. It is tasteless to prolong life artificially. I have done my share, it is time to go. I will do it elegantly". He died in Princeton Hospital the next morning. Thus, his death proved to be an irreparable loss to the scientific community.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **neuroscience** – the science that deals with the structure and function of the brain and the nervous system
- ♦ **resented** – to feel bitter or angry about something, especially because you feel it is unfair
- ♦ **prestigious** – respected and admired as very important or of very high quality
- ♦ **rote** – learning something through mechanical repetition, by hearing and repeating aloud
- ♦ **capillary force** – the force that makes a liquid move up a narrow tube
- ♦ **impetus** – something that encourages a process or activity to develop more quickly
- ♦ **nuclearenergy** – a powerful form of energy produced by converting matter into energy splitting the nuclei of atoms. It is used to produce electricity
- ♦ **cumulative** – having a result that increases in strength or importance each time more of something is added
- ♦ **patent** – An official right to be the only person to make, use or sell a product or an invention, a document that proves this
- ♦ **refuted-refute** – to prove that something is wrong
- ♦ **axiom** – a rule or principle that most people believe to be true.



Bill Gates

The Billionaire with a 'Big' Heart

Everyone wants to be in the shoes of the richest man in the world, whose wealth at one point of time was more than \$ 100 billion!

He has been characterised as the quintessential example of a super-intelligent human being with immense power and wealth. Every minute, every second when you are on your PC, he guides you. Almost Every computer in the world comes with his software pre-installed! With this hint, surely, you can gauge the fact that we are talking about Microsoft and the brain behind it—Bill Gates.

“It’s fine to celebrate success, but it’s more important to heed the lessons of failure.”

His was not a ‘rags-to-riches’ story, but a ‘riches-to-riches’ one. The noteworthy thing is that his parents’ wealth didn’t make him complacent.

The American entrepreneur, philanthropist and the Chairman of Microsoft, was born on 28th October, 1955 into a wealthy Seattle family. His father was a prominent attorney and mother, a bank board member. A story goes that, at his birth, his father set-up a million-dollar fund for him. But, Gates denied it. But one thing that is for sure, is that he had the best of education, including 3 years at Harvard.

As a student, Gates excelled in elementary school, particularly in Mathematics and Sciences. At 13, he was enrolled in the Lakeside School, Seattle’s most exclusive preparatory school. When he was in the eighth grade, the school mothers used proceeds from Lakeside’s rummage sale to buy an ASR-33 teletype terminal and a block of computer time in a General Electric Computer. Gates took an interest in programming the GE system in BASIC and was excused from Maths classes to pursue his interest. After the Mothers’ Club donation was exhausted, he and other students sought time on other systems, including DEC PDP minicomputer. One of these systems was a PDP-10 belonging to Computer Centre Corporation, which banned the Lakeside students for the summer after it caught them exploiting bugs in the operating system to obtain free computer time.

At the end of the ban, the Lakeside students offered to find bugs in CCC’s software in Exchange for free computer time. Gates went to CCC’s offices and studied source code for various programmes that ran on the system, not only in BASIC but FORTRAN, LISP and machine language as well. The arrangement with CCC continued until 1970, then it went out of business. The following year, Information Sciences Inc. hired the Lakeside students to write a payroll program in COBOL, providing them not only computer time but royalties as well. At the age of 14, Gates was dexterous enough to form a venture with Allen, called Traf-0-Data, to make traffic counters based on Intel 8.008 processor. That first year, he made \$ 20,000, however, when his age was found out, business slowed down.

Since beginning, Bill Gates was on the lookout for opportunities. So, after reading the January 1975 issue of Popular Electronics that demonstrated the Altair 8,800, Gates contacted MITS (Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems), the creators of the new microcomputer. He informed them that he and others were working on a

BASIC interpreter for the platform. MITS President, Ed Roberts, agreed to meet them for a demo and when Gates demonstrated his work, it was a success.

Paul Allen, Gates' intimate friend was hired into MITS, and Gates took a leave of absence from Harvard to work with Allen at MITS, dubbing their partnership 'Micro-Soft' in November, 1975. Within a year, the hyphen was dropped and on 26th November, 1976, the trade name "Microsoft" was registered. Microsoft became independent of MITS in late 1976, and it continued to develop programming language software for various systems.

In 1980, IBM approached Microsoft to make the BASIC interpreter for its upcoming personal computer, IBM PC. Gates proposed using 86-DOS (QDOS), an operating system. After adapting the operating system for PC, Microsoft delivered it to IBM as PC-DOS. As several companies reverse-engineered the IBM architecture and developed clones, Microsoft was quick to license DOS to other manufacturers, calling it MS-DOS. Keeping pace with time, in the early 1980s, Microsoft released 'Windows' as an addition and alternative to their DOS command line, and to compete with other systems in the market. By the early 1990s, Windows had pushed other DOS-based systems out of the market. The release of Windows 3.0 in 1990 was a tremendous success, selling around 10 million copies in the first two years and cementing Microsoft's dominance in operating systems' sales. It gradually became the largest software company in the world.

A portion of Gates' popularity can be attributed to his wife Melinda. It is due to her philanthropic mindset, that Gates came out to participate in the 'real' world. It was their combined effort that made Warren Buffett channelise much of his fortune to their social welfare institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. At the time of its inception, Gates 'gifted' \$ 106 million. It provides scholarships to needy, and efforts are directed for the control of AIDS, polio, diphtheria, measles and yellow fever. It gives away at least 5% of its assets each year, in order to continue as a charitable organisation.

Gates has been continuing to drive the world with his genius. 'Forbes' magazine's list of the 'The World's Billionaires' has ranked him as the richest person in the world since 1995, and recent estimates put his net worth near \$ 56 billion. But the Gates Foundation and his social work will make us remember him for more than just his business empire. He will inspire us to steadily move towards our higher goals, for he rightly said :

"If you are born poor, it's not your mistake. But if you die poor, it's your mistake."

VOCAB HELP

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| ♦ quintessential | – of or pertaining to the most perfect embodiment of something | ♦ rummage | – miscellaneous articles |
| ♦ gauge | – to appraise, estimate or judge | ♦ dexterous | – having mental skill or adroitness, clever |
| ♦ complacent | – pleased, especially with oneself or one's merits, disadvantages, situation, etc., often without awareness of some potential danger or defect, self-satisfied | ♦ telemetry | – the wireless transmission and reception of measured quantities for the purpose of remotely monitoring environmental conditions or equipment parameters |
| ♦ philanthropist | – a person who practices philanthropy | ♦ inception | – beginning, start, commencement |
| ♦ exclusive | – fashionable, stylish, expensive | ♦ steadily | – regularly, continuously |
| ♦ royalties | – payments received by an owner of real property for allowing someone to use it. | | |



Verghese Kurien

The Milkman of India

‘The Father of White Revolution’, Verghese Kurien could’ve had a glorious career abroad, with multiple degrees to his name. But he chose to stay back in Gujarat and the rest is history. He believed that a country’s biggest assets are its people. He improved the living standards of millions of poor farmers by placing technology and professional expertise in their hands.

Kurien was born on 26th November, 1921 at Calicut, Kerala in a Syrian Christian family. His father was a civil surgeon in Cochin. He graduated in Physics from Loyola College, Madras in 1940 and then obtained his Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Madras. He also studied at Tata Steel Technical Institute, Jamshedpur, after which he went to US to pursue Masters.

Kurien came back from US and was immediately assigned to work at Anand in Gujarat’s Kheda district in 1949. He had made up his mind to quit but was persuaded to stay by Tribhuvandas Patel, who had brought together farmers as a union to process and sell their milk. So he stayed and his sincere efforts were applauded by the then PM Lal Bahadur Shastri who came to inaugurate Amul’s plant.

He named Kurien as Chairman of National Dairy Development Board, in 1965. In its phase-2 programme in 1979, Operation Flood sought to cover the entire country. To that effect, Kurien founded the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA). Kurien also Chaired Viksit Bharat Foundation, a body set-up by the President.

Kurien was mentioned by the Ashoka Foundation as one of the eminent present day social entrepreneurs. His ‘billion-litre’ idea or operation flood is the world’s biggest agricultural development programme. The operation transformed India from a milk-lacking nation to the largest milk producer in the world, surpassing the US in 1998, with 17% of global output in 2010-11.

He also made the country self-reliant in edible oils. The work of Kurien and his team in India, took the country from a milk importing nation to a milk and milk products exporting nation within a span of 2 decades. He founded 30 institutions, which are owned by farmers.

Kurien was behind the creation of Amul, where milk powder from buffalo milk was produced for the first time in the world. Kurien’s life story is chronicled in his personal memoir— ‘I too Had a Dream.’ Film-maker Shyam Benegal, produced a film, Manthan, based on the cooperative milk movement in India.

Not able to finance it himself, he sought Kurien’s help, who got half a million farmers to contribute two rupees each for the making of the movie. The farmers loved ‘their’ own film and it won many awards. UNDP, planned to use the movie to start such cooperative ventures in Latin America.

Kurien has been bestowed upon 15 honorary degrees from different universities of the world. In 1963, he got the Magsaysay Award; in 1966, the Padma Bhushan and in 1989, the World Food Prize. In 2001, he got Lifetime Achievement Award.

Verghese and his wife Molly had one daughter and a grandson. He died on 9th September, 2012 after a brief illness in Nadiad, near Anand. Interestingly, the man behind the milk revolution didn't drink milk himself. His cooperative movement alleviated the misery and poverty of millions, not only in India, but also outside India. His contributions will always be admired.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **alleviated** – to make less severe as a pain or difficulty
- ♦ **inaugurate** – to make a formal beginning of, initiate, commence, begin
- ♦ **surpassing** – exceeding, excelling
- ♦ **memoir** – a record of events written by a person having intimate knowledge of them and based on personal observation



Adolf Hitler

An Unparalleled Leader

Such was Hitler's determination and love for his motherland, that he went all out to achieve it. Adolf Hitler was born on 20th April, 1889 at an inn in Austria, to Alois Hitler and Klara Polzl. He had 5 siblings, out of which the older ones died in infancy. When Hitler was three years old, the family moved to Passau in Germany. In 1895, the family acquired a small plot in Hafeld. The farming failed and in 1898, the family shifted permanently to Leonding.

Hitler's relations with his father were not good. At 8 years of age, he took singing lessons and sang in Church choir. He thought of becoming a priest. But the death of his younger brother transformed him into a depressed introvert boy. His father wanted him to work in customs like him, ignoring his desire to become an artist. Alois passed away in 1903 and Hitler joined another school.

At the start of World War I, Hitler served as a dispatch runner in the Bavarian army. He was felicitated with the rare awards of Iron Cross, First Class. He described the war as 'the greatest of all experiences'.

His patriotism for Germany grew and he was shocked at Germany's capitulation in 1918. He joined the German Workers Party (DAP) in 1919, which was renamed as National Socialist DAP or NSDAP. Hitler himself designed the party symbol of a 'Swastika'. He gave speeches against Treaty of Versailles, Marxists and Jews. In 1921, he became the party's chairman. In 1932, Hitler was elected as the Chancellor of Germany.

One of the main concepts of Nazism was 'Racial hygiene'. Marriage between Jews and non-Jews was not permitted and 'non-Aryans' were deprived of the benefits of German citizenship. Between 1939 and 1945, around 6 million Jews were murdered. It is commonly referred to as the Holocaust. It amounted to two-thirds of Jewish population in Europe.

In 1938, Hitler signed the Munich Treaty which attached Sudetenland districts to Germany. In 1941, Hitler violated the non-aggression pact with Stalin, invading Soviet Union. Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, Germany was face-to-face with the other three powers—US, Britain and Soviet Union. After 1942, Germany suffered several defeats.

On 29th April, 1945, Hitler married Eva Braun. He was informed soon of the assassination of Italian dictator Mussolini. So, terrified of surrendering to enemies, he and Eva committed suicide on 30th April, 1945.

“Do not compare yourself to others. If you do so, you are insulting yourself.”

—Adolf Hitler

While we loathe at Hitler for his genocide of millions of innocent people, we can also take a leaf or two, out of his positive side. There were a number of rare qualities in him, which we can certainly imbibe.

He had excellent leadership and oratorical skills. When he spoke, everybody used to listen and become charged. He never used to be tired of travelling from town-to-town and gave several speeches in a single day. He united a depressed and demoralised nation. He was zealous and wanted his nation to have a mission. He built several freeways. Under him, the V₂ technology to send rockets into space, was invented. He banned the use of atomic weapons, smoking, alcohol and meat. He infact , freed many small nations from the rule of Britain and France.

Even though, we can't go back in time to correct his mistakes, we can definitely take inspiration from his positive attributes. Hitler was a villain, no doubt, but there was a leader in him, which few have acknowledged. There was never someone like him in the annals of world history and perhaps won't ever be again in future.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| ♦ introvert | – a shy person | ♦ genocide | – the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political or cultural group |
| ♦ felicitated | – to compliment upon a happy event | ♦ imbibe | – assimilate |
| ♦ capitulation | – a treaty or agreement by which subjects of one country residing or travelling in another are extended extra territorial rights or special privileges | ♦ oratorical | – of, pertaining to, or characteristic of an orator or oratory |
| ♦ assassination | – to kill suddenly or secretly, especially a politically prominent person, murder premeditatedly and cherosusly | ♦ attributes | – something attributed as belonging to a person, thing, group, etc., a quality, character or property |
| ♦ loathe | – to feel disgust or intense aversion for, abhor | ♦ annals | – a record of events, especially a yearly record, usually in chronological order |



Abraham Lincoln

A True Champion of Democracy

"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

— Abraham Lincoln

It's a sincere quote coming from a man who exemplified it through his own life. Self-educated, self-made, he echoes the poor boy made good theme in American politics. His rise from obscurity to fame is tremendous. Scholars rank him among the top three US Presidents, with most of these surveys placing him at number one. Truly, Abraham Lincoln had the charisma to let the world fall at his feet.

Born on 12th February, 1809 as the second child to Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, two uneducated farmers in a one room log cabin in Sinking Spring farm in Kentucky, young Lincoln had humble roots.

Lincoln's paternal grandfather, Abraham, whom Lincoln was named after, had moved his family from Virginia to Kentucky. His parents belonged to a Baptist Church and had pulled away from a larger Church because they refused to support slavery. Thus, from a very young age he was exposed to anti-slavery sentiment.

At a very young age of 9 years, his mother passed away due to milk sickness. His older sister Sarah took to looking after him until their father remarried in 1819, but she too died during child birth in her late 20's . His father then remarried and Lincoln became close to his step mother Sarah Bush Johnston.

His formal education consisted of about 18 months of schooling from unofficial teachers. In effect, he was self-educated, studying every book he could borrow. He once walked 20 miles just to borrow one book! His favourite book was 'The life of George Washington'. He developed a plain writing style which puzzled audiences who were more used to grandiloquent rhetoric.

Lincoln began his political career in 1832, at the age of 23, with an unsuccessful campaign for the Illinois General Assembly as a member of the Whig Party. In 1834, he won the election to the State Legislature and after coming across the commentaries on the laws of England, he taught himself law. After developing a reputation as a formidable adversary during cross examination of witnesses and in closing arguments, Lincoln became one of the most respected and successful lawyers in Illinois. In 1836, he was admitted to the bar and started practising law under John T Stuart. In 1837, he made his first protest against slavery in the Illinois House which later lead to the abolition of slavery.

In 1851, he represented Alton and Sangamon Railroad in a dispute and the original charter was modified in public interest to provide cheaper, superior route. Slavery was still prevalent, as it was legal.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which repealed the limits on the spread of slavery drew Lincoln back into politics. On 27th February, 1860, New York Party leaders invited Lincoln for a speech to a group of republicans. He didn't have a flattering appearance, yet Noah Brooks, a journalist, said :

“No man ever before made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience.”

Lincoln's supporters described him as the 'Rail Candidate'. He was named so because of his humble background. Before Lincoln pursued law and politics, he used to do several odd jobs to earn money and one of them was the job of a rail splitter. He was a candidate for the 'common man'.

Lincoln was steadily strengthening his position in politics. He entered the presidential nomination process as a distinct underdog and was eventually chosen as the Republican candidate for the 1860 election. Finally, on 6th November, 1860, Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States.

Lincoln's major contribution as President was that he helped preserve the United States integrity and sovereignty, by leading the defeat of the secessionist confederacy in the American Civil War. He borrowed and studied Henry Hallock's book, 'Elements of Military Art and Science', to be aware of technical military terminologies. Moreover, he introduced measures that resulted in the abolition of slavery.

He issued his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and promoted the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. This eventually led to negation of slavery in the United States. However, anti-war leaders criticised him for refusing to compromise on slavery. On the other hand, radical republicans, criticised him for moving too slowly in abolishing slavery.

Lincoln was a very strong orator. He rallied public opinion through the powerful rhetoric of his messages and speeches. His Gettysburg address is remembered as a prime example. At the close of the Civil War, Lincoln took a moderate view of reconstruction, seeking to speedily re-unite the nation through a policy of generous reconciliation.

Reconstruction began during the war as Lincoln and his associates pondered the questions of how to reintegrate the Southern states back into the Union and what to do with Confederate Leaders and the freed slaves.

Other than this, his achievements also included his brilliant handling of the factions of the Republican Party by bringing the leaders into his cabinet and forcing them to cooperate. In crisis management, he defused a war scare with the United Kingdom (1861). He also managed his own landslide re-election in 1864.

All was going well till this time. Lincoln was popular with people and had just been re-elected as the President. But a sudden turn of the wheel of fortune led to his assassination. Lincoln left to attend the play 'Our American Cousin' at Ford's theatre on 14th, April 1865, Good Friday. His assassin, John Wilkes Booth, a well known stage actor fired at him and Lincoln embraced death soon after.

A truly rags-to-riches tale, Lincoln's assassination in 1865 was the first in US history, though an unsuccessful attempt had been made 30 years earlier on Andrew Jackson. Booth's co-conspirators wanted to eliminate the top three people in the administration so that the Government crumbles. The funeral and burial ceremony was a period of nationwide grief and mourning. A great visionary, a champion of the rights of the downtrodden, he showed the world the road to an enlightened future.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **exemplified** – to show or illustrate by example
- ♦ **obscurity** – the condition of being unknown
- ♦ **charisma** – a special personal quality or power of an individual making him capable of influencing or inspiring large numbers of people
- ♦ **grandiloquent** – speaking or expressed in a lofty style, often to the point of being pompous or bombastic
- ♦ **rhetoric** – the undue use of exaggeration or display
- ♦ **formidable** – causing fear, apprehension, or dread
- ♦ **integrity** – the state of being whole, entire, or undiminished
- ♦ **sovereignty** – the quality or state of being sovereign
- ♦ **terminologies** – the system of terms belonging or peculiar to a science, art, or specialised subjects, nomenclature
- ♦ **reconciliation** – the process of making consistent or compatible
- ♦ **confederate** – united in a confederacy, allied



Lata Mangeshkar

The Nightingale of India

The Queen of Melody, the Bharat Ratna and Swar Ganga who has completed 81 years of wonderful life and is still as melodious as a nightingale— Lata Mangeshkar is music personified. This Dada Saheb Phalke Award receiver moved the entire nation with her deep influencing voice while she sang 'Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon' on All India radio and a stunned nation wept to her heart rendering voice.

She represents an entire era, a movement and a lasting phase in Indian music. Her voice has such great power that it has transcended all barriers of language, caste, creed, culture, boundaries, region and religion. To millions it is an amalgamation of melody, sweetness and harmony.

Born on 28th September, 1929, she is the daughter of the well known Drama Troupe Owner in Marathi— Pandit Dina Nath Mangeshkar. She is the eldest among the four daughters and a son. Her mother Shevanti, hailed from Thalner, Maharashtra and was her father's second wife.

The family's surname was originally Hardikar, but Deenanath changed it to 'Mangeshkar' to relate it with his native place Mangeshi in Goa. Lata's childhood name was Hema. She was renamed after a character, Latika, from one of her father's plays. The first fruits of Classical Music were tasted by Lata Mangeshkar under the auspicious training of her own father.

But the sky fell down when in 1942 with the demise of Pandit Dina Nathji, the mantle of responsibilities naturally fell on to the shoulders of Lata who was barely thirteen.

But destiny was not cruel altogether. Vinayak Damodar, the owner of Navyug Chitrapat Company looked after them. She sang the song “Nachu Yaa Gade” for a Marathi movie in 1942, but the song was cut off in the final release of the film. Her first Hindi song was also for a Marathi movie in 1943.

In 1945, she moved to Mumbai, where she started learning Hindustani classical music from Ustad Amanat Ali Khan. After partition, the latter migrated to Pakistan. So she started learning from Amanat Khan Devaswale and Pt Tulsidas Sharma. Lata got her first break in 1948 when she sang a song in the Hindi film ‘Majboor’ composed by music director Ghulam Haider.

The rest is history as we all know. Since then, she never looked back. She has successfully etched in gold, a place of honour for herself. The versatility of Lata as a singer can be judged by the number of songs and the number of languages that she has sung in, ranging from love songs to sad blues to classical singing and Ragas to Bhakti and Devotional—there seems to be nothing left untouched and unexplored by Lata Mangeshkar.

Her voice has given life, flesh and blood to thousands of songs in numerous languages. Her voice symbolises the voice of India or India singing to the world. If there are things that have for ages divided the people, her voice has the force to unite and bind people through the string of her sweet voice. Her voice has echoed through decades and still emerges as a clear, distinct and representative voice of an entire nation, and era.

In 2007, she released an album, Saadgi, comprising eight ghazal-like songs penned down by Javed Akhtar. In 2011, she released the album, ‘Sarhadein : Music Beyond Boundaries, which consists of a duet between her and Mehdi Hasan. On 28th November, 2012 she launched her own music label LM music, with an album of bhajans. She sang alongwith sister Usha in it.

Recognising her great contribution in the field of vocal art and melody, she was nominated to Rajya Sabha in 2000. Her work in that field too is commendable. She regularly contributes to the welfare of the country and works towards the upliftment of the under-privileged.

Despite being such a great name. Lata seems to have remained the same simple person at heart. The white silk saree with a traditional red border and plait have become a trademark symbol of Lata Mangeshkar. Her humility and shy persona too has remained unchanged. Not only has her voice moved millions within the country but has also spread the magic of Indian music all over the globe.

She is one of the only two singers and the only playback singer to have been awarded the Bharat Ratna, the country’s highest civilian honour the other being the classical vocalist M.S Subbulakshmi. She has also been awarded Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan and Dada Saheb Phalke Award in recognition of her great achievement in the field of music. Moreover she has received four Filmfare Awards, the Platinum Disc of EMI London and numerous other awards.

The story moves further as Lata continues to rock the nation with her melodious and harmonious voice. She has become an ideal for all the aspiring young girls who want to pursue the profession of singing. Her simplicity and humility is as amazing as her voice.

Ghulam Haider had once said years ago, “Let me foretell today, that this girl will put to shame everyone else including Noor Jahan. Producers and directors will fall at her feet, begging her to sing in their film”. Well, there is no doubt about the prophecy coming true. Till date, India has failed to produce another Lata Mangeshkar and it seems that there can be no other like her even in the years to come.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **stunned** – astonished, overwhelmed
- ♦ **transcend** – to rise above or go beyond, overpass, exceed
- ♦ **auspicious** – promising success
- ♦ **melodious** – having a pleasant melody or sound, tuneful
- ♦ **mantle** – something that covers, envelops, or conceals
- ♦ **versatility** – capable of or adapted for turning easily from one to another of various tasks, fields of endeavour, etc
- ♦ **plait** – a braid, especially of hair or straw
- ♦ **persona** – a person’s perceived or evident personality, as that of a well-known official, actor, or celebrity, personal image, public role
- ♦ **prophecy** – the foretelling or prediction of what is to come



Amitabh Bachchan

The Living Legend of the Indian Cinema

He was the ‘angry young man’ of Bollywood in the 1970s, and since then has acted in over 180 Indian films. Amitabh Bachchan is one of the greatest and the most popular actors in the history of Indian cinema. French director Francois Truffaut called him a ‘one-man industry’. He is still busy on TV and films, and can give the younger actors a run for their money.

He was born in Allahabad on 11th October 1942 to Harivansh Rai Bachchan and Teji Bachchan. His father was a Hindi poet. His mother was a Punjabi Sikh from Faisalabad (now in Pakistan). He was named ‘Inquilaab’ in childhood, after the famous slogan of freedom struggle—‘Inquilaab Zindabaad’. Poet Sumitranandan Pant suggested the name Amitabh, which means “the light that will never die.” Amitabh studied in Sherwood College, Nainital and Kirori Mal College, Delhi University.

Bachchan made his debut in 1969 with the film ‘Bhuvan Shome’, as a narrator. He got his first acting role in ‘Saat Hindustani’. In 1971, his famous movie, ‘Anand’, with Rajesh Khanna won him his first Filmfare Award for the Best Supporting Actor. In 1973, director Prakash Mehra cast him in his first angry young man role for ‘Zanjeer’. It went on to be a hit and Bachchan was catapulted to stardom.

In 1975, he starred in Yash Chopra directed ‘Deewar’, which again was a hit. Coming close was ‘Sholay’ released the same year. Both films have been listed in Top 25 must see Bollywood films. In 1977, he won his first Filmfare Best Actor Award for the movie ‘Amar Akbar Anthony’. It was also the highest grossing film of that year.

In 1982, while shooting an action scene for the movie ‘Coolie’, the actor met with a fatal accident. He remained in hospital for several months, with fans praying fervently for his recovery. After he recuperated and shot the rest of the film, director Manmohan Desai changed the ending of the movie.

Amitabh’s character who had to die originally, continued to live till the end, because he won against death in real life itself. In 1984, he won Allahabad’s Lok Sabha seat by one of the highest margins in general elections. His friend Amar Singh supported him during the failure of his company ABCL (Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited).

He reappeared with ‘Bade Miyan Chhote Miyan’ (1998) and ‘Sooryavansham’ (1998). Thereafter he acted in a number of films. In 2013, he made his Hollywood debut with the movie ‘The Great Gatsby.’ He appeared on TV since 2000 playing the host of ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati.’ He is also the brand ambassador of Gujarat Tourism. He has received a plethora of awards over the years.

In 1991, he was the first artist to receive the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award. He was given the title of Superstar of the Millennium in 2000. In the same year, he also became the first living Asian to have a wax statue modelled at Madame Tussauds Wax Museum in London. In 2007, he was conferred upon France’s highest civilian honour, the Knight of the Region of Honour and had already received Padma Bhushan in 2001.

He will forever be the ‘Shahenshah’ of Bollywood. Film industrialists and people from across the world hail him unambiguously as the actor with depth in his voice and strength in his character, a charismatic personality in total. Veteran actor Dilip Kumar aptly quoted, referring to the Oscar award :

“If any Indian actor, in my opinion deserves the world’s most coveted award, it is you”.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **catapulted** – to thrust or move quickly or suddenly
- ♦ **stardom** – the world or class of professional stars, as of the stage
- ♦ **fervently** – ardent, having or showing great intensity of spirit, feeling, enthusiasm, etc
- ♦ **recuperated** – to recover from sickness or exhaustion, regain health or strength
- ♦ **plethora** – excess
- ♦ **unambiguously** – not ambiguous, distinct
- ♦ **charismatic** – of, having, or characteristic of charisma



Rabindranath Tagore

The Magical Poet

After Kalidasa, if India has ever produced a literary genius, then that would undoubtedly be Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore or 'Gurudev' as he was called, is recognised the world over as one of the greatest poets and novelists of all times. His artistry, wisdom, experience and profound understanding of human nature is reflected in his writings, be it poems or short stories. He literally wove magic into his work.

He was born in Kolkata on 7th May, 1861 in a wealthy Brahmin family. He was the youngest of the thirteen children. He had spent most of his childhood with servants, since his mother had passed away when he was very young. His home was the hub of a lot of literary and theatrical activities.

He avoided classroom education. His brother made him swim and indulge in other sporting activities. He learned Drawing Anatomy, Geography, History, Maths, Sanskrit and English. Ironically, English was his least favourite subject. At home, he grew up imbibing the rich discussions held in his father's study, endlessly. He got the first taste of the Upanishads at home under the guidance of his father. At home, he extensively read the mystical and the Vaishav poets of India.

At the age of 11 years, an 'upnayan' ceremony was conducted for him. After that, he and his father embarked on a month long tour. They first visited his father's estate at Santiniketan, rested in Amritsar for a while and then left for the hill station at Dalhousie. On the way, he read several biographies. Upon reaching the hill station, they settled in a house amidst forests and waterfalls.

Tagore was smitten by the beauty of the region. They followed a rigorous routine of studies there. In 1877, he returned to Jorosanko and worked on one of his first literary pieces. He finished a long poem in Maithili style. His first short-story in Bengali had the title-'Bhikharini' (The Beggar Woman). He was sent to England to study law in 1877 but he returned to India only after a year for his love of writing. After returning, he devoted himself completely to writing. In fact, poetry came to him naturally.

He had published more than 6000 lines of verse before he was 18, along with prose. He became an active member of the Bengal Literary Academy and frequently contributed to many periodicals. He became famous as the 'Shelley of Bengal' amidst the intelligentsia of the society. When Rabindranath Tagore made his presence felt in the literary society, Bengal at that time was in the full swing of Renaissance in every field-religion, literature and politics.

The time was ripe for him to reach greater heights and newer horizons. He too was at the prime of his poetic capability and sensibility which bursted into his excellent poetry, drama and novels. His mystic nature, profound piety and deep religiosity earned him the title of 'Maharishi.' His ideals culminated in the establishment of Shantiniketan in 1901 near Bolpur in Bengal.

It was modelled on the Gurukul Pattern of education of Ancient India. He hoped to create a peaceful retreat for students where they would flower into young and versatile minds of India. The school became Vishwabharti in 1921.

Rabindranath was writing at a time when the entire country was thrown into the fever of freedom struggle. A sensitive poet like him could not sit in his Ivory Tower.

Therefore, he also plunged with deep passion into the struggle, trying to stir millions with the power of his pen. He wrote a number of patriotic poems, songs and articles especially during the painful partition of Bengal in 1905. Our National Anthem-Jana Gana Mana is the proud creation of Gurudev. In 1909, Gitanjali, a monumental work of the poet, was published.

In 1913, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and the University of Calcutta honoured him with the honorary Doctorate the same year. He was also Knighted by the British Government but the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on 13th April, 1919 repulsed the tender heart of the poet. In protest, he returned his knighthood. Tagore has also to his credit a collection of 2230 songs, which he composed. They are known as 'Rabindrasangit'.

He dabbled in a bit of drawing and painting at the age of 60 years. He died on 7th August, 1941 and not only the entire nation but the whole intellectual community of the world suffered an irreparable loss. The nation lost a great poet, philosopher, social reformer, mystic and a greater human being.

He was not only a representative of the nation, but a wholesome product of Mother Earth, an amalgamation of Indian and modern values. Even though he is not in our midst, his presence can be felt through his works. Like he conveys to the reader in a poem from his book 'The Gardener' :

*In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one
spring morning, sending its glad voice across a hundred years.*

VOCAB HELP

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|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| ♦ genius | – a person having an extraordinarily high intelligence rating on a psychological test, as an IQ above 140 | ♦ renaissance | – the activity, spirit, or time of the great revival of art, literature and learning in Europe beginning in the 14th century and extending to the 17th century, marking the transition from the medieval to the modern world |
| ♦ theatrical | – of or pertaining to the theatre or dramatic presentations | ♦ sensibility | – capacity for sensation or feeling |
| ♦ anatomy | – the science dealing with the structure of animals and plants | ♦ piety | – the quality or state of being pious |
| ♦ extensively | – great in amount, number, or degree | ♦ irreparable | – not reparable, incapable of being rectified, remedied, or made good |
| ♦ mystical | – spiritually symbolic | | |



Helen Keller

The Indomitable Spirit

“The public must learn that the blind man is neither genius nor a freak nor an idiot. He has a mind that can be educated it is the duty of the public to help him make the best of himself.” These words by Helen Keller echo the fact that disability need not be the end of the world. But one can overcome all hurdles through one’s spirit.

Born on 27th June 1880 in Tuscumbia, USA, daughter of captain Arthur Henley Keller and Kate Adams Keller, she was born with full sight and hearing. The family lived in a house, Ivy Green, that was built decades ago by her grandfather. She had two younger siblings and two older half brothers.

They were leading a quiet life. But this was soon going to be short lived. In February 1882, when Helen was nineteen months old, she fell ill. To this day, the nature of her ailment remains a mystery. The doctors of that time called it ‘brain fever’, while today’s doctors think it may have been scarlet fever or meningitis. Whatever the illness, Helen was expected to die. When eventually, the fever subsided, Helen’s family was believed that their daughter was well again.

However, Helen’s mother soon noticed that her daughter failed to respond when the dinner bell rang or when she passed her hand in front of her daughter’s eyes. Helen became a very difficult child, smashing dishes, lamps and terrorising the household with her screaming and temper tantrums. Relatives regarded her as a monster and said that she should be put into an institution. By the time Helen was six, her family had become desperate.

Looking after Helen was proving too much for them. So her mother travelled to a specialist doctor for advice. They were given confirmation that Helen could never see or hear again. But the doctor believed that Helen could be taught and he advised them to visit a local expert on the problems of dumb children. This expert was Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of telephone.

Bell suggested that the Kellers write to Michael Anagnos, Director of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind and request him for another teacher. He considered Helen’s case and immediately recommended a former pupil of the institution, Anne Sullivan. On 3rd March, 1887, Anne met Helen Keller for the first time. Anne immediately started teaching Helen to finger spell. Spelling out the word ‘Doll’ to signify a present she had brought with her for Helen.

The next word she taught Helen was ‘Cake.’ Although Helen could repeat these finger movements, she could not quite understand what they meant. What frustrated her was that every object had a unique word for it. When Anne was teaching her the word ‘mug’, Keller broke the doll in rage.

Anne and Helen then moved into a small cottage on the mainland house to try and get Helen to improve her behaviour; of particular concern were Helen’s table manners. She had taken to eating with her hands and from the plates of everyone on the table. Over the coming weeks, however, Helen’s behaviour did begin to improve as a bond grew between the two. Then after a month of Anne’s teaching, what the people of the time called, a ‘miracle’ occurred. Helen had until now not yet fully understood the meaning of words.

When Anne led her to the water pump on 5th April, 1887, a drastic change occurred. As the cool stream gushed into Helen's one hand, Anne slowly spelled the word 'water' on 'Helen's hand'. Helen suddenly, felt that the mystery of the language was revealed to her. Within the next few hours, Helen learnt the spelling of thirty new words.

Helen's progress from then on was astonishing. Her ability to learn was far in advance of anything that anybody had seen before in someone without sight or hearing. Soon, she could write with both ordinary and braille typewriters. Helen had now become a phenomenon to reckon with. Her next achievement which brought her laurels from all over the world was when she moved to the Cambridge school for young ladies in 1896 and in the Autumn of 1900 entered the Radcliffe college, becoming the first deaf and blind person to have ever enrolled at an institution of higher learning. In 1904, Helen graduated from the college, becoming the first deaf-blind person to have a Bachelor's degree.

She maintained contacts with Austrian philosopher Wilhelm Jerusalem, who was one of the first people to discover her literary skills. With her, determination, she learnt to speak and gave lectures and speeches. She 'heard' others speeches by feeling their lips with her hands. She became adept at Braille and sign language. She could also feel music by placing her hands on top of a resonant table.

She was an advocate for people with disabilities. In 1915, she and George Kessler founded Helen Keller International (HKI) organisation. This organisation undertakes research in vision, health and nutrition. She also helped in the foundation of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1940. She was a member of the Socialist Party and supported the working class.

She published 12 books and several articles. One of her earliest writings, was 'The Frost King', which she wrote when she was only 11 years old.

During her college time, Helen also started working on her first book 'The Story of My Life,' which later became a classic. After this success, Helen and Anne went on lecture tours throughout the world speaking on their experiences. In 1908, she wrote 'The World I live in'. Her essay series on Socialism, 'Out of the Dark' was published in 1913. Her spiritual autobiography, 'My Religion' was published in 1927, and revised edition, right in My Darkness came out in 1994. In October 1961, Helen suffered the first of a series of strokes, and her public life was drawn to a close. On 1st June 1968, at Arcon ridge, Helen Keller died peacefully in her sleep.

Today, Helen's final resting place is a popular tourist attraction. Her life has inspired many. In 1962, the play 'The Miracle Worker' was made into a film and was a phenomenal success. More recently in India, the film 'Black' was made on her life. Her achievements and admiration prompt us to ask the question what else could somebody desire from life? It's so true that some of the best things in the world can't be seen or touched, they can only be felt with the heart.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **hurdle** – a difficult problem to be overcome
- ♦ **ailment** – a physical disorder or illness
- ♦ **tantrum** – a violent demonstration of rage or frustration, a sudden burst of ill temper
- ♦ **desperate** – having an urgent need, desire, etc
- ♦ **frustrated** – dissatisfied
- ♦ **drastic** – extremely severe or extensive
- ♦ **astonishing** – causing surprise, amazing
- ♦ **phenomenon** – something that is impressive or extraordinary
- ♦ **adept** – very skilled
- ♦ **resonant** – causing amplification or sustension of sound
- ♦ **phenomenal** – highly extraordinary or prodigious, exceptional



Sachin Tendulkar—*The God of Cricket*

"I have seen God. He bats at no. 4 for India in tests." —Matthew Hayden

Sachin Tendulkar is undoubtedly one of the greatest sportsman that India and the world has ever seen. His prowess on the field and his humility off it, makes him stand out as a role model for many.

The living legend of the cricket-world and a batsman par excellence was born on 24th April, 1973 in Mumbai in a middle class family, as the youngest of four children. His father was a well known Marathi novelist and his mother worked for an insurance company. In fact, he was named after the family's favourite music director, Sachin Dev Burman. He was sent to Sharadashram Vidyamandir School where the fever of cricket caught him at the tender age of 11. In a match for Harris Shield, he made a huge partnership of 664 runs with his friend and international team-mate, Vinod Kambli. In 1988, he scored a 100 not out, his first-ever century in a first class match for Bombay against Gujarat. His first international appearance was against Pakistan at Peshawar, in an abandoned one-day match where he crushed Abdul Qadir and Co. He made his international debut at the age of 16 against Pakistan at Karachi where Waqar Younis bowled him out at a mere score of 15 runs.

Incidentally, Waqar Younis too had made his debut in that very match. In the next innings, he scored his maiden test 50 at Faisalabad. However, the rest of the series went by quietly, but by then Sachin had showed all the potential signs of a great cricketer. The determination, the strong will power, the ease of this young lad from Mumbai, against such a tough side impressed one and all.

His One Day International debut was even more disappointing. This time Waqar Younis dismissed him without any run. He then went on to a tour of New Zealand where he was caught at 88 by the former Indian Coach, John Wright. Tendulkar here lost a chance of becoming the youngest centurion in Test cricket.

Later in 1990 in his tour of England, he finally scored a Test century. But it was in 1991-92 during his tour to Australia that he made his presence felt as a true and a great batsman.

Since then Sachin has performed remarkably and played cricket— both in and outside India. He has been selected as the Man of the Match 13 times in Test cricket and four times as the Man of the Series— both times in Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia. Sachin's first ODI century was made on 9th September, 1994 against Australia at Colombo. His performance has been beyond imagination with a great record of 51 Test centuries and 48 centuries in One-Day Internationals.

Sachin has become a sports icon for not only the youngsters of the nation but also across the globe. At a young age of 19, Sachin was invited as an overseas player by the Yorkshire County of England for the first time in 130 years. He also has to his honour the highest number of runs in One-Day Internationals and the maximum number of centuries in both One days and Test cricket. In India, this star shone even more brightly. In a country suffering from economic crisis, he was hailed as a symbol of hope. A newspaper dubbed him as the 'Last Hero' for his home country. In December 2005, he made his record breaking 35th century in Test cricket. In June 2007, he became the first player to make 15,000 runs in one-day internationals.

In 2010, he again stormed the record books, when he became the first batsman to score 13,000 runs in Test cricket. Just one month later, he cracked a double century against South Africa. He was named the ICC Cricketer of the year 2010.

Although, he is a top-order batsman, rather an opening batsman to be exact, Sachin has proved himself useful for the country at any position. He has also proved to be an effective wicket taker in time of need as an off-break bowler. Sachin is at his best even at taking wickets. He has 45 Test wickets to his credit and has a bowling average above 40. He also has another record of playing Test Matches on 52 different grounds ahead of Azharuddin and Kapil Dev. Moreover, he holds a record with Brian Lara to score the fastest 10,000 mighty runs in just 195 innings.

In the 2011, World Cup tournament Sachin contributed 482 runs, including two centuries. After India defeated Sri Lanka in the finals and lifted the World Cup Trophy, Sachin commented, “Winning the world cup is the proudest moment of my life... I couldn’t control my tears of joy.” He scored his much-anticipated 100th international century on 16th March, 2012 against Bangladesh. He became the first cricketer to achieve this mark. In the Indian Premier League scenario, he smashed Shaun Marsh’s record of maximum runs in a season.

He also won the titles of ‘Player of the tournament’, ‘Best Batsman’ and ‘Best Captain’ awards. The ‘Little Master’ announced his retirement from ODI’s in December 2012. In November 2013, he retired from all forms of cricket. In 2014, he was appointed as Mumbai Indians team’s ‘icon’.

In 1997, he was awarded the Wisden ‘Cricketer of the Year’ and again in 1999, 2001 and 2002. Sachin, in fact, is the only player to score a century in Ranji Trophy, Duleep Trophy and Irani Trophy debut Matches. He has also been awarded the country’s highest sporting honour–The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna in 1997-98.

He has been given the Padma Shri in 1999. In 2002, he was chosen as the ‘Asian Hero’ and appeared on the cover of the famous Times magazine. Recently, he has been awarded the Bharat Ratna, in 2014. He also has a heart of gold. He sponsors 200 underprivileged children every year. He raised funds for crusade against Cancer and Support My School. On personal front, Tendulkar is married to Anjali Mehta, a Gujarati doctor in 1998. Sachin has been a devout family man and has been blessed with two children Arjun and Sara. Sachin though being in the cricketing lime-light has guarded his private life with great sanctity. Today, Tendulkar is the hero of an average Indian child. He is idolised and worshipped by millions of fans over the world and will continue to be so for years to come. As he says:

“Enjoy the game and chase your dreams. Dreams do come true.”

VOCAB HELP

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|--------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| ♦ humility | – the state or quality of being humble | ♦ underprivileged | – denied the enjoyment of the normal privileges or rights of a society because of low economic and social status |
| ♦ abandoned | – to leave completely and finally | ♦ crusade | – a vigorous and dedicated action or movement in favour of a cause |
| ♦ debut | – a first public appearance on a stage, on television, etc. | ♦ devout | – devoted to divine worship or service, religious |
| ♦ icon | – a person or thing regarded as a symbol of a belief, nation, community or cultural movement | ♦ sanctity | – holiness, saintliness |
| ♦ overseas | – over, across, or beyond the sea; abroad | | |



MS Dhoni —*Captain Cool*

In a country where cricket is nothing less than a national obsession and a land where, be it God or the devil, both eat, sleep cricket and most certainly wear cricket with their hearts right on their sleeves. Where the game takes a near fanatical angle, this 26 years old from the backwaters of Jharkhand sparked off instant national celebration after leading Team India to lift the 2011 world cup trophy.

This was another historical win for Team India and the entire nation, after the success of inaugural Twenty-20 World Cup at Johannesburg in South Africa on 24th September, 2007.

'Mahi', as Mahendra Singh Dhoni is popularly known, was born on 7th July, 1981 to Pan Singh and Devaki Dev at Ranchi in Bihar (now Jharkhand). Dhoni's parents had moved to Ranchi from Uttarakhand where his father works in a junior management position in Mecon. He has a sister and a brother.

Dhoni is a fan of Adam Gilchrist and his childhood idols were teammate Sachin Tendulkar, the Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan and the melody queen Lata Mangeshkar.

Dhoni studied at DAV Jawahar Vidya Mandir School, Shyamali in Ranchi where he initially excelled in badminton and football, and was selected at district and club levels in these sports. For his football team, Dhoni was a goal keeper and was sent to play cricket for a local cricket club by his football coach.

Though he had not played cricket before, Dhoni impressed with his wicket keeping skills and became the regular wicket keeper of his cricket club. Dhoni started focussing completely on cricket after 10th standard. He was also good at studies in his school.

During 2000-03, he worked as a Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) in Midnapore district, West Bengal. He was honest and straightforward. But he also had a mischievous shade to him. He and his colleagues scared the night guards by acting as ghosts. This incident even made news the next day.

Dhoni was included in Bihar U-19 squad for the 1998-99 season and later made his Ranji Trophy debut for Bihar in the 1999-2000 season as an 18 year old. He made a half century at the time of his debut. In 2004, he became a serious contender for national selection with some stirring performances when the occasion demanded— a rapid 100 which helped East Zone clinch the Deodhar Trophy and an audacious 60 in the Duleep Trophy final.

Later, in his two centuries against Pakistan and in the triangular tournament in Kenya, he established himself as a clinical destroyer of the bowling attacks. Dhoni's talent was noticed through BCCI's small town talent spotting initiative. He was seen by PC Podar, the Captain of Bengal in the 1960s, while Dhoni was playing for Jharkhand. Podar immediately sent a report to National Cricket Academy.

In his fifth one-dayer against Pakistan, at Visakhapatnam, he cracked a dazzling 148, followed by a colossal 183 not out at Jaipur against Sri Lanka and in the process eclipsed the highest score by Adam Gilchrist. These innings had Dhoni's 10 sixes, the most by an Indian in an inning and the fifth highest in ODIs.

He and Mahela Jayawardene set a new world record for the sixth wicket partnership of 218 runs, during Afro-Asia Cup in 2007. In 2012, he became the only captain in ODIs to score a century while batting at number 7. He also became the fourth fastest batsman to complete 8,000 runs in One-Day cricket in 2014.

In test matches also, he was an instant hit, cracking 148 at Faisalabad against Pakistan in his fifth test, when India was struggling to avoid the follow on. He was elevated to the vice-captaincy of the one-day squad for the tour of England and Ireland in 2007. In 2008, defeating Australia, under Dhoni's captaincy, India registered the biggest ever win with 320 runs. In 2009, Dhoni created a record for most catches by an Indian player in 320 an inning.

In 2007, he was appointed the captain of Twenty-20 squad for the World Championship in South Africa. Watching his performance in just a few of the T-20 World Cup matches in South Africa, the selectors handed the reigns of one-day team to him after Rahul Dravid decided to step down as captain. Under his captaincy, India won the 2011 World Cup. In the final against Sri Lanka, he promoted himself up the order, knocking 91 off 79 balls, with a six off the last ball.

Dhoni has won accolades for his tremendous talent. He was the ICC ODI Player of the Year for 2008 and 2009. In 2013, he won the LG People's Choice Award. India's highest honour in sports, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna was also bestowed upon him earlier (2007-08). He also holds a honorary doctorate from De Montfort University.

A powerful hitter of the ball, MS Dhoni has shown the maturity to restrain his aggressive nature and play responsibly when the situation requires so. As a leader on the field, he is coolness personified. Great cricketers, like Sachin, Dravid, Ian Chapell, Steve Waugh have unanimously hailed him as 'the best captain', 'a great leader' and the 'best finisher.'

The ever-manipulating cricketing brain beneath the long locks knows how to get the best out of his team. He is a fountain head of positive energy and will continue to be the heartbeat of young India.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **obsession** – the domination of one's thoughts or feelings by a persistant idea, image, desire, etc
- ♦ **fanatical** – motivated or characterised by an extreme, uncritical enthusiasm of zeal, as inreligious or politics
- ♦ **backwaters** – a place or state of stagnant backwardness, an isolated, peaceful place
- ♦ **inaugural** – marking the beginning of a new venture, series, etc
- ♦ **mischievous** – maliciously or playfully annoying
- ♦ **contender** – to strive in opposition
- ♦ **audacious** – recklessly bold in defiance of convention, propriety, law, or the like, insolent
- ♦ **accolades** – any award, honour or laudatory notice
- ♦ **unanimously** – in complete agreement
- ♦ **manipulating** – to handle, manage or use, especially with skill, in some process of treatment or performance



Bachendri Pal—*The Conqueror of Everest*

Bachendri Pal is a lady of great courage, perseverance and determination. She braved all adversities to become the first Indian woman to summit the world's highest peak, Mount Everest, in 1984.

Pal was born in a modest family in Nakuri village, Uttarakhand on 24th May, 1954 to Hansa Devi and Kishan Singh Pal. She was one of the seven children. Her father was a cross-border trader. She climbed for the first time, at the age of 12, during a school picnic. It was a 400 m high peak. She became the first girl to graduate from her village. She did masters in Sanskrit, and then B.Ed. During her course at NIM (Nehru Institute of Mountaineering), she climbed Mt Gangotri and Mt Rudragaria. She got a job at the NAF (National Adventure Foundation) as instructor.

In 1984, she was selected to be a part of a group of six women and eleven men, to climb Mt Everest. The team started the ascent in May 1984. Her team met with an avalanche accident in their night camp. Many members quit and by 22 May, Pal was the only woman left in the group. On the last day of their climb, cold winds were blowing at a speed of 100 km/hr and temperatures dipped to minus 30 to 40 degrees Celsius. On 23rd May, the team touched the summit at 1:07 pm and the lady created a new record. After the successful climb, Pal led Indo-Nepalese Women's Expedition in 1993. It comprised 7 women. In 1994, she took part in the Great Indian Women's Rafting Voyage, and completed the journey from Haridwar to Calcutta in river Ganga in 39 days. In 1997, the Women Trans-Himalayan Expedition, that included her and seven other women, trekked more than 4,500 km in 225 days. They crossed 40 high mountain passes. This was unique and the first in the world.

She has been conferred numerous awards. She won the Padma Shri in 1984 and Arjuna Award in 1986. Her name featured in Guinness Book of World Records in 1990. In 2013, she was the first one to be felicitated with Lakshmi Bai Rashtriya Samman. Her autobiography, "Everest—My Journey to the Top" makes for an interesting read. Not only in adventure sports, she used her skills for service to the nation too. In 2013, when floods ravaged Uttarakhand, she quietly arrived on the scene with a group of climbers and carried out rescue operations in terrains where even Army Jawans couldn't reach. Hers is an awe-inspiring tale of discipline and passion. She broke the ice-ceiling for women and proved that nothing is impossible if we have strong will-power. Her feats inspire us to follow our dreams and to never give up.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **perseverance** – steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties
- ♦ **adversities** – a condition marked by misfortune, calamity or distress
- ♦ **summit** – the highest point or part, as of a hill, a line of travel, or any object
- ♦ **ascent** – the act of climbing or travelling up
- ♦ **avalanche** – a large mass of snow, ice, etc., detached from a mountain slope and sliding or falling suddenly downward
- ♦ **felicitated** – to be bestowed with
- ♦ **ravaged** – to work havoc upon, damage or mar
- ♦ **terrain** – a tract of land, especially as considered with reference to its natural features, military advantages, etc
- ♦ **awe** – an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, fear, etc., produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful or the like
- ♦ **feat** – A noteworthy or extraordinary act or achievement, usually displaying boldness, skill, etc



Milkha Singh

The Flying Sikh

Milkha Singh is one of the greatest athletes, that the nation has ever produced. He was the only Indian male athlete to win an individual athletics gold medal at the commonwealth games, before Vikas Gowda in 2014. The race he is best remembered for is his fourth place finish in the 400 metres final at the 1960 Olympic games. Due to his extra ordinary track performances, he was nicknamed as the 'Flying Sikh'.

He was born on 20th November, 1929 according to records in Pakistan. Other official records mention his date of birth as 17th October, 1935 and 20th November, 1935. His birthplace was Govindpura a village 10 kilometres from Muzaffargarh district, now in Pakistan.

He had a horrendous childhood, because he saw his parents and relatives being hacked to death in front of his own eyes during partition. The 12 years old ran for his life, and hid himself among dead bodies in the train, to reach India. Though he got a new lease of life, but he was left all alone to fend for himself.

He tried to get into the army thrice, but failed. Finally, his brother Malkhan Singh got him into the Electrical Mechanical Engineering branch of the Army in 1952. In the Army, under the mentoring of Havaladar Gurudev Singh, he began practising hard as an athlete. In the Services Meet of 1955, he stood 2nd in the 200 m and 400 m races.

He won in both events at National Games 1956. In 1958 games, he broke the existing records. In 1960, he timed 46.1 seconds in 400 m, which was considered to be a world class performance of that time.

Milkha represented the country in Melbourne Olympics of 1956. Although he did not do particularly well, he got to learn a lot and prepared for future events. The golden period of his career came between 1958 and 1960. He won gold in both events at the Asian Games in 1958.

The Olympic Games at Rome in 1960 were momentous. In the first heat of 400 m race, he finished second. In the second heat, he again stood second. However, in the final round, he went cruising ahead of all competitors, right from the word 'Go'. But unfortunately, due to slowing down his speed a bit in the middle, cost him the coveted Olympic medal.

Even the announcement was held up for few minutes, owing to the confusion over the close finish. Milkha lost by a mere 0.1 seconds, the closest brush for an Indian athlete with the Olympic medal till date. In 1962, Milkha Singh defeated Pakistani runner Abdul Khaliq. It was then that the Pakistan's President Ayub Khan named him the 'Flying Sikh'. He was bestowed upon the Arjuna Award and, Padma Shri in 1958. A film, 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' in 2013, showcased his life and achievements.

Currently, he is campaigning for the cause of two Indian basketball players, Amarpal and Amjot Singh, who were asked to remove their turbans, by International

Basketball Federation. He believes that his faith and religion played a big role in his successful career. Hence, such kind of humiliation is not acceptable for any sportsperson. Milkha is a living legend.

Few can match his zest for life. Even today he follows a rigorous routine, starting with early morning jogs. His life teaches us that despite of all the miseries fate may inflict upon you, you can carve out your own destiny with your sincerity and hard work.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **hacked** – to cut, notch, slice, chop, or sever (something) with or as with heavy, irregular blows
- ♦ **momentous** – of great or far-reaching importance or consequence
- ♦ **coveted** – to wish for, especially eagerly
- ♦ **bestowed** – to present as a gift, give
- ♦ **showcased** – to exhibit or display
- ♦ **humiliation** – an act of humiliating or being humiliated
- ♦ **zest** – liveliness or energy
- ♦ **rigorous** – rigidly severe or harsh, as people, rules, or discipline
- ♦ **inflict** – to impose as something that must be borne or suffered
- ♦ **carve** – to make or create for oneself



Sardar Patel : *The Iron Man of India*

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, popularly known as Sardar Patel, the iron-man of India was born on 31 October, 1875, in a small village in Nadiad. His father Jhaverbhai Patel was a farmer and mother Laad Bai was a simple lady. From his childhood itself, Patel was a very hard-working individual. He used to help his father in farming and studied in a school NK High School, Petlad.

He passed his high-school examination in 1896. Throughout school, he was a very wise and intelligent student. In spite of poor financial conditions his father decided to send him to college but Vallabhbhai refused. Around three years he stayed at home, worked hard and prepared for the District Leader's examination, hence passing with very good percentage.



He completed his schooling in the local area and subsequently, in his 30s, he went to Britain; like many of his generation of political leaders, he qualified as a barrister. Patel returned to India around the same time as Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, on the eve of World War I, and the two met shortly thereafter. Patel joined Gandhi in representing the weavers in the dispute with mill-owners in Ahmedabad in 1918, and he played a pivotal role in helping to redress the grievances of peasants in Kheda district. In 1928, Bardoli Taluka in Gujarat suffered from floods and famine. In this hour of distress, the British government raised the revenue taxes by thirty per cent. Sardar Patel took up cudgels on behalf of the farmers and appealed to the Governor to reduce the taxes. The Governor refused and the government even announced the date of the collection of the taxes. Sardar Patel organised the farmers and told them not to pay even a single pie of tax. The government tried to repress the revolt but ultimately bowed before Vallabhbhai Patel. It was during the struggle and after the victory in Bardoli that caused intense excitement across India, that Patel was increasingly addressed by his colleagues and followers as Sardar.

Another definite struggle was the Disobedience Movement in 1930 following which he was arrested. Later, he was released and was elected Congress President in the 1931 session in Karachi. In August 1942, the Indian National Congress launched the Quit India Movement following which Sardar Patel along with many other freedom leaders was jailed for three years. After achieving independence on 15th of August 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of Independent India and Sardar Patel became the Deputy Prime Minister. He was in charge of Home Affairs, Information and Broadcasting, and the Ministry of States.

There were 565 princely states in India at that time. Some of the Maharajas and Nawabs who ruled over these were sensible and patriotic. But most of them were drunk with wealth and power. They were dreaming of becoming independent rulers once the British quit India. They argued that the government of free India should treat them as equals. With great wisdom and political foresight, he consolidated the small kingdoms. The public was with him.

He tackled the likes of Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Junagarh- who initially did not want to join India. There were a lot of problems connected with the reunion of the numerous states into India. Sardar Patel's untiring efforts towards the unity of the country brought success. Due to the achievement of this massive task, Sardar Patel got the title of 'Iron Man'. He is one of the prestigious leaders of the world who became immortal by uniting a scattered nation without any bloodshed.

However, his enthusiasm to work for the independent nation got a big jolt when Gandhiji was assassinated. Patel was very attached to Gandhiji and considered him, his teacher and mentor. He was encouraged by Mahatma Gandhi in all his work. Gandhiji's death left him broken. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's health declined in 1950. He, himself realised that he was not going to live much longer. On 2 November his health deteriorated further and he was confined to bed. After suffering a massive heart attack, on 15 December, 1950, the great soul left the world.

For his services to the nation Sardar Patel was conferred with Bharat Ratna in 1991. But that was not the only accolade that he has received after his death. The new BJP government, under the leadership of PM Narendra Singh Modi, announced that a 182 metre statue of India's Iron man, tipped to be the world's tallest, would be erected in the middle of the Narmada River. The statue will be located at Sadhu Bet, an island situated 3 kilometers away from the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat. It is also one of the largest projects of the country. Recently, the government has also decided to observe the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on October 31 as 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas' (National Unity Day) every year. The day will be marked by administration of a pledge to all government employees as well as school and college students, to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. These truly seem to be the befitting tributes to a great man who fought with his blood and soul for keeping this great nation in unity.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **subsequently** – later
- ♦ **barrister** – advocate
- ♦ **pivotal** – essential
- ♦ **redress** – rectify
- ♦ **grievances** – cause of complaint/problems
- ♦ **distress** – suffering
- ♦ **cudgels** – a small stick
- ♦ **repress** – suppress
- ♦ **foresight** – insight
- ♦ **accolade** – tribute
- ♦ **conferred** – grant (a title, degree, benefit, or right)



SN Bose

The Mind Behind the Bosons

Satyendra Nath Bose, better known by the name SN Bose, was born in Calcutta on the first of January, 1894, in a high caste Kayastha family with two generations of English education behind him. Both his grandfather and father held government jobs for which they had to leave their ancestral village Bara Jagulia, in the district of Nadia, about 48 km from Calcutta. Satyendra Nath Bose was not known to talk or write very much about himself.

That is why there is very little firsthand account of his activities and experiences. It is evident that he was uncomfortable discussing himself, and always, whether in conversation or writing, deflected the topic away. As such, few know extensive details about Bose's life from Bose himself. Many who knew Bose have written their recollections in memoir form, but beyond their narrow experience, few can convey the expanse of his life.

Bose was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, the eldest of seven children. He was the only son, with six sisters after him. His ancestral home was in village Bara Jagulia, in the district of Nadia, in the district of West Bengal. His schooling began at the age of five, near his home. When his family moved to Goabagan, he was admitted to the New Indian School. In the final year of school, he was admitted to the Hindu School. He passed his entrance examination (matriculation) in 1909 and stood fifth in the order of merit.

He next joined the intermediate science course at the Presidency College, Calcutta, where he was taught by illustrious teachers such as Jagadish Chandra Bose, Sarada Prasanna Das and Prafulla Chandra Ray. Satyendra Nath Bose chose mixed (applied) mathematics for his BSc and passed the examinations standing first in 1913 and again stood first in the M.Sc mixed mathematics exam in 1915. It is said that his marks in the M.Sc examination created a new record in the annals of the University of Calcutta, which is yet to be surpassed. After completing his MSc, Bose joined the University of Calcutta as a research scholar in 1916 and started his studies in the theory of relativity. It was an exciting era in the history of scientific progress. Quantum theory had just appeared on the horizon and important results had started pouring in.

In 1924, he sent a paper to Einstein describing a statistical model that eventually led to the discovery of what became known as the Bose-Einstein condensate phenomenon. This transformed Bose's life. The Dhaka University realised the worth of its prized possession, sending him off to Europe on a tour, even though Bose only had a Master's Degree in Science and had no higher academic qualification. After a written recommendation from Einstein, who Bose had worked with in Berlin, Bose was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Physics in 1926.

After 25 years in Dhaka, Bose moved back to Kolkata in 1945, and continued to research and teach there till his death in 1974. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's second highest civilian award, in 1954. According to a July 2012 New York Times article, Bose is described as the "Father of the God Particle", a key element in scientists' theories explaining the makeup of all matter.

The Higgs boson, or ‘God particle’, is believed to be the particle which gives mass to matter. The ‘Higgs’ of Higgs boson is well known to refer to Peter Higgs, the British researcher who in 1964 laid much of the conceptual groundwork for the presence of the elusive particle. What is largely unknown, at least to non-specialists, is that the term ‘boson’ owes its name to the pioneering work of the late Indian physicist, Satyendra Nath Bose. In what may only be termed as a grave oversight, Bose was never considered for the Nobel Prize. Yet, at least ten scientists have been awarded the Nobel for their research in the field of particle physics based on concepts like the Bose-Einstein Condensate or the boson.

Bose was a rare combination of kaleidoscopic versatility and evergreen vivacity. He made two important contributions in mathematical physics one in his 20s and the other in his fifties. In terms of number of publications (if we go by the present trend where every scientist would tend to flaunt his number of publications rather than their contents) his contribution would appear to be hopelessly insignificant. He published only twenty-five papers including the obituary note on Einstein published in science and culture. Out of these 25 papers 17 were single authored.

However, it does not mean that in the intervening thirty years he did not do anything. He worked in as diverse fields as chemistry, mineralogy, biology, soil science, philosophy, archaeology, the fine arts, literature and languages. Unfortunately, in India Bose’s name is not so familiar. This is a reflection of sad state of Indian science.

To quote G Venkataraman: “The name of Satyendra Nath Bose will live forever in physics...unfortunately, most people in India have never heard of him. I would not be surprised if most of our scientists also do not know much about him, although they might have heard his name. Indeed, I am prepared to bet that barring a sprinkling of physicists (mostly theorists); many in our physics community too are ignorant about Bose. Even if they have heard of him, it is quite likely that they are not aware of the significance of his work.”

VOCAB HELP

♦ ancestral	– of, belonging to, or inherited from an ancestor or ancestors	♦ condensate	– contraction, brief, abstract, conspectus
♦ deflected	– cause (something) to change direction, turn aside from	♦ recommendation	– guidance, judgement, instruction
♦ extensive	– covering or affecting a large area, ample, a straight course, great, huge	♦ pioneering	– colonist, discoverer, explorer
♦ illustratious	– eminent distinguished, prestigious, important	♦ oversight	– lapse, blunder, blank, carelessness
♦ surpassed	– exceed, be greater than, be superior to	♦ versatility	– adaptability, skillfulness, utility
♦ horizon	– range of vision, vista, view, field of view	♦ vivacity	– energy, enthusiasm, zeal
		♦ intervening	– middle, intermediate, interceding



Mary Kom—*The Woman of Power Punches*

Indian woman boxer, MC Mary Kom or ‘Magnificent Mary’ as she is known as, is humble and down-to-Earth, despite being an Olympic medalist and five times world amateur champion. She was also the only Indian woman boxer to have qualified for 2012 Summer Olympics, and brought home a bronze medal.

Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom was born in a poor tribal family to Mangte Tonpa Kom and Mangte Akham Kom, on 1st March, 1983, in Manipur’s Kangatheh village. Her parents work in jhum fields. She was the eldest of four children. Her grandmother named her Chungneijang, which means ‘prosperous’ in the Kom tribe’s dialect.



Besides attending school, caring for her younger siblings and playing sports such as hockey, football and athletics, she also had to assist her parents in the fields. She did graduation from Churachandpur College.

Inspired by Manipuri boxer Dingko Singh’s gold at 1998 Asian Games, Mary moved to Imphal to train in athletics. Initially, she hid it from her parents, as boxing wasn’t considered a womanly sport. Dressed in old shabby attire, the teenager met coach K Kosana Meitei at Sports Authority of India branch there, and requested for an opportunity. Thereafter there was no looking back for her. She would practice till late at night, long after others went to bed. But her reason for taking up boxing was that she wanted to support her family.

Like everywhere else, in the North-East, only the rich could afford private schools. The poor go to government schools, where the quality of education isn’t up to the mark. So they depend on sports to land jobs. Mary eventually got a job in the police department. Her first match at the state level sub-junior boxing championship in 2000, earned her the distinction of being the ‘best boxer’. That’s when she realised her talent. She got married to K. Onler Kom in 2005 and has twin sons.

In 2008, she won silver at Asian Women’s Boxing Championship. She won her fourth consecutive gold medal at AIBA Women’s World Boxing Championship, followed by another gold at 2009 Asian Indoor Games. In 2010, she along with Sanjay and Harshit Jain, bore the King’s Baton in the opening ceremony of 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

Mary had competed earlier in the 46 and 48 kg categories. But she had to gain weight after the international body declared that it would allow women’s boxing in only three weight categories—the lowest being 51 kg. She was defeated in the World Boxing Championship 2012, but booked her berth for London Olympics, which were to be held the same year. Here, when she reached the semi-finals, she was defeated by the same opponent as in the previous championship. So, she settled for bronze.

She won numerous awards for her stupendous performance. Her name featured in the Limca Book of Records 2007. She was named as Sportswoman of the Year 2010. She was also conferred upon, Padma Bhushan in 2013. Latest in the list of her achievements is winning the gold medal in 17th Asian Games. 2014; thus becoming

the first Indian woman to bag a gold medal at the Asian Games. In a short span of time, she has brought the acclamation for the country which only a few of the eminent cricketers have been able to bring. The Manipur Government awarded her ₹ 5 million and two acres of land for her Olympics 2012 performance. A film by her name and based on her life has been released in September, 2014.

In 2013, she gave birth to her third baby boy. Mary Kom is an angel of inspiration for many who come from poor backgrounds and dare to dream. Since 2007, she has been teaching boxing to underprivileged children for free. She also started India's first female, only fight club to provide self-defence training to girls. She proved that

"Where there is a will, there is a way."

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **amateur** – an athlete who has never competed for payment or for a monetary prize
- ♦ **dialect** – a provincial, rural, or socially distinct variety of a language that differs from the standard language, especially when considered as substandard
- ♦ **sibling** – a brother or sister
- ♦ **shabby** – wearing worn clothes or having an unkempt appearance
- ♦ **distinction** – condition of being different
- ♦ **berth** – position
- ♦ **stupendous** – causing amazement, astounding, marvelous
- ♦ **conferred** – to bestow upon as a gift, favour, honour, etc



Narendra Modi

The Leader of the Masses

"Our nation is filled with tremendous energy of the youth.

Whatever future we desire of, we must keep the youth at the centre." **Narendra Modi**

He waved and a million Indians joined him in the chorus which he led. He, Narendra Modi, sang the song of India's development and the road ahead. Truly, the popularity that Modi achieved before and after his election as Prime Minister of the country is praiseworthy. Modi was born on 17 September, 1950 to Damodardas Moolchand Modi and Heeraben in Vadnagar, Gujarat. He was the third of six children and helped his father in selling tea. In 1967, he completed his schooling.

At the age of 8 years, he met Lakshmanrao Inamdar, who inducted him as a junior cadet in RSS. He is known to be Modi's political 'guru'. At 18 years, he was married to Jashodaben by his parents. But he soon left her to pursue his political ambitions. In 1970, he became a full-time campaigner of RSS. In 1983, he completed his Master's degree in political science from Gujarat University.

In 1988, Modi was elected as organising secretary of BJP's Gujarat unit and in 1995, became its National Secretary. In 2001, Modi was appointed the Chief Minister of Gujarat. In 2002, in the aftermath of the Godhra carnage, he submitted his resignation. However, it was rejected. Under Modi, Gujarat flourished. A number of



projects for groundwater conservation were undertaken. As a result of better irrigation measures, the production of *Bt* cotton became the largest in India. Rural electricity supply was improved. In 2013, Modi was announced as BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate and contested from Varanasi and Vadodara. Modi effectively used social media like Twitter and Facebook for his campaigns.

"Abki baar, Modi Sarkar"

This became the most popular punchline supporting his candidacy. As was expected, he won and was sworn in on 26 May, 2014, as the 15th Prime Minister of the country and also the first PM born in the post-independence era.

Soon after coming to power, Modi introduced a high-speed train between Delhi and Agra and a new train upto Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra. He is also planning to start bullet trains in the country, which have been his long-cherished dream. His Independence-day speech was particularly spectacular, despite being an extempore. Some of the excerpts were—"Why does a man have weapon in his hand and not a plough?"

About the safety of women he said :

*"We put so many restrictions on our daughters, but not on sons.
After all, a rapist is also someone's son."*

India has been longing for a change since long. Freedom from corruption and communalism, education and jobs for all are some of India's top concerns. India has reposed a lot of faith in this 'son of the soil'. Let us hope Modi to be India's next 'Miracle Man'.

The most recent series of events include the launch of 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'—a countrywide campaign to clean up India. He launched it especially on Gandhi Jayanti and asked people to take a "pledge to affirm to remove dirt". The following day he made his first radio speech in order to reach out to tens of millions of Indians. In his address, he spoke on several issues like khadi, skill the development and empowerment of village.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **inducted** – to introduce, especially to something requiring special knowledge or experience
- ♦ **aftermath** – something that results or follows from an event, especially one of a disastrous or unfortunate nature, consequence
- ♦ **cherished** – highly valued, or having a high personal value
- ♦ **spectacular** – impressive, grand, or dramatic
- ♦ **extempore** – on the spur of the moment, without premeditation or preparation
- ♦ **excerpt** – a passage or quotation taken or selected from a book, document, film, or the like, extract

G. Constructive Writing : General Topics

India of My Dreams

Albert Einstein, the genius, once said : “We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.” I believe in each word said by him and believe that India has a lot more to teach the world. Most supreme is the ‘India of My Dreams’. All of us being inhabitants or citizens of our country naturally dream of what kind of a country we desire. We even dream of building the kind of country we want. India is a large country with an amazing wealth of diversity. With the onset of the new millennium, historians, sociologists and other experts predict that only three Asian countries seem to be the ones who can or have the potential of taking Asia to great heights i.e, India, China and Japan. China and India seem to be more dominating and promising because of their impressive size and huge manpower. India, marching gloriously ahead after her Independence, is emerging as a force to reckon with.

But a lot needs to be done at home front as illiteracy, population explosion, poverty, unemployment, corrupt politicians as well as bureaucracy are the burning problems of the day. Besides this, we have failed to provide basic needs of life to all the citizens like safe and clean drinking water, housing, sanitation, a square meal a day, medical facilities etc. Moreover, the problem of malnutrition, AIDS etc are growing day-by-day. India has the world’s third largest population suffering from HIV/AIDS. According to the WHO report, about 2.5 million Indians are suffering from AIDS and if nothing is done in this regard India will overtake Africa in the cases of HIV infection. The India of my dreams may appear impractical and a little too imaginative to many, but then this is what I want my country to be. In the land of my dreams, the suffering of millions and the burden of poverty will be no more. The ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor will be bridged.

Education will be free and compulsory, and there will be complete law and order. Crime and violence will no longer be because reason will reign all over. Every citizen will be free to express his/her ideas. No one would be deprived of justice. Everyone will live with dignity. There will be equal rights for everyone. There shall be no discrimination between the rich and the poor, high or low, man or woman.

Malevolent and dividing forces like casteism, regionalism, communalism, parochialism, provincialism, chauvinism will lose their identity and roots. There will be no more corrupt politicians in the country. The country will be run by capable and able youth elected democratically. Terrorism and violence would end. Peace will reign supreme. Bureaucracy will be honest and prompt in their duty. Right incentives will be given to those who are economically backward to bring them at par with others. There would be no minority and no majority feelings. No part of the country would feel side-lined or cut off from the mainstream. There would be no child labour, no exploitation and no one will sleep hungry.

Science and technology will trickle down to every village, town and city. Computer literacy will be cent per cent. Science will erase even the least traces of superstitions and ignorance. India will be a haven of scientists. We will produce our own

indigenous products and technology. The country will be self-reliant in technology and everything else. Every citizen will be swayed only by one emotion—patriotism and nothing else.

India will emerge as a world leader and lead the world towards peace and universal brotherhood. The country of my dreams will emerge as the champion of peace and goodwill among the nations. The planning of India would be real, pragmatic, well-targeted and would yield fruits. The policies would not be lopsided. Agriculture, small-scale and cottage industries will be fully protected and will be prosperous.

India of my dreams will be a superpower with all the modern and developed amenities. It would have the best war-time machines and thus will be free from any kind of fear. Yet, it will be the most environment friendly nation. It will be a corruption free nation where every citizen will exert its voting right. Thus, India of my dreams would be strong and self-reliant economically and strong in its defence, politically astute, socially civilised, non-communal, secular, educated and united.

VOCAB HELP

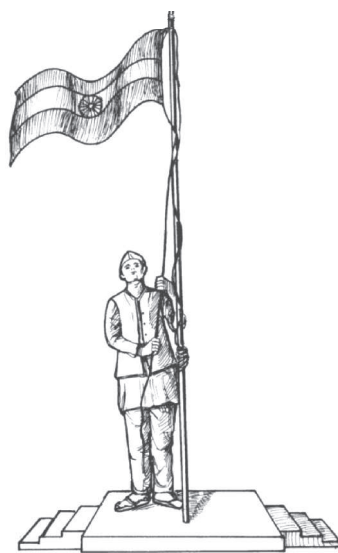
- | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| ♦ reckon | – to rely or depend | ♦ chauvinism | – activity indicative of belief in the superiority of men over women |
| ♦ bureaucracy | – government, officials, authorities, administration | ♦ incentives | – a motivating influence; stimulus |
| ♦ sanitation | – hygiene, cleanliness | ♦ indigenous | – original, home grown |
| ♦ dignity | – self-respect, self-worth | ♦ pragmatic | – practical, efficient, sensible, realistic |
| ♦ malevolent | – having an evil or harmful influence | ♦ lopsided | – one-sided, unequal, unbalanced |
| ♦ parochialism | – narrow-mindedness | ♦ secular | – worldly, civil |
| ♦ provincialism | – narrowness of mind or outlook, lack of sophistication | | |

Independence Day

15th August, 1947 is the day engraved in the golden history of India. It is the day when India attained its freedom from the clutches of a long slavery of over 200 years of the British rule. It was a long and hard struggle in which many freedom fighters and great men laid their lives for our beloved motherland.

Mahatma Gandhi led the great non-violent movement to which the British had to finally succumb. The country produced great leaders and patriots like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lala Lajpat Rai, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and Chandra Shekhar Azad.

The struggle for Independence was such a moving force that it united all the people belonging to different castes, classes and beliefs into a single nation. Women also came out of their houses and significantly contributed to the freedom struggle.



Women like Aruna Asaf Ali, Sarojini Naidu, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Kamla Nehru, Kasturba Gandhi and Annie Beasant contributed greatly to the success of our freedom movement. 15th August is celebrated as Independence Day every year. On our first Independence Day, Pandit Nehru, our first Prime Minister, hoisted the National Flag, the Tricolour at the Red Fort. At midnight, when the whole world was sleeping, India awoke to a great nation promising peace, prosperity, equality and liberty.

Since then, Independence Day is traditionally celebrated with full zeal, fervour and great excitement. Every particle and pollen in the air seems to be charged up with the love for the motherland on this particular day. Several vehicles, tempo, auto-rickshaw have a tricolour flying on the top.

Patriotic songs can be heard at every street corner. The day is celebrated with great fervour and people pay homage to the thousands of lives laid down by great men and women. They remember the countless sacrifices made and they glorify the great Indian tradition and culture with which we have enriched the world.

The celebration starts with the hoisting of the National Flag by the Prime Minister at the Red Fort in New Delhi. Twenty one gunshots are fired in the air in the honour of the occasion.

This is followed by the nationally broadcast Independence Day speech by the Prime Minister from the ramparts of Red Fort itself. During his speech, the Prime Minister focuses on the achievements of the government during the past year, mentions the issues that still need to be addressed to and calls upon for further developmental efforts.

Tributes are paid to the leaders of the freedom struggle. The Indian National Anthem—Jana Gana Mana is sung. March past follows the speech with the division of the Indian Army leading and followed by the para military forces. All state capitals hold events on similar lines with the Chief Minister of the respective states unfurling the National Flag.

Another interesting feature of the celebration is the kite flying event that is held all over the country with great zeal. The sky, on this day, is filled with kites of various colours, shapes and sizes. All the government and private institutions, schools, colleges and universities celebrate this day of great historical importance by hoisting the tricolour. Some buildings are especially decorated with lights depicting the independence theme.

Even the television channels and radio programmes are charged up with patriotism. Films based on patriotic themes are telecast to let the people and children know about the various incidents of our freedom struggle and to inspire love for our motherland. Newspapers too print special editions and cite inspirational stories and excerpts of the life of great men from the great books written on them.

Independence Day, thus, is an important day in the life of every Indian. Year after year, it reminds us of the great sacrifice and struggle made by our freedom fighters to free Mother India from foreign rule. It reminds us of the great ideals which were the foundation of the dream of a free India, envisioned and realised by the founding fathers.

It also reminds us that our forefathers have done their share of duty. It lies in our hands now how do we shape and form the future of our country. They have played their part and have played it really well. The country now looks up to us as how we perform our part now.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **clutches** – narrowness of mind or outlook; lack of sophistication clutch, grip, hold, grasp
- ♦ **succumb** – surrender, yield, submit, give in,
- ♦ **zeal** – enthusiasm, passion
- ♦ **fervour** – enthusiasm, excitement
- ♦ **pollen** – the fertilising element of flowering plants
- ♦ **homage** – respect, honour
- ♦ **enriched** – to make fuller, more meaningful, or more rewarding
- ♦ **unfurling** – open, unfold, open out
- ♦ **excerpt** – a passage or segment taken from a longer work, such as a literary or musical composition, a document, or a film
- ♦ **envisioned** – to picture in the mind; imagine



Republic Day

26th January is celebrated as Republic Day in our country. On this day in 1950, the Constitution of our country was formally adopted. The fundamental law of the land, the Constitution, born out of the diligence, conscientiousness and hard labour of our founding fathers became supreme in our country on this day. Hence, the day has its own historical importance in the history of our nation.

After the Independence, the country did not have any self-made official Constitution, instead its laws were based on modified colonial acts. So, establishing an official constitution of our own was the utmost important task in front of the Government of India. That's how Constitution came into being.

Our Constitution is the fruit of the labour of the esteemed members of the Constituent Assembly under the Presidentship of Dr Rajendra Prasad. Dr BR Ambedkar who is called the Father of our Constitution. After deeply studying the various constitutions of the world, our founding fathers framed our Constitution. It is one of the lengthiest constitutions of the world. The Constitution reflects upon the dedication and foresight of these great men.

The Constitution took 2 years, 11 months and 18 days to take its final shape. Dr BR Ambedkar was confident of his work saying :

“I feel that the Constitution is workable, it is flexible and it is strong enough to hold the country together both in peace time and in the time of war.”

Though, it was completed on 26th November, 1949, but it came into force on 26th January, 1950. The historical importance of this day goes back to 1930, when on this very day, Indian National Congress celebrated the country's first Independence Day by hoisting the tricolour on the banks of the 'Ravi' river and on this day under the leadership of Pandit Nehru, the people vowed to fight for total and complete Independence of India. Keeping in mind the importance of this day historically, it was decided to wait for sometime and enforce our Constitution by declaring India a Republic on 26th January, 1950. Therefore, this day is celebrated as a National Day with great joy and pride.

To mark the importance of the occasion, every year a grand parade is held in the Capital, New Delhi, with great pomp and show. It starts from the Raisina Hill near

the Rashtrapati Bhawan (the President's residence), along the Rajpath past India Gate. Prior to its commencement, the Prime Minister lays a floral wreath at the Amar Jawan Jyoti, a memorial to unknown soldiers at the India Gate, followed by two minutes silence in the memory of unknown sacrifice of the soldiers. It is a reminder of the sacrifice of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the country.

The grand parade starts with the President of India unfurling the National Flag, as the National Anthem is played and a 21-gun salute is given. Important awards like the Ashoka Chakra and Kirti Chakra are given away by the President. The President awards the medals of bravery to the people from the armed forces for their exceptional courage and also to the citizens, who have distinguished themselves by their different acts. It is then followed by the march past by the contingents of the Armed Forces.

Different contingents of the Indian Army in addition to the Navy and Airforce, with their bands march past in all their finery and official decorations. The President of India, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Armed Forces, takes the salute. It is followed by state-wise jhankis, folk dances and breathtaking flypast in the sky by our daring Air Force pilots making this parade fascinating. Several school children also perform various dance forms in the parade. The whole parade tries to capture the varied and diversified essence of Indian culture.

Another important episode of the parade is the presence of a chief guest. Since 1950, India has been inviting the head of state of another country as the guest of honour for the Republic Day celebration. The guest is chosen after a deliberation on strategic, economic and political interests. This whole parade is watched with equal enthusiasm by all. Thousands of people in Delhi watch it in real and millions of others watch it on the National television.

The Beating Retreat Ceremony officially denotes the end of Republic Day festivities. It is conducted on 29th January, the third day after the Republic Day parade. It is performed by the bands of the three wings of the military : the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force. Everybody, across the country celebrates Republic Day with great spirit to mark this auspicious day in the history of the motherland.

Sadly, it seems that this zeal of nationalism gets ignited only on these two days— Republic Day and Independence Day. So, instead of merely participating with zeal and enthusiasm in our National Festivals, we should pledge to take India to greater heights and fulfil the dreams envisioned by our great leaders.

The youth should come forward to fight the evils of casteism, corruption, illiteracy, poverty etc., in order to make India a worthy Republic by giving India better leaders, administrators, doctors, engineers, teachers, professionals, lawyers, etc.

VOCAB HELP

♦ diligence	– careful and persistent work or effort	♦ fascinating	– captivating, engaging, gripping
♦ conscientiousness	– the trait of being painstaking and careful	♦ diversified	– having variety of character or form or components
♦ wreath	– flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes	♦ deliberation	– careful consideration before decision
♦ contingents	– a quota of military troops	♦ auspicious	– marked by success, prosperous
		♦ zeal	– enthusiasm, excitement, passion

An Ideal Student

The word 'student' refers to 'a learner'. A person who wishes to acquire a certain kind of knowledge and wisdom or skills in a particular field or enhances his/her intellectual capabilities in a general manner is a learner or a student. Though, all of us remain students of the Great Master called Life throughout, yet our life is so divided, that we spend around 15-20 years of the early part of our life in acquiring the necessary knowledge in order to lead a successful life later.

This calls for a systematic and organised system of education. Pupils under the ambit of this formal system of education spend a bulk of their childhood, adolescence and a part of their youth in acquiring all the pre-required knowledge needed to build up a successful career and thereby lead a successful life.

Thus, we see that a person for the first quarter of his life is foremost a student. Even in ancient times in our country, the life of a person was systematically divided into four parts called the Ashramas *viz* the Brahmacharya Ashrama, the Grihastha Ashrama, the Vanprastha Ashrama and the Sanyasa Ashrama.

The Brahmacharya Ashrama was the time when the child practised celibacy and acquired knowledge, wisdom and understanding at the feet of his Guru. Even in these Ashramas, the students were supposed to be disciplined and abide by the rules of their Gurus. These rules were same, for the members of the royal family as well as for others.

A person in order to acquire knowledge and gain wisdom should have certain qualities, capacities and abilities in him in order to be a good student. A person who has such capacities makes for a desirable and likeable student in the eyes of his teacher. An ideal student should first of all be punctual.

He should know the value of time. Unless he realises how precious the time is, he will not be able to master himself. If he lacks this quality, time, the great power, will finally beat him and he will fail to achieve his goals. Next, an ideal student should be obedient and should have an open mind. Unless he follows the instructions of his teacher and allows himself to be corrected and reformed for betterment, a student will never be able to succeed in life.

A good student should be humble as well. If he is humble, only then he will be able to learn, be obedient and will gain the knowledge and the skills imparted by the teacher. Students are like raw clay in the hands of a teacher. They are like tender saplings which need to be grafted and groomed. This is possible only, if the clay is willing to be moulded in a desirable shape and the sapling is tender.

A good student should be responsible. Without having the capability to shoulder the responsibility regarding anything, a student will not be able to achieve anything worthwhile in life. Only a responsible person can carry forward the greater responsibility of being a good citizen, a good person or even for that matter shoulder the responsibility of a family. A good student should be persevering and consistent in his studies. A person who moves ahead continuously without being discouraged by failures and obstacles, succeeds in life. Along with having perseverance, a good student should be hard working. Hard work and consistency go hand in hand.

Moreover, a good student will never be selfish. He will be very helpful. Knowledge, it is said, increases only by sharing. An ideal student will always help his fellow students. He will be full of humility and will know no pride, conceit, vanity or selfishness. An ideal student will have a keen observation and a curious mind. Without these two, he will fail to acquire knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Infact, they are the seeds of knowledge. Only a curious mind will seek new things and like to learn novel ideas as knowledge of new things can be acquired only by a keen observer.

In modern days, an ideal student is sometimes mockingly called a ‘book worm’ or a ‘teacher’s pet’. But instead he is a person who aptly utilises his time. He studies while it is time to study. And plays appropriately too for his physical development. He is never slave to his senses. An ideal student could have the curiosity for modern gadgets like others. But they know how to avoid temptation and addiction. A school serves like a community and an ideal student would learn to be a successful member of it; thereby proving an assent to the institution and to the country.

Swami Vivekananda has inspired many generations not only in India but in the world as well. In his lessons, he has elaborated on certain qualities that a person should have in order to be an ideal student. Some of them are : respect, love, self-discipline, self-control, faith, concentration, truthfulness, conviction, strength, firm-determination etc. The teachings of Swami Vivekananda has inspired many legendary figures thinkers and leaders.

These intellectual capacities are not sufficient. A healthy mind resides in a healthy body. Thus, an ideal student has to be physically strong and fit in order to have a good concentration and to work hard. An ideal student therefore, keeps fit by exercising regularly. Exercise increases his capacity to concentrate, makes him disciplined and orderly.

And we all know a disciplined student is always successful. Finally, a good student is also respectful. He who knows no respect, knows no knowledge, is a maxim. One cannot progress without the blessings of his teachers and elders, which he earns only when he is respectful. These are but a few qualities of an ideal student which are his beacons on his march towards attaining the eternal wisdom.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| ♦ ambit | – range, reach, extent, scope | ♦ consistent | – steady, even, regular, stable, constant, persistent |
| ♦ celibacy | – the condition of being unmarried | ♦ conceit | – self-importance, vanity, arrogance |
| ♦ abidy by | – comply, follow | ♦ vanity | – pride, arrogance |
| ♦ grafted | – to join or unite closely | ♦ asset | – benefit, service, aid, advantage |
| ♦ tender | – easily damaged, vulnerable or sensitive | ♦ conviction | – strong belief |
| ♦ ardent | – enthusiastic, keen, eager | ♦ beacons | – a guiding or warning signal |
| ♦ bowmanship | – the sport of shooting arrows with a bow | | |

My Childhood Memories

Childhood memories are the sweetest things in a human mind. Nobody can forget one's childhood memories whether pleasant or painful. When I think back about my childhood, many vivid memories spring to my mind. Some are pleasant while some are painful.

Regardless of the quality I attach to these memories, they constitute the early experiences of my life and they help to make me the person that I am today. "Sweet childish days, there were as long as twenty days are now" aptly said William Wordsworth.

The most vivid memory that I have is about the time I fell from a coconut tree. Though I fell from about three feet, I dislocated my elbow. I can still recall the process of falling and the immense pain and discomfort afterwards. I was about five at that time. That accident makes me extra careful whenever I climb a tree now. A repetition of a bad experience is definitely not welcomed.

As I grew older, I remember sitting sidesaddle on the horizontal bar of my elder brother's bicycle while he pedalled us towards a small farm nearby. There we would feed ourselves on the way back. I had to watch out for the police because my brother told me that if I were to be caught riding sidesaddle, the police would arrest me and put me in jail. Now I know that he was just frightening me to be on the alert. He was too lazy to watch out for the police himself. Even this small fear had some kind of enjoyment.

My elder brother taught me many things. I learned to make flyable kites and spinning tops. In addition, we would go around fishing. Catching fish had its ups and downs. Ups when we managed to catch a small amount of fish, and downs when we ourselves became the victims of water leeches. Ugh! Just thinking of them now makes me feel creepy. We learned to respect the living creatures in the countryside.

No single living being rules nature. We are the hunters and the hunted at the same time. The most important thing is to recognise our position. Or to put it better in George Eliot's words : "We could never have loved the Earth so well if we had no childhood in it."

The pleasure of outdoor games in all kinds of weather, getting wet in the rain or soaking with sand, can never come back again. The golden days were tension free and care free from all sorts of duties and responsibilities. Even the fights had its own charms.

Each game played, each activity performed taught a unique lesson of life. Ironically as a child, I always wanted to grow up fast, now that I am growing and had grown up, I want to be a child again and relive everything.

Later on my elder brother went overseas for further studies. I miss him but fortunately I had a group of friends living in the neighbourhood. We would play all sorts of games and go exploring all sorts of places. We were lucky to live at the fringe of town where the natural surroundings were not destroyed yet.

Now the streams and farm are gone, the victims of polluted drain was once a stream of cool clear water, brimming with life. No longer can we hear the call of the birds and animals. Instead, we hear impatient blast of car horns and the roar of bulldozers churning up the once beautiful land.

I mourn the destruction of the living bountiful land and the subsequent erection of nameless houses all arranged in neat sterile rows. I wonder what sort of childhood memories the children living in these houses will have. Especially in this technological world, the glory and enjoyment of outdoor games seems completely lost for these children.

As years rolled by, my friends and I grew up. Most of them have left the neighbourhood for more lucrative jobs in the big cities. Some of us remained over here. We have lost our childhood. We are like strangers to one another now, for we have our separate lives to live. The only thing that binds us together is the fact that we share the same childhood memories, memories that we will always treasure.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **constitute** – consist of, comprise of
- ♦ **sidesaddle** – to sit with both legs on one side
- ♦ **creepy** – causing a sensation as of things crawling on your skin
- ♦ **fringe** – a part of the city far removed from the centre
- ♦ **brimming** – overflowing
- ♦ **churning up** – break up the surface of (an area of ground)
- ♦ **bountiful** – plentiful, abundant
- ♦ **erection** – something that has been erected, a building or construction
- ♦ **sterile** – barren
- ♦ **lucrative** – profitable, rewarding, productive

My Favourite Game

“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” goes the famous saying. That justifies the fact that if everybody, all the young students’ would have only studied then there would have been no Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar or no Leander Paes, no Sania Nehwal. Thus, sports hold equal value as does the education. History is the testament of the name and fame for the ones who have taken their passion for sports to the next level. I also wish to work hard to bring triumph to my young passion. I also believe in Muhammad Ali’s words :

“Champions are made from something, they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision.”

I enjoy playing all sorts of games—both indoors as well as outdoors. Among the indoor games, I enjoy playing carrom and chess. I also enjoy playing badminton and table tennis with my friends and cousins. But the game I like the most is cricket. I not only enjoy playing this game, but also love watching it. It is my favourite game. We play cricket in our school also. I am in our school team and I really enjoy playing for our school. I open innings for our school team.

I like all aspects of the game—batting, fielding and bowling. I especially like taking catches and diving to stop the boundaries during fielding. I bowl sometimes. But, it is batting that I enjoy the most. I am also the vice-captain of the school team. In the last inter school tournament, our school grabbed the trophy and I had contributed 58 runs to my team’s score.

Our coach too is very hardworking. We practise everyday from 6 am to 8 am in the morning and 4 pm to 5 pm in the evening. At first we do the warm up by taking a few rounds of our ground, then we do a few stretching and fitness exercises. Then, we practise as per our turns—fielding, batting or bowling.

I also enjoy watching the game whenever there is a live telecast on Television. India is of course my favourite team but I also like watching the Australian and the Sri Lankan teams. I, therefore enjoy watching any match of the Indian team and if the other team is also one of my favourites, it is like an icing on the cake.

A few years back, I got a chance to watch a live cricket match at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium between India and Sri Lanka. It was a thrilling experience. I enjoyed the match especially, the great performances of Captain Dravid, Sehwag, Tendulkar, Dhoni, Kaif and Kumble. Sachin Tendulkar is my favourite batsman.

Dhoni too has won the hearts of many people including mine. It was a great joy to watch my favourite teams pitched against each other. When India won the match our joy was doubled and we felt our watching the Match was even more rewarded. I wish, I could get more chances of such kind to watch live matches.

Looking at the exalted and content faces of these players of Indian team, I too felt overwhelmed. I too have decided to feel the essence of that uniform of the National Cricket Team by taking my passion of my favourite game to the next level. I was highly amazed by the idea of bringing glory to the country after each such victory.

That is why I too have decided that I will work hard and make my passion my career to serve the motherland like Sachin Tendulkar, Vishwanathan Anand or Abhinav Bindra.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **testament** – proof, evidence
- ♦ **triumph** – success, victory, accomplishment
- ♦ **exalted** – excited, elevated, exhilarated, ecstatic, jubilant, joyous
- ♦ **overwhelmed** – to affect deeply in mind or emotion



A Visit to a Historical Place

India is a country of rich culture and has centuries of history and tradition of its own. Thus, the country is full of places which are rich in traditions, are important historically, economically, politically or sociologically. Moreover, the diversity that it presents baffles many because the diversity is not only geographical but social and cultural as well. Thus, India attracts thousands of tourists from all around the globe.

Last year, I had a chance to visit Agra with my uncle's family. As soon as I got the invitation, I accepted it because Agra has been a great centre for art and architecture from the Mughal period. It goes to Akbar's credit to transform Agra into a great city of cultural and historical importance. Interestingly, these monuments have the depictions of both Hindu and Islamic cultures and architectures.

History stands testimony that the old brick fort of Sikandar Lodhi was dismantled by Akbar and a magnificent fortress of rust coloured sandstone was built. For the same reason, the 'Fort of Agra' is also known as 'Lal Quila'. This fort was built by Akbar, in AD 1565. It took 8 years to be completed.

The fort is said to have 500 buildings in the style of Bengali and Gujarati architecture. This is what Akbar's historian Abul Fazal had recorded. But unfortunately only a few survive today and the successors of Akbar too subsequently made a few changes and additions. The fort stands on the banks of the river Yamuna with double walls to protect it. These walls are very high.

The fort has four gates. Presently, the entry to the fort is allowed through the gate in the South of the fort called the Amar Singh Rathore Gate. Just outside the gate is a stone statue of a horse's head built by Amar Singh Rathore of Jodhpur in remembrance of his faithful horse that had jumped the walls of the fort and lost its legs in order to save its master.

The gate on the West side of the fort is called the Delhi Gate at whose entrance are the famous statues of Jamal and Patta who had laid down their lives fighting for Akbar. The space between the fort and the river was used for holding elephant fights.

Right behind is Akbar's majestic Palace, the roof and floor of which are made of red stone. The Diwan-e-Aam of the Palace was the place where he held his Darbar and dispensed justice. We also saw the Diwan-e-Khas and the Machhli Bhavan. Close to the Diwan-e-Aam is the Meena Bazaar. To the West is the building which is a very curious kind of a Hide and Seek building.

It is said that Akbar was indebted to the blessings of Sufi of Sikri, Sheikh Salim Chishti for the birth of his son. Therefore, in order to show his gratitude, Akbar built and developed Sikri and decided to shift his capital there. The place is 40 km to the South-West of Agra. He named it as Fatehpur Sikri. The buildings at Fatehpur Sikri are outstanding in their carvings.

There is an Ibadat-Khana built for holding discussions on matters of religion. But the crowning glory of the city is the Jama Mosque which can accommodate 10,000 worshippers and is believed to be the replica of the Mosque at Mecca.

It is a monumental example of the mixture of Persian and Indian style. Inside the Mosque is the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chisti. Right at the entrance of the Mosque is the famous Buland Darwaza which is 41 metres high from the ground level. Other structures to see at Fatehpur Sikri are the Panch Mahal, Jodha Bai's Palace, the Sunhera Makan and many other buildings.

We also went to see the great Taj Mahal on the banks of the river Yamuna. It surely is a 'wonder of the world' as it is beyond any description. Words would fall short to describe this "Symbol of Eternal Love". It is beautifully decorated with precious and carved stones. It is built in the memory of Shah Jahan's beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal.

The real tomb of the queen lies in a small room downstairs made of white and black marbles. Scriptures and verses from the Quran are engraved on the walls along with lovely floral designs and different coloured carved precious stones.

Its overall architectural brilliance is still a question for modern builders and architects. They get really surprised to see the fullproof plan of the Taj Mahal built at the time when technology was not that much advanced. It's extra-ordinary beauty

also made us utter ‘Waah Taj!’ However, just one thing that pinched me was how recklessly people have ruined this historic beauty. But our government has taken the right step at the right time by relocating the factories far off from the Taj Mahal. It was thus an overall enriching and enlightening experience to visit these places.

It is really a ‘dream in marble’ as thousands of poets have attempted to describe it in many ways. One gets speechless on seeing this great spectacle of marble. It was an extremely mesmerising trip.

Since then Agra and Fatehpur Sikri have become my favourite destination to spend my vacations. I am now eagerly waiting for another chance to visit Agra.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **baffles** – confuse, puzzle
- ♦ **dismantled** – demolished, destroyed
- ♦ **fortress** – a large fort or fortified town
- ♦ **dispensed** – to administer
- ♦ **carvings** – the cutting of material such as stone or wood to form a figure or design
- ♦ **replica** – an exact copy or reproduction, esp on a smaller scale
- ♦ **carved** – to engrave or cut figures
- ♦ **reckless** – careless, irresponsible
- ♦ **spectacle** – an elaborate and remarkable display on a lavish scale
- ♦ **mesmerising** – attract strongly, as if with a magnet

My Favourite Book *The Alchemist*

“Reading maketh a full man”, said Sir Francis Bacon years ago. The saying still holds true. Reading for leisure and pleasure is a good habit. It instructs us in our youth and comforts us in our old age. Sometimes, reading brings about a revolutionary change in the outlook of a person. Particularly in these days of mechanical existence, when people have hardly anytime to attend meetings, the best source of acquiring religious and general knowledge are books that can be easily browsed wherever a person finds some time to spare. Since long I too have developed this habit of reading books. I like reading books of different genres. Very recently I read the famous book by Paulo Coelho, ‘The Alchemist’. Since then it has become one of my favourite books. This is one book that would keep me glued to it for hours together.



I was just not able to leave the book at any point as every next page was proving to be even better than the previous one. The book covers many aspects of life : journey, love, life, finding one’s own self etc. Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian lyricist and a novelist. He is the recipient of numerous international awards. This famous author has million fans following him on social networking sites. His novel ‘The Alchemist’ has been translated into at least 56 languages. It has sold more than 65 million copies, thereby becoming the best selling books in the history and thus setting the Guinness World Record for most translated book by a living author. “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” is the core theme of the book. The story is dazzling in its powerful simplicity and inspiring wisdom. It is about a

shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried in the Pyramids. Along the way, he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself king and an alchemist, all of whom guide Santiago in the direction of his quest.

No one knows what the treasure is or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles along the way. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a discovery of the treasure found within. Lush and deeply humane, the story of Santiago is an eternal testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

The Alchemist has been called “A fable about following your dreams.” In my view, The Alchemist expresses belief that easily relate to people around the world since at one point or another everybody suffer from confusion about their hearts. Coelho beautifully constructed a novel that contains remarkable truths, such as the secrets to suffering, love and the heart.

It consists of numerous pieces of advice dealing with universal wisdom. In my opinion, ‘The Alchemist’ is a very inspirational story with many important and memorable messages. Paulo Coelho shows that it is best for you to take the opportunity and live life to the fullest. It has thus certainly changed my perspective towards life and helped me live my life in a better way.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **genre** – a kind of literary or artistic work
- ♦ **conspires** – to join or act together; combine
- ♦ **dazzling** – extremely impressive, beautiful, or skilful
- ♦ **gypsy** – traveller, roamer, wanderer, bohemian
- ♦ **alchemist** – a person who practices alchemy or witchcraft or magic
- ♦ **lush** – extremely pleasing to the senses



Children : *Our Tomorrow*

The wealth of a nation lies not so much in its economical and natural resources but it lies more decidedly in its children and youth. It is they who will be the creators and shapers of a nation’s tomorrow. The children of today will be adult citizens of tomorrow. Today’s students will be tomorrow’s lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, leaders and activists. Their quality and personality will determine the kind of destiny that beckons the nation. Nelson Mandela has aptly said :

“Children are our greatest treasure. They are our future.”

It, therefore becomes mandatory for every nation and every society to nurture a strong, healthy and intellectual childhood. The children have boundless store of energy, will, capability, zeal and enthusiasm, and have the power to mould the destiny of the nation. And particularly in India, this store is available in abundance. Indian population has this major advantage over the population of China or rest of the world. So, this advantage has to be properly moulded and needs to be given appropriate direction. Development and upliftment of children is an important step, especially for poor and low income children. Investing in them in their early years will provide a foundation for future success with lifelong benefits for them, and

economic and social benefits for our entire nation. Government of India has acknowledged this fact and has started with reforms to bring a change. It has been seen that not only non-poor, but poor children too perform well if they are provided with the right support.

There are so many examples around us, which show that it is not that only children of rich families help in the development of nation. There are many famous riches who had poor and gloomy childhood. Yet, today they are famous billionaires.

Howard Schultz, Chairman of Starbucks was born in a government housing and his father was a truck driver. Sam Walton, founder of Walmart helped his family out by milking the cow and delivering newspaper. Famous Media person Oprah Winfrey was born into abject poverty but now is a well-known face. Dhirubhai Ambani, U S President Barack Obama are all examples of such people who were born poor but found their way to the top of the world.

Right kind of education is the first step towards the upliftment of children. The education provided should be progressive, in keeping with the needs of the society and should not only create great professionals, but also great human beings. Academics should be taken care of along with adequate emphasis on sports, technical areas and other fields as per the interest of the students.

The ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ (Education for All) is one such wonderful step taken by the government to brighten the future of poor and village children. Some NGO’s like CRY, Smile, Asha too are doing great work by providing education, rights, meals to poor children and their families. Social evils like child labour, drug addiction, child marriage, beggary, child abuse etc., also hamper the proper development of children. These rampant evils, if remain unchecked, will jeopardise and endanger the future of the country.

The government should take strict measures to ensure that children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools and should try to reduce the drop-out percentage. Child labour too should be strictly prohibited.

Children today are very smart and enlightened right from their early age. They are capable of many feats and accomplishments. All they need is proper channelisation of abilities, right guidance and training, and a desired environment. Given this, the posterity is sure to lead the nation to greater heights and newer worlds. We all are human beings and share the same planet.

Just as it is our responsibility to care for the environment for generations to come, we must also take responsibility for those children who were born into a world without the care and support what every child deserves. God has given us two hands, so we must use both of them to help these children. And let’s use our mouths too to advocate for their rights. Let us give them a better future and in turn give the world a better future.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **beckons** – attract, draw, entice
- ♦ **boundless** – unlimited, endless, immense, limitless
- ♦ **gloomy** – causing depression, dejection
- ♦ **abject** – miserable, hopeless, dismal
- ♦ **rampant** – widespread, epidemic, prevalent, uncontrolled
- ♦ **jeopardise** – endanger, threaten
- ♦ **prohibited** – forbidden, banned
- ♦ **feats** – a notable achievement
- ♦ **posterity** – future generations, succeeding generations

On Top of the World

Few words such as on top of the world immediately bring to my mind two different but distinct thoughts. One is visual and totally imaginable while the other is auditory and music to ears.

The first thought that evoked in my mind is that of Sir Edmund Hillary standing on top of Mount Everest. I imagine myself standing in his place and looking down on the world below me. How does one describe such a feeling? The most appropriate description that I can think of to describe 'on top of the world' feeling, is exhilarating fantastic and incredible.

The second thing that strikes my mind is more down-to-earth. It is the voice of Karen Carpenter singing the melodious song, 'Top of the World'. The sheer fluidity and grace of her singing and the lovely tune of the song invokes a wonderful feeling in me. I can imagine how it feels to be in love and having that ecstatic 'on top of the world' feeling, so to speak.

I suppose that everyone of us, at one time or another, must have felt this on the top of the world feeling when we did succeed in doing or getting something that we so desire. I do remember many of such moments very well, because they were the high points of my life.

It was the time when I learned to ride a bicycle. Though I knocked into the cherry tree, the feeling of euphoria that went with the fact that I actually managed to stay on the moving bicycle unaided, is something I still remember vividly. I was about five or six at that time. That was many years ago but if I just close my eyes and imagine, I can picture it happening all over again.

When I think about it, most of my on top of the world feelings came immediately when I learned to do something new, not so much when I received something. Learning to roller-skate, for example, was, to my mind, one of the great moments of my life. To be able to glide along the cemented ground without skinning my knees and bruising my bum was and is still a fantastic feeling.

I am one of those fortunate people gifted with a keen ear for music. Together with deft fingers and a hand-me-down guitar, I was able to learn to play the guitar well enough to perform with a pop band. The feeling that I get everytime, I learn to play a new tune is something quite beyond description.

When one can make one's own music to listen to, the intensity of the feeling gets doubled. How do you think it would feel like when one plays in front of an appreciating audience? Well, that is the ultimate top of the world feeling. It is quite intoxicating. Yet, I would repeat APJ Abdul Kalam's words :

"Climbing to the top demands strength, whether it is to the top of Mount Everest or to the top of your career."

As I have said earlier, the on top of the world feeling can also come when one receives something that one desires, for example, passing exams, receiving presents and being rewarded. However, the feeling of receiving something cannot beat the feeling of being able to do something.

To receive something is a temporary feeling. However, to be able to do something constructive is a more permanent feeling. If cultivated with care, this wonderful feeling can remain with one for lifelong. Like for some it could be their first salary, earned after their hard work.

For me, I feel good every time I play my guitar. The euphoria always returns. What a joy it is to listen to the melodic sounds of the plucked strings, knowing fully well that I am the one making the music. On top of the world is the feeling that Narendra Modi must have felt after his huge victory. It is the feeling Mukesh Ambani must have felt on being listed in forbes list of billionaires. It is the same exulted feeling Sushmita Sen must have felt after winning the crown of Miss Universe.

In a nutshell, I would say that this on top of the world feeling is one that can be experienced by anyone. The only requirement is that a person does the things he loves to do, and that he does it with full awareness, without prejudice or preconception. Only then, his actions will give him such satisfaction that he feels that he is on the, 'top of the world.'

VOCAB HELP

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|-----------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| ♦ auditory | – relating to the sense of hearing | ♦ deft | – skilful, expert |
| ♦ exhilarating | – exciting, thrilling | ♦ intoxicating | – exciting, thrilling |
| ♦ incredible | – amazing, great, wonderful | ♦ plucked | – of a stringed instrument; sounded with the fingers or a plectrum |
| ♦ fluidity | – smooth and flowing; graceful | ♦ forbes | – American publisher and businessman who founded and edited (1916-1954) Forbes magazine |
| ♦ invokes | – bring up, arouse, raise | ♦ exulted | – feel extreme happiness or elation |
| ♦ ecstatic | – enthusiastic, joyous | ♦ nutshell | – in a few words; concisely |
| ♦ euphoria | – a feeling of great happiness or well-being | ♦ prejudice | – discrimination, injustice |
| ♦ vividly | – presented in clear and striking manner | ♦ preconception | – an opinion formed beforehand without adequate evidence |
| ♦ bruising | – to injure the underlying soft tissue or bone of (part of the body) without breaking the skin, as by a blow | | |

Road Accidents

An Avoidable Issue

Road accident is a global tragedy with the ever-rising trend. Almost every day, we come across the news of some accident on the television, radio and internet. Most people continue to neglect and ignore the dangers involved in their reckless driving and so, these accidents happen.

To begin with, carelessness is one of the major causes of the road accidents all over the world. Using the mobile phone while driving, breaking the traffic rules and entering from the wrong side driving are some examples of carelessness. Furthermore, inexperienced and untrained drivers and those with poor eyesight who drive at night are one of the major causes of escalating accident rate. In addition, most of the people drive after drinking alcohol, which may lead to dangerous road accident. The provision of highways is resulting in convenience for the people. However, the main problem which is faced by the government of any country is the more frequent road accidents which are happening on the highways which results in severe damage in form of man power or infrastructure. The main reason behind the accidents which occur so frequently on the roads is the inattention which is given during driving a vehicle. There would probably be lesser amount of accidents if proper attention is paid and rules are followed during driving. There could also be weather conditions such as the fog which hinders visibility and result in accidents.

Road Accident is collision between vehicles (for example car, truck, motorcycle etc.) or it can be with any pedestrian, animal or the hindrance placed in the middle of the road. The accident occurred could result in many injuries or damage to the property. There are various factors which come into account which can be the reason of accident such as the design of the road, driver's impairment and vehicle design which can cause serious and most dangerous types of accidents.

There are four factors which are responsible for these types of road accidents. The failure of some equipment inside the vehicle resulting into serious accident is known as Accident due to Equipment Failure. These could be of various types such as failing of break, bursting of tyre, tread separations or the problem could occur in steering or suspension.

The accidents which occur due to the irregular design of roads are known as accidents due to Roadway Design. It could occur through hazardous visibility which consists of merging lanes, livestock or pedestrian crossings, crests and troughs etc. The accident also occurs due to the irregular surface of the roads which causes imbalance of the vehicle and results into collision with another vehicle or object.

Poor roadway maintenance also contributes to some of the road accidents. There could be debris in the way of the road which could create problems for the driver and is the responsibility of local highway department, faded road signs and potholes could be another cause for the major road accidents.

The first and foremost cause is driver's behaviour other than the three causes discussed above which constitutes only 5% of the causes of the road accidents and 95% depends on this one.

The accidents are taking place at an alarming rate and so there is a need for taking protective measures by the government to enhance the education related to the safety adoption during driving to avoid the risk of accident. There are various policies which have been introduced by the government to reduce the number of accidents in the country. Various systems introduced abroad to control the accidents which takes place on the highway are like introduction of fine system, black points and installation of application like radars.

There should be formation of different associations which could take part in making the rules of road safety implemented in every part of the country and help the government in reducing the rate of accidents. Sharp division speed breakers which are situated on the highways could be placed with the forewarning boards and properly colored which could be seen from a distance.

There should be jurisdictional restriction on speed on different types of vehicles. There should be some technical equipment to put a check on speed.

Adequate measures should be taken by individual like proper wearing of seatbelts, time to time service of the vehicle to avoid any risk during long run. The driver should be educated enough to identify the roadside signboards to minimise risk of accident. The road safety rules should be followed strictly both by the people and the government agencies. This year 31 August was observed as road safety day in India.

Furthermore, passengers should also be vigilant enough to check drivers when they are over speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol. Police can play the pivotal role to decrease the ratio of the accidents. To sum up, there are many causes of the road accidents in our world, with good strategies and with the participation of the both government and individual; we can easily overcome with this potential problem.

VOCAB HELP

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|-------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| ♦ blur | – something vague, hazy, or indistinct | ♦ merging | – the act of joining together as one |
| ♦ escalating | – to increase, enlarge, or intensify | ♦ livestock | – domestic animals, such as cattle or horses, raised for home use or for profit, especially on a farm |
| ♦ provision | – something that is supplied or provided | ♦ crests | – a slight upward curve to the centre of the surface of a road |
| ♦ manpower | – the power of human physical strength | ♦ troughs | – a narrow channel, gutter, or gully |
| ♦ infrastructure | – the basic structure or features of a system or organization | ♦ collision | – crash, hit, accident |
| ♦ hinders | – to obstruct or delay the progress of, block | ♦ debris | – the scattered remains of something broken or destroyed; rubble or wreckage |
| ♦ impairment | – the condition of being unable to perform as a consequence of physical or mental unfitness | ♦ potholes | – a hole or pit, especially one in a road surface |
| ♦ tread | – the outer part of a tire or wheel that makes contact with the road, esp the grooved surface of a pneumatic tire | ♦ forewarning | – to warn in advance |
| ♦ suspension | – a system of springs, shock absorbers, etc, that supports the body of a wheeled or tracked vehicle and insulates it and its occupants from shocks transmitted by the wheels | ♦ cops | – a police officer |
| | | ♦ intersections | – a junction where one street or road crosses another |
| | | ♦ pivotal | – of crucial importance |

✧ Are Borrowing and Lending, Both Unwise?

Lending and borrowing has been taking place since the time immemorial. Earlier it was called Barter System wherein people exchanged goods in return of the equivalent amount of goods. People borrowed and returned implements, animals, foodstuff etc., from their friends, neighbours and relations. When money came into being, people borrowed that too and returned. It was all on the basis of mutual help. As time progressed, professional moneylenders appeared on the scene and they demanded a 'fee' for the use of their money. So, the situation started changing. Elders would preach : never forget to repay a debt, but if you ever lent anything to anyone prepare not to be repaid.

According to the Bible, "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." This was exactly what was happening in the older times. Farmers would go to moneylenders to fulfil the necessary demands of their lands. Moneylenders, in return would charge huge interest from these borrowers, exploiting their necessity and ignorance.

Unfortunately, if the farmer was unable to repay the amount and the interest borrowed, then the slavery would inevitably fall on all the coming generations of the farmer. This was a common scenario in some parts of India and is still prevalent in some remote parts of the country. Son would have to pay for the money his father borrowed, even after the latter's death.

During our childhood days, borrowing and lending of items meant sharing which was considered a part of moral values. It was healthy and deepened the relationship between the two, as the items constituted low value. Yet, refraining from borrowing and lending 'money' was preached.

In today's modern time, borrowing and lending is substituted with the term 'loan system'. Borrowing is an attractively easy solution and this is what the moneylender would recommend for all situations, for it is the most profitable one from their point of view.

So, today people could buy literally anything, from a mobile phone to a big house; whether they can afford it or not, whether they really need it or not. It is now global, so the suffering is universal. If the borrower is unable to repay the loan and interest, the interest would keep on mounting and the moneylender eventually confiscate the collateral. As such, if one engages in such spending using borrowed money, he is seeking his own doom.

The loan system renders only few benefits that too only to a few. It has only increased the problems of the wage earner of the family, burdening him with the undue demands of each member of the family.

This has lead to stress and tensions. Infact, in many developed countries the laws encourage borrowing and discourage savings as their economy gets most benefitted that way. No wonder, developed countries like America and some of the European countries are facing economic slowdown or bankruptcy.

To avoid all these problems associated with borrowing and lending, the best thing one can do is neither borrow nor lend. When Shakespeare wrote :

“Neither a borrower nor a lender be’ for loan oft losses both itself and friend”.

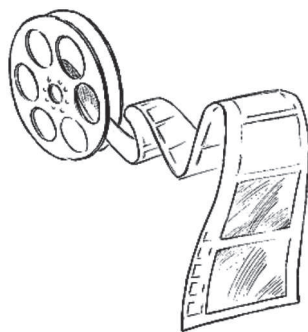
He was probably very much aware of the folly of being a party in this not too pleasant transaction. Life is definitely more pleasant without being a borrower or lender.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **immemorial** – age-old, ancient
- ♦ **implements** – a tool or instrument used in doing work
- ♦ **grimmer** – unpleasant, harsh, depressing, gloomy
- ♦ **debt** – an obligation or liability to pay or render something to someone else
- ♦ **ruleth** – rule
- ♦ **inevitably** – unavoidably, naturally, necessarily, surely, certainly, as a result, automatically
- ♦ **latter** – the second of two or the second mentioned of two
- ♦ **refraining** – restricting, confining, constraining, limiting
- ♦ **confiscate** – to seize by or as if by authority
- ♦ **collateral** – a security pledged for the repayment of a loan
- ♦ **doom** – destruction, ruin, downfall
- ♦ **bankruptcy** – financially ruined; impoverished
- ♦ **folly** – stupidity, foolishness

The Role of Indian Cinema

Cinema is in today’s world the most popular means of entertainment. Millions of people watch cinema everyday all over the world—not only as a means of entertainment, but also as an escape from the monotony, boredom, anxiety and troubles of life. It is a restful, pleasurable and entertaining way of rewinding and relaxing after a long day’s work. All the senses are captivated while viewing cinema and the next two and a half or three hours are spent in a wink. Moreover, every class and section of society can afford this form of entertainment at their will and convenience.



Indian cinema has a charm, flavour and magic of its own. It appeals not only to the film-crazy Indian public but also enchants a large number of audiences the world over. People who do not speak or understand Hindi still sing songs from Hindi films. An average Indian film is longer than films from other parts of the world, has a ginger-touch of love, hate, revenge, drama, tears, joys and also its own share of songs and dances. A typical Indian film has it all—all the spice and variety of life condensed into it, transporting the audience on a magic carpet to a totally different world where everything and anything is possible. Infact, Salman Rushdie has quoted :

“I have been a film buff all my life and believe that the finest cinema is fully the equal of the best novels.”

Down the years, cinema in India has reached its own destination, created its own history, touched its own milestones. From stereotyped love stories to action, to drama, to realistic, to fictional—the silver screen in its every aspect has mesmerised, captured and tantalised millions of every age, class, sex and community. The journey from silent films to talking pictures, from black and white to coloured has been long.

It has catered to the dreams and aspirations of many who have hungered for glamour and reached ‘Mumbai’ and it still does.

There have been two streams of cinema in India—one is the Commercial Cinema which has the sole aim of entertaining and making money in return. The second stream is the Parallel Cinema or the Art Cinema which aims at sensitising people on various social issues and problems of the society. While Commercial Cinema appeals to all sections of the society, Parallel Cinema appeals mainly to the intellectual class and the intelligentsia of the society. But a change has taken place over the last decade and a half. A general awareness among people has increased and Art Cinema is being more and more appreciated by a large number of people. Many a times, an art film does much better at the box-office than a mainstream commercial film. This has resulted in the thinning of the differentiating line between Art and Commercial Cinema.

Cinema has an educative value too. Because it exercises a deep influence upon the minds of the people; cinema can be used as a very effective reformative instrument. Statutory warnings are included to spread the awareness about the adversity of smoking has compelled many to quit the habit. Social awareness can be generated on issues like dowry, women education, abortion, girl foeticide, youth unrest, corruption, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy etc. Films like No One Killed Jessica, My Name Is Khan, The Attacks of 26/11 are some movies which have dealt with current sensitive issues. Cinema can expose the evils prevalent in society. It is the most effective means of mass communication. Cinema also is a great unifying force in a diversified country like ours. People belonging to all communities and sections, speaking any language, watch the cinema with the same fascination and excitement. Moreover, people can go to places with cinema. We travel from Ooty to Shimla to Switzerland to Washington to Sydney. It also encourages the art of music, singing, dancing, script-writing, direction etc. It employs a large number of people from technicians to producers to spot boys to dress makers. Thousands of people earn their livelihood through cinema. Shahrukh Khan has aptly put the significance of cinema by saying :

“Cinema in India is like brushing your teeth in the morning. You can’t escape it.”

The silver screen spreads and sells not just dreams but captivates the hearts of young boys and girls. If this medium is not used judiciously and wisely, it can distract the youth from the right direction. Thus, the film makers should undertake film making as a social responsibility and through films should give youth a sense of direction. The trend of making films on famous novels and plays should be encouraged to spread good literature and its appreciation among common man. Sensible and relevant themes should be picked to make films. Films need not be didactic, but they still can pass on constructive messages subtly to the masses. Hence, if used with pure sensibility, cinema can help in bringing positive changes in the society and the attitudes of the people.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| ♦ monotony | – boredom, dullness, tiresomeness | ♦ sensitising | – cause (someone or something) to respond to certain stimuli, make sensitive |
| ♦ captivated | – strongly attracted | ♦ intelligentsia | – an educated and intellectual elite |
| ♦ enchants | – to attract and delight | ♦ statutory | – prescribed or authorised by or punishable under law |
| ♦ condensed | – compressed, summarised | ♦ adversity | – hardship, trouble, distress, suffering |
| ♦ buff | – a person who is very interested in a particular subject | | |
| ♦ mesmerised | – fascinated, hypnotised | | |

The World of Advertisements

We come across different types of advertisements in our day-to-day life. They have invaded every aspect of our day-to-day dealings, our conversations, our thoughts and to a certain extent even control our behaviour as customers and consumers of goods, and services. Advertisements stare and scream at us from every corner of the street every newspaper, every magazine, every hoarding, every stall or shop or showroom to walls of every public building, vehicle, radio and television. They don't even spare our computer screens when we all are interested in checking our mails or even simply browsing through. The world has suddenly become advertisement conscious, so much so, that at night the city lights up with thousands of neon glow signs proclaiming, capturing and demanding our attention.

Advertisements have crept even into smaller and insignificant things of our life. Everything from education to career building to buying a soap or a mobile, one has to rely upon advertisements. It seems nothing as if can be obtained without advertisements. They are the ones that tell us which soap to use, which biscuit to eat, which brand to wear, which sun glasses to use, which pens to write with, which toys to play with etc. An effective advertisement can zoom the sale of even a third rate and useless commodity. No business, trade or transaction can flourish without proper advertising and marketing. It is these advertisements that bring products to the notice of general public. Today lakhs of rupees, even crores, are spent in preparing two or three minutes of an advertisement.

Many small things have been made large by right kind of advertising. Infact, newer needs have been generated amongst people. People have started to feel the need for even those goods which they have never heard of before. Advertisements intentionally create demands. The companies pay utmost attention to study the right time to telecast their advertisements so as to target major viewership. Large companies depend heavily on advertisements to make their products known to the consumers. Without these sponsorings, the major sports events cannot be organised with such a fanfare.

The art of advertisement is of course a modern blessing but it has reached and touched all possible heights. It has touched all the aspects of modern complexities and has complicated man's life more. For even a simple pencil, there are too many options which don't provide a child with any solution but rather confuse him all the more. Myriads of products work up man's brain, play havoc with his pocket and assault his peace of mind. It is because of these advertisements that a whole new field of career and businesses have opened up. The branch of marketing solely depends upon this recent art of advertising alongwith other components. Advertisers exercise their imagination, feel the pulse of the people, what touches or tickles them and what captures their mind and then create a whole new tantalising world of fantasy, glamour and fiction to sell off real things. Infact, advertisers and advertisements play and encash upon the psychology of people in order to achieve their ends.

Even cinema has been affected by advertisements. What we call as trailers of movies or publicity of a movie, is nothing but its advertisement to bring audience to the theatre. In this age of tough competition, one cannot survive without popularising one's business, product, institution. It is then that advertisements come to one's aid.

Moreover, these days politicians too rely heavily on advertisements for election campaigning. Some advertisements are enlightening like the ones which caution against the use of tobacco or informing about polio day. Some advertisements are revolutionary in nature like Tata Tea 'Jago Re' advertisements or Idea Cellular advertisements. Some advertisements are misleading, especially in the education sector wherein various institutes guarantee 100% job placement. Such claims proved fake and thus were banned. There are some other advertisements too which gained huge popularity, but did little to boost the sales of the company. The Vodafone's Zoozoos are the perfect examples of this. "A good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself," quotes David Ogilvy.

It is through advertisements that people can popularise their business, talent, product, service or commodity. But for this, advertising is not limited to the television advertisements only. Advertisements in thousands are there in newspapers, magazines, radio, banners, hoardings, on walls, on the internet. All of them are gaining equal viewership. Advertisements are not limited to consumer durable or FMCG products only. Today advertisements are published or telecast for everything like for services: banking, hospitality, matrimonial service, insurance, salon service, for schools and other educational institutes; for vacancies available, for upcoming exhibitions or shows, for every big and small thing. And with a smart phone in every hand, internet seems to be a new rage for advertisers wherein Bill Gates has said :

"The future of advertising is the internet."

Without advertising, the world refuses to acknowledge the presence of a thing in today's context. It would not be wrong to say that hike in sales depend upon the kind or quality of advertisements prepared to promote it.

Lately, it has been seen that some advertisements are gradually crossing over from artistic sensibility and creativity to shabbiness, puerility and sometimes even indecency which hurts a person's artistic sensibility and aesthetic sense. For this reason many advertisements have been banned. For instance, cigarette advertisements are banned on Indian channels. Tobacco and Alcohol advertisements are telecast or printed only with statutory warnings. Other advertisements which were found indecent, unethical or provoking religious sensibilities have been banned from time-to-time. Advertisements should be made with great care as they are seen by all men, women and children alike. Sometimes, children try to imitate what they have seen without realising that they are breaking the code of conduct. Public needs to be vigilant while watching or reading advertisements. Thus, we see that advertisements can be useful as well as can be destructive. If used with sense, advertisements can prove to be entertaining as well as educative. Although, we cannot escape this onslaught of advertisements, we can use our own intelligence to weed out the bad ones.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **proclaiming** – declare formally
- ♦ **fanfare** – an impressive public display
- ♦ **myriads** – constituting a very large, indefinite number; innumerable
- ♦ **assault** – attack, strike
- ♦ **puerility** – childhood, immaturity
- ♦ **aesthetic** – conforming to accepted notions of good taste
- ♦ **unethical** – immoral, wrong, illegal
- ♦ **provoking** – causing annoyance or anger
- ♦ **imitate** – copy, follow
- ♦ **vigilant** – watchful, alert, careful
- ♦ **onslaught** – an overwhelming outpouring

My Favourite Newspaper

The word ‘Newspaper’ sounds a bit obsolete in this era of information technology and electronic media. With its historical importance and important role played, print media was doomed to lose its battle in the face of the fast popularising electronic media and internet due to their speed, graphical illustrations and visual effects.

The entire generation seems to be hypnotised by the more popular and easily accessible visual media. People had thought that newspapers are doomed forever and will soon be listed in the gloriously old and long list of the extinct species. It was thought it is already an endangered one with no added incentive to compete with its big rivals—satellite TV, internet and other channels of mass communication.

Yet, all the doomsday predictions against the print media have fallen apart in due course of time as we see that no matter where technology goes and to what height it reaches, newspapers and other forms of print media are there to stay forever. Nothing can substitute the feel of paper in one’s hands, with the early morning tea and its rustic charm on a common man.

The newspaper I enjoy reading the most is ‘The Times of India’. It seems to be a natural way of bringing India to the world and the world to India. The Times of India is synonymous in being the ‘Masthead of India,’ an opinion-forming instrument for India and Indians. ‘The Times of India’ is not only India’s largest selling English language daily but also the leading English general daily broadsheet in the world.

It attracts a daily circulation level of about 34 lakh copies. Its own history constitutes an authoritative slice of the history of journalism in India. Since its inception in 1838, it has witnessed and reported the making of the phenomenon called modern India. It has been moulded by the experts of English journalism in India, in turn moulding public opinion in India, re-inventing itself along with the times to remain the India’s favourite English newspaper. It fully enjoys the freedom of speech by being unbiased or supportive to anyone/anything. It furnishes only the authentic details.

Newspapers are called the ‘mirrors of the world’ and ‘The Times of India’ is a perfect mirror to display the image of India. ‘The Times of India,’ according to me, is a brilliant piece of reading to any newspaper reader.

But it always was, and is—and ever will be—the one and only, the greatest with a typical Indian flavour to it. I enjoy reading its well-rhymed headlines, which tickle the humorous bone of every individual and also add a tinge of Indian spice even to the most boring and mundane piece of news. Everything sounds like an interesting jingle or a couplet.

I enjoy reading every part of the newspaper right from the headlines to the last page—sports page, finance and business, world and the editorial page.

Moreover, the regular columns by Jug Suraiya, Shobhaa De, Gurcharan Das, Swaminathan Aiyar and Bachi Karkaria are all very interesting. All the columnists colour life with their pen and imagination, blending it with reality very exquisitely. The Sunday Times with its Review, Deep Focus, Mind over Matter, Open Space and Special Report are all very vivid and interesting.

Any person who enjoys reading can spend a few hours with this faithful friend. Not only that but also when I like to keep track of the movies to be telecast on the various channels, the newspaper is of great help. I also enjoy reading the daily horoscope and cracking the crossword puzzle even though I always get stuck after the first few initial lucky strokes.

The nice inputs about lifestyle, fashion, movies etc., too make a good and light reading after going through the boiling news of the political and business world. The newspaper is an excellent information provider and educator for young minds, especially for those who are interested in the field of politics economy and business.

I like reading the editorial every day and also the Speaking Tree. Everyday, there is a lovely and inspiring message that makes for the best kind of a reading to start your day with. 'The Times of India' caters to the intellectual needs of all kinds of people and that brings about the versatile nature of the newspaper. It would not be wrong to say that it possess the power to bring a change in the society and shake the government, be it the Nirbhaya Case, Jessica Lal Case or voicing Anna Hazare.

Even when I go to school, the first thing my friend and I do is to rush to the school library to take a quick look at the newspapers, especially 'The Times of India'. The paper helps me keep myself updated with the latest events happening not only in the country but also around the globe.

It helps in increasing my general knowledge, improving my language, writing and reading skills, vocabulary and also helps me develop my personality. I am able to keep up with the fast moving pace of the world, the changes that take place every now and then and also enrich my spiritual side. I also enjoy going through the columns on astrology, the tit-bits from the Page-3 world and the events in Delhi.

I think that everyone should develop a regular habit of reading newspapers. Just as we need to have a good and nutritious breakfast to be hale and hearty, similarly, we need to take a regular morning dose of intellectual reflections in order to maintain a sound and a healthy mind.

This habit should be cultivated right from childhood by the parents and also should be encouraged in the school through the reading of news daily in the morning assembly, organising regular quiz competitions based on the knowledge of current events, sports, politics and economy. Then only can the habit of reading newspapers be developed and inculcated among children, which once cultivated will continue till the rest of their lives.

The habit of reading newspapers is extremely important in today's world as it gives us every minute detail about our surroundings—everything related to the present, past and also helps us to predict or dream the future. A newspaper helps in developing the intellectual and mental faculties of a person and hence should be read with great interest, zeal and fervour.

One gets all the information about stock market, various political activities, strikes or bandhs and not only this, one gets to know about various options available for one's career, jobs, vacancies, admissions in various institutions, scholarships in the country and even abroad, various walk-in interviews for jobs and further studies. 'The Times of India' provides every bit of such news and is therefore my favourite newspaper.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **obsolete** – outdated, old-fashioned
- ♦ **doomed** – marked by or promising bad fortune
- ♦ **incentive** – encouragement, motivation
- ♦ **doomsday** – an unpleasant or disastrous destiny, the day of the last judgement
- ♦ **rustic** – simple, basic
- ♦ **broadsheet** – an advertisement (usually printed on a page or in a leaflet) intended for wide distribution
- ♦ **inception** – beginning; commencement
- ♦ **tinge** – a slight but appreciable amount
- ♦ **mundane** – everyday, routine, unremarkable
- ♦ **jingle** – a piece of light singsong verse or rhyme
- ♦ **couplet** – a stanza consisting of two successive lines of verse; usually rhymed
- ♦ **exquisitely** – in a delicate manner
- ♦ **versatile** – having varied uses or serving many functions
- ♦ **hale** – healthy and robust
- ♦ **inculcated** – to instil by forceful or insistent repetition

My First Flying Experience

Paragliding

Surprises render more pleasure, especially when it is totally out of one's expectation. It becomes even more memorable if it happens to be the one elating you from the ground and literally putting you in the sky. I was actually on cloud 9 last week, as I happened to experience my first flying experience; my first ever paragliding experience. It was one its type, the ultimate, unmatched, an elating one.

Last week, I went for a vacation with my family and some friends to Bhimtal, Uttarakhand. It is a very quiet and peaceful place with natural beauty all around. It is a perfect place away from the loud, busy chores of the city life.

Not many travellers visit here, so in that respect, it is less crowded too. On reaching the destination, we spent our first day resting in the luxurious resort and just enjoying the nearby market. Then, suddenly a local informed us that we can try paragliding too. That was the turning point for all of us and our joy had no limit. We got really excited to try the adventure of flying.

The next morning we all got ready early to be prepared for paragliding. As we neared the camp, we were able to see people enjoying their first flight, shouting, laughing, clicking pictures and so on. Our excitement had no limit. It was not less than a movie scene. As we reached the spot, the mountains looked even more beautiful from the height and clouds seemed to be very near. The instructor told us about the mechanism behind paragliding and also explained us the rules. We saw that the pilot sits in the harness suspended below a hollow fabric wing whose shape is formed by its suspension lines.

The pressure of the air enters in the front of the wing and the forces of the air flowing from the outside. Without using any engine, paragliders can flight for good amount time, covering some tens of kilometres.

After a long wait, my turn came. I was super excited to fly like a bird. Several ropes were tied to me, yet somehow it felt light. The security quotient was boggling my mind, but soon it just went away. The pilot was sitting at my back, guiding me the way. After a short lapse of running on the mountains, the ground disappeared beneath my feet. In a spin of some seconds, I was flying in the air.

I was above the clouds and it felt as if I was weightless, moving freely in the direction of the wind. Before taking off, I had butterflies in my tummy, but now after my pilot's assurance, I was confident and was just enjoying every moment of it. After a span of 2-3 minutes, my pilot prepared the landing. Again, in a spin of seconds I was back to the ground. I was filled with immense pleasure, contentment and satisfaction.

After my landing, I was relating my experience to that of Neil Armstrong's experience of landing on moon. The experience surpassed all, it was beyond description. It proved to be more than a recreational sport. All of us were so delighted to have tried it. For me, I had never felt like that before, I actually felt like a superhuman. It also made me realise the power, intelligence, capability of human mind, having created such a brilliant thing.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **paragliding** – the sport of cross-country gliding using a specially designed parachute shaped like flexible wings
- ♦ **elating** – making lively and joyful
- ♦ **chores** – a small routine task, esp a domestic one
- ♦ **harness** – something resembling such gear or tackle, as the arrangement of straps used to hold a parachute to the body
- ♦ **suspension** – a device or structure, usually a wire or spring, that serves to suspend or support something
- ♦ **boggling** – alarming, confusing
- ♦ **immense** – vast, great, large
- ♦ **contentment** – happiness with one's situation in life
- ♦ **surpassed** – out shadow, out do
- ♦ **recreational** – engaged in as a pastime

Role of Media

Media is known as the fourth pillar of democracy due to its important role in shaping public opinion. Today, in this ultra modern world, the role of media has been augmenting day by day. It has been surviving as a vigilant watch dog of India. Print Media has created an awareness among the people regarding their rights and duties. We can update ourselves just by going through the morning newspaper, getting each and every kind of news from every nook and corner of the world. Catering to all this, today mass media is well-established, wherein it is remarkable to see the All India Radio (AIR) now reaches 90% of the population, TV more than 80% and over 5,600 newspapers, 150 of these publications are published daily in over 100 languages.

There has been a worldwide growth of the Print Media even after the emergence of the electronic media. Moreover, there has been an increase in the circulation of newspapers around the world even after the emergence of electronic media and the internet. The newspapers play a very important role in the working of any

democracy. Our Constitution too grants us the Right to Freedom of Expression which is manifested, in free press in our country. In a democracy, newspapers are the best way of educating people politically and socially. They play a decisive role not only in updating the public but also in formulating a well-balanced public opinion. The public read about the current events, interpret them and learn to intelligently participate in the political, social and economic affairs of the country.

Newspapers also reflect public opinion, thus formed through letters to the Editor which are usually published in a separate column. Moreover, Print Media provides great incentive to business by large number of advertisements on a variety of things such as a house on sale, shops, electronic goods, stationary, cloth stores, glass ware, crockery shops etc. Matrimonial advertisements, job-opportunities, obituaries are all advertised through the Print Media.

Now-a-days, another very popular means of social interaction and propagation that has emerged along with the Print Media is the rise of Electronic Media. The birth of electronic media took place with the invention of radio, it further got spread through television, then through the laptops, computers *via* internet and now in every hand in the form of mobile phones. Electronic Media has a very emphatic and motivating effect on the society today. The various news channels keep the vigilant citizens updated. Channels like Discovery and National Geographic keep the inquisitive mind busy and satisfy every intellectual query of a probing mind. Alongwith these, there are endless number of entertainment channels solely to amuse and tickle the audience. Now, quite a number of kids' channels have come up to cater to this special section of the society. Television can help popularise technology and internationalise and universalise our outlook.

These days, the internet too is gaining a huge momentum, in terms of its role in media. This is because traditional 'silent citizens' for traditional media like newspaper often 'speak out' through the internet platform to let a society hear their voices. This has in turn increased the society's level of democratic awareness wherein people of all age groups and sections formulate their opinion on the social networking sites. It is also because internet can be used by anybody, anywhere, at anytime easily to express themselves economically. Infact, these days there are many independent websites established which hope to monitor parliament activities and other crucial operations of society. The only major drawback internet is facing is that its spread is limited.

Yet, there is other side to media too, wherein it tries to cater to the transient needs of life and to appeal to the emotions of masses instead of maintaining an intellectual level. They even lower the moral tone and publish sub-standard materials to increase their readership.

Many a times, newspapers try to ally themselves to particular ideology or a party instead of maintaining impartiality and indulge in mudslinging or even communal propaganda. These thoughtless means for easy money provides temporary financial benefits to a handful of people but prove to be extremely disastrous in the end for society at large.

People involved in this profession should realise the massive responsibility they shoulder and sacredness of the duty that they perform. They should avoid personal bias and prejudice to cloud their good sense. Instead, they should try to combat social

evils, communal forces and also keep the government on its toes, committed to its promises. It should try to make people politically conscious and keep patriotism and national pride alive in the people.

In today's world media has become as necessary as food and clothing. In the earlier times, it united people for freedom struggle, today it is uniting people against social evils. It has always been a crucial part, a 'mirror' of society in every age, however it only differs in its approach, means and spread, from time to time. It has immense power which needs to be carefully harnessed. Moreover, it has also been seen that media is reduced to a commercialised sector, eying the news which are hot and good at selling. The goal is merely to gain the television rating points.

I believe, if the media identifies its responsibility and work sincerely and honestly, then it can serve as a great force in building the nation.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **augmenting** – increasing, growing, raising
- ♦ **manifested** – expressed, established
- ♦ **decisive** – crucial, significant, critical
- ♦ **formulating** – expressing, developing
- ♦ **obituaries** – a published notice of a death, sometimes with a brief biography of the deceased
- ♦ **propagation** – spreading, spread, promotion, communication, distribution
- ♦ **emphatic** – forceful and positive; definite; direct
- ♦ **inquisitive** – curious, questioning, inquiring
- ♦ **probing** – searching
- ♦ **amuse** – entertain, please, delight
- ♦ **transient** – short-term, temporary
- ♦ **ally** – associate, connect
- ♦ **mudslinging** – efforts to discredit one's opponent by malicious or scandalous attacks
- ♦ **propaganda** – information, advertising, promotion

Old Times *v/s* The Modern

There is a famous saying : “Old is gold”. It’s modern adaptation says “Old is Gold but New is Diamond.” Such is the very uniqueness of the two times too : The Old Times and The Modern Times. They both have their own distinctive values. Irrespective of its peculiarity, the times have always been the reflection of human kind. Both the old and the modern times have their charms, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. But to prove which one is better is an endless debate. Both have some or the other epitome excellence and both have, in some way degraded the mankind.

The old age does not refer to the stone age or the ancient age; it primarily refers to the age before the technological and scientific advancement. The age in which our grandparents were born and lived. The age which is particularly known for its rich traditions and values. But lack of education lead to diseases, ignorance and superstitions. Lack of advanced medical facilities led to shorter lifespan, wherein people would die pitifully merely due to spread of infection. Means of transport were rare or were limited to the elite only. Far-off, international journey was as far as one aeroplane itself. Means of communication were in equally terrible state wherein exchanging a message was a herculean task.

Inspite of this, old times were the times when people cared less for materialistic goals. Instead they gave utmost importance to their health and well-being. They would eat fresh, work upright and so would sleep tight. They did not have much

technology to ease their work load. Yet, they had time to sit with people as a community. There were very few opportunities yet they enjoyed peace of mind.

Their lives were stress free. The chronic diseases like HIV/AIDs, cancer, tuberculosis were unheard of. They enjoyed their existence alongwith nature, with utmost zeal. “We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths,” said Walt Disney. Indeed, the advancement in the means of transportation and communication lead mankind to newer paths. Modern lifestyle has come across with new technologies and has broaden the horizon of one’s knowledge. The development of technology has made it easier for people to communicate, to travel, to work and so on. The computers, laptops and mobile phones have completely changed our lives. Education has developed, more so with the use of internet. Medical advancement is at its peak and still surprises us daily with further improvements.

Modern times has a darker side too. Due to modern lifestyle, the culture and tradition is fading off. Innovation has increased the hunger to quest for even more. It has in turn led to more competition and less peace of mind. People are more dependent on fast food which is taking their health down the drain. Technology has reduced the interaction time with family members, alienating human beings. Gadgets have made us lazy. Status and snobbery have evolved because of growing affluence. There are endless number of risks involved, yet people take those things, infact they take life for granted. Another major problem is all kinds of environmental damages like air pollution, water pollution and noise pollution. As a whole, life in the old days was simpler. One did not have so many problems that we face today. Their lives were not cluttered with so many consumer goods that we find today in supermarkets and shoppingmalls. Their lives were not any better or worse, only that it was different. They had so little gadgets such as TV, so they did not become square-eyed. They did not have cars nor pollution. We have so many gadgets but at the same time so many accompanying bills as well.

Like every coin has two sides, both the old and modern times too have its advantages and disadvantages. The way both the sides of coin are inseparable, incomparable and of equal importance, same is the case with the times. Both the times have their uniqueness, their share of advancements and setbacks. Yet it can’t be denied that in a country like India, old times and modern times co-exist. Or in Anita Desai’s words :

“India is a curious place that still preserves the past, religions and its history. No matter how modern India becomes, it is still very much an old country.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **peculiarity** – strange, unusual, something that is a feature of only one particular thing
- ♦ **adaptation** – modification, adoption, alteration
- ♦ **epitome** – the best possible example of something, embodiment
- ♦ **pitifully** – in a pitiable manner, which can induce pity
- ♦ **herculean task** – needing great strength or determination, backbreaking task, laborious task
- ♦ **chronic** – continuing for a long time, recurring frequently
- ♦ **quest** – long search for something that is difficult to find, search
- ♦ **snobbery** – arrogance, behaviour which shows that you think you are better than other, pretensions
- ♦ **alienate** – to do something that makes someone unfriendly



My Hobby

A hobby gives us pleasure for we do it for the love of the work and not under compulsion to earn. Thus, it is more fulfilling and gives us more satisfaction and joy. My favourite hobby is reading. It is said ‘reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body’. I truly believe in the fact and that over the years, I feel books have become my friend. They cater to every mood of mine and have all my answers.

With the popularity of computers and video games in recent times, habit of reading has taken a backseat. People are so occupied in watching movies, television and addicted to computer games that they find little or no time for reading. However, those who have developed reading as a hobby are aware of the countless advantages associated with it.

My habit of reading started at an early age, when my mother or my grandmother would narrate me a story at bedtime. They would narrate me moral and other fairy stories. I would become very involved in these stories by asking different questions. I used to try to picturise the stories by adding my own elaborative version to it. As I grew, my eagerness and curiosity was only increasing, making me realise that there are many more towns to be built, many more scenes that needs a new shape of my imagination. That is how I fuelled this passion for reading even more.

In my readings, I have been a king who has won nations, I have been an angel helping the needy, I have wandered places in search of the treasure, and I have also shed tears being a forgotten beloved. Through my readings, I have travelled the farthest of the universe and have met zillions of aliens. Additionally, once I start to read the novel, I can’t stop reading it because it makes me wonder and want to know what would be the ending of it. When I read, I can exactly relate the author’s feelings, experience and his intention in delivering the message. I genuinely believe in Walt Disney when he says :

*“There is more treasure in books than in all
the pirate’s loot on treasure island”.*

I like reading books. But my reading is not limited to any particular genre. I like reading everything like Shakespeare, John Milton, Jane Austen, Mythological books, Rabindranath Tagore, and contemporary genre too like that of Chetan Bhagat, Paulo Coelho, Arundhati Roy etc. For that matter, I also like reading newspaper and magazines. “If a book is well written, I always find it too short”, exclaimed Jane Austen and such is the case with me.

Reading has endless number of advantages. By reading a good book, one cannot only earn knowledge but also gain experience in life, and realise the eternal truth. Reading broadens the horizon of thinking of a person, improves vocabulary and cultivates sensitivity towards people of different cultures. A good book can guide one in the right direction in his journey of life. In fact, it has been proved that the mind of a reader is more concentrated and focussed about various aspects of life.

When the mind is focussed, it has the capability to be more attentive in practical situations of life. As a result, the body and mind of such people remain calm; they look at the problem objectively and are better decision makers.

Additionally, reading improves memory as when one reads a book, he/she has to remember an assortment of characters, their backgrounds, ambitions, history, and

nuances, as well as the various arcs and sub-plots. Reading, according to me is one habit that is without any drawbacks. In my opinion, everyone should cultivate the habit of reading, be it reading just anything.

And no movie can match up the charm of reading. All the characters looked better and justified in the book rather than in the movie based on it. I also believe that after reading so much I have a lot to narrate to the world. Well, who knows this hobby turned into passion can turn me into a writer someday, or may inspire me to open my own library someday.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **eagerness** – yearning, longing
- ♦ **fuelled** – something that sustains or encourages
- ♦ **zillions** – an extremely large but unspecified number, quantity, or amount
- ♦ **pirate** – a person who robs or commits illegal violence at sea or on the shores of the sea
- ♦ **genre** – a kind of literary or artistic work
- ♦ **eternal** – permanent, everlasting
- ♦ **horizon** – scope, perspective
- ♦ **cultivate** – develop, establish
- ♦ **assortment** – variety, choice, collection, selection, mixture
- ♦ **arcs** – a part of a story line



My Favourite Author—*Chetan Bhagat*

One doesn't need to be an outstanding English literate genius to be a writer; this statement is well proven by a modern day writer, Chetan Bhagat. Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular authors in the fiction category. Known as a novelist, columnist, script writer, motivational speaker, and a youth icon, Bhagat's work has seen tremendous popularity and success among Indian audiences. The strong contemporary topics of his novels have been transformed into movies too. In 2008, The New York Times called Bhagat "the biggest selling English language novelist in India's history".

Bhagat, was born on 22 April, 1974 in Delhi. After completing his schooling, he got graduated from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and did his masters from IIM Ahmedabad. After working for eleven years in Hong Kong as an investment banker, he returned to Mumbai and began fulltime writing. He had started his novel about life on the campus of an IIT while at work only. After much struggle his first novel 'Five Point Someone' came in 2004 and this very first project led to immense rise in his fame. This book continues to be the most landmark book in his literary career, being the highest selling book of India till date. The book also won the Society Young Achiever's Award and Publisher's Recognition Award.

Bhagat had started with comedy based novel writing in simple English. The author Samit Basu puts, "Chetan has shown how wrong Indian publishers are when they explain away their failures to sell Indian fiction to large numbers of Indians by saying there are no readers.....Chetan's managed to tell them they exist." His easy style of writing and the issues linking to everyday problems was well received by readers, particularly the youth. What is clearly evident from Bhagat's first two books –five Point Someone and One Night at the Call Center is that Bhagat constructs his narratives around the lives of urbanised youngsters: the pressures to get into a top school, earn high grades, get a good job and find the right partner. In other words, much of his popularity can be attributed to his being able to have created a connection with Indian youth. Bhagat has written 7 books so far: Five Point Someone, One Night

At the Call Center, The Three Mistakes of My Life, Two States, Revolution 2020, What Young India Wants and the latest being Half Girlfriend. Apart from writing novels, Bhagat also writes for the columns of The Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar among others. These columns have a focus on youth and national development issues. Chetan's columns are written in a way that directly points out the issues within our country and in many times it has even triggered discussions in the parliament. He is not only a good writer but also a motivational speaker and has given many motivational speeches at various occasions at various institutes. He has addressed issues like corruption by sending a letter to Sonia Gandhi and also has spoken about the political issues that revolved around Baba Ramdev.

Bhagat's fame cannot be applauded for his writing only. Clearly, his success has been but a carefully calculated work, targeted to capture the mind-share of people from all across India. To cater to the mass market, the publisher had carefully played around with the price point. All of Bhagat's novels have been priced at affordable prices, which make it possible for everybody especially students to buy and read. His other marketing strategies include the media buzz, he has his own website, his first books contains teasers of the upcoming books, he initiated the concept of selling signed copies at a premium price, and sensibly campaigns his book launches by inviting eminent personalities. Bhagat is often credited with revolutionizing the commercial fiction industry in India. Typical Indian 'bestseller' sold between 3,000 and 5,000 copies. But Bhagat's novels, with sales of a staggering million copies a year, sparked off a trend itself.

Chetan Bhagat, irrespective of public opinion, continues to be a boon for the publishing industry for India has never been swept to read like this before; the sales have never been so amazing. His work struck a chord with young India, the India that never read Indian writing in fiction. Evidently, some of the readers who start with Bhagat's fiction migrate to literary novels with time. New authors following his footsteps are only benefitting out of it, and same holds true for the old authors who could capitalise on the widening market. Even to this day, almost ten years since his first book appeared in the market, his book occupies prime space in all the bookstalls of even the smallest railway stations.

People know that his work is nowhere close to the literary works of Shakespeare; instead he writes that appeals to the mass population. Critics argue that his novels lack substance, yet he ignores them citing he writes stories that people can relate to, and so goes on to come up with something new everytime. As a scriptwriter he has himself written the story of his books into movies which has proved to be the blockbuster hits. In 2010, Time magazine named him as 'One of the 100 Most Influential People in the World'. He has renewed the definition of a talented IIT engineers who were thought to be the bookworms, lacking fun in life. Instead his educational background has boosted his portfolio. Many engineers themselves have turned to writing just like him.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **contemporary** – modern, present-day
- ♦ **urbanised** – developed, sophisticated
- ♦ **triggered** – activated, started
- ♦ **applauded** – celebrated, admired
- ♦ **buzz** – excitement, high
- ♦ **teaser** – riddle, mystery
- ♦ **staggering** – outstanding, amazing
- ♦ **sparked-off** – ignite

H. Environment, Ecology & Climate

Biodiversity : *The Variety in Nature*

If we look around us, we can see variety in everything. We don't wear the same clothes everyday. We can choose from a variety of cuisines available in a restaurant. We see a wide range of smart phones in the market. Similarly, variety exists in nature too. Biodiversity means 'the variety of life on Earth'. It is the variability of all living organisms—including animal and plant species—the genes of all living organisms, and the terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems of which they are part of. Thus, in essence, biodiversity represents all life.



Biodiversity also includes the structure of the ecosystem and habitats that support essential living resources, including wildlife, fisheries and forests. It composes of ecosystems that maintain oxygen in the air, enrich the soil, purify the water, protect against flood and regulate climate.

Biodiversity in terrestrial areas, known as terrestrial biodiversity, is the highest near the equator due to warm climate and high primary productivity. Marine biodiversity is the highest along coasts as the sea temperature is maximum there.

Diversity of plants and animals yields great benefits to the ecosystem. Diversity of plants results in greater fodder yield, crop production and wood. It also increases the content of organic matter in soil. Diversity of fish increases the output of fisheries. Biodiversity supplies raw materials to the industries namely timber, rubber, oil, dyes etc. Biodiversity boosts leisure activities, such as hiking, bird watching etc. Gardening, fish-keeping, specimen collection, all require biodiversity. It also has an aesthetic and spiritual value.

India contains a great wealth of biological diversity in its forests, its wetlands and in its marine areas. The country is one of the mega biodiversity centres in the world and has two of the world's 18 'biodiversity hotspots', located in the Western Ghats and in the Eastern Himalayas. The total forest and tree cover of the country is estimated at 23.39% of the geographic area, of which forest cover accounts for 21%. India is estimated to have 12.5% of the world's flora and 7.25% of the world's fauna.

To finance new models for high-value forest conservation in India, through participatory approaches and mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation outcomes, the World Bank has approved of financing from the International Development Association (IDA) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund. The project seeks to demonstrate landscape conservation approaches in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat and Askot in Uttarakhand.

Over the last century, a great deal of damage has been done to the biodiversity existing on Earth. Increasing human population, greater consumption levels, and inefficient use of our resources are some of the causes that have led to overexploitation and manipulation of ecosystems. Trade of rhino horn and tiger skin etc has also led to the extinction of species. According to the tiger census report released on 28 March, 2011 by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the tiger population estimated is 1706. Although the population of tiger has increased over the years, tigers face the threat of being killed for their skin.

Consequences of biodiversity loss are disastrous as disturbance to one species gives rise to imbalance in others. Presently, 57 species of animals and species of about 1500 flowering and non-flowering plants are categorised as critically endangered or very rare species.

Society's growing consumption of resources and increasing populations have led to a rapid loss of biodiversity, eroding the capacity of Earth's natural systems to provide essential goods and services on which human communities depend. To enumerate ways of conservation of biodiversity wealth of India it is necessary that we realise the importance of our biological resources for the continued welfare of India's population. Conservation biology as a science emerged in the mid-20th century as ecologists began to address the issues of deterioration of biodiversity. Gene banks have been established that store collections of specimens and genetic material. Biosphere reserves allow endemic species to thrive in their natural habitats. Wildlife corridors can be created to allow 'safe routes' for migratory birds and animals. Judicious use of pesticides in agriculture can allow local populations of organisms to survive.

Thus, conservation is not a far-fetched ideal, but the need of the hour. We can no longer afford to sit back luxuriously in our air conditioned rooms, watching nature's elements getting lost forever. Let's join hands for a greener Earth and a secured tomorrow.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| ♦ terrestrial | – of or pertaining to land as distinct from water | ♦ deterioration | – a gradual decline, as in quality, serviceability, or vigor |
| ♦ aquatic | – of, in, or pertaining to water | ♦ endemic | – natural to or characteristic of a specific people or place, nature |
| ♦ marine | – of or pertaining to the sea | ♦ specimen | – a sample of a substance or material for examination or study |
| ♦ aesthetic | – pertaining to a sense of the beautiful or to the philosophy of aesthetics | | |
| ♦ manipulation | – skillful or artful management | | |
| ♦ endangered | – threatened with a danger | | |

Forests of India

The word 'forest' is derived from the Latin word 'fores' which means 'outside'. Thus, it must have always referred to a village outskirts, fence or boundary which might have included all cultivated as well as uncultivated land. Today, of course, forests refer to vast areas of land covered with thick vegetation, trees and animals dwelling within.

Climatic factors such as rainfall and temperature along with soil, determine the kind of natural vegetation that will be found in a particular place. Places that receive more than 200 cm of annual rainfall have evergreen rain forests.



Areas receiving rainfall between 200 and 100 cm have monsoon deciduous trees while drier deciduous or tropical savannah forests are found in areas receiving 50 to 100 cm of rains per annum. Places which receive less than 50 cm annually have only dry thorny vegetation. Owing to the physical diversity of India, a great variety of vegetation is found in different parts of the country. Ranging from tropical wet evergreen, tropical moist deciduous, tropical dry evergreen, sub tropical dry evergreen, broad-leaved or pine, Himalayan dry temperate to sub-Alpine and dry Alpine and other 16 kinds and sub-types of forests are found here.

At the present the total forest and tree cover of the country is 78.92 million hectare which is 24 per cent of the geographical area of the country.

Indian forests are also classified on the basis of statutes, ownership, composition and exploitability. The legal or administrative classification is done to protect forests against indiscriminate cutting of trees. The forests in India have been divided into (i) Reserved, (ii) Protected and (iii) Unclassified. The first two categories are permanent forests which are maintained for regular supply of timber and other forest products. They are also maintained to restore the ecological balance. The reserved forests in India cover about 54% of the total forest area of the country while 29% of the total forest area is protected.

The remaining 17% is the unclassified forest area which is mainly unproductive and unprofitable. Another classification is based on the ownership of forests. Most of the forests are owned by the Government through the means of its departments such as forests department etc. Some are owned by corporate bodies. A negligible 1% area is owned privately by states like Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

An important type of forest in India is the village forests or panchayat forests. These are the forests which are managed by local communities, keeping in mind the idea of sustainable development. Community forest management involves collaboration between villagers and NGOs.

The Rajaji National Park has been built on this model. Indigenous forest management refers to initiatives taken by villagers and the communities which share the responsibility of protection in turns. The 'sacred groves' are small communal forests, which are protected for their rare flora and religious importance.

There are other forests like production forests, which are maintained for commercial production. The other is social forestry, which supports the rural poor, who depend on forests for their livelihood. Agroforestry is a scheme where farmers carry out plantations of *Eucalyptus*, *Casuarina*, teak etc, on their agricultural land using irrigation and fertilisers to find a market for their produce.

Forests make up for one of the major natural resources of a country. Their use in fuel, timber and industrial raw material cannot be undermined. Bamboos, canes, herbs, medicines, lac, grasses, leaves, oil etc are all received from the forests. India has about 5000 kinds of variety of woods out of which more than 400 are commercially used. Hard woods such as teak, mahogany, logwood, ironwood, ebony, sal, greenheart, kikar, semal etc are used in making of furniture, tools and wagons. Soft woods such as deodar, poplar, pine, fir, cedar, balsam are light, durable and easy to work. Therefore, they are used in constructions and as raw material for making paper pulp. But unfortunately, 70% of the hard wood is burnt as fuel and only 30% is used commercially. On the other hand, 70% of soft wood is used in industries while 30% is used for fuel purposes. Thus, forests meet about 40% of the energy requirement of the country which includes 80% of the rural requirements.

Indian forests are one of the 12 mega-biodiversity regions around the world. The Western Ghats and Eastern Himalayas are among the biodiversity 'hotspots' of the world. India is home to 12% of world's plants and 7% of Earth's animal species. India also has one of the richest varieties of bird species. Indian forests and wetlands are the temporary abodes of many migratory birds. Many birds and animals are endemic to India.

Moreover, forests help in the control of soil erosion and control floods to a considerable extent. Forests, also check the spreading of desert through strong winds. They add humidity to the atmosphere which checks the spread of desert. The humus added to the soil increases the soil fertility and soothes the extremes of climate by reducing the heat in summers and the cold in winters.

Thus, keeping in mind their great use, forests should be conserved and protected in India. The Government has made many efforts to increase the forest cover in the country. The Ministry of Environment and Forests is implementing a National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme with people's participation, including involvement of non-government persons, rural and local people living in and around the forest areas to increase Forest and Tree Cover (FTC) in the country.

The scheme is being implemented through a decentralised mechanism of State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) at state level, Forest Development Agency (FDA) at forest division level and Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) at the village level. In 1988, a New Forest Policy was introduced to maintain ecological balance, preservation of forests as natural heritage, prevention of soil erosion, check on the expansion of deserts, increase in the forest area to increase forest productivity and to propel a mass movement to achieve these objectives.

Van Mahotsav was initiated in 1950 and the famous Chipko Movement stands as an example of the effect of people's movement. In 1987, the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education which was created was converted into an autonomous body called Forest Research Institute.

More recently, Arunachal Pradesh set an example to the entire nation by achieving 70% afforestation.

The programme was implemented under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority in 2010 in those areas where trees were cut by various agencies. The Supreme Court judgement directed that there should be afforestation as a compensation for the number of trees felled.

Forests are the lifeline of the society. They are crucial for the survival of organisms and maintenance of harmony in nature. We must plant as many trees as possible in our lifetime. As a Chinese proverb states :

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.

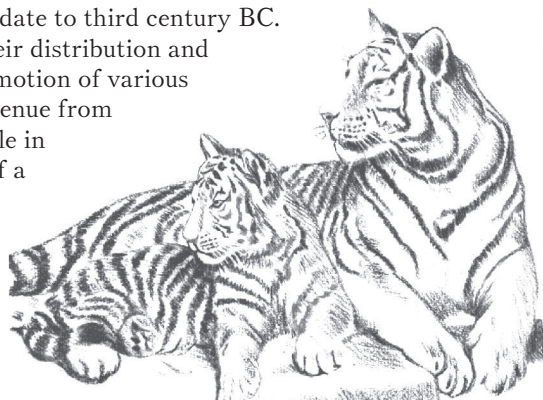
The next best time is today.”

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| ♦ indigenous | – originating in and characteristic of a particular region or country | ♦ mechanism | – routine methods or procedures |
| ♦ commercial | – able to yield or make a profit | ♦ propel | – to impel or urge onward |
| ♦ velocity | – rapidity of motion or operation, swiftness, speed | ♦ autonomous | – self governing, independent |
| ♦ tract | – an expanse or area of land, water, etc region, stretch | | |

Wildlife of India

Wildlife constitutes animals, birds, insects etc., living in the forests. The rich flora and fauna of India have been studied and mentioned in texts since the earliest times. Animal laws date to third century BC. Later, several zoologists recorded their distribution and abundance. Wildlife helps in the promotion of various economic activities that generate revenue from tourism. The fauna plays a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance of a region. With the baffling variety of forests in India, the wildlife wealth is equally diverse and perplexing. There are about 76000 species of animals in India which comprise about 82% of known species of the world. India has a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.



The trans-Himalayan region, encompassing Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh comprise the richest wild sheep and goat community in the world. Tigers are found in the forests of Eastern Himalayan foothills. Leopard is found in Northern parts of Asom, Lynn and Yak in Ladakh along with Brown, Black and Sloth Bear in the Himalayan Region. The Wild Buffalo is found in Asom, Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh, while the Great Indian Bison is found in the forests of Central India. Black Panther is found in widely distributed areas including deserts and jungles. Cats are found in the North-Western parts of the country. Several species of Wild Sheep and Goats too are found. Deer, Stag are common but have reduced in numbers considerably. Monkeys, Langurs, Chinkaras too are common as well as the Blue Bull, the Four-horned Antelope or the Chawsingha, Wild Dog, Fox, Jackal, Hyena, Mongoose, Shrews, Hedgehogs, Mole, Bats, Rodents and Squirrels. There is

an abundance of reptiles like Cobra, Krait, Russel Vipers Dhamaoa, a non-poisonous large snake, Rock Python, Marsh Crocodiles, Gharial, Lizards, Chameleon, Monitor Lizards, Turtles etc.

Elephant is the largest Indian mammal found in the forests of Asom, West Bengal, Central India, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Rhinoceros is India's second largest mammal whose number has considerably decreased and is now confined to the forests of Asom and West Bengal under strict protection, in the famous Kaziranga and Manas Sanctuaries of Asom, and Jaldapara Sanctuary in West Bengal.

India can proudly boast of about 2000 species of birds in India which is thrice the amount of birds in all the countries of Europe put together. Aquatic birds like Storks, Herons, Ducks, Flamingoes, Egrets, Cormorants are found along with waders and shore birds like the Sea Gulls, Snipes, Iluses, Cranes and Lapwings. The Great Indian Bustard, Pea Fowl, Jungle Fowl, Quail and Partridges are the main ground birds along with Babblers, Barbits, Bulbuls, Mynas, Pigeons, Parakeets, Doves, Cuckoos, Rollers, Beaters, Fly catchers, Orioles, Warblers, Wagtails, Finch larks, Finches, Drongos and Hoops. Prey birds such as Owls, Eagles, Kites, Fallows and Kestrel too are found in large numbers. Peacock, is rightly the national bird of India symbolising the vast variety of our bird-wealth with its rich and magnificent plumage fossils of several animals have also been found in India. *Titanosaurus indicus* was the first dinosaur discovered in 1877 in the Narmada Valley by Richard Lydekker. *Rajasaurus narmadensis*, a carnivorous dinosaur was also known to inhabit this region. Whale fossils were found in the foothills of Himalayas, as the area used to be underwater (in the Tethys Sea). Unfortunately, our wildlife has been adversely affected by the fast dwindling forest wealth. Large number of species have got reduced, others are endangered and still others are on the verge of extinction. This has adversely contributed to the disturbance of the ecological balance. Moreover, poaching and illegal killing of animals for their fur, skin, teeth, hair etc has contributed in the reduction of wildlife population.

The first species to disappear during the Indus Valley Civilisation was wild cattle. This probably happened due to inter-breeding with domestic cattle. Species of birds, like pink-headed duck and Himalayan quail have become extinct. Along with Tigers, the numbers of Cheetahs too have dwindled who are now surviving under protection and breeding programmes in the Gir Sanctuary, Gujarat.

To put a check on this, Indian Board for Wildlife was made in 1952 with its main function as an advisory board advising the government on how to conserve and protect wildlife with the construction of National Parks, Sanctuaries, Zoological gardens etc. The Wildlife Conservation Act, 1972 is a strict law and gives a firm footing to National Parks and Sanctuaries. The endangered species of plants and animals have been classified under this act for protection. Project Tiger was launched in 1973 under which 21 Tiger Reserves have been created to check intensive land use practices like mining, construction of roads and railway lines affecting the tiger habitat and corridors. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has set-up a 10-member committee of experts in 2011. The committee will also appraise ongoing demand for diversion of habitat areas towards infrastructure projects in states. Wildlife reserves have started using advanced technology for better maintenance of facilities and also the inhabiting animals. Haryana wildlife

department will make use of the camera trap method to get the exact number of animals in its sanctuaries. Kolhapur department has been equipped with wireless communication.

Along with the efforts of the government, people's awareness and cooperation is needed in order to conserve and protect these invaluable natural resources of our country. Then only can the efforts of the government be given a concrete direction and the conservation goals can be achieved. On International Tiger Day, 29 July, Pench Tiger Reserve along with Rotary Club organised competitions in Nagpur. Such initiatives can go a long way in instilling responsibility towards wildlife among citizens. Wildlife is an integral part of our national heritage. We want our future generations to be able to 'hear' lions roar and not just 'see' them in picture books. For that we must take steps today. Otherwise, it will be too late!

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **zoologist** – a specialist in Zoology
- ♦ **baffling** – to confuse, bewilder, or perplex
- ♦ **perplexing** – to cause to be puzzled or bewildered over what is not understood or certain
- ♦ **sanctuary** – any place of refuge
- ♦ **magnificent** – extraordinarily fine, superb
- ♦ **plumage** – the entire feathery covering of a bird
- ♦ **dwindle** – shrink, waste away
- ♦ **poaching** – the illegal practice of trespassing on another property to hunt or steal game without the landowner's permission
- ♦ **appraise** – determine the worth of, assess

The Fury of Floods

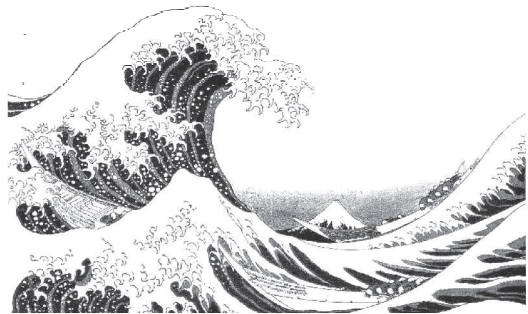
A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land, which is otherwise dry or not normally covered by water.

Floods happen due to many reasons such as heavy rains, melting of snow, high tides, Tsunamis, failure of dams or other structures meant to retain water. Flooding can also occur after natural mishaps such as forest fires, which engulf all vegetation that could otherwise absorb the water.

Periodic floods take place on many rivers, forming a region known as 'flood plain'. Floods occur when

ponds, lakes, riverbeds and vegetation are not able to retain all the water. Water then runs off in large quantities. A flood that arises rapidly, and all of a sudden is called 'flash flood'. Flash floods result from heavy rainfall over a small area, especially if the area was loaded with water from previous precipitation.

Besides causing loss of life and damage to buildings, floods also destroy bridges, sewage systems, roadways and canals. It affects power transmission. Floods also raise the risk of water borne diseases like typhoid, cholera etc. In the agriculture sector, it drowns farms, preventing sowing and harvesting. The economic effects decline in tourism and there is price rise owing to food shortage. Floods are a major natural disaster in India which occur year after year owing to excessive rains caused by the



South-West monsoon which is the sole provider of maximum rains to India. Besides heavy rains, many a times, tropical cyclones occurring during pre and post monsoon time also cause severe damage. Sometimes silting of river beds, deforestation or change in the course of rivers too cause floods or flood-like situation. In 1979, a man-made flood occurred in Gujarat when Machhu dam bursted causing great destruction. The vast diversity of India, too, geographically causes extreme situations many times. One part of the country suffers from severe famines or droughts while the other part gets destroyed due to floods and over-flow of rivers. Approximately, one-eighth of the total land area of the nation is considered as flood-prone area.

In June, 2013, massive flash floods also called ‘Himalayan Tsunami’, ravaged several villages in Uttarakhand. Thousands perished, still many more went missing, while dead bodies were recovered even till 2014. Floods have affected Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Asom in 2014. Human beings can’t stop the rain from falling or water from flowing. But they can surely adequately prepare and protect them selves so that the disaster can be minimised. Houses can be constructed in such a way that the slope is away from houses. Cracks on walls and floors must be repaired on time.

Service pipes between municipal sewer line and houses must be in good operating condition. Storm drains must be regularly cleaned of debris. Trees and other vegetation must be planted to reduce the velocity of incoming water. Emergency survival kit, that includes non-perishable food, water for drinking and medicines, must be kept ready. In 1954, the government formulated a National Flood Management Programme which included immediate, short-term and long term plans. The immediate goal was to intensively collect data within 2 years of time and execute emergency measures accordingly. The short-term goals were concerned with construction of spurs and embankments.

Long-term flood prevention measures concentrated upon storages and reservoirs being built upon rivers and their tributaries. A great degree of protection can be given to flood-prone areas by implementing these structural measures. Owing to this programme, Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Hirakud Dam on Mahanadi, Tungabhadra Dam on Krishna, Ukai Dam on Tapi, Konar and others on Damodar have been built.

By adopting various measures such as inter-linking of rivers etc, the damaging effects of floods can be reduced and the excess water instead of being wasted can be used for constructive purposes. Since majority of rural areas are situated near water bodies, optimum flood insurance cover must be provided to the rural inhabitants. India needs to be able to combat the fury of its rivers, otherwise the nurturing rivers would devour everything that comes in their way, when they are in rage.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **precipitation** – the amount of rain, snow, hail, etc, that has fallen at a given place within a given period, usually expressed in inches or centimeters of water
- ♦ **silting** – to become filled or choked up with silt
- ♦ **devastating** – tending or threatening to devastate
- ♦ **debris** – the remains of anything broken down or destroyed, ruins, rubble
- ♦ **spurs** – a ridge or line of elevation projecting from or subordinate to the main body of a mountain or mountain range
- ♦ **embankment** – a bank, mound, dike, or the like, raised to hold back water, carry a roadway, etc
- ♦ **reservoir** – a natural or artificial place where water is collected and stored for use, especially water for supplying a community, irrigating land, furnishing power, etc

Devastating Droughts

India is situated in the Northern Hemisphere extending from $8^{\circ} 4' N$ to $37^{\circ} 17' N$ latitude. The Tropic of Cancer passes through the middle of the country, thus the country falls into tropical as well as sub-tropical zones. The country gets two complete showers of seasonal rain, one during summer season called South-West monsoon and one in winters called the North-East monsoons.

The rest of the year is practically dry. The rain bearing winds are called monsoon winds which persistently flow in the same direction and get reversed only with the change of seasons.

The agriculture in India is largely dependent upon the monsoon rain shower during the months of June to the middle of September and a few parts of the country gets rains during the retreating monsoon from October to December. Tamil Nadu, South of Andhra Pradesh, South-East of Karnataka and Kerala get the maximum showers during the time, about 75 cm.

The occurrence and quality of monsoons depends upon the intensity of winds blowing over the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Sometimes, the country receives intense rainfall and there are times when the monsoon gets weak and there are scanty rains here and there.

Moreover, there is the problem of unequal distribution of rainfall over the country where the monsoon is extremely active whereas the same monsoon is barely active in other parts of the country. In other words, by the time it reaches the higher regions, the winds have shed most of their moisture already or they weaken so much that nothing is left in them in terms of momentum and so they shed their moisture on the way.

This uncertain and uncontrolled character of monsoons in India causes the problem of droughts at some places. Droughts occur when rainfall during a particular year fails to reach even the average or normal level expected of the place at that time of the year. Droughts usually occur in places which have a high variability between low and heavy amount of rainfall.

The greater the difference, more are the chances of droughts. Thus droughts in India occur mainly when South-West monsoon is weak and ineffective. A weak monsoon results in scanty or no rainfall; hence leading to droughts. Many a times droughts occur due to untimely arrival of monsoon-either it is too late or too early. In either case, agriculture is most severely affected. Prolonged breaks between consecutive spells of rain, too, aggravates the problem.

In India, on an average, a drought affects about 16% of the total agricultural land and about 50 million population. The areas that are regularly affected by droughts are those which receive an annual rainfall below 75 cm or have a high variability of 40 cm or more. There are about 99 districts which receive annual rains below 75 cm. A total of 68% of sown area is subject to drought in varying degrees.

But surprisingly the severest droughts have occurred in comparatively humid and wet areas such as West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. These regions usually get high rainfall but a slight failure of rainfall can cause severe droughts here simply because of high intensity of population and the near total dependence of agriculture on monsoon rains in these regions. A normal drought affects a huge part of the country's population, hence making the drought into a severe one.

This leads to a vicious circle of misery, especially for that part of the population, which is practically hand to mouth. Even among these, the landless labourers are the ones who suffer the most because they are the first ones to lose their jobs due to failure of rains.

Less people are thus required to till the land and so they are the first ones to be pushed over the crevices of hunger, poverty, starvation and destitution. Lack of irrigation facilities and total dependence on monsoon rains leads to even more severe droughts in the remote parts of the country. Moreover, due to the ecological imbalance, the frequency of droughts is likely to increase.

The failure of rains in 2014, has led to the possibility of it being declared as a 'drought year'. Till August, 2014, 36% of the nation's meteorological regions faced moderate to severe drought. Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, India's 'grain' bearer belt, is reeling under severe drought. As a result, farmers are paying sky-high prices to protect their paddy crop.

Hopefully, due to great technological advances, irrigation facilities and developments in the transport system, with even the remotest villages getting connected to nearby towns and cities, the intensity with which the droughts can affect human population, agriculture and cattle can be reduced to some extent. The governments now prefer to keep surplus stocks of food grains as well as fodder to combat such recurrent crisis with the support of voluntary organisations, NGOs etc.

NASA scientists, including one scientist of Indian origin have developed a new satellite to predict the severity of droughts and help farmers maximise crop yield. At present, there is no ground or satellite-based global network for monitoring soil moisture at a local scale. It would be of great help to developing countries like India, if this technology gets introduced soon.

The Government of India through Crisis Management Framework 2011, aims at identification of fundamental aspects of drought prone areas, phases of crisis, magnitude, outcome of crisis to trigger mechanism and strategic response matrix. The Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), under ICAR has been assigned the task to prepare district-wise contingency plans in collaboration with State Agricultural Universities, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

The programme also works toward long-term goals such as maintenance of ecological balance by developing, conserving and even harvesting all kinds of resources including land, water, livestock and human resources. It also aims at minimising the adverse effects of droughts on crops and livestock through use of appropriate technology and the naturally available resources.

The recent initiatives by Government were—special assistance package and higher seed subsidy. It is also planning to extend subsidy on diesel to areas where there has been less than 50% rainfall. In case, drought is declared by any state, the government has proposed a ₹ 700 crore scheme for cultivation of horticultural crops and ₹ 100 crore for fodder production. Agricultural crop insurance scheme is also in the pipeline. It's high time that India implements robust drought mitigation measures. The entire burden or blame shouldn't be put on the farmers. They must be protected and fully prepared for natural calamities. Their prosperity is nation's progress.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **persistent** – constantly repeated, continued
- ♦ **scanty** – barely sufficient
- ♦ **momentum** – force or speed of movement, impetus, as of a physical object or course of events
- ♦ **variability** – apt or liable to vary or change; changeable
- ♦ **consecutive** – following one another in uninterrupted succession or order, successive
- ♦ **vicious circle** – a sequence of reciprocal cause and effect in which two or more elements intensify and aggravate each other, leading to a worsening of the situation
- ♦ **crevices** – a crack forming an opening
- ♦ **destitution** – lack of the means of subsistence, utter poverty
- ♦ **matrix** – the cultural, social, or political environment in which something develops
- ♦ **subsidy** – a grant or contribution of money
- ♦ **mitigation** – the act of making a condition or consequence less severe



Tsunami *Waves of Disaster*

The term Tsunami comes from the Japanese language and means harbour wave. Tsunamis are seismic waves that are caused by earthquakes which travel through water. An earthquake that is too small to create a tsunami by itself may trigger an undersea landslide quite capable of generating a tsunami. Tsunami can be generated when the sea floor abruptly deforms and vertically displaces the overlying water. Such large vertical movements of the earth's crust can occur at plate boundaries. Although often referred to as 'tidal waves', a tsunami does not look like the popular impression of 'a normal wave only much bigger'. Instead, it looks rather like an endlessly onrushing tide which forces its way around and through any obstacle. Most of the damage is caused by the huge mass of water behind the initial wave front, as the height of the sea keeps rising fast and floods powerfully into the coastal areas. The sheer weight of water is enough to pulverise objects in its path, often reducing buildings to their foundations and scouring exposed ground to the bedrock. Large objects such as ships and boulders can be carried several miles inland before, a Tsunami subsides.

It is said that the Greek historian Thucydides proposed that Tsunamis had some relation to submarine earthquakes. However, the understanding of Tsunami's nature and causes remained weak until the 20th century. Roman historian, Ammianus described the order of events giving rise to a Tsunami: an earthquake, sudden retreat of the sea followed by a gigantic wave. Japan has the longest recorded history of Tsunamis. The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake cum Tsunami is marked as one of the most devastating in modern times, taking the death toll to around 2,30,000 people. The Sumatran region also experiences earthquakes off the coast regularly.

Recently, it has been discovered that larger Tsunamis than previously believed possible could be caused by landslides, explosive volcanic actions and Earth-scouring impact events. These phenomena rapidly displace large volumes of water, as energy from falling debris or expansion is transferred to the water into which the debris fall. Tsunamis caused by these mechanisms, unlike the ocean-wide tsunamis caused by some earthquakes, generally dissipate quickly and rarely affect coastlines distant from the source due to the small area of the sea affected.

Tsunamis move the entire depth of the ocean (often several kilometres deep) rather than just the surface, so they contain immense energy, propagate at high speeds and can travel great trans-oceanic distances with little overall energy loss. A Tsunami can cause damage thousands of kilometres from its origin, so there may be several hours between its creation and its impact on a coast, arriving long after the seismic wave generated by the originating event arrives.

In open water, Tsunamis have extremely long periods from minutes to hours, and long wavelengths of up to several hundred kilometres. This is very different from typical wind-generated swells on the ocean, which might have a period of about 10 seconds and a wavelength of 150 metres.

A few signs may be triggered by nature to warn a huge tsunami wave. An earthquake may be felt. Large quantities of gas may bubble to the water surface and make the sea look as if it is boiling. The water in the waves may be unusually hot. The water may sometimes smell of rotten eggs due to the presence of hydrogen sulphide or of petrol or oil. The water may sting the skin.

A thunderous boom may be heard followed by a roaring noise as of a jet plane, a helicopter, or a whistling sound. The sea may recede to a considerable distance. A flash of red light might be seen near the horizon and as the wave approaches, the top of the wave may glow red. These signals have been recorded from time to time over the ages before every Tsunami tragedy. Oceanographers, scientists, geologists and environmentalists are working on making some kind of systems which can if not prevent at least signal the impending Tsunami.

The Lisbon quake is the first documented case of such a phenomenon in Europe back in 1755 which had generated an almost 12 metre high sea wave and had destroyed most part of the city killing around 60000 people. This phenomenon was also seen in Sri Lanka in the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. In 2011, the powerful 8.9 magnitude earthquake sent Japan into chaos as it triggered a giant tsunami in the Pacific Ocean, sweeping away boats, cars, homes and people, and led to the loss of more than 15000 lives in Japan.

In some particularly Tsunami-prone countries, measures have been taken to reduce the damage caused on the shores. Japan has implemented an extensive programme of building Tsunami walls of up to 4.5m (13.5 ft) high in front of populated coastal areas. Other localities have built floodgates and channels to redirect the water from incoming tsunamis. However, their effectiveness has been questioned, as Tsunamis are often higher than the barriers.

For instance, the Tsunami which hit the island of Hokkaido on 12 July, 1993 created waves as much as 30 m (100 ft) tall - as high as a 10-storey building. The port town of Aomori was completely surrounded by a Tsunami wall but the waves washed right over the wall and destroyed all the wood-framed structures in the area.

The wall may have succeeded in slowing down and moderating the height of the Tsunami but it did not prevent major destruction and loss of life.

Yet the effects of a Tsunami can be mitigated by natural factors such as tree cover on the shoreline. Some locations in the path of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami escaped almost unscathed as a result of the tsunami's energy being sapped by a belt of trees such as coconut, palms and mangroves. In one striking example, the village of Naluvadapathy in India's Tamil Nadu region suffered minimal damages and few deaths as the wave broke up on a forest of 80244 trees planted along the stretches of seacoasts that are prone to Tsunami risks.

While it would take some years for the trees to grow to a useful size, such plantations could offer a much cheaper and longer-lasting means of Tsunami mitigation than the costly and environmentally destructive method of erecting artificial barriers.

Regions with a high risk of Tsunamis may use Tsunami warning systems now available to detect Tsunamis and warn the general populace before the waves reach the coasts. In some communities on the West coast of the United States, which is prone to Pacific Ocean Tsunamis, warning signs advise people where to run in the event of an incoming Tsunami. Computer models can roughly predict Tsunami arrival and impact based on information about the event that triggered it and the shape of the sea floor and the coastal landmass. One of the early warnings comes from nearby animals. Many animals sense danger and flee to higher ground before the water arrives. Monitoring their behaviour closely could provide advance warnings of earthquakes, Tsunamis etc.

In 2011, Earthquake Research Committee of Japanese Government announced that Tsunami forecasts would be started to alert the public in advance about the approaching Tsunamis in near future. This would comprise Tsunamic height, attack area and probability of occurrence within 100 years. Such forecasts should be soon activated in the Indian sub-continent also. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, UNESCO is working out strategies for this area.

Coastal areas of India are sitting on a 'Tsunami-bomb'. Awareness and robust measures are the needs of the hour.

VOCAB HELP

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|---------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| ♦ seismic | – pertaining to, of the nature of, or caused by an earthquake or vibration of the earth, whether due to natural or artificial causes | ♦ recede | – to go or move away, withdraw |
| ♦ pulverise | – to demolish or crush completely | ♦ oceanographer | – the branch of physical geography dealing with the ocean |
| ♦ scouring | – to clear or dig out (a channel, drain, etc) as by the force of water, by removing debris, etc | ♦ unscathed | – not scathed, unharmed, uninjured |
| ♦ wavelength | – the distance, measured in the direction of propagation of a wave, between two successive points in the wave that are characterised by the same phase of oscillation | ♦ dissipate | – to use up or waste, to disperse |

✿ Global Warming : *Soaring Temperatures*

Global warming, as the term itself suggests, is the consistent rise in the overall average temperature of the planet. It has been noted that, since 1971, about 90% of the increased energy has been accumulated in the oceans. But, in spite of ocean's role in storage of this energy, 'global warming' is used to refer to increase in average temperature of air and sea at Earth's surface. The global temperature has risen by about 0.8°C , since the beginning of the 20th century.

The greenhouse gases which cause pollution are responsible for global warming. In fact, air pollution has adverse effects on the climate. Industries which produce gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, carbon tetrachloride etc get accumulated in the air. These gases are also known as greenhouse gases. They are responsible for the rise in temperature which scientists and environmentalists fear can bring about long-term changes in the climatic conditions of the Earth. These changes can in fact, turn harmful for the survival of life on Earth and hence, something concrete should be done about them. These gases are responsible for gradual rise in temperature far beyond the normal limits needed for survival.



The greenhouse gases including CFC-11 and CFC-12 make the Earth hotter and hotter by absorbing maximum quantity of thermal radiation of the sun. These gases permit the rays of the sun to penetrate but don't let the thermal radiations escape from the Earth's atmosphere once they enter it, thus causing what is termed as the greenhouse effect, which is responsible for the increase in the temperature all over the world. The rise in temperature even by 1°C melts the snow at the poles which if left unchecked, will increase the water level, converting the entire landmass of the Earth into a huge sea. Another change that global warming has brought about is the reduction of forests. Thus, rain has become scanty, salinity of water has increased and even the entire water cycle stands disturbed. Moreover, due to global warming, the duration of seasons has reduced.

The tenure of summer has increased over the years and there are practically no seasons left especially in the tropical and sub-tropical regions.

This rise in temperature disturbs the rain cycle, the ecological balance, the cycle of seasons etc. It adversely affects vegetation and agriculture. Due to this, we have to face frequent floods and droughts throughout the world. With this increase in temperature and the melting of glaciers, even snowfall has reduced its occurrence and intensity. The winter temperatures are showing a gradual increase. With the warming of the planet there is also a rise in humidity because the rise in temperature has increased the rate of evaporation. Even though rains may increase, yet they will not match up to the rate with which the land gets dry due to rise in heat. Thus, even fertile regions might slowly get converted into dry lands and deserts. Storms and hurricanes will be frequent.

If the present trend of global temperature rise, continues, then, it is projected, that by 2030, maize production in Southern Africa could decrease by upto 30%. The yield in India could also plummet by 30-40%. This would increase the risk of malnutrition.

There is a danger of coastal regions drowning due to increase in sea level with the shrinking of glaciers. Thus there is a grave danger of an entire civilisation becoming extinct in a watery grave. Animals and plants are also finding it difficult to cope up with these temperature changes. Species after species of both flora and fauna might disappear from the face of the Earth. Not only this, even human life is getting affected by global warming. Epidemics are spreading frequently. There is heat stress responsible for killing people. Diseases like dengue fever, yellow fever and encephalitis are indirect results of global warming.

Governments all over the world are concerned about such issues. In 1992, the Earth Summit was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where 150 countries agreed to confront the problem of greenhouse gases. In 1997, in Japan, 160 nations signed an agreement called Kyoto Protocol that commits state parties to reduce greenhouse gases emissions, based on the notion that global warming exists and man-made CO₂ emissions have caused it. By May, 2011 the number increased to 194. The 2011 United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Durban, South Africa, from 20 November to 9 December, 2011. The primary focus of this 17th session of the conference was to secure a global climate agreement. The protocol calls upon the developed nations to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases upto 5% by 2012. The treaty still awaits to be implemented by the developed countries, especially the US.

Agreements and treaties signed at international level will not help reduce global warming. Serious and concrete efforts need to be made at the national and regional levels. The local governments should work against the emissions of the greenhouse gases by modernising the vehicles, creating awareness among the people, selling environment-friendly appliances, etc. Such efforts are needed by the people at the grass-root level. Only then we can combat this problem in an effective way.

At home and workplaces, electrical and electronic devices must be turned off and unplugged when not in use. Old and inefficient appliances must be replaced, as they consume a lot of energy. Locally grown and produced food should be preferred over that in malls and chain outlets. Use of paper should be minimised and re-use of plastics, cans etc should be encouraged. The amount of material used for packaging goods must be reduced.

Small steps often lead to big changes. It's high time, that we realise where and how can we reduce our carbon footprints. After all, at present, Earth is the only planet where life exists. We have nowhere else to go.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **consistent** – steady, even
- ♦ **accumulated** – to gather or collect, often in gradual degrees, heap up
- ♦ **greenhouse gas**– any of the gases whose absorption of solar radiation is responsible for the greenhouse effect, including carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, and fluorocarbons
- ♦ **penetrate** – to pierce or pass into or through
- ♦ **plummet** – to drop down, plunge
- ♦ **encephalitis** – inflammation of the substance of the brain, a form of this condition, caused by a filterable virus and characterised by apathy and abnormal sleepiness
- ♦ **carbon footprint**– the amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere by the activities of an individual, company, country, etc



Climate Change

Climate change refers to a statistically significant variation in either the general state of the climate or in its variability, persisting for an extended period, typically decades or longer.

Change in climate may be due to natural internal processes or external factors, due to persistent changes in the composition of the atmosphere, or in land use brought by humans. Short-term fluctuations like El Nino, represent variation in climate for short temporary periods. On a longer time scale, changes in ocean heat circulation patterns may result in a stronger impact on climate. Variations in Earth's orbit lead to differences in the distribution of sunlight reaching the Earth in different seasons and at different places on Earth. The solar intensity is also known to affect global climate.

Volcanic eruptions are also considered to be significant in affecting Earth's climate, especially those which emit large quantities of SO_2 into the stratosphere. This is due to the optical properties of SO_2 and sulphate aerosols. They absorb or scatter solar radiation, creating a haze of sulphuric acid. Other than volcanoes, the movement of tectonic plates affects the global and local patterns of climate.

Anthropogenic factors relate to human activities which include burning of fossil fuels, ozone depleting causes, and deforestation. Due to industrialisation and urbanisation, presently, the global atmospheric concentration of carbon-dioxide has increased to 393.69 parts per million (ppm). These could lead to impact on freshwater availability, oceanic acidification, food production, flooding of coastal areas and increased number of water borne diseases associated with extreme weather events.

Glaciers are one of the most sensitive indicators of climate change. Their size is determined by the input of snow and their melting output. Due to rising global temperatures, their size shrinks, leading to escalation of sea levels. The ice on Arctic ocean is also melting rapidly, which is another proof of climate change.

Due to climate change, the distribution and density of vegetation may also be affected. The increase in temperature will lead to early onset of flowering and fruiting, which will affect the life cycles of animals dependent on them. One example is the destruction of rainforests of Europe and America, 300 million years ago. These forests fragmented into isolated 'islands', leading to the extinction of many plant and animal species.

India is facing the challenge of sustaining its rapid economic growth while dealing with the global threat of climate change. This threat emanates from accumulated greenhouse gas emissions, generated through long-term industrial growth and high consumption lifestyles. Presently, India is among the top 10 emitters of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) in the world. However, it is in India's interest to ensure that the world moves towards a low carbon future. With changes in key climate variables, namely temperature, precipitation and humidity, crucial sectors like agriculture and rural development are likely to be affected in a major way. As a developing country, India is closely tied to natural resources and agriculture, and water and forestry are climate-sensitive.

To combat climate change, India’s National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) aims to achieve national growth objectives, along with enhancing ecological sustainability that leads to further mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. NAPCC endeavours to deploy appropriate technologies, for both adaptation and mitigation of greenhouse gases and to promote sustainable development.

NAPCC also plans to extend international cooperation for research, development, sharing and transfer of technologies enabled by additional funding. India is a member of the United Nations Framework Convention and intends to cooperate with the same on Climate Change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty produced at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and is informally known as the Earth Summit. The objective of the treaty is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

The 2011 Annual Conference of the Parties was hosted by Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December, 2011. In 2012, Earth Summit took place in Rio de Janeiro to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development; to assess progress towards internationally agreed goals on sustainable development and to address new and emerging challenges. The Summit focussed on two specific themes-: a green economy in the context of poverty eradication and an institutional framework for sustainable development.

We, as individuals also can contribute towards lessening our impact on the climate by modifying our transportation modes, energy consumption, eating habits and waste utilisation. Short distances can be covered by walking or cycling or even car-pooling. In place of the conventional light bulbs, LEDs can be used. Electrical appliances should be switched off when not in use.

Our tiny carbon footprint also affects the big picture of climate change. Even though, we might feel that our lifestyle is a small factor, but the choices that we make in our day-to-day life can play a major role in slowing down climate change. Let us all strive for a ‘Cleaner and Greener’ Earth.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **statistically** – pertaining, consisting of, or based on statistics
- ♦ **aerosol** – a system of colloidal particles dispersed in a gas
- ♦ **haze** – reduced visibility in the air as a result of condensed water vapour, dust, etc, in the atmosphere
- ♦ **tectonic plate** – the two-sub-layers of the earth’s crust (lithosphere) that move, float, and sometimes fracture and whose interaction causes continental, drift, earthquakes, volcanoes, mountains, and oceanic trenches.
- ♦ **escalation** – advance, mount, swell
- ♦ **anthropogenic** – caused or produced by humans
- ♦ **emanate** – to flow out, issue, or proceeds, as from a source or origin, come forth, originate
- ♦ **deploy** – to arrange in a position of readiness, or to move strategically or appropriately
- ♦ **eradication** – to remove or destroy utterly

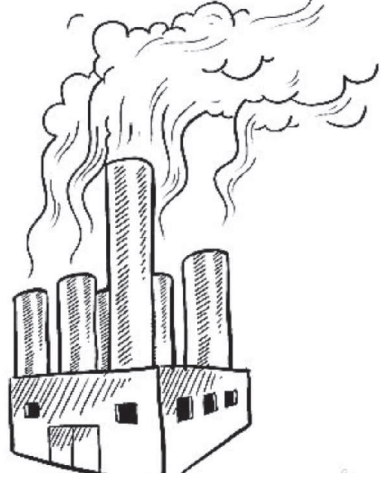
✿ Pollution

A Threat to Our Existence

Environment is the surrounding of an organism. This environment in which an organism lives is made up of various elements like air, water, land etc. These elements are found in fixed proportions to create a harmonious balance in the environment for the organism to live in. Any kind of undesirable and unwanted change in the proportions of these elements can be termed as pollution.

With the rise of the industries and the migration of people from villages to towns in search of employment, there has been a regular increase in the problem of proper housing, and unhygienic conditions of living has led to rise in factors which increase pollution.

The mad rat race among countries of the world to compete against each other in the index of development has harmed the health of the people itself. Progress in agriculture and industry is taken as an indicator of development. This resulted in the exploitation of natural resources in a reckless manner. Thus, pollution has been an inevitable gift of industrialisation and urbanisation.



The growth of industries has given rise to the problem of proper disposal of waste material of the industries. Many a times, the waste products of these industries contain poisonous elements which if disposed without being properly treated, pollute the rivers and other water bodies. Thus, we face the problem of water pollution.

The poisonous water and waste product of the factories mingles with the water bodies and poisons them. Resultantly, the aquatic life gets affected. Fish die, disturbing the ecological balance. The water too is rendered useless which can neither be used for drinking or washing. This also results in the reduction of the area of water bodies. Such a situation arises when non-degradable products are dumped on fallow land or on the banks of rivers and sea shores.

Waste materials such as plastics, polythene, bottles etc cause land pollution and render soil infertile. Moreover, dumping of dead bodies of men and animals, washing of clothes and utensils too add to the problem. In recent surveys, Sabarmati river in Gujarat, Yamuna and Ganga rivers have been found to be excessively polluted. Yamuna has been described as an 'Open Drain'.

Another major problem of pollution is the air that we breathe in being polluted by the smoke pouring out of chimneys and automobiles. No doubt, air pollution takes place even by volcanoes, cyclones, forest fires etc. But human activities are more responsible for causing air pollution. Gases like CO_2 , CO, SO_2 , are emitted which mix with air and cause great harm to the human body, flora and fauna.

The use of dry farm waste, dry grass, leaves and coal used as domestic fuels in our villages also produce harmful gases. Acid rain occurs due to excess of SO_2 in the air. The most tragic incident of air pollution is the Bhopal Gas Tragedy when the dangerous Methyl Isocyanide was emitted from Union Carbide Fertiliser Factory in 1984 which killed thousands of men, women and children, and rendered thousands of others handicapped.

Fire crackers, nuclear explosions, air conditioners, refrigerators, organic solvents, pesticides etc also contribute significantly in polluting air. Air pollution not only causes various kinds of allergies, respiratory problems and other health problems but also affects the vegetation, animal life and the environment. The soot which contains high concentration of hydrocarbons proves very harmful for monuments like the Taj Mahal.

Another very subtle form of pollution is noise pollution. Technology has given us comfort along with a cacophony of harsh and unharmonious sounds. This problem is extremely severe in big towns and cities. The maddening horns, loud speakers, music systems etc cause metabolic, hearing and other kinds of disorders. Noise pollution may also lead to a nervous breakdown or madness. Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) recently revealed that even silence zones, such as hospitals, schools and residential areas are suffering from high decibels of sound.

Thus, we see that there are various kinds of pollutions which need to be checked in time. Problems like ozone depletion, global warming, greenhouse effect, change in climatic and weather conditions, melting of glaciers etc have arisen due to pollution. Strict and serious measures should be taken to control it. Industrial waste should be properly treated in special treatment plants before letting it flow into the water bodies or dumping it. The pollution department of Farrukhabad issued directives to close all textile dyeing units, polluting the Ganga river.

Use of organic manures should be encouraged instead of chemical fertilisers to prevent soil pollution. Planting of trees should be encouraged and cutting down of green trees should be strictly checked. Unleaded petrol should be used in vehicles. The directions of the Supreme Court to manufacture cars as per Euro I and Euro II norms should be strictly enforced.

Industries should have proper emission systems and should conform to the laws in order to ensure safety of the people living in residential areas around. Strict laws should be legislated and enforced regarding the keeping of our sea shores and river banks clean. For example, Himachal Pradesh was the first state to ban plastic and polythene bags, to save the fragile ecology of Himalayas. But the law exists only on paper.

The horns of automobiles should be checked as per the limits prescribed by law. Loud speakers music system etc should be strictly prohibited after ten at night and vehicles should not be allowed to play their stereos at high volume.

The Government, after launching online green clearance systems for industrial and infrastructure projects, now will monitor treatment of industrial effluents and emissions, in a similar manner, by using online systems. The purpose is to bring transparency and facilitate real-time analysis of waste discharge.

The Government should also try to educate people about various kinds of pollution and create public awareness. People should be involved in helping to reduce and control pollution. Moreover, punishments should be strictly given in case of violation of any environmental law so that such people learn a lesson. Until we all get serious and resolve to make our planet a better place to live in, humanity stands amidst grave danger of perishing and being destroyed due to the severe and increasing problem of pollution. Franklin D Roosevelt, former American President, said the same about pollution :

“A nation that destroys its soils, destroys itself.”

VOCAB HELP

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| ♦ reckless | - utterly unconcerned about the consequences of some action, without caution, careless | ♦ subtle | - insidious in operation |
| ♦ inevitable | - unavoidable | ♦ decibel | - a unit used to express the intensity of a sound wave, equal to 20 times the common logarithm of the ratio of the pressure produced by the sound wave to a reference pressure, usually 0.0002 microbar |
| ♦ fallow | - plowed and left unseeded for a season or more, uncultivated | ♦ fragile | - delicate |
| ♦ solvent | - a substance that dissolve another to form a solution | ♦ perish | - to suffer spiritual death |
| ♦ hydrocarbon | - any of a class of compounds containing only hydrogen and carbon, as an alkane, methane, CH ₄ , ethylene, C ₂ H ₄ , C ₂ H ₂ or an aromatic compound, benzene, C ₆ H ₆ | | |

Depletion of Ozone Layer

In another major atmospheric challenge that has been traced to human technology, the work of environmental scientists again has uncovered a serious problem for which there was no prior warning. Our knowledge of the workings of the atmosphere has been appallingly poor, and one consequence of that lack of understanding is the strong possibility that ultra-violet radiation will increase in intensity all over the Earth.

Radiation from the sun includes ultra-violet (UV) radiation, alongwith the visible light. On penetrating the atmosphere and being absorbed by biological tissues, UV radiation damages protein and DNA molecules at the surface of all living things. This is what occurs when you get a sunburn. If the full amount of UV radiation falling on the stratosphere reached the Earth's surface, it is doubtful that any life would survive. We are spared from the more damaging effects of the UV rays because most of the UV radiation (over 99%) is absorbed by ozone in the upper stratosphere. For this reason, stratospheric ozone is commonly referred to as the Ozone Shield or the Ozone Layer.

Ozone depletion refers to two related atmospheric events of significance, observed since the late 1970s. The first is the steady decline of total volume of ozone in stratosphere at the rate of 4% per decade. The second is a larger decrease in ozone over the polar regions, which is known as ozone hole.

In the autumn of 1985, some British atmospheric scientists working in Antarctica reported a gaping 'hole' (actually, a thinning of one area) in the stratospheric ozone

layer of the South Pole. There is an area equal to the size of the United States, where ozone levels were 50% lower than normal. Scientists had assumed that the loss of ozone, if it occurred, would be slow, gradual and uniform over the whole planet. The 'hole' came as a surprise, and if it had occurred anywhere but over the South Pole, the UV damage would have been extensive.

News of the ozone 'hole' stimulated enormous research effort. A unique set of conditions were found to be responsible for the ozone 'hole'. In summer, gases such as nitrogen oxide and methane react with chlorine monoxide and chlorine to trap the chlorine, forming so-called chlorine reservoirs, preventing much ozone depletion.

High above the Earth is the stratosphere where a small number of ozone molecules shield all life from harmful ultra-violet radiation. Ozone, an unstable form of oxygen containing 3 oxygen atoms (O_3), falls apart into an oxygen atom (O) and an oxygen molecule (O_2) when it absorbs ultra-violet radiation. However, a fresh supply of ozone forms continually in the stratosphere, producing a delicate chemical balance in which a layer of less than 4.5 trillion kg of ozone, blankets the planet. That balance is threatened by chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs, such as the fluoro carbon-11. They decompose and release chlorine atom, which cause ozone to break down. The difference is that each chlorine atom destroys as many as 100,000 ozone molecules faster than nature can replenish them. As a result, the ozone layer is thinning, forming a hole that lets damaging ultra-violet radiations reach the Earth.

The maximum decrease in ozone has occurred in the lower stratosphere. However, ozone hole is not measured in terms of concentrations of ozone. It is quantified by the reduction in total column ozone above a point on Earth's surface. It is expressed in Dobson Units or DU. Ozone column is surveyed with the help of total ozone mapping spectrometer.

The reductions of upto 70% in ozone column observed in the spring of Southern Hemisphere over Antarctica are still continuing. In the 1990s, column ozone was 40-50% lower than pre-ozone hole values. In the Arctic, the amount lost varies year-to-year. The greatest decline occurs during winter and spring, when the stratosphere is colder.

The depletion of ozone layer, allows more UV radiation to reach the Earth. It has been estimated that a 5% loss of ozone results in a 10% increase in UV radiation. Some of the important effects of ozone depletion are that in humans, the increased UV radiation increases the incidence of cataract, skin cancer and decline in the functioning of the immune system. Secondly, the elevated level of UV radiation damages nucleic acids in living organisms.

Thirdly, UV radiation inhibits photosynthesis in plants and phytoplanktons which in turn affects the whole food chain. Fourthly, UV radiation will affect the crops in symbiotic association with cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria live in the roots of some crops, like rice and help in the retention of nitrogen. Cyanobacteria are sensitive to UV radiation, and plants too have limited adaptability to increased UV-B levels. Fifthly, like in humans, in other organisms too, UV radiations cause severe sun-burns. The epidermal damage was discovered in the whales of the Gulf of California in 2010.

Ozone losses have not been confined to Earth's polar regions, although they are most prominent there. A worldwide network of ozone-measuring stations send data to the World Ozone Data Centre in Toronto, Canada. Reports from the centre reveal a rate of loss of 2-4% per decade since 1979 over mid-latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere. Ozone loss was expected to start showing in the year 2001, when the chlorine and bromine concentrations in the stratosphere started to decline as a consequence of the international agreements that have been forged.

However, according to a report published in 2010, the ozone holes, high in the stratosphere over each of the polar regions, have stopped growing due to the phase out of nearly 100 ozone-depleting substances once used in products like refrigerators and spray cans, as per the study by United Nations scientists. It was noticed that the ozone hole that forms each year over Antarctica was slightly smaller in 2013. The world is moving towards phasing out of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), however, India has said that it first needs to find environment friendly alternatives, then make the move.

The ozone story is a remarkable episode in the human history. From the first warnings in 1974 that something might be amiss in the stratosphere because of a particularly inert and useful industrial chemical, through the developments of Montreal Protocol the final steps of CFCs phase out that are still being undertaken, the world has shown that it can respond collectively to a clearly perceived global threat. The scientific community has played a crucial role in this episode, first alerting the world and then plunging into intense research programmes to ascertain the validity of the threat and its remedial actions.

Stopping the rapid decline in ozone layer is as much the responsibility of the civil society as it is of governments and scientists. We can see to it that we limit private vehicle travelling, use eco-friendly cleaning products and avoid chemical pesticides and weedicides.

Ozone layer is the protective shield of the Earth. We have to ensure that the hole in this 'shield' doesn't get bigger, otherwise all life on Earth would perish owing to the wrath of the sun, in the form of UV rays.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **appalling** – causing dismay or horror
- ♦ **stimulate** – to rouse to action or effort, as by encouragement or pressure, spur on, incite
- ♦ **replenish** – to make full or complete again, as by supplying what is lacking, used up, etc
- ♦ **quantify** – to determine, indicate, or express the quantity of
- ♦ **spectrometer** – an optical device for measuring wavelengths, deviation of refracted rays, and angles between faces of a prism
- ♦ **symbiotic** – living in symbiosis, or having an interdependent relationship
- ♦ **retention** – the act of retaining
- ♦ **epidermal** – the outer, nonvascular, nonsensitive layer of the skin, covering the true skin or corium.
- ♦ **inert** – having little or no ability to react, as nitrogen that occurs uncombined in the atmosphere
- ♦ **ascertain** – to find out definitely, learn with certainty or assurance, determine



River Linking Project

A Solution to India's Water Woes

River linking is a proposed large scale project that aims to link rivers in India by a network of reservoirs and canals. If the project is successful, it would address all issues of drought, flood, drinking water, navigation etc., simultaneously.

The monsoons in India, being highly erratic, the country faces drought and flood cycles year- after-year. River linking would provide adequate irrigation to the poor farmers for their crops. This, would result in greater agricultural yield and food security for the burgeoning population.

The Bhakra Nangal dam was one of the earliest river valley projects in India, built over river Satluj. It was described as,“New Temple of Resurgent India” by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. On 30 October, 2013, this second highest dam in India, celebrated 50 years of its construction. Another project, the Beas-Satluj Link is now a part of Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB). It sets the example for the most optimal utilisation of water resources. In this, the diverted water of Beas river is used for generating power twice, first in Dehar Power House, before joining river Satluj and then under Bhakra Nangal Project.

Presently, the river-linking projects are set to get a boost under Narendra Modi's government. The project has two components—Peninsular and Himalayan. The Southern Water Grid would link 16 rivers. The surplus waters of Mahanadi and Godavari would be diverted to Penner, Krishna, Vaigai and Cauvery rivers. The Himalayan component comprises 14 links.

River-linking has become an urgent necessity in India. Vidarbha in Maharashtra and Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh face regular droughts. Adequate water supply would ease atleast the problems of water scarcity in Rajasthan districts which remain dry for most parts of the year. It would also help in the replenishment of depleting water table. Power crisis would be soothed to a certain extent.

For example, the proposed dam on river Ken, would provide 60 MW of power to adjoining villages and towns in Madhya Pradesh. The linking canals would provide a faster means of transporting goods. This would cut down the pressure on roads and railways, saving oil. Frequency of occurrence of floods and famines would be reduced. Massive job opportunities would be created due to the project.

The river-linking, though seemingly promising, may open ‘Pandora’s box’ of many unseen problems. First, is the unequal distribution of water. For example, in the Polavaram project that is coming up, the seasonal water shortage in the target area of reservoir would be alleviated, however, it would shift the water shortage down the Godavari delta during rabi and summer.

The transfer of enormous quantities of water will flood forests and land for reservoirs, if not properly channelised. The weight of billions of litres of water may have seismic side effects in the Himalayan region. Water quality may also be affected by salinisation, pollution etc. Most importantly, a large number of people get displaced due to such projects.

The national river-linking project is bound to face many challenges. Firstly, the initial estimation of the cost was about ₹ 5.6 lakh crores. But the actual expenditure would be higher. Secondly, India needs to be mindful of the border issues with neighbouring countries. India and China are already clashing over sharing of river Brahmaputra. Thirdly, the project is touted to affect the natural habitat of wild animals. A case in sight, is the Ken-Betwa project which will submerge Panna tiger reserve and threaten aquatic life in Ken river. Nevertheless, the project has received approval from many stakeholders, be it the ministers of state or the citizens. It is a ray of hope to millions of rural households. India's water issues could finally get an answer and focus could be shifted to other issues of national importance.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **erratic** – having no certain or definite course, not fixed
- ♦ **burgeoning** – to grow or develop quickly; flourish
- ♦ **optimal** – most favourable or desirable, best
- ♦ **depleting** – to decrease seriously or exhaust the abundance or supply of
- ♦ **pandora's box** – a source of extensive but unforeseen troubles or problems
- ♦ **alleviate** – to make easier to endure, lessen, mitigate
- ♦ **tout** – to solicit support for importunately



Non-Conventional Sources of Energy

The Key for a Better Tomorrow

We have been hearing about non-conventional sources of energy for a very long time, but in our daily life how many of us actually use or come across any average person who uses non-conventional sources of energy? What comes to mind when one thinks of non-conventional sources of energy? Most of us will think about solar energy, wind energy, hydel power, geothermal energy, nuclear power, biomass energy and few other commonly known types of energy. Non-conventional energy resource is a resource that is unlimited, environment friendly and of course renewable. It is abundantly found in nature.

In other words, non-conventional energy sources consist of those energy sources that are infinite, natural and restorable. For example, tidal energy, solar energy and wind energy. Energy generated by using wind, tides, solar, geothermal heat and biomass is known as non-conventional energy. All these sources are renewable or inexhaustible and do not cause environmental pollution. It is also known as the renewable source of energy replacing the conventional fuels like coal, diesel, petrol etc. The energy thus produced is used extensively in four distinct areas: electricity generation, hot water/heating, motor fuels and rural (off-grid) energy services. The sun is the most abundant and unlimited source of energy. As a result, solar energy is one of the most important non-conventional source of energy that is utilised in India. In India, the area of Thar Desert that is in Rajasthan, has been set aside for solar power projects.



Reliance Industries has commissioned largest solar thermal project in Rajasthan. Additionally, solar street lighting systems, solar lanterns, solar cookers, solar water heating systems etc have been installed both in cities and in rural areas.

Earlier, rivers were used to transport wood logs, but now it is a limitless renewable source of energy. For producing electrical power, dams are built close to estuaries to make use of inward and outward water currents. Tidal Power Plant technology is still immature, that is why, currently India does not have any operational tidal energy plant. But soon Gujarat is set to develop India's first tidal energy plant to produce energy from the ocean tides. In India, states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Odisha and Maharashtra are regarded as superior areas with respect to wind energy. These places have regular and rapid wind flow, appropriate for wind power generation. The development of wind power in India, began in 1990's and has significantly increased in the last few years. India's domestic policy support for wind power has led India to become the country with fifth largest installed wind power capacity in the world.

Biomass is another important source of energy which represents approximately 33% of the overall volume of fuel, used in the country. It is broadly utilised in domestic circles for preparing food etc. In some areas, farming disposables, timber, wood, sunbaked droppings, are also used. Geothermal energy is also a non-conventional source of energy which is obtained from the heat of the earth's interior. This energy is manifested in the hot springs. Unfortunately, India is not very rich in this source.

India is one of the fastest growing countries in terms of energy consumption. Currently, it is the fifth largest consumer of energy in the world and is expected to be the third largest by 2030. The country is heavily dependent on fossil sources of energy for most of its demand. This has necessitated the need for alternate non-conventional sources of energy. Also, most of the rural sectors in India are devoid of power electricity. Renewable energy can offer an economically viable means of providing energy solutions to these sectors. Government too is coming forward to promote non-conventional energy projects to private companies. Establishment of Non-conventional Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh Limited (NEDCAP) is a milestone in this endeavor. Soft loans, subsidies, concessional customs duty, exemption from excise duty in non-conventional energy projects, are some of the benefits available from the government.

The importance of non-conventional energy resource is thus gaining momentum in the country as well as in the state. India is now one of the countries implementing various programmes on the utilisation and promotion of non-conventional energy resources. Private participation is also solicited in some of the areas like power generation and solar heating systems. To become more effective in the promotion, NEDCAP can also undertake promotional and publicity campaign for individuals, NGOs, commercial and non-commercial institutions elaborating the importance of the conservation of the conventional sources of energy and the need for supplementing them with non-conventional sources. Finally it is aptly said that :

“Save Nature and Enjoy the Future”.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **restorable** – capable of being reclaimed
- ♦ **geothermal** – pertaining to the internal heat of the Earth
- ♦ **renewable** – that can be renewed
- ♦ **inexhaustible** – that cannot be entirely consumed or used up; timeless; endless
- ♦ **conventional** – traditional
- ♦ **estuaries** – the wide part of a river where it nears the sea
- ♦ **manifested** – reveal, display, made evident
- ♦ **fossil** – a remnant or trace of an organism of a past geological age, such as a skeleton or leaf imprint, embedded and preserved in the Earth's crust
- ♦ **devoid** – completely lacking, destitute or empty
- ♦ **viable** – workable, suitable

Green Revolution

The Green Revolution refers to the technological advances in agriculture that changed the way farmers managed their farms. These changes allowed farmers to grow and harvest more crops with less manpower.

The Green Revolution, first coined by William Goud, demonstrated the power and influence that science and technology have over the economic, social and institutional environment within which they operate. Traditional agriculture practices involved few or little inputs, with Mother Nature taking care of the crop. However, at some point in history, an improved method of farming arose; the Green Revolution. This focussed on three interrelated actions.

Firstly, breeding programmes for staple cereals to produce early maturing, day-insensitive and high yielding varieties. Secondly, the organisation and distribution of fertilisers, pesticides and water regulators, and lastly the implementation of these technological innovations.

The Green Revolution describes a rapid increase in the production of crops ranging from wheat to rice. It led to a boom in the agriculture industry. It was the technological response to a worldwide food shortage which became threatening in the period after the World War II.

The beginnings of the Green Revolution are often attributed to Norman Borlaug, an American scientist interested in agriculture. He is known as the 'Father of the Green Revolution'. He is credited with saving over a billion people from starvation. He developed new disease resistance high-yield varieties of wheat.

By combining his wheat varieties with new mechanised agricultural technologies, Mexico was able to produce more wheat than was needed by its own citizens, leading to its becoming an exporter of wheat by the 1960s. Prior to this, the country was importing almost half of its wheat supply.

In India, the seeds of green revolution were first tested during the drought of 1964-65. M. S. Swaminathan an Indian geneticist, is known as 'Father of Indian Green Revolution' for his leadership and success in introducing and further developing high-yielding varieties of wheat in India. These seeds were planted in different soils of Punjab, Delhi, Pusa and Kanpur.

The yield was over 4,000 kg per hectare which was approximately about four times the yield of local varieties. These varieties were then replicated for public cultivation. High yielding varieties programme was introduced in the kharif season of 1966. States like Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh reaped the benefits of the green revolution in wheat, while production of rice increased in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

There are around twelve components of Green Revolution such as high yielding varieties of seeds (HYV), irrigation – surface and ground, use of chemical fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides, Command Area Development (CAD), land reforms, consolidation of holdings, supply of agricultural credit, electrification of rural areas, construction of roads and markets, farm mechanism and development of agricultural universities.

These components do not work in isolation. Infact it is the consolidated development of all these components that result in the overall development. Green Revolution has influenced Indian Economy to a large extent. One major problem lies in the fact that the revolution did not spread evenly to all the parts of the country.

With the introduction of Green Revolution in 1967-68, there was a phenomenal increase in the production of food grains, especially the wheat. Thus, Green Revolution in India can be exclusively called wheat revolution. Green Revolution increased production thus bringing prosperity to the farmers. The increased production within the country made the country self-sufficient and self-reliant in food grains. This led to a considerable decrease in the quantity of import. In fact, now many a times we are in a position to export.

With the use of mechanised and scientific methods in farming, industries too sprang up. Tractors, harvesters, threshers, electrical motors, diesel engines, pumps etc began to be manufactured on a large scale. Besides demands for pesticides, fertilisers, insecticides increased the number of fertiliser plants in the country. Consequently, there were increased employment opportunities, especially in the rural areas.

Even though, Green Revolution turned out to be a unique event in the history of Independent India by resolving the problems of hunger, famine and starvation, yet it had certain demerits. Green Revolution has greatly profited the rich farmers but has failed to profit the smaller ones. Rather the income gap between the rich, marginal and small farmers has increased. Moreover, not all parts of the country were benefitted. All the crops could not reap the benefits of green revolution except rice and wheat. Moreover, the revolution took off with a great start but it could not sustain its growth rate and productivity rate over the subsequent years.

The green revolution had some disadvantages too. It led to a change in dietary habits, as fewer people were affected by hunger and died from starvation, many were affected by malnutrition such as iron or vitamin-A deficiencies. Nutritional content of the products thus yielded were questioned. Also the consumption of the pesticides used to kill pests by humans in some cases may have increased the likelihood of cancer. Poor farming practices including non-compliance to usage of masks and over-usage of the chemicals compounded this situation.

There are varying opinions about the effect of the green revolution on wild biodiversity. Land degradation and soil nutrients depletion have forced farmers to clear up formerly forested areas in order to keep up with production. Moreover, most high intensity agricultural production is highly reliant on non-renewable resources. Agricultural machinery and transport, as well as the production of pesticides and nitrates all depend on fossil fuels. The essential mineral nutrient phosphorus is often a limiting factor in crop cultivation, while the phosphorus mines are rapidly being depleted worldwide. The failure to depart from these non-sustainable agricultural production methods could potentially lead to a large scale collapse of the current system of intensive food production within this century.

“The green revolution has an entirely different meaning to most people in the affluent nations of the privileged world than to those in the developing nations of the forgotten world”, said Norman Borlaug. Although the green revolution has been able to improve agricultural output in many regions, there was and there is still room for improvement.

Therefore, in 2006 Ex-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for a second green revolution in the country that would focus on non-food crops, horticulture and new plant varieties. Singh said, “Science and technology have benefited the Indian farmer but there still remains the challenge of bridging the development gap between urban and rural India. This requires a second green revolution in non-food crops, horticulture and new plant varieties”. Taking into consideration the criticism that the first green revolution faced, Singh said that the second one should focus on dry land agriculture and benefit small and marginal farmers. He also spoke on the need for decentralisation and inter-linking of rivers for promoting rural development.

Hence, in order to do away with the ill-effects of green revolution, we need to widen the cultivated area, include maximum variety of crops, use effective irrigation and increase the intensity of cropping. We also need to find ways to benefit our small and marginal farmers, only then the green revolution can spread truly to all parts of the country.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **manpower** – the power of human physical strength
- ♦ **coined** – invent, create
- ♦ **geneticist** – a biologist who specialises in the study of heredity and variation in organisms
- ♦ **replicated** – reproduced, duplicated, repeated
- ♦ **reaped** – obtained, gained, derived
- ♦ **consolidation** – strengthening, combination
- ♦ **phenomenal** – extraordinary, remarkable
- ♦ **threshers** – a farm machine for separating seeds or grain from the husks and straw
- ♦ **famine** – an acute insufficiency or shortage of food
- ♦ **affluent** – wealthy, prosperous
- ♦ **decentralisation** – process of redistributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things away from a central location or authority
- ♦ **intensity** – the amount or degree



Earthquake *A Natural Calamity*

An earthquake is defined as “a movement of the ground surface which can range from a quaint, negligible tremor to a wild shaking capable of great destruction.” Geographically, it can be understood as “a form of energy wave motion transmitted through the surface layer of Earth in widening circles from a point of sudden energy release called the focus.” The intensity or the magnitude of the earthquake is measured on the Richter Scale.

The world’s most intensive earthquake measured until now has been 9.5 on the Richter Scale. As said earlier, the place of the origin or the place of the energy release is called the focus which is usually below the surface. The place perpendicular to the focus on the ground surface is called the epicentre.

The main reason behind the occurrence of an earthquake is the disequilibrium in the Earth’s crust. This disequilibrium can be caused by volcanic eruptions, faulting and folding, hydrostatic pressure of man-made water bodies such as reservoirs and lakes, and by the movement of the plates. The earthquakes in India along the Himalayan range and its foothills are caused by the shifting of plates.

An earthquake becomes a disastrous one only when it occurs in an inhabited area. Many a times an earthquake itself is not as disastrous as the other things like landslides and floods which are triggered by it. Earthquakes have a disastrous effect

on human beings as buildings, bridges, roads, dams, factories, railway lines etc get collapsed. The earthquakes sometimes wipe out towns and cities, entail great loss of human life, animals, property etc.

The two major earthquakes which took place in Bihar and on the Nepal border in the year 1984 and 1988 stand a testimony to the kind of destruction it can cause, especially to human structures. The 1993 earthquake in Latur, Maharashtra, the Bhuj; Gujarat earthquake in January 2001 are examples of earthquakes as hazardous and natural weapons of destruction.

The earthquakes that occur in water bodies generate high velocity waves such as Tsunami, causing large scale devastation along the coastal regions. The Tsunami that struck the coastal regions of South-East Asia in December 2005, brought about severe damage along the coastal areas in these regions. In 2011, the most tragic earthquake of magnitude 9.0 (Mw) hit Japan and caused Tsunami which led to loss of more than 15,000 lives in Japan. In addition to loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, the tsunami caused a number of nuclear accidents, primarily due to meltdowns at three reactors in the Nuclear Power Plant complex.

Recent studies by a number of geologists say that the glacial melting, in particular, will unleash pent-up pressures in the Earth's crust. Dramatic climate shifts of the past have also been associated with spectacular seismic activity. Aside from massive earthquake predictions, they believe we are in for other extreme geological events such as Tsunamis and volcanic eruptions.

In another set of research, geologist Jim Berkland claims to have a formula that uses animal behaviour to accurately forecast earthquakes. Reports also revealed how animals of all kinds throughout the coastal areas of Asia headed for the hills in time to avoid the Asian Tsunami. Some scientists argue that the factors that influence the birth and growth of earthquakes are so numerous and complex that measuring and analysing them is impossible. But they rightly said that what can be done in this modern world where messages can be shared instantly across the globe is, that people after the first tremors itself, can alert the others at some distance away, giving them seconds to brace themselves. But the ultimate goal of accurately specifying the time, location and magnitude of a future earthquake of is extremely difficult.

Different cases also illustrate how inaccurate predictions can lead to panic and unnecessary evacuations on one hand, or a false sense of security on the other. And even if the predictions are exact, we would still need evacuation plans and earthquake-proof buildings – and these measures do not depend on prediction.

Even after all the advancement in the technology sector, earthquakes still cannot be predicted with certainty. In order to avoid the casualties we can only take some preventive measures. For instance: we can design our cities to be as earthquake-resistant as possible. Damage to buildings is a serious cause of human injury and death during an earthquake. This earthquake-proof planning and design of buildings can be adopted. People should closely inspect their house and workplace to determine if there are structural dangers.

Expert advice regarding the same would be beneficial. Apart from this, heavy objects from high places should be removed. Special care should be taken with the location of toxic or flammable products to prevent the occurrence of leaks and spills.

Also the exits of the building should be obstacle free. Most importantly people should be made aware of these measures and also of the way to tackle the calamity.

Moreover, it would not be wrong to say that a natural calamity has one strong power: the power to unite the humanity as one. After every earthquake the support and prayers from the non-hit areas is tremendous.

Along with different governments, WHO, UNICEF, United Nation and people from all across the globe should do every bit they can by donating in various kinds. The dream is to be able to forecast earthquakes like we can predict the weather. Even a few minutes' early warning would be enough for people to move away from walls or ceilings that might collapse or for nuclear plants and other critical facilities to be shut down safely in advance of the temblor. And if accurate predictions could be made a few days in advance, any necessary evacuations could be planned.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| ♦ quaint | – strange, unusual, unfamiliar | ♦ unleash | – release, unloose |
| ♦ tremor | – small earthquake | ♦ spectacular | – remarkable, striking |
| ♦ intensive | – serious, exhaustive | ♦ seismic | – subject to or caused by an earthquake |
| ♦ perpendicular | – straight | ♦ brace | – steady, support, secure |
| ♦ faulting | – to shift so as to produce a fault | ♦ evacuations | – clearance, emptying |
| ♦ triggered | – caused, produced | ♦ temblor | – shaking and vibration at the surface of the earth resulting from underground movement, earthquake |
| ♦ testimony | – evidence, confirmation, proof | | |



Sustainable Development

The Need of the Hour

Sustainable development is a road-map, an action plan, for achieving sustainability in any activity that uses resources and where immediate and intergenerational replication is demanded. As such, sustainable development is the organising principle for sustaining finite resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. It is a process that envisions a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the “integrity, stability and beauty” of natural biotic systems.

The concept of sustainable development was popularised in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development. In its report it defined the idea as “Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”, i.e. without stripping the natural world of resources future generations would need.

All too often, development is driven by one particular need, without fully considering the wider or future impacts. We are already seeing the damage this kind of approach can cause, from large-scale financial crises caused by irresponsible banking, to changes in global climate resulting from our dependence on fossil fuel-based energy sources. The longer we pursue unsustainable development, the more frequent and severe its consequences are likely to become. Climate change is one of the hotly contested debates of our times. Studies have shown that at many places around the

Earth, climate change has already started and wreaked havoc on the surroundings. The reason behind such drastic effects is the human claim on the Earth’s resources. Human civilisations have been around for a paltry 12,000 years — barely a few seconds on the geological clock. In that short amount of time, we’ve managed to create quite a ruckus, etching our dominance over Nature with our villages, towns, cities, megacities. The rapid increase of human populations has left us battling with other species for limited resources, and the unmitigated burning of fossil fuels has now created a blanket of carbon dioxide around the world, which is slowly but surely increasing the average global temperature.

The time is right to ask ourselves “Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environment?” If we want to undo the mess that we have made on this Earth, then we need to follow the ideas of sustainable development. Sustainable development promotes the thinking that social, environmental and economic progress, all are attainable within the limits of our Earth’s natural resources. All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system—a system that connects space; and a system that connects time. When you think of the world as a system over space, you grow to understand that air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia, and that pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia.

Sustainable development constantly seeks to achieve social and economic progress in ways that will not exhaust the Earth’s finite natural resources. The needs of the world today are real and immediate, yet it’s necessary to develop ways to meet these needs that do not disregard the future. The capacity of our ecosystem is not limitless, meaning that future generations may not be able to meet their needs the way we are able to now if we continue to deplete the resources at an unforgiving pace, for growth that is unmanaged and not sustained will lead to increased poverty and decline of the environment.

If one goes deeper into the issue then at one point it will surely be realized that the increasing number of humans on Earth is the main reason behind the destruction of its resources at a rate that cannot be sustained. Therefore, population management has a major role to play before the concepts of sustainable development can truly be realised. And in a country like India, with the second largest population of the world having millions under the poverty line, sustainable development takes a back seat when the question of meeting one’s daily needs arises. No doubt, there are many issues that need to be resolved but if we want to see our progeny on this Earth, we need to take some active and urgent steps and sustainable development is the first step that needs to be taken. If we want to see our future generations progress then we must remember the words of Mr Lester R Brown, who once said : “We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **sustainable** – able to be maintained at a certain rate or level
- ♦ **intergenerational** – relating to, involving, or affecting several generations
- ♦ **replication** – imitation
- ♦ **envisions** – visualisations
- ♦ **stripping** – wiping
- ♦ **severe** – brutal
- ♦ **wreaked havoc** – caused destruction
- ♦ **paltry** – worthless
- ♦ **ruckus** – disturbance
- ♦ **etching** – engraving
- ♦ **scorched** – parched (here burned)
- ♦ **impoverished** – ruined
- ♦ **attainable** – within reach
- ♦ **progeny** – forthcoming generations/children



Tiger Conservation

Tiger is the national animal of India. As the national animal of India, tiger symbolises India's wildlife wealth. It is chosen as the national animal for the combination of grace, strength, agility and enormous power. Also, India is home to the largest number of tigers in the world and consists of approximately 50% of the world's tiger population. Yet this creature is the most slaughtered one in the country, so much so that it was on a verge of getting extinct. It was in 1970, that the alarm was raised and thus hunting of tigers was made illegal.

During the British rule in India, tiger was hunted in large numbers for several reasons. Hunting tiger was a popular source of entertaining sport for the royal families and elites; they were killed for the beautiful skin which was used for making clothes, rugs etc; for its multitude of medicinal properties and for other selfish interests. There was and there is a huge demand for tiger parts and products in the market outside India's border, which is proving an added threat to the tiger's very existence. It has been observed that large development projects like mining, thermal and hydroelectric dams are also affecting the tiger's habitat as many forests have been destroyed to facilitate such projects. Activists have rightly put the slogan :

"Tigers are killed for greed and not out of need".

Tiger conservation is most crucial for the whole planet for numerous reasons. As a large predator, tiger plays significant role in maintaining the equilibrium of the ecosystem. Tiger along with other predators keeps a check on the herbivore animals, thus help in maintaining the right balance of animals. This in turn checks deforestation. This way with just one tiger several acres of forests can be protected. Apart from the benefits to human beings, tigers and other animals will also get their natural habitat.

In order to control all this, Project Tiger was initiated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1973 with the aim of creating a safe and ideal environmental condition for the survival and growth of tigers and its prey. Over the time it has saved tigers and has identified and eliminated the factors responsible for the decline of tiger population in the country. In order to conserve tigers, the project started with 9 Tiger Reserves and today stands with 28 Reserves across the country. Since its launch, the tiger population has shown a gradual increase. Other than conserving, the main aim of Project Tiger has been to aid and facilitate the breeding of tigers within a safe environment and then transport these tigers further afield so that their world population can be upped.

Though Project Tiger tackled various issues over the past 20 years, it has not been able to keep pace with the rapid changes that have occurred. In 2006, it was replaced by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Along with governmental projects, some NGOs and individuals are implementing a variety of conservation activities to protect tiger habitats, mitigate tiger-human conflict, tackle wildlife crime, monitor tiger populations, raise awareness and improve the livelihoods of people living next to tigers. Efforts are also being done to save the rarely seen white tigers. Along with this, NDTV-Aircel Save Our Tigers, a social campaign was launched to create awareness about the alarming state of the tiger in the country.

The campaign is supported by India's Superstar Amitabh Bachchan, Sanctuary Asia, India's premier wildlife magazine and the Wildlife Conservation Trust. On this Amitabh Bachchan said : "Collective action is the need of the hour. It is for the government, wildlife experts, the media and the public to come together and affect a change." And added "If my face and voice can be used to impress people about a national cause then I am all for it." Later, MS Dhoni too became the face of the campaign.

Despite all these problems, India still holds the best chance for saving the tiger in the wild. Tigers are found in 17 states within India, with 7 states reportedly having a population in excess of 100 tigers. Adequate funding and international pressure will help. But probably the most effective way to conserve tiger in India is to enhance NGO participation to keep the issue energised on a national level and to increase general awareness. The Indian conservation and scientific community is now a proven force; it needs to be strengthened.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **agility** – sharpness, cleverness
- ♦ **slaughtered** – beat, kill
- ♦ **verge** – edge, border
- ♦ **extinct** – having no living member, no longer in existence
- ♦ **rug** – carpet, floor mat
- ♦ **multitude** – in large number, numerous
- ♦ **facilitate** – aid, enable
- ♦ **predator** – hunter, an animal that survives by killing and eating other animals
- ♦ **equilibrium** – balance, stability
- ♦ **herbivore** – animals that feed on plants
- ♦ **reserves** – facility where animals are brought to live in their natural habitat and be protected for the rest of their lives
- ♦ **breeding** – the producing of offspring
- ♦ **afield** – away from home
- ♦ **mitigate** – ease, lessen

I. Famous, Proverbs & Sayings

A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever

Beauty is a combination of qualities that award pleasure to the senses. Admiring beauty is an inborn instinct in human beings. Beauty both of nature and of human form have been a powerful attraction for men and women of all times. Man has developed an eye for beauty right from the stone age. The earliest cave-paintings depicting animals and trees show the cave man's penchant for artistic creations.

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever” is the opening line of ‘Endymion’, the famous poem of John Keats, an English poet. Keats was a great lover of beauty in all its varied forms. According to Keats beauty is immortal. A thing of beauty is a constant source of pleasure and it never dies. Another poet, William Wordsworth, wrote the much-read poem on daffodils, four years after he had seen them. This was because they left an indelible impression on his memory. Sanskrit poet Kalidas, has also described the beauty of the forest blooming all around in spring time, in his poem, Kumar Sambhava.

A painter always remains in search of a place where he could find his muse in the form of nature or a human being to adorn his canvas with an everlasting charm of beauty. A musician creates beauty by the soothing blend of notes and tunes. Beauty of thoughts, feelings and expressions is more transcendental, inexplicable and of purer quality. Such beauty is found in great works of art, literature and others like these. The paintings of Raphael or Vinci, the music of Beethoven or Chopin, the poetry of Homer, Virgil or Milton and Tagore, the works of Shakespeare or Kalidas or the sculptures by Leonardo da Vinci or that of Ajanta and Ellora cast a mesmerising spell upon a person's mind. The beauty underlying these great works is the sole reason behind their perpetual and permanent appeal. It is the beauty and appeal of such work that enriches our culture and makes it enduring through ages.

A beautiful object fills the heart with joy and delight. There are moments of life which we cherish. Confrontation with a beautiful thing may be of a short duration but its memory lasts for a long time. A rose seen for ten minutes gives instantaneous delight for ten minutes but if that scene is remembered twenty times, the joy becomes twenty fold. It requires gift of imagination to revive and relive the happy moments spent in the company of beautiful things.

Any gift from a loved one— no matter how small or insignificant it may be— is full of beauty for the recipient. A small task completed by a person with hard labour and work is full of beauty for that person. A child's first spoken words or his first step holds incomparable beauty for the parents. A beginner's first painting—no matter how faulty— is full of beauty for the beginner as well as his teacher.

The beauty here lies in the feelings hidden behind a task completed and not the task itself. The sincere efforts made in order to accomplish and achieve something comprise of the beauty which of course becomes a joy forever.

When we talk about beauty, it doesn't merely refer to the outward physical beauty, but also the inner beauty, the beauty of thoughts and intentions. Many great personalities like Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa, wore the radiance of their inner beauty.

Spiritual beauty is something nobler and higher than physical beauty. It touches the soul. The pleasure one derives from it is sublime. Spiritual beauty is accompanied by truth and goodness as expressed by a sage-Satyam Shivam Sundaram. We find a similar view in Keats's poem, when he says, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'. Keats regards spiritual beauty as the source of true joy. Beauty according to Shelly is eternal. An object of nature may decay and many may die, yet both survive in thought for beauty never dies.

The beauty around us and within us keeps us going on in life. It is this beauty that charms us, hypnotises us and makes us fall in love with life.

When life seems dull and full of tears and sorrows, only, a look at the sun rising, the birds chirping and hopping all over can lift our sinking spirits. Even when the night seems too dark, a glance at the crescent or full moon gradually making its way through the starry sky will make us hopeful for another dawn.

"What is this life, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare".

Even though our surroundings abound in beauty, today's life has become so fast-paced, that we don't have time to even relax. Being close to nature and marvelling at the beauty of this world around us, will help us see life from a different perspective.

If we learn to see the beauty hidden behind everything in our lives, we will gradually reach the highest realms of truth. There is beauty even behind a sigh, a tear or a sorrow. There is beauty not only in the rose but also in the thorny bush that breeds it. There is beauty in the beautiful countryside as well as in the otherwise sordid city life. We only have to look deeper and feel with pure heart. Then only can we feel the beauty around and let it be a source of perpetual joy forever.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **instinct** – an innate, typically fixed pattern of behaviour in animals in response to certain stimuli
- ♦ **pendant** – a strong or habitual liking for something or tendency to do something
- ♦ **immortal** – living forever, never dying or decaying
- ♦ **indelible** – permanent, lasting
- ♦ **adorn** – make more beautiful or attractive
- ♦ **muse** – a guiding spirit, a source of inspiration
- ♦ **transcendental** – being beyond ordinary or common experience, thought, or belief; supernatural
- ♦ **inexplicable** – incapable of being explained or accounted for
- ♦ **mesmerising** – attract strongly, as if with a magnet
- ♦ **perpetual** – everlasting, permanent, endless, eternal
- ♦ **instantaneous** – occurring with no delay, immediate, prompt
- ♦ **sublime** – noble, magnificent, glorious
- ♦ **sordid** – filthy, unclean, wretched

✧ If Winter Comes, Can Spring Be Far Behind?

Human life is a mingled thread of joy and sorrow. Like day and night, happiness and sorrow are inseparably woven in our life. Every sorrow has a spark of joy behind, every adversity provides an opportunity for the fuller and greater flowering of manhood, every disappointment sharpen's man's resolve to conquer adverse force. It is but true to say that "if winter comes, can spring be far behind."

Human life is a state of existence in which there is much to be endured and little to be enjoyed, or as Thomas Hardy has put it, "happiness is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain."

The changes of fortune, fall from prosperity, sudden misery and suffering are extremely common in this world. However, the question is whether man is going to endure "the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune" or by taking arms against them, end them or just make an abject surrender to them and thus bring more misery and sorrow into his life. Obviously, the duty of man is to put up a heroic resistance against the sea of troubles and fight these ills without submitting to them.

Alexander Pope had very rightly said, "Hope springs eternal in human midst, Man never is but always to be blest." It is this hope that continuously wells up in a person's heart and makes him exclaim that if winter comes, can spring be far behind? Rather it is the coming of winter that makes the arrival of spring surer than ever. The sinking sun promises before it melts into the golden sea that it will come back tomorrow with a beautiful dawn and a better, sunnier day. It is the clouds that for sometime hide the sun but that does not mean the sun is not there.

So what if the Earth seems to be barren and fruitless, so what if the trees seem dead standing stark naked ripped of their last of the leaves and the wind sounds hollow and scary. A few days more and the Earth will spring forth with life, teeming with flowers and birds, bees humming and the breezes singing. It is this dead winter that promises a lively spring. The quotation referred to originated from Percy Shelley's poem, 'Ode to the West Wind.' The poet wants his dead and dull thoughts to be scattered like dead leaves by the West Wind, so that new and fresh thoughts can regenerate in him. As winter is sure to be followed by spring, in the same way, dark and unhappy days of life are bound to be followed by a period of happiness and joy. Winter symbolises barrenness, while spring stands for abundance, joyousness and fruitfulness.

The American recluse poetess, Emily Dickinson relates her own experience in life about 'hope' and concludes

*"I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest sea—
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me".*

Yes, hope is the only thing in life that never expects anything in return but has since ages pushed and surged forward even through difficult times and trying moments.

"Hope is the rope that swings you through life".

Even when misfortune and adversity strikes to break the determination of man, hope flies in like a reliable anchor, like a trustworthy friend to hold on to and survive the thick clouds of darkness, gloom, despair. Nature too has sprinkled its message of hope and courage. With thorns we have roses, after rain there is a rainbow, in every dark cloud there exists a silver lining, if there is winter snow, there is the summer sun to melt it.

It is the characteristic of a weak will and a short-sighted person to lose heart in the face of obstacles and hardships. But a man of faith, courage and confidence pursues his goal with unflinching determination, persistent patience, rock-like strength and steady perseverance. One famous example from the history of sports is that of Florence May Chadwick, the first woman to swim across the English channel, in both directions.

When she was attempting to swim across the Catalina Channel, a thick fog enveloped the coastline, making her think that the coast was very far away. As a result, she quit. However, later she found out that her destination was just a mile away. She regretted her decision of not persisting to achieve her goal. One has to remain firm with indomitable will and determination in the face of rough times and then only can one sail through life with one's head held high.

"People do not lack strength, they lack the will".

—Victor Hugo

Today, people are having a miserable existence, due to frustration and despair taking centre stage in their lives. The alarming rate of suicides amongst the youth is testimonial to the pessimistic attitude that they are harbouring. Life is like a see-saw. What goes down, will subsequently come up.

Today various factors of life have made man morbidly tired of himself. In the midst of intellectual, moral and spiritual bankruptcy, the forces of optimism though bleak, appear to be the only sustaining force. In our frustration we are made to think that life is devoid of joy and happiness. It is wrong on our part to lose faith in the ultimate goodness of things. We must realise that in the course of life good and evil days follow in succession. Each follows the other as night follows the day. Indeed, it is human nature to welcome joys and condemn sorrows. But we must bear sufferings with patience and fortitude in the hope that as spring follows winter, joy will follow sorrow.

One should not reach the lowest ebb of his life if hardship knocks at the door and the winds blow adversely. One has to keep pressing against the storm, only then one can reach the spring of his dreams, the paradise of his hopes and the land of one's own achievements. One will have to survive the winter, live through the night and beat the storm in order to emerge out as a winner in the end.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **eternal** – everlasting, lasting, permanent
- ♦ **barren** – unproductive, dry, useless
- ♦ **endured** – experience, suffer, bear
- ♦ **outrageous** – shocking, terrible, violent
- ♦ **abject** – wretched, miserable, hopeless
- ♦ **surged** – increase, rise, grow, jump, boost
- ♦ **unflinching** – determined, firm, steady
- ♦ **ebb** – the receding movement of the tide
- ♦ **perseverance** – resolution, determination
- ♦ **indomitable** – difficult or impossible to defeat or subdue
- ♦ **morbidly** – suggesting an unhealthy mental state or attitude; unwholesomely gloomy, sensitive, extreme
- ♦ **fortitude** – courage in pain or adversity
- ♦ **deceptive** – misleading, false, fake

All that Glitters is Not Gold

Appearances are often deceptive. Many things may superficially appear very attractive but when they are examined from close quarters, they prove to be disappointing. One cannot judge the quality of a thing by seeing its exterior portion only. Every shining metal is not gold.

In reality, many a times it is the fake one that glitters more. Even that useless broken piece of a glass that can do nothing but cut through flesh and make it bleed will shine with great glory as the sun rays fall and dance upon its surface. But that reflection of prismatic colours do not change that wounding piece of glass into gold.

“All that glitters is not gold”, is a popular saying, which means that not everything that looks valuable or true, turns out to be like that. This applies to people, places or things that claim to be more worthwhile than they actually are. This expression was used by William Shakespeare in his famous play, ‘The Merchant of Venice’.

Looks can be greatly beguiling. Gold is a valuable metal. It has an attractive shine to it but it is not necessary that everything which shines like gold is precious. Some of the pale dull things may also possess immense value. This is true in case of humans too. A person may put up false show of kindness, charity, love, respect and other kinds of virtues. People even get swayed by that artful pretence of such people showing their true colours.

Very often, things are not what they seem to be. We often form our opinion about objects on the basis of superficial impression. One should always try to find out the true nature of things. We should try to find out the reality hidden behind their glittering facade. A book with a beautiful cover has no guarantee of its being interesting.

A person may pretend to be noble, hiding his defects. One cannot judge a person from his smiling face or cheerful appearance. Most of the times, they are covered by false masks, faces and appearances. In fact, history has repeatedly proved that people have worn multiple masks in order to reach the highest ladder of success. People often make use of trickery, cunningness, hypocrisy and flattery in order to achieve their dreams. They belie their inward reality of shallowness and hollowness by a fantastic and blinding show of grave morality.

And due to such false appearances, morally depraved have easily passed as great moralists before the world, fools have passed as wise, dishonest people have been thought of as honest, liars as great protectors of truth, wicked as sincere friends and traitors as great patriots. The garb of fine dresses, good manners, sweet voice, kind behaviour and honey-dripping personality works out well with such persons as people at large are often swayed by such sweetness. But rarely do they realise that under this rosy appearance lies the serpent quietly coiled up ready to sting at the slightest provocation.

It is in fact very easy to befool and misguide people by putting on a garb of goodness by means of fine dresses and speeches. People fall prey to good manners and good appearances. Human mind is gullible and foolish. It is often taken captive by what is

shown and does not care to see what lies behind. Hence, people are often deceived because of such appearances. A thirsty traveller in a desert mistakes the sand shining under the sun for an oasis of water. If mother nature can play games with humans, then humans, no doubt, can take their fellow humans for a ride.

Sycophancy and hypocrisy can, of course, help people for sometime to climb the social and economic ladder but concealment cannot work for long. Gold proves itself as purer than ever before when tried and tested, but it is the fake one that fails at the slightest touch of test.

Thus, it has been rightly and aptly said that everything is not exactly as it seems. A shiny piece of metal shining gloriously in the sun from afar, turns out to be a useless piece of sharp-edged tin if examined closely.

With consumerism on the rise in today's times, we find so many products to choose from, in the market. A beautifully packaged product, advertised aggressively attracts more number of customers. However, more often, these products prove useless in the long run. Similarly, we have witnessed the rise of men donning saffron robes, the so-called 'Godmen', claiming to be the masters of supernatural powers. But they are mere mortals like each one of us, who have taken to fooling innocent people in the name of religion and spirituality.

Thus, before making hasty judgements based on what seems to be, one should take time to try and peep behind the facade of make-believe sweetness and politeness. One should use wisdom and discretion to weigh the appearance against what lurks behind as truth. Then only one can learn to differentiate between gold and the rest that glitters as gold.

"Beauty is skin-deep".

We must remember that the real beauty is the beauty of heart, mind and soul. In simplicity, lies Godliness. Gold symbolises purity. Let us imbibe it in our character.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **prismatic** – bright spectral colours
- ♦ **beguiling** – charming, interesting, pleasing, attractive
- ♦ **swayed** – influenced
- ♦ **grave** – serious, important, significant
- ♦ **depraved** – corrupt, abandoned, perverted, evil
- ♦ **traitors** – one who betrays one's country, a cause, or a trust, especially one who commits treason
- ♦ **provocation** – aggravation, irritation
- ♦ **gullible** – naive and easily deceived or tricked
- ♦ **captive** – one held in the grip of a strong emotion or passion
- ♦ **façade** – a showy misrepresentation intended to conceal something unpleasant
- ♦ **sycophancy** – self-seeking or servile flattery
- ♦ **donning** – put on (an item of clothing)
- ♦ **discretion** – consideration, judgment, caution, diplomacy
- ♦ **hypocrisy** – to pretend to have beliefs, qualities virtues etc which one does not actually have

A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing

Knowledge is the foremost tool of empowerment. It is the key to success in life. Knowledge, along with the power to think and analyse, differentiates men from animals. The great scientist, Newton had observed, that knowledge is extensive. It's true that one can't master everything in the world. However, learning something incompletely can prove dangerous in the long run.

The origin of the proverb could be traced to a composition by Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism. But, he used the word 'learning' instead of 'knowledge'. The purport, according to Pope was that people who did not know much, thought that they knew everything.

Be it any stream of knowledge or any part of wisdom, an indepth knowledge of it is necessary in order to be able to formulate an opinion or develop a line of thought. Whether it is art, science, literature, politics, technology, communication, astronomy, computers, economics, administration, law etc., or whether it is simply about life in general, one has to have great, deep and wide knowledge about it in order to be able to speak about it—for or against. This is necessarily, needed and demanded especially in today's world where opinions are challenged and words have to pay a price.

An ill-informed soldier will get himself foolishly killed if he has no knowledge of war strategies or else will even more foolishly kill his own comrades. A teacher will instill absurd knowledge and inverted concepts if he has no real learning himself. An industrialist will ruin his own fortune as well as that of the others if he has no true knowledge about his own business. A lawyer will ruin his clients' fate without thorough knowledge of law and legality. A dumb engineer's bridge is sure to collapse and God save a patient from a dumber doctor.

Therefore, it is always very dangerous to rely on such half-knowledge. It is rather better to have no knowledge and learning than to prove to be a fool with an incomplete one. Wise people are usually quiet when fools talk. And it is this blindness of fools to their own lack of knowledge which lets them remain in their benighted condition for the rest of their lives. They are blind to their follies and rather cover them up with their superficial learning and hence close all doors for further learning and advancement. A wise person is also fully informed about his own ignorance so that he can shovel away the cobwebs of his ignorance and enlighten himself with the weapon of knowledge. (People with real wisdom are like those trees over-laden with fruit which appears to be bending low so that everyone can enjoy their blessed fruits. It is the man of little learning who is haughty and self-conceited, standing erect like a dry and rotten tree which breaks but does not bend, hence, in turn, loses its very own existence.)

In this era of expert knowledge, a little knowledge of the world stands nowhere. One has to keep oneself updated in order to be somewhere in this world. Moreover, where every word spoken is accountable and is scrutinised closely one cannot get away with sweeping statements which in reality conceal shallow knowledge. It has been proved many a times that words spoken without any real knowledge and statements given without true understanding have often created trouble and controversy.

Words uttered thoughtlessly have created mess which is cleared often by apologies. Thus, if one wants to stay away from troubles one has to learn to be aware of one's own world around and continuously gather knowledge as readily as children enjoy gathering flowers in a garden during spring time.

"Learning is a life-long process".

There is no upper age limit for learning. However, whatever one starts learning, must be taken to its completion. In this fast-paced life, everybody is busy gathering bits and pieces of information from wherever possible. However, a complete hold on any particular area is lacking. Therefore we must be patient enough to gain expertise in our chosen field before shifting to another. Youngsters must be taught to test their 'knowledge' only when they are sure that it won't harm them or others.

We must follow the middle path. Neither should we be content with less knowledge nor should go overboard as we learn. Knowledge teaches us to be humble and compassionate. Only this can maintain order and harmony in society.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **purport** – intention, purpose
- ♦ **comrades** – companion, friend, partner
- ♦ **absurd** – utterly or obviously senseless, illogical, or untrue, contrary to all reason or common sense
- ♦ **inverted** – to reverse the position, order, or condition of
- ♦ **benighted** – uncivilised, backward
- ♦ **shovel** – move, shift
- ♦ **cobwebs** – Confusion; disorder
- ♦ **haughty** – disdainfully proud, snobbish, arrogant
- ♦ **self-conceited** – characteristic of false pride, having an exaggerated sense of self-importance

Boys Prefer Sports, Girls Prefer Clothes

If we were to consider the young people of, say, fifty years ago, the statement would have been undeniably true. In those days, sports were predominantly a male pursuit. The girls were considered the fairer sex and they were more concerned about their appearance. Thus the preference was for the beautiful clothes.

The movie, Bend It Like Beckham, in the year 2002, showcased this stereotype that was imposed on two teenage girls. Both the girls were passionate about soccer. But, the Indian girl's mother wanted her to stay at home and learn cooking. The other girl's mother also wanted her daughter to behave in a 'lady like' manner and quit playing soccer.

Now-a-days, this statement is no longer true. There are as many games for girls as there are for boys. With the exception of some games like rugby, girls participate in almost all the other games. In athletics, we see girls performing just as good as the boys, some even better. They jump, run, throw and generally enjoy the sporting events as much as the boys do. In fact, some girls are really aggressive and highly competitive. Girls are seen elbowing one another in a basketball game, uttering objectionable and abusive words when angry and shouting hoarsely while cheering or jeering the participants—so much for the myth that girls are weaker and not sports

loving. They definitely revel in sports, with some exceptions. Anyway we can say the same for some of the boys too. Not all of them love sports or excel in it.

The female participation in sports has led to some previously unheard-of phenomena. For example, each of the female participants in most international sports meets must undergo a sex test. Imagine, a girl has to prove that she is a girl before she can participate. I suppose the controlling sport bodies have no choice but to conduct such tests. If we look at some of the female athletes of today, especially those from the East European countries, we would sympathise with the sport bodies. Some of these ‘girls’ are built more like men! It reflects on the extremes some countries have gone to just to produce medal winning athletes. It is a kind of madness.

Talking about clothes, we find that it is no longer a female domain. Boys love fancy clothes and the latest fashion just as much as girls do. Departmental stores have sections devoted specially for the males. We have boys and men who are so label-conscious that they will not touch the ‘inferior’ stuff. They would gladly spend anything for an in-style outfit just to impress the fairer sex. Clothes are means to gauge the status and the acceptability of a person. Faded blue jeans are ‘in’ with certain groups while outrageous ‘new-wave’ fashion has gripped others. In the fifties, it was the teddy-boys’ look. Then, the hippies look took over. After that, the types of clothes and fashion that have proliferated is beyond imagination. Now, it has become impossible for an average person to keep up with every bit of development in the fashion world.

If we ask who are the people responsible for such preoccupation with clothes, we can only point our fingers at the fashion designers and trendsetters. And who are these people who can sway the rest of the world? They are predominantly males. Designers, pop singers and other trend setters are mostly males. It therefore shows that our values are undergoing drastic changes.

Today, girls are giving tough competition to boys in every field. Girls are now more keen to learn ‘martial arts’ than ‘arts’ like sewing, weaving, cooking etc.

Apart from this increasing female indulgence in sports and male indulgence in clothes, it can be said that there are still some who subscribe to the old belief that boys prefer sports and girls prefer clothes. This belief is however slowly being eroded away. Soon the day will come when boys and girls will participate together in all kinds of pursuits without obvious preferences. Unisex saloons, women soccer, male models walking on ramps are some of the modern developments—all pointing to the changing values in society.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **predominantly** – mainly, largely, chiefly, mostly, generally
- ♦ **jeering** – abusing vocally; expressing contempt or ridicule
- ♦ **revel** – enjoy, relish
- ♦ **outrageous** – extremely unusual or unconventional; extraordinary
- ♦ **gripped** – to hold the interest or attention of
- ♦ **drastic** – extreme, strong
- ♦ **eroded** – to cause to diminish or deteriorate



Moderation

The Best Bet is the Key to Life

Moderation is the process of eliminating or lessening the extremes. It is used to bring about normal conditions in the field it is applied.

“Excess of every thing is bad”.

Mahatma Gandhi

In ancient times, the temple of Apollo at Greece, bore the inscription—“Nothing in excess.” In Christianity, drinking alcohol in small portions is allowed, but drunkenness is prohibited. Moderation is one of the three jewels of Taoist thought. It states that there is nothing that cannot be moderated, including actions, desires and thoughts. By following it, one achieves a more peaceful and natural state, and faces less hurdles in life.

Buddha had also emphasised on following the Middle Path. In Ashikaga Gakko, the oldest school in Japan, the ‘cup experiment’ is used to teach students the importance of moderation. In that, the cup is inclined when it’s empty. On pouring water into it, it becomes erect, but tilts again if more water is poured.

If we eat too much, we are liable to grow fat thus becoming vulnerable to so many diseases just waiting to do their dirty job on us. If we do not eat enough, then we will suffer the consequences of malnutrition. Overeating and not eating enough are extremes, they don’t help us to live life fully.

Everything in this world has its opposites and this is an unavoidable fact of life. We know something is hot only in relation to something cold. A person is tall only when compared to a shorter person. We are rich only when compared to a poorer person. Freedom is only meaningful when we experience the shackles of restrictions. We value our health because we know that we are capable of falling ill.

Society has a penchant for youthfulness. So in its extreme, everybody tries to remain young. Cosmetics sell in huge quantities. Boys and girls dress in all kinds of dresses that they think make them young and desirable. Middle-aged men and women too indulge in the same game. But nature has its way. People grow older moment by moment. Old codgers fight a losing battle with time.

Finally, when old age sets in they sit mournfully alone in old folk’s homes or stately mansions with nobody around but a servant. The desirable extreme of trying to remain young forever results in the unhappy extreme of feeling sad. If in the first place, we are moderate with our lives, not identifying with youth or old age, then it will not matter at all when we are old. We can live peacefully with ourselves and let nature run its course painlessly, gently.

So it is with other areas of life as well. A super rich person is afraid of losing his wealth. His riches keeps him anxious. He is a prisoner of wealth. A person living in abject poverty is anxious about where his next meal will come from. He is a prisoner of fate. A moderate person who simply works for his living has no fear of losing his wealth and no worries about his next meal. Moderation carries him along without any problem.

Those who over-exercise burn themselves out. Those who sit sedately all day suffer from atrophy. A boy who studies all the time has no friends. Another who only makes friends fails in his examinations. Staying too long under the sun can result in heatstroke and sunburn.

Not going out in the sun at all makes the skin pale and pallid. Riding too fast on a motorcycle means you may lose balance. Not moving at all takes you nowhere. Sharpening a knife too often will wear the blade away quickly. Not sharpening at all will render the knife useless. Being extreme is always the cause of pain.

There are some people who are fanatically religious. They become blind to other things besides what they think religion demands of them. As a result, they live out of touch with reality and cause numerous problems to the rest of us. Their over-righteous attitude to life makes them see things only in two ways—right or wrong. They make for themselves a prison of their beliefs and damn the rest of us who do not agree with them.

Right on the opposite end are people without a strand of conscience in their hearts. They are more like animals who give way to all their lusts and desires. They say and do things that show no respect or concern for the other people. All they want is the satisfaction of their desires, regardless of the consequences.

Religious fanaticism or godlessness are extremes that will only bring grief to those involved in either of them. Both require taking of one side and complete avoidance of the other. The result is an imbalance that can only bring disaster.

A person who wishes to remain clear-headed will not indulge in any of these extremes. He does not blind his eyes with religious fury, nor does he inflame his heart with uncontrolled passion. He is a moderate person who lives his life gently and lets his conscience guide him. His life then proceeds along smoothly and calmly.

Moderation, then, is the key to life. It is the way to live our lives as it is meant to be lived.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| ♦ Taoist | – of or relating to the popular Chinese religious system based on the teachings of Lao-tzu | ♦ pallid | – having an abnormally pale or wan complexion |
| ♦ vulnerable | – liable or exposed to disease, disaster, etc | ♦ render | – make |
| ♦ shackles | – to restrict, confine, or hamper | ♦ fanatically | – Possessed with or motivated by excessive, irrational zeal |
| ♦ penchant | – a strong liking | ♦ over righteous | – excessively righteous/fair/good; usually implying hypocrisy |
| ♦ codgers | – a somewhat eccentric man, especially an old one | ♦ strand | – element |
| ♦ sedately | – calmly | ♦ fury | – violent anger; rage |
| ♦ atrophy | – degeneration as the result of disuse, malnutrition, etc. | ♦ inflame | – enrage, stimulate, provoke |

Look Before You Leap

It is always better to look before you leap or else there is a great danger of falling into a ditch. To act without prior thinking will lead us into endless trouble. Elderly people often say that haste always makes waste. Rushing into things without prior thinking will lead to wastage of time, resource and energy.

“Look before you leap” appears as a moral in several childhood stories. One such story of a cunning fox and a foolish goat. The goat leapt into the well without thinking how would it come out. In another story, the wise jackal saved his life when he saw the footprints of a lion outside the cave, before entering it. The other proverb, “fools rush in where angels fear to tread” originated from one of the works of Alexander Pope, *An Essay on criticism*. In 1854, Abraham Lincoln used this expression in a speech that he delivered at Illinois.

Rash decisions many a times lead to dangerous and unwanted consequences. It is as similar as jumping into a river without knowing its depth and flow. However, it does not mean that one should delay in making decisions or avoid taking a stand. Rather, one should think twice before taking a decision. One should think about things rationally and logically to reach a conclusion. Quick decisions are always welcome but not rash decisions. Even if one has to act on impulse and has no time to think things out as in times of an emergency, then also one should use one’s presence of mind and then do something. Quick decision-making should be coupled with prudence and justice. For instance, the great conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte took a rash decision of attacking Russia without realising or taking into consideration the fierce and terrible winter conditions of that country. Resultantly, his armies were trapped in snow and the Iron Guards of his army, of whose strength Napoleon was extremely proud of, got completely destroyed and annihilated. Historians believe that due to this one rash and hasty decision, Napoleon lost the crowning glory of his army. It was a loss from which he could never recover. It is hard to believe that a man with an unshakable will power and sound reasoning made such a rash decision.

In many fields today, we see people doing things mindlessly. Students opt for a subject which they are not interested in. Professionals diverge from their core area of competence and regret later.

Thus, it is always better to think twice, before reaching any decision or jumping to conclusions. One should not rush into things. Foolish people rush in where wise people even fear to tread. Foolish people act on impulses without exercising their reason. They act impulsively, being governed and guided by their emotions. Overpowering emotions cloud their power of reasoning and they end up without any pre-consideration and pre-thinking. It seems that they invite danger and trouble with their hasty nature.

The fishy, temporary charms, the transient things of this world which are like serpents under a rose, attract the unwise and the foolish. They unwittingly surge ahead on the slippery and slimy path of destruction. They fail to assess their situation, circumstances and the environment around. They fail to see the full picture as they are blinded by their hasty nature. They even fail to analyse their abilities and also fail to channelise their abilities in the proper and right direction.

On the contrary, those who are wise and intelligent, plan every detail with careful consideration and think over it again and again using reason, logic and brain before plunging into a task. They do not plunge heedlessly into doing things. They weigh all the pros and cons, the good and the bad, the positive and the negative before arriving at a solid and workable decision. Even if a problem arises they do not jump to conclusions hastily. They try to get to the root of the problem in order to solve it. They devote a good amount as well as good quality of time and energy to take the right decision and even to mend mistakes or make things right.

Thus, it is a prudent advice to foolish and impulsive people that it is always better and desirable to look before one leaps.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **tread** – step, walk
- ♦ **prudence** – wisdom, common sense, caution
- ♦ **annihilated** – destroyed completely
- ♦ **crowning** – supreme, final, ultimate, sovereign
- ♦ **transient** – lasting a very short time
- ♦ **surge** – to move like advancing waves
- ♦ **heedlessly** – without care or concern
- ♦ **impulsive** – instinctive, emotional, unpredictable
- ♦ **fishy** – suspicious; inspiring doubt.

Where There is a Will, There is a Way

If a person pursues anything in life with firm determination and persistent hard work, then nothing in this world can stop that person from achieving what he has aimed for. It is a time-tested saying and is cent per cent correct.

It is said that “life is for to be taken”. When a person has the will and the strong desire to achieve something, he also finds ways and means to overcome all the hurdles and obstacles. Even if the task seems impossible it can be achieved through persistent hard work. One should not be discouraged in face of difficult circumstances and adverse situations. One should not lose hope when the path seems difficult. Will-power of a person should be insurmountable and invincible. It is the greatest moving force in the world. The possessor of strong will wins half of the battle of his life.

The simple story of the thirsty crow who dropped pebbles into the half-filled pitcher of water, teaches us the lesson of having a strong will. There is another story of a spider and King Bruce. Seeing the spider repeatedly trying to weave its web, he got inspired and won his war after losing 13 wars, in succession.

History is replete with such instances where people have overcome all sorts of obstacles within and in the outer world to achieve success. People like Hitler and Mussolini too shook the entire political scenario of Europe by their sheer will. Abraham Lincoln came from humble parentage but with unwavering determination and persistent efforts, he rose to become the President of America. Napoleon never believed in the occurrence and existence of the word ‘impossible’.

Robert Bruce succeeded in liberating Scotland while Garibaldi strived with firmness to free his motherland Italy from the clutches of slavery. Continuous efforts led Columbus to discover America. Nelson Mandela fought for years against racial discrimination, also known as Apartheid, in his country.

Akbar was illiterate but was one of the most efficient emperor due to his sheer determination. It was the will and the perseverance of Eklavya to master the art of archery in the presence of Guru Dronacharya's statue that paid. PT Usha proved that age and sex can never be a hurdle in front of a strong will. Mahatma Gandhi fought for the blacks in South Africa and liberated India from British rule, with his will-power. Martin Luther brought about tremendous changes in USA.

Nothing is unattainable in this world if there is a firm determination and a willing heart. People with a strong mind and a firm heart can never be moved even by the strongest and the most ferocious of the storms in their lives. They, unlike the weak-minded, do not believe in destiny, luck and fortune. They create their own fortune, make their own destiny and mould their luck with their efforts. To achieve something in life they do not rely on such external factors.

Even if they fail, they face it with courage and dignity. They never shy away from taking the responsibility in the case of defeat. Rather they have the strength to step up and say "I am sorry, I made a mistake" or "I was wrong, I apologise." As the circumstances get difficult, their determination too increases manifolds and they continue moving towards their aims.

Germany and Japan were completely destroyed after the Second World War and yet they are stronger than ever before only because the hearts of the people of these nations were swayed with love for their country, firm determination and strength of will. They must have been moved by similar emotions as expressed in Paradise Lost: Book I, by Lucifer, after he was thrown down from heaven.

*"What though the field be lost?
All is not lost: the unconquerable will
..... And courage never to submit or yield".*

In today's times, we see many students from underprivileged sections of the society topping in competitive exams. They realise their dreams with their indomitable spirit and never give up attitude. Our former President APJ Abdul Kalam used to sell newspapers in childhood, while current Prime Minister Narendra Modi worked in a tea-stall. They are what they are today, only due to their perseverance and ambition.

A man of weak will and dampened enthusiasm can never achieve his goals. If a person gets discouraged easily or wavers from pursuing his goal in the face of difficulties and challenges, then he can't achieve success. Success cannot be achieved in a single day. One has to work hard daily, burn the midnight oil for days together to achieve one's goal and fulfil one's dream.

A strong resolution and sustained endeavour can lead a person to his aims. No obstacles, hurdles, hindrances or impediments can stand in the way of a person armed with firm determination and strong will.

A strong will is the most precious asset in the life of an individual as well as a nation. That is why all of us should try and cultivate this quality in us if we want to achieve success. People with will and courage never run away from responsibilities and challenges. For them, every task is full of great possibilities and they try to give their very best to everything that they do. Life is all about working hard and turning every hurdle into a milestone while climbing the peak of success.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| ♦ persistent | – continuous, constant, relentless | ♦ ferocious | – fierce, violent, savage |
| ♦ insurmountable | – incapable of being overcome | ♦ manifolds | – numerous, many, various, varied |
| ♦ invincible | – Incapable of being overcome or defeated; unconquerable | ♦ indomitable | – incapable of being overcome, subdued, or vanquished; unconquerable |
| ♦ replete | – abundantly supplied, filled | ♦ dampened | – subdued, weak |
| ♦ unwavering | – marked by firm determination or resolution; not shakable | ♦ endeavour | – to try (to do something); an effort to do or attain something |
| ♦ perseverance | – persistence, resolution, determination | ♦ impediments | – obstacle, barrier |
| ♦ tremendous | – extremely large in amount, extent, or degree; enormous | | |



Sweet are the Uses of Adversity

This Shakespearean proverb challenges the fear of a common man who falls on difficult days. Usually, people prefer prosperity to adversity. No one wants to live in difficult circumstances, where life seems to be a burden, full of sorrows and suffering. Life seems to be a yoke, unable to carry and bear during adversity. On the other hand, everyone wants to live perpetually in prosperous times when life seems to be a bed of roses, full of joy, happiness, pleasure and beauty. But we rarely realise that without bitterness, sweetness has no existence; without black, white has no colour and without hardships, joy has no meaning.

The proverb originated from William Shakespeare's famous play, *As You Like It*. In the scene, where this phrase was used, the dramatist considered adversity to be a blessing in disguise and compared it to toads. Toads although, ugly they have a jewel in their head, according to the playwright. This implies that adversities too have ugly faces, but their outcomes are enlightening. Hence, it is not wise to curse them. They are part of our lives and we should embrace them as we embrace prosperity.

No matter how detestable and disagreeable adversity seems to people, no matter how bitter it tastes and how unwelcome it is at every doorstep, yet the poet tells us that adversity is not without any use. The experiences from a shallow perspective may seem bitter during adverse times, yet the poet tells us that its uses are sweet. Life would be dull and uninteresting without shades and hues of different colours. Night follows day, winter is followed by spring, likewise varies the cycle of life. Where there are valleys there are peaks as well. Ups and downs, joys and sorrows, pleasure and pain make the warp and woof of life. It is the sunshine and the cloudy days that make life interesting and worth living.

Difficulties disappear when they are faced boldly. They are like thieves who run for their lives when confronted. Everest was conquered by people who faced dangers on their way, but persisted to reach the summit. Great people like Socrates, Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Gandhi had to suffer a lot, but they did not refrain from

following their ideologies. Some of the most famous books in history were penned in jail or difficult circumstances. Like a strict school-master who punishes students for their good, adversities too give a lesson. Herbs give sweet fragrance when they are crushed, while a doctor gives bitter pills to his patient to cure him. Discovery of America by Columbus was an arduous task but he did not bow down before the dangers that the route threw on him.

“Prosperity makes friends, adversity tries them”.

Prosperity brings infinite friends, great money and high status. Virtue is forgotten, rather prosperity becomes the only virtue. Society too looks up to a man in prosperity. On the other hand, when adversity strikes at one’s door the man is looked down upon, is forsaken and forgotten by his very own dear friends.

Adversity is a furnace that tries friendship as well. In a world where fickleness and betrayal is common, where fortune vanishes and friends feign, it is during adversity that the sheep stands separated from the goats. Fair-weather friends disappear even at the sight of adversity whereas true friends stick through thick and thin. The essential baseness of human character is revealed during the times of adversity.

When the tough times strike us, then only we get to see the true and real faces of our friends and near and dear ones. Their sincerity and genuineness is revealed only when they stick through troubled time and have the courage to cry with us and stand with us during sorrow, poverty and loneliness. A true friend is the one who walks in when the world walks out.

If prosperity harbours good fortune, great number of friends and comforts, adversity too, has its own uses in life. It is easy to stand on a pulpit to preach sermons on various virtues during the time of prosperity. But it is the storm of adverse times and circumstances that tests a person’s real calibre and strength. Adversity acts like a furnace or a kiln which tests and tries gold to make it purer and better by separating dross from it. It is adversity that teaches us to be patient, courageous, firm and strong. It is only when we have to fight the circumstances that we turn to the best capacities and abilities in us. It is adversity that tests our will power and determination. It teaches us virtues of fortitude, forbearing, firmness, humanity and sympathy. It also stretches our limits. When chased by a murderer, a person can jump over a high wall, which in ordinary circumstances, he couldn’t have thought of attempting.

Adversity is the test of character. The weak and the infirm break into pieces and are grinded to powder in the mill of adversity. But the real man who has real strength of character emerges out as an even stronger, greater and firmer creation of God. We learn to suffer with dignity and forbearance so that we become noble and brave. Pursued and persuaded by adversity, we learn to fight and face the world alone without relying on fair-weather friends.

Bacon, the father of English Essays said once, “The virtue of poverty is temperance, the virtue of adversity is fortitude, which in mortals is the more heroic virtue”. It is adversity that keeps the human in us alive. In days of hay and sunshine, we are apt to get lost in the glory and honour, and grow indifferent to human feelings and sufferings. But when adversity strikes, we learn to be humble, sensitive and sympathetic.

Perseverance, despite all odds, can change failure into success. Favourable and adverse situations shouldn't be taken as separate concepts. These are mutually dependent and can be as fruitful as harmful. The so-called 'harmful effects' can be nullified through mental reconditioning. A wise man treats all situations with equanimity.

Thus, it is only in times of adversity that the human soul transcends and rises above the mundane forms of life. It makes the soul sublime because prosperity easily brings in vice but it is adversity that discovers the virtue.

VOCAB HELP

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|------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| ♦ yoke | - burden | ♦ feign | - to give a false appearance of |
| ♦ disguise | - appearance that misrepresents the true character of something | ♦ pulpit | - a platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it |
| ♦ detestable | - hateful, shocking, offensive | ♦ kiln | - a furnace for firing or burning or drying such things as porcelain or bricks |
| ♦ warp and woof | - a foundation or base upon which something is built | ♦ dross | - an impurity, usually an oxide, formed on the surface of a molten metal |
| ♦ summit | - the highest point or part; the top | ♦ fortitude | - strength of mind that allows one to endure pain or adversity with courage |
| ♦ refrain | - to hold oneself back | ♦ forbearance | - self-control; patience |
| ♦ arduous | - demanding great effort or labor; difficult | ♦ nullified | - to make null; invalidate |
| ♦ virtue | - moral excellence and righteousness; goodness | | |
| ♦ fickleness | - unfaithfulness by virtue of being unreliable or treacherous | | |



A Good Anvil Does Not Fear the Hammer

A man of strong character would not fear any adversity. In trying times, the strong and virtuous, stand sturdy like an oak, while the weak wither away.

The metaphorical proverb is an old one but applies well to real life situations even today. The 'anvil' and 'hammer' refer to people and circumstances, respectively. The hammer may also represent the apprehensions of people or the anticipation of uncertain future events.

The proverb emphasises on being adept at whatever one wishes to do. If we want to achieve our goal, we would have to face numerous obstacles on the way. These may be in the form of fear or lack of self-confidence. However, once we become skilled, we can face any situation, come what may. One's moral grooming is also a source of inspiration in hostile conditions.

We must not only be physically fit to face tough situations but also be mentally prepared at all times. This will only be possible if we practice what we truly believe in. Our values, ethics and principles can go a long way in braving even the most hostile conditions in life.

A soldier doesn't fear the enemy as he is trained to fight. A wildlife biologist doesn't feel afraid to stay in a forest, due to the passion he has for his work. A weight lifter

can lift weights easily because he has built himself up for that. Similarly, there is no task in the world, that can't be accomplished with practice and dedication.

“Practice makes a man perfect”.

With hard work and sincerity, even mountains can be cut into. The more a person tries to make himself better at a job, the more he achieves. In real life too, a morally sound person can deal with the toughest of the situations easily. An honest upright person always attracts the best. A dishonest, unscrupulous individual may fool others initially, but in the long run, he harms himself.

Today, we need to be tough to face any kind of emergencies or untoward happenings. The country needs to stand prepared for every kind of natural calamity. The citizens must speak out against corruption, then only they will fulfil the roles of ‘good anvils’.

Circumstances can make or break a man. The inner strength of a man should be like steel. Such a man can wage a war even with the devil. He is an asset to the society, and a gem of humanity.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **virtuous** – having or showing virtue, especially moral excellence
- ♦ **sturdy** – strongly built; robust; hardy
- ♦ **anvil** – a heavy block of iron or steel on which hot metals are shaped by hammering
- ♦ **apprehensions** – anxiety, concern, fear, worry, doubt
- ♦ **anticipation** – intuition, foreknowledge, or prescience
- ♦ **adept** – Very skilled, expert
- ♦ **unscrupulous** – immoral, dishonest
- ♦ **untoward** – unfavourable, unfortunate, disastrous

Failures are the Pillars of Success

There goes an old saying “To be a champion, fight one more round,” which is very true. Only tireless pursuit can create winners. Success comes to those who try and never tire. To be a winner, one has to learn to strive with perseverance, courage and determination. Success cannot be achieved in a day. The road to success is not an easy one. It is narrow, rough, patchy, long and full of hurdles and obstacles. One has to learn to overcome the hurdles and obstacles to achieve the desired goal.

A little failure does not matter. In reality, the path to success is strewn with failures. With each failure one gets closer to success and with each fall one rises higher. It may seem paradoxical and contradictory to talk of failures and falls alongside success and rising higher. But it is the very truth. Each failure brings one closer to success because within each failure is hidden a lesson on success.

Look at the first step of a child. He takes a step forward but then on the second one he falls and stumbles. But that does not mean that the child will never learn to walk just because he stumbled at the onset. Rather his stumbling ensures that soon he will learn not only to walk but run around also. Look at a bird in the sky, how it flutters, flutters and fails. Its wings quiver as it makes its first attempts to fly. It tries and fails. But it does not give up. And at last with one more try, it spreads its wings and off it goes into that infinite azure blue sky that seems to be applauding its little yet significant efforts.

The story of the ant trying to climb a wall is often told. It crawls a few inches and falls. But tries again. In fact, the ant goes on trying infinitely, trying to reach the top of the wall. The onlooker gets bored, tired and loses heart. But the ant does not. It keeps on trying till it reaches the top.

History too is sprinkled with such instances where success was granted only after passing through a series of failures. One has to pick up the life story of any great personality to see that success is never granted on a silver platter. One has to try a number of times before actually tasting success.

Indian freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel faced failures innumerable times, but they put the goal of India's freedom above everything and hence, India became free. Great scientist Thomas Elva Edison failed 10,000 times before he could invent an electric bulb. Steve Jobs was ousted from the very own company he started. But he was excited at the prospect of starting all over again, like a beginner.

However, in today's time, we find that people are losing heart at the drop of a hat. Students succumb to examination phobia and peer pressure. Everybody has high expectations with their own selves, which, if not fulfilled, drives them to depression and even suicide. It's important to realise that failure is not the end of the world. There would be opportunities galore to rise and shine.

Life is an interesting game. It does not guarantee that success will be yours at every point in every round. There will be times when failure seems to be haunting more devotedly. There is nothing wrong in losing. But one should never forget the lesson learnt by every failure. One climbs the ladder of success by stepping courageously over each failure, carefully picking up on the lesson taught by each failure and learning from them. More so because it is these failures that form the core of the experiences that a person gains in life.

Bitter as these failures may seem to be, yet they hide behind their ugly appearance a useful lesson and a valuable experience which is unravelled only sometime later. It is these failures that strengthen the forthcoming success. Therefore, when failures seem extremely overpowering and life seems bleak, one has to remember that they are in fact even surer signs of success in future. "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." Thus, when nothing seems to work out in the right manner and it seems that all roads are leading to failures and nothingness, one has to just remember the arrival of the dawn, the sun rising dispelling darkness at that very moment when night seems blackest and thickest. Therefore, one should never lose hope but keep on trying till one succeeds. Who knows, that this is the last round and you are declared a champion.

VOCAB HELP

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|-------------------|--|----------------------|---|
| ♦ strewn | - to spread here and there; scatter | ♦ ousted | - remove from a position or office |
| ♦ stumbles | - to miss one's step in walking or running; trip and almost fall | ♦ succumb | - to submit to an overpowering force or yield to an overwhelming desire; give up or give in |
| ♦ azure | - the clear, cloudless sky | ♦ unravelling | - solve, explain, work out, resolve |
| | | ♦ dispelling | - drive away, dismiss, eliminate |

Are Prizes Real Incentives?

A prize is a reward or a token of appreciation bestowed upon a person for his commendable performance or work. A prize can be in cash or in kind. It can have a symbolic significance too, like in the form of trophy or shield. Sports tournaments award trophy, cash prize and other incentives. Music and several reality shows award contracts with the channel or company. Corporate world also lavishes upon its employees several ‘add-on’ facilities.

A prize, however big or small, is an important aspect for both the education sector and the workplace. The culture of awarding prizes has been followed through centuries. In ancient times, kings and queens used to generously give away some precious piece of their adornment to their courtiers or ministers, in times of celebration or upon accomplishment of a task.

A prize is a great motivation for people to give their best. It is a reward for people who have worked hard to produce the desired results. It also boosts the morale of those people who have not yet received any prize, to work towards achieving their goal.

However, there are also a few negative dimensions to prize-giving. Normally, only one prize is given in a field. The aspirants know very well beforehand who would win a particular prize. In any case, a handful of them, may be three or four, stand a chance to receive a prize, so the desire to improve is present only in these few.

The rest of the group is not bothered because they know they have no chance. This lack of interest is shown even by the best group. As for the poorer groups, they would not even attend the prize distribution day, much less compete for a prize.

This state of affairs has two possible unpleasant consequences such as the prize recipients often become swell-headed and become cut out from the rest while other possibility is that some losing participants actually become resentful.

They feel left out and unwanted. The few days immediately before and after the prize giving the ‘elite’ members strut around. More often than not these ‘brainboxes’ are given the honour of wearing the coveted badge of ‘top performer’. Some of them are very humble people who are simply overawed by the positions they are in, but some are undoubtedly cocky.

While those in jobs may somehow handle the ‘prize-pressure’, it however, becomes tough for the students, with increasing competition, in today’s time. The school authorities never seem to notice this basic flaw in the school system, that is, the obsessive drive to produce a handful of ‘top’ students while neglecting the rest. As if examinations are not enough to weed out the poor students, they must indulge in this form of back-patting the top students and the teachers get patted in return for a job well done or so it seems.

“Do not compare yourself with anyone. If you do so, you are insulting yourself”.

Thus, a prize shouldn't be taken too seriously. One must treat both the situations—winning and not winning, with equanimity. Every individual is a creation of God. Thus, he is unique and different from the rest, in atleast one way. We must celebrate that uniqueness, instead of running listlessly towards material pursuits.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **bestowed** – present, give, accord, award
- ♦ **lavishes** – to give or bestow in abundance; shower
- ♦ **swollen** – headed characteristic of false pride; having an exaggerated sense of self-importance
- ♦ **strut** – to walk with a lofty proud gait, often in an attempt to impress others
- ♦ **coveted** – greatly desired
- ♦ **cocky** – overconfident, arrogant
- ♦ **weed out** – remove unwanted elements
- ♦ **equanimity** – the state of being calm, stable and composed especially under stress

Small is Beautiful

The word 'small' conveys that something is minor or not of much importance, but 'small' can also be a 'thing of beauty.' There are countless examples from nature and in the material world, which reflect that small things have their own charm.

The word 'smile' is a small five letter word, but it is so important as it brings happiness in one's life. It helps in making bonds stronger and winning friends. Without this little word, the world would be a grim place.

Babies are little angles, who bring immense joy in our lives. Even being small, they teach us to be happy and relaxed.

To study in a small school is many times more desirable than studying in a big school. In a small school you practically know everyone and more importantly everyone knows you. The teachers are like members of the family. Your welfare and well-being is looked after properly and you feel you belong to the school. Consequently, your loyalty is never in question.

The situation is not so beautiful in a large school. In the midst of a couple of thousand other students, you become a nobody. If you do want to stand out, then you will have to involve yourself in school politics where everybody steps on one another to gain the favours of the teachers. The teachers too are generally less caring. They do not even know your name. What is more, they do not even know some of their colleague's name.

So it is also the case with the business. Small is indeed beautiful. Consider a small general store. You can buy things on credit and at a discount if you know the proprietor well enough. On top of that any defective item can be returned and exchanged for something else. You get none of this in a big modern supermarket. It is strictly cash, no discount and definitely no such thing as returning goods. It is your bad luck if you get a defective product. To try to see the manager about it is like trying to go through a brick wall of bureaucracy and indifference. When you have handed over your money to the cashier—that is the end of it.

On top of all these things, they even install close-circuit cameras all over the place. It makes you feel as though you are a shoplifter. And still they cannot catch the seasoned shoplifters.

When towns grow larger, people grow unfriendly. It is the inescapable price we pay for congregating too many people in one place. Small town folks care about their neighbours. Granted sometimes these simple folks intrude into your life when you do not want them to, but such intrusion is infinitely better than living among people who do not know or care about other people at all, even when they are only separated by just a wall. In big towns, neighbours are looked at with suspicion. Who knows if one of them is a thug or a crook or a terrorist? Only slowly and rarely do you get to know your neighbour next door, that too, if he wants to know you at all. When you think about it, it is silly, but the fact remains that many next door neighbours live side by side for years without even exchanging a glance.

In general, it is thus easy to see that when organisations become too large, they invariably become impersonal. Large organisations require greater control. It would look as though that the people in such an organisation spend so much time keeping the organisation in running order that they do not have time left for other things. They become slaves to their organisations. They have forgotten their individuality and uniqueness.

Our country can also be taken as an example. Despite being smaller than many powerful countries of the West, it has retained its rich culture and traditions. Here, the parents-child bond is sacred. A multitude of religions cohabit here. Thus, there is 'unity in diversity'.

The world of technology is progressing at a fast-pace. The size of computers is getting smaller. What used to be a mammoth mean machine, is now a small sleek palm top device. The smart phones will soon be a thing of the past, with smart watches all set to be released in the market. Their small sizes and slender designs make them portable and user-friendly. Nanotechnology is another area, which uses nano-scale or very small sized particles for drug delivery inside body.

'Small' also conveys limiting one's desires to what is most essential for survival. In this material world, we often forget to cherish the little moments of life like greeting our neighbours, meeting an old friend, having dinner with family or spending some quiet time with oneself. In the kaleidoscope of life, small is indeed more colourful and more beautiful.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| ♦ grim | – filled with melancholy and despondency | ♦ thug | – an aggressive and violent young criminal |
| ♦ sundry | – various, miscellaneous | ♦ crook | – criminal, rogue, cheat, thief |
| ♦ congregating | – to bring or come together in a group, crowd, or assembly | ♦ mammoth | – something of great size |
| ♦ intrusion | – interruption, interference | ♦ slender | – slim, narrow, slight, lean |
| | | ♦ portable | – compact, convenient, handy |



Caution Or Risk

Take Your Pick!

Caution refers to an alert state of mind, watching out for potential risks and dangers. Caution is instinctive but is learned as we grow up.

A small baby doesn't exercise any caution. It can plunge into a pool or touch the flame of a candle. This is because it knows no fear. The idea of fear is ingrained into a child by repeatedly telling him not to do a particular thing as it would invite trouble. As we grow, we develop reasoning and are able to distinguish right from wrong. But some individuals become over-cautious and some become, daredevils. Both are extremes and must not be aspired for. Rather, a balance is essential.

"No venture, no gain".

Only when we take risks, do we realise our full potential.

Take for example learning to swim. In order to learn to swim we must plunge into water first. Initially, we might swallow a bit of water and become disoriented, but gradually our natural ability will take over and we will feel at home in water. If instead of taking the risk of plunging into water, we elaborately study about all the aspects of swimming, theorising about it and then carefully testing things out, we would probably never get to the actual process of swimming. Even if we do learn to swim in this way, the ability obtained thus can never match to that of a person who learned to swim naturally. Furthermore, the joy of swimming freely is vastly greater than that of doing it with measured strokes only.

Gymnastics is a form of exercise that is full of risks. Sprained ankles and pulled muscles are common occurrences. There have been cases of broken bones and even death resulting from such accidents. For most people, gymnastics is definitely 'out'. They do not want to risk their necks. Rather, we should take 'calculated' risks. The trainer tells the danger involved in certain exercises and certain rules that must be observed to minimise accidents. We should acknowledge the dangers, gauge our abilities, follow the instructions and then put our best efforts into the exercises. If we take the risks, only then we can overcome our fears.

How wonderful it is to be able to do fly-spring or a somersault, much to the envy of the cautious people. To be strong and agile is what youth is all about. We will slow down with age, but that will come at its own good time. It is great to be able to enjoy what youth has to offer now. It is better to take the risks and discover our abilities and weaknesses instead of hiding behind our fears and wonder for the rest of our lives whether we could have done something or not. Time and tide wait for none. We are young for once only. Either we use our opportunities or see them vanish forever into the past.

Again it must be stressed that the risks taken should be 'calculated' risks. Only a fool will try to fly an aeroplane without any basic training and awareness of the dangers involved. Flying an aeroplane is a very risky job. But if we are to fly one we have to be brave enough to take the risk.

In today's time, we find two types of people. One who get scared at the drop of a hat and are skeptic, and wary of trying new things. The other type, assumes that they

are superheroes. There have been tragic accidents when people tried to imitate the stunts of their screen-idols. At the same time, people who stay in their protective cocoon, cannot learn any novel thing.

It is, thus, the same in other areas of life. If we are to learn something, we have to take risks. If we want something, we have to take risks. There would have been no USA today if nobody had dared to venture out and thus discovered the new world. There would not have been space-shuttles or Airbus-380 if everybody had played it safe on the ground. We would not have any friends if we had not taken the risk of reaching out to other people and may have got rejected in return.

Many risk-takers failed in their ventures. Sailors died and space-shuttles exploded killing all aboard. But we did not stop taking risks. The discoveries and gains that result from our ventures, know no limits and we go on again to risk what life has to offer.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **venture** – an undertaking that is dangerous, daring, or of uncertain outcome
- ♦ **disoriented** – lost, confused
- ♦ **gauge** – measure, calculate, evaluate, value
- ♦ **somersault** – an acrobatic stunt in which the body rolls forward or backward in a complete revolution with the knees bent and the feet coming over the head
- ♦ **agile** – active, quick, lively
- ♦ **skeptic** – a person who maintains a doubting attitude, as toward values, plans, or the character of others
- ♦ **wary** – watchful, cautious, or alert
- ♦ **cocoon** – shelter
- ♦ **novel** – strikingly new, unusual, or different



Early Bird Catches the Worm

Time turns the wheel of life. It governs our daily life and worldly activities. If we work according to it, it can be an asset. One who is punctual and does not procrastinate, reaps great rewards.

The popular proverb, “Early bird catches the worm” stresses on the importance of doing work on time in order to stay ahead of others. It was first found in John Ray’s ‘A Collection of English Proverbs’. If a bird starts its search for food early enough, it can easily catch worms. Similarly, if we start work as soon as possible, we won’t have to worry in the last moments.

A ‘worm’ comes out of the ground usually in the early morning period. Here, ‘worm’ is used as a metaphor for opportunity. The bird is analogous to a person who has work. Thus, to grab a golden opportunity one has to be proactive, alert and should start early. Postponing a work can rob us of potential benefits. And the same would then be availed by a person who was quick to commence his task. Latecomers are always dissatisfied and disappointed with anything and everything in life.

By starting work early, one faces less competition. There is also less distraction. Hence, work can be done with full focus and energy. Energy and enthusiasm levels are high usually when we start early due to the absence of negative influences. More choices can be explored. They get the first pick on items that are either in huge demand or limited stock.

Also, reaching workplace or any other venue on time or early enough, saves the embarrassment of turning up late with a cooked-up excuse.

Several great personalities have followed this maxim in their lives. Great saints, great ruler Maharana Pratap, poet Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Rani Lakshmi Bai, have had, and from recent times, Apple CEO Tim Cook, imbibed disciplined lifestyles that involve waking up early in the morning.

In today's time, we have forgotten the importance of being early. We start work late, and then crib about 'lack of time'.

Schools and colleges have limited seats, so the earlier the students apply, the better for them. Restaurants also follow the rule of 'first-come-first served'.

"Time and tide wait for no man".

Opportunities aplenty lie waiting to be utilised. He who values time, will be the winner. Nature taught us this beautiful lesson, which will hold true, no matter how much the world advances.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **procrastinate** – delay, postpone, prolong.
- ♦ **analogous** – similar or equivalent in some respects though otherwise dissimilar
- ♦ **proactive** – acting in advance to deal with an expected difficulty; anticipatory
- ♦ **distraction** – the act of diverting the attention
- ♦ **imbibed** – to receive and absorb into the mind
- ♦ **crib** – complain

When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Gets Going

Life is not a bed of roses. It is a mixed bag of happiness and tough times. People rejoice during happy moments of life, but lose heart during problems. Only people who are strong from inside, take adversities in their stride and work out their way around them.

The saying was originally spoken by Joseph Kennedy, the father of the former US President John F Kennedy. It was made popular by a song by Billy Ocean. It is widely quoted by football coaches, CEOs and motivational speakers all over the world.

In tough situations, people who trust their abilities, work harder to meet challenges. They don't sit back and relax. Neither do they wail and curse their fate. They brace up to extend their limits, tap their potential and face even the worst circumstances with a smile. On the other hand, the weak break down and fail in this crucial test of life.

History is fraught with examples of great men braving difficult conditions with sheer grit and courage. The lives of our freedom fighters is testimonial to this.

"Tough times do not last long, but tough people do".

The important thing is to remember that every difficulty or obstacle is temporary. It may take a while and may not end the way we expected, but will definitely come to an end. We must harbour positive thoughts and surround ourselves with positive people. Negativity breeds negative emotions and actions.

Another way to tide over tough times is by lending a helping hand to those in need. This would make our own problems appear smaller in front of theirs. We must count our blessings and be thankful for the things we have. And last but not the least, we must never be afraid to follow our heart.

Adversities are a part and parcel of life. They shouldn't be treated as unwelcomed visitors. They make us better individuals by teaching us to be undaunting and compassionate to our fellows. The key to a healthy and happy life, is after all, bearing everything spiritedly. There is always a dawn after a dark night.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **adversity** – hardship, trouble, distress, suffering
- ♦ **stride** – to cope with calmly, without interrupting one's normal routine
- ♦ **brace** – support, balance
- ♦ **fraught** – filled with
- ♦ **grit** – courage, spirit, guts, determination
- ♦ **undaunting** – courageously resolute especially in the face of danger or difficulty, not discouraged

The Pen is Mightier than the Sword

The pen looks like a small ordinary object. It is not very costly and is not impressively built. Yet, it comprises of great power and strength. The holder of the pen is a learned person. He succeeds everywhere and is respected. The sword, on the other hand, is wielded forcefully against someone, with an intent to injure or kill. While sword can only be used by a physically fit person, even a frail person can shake the world with the power of a pen.

The proverb originated from the play 'Richelieu,' by Lord Lytton. In the play, the character, Richelieu saved himself from enemies through his writings. He also helped his country to evade an alliance with another country.

Early man lived by the strength of his muscles. As civilisations progressed, reading and writing emerged. The fate of nations was shaped by wars. Gradually, man realised that weapons could not solve problems. Weapons could only kill and not bring about a change of heart.

The pen can be used to express personal views or public opinion. It represents the press, literature and other pieces of writings. The purpose of writing is to connect one's mind with another and to persuade the reader to take up the writer's views. But the reader is free to hold his own views. He may either agree or disagree with the writer. Thus, the pen represents peaceful means of propagating ideas.

Great writers and thinkers have inspired the masses, since times immemorial. French Revolution was boosted by the writings of Rousseau and Voltaire. Lenin, the leader of Russian Revolution was moved by Karl Marx's 'Das Capital.' India's newspapers, the Hindu, Kesari, Amrit Bazar Patrika etc., helped to campaign against the British rule.

On the other hand the victories of the sword are short-lived. Alexander's desire to conquer the world remained unfulfilled. Hitler was eventually defeated in the Second World War. However, the plays and poems of Kalidas, Shakespeare and Wordsworth are still afresh among readers. The laws and theories of Newton and Darwin, evolved and propelled scientific knowledge, with their written forms.

Battles are fought for a certain period of time over a particular area. But the teachings of Buddha, Christ and Gandhi are universal in their appeal. Let us embrace the pen and throw away all swords and weapons of mass-destruction. This is the surest way of making brotherhood and humanity prevail in the world. Long live the pen!

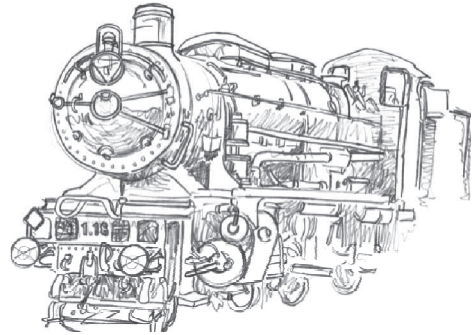
VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **frail** – physically weak and delicate
- ♦ **evade** – to escape or avoid by cleverness or deceit
- ♦ **propagating** – spread, publish, promote
- ♦ **propelled** – to cause to move forward or onward

J. Miscellaneous

❁ Indian Railways *In Need of Revival*

Indian Railways is one of the largest railway networks operated by the Government of India. Railways was first introduced in India in 1853. Today, its operations cover 29 states and 7 union territories, and also provides international services to its neighbours, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. It is also one of the busiest rail networks in the world, carrying about 18 million passengers daily. Moreover it is the world's largest employer, providing jobs to millions.



For a country so reliant on its trains, Indian Railways Vision 2020 envisages introduction of bullet trains. It will be a massive addition to its route network, with segregation of passenger and freight services into separate double-line corridors, raising the speeds of passenger trains from the current 130 kmph to 160-200 kmph on some routes, zero accidents and equipment failures and setting up of high-speed passenger corridors.

However, this vision would remain a difficult one to achieve, looking at the past and current situation of the railways. In spite of being the largest and the busiest network, Indian Railways was never a sector to give good returns to the economy, (barring the time of Lalu Prasad Yadav). It faces a lot of problems, sometimes proving even a burden to the Indian Government. The age-old and crumbling infrastructure, low fares, lack of maintenance, mismanagement, lack of quality service deliverance etc are all the major issues with the railways. A sharp decline in the earnings and serious escalation in expenditure has posed even more problems for Indian Railways. Additionally, the ever increasing prices of fuel, coal, the number of accidents, cost of maintenance etc further increases the problems.

A significant change in the Indian Railways came after the year 2004. The 156 years old Indian Railways was regarded as a hopeless, loss making organisation, with too little revenue, too many problems. Steps were taken to increase the demand rather than the price. A team of experts proposed and applied some simple techniques effectively on a per train basis. Subsequently, fares were increased in line with the demand, giving the railways the much needed cash flow to improve its services. Thus with these efforts, Indian Railways was able to book profits. After 2010, the railways went back into problematic phase. The funds started shrinking, therefore improvement in passenger amenities could not be carried out. However, the recently elected government has again brought in a ray of hope for the good days for 'Indian Railways'. Surprisingly, Indian train fares are among the cheapest in the world. With such fares, Railways paced its steps well with the technological advancement. The e-ticketing for making reservations and mobile app system to track train schedule are some major breakthroughs. Additionally, with the new government, new hopes

have also risen. Today, Railways is eyeing private players and foreign funding to mobilise more funds for its various projects. Railways is keen to modernise railway stations with the help of private players. They are also prepared to lease out its properties for some years, given the share should come to Railways too.

Vision 2020 also intends to spread the railroad service to isolated areas of the country with 25,000 km of new track by 2020. Moreover, the ‘vision’ to revamp railways comes with an assurance that investment in India’s conventional train network would continue, which is a social necessity in the wake of 18 million daily passengers.

With 18 million daily passengers, a staff of 1.4 million employees and 17,000 trains operating on 64,000 km of track, India maintains one of the world’s largest rail systems. Vision 2020 not only aims to accelerate the urban pace of the country, but also plans to connect the isolated parts of the country by reaching far and wide. It largely suggests that India is all set to write a new chapter in the history of Indian Railways.

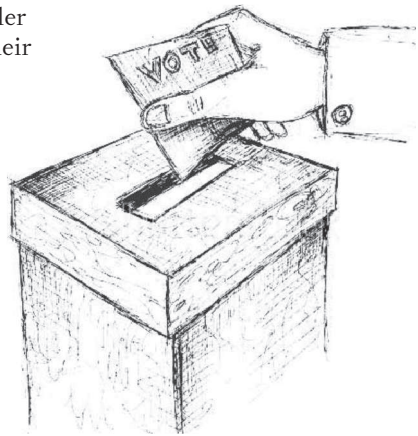
VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **envisages** – to conceive an image or a picture of, especially as a future possibility
- ♦ **segregation** – separation, discrimination, partitioning, setting apart
- ♦ **freight** – a railway train carrying goods only
- ♦ **barring** – except for
- ♦ **crumbling** – collapsing, deteriorating
- ♦ **escalation** – increase, rise
- ♦ **tenure** – the term during which some position is held
- ♦ **deficit** – shortfall, shortage, loss
- ♦ **revamp** – to renovate, revise, or restructure, redo
- ♦ **untapped** – undeveloped or unused

✿ Electoral Process in India

Abraham Lincoln, in his famous statement years ago, defined democracy as “government for the people, of the people and by the people.” Democracy is a system of governance where people are free to choose their own representatives to serve or govern them. In simpler terms, the people of a country elect persons of their own choice who in turn make laws and frame policies for them.

Thus, elections are the part and parcel of any democratic country. They are the backbone of a democracy. The nature of elections reflects upon the success of a democracy and the political maturity of a nation. Elections should be free, fair and impartial. The people should be free to choose leaders of their own choice without any fear, pressure or hesitation. All adults who have attained the age of 18 are eligible to vote in India.



India is a democratic nation and hence elections are a recurrent feature here. Elections are held to elect the Prime Minister of India, the representatives for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabhas, under normal

circumstances, elections are held every five years but bye-elections too can be held due to dissolution or death of the person representing a seat. The Constitution provides for an Election Commission responsible for all matters related to elections. Earlier, elections in India was a Herculean task, primarily because of the use of paper ballot system.

Moreover, security and safety was another major concern for the government. In spite of the huge costs involved and security personnel, election procedure was not smooth. It was very time consuming too. In today's time, it is still a Herculean task, but technological advancement has somehow reduced the hurdles.

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are being used in elections to implement electronic voting in part from 1999 elections and in total since 2004 elections. It has thus reduced the time both in terms of casting a vote and declaring the results as compared to the old paper ballot system.

In India, illiterate people find EVMs easier than the earlier ballot system. Instead of the long procedure as in past with EVM, a voter simply has to press the button in favour of the candidate/symbol and their vote is recorded. Introduction of 'None of the above' option in the EVMs has allowed voters to register an official vote, even though they do not support any party or candidate. In 2014, lot of people exercised their voting right, yet not supporting any party.

A political party is a group of people who want to achieve common goals and control the government by winning elections and exercising political powers. India has a multi-party system. It has a huge population. Thus, the size of the huge electorate mandates the elections be conducted in number of phases. Election is a huge process which starts a month before the election date.

Newspaper and TV channels play a major role by covering elections, spreading awareness and by airing advertisements for the parties.

Weeks before elections, all the parties get busy in campaigning for their candidates. There are banners, posters and hoardings all over the cities. Lavish advertisements in the newspaper, on TV and FM Radios can be seen/heard. Meetings and processions are held at various places.

The candidates even go from door to door asking, pleading, requesting, charming the voters so that the public votes in their favour. But 48 hours before the election, as per the law, all canvassing comes to an end. Simultaneous elaborate preparations take place at the polling booths.

On the election day, Government schools and colleges fulfil the purpose of polling stations. The collector of each district is the in-charge of polling. Voting is done under high security alertness with special forces directed, surveillance through cameras at the polling stations.

Government employees are employed to help make the election process smooth. People of all classes, sections, communities and places come to the booth along with their Voter Identity Cards to cast their votes. Voting by the candidate is done with utmost privacy.

An indelible ink is mandatorily applied on the left index finger of the voter to indicate that the voter has cast his vote. After the different phases of the elections are complete, a day is set to count the votes. With the counting and announcing the

winner, the election procedure is completed, thereby paving way for the formation of the new government. The recent election of 2014 was a noteworthy event in the history of India. In 2014, the Electoral Strength of India increased to 814.5 million (larger than both EU and US elections combined) using more than one million electronic voting machines. With this figure, there was an increase of 100 million voters since the last general election in 2009, making it the largest ever election in the world.

The good thing was that the average election turnout over all the nine phases was around 66.38%, the highest ever in the history of Indian general elections. Truly, Indians have started believing in Abraham Lincoln's words :

"The ballot is stronger than the bullet."

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **dissolution** – dismissal, termination
- ♦ **herculean** – hard, demanding, difficult
- ♦ **ballot** – A sheet of paper or a card used to cast or register a vote, especially a secret one
- ♦ **hoardings** – a large board used for displaying advertising posters, as by a road
- ♦ **processions** – parade, march
- ♦ **canvassing** – persuasion of voters in a political campaign
- ♦ **surveillance** – close observation of a person or group
- ♦ **indelible** – cannot be removed or erased

✿ Meditation *The Ultimate Nirvana*

Modern age philosopher Osho maintain "No meditation, No life. Know meditation, Know life." This quote holds cent per cent relevance in today's time. In this modern day and age, the negative effects of stress are unavoidable. People have literally forgotten the way to live their life. They are extremely busy running after materialistic goals thereby fueling stress every day.

To cope with this stress, they have tried everything from exercise and diet to alternative methods like medicines. However, the most effective method to deal with stress is not one of these modern methods but rather thousand years old idea of meditation. Meditation finds its root in many religions, primarily in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Hindu mythology is full of examples wherein normal human beings and sages meditated for years to gain higher spiritual powers. Through meditation, they have risen above the botherations and tensions of worldly life. They have aligned their souls with the almighty in their meditation.

Buddhist mythology explains 'Nirvana' through meditation. According to it, Lord Buddha reached enlightenment at the age of 35, awakening to the true nature of



reality, which is 'Nirvana', the 'Absolute Truth'. The word Nirvana comes from the root meaning 'to blow out' and refers to the extinguishing of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion.

When these emotions are destroyed by wisdom, the mind becomes free, radiant and joyful, and at death, one is no longer subject to rebirth. Nirvana is the ultimate happiness, which can be achieved through meditation. The basic principles and practices of meditation are rooted in Hinduism, which believes that the soul is eternal and maintains an eternal relationship with God. The aim of meditation is to quieten the thought waves of the mind.

Quietness can lead to more peace inside the mind. Meditation leads to tranquility and purification from negative state of our mind. Infact, Buddha religiously believes :

"Meditation brings wisdom, lack of meditation leaves ignorance."

Meditation is very difficult to describe and can only truly be explained once experienced. It is the practice of mental concentration leading ultimately through a sequence of stages to the final goal of spiritual freedom called nirvana. Meditation can be compared with any sport, for example to basketball game. Everyone can try to play this sport but only a few know the rules and the central dogma of the game. And the others just play the game as they assume it is like. So, it would be right to say that not everyone is able to practise meditation correctly.

Learning to meditate properly, however, is very difficult and must be done under the supervision of teachers. A person who has not practised meditation before, finds it difficult to understand the nature of his mind and may think he is meditating while his mind runs disorderly.

Just a mere 10-15 minutes practice of meditation each day can bring many positive results in the lives of the people. It can be practised anywhere and anytime. The first stage of meditation is to stop distractions and make the mind clearer and more lucid. This can be accomplished by practising a simple breathing meditation.

A quiet place is chosen to meditate and to sit in a comfortable position with closed eyes. Sitting in traditional cross-legged manner is preferable. The most important thing is to keep the back straight to prevent mind from becoming sluggish or sleepy. The main motto is to concentrate on breathing.

Breathing, during meditation is done naturally, preferably through nostrils, without attempting to control it, thereby trying to become aware of the sensation of the breath's movement. This sensation is the object of meditation. Additionally, meditation should be practised with great discipline and awareness to obtain positive results, otherwise it can cause problems in psychological and spiritual well-being.

In the recent years, scientists and doctors have shown interest in the effects that meditation has in people going through various situations. Infact, prestigious universities such as Harvard and Washington have invested their efforts in the research and have also come out with positive results. Meditation not only helps reduce the negative effects of stress, but also leads to a better sense of well-being by uniting mind and body.

Statistics on meditation in the Western culture has shown that people suffering from chronic pain, anxiety, depression, hypertension were treated with the help of meditation. Meditation provides benefits to all of the major forms of human existence : physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

A lot of famous people across the globe have started shifting to this practice religiously. They believe that through meditation, mind is rejuvenated, the soul refreshed, nerves calmed and in general, one is at peace with oneself and the environment. Fortified by sessions of meditation, people have found they are able to face the tensions of the world with increased success. Infact, Dalai Lama has gone a step ahead in saying :

“If every 8 year old in the world is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence from the world within one generation.”

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **fueling** – increasing more intensely
- ♦ **aligned** – To move or be adjusted into proper relationship or orientation
- ♦ **nirvana** – enlightenment
- ♦ **delusion** – misconception, misapprehension, illusion
- ♦ **tranquility** – a state of peace and quiet
- ♦ **dogma** – an established belief or principle
- ♦ **sluggish** – inactive, slow, lethargic
- ♦ **rejuvenated** – refreshed
- ♦ **fortified** – to give emotional, moral, or mental strength to; encourage

Can One Man Alone Change the Face of Politics?

Queen Elizabeth, Mahatma Gandhi, Barack Obama, Narendra Modi, Arvind Kejriwal are some examples where leaders have changed the implication of the word ‘Politics’. These are the people who are known for their work towards the betterment of people. Time is a testimony to the fact that honest efforts of a single common man can change the fate of the whole nation.

Politics refers to ideas and activities relating to gaining and using power in a country. It relates to the government and the public affairs of the people of a country. Often it has been noticed that it is infectious in nature wherein people start misusing these means. That is how politics gets a generalised bad/negative name. Even the religious efforts of an honest leader are put to doubt. Unfortunately in every age, the politics involves so many unprincipled leaders that they either overshadow or intentionally refrain from other’s moral deeds.

“Mere good governance is not enough, it has to be pro-people and pro-active. Good governance is putting people at the centre of development process,” is rightly quoted by Narendra Modi. Infact, this is the core motive for which leaders are looked up to and remembered for ages. They possess sane knowledge and principles to find their glory in working for the people. Queen Elizabeth, opposed by many gender biased leaders, brought many reforms in her times. It was because of her, that Britain was able to conquer nations and assert its supremacy.

Hitler, though remembered as a dictator, changed the fate of Germany and recovered the nation from aftermaths of World War I. The Italian dictator Mussolini governed authoritatively. He is held responsible for the transformation of his country, for carrying out social reforms and public works without losing the support of industrialists and others.

History is full of such examples and Mahatma Gandhi is one of such persons whose efforts helped India to end the British rule. The freedom struggle was going on for decades. But it was under his leadership that India finally attained freedom.

The leadership of Anna Hazare is not hidden from any citizen of India. His campaign for Right to Information (RTI) movement proved tremendous to curb corruption in India. Another leader Arvind Kejriwal, yet again asserted the power of a common man wherein his right intentions made him victorious in his very first election attempt. Narendra Modi's policies for the development of Gujarat elated him to the honour of being the Prime Minister of India.

A common fact with all these people is that all of them were sincere in their efforts. They never disrespected their power or position. "I know that we have a huge responsibility today," exclaimed Arvind Kejriwal. Indeed, all the successful leaders have delivered their best considering power and position as their responsibility.

In the corporate world also, the great leadership of the CEOs have put the nation's economy to world competition. Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs, Dhirubhai Ambani, Narayan Murthi are known names who helped build the nation's economy. It would be right in Plato's words :

"Mankind will never see an end of trouble until lovers of wisdom come to hold political power or the holders of power become lovers of wisdom."

Man is the superior race amongst all the living beings. He has the power to think, to lead and to bring about change. In future also, human race will see more wise leaders who alone will bring change to the fate of a whole nation or rather to the whole humanity.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **testimony** – proof, evidence
- ♦ **refrain** – to hold oneself back, restrain
- ♦ **dictator** – a person of authority who subjects others to undue pressures
- ♦ **curb** – place restrictions on
- ♦ **elated** – elevated, roused

If I Become Invisible

To become invisible is such an amazing fantasy that surely most of the people on the planet would have imagined at some point of time in their life. There are absolutely endless possibilities that one can do if they become invisible even for a day. There would be no worldly rules or boundaries to stop anybody from anything. That is why, in this time and age, people fear people more than the real monsters.

An invisible person would feel like a genie as he would be able to fulfil all his wishes. An invisible person would not be stopped or checked by anybody. He could travel wherever he wishes to, tease anybody, peep anywhere and everywhere. Undoubtedly, anybody who becomes invisible would think according to his/her calibre, his/her mental ability and for his/her materialist or fantasied needs. Some would acquire position, some power, others, the riches of the world. But sadly, nobody would bother to look at the bigger picture of resolving the bitter problems of the society. There are so many things that one can do that would prove beneficial to the mankind. One can feed the poor, or unmask the terrorist, or acquire the knowledge of the unknown mysteries of the world.

One day, if I become invisible, firstly, I will thank God for choosing me and giving me the opportunity to put the things to right. I will use my power in the most fruitful manner proving a blessing to the humanity. My ambition would neither be the riches nor power. I would just simply help people in need like the superheroes in the movies. For that I don't even wish anything in return. Not even fame. I would be contented seeing the people happy.

However, invisibility can prove a little boring when nobody would be able to see or hear the invisible person. It would be like nullifying one's own identity. It is juxtaposed to the goal of every man. Every man or woman wish to make a place for themselves in the society. Infact, inspite of doing good deeds, the invisible person can unintentionally prove immoral to some. Also 'great power comes with great responsibility'; with such a power at hand any strictly moral person can think malicious. So, the power would have to be handled with care.

So many flicks have showed so many stories wherein the characters become invisible by one way or the other. Directors of such movies have shown both the pros and cons of such a situation. If invisibility happens to a villain then he/she tries to harm, conquer or even destroy the whole humanity. They try to equate themselves to God without fearing anything. On the contrary, if invisibility happens to the good man in the movie than he proves to be a blessing to the mankind. He/she tries to put things right and help people to the most. 'The Hollow Man', 'Harry Potter Movies', 'Twilight Movies', 'Gayab', 'Mr India' are examples of movies based on invisibility.

If we use our magical power for the benefit of humanity, it would be justice with the magical power. In this world, people only become invisible when they die, but if they did good works and deeds in their lives, it really makes them more than a super natural power.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **fantasied** – filled with imagination or fancies
- ♦ **nullifying** – to make null; invalidate
- ♦ **juxtapose** – to place side by side, especially for comparison or contrast
- ♦ **malicious** – motivated by wrongful, vicious, or harmful purposes
- ♦ **flicks** – movies

✿ Online Shopping

The internet has revolutionised the way we do our shopping. The businessman regards the internet as a modern effective tool for business transactions. Online shopping is the act of purchasing products or services over the internet.

In other words, online shopping or e-shopping is a form of electronic commerce which allows consumers to directly buy goods or services from a seller over the Internet using a web-browser. English entrepreneur Michael Aldrich invented online shopping in 1979. His system connected a modified domestic TV to a real-time transaction processing computer *via* domestic telephone line.



Online shopping took over a significant segment of the retail market during the first decade of the 21st century. As number of personal computers increased and established, retailers began to offer their products over the Internet. Some of the various ways in which online marketing is done in India are company websites, shopping portals, online auction sites. Interestingly, India is expected to be the third largest Internet market in the world in the next five years.

A survey by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSO CHAM) revealed that shopping trends of Indian consumers have witnessed a significant change as online shopping show more than 55% rise in 2013 as compared to previous year's 85%.

The key drivers for the boost of online shopping sector are: increasing broadband internet penetration/usage, rising standard of living with high disposable income, availability of much wider product range compared to what is available in the market, busy lifestyle leading to lack of time for offline shopping and relatively lower prices of the products. Generally, higher levels of education, metropolitan cities and personal income correspond to more favourable perceptions of shopping online. Delhi ranks first in e-shopping followed by Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

With online shopping we are no longer required to visit malls to make a purchase. By just sitting at the comfort of our homes, we can buy the required products and also pay online. Online shopping is fast, convenient with your goods reaching you at your door step. There is now no need to drive down to the mall, hence saving your money, time and effort.

More and more people have turned to Internet to buy everything from food to books to houses and groceries. The idea of not having to wait in long queues or in traffic or search through racks of clothing looking for the items or being able to shop at any time—preferably in pyjamas—has caused more people to turn to shopping online.

Apart from convenience, rising fuel prices, money saving schemes and availability with abundance of choice are keeping the buyers glued to the trend. Smaller towns and cities, where latest fashion trends may not be available, can buy their favourite items through online shopping. Many shopping sites provide the option of flexible delivery date and time, insurance of items, hassle free exchange policy and even cash

on delivery which is the biggest added advantage. For all these advantages one of the online portals have the tagline “shopping makes me happy happy.....”

Technology is more often accompanied with disadvantages and online shopping is no exception. The internet is prone to cybercrimes and online shopping is facilitated through this internet only. Cyber criminals like identity thieves prowl the internet looking for unsuspecting targets to steal their credit card details. Armed with sophisticated hacking and tracking software, they break the security protocols and access confidential credit card information which they use to their benefit. Many people are thus very wary of online shopping because of the risks involved in them.

‘Pictures can be deceptive’ is a widely known fact. This is one major drawback of shopping online. Although one is able to read the description of the product, the quality variant is an issue. Choosing the appropriate size is another hurdle. A shopper who is uncertain about what to look for, or who just enjoys browsing through items on display will prefer a store where the products can be seen. The decor, music and arrangement of goods in a retail store creates a multi-dimensional shopping environment that cannot be duplicated online. Many people who are currently unfamiliar with computer are not likely to change their habits to shopping online.

During the festive season of Diwali and Eid, there were more than 3,600,00 products available for online consumers. Online shopping sector constitutes to a good percentage to country’s GDP. Recently, a lot of foreign investors have shown interest and are willing to come with huge bag of finance. It seems former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s vision of advancement in the technology sector has reaped its fruit in today’s times. Today this sector is providing employment to a large number of citizens both in big and small towns.

Today, in this modern era, our life is full of technology. It is no wonder that online shopping is growing by leap and bounds year after year. While there may be some negatives of technology, one fact remains intact that technology has made our life simpler. Some two-three decades back, who could think that one can buy anything, anytime without even going out. Who could have thought that sending gifts to a relative or friend at a far distance would be so convenient, just by clicking a button. But despite the high growth of online shopping in recent years, India’s e-commerce industry is still in its nascent stage. Online shopping accounts for less than one per cent of the total shopping in the country, but has a lot of potential to shoot up.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| ♦ transaction | – dealing, commerce, trade | ♦ prone | – liable, inclined, having a tendency |
| ♦ auction | – bid, public sale | ♦ prowl | – move stealthily, sneak, stalk |
| ♦ penetration | – the extent of influence | ♦ protocol | – a set of standardised procedures for transmitting or storing data |
| ♦ perception | – sensing, intuition | ♦ wary | – watchful, cautious, alert |
| ♦ racks | – a framework or stand in or on which to hold, hang, or display various articles | ♦ leaps and bounds | – considerably, significantly |
| ♦ deceptive | – misleading, false, fake | | |
| ♦ glued | – affixed, firmly attached | | |
| ♦ nascent | – beginning, developing, evolving | | |

✿ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, popularly known by its abbreviation AIDS is a fatal disease that attacks and destroys the immune system of the body. It is caused by a virus called Human Immuno Deficiency Virus or HIV in short. This virus is even invisible under a microscope and can remain in the body for years together without showing any visible symptoms. AIDS is the last stage of infection of this virus. It takes at least a period of 10 years between getting infected with HIV and reaching the stage of developing AIDS.

The first ever case of a person with AIDS was detected in America in 1959 and it later emerged as a dreadfully widespread disease in the 1980s in countries like France, Belgium, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe etc. In India, it was first reported in 1986.

AIDS is a fast spreading disease in the world which—if not controlled can take epidemic proportions. As per the reports of Indian Health Organisation (IHO), women and children are found to be more prone to the disease. The highest number of AIDS cases are found in Mumbai in India which is known as the AIDS capital of the country and is closely followed by Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Nagpur, Aurangabad and Kolhapur.

As per the common myth, HIV infection is not contagious as measles, chicken pox, tuberculosis, cholera, plague, smallpox etc. The infection mainly spreads either sexually or through blood to blood contact. HIV spreads mainly through sexual relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual with an infected partner, through transfusion of HIV infected blood and blood products, use of infected syringes or needles and is passed on by an infected mother to her unborn child. It is therefore, foolish to believe that HIV spreads through mosquitoes, embracing, holding, touching or kissing each other, shaking hands, coughing, sneezing, spitting, sharing of public toilets or swimming pools, sharing meals or eating from the same plates, or sharing clothes, bed sheets or attending same schools or working together.

AIDS is caused by a slow and gradual process. Medically, four stages have been defined in its long process. The initial HIV infection may show general symptoms like fever, bodyache or headache and then lie dormant for years together without showing any further signs. The infection can be passed on. Next, a person may develop enlarged glands in the neck or armpits without any pain or other symptoms. Other symptoms can be fatigue, weight-loss, chronic diarrhoea, prolonged fever, cough, night sweats etc.

Gradually, the virus damages the immune system. The last stage of the disease takes at least 10 years to culminate into a fully blown AIDS. By this time, the patient's immune system is totally destroyed and the person gets infected by various diseases and cancers. This stage is easily recognised and a man survives for about 3-4 years after entering this stage. Two tests are carried out in order to confirm HIV infection—ELISA (Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay) and Western Blot.



ELISA is simple and the results can be known within a few hours, but Western Blot is difficult, expensive and time consuming. December 1, every year is celebrated as World AIDS Day worldwide and in India too. Celebration of World AIDS Day is symbolically a call to enhance social protection mechanism for people with HIV and alert government in framing unbiased policies for vulnerable population so that they can enjoy an equal status in the society.

Awareness camps are held to enlighten people about the signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS. United Nation, World Health Organisation (WHO) and numerous social welfare organisations along with NGO's are constantly striving and taking initiatives on AIDS awareness and to reach both urban and rural areas, cities and villages.

According to more recent National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) data, India has demonstrated an overall reduction in estimated annual new HIV infections (among adult population). Soon after the first cases emerged in 1986, the Government of India established the National AIDS Committee within the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The NACO has increased the number of centres providing free Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART) and more such centres are getting operational soon.

The Indian Railways gives 50% concession admissible in basic Mail/Express fares while travelling for treatment at nominated ART Centres. In 2009, India established a "National HIV and AIDS Policy and the world of work" which sought to end discrimination against workers on the basis of their real or perceived HIV status. Under this policy all the enterprises are encouraged to establish non-discrimination, healthy-work environment, confidentiality, prevention and care, and support to its employees. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund) is partnering with high profile supporters from the Entertainment industry to highlight the importance of community empowerment against AIDS. A number of celebrities have shown keen interest in UNICEF's programmes and have expressed a desire to get associated with it. Celebrities worldwide are coming forward and are speaking openly about the issue to spread awareness, thereby also raising funds for the cause. On World AIDS Day, more than 80 iconic landmarks across 13 countries turn red to promote awareness of the ongoing fight against the AIDS epidemic. Celebrities like, Serena Williams had turned-off from all social media on (December 1) AIDS Day to lament the death of AIDS victims.

These days there are films like 'My Brother Nikhil', 'Kaminey' amongst other which have talked about AIDS. Media too is helping to spread awareness with repetitive advertisements on the issue wherein employees resign from their office as their co-worker was terminated for having AIDS; or latest being doctors avoiding AIDS infected pregnant woman. Government too is spreading awareness through large number of hoardings and installing contraceptive vending machines in public toilets. International Cricket Council (ICC) too have collaborated with the United Nations to spread awareness against HIV. Nelson Mandela once quoted :

"AIDS today in Africa is claiming more lives than the sum total of all wars, famines, floods and ravages of diseases such as malaria."

What had initially been thought of as a homosexual disease has emerged as one of the most widespread one among men, women and children of all ages. The diseases in many ways—strikes at the very foundation of the smallest unit of society—the family. The victims and their families go through a phase of emotional trauma, social isolation and are shattered financially. The victims are ousted from their jobs,

disowned by their families and turned down everywhere. The facilities currently available to treat this disease are inadequate. More and more medical colleges, hospitals and counselling centres need to be developed.

Scientists across the globe are trying to invent/come out with more sensitive, affordable techniques to test the signs of HIV at an early stage. Yet, more and more awareness about the disease, its causes and treatment should be created among the masses. Schools and colleges can be a very effective medium of creating awareness among the youth. These youths in turn can be instrumental in spreading awareness among the other sections of the society. HIV patients need to be cared with compassion and be allowed to live and die with dignity. Voluntary organisations can help the government in accomplishing this task by various means of advertising, performing street plays, conducting seminars and involving the youth.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **fatal** – causing death
- ♦ **detected** – discover, identify
- ♦ **epidemic** – widespread, rampant, extensive
- ♦ **proportions** – a part, share or number, amount
- ♦ **myth** – a widely held but false belief or idea
- ♦ **contagious** – communicable, transmittable, infectious
- ♦ **transfusion** – the transfer/introduction of blood or blood plasma into a vein or artery
- ♦ **syringe** – a medical instrument used to inject or withdraw fluids
- ♦ **embracing** – the act of clasping another person in the arms affectionately
- ♦ **culminate** – end up, conclude, to reach the highest point
- ♦ **vulnerable** – capable of being physically or emotionally hurt
- ♦ **enlighten** – give greater knowledge and understanding about a subject or situation
- ♦ **striving** – to exert much effort or energy, to struggle
- ♦ **lament** – to express grief, sorrow
- ♦ **terminated** – to bring to an end, dismiss
- ♦ **contraceptive** – birth control device
- ♦ **ravages** – to bring heavy destruction or devastate
- ♦ **trauma** – distressing experience, suffering

✿ Delhi Metro

The Defeline of Delhi

Not long ago, Delhiites used to curse the public transport system of the national capital. Errant, reckless and rash bus drivers, showing no sign of courtesy even to the ladies as well as the elderly, made commuting from one place to the other a painfully daunting task.

Delhi Metro has changed the way people travel within Delhi. With the arrival of Metro, travelling from one place to another has become joyfully exciting, fast, noiseless, dust free and absolutely dependable. For most people living in Delhi, Metro is their great pride, as it has made their life comfortable by making travelling stress free. It has brought relief from traffic snarls.



Delhi Metro is thus a world-class metro. It is one of the few metro systems in the world having an operational profit from the very first day. It is India's second

urban-mass rapid transportation system after Kolkata Metro. Delhi Metro or Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to be precise, is a metro system serving Delhi and the suburbs such as Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad region in the National Capital Region of India. Delhi Metro is the world's thirteenth largest metro system in terms of length. It is a dream come true for the workers and people employed and a blessing for its commuters.

After the 1980s, Delhi saw a major population explosion and about fivefold rise in the number of vehicles. As a result, the other public transport system i.e., bus service was unable to bear the load. Commuters took to private vehicles which increased the traffic congestion as well as pollution. So in 1984, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Urban Arts Commission came up with a proposal of developing multi-modal transportation system which would curb all the problems and would connect the city in a better way.

After the technical study and finalising the finance issue the physical construction of Delhi Metro was started on 1st October, 1998. The first line of Delhi Metro was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 24th December, 2002. It became the second rapid system in India after the Kolkata Metro which was operational since 1984. The first phase of the Metro was completed on the estimated budget and almost-three years ahead of schedule, an achievement described by Business Week Magazine as 'nothing short of a miracle'.

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (DMRC) is a state-owned company with equal participation from the Government of India and Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi. The huge investment involved in the construction comes from both of these sectors as well as from the loans from companies. These companies are banks like Japan Bank for International Cooperation or Indian companies like Reliance Infra. In 2007, the Delhi Metro claimed to be one of the only five metro systems in the world that operates at a profit without governmental aids. This was achieved by keeping the maintenance cost limited and by getting additional revenues from advertisements and property development, apart from the ticket sales. With the increasing association with Delhi as an image of the city's everyday life, it became popular filming location for films like 'Love Aaj Kal', 'Delhi 6', 'Paa' etc and for some other advertisements too. The metro also generates revenue with such a lease. Delhi Metro has air-conditioned coaches. To ensure safety, it is equipped with the most modern control and communication system. It has all the conveniences and world class amenities like ATMs, food outlets, cafes, mobile recharge stores etc., in most of the stations.

Students of many art colleges have designed decorative paintings at Metro Stations, while pillars on some elevated sections have been decorated with the creations of schoolchildren. Some of the newer metro stations conduct rainwater harvesting as an environment protection measure. In order to reduce its dependence on non-renewable sources of energy, DMRC is looking forward to harness solar energy. Infact DMRC has been certified by the United Nations as the first metro system in the world to reduce greenhouse gas emissions thereby reducing pollution levels in the city.

Delhi Metro has a huge ridership on the daily basis and even record breaking number of commuters on the festival days. Commuters find it most convenient as it saves their money, save them from ever-lasting time consuming traffic, pollution, rains, heat among other things. The brighter side does not end here. DMRC conducts awareness programmes for the labour engaged in the construction work on issues like

HIV/AIDS etc. It also provides medical facilities and educational services to its labourers and to their children. Overlooking some minute drawbacks like overcrowding, congestion during construction, Delhi Metro is a huge success in the capital city. It has, in more than one way, helped in the beautification of the city. Looking at such a positive success, government is planning to come up with more such metros in other cities like Mumbai and Lucknow. It is also attracting foreign investors who wish to be a part of one such profitable plan.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **errant** – straying from the right course or from accepted standards
- ♦ **reckless** – careless, irresponsible
- ♦ **commuting** – travelling
- ♦ **daunting** – frightening
- ♦ **snarls** – a complicated or confused condition
- ♦ **suburbs** – a residential district located on the outskirts of a major city
- ♦ **congestion** – overcrowding
- ♦ **curb** – control, hold, restrain
- ♦ **lease** – to grant temporary possession at a fixed rate
- ♦ **elevated** – raised to or being at a higher level
- ♦ **harness** – utilise, trap
- ♦ **ridership** – the number of passengers who ride on a public transport system

✿ Photography

In Today's World

The idea of colours floating across a sheet of paper forming either familiar shapes or new creations is appealing to the eye. In reality, though, it is much more than just the beads of colour. Photography can capture someone's heart and soul. Even the simplest photo has a story that tails along with it. It is an escape from the real world; a creation that narrows on one particular subject and carefully details their every move and emotion.

Photography was invented, about a century ago. In those early days, only simple box-cameras were available to take simple black and white pictures. Photographic techniques and equipments have come a long way since then. Exploding flash guns have progressed to compact electronic flash unit, box-cameras to sophisticated computerised reflex cameras, stills to movies, black-and-white to full glorious colours and part-time dabblers to highly paid professionals.

On a summer day in 1827, Joseph Nicephore Niepce made the first Photographic image with a camera obscura. Prior to Niepce people just used the camera obscura for viewing or drawing purposes not for making photographs. Joseph Nicephore Niepce's heliographs or sun prints as they were called were the prototype for the modern photograph, by letting



light draw the picture. In almost every sphere of human activity nowadays, photography has now come to play a very significant role.

Photography as a hobby is perhaps the most popular of all its uses. Cameras and films are now cheap and easy to use. 'Instamatic' cameras have largely eliminated the hit-or-miss techniques of yesteryears.

The use of camera phones has made life so easy and entertaining. It has a vast usage and is one of the best modern age techniques so far. Anybody with a pair of eyes and hands can take reasonably good pictures. We see amateur photographers all over the place, especially in holiday resorts and recreational areas.

Tourist and sightseers are never without cameras. Pictures and snapshots of important events, wonderful times and places or memories to be precise, are all recorded in photographs. They are our link to the past.

Newspapers and magazines would never be what they are today without photography. Photographs enliven these periodicals with pictures of people and places. "A picture is worth a thousand words", so goes the old saying.

A well-clicked photograph is worth more than a thousand words. It describes a scene infinitely better than mere words can depict. Besides making newspapers and magazines attractive, photography provides jobs to numerous professionals who roam around the world in search of pictures.

'Eyes work more than ears' is a widespread fact. Use of photographs helps people to retain better. Photographs/images get quickly captured in our mind and stays in our memory for a relatively longer time. That's why it is also said that many people have photographic memory wherein whatever they see gets stored in their mind and helps in remembering things quicker and in a better way. This proven fact has been rightly harnessed by the educationist wherein they use more and more of pictures in text books and while teaching.

Modern printing processes make extensive use of photographic techniques. Off-set printing and photocopying are examples of what photography is doing for us. Such is the versatility of photography. All the books and magazines are now made by photographic processes.

In another field of human activity that is medicine, photography is extensively used. X-ray photography is now a common thing in hospitals. They help doctors in the diagnosis of diseases. In addition, X-rays can be used in treatment of certain diseases. Nowadays, with the invention of fibre optics where light can be directed through thin tubes, doctors can see and probe into the insides of patients as never before. They can then photograph all they see in full colour. Such techniques were unheard of just a decade or so ago.

Photography is also employed in meteorology. Weather forecasting by satellites is now a routine thing. It is also accurate.

Pictures of other planets and celestial objects are always wonderful to look at. Space probes approaching the giant planets of Jupiter and Saturn have taken sharp and clear pictures for us to unravel the mysteries of the universe. All these are made possible by the wonders of photography.

Photography provides us with sights of deep-sea sharks, microscopic bacteria, constellations—a million light years away, ravishing beauties and our passport pictures. A person sitting at the remotest area of any part of the world can enjoy the view of any wonder of the world. Its use is wide and varied and of tremendous importance to us. Non-existence of photography in the earlier times has left us with a very bleak image of our ancestors.

In the contemporary world the practical applications of the photographic medium are legion; it is an important tool in education, medicine, commerce, criminology and the military. Its scientific applications include aerial mapping and surveying geology, reconnaissance, meteorology archaeology and anthropology. New techniques such as holography, a means of creating three-dimensional image in space, continue to expand the medium's technological and creative horizons. In astronomy the Charge Coupled Device (CCD) can detect and register even a single photon of light.

By the end of 20th century, digital imaging and processing and computer-based techniques had made it possible to manipulate images in many ways, creating revolutionary changes in the world of photography.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **exploding** – to shatter with a loud noise
- ♦ **flash guns** – a type of electronic flash incorporated in a camera
- ♦ **sophisticated** – advanced, refined, highly developed
- ♦ **stills** – motionless images
- ♦ **dabblers** – one who engages in an activity superficially or without serious intent
- ♦ **prototype** – example, standard, model
- ♦ **instamatic** – a series of inexpensive, easy to load camera made by kodak
- ♦ **amateur** – non-professional
- ♦ **recreational** – amusement, pleasure
- ♦ **enliven** – inspire, excite, enhance
- ♦ **harnessed** – managed, controlled
- ♦ **versatility** – having a wide variety of skills, having varied uses a functions
- ♦ **diagnosis** – identification, detection
- ♦ **probe** – inquiry, examine, investigate
- ♦ **celestial** – heavenly, astronomical
- ♦ **unravel** – solve, explain
- ♦ **ravishing** – enchanting, gorgeous
- ♦ **bleak** – dim, discouraging, hopeless
- ♦ **legion** – numerous, countless
- ♦ **aerial** – of, in, or produced by the air
- ♦ **reconnaissance** – survey, exploration, investigation



Information Media

By far, books, magazines, newspapers and other printed matter carry the largest and most varied kinds of information to their readers. We can get books on almost any subject that we care to read on. There are books on sports, cookery, fashion, language education, etc. You name the topic and the likelihood is that somebody has published a book (or books) on that topic. So does the internet, which is a modern development in this field.

We get all kinds of information via magazines and newspapers. We come to know about various anti-social happenings through the print media and are able to keep ourselves alert. We also read about the rise and fall of certain politicians, the cricket matches, the state of the stock exchange, the grand sale going on in a supermarket, and also about the various kinds of jobs available.

The amount of information that we can gather from a newspaper is enormous. To read the whole newspaper completely would take hours. While everything printed in

newspapers may not be interesting to everyone, we usually read the sections we like, for example, the sports and cartoon pages, and leave the rest. In our country, newspapers are published daily in various languages to cater to various linguistic groups. Each newspaper gives its own version of the hottest news items plus other items that are its particular preferences.

Thus, an average person can be reasonably well-informed about the current happenings in this ever changing world; and only at the price of a few rupees.

The last century, and especially the last few decades, witnessed the tremendous strides made in the field of electronic technology. The simple traditional telephone has been joined to sophisticated television sets, computers, stereo, music, mobile phones and internet.

Moreover, internet and social media are particularly important for facilitating access to an unparalleled wealth of information, as well as providing opportunities for new innovative activities and social interactions. Through the means of internet, especially in smart mobile phones the information spreads instantly and reaches mass audience in a less costly manner.

In order to get the attention of masses one can voice thoughts on any of the social networking sites and in return get thousands of reviews back. This advancement made Bill Gates quote; “The PC (Personal Computer) has improved the world in just about every area you can think of ... Access to information and the ability to give a voice to people who would never have been heard.”

Through the television comes all manners of soap-operas, talk-shows, news, documentaries and the ubiquitous advertisement clips. Large number of people are reached daily in this way. A whole new generation of people is created based on the ideals and dreams that are propagated by the television. Political groups and manufacturers make extensive use of this mode of communication to communicate with people. Television has become so effective as a means of transferring information that even criminals and terrorists know its value.

The invention of communication satellites now allow us to witness any event around the globe at the touch of a remote. Even internet is playing a huge role in the transfer of information at present.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **enormous** – huge, vast, extensive
- ♦ **linguistic** – consisting of or related to language
- ♦ **tremendous** – great, extraordinary
- ♦ **strides** – to attain a maximum level of competence
- ♦ **facilitating** – furthering, forwarding, promoting
- ♦ **ubiquitous** – ever-present, all-over, universal
- ♦ **propagated** – promoted, generated

Right To Information (RTI)

The New Revolution in India

The spirit of Right To Information (RTI) Act can be best stated by saying that without informed citizens there is no democracy. Indian Constitution permits its citizens to speak and express without fear. But how can a person speak against the government if he or she does not have the information? Right To Information in India is a recognition of democracy that requires informed citizenry and transparency of information for a better functioning. Globally, more than 80 countries have enacted such laws, with the list growing each year. India's RTI Act is internationally recognised as a strong and effective law.

Right To Information (RTI) Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizens' requests for government related information. Since every citizen pays taxes, therefore he is entitled to know how the government is functioning. The Act empowers every citizen to seek any information from the government, obtain copies of any government documents, inspect any government documents, works and records, and take certified samples of materials of any government work.

According to Act No. 22 of 2005, The Right To Information Act is "An Act to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the Constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto." This law was passed by the Parliament on 15 June, 2005 and came fully into force on 13 October, 2005.

The RTI Act extends to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir. All bodies, which are constituted under the Constitution or are under any government notification, or all bodies, including NGOs, which are owned, controlled or substantially financed by the government are covered under the Act. All authorities covered must appoint their Public Information Officer (PIO). In addition, every public authority is required to designate Assistant Public Information Officers (APIOs) to receive RTI requests and appeals for forwarding to the PIOs of their public authority. Any person may submit a request to the PIO for information in writing along with the application fees, which is ₹ 10 for Central Government Departments and different for different states.

In case of Central Government Departments, 629 post offices have been designated as APIOs. This means that one can go to any of these post offices and submit his/her fee and application at the RTI counter. A receipt will be issued as an acknowledgement and it is then the responsibility of that post office to deliver it to the right PIO. It is the PIO's obligation to provide information to citizens of India who request information under the Act.

The PIO cannot refuse to accept application for information under any circumstances. Even if the application does not pertain to his department/jurisdiction, he would have to transfer it to the concerned PIO within 5 days. If the concerned PIO does not accept the application, then the applicant can make a formal

complaint to the respective Information Commission under Section 18. The Act also casts a direct accountability on the officer for not performing his duty and Information Commissioner can impose a penalty of ₹ 25000 or ₹ 250 per day. Also the applicant is not required to disclose any information or reason other than his name and contact particulars to seek the information.

Rampant corruption prevailing in the country forced the law-makers to realise that there is no way the country can be better without giving more power in hands of its citizens. Under such circumstances, the RTI Act checks corruption and helps in improving transparency. Since its enactment, the Act has been extensively used by ordinary Indian citizens to demand a vast range of information from their government. Unlike many countries where RTI laws have been used primarily by journalists and the media, in India the law has a broad base of users from different parts of the country. Case studies and media reports show that RTI is being used to redress individual grievances, access entitlements such as ration cards and pensions, investigate government policies and decisions and expose corruption and misuse of government resources.

For many, particularly India's poor and disadvantaged, the Act has been empowering and has led to tangible results. For instance in 2010, a resident of rural village of Odisha, filed a RTI application seeking information on the number of ponds constructed in his village under government's scheme. The information he received was revealing: the ponds had never been constructed even though money was spent. Following this, the local administration was forced to take action.

Anna Hazare's campaign for the RTI movement proved to be tremendous against corruption in India. He got huge public support with citizens coming out on the streets of Delhi, Bengaluru and other cities to voice their anger and discontent. While, the debate on corruption in the country rages on, the RTI Act is fast emerging as an effective anti-corruption tool.

Civil society organisations have played an important role in raising public awareness about RTI and assisting citizens in filing requests for information. For example, Delhi based NGO Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) assist local residents and slum dwellers to file RTI. In addition to such initiatives, the law is increasingly being used to tackle high profile corruption. Much of the information regarding corruption during Commonwealth Games was unearthed using RTI. The power of RTI can be best utilised today as the citizens are more awakened/enlightened and educated as compared to any other times. Also, unlike during Mahatma Gandhi's time, where he had to move from place to place to mobilise people and had primitive communication method; we are at a distinct advantage as we are empowered by technology. We have the benefit of internet and fast paced media to harness the use of our Rights.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **citizenry** – voters, population, public
- ♦ **pertain** – relate, be appropriate
- ♦ **rampant** – widespread, uncontrolled, extensive
- ♦ **grievances** – complaints, objection
- ♦ **tangible** – solid, clear, definite
- ♦ **mobilise** – prepare, encourage, assemble
- ♦ **primitive** – very basic or simple, old, not much developed

✿ India *One Land, Many Clans*

Romaine Rolland, a French scholar, once quoted, “If there is one place on the face of Earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India!”

India, the land of spirituality and philosophy considers religion as an integral part of its tradition. The worship of various religions and its rituals play a significant role in every aspect of human life in the country.

India is the birthplace of two great religions of the world, namely, Hinduism and Buddhism. India is also home to the followers of one of the oldest religions of the world, Zoroastrianism and ancient religions like Jainism and Sikhism are also widely practiced here. Followers of Islam, Christianity, Bahaism and Judaism exist throughout the world and also form a part of the population of secular India.



Hinduism is the dominant faith in India. The ancient Hindus, literally meaning the people of the valley of the Indus river, soon took on functions and specialisation that had little to do with tilling the soil. Different castes developed out of necessity, for with the evolution of society, it was no longer possible for the tiller of the soil to assume the functions of priest, warrior, merchant and artisan, all rolled in one. Roles began to be defined and people were classified according to their work, occupation and economic place in the society.

Also, a number of world religions originated in India and others that started elsewhere found fertile ground for growth here. Buddhism and Jainism, and ancient monastic traditions, have had a major influence on the Indian art, philosophy, and society and are followed by a large section of the society even in the late 20th century. Islam spread throughout South Asia in the early 8th century and is the largest minority religion in India today.

Sikhism, which started in Punjab in the 16th century, gradually spread throughout India and to the other parts of the world. Christianity, represented by various denominations, traces its history in India, back to the time of the apostles. Judaism and Zoroastrianism, that originally arrived with traders and exiles from the West, are represented by small populations, mostly concentrated on India’s West coast. A variety of independent tribal religious groups are also live carriers of their unique ethnic traditions. Even with such diversity, the message of love and brotherhood is expressed by all religions and cultures of India—the bowing in prayer in the courtyard of a mosque or the rows of lamps that light up houses at Diwali, the good cheer of Christmas or the bonhomie of Baisakhi—the festivals of India are celebrations of a shared emotion that bring people together.

People from different religions and cultures of India, unite in a common chord of brotherhood and amity on this fascinating and diverse land. Yet, there is a disparity amongst various religion in accordance with the occupation or hierarchy due to which caste system evolved.

This rigidity of caste system marginalised a lot of sections of society, thus, hampering the overall growth of human race in India. A lot of religious leaders such as Mahavira (540-468 BC), the founder of Jainism and Gautama (563-483 BC), the founder of Buddhism, failed to reduce the rigidity of caste system.

It was the Industrial Revolution that finally made a dent in the caste system and brought a new awareness to Indians. Industrialisation encouraged urbanisation, as village dwellers of both high and low castes moved to the cities for better jobs. In the urban areas, the rigid, age-old, caste-centered thinking gave way to a more liberal outlook and encouraged the mixing of castes without distinction. Trade unions and other associations saw members from all castes working together.

The British Government of India had a considerable transforming impact on the country's social structure. The British brought changes by passing many important laws, such as the Hindu Act, the Caste Disabilities Act and the Widow Remarriage Act etc.

The strongest, most systematic attack on the caste system had come in the 20th century through the Constitution of India, adopted on 26th November, 1949. India's Constitution guaranteed the rights of all its citizens to justice, liberty, equality and dignity. This highlights the long and arduous journey from ancient caste distinctions based on Hindu philosophy and religious traditions to the constitutional pledge of a democratic government with equality, dignity and justice for all human beings.

To uplift the backward classes, the Government of India has officially documented castes and sub-castes, primarily to determine those deserving reservation in education and jobs through the census.

India is a secular state and probably, the only state where so many religions flourish side by side. In practice, it is difficult to divide religion or caste affiliations from the life of people. This is probably so, because it is impossible to know India without understanding its religious beliefs and practices, which have a large impact on the personal lives of most Indians.

For many Indians, religion and their caste exerts a strong motivational influence on their lifestyles, beliefs and culture. Kinship bonding in India is very strong, with an enormous respect for family, community values and traditions. Festivities transcend the invisible barrier between religions and rather become a celebration of the universality of human living. But this does not mean that religious practices in Indian sense merely involve hollow and meaningless display of traditions, instead it is a deep rooted sense of the way of life.

At present, Indian society is characterised by the development that has led to a free-market economy. In the current scenario, India's caste system can no longer fully contain the socio-economic changes that the country is undergoing. Different occupations and levels of education are no longer correlated with caste.

For example a high caste person may not be born as a Chief Executive, but he/she can work to become one. A person of low caste can now get a good education and can become an executive, a college professor or even a political leader.

However, the vote politics rampant in Indian democracy tries to lure the voters on the basis of their castes and religions, which is also a great setback to the real and concrete development of the country.

The only weapon that seems available to fight the rigid caste system is education. We need to learn to respect man as man first, which will help us value the uniqueness of religion, class, ethnicity and culture of India.

VOCAB HELP

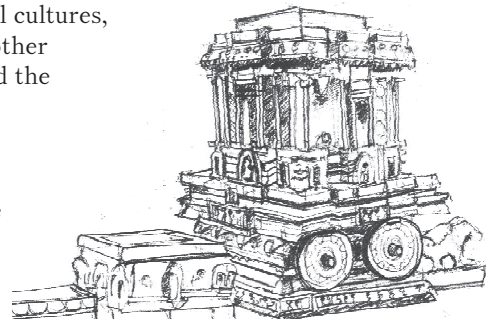
- ♦ **Zoroastrianism** – pre-Islamic religion of ancient Iran founded by Zoroaster in the 6th century BC
- ♦ **tilling** – prepare and cultivate crops
- ♦ **evolution** – development; growth
- ♦ **monastic** – relating to monks, nuns, or others living under religious vows
- ♦ **denomination** – a recognised autonomous branch
- ♦ **apostles** – any of the early followers of Jesus who carried the Christian message into the world
- ♦ **bonhomie** – cheerful friendliness, good-natured manner
- ♦ **amity** – friendship; peaceful harmony
- ♦ **dwellers** – live in or at a specified place; resident
- ♦ **affiliations** – attached or connected to an organisation, association
- ♦ **transcend** – surpass, go beyond the range or limits; to rise above
- ♦ **chasm** – difference between people, viewpoints, feelings etc; gap
- ♦ **lure** – attract, tempt to do something or to go somewhere especially by offering some form of reward

Indian Heritage

India has a rich and unique cultural heritage, and has managed to preserve its established traditions throughout history. By absorbing customs, traditions and ideas from both invaders and immigrants, Indian culture, evolved with confluence of several regional cultures, which witnessed cultural influences from other countries and consequently, also influenced the culture of several other regions.

Indian culture is strongly influenced by various religions and their respective folklores and art. While the classical influence is still evident in rural Indian culture, the urban India is now widely influenced by global popular culture. Indian is usually divided into five major cultural divisions,

each with their own styles. Some considers that there is a more pronounced difference between the cultures of South India and North-East India, whereas East and West Indian cultures portray a mingling of Northern and Southern influences with their own peculiar forms. Along with regional diversity, languages have created diverse traditions of culture in India. There are a large number of languages in India—216 of them are spoken by more than 10000 communities.



The two major families of languages are Dravidian languages and the Indo-Aryan languages, the former largely confined to the South India and the latter to the North India. The Constitution of India has stipulated the usage of Hindi and English to be the two official languages of communication for the National Government. Sanskrit served as the classical language of India and Eastern Asia, and is equated in importance to Latin or Greek in Europe. It is studied as far as Japan, due to cultural and religious ties. Each of the languages of India has numerous speakers and thus, their cultural traditions are strong.

The earliest literary traditions of India were mostly oral and were later transcribed. Most of these spring from Hindu traditions and are represented by sacred works like the Vedas, the epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Tamil Sangam literature represents some of India's oldest secular traditions. Many Buddhist and Jain works are in Prakrit languages like Pali.

The classical playwright 'Kalidasa' is widely regarded as the greatest poet and dramatist in the Sanskrit language. The place bestowed to Shakespeare in English literature is similar to that held by Kalidasa in Sanskrit literature. On the arrival of Muslim dynasties, Islamic culture dominated most of the medieval Indian literature, with the spread of Persian influence and the rise of famous poets such as Amir Khusro. Simultaneously, India also saw the growth of literature in regional languages.

Colonial rule prepared the stage for modern literature exemplified by the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Madhusudan Dutt, Munshi Premchand, Devaki Nandan Khatri and Vaikom Muhammad Basheer among many others. Indian writers in modern times, like RK Narayan, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai and others are the cynosure of wide acclaim today, both in Indian languages and in English.

India has strong traditions of poetry, as well as prose writing. This is often closely related to musical traditions and most poetry can be attributed to religious movements. Writers and philosophers were often also skilled poets. Poetry also served as an important non-violent tool of nationalism during the Indian Freedom Movement. Figures such as Rabindranath Tagore in modern times and poets such as Kabir in medieval times rekindled spark in people's hearts through their intense verses. Two references of poetry from Tagore's Gitanjali serve as National Anthems of both India and Bangladesh.

The music of India includes multiple varieties of folk, popular pop and classical music. India's classical music tradition, including Carnatic and Hindustani music, noted for the use of several Ragas, has a history spanning millennia and, has developed over several eras. Even today, music remains instrumental to the religious inspiration, cultural expression and pure entertainment.

Alongside distinctly sub-continental forms, there are major influences from Persian, Arab and British music. Indian genres like filmi songs and bhangra have become popular throughout the United Kingdom, South and East Asia, and around the world.

India is a land of numerous classical dance forms, each of which can be traced to different parts of the country. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people. The eight main styles are Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Bhangra, Manipuri and Kathakali. Besides these, there are several forms of Indian folk dances and special dances observed in regional festivals.

Cave paintings from Ajanta, Bagh, Ellora and Sittanavasal and temple paintings are testimony to the love of nature and God. Most rock arts in India are Hindu or Buddhist in origin. A freshly made coloured design (Rangoli) on floor is still a common sight outside the doorstep of many Indian homes (mostly South Indian). Madhubani painting, Rajput painting, Tanjore painting, Mughal painting are some notable genres of Indian art; while Raja Ravi Varma, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy are some modern painters.

The first few sculptures of India date back to the Indus Valley civilisation, where stone and bronze carvings have been discovered. This is one of the earliest instances of sculpture in the world. Later, as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism developed further, India produced some of the most intricate bronzes as well as unrivalled temple carvings in the world.

Some huge shrines, such as the one at Ellora were not actually constructed using blocks, but were instead carved out of solid rock, which make them perhaps the largest and most intricate sculptures in the world. The pink sandstone sculptures of Mathura evolved during the Gupta Period (4th to 6th century) exhibit a very high finesse of execution and delicacy in the modelling. Newer sculptures in the North-West, in stucco, schist or clay, display very strong blending of Indian post-Gupta mannerism and classical influence, Hellenistic or possibly even Greco-Roman. Meanwhile, elsewhere in India, less anatomically accurate styles of human representation evolved, leading to the classical art that the world is now familiar with and contributing to Buddhist and Hindu sculptures throughout Asia.

Indian architecture is such a vast tapestry of the Indian sub-continent that encompasses a multitude of expressions over space and time, transformed by the forces of history, sometimes destroying, but most of the time absorbing new ideas. The result is an evolving range of architectural production that none the less retains a certain amount of continuity throughout history. The earliest production in the Indus Valley civilisation was characterised by well-planned cities and houses.

During the Gupta and Mauryan empires, several Buddhist architectural forms like caves of Ajanta and Ellora and the monumental Sanchi Stupa were built. South India has several Hindu temples like Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur, the Sun Temple of Konark and Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam. Angkor Wat and other Buddhist and Hindu temples carry the evidence of Indian influence on South-East Asian architecture, as they are built in styles almost identical to traditional Indian temple building. With the advent of Islamic influence, the erstwhile Indian architecture adapted to the traditions of the new religion.

Fatehpur Sikri, Taj Mahal, Gol Gumbaz, Qutub Minar and Red Fort of Delhi are the creations of this era, and are often used as the archetypal symbols of India, despite the greater antiquity and originality of the traditional architecture.

The Colonial rule of the British Indian empire saw the development of Indo-Saracenic style and mixing of several other styles, such as European Gothic, Victoria Memorial and Victoria Terminus. Recent creations such as the Lotus Temple and the various modern urban architectural forms of India, are also notable. The traditional system of Vaastu Shastra serves as India's version of Feng Shui and influences town planning, architecture, and ergonomics.

It is unclear which system is older, but they contain many similarities. Any glimpse of the rich heritage of India seems to be incomplete because it becomes difficult to capture heritage as old as 6000 years or more in a few words. Yet no one can deny the great contribution of the sub-continent to the richness of India's heritage, characterised by its delicacy and diversity.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| ♦ confluence | – a coming together of people or things; merger | ♦ intricate | – very complicated or detailed |
| ♦ mingling | – mix, blend | ♦ unrivalled | – better than everyone or everything of the same type; incomparable |
| ♦ stipulated | – to make an express demand or arrangement as a condition of agreement | ♦ stucco | – various fine plasters for decorative work, moldings etc. |
| ♦ transcribed | – to make a written copy, to make an exact copy | ♦ schist | – metamorphic rock which consists of layers of different minerals and can be split into thin irregular plates. |
| ♦ spanning | – the amount of space that something covers | ♦ anatomically | – relating to bodily structure |
| ♦ millennia | – a period of a thousand years | ♦ tapestry | – something that is made up of different people and things |
| ♦ genres | – a style or category of art, music, or literature having a particular form, content, technique or the like | ♦ archetypal | – a perfect example of something, because it has all the most important qualities of things that belong to that type; relating to or denoting an original which has been imitated |
| | | ♦ dynasties | – a series of rulers or dynasts from one family |



United Nations Organisation

The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organization established on 24 October 1945, to promote international co-operation. During the Second World War, the need for an agency that could act as a successor to the League of Nations was felt and so, the United Nations Charter was drafted at a conference in April–June 1945. This charter came into effect on 24 October 1945, and the UN began its operations.

In addition to maintaining peace and security, the United Nations' ambit includes other important objectives like developing friendly relations among countries based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of people achieving worldwide cooperation to solve international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; respecting and promoting human rights; and serving as a centre where countries can coordinate their actions and activities toward these various ends.

The general purpose of the United Nations was in homogeneity with that of the League of Nations. Its structure and functions too are in congruity with its predecessor. Same goes with its principal organs and related agencies. In some

respects, however, the UN constituted a very different organization, especially with regard to its objective of maintaining international peace and security and its commitment to economic and social development.

The UN's mission to preserve world peace was convoluted in its early decades by the presence of Cold War between the US and Soviet Union and their respective allies. The organization participated in major actions in Korea and Congo as well as approving the creation of the state of Israel in 1947. The organization's membership grew significantly following widespread decolonization in the 1960s, and by the 1970s its budget for economic and social development programmes far outstripped its expenditure on peacekeeping. After the end of the Cold War, the UN took on major military and peacekeeping missions across the world with varying degrees of success.

Post Cold war, there was a radical expansion in the UN's peacekeeping operation execution. Also, the body witnessed immense growth and garnered more members than it had earlier. Today, the United Nations is a name familiar to all. In order to handle the complex task of getting its member states to cooperate most efficiently, it is divided into five branches. The first is the UN General Assembly. This is the main decision-making and representative assembly in the UN and is responsible for upholding the principles of the UN through its policies and recommendations. It is composed of all member states, is headed by a president elected from the member states, and meets from September to December each year.

The UN Security Council is another branch in the organization of the UN and is the most powerful of all the branches. It has power to authorize the deployment of the member states' militaries, can mandate a cease-fire during conflicts, and can enforce penalties on countries if they do not comply with the given mandates. It is composed of five permanent members and ten rotating members.

The next branch of the UN is the International Court of Justice, located in The Hague, Netherlands. This branch is responsible for the judicial matters of the UN. The Economic and Social Council is a branch that assists the General Assembly in promoting economic and social development as well as cooperation of member states. Finally, the Secretariat is the branch of UN headed by the Secretary General. Its main responsibility is providing studies, information, and other data when needed by other UN branches for their meetings. Today there are 193 nations which are members of the United Nations. Though the UN does not maintain its own military, it does have peacekeeping forces which are supplied by its member states. On approval of the UN Security Council, these peacekeepers are often sent to regions where armed conflict has recently ended to discourage combatants from resuming fighting. In 1988, the peacekeeping force won a Nobel Peace Prize for its actions.

In addition to maintaining peace, The UN also safeguards the human rights of people and extends humanitarian assistance and cooperation whenever needed. the UN currently provides technical assistance in elections, helps to improve judicial structures and draft constitutions, trains human rights officials, and provides food, drinking water, shelter, and other humanitarian services to people displaced by famine, war, and natural disaster.

Finally, the UN aids significantly in social and economic development through its UN Development programme. This is the largest source of technical grant assistance in the world. In addition, the World Health Organization, UNAIDS, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the UN Population Fund, and the

World Bank Group to name a few, play an essential role in this aspect of the UN as well. The UN also annually publishes the Human Development Index to rank countries in terms of poverty, literacy, education, and life expectancy.

For the future, the UN has established a set of goals that it calls its Millennium Development Goals. Most of its member states and various international organizations have all agreed to achieve these goals related to reducing poverty, child mortality, fighting diseases and epidemics, and developing a global partnership in terms of international development by 2015. Some member states have achieved a number of the agreement's goals while others have reached none. However, the UN has been successful over the years and only the future can tell how the true realization of these goals will play out.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **ambit** – a sphere of operation or influence; range; scope
- ♦ **homogeneity** – diversity
- ♦ **convoluted** – extremely complex and difficult to follow.
- ♦ **outstripped** – to leave behind; outrun
- ♦ **mandate** – an authoritative command or instruction
- ♦ **comply** – to act in accordance with another's command, request, rule or wish
- ♦ **cease-fire** – a command given to any unit or individual firing any weapon to stop engaging the target
- ♦ **combatants** – a person or group engaged in or prepared for a fight, struggle, or dispute



Indian Tourism

Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry. It is an invisible export, which earns valuable foreign exchange without any significant or tangible loss of internal resources. It is a source of revenue and employment. There are countries in the world whose main source of revenue is tourism.

India is one of the popular tourist destinations in Asia. India has fascinated people from all over the world with her secularism and her culture. Hence, India is a country with a great potential for tourism. Bounded by the Himalayan ranges in the north and surrounded, on three sides by sea (Arabian sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean), India offers a wide array of places to see and things to do. The enchanting backwaters, hill stations and landscapes make India a beautiful country. There are historical monuments, beaches, places of religious interests, hill resorts, etc. that attract tourists. Every region is identified with its handicraft, fairs, folk dances, music and its people. Tourism is the second largest foreign exchange earner in India. The tourism industry employs a large number of people, both skilled and unskilled. It promotes national integration and international brotherhood.

Tourism is highly labour intensive industry of a unique type. It provides different services needed as well as expected by the incoming tourists. At the world level, it is one of the largest in terms of money spent by tourists in the countries they visit. This amount is said to exceed the GNP of many countries with the sole exception of the USA. According to the latest estimates of the world travel and tourism council, this industry is expected to generate about 6 percent of India's total employment.

The services rendered to foreign tourists visiting India are the invisible products of tourism industry. These products, i.e. hospitality services of all sorts for tourists turn into invisible exports because these are included in this category without leaving Indian soil. More the foreign exchange earnings, greater is the gain. In the same

manner more the number of visitors from foreign countries, more is our foreign exchange earning. The host country has only to provide all possible facilities to the guest visitors to keep them entertained and in a holidaying mood for the longest possible period in hotels. Longer is their stay, more money they will spend and their earning is passed on to us. As the same time, the creative items like art pieces fabrics in indigenous designs including heavy goods like carpets and a lot more, do not fail to carry an appeal for the sightseers. Their sale in India itself is an additional advantage. By exporting the same product through an agent, our profit gets reduced. Next to readymade garments, gems and jewelry, tourism is our largest export item in terms of its earnings. In 2005 The Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) started a campaign called 'Incredible India' to encourage tourism in India. For a better growth, the department divided different places in different sections like 'spiritual tourism,' 'spa tourism', 'ecotourism' and 'adventure tourism'.

As Indian healthcare sector develops, a new term has been coined called 'Medical Tourism', which is the process of people from all corners of the world visiting India to seek medical and relaxation treatments. According to research reports on Indian Healthcare sector, the medical tourism market is valued to be worth over \$310 million with foreign patients coming by 100,000 every year. Medical tourists choose India as their favorable destination because of the key opportunities in Indian healthcare sector in the form of efficient infrastructures and technology. The health insurance market and National medical systems here are well developed, which is convenient for visitors from the West and the Middle East. They also find the hospital expenses very affordable.

Things have now started looking bright for the Indian tourism industry. However, the Indian tourism industry has been hit by pollution. The effluents emitted by the Mathura Refinery have led to the de-colorization of the Taj Mahal in Agra. The condition of many of our monuments is deteriorating due to the negligence of the concerned authorities. On the other hand, beaches have become the dumping grounds of garbage and waste left by tourists. The natural environment and heritage sites remain a source of attraction as long as these are not damaged beyond control from their degradation or pollution. Massive tourist traffic, unless regulated creates these mal-effects. Tourist carrying capacity of a resort needs to be matched to minimise the inconveniences of local people during the period of tourist rush. Youths of the host area are also to be saved from cultural alienation by blindly imitating the lifestyle of foreigners during days of reckless massive tourism. A planning for adopting a sequence of steps like a survey of the existing position of services, facilities needed by tourists and measures for development of a healthy and sustainable tourism, has become a dire need. At national level, an apex body has to take stock of the status and trends of tourism in comparison with neighbouring countries. It will help appraise the future needs, the nature of various incentives for alluring tourists and the gaps to be removed for better provision as well as management of the infrastructure.

VOCAB HELP

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| ♦ tangible | - physical | ♦ effluents | - factory wastage |
| ♦ enchancing | - captivating | ♦ deteriorating | - worsening |
| ♦ labour intensive | - needing a large workforce | ♦ apex body | - head body |
| ♦ rendered | - performed | ♦ appraise | - evaluate |
| ♦ indigenous | - native | ♦ alluring | - appealing |



India's Defence Programme

The Indian Armed Forces are the military forces of the Republic of India. It consists of four professional uniformed services: the Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard. Additionally, the Indian Armed Forces are supported by several paramilitary organisations (Assam Rifles and Special Frontier Force) and various inter-service institutions such as the Strategic Forces Command.

The President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces. The Indian Armed Forces are under the management of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), which is led by the Union Cabinet Minister of Defence. With strength of over 1.5 million active personnel, it is world's 2nd largest military force and the largest standing volunteer army in the world.

India has quite a volatile neighbourhood. To our north we have China- a very big military power- with whom we keep on having altercations, not to mention the war of 1962. We still have many border issues with them and their troops keep on infiltrating our land. Then there is Pakistan, a country born out of India but still trying to take one or more parts of it under control. We have had a number of wars with them. In the recent years, terrorism has become a grave concern for India. Owing to all these wars in the past, the recent infiltrations, terrorist attacks, border altercations and stand-offs it is easy to imagine why India needs a strong military strategy to combat these problems and survive as a nation.

Speaking of stats, India is now one of the world's biggest spenders on defence and the world's largest importer of military equipment and munitions. Adjusted for purchasing power parity, India was the world's ninth-biggest spender on defence in 2012, according to the World Bank. It spends a full 2.5% of its GDP on the military, a tad higher than the world total of 2.4%, though lower than America's 3.8% of GDP. Yet, unlike the US, most European nations or even China, India does not have a thriving domestic defence industry of its own. The tendency to import weapons, military aircraft, ships and other hardware from abroad is worrying. However, India has a land frontier of 15,200 km, a coastline of 7,516.6 km and an exclusive economic zone of 2.2 million sq km, as well as island territories, vital offshore installations and airspace to defend. The Indian forces, therefore, have to be kept prepared and well equipped to repel any external threat.

One can easily understand that Indian military depends heavily on foreign products. India, hence, needs to revamp how its defence sector operates. Though the country basks in the glory of Kargil and thumps its chest over an occasional successful missile test, defence development and production remains a joke in India. The list of failures and shocking delays in the country's defence sector is long. The cloak of secrecy under which research and development in defence operates causes even greater concern about inefficiencies, waste, questionable priorities, and failed or delayed projects the public is not yet aware of.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's maiden budget does address issues relating to the defence sector. A key Budget announcement was that 49 per cent foreign direct investment will be allowed in the defence manufacturing sector, up from 26 per cent. This will induce more foreign companies to invest in India's defence manufacturing. It is also good news for domestic private sector players such as Mahindra & Mahindra Defense, Tata Power SED, or the Kalyani Group's defence arm which manufactures

field guns and similar equipment. That, in turn, is healthy for India's defence procurement, which is dominated by either public sector undertakings or by foreign contractors. This, combined with the upgrade plan for soldiers and the modernisation of the army, means well for Indian manufacturers who stand to benefit.

A policy of integrating border policy in some ways with defence needs is also evident in the enhanced allocation of ₹ 990 crore, a substantial sum, for the socio-economic development of villages along the border. This may mean economic improvement of those communities residing there. The ₹ 150 crore earmarked for marine police stations, jetties and purchase of patrol boats holds out a similar indication. While modern warfare is mostly about improved technology, it is also important to ensure that the morale of the troops remains high. The decision to erect a war memorial and set up a defence museum will definitely raise the morale of the armed forces. It will certainly be a welcome addition to the Amar Jawan Jyoti at New Delhi's India Gate. Again, the one rank one pension scheme, accepted earlier by the government, has been given a Budgetary allocation of ₹ 1000 crore.

In the recent years, India has leaped miles forward in the field of tidying up its security. We have a range of state-of-the-art products like missiles and tanks that has put us at par with the strongest military powers of the world. India is one of the few countries to have developed an anti-missile system. India is only the sixth country in the world to develop an undersea nuclear deterrent, INS Arihant ("Destroyer of Enemies"). India has also successfully test-launched its long range ballistic missile, Agni-5, which can carry a nuclear warhead in the east as far as all of China and in the west all over Europe. There is no dearth of money in defence, what remains to be seen is how the private sector and the army spends it. The best way would be to increase our capabilities using the opportunity and the increasing interest from foreign collaborators. The most difficult part of this balance would be ensuring a successful interlocking set of relationships between the military, private sector, universities, and the political leadership at least over the fledgling period.

VOCAB HELP

- ♦ **volatile** – unstable/explosive
- ♦ **altercations** – clashes
- ♦ **infiltrating** – sneaking in
- ♦ **munitions** – weapons
- ♦ **a tad higher** – a bit higher
- ♦ **tendency** – inclination

- ♦ **revamp** – overhaul
- ♦ **cloak** – cover
- ♦ **inefficiencies** – inability
- ♦ **maiden** – first
- ♦ **procurement** – obtainment
- ♦ **dearth** – shortage

QUOTES FOR GENERAL USE

- ◉ Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
Martin Luther King Jr
- ◉ “Remember, no human condition is ever permanent. Then you will not be overjoyed in good fortune nor too scornful in misfortune.”
Socrates
- ◉ “Don’t give anyone the power to put you down.”
Paulo Coelho
- ◉ “If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.”
Mohandas K. Gandhi
- ◉ “With realisation of one’s own potential and self-confidence in one’s ability, one can build a better world.”
Dalai Lama
- ◉ The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.
Winston Churchill
- ◉ The world has changed far more in the past 100 years than in any other century in history. The reason is not political or economic but technological- technologies that flowed directly from advances in basic science.
- ◉ It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.
Charles Darwin
- ◉ “If you’re walking down the right path and you’re willing to keep walking, eventually you’ll make progress.”
Barack Obama
- ◉ “Don’t find fault, find a remedy.”
Henry Ford
- ◉ “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi
- ◉ “The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”
Socrates
- ◉ “You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”
Mahatma Gandhi
- ◉ “No woman has to be a victim of physical abuse. Women have to feel like they are not alone.”
Salma Hayek
- ◉ “I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.”
Nelson Mandela
- ◉ “As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”
Bill Gates
- ◉ “Let us wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism. Let us pick up our books and pens; they are the most powerful weapons.”
Malala Yousufzai
- ◉ Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.
Albert Einstein
- ◉ Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
Martin Luther King Jr
- ◉ The welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all.
Helen Keller
- ◉ “In too many instances, the march to globalisation has also meant the marginalisation of women and girls. And that must change.”
Hillary Clinton
- ◉ “An educated, enlightened and informed population is one of the surest ways of promoting the health of democracy.”
Nelson Mandela
- ◉ “The supreme reality of our time is...the vulnerability of our planet.” *John F. Kennedy*
- ◉ “Globalisation has shown in the global crisis that we are in the same boat. If we do not choose wise captains, then the storm will harm us all.”
Hassan Rouhani, President of Iran

- ◉ Democracy is necessary to peace and to undermining the forces of terrorism.
Benazir Bhutto
- ◉ Nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change.
Barack Obama
- ◉ For the sake of our security, our economy and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change.
Barack Obama
- ◉ Your imagination is your preview of life's coming attractions.
Albert Einstein
- ◉ We are a nation of mouse charmers. Every young person in India uses a mouse on the computer.
Narendra Modi
- ◉ "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."
Albert Einstein
- ◉ "It's not enough to train today's workforce. We also have to prepare tomorrow's workforce by guaranteeing every child access to a world-class education."
Barack Obama
- ◉ "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
Nelson Mandela
- ◉ The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.
Aristotle
- ◉ The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.
Rabindranath Tagore
- ◉ "Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens."
Bill Clinton
- ◉ "The highest result of education is tolerance."
Helen Keller
- ◉ That everyone may receive at least a moderate education appears to be an objective of vital importance.
Abraham Lincoln
- ◉ The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.
John F. Kennedy
- ◉ "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity."
Albert Einstein
- ◉ "We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something very special."
Stephen Hawking
- ◉ "The Internet has been a boon and a curse for teenagers."
JK Rowlings
- ◉ "The Internet has always been, and always will be, a magic box."
Marc Andreessen
- ◉ Technology... is a queer thing. It brings you great gifts with one hand, and it stabs you in the back with the other.
New York Times
- ◉ To me there has never been a higher source of earthly honour or distinction than that connected with advances in science.
Isaac Newton
- ◉ Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.
Stephen Hawking
- ◉ I'm not anti-science, I'm anti the way science is sometimes used.
Charles, Prince of Wales,
- ◉ Scientists are the true driving force of civilisation.
James Burke
- ◉ Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.
Steve Jobs
- ◉ "Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected."
Steve Jobs

- ☉ “Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” **Albert Einstein**
- ☉ “My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.” **Dalai Lama**
- ☉ “As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.” **Bill Gates**
- ☉ I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people. **Mohandas K. Gandhi**
- ☉ Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others. **Jack Welch**
- ☉ To do great things is difficult; but to command great things is more difficult. **Friedrich Nietzsche**
- ☉ Whatever you are, be a good one. **Abraham Lincoln**
- ☉ Our planet’s alarm is going off, and it is time to wake up and take action! **Leonardo DiCaprio**
- ☉ There’s enough on this planet for everyone’s needs but not for everyone’s greed. **Mahatma Gandhi**
- ☉ Technology, when misused, poisons air, soil, water and lives. But a world without technology would be prey to something worse. **New York Times**
- ☉ “What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.” **Mahatma Gandhi**
- ☉ “The threat to the planet is us. It’s actually not a threat to the planet- it’s a threat to us.” **Margaret Atwood**
- ☉ I only feel angry when I see waste. When I see people throwing away things we could use. **Mother Teresa**