



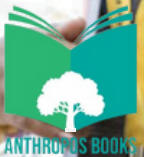
childhood matters

AIF Digital Magazine

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A Bilingual, quarterly, digital magazine by AIF's *Anthropos Books* catering to children, parents, teachers, and to all those who work for children.





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CHILDHOOD MATTERS.

A digital magazine by Anthropos India Foundation.
April 2022.



About Us

Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) is a trust registered in Delhi since October 2011. Anthropology is one of the most vibrant and fascinating subjects. Anthropology deals with communities both big and small and people from all walks of life. It engages in solving various social issues of communities by understanding from an 'emic' perspective and respecting the local cultures and ecology. The philosophy, theories, concepts and methods of anthropology have made notable contributions in every field, be it law, human rights, public health, education and child rights. The aim of AIF is to promote the discipline of anthropology, its philosophy and methods. It also aims to conduct anthropological research; applied, visual and action research.

Childhood matters and the experiences of childhood play an important role in the making of an adult. The impact of childhood experiences will decide the personalities, attitudes, and actions of future adults. The current situation is grim because crimes against children are on the rise. Child rights are violated every second in this vast country.

To have a safe, healthy and happy childhood is every child's right. This digital magazine aims to make humble efforts to disseminate the knowledge and information related to child rights and child protection. We are releasing the digital magazine "CHILDHOOD MATTERS" for the well-being of children to bring a positive impact on society. The methodology and approach of the digital magazine is participatory, where all the stakeholders will be involved: children, parents, teachers, child welfare activists, child protection professionals and all those who are concerned about children. Each one of us can contribute to this digital magazine, in the form of poems, stories, illustrations, paintings, podcasts, short films, images and many other forms of expression. We attempt to take into consideration the existence of multiple childhoods along with specific circumstances of children shaped by the intersection of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and other specific context. We shall keep the diversity of children in mind and come up with meaningful, useful, and impactful content. This is a small effort to bring a small change by the AIF team to make childhood a better experience.

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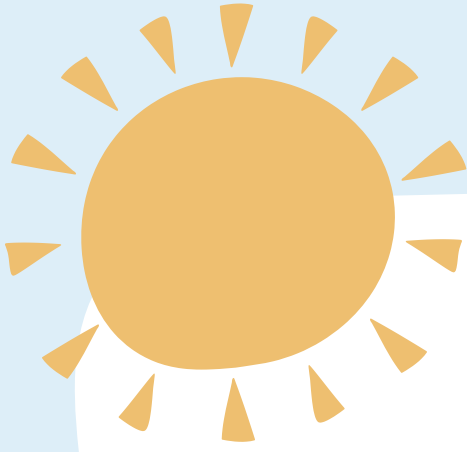


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Guest Editorial

*Prof. Geetika Ranjan, Head, Department of Anthropology,
North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong*

Of the various stages of life, 'childhood' generally evokes a picture of unsullied joy, of innocence and all that which is quite opposite to the life of an adult. Oft heard words, *keep the child in you alive*, say a lot in the direction of leading a more quality existence. No wonder, Rajesh Reddy, a poet, beautifully captures the inner voice of an adult as he writes, *Mere dil ke kisi kone mein ek masoom sa baccha, bado ki dekh kar duniya bara hone se darta hai* (An innocent child in some corner of my heart, seeing the world of the adults, fears to grow up as an adult). A poet's vision of a ubiquitous beautiful childhood notwithstanding, the real world gives a reality check, as a section of children drag on with life without experiencing any such ideal childhood of blissful happiness. The lifelong trauma of being victims of rape and molestation, of sexual abuse within the "safe" environs of the house and school – are injuries which leave an inerasable scar in the psyche of a child.

We curse the times we are living in, but on second thought, the present time is a rather interesting period to witness, something reminding us of the perfect paradox reflected in Mark Twain's famous lines from *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times... ." Why is the present age, the best and worst at the same time? When we look at the escalation of gruesome crimes against children today, we are forced to agree that human society could not have degenerated any further. But, this is also the very age when such crimes are being reported, spoken about and openly discussed. Such evils have probably always been in society, but seldom brought out in the open. However, over a couple of decades, we have been advancing towards becoming a people who are no longer willing to be in a state of denial and

are finally accepting that our children can be and are victims of abuse at the hands of their so called biggest protectors.

Several programmes on television victims sharing how they were abused in their childhood and why they feel the need to talk about it now as adults. What is even heartening to see is that such venting out finds all empathy and no surprise look from the patient audience whose countenance is all about, *I understand and I am in this with you*.

"Children and childhood" has emerged as an independent field of academic discourse, and this speaks volumes about the conscious acknowledgement of the fact that it's high time, children, their fears, their worries, their stress, their dilemma and insecurities are no longer brushed under the carpet as just another childish stuff. Researches in this direction need to be further encouraged to holistically understand the lives of juvenile delinquents, children in orphanages, differently enabled children and the like, and we the adults need to walk that extra mile to reach out to these struggling children and give them a better world.

*Prof. Geetika Ranjan, Head,
Department of Anthropology,
North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong*



Editorial

Now that the schools have reopened, parents, especially mothers are perplexed...Every day the dilemma of whether to send or not to send to school...the hot weather, the new environment, new sessions, the threat of another infection and the choice to go online or offline. Children too are excited on one hand to go out of home and make new friends but some don't want to leave the comfort of cozy homes. But as it is said, life has to move on...then why not take everything in your stride.

Children, the World is beautiful, the more you explore the more you find it mesmerizing. No education is complete without seeing and experiencing yourself. Surfing the internet may have become a part of your life, however, chatting with friends adds spice to life, strolling in nearby parks, cycling, and playing football and badminton can make you agile and make your day.

Each child is special with her/his own likes and talents. Never compare yourself with others, you are unique and you have all the potential to grow. Make sure you are better than yesterday, learned something new, or did something interesting and innovative. Scribble, draw, paint, colour, or write and spend quality time with your loved ones. Cherish small things and create your own beautiful world around. Surround yourself with besties and loving people.

Parents can give the best education to children by not just sending them to schools but by taking them to newer places, indulging in new activities, and exploring heritage sites. Visiting zoos and national parks. Taking kids for small and simple treks. Hiking early in life will inculcate the habit of exploring and make them strong and face challenges. Sending children to summer nature camps can add value to their life and admiration of nature and biodiversity. Spending quality time with your child will go a long way in bonding with them, inculcating good values and cherishing the time spent together.

Not to forget that there are lakhs of children who are not as fortunate as you are, do a small bit by lending a helping hand but with dignity to support children from marginalized sections within your own limits.

Children grow very fast...you will not realize when they have grown up and gone to find their place under the sun. Cherish life together at every stage, it's a joy to see them growing. I wish each child to have the best time in school and at home and for parents to enjoy the moments with their children.

In this issue of 'Childhood Matters' we have collected some gems for you to read and cherish. Dilemmas of going to school, being compassionate, being a woman and a mother, dental care, reflection of a teacher on the online education, new education policy, right to education and equity, and some darker issues of child abuse, JJ ACT, child begging ending with a beautiful poem.

Enjoy reading and share your thoughts.

Dr Sunita Reddy
Founder Chair, AIF



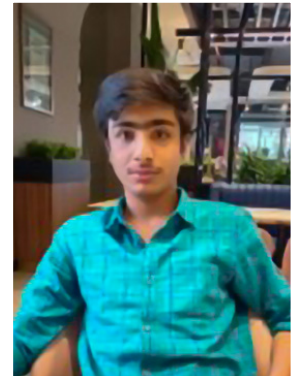
Children's Corner

Are We Ready For The Upcoming Sweltering Years?

Being a student in tenth grade, and attending my school on these hot summer days has been very challenging. The month of April has been unexpectedly hotter than in the past. Morning at the bus stop itself I see many young children from class one or three, sweating and by the afternoon, they are haggard, including me. The masks that are compulsory, make it more difficult for us. The other day a small girl in my bus was crying as she had no water left in her water bottle and was very thirsty. Nobody noticed the frail exhausted girl. I was standing near the bus gate as I was to get down at the next bus stop. I was also thirsty, but I gave her water from my bottle, thinking that I would reach my home in another ten minutes and quench my thirst with the *nimbu paani* that my mother makes for me every day. This little girl might have to wait for another half an hour to reach home. After having water, she, with a tired smile, waved me bye. The next day this girl offered me candy, saying thank you for sharing water with her. She told that she shared about this with her mother and *daadiji*, that one senior *bhaiya* had helped her. This episode made me think about two things; one is offering water to the thirsty and the other is the heatwave. Reaching home, I told my mother about this episode, and she said she was proud of me.

My mother and I usually discuss climate change, rising temperatures, water shortage, forest fires, and melting glaciers. In school, we have regular classes where we are told that future generations will have to struggle

with this issue and that even a small rise in temperature would change the whole ecological landscape. Is my generation equipped to tackle a situation, where water would be scarce and nobody would share? And a discussion with my *Naani* tells me that water was shared with everyone. In Hindu scriptures and the *Panchatantra* tales, I always read that you should always offer water to the thirsty. My *Naaniji* once shared that, in their days, whosoever came to their home was offered water and *gur* (jaggery). It was believed that the guests who came must have travelled on foot or a horse or bullock cart and must have been drained by the hot sun. So water from a *matka* (an earthen pot) and *gur* from a brass container would be offered.



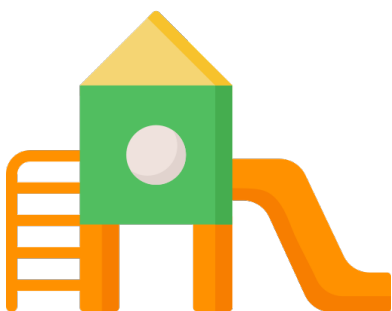
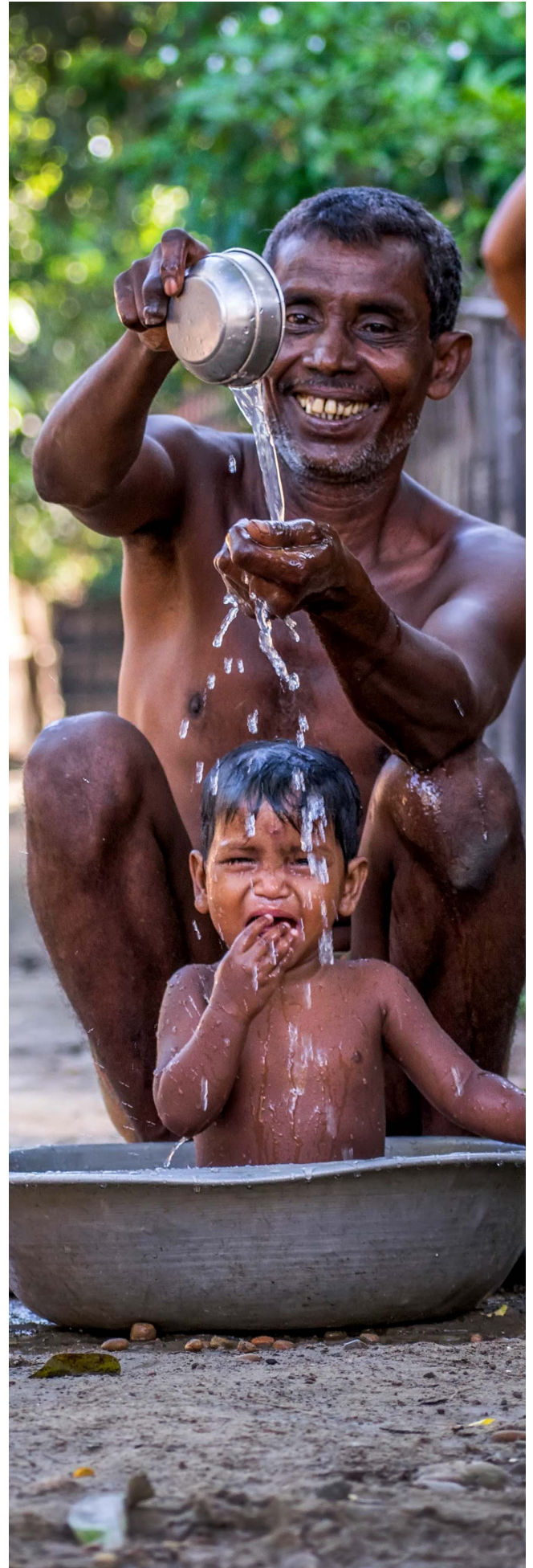
The heatwave has immensely affected the lives of children. Many students are missing classes because they have been affected by the heatstroke. I was affected by the same thing two weeks ago. Most of the schools are not air-conditioned. This is also hampering the concentration power of students as many

find it challenging to study on these hot days. Numerous children in remote areas attend school in tin-roofed shelters, which would be unbearably hot in the summer. The poor in the country are adversely affected, as they are not financially strong enough to buy cooling appliances like a refrigerator, water coolers and air conditioners. The government announces school closing on intense summer days to save children from heatstroke. But the question remains: Are we doing enough to reverse this climate change? I often say that making posters on Earth Day might create awareness, but do we really follow what we preach? We waste water, we use plastic rampantly, and the AC's are kept on the whole day. Witnessing this often petrifies me and I worry about our future. The only solution is the judicious use of our natural resources, minimizing the use of appliances that release harmful gasses like Chlorofluorocarbons. Can we develop technology that keeps our homes cooler? Few considerate people have made architectural changes to make their homes cooler, even without a fan. Can we encash our rainwater and Sun's energy? I know we are already doing this, but it has to be made a norm and compulsory for us to Save our Planet. Else, we have to be ready for more sweltering days and less water in our water bottles.

Aviraj Arora

Class X

New Era Public School, New Delhi



Expert Column**Dental Care For Children***Dr. Rupesh, Dentist*

Oral health is the key indicator of overall health, well-being and quality of life. Though healthy teeth are important for a child's overall health, dental care in children is often neglected assuming that milk teeth will eventually fall off but that is not the case. Children should be taught about the importance of brushing their teeth regularly to remove bacteria from their mouths. They should be educated that preserving their milk teeth is important since they form the basis of emerging permanent teeth. Taking care of the teeth from the beginning can help prevent several problems like tooth decay that can subsequently cause pain & inability to eat & chew, bad breath that might affect a child's confidence, gums swelling, misalignment of teeth and others. Dental hygiene should begin when the child is an infant that involves the use of cotton or gauze pads to gently clean the gum pads, inner surfaces of the cheek & tongue for any food or liquid residues.

How to guide kids to maintain oral hygiene?

As soon as the first tooth erupts in the oral cavity, soft-bristle toothbrushes especially designed for children should be used. Young children initially require parent's guidance to get into the habit of brushing. Parents must hold their hands to guide them while they brush. Clean every tooth thoroughly and brush the inside, outside and chewing surfaces of teeth gently in small circles. After brushing, encourage your child to spit out toothpaste, not to swallow it or rinse with water. Place the timer for 2 min while they brush or play any of their favorite songs to keep them

motivated. Include fluoridated toothpaste in the regime after 3-4 years of age once the child learns to spit after brushing.

Kids who eat a lot of sugary foods and drinks are at high risk for cavities. It is important to make healthy food choices. Avoid too much sugar. Excess of soda, fruit juice, or sweetened drinks should be avoided. Sweet snacks and drinks between meals must be limited.

Tips for parents —

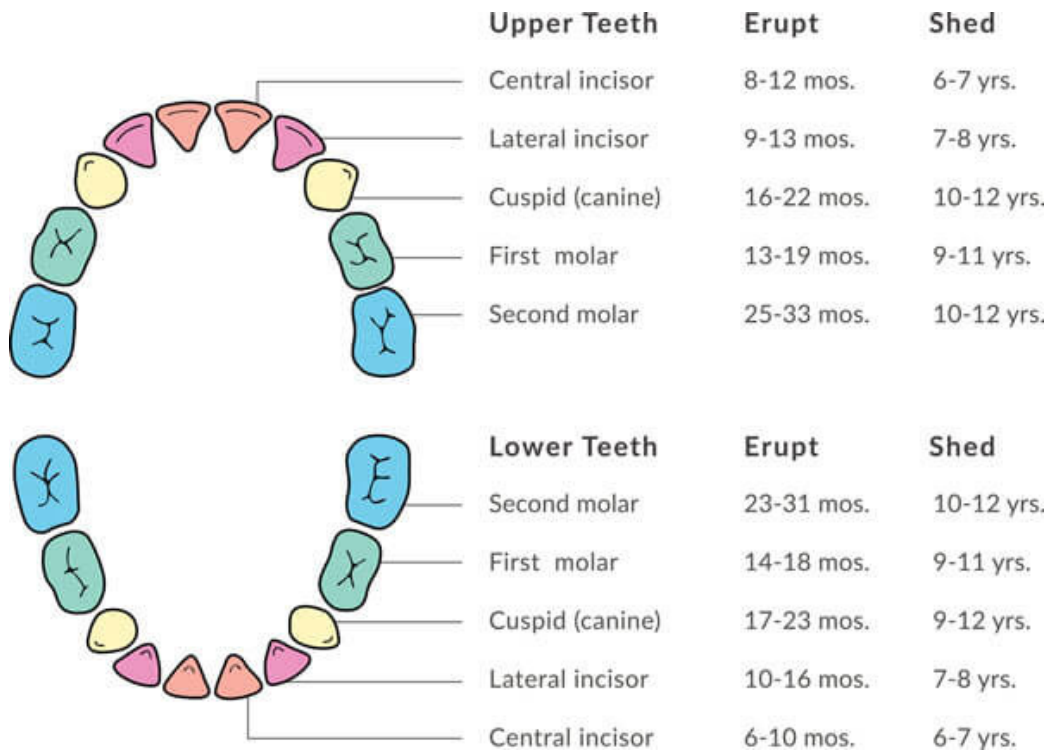
If your child does have sugar, make sure they brush their teeth afterward. Good dental hygiene & oral habits begin with parents. If they see you religiously brushing & flossing every day, it will make them want to follow you. Make sure they watch you brush twice a day & make it look like you are having a great time removing all the bad bacteria & germs from your mouth. You will notice that your child will start following you in no time.

Visiting a pediatric dentist is also essential from as early as one year of age. This visit gives a child an opportunity to meet the dentist in a non-threatening and friendly way. At this time the dentist can give you information on nursing bottle caries, thumb sucking or tongue thrusting habits, pacifier habits or teething. This also establishes the good habit of regular dental checkups & to detecting the problems early before they progress. It will also help to develop a positive approach to visiting dentists which will motivate the children to take care of their teeth.

**Take away message for kids**

1. Brush and floss every day.
2. Visit dentists regularly.
3. Eat healthy food.
4. Rinse after every meal.

Tooth Eruption Chart



Parent's Perspective

Being A Woman Is No Gimmick

Aditi Verma [aditiverma137@gmail.com]

Being a woman is no gimmick. If an analogy has to be drawn, I take the liberty to invoke the imagery of Maa Durga orchestrated with her many hands, all amplified with different weapons. I prefer to see the image as a woman exhibited in her various avatars - be it workmanship as an executive at a workplace, her judicious choice of being an entrepreneur, her selfless duty-bound presence as a health worker in a pandemic gripped society, an ambitious pilot to scale high in the sky and prove her mettle in abeyance of gender defiance or last but not the least, her more demure and proletariat presence of being a home-maker. But of all the manifestations she may have, the most assertive and

herculean task is that of being a MOTHER. She may be a glamorous diva or a strapping executive, but the innate assertion of her maternal instincts encompasses her focus on her offsprings. Here I take the liberty to assess and analyze my journey as a mother.



Maternal instincts had been an inherent part of me and in the very first year of my marriage, these instincts got amplified when we were blessed with the birth of a baby girl.

Holding her close to my bosom, it felt as if my world was complete and I had nothing more to seek from God. Those dark and big eyes and a wry smile on the small cherubic face faded all other chaotic moments in life and I pledged that I will armor around her and won't let anything scathe her. Too soon though ... My little pumpkin was sharp, enigmatic and studious and cleared her elementary education with aplomb displaying her excellence in studies, sports and cultural activities. All this happened within the preview of my scrutiny. In her teenage years, we decided that it was time to give her some leeway and let her be independent to make her choice on the stream she wished to pursue.

She clearly showed her displeasure at making the more popular choices like medicine or engineering and rather opting for a more academic-oriented career. As parents, we received her aspirations duly. She proceeded ahead in her studies without much interference from us. But suddenly we started witnessing a more reticent child, who was uncommunicative, more aggressive and

with smiles that were stretched and forced. With each passing day, she ceased to be the happy bundle of joy, so full of hope and aspiration to achieve something novel. As a mother, it became a challenge for me to break the ice and to make her communicate. All efforts failed and it writhed my heart to see her churning in an internal conflict.

I was desperate to seek my child back and I



took some unconventional steps. I took out her childhood footage and made some small clippings from them. From YouTube, I learnt how to convert them so as to make them compatible with WhatsApp.

Each day I posted those clippings on her WhatsApp account. This really helped in thawing her reserved posturing. Three days later she came to me and lay beside me. I curled her in my embrace and simply asked her, "What happened?" and she started crying. I didn't make any efforts to stop her. After an hour I asked her, what was tormenting her? She expressed that she was not able

to cope with the studies and the peer pressure at school. The competition was stringent and that expectation to excel had infused melancholy in her life. The metric system of analyzing a child's ability is so faulty that many kids succumb to its pressure. Now that I knew the root cause of her misery, I assured her that we don't seek to see her excel at anything. We also

took measures to see to it that her subject topics were comprehensible to her. These efforts restored her confidence and we could see the resumption of her assertiveness.

I crossed this milestone for sure but with a lesson - a mother would never be out of action. Her presence is required at every juncture and junction to redeem her kids out.

Riddles To Solve

1. What is so fragile that saying its name breaks it?
2. What two things can you never have for breakfast?
3. What can fill a room but takes up no space?
4. If you drop me, I'm sure to crack, but give me a smile and I'll always smile back. What am I?



Teacher's Perspective

Rupali Ganguli, Teacher at Sardar Patel Vidhyalaya, New Delhi

I have been in the teaching profession for the last 25 years. I really enjoy the whole experience of teaching and interacting with students. But the last 2 years have been a bit of a struggle. Speaking as a teacher in her 50s, the technological shift that came with online mode was quite hard to adapt to. But I acknowledge that I learnt a lot from it and now I do not feel scared of using technology for my teaching lessons.

The shift to offline/ in-person mode has been a new experience in itself. It's not completely back to the time before the pandemic. While we do make jokes about talking through the screen, not unmuting ourselves when we speak, etc., teaching 35-38 students together has been an adjustment. Everybody is masked and as a teacher, I always wear masks to keep myself and the students safe. But talking through a mask for 6-8 hours of your day is very exhausting and nauseating. On the other hand, it's been a pleasure to see all the students in the classroom together. They have enjoyed getting back to the school environment, spending time with their friends and also getting outside of their homes. Students who are not very sound in studies or kids with special needs or coming from economically weaker sections are able to get more in-person attention from teachers which has been better for them. Many of them shared their experiences that they

were not comfortable in the online mode and failed to understand the lesson.

Another challenge of the online mode was correcting assignments because different modes of activities and assessments required different ways of evaluations.



I feel one of the biggest impacts has been on children's learning. The online mode helped to teach the curriculum and complete tests and assignments, but the level of learning has slowed down. There has also been a huge decrease in the ability to write. For example, the children of class VIII are at the level of class 6th and so on. Although school life is slowly gaining momentum, in the early days of school being reopened, students could not sit for long and got tired quickly. It is very pleasant to see them interacting in a school environment which is very important for the overall growth that got affected in the last two years of lockdown. If schools stay open and the pandemic does not get worse, then I feel that the process of teaching and learning can be better for teachers and students.



MEOW!

Mini 'Cat Whisperer'

A big shout out to all young humans who are reading this. You are all born naturals when it comes to loving animals. The manner in which you young people reach out to non-human beings is amazing. The bonding you make, the companionship you have and the whole secret world that you create between yourself and a pet is worth exploring. And that is what I hope to do by writing this to all you children. I am going to mention cats a lot because they are a big part of my life. Hence, there is a lot to share about these purring, furry, cuddly, soft padded, limpid large-eyed 'melt your heart' pawed bundles (see? can go on and on :)).

When it comes to keeping pets, most people think of dogs. In my opinion, that's only because one sees more of them around as pets. Cats are not far behind but a bit lagging in numbers as pets, since most people think they're not as loyal or intelligent as dogs. Well, no offense to bow-wows (they're The bestest!) but I stomp my foot down and say " cats are just as wonderful!". How? Allow my half-century's experiences in dealing with these cuddle bugs to speak for itself.

To look back, my earliest memories are of noticing these sleek creatures flitting by bushes, sidewalks, or just sitting on some wall. Their cute bodies covered in soft gleaming fur always looked appealing. Their gait is stylish and adorable - the rear ends bobbing as they trot along. The tiny pert ears picking up every little rustle. The eyes are big expressive pools - the pupils huge and pleading when they want to be cute ...narrowed and slit-like when aggressive! And oh, none of you can deny noticing those cute padded paws with which they move around so stealthily. Do I even need to elaborate on those majestic whiskers? That's just about looks. What about the way they crouch and lap up their food, the way they groom (lick lick lick...wiping their face repeatedly with licked wet front paws). The

innumerable ways of stretching are one of the many things we humans can learn from these supreme beings (very well adopted in yogic postures).

Cats, by nature, are independent. Believe me, that's one of the traits that make them great pets. They love being cuddled, their chin rubbed, and purr loudly as they sleep with you. They're with you for all the fun parts but don't need any assistance from you in actually being taken care of. They groom themselves, you don't have to bathe them (haha, you wish you were a cat, right?!), they don't need potty training (if you've the litter sand ready, straight they head to it for their loo business! even at a few weeks old), they don't need to be taken on walks!

Also, domesticated cats live looong. Up to 20-30 years! The pain and grief of losing one's dear cat are much less than having some other species.

Having drawn your attention to their appealing appearances and habits, let me move on to what it's like having one around the house. A treasure house of fun! That is the simplest way to put it. As kittens, their size, their antics, and the way they will follow you around is something of an in matched experience. The sheer joy that you feel is not to be missed. Any little thing, like a thread hanging by the end of a curtain, a moving blade of leaf, small spaces under a cupboard sets them off playing. They'll battle it with their tiny bodies. Pretending there's some ferocious beast that needs tackling. Tumbling around, crouching, sneak dashing towards the pretend enemy. And if there are two three in the litter, they manage to keep themselves amused with each other too!

As full grown, they are regal. The females make very caring mothers. Extremely protective of



her young ones till such time that they can hunt and take care of themselves. They are good hunters and can fend for themselves in the wild.

These one of a kind fur balls make excellent subjects for cartoons too. Surely you're all familiar with Tom and Jerry, Calvin and Hobbes besides a string of other sketches that portray their elusive nature and pranks. Aren't we lucky to have these cuties all around?!

I've to stop at some point lest this article stretches to miles. All I want to mention in conclusion is that the next time you come across one of these majestic cuddle-worthy potlums, stop and relish them. Engage with them; adopt one as your pal. As a young

person, your instincts are right - you need at least one in your life. More for your own sake than the cat's... Meeeeeowwwww!



Joey and Mandrake

Right To 'Education' Or 'Quality Education'? An Anthropological Critique

By Shweta Srivastava

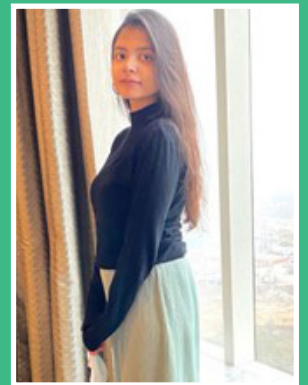
"When any culture or society denies human rights, anthropologists have an ethical responsibility to protest and oppose such deprivation. This implies starting from the baseline of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and associated implementing international legislation, but also expanding the definition of human rights to include areas not necessarily addressed by international law." This Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights clearly defines the role of anthropologists in protecting and safeguarding human rights, including the right to education. The unique ethnographic sensibility that anthropology brings to all areas of life enables a more holistic evaluation of the root of all social issues. This discipline is more solution oriented than we give it credit for. Moreover, as anthropologists, we have too much colonial baggage on our head to not be actively involved in the betterment of society.

'Quality Education' is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations in 2015, which are to be collectively fulfilled by all nations by the year 2030. Since

then, the government of India has left no stone unturned in formulating various programs and schemes to achieve the same including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Udaan, Swachh Vidyalaya, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, etc. However, India's

literacy rate is still stagnant at 77%. Why is that? Let's examine the reasons.

As an anthropologist working in a non-profit organization that is dedicated to providing financial aid to underprivileged girls so that they can pursue higher education and avail skilling facilities, I have seen the microscopic implementation of these efforts, which remains little to none. The initiatives are wonderful on the surface level, but the implementation is not modeled keeping in mind the cultural nuances in which these girls are embedded. Firstly, information about most of the career opportunities and scholarship programs



targeted specifically to these girls do not reach their ears at all. How do you exercise a right you have never heard of? Most girls remain clueless about what to do after passing class 10th or 12th. Even after securing high marks, due to lack of exposure, they do not know of all the possibilities and opportunities. Living in the outskirts, where you are one of the very few people receiving education definitely comes with its own setbacks. No one in your vicinity can guide you, you have no peers to discuss your studies with, nor is there any skilling institution nearby where you can pursue courses to embellish your resume.

Secondly, in today's highly digitized world, almost all information is imparted online. To access that information, you need a mobile phone or a laptop, the permission to use that gadget (if you are a girl in a backward family), the knowledge of operating these gadgets, ability to understand the English language to a certain degree and a stable internet connection, all of which is a luxury to the majority of population living in rural India. Even if these girls are given a mobile phone by an NGO or under any government scheme, who guarantees that they will be the one using it and not their parents or siblings?

One of the beneficiaries of the fellowship program that I am involved with, who lives in the village of Mamura in Uttar Pradesh, was given a mobile phone, as she wanted to do an online course. She and her father were ecstatic to receive one. They put up various celebratory stories on their whatsapp account. Naturally, I believed that it will be easier to reach her from now on. But whenever we tried to contact her, her brother or her father would receive the call, or sometimes disconnect it. The phone was never with her. The display picture on her whatsapp account was now her brother's. On inquiring, she said that her younger brother likes to play video games on it. She very hesitantly explained that the

display picture on her WhatsApp account is her brother's only because her father does not think it is safe to put up her picture on display, a sentiment not popular among other girls her age living in the same village. There have been other instances where the fellowship money has been used by the girl's family for personal matters. The financial aid that we provide only trickled down to the girls, passing through the filters of her family members.

Thirdly, different people communicate differently, as a result of which language becomes a medium of identity formation. But this heterogeneity can lead to misunderstandings. Indians have accents, a thick one at that. The girls I am working for have been born and brought up in various nooks and corners of the villages of Uttar Pradesh. They speak 'khari boli', a style of speaking which is considered rude and unsophisticated. This kind of tonality might not be appreciated in the workplace.

Thus, it's easy to see that there are layers to providing education to 'all'. It's no easy feat, but one that can be easily accomplished by first understanding the people and then forming a curriculum to fit their educational needs. Mere financial aid will not cut it. In this sense, it seems that a long-term fellowship program is much more efficient than providing one-time scholarships. I also suggest the comeback of traditional youth dormitories in the Indian education system. The Konyak Nagas, for example, would gain education in Morungs, which was an institution where young unmarried men were taught about social systems, their history, etc. Gurukuls of ancient India, where the students stayed with their teachers, who took care of their daily food and clothing, is also an ideal model. A residential intervention is the need of the hour to overcome the regional, gendered and structural barriers to quality education.

<http://www.aaanet.org/about/Policies/statements/Declaration-on-Anthropology-and-Human-Rights.cfm>

Note:

This article by Shweta Srivastava secured third position in the Creative Content Writing Competition organized by AIF on the occasion of World Anthropology Day, February 2022

Child Begging In India: Violation Of Child Rights

By Archana Yadav (AIF Intern)

“A happy childhood is perhaps the most-fortunate gift in life” - Dorothy Richardson

A happy childhood is when a child has enough nurture and love, when they are physically and mentally fit, and have access to basic needs such as food and shelter. But this is not the case with Child beggars, they are victims of severe physical, emotional and mental trauma as they are exposed to physical violence, drug abuse and psychological coercion.

Child beggars can be seen in every city and town in India. It is one of the most significant social issues which explicitly reveals the failure of the country to provide basic amenities for the poor children. The Constitution of India expresses concern for upbringing of children in safe, secure and healthy manner through various provisions in the Constitution. However millions of children become victims of many crimes such as rape, kidnapping, abduction, buying, selling, exposure, abandonment, infanticide, foeticide and child marriage, and abetment of suicide. They also become victims of neglect, abuse and child bondage or slavery, many children exist below poverty line and are malnourished and many of them die. Many children spend their childhood begging either due to poverty or under threat.

Children comprise about 50 percent of the earth's population and out of this India has almost 19 percent of the world's child population which is the largest child population in the world in any country. Children are the most vulnerable as they are dependent on adults and can be manipulated and are susceptible to all kinds of influences including both mental and physical.

Despite of rapid rapid economic growth in India, poverty and begging are still big problems. Data from census 2011 reveals that India has over three lakh child beggars, although some organizations claim them to be one million. Report by the Indian National Human Rights Commission suggests that approximately 40,000 children are abducted in India every year, which means one child goes missing every eight minutes, and over 25% of whom remain untraced. These children fall into the clutches of gangs (often known as mafias : who keep a check on child beggars so that they cannot steal the money) who forced them to beg.

For a meager amount, these small young children are often injured, maimed and handicapped and are left on roads, at religious places and streets to beg. One of the major reasons that force children into child begging in India is coercion by parents/guardians and drug addiction. Many child beggars are addicted to solvents, alcohol and charas. This helps the children to forget where they are and it also helps the gang masters to keep them under control.

Over the decades, many provisions were made to stop child abuse and child begging, some of them are:

- ✓ Article 15 (3): Enables the State to make special provisions for children.



- ✓ Article 24: Explicitly prohibits child labour and hazardous employment of children.
- ✓ Article 39(f): Further directs the State in its policy towards the well-being of the children.
- ✓ Article 39 (c): Provides that children of tender age should not be subject to abuse and should be given opportunities to develop in a healthy manner.
- ✓ Article 45: Makes provision for free and compulsory education for children.
- ✓ Article 47: States that it is the duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living and to improve public health.

Other than these provisions we have the Child Labour Act, The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (1959) , Indian Penal Code, BPBA Reform in Delhi (2018) , Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (2015), The Children Act (1960) Persons in Destitution Model Bill (2016) Indian Railway Act (1989,) and many several regulations at state, national and international level.

All these provisions provide the child with the right to live a better standard of living, the right to education, provides them protection against child abuse. But despite all these provisions, rules and regulations both Central governments and State governments failed to stop child labour and child begging and to provide them with a better standard of living. There is a continued violation of child rights.

Children need love, affection and security but they have to face poverty, loneliness, and sexual and physical abuse. Therefore there is a need to develop sustainable intervention strategies to rehabilitate child beggars, to provide them with basic necessities and safe, secure, and joyful life.

At an individual level, one should volunteer at a Centre for children and donate to charities that work for uplifting the conditions of these beggars. Both Central and State governments should work together as this problem is taking alarming proportions. We need a holistic approach to tackle the problem of child begging, which combines compulsory education for children, good orphanages for orphans, financial assistance to children in need, and punishment for the beggar mafia.

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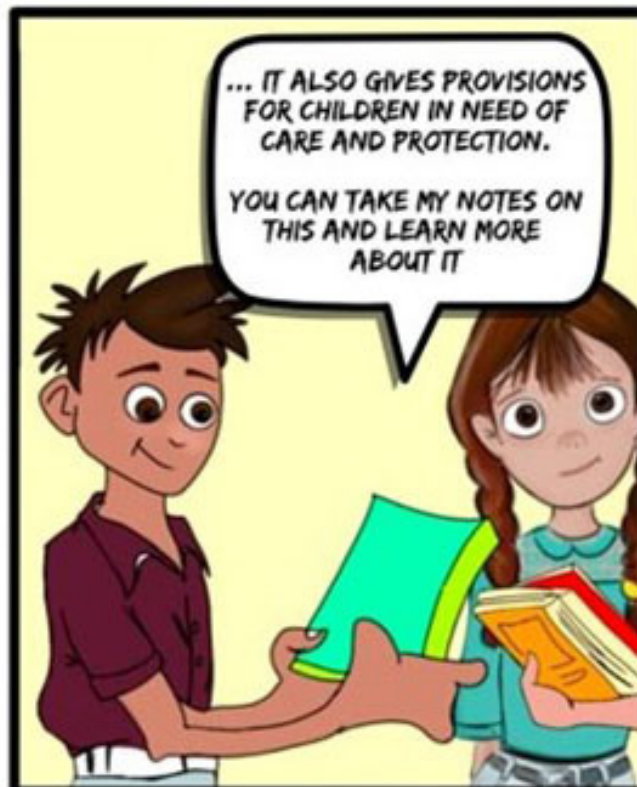
Image source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27994318>

Facts About Child Begging in India

1. 3 Lakh children are forced to beg across India. (<https://delhipostnews.com/child-beggars-indias-invisible-citizens-of-tomorrow/>)
2. Total of 63,407 children in 2016, 63,349 in 2017 and 67,134 in 2018 were reported missing, says NCBI reports.
3. Around 10 percent of the children were brought to Gurgaon by contractors from rural areas of Bihar and Jharkhand and were pushed into begging (The Hindu, February 22, 2014).
4. As per Census 2011, India has 3.72 lakh child beggars below 14 years of age. Out of them, 1.97 lakh are boys, and 1.74 lakhs are girls.

COMIC STRIP

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT



The Juvenile Justice Act

The Juvenile Justice Act was enacted to accomplish the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which India joined on December 11, 1992. This legislation specifies the procedural safeguards for children who violate the law. The present legislation addresses issues with the previous law, such as adoption delays, many outstanding cases, institutional responsibility, and so on.

The bill also tackles the rise in recent years in the number of crimes perpetrated by youngsters aged 16 to 18 and children who have run afoul of the law. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015 has been effective since January 15, 2016. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2000 is repealed.

Juvenile Justice is a notion that is widely used in India and other countries where juvenile justice is becoming more common. The United Nations General Assembly approved a Convention on the Rights of the Child, which required member states to ratify and adhere to the convention's norms and principles for the security and protection of children's rights and development.

While most approaches to juvenile justice focus on punishing or treating delinquents, the restorative justice process tries to right wrongs by including the entire community in offender rehabilitation and making offenders accountable for their actions.

To carry out the tasks imposed by this Act, the state government must establish a Juvenile Justice Board in each district. A Metropolitan Magistrate or Judicial Magistrate of First Class with at least 3 years experience and two social workers, one of whom must be a woman, must make up the board. They should be well-versed in child psychology and welfare.

It is critical to rehabilitate and reintegrate the youngster into society and instill in him a sense of regret and significant responsibility for the crime he has done. The Juvenile Justice Act of 2005, which incorporates the pertinent elements of the 1985 Beijing Rules, contemplates and addresses this. Because young brains are the future of civilization, their age and physical and psychological condition must be considered. This purpose is also the overarching goal of the restorative justice system.

JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE & PROTECTION) ACT, 2015



Back And Forth To School

Amitabh Srivastava, Senior Journalist

It's difficult to say who is happiest from the reopening of schools after a long pandemic break of almost two years. It could be the teachers, fed up with online classes with faceless children, or the tired parents, or the politicians who want to show that everything is back to normal. With students however it's a mixed reaction depending on the age group.

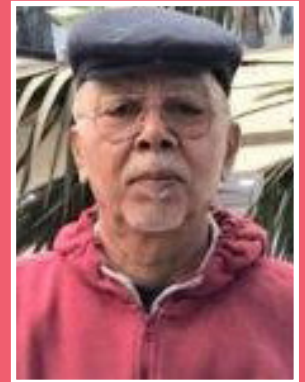
The tiny-tots, for instance, who had been confined to their homes and subjected to the rigours of online classes by their tired-looking moms were raring to get out and join their friends. Some of them were telling their parents to send them to school even on Sundays and holidays. Good that they had not read Shakespeare whose character Jaques says in 'As you like it' that the second stage out of the seven stages of a man's life is that of

*"The whining schoolboy
With his satchel
And shining morning face,
Creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school"*

That image of a child being dragged to school by parents has stuck in the imagination for ages and it's difficult to find kids rushing to get back to school to meet their friends in person. The senior children have started going back to school after a long back and forth movement. While the government wanted them back earlier the parents were unwilling to take the risk of infections.

Some children and parents even started a strong online campaign saying #no vaccinations no schools. This voice became so strong that the Prime Minister had to personally intervene and declare that all students who had board exams of Xth and XII th would be passed without exams. But before that, they had already taken several pre-board online exams. That is another story of course.

However, after vaccinations were introduced for children above 12 there was no valid excuse for them to stay back in the comforts of their homes and they were put back in the place where they belong-in schools. From my personal knowledge, I know that most of the eleventh and twelfth students were initially very irritated that they were being forced to go to school.



"Our teachers also seem unwilling to teach us. They just want us to get to school because they have to fill up the quotas of attendance. Sometimes we are left alone for two periods at a stretch because the teachers themselves are not prepared with the lessons," said a student from a reputed school in Greater Noida.

However after about a month today, she says that she is very happy to get back to school because she has made a lot of new friends after a two-year gap. A school where I was invited to give a talk to motivate the children of Class XII to attend school gave me the impression that they were getting a little irritated by the number of extracurricular activities and lectures by so-called specialists, including me. I realized that I could not give them any new inputs about their career choices or the importance of getting into the groove for the year ahead because they are already quite well informed.

The children of today are not like my generation when we had no one to guide us at such crucial stages of life. Having taken online classes by organizations like BYJU and Vedantu they have become much smarter than their teachers. Today they are happy going to school like going to a party or on a picnic. Good for them but for teachers this is alarming.

A school principal confided in me and said

“We are conducting offline examinations for students of XII th but most of them appeared totally unconcerned. I guess most of them from my school have already planned and got admissions abroad. For them, it’s just a matter of clearing the Boards.” Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education has only helped to create more confusion and disinterest in the Board Exams.

Having introduced the Central University Entrance Test (CUET) system for admissions to colleges across the country this year the Center has effectively negated the relevance

of all Senior Secondary Board examinations. While earlier, admissions only to MBBS and Engineering classes were based on competitive exams, today the situation has totally changed.

The new regulations clearly state that for admissions to higher education the CUET will not consider the marks obtained in the Boards. “If the government itself is not serious about the school board results, how can we blame the children?” asked a chemistry teacher in Varanasi.



National Education Plan 2020 In The Middle Of 2022; Key Challenges In Achieving Inclusion And Equity

Indira Patnaik, Artist

Our third National Education Policy 2020 NEP (2020) is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in India. It is permanently altering the nature of our typical low-funded public school. This policy is considered an innovative milestone, and it replaces the 1986 education policy after 34 years. NEP 2020 is connecting millions of Indian educators who are together changing pedagogy to match global standards and reduce inequity. Above all the most welcoming thing about the NEP 2020, is looking at education through an “inclusion and equity” lens. It broadens educational opportunities for young people who are socio-economically disadvantaged /low income. This will tackle caste segregation and centuries-old poverty. It seems apparent that our established education system is in a state of (r)evolution.

Now the world is interconnected. No group of people can remain isolated from the rest of the world due to their physical and cognitive abilities, different socio-economic level, or appearance. Our current challenge is how educators are going to include/ combine all kinds of abilities while prioritizing student developmental needs in one classroom. The aim of my paper is to lay out the steps for achieving inclusion and equity by addressing the challenges in a responsible manner rather than critiquing them from a political point of view.

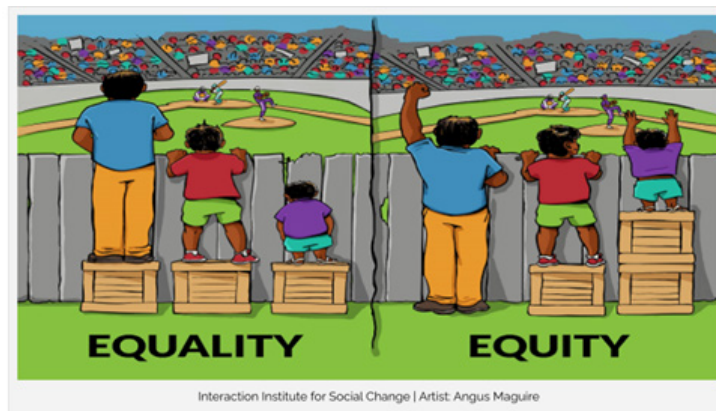
What is Equity and Inclusion?

Every child has an equal right to learn.

Some children need additional support to access the academic materials, so equity is how we distribute the access fairly.

We all know that the word equality is providing equal opportunity. Equity means aiding the needs of the student. I would like to unpack the metaphor this picture represents. The foundation on which these children stand is unequal, and that foundational difference leads to some being able to watch the baseball game, while someone cannot watch by merely providing an equal opportunity.

Inclusion is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in general education to receive quality learning material that is developmentally appropriate. Intervention and support can be given that enables them to succeed in their curriculum.



Some children need special care and attention to learn, particularly neurodiverse learners with cognitive disabilities such as autism, intellectual disability, and ADHD. Among children who are socially and economically disadvantaged, it is those children with physical disability (blind, deaf, mute, and handicapped) who are also the most vulnerable.

Equity is a long journey. Of all the most vulnerable students it is those whose special needs are invisible, our neuro diverse learners, that are most neglected in our educational system. NEP 2020 is not adequately including them in accessing education equitably.

See you in the next issue about the seven challenges of NEP 2020 in achieving inclusion and equity in Indian classrooms. Some of these challenges are well-known and long-standing issues.

About me

I would like to introduce myself as an inclusion specialist. I began my career as an art educator. I ended up in special education studies. It made my life meaningful. I teach Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics through art, it is called STEM. Above all I

consider myself a scholar in disability studies in education. I respect the perspectives of children with special needs, and I modify the learning environment. I value adopting and modifying everything I do, to make sure that everyone is included and that goes to my research methods and the way I teach and the way I live my life.

Most neurodiverse students don't see things exactly the way neurotypicals do. I believe If we educators are flexible, they can be successful.



बचपन और मातृत्व

- डॉ. मनिका कमठान, असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर, सिम्बायोसिस लॉ स्कूल, पुणे

हमारे पिताजी सरकारी नौकरी में थे, जिसमें उन्हें परिवार के लिए वक़्त कम ही पड़ जाता था, पर मेरी माँ हमारे लिए २४ घंटे उपलब्ध थीं। ऐसा बेहद कम ही होता था कुछ भी उनके नज़र से बच जाये। हमारी हर बात उनको या तो पता रहती या फिर वो हमसे उगलवा लेतीं। हमारे सारे दोस्तों के फ़ोन नंबरों उनकी डायरी में दर्ज़ होते और मेरी चोटी के रिबन से ले कर मेरे पैर की चितकबरी नेल पोलिश तक की उनको पूरी खबर रहती थी। माताजी की इस मुस्तैदी के चलते हमारा बचपन काफी खुशहाल और सुरक्षित रहा। वो चाहती तो नौकरी कर सकती थीं पर घर की ज़िम्मेदारी और परिवार के नॉन कोऑपरेशन आंदोलन के चलते ये मुमकिन न हुआ। तो वो आज अपने बच्चों को ही अपनी सबसे बड़ी उपलब्धि और पूँजी मानती हैं।

मैं अभी हाल में ही माँ बनी हूँ। आजकल मैटरनिटी लीव पर हूँ। पेशे से असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर हूँ। ये सोच सोच कर दिमाग धुन जाता है की कैसे नौकरी पर वापिस लौटा जायेगा। NCRB के डाटा की माने तो भारत में प्रतिदिन 108 से ज्यादा चाइल्ड सेक्सुअल एब्यूज के मामले दर्ज़ होते हैं, जिसमें से ज्यादातर अपराधी जान पहचान वाला ही कोई होता है। पिता को तो पेटर्निटी लीव भी नहीं मिलती। कुछ एक सरकारी अनुसंधानों और सजग संगठों फिर भी 15 - 20 दिनों की छुट्टी पिताओं को देती हैं, मगर कानून पेटर्निटी लीव देने के लिए मजबूर नहीं करता। ऐसे माहौल में कामकाजी महिलाएं एक अलग ही अंतर्ध्वन्ध से जूझ रही हैं। 6 महीने के बच्चे को क्रेश में छोड़ कर छोड़ कर जाना या फिर घर पर छोड़ कर जाने की ग्लानि कुछ अलग ही होती होगी। बहुत सी महिलाएं नौकरी छोड़ देती हैं। क्या हम माँ होने की कीमत चुकाते हैं? माँ बनने से क्यों आपके करियर में एक ठहराव आ जाये? पुरुषों को तो ये सारे चुनाव नहीं करने पड़ते।

2017 के प्रसूति प्रसुविधा शंशोधन अधिनियम के अनुसार नियोक्ता को क्रेश की सुविधा उपलब्ध करवानी होगी। मगर भारत में इस नियम का पालन न के बराबर है। एक कामकाजी महिला के लिए ये एक बड़ी सहायता हो सकती है। बचपन का सुरक्षित होना बेहद जरूरी है और ये सिर्फ माता पिता ही नहीं बल्कि सरकार की भी ज़िम्मेदारी है। जरूरी है की क्रेश जैसी मूलभूत सुविधा निशुल्क दी जाये। बच्चों के खेलने की जगहों जैसे पार्क आदि में भी सुरक्षा के कड़े नियम बनाये जाएं। स्कूलों में सेक्स एजुकेशन के नाम पर खानापूती न हो कर, बेहद संजीदगी से सेफ टच और अनसेफ टच ज्ञान बच्चों को शुरू से सिखाया जाये। अपने बच्चों का आप कितना भी ख्याल रखिये मगर सबकी सहभागिता से ही बचपन सुरक्षित हो सकता है।

मातृत्व अपने सपनों का बलिदान नहीं है और बचपन कोई कैद नहीं है। एक समाज के तौर पर हमारी उपलब्धि तभी मानी जाएगी जब बच्चों के लिए माँएं अपनी नौकरी नहीं छोड़ेंगी और माँ की अनुपस्थिति में भी बच्चे सुरक्षित रहेंगे। इस सपने को हम सब समाज और सरकार की सहभागिता से ही पूरा कर सकते हैं। कानूनों का कड़ाई से पालन हो और पेटर्निटी लीव को भी कानूनी दर्ज़ा दिया जाये जिससे मदरहुड से हम पेरेंटहुड की तरफ बढ़ सकें।

Answers to Riddles

1. Silence
2. Lunch and Dinner
3. Light
4. A Mirror



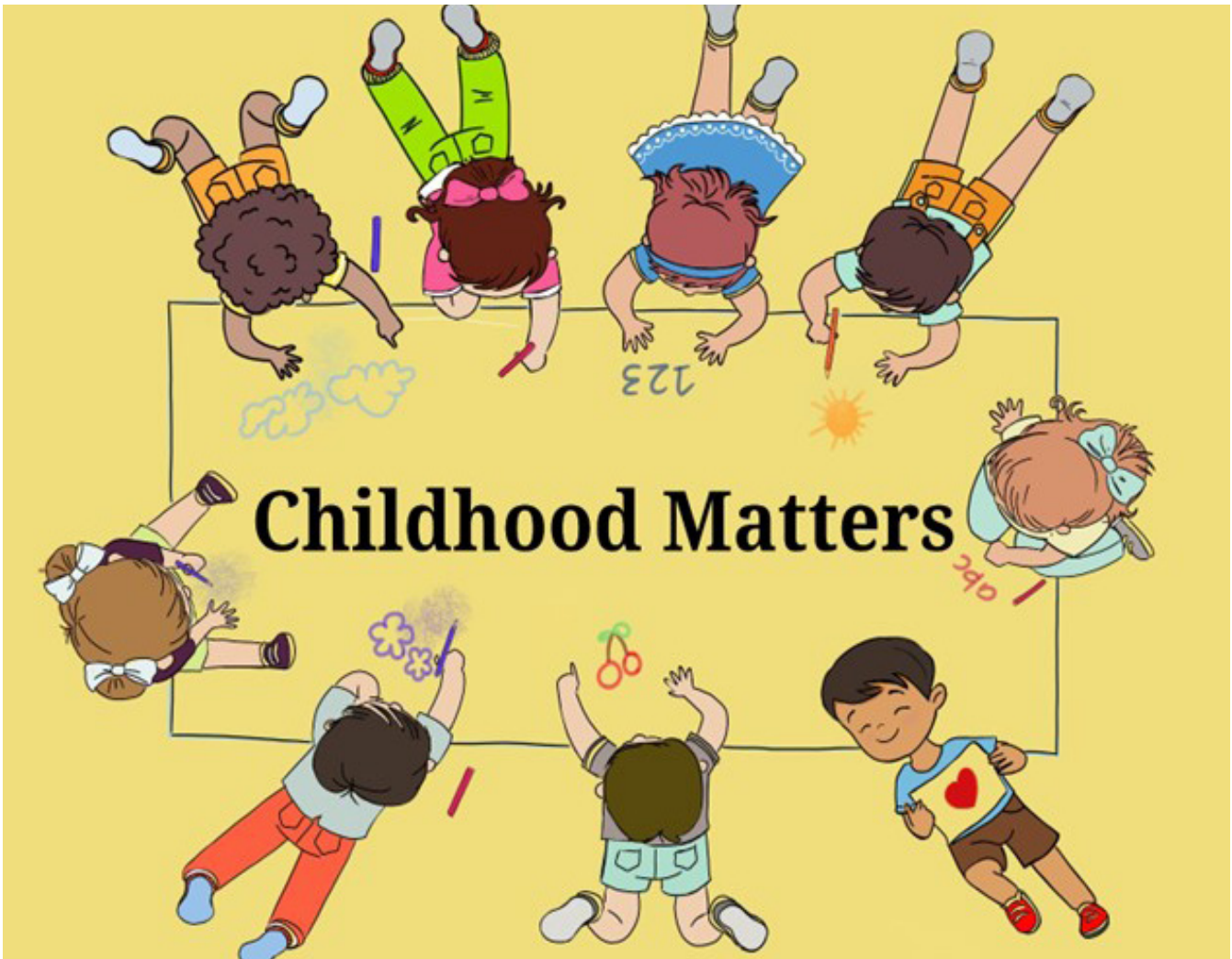
कुछ रंग जीवन में सिर्फ अपने लिए भरना

मुमुक्षु पोरवाल

सात तरह के रंग में से जो पसंद आए वो रंग अपने जीवन में भरना,
कभी किसी घड़ी कोई मुसीबत आ जाए तो,
न डरना, न घबराना, न ही किसी को बैचैन नज़र आना,
हिम्मत को हथियार बना एक नई कहानी लिखना,
अपनी ग़लतीयो से हर बार कुछ सीखना।

हारने के डर से, दौड़ना नहीं छोड़ना,
रुक जाना भले राह में, तसल्ली से सांस लेना,
जो मुसिबत आए भले, मंजिल से मुंह कभी न मोड़ना,
जोश का एक कलम उठा, होश में कहानी लिखना,
अपनी कामीयाबी की दास्तान ऊंची आवाज़ में चीखना।

एक रंग खुशी का सबमें जरूर बांटना,
दर्द, गम और हताशा की कटार से कभी सपनों को मत काटना,
जीवन हर रोज़ नई, सुनहरी रोशनी में काटना,
कभी डर लगे आगे बढ़ने में, तो पिता के संघर्ष की ओर झांकना,
मां की ममता को हथियार बना एक नई कहानी लिखना,
कुछ रंग अपने जीवन के, अपनों के जीवन में भरना भी सीखना।





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childhood matters

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