



childhood matters

— AIF's 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.
July 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 furthering 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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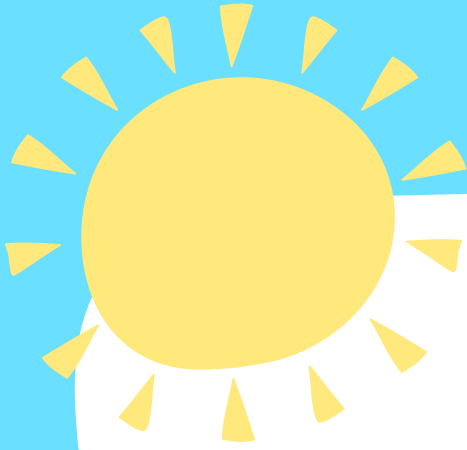


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Guest Editorial

By Dr Itishree Padhi;

Professor and Head in Anthropology BJB Autonomous College, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

I was on cloud nine, seeing my tiny tots back to my Ashram-like kinder garden almost after two years! Holding them made me feel as if I had regained all the strength I lost severely during the unprecedented pandemic. I was terribly missing the warmth of human touch and the comforting feeling of holding my angels in video calls. Touch deprivation is so painful.

For the last many years, my life has revolved around these small kids, including a few from slums, who are in my home away from their own, who stay with me for four to five hours daily. All between 4-6 age, they come for a year or two and with all my head, heart and hand, I prepare them to deal with the outside world boldly with a strong foundation in every single child's life, motivating them to face reality and fly on their wings!

"Hello, children! Have you started painting again? Are you ready to solve puzzles, to dance on the tune of your favourite music??"
No response.

There was no response as the hall was bubbling with the sounds of my angels' chuckling and giggling. I, too, was smiling through their lively guaw. That was so fulfilling and gratifying!!

Teaching them to draw the standing line, sleeping line, bending line, and again making them draw a half circle, full circle, dots.... nothing more, nothing less and they are done with all alphabets! Amazing! From prayer to painting, rhymes to the meme, each child's interest is carefully observed, and I try to shape it with touches of ethics and values indispensable for their firm footing on the mother earth.

Only a few days later, I suddenly noticed that my most beautiful angel was trying to wipe her tears from her wishy-washy pink face with marks of blisters, and she looked distressed.

I called her, made her sit on my lap and asked, pointing to the deep scars – What happened here today?

She was in a dilemma- to speak or not to, remained silent. I held her face lovingly, turned her towards me and asked again – Who made you sad darling ??

'Driver uncle'- she said. 'Where'? 'Inside the car, while coming here' – Her answer startled me, for a second I could not make sense. When I did the reply was scary, puzzling and disturbing. With deep dilemma and confusion, she glared at me through her tender, innocent eyes. I didn't uncover what could be a more heinous crime, and if we all are safe on this planet, earth!

"When desire blinds the mind with delusions and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and the thunder prayed."
– Rabindranath Tagore.

I was shattered when I heard that my child was abused on the way to my sanctuary, my safe house of all spaces. Endless questions muddled my mind. What are we doing so far? We are always made to realize that children are the most precious and beautiful creations on earth. Where and why do we fail so miserably? Why is so much darkness still obstructing the future of our countless children? I am sure this is not the educated and civilized world we have been dreaming of for years, and I assure you, there is no modern technique- no software to remove this darkness. Each child deserves to enjoy its childhood in full bloom before entering adulthood. There will be many such interruptions in our efforts to make the



world a better place for children but we must hold on to the mantra: Tamasoma Jyothirgamaya- from darkness lead me to light.

Kudos to the Anthropos Foundation of India (AIF) for its commendable and continuous efforts to eliminate darkness that haunts our society and to make our world a better place to live, especially, for our children. AIF shoulders huge responsibility in sensitizing parents, sharpening teachers and in sincerely attempting to develop public awareness by alerting stakeholders to realize how crucial childhood is to a child and how effectively childhood matters! Suppose the notion of innocence refers to the simplicity and purity of childhood. In that case, we owe a lot to seeing if every child grows up with all their innocence and turn into a responsible citizen of the country! Because growing up comes at the

cost of the innocence of a child (unknown).

I strongly feel the exigency to make our children understand the thin line between bad touch and good touch through a sequence of conversations between parents and children and family. We cannot predict the future, but we definitely have some power to shape it. Knowledge, determination and self-guidance can prompt one to make endeavors in the desired direction, and these attempts subsequently can help unlock better futures for our children.

"The safety of people should be the highest law." - rightly said Marcus Tullius Cicero.



Editorial

Dear Readers,

It gives me immense pleasure to share our fourth issue of the digital magazine 'Childhood Matters'. As we celebrate the 75th year of independence, it set me thinking that we are still far from ensuring the safety and security of our children and giving them joy, happiness and pleasures of growing up. The increase in crimes against children perturbs every rational mind. COVID-19 further aggravated the problem, and child abuse is now a glaring pandemic. The guest editorial by Itishree touches a raw nerve by bringing the dark reality of children being abused every minute. Despite having the most stringent laws like POCSO, the crimes continue unabated. Thus, the need to educate, sensitise and make all of us aware of child rights.

Further, the touchy prose by Soumi brings out the pain of being born a girl. Priyanka, a competition winner, wrote a beautiful article on child rights. This issue also presents facts and figures related to child marriage. Even though child marriage is legally banned, this practice continues in many states, burying their childhood and dreams. Isn't it time that we all realise the sufferings many of our children go through and do something about it in our capacity, starting from introspecting how we treat our children and the children around our neighbourhood? It just takes a few minutes and a few resources to make a child happy and childhood joyful before the phase is over.

While Ramneek and Christy's articles reveal the true meaning of 'freedom' and 'independence', Aditi and Sangeeta create awareness and sensitivity about children who are differently abled 'divyang' and the uniqueness of each child. It is crucial to understand each child as a gift of nature, not to compare and burden them with the adult's expectations, but to give love and encouragement to flourish. Habiba's article questions another fascinating aspect of assessing the abilities and skills of children. Can we evaluate them accurately? Have you seen the most humble and quiet child making it big when grown up and the most naughty child going utterly silent as they grow up? One can only guess... what journey they must have been through and who is responsible around them—leaving all of us to remember

our childhood passing through good and bad phases.

In the continuation of the earlier article, Indira brings out more on National Education Policy and Preetha's article on 'Let's talk money' to understand the value of money and handle it early on, to earn and spend wisely, which unfortunately is never taught in any school! It is time for the school curriculums to teach children, perhaps at the secondary education level, to be 'money-wise', as each of us, be it a rickshaw puller or a multimillionaire, have to deal with monies. Another pertinent issue is raised by Bharat on the impact of climate change, especially on children and future generations. We must be mindful of what we will leave for our children and engage in environmental movements. It is followed by a beautiful article from the heart of a loving and doting father of a girl. He talks about the dilemmas and joy of raising a daughter, a daughter who has a mind of her own and keeps communication open. This prose sets an example of building confidence and healthy relations between parents and children; a must lesson on parenting tips. I am sure you will all enjoy the three beautiful Hindi poems by Sanjeev, Pawan and Pranjal on various topics, a treat for our senses.

We look forward to your feedback and various contributions to the forthcoming issues of 'Childhood Matters'. This effort is a drop in the ocean to sensitise on the issues we are grappling with...I am sure you will add a precious drop.

With warm regards and best wishes to all our readers,

Dr Sunita Reddy
Founder Chair, AIF

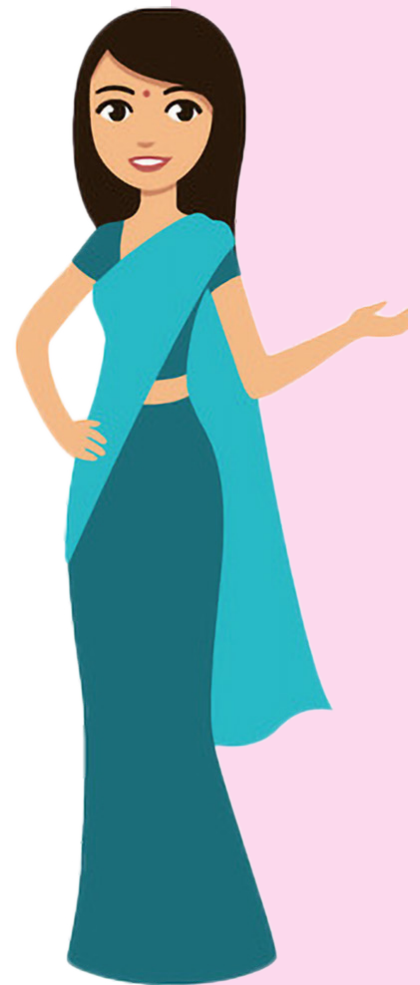


Children's Corner

Go Girl

By Soumi Samanta (KV Student)

The rhythm always begins,
I am always left alone,
Everywhere, every time people poking,
Slashing me for I am a girl.
I am Durga, I am photon,
Someone's mother, someone's wife,
Someone's sister, someone's daughter,
But I am always left alone,
Everywhere, every time people poking,
Burning me for I am a girl.
Do you remember?
Those black-shaded nights,
Those unpleasant shouts, those heart-
fluttering cries,
Yes those darkest hours going back to the
wall,
When some helpless daughters left their
debris behind,
If not, reminisce the little Nirbhaya,
And at that second 'abduction' like word was
lighted.
You fellow people when will you ponder
your catechism,
To those who have made me the issued-
question.
Ceaselessly the rhythm continues,
Again I am left alone
Everywhere, every time people violating,
Mocking me for I am a girl.



Independence Day

By Ramneek Singh (Student, class 12th)

This year, we are celebrating the 75th year of our independence, but the question to ask is "are we really independent?"

We achieved our independence after numerous and invaluable struggles and sacrifices but do the ideals of the people who fought for our independence still stand today?

India did not become what it is today, overnight. After our independence from the British in 1947, we still had several problems lined up on our plate, the biggest of which was uniting a diverse country like India. After our independence, there were still 3 princely states who had not yet signed the instrument of accession and claimed their independent status, namely- Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad. Under Sardar Vallabhai Patel's leadership, all these states joined with India. Another big problem was establishing democracy in a diverse state like India. Many experts and political scientists commented that the failure of democracy was inevitable in India. But the vision of our revolutionaries was clear. They would settle for nothing less than a complete democratic structure in India. The first general elections in 1951 proved to be perhaps the biggest win for independent India. The then chief election commissioner, Sukumar Sen, was also called by many Asian and African countries to facilitate their elections.

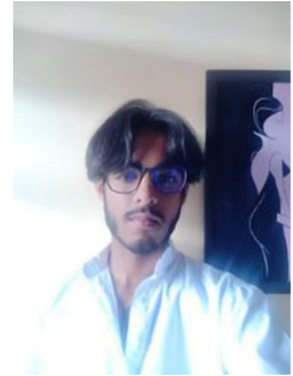
We must understand the hardships that brought India to where it is today. It is also imperative to understand the meaning of the word independent. Will the mere absence of a foreign power make our country independent?

Are we really independent if we are still a slave to ourselves? And now the most crucial question: is today's India really independent?

Sardar Bhagat Singh once said that independence is not just the freedom from the British but the absence of all social evils. We can only call ourselves independent when each and everyone of us are treated as equal and with dignity. As Sardar Bhagat Singh once said "we call ourselves spiritual but don't treat fellow humans with dignity." The essence of democracy and the ideals of independence are still buried somewhere inside us. Are we willing to ignite the spark that could turn India into the nation that the harbingers of independence dreamt of?

With that question, I bid adieu to all of you.

Jai Hind!



Expert Column

Let's Talk Money

By Preetha Wali, co-founder, PAY IT FORWARD

Let's talk money! Not that everybody dreams of making sacks and sacks of it. We are talking about Personal finance. A topic that is not actively taught to most of us during schooling. We usually learn money matters on the go and at the cost of making serious financial mistakes. And then there are a whole lot of myths that surround savings and investments. All this leads to a lot of confusion in investors' minds about the best way to go about it and what suits them. Everyone has dreams and goals, which change per each one's circumstances.

To make matters worse, youngsters tend to fear the word "finance" as they do not understand it thoroughly. They tend to ignore it till it is too late. Youngsters tend to depend on elders for most financial decisions in their lives. The primary reasons for not taking charge of their finances are their beliefs that finance is a grown-up domain, complex and hence tough to understand, full of complicated number crunching etc.

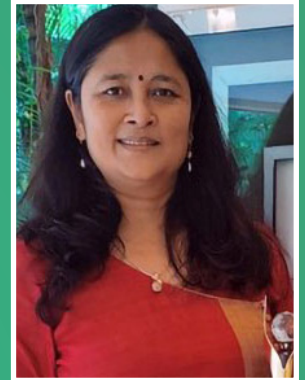
Young adults forget that they come with some strengths that best suit personal finance, like, they are single and are not responsible for somebody else as yet... they can save

without cramping their lifestyle...they can put away just a little, but that will grow into a substantial amount later in the day...

Youngsters tend to believe they do not need to save or invest while they don't earn (only get pocket money or gift money) or as soon as they start earning. They think they can put off the process till a few years when they are closer to taking on more extensive family responsibilities. As a result, they miss out on the opportunity to grow their investments to a large corpus with a smaller amount using the power of compounding they learned in their math class in middle school.

Remember, a penny saved is a penny earned. It's never too early to start thinking wisely about your finances. Think about how it makes you independent, secure, and self-respecting.

We hope this motivates many of our readers to take a hard look at their financial situation and rework where necessary so that they can lead a stress-free life and reach all their life goals.



Creating Awareness Among Children About 'Disability'

By Ms. Sangeeta Saini; Master of Prosthetics and Orthotics (MPO), Indian Spinal Injury Center-New Delhi

Children are curious by nature and ask many questions about what they observe. By asking questions, they try to develop an understanding of the world around them. Your child may come across an individual with differential ability, physical or behavioural. As a parent, we often face this inquisitiveness of the child wherein he/she can point out with wonder, "Look at that child, his leg seems different!". Or the pointed questions like "Why is this person walking different from others?" or "why that person is sitting in that chair with wheels?". Our response to these queries may vary based on our understanding, situation awareness and perspectives.

Some parents may instruct the child not to stare and try to deflect his attention to other things, while some may try to ignore or avoid the situation. Sometimes, parents yell at their child, asking them to stay away from the differently abled person or maintain a distance. By doing this, we unknowingly create an impression that something is wrong with asking or knowing about these questions. This may impact the child's learning process, and instead of empathy, a biased response gets normalized early in the child's life.

As a parent, our goal should be to prepare responsible adults that could do well for the country and humanity in general. We can accomplish these goals only by sensitizing the child and making them aware of the diversity and type of disabilities, visible or non-visible, with appropriate terminology. As per World Health Organization (WHO), ~15% of the world's population (about 1 billion people) live with various kinds of disabilities. WHO expects this number to increase even further through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process¹. As per UN Development Programme, about 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries¹. According to UNESCO, 90% of children with disabilities cannot attend school². The annual incidence rates of violence

against children with disabilities are at least 1.7 times greater than for their peers without disabilities³. There is a need to make this world more equitable and just, which is impossible without the participation of children as they are the citizens of tomorrow.



The child's education starts with the family, the basic unit of society. We should educate, sensitize and create awareness among our children to respect diversity and differences as we all are different people. Some of the things that we can do to help the child develop a positive view and acceptance of disabilities can be:

- ✓ Answering the questions of the child with honesty and age-appropriate terminology. This should be used as an opportunity to introduce the child to the idea of disability.

Watch a movie, motivational video, or read a book together that positively portrays disability. This can make a huge difference in their understanding.

Teach your child to be kind to everyone and ask before helping the person with disabilities.

- ✓ Websites with age-appropriate explanations and activities should be encouraged.

Sensitizing the children about disabilities and channelizing their curiosities will improve their understanding of people with disabilities. The chances are they will not find it wrong or unusual to be different from others. Your child will grow and benefit in multiple ways. For example:

- ✓ It will help in building emotional intelligence

Parent's Perspective

Being A 'FATHER' Is Not Easy!

By Pawan Kumar Pandey (Father; Sri Venkateswara College, DU)

It's just another morning, I'm sipping my tea
The cynosure of my eyes – my daughter
comes to me

A normal conversation starts – it slowly
becomes a debate

I want to end the discussion – but alas, it's
too late!

There's a clash of opinions; she has a lot to
say;

I tell her to stop – it's enough for the day

She grumbles, she's half way out of the door

I'm thinking about what happened; She's not
a kid anymore!

My mental picture is fuzzy, there's a cluster
of memories in my head

I remember eighteen years back when
I picked up a tiny blob of flesh from the
hospital bed

I promised her then – I'll give her all the
happiness in the world

All her wishes are fulfilled; I've successfully
kept my word.

I remember how she used to run to me after
a working day

How she climbed my back, how she stamped
her feet to get things done her way

How she thought I was a 'superhero' and
could fix almost anything

And how her greatest gifts would be all the
chocolates, I'd bring....

And so on, the flashes continue, she's no
more the same now

Books have replaced toys and debates have
taken over rhymes somehow

But I know she loves me unconditionally and
she respects me too

I'm still her idol and she adores all that I do.

I've instilled in her the values so she grows
up the way she should

I'm sure she knows all the scoldings are only
meant for her good

She's still a kid to me, I'm scared for her she
knows

It's difficult to live with the feeling; guess
that's how it goes.

A difference in views exists, the situation's
really gritty

From being known as my daughter, she's
developing her own identity

The transition's not easy, I know the world
is too bad

She tries to comfort me by saying; "I can
handle it Dad".

I'm proud to be her father – she knows it
really well

She's the reason of my being, she's my angel.

But I hope she understands – it's a father's
heart after all

There's a strong feeling within, don't know
what it's supposed to be called

The fact that she'll leave some day makes it
all the more uneasy

It's difficult to deal with it - Being a father is
not easy!

Every second of my being – I pray she gets
the best

I'm doing my duty and have left to God the
rest.



Teacher's Column

Each child, with or without disability, is unique; they only need love and encouragement to flourish

Dr Aditi Panda, Project Manager, Samarthya, LSE for special schools of Odisha

Childhood memories play an important role in shaping the overall persona and the thought processes of all individuals. Irrespective of gender and disabilities a child experiences several emotional upheavals and unforgettable as well as impactful incidents during childhood. World Health Survey conducted by the World Health Organization in 2002-2004 indicates that disability affects vulnerable populations. Higher disability rates are prevalent in lower-income countries and persons belonging to the poorest wealth quintile are more prone to disabilities because of different variables. Nevertheless, a child born with disabilities in these circumstances cannot change the fact that they are unique and have great strengths as well as weaknesses and must be accepted as they are. The problems of these children are no longer confined to the medical and educational aspects but are the community's concern as a whole. To begin with, the parents and family must accept that their child is unique with different needs and should be given the same amount of love, care and attention as any other child. If the parents and family have a positive attitude



and unconditional acceptance for the child, the society or neighborhood will slowly fall in line with it and respect the child. Usually, the terminology used to address persons with disabilities, especially children, leaves a huge scar on their soft, vulnerable psyche, making

them introverted and wanting to stay isolated.

Some kinds of disabilities are visible and can be recognized easily, but some kinds of disabilities cannot be understood. More sensitivity and care are needed in



communicating or handling children with disabilities in the second category, especially when they start going to school or out on their own. This is their first rendezvous in the outer world, away from the comforting envelope of their home and family and it is a difficult journey for them like any other child. It's essential and imperative for us to realize that it's our responsibility as adults to welcome them and drive away their fears and apprehensions. As adults, it's equally vital to teach other children that those without disabilities that children with disabilities are at par with them on all fronts but need extra care because of their condition, which they are not responsible for.

Children are simple, uncomplicated beings who accept and embrace reality with ease. If one can explain the situation at hand properly, children will make considerable efforts to make their disabled peers happy and comfortable with them. Quoting the experience of Tanvi, a 7-year-old wheelchair user, "I did not want to go to school at first. But after some time, I got new friends, who started pushing my wheelchair, helping me with my notes, eating time with me in the classroom and calling me for their birthday parties. I'm not too fond of Sundays now, because there is no school. I love going to school every day".

You do not need rocket science to bring about

a change but simple and loving gestures to create empathy among the children to accept a child with disabilities wholeheartedly is the need of the hour. These thoughtful and much needed actions will promote inclusion in our society and may help in nurturing sensible and emphatic future generations. This may not be an easy path to tread because, at present, individuals are becoming more and more materialistic with every passing day, and one's status in society is determined by their assets and bank balance, not by one's behavior. Unfortunately a top scorer is pampered more, even if he/she/they is insolent or rude, and on the other hand, an average student is ignored or laughed at, despite being a good child with the right values and loving nature. It's time that we introspect about our times and educate our children in the

truest sense by teaching them to respect others based on some valid parameters and not on artificial values. After all, materialistic possessions may be lost but one's nature and attitude stay for life. Therefore, it is necessary to wholeheartedly encourage our children to create a happy place for all, especially for children with disabilities. Remember, if a child has a good and happy childhood then they will surely grow up to become strong individuals who will be able to face and handle challenges effectively that they may face in future as adults. More importantly, happy and thoughtful children grow up into responsible and empathetic citizens who lead our country to become the number one nation of our world..

Child Rights: The Introspection

By Priyanka (Winner of Content Writing Competition)

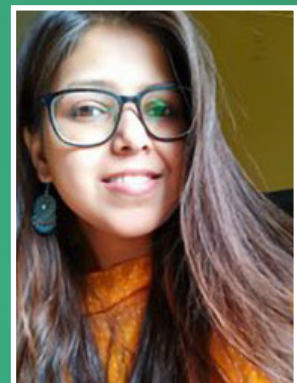
The date was 12/08/2007. The girl was ten years of age. That day, being very determined, she picked up her pencil and her small notebook and wrote "A Child in Mine" and continued –

"Wherever I see, there is smoke,
I am someone with no hope
Burden on my shoulder is tied with rope
Darkness is the thing which I must cope.
Rays of light shining through that hole
Dares to wake up my dead soul
Strength is the thing which I must keep
Keeping my mind sane, this deep.
Brightness of life can be seen outside
But I am stuck, this deep inside
Nothing I do will let me leave
Lots of temptations that I do resist
I am someone surrounded by coal.

Hope its darkness
never reaches my soul

Because I have heard,
life is a drama, and I
must play a role

Then, no longer would
I be a dead soul."



She did not know at that very moment she was writing the first poem of her life; in her mind, her words were rhyming, and what she felt was being reflected in those words.

On the way to school that morning, her bus had stopped near a coal mine. The girl saw a boy through the window of her bus, with black dirt smeared on his clothes. And then he saw her. Now she was used to other children smiling at her or making a face. But she had never seen a child looking at her with a blank face. She saw him watching the bus, and as he came closer to the bus to pick up

the rope, he again looked at her. And then she noticed his eyes. The girl noticed two things- first- unique pair of blue eyes that she had never seen before, and second, a pair of hopeless eyes that she sees every day at her home every night when her mother looked at her with the same hopeless eyes but with immense love. Maybe it was his same hopeless eyes and her feeling of helplessness for not being able to help her mother to have happy eyes. She could not do anything to stop that screaming drunk man from hitting her mother every other night. This extreme feeling of helplessness made her pick up her sharpest weapon – her pencil- to deal with her bottled emotions. She did not know this, but she grew up ten folds that day while writing her first poem.

This story has many social facets if one tries to understand it. I have shared this story to acknowledge that all adults, the child rights protectors who voluntarily make efforts to make a change, were, of course, a child once, and many of us did not have a great happy childhood. Now when we are in this position where we can help millions of children not have a story like ours or worse than ours, we need to step up our game. The change of any kind first begins at home. An experienced adult who has gone through the sufferings of life would naturally like to give their children a better childhood than theirs. This is the only positive outcome of living their life as some sort of ordeal. The concept of Child rights

should not be an extraordinary phenomenon to understand. It should be intricately inevitable and naturally operational. Child rights are essential human rights that begin when a child is born. Children need to be nurtured in a way that not only develops their personalities but can also develop their intellectuality. Every child deserves to live a life. And every family needs to make reasonable efforts to provide for children living in their home mentally and physically sustainably. It should be our moral duty not to corrupt their innocence and make them grow up before time. Thankfully the notion of protecting children has translated into practical, implementable laws. Hence the moral duties which should have been felt naturally and fulfilled by everyone have taken the shape of a legal obligation to make this world a better place for children to live and not to “survive”. We are the homo sapiens, the most distinct species because we do not focus only on “survival” anymore. We “live” our lives. Both national and international organizations have made numerous efforts, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to all humans regardless of age. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child provides both national and international laws to safeguard children and provide them protection. Suppose the existing laws are practically implemented in all the corners of the world. In that case, the efforts of millions of people will be successful, and every child will have hopeful eyes for a phenomenal future.



FACTS AND FIGURES ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Compiled by Archana Yadav (AIF Intern)

Child marriage is on the global development agenda. It is included in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 is to eliminate the practice of child marriage by 2030. This practice is more rampant in India and occurs among girls and boys.

- ✓ One-third of the world's child brides live in India. Of the country's 223 million child brides, 102 million were married before turning 15.
- ✓ In terms of child marriage prevalence, India ranks fourth among the eight South Asian Countries.
- ✓ Majority of Indian child brides, i.e. 50%, live in five states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh is home to the largest population of child brides, with 36 million.
- ✓ Approximately one in four young women in India were married or in union under the age of 18.
- ✓ In India, the prevalence of child marriage varies across states and union territories. Over 40 per cent of young women were married before turning 18 in Bihar and West Bengal, compared to less than 5 per cent in Lakshadweep.
- ✓ Girls who live in rural areas or come from poorer households and have little or no education are at greater risk of child marriage.
- ✓ Child marriage is less common among boys than girls, and the practice among boys could be eliminated by 2030 if progress is accelerated.

(Source: <https://www.unicef.org/india/media/1176/file/Ending-Child-Marriage.pdf>)



Can examinations accurately assess our abilities/skills?

By Habiba Haroon (AIF Intern)

Is it fair that an individual is evaluated on the basis of an exam to assess the reception of the knowledge imparted to a set of heterogeneous children within the four walls of the classroom? Can a 3 hours exam fairly assess the student's diligent efforts to learn and grow over a year? Also, how can we evaluate an individual's unique abilities, skills, and capabilities through just one question paper that is the same for all when we constantly parrot the truth that every child is unique and no child's needs can exactly match others? These inquiries demand an answer since, in some cases, they are to be blamed for a majority of problems that children in our day and age face and are unable to overcome. Firstly, the mentioned issues are the reasons for the cause of several psychological issues in children that in many cases persist throughout adulthood. Secondly, because exams and their results are considered as a reflection of one's intellect in our society, they also have a deep and lasting impact on a child's self-esteem and social skills. Thirdly, and most importantly, as parents are so over zealously concerned about their child scoring the best or good grades: students always aspire for the best grades and therefore prevented by this very lopsided evaluation system and parental expectations either from improving their skills or embracing their individuality. At times the development of their natural talents are also prevented by the same.

The examination system is not entirely wrong of course; we need methods or processes to evaluate the learning a child undergoes in the classroom as all learners have different abilities. Some children are excellent in understanding and grasping concepts but struggle to answer questions in the examination. Some on the other hand perform well in exams even though they are unsure of their answers. Nevertheless, even the best students sometimes struggle to obtain high grades. Nobody can predict the blunders, incorrect reading of the questions, forgetting to read the questions, silly errors, or problems in the evaluation process and many more problems that one may occur during

the exam or the processes before and after examinations.

Even though each student has unique abilities, all students are subjected to the evaluation process through an exam format that is standardised. Unfortunately, that stereotypical exam becomes a marker for a student's academic performance. Students are pressured to memorize material and study minute details to prepare for a given and non negotiable exam framework. Most of the times, students don't genuinely engage with the content taught; rather, they learn what they need to know to get good marks.



While it is true that a single exam cannot accurately assess a student's intellectual capacity, it is untrue to claim that exams evaluate learning. Exams assess a person's ability to remember and the ability to separate

critical information from irrelevant diversions. Exams consider a student's capacity to comprehend a question and provide a meaningful response. Thus, exams are still an important part of learning and assessment till date. Recent interventions by academic bodies like emphasis on application-based learning and logical reasoning can be considered a big step towards evaluating cognitive abilities rather than rote learning.

However, the basic questions remain the same: how can these examinations assess a child's skills and talents? Can their abilities and skills be measured by these exams? Life struggles and experiences cannot be handled by the information gained from books. Can they? No, the ability to process information successfully doesn't guarantee that an individual is knowledgeable. I guess we all use computers but can we call it a knowledgeable being?

Digressions aside, it is a crime to overlook and suppress a child's talents and skills however this is a repeated occurrence in schools nowadays. The focus on sports and related extracurricular activities are relatively low. I say so because a weekly practice of 30 minutes cannot polish a child's athletic abilities or can they? Is one co-curricular activity per month enough to improve one's social and physiological skills? And with all these inconsistencies in formative learning years and drawbacks in the education system isn't it ironic that we complain about people leading a lazy and introverted lifestyle as adults? The future is shaped by childhood, and we inadvertently sabotage it through our actions. Not every kid excels in academics, but they may excel in sports, a particular art form, or possess extraordinary ability to work with technology. But they are compelled to study to be accepted by society. Their special skills and talents are destroyed by their society. This is a peculiar issue, which affects every student's life in a significant way and is not addressed by our examination system. As a result, our children are under great stress, and so are their worried parents.

Over the years through numerous discussions various issues have emerged but no clear-cut

solutions have been arrived at. Multiple new measures were adopted, such as evaluating students through tests and quizzes, fun-learning activities, group projects, discussions, etc., but rather than assisting in bringing about a positive change these measures have become more of a burden to parents. As per surveys and research conducted among academicians, it has been found that this conventional method of evaluating students has many lacunas, but what are the options or way out? Do you think we should test the system without exams? If so, how can we assess their academic performance? There are undoubtedly significant issues that need to be handled in this situation. Why do we require tests to evaluate students' learning outcomes? In a system where every student is seen as apples in a basket and all apples have the same flavor and composition, how can we evaluate their question marks? Every child should be treated as an individual with unique abilities and valuable inputs to offer. The testing process should highlight this special quality to instill confidence in children. It demands us to give up on the concept of the "classroom" and instead shift our attention to the learning outcomes, which may be measured via project-based hands on learning, digital and graphic tests, games, and a variety of other methods. In this regard, policymakers should conduct more social research. In many countries, different unique models and educational methods are being experimented with; thus, it is high time that we allow the encouraging trend to impact our thinking. These upcoming models and approaches require more money, time, skill, and wisdom. But we should at least make an effort to take one step in the long process of making our examination system responsive and humane.

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

By Indira Patnaik; Inclusion Specialist, Artist

Dear Readers,

I am motivated to continue the article about the seven critical challenges of the National Educational policy (NEP) 2020 in achieving inclusion and equity in Indian classrooms.



Source credit Francecoch

1. NEP 2020 policy was based on the Committee Recommendation rather than Evidence-Based Research

If we want to focus on Equity and inclusion in public schools, we need evidence-based research recommendations. Evidence-based research means making decisions. The information is collected from several sources like published research article results of valid, reputable field studies rather than a few experts' opinions. Educational research involves various methods to address the issues or measure specific needs. It includes systematic collection and analysis of data related to the problems in the field. NEP is the opinion of a group of scholars on the committee. Unlike evidence-based research, the committee-based recommendation will not measure specific needs typically obtained through data. During the implementation period, another group of trained researchers will work in a task force to calculate the result and develop a few recommendations. During the middle of the policy period, the committee will be adjusting the expectations for tenure. There will be a frequent shift in

teaching and learning approaches which will delay the process.

2. Achieving Educational Equity will be a Highly Challenging Task Against Biases about Disability Poverty and Diversity:



Source credit Francecoch

Our India has a rich, complex, and profoundly diverse cultural environment rather than monochromatic inclusive. Hence, equity and inclusiveness in education have long been ideal. Inclusiveness is likely to grow and change as we better understand one another. In an inclusive environment, any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to participate fully. Applying key concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion continues to be challenging for educational institutions. Diversity is the presence of different and multiple characteristics that make up individual and collective identities, including race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, socioeconomic status, language, and physical ability. Equity is the process of identifying and removing the

barriers that create significant differences in access to resources and means and achieving fair treatment and equal opportunities to thrive. These practices of Diversity and equity in education have been less than adequate because of our socio-cultural and implicit biases. Here implicit bias means, as Kirwan Institute at Ohio State University defines, quotas, attitudes or stereotypes that are activated unconsciously and involuntarily quotas. Social scientists believe implicit biases are learned as young as age three and may be fueled by stereotypes perpetuated in the media or beliefs passed by parents and other community members.

IEP focuses on cultivating inclusive learning environments. What can educators do against the deep-rooted cultural biases? The inclusive practice among educators will be highly challenging to achieve optimal equity while moving forward with IEP 2020.

Limited Resources for Providing Assistive technology for all Students with Disabilities:



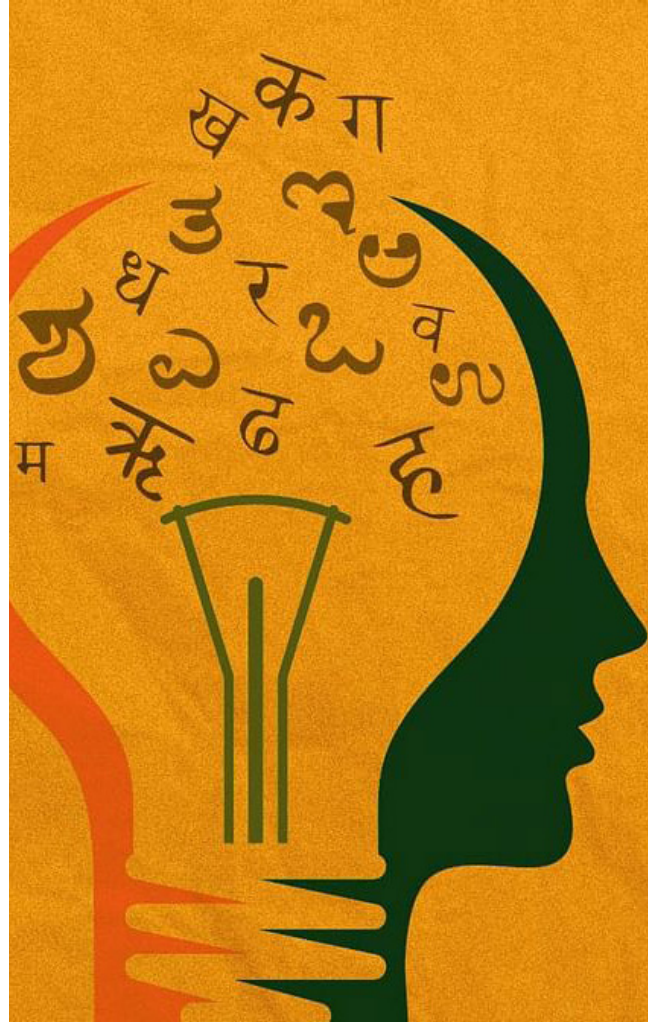
Source credit Francecoch

Our educators struggle to manage the size of the classroom. They were trained to focus on the syllabus instead of the student's needs with empathy. Most of the student population is not being adequately served, and with so many technological advances. Assistive technology in simple and complex platforms can lift the entire educational experience and provide a better life foundation for students with disabilities. A key to improving the educational experience for students with disabilities is better accommodations in schools and continued improvements in assistive technology. Assistive technology

is designed to improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The cutting-edge electronics, simple design, and some assistive technologies are possible with simple accommodations. Assistive technology can transform the learning experiences for the children who benefit. Assistive technology is vital for providing sound education for students with disabilities. However, addressing the needs of students with disabilities will continue to be challenging with limited resources. In our following newsletter, I will share other challenges in creating inclusive and equitable classrooms for all students—particularly IEP challenges in addressing opportunity, achievement, and belief gaps.

References

The core terms utilized by the National Association of Counties (NACo) for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Climate Change And Children's Right To Live

By Bharat Kumar Pradhan; Gangtok, Sikkim

Climate change is the biggest crisis the world is facing today, and children are amongst the most vulnerable ones. Every year, over 5 lakh children die due to environmental changes to which they have zero contribution, but they are to bear the brunt. Children are the future of tomorrow, and they are the ones who will take the human race forward. Climate change is posing a direct threat to their survival, which means that soon the planet earth will be without humans. Unfortunately, the human, the most beautiful creation of nature, has turned out to be the worst creature on this planet. Instead of being the steward of the blue planet, we exploited mother nature to such an extent that now it is turning nasty on us. We are already witnessing extreme climatic events like raging wildfires, disastrous floods, brutal heatwaves and prolonged drought in different parts of the world, resulting in biodiversity loss, the eruption of diseases, crop failure and infestation by insects and pests, etc., which will severely affect the health and well-being of our children. Studies have revealed that children below five years of age bear approximately 90 per cent of climate change-attributed diseases. Not only this, nearly half of the death in children under 5 are attributed to undernourishment, and by 2050, 25 million more children will be malnourished due to climate change.

The Paris Agreement of 2015 is one such commitment of mankind to safeguarding the entire humanity and the dependent biodiversity from the extreme impact of climate change. We are committed to keeping the global temperature well below 2 degrees C and taking action to maintain it to 1.5 degrees C by the end of the century, as per the agreement. Nevertheless, today the earth's temperature has already risen by 1.2 degrees C

as compared to the pre-industrial level (1850 to 1900); at the current rate of increasing global temperature, the earth's temperature will exceed 3.2 degrees C by the end of the century as indicated by several scientific studies, the prime reason being the continuous spewing of a large number of greenhouse gases, mainly CO₂ into the atmosphere. It is alarming that approximately 1.7 million children die annually due to environmental pollution. If we are to avert the severe impact of climate change, all nations must work towards reducing their CO₂ emission by 50 per cent by 2030 and achieve net zero emission by 2050. The developed nations have more responsibility as they significantly contribute to climate change but are doing little in its mitigation and are not committed, which is clear from the recent COP-26 held in Glasgow, the UK, in 2021. Because of their indifferent attitude, we are losing our battle against climate change and failing to keep up our promises of handing over a safe environment to our children, thus pushing them and their future towards uncertainties.

Consequently, numerous would-be parents in developed nations, especially in the UK, have decided not to have biological children as they do not want to bring their would-be children into the dying world; some fear that their would-be children will have to struggle through a climate apocalypse and face the end of the world due to climate change. This indicates that we have significantly failed ourselves as responsible parents. The recent COVID-19 disease is sufficient to prove the greatest failure of mankind in entire human history, and the present generations are sole to be blamed for this.

Children worldwide have lost hope in us and



are alarmed to witness the incapability of the present generation to deal with climate change. They have every right to be alarmed because we are taking away their fundamental right, 'the right to live in a clean environment'. They have every right to question us because they will have to live and grow up in an environment that has been made far more dangerous and uncertain because of the unsustainable action of the present generation. Nevertheless, the matter is being taken seriously by the youths, the future leaders and the change-makers; they are taking into streets to remind us about our promises and have started environmental movements like 'Fridays For Future', which has received global support. It indicates

that our present action on climate change is insufficient, and it is time to double our effort to mitigate the impact of climate change because we are in an emergency now. We have only eight years in hand to avoid the worst impact of climate change, and we are running out of time. If we are concerned about our children and genuinely want to protect them and safeguard their future, it is imperative to address climate change as priority and mitigate its impact.



Answers to the riddle

1. A promise
2. A towel
3. Darkness

बोलता बचपन (Hindi Section)

बचपन बचाओ-**संजीव जैन----**

Sanjeev jain

Principal judge Family court,
Delhi .



शैशव के पलने में तारे सजा कर,
दुनिया की आँखों में सपने सजाओ।
बच्चों का भोला सा बचपन बचा कर,
जन्नत सी सुन्दर यह दुनिया बनाओ।

जूठन जमाने की धोते यह बच्चे,
बचपन में बचपन ही खोते यह बच्चे।
लाखों घरों के चिराग़ बुझ रहे हैं।
सुबकते, सिसकते, रोते यह बच्चे।

इन नन्हें हाथों में चन्दा थमा कर,
बचपन के चेहरे की मुस्कान

लाओ।

बच्चों का भोला सा बचपन बचा कर,
जन्नत सी सुन्दर यह दुनिया बनाओ।

ढाबों पर खाना खिलाते यह बच्चे।
घरों में पोंचा लगाते यह बच्चे।
कल के ये नाजूक स्वाब बुझ रहे हैं,
कोठों की रौनक बढ़ाते यह बच्चे।

बदनाम गलियों से बचपन बचा कर,
बचपन की बगिया में फिर से सजाओ।
बच्चों का भोला सा बचपन बचा कर,
जन्नत सी सुन्दर यह दुनिया बनाओ।

बचपन अगर मिट जायेगा कल को,
इतिहास जालिम बतायेगा हमको।
अगर बच ना पाया दुनिया में बचपन,
इल्जाम हम पर ही आयेगा कल को।

ठुकरायें बच्चों को गोदी में लेकर।
ममता की मीठी सी लोरी सुनाओ।
बच्चों का भोला सा बचपन बचा कर,
जन्नत सी सुन्दर यह दुनिया बनाओ।



हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ।।

पवन कुमार पाण्डेय

एम.ए. (साहित्य) &

एम. ए. (लोक प्रशासन)

अनुभाग अधिकारी

श्री वेंकटेश्वर महाविद्यालय

(दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय)

बालसखा जो बिछुड़ गए हैं
साथ-साथ खेले खाए हैं,
बुला उन्हें अब पास मेरे ला
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

चाय सुबह-शाम बनती थी
पापा को बिस्तर पर मिलती,
बनने को पापा मन करता
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

फिर, लेकिन अब तो हूं पापा
वो सुख मुझे नहीं मिल पाता,
जो बचपन में पाता
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

वह दिन मुझे याद अब आता
समवय सह पढ़ने जब जाता,
लगता है वह समय स्वर्ण सा
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

शाम लौट जब घर आता था
आते ही खाना पाता था,
समय बड़ा वो मनमोहक था
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

"अम्मा" सुबह-सुबह उठ जातीं
हम सबको वह खूब पढ़ातीं,

हाथ कभी उनका न उठता
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

पड़ीं झुर्रियां चेहरे पर थीं
बाल दूध आंखें अंदर थीं,
ऐसी थीं मेरी दादी मां
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

साथ-साथ हे चलने वाले
पथ-बाधा से लड़ने वाले,
उस दिन को वापस अब ला
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

गया समय कैसे आएगा
इसको रोक कौन पाएगा,
दौड़ दोस्त! तू पकड़ समय ला
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...

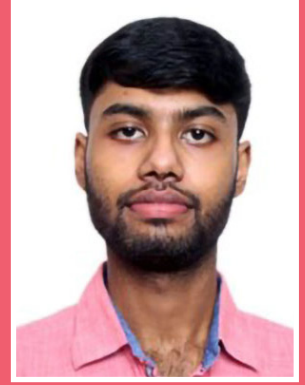
समय-चक्र है ऊपर-नीचे
रखिए 'पवन' नयन-पट नीचे,
प्रियवर! सोच विचार जरा सा
हे बचपन! तू लौट पुनः आ...



पढने की जब उम्र थी उसकी

By प्रांजल डे (AIF Intern)

पढनेकी जब उम्र थी उसकी,पढ़ नहीं पाया
मात-पिता निज स्वार्थ ने उसको काम लगाया
रह गया अंगूठा छाप आज करता मजदूरी
नहीं पढाया उसको क्यों,थी क्या मजबूरी
नन्ही अंगुली ने बीडी के धागे बांधे
भार उठाया उम्र से ज्यादा दूखे कांधे
मंद रोशनी में बुनता था रात गलीचा
सुबह उठा मालिक का सींचा बाग़ बगीचा
रंग रासायनिक से की है उसने वस्त्र छपाई
झूठी प्लेट उठा कर जिसने भूख मिटाई
वर्कशॉप में मार वो, जब औजार से खाता
नन्हा दिल बस सुबक सुबकता रो नहीं पाता
सड़क पार करता, लेजा कर चाय केटली
जान बचा ट्रेफिक से लड़ता सड़क हर गली
ढाबे में हम जब भी जाकर खाना खाते
'छोटू' दे आवाज उसी से जल मंगवाते
मेज पोंछता नन्हे हाथ जब रखते थाली
थोड़ी सी गलती पे,खाता ढेरो गाली



Feedback Page

1- It's a nice magazine, and the text is perfectly balanced between entertaining and knowledge. It gives a great message about the importance of education nowadays; it's refreshing.

By - Christina Rana
Age-15

2 - The magazine is organized with two things: children and anthropology. While the anthropological aspect is maintained seemingly throughout the magazine, covering various issues concerning children, like education, child rights, health and hygiene, political issues and activism etc., From the understanding point of view, the vocabulary could be made easier, limiting the jargon so that the main audience, i.e., the children, can easily understand the core issues while enjoying reading concerns and ideas regarding themselves and many more children like them.

BY- Rakhi
Age-23

3 - This magazine is a packet of childhood concerns which creates a bloom of concern.

The various points and experiences shared by teachers, students and parents are impressive as generally. They end up getting neglected also the applauding feature of the magazine explanation and assessment of various acts and government policies like: JJ act, which have a direct impact on children's welfare in India.

By- Kajol
Age-22

4 - A beautiful and informative magazine in today's time.

A suggestion is this magazine can attract more children and young adults with the inclusion of animated pictures, with some moral value

stories, puzzles, games and colouring pictures where they can show their own creativity, and fun facts can also be included. But overall, it's a good attempt to create such things for children as they are the light of hope for better future generations.

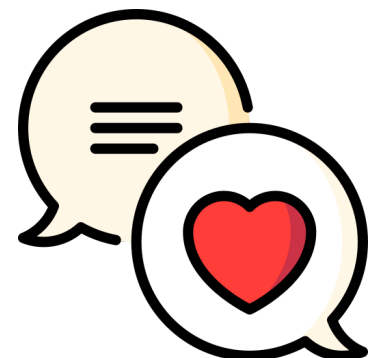
By-Rishi
Age-20

5 -Change is hard. You've handled this topic of childhood with calmness and clarity, and it has had a significant impact on the morale of the rest of the world. I can't thank you enough."

The article, namely expert column, is the most striking feature of ur magazine, directly linking to all the children and explaining precisely the course of action and reason behind them.

A suggestion is that there should be a balance between the number of Hindi and English articles in the magazine.

By- Poorna Chauhan
Age-24





Write To Us

If you have any suggestions, comments, ideas, please write to us:

aif.digitalmagazine@gmail.com

Anthropos India Foundation is a trust, since 2011 doing action and applied research. It is a foundation, which works for the social cause based on ethnographic research, skills and capacity building, advocacy, policy and social interventions. The purpose of the foundation is to bring positive change, especially in the lives of women and children. You can visit and to engage meaningfully, become member and access our e-resources and get notification of our programs, workshops, lectures series and research projects.

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childhood matters

— AIF Digital Magazine —

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