

SCHOOL LIVE

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The Bug Whisperer

Land of the Golden Pagoda

Plastic on Our Plates





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ed-note inside



April is a vibrant month of festivals in India, showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity. As winter transitions to summer, and the academic and financial years begin anew, April signals renewal. This year, the festive season kicked off with Eid, followed by Navratras, Rama Navami, Guru Tegh Bahadur Prakash Diwas, and Easter. India's unity in diversity is truly remarkable.

For students, the string of holidays at the start of the academic session, topped with the IPL season, is a welcome bonus. While some parents might lament the start-stop schedule, we're thrilled to celebrate with our students at every opportunity! Festivals bring people together, fostering a sense of community and joy.

On our cover this issue, we've captured the essence of the ongoing tariff war initiated by the US, a global conversation that may have far-reaching impacts. Our illustration highlights the potential ripple effects on economies worldwide, sparking important discussions. We hope the good outweigh the bad, especially for developing countries that look towards the West.

This issue is as fun-filled as always, making it the perfect travel companion for your holidays. Pack it along with your bags and enjoy the ride! With engaging articles, interesting features, and thought-provoking commentary, we're confident you'll find something that piques your interest.

Happy reading, and we hope you make the most of your break, which will probably come sooner than you expect, with the heat-wave catching up!

Hariharan Balagopal

• War? Again?

This time, we're talking about Tariff Wars - Trump's latest power play!

• What? SWOT?

Applying it to yourself may be the key to success!

• Way Abroad!

Following up on the previous issue's Gyan on studying abroad, we tackle the opportunities and processes. Flip to the Pathfinder section.

• Land Of The Golden Pagoda

Shaken, but not stirred! Let's understand the land that was recently rocked by an earthquake.

• Treasure-Hunt Alert!

Presenting the classic 'Treasure in the Forest' by H.G. Wells with a twist. Our classic storytelling continues.

• Plastic On Our Plates!

Did you know that microplastics invisible to the naked eye are taken up by plant roots and eventually end up in the fruits and vegetables we eat?

• Get Growing!

Growing a green thumb may be just the right thing for you. Here are some tips on how to go about it!

• Paw-Sitive Take!

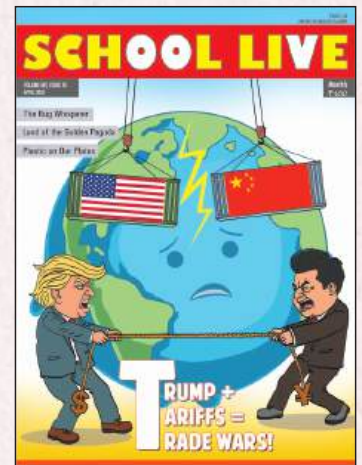
Booty and Boota have a thing or two to say about their two-legged friends! Check out their story!

• Flora Fatale!

Some flowers are mesmerizingly large, beautiful and fragrant but can be deadly.

**School Live has something for everyone.
Share with your friends and relatives!**

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SCHOOL LIVE - THE ONLY COMPLETE EDUTAINMENT MONTHLY FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS



**Mrs. Veena Mishra, Principal
National Victor Public School, Patparganj, Delhi**

The ongoing tariff war, triggered by US President Donald Trump's policies, holds significant implications for global trade and education. As the world watches with bated breath, questions arise about its impact on students, educational resources, and international student mobility. Will this lead to increased costs for educational materials? How will it affect students studying abroad? These are questions that warrant attention and discussion.

In our News Bytes section, we've curated important headlines from April, keeping you updated on current events. From politics to technology, these news snippets provide valuable peep into the world around us.

As India celebrated its vibrant festival season in April, we're reminded of the country's rich cultural diversity. From colorful practices to traditional sweets, each festival offers a unique glimpse into the nation's heritage. The festive atmosphere is infectious, and it's a great time to learn about different cultures and traditions.

Learning on the job is an invaluable experience. Starting as an intern or volunteer can help students develop practical skills, think critically, and apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings without the pressure to perform. This approach allows students to explore their interests, build confidence, and gain hands-on experience. By embracing this approach, students can become more enthusiastic about learning and develop a growth mindset.

Some schools have been pioneering innovative ideas since the 19th century. These institutions offer valuable insights into how education can be shaped and improved. By exploring these trailblazing schools,

we can gain a deeper understanding of what works and what doesn't in education.

Our Zany Ideas section features interesting and unconventional business concepts that showcase creative thinking. From quirky inventions to out-of-the-box solutions, this section is designed to inspire students to think differently and explore new possibilities.

The lighter vein pages include comic strips and humorous anecdotes, providing a break from academic seriousness. These engaging stories and illustrations will leave you smiling and refreshed. Laughter and humour are essential parts of the learning process, and we aim to bring a touch of humour to our readers.

The impact of microplastics on our environment and daily lives is a pressing concern. Reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainability are essential for a healthier planet. As we learn more about this problem, we can work towards making a positive impact on the environment.

We're retelling the classic story "Treasure in the Forest" by H.G. Wells, bringing this timeless tale to life for a new generation of readers. This story is a thrilling adventure that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

The beauty of Tanjore paintings, and rich African culture represented by colorful masks and intricate embellishments, showcase the world's diverse artistic heritage. These art forms are not just visually stunning but also carry significant cultural and historical value.

School Live is dedicated to igniting a passion for learning that lasts a lifetime. By expertly blending engaging content with academic rigour, it creates a balanced experience that resonates with readers of all ages. Through its diverse range of topics and articles, School Live makes learning fun, accessible, and enjoyable for students and families alike, fostering a community that values knowledge, creativity, and learning through reading.

Best Wishes !

Veena Mishra

Be a Leader!

BEING a leader is a lonely job. You have to face envy and admiration in equal measure. If you want to be a leader, try to develop all the qualities described below...it's hard, but then, no pain, no gain!

Rajeev always wanted to be class monitor, but every year it was his classmate Akshay whom the teacher chose. What was it about Akshay that put him ahead? Rajeev began observing him and this is what he found...

Confidence

Akshay believed in himself and his ability to lead the class to success. If the teacher announced any inter-class competition, Akshay would immediately say that they would win first prize! His confidence was infectious and made others believe in themselves too.

Energy

A leader does everything he asks his followers to do. He has boundless energy. Akshay would be the first to arrive for any practice and he would stay on longer than anyone else. He would overcome any obstacle quickly after consulting everyone. He was totally involved from start to finish.

Concern

Rajeev admired Akshay for not letting his position go to his head. He was always willing to listen to anyone who had a



problem and help him sort it out. He didn't try to boss over the rest of his classmates, especially the weaker ones, just because he was the monitor.

Sense of Duty

Akshay did not let anyone or anything come in the way of doing his duty. When others would suggest goofing off during practice, he would become angry. His sense of school spirit was such that he could sacrifice a family holiday for a competition.

Charisma

Akshay had that extra 'it' factor — charm — to add to his other leadership qualities. He was outgoing, usually cheerful, walked with a spring in his step and had a sense of humour.

Faith

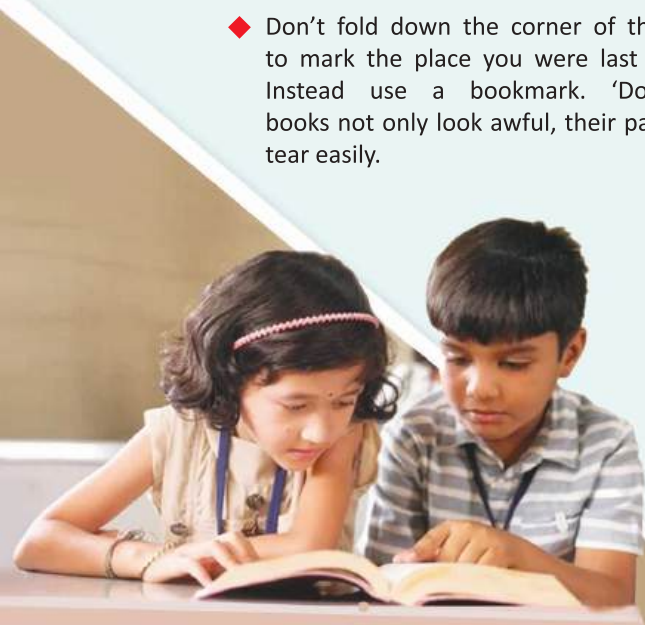
Above all, Rajeev found that Akshay had faith in himself, his classmates and his goal. His faith inspired everyone to put in his or her best.

Booked!

IN India, books are traditionally considered the symbol of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. In fact, it's taboo to let one's feet even accidentally touch a book. How can you make your books last for ages?

- ◆ Don't fold down the corner of the pages to mark the place you were last reading. Instead use a bookmark. 'Dog-eared' books not only look awful, their pages also tear easily.

- ◆ Never place an open book face down. It damages the spine and loosens the binding. The pages become filthy, too. Don't leave books open anyway.
- ◆ Folding books backwards is a strict no-no. Keep the book spread out flat on its back when reading, preferably on a table.
- ◆ Never, never, underline words and sentences or scribble in the margins — especially in library books. Not only does it spoil the book, but it also spoils the enjoyment of the next reader.
- ◆ A cardinal sin is tearing pages out or cutting out pictures from books. Remember, books are not *raddi*. They are meant to be cherished.
- ◆ Arrange books in a standing position, not one on top of the other. Use bookends if you have to keep books on your table.
- ◆ Don't wet your finger with spittle when turning the pages of a book. Yuck! That's awful! The correct way of turning pages is to lift each one gently from the bottom or top right hand corner.
- ◆ Are you reading while eating? Stop! Surely you don't want dal and oil spattering those pristine white pages.
- ◆ And last, but not the least, it is sensible to cover books with clear plastic or brown paper as soon as you buy them.



Knowledge Hub!



1. What does a fathometer measure?

- a. Speed of light
- b. Height of mountains
- c. Depth of water bodies

2. Which country's national flag features the Star of David?

- a. Iraq
- b. Israel
- c. USA

3. In which of these countries would you find the most members of the Masai tribe?

- a. New Zealand
- b. India
- c. Kenya

4. Name the manufacturer of the Dreamliner aircraft.

- a. General Electric
- b. Ford
- c. Boeing

5. What is a person who collects and studies currencies known as?

- a. Numismatist
- b. Philatelist
- c. Ornithologist

6. What was the venue of the Great Exhibition of 1851 held in London?

- a. Buckingham Palace
- b. Crystal Palace
- c. Kensington Palace

7. What is piccolo?

- a. Card game
- b. Type of cake
- c. Musical instrument

8. Which town in Tamil Nadu is famous for its halwa?

- a. Thanjavur
- b. Tirunelveli
- c. Salem

9. Who painted *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, also known as the 'Dutch Mona Lisa'?

- a. Claude Monet
- b. Vincent Van Gogh
- c. Johannes Vermeer

10. What is kale?

- a. A vegetable
- b. A fruit
- c. A lentil

11. Which constellation is known as the Little Bear?

- a. Ursa Major
- b. Ursa Minor
- c. Pleiades

12. What is the name of Ali Baba's brother?

- a. Cassim
- b. Abdul
- c. Cadir

13. What sport did 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh's wife Nirmal Kaur play?

- a. Basketball
- b. Volleyball
- c. Golf

14. What is a monotreme?

- a. Pouched mammal
- b. Egg-laying mammal
- c. Placental mammal

15. Which river forms Jog Falls in Karnataka?

- a. Narmada
- b. Sharavati
- c. Krishna

Answers: 1. Depth of water bodies 2. Israel 3. Kenya 4. Boeing 5. Numismatist 6. Crystal Palace 7. Musical instrument 8. Tirunelveli 9. Johannes Vermeer 10. A vegetable 11. Ursa Minor 12. Cassim 13. Volleyball 14. Egg-laying mammal. There are only two: the platypus and echidna. 15. Sharavati

KEY TO SUCCESS

Know Thyself!

Personal development is essential for self-improvement. To know what areas to focus on, there are various methods and tools that can be used.



What is SWOT?

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A SWOT analysis is one of the most widely adopted strategic planning tools used. It is a framework technique that identifies these aspects, carries out a fact-based analysis and provides a perspective on how to utilise this information for strategising. Though it began as a means of analysing businesses, SWOT is now used by non-profit organisations, governments and even individuals.

Origins

SWOT Analysis is usually attributed to Albert Humphrey and his team at the Stanford Research Institute. In the 1960s, they created a framework called the SOFT (satisfactory, opportunities, faults, threats) approach that used data from companies to do long-term future planning. This was later modified to SWOT. However, there has been some dispute on the origins of the tool, with some crediting Robert Franklin Stewart, and some citing Harvard Business School professors George Albert Smith Jr and C Roland Christensen from the 1950s as the originators.

Significance

The main purpose of a SWOT analysis is to identify and promote strengths, reduce weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities and plan ahead to minimise threats. It is designed to facilitate a realistic, fact-based, data-driven look at the performance, competition, risk and potential of an individual, an organisation, a product, an industry or a government.

A SWOT analysis is a comprehensive evaluation of relevant external and internal factors influencing these characteristics. Used carefully and

collaboratively, it can give insights on where one stands currently and help develop the right strategy for improvement and growth. It aids in identifying priorities, challenges assumptions, uncovers dangerous blind spots and enhances the decision-making process.

Writing a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT matrix is a 2 x 2 grid, with each of the four quadrants dedicated to listing the four elements of SWOT. This visual arrangement helps provide a quick overview. The SWOT table is often laid out with the internal factors at the top and the external factors on the bottom. Also, the items on the left side of the table are the more positive or favourable aspects,

while the items on the right are the negative or concerning elements. All the points under a particular heading may not be of equal importance, but they all represent key insights into the balance between advantages and disadvantages.

Strengths describe what one excels at and what separates one from the competition.

Weaknesses are areas where one needs to improve to achieve an optimum result.

Opportunities refer to favourable external factors that could give one a competitive advantage.

Threats allude to factors that have the potential to cause harm.

How to Do a SWOT Analysis

Step 1: Determine Scope

The analysis needs to have an objective and what one hopes to achieve at the end of the process.

Step 2: Gather Resources

Different datasets and various stakeholders may have to be involved in it.

Step 3: Compile Lists

Organise and visualise the findings. Come up with as many items as possible.

Step 4: Analyse Findings

Refine thoughts in each category. Look for patterns and connections. Focus on priorities. Consider the impact of each factor on the objective.

Step 5: Develop Strategy

Identify and evaluate a strategic plan to address the priorities, leverage strengths and opportunities and mitigate weaknesses and threats.

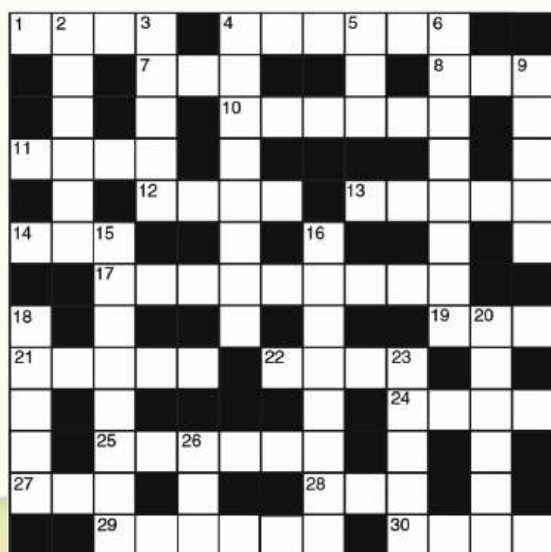
Step 6: Implement

Put the plan into action and regularly monitor and review it to make adjustments as needed.

Avoid

- ◆ Making lists that are too long.
- ◆ Failing to be objective and honest in the assessment.
- ◆ Conducting the analysis without input from necessary participants.
- ◆ Neglecting to prioritise the factors correctly.
- ◆ Treating it as a one-time exercise. It should be regularly updated to remain relevant.
- ◆ Relying on SWOT Analysis alone. It is one tool of many that need to be used.

Crossword



Across:

1. A sharp twist (4)
4. Attach; add on (6)
7. Short snooze (3)
8. Wheat-like hardy cereal plant (3)
10. Hire for job (6)
11. Group of political allies (4)
12. Type (4)
13. Panama's chief port (5)
14. Cut down (3)
17. Happenings (9)
19. Pointed end of a pen (3)
21. Arm of the sea (5)
22. Pretence (4)
24. Globes (4)
25. Indulge (6)
27. Foolish person (3)
28. Make a move (3)
29. Shout of excitement or delight (6)
30. Jedi master in Star Wars (4)

Down:

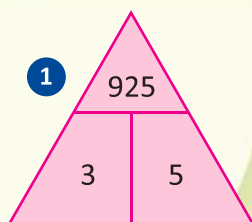
2. Inundation (6)
3. Talent (5)
4. Italian mountain chain (8)
5. Old unit of measurement (3)
6. Wash clothes without water (8)
9. Jet-black (5)
15. Brain disorder that causes fits (8)
16. Ancient Greek jars (8)
18. Popular Italian snack (5)
20. Mated within the same gene pool (6)
23. ___ Python: British comedy group (5)
26. Bite sharply (as of a dog) (3)

Answers:
Across: 1. Kink 4. Append 7. Nap 8. Rye 10. Employ 11. Bloc 12. Kind 13. Colon 14. Axe 17. Phenomena 19. Nib 21. Inlet 22. Sham 24. Orbs 25. Pander 27. Ass 28. Act 29. Wippee 30. Yoda
Down: 2. Influx 3. Knack 4. Apennine 5. Ell 6. Dryclean 9. Ebony 15. Epilepsy 16. Amphorae 18. Pizza 20. Inbred 23. Monty 26. Nip

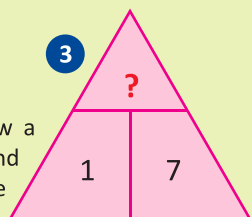
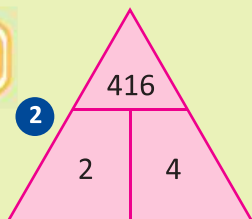
A Quick Think

1. What is it that you can keep after you give it to someone?
2. Two in a corner, one in a room, zero in a house, but only one in a shelter. What am I?
3. Paresh says he wants to meet Suresh. When Suresh asks him which day he is coming, he replies, "Tomorrow's yesterday; yesterday's tomorrow." Can you help me understand what he means?
4. Susan has as many brothers as sisters, but each brother has only half as many brothers as sisters. How many brothers and sisters does Susan have?
5. If two's company and three's a crowd, what are four and five?

B Count Right



The numbers in the triangles follow a logical order. Find out the order and replace the question mark with the correct number.



C Matchstick Fun

Can you move only one matchstick to make four triangles?



D Bottle Puzzle



I have two bottles of the same size. One is filled with water and the other one with milk. I empty the milk into a vessel, but it fills only three-fourth of the vessel. To fill the vessel completely, how much water do I need to pour from the other bottle—one-third, half or one-fourth?

Answers:
 A. 1. Your word 2. The letter 'r' 3. Paresh wants to meet Suresh today (both 'tomorrow's yesterday' and 'yesterday's tomorrow' refer to today). 4. Susan has three sisters and three brothers. 5. Nine
 Triangle 1: $3^2 = 9$ and $5^2 = 25$
 Triangle 2: $2^2 = 4$ and $4^2 = 16$
 So Triangle 3: $1^2 = 1$ and $7^2 = 49$
 C. One-third (Suppose the capacity of the vessel is 12 litres. Then $3/4$ th is 9 litres, which is the capacity of the bottle. Only 3 more litres are needed to fill the vessel, which is equal to $1/3$ rd the capacity of the bottle.)
 D. 149 Solution:

Bonding Moments

As teenagers begin to assert their independence and parents slacken their hold on them, the family drifts apart and the members know less and less of each other's daily lives. Here are some activities that will help in bonding parents with their teens.

Cook up a dish

Cooking is a wonderful way to spend a memorable time together. Choose a simple recipe. Get creative and allow room for modifications. Remember, the activity itself is more important than the end result.

Watch TV together

Parents are often sceptical about a mushy young romance or some dance reality show that their teens enjoy watching on TV. Rather than giving a big lecture on how one should watch meaningful programmes, try watching the programmes with your children occasionally. That will be a perfect bonding moment!



Solve a problem together

Teenagers are usually quite enthusiastic about trying out new things. Allow the teen to come up with a quick solution for a cracked window for instance, chipping in with your suggestions.

Take a vacation

Do not select a typical tourist spot with a long list of must-see attractions or worse, pass off a family wedding as vacation. As parents we tend to be overenthusiastic at times about showing our kids all the 'wonderful' things in life. But children's interest may lie elsewhere.

Also be open to the idea of your teen happily sleeping off the entire vacation! Make the most of your vacation by planning outdoor activities like bicycling, trekking up a hillside, slouching on the beach, or going to town to window shop and eat at an unusual place.

—M. J. Neela



Give Your Dreams Wings!

Pursuing studies abroad can not only be a fun and enriching experience but also help in one's personal and professional development, as students get to experience a different culture while gaining new perspectives.

DECIDING to study abroad is a big step for most people. It requires meticulous planning and one has to jump through several hoops before one can get on the outbound flight!

Course fees and the steep living costs abroad can be daunting, and many students struggle to cobble together the funds to fulfil their dreams. Fortunately, several foreign governments, universities and organisations abroad offer scholarships to support international students.

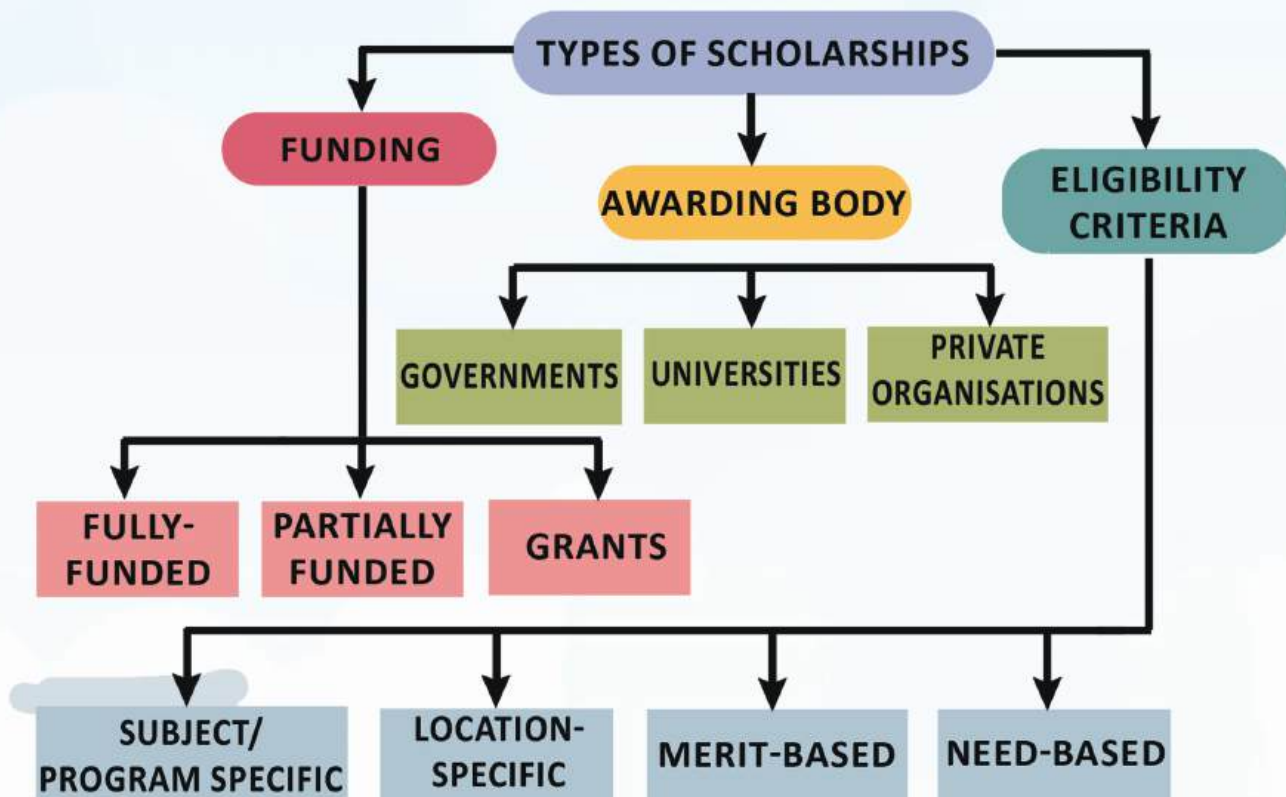
A World of Opportunities

There are various types of scholarships offered to students, depending on the extent of funding, the awarding body and

the eligibility criteria that stipulate who can apply for the scholarship.

Notwithstanding the new regulations enforced by many countries recently, universities around the world still value high-performing students, and hence offer numerous scholarships to attract the brightest minds.

While several universities offer individual scholarships for their own study programmes, there are some popular scholarships that are much sought-after. They usually cover the tuition fees, living costs, travel allowance and also medical expenses.



Postgraduate Scholarships

Let's look at some of the popular, fully-funded scholarships that support postgraduate study abroad.

Apart from the regular eligibility conditions such as completion of undergraduate studies, proficiency in English language, and academic performance, they also have specific criteria, some of which are mentioned below.

United Kingdom

Chevening Scholarship

Awarded by: British Government

Requires students to demonstrate leadership qualities and also commit to returning home for 2 years after the scholarship ends.

Commonwealth Scholarship

Awarded by: British Government

Requires students to demonstrate inability to self-fund the course.

British Council Scholarship for Women in STEM

Awarded by: British Council

Applicable to female students pursuing studies in the field of science.

Rhodes Scholarship

Awarded by: Rhodes Trust, University of Oxford

Applicable only for study at University of Oxford, and requires students to demonstrate academic excellence.

USA

Fulbright-Nehru Master's Fellowship

Awarded by: United States-India Educational Foundation

Requires students to demonstrate professional and community service experience.

Inlaks Shivdasani Scholarship

Awarded by: Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation

Requires students to demonstrate need for funding.

Australia

RTP Scholarship

Awarded by: Australian Government

Applicable only for Master's by research programmes.

The above list is by no means exhaustive and only provides a glimpse of some of the opportunities available to students to fund their international education. Apart from these, several Indian organisations also offer scholarships to meritorious students that help to supplement finances.

Give it your best shot!

Once you have made up your mind about what and where you want to study, it helps to break down the process of application for scholarship into small steps.

Research

Go through the scholarships offered in the country and university of your choice by searching online and make sure to visit the specific website of the awarding body to learn the eligibility criteria in detail. Social media and online forums can also provide you with valuable tips from students who have gone through the scholarship application process.

Preparing documents

After narrowing down on the scholarships, start putting together the required documents including academic transcripts, CV, financial proof, research proposal and your scholarship essay. Ensure that your essay is tailored to suit the specific institution that is awarding the scholarship.

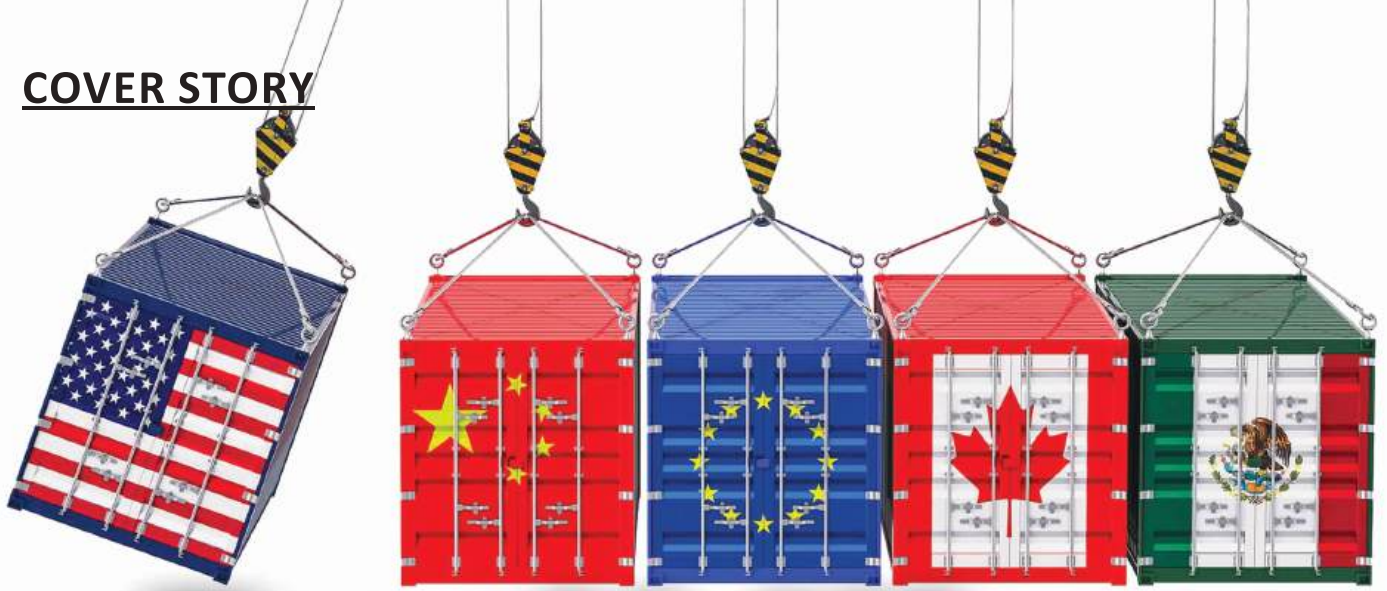
Submission and follow-up

It helps to prepare and submit the scholarship application before time so that you don't miss the deadline. Also keep a lookout for updates in order to take follow-up actions when necessary.

Although applying for a scholarship abroad may appear to be a lengthy process, the support it offers lightens the financial burden and helps students to focus on their academic programme.

—Radha Sundaresan





Tariff Wars



US President Donald Trump announced a raft of tariffs on almost every country in the world on April 2...

TAXES on products that are traded from one country to another are called tariffs, or customs duties. They are typically calculated as a percentage of the value of the goods. Governments commonly impose tariffs on companies that import products into their country in order to generate revenue and to protect local businesses and promote the use of domestic products.

On April 2, what he termed 'Liberation Day', President Trump introduced a range of 'reciprocal' tariffs including a 10 per cent baseline tax on nearly all imports entering the US and higher rates for nations that export more to the US than they import from it. The tariffs have been implemented through an executive order, bypassing Congress. Tariffs levied by other nations on the US have not been factored into this calculation. Trump claims this will encourage local consumers to buy American-made goods, boosting the country's economy, while increasing the amount of tax raised.

More than 180 countries have been impacted by the sweeping tariffs. China was one of the hardest hit since the total tariff levied against it was initially 54 per cent. Many Southeast



Asian countries are similarly affected. India is facing a 26 per cent tariff.

One of the highest tariffs has been imposed on Lesotho, a tiny African country. Trump has also slapped tariffs on Heard and McDonald Islands, a sub-Antarctic Australian territory which is inhabited only by penguins! Russia seems to be the only country to have escaped tariffs.

Global markets have been affected by the announcement, with stocks suffering their worst fall since the COVID pandemic in 2020. The tariffs could knock the economies of many nations off course. Americans also rely on many of these countries for consumer goods, machinery, electrical goods, textiles, jewellery and pharmaceuticals. Economists feel that the average American household will now have to pay more as businesses pass on at least some of their increased costs to customers. The price of goods manufactured in the US using imported components may also rise.

Nations are calling the tariffs a major blow to the world economy. Many countries are questioning the long-term effect of the US trade policies and have decided to take countermeasures to safeguard their own rights and interests. Experts warn that Trump's tariffs could lead to a global trade war as affected countries retaliate with increased tariffs against the US.

The World Trade Organization has warned of a major dip in global trade amid fears of a recession.

Tit for Tat

President Trump's tariffs got a strong response from China, who hit back with retaliatory tariffs of 125 per cent on the US and export restrictions. The US administration accused China of deliberately restricting export of vital high-tech materials, including gallium, germanium, and antimony — elements critical for the military, aerospace, and semiconductor industries. This comes in addition to China suspending exports of six heavy rare earth metals and rare earth magnets, tightening the grip on components essential to global supply chains.

Amid escalating tension, China now faces up to 245 per cent tariffs on imports into the US with the exclusion of smartphones, computer monitors and other electronics. Although 75 countries have initiated discussions with Washington to resolve disputes and avoid tariffs, China has not been among them.

Experts point out that Trump's tariffs will reduce the long-run GDP of the US by about 6% and wages by 5%. A middle-income household would face a \$22,000 lifetime loss. Tariffs could drive up US healthcare costs and hamper the affordability of medication as they have the potential to impact the availability of pharmaceutical products.

A shortage of semiconductor chips is also one of the fallouts of the war.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has sued the Trump administration, challenging the president's authority to impose sweeping tariffs that have set off a global trade war. The state has the fifth-largest economy globally that depends on major trade relationships with China, Mexico and Canada.



Learning on the Job



One of the most popular ways of gaining experience in one's chosen field of work is by becoming either an intern or volunteer...

What is volunteering?

Volunteering is a freely chosen offer to help a group or company with your time and labour. The position is usually unpaid. It can be related to your field of expertise like education, medicine, engineering, language, etc. However, it can also be an off-the-cuff activity, such as providing emergency rescue, distributing food to the homeless, teaching the underprivileged, etc.

Benefits of volunteering

Develops soft skills

When volunteering you meet different people. You develop your communication skills, work in a team and deal with problems on the ground rather than from behind a screen. It demands keenness, adaptability,

and versatility, since the work can be dynamic.

Connects to the community

Since volunteering is freely given, it develops altruism and a sense of connection to the community, outside of your family and college.

Improves confidence

Providing assistance to strangers makes you more comfortable being with people of all kinds. This eventually develops your confidence to face the real world as you step out from the academic bubble.

Flexibility

Nothing binds you to the job but your own will, and you can leave if the work is something you cannot do or prefer not to.

Psychological benefits

Volunteer work can combat stress, anxiety and anger and improve your mood. It gives you a sense of purpose, especially if you are feeling lost or confused about the future.

Slow transition

For those who do not want to immediately step into the professional world, volunteering can be a stepping stone. You can get an idea of how things work, but at the same time not be under pressure to choose a career pronto. It also helps you think carefully about decisions you will eventually have to make.

What is an internship?

An internship is a professional, but temporary work opportunity. It is related to your field of expertise. It's a 'practice job' to prepare you for a full-time career. Internships can be paid or unpaid.

Benefits of an Internship

Puts theory into practice

An internship translates academic knowledge into practice in the real world. Due to first-hand experience, the learned theories and terms finally make sense. Moreover, it also discloses gaps in your knowledge that you were previously unaware of.

Develops professional skills

Soft skills like communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc. can be taught, but in the professional world, these skills are sharpened. You are faced with unexpected challenges, pulled out of your comfort zone, made to work together as a team and develop a professional work ethic.

An insider's view

While working as an intern, you get the inside scoop on what is happening in your field of expertise. You learn how a company functions from its daily operations, meetings and workshops. You also get familiar with work trends and work culture, and learn the unwritten rules that are to be followed.

Professional guidance

Being an intern allows you to learn from professionals with years of experience. They can eventually become your career mentors who can guide you through the initial steps in the work space. They can give you feedback on your strengths and weaknesses, point out things to look out for and what to look forward to in the future. They may even agree to give you references when you apply for another job.

Testing times

An internship is a great chance to discover the environment or job that suits your temperament. Since these are short-term opportunities, you can try different sectors in your field to see what you like best. After working hands-on, your choice of career may change.

Smooth transition

Interning helps you transition gradually from the academic world into a professional one. It gives you a sneak peek of the work place. In the future, when you do get a full-time job, you would be already familiar with the work ethics and would find it easier to settle in.

Resume enrichment

The time spent in internship helps you build your resume, so you are more likely to be chosen since you have a bit of experience. You may even be offered a higher salary because of it. Moreover, the company you're interning for may choose you instead of hiring new people, since you're already familiar with the workplace.

Whether you choose to volunteer or intern, both help you develop as a person and prepare you for life ahead. You catch a glimpse of what may be in store, so you can make an informed decision.

—Josephine Moses



NEWS BYTES



Grapplers' Glory

INDIA won 10 medals at the 2025 Senior Asian Wrestling Championship in the Jordanian capital Amman, putting up strong performances in freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling. Manisha Bhanwala won the only gold medal for India in the women's 62 kg weight division. Deepak Punia, Udit and U23 world champion Reetika Hooda won silver medals. The Indian contingent returned home with one gold, three silver and six bronze medals.

Homegrown TB Test

SCIENTISTS at Thiruvananthapuram-based Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology have developed and tested a novel, cost-effective molecular test with high sensitivity and specificity for early diagnosis of tuberculosis (TB). The real-time LAMP (rt-LAMP) assay was able to detect TB DNA even when only 10 copy numbers were present per microlitre in a sample. The test utilises inexpensive dyes and results can be obtained in 20 minutes.



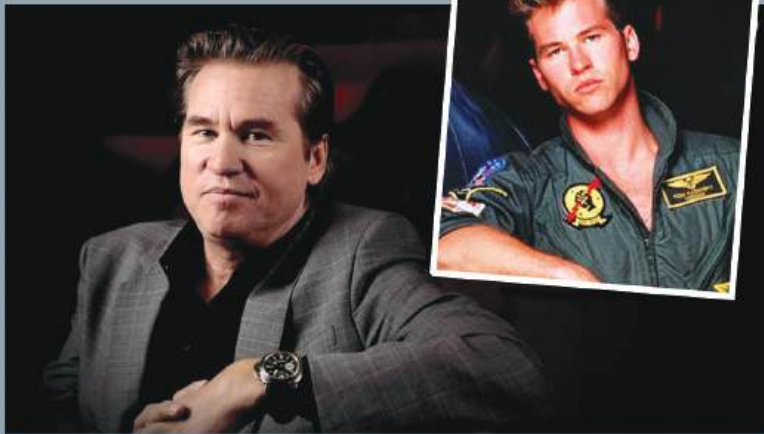
A Never-ending War

COMING up on 1,150 days, intense fighting continued with Russia capturing some areas in eastern Ukraine. Russia reportedly began a new spring offensive with increased attacks across many frontlines. The US has made futile attempts to broker a peace deal between the two warring nations.

Star Exits

BOLLYWOOD lost veteran actor Manoj Kumar on April 4, at age 87. Popularly known as Bharat Kumar for his strong portrayal of patriotic characters, his career spanned four decades and 55 films. He died of chronic heart-related complications.





Hollywood's Val Kilmer passed away on April 1, aged 65. The actor is remembered for many iconic roles and acted in 66 films. He died of pneumonia and respiratory failure.

All that Glitters

THE world's largest gold deposit was found in Central China by geologists. Worth 78 billion Euros, the supergiant deposit in the Hunan Province is estimated to contain over 1,000 metric tonnes of high-quality ore in over 40 distinct veins at depths of approximately 2,000 to 3,000 metres.



Revolutionising Space Travel

UK-BASED space technology pioneer Pulsar Fusion announced a ground-breaking invention — its cutting-edge Sunbird nuclear fusion rocket. The rocket aims to reduce travel time to Mars to just four months. At an impressive theoretical speed of 500,000 km per hour, it would potentially be the fastest self-propelled spacecraft ever engineered. Pulsar founder Richard Dinan said that they hope to carry out the first orbital tests of the Sunbird in 2027.

Happy Days

IN the World Happiness Report 2025, India is ranked 118th out of 147 countries. This marks an improvement from its 126th position last year. Finland leads the board for the eighth consecutive year with other Nordic countries following closely behind. The International Day of Happiness was celebrated on March 20.

MURDER MOST FOUL

As the April month was progressing with gaiety and celebrations following a series of festivals, the horrific terrorist attack at the scenic valley of Pahalgam, Kashmir, has shaken the whole country. On a busy day, terrorists emerged from the forests and opened fire on innocent tourists in the Baisaran meadow, killing 26 people, including 25 tourists and a local pony ride operator who died shielding a tourist. The terrorists targeted tourists, shooting them in cold blood, and disappeared into the forest after a 10-minute massacre. Baisaran Meadows, often referred as the Mini Switzerland for its breathtaking views and scenic beauty, has been scarred like never before.

The attack has sparked widespread outrage and condemnation, with many calling for swift action against those responsible. People from all walks of life have come together to express their grief and solidarity with the victims' families.

The Indian government is working hard to bring those responsible to justice and ensure the safety of its citizens. The authorities are also taking steps to prevent such incidents in the future and to provide support to the affected families. The international community has condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the victims and their families.

Pahalgam, a popular tourist destination, has been affected by terrorism in the past. However, the recent attack has once again highlighted the need for increased vigilance and security measures in the region. The government and security agencies are working tirelessly to ensure the safety of tourists and locals alike. Our thoughts and prayers are with the innocent lives lost in this tragic attack.

We must stand strong in the face of this tragedy, united in our resolve to promote peace and stability.

--- Editorial Team

Sensational Shreyanka!

BENGALURU'S Shreyanka Patil is the new star in the making in Indian cricket. Just twenty-two years old, she already has a huge fan following in the country.

From a young age, Shreyanka was drawn to cricket. Her father, Rajesh, who ran a cricket academy and now owns a sports store, was her inspiration. But her journey wasn't all smooth sailing. At the tender age of 17, Shreyanka faced a daunting setback—a serious back injury that kept her away from the game for two long years. But did that stop her? Not for a moment!

Determined to bounce back stronger, Shreyanka worked tirelessly. She found solace in her passion for the game, even playing with a hanging ball when she couldn't hit the nets. Her hard work paid off when she returned to the field, winning hearts with her stellar performances and even winning an award for the best spell of the year!

Her journey to the top was peppered with remarkable achievements.

From captaining the under-16 Karnataka team to being recognised as one of the finest emerging bowlers in domestic cricket, Shreyanka's rise was unstoppable. Her superb performances in club matches, like taking 6 wickets for just 4 runs, when playing against Swastik Union Cricket Club, made her a household name in the state.

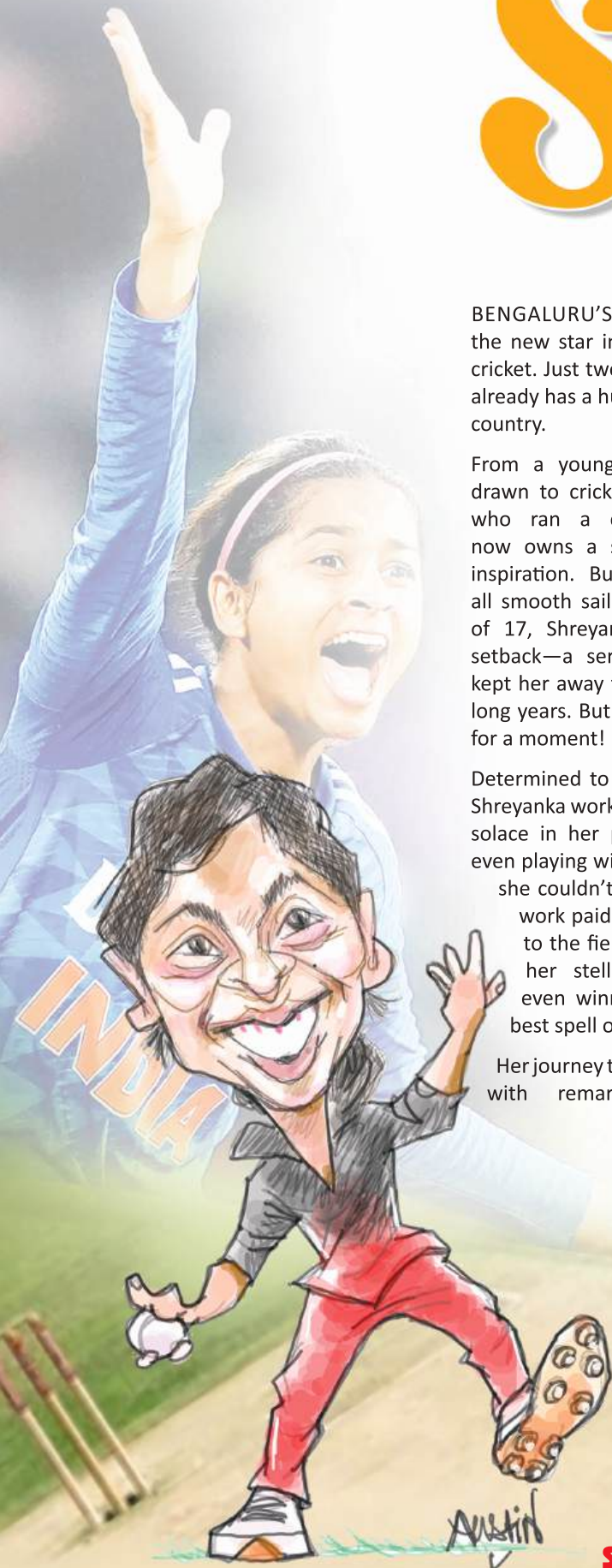
Shreyanka's talent shone bright in the 2022–23 BCCI's Senior Women's ODI Tournament, where she emerged as the second-highest wicket-taker with an impressive tally of 20 wickets. Soon she was donning the prestigious RCB jersey in the Women's Premier League. With a handsome salary from BCCI and a lucrative sponsorship deal, Shreyanka was living her dream!

And just when you thought her story couldn't get any better, she received the ultimate call-up—representing the Indian women's team in the T20 series against England!

Cricket isn't her only love. Shreyanka has a knack for dancing and a sweet tooth for chocolate fudge. And guess what? She admires none other than the cricket maestro, Virat Kohli!

Shreyanka's journey is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance and dedication. For one so young, she carries a mature head on her shoulders and it won't be too long before she becomes an international sensation. Best wishes to the young, bubbly Shreyanka!

—Austin Coutinho



Out of the Box

There many examples around the globe of how some schools are redefining what education means...

St. Johann Primary School, Switzerland

The school was built in 1888 in Basel in the Neo-Renaissance style. Design studio ZMIK reconstructed the three main corridors into multi-functional spaces for learning and recreation. Called Learning Scapes, they are spread across three floors and are designed to let in as much daylight as possible. The architects also used natural materials.

Each corridor is divided into five different zones. Two cloakrooms at either end of the corridor provide a buffer between the inner corridor and the staircase. Two terraced learning landscapes are positioned alongside the windows behind zigzagging slats. They are each filled with interactive and playful elements such as bouncy stepping-stones and



lookouts that form a landscape for children to explore during lessons. Slides, balancing beams and bouncy balls support the concept of 'dynamic lessons'.

The open central space is occupied by the recreational area. The space also includes imaginative areas for privacy such as a cave-like room with a curtain, and alcoves with desk spaces for group and individual study.

Playschool, Georgia

Gari Chapidze, the rector of the Institute of Georgian-Ukrainian Social Relations, wanted to create a kindergarten where children would enter happily and not want to leave. So he decided to make one in an aeroplane!

He bought an old but fully functional Yakovlev Yak-42 from Georgian Airways and transported it to Rustavi. The plane's interior was refurbished over the course of a few months with educational equipment, games and toys. The original seats were pulled out and replaced by pint-sized tables and chairs, but the cockpit instruments were left intact so they could be used as play tools. It was transformed into a space that stimulated the senses and engaged the children.



The children are attracted to the 1500 buttons in the aeroplane's cockpit and like to amuse themselves with the headphones and intercoms. The high-up vantage point gives them a new perspective. The children play and learn on board and hopefully develop an interest in technology and technical skills. Currently, the kindergarten accommodates 20 students, but there is an ever-growing waiting list.



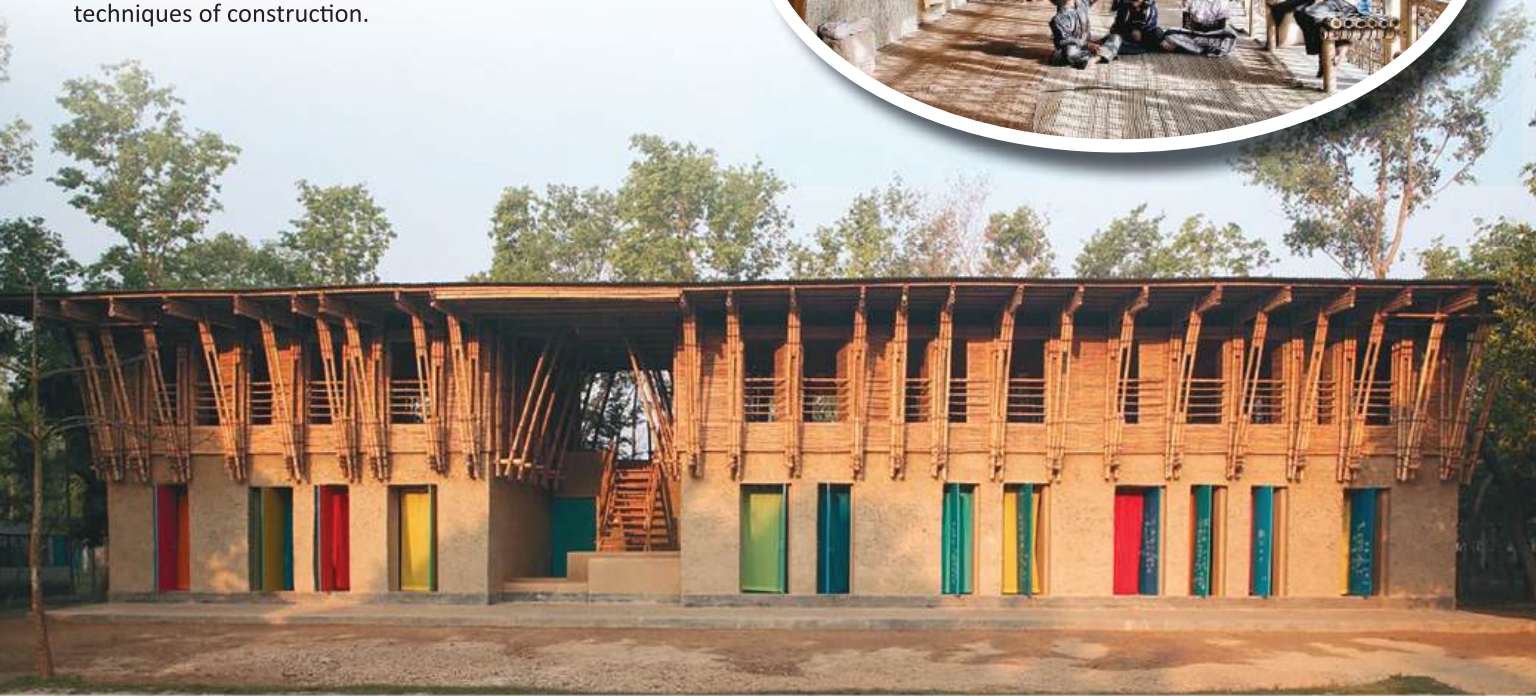
METI School, Bangladesh

NGO Dipshikha helps rural populations in Bangladesh improve their quality of life to discourage them from migrating to cities. As part of their development programmes, they planned a special school concept. The philosophy of METI (Modern Education and Training Institute) is learning with joy. METI aims to promote individual abilities and interests in an open form of learning. It keeps in mind the different learning speeds of children.

The innovative school building in the village of Rudrapur was built by hand in four months by local craftsmen, pupils, parents and teachers. It was designed by architects Anna Heringer from Austria and Eike Roswag from Germany. They put to work the skills of local labourers, teaching them new techniques of construction.

Materials such as loam and straw were combined with bamboo sticks and nylon lashing to shape ground-floor classrooms and play caves for students. A second storey had earthen floors and walls of bamboo latticework. Local fabrics in bright colours were used in the decor.

The project promotes sustainability by utilising local materials and labour.



The Treasure in the Forest

A story by H.G.Wells

ONE night, Evans and Hooker had come upon three Chinese men discussing something in whispers. The two Englishmen were vagabonds, stranded on a Far East Asian island when the ship on which they had stowed away had sailed without them. The Chinese were conversing in pidgin English and from the fragments they could understand, Evans and Hooker deduced that one of them had found a treasure.

The story was that a Spanish galleon carrying gold ingots had been wrecked near an uninhabited island off the Philippines over two centuries before. The sailors had buried the treasure on a nearby island planning to return for it later but had disappeared, never to be seen again.

One of the Chinamen around the fire called Chang-hi had come upon the treasure when he had anchored at the island a year before in search of water. He had seen a river and had walked toward it when he stumbled on the chest of ingots. He had reburied the treasure carefully and now he wanted their help to retrieve it.

Chang-hi had produced a map and the three men had been poring over it when Evans and Hooker had attacked. The other two had run away, but they managed to overpower and kill Chang-hi though the Chinaman had been strong and had resisted. In the end, incomprehensibly, he had grinned, a malicious and evil grin. Evans had been taken aback and, paddling towards the island in the canoe, he thought back to how eagerly they had opened the map. It had been a rough drawing and the paper had been folded and re-folded so many times, it was falling apart. The outline of the bay had been drawn and the gap in it leading to the reef and beyond it, the thin twisting line of the river.

Now Hooker opened the map and pointed. "Look, here is the reef and here is the gap."

"That curved line is the river. God! How thirsty I am! I could do with a drink," replied Evans. "It's so blazing hot."

"See this dotted line that runs from the reef to a clump of palm trees. He's marked the spot with a star where the line cuts the river. We must mark the spot when we go into the lagoon."

"What I can't understand are all these little dashes, pointing this way and that," said Evans. "And there's something written here; must be in Chinese."

The canoe had drifted close to the island.

"It's your turn to row," said Evans giving the paddle to Hooker. He lay back and fell into a stupor brought on by the heat and the raging thirst. He dreamed of heaps of gold. Suddenly, the gold turned into a roaring furnace and Chang-hi appeared, transformed into a devil with a huge black tail. He began screaming, "Evans, Evans you sleepy fool..."

Evans awoke and saw that they were in the mouth of the lagoon.

"There are the three palm trees, in line with those bushes. We must keep to a straight line."

They could see the lagoon opening out into the river.

"Hurry up, man!" said Evans. "Give me the paddle. I am so thirsty I might start drinking sea water."

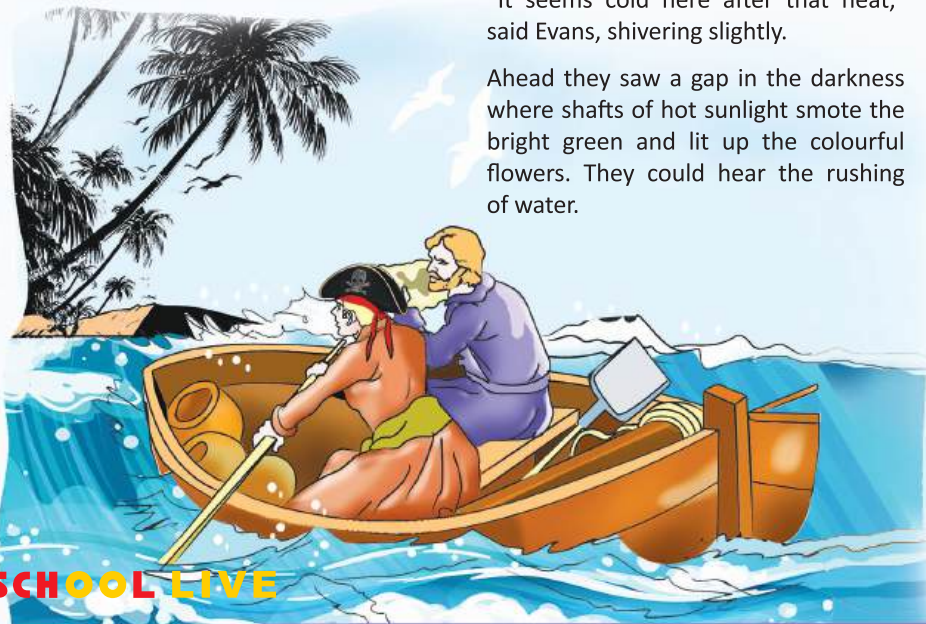
He began rowing furiously and the minute they were in the river, he cupped his hands in it almost falling out of the boat in the process. He gulped great handfuls of the water and so did Hooker. They pulled the canoe up the beach and Hooker took out a native digging implement.

"We must strike straight through the jungle till we find the river again," said Hooker.

It was tough going at first as they pushed through the reeds, broad ferns and thickets of small trees. However, soon the trees became taller, stretching massive trunks to the canopy far above, and the ground opened up. Rope-like creepers hung down from the trees and waxy white flowers grew on their stems. The shadows enveloped them and the temperature dropped several degrees.

"It seems cold here after that heat," said Evans, shivering slightly.

Ahead they saw a gap in the darkness where shafts of hot sunlight smote the bright green and lit up the colourful flowers. They could hear the rushing of water.



"We should be close to the spot now," said Hooker. "Chang-hi said he had marked it with a heap of stones."

They walked slowly, keeping a cautious eye on the surroundings. Suddenly Evans stopped.

"What's that thing down there?" he exclaimed.

They ran forward until the thing became the blue-suited figure of a Chinaman lying face down on the ground. He was unmistakably dead, his face and feet purple and swollen. The body lay in a clearing. Next to it was a spade and further away, a disturbed pile of stones near a freshly-dug hole.

"Someone has beaten us to it," said Hooker.

Evans began to curse and rave. Hooker went closer to the hole and then stopped with an exclamation.

"It's all right Evans! It's still here. The treasure's here." He turned and looked at the dead Chinaman and again at the hole.

Evans hurried up. In the hole lay a number of dully-glinting yellow bars. He bent down and with his bare hands cleared away the soil and hauled out one of the heavy ingots. As he did so, he felt the sharp prick of a thorn. He pulled it out, and weighed the bar in his hand.

"It's the treasure all right!" he said excitedly. "It's all ours now!"

Hooker cast a puzzled look at the Chinaman.

"It seems like he stole a march on the others, came here alone and was killed by a venomous snake. But how did he find the place without a map?"

"Why do you care so much?" Evans said. "We have to find a way to take all this stuff to the mainland and bury it in a safe place there. How shall we get it to the canoe?"

He removed his jacket and spread it on the ground. He threw two or three ingots in it. Another thorn pricked him and he pulled it out with a grunt of annoyance.

"We can only carry so much," he said. Then he snapped with sudden irritation.



"What are you staring at Hooker? Help me!"

"I don't like it, Evans," said Hooker gazing fearfully around. "The dead man reminds me too much of..."

"Rubbish! All Chinese men look alike," replied Evans.

Hooker glanced at the forest around them. His eyes travelled again to the blue-clad figure.

"I want to bury the body and then take out the gold," he said. "It gives me the creeps."

"Don't be a fool Hooker," said Evans angrily. "Come on, help me."

Hooker took hold of one end of the coat and Evans the other and they lifted the load. They had taken just a few steps when Evans stopped, staggering a little.

"My arms ache with all that paddling. It's queer."

They put the jacket down. Evans' face was white and dripping sweat.

"It's really stuffy in here," he said. Then with a sudden burst of anger, "What good is it waiting here all day? Lend me a hand, I say."

Hooker looked at him keenly, and then lifted his end of the jacket again. They went a hundred yards before Evans flung the coat away from him and clutched his throat. He staggered to a tree and leaned against it. After a moment he slid down, groaning.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Hooker.

"Don't come near me!" said Evans. "Put the gold back on the coat. I will be better in a while."

As Hooker picked up the ingots, he felt a prick on his thumb. A slender two-inch-long thorn poked out his skin. He pulled it out.

Evans' face twisted with pain and his hands clenched convulsively. He cried out and then he rolled over and lay still.

Hooker stared at Evans and then at the thorn with dawning horror. He looked back at the clearing where the Chinaman lay. A chill ran down his spine as the meaning of the little dashes on the map became clear.

The thorns were the poisonous ones the Dyak tribe of Borneo used as darts in their blowpipes. He sucked feverishly and uselessly at his thumb. Soon, a feeling of heaviness crept down his arms and legs. He could no longer stand. A mist descended over his eyes. The last thing he saw was a white flower. It floated down from the canopy and came to rest on one of the scattered ingots.



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The second part in our aviation careers series...



Aviation Manager

Aviation management focuses on the supervision and direction of operations within the aviation sector. These range from the management of operations of airline companies, planning and control of aircraft movement to the maintenance of aircraft and supervision of safety measures.

The profession is mainly about facilitating improved movement of people and goods such as the management of airports, ground activities and time. Aviation managers oversee all aspects of customer service, respond to passengers' grievances and provide good service delivery — from ticketing to baggage claims. They are equipped with a comprehensive grasp of operational procedures, safety protocols and regulatory compliances essential for airports and airlines.

After completing Class 12, a BSc or BBA in Aviation Management provides a solid foundation suitable for the aviation industry. One may also pursue an MBA or MSc in Aviation Management for leadership positions. Additional certifications from esteemed organisations like the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Airport Authority of India (AAI) give candidates a thorough understanding of aviation management fundamentals, standards and best practices.

Ground Staff

Customer service agents, baggage handlers, cargo operations and flight coordinators — these comprise the ground personnel.

They manage the check-in, baggage handling, boarding procedures, security procedures, passenger handling and customer assistance. They ensure seamless airport operations on the ground. These jobs tend to be fast paced and dynamic, with an opportunity to work with diverse teams.

Eligibility is Class 12 in any stream. Some colleges also accept CUET and other entrance exam scores. One can pursue a Diploma in Airport Ground Services from various aviation training institutes and a certificate course in Airport Ground Handling offered by the AAI. The duration of the courses varies from 6 to 12 months. BBA or MBA in Airport Management is required for higher positions. These courses take two to four years. Candidates are usually required to be between 18 and 27 years old. However, this can vary by airline and specific job role.



Air Traffic Controller

They use computers, radar or visual references to monitor and direct aircraft in the sky and ground traffic at the airport. They communicate effectively with pilots and give clearance for landing, take-off, as well as guide the aircraft to correct taxi positions on runways.

They analyse weather forecasts, determine air routes for aircraft movement, track and guide aircraft at different altitudes and help pilots navigate the airspace between airports. They control runway lighting and monitor all communications in and out of the flight tower. They also may handle emergency situations and organise searches for missing airplanes.

Once they complete Class 12 in the Science stream, candidates can pursue an engineering degree in Electronics or Telecommunication. Some students complete their bachelor's degree in Physics or Maths before pursuing MTech. They then need to clear the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) entrance exam held by the AAI every year,

after which they undergo a year-long training at one of their centres before obtaining an ATC license from the Indian Civil Aviation Authority. Passing the medical fitness exam as well as having a fluent grasp of English are essential.



Flight Instructors

They are highly skilled aviation professionals who teach and train aspiring pilots to become proficient in flying passenger aeroplanes, helicopters and other aircraft. They are responsible for screening pilot candidates and preparing the course curricula for students with various levels of flying experience. They provide comprehensive ground and flight training to students, which includes teaching them about the technical aspects of flying, navigation and safety protocols. They provide detailed instruction via on-the-ground classes, in simulators or during live flights. They may also examine students for proficiency and help them prepare for the pilot's license test required by the DGCA (Directorate-General of Civil Aviation).

A valid commercial pilot license (CPL) or airline transport pilot license (ATPL) is a basic requirement for flight instructors. After completing the prescribed amount of flight hours and passing the relevant medical examination, candidates can then enrol in a course to earn their flight instructor license via an Instructor Rating endorsement. This involves additional training such as 20 hours of patten flying as well as a written and oral test conducted by the DGCA.

("Patter" is the language used by flying instructors while demonstrating training exercises in the air. It is a special language which must be precisely co-ordinated with control movements and absolutely clear.)



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In Quest of Life's Meaning



"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."



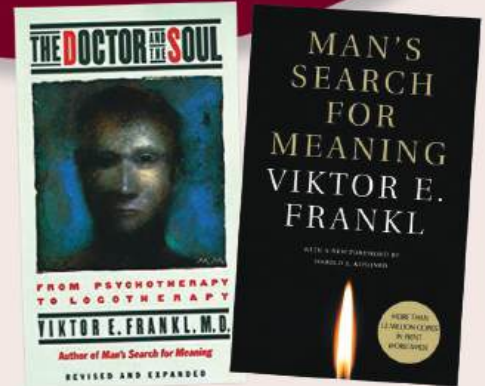
VIKTOR FRANKL was an Austrian neurologist and psychologist who developed a school of therapy called 'logotherapy'. (*Logos* is the Greek word for 'meaning'.) Its basis is that the primary motivation of any individual is the search for meaning in life; the primary purpose of logotherapy, thus, is to help the person find that meaning.

Born in 1905 in Vienna, Frankl had certain life experiences that caused him to live out his ideas. Being a Jew, he and his family were targeted by the Nazis and put in concentration camps. On his first day in the camps, he lost all his belongings and was forced to surrender a cherished manuscript.

He lived under the constant threat of being killed. After three years, he and other prisoners were liberated by the Allied forces in 1945. Unfortunately, his parents, brother and wife had perished in the camps.

On his return to Vienna, he re-wrote the manuscript which he had lost — *The Doctor and the Soul* (1945). The next year, he dictated his best-known book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, in nine days and published it anonymously, with only his prisoner number on the cover. The book went on to sell 16 million copies in 52 languages.

His material was drawn mainly from his experiences as a concentration camp inmate. When faced with such brutal conditions, he realised that he had a strong desire to help people overcome suffering. So, he rendered psychological help to fellow prisoners and jotted down notes remembered from his lost manuscript (some of which formed the raw material for *Man's Search for Meaning*).



With his insights into human nature and free will, he helped many of his patients overcome problems ranging from job dissatisfaction to terminal illness. He believed that the greatest human achievement was not success but facing an unchangeable destiny with courage.

Frankl went on to head the Neurology Department of the Policlinic Hospital, Vienna. After moving to the US in the 1960s, he held visiting professorships at Harvard and other US universities. He wrote more than 30 books, including an autobiography.

He died of heart failure in 1997.

WHAT IS EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY?

IT is a scientific discipline that combines the science of psychology with evolutionary biology. Evolutionary psychologists seek to explain people's thoughts, emotions, behaviour, likes and dislikes in the same way that evolutionary biologists try to explain an organism's physical features. After all, the human brain, like other physical organs, is a product of evolution.

A common nightmare experienced by most people is falling from a great

height. Evolutionary psychologists argue that this type of dream stems from a time in our evolutionary past when we would have slept high up in trees away from nocturnal predators. Our ancestors would have strongly feared falling from a tree at the time, a fear that is still deeply rooted in our minds.

A common problem faced by people today is that they find it hard to resist sweet and fattening foods even

though they know it's not good for them, especially if they are already overweight. Also many dislike bitter substances, even if they are beneficial, such as medicines. What is the explanation for these preferences? Evolutionary psychologists say that in prehistoric times, when food was scarce, a preference for high-energy foods (e.g. ripe fruit) increased the chances of survival. Similarly, natural poisons have a bitter taste; hence we have evolved to dislike bitter things.

Booty and Boota to the Rescue



“BE nice!” I growled at Boota, my slightly stupid brother. The fool bared his teeth like the two-legged ones, who do that when they are nice to each other or us. Maybe because they don’t seem to have waggable tails, poor things!

“No!!” I jumped at Boota. “Not like them, you fool! They get scared when we do that! Look...like this,” I said and showed him how I widen my eyes, bat my eyelids, wag my tail and look cute.

Boota copied me well, but got carried away and rolled over with his four paws in the air! He couldn’t look stupider but the little humans were laughing—so it must be good!

I rolled over too.

“Oooh!” cried Priya. “Aren’t they cute! Here, puppies! Who wants a bishkitt!”

She turned to the taller, sterner lady with her. “Mummy! Can I give them a biscuit? They are soooo cute!” she pleaded.

“Okay, but just drop them or they may bite!” said the lady.

As if we didn’t know better than to bite the hand that feeds us!

The girl gave us bishkitts—crunchy, sweet, ooh, they were heavenly! I could have eaten many more of them. We had hardly begun when the girl was flapping the packet and saying, “See, no more, no more, you ate them all!”

“Let’s go to that old man’s house,” Boota whined, “where Mum used to take us.”

I pulled his ear and tried to lick the bishkitt crumbs off his face. “I don’t much like him.”

“But I’m still hungry!” he barked.

So was I, and we decided to take a chance. We raced and stood on our hind legs and peered across his gate. He saw us.

“Shoo! Shoo!” he said, charging towards us, his big belly wobbling. “Go away!”

We widened our eyes, looked cute and wagged our tails hard.

He turned around and what was that in his hands?

A long, sturdy stick!

Boota, the idiot, was still wagging his tail, but I remembered Mum’s warning,

‘Run when you see them with a stone or a stick!’

“Whoa! Run!” I barked at him and sped away as fast as I could. And then I heard Boota’s loud, pained yelp and looked back.

I couldn’t believe my eyes—the man had actually hit my brother! Limping and yelping, Boota ran towards me.

“Why did he do that?” whimpered Boota, licking his poor leg.

“Mum told us, remember? He is one of those evil humans!” I licked his nose and gave him the bigger piece of a roti I’d found.

“We didn’t even do anything,” he whined while nibbling at it.

We snuggled together and went to sleep under the wooden bench in the park. I kept my paws crossed and hoped it wouldn’t start raining. Then we would have to go under one of the cars—which I had learnt were safe until humans got inside them and they started making the scary ‘rrrrrrrr’ sound and moving. We preferred the bench.

“Whoop! Whoop! Whoop!”

I woke with a start.

Monkeys! In a huge horde!

Boota, in his excitement, forgot his hurt leg and chased after one that was peering at us under the bench. “Hah!” he panted. “That was a first. You should’ve seen how I barked and how the big monkey jumped on that tree!”

Indeed, the monkey was gibbering angrily at us from the gooseberry tree. I came out from under the bench and chased a slightly younger monkey. He too ran up a neem tree. Boota bounded over and belted out a volley of barks just to show those monkeys that it was our park!

“Aaaaaa! He-elp! Aaaaa!!”

It was the stick-uncle. We ran to investigate. And guess what! The monkeys we had chased away had gone straight to

his house. He was sprawled on the ground and his glasses had been knocked off, too.

“Let them bite him!” I said. “That will teach him a lesson!”

“Uh...huh,” Boota hesitated as his tail quivered thoughtfully.

I knew exactly what he was thinking.

“Oh, come on!” I yipped and we sprinted towards the site. “Let’s chase those tree bandits away!”

“Woof! Woof! Woof!” said Boota and rushed straight at the monkey.

“Eeekiiiiiri! Mikkkirri! Meiiikirri!” screeched the shocked monkey and leaped up a wall. Boota leapt too and I joined him. We missed that long tail by a whisker! What fun it was! I’d never be scared of a monkey again! And next time we would leap even higher!

“Oh, my babies! You little dears!” the old man exclaimed. He was up and trying to wipe his glasses with his T-shirt. “Come, come, see what I have got for you!”

We were a bit suspicious—was he going to hit us again? He went in and waddled out again, carrying a large bowl. Did I smell milk and roti? He put the bowl down and called us in the strange way that these humans do.

We approached gingerly—you never know with humans! But he smiled. Boota was about to show his teeth, too, but I growled at him, “Wag your tail, donkey!”

“Oh, yes!” Boota wagged it hard and the old man laughed.

That was a good sign.

We sunk our noses in the bowl and had a hearty, hearty meal, our first in two days!

— Madhumita Gupta



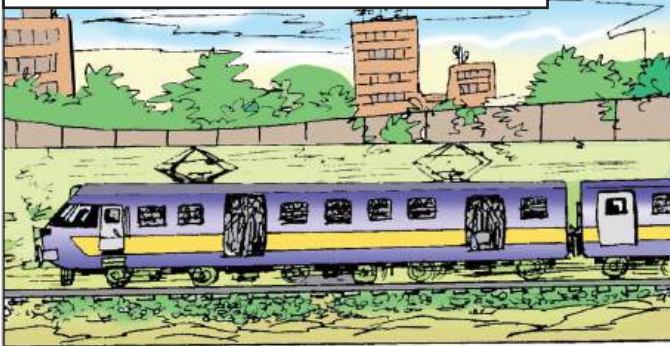
The Red Flag

(based on a true life incident)

Script: Appaswami

Illustrations: Prasad Iyer

THE 9.15 AM LOCAL FROM CANNING TO SEALDAH WAS PACKED WITH OFFICE-GOERS!



SUDDENLY-

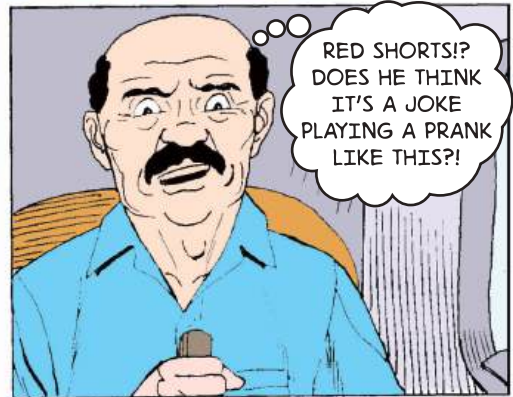
HEY, WHAT'S THAT?



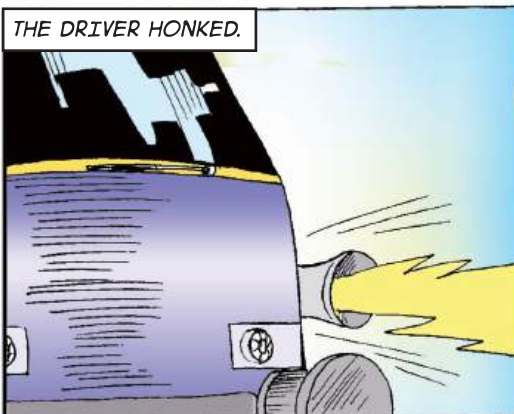
SOMEONE WAS WAVING A RED RAG.



RED SHORTS!? DOES HE THINK IT'S A JOKE PLAYING A PRANK LIKE THIS?!



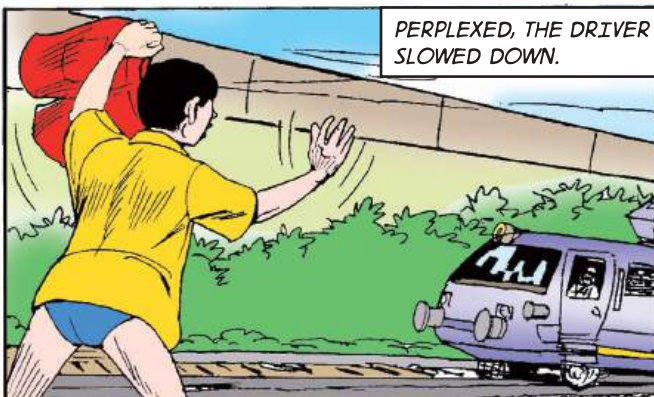
THE DRIVER HONKED.



WHY ISN'T HE GETTING OUT OF THE WAY? CAN'T HE HEAR THE HONKING?



PERPLEXED, THE DRIVER SLOWED DOWN.

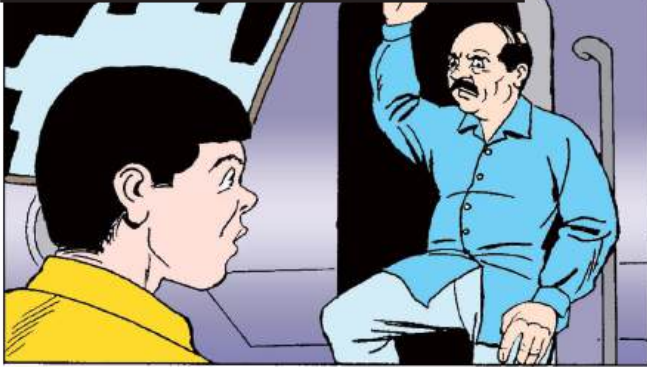


AND THE TRAIN SLOWED TO A CRAWLING SPEED.



UNCLE, STOP THE TRAIN! STOP!

THE TRAIN STOPPED AND THE DRIVER GOT OUT ANGRILY TO FIRE THE IMPERTINENT KID...

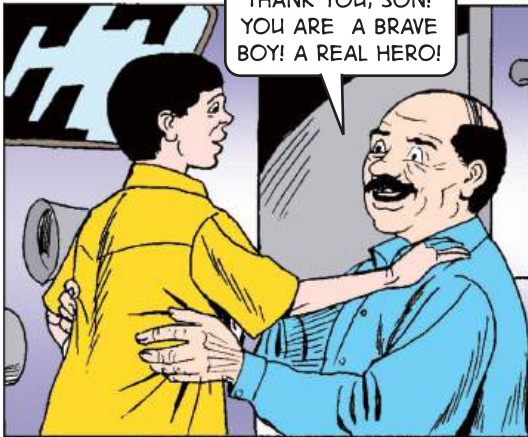


...WHEN-

A FISHPLATE IS MISSING! GOOD GOD, THE TRAIN COULD HAVE DERAILED!



THANK YOU, SON! YOU ARE A BRAVE BOY! A REAL HERO!



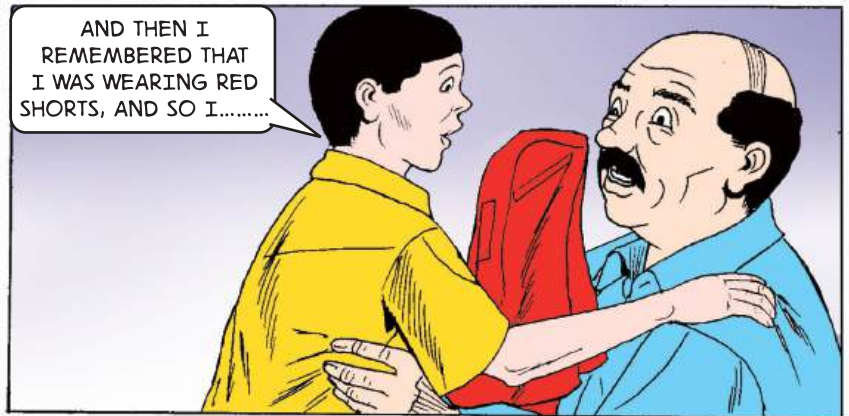
I NOTICED THE MISSING FISHPLATE AND WHEN I SAW YOUR TRAIN COMING, I GOT SCARED!



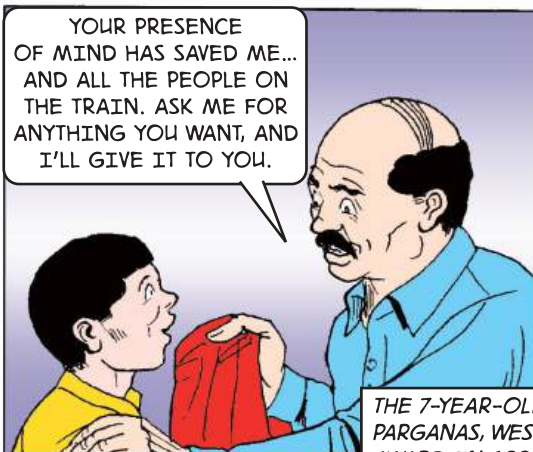
I KNEW I COULD DRAW YOUR ATTENTION ONLY WITH A RED FLAG....



AND THEN I REMEMBERED THAT I WAS WEARING RED SHORTS, AND SO I.....



YOUR PRESENCE OF MIND HAS SAVED ME... AND ALL THE PEOPLE ON THE TRAIN. ASK ME FOR ANYTHING YOU WANT, AND I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU.



UNCLE, CAN YOU GIVE ME MY SHORTS BACK?



THE 7-YEAR-OLD BOY, GAURANGA SARDAR FROM CANNING, 24-SOUTH PARGANAS, WEST BENGAL, WAS HONOURED WITH THE NATIONAL BRAVERY AWARD IN 1997 FOR HELPING TO PREVENT A TRAIN ACCIDENT.

THE END.

Plastic on Our Plates

Did you know that microplastics, tiny bits of plastic invisible to the naked eye, are taken up by the roots of plants and eventually end up in the fruits and vegetables we eat?



MICROPLASTICS are everywhere. They have been found in Antarctica, buried in the sea ice and in the stomachs of creatures living in the deepest ocean trenches. According to a recent study, there are around 24 trillion fragments of microplastics adrift in the world's oceans.

Food Front

The unpalatable truth is that not only are microplastics present in Earth's water bodies, they are on land too, in the soil in which we grow our food. In fact, we are swallowing plastic along with the food and drink we consume every day, including tea, salt, milk, honey, sugar, vegetables, fruits and soft drinks. Tap water contains plastic and bottled water, even more.

The main reason why food crops absorb microplastics is the use of sewage sludge as an alternative to chemical fertilisers by farmers. Sewage sludge is left behind after wastewater is cleaned. Since it is costly to dispose of sludge and it contains a number of nutrients beneficial to soil, the sludge is used as organic fertiliser.



Worth of Sludge

Also called biosolids, treated sewage sludge has elements such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, which are essential for plant health. The US and countries in Europe have used sludge for decades on farmland.

In Europe, it is part of an EU (European Union) directive to promote a circular waste economy. Around 10 million tonnes of sludge is produced annually, of which 40 per cent is spread on fields. Researchers estimate that due to this practice, 31,000–42,000 tonnes of microplastics could be contaminating European farmland every year. This works out to 86 million to 720 million particles of microplastics! About 650 million microplastic particles, measuring 1 mm to 5 mm in size, entered one wastewater treatment plant in the UK on a single day and almost all of these ended up in the sewage sludge, forming one per cent of its total weight.

In USA, an analysis by an environmental non-profit group in 2022 found that sewage sludge had contaminated 20 million acres of cropland. The contaminants were PFAs* in plastic products that don't break down easily. They are termed 'forever chemicals'.

From Soil to Food

Microplastics can remain in the soil for a long time, leaching harmful chemicals into it. Ploughing also enables the plastic to reach areas where sludge is not applied. In fact, scientists say that the amount of microplastic particles in agricultural soil is equal to what is found in surface ocean waters. Rainwater runoff containing topsoil and irrigation runoff also contribute in a big way to microplastic pollution in rivers, seas and in groundwater.

Research shows that crops absorb the particles from surrounding water and soil through tiny cracks in

their roots. Most of the plastic collects in the roots with only a tiny amount travelling up to the shoots and leaves. Root vegetables like carrots, radishes and turnips may thus pose a bigger health risk when consumed. In leafy vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage, the concentrations are very low.

A surprising finding is that microplastics can stunt the growth of and lead to weight loss in earthworms! Microplastics may clog up the earthworms' digestive tracts, hampering their ability to absorb nutrients. It is a well-known fact that earthworms are important for soil health.

Though the impact is not fully understood yet, studies show that the chemicals added during the manufacture of plastics can disrupt the hormone-producing endocrine system and cause other health problems and diseases.

Some European countries have banned sludge on farmland, but that may not be the best solution. It may force farmers to use synthetic fertilisers. Depositing it in landfills or burning it also poses environmental hazards.

*Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances





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The Bug Whisperer

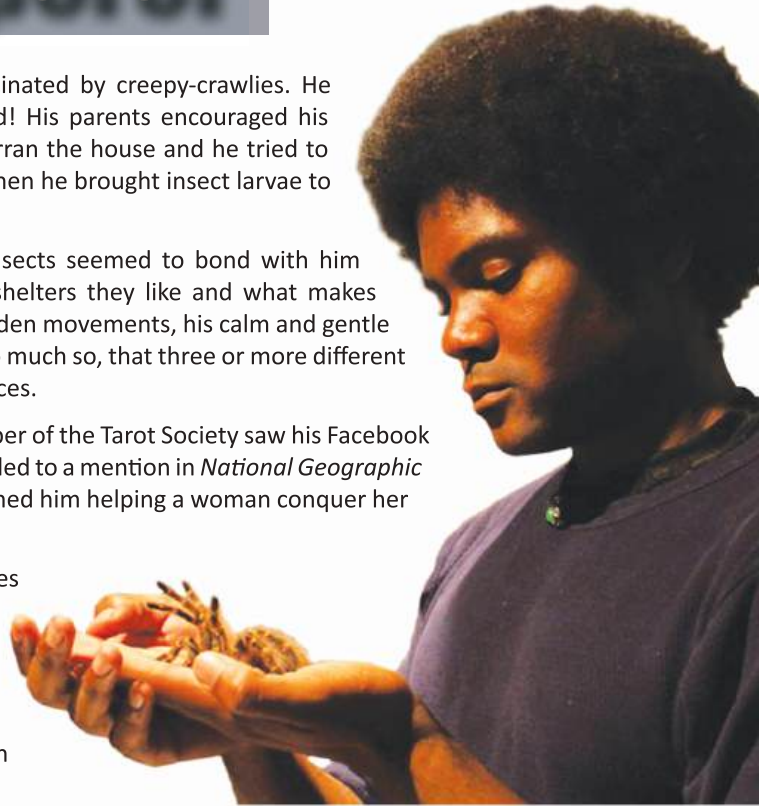
EVER since Aaron Rodriques was a toddler, he had been fascinated by creepy-crawlies. He started keeping ants and beetles when he was three years old! His parents encouraged his hobby, except for the one time when German cockroaches overran the house and he tried to collect them for pets. His schoolmates were not so impressed when he brought insect larvae to show-and-tell sessions in class.

In college, friends nicknamed him 'Bug Whisperer' because insects seemed to bond with him instantly. Rodriques knows their favourite foods, the kind of shelters they like and what makes them nervous. Since insects are hyper-sensitive to smell and sudden movements, his calm and gentle handling relaxes them! They even seem to recognise his smell. So much so, that three or more different bug species stand quite still on his palm as he lectures to audiences.

Rodriques began his live shows in Brooklyn in 2015 when a member of the Tarot Society saw his Facebook post on moths. She invited him to conduct a demonstration. That led to a mention in *National Geographic* and a profile on the Atlas Obscura website. A newspaper also filmed him helping a woman conquer her fear of spiders.

Today, Rodriques stages a number of shows where he introduces grown-ups and kids to insects such as cockroaches, moth larvae, centipedes and tarantulas. He attempts to explain how humans can build connections with insects. According to him many bugs and arachnids are mistakenly seen as aggressive.

Rodriques has a PhD in Entomology from Purdue University in Indiana, USA.



Mystery Manuscript

WHAT is the name of the document that no one, not even expert codebreakers and linguists, has been able to decipher? It is the Voynich manuscript housed in the United States, in Yale University's Beinecke Library. Measuring 14 cm by 21 cm, the manuscript has 200 pages covered with flowing writing in a completely unknown alphabet! The illustrations in it are equally odd, making it the most mysterious manuscript in the world.

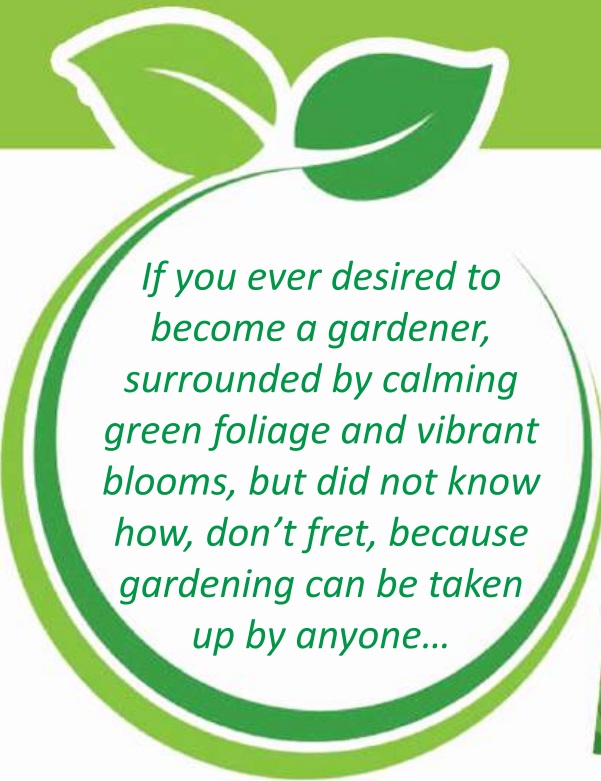
A New York book dealer, Wilfrid M. Voynich, bought it in 1912 on a trip to Italy. He said that a letter found with it revealed that the author was Roger Bacon, a renowned English scientist and philosopher who lived in medieval times.

While studying it, Robert Brumbaugh, a professor at Yale, discovered a chart with 26 symbols drawn in the margin that seemed to be the key to the code. However, even using the key, he could not make head or tail of the writing!

After years of intense study, researchers have speculated that the Voynich manuscript may just be one elaborate hoax.



Grow a Green Thumb!



If you ever desired to become a gardener, surrounded by calming green foliage and vibrant blooms, but did not know how, don't fret, because gardening can be taken up by anyone...



Plan it out!

Choose your plant

Firstly, list the plants you want in your garden and research them. Find out their growth pattern, nutritional requirements and care. Remember each plant is unique. If you do not want to deal with the hassle of specialised care, simply choose plants that have similar requirements.

Find the spot

Most plants require sunlight, so make sure the place you choose, whether it be a terrace, window sill or balcony,

receives a good amount of sunlight for five to six hours. But if the sun is too strong where you live, put up a shade with a cloth or old newspaper sheets.

Prepare the soil

Next, you must check the quality of the soil. Plants like daylily, broccoli and cauliflower grow well in damp clay soil. But hardy plants and succulents like roses and aloe prefer well drained sandy soil. You can increase drainage by adding compost and organic waste to the soil. Make sure your pots have drainage holes at the bottom.

Gather your tools

Gardening tools are pretty simple. You need something that digs into the soil, a tool that can lift and carry soil and a pair of pruning shears. You don't need anything complicated! Just use a strong spoon as a shovel, or an old screwdriver to dig and a pair of strong sharp scissors for pruning. Watering tools can be anything from a bottle to a bowl.

Let the gardening begin!

Plant

Make sure the soil is ready for the new plants by adding dry leaves and compost. When planting a seed, bury it well so it is in complete darkness. When taking plant cuttings, check for nodes, which are the small bulbous areas on a stem. Cut a few centimetres beneath them and plant them so that the soil covers the bottom node completely. Here is where the new roots will emerge. Place the newly planted seed or sapling in shade so that the soil around does not dry out during the delicate process.

Water

Plants have different water requirements—not all need a daily shower. Plants that like well-drained soil like ferns and money plant have roots that can rot if left in moist soil for long. Chrysanthemums prefer slightly moist soil but water on their leaves can make them mouldy, so make sure to research on what your plant likes.

Feed

Fertilise them by adding biodegradable organic waste to the soil like fresh or dry leaves, veggie scraps, rice water, etc. Make sure to bury the waste in the soil or it will rot and attract pests. You can pour liquid fertilisers but only in the soil, without touching the parts of the plant above ground.

Protect

A healthy organic environment is quite inviting to pests. To deter them, add neem, basil, mint or rosemary leaves around the plants — you can also grow these herbs in nearby pots.

Recruit friends

There are many little animals that actually help and protect your plants. Earthworms turn organic material in the soil into

compost and their movements in the soil improves drainage. Ladybugs and spiders feed on pests and protect your plants. Bees and butterflies help in pollinating your flowers.

Tend

Regularly cutting back your plants can trigger more growth. In plants that grow single flowers, cut back the stem that has finished flowering. In plants that grow many flowers, remove the blooms that have begun wilting. Removing weaker stems redirects nutrition to stronger stems in herbs and cutting back longer stems will make them grow back bushier.



Tips

- ◆ In dry weather, mulch your soil, i.e. add dry leaves on top so the top layer does not dry out.
- ◆ On rainy days, water less often or skip watering altogether if your plants are unsheltered.
- ◆ Do not place rocks at the bottom of your pots; they do not increase drainage.
- ◆ Clear the plants of dead and dry leaves gently.
- ◆ Start with fewer plants and those that require easy care like herbs. Then upgrade to more challenging ones!

Happy Gardening!



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Fun-gus!

Here is an interesting science activity you can try at home.

What you need

Some oranges, lemons or other citrus fruits, a bowl, two clear plastic bags and cotton balls.

What you do

1. Keep the fruits in the bowl and leave them out in the open for a day.
2. Put one orange and one lemon in each of the bags. Soak the cotton balls in water, squeeze them out and place one cotton ball each in the bags along with the fruits.
3. Tie the ends of the bags firmly.
4. Place one bag in the refrigerator.
5. Place the other bag in a warm, dark place like a closed cupboard.
6. Leave the bags undisturbed for two or three days.

What do you see?

After two days, when you open the bag you kept in the fridge, the fruits look the same, only a little dry. The fruits kept in the bag in the cupboard will be

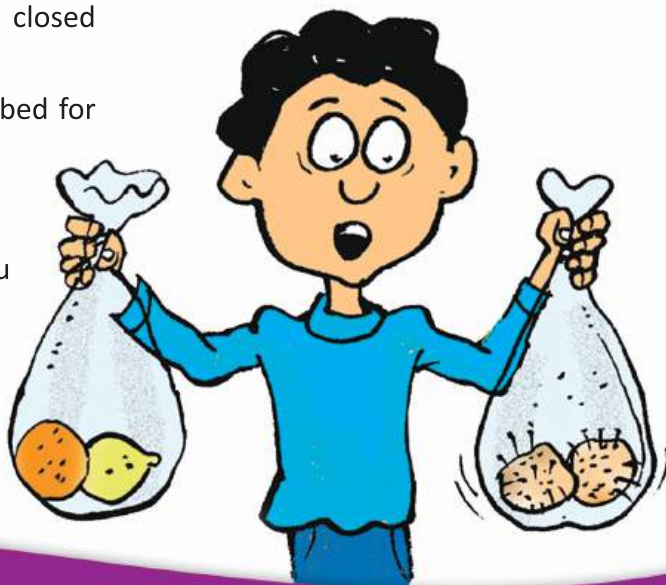
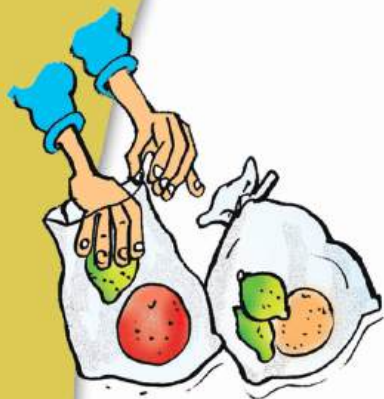
covered with a blue-green fuzz. The hairy growth is mould — a form of fungus.

Why does this happen?

Mould is formed of tiny spores. These spores float in the air like dust particles and if they land on a suitable warm and moist article of food, they start multiplying. This is why food becomes mouldy faster in summer than in winter. Keeping food cool slows down the growth of mould. Freezing slows it down even more. Fungi are all around us but they normally don't reach the fruiting body stage. That's because not enough nutrients and water are available.

Did You Know?

Penicillium, a type of fungus, is used to make an important medicine called an antibiotic. Antibiotics are used to fight infections.



Land of the Golden Pagoda



Fact File

Area: 678,500 sq km

Population (2024 est.): 54,500,091

Capital: Naypyidaw (since 2006)

Other large cities: Mandalay, Yangon

Monetary unit: Kyat

Myanmar (formerly Burma), suffered a massive 7.7 magnitude earthquake on March 28, followed by strong aftershocks. The military junta that rules Myanmar put the death toll at over 5500.

Blessed by Nature

Myanmar lies to India's northeast and shares a border of nearly 1600 km. It is the second-largest country in Southeast Asia.

The country is shaped roughly like a kite with a long tapering tail. It has three major rivers of which the longest is the Irrawaddy at 2170 km.

Myanmar's coastline runs for 1930 km along the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.

Blessed with an abundant monsoon, Myanmar has fertile soil except in the drier central part, and coastal waters and rivers brimming with fish. There are dense tropical forests with valuable teak trees and a rich variety of wildlife.

It does not lack in mineral wealth either. Besides ores such as tungsten and tin, its rubies, pearls and sapphires are world-renowned as is its high-quality jade. It also has crude oil resources and a potential for generating geothermal energy.

Golden Rock

Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, also known as the Golden Rock, is built on top of a gravity-defying granite boulder covered with gold leaf by devotees. The pagoda is 7.3 m high and is said to be precariously perched on a strand of the Buddha's hair.

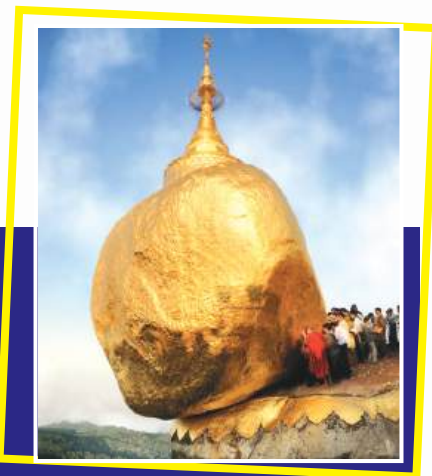
No wonder then that Burma was thought to be the fabled Land of Gold or Suvarnabhumi!

A Page from History

Beginning around 840 CE, the Bamar, or Burman, a people from southern China settled in central Burma, in a place that came to be known as Pagan (Bagan). The man responsible for unifying the Burmese was Anawrahta who ruled from 1014 to 1077 CE.

The last king, Thibaw of the Konbaung dynasty, abdicated and was exiled to Ratnagiri in Maharashtra with his family bringing an end to the monarchy in Burma.

Ironically, the last king of the Mughals in India, Bahadur Shah Zafar II was exiled to Rangoon.



Winking Wonder

Though no longer the official capital, Yangon is Myanmar's biggest and commercially most important city. It is dominated by the 'winking wonder'—the Shwedagon Paya. One of Buddhism's most sacred sites, it attracts pilgrims from all over the world.

The stupa stands on the Singuttara Hill. The entire complex covers 46 hectares. The 97.5-m-high *zedi* or stupa, is adorned with 27 metric tonnes of gold leaf and thousands of diamonds and other gems. Four graceful covered stairways lead to the main terrace.

According to legend, the stupa is 2600 years old. Two merchant brothers, Tapussa and Ballika, met the Buddha who gave them eight of his hairs to take back to Myanmar, then ruled over by King Okkalapa. Okkalapa enshrined the hairs in a temple of gold, together with relics of three former Buddhas, which were then enclosed in a temple of silver, then one of tin, then copper, then lead, then marble and, finally, one of plain brick.

The original stupa was probably built by the Mon people between the 6th and 10th centuries. It has been rebuilt several times since. In the 15th century, the royals began offering their own weight in gold for gilding the stupa.

During the 17th century, the monument suffered earthquake damage on eight occasions. In 1768, a quake brought down the whole top of the zedi. King Hsinbyushin had it rebuilt to its present height.



Inle Lake

Myanmar's second-largest lake lies in the Shan Hills in northeast Myanmar. It spreads over 116 sq km.

Several different ethnic groups live around Inle: the Taungyo, the Pa-O and the Intha, whose houses are built on stilts on the lake itself.

Intha fishermen row unique flat-ended canoes which they paddle with their feet, while using both hands to fish!

Villages near the lake have thriving cottage industries that include boat-making, silver work and lotus silk weaving. The fibre is extracted from the pith of the lotus stem and then woven into fine cloth.

Mandalay Musings

A hot, bustling city on the banks of the Irrawaddy, Mandalay has a number of pagodas, striking churches, temples and mosques amidst the urban sprawl of concrete blocks.

Every day, thousands venerate the Mahamuni Buddha, a 4-m-tall seated image that's believed to be some 2000 years old. Gold leaf is applied on the figure by male devotees (women can only watch). Years of this practice has left the figure with a 15-cm-thick layer of pure gold.

The marble tablets in the Kuthodaw Pagoda at Mandalay have Buddhist teachings inscribed in Pali script. They make the world's largest book.



Bagan

The city of Bagan lies 288 km from Mandalay. Thousands of bell-shaped and stepped pagodas dot the plains beside the Irrawaddy, from just a few metres in height to more than 60 metres.



Ways and Means

- There are over 100 ethnic groups in Myanmar. Men and women of the majority Burman group wear the skirt-like *longyi*, a sarong type garment. Women use a traditional make-up called *thanakha*, made from ground tree bark. People still travel in trishaws and, in rural areas, by horse-drawn cart. Drinking tea is a national pastime followed in thousands of traditional teahouses.
- Tea makes its appearance even in salads which the Burmese love. Meals end with a salad called *laphet thoke*, fermented green tea leaves mixed with sesame seeds, fried peas, dried shrimp, fried garlic, peanuts and other crunchy ingredients. However, the unofficial national dish is *mohinga*, thin rice noodles served in a thick fish and shallot broth and topped with crispy deep-fried vegetables or lentils.

Did You Know?

- ◆ Above Pone Taloke Lake, is a complex of natural caves and tunnels called Pindaya filled with more than 8000 Buddha images made of different materials and in different sizes.
- ◆ Gems, mainly pigeon's blood rubies and sapphires, are found near Mogoke. Since the 13th century, Myanmar has exported jade from the Hukawng valley in Kachin State.



- ◆ Famous Burmese include the UN Secretary-General from 1961-71, U Thant and Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.
- ◆ The 'giraffe women' of the Padaung tribe wear copper and brass rings to elongate their necks as long necks are considered a mark of beauty.



Mandalay Fort



Mahamuni Buddha

World's Best Selling Game



THE best-selling board game in the world, Monopoly is sold across 113 countries, in 46 languages. There is even a Braille version. The company also launched a version that has a VISA debit card complete with an electronic card reader instead of fake money!

The game was patented in 1935 by an unemployed American engineer called Charles Darrow. As a child, Darrow dreamt of fame and fortune and created the first rough outline of the game on a tablecloth.

Keen to recreate his childhood game Charles approached game manufacturer Parker Brothers who turned him down, saying the game took too long to play and was terribly complicated! When Charles successfully began selling the game directly, Parker Brothers relented.

However, few know Monopoly is very similar to a game called 'The Landlord's Game' created in 1904 by another American, Elizabeth Magie.

Zany Ideas

IN an effort to popularise fruit, an American company called Fizzy Fruit is pumping carbon dioxide into fresh fruit chunks to turn the juice within all gassy and bubbly. The Fizzy Fruit comes packed in air tight jars to prevent it from going 'flat' and when you pop one of these fruity bits in your mouth it fizzes on your tongue just the way soda does. The company says the carbonation process does not affect the nutritional content of the fruit and only makes it more fun to eat.



Quiz

1. What colour do you get when you mix the three primary colours?
2. What percentage of the Earth's surface is covered by water?

Answers: 1. White. The primary colours are red, blue and green.
2. Almost 70%!

Lighten those Dark Circles!

THE depuffing wand is a compact portable all-in-one skincare tool that incorporates Cryothermal technology, which alternates between cooling and heating modes to reduce facial puffiness, minimise dark circles and enhance skin appearance. It offers three pre-set temperature levels: a refreshing cold treatment to revitalize tired-looking eyes and diminish the appearance of pores; a rejuvenating heat treatment to boost circulation; and revitalizing contrast therapy, which begins with heat and ends with cooling to enhance the skin's elasticity and firmness. The heat mode reaches up to 42°C and promotes circulation and aids in the absorption of skincare products, thus amplifying their efficacy. It also cools the skin to 10°C, which can help tighten pores and contour the face. Rigorously tested by dermatologists, it is suitable for all skin types and has an ergonomic design that ensures it can effectively target even difficult areas, such as the delicate area under the eyes.



Wireless Wearable Speaker

THIS is a heavy-duty portable Bluetooth stereo speaker that combines advanced audio technology to deliver powerful sound alongside great aesthetic appeal with its iconic design elements and a retro feel. Its two tweeters, single subwoofer and two passive radiators make it suitable for both indoor and outdoor use. The outdoor mode boosts bass performance and long throw, ensuring high-resolution audio quality regardless of the environment. Designed for portability, it is water resistant, cold resistant, shockproof and comes with a cross-body carrying strap, making it an ergonomic and fashion-forward wearable technology. The speaker is capable of reaching a maximum volume of 115 decibels, enabling powerful sound in any setting. The battery life of up to 16 hours makes it ideal for extended use at events and gatherings. It also caters to needs beyond audio playback, including an integrated power bank function that enables users to charge other devices on the go.

Pool Robot

THIS automated device offers a comprehensive and efficient cleaning solution for swimming pools. It features a multi-brush cleaning system that effectively scrubs the pool's floor, walls and waterline. It is equipped with an 8-motor propulsion system and has a filtration performance of 280 litres per minute along with a 2-hour working time. It employs an intelligent S-shaped cleaning pattern, utilising advanced sonar technology and a multi-sensor system for precise mapping, intelligent path planning, edge recognition and obstacle avoidance, ensuring thorough coverage and effective navigation of every corner of the pool. Its auto-recharging capability facilitates continual operation without manual intervention. When the battery is low, it automatically returns to its charging station, ensuring it is always ready for the next cleaning cycle. Additionally, the device supports remote control and scheduling through a dedicated app, providing the flexibility to customise cleaning sessions according to the user's needs.



UV Mobile Steriliser

WITH ever-increasing sanitisation concerns, consumers need a simple yet effective way to clean and disinfect common items that are used regularly. This compact and portable UV steriliser works without water or chemicals to sanitise essential items. They need only to be placed inside before closing the lid and turning the device on. The UV-C light eradicates 99 per cent of all bacteria, viruses, fungi, mildew and other harmful pathogens that could be lurking on the surface. It works fast and only takes minutes to completely sanitise the item. The enclosed design eliminates health risks due to radiation. It is effective for mobile phones even in a large size, as well as sunglasses, ear pods, watches, jewellery or any commonly-touched small items that fit inside it. The unit also features a Qi-enabled design and functions as a wireless charger that will transfer power to compatible devices.



Meals

A healthy pet is a happy pet!

- ★ Chicken changezi
- ★ Buff bhurji
- ★ Quail
- ★ Mutton masala
- ★ Chikpea Salad
- ★ Paneer Meal

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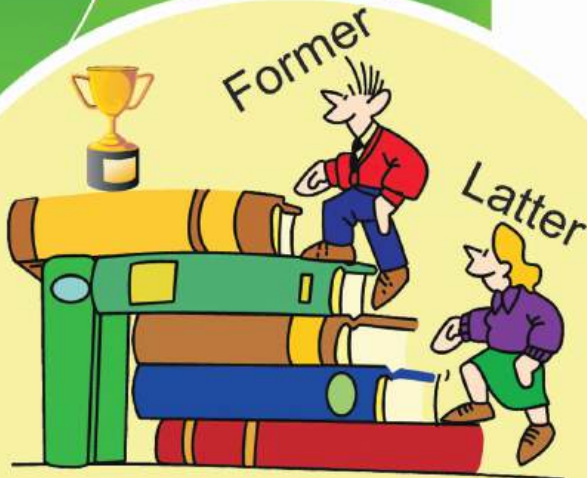
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MIND YOUR LANGUAGE!

First and Last



Rajesh and Sonal appeared for the SSC exams. The former scored better marks in Science while the latter fared better in English.

When you talk of only two persons or items, former refers to the first and latter refers to the second. Avoid using the terms if you mention three or more persons or items.

What a Word!

EUPHEMISM

A polite or pleasant word or phrase used instead of a word or phrase that is more direct but harsh or hurtful.



Phrase Hunt

Guess the phrase from this picture. It means you should not discard something valuable along with the unwanted.



Answer: Do not throw away the baby with the bathwater

Crazy Words

Runner-ups or Runners-up?

The plural form of 'runner-up' is 'runners-up'. They are those who do not win in a contest but perform well and hence, deserve a mention.

Which of these is correct?

1. higher-ups or highers-up
2. passer-bys or passers-by
3. brothers-in-law or brother-in-laws
4. aircraft or aircrafts
5. diagnoseses or diagnoses

Answer: 1. higher-ups 2. passers-by 3. brothers-in-law 4. aircraft 5. diagnoses

Tick the Pick

Pick out the word that best fits the given description.



1. A film marked by high drama and strong suspense, where you are left guessing about the end.
a. melodrama b. cliffhanger c. trilogy
2. A comedy based on deliberately clumsy actions like slipping on a banana peel.
a. slapstick b. western c. mockumentary
3. A murder mystery where the murderer's identity is revealed only at the end.
a. whodunit b. mainstream c. horror

Answer: 1. b, 2. a, 3. a

Ciao!

Ciao, pronounced 'chow', is used to say both hello and goodbye. The term originated from the Venetian phrase 's-ciào' which actually means 'I am your slave'. However, over the years, s-ciào got shortened to ciao and came to mean 'hello' and used by people all over the world. Ciao said twice means 'goodbye' and said several times shows that you are in a hurry to say goodbye.

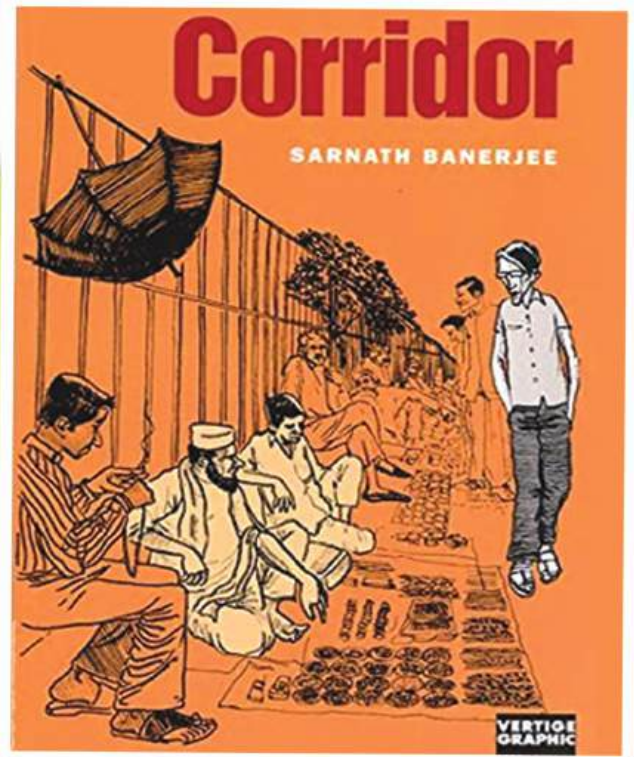


What are graphic novels?

GRAPHIC NOVELS are a masterful way of blending illustrations and text to tell a story. Like mainstream novels, they have a distinct beginning, middle and an end.

Graphic novels are a more serious and mature form of comics.

- The story line and theme of graphic novels are more elaborate and diverse than those of comic books.
- They are written for many age groups — adults, teenagers and small children.
- A graphic novel is longer than an average comic book
- Graphic novels usually tell one story per book (sometimes in multiple volumes) unlike comic books that come in series.
- Although illustrations are mostly laid out in strips of panels, some graphic novels are found to deviate from this format by using experimental art forms that are not always boxed-in.
- Most graphic novels are square-bound like books whereas comics are thin pamphlets.



Some prominent Indian graphic novels include Sarnath Banerjee's *The Corridor*, Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm*, and Orijit Sen's *River of Stories*.

Sarnath Banerjee is considered the first Indian graphic novelist.

Which side of the shirt has buttons?



IT depends on whether you are a girl or a boy! Generally, men's shirts have buttons on the right hand side whereas they are stitched on the left hand side in women's shirts.

This practice dates back to the 17th century when buttons first made their appearance in Europe. At the time, wealthy women were accustomed to being dressed by their maids. It is easier for a right-handed person to fasten the buttons on another person's shirt if they are situated on the left hand side. So women's blouses had their buttons sewn on the left side — a practice still followed today.

On the other hand, men dressed themselves; so the buttons were sewed on the right side of the shirt. According to another theory, sword-wielding men of medieval times drew out the weapon with the right hand from the sheath on the left hip. While doing so, there was a chance that it might be caught in the shirt flap opening if the buttons were on the left side. So, men's shirts were made with buttons on the right-hand side.

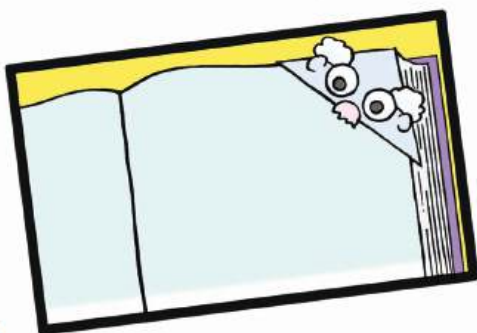
Corner Bookmark

Materials required:

Thick, used envelopes, pinking scissors (scissors with zigzag edges), pencil, material for decoration.

Method:

1. Cut out one triangular edge of the envelope with the pinking scissors so that you get a cone-shaped bookmark.
2. Draw a funny face on it and decorate it using any material of your choice.
3. Instead of making a dog ear in your story book when you want to mark a page, insert your cone-shaped bookmark at the corner edge of the page.
4. Make several such bookmarks and present them to your family and friends.



Cereal Box Puppet

Things required:

An empty cereal box or any similar cardboard carton; any colour marble paper to cover it; wool for the hair; big buttons for the eyes; a small plastic ball or marble for the nose; glue and a pair of scissors; black and red sketch pens.

Method:

1. Keep the box on the marble paper and cut out the shape of the box, leaving enough paper to cover the sides, top and bottom.
2. Now cut the box as shown in the picture to create a hinged jaw. Paint or sketch in the lips with a red sketch pen.
3. Cut out two holes in the back big enough for your fingers to go through.
4. Decorate the box to resemble a face, using the wool for hair and the buttons for eyes. Glue on the plastic ball or marble for the nose (you can also crumple up coloured paper to make a ball and use it for the nose). Draw on the ears with a black sketch pen.
5. Hook your thumb and finger in the holes and make the puppet 'speak'!
6. You can create a whole gang of puppets with different sized or same-sized cereal boxes, with a variety of faces. Put on a puppet-show for your parents with the help of your friends!





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Icons of Tanjore

INDIA has various painting styles to depict the gods, but none as resplendent as the Tanjore paintings. Adorned with semi-precious stones, pearls and gold leaf art work, each Tanjore painting is a labour of love.

The art evolved in Tanjore under the mighty Cholas in the 9th century, but realized its glory under the Maratha rulers in the 16–18th centuries.

Tanjore paintings depict Hindu gods and goddesses. A typical painting has a main deity painted in white or blue framed by an arch or pillars. What sets it apart is its glittery decoration.

The design is embossed on an elaborately prepared canvas pasted on a wooden board. Hence it is locally called 'Palagai Padam' (i.e. wooden plank picture).

Gemstones and glass pieces are stuck to highlight ornaments and costume. Originally, diamonds and rubies were used to give it a glowing presence in dark puja rooms.

The artist lays the relief work in intricate detail, giving it a 3D effect. It is covered with delicate gold leaf, which showcases the artistry of the relief work. The background is filled in last with vivid reds, blues or greens.



Masks of Africa



YOU have seen spear-wielding African tribals wearing scary masks, dancing around a bonfire in movies. The masks are not merely an embellishment. Each is a testament to Africa's rich tribal culture.

In African culture, masks are of immense symbolic value. Traditionally, they are created for special occasions like weddings, funerals, initiation ceremonies, fertility rituals, etc. Tribals believe that masks embody the spirits of their ancestors or gods and have the power to control the fortunes of their community.

Every tribe has its own unique brand of masks. Most tribes wear masks to inspire awe and respect. The Dogon and Bamana tribes of Mali believe that their animal masks help to communicate with the spirits of the forest and savannah. The Punu tribe of Gabon depicts the beauty of its women, in its feminine masks which have arched eyebrows and almond shaped eyes.

A mask artist is highly respected for his skill and spiritual knowledge. The art passes from father to son or master to apprentice. Masks worn on public occasions are usually brightly coloured and attractive. They are made of wood, ivory, metal or terracotta.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

Emperor of the USA

SOME emperors are born into that position; some become emperors by overthrowing the previous occupant of the throne. Norton I was unique. He became emperor of the USA merely by announcing his accession through an advertisement in a San Francisco newspaper in September 1859.

Norton I (born Joshua Abraham Norton) was an eccentric Englishman who became even more unpredictable in his behaviour after he lost all his money in a series of bad investments.

After the announcement, he acquired a military uniform and a 'palace' — a run-down boarding house for which he paid a rent of 50 cents a day — and commenced his fabulous reign. One of his first acts as emperor was to issue a decree deposing the President of the USA and abolishing Congress. Later he declared that as the people of neighbouring Mexico seemed unable to manage their affairs he was taking over that country's administration too and bestowed on himself the title 'Protector of Mexico'.

The people of San Francisco were amused and went out of their way to humour him. He rode free in public transport and dined without paying in the best of restaurants. He made it a point to attend all important functions in the city and always demanded to be seated in a prominent place. Theatres reserved a special seat for him and the audience would rise in respectful silence when he entered.

In the afternoons, he would go on tours of inspection, peering into drains to see if they were working properly and checking bus time tables. Once an over-zealous young policeman arrested him for vagrancy and the whole city rose up in protest. The chief of police personally released him, apologising profusely all the while. The emperor graciously agreed to "blot the incident from memory".

Emperor Norton ruled for twenty years and when he died on January 8, 1880, he was given a state funeral. Thousands filed past his coffin in two days, some weeping openly. The media



paid him rich tributes. Said a San Francisco newspaper: "The Emperor Norton killed nobody, robbed nobody and deprived nobody which is more than can be said for most fellows in his trade."

In 1934 a marble slab was placed on his grave. The inscription read:

Norton I, Emperor of the United States, Protector of Mexico, 1819-1880.

AFTER the defeat of Germany in World War II, the Soviet Union cut off all land and water routes to West Berlin. The Allies had to airlift food and other supplies to the besieged city. Gail Halvorsen, an American, was one of the pilots involved in the airlift, codenamed Operation Vittles.

Once a group of thirty German children clustered around the air base and asked for sweets. He gave them two sticks of chewing gum which he had in his pockets, and promised another



Sweet Mission

'candy drop' the following day. He told them to identify the plane by its 'wiggling wings'.

From then on, Halvorsen dropped candy packets almost daily, using handkerchief parachutes made by volunteers. Letters poured in for 'Uncle Wiggly Wings'. His superiors came to know what Halvorsen was up to but allowed him to carry on. The mission was even given a name: 'Operation Little Vittles'!

About 23 tonnes of candy, some donated by American confectioners, had been dropped all over Berlin, by the end of the airlift.



Mindbender



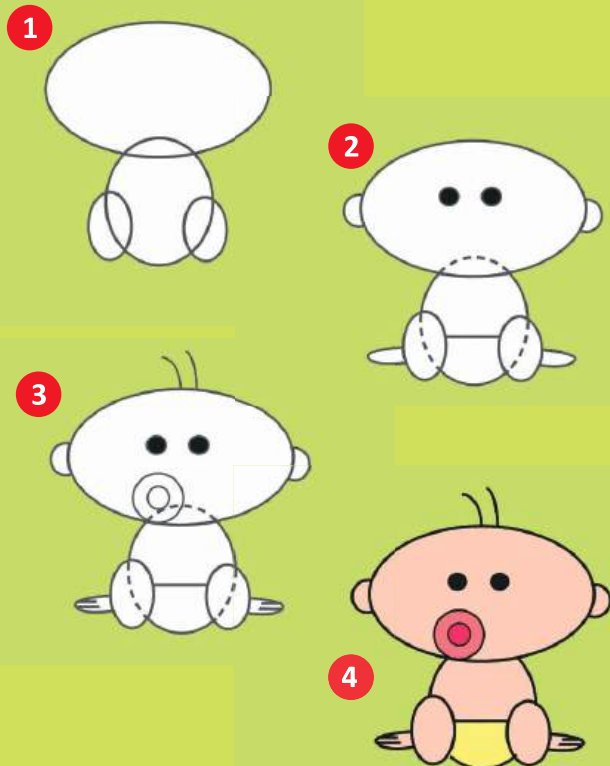
Code-decode

If DISTURB is written as DTWVUKF, how will you write FRIENDS in the same way?

Answer: UFPGKTH
Move up 2 letters of the alphabet from each letter. Decode all the letters and reverse the word to get the answer. DISTURB, D – F; I – K; S – U; T – V; U – W; R – T; B – D. New word formed – FKUVWTD. Reverse it and you get DTWVUKF.

Easy Draw

Draw a baby in four easy steps.



Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, vertical column and 2x3 box has the digits from 1-6 without repeating them in the same row, column or box.

1	4		6	5	
			1		
3		4			6
	6			3	4
4		6		2	
		2			1

ANSWERS:

5	3	2	4	6	1
4	1	6	3	2	5
2	6	1	5	3	4
3	5	4	2	1	6
6	2	5	1	4	3
1	4	3	6	5	2

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A New Mission

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An Apple A Day

DELICIOUS and crunchy, apples are one of the most popular fruits among the health conscious. Over 60 million tonnes of 7500 varieties of apple are grown every year.

If it had not been for an American missionary called Samuel 'Satyanand' Stokes, apple cultivation in India would probably never have taken off.

Stokes came to India in 1904 and so fell in love with the country and its people that he gave up his missionary life, married a local girl and settled in Kotgarh, near Shimla in Himachal Pradesh.

Kotgarh was a very poor village and most of its inhabitants were bonded labourers. Stokes wanted to improve their lives in some way. He found that the soil was suitable for apple

cultivation. He sent for seedlings of the Golden Delicious variety from the USA and planted them in his garden. The trees gave succulent and delicious apples after four years. Stokes encouraged the local farmers to plant apples by giving them free saplings. Apple orchards bloomed all over the region and Kotgarh became prosperous beyond its farmers' wildest dreams.

Today, Himachal is India's Apple State and Kotgarh is the heart of the apple industry.

Apples are obtained from medium-sized tree belonging to the Rosaceae family. They are not only easy to eat and digest, but they also contain minerals, vitamins and lots of fibre. They are rich in antioxidants that prevent damage to cells, and a chemical called quercetin

that fights cancer. The fibre called pectin in apples lowers cholesterol.

'Cooking' apples are different from 'eating' apples — cooking apples tend to be larger in size, crispier, and tarter. Usually different kinds of desserts like apple pie and applesauce are made from eating apples while cider or apple juice is made from apples that are tart to taste.

Forbidden Fruit

In the Bible, Adam and Eve were banished from Eden because they disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge. This has given us the phrase 'forbidden fruit', something that is taboo but very tempting. The fruit that they ate was believed to be an apple. And because Adam tried to gulp the fruit down before God saw him, a piece got stuck in his throat. Which is why all men have an 'Adam's apple', a protrusion in their throats!

Golden Apples

In Greek mythology, the eleventh labour of Hercules was to pluck golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. On the way he meets Atlas, who holds the sky up for eternity.

Atlas tricks Hercules into holding up the sky in his place, while he went to fetch the golden apples. The story goes that when Atlas returned with three golden apples, he refused to take back the sky. Hercules said that he needed a moment to place a lion skin on his shoulders to cushion the weight. Atlas agreed. Then of course, Hercules took the opportunity to escape and poor Atlas was left holding the sky yet again!

Phrase Craze

- To be 'the apple of someone's eye' is to be precious to that person above all else.
- 'Apple of discord' is a disagreement over an issue that is usually trivial. Eris, the Greek goddess of strife, was excluded from a celebration. Swearing revenge, she threw a golden apple into the midst of the gods and goddesses. It was inscribed 'For the loveliest one'. The goddesses began fighting over the apple and finally Paris of Troy was called to decide. He chose Aphrodite because she offered him the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen who was already married to Menelaus the king of Sparta. The Trojan War resulted.

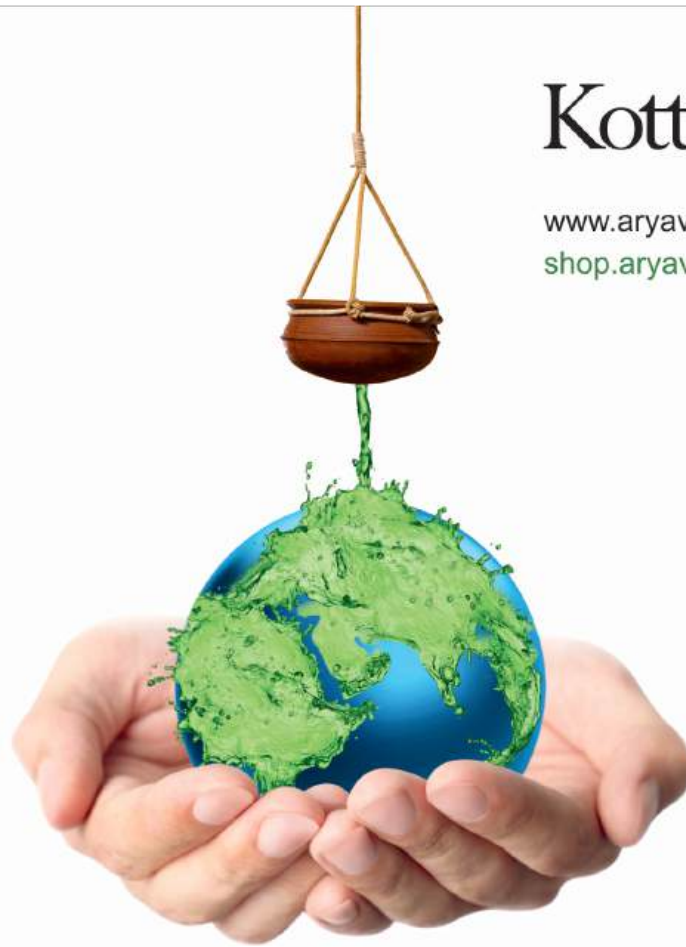


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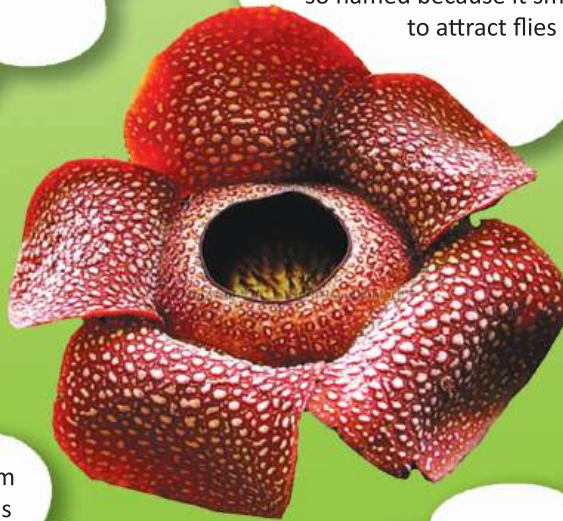
Fantastic Flowers

While many flowers are loved for their beauty and fragrance, others are famous for being the largest, the rarest or the most poisonous!

The western underground orchid lives, blooms and sets seed several centimetres below the soil surface. Endemic to Western Australia, the flower head is made of up to 100 tiny, densely-packed purple-pink blooms.



The world's largest flower, the stinking corpse lily, measures 90 cm across! Found only in the rainforests of Indonesia and Borneo, the strange-looking flower with its thick, mottled red petals is so named because it smells like a rotting corpse to attract flies for pollination.



The smallest flower comes from the Wolffia plant, known as watermeal. A common aquatic plant, it is the size of a rice grain. A bouquet of Wolffia flowers would fit on the head of a pin!



The world's rarest flower, the Middlemist Red, is found in only two places, a garden in New Zealand and a greenhouse in Britain. Native to China, the pretty deep pink flower was brought to England 200 years ago by John Middlemist, after whom it is named.



The slowest-flowering plant is the Queen of the Andes, a rare bush that grows in the Andes Mountains of South America. It takes 80 to 100 years to bloom—it produces a huge vertical stalk bearing numerous white flowers. Soon after blossoming, it dies!



Native to the tropical parts of Asia and Africa, the flame lily is a striking-looking flower with an unusual shape. All parts of the plant are highly toxic and may be fatal if eaten. Even touching it can cause skin irritation!



THE LIGHTER SIDE

A man was walking down a deserted street at night. He was nervous and edgy, jumping in fright every time he heard a sound. Finally he met a policeman.

"This is a dangerous road, isn't it!" he demanded, his eyes rolling in terror.

"Take it easy, man!" said the policeman. "Calm yourself. If this were a dangerous road would I be walking here?"



Two women, both wives of prominent industrialists, were trying to impress each other with their wealth.

"I always clean my sapphires with fresh milk," said one of the women. "They say milk from Greece is best for the purpose so I get the milk from there. My rubies, of course, I clean with French wine and my diamonds with ammonia imported from Germany. How do you clean your jewels?"

"I don't clean my jewels at all," drawled the other woman. "When they get dirty I throw them away."

A couple arrived home earlier than usual and found a robber in their house.

"Now that you've seen me I'll have to shoot you," said the man, pulling out a gun.

The couple was too frightened to speak.

"I like to know the names of my victims," said the robber, pointing his gun at the woman. "Tell me your name."

"Laxmi," said the woman.

"Laxmi!" exclaimed the man. "That's my mother's name too. I can't shoot you."

"Tell me your name!" he snarled at the man, pointing the gun at him.

"S-Sharma," stammered the man. "But all my friends call me Laxmi."



A man who worked as an usher at a cinema house developed toothache and went to see a dentist.

"Which is the tooth that's troubling you?" asked the dentist, peering into his mouth.

"Fifth from the right," replied the usher, "in the balcony."



A policeman stopped two priests who were going very fast on a motorcycle.

"Why were you speeding?" he demanded. "You could have had an accident!"

One of the priests smiled and said: "Don't worry, my son. God is with us!"

"Then I'll have to fine you," said the policeman, grimly. "The law does not allow three passengers on a motorbike!"



Desi Speak

- ◆ Where do cabbages hang out?
In the Gobi desert.
- ◆ What did the flower say to its girl friend?
Why do phools fall in love?
- ◆ What did the large car say?
I'm a mota car.
- ◆ What did the confused egg say?
I don't unda-stand.
- ◆ What do shrimps sing at Christmas?
Jhinga Bells.
- ◆ What are call-boxes for ghosts called?
B(h)ooths.



- ◆ What did the half eaten naan say?
I wish I was puri.
- ◆ What language do carrots speak?
Gajarati.



A man once called up a computer service technician to say that he had a problem. This was the conversation that followed.

Technician: I need you to right-click on the Desktop.

Man: Ok.

Technician: Did you get a pop-up menu?

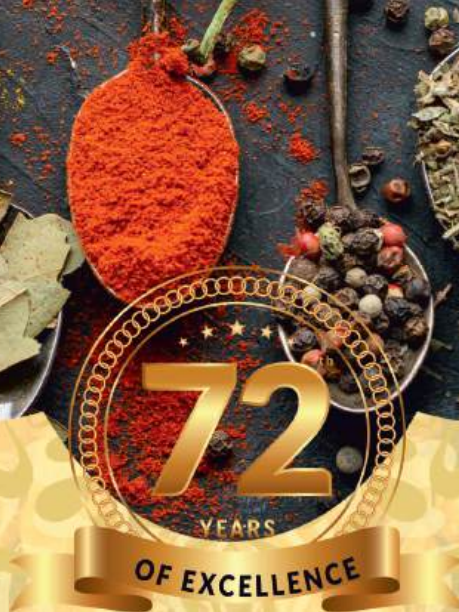
Man: No.

Technician: Ok. Right click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?

Man: No.

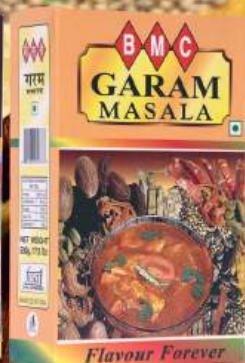
Technician: Ok, sir. Can you tell me what you have done upto this point?

Man: Sure, you told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'.



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