I am still not at all in favour of offering any defence. Even if the court had accepted that petition submitted by some of my co-accused regarding defence, etc., I would not have defended myself.
—Bhagat Singh

FUTURE OF EDUCATION- HYBRID LEARNING

Parents, who are universally acknowledged to understand what's best for their children, have known the secret for a long time. To thrive academically, children require personal attention. May be even one-on-one classes that ensure they don't fall behind. In the past, such supplemental care was given in the form of private tuition. The extra attention from dedicated tutors, however, they could only be acquired by a handful of parents, ultimately meaning that a mere fraction of students received the privilege of personal attention. Such was the scenario, until now. Technological progress has bridged the gap between man and machine, we're seeing new-age innovations disrupting multiple aspects of lives, from how we interact with others to how we consume content. As such, technology has also transformed the way we acquire knowledge.

Today, more students than before have access to personal attention by the way of online-learning platforms. They act as all-knowing coaches who can clarify doubts, reinforce concepts, teach new topics, and do all of this at the students preferred pace and time.

At this point, we all know how the pandemic-induced lockdowns helped the world warm up to digitisation in the education space. But as the new normal comes into play will online learning be phased out once again? Emerging markets are still experiencing tail winds of the pandemic both in India and Indonesia. But behaviour of students, as well as parents, has changed entirely. Before the pandemic, markets had less awareness about online learning as a mainstream methodology for teaching compared to the present scenario. Necessity, however, is the mother of invention. Post the outbreak, it was only for the backing of online education that students could continue learning while at home. How will online-learning platforms fit into the new normal of education in the post-COVID-19 world? Immediate shift to digital learning a lot of students were left behind. Many parents realised that their kids have fallen behind losing almost two years of their education after the viral outbreak. That is where online learning will find its footing now.

With increased awareness of the merit of online learning, there will be much higher usage of digital education platforms. While there is no replacement for schooling digital learning platforms act as a support system. Students struggling with new concepts, or even homework, can find their way by turning to such platforms. Parents need to make sure that their children receive as good a chance as possible to make up for what was lost, and this is the perfect way to catch up. The much-talked about new normal is going to be the hybrid model - a combination of online and offline learning Education technology, or ed-tech platforms, which offer students a direct line to experts who can help them understand new topics and solve doubts, will have to focus on providing a high-quality customer experience. The challenge, in such a scenario, will be to make sure that continuous support is provided, while introducing new features to make online platforms accessible to a larger section of children across the country when students are unable to consult their teachers, online education platforms will bridge the gap. Thus, creating a 24x7, always-accessible platform to help students will be the key focus for edu-tech companies. The best part is that students thrive while learning through digital platforms. While parents and teachers were initially concerned about them adapting to high-tech tools, it turned out that they were not being given enough credit. They are not only adjusting, but also eager to learn through platforms integrated with innovations such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. Engagement levels are high, and so is retention.

Edu tech platforms give students more control over how, what and when they would like to learn. So once schools reopen and physical classes resume digital learning will become a post-school activity for those who wish to build on what they have learnt in class. With all the required resources at their fingertips, students will not just catch up, but also be optimally prepared for future disruptions in education. The future of education is now, and it is hybrid learning all the way!

Truth behind success of India's IT companies

■ R K SINHA

Unfortunately, it is a widely known fact these days that positive news in India is rarely highlighted or talked about. Seldom has such news come to the fore, and even if it does, it disappears swiftly and unnoticed. Nowadays, the practice of spotlighting additional focus on pessimistic and cynical news is in fashion. And to be honest, it only appears to be following an upward trajectory. Let's examine a notable example of this from the current scenario. The country's four most prominent IT companies - Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro, and HCL Technologies, recruited over 1,00,000 professional youth in the first 6 months of the current financial year. This is 13 times more than the first 6 months of the last financial year. These recruitments are a plausible indication that India's IT sector is experiencing expeditious advancements.

TCS currently has a total of about 5,00,000 professionals working for it. The rest of the IT companies that we have mentioned also have lakh employees working in total. It is important to note that apart from recruitment in these companies, professionals working in these join other companies once they land better options. In the last quarter, Infosys's 20 percent of the staff resigned.

Employees leaving a reputed company like Infosys, is a clear indication that they are acquiring finer opportunities. Otherwise, anyone will contemplate tenfold before quitting a company of such paramount stature like Infosys. It was merely one example to display how the companies of the IT sector of the country are breaking all the records of progress and growth.

Recruiting new, young men and women as its staff is a manifestation of their rapidly increasing profits. TCS has made a profit of Rs 9,624 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal year. In the first quarter of the same year, the company had made a profit of Rs 9,800 crore. Infosys made a profit of about Rs 5,500 crore in the first quarter of the current year. Wipro and HCL also landed phenomenal results. Despite such significant leaps, the country did not warrant any special reaction in the light of such wonderful news.

Nowadays it is only a matter of where and how violence took place or how the country was caused detrimental damage.

However, it is of popular opinion that the Tata group recently bought Air India for Rs 18,000 crore only because of the enormous profits of its flagship company Tata Consultancy Services.

The Tata group could have easily bought Air India on the basis of TCS' two-quarter results.

In the light of the phenomenal achievements of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro, and HCL, have you ever wondered which companies stand on top of making profits? Whose credit is the most in the market? Finding answers to these questions is not a Herculean task.

All of this progress is greatly owed to having received the best leadership and proper guidance. Now, take TCS for instance.

TCS had become a world-class company even before its current Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Rajesh Gopinath took over the ropes at TCS. The credit for this has to be given to N Chandrasekaran, the current chairman of the Tata conglomerate. He became CEO and Managing Director of TCS in 2009.

He started his professional career with TCS itself. He was handed TCS in perfect condition.

While at TCS, Chandrashekhar learned leadership skills from Tata Group Chairman, Rattan Tata and TCS Founding Chairman Fakirchand Kohli. If today the world recognizes India as one of the most salient powers in the field of information technology and India's IT sector has reached a $ 190 billion valuation, then the credit has to be given to Fakirchand Kohli.

He was the one who laid the foundation of the IT sector in the nation. Working with Kohli and Rattan Tata, Chandrashekharan learned a culture of innovation and excellence in the world of technology.

Talking about Shiv Nadar, who hails from Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. He single-handedly established HCL Technologies as a great software company during his long leadership. It is said that he always inspired his CEOs and managers to think out of the box and do something different.

Nadar always stands by his employees. He would never abandon their side even in failure.

That's why his managers would also yield the best results. HCL Technologies was established by Shiv Nadar. Today, it boasts of its presence in about half a dozen countries, comprising more than one hundred offices and having about one lakh professional engineers associated with them.

The city of Noida in the National Capital region is heaving with Shiv Nadar's offices. The fighting spirit and sharp business acumen of JRD Tata can be seen in Nadar.

Their beliefs and philosophy towards education and national building are almost similar. If we talk about Infosys Limited, even though its current CEO is Salil Parekh, its foundation is as strong as a rock. Its foundation was laid by an epoch-making entrepreneur, Narayana Murthy.

He got cooperation in this regard from colleagues like Nandan Nilekani.

Nandan Nilekani is still the working chairman of Infosys. Narayana Murthy is always busy making every moment meaningful in his life.

Of course, human life may be momentary, yet God provides us the opportunity to make it meaningful through our good deeds.

No matter how massive the kingdom of darkness may be, a tiny lamp lying in a corner keeps on fighting the darkness till the end of its life.

It's very noticeable how short the life of flowers is, but they continue to follow the dharma of imparting their fragrance. Narayana Murthy has made his life-like flowers and lamps, knowingly or unknowingly. He always wants to keep doing better deeds than before. His life has also been spotless. Giving new direction to his company, he has been donating huge amounts for welfare schemes for social welfare works.

That is why he and his Infosys are earning success continuously.

Like all of them, there is also Azim Premji, Chairman of Wipro Limited. He has an exceptional quality. He picks and chooses high-ranking, eminent managers to join and get associated with Wipro.

Azim Premji gives key positions to professionals in Wipro only on the basis of merit and caliber. As a result of his efficient guidance, Wipro has landed the status of the top IT Company in the country.

Thus, the bottom line is that with the rapid advancement of India's IT companies, not only are the youth getting huge employment opportunities but also, the country is earning huge income tax and foreign exchange.

But only those companies are achieving unprecedented success today that have got strong and compelling leadership.

(The writer is a senior editor, columnist and former MP).

Poverty in new paradigm

■ DR PARVEEN KUMAR

Poverty in simple words refer to a condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty is the state of not having enough material possessions or income for a person's basic needs. Poverty results in diverse social, economic, and political causes and effects. India is being categorized as a developing nation. Of the many challenges the country is being confronted with, poverty is still a major challenge. India has not counted its poor since 2011. But the United Nations estimated the number of poor in the country to be 364 million in 2019, or 28 per cent of the population. All the estimated new poor due to the pandemic is in addition to this. Although, poverty is on the decline in India, still around 84 million people are living in extreme poverty in the country and this makes up about 6 per cent of its total population as of May 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic is further estimated to push an additional 90 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty this year, with the total rising to as many as 400 million by 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction. According to United Nations Development Programme administrator Achim Steiner, India lifted 271 million people out of extreme poverty in a 10-year time period from 2005-2006 to 2015-2016. A 2020 study from the World Economic Forum (WEF) found 'some 220 million Indians sustained on an expenditure level of less than Rs 32/day, the poverty line for rural India by the last head count of the poor in India in 2013.'

Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than $1.90 a day and is likely to affect between 9.1 per cent and 9.4 per cent of the world's population in 2020 according to the biennial Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report. This would represent a regression to the rate of 9.2 per cent in 2017. Had the pandemic not convulsed the globe, the poverty rate was expected to drop to 7.9 per cent in 2020. On the other hand, multidimensional poverty has significantly reduced from 54.7 per cent in 2005 to 27.9 per cent in 2015-2016. While poverty is often defined by one dimensional measure usually based on income, Multidimensional poverty represents a new paradigm which encompasses the various deprivations experienced by poor people in their daily lives such as

poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, poor quality of work, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others. A multidimensional measure of poverty can incorporate a range of indicators that capture the complexity of this phenomenon in order to inform policies aimed at reducing poverty and deprivation in a country. Depending on the context of a country and the purpose of the measure, different indicators can be chosen to reflect the needs and priorities of a nation, as well as its constituent regions, districts, provinces, etc. To measure the multiple dimensions of poverty the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative OPHI came out with the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2010. MPI is based on the idea that poverty is not one dimensional (not just depends on income and one individual may lack several basic needs like education, health etc.), rather it is multidimensional. The index shows the proportion of poor people and the average number of deprivations each poor person experiences at the same time. MPI uses three dimensions and ten indicators. The two indicators under education include years of schooling and child enrollment; Child mortality and nutrition indicators are put under dimension of Health and six indicators under Standard of Living include electricity, flooring, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and assets. A person is multi-dimensionally poor if she/he is deprived in one third or more (means 33 per cent or more) of the weighted indicators (out of the ten indicators). Those who are deprived in one half or more of the weighted indicators are considered living in extreme multidimensional poverty. MPI is significant as it recognizes poverty from different dimensions compared to the conventional methodology that measures poverty only from the income or monetary terms.

Recently, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021 was released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) by considering the data from 109 countries and 5.9 billion people. The data has come up with shocking figures and facts. At the global level 1.3 billion people are multi-dimensionally poor and of these about half (644 million) are children under age 18. Nearly 85 per cent live in Sub-Saharan Africa (556 million) or South Asia (532 million). There has been also a periodic reduction in Poverty. Of the 80 countries and five billion people for which there is data over time, 70 reduced MPI in at least one period, with the fastest changes coming from Sierra Leone (2013-2017), followed by Togo (2013/2014-2017). There has also been an absolute reduction in poverty. Some countries saw the fastest absolute reductions in their poorest regions-helping to fulfill their pledge to leave no one behind. Multidimensional poverty also concluded that education has a bearing on multidimensional poverty. Worldwide about two-thirds of multi-dimensionally poor people (836 million) live in households where no woman or girl completed at least six years of schooling. One-sixth of all multi-dimensionally poor people (215 million) live in households in which at least one boy or man has completed six or more years of schooling but no girl or woman has. The report also finds that women and girls living in multidimensional poverty are at higher risk of intimate partner violence. As far as living standard is concerned 1 billion peoples are exposed to solid cooking fuels, another billion live with inadequate sanitation and another billion have substandard housing. 788 million live in a household with at least one undernourished person. 568 million lack improved drinking water within a 30-minute round trip walk. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index has also exposed the weaknesses in social protections systems, education, and workers' vulnerability around the world particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Indian scenario where castes and tribes are a more prevalent line of social stratification in India, this index has also come up with the incidence and intensity of multidimensional poverty among castes and tribes and among individuals who are not members of any caste or tribe. In the country, five out of six multi-dimensionally poor people are from lower tribes or castes. 9.4 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe group lives in multidimensional poverty whereas 33.3 per cent of the Scheduled Caste group lives in multidimensional poverty. 27.2 per cent of the Other Backward Class group lives in multidimensional poverty. Poverty which until a few decades back was just confined being related with the income has now became a global challenge with a new paradigm representing deprivations of basic necessities of life. One type of deprivation gives rise to another one ultimately resulting in this vicious cycle of poverty going on continuously. It is high time to fight this challenge with a holistic approach and a more inclusive and participatory approach involving all the member countries.

(The author is a Scientist at KVK-Leh).

OFF 'D' CUFF
Get rid of your self-doubt

It's normal to experience a feeling of doubt when you are about to face a new situation in life. And when the situation is challenging with great rewards at the end-like embarking on a spiritual journey- then such feelings are inevitable. It is something that everyone experiences at one point of time in their lives.

Further, for a seeker, who is moving on the path of God, the situation is not very different. Self-doubt may stem in him or her as well due to any previous negative experience. A failure in realizing the Higher Power's blessings in life can have a large negative impact on the self-worth of such seekers.

If such self-doubt is not tackled, it can lead to anxiety, depression, lack of motivation to feel the power of God, emotional instability, and also low self-esteem. So, when self-doubt starts emerging in the form of inner weaknesses, try to get rid of it and keep moving on the divine path that will ultimately invoke God's blessings in your life.

Here's what you should do. Continue Your Spiritual Journey undeterred

Understand that disquiet in life keeps you away from God and His blessings. Internal peace is the bridge between you and Him. You can invite His blessings into your life by building such bridges of tranquility.

Also know that when you get entangled in the worldly attractions you give rise to unnecessary chaos in your life. Try to build strong connections with God while per-forming your worldly duties selflessly. You will attain the state of peace and perform your duties faithfully but without getting attached to them or the outcomes. Therefore, walk your spiritual path undeterred and try to build a strong connection with God. But how to continue the spiritual journey while performing duties in the materialistic world?

Live Life of a True Seeker

From the mind, speech and deeds always stay righteous. Refrain from even thinking about committing any misdeed. A true seeker never hurts anyone. The one who is revengeful (Tamasik) and of demonic nature, will have an innate desire to hurt others, cause unrest and chaos all around. Those with a kind and caring heart will never think of causing anyone harm and are true seekers. Such people will have a sparkle in their eyes and that shows they are replete with self-knowledge. They are enlightened by the radiance of Brahma and God. They remain in a state of peace and bliss having depth, gravity and wisdom. So, become a person with self-knowledge, be contented and balanced without being caught up in any duality. Eventually, you'll overcome your self-doubt while living the life of a true seeker.

Become Doubt-Free

A man having no idea about the taste of delicious sweets cannot truly understand its pleasing taste by reading about it in books or by watching how to prepare sweets on TV.

Dr Archika Didi

YOUR COLUMN
Save Trees Save Environment

Dear Editor

Planting trees is one of the most important things you can do to save the environment. It takes about 625 square feet surface area of vegetation to produce the daily oxygen requirement of one person. Even people living in big, bustling cities can play a vital role in greening their environment. Here are some simple, cost-effective ways by which you can plant a tree, and do your little bit to green your world. If you have a big enough garden, plant trees, for they can cool your homes considerably. Select appropriate plants to suit your garden and the climatic conditions. Your local nursery or horticultural society can help you. If your garden is too small for trees, have plants and creepers instead. Every green plant helps to reduce the carbon dioxide we are letting out into the atmosphere.

Garden plants are better than a lawn for absorbing carbon dioxide. So when you plan your garden, opt for extra space for plants rather than for a lawn.

If your city or garden lacks water for gardening, plant drought-resistant plants like cacti, flowering shrubs, etc. If you live in an apartment, grow a terrace or balcony garden using potted plants. Window boxes can be used to grow small flowering plants which also add to the beauty of your apartment. Try and use discarded materials to make your boxes. Keep indoor plants in the house, they can lessen indoor air pollution. Compost your leaf waste to avoid use of chemical fertilisers. Do not present flower bouquets. Instead, give a potted plant and encourage your friends to grow plants. Start a tree planting programme in your area. Plant on roadsides, in parks, in schools, factories and home. If you see trees being cut down on the street, report it immediately to the concerned authorities. Most environmental problems arise due to public apathy. Make saving trees a personal commitment. Conserve paper, conserve trees, save nature, When you buy furniture, find alternatives to wood. You will be saving some of our precious forests. Saving paper is saving trees. Use paper carefully and write on both sides of a sheet. Save envelopes, old letters and junk mail. Use this when you need paper. Do not use paper towels and tissues in household cleaning activities. Instead, use old towels, sheets and pillow case. Do not use paper plates and tissues or paper decorations when you hold a party. Do not collect unnecessary pamphlets and leaflets just because they are free. Use cotton handkerchiefs rather than paper tissues. Avoid sending greeting cards. Every year countless trees are cut down for them. Reuse cartons and gift wrapping paper. Use recycled paper whenever possible. Start eco-clubs in schools which will take up projects in the locality. By following these simple steps one can contribute in saving environment.

Mannan Sharma, JKPS.