

BOOK READING-GATEWAY TO KNOWLEDGE

The importance of books in human life is quite insightful. Books indeed hold a special place in our lives and offer numerous benefits that contribute to personal and intellectual growth. Books are like a gateway to knowledge. They provide individuals with access to a vast reservoir of information and wisdom. Starting as a student, one can evolve into a great and successful individual through the knowledge gained from books. Reading and learning from books can be a transformative experience. Books are like reliable friends that are always there to share their knowledge. They serve as companions throughout one's life. Parents and teachers often encourage reading as it helps students acquire knowledge and tap into the wealth of information contained in books. The concept of continuous learning is emphasized. Those who keep learning are more likely to achieve success and personal growth. Books can be a source of solace and companionship, especially during lonely times. Books provide guidance in life and can have a significant impact on a person's personality and outlook. Many people read storybooks for entertainment, but they also derive valuable lessons and insights from stories. Reading instills confidence, enhances mental and emotional abilities, and contributes to personal development. Books are instrumental in improving vocabulary and language skills, enabling individuals to learn different languages. Books can be considered life partners and friends that offer unwavering support, knowledge, and wisdom. Reading books can enhance mental capacity and self-confidence, helping individuals progress in life. Books are an integral part of human life that enriches the mind, broadens horizons, and supports personal growth. They provide not only knowledge but also companionship, guidance, and entertainment, making them an invaluable asset for individuals of all ages.

'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' - A political trickery

MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

The inclusion of all sections of the society in the public sphere is critically important for any democracy. India has a mixed track record when it comes to women's participation and representation in politics. India stands 20th from the bottom in terms of representation of women in Parliament. India has also produced a number of powerful and consequential women politicians more than most democracies that have held, and still hold power, at the highest levels in state and national politics. Women have held the posts of president and prime minister in India, as well as chief ministers of various states. Indian voters have elected women to numerous state legislative assemblies and national parliament for many decades. In spite of such progress, women's representation in elected assemblies remains abysmally low. In 1952, women comprised 6% of India's first Lok Sabha. Sixty two years later, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha reached an all-time high of 12.15%. The situation is worse at the state level, where the average representation ratio of women is only 7.3%. The greatest obstacle women face are the political parties, who refuse to field a fair number of women candidates. It was realized that the only way to address it in the short run was through bold legislation. This created a voice of reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It was really a joyous moment for every sensible citizen of India, when decade long pending demand of politically empowering the woman by way of creating provisions of reservation in lok sabha and assembly seats was dawning in the new building of the Parliament. The moment 'The Constitution (one hundred and twenty eighth amendment) Bill, 2023 named 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam', to meet a long-pending demand to reserve one-third of seats i.e. 33% reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women was introduced in the new building of Lok Sabha as first bill marking a history in Indian Parliament, I sketched a beautiful map of Indian politics to be more colorful and attractive now with the greater participation of women in policy-making at the national and state levels who will leave wide impact on Indian electoral politics onwards. But as I moved on from clause to clause of the bill the glear cleared from the pages of the bill, and words of erstwhile US President Abraham Lincoln struck to my mind that 'You can fool all people some of the time and some people all the time. But you can never fool all people all the time.' Similar trickery reflected from this bill that apparently was cheering but befooling in nature. After the passage of the Bill by both Houses of Parliament, it will also have to be rectified by at least 50 per cent of state assemblies to become a law. The nod by state assemblies is necessary as it affects the rights of the states which put off its date to around 2029. The reservation of 'as nearly as may be, one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election' will come into effect after a delimitation exercise is undertaken. Delimitation exercise involves the redrawing of boundaries of Lok Sabha and state assembly seats to appropriately represent changes in population. These exercises seek to provide equal representation to the various segments of a society. This means that the bill cannot be implemented before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. So we can deduce that it is a political trickery and well-planned move to create chaos and restlessness in the minds of women to attract votes in 2024 elections of this segment of voters. As per existing law, the next delimitation exercise can only be conducted after the first census to be taken post 2026. This effectively means that the bill cannot become a law until at least 2029 or even later. The bill has proposed that the reservation would continue for a period of 15 years and there will be a quota for SC/STs within the reserved seats for women. In this way, out of the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 33 percent will be reserved for women. Seats reserved for women will be rotated after each delimitation exercise, according to the bill. The interesting part of this bill is that the quota will not apply to the Rajya Sabha or State Legislative Council as these are the safe houses for backdoor entries in power corridors for those rejected by voters but blue eyed boys of political parties. In a nutshell we can say that it is a political trickery of the Modi Government to attract women voters in 2024 as the women have to wait to get its benefit at least for a decade. This is a Bill that makes women look stupid. A careful reading of the provisions of the Bill reveals so. It is the need of the hour that a true representative democracy seeks adequate representation of women in politics. Women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in politics, economics and public life cannot be put on hold for even a day but to talk of decades that the present bill introduced by the Modi Government speaks of. The government seeks maximum participation of women voters by its lucrative schemes for remaining in power but for granting them the authority to decide their own rights; this government brings trickeries in their legislations. I am of the opinion that the Woman Reservation Bill be immediately implemented as there is no logic in putting rider of delimitation exercise as amendments in constitution is a regular exercise and the things proceed in natural course as per need of the hour.

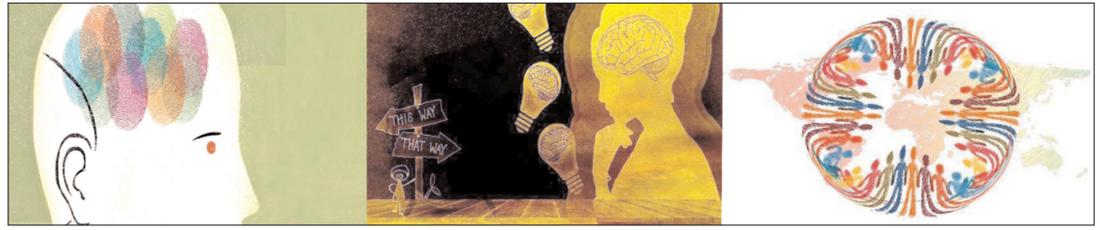
Cancer and Mental Health: Exploring Interconnections and Role of Professional Social Workers

MOHD MANSHOOR AHMED



Understanding the complicated connections between mental health and illness is essential to delivering comprehensive care to cancer patients and survivors. According to several studies, a 29% higher prevalence of mental diseases among cancer patients is rising. (Peng et al., 2019; Pilevarzadeh et al., 2019). Here are some crucial factors to think about:

- **Psychological Effects of a Cancer Diagnosis:** Cancer can have a terrible emotional impact. Patients frequently struggle with worry, dread, sadness, and future uncertainty. Acute stress reactions may occur due to the overwhelming stress of a cancer diagnosis.
- **Mental health issues caused by treatment:** Cancer therapies, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and surgery, can seriously affect mental health. These negative consequences, which can all lead to mental discomfort, may include weariness, pain, modifications to one's body image, and cognitive deficits.
- **Quality of Life:** A cancer patient's general quality of life can be severely impacted by their mental health. Untreated psychological anguish may make it more challenging to follow treatment recommendations, affecting the prognosis and results.
- **Survivorship Issues:** Survivors may experience various psychological difficulties following cancer treatment. Long after the completion of therapy, anxieties about recurrence, body image, and the psychological effects of physical changes brought on by the treatment can still exist.
- **Comorbidity:** Patients with cancer are more likely to have concurrent mental health issues. The detection and treatment of cancer may cause preexisting or new conditions like sadness and anxiety.
- **Supportive Care:** Numerous healthcare facilities provide supportive care services because they understand how important mental health is in treating cancer. To address anxiety and depression, this can include counselling, support groups, and initiatives. The mental health of cancer patients can be enhanced by having these services in treatment.
- **Psychoneuroimmunology:** This field of study examines how the immunological, neurological, and mental systems interact. Evidence suggests psychological health might affect the immune response, which may affect the course and results of cancer.
- **Early detection and intervention:** Spotting mental health problems early in the cancer journey is critical. The patient receiving the proper support and management can be helped by routinely screening for distress and mental health issues.
- **Impact on Family and Caregivers:** Understanding how cancer impacts the patient's family and caregivers is essential. They might struggle with emotional discomfort and caregiver burnout, among other mental health issues.
- **Holistic Care:** Comprehensive cancer treatment should adopt a holistic perspective, addressing the patient's physical and mental health. This may result in



increased treatment compliance, greater quality of life, and perhaps even better treatment.

- **Rural people's mental health can be significantly impacted by cancer, and several factors play a role in this relationship:**
- **Limited Access to Healthcare:** Healthcare institutions and specialists are sometimes out of reach in rural locations. Delays in cancer diagnosis and treatment can result from this, making patients fearful and anxious. Inadequate access to medical care can make people feel helpless, exacerbating mental health problems.
- **Isolation and Social Support:** Populations in rural areas may be smaller, and fewer resources may be available for support services. Patients who live in remote locations could experience feelings of loneliness and have limited access to support networks or counsellors who specialise in cancer-related concerns. Feelings of isolation and despair might worsen when there isn't enough social support.
- **Stigma and Cultural Factors:** Cancer may be stigmatised in some rural communities. Due to this stigma, people may be discouraged from getting medical attention or discussing their diagnosis publicly. How cancer is viewed and treated may also be influenced by cultural and traditional beliefs, which could affect the results for mental health.
- **Financial Stress:** Cancer treatment can be expensive, and those living in rural areas may not have access to as many financial resources or health insurance options. The cost of cancer treatment, including travel costs for in-city therapies, can cause great stress and anxiety.
- **Limited Educational Resources:** Educational resources on cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment alternatives may not be widely available in rural areas. Lack of knowledge can cause misunderstandings and dread, harming mental health.
- **Transit issues:** Reliable public transit is sometimes lacking in rural locations. Patients might experience access issues, which would increase their tension and worry.
- **Work and livelihood:** Many rural populations rely on physically taxing occupations like farming or manual labour. Physical restrictions brought on by cancer and its treatment might make it difficult for a person to work and support their family. Financial stress and feelings of inadequacy may stem from this.
- **Mental Health Stigma:** Besides having few mental health resources, rural locations may also be stigmatised for seeking mental health care. This may keep people from getting the mental health care they need, even after a cancer diagnosis. Coping Mechanisms: Rural communities frequently have distinctive coping strategies

and social support systems. These can be helpful but might not always meet cancer patients' emotional and psychological needs.

- **It's critical to have initiatives that consider the particular difficulties rural communities face to lessen the negative effects of cancer on their mental health.**
 - **Telemedicine:** Expanding telehealth services can improve access to cancer treatment and mental health support in rural locations.
 - **Community-Based Support:** Setting up neighbourhood support groups and community outreach initiatives can assist patients in getting in touch with people going through comparable struggles.
 - **Culturally Tailored Interventions:** Creating interventions honouring rural communities' cultural values and beliefs can increase participation in and acceptance of mental health services.
 - **Education and Awareness:** Supporting cancer education and awareness programs can help dispel myths and prejudices, lowering fear and stigma in rural regions.
 - **Financial Support:** Receiving financial support or information on available resources can help reduce some financial strain related to cancer treatment.
 - **Support at the workplace:** Encouraging employers to provide flexible work schedules or accommodations for cancer patients can assist people in maintaining their livelihoods and lessen financial stress.
 - **A comprehensive strategy that considers the special difficulties and resources these communities face is needed to address the mental health needs of rural populations dealing with cancer.**
- The Role of Professional Social Workers
- To support and help cancer patients and their families throughout their cancer journey, professional social workers are essential. They play a varied function, providing emotional, practical, and psychosocial assistance in various ways.
- The following are some of the primary duties performed by professional social workers who work with cancer patients:
- **Emotional Support:** By being an empathetic and understanding presence, social workers offer emotional support to cancer patients. They assist patients in navigating the emotional difficulties brought on by receiving a cancer diagnosis by listening to their worries, fears, and anxieties.
 - **Crisis Intervention:** Social workers are competent at providing crisis intervention, which enables them to assist patients and their families in overcoming the initial shock of receiving a cancer diagnosis and any following crises that may develop during treatment or survivorship.
 - **Evaluation and Counseling:** Social workers do psychosocial needs assessments

for cancer patients and offer counselling to help them deal with emotional anguish, sadness, anxiety, and adjustment problems. Patients who must decide about their end-of-life care may also receive bereavement counselling and support from them.

- **Social workers represent cancer patients to ensure they receive the proper medical attention and support services.** They assist patients in navigating the healthcare system, comprehending their available treatments, and gaining access to the tools they need.
 - **Education:** Social workers provide information about the disease, available treatments, side effects, and self-care techniques to cancer patients and their families. They support patients in making wise choices regarding their care.
 - **Resource Coordination:** Social workers help patients find local services like support groups, financial aid programs, transportation, and home healthcare. They assist patients in gaining access to these services to ease practical burdens.
 - **Financial Counseling:** Social workers help patients navigate family and cancer care, understand their insurance coverage, and find sources of financial support or assistance for medical bills.
 - **Care Planning:** Social workers work with the medical staff to create individualised care plans that consider each patient's particular requirements and preferences. They make sure that the treatment approach takes psychological elements into account.
 - **Support for Family and Caregivers:** Cancer impacts the patient, family, and caregivers. Social workers offer services and support to help families deal with the difficulties and changes brought on by cancer.
 - **End-of-Life Planning:** Social workers offer end-of-life planning assistance to cancer patients nearing the end of their lives. This includes talking to patients and their families about advance directives, hospice care, and emotional support.
 - **Advocacy for Vulnerable groups:** Social workers may specialise in working with particular groups, such as elderly people, underserved communities, or children with cancer, and they may advocate for their special needs and difficulties.
 - **Research and Policy Advocacy:** Some social workers strive to advance systemic and individual cancer care policies and services through research and advocacy.
 - **Social workers are educated to be culturally competent, recognise cancer patients' backgrounds and beliefs, and adjust their care accordingly.**
- (The author is (Doctorate Purr.) AAPC-SW, American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and Association for Clinical Oncology, USA and Director/Founder, Foundation for Sustainable Health Education and Environment, India).

Sweetness Begets Sweetness

CAPT PURUSHOTTAM SHARMA

Madhura' or Sweetness is nectar indeed. It is full of vitality and, with it, health and happiness go together. How sweet of Owner of the Universe is to give us plenty of sweet gifts like mangoes, apples, bananas, grapes and many other such things. A 'Dabba' of sweets works wonders when gifted to one's Boss or 'Saheb' on Diwali or Baisakhi or on his 'Happy Birthday' or on some other such occasion. We exchange sweets to celebrate our success. At the sweet-shop we find bees and insects hovering over the displayed sweets which reveals the fondness of these beings for the sweetness.

The God has been very kind to give us the tongue to enjoy sweetness, ears to listen sweet, eyes to see sweet, nose to smell sweet and the touch to experience sweet. Sweet speech is also spiritual practice. Radha is looked upon by all the devotees "as the sole ideal of Madhurbhakti". Sweetness harbors humility, anity, perseverance, benevolence and politeness with it. In turn, rewards us with love, happiness, reverence, goodwill, enlarged vision and honor. Persons with sweet speech being thoughtful of others become embodiment of love and esteem. Sweetness begets sweetness. It cures many ailments of the mind. It subdues bitterness, cruelty and egotism. In fact, sweetness purifies the complete system, both internal and external. Virtue of sweetness works like 'Kamdhenu' (the cow of plenty): Sweet culture is bound to spread harmony and joy everywhere.

Gods and Goddesses' favorites are sweets. Lord Ganesha is fond of 'Laddus', so are Hanuman ji and Ma Durga. We offer sweets to them to propitiate them to seek their blessings. Krishna's favorite is Makhan- Mishri. Bheelini, the tribal-saint-women-devotee of Rama, sorted out sweet berries to offer to her Lord. No Yajna (mass feeding) is complete unless a sweet dish is included in the menu. The Prasad to the devotees is invariably a sweet or a sweet fruit.

It brings us great elation when we speak of sweet home, sweet heart, sweet song, sweet music, sweet meet, sweet nature, sweet voice, sweet remembrance, sweet sleep, sweet dreams and sweet of many other things.

Bhagwan is named Madhava. A Holy City in Tamil Nadu is famous for Meenakshi Temple said to have been built by Lord Shiva and Ma Parvathi in one of their incarnations, was named Madurai, City of Honey. We name and affectionately call our children Sweety, Madhu, Madhuri, Madhvi, Mithu. Obviously, the content of these names is sweetness.

The cuckoo is held in all admiration for its

sweet singing although it is dark in complexion whereas a skylark is not because of its awkward voice although it has milky-white feathers. The domesticated sweet-singing parrot is often called Miyan Mithu. There is Madhuvahini River on the bank of which is situated village Madhupura (Malabar), a pilgrimage center.

For a successful and happy domestic life, there are six essentials, namely, perennial source of income, sound health, obedient son, sweet-speaking wife, spiritual knowledge and worldly knowledge. Madhur-Bhashini-Patni (sweet-speaking wife) creates heaven on earth and the family enjoys living an ideal life.

Saints speak of sweetness in their own way.

"Tulsi Meethe Bachan So, Sukh Upje Chahun Orevahikaran Ek Mantar Hai Tajiya Bachan Kathore"

"Sweet words spread happiness everywhere. Through self-control which is one of the greatest austerities, the bitter speech should be renounced."

"Aisi Baani Boliaye Man Ka Aapa Khoyaun Ko Sheetal Kare Aapu Sheetal Hoy"

"One should speak so sweet that it should give smoothing-touch to the mind. It should please the listeners and equally to the speaker too."

"Narayan Ya Jagat Mein Doi Vastu Hai Saar Sab Se Meetho Bolibo Karibo Par Upkar"

"There are only two modes in this world to make an ideal living. One is to speak sweet and the other is to serve and do good to others."

"Madhur Bhaav Madhav Tumhi Namaskar Sao Baar Madhumaye Jeevan Ko Karo Madhur Karo Sansar"

"O My inclination for sweetness! You are the lord of sweetness. I bow hundred times before thee. Make my life sweet. Make this world sweet too."

In MADHURASHITAKAM by SrinadVallabhaacharya, the Saint, in the opening verse out of eight in all, says -

"Adharam Madhuram, Badanam Madhuram, Nayanam Madhuram, Hastam Madhuram, Hridayam Madhuram, Gamanamadhuram, Madhuraadi Pate Rakhilam Madhuram"

"Sweet His lips, Sweet His face, Sweet His eyes, Sweet His smile, Sweet His heart, Sweet His gait, SWEET is everything about the Lord of Sweetness."

Sages and seers say that the Bliss experienced is like sweetness enjoyed by a dumb ("Goonge-ko-gur-ka-swad"). People rush in to listen to sweet-speakers like bees to flowersto collect honey. God's Kingdom is 'Kingdom of Sweetness' indeed.

YOUR COLUMN One Nation, One Election

Dear Editor,

As we all know that the Indian Government is putting in extraordinary efforts in making India a Superpower. Among the various efforts that are being done by the government, one very important step that is under consideration is 'One Nation, One Election'.

This move of the Indian Government, like always, has left the social media and world luminaries surprised. Belgium, Nepal, South Africa and Sweden have implemented 'One Nation, One Election' in one form or the other.

So here the question arises - What really is 'One Nation, One Election'?

'One Nation, One Election' is a proposal to synchro-

nize the elections of the Lok Sabha with the elections of all the other State Assemblies. Its benefits are that it would reduce the burden of the administration and the security. It intends to hold these elections simultaneously, either on a single day or within a specific time frame. Though there are some people who are opposing this step of the government by saying that if there would be elections (Both State and Lok Sabha election) at the same time then the issues related to the states would not be resolved as it will be mixed with the National issues but, if we see from the public's point of view that what benefits they would get. "It is a very good initiative taken by the Indian Government".

India has 28 States and 8 Union territories and due to elections in the States and UT's almost the whole year around our administrative and election machinery remains busy. Pertinent to mention here is that due to frequent code of conduct, the development process

also comes to a standstill. If One Nation, One Election is implemented it would release the burden off administrative and election machinery and focus shall be shifted to other important issues related to the India's economy, education, defence and external affairs etc. However, it said that the Constitution, the Representation of the People's Act 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies would require appropriate amendments to conduct simultaneous polls. So, we need to wait and see what time has in store for us. At last, I would like to say that our government is trying to make India-The Vishwaguru and a better place to live. So, we being the citizens of the country must co-operate with the Government which is doing so much for our pridedful country India. And I am sure in the upcoming time India will rise and shine at the world level.

Kunwar Yashat Singh Pargal