



Success &

ABILITY

India's Cross-disability Magazine

November 2018



BRAVE NEW WORLD

Our young generation
has their say

PLUS:

Global News, Empowerment, Sports, Name Sensitivity
and more...

CONTENTS



3

NEWS & NOTES

Giving and getting visual assistance using the 'Be My Eyes' app; getting ready a disaster preparedness plan the Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities, 2018' and 'Purple Tuesday' to promote accessible shopping.

COVER FEATURE

This November, celebrating Children's Day, we bring to you the thoughts of children from across the country...on how they view and relate to the world around them, a world that offers an unprecedented level of information, choices, technological advances, and evolving platforms for social interaction.

6

30

EMPOWERMENT

International para-athlete, disability counsellor, activist and founder of Wheeling Happiness Foundation, Devika Malik, shares with Eleanor Davis how she ropes in sports to empower women with disabilities.

REFLECTIONS

Paresh Palicha looks back at how computers, Internet and emerging social media platforms helped him break barriers and shed inhibitions.

34

38

LAST WORD

What's in a name? Rather than obsessing over euphemism, let's be truly inclusive on ground, writes Dr. Madan Vasishtha.

WE'D REALLY LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Whether you are a person with disability,
or a parent or a friend or just someone who cares,
we look forward to getting to know you and your concerns.
You are just a **click** away!



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News & Notes

BE MY EYES!



You can now offer visual assistance across cities, across even countries! This has been made possible by a simple and effective venture to help persons with blindness or low vision get visual assistance to identify everyday objects through a live video call, using a smartphone app and camera.

‘Be My Eyes’, a start-up in Silicon Valley, pairs blind people with sighted volunteers who help them identify objects. Users can connect to people with sight who have volunteered with

‘Be My Eyes’. Users can point the smartphone camera at the things that they want to identify and can get help from a volunteer who responds and connects with them over the app. Once the app is downloaded and the user registers himself/herself, the user can tap the icon of the downloaded app to launch the request for assistance at any time of the day or night. The request may also be launched by using a voice command. The app rings until both sides are connected, and the user can then get the volunteer’s assistance to identify things. The start-up has more than 24,000 blind users registered and 300,000 volunteers. All users and volunteers across the world can connect through this free app, which can be downloaded on both android and iOS phones from <https://www.bemyeyes.com/>

Source: National Public Radio

LET NOBODY BE LEFT BEHIND

We live in an age when cyclones, landslides, earthquakes, forest fires, and many such disasters are occurring more frequently than ever. So disaster preparedness is an imperative for all citizens. Here is some help on hand, if you have been wondering how people with disabilities can plan and prepare for emergencies to protect themselves, their families, friends, personal care assistants and others in the support network in the event of an emergency or a disaster.

Listed on enabled.in is a comprehensive disaster response manual. This includes everything from a checklist of items that you need to have on hand, to handle an emergency situation, to emergency numbers and helpline numbers across India, contact numbers and email addresses of all the State and Union Territory Disaster Management Authorities, besides links to international resource guides on preparedness and response to disasters for persons with disabilities.

Specific guidelines and tips on disaster preparedness for persons with hearing impairment, visual impairment and mobility challenges have been listed too. For more, check out <https://enabled.in/wp/nobody-left-behind-disaster-preparedness-for-persons-with-disabilities/>

A fire safety guide for persons with disabilities may also be accessed on this site. Once you make your disaster preparedness plan, you could post a copy of the plan where everyone will see it, keep a copy of the plan with you, and make sure that everyone involved in your plan has a copy too.

Source: enabled.in

GLOBAL IT CHALLENGE FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, 2018

96 youth with disabilities from 18 countries – India, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mongolia, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, UK and UAE participated in the ‘Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities, 2018’ held at Delhi between 9 to 11 November. The event was organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Government of India, in association with Rehabilitation International Korea.

This annual event is a capacity building project that helps youth with disabilities overcome limitations and challenges for creating a better future for themselves through access to Information and Computer Technology (ICT), alleviate the digital divide and expand participation of youth with disabilities in society. The competitions included two individual events – E-Tool (application of MS-Excel, MS-Word, etc.) and

E-Life Map Challenge (to evaluate the ability to search for online information in specific situations), and two group events – E-Creative (ability to create animated stories/games) and E-Content (ability to make videos). The event included an ‘IT Forum’ to showcase the best practices followed by various participating countries regarding use of ICT for empowerment of persons with disabilities.

India had nominated 12 youth with disabilities to participate in the event. These youth had been selected on the basis of the National IT Challenge conducted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in June, 2018. India has been participating in the event since 2013 and has been winning awards ever since. This year, India bagged three awards – Manjot Singh won two awards, in the E-Tool challenge and E-Life Map challenge under visual disability category, while Saurav Kumar Sinha won the Super Challenger award. Thailand topped the awards table with six awards.

Source: Press Information Bureau, Government of India.

PURPLE TUESDAY!

If accessibility and inclusion in our public spaces is to become a widespread reality, all stakeholders have to be roped in. Here is an innovative initiative to improve accessibility for shoppers with disability. ‘Purple Tuesday’, was held on 13 November in the United Kingdom, to draw attention to the challenges faced by disabled shoppers and the adjustments that could improve their experience.

The initiative was taken up by several retailers including Asda, Sainsburys and Marks & Spencer, and was created by Mike Adams, chief executive of the non-profit organisation Purple. Purple focuses on creating conversations between disabled people and businesses, in order to improve access for disabled people and enable them to spend the “purple pound.” According to Purple, one in five people in the United Kingdom has a disability, and UK’s disabled population has a collective spending power of 249 billion pounds. One of the aims of the initiative was to demonstrate to retailers that some accessibility measures need not cost anything, and to encourage businesses to view people with disabilities as customers. Participants in Purple Tuesday were asked to draw attention to the needs of disabled customers, and make at least one long-term commitment to make their business more inclusive. ■



Source: Bustle

"Brave New World"



What a world we live in today! A veritable kaleidoscope of people, places, lifestyles, and gadgets that rule those lifestyles! Perhaps even kaleidoscope is an underestimated word! A galaxy? A world beyond comprehension? Bewildering information explosion? An unimaginable array of choices. Constantly evolving forms of social pressures and social interaction. A period of massive innovation and change – change that has impacted everyone’s lives significantly, but more so for those born in the early 2000s!

How do our children navigate the exciting new world they live in? How do they view the world around them? Have they taken to everything like a fish to water? What about the adults? Particularly, in the context of this article – parents and teachers?

This month of November, is mostly focussed on children – celebrating Children’s Day, and more. We therefore, bring to you thoughts of children from across the country...on how they view and relate to the world around them, a world that seems to be riding the crest of technological advance. As Kahlil Gibran put it, “Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself. They come through you but

not from you... You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth”.

Read on. Realise. Recognise. Reflect.



THE OTHER SIDE OF SMART!



Aditi
Ramachandran

In a world tuned into “smart” technology, are we becoming less sensitive, asks **ADITI RAMACHANDRAN**, Sankalp The Open School, Chennai.

I am Aditi Ramachandran studying the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Secondary Course at Sankalp The Open School at Shenoy Nagar. I love to play games, both on my computer and on phones, and aspire to become a game developer. I am learning to play the keyboard - both Indian and Western Classical. Watching movies, especially horror movies, is my pass time. I love to travel and visit foreign countries.

The last century has seen so many developments in the arena of science and technology, which in turn has sparked off significant developments in areas of medicine, communication, etc. Day in and day out, we are reading about automation, robotics and Artificial Intelligence machines everywhere, which is creating fear in the minds of people of whether machines will control us and replace the human workforce.



“Gone are the days when we controlled machines. Now, gradually the machines are taking the upper hand.”

Though we reap many benefits from such advancements, they do have some drawbacks.

Today, we are able to harvest multiple organs from one dying person and save the lives of seven or eight individuals. This would not be possible but for the developments in the field of medicine. Many vaccines and medicines have been discovered through a lot of research, which protect people from dreadful diseases. We are thankful to the researchers and scientists who have worked tirelessly for this.

The remarkable developments in the means of transportation have enabled us to reach the other end of the globe in a matter of hours. In contrast to Jules Verne’s novel, where it took 80 days to circumnavigate the world, it now takes just eight days or a little more for the same.

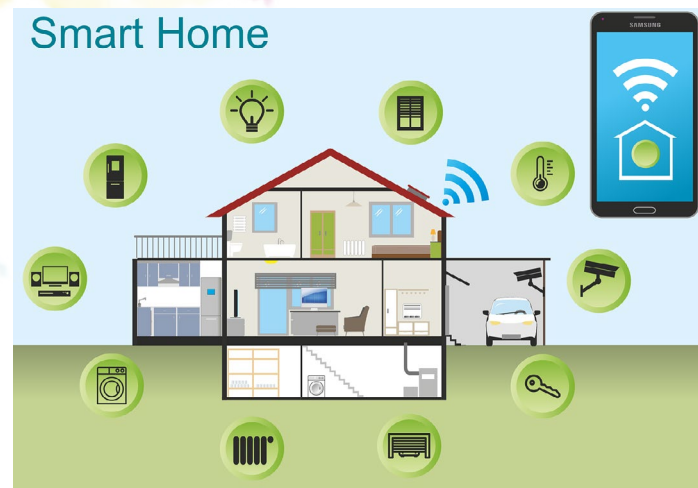
Needless to say, the growth of technology in the field of communication has been amazing. From huge TV sets of yesteryears to the sleek TV screens, desktops, palmtops and phones, we see innovation in all devices. Yes! TVs have become smart TVs and mobiles have become smartphones, with their utility surpassing the said functions of watching or calling. Now, we can see our favourite serials, cinemas, sports matches, chats and everything else LIVE on our mobiles and TVs.

Then comes Virtual Reality, fascinating both kids and grownups alike, especially gamers.

Besides, there are a number of apps which help businessmen study the dynamic changes in the stock markets in order to plan their investments.

Today, classrooms have also become smart and virtual, with computers and tabs being the virtual *gurus*. Blackboards have become whiteboards with government schools too using audio-visual aids. Google and Wikipedia are close at hand to help the child who wants to gain knowledge. “Have your answers at your finger tips!” Ironically, this age-old adage has literally come true! Now, we can get answers to our finger tips, and in a split second.

Additionally, children can access educational websites and can get detailed information on any topic. Visual presentations, online videos, interactive programmes, learning tutorials and a variety of books have revolutionised education in an unimaginable way. Kids learn state-of-the-art tools and methods on their own. Educational games help children perform well in their studies with their online quizzes, tutorials and brainstorming riddles. Does it mean that schools, classrooms and teachers will become redundant?





It is a common sight to see small children who haven't even started school, learning rhymes, numbers, colours and much more at home...thanks to technology. Shopping has become simpler, easier and smarter too. You can send gifts to your family or friends in any part of the world, from the comfort of your home.

We can have any number of friends through social media in spite of never meeting them in person. Sharing our thoughts and ideas, and uploading and downloading anything that interests us is a norm.

Smarter 3D printing technology in designing anything from bridges to human prostheses...the list is endless.

However, is all this fine?

Gone are the days when we controlled machines. Now, gradually the machines are taking the upperhand. You don't even have to walk to turn off the fans or lights. Just tell 'Alexa'. She will take care.

Slowly, we are turning into zombies living in a utopian, virtual world, failing to understand the realities around us...

Gradually, we are becoming less sensitive to certain social issues...

Do these advancements in technology make us emotionally weak? The answer is YES! We are not able to accept failures...the evidence lies in the increasing rate of suicides among school children who are unable to handle the mounting pressure.

In the next 20-25 years, we are going to witness even smarter developments which will significantly impact the lives of human beings.

With smarter technology, we are forced to become smarter, but to what extent?

Robots, androids and humanoids will control us even though they are made by us... We will see driverless cars, self-flying planes and drones flying everywhere.

Smart phones, smart TVs, smart classrooms, smart cities... It is going to be a world of and for SMART PEOPLE.

Where will a less smart person like me live?

We need to wait and watch...as technology will change and continue to change our lives....change is the only constant.



“With smarter technology, we are forced to become smarter, but to what extent?”



THE TECHNOLOGY TRAP

We need to learn to pull ourselves away from our devices and focus on what truly matters - human interactions, says ANANT BAJAJ, Grade 11, AISC, Chennai.



Anant
Bajaj

The world we live in is ever evolving to meet the growing demands of society as we know it. For every situation we are placed in, there is an abundance of choice. The change seen within the span of a decade is incredible. Not only has technology advanced, but we as a society and a global community have evolved as well. As exciting as this change is, the more we explore the characteristics of how we have advanced, it is scary. This dramatic shift in paradigm has been extremely relevant in the lives of the youth born in the 2000s (18 years old now or younger).

Being someone belonging to this category, I can firmly say that the way we navigate today's world is through technology. Where would we be without technology? Take a moment to think about this question. The more you think about it, the more you realise that our daily lives are



completely driven by technology. When we wake up in the morning, the first thing we do is to check our phones and find what happened overnight. When walking from place to place, instead of looking up and admiring our surroundings and interacting with real people, we choose to look down at our phones and hide behind a screen, checking if we have received new friend requests, ignoring real social interactions. This is not an attack on the current generation, because I too am guilty of doing this.

As Simon Sinek put it, we live in a world driven by the impact of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. In other words, we live by putting filters on everything we do. We are good at portraying that our lives are absolutely perfect when in reality we are suffering from depression and other symptoms. Who we are as a people is defined by the number of followers or friends we have on these social media platforms. Consequently, this leads to our generation having lower self-esteem. There are age restrictions on things such as drinking, smoking and other activities that are bad for you. However, there are no age restrictions on technology, something that has been scientifically proven to deteriorate our lives and increase depression, besides eliminating the all-important social interaction necessary in the real world. What happens when we need to talk to someone in the real world, but have not learned the skills to do so, due to spending our entire lives behind a screen? Don't get me wrong, technology has amazing benefits, but just as with everything in the world, it is good only in moderation. All of this meshed together, in my opinion, has shaped the way we, the future leaders of tomorrow, view the world around us.

Like I said, our perspective on the world itself is driven by the likes of technology. Our entire lives are fit compactly within the boundaries of our smartphones and we struggle to intentionally navigate the world the way it was meant to be. Real life experiences are the only way we as a community are able to develop into fully functioning beings. Technology strips us of that ability and forces us

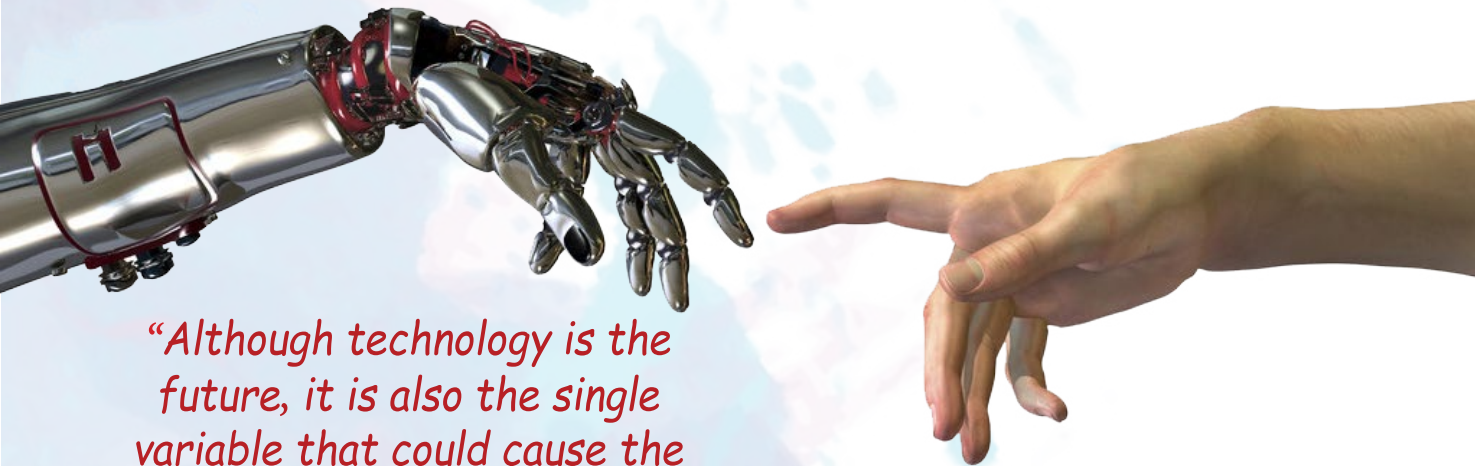
“The world has so many beautiful experiences and sights waiting to be seen. However, by looking down at your screen, you might just miss it.”





to rely on the Internet as a means to accomplish what we want to do, rather than personal interactions. We want instant gratification. Instead of going through the process of life, we want and expect results immediately, as voiced by Simon Sinek.

This is especially relevant when we talk about our friends. We define our friends by the number of followers we have. But when you think about how many of them are truly your friends, you realise that a significantly small portion of your followers are actually friends. It's incredible because the way we view friends is completely superficial. We don't need to have actual relationships to connect with someone and become their friend. We can click one button and send them a "request" to be their friend with no interaction at all. That is not the essence of friendship at all.



“Although technology is the future, it is also the single variable that could cause the demise of society as we know it.”

We also don't value the relationships we develop with our teachers, parents, or adults in general. They are the figures who guide us in this complex journey called life. However, nowadays, we view them as people who merely guide us into a world where we will be inevitably sucked in by technology. Adults can offer us so much, however, we choose to engage with inanimate objects and neglect people who have the experiences that have made them successful. They have lived in a world without technology and understanding those times and experiences is imperative to our growth. When kids our age have free time, I guarantee you that instead of maybe picking up a book for fun, a vast majority turn to technology for entertainment such as videos, movies, and videogames. We cannot escape the trap that is technology because that is what it was intended to do. To get us hooked and make us dependant on it so much, that a majority of people spend more than eight hours every day on technology. We are addicted as a community and it has become the norm and culture to use technology for all of life's needs.

This is especially relevant in my life currently. I attend an international school here in Chennai and am surrounded by an incredible, diverse community. Our campus is beautiful and we have state-of-the-art facilities. However, all of our time here in school revolves around technology. All of our assignments and homework are done online. This takes up a lot of time and shows that



much of our time is spent on technology. I am also lucky to have amazing friends who are Korean, Spanish and American...an incredible mix of ethnicities. However, my friends and I tend to gravitate towards technology and spend more time on our phones rather than talking about the many experiences we have. Interacting with my friends is also impersonally done through my phone. I text them almost everyday about different things, which makes for minimum personal interaction. Having lived in the U.S. for five years, I have many friends there that I still keep in touch regularly. The only way to do this is through technology - texting and video chat. I love having this availability, but it also adds to the time I spend on technology when I should be more available to the people who are around me. I have made it a goal to appreciate what life has given me and appreciate the little things that are available to me rather than always spend time on technology. This again underlines the point that everything is good only in moderation. What keeps me going are my friends, when school pushes me to my lowest. Therefore, it is important that I take the time to be with the important people in my life rather than sit behind the comfort of my devices. Real people should always be valued over inanimate objects.

For those born in the 2000s, I strongly urge you to reflect within yourself on how much technology has consumed you. The world has so many beautiful experiences and sights waiting to be seen. However, by looking down at your screen, you might just miss it. We need to learn to pull ourselves away from our devices and focus on what truly matters. Human interaction. Because that is what life is all about. Developing true, meaningful human relationships is invaluable and technology negates that ability. So next time you are in a car or walking home, instead of looking at your phone and texting, look up and enjoy what God has given us on this beautiful earth. Because although technology is the future, it is also the single variable that could cause the demise of society as we know it.

“It is important that I take the time to be with the important people in my life rather than sit behind the comfort of my devices. Real people should always be valued over inanimate objects.”





Make the most of it!



Nikhil
Barretto

We should make the best of technology, and also contribute to its growth, as it is our prime source of information and learning, says NIKHIL BARRETTO, Grade 8, Abacus Montessori School, Chennai.

The rapid changes in the 21st century continue as time goes on, with developments in technology being made everyday. These developments ensure that the world progresses with time, new gadgets and phones are released every year, and companies reach new economic heights all the time. In this century, almost every person living in urban areas has access to the Internet, which allows them to learn countless skills and have access to thousands of entertainment sources. The Internet also allows people to access social media websites and applications, letting people meet online by messaging, besides giving people a preview into others' lives. Through the years, social media has allowed people to help others in need and to signal that they are in need as well. Standard of living is also at an all-time high in most major metropolitan cities.





This may seem like an ideal situation, however, most of the things I mentioned cause urbanisation, which in excess will eventually lead to overpopulation and unemployment in large cities and could cause economic crashes and unhappiness among people.



“Technology has taken the world by the storm and even our elders are using it in their everyday life.”

As for me, I live a comfortable life in Chennai with my parents, two brothers, and my dog. I, like most children and adults, live a life completely connected to the Internet and to technology. I play video games, which help me express my creative side and develop a strategic mind. I believe that video games are a great source of learning mixed with entertainment

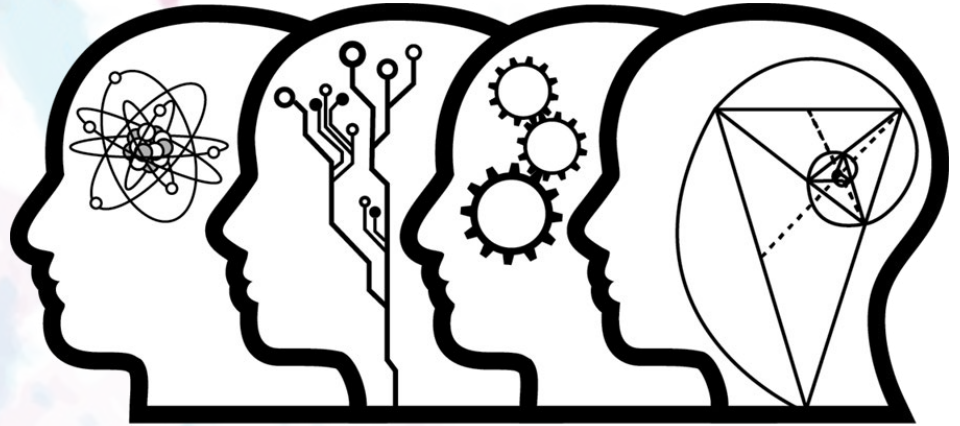
and fun. A good example of a video game that helps you learn is *MineCraft*. In *MineCraft*, there is no one true goal. It allows you to build anything you want and explore your almost infinite world. *MineCraft* allows you to be as creative as you want - you can build a large mansion or even an entire city. As a result of this, it is often used as a tool by 3D designers.

I enjoy listening to music and making music. Because of my parents, I often listen to music from their time, which I believe to be better than today's music. There are multiple applications that let you access millions of songs on one device through streaming, and even download them to use offline. I, for one, use Apple Music, as I have access to Apple devices, although there are multiple applications that can be used to listen to music.

The Internet has also turned into a platform for discussion. Websites such as Reddit and

Quora allow you to open a discussion on any topic or join an existing one. These discussions can range from 'Who has the funniest meme?' to the end of the world.

Are our minds being MANIPULATED?



Vishal
Anand

Let technology manoeuvre, not manipulate minds, says VISHAL ANAND, Grade 6, Sankalp The Open School, Chennai, inquiring into how search engines and social media trigger human responses to situations.

Mind is what we make out of our moves in our world. An ant moves in life because it has a defined purpose. Do we then accept that all our moves in life, in this world, are with purpose? This is a question we need to ponder on. Any movement in one's mind happens because of predictive purpose today. Much adored social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook use this prediction as their search engine fuel of the human mind. After all, poets have sung about visible movements of joy, which they instigated in their minds out of imagination. Alas! In today's world, I see everything as a pure matrix maze of responses. Some examples:

Matrix response 1: Normal response.

Matrix response 2: Sarcasm

Matrix response 3: Predictive response based on special mapping of minds which is a pure psychic cycle. All my childhood, I saw people responding to the term "autism" as a poor social



“Somewhere, inferior became vaguely superior.

I could term this as a change that ensued due to recorded events of achievement getting registered in minds.”

ability. This psychic thought engulfed everyone. However, a radical change came about in the space, and in human psyche, which transformed this definition to “unbelievable skills”.

Somewhere, inferior became vaguely superior. I could term this as a change that ensued due to recorded events of achievement getting registered in minds. I started to understand the psychology of mankind from the repetitive messages on media and social networks.

Virtual reality can be a *faux pas* as shown in the funny movie Johny English. All the events experienced by the actor were the same, except that it was in a different context. Instead of virtual space, it was witnessed in real space, which created a roller coaster of laughter. That’s the exact condition we are in. All the virtual space we create as friendship, love, knowledge, entertainment, etc., are so vulnerable that they occupy no real space that is needed for it to be anchored, and eventually it is but a mirage.

A message might get forwarded to 10 people and create a virtual pursuit of emotions, even though there was no intentional interest in the mind space of those receiving or forwarding the message... We call this the fulcrum of choice, but it may just be mob-lynching by words.

Millenials like us see Minions as pals. They are disfigured characters. Our brains are getting wired to unisexual images where male and female identities are lost. Creatures overrule humans and we are being sown with the seed of rationalism, not conceptualism. I am an autistic boy, hence I find these images gory and meaningless. But other kids joyfully play with these toys. What a pity!

So today, human psychology is understood with the help of creatures and not humans themselves. In the worst-case scenario, eyes don’t show love, they show terror. Then why do we lament about terrorism? Why are we crying about depression and stress? Patriotism, spirituality, and realism are no more in the vicinity now.

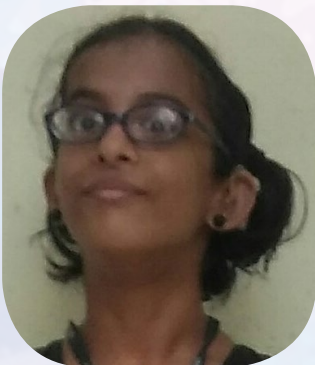
My humble request is to create abundant real space for paper, gadgets, apps, technology and learning. I am not against technology, but it shouldn’t manipulate minds, but rather manoeuvre millennials towards growth and peace.

“Any movement in one’s mind happens because of predictive purpose today.”



My views about the world

Jinisha Mary Thomas





Jinisha Mary Thomas
V-E

My views about the world

I lead a happy life in this wonderful God created world.

I really love to live in this world.

I was astonished to see the gigantic mountains in the hill stations along with my friends / parents when I spent a few days with them. I was taken up by the waterfalls, rivers and the tall trees; the small small insects

Wow.. such a wonderful sight. Once I ran behind a butterfly. I ran and ran and ran. But, I could not catch it. But the chasing behind the butterfly gave me a joy.



I always used to admire the rainbow. I used to raise my doubts to people asking "Who had gone up to the sky and painted the rainbow?" Why is the sea water salty and how do the waves formed again and again.?



Why does the water level in the sea never decrease? All the above questions do not give me any answers. Still, I love this world which I live in. Do you know why?

Yes, my beloved parents, sisters and brothers live in this world. I love to play with my brother. He often fights with me if I take ~~my~~ his car ~~doll~~. My mother gets angry with me. At times, I used to get beatings. I cry during those moments. Again I join with my brother and play.

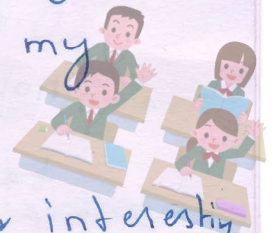
Another place which I enjoyed was my school. No... no... its my mother's lap where I share my whole feelings. It's a place where I share my emotions, my interest and my disappointments.





Such a beautiful place. The green trees all around, a big playground to run and play, vast classrooms and other facilities... one or two... countless.

My teachers who work hard and expect us to learn everything, my Headmistress who does all sorts of help at our requests etc. Hence not only myself, but my friends too like my school.



Let me tell you another interesting information. Only in our school a model of transportation and its signals and irrigation facilities have been done.

These are a few places which I like the most. Suppose, if this school is not here..... What about me?.....



I forgot to introduce my beloved friend Sehine. Both of us used to join our hands and play in the ground. Sometimes we fight. She is my true friend who understands my thoughts and feelings. I thank ~~the~~ God for rendering this friend.



Such a beautiful place/world is now turning into a garbage. Hence, my teacher advised me to take care of this world which I live in. When I was out on the road, I could not inhale clean air due to the vehicles smoke. I had cough. I realised that my world is slowly getting spoiled. But, I wanted to save the world. I remembered my teacher's idea of planting trees. I have a small sapling in my house. I have kept





5

That sapling will grow into a tree where birds come and stay, build nest, lay eggs and small birds grow. My mother says that those birds makes sounds/chirp saying keech... keech...



I too like to hear those sounds. But I could not. Yes, I am hearing impaired by birth. I enjoy everything through vision. I cannot hear. But, you hearing people enjoy the sounds of this world and lead a happy life. Can you destroy this world?

"Come on... Let us save our world"





Trees for life

Trees are essential for our very existence. We need to plant more trees and expand the green lungs of our city to combat the evils of everyday pollution, and on a larger scale, the ever increasing global warming. Indiscriminate felling of trees has led to soil erosion, landslides and earthquakes. We have to take immediate action to plant more trees and promote the slogan 'One tree, one life'.

- **Debjoyti Roy**, Middle and Senior Academics.



My school picnic

Winter is a lovely time of the year and there are many interesting events. One of them is the annual class picnic. Last year, we went by bus to a nature park accompanied by our teachers and mothers. We went around the park and saw many rabbits and deer in their enclosures. It was fun feeding them grass and leaves. We played many different games under the

shade of the trees. By then, we were all quite hungry and waited for the most interesting part of the excursion – sharing the delicious food brought by our mums. My favourite was fried rice and chilli chicken. I also enjoyed sampling all the different varieties of flavoured potato chips and wafers brought by my friends. I am now waiting for winter and am eagerly looking forward to the next picnic.

- **Deepanshu Pal**, Middle and Senior Academics.



My dream encounter

I have always been fond of music and like to listen to music of all genres. My absolute favourite is Indian classical vocalist Kavita Krishnamurthy and I have often dreamt of meeting her some day. That day came on 21st June 2015 – World Music Day. We were taken from school to participate in a cultural event at Nazrul Manch. Many well known singers and musicians were to perform and among them was my idol Kavita Krishnamurthy. Out of the three songs that she sang, her rendition of a Meera bhajan was soul stirring. I was overjoyed to have a picture taken with her at the end of the programme. Three years later, I was fortunate to be selected to attend a music programme in which Kavita Krishnamurthy was to perform. She not only sang some soulful numbers but also took a request to sing one of my personal favourites. I was ecstatic when she asked me to join her on stage and sing along with her. I felt that I was in the divine presence of Saraswati, the patron goddess of arts and learning. That evening will always remain most memorable.

- Shubhangi Mitra, Middle and Senior Academics.



My dream

Everyone has dreams and aspirations of some kind. My dream is a long term one. I want to be a computer teacher. I learn about computers in school and find it very interesting. My mother has bought a desktop computer for me to practice all that I learn in school. My family and teachers are very supportive and I am positive that if I work hard and persevere, I will be able to succeed in achieving my goal.

- Diganta Nag, Middle and Senior Academics.



My first nature camp

Last year, I was part of the school team that attended a nature camp held at the foothills of the Himalayas. I had never seen mountains at close quarters. It was a unique experience for me. Our camp was based in Dalgaon in Darjeeling district and was surrounded by tea plantations and forests. A small river flowed past our campsite. I was delighted when my teacher and therapist helped me dip my feet in the cold running water. It was a most unforgettable experience. I heard a variety of bird calls as we sat on the river bank. It was a very memorable trip.



- Shreya Singh, Academics, Hindi and English section.

Unity in diversity

The most unique feature of our country is unity in diversity. There are people of different faiths and religions who live together in harmony. Yet, there are also some who deliberately seek to create divisions in the name of religion. It is unfortunate that in today's society, people are only interested in fulfilling their own needs. This has resulted in the erosion of this unique feature of our country. People are being discriminated on the basis of their colour, language, food and dress. All men are equal in the eyes of the law

and are meted justice accordingly, regardless of whether they belong to a high or low caste. I want everyone to help others, remove all forms of discrimination and reinforce unity in the country.

- Md. ARYAN, Academics, Hindi and English





My parents

I love my parents. My father pampers me and becomes a kid just like me when we play. However, he is quite a strict parent when it comes to my studies or music lessons. My mother often scolds me when I am naughty, but when I am sad, she is always there to give me a tight hug. My dad reads to me interesting bedtime stories and mom sings old favourite melodies. We should respect our parents. I believe, with the blessings and love of my parents, I will overcome all the hurdles in my life. I want to sing the song, "We shall overcome someday..."



- Shiladitya Roy, Junior Academics.

A picture I want to draw

I love to draw pictures, especially of nature. I wish to draw a picture of a big and beautiful garden that I see clearly in my mind. The garden will be full of tall and lush green trees. Flowers will bloom in profusion. Birds will sit on the branches and sing the sweetest melodies. And in the midst of all this, my friends and I will play and chase colourful butterflies. That is the picture I want to draw.

- Sneha Das, Junior Academics.



Students of Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, Kolkata.

IT'S A YO-YO WORLD



Yuvaraj, Dhanvanth, Gayathri, Subhasree,
Bhuvana & Gangadharan

- Vidya Sagar, Chennai

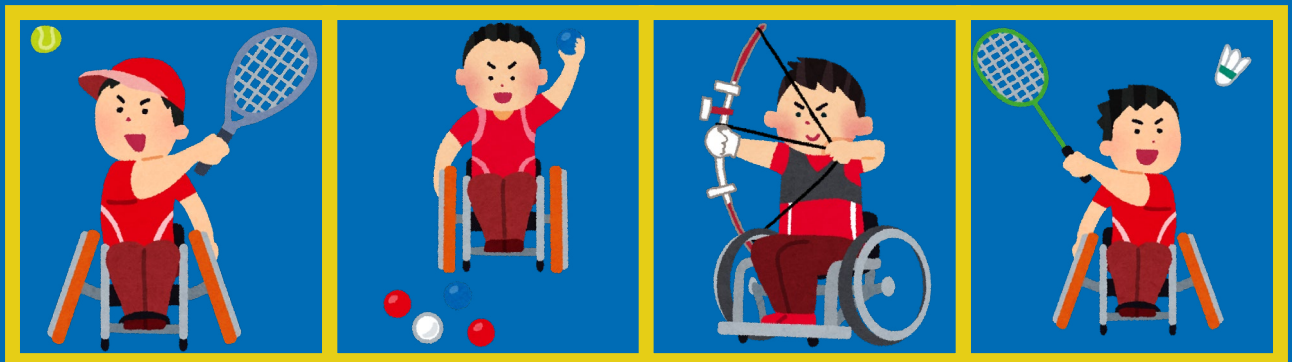
We are happy to be born in a tech age; we have access to Email, Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, Playstore, etc. We are somewhat independent, thanks to convenient transportation services like Ola, Uber, Metro, Fast Track, etc. Our standard of living holds the fridge and television as basic necessities. The leisure times are spent mostly watching television, playing video games, and some indoor games like chess and carrom. Sadly, people from villages have moved to cities to live in urban societies.

It is good to see cultural changes – people dress as they like, we see more bikes and cars, and everyone has a smartphone. In spite of all this, it is sad to see beggars and drunken people roaming around; it is sad to see people busy and lost in their own worlds. Everyone feels pressured to work only in software companies and the like. We can't understand why rules and regulations are flouted by adults around us, such as talking on mobiles while driving, drunken driving, breaking traffic rules, etc. There is no proper accessibility for persons with disabilities in public places and public transport. Every day, we see chain snatching, thefts, murder and cheating. Everyone is getting sick because of pollution and sickness like cancer, dengue and cholera. The present generation has moved from joint families to nuclear families, and both the parents take up jobs outside home. They take good care of us and provide all facilities we want. But, though we are looked after with good care and affection, due to hectic lifestyles, both the parents are always on their phones or laptops. ■

The Duke of Cambridge, PM Narendra Modi, the Duchess of Cambridge & Devika Malik



Be a Sport!



Can taking up sports empower women with disabilities? International para-athlete, disability counsellor, activist and founder of Wheeling Happiness Foundation, DEVIKA MALIK tells ELEANOR DAVIS just how this works.

In a world which performance wakes up to the need for strong, female role models, the likes of Devika Malik are not to be missed. At the age of 27, Devika has become an international para-athlete and disability counsellor, has addressed 53 Commonwealth Heads of State on disability rights and has co-founded a disability sports charity.

Born with hemiplegia, a condition that causes paralysis to the left side of her body, Devika's life has been dedicated to improving the lives of others with disabilities in India, particularly through sports. She is the daughter of the Paralympic athlete Deepa Malik, and grew up watching her mother defy paralysis to go on to become the first Indian woman to win a Paralympic medal, race rally cars and raise a family.



Together, they founded the 'Wheeling Happiness Foundation', which aims to enable women with disabilities from under-served communities to take up sports. This, they did, by sourcing mobility equipment, helping with transport and finding the right coaches and by conducting access audits for buildings and stadiums that fell short of access norms.

The mother-daughter duo seems a formidable force and has big plans to expand their outreach. Currently, they mentor three women by looking after their sports-related needs. This includes a single mother-of-four who has won a collection of national medals and has entered her first International event in javelin and discus.

"A lot of people with disabilities from rural backgrounds are reaching out to us, saying that they want to be more active and want to get outdoors", Devika says. "They want to be more independent but they don't know how, because they have neither the information nor the resources, just the intent."

A sense of agency

Since the age of 12, Devika has volunteered with disability organisations and remembers

"A lot of people with disabilities from rural backgrounds are reaching out to us, saying they want to be more active and want to get outdoors, but don't know how."

growing up in a household dedicated to supporting others in reaching their sports goals. With a team of volunteers, the foundation has organised sponsorship for two para-athletes for the Asian Games, provided counselling, driving lessons and supported over 50 people to take up sports.

“The reason we chose to focus on sports as an empowerment strategy is because it gives people a sense of identity and a sense of agency”, she says.

“The feminine gender is considered a minority, in terms of the vulnerabilities that women face; and people with disabilities are considered a minority community too. When you bring these two together, the term

“When women with disabilities are able to engage in sports, it shifts their focus, as well as that of society’s, on to what they can do, rather than what they cannot do.”

we use is ‘double stigma’. When women are able to engage in sports, it shifts their focus, as well as that of society’s, on to what they can do, rather than what they cannot do”, voices Devika.

In a number of families, when someone acquires a disability or if somebody has a degenerative disability, more so if this is a woman, then, for safety and security reasons, the families are invariably very protective and tend to keep them indoors. “When we bring them out and start engaging them in sports, they realise that in spite of limitations, this is still a predominantly physical activity that they can not only engage in, but can also excel at. This, in a big way, totally shifts people’s mind-sets as to what these women are capable of”, she says.

Access to buildings remains one of the biggest issues that the foundation is helping



Devika Malik receiving the ‘Queen's Young Leaders’ Award from Queen Elizabeth II.

to tackle. During audits, it is commonplace for them to find unnecessary steps, narrow doorways and inaccessible toilets. There are these adjustments that need to be made before they recommend that a wheelchair user, for example, enters a stadium or sports academy.

“More importantly, it’s around changing mind-sets where our advocacy work is of immense help”, Devika says. “If I go in front of an audience of 1500 people and say ‘this is my disability and in spite of that, this is where I am today’, or we show them videos of how my Mum is able to drive, or the tricks of how she manages her movements, the message is easier to communicate.”

The growth of Wheeling Happiness has shaped Devika’s academic pursuits and she is in her second year of a Ph.D. at Loughborough University, where she is undertaking an exploratory study documenting the experiences of women with physical disabilities in north India who have engaged in sports. Her research will take her back to India to interview around 25 women, with disabilities such as spinal cord injury, polio or amputations.

These efforts haven’t gone unrecognised. Apart from becoming a TEDx speaker and addressing organisations around the world on the

importance of disability sports, Devika was awarded the Queen’s Young Leader Award in 2015, which included a four-year package of mentoring to help develop her organisation. In July this year, she addressed 53 Heads of State and the British Royal Family at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held at Buckingham Palace, on the importance of an inclusive vision within the Commonwealth.

After completing her Ph.D., she hopes to expand the foundation’s capacity to enable more people to take up sports, in particular bridging the gap for those who do not have the financial means, or ability to reach sports venues.

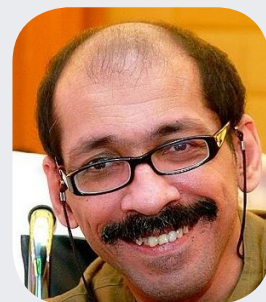
“That’s a long-term goal for us – to organise financial support or establish an actual facility, like an academy of some sort, where you can tell a disabled person who has never been out of her house, with confidence: Come here, we will look after your accessibility needs, your travel, your sports diet; we will give you three to four months of training to explore different sports.” ■





LIFE *in the times of* SOCIAL MEDIA

From the floppy disc era to now, PARESH PALICHA looks back at how emerging social media platforms widened his circle of friends and enhanced his connect with society.



It is said that friends are the only people you can choose in your life. The rest you get by default, be they your parents, siblings, or your extended family. In the Indian context, no one is spared. Even your prospective spouse or life partner is selected or at least scrutinised by your extended family even before you formalise the relationship. More so, if you're a severely disabled person and happen to look like a dim-witted person, woe is upon you. The chances that you have friends of your own are very grim. I was such a person in my younger days. A guy with slight speech impairment, that left me tongue-tied when an unknown person tried to converse with me, and in the bargain, perhaps confirming to that person that I was really rather dim-witted.

So, as with everything else, my siblings had to share even their friends with me. Or, to put it more precisely, their friends who visited our home were considered as my friends too. They would say a 'Hi' or a 'Hello' when they came in, and a 'Bye' when they left. Some of them even paused to enquire what I was reading or watching on TV. A few of them did become my real friends and came to see me even when my siblings weren't around. Those days, I was keenly interested in palmistry, numerology and used this knowledge to make more friends. They were mostly people who were experiencing the flutter of romance for the first time or seriously stung by Cupid's arrow and wished to know their future.

Life went on like this till the early 90s when I passed SSLC as a private over-aged student. My sister then took the initiative to register me for a pre-degree course and a diploma in computer applications in a neighbourhood shack of an institute that boasted of three giant-sized computers and a small



“In those days, email was the new breakthrough. Once, I tried my luck by sending an email to one of my favourite film critics, C.S.Venkiteswaran, which turned out to be the beginning of an enduring friendship.”

Simultaneously, my ambition to see my name in print was showing results. Some of my Letters to the Editors were published and by 2000, I was contributing to the local edition of two English newspapers on a freelance basis. To top it all, at the dawn of the new millennium, I had a PC at home with a dial-up Internet connection. In those days, email was the new breakthrough. Once, I tried my luck by sending an email to one of my favourite film critics, C.S. Venkiteswaran, which turned out to be the beginning of an enduring friendship.

The next big discovery for me, were the blogs, of the writers I followed in print. This inspired me to create not one but three blogs: one for my film based writings, one for my general interest stories and one concerning disability.



Until then, I had been very reluctant to reveal my physical condition publicly. Even the Features Editors of the newspapers I wrote for had come to know about my condition only after they had accepted my stories. Although I didn't write much in my blogs, it somehow helped me let down my guard.

It then so happened that a private news agency approached me to cover Malayalam cinema, which I did for a couple of years before migrating to a popular website that I went on to write for around a decade. This somehow helped me develop a thick skin, as the fans of the stars whose films I criticised hurled abuses at me and my credibility. For the first few months, I kept googling my name to check out the response my reviews got, until I realised that this was preventing me from giving my honest opinion.

In the meanwhile, Orkut happened and people started approaching me directly. Some of them argued for hours and vanished, some got my point and retreated, and yet others agreed to disagree with me but remained friendly. Once Orkut started waning, FB rose from the other end, so to speak, and the list of my friends increased by the day. And when they come to meet me, or spot me somewhere and walk up to say 'Hi', they wait patiently for me, without considering me dim-witted. ■

TERMS OF IMPAIRMENT

What's the good word?



What's politically correct keeps changing over time, disability terminology included. Rather than invent euphemism to hide our hidden prejudice, let's be truly inclusive on ground, writes DR. MADAN VASISHTA, making you chuckle and contemplate all the way.

Shakespeare through Juliet had asked, “What’s in a name?” Obviously, Shakespeare and Juliet did not have to deal with political correctness or the extremely biased and sensitive issue of selecting a name for some disability. Terminology to describe various disabilities has changed over time and will continue changing. The requirement to be politically correct forces us to select and use names that are not offensive. And this political correctness changes with time, faster than the weather. Juliet’s rose “by any name would smell as sweet” but the names of disabilities start to stink faster than fish.

Some of the terms I refer to below might raise eyebrows of highbrow people working with and for people with, hmmm, disabilities, but I am using these as references and request to be forgiven.



The generic “handicapped” referring to all people with various disabilities fell out of grace and was replaced with a softer term - disabled. “Differently abled” and the

sugary “capable” were euphemisms that were toyed with too. What was forgotten was that “abled” is not an English word. These terms will keep changing as people find a “softer” or sexier appellation.

Let us start with blindness. Visually handicapped became visually impaired and is now visually disabled as well as

visually challenged. Similarly, deaf people were plain deaf, then they became hearing

handicapped and hearing impaired and also hearing challenged. We need a whole encyclopedia to go over all the 21 disabilities included in the RPD Act and the

names that are/were/will be used to identify them, so I’ll stop here.

Let’s call a spade a spade. Let us show proper respect to disabled people by being with them and associating with them.

Before I proceed, I would like to challenge this “challenged” appellation. I have a lot of challenges. Yes, I am deaf, therefore, hearing challenged. I am five feet four, therefore, vertically challenged. Being bald, I am follicle (or rather follically) challenged. At times, I am morally challenged too. The list goes on. However, I would prefer to be called a short, bald, deaf man with questionable moral turpitudes.

We are all challenged mentally a lot of times. Are we, then, all mentally challenged? Therefore, calling people who fall on the left side of the normal curve, mentally challenged is, well, discrimination.

Similarly, people have selective hearing and should be called hearing challenged. People who go to the beach to ogle at the opposite sex and ignore the beauty of the sea and the sunset are obviously visually challenged. The list goes on.



Then there is the “people first” hypocrisy. Instead of simply saying “deaf child” we are advised to say, “the child with deafness” or a “child who is deaf.” These are efforts to prolong mentioning the area of disability, like calling a beautiful girl, “the girl with beauty” or “the girl who is beautiful.” I am sure that the girl would prefer to be simply

called a “beautiful girl.” It can get even worse when a tall man is called “a man with tallness.”

Deaf people do not like being called hearing impaired. They prefer to be called deaf or hard of hearing. These terms show their hearing status clearly.

The term “hearing impaired” was invented by hearing people with impaired thinking, according to a friend of mine.

Let us call a spade a spade. Let us show proper respect to disabled people by being with them and associating with them. Let us not hide our hidden prejudice by inventing euphemism. And no... I am not going to mention *Divyangjan*. ■

16 வகை அனைத்தும் சிறந்த சுவை

உங்கள் உணவை மேலும் சிறப்பாக்க,
நாங்கள் ஆவக்காய், தொக்கு, எலுமிச்சம்,
பூண்டு, தக்காளி, இஞ்சி போன்ற 16
சிறந்த ஊறுகாய் வகைகள் தருகிறோம்.
அத்தனையும் ருசித்திடுங்கள்.

