

ParentsWorld

NURTURING 21st CENTURY CHILDREN

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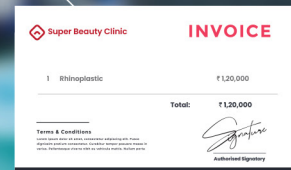
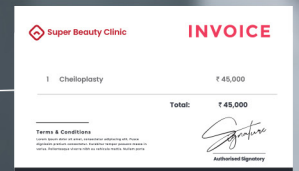
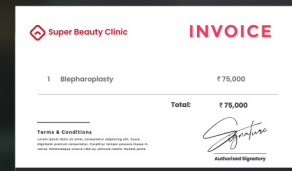
BODY BEAUTIFUL OBSESSION IS DANGEROUS & EXPENSIVE

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ParentsWorld
NURTURING 21st CENTURY CHILDREN

Volume X No.10

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“

God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another.” — William Shakespeare in Hamlet (1603)

While the universal desire to look good and pleasing is natural, in the new digital age it's becoming an obsession especially among teenage children and youth — too many of whom are prepared to move mountains to make themselves another. The birth of internet and spread of the world wide web has made social media ubiquitous.

And while it has revolutionised communication and has numerous upsides, social media has also emerged as the most powerful medium shaping how people worldwide — especially millennials and Gen Z — evaluate themselves.

Currently an estimated 1.3 billion early teens and youth are posting and preening themselves on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok among others, expending an average three-four hours daily uploading images, videos, messages and approvals by way of likes, hearts and comments.

As a result, a new image beautification industry comprising photo curators, image enhancers, dieticians, beauty creams and lotions manufacturers and marketers, fitness instructors, influencers and cosmetic surgeons has mushroomed to endow good looks-obsessed teens, youth and even elders, anxious to solicit online likes, hearts and compliments. Across the country an exponentially rising number of adolescents and youth from India's fast-expanding 430 million middle class are signing up for dangerous diets and even going under the knife, to attain idealised beauty standards. This look-good obsession is taking a huge toll by way of rising cases of anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia among adolescents and youth when promises of flawless, chiselled good looks and sculpted bodies are belied.

In our this month's cover story we highlight a spreading mental health crisis within millennials and Gen Z because of the social media comparison and validation culture. The message to parents is to limit — not ban — children's exposure to narcissistic social media apps through responsible usage, education about the distorted reality of heavily edited 'perfect' photos and to develop children's self-confidence by redirecting them to online platforms that propagate positive body image, life skills and holistic personality development.

There's lots more in this issue of *ParentsWorld*. Check out our Early Childhood section in which child psychologist Riddhi Doshi Patel explains how music and movement enhances children's physical and cognitive development during their early years, the Health & Nutrition essay in which Nick Fuller, author of *Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids*, answers an oft-asked question by parents: 'Do my children need vitamin supplements?' Also recommended is our Recipes section in which home chef Farida Gupta shares healthy, nutritious dessert recipes for Diwali.

Summiya Yasmeen

P.S. Happy Deepavali!

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MAILBOX



Good job!

Your cover story '21st century fun and learn options' (*PW* September) has done a good job of showing how co-curricular activities preferences of Gen Z have evolved in the digital age. It doesn't dismiss traditional co-curricular activities but recognizes that Gen Z's preferences are shifting and offers ways to adapt.

While it celebrates new age pursuits like urban photography, podcasting, vlogging, digital art, robotics, gaming, and app development, it also cautions against over exposure to digital platforms. I look forward to reading interviews of children who have successfully started a podcast or built a mobile app in your future issues.

Gargi Dutt
Delhi

Actionable advice

Nancy Weaver's special essay titled 'New neuroscience research prompting shift in parenting strategies' (*PW* September) is well researched and insightful. Neuroscience can easily become dense and jargon-heavy, but Weaver suggests a fine balance be-

tween scientific rigour and readability. She has deftly translated research findings into actionable advice: what behaviour parents should nurture, and cautionary notes on what to avoid. It prompts parents to adopt science-backed and compassionate parenting practices.

Shahnaz M.
Hyderabad

Valuable & insightful

I congratulate *ParentsWorld* for publishing valuable stories and insightful guidelines for parents. In the August issue, the story on missed milestones in early childhood development was eye-opening. It offered practical insights and guidelines. Also, the essay by Dr. Tarun Singh on pediatric hypertension was very useful.

Thanks for presenting factual educational advice to parents and teachers.

Rohini Aima
Principal cum Vice Chairperson
Jammu Sanskriti School, Jammu

Safety lessons

Thank you for the insightful 'Ask Your Counselor' column (*PW* September) in which Pune-based psychologist Aarthi Takawane provides useful suggestions for parents teaching children about personal safety rules.

Instead of scare tactics, she advises parents to focus on building confidence through skills-building and rules-based reasoning, which I believe makes safety lessons more interesting and children less anxious. Teaching the "Safe 5" trusted adults rule, reinforcing body autonomy, and trusting one's "uh oh" feeling are all tangible ways to help children internalize safety without being overwhelmed.

Also liked your Health and Nutrition story titled 'Common Cold: Effective home remedies' in which Dr.

Snigdha Samanta did a wonderful job of combining medical insight with practical, age old wisdom. Suggested home remedies are very informative, as are the precautionary guidelines.

Gungun Singh on EMAIL

Honest account

Your Middle Years story 'Effective ways to bond with your special needs child' (*PW* September) is a must-read for caregivers of special needs children. As the mother of a special needs child, Shireen Joanna does an excellent job of acknowledging that every child is unique, and that meaningful connection often happens in "small, everyday moments".

I love the way the author opens up with honesty about the day-to-day struggles of parenting a neurodiverse child. What especially resonated was the emphasis on observation over prescription. Instead of rigid formulas, the author urges caregivers to use their unique knowledge of their child and trust their instincts.

Seema Shahane
Mumbai

Marvellous travelogue

Your Leisure & Travel story 'Jungle Book: 5 Selected Wildlife Sanctuaries of India' (*PW* September) was engaging and informative. The travelogue beautifully captures the richness of India's natural forests and wildlife reserves.

Author Punita Malhotra strikes a good balance between interesting narrative and science/nature facts. Each sanctuary is presented with its distinctive ecology and wildlife conservation challenges. The narrative not only educates but also raises awareness about the importance of protecting forests and wildlife habitats.

Kush Sharma
Gurugram

DPS Kamptee Road and MIHAN, Nagpur

Resilience: The Foundation of Future-Ready Education



‘Change is the only constant.’ This truth has never been more evident than it is today. From the way we communicate to how we learn and even how we dream, the world around us is evolving at lightning speed. For children, this whirlwind of change can sometimes feel overwhelming, but it also opens endless doors to explore, grow and thrive.

What makes the difference is resilience, the ability to bounce back, face challenges and move forward with confidence. At DPS Kamptee Road and DPS MIHAN, resilience isn’t just an idea we discuss; it’s a quality we intentionally nurture in every child, preparing them to navigate a changing world with strength and optimism.

Raising resilient learners is just as important as building academic excellence. At DPS, education follows a holistic approach where learning extends far beyond the classroom. Children are encouraged to take risks, explore new ideas and learn from both success and failure. With the right balance of guidance and challenge, they discover how to transform setbacks into stepping stones toward growth.

Teachers serve as mentors, supporting students with empathy and encouragement while empowering them to make independent choices and take responsibility for their outcomes. This thoughtful balance nurtures confidence, adaptability and a mindset ready for the future.

Resilience, after all, is not taught through lectures; it is built through experiences. At DPS Kamptee Road and DPS MIHAN, every activity is thoughtfully designed to create these meaningful opportunities. Classroom discussions, peer learning and project-based activities promote collaboration and reflection. Sports instill discipline, teamwork and the ability to embrace both victory and defeat with grace. Debates, Model United Nations and public speaking platforms nurture critical thinking, adaptability and confident self-expression. Community service initiatives open young minds to empathy, compassion and real-world problem-solving. Well-being

and mindfulness sessions help children develop emotional balance and self-awareness. Each of these experiences becomes a brick in the strong foundation of resilience we seek to build in every learner.

The words of Carl Jung ring true: “I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.” This spirit lies at the heart of education at DPS Kamptee Road and DPS MIHAN. Students are encouraged to shape their own journeys, rise above circumstances, and view every challenge as an opportunity to grow. Resilience is the thread that weaves together learning, values and aspirations into a strong fabric of character.

Today, schools carry a responsibility that extends far beyond academics. They are spaces where the habits of mind and heart are formed for life. At DPS, teachers and staff lead by example—showing children how to remain solution-oriented, optimistic and determined, even in challenging times. By nurturing a culture of inclusivity, respect and encouragement, the schools ensure that every student feels seen, supported and capable of progress. The curriculum and co-curricular programmes are designed not merely to impart knowledge but to cultivate perseverance, adaptability and an enduring belief in oneself.

The challenges before today’s generation are unlike any seen before—digital overload, social pressures and rapidly evolving career landscapes. Academic brilliance alone is no longer enough. The true differentiator is resilience—the quality that enables students to bounce back from setbacks, embrace opportunities with courage and thrive in an unpredictable world. Building resilience, therefore, is not just important; it is the need of the hour.

At DPS Kamptee Road and DPS MIHAN, this belief lies at the heart of our educational vision. Through meaningful experiences, strong mentorship and a nurturing environment, we prepare students not merely to face the future but to flourish in it. In the end, resilience is not about surviving change; it is about transforming change into opportunity and that is what makes our students truly future-ready.



NEWS BYTES



Indian couples inspire each other to adopt unhealthy lifestyles

Indian couples tend to inspire each other to adopt unhealthy lifestyles and dietary patterns, says a first-of-its-type study examining marital concordance of obesity and associated risk factors. Health researchers from premier Indian institutes including the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) studied data collected from 52,737 married couples in the National Family Health Survey (2019-2021). The study reveals that obesity is highest in South India, in particular among middle-aged couples, with Kerala leading with 51.3 percent followed by Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Delhi, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

"Our findings indicate this alarming health paradox where we are witnessing an increase in the prevalence of lifestyle and metabolic conditions like obesity among the affluent and educated sections. The higher rate of obesity in middle-aged couples could be due to the fact that often companions tend to either become adjusted or decide to adopt unhealthy dietary lifestyles of their partners after years of living together," says Prashant Kumar Singh, lead author of the study and scientist, Division of Preventive Oncology and Population Health at ICMR.

Child obesity overtakes undernutrition among children globally

The prevalence of obesity among school-age children and adolescents in all regions of the world except sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, has for the first time, surpassed undernutrition (9.4 percent vs. 9.2 percent). According to the report, which draws on data from over 190 countries, the prevalence of undernutrition among children aged 5-19 years has declined since 2000, from 13 to 9.2 percent, while obesity has increased from 3 to 9.4 percent. An estimated 188 million children and adolescents aged 15-19 years worldwide are obese, placing them at risk of life-threatening diseases. The report attributes rising obesity to a shift from traditional diets to cheap, energy-dense, processed foods.

"When we talk about malnutrition, we no longer talk about underweight children. Obesity is a growing concern that can impact the health and development of children. Ultra-processed food is increasingly replacing fruits, vegetables and protein at a time when nutrition

plays a critical role in children's growth, cognitive development and mental health," says Catherine Russell, Unicef Executive Director.

Chronic insomnia raises risk of dementia

People suffering from chronic insomnia experience faster decline in memory and thinking skills as they age, says a study published in *Neurology* (September). The study tracked a group of 2,750 healthy adults with an average age of 70 for 5.6 years. Of the participants, 16 percent suffered chronic insomnia. After accounting for factors such as age, high blood pressure, and sleep medications usage, the study found that people with chronic insomnia had a 40 percent higher risk of developing mild cognitive impairment or dementia, than those who slept well.

"Insomnia doesn't just affect how you feel the next day — it may also impact your brain health over time. We saw faster decline in thinking skills and changes in the brain that suggest chronic insomnia could be an early warning sign and a contributor to future cognitive problems," says study author Diego Z. Carvalho, MD of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota (USA).

Smoking & vaping increase Type 2 diabetes risk

Smoking, vaping and smoking 'smokeless tobacco' significantly raises the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, according to a new study presented at the annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes. Researchers analysed medical data of over 3,300 people with Type 2 diabetes and 3,900 without. All of them had either age-related diabetes, obesity-related diabetes, severe insulin-deficient diabetes and severe insulin-resistant diabetes. The researchers found that any participant of any subtype who smoked — either currently or in the past — was at a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes than those who had never smoked.

"We wanted to find out if smoking plays the same role in all subtypes, or if some groups are more vulnerable than others. This is important because different subtypes may have distinct underlying disease mechanisms, and learning how smoking is linked to subtypes can help us understand the biology of diabetes. It may also help in developing more tailored prevention strategies," says Emmy Keysendal, a Ph D student at the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute, Sweden.



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COVER
STORY

Beware! Body beautiful

OBSESSION IS DANGEROUS

Consistent exposure to carefully curated body images, digital filters that eliminate all flaws, and influencer-driven standards of body beautiful have generated an environment in which comparisons have become inevitable and often damaging. Endless scroll of perfect bodies and faces has ignited unrealistic expectations, leading many — especially teens and youth — to internalise distorted ideas of perfect figures and chiseled, blemishless faces

BAISHALI MUKHERJEE

This is an age when millions of photos are being clicked for posting online. Apps such as Instagram and Facebook have become theatres of approval, where hearts, likes and comments have intensified the urge to look bold, beautiful and modish. Yet this new-age phenomenon birthed by internet connectivity and the irreversible digital revolution is extracting a big price from societies around the world. India, which negligently hosts the world's largest child and youth population, is no exception.

On July 24, a 17-year-old boy in Colachel, Tamil Nadu died after following a fruit juice-only diet prescribed on YouTube. Earlier on March 8, an 18-year-old girl in Kannur, Kerala, succumbed after following a starvation diet. These are only the latest of a growing number of fatalities due to teens and youth following crash diets and undergoing risky cosmetic surgery in the quest of bodies and faces beautiful for display on social media platforms. Across the country, millions of citizens starting from early teens to the middle aged and beyond are ready and willing to suffer pain and near-starvation to allay weight gain and body image anxieties.

Social media is now the most powerful force shaping how people evaluate themselves — especially millenni-

als and Gen Z. Consistent exposure to carefully curated body and facial images through digital filters that eliminate all flaws and imperfection, and influencer-driven standards of body beautiful have generated an environment in which comparisons have become inevitable and damaging. Endless scroll of perfect bodies and faces made beautiful by a global \$335 billion cosmetics and beauty products industry — the annual output of this fast-growing industry in India is valued at Rs.2.43 lakh crore — has ignited unrealistic expectations, leading many, especially teens and youth to internalise distorted ideas of perfect figures and chiseled, blemishless faces. This new internet age phenomenon is emerging as one of the most troubling consequences of the world's obsession with digital media.

A March (2025) study covering 55,000 study participants between 2008-24, published in *Science Direct*, a London-based online platform that draws data from 23 million published features/blogs, 3.8 million open access essays and 48,000 books on science, health and technology, reported strong linkage between online social comparisons and negative body image. Those who compared themselves with online peers are “significantly more likely to struggle with body image issues, manifesting eating disorders, and suffer low body image.”



Unsurprisingly mental health professionals worldwide are warning that social media approval addiction results in heightened anxiety, lower self-esteem, increased body dissatisfaction, and eating disorders, symptoms exacerbated by photo-editing apps. A rising number of medical practitioners — and mental health gurus in particular — are veering around to the opinion that what social media platforms provide in the form of visibility and global reach, they take away from mental health and emotional well-being. A 2017 survey by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons revealed that 55 percent of patients specifically requested procedures to improve their physical attributes. Almost a decade later, that's a gross under-estimate. In India, rising social media addiction within the fast-expanding middle class — especially among millennials and Gen Z — is generating rising social anxiety, lower confidence, diminished body image perception and increased resort to cosmetic surgery.

Across the country, brain-washed by Hollywood (faithfully imitated by Bollywood) where film stars' ugly red patches and blemishes are concealed by America's \$62 billion cosmetics and creams industry, millions of youth and adults are resorting to cosmetic surgery and/or slathering on mercury-infused creams and lotions to lighten their natural and aesthetically pleasing tanned



Dr. Jai Ranjan Ram

skin tones, even at the risk of inviting cancer and other maladies.

“Numerous research studies and clinical experience indicate that social media exposure strongly affects body image and self-esteem. Earlier, such anxiety manifested in youth after they attained 17-18 years of age. But now children as young as 12-13 are becoming anxious about their looks and physical attributes. Boys, once relatively immune, are now heavily influenced by online ‘ideal’ body types. Within the fast-expanding middle class in particular,

becoming fairer, hairless, muscular, pierced, and styled is becoming a national obsession. When youth don't receive online validation and approbation, they often sink into depression, self-harm, and deep frustration. Parents struggle to cope as children demand costly and dangerous beauty treatments,” says **Dr. Jai Ranjan Ram**, a leading psychiatrist specialising in child and youth mental health counselling and treatment at Apollo Multi-Specialty Hospitals, Kolkata.

According to Dr. Ram, such obsession with good looks and peer approval is also harmful for physical health as hours spent online reduces physical activity and participation in sports and games. Many adolescents feel powerless in other areas of life and turn to body modification as the one thing they can control. Therefore it has become

COVER
STORY*Distorted* REALITY

The rising popularity of miracle weight loss diets, ‘safe’ drugs such as Ozempic and cosmetic surgery is not unconnected with intensifying social media addiction of the general populace, and teens and youth in particular. On popular apps and platforms such as Instagram, Tik-tok and Facebook millions of people starting from early teens to trendy oldies are enamoured with images of movies stars, fashion models and socialites with hour-glass figures and perfectly proportionate faces.

Photo editing apps significantly alter visual appeal of individuals by digitally enhancing or modifying their physical features to create an idealized version of themselves.

Enhancement of facial features. Apps like Facetune and Faceapp allow users to reshape noses, enlarge eyes, and slim down cheeks, aligning their looks with societal beauty standards. This can make a person appear more attractive than in their natural state, heavily influencing viewers’ perceptions.

Skin smoothing and blemish removal. Many apps provide filters and touch-up tools that erase imperfections like acne, wrinkles, uneven skin tone, contributing to flawless skin projection.



Lighting and color adjustments. Subtle tweaks to lighting and color can alter features conferring a more vibrant and attractive image.

In short, photo editing apps change perceived attractiveness by digitally tailoring features to fit societal standards of beauty. Social media photos create unrealistic body proportions primarily through digital editing techniques such as ‘Puppet Warp’ and ‘Liquify’ in software like Photoshop.

Other common edits include removing natural body curves or folds and altering muscle and bone shape for exaggerated silhouettes. These techniques often produce proportions that are anatomically unrealistic, like impossibly slim waists or overly long limbs, contributing to distorted beauty standards on social media.

a duty of latter-day parents and guardians to reiterate to children that curated celebrity and influencer good looks and body types are exceptions, not the norm, and that pursuit of perfect profiles and body types can have severe consequences leading to self-harm, even suicide. “Children must be taught that while homes, schools, and apparel can be changed, one’s body is a lifelong home that needs care, not torture,” adds Ram.



Roma Kumar

To counter this spreading epidemic, **Roma Kumar**, co-chairperson at the Institute for Psychiatry, Sri Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, advocates school awareness programmes, counseling for the addicted, and clinical refusal when mental health risks outweigh the benefits of cosmetic surgery. “Responsible social media use — with parents imposing screen time limits, device-free zones at home, and content monitoring — is critical. Guidance from parents, educators, and counselors is necessary. Collaboration between schools, governments, and social

media platforms has become important to curb youth narcissism,” says Kumar.

Focus on physical fitness not attributes. Physical fitness experts emphasise that maintaining physical fitness through playing games and sports and working out enjoyably, is more advantageous than heavy grunts and sweat training to build bulging muscles and trim waists. “Your body isn’t a problem to fix, it’s your vehicle for life. Respect it, fuel it, exercise it to maintain it in good condition, treat it kindly. Focus on progress, not perfection. When body image becomes self-care instead of self-criticism, it shifts from comparisons to growth,” counsels **Yash Agarwal**, celebrity fitness coach and founder of the Kolkata-based Yash Fitness.

“The key is to redefine body image, valuing fitness not as chasing an ideal, but building health, strength, and confidence. A fit body isn’t necessarily beautiful; true fitness requires resilience, balance, and freedom from ailments,” adds Agarwal, who



Yash Agarwal

Pricey VANITY

For the rising number of teens and youth — and adults — dissatisfied with their endowed physical attributes, it's also pertinent to bear in mind that cosmetic surgery interventions come at not insignificant prices. The cost of cosmetic surgeries for the lip, nose, and eye varies considerably based on the specific procedure, surgeon's expertise, geographic location, facility fees, and the complexity of the intervention.

Since there is also and always the risk of an intervention — especially a surgery — going wrong (see p. 14), which would necessitate ameliorative repair surgery, it is advisable to avail the services of thoroughly qualified medical professionals with specialist qualifications in cosmetic surgery and dermatology. Moreover since experienced surgeons are unlikely to be available in small-town

India, add the costs of travel, lodging and hospitalization in metros which can be considerable.

Arguably a lesser outlay invested in developing life skills such as singing, dancing and elocution and/or other performing arts could compensate for modest looks and physical attributes. Contrary to popular opinion people in search of love and companionship are not as influenced by good looks and great figures as by likeable entertainers.

For those who are unpersuaded by this opportunity-cost argument, the price of cosmetic surgery operations range as under.

NB. The cost estimates provided are heavily influenced by location. Prices in metro cities are generally higher than in smaller cities. However metros are likely to house the most qualified and experienced cosmetic surgeons. Their fees are likely to vary according experience and reputation.

Procedure category	Common procedure	Estimated cost range
Lip Cosmetic Surgery	Lip Augmentation (Surgical or Fillers)	Rs.15,000-80,000
	Lip Reduction (Surgical)	Rs.25,000-80,000
Nose Cosmetic Surgery	Rhinoplasty (Nose Job)	Rs.50,000-200,000
Eye Cosmetic Surgery	Blepharoplasty (Eyelid Surgery)	Rs.30,000-150,000

has trained 100 fitness enthusiasts, conducted 50 workshops, guided top business leaders and leads a team of 40 experts serving 200 corporate clients globally.

Parents need to battle this silent epidemic. Children's social media addiction and resultant poor body image perception have emerged as major parenting problems. Nineteen-year-old Delhi-based Arushi (name changed) became so obsessed with social media image building that she pressed her parents for cosmetic facial surgery. When her pleas were refused, she attempted suicide by overdosing with sleeping pills. Fortunately, her mother's timely intervention saved her life and ensured that she received psychiatric help. Avantika's (name changed) mother faced a similar crisis when her 21-year-old daughter insisted on undergoing rhinoplasty, believing surgery was the only way to match the image she wanted for herself.

Against this rising demand within India's fast-expanding middle class, it's instructive to learn that a rhinoplasty (aka nose job) can set parents back by Rs.40,000-2.5 lakh and lip augmentation surgery by Rs.4.5 lakh. Unsurprisingly, India's cosmetic surgery market is experiencing rapid growth, with a projected market value of US\$11.5 billion (Rs.95,450 crore) by 2030.

The rising popularity of Indian cinema, especially Bol-



Dr. Kiran Modi

lywood feature films and their regional clones, has amplified body and facial obsession of social media-influenced teens and youth. Several leading Bollywood actresses, already beauty icons, have openly admitted to undergoing cosmetic surgery from lip enhancements to nose jobs. In 2020, Mumbai based rising film star Mishti Mukherjee reportedly died because of complications arising from ketogenic dieting. With the spread and easy accessibility of Hollywood and Bollywood cinema over movie streaming platforms such

as Netflix, Prime Video and Reliance Jio among other streaming platforms, Indian youth are increasingly regarding cosmetic surgery, and face and body alterations as the new normal as they unwittingly chase unrealistic body beautiful standards that heighten anxiety and erode self-esteem.

Comments **Dr. Kiran Modi**, Founder of Udayan Care (estb.1994), an NGO providing mental and emotional well-being and career counselling services to 40,000 children and youth in 38 cities countrywide: "Social media projecting unrealistic beauty standards has prompted a rising number of youth to strive to improve their body shapes and physical attributes. This has resulted in a fast-multiplying number of teens struggling

COVER
STORY*Cosmetic surgery* **RISKS**

The often heavy monetary expenditure that has to be incurred for cosmetic surgery aside, individuals aspiring for artificially sculpted bodies and supermodel facial features also have to weigh the dangers of beauty enhancement procedures. Obviously there is a possibility — however remote — of simple procedures going haywire, or else surgeons and hospitals wouldn't require patients to sign indemnity agreements. Therefore before volunteering for cosmetic surgery, it's important to bear the following risk possibilities in mind.

Infection. This is a common risk in India. Because of poorly trained para-medics, there's always the risk of poor hygiene, contaminated instruments, excessive/ deficient anaesthesia, inadequate post-operative care.

Bleeding and hematoma. Excessive bleeding can occur during or after surgery, sometimes requiring re-operation.

Nerve damage. Temporary or permanent numbness,

tingling, or loss of sensation in lips, nose, breasts.

Scarring and asymmetry. Poor wound healing can cause thick, raised scars or uneven results.

Anesthesia risks. Adverse reactions can include respiratory distress, allergic shock, or in rare cases, death.

Tissue necrosis. Loss of skin or fat tissue due to interrupted blood supply, especially after liposuction and facelifts.

Implant complications. For breast, chin, or buttock implants, rupture, leakage, displacement may occur over time.

Poor aesthetic outcome. Results may differ from expectations, causing distress or need for revision surgery.

Moreover there are well-documented psychological risks of cosmetic surgery. Among them :

Body Dysmorphic Disorder. Some patients have unrealistic expectations generating psychological conditions that surgery cannot address.

Post-surgery depression. Emotional low after surgery, often caused by pain, swelling, or regret.

Addiction to surgery. Some patients undergo repeated procedures seeking “perfection,” leading to permanent dissatisfaction.

with low self-esteem, anxiety, and eating disorders. In Udayan Care, we counsel and mentor teens by creating safe spaces for girls to express themselves and focus on inner growth. Our programmes also include digital literacy and positive self-image workshops, helping teens and youth to navigate social media, question stereotypes, and build resilience with guidance from mental health professionals,” says Modi.

Kolkata-based **Indrani Mukherjee**, Rector of Holy Home (estb.1985), a K-12 co-ed CISCE-affiliated school, advises parents to address social media induced body image management issues squarely and urgently. “Parents and education institutions need to seriously educate youth about the harmful effects of trendy diets and cosmetic surgery. Media literacy programmes in schools, responsible cosmetic and clinical practices, and campaigns promoting body positivity and mental well-being are all crucial. Most needed is recognition that social media addiction is not trivial — it is shaping identity, aspirations, and even survival,” warns Mukherjee.

Even if belatedly, a consensus is emerging within the educators' and counsellors community, that in the matter of enhancing physical attributes, better can be the enemy of good. Although it's natural for all people — young and old — to look pleasing, it's important to remember



Indrani Mukherjee

that building an attractive personality requires more than beauty pageant physical attributes. Dr. Kiran Modi (quoted earlier) has an important valuable, message for young and impressionable youth: “You are much more than your reflection. Be authentic, value your body as a vehicle for your dreams, and focus on developing your talents, capabilities, and passions. Don't let algorithms, filters, and the surgeon's knife determine your self-worth. True beauty lies in confidence, kindness, and courage — qualities that cannot be edited or filtered.”

India ungraciously hosts the world's largest poorly educated — hence vulnerable — teens and youth population whose number is estimated at 253 million. Currently they are massively attracted to — and overwhelmed — by social media platform options. Contrary to popular opinion the internet and access to the worldwide web also offers the option to enhance knowledge and develop life skills that enable development of well-rounded balanced personalities. Even at the risk of short-term unpopularity, parents should limit children's access to harmful narcissistic social media platforms and re-direct them to websites that propagate positive life skills and holistic personality development. In the long run when they mature into well-balanced adults, their children will thank them for it •



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EARLY CHILDHOOD



RIDDHI DOSHI PATEL

Music and movement boost

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

According to latest research, one of the best ways to optimally develop children's motor and social-emotional skills is through music and movement

Early childhood is a time of rapid physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. In particular, it's a period of significant motor and movement development. During the early years, children learn to coordinate their muscles and body movements. According to latest research, one of the best ways to optimally develop children's motor and social-emotional skills is through music and movement.

In this essay, I explain the importance of the 2 Ms: music & movement in enhancing children's physical coordination, emotional expression, and cognitive growth during the early years.

Music benefits

- Introducing children to music enables them to discriminate between different sounds, song lyrics, rhythms and vocalise it themselves (e.g, Alphabet song / Twinkle Twinkle Little Star).
- Songs also introduce children to new vocabulary and sentence structures, phonetics and rhyming words.
- When youngest children remember song lyrics, repeat rhythms, it enhances recall, memory and pattern recognition skills.
- It prompts children to attempt their own lyrics and music, thereby encouraging creativity.
- In group play, children singing together develop skills of cooperation, social bonding, and teamwork.

Movement and learning

- Likewise encouraging physical movements such as dancing, hopping, clapping, and running develops children's gross motor and coordination skills.
- It develops right and left brain functions independently and integratively.
- Physical activities teach children spatial orientation and control, thereby improving hand-eye coordination, pattern recognition and frontal lobe development.
- When children dance freely, they develop self-confidence and self-esteem.



- Learning to stop, start, and adjust physical movement supports impulse control and develops listening skills.

Magical combination of music and movement

Rhythm (music) and motion (movement) when integrated enhance timing, coordination, and focus of children.

More important, they boost

children's social and emotional growth by encouraging self-expression, creativity and communication skills.

Suggested activities

- Action songs and games such as "Simon Says," and "If you're happy and you know it...clap your hands!" improve children's motor coordination, active listening and sequencing capabilities.
- Freeze Dance and Musical Statues builds their impulse control, quick thinking and balance.
- Ribbons and Music — the well-known game where you have laser-sharp focus on a ribbon you're holding as you move around freely — improves self-bodily awareness, focus and self-acceptance.
- Drum Circles — an activity where children play beats either by copying each other or improving their own beats — enhances physical coordination and social bonding.
- Animal Movement Songs with instructions such as "hop like a frog", "flap like a bird" encourage imaginative thinking, motor skills and body awareness.

While introducing these activities, ensure they are age-appropriate, balance structured and unstructured activities while prioritising children's enjoyment and participation over accuracy and perfection. Moreover, incorporate short bursts of music and movement in the daily routine rather than one-off sessions.

(Riddhi Doshi Patel is a child psychologist, parenting counsellor, and founder of Rhyns Academy, Mumbai)



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ADOLESCENCE

Enabling adolescence

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

KIRAN BALIMANE

Social stigma and misconceptions about mental health prevent many parents and teenage children from soliciting professional advice

Adolescence is a development phase marked by rapid physical, psychological, and emotional changes. During these years, teens experience mood swings, emotional turbulence, and heightened sensitivity to peer and parental pressure. While these challenges are normative, sometimes they trigger anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and in extreme cases, suicide.

The World Health Organization estimates that 10-20 percent of adolescents globally suffer mental health problems. According to the latest National Mental Health Survey of India, nearly 7.3 percent of adolescents suffer diagnosable mental health conditions, but only a fraction receive professional treatment. That's because social stigma and misconceptions about mental health dissuade many parents and teens from soliciting professional advice. Add to this lack of awareness and knowledge of parents about ways and means to support teenage children's mental well-being.

"In India, mental health is a taboo subject because it's associated with social shame and stigma. Many parents fear that acknowledging that their teenage child is suffering anxiety or depression is admission that their child is 'weak'. This mindset needs to change. Parents must understand that mental health problems are not a sign of weakness but a normal part of human experience, especially during adolescence. Recognising and addressing these challenges early enables adolescents to develop resilience, emotional balance, as also ability to seek professional help without fear or guilt," says **Reena Chopra**, a Bhubaneswar-based psychologist and founder of Saar Holistic Wellness.

Chopra believes that schools and colleges have an important duty to break social taboos surrounding adolescent mental health by organising workshops on stress management, coping with peer pressure, and exam anxiety. "Exam-related stress and performance



anxiety, peer pressure and social media influence are some of the major causes of adolescents' mental health problems. Workshops can teach simple coping techniques such as breathing exercises and role-play activities to de-stress students and make them feel more confident and less lonely.

They also encourage peer support and comradeship," she adds.

Mental health support

The Central government, NGOs and several other education organisations have taken important steps to provide accessible mental health care to adolescents. Among them:

- **Tele-MANAS (14416 or 1800-891-4416):** A nationwide 24x7 mental health helpline providing free counselling and crisis support.
- **KIRAN Helpline (1800-599-0019):** A toll-free helpline of the Union ministry of social justice & empowerment offers guidance and mental health support.
- **School counselling frameworks.** National exam boards, CISCE, CBSE and several state boards have mandated counsellors inside affiliated schools.
- **Online counselling platforms.** Several government-supported online platforms provide professional counseling services.
- **Parental support.** "The most important support adolescent children need is from parents. Parents readily teach children to solve equations and write essays, but how often do they teach them how to deal with heartbreak, failure, or fear? As parents, we must prioritize mental health literacy as much as academic excellence. Parents need to make the effort to attend workshops and enhance their knowledge about mental health issues, and most important, seek professional advice if their children are suffering mental health problems," says Chopra.



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RESOURCES

Effective learning APPS

The online world offers a wealth of learning resources for children. Check out PW's shortlist of four effective learning apps

KIRAN BALIMANE

KHAN ACADEMY KIDS

Platform: Android, iOS

Age group: 2-7 years

Ideated and developed by globally renowned American educator Salman Khan, this app offers free-of-charge lessons in math, reading, and social skills through engaging stories and games. Available on Google Play, the app features colourful characters, engaging activities, and a library of books, songs, and games tailored to early learners. Parents and teachers can track progress. This app is completely free-of-charge with no ads or in-app purchases, making it a safe and child-friendly resource.

**DUOLINGO KIDS**

Platform: Android, iOS

Age group: 4-8 years

This app makes language learning enjoyable for children with bite-sized lessons and playful games. It introduces children to Spanish, French, and English through short, engaging lessons that combine playful stories, interactive exercises, and listening practice. Bright visuals, cheerful characters, and game-like rewards keep children motivated as they gradually build vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and practice forming simple sentences. Ads-free with optional in-app purchases (₹499), it provides clear progress markers that show how children are advancing in language learning.

BYJU'S

Platform: Android, iOS

Age group: 4-18 years

BYJU'S – The Learning App offers personalised learning in subjects such as math, science, and social studies through interactive video lessons and adaptive practice exercises. The content is aligned with national and state boards. With animated explanations, gamified quizzes, and progress tracking, it makes complex concepts easy to understand. The app also offers live online classes with a unique two-teacher model for real-time interaction and doubt-solving. Moreover, it offers test prep for competitive exams such as JEE and NEET. Free with premium subscriptions (₹999/month).

**EPIC**

Platform: Android, iOS

Age group: 4-12 years

Epic provides an ads-free digital library with over 40,000 books, audiobooks, and learning videos across multiple subjects and reading levels. Its colorful, interactive interface encourages independent reading in children while allowing parents and teachers to track progress. Children earn badges and rewards as they explore new titles, making reading both enjoyable and motivating. The app is free for educators, while families can access premium features through a subscription (Rs.699/month).

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ASK YOUR
COUNSELOR

REENA CHOPRA

Teaching children to cope with DISAPPOINTMENT



My five-year-old daughter gets upset when things don't go as planned. Please suggest how I can help her cope with disappointment.

— Mini Sharma, Mumbai

You can help her cope with disappointment by following these simple strategies:

- Acknowledge her disappointment. If plans are canceled or postponed, you could say: "I know you were waiting to go to the park. I also feel bad we couldn't go today." This will reassure her that you are mindful of her disappointment.
- Offer alternatives. Suggest a backup activity such as board games, story time, or an impromptu dance session at home.
- Prepare children in advance. Instead of fixed promises, make conditional plans: "If the traffic is not heavy, we'll go to the park. If not, let's plan to play your favourite board game at home."

Over time, children develop maturity and learn that while life may be unpredictable, disappointment can be managed by making alternative plans and choices.

We take my two-year-old son to the mall on weekends

for grocery shopping. After a while, he starts shouting, pulling things off the shelves and refuses to sit in his stroller. At first, we thought he was throwing tantrums, but later we realised the loud music, bright lights, and crowd overstimulated him. Please advise.

— Gavisht Sharma, Bengaluru

Some toddlers are more sensitive than others. I suggest that you become more observant and follow these strategies:

- Avoid outings during sleep or meal times, when toddlers tend to be irritable.
- Instead of long-duration mall trips, break errands into shorter visits or shop online when possible.
- On mall trips, carry a familiar toy, small snack, or soothing playlist to provide comfort when he feels overwhelmed.
- It's also a good idea to step outside the mall for five minutes of quiet before resuming shopping again.

Toddlers learn to calm down when parents respond with patience instead of labeling them as difficult.

Recently, my 11-year-old son saw his classmate's instagram post about a foreign vacation and asked

us, "Why don't we go abroad like everyone else?" His self-worth is getting influenced by what he sees on instagram. How can we help him?

— Mrinalini Saxena, Delhi

Social media has a powerful influence on children, shaping their self-image, aspirations, and sense of self-worth. Here are some suggestions to cope:

- Instead of banning social media, discuss and agree on limited usage. Moreover, explain to him that online posts don't always reflect reality.
- Encourage non-digital activities such as sports, art, and music. This will encourage him to discover his strengths and interests outside the online world.
- Role model balanced social media usage. Set an example by limiting your own digital screen time.
- Educate your child that qualities such as kindness, effort, and self-worth don't require external validation. When children feel secure, the influence of social media comparisons weakens.

My 16-year old daughter spends her weekdays between school, coaching classes, and late-night study sessions. Recently, we noticed that she is experiencing frequent headaches, irritability, and sleep deprivation.

We want her to do well in her board exams but without disrupting her health. Please advise.

— Kirthika Rao, Hyderabad

Encourage her to balance study with rest and recreation. Overdoing late nights or stressing about exams can be counterproductive. Here are some guidelines to strike a balance:

- Explain that relaxation is a necessity, not a reward. Encourage downtime through music, sports, meditation, outdoor walks.
- Help her prepare a daily schedule which strikes a balance between study hours and relaxation.
- Provide emotional reassurance and support. Take time for one-on-one conversations and listen without judgment about her apprehensions and anxieties.
- Role model self-care. Parents who respect their own work-life balance best demonstrate to children that ambition and mental well-being are not mutually exclusive. Academic success is possible only when children's mental and physical health is protected.

(Reena Chopra is a Bhubaneswar-based child psychologist, parent-ing coach and founder of Saar Holistic Wellness)

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ASK THE DOCTOR

Protecting children from EAR INFECTIONS



DR. TEJAN BHATT

My three-year-old son often gets ear infections. What is the cause, and what should I do to prevent them?

— *Tapas Mohanty, Delhi*

The most common causes of ear infections include frequent colds due to viral exposure in child daycare centres/preschools, passive smoke or dust exposure, and enlarged adenoids that block proper ear drainage. Moreover, children in this age group tend to have shorter and more horizontal ear canals, leading to fluid buildup. Parents often notice irritability, ear pulling, disturbed sleep, or discharge from the ear. Low-grade fever and reduced appetite are also common symptoms. While not every earache is an infection, parents should take preventive steps -- keep the home smoke-free, use saline nasal drops to keep nasal passages clear during cold infections, and ensure children are adequately hydrated. Moreover, encourage frequent handwashing as it reduces the spread of infection.

To relieve pain, provide comfort with warm compresses over the ear and an age-appropriate paracetamol dosage. Avoid inserting oil, cotton buds, sharp objects or over-the-counter drops without medical advice, as they may worsen the problem.

Seek medical advice if pain is severe, fever persists beyond 48 hours, or there is pus discharge. Recurrent infections may need further evaluation for allergies or adenoid issues. With simple preventive care and timely consultation, most ear infections of toddlers resolve without long-term hearing loss.

I suspect my infant's hearing is not very good. Should I get him tested, or wait until he turns one year old?

— *Jeenie Robert, Trivandrum*

These days, infants are exposed early to environmental noise and digital screen sounds. Therefore, it's important for parents to prioritise their infant's hearing and vision screening within the first year of life. Auditory screening is ideally recommended at birth, usually done before hospital discharge. If missed, it should be completed within the first three months. Vision screening, while more difficult in newborns, should be done during routine medical check-ups, with a detailed examination conducted when the infant is six months of age. By the time a child is one year old, hearing and visual responsiveness should be clearly documented, especially if your infant was born

prematurely or had complications.

Some early red flags you should watch for possible hearing problems include your infant not being startled by loud noises, not responding to familiar voices by six months, or not babbling meaningfully by nine-ten months. For vision check, lack of eye contact within three months, persistent eye crossing beyond six months, and not reaching for objects by six-seven months. These symptoms warrant prompt evaluation.

Timely detection is vital because the first year is when the brain is most receptive to sensory input. Early use of hearing aids, cochlear implants, and vision therapy can make the difference between normal development and long-term delays. Attend all 'well-baby' medical check-ups, take extra precautionary care of premature babies, and report problems to your pediatrician promptly.

I'm not sure how to potty-train my child or when to begin. Please advise.

— *Hita Choudhry, Bengaluru*

The right time to begin is usually between 18 months and three years, depending on the child's readiness rather than the parent's schedule. Signs of readiness include the child remaining dry for two-three hours, showing awareness of wet or soiled diapers, and being able to follow simple instructions.

Use small portable potty chairs, which are less intimidating and easy to move around. Create a predictable routine — such as seating your child on the potty after meals. Positive reinforcement is key: celebrate small successes with praise or stickers rather than punishment for accidents.

Difficulties may arise if the child resists strongly or withholds, leading to constipation. These are signs to pause training and retry after a few weeks. Pressure often delays progress. Nighttime dryness usually comes later and should not be rushed.

For parents, keeping the potty in an accessible spot, dressing your child in easy-to-remove clothes, and remaining calm during accidents can make the potty-training process smoother and stress-free. Remember: every child's timeline is different, and gentle encouragement works far better than comparison or pressure.

(Dr. Tejan Bhatt is a paediatrician and intensivist at Sanidhya Hospital, Rajkot)



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CAREERS WATCH

Enduring appeal of the **INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE**

In 2024, 583,213 graduates wrote the UPSC civil services exam — the qualifying exam for entry into the civil services, including the IFS



Despite the glamour of new careers in business and academia, the Indian Civil Service continues to attract lakhs of applicants every year. In 2024, 583,213 college/university graduates wrote the civil services examination conducted by the Union Public Services Commission (UPSC) — the qualifying exam for entry into the civil services, including the Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

Graduates in the 21-32 years age group are eligible to write this exam with each candidate allowed a maximum of six attempts. The examination is held in two phases — a preliminary objective-type exam and the main exam. Students who clear the prelim — a general studies and aptitude test held in 72 centres countrywide every August — qualify to write the main exam held in December.

The main examination requires candidates to write

nine essay-type papers testing their knowledge of one Indian language, English, general studies and any two subjects selected from a prescribed list. Candidates who clear the main exam are administered a personality test and interviewed by a UPSC board panel. Marks obtained by candidates in the main exam and interview determine their final ranking. The selection process is rigorous. The average number of candidates selected by UPSC is a mere 1,000 per year.

Based on their ranking, candidates — who are required to indicate their preferred service cadre (administrative, foreign, revenue, police etc) in descending order — are slotted into the first, second or third service of their choice. Although in the immediate aftermath of independence, IFS was the first choice of UPSC-selected civil servants, since the 1970s top rankers prefer to join the IAS cadre.



Candidates who clear the main exam are administered a personality test. Marks obtained by candidates in the main exam and interview determine their final ranking. The selection process is rigorous. The average number of candidates selected by UPSC is a mere 1,000 per year

Nevertheless, the IFS is a prestigious service for youth aspiring to serve the nation.

PAY & PROGRESSION

Once selected, IFS recruits together with their counterparts selected for IAS and other Central services are required to undergo training for four months at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, where they are provided basic grounding in economics, history, political science, public administration and Indian languages.

Subsequently, IFS trainee officers are admitted into the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi where they are schooled in foreign policy, economic and trade issues, cultural diplomacy etc for 18 months. This training is followed by a six-month attachment with a division in the Union ministry of external affairs (MEA), Delhi, after which they are designated assistant secretary.

The first posting of an IFS officer is usually in an embassy abroad as a third secretary and language trainee. As such, IFS officers are required to thoroughly learn a foreign language for a period of up to two years. On clearing the foreign language qualifying exam, the officers are confirmed and posted as Second Secretary in an embassy or as under secretary in MEA. After seven years, officers progress to the office of First Secretary/Counsellor (13 years), and Minister (18 years). Ambassadors are appointed from the ranks of Minister (joint secretaries and above in the MEA) or from among senior counsellors.

While posted in the MEA, Delhi, IFS officers'

remuneration is on a par with the IAS cadre. However, when posted abroad, additional foreign allowance is paid to compensate for cost of living differences. The starting salary of an IFS officer is Rs.70,000 plus allowances per month which can go up to Rs.350,000 plus allowances.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

"Apart from the joy of discovering a new country every three years and enjoying the privilege of representing India, the variety of work — ranging from political and economic to socio-cultural diplomacy — which IFS officers engage in at missions/embassies and within the MEA, is challenging and exciting. It requires sharp skills of negotiation, consultation, diplomacy and persuasion," says **Jaideep Mazumdar**, who retired from service in March 2025 as Foreign Secretary (East) in the MEA. A suave, seasoned and experienced diplomat, Mazumdar has served as Indian ambassador to Austria and in Indian embassies in China, Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt, the United Nations, New York and in the prime minister's office.

"The IFS is a small service — far smaller than the foreign services of any country with comparable global interests. However, Indian diplomats are highly respected for their diplomatic and negotiating skills and their English language competence. Though the pay and perks may not be on a par with blue-chip corporate salaries, the prestige, respect, breadth of work and the satisfaction of serving one's country more than make up. I highly recommend this career to those who want to serve the nation and become global change agents," says Mazumdar.

SUNDRY
MUSINGS*Prime Minister*
STRIKES PLATINUM**SURESH SUBRAHMANYAN**

Caveat: Some of what you are about to read happened. Some of it did not, though it could so easily have. Either way, a pinch of salt would help garnish the offering

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi — and the nation — celebrated his 75th birthday, his platinum jubilee, which came about on September 17. All his colleagues, friends and acolytes gathered outside 7, Lok Kalyan Marg (Race Course Road is considered an abomination) to shower him with blessings and good wishes. Sweetmeat shops made roaring trade with laddoos and jalebis selling like hot cakes. Some select newspapers and TV channels pulled out all the stops to mark the occasion. Several columns of space and considerable airtime were devoted to singing the praises of our charismatic leader.

This is expected in a country where hero worship of our tallest leaders is an article of faith and arguably enshrined in the Constitution ever since we gained independence. Of far greater interest is the fact that President Donald Trump extended his personal greetings to his 'dear friend Narendra'. What's noteworthy is that Mr. Modi graciously returned Trump's goodwill gesture. If Trump was first off the blocks to greet the PM, Vladimir Putin and Pope Leo were not far behind. Xi Jinping, as is his wont, remained tight-lipped.

Amidst all this bonhomie, there are rumours that put a different spin on this "feast of reason and flow of soul" between Trump and Modi. The two haven't lately been on the chummiest of terms. One version has it that Peter Navarro, one of Trump's henchmen, is alleged to have suggested that it was the Indian Prime Minister's office that contacted the White House prior to 'dear friend' Modi's birthday and made a craven request that Mr. Trump should call and wish our PM well. An anonymous caller from the White House is rumoured to have said: "You can hardly expect our President to recall birthdays of the heads of so many nations. However, since you have made the request during this delicate period in Indo-US relations, we will pass on your request to President Trump."

We now await Navarro's next gaffe with bated breath. Meanwhile, we can expect more 'good cop, bad cop' pronouncements from all the President's men. If Navarro is the bad cop, the well-groomed Secretary of State, Marco Rubio usually steps in to play good cop — "Ties with India is one of the top relationships the US has in the world today." Really? You could have fooled me, Marco. I suppose the

strategy is to mollify India, but it doesn't seem to be working, judging from the President's feeble gestures of late, followed immediately by the H-1B jolt.

To add spice to this whole brouhaha, one of India's prominent economists advising GOI has predicted that the 25 percent secondary sanction by America on India's exports will soon be lifted, post which a further reduction can be expected on the base tariff. And presumably everything will be, in Wodehouse-speak, oojah-cum-spiff. When I read that, I wondered if it was entirely wise on the learned gentleman's part to have made such a bold, public statement, even if talks behind the scenes warranted such optimism.

All said and done, the PM and party henchmen will take full advantage of every available opportunity, in this instance his extended birthday bash, to reach out to the electorate to think well of the ruling alliance when election time comes round. With the Bihar state election just around the corner, felicitating the country's beloved PM will help the cause.

On the other hand, opposition alliance has its work cut out, as has been the case these past few years, to create any kind of dent in the BJP bulwark. Of all the strategies available to the I.N.D.I. Alliance, the least favourable option is ceaseless bad mouthing of the PM via the Election Commission. If for no other reason, because it seems to be merely performative and counterproductive. They need to put on their thinking caps and come up with something different and original.

Right now, that seems a far cry. Unless they are counting on the constant din created by 'The Guns of Navarro,' having an impact on the Indian voter. For now, those guns appear to be firing blanks while India's birthday boy and team burn the midnight oil to keep matters on an even keel amidst a highly complex, volatile and unpredictable global geopolitical scenario. The vat is simmering and with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia announcing their nuptials, it is boiling over.

Happy birthday, Prime Minister.

Tailpiece: I read with astonishment a news headline that famed Hollywood actor Johnny Depp has directed a film named Modi: Three Days on the Wings of Madness. Surprisingly, this startling news item received very little play in India. Only on reading the fine print did I realise, with relief, that it was a biopic on the turbulent life of Italian painter, Modigliani!

(Suresh Subrahmanyam is a Bengaluru-based former advertising professional)



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KIDZONE

Heart to HEART*Hello Parents!*

Children need good role models to emulate and inspire them to achieve greatness. And what better role model than Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation who master-minded and won India's freedom struggle from the imperial Great Britain's exploitative rule?

In the past few issues of the Kidzone section, we have been featuring excerpts from *Growing Up with the Mahatma* authored by **Dr. Swati Popat Vats**, president of the Early Childhood Association of India and the Podar chain of preschools. This richly

illustrated book presents inspiring stories from the life of the Mahatma with each chapter narrating one of the many 'avatars' of Gandhiji and lessons to learn from them. The avatars include animal activist, fashion stylist, teacher, journalist, fitness expert, social worker, doctor, barrister and chef. Moreover chapter-end there are several activities for children to write a story, solve puzzles and a books quiz.

This month we present an excerpt from the chapter 'Mahatma inspires you to become a lyricist'.

When I grow up I want to be a lyricist just like the Mahatma...

'Happiness is when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony'

Did you know that...

Mahatma Gandhi would spend time with his grandchildren and help them make nonsensical rhymes?

Mahatma Gandhi enjoyed playing with children and liked to crack jokes with them. His favourite activity with his grandchildren was to help them make up with nonsensical rhymes like the one given below that he made for his six-year-old grandson Rasiklal:

"Rasiklal Harilal Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Had a goat in his keeping; The goat would not be milked; And Gandhi would not stop weeping."

Just like Bapu, you can create your own poems or nonsensical rhymes. Pick a topic and let your imagination run wild. Involve your friends and family and work together to create a nonsense rhyme! Here are some made by other kids:

"The charkha has the shape of a zero; And Bapu is my hero!"

"Nobody likes the donkey. And Bapu had three monkeys!"

"The metro stops at the station. And Mahatma Gandhi is the father of our nation."

Bapu liked to read poems and enjoyed listening to bhajans. Every evening in the ashram, people would gather to sing bhajans and his favourite was, 'Vaishnav jana to tene kahiye'

How about writing a poem? You could also write an instant poem by following the steps given below: In the first line and consequent lines write an emotion (i.e, happiness, anger, fear, delight, joy etc.) Stick to the same



emotion!

1. If (emotion) was a colour,
2. It would be _____
3. As _____ as a _____
4. If (emotion) _____ was a taste
5. It would be just like _____
6. If (emotion) _____ was a feeling
7. It would be as _____ as a _____
8. If (emotion) _____ was a smell
9. It would be _____ as a _____
10. If (emotion) _____ was a sound
11. It would be _____ as a _____

Your completed poem should look similar to this:

1. If happiness was a colour,
2. It would be yellow
3. As yellow as chamomile tea
4. If happiness was a taste
5. It would be as sweet as a toffee
6. If happiness was a feeling
7. It would be happy!
8. If happiness was a smell
9. It would be fragrant as a jasmine.
10. If happiness was a sound
11. It would be the chiming of a wind chime

Learning from the Mahatma you can learn to write your own poem or lyrics. You can even grow up to be a lyricist and choose it as a career.

If you like the idea of becoming a lyricist, here are some other related career options you might like:

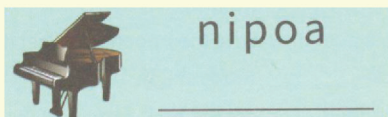
Poet: Drawing inspiration from personal life, societal issues or nature, a poet uses language creatively to express her emotions, ideas and experiences through the art of poetry. Poetry can be published in literary journals, magazines or as compilations

Creative writer: A writer who uses imagination and language skills to produce original content for novels, poetry, screenplays, and other literary work, distinguishing her work from academic, technical, or business writing. Creative writers generate fiction and non-fiction content.

Composer: The role of a composer is to create original music by writing scores for melodies, harmonies and rhythm often in collaboration with directors and producers for film and TV show, video games or musical theatre projects.

Songwriter: Songwriters write the lyrics and compose music for a song. They have exceptional skill in music theory, composing and playing music. Many popular artistes hire songwriters to write lyrics and compose melodies for them.

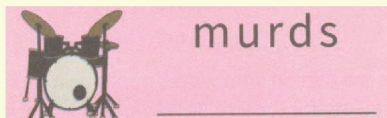
Some of the letters below started dancing when the instruments started playing and they have lost their place. Can you help them get back in order?



nipoa



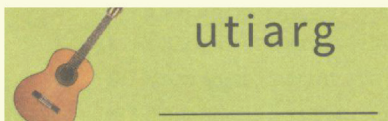
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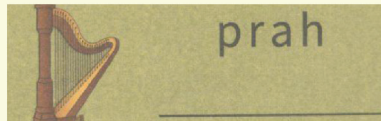
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utiarg



prah

(Excerpted from *Growing up with the Mahatma* by Dr. Swati Popat Vats, Podar Publishing)

KIDZONE



Indian rhinoceros/Great one-horned rhinoceros

Name of the animal: Indian rhinoceros/Great one-horned rhinoceros

Young ones: Calves

Food: The Indian rhinoceros is herbivorous and primarily eats tall reed grass, leaves, fruits but also consumes a variety of aquatic plants and crops. They use their prehensile lips to grasp and tear plants and even use their legs to flatten tall grass or saplings to make them easier to eat.

Life span: 35-45 years

Sound/s: Indian rhinos make a variety of sounds including grunts, honks, sneezes, growls, and squeaks, to communicate in different situations. They also use other markers, like scent marking with urine and dung, and body language, to communicate dominance, mating interest, and warnings.

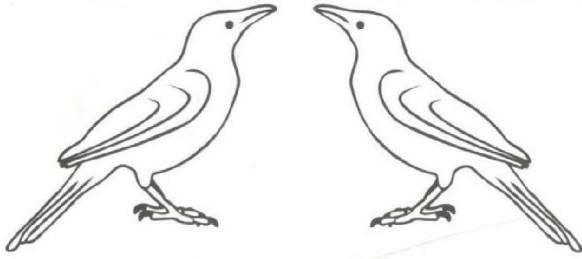
Habitat: Their native habitat is characterized by tall grasslands, swamps, and forests in the alluvial floodplains of the Himalayas, specifically in India and Nepal. They prefer areas with abundant water, food, and mud for wallowing, which helps them regulate body temperature and protect their skin from insects.

They typically reside in protected areas in the states of Assam and West Bengal, and parts of Nepal.

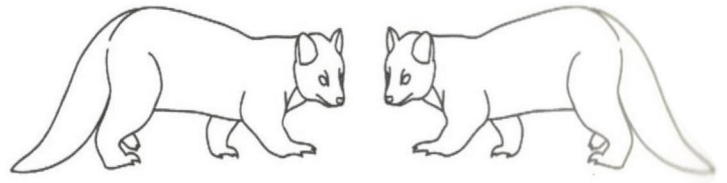
Other facts:

- Aka the Indian rhinoceros, great one-horned rhinoceroses are the largest of three species of Asian rhinoceroses. While males are larger and heavier, females have a narrower, often longer horn. Moreover, males take longer to reach sexual maturity than females.
- Female rhinos with a slightly thinner skull and a narrower horn base weigh up to 1,600 kg while male rhinos with massive neck and collar folds weigh up to 2,200 kg and run at the speed of 55 km/hour. Male and female rhinos are distinguished by their 'shield plating' and single horn.
- They have sharp hearing and a keen sense of smell yet poor eyesight. They find one another by following each other's scented trails. Despite their bulky body, they are agile and can jump or change direction quickly.
- An estimated 3,323 greater one-horned rhinos survive in India, according to a 2025 report by the International Rhino Foundation

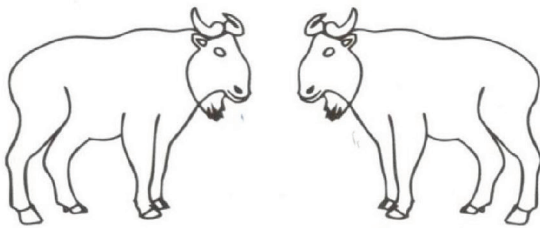
Read the direction given below each image and circle only that animal



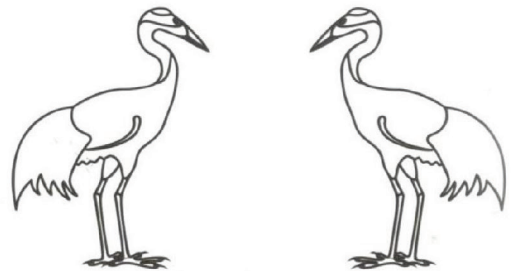
Circle the left raven



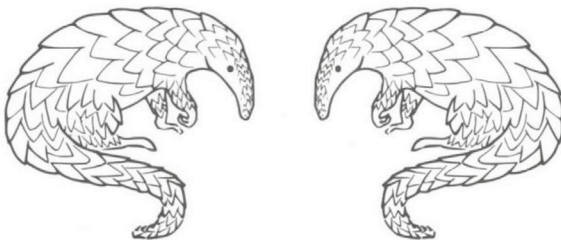
Circle the right yellow-throated marten



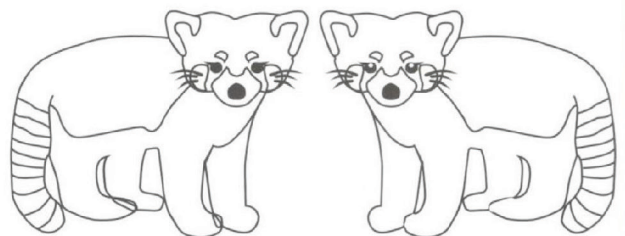
Circle the right takin



Circle the left black-necked crane



Circle the left pangolin



Circle the right red panda

This activity helps in understanding directions which help in solving algorithms is an important aspect of coding.

FUN WITH WORDS

Tables Turned WITH POETIC JUSTICE

ROOPA BANERJEE

In JK Rowling's best-selling Harry Potter novels, Lord Voldemort, the feared dark wizard, spends years trying to conquer death, only to die at his own hand, his final spell rebounding upon him. This is a master play of the literary device 'poetic justice'.

Poetic justice is when virtue is rewarded and evil is punished, often ironically or unexpectedly. The ending may not be "happy" in a traditional sense, but it feels morally appropriate, as evil/amoral characters get what they deserve.

The term poetic justice was coined by English literary critic Thomas Rymer in the 17th century. He believed that literature should uphold moral values and that characters should experience outcomes based on their virtues and vices. The word 'poetic' refers to how fitting the outcome feels within the artistic structure, not necessarily that it's found in poetry.

Literature abounds with examples of this literary device. In Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, the cruel aristocrat Charles Evrémonde shows no empathy with the poor, fuelling the rage of the French Revolution. Though his descendant Charles Darnay is innocent, he nearly pays for his family's crimes. Justice comes full circle when Sydney Carton sacrifices himself to save Darnay, redeeming his own life in the process. The fall of the oppressive class and Carton's noble act reflect poetic justice.

In *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Macbeth murders King Duncan to wrest the crown. But his ambition unravels his sanity, and he becomes a paranoid, lonely tyrant. He's eventually killed by Macduff, born via Caesarean operation, fulfilling a prophecy that Macbeth would fall to "none of woman born". The twist adds a sense of fate and fairness, making Macbeth's end not only logical but deserved.

Pop culture loves this literary device more than literature. An unforgettable example is in the film *The Lion King*. Scar kills his brother Mufasa and blames his nephew Simba, to grab power. But Scar's lies and cruelty eventually turn against him. When Simba returns and the truth is revealed, Scar is defeated and eaten by the very hyenas he had manipulated. It's not just revenge; it's justice delivered with poetic flair.

Poetic justice is also used in proverbs: "What goes

around, comes around." Or "You reap what you sow." These ideas reflect our collective hope that the universe, in its own time, sets things right.

In real life, poetic justice is rare. But when it does manifest, it satisfies our natural sense of fairness.

Writers use poetic justice to give their stories moral shape. It reinforces popular sentiment that actions have consequences. Even in tragic endings, poetic justice gives readers the sense that the universe has a moral compass.

Poetic justice is more than just a satisfactory ending; it's a powerful reminder of cause and effect, of how character shapes destiny. And whether in books, on screen, or in our own lives, it gives us hope that, in the end, the scales of natural justice will balance.

EXERCISE

Here are some examples of poetic justice. Identify the literary work and author:

1. Abigail Williams manipulates the Salem witch trials for power and revenge. But her lies are exposed, and she is left disgraced.
2. Napoleon the pig rises to power through manipulation, but finally the animals realise he has become indistinguishable from the tyrants they overthrew, outing the corrupt cycle of power.
3. Oedipus tries to escape a prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother, only to fulfil it unknowingly, illustrating fate's inescapable justice.
4. Dorian's immoral actions are hidden while his portrait bears the scars of his corruption. In the end, he destroys the portrait and dies, as his sins catch up with him.
5. Tom and Daisy Buchanan's careless actions lead to Gatsby's death. While they escape punishment legally, their emptiness and loveless marriage is subtle poetic justice.

1. *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
2. *Animal Farm* by George Orwell
3. *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles
4. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
5. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

ANSWERS

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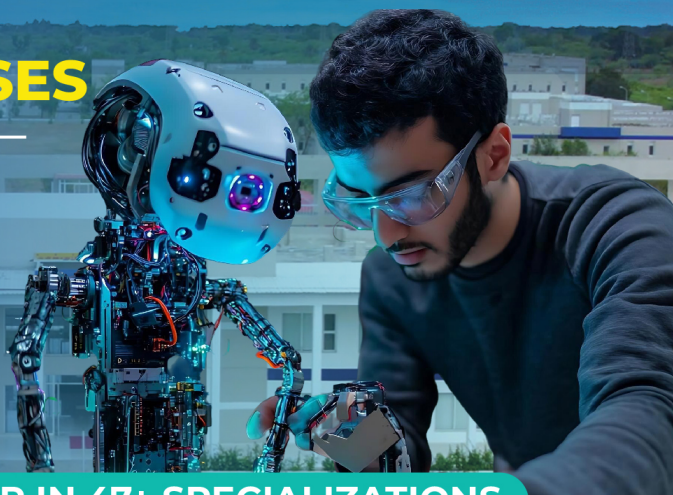
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HEALTH & NUTRITION



NICK FULLER

Do kids really need **VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS?**

For parents of fussy eaters in particular, supplements may feel like a quick and reassuring solution. But are they really needed?



Walk down the health aisle of any supermarket and you'll see shelves lined with brightly packaged vitamin and mineral supplements designed for children.

These products promise to support immunity, boost brain development and promote healthy growth — leading many parents to believe they're a necessary addition to their children's diets.

For parents of fussy eaters in particular, supplements may feel like a quick and reassuring solution. But are they really needed?

The nutrients children really need

It's true that children require a broad range of vitamins and minerals — such as vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K, together with folate, calcium, iodine, iron and zinc — for healthy development. These nutrients play essential roles in brain and nerve development, vision, bone strength, immune function, metabolism and maintaining healthy weight.

However, for most healthy children, these nutrients

can and should come from food — not from supplements.

Even children with selective eating habits typically receive adequate nutrition from everyday foods, many of which are fortified. Common staples such as breakfast cereals, milk and bread are often enriched with nutrients such as B vitamins, iron, calcium and iodine.

What science says about supplements

Although many children's supplements claim to support immunity, growth, or overall wellbeing, there is little robust scientific evidence that vitamins improve health outcomes or prevent illness in otherwise healthy children.

Leading health organisations advise that children who consume a varied diet do not need additional supplementation.

Research consistently shows that getting vitamins and minerals through whole foods is superior to taking them in supplement form. Foods provide these nutrients along with fibre, enzymes, and bioactive compounds, such as phytochemicals and healthy fats, which enhance absorption, metabolism and overall efficacy in ways isolated supplements cannot replicate.

Potential risks and unintended consequences

Parents should also be aware that supplements are not risk-free.

Fat-soluble vitamins — such as A, D, E and K — can accumulate in the body if consumed in excess. If they reach toxic levels, they can cause health issues. In the case of A and B vitamins, these issues can be severe and even cause death.

High doses of other water-soluble vitamins, such as vitamin C, may not be dangerous, but can cause side effects like diarrhoea or interfere with the absorption of other nutrients.

Many children's supplements are flavoured or sweetened to make them more appealing. While this might

make them easier to administer, it also introduces added sugars and artificial ingredients into children's diets — potentially undermining healthy eating habits.

There is also a psychological dimension to consider. Routinely giving children supplements in response to abnormal eating behaviour, such as fussiness or selective food preferences, may inadvertently teach them that pills are a substitute for a nutritious diet, rather than a temporary aid.

So, what should parents do?

The most reliable way to provide children with essential vitamins and minerals is through a varied and balanced diet. This means including dairy, meat, poultry, fish, wholegrains, nuts, seeds, legumes, and a colourful array of fruits and vegetables in their daily diets.

If you're regularly negotiating with a pint-sized dictator over a single pea, rest assured you're not alone. Research shows nearly half of children go through a phase of picky eating — a behaviour rooted in our evolutionary past.

Early humans developed an aversion to unfamiliar and bitter foods as a survival mechanism to avoid potential toxins. At the same time, they learned to seek out and store energy-rich, palatable foods to survive periods of scarcity.

So, how can parents gently encourage toddlers to embrace healthier food options?

- **Mix things up.** Blend less nutritious beige or white foods with healthier ingredients. For example, add cannellini beans and cauliflower into mashed potatoes

to boost nutrient content without sacrificing familiarity.

- **Make healthy swaps.** Gradually replace white bread, pasta and rice with wholegrain versions. Start by mixing brown rice into a serving of white rice to ease the transition.
- **Use familiarity to your advantage.** Pair new, colourful foods with familiar favourites. Offer fruit dipped in yoghurt or add a vibrant red or green sauce to pasta, making new flavours less intimidating.

By taking small, strategic steps, parents can support their child's nutrition and help them develop a positive relationship with food — no matter how selective their tastes may be.

That said, there are cases where supplementation may be appropriate — such as children with diagnosed nutritional deficiencies, specific medical conditions, or highly restricted diets.

In these instances, parents should seek advice from a qualified health professional, such as a GP or paediatric dietitian. Warning signs may include symptoms such as persistent constipation and signs of impaired growth.

But for most children, vitamin supplements aren't necessary — they may be doing more harm than good.

(Nick Fuller is the author of *Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids — Six Steps to Total Family Wellness*. His free, practical recipe ideas for a nutritious, varied diet can be found at feedingfussykids.com)

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HEALTH & NUTRITION

Healthy festive DESSERTS



PRIYA GUPTA

Faridabad-based Priya Gupta, founder of popular YouTube channel 'Recipes tried and true', shares three healthy and nutritious dessert recipes

INGREDIENTS

FOR BREAD SANDWICH

- 4-6 slices of white or brown bread
- ¼ cup condensed milk

FOR CUSTARD

- 2 cups full-fat milk
- 2 tbsp vanilla custard powder
- 4 tbsp sugar (adjust to taste)
- ¼ tsp cardamom powder
- Chopped pistachios, almonds, tutti frutti and rose petals

PREPARATION GUIDE

- Trim the crusts from bread slices and cut them into triangles.
- Spread condensed milk on the bread slices and make a sandwich. Set aside.
- Whisk custard powder with ¼ cup of milk in a small bowl. Mix until there are no lumps.
- Heat 2 cups of milk in a saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil and then lower the flame.
- Add sugar and cardamom powder, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
- Slowly pour the custard mixture into simmering milk, stirring constantly to prevent lumps.
- Cook for 4-5 minutes until custard has thickened. Let it cool.
- Place the bread sandwich on a serving platter. Pour cooled custard evenly over it.
- Garnish with chopped pistachios, almonds, and a few rose petals.
- Refrigerate for 1-2 hours. Serve chilled.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Milk is rich in calcium and protein, aiding bone growth and health. Cardamom aids digestion, while pistachios and almonds provide healthy fats and vitamin E.

CUSTARD SHAHI TUKDA (5 servings)





GHIYA KI BARFI

(6 servings)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg tender bottle gourd (*ghiya/lauki*)
- 2 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 2 cups milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 2 tbsp chopped almonds
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cardamom powder
- 3 drops green food coloring (optional)

PREPARATION GUIDE

- Peel the bottle gourd. Cut it in half, scoop out the seeds and grate the rest. Keep grated gourd in chilled water to prevent it from browning.
- Heat 2 tbsp of ghee in a large, heavy-bottomed pan or *kadai*. Add grated bottle gourd and sauté for 5 minutes.
- Add milk and mix well. Cook on a medium flame, stirring occasionally, until all milk has evaporated and the gourd is fully cooked.
- Add sugar and green food coloring (optional). The mixture will become runny as the sugar melts.
- Cook on medium flame until the mixture thickens and starts to leave the sides of the pan.
- Stir in chopped almonds and cardamom powder and mix thoroughly.
- Grease a tray with ghee or line it with parchment paper. Transfer *barfi* mixture to tray, and flatten the top with a spatula.
- Sprinkle the remaining chopped nuts. Set aside for 3-4 hours at room temperature. You can refrigerate it to speed up the process.
- Cut *barfi* into square or diamond shapes and serve. *Barfis* can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Bottle gourd (*ghiya*) is low-calorie, hydrating, and rich in fibre, promoting digestion and weight loss. Milk provides calcium and protein for bone health and growth. Almonds offer healthy fats and vitamin E and cardamom aids digestion.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

MAWA BARFI (5 servings)



INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups full-fat milk powder
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp cardamom powder
- Chopped almonds and pistachios

PREPARATION GUIDE

- Add milk and ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan or non-stick *kadai*. Stir over low heat until the ghee melts.
- Add milk powder gradually, whisking continuously to prevent lumps.
- Cook over low to medium heat, stirring constantly.
- Once it begins to thicken, add cardamom powder and continue stirring until it forms a soft, non-sticky dough. This should take about 8-10 minutes.
- Transfer *mawa* mixture to a wide mixing bowl. Let it cool. It is important that the mixture is not warm when you add the sugar, or it will melt.
- Mix powdered sugar to form a soft dough.
- Grease a tray or pan with ghee and line it with parchment paper. Transfer barfi dough into the tray and use a spatula to press it into an even layer, about half an inch thick.
- Sprinkle chopped nuts and gently press them into the barfi. Refrigerate for 1-2 hours, or until the barfi is firm and set.
- Cut it into squares or diamond shapes and serve.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Mawa (milk powder) provides protein and calcium, supporting bone growth and health. Almonds and pistachios offer healthy fats and vitamin E and cardamom aids digestion.



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LEISURE & TRAVEL

Unesco World

HERITAGE SITES OF NORTH INDIA

Currently 44 cultural and natural sites in India have been designated UNESCO world heritage sites. Applications for an additional 69 sites are pending





LEISURE & TRAVEL



Humayun's Tomb, Delhi

A nation's cultural and natural heritage embodied in buildings, monuments and natural wonders is proof of a nation or civilization's history. Moreover unique buildings and monumented wealth of countries trace the progress of humankind irrespective of where they are located. With jet travel having made the world's greatest civilizational and natural wonders accessible to a progressively larger number of students, scholars and lay people around the world, there's growing awareness of the need to preserve and maintain heritage sites and monuments.

In 1965, the United States of America called for creation of a World Heritage Trust to promote international cooperation to protect the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry. The idea was accepted by nature preservation organisations and in 1968, the International Union for Conservation of Nature drafted similar proposals which were presented at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.

The UN General Assembly referred the proposition to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and that very year, Unesco drafted an international treaty under the name and style of Convention Concerning Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The prime objective of the treaty is to encourage identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world designated as being of outstanding value to humanity.

Since then, Unesco has been inspecting and identifying cultural and natural heritage sites worldwide and designating them Unesco World Heritage Sites (WHS). These sites could

be a forest, mountain, lake, desert, monument, building, complex, or city. A list of such sites has been compiled and is regularly updated by the International World Heritage Programme administered by the Unesco World Heritage Committee comprising representatives of 21 member countries of the Unesco Convention. India was a member of the Unesco World Heritage Committee from 2001-07.

The committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and allocation of grants from a World Heritage Fund for restoration, protection and preservation of world heritage sites. During its term in office, the committee makes final decisions on the addition or deletion of properties on the World Heritage list.

Currently there are 1,248 sites (972 cultural, 235 natural, and 41 mixed properties) spread across 170 countries worldwide on the World Heritage list, with Italy hosting the largest number (61).

One of the most important benefits of getting listed is access to annual financial grants from the World Heritage Fund, which has a budget of \$5.8 million (Rs.51.4 crore) per year. Another intangible benefit of inclusion is creation of global awareness about the chosen site and its outstanding values.

India's World Heritage Sites

Widely acknowledged as one of the oldest civilizations in the world, India has a rich cultural and natural heritage. Unfortunately due to centuries of neglect, many of these sites have fallen into ruin and require extensive restoration work before they can be included in the World Heritage list. Currently only 44 (36 cultural and seven natural) sites in India are

qualified according to the UN World Heritage Convention. Applications for including an additional 69 sites are pending with the new Unesco World Heritage Committee.

For ease of presentation and reading convenience, I have categorised India's world heritage sites geographically and this essay, the first of a three-article series, provides brief overviews of 15 World Heritage Sites located in north India. The sites include: Agra Fort, Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, and Keoladeo National Park in Uttar Pradesh; Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks in Uttarakhand; Humayun's Tomb, Qutb Minar and its monuments and the Red Fort in Delhi; the Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya, Bihar; the Great Himalayan National Park (Himachal Pradesh), the Architectural Work of Le Corbusier (Chandigarh); Hill Forts of Rajasthan (group of six forts), Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (Rajasthan); and Ahmedabad — Historic City, Gujarat.

Humayun's Tomb, Delhi

Set in fragrant gardens, this strikingly beautiful monument, built in memory of Moghul Emperor Humayun was accorded World Heritage Site status in the cultural category in 1993. The mausoleum is of particular cultural significance as it was the first garden-tomb of the Indian subcontinent and inspired several architectural innovations, culminating in the Taj Mahal.

Sited in the heart of Delhi, Humayun's tomb is an imposing red sandstone structure surrounded by manicured lawns and tree lined walkways. According to history, Humayun's widow Hamida Banu Begum ordered a fitting resting place for the emperor and construction of this massive necropolis started in 1562 and was completed in eight years.

After the decline of Moghul rule in India, the tomb lay neglected until the early 21st century when the Geneva-based Aga Khan Trust for Culture stepped forward to restore the complex. The restoration work which was completed in March 2003 has reinstated water flow through the watercourses and the monument has regained much of its original grandeur.

Qutb Complex, Delhi

The Qutb complex sited in the now fashionable Mehrauli area of South Delhi was also accorded World Heritage status in 1993. An array of monuments and buildings surround the Qutb Minar, the tallest brick minaret worldwide. The construction of this sprawling complex began in 1199 AD during the reign of Qutb-ud-din Aibak, the founder and first ruler of the Slave Dynasty, and was completed by his successor Iltutmish in 1236 AD. New structures were built on the site by several subsequent rulers, including Alauddin Khilji as well as the British.

The Qutb Minar, the most famous edifice in the complex, is a 239 ft tall five-storey tower, built of red and white sandstone tapering to a top-floor diam-

eter of 9.18 ft from a 48.6 metre base. In its structure and proportions, it reflects the equilibrium and serenity of Islamic architecture. Each storey is marked by a projecting balcony, accessible by a 367-step winding staircase up to the third floor. But public access to the third storey has been prohibited following a stampede in 1981 which led to the tragic deaths of several visiting school children. Other historical sites in the Qutb vicinity are the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, the Ala-I-Darwaza, the Alai Minar and the iron pillar.

Red Fort

Popularly known as Lal Qilah, the Red Fort was conferred World Heritage status in 2007. Sited in old Delhi, the fort has several firsts to its credit. It is the most popular tourist destination in India's capital city attracting scores of visitors daily. It is the largest monument in old Delhi and from its historic ramparts, the prime minister of India *ex officio* addresses the nation on Independence Day (August 15) every year.

Sited on the right bank of the river Yamuna, the fort is surrounded by a 2.5 km wall which varies in height from 60 ft on the river side to 110 ft towards the city. It displays a fine fusion of Persian, European and Indian art, later designated the Shahjahani style. Construction of the fort began in 1638 AD under close supervision of Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan and was completed in 1648.

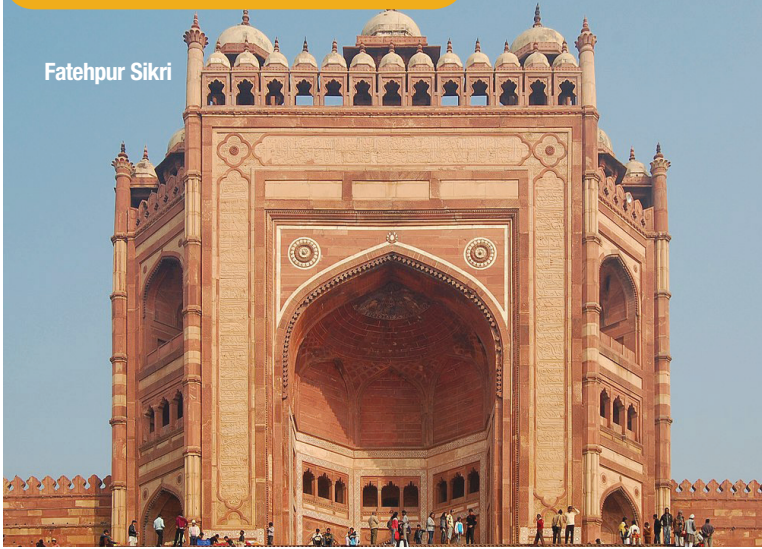
In its heyday the fort walls enclosed an entire city. Today, several of its monuments are well preserved and a son et lumiere show every evening highlights the grandest of them. They include NaqqarKhana or drum house sited on the eastern side of Lahore Gate and famous for its musicians' gallery. The Diwan-i-Aam, or hall of public audience is an ornate throne-balcony. The lavishly decorated Diwan-i-Khas or hall of private audience, was used for ministerial and court



Red Fort

LEISURE & TRAVEL

Fatehpur Sikri



gatherings and displays exquisite floral ornamentation on its fine marble columns.

Agra Fort

The Agra Fort, also known as Lal Qila, Fort Rouge and Red fort of Agra, was designated a Unesco World Heritage site in 1983. Sited 2.5 km northwest of Agra's most famous landmark the Taj Mahal, the fort described as a palatial walled city, was the capital of the Moghul dynasty for a long period. In the days of its glory, it housed the country's largest treasury and mint.

It was the third and perhaps the greatest Moghul Emperor Akbar who rebuilt the fort with its red sandstone exterior and brick interior. It took the labour of 1.4 million workmen, working non-stop for eight years to complete the fort in 1573. However it was only during the reign of Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan, that the fort assumed its current contours.

Currently only 30 of the fort's original 500 buildings are extant. While some were demolished to make way for marble palaces, others were bulldozed by the British between 1803 and 1862 to build soldiers barracks.

In the intimate world of the residential palaces, the most famous room is the fabled mirrored hall supposedly built for empress Mumtaz Mahal to bathe in. Other important structures include the Diwan-i-Aam, used to address people and listen to petitions; Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience) used to conduct private meetings and receive visiting dignitaries. Here rests Emperor Shah Jahan's magnificent black marble throne built from an entire slab of touchstone..

Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal is the undisputed emperor of tourist attractions in the Indian subcontinent attracting over 7 million visitors annually to this monument of love. The ethereal white

marble mausoleum built in memory of Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan's wife Mumtaz Mahal, is universally acknowledged as the noblest creation of the Moghul period, combining elements from Persian, Turkish, Indian, and Islamic architectural disciplines into a structure of balance and harmony. Unsurprisingly it was the first monument in India to be accorded the Unesco World Heritage Site status (1983).

Construction of this rich, extravagant marvel began in 1631 and was completed around 1653 under the close supervision of Ustad Ahmad Lahauri, the principal designer, and master architect Ustad Isa. It took 20,000 craftsmen from Delhi, Kannauj, Lahore and Multan 22 years and Rs.3.2 crore (converted to present value it would run into several billion dollars) to construct this stupendous monument. Sculptors from Bukhara, calligraphers from Syria and Persia, stone cutters from Baluchistan and inlay artisans from south India were also involved in its exquisite craftsmanship.

Fatehpur Sikri

Designated a World Heritage Site by the Unesco World Heritage Committee in 1986, Fatehpur Sikri, sited in the town of Fatehpur in the Hindi heartland state of Uttar Pradesh, was built to commemorate a battlefield victory of Moghul invader Babur over Rajput king Rana Sangram Singh. Later during the reign of Emperor Akbar in 1571, Fatehpur Sikri was designated the administrative capital of the Moghul dynasty. Sited 45 km from Agra, this is a striking example of Moghul fort architecture.

The defining feature of Fatehpur Sikri is its seamless synthesis of central Asian and Indian schools of architecture, particularly of Gujarat and Bengal. Built in rich red sandstone and white marble, most of the buildings within the fort city reflect influences of Hindu and Jain architecture, while maintaining a defining Islamic style which rejoices in ornate decoration and delicate calligraphy. Reflecting this aesthetic refinement are the Naubat Khana or drum house near the entrance; the Diwan-i-Aam or hall of public audience and the Diwan-i-Khas or hall of private audience.

Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan

This former duck-hunting reserve of maharajas is one of the major nesting and roosting areas of avian species flocking from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, China and Siberia. Over 364 bird species, including the rare Siberian crane, are habitués of this national park, designated a Unesco World Heritage site in the natural category in 1985.

Sited in the north-west of the state of Rajasthan (pop.56 million), Keoladeo National Park or Keoladeo Ghana National Park was formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary. Today this park is a major tourist draw with scores

of ornithologists arriving here in the hibernal season to observe and study exotic species. Located on the edge of the Thar Desert, its epicentral lake sprawls across a diameter of 11 sq km within an embankment of 29 sq km. Currently it is the breeding site for over 375 bird species including herons, storks, cormorants and until a few years ago the migratory Siberian crane. The area was declared a wildlife sanctuary in the late 18th century and named after an ancient Keoladeo (Shiva) temple sited within its perimeter.

Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Designated status of a Unesco World Heritage site in 2002, the Mahabodhi Temple aka Great Awakening Temple in Bodh Gaya (Bihar) is believed to be the site where over 2,000 years ago, Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment. It is sited about 96 km from Patna, capital of the state of Bihar (pop. 134 million).

According to popular belief, a bodhi or pipal tree sprang up on this location the day Gautama was born. Circa 530 BC, Gautama Buddha who had cast off his princely garments to become a wandering monk in search of enlightenment, reached the sylvan banks of Falgu River, near the city of Gaya. Here he immersed himself in meditation for three days and nights under a pipal tree and emerged as the Buddha, or Enlightened One.

The Mahabodhi temple was built in 250 BC, two centuries after the Buddha attained nirvana, by the great Emperor Ashoka. After the death of Ashoka and subsequent invasions by the Huns and Muslim plunderers, Buddhism went into decline and the Mahabodhi temple fell to ruin. The site was largely abandoned until the late 19th century when the British started restoration work under the direction of Sir Alexander Cunningham.

Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks

Wrapped around the perennially snow-capped Nanda Devi peak (25,646 ft) in the heart of the Himalayas, the 630.33 sq km Nanda Devi National Park is one of the most fragile bio-diversity hotspots of the world. Located in the newly carved out state of Uttarakhand in northern India, the site was declared a national park in 1982 and accorded a World Heritage Site status in 1988.

The park encompasses the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, a glacial basin surrounded by a ring of peaks ranging from 19,700 ft to 24,600 ft and drained by the Rishi Ganga river through the Rishi Ganga Gorge, a deep ravine. Together with the contiguous Valley of Flowers National Park sprawled across 87.50 sq km, the entire area is grouped under the umbrella of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve spread over 233,674 hectares. The valley combined with the Nanda Devi Sanctuary entered the World Heritage Site list in 2005 and is a highly protected area.

The Great Himalayan National Park

The Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) is a Unesco World Heritage Site sited in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. Established in 1984 and declared a Unesco Natural World Heritage Site in 2014, it spans an area of over 1,100 sq km and is included in the Western Himalayan biodiversity hotspot.

GHNP is known for its rich biodiversity, including endangered species like the snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, musk deer, and the Western tragopan. The park's altitude ranges from 1,500 to over 6,000 meters, offering a wide variety of ecosystems — from alpine meadows to dense forests.

The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier (Chandigarh)

The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier in Chandigarh is a Unesco World Heritage Site recognized in 2016 as part of a transnational series showcasing the pioneering architecture of Le Corbusier, a legendary 20th-century architect. Chandigarh, India's first planned city post-independence, was designed by Le Corbusier in the 1950s to represent the nation's modern and progressive vision.

In Chandigarh, his work includes iconic structures such as the Capitol Complex, which houses the Secretariat, the high court and the Legislative Assembly known for their bold use of concrete, geometric design, open spaces, and integration with nature, reflecting Le Corbusier's modernist ideals.

Hill Forts of Rajasthan

The Hill Forts of Rajasthan are a group of six majestic forts collectively designated a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2013. These forts, built between the 8th and 18th centuries, represent the military might, architectural brilliance, and cultural heritage of the Rajput kingdom.



PARENTS CORNER

Helping children respect **INDIAN CULTURE**

PW invited parents of Gurukul The School, Ghaziabad to share their insights on how they help their children respect Indian culture and traditions



“In our home, culture flows like a gentle river -- through lullabies, laughter, and little hands folded in prayer. Mornings begin with soft chanting of mantras and simple bhajans in which our daughter Pranika (class III) plays an active role. Festivals are not just dates — they are stories about why Diwali lights up the night, how Lord Krishna’s colours filled the skies on Holi, and what makes Rakhi

a thread of love. Pranika listens wide-eyed. But the soul of her learning lies in our village. There, barefoot on mud paths, chasing butterflies and listening to her grandmother’s folk tales, she connects with her roots. No screen, no toy can match this magic” — **Monika Yadav**, Senior Software Developer, VML Commerce



“Culture is a living, breathing story passed between generations. My approach is to make this story a natural part of our lives. At bedtime we engage in the craft of storytelling to introduce our son Pavit (class I) to epic tales

from the Panchatantra, the wisdom of the Puranas, and the heroics of the Mahabharata. Cooking together becomes a lesson in geography and heritage — explaining to him why we eat *sarson ka saag* in the North and *pongol* in the South. Most importantly, we celebrate every festival in its right spirit, explaining the historical context of light over darkness (Diwali) or good over evil (Dussehra). It’s all about building a proud, intelligent connection with his roots” — **Anshika Saxena**, IT professional, Rackspace Technologic



“Encouraging our son Bhanvi (class III) to mindfully listen to stories drawn from the epics or mythology and learning classic art forms has truly helped him imbibe Indian culture, taught him respect, and a sense

of belonging. Exposure to classical music, dance, and literature stimulate pride in our heritage and children develop a deep appreciation of India’s cultural richness and diversity” — **Dr. Perna Piyush**, dental surgeon at UPPMS



“Passing on Indian culture and traditions to our daughter, Vedikka (class I) is about weaving small rituals into her daily life. Her mornings begin with a prayer and chanting Gayatri mantra and aartis she knows by heart, and end with recitation of ‘Ram Stuti’ in San-

skrit. Her daily routine has zero screen time except for videos on Krishna’s mischief, Hanuman’s strength, or Ganesha’s wisdom — characters who have become her friends. She lovingly greets everyone with a “namaste” with tiny hands folded. By bowing to the sun and moon, thanking God for meals, and celebrating all festivals, she is absorbing the virtues of gratitude and respect” — **Mansi Mishra**, Manager, Turacoz Healthcare Solutions



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PARENTS CORNER

Teaching children the VIRTUE OF COMPASSION

PW invited parents of Greenwood High, Bengaluru to share their insights on how they teach their children to be compassionate towards others



“Compassion is a fundamental virtue essential for humanity's survival and growth. We have nurtured our son Yuvaan (class III) from youngest age in a compassionate environment. Children learn by example, internalizing kindness through the ac-

tions and attitudes of adults. Empathy can be taught by helping them understand their own feelings and those of others. Simple acts like sharing, helping classmates, or caring for a pet develop this quality. By encouraging and appreciating acts of kindness, and providing opportunities for them to practice compassion, we show children that tenderness is a form of strength. Ultimately, children learn compassion by living it” — **Sonia Abrol**, Advocate and Founder, Sarvaya Legal



“Our daughter Samhita (class IV) is a voracious reader who has learned compassion through her reading habit. Books help develop empathy by simulating social experiences and allowing readers to step into characters' minds. As parents we have taught Samhita

these virtues in the context of daily life by modeling empathetic behaviour, discussing feelings openly, encouraging perspectives-sharing. Also by creating opportunities for kindness. Consistent, small moments at home, at the playground, or when reading together has helped Samhita build this important skill” — **Shruti Aditya Kulkarni**, homemaker



“Compassion is a vital trait that enhances emotional intelligence and fosters empathy in children. It helps them nurture relationships and understand the feelings of others. We always encourage our son Atrij (class VI) to speak with kindness and

show empathy towards others. We also teach him to accept his mistakes, apologize and ensure he doesn't repeat them. Likewise we have also taught him to forgive people for their mistakes and avoid making a big fuss about them. We also make it a point to appreciate Atrij for his acts of kindness by treating him with ice cream/pizza, so he feels rewarded” — **Animesh Khare**, Director Tonbo Imaging Pvt Ltd.



“I believe compassion is best taught at home by simple acts of kindness. Which is why parents must model compassionate behaviour in their homes, in front of their children. Our daughter Kaelyn (class VI) has seen her father feed stray dogs and has wanted to do the same

since. She has seen me give away my old clothes and her baby brother's clothes to the nanny and her child. For Kaelyn, it is common to give away her clothes to someone in need. I have a friend who works with an orphanage and often collects our children's clothes, which both our children happily hand over for the children there. Kaelyn feels very happy when she sees the joy on the faces of the children she shares her old clothes with. And that's a huge takeaway” — **Mokshada Tandon**, Content Writer, Yourstory Media Pvt Ltd



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