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# LETTER FROM MANAGING EDITOR



NURTURING 21st CENTURY CHILDREN

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major deficiency of most school curriculums countrywide is that they don't allocate sufficient time and attention to developing children's life skills. In an overwhelming majority of the country's 1.4 million schools, teaching-learning, syllabus completion and exams are the first, second and third priorities of the academic year. Co-curricular and sports education are seldom accorded the importance they deserve.

Consequently, most children suffer a deficiency of important life skills such as self-confidence, communication, critical thinking, and social competence. A 2023 survey conducted by the transnational non-profit Life Skill Collaborative in partnership with Breakthrough, Quest Alliance, and Pratham, discloses that 60 percent of adolescents aged 14-18 are unfamiliar with the terms 'life skills' and/or '21st century skills', leave aside the question of receiving guidance or training to develop them.

Sustained neglect of life skills development in K-12 education has adversely impacted school-leavers' higher education and employment prospects. A major grouse of industry and business leaders is that most of the 10 million graduates who stream out of India's 52,000 colleges and 1,338 universities annually, are under-prepared, and in particular, lack essential life/soft skills which renders them unemployable. A notable life skills deficit flagged is self-confidence, identified by Unicef and WHO as a "foundational life skill which promotes personal competence, mental wellbeing and healthy social integration".

In this year-end cover story, we discuss ways and means to develop children's self-confidence, a vitally important life skill in 21st-century workplaces. Choice of this cover story is inspired by a recent *Listen Up Report 2025* of Hark, a UK-based education agency. It highlights that lack of confidence negatively impacts children's capability to "learn, develop skills and relate to people around them". The study connects a global "confidence crisis" among youth to reduced workforce readiness and soft-skills deficits, concluding that "confidence is not merely a personality trait but a foundational capability that shapes how young people learn, relate to others, and step into adulthood". In our detailed cover story, we present valuable advice from child psychologists and parenting experts on how parents can build and nurture children's self-confidence — the X factor that's necessary for personal and professional success in increasingly complex and fast-changing workplaces worldwide.

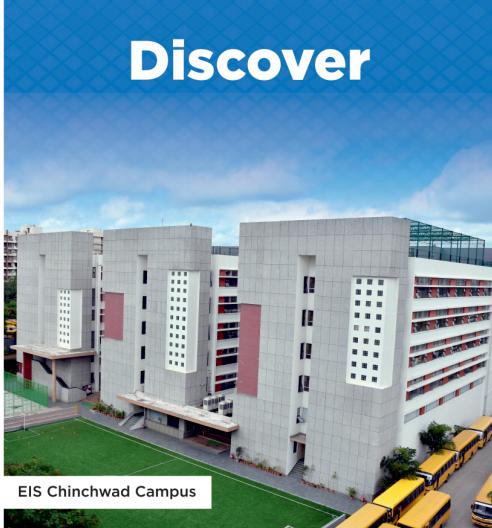
There's much else in this yuletide issue of *ParentsWorld*. Check out the Early Childhood essay in which Gurugram-based psychologist Priyanka Sethi recommends play-way pedagogies to teach children foundational numeracy, and the Special Essay in which Prof. Thomas Delawarde-Salas of Quebec University highlights the importance of paying attention to the mental health and well-being of new mothers. Also recommended is our Health & Nutrition story in which pediatrician Dr. Tarun Singh presents a useful age-appropriate children's physical activity and exercises guide.

Merry Xmas and Happy New Year!

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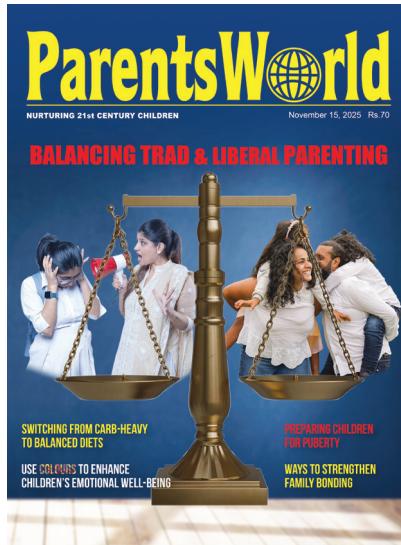
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## Look-good culture

Your cover story 'Beware! Body Beautiful Obsession is Dangerous & Expensive' (PW, October) was a thought-provoking feature on the growing obsessive look-good culture within Gen X.

The relentless pursuit of 'idealised' beauty standards — driven by social media filters, influencer culture, and endless scrolling — can take a serious toll on children's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Parents must make conscious efforts to limit their children's exposure to narcissistic social media platforms, guide them toward responsible digital use, and help them understand the distorted reality behind "perfect" images. Most importantly, they should nurture their children's self-esteem by encouraging engagement with online platforms that promote positive and realistic body images.

**Aisha Ibrahim**  
Bengaluru

## Music importance

Your essay 'Music and Movement Boost Child Development' (PW, October) offers a refreshing and insight-

ful perspective on how young children learn best — not through books and worksheets, but through play, rhythm, music, and free expression. It's a timely reminder that learning in the early years is a multisensory process that engages the body and mind together.

Child psychologist Riddhi Doshi Patel highlights how the "magical combination" of rhythm and motion can enhance timing, focus, coordination, and social-emotional skills such as communication, self-expression, empathy, and teamwork. Equally important, music and movement activities stimulate creativity, strengthen neural connections in the brain, and build confidence and joy in learning.

**Vinny Datta**  
Pune

## Nurturing resilience

Thank you for your insightful 'Ask Your Counsellor' column (PW, October), in which Bhubaneswar-based psychologist Reena Chopra offers thoughtful and practical parenting advice. Her guidance on nurturing emotional resilience in children was particularly valuable — reminding parents that life's unpredictability and disappointments are natural, and that with understanding and support, children can learn to cope and grow stronger. She also urges parents to respond with empathy rather than criticism, and to avoid labelling children as "too sensitive" or "difficult."

**Nisha Jha**  
Ranchi

## Boosting mental health

Your Adolescence Essay 'Enabling Adolescent Mental Health & Well-Being' (PW October) is a must-read for parents especially of teenage children.

Citing that nearly 7.3 percent of

Indian adolescents experience diagnosable mental-health conditions — often exacerbated by social stigma, silence, and lack of awareness among parents and schools — the author makes a compelling case to shift parental focus from academic achievement to emotional resilience and mental well-being.

Equally important, the essay reminds educators and parents of the need to create open, non-judgmental spaces where teens feel heard and supported. Strengthening mental-health literacy, encouraging empathy and dialogue at home and in schools, and seeking timely professional help when needed can go a long way in enabling adolescents to thrive — not just survive — these formative years.

**Priya Kanwar**  
Mumbai

## Important message

Your Health & Nutrition essay 'Do Kids Really Need Vitamin Supplements?' (PW, October) was informative and balanced. While children's supplements are aggressively marketed as boosters for immunity, brain development, and overall growth, as the author argues, scientific evidence supporting their use in otherwise healthy children is limited.

I agree with the author that a well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet is the best and most natural option to meet children's nutritional needs. Routine supplementation is rarely necessary for healthy children and, when used without medical supervision, may even pose health risks. The key takeaway of the article — that supplements should never replace wholesome food and that parents should seek professional guidance when genuine health concerns arise — is timely and important in today's market-driven wellness culture.

**Garima Kapoor**  
Gurugram



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# NEWS BYTES



## Walking 5,000 steps per day delays cognitive decline

Walking 5,000 steps a day may delay cognitive decline by about three years, and 7,500 steps a day could slow it by seven years, says a new study published in *Nature Medicine* (November). The study analysed 296 adults aged 50-90 years, all of whom were mentally healthy at start. They were participants in a long-running Harvard Aging Brain Study. Brain scans were taken to measure two major protein buildups in the brain — amyloid-beta and tau — accepted as strong markers of Alzheimer's disease. Researchers followed participants for 14 years.

"Lifestyle factors impact the earliest stages of Alzheimer's disease. This suggests lifestyle changes may delay the onset of cognitive symptoms if we intervene early. This research study explains why some people show early signs of Alzheimer's but do not worsen as quickly as others," says Dr. Jasmeer Chhatwal, associate professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School.

## Human brain develops in five different phases

A new research study published in *Nature Communications* (November) suggests that the human brain develops in a series of distinct phases, or "epochs," as its architecture shifts and reorganises how we think and process information. In this pioneering research, neuroscientists at the University of Cambridge, UK, identified four major inflection points in the average brain's lifespan — at ages 9, 32, 66, and 83 — each marking a transition into a period with noticeably different neural characteristics.

According to the study, human cognition does not simply rise, peak, and then decline. Instead, only during the phase from ages 9-32 it manifests increasing neural efficiency. From 32-66, the brain's structure remains relatively stable, a period researchers associate with plateaus in intelligence and personality. After age 83, however, the brain begins to rely more heavily on disparate regions as connections between them gradually deteriorate.

"These eras provide important context for what our brains might be best at, or more vulnerable to, at different stages of our lives. It could help us understand why some brains develop differently at key points in life, whether it is learning difficulties in childhood, or dementia in our later years," says Dr. Alexa Mousley,

a postdoctoral research associate at the Cambridge University and the study's lead author.

## Childhood hypertension has doubled in 20 years

Cases of high blood pressure among children and teenagers have nearly doubled worldwide during the past 20 years, according to a new study published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* (November). The study, which analysed data drawn from 96 studies across 21 countries involving more than 443,000 children and adolescents, reveals that hypertension among pre-19s rose from around 3.2 percent in 2000 to over 6 percent in 2020. It also flagged a disturbing trend of "pre-hypertension" affecting 8 percent of children and teens and "masked hypertension" affecting over 9 percent of young people.

Researchers found that nearly 20 percent of children and teenagers with obesity experience hypertension, almost 8x the rate of children with healthy weight. According to study author Dr Peige Song, of Zhejiang University School of Medicine, the rise of hypertension is "driven largely by lifestyle factors such as unhealthy diets, decreased physical activity, and increasing prevalence of childhood obesity". "Promoting healthy habits, such as a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains while minimising salt and sugar intake, can substantially reduce the incidence of hypertension.

## Gene mutation causes rare diabetes in children

Researchers from the University of Exeter (UK) and Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) have identified a previously unknown form of diabetes that afflicts infants under six months of age. Typically, when diabetes develops this early, it is caused by a genetic mutation, say the researchers in a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* (November). Using advanced DNA sequencing and innovative stem cell models, they discovered mutations in the TMEM167A gene, which is linked to a rare type of neonatal diabetes.

"Finding DNA changes that cause diabetes in infants provides unique insights to identify genes that are vital for insulin production and secretion. This discovery has helped to clarify the function of the little-known TMEM167A gene and revealed its key role in insulin secretion," says Dr. Elisa de Franco, senior research fellow at the Exeter University.



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COVER  
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# *Nurturing children's* SELF-CONFIDENCE

**Confidence is not a genetic endowment. Through structured activities, parents and educators can guide and enable children to develop this vital attribute that's necessary for success in complex and fast-changing workplaces worldwide**

**KIRAN BALIMANE & CYNTHIA JOHN**

*"If you have no confidence in self, you are twice defeated in the race of life. With confidence, you have won before you have even started"*  
— **Marcus Garvey** (1887-1940), Jamaican political activist and Black nationalist leader

**D**efined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the feeling of trusting in your own ability to do things and succeed, leading to a sense of assurance and sureness about oneself or a situation," self-confidence is the magic attribute that is necessary for success in complex and fast-changing workplaces worldwide. It regularly features among the 3 'Cs' — together with commitment and competence — identified by self-help and leadership gurus as non-negotiable traits to overcoming obstacles and achieving academic, personal and professional goals. And like most attributes and traits that shape character, children's self-confidence can be nurtured and strengthened from youngest age through adolescence to enable them to develop into confident young adults ready to take on the world.

Several authoritative studies link children's low self-confidence to diminished capability to learn, build skills, participate socially, and realise their potential. A recent

*Listen Up Report 2025* by UK-based education agency, Hark, highlights that lack of confidence negatively impacts children's capability to "learn, develop skills and relate to people around them".

The study, which surveyed a representative sample of 1,400 children aged 11-18, found that 33 percent of them had little or no confidence, with the result that they are less likely to participate in school (40 percent never raise their hand in class even when they know an answer) or engage socially, often avoiding clubs, leadership roles and extra-curricular activities. According to the study, the "confidence crisis" will have a negative impact in terms of workforce readiness and soft-skills deficits. The authors of the study conclude that "confidence is not merely a personality trait but a foundational capability that shapes how young people learn, relate to others, and step into adulthood".

Yet confidence is not a genetic endowment. Through structured activities, parents and educators can guide and enable children to develop this vital attribute. In this year-end cover story, we present valuable advice from child psychologists and parenting experts on ways and means to build and nurture children's self-confidence from young age.



## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

According to **Reena Chopra**, a Bhubaneswar-based psychologist and founder of SAAR Holistic Wellness, a firm that provides mindful parenting advice, encouraging participation in structured extra-curricular activities provides an excellent pathway to build children's self-esteem and confidence. "Unfortunately, in most schools, there is excessive focus on academics and exam success to the neglect of sports, games and extra-curricular activities. This results in children failing to develop important life skills. Extra-curricular activities such as theatre, sports, public speaking and debates, provide children safe spaces to take risks, express themselves and discover innate capabilities. When children practice collaboration and leading in these settings, confidence grows naturally. These experiences teach them to develop life skills, navigate setbacks and move forward with greater confidence in everyday life," says Chopra.

To develop children's self-confidence, Chopra suggests three extra-curricular activities in particular. **Theatre/drama.** Participation in school plays and theatre develops children's memory, elocution and self-assurance. When children participate in dramatisation



**Reena Chopra**

and role play, they explore a range of emotions and perspectives. This process enhances emotional intelligence and diminishes social inhibition, especially in shy and introverted children. Through role-play, voice modulation exercises, and group performances, children develop the confidence to present themselves before public audiences.

**Sports.** Participation in physical activities and formal sports and games builds children's confidence by providing them numerous opportunities for experiences of

mastery — the feeling of 'I can' after consistent practice and effort. Every small improvement is a stepping stone towards building capability. Physical challenges and failure also teach resilience, enabling children to learn that setbacks are temporary. Even small successes build competence, while failures provide opportunities for emotional regulation and problem-solving. Additionally, team sports develop leadership, cooperation, and socialisation skills which in turn develop self-confidence.

**Public speaking and debate.** Encouraging participation in school debates, elocution and public speaking activities develops children's verbal confidence

## COVER



and communication skills. Children who begin with hesitant participation often progress to delivering full-length speeches and engaging in formal debates. Such incremental experiences reduce stage fright, improve articulation and logical thinking, and promote capability to express ideas confidently in group settings.

#### ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

**Blessy Esther**, Director-Programs, at Breakthrough, a Bengaluru-based firm that facilitates soft skills learning through outdoor programmes, believes adventure activities such as rock climbing, rappelling, and trekking provide great opportunity to develop children's self-confidence. "In professionally managed experiential learning environments, every adventure activity is paired with guided reflection, helping children process what they felt, what they attempted, and what they accomplished. It is this cycle — experience, reflection, application — that transforms a moment of courage into habit. These experiences require children to manage fear, assess risk, and persist despite discomfort. When a child completes an age-appropriate climb or navigates a rope course, the experience generates powerful sense of

accomplishment. It enhances the belief in one's capability to undertake and execute challenging tasks. Over time this develops children's self-confidence and can-do mindset, positively influencing their attitude to academic, social, and personal challenges," says Esther, who strongly recommends parents to sign up their children for organised adventure activities such as rock climbing, trekking, rappelling, obstacle-course challenges, and supervised outdoor camping during long vacations.



**Blessy Esther**

#### FREE-THINKING ACTIVITIES

**Swati Jain**, an alum of Delhi University and the well-reputed Fore School of Management, Delhi and Director of The Banyan, a Delhi-based enterprise that provides in-workplace children's day care services to corporate employees, advises parents to encourage "free-thinking activities" to develop children's self-confidence. "Confidence isn't built only by academic outcomes and

structured play and games. Children should also be encouraged to imagine, explore, experiment, and express themselves. When children engage in open-ended, 'free-thinking' activities, they learn to make choices, develop their unique personalities and cognitive skills, freedom

# 3 ways to build confidence in YOUNGEST CHILDREN

An alum of America's top-ranked, blue-chip Georgia Tech and Stanford universities, Mumbai-based

**Raghav Himatsingka** is founder-CEO of Raising Superstars Pvt Ltd. The company has ideated and developed an app christened *Prodigy Baby*, designed to arouse the inherent latent potential of 0-6-year-old children. Himatsingka shares three parent-child activities designed to develop the self-confidence of youngest children.



**Make small wins possible.** In the early years, confidence grows from mastery, not praise. And the best way to develop mastery is by assigning toddlers small, achievable challenges. Each day or week, give your child a small task that's just above her current capability — folding a T-shirt, balancing on one leg, tidying a bookshelf, building a simple Lego model from a picture, pouring water into glass. When she completes it, her brain registers a sense of achievement/capability, reinforcing the belief that she can accomplish tasks on her own. Don't rush her or jump in to help prematurely. You need to celebrate effort and persistence rather than outcome or perfection. Keep tasks/challenges short and interesting; don't let her feel like she is doing big chores or being tested.

**Brave or unusual act of the day.** Confidence also comes from learning to be okay with mild discomfort in everyday activities — such as trying something new, taking initiative, or speaking up. Every evening, casually ask, "What was one brave thing you did today?" Don't set unrealistic expectations or define "bravery". Encourage her to recall anything where she felt

uncomfortable but tried anyway. Make deliberate efforts to introduce unusual moments in her day, such as greeting a stranger, asking a question, trying a new activity, etc. Subsequently, at the end of the day help her recollect these moments. Keep the conversation light, pressure-free, and matter-of-fact without making it a big deal or stressful.

**Make your child teach.** One of the simplest ways to build confidence is to flip roles and let your child become the expert. Ask her to teach you something she knows — how to dribble a ball, draw

a rocket, a dinosaur fact, a puzzle trick. When children take pains to explain, they activate metacognition and experience a sense of competence and leadership. Exhibit genuine curiosity, ask follow-up questions, and let them guide the interaction without correcting them in the moment. Ensure you don't come across like you already know the answer. Engage meaningfully and with curiosity, praising effort rather than perfection. This ritual helps them visualise themselves as someone who has knowledge worth sharing, which is a profound confidence booster.

When parents integrate such experiences into routine learning, children develop a robust internal belief system: conviction that they are capable, adaptable, and prepared to take on new challenges. Ultimately, confidence is not taught; it is built through well-designed experiences that enable children to know themselves, trust their abilities, and engage boldly with the world. **”**



**Swati Jain**

to think, imagine and ideate. The more opportunities children have to play, discover and express freely, the more naturally confident they will become," advises Jain, who recommends four 'free-thinking activities'.

**Unstructured creative play.**

Don't always direct how children should play. Allow them to make up their own games, experiment and play with paint, playdough, sand. This nurtures creativity,

cognitive capability, risk-taking, and confidence by providing them a sense of ownership and pride in games and activities they craft.

**Free outdoor exploration.** Outdoor exploration also boosts children's self-confidence. Simple 'free' outdoor activities such as picking up sticks and stones, collecting seashells, and sand play encourage sensory engagement and spontaneous discovery. Such experiences nurture curiosity, adventurism, independence, and willingness to venture into unfamiliar territory. Exposure to outdoor environments gradually reduces fear of the unknown and strengthens children's belief in their capability to navigate challenges with confidence.

**Building blocks.** This childhood game is not as simple as it seems. Building and creating structures with blocks enhances children's confidence because they're starting from scratch, developing creativity, design and problem-solving skills. Each time they build a new

# COVER STORY



structure, they'll experience pride and accomplishment.

**Storytelling.** This is a time-tested pedagogy to build children's self-confidence. Encourage children to make up their own characters, narrate stories drawn from their own imagination, and share them with friends and peers. They will transform into great raconteurs and perhaps great writers.

## MIND GAMES

A 2023 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* says that self-referenced praise, such as "You're improving so much" helps to develop "healthier, more stable confidence" than comparative praise like "You're the best." Moreover, well-known psychologists such as Stanford University professor Carol Dweck (growth mindset theory) and Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura (self-efficacy theory) have concluded that when children imagine successful outcomes, monitor their progress, and use positive, affirming language, they develop greater confidence and perseverance.

Here are four suggested 'mind' activities grounded in positive psychology and cognitive-behavioural (CBT) research:



**Journaling.** Provide your child with a journal (note book) and encourage her to write down achievable daily or weekly goals. Subsequently, completing and checking off tasks establishes a clear sense of progress and builds confidence through small, consistent triumphs.

**Visualization.** Teach children to mentally rehearse successful outcomes. For instance, delivering a speech with poise or scoring a

winning goal. Positive visualization strengthens self-belief and reduces performance anxiety by helping children (and adults) picture themselves as capable.

**Positive affirmation.** Teach children to use short, empowering statements during moments of anxiety and challenge. Simple phrases such as "I can do it" or "I'm bold and capable" help towards developing determination and emotional stamina.

**Progress tracking.** Break long-term goals into measurable steps using a visual progress tracker. Experiencing incremental advancement helps children to remain motivated and measure their growing competence, as they progress towards accomplishing set goals.

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# SPECIAL ESSAY



THOMAS DELAWARDE-SAÏAS

## Understanding perinatal RELATIONAL DISTRESS

**From post-partum depression to relationship woes — the importance of mental health after giving birth**



“Post-partum depression” has been discussed as an identifiable, measurable, treatable disorder for 50 years. Thresholds, scales, prevalence rates: everything seems clear, even reassuring.

But this binary model — it’s either depression or not depression — obscures a more subtle reality: new parenthood is disruptive, makes us vulnerable and places us all on a spectrum of distress.

The notion of post-partum depression was established in 1968, primarily because it responded to dual academic and medical requirements: to lend scientific legitimacy to the suffering of new mothers and to provide a clear and specific diagnostic framework for a particular period of life.

At the time, emphasis was placed on the atypical nature of this depression, which resembled an anxiety disorder. Its specificity was considered to be solely related to its symptoms, and the challenge lay more in its detection than management.

### Minimizing lived experiences

Furthermore, this specific characterization made it possible to distinguish post-natal depression from the “baby blues” (sometimes called “chemical depression”) that occur in the form of brief depressive episodes linked to

biological factors, particularly post-partum hormonal changes.

Since then, the debate has been confined to psychiatric classifications and screening tools. But that’s reduced a lived experience to a simple diagnostic category.

In a recent article published in the journal *Neuropsychiatrie de l'enfance et de l'adolescence*, we proposed, together with child psychiatrist Romain Dugravier, talking about perinatal relational distress rather than post-partum depression.

Far from being unanimously accepted within the scientific community, our approach, which questions diagnoses and labels, attempts to view adjustments to parenthood beyond the sole prism of individual disorders.

### A crisis of maturity

Becoming a parent means meeting the needs of a totally dependent child while reorganizing your emotional, marital and social life.

For many, this experience is deeply formative. For others, it reawakens old wounds: emotional deprivation, loneliness or experiences of rejection. The arrival of a baby in that case can become disruptive by reawakening buried vulnerabilities.

Take the case of a woman who has her first child. More than fatigue, she is overwhelmed by the feeling of being trapped: someone who has always defined herself as independent and “not dependent on anyone” is suddenly confronted with an infant who is totally dependent on her.

This confrontation can reactivate the patterns of a childhood marked by the need to fend for herself. A diagnosis of post-partum depression does not address this history or the tension between dependence and independence.

Antidepressant treatment, which in our experience is sometimes prescribed following this diagnosis, will not address the cause of this distress, either. This is in contrast to a space where vulnerability is recognized and where the relationship with the child can be supported.

This leads to a loss of meaning: we diagnose “depression” when what we really need to understand are the interactions and upheavals inherent in the new parent-child relationship. The scales used — such as the widely used Edinburgh scale (EPDS), a 10-item questionnaire designed to screen for depressive symptoms after birth — focus on the mother’s mood, neglecting the quality of the parent-child bond, social support or identity changes.

The result is that symptoms are assessed, but loneliness, family loyalty conflicts or difficulties in investing in the relationship with the baby are overlooked. Having “psychiatrized” the relationship, it is also difficult to treat it beyond medication.

### Dependence, independence

Our article offers another interpretation, this one inspired by attachment theory: the tension between the baby’s dependence and the parent’s independence.

Parental independence is not always synonymous with autonomy. It can be a survival strategy learned in childhood, when relying on others proved too risky. However, becoming a parent brutally confronts one with the absolute dependence of a newborn: one must be there, all the time, unconditionally. For those who have learned never to owe anyone anything, this experience can be disorienting.

This relational interpretation helps us understand why perinatal distress cannot be divided into two groups — depressed or not — but forms a gradient: from normal fatigue to severe anxiety and depression, including loneliness, loss of confidence and feelings of parental incompetence.

### Containment and continuity

Unlike a categorical approach, which can be restrictive, attachment theory opens up new perspectives. It is based on two essential principles: containment and continuity.

- **Containment:** First and foremost, offering parents a space where their emotions are welcomed, without judgment, to help them make sense of what they are ex-



periencing. Interventions such as parent-child interaction therapy or relational intervention with video feedback show that confidence and security can be restored by valuing existing parenting skills — rather than by correcting supposed deficiencies.

- **Continuity:** Too often, parents are passed from one professional to another, having to repeat their story and experiencing breaks in continuity of care. But dealing with issues continuously over time (from pregnancy to the early years of the child’s life), in terms of location (maternity ward, home, health services) and in terms of language (between medical, social and psychological disciplines), is important. Ensuring a chain of relational security means avoiding assistance that is limited to isolated, one-off interventions with no common thread.

### Rethinking organization of care

Our criticism is not only aimed at concepts, but also at the consistency of the various interventions with families.

Perinatal care remains fragmented: between adult mental health, child psychiatry and social services, each speaks its own language and follows its own priorities, sometimes leaving parents alone to piece things together on their own.

We advocate for a relationship-centred approach to health care: training teams in attachment theory, creating accessible post-natal spaces and providing key figures to support families through transitions. Because if “there is no such thing as a baby” on its own, there should be no such thing as isolated parents, either.

### Human-centred vision

Replacing post-partum depression with perinatal relational distress is not just a question of vocabulary. It means refusing to limit ourselves to an approach that classifies disorders into diagnostic categories according to fixed criteria to the detriment of a psychopathological consideration that views parenthood as a universal, relational and evolving human experience.

This is not about denying suffering or dismissing treatment when it is necessary. It’s a reminder that perinatal mental health cannot be limited simply to screening, prescribing and referring. It must also contain, connect and accompany.

In short, it’s time to move from a logic centred on individual disorders to an approach that treats the parent-child bond, not just the symptoms. Prevention and care must be organized around families, not around diagnostic categories.

**(Thomas Delawarde-Salas is professor of psychology, University of Quebec, Montreal)**

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# EARLY CHILDHOOD



PRIYANKA SETHI

## Teaching numeracy THROUGH PLAY

**When numbers are taught through games, stories, and everyday moments, learning becomes enjoyable for youngest children**



**T**he early years are crucial for building children's foundational numeracy skills. And children learn best through play. When numbers are taught through games, stories, and everyday moments, learning becomes enjoyable. Research has shown that children develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts when they are embedded in everyday contexts.

Here are some ways parents can use play to teach children foundational numeracy skills.

### Count with toys

Toys are a child's best friends and also their first teachers. Arranging toy cars in a line, stacking blocks, or sorting dolls by colour naturally builds one-to-one correspondence and counting skills.

For instance, a child lining up cars can count: "One

car, two cars, three cars." Create playful challenges such as "Who can count blocks the fastest?"

### Numbers in motion

Children love to move. Let numbers move with them. A hopscotch grid with chalked numbers invites children to jump, skip, and count aloud. Beyond simple sequencing, playful variations such as hopping only when even numbers are called out teach children advanced concepts such as categorization and number patterns.

This blend of kinaesthetic action and cognitive recall reinforces learning.

### Rhythm and maths

Music and rhythm are a great way to teach numeracy. Clapping games, where each clap is paired with a

number, weave together motor coordination and auditory memory. Variations such as clapping louder when big numbers are called out keep children engaged while improving their body flexibility.

### **Snack-time math**

Children love snack time. This daily ritual is also a perfect opportunity for math-in-action. Encourage them to count biscuits, divide fruit slices equally and subtract them as they are eaten. This activity introduces concepts of addition, subtraction, and division in an enjoyable, rewarding way.

When children see math taught at the dining table, they understand that numbers are not confined to books but are applied in everyday life.

### **Treasure hunts and stories**

Children learn quickly and enjoyably through adventure and imagination. Organise a treasure hunt for hidden number cards or ask your child to pair each number with real objects (finding '5' next to five pencils).

Stories, too, work wonders. "Three rabbits went into the forest, and two more joined them..." Suddenly, addition is not just math, it's part of an unfolding tale. Narratives capture emotion, and when numbers are part of the story, children learn and remember better.

Children are natural storytellers. A tale of "three rabbits hopping into the forest, joined by two more" makes addition an adventure, not an equation.

### **Block play**

Block play isn't just entertainment; it's mathematics in disguise. Counting blocks in a tower, comparing which

structure is taller, or combining sets by colour introduces concepts of addition, measurement, and comparison.

### **Musical numbers**

From "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe" to child-invented rhymes, songs are a great way to embed number sequences into rhythm and melody. These playful repetitions strengthen memory and develop children's liking for math.

Drawing numbers is another way to learn joyfully. Transforming 2 into a swan or 3 into a butterfly gives numerals a personality. This art-based approach turns abstract shapes into familiar friends, making recognition and retention easier for children.

### **Everyday moments**

Beyond structured activities, numeracy can be taught through everyday moments. For instance, encouraging children to read public bus numbers, count loose change/coins at a mall, or read the clock. Make an effort to highlight these small 'live moments' to reiterate to children that numbers are not an abstract concept but integral to everyday life.

Using play to teach children numeracy skills builds their confidence and liking for math. Children who learn numbers through song and dance are less likely to develop math anxiety in primary-secondary school. When math is taught through play, it ceases to be intimidating and becomes a language of discovery and joy for children.

**(Priyanka Sethi is a Gurugram based psychologist, special educator and Director of Arambh — The Learning Space)**



# RESOURCES

*4 apps to nurture*

## CHILDREN'S CREATIVE HOBBIES

**Technology can help children explore, nurture, and develop creative interests and hobbies. Here are four apps that enable children to transform leisure pursuits into opportunities for growth and self-expression**

**Andrew John**

### HOBBYVERSE

**Age group:** 8 years upwards

This app enables children to organise and track their creative interests by allowing them to log activities such as reading books, playing board games, learning music, etc. It builds a personalised digital library of hobbies wherein users create lists and monitor their progress. As children record their activities, the app awards experience points, medals, and achievements, adding a game-like layer through avatars and level-ups. Hobbyverse also encourages social interaction by enabling children to interact online with friends and compare progress.



### SMILEBOX

**Age group:** 7 years upwards

It allows children to design digital cards, invitations, slideshows, collages, among others. Its wide range of ready-made templates enables children to personalise their creations by adding photos, music, stickers, and text. Creatives/designs can be shared online or downloaded for printing or sent digitally, making it useful to prepare school projects. While many basic templates are free, premium features — such as advanced layouts, additional music options, and higher-resolution downloads — require a paid subscription.



### SNAPSEED

**Age group:** 8 years upwards

An ads-free photo-editing app, Snapseed brings professional-level tools to a child-friendly mobile interface. Developed by Google, it supports both RAW and JPG files and offers an impressive range of photo editing features, including healing, brush tools, HDR effects, perspective correction, and precision tuning. Children (beginners) can start by enhancing photos, while older children and teens can use advanced photo-editing features. Free to use, Snapseed is an excellent option for young photographers to refine their images, experiment with visual styles, and learn the basics of digital photo editing.



### MAGMA

**Age group:** 7 years upwards

Magma is a browser-based collaborative drawing platform that allows children to create art together on a shared digital canvas in real time. With professional-grade tools — such as advanced brushes, layers, blending modes, and pressure-sensitive stylus support — it offers an experience similar to Photoshop but without the need to install software. Users open the website and start drawing, making it very appealing to beginners. Magma is widely used for concept art, illustration, and group “art jams,” allowing friends, classmates, or remote teams to sketch, refine, and experiment side by side. While many features are free, payment plans unlock higher-resolution canvases and tools suited for advanced artistic projects.



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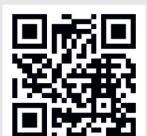
\* The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA) X6.1 is a safety and performance standard for educational seating

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# ASK YOUR COUNSELOR



SUSHMA GOPALAN

## Guiding teens through ROMANTIC EMOTIONS

**My 14-year-old daughter is developing romantic interests and experiencing the effects of peer pressure and media. How can I help her manage these emotions in a healthy, balanced way?**

— *Ruha Sinha, Bengaluru*

Teenage crushes are acts of rehearsal, not rebellion. During adolescence, the limbic brain system — which drives emotion and impulsivity — matures far earlier than the prefrontal cortex, the centre of judgement and self-regulation. As a result, emotions often surge ahead of reason. Acknowledging this developmental reality helps parents navigate this turbulent stage with empathy. Research also shows that transparent, open parent-adolescent communication is associated with fewer risky behaviours and healthier emotional adjustment (Smetana et al., 2015, *Child Development*).

Here are my suggestions:

- Model healthy relationships. Let your child witness kindness, respect, and mutual admiration in your relationship with your husband/partner.
- Remain calm and approachable. Keep conversations non-judgemental, listen attentively, and create space for honest dialogue.
- Discuss values, not prohibitions. Focus on respect, boundaries, and self-worth rather than a list of rules.
- Normalise attraction. Acknowledge that romantic feelings are a natural part of growth while guiding her through the emotional complexity that comes with it.

**My ten-year-old daughter is becoming very demanding and materialistic. How can I change her attitude?**

— *Minu Dewars, Delhi*

Children are highly vulnerable to media advertising, especially social media, which equate happiness with possessions and material gain. Parents have a responsibility to enable children to navigate consumerism and look



beyond material happiness. Here are some suggestions:

- Encourage your daughter to participate in small acts of kindness such as helping a neighbour with a chore, watering plants, donating some amount of pocket money to a charity, or mentoring a younger sibling.
- Link effort to impact, teaching accountability. Show them how their work — be it school projects or volunteering for a community activity — creates value.
- Share inspiring stories that celebrate purpose, kindness, and contribution rather than wealth. Also, real-life experiences of yourself or others who have made a positive difference to the world.
- Make time every day for a family gratitude circle when family members sit together to share what they're grateful for.
- Encourage an attitude of gratitude by showing, not telling, and letting children absorb it through live examples.

**My nine-year-old son is very impatient and seeks instant gratification. Please suggest how I can help him develop the virtues of patience and empathy.**

— *Dinesh Chaturvedi, Mumbai*

Today's fast-paced life is driven by instant gratification — instant deliveries, instant feedback, instant entertainment. Patience needs to be intentionally taught to children.

The classic Stanford Marshmallow Experiment (Mischel et al., 1972) found that children who develop capability to delay gratification demonstrate better emotional control and life outcomes decades later.

I suggest the following:

- Engage him in activities where rewards require effort and time. E.g., puzzles, gardening, etc.
- Encourage him to schedule 30-60 minutes of 'quiet time' every day for mindfulness/breathing exercises or for reading. This will help him slow down.
- Model patience by showcasing calm in situations of delays — e.g., in traffic, queues, etc.
- Practice open reflective communication by asking him about his waiting experiences and what helped him remain calm.

**My eight-year-old has a fear of failure in extracurricular activities such as robotics and sports because his friends are performing better than him. How can I**

### **motivate him?**

— *Reva Krishna, Chennai*

In today's ultra-competitive world, it is imperative to teach children to cope with failure and success. The two go hand in hand. Early exposure to competition and extracurricular activities enables children to understand the concept of effort and outcome. Research (Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory, Stanford University, 2006) has proved that when children are praised for effort rather than outcomes, they become resilient and better learners.

My recommendations:

- Praise your son's efforts, ideas, initiative rather than outcomes.
- Share your own life experiences, including failures. This normalises the concept of learning from failure and when and how to move on.
- Encourage experimentation by giving her the freedom to do things her way.
- Reflect and share insights about problems and problem-solving.

**(Sushma Gopalan is a child psychologist and child life specialist at Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru)**



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# ASK THE DOCTOR



DR. SAURABH SINGH

## Infant teething symptoms and REMEDIES

**When will my five-month-old start teething? What are the common signs of teething? I have read that it may cause discomfort. How can I provide relief?**

— Garima Pehel, Bengaluru

Most infants begin to teethe around six months of age. Some may start teething earlier, and others much later. Watch out for these symptoms:

- Swollen and tender gums
- Fussiness and crying
- Excessive drooling
- Irritability
- Gnawing, biting/wanting to chew on hard objects
- Bringing her hands to mouth
- Night waking
- Slight increase in body temperature

Here is how you can help soothe your infant while teething:

- Wipe drool to avoid drool rash
- Massage sore gums with clean fingers
- Use chilled silicone teether or teething gel
- Analgesics for pain relief – only if recommended by a paediatrician

**My four-year-old son gets cold and cough infections often. How can I prevent this? Is it safe to use over-the-counter medication?**

— Mani Thimmiah, Pune

You can proactively prevent cough and cold infections. Here are some preventive guidelines:

- Dry air and cold weather tend to irritate children's throats and respiratory systems, especially during winter. Keep your child warm with layered clothing and scarves.
- Keep him hydrated.
- Avoid triggers such as dust, cold items, and mosquito repellents.
- Pollutants from heaters and stoves can exacerbate respiratory conditions in children such as asthma. Minimise exposure.
- Ensure his chest and feet are adequately covered with warm clothing.
- Keep indoor air clean and moist.



- Boost immunity by providing a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole cereals, and proteins. In particular, add citrus fruits such as oranges and grapes.
- Avoid giving your child over-the-counter cough and cold medications unless prescribed by a doctor.
- Consult your paediatrician if he experiences persistent fever, cough and cold, difficulty in breathing, bluish lips or nails, and severe fatigue.

**I am the mother of a three-year-old child. What are the symptoms of anaemia?**

— Karthik Sundar, Chennai

Iron deficiency is a common nutritional disorder in children. Early indicators/symptoms of iron deficiency are pale skin; persistent ingestion of non-nutritive, non-food substances (e.g., soil, chalk, paint, hair, mud, wall plaster); sore, swollen tongue; fatigue; cold hands and feet and delayed growth and development. Introduce iron-rich foods such as green leafy vegetables, cereals, chicken, fish, peas, and citrus fruits in your child's diet.

**I live in Chennai, where it is sunny all year round. My 11-year-old daughter is worried about damage to her skin. Please suggest a daily sun protection routine.**

— Fathima Akthar, Chennai

Pre-teens have sensitive skin prone to sunburn and heat rash. Encourage her to follow skincare routine hereunder:

- Avoid going out during peak sunlight hours to limit direct exposure.
- Encourage her to wear full sleeves and lightweight shirts.
- Ensure she drinks plenty of water to remain hydrated.
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against both UVA & UVB. It should be SPF-30, contain minerals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, free of harsh chemicals, fragrance-free, non-irritating, non-greasy and hypoallergenic.

**(Dr. Saurabh Singh is a paediatrician at Shatakshi Nursing Home, Motihari, Bihar)**

# Is Your Child Ready for an AI-Powered Future?

*Can your child answer this question?*

*Spacey is a curious student who uses an AI (Artificial Intelligence) tool called "AskAnything.ai" to find answers and learn new things. She knows that AI can sometimes make mistakes.*

*Which of these questions would be the MOST UNSAFE for Spacey to ask?*

- A** *My brother wants to hear a joke on penguins. Can you tell me one?*
- B** *My class project is on 'earthquake safety'. Can you help me?*
- C** *My mother has a fever. What medicine should I give her?*
- D** *My friend is sad. How do I cheer her up?*

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**FINANCIAL PLANNERS**

According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, the overall employment of financial planners and advisors is expected to increase faster than the average (by 27 percent or more) for all occupations through 2029



“ The financial planning profession has been rated the No.1 job in USA by Jobs America Almanac.

The CFP (certified financial planner) certificate is one of the most prestigious and preferred qualifications in financial planning globally, described by the *Wall Street Journal* as the ‘gold standard’,” says **Ranjeet Mudholkar**, former principal advisor and director of the Financial Planning Standards Board India (FPSBI).

According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, the overall employment of financial planners and advisors is expected to increase faster than the average (by 27 percent or more) for all occupations through 2029. This is the result of increased savings and investment by businesses and individuals; the rising number of self-directed retirement plans; increasing number of HNW (high net

worth) individuals and the growing number of senior citizens worldwide. All people in these categories require savings plans and investment advice. Financial planners earn their living by helping people choose securities, insurance and other financial products. They provide services and advice for retirement planning, college funding, estate planning and general investment.

Currently the population of CFPs in India is minuscule. Informed opinion is unanimous that in the near future, CFP professionals will be the most sought after and well remunerated finance professionals in India and abroad.

CFP certification programmes are offered in India by FPSBI, which is affiliated with FSPB Inc, Denver, USA, and is the sole licensing authority for CFP certification in India. FPSBI proactively guides the development



and promotion of standards for financial planning professionals.

There are two pathways open to aspiring CFPs. For the Regular Pathway, you need to have completed class XII and worked in finance for five years or you should be a graduate with three years experience in finance. Challenge Status Pathway candidates should be graduates with a minimum of three years financial services experience with a specialised degree/diploma/certificate in finance or related subjects (CA, ICWA, LLB, MBA-finance etc). Under the Regular Pathway, candidates have to pass five exams while in the Challenge Status Pathway, only the final exam needs to be cleared.

On average, 4,000-4,500 students have been registering for CFP certification programmes annually. Once a candidate registers, the minimum time required to clear all five exams is four months. After clearing all exams, successful candidates need to apply to FPSBI for membership and subject to the candidate fulfilling the work experience criterion, certification is awarded within 15 days.

Moreover, individuals employed in industry desirous of switching tracks are free to sign up for the CFP certification programmes while working. There are several education providers (colleges) in India approved by FPSBI which offer study material.

For duly qualified CFPs there are numerous employment options. He/she can work in the financial planning/wealth management departments of banks as a relationship/key accounts manager or portfolio manager in asset management/insurance/broking companies. Qualified CFPs also have employment opportunities in the areas of training, software development and media. Alternatively, they can set up their own practice in wealth management and advisory services. Remuneration packages for CFPs are on a par with the best in the financial sector.

“Job opportunities for qualified financial planners are growing at a fast pace. Fresh out of the economic down-

**For duly qualified Certified Financial Planners, employment options include working in the financial planning/wealth management departments of banks as a relationship/ key accounts manager or portfolio manager in asset management/insurance/ broking companies**

turn, investors have learned that they need professional advice in financial matters. Companies, banks and financial institutions have understood that over-selling, excessive risk-taking can have grave consequences and are eager to acquire balanced investment and financial planning advice,” says Mudholkar, who worked with FPSBI from 2002 to 2022 after qualifying as a CFP.

A statistics and computer programming graduate of Ruparel College, Bombay (1994) and an MBA (marketing and finance) from the Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies (SIMS), Pune, Mudholkar began his career with the Birla Capital Asset Management Company before he was appointed the youngest director of SIMS. However in the new millennium following a nine-month stint as head of HRD in Salora International Ltd, Pune, Mudholkar switched tracks to qualify as a CFP and signed up with FPSBI where he was appointed its first director in 2002.

Enthused by the potential of FPSBI to inject a new genre of trained CFPs into India’s financial sector, Mudholkar looks ahead with much optimism. “If we look at regulatory trends, they certainly indicate a clear shift towards professionalisation and fee-based advisories in the financial services sector, following growing demand for financial planners from corporate and retail investors. A number of other factors like scaled-up training infrastructure and mass awareness about the need for financial planning will boost demand for CFP professionals. The compounded annual demand growth (CAGR) for CFP certification programmes in the past two years is 63 percent. We expect a 40 percent CAGR over the next three years,” says Mudholkar, assuring a bright long-term future for young CFPs.



**Shri. Anil Omprakash Garg**  
Managing Director

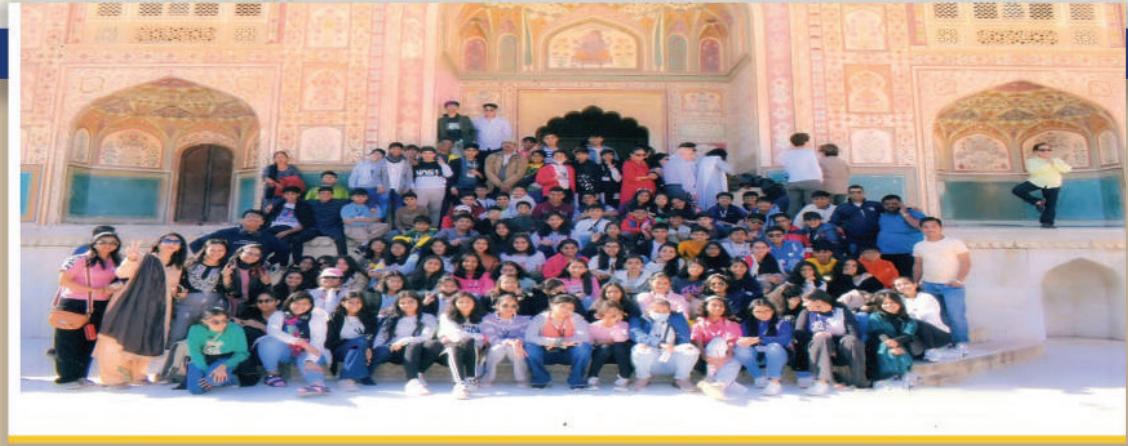
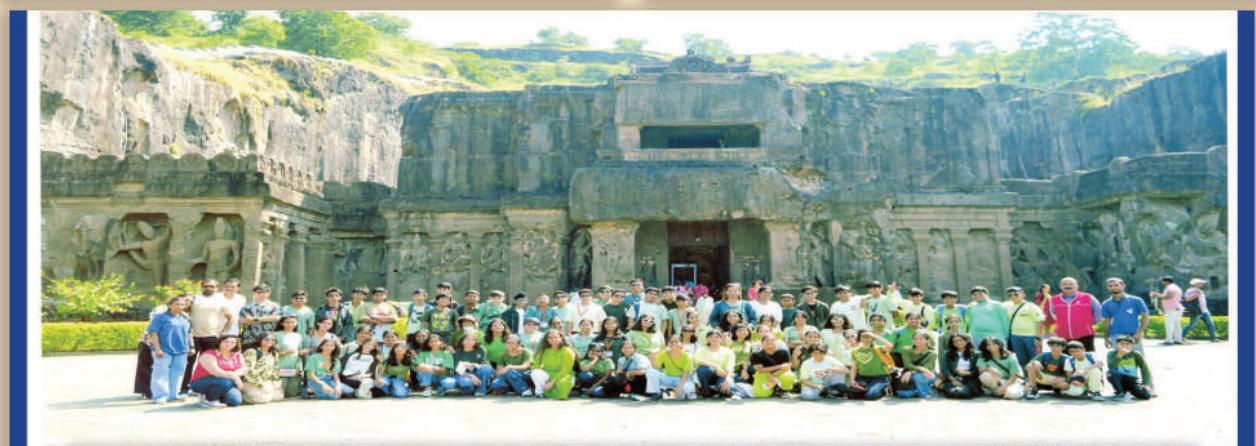


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## KIDZONE

## 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 barrister/lawyer'.

## When I grow up I want to be a Lawyer like Mahatma Gandhi.

*"The law an eye for an eye makes a whole world blind."*

Did you know that... As a barrister, if Mahatma Gandhi found his clients to be dishonest or guilty, he would not only rebuke them but also refuse to fight their case, even going to the extent of reporting them to the attorney general.

In the 1900s, it was difficult and expensive to qualify as a barrister in London. Bapuji worked hard to pass his bar exams. As a barrister, two principles were dear to him — honesty and truth. These principles are best exemplified in the 'three monkeys' maxim — 'see no evil', 'hear no evil' and 'speak no evil'. If these principles are practiced by lawyers, many people would get the justice they truly deserve.

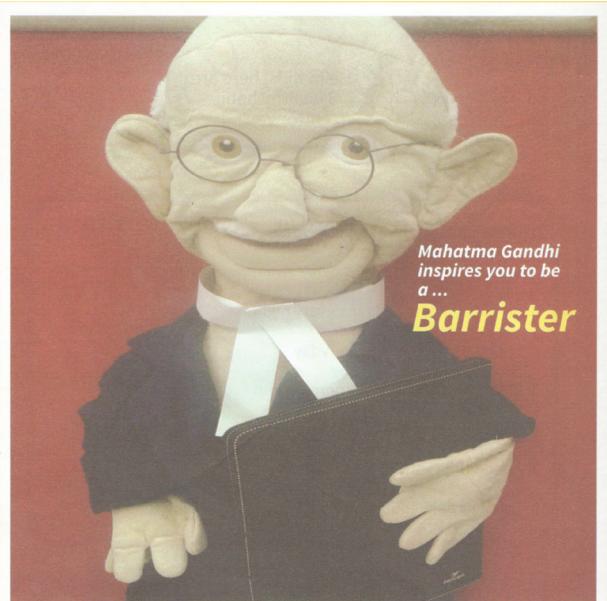
You can also practice Bapu's principles of honesty and truth. When two friends fight or have arguments, evaluate the points of view of both parties and, without bias, give your verdict.

**See No Evil – Don't see bad things**

When you see your friend throwing garbage on the road, you should correct him, not join in.

**Speak No Evil – Don't use foul language**

Learn to be truthful like Bapu. Also, avoid using foul language and shouting while talking.



## **Hear No Evil — Don't hear foul language, walk away**

When any of your friends use bad language, don't imitate them; ignore and walk away.

Learning from the Mahatma you can learn to be fair, truthful and honest.

You could even grow up to be a lawyer and choose it as a career.

### **If you like the idea of entering the legal profession, here are some other specialisations you might like:**

**Judge.** A judge is a public officer who presides over court cases, interprets the law, evaluates evidence, and ensures that hearings and trials proceed fairly. By remaining impartial and upholding justice, judges make legal outcomes trustworthy and equitable for all.

**Attorney General.** The attorney general (AG) is the

government's chief legal advisor and its primary representative in court cases. In India, the AG serves as the Union government's leading lawyer in the Supreme Court and offers legal guidance on important matters. The AG is appointed by the President of India.

**Court reporter.** A court reporter transcribes spoken or recorded speech during legal proceedings to create accurate, official transcripts. She produces clear written records of hearings and trials for legal reference and review.

**Courtroom sketch artist.** A courtroom sketch artist illustrates scenes from a trial when cameras are not allowed inside a courtroom. Arriving early to secure a clear view, the artist observes the proceedings and quickly sketches the people involved — their expressions, gestures, and reactions. These drawings are then sold to the media, providing, in the absence of photographs, a visual record of the trial.

**Colour the monkeys and label them with the appropriate numbers.**



- 1. We will not see bad things.**
- 2. We will not use bad language or speak lies.**
- 3. We will not hear bad language- we will walk away.**

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

# KIDZONE



## Axis deer-Chital deer

**Name:** Axis deer-Chital deer

**Female:** Doe

**Male:** Stag

**Young one:** Fawn

**Food:** Leaves, wood, bark or stems and fruits

**Life span:** 20-30 years

**Sound/s:** Grunt, rattle, wheeze, snort

**Habitat:** Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Sikkim

### Other facts

- The chital deer has a more cursorial build than a hog deer.
- Antlers and brow lines are longer than those of a hog deer. Pedicles – the bony cores from which antlers arise – are shorter, and auditory bullae are smaller.
- The chital deer has several white spots, whereas fallow deer usually have white splotches. Fallow deer also have palmate antlers, whereas chital have three distinct points on each side.
- Moreover, it has a prominent white patch on its throat, while the throat of fallow deer is white.

## Black buck

**Name:** Black buck

**Female:** Doe

**Male:** Buck

**Young ones:** Calf

**Food:** Plants, mesquite, witchgrass, live oak and acacia trees.

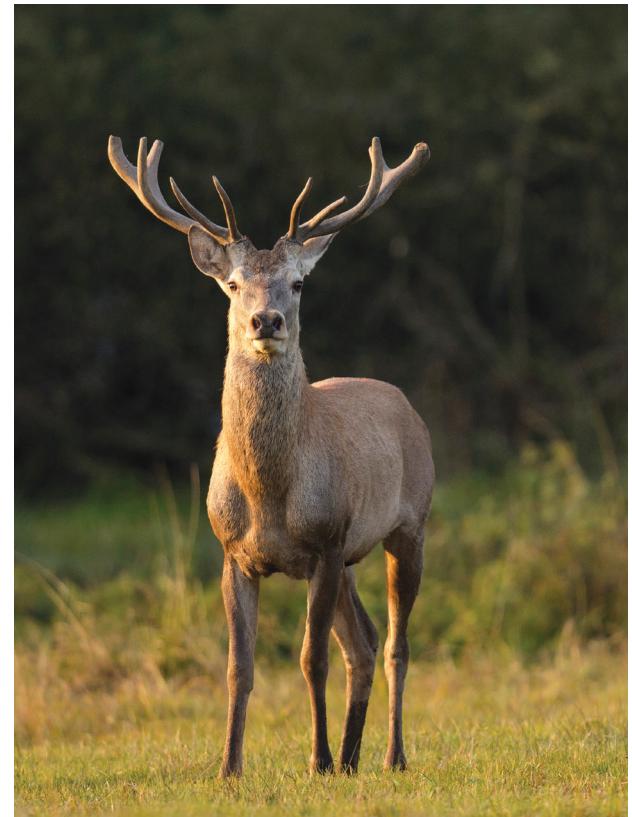
**Life span:** 10-15 years

**Sound/s:** Dik-diks whistle

**Habitat:** Gir Forest National Park, Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Kanha National Park, Ranibennur Black-buck Sanctuary in India. Also Nepal and Pakistan.

### Other facts

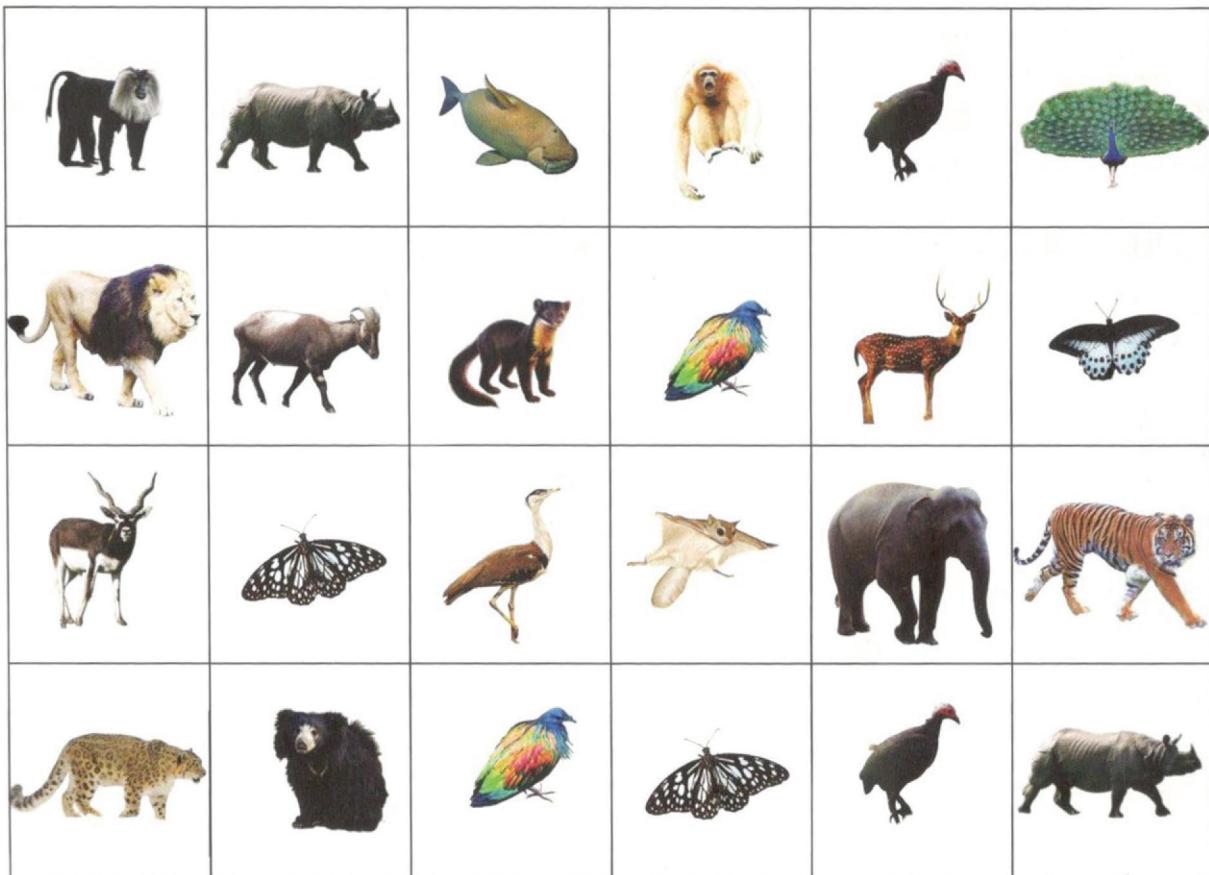
- The most remarkable feature of a male black buck is its long, spiralling horns, which range from the base to several tips. Females don't have horns.
- The back, sides and outer side of legs are dark brown in males and yellowish in females.
- They rely on their eyesight to steer clear of danger.
- Posture and movements are good indicators of a black buck's mood.
- Several local tribes in India revere them and prohibit hunting them.
- Black bucks are an endangered species because of the destruction of their habitat.



(Excerpted from *Why I am Not an Elephant* by Dr. Swati Popat Vats, ECA-APER, 2020)

**Read the following clues that will help you find one correct image and circle it.**

1. I do not have an identical twin.
2. I am any animal but a snake.
3. I am in column 1,3, 4 or 5
4. I am in neither the 1st nor the 2nd row.
5. I am an animal that you can see on this planet.
6. You can see my ears.
7. I could be any animal but a Hoolock gibbon.
8. I am closest to the last column.
9. I am the heaviest of all.



**This activity helps with following instructions and finding solutions which are the aspects of coding.**

# FUN WITH WORDS

## *The power and* **PERIL OF EPITHETS**

**ROOPA BANERJEE**

“*Swift-footed Achilles charged into battle.*”

**T**his sentence artfully uses the literary device epithet -- a descriptive phrase attached to a person, place, or thing to highlight a defining quality.

Epithets are not just adjectives; they convey an essential trait, allowing writers to add colour, depth, and symbolic resonance to characters. From their first use in ancient epic poems, epithets have been used to define characters, enrich language, and shape audience memory.

The word epithet comes from the Greek *epitheton*, meaning “something added”. It combines *epi*, which means “upon,” and *tithenai*, i.e., “to place.” Greek poets such as Homer used epithets in oral recitations to enable listeners to remember characters and scenes. Expressions such as “rosy-fingered Dawn” and “wine-dark sea” are repeated throughout *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, giving rhythm and beauty to the verses while anchoring the story in the listener’s memory.

In *The Iliad*, heroes are inseparable from their descriptive titles. Achilles was “swift-footed,” Odysseus was “wise,” and Hector was the “breaker of horses”. These short descriptors reveal more than speed or strength; they symbolize identity and destiny. For instance, “swift-footed Achilles” indicates more than just a fast runner; a fierce and unstoppable warrior whose speed defines his fate.

Shakespeare also used epithets generously to define his characters. In *Othello*, the eponymous protagonist is often described as “the valiant Moor”. “Valiant” speaks to his bravery, while “Moor” underlines his outsider status in Venetian society, a contrast that fuels the tragedy.

Today, modern writers similarly make use of epithets. For example, in the Harry Potter series by JK Rowling, Lord Voldemort is referred to as “He Who Must Not Be Named.” This conveys fear and respect, wherein his power is so extraordinary that a real name is too dangerous to utter.

Popular culture also embraces epithets, especially when developing strong and memorable identities. In sports, athletes often become legends through their epithets, such as “The Wall” for cricketer Rahul Dravid or “The Greatest” for boxer Muhammad Ali. These titles celebrate achievement and create larger-than-life identities that remain in

public memory.

Another perfect example from the movies is in *The Lord of the Rings*, where Aragorn is commonly referred to as “Strider.” It epitomizes his lone and wandering nature before he lays his claim to a royal future. Later in life, after his triumph, he becomes “King Elessar,” enabling readers and viewers to trace his journey and growth.

The magic of an epithet is in its economy. A few words can capture an entire personality. Whether expressing admiration, as in “Alexander the Great,” or fear, as in “Ivan the Terrible,” an epithet distils the essence of a person into something instantly recognizable. That is why epithets often outlive the people they describe. We may forget the details of Alexander’s conquests, but never that he was great.

However, epithets have a dark side: since they generalize, there’s a danger of stereotyping. A character who is repeatedly identified with only one trait — “the villain,” “the beauty,” or “the fool” — becomes reduced to that one quality.

Epithets remind us that descriptors hold power. From Homer’s “rosy-fingered Dawn” to Harry Potter’s “He Who Must Not Be Named,” these labels reveal how language deeply defines identity. That is what makes the epithet one of literature’s most enduring and transformative literary devices.

### **EXERCISE**

Guess from which book or movie these famous epithets have been excerpted:

1. Breaker of Chains
2. The Dark Knight
3. The Man of Steel
4. The Chosen One
5. The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up

1. Game of Thrones. One of Daenerys Targaryen’s many titles, symbolising her mission to free the oppressed.

2. Batman films and comics

3. Superman comics and films

4. Star Wars series. Refers to Anakin Skywalker, believed to bring balance to the Force.

5. Peter Pan by J. M. Barrie

**ANSWERS**

# A MOTHER'S HEART AT THE GATES OF SARALA BIRLA ACADEMY, BANGALORE

Nevaan's Journey, and Mine



There are moments in a mother's life that carve themselves into memory with unspoken intensity. Leaving a child at a boarding school is one of them. It is a very well planned, non dramatic moment, quiet and organised, and very deceptively so. Yet within that silence sit a thousand emotions that only a mother can bear. The trembling breath of the child fearing the unknown and the mother pretending to be brave, preparing for the final look which is exchanged before turning away. A journey of courage and hope that they take together while being apart.

## The child mumbling "I've to go now" and the mother whispering "he has to grow now"

Two years ago, I lived that moment. As I stood at the gates of Sarala Birla Academy with Nevaan's tiny hand holding mine, I felt my world shifting. The doctor in me tried to analyse, reason, reassure, the mother in me felt fragile, vulnerable, and overwhelmingly protective and questioning if it's all worth and my heart said "have faith". I wondered if anyone could understand his shyness, his fears, the way his silence also spoke. I wondered if the world inside those gates would hold him with softness on the days he needed it most. And above all, I wondered if he would feel alone. That day, when I walked back without him, each step felt heavier than the last. But life, in its quiet wisdom, knew what it was doing.

Two years later, I see a different boy—and, in many ways, a different mother. Nevaan, who once hid behind me now stands with a new steadiness. His voice is clearer, his thoughts more expressive, his steps more assured. He talks about art with a

spark in his eyes, his artworks cover my diaries, he narrates tales of cricket matches with pride, and speaks of his friends with genuine warmth. Today he packs his bags for school with an eagerness to belong. He has missed his teachers and wardens like he misses home. For a mother, this is the most healing kind of reassurance: that her child has found comfort, care, and connection in a place she once feared might feel distant. What touches me deeply is how beautifully his self-esteem has blossomed, not suddenly or dramatically, but gently—like sunlight filtering through leaves. He has learned to take small responsibilities, to trust his decisions, to navigate friendships, to embrace challenges. His academics, have grown step by step—not in leaps, but in meaningful, steady progress. He was very primitive at academics at start and the teachers made sure he progresses but more so, that he doesn't lose faith in himself and in my eyes he's a flag bearer of improvement. And in watching him grow, I realised something powerful: Sarala Birla Academy did not take him away from me; it helped him return to himself. This journey, though named on him, changed me altogether. It taught me the art of letting go—not as abandonment but as love in its highest form. It taught me that children often rise in ways we cannot imagine when we give them the space to unfold. And it taught me that courage is not the absence of fear, it is walking forward despite it.

Sarala Birla Academy gave my son more than an education. It gave him confidence, resilience, affection, and a sense of belonging. Nevaan suffers with an issue that doesn't allow him to eat everything but the school took such good care of that! The pastoral care is better than what even I can provide at times: Teachers have told me such minute things about NEVAAN which only I knew. At times they have handled his downs even better than I could. His self esteem has surfaced with great poise, picking on life skills.

Thank you Sarala Birla Academy, for giving Nevaan—and me—a renewed zest for life. THE CHILD IN HIM AND THE MOTHER IN ME BLOOM ALIKE. These achievements though not mentioned in any mark sheet are of invaluable and of utmost importance...gratitude is but a small word....

NEVAAN KARN is a child who came to Sarala Birla Academy at Grade 5 and is now in Grade 6.

The above is a spontaneous response from his mother, Dr Smita Mallick Karn,  
a Gynaecologist obstetrician at Muzaffarpur, Bihar.  
Nevaan's father, Dr Deepak Karn, is a Neurosurgeon at Muzaffarpur, Bihar

# HEALTH & NUTRITION

## Physical activities for children GUIDELINES & BENEFITS

**Kiran Balimane**

**For growing children, in particular, exercise is vital for strengthening bones and muscles, enhancing motor development, emotional regulation, and laying the foundation for healthy lifelong habits**

Physical exercise is arguably the most efficient, affordable, and wide-ranging intervention, providing numerous health and development benefits. Beyond “burning energy”, daily physical exercise boosts the immune system, stimulates cognitive development, and is also a catalyst for learning social skills. For growing children, in particular, exercise is vital for strengthening bones and muscles, enhancing motor development, emotional regulation, and laying the foundation for healthy lifelong habits.

Numerous child development research studies cite a correlation between regular physical activity and improved brain and cognitive development. A 2025 meta-analysis of 39 trials (*International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, May 2025) indicates that physical-activity programmes improve children’s overall executive function (“a set of mental skills, controlled by the brain’s frontal lobe, that help you manage daily tasks, plan, focus, remember instructions, and handle emotions to achieve goals”) by 0.6 standard deviations — equivalent to promoting a typical child from the 50th to the 75th percentile in planning, self-control and working memory.

Moreover, when children participate in group physical activity and/or organised sport, the benefits multiply. A recent meta-analysis study (*BMC Public Health*, April 2025) based on 30 randomised trials found that moderate-to-vigorous exercise reduces stress, improves self-esteem and boosts social competence, with the best effects seen in adolescents who exercised at least twice a week. Observational studies echo these findings: children who participate in team sports report fewer symptoms of depression.

“Daily physical exercise and engagement in formal sports benefit children’s growing bodies in many ways. It aids healthy musculoskeletal development, strengthens immunity, and supports the efficient functioning of vital body organs. For instance, weight-bearing games such as jumping, hopscotch and skipping build stronger bones, while resistance activities such as rope climbing, tug-of-



**Dr. Tarun Singh**

war or simple push-ups prompt muscle fibres to enlarge and reinforce postural stability. Cardiovascular workouts — cycling, running — strengthen the heart, expand lung capacity and keep blood pressure levels in check. More intense bouts of play and sports mobilise ‘surveillance’ leukocytes that patrol for pathogens and block chronic inflammation, a known cause of obesity, diabetes and even certain cancers. Modern immunomics studies now show that when children exercise, their blood cells activate protective genes that strengthen the immune system. Moreover, after exercise, children also sleep soundly, creating a virtuous cycle of hormonal balance and tissue repair,” says **Dr. Tarun Singh**, pediatrician and neonatologist at Kalpavriksh Healthcare, Delhi.

According to Dr. Singh, there’s a consensus that children and adolescents (5-17 yrs) need at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity daily, mixing aerobic and muscle-strengthening movements on three or more

Dr. Singh suggests age-wise physical activity guidelines:

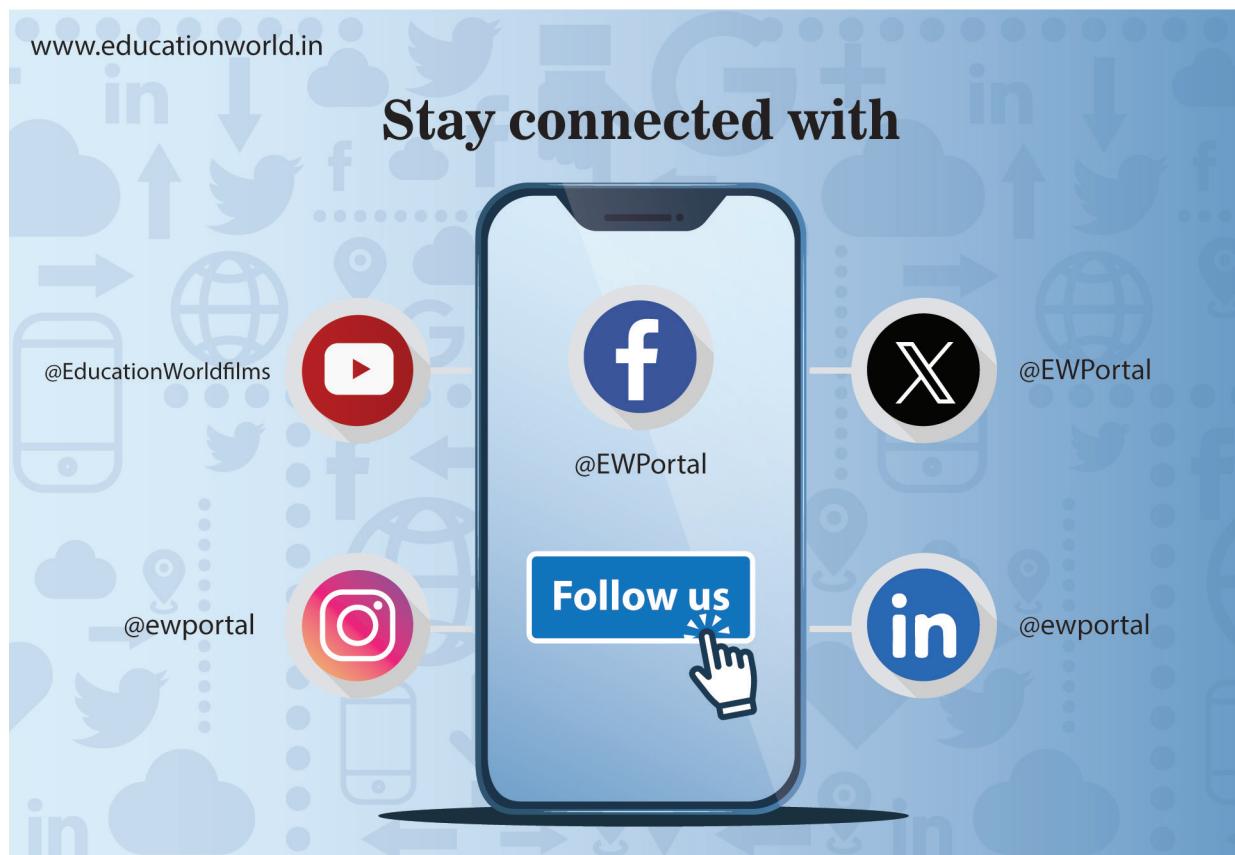
Age Group	Daily activity goal	Play ideas	Useful tip
<b>Toddlers (1-3 yrs)</b>	≥ 180 min spread through day	Floor play, push-toys, parent-child dance	Use colourful tunnels and cushions to build indoor obstacle courses
<b>Early school (4-7 yrs)</b>	≥ 60 min MVPA*	Games involving running and catching, skipping ropes, cycling with training wheels	Turn chores into races (e.g., “laundry-basket relays”) to sneak in bursts of cardiovascular activity
<b>Tweens &amp; Teens(8-17 yrs)</b>	≥ 60 min MVPA incl. 3 days vigorous, muscle & bone strength	Team sports, fitness classes, resistance bands	Allow adolescents to choose the activity — autonomy drives adherence

\*MVPA = moderate-to-vigorous physical activity

days each week. Unfortunately, as per the World Health Organization (WHO), 80 percent of adolescents worldwide fail to cross this threshold.

“Every minute a child spends moving guards against

a spectrum of physical and mental ailments. It’s an important duty of parents to encourage and provide children every opportunity to exercise and play sports,” concludes Dr. Singh.



## HEALTH & NUTRITION

# Healthy vegetarian TREATS

**Sowmya G.S, founder of the social media page 'Shree Magic Kitchen', shares three healthy, child-friendly vegetarian recipes**

### SOOJI PIZZA

(4 servings)

#### INGREDIENTS

##### FOR THE BATTER

- 1 cup *sooji* (rava/semolina)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup *besan*
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup curd
- $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda or Eno (fruit salt)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely chopped capsicum
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely chopped carrot
- 2 finely chopped green chillies
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp black pepper
- 2 sprigs coriander leaves

##### TOPPING

- 1 finely chopped onion
- 1 finely chopped capsicum
- 1 chopped carrot
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sweet corn (optional)
- 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups grated cheese
- 4-6 tsp tomato sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp chilli flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp oregano

#### HEALTH BENEFITS

*Sooji* and *besan* provide fibre-rich carbohydrates and proteins to boost energy levels. Capsicum and carrot are rich in vitamins A and C, boosting immunity. Curd provides probiotics for gut health.



#### PREPARATION GUIDE

- Mix *sooji*, *besan*, curd, salt and water in a bowl. Set aside for 10 minutes.
- Add capsicum, carrot, green chillies, black pepper and coriander leaves. Mix well. If required, add a little water to form a thick idli-like batter.
- Add baking soda/Eno and mix gently. The batter will become light and fluffy.
- Chop all vegetables and grate cheese for the topping.
- Heat a non-stick pan on a low flame. Grease it lightly with ghee or butter.
- Pour a ladleful of batter (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cm thick). Cook both sides for 5-6 minutes. Spread tomato sauce on top. Add grated cheese and chopped vegetables on top. Sprinkle oregano and chilli flakes.
- Cover pan and cook on a low flame for 3-4 minutes until cheese melts and the pizza base becomes crisp.
- Cut into slices and serve hot with extra toppings or ketchup.

## BEETROOT BURFI/ HALWA

(4 servings)



### INGREDIENTS

- 1 beetroot
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup *rava*
- 4 to 5 tsp *ghee*
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup jaggery
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp cardamom powder
- Dry fruits (cashews, almonds, pistachios and melon seeds)

### HEALTH BENEFITS

Beetroot is rich in iron, folate and antioxidants, boosting immunity and preventing anemia. Rava provides energy-rich carbohydrates, while jaggery offers natural iron and minerals. Ghee aids nutrient absorption and dry fruits provide protein, vitamin E and healthy fats.

### PREPARATION GUIDE

- Roast rava in a pan on a low flame until light golden and aromatic. Set aside to cool. Transfer into a mixer jar. Add water and grind it to a smooth paste.
- Wash, peel and cut the beetroot. Add to a mixer jar with one cup of water. Blend into a smooth paste. Sieve the beetroot puree through a fine muslin cloth/strainer.
- Add rava paste to beetroot puree; stir continuously to avoid lumps.
- Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water and jaggery to a pan. Heat on a low flame until the jaggery melts and sieve the syrup to remove impurities. Add the filtered jaggery syrup to the beetroot and rava mix. Mix well and cook on a low flame until it thickens.
- Add 4-5 tbsp ghee and mix well. Add crushed cardamom ( $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp) and stir well. Continue cooking until the mix thickens.
- Grease a plate/tray with a little ghee. Transfer the mix into a plate (for burfi) or serving bowl (halwa) while still hot. Spread evenly using a spoon or spatula. Add chopped dry fruits (cashew, almond, pistachio). Press gently so they stick to the halwa/burfi. If you are making burfi, let it cool or serve it warm as a halwa.

# HEALTH & NUTRITION

## INGREDIENTS

### FOR GREEN CHUTNEY

- ½ cup coriander leaves
- ½ cup mint leaves
- 1 green chilli
- 1 tsp *chaat masala*
- 4 tsp curd
- ½ tsp pepper powder
- Salt to taste
- Water

### FOR CHAAT

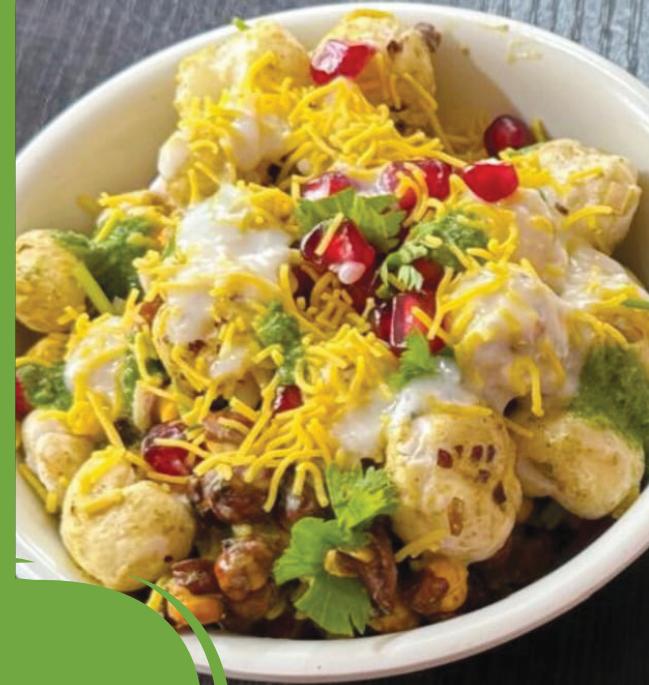
- 1 cup *makhana*
- 1 cup roasted *chana*
- 1 tsp ghee
- 1 finely chopped onion
- 1 finely chopped tomato
- 1 chopped green chilli (optional)
- ½ cup curd
- 1 finely chopped carrot
- ½ finely chopped cucumber
- 1 tsp *chaat masala*
- ¼ tsp red chilli powder
- ¼ tsp roasted jeera powder
- ¼ tsp vegetable masala powder
- Salt to taste
- 1 chopped sprig coriander leaves
- 2 tsp pomegranate seeds
- 2 tsp sev

## PREPARATION GUIDE

- Add coriander, mint, green chilli, chat masala, curd, pepper powder, salt, and a little water in a mixer. Grind it to a smooth paste. Set aside the green chutney.
- Whisk curd until smooth, add salt, roasted jeera powder and a pinch of sugar (optional).
- Heat 1 tsp ghee in a pan. Add makhana and roast for 3-4 minutes until crisp. Add roasted chana and toss for 1 minute. Set aside.
- Mix onion, tomato, cucumber, green chilli, carrot, red chilli powder, vegetable masala powder, *chaat masala*, fresh coriander leaves and salt in a bowl.
- Add veggie mix and roasted makhana, roasted chana, 3-4 tsp spiced curd, and 1-2 tsp green chutney to a bowl. Sprinkle *chaat masala*, chilli powder, and coriander leaves. Garnish with pomegranate seeds and sev. Serve immediately.

## HEALTH BENEFITS

Makhana is rich in protein and magnesium, aiding bone growth. Roasted chana provides fiber and iron, and vegetables vitamins A and C, boosting immunity. Curd provides probiotics to aid gut health and pomegranate essential antioxidants.



## MAKHANA CHAAT WITH ROASTED CHANA

(4 servings)

# SUNDRY MUSINGS



SURESH SUBRAHMANYAN

## *The Two Musketeers of TENNIS* *Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz*

*'Whoever said, It's not whether you win or lose that counts, probably lost.'* **Martina Navratilova.**

We had the Big Three. We now have the Big Two and a half. I am, of course, talking tennis. Federer and Nadal hung up their rackets recently, at different times, amidst much emotional, tear-jerking fanfare. The third of that triptych, Djokovic, is still in the mix but only just. At nearly 39, he is good enough to reach the semi-final stage at all the four Grand Slams, but unable to breach the dynamic, young Alcaraz-Sinner wall. That makes the Super Serb the half along with the 'Sinacraz' duo, who now bestride the tennis world with virtually no rivals in sight. It won't be long before Novak bids adieu and joins his illustrious mates Roger and Rafa in their luxurious Senior Citizens enclave. The Joker is playing his cards close to his chest, refusing to contemplate retirement and promising to turn up for the Slams, but it's clear that while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weakening.

The mind-boggling achievements of the Big Three have been well-documented and I don't intend to detail the 66 Grand Slam titles the trio have garnered over the past couple of decades. A golden era in which the likes of Murray and Wawrinka, great players in their own right, played the occasional spoiler role. As walk-on parts, they made their entrances and exits. As the inevitable decline of these warriors became evident, tennis buffs turned to the likes of Medvedev, Thiem, Zverev and Tsitsipas to take over the reins. Thiem opted out prematurely due to injury problems, while the other three, still active on the circuit, have flattered to deceive. And before you could say double fault, two precociously talented aces, barely out of their teens, shattered everybody else's dreams with their incandescent brilliance.

I am of course, talking about the Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz and the Italian Jannik Sinner. These two have shared the available eight Grand Slam titles equally between them in 2024 and 2025. Need I say more?

Alcaraz, with his boyish, toothy grin and extraordinary wizardry is bringing back the genius X factor to world tennis after the exit of Federer, who has long been acclaimed as tennis royalty. He even has a permanent seat in the Royal Box at Wimbledon these days! At his best, Federer on court was a ballet dancer, pirouetting and gliding around the courts with-

out breaking sweat. When the great Swiss maestro was doing his stuff on Wimbledon's Centre Court, you could almost hear the Swan Lake overture playing in the background. Is that Nureyev? Is that Baryshnikov? No, it's Federer. Whence comes such another, the fans cried when Roger called it a day.

We did not have to wait long. Alcaraz is here, with knobs on, and all is well. The young Spaniard is Federer plus his compatriot Nadal multiplied manifold. Alcaraz is all that those two greats were plus a burst of speed, strength, athleticism and dexterity. A generational talent. And he is just 22! However, it takes two, sometimes three, to tango. Federer and Nadal were a beloved twosome. Nobody wanted a third. Djokovic was an unwelcome interloper but the great Serb upended and put paid to the dominance of the other two by sheer force of spirit and sweat. Finally earning the somewhat reluctant admiration of the fans. A modern-day anti-hero.

Today, we are back to the era of the commanding twosome. Enter stage left, Italian Jannik Sinner, a deceptively shy, redhead. What Sinner lacks in instinctive flair his rival Alcaraz possesses in spades. Sinner makes up with his amazing agility, the metronomic consistency and power of his ground strokes, not to mention a smooth and silky service motion. He may not provide the frequent out-of-the-blue magic moment that Alcaraz can dazzle us with, but Sinner is proving to be the ideal foil to this Spanish matador. Understated, soft-spoken and quietly determined, he goes about his business without fuss. And he is 24. Two contrasting styles, with years ahead of them, Alcaraz and Sinner have, for the moment, firmly shut the door on any other aspirant to major triumphs in tennis.

Which leaves the tennis world with the existential dilemma – should Djokovic retire instanter? His die-hard fans argue that many young players today would give anything to be in all the Slam semi-finals (and one final), win an Olympic Gold Medal and be a constant threat to the top players as Novak has been. So why should he not keep playing? The contrarian view is simply this. You have done enough, bagged a record-breaking 24 Slams and finally won the love and affection of the sporting world. Time now to bow out gracefully.

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



# MADHYA PRADESH

## THE HEART OF INDIA

From the majestic gorges of Marble Rocks in Bhedaghat and the tranquil expanses of the Narmada River to the tiger-inhabited wilds of Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Pench national parks and stunning Khajuraho temples, MP is a living canvas of India's diverse geographic landscapes, wildlife and architectural splendour

ANIL THAKORE



# LEISURE & TRAVEL



Khajuraho Temples

For many years, a holiday meant a trip abroad, usually to western countries that advertised picturesque locales, historical wonders, clean and orderly cities, exotic cuisine, and luxury shopping. However, after some very satisfying experiences of travelling in India, I have arrived at the conclusion that everything the world's most sought-after destinations promise, India also offers, and often with greater charm and authenticity.

Therefore, I wasn't surprised that our recent family holiday to Madhya Pradesh (MP, pop. 88 million) exceeded all expectations. Located at the very heart of India, MP is the country's second-largest state by area (after Rajasthan) offering rich history, heritage, and natural splendour. Sprawling across plateaus, riverine valleys, and dense forests, MP presents an excellent mix of architectural grandeur and scenic vistas. From the majestic gorges of Marble Rocks in Bhedaghat to the tranquil expanses of the River Narmada to the tiger-inhabited wilds of Kanha, Bandhavgarh, and Pench national parks, MP is a living canvas of India's diverse geographic landscapes, wildlife and architectural splendour.

Madhya Pradesh, which literally means 'central province', reflects its geographic position at the crossroads of Indian culture and civilization. The state hosts Unesco World Heritage Sites such as the stunning Khajuraho temples, ancient Buddhist monuments of Sanchi, and rock shelters of

Bhimbetka. Its cities — Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior, and Ujjain — blend old-world charm with modern vibrancy, inviting travelers to experience majestic forts, sacred ghats, handloom traditions, and memorable local cuisine.

In Part I of this leisure & travel dispatch on MP, we explore Bhopal, Sanchi, Pachmarhi, Jabalpur, and Kanha National Park.

## Bhopal

Our first stop was Bhopal, the administrative capital of the state. The city was established by Raja Bhoja Rao (1010–1055), the legendary king of the Malwa region who named it Bhojapal. His majestic statue stands tall in the Upper Lake. Over the next few centuries, the city evolved from a fortified settlement into a princely state, flourishing under the rule of the famous Nawabs and Begums of Bhopal.

Today, Bhopal (pop. 2.7 million) is a modern city that blends regal heritage and architectural grandeur with contemporary urban development, busy markets, and serene lakes. Aka the 'city of lakes' because it is dotted with numerous natural and man-made lakes that shape its landscape and climate. The two most prominent are the **Upper Lake** (Bhojtal), one of India's oldest man-made lakes created in the 11th century, and the **Lower Lake**, built during the Mughal era.

A historical city, it hosts an astounding 422 palaces, most in state of ruin. However, the **Taj Mahal, Jehan Numa, Gohar Mahal** and **Sadar Manzil** are worth a visit. The largest mosque in India, **Dar-Uloom Taj-Ul Masjid**, a massive 19th century construction built of red sandstone with white marble-topped domes, is a landmark. Another must-visit is the **Van Vihar**, a natural protected habitat sited between the shores of the Upper Lake and lush green mountain slopes. Van Vihar is home to tigers, deers, hyenas, leopards, a centre for vulture conservation and breeding, butterfly park and tortoise reserve. On the way out, stop at the **Boat Club** and take a boat ride on the Upper Lake to witness evening lights cast their glow over serene waters.

**Bharat Bhavan**, Bhopal's premier multi-arts complex inaugurated in 1982 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, provides visitors an interesting introduction into the history and culture of MP. Designed by renowned architect Charles Correa, it houses four main cultural centres: the Museum of Fine Arts, which displays magnificent urban, tribal and folk paintings; Anhad, a cultural centre which houses music archives and stages concerts of classical and folk music; Rangmandal, a repertory, and Chhavi, which hosts Indian cinema archives.

**Accommodation.** Jehan Numa Palace Hotel (Rs.7.000-11,000 per night)

Some of the most famous historical wonders of MP



are situated near Bhopal. A 60- minute drive takes you to **Vidisha**, once a flourishing merchant town in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. It hosts the magnificent **Heliodorus pillar** ("Khamba baba") built in 113 BCE by Heliodorus, the ambassador of the Indo-Bactrian King Antialcidas of Taxila and the **Vidisha Museum**, which houses relics of the Sunga period and Parmar artefacts.

Not to be missed, just 5 km away, are the 20 **Udayagiri caves**, carved in the 5th and 4th centuries CE during the reign of King Chandragupta II (AD 382–402). Cave No. 4 has a rare carving of the Ekmukha Shivalinga and Cave No. 5 a massive carving of Vishnu in his Varaha avatar, holding the Earth Goddess Prithvi aloft on one tusk.

### Sanchi

Driving towards Sanchi (46 km), we crossed the **Tropic of Cancer** near Salamatpur — a diagonal line marked by the state tourism authorities. A Unesco World Heritage Site, Sanchi hosts an ancient Buddhist complex — stupas, relics and archaeological artifacts are strewn all around. A highlight is the **Great Stupa of Sanchi**, built by Emperor Ashoka in honour of his wife, and one of the oldest stone structures in India. The Sanchi museum houses many invaluable artefacts, including the Lion Capital of the Ashoka pillar.

Our next stop was the **Bhimbetka caves**, 95 km from Sanchi on the super expressway. A Unesco World Heritage

# LEISURE & TRAVEL

Great Stupa of Sanchi



Site, it comprises 750 awe-inspiring rock shelters/caves scattered across 10 km and seven hills. Some of the caves were inhabited for more than 100,000 years until the second century BCE. Fifteen caves are open to the public and depict the lives of prehistoric hunter-gatherers. The cave paintings are mainly executed in red and white, with touches of green and yellow, and were probably painted by combining manganese, haematite, coal and red stone.

Fifty km from Bhimbetka is **Bhojpur**, founded by Raja Bhoja, in whose memory stands the majestic **Bhojeshwar temple** ('Somnath of the East'). It soars 66 ft high and features a richly carved dome supported by four elegantly shaped pillars. Nearby is a poorly maintained museum housing ancient archaeological sculptures and carvings.

**Accommodation.** MP Tourism Gateway Retreat — a charming hotel featuring cottages amid lush greenery. (Rs.3,600-4,500 per night)

## Pachmarhi

From the historical to the natural wonders of Sanchi, we headed 150 km east to **Pachmarhi**, the queen of hill stations. Sited in the Satpura hills, the **Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve** is a Unesco-listed site and hosts rare species of flora and fauna, dense forests and water bodies.

**Bee Fall (Jamuna Prapat).** A short walk through lush, shaded forests leads to a stunning lookout point where Bee Fall plunges dramatically over rocky ledges and thick shrubs

into the valley nearly 300 m below. Reaching the base of the waterfall requires descending about 300 steep steps — a rewarding but strenuous route recommended only for the fit and sure-footed. Nearby are two other charming natural attractions: **Apsara Vihar** (Angel Falls), a serene pool ideal for a refreshing dip, and **Rajat Prapat** (Big Fall), a towering, silver-streaked cascade visible from a distance.

**Mahadeo Cave Shelters.** Dating back to 500-800 CE, they feature spectacular rock paintings of the Mesolithic and Chalcolithic periods, depicting animals and humans, but in a different style (Gond) from Bhimbetka. Paintings of hunting and battle, rituals and worship, and fantastical creatures adorn the caves. However, the caves are poorly maintained by the Archaeological Society of India (ASI).

**Dhoopgarh.** The highest point of the Satpura hills, Dhoopgarh is ideal for witnessing sunsets. From its wide, rocky vantage point, the horizon opens into sweeping layers of forested ridges that glow gold and crimson as the sun dips behind them.

**Accommodation.** MP Tourism Glen View Hotel (Rs.6,000-10,000 per night)

## Jabalpur and Bhedaghat

The expressway is the swiftest route to reach Jabalpur from Pachmarhi (288 km). Jabalpur (pop.1.85 million) is an excellent base for several excursions. A short 23 km journey brings you to **Bhedaghat** — the famous site of the magnificent

**Marble Rocks.** Here, the River Narmada winds its way through towering marble cliffs on either side, some soaring up to 100 ft. On a scenic boat ride between these cliffs, the sunlight dances across pink, white and blue marble, streaked with veins of dark green and black, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. Nearby, the **Dhuandhar Falls** command attention as the Narmada plunges 30 ft into a basin, spraying fine droplets that give the falls a smoky, ethereal appearance.

Other places of interest around Jabalpur are the **Chausath Yogini Temple**, the largest yogini temple (female deities) in India; **Madan Mahal** or Rani Durgavati Fort (11th century) and the **Kachnar City Shiva Temple** with one of the tallest statues of Lord Shiva (23 m). **The Military College of Materials Management**, with a museum showcasing over 250 years of India's military legacy, is also well worth a visit. Its galleries display rare weaponry, uniforms, documents and logistics innovations that shaped the evolution of the armed forces.

**Accommodation.** MP Tourism Hotel (Rs.3,500-4,000 per night)

### Kanha National Park

Kanha National Park, 125 km from Jabalpur, is one of India's best-conserved tiger reserves. (En route, take the bypass to MPT Bargi, overlooking the enormous **Bargi Lake** and dam, and stop for breakfast).

Spread across the Maikal range of the Satpuras, Kanha is a breathtaking landscape of dense sal forests, sun-drenched meadows and winding streams. Described as the inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*, it hosts an extraordinary richness of wildlife ranging from tigers, leopards and wild

dogs to massive gaur herds and the graceful barasinghas. Dawn safaris are magical: the forest stirs awake in soft amber light as deer call alerts and the jungle air hangs with the scent of mahua blossoms.

Beyond wildlife, Kanha offers an immersive experience of wilderness. The vast meadows open into sweeping vistas framed by forested hills, and each safari route reveals a shifting palette of landscapes. Skilled guides help visitors read the forest's subtle signs — a pugmark in the dust, a sudden hush among langurs, a distant sambhar alarm call. Don't miss visiting the **Bamni Dadar** or Sunset Point, offering a panoramic view of the vast forest.

**Kanha Museum** displays skeletal exhibits of reptiles and animals, offering visitors a deeper appreciation of the dedicated efforts of the forest department and its staff in preserving this forest habitat.

**Accommodation.** MP Tourism Safari Lodge (Rs.4,000-5,000 per night)

### Travel tips

**Getting there:** Bhopal is well-connected by air/train/road.

**Preparation:** Good footwear, rain protection apparel, sun protection headwear and cream. Pack binoculars and all essential medicines, as they are not easily available in the smaller towns.

**Best season to visit:** October-May.

**Guides:** Hire the services of guides who will enhance your holiday with historical background, cultural context, and practical tips.

**P.S.** We used the services of the MP Tourism Board to arrange all travel, board and lodging.

Marble Rocks, Jabalpur



# PARENTS CORNER

## Maintaining calm in EXAMS SEASON

**PW invited parents from Inventure Academy, Bengaluru to share their insights on how they ensure their children remain calm during exam seasons**



“ Exam seasons test more than just what my daughter Ezri Syed Rajendran (class VI) knows — it challenges her calm, balance, and confidence. At home, I try to keep the atmosphere light and reassuring. We revise together on weekends, breaking lessons into manageable parts and cele-

brating progress instead of stressing over what remains. I've learned that calm doesn't come from studying harder but from remaining connected with what makes her happy. For Ezri, that's football. Even during exams, she refuses to miss practice — and I've acknowledged it as her best stress-reliever. The football field gives her freedom, balance, and confidence that carry into her studies. So I encourage it. It's her reset button and a reminder that exams are only one part of life” — **Tazeen Syeda**, Director at Fidelity Investments



“ Our son Vedant (class XI) is a dedicated and disciplined child who manages academics and competitive football with commitment. This balance demands good time management, a structured routine and short, focused study

sessions using techniques like Pomodoro. Sports activity has greatly helped in building his discipline. Just as daily training is essential in football, he ensures he studies every day as well. He follows a regular sleep schedule and a healthy diet, which keeps him energised. During exams, we maintain the same routine: at least eight hours of sleep, some physical activity and a warm, supportive, stress-free home environment. On exam day, we remind him to practise deep breathing and stay calm, just as he would before a football match” — **Shreya Mishra**, self-employed



“ Exams are stressful for all students, and even more so for parents. Our daughter Taisha is in class XI, a crucial year for her. The exam pattern in her previous school

was very different from the IGCSE format here, which made her anxious. At the start of the year, she often turned to stress eating—noodles, chocolates—and stayed up late, relying on last-minute cramming as exams approached. However, over the past few months she has adopted a far more structured routine that helps her stay calm. She now practises timed writing to improve speed, has dinner on schedule, avoids her phone, and sleeps early. Prayer has also played a meaningful role in maintaining her composure.” — **Kanchan Gupta**, Startup Entrepreneur



“ For my son Aaryan Darshan (class VIII), keeping calm during exam season begins with simple basics: nutritious meals, sufficient sleep, and a steady study routine. When his body and mind are relaxed, everything becomes easier. We

often share stories from our own school days, helping him understand that exams are only a phase of life, not something to fear. There is no pressure at home; we remind him that exams merely show what he has learned and where he can improve. A month before exams, we create a shared calendar and study plan in which playtime is essential, because it helps him refocus. We encourage smart study habits and regular revision to avoid last-minute stress. — **Soumya Reddy**, Director, Saiven Group

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# PARENTS CORNER

## Exposing children to CAREER CHOICES

**PW invited parents of Sunbeam Varuna to share how they ensure their children are exposed to diverse career options**



“ Children role model their parents, and naturally, we hope to help shape a bright future for them. As doctors, we quietly wish they will one day pursue medicine, yet we are aware of the intense competition, long training, and uncertain work-life balance it involves. Therefore, we have introduced our son Shatakshi (class III) to a number of career options right now. We discuss various professions, encourage them to explore their interests, and help them understand the skills and commitment each path demands. We also guide them to reflect on their academic strengths, resilience, and personal goals. Our aim is not to steer them toward any specific career, but to empower them to make thoughtful, informed choices that truly fit their personalities” — **Dr Swati Verma**, ESIC Medical College, Varanasi



“ As parents, our goal is to help our children — Navya (class III) and Mihir (class II) transform into strong, compassionate, and responsible individuals prepared to face life with confidence. From youngest age, I have given them lessons on sincerity, sensitivity, and care. I encourage them to remain positive during challenges, accept failures with equanimity, and celebrate success with humility. We avoid judging their mistakes and instead help them learn from them. We help nurture diverse qualities — compassion for the medical field, communication skills for law, and critical thinking for science or engineering — while observing and encouraging their natural interests. In a school that promotes holistic development, I am certain they will discover who they wish to become” — **Nancy Mary**, Assistant Teacher, Primary School Newada (Tari), Varanasi



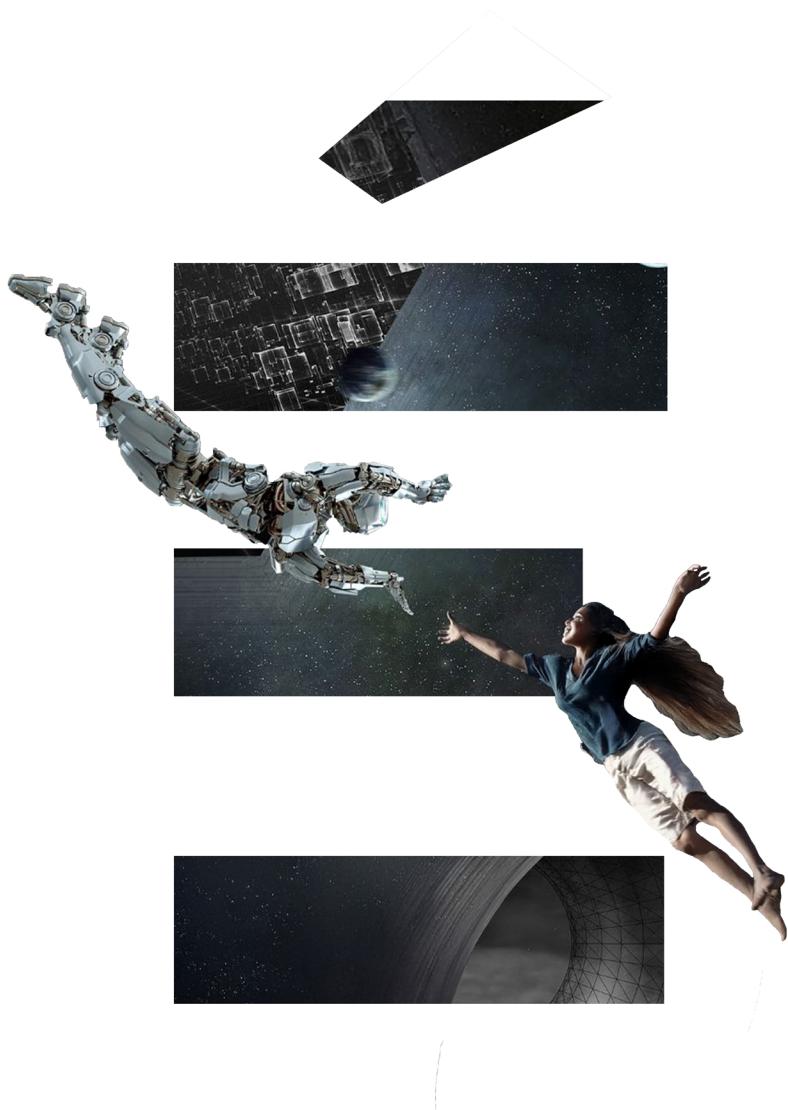
“ I believe my son Aahan (class VIII) is at an age when he is gradually beginning to shape his identity. Instead of focusing on career choices, I encourage Aahan to share some activities that interest him deeply — whether related to sport or academics.

These conversations build clarity and self-awareness. In class VIII, we believe he needs to discover his interests, hobbies, passions, and level of commitment. Beyond music, dance, or sports, we encourage him to explore advanced technologies, attend lectures by professional experts, and read about inspiring young achievers. Most importantly, we avoid imposing any pressure, and guide him with openness and support” — **Swati Mishra**, homemaker



“ Introducing children to diverse career options helps them understand the world of work and imagine their future. Our approach focuses on encouraging curiosity, exploration, and recognizing personal strengths and interests rather than pushing a specific path. After several discussions, we began taking our son Adhrit (class VI) to different workplaces where he observed real professionals and understood how each role contributes to society. We encourage open conversations about his daily experiences and listen without imposing our ideas. Books, stories, and films spark his imagination. Alongside this, we encourage him to build essential skills like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. Our goal is to offer guidance and freedom so he can confidently discover his own path” — **Rashmi Dixit**, homemaker

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