



CHILDHOOD MATTERS

AIF's Digital Magazine

VOLUME I | ISSUE NO. 5 | JULY 2023

Bilingual Quarterly Magazine
by
Anthropos India Foundation



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A Digital Magazine by Anthropos India Foundation
July 2023

ABOUT US

Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) is a trust registered in Delhi since October 2011. Anthropology is one of the most vibrant and fascinating subjects. Anthropology deals with communities both big and small and people from all walks of life. It engages in solving various social issues of communities by furthering understanding from an 'emic' perspective and respecting the local cultures and ecology. The philosophy, theories, concepts and methods of anthropology have made notable contributions in every field, be it law, human rights, public health, education and child rights. The aim of AIF is to promote the discipline of anthropology, its philosophy and methods. It also aims to conduct anthropological research; applied, visual and action research.

Childhood matters and the experiences of childhood play an important role in the making of an adult. The impact of childhood experiences will decide the personalities, attitudes, and actions of future adults. The current situation is grim because crimes against children are on the rise. Child rights are violated every second in this vast country.

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To have a safe, healthy and happy childhood is every child's right. This digital magazine aims to make humble efforts to disseminate the knowledge and information related to child rights and child protection. We are releasing the digital magazine "CHILDHOOD MATTERS" for the well-being of children to bring a positive impact on society. The methodology and approach of the digital magazine is participatory, where all the stakeholders will be involved: children, parents, teachers, child welfare activists, child protection professionals and all those who are concerned about children. Each one of us can contribute to this digital magazine, in the form of poems, stories, illustrations, paintings, podcasts, short films, images and many other forms of expression.

We attempt to take into consideration the existence of multiple childhoods along with specific circumstances of children shaped by the intersection of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and other specific context. We shall keep the diversity of children in mind and come up with meaningful, useful, and impactful content. This is a small effort to bring a small change by the AIF team to make childhood a better experience.



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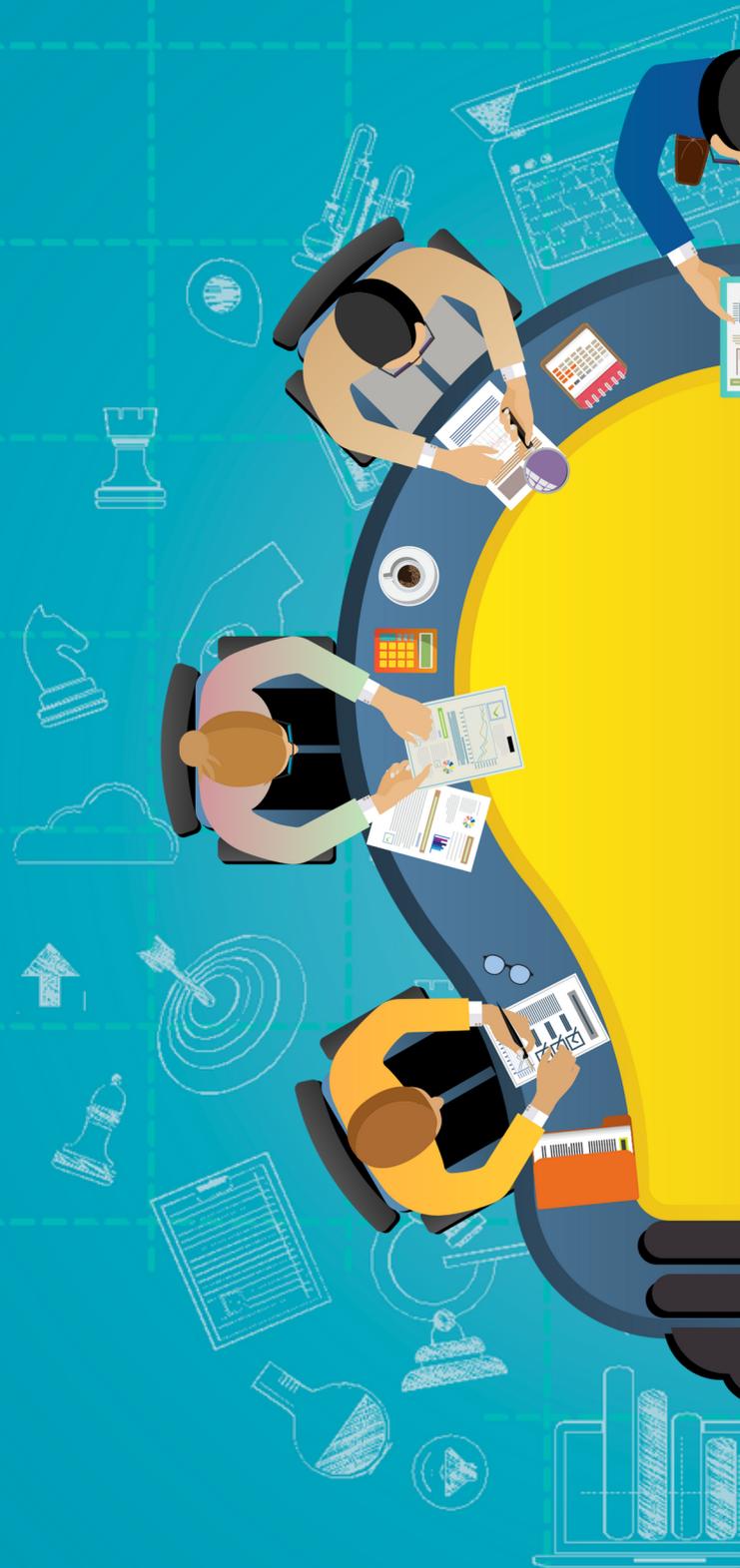


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EDITORIAL

In this short life, when we grow up, we ultimately remember some good moments and some bad moments. The rest of the mundane things are forgotten. While everyone deserves a good life, with pleasant moments and good memories to cherish, many children still face adversities, be it hunger, neglect, abuse, humiliation and discrimination. To make children's lives better, it is not just the responsibility of parents and teachers but also of the State. National Child policies and institutional measures are there to protect children and ensure child rights are already in place, yet children face many adversities.

'Childhood Matters' is a humble effort to share, sensitize and disseminate some issues, concerns and challenges faced by children, but more important are the information, knowledge, awareness, ideas and strategies to be shared on various aspects of childhood to the broader audiences- not just children, parents, teachers, but society at large.

This issue of 'Childhood Matters' covers range of interesting topics, starting with a narrative of the child abuse and how well it was handled by the guest editor. Informative articles on child nutrition and anemia and how to overcome it, class room dynamics and the role of a teacher. Interesting and thought provoking articles on the mental health of teenagers in disturbed families, well-being of children and childhood stories. Sensitisation of transgenders by breaking the binary understanding of gender and some beautiful poems in English and Hindi. I am sure all of you will enjoy reading and sharing with your friends.

With the growing intolerance, individuality, and self-centeredness, there is a need for exposure to the diversity of our society. India is the most culturally and ethnically diverse; children at a young age from 8 years to 18 years, from secondary school to higher secondary schools, can be taken for Bharat Darshan every summer and winter holidays through schools. I still remember my school excursions as part of scouts and guides; what fun and memories!

Under the National Education Policy, the education department can make it a part of the school curriculum, where children can be taken to the length and breadth of the country and, by the time they are adults, have seen most of the nation.

Dr Sunita Reddy
Founder Chair, AIF
Editor of 'Childhood Matters'



We have seen, in general, people from north India see all south Indians as Madrasis, not knowing there are five different states, four different languages and many dialects. Similarly, from the south, ignorance can persist, and many mainland Indians don't even realise that there are eight beautiful, bountiful, ethnically diverse North Eastern States that are considered homogenous.

I am dreaming and wishing for something every child can experience. With his magic wand, the Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi can start 'dedicated trains' for children 'Bal Vahana' painted with colours- India's myriad cultures. Every year with the 'Bal Yatras', the child should be able to see the diversity in food, clothing, art, artefacts, architecture, dance, music, topography, people and their hospitality. These excursions can be curated to give different kinds of experiences to the children.

Though there are School exchange programs, primarily in private schools, where parents can afford and send their children for annual excursions for a week within India or abroad, but the children in government schools too can be given an opportunity with the above idea of Bharat darshan. Rural children can visit and stay with urban kids, and urban kids stay with rural counterparts. The rural kids will get inspired to go to the cities and make their careers, and the urban kids will understand the hardships they go through to compete and excel in life despite all odds. The urban kids will then value what they have, the privileges and comforts their parents have given, and possibly crib a little less. Equally, they become tolerant of other cultures and take pride in the nation's diversity.

I hope to see the dream come true sooner, as children cannot wait and grow in a blink. My kids did.

GUEST EDITORIAL

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BHURI

Adults have a tendency to take children's conversations lightly or with a pinch of salt especially when it concerns children of a young age. But if one were to stop a while, observe them and hear them carefully, some sense starts emerging more often than not. I am referring to the case of Bhuri, my former domestic help's eleven-year-old daughter, who used to accompany her to my house on many evenings. Bhuri had large brown eyes that justified her name. Her continuous, upbeat chatter always lit up the room and warmed our hearts. This was always the cherished time for everyone – tea and snacks for elders and milk for children, a gentle melody playing on the radio in the background.

Between gulping down sips of Complan milk, Bhuri would speak of plucking mangoes or sharing a chuski outside school with her friends, or would narrate stories of the 'dangerous' cycle-ride back home with her brother who always tried to find new by lanes on their way back. Bhuri shared nicknames of many of her teachers – saddu madam (who scolded children a lot), danda sir (who especially punished boys who didn't do HW) and thakdu-akdu sir (the PT teacher who seemed old, arrogant, and didn't have stamina to run like an athlete when he tried to inspire them for running). "Bache kitna bolte hain!" often remarked her exhausted mother as she finished mopping the floor. Bhuri's father was a daily wage earner who came home drunk once or twice a week to snatch away money from her mother.

-Shaweta Anand
Writer and researcher,
Specialist in Child
welfare and protection
issues.



One day, the ever-chattering Bhuri seemed a little lost as her restless eyes wandered while she kept fidgeting on the stool that she was sitting upon. She wasn't smiling at all and was exceptionally quiet. I offered her milk with her favorite chocolate cookie which she gently refused to take. Her mother seemed quite alright with Bhuri's changed temperament but then she also seemed too distracted by the household chores she was handling at break-neck speed. But I knew it in my bones that something about the child was completely off. She was not in her element.

After switching off the radio that was playing particularly cheerful tunes that day, I took her away into my room for a conversation. She would usually play a quick game of Ludo with me there but that day she didn't want to play that either. I still don't know why but I started telling her stories about my days in the over-crowded, rickety DTC buses on way to my college; how it involved eve-teasing, being inappropriately touched, and many journeys to college ended with the choicest rants from my side.



“Apke saath bhi aaisa hota tha,” Bhuri looked at me in disbelief. I explained to her that every girl needs to recognize bad touch and learn how to say ‘no’; and raise their voice if someone persists. Feeling somewhat relieved after listening to a few anecdotes from me, Bhuri opened up about how the thakdu-akdu PT teacher touched her front shoulder and all the way down to her chest that day. She also shared that on an earlier occasion too, he had touched her bottom and her waist on some pretext. “Mujhe ajeeb toh laga tha didi par who papa-jaise haina toh main kuch nahi boli unko,” said Bhuri.

I hugged her instantly and assured her that won’t happen again if she was vocal about it with her school teachers, her friends and her family. There was no POCSO at that time so we did what we thought was the best thing to do. We spoke to both her parents and then her school principal. After a few days of absence, Bhuri walked in with her mother one evening, the spring back in her feet, smiling ear to ear. The first thing she excitedly said was “didi, badi madam ne thakdu-akdu ko sabke saamne khoob danta. Usne mujhe sabke samne sorry bhi bola and wada kiya aise kabhi dobara nahin karega.”

EXPERT COLUMN

IRON DEFICIENCY ANAEMIA IN CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

The development during infancy is rapid than any other period of life time. The growth and development is accompanied by a number of physiological changes which include change in body size, body composition, gastro-intestinal system, excretory system, mental development feeding behaviour, circulatory development. The rapid growth during infancy is followed by generally slow growth between 1-6 years. The child becomes more active; social and environmental influences have a great impact on his food behaviour and eating pattern.

The need for nutrients is increased as growth and development continues. The schooling age 6-12 years is a latent period of growth. During this stage growth is slow and body changes occur gradually. The nutritional requirement is the same for boys and girls up to 9 years after which girls outdo boys and there is a change in some of nutrient requirements for boys and girls. If the adequate dietary intake of nutrients will not be fulfilled though diet or due to inadequate absorption and utilisation may develop severe deficiencies in children. Iron deficiency anaemia is one of the major nutritional deficiency disorder. Iron deficiency anaemia puts child at risk of developmental delays.



INCIDENCE

More than 50% of preschool children suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. This is caused by the dietary lack of iron or inadequate absorption and utilisation of iron.

ICMR RECOMMENDATIONS: DIETARY ALLOWANCE OF IRON (MG)

- Age 1-3 years: 12
- 4-6 years: 18
- 7-9 years: 26
- 10-12 years: Boys- 34 and Girls 19





SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF IRON DEFICIENCY ANAEMIA IN CHILDREN:

1. Fatigue, Malaise in 90% of cases
2. Breathlessness in 50% cases
3. Poor memory
4. Depression
5. Palpitation
6. Personality changes
7. Early greying of hairs
8. Skin pallor
9. Fingernails become thin and flat and eventually results in koilonychia.
10. Atrophy of papillae of tongue, glossitis angular stomatitis
11. Dysphagia, gastritis.

MANAGEMENT

The iron deficiency anaemia in child can be confirmed with the help of some pathological investigations. Plasma ferritin is a measure of iron stores and the single best test to confirm iron deficiency. A subnormal level is due to iron deficiency, hypothyroidism or vitamin C deficiency. Transferrin levels are lowered by malnutrition, liver diseases. In difficult cases it may still be necessary to examine a bone marrow aspirate for iron store. Without any blood investigations on the basis of signs and symptoms, anaemia can be suspected. In that case, dietary errors need to be corrected. Haemoglobin level should be above 10gm/dl.

SOME NUTRITIONAL HEATH FOODS WHICH ARE REALLY HELPFUL TO RAISE THE HAEMOGLOBIN LEVEL NATURALLY:

1. Iron rich bread, whole wheat bread
2. Legumes
3. Dried fruits
4. Dark, green leafy vegetables
5. Fortified cereals
6. Carrots, beet root
7. Jaggery, black dates, black resins
8. Pomegranate, apple
9. Red meats, shellfish (Esp clams), poultry.
10. Egg yolk
11. Vitamin C – (As vitamin C helps in absorption of iron)
12. Fruits - kiwi, mango, pineapple, papaya, strawberries, cranberries, watermelon, blueberries, orange, grapefruit.
13. Vegetables – broccoli, Brussels sprout, cauliflower, spinach, sweet and white potato, tomatoes.

Please note – In case of severe iron deficiency proper medicinal line of treatment under expert's opinion is mandatory.



TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

SILENCE IN THE CLASSROOM: UNPACKING THE DYNAMICS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND TEACHER'S ROLE

AUTHOR BIO

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ABSTRACT

This academic piece examines the phenomenon of silence in the classroom through the lens of a teacher's experience in teaching sociology at the Department of Sociology, Hindu College, University of Delhi, for three semesters. The author delves into the complexities of why some students remain silent while others actively participate in classroom discussions. Factors such as gender, caste, class, language, region, and religion are considered, along with the influence of English-medium schooling on students' comfort with verbal expression. The study also explores how a teacher's persona and approach can encourage students to open up and participate actively in the learning process. Drawing upon sociological imagination, the author emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual experiences and societal structures. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of creating a democratic and inclusive classroom space, where the teacher transcends social backgrounds and listens attentively to the students' perspectives to foster meaningful engagement in learning.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the educational experience of students. The act of speaking or remaining silent in a classroom is an intricate aspect that warrants closer examination. As a teacher in the Department of Sociology at Hindu College, the author observed distinct patterns of participation among students. While some students actively engaged in classroom discussions, others maintained a prolonged silence, prompting the author to reflect on the topic of silence in the learning environment. This research explores the factors that contribute to student silence, the role of the teacher in fostering an inclusive classroom, and the impact of societal backgrounds on students' participation.

THE MULTIFACETED SILENCE

In the sociology classroom, the presence of both vocal and silent students poses intriguing questions. The reasons behind students' hesitancy to participate actively can be diverse, encompassing elements like linguistic barriers, hesitancy, and feelings of awkwardness.

Unraveling the dynamics of silence requires an understanding of the act of speaking among different sets of students. Teachers are tasked with innovating evaluation methods for silent students and facilitating their active participation. The distinction between silence and speaking in the classroom involves multiple layers, making it a complex issue to address.

THE INTERPLAY OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS

At first glance, the act of silence or speaking might seem to depend solely on an individual's choice and agency. However, a deeper analysis reveals that individual efforts are intricately entwined with societal factors. The diverse backgrounds of students, including gender, caste, class, language, region, and religion, significantly influence their participation. For instance, fluency in the English language, emphasized in college, may be influenced by students' linguistic background and exposure to English-medium schooling. The interconnectedness of individual and societal aspects necessitates a teacher's consideration of students' linguistic skills within their social context.

CASTE, CLASS, AND LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

India's social fabric is intertwined with a complex caste system, which also permeates the educational realm. Upper caste-class students, having benefitted from English-medium schooling and accumulated intergenerational capital, often occupy prominent roles in classroom interactions. On the other hand, lower caste-class students may encounter challenges in asserting themselves verbally due to exclusionary institutional practices. The impact of caste, class, and language on student silence calls for teacher awareness and sensitivity.

CLASSROOM AS A DEMOCRATIC SPACE

The classroom is envisioned as a democratic space where students and teachers engage in a dynamic exchange of ideas. However, for some students, grasping unfamiliar topics may require unlearning and a careful integration of past experiences. In this context, a teacher's role is vital in creating an environment conducive to expression and fostering comfort among students. Encouraging interactive tutorial meetings and small-group activities can facilitate student familiarity and active participation, especially for those who are initially hesitant.

A TEACHER'S PERSONA: TRANSCENDING SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS

To break the long silence among certain students, a teacher must transcend their own social background, encompassing caste, class, gender, and religion. A welcoming image projected by the teacher can instill confidence in students and motivate them to engage actively. By being attentive listeners, teachers can comprehend students' perspectives and adapt their teaching methods to suit individual understanding. This proactive approach fosters an inclusive classroom environment and encourages students to participate openly.

TOWARD INCLUSIVITY: BRIDGING THE POWER GAP

The teacher-student relationship holds significance in exploring the dynamics of power within the classroom. The goal of a teacher should be to create a democratic relationship that bridges the power gap and facilitates mutual understanding. Emphasizing the role reversal, where teachers can adopt the perspective of students, can foster empathy and create a nurturing learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Silence in the classroom is a multi-dimensional phenomenon shaped by individual choices and societal structures. This study highlights the importance of understanding the interplay of caste, class, gender, language, and region in influencing students' participation. To create an inclusive and democratic classroom, teachers must transcend their social backgrounds and actively listen to students' perspectives. Encouraging student interaction through small-group activities and interactive tutorials can further enhance engagement. By unlearning biases and ensuring equitable evaluation methods, teachers can break the barriers of silence and create an enriching learning experience for all students, fostering a culture of active participation and academic growth.

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CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

In 2020, dreadful virus named Covid 19 came into this world. Mostly, the people who had low immunity were affected such as old people, new borns and infants. Some babies were born with diseases because of genetical environmental or other problems. A child's well being means their physical, mental, emotional and social health. You must have seen many homeless kids on the street. Few kids lost their parents during Covid.

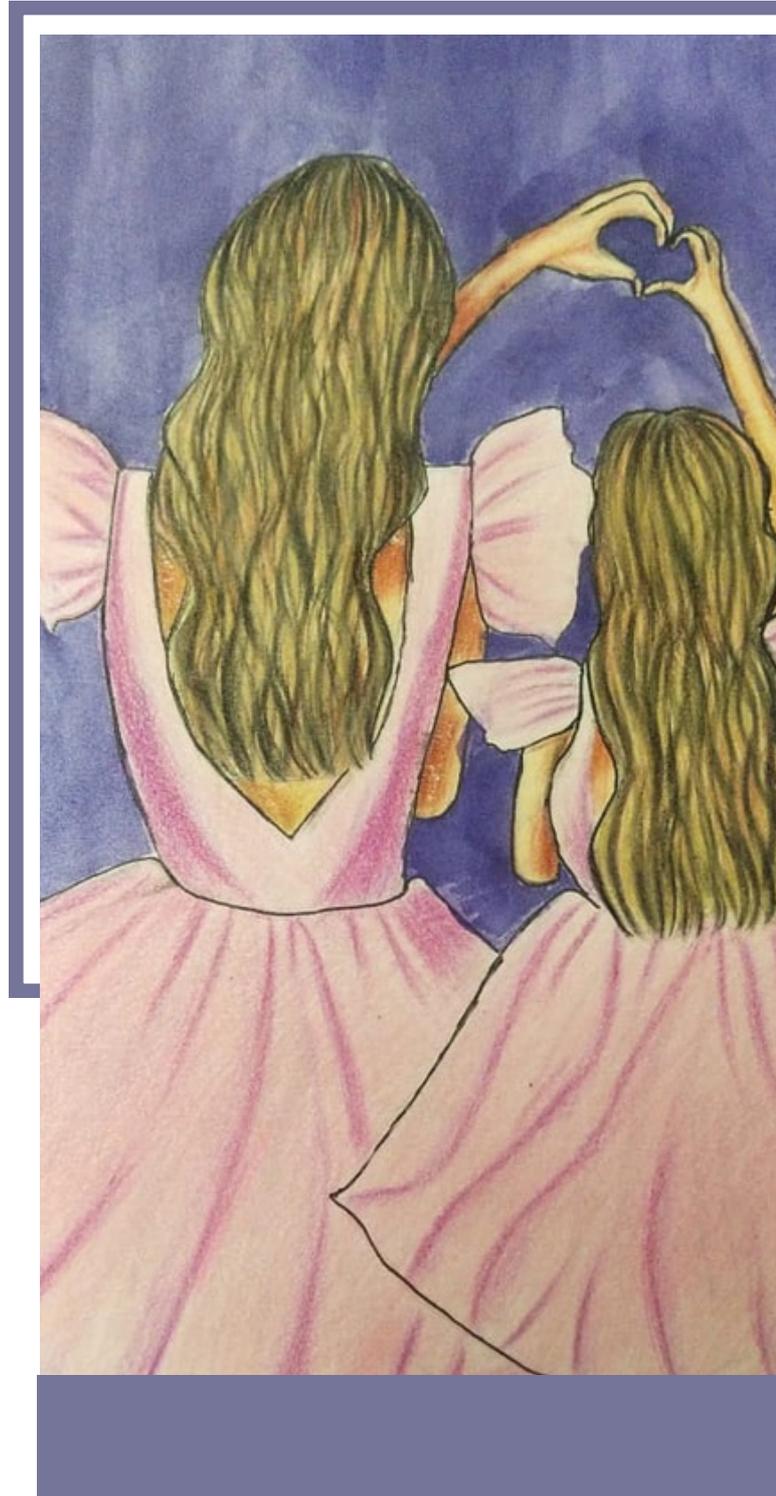
We can show love towards them. We don't even know if they have a proper meal. But we can give them one meal for a day, atleast a bottle of water. Or even adopt them and give them a new home. We can also give the sanitizers or mask. Not only food, we can also give them small gifts to make them happy, like our old clothes or shoes we don't like wearing anymore or you want to throw away. It is easy to just say yes, I will do it but no one does.

So, from today let us promise ourselves that we help every child whenever we can.

Name: Khanishka

Age: 12 years

School: Little Angels School, Visakhapatnam



CHILDHOOD STORIES

Akash Paul, Child Protection services

My name is Akash Paul. I work in Child Protective Services which reaches out to parents for the safety and well-being of their children.

With that being said, one of the most frustrating incident I encountered was that of a mother who was emotionally and mentally abusive to a daughter who had mental health issues. The mother, daughter, and brother were survivors of an extremely physically abusive father. The children at a very young age that very clearly caused them immense trauma that manifested as mental health issues like ADHD, violent outbursts, inability to regulate emotions, several other things all piled together. I became involved years after that man was out of the picture.

Mother spent the entire time I was involved with the family essentially blaming everything on the daughter's outbursts and as much as said with her daughter present and old enough to understand "she was forced on me when he took off his condom" with regards to whether the daughter was planned or an accident. I spent several days working with this family and not once did I hear the mother say anything resembling love, affection, caring, kindness, or understanding towards her daughter and the vast majority of the time the mother was trying to elicit sympathy from other adults in terms of how difficult the kid was to manage.



She made multiple disparaging comments about her daughter as if she wasn't present in the room, coldly ignored her for large periods of time while sitting right next to her, etc. She very obviously still had her own trauma from the abusive ex and seemed to transplant all of her negativity towards him into her behavior towards her daughter. We had statements by police officers involved after one of the violent outbursts by the daughter that the mother told them in front of daughter "take her away, take her anywhere, I don't care where she goes, just get her the hell out of my house".

The daughter wasn't even a teenager. I have no idea what happened following my involvement but yeah...that kid's got a rough future ahead no matter which of several possible scenarios plays out. Child abuse can lead to many difficulties

including: shame, guilt, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Additionally, your parents' actions have formed who you are, what you think about yourself and what you think is normal behavior. It had been ten long years since the family had been happy.

The parents had divorced and the children were left to fend for themselves. The eldest, a girl of just eighteen, was the only one who still spoke to her father. The rest of the siblings were angry and resentful. They blamed their parents for the misery in their lives and were determined to never forgive them. But now, after all these years, the parents have decided to try and make things right. They have both agreed to go to counseling and to work on their relationship. The children are grown now and want their own families to be happy and whole. They are willing to give their parents a second chance. It will be a long road.

MAN, WOMAN AND THE OTHER: THE NEED TO BREAK THE BINARISED VIEW OF A CHILD

Gaurvi Saluja, AIF Intern

Bindi, believed to be an ornament of women seemed a misfit resting on a male forehead; saree, which I had always seen draped up on a woman's hourglass body looked misplaced on a man's muscular figure. The initial few days at college came out as a cultural shock for me, where one's choice was given primacy over the social norms in contrast to the world outside college premises. And it was only a matter of time that the bindi adorned the forehead, where it earlier seemed a misfit; the saree liberated the body which was confined by norms.

In the absence of gender sensitisation at an early age, we are often introduced to the possibility of anything beyond the two genders by some class bully ridiculing our classmate as 'gay' or 'lesbian'. Family and educational institutions are the two primary social institutions that a child first encounters, who observes and mirrors everything they see around them. Everyday interactions between adults, the clothes they wear, the way people talk, sit, and behave or the media the child consumes in the early years of life, create the base through which a child makes sense of the world. Anything new/ different/ diverging from the 'normal' standardised behaviour that the child is accustomed to is viewed as deviance, an anomaly. At a very preliminary stage, formal education further etches these norms through English exercises such as 'change the gender', where the only correct answer to husband is wife. Moreover, textbooks are written with a heteronormative bias, casual sexism is a common feature in schools and bullies are reprimanded instead of sensitised.



Under such a spectrum of intolerance, young teenager who find it difficult to fit themselves in the binarised world, are in conflict with the identity they identified with for years, and find their whole lives upended and debased. This lack of sense of identity is further heightened in the absence of support from parents, peers or teachers. According to Fifty Shades of Gay, a community working towards empowering the South Asian queer community, 37% of the individuals interviewed had a history of being bullied. Gender and sexuality are some of the tabooed subjects, which are often swept under the carpet in mainstream political discussions and even from educational curricula. Manifestations of this silence can result to be very harmful even deadly for some. LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).

They are not inherently prone to suicide risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity but rather placed at higher risk because of how they are mistreated and stigmatised in society. (Trevor Project) The intersection of gender identity with multiple marginalities in terms of class, caste and ethnic identity further aggravates the situation. (Cyrus, 2017) In 2018, graphic designer Daniel Quasar added black and brown stripes to the LGBT Rainbow Flag to emphasise cumulative marginalisation experiences by intersectional identities and incorporated pastel blue, pink and white from the transgender flag designed by activist Monica Helms in 1999. Today, after years of battling the behemoth section 377 of the Indian Penal Code with the landmark judgement of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, homosexuality finally stands decriminalised and now it is time for us to echo the judgment in our lives. This calls for greater structural, infrastructural and interactional changes.



These wounds of the past have eked our lives for long and cannot be cured in a closed room with a gender sensitisation lecture, rather it has to be an ongoing, constant learning process. If the child from an early age is made to believe that happy families don't always come in pairs of a man and a woman, they will grow up to be allies rather than bullies.

However, given the lack of awareness on the subject among adults, efforts should be made to sensitise parents, teachers and school administration who can then try to be more gender-neutral in everyday interactions with their children. Sensitising children to the LGBTQIA+ community, might not always involve introducing them to complex terms, but rather normalising that an individual might love a person of their own gender, that any activity or chore is interchangeable, that they can wear any form of clothing they are comfortable in and the choice of clothes is not dictated by the society. This can be normalised through picture descriptions of concepts such as 'family' in course books which shows a family of two women and a child along with the

heteronormative family, through story books, cartoons, the need to ask for pronouns etc. So, if children wouldn't observe any homophobia or see acceptance of differences at school, they will behave accordingly and would create conditions for a greater possibility of assisting them in discovering their identity and, as a result, developing empathy for the gender and sexuality of others.

Along with interactional changes, infrastructural changes such as the creation of gender-neutral washrooms, ramps for the disabled, and the installation of menstrual pad vending machines in public places can go a long way towards a more egalitarian society. Moreover, political changes often act as drivers for change in society by laying the foundation on which popular perceptions change. At the same time just as the decriminalisation of homosexuality, liberated and helped people come out; a more open discourse about the issue and changing attitudes can lay grounds for the legalisation of homosexual marriage and fuller recognition of their rights.

We might have started off from a binarised view of the world but we are increasingly moving towards more acceptance of diversity and inclusion. Martin Luther King echoes the same sentiment in his words, "The arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice." And what better, if the process begins straight from childhood. The minds of young children are fertile grounds, it is our duty as adults to lay the seeds that bear fresh and beautiful flowers in terms of the creation of a more egalitarian, democratic society where respect isn't limited to a particular group and mutual empathy binds people together.

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CHILDREN OF NIGHT

-D. Tara, Kolkata

Have you ever wondered a while;
Ever paid any heed?
For the petrified souls on the road to their
damnation
for all those who share a nameless seed.
Or did you just avoid the call,
They lay impoverished, begging you for
the change
But all you can give is;
some coins and pity
for the doomed and deranged.
Thin eyes never weep, for tears are long
gone
They have nothing to lose, they never
mourn.
When they are born; there comes no light
For they are the children of the Night.

But I plead you to stop! My friend!
For this shall not be the end.
Lend a hand for they are the upcoming
tomorrows
Because if you do not!
Their thoughts shall devour on your
souls.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TEA GARDEN RESIDENT

- Preeti Khandulna, Graduate Student
From Tezpur, Assam

Childhood is said to be the best phase of a person's life. But I wonder if the labourers of a tea garden are included in this section of people whose best phase of life is the childhood. For as far as I remember, more than playing around or enjoying my time with my friends, I remember the early waking up and getting on with household chores. Times when I have to rush to the garden to make it in time to give my mother her lunch is more vivid than of my lazing in the sun.

We are a family of eight where, I am the eldest among us six siblings. My father was a permanent worker in the tea garden and my mother a temporary garden worker. When I was the only child, my parents left me under the care of my maternal grandmother while they went to their workplace.

Those times were fun as my grandmother let me play to my heart's content and feast upon the vegetables she cooked. But as I neared three years of age, my mother gave birth to another daughter and my days of frolicking came to an end. I had to take up the responsibility of looking after my sister while my parents worked.

Most of the times, I accompanied my mother to the tea garden where she plucked tea leaves and I played with my little sister under the shade.

Except me and Santi, who is three years younger to me, all the rest of my siblings have just a year gap between them. I had a busy childhood being a nanny to my siblings and helping my mother with household chores and so I couldn't attend even the primary level of education. But my two brothers had the chance, thanks to the Anganwadi workers and lower primary teachers who visited my parents and explained to them the importance of education.

Why just my brothers? Patriarchy is the answer. As they say locally - "a boy will run the house in the future but a girl will only end up cooking in someone else's household". But with the financial belt tightening around us, even they had to give up their education after middle school and take up to doing various odd jobs around the neighbourhood like tending to the cattle, or working in their fields.



I might not seem right when both the parents are working so how could they not manage to properly feed the children. But with an earning of Rs. 130 -150 per day, it's rather difficult to fill the stomachs of a family of eight. My two younger sisters were sent out of states to work as a housemaid later on when they were barely 7-8 years old.

We did not have the emotional connection with our father because he was most of the times away at work. We also did not have land to cultivate on our own and so had to depend on the tea garden rations, which was barely enough to feed all of us. My mother tried to keep the vegetable garden in our backyard in good condition because at least that would reduce the household budget to some amount.



But life wasn't so bad always. We had our happy times when our good neighbors invited us every now and then to have food, or during the month of October when our parents bought us new clothes from their bonus salary. We lived in financial frugality but my parents did buy us pakoras and goppos from the market whenever they could manage. Children in our neighbourhood played together in groups no matter their age. During festive seasons, we went around the village dancing with a make-do drum made of big plastic tumblers.

Most of the teenagers in the tea garden get to working in the tea garden as temporary workers. Those near the age of 15, most of the time change their date of birth and start working permanently. As my father's retirement drew near, I took up his post and started working full time in the tea garden.

Life right now, is a monotonous routine of waking up, doing household chores, going to work at 7 and then off duty at 5. Reaching home, it's time to clean up the house and courtyard, other miscellaneous chores and finally preparations for breakfast. Electricity in this part keeps fluctuating and there are more hours of no electricity than the no. of hours when there's electricity. Hence, we try to get things done before it gets too dark just so that we do not use too much of kerosene while lighting the lamp.

As the day ends, when one is supposed to be resting, I worry if tomorrow will be any better than today. Whether tomorrow we'll have enough food on our plates to eat. Or what if tomorrow something happens and I lose my job, what would happen to my family. As I worry, I lull myself to sleep.



HOW FAMILIES AFFECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF A TEENAGER



- NENA

A teenager or teen is someone who is between 13 and 19 years old. The word teenager is often associated with adolescence.

Most neurologists consider the brain still developing into the person's early or mid 20's. It is a time for puberty changes.

Whereas toxic family dynamics refer to unhealthy family relationships characterized by harmful behaviors, poor interactions, and ineffective conflict management. Unhealthy family dynamics include signs such as lack of boundaries and empathy, lack of personal space and privacy, constant conflicts, hostility and aggression, verbal, emotional and physical abuse, role reversal between parent and child, conditional acceptance and love. Growing up in a dysfunctional family can have far reaching negative impacts, and therefore prevention and early interaction are crucial.

For example, constant need for validation, feeling helpless or hopeless, lack of trust and boundaries, irrational fear or being abandoned or rejected.

I conducted a survey through a google form on the same topic. The aim of the study is to understand how families not necessarily 'toxic' affect the mental health of teenagers.

Teenage is a period of life where confusion is amid the minds of teenagers, to be treated as children or adults? They yearn for freedom but should also realize that it comes with responsibilities. A healthy family environment is very important to nurture teenagers into sensible, mature and humble human beings. No family is perfect and we should be working towards building a healthy, supportive family by teaching good parenting as well as understanding teenagers which is what my survey aims to do. The survey includes responses from 26 respondents, a mix of male and female of age group 12- 18 years.





The responses were that more than 75% of respondents feel disturbed mentally due to fights between their parents and it distants them from their parents where they feel suffocated, cannot share things with them.

Also, parents often don't reflect on their actions and don't realize the impact it has on their children, as they should set a good example. More than 50% are skeptical about marriages since their parent's marriages prejudiced them of unhealthy marriages.

Comparing kids and passing negative, unwanted comments about them is also a toxic trait of elder family members that should not be encouraged. All of this results in many teenagers wanting to move out soon and be independent.

The conclusion that I derived from my survey was that the majority of teenagers have some of the other kinds of issues that they face due to their family. When parents fight, it takes a toll on their mental health.



Moreover, communication is a very essential part of this relationship and parents need to be more approachable and understanding towards their children. Most of the responses were how they were closest to their mother which suggests that fathers also need to participate more in their child's life.

I would like to conclude, problems can manifest in the healthiest of families, resulting in challenging, frustrating and painful interaction among family members, From little irritations to buried resentments, from dramatic arguments to feelings of guilt, disappointment and anger we did not even know we had.

Our families often bring up the most intense emotions we experience, for better or worse.

THE PETROCHEMICAL PLAGUE

Petrochemicals and plastics,
A toxic partnership we can't dismiss,
Derived from natural gas and other fossil fuels,
They seem very convenient and handy to use.
But what ensues after their job is done
And they are discarded thoughtlessly by everyone?
They neither decompose nor do they disappear,
And their remnants rule the landfills for hundreds of years.
They choke the oceans and the sea,
Fly around in the breeze so easily,
They litter and degrade our own land,
Also weaken the beauty of the beach and its sand.
Plastic bags and straws, cups and plates,
Fishes in the sea they now replace.
Wildlife suffocating, their habitats destroyed,
Threatening the beings on earth that once enjoyed.
Considered a boon but actually a bane,
If we are not cautious our descendants will complain
So, we need to deliberate and use our treasury of wisdom
To reduce its usage and find a sustainable system
So let us reduce, reuse, and recycle,
And create innovative techniques to triumph over our rival,
Let's be aware of the waste we generate,
And act to make a recovering world, it's still not too late.



- ARADHYA PORWAL



THE PURPLE PARADISE

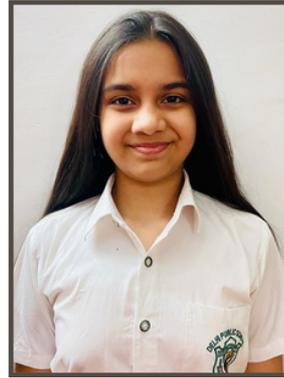
-Fatima Jamshed

I travel the hilly vast valleys of the high mountains,
The winter sun leaving the cold sky and greeting goodbye,
Tears of my shiver cries like an explosive fountain,
Blush pink of the icy sky makes the evening time fly.

Surrounded by deceased trees and dead leaves,
Darkness spreads across the lifeless environment,
Stars of the galaxy happily welcoming summer beams,
Foggy Fog became the smell of the sweet flower scent.

Autumn leaves start scattering in the spring morning,
My sleep breaks by the warm wind laughing away,
Those delicate dull ashes reach the heaven flying,
Sight of the purple paradise makes it a great day.

Magical mist with shining droplets of daylight dew,
Covered by the wild wonders with shades of amethyst,
Angels fly above the clouds and the sky so blue,
My spirits enlightens with a cheerful bliss.



THE GOLDEN HOUR

-Fatima Jamshed

Walking through the path ...
... covered in the great shades of bright amber
Spring evenings blooms the golden daffodils
... across the blonde gardens and huge meadows ...
... The wind rings sounds of the musical lyrics
Makes the yellow bells reach its voice to the hills
Flowers hanging from the trees starts rustling...
... Like the golden rain sprinkling from the
Orange sky which greets the sun goodbye ...
And the sweet pink blush of the cottony clouds shines ...
... I enjoy the music that my ears are listening
Dandelions dancing in the rocky mountains ...
Water swimming in the bay reflects the gold spirits
... The moment of the long spring day



बोलता बचपन
HINDI SECTION



निर्भया

About the author: My name is **Hema.M**, graduated from Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkiy Mahavidyalay in Geography. By the end of third year, I was more into English literature than my own subject, so then decided to do my masters in English literature it was a life changing decision for me. Geography did gave me the knowledge about my surroundings, my environment but literature thought me about my own self.

I felt more connected towards people and books, the growth of women hood and feminism gave a spark of acceptance in me for all my individual beings. As a teacher, I felt the need to inculcate these spark and values of equality among the every gender.so, that they will grow up to break all the stereotypes which has been there around them for centuries.

मैं निर्भया नहीं अभी बहुत संघर्ष बाकी है मुझ में अभी भी बहुत टूटे टुकड़े बाकी है।।
मेरे कपड़ों में लगे गंदे सोच मिटाने बाकी है..
मेरे शरीर में लगे गंदे नजरों के डब्बे मिटाने बाकी ही ।।
आंके नीची करो .. कितनी छोटे कपड़े पहने है, रात को बाहर नहीं जाते, घर में बैटो... ये सब कोई लडको को क्यों नहीं कहता ये जानना अभी भी बाकी है।।
अगर किसी एक के कैद होने पर ही दूसरे को आजादी मिलेगी थो ये आजादी आदमी को ही क्यों ये जानना अभी भी बाकी है।

आंखों में पढ़े पर्दों का उठना अभी भी बाकी है .. कैद पंको को आजाद करना अभी भी बाकी है।।
घर 9 से 5 वाली जॉब कर के आने के बावजूद "खाने में क्या है" पत्नी के इस सवाल का जवाब अभी भी पत्नी को ही क्यों देना पड़ता हैं ये जानना अभी भी बाकी है।
कॉन्सेंट सिर्फ इलीगल शादी से पहले ही क्यों शादी के बाद क्यों नहीं ये जानना अभी भी बाकी है।।
तुम्हारी उम्र 28 हो गई तुम जल्दी शादी कर लो, ये बात कोई पुरुष को क्यों नहीं कहता, ये समझना अभी बाकी है।।

आसमान में बजते रॉकेट गिन्नु या देश के बढ़ते रेप केसेज ...उम्र गठी जा रही है, पर सवाल अभी भी इंसाफ का है कि कितना जानना बाकी है..

उस निर्भया को थी इंसाफ मिल गया .. पर और कितनी ही निर्भया निर्भय होके आगे आ पाएगी .. या जाना अभी भी बाकी है।।



Poem MOTHER'S DAY

बतलाओ ना माँ

-संजीव जैन

प्रधान न्यायाधीश, परिवार न्यायालय, कडकडूमा
कोर्ट, दिल्ली

मैं फिर से बच्चा हो जाऊँ,
तुम उसी वेश में आओ ना माँ।
बतलाओ ना माँ।

माथे पर सूरज सी बिंदी
वही ओढ़नी तारों वाली ।
हाथों पर मेहंदी सजती हो,
और मुस्कान बहारों वाली।
गीता का उपदेश था जिसमें
फिर वो कथा सुनाओ ना माँ।
कान्हा तेरा कहीं खो गया,
फिर आवाज़ लगाओ ना माँ।
बताओ ना माँ.....

चल चलते हैं एक दिन दोनों
अपने बचपन वाले घर में।
वही ओढ़नी तारों वाली
ओढ़ कर फिर से आओ ना माँ।
लीप बुहार कच्चे आँगन को,
चूल्हा वही जलाओ ना माँ ।
एक बाजरे की रोटी पर,
मक्खन ज़रा लगाओ ना माँ।
भजन तुम्हारा लोरी वाला,
मंद मंद फिर गाओ ना माँ।
बताओ ना माँ।

मातृत्व

-मनिका खमथान

मातृत्व एक बेहद दिलचस्प अनुभव है। इसमें आप असीम प्यार के अलावा कभी कभी घुटन भी महसूस करेंगे। आप को बाकी लोग जज भी करेंगे। मां को ममता और त्याग की मूर्ति बना कर पूजने की रिवायत बहुत पुरानी है, जिसमें अब दरार आने लगी है। मेरा मानना है कि मां को ये दर्जा भी पितृसत्ता ने ही दिया है जिससे उनका सिस्टम सुचारू रूप से चलता रहे औरत उनकी एजेंट ही बनी रहे। मुझे अपनी मां जैसी मां कभी नहीं बनना था मगर जो मैं उनसे सीखना चाहती थी वो भी नहीं सीख पाई। वो बात कभी और.

मैं नहीं चाहती कि कीकी मुझ में और राजन में कोई अंतर न महसूस हो। लड़कियों को पिता से एक दूरी बना कर रखने की ट्रेनिंग शुरू से ही मिलती है जिससे उसको पुरुषों से दूरी बना कर रखने की शिक्षा मिल सके। और हां मातृत्व एक चॉइस है ये ने बहुत सुंदर तरह से सबके सामने रख ही दिया है। मातृत्व एक gender neutral भावना है जो किसी पुरुष में किसी महिला से ज्यादा भी हो सकती है।

बात बाक्री एक तरफ मदर्स'डे पर अम्मा को शुभकामनाएं हमने भी भेजी।





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FEEDBACK

Preparations and opportunities when meet together, something wonder does happen. Dedication and hard work with a clear vision, if, added to it, its called as phenomenon. The phenomenon I am referring here is the Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) - the digital magazine, which took birth in October, 2011, and is continuing with a mission to serve humanity.

This digital magazine is working hard touching relevant issues of the society, of people struggling with, in their everyday life. This particular volume AIF focuses on one of the most demanding and sensitive issues of human society – Children and Childhood. Realizing the fact that children are the most precious creations on earth, protecting and safeguarding their future is very much jeopardized, AIF is doing commendable job promisingly defending future of many children who are still in dark. With a multi-dimensional approach, AIF is creating awareness among children, parents, and nationals through its embellished stories like editorials, children’s corner, riddles, teacher’s columns and many more. Interestingly this digital magazine is reaching a much wider audience through its bilingual features (Hindi and English) with every single attempt to answer human issues.

Salute to the team efforts with Dr Sunita Reddy as its captain for bringing constructive positive changes to our society.

My best wishes...

-Dr Itishree Padhi, Professor in Anthropology, Bhubaneswar, Odisha





Send your articles, poems, illustrations, stories and paintings:
aif.digitalmagazine@gmail.com

Anthropos India Foundation is a trust, since 2011 doing action and applied research. It is a foundation, which works for the social cause based on ethnographic research, skills and capacity building, advocacy, policy and social interventions. The purpose of the foundation is to bring positive change, especially in the lives of women and children. You can visit and to engage meaningfully, become member and access our e-resources and get notification of our programs, workshops, lectures series and research projects.

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ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION
Childhood Matters
AIF Digital Magazine
VOLUME I | ISSUE NO. 5 | JULY 2023

