

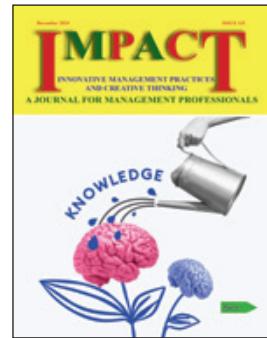
# IMPACT

INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES  
AND CREATIVE THINKING

A JOURNAL FOR MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS



# *Greetings from IMPACT*



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Dear Readers,

### Change and Resilience

As December unfolds its final act in the calendar of 2024, the world stands at a crossroads of reflection and anticipation. This month, often a tapestry of festivities, resolutions, and retrospections, has brought with it a series of events that remind us of humanity's enduring spirit and the complexities of the times we live in.

Globally, the climate crisis remains an omnipresent reality, underscored by erratic weather patterns disrupting lives across continents. From unseasonal flooding in Asia to record-breaking heatwaves in parts of Europe, the evidence of nature's fury cannot be ignored. These events serve as stark reminders of the urgency to act collectively, transcending borders and ideologies, to preserve the planet for future generations.

On the political front, December has witnessed a surge in dialogues aimed at resolving longstanding conflicts. Efforts in the Middle East towards peace negotiations bring a glimmer of hope, though the road remains arduous. Similarly, strides in global diplomacy, particularly on climate action during the COP30 summit in São Paulo, signal the possibility of unified progress, despite challenges of geopolitical rivalry and differing national priorities.

In the corporate world, the end of the year has seen a renewed focus on sustainability and inclusivity. Businesses are recalibrating their strategies, recognizing the importance of social impact alongside profits. The rise of AI-driven innovations continues to reshape industries, raising both opportunities and ethical dilemmas that demand vigilant oversight.

Yet, it is also a time for introspection. The mounting mental health crisis, particularly among younger populations, has surfaced as an issue that requires immediate attention. It is a call to prioritize well-being as fervently as we chase progress.

As the world gears up to bid farewell to 2024, the lessons of this year — resilience, adaptability, and the power of collective action — resonate deeply. The dawn of 2025 holds promise, but it also challenges us to rise above divisions, to innovate responsibly, and to cherish the values of empathy and collaboration.

December is not just the end of a year; it is a reminder of beginnings. May we step into the new year with a renewed sense of purpose, ready to craft a better narrative for ourselves and the world.

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# Kavichakravarthy Kamban's Art of Economy of Words

Out of ten thousand odd, 4 line stanzas of Kamba Ramayanam, Poet Kamban was able to bring forth the greatness of SATRUGNA within just ten stanzas!

After meeting Shri Rama in Dandakaranyam, Bharata agreed to go back to Ayodhya, only after extracting the promise from Shri Rama that he would positively return to Ayodhya after the expiry of the 14years of 'vanavasam'. However, when Shri Rama did not return on the stipulated day, Bharata was terribly upset and wanted to

immolate himself, after passing on the kingdom to Satrughna the youngest of the four brothers. In the above context, Poet Kamban allots just ten stanzas and elevates the character of Satrughna to a high pedestal.

Hereunder, is a portion of my English Rendering of Kamba Ramayanam “ Holding Satrughna tightly against his tear soaked bosom and weeping bitterly, Bharata said, “I wish to seek a boon from you that deserves to be granted. Rama has not returned on the appointed day. I am

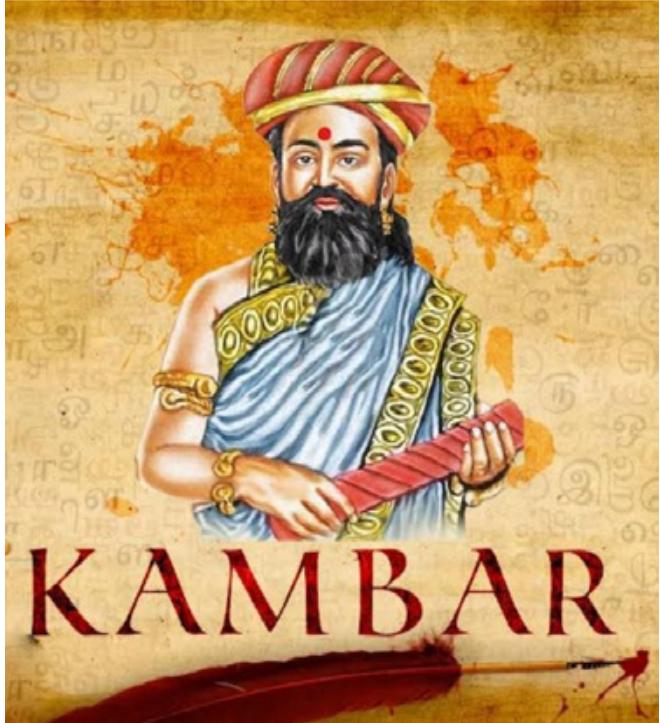




## Shatrughna , Ramayana

going to fall into the bright fire and end my life, as I had vowed. You must become the king of

Ayodhya". Satrughna was stunned. He closed his ears with his huge hands and was in great agony as if he had been fed poison. He stood trembling with his eyes throbbing. He fell down several times and got up. Sobbing bitterly, heaving a hot sigh with rising fury, Satrughna asked Bharata, "What harm have I done to you who are steeped in sorrow?" With sarcasm, Satrughna continued, "The eldest son, Rama gave up ruling the land and went away to rule the forest. He was followed to the forest by a younger brother (Lakshmana). Now that the day for the return of Rama from the forest has elapsed, yet another younger brother (Bharata) proposes to end his life. Born along with such noble brothers, should the last brother, shamelessly rule this big world ? How 'sweet' is this sovereignty thrust on me! After Rama left for the forest giving up the prosperous city of Ayodhya, you stayed here at Nandi outside Ayodhya, leading the life of an ascetic. When such is your greatness, how can you think that I will ever live, after you enter fire and end your life? The thought of my surviving your death, is as treacherous as my wanting to rule when you are alive". In the entire Kamba Ramayanam the above words are the only ones, spoken by Satrughna, which have made him immortal.



It would be interesting to know that these facts were presented, at a function on 21.01.1997 by the former President of India, late Shri. R. Venkataraman, while introducing my English prose rendering of Kamba Ramayanam, before an enlightened audience, at the Narada Gana Sabha.

**Dr. H.V. Hande**

*Former Health Minister of  
Government of Tamilnadu.  
Founder & Director of  
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# The Art of Giving

In a world driven by materialism and individual pursuits, the act of giving often stands as a beacon of hope, humanity, and connection. The art of giving is not merely an act of charity; it is a reflection of the intrinsic human values of compassion, empathy, and interconnectedness. To give is to bridge the gap between self and others, to dissolve barriers, and to cultivate a spirit of abundance and gratitude.

## The Philosophy Behind Giving

At its core, giving is a fundamental aspect of human existence, rooted in ancient philosophies, religious teachings, and cultural practices. Across cultures, giving is celebrated as a path to fulfillment and enlightenment. In Hinduism, the concept of dāna (charitable giving) is revered as a way to attain spiritual growth. Similarly, Christianity emphasizes selfless giving through the teachings of Jesus Christ, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

The essence of giving lies in its selflessness. True giving transcends transactions or obligations and stems from a genuine desire to share and



support. This principle is well-articulated by Mahatma Gandhi, who stated, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Giving, therefore, becomes an act of self-discovery and a means to connect with a higher purpose.

# The Science Behind Gifting

**79%**

of respondents to a consumer-spending survey said regifting is socially acceptable during the holiday season.

Source: American Express



## Heartfelt

A thoughtful gift makes the giver feel closer to the recipient, not the other way around.

Source: Journal of Experimental Psychology: General



## Pricier

Spending more money on a gift often doesn't translate into greater appreciation, a study found. Take note, men: The gifts in the study were engagement rings.

Source: Journal of Experimental Social Psychology



**22%**

of regifters in a poll of New Jersey adults said they regift to get rid of an unwanted item. People under 30 years old are more likely to regift than older people.

Source: Fairleigh Dickinson University



**50%**

Women regift at a 50% greater rate than men, according to a recent online poll by a credit-card-comparison website.

Source: Creditdonkey.com



## Helping Hand

A recent study found helping other people increases givers' sense of how much time they have for themselves.

Source: Psychological Science



## Forms of Giving

Giving is multifaceted, extending beyond material possessions to include time, knowledge, emotional support, and acts of kindness.

### 1. Material Giving

The most visible form of giving, material generosity, involves sharing wealth or resources with those

in need. Philanthropy, donations to charities, and supporting social causes fall under this category. However, it is crucial to approach material giving with a sense of purpose and humility, ensuring it empowers the recipient rather than fostering dependency.

### 2. Giving of Time and Effort

Time is an invaluable resource, often more precious than money. Volunteering, mentoring, or

simply spending time with someone in need can create a profound impact. The act of being present and offering undivided attention reflects a deep commitment to others.

### 3. Sharing Knowledge and Skills

Education is a powerful tool for empowerment. Sharing knowledge, mentoring, or teaching skills can transform lives and create lasting change. In a professional setting, this could mean guiding a junior colleague or imparting expertise to help others succeed.

### 4. Emotional Support and Kindness

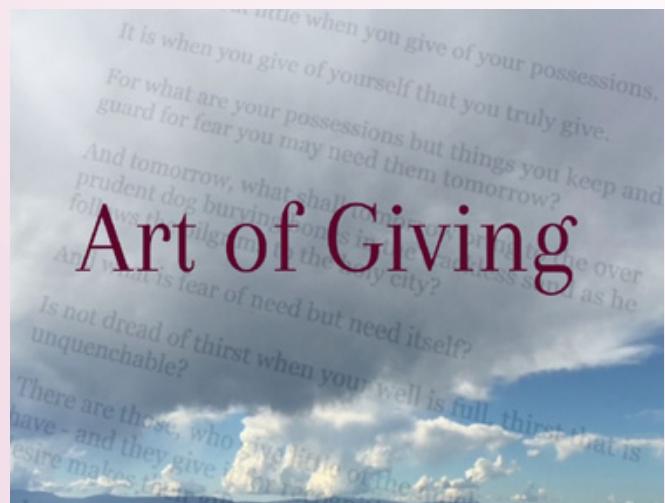
Giving extends to the emotional realm, where a kind word, a listening ear, or a gesture of support can make a world of difference. Acts of empathy and compassion often leave lasting impressions, reminding individuals of their inherent worth and dignity.

## The Impact of Giving

The ripple effects of giving are profound, influencing both the giver and the receiver.

### 1. Personal Fulfillment

Neuroscience reveals that acts of giving activate the brain's reward system, releasing feel-good chemicals



# The Power of Giving: How Generosity Enriches Your Life

like dopamine and oxytocin. This phenomenon, often referred to as the "helper's high," underscores the intrinsic joy of altruism.

### 2. Building Relationships

Giving fosters trust, strengthens bonds, and cultivates a sense of community. It reminds us that we are part of a larger whole, interdependent and connected.

### 3. Social Transformation

On a societal level, giving can address inequalities, alleviate suffering, and promote social justice. Philanthropy and collective action have the power to drive systemic change, creating a more equitable and compassionate world.

## Challenges in Giving

Despite its many benefits, the act of giving is not without challenges.

**Ego and Expectations:** Giving with an expectation of recognition or reciprocation diminishes its authenticity. True giving is unconditional, free from ulterior motives.

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Cultural Sensitivities: Understanding the needs and values of the recipient is essential to ensure that the act of giving is meaningful and respectful.

Sustainability: Giving should empower recipients to become self-reliant rather than fostering dependency. Sustainable giving focuses on long-term solutions rather than temporary relief.

## Cultivating the Habit of Giving

The art of giving can be cultivated through conscious practice and reflection:

1. Start Small: Giving does not have to be grandiose. Small, consistent acts of kindness can make a significant impact.
2. Practice Gratitude: Recognizing one's blessings fosters a mindset of abundance, encouraging giving from a place of gratitude rather than scarcity.
3. Be Mindful: Genuine giving requires mindfulness, ensuring that the act aligns with the needs of the recipient and the intentions of the giver.
4. Encourage Others: Sharing stories of giving and inspiring others to contribute amplifies its impact, creating a ripple effect.

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty



THE GREATEST GIFT YOU  
CAN GIVE SOMEONE  
IS YOUR  
**TIME.**  
BECAUSE WHEN YOU  
GIVE YOUR TIME,  
YOU ARE GIVING A  
PORTION OF YOUR LIFE  
THAT YOU WILL NEVER  
GET BACK.

The art of giving is a timeless practice that transcends barriers of culture, religion, and status. It enriches lives, strengthens communities, and uplifts the human spirit. In a world fraught with challenges, the simple yet profound act of giving serves as a reminder of our shared humanity and the boundless potential for kindness and generosity.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, may we embrace the art of giving, not as a duty but as a way of life, a celebration of the human spirit's capacity to connect, care, and uplift. In giving, we not only transform the lives of others but also discover the true essence of our own.

Author: Mr. Lakshmi Narasimhan

# “I always believe in Karma”

Do you recall the above words spoken by a sportsperson recently at the Paris Olympics?

Can you recall the name of this person?

Normally terms like Karma and Rebirth are used by old people like me, who have become highly philosophical in the evening of their lives.

But these words were uttered by Ms Manu Bhaker the 22 year old double medallist when she refused to own the ‘Legend’ tag. She mentioned “I did my duty for my country. I always believe in my Karma”.

This incident led me to think how we have to perform our part in this world whatever position we hold in life without worrying about the returns or the results of our actions.



## Whatever may be the Task, Do it with Love

God when created the world, assigned the duty of taking care of His various creations like plants, trees, flowers, animals, birds and even the common grass to different Devatas. The Diety presiding over the common grass became angry one day and protested “God has assigned to my brothers





beautiful things to watch over- charming flowers, majestic trees, chirping birds, whispering brooks, ferocious animals and what not. But for me, He has given only this common grass. As a protest, I will not watch over the grass any longer.”

Within a short time, the Diety of the trees came to God complaining that they were drying up because the Earth has become hard and brown since grass has dried.

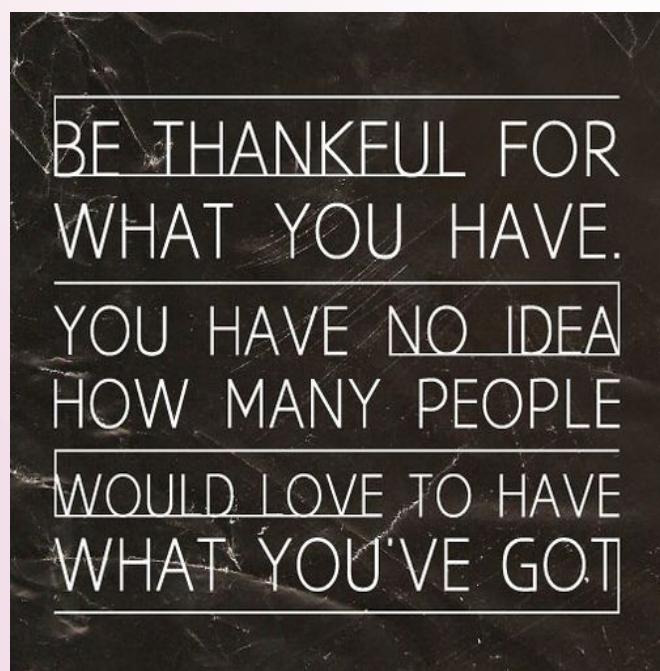
The Devata of the flowers came next crying that the flowers were not growing and plants could not survive with the soil not being soft and moist. There was no cool protection of soft grass.

Likewise, all other things like animals, birds etc came running to God unable to bear the heat of the Earth.

Finally Man cried out to the Lord, “The animals are dying without fresh grass to eat. All fruits and vegetables are drying up withering away since the soil is hard like baked clay. Soon we too will die unless the grass flourishes again.”

The arrogant diety of the grass listened to all these complaints. Silent God simply looked at him. Ashamed and sad the devata of the grass has created in his foolishness, he prostrated before the Lord and in repentance cried “ Forgive me and my vanity my Lord. I shall soon make the grass flourish.”

As grass flourished once again, flowers bloomed, fruits ripened, animals and birds got fattened and man once again became happy and content. The world was again lovely and alive, all because of COMMON GRASS.





I can do what I love or I can love what I do. Learn to love the task in front of you.

— *Dewitt Jones* —

Like the deity of grass, we too must joyously strive in whatever situation we find ourselves and do our best in whatever we are called upon to do.

### Each has his/her place

Everyone has a precise place in the scheme of created things. No one is high or low.

Let us fulfil our obligatory duty as best as we can.

No task is big or small. Let us do whatever is assigned to us with love, devotion and dedication.

Even if one person stops his work, the world will crumble as it happened in the absence of fresh grass.

Be thankful for what you have.

Stop craving for what you do not have.

### Just for Thought

Issue at hand. Will it matter

Five minutes from now?

Five hours from now?

Five days from now?

Five weeks from now?

Five months from now?

Five years from now?

If not, when why bother? CHILL NOW.

Ref: Newspaper reportings.



R. Venugopal

*Mr. Venugopal has served in LIC of India from 1968 to 2006 for 38 years and retired as an Executive Director.*



# Grooming Children: Teaching Life Skills in the Indian Way

The upbringing of children has always held paramount importance in Indian culture, where values, traditions, and life skills are intricately woven into daily life. Life skills are not merely a modern necessity but have been a cornerstone of Indian parenting and education for centuries. These skills prepare children not only to navigate challenges but also to contribute meaningfully to society. This article delves into the Indian way of imparting life skills, emphasizing traditional practices, cultural values, and contemporary relevance.

## Understanding Life Skills

Life skills are the essential abilities that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes them into ten core skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, empathy, and decision-making. In the Indian context, these are deeply ingrained in cultural practices, spiritual teachings, and the education system.



Indian traditions emphasize holistic development, where the mind, body, and spirit are nurtured together. Life skills are not confined to formal education but are taught through stories, rituals, and everyday interactions. This approach ensures that children grow up with a strong moral compass, emotional resilience, and practical abilities.

## Traditional Methods of Teaching Life Skills

### 1. Storytelling and Epics

Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata serve as rich repositories of life lessons. Through these stories, children learn about courage, humility, perseverance, and the consequences of one's actions. Folk tales like the Panchatantra are designed to impart wisdom and critical thinking through animal characters and moral dilemmas. These narratives not only entertain but also instill ethical values and decision-making skills.



## 2. Rituals and Festivals

Indian festivals such as Diwali, Holi, and Pongal are more than celebrations; they are opportunities to teach teamwork, cultural values, and social harmony. For instance, children learn the importance of cleaning and organization during Diwali preparations, fostering responsibility and a sense of belonging.



## 3. Joint Family System

The joint family structure, a hallmark of Indian society, naturally promotes life skills such as cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy. Living in a large family environment exposes children to diverse personalities, teaching them how to navigate relationships and respect differences.



## 4. Yoga and Meditation

Practices like yoga and meditation, rooted in Indian tradition, are integral to fostering emotional



resilience and self-awareness. By teaching children techniques like mindfulness and controlled breathing, they develop the ability to manage stress and enhance focus.

## The Role of Gurukuls and Modern Adaptations

Historically, the gurukul system was a model of holistic education, where students lived with their teachers and learned not just academics but also practical skills, ethics, and discipline. This approach emphasized experiential learning, self-reliance, and respect for nature.

In today's context, schools and families can adapt the principles of the gurukul system. For instance:

**Interactive Learning:** Encourage hands-on projects that develop problem-solving and collaboration.

**Outdoor Activities:** Promote environmental awareness and survival skills through treks and gardening.



Ethics and Value Education: Integrate sessions on kindness, gratitude, and integrity into school curricula.

## Balancing Tradition and Modernity

While traditional methods are invaluable, it is equally important to prepare children for the modern world. The Indian way of teaching life skills can be adapted to include technological literacy, financial management, and global citizenship. For example:



Financial Responsibility: Introduce concepts of saving and budgeting through pocket money.

Digital Literacy: Teach responsible use of technology and online safety.

Civic Sense: Foster an understanding of democratic values, sustainability, and community service.



## Role of Parents in a Child's Education



Combining traditional wisdom with modern tools ensures that children are well-equipped to navigate a rapidly changing world.

## The Role of Parents and Educators

Parents and educators play a pivotal role in shaping a child's personality and skill set. Some actionable strategies include:

1. Lead by Example: Children learn more from actions than words. Demonstrate empathy, discipline, and resilience in daily life.
2. Encourage Curiosity: Create an environment where children feel safe to ask questions and explore new ideas.
3. Promote Responsibility: Assign age-appropriate chores and hold children accountable for their tasks.
4. Foster Communication: Have regular family discussions to improve listening and articulation skills.

## Life Skills Which Your Child Must Learn





5. Cultivate Gratitude: Teach children to appreciate what they have and to give back to society.

## Challenges and Solutions

Despite the richness of Indian traditions, there are challenges in imparting life skills today:

**Nuclear Families:** With the decline of joint families, children miss out on the interpersonal dynamics that foster empathy and cooperation.

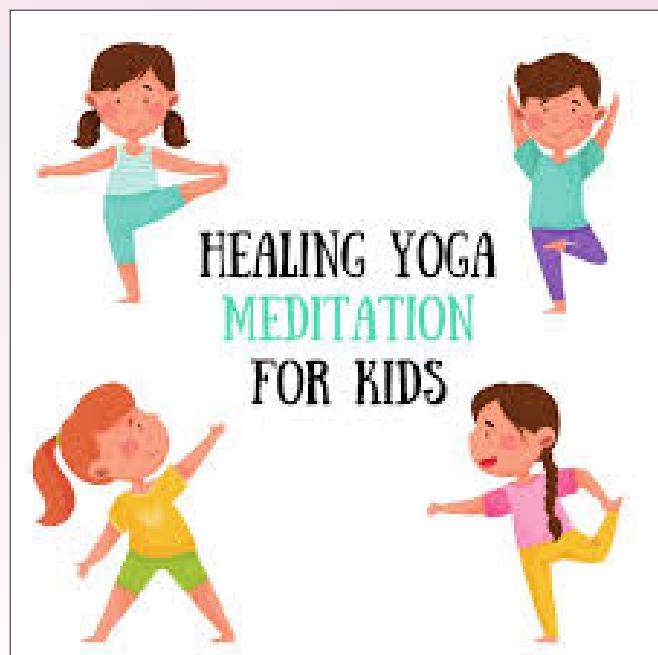
**Academic Pressure:** A heavy focus on grades often sidelines the importance of life skills.

**Screen Time:** Excessive use of gadgets can hinder social and emotional development.

### To address these issues:

Encourage participation in group activities like sports and cultural clubs.

Redefine success to include emotional intelligence and character, not just academic achievements.



Set boundaries for screen time and promote outdoor play.

The Indian way of teaching life skills is a blend of tradition and adaptability, offering timeless lessons for holistic growth. By leveraging the rich cultural heritage and integrating modern techniques, we can groom children to be resilient, empathetic, and resourceful individuals. As parents, educators, and society at large, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that life skills remain an integral part of a child's upbringing, enabling them to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Teaching life skills the Indian way is not just about preparing children for success but about nurturing well-rounded human beings who contribute positively to the world.



Author: Mr. M. Swaminathan

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# The Art of Living

I have enjoyed several cartoons like Rusty Rivets, The fixies, Miles from tomorrow land, Doraemon, Chhota Bhim, Shiva, Mighty Raju, Roll no-21 etc with my son and nowadays he is surrounded by several robotic characters, transformers, Pokemons and Baybladers. Then there is something called Minecraft and the Lego building. Be it the Power Rangers or the superheroes like the Avengers, everywhere, one thing is common, that is problem solving. Isn't it that, real life stories are also similar to these reel life stories?

Somewhere in grade VII, we had a story titled -The Clever Basket Weaver. In that story, the king used to visit the villages in disguise to find out the real stories of his subjects by cross-checking the updates of his ministers. During one such night, he had happened to visit a family of a basket weaver. The weaver family had offered him water and when the weaver was asked about his earnings and livelihoods, he had replied that he used to earn eight rupees a day and with that eight rupees, eight members that included his parents, four children and the weaving couple, used to live. In addition to

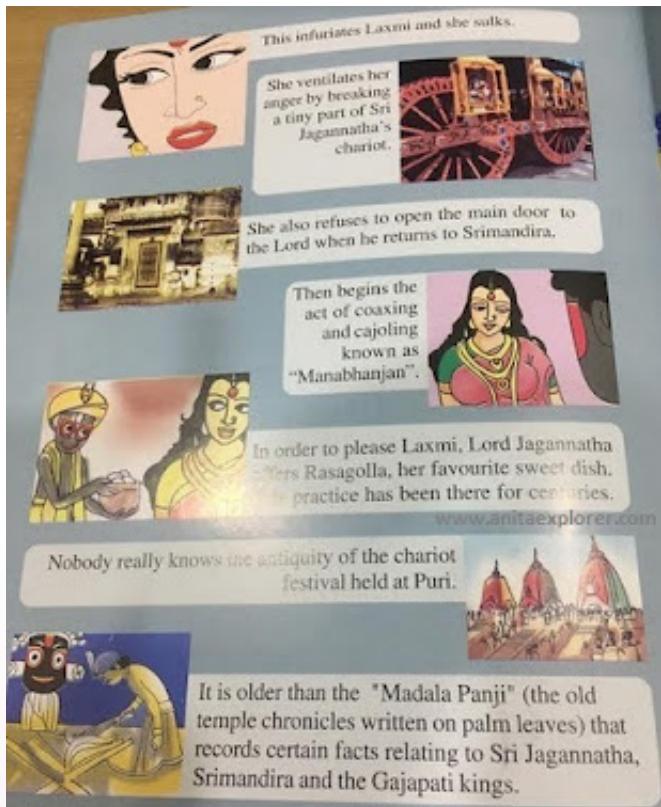
that, he used to pay a debt of two rupees daily and used to save four rupees every day, for future. Upon hearing his calculations, the king was a bit puzzled not understanding the puzzled calculation. On his request, the basket weaver had explained that, by taking care of his parents, he was paying the debt and by taking care of his four children, he was saving for the future and all were taken care of in that eight rupees on a daily basis.

Listening to the explanation, the king had become quite impressed and had revealed his true identity. Then he had made a request to the weaver telling him not to tell the solution of that puzzle to anybody till he saw the king's face. And the king had another condition for him that in case the king came to know about him telling the solution to anybody without seeing his face, that he would get capital punishment.

The next morning, the king had asked that puzzle to his ministers and had asked them to solve as to how was that possible to run a family of eight members with eight rupees daily along with two rupees debt payment and four rupees savings. And when the ministers had failed to find out the answer within the deadline fixed by the king, one of the minister had suggested to find out the person whose house was visited by the king the previous day of the question being asked. And they had managed to trace the weaver and had asked him to solve the puzzle.

The basket weaver was an honest man but he was poor. When the ministers had bribed him with a bag full of gold coins that could take care of his





past debts and future savings in the long run, the weaver had accepted the offer and had given the solution to the ministers despite the king's warning of a capital punishment. And when the king had found out the truth, the basket weaver was summoned to the court to face the capital punishment for violating the king's words. And to the king's surprise, the weaver proved himself to be a man of wisdom and common sense when he had revealed that he hadn't disobeyed the king's orders as he had told the solution after seeing the king's face on those gold coins offered to him. The king had got impressed once again and he had offered him a post in his ministry in the capital of his kingdom instead of the capital punishment.

Many times for me, these stories become the storehouse of lessons of life and living. In place of those fancy formulas of several spiritual leaders these simple stories attract me more. But I am attracted the most by those stories of Lord Krishna. Sharing some of my personal experiences of dealing with certain complex situations and how I had tried to solve them.

After having revealed about my husband to my father, I was put into the toughest moments of life. The situation was equally challenging for me as well as my father. More than me, my father was into a much bigger challenge imagining the consequences. And isn't it that many times, more than the actual impact of any decision, it's the imagination particularly the negative ones that trouble us more in taking a proper decision or at least responding to someone's decisions. And however liberal we might be, several of our situations from birth to death, make us behave in certain ways despite the knowledge of several standard norms of good behaviour learnt in our textbooks. So, is it possible to execute those theoretical knowledge of textbooks in real life, be it of Panchtantra or Modern Management Lessons?

Well, my father had accepted my revelations about my husband but with a condition of not to talk to him till he reveals to his parents. And on the other hand my husband wanted me to be in contact with him every day till he gets settled and reveal to his parents. Then these smartphones had not got revealed and one person in Delhi and the other person in Odisha and the decision was to keep the love alive till both the parents accept the proposal.

Being a girl's father, it was highly challenging for my father and on the other hand, the boy's father had not received the news. And without communication, how to keep a relationship alive! Though, many couples stay in a relationship without any communication despite being happily married through an arranged marriage system and later finding it difficult to express their unhappiness due to several reasons.

Oneday, I was over the landline in my house, my father was asking me to keep the phone and not to talk to him any day till he tells to his parents and on the other side, my husband was asking me to talk to him every day. I was in the middle of a big puzzle. Not knowing whom to listen and whom not to, I had accepted both of them. I promised my

father that I would not talk to him anyday till he tells to his parents and at the same time I promised my husband that I would talk to him every day till he tells to his parents. My father was puzzled just like the king.

Finally one night, my father caught me red handed talking to him and he had asked me about my promise made to him. That time I had brought in Lord Krishna to safeguard myself. I had told my father, the way Lord Krishna suggested to use the name Ashwathama to control Dronacharya for the right side to win, I had used the term "Day" not to lose both of you. I had promised not to talk anyday and hence I used to talk in the night.

Then several such situations came, where for five years I had to defeat my father defending myself to wait for my husband till he revealed it to his parents. But the moment he had revealed it to his parents, within no moments they had accepted the proposal when my husband had expressed that he would be happy with me throughout his life and we both got married taking everyone's blessings.



But if I struggled for five years with my father before marriage, I struggled for fourteen years with my husband after marriage.

From 2004 in Delhi to 2024 in Chennai, life was a roller coaster of events and incidents where more than lessons of modern management studies, the lessons of Mahabharata have helped me to survive in the battle of kurukshetra like life. Of Course, of late and very recent, the big universities and institutions are adopting the teachings and preachings of the Bhagavad Gita, that my father had given to me at an early age and that is the ultimate book of management lessons of life and living. Lord Krishna had made his friend Sudama to sit on his throne and his beloved queen had washed his foot with water and even tears of Lord Krishna had got added to that water and Lord Krishna had snatched that pouch of roasted rice sent for him by Sudama's wife which Sudama was unable to offer to him in his big palace.

Isn't it that caste and class play an important role in our behaviour patterns and decision making process despite our constitution talking about equality, fraternity and justice. Aren't these the two most fundamental things experienced by us from birth that shapes our journey of life despite our knowledge of good behaviour learnt in the textbooks? Again in grade IX, in the read for pleasure part of the English text book, there was a story titled - Eat Pocket Eat.

In that story, one Sunday, a person who was busy with his plants and flowers, suddenly realised that



he had to visit a party at a friend's house in the evening and evening had happened by that time of his realisation. So, he had rushed to the party wearing those soiled clothes only to be interrupted at the gate by the guards. Though he revealed his identity citing his closeness to the person hosting the party, the guard didn't allow him to enter inside the house where the friend was busy with several other rich people. Little disappointed at first, and then realising his outer appearance and the appurtenances he wore to be the cause of such a behaviour, he had returned to his home. Then after taking a good shower, he had revisited the party as the real gentleman that he was, wearing his rich suits that suited the most for the party. And to his surprise, the same guard had given him a warm welcome without asking his identity. Realising the impact of such dresses, he had felt the party was for the dress and not for him and he had started filling up his pockets with the food, telling, 'Eat pocket eat, it's for you and not for me'.

Me and my mother-in-law, we both are two different persons belonging to two different castes and class and above all of two different ideologies and principles. Hence, clashes were quite natural. Then, how to decide what is right and who is right and how to live together happily?

Is there any single magical formula that can solve every one's problems or do we need tailor made customised solutions to solve individual problems of life?

Without much knowledge of old and already used cups kept for servants and, new and unused cups kept for family members, I had offered tea to some of my husband's distant relatives in the cups, reserved for near family members and, the war of words in the form of arguments in favour of justice had begun between me and my mother-in-law. On one side, less qualified but a bureaucrat's wife dictating the rules of segregation and selfishness and on the other side better qualified but a failed aspirant and a failed aspirant's wife arguing for equality and selfless service. This war of words continued for fourteen years. On one side ego and arrogance of bureaucratic lifestyle and on the other side humbleness and honesty of a middle class girl. The way I was trapped between my father and my husband before marriage, my husband got trapped between me and his mother after marriage and we both struggled, but my struggle was more than my husband's.

Though my father made me marry to my husband, he declared himself dead for me. Though my husband loved me and married me, he almost abandoned me thinking of his parents. I was brought up liberally in my home and being a well educated person, aware of my rights and duties I kept doing my duties as a daughter-in-law, wife, mother and other roles in the family. But the way, our public keep running to the government offices for their rights, I kept waiting for my personal justice. For fourteen years, I have lived as an orphan and as a widow despite having my father and my husband. And such a woman become an easy prey to be attacked every now and then by some vultures like human beings.

Though we belong to a higher caste, we are middle class and my husband's family though belong to a lower caste are of higher class. And money matters the most. We all know where lies corruption in our

nation, but do we dare to charge those people who wear clean white dresses, travel in cars covered with clean white covers, take up the seats in the office with clean white covers that hide every dirty intention.

Working day and night as a homemaker, I became older than my age, without any money of my own I had no rights and no values for my views and opinions, and the government keeps promoting Beti Bachao and Beti Padao, but here there is no respect for a qualified and well educated girl and the main bone of contention is honesty. My hard work was illused and my honesty was insulted.

My father had loved me more than my brothers and had made me well educated but he couldn't accept my decision of choosing my husband. If empowerment means having the ability to take suitable decisions in required situations, then why are we getting powerless by taking several such decisions in life?

They say, "love is blind and marriage is an eye-opener", my eyes were open before marriage and

hence I never wanted to fall in love with my husband knowing the differences between both the families. Then my husband was philosophical and I was practical. But his true love for me made me take the decision of accepting him in life and after marriage he became practical in front of my philosophical ways of life of honesty and hardwork.

He was not exposed to hardships and financial struggles of middle class families but he had seen the struggle between his parents and he wanted to have a loving and caring wife. But see the irony of life, he fell in love with a person like me who wanted to make a career and earn money to help her father thinking him to be a little poor. And the struggle stories of love, dignity, success, failure, justice, injustice, rights and duties engulfed both of us. We both love our parents, but for fourteen years, a middle class girl's love for her parents was treated valueless in front of the of a higher class boy's love for parents.

Though both my father and my husband abandoned me mentally, I never abandoned them from my thoughts. But it was very painful to live like that.

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The moment came in life when I felt maybe I had taken a wrong decision in life and felt like going away from him and his family. But divorce is not an easy decision. In this struggle stories, the scapegoats were my son and the love that made us got married.

Good decision comes from experience and experience comes from bad decisions. If I would have married the person chosen by my father, I might have lived a life of dignity and abundance as two such candidates were a doctor and an agricultural officer. Instead I chose love, only to suffer for nineteen years losing love of both the most loved persons of my life - my father and my husband.

My decision was not wrong, but the outcomes of that decision that involved managing two families that were pole apart was very hard and bringing them together was the most challenging task. We don't take good decisions when we are angry or emotionally imbalanced. Hence, one day I sat in front of the pooja room, cried fully for all the pains I had undergone and made my heart clear to think clearly before taking another decision of parting from my husband. The brain said move on and the heart said hold on .

Once again I listened to my heart, I chose to live with him instead of leaving him. I didn't want to do injustice to my son who was the sole source of strength throughout this struggle. He deserves his father's love. I made my heart a little more stronger and decided to continue in the relationship for my son. But isn't it that even such decisions are not balanced ones. Many parents are living together for the sake of their children though they don't enjoy that love for each other and maybe that's how, now a days the grey divorce is gaining momentum when the children are grown up and both the parents are independent economically.

But I couldn't bear the abandonment by my husband and once again I was inspired by Lord

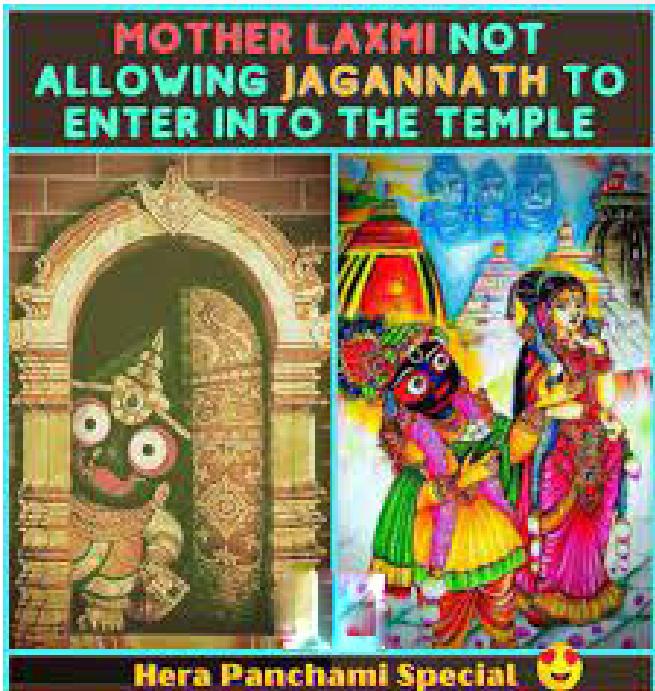
Krishna, this time from the stories of Lord Jagannath and Goddess Lakshmi of Odisha.

Every year during the Rath Yatra festival, on the day of Hera Panchami, goddess Lakshmi goes to Gundicha temple and breaks Lord Jagannath's chariot with her broom, expressing the pain incurred to her by Jagannath through abandonment while he being busy merry-making with his brother and sister and his family. This story is from the time when Lord Krishna had rescued Rukmini from forcibly being married to Sisupal but he himself having forgotten to pay attention to her after rescuing and marrying her.

I was aware of the Hera Panchami, as on that day, mouthwatering cooked prasad ( belief is that the whole meal is cooked by Goddess Lakshmi) is offered and from childhood I had eaten those prasada several times as a little girl not knowing the cause of such celebrations related to the family fight between the divine couples. And till date, people play the role of these two supreme couples on the day of Hera Panchami during the Rath Yatra celebration and the belief is that those couples who witness this divine fight, such fightings get vanished from their life.

The previous year, during the day of Hera Panchami, I had read this story in the notice page of the Pondicherry Utkal Samaj when they were organising the Rathayatra and there was an invitation for witnessing the play organised in the temple. I was not able to visit Pondicherry to witness that, but I was able to pray to the Lords to end those struggles from our life .

As lord Krishna says, we have to rise above our situations and he will be there with us to support us, I decided to raise my voice and demand my rights from my husband that I deserved as his wife. I had argued for justice for others, but I had forgotten to demand justice for myself. On the day of Hera Panchami goddess Lakshmi breaks the chariot with her broom exhibiting the fact that if



a homemaker can take up the broom to keep her house neat and clean,she can use that broom to rearrange her home too by reminding her husband to give her her rights. And when the lords return to the temple after nine days of celebration at their birthplace, Jagannath takes the other gate sending off his brother and sister through the maingate and makes his wife happier by offering Rasagulla and apologising for the negligence. Last Year I too raised my voice and demanded the love I deserved from my husband that he had forgotten by being busy with his family members.

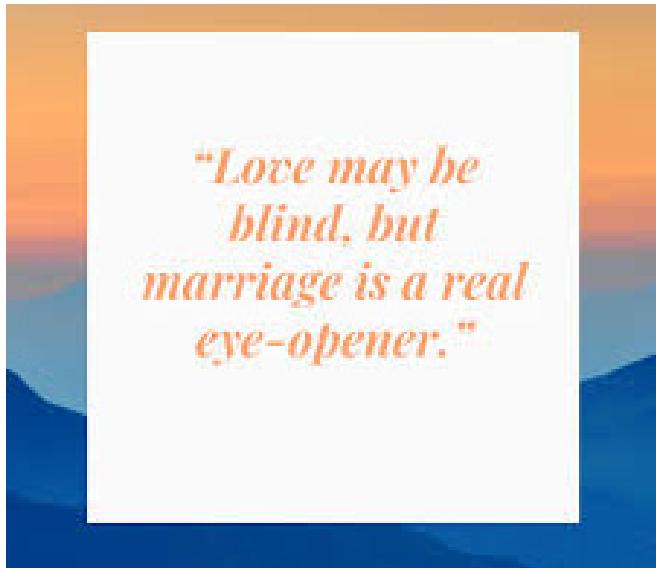
Finally on the day of Bhaimi Ekadashi, as if cupid had struck the arrow in my heart, after a longtime, seeing my husband in a formal dress (from lockdown the dress code has changed owing to work from home options) I felt very happy and many more events and incidents happened from that day till we took my parents to Rameswaram in the month of March -2024 and as they say after visiting the shore temple life changes for many, my life too changed . We shifted to another house in Adambakkam, my son got admission in a better school, we came closer to my husband's office and I got engaged in a small after school academy as a grammar and creative writing teacher.

Interestingly, we had to search another house for two months during March and April when our previous owner had the requirement of coming back to their house. That was a very sudden and short notice request and getting admission in a school and getting a house was very tough. But instead of reacting to the situation, we responded, and it so happened that my son got admission in a school where getting admission during pre kg is also difficult and he proved himself through his interview without any recommendations or donations and the house we shifted had its unique story.

It seems with the previous tenant , the other house owners had a very tough time when they had stayed here for one year while building their own house in the nearby locality. And all were in a nightmare like situation not knowing how would be the next tenant. One day, I came to know about all those troublesome situations and to our surprise all have felt as if peace has resumed after a long neighbourhood war of water and motor issue, gate closing and common area cleaning etc, when we have come to this house.

And in fact, now even that little rat is not spoiling my balcony but it's visiting it occasionally. And as if the long battle of kurukshetra war of our life has come to an end and we both husband and wife are leading a happy life with our son and our happy parents.

If I would have cleared the UPSC and then chosen my husband, may be the challenges of caste and class wouldn't have mattered that much as its the matter of success and success in a very big endeavour. But maybe as Shakespeare has said, "Love is everything except what it is", and true love is unconditional and it has to survive through several waves of failure for anyone to realise its true essence. All these years having chosen the path of love, I kept fighting just like those cartoon characters in my son's TV programmes, I kept facing challenges in real life, kept looking for their



solutions where love had almost died, health had almost deteriorated, heart was beating faster, and surviving physically and mentally was the only goal. But one thing, at least those imaginary cartoon heroes of reel life are better than many of the real heroes of reel life who for me are not that real great heroes in their own real lives to be admired as role models. For me, the simple characters of many such moral stories, read and listened here and there are bigger ones.

And having shown faith in Lord Krishna and his Bhagwat Gita, after twenty years of struggle, I succeeded in going to Puri with my husband and son to have the Darshan of Lord Jagannath during this year's Dussehra holidays. This trip was a very big event for me. This happened only after the lost love blossomed again and the deteriorated health conditions improved and the challenges of two families got settled.

It's said that action speaks louder than words and yes it is true but at the same time, at times, words do the magic that actions do not do like those words in the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Similarly, Lord Krishna or Narayan or those avatars exist among us through our scriptures and stories of their heroic actions, even though we are not their immediate contemporaries who have

experienced them directly. And this is the ultimate art of life.

Our actions prove who we are while we live in this world and others' words about our actions keep proving what we were and what we are after we leave this world.

Every human being is unique and so are his situations and problems. Hence there can't be a fixed solution for every human being but every human being's problem can be fixed.

And love is like the needle that can pierce through two torn parts to stitch them together with the thread of happiness. Though we have to bear some pain of piercing by the needle of love. My torn life has got stitched up and I am reliving a happy life. Lord Krishna is the ultimate artist who has created the beautiful painting of life through the brushes of love on the canvas of earth with colours of human emotions. Let that Jagatguru teach each one of us the techniques to hold those brushes to make finest strokes of living on the canvas of our individual lives.

And dear readers I have managed not to segregate the domestic aids who have helped me in my routine works. Be it Manjula and Vimala in Anna Nagar or Hema akka in Adambakkam. I have given them food and tea in the plates and cups used by us. Sometimes I sit down with them and enjoy a cup of tea. But immediately the reaction becomes, "Ayo, akka, ninda maele okarunga, yen kilae okaringla"! (Oh sister, please sit up, why are you sitting down?). But again a childhood story flashes back in my memories guiding me to behave the way I feel appropriate in that situation.

That is the story of Hasya Kavi Jadumani of Odisha whose relationship with the then King of Odisha can be understood in parlance with those stories of Akbar and Birbal or Krishna Devaraya and Tenali Raman. One day, when the king was out on a royal procession sitting on the elephant ( Odisha

kings are popularly known as the Gajapatis, and a large number of real elephants not the robotic ones were tamed and used in wars by them, even the maritime traders of Odisha used to carry them to the Bali island for exchange of things), and the poet was walking along with the other cavalry, the king had made some fun by teasing the poet, asking him to judge, as to who is greater, the king who is on top of the elephant or himself who is on the ground. And the poet had given a balanced judgement by citing the example of a physical balance in which the side with heavier things goes down and the side with lighter ones goes up.

Once again, I am inspired by these stories and tales of real life, so I smile and say, nothing is more relaxing than sitting on mother earth's lap and continue enjoying that five minutes of occasional tea time with Hema akka.

Moreover, the way, our commercial adds are coming about FMCG products including the vim bar with the energy of lime or pril liquid with the power of tamarind, do you think, the plates used by those domestic maids will remain with germs if we offer them our own plates and cups. Oh, how can I forget, those maids are only cleaning those plates that I am using.

Providing service to us, many such basic service providers of our country are becoming untouchables as they get dirty doing physical work and we get cleaner by doing mental works. No one can be a better example than Lord Krishna having hugged his friend Sudama when he had reached his palace in ragged clothes and Lord Rama who had eaten those tasted plums from the old granny Sabari, who was considered untouchable by the society. When Gods do not discriminate, who are we to discriminate!

But that's the real test of life, in which I have passed despite being a failure in UPSC. I have survived within two families separated by the psychological forces of caste and class and in this

endeavour I have succeeded in bringing peace in my life, reclaiming happiness and redoing many small small things of life like learning swimming, learning four wheeler driving, doing a certificate course in freehand drawing to overcome my inner challenges of imbalances between left and right.

I am carrying out my household responsibilities as a mother, as a wife and, fulfilling my personal goals as an individual and to be frank, I am earning just rupees 6500/- per month by investing a small time period of two hours for four days a week in the academy. And every month, I am sending rupees 2000/- to my parents, spending rupees 3000/- for my son's Robotics class and Tamil tuition, paying rupees 500/- to that old flower selling granny who is awaiting her widow pension promised by the government, contributing rupees 300/- towards the construction of the Jagannath temple in Pondicherry by the Pondicherry Utkal Samaj, recharging my phone for rupees 300/- to be in touch with my near and dear ones including you all through my writings and, the left amount I am using for carrying out small small household responsibilities by sharing a very small amount otherwise the main responsibility is carried out by my husband.

But, after I proved my earning ability without giving up my household responsibility, I have earned a huge return in the form of my husband's support in my daily routines. That is a huge change and such changes have broken those barriers of ego and arrogance and has reduced the huge distance of both the families and I am able to move to Odisha with my family to spend some happy moments with my parents. Many a great physical distances can be overcome if we can reduce the psychological distances of caste and class.

Well, my small investment of time in reading, writing and teaching is giving me back a small earning with which I am able to carry out many big things. And our experiences of life and the experiential knowledge is like the brown soil

# The Art of Living

housing an evergreen forest, where in the brown money market, the products are leaving us looking for another new owner and finally getting recycled, but here, even if we share our experiences with others, it doesn't leave us, and it would stay forever through stories and narrations even after we would have left this world.

This is the piece of art, of life and living, created by me on the canvas of my life, that I have shared with you all. Hope you like the piece of art, I have enjoyed the entire process of creating it, though at one point of time I was doubtful, if I could complete it.

Nowadays, many couples are going for grey divorce, but we both husband and wife are going back in time to feel happy the way we were before meeting each other. While I am busy writing my articles mostly late-night, he is giving a cosy comfy feeling to my son who finds it difficult to sleep without me. If I am buying plants he is watering them and if I am busy cooking, he is helping the child get ready for the school. All these changes have happened after he realised his negligence and apologised and even made me happy with his love that he had shown towards me before marriage.

So, if we can solve our problems and relive our happy moments the way we start life as small kids, those are the masterpieces of the art of living. When love is made part of living, the art of living is everyone's cup of tea.

Last year, I was happy having harvested my first five articles and this year it has grown up to 17, with the added bonus of a happy personal life and a new professional life. Now, I am a happy homemaker, a happy writer, a happy grammar teacher and a happy life partner. And I wish everyone to be happy despite the ups and downs in life.

Last but not the least, the devotional song composed by Adi Shankaracharya: Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam, Govindam Bhaja Mudha Mate, was close to my heart from childhood. I used to listen to that on the Philips radio which is still in use in my house and I used to keep murmuring while doing my work without knowing its meaning. And very recently when I came to know its meanings while watching it on the YouTube that says - Oh foolish human beings, keep chanting Govindam, as rules of grammar won't help you at the end moment, I couldn't stop retrospecting.

Dear readers, wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous New Year - 2025.

Ms. Chinmayee

*Am a full-time homemaker and a self-taught passionate artist and an amateur writer looking forward to take my passions to a professional level. I have written certain situational stanzas in English and an amateur autobiography of my life experiences from 1999 to 2021 in Odia titled Baishi Pahache meaning on the 22nd step.*

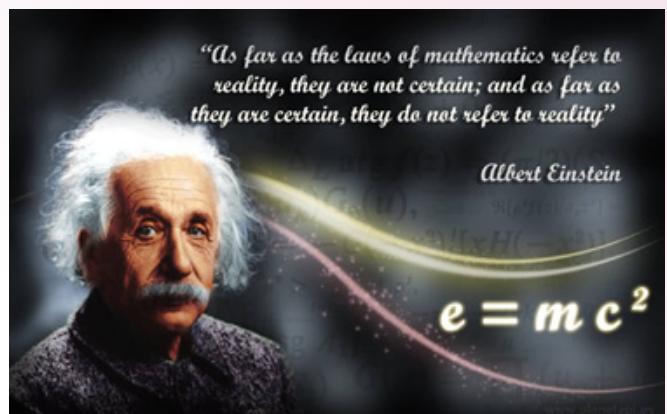


# To Believe or Not To Believe Astrology?

Astrology, the ancient study of celestial patterns and their influence on human lives, has been a topic of fascination and debate for centuries. Rooted in history and culture, astrology holds a unique place in human civilization. However, the question remains: Should we believe in astrology, or is it merely a pseudoscience with no real basis? This article explores both sides of the argument, delving into its historical significance, scientific validity, and psychological implications.

## The Origins and Evolution of Astrology

Astrology originated in Mesopotamia around 2,000 BCE and spread to ancient civilizations such as Greece, India, and China. Early astrologers believed that celestial bodies like the Sun, Moon, and planets influenced earthly events and individual destinies. Astrology was deeply intertwined with astronomy and often served as a guiding tool for rulers in making decisions related to wars, agriculture, and governance.

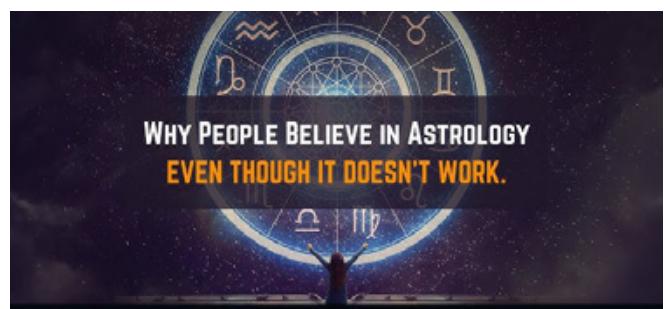


In modern times, astrology has evolved into a personalized practice focusing on horoscopes and birth charts. These tools are used to predict individual traits, life events, and even compatibility with others. Despite its widespread popularity, particularly in the media, astrology's foundations remain contentious.

## The Case for Believing in Astrology

### 1. Cultural and Historical Significance

Astrology is more than a belief system; it is a cultural heritage that connects people to their roots.



For instance, Vedic astrology in India is deeply integrated into religious practices and rituals. It provides comfort and a sense of continuity, helping individuals navigate uncertainty.

## 2. Psychological Benefits

For many, astrology acts as a tool for self-reflection and understanding. Reading a horoscope can help people recognize patterns in their behavior, strengths, and weaknesses. This introspection often leads to a sense of empowerment and emotional well-being.

## 3. Patterns in Nature and the Cosmos

Proponents argue that the universe operates on patterns and rhythms, from the cycles of the Moon to seasonal changes. Astrology, they claim, is an extension of these patterns, offering a macrocosmic perspective on life's events.

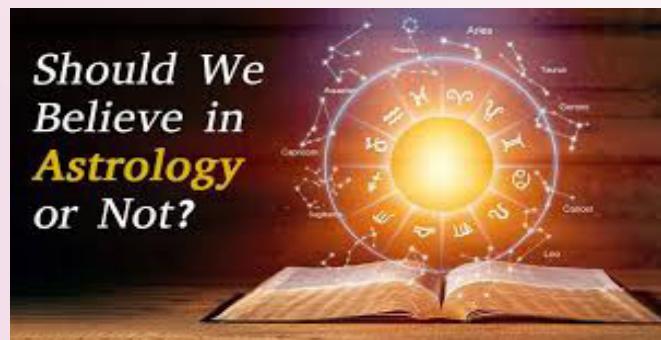
## 4. Anecdotal Evidence

Many individuals attest to the accuracy of astrological predictions, which can create a strong emotional connection to the practice. While these accounts lack scientific rigor, they highlight astrology's profound impact on human lives.

## The Case Against Believing in Astrology

### 1. Lack of Scientific Basis

Critics argue that astrology lacks empirical evidence. The scientific community often dismisses



it as a pseudoscience because its principles cannot be tested or falsified. For instance, the positions of celestial bodies at the time of birth are not proven to influence personality or fate.

## 2. Confirmation Bias

One reason astrology feels accurate to many is confirmation bias—the tendency to interpret information in ways that confirm pre-existing beliefs. People often remember accurate predictions and forget the inaccurate ones, perpetuating their belief in astrology.

## 3. Generalizations

Astrological readings often rely on vague and broad statements that could apply to anyone. These generalizations, known as the "Barnum effect," make predictions seem personally relevant, even when they are not.

## 4. Incompatibility with Modern Science

Astrology's principles clash with modern scientific understanding of astronomy and physics. For example, the gravitational forces of distant planets are negligible compared to everyday earthly interactions. This raises questions about astrology's mechanisms of influence.

## The Psychological Middle Ground

Interestingly, some psychologists view astrology as a form of narrative therapy. While they do not endorse its predictive claims, they acknowledge its role in providing a framework for individuals to make sense of their lives. Astrology often offers hope and guidance, particularly during crises, serving as a coping mechanism.

This middle ground suggests that astrology's value lies not in its accuracy but in its ability to address human needs for meaning, identity, and connection. It mirrors myths and stories that have guided



societies throughout history, offering structure to an often-chaotic world.

### **The Commercialization of Astrology**

Astrology has become a billion-dollar industry, driven by apps, websites, and personalized readings. While this commercialization has made astrology more accessible, it also raises ethical concerns. Skeptics warn against exploitation, as some practitioners charge exorbitant fees for services with no guaranteed results.

The mass appeal of astrology, particularly among younger generations, is also fueled by its

integration with social media. Meme culture and daily horoscopes have transformed astrology into a form of entertainment, diluting its traditional and spiritual essence.

### **A Personal Choice**

The decision to believe or not believe in astrology ultimately depends on individual perspectives. For some, it is a profound spiritual practice that offers guidance and clarity. For others, it is a pseudoscience that capitalizes on human vulnerabilities.

Regardless of one's stance, astrology remains a fascinating lens through which to explore human nature, culture, and the cosmos. Whether viewed as a meaningful tradition or a harmless diversion, its enduring popularity reflects humanity's timeless quest for understanding and connection.

In the end, astrology's significance may lie not in its accuracy, but in its ability to inspire hope, introspection, and a sense of wonder about the universe and our place within it.

Author: Ms. Aishwarya Balaji

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