

FIRST COLUMN

IT IS EASIER TO LIVE IN DENIAL OF REALITY

But the lesson of Gita is that we should accept reality



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

One must wonder as to why we do not want to accept reality. Why do the majority of us want to live in denial? Because it is difficult; it is easier to live in denial. It wasn't so, it would not have taken Lord Krishna to speak the entire Gita to convince Arjuna, who accepted what the Lord wanted him to do only in verse #18.73. What was Arjuna's initial position? He didn't want to fight the inevitable war, and he gave many reasons for it. Sample some of his arguments. Arjuna didn't see the opposition Army consisting of persons who were bent upon perpetrating 'adharma' (injustice) as what they were; he saw them as relatives. (1.28) He could see only adverse consequences, nothing favourable in killing them. (1.31) He would rather die than desire either victory, kingdom or pleasures. (1.32) He was strongly of the opinion that it would be sinful to kill his relatives. (1.36) Arjuna even foresaw sacrosanct family values getting destroyed, predominance of immortality, women of the family getting corrupted resulting in illicit progeny, etc. Such an act by him was surely going to result in a long stay of hell for his side. (1.44)

How did Lord Krishna manage to bring Arjuna around to see the reality? The Lord started with the knowledge of soul, while Arjuna was seeing only material bodies. This is what most of us do too. We don't want to accept the reality of previous lives, future lives, etc. For the ignorant mass, the present life is everything. This wrong perception prevents us from seeing the truth of our existence.



We don't believe in the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is crucial for accepting reality, the system of reward and punishment, which is fate. Once we accept the reality of the soul, we begin to accept death – the most painful reality. This is where actual realism comes.

The next reality is being dutiful. Even animals are dutiful towards their progeny. We cannot be worse than them. We must accept to do whatever is necessary according to time, place and circumstances. If we are mentally prepared to do that, life becomes more meaningful. Because as human beings, being dutiful is the foremost requirement. These duties are towards ourselves, our families, our professions, etc.

We, being small, are incomplete in every sense; we need God's help 24x7. A good connection with God makes us complete, we being parts of Him. (15.7) Then nothing is beyond us. We can accept whatever the realities of our lives.

Then, comes mind control. Aren't we dictated to by our minds? Don't they define us? Therefore, God has insisted that we try to control our minds. We have to be in control, not our minds. Then, where will there be any difficulty in accepting what we must?

'Maya' may try to bemuse, confuse, and make us see everything upside down, which is liking what hurts and avoiding what helps. This is where the human species is well placed; it has all the tools to live a quality life. We just have to accept to be good in all respects, which happens by embracing the mode of goodness in all our activities, as detailed by Lord Krishna in the Gita. Gradually, we will become habituated to accept the ups and downs of life. (2.14) Acceptance makes living easy. It shows faith and hope for the future. Will we then be ready to accept what we must and go on steadily ahead? Those who can live their lives in the way explained by Lord Krishna in the Gita can look forward to a quality life, notwithstanding challenges, which loom ahead.

*(The author is a spiritual teacher)*

# Pariksha Pe Charcha deals with anxiety



Making career decisions is a crucial milestone at the secondary level because it helps students build their identities

Adolescence is characterised by significant psychological, physical, and social changes. Traditionally, a coming-of-age period, it should be a celebration of life. However, it is alarming how stressed and in the mental health crisis today's pupils are.

Common sources of stress include interpersonal interactions, learning difficulties, and exam failures. Examinations, in themselves, are a cause of stress as they lead to anxiety about opting for higher education or career. Choosing a higher education and future employment is challenging due to the complex options available. The choice of a career among the many possibilities available is one of the major reasons that might cause stress and worry in youth.

Additionally, empirical data has demonstrated that late teenagers with career choice issues frequently have significant psychological issues. Therefore, it is now more crucial than ever to pinpoint the causes of the stress and worry that young people are experiencing.

The pupils' stress may be influenced by what their parents think about them and their prospects. Additionally, a youngster who is unable to express their thoughts, feelings, and plans to their parents may wind up keeping everything buried deep inside, which could be harmful to their health and wellbeing.

In fact, such questions have been raised in previous editions of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', wherein one student talked about the "huge competition in each field", how at times "they were not selected in any exam due to high competition and pressure". Questions from a societal perspective as to "what can we do for them so that great talent of our nation will not be just wasted and will be useful for the nation?" have been raised.

The Prime Minister's response has, of course, been well-documented but he has also written, "Aspire not to BECOME something but TO DO something. Normally, the desire to become something is driven by the expectations of the family, fashionable professional trends, peer pressure or fantasies about fame, money and power. It distances you from your true potential and gradually snuffs out the innate passion you are blessed with."

When parents don't approve of their child's choices, such as choosing to major in humanities rather than science, the child may experience shame, disappointment, resentment, and despair. Getting influenced by the choices made by their peers and constantly making comparisons with them could add on to their stress.

While it is good to have focus and many children may be able to decide what they want to become, it is important not to let these choices, whether to become a doctor or pilot or civil servant, define our dreams. Rather let the dreams lead you to



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paths determined by how you can make a difference to your family, to society and to the world at large.

Lacking clarity about one's interest areas, aptitude, work preferences, etc. and having a negative self-image could substantially increase the magnitude of stress and anxiety experienced by the students.

Swami Vivekananda exhorted us, "...each soul is a manifestation of divinity. If you have faith in all the Gods...and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you." Thus, self-awareness is crucial, leading to identification of both strengths and weaknesses and resulting in increased confidence. This is why it is critical not simply to have a positive outlook, but rather to consciously weed out the negativity in our lives – negative thoughts, negative friends, negative information, etc. Negativity should not be removed by a false sense of superiority but by acknowledging that even our smallest strengths can help in different situations.

Life is a series of new experiences, environments, people, it is multi-faceted and a journey with many infinite destinations and possibilities. But everyone approaches it in a different way. While some are stifled by choices, others are overwhelmed by choices. At another end of the spectrum, some do not even know enough about the choices at hand. Lack of accurate understanding about numerous career options is another issue that stresses out students. This includes diverse work profiles, pay scales, potential for growth, future of certain industries, etc. One can make an informed choice only when they have all the required information. In such a case, not having access to information or

consuming content from unreliable sources (eg. making a career decision based on a random conversation with a friend) could prove to be quite harmful in these circumstances.

In Exam Warriors, PM has written, "Create your own opportunities. Be the master of your destiny. Today, there are tremendous opportunities in fields which were unimaginable even a decade ago. When you make these choices, remember your passion makes for the best vocation."

With these words as a foundation, practically, at the individual level, students can focus more of their time and energy in seeking information, having healthy conversations with friends, family, teachers, and resource persons. The cohort of adults in a child's environment can assist the students by encouraging open communication. They can guide, without being judgmental or forcing their opinions on children, and help children make decisions and become independent while selecting their subjects, colleges and universities.

Having an adult to speak with or discuss their career concerns or to ask questions and have constructive discussions could be significantly important for teenagers deliberating about their future.

Parents and teachers can also help the children by removing the taboo of going to a counselor and seeking professional help, if the need be. Having proper meetings with the parents, teacher and the child present would also be beneficial in discussing the concerns each of them might have, even concerns about resources, and come up with feasible solutions accordingly.

Such discussions could foster an environment of support, and understanding for the student. It is of utmost importance for the students to know that they are not alone in this journey, and that they will be able to figure things out gradually.

Lacking important life skills like time management, goal setting, etc., could further deteriorate their academic situation, and the student might start feeling incompetent leading to a negative self-image.

During PPC, PM Modi counseled students, "Every individual is blessed with unique abilities. These abilities are best channelled through quality time management. So, time management is nothing but ability management."


Life skills are built by taking constant care of yourself, mentally, physically and emotionally. The Prime Minister has said that "practising yoga with full awareness is the most effective way to achieve holistic development of the self....one who plays, shines." Physical exercise, whether in the form of individual games or team sports, not only keeps us physically fit but also helps us to learn life skills, value of team-work, the art of competing with oneself and achieving a better version of your own self. It instills a sense of discipline and also increases focus.


Making career-related decisions is a crucial milestone at the secondary level because it helps students build their individual identities in society and prepare for the workforce. The process of making these decisions can be both exciting and anxiety-provoking. This is, why, in this journey, Pariksha Pe Charcha has come to play an important role.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

BJP MEANS BHAGTI JANATA PARTY. TODAY WE DEMAND THAT THE MEETING SHOULD BE CALLED AGAIN AND THE MAYOR'S ELECTION SHOULD BE DONE TODAY ITSELF.

— DELHI DEPUTY CM MANISH SISODIA





WE WERE SITTING IN THE HOUSE TO VOTE & WHEN THE TIME CAME, A RUCKUS BEGAN IN THE HOUSE. DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES MUST BE FOLLOWED.


— UNION MINISTER MEENAKSHI LEKHI

# India should win war against cervical cancer fast

The necessary tools to stop this preventable disease and eliminate it completely are available

recent tweet by the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare highlighted a new milestone achieved by India in securing the health of new mothers in the country. Sustained systemic efforts over a decade and targeted health initiatives have helped India bring down the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births or the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 130 in 2014-2016 to 97 in 2018-2020.

A decade back, deaths due to cancer of the uterine cervix and maternal deaths were both pegged at around 72,000 per year. However, cancer cervix has rapidly surpassed maternal mortality and has become the second common cause of cancer



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deaths amongst women in India. This is a distressing sign for a life-threatening disease that is almost entirely preventable but 48.35 crore Indian women above the age of 15 years and older continue to be at risk.

In 2020, over 120,000 women in India were reported to have cancer of the cervix, resulting in more than 77,000 deaths. Human Papilloma virus (HPV) has been established as a cause of cancer of the cervix. More than 90 per cent of cancer cervix cases are due to high-risk HPV type. HPV, much like the influenza virus, is a ubiquitous virus and can enter the body through small abrasions in the skin and mucosa.

While most low-grade infections spontaneously

resolve within two years, persistent infection results in cancer of the cervix. Early cancer can be completely asymptomatic. Hence, we may not know when a woman will develop pre-invasive or invasive cancer and a woman could be harboring a cancer for several years only discovering it at an advanced stage. Symptoms usually include irregular vaginal bleeding, post-coital vaginal bleeding and sometimes between menstrual cycles.

Invasive cancer of the cervix can cause a foul-smelling vaginal discharge or pelvic pain and is undeniably the most dreaded form when it invades adjacent organs like the bladder and rectum.

Beyond mortality, the

long-term effects of cervical cancer can severely impact the quality of life for survivors. In addition to undergoing the harrowing experience of cancer treatment and associated toxicities, cancer survivors also have to battle with long term issues such as menopausal symptoms, severe leg swelling (lower limb lymphedema), sexual dysfunction, infertility, social judgement and rejection, difficulty in social functioning, reduced self-esteem, negative body image, as well as financial issues.

Unfortunately, this cancer is mostly diagnosed in young women between 35 to 45 years of age when they are in the prime years of their lives putting their families, work and hence economic and

social stability at stake.

Only silver line is that the cancer of the cervix is almost entirely preventable. We know that it is caused by a virus and that there are effective vaccines already used globally to help prevent it. Vaccinating young girls long before they are exposed to this virus can aid primary prevention. Regular screening after the age of 30 and effective treatment through surgery or radiation, can eliminate what currently stands as the second most common cancer in women in India.

Advocating the vaccine to every young girl between the age of 9-14, that they see in their practice, and advising screening of women between 30-49 years with a high precision HPV DNA test will be

the two strongest pillars in this fight against cancer cervix.

As a member of the World Health Assembly, India committed to WHO's Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative to accelerate the elimination of cancer of the cervix by 2030. The 90-70-90 target set by the initiative requires 90 per cent of girls to be fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine before the age of 15, 70 per cent of women to be screened with a high-performance test by the age of 35 and again by the age of 45, and 90 per cent of women identified with cervical cancer (pre-cancer or cancer) to receive treatment.

In an endeavour to meet the commitment and protect our girls, the Government of

India must consider launching HPV vaccination funded and implemented under the immunization programme. As we celebrate the cervical cancer awareness month this January, each one of us can play a part in helping the country secure the health of its women.

Women represent the cornerstone for a family's overall health and hence investing in their health and ensuring their access to quality care goes a long way in ensuring the wellbeing and future of a society. The necessary tools to stop women from suffering and dying from this preventable disease and eliminating it completely are available; thus our girls will live to see a world free of this deadly disease.