



The Peace Gong

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"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

- Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore

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Ultimate Act of Kindness

An Interview with Dr Sakhi John, a Professor in Jamia Hamdard Delhi on his Donating his Kidney to a Stranger

SIR, BY DONATING YOUR KIDNEY TO A STRANGER, YOU HAVE SET AN EXEMPLARY EXAMPLE OF KINDNESS. HOW DOES DONATING ONE'S ORGAN BENEFIT ONE'S SELF?

To be true and honest, I am an ordinary man. I don't feel like that I have done anything extra-ordinary by donating one of my kidneys to a stranger. My philosophy is that of giving, giving till the last drop and that is why I rejoice when others rejoice and I cry when others cry. I consider helping others in need is my divine responsibility to please the higher spiritual force. The happiness and satisfaction I feel when I render a helping hand to someone in need, when I bring a smile on someone's face is inexplicable to my family and me.

PLEASE SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND TELL US WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO DONATE ONE OF YOUR KIDNEYS?

I donated my kidney to a bus cleaner who I never had known. In real life too the Third Law "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction" has practical implications. A father's action influences a son's action. This action of goodness and giving originated in my father, Ozhathil Ninan John, a postal employee who continues to live and see the world even after death by donating his eyes after his demise. My father was a great source of inspiration to me. Even today the words of the doctor who transplanted my father's eyes echo in my ears "Sakhi, with your father's eyes two people are able to dispel darkness out of their lives". And along with my father, the source of motivation was Mother Teresa, symbol of loving, giving sharing.

HOW DO YOU CONSIDER PEOPLE'S APPROACH TO KINDNESS?

In all time and in all places people respond differently when it

comes to kindness. My approach to kindness was a different one. Mother Teresa responded in another way. The response of the people all over the world in the wake of the history's worst and devastating floods in Kerala was over-whelming. All these and many more examples show that today also people have a positive approach to kindness.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT YOUR CONCEPT OF KINDNESS?

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." The above words of Mother Teresa have touched me profoundly. I feel my concept of kindness and that of Mother Teresa are similar. I feel the ultimate aim of my life is to give, give to others, give to others what I have inherited from others, give with love, give with a generous heart, give with a smile. And every day I wake up recalling the words of my inspiration Mother Teresa-



"Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.

Be the living expression of God's kindness.

Kindness is your face

Kindness is your eyes

Kindness is your smile"

These inspiring words indeed transient my life for the rest of the day. I have learnt in my life that kindness is not in preaching but in doing, kindness is not in taking but in giving.

The Peace Gong, Delhi Bureau



Donating time for differently abled at NGO Arushi

Kindness is a simple but powerful concept. The world can be made better with kindness since it can end sufferings. Even a small act of unexpected kindness can make a person's day happy. Thus, it is incredible to spare some time to participate in constructive work such as visiting voluntary organisations. Kindness does make others happy but the ones spreading it are the happiest.

Harshini Samadhiya, 21, is a student who feels that donating time for the underprivileged and specially challenged is important to evolve as good human beings. She is inspired by what Helen Keller said, "The best and the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with heart."

Harshini started recording course materials for the visually impaired students of Arushi, an organization working among differently abled children from Bhopal.

Similarly, 20-year-old Alina Sheikh, who teaches children of Arushi, feels that the inner satisfaction you get after spending time with underprivileged children is immense.

Saumya and Sinja Shukla, both sisters and students of fine arts, consider art a powerful therapy for differently-abled children. They feel the students have great potential and creativity which needs nourishment. Inspired by art's potential in empowering children, both sisters have been volunteering with Arushi for

several years now.

Bob Kerry once said, "Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly and most underrated agent in human change."

Kindness is not difficult, it is the easiest thing to execute in the world. It requires very little time and effort. However, the result is profoundly beautiful. For Alina, Saumya and Sinja, donating time for children's cause, has become an integral part of their lives.

Another way to satisfy ourselves is to be selfless. We must not be so self-centred that we forget caring about others. We must always be benevolent; otherwise there will be no true kindness. We should thus try to be helpful and kind.

Instead of buying usual gifts for family, we must do something imaginative and creative. Since kindness has a power to strengthen the bonds of our families, and friends, it is a perfect act of expressing graciousness and inspire others to love everyone.

Khushi Gupta, Class IX, Bhopal



Helping humans breathe

Dr Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist said, "It's the little things citizens do; that's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees".

I am inspired by Dr Maathai's statement and I have been planting trees in my birthday's every year. It is not just my brother and I, but I now inspire my friends too to take the plunge of planting trees in their birthdays.

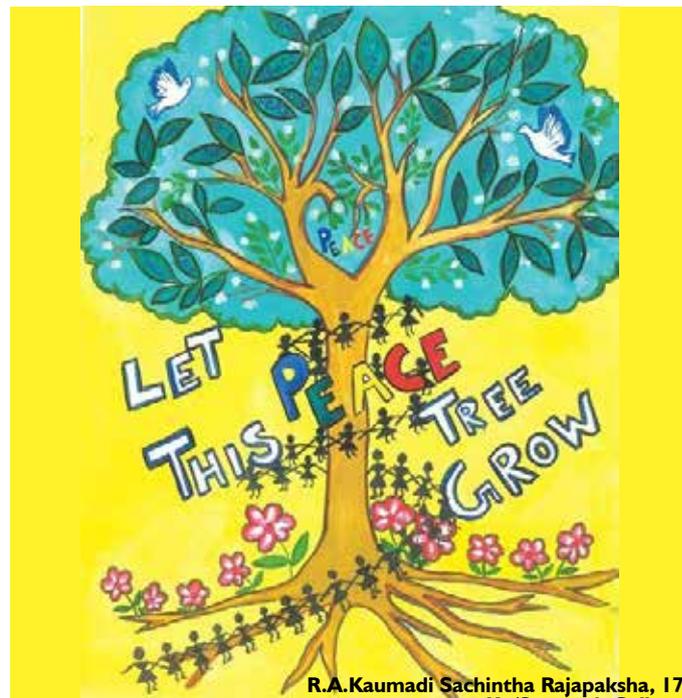
My father is an agriculturist and I understand the value of planting trees. He has been motivating all of us on the importance of conservation and how it can make our lives beautiful. Gifford Pinchot has rightly said in 'The Fight for Conservation', "Unless we practice conservation, those who come after us will have to pay the price of misery, degradation, and failure for the progress and prosperity of our day.

We must start loving trees, my father says. He feels we must learn to express gratitude to trees and nature for sustaining us. It is only when we learn to love and show compassion towards trees, we will enjoy planting trees. Just imagine how much good would we be contributing to the environment if all of us and our family members start loving plants and trees and make it a habit to plant trees in our birthdays.

Planting trees on birthdays is a celebration. I still cherish how I planted a neem tree (Kohomba tree) in our home garden for my 12th birthday. All my friends were around me along with my parents and brother and we planted the tree; it was a wonderful feeling.

I have promised myself that I will carry on with this celebration

of planting tree for the rest of my life as I have been reaping the results from the plants I grew since my childhood. The feeling of witnessing how a plant grows slowly which you have planted can't be explained. So, we children as the future of the country can give a real meaning and be an example to the world by planting trees and protecting them for our brothers and sisters.



R.A.Kaumadi Sachintha Rajapaksha, 17, Ku/Saranath College, Kuliypitiya, Sri Lanka



Kindness towards Mother Earth

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall.

At a time when large number of young people seems disconnected with Mother Earth, children of the Children Field School at Gokak Shishu Panchayat in Gokak, Karnataka are taking practical lessons in conservation and organic agriculture. As we are all from rural areas, deep understanding of agriculture and lifestyle that would not harm nature is important.

The Gokak School teaches that lessons alone cannot be enough if we do not put them into practice. If we do not act now, we will be walking towards self-destruction. In brief, we cannot fool our beloved Mother Earth. In fact, the first thing we are told in the School is to respect nature and develop a feeling of compassion and kindness towards Mother Earth. It is only when we learn to express our deep gratitude towards Mother Earth, we will work to preserve her, we are told.



In the Children Field School, we members of the Gokak Shishu Panchayat are given leadership training for ecological conservation. We are told in our

training: “The modern man must re-establish the broken link with the nature and with life. He must again learn to invoke the energy to grow things and recognize it as was done in ancient India. Centuries ago, one would take from the earth and atmosphere only as much as one could put back.”

A few months back, the Gokak Shishu Panchayat organized a meeting of local children, youth and farmers at Naganur village. The meeting concluded that it was high time to think of alternative cropping to deal with food insecurity in the village. Children, youth and farmers, attending the meeting, agreed that dependence on single crop and poor rainfall has made food security of the village vulnerable and fuelled price rise. Nearly 40 farmers and children attended the meeting and most agreed that food was one of the root-causes of their problems. Taking part in the discussion, the headmaster of the local school, Mr Venkatesh noted that because of lack of rainfall from June to September this year, the main crop of the area, jowar was affected.

In the brain storming session, the significance of introducing sustainable farming practices in villages of Gokak was taken up. Children, youth and farmers all felt that introduction of sustainable integrated farming practices was necessary to promote sustainable living.

The Children Field School aims to build the capacity of adolescents and local youth analyse their production systems, identify problems, test possible solutions, and eventually adopt



best locally suitable agricultural practices. It could provide young or would-be farmers skills to test sustainable land use and introduce new technologies by comparing their conventional wisdom.

The Children Field School usually does a time bound activity (generally one agricultural production cycle), involving a group (commonly 20- 30) of young farmers. It is facilitated by extension staff or – increasingly – by farmer facilitators. The method emphasizes group observation, discussion, analysis, presentation, and, collective decision making and actions.

Participants in the school observe and learn from the field work instead of from textbooks and lectures. We learn by doing. All participate on an equal basis and there is no hierarchy between adults and children.

As part of the school, we are given practical lessons on soil preparation through local and traditional means, green manuring, intercropping and natural waste decomposition methods.

The Gokak Shishu Panchayat, the youth of the village and our parents are working together to promote traditional and organic farming methods. We try to motivate our parents to desist from using chemical fertilizers which can damage ecology. We are now adopting sustainable methods like chemical free organic manure, natural waste decomposers and traditional soil conservation methods.

We strongly believe that all children and young people need to be sensitized on sustainable living practices whether they are living in villages or in cities so that they can come together to contribute towards conservation of Mother



Earth. The Gokak Shishu Panchayat feels, “Every minute is important in our efforts to protect Mother Earth. The rate at which we are destroying her is unprecedented. It is only when we young people across the world come together and contribute at a rate greater than people destroying it, will we be able to save her.”

Pavitra Kapse Grade 7, Deepa Mannikeri Grade 7, Shivanda Paddi Grade 7, Saibanna Khangawdar Grade 7
Translated From Kannada By A R Patil

Editorial

Kindness Matters

"Wherever you are, do a little bit of good whenever you get the chance. It's those little bits of goods and kindness put together that overwhelms the world." - Desmond Tutu

In technical terms, kindness is a pleasant disposition and consideration for others. But being kind is so much more than that. Kindness is noticing and recognizing someone's struggle with open eyes and heart. Kindness is helping others without expecting anything in return. Kindness is greeting people with a gentle smile. Kindness is the willingness to wholeheartedly celebrate someone else's success.

In a world where random events are giving rise to so much anxiety and displeasure, it is undeniable that the acts of kindness are the missing pieces that could stop the disastrous ripples. People working together with compassion and understanding could indeed show a way for humankind to shrug selfishness and make the world a better place.

Every creation of man that you see in this world was first created in the mind. Therefore, it is safe to say that whatever you see around you is actually a manifestation of the thoughts and images created in the human mind. Thus it is essential to mend one's thoughts to correct the fallacies of humankind.

Philosophers, saints, seers have again and again fallen back to the ancient wisdom of kindness towards human, nature, wildlife and have called for a mutual coexistence.

Leaders across the world from Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda have by their acts of kindness have proved that the essence of kindness lies in sharing, giving and nurturing relationships with fellow beings.

The poet Khalil Gibral wrote, "I have learnt silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant and kindness from the unkind. Yet, I'm still not grateful to these teachers."

The present issue of The Peace Gong is dedicated to 'Acts of Kindness'. Stories from across the world – from Nepal, Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Sri Lanka and India prove that there is no dearth of acts of kindness across the world. What is needed is to open up our horizons and arms for others and develop a sense of compassion towards fellow beings.

As the first time Editor of the global children's newspaper, 'The Peace Gong', I am not only delighted, but also very excited. Delighted because I have been chosen among the many as the Editor of the newspaper; excited, because the very first issue itself has been an eye-opener for me. This issue focuses on 'acts of kindness', with my friends from over seven countries of the world sharing stories. I am grateful to everybody for their support and coordinated efforts in bringing out this issue. We have become friends and shall continue to take this friendship further with our commitment to work for making the world a better place where kindness for others replaces envy and hatred. We can... We will!

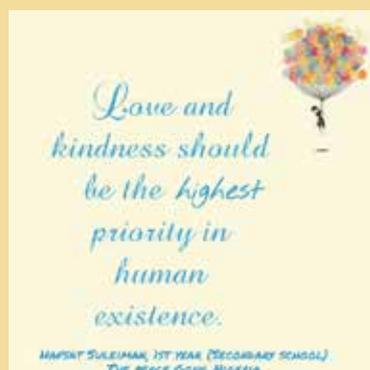
Jiya Khan, Class X, Editor

Helping an old aged woman

One day on my way back to home from school, I overheard an old woman screaming for help in the nearby field. When I went to towards the field, I saw few dogs attacking the cattle of the old woman and the woman

was crying and shouting for help. I called my friends and we took sticks to scare the dogs. The dogs went away and the old lady was relieved and very happy. She thanked and hugged each one of us.

Sayeeda Khatoon
Class VIII,
(Village Pashkum, Kargil)



Sharing is caring

Our village is located in a remote and difficult location. The winters are very harsh and the locals face drinking water scarcity to blockage of water supply facilities. We go to far off river to bring drinking water braving extreme cold and slippery icy path conditions. One day on our way back home from river, one of my friends slipped on the icy path. She was badly

hurt and broke her container carrying her drinking water for home. She was very sad. We shared our water with her. She was very happy to have to take some drinking water home that day instead of going all the way back to the river on the cold weather again.

Mariya Banoo
Class: VIII,
(Village Pashkum, Kargil)





An Opportunity for Kindness

At a time when children are constantly exposed to different kinds of health issues, it is important to teach them the essence of personal hygiene and the need to abstain from habits which impacts their health. Health and hygiene education are critical for children's wellbeing; this also contributes to their happiness.

As an endeavour to reach out to children and provide them with health and hygiene education, doctors and students of medicine who are part of The Peace Gong Nepal team have been regularly conducting regular workshops in Bethal Academy in Kathmandu.

"We want to give back to the society whatever we have learnt," says Dr Ankita Poudel, Coordinator of The Peace Gong Nepal, "We felt by imparting health and hygiene education to children we can contribute to their well-being and make them happy. This was the reason our team chose to work on this issue."



Lucius Annaeus Seneca has said, "In the time of our being, there is an opportunity to do good. If we miss an opportunity to do good, we miss an opportunity to improve our well-being. To make the world a better place, we must do good to others." The Peace Gong Nepal team is providing health and hygiene education to children. "One can see the impact when they get these," Dr Ankita Poudel says. For all of us it is an amazing experience. For students like Tsering, who are aspiring to be doctors, this experience to work with children who are able to contribute to the well-being of children gives us immense inner satisfaction," they point out.



As part of the workshops, the team has been sensitizing children on basic health and hygiene practices, oral hygiene and how to remain fit and alert. "Our efforts will bear fruits when the children start practicing these principles in their daily lives and even try to sensitize their friends and families," Dr Poudel says.

Sushila Gurung, 17, Kathmandu

Reminiscences....

A friend of mine and I went out for lunch together and we could see that the waitress was little disturbed.

We asked her how was she doing? She said she was a single mother and does not have enough money to cover her household expenses.

We asked about her income, expressed our sympathies and went back for lunch. However, we both felt that God wanted us to help her.

So, I went out to get some cash from the nearby ATM when the manager of the restaurant told my friend that the waitress Kashish was very hard-working and honest.

We bought some fruits, juices, biscuits and vegetables, asked the manager, and went to meet the three kids of Kashish, all of whom looked weak and under-nourished.

We handed over the things to Kashish and took her kids to nearby Domino's Pizza to give them a pleasure treat. Though we both had spent our one-month pocket money by then, we felt very happy to see them happy.

Kashish's eyes were full of tears to see her kids enjoy meal and she thanked us from the bottom of her heart. That day of my life has become an unforgettable one for me.



Vanshika Singh, Class X, Noida, India

The Virtue Of Kindness

Kindness is defined as a behavior marked by ethical characteristics, a pleasant disposition, and concern and consideration for others. It's considered a virtue, and is recognized as a value in many cultures and religions. Ethiopians are known by their kindness as their culture and religion teach them to be good to people.

Kindness for me is being friendly, giving love to others and helping

people. Moreover helping people makes me so happy because when I help people by cloth, by food and by money they will be happy and their happiness makes me happy. Kindness is important for animals and our beloved nature.

Mariamawit Fesseha, 6th grade Addis ababa, Ethiopia



Expression of extraordinary love

Kindness is but doing ordinary things with extraordinary love – and whenever love comes into play nothing can justify the very feeling but children.

Unfortunately, the number of playgrounds is at decrement while on the other hand hospitals and orphanages are increasing with the passage of time, sadly a bitter truth.

My mother says no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted all what matters is our intentions.

Orphanage - a place where you feel vacant and full simultaneously, a place where all the hopes shatters and yet begins at the same time, a place where tears of joy and sorrow are intermixed with each other.

My mom often makes me realize how grateful I'm that I'm blessed to have my siblings alongside and my parents in all that I do and full family support. But there are kids like me, of my age who are deprived of all the basic rights of an individual and to them happiness is a rare find.

I believe nothing can replace the value of cherishing your moments with someone and I asked my mom to take me to the orphanage where I could spend time with the kids of my age, make friends with them share my toys with them and my reading books so that even for a while they would know what happiness is. My mom and I decided to plan a lunch with the kids in orphanage we brought food for them however, initially it was all so new for them I remember when of the kid aged 10 years old named 'Ibrahim', came up to us and asked if we are at the right address, I then added; "what exactly do you mean?" as to which he replied it's not that people don't leave food, gifts or money for us but none really has ever stayed here for longer and not for lunch at least. In his innocence he uttered everything that him or his friends were going through.

I tried my best holding onto the tears, maintain a certain smile on my face and acted all so normal.

There were around 25 kids by that time, we thankfully were carrying a variety of cuisines and enough food with us keeping in mind how I am a foodie myself.



They set a tablecloth on floor and all of us had lunch together, the smile on their faces at that time was everything our conscience looked upto.

Not just 25 kids, those were 25 hidden stories none ever heard, just at the age where other children spend most of the time free from the worldly worries with their friends, family and what not and they on the other hand have witnessed the bitter reality of life.

From the lunch to the evening cupcakes, sharing my toys with them and then the dinner the whole day was one of the finest days of our lives. Mom and I made new friends and I today am thankful to god for all the blessings he has showered upon me and my family.

The lonely white sloughed-off walls, the open-fragile doors, the barren hearts, those big-eyes all were in search of their answers.

**Abdul Rehman Student of 4th standard
Fauji Foundation Model School (jauhar campus)
Karachi, Pakistan**

Kindness close to compassion

Kindness is a virtue that is found in increasingly lesser number of people. People are so busy with their own needs and desires that they overlook that of others. To see someone being kind to others is rare.

I usually go to school by auto rickshaw, while a girl in my neighbourhood travels in her private vehicle. However, one day my auto rickshaw did not come. I was waiting outside when the neighbour's daughter came out and was about to leave for school. However, when uncle saw me waiting, he came to me and asked why I had still not left. I told him the auto rickshaw driver was not well, so he did not come.

Uncle immediately offered to drop me at school. I hesitated first but after asking my parents agreed elatedly. It was uncle's act of kindness that touched me and made me feel I had a good neighbour. The same weekend, I offered to help his daughter in her homework as she found mathematics challenging. One kind gesture multiplies and creates lot more positive feelings inside you.

Kindness is doing good to others. It involves taking care of their needs and concerns. Very few people in real world are blessed with kindness and their presence is a blessing for all around them.

If God has been kind enough to give us this life, we must be kind to others and render help in whatever ways we can. Buddha said, "A generous heart, kind speech and a life of service and compassion are the things that renew humanity."

If we have to become a good person, it has to begin with being kind.

**Naman Srivastava
Class VI
Delhi Public School, Kalyanpur, Kanpur**





Being kind to Sparrows

The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated. - Mahatma Gandhi

In busy cities of today, children are rarely able to see birds. In the mad race towards 'modernization', human beings are fast appropriating all possible spaces where birds could build their nest. The humble house sparrow which was seen easily in our cities once, has almost disappeared.

For humanity, it is an alarming situation as we are constantly destroying the habitat of other living beings to further our greed. Several species are facing extinction and we know about many birds and animals just through text books without ever seeing them physically.

To ensure that we all live in harmony with nature and other living beings, we need to develop a spirit of compassion and kindness towards all. It should be part of our habit and inculcated right from childhood.

Henry James rightly said, "Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."

To promote the spirit of kindness and compassion, and to sensitise young people about the need to preserve bird habitat in cities, The Peace Gong, Aligarh team has launched a programme to put up sparrow boxes in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) campus. Initially, the sparrow boxes are being put up in hostels where students volunteer to provide food and water in the boxes for sparrows.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." With Gandhi as inspiration, Coordinator of The Peace Gong, Aligarh, S Saba, took up the initiative to put up sparrow boxes in AMU hostels

"Serving others includes nature and all other living beings," Saba says, "We must understand that the relevance of nonviolence is not limited to dealing with other human beings but it is equally important for nature and other beings." By trying to find space for dwellings of birds and animals, we are expressing our compassion towards them.

"By doing this we are not just helping the birds who do not find a habitat to dwell in cities but actually helping ourselves. We become more connected to nature and other living beings when we live among birds and animals," Saba points out.

There is lot of enthusiasm in the students and teacher's community of AMU towards this sparrow box initiative and there are plans to install them in each of the faculty buildings, says Saba.



Saba and her team plan next to reach out to schools to train young volunteer corps who could sensitise people about the need to preserve city homes with birds and animals.

Huzaifa Malik, Class XII, Aligarh, India

Caressing Cats or Sheltered...

Animal lover, journalist, communications trainer and volunteer – these are many traits of Shweta Rashmi whose little acts of kindness on the one hand gives her personal satisfaction, on the other this has provided wandering and stray animals shelter. In a candid interview with Jiya Khan, Editor, The Peace Gong newspaper, Shweta Rashmi shares her story of compassion and kindness.

"In order to sustain in the ecological system, all three, human, animal and plant life are required. All three need to peacefully yet independently coexist for the cycle to rotate properly. But somehow, we humans have become cruel and greedy", says journalist and communications trainer Shweta Rashmi from India.

Ms. Shweta Rashmi, resident of Safderjung, Delhi, India, is a senior journalist and an animal lover with currently over 50 adopted cats at her home. They were all adopted under different circumstance, from stray cats at the Metro Stations to kittens abandoned by their mother.

In 2010, because of some health issues, Shweta had to take a break from her job. She decided to spend the extra time she had by volunteering at animal shelters. "Being around animals so much, it almost became an instinct to help and protect the animals at my locality, says Shweta".

Pregnant cats first started wandering around her premises when

she got a pet dog. "They were pregnant and in desperate need for nutrition. The smell of dog food must have been irresistible. Naturally, we (she and her brother) began feeding the cats daily. Soon enough the cat gave birth to five little kittens out of which unfortunately only three survived. After that I just kept on stumbling across the homeless cats and the family continued becoming larger and larger", points out Shweta.

Till now she has rescued and helped almost over 60 cats getting adopted apart from the ones she adopted herself. "Obviously at first I tried to have the cats live in animal shelters but it didn't take long for me to realize that those conditions were in no way suitable for them."

She has an undying love for plants and animals which she says she got from her father. "The animals and plants react very naturally with me and vice versa. It really saddens me that people go out and buy the preferred breeds. But when they get sick, they just leave them out to die on the streets. These animals have become dependent on us humans which is too our own fault since we have snatched away their natural habitats from them. Therefore, we are working to rescue these innocent souls. We don't own any NGO. Neither are we getting any funds. This is just a responsibility that I and my brother have taken upon ourselves and it gives us a lot of satisfaction."



Abandoning Parents is being Unkind

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees." -Amelia Earhart

In this world there are different kinds of people who we can see many differences among them such as cultural differences, languages, religions, habits, occupations, skin colours, clothes, food items, etc. Although there are many differences in each other, one thing is common that we are all human beings.

People are doing many things in their life and they get many experiences for their life. I think we can develop our own way of life and meaning of life through our experiences what we had in our life so far.

We all have many experiences in our lives. Here, I'm going to share the most beautiful experience I had in my life. I think it is so good to share it with.

We all have birth days. So, people do many things to celebrate their birthdays and to be happy such as going for movies or picnic, parties so and so.

I also celebrated my last year birthday so beautifully. I think it was bit uncommon way of celebrating among others celebrations. That day was my most glamorous day in my life because I celebrated my special occasion in an elder's home. But it made me so sad by seeing those helpless mothers and fathers. They were staying there so sadly because they all were away from their own children.

I couldn't believe how children can abandon their loving parents by forgetting the good habits they were taught by their parents. It was really heart breaking how children can live away from their parents and how parents can live away from their children.

I cannot understand what made children to put their innocent parents to an elder's home.

On that day I met many parents there in the elder's home. I spent the whole day with them. I was listening to their stories. They were so lovely. It was amazing to know that although their children have put them into an elder's home, those parents love for their children remains the same. Someone was expecting their children to visit them. It brought tears to my eyes. How cruel this world is?

How can a child stay without loving his/her parents? Parents struggle a lot to make their children happy and give them a comfortable life. In order to make them happy at least for a moment, I danced, sang songs and I enjoyed that day with them. I treated them all by giving presents, food, clothes and happiness too. I think I was able to make them so happy on that day. It was a day that I added beautiful memories to my life .

At the end, all I want to share with you is we will never get another mother or father who love us the same way as our parents. Even I realized the worth of my parents a lot that day. I have now decided to regularly visit the home for the elderly frequently and spend time with those beautiful people. I have also spoken to several of my friends who are also keen to accompany me.

So, my dear friends, let's love our parents a lot, protect them, treat them well and make them happy and proud always as nobody can replace their absence in our lives.

**R.W.E.M.R. Piyumi Buddhima Ekanayake, 17.
Ku/Weuda Royal Central College,
Kurunegala, Sri Lanka.**

Nurturing spirit of kindness, compassion amongst children for peace

Is it not enough to talk about peace? But talking alone cannot be enough. The need is to take a collective action towards peace.

Peace means; prosperity, happiness, security, unity and acceptance of one another. I feel peace is what brings security, justice, brotherhood and harmony in a society. Peace does not belong to an individual but to a nation and a society. And where there is peace, prosperity and development will follow.

For all societies across the world and especially in places such as conflict-ridden Afghanistan, there is need to sensitize children with the spirit of compassion and kindness from a young age. When children are taught to help others, say kind things, help out their peers in trouble and invite others to join them for food or game, they become kind and compassionate. It is when they show kindness and compassion for others that they can contribute towards a peaceful society.

When there is peace in a society, you can have all the developments, such as; educational, cultural, social and economic. When there is no peace then there are many challenges and problems. For instance, in case of a war, the

entire society becomes psychologically vulnerable. War causes dysfunctionality and generates many economic, social and educations challenges.

In today's societies, including in Afghanistan, we witness two types of war- the war with weapons and, power and ideological war. The ideological wars have proven to be more dangerous than those waged with weapons. Such wars have destroyed people mentality and pushed destructive thoughts in their minds. We must change people mentality and thinking towards peace and introduce the new and best face of peace to them.

This is why we need to spread the message of kindness, love and compassion so that it can challenge the menace of conflicts. Kindness is not something that demands hard work. It originates from the simple act of doing no harm to others.

Leban-born poet Khalil Gibran has rightly said: "I have learnt silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet strange, I am ungrateful to these teachers."

Fatima, 14, Herat Province, Afghanistan



An act of kindness-and the revival of a school within 72 hours

The district Wayanad is a high mountainous plateau on the peak of Western Ghats- a global biodiversity hotspot. The district has been recently classified as one of the 4 Climate Change Hotspots of Kerala, and it is an important Wayanad Watershed Terrain (WWT) of the Nilgiri region.

In August ,2018 Kerala experienced its worst floods in a century that left 483 people dead, Kurichiar mala, the northern part of Wayanad , around 4 am on August 9, a landslide swept through Makkimala in Tavinhal gram panchayat. There are 27 homes in the neighborhood. In Kurichiarmala, 50 km south of Makkimala and one of the highest points in Wayanad, around 300 villagers had a miraculous escape the same day as the landslide narrowly missed their houses. But it destroyed 100 acres of tea plantations. The landslide struck without warning, villagers in Kurichiarmala quickly moved to a relief camps .The wreckage and rock it brought down almost destroyed this lone government lower primary school in Kurichiarmala village in Pozhuthana Gram Panchayat affecting the continuation of studies of 92 students. The almost century old school was started in the 1930s, and was only the source of knowledge for the children of the tea estates.

The district administration had ordered schools in the area to shut in the first week of August because of heavy rain that had led to floods and landslides all across the state. After the rains subsided, the government announced that the schools would open on August 29. But that



was easier said than done in Kurichiarmala. The school building was all but destroyed. Large amounts of debris – mud, rocks and trees – were piled in front of it. District officials suspect that the force of the debris hurtling down the slope may have damaged the building’s foundation. Though the exact nature of the damage to the structure will be ascertained only later, the district administration has decided to abandon the building and asked the education department and gram panchayat officials to identify a suitable location for a new building.

But what would the students do in the meantime? That was a question that troubled headmaster PK Sasi. He approached the district administration on August 25 to identify an alternative building to be used as a temporary school, but did not get any assurances from them. The local mosque committee then stepped in, saying that a temporary school could be set up in its madrasa building, which is just a kilometre away from the damaged school. This offer and the labour of a group of 40 volunteers ensured that the children in the area were able to start attending school from August 29 without any further delay. Sasi said that “he was grateful to the mosque committee for allowing the school to function from the Hayathul Islam Madrasa. We

are indebted to the youngsters and the mosque committee for giving us a new facility,”

Sasi explained how he had met the volunteers on his way to meet the district collector. They belong to different parts of Kerala and are affiliated to three organizations – Green Palliative, Human Being Collective and Malabar



Flood Relief Volunteers. They include artists, teachers and students. “When I told them the difficult situation we were in they offered to help us,” said Sasi.

The madrasa building comprises a ground floor, where the Islamic school operates from, and a first floor that was not in use. The first floor had a concrete roof but no walls. The villagers, with their limited resources, and the volunteers, who effectively used social media to source the items required to start the school, helped upgrade this space.

The school will be shut on Fridays so that Muslims in the area get enough space for their Friday prayers. To make up for this, it will remain open on Saturdays. “The arrangement will continue till the end of the academic year,” said Muhammed Aslam, president of the school’s Parent Teacher Association and vice-president of the mosque committee.

The volunteers reached the village on August 25. “They asked us to provide a list of essential things for the school,” said Sasi. “Contributions poured in after we requested people to support our effort to set up the school,” said Anees Nadodi, the leader of the group who works as an art director in the film industry.

“We got all the materials for setting up the school, from the bricks for the walls, tables and chairs for students, books for students and shelves for teachers in just one day. We made a poster, which put in the picture of the destroyed school on 26th to share in the social media. By 27th night all the requirements were fulfilled. People

and organisations from different part of India joined hands together to support us to rebuild the school. Even students from Aligarh university came to help and support” Anees Nadody said gladly. The work was divided and done in shifts. With the



help of villagers, the volunteers worked to make the space suitable to be used as a primary school. It took them 72 hours, working round the clock. They constructed and plastered walls, installed white boards, rolled out mats in classrooms. The



wall was painted and beautiful pictures and cheerful murals and decorated the corridor with plants.

The volunteers say that they could not have done this without the support of the people of Kurichiarmala. "They took the initiative and did the planning and execution," said Nadodi. "We just supported them. They put us up in their houses and gave us splendid meals three times a day. It was a complete team effort."

Nadodi spoke of the volunteers' motivation. "We decided to set up the school to help children overcome the trauma of the landslide. During the festivals of Onam and Eid most of the children stayed in the relief camp." he said. "Otherwise the

children would have to spend their time in relief camps, and they will be haunted by the horrific scenes. We also conducted a three day motivation camp for children to overcome their trauma.

Thus the school and children witnessed a proud and inspirational volunteering act of kindness. Tragedies invite greater, noble thoughts and collective action. The flood brought sufferings and pain but proud moments too ; bitter lessons assimilated from the cross roads of hardship and disaster. This story evokes the spirit of mutual co-existence of interdependence.

Jagathnath, Athul Krishna, Gopika, Safna
SKMJ high school ,Afrca

Going back to Villages

An Interview with Mayank Jain Helping Farmers who left a busy Corporate life to help farmers

Please share a small brief about yourself.

Mayank Jain hailing from Delhi with a degree in engineering in manufacturing processes and automation was a patent professional. He co founded Microx Foundation [Samarth] working with over 10,000 farmers in NCR Delhi, Gaya and Patna and also excelled in the voluntary sector.

What motivated you to go and work with farmers of Bihar?

It evolved from something personal and that's how I landed up. While working, I realized health is like a glass ball: once it is gone it never returns. As a kind of preventative healthcare, I started focusing on food. Food has powers to solve all issues that exists in the society. I realized our agriculture system is broken. The conclusion I arrived at, was that the problems of high healthcare costs, the degrading environment and social disparity can only be solved by fixing this broken system. That's why I landed in Bihar - exploring synergies with one of my friends - and that's how it all began. We started something as an experiment, but on field I get to closely witness the realities - and that's why I stayed.

My governing principles in life are to be empathetic and cherish human connections. Isn't financial reward important? Yes, of course - I need to take care of my bills. Everyone has a story - be patient, don't over-react; above all be kind. Giving up your privileges is the first step to a new journey, and I am proud of myself for that. Overall, it has been a journey of introspection, development as a human being, crisis management, and what not. While growing up in middle class urban setup - I used to have opinions on everything with(out) understanding - but exploring the hinterlands and conversations there broke my arrogance. I learned to be kind, to be empathetic and to be rationale (not eutopian). I got some life lessons, which I practice and cherish and keeps me motivated.

How do you think we can motivate children and youth to nurture the spirit of volunteering?

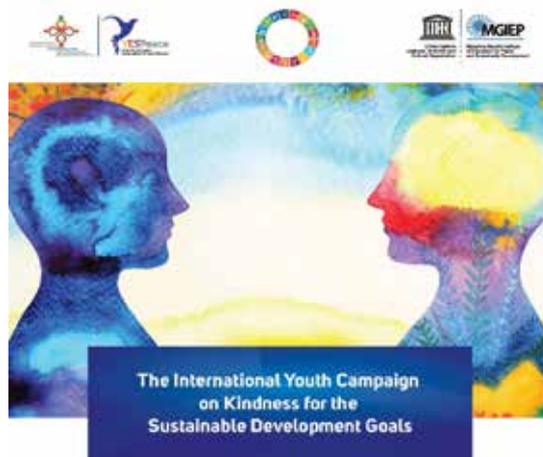
What I have seen is kids and youth these days - are becoming short tempered wanting quick results. They are digitally addicted and have been pampered enough to believe everything is good.

That needs to be broken. Time to call spade a spade - if they aren't good at something - give them critical feedback. Through media literacy - share conversations and stories, real grassroot stories, - on acts of kindness and foster an ecosystem which make them empathize. "An act of kindness creates an endless ripple - that comes back to you" Spirit of volunteering can come only when you are kind enough and not totally self-centered.

Get their hands dirty. Make them play outdoors. Encourage them doing physical activities.

You can be those pen warriors - that make them do actions. So do give them actionable points. Eg if anyone in Delhi/NCR wants to volunteer in doing urban farming and learn a skill or two in return - I am more than happy to take this.

The Peace Gong, Delhi Bureau



The International Youth Campaign on Kindness for the Sustainable Development Goals (ICYCK) is an empowering platform for young people to share about their actions on kindness, empathy, compassion and demonstrate how these can be used to address global challenges such as climate change, migration, diversity and social inclusion.

The purpose of the Campaign is to mobilize the world's youth to achieve the 17 SDGs through transformative acts of kindness. The overall goals of the Campaign are to:

- Create a positive culture of kindness where a person's selfless act matters, and show how it can make a difference to the achievement of SDGs
- Provide a comprehensive, independent, fun and engaging pathway for youth to demonstrate how an act of kindness is a non-fictional task and that being kind is being 'cool'.

Join the campaign and be part of a global movement!

The International Youth Campaign on Kindness for the SDGs invites global youth to share and submit original stories, videos and images of their favorite acts of kindness stories for the SDGs. By supporting the amplification and narration of the stories, UNICEF, UN Women and the campaign partners recognize youth as powerful agents of change for achieving the SDGs.

The need for peace

Prophet Mohmmad has said: "People who divide people or fight for one another... are not one of us".

Peace means you and me coming together for the development of the country. It means prosperity and comfort for all. Despite all our differences, peace is synonymous with reconciliation and co-existence while conflict leads to forced displacement and migration. A major cause of conflict is weak national unity due to internal conflicts and subsequent migration among youth in search of peace. In disturbed societies, youth are the most affected. Youth can play a major role in building nations but who will prevent a country from coming under the influence of other

nations if the young generation leaves? However, for a conflict free society, young people as well, must inculcate the habit of being kind and express gratitude to others. Kindness has many benefits including greater happiness, improved relationships, a healthy heart and in turn happy ageing.

Any person can be kind and it does not require much special effort. On top of it, being kind and compassionate helps having no ill-will against anyone. Most of the conflicts in our society will disappear when we make kindness and compassion part of our lives.

Zahra, 13 from Herat City, Afghanistan

Kindness in Action...

Members of the Peace Gong Manipur bureau reaching out to their less fortunate peers

"Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate." -Albert Schweitzer

For the children and youth involved with the Peace Gong Manipur, a one-day training programme in nonviolent communication on October 2, the International Day of Nonviolence gave new insights on how to reach out to young people with different aspects of Gandhian philosophy.

To take forward The Peace Gong's framework of enhancing one's nonviolent footprints, the team has decided to organize a series of programmes on 'simplicity and kindness' in different schools of Imphal. As part of this the first awareness programme was organized in the Maheirel Sindam Shang School located at Khurai Sajor Leikai, Imphal on October 10, 2018.

The School has altogether 43 students only from Pre-Nursery to class X. We were surprised to see a school with such small number of students. But the school has a joyous environment as the school was run by teachers who had a will of sacrificing and spirit of volunteerism. They are kind to the students as their own son/daughter. They spend their time from 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. for educating the students and tried to work hard with them. They spend their own money for getting the students school uniforms, books and other accessories.

Though the school's infrastructure was poor as they had no flooring, no proper walls and no proper benches; the teachers did not compromise with the education they tried to give to the students and made everything possible to make them happy. All the students are from poor background.

The Peace Gong team has now decided to work extensively with the School. We went back to the school on October 27, 2018 for conducting our next programme on 'simplicity and kindness'. As there was no sports facility in the School, we distributed sports kits and school accessories. We will now have regular sports programme in the school. We raise money from our parents, relatives and friends for the sports kits.

During interactions a student from Class IX, Mangalsana expressed the views of the class, "We are poor but we want to study to become a well-educated individual. But we can't get educational support from our families as they under Below Property Line. There is no one to help except our teachers and that's why we could manage to reach Class IX."

The students and teachers have inspired the Peace Gong Manipur volunteers to help the children with their education too. Irengbam Manoj Meitei, a college student and a coordinator of The Peace Gong has started to take English classes on alternate days for students from Class VIII-X. Nihas another coordinator is taking English classes for students from Class III-V. The Peace Gong is now enlisting more volunteers to reach out to more such schools where mostly poor children study.



Maisnam Anamika,
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“If the phenomenon of hatred, intolerance and ill-feelings have to be made outdated, then we should ensure that virtues of kindness, compassion, gratitude, appreciation and acceptance be ingrained as a habit right from childhood. Most conflicts in this world can be avoided if we practice these values.”

– The Peace Gong

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