

CHALK OUT

A Student-led EdZine

Care in the
times of Corona

ISSUE 2 | MARCH 2021



CHALKING IT OUT: A SECOND TIME!

Along with applause for the first issue, came in several suggestions for what the second issue could be about. We found many voices converging on the theme of 'care'. These voices, from our very first education seminar, resonated with us, partly because of the alliteration in the title, but mostly because of the pertinence of this four letter word now more than ever.

This simple four-letter word that spells c-a-r-e is packed with all kinds of meaning. It is the very reason for this zine to come into existence, and also perhaps why you're here, reading this!

Stay with us as we explore in the pages to come what care looks like: as an ideal, a practice, an experience, an action, an ethic, a moral imperative - and beyond. We hope that the care put into curating each page reaches you and finds an inkling of the same in you!

**Yours Caringly,
Chalk Out**

An Ed-zine from the education students of
School of Arts and Sciences,
Azim Premji University



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TEACHER FEATURE

From the horse's mouth.

Second in our series of Teacher Feature, **Mridula** gets candid with Ramchandar Krishnamurthy, an education professor at the Azim Premji University. He has had years of experience in the field of education, especially in schools.

In this video podcast, we have an interview, or rather, a free flowing conversation with him about what care has meant for him. He shares experiences from his personal life as well as from the frontlines of the field of education, pre-COVID19 as well as during the pandemic. He also elaborates on a bird's eye view about care from a philosophical perspective! Be sure to catch this engaging, amusing and insightful conversation with Ram!



Teacher Feature is a column that engages with the work of diverse educators in India. It gives us a peek into their quirks, how they think about classrooms and educating, and what they're doing differently.

Click here to catch it on

[YouTube!](#)



Mridula Kalluri
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PUTTING BACK THE 'SELF' IN SELF CARE.



Picture Credits: Manasi Barmecha

"ALL OF HUMANITY'S PROBLEMS STEM FROM MAN'S INABILITY TO SIT QUIETLY IN A ROOM ALONE," WROTE THE FRENCH PHILOSOPHER BLAISE PASCAL. CENTURIES LATER, **ABHINAV** AGREES WITH HIM AS HE WRITES THE FOLLOWING.

Suddenly, the ticks of the clock that signified the passing of time sounded different with the weight of all the new adjectives attached to them. Time had now become a thing that was 'trying' and 'uncertain'.

My personal favorite adage- ‘we’re all in this together’ entering my inbox from obscure airlines and websites I’d accidentally logged into once didn’t do much to help, piled on top of a tall pile of unclean dishes and my reluctant hands that hovered over the ‘join meeting’ button for the 563rd zoom meeting. In the confines of my room, I began to think of how important it is for us to figure out ways in which we can stay sane and keep up our suddenly very precious immunity to stay (strictly mentally) positive during these times rightly christened as ‘trying’.

Another word that was added to my increasingly medical vocabulary was ‘self-care’. What was this whole “self-care” thing that everyone was talking about and how do we go about actually caring for ourselves?

To begin with, we must understand what self-care isn’t.

It’s incredibly easy to confuse it with either self-improvement or self-indulgence. Self-improvement involves taking steps to become better in certain aspects of your life, such as fitness or skills, is generally approached with a mindset of fixing something, and ideally comes from a place of acceptance of a weakness. This can sometimes lead to feeling inadequate when you don’t follow through on actually improving, and might make you think that the only way that you will be happy is if you do something about it.



On the other hand, self-indulgence is when you satisfy all your pleasures and desires without many boundaries, to make yourself feel better in the short term. These behaviors mostly serve to provide instant gratification and are not sustainable in the long run. Keeping this in mind, self-care is something we initiate deliberately that keeps us mentally and physically fit and functional.

For most of us, our approach to self-care is the ‘cross-that-bridge-when-we-get-to-it’ kind, which means that we only think of caring for ourselves when

“
For most of us, our approach to self-care is the ‘cross-that-bridge-when-we-get-to-it’ kind
”

wounded emotionally or mentally- and the first aid we are equipped with for that is still inadequate, more so in a time where we're already dealing with an invisible foe.

I had never given self-care proper thought until a few months back. I believed I was mentally and physically fine and generally happy with my life, but this image I had of myself changed as it took the test of time and circumstance. They say that an empty mind is a devil's workshop. What they don't tell you is that this devil is an anxious creature that doesn't let you sleep, doom scrolling through Instagram and putting down scheduled headaches in your calendar, spiraling into ridiculous 'what-if' scenarios at the slightest provocation.



Not the conventional gory devil but somehow worse. The acceptance of the idea that I would have to work to be better made it much easier to start the work. I set down time-tables for myself just to have a structure to my day, exercised whenever I could and regulated my sleep strictly. Slowly, it got better. I was able to spend good time with myself, and to be able to do that is already a battle won. **"All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone," wrote the French philosopher Blaise Pascal. Centuries later, here I am, sitting alone, nodding at these words.**

Putting yourself in a teacher's position forces you to grasp a particular subject completely and thoroughly

I also made an attempt to explore what self-care would look like from an educational perspective. What could I do to enhance my learning experience and how would I cope with the sudden on-screen workload. To begin with, I decided to study a few topics which were not part of my academic curriculum at the moment.



Picture Credits: Abhinav Govindan

This gave me a sense that I still carried the power to learn autonomously within me and it also served as a much needed message to myself to remind me of my curiosity in the subject. It was quite the liberating experience and I found myself spending hours on a single problem and thinking of different ways of solving it. My willingness to learn was assertive of my core values. I also focused on trying to explain the topic in the simplest way possible, as if I were teaching a student, and this allowed me to cut out all the unnecessary information as well as find the gaps in my knowledge. I guess putting yourself in a teacher's position forces you to grasp a particular subject completely and thoroughly.

If there's something I want to leave you all with, it is that being happy takes effort and luckily for us, the tiniest, smallest steps are the ones that count the most!

Abhinav Govindan

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IS THERE LOVE IN TOUGH LOVE?

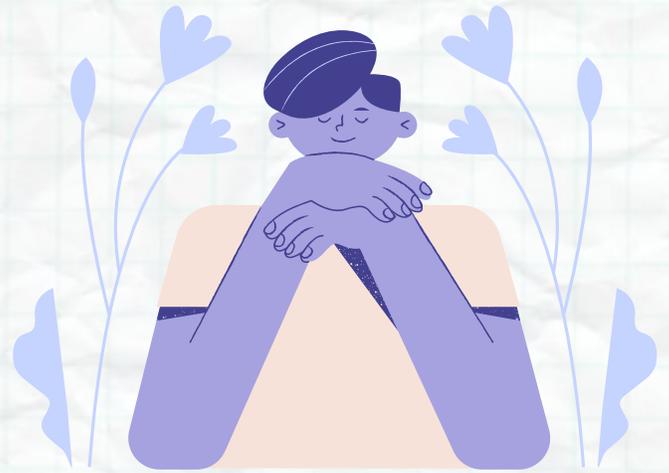
Samanvitha and Uthara tackle the idea of care in online classrooms, challenging and indulging the age old tough love debate. Is it true that what doesn't kill us really makes us stronger? Uthara would disagree, at least as long as we are zooming.

Care in the times of Corona

What does it mean to care? What is care made up of? Is care an action, a feeling, an intention, or a series of processes that lead to specific outcomes for the giver and receiver? Trying my best not to squeeze out the warmth from that term, I've been pondering about the nature of care, and here's my juvenile attempt at coming up with a functional definition for it.

Care = Consideration + Understanding + Support

From the caregiver's perspective, I believe these are the components of care, often in that chronological order. Problems are caused when we jump some steps or confuse these three with their less accurate synonyms.



Consideration: The acknowledgement of another person as a living entity with emotions, feelings and thoughts just as valid and justified in their world as your own. A sense of gratitude for the presence of people in your life.

Understanding: A sincere attempt to get to know another person's truth, to see beyond how you feel about a person's actions/reactions, and instead into the cause for why they may have acted/ reacted that way. Only after the first two steps have been initiated can true support, the part of the definition that's most important, be attempted.

Support can often get smothering, unhelpful or sometimes entirely selfish without the first two parts. Support is extending your own resources to the other person and being around while they grow at their own pace.

We find the idea of tough love to be prevalent in the Indian context very often, so much so that the alternative hardly even strikes us as a legitimate way of doing things. In classrooms, teachers might be driven to being strict in order to maintain discipline, so that classes are conducted smoothly, and the expected outcomes of the curriculum are 'achieved.' But who is at the centre of such a system in place? The child, the passive curriculum to be completed, or the teacher's need to put a tick mark on what's been taught? How much 'love' is really present in tough love?

During the Zoom era, which demands us to be compassionate without being too indulgent, these seem to be very pertinent questions to ask. The mutual part of care needs to be emphasised now more than ever. What kind of care can students extend to make the entire experience meaningful for both the parties. I was in conversation with Uthara, who shares her personal encounters with tough love and discusses their efficacy in the online mode.

Tough Love: Are teachers really strict for our own good?

It wouldn't be too much of a sweeping generalisation to claim that almost all people that have undergone schooling have encountered a strict teacher. They range from common to uncommon depending on where you're studying. In some schools they are the lonely few, lurking in corners, never to be loved by the students they teach, while in others, they are the vast majority. By strict, I mean the teachers that don't hesitate to thrash and hit and yell. The kind that crack jokes at the expense of some students, verbally abuse, or are hard task masters who work their students with no sympathy or empathy. They have taken it upon their shoulders to discipline all the students they come across and demand absolute and utter obedience in return.



The interesting thing is that they are usually doing it “for your own good”.

My own life is littered with instances of mean teachers who seemed to adhere to this peculiar and counterintuitive brand of care. Jyothi ma'am from the 4th standard, who would hit us with a scale if we didn't learn our tables or forgot our drawing book. Bhaskar sir from the 7th standard who would yell at us in front of the whole school if our shoes were not polished. My beloved (ahem) music teacher who demanded absolute obedience of her every word, a 105% effort and tolerated no excuses whatsoever.

I've often reflected upon the role of tough love as an aide to successful learning . It is presented to us as care with foresight, because if we aren't whipped into shape right now, the world will eventually do it for us the hard way.



— “ —
It is presented to us as care with foresight, because if we aren't whipped into shape right now, the world will eventually do it for us the hard way.
— ” —

But I do think it is worth reflecting on certain aspects of tough love in a classroom. What is the educational outcome to this kind of a teaching model? How does it ultimately impact the student's understanding of the relevant subjects or skills? What is its emotional impact?

Due to my lack of actual teaching experience, all I can do is reflect on my life as a student. For one, I know for a fact that I usually end up doing well in courses with strict teachers. I spend more time doing work out of fear of the teacher, hold that subject in higher regard and plan around the needs of that course. If we want to define educational outcomes solely from an assessment point of view, strict teachers have almost always given me a better one. I usually end up having a fairly decent understanding of the subject too, because I have put in more effort towards it.

I also find myself going back to demanding and strict teachers. For instance, I have continued to learn from the same music teacher because she pushes me to produce outcomes I am often proud of. This is however not a very universal experience. In a brief chat with my friends, I realised some people end up doing better in subjects with strict teachers while others do worse out of sheer hatred for the subject taught by them. Their instinct tells them to run away, to get it over with. This, therefore, begs the question; does tough love actually work if the teacher genuinely cares about the student and wants them to succeed?

There is one thing I can say with certainty. Being overly strict and demanding has a greater risk of making the motivation for learning extrinsic in students.

The constant pressure and push from the teacher becomes a habit, and the students have no commitment to the subject apart from the one they have to the teacher. I myself am very guilty of studying for a subject just to appease an authoritative teacher. This is especially true in cases where the classroom discourse is highly non-conversational and mechanical, in which case a demanding and highly strict teacher would fail to appeal to a student's sense of wonder and so, fail to hone intrinsic motivation. **Fear is also a difficult emotion to forget.** If the student has been emotionally affected by the teacher, enough to be scared of them, there is a chance that the student will end up having phobic feelings for the subject or end up fearful of attending school in general.



I personally do find differences with how scared I am of the strict teachers that teach me, whether online or offline. I am unfortunately terrified of said music teacher even now, but it's a more distant and vague feeling at present. The fear I have is quite strange and unexplainable, especially at this point in my life. Indeed, I am on the brink of real adulthood and any childish qualms I might have about standing up for myself are completely my own fault.

But another aspect makes tough love very strange for me, specific to this quarantine. The very overwhelming sense of realness I experience when learning in person is missing. I am not sitting there in front of the teacher, holding on to their every word. I don't break into a sweat or feel my heart pounding every time they yell at me or scold me. I don't even have to actually make eye contact with them. All I see is the LCD display of my computer. I know that in reality my teacher sits far away on her desk and teaches me with the same disconnect I experience. From the teacher's perspective we are a set of pictures on a screen. How does one care in this case? It is hard to care for the pictures on a screen, much less be firm or scold them in hopes of preparing them for their future, I would imagine. Similarly at our end, that very real sense of dependence or extrinsic motivation we got from our strict teacher has been severely damped. So tough love as a concept, doesn't work as well over online classes!

I think it is worth reflecting on how we would want to balance strictness and firmness with compassion and empathy. Being tough is not a panacea to classroom practice, nor is it necessarily bad in many cases. One thing that's certain is that it's difficult to care in different ways when we are separated and isolated from one another. But at the end of the day, we should never never stop trying to care, however we choose to do it.



Artwork by Yazhini AS



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A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

I see my child in the wee hours of the morning
Playing with his pencils as the screen drones on
The voices behind the screen tired
Of trying their best, their own lives on hold.
I know that soon after his classes end
He will come to me, asking to play cricket
Or something else he recently saw on a smaller screen
I have my own screen to be glued to
Endless meetings as 'work from home' reigns
I wish I could shut my devices and tell him
'Let's go beta', today we'll play on the ground.
I attempt to explain to him what the word corporate
means
In vain as he pleads me to just call in sick
If he could just go to school-
Play pranks on his buddies and come back with stories
It would be good for him, I tell myself



But I can't help be a little relieved myself.
Of a responsibility; shoes I can only half fill
Of a burden I may not be strong enough to lift
I reprimand myself
Did you hear me, diary?
Calling my own child a burden- my heart knows I don't mean it
Yet my to-do list throbs of a pain
Of trying to be a playmate, a teacher, a friend
Wishing he would elude my sight for a few hours
Yet, at the end of the day
When I finally trust the outside world to hold my precious child
Happy as I am that he can finally go out
I shout and ask him to come back one last time
To straighten his mask and tell him to be careful.

As I sigh and enjoy my tea, reheated the third time.
I peak out the window for one more look
Out of sight, never out of mind

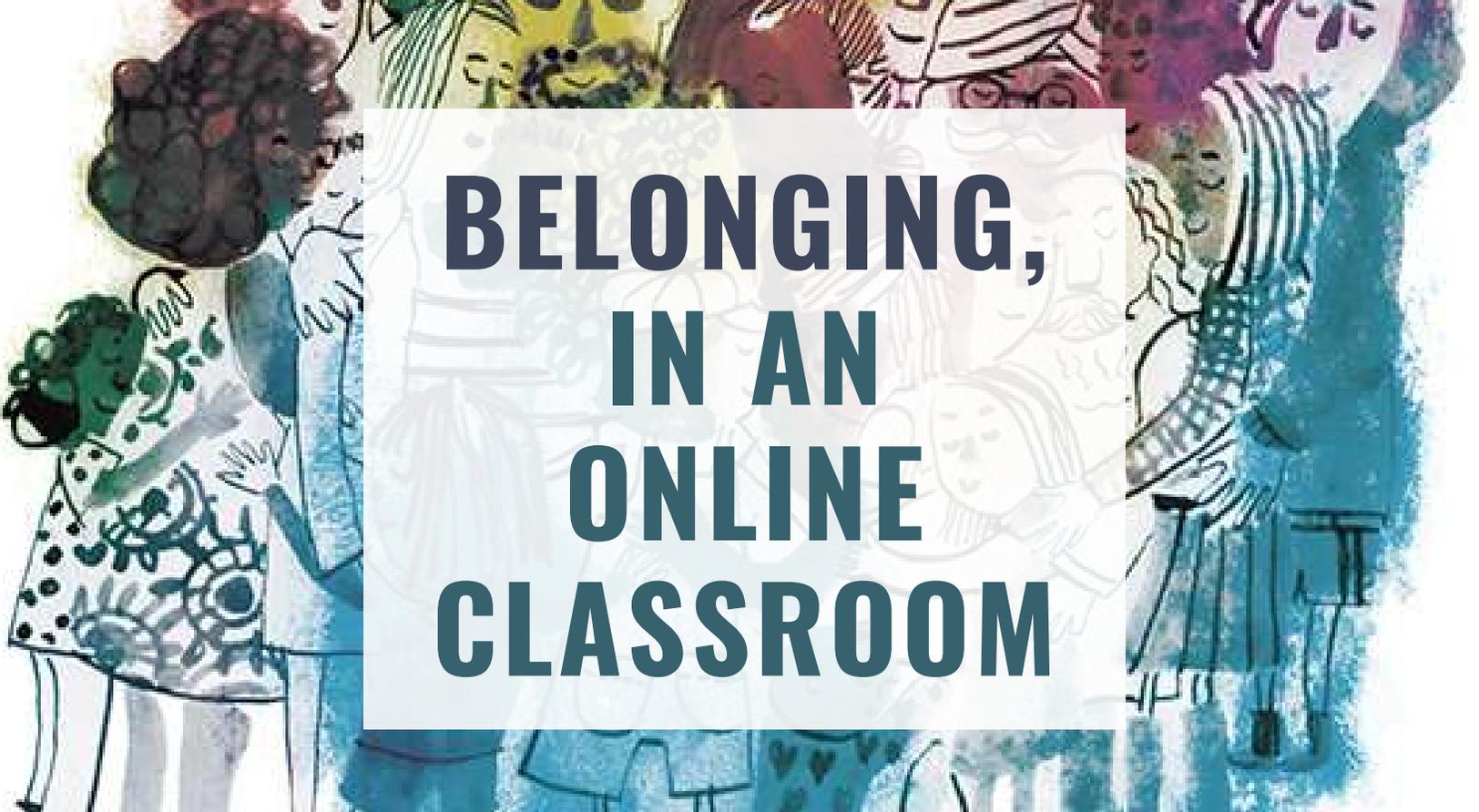
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Belonging in an online classroom





BELONGING, IN AN ONLINE CLASSROOM

**STAY WITH VEDA,
AS SHE DRAWS OUT HER
UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT
BELONGING IN A CLASSROOM
FEELS LIKE WHILE EQUIPPING
US WITH SOME TOOLS AND
WAYS TO BRING IT TO PRAXIS.**

The online schooling experience for most of us has been a series of ups and downs, with eager curveballs around every corner. New classmates, new ways of learning and new knowledge played a huge role in this thrilling adventure.

One of the endeavours of our university experience, and perhaps even education, is to build meaningful connections with those around us. I believe that this attempt ought to be carried on into the online setting as well.

Naturally, enabling an inclusive learning environment is very important to our pursuit of this end.

A refined interpretation of inclusion developed by Eric W. Carter at Vanderbilt University, is the feeling of belonging to something much greater than ourselves.

This naturally begs the question of its relevance in an online classroom atmosphere. Does developing a sense of belonging even matter in this hectic online trimester? It most certainly does! After all, creating such meaningful connections between individuals entails the appreciation of the contribution of each individual and thereby encourages a sense of belonging. To ensure a sense of belonging amongst members of a classroom, certain parameters hold importance.

Accessibility is one such important parameter. One's connection to online settings differs from in-person classroom-relations. A fundamental requisite for online interactions is having access to the tools needed for such interactions. Access to a stable internet connection and a functioning computer have become indispensable essentials!

“**However, is accessibility sufficient for inclusion?**”

Will the provision of the two essentials effortlessly enable a sense of belonging? I believe it wouldn't suffice. This leads us to the second parameter to consider - equal participation. The need to be seen, heard and understood is inherent in the participants of any classroom. Every student is unique in their own way, and therein lies diversity.



Providing for equal participation will definitely aid in meeting these needs. **A combination of considering accessibility and equal participation might achieve greater results. But is that it?**

While we think of creative means to accomplish equal participation, **it is vital to consider the various modes of engaging with an online setting.** Different people experience different levels of comfort with online environments.

Some might find using these modes easy as pie, others might find it excruciatingly difficult! Hence, **paying heed to the diversity of experiences in engaging with the online setting might benefit the classroom.**

But who is responsible for executing these parameters? Does an instructor solely shoulder the burden or does it depend also on the students? It's fair to think of this responsibility as a shared one. Students being conscious of this individual responsibility brings a greater body of individuals who are supportive of marginalized voices and ensures healthy classroom participation.

Most of my ramblings, thus far are perhaps only lofty ideals. Implementing these parameters and making them a reality will require an unimaginable amount of effort. However, there is no harm in remembering them while participating in online classrooms. Reflecting upon these parameters has helped me realise a few things that might help to keep in mind while participating in a class; a few guidelines, if you will.

mind while planning for online schooling environments, whether you're a student-presenter or an instructor. For example, my sister's school provided her with a combination of online chemistry laboratory applications, apps creating books, and sketching tools to ensure that the students didn't miss out on the more engaging aspect.

The following are some interesting resources that I picked up on my online journey-

- [Royal Society of Chemistry](#).
- [Padlet](#)
- [Venngage](#)
- [Overleaf](#)



Making provisions for different modes of engaging with new information in an online trimester, undoubtedly diversifies teaching methods. It is extremely important to keep the difference in consuming information in



Creating peer-support groups is one manner of going the extra mile to build bonds outside synchronous class hours. Research shows that peer-learning is an especially effective method of developing a sense of belonging in students in such groups. As important as it is to share, it is equally important to listen. Having frequent conversations with instructors might also boost the feeling of belonging. It provides an

insight into the experience of a student, useful in not only setting the student at ease but also as a means of evaluating the success of online schooling.

SOME QUIET TIME



The daily humdrum of an online environment can cause fatigue, restlessness, and disinterest. **It is also valuable to take a step back and reflect upon participating in such environments, the amount of space we take up, and the demands of these atmospheres.** Finding peace within this fast-paced world of ours ought to become a natural part of our routines.

While these suggestions do not achieve 'complete' inclusion, they do help in fostering a feeling of belonging. The online setting certainly calls for a complete rethinking of the process of learning. It reminds us of our mutual-dependency on one another. Caring in such confusing times brings its own set of challenges.

Nevertheless, the goals of an in-person class persevere, and are valuable in establishing boundaries, ideals, and goals for online set-ups.

Perhaps, remembering our effort towards building meaningful connections and a sense of belonging within ourselves might help harness this mutual-dependency in a productive and healthy manner.



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STAYING AFLOAT

AMIDST WHIRLPOOLS AND TIDE POOLS IN THE OCEAN, FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE IS NOT THE EASIEST, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT TO KEEP THE BOAT FROM TIPPING OVER.

READ ON AS **DRISSYA** TELLS US WHAT HELPED HER STAY AFLOAT DURING THE PANDEMIC.



Things were all over the place and everything happening around me made me anxious and I imagined the worst of the worst; as they say 'an idle mind is a devil's workshop'. So, I began to introspect and keep myself occupied. I began to work out and meditate. My family was a great support and spending time with them put me at ease and helped me stay hopeful. Yet, there was something lacking; I didn't get to interact with others as much.

As a student and a future teacher, I knew the value of having lively interactions and exploring and learning new things from every conversation.

I tried to overcome this by connecting with people through chats and calls, but somehow that didn't suffice. That is when I began talking to the kids in the neighbourhood and helping them with their academics, which gave me a new perspective of looking at things.

“ Being able to understand the other person is what care is all about, isn't it? ”



I realised the need for creativity in dialogues; it could be the in-classroom dialogues where teachers facilitate lectures and discussions or even in casual conversations. Now I look at dialogues to be much more than a mere exchange of words. It is a medium through which both the teacher and student learn. They facilitate and help build better relationships. Being able to understand the other person is what care is all about, isn't it?

Engaging in dialogues in creative ways can not only enhance the learning process but can also provide us with some really meaningful experiences.

In my small attempt to act upon this understanding, I thought of new ways to engage with the children. When they would tell me that their online lectures felt like boring radio broadcasting, I made their lessons and discussions more alive and active outside their online classes. Together we found new ways of learning different school subjects. We would play games, have storytelling, drama and art sessions. The excitement I saw in their eyes kept me motivated and I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with them.

Having had the opportunity to interact with these children made me realise that caring for others could also be a form of self care. Self care isn't necessarily only about oneself. Truth be told, providing care and making others feel cared for can make one feel a lot happier and more satisfied too. This year made me realise the importance of respecting myself and my needs. Looking back, I am grateful that I could cope with the different situations I faced this year. As a learner and a future teacher, I believe that providing care for ourselves and to others should be our priority and the rest will follow with great assurance.

“Self care isn't necessarily only about oneself. Truth be told, providing care and making others feel cared for can make one feel a lot happier and more satisfied.”

Drissy

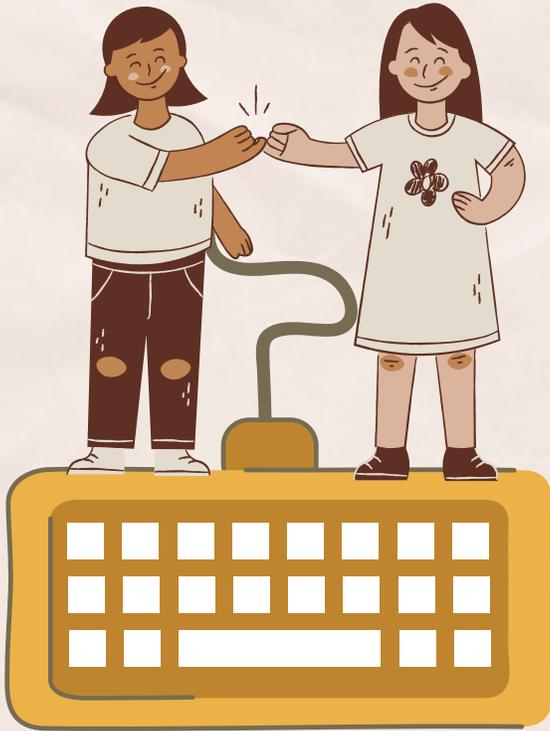
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Handful of Care |



A HANDFUL OF CARE



Waving to me before swinging on their way to class,
those hands now stay still while trudging back to the screen.
The hands that used to lock pinkie fingers with me,
to promise that they'd not play for too long in the
playground,
now link with mine to assure that they'll pay attention in
class.

But one thing has remained constant in this new world.
Those hands still give the same hugs,
bone-crushing bear hugs that fill me with hope.
Maybe those hands haven't changed that much at all.

On the way to the bus stop,
hands grasping mine tightly,
in fear of the dog across the street,
my sister walked hesitantly.

Now, in the days of the new normal,
those hands cling the same way,
scared of horror movies instead.

The hands that once moved animatedly,
weaving stories of classmates' shenanigans,
now glide over the keyboard effortlessly,
typing and asking the teacher questions.

Knocking on my classroom door,
those hands once borrowed my water bottle.

They now knock on my bedroom door,
sneaking me snacks in between classes.



Harshada

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2020-2023



What do the usual receivers of care have to say about the idea?

Manasi finds out in conversations with her little friends.

“Care, yeah my teacher said to share things with everyone so I give my sister a chocolate, but only if I have two!”

-Khushal, 11
who usually has only one chocolate

Caring as sharing

FROM THOSE
ON THE FRONT
LINES



Caring as help

म्हे मद् करू कधी कधी भांडा
लगावने, मद् करन चहिजे
(Marwadi)

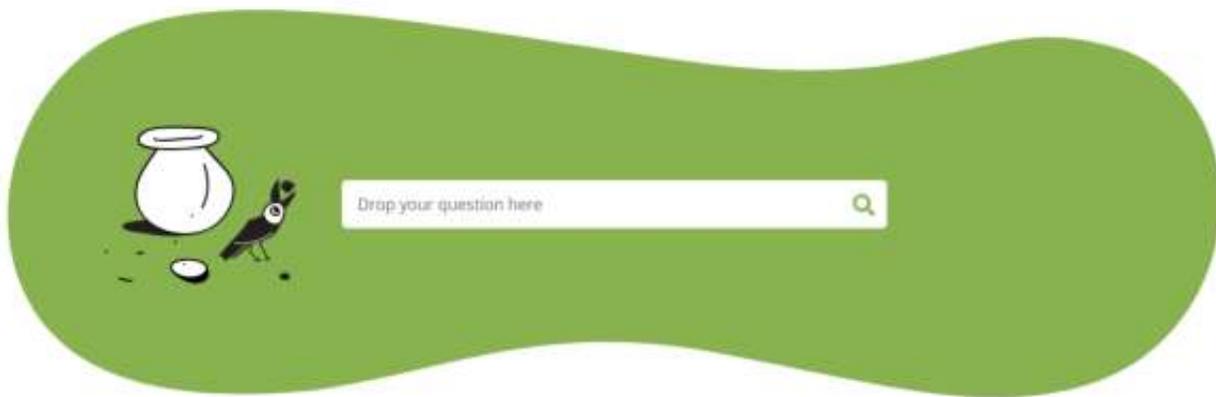
“Care, yeah of course we have to care- I sometimes help mumma to put all the washed utensils on place.”

-Tejal, 9,
often found answering
questions about the
whereabouts of spoons in
the house

**Caring as knowing
when to help**

“I think sometimes mumma cares too much. I can also care for myself. I would only care for someone if they asked me for help.”

- Yuti, 12, a victim of care



Sawaliram, a project born in 1978, seeks to give us a glimpse into the rich and multifaceted world of a child. It has a vast repository of resources including myriad questions from children across India about any and everything. Here, we take a look at what kinds of questions have been asked around care. Do visit the [website](#) for some fun scrolling!



इंटेन्सिव्ह केअर युनिट म्हणजे काय? तिथे रुग्णावर काय उपचार केले जातात?

What is an Intensive Care Unit (ICU)?
What treatment is provided to a patient in the ICU?
Kishor, Balbharati (Pune);
Issue 3; March 1977

वन्य प्राण्यांचे संरक्षण आपण का करावे?

Why should we protect wild animals?
Kishor, Balbharati (Pune); Issue 1;
January 1980 मोहोने, कल्याण ,
Maharashtra

Why do we care about studying more than playing?
New Child Care High School (State Board)
Boniyaar, Kashmir , Jammu & Kashmir

मां की ममता पिता के अपेक्षा अधिक क्यों होती है?

Why is mother's care greater than that of a father?

Why do we care about bad handwriting?
New Child Care High School (State Board)
Boniyaar, Kashmir,
Jammu & Kashmir



Animals in classrooms, we approve ruff!



READ ON AS **SHARDA** EXPLORES THE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ANIMALS SHARE SPACE WITH STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, TO KEEP THEM COMPANY AND LEND SUPPORT.

Have you heard people say that the journey with their pets made them realize that they need their pets as much, or perhaps even more than their pets need them? When I first got a pet, this is exactly how I felt too! I have always loved petting and pampering any animal that approaches me or lets me approach it. It really cheers my day up. The pandemic however, has minimized interactions of this nature significantly. I find myself longing for the company of a dog or a cat or even that of a monkey really! As I scan the streets for friendly non-human life, I wonder why I am desperate for animal company, and why it is so important to me.

When one of my **human** friends approached me for emotional support recently, I felt helpless as I couldn't do much. I could not be around her in person. She decided to get herself a pet, soon after. I told her that it was a lovely idea especially at a time such as this when the company of loved ones is difficult to come by.

It is not uncommon to see people find joy in the company of their pets. Many researchers have explored animal-human interactions in the context of the effect such interactions have on the mental state of the people involved. Here, I attempt to expand upon the idea of having animals in educational institutions, with specific regard to the accompanying psychological, social and physical development of students.

Classroom Animals

Animals have been part of educational activities for a long time - as subjects in scientific experiments, medical training and research. Sandra Herbert and Julianne Lynch (both Educators) wrote an article, 'Classroom Animals Provide More Than Just Science Education', which investigates classroom animals and their interaction with kids at an Australian primary school. Here, having classroom animals was mandatory under the school policy. But why?

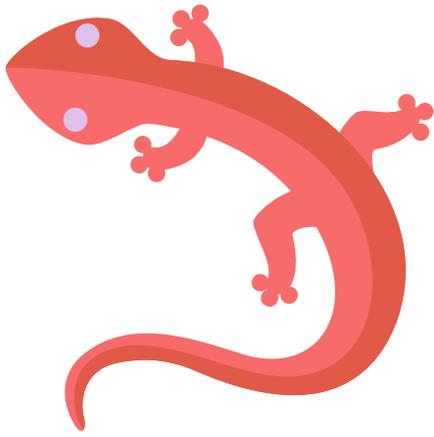
Scientists make a claim that positive interactions with animals produce high levels of oxytocin in the brain as a response to love and bonding, coupled up with a dramatic decrease in the levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) in the subjects interacting. This helps improve their mental states. Many schools around the world have adapted the practice of having animals as means for offering emotional support to their students or as part of therapy. These animals are known as 'Emotional Support Animals' (ESA) or 'Therapy Animals'. The development of connections through interaction with animals enhances social bonds outside the classroom - at home, with friends and with the larger society.

Teachers assert that classroom animals may serve a role in humane education which is designed to nurture respect, kindness, empathy and positive attitudes to people and other animals.

Notably, the dimension of animals in the classroom for science education is not limited to laboratory experiment based studies. The interviewers discovered that the presence of animals motivated children to engage with and get excited about learning, specifically learning science!



Picture Credits: Risha Vaidya



One of the teachers says; "...we have these cool animals at school and the kids, like you know, might not be sort of engaged in other ways, but love the lizards. Those boys that are 10 and 11 and don't really want to be at school but yet with the lizard, they're happy to watch the lizard and maybe write about the lizard and that sort of stuff."



"I find myself longing for the company of a dog or a cat or even that of a monkey really, as I scan the streets for friendly non-human life!"



Therapy Animals

Studies are now investigating if human-animal interactions can help with conditions like autism, ADHD, etc. in children. The 'Saraswathi Kendra Learning Centre' located in Chennai admits children with learning disabilities and provides creative ways of addressing their specific needs.

Here, Dr. Ruffles is a favourite and is popular for lending help and support to the students. And yes, he is a dog! Although he has been trained, he is basically himself during his interaction with the kids- 'non-judgmental, attentive and very affectionate'. The doctors tell the children that Dr. Ruffles understands whatever language they can speak,

which puts them at ease and prompts them to speak out. This kind of therapy has been extremely successful, especially with children who for many reasons find it difficult to communicate with others in daily situations.

In many schools around the world like KFI (Krishnamurti Foundation of India) and other sister schools in America and Britain, nature walks, bird watching, and a campus that is inhabited by very many different kinds of animals are part of the ordinary day.

I participated in these activities as a student in KFI and am convinced that much of my love for animals came to be because of this. Our house cat, humorously named 'Wiggly bum', was not just cute and old, he was often my emotional support too.



Taking into Consideration the Well-Being of Animals



Despite the numerous advantages of classroom animals, it is essential to examine certain issues that may arise in such environments. Some view these constant interactions with animals, especially in classrooms, as potentially disruptive to the privacy and space of the animals themselves, as they are being engaged with constantly.

Animal spaces such as classrooms are also criticized for inadequate space, facilities, and as a practice that may not take into consideration, the health of the animal itself. Animal abuse and hostile treatment is another persisting issue, and the lack of knowledge and learning about how to interact with animals can lead to problems, even with children.

On the flip side, frequent interactions with animals outside the four walls of the classroom, in manners that are not pre-arranged, can help the children themselves develop attitudes of care for the natural world around them.

In conclusion, the role of animals, trained or untrained, in all aspects of human life is remarkable and worthy of attention regardless of whether they are the recipients of our care or the other way around in small ways. Animals in classrooms and other educational spheres could come to play crucial roles in carrying forward a humane education. The simple gestures of compassion, loyalty, care and love that could result from such sustained interactions, makes them valuable companions.

Sharda CSR

B.A (Humanities)

2020-2023



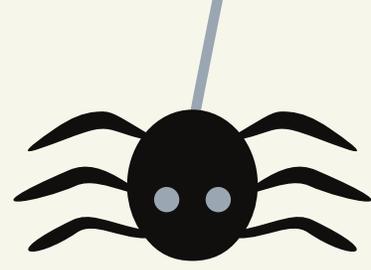
Follow up Questions

When we use these animals in classrooms as support for the students, do we reduce them to mere resources and in the process ignore their well being?

Does having a pet make you find aspects of you that you thought were non-existing such as, singing funny songs, thinking of creative, intelligent games to keep your pet engaged and being more caring, patient and forgiving?



सबका प्यारा घर दिविक रमेश



सदा यही तो कहती हो माँ
घर यह सिर्फ हमारा अपना,
लेकिन माँ कैसे मैं मानुं?
घर तो यह कितनों का अपना!



देखो तो कैसे ये चूहे
खेल रहे हैं पकड़म-पकड़ी
कैसे मच्छर टहल रहे हैं
कैसे मस्त पड़ी है मकड़ी!

और छिपकली को देखो
चलती है जो गश्त लगाती,
अरे कतारें बांधे-बांधे
चींटी-चींटी दौड़ी जाती।



और उधर आंगन में देखो
पंछी कैसे झपट रहे हैं,
बिलकुल दीदी और मुझ जैसे
किसी बात पर झगड़ रहे हैं।



इसीलिए तो कहता हूँ माँ
घर न समझो सिर्फ हमारा।
सदा-सदा से जो भी रहता
सबका ही है घर यह प्यारा।



Picture Credits: Manasi Barmecha

Of Wonder, Warmth and
Worry



OF WONDER, WARMTH AND WORRY

ABHISHEK RAO WRITES ABOUT THE DIFFERENT FORMS
THAT CARE HAS TAKEN IN HIS LIFE THROUGH 12TH
GRADE INTO HIS APU YEARS

12th Standard is one of the most defining moments of student life and easily one of the most eventful phases for a child. And if you're Indian, the entire family somehow feels like their own lives are at stake. Faced with these myriad challenges, I went for the classic solution: joined some science and math tuitions. Quintessential 12th grade move.

“

Now, if you're thinking this is going to be one of those- I was forced into science but have now found my true calling-which is alpine mountain climbing, you're in for a surprise!

”

Much to my own surprise as well, my tuition turned out to be a place where I could truly grow and learn. The immense sense of wonder and curiosity that my teacher had for the world around us rubbed off on me and made me think not just in terms of formulas and equations but rather the deeper explanations behind every concept. By giving us a host of examples and analogies, he made us look at problems in a multitude of ways and not just take the traditional approach. He once explained the idea of limits, in mathematics, by comparing it with a goal scored by a football player. Going over the footage either from the beginning or the end would still converge at the moment the goal was scored, just as the left and right hand limits converge to a single point.

The efforts made by my teacher helped me experience the sheer joy of learning and inspired me to undertake the pursuit of sharing it with others.

It was thus that I decided to become a teacher, wondering what I would do in class to open the eyes of students to truly see what lies around us and our relationship with it. I dreamt of being that cool teacher in school, walking into a classroom, holding a guitar and explaining the concept of standing waves to the students through a song. But there was a question that still lingered in my mind;

“ ***Is being equipped with knowledge of the subject and relying on a certain pedagogy the only necessity for being a good teacher?*** ”

Reminiscing about it now, I realized that care was also an underlying and important factor in the experiences I had with my teacher. Our interactions would not just be about matters pertaining to the classroom, but would extend beyond it. He would often enquire about how I was doing outside academics and school and there was this feeling that he showed genuine interest in me as a whole. This, I feel, motivated me to prepare for and attend tuition, which in turn helped me spend more time with science and mathematics, resulting in my boosted interest towards the same.



Picture Credits: Swathi Aravind

Subsequently, upon arriving at my university (the Azim Premji University), it was delightful to encounter an ethic of care, right from the seniors to the faculty. An example of this that springs to mind is the lighting of lamps near the lawn that brought our orientation week to a close. It acted as a culmination of all the warmth and love we had received during the week, whether it be through personally reaching out to us or creating an environment of safety. The mere recognition that there were all these people, trying to create a home away from home for such a diverse set of juniors was heartwarming.



Apart from this, I found the mentor-mentee system to be particularly interesting. The system involved a group of students who would be assigned to a particular faculty, whom one could approach for a variety of things, including academic advice and, if they felt comfortable, personal issues as well. In all candor, while this was an informal relationship, I felt that I did not engage much initially. However, after we shifted to online classes, the mentors started to play a more important role than they used to before. Not only did they reassure us about the way in which college would proceed, but also showed more interest in aspects of our life other than academics. The idea that someone out there is invested in your well being and worries about your future was stirring.

From these personal experiences, I was able to reach a few conclusions regarding the relevance of care in education. Firstly, its impact in the case of academics is that it fosters the right kind of environment for learning by making the student feel secure and hence comfortable enough to participate, ask for aid when required, and pay more attention to the encouragement and advice offered to them by the teacher.

“

Moreover, being bound to an ethic of care can help develop the emotional capacities of students, by allowing them to recognize the frailties and limitations of the human condition.

”

By experiencing a caring relationship, the students are more likely to be empathetic towards their peers and carry forward the care they received.



G R Abhishek Rao

B.Sc. (Physics)

2019-2022



DOES THE PM REALLY CARE?

THIS LETTER CANDIDLY SPEAKS ABOUT THE HARSH REALITIES OF AN IRONICALLY NAMED FUND. PRERANA ARGUES THAT 'CARE IS NOT ACHIEVED BY SAYING YOU CARE. THERE HAVE TO BE ACTIONS TO SHOW FOR IT'.

EDITED BY MANASI, RUCHI AND VEDA

To,
Prime Minister's Office
Secretariat Building
Delhi, New Delhi

Subject: An Inquiry into the PM Cares Fund.

Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

As a student and citizen of this country, of which you are the elected leader, I am writing to you to share some concerns and seek light on an issue that has been troubling me for some time.

The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic from early March 2020 caused an unprecedented crisis. It has sent a large percentage of the Indian population into spirals of medical and financial crises. On March 27th, 2020, the PMO created a Public Charitable Trust fund. As stated on the official website, its aim is:

1. "To undertake and support relief or assistance of any kind..."
2. "To render financial assistance...to the affected population"

It was named the '**Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund**' or, as it is more popularly known, the **PM CARES Fund**.

On the website, you urge voluntary contributions from people of all walks of life. The only existing public audit report on the PM CARES Fund states that between the date of its creation and March 31st, 2020, the account had gathered a total of Rupees 30,76,62,56,047 (3076.62 crores) in the form of donations from people across the country as well as abroad. This large amount in such a short period of time was gathered because people cared. They wanted to help by giving to others, to do their bit to alleviate the suffering of others. The people who contributed entrusted you, as the Chairman of this fund, to give their care to someone who needs it. They trusted you to care and to do right by their caring.

The fiscal year, however, ended on March 31st, 2020, and so did further public information about the details of this fund. A significant amount of the information available on the website pertains to how citizens and foreign nationals can contribute to the fund through donations, and very little on how to avail such funds, or how they have been used during the crisis. The only information now available about how this fund has been sanctioned is buried in the FAQ section of the website, which states the following:

Q.17 How much money has been sanctioned from PM CARES Fund?

So far, an amount of Rs. 3100 Crore has been allocated from PM CARES Fund for the following activities:-

- a. Rs. 2000 Crore : For supply of 50,000 'Made-in India' ventilators to Government Hospitals run by Centre/States/UTs
- b. Rs. 1000 Crore : For care of migrant labourers (funds allotted to State/UT Govts.)
- c. Rs. 100 Crore : For vaccine development

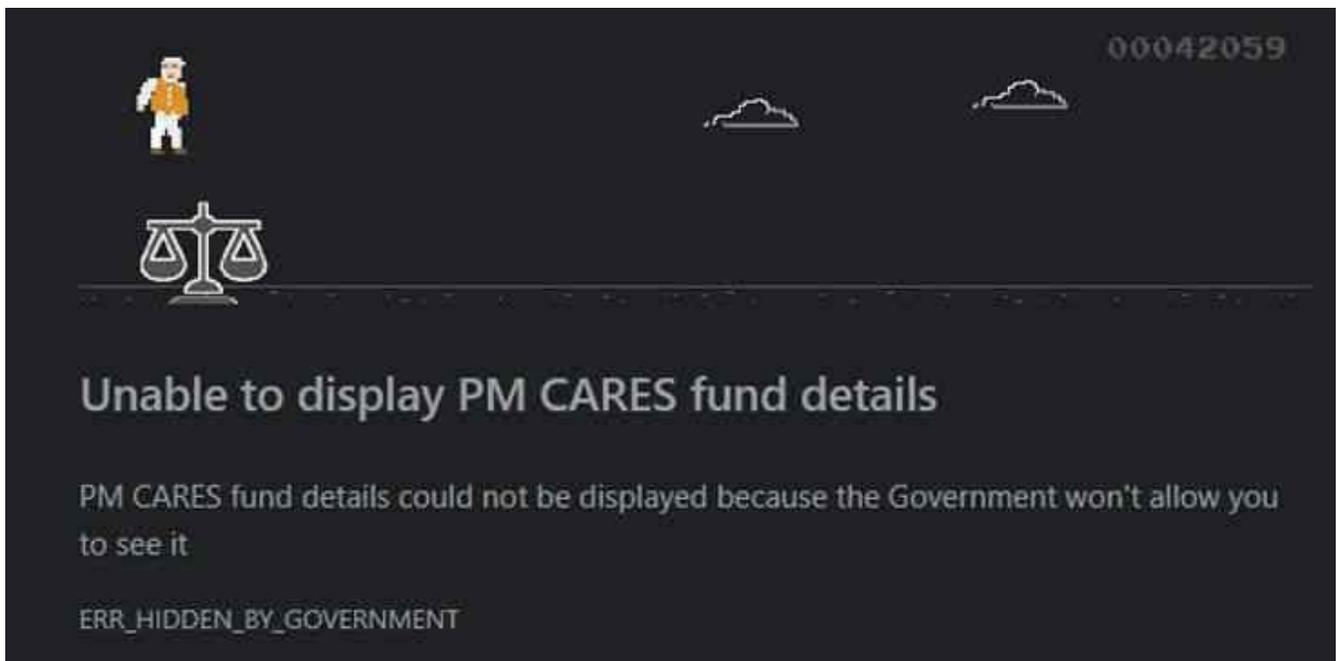
Source: pmcares.gov

For a fund of this magnitude, the provided figures only indicate broad brush strokes. Aren't there detailed accounts of where the money went and how it was used?

Members of the public who have filed RTIs to better understand the use of these funds have hit dead-ends. They have been told they do not have access to such information. How is this possible, Hon'ble Prime Minister? Isn't PM CARES a Public Charitable Trust? And as a Public Charitable Trust, isn't information about these public funds the constitutional right of any citizen who wants to find out more?

In addition, the PM Cares Fund is 100% exempt from taxation under the law. This is usually the case only if the fund applies a minimum of 85% of its income towards charitable purposes.

You have that money because people care.



Picture Credits: Reddit User on Pm Funds

It concerns me that information about the beneficiaries of this charity is not transparently available. It also concerns me that a fund such as this, accumulated from donations, will not allow for part of the money to be taxed and channelled towards benefitting state welfare – another way it could have been used for public goods in this time of crisis. Why is the flow of funds from this Public Charitable trust blocked doubly, in terms of information about it, as well as the possibility of it going towards state welfare?

Speaking of state welfare, although the FAQ response states that money has been diverted to the care of the migrant labourers, ventilators, and development of vaccines, I wonder if a portion of the funds could have been channelled towards the field of education? India has one of the largest youth populations in the world and as such, the burden on the government to help this immense group of people is significant. As a student myself, news about the struggles faced by many other students during this trying year has been hard hitting. Much of this struggle seems to have been due to the extreme absence of access to funds.

Aishwarya Reddy, who was a first-generation scholarship student at Delhi University, was one such student who faced the burden of extreme financial crisis. She needed 20,000 rupees to buy a laptop to survive the sudden switch from in-person to online education. She died by suicide on November 2nd 2020, because the debilitating financial cost her education was having on her family called into question her dreams of continuing to study. Hers is not an isolated case. There are several teachers who lost their jobs because day-cares and schools couldn't afford to keep them on, students who could not afford to go back to school because their parents lost their jobs, scholarship programs

— “ —
You created a fund that accumulated money from donations, whose beneficiaries are unknown and whose taxation benefits will not allow for part of the money to benefit state welfare.
— ” —

that stopped because money had to go into procuring computers instead, and of course, many others who didn't even have access to a laptop or smartphone with which to attend online classes.

The PM CARES Fund was specifically created to assist citizens and help them cope with the impact of the CoronaVirus pandemic. According to the website, the money in the PM CARES Fund is allocated to areas based on decisions by the Board of Trustees. This

leads me to understand that no other bureaucratic process stands in the way of providing help to the people who the fund was created for – those affected by the pandemic. Could parts of the fund have been made accessible to such people facing such stark hardships? Could disasters such as the death of Aishwarya Reddy have been prevented?

To take an example of how governments could respond in such times of crisis, in the UK, the Department of Education released various new policies and schemes. Some of these gave tablets and computers to schools and students and others gave students access to free mobile data and routers. Disadvantaged families could avail 30 hours of free childcare a month, allowing parents to continue working – especially those on the frontlines. Hon'ble Prime Minister, couldn't some of the funds of PM CARES have gone into developing and implementing policies and schemes such as this? Even if they helped only by a little, wouldn't measures like these have demonstrated the care, in line with the purported name of the fund, that so many people in this country so desperately need?

You received donations from all around the country and abroad, from people who care and wanted their money to go to those in dire need. There is very little clarity on the use of these funds, and avenues to gain clarity on the same seem to be blocked. So the question about the PM CARES Fund that I feel compelled to ask now is not about how much money there is or even where it's going, but rather, does the PM really care?

Sincerely,
A concerned student.

Prerana Sudarshan

B.Sc.B.Ed (Biology)

2019-2023



'COMEDY IN THE TIMES OF MONOTONY'

'WE ALL NEED A GOOD LAUGH' WRITES ANJALI AS SHE TALKS LIGHTHEARTEDLY OF A BOOK THAT KEPT HER MIND BUSY AND HER BONES TICKLED. READ ON AS SHE DESCRIBES THE HILARIOUS IDIOSYNCRASIES OF GERRY AND HIS FAMILY.

I was swept up in the dusty monotony of the 'pandemic' days until I chanced upon 'My Family and Other Animals' while attempting to revive the comforting habit of reading. An intriguing and funny title, I had a hunch that the book would follow suit. "Although it did test my patience, I am extremely glad to have read the book." It tells the tale of a ten-year-old Gerald Durrell's (the author's) interest in the natural history of the island, and how his life revolves around the other family members. Durrell, a naturalist, and an animal lover was born in India in 1925. He has written an array of books; 'My Family and Other Animals' is the first of the Corfu Trilogy, followed by 'Birds, Beasts and Relatives', and 'The Garden of the Gods', each of them rife with curious creatures (including humans), vivid scenery and ridiculously funny scenarios.

“*Laughter is the best medicine. Well you know, apart from actual medicine.*”



Picture Credits: Anjali Philip

The rich vocabulary, characteristic of Durrell's work, can be a tedious read for the young, but for the older, it provides room to grow as readers. His use of 'proper' English words often left me flustered, hurriedly searching the pages of my dictionary. Words like 'elephantine', 'salubrious', and 'somnambulistic' left me in peals of laughter.

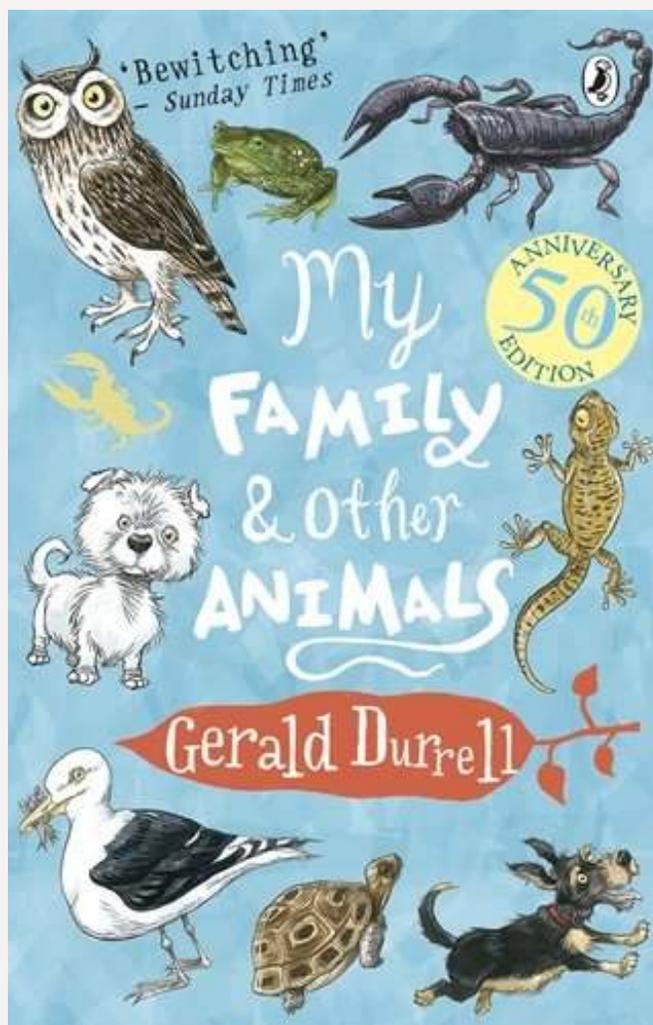


His exceptional usage of hyperbole and the offbeat dialogue among his family made this a humorous and enjoyable read for me.

Durrell's 'family' consisted of his brothers Larry and Leslie, his sister Margo, and his mother (Mrs. Durrell). Together, they set sail to Corfu, a Greek island.

Larry, the eldest, brought with him a strong sense of self-righteousness, and the various ways in which he defends his actions are both remarkably funny, and awfully tiring. Leslie's practicality neatly balances his brother's over-confidence. A year older than their sister, Margo, Leslie loves guns and shooting. Their mother, Mrs. Durrell, is a gentle and soft lady with an admirable passion for cooking, sewing, and bold, adventurous streaks as well. She buys herself a ridiculous swimsuit, with frills and pleats, and bravely wears it despite everyone's teasing. Margo, the sole sister, was a character who kept me entertained. From catching the flu by zealously kissing St. Spyridion's feet to sailing off to 'meditate on love' when her

Turkish boyfriend bid her farewell, Margo, like many 18-year-olds, is caught in several ludicrous, messy situations. Durrell or Gerry, as he's fondly called, is the youngest of the lot, and has an incredible knack for observation. With his dog, Roger, he explores the fields and orchards of Corfu to find the most interesting creatures. He christens these newly found creatures with intriguing names like Achilles, Puke, or Quasimodo, amongst others. Further, he is encouraged and supported by Theodore, one of his tutors who did not consider Durrell as his pupil but a friend, and together they went exploring the island.



Picture Credits: Amazon

Theodore with his impressive knowledge of freshwater Biology was the perfect guide! In fact, he helped Durrell gain an understanding of the natural history of Corfu.

The family's encounters with animals that Durrell brings into the house (like the tortoise, the owl, and the magpies), are extremely comical; the pandemonium that follows makes this book all the more delightful. I was especially surprised when his mother permitted him to keep his sun stroked snakes in the bathtub!

Durrell's experiences in Corfu made me think of how he discovered the wonders of Science. His passion for going outdoors and learning by observing is worth noting in this regard. It made me think ***what if we all learned as Gerry did? By looking around us and learning from our environment predominantly? This would have serious implications on the way we look at science education.***

Apart from Theodore, I believe Durrell's mother played an important role in this journey of 'discovery'. This book taught me a couple of things during the lockdown. One, we all need a good laugh, not just once in a while, but imagining humor as a way of life. Unless we see the comedy intertwined in our

“
Unless we see the comedy intertwined in our lives, it will cease to be tolerable
”

lives, it will cease to be tolerable.

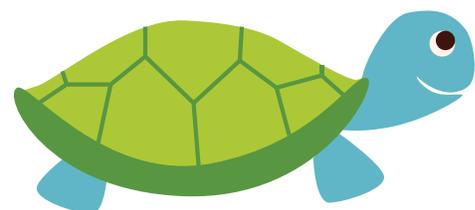
I had many sluggish days; days where I felt like a sloth, just lolling about. Small things like reading in this case, made me think, reflect, and rinse myself of my occasional sloth-like tendencies. He encouraged me to be like him, curious, and wanting to do something. The distance between wanting to do something and actually doing is very little once we decide.

With these thoughts in my head and laughter resonating in my heart, I was happy I could jump into another world for the span of this book. I realized that it's best to live and come to terms with what you have and do what makes you happy. I would wholeheartedly recommend that you get introduced to this family of talented oddballs.

Anjali Achamma Philip

B.Sc.B.Ed (Biology)

2018-2022





RE-VIEW OF THE ED SEMINARS

'From the Practitioner's Lens: Chalk Out'

The very first one in the series was an open house where the core-team and the contributors for the first issue of Chalk Out: Online but is it inline? shared behind the scenes and process of making the Edzine.

'The Stories of Hope and Despair' by Mr Lokesh Thakur, Azim Premji School, Udham Singh Nagar

Lokesh shared his experiences as a school head and a teacher of Azim Premji Foundation's largest school, Azim Premji School, Dineshpur.

'Can Pedagogy of Science Play a Role in a Classroom that Needs Change?' with Saumy and Sunil Teachers of Science at Azim Premji School, Udham Singh Nagar

Within the context of the Azim Premji School and the community where they work, Saumy and Sunil shared their journey of challenges, work and learning as teachers of Science.

'Nai Taleem- Its Humble Beginning and Evolution' with Sushama Sharma, Director, Principal, Anand Niketan School, Wardha

In the seminar, we explored Nai Taleem- a core idea of Gandhian Philosophy of Education. Sushama Sharma, who is the Director and Principal of Anand Niketan School laid before us the fabric of thoughts that bind together into a cohesive educational philosophy.

***'Nai Taleem: View from a Teacher's Eye'* with Adwait Deshpande, Anand Niketan School, Wardha**

Adwait who shared with us his experiences of working on Nai Taleem - the strengths and struggles he encountered. He also engaged with the participants about their questions and ideas about Nai Taleem.

***'On Finding Order in Chaos'* with Krunal Desai and Chalk and Talk**

In conversation with Chalk and Talk, a voluntary student-group for open discussions on themes in education, Krunal, an alumnus of APU, shared his journey into education through his association with Anand Niketan.

***'A Journey into Learning and Teaching'* with Radha Gopalan**

From a consultant and technologist to a school teacher, in this session, Radha looked at not only sharing her journey into learning and teaching but also collectively explored the meaning of learning and the teacher-student relationship.

***'Inclusion To Do Away With Confusion'* with Gauri Gupta**

Gauri Gupta, a final year undergraduate student at Lady Shri Ram College, recognizes herself as a person with disability. The session aimed at using a discussion with participants as a platform to create awareness about the intersection of disability and education.

***'Looking Back and Forward into Experiential Education'* with Aarti Sharma and Priyanka Jajoria, The Heritage School, Rohini, Delhi**

Aarti and Priyanka provided a virtual tour of The Heritage School- giving a sense of the culture of learning and co-creating it, and redefining education for children, teachers and parents.

Click on the titles to view the recordings



Questions to Mark

These are some questions you could take away from this issue and hopefully chalk out some answers of your own!

Care: Consideration + Understanding + Support. Dwell on this definition for a bit, what other factors could feature in this equation. Could there be a larger circle of context or a bracket for when one is exempted from any of the steps?

Is one form of care more valuable than another? How insightful is the adage 'only we can heal ourselves' when we are trying to be of aid to another?

The test of care is in tough times. How do we continue to care when it's not easy, when the receiver is unreceptive?

There are plenty of wrong actions taken with well-meaning intentions in the name of care. Is care legitimate only when it's helpful to the cared for?

How can we include different stakeholders of Education - parents, teachers, children, society in general - in conversations on care and its different interpretations?



Can we rely upon unstructured and informal ways in which children and adults are introduced to the ethic of care or should we have more formal and organised ways and experiences in which the ethic of care is introduced and practiced?

Do curricular areas such as 'value education', 'moral science', 'moral education', include learning an ethic of care the way we are visualising it?

Often communication, either with yourself or another is what is standing in the way of us realising our needs. What has care looked like for you, what would you like it to look like?

A very grateful team would like to thank

All our lovely contributors for this issue.

Without you, this wouldn't have been possible!

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And most importantly - you, dear readers, for whom this is all meant. Keep reading!

Keep caring!

