



REFLECTIONS

April 2020

Be virtual ■ Be agile ■ Be well

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Tell us

What we're doing right and what we're doing wrong and what you think of this issue. We'd love to hear from you.

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It gives me great pleasure to bring to you the next issue of *Reflections*. While you're reading this, I hope you are all well and safe and so are your families. To say that we were blindsided by this pandemic would be a gross understatement. But when disaster strikes, solidarity comes into play. Nature may lash out at us, but it has also brought families and friends closer. It's true that some of us (nay, most of us) are climbing walls because we're stuck at home and don't



STAY HOME, STAY SAFE

really know what to do with all this imposed geographical closeness.

I spend the evenings up on the terrace with my nieces watching the sun go down, birds making their way home, and kites adorning the sky, and sometimes playing *I Spy*. Simple forgotten pleasures. So, how are you handling this change in routine? What is your new normal?

Tell us. We'd love to hear from you.

~ Lydia

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Visit to Chennai

Prasha Kajendran

Senior Content Delivery Manager, Pearson UK Schools

When Prasha Kajendran, Senior Content Delivery Manager for Pearson—UK Schools, visited Newgen in February, it was her first time both in Chennai and in India. “I loved my time there,” she says. “My first impression was that India has so much to offer and I wish had more time to explore! I’d definitely like to come back for a longer trip. Great weather, great people, and great food. Everyone was so friendly, and of course, being a Londoner, the sunshine was much appreciated!”

Prasha’s mother tongue is Tamil, and she found it nice to drive through the city and see all the Tamil signs and be able to understand what the locals were saying. “It felt quite homely and familiar despite it being my first time in Chennai! Lydia was kind enough to take me sightseeing and shopping. I bought a lovely silk saree for my mum

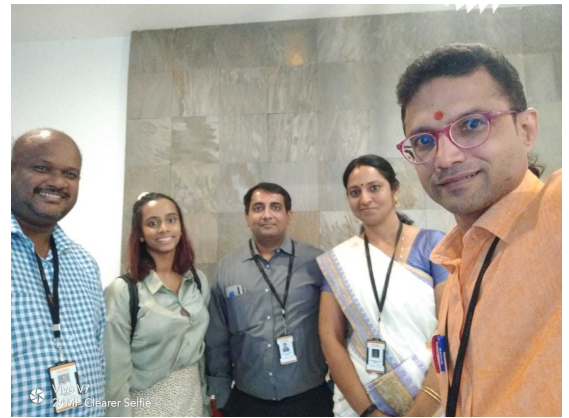


(who loved it!) and some silk scarves for a few of my friends. We also managed to grab a tasty breakfast at Saravana Bhavan—I'm a big fan of the ghee roast dosa. I love South Indian food. We went to a place called Dakshin for dinner, and we had a really nice banana-based pancake there and a variety of other dishes. Really tasty.”

Though her time in Chennai was brief, one of the highlights for her was the Pearson-themed cake made in honor of her visit to the Newgen office. “It looked amazing, almost too good to eat,” she comments! If she gets the chance to travel to India again, Prasha would like to explore more of Tamil Nadu, particularly Pondicherry.

“Kerala and Goa are also highly recommended, so I would love to visit those places too in the future.”

Prasha had come to visit the team at the Newgen office in Chennai as they work closely with the UK team as one of



Pearson's supply partners. It was an opportunity for her to get a better insight into the talent and skill set at Newgen and see how the offices are set up to deliver the services to Pearson for their UK Schools products. “I gained a lot from my visit,” she says, “and am looking forward to building on the momentum gained from our discussions.” She hopes for a visit from the Chennai team to Pearson's London and Oxford offices. “Working together as one team, we hope to deliver several innovative products to learners in the UK.” When asked for some feedback for the Chennai team, Prasha advises, “If you are unclear about a brief, it is always better to flag this up early! This way, we are setting ourselves up for a greater chance of success. In addition to this, always take the learnings from your previous projects and drive improvements in what you do.”



Spotlight on

Asha Bhaskar

Asha is a Chennaiite at heart. Though she tries her best to avoid the peak-time rush, constant honking, overpriced auto fares, and finally the lack of civic sense among a few that gives Chennai an unclean image, she gushes about the city's versatility:

Chennai is home. I cannot imagine living anywhere else. Where else would you find a Gucci alongside Kanjivaram silk, hot potato-laden bondas alongside chocolate truffle, and where in the world would a classical Carnatic *aalaap* meet Taylor Swift? Chennai gives people the space that they need and the warmth that is necessary to bloom. I love the lanes of T. Nagar and Mylapore, where you will be able to find almost anything you are looking for (or not!). Temples of Chennai are intriguing and the stories behind each one of them and their origins fascinate me. As a child, I was very interested in classical dance, which called for a musical way of telling stories. That connect with the divine has never left me.

The time Asha spends with her sons constitute the happiest memories for her. "My younger son is a riot of laughter while the elder one is a composed person. With two contrasting personalities I find it very amusing going through everyday life as each activity and every possibility is received differently."

Asha calls her mother a superpower and a wonder woman. "She is Ms. Dumbledore with the Elder Wand. She has a solution to almost every problem in my life, and I simply cannot imagine a day without an argument with her, which she wins hands down. I am a huge fan of Maya Angelou, and her 'Phenomenal Woman' is my mom!" Asha's grandmother has impressed her most with what she has accomplished. "She moved to Chennai at the behest of her children who found professional growth in the city, far removed from the remote village of

Thanjavur. She must have had a lot of challenges to deal with given that she was not educated and was a home-grown bird that never took flight into the skies. Her sheer steely-nerve persona puts her on top of my list.”

The top three items on her bucket list: enabling her son to win the nationals in swimming, visiting as many places in India as possible so that her sons learn the culture and history of their land, and compiling a book of poetry. Asha recharges by talking to her sons: “They have a whole new take on life and very simple solutions to complex life problems, like placing their little hands over my forehead to drive away my pain, giving me a kiss to make me smile, which erases



my worry, and finally telling me stories in his baby tongue that makes me laugh. Especially when my 5-year-old tells me how different things were when he was a baby!” The nicest compliment she’s ever received is from her elder son: “He told me that I am his secret for success. He calls it ‘Mummy Magic.’ Nothing ever can or will beat that.”

Asha loves thrillers, and romance is something she cannot handle. “*Godfather* is an epic to me, and both as a movie and as a book I have yet to come across an equal.” *Ponniyin Selvan* (a Tamil historical novel written by Kalki Krishnamurthy) is the best book she has read: “Grossly underrated, perhaps, in the international arena, where it deserves much more attention. A book that will leave you spell-bound and amazed for many days.” Asha feels she can get things done if she sets her mind to it, and also let go of things in the same way. She doesn’t get the whole deal with Facebook: “I don’t see why it is so important that when something is not posted, it is almost like it has not happened!” Writing poetry was something she secretly enjoyed doing, until a few years ago when “life caught up, I suppose.”

If a movie were to be made of her life, she would like Jennifer Lawrence or Alia Bhatt to play the lead role. Three things that no one at Newgen knows about her are that she is a foodie, “to the extent that anyone who is hungry stops by at my workplace for food”; that she can binge-watch sitcoms, season after season, in record time; and that she is a coffee addict.



Asha with her sons, Advait and Adhyanth

Asha's take on women's place in today's society:

The words that keep me going are, "You may write me down in history /
With your bitter twisted lies / You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like
dust, I rise."

Woman is a phenomenal source of energy, a force that keeps the universe in balance, and she is the aggression that quells the negativity and reinforces optimism. No matter how society suppresses her, like the buoyant force she rises each time.

It is good to see women rise in power across sectors today, although there may be an equal proportion that is succumbing to family and outside pressures. But a day will come when those women will break the shackles and see the sunshine.

A long way to go, perhaps, but we are slowly but surely getting there. Nevertheless, more could be done.

~

Corona

Bibi Christa Xavier, Thomson Reuters, India

Heard of your birth in the distant East
From a bat to a rat, you followed your roots
We thought you were a sibling of SARS and MERS
Whose cells we'd flushed to the Netherworld
But you moved over land and seas
As none our kind had e'er seen.

We who'd mastered the earth and space
Thought you an eerie disgrace!

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As you sneaked into every nook and cranny
As you sneaked into every aircraft and rail
We geared up with masks and hose.

But,
You drove us out of our workspace and schools
You drove us into our homes and rooms
We shivered and froze
As they screamed quarantine!

It's been countless days we're in our space
We thought, we planned, we awoke, we moved





With laptops and with mobile phones
We set the world in motion.

We've adapted and evolved and survived the ages
Through nature's wrath or humanity's wars
The human spirit has prevailed!

You cannot kill our spirits
Your days are numbered
As one of us will wane you out to nothing
. . . wane you out to nothing!

~

Working from Home

Bibi Christa Xavier, Centralized Books Copyediting Team

Pandemics have swept through nations and continents, taking human lives in millions. Humanity has been brought to its knees many a time in history; it has been Destiny's way of holding a check on the ape-turned-sapiens who conquered the world!

Today, the species that conquered literally everything on the planet and ventured beyond its borders and into other planets stands baffled as its brethren fall dead in the thousands in a day. The battle continues even as the world screeches to a halt.

It has impacted life and work culture in ways that we could never conceive of in the remotest corners of our brain. Before the advent of



the pandemic, did we think it was possible to stay at home for even just a weekend? Luxurious office spaces, cafeterias, gyms, and parking lots were never enough. The employee was king!

Does that thought linger anymore? When the country shut down on March 25 this year, many a heart skipped a beat. How many of us will still be on the rolls? Television channels screamed of job cuts. Newspapers followed. Fear lurked and lingered.

Ensuring the smooth functioning of work irrespective of an “office space” was the next big challenge. At Newgen, medical check-up for employees was conducted through KL Hospital at Neelankarai. We distributed masks and sanitizers, used a thermal gun to check the temperature of anyone entering the premises, and cleaned hand touchpoints every half hour. Mediclaim insurance coverage status was checked and validated. Coronavirus Managers were appointed at every location.

As per the directive issued by the Tamil Nadu government on March 19, 2020, Subash Panicker, the vice president of Newgen’s Strategic Human Resources team, was designated as the Nodal Officer to handle the situation in the event of a serious coronavirus outbreak.

Laptops were hired through FutureNet, Newgen’s partner in infrastructure. FutureNet and Newgen worked in lockstep to meet infrastructure requirements in the form of laptops, desktops, and dongles and Internet connectivity for employees at all branches.

A complete Work-from-Home drive was initiated, and as early as March 25, 2020, all Newgen employees were enabled to work from home.

Hiring was made possible through telephonic or Skype interviews. As of today, senior managers and business heads meet up every day via video conferencing to discuss and resolve any issues.

Newgen has braved the situation and works 100 percent as efficiently as it did before the pandemic. As new challenges await, we have learned that the company that adapts to change quickly is the one that survives.

A Meditative Run on Chennai's Marina Beach

Arnaud Béglé, CEO, Peter Lang Group

After a Sunday at the Newgen Neelangarai office, it was time for me to decompress from a long week of work. I wanted to feel the city's vibe, discover new places, and eventually engage with new people.

Destination: Marina Beach.

I started my run using Google Maps and went to Santhome Church, a wonderful basilica with a beautiful white dome standing in the middle of the city. I then crossed over to the beach, where all the wonderfully colored boats of the fishermen were standing with nets cleaned and folded, ready to go for the next catch.



The frontal marine breeze helped keep the pace of the run as it cooled down the temperature. All conditions present made this a great run. I was surprised by the amount of fish and crabs that were lying on the shore; amazingly, there was even a sort of white box fish lying there.

I then arrived at the lighthouse and the more crowded part of the beach. Everyone was having a great time, enjoying their beach games and family moments. What a splendid experience it was, witnessing all this joy and happiness of citizens appreciating a Sunday afternoon on the coast! I continued to run on the magnificent promenade. Small boys were running behind me barefooted! It was really fun.

I also had the chance to be accompanied by Turam, a 16-year-old Indian who studied in Singapore. He is now back in Chennai and is thinking of starting a YouTube channel. As we were running 4 km together going north, we could discuss for a while. I asked him what he wanted to do in life. He wants to be a “traveller.” What a great goal! Of course it’s no profession, but if this is what will drive him in life, he shall find a way to become a YouTuber who posts about travelling, probably starting with travels in India and later with more and more abroad. I shall definitely welcome him when he comes to Europe. Having such open-minded people full of energy and dreams is an energetic boost to me. It opens up a world full of possibilities. This is why I love visiting India.



Santhome Church and fellow runners at the Marina Beach



At the end of Marina Bay, the crowd was even more packed. There were even some holy cows, and I enjoyed running next to them; it's amazing for me how they are part of the city life like nowhere else.

Turam had to leave then. I put on some chill music. I passed smiling, laughing faces. With the light dimming, the many rainbow lights started to give a new perspective to my run. Monuments, statues, and the traffic were moving me on to a new energy level.

I felt a great satisfaction for having the chance to be a part of this grand party time around the Chennai Beach on a Sunday afternoon.

During the last stretch, I got the chance for a quick exchange with some old ladies selling fresh fish. Some of them are quite old, and I understand they have to stand there until late night to be able to get some tiny revenues.

This brings me back to the reality of the tough lives that many people lead in this city. There is not much I can do except spend a small amount of time with a few of them. I hope that sharing a bit of time together made their day a bit nicer, as it did for me. At the very least, I had the most beautiful smiles ever. It also allowed me to remember how lucky I am for the health, security, and also self-realization that I have in my day-to-day life. Being grateful for what you have is so



Turam and Arnaud

important. Unfortunately, I tend to think too much, and my mind is constantly going back to analyzing and coming up with solutions to problems. But that is the reason I run; it's a time of meditation for me. It allows me to let go of a lot of things, be open to others, get rid of negative thoughts, and connect back to who we really are!

I completed my run in just 1 hour and 15 minutes for almost 13 km. But what a fulfilling moment I had then! Chennai will never be the same to me and will remain deep in my heart forever.



(from the left): A box fish, a mini-Ferris wheel for kids, and a fish monger at the beach

~

Team Spotlight on Wolters Kluwer—Asia Pacific

Internally called WK Australia, the official reference to the team is “WKAPAC.” The team has a unique workflow called event-based publication (EBP), which does not work off a schedule for digital content; they publish as and when updates are sent by the client, and it has to be published online within 24 hours.

In addition, the team has FSM books and a content writing team.

WK Australia is a 1.9-year-old team, and since it was formed it has

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always been the talk of Newgen. The members are always enthusiastic and active as the job demands.

The spirit of working with the Australians has in fact infused into the team members as well. With a total strength of 74, the team works in first and second shifts. The content writers work remotely from different places across North India.

XML and sub-editing are skills that the team is developing.

To begin with, the team's biggest challenge was attrition, followed by team building and productivity.

Quality is an area they are continuously working on. The members have a weekly meeting for production on every Saturday, which is an energy booster to achieve better quality and productivity. The production manager conducts a small team game every week to keep the session interactive.

The nicest thing about the team is that the members are always well bonded. The team includes a lot of fresh blood with bubbling enthusiasm. The team as a whole has been a star. It has been a win-win season for them since the New Year, with many accolades across all the Logoff competitions conducted.

The creation of a semi-WMS tool named Copy Tracker Tool is a work-related accomplishment that the team is proud of. This was developed in a very short period and till date serves as the database





for all their inventory and reporting purposes.

Although understanding the nuances about the job's nature was a challenge at first, the team has learnt from their experiences in their first year.

“EEE” is what best describes the team: Energetic, Encouraging, and Enthusiastic.

Working on a Saturday, while other publishers do not, is one thing that has surprised the team about Newgen.

The biggest misconception about the team is that they have very less or no work. Their pet peeve can be summarized in one word: rework.

Good washrooms and a cleaner/hygienic cafeteria are what the team would like to add to the office if they could.

For their last team outing, the team organized a two-day trip to the Talakona falls and Horsley Hills, both located in Andhra Pradesh.

The trip served as a good opportunity for the team to mingle and understand each other better:

It was complete fun: dancing on the move, fresh bath in the piercing cold waters of the Talakona falls, late-night barbequing for the whole team with a camp fire.



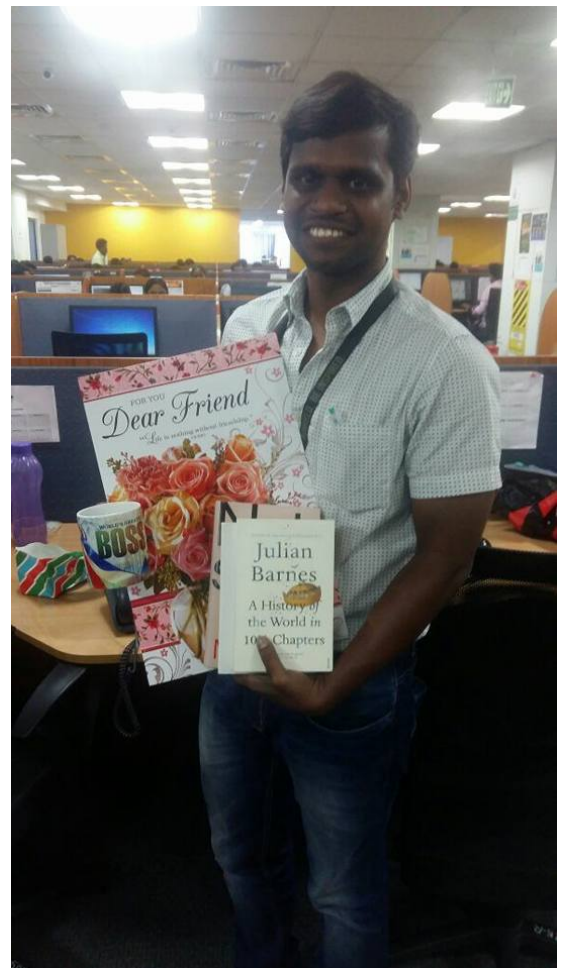
Spotlight on Kondappan Sathiasseelan

Say hello to Kondappan Sathiasseelan, Copy Editing Manager from the Peter Lang team in Pondicherry. He loves visiting places, watching movies, and reading books. He thinks that there are two things everyone should make a part of their daily lives: exercise and reading.

Kondappan says that he is most inspired by the books he reads and the movies he watches. History, politics, anthropology, and philosophy are the topics that interest him the most. The universe portrayed in the movie *Midnight in Paris* is one he'd like to live in.

Kondappan has no irrational fear, but he does have “a normal and rational fear of the unknown or the unknowable.” He doesn't believe in any superpower; he says, “And nor can I fathom what it would be if I had one. But I just know what I would want to do with it: make this world absolutely safe and livable for children and women.”

Kondappan doesn't feel proud





about anything in particular about himself. “This is neither arrogance nor modesty,” he says. “I just stopped believing in the word ‘pride.’ I feel happy about and at peace with myself but not ‘proud’ about anything.” He has an interesting happy memory to share:

I had a college senior whom everyone, including me, would call a weirdo. His disheveled hair, oblong face, sunken eyes, and uncanny behavior made him subject to others’ ridicule. But he remained unperturbed and at peace. His tranquil composure, in spite of his (subjectively) ridiculous outward appearance, stood out. He always carried books in his hands. One day, we met in the college park, and he introduced me to a book called *Siddhartha* written by Herman Hesse (originally written in German). I reluctantly read the book.

That was the first book I read in my life. Although I couldn’t get the hang of the ideas discussed in the book due to my naivety, I gained some insight into philosophy. I got introduced to more books and people who loved books through my “weirdo” friend. We used to read a lot of books and talk about them, of course only in naive terms. We would have regular such sittings either in a sober state or in a stupor state. Those were the happy days of my life.

The top three items on his bucket list: visiting places of historical significance in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, like Mohenjo-daro and Harappa; setting up a library (post retirement); and being involved in film-making if possible. His take on women’s place in today’s society:

I can speak of their position in the context of the society I live in. I see three types of women: (1) those who are oblivious to the fact that women have identity, passion, desires, etc., as men do have, and who have long been contrived to believe that in just being part of the men’s world lies happiness; (2) those who are aware of it but do submit to the ruthless reality of this world and are at a self-imposed peace with the reality; (3) those who put up an unrelenting fight in the face of difficulties.

Kondappan is habitually early, and when people come to him for help, it is usually for some write-up or a Tamil to English translation. An ardent Ilaiyaraaja fan, he has memorized several of the composer’s songs.

Kondappan refuses to watch any reality show; “I have recently developed a strong aversion to so-called political debates. I refuse to watch any socially irrelevant movies and so-called high-budget movies,” he comments.

Reading physical, hard-bound books, and not e-books, is something he

likes doing the old-fashioned way.

The best books that Kondappan has read: Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of Word History* and *Discovery of India*; Ambedkar's collections; Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's *Freedom at Midnight*; Yuval Noah Harari's *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*; and Julian Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*.

When asked what he would save from a burning house, once his loved ones are safe, he says, "The most favorite part about my house is my bookshelf. But in case of fire, I wouldn't prefer saving it because the books are not costly and I could simply buy them again online. So I would save anything that is relatively expensive and involves hard-earned money."

~

Adapting to the New Normal

Krishnaa Lakshmanan, Centralized Books Copyediting Team

The world is hurting.

Nations have come to a standstill. The economy has crumbled.

Healthcare systems have taken a hit.

There's a virus on the loose, and it is affecting more than just human physical health. Countries worldwide are trying everything they can to contain the spread. Despite best efforts, the effects of the virus have managed to creep into everybody's lives, in one way or another.

Over the course of the past few months, the world has seen families and households everywhere locked in, quarantined to isolation, confined and—excuse the metaphor—caged in for the greater good.



Consequently, people are experiencing lethargy, restlessness, and even depression—because of the uncertainty of the situation, the helplessness, the lack of human contact.

One article in the *Harvard Business Review*

(<https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief>)

explains that this discomfort is actually a form of grief. While the circumstances are in no way ideal, it is important to not get sucked into the negativity. This is a time for stepping back, without panicking, and assessing our lives; this is a time for introspection.

Putting Things into Perspective

Yes, we are all dealing with a grossly troublesome situation right now. But we need to take a step back and breathe. Can we come up with a cure for the coronavirus? Probably not. But there are people out there in the front lines who are working day and night on developing a vaccine, and the solution is quite literally in their hands. That needs to go through its own process. We need to realize that brooding over the time it is taking for a solution will get us nowhere. It doesn't help anyone.

We can instead focus on what we *do* have in our hands. The best we can do to fight this pandemic is follow the regulations and precautions strictly and religiously: washing hands with soap frequently, wearing a mask (or at least covering the face) when going out for essentials, maintaining a safe distance from others when outside the house. Most importantly, all of us need to *not* step out of our homes unless absolutely essential.

Self-Improvement

Once you develop the habit of following precautions, you can start looking inward. What can you do for yourself, with all the extra time in your hands now that you don't go outside? This can include staying in shape, all the more crucial because there isn't much physical activity. An exercise regime in the morning can help set the pace for the rest of the day. With the most of us working from home, following a disciplined work routine should not be underestimated: working to a

schedule, with proper posture, getting up and stretching your legs every now and then, and having timely meals.

It is also a good time to assess your goals, both short-term and long-term. If you have something you've been wanting to work on, now is a good opportunity to do your research, read up on material, and polish your skill set.

Self-Care

During these times, mental health is prone to get affected. The feeling of being stuck, without much in your control, confined without any social interaction, is bound to make you overthink many things that you wouldn't have time for otherwise. The forced isolation, coupled with the looming threat of a potentially fatal virus, is something that is so out of the ordinary that it is completely normal for such a situation to mentally overwhelm.

Such circumstances come by perhaps once in a century, and humans as inherently social beings have not faced this in such a massive scale before. Meditation is proven to make great strides in alleviating such stressful thoughts. Keep 10–20 minutes a day aside for meditation. Utilize this time to learn how to not get carried away by your thoughts.

Financial Planning

There is no denying that the economy is down. Essentials like vegetables and groceries are costing atleast 1.5 times the usual. Companies are announcing budget control measures and, in some cases, pay cuts. The values of earlier investments have come down.

Take stock of your funds and investments. It can be easy to get overwhelmed, so speak to a trusted





financial advisor about investing and managing funds wisely during this time. If you have any money to spare, think about contributing to the efforts of organizations fighting Covid-19. By setting up a plan for at least the next six months, you will have a clear idea of how to proceed for the coming year.

Staying in Touch

Do not let your near and dear be forgotten! Call them up to find out how they're coping with the situation. Check in on your loved ones who are far away. We are all going through more or less the same problems, and it helps to get a different perspective on things. Perhaps there is someone who needs to hear from you that you are facing a similar difficulty, that they are not alone. Perhaps someone needs to be reminded of wearing their mask when going outside. Perhaps that someone is you, even.

Creating More than Consuming

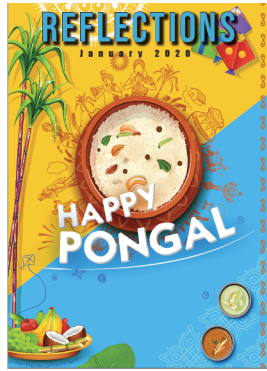
Many people are using the extra free time they have to binge on some TV shows and movies. Or maybe there is that one book (or bookshelf!) you've been putting away that you can finish now.

However, you need to be watchful not to get lost in the consumption of content, be it social media, news channels, or your favorite shows and movies. Do not stop at just satisfying that sweet tooth. Work more on that creative side of you. Perhaps you can start that blog you've always been wanting to. Maybe that sketchbook should be taken off the shelf. Maybe it's time to dust off your old guitar or keyboard and jam to some music. Or you are someone who has been procrastinating on writing that book you've been dreaming of writing.

Rather than being forlorn people cooped up inside our homes out of necessity, we can be among the individuals who are utilizing this time constructively.

We Are in This Together

Most of all, remember that you are not alone. Let us all support the front line workers in what way we can. Let us all hold on to our hopes. We will all weather this storm, together.

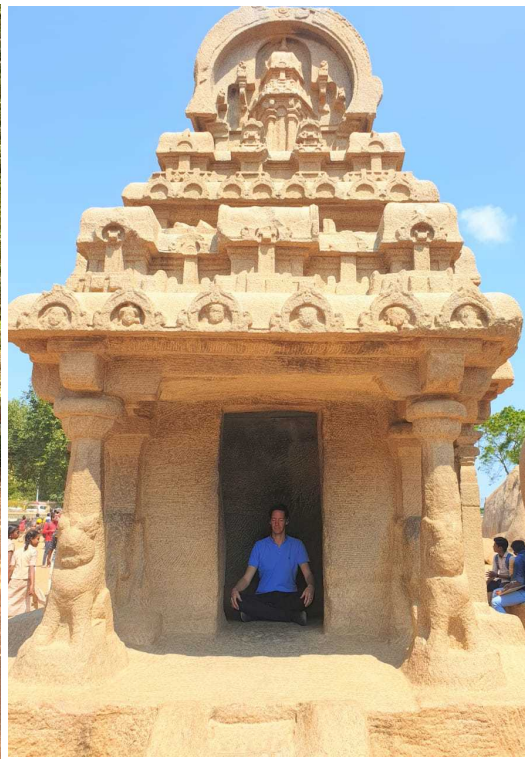


Feedback for the Jan 2020 issue

- ▶ Thanks so much for sending me *Reflections*—I loved it, especially the article on the OUP Law team! Look forward to the next issue.
~ Emma Collison, *Oxford University Press*
- ▶ I enjoyed reading it and learning more about the NG teams.
~ Renay Taylor, *Asia and Emerging Markets, Thomson Reuters*
- ▶ Lovely to receive this, as usual. Very poignant this time as it reminds me of a very different time, but at the same time only a few short weeks/days ago . . . how times change quickly.
~ Emma Lonie, *Oxford University Press*
- ▶ [A] very interesting, informative and enjoyable publication. Congratulations!
~ Craig Ryan, *Asia and Emerging Markets, Thomson Reuters*
- ▶ Nice to see the program for women's safety, and I also love the Pongal floor mandalas, beautiful!
~ Claire Chouzenoux, *Kluwer Law International*
- ▶ I'm always impressed with the community-building philosophy that is part of Newgen's DNA.
~ Dawn Danish, *Kluwer Law International*
- ▶ I found it very interesting and appreciated the insight.
~ Sarah Cooper, *Oxford University Press*



Events @ Newgen



Arnaud Béglé, Lucy Melville, Bianca Matzek at the Pondicherry office and at Auroville and Mahabalipuram



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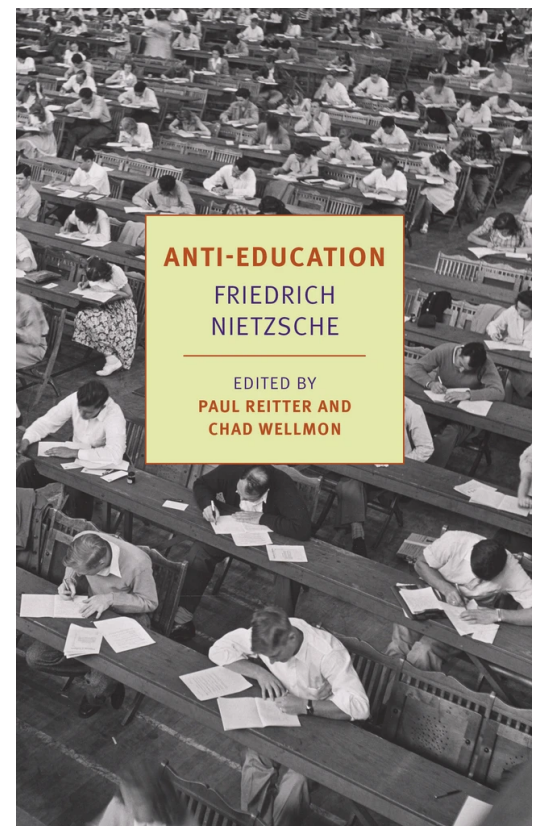
Education and Anti-Education

Rengarajan Sundararajan, Anthem Press

The ongoing viral pandemic has slowly driven home a self-evident truth that all human activity has evolved from, and is centered on, an economic reality. When human activity in more than half the world shuts down, the repercussions are long in time and exacting when it comes to human costs. Under this all-pervading reality, questions like “What is education?” “What should one learn?” and, most importantly, “How should one learn?” become all the more important because education across the world is aimed at equipping oneself with “merely” a skill so that one can contribute to this economic reality. The more people with skills, the better, as they can contribute more to burgeoning trillion-dollar economies of states so they become quadrillion-dollar economies.

Nietzsche’s *Anti-Education* and Education Now

Thrusting education upon an ever-widening population only to equip them with skills to serve the “state” forms the central thesis of Friedrich Nietzsche’s (a philosopher famous for his provocative ideas and a writer well known for his



evocative style) *Anti-Education*, a published collection of a series of five lectures that he delivered at the city museum in Basel, Switzerland, between January and February 1872, which is still relevant today. Education now is dominated by two tendencies, “apparently opposed but equally ruinous in effect and eventually converging in their end results. The first is the drive for the greatest possible expansion and dissemination of education; the other is the drive for the narrowing and weakening of education.” Liberal values want to extend education to all, mostly as a route out of poverty to economic prosperity. Autonomy is, thus, sacrificed when education is standardized to conform to the dictates of the state.

All modern states, so-called welfare states, have evolved into economic engines, perpetually driven by the consumption-production cycle. A huge, and constant, workforce is needed to turn the cogs of the economic wheel. Not only the noble and ideal pursuit of education is subservient to the state but it is also a part of the consumption-production cycle.

Education itself is an economic activity—one only needs to look at the high cost of education in schools and colleges. Even states that offer free education do so not for altruistic, ideal reasons. Nietzsche was prescient in predicting the turn education would take in the twentieth century when he delivered those lectures, critical of the German education system when at that time it was regarded as one of the finest in Europe.

A 2013 Harvard report on education

(http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/jamessimpson/files/mapping_the_future.pdf) states that for a discipline in an university to be successful, the discipline must be either (i) devoted to the study of money; (ii) capable of attracting serious research money; or (iii) demonstrably promise that its graduates will make significant amounts of money. Making a living is inescapable for which one needs a skill, but is that the true and only purpose of education? The founding fathers of the modern

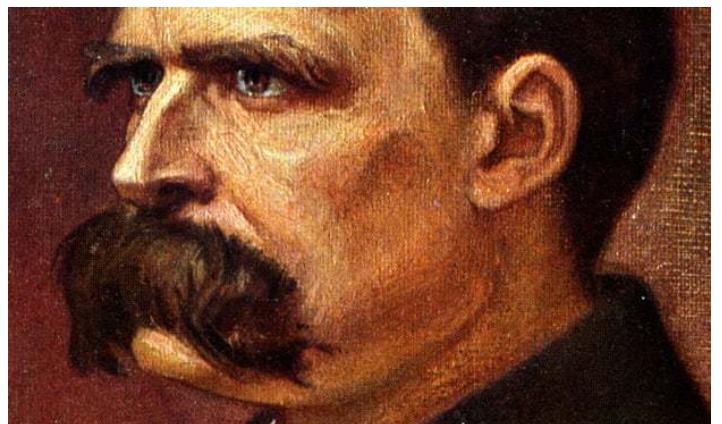
university system envisaged education with liberal tendencies—the pursuit of wisdom conducted in a spirit of inquiry—where entry into the university was decided on merit. Specialized education, the mad race to become “specialists,” narrows oneself to one corner of the knowledge production factory. Looking back, standing in the twenty-first century, we can realize the enormous amount of human knowledge we have—published works in the arts and literature—that one human life will not be sufficient to assimilate all that has been produced across histories and cultures.

Scientific knowledge is expanding at such a rate that even the so-called specialist will be caught lagging as the knowledge production outpaces knowledge assimilation. The gargantuan explosion of scientific knowledge in the twenty-first century and beyond is unimaginable! Where is the end? There will be no end because we are only relying on empirical observation for creating “knowledge.” Particle physics is an example where the list of new particles discovered is never-ending.

Anti-Education from Education

Can education be pursued only in state-policy-driven (and state-controlled) institutions? Many academicians are already hailing the failure of the university system, with some even predicting the collapse of the university.

Educational reforms are never easy and, sometimes, not possible. How does one think of education itself as flawed? Through education, an anti-education emerges, one that aims at, and the purpose of which is, the inner development of the individual, placing equal, if not more, importance on experiences that need not be tangible in an economic reality and on the fact that



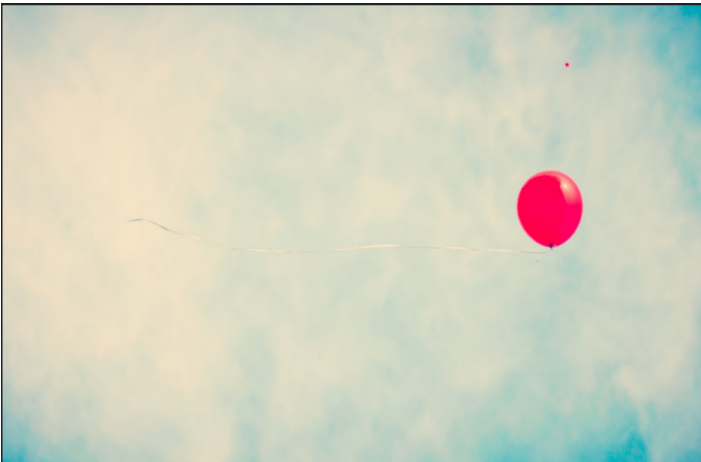
intellectual life has value as an end in itself. *Friedrich Nietzsche*

* யார்மீது கொண்ட
அன்போ தெரியவில்லை...,
கண்ணீர் சிந்தியே
உருகிப்போகிறது...
#மெழுகுவர்த்தி...



* எத்தனை வேகமாக
ஓடினாலும் சரி...,
பாராட்டுகளோ
பரிசுகளோ
கிடைப்பதே இல்லை...
#மின்விசிறி...

* உடல் இல்லாமல்
நகர்கிறேன்...,
உயிர் இல்லாமல்
வாழ்கிறேன்...!
#நிழல்



* உடல்
எடை குறைக்க
அவ்வப்போது காற்றில்
நடை பயணம்...
#பலூன்...

~ Sivakumar Kanniyappan,
project manager, Aspen



Woman

Dr. Chitra Somasundaram

I possess a strong mind, a vigorous vitality, a rigorous resolve,
and an indestructible soul

I own a tender heart, not sans tenacity

To say that I am a phoenix is an understatement,

Oh no! too clichéd for I rise every time not from the ashes

But from concentration camps and sometimes from beds of
roses.

Each time stronger than ever before, marching forward . . .

Irrespective of whether I am lauded or not.

The only facet fragile about me is my physique

Yet I am branded the weaker sex!

As I gallantly take up the challenges that life throws on my way,

Shouldn't I be celebrated every day, every moment?