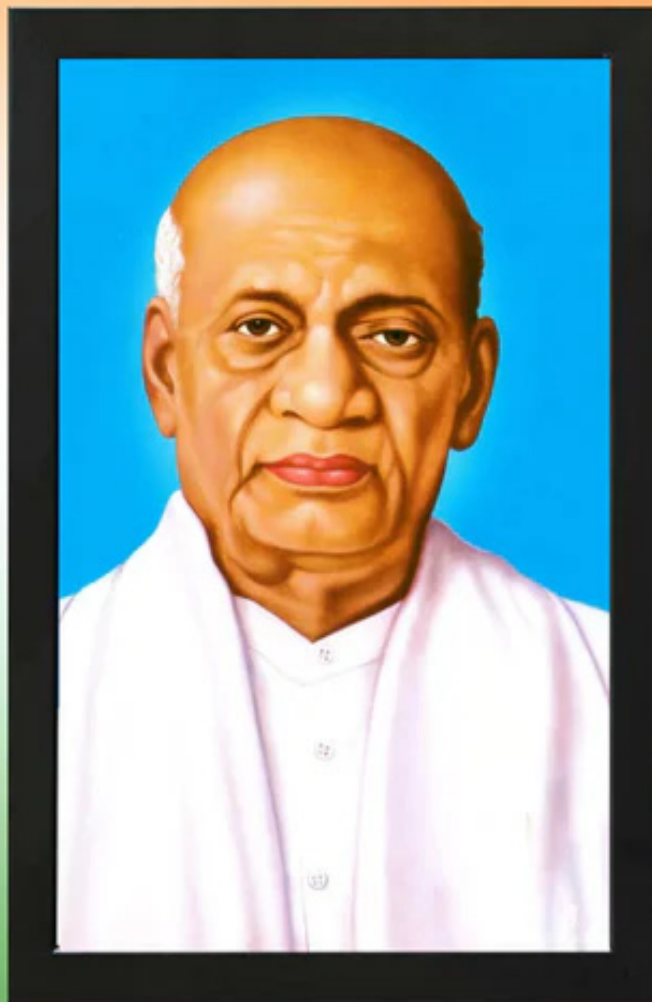


IMPACT

INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
AND CREATIVE THINKING

A JOURNAL FOR MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

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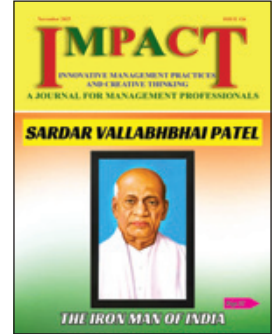
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Dear Readers,

With regard to citizens, the current phase is a call to vigilance and engagement. The headlines tell us that lofty commitments without concrete follow-through yield little; that reforms are necessary but not sufficient; and that everyday safety, accountability and transparency matter as much as high-profile announcements. This applies to various schemes also.

As we approach events like COP30 and the 2025 G20 Summit in Johannesburg later this month, the question for us is: will this be a moment of realignment or another cycle of deferred promises? For India and the world alike, the answer lies not just in the speeches made, but in the policies implemented — and in our collective insistence that no one gets left behind as we navigate the tipping point of our times.

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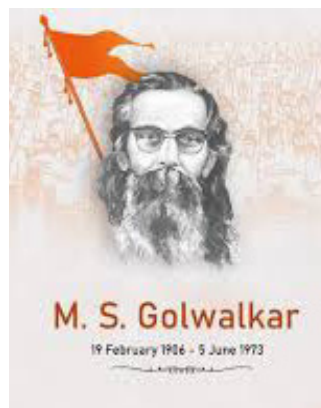
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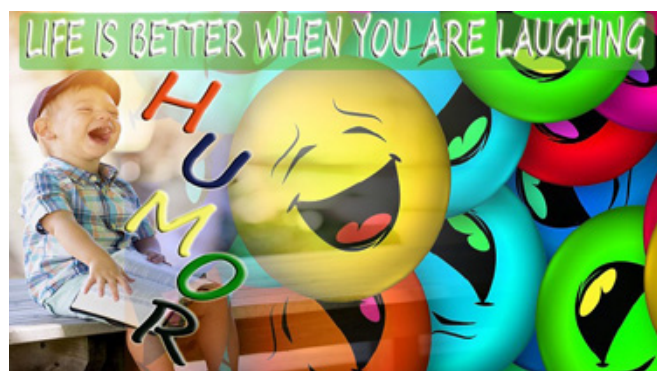
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Counselling: Is It Essential For Students!

PART 1

ABSTRACT

Counseling is increasingly recognised as an essential component of student support services in educational institutions. This paper reviews the literature on the importance of counseling for students, highlighting its impact on mental health, academic performance, and personal development. The findings indicate that effective counseling services can significantly enhance students' coping skills, wholistic well-being, and overall academic success. As mental health issues among students continue to rise, the need for accessible and comprehensive counseling services becomes more critical and crucial as well. Holistic well-being in counseling emphasises the interconnectedness of mental, physical, and social health etc. This approach is increasingly recognised as essential in supporting students' overall development and academic success. As mental health issues among students rise, holistic counseling practices are gaining traction in educational settings. Culturally responsive counseling is essential in addressing the diverse needs of students from various backgrounds. It's the need of the hour to explore the importance of cultural competence in counseling practices, the impact of culturally responsive approaches on student outcomes, and the challenges faced by counselors in implementing these practices.

Culturally responsive counseling recognises the importance of understanding and integrating a client's cultural background into the therapeutic process. SWOT analysis with categorised recommendations is one of the salient features of the Part 1 of this Research Paper. Future trends suggest a shift towards technology-driven solutions, preventative mental health strategies, and culturally responsive practices in counseling.

Key Words: Counseling, Counsellors, Students, Mental Health, Academic Performance, Wholistic Well-being, Preventative Strategies, Technology, Cultural Responsiveness , Support Services, Educational Institutions

1)Introduction:

Firstly, the author is of the view that, the topic undertaken is extraordinarily broad and it can be appropriately prefixed and/or suffixed with multi dimensional perspective and at various levels of interpretation and analysis is possible. However, keeping in view the heterogeneous readerships of this research journal, compact and concise views are given in Part 1 of this paper and Part 2 of this paper will value add more specific to research driven insights and data captured through various modes and sources and interpretation and suggestion offered accordingly in a compact tabulation format.

1.1. Definition and Importance of Holistic Well-Being

Holistic well-being encompasses various dimensions, including emotional, social, physical, and spiritual health. According to Hettler (1980), holistic health is a comprehensive approach that considers the whole person rather than focusing solely on specific symptoms or issues. This perspective is crucial in counseling, as it allows practitioners to address the multifaceted needs of students.

1.2. Impact on Academic Performance

Research indicates that students who engage in holistic counseling practices experience improved academic performance. A study by Eisenberg et al. (2019) found that students who received comprehensive mental health support, including emotional and social counseling, showed higher academic achievement and lower dropout rates.

1.3. Integration of Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Techniques

Regehr et al. (2019) demonstrated thoroughly a meta-analysis regarding mindfulness practices and stress reduction techniques maintained that they are increasingly integrated into counseling programs. Furthermore, meta-analysis by that mindfulness-based interventions significantly reduce stress and anxiety among students, contributing to their overall well-being.

1.4. Cultural Competence in Holistic Counseling

Sue et al. (2019) emphasises the importance of understanding cultural backgrounds in providing effective holistic counseling, which can enhance students' engagement and satisfaction with counseling services. Culturally responsive counseling practices are essential for addressing the diverse needs of students

1.5 Cultural responsiveness in Counselling

Culturally responsive counseling recognises the importance of understanding and integrating a client's cultural background into the therapeutic process. As educational institutions become increasingly diverse, counselors must be equipped to address the unique needs of students from various cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Culturally responsive counseling not only enhances the therapeutic relationship but also improves mental health outcomes by fostering a sense of belonging and validation among students. This approach emphasises the importance of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence in counseling practices, ultimately leading to more effective support for students.

1.5.1 Cultural Competence in Counseling

Sue et al. (2009), cultural competence involves three components: awareness of one's own cultural worldview, knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and the ability to adapt counseling practices accordingly. Cultural competence is defined as the ability of counselors to understand, appreciate, and interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Constantine (2007), found through their research that culturally competent counselors are more effective in building rapport with clients, leading to better therapeutic outcomes

1.5.2 Impact on Student Outcomes

Hernandez et al. (2018) identified that students who received culturally tailored counseling reported higher levels of satisfaction and engagement in therapy, which correlated with improved academic performance. Studies have also demonstrated that culturally responsive counseling practices positively impact students' mental health and academic performance.

Gonzalez et al., (2020) identified that culturally responsive approaches can help reduce dropout rates among minority students by fostering a supportive environment that acknowledges their unique challenges.

1.5.3 Counselling Challenges

Davis et al., (2021) was of the view that counselors may face barriers such as lack of training, insufficient resources, and personal biases that hinder their ability to provide effective support. Despite the benefits, there are challenges in implementing culturally responsive counseling practices.

Smith & Lee, (2022) maintained that, systemic issues within educational institutions, such as inadequate funding for diversity training, can limit the effectiveness of culturally responsive counseling programs. Counseling services play a vital role in supporting students' mental health and academic success. Research has consistently shown that mental health issues can adversely affect academic performance. The importance of holistic well-being in counseling for students, highlighting its impact on academic performance and overall health

Eisenberg et al., (2019) found that students with mental health challenges often experience lower grades and higher dropout rates. This underscores the necessity of effective counseling services in educational settings. The accessibility of counseling services has also been a significant focus.

Kitzrow (2018) emphasised that many students, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, face barriers to accessing mental health support. This highlights the need for institutions to create more inclusive and accessible counseling programs. Moreover, the integration of technology in counseling has gained traction.

Barak et al., (2009) demonstrated that online counseling platforms can effectively reach students who may be reluctant to seek help in person. This trend is expected to continue, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of teletherapy (Hollis et al., 2020).

Sue et al., (2019) argue that culturally competent counseling can significantly improve the therapeutic relationship and outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds. Culturally responsive counseling practices are becoming increasingly important as student populations diversify.

2) SWOT Matrix for implementation challenges for counselling of students:

Below is a tabulated SWOT matrix that outlines the implementation challenges in counseling, categorised into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This matrix provides a clear overview of the challenges associated with implementing a SWOT analysis in a counseling context, helping counselors to identify areas for focus and improvement.

SWOT Component	Challenges	Suggestions by the Author
Strengths	1. Identification: Difficulty in accurately identifying strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct self-assessments and peer reviews to gain insights into strengths.
	2. Overemphasis: Tendency to focus too much on strengths, neglecting areas for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance strengths with a structured approach to identify weaknesses.

SWOT Component	Challenges	Suggestions by the Author
	3. Communication: Challenges in effectively communicating strengths to clients and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a personal branding strategy to articulate strengths clearly.
Weaknesses	1. Acknowledgment: Difficulty in acknowledging weaknesses due to fear of judgment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a culture of openness and vulnerability within the counseling team.
	2. Addressing Weaknesses: Challenges in developing strategies to improve identified weaknesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a professional development plan that includes specific goals for improvement.
	3. Resistance to Change: Resistance from counselors and clients to change practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement gradual changes and involve clients in the process to increase buy-in.
Opportunities	1. Professional Development: Opportunities for training and workshops to enhance skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seek out and participate in relevant training programs and workshops.
	2. Collaboration: Potential for collaboration with other professionals to share best practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network with other professionals and establish partnerships for shared learning.
	3. Feedback Mechanisms: Utilising client feedback to identify areas for growth and improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regular feedback sessions and surveys to gather client insights.
Threats	1. Competition: Increased competition from other counseling services or professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate services by specializing in niche areas or offering unique programs.
	2. Resource Limitations: Limited resources (time, funding, support) to implement changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek grants, funding opportunities, or community partnerships to enhance resources.
	3. Regulatory Changes: Changes in regulations or policies that may impact counseling practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay informed about regulatory changes and adapt practices proactively to comply.

This comprehensive SWOT matrix above not only identifies the challenges associated while implementing a SWOT analysis in counseling but also provides practical suggestions to address those challenges, making it a more comprehensive tool for counselors.

The table below categorises the suggestions from the SWOT analysis in a way that is relevant to each stakeholder group, allowing them to take

actionable steps based on their specific roles and responsibilities in the counseling landscape. Below

are five categorised suggestions for each stakeholder group based on the SWOT analysis in the context of counseling. These suggestions aim to address the challenges identified and enhance the effectiveness of counseling practices.

Stakeholder	Categorised Suggestions
Policy Planners	1. Develop policies that support ongoing professional development and training for counselors.
	2. Create frameworks for regular feedback mechanisms in counseling practices to ensure continuous improvement.
	3. Implement policies that promote mental health awareness in schools and communities.
	4. Establish funding programs specifically for mental health initiatives and counseling services.
	5. Encourage collaboration between public health and education sectors to integrate counseling services.
Decision Makers	1. Allocate resources for counseling services based on identified strengths and weaknesses.
	2. Support initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion within counseling practices.
	3. Facilitate partnerships between counseling services and local businesses for resource sharing.
	4. Invest in technology that enhances the delivery of counseling services, such as telehealth platforms.
	5. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of counseling programs to inform future funding and policy decisions.
Educationalists	1. Integrate mental health education into school curricula to raise awareness among students.
	2. Provide training for teachers on recognizing mental health issues and referring students to counseling.
	3. Develop partnerships with local counseling services to provide on-site support for students.

Stakeholder	Categorised Suggestions
	4. Create workshops and seminars for parents on the importance of mental health and available resources.
	5. Encourage research on effective counseling strategies within educational settings.
Management Consultants	1. Conduct assessments of counseling practices to identify areas for improvement and efficiency.
	2. Develop strategic plans for counseling organizations to enhance service delivery and client satisfaction.
	3. Facilitate training sessions on best practices in counseling management and operations.
	4. Assist in the implementation of technology solutions that streamline counseling processes.
	5. Provide guidance on measuring the impact of counseling services through data analysis and reporting.
Counseling Strategists	1. Develop targeted outreach programs to connect with underserved populations.
	2. Create specialized counseling programs that address specific community needs (e.g., trauma, addiction).
	3. Implement evidence-based practices in counseling to ensure effectiveness.
	4. Foster collaboration among counselors to share resources and strategies for common challenges.
	5. Regularly review and update counseling strategies based on client feedback and outcomes.
Government Entities	1. Provide funding and support for community-based counseling initiatives that address local needs.
	2. Establish regulations that promote ethical practices and accountability in counseling.
	3. Create public awareness campaigns to destigmatize mental health issues and promote available services.
	4. Support research initiatives that evaluate the effectiveness of counseling programs.

Stakeholder	Categorised Suggestions
	5. Collaborate with mental health organizations to develop comprehensive mental health policies.
Entrepreneurs	1. Identify market gaps in counseling services and develop innovative solutions to meet those needs.
	2. Leverage technology to create platforms for counseling services that enhance accessibility and convenience.
	3. Develop mobile applications that provide mental health resources and support.
	4. Create subscription-based models for ongoing counseling support and resources.
	5. Partner with existing counseling services to expand their reach and service offerings.
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	1. Partner with counseling services to provide resources and support for underserved populations.
	2. Advocate for policies that enhance mental health awareness and access to counseling services.
	3. Develop community programs that provide free or low-cost counseling services.
	4. Create awareness campaigns to educate the public about mental health resources available in the community.
	5. Collaborate with local governments to address systemic barriers to accessing mental health services.
Managing Directors	1. Set a clear vision and mission for counseling services within the organization.
	2. Allocate budget and resources to support mental health initiatives and staff training.
	3. Foster a culture of mental health awareness and support within the organization.
	4. Monitor the performance of counseling services and make data-driven decisions for improvement.
	5. Engage with stakeholders to gather feedback and insights on counseling service effectiveness.

This updated table provides a comprehensive set of suggestions tailored to each stakeholder group, including Managing Directors, to enhance counseling practices and mental health support.

Research paradigm :

Research Scholars from India	1. Conduct studies on the effectiveness of counseling practices in the Indian context.
	2. Collaborate with local counseling services to gather data and insights for research.
	3. Publish findings in academic journals to inform policy and practice in mental health.
	4. Explore cultural factors that influence mental health and counseling in India.
	5. Engage in interdisciplinary research to address mental health issues from multiple perspectives.
Research Scholars from Abroad	1. Share best practices and research findings from international contexts to inform local practices.
	2. Collaborate with Indian researchers to conduct comparative studies on counseling effectiveness.
	3. Participate in conferences and workshops to disseminate research findings and foster collaboration.
	4. Explore global trends in mental health and their applicability to local contexts.
	5. Contribute to the development of evidence-based guidelines for counseling practices.

These suggestions are designed to be actionable and relevant to each stakeholder group, helping to improve counseling practices and enhance mental health support in various contexts.

3) Directions for Future Research and Trends:

Future researchers need to focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of counseling on student outcomes, the effectiveness of online counseling platforms, and the development of culturally responsive practices in counseling. As we look towards 2026 and the near future, several trends

are anticipated in holistic counseling for students. Here the author enlists few of those as below :

- **Increased Use of Technology:** The integration of digital tools and Teletherapy will likely expand access to holistic counseling services.
- **Focus on Preventative Strategies:** There will be a growing emphasis on preventative mental

health strategies that promote overall well-being.

- **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Collaboration between mental health professionals, educators, and wellness coaches will become more common, fostering a comprehensive support system for students.

4) Implementation Steps proposed by the Author:

- **Establishment of Collaborative Networks:** Create partnerships among schools, colleges, universities, NGOs, and government entities to share resources and best practices.
- **Developing Innovative Training Programs:** Design and implement training programs for counselors that focus on emerging trends in mental health and culturally sensitive practices.
- **Launching of Awareness Campaigns:** Initiate community outreach programs that educate the public about mental health resources and the importance of seeking help.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Set up systems for ongoing evaluation of counseling services to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
- **Secure Funding:** Actively seek grants and funding opportunities to support mental health initiatives and ensure sustainability.

By focusing on these conclusions and implementation steps, stakeholders can work together to create a more effective and responsive counseling framework that meets the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

5) Conclusions

1. **Integrated Approach:** Stakeholders must collaborate across sectors—policy planners, educators, researchers, and practitioners—to create a cohesive framework for mental health support that addresses the unique needs of different communities.

2. **Continuous Professional Development:** Ongoing training and professional development for counselors should be prioritized to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to address mental health challenges effectively.
3. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Implementing regular feedback mechanisms and data collection will allow stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of counseling services and make informed adjustments to improve outcomes.
4. **Awareness and Advocacy:** Increasing public awareness about mental health issues and reducing stigma through targeted campaigns can enhance community engagement and encourage individuals to seek help.
5. **Resource Allocation:** Adequate funding and resources must be allocated to mental health initiatives, ensuring that counseling services are accessible to all, particularly underserved populations.
6. **Research and Evidence-Based Practices:** Encouraging research collaboration between local and international scholars will help develop evidence-based practices that are culturally relevant and effective in addressing mental health needs.

Highlighting the essential role of counseling in supporting students' mental health and academic success, is of prime importance in the future. The trends and findings suggest that as the landscape of education evolves, so too must the approaches to counseling, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in meeting the needs of all students. Culturally responsive counseling is essential for effectively supporting students from diverse backgrounds. By fostering cultural competence, counselors can enhance the therapeutic relationship and improve mental health outcomes for students. However, challenges in implementation must be addressed to ensure that all students receive the support they need. Future research should focus on developing

training programs for counselors and evaluating the effectiveness of culturally responsive practices in various educational settings.

Note: Part 2 of the paper will carry additional inputs, insights and survey conducted and authors interpretation /suggestions in a detailed manner from a sample size of N=250 gathered from India and abroad.

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- To be continued

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How Reliable Is Indian Astrology?

Few cultural practices in India have enjoyed as much persistence and public fascination as astrology. Known traditionally as Jyotisha Shastra — the “Science of Light” — Indian astrology has guided decisions about marriage, business, travel, and even national policy for centuries. The planetary charts, the janma kundali or birth horoscope, and the intricate calculations of dasha (planetary periods) and gochara (transits) are interwoven with India’s social and spiritual fabric.

But in a world increasingly governed by scientific empiricism and statistical validation, a crucial question arises: How reliable is Indian astrology? Does it truly offer insights grounded in observable patterns, or does it thrive mainly as a cultural and

psychological framework for meaning-making? Let us explore the reliability of Indian astrology from historical, philosophical, scientific, and psychological standpoints — attempting to separate its symbolic power from its empirical claims.

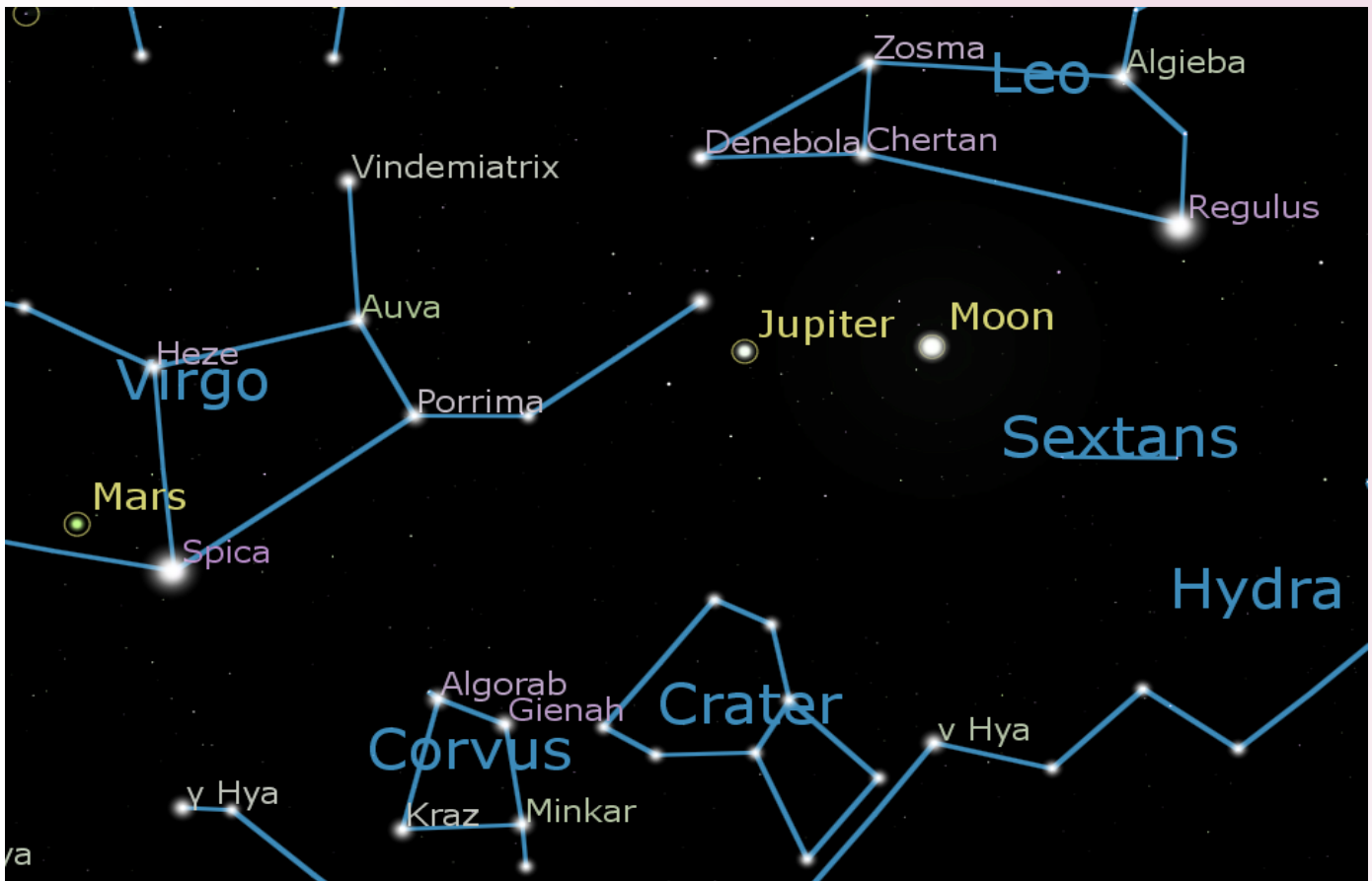
1. Origins and Theoretical Foundations

Indian astrology traces its roots to the Vedic corpus, especially the Vedanga Jyotisha (circa 1200 BCE), which outlined rules for calculating celestial positions for ritual timings (muhurtas). Over centuries, astrology evolved under the influence of Greek, Persian, and Arabic systems, giving rise to what we now call Parashari Jyotisha, Jaimini Jyotisha, and Tajika methods.

The underlying premise is cosmological: the universe is an interconnected whole where cosmic rhythms influence earthly life. Planets (grahas) are not merely inert celestial bodies but archetypal forces embodying certain psychological and karmic energies. The rashi (zodiac sign), nakshatra (lunar mansion), and bhava (house) divisions of the sky form a symbolic map of human destiny at birth.

Astrology, therefore, is less a predictive science in the modern sense and more a symbolic language that seeks to express the relationship between the macrocosm (universe) and the microcosm (individual life). However, its practitioners often assert predictive accuracy, bringing it under the lens of scientific scrutiny.





2. The Claim of Predictive Power

The central claim of Indian astrology is that the positions of planets at birth reflect patterns of life events, character tendencies, and karmic outcomes. Astrologers often predict:

- Career paths (based on the 10th house and its lord),
- Marriage compatibility (via kundali matching),
- Health and longevity (through planetary aspects on the lagna and 8th house),
- Financial prospects, and
- Timing of events through dasha-bhukti systems.

Anecdotal cases abound of astonishingly accurate forecasts — a person's sudden windfall or an unexpected illness predicted to the month. However, anecdotes, while compelling, cannot establish reliability. Scientific reliability

demands replicability, consistency, and statistical significance.

Several empirical studies have attempted to test astrological claims. For instance, one of the earliest large-scale studies by physicist S. Carlson (1985, *Nature*) found no correlation between natal charts and personality traits. Later studies by Indian universities (e.g., Andhra University's Department of Astrology) sometimes report moderate correlations, though critics point to methodological weaknesses and lack of peer review.

Thus, while astrology often produces impressive individual hits, systematic testing has so far failed to confirm consistent predictive reliability.

3. Astrology as Symbolic Psychology

One reason for astrology's enduring relevance may lie not in its prediction, but in its interpretation. Modern psychological thinkers, notably Carl Jung,

saw astrology as an archetypal system reflecting deep patterns of the human psyche. Jung wrote, “Astrology represents the summation of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity.”

From this viewpoint, astrology works symbolically rather than causally. The “influence” of Mars does not mean a physical beam of aggression radiates from the planet, but that the human psyche projects inner energies outward, using the heavens as a mirror. A chart reading then becomes a tool of self-reflection and insight, not deterministic prophecy.

In contemporary India, several counsellors and psychotherapists integrate astrology with psychology — interpreting charts to explore unconscious motives, relational patterns, or life scripts. In such contexts, astrology’s reliability is less about empirical precision and more about symbolic resonance. The chart offers a language through which individuals can narrate and understand their life stories.

4. The Cultural Context: Faith, Fatalism, and Functionality

To understand Indian astrology’s reliability, one must also acknowledge its cultural embeddedness. Indian society has long upheld a cyclical worldview — life as governed by karma, rebirth, and cosmic rhythms. Within this frame, astrology serves as a navigational aid rather than a tool for control.

Ritual life, from naming a newborn to scheduling a business inauguration, relies on astrologically auspicious timings (muhurtas). This cultural reliance has functional value: it introduces rhythm, ritual order, and collective faith in the face of uncertainty.

However, critics argue that excessive dependence fosters fatalism. When individuals surrender agency to planetary configurations, they risk avoiding responsibility for choices. The line between faith and fatalism becomes thin.

At the same time, astrology offers emotional comfort — providing a sense of predictability in an unpredictable world. Even when predictions fail, believers often reinterpret outcomes as “karmic lessons,” preserving faith. This psychological flexibility partly explains astrology’s survival, independent of scientific validation.

5. Scientific and Philosophical Challenges

5.1 Lack of Mechanistic Explanation

For a system to be scientifically reliable, its causal mechanisms must be explainable or at least testable. Astrology posits planetary “influences,” but offers no measurable physical interaction between celestial positions and human behaviour. The gravitational and electromagnetic effects of distant planets are negligible compared to local forces. Thus, astrology’s causal model remains metaphysical rather than physical.

5.2 Statistical Testing and the Problem of Falsifiability

Scientific reliability also requires falsifiability — the capacity for a theory to be proven wrong. Astrological interpretations, being highly flexible and symbolic, are often resistant to disconfirmation. A failed prediction can always be attributed to a wrong birth time, overlooked planetary aspect, or “free will.” This un-falsifiability weakens astrology’s claim as a scientific system.

Nonetheless, several Indian research initiatives — such as the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan’s astrology department — continue efforts to develop statistical models correlating planetary patterns with socio-economic or health trends. Though results are preliminary, they aim to standardize what has traditionally been a highly interpretive art.

5.3 The Observer Bias and the Forer Effect

Psychological studies highlight the Forer effect — people’s tendency to accept vague, general

statements as highly accurate descriptions of themselves. Astrological readings often capitalize on this bias: statements like “You have great potential but sometimes doubt yourself” fit most individuals. Thus, perceived accuracy may reflect psychological suggestibility rather than objective correlation.

6. Indian Astrology in the Modern Era

Despite scientific skepticism, astrology has not only survived but thrived in the digital age. Online horoscope portals, AI-generated charts, and astrologer-influencers command millions of followers. Mobile apps now produce detailed birth charts instantly, making astrology accessible beyond traditional priestly lineages.

This democratization, however, has diluted traditional rigor. Many “astrologers” lack training in Sanskrit texts or astronomical computation, relying instead on software outputs. Consequently, public trust oscillates between reverence and cynicism.

At the same time, a parallel reformist movement within astrology seeks to re-establish intellectual credibility. Scholars advocate for Jyotisha as a cultural science — a synthesis of astronomy, psychology, and ethics. The Council of Vedic Astrology and similar institutions now propose standardized syllabi and ethical codes of practice.

Moreover, Indian astrology is finding new applications in corporate decision-making, counselling, and wellness industries. Even some business schools explore muhurta-based project launches as part of cultural strategy, illustrating its adaptive resilience.

7. A Balanced Perspective: Reliability Beyond Empiricism

To dismiss Indian astrology purely on scientific grounds may be to misunderstand its core purpose. Its reliability may not lie in precise prediction but in its existential utility — its ability to provide meaning, coherence, and moral guidance.

- As a symbolic system, astrology reliably mirrors archetypal dynamics of human life.
- As a counselling tool, it reliably evokes introspection, comfort, and behavioural awareness.
- As a cultural practice, it reliably binds communities through shared ritual logic.

Yet, its empirical reliability — the claim that planetary positions determine or predict events — remains unproven. The challenge, then, is to appreciate astrology as a language of meaning rather than a science of causation.

8. The Way Forward: Integrative and Critical Approaches

Modern India need not view astrology and science as adversaries but as different modes of knowing. A few steps could lead to a more balanced engagement:

1. Encourage critical literacy: Citizens should learn the difference between symbolic interpretation and deterministic prediction.
2. Promote research: Interdisciplinary studies combining statistics, psychology, and cultural anthropology can clarify where astrology may hold heuristic or therapeutic value.
3. Regulate practice: Licensing or accreditation systems could protect people from exploitative pseudo-astrologers.
4. Foster dialogue: Collaboration between scientists, philosophers, and astrologers may lead to richer understandings of consciousness, symbolism, and fate.

Astrology, stripped of dogma, can then be reclaimed as a contemplative art — a bridge between the visible and the invisible.

Mr. R. Chandrasekaran

Leaders Are Born Managers Are Made

Leaders vs Manager is an age old topic. But still, it is always interesting and raises enormous debates and arguments For and Against!

Every Manager wants to become a Leader. But it is not easy. Leaders are to be chosen by the people and this is possible in a political arena, where the Party workers elect their Leader but even here sometimes the Leader is imposed by the High Command and the election becomes a “taken for granted occasion”! Under the Public and Private Sector organizations, the Manager is posted from the above and then he is ordered to lead the people whom he has never met or talked with! However the Manager has to win the confidence of the people and transform himself as their Leader. Some Managers turn victorious in this task and become Leaders, while quite a few remain and retire as Managers only. This article is meant for helping such people as to how they can turn as Leaders.

Managers avoid hard conversations. Leaders run towards them.

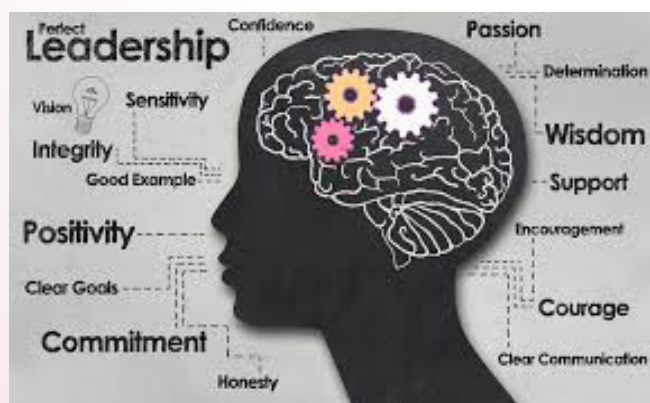
Posting of Managers

Under the Public Sector Undertakings, the Officers don't sleep after the close of the March New Business- not that they are waiting breathless as to who is emerging as Number 1 at the All India Level or Zonal Level or Divisional Level-

they are spending sleepless and snoreless nights as to where they will be posted in the first week of April. Especially who are awaiting promotions- the Promotion list will come, congratulations galore, Sir, you are promoted!- but within a day, the Transfer List will come- Sir, very sorry, you are posted to Gauhati/ Kolkata/ Raichur, these condolence messages after the congratulatory tinkles follow- Let us be prepared. Well, this is life, let us face it! Children are crying. Dad, I don't know Hindi/Bengali/Madrasi! For the people in the North, all the persons beyond Vindhyas are Madrasis!

The Dad is seeking with anger and depression- “I know this would happen, that official A is close to the Top! That B is always crow-catching the Boss! That C's wife is a good friend of the Madam of the Superior, I used to see them always together!”

Well, again this is life. Let us accept it!





Here comes the Leader!

Before you take over the new position, rumors will come about that place about the people there. “Don’t believe anybody, very dangerous fellows, they will pass on to the opposite people what all you comment! Don’t take your family, you can come back in an year, go and meet the Boss every month- he should never forget your sorrowful face, don’t miss to take a packet of Mysore Pak, very famous in your area! Advices galore!

Your staff should accept you as their Leader. Just as you don’t hide your illness to your Doctor, please reveal yourself to your colleagues- your likes, dislikes, plus and minus points. They have to accept you with all your good and bad. You have to appeal to them to work- not for you, not for the customers, not the Stakeholders nor for the organization. They have to work and win for THEMSELVES. Will anything else attract them more? When they toil for their own progress, automatically the Institution will progress, since both are interlinked with each other.

You have hired your Staff, not for their skills or talents. You can always teach them skills.

You have hired them for their attitude. This is inborn.

Some Employers say that they have hired ‘passionate people’. But often people fake passion. Some are passionate only during interviews!

You have to make it clear to your employees that Success is not key to Happiness, whereas Happiness is key to Success. If you love what you are doing, you become successful in the end.

People who come to work with a clear sense of WHY, are less prone to giving up after a few failures because they understand their higher Cause. Remember what Thomas Edison said “ I did not find a way to make a light bulb but I found a thousand ways how not to make one.”

You have to inspire your employees, not simply motivate them, because motivation is short term whereas inspiration is long term.

It is no more your Growth, but your Employees’

At a particular time in your career, you have to realize that it is no more your growth and success but it is of your Staff.

You have to serve them who served you so long.

Leaders: born or made?

"Leadership is a set of skills and behaviours; skills and behaviours can be learned through dedication, obtaining knowledge, practice, feedback and refinement."

You have to leave the organization in a better shape than when you joined it.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Gave a speech in 1963 at Washington "I have a Dream." 250000 people attended it. They believed him although they had their own beliefs. Because Energy only excites whereas Charisma inspires. Again Energy is short term and Charisma is long term. People come to work not to build walls but a CATHEDRAL.

We should live in the minds of others even after our death. The moment you are not in the minds of others, you are DEAD. Let us live in such a way that we never die.

When the going gets tough, the Tough gets going.
Tough times don't last but Tough people do!
When you compete against others, no one helps you.
When you compete against yourself, every one helps you!

Leaders don't have all the great ideas. They only provide support to people to generate great ideas.
Leaders inspire others.
Leaders inspire Action!

R. Venugopal

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

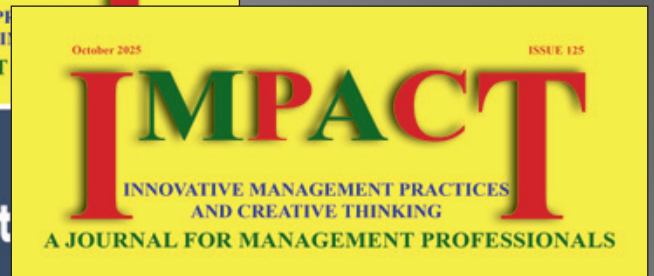


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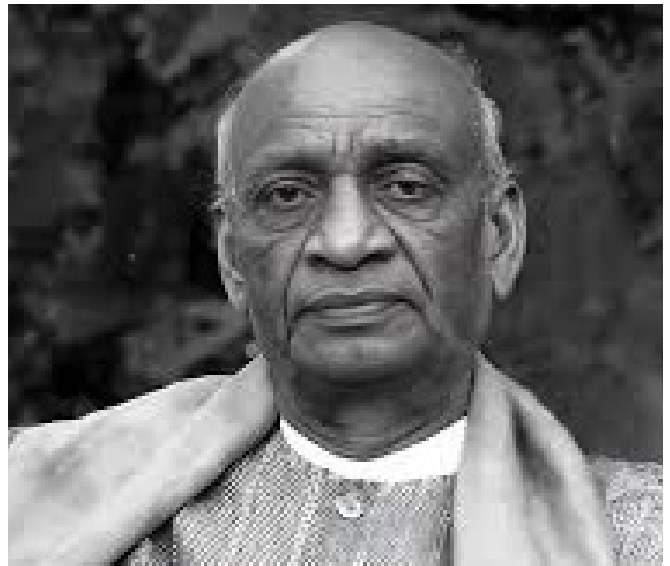
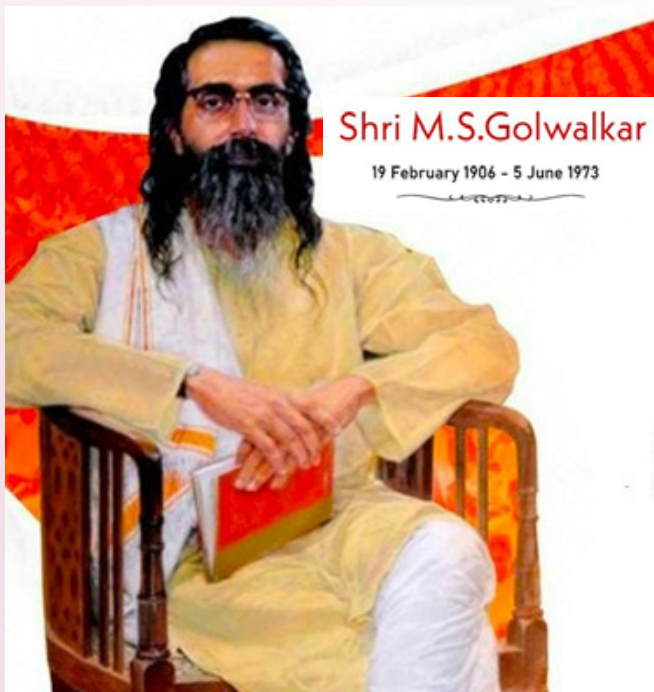
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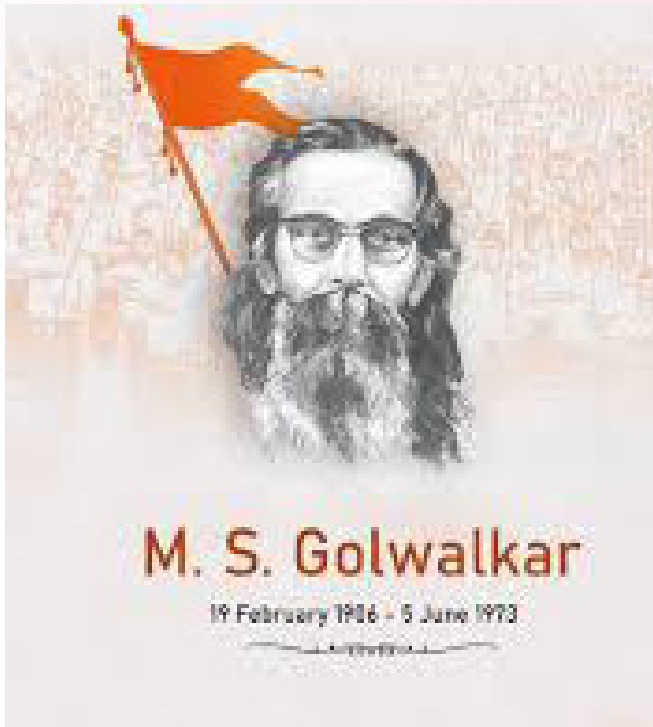
How Sardar Patel Used R.S.S. Chief Golwalkar to Save Kashmir in 1948

When the partition of India was announced in the House of Commons in London by the U.K Prime Minister Clement Attlee, the princely states were given the choice either to be independent or join India or Pakistan. While most of these Princely States joined India, the ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh was a confused man (whether to join India or Pakistan) due to several factors including the wrong message given to him, by the Viceroy Mountbatten. Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, as usual, was in a political 'coma'.



It was finally the Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel who saw clearly the 'writing on the wall', and boldly chose to send the R.S.S. Chief Shri GolwalkarGuruji, in an I.A.F. plane to Srinagar, on 17th Oct 1947, to convince the Ruler of Kashmir Maharaja Hari Singh to join India. (Kashmir 1947 by Prem Shankar Jha – Oxford University Press, pp. 46–52). Shri GolwalkarGuruji (R.S.S. Chief) accomplished the assignment given to him by Sardar Patel and returned to Delhi on 19th October 1947 and reported the matter to the latter.

As a result of the success of Shri Golwalkar the R.S.S. Chief's mission, finally the 'Instrument



of Accession' of Jammu & Kashmir to India was officially signed on 26th Oct 1947.

The above episode is proof to show that Sardar Patel was not allergic to R.S.S. He even utilized their services in accomplishing a noble task.

The subsequent bungling by Pandit Nehru of ordering a premature ceasefire and thereby, creating an unfortunate P.O.K (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and also needlessly, taking the Kashmir issue to the United Nations, are all part of our tragic History.

Dr. H.V. Hande

*Former Health Minister of
Government of Tamilnadu.
Founder & Director of
Hande Hospital.*



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Chhoti Chhoti Si Baat

When Man Proposes and God Disposes

When I was with my parents during the second lockdown, I had purchased a few Odia books and novels and some I have read and some are halfway through. One such book was *Antaranga Bharath*- part I and part II by writer and author Manoj Das ji who happened to leave the world during the pandemic. Interestingly while working as the editor of the monthly magazine "The Heritage" that was launched by The Chandamama Group of Chennai in 1985 as the last serious English Literary Magazine of India in the twentieth century, he had travelled several places in India to collect information for the magazine and those writings that included the historical facts and evidences along with his personal experiences while collecting them and his personal views and reflections, became very popular and also found a place in Odisha in the monthly literary journal -Jhankar, a notable Odia monthly literary magazine, as a series of Travel Stories, published by the Prajatantra group. And the collection of all those stories later took the shape of the above book that I happened to purchase and go through it. And his editorials of the *The Heritage* magazine are also published as a book in English titled - *The Heritage* -Complete Editorials .

By reading those two parts of the Odia book *Antaranga Bharath*, I kind of completed a virtual tour and travel of all the heritage sites of India and there I happened to read about the stories and legends of Kanyakumari, Srivilliputtur Andal and Sri Ranganathan etc of Tamilnadu. Well it was

very interesting to read about the state in which I am a daughter-in-law by an author who is from the state where I am a daughter.

Last month was the month of October, and I got married on 25 th October -2009 .From the state of Odisha and the state of daughterhood I entered the state of Tamilnadu and the state of daughter-in-lawhood. Husband's Brother-in-law was posted at Delhi and it seems sister-in-law had proposed that me and her brother or my husband could visit their house in Delhi and from there we both could go to Shimla by the arrangements made by them. After few days of marriage, I and my husband went to Coimbatore along with my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. They happened to stay with us for few days and then left for Vellore. Sister-in-law was going through fertility treatments and she had got the reference of a special doctor in Coimbatore and while returning she had suggested to consult the same doctor in case

I happen to conceive.

I conceived and we consulted the same doctor and many visiting persons used to ask me about my problems and years of marriage etc. Many used to ask why was I consulting her in place of a regular gynecologist. And it so happened that I lost my kid and became a special person consulting a special doctor. By the time the Thala Deepawali came, as if a box of crackers of burdens had burst in our life. With the pains of those burnt marks, we tried to push through life. For fourteen years every festival came, every occasion came and in every occasion the in-laws proposed and executed everything

including the travels and tours. As if there were no places of interest other than the Vellore house and the sister-in-law's house. Neither we had much money of our own to plan travels nor we had the bonding to think of outing. Till now I haven't seen Ooty despite having spent two years on the foothills in Coimbatore.

In my primary school, we had a chapter in Odia literature - Kuna O Bani, it was a poem as a discussion between the little boy named Kuna and a bani or the bird myna.

I was like that bird. In that poem, the little boy was so fond of the bird myna that it asked her to come and stay as his pet and he offered her to be kept in a golden cage and to be fed in silver bowls and to be taken to fairs. But the bird had denied every offer of the little boy describing nothing as important as her own freedom in the jungle where she flies branch to branch and eats the fruits of the jungle and rests happily in her little nest of twigs and feathers. And she had fled away to the jungle telling Kuna to meet in him in his garden in place of staying in his golden cage. I had never thought my life would get caught inside such a golden cage. All the freedom that I had enjoyed as my parents' daughter in our little house was lost within the big bungalow of my parents-in-law.

Well, in my other articles through some incidents and instances I have narrated about my life and the golden phase that has unfolded. And to be very precise, in the month of October-2004, when I was in Delhi, taking coaching from Madam Neetu Singh, an aspirant named CM Karthikeyan happened to sit next to me when he had joined the class two weeks later when the coaching session had started on 4th October. And he had introduced himself and had asked about the previous class notes. Few days later one day when I was waiting for my paper to be corrected by ma'am, my two other friends from Odisha preferred to leave the centre early as they had got back their papers. It was around 8:30 pm, as the class used to be from

4pm to 8pm with a small tea break of 5 minutes at 6pm.

That day I had asked the other aspirant CM Karthikeyan who was also waiting for his papers, if I could come along with him during those night hours where we used to walk from Karolbagh to Old Rajender Nagar. And a gentleman that he is, he had gladly given a company along with several other Tamil friends who all were taking coaching there. And few days down the month it was Diwali. My roommate had visited her guardian's house in Gurgaon and I was standing outside the house to get a little warmer in that little bit of sunrays in that otherwise very chill winter day of Delhi, when one friend from the group to whom I was introduced the other day by CM Karthikeyan happened to pass through that road and I had shaken hand wishing him Happy Diwali. Later when CM Karthikeyan had visited us with some Diwali sweets, he had mentioned about the friend whom I had wished happy Diwali to be the person who had seen me on 4th October, on the first day of the class and he was in love with me since then and that journey that had started with a Happy Diwali Handshake not knowing about the feeling on the other side has gone through every ups and downs of life and still the warmth of that handshake has kept us intact but we couldn't see a single Happy Diwali in these 21 years. In fact I cried the worst in the previous year's Diwali.

Those were the last tears, crying for self dignity. I had stopped going to Vellore but the visits to the sister-in-law's house were intact. There also the same issues of ego and arrogance. Since I had stopped going to Vellore, sister-in-law was adamant not to visit our house and my son who had spent few nights in her house with the cousins, wanted them to come and spend some days in our house with him. But there started the ugly game of shooting the gun from someone's shoulder and even the kids are not barred from such diplomacies.

She didn't allow her children to visit our house and my son was emotional to meet the cousins.

And my husband kept insisting on going there and meeting them when Brother in law was at Arunachal Pradesh. This time I hesitated to go there and as usual there were smokes and fumes of arguments and cold wars.

Not a single festival, not a single ceremony, not a single occasion without arguments and tears.

When I asked my husband to visit her house with my son without me, he found it insulting and again I started arguing about my respect and my dignity, and the house was gloomy and dark like the night of Amavasya.

I cleared the clouds of doubts from my heart and decided to go to her house with my husband and son along with the Gulab jamuns that I had made for the children thinking they will be visiting our house.

It was a big victory for my sister-in-law who had gone to the extent of excusing that her son was busy playing with the watchman's son and not interested in visiting our house. And the daughter had classes to attend in the Akash coaching centre etc.

Relationships are the golden cages inside which our lives get caged and without those golden cages I don't know what life would be like.

But, after a month of that Diwali day,

our parents-in-law had rushed to Chennai to their daughter's house and we came to know that my niece had fallen sick for almost one month and the sister-in-law was scared having taken the decision of staying away from Arunachal Pradesh to raise the children in Chennai.

While on one side, those who were not doing any work were able to take and execute decisions even if those were like the decision taken by Mohammad Bin Tughlaq who tried to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and again from Daulatabad

back to Delhi and I who was doing every work was not having the freedom to take my own decisions.

During that time, all of them, parents-in-law, sister-in-law and her two kids visited our new rented house and mother-in-law had to struggle a lot to climb up to the second floor.

All those days, they used to propose, they used to dispose, they used to plan, they used to cancel, everything was decided by them, executed by the orderlies and I was like the bird inside the golden cage. At least the bird was able to decide to stay away from the cage but I was not able to leave the cage.

All my writings have turned out to be the songs of sadness that I have gone through while being caged inside the golden cage of this relationship. But there is a sweet song too.

Throughout these 21 years of journey, whenever I had to make a decision, despite pain, I decided to choose the path less traveled, the path of love, sacrifice and standing with my husband.

After that incident, the entire family stopped interfering in my life and I was never anti-in-laws and now I became more pro-self like we are not anti-America but we are pro-India, focusing on rebuilding my shattered relationship and gathering back my scattered career.

In 2009, when sister-in-law had proposed for our trip to Shimla via their Delhi house, she had disposed the same when she had decided to stay away from the house as her mother-in-law had decided to stay there for few days for her eye surgery. And I had told my husband not to feed me with others silver spoon but to feed me with his own hand with a little bit of love even if it is only a simple broth.

By this Navratri vacation, when every cold war and open war has come to an end, my husband decided

to take us somewhere with his own expenditures and I asked him if possible to visit Delhi. But mother-in-law's wish was to visit the Guruvayoor temple and the Houseboat in Kumargom in Kerala.

But, unlike the previous years when I was forced to visit only in-laws' houses, I wasn't forced this time and I didn't want to become an obstacle when my husband wanted to fulfill his mother's wish as most of her wishes are fulfilled by her daughter with the freebies and facilities extended to her husband as a top executive. Due to some reasons she had missed the trip to Kumargom when her daughter had paid a visit, so it was the sister's suggestion to fulfill their mother's wish and the sweet brother was ready to execute it.

He said to me very humbly, "I feel like taking Amma to Guruvayoor temple and the Houseboat". And I had a very humble reply, "Ok, let's visit God's own land".

In that book of Antaranga Bharath, I had read the story of Guruvayoor, how, when Lord Krishna had sensed the approaching devastation of Dwarika, he had made arrangements for the people to return back to Vrindavan and from there he had made arrangements for that idol of little Krishna to be brought by Guru or Brihaspati and Vayu Dev to Kerala and be consecrated there which is known as Guruvayoor temple.

It was decided to visit Kerala and husband started inquiring about the places to stay as otherwise it used to be the free forest guest house or the police guest house. But during that time he happened to come across the news of some particular type of amoeba sprawling in freshwater and causing brain fever and many loss of life cases being reported in Kerala. Hence he decided to cancel the trip to Kerala and we three husband, wife and son happened to visit Trichy and Thanjavur and had the darshan of Maari Amman at Samayapur on the first day of Navratri followed by SriRanganathan, Sri

Ranga Nayiki, then Sri Jambulingeswar and Akhilandeswari and Uchipilayar and then the Brihadeeswar temple and while returning the visit to the mangrove forest in Pichavaram.

This time I said very softly, all these years your people proposed and your people disposed as per their wishes and finally when you decided and proposed, I guess God disposed as per his wish. Maybe it's the message from the Land of God's own Land, "All these years you have fulfilled your family's wishes and now you fulfill your wife's wishes".

The virtual tour that I had made by reading about the Sri Ranganathan temple turned out to be a real travel and tour and three days of continuous darshan and travel made us tired but filled our hearts with sheer satisfaction.

After returning home and taking some rest, again my husband proposed to visit the Yelagiri hill station and this time he wanted to take parents-in-law as well as sister-in-law and her kids. Again I said, good, let's go together. But like all these years, it was told, "we will let you know".

Unlike these executive families, where people are there to execute, budgets flow free, organising gets done by the subordinates, and a clearcut decision is not taken properly, in our normal families, we decide, we execute with proper planning, organising and budgeting.

I asked permission from the academy, my husband was on leave and it was Pooja vacation for my son. At first, the proposal was for a two day's visit to the hills. The proposal was disposed of by sister-in-law with the alteration of one day stay in Vellore and one day trip to the hills. Husband informed me and again I agreed without any hesitation and by the time I came from my evening class, the proposal was further altered as to why waste money in the hills and the decision was made to spend two days in the Vellore house. This time also I kept silent

and did cooking and other works. The next day morning, my son who was eager to visit the hills with his cousins started crying after knowing about the disposal. And when my husband decided to take him to a nearby place, again there were phone calls to cancel everything and visit Vellore.

Finally I opened up and made my clear statement, “I lost my child, my career and my peace of mind because of your silence and your family’s irrational decision making, but hereafter I have no interest to serve those who don’t deserve it, rather I will serve myself”.

I left it up to him to decide whatever he wanted to decide and I decided not to spoil the festive occasion of Navratri. This time, again they tried to play the child card of shooting from the child’s shoulder but my husband decided to take us to the ECR and after a happy Independence Day celebration and a Happy Ganesh Pooja we had a Happy Vijaya Dashami by working hard the whole day on Wednesday and doing the pooja in the evening and having the darshan of Goddess Bhuvaneswari near our current location.

All these years, every small and big thing of life got complicated the way our lives get complicated in the government offices with the excuse of this or that like, the officer is on leave, or the forms are not available or come on some other day as the officer is busy. And the helpless public keep running between this and that office for small small things.

After the Ravana Badha on the day of Vijaya Dashami, when Sri Ram had reached Ayodhya, it was the amavasya day and lamps were lit and he was welcomed with crackers and Diwali was celebrated and while returning home Vibhishan could get the statue of Sri Ranganathan from Lord Ram to be carried to Sri Lanka with a condition of not keeping him down anywhere else he would not move an inch from that place. It seems by the time Vibhishan reached the banks of Cauvery and wanted to get freshened

up, he had found a boy who agreed to carry the idol for sometime till Vibhishan returns. But to his surprise, the little boy had put the idol down and had hidden somewhere on the rockfort area of Trichy. After having the darshan of Kodanda Ramar where Maata Sita is seen on the right side of Lord Rama, when I asked the priest about the temple, he too told the story that I had read in the book and when I came out, another old lady called me to the corner and narrated the story in little detail that, the little boy was none other than Lord Ganesha and purposefully he had appeared there to stop Lord Narayana from leaving India and going to Sri Lanka with Vibhishan and the Uchhipilayar is the same Ganesha. And it seems Lord Ranganathan is positioned facing southward keeping an eye on Sri Lanka but Sri Lanka is still burning because of the fire they had put on Lord Hanuman’s tail and that he had spread to the entire city. That granny also happened to narrate that the idol was left there and after several years when a king was resting under a tree two parrots happened to narrate the story to the king telling about the idol being buried under the sand and the king excavated in that place as narrated by the two parrots and happened to retrieve the idol and built the temple for Sri Ranganathan and the Kili Mandapam in memory of the two parrots. And from time to time, different kings have contributed towards the enlargement of the campus area with the latest addition being the very colourful Ranga Ranga Gopuram completed in 1987.

I had also read that when the statue of Lord Narayana was thrown by some kings from the Chidambaram temple, glorifying Lord Shiva, the odia ruler Choda Ganga Deba had rebuilt the Puri temple in the current format as an improvisation over the existing ancient temple built by the Keshari ruler and those rulers must have rebuilt the temple as explained in the story of Raja Indradyumna and Rani Gundicha mentioned in my other articles. And the boatman who took us through the backwaters and the mangrove forests, showed us the places and told us the story that

I had read in the book and how Kamal Haasan happened to shoot the movie of Dashavatar and the scene of throwing away of Lord Narayana into the waters of Bay of Bengal.

Well even now,our leaders are fighting in the name of religion,if Udayanidhi Stalin is condemning Sanatana Dharma in the open, the Chief minister of West Bengal is building a temple at Digha and calling it to be the New Jagannath Dham.But I believe,time and again,God will appear on earth and restore the delicate balance of Dharma and be it in the personal life or the public domain, when the tolerance of injustice will cross the limits,there will be a Mahabharat or a Ramayan and there will be the Vijaya Dashami and the Diwali Celebration.The Right will win over the wrong and the Dharmchakra will keep moving ahead.

From that day of Happy Diwali Handshake in 2004, it was a journey of 21 years without a single Happy Diwali.

But on this 21st year, I finally celebrated Happy Diwali.

Two weeks before Diwali I asked my husband, “What is the plan for Diwali?”He said, “There is no plan .”Then I said, “ Well, I have a plan.”And within no time he said, “Actually I have a plan.”

Then I said, “If you have a plan then why are you saying there is no plan.”Then I asked, “So, what is your plan?”And in a slow voice he said, “I thought of going to Vellore.”This time again I expressed my plans very clearly.I said, “ Very good, please go ahead with your plan.But this Diwali,I am not going anywhere .I am lighting the lamps in my own house even if it is a rented one .I will put Rangoli,make sweets and will relax in my own house.You are free to go wherever you wish and celebrate Diwali the way you want.”

I conveyed the message to my son telling him to feel free to choose whatever he wants ,either

joining his father at his grandparents’ house or staying in Chennai.There were no more discussions.We purchased some new clothes and crackers and some earthen lamps.I got four days leave at the academy and so also my son.Husband had got three days off.On Sunday morning,after having the breakfast,my husband asked, “Chinu,is there any chance we can go to Vellore?”Again I said, “Sorry Enga,I am not going anywhere.You can ask your parents and sister to join us here in this house if they don’t have any plans.”

He listened to me and went out to get back son from his guitar class and I cooked lunch.But I could see the silence in him.He is like a carbon copy of my father.Both of them won’t speak out their minds openly and start behaving gloomily.

But this time I didn’t get affected by those behaviours.

When I was a kid, I remember being very happy on Diwali.One day of school leave,few crackers and few lamps and few Gulabjamuns and a new dress.And just simple happiness not knowing what are the challenges of life and living.This Diwali I wanted to be like that.No intention of arguing with anyone,no intention of hurting anyone’s emotions but just being happy like a kid.

My intention was not to stop my husband from being with his parents on a day of celebration.My sole intention was to be happy without allowing anyone to interfere in my life .I have never interfered in anyone’s life.But circumstances and situations led to several interferences in my life. When I saw my husband being gloomy, I asked him to leave for Vellore after the lunch and be happy there instead of not going there and staying here gloomily.The worst pain is when our own people stay with us being unhappy.I have gone through this pain a lot.But this time I disposed the proposal made by my husband and decided to be happy even if no one is happy with me .

The little Ganesha we had got on the day of Ganesh Pooja is still there with us. I had prayed to him, “If you have made up your mind to stay with us for some more days, please make sure that you leave us after having initiated the Happy Diwali of our life.”

And finally my husband removed all the clouds of doubts from his heart and became the normal he is even though he didn't go to Vellore and on Monday morning I got up early and cleaned up the house and prepared Idly and Mutton gravy, vada and payasam and my husband was applying the sesame oil for my son that was heated with garlic, pepper and turmeric and was narrating how he used to celebrate Diwali when he was a kid. Then we three did Pooja and burst few crackers and had the food and in the evening I put the lamps the way we do in Odisha and for the first time I saw my husband as a role model for his son encouraging him to take up life like a leader. Otherwise all these years I had seen him standing quietly in the shadow zone as if still carrying the guilt of having chosen me against his parents wish.

During the day, we rang up and spoke to parents and for the first time I could feel my husband feeling lighter from within without any guilt of having chosen to stay here and having not visited his parents on Diwali.

The adamancy was neither against my husband nor against his parents. It was a pure adamancy of feeling happy for whatever life has given to me without having any regrets in life .

A few days after Diwali, it was our sixteenth anniversary on 25 th October and I asked my husband what he would like to get me. He said, “Ask ,what you want.” I said, “Will you get me whatever I ask!” Then he said, “ If it's practical and possible I will get that else I will say not possible.” And I said, “I don't want to ask anything, get me anything you feel like on your own.” He got me a beautiful toe ring and I am wearing it happily. Other than that I had a wish to pay a visit to the Nitya Kalyan

Perumal temple in the ECR .It was drizzling and son went to school telling please don't call me to anymore temples as he had visited quite a lot of temples during the Navratri holidays. So we both husband and wife went to the temple on that day and had a darshan and got the blessings. For the first time, that day, I could feel a sense of belongingness in the voice of my parents-in-law and sister-in-law when they happened to call us and wish us.

Finally, after having accepted life for 20 years the way it came for me, during this Navratri on the 21st year when my husband proposed for his family and I accepted it was God who disposed his proposal and after Navratri, during the Diwali when he proposed again this time I disposed his proposal. But only now I am being accepted the way I am.

21 years ago if I could have disposed of the proposal made by my husband maybe our life would have been different. But then God had disposed of my proposal and I had accepted my husband's proposal maybe to complete a circle of 21 years of journey to understand the meaning of life and love when God disposed of his proposal and he had to accept my proposal.

Finally we are happy with each other and our son and our families that are poles apart. Now we both are taking decisions together and we don't have any guilt for having chosen the path of love. When man proposes and God disposes, there is always a good reason.

Ms. Chinmayee

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



How Humour Makes You Light-Hearted

Humour is one of life's simplest yet most powerful gifts. A spontaneous laugh can dissolve tension, shift perspective, and infuse even the duller moments with energy. When we laugh, we release endorphins—the body's natural feel-good chemicals—that instantly elevate mood and reduce stress. Humour acts as a gentle antidote to life's pressures, helping us take ourselves a little less seriously and view our challenges through a more forgiving lens. It does not erase our problems, but it certainly makes them easier to bear.

At its core, humour is a sign of emotional flexibility. People who can laugh at their mistakes, quirks, and even misfortunes tend to be more resilient and optimistic. Instead of being weighed down by guilt, anxiety, or pride, humour allows them to step back and see the bigger picture. This sense of detachment makes the heart lighter and the mind clearer. In relationships, humour serves as a bridge—it breaks barriers, fosters empathy, and helps people connect beyond differences. A shared



laugh can heal misunderstandings faster than a long argument can.

Becoming light-hearted through humour is not about ignoring reality; it's about embracing it with grace. The ability to laugh, even in adversity, reflects inner strength and wisdom. It reminds us that life is transient and that our reactions, not our circumstances, shape our happiness. Whether it's a witty remark, a funny story, or a simple smile, humour adds rhythm and brightness to the ordinary. In learning to laugh freely, we learn to live freely—and that is what truly makes the heart light.

Dr. B. Sahana

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