

## On Learning

Yesterday the results of the All India 12th Std Exams were announced. They were outstanding with some students scoring 100% in the Humanities.

The Pandemic demands that all admissions be through electronic mediums. All Universities including the IIT's have lowered their minimum percentage required for admission.

After the initial joy of the prospect of a continuous vacation, the novelty has worn off. We miss outdoor sports, meeting our friends and the intellectual interaction in the class and the canteen.

I went down memory lane and thought about my education graph. It is quite revealing, and I want to share this with my family.

I joined Don Bosco School, Matunga in 1948 as a five year old. I was an average student and continued to get promoted every year. I hit a roadblock in my 8th Std. I had just become too casual in my approach to studies. I did not think that drawing a map of Turkey had any relevance to my life. What was the purpose of knowing sine@ or cos@? How did the speed of light have any connection with me? My total focus in life was playing marbles or collecting empty cigarette packets and generally fooling around in the class and at home. I thought that I would somehow make pass grades.

The inevitable happened and I failed in the final exams. I still remember that when the results were put up on the school notice board, I was fast asleep at home. My older brother, Peshi came and woke me up and said that I had failed. It did not impact me that I had lost one year of my life and that my father had lost a lot of money in school fees. My father was so upset that he did not say anything to me. I had expected a solid hammering. Nothing happened because the loss of a year and the public humiliation was so great that my father said nothing.

The next year started and all my friends and classmates had moved up. I was now sitting with the boys who were younger than me. It was a difficult year, but there was no one to blame except myself.

The following year I changed my school and shifted to St Joseph's School at Wadala. I started applying my mind to my studies. The humiliation of one year had been too much. My uncle who lived across the street, Manmohan Krishna took a special interest in my education. I used to score about 15 out of 100 in Algebra. Now my score went up to 96 and more. Slowly the realization came to me that studies were important to gain knowledge and to move up in life.

In the 10th Std. exam (then called Matriculation), I scored a First Division. I gave the entrance exam for the NDA( National Defense Accademy) and did very well. Out of a total of more than 25000 applicants I was judged as the 7th in the All India Merit List.

I joined the NDA and was commissioned as an officer in 1964. Your Nani and I got married in 1966. We were both 23 years old. Nani is from the Amal community of the Sindhis, where they give a lot of importance to education. She had done her BA ( Bachelor of Arts) and LLB ( Law) , but never practised because of my frequent transfers. She wanted to devote all her time in bringing up her daughters. Her efforts met with success and your mothers did extremely well for themselves with a Masters degree each.

Even today, I felt guilty about having lost a year at school. Many years later, it is that which probably led me to do a Bachelors degree from Punjabi University Patiala in 1983, Masters degree from Madras University in 1989 and then a Doctorate ( Ph. D) from Barkatullah University, Bhopal in 1995 ( at the age of 52). I also spent a couple of years doing Law and three years working on a MBA from Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi and finally a semester on Gerontology at USC, Los Angeles. All this was to atone for the failed year at school!

I am convinced that education is a must. It may seem boring at an age where all of you are, even irrelevant or outdated. It does provide a matrix for thinking out problems. It also provides a general and common platform for employers to choose a potentially good employee from amongst hundreds of applicants.

So, you do have choices! One of them is to immerse yourself in your education for some years to come, find your place in society and secure a place on this planet. One that can afford the necessities and luxuries of life matching your personal aspirations.

LOVE YOU ALL

Nana  
20th July 2020