

Winter..
..is here.

THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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EDITORIAL

Thomas Jefferson had once famously remarked that honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. Unfortunately, both honesty and wisdom are becoming rare commodities in the modern world. As a matter of fact there are huge political and economic ramifications to honesty. What is evident is the tendency of most leaders in almost all walks of life to often take recourse to lies and falsehoods, often with exceeding impunity when it involves defending their own position or aiding their rise to power or to hold on to it. As a matter of fact, there seems to be a growing social acceptability to lying in the pursuit of the ephemeral destination called success. As someone jocularly remarked, the first time you do it, it's hard, the second time it gets easier, the third time? Well, you probably don't even think about it! In other words, the desire to uphold a standard of honesty and integrity is hard; especially when there exists a tacit permission to lie. Interestingly it is often argued that the relationship between lying and happiness is extremely adversarial. The more you engage in lying, the less you have of happiness and wellbeing. By extension it may be asserted that honesty can demolish deception by the high and the mighty and truth has the time tested ability to easily cut through all deceit and lies. Probably, this explains the need of dictators and powers that be, to prevent both free speech and the easy access to information. However, thanks to the percolation of technology which has the inbuilt capability of easy access to information and its easy dissemination at the click of the button, it has become extremely difficult to put an effective stop to the flow of information. This includes both truths and untruths! Interestingly, honesty is not only about telling the truth. It is also about being real with oneself and others. This would obviously begin with self and about who you are. It is essentially about what one wants and what one needs to live an authentic life. It goes without saying that anything authentic cannot be based on untruth. In turn, this promotes openness which helps the development of a narrative on how facts are

presented. Consistently practicing honesty has the unintended effect of acutely sharpening one's perception. This develops the ability of observation everything around with clarity. This ability normally sends the jitters down the dishonest that one encounters in everyday life! It hardly needs to be emphasised the opposite of honesty is deception and lying. These traits may be used against others and interestingly, also against oneself. The consequences of lying, whether to others or to oneself can be equally disastrous. Deceiving oneself is often dubbed as living in self denial, which in turn may lead to delusional behaviour and at times schizophrenia. A simple explanation for this is that when you repeatedly lie, you delude yourself into believing what you're saying. This is similar to painting a monster in your mind which in time gets bigger and deadlier ultimately consuming your entire being. Deceit over an extended period confuses self and others. It may lead to loss of credibility and result in actual bodily harm. In other words, lies and deceit blurs the line between right and wrong and waters down the very concept of morality. Once that line is blurred, humans very easily lose the compass of social living and engage in acts and activities that has the potential to harm and cause pain to others. Another aspect of deceit is the fact that the person engaged in the act of lying may actually be trying to try to excuse or misrepresent one's own shortcomings or to compensate for something. When this is done over an extended period of time the make belief world becomes the reality. When the chasm between reality and the make belief reality becomes too large, and there is no societal mechanism to call the bluff or put a stop to it, what could emerge are aberrant humans and leaders who mock the very fundamentals of what humanity is all about. As the year starts, it is certainly worth our time to ponder if life without honesty is a life worth living at all!

ABOUT NUKSA

Nuksa The Pine Chronicle is the monthly news magazine of IIM Shillong.

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to withstand any disruption. Following this was **bITeSys**, the System and Analytics club bringing together a panel that included Gaurav Vatsa, Mythili Krishnan, Tony Thomas and Dhruv Rastogi, who presented a fruitful discussion on the **role of Data Analytics in transforming small and medium scale business in the emerging markets of India**. The last panel discussion was held by **Markathon**, the Marketing club wherein, industry leaders like Nishith Patel, Krithika Sriram, Piali Dasgupta and Srihari Gopinath had a thought-provoking discussion on **how digital transformation can form the stepping stone for India's global dominance**.

Both days ended on a musical note with fabulous entertainment events which had live performances by Mumbai-based alternate rock outfit- **The Yellow Diary** and the famous Indian composer, singer, lyricist, music director and sound recordist- **Gajendra Verma**.

Synergy

The corporate connect series entitled Synergy is specifically aimed at extending learning outside the classrooms and providing a platform for engaging with the industry. The Synergy session in the month of January hosted a session by Mr Aditya Pal Singh, Head, Talent Acquisition – Informatica. With an industry experience of over 19 years primarily focussed on Talent Acquisition, there was much to be learnt from this session with Mr Singh. In his illustrious career, he has majorly worked with big Consulting organizations like Accenture and has designed and deployed various talent acquisition strategy programs to meet the growing needs of the industry.

The session's topic was "Workforce of the future", where Mr Singh delved deep into several essential facets of the future workforce and provided his views on how management graduates can learn these skillsets. He also briefly touched upon the applications of ML and AI in the field of Human Resource Management. He also addressed several queries that the participants had around the industry's current recruitment scenario and shed light on how individuals can differentiate themselves in this highly competitive market.

IIM SHILLONG
SYNERGY

Informatica

Aditya Pal Singh
Head Talent Acquisition
Informatica

Republic Day Celebration

The deep roots of Indian democracy is the envy of most of our neighbours and the fact that the constitution of our country establishes this democratic republic ensures that India is the largest democracy in the world. Come 26th January the nation is agog with the celebrations of the Republic day commemorating the day when the constitution was adopted and India was declared a Republic in the year 1950. The celebrations at IIM Shillong saw the unfurling of the National Tricolor by the Director Prof D P Goyal and his inspiring address on the occasion. It included an impressive march past by the security staff and a beautiful cultural programme.



MÉTIER

Prof Achinta Kumar Samah published a book *Soft X-ray Holography with Indigenous Facilities from India*.

Soft X-ray Holography with Indigenous Facilities from India
(Possibilities, Challenges and Future Directions)

Dr. Achinta K. Samah
(www.ekogroda.in/hi)

OFF BEAT

The 'Spirit' of Sustainability: Insights from Rabindranath Tagore

Ecological sustainability cannot be a movement without sensitivity towards the Spirit as in *Espirit de corps*. The Latin root *Spiritus* means breath. There is a breath of life eternal in the glow of the sun, the flow of the water, the blowing of the wind and dancing of the leaves and birds. Are we ready to perceive these movements of Nature that also keep us alive?

Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate poet and philosopher from India could fathom these vibrations as evident from all his creative masterpieces. *Mukktadhara* (The Flow Unbound) is a play by Tagore where one finds the human protest bold and clear against mindless dam construction that arrests the natural flow of the river for power and control on 'others' including nature. Abhijit, the protagonist of alternative voice finally laid down his body and life in the gushing waters of the dam to protest against this inhuman act of exploitation of nature and human spirit of free-flowing natural life.

We have lent silent ears to the wisdom of the poet. And what are the consequences?

In the hills of Uttarakhand in India are many places of pilgrimage including Kedarnath and Badrinath. Devotees from all over the country and elsewhere flock these age-old shrines for spiritual solace and sublimation for thousands of years. For centuries pilgrims would sustain all hardships to reach these places mostly on foot. They would chant hymns in glory of Lord Shiva on the way up the hills. It is indeed an awesome sight.

And then one day it happened just a few years back. One still has horrid memories of that catastrophe. It was peak time for visitors to reach these shrines. And then the calamity came. Never before in the recent history of this land did clouds burst and floods hit all over this region. Official figures said that the death toll was 6000 while media reported that the figure crossed ten thousand in number. Untold misery befell the families afflicted. Many corpses were to be recovered months later. But the question remains: Why and how did it all happen after all?

Mindless construction of buildings and dams had been going on in this region for long in the name of progress and development. The lure of the lucre and power prompted the business and political elite flout all basic norms of ecological sustainability to grab fast bucks taking undue advantage of the common Indian quest for religion and spirituality. Conscientious experts and critics strongly suggested that this disaster was man-made! The self-sustaining resources of Nature were being ravaged to cater to the greed of man to such an extreme that finally the blow came back. Where then are we heading in the name of progress and development?

In our mind's eye we can visualize another scene. This time it was in Germany on the bank of the river Rhine. The entire village folks had assembled to watch the installation of a hydro-electric plant. All around there was the mood of celebration. The power generated from the plant will not only be an example of a technological marvel but also be of great economic and civic utility to the entire village community. On the bank of river, a little away from the scene of merriment was sitting the philosopher Martin Heidegger. His mood was one of remorse. One could see the worry in his eyebrows and wrinkled all over his forehead. A passer-by asked why he was not participating in the grand celebration ceremony. Heidegger was silent. His eyes were painfully watching the turbine blades striking and churning the waters. One could then hear his murmur of lament that was powerful and poignant – "Can't you see the river is getting hurt?"

In his famous play 'Raktakarabi; (The Red Oleanders), that drew inspiration from a natural scene in Shillong, Tagore portrays an atrocious king, the owner of a mine, as an engine of exploitation and mechanization as reminiscent of Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Then the child of nature, Nandini makes her glorious and lively advent into that kingdom with her love, freedom and spontaneity. People could feel and sense their fetters as in the machine and learnt to sing and dance in celebration of life – Nandini's worship (*Puja*). The symbol of power and authority, the royal flag (*Dhwoja*) was still standing in the way. The grand finale was reached when the King himself broke down his flag to join the celebration of Nandini. The crux of sustainable self and life is in this ability to challenge and demolish one's archaic beliefs and values that devours the life natural!

Any teacher and learner of substance and eminence will ever be willing to challenge the self. The roots of sustainability lie in our Self. It depends on whether we are bold enough to raise the deeper and critical questions about the way we think and live. Otherwise, the system of learning becomes ossified and fossilized with heat and dust around but no Light! Sadly enough, *The Little Prince* lamented: "Grown-ups are like that!"

Tagore was admitted to six schools but could not 'sustain' any of them even for a few days as the education was structured, monotonous and lifeless! Finally, at the age of 40, he created a university at *Santiniketan* (Abode of Peace) in the heart of nature far from the humdrum of city life of Calcutta. He christened it *Vishwa Bharati* meaning Global India. The poet could listen to the call of the wilderness for sustainability and spiritual transformation. In his play *Achalayatan* (The Stagnant Chamber) the poet portrays the worst possible predicament as we witness in modern education. But he also gave the clarion call to freedom: "In which dawn did you give that call? / No one will ever know."

where equality was a birth right, not a life-long fight. Begumpura was the city of dreams where an individual would live free from discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, financial status, gender and creed. But, what may have been a yearning hope of a grief stricken mystic, has six centuries later, reduced to a utopian society.

When Begumpura was conceptualized, world was far from its current state. India was under a brutal monarchy where conversion of faith was rampant and life highly uncertain, bazaars of Istanbul were the trade centers, Italian renaissance was at its peak and the modern medicine was not yet developed. Years later, when a form of this concept of socialism was attempted in the real world, it failed miserably due to corrupt leaders, personal biases, and ineffective systems leading to mass destruction of life and property. But, much has changed in the 21st century leading to the question, "If Begumpura were to be constructed today, would it be possible?"

Casey Gerald in the 2014 Harvard business school commencement speech quotes one of his professors saying, "If you wanted to change the world in the 20th century, you should have gone to a law school. If you want to change the world in the 21st century, you should go to business school." I believe, this statement is the key to creating Begumpura of the 21st century.

When Dr. VergheseKurien took the management of a small dairy in Anand, Gujrat, little did he know that he would go on to create India's largest self-sustaining industry & the largest rural employment sector. The formation of unions and a centralized marketing federation not only ensured economic returns, but also provided a platform of social equality. Every single member of the union was given equal voting rights and the right to contest union elections, thus eradicating the unfair control of upper caste individuals from office of power. This was the beginning of Begumpura and the form of management that business schools should teach.

Similar cooperatives are required to be established in the agriculture sector to enable value addition and provide higher returns to farmers. Cooperatives, in partnership with private sector, should build small scale cold-storage plants which would run on a subscription model basis. Farmers would store their produce until fair market price is not obtained. The cooperatives should also build & operate food processing plants which would help farmers gain the benefits of value pricing. Further, the marketing federation could use predictive analysis and help plan the next season's crops based on the demand in the market, thus maximizing the returns to the farmers and reducing the food wastage. Since, farmers would be members of the federation, they would act as shareholders and their dividends would be directly reach their bank accounts.

Cooperatives that enable craftsmanship should also be established. These small business groups should have a marketing and distribution federation which could promote the ages-old art & craft across the world and then pay royalty to the craftsmen from the sales proceeds.

Coupled with easy finance availability, universal basic income and such business opportunities, one would not only provide financial self-sufficiency to the rural population, it would also enable them to stand amongst the rest as equals. Discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, oppression of woman, exploitation at the hands of the rich cannot be completely eradicated from our society but can be fought against by reducing the dependency for survival and helping people make an honest livelihood. One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.



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