

Winter..
..is here.

THE PINE CHRONICLE

News, Views and Creative Expressions

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EDITORIAL

By the time you read this editorial, the memories of 2020 will slowly fade from memory. In a couple of years it will be relegated to a footnote in history where the only reference will be about a pandemic called Covid 19 and how it shut down the world. What was the human cost of it, the misery and chaos it wrought and the pain it caused? Will those be remembered? No they will be replaced by a figure: the number of casualties. This is what we have done to the other pandemics, such as the Spanish flu, which we refer to mostly in terms of the numbers killed and the year of occurrence. This time around, would there be any lessons learnt apart from the human avarice and the tendency to make a quick buck? Would there be a change in the way we live our lives? If history is anything to go by, it is highly unlikely. Though the year that went by may have made people more aware of their own mortality yet how that would result in any tangible behavioural change is yet to be noticed. Maybe a large number of people have started becoming nice to one another. But at the same time it needs to be questioned whether this niceness is a result of genuine compassion but out of mere politeness. Interestingly, the word "nice" has an interesting etymology. In the beginning it was a term for being foolish! Gradually it was used to denote being wanton, to being reserved and fastidious to eventually emerging as a bland and opaque way to describe a particular trait. Studies in the realm of personality psychology stresses that it is important to make a clear distinction between the two personality traits of politeness and compassion that is associated with the use of the term "nice". Normally, politeness is usually associated with behaviour that is linked with what is politically and socially correct. It is essentially a display of behaviour patterns that are external to the person. On the other hand, compassion may be understood as something internal to an individual and may not necessarily be displayed in the external behaviour of the person. In other words, a rough and foul mouthed individual may actually be

someone who is extremely compassionate whereas a polite and soft spoken person may be absolutely without an iota of compassion for the other. Interestingly, it is also seen that that emotions related to politeness and compassion are also linked to different brain components and hence display a difference in their working systems. It is shown that the function of politeness is linked to those areas of the brain that also govern aggression. On the other hand, it is seen that the function of compassion is related to those brain areas that are linked to regulating social bonding and affiliation. Clear patterns about this difference is also evident in neuroimaging research, where different areas of the brain light up subject to different stimuli. It was seen that compassion showed a clear association to structural differences in brain regions involving empathic responses in participants. However, similar responses were not visible in the case of politeness. Taking the understanding forward it was noticed that the trait called politeness may be used to specifically understand human tendency to be respectful and accommodating to the others view point. This may be accompanied by lack of any genuine compassion and respect for the other. The reverse of this behaviour would be seen as being aggressive. In other words, politeness may be more about displaying good manners and adhering to societal rules and norms rather than any genuine concern for the other. In contrast, *compassion* refers to the human tendency to be emotionally concerned about the welfare of the other. In other words, though a lot of emphasis is laid on politeness it is important to be mindful of the fact that mere politeness does not equal compassion as the two virtues stem from two separate strands of human nature. Humans must strive for both and arguably compassion needs to be given more emphasis.

ABOUT NUKSA

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

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His many examples stressed the need to keep learning no matter what stage one is at. One of the quotes he made will certainly act as a beacon for the young “Your pedigree and background is only your Passport, and not your Visa.”



Yuletide Celebrations

It was as if the spirit of Christmas had overtaken the Campus in the Clouds! The beautifully decorated Christmas tree at the reception area, the beautiful sounds of guitar strumming and lively voices of singers reminding everyone that Santa Claus was coming to town, it was celebration time at IIM Shillong. Everyone joined in for an evening of fun, frolic and yummys. Enthusiastic caroling, games, exchange of gifts and photo sessions in front of the fully adorned Christmas tree, the bonhomie truly emanated a yuletide experience for many!



Online Masterclass on Healthcare Management: Series 2

IIM Shillong, Centre for Development of North Eastern Region (CEDNER) in association with Consortium of Accredited Healthcare Organizations (CAHO) organized the Series 2 of the Online Masterclass on Healthcare Management.

The 3 Day Online Masterclass on Healthcare Management held from 20th December, 2020 to 22nd December, 2020. The focus of this program was to promote holistic understanding on the concepts of Management across different verticals of Healthcare management. The program was attended by more than 110 participants from different parts of India. Resource person were drawn from leading hospitals and institutions: Dr. Reginald Alex from CMC, Vellore, Mr. Deepak Agarkhed from Sakra World Hospital, Bengaluru, Prof. O V Nandimath, NLSU, Bengaluru, Mr. Sameer Mehta, Vice Chairman & Director, Mehta's Hospital, Chennai, Dr. Lallu Joseph (CMC Vellore), Dr. Girdhar Gyani (AHPI, India), Dr. Chacko Jacob (IIM Shillong), Dr. Ashutosh B. Murthy (IIM Shillong) and Prof. Sanjeeb Kakoty (IIM Shillong).

The Course Coordinator for the above Programme was Dr. Jeet Patwari.

It may be noted that IIM, Shillong is planning to start a Series of Modular Health Care Management Programmes including One Year Certificate Programme which will be launched in the early part of the next year. The details of which will be available on the website www.iimshillong.ac.in

Online Masterclass on Healthcare Management : Series 2



MÉTIER

- **Prof Sanjeeb Kakoty**, *Connectivity Issues in the North East* , Economic and Political Weekly , December 5, 2020 Vol LV no 48
- **Mandal, P.C.** (2021). Marketing of Private Labels – Strategies and Initiatives, Mandal, P.C., *International Journal of Business Strategy and Automation*, 2(1), 70-81
- **Mandal, P.C.** (2021). Public Policy Issues and Technoethics in Marketing Research in the Digital Age, Mandal, P.C., *International Journal of Technoethics*, 12(1), 75-86. (Indexed in SCOPUS Elsevier, Thomson Reuters Web of Science)
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OFF BEAT

Ode to Joy!

"... Black is the colour and nine is the number..." sang Bob Dylan in his poignant and powerful composition, "Hard Rain".

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is the culmination of his musical prowess – from the majesty of the Third, through the buoyancy of the Fifth, the Dionysian impact of the Seventh and finally to reach the eternal glory of the Ninth. We are transported to an experience of Divine joy amidst tempests of the mundane, of Freedom away from the maddening crowd, heralding a voyage to transcendence in an embrace of LOVE UNBOUND for humanity and celebration of JOY DIVINE!

A child learns the language of expression through the medium of grammar. Grammar has a significant role to play in any creative initiative. But the real quantum breakthrough happens beyond the umbrage of grammar and its conventional structures and systems. Beethoven's Ninth is ever a reminder of this radical departure from the known to the unknown and the ineffable, music that was never heard before.

A struggle was evident during the making of this masterpiece, 'Ode to Joy'. The first movement takes us through a turbulent and oceanic odyssey. As Beaudelaire had said, his music invites us to a journey into the tumultuous sea only to keep us afloat in the ocean of Joy! Our lungs get filled with fresh air, our hearts expanded, and we reach the pinnacle of ecstasy in all our emotional colours and flavour. The second and the third movements bring us the harmony of new rhythms and vibrations, though variant in their forms pining for the final effulgence. And then we are greeted with the grand finale – the fourth and the final movement. Here we find the maestro in a mood of creative destruction. Near deaf as he was, Beethoven then breaks the themes and citadels of his first three movements and dissolves into a spell of silence. Then, from the depth of that eternal silence arose a new world of music – in notes, themes and vibrations – first captured in musical instruments and then followed with vocal renditions to reach the crescendo, first time ever in the history of western classical music.

It all began with a genius challenging himself time and again in spite of severe impairment of his faculty of audition. Are we bold enough to challenge ourselves in hours of turbulence and crisis? If so, may our disenchantment with the dominance of 'successful mediocrity' today in any sphere of human endeavour lead us to a fiery ignition of our creative inferno!

One cannot isolate the creator from the act of creation. Beethoven's own life was a saga of turmoil and challenges but ever charged with a passion for life and his musical efflorescence. In the words of the Nobel Laureate literary master Romain Rolland: "Joy appeared to Beethoven only as a gleam of blue through the chaos of conflicting clouds." But, be it amidst joy or sorrow, Beethoven was ever the solitary voyager in life. Fran Von Breuning has this to say: "When he travelled afar, the sounds of the mundane and the rancour of the

populace never touched his thoughts. And it was then and there that Beethoven found his true self, his real nature. Beware! Don't bring him back to our world of 'sound and fury'. He will be on fire exploding like a dormant volcano. The call of the wild, the dark nocturnal abyss has invited him. He will forgive none who will pull him back." (Trans-created from the original in German)

The Ninth Symphony is Beethoven at the height of his volcanic best – it is his passionate struggle to find new forms and themes in music. Thwarted with deafness he had remarked: "I will take Fate by the throat".

And the Ninth remains a testimony to his struggle against the vagaries of life to unveil the descent of Divine Grace and offer the message of universal brotherhood to humanity at large.

But what was his inspiration?

It was the poetry of Schiller and the benediction from Mother Nature.

In the woods of Vienna he would go out on long walks. When his creative forces were at their lowest ebb, he would grope in the darkness of nature to find a glimmer of light. The trees of Vienna woods are still alive with his passionate kisses and endearing embraces.

When shall we live and love to learn a few cardinal lessons from Mother Nature?

A song from Uriah Heep comes to mind:

"And we all make our choices,
Like a blind man feels his way:
And the choice I have made is simple,
Passion over pain."

Beethoven's Ninth is a celebration of this passion from the dust of the earth to the stars in the heaven. Here he offers himself as a grand synthesis of the Apollonian, the razor of reason and the Dionysian, the flame of emotion, in all of us. Romain Rolland who was a connoisseur of western classical music and a biographer of Beethoven wrote his tribute to this great maestro who remained ever an enigma in history and in the world of music:

"Like a whirlwind, strong and fierce,
Reaching the depth of the ocean,
His music touched the earth,
And kissed the mighty heaven,
Like the dance of Fire amidst destruction,
Steers along the lonely boatman –
The one and only Beethoven." (Trans-created from the original in French)

It was a stormy night in Vienna when I was sitting alone till midnight in front of Beethoven's statue just beside his house (in fact one of his many houses) in a lonely park. He had changed several houses in Vienna, the city famed for being the haven of western classical music. There was no one around me but his presence in spirit kept me aflame. I have no claims to mastery in western classical music. This is the unfolding of a personal journey that I began three decades back with Beethoven holding my hands amidst travails and

tribulations. A feeling of turbulence and tranquility captivates my senses and recreates lost rhythms of life as I meditate on this incredible phenomenon. I offer this piece of writing with humility to a genius who taught me how to live and love while beaming with joy or bursting into tears alike. I haven't been able to fathom thy greatness, O Great master!

For any avid learner in any discipline of knowledge, Beethoven is ever an inspiration not only in the domain of knowledge but also in the field of life. And just imagine how he made a glorious and startling 'invasion' into my life and mind! I was travelling in a bus up the Vienna Hills. In the midway the bus stopped for a while. We came down to feel and see the ambience. Many great masters from Science and Arts had built their summer houses up in the Vienna Hills from where one can have a view of the city and the gracious Danube. Just where our bus stopped I found a house with a plaque outside that read 'Einstein lived here' in his times of leisure. And believe it or not, the plaque in front of the very next house read in German 'Beethovenhuset', the house where Beethoven lived composing his music and musing in the Vienna woods. And yes, Einstein too was a violin player, I remembered! I was speechless in that moment of ecstasy, a defining moment in my life when I felt the first spark to launch a course on Management and Liberal Arts.

It was in an opera house in Vienna one evening that the Ninth Symphony was being played in his gracious presence. Beethoven was almost deaf by then. A friend asked him, "We are all listening to your music. But what are you listening?" The music of the orchestra was hardly reaching his ears. But he smiled and said, "I am listening to the Divine Music which is beyond your reach."

Rabindranath Tagore himself was deeply inspired by Beethoven and his music. The golden words of Tagore come to mind in my homage finale to the great Master:

There you stand beyond the reach of my song,
My tears flow to bathe thy feet, but where are you gone?

(Trans-created with inspiration from Tagore)
[Revised version of my original article published in SWARAJYA]



Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee

ODE

Where else would I be?

Where you bloom like the British rose
I want to be there
Where the dew still brings back the memories
Of all things afresh, all the moments we enjoyed,
I want to be there

Not just to find those blooming cherries
But to be mesmerized by you once again
There hasn't been a moment
Not a moment, when you haven't been in my thoughts
Just waiting to be there

This is a ceaseless wait and I know,
I know you won't approve of it
But I am scared of it, and don't
Don't for a moment think I am weak,
I won't, no I won't budge,
even if the skies were to fall upon me
Just to be with you, I would risk it all,
Even if it were to be at my despair,
I want to be there

Ameya Virkud
PGP 2020

ALUM SPEAK

Choosing our Race

It was one of those virtual get-togethers, one of those things that were rekindled during the lock down. This one was with my school batch, the connect that struggled to survive the time since our farewell from a small time school in a 'run of a mill town' in South of India – rice and cotton mills forms the bulk of the revenue creation there. Our batch was a typical one from a small town school. Students more often grew up to be working in many different fields and locations, sometimes as many as the entire strength of our class itself. Some end up taking part in their father's business, some set up new ventures, some working in IT companies and a few as Swiggy Delivery partners in Chennai.

One of my friends, who settled in the U.S.A as a techie, was explaining in the call about his hardships there and the threat of pay cuts and possible layoffs. Another friend in the group, who is running a rice mill in our native place, consoled him, "Don't worry. Even in the worst of times, you can always come back to our town and start a bakery shop". He just uttered the words what the other one was in fact terrified about – returning back to India and ending up in the same place where he had started from and made up so far.

In normal times, this would be a light hearted remark and we would have moved on. But that day was not normal and the techie had taken offence. He resorted to showing off the life that he had and about the price of the sports car that he owns. And he asked back that, "You want me to leave all these, come back and start a bakery in India?" Before it could go out of our hands, one sensible guy in the group calmed him down saying "Nothing as such will happen and the situation will bounce back, see how China has turned it around. So are a few countries like New Zealand and Australia".

I stayed in touch with both these gentlemen, who were doing fine in their lives. The guy back at home had inherited his father's mill and did fine, even expanding it. He now owns three mills and one value added business of extracting oil from cashew nut for industrial purposes. The techie abroad established himself by slogging his way out to an onshore opportunity. Yet, their perspectives about lives differ in more ways than they coincide. Our gentleman in Georgia is still thinking about getting married. There are Visa complications should he chose to marry someone staying in India.

For him, career and lifestyle is a priority at his stage in life. He is passionate about travel, literature and world politics. Our mill owner, on the other hand, has already secured the admission for his kid in the same school we studied from. He owns a Maruti Ertiga so that his entire family can be accommodated. He always spoke of business, money and rising in stature amongst the business community in the region. In his opinion, opening a bakery shop in our native place was a very good business idea and he himself was mulling over it.

This has got me into thinking about many different people that I have met and gained acquaintances with. The needs, wants and ambitions of these people are often different from each other. What seems to be a logical decision for some seems like a 'no way' to a few others. Then I opened up my window to the outside world – Twitter and LinkedIn (This could be Facebook and Instagram for some others). The feeds were painfully monotonous. Similar to the search engine recommendations, all my friends were from very a limited set of professions and background.

In LinkedIn, one of my friends was giving his opinion on how to make a right hiring decision. A few others were posting screen shots of an office meeting, tagging the people in the meeting and saying how productive that meeting was. Other posts were about life lessons that we could learn from Biden's election campaign to the subtlest of things like how a rag picker would keep his eyes down to move up in his life. Most of us end up falling for this trap of recognition amongst our social circle and show that we have sorted everything in our lives. The excessive and meaningless bragging about oneself or one's opinions triggers a sense of anxiety and a false narrative to the outside world and their friends. Seeing them, others tend to develop similar habits out of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and a longing for followers, notifications and a buzz around their social profiles. We end up comparing our own lives with others, often on status, lifestyle and finances. Things that are initially not part of one's aspirations, are now compelled to be taken up post this comparison. Luxury vacations, social media follower counts and an urge to buy brand new mobile phones are some examples of this. The marketers from the same social media cohort cash in on the same compulsion marketing and sell their products and services.

It's good to be competitive, self-aware and be abreast of everything around us. But on the other hand, it is important for us to understand the lives that we lead are different. It is perfectly alright for us not to be part of a race that we are not competing in. Let's choose our paths and priorities first and our posts on social media little later. Perhaps, we could give time again for those introspections, like we all did before the times of social media.



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