



FROM THE HEAD'S DESK JULY 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020



A century! A 100 days of lockdown. That's something we have all achieved as one common thing. Definitely it was not a goal, by any means for anyone, I am sure. Yet, we have all ticked it off.

For our children, it seems to have been one extended summer vacation, not going to school – something that we also might have wanted, in our school-going days. When I recollect my summer vacation, mostly spent at Delhi with my extended family, it always left me and my siblings longing for more.

The summer days were filled with eating yummy food the Punjabi cook in my uncle's home would make; with a lot of enthusiasm and love, for so many of us guests at home; the many glasses of lassi through the day, to beat the Delhi heat; listening to my grandmother narrate stories from her childhood; walking with my grandfather and cousins to the India Gate Park and playing in the evening; helping my aunt pick vegetables from the vendor; grinding fresh coffee powder every morning and so many more little 'everyday-things'. By far, my favourite routine was the stories my grandfather narrated. He was a history and literature buff and read a lot. The intricate narration of the stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchatantra, Shakespeare, World Wars, Arabian Nights, different dynasties of India and many more, was our favourite. When narrating a part of the story, he would stop at a point of heightened suspense, which would leave us wanting more, but we had to wait for the next session, sometimes, the next day. Thinking back, this experience helped us build a certain level of patience and understanding. After all, my grandfather was already in his 80s in the early 1980s and would feel tired after an hour of story-telling. Without being prescriptive, he would subtly leave a message on the values that one must strive to develop.

He would say *"one must be like Portia: intelligent, sharp and in the moment"*, referring to the character from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, who saved her fiancé from the clutches of a greedy and jealous money lender. His other story on a family of thieves posed a mathematical puzzle: my older cousins would bring a paper and pen to solve it, while I would choose to back my favourite cousin who I was sure would get the correct answer. On one of my visits to the Chennai Book Fair a few years ago, I was delighted to stumble upon a copy of this story, but it missed the range of mathematical puzzles that I always thought made the story more interesting.

He would goad us to look at the multiple perspectives, many times he would pose a question asking us *'what do you think would happen next'*, *'why did the character behave or act in a certain way'* or *'do you think it was right for the protagonist to say so'*, *'what would you do if you are in this situation'*. My imagination was given a free-run and I enjoyed this exercise a lot more than the physical exercise routine I

follow now. Later on, in life, it allowed me to bring this trait of imagination when I had to portray, depict or narrate a situation during my dance recitals.

Today, in the current role I hold, I tap this very trait to look at ways in which we can sustain through these extended periods of distancing and lock-down. We all need a variety, a jig from the normal routine, but also engage in things that help us focus on our self, support each other and build a healthy relationship with one and another, especially an open and healthy parent-child relationship. When I proposed a digital detox as a part of our new timetable, 'mandated' to every student and 'recommended' for the family as a whole, my team quickly reworked our calendar and what came out was a mandatory 3-day weekend every 3 weeks, with complete shutdown or minimal work (for high school students and those who have to work). This time it is a long weekend starting off on a Friday and the second 3-day break in end-July includes a Monday to reduce the Monday morning blues. The 'Well-being team' at School has come up with age-appropriate activities that can engage the children, while encouraging the family to spend time together – there is every possibility of bringing back and recreating a childhood we have had and often reminisce about, for our children today. Of course, there is also the opportunity to record / document this, albeit no compulsion to do so . After all we are social (media) animals!

As we start July, adding more days to our century score/mark, include your children in small decisions at home, inculcate a habit of doing appropriate chores around the house, share your thoughts with them, encourage them to talk to extended families, allow them to verbalise their feelings.

And in between all this, do remember to count the blessings we have and say a thank you – to all those, whether we know them or not, who help, support and care for us.

To each of you, stay happy, stay positive, stay fit, stay well and stay connected – within the confines of your home and family.

Warm regards,

Priya Dixit



