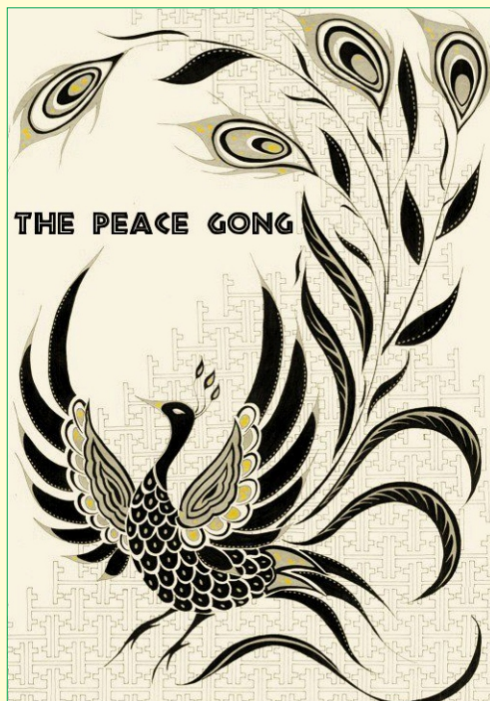




This children's newspaper is part of the Media and Information Literacy Initiative of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation
This special supplement is dedicated to the Universal Children's Day (November, 20)



Editorial

Celebrating Childhood, Celebrating Innocence

ASIYA BAQUAR NAQVI,

Class XII, Senior Secondary School, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

November 20 is celebrated as universal children's day every year. It was on this day in 1959 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It was also the day when in 1989 the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Despite efforts both at global and national level to end violence and abuse of children, the situation continues to be a matter of concern.

As debates and discussions continues at different levels, at ground zero, a small, weak boy continues working dawn to dusk in a tea stall or a malnourished girl sweeps the streets all day long without even going to school. She is vulnerable and is exposed abuses. No doubt the UN in this year's universal children's day called to make child protection a priority in the global development agenda. UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) Executive Director Anthony Lake rightly pointed out, "Violence against children does more than harm individual children, it undermines the fabric of society, affecting productivity, well-being, and prosperity. No society can afford to ignore violence against children."

Nations proclaim the young population as their future, an advanced vibrant future, but what will be the future of 158 million children forced into child labour or the one in every 8th child in the world who suffers from chronic hunger? Let us not forget that each new day is a new struggle for them. Let us not turn a blind eye to the fact that they are merely a victim of circumstances, caught in a vicious circle of poverty, deprivation and endless brutality. All around the world, children want to be loved, anticipating a spark of hope that would light up their future and rescue them from the shackles of poverty and exploitation. Their future revolves around education.

Each of us is a deep rooted activist who is ready to be the harbinger of change. As said by our beloved MAHATMA, "Be the CHANGE you wish to see in the world". Even the smallest contribution is enough to spark a revolution. Even a bullet couldn't stop Malala Yousufzai from demanding rights for the girl child. The youth brigade is meant to be the biggest contributor in eradicating child labour and aspiring for a better future. 150 million around the world don't want the latest gadgets; all they want is a pen. Small hands can handle a pen better. Lend your support to abolish and end violence of all kinds against children.

Orienting children on child rights and media

AIMAN KHAN

Class XII, Senior Girls Secondary School, AMU, Aligarh

Understanding media in today's world is very important for all young people. It is all the more important as different media forms like films, television and the Internet promotes lot of violence. A large number of children get influenced by these forms of violence and get desensitized.

To make children of Aligarh aware of their rights vis-à-vis the media, the Peace Gong Aligarh Bureau organized a one day workshop on November 9, 2013 on the theme, 'Child Rights and Media'. The workshop was organized in S.T.S High School (Minto Circle), Aligarh Muslim University. About 100 students from the School, the Senior Girls Secondary School, AMU and a few other schools took part in this orientation programme.

Initiating the training programme, the Peace Gong Aligarh Bureau Chief Coordinator, Mr Mumtaz Ahmad Numani said the media should focus on child rights issues. He quoted the senior educationist, Prof Krishna Kumar, "Cinema and television have made a substantial contribution to the creation of an unkind, volatile ethos. Bollywood films have glamorised certain kinds of violence; certain other kinds of violence have been trivialised. Television has enabled cinema to reach our living spaces, making horror and brutality a homely affair. Watching scenes of cold-blooded murder and rape since an early age allows children to develop a kind of derangement which lets them cope with the deep anxieties they carry."

In this context, Mr Numani said media literacy education was important and could contribute towards children understanding their rights and how to use the media to take up their issues. He and his team members have been working hard in Aligarh with full determination to spread the message of THE PEACE GONG.

Mr Vedabhyas Kundu, Programme Officer, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti



and Advisor to the Peace Gong oriented the students with different exercises on the different media children could use. He talked about the Convention of the Rights of the Child and discussed Article 12 and 13 in details to highlight the importance of child participation.

Mr Kundu discussed the salient features of the Peace Gong Media Literacy programme and how it can shape children's attitudes and efforts to use the media for peace and conflict resolution.

A presentation was made on the Peace Gong, the global children's newspaper. This paper is an endeavour to promote diversity and encourage dialogues among children from different cultures and communities. The objective of this programme was to make young students aware of their rights and responsibilities with the key concept of 'Media' as a 'Medium' to promote dialogue among young students from culturally varied backgrounds and the role media can play to bring out the activist in every socially active child.



Initiatives taken up by the Peace Gong Bureaus in different parts of the country was discussed.

The Chief Guest of workshop was Prof. T K Thomas, Chairperson of the Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore Foundation. He talked about various Constitutional Provisions which reflected on the rights of the child. He also discussed the different policies of the Government of India related to children.

Prof Thomas conducted a compact training programme on the importance of communication and how better communicative skills help children take up their rights.

The questions enthusiastically asked by the students ranged from the aims and objectives of Peace Gong to how the students can contribute in spreading awareness among fellow students with the specific aim of promoting peace and dialogue? They also enquired on to how develop their capacities to critically analyze media and media messages and help them to use their communicative skills for peace and non-violence. The workshop also discussed the ways in which a child can become a major contributor to the society, steps to be taken to promote media and information literacy to make a child envisage a broader concept like child rights and education.

Towards the end students felt motivated to be a member of a task force promoting peace and non violence through mass media and were keen on being part of The Peace Gong family.

Voices of Participants:

RACHEL WAHAB, Class XII, Senior Secondary School, AMU:

Continuous exposure to violence in the media desensitizes children. We must be oriented on what is real and what fiction is. Hence training and understanding of media is important for children.

YASIR KALEEM, CLASS 8, STS High School:-

I think the schools and teachers should at least have a debate and discussion on the burning social issues so that children are compelled to read newspapers & magazines to get information and hence mass media will be a part of their daily life.

MOHD. SHADAB ANSARI, Class 9, STS High School -

I was previously unaware of the role media can play in creating awareness and extending support. Having attended this workshop has transformed the way I shall use mass media now.

IT'S FUNNY HOW LIFE CHANGES!!

I remember a businessman whom I once met on train named Rajesh. He had an interesting history, recalling it makes me keep pursuing my hope of humanity still exists in this modern era where only "money talks."

He used to live in a slum and worked in a matchsticks making industry. He used to go to the industrial site with his neighbour but once his neighbour fell ill and he had to go alone. And the incident that followed was a turning point in his life. While going to the working place a town fell in the way. He always wanted to go to a school and by luck that day he was careless while crossing the road and got almost hit by a car. Luckily for him the man who owns the car turned out to be a school's principal. He took Rajesh home and dressed his wounds. And that is when he asked him about which school he attends to in order to drop him there. Rajesh being an innocent kid told all about him, how he works in a factory and about him being an orphan and living in a slum. The principal being a good man asked Rajesh to join a school. He was the one who told Rajesh about child rights and how he has the right for education and food.

Rajesh first said that he was scared and thought his life was only in the slums but after persuasion and with the help of the man he got into a government school. And now he is a successful businessman and it's all because of the man whose car hit him. "It's funny how life changes", says Rajesh.

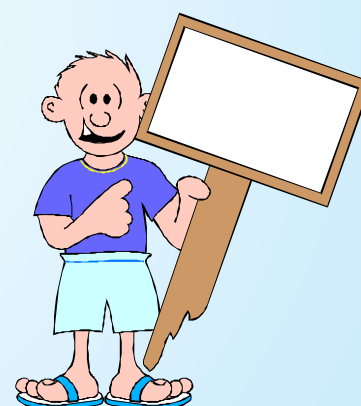
Now he helps many children who are like him to join schools, he helps many in orphanages. Not everyone is as lucky as Rajesh to find a good SAMARITAN to lead them.

We can see many minor children working for small amounts of money because of their circumstances.

We need to help such children build a bright future. Be the first one to bring a change, start from your own home. Spread the message and build a prosperous country with no poverty.

S SABA

Class XII, Senior Secondary School,
Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh



Child Labour

Since the last few decades, child labour has been a major social issue in the rural as well as urban parts of Nepal. The number of children working as child labourers has increased vigorously. The most obvious reason is widespread poverty exasperated with which poor parents are left with no choice but to engage or send off their minor children for manual labour at a tender age. They believe their child would earn some money and support the family unaware of the harsh realities of child labour.

In the small community, Sunakoti of Kathmandu, majority of poor children work in the construction sites, biscuit factory and brick furnaces. Shiva Gautam, a local resident shares a fact that about 25 per cent children of this area are deprived of school education as

their parents can't afford two times meals let alone sending their ward to school! About 10 per cent children who are fortunate enough to attend school via some funds work on their holidays at construction sites to pay their school fee and purchase exercise books.

With the increase of child labour in this community the situation is worsening. Many teachers, doctors and advocates are contributing as much as they can for the poor children's education. But I believe the whole nation should join hands and eradicate this evil from the society.

BHAWANA DAHAL,
Class IX, New Tulips' School,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Need a small footstep

Children's Day: It's November 14. Wake up and wish all your friends a very "Happy Children's Day". Enjoy the day with gifts, parties and obviously exclusion from studies. A single day in a year which every child waits impatiently for!

Oops! Is it every child?

Am I right?

No, not all children are lucky to enjoy this fun day. For many every day is a struggle for life. So, just instead of simply sympathising with them, let's do something for them.

St. Joseph's School, Matigara, a Christian missionary school of the "Daughters of the Cross" congregation has taken up the initiative for many years to bring a genuine smile on each child's innocent face. Matigara is on the outskirts of Siliguri and is underdeveloped. The area is inhabited mainly by daily wage labourers, masons, shopkeepers and potters. For many of them sending their wards to school is almost impossible.

The school has a separate section devoted for these children who apart from adequate education, are offered mid day meals. Talking to them we find out that their elder brothers who were not sent to school began work as wage labourers at the tender age of 10. All have their own heart wrenching tales of LOST CHILDHOOD.

Thus the education provided ensures that the fate of these children will not resemble their elder siblings. Moreover, there are also orphanages and old age homes like Jeshu Ashram and Jeevandan which also cater to the educational and miscellaneous needs of helpless ones.

SUBHASREE GHATAK

Class 11, St Joseph School, Matigara, Siliguri,
West Bengal

Child Labour: A major threat to the biggest democracy

Child labour refers to the employment of children below 14 years and forcing them to work in a particular environment thereby depriving him of their basic rights. This poses a major threat to the biggest democracy of the world. It's the most rampant social evil spread in India and other parts of the world. Data obtained from UNICEF, further establishes the fact- an estimated 70 to 80 million child labour in India.

The main cause of child labour is poverty, lack of awareness and illiteracy. People caught in the vicious trap of poverty cannot even provide single bread a day to them and their family; providing a proper education to their children is a distant dream. Poverty compels these innocent children to spend their whole life on streets, footpaths and slums in miserable conditions aloof from educated and healthy childhood. Child labour not only exploits the physical well being but also hampers the psychological growth of the child as well.

Owing to ignorance and poverty the poor are forced to send their children to work in hotels, factories, shops and as domestic servants to earn money for their livelihood instead of sending them to school. Even today we can see rampant child trafficking in our own neighborhood and society especially in very rich and well off families who first promise the poor parents that they will provide education to their child but in the end make the child work as a servant.

Our government has banned child labour in the country. Strict action ought to be taken against those who keep minors as domestic servants. With a vision to eradicate this evil, the government has launched several schemes like mid day meal, free distribution of books, uniform etc for those who are unable to afford educating their child. As a student, we can contribute by organizing various awareness programmes in our own school. Steps must be taken now so that the scenario does not persist.

SAMINA BANO

Class: 10th; Govt, High School Chuchot-Yokama, Leh

Reminiscences of a Muslim girl

Muslim girls have suffered in many ways in our society. Her story is all about something which is meant for the marriage market. It was corrected very rarely in history.

Each time a girl is born, we can see the worried faces of parents, with troubled thoughts of the child, how to get her married off when she matures and also the burden of the dowry and marriage expenses. Giving birth to a girl child is to marry her off, nothing else. This attitude has to be changed and receipted.

The society has been instructing a growing child with lessons with no senses:

"Always speak in a low voice!"

"Make sure you don't cross the limits!"

Why is it that the average Muslim or any girl child not instructed like:

"You are the citizen of the future..."

"You have to serve the nation!"

"You should study and the world shall benefit..."

The thought that discipline and manners should only be possessed by girls should be changed from the mentality of the society. Millions of Muslim girls spend days without knowing how wide this world is and there are open skies and vibrant oceans. In the middle of this darkness some lonely voices like Malala's can be heard.

I dream of a world where all the girls speak without fear and their ideas shape the world into a better place. It is so easy to love and give and so difficult to suppress. Then why can't we?

We do not want to fly, we want to live

RAMSHEENA,
Class XI, Farooq College HS School,
Calicut

Voice of The Peace Gong in Taiwan

The Asian Girl Human Rights Award is a movement to promote the UN International Day of the Girl Child around Asia.

Thansila, the former Bureau Chief of Peace Gong Waynad was selected as the Girls' Human Rights Ambassador finalist by Garden Of Hope Foundation, Taiwan.

Representing India, Thansila along with Ms Laila Saein, Advisor, the Peace Gong and CEO of AFRC India participated in the one week event in Taipei, Taiwan.

In her presentation Ms Saein, shared her views on Indian education as well as the incredible volunteer stories from Peace Gong reporters in India and abroad. She has also shared the need for value based education, the Micro Finance Bank of Wayanad Shishu Panchayat, media literacy, skill development and My World Survey conducted by Peace Gong reporters in India.

Thansila spoke about how she and her friends across India were working together to bring change through Peace Gong. She shared the information about the Peace Gong Kashmir winning the My World Volunteerism Award.

The Peace Gong representatives participated in many discussions with students from different schools. The team also met the Taipei and Tai Chung mayors and spent valuable time with them and also presented gifts from India.

DYUTHI,

Class XI, NSS Higher Secondary School, Kalpetta

Mother Teresa and her unconditional love for children

Childhood has always been considered the best part in the course of life. It is akin to innocence, freedom, joy, play and the like. It is the time when children are spared the hardships of adult life; a child is totally unaware of any kind of responsibility or obligations. But, the other side of the story is harsh; in the present scenario children are vulnerable to heartless criminals hidden underneath the so called 'civilized society'. There are large numbers of helpless small children who don't have shelter above their heads and they are always struggling for their survival.

One person who till this day holds high regard is Mother Teresa, who taught us to love and hold compassion for these small children. She was a great individual who considered all children a gift from God and treated them with equal love and care. With this mission in mind she set up the Missionaries of Charity. Here she cared for the helpless who had nowhere to go and were social outcasts. Special care centre were developed for children with infectious diseases. In 1955, she opened the Nirmala Shishu Bhavan, the Children's Home of the Immaculate Heart, as a haven for orphans.

Mother Teresa's Foundation till to this day reaches out to all who need help and till date has saved many on the verge of dying. As tomorrow's future, we must inculcate the same thing. We, who are lucky enough to have a shelter above us and parents who care should come forward to help these children voluntarily. Children's day is the day to remember this great lady who sacrificed her whole life to be small, needy children, just to create a better world for all of us.

DEBANU DAS

Class VII, St. Xavier's School, Durgapur

The Mighty Little Peace Creator

Once upon a time a group of people had gathered in a square to celebrate a rally for peace. They made and listened to speeches and enjoyed music and melting friends. They bought and sold wholesome and nourishing foods.

They created colourful banners and, led by an energetic group of drummers, singers and dancers, they paraded through the city streets of the city. On their return to the square, they were hot and sweaty but pleased with themselves for having told everyone how important peace was. They bought some more drinks and settled down on seats and listened to the speakers.

As they waited, they heard a sound, it was a mighty roar. Some screamed, "ahhhh! What's that?" others jumped up, standing on the seats and looking around a war plane. Bombs and rockets hung off the underneath of the wing. A bright orange flame flared out of the after burner as it around overhead. Everything shook and shuddered as it flew past.

The people watched in honour as that war plane banked and turn back towards the square. Someone shouted, "Run for cover! Run for your lives!" They could hardly believe their eyes. As they watched a long cylindrical object detached from the wing and started to tumble down, down, down towards the square.

Just before it hit the square, the people came together and put up a force field and slid down the side. The people thought, "Oh! We've saved ourselves but what about the people of the city? We've to do something.

A child pointed a giant meteorite scorched across the sky, collided with the bomb and pushed it high up in the sky. There it imploded harmlessly. Children and adults congratulated themselves for having worked so quickly to save lives.

Someone said, "Look, there must have been something packed inside the bomb. It's fluttering down like a brown shower of rain. Strong and hands flew up again the force field spread out and it was nothing but a swarm of cockroach icky, sticky, smelly, sticky cockroaches."

The cockroaches lived in the city running around being a nuisance, disturbing people's peace. The only purpose they serve to remind the people of the city is that working together, they can stop a bomb. They can create peace.

Peace can be created by everyone and anyone. Even a small child is required for peace keeping. The countries of the world have been in conflict since many years. Also in a small state like Manipur, the rate of killing and other violent activities is very high. Due to this many children have become orphans and homeless too.

If we trace back to the past, the citizen of Manipur are very brave, digging its own freedom from the British. But what happen now. They kill their own citizen. If this process continues, there will be no 'Meiteis' after a decade. The people should think of what will happen in future. In the story, a swarm of little cockroach worked for peace. Then why can't human, a thousand times bigger organism then cockroach create peace. The requirement is a mentally developed society with unity.

ARNON PUKHRAMBAM

Class X,

School: JNV Khumbong, Imphal West, Manipur

DEAR Chotu !! I can hear you.

It is a fact that there exists a Chotu in everyone's life. Chotu is a name often given to a child employed at various places. We all can't help but notice these unprivileged one's at the roadside stalls, in factories, at fields and most shamefully, in our own houses where they are employed as domestic helps. A nation which calls itself the world's largest democracy, child labour persists rampant. The 2011 national census of India estimated the total number of child labours aged 5-14 to be 14.2 million, approximately 10 million children were employed in hazardous jobs.

Poverty is the root cause of child labour, compelling a tragic tale of lost childhood. Poverty stricken families are unable to send their children to school so they remain illiterate and the cycle of poverty and of child labour continues. Adding to the woes, the employer doesn't realise that Child labour is an awful crime. Child labour is a brutal denial of childhood; a ruthless denial of dignity, freedom, growth and the right to dream.

As these little children cling onto their broken dreams, let's support them. Let's join hands and let them dare to dream about a better future. They need encouragement to dream about a future where their basic needs are met, where they can play, study and most importantly where they can live rising above their shattered childhood. Their vacant dreams raise some heart wrenching queries!! Who will fulfil their dreams? Will India ever wake up? Will there ever be a day when these un-blossomed petals are not crushed under the stones of their destiny and struggle? Yes, I definitely believe that there will come such a day.

Article 24 of the Indian Constitution prohibits child labour. Various laws and the Indian penal code, such as the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 provides a basis in law to identify, prosecute and stop child labour in India. These innocent labourers are the nation's future. The young labourers today will be a part of India's human resource tomorrow.

I believe that proactive steps for their relief and rehabilitation need to be taken urgently. I hope that my effort in my article will make the people aware of the tragedy of their lives. I longed to convey a message for all the Chotu's in the world - "The bricks walls are there for a reason. The bricks walls are not there to keep you out. The bricks walls are there to give you a chance, to make you realise how badly you want something. They are rigid for people who want to stop you in your realisation of your dreams." Let's strive that these innocent voices will soon be heard and their echo lasts long enough to bring a revolution. Let's speak out! Let me and you, be the change.

AAKRITI AJAY GOENKA

Class XI, The Sanskriti
Valley School, Bhopal

**Are
the
rights
for
children
still
secured?**

Being citizens of a democratic country, we are entitled certain rights like political, social, cultural, & economic rights and most importantly human rights. Roughly defining, human rights refer to certain basic rights enjoyed by a person because he or she is born a human. Then what about the rights related to children, of the children and for the children? It is simply being neglected.

The learned ones preach, "Children are the future of OUR NATION". If it's so, I would like to raise a simple question, "If children are seriously regarded the future of the Nation then why is our nation simply neglecting our future technocrats & entrepreneurs, future achievers who have probably the largest proportion in the world population right now". If we are really concerned regarding our country's future, then obviously we must ensure the safeguarding of the rights of innocent children.

I would like to share an incident that occurred in October 2013 at my native place. Geeta Biswas, a 13 years old girl belonging to a very poor family had no option but to regularly contribute to her family's income. She had to serve as a domestic help since a tender age of 8. The irony is that the very house which she served was owned by a Principal of a Government College. With time her bright days came & with the initial help of a local community worker, Geeta was admitted to a local school under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. But soon she had to discontinue her studies as she was rendered the sole earner of her household. At a tender age she had the responsibility to provide two square meals to her entire family. In the meantime she longed to go to school again but the girl was helpless. She unfortunately fell into a vicious circle of middlemen who conspire to keep the poor in abject poverty. She committed suicide on October 12, 2013. Although the person behind her taking such a drastic step is still unknown but the fact lingers that why Geeta, a girl of tender age finally decided to end her life. If Geeta had got a chance to continue with her studies, would she still be alive or not?

And this is just one amongst the issues which we need to reflect upon and ask ourselves that are the rights for children still secured?

BHIYANKA DEVI

Class: XII,
S. R. Academy, Narengi, Guwahati



The girl child: A prevalent stigma

*Those kohl rimmed eyes are captivating,
The depth of sorrow in those hazel eyes is devastating,
The bangles clink merrily on her fists,
The slender fingers have now formed tiny fists,*

*Her forehead is furrowed with concentration as she
struggles to carry the pail of water,
As she watches other children go to school, she feels like a sheep for slaughter,*

*She has sacrificed her life, her ambition and her dream,
She is not a normal ten year old girl who craves for strawberries and cream,*

*She is a girl child,
An innocent wide eyed doe strayed in a world that has gone wild,*

*She has never held a pencil in her life,
Her life's periphery is all about mopping floors, scrubbing utensils and
dreams about becoming someone's unwilling dutiful wife,*

*She can be slapped mercilessly by her mistress,
After all, she is just another daughter of an ordinary seamstress,*

*Why would we raise our voices for her right?
We, who possess a selfish heart and a blind sight,*

*We, who love to exercise our power,
Who have turned this budding rose into a wilting flower,*

*We, who will never speak until it is our own daughter who is abused,
We, who have always been guilty and rightly accused,*

*My fingers are crossed, I'm hoping for a difference to be made,
Just close your eyes and follow your heart; the path to serve humanity
has already been laid.*

Syeda Rumana Mehdi
Peace Gong Correspondent in Karachi

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