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AMITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

Expressions



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SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SERVING AS COVID HELPLINES



Bhargavi Singh & Kamakshi Singh

Anxiety, fear and concern run high among students of class 10 and in particular class 12 with the postponement of board examinations, second year in a row as the pandemic peaked to new heights in Season 2.

After a short-lived relief from the decline in number of COVID-19 cases, the situation in the country worsened since April as the pandemic second wave pushed people onto the brink of precipice with the required medical resources falling drastically short.

The sight in front of umpteen hospitals shattered the hearts of all as patients sat helplessly, waiting and gasping, while families ran helter-skelter, pleading for help. In these trying times, when the soaring Covid-19 cases rattled the Indian medical infrastructure, social media platforms became conduits for people looking for vacant hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and other medical supplies amidst shortage, as people volunteered to post required information online for anyone in need.

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Editor's Desk

More than a year into the pandemic and with the recent second wave forcing closure of educational institutions across the country, students are confused, frustrated, terribly stressed and uncertain about their future.



Though university students especially the local ones could visit their respective campuses barely for a month

in March but spurt in cases sent them back home. This time hardly any family was left unaffected with many even losing their loved ones to the deadly mutant virus.

Continuing with online mode of teaching, pressure of regular classes and completing their assignments before they appear for examinations, students are finding it very difficult to cope up with this unprecedented situation.

'There is a limit to sit on-screen and sometimes we just go blank', Ankit, a student, said sounding visibly upset. "Staying at home may not be the worst thing in the world, but stresses of our academic and social lives weigh us down," feels Moulshree who adds further, "We may have been continuing with online mode but lack of physical proximity between a student and teacher has severely impacted us as 'one on one' interaction, which makes a student connect with his mentor better is absent in the present scenario.'

"There is no real substitute for social interaction," says a psychologist. Parents too owe responsibility and must encourage one to one social interactions with all precautions in place in this trying time.

With no immediate solution in sight, students concerns and stress level is understandable but there is a way out. Students must actively participate in class discussions, question-answer sessions instead of switching off their camera and remaining on mute thus spoiling the vary sanctity of education.

We need to appreciate the blessings of modern technologies of internet connectivity, digital content and collaboration tools that has facilitated us in every walk of life during this crisis. It is indeed victory of human ingenuity that education has continued throughout the country in the face of the most challenging times in recent history.

Prof (Dr) Sanjay M Johri

From a media student to a show anchor

From a media student to a media professional, the journey of these last four years has shaped me into a different person and provided a new perspective in life.

From standing in Croma studio in college to be in an actual newsroom reading bulletin - the journey has been nothing short of being surreal.

After college, my primary focus was to get into a news channel but not many students come out with

a clear vision of a career after college. When I reminisce my days back in ASCO the best part was that there was a lot of room given to discover your forte.

I joined a national television straight after my concluding ceremony. I was tracking down each activity very minutely of how a news channel functions and my desire to appear on a TV screen grew.

Within a month I was set to file my first report from the ground and that feeling of holding India TV's mic for the first time was unimaginable. After 2 years of dedication, I bagged my first

ALUMNI CORNER

show with another National TV where I got a slot for a morning show.

For a 90s kid where "Doordarshan" was considered to be a landmark of the TV world, I hosted a show named "Khatirdaari".

Since then, it has been a rewarding journey where every day provided me a new challenge or an opportunity. Working in media is a 24x7 job that requires innovative ideas, playful and active mind, and a strong sense of newsworthy content. When asked about revamping communication skills especially when you have to deliver to thousands of people watching you on screen, the advice which I have been passed on by my seniors is to read aloud, be updated about the news.

Every profession needs proficiency, and it only comes from practice and hard work. I have set a goal for myself to appear on a primetime show before I turn 39.

Your college life is as important as your professional life. Every moment counts be sure to make the most of it.

ASCO is that one place, where you are open to communicate and express yourself to the faculties easily, there aren't any complexities mixed, and this what makes this department so special for each batch coming every year to learn communication. As rightly said, "Where there is no vision, people perish". Our Director Prof (Dr) Sanjay Mohan Johri keeps everyone in the loop and keeps a check that everyone in the department is up to the mark.

Sakshi Pandey, Independent Anchor
(Batch BJMC-2014-2017)



Social media platforms serving as COVID helplines

Continued from P1

India has around 448 million active social media users. Conventionally marked by viral videos and entertaining memes, the social media platforms found a new meaning amidst the second wave by giving its users a platform to pool resources together. Social media influencers like Kusha Kapila, Sherry Shroff, Dolly Singh, and Srishti Dixit among others, became the front-runners of this internet-led disaster management set-up. From content creators to comedians and even actors like Priyanka Chopra, Anushka Sharma and a rather familiar humanitarian Sonu Sood, did their bit and pleaded others to do so. The netizens also followed the suit by sharing verified leads for the medical supplies and amplifying SOS messages through stories and posts.

Youtuber Sherry Shroff in an interview with The Mint, said, "We all have to do what we can. And everyone should just share what they can irrespective of what they do or how many followers they have", she said. Another big name from social media, chef Saransh Goila supplied over 550 meal providers contacts for covid patients across 36 cities using hashtag #CovidMealsforIndia.

Volunteer groups include people

from different walks of life – but the youth of the country has stood out the most. Manvi, a second year DU student, who is also a part of one such volunteer group shares, "My classmates and I had some free time in our hands as our classes were suspended and we really wanted to help in some way. I think as youngsters we are more accustomed to social media and don't have to worry about other household responsibilities, which makes it easier for us to help out."

Social media became a messiah in these catastrophic times as people started circulating leads, donating to charities and foundations like Hemkunt. Besides there were messages imploring people to get vaccinated with many people sharing their experiences online to fight Covid-19.

Apart from requiring hospitalization, there are numerous who are self-isolating at their homes. Social media is also helping such families get in touch with doctors, psychiatrists and even tiffin services. The past few weeks are an evidence that social media and goodwill of people can turn around the most difficult of situations. Amidst all this chaos, the response of the citizens to the ongoing crisis and the way everyone is going above and beyond to help even complete strangers tells a story of human resilience and compassion.

Even hospitals reached out to social media platforms with plea for help.

"Fortis Hospital in #Haryana has only 45 minutes of oxygen left," Fortis Healthcare, a private health company running hospitals across the country, tweeted on April 22, pleading with authorities "to act immediately and help us to save patients' lives." Shortly over an hour later, it confirmed online that a tanker had been dispatched to its location

As citizens of the country rallied together to help, Tech giant Facebook came up with a vaccine finder tool for India, to help people identify places within reach to get inoculated. Many dedicated websites like covidfightclub.org and plasmaline.in also came in light, which streamline verified leads from social media platforms to smoothen the process

Stress, work overload triggers WFH burnout

Saumya Agrawal

Work from Home (WFH) no longer gives the thrill it did when the format began last year due to Covid. Reason: Employees feel a continuous pressure to be always available, answer work calls and emails outside of working hours, due to the fear of job layoffs, financial crisis, and intense work pressure.

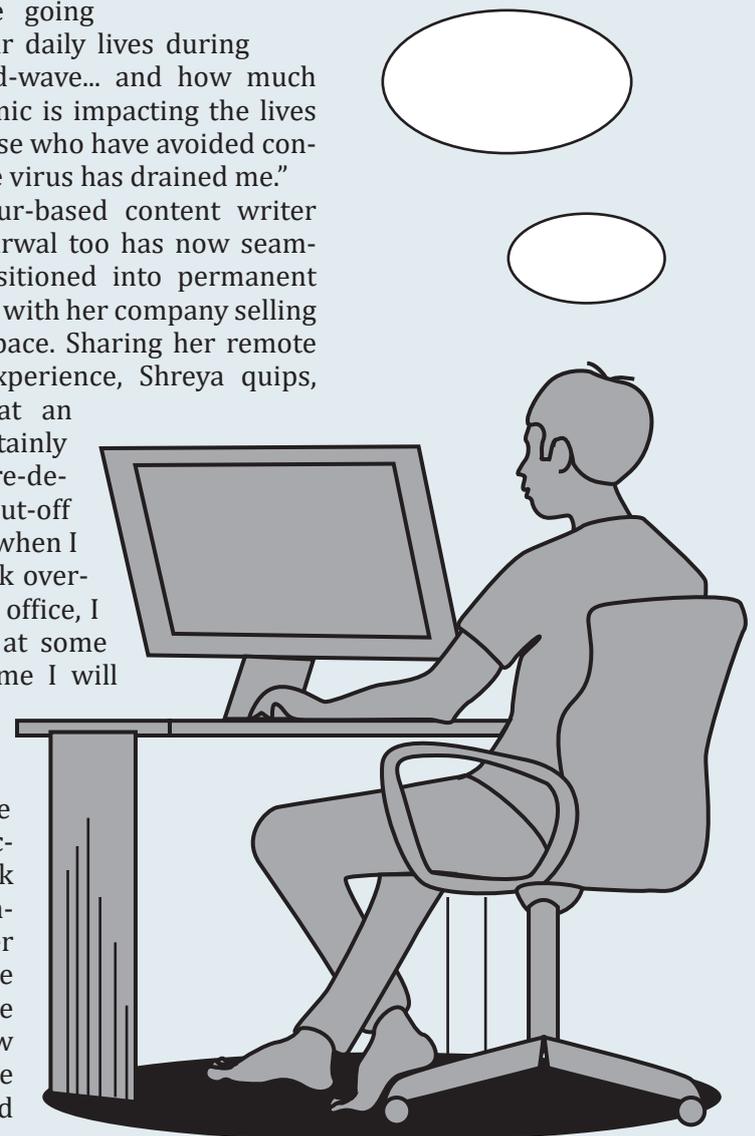
Expressions reporter spoke to some professionals/employees to get their take on the situation. "The era of remote work is no longer as easy or thrilling as it once was" says Garima Goel, an employee at a Media-Marketing company based in Delhi. "The limitations between work and non-work are blurring now that WFH has become the new standard".

Tanya Dobriyal, Kanpur-based lawyer, opined, "Indians are no strangers to high-stress work environments that keep them on their toes all day, particularly those in the corporate world. When I was working as a lawyer, that was pretty much how my life was as well. Even though we've been juggling office work with household duties for a year, working during the second wave feels unbelievably overwhelming."

She attributes the reason to an unprecedented fear/anxiety of contracting the virus, seeing loved ones, friends, acquaintances, neighbours going through the crisis of finding basic medical facilities and constant news of death that hovers over everything. "I kept wondering why, in 2021, we're all feeling drained — turns out, the issue wasn't the WFH-model, or even our jobs. It's needless to men-

tion the feeling of helplessness while going through our daily lives during this second-wave... and how much the pandemic is impacting the lives of even those who have avoided contracting the virus has drained me."

Gorakhpur-based content writer Shreya Agarwal too has now seamlessly transitioned into permanent WFH mode with her company selling its office space. Sharing her remote working experience, Shreya quips, "Working at an office certainly allows a pre-determined cut-off time, even when I had to work overtime at the office, I knew that at some point of time I will pack up my laptop and go home but balancing work and personal life under the same room since a year now is giving me a real hard time." ▶



Covid-19: Ultimate lifestyle changer

Drishti Vanaik

Somya Bagaria, a psychology graduate explains the relationship between trauma and WFH during the second-wave, “None of us expected the pandemic to last this long when it hit us last year. Now with a comprehension that the pandemic could last forever, it’s disheartening and demoralizing to keep doing the WFH routine that seemed like a good idea in 2020. The trauma of working in 2021 seems significantly more complicated due to the immense work pressure and off-hours working expectations.”

She further elaborates, “When a trauma hits, initially there is an optimum tolerance. But as the anxiety continues and with no relief in sight, the fear tends to convert into phobia, and this process manifests as constant anxiety that affects all aspects of our lives, including work. This concern seems much more real this year, as the pandemic has reached even closer to home and has impacted practically every family in the current second wave.”

Employees’ mental and physical well-being is suffering as a result of their work at WFH mode. Insomnia, restlessness backaches, irritability, anxiety, and other issues may result from long work hours with little time or no time for physical exercise, hobbies, or leisure pursuits.

When work was stressful even in 2020, people could find an escape by talking to friends or relatives, or by mindlessly scrolling through social media for a few minutes to pass the time. In the current scenario, neither social media nor people’s WhatsApp inboxes are offering any solace; rather, they serve as stark reminders of the same distressing fact.

Mask, sanitiser, social distancing notwithstanding Zeel Devnani finally came ‘face-to-face’ with Covid during the second wave much to his dismay. What followed was the standard protocol medicines, home isolation and a never-ending cycle of steam inhalation-kadha-oxygen level measurement.

Finally, after 21-days, a ‘Covid negative’ report gave Zeel much relief, however, recovery was not complete as the double mutant virus had brought several complications with it. Zeel like so many millions of Covid patients revamped his lifestyle to meet the deadly virus head on and survive. “I did recover from Covid but complications post-recovery like breathlessness, body aches, metabolic issues, etc are still significant”, he says.

Another Covid positive patient Rhea Singh outlines her mechanism to fight the infection. “Taking rest, having steam and kadha or soup to relax throat, eating food like green vegetables, exercising twice a day, checking oxygen level has become a routine,” she says.

Much like the phase of having the disease or fighting it, post-recovery also comes with its own complications. Generally, Covid-19 patients take 2- 3 weeks to recover completely. Following a general health routine, involving a nutritious diet, exercise, stress-relieving measures,

and yoga often aid early recovery.

Dr. Ajit Singh Chawla, a Ludhiana-based physician, and former district epidemiologist says, “Special care needs to be taken of the lungs as this is where the virus strikes the most. Diseases like lung fibrosis are becoming common. Hence, one must continue to monitor their oxygen levels and do breathing exercises even after getting cured.” Exercising daily, including power yoga and kapalabhati can help in making your lungs strong to combat the infection effectively.

Doctors at John Hopkins School of Medicine in the USA, say that post-recovery, ups and downs are common. “(Covid) recovery is not a linear process as it’s very individualized. What we don’t want is for patients to go home and lie in bed all day that will not help with recovery and will probably make things worse. Patients and their families should realize that fluctuations in progress are normal”, adds Dr. Dale Needham, a critical care physician at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

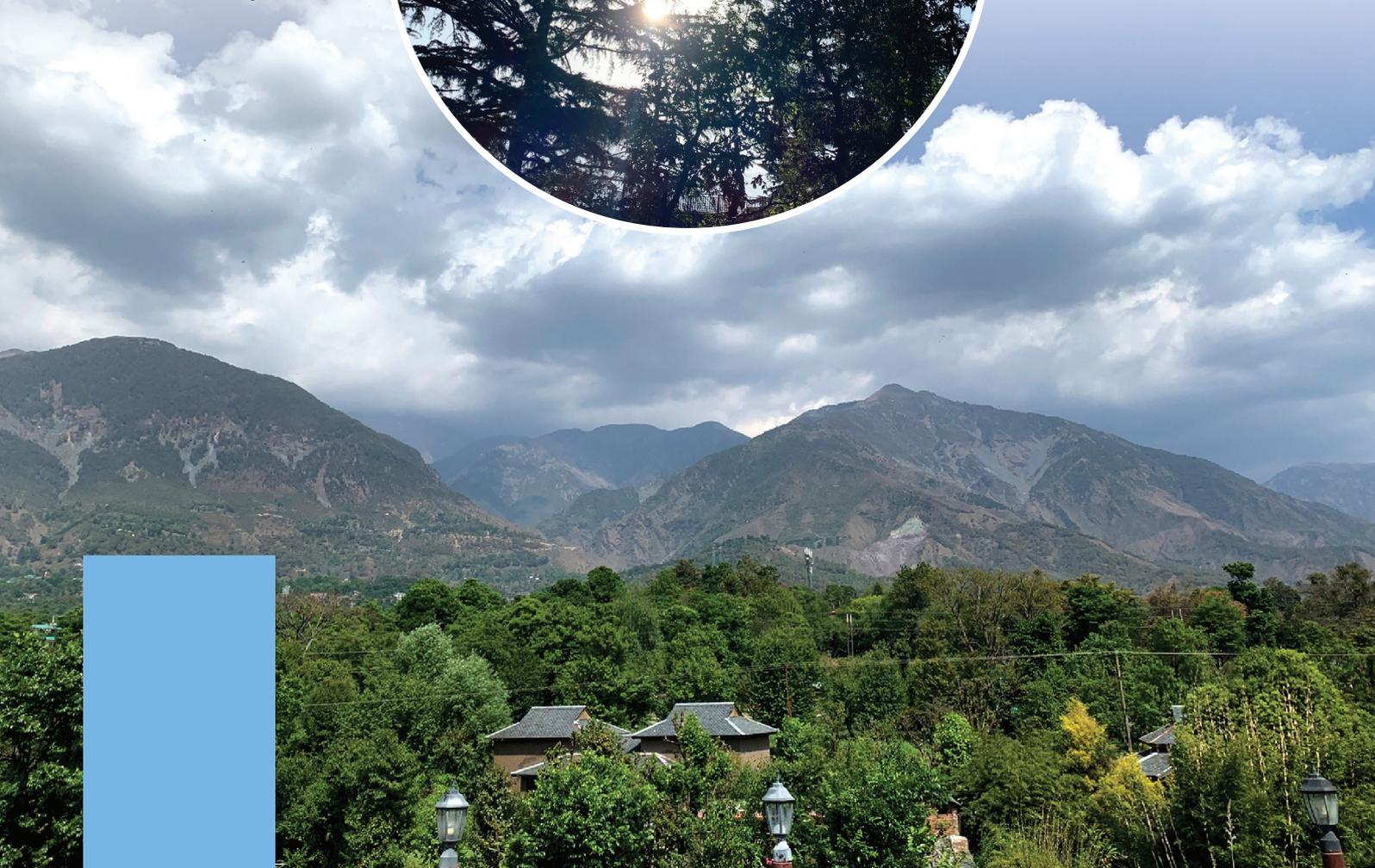
A holistic lifestyle including healthy diet and exercise are the only way to keep immunity high. Trainer at ‘Beyond Fit’ gym Subhash Kumar advises people to “Do yoga every day for 15 minutes in the morning and evening, do breathing exercises, which will also improve concentration level.” Sheetal Singh, who is currently working out under him, has successfully recovered from Covid.

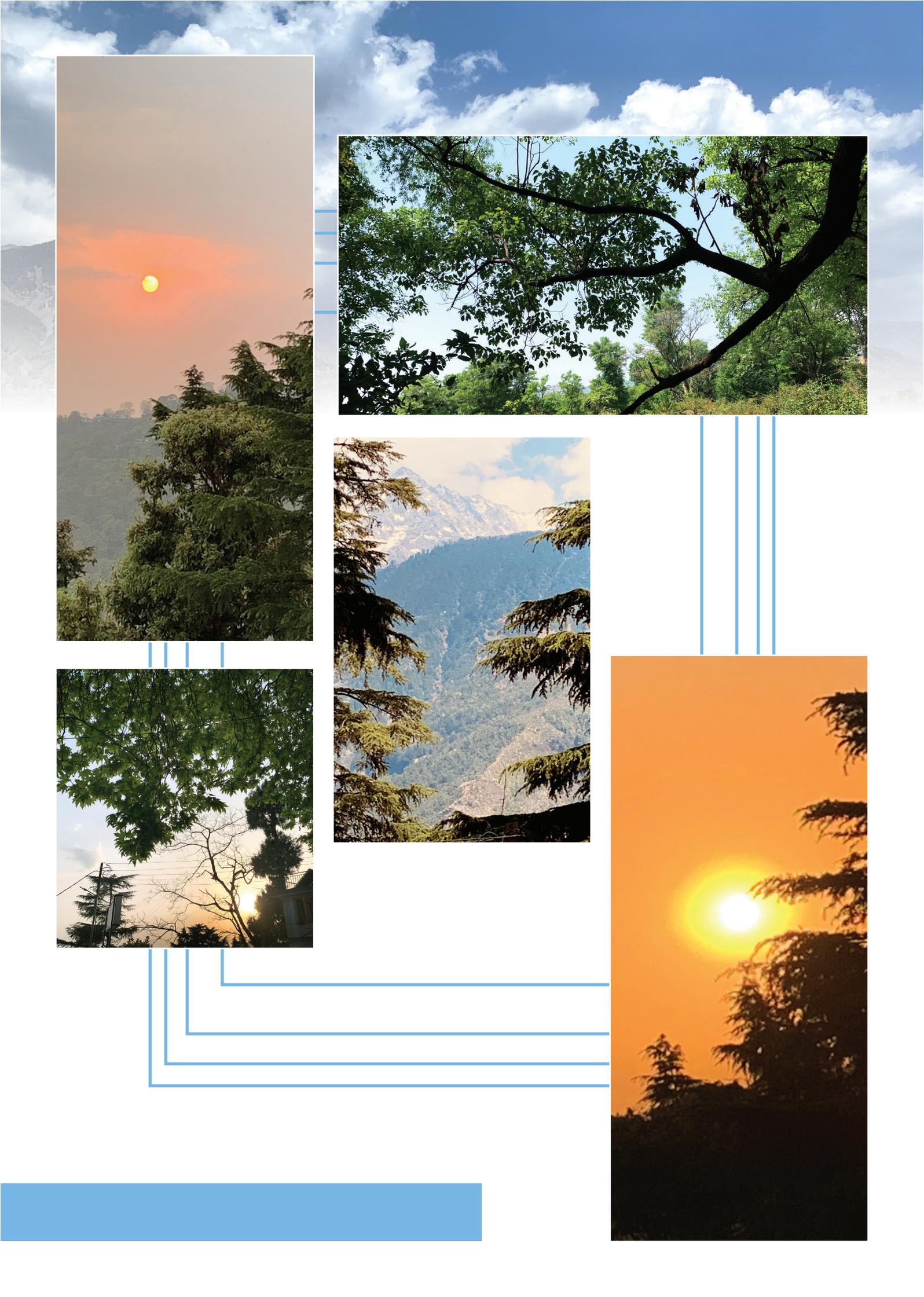
PICTURE PERFECT!

Lensman: Sanjay M Johri

The mighty Himalayas with its snow-capped peaks and mountainous terrain lined with trees, lush greenery greeting visitors in the quaint town of Mcleodganj, is a picture straight out of any fairy tale. Located in the suburbs of Dharamshala in Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh, this place is a haven for not just regular tourists but those seeking peace and a 'one-on-one' time with nature.

From early morning as the sun kisses the snow-capped white peaks with a golden hue to the bright blue sky opening its arms during the day letting the Himalayas and the greenery revel in all its glory to dusk as the golden orb sets amidst a splatter of orange and pink—is a sight for eyes and soul. Fairy tale, well...you have to visit and decide for yourself!





Daily wagers in doldrums again

Ankita Bhatt

"The Greatest nations are defined by how they treat their weakest inhabitants"- Jorge Ramos

The second wave of pandemic resulting in lockdowns and night curfews once again brought fore reports of migration of labourers from cities to their villages/hometowns reminding one of similar scenes during the Covid first wave.

Sharing his plight, a daily wage worker Rajneesh Singh, residing in Lucknow, said: "Lockdowns in the city have made it almost impossible to get work for even two days in a week. I earn by working at construction sites and now I am jobless". The repair work and construction projects have been halted indefinitely that reflects in data citing monthly income of laborer falling by a whopping 62%, from Rs 9500 per month to Rs 3500 per month. The average monthly working days have also come down from around 21 days/month to 9 days/month with lockdowns in regions of high transmission of virus.

A mason from Lucknow, Mohd. Hareen explained, "Earlier wages were Rs 400-500/day that was in itself a very small amount. But, currently it is difficult to get work to begin with. Even if a work opportunity knocks at the door, the wages are shockingly low."

Narendra V. a daily wage worker who was employed at a fast-food chain in a mall, said surviving in Bengaluru has become increasingly difficult with each passing day. "This month's end looks gloomy as I won't be paid for at least 15 days. And what if it's (lockdown) is extended further?" Narendra said to The Hindu.

The first wave triggered work from home format of working across various industries, which were equipped to fight the second wave this time. However, given the nature of their jobs, the employment of daily wagers remains under risk yet again. At present, the country is trying to fight against Covid-19 by staying in while numerous labourers remain incessantly worried, unable to make the two ends meet. This concern demands attention because a nation can develop when its citizens are hale and hearty.

Let's talk about mental health issues

Rinil Srivastava

Covid-19 has disconnected us from friends and relatives through quarantines and lockdowns, resulting in a feeling of helplessness, grief, anxiety and depression. A family head who does not receive his/her salary on time, a working person who wishes to explore and achieve his/her goal, a child who wishes to play outside, a student who wishes to learn and discover, and a career aspirant. Covid-19 is not only affecting people physically but mentally too.

Octogenarian Covid survivor Lata Singh advises people to change the stereotype mindset and talk about mental health issues. "When you feel lonely or unhappy, chat and share with your loved ones. Do stuff like meditation, drink water, keep a journal of your thoughts, and speak to a therapist. You never know when it will be your last day, so smile and enjoy it while you can," she advises.

For Sejal Sahni, housewife, every day is a struggle as all her family members are Covid positive. She adds, "We feel so helpless. We just pray and try to remain calm and relaxed, even though it is difficult." She felt grateful to God for keeping everyone healthy. "I have learned a lot of things, but most importantly about mental health. Since then, we are counting our blessings together every single day. From morning champi sessions to evening walks & chai time with family, from bedtime story sessions, till dancing with joy and enjoying small celebrations. We have learnt to cherish every moment of our lives," she concludes.

Losing a family member to this virus specially in such trying times is devastating and it's important to keep mental and emotional balance says Ajay Tripathi, who lost his grandfather to Covid. "His death shook us, and we were very disturbed. No one ate well and it was like being in a state of suspended animation. Then my psychiatrist friend recommended yoga, which is free therapy for mental wellbeing. We began practicing yoga every morning after that, and it has greatly aided us in sustaining and managing our lives on a physical, mental, and emotional level," shares Ajay.

To sum up, there is a very famous proverb in the story Last Leaf, "He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything," which rightly illustrates how, like a plant, we must take care of our mental health. This stereotype must be abolished now, and we must speak about it. It is normal to feel anxious and depressed. We must, however, not give up and take care of our mental wellbeing.

Online education a mixed bag for students

Shreya Kumar

COVID has had a long-lasting effect on the Education sector much like every other aspect of our lives. Lockdowns and the dire need to continue with college, school education has certainly benefited online platforms that facilitated in providing education through various platforms like ZOOM, Google Classroom or MS teams, but the big question is: Has it proved beneficial for students?

It was a mixed bag for students as many gave it a thumbs up while several wanted offline teaching to resume as they found it better than online mode.

Ayushman, a class XI student, says: "It is very hard to concentrate in the online mode, maybe because we are used to and are comfortable studying with teachers, interacting physically in the classroom environ-



ment, but constant network issue and lagging makes it tougher for us to even listen properly without the glitches."

Persistent use of electronic devices creates crankiness and grumpiness, irritation in the eyes, headaches and body aches that affect the child and his/her capacity to be more productive

- Jai Nair | PARENT

ment, but constant network issue and lagging makes it tougher for us to even listen properly without the glitches."

But another class XI student Laksh feels otherwise. "Being an introvert, I have always faced problems while speaking in front of the

class and always been a slow learner, so online mode has helped me to overcome it as I can easily see the recorded lectures until I understand the concept," he quips.

On the other hand, college students have their own set of problems, with the added responsibility of making a career amidst the chaotic scenario. Sarandha, a first-year student from Patna Women's College shares, "We are under pressure. I need to work on pending things, but I know that I won't be able to meet the deadlines because of the increased workload. Sometimes you just reach your limits as a student and want to throw away the laptop in frustration." Just like her, every student is having trouble in adapting to this change.

Even parents seem to get affected by this new normal. According to a survey conducted by American Educational Research Association, in

March and April 2020, parents have experienced "significantly higher levels of stress" due to a child's struggle with distance or online learning and health of the child (especially eyes) getting affected due to being - 'on screen' constantly

for hours. As a parent of a 10-yr old, Jai Nair mentions, "Persistent use of electronic devices creates crankiness and grumpiness, irritation in the eyes, headaches and body aches that affect the child and his/her capacity to be more productive".

It is a big challenge for students and for educational institutions to continue with the studies when even standing near someone means catching a life-threatening virus. However, education is pivotal for the better future of students and the online mode, in present scenario, is our only shot at ensuring the same.

78%
of families have encountered mental disturbances among students due to COVID-19, as indicated in research by BestColleges

'Coming out' still a big problem for gay people!

Anushka Bhakta

Even as a petition regarding acceptance and recognition of marriage between same sex couples is pending in the Delhi High Court, while in 2018 the Supreme Court decriminalised consensual sex between homosexuals thus repealing section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, however, even today 'coming out' as being gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) is still a big issue in the country.

For aspiring musician *Nikhil, 24, coming out as gay was a big challenge. Growing up in a conservative household Nikhil was not very close to his parents, therefore breaking the news of his sexual orientation was pretty difficult. Through his teenage years, he had struggled with fear of getting accepted by his family. "I told them I was gay when I was 20, during my final year of college. It was a hasty decision. I was at home one evening and wanted to tell them. I immediately sat them down before I could change my mind. My father foresaw what I was going to say. There were tears and resentment, but there were still promises. They reminded me that they always loved me and that this will not change," he recalls.

Their reaction surprised Nikhil who did not expect such support from his family. "If only I knew they would take it so well, I would have done it a long time ago", he says with a sigh of relief. Even though his father showed resentment yet his disposition toward Nikhil never changed. While his mother was in complete support of whoever he

was and whoever he chose to be.

"That evening, that confession made me feel liberated. I have no ashamed of being who I am but seeing it as a taboo for so long it was natural for me to feel anxious and trapped, which was difficult to overcome," he reminisces.

Fortunately for Nikhil coming out was not that bad as it was for *Malini, 26, theatre artist. A bisexual, Malini at present lives in Delhi with her partner *Rishika (*Riri), for the past many years. She is

“If only I knew they would take it so well, I would have done it a long time ago

- Nikhil

completely out of touch with her mother although her father often contacts her.

Being born and brought up in a liberal family in Kolkata, Malini's life was different from many of her fellow mates. She was an outgoing woman, often involved in theatre/filmmaking work with no restriction from her parents whatsoever.

While most girls her age had restrictions at home, she had the privilege of doing whatever she wanted. She was very close to her parents and shared everything with them. Unlike many, she was given the freedom of following her passion. Despite this, one would never think that her life would turn out the way it is now.

She was 22 when she first met her partner at a theatre festival in

Kolkata. At first, they were only friends, but eventually both developed feelings towards each other. "I never knew what I was until I met her. Earlier, I had few relationships with men as I never explored myself. But being with Rishika is different and beautiful," Malini recalls wistfully. The couple continued their relationship for over a year in secrecy before Malini's mother found out and all hell broke loose.

"My mother found out about us, through some letters and gifts Rishika had sent me for my birthday. She didn't take it well. In a rage, she burnt everything Riri had ever sent me. My father on the other hand was a little disappointed but didn't make me feel unwanted or unloved. I never expected my family to react the way they did. As a family we are quite forward and liberal in our thoughts and ideas. Home never felt the same after that day", she says with a sigh.

It was a year after the incident that Malini decided to move to Delhi to take forward her career in theatre. Cherishing the support her partner has given, the lass quips, "Riri has been a great support to me during this time. Even though my life is going pretty well now but I do miss my family. My heart yearns to talk to my mother once. I miss her a lot."

Unlike Nikhil, Malini didn't find peace by coming out to her family. There are thousands of people like them who still go through the daily grind suppressing their sexual orientation for fear of being ostracised. Merely repealing law is not enough unless the society starts accepting them.

**Names have been changes to keep the identity anonymous.*

Journey from a dropout medical student to historian

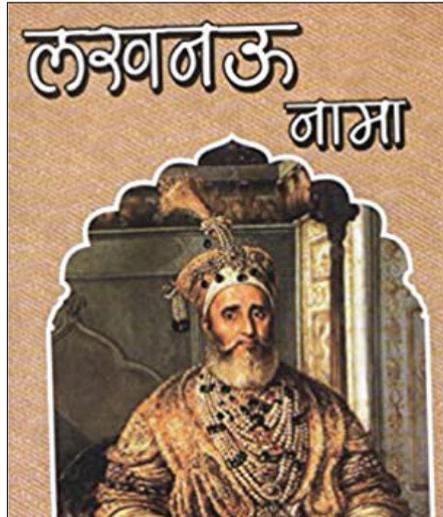
Riddhima Srivastava

“Wahi roop ki dhoop, wahi rango ki Roshni, wahi dosti ki Khushbu, mohbbat ki Mohini, wahi thumri kathak aur tihai ki chot, sitaron bhare anchal, katari ki got, chikan ke karishme sajae badan, zareedar jalwe jawan anjuman, apne dile nashad ko ashad kare ham, aao Lucknow ko zara yaad kare ham”, these lines by Dr. Yogesh Praveen truly describe the beauty of Lucknow.

Born on 28th October 1938, Yogesh Praveen was popularly known as the encyclopedia of Lucknow. From being a medical student to Hindi lecturer to writer and historian, his journey defines his personality. Dr. Yogesh Praveen left his medical degree in 2nd year due to illness. Later, he completed his M.A in Hindi and Sanskrit and started teaching. Meanwhile, he published his first poetry book “Shabnam”, which luckily received lots of love and appreciation from people. He was well versed in Bengali, Urdu, and Awadhi dialects.

During a conversation once he said, “I used to narrate my stories to my fellow lecturers in the staffroom and one day one of them suggested me to compile all of them and publish a book, and that’s when I wrote Lucknow Nama”. For the literature he has written 15 books on Lucknow including Lucknow Nama, Dastan-e-Lakhnau, Bahar-e-Awadh, Tajdar-e-Awadh, Lakshmanpur ki Atmkatha, Doobta Awadh, History of Lucknow Cantt, Mohabbatnama and Lucknow Monuments.

The specialty of his books based on Lucknow’s monument description included the infrastructure, history, ambiance, and stories related to it, in such a way that made the read-



ers feel as if they were physically witnessing that beauty.

Some of his amazing poetic works include ‘Mayur Pankh, Peeley Gulab, Shabnam, Aadhi Sadi ke ujale and Aprajita’. His contribution for Bollywood like Junoon, Umrao Jaan and Shatranj ke Khiladi are appreciated even today. His collection of stories like Peeli Kothi, Kanchan Mrig, Agni veena ke taar and Patthar ke swapn are considered as pride of literature.

To add feather of achievement he has won many awards including UP Ratna, Sahitya Sadhna Puraskar, Yash Bharti, Padma Shri and UP Hindi Sansthan Kala Bhushan Samman. On being awarded the Padma Shri last year he said, “Lucknow ko maine nahi mujhe Lucknow ne likha hai. I would like to specially thank my mother because she always motivated and encouraged me, unhone kabhi mujhe tootne nahi diya”.

Dr. Yogesh Praveen breathed his last on 12th April 2021 leaving a legacy of more than two dozen books and a page with a few lines which he wrote right before he lost consciousness that were: “Baal bikhrae taboot par jab koi mehzabeen roti hai, zindagi soch ke reh jaati hai maut kitni haseen hoti hai”.

The specialty of his books based on Lucknow’s monument description included the infrastructure, history, ambiance, and stories related to it, in such a way that made the readers feel as if they were physically witnessing that beauty.

Research: Key ingredient for creating a cinematic masterpiece

Sonia Singh

“To make a great film you need three things- the script, the script and the script.”- Alfred Hitchcock.

With the current pandemic, lockdown and travel restrictions many around the globe have found their escape from the monotonies of real-life in reel-life.

Binge-watching series/movies is not just about gulping in whatever content is available, viewers only get hooked to quality content without any compromise. They often ask themselves, how many series/movies they saw were authentic? How many characters seem relatable?

Regardless of genre, even people sitting in their living room can feel a connection to a military drama's main character who struggles with his emotions in the battlefield when portrayed authentically. This is why the most successful series/movies have an authentic story, characters with depth and a sense of reality even when it is fictional. Inauthentic writing never reaches the heart of its viewer.

The foundation stone of any good movie/series will always be a good script. Without it, nothing can work. But what makes a script so good? Research. It is that secret ingredient which makes a story worth viewing.

So, how is research for screenplay different from general paper research done in school/college. The process is quite similar, so it is necessary to have a command on the basics of research.

A writer before spilling the ink ventures out in the world to grasp different experiences which in-turn helps him make his writing more truthful and relevant.

Initially, every amateur writer starts by writing about something which is close to their reality, which they have experienced themselves. This provides a certain depth to the story and its characters. Screenplay writing demands character sketching with detailing, like how will this character talk, how he/she thinks, which language do they prefer, how they express themselves. These details require thorough research and visualisation.

But when a writer is hired for a screenplay assignment, they have to say goodbye to their comfort zone. Genres like medical drama, military action, science fiction, natural disaster and even historical dramas are all very popular genres.

So, how to write about something which you may have never experienced or never felt interested?



Here are five things to remember to ace your screenplay research for any genre:

True stories require in-depth research: True incidents, which were witnessed by few or many can be turned into a screenplay. Viewers are always curious to know more about such stories. Whether it was 26/11, Kargil War, a mysterious murder of a celebrity or a scam which shook the nation at some point viewers are eager to watch it happening through the camera lens. Here, the writer has to go through all the available material like newspaper clippings, news footages, books, conducting personal interviews of all the people who witnessed the scenario in some way.

RESEARCH GOES BEYOND FACT-FINDING: While it is important for a writer to become well-versed with the facts and technicality of their subject; it is important to explore it through the eyes of a person who is part of this reality.

STUDY MULTIPLE MEDIA: Screenplay writers can be hired to write for a movie, OTT or TV. This does not mean they only go through only these media during the research phase. To bring out quality writing, the writer is required to be immersed within whatever worlds they want to showcase in their writing.

RESEARCH ISN'T YOUR STORY: The research writer does should create an ambience for the story. It can never be a copy paste of the research finding into the script. Research gives a base to the story, but if the story is not developed in a correct flow, it will just become news documentary without any room for entertainment.

RECORD YOUR FINDINGS: Fictional stories do not demand a well-kept record as it is mostly imaginary. True stories require documentation of personal interviews, important locations, dates of events etc. This information comes in handy during the production phase.

With emerging platforms for movies and series, a vast opportunity for writers is here. It is necessary to be prepared for this industry.