

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Kashmir and parts of Jammu have come out of a grim phase of terroris-inflicted violence. Though an odd incident can happen till the last gun and terrorist remain there but the daily and recurring violence caused by terrorists is surely a thing of the past. Yet the situation in Kashmir cannot be termed as normal since a part of population – Kashmiri Pandits and even Sikhs – continues to live outside of the land of their ancestors. Kashmir can never become normal till last of the Kashmir who was forced to become homeless due to terrorism and violence is welcomed back and he feels safe.

Reconciliation can become a major move in this direction but then there can't be any closure to the past without justice. And it's heartening to see the authorities have begun to work on delivering justice to Kashmiri Pandits and others who are victims of terrorism. Many high profile cases of assassinations like that of Nurse Sarla Bhat, Poet Sarvanand Premi and his son, have been since reopened for investigations. Many of those involved on these gory killings of innocents ara still alive and people remember them. These terrorists were so emboldened at that time that they flaunted their misdeeds not realizing the reach of the justice. It's not only the Hindus but also the Muslims who were killed for their defying the writ of the terrorists whose cases have been reopened for investigations. May be the killers would not be found for the lapse of time but the quest for justice will give their families a kind of closure. Without justice there is no reconciliation and lasting peace possible. The reinvestigation should not be limited to some high profile cases alone but extended to all the killings. This will also become a deterrent for the future.

Priyanka Chaturvedi

There are some books you read as a reader. And then there are books you hold as an inheritance. For me, Mathura, Braj aur Mathur Chaturvedi is the latter not just because it is the fruit of labour of my father, C. A. Purushottam Chaturvedi, who has spent much of his life besides being a Chartered Accountant, as an avid reader, chronicler, researcher collecting as well as documenting the history of the region. What began as a lifelong intellectual curiosity has now become a substantial volume bringing together history, religion, culture, genealogy, local traditions and the political history of Mathura.

Mathura has always occupied aN important place in Indias imagination. It is one of Indias seven sacred cities. The town carries the memory of Krishnas birth, the history of the Shurasena kingdom, the traditions of Braj, and layers of Buddhist, Jain, Vaishnav,

Shaiv and Shakta traditions. It is not just a geographical location, a historical city, a pilgrimage centre, Mathura is an amalgamation of all these lived and ideas. Despite its rich cultural and civilisational history there is one uncomfortable question that the book asks, why has Mathura not received the attention and development that it deserves?

Cities survive because ordinary people continue living in them. Traditions survive because families continue practising them. Memories survive because somebody tells the next generation what happened. This is why the book is an important contribution towards Indias civilisational ethos and the power of continuity as it brings the historical narrative through the people who lived these centuries of change - it is the communities of Mathura and, particularly, the Mathur Chaturvedis who continued to remain connected to the city and its religious traditions. The book documents the Mathur Chaturvedi commu-

nity through its gotras, pravars, all, kuldevis, customs, social institutions, and geographical spread. These may sound like details of genealogy, but they are actually records of continuity.

The book describes how these identities became important not merely as markers of ancestry but as structures that helped preserve social and cultural memory. A community is not preserved merely because its members continue to carry the same surname. It survives because it carries forward a memory. It remembers where it came from, what traditions shaped it, who its teachers were, which institutions sustained it, and what it believes is worth passing on.

There is also the story of the Chaturvedis beyond Mathura. Over different periods, Chaturvedi families came to be settled in areas beyond Mathura, including parts of the Bhadaur region and present-day Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The book engages with the popular explana-

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We have spent decades asking what our children need to learn. Perhaps it is time to ask another question: what do they need in order to learn well?

Education in India has changed significantly. Curricula have become more progressive; technology has expanded access to knowledge and assessment is gradually moving beyond rote learning. These changes reflect a larger shift in how we think about preparing young people for an uncertain future. Yet one part of that preparation is still often treated as secondary: the emotional experience of learning.

A child does not leave their worries at the classroom door. Pressure to perform, fear of disappointing parents, friendship struggles, loneliness or uncertainty about the future can influence how they concentrate, participate and respond to challenges. If education is meant to prepare young people for life, then how they feel while learning cannot remain separate from what they learn.

This is why I believe the next chapter of education reform must place emotional wellbeing alongside academic development. Not instead of excellence, but as an essential part of enabling it.

The need is increasingly visible. An NCERT survey conducted in 2022, cited by UNICEF India, found that 11% of students reported anxiety, 14% experienced extreme emotions, and 43% reported mood swings. The importance of early intervention is equally clear: half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14, and 75% by the mid-20s.

These figures should prompt us to look beyond whether a child is keeping up academically and consider whether they are developing the emotional resources to cope with the demands placed upon them.

Emotional literacy is not a soft skill. It is a life skill. It begins with giving children the vocabulary to understand what they are experiencing. A child who can recognise frustration before it becomes anger, understand anxiety rather than simply fear it, or articulate that they



need help is developing a capacity that will remain valuable far beyond school.

A psychologically safe classroom allows children to question, disagree, make mistakes and try again without feeling diminished. If children associate mistakes with embarrassment or failure with loss of worth, they may become more focused on avoiding errors than on discovering, experimenting and learning.

The role of the teacher is therefore changing too; not into that of a mental-health professional, but into that of an informed and observant adult within a child's support system.

A sudden withdrawal, behavioural change or disengagement can sometimes signal that a child is struggling. Teachers need not become mental-health professionals, but they do need the awareness to recognise such signs, respond with empathy and know when professional support may be required.

This also means rethinking how we interpret behaviour. Children facing mental-health concerns may be labelled "lazy", "hyperactive" or "naughty" when they may actually need understanding and support. In one school-based intervention, 95% of teachers reported a positive change in how they perceived students with mental-health concerns.

Student referrals offer another important insight: 20% were related to poor academic performance, while others involved aggressive behaviour. Such changes should not automat-



but for his heel, dies to an arrow, exactly as Krishna does, shot in the foot by the hunter Jara. The wooden horse that breaches Troy has its twin in Yudhishtiras murmured lie

about "Ashwatthama," the elephant, which breaks Dronas will to fight. Both wars ignite over a humiliated woman: Helens abduction, Draupadis disrobing.

ically be viewed as disciplinary issues; they can also signal that a child may be struggling emotionally.

But recognition is only the first step. Students must also have access to the right support, without placing the entire responsibility on teachers.

UNICEF India notes that India has only 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, with shortages extending to psychologists and psychiatric social workers. This

is why strengthening mental wellbeing in education cannot mean placing another responsibility on teachers and schools without strengthening the wider support system.

Schools need clear pathways to professional care, while counselling must be normalized as a resource rather than viewed as a last resort. Equally important is bringing parents into the conversation and strengthening relationships between students, teachers and families.

Often, meaningful support begins with something simple: an adult who listens without immediately comparing, correcting or trying to solve everything.

The experience of implementing the curriculum demonstrates how strengthening emotional skills and relationships can create a school environment that is more conducive to learning, while also contributing to academic outcomes. Across all grade levels, students became better at managing their emotions and more willing to seek help when needed. Both coping skills and help-seeking behavior improved significantly from baseline to endline across every age group.

The impact was also visible beyond the classroom, with parents observing positive changes in how children handled everyday conflicts. When students are equipped to regulate emotions, seek help and build healthier relationships, classrooms can become more supportive spaces where both well-being and learning can

thrive.

The approach must also recognise that wellbeing does not look the same for every young person. The pressures faced by a school student may differ from those experienced in university. Adolescence, young adulthood, family circumstances, social environments and individual experiences all shape how challenges are experienced.

A responsive approach to wellbeing must therefore be responsive rather than one-size-fits-all.

When a young person is unable to cope, the consequences can affect attendance, learning, educational progression and, later, employability and participation in the workforce. Supporting wellbeing early is therefore not merely an investment in individual children. It is an investment in the country's human potential.

A report card can tell us what a child has learnt. It cannot tell us whether they have developed confidence, empathy, adaptability or the ability to recover from disappointment. These qualities shape how young people navigate relationships, decisions, setbacks and opportunities.

That does not mean lowering academic expectations. Quite the opposite. We should want young people who can pursue excellence without tying their entire sense of worth to achievement; who can experience failure without seeing themselves as failures.

The next education reform, therefore, should not ask us to choose between achievement and wellbeing. It should recognise that the two are deeply connected.

Education has always been about preparing the mind for what lies ahead. The next step is to recognise the person behind that mind, their emotions, relationships, confidence, vulnerabilities and capacity to adapt.

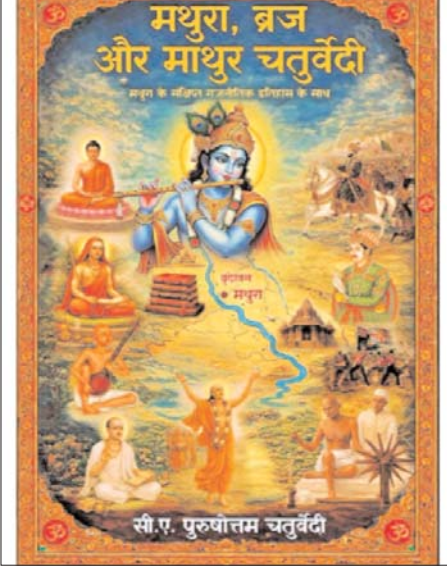
Perhaps the question for the next education reform is no longer only what do we want our children to learn? It is also: what do we want them to be equipped to handle when the lesson ends? Education

If the answer includes uncertainty, failure, relationships, change and the inevitable challenges of life, then emotional wellbeing cannot remain at the margins of education.

than conviction. Patroclus and Abhimanyu both die young, entering battles meant for greater men in their absence. Even the dogs rhyme: Argos waits twenty years to die at Odysseus returning feet; Yudhishtiras companion walks with him all the way to heavens gate.

No credible contact existed between Greece and India before Alexanders invasion of 326 BC, centuries after both epics took shape. So this is either coincidence, or evidence that every culture reaches for the same stories to make sense of duty, loyalty and grief. What survives intact in both is an unfashionable moral: glory isnt the point. Rama, the Pandavas and Odysseus all end their stories by turning away from the spoils of victory, choosing home over conquest. Thats the real inheritance: not the wars these epics describe so unforgettably, but the walking away from them.

What we inherit: A father, a book and the memory of Mathura



tion that the communitys dispersal was simply the result of people fleeing Mathura because of invasions and persecution. The Chaturvedi story, as presented in the book, is therefore not simply a story of migration. It is a story of how identity travels. What emerges is a simple but powerful idea: Education was one of the ways a small community like the

Chaturvedis decided to empower themselves and break the poverty cycle - through intellect and knowledge. Perhaps that is one of the most valuable lessons my fathers generation can leave ours.

Another part of the book is its discussion of the traditional akhara and community institutions. The akhara was not merely a place for wrestling. It could become a space of social cohesion, where people

with completely different political beliefs could nevertheless come together as members of the same community. The book gives the striking example of Congressmen, Jana Sangh supporters, and communists sharing the same social space.

That feels remarkably relevant today. We speak endlessly about

polarisation and the loss of social cohesion. Perhaps we should also ask ourselves what happened to the institutions that once allowed people to disagree politically without ceasing to belong to the same social world.

The other lesson from the book is that the communitys history through music. How music continues to build communities and keep it alive. Music became a vehicle for devotion and cultural expression in Mathura. The book records traditions of Ramllela, Kansa Mela, Holi that continue even today. Most importantly the book eventually brings us back to something far more eternal.

One of the reflections in the book beautifully connects Braj, Krishna, and the Bhagavata tradition through the idea of prem- the affection of Yashoda, the friendship of the cowherds, the devotion of the gopis, and Radhas mahabhava.

Personally for me & selfishly so, this book is an act of preservation. Every generation assumes the

next one will remember. It doesnt unless someone makes the effort to write it down. In the foreword I wrote for the book, I described it as preserving the unbroken connection of the Chaturvedis with Krishna and his janmabhoomi. But perhaps I was also describing something much more personal; the connection between one generation and the next - that is of me with that of my parents and the one I take forward with my children. Finally, when I think about what a parent can best do for their children, it is not merely to leave an inheritance that is of monetary value - property, money, or possessions.

But sometimes it is to leave behind something as invaluable as curiosity. Sometimes something as precious as a library. Sometimes something as beautiful as a story of our roots and where we belong. And then, sometimes it is a book that says: this mattered to me, and I wanted you to know why. (The reviewer is a former member of Rajya Sabha)