

SOCIETY

Family-The foundation of life

Ganishka

You lay in a bright white room on a crisp white bed. You're alone. In the background you hear a faint beeping noise. You are isolated; your thoughts, feeling and emotions engulf you until you feel suffocated. You think to yourself, the strength of a family is tested by the way it stands together in the most difficult of times. Suddenly you hear faint voices, which are slowly growing louder. Now they are all around you and you begin to recognize them. These are your loved ones. They have supported you through all your triumphs and now when your body had failed you, they are here again.

Family, we hear this word multiple times a day, and it is ever present in multiple forms of media. There are even shows, such as Everybody Loves Raymond dedicated to showing the ups and downs of a modern family. Ray Romano, his wife Deborah, and their three children all live together, across the street from Ray's parents. This causes many conflicts between the two families often resulting in the two families giving one another the infamous silent treatment that has become a staple in modern households today.

But how did families function say, 70 years ago? Did they also face the same frustrations as we do today? Anne Frank seemed to think so. On Wednesday, September 2nd, 1942, she recalls, "Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan have had a terrible fight. I've never seen anything like it, since Mother and Father wouldn't dream of shouting at each other like that. The argument was based on something so trivial it didn't seem worth wasting a single word on it" (Frank 33). Throughout her diary, Anne reflects upon the ways of her own family who were very calm throughout their hiding in the secret annex with the Van Daans who were rather rambunctious with their behavior. However, fights just make a relationship stronger. My mother often says, "When a relationship has no arguments, someone is hiding something." It seems that the Van Daans were simply trying to sustain their relationship in the hard times they were facing as they held on to the idea that family is incredibly important.

Families are very supportive of one another. Through thick and thin they are always there for you. A backbone to support you when you need it most. Lady Macbeth is an excellent example of this necessary backbone. As she hears of the three witches prophecy's, she thinks



to herself, "Yet I do fear thy nature; it is too full of the milk o' human kindness to catch the nearest way" (I.V.XVI-XVIII). She knows her husband will not be able to fulfill the three prophecies on his own and fears his failure for it will hurt her to see him not succeed. She ensures his success by saying, "But screw your courage to the sticking-place, And we'll not fail" (I.VII.LX-LXI). By practicing tough love and physiological manipulation she encourages Macbeth to murder King Duncan. By doing this she guarantees his success and is incredibly supportive.

Much like Lady Macbeth, Jillian Michaels also practices tough love. Michaels is a trainer on the show The Biggest Loser and is known for her unique approach to weight loss. Just as Lady Macbeth knew her husband was capable of murdering King Duncan, Michaels knows her clients are capable of weight loss and she stands by them as through every struggle. Michaels pushes her clients to the extreme often pressuring them to do what they had never thought possible before just as Lady Macbeth does to Macbeth. Michaels can also be tender much the way a mother is. She knows in her heart that she is doing what she is out of love.

My own family consists of four people. My mother, father, sister and myself. We do not live near other family and for all holidays, it is just us. I like to think of us as the dandelion seed that the wind blew too far. When we moved to Canada two years ago from the United States it was a big change for all of us specifically emotionally. When we moved, we left our life long home and all of our friends and it was a difficult transition. I had spent my entire childhood

around the same children and I knew that I would now have to make new friends. This was a challenge I had not experienced before and I grew anxious as the move grew closer. The one thing that kept us motivated was knowing that we had the support of one another when we came home. Although my family is small, we all communicate a great deal and this allows us to share our emotions.

The one thing that really makes a group of people a family is selflessness. Albert Dussel was a man who came to live with the Van Daan's and Franks in the Annex in order to prevent his capture. Dussel must not have had strong family relations because he was very selfish. On November 17th Anne stated: "... yesterday was November 16, the first anniversary of his [Mr. Dussel's] living in the Annex [...] instead of taking the opportunity to thank us - for the first time - for unselfishly taking him in, he didn't utter a word" (Frank, 148). The Franks and Van Daans risked a great deal by hiding Dussel but in return he did not even thank them. This led me to believe that Dussel had a difficult family life unlike Anne and myself.

Your family has now left for the day and you smile to yourself as you think: the strength of a family is tested by the way it stands together in the most difficult of times. This is especially true for Anne, Macbeth and yourself. You have all faced challenges your families helped you overcome and you now realize something; the size of a family does not measure its strength but rather the number of birthdays you need to remember.

BOOK REVIEW

Creating Lalla Ded consciousness

Dr. K L Chowdhury

Lalla - the Yogini
A study from the perspective
of Kashmir Shaivism
Author: Prof. M L Koul

Several years back, I had the privilege of writing an introduction to Prof. Koul's second book, Kashmir - Wail of a Valley - Atrocity and Terror, and of reviewing his first book, Kashmir - Past and Present, both valuable treatises that deal with the history of Kashmir and, especially, the invasion into, and destruction of, her cultural, religious, and civilizational foundations by foreign proselytisers, iconoclasts and jihadis - a subject near to the heart of the author who is braving exile for the last twenty-three years like the rest of us. In that sense, the present book is of a different vintage, for it takes you beyond the mundane, beyond the strife and struggle of life in exile, into the realms of poetry and aesthetics, scriptures and spirituality, philosophy and literature, and other finer human sensibilities. He has tackled a subject not beyond the scope of his genius and comes out eminently successful in portraying Lalla Ded in a different light, holding a prism of understanding in front of her soul-stirring vaakhs, creating a rainbow of seven different colours of her soulful utterances. Yes, the seven chapters of Lalla - the Yogini are transformational in understanding the true stature of Lalla Ded and her lasting impact on the consciousness of generations of Kashmiris. They impart a new persona to one about whom there is only nebulous understanding through the vaakhs that have come down through oral tradition and were never written down during her life time. They give shape and form to this saint-poetess who straddled like a spiritual colossus across the vast expanse of the valley of Kashmir. In that sense this book is a valuable addition to the extant literature on Lalla Ded.

Lalla - the Yogini is essentially a compilation of seven essays that have already appeared serially in Kashmir Sentinel. To see the whole corpus of the work in the form of a book is refreshing and inviting. It makes them quite readable.

The first essay discusses the Buddhist concept of Sunya, (or should it be Shuniya) - a depressing and cynical theory of the universe being unreal, illusory, or empty, something at total variance with a positive and real-world view of Kashmiri Shaivism. Here Prof. Koul wades through the forest of literature on Shuniya, and the fierce intellectual debate between Buddhist scholars and Shavites, who finally embrace the concept of Shuniya but give it a different interpretation, which is positive and affirmative. To the Shavites the world is real,

not void or empty. Shiva is the Being, Shakti the Becoming, and their unity is the Absolute Reality. In this positive world-view there is also scope to accommodate other views, and that is how Shavites accepted Shuniya and remodelled and redefined it as 'shunyam ashuniyam iti ukhtam', which in translation means shuniya is ashuniya, or void is non-void. It is like the multiplication of two negatives resulting in a positive in mathematics. Well, I will leave it to the reader to try and make sense out of it.

Of the seven Lalla Ded vaakhs that Prof. Koul has selected here, the last sounds the best that traces Lalla's spiritual journey as she rejects the ritualistic trappings of tantra and manter, and casts away the mind influences to be in ecstasy because she has reached a state of Shuniya, and merged with Shuniya:

*Tanther gall tai mather mostei
Manther gol tai mostei chyath
Chyath gal tai kehn tin a kune
Sunes shuniya meelith gav.*

Shuniya for Lalla is the state of bliss, of transcendence, not emptiness nor nothingness.

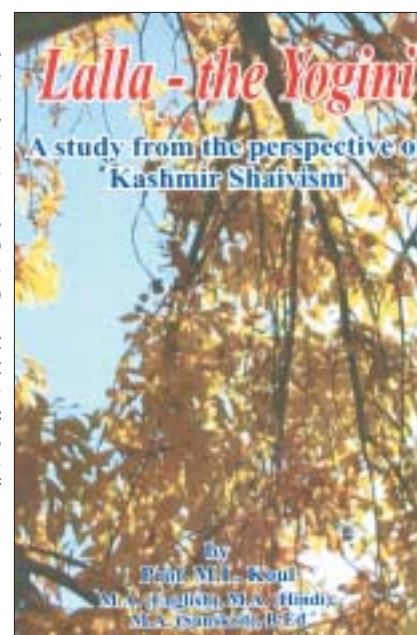
In the second essay, Prof. Koul goes on to explain the concepts of Shiva as the highest metaphysical reality, being svata siddha (self proved), prakash (light and luminosity) and jnan (knowledge, all knowing). Shiva is transcendental, beyond time and space and yet immanent, creating a web in all things and permeating everywhere while being absorbed in self. He speaks about Shiva consciousness as consciousness supreme, and touches on the various Shiva concepts from Utpaldeva's Shiv Strotavali, to Abhinavagupta's Tantraloka, describing the universe as a manifestation of Shiva as prakash and Shakti as vimarsha or vibrations.

Lalla was a Shiv yogini who worked her way up in the spiritual journey to experience the light of Shiva consciousness and give profound utterance to her ecstasy:

*Gagan chui, bhootal chui
dyan pawan to raath chui.*

She speaks of Shiva's universal presence; she experiences the thrill of merging with Shiva in the lake of immortal bliss: laya karemas amrit saras.

In the third essay on the Guru tradition in Lalla vaakhs, I would like to quote the author: "A shiva guru moulds his disciple in sync with his cultural setting and bequest. He roots him in the indigenous soil to put him on the highway of quest; his icons are native, his gods are native." That is exactly how her guru, Siddha Srikanth, shepherds Lalla in her quest to know her innate reality. His presence and personal grace (shaktipath) breathes in her vaakhs for she holds him supreme: gwarakath hirdayas manzbag ratem; and he imparts the core precept, the kunai vachun, and tells her to peep inside herself - neber dhopnum inder achun.



The fourth essay deals with AUM, the divine Vedic symbol, the primordial sound, the ultimate reality and the spiritual charm, which equates with Brahman: om iti Brahman, om iti sarvam. It is the sacred symbol, the core mantra (bij-mantra) Lalla received from her guru which transformed her from ashes to gold:

*omai akui achur parum, soi ha mali
rotum vondas manz, siu ha mali kane
peth gurum to churum, asis sas, sapedis
soun.*

In the last essay on Bhakti in Lalla vaakhs, Prof. Koul defines Bhakti as motiveless service or total surrender to God, tracing its evolution from the Vedic times down to the Bhakti movement of the Alvar saint poets, and Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tulsi and Surdas. Lalla who practised Bhakti yoga, is the 'fore runner' of the movement in the mountain-grit valley. Her bhakti graduated from formal ritual worship to the subtler techniques of merger with the eternal:

*deva vatta divar vatta,
petha bon chui ekavata
Kas poozi karak hatta batta,
kar pranas tu pavanas sanghata.*

In the eighth chapter the author makes a strong case for preserving the pristine purity of the numerous words, phrases, and expressions of, what he calls The Lalla Ded lexicon; and in the ninth chapter he highlights the enduring influence of Lalla in Kashmir and beyond, down several hundred years, a legacy which is under threat of being appropriated, tampered with, and distorted. Creating a Lalla Ded consciousness is the need of the hour in the troubled times through which our nation, and in particular Kashmir, is going through.

CAREER COUNSELLING

Information Technology-forking pathways

Gauri Chhabra

Two roads diverged in a wood...
These immortal verses of Robert Frost resonate in our minds when we think of career options that look similar but diverge after a certain point causing a dilemma.

One such dilemma comes between choosing BCA (Bachelor of Computer Applications) or B.Sc (IT). Both courses catering to the job opportunities in the information Technology sector, there are subtle differences between the two.

Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA)
BCA (Bachelor of Computer Application) is three year undergraduate program for the students who want to carve a niche for themselves in the field of computer science. This program consists of six semesters each with duration of six months. In the sixth semester you need to go in for an Industrial Training in an organization four to six weeks.

As far as the content is concerned, you would be studying various areas of computer science, programming, database design, software engineering, networks and information systems. The linear path it prepares you for is pursuing a postgraduate research degree or employment in any variety of roles in organizations that require expert professionals, who can apply computer science principles to lift businesses, streamline their processes and use technology to solve their real life problems.

BCA has a professional focus as far as content and pedagogy is concerned. The admission to most colleges is based on an entrance test, the eligibility for most is 50% or above in XII with Mathematics as a compulsory subject.

In case you take up Information Practices as an option in your XII, it would be an added advantage. You can go for an MCA or you can directly apply for an M.Tech, after you complete your BCA. For M. Tech, you will have to clear the GATE.

B. Sc IT is a different course altogether. It is also a three year undergraduate course having computer science as background for those who want to specialize in information system and management. The main aim is to prepare students who have good knowledge of theory of core subjects like operating system, data base, data structure.

It is an academic discipline. You need to have Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at the XII level for being eligible for this program. At the under graduation level, Chemistry is replaced by Computer Science. You can pursue courses like M.Sc or MCA. You can even pursue an M.Tech, after you complete your M.Sc, if the M.Sc degree is recognized by UGC or AIU. For M.Tech you can appear for the GATE examination conducted by the IITs or check individual universities which conduct their own entrance exam.

Forking Career Options

BCA offers you a roadmap that again has inroads. Students involved in BCA are provided with such academic base that leads them to advanced career in Computer Applications. To land in a good job, you need to pursue MCA/M.Tech. You may take the job of a software developer. Depending upon the programming languages you are comfortable with, you can be a Java developer, dot net developer, or a PHP developer. For those who are interested in Quality Assurance, you can follow the route of a Quality Analyst. Those who are interested in interactions with clients and can think from the end user's perspective can carve a niche for themselves as BA (Business Analysts) and later on graduate to Project Managers.

B. Sc IT has a different focus altogether. It focuses less on programming languages and more on the mathematical and theoretical foundations of computing. The linear path after this program is a post-graduation, ie MCA, MSc

IT or an MBA. Depending upon your choice of Post-graduation subject you can choose your career. In case you go in for M.Sc Mathematics or Physics, you can go in for Research or teaching line. Or if you go in for M.Sc IT, you can take up software development as a career option.

Which Course is better?

Dainish Hingwe, Executive Director, Technosoft Software Services says, "B.C.A and B.Sc. IT, both are technical courses that can provide better job opportunities in the field of Computer application or Information technology."

If you want to make a career in Software development BCA is a better option. In case you want to broad base yourself in Physics and Mathematics too B.Sc. IT is best. It is also good for those students who want to see their career in Management, teaching or database field. Most of the B.Sc. IT students prefer to go Postgraduate Management Degree MBA and use IT knowledge as additional skill set in management field".

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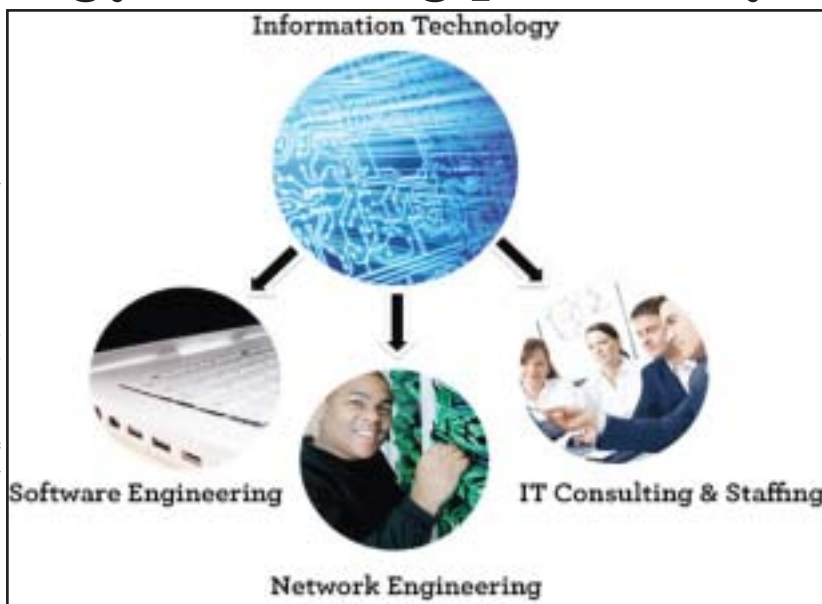
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Some Certifications to enhance employability Project Management Professional (PMP)

The Project Management Institute's (PMI) Project Management Professional (PMP) credential is recognized as the most important certification for project managers and would increase your employability. The certification demonstrates that you have not only the experience but also the education to successfully lead and direct projects. The PMP credential is for experienced project management professionals, as the qualifications and testing for this certification are rigorous, as are the required continuing education requirements. All of these factors ensure that the PMP credential is widely respected. The PMP experience and exam requirements focus on five process groups: Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling, and Closing.

MCP

Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) is a professional certification given by Microsoft. Individual certificates are awarded during the passage of one or more tests. The MCP program itself is designed for IT professionals and developers. These series of techniques for MC (Microsoft



Certified) code contains a Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP), Microsoft Certified Master (MCM), Microsoft Certified Architect (MCA), Microsoft Certified Professional Developer (MCPD) Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS). You need to recertify yourself almost every 3 years in order to stay current.

MCSD (Microsoft Certified Solution Developer)

Information Technology is a dynamic field. In case you wish to remain current and improve enhance your employability, you can go in for Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD) credential that is the highest level of certification program offered by Microsoft. It focuses on the ability to design and build application solutions that may include integrating multiple technologies and may span multiple versions of a single technology. To meet certification requirements, a person must pass three tracks: MCSD Windows Store Apps, MCSD Web App, MCSD Application Life Cycle Management. However, in order to stay current, you need to do a recertification after every two years.

MCITP (Data Base Administrator)

The MCITP certification validates that you are capable of deploying, building, designing, optimizing, and operating technologies for a particular job role. MCITP certifications builds on the technical proficiency measured in the Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS) certifications. In order to earn the MCITP: Database Administrator you must first pass the Microsoft Certified Technical Specialist certification in SQL Server 2008. You will have knowledge of SQL Server instances and database solutions, database server security solutions, high availability databases, backup and recovery solutions, monitoring strategies, database management and maintenance strategies, and data distribution strategies.

Earning a certification will enhance your employability; however, it does not guarantee that you will walk into a higher paying job. Certification counts, but employers look at several factors, including experience.

Therefore, for whether you take the first road or the second, team it up with certifications and experience to step up to success.

For queries contact gauri_nagpal@yahoo.com

INNER VOICE

"IN THE NEW CITY..."

Estranged from my home, my place
Looking for a great solace,
In the new city!
Missing my mother's lullabies,
Which she used to sing to keep me at ease,
In the new city!
Recalling that tittle-tattle in my verandah,
Which could be often combined with
a glass of Mirinda,
In the new city!
Thinking about my earnest school and friends,
Then comparing with my mates here who never
get over with the latest trends,
In the new city!
A tussle going on between the serene
environment of my town,
And the exorbitant mayhem which
makes me down,
In the new city!
People trying to tarnish me,
Sending shivers down my spine,
In the new city!
Quaffing and at times tugging me into this vicious
circle of doom,
And then gaping when I refuse and go in my
room,
In the new city!
No one who can be trusted upon,
All the intimates have gone,
In the new city!
In the middle of this ocean, I cannot go back,
Certainly want to stay with everything in pack,
In the new city!
The amulet reminding me of my mother,
Consoling, He (God) cares for you, who in his hair,
has a feather,
I know the path to success won't be a cakewalk,
But, envisaging, to see myself even taller
than a stork,
In the new city!

Apoorva Shekher

BORN TO DIE

Blessed were the hours when I was born to the Soil
Divine
Earlier I belonged to her and soon She became mine,
Saints chanted that I will make her Proud,
and She will praise my name in a voice so Loud.....
Gradually I was brought up in the lap of Nature,
and my Godly Parents turned me into a Wealthy Creator,
They infused in me the Patriotic feelings and Bred me
Hard,
and always made me win over the Heaviest Sword.....
I Promised my Parents that I won't let them down,
and they will always cherish my living in the Kingly
gown,
I promised me Love not to feel so low,
I will be born again to keep the vow.....
My pals need not be mum and look depressed,
they shall be proud looking at me in Flag dressed,
All my belongings I hand over to them,
they shall not just gaze but treasures like Gem.....
I request my Mother not to beat her breast,
for I am not a coward and I did my best,
I request everyone, "Please don't cry,
for I am a Soldier and I was born to Die."

Kulbhushan Gupta

BY RIVER SIDE

I want someone who'll sit with me by the
river side
She'll share her thoughts and cries
She'll feel me from her heart inside
I want someone who'll sit along with me by
the river side
Looking at moon from the mirror of water
Waiting for the blessings from the Goddess
of love
In a hope of dark night
I want someone who'll sit along with me by
the river side
She'll fill my life with lush magnolia
Being moon as witness, she'll say three mag-
ic words of life
And the moving water will message this to its
pathway side
I want someone who'll sit along with me by
the river side

Ashish Sharma

Indra Gandhi Govt. Dental College

Jammu

FLYING ANGELS

As I sit to pen down the seasons,
Colourful birds spring my heart
And chirp in my winterless garden.
A lease of life comes in me replacing out
my soul.
Listening to thy distinct melody,
The tears may shed, The rain may come.
A rush of vigour in my unmaturred brain
From the core to heaven and
Everywhere in between pulsates with life.
Migrating to their small nests
Sometimes over the trees and
Sometimes over the mountains.
Absorbing in thou titanic view
I'm waiting still, till the next dawn.
Cooling my head by the visual delight
I'm the one to have walked over the lakes.
Below my feet, the same world of ours,
But up my head, a rejuvenated world
Of the flying angels..... "HEAVEN"

-Abhishek Jandial

and Kokila Jandial

Laker Mandi, Jammu