

EDUCATION PLUS

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A. Joseph Dorairaj

Complex issues and phenomena such as global warming and climate change, poverty, migration and displacement cannot be addressed by a single discipline. They need to be studied from an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary perspective so that we can grapple with them comprehensively and meaningfully. Global warming and climate change, for instance, need to be addressed by experts drawn from different disciplines such as Glaciology, Hydrology, Oceanography, Geology, Geography, Geoinformatics, and Engineering and Technology. Similarly, migration and displacement need to be discussed by experts from Political Science, Geopolitics, Economics, Sociology, Ecology, Human Rights, and Literature.

Unfortunately, academia is subtly biased in favour of "academic tribes and territories" (Becher and Trowler 2001). Against this backdrop, we need to highlight the ongoing debate between 'generalists' and 'specialists'. While the generalists, even as they are grounded in their respective disciplines, strive to strike a conversation with their counterparts in other departments to promote interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration, the specialists prefer to confine themselves to their respective areas and



Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice, Klein points out that the coming together of different disciplines in multi-disciplinary endeavours is "essentially additive, not integrative".

Why are academicians reluctant to undertake interdisciplinary projects? There are five major reasons. First, the epistemological clash, sometimes incompatible, between different disciplinary perspectives is a hurdle and a challenge. Second, getting to know a new discipline involves time and energy, and many prefer to expend their energies in their own disciplines and territories where they already have a foothold. Third, there is hardly any incentive for undertaking innovative interdisciplinary projects. Fourth, when it comes to research projects and publications, editors are inclined towards papers in conventional disciplines. As a result, interdisciplinary projects get sidelined. Finally, interpersonal issues crop up while undertaking interdisciplinary projects with issues relating to seniority and ownership of the project occasionally rearing their heads.

Fostering interdisciplinarity
What should be done to shed academic tribalism and foster interdisciplinarity? First, higher educational institutions should, under the Choice-Based Credit System, offer interdisciplinary courses in domains such as AI, Na-

notechnology, and Digital Humanities. Teaching pedagogy too could be interdisciplinary. A course like Philosophy and Literature could be co-taught by faculty from the two departments. Second, allied departments could come together and organise interdisciplinary seminars and conferences. For instance, Chemistry and Life Sciences could come together and explore common topics such as enzyme catalysis, kinetics, energy and metabolism. English and Political Science could organise a conference on a topic like language and ideology. Language departments such as Tamil, Hindi, French, and English can pool their resources and explore themes in comparative literature and translation. Third, research scholars and postgraduate students should be motivated to explore interdisciplinary topics for their projects. Finally, border-crossing leading to inter-departmental networking. So interdisciplinary collaboration should be recognised and incentivised.

Academic tribalism breeds a culture of hierarchy, insularity and traditionalism. Therefore, academia should ensure that the curriculum is innovative, interdisciplinary and holistic and encourage and help shape our students into multifaceted individuals.

The writer is Emeritus Professor, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu. Email: josephdorairaj@gmail.com

SCHOLARSHIPS

TSDPL Silver Jubilee Scholarship Programme

Eligibility: Open to students domiciled in Jamshedpur, Kalinganagar, Pantragar, Faridabad, Pune, Chennai, Tada, or Kolkata in ITI or diploma programme from a government-recognised institute and have scored at least 50% in Class 10 exam. Annual family income must not be more than ₹5,00,000.

Rewards: ₹50,000

Application: Online
Deadline: December 3
www.b4s.in/edge/TSDPL

Shri Tulsi Tanti Scholarship

Eligibility: Open to girls in Class 9 or in the first year of a B.E./B.Tech. degree or diploma in Engineering and have scored at least 50% in Class 10 and 12; Annual family income must be less than or equal to ₹600,000.

Rewards: Variable

Application: Online
Deadline: December 10
www.b4s.in/edge/SZSP1

Federal Bank Hormis Memorial Foundation Scholarship

Eligibility: Open to students in Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu enrolled in MBBS, B.E./B.Tech., MBA, B.Sc. Nursing, B.Sc. Agriculture, B.Sc (Hons) Co-operation and Banking. Annual family income must be less than ₹300,000.

Rewards: 100% tuition fee

Application: Online
Deadline: December 12
www.b4s.in/edge/FHMF1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Cross those borders

Academicians should move beyond their silos and promote the crossing of disciplinary boundaries to make the pursuit of knowledge innovative and holistic

guard their territory. Disciplinary boundary crossing is an anathema to them.

In *Academic Tribes and Territories*, Becher and Trowler address the issue and point out that "the tribes of academe ... define their own identities and defend their own patches of intellectual ground by employing a variety of devices geared to

the exclusion of illegal immigrants." But academicians should shed their silos syndrome as a fragmented and piece-meal approach to the pursuit of knowledge will not produce tangible results.

Subtle differences

At this juncture, we need clarity about what exactly is meant by interdisciplinarity and the reasons to

embrace it. We also need to distinguish it from its cognate: multidisciplinarity. There are subtle but crucial differences between the two. Both call for the presence of various disciplines but the level of integration between them is differential. While the integration of different disciplines is quite high in interdisciplinarity, the integration of ideas, multidisciplinarity focuses on juxtaposition with limited space for integration. In

projects, it is limited in the case of multidisciplinary endeavours. The former aims at amalgamation and synthesis of ideas and theories and the latter is rather reluctant to shed its disciplinary character. In short, while interdisciplinarity insists on integration of ideas, multidisciplinarity focuses on juxtaposition with limited space for integration. In

Shadab Alam

Though Canada is one of the top choices for Indian students who want to study abroad, the ongoing diplomatic tensions have sparked worries about possible restrictions. Recent reports indicate delays in visa processing times, stricter application reviews, and growing anxiety among students about their future in Canada. So let's look at the other alternatives open to students.

The U.K.

A prime alternative for Indian students, the U.K. offers favourable post-study work policies. The Graduate Visa allows stay in the country for at least 2-3 years depending on the course (undergraduate, postgraduate, or other). Moreover, top British universities like Oxford, Imperial College of London, Cambridge and so on are globally recognised for academic excellence. Numerous scholarships such as the Chevening, GREAT, Commonwealth and others are available as part-time work opportunities to help with expenses.

Australia

Known for its student-friendly environment and high-quality education, institutions such as the University of Mel-



Going beyond Canada

With the diplomatic unrest creating restrictions for students, here are other countries that students aiming to study abroad can consider

bourne, the University of Sydney, the Australian National University, Monash University, and others offer globally recognised programmes including three- and four-year Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees ranging from one to two years, and doctoral programmes. The post-study work visa ranges from two to four years, depending on the qualification. The government and universities offer various scholarships, including the Australia Awards, Australia for ASEAN, and

the Australian Government Research Training Programme and regional scholarships such as scholarships in Adelaide, Canberra, and Tasmania, to attract students to study in the smaller cities.

Germany

Slowly gaining popularity as a study-abroad destination among Indian students, many German public universities offer tuition fee waivers and demand minimal administrative charges per semester.

Some of the popular institutions include Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Technical University of Munich, Heidelberg University, and Freie University of Berlin. The affordability of fees combined with an emphasis on STEM fields makes Germany a great choice. The 18-month job-seeker visa allows graduates to explore employment opportunities within France.

While Canada has long been a favoured destination for many Indian students, it is time to re-evaluate one's options in the current circumstances.

The writer is Head-Higher Education and Study Abroad at Internshala.com

Management, and International Business.

Eligibility: 50% in Bachelor's degree from a recognised university and valid scores in CAT, XAT, NMAT, MAT, CMAT, KMAT, or the Alliance Management Aptitude Test (AMAT).

Deadline: November 30
<https://www.alliance.edu.in/programme/mba>

University has introduced a suite of entrance examinations for 2025 admissions. For degrees in Engineering, students have to take KLEEE-2025, while for diploma courses aspirants have to take KLCET-2025. KLMAT-2025 is for Management KLSAT-2025 for Science and KLHAT-2025 for

Humanities courses.
Deadline: December 4
www.kluuniversity.in

Alliance University has opened applications for its full-time, two-year MBA programme with specialisations in Business Analytics, Marketing, Finance, Human Resource Management, Operations

Management, and International Business.

Eligibility: 50% in Bachelor's degree from a recognised university and valid scores in CAT, XAT, NMAT, MAT, CMAT, KMAT, or the Alliance Management Aptitude Test (AMAT).

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Stay mindful

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE

Nandini Raman

After Class 12, I attempted the NEET but my scores were not good. I have decided to go in for B.A. LL.B (Hons.) but people around me say it's risky. What other course can I opt for?

Laura

Dear Laura,
B.A. LL.B (Hons.) is good if you have an interest in Law and related fields. The degree will provide you with critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and communication skills. The legal field offers diverse and potentially rewarding careers like being a lawyer, legal advisor, judge, legal consultant, or across corporate law, civil services, and more. It is an intensive programme that requires strong commitment, sustained interest and academic challenges. Meet a career counsellor and do a personality and aptitude assessment to understand your inherent strengths and choose a path that aligns with your long-term goals and personal interests. Discuss your options with mentors, teachers, or career advisors who can provide personalised advice. There are many options including BBA, B.Com, Design Courses, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Communication and Media Studies and so on.

I have done a B.A. in History and Psychology. Unfortunately, I have a backlog to be cleared next year. I am interested in both subjects. What can I do in this one year for my educational growth? Pradhan

Dear Pradhan,
Use your time productively to enhance your skills and knowledge by taking online

courses and earning certifications in specialised areas on Coursera, edX, and Udemy. Look for internships, volunteering opportunities and research projects so that you get experiential and practical knowledge across areas of your interest. Meet a career counsellor and discuss your goals and explore potential pathways based on your likes, aptitude, passion and personality. Consider doing a Master's. Prepare for entrance exams and research colleges and courses available. Join online forums and discussions, engage in debates to enhance your understanding and keep yourself informed. Finally, network with professional organisations related to History or Psychology, as they often provide resources, opportunities, and access to industry events.

My daughter is in the IGCSE stream and has chosen Arts and Business as her majors in high school. Which undergraduate courses would be suitable for her? Vidya

Dear Vidya,
Choosing the right undergraduate course depends on your daughter's interests, strengths, and long-term career goals. What does she want to do? What are her core interests? Seek guidance from a career counsellor. She can choose any of the following courses: BBA with specialisations in International Business and Entrepreneurship, B.Com, B.A. in Media Studies, Marketing and Communications, Innovation and Design, Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Literature, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology or International Relations, B.Design, or a B.F.A. A career assessment will help narrow down suitable courses and career paths.

Research specific programmes and universities to find courses that align with her interests and

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to edplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge.

SAVE THE DATE

Admissions
Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, has opened admissions for the 2025-26 academic year for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes across its schools of Engineering, Natural

Sciences, Management and Entrepreneurship, and Humanities and Social Sciences. It has also launched dual degree UG programmes in Computer Science and Business Data Analytics in collaboration with Arizona State University, the U.S. <https://t.ly/Zvt2u>

KL Deemed-to-be

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Deadline: November 30
<https://www.alliance.edu.in/programme/mba>

A.S. Suresh Iyer

Peer pressure is a social force that significantly impacts people's attitudes, behaviour, and decision-making skills. Students facing peer pressure in their social environment find it hard to explore career choices, especially those different from the conventional paths. They may feel compelled to follow traditional routes such as medicine, law, or engineering despite having a passion for fields like the arts, entrepreneurship, or environmental science.

Complex nature

Understanding peer pressure in career decisions involves a thorough knowledge of its complex nature. It often develops from the desire and need to be accepted or to meet expectations. For many students, peers are a large source of validation. There is also the stress that comes from high family expectations and societal norms that consider some careers as the best and most prestigious, undermining other options. This

eventually makes it hard for them to choose a career that is considered risky. To cope, students must first develop self-awareness and confidence in their interests and strengths. This includes self-reflection and building a support network of mentors and peers who encourage diverse career paths.

Students who choose unconventional career paths are driven by their personal interests, values, and aspirations. Sometimes, traditional career options may offer stability and financial security but may not align with individual passion and interest. Unconventional roles often provide creative freedom, personal satisfaction, and the chance to pursue something one genuinely loves. Fields like interior design and applied fine arts help people embrace their creativity and enhance their aesthetic expression. While they may seem risky, they offer fulfilling opportunities for those passionate about transforming environments and objects into works of art. Another rea-



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

Stand up for yourself

How students can overcome peer pressure when making unconventional career choices

son for students to opt for unconventional career roles is the desire to start their own business or venture. The rise in technology has made entrepreneurship more appealing and easy to assess. Entrepre-

neurship and freelance work lets students strike out on their own.

Institution's role

Educational institutions play a vital role in shaping students' career choices

and helping them deal with challenges such as peer pressure. Organising programmes and activities that will help them build healthy friendships and bonds can help students combat the pressure and not fall prey to it. Career counselling services will allow students explore their interests, strengths, and options with professional counsellors offering neutral, third-party personalised advice, conducting

aptitude tests, and helping them understand the requirements and realities of various fields. This will empower students to make informed and confident decisions without any outside pressure. These days, many institutions are increasingly recognising the value of non-traditional career paths and offer programmes and resources for those.

Dealing with peer pressure when it comes to making career choices requires self-awareness, strategic thinking, and proactive measures. The first is required to understand one's own interests, values, and career goals. Students should set clear personal objectives so that they can focus on what truly matters to them rather than be affected by external influences. Another important strategy is to find mentors, role models, and friends who support and encourage the choice of unconventional roles.

These people can provide valuable guidance and reassurance to help them stay on the chosen path. Students should also engage with communities or

The writer is the Director, Aditya School of Business Management (ASBM).

organisations in their area of interests that can offer both inspiration and practical advice.

An unconventional career can be scary initially, but fulfilling in the long run. It often involves higher uncertainty and risk with less predictable income, fewer established trajectories, and greater competition. These challenges require strategies and planning that includes financial management and risk mitigation to navigate the complexities. Additionally, staying informed about industry trends and continuously upgrading skills can mitigate risks and enhance adaptability.

Battling peer pressure to make unconventional career choices is difficult and often challenging. However, students can successfully navigate these challenges and pursue careers that align with their passions and values by developing self-awareness, seeking supportive networks, educating others, practising assertiveness, and setting realistic goals.

The writer is the Director, Aditya School of Business Management (ASBM).

Silent signals

Using actions while speaking helps comprehension as gestures may help people decipher meaning more intently

THINK
Aruna Sankaranarayanan

Though most of us associate exceptional oratorical skills with passion, a facility with words and proper intonation, there's another facet of effective communication that doesn't garner much attention. We can emphasise a point, seed a doubt, rouse people to action and help people remember not only through words but also our gestures. In an article in the online magazine *Psyche*, Susan Goldin-Meadow argues that gestures "contain and convey meaning" and can be deployed to enhance our thinking and communication.

She avers that gestures involve far more than people simply waving their hands, as they chatter on excitedly. The need to gesture is possibly innate as blind children, who have never seen other people use their hands while communicating, also gesticulate while talking. In one study, Goldin-Meadow and her colleagues found that participants were better able to recall vivid scenes like a "chicken sliding to a policeman" or a "jogger bending down to touch his toes" if they gestured while describing the scenes. A possible reason for this advantage is that a person has a dual code of both words and gestures to help them remember the

scenes. Goldin-Meadow suggests that people may try gesturing while memorising their shopping lists to see if that aids recall.

Additionally, Goldin-Meadow and her colleagues have found evidence that gesturing helps children with mathematical reasoning. In one study, children were asked to explain their thinking behind a Maths problem using words and gestures while another group had to use only verbal explanations. When the students were given subsequent problems, those who had gestured while explaining outperformed the verbally group. According to Goldin-Meadow, the former group applied "ideas represented in their earlier gestures" while tackling the new Maths problems.

As a lot of our communication is online nowadays, Goldin-Meadow suggests that we continue to tap into the benefits of gesturing even during video calls. By adjusting the position of our screens so that our hands are visible, we may enhance our online communication as well. Because we appreciate the importance of body language in cognition and communication, perhaps, we can try to schedule more in-person meetings.

One of the best ways to encourage our conversational partners to gesture is to use gestures ourselves. As our mirror neurons tend to mimic actions of people we're interacting with, we may also stand to gain when we use our hands and fingers to make our exchanges more meaningful and memorable.

The writer is the author of *Zero Limits: Things Every 20-Something Should Know and blogs at www.arunasankaranarayanan.com*.

Focus and comprehension

Gesturing also leads to better comprehension. Goldin-Meadow states that pointing to bullet points while making a presentation helps the audience focus better. Using actions while speaking also aids comprehension as gestures may help people decipher meaning more intently. Moreover, gesturing comes to us "naturally" if we allow ourselves to move our hands freely. Our ac-

tions will automatically mirror the "temporal and semantic" intent of our speech if we let our hands speak for themselves.

Even as we gesture more often, we may also pay closer attention to other people's actions. At times, people may struggle to put their thoughts into words coherently. However, they may convey information with their hands if we bother to notice this form on non-verbal communication. Goldin-Meadow notes that astute clinicians observe body language, including gestures, for clues regarding their client's internal thoughts that may or may not be vocally stated.

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"Are you a scientist?" came next. My answer was: "I am a scientist by training but a marketer by profession."

People often ask how a scientist can be in marketing or sales. Many people in Science and Marketing start their careers with the thrill of experiencing textbook things in real life. Coupled with great opportunities and a higher purpose, this makes a career in Life Science even more attractive.

But a career in Science is still associated with the traditional professions of engineers or doctors. The inclination to pursue Science often depends on the environment and mentors who can inspire you and make you feel amazed



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AI for all

University curriculums should include the fundamentals of Generative AI to equip students to become creators and expert users of these systems.

benefit from understanding the fundamentals of Generative AI algorithms to be able to leverage AI technology within their respective disciplines.

Finding a balance

A robust curriculum that balances theoretical knowledge with practical application is essential to teach Generative AI. Indian universities must design courses that include theoretical modules on machine learning algorithms,

neural networks, and natural language processing complemented with practical labs and projects that allow students to apply concepts in real-world scenarios.

For example, students could work on developing large language models (LLMs) for natural language generation in regional languages such as Hindi or Tamil to allow them to gain a deep understanding of the model training process, while also learning to

use advanced cloud GPUs and the necessary libraries to optimise training. Collaborating with industry leaders, as recommended by NASSCOM's AI Adoption Report, could further bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs.

Across disciplines

Beyond the technical knowledge of building models, Generative AI has the potential to transform a wide range of industries.

Its applications intersect with numerous fields, including Computer Science, Maths, Linguistics, Media and Communication, and Social Sciences. This requires an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from multiple disciplines to prepare students for the broad impact of this technology. Indian universities can also leverage online platforms to offer supplementary courses on Generative AI. Equally vital are industry internships, which provide practical, hands-on experience in real-world AI projects.

Teaching the fundamentals of Generative AI in Indian universities is not merely about imparting technical skills; it is about preparing a generation to lead in a world increasingly driven by AI. India has a young population, therefore impact begins in the classroom.

The writer is AVP-Marketing at E2E Networks Ltd.

derstand the research, concept, product, or service and to better communicate the vision to people with non-scientific backgrounds and answer questions seamlessly. You may have a significant discovery but, unless you share it and solve others' problems, it might go unnoticed.

Networking is vital to scale up, add value, and fund project. In Life Sciences, professionals connect with academicians, pharma QC analysts, chemists, and industry experts to support their journeys and foster success. A scientific background helps create platforms for collaboration and innovation.

We live in a dynamic world of constant change, where technologies become outdated quickly, and concepts learned from books can be summarised in a few lines using AI. Limiting oneself to a specific scientific profession may hinder growth.

Exploring and uncovering the unknown is the true essence of Science.

The writer is the Senior Manager-Commercial Marketing (Segment and Services) and Scientist at Merck.

From labs to leadership

Venkat Koushik Pulla

"Hey! That was a great shot." Later, a fellow badminton player asked, "What do you do? What is your profession?" I took a moment to respond. "I help scientists solve some challenges in their research work."

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But a career in Science is still associated with the traditional professions of engineers or doctors. The inclination to pursue Science often depends on the environment and mentors who can inspire you and make you feel amazed

by the new knowledge you acquire. Students who study in a well-equipped campus during graduation and Master's get to experience scientific experiments more elaborately, piquing their interest early on.

Specific areas

To thrive in any environment, one must be adaptable and flexible. As we delve deeper into Science or any field of education, we zoom in on increasingly specific areas that require different skills, roles, and opportunities. Typically, a

STEM graduate pursuing an advanced degree in the Sciences studies particular topics in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science, or Maths in depth and undertakes an original research project. Many who pursue advanced studies often take up careers in research or teaching.

However, their options extend beyond these fields, with various opportunities in marketing, sales, logistics, management, and even leadership or entrepreneurship, leveraging their strong STEM

foundation to support the business aspect of Life Sciences.

Exploring Science requires patience. While the best part of research is running real-time experiments and seeing expected results, not all experiments yield conclusive results. Some researchers may even take more than six years to earn their Ph.D.s. Additionally, research careers must foster a culture of research and innovation in Generative AI. For example, establishing dedicated AI research labs that focus on solving India-specific challenges, such as deve-

loping AI models for agriculture, healthcare, or disaster management. Universities should also encourage students to publish their research in reputed journals and participate in national and international AI conferences like NeurIPS, ICLR, or the AI Summit India so that they can showcase their work, receive feedback, and network with professionals.

Inclusive and accessible
AI education should be inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their background. Universities can play a significant role in democratising AI education by offering scholarships, financial aid, and outreach programmes. Additionally, AI courses should be available in multiple languages to overcome the language barrier that many students face and to ensure that India's AI workforce is diverse and representative.

Research is the backbone of academic growth, and Indian universities must foster a culture of research and innovation in Generative AI. For example, establishing dedicated AI research labs that focus on solving India-specific challenges, such as deve-

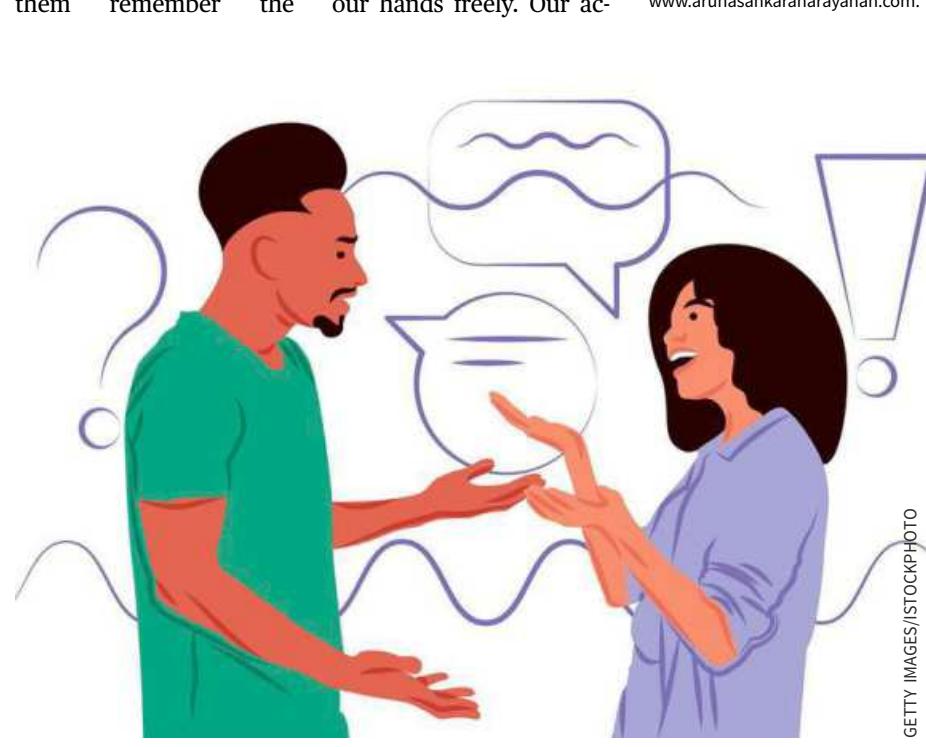
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