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A multi-dimensional approach

The higher education curriculum requires a new framework that integrates knowledge, cognition and social knowledge to make students future ready

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Mukul Saxena

Challenges in higher education are becoming increasingly nuanced and complex. Technological innovations, shifting human-machine frontiers, and advances in AI, Healthcare, and Medicine are emerging as key focus areas. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2023* highlights that 44% of workers' skills will be disrupted by 2027. Analytical and creative thinking will be crucial skills in the next five years, closely followed by leadership, social influence, resilience, flexibility, and agility.

Possible approaches

The future of higher education lies in the fine integration of these skill sets. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) emphasises a principles-based and outcomes-focused approach and underscores the need for experiential learning, social impact, career readiness, and partnerships. Similarly, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology emphasises skill competency while ensuring that academic programmes meet high-quality standards aligned with industry needs. The National Board of Accreditation in India focuses on achieving desirable outcomes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour, based on an 'Input-Process-Output' model. Additionally, the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development, and global well-being.

The question now is whether Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) are equipping students with these skills, or still fixated on teaching them to remember and understand subjects through a taxonomical design, such as Bloom's Taxonomy? The answer, unfortunately, is a resounding "Yes", with some exceptions.

How can we prepare students to be future ready? Competency-based education (CBE) and outcome-based education (OBE) are two dominant approaches to assess student learning. OBE emphasises mastery of specific skills and competencies that reflect real-world experiences, while CBE aligns educational outcomes with the labour market needs, increases employability, and fosters industry connections. Unfortunately, both often focus on discipline-centric skills and overlook discipline-neutral ones. Consequently, HEIs assess educational relevance by emphasising multidisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity as educational outcomes. While CBE advocates for a transformative approach, there remains a transactional focus.

The skill gaps in higher education are particularly pronounced in the technology sector. A high rate of graduate unemployment due to a mismatch between the skills taught in colleges/universities and those needed by industry has led to poor job performance and employer dissatisfaction, particularly in areas such as writing, editing, research, and data analysis.

Three-step assessment

These challenges can be addressed by a new framework that effectively integrates knowledge, cognition, and social inquiry into the educational curriculum, focusing on skill development and social orientation. It positions students as key stakeholders alongside parents, industry representatives, and faculty and emphasises social orientation and skills competency by integrating OBE and CBE, promoting a multidimensional approach to learning. It enables students to develop higher-order skills, enhance their capacity for social inquiry, and refine and sharpen their competencies throughout their academic journey.

Not only does it formally integrate social inquiry into educational design but also strengthens skills and competency courses while establishing a robust, communicative, and engaging framework. This allows for mapping students' skills and social orientation through a well-defined mentoring process, including corporate mentoring in subsequent stages. The framework involves a three-stage assessment:

Stage I: Initial assessment of student skills during the orientation programme and/or at the start of classes. Students participate in the Learners Value Proposition (LVP), which, while not mandatory, facilitates skills mapping. Once the results are analysed, they are aligned with the programme's mission and objectives, creating a case file for each student.

Stage II: Assigned mentors conduct continuous assessment at the end of each semester and implement the necessary intervention for skill development through electives and participation in activities or field projects. Corporate mentorship and parental feedback can be integrated aiding in competency mapping and social orientation for internships.

Stage III: The final assessment compiles a comprehensive student profile, which maps skills competency in alignment with future job requirements and upskilling needs.

Higher education must prepare students to be future flag-bearers who will tackle complex global problems. The World Bank's latest report on poverty reveals that 8.5% of the world's population still lives on less than $2.15 a day. The critical question remains: are we adequately preparing our future problem-solvers with the relevant skills, knowledge, and competencies?

The writer is Professor and Director, Centre for Postgraduate and Legal Studies, and Centre of Excellence in Public Policy, Alliance School of Law.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Sightsavers India Fellowship Programme
An initiative offered by Sightsavers India
Eligibility: Students with a PG degree or diploma in Ophthalmology from a recognised institute in India who possess a strong foundation in Clinical Ophthalmology and demonstrate a strong commitment to lifelong learning, adaptability, professional ethics, and emotional resilience
Rewards: ₹75,000 monthly + benefits
Application: Online
Deadline: March 31
http://www.b4s.in/edge/SIFS1

The Sonny Mehta India Scholarship
Offered by the Department of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia (UEA), the U.K.
Eligibility: Indian national residing in India who has been accepted for a full-time M.A. in Creative Writing
Rewards: £28,500 + maintenance fees.
Application: Online
Deadline: April 1
http://www.b4s.in/edge/SOIS4

The Doon School Scholarship Examination (DSSE)
Annual entrance exam conducted by the Doon School, Dehradun, Uttarakhand
Eligibility: Indian boys between 11 and 13 years on September 30, 2025 who have been promoted to Class 7 or Class 8 in the 2025-26 academic year
Rewards: Financial assistance to study at the Doon School
Application:
admissions@doonschool.com
Deadline: April 15
www.b4s.in/edge/DSSE2

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Assess your strengths

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

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am a UPSC aspirant from Chennai. I have a degree in History and am doing a distance PG from Madras University. I am not interested in teaching but am into research-based work. What can I do if I don't clear the exam? Mathes

Dear Mathes,

You could consider archival and museum work. Chennai has numerous archives, including the Tamil Nadu Archives and the Madras Record Office that preserve historical documents. You can work as an archivist, researcher, or document manager or pursue a career in museum curation, research, or education or be a research assistant at institutions focusing on history, culture, and social sciences or work in heritage management and conservation. Content creation and journalism are also options to create engaging and informative content. Another option is to do an M.Phil or Ph.D. in History. Connect with professionals for insights and job opportunities. Develop skills relevant to your chosen field, such as research methodologies, data analysis, writing, and communication. Also, look for internships or volunteer opportunities in archives, museums, or research institutions to gain practical experience.

I am doing a B.Com (Hons.) and want to study abroad. I am from a middle-class family. How can I get scholarships or financial aid? Also which course would be better: M.Com or MBA? Ayush

Dear Ayush,

Research scholarships are offered by the host country's government or Indian government schemes. Universities have scholarships for international students based on academic merit, financial need, or specific programmes. Check the websites of the universities that you are interested. Numerous organisations and foundations also offer external scholarships for international students. You will need to research these thoroughly. Some universities offer financial aid packages that combine scholarships with grants based on financial need. You can also take a student loan to cover tuition and living expenses, but check the repayment terms before committing.

Maintain excellent grades and hold a strong academic record, as that will significantly increase your chances of receiving scholarships and other financial aid. Many universities require a GMAT (MBA) or GRE (M.Com/other programmes) score as a prerequisite. So, practise and aim for high scores to improve your application. Strong essays highlighting your ambitions, financial need, and reasons for choosing that university and programme will also help.

Both M.Com and MBA are good options;, the choice depends on your interest and career goals. M.Com would be ideal for a career in accounting, finance, or research. An MBA is a broader option suitable for various business careers, including management consulting, marketing, finance, or entrepreneurship. Shortlist the course and the college first, the country and the living expenses next and then write to their admissions office with your specific requirement(s).

I have a PG in Maths and a B.Ed. I want to do a Ph.D. but am not sure how to choose my research subject, as I don't have anyone to guide me. Abhishek

Dear Abhishek,

Review your M.Sc. coursework and explore your interests. What did you like most during your M.Sc.? Do you have any shortlisted topics that you thoroughly enjoy researching? Explore different areas of Maths through online resources, textbooks, and research papers. Platforms like arXiv (arxiv.org/archive/math) offer a vast collection of Maths research papers. Once you have a general area of interest, look for research gaps and delve deeper to identify questions that haven't been fully addressed or problems remain unsolved.

Reach out to professors from a university whose research aligns with your interests. Go back to your college and meet your professors to discuss potential research topics and request their mentorship. Explore if you can join their research group. This can provide you with valuable guidance and maybe also a guide. Many universities also have dedicated Ph.D. programme pages outlining potential research areas within their Maths department. Check that out as well. Online forums and communities like MathOverflow (https://mathoverflow.net/) can be a great source of information and discussion. You can post questions or browse existing threads related to research areas that pique your interest.

I am in the third semester of graduation. From childhood, I dreamt of the UPSC and never really thought of what interested me or what my career options were. I now understand how tough the UPSC is and how most aspirants have a Plan B. Should I do an MBA, as that may be easier? Ayushman

Dear Ayushman,

Choosing a career in Civil Services or an MBA solely on the perceived difficulty of the qualifying exam is not an effective approach for a lifelong career. Identify what you enjoy doing. UPSC will lead to roles involving public administration, policy implementation, and serving the nation. An MBA will lead to managerial roles in various industries. Take time to reflect on your core interests, values, and career aspirations. Try to gain some exposure to both public service and business through internships, volunteer work, or online courses. Don't compare the difficulty of UPSC and CAT, as both require dedicated preparation and use different skill sets. Focus on which one aligns with your interests and strengths. Meet a career counsellor to understand this better. If you end up liking both, you could choose to specialise in public policy or social entrepreneurship during your MBA. You could also work in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) sector to bridge the gap between business and public service. Take time to assess your strengths and weaknesses, overall personality and finally make an informed choice.

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 eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

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No clear winner

Both remote and in-person internships, when structured well, can develop talent and teach new skills

S. Pasupathi

Internships are the first step into the corporate world, no matter what the duration. While they may not always count as formal experience on paper, internships play a crucial role during interviews and in shaping your future career, as they allow you to gain hands-on exposure to your chosen industry and develop the necessary skills to succeed.

With the rise of remote work, internships have also changed. The question now is whether remote internships offer the same benefits as traditional in-person ones. While remote work isn't new to professionals, remote internships are now more widely accepted, thanks to modern technology. They allow freshers to work from anywhere, breaking down geographic barriers and providing flexibility. Several tools help employers stay connected with their remote interns, thus making it more feasible than ever.

Pros and cons

Remote internships offer significant advantages, particularly in terms of accessibility and inclusivity. They open up opportunities for candidates who are geographically distant or face challenges accessing the professional networks in major cities. Interns can also balance their studies while gaining valuable work experience. For companies, remote internships provide access to a broader talent pool and offer cost savings by reducing the need for office space. Interns can take on tasks that help reduce the workload of full-time employees, allowing them to focus on more complex projects.

However, remote internships require a more self-driven approach. Without the structure and support of an office environment, interns must be proactive in seeking feedback and developing their professional skills. The lack of face-to-face interaction can limit mentorship opportunities and informal learning that typically occurs in an in-person setting.

In contrast, in-office internships provide a level of immersion that remote ones often lack. Being physically present in the workplace offers opportunities to absorb the company culture, develop relationships with colleagues, and gain informal learning experiences that are impossible to replicate remotely. Networking is another key benefit of in-person internships. Being in the same physical space as mentors and colleagues allows for organic conversations, immediate feedback, and hands-on learning. In-person internships also make it easier for top management to assess interns and integrate them into the team.

Hybrid internships

Hybrid internships, combining remote and in-person work, allows interns to enjoy flexibility while gaining valuable in-office experience. Interns can spend part of their time in the office, immersing themselves in the company culture and networking, while also working remotely for tasks that require less direct supervision. This offers flexibility for both interns and employers. However, this model requires careful planning and communication to ensure that both the remote and in-person aspects of the internship are effectively managed. Without attention to detail, either component could suffer from a lack of engagement or direction.

There's no clear winner between remote and in-person internships. The right choice depends on the nature of the role, the organisation's needs, and the intern's goals. For hands-on roles like engineering, product development, or research, in-person internships are often more beneficial.

However, for more flexible, tech-focused roles like marketing, content creation, or software development, remote internships may work better. In the end, the purpose of an internship is to develop talent, teach new skills, and prepare youngsters for the future. Both remote and in-person internships, when structured well, can achieve these objectives.

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The writer is Chief Operating Officer, HirePro.

Step with caution

While technology is revolutionising financial education, learners have to learn to filter and strategically leverage digital resources to become financially literate

Ajay Lakhotia

In digital India, where 800 digital payment frauds are reported daily, financial literacy is a critical survival skill for the next generation.

Technology is a powerful ally, transforming how we understand and engage with money. Gone are the days of dense textbooks and complex financial jargon.

Today's learning platforms are revolutionising financial education through engaging, interactive experiences that speak directly to the digital generation. Imagine learning investments, budgeting, and financial planning through interactive modules, short videos, and real-world simulations.

These tech-driven platforms create a safe playground for young learners to understand financial dynamics. Interactive quizzes and challenges replace intimidating spreadsheets with exciting, bite-sized learning experiences. Users gain hands-on financial insights without risking real-world consequences, turning complex concepts into accessible knowledge, one interactive lesson at a time. But even as technology opens unprecedented doors to financial learning, smart navigation is key. The real power lies not just in access, but in discerning, filtering, and strategically leveraging digital resources to transform financial literacy from a challenge into an opportunity.

Caution and clarity

Social media's financial advice ecosystem is a double-edged sword. While technology democratises information, it also blurs the lines between credible guidance and misleading claims.

The mantra is simple: Not Every Influencer is a Financial Advisor.

Technology offers powerful filters to distinguish genuine expertise. Regulated platforms provide professional advisor profiles with transparent credentials, performance histories, and user ratings. These help users identify reliable sources, warning against vague promises of extraordinary returns or unverified expertise.

Finding the right financial advisor is no longer a challenge. The key lies in three strategic steps:

FREEPIK

Understand your financial DNA: Recognise that advisors specialise differently; some offer holistic guidance, others focus on specific domains like investments, debt management, or tax planning.

Credential check: Always prioritise SEBI-registered professionals and Registered Investment Advisors (RIAs). Technology now enables instant verification of an advisor's track record through transparent performance records and testimonials.

Platform simplicity: Select interfaces that are intuitive, with clear fee structures and transparent terms.

Learning curve

The journey from seeking financial advice to becoming financially intelligent is increasingly shorter in the digital age. Young learners are no longer passive recipients but active participants in their financial education.

While professional guidance remains crucial, technology has bridged the gap between expert knowledge and personal understanding. Here's how students are being supported in the journey of personal understanding with the help of technology:

Fundamental Mastery: Interactive platforms break down complex terms like compounding, inflation, and investment tools into digestible bits.

Budgeting Bootcamp: Apps help students track expenses, set realistic budgets, and identify saving opportunities.

Goal-Driven Learning: From creating investment portfolios to planning emergency savings, technology provides simulated environments for risk-free financial exploration.

As financial literacy transcends the walls of a classroom, important concepts like trading, insurance, risk management, and emergency planning are becoming common knowledge from a young age.

Parents, educators, and mentors must guide young minds to leverage digital tools thoughtfully, turning interactive platforms from mere learning interfaces into launchpads for financial independence and strategic life planning.

The future belongs to those who can navigate the complex financial landscape with confidence, curiosity, and continuous learning.

The writer is the founder and CEO, StockGro.

Tech meets medicine

Kalyan Sivasailam, Founder & CEO, 5C Network, a healthcare AI company, on using AI to help automate diagnostics

FUTURE PERFECT
Ananya Ganapathy

The next in the series featuring conversations with entrepreneurs, technologists and researchers about emerging technologies and what students need to know about these fields.

What do you do?

I am the CEO of a company called 5C, which I also founded. My job is to conceptualise unique, profitable and hard-to-copy products, build a high performing team that can bring these products to life and take them to customers.

I hold a B.Tech. in Computer Science from NIT Surathkal and a PG Diploma from NLS Bengaluru.

Why is your work important?

5C is a medical AI company specialising in remote radiology reporting and advanced AI-powered diagnostic tools. A large part of diagnostics and reporting in healthcare is manual and time-consuming and, in some cases, prone to errors.

In countries like India, qualified medical professionals like radiologists are in short supply. We bring advances in AI to help automate diagnostics and make reporting accessible, quick, cost efficient and more accurate.

What is exciting about your work?

With less than 14,000 qualified radiologists, most of them located in urban /Tier 1 cities, access to timely diagnostics is a huge challenge.

With advances in AI technology, it is now possible to train machine learning models to perform accurate diagnosis of an X-ray or a CT scan taken anywhere, and share the results quickly.

Error-checking algorithms embedded in these models can identify patterns and reduce risk of mistakes.

Any experiences in college that led you to become an entrepreneur?

This may be surprising but my experience in leading sports teams in college led me towards entrepreneurship.

The core principles are the same: new companies have to run like a well-synced sports club. You have talented people and some have big egos. However, a common goal can only be achieved with collective efforts.

Even today, my leadership style is highly influenced by my understanding of leading and being part of sports teams.

What should students know about your field?

Unlike AI in other industries, AI in healthcare must undergo rigorous clinical validation, regulatory approvals, and real-world testing before deployment. High-quality, well-annotated medical data is critical to build reliable models.

Success in this field requires solid coding skills in programming languages like Python and familiarity with Vision Language Models. In addition, it requires understanding medical workflows, imaging, pathology, and patient impact.

The real value comes from those who can bridge AI and clinical practice, ensuring that technology integrates seamlessly into healthcare rather than disrupting it.

The writer is an avid follower of emerging technologies and their applications.

Keep the goods moving

The onset of data-driven models, automation, and AI is giving rise to new and niche job roles within Supply Chain Management

Vinay Konanur

Behind every packet of milk that gets delivered in less than 10 minutes and official merchandise from Hollywood that gets delivered in five business days lies a robust supply chain network. Over the last decade, we've been moving away from conventional supply-chain models – involving spreadsheets and phone calls – to their intelligent counterparts. This next-generation model effectively mitigates visibility challenges associated with order fulfillment milestones and offers transparency in the movement of goods during low-probability-high-impact scenarios like wars, natural disasters, and even a pandemic.

Leveraging emerging technologies like data science, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, robotics, and more, smart supply chain models are complementing enterprise visions to offer better customer service as well.

New roles

The onset of data-driven models, automation, and AI is giving rise to new and niche job roles that offer rewarding career paths. We are looking at a new era of opportunities such as:

Predictive Analytics Specialists: who develop effective models to identify patterns from historic data and forecast trends and events in the future with respect to supply chain opportunities and hindrances.

AI Supply Chain Analysts: who build AI-powered statistical models to analyse massive volumes of supply chain data for insights, anomalies, patterns, threats, and opportunities .

Supply Chain Managers: who lead teams of AI supply chain analysts and translate their efforts into business outcomes and be the bridge between data scientists and business stakeholders for data-driven decision making.

Digital Supply Chain Architects: who design and deploy digital transformation strategies to optimise supply chain operations and look for ways to seamlessly integrate AI and machine learning models for a connected supply chain ecosystem.

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Cybersecurity Experts: who fortify the digital infrastructure of the entire supply chain ecosystem and ensure no back doors, loopholes and vulnerabilities exist for hackers to exploit. They are also responsible for nurturing cyber awareness across hierarchies for safe practices of digital systems.

Robotics Engineers: who design robots, edge systems, and IoT devices to enhance warehouse workflows, operations, and allied logistics and automation processes

Academic Prerequisites

For a career in this space, a strong foundation of supply chain concepts is necessary. Ideally, the academic prerequisites include Undergraduate degrees in supply chain management, industrial engineering, information systems, and business administration; Master's and relevant specialisations in supply chain electives; Technical skills such as exposure to data science, analytics models and tools, AI and machine learning, programming languages like Python and R, digital technologies such as IoT, cloud computing, edge computing, blockchain, cybersecurity, or others; Professional skills such as problem-solving capabilities, the thirst for perpetual learning, strategic thinking, analytical and logical reasoning, interpersonal skills, and leadership qualities

A promising space for freshers and enthusiasts who envision a rewarding career path, supply chain also demands strong skills and capabilities. So one needs to do is to:

- Develop strong foundational knowledge on supply chain concepts and industrial engineering
- Gain as much practical expertise as possible by getting hands on with tools, programming languages, statistical models, and AI algorithms
- Be on the constant lookout for changes and be adaptive and resilient to quickly pick up new competencies
- Consistently work on communication, data visualisation, and storytelling aspects
- Seek a mentor for the right guidance and direction in the domain

Apart from these, aspirants should look for online training and certification programmes to work on all these aspects simultaneously. Top Indian institutions have some of the most industry-specific and agile curriculum on supply chain that also emphasises practical learning through sandbox labs and tools for experiential learning.

While carving a career in intelligent supply chain may sound daunting, at its core, jobs revolve around core aspects from conventional supply chain models such as demand planning and forecasting, process optimisation, inventory management, vendor coordination, order fulfillment, and more. What is getting an upgrade is the medium and way to accomplish such goals. So, start with the basics and strengthen your understanding to tap into existing potential for growth.

The writer is the Vice President-Emerging Technology, UNext Learning.

Ripples of growth

By integrating community projects into academic programmes, universities can show how education can be a force for holistic development and bridge societal divides

Vikas Singh

Community-based projects driven by universities are a powerful blend of education and social impact, creating ripples that empower individuals and uplift entire societies. These initiatives serve as transformative platforms where academic knowledge meets real-world application, offering students practical learning opportunities while addressing pressing local challenges, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Community projects provide students with an avenue to engage directly with societal issues such as literacy gaps, health awareness, and environmental sustainability.

For example, literacy programmes led by students not only enhance reading and writing skills in underprivileged communities but also cultivate a sense of purpose among the volunteers. Similarly, health drives addressing local issues like malnutrition or sanitation teach students about public health systems while directly benefiting the community.

These hands-on experiences develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership skills, equipping students for professional success while fostering empathy and social responsibility.

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Catalyst for growth

Community projects are often catalysts for economic growth, introducing sustainable and scalable solutions that transform local economies. Initiatives such as skill development workshops, vocational training, and small business support empower individuals with tools to enhance their livelihoods.

For instance, training programmes in crafts or technology enable participants to generate income while preserving traditional knowledge or adopting modern practices. By involving students in such initiatives, colleges create a dual impact: communities gain access to innovative ideas and resources, while students gain exposure to entrepreneurship and grassroots development.

The intersection of community projects and sustainability drives meaningful progress. Universities often emphasise eco-friendly practices, promoting green technologies and resource-efficient solutions in rural and urban settings. Projects such as water conservation drives, waste management systems, and afforestation campaigns not only address environmental challenges but also create awareness among students and residents alike. This holistic approach ensures long-term benefits for both society and the environment, reinforcing the idea that education is a tool for enduring positive change.

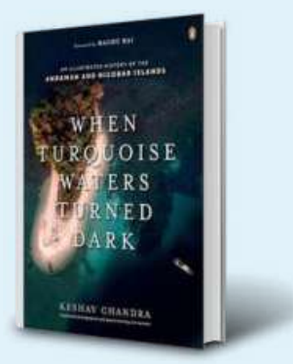
The synergy between education and community development fosters mutual growth. Communities benefit from access to resources, knowledge, and innovative solutions, while students gain experiential learning that prepares them for real-world challenges.

Moreover, these initiatives instill a sense of purpose in students, encouraging them to view education as a means of contributing to the greater good. Such a mindset extends beyond individual achievements, inspiring students to become change-makers in their professional and personal lives.

Community projects create a ripple effect, with each initiative leading to wider-reaching impacts. Education leads to empowerment; empowerment leads to economic growth; economic growth drives social progress. By integrating community projects into academic programmes, universities can show how education can be a force for holistic development, bridging societal divides and laying the groundwork for a brighter, more equitable future. This collaborative model underscores the profound impact of aligning education with community service, proving that when institutions and communities work together, they create ripples of progress that benefit all.

The writer is the Chief Growth and Strategy Officer at Mohan Babu University

ON THE SHELF



When Turquoise Waters Turned Dark

Offering a fresh perspective on the colonial history of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, this book is an immersive exploration crafted with stunning photography and meticulously researched narrative. The images capture picturesque landscapes, architectural ruins and the diverse local population, giving a visual history and a narration of the present. The book reveals fascinating insights, including how a single decision by Commodore Cornwallis could have turned the Andaman Islands into a vibrant naval base instead of a penal colony. It also sheds light on the forgotten lives of imperialists who once inhabited Ross Island. Journey through time and discover the islands' strategic importance.

Author: Keshav Chandra
Publisher: Penguin
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