Monday, February 9, 2026
CHENNAI

THE HINDU

# EDUCATIONPLUS

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K. Elango

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government issued a circular directing all state-run schools to allot 10 minutes during the morning assembly to read out main items from "physical newspapers". The circular further added that this activity be conducted regularly on a rotational basis by students to cultivate the habit of reading. While the initiative is to be applauded, this practice has been in place across thousands of schools for several years.

Although the impact is yet to be scientifically measured, the fate of reading among students is starkly evident. They shun it, trapped in the cauldron of screen addiction, toxic effects of which have been so alarming that the Australian government has banned social media nationally for children under 16 years.

**Informal survey**

The task at hand, therefore, is to engineer a turnaround: to rejuvenate the reading habit that can organically act as a cognitive detoxification. For academia to meaningfully engage in this pursuit and for such initiatives to succeed, a practical roadmap must be drawn. As a first step, an informal survey was conducted among students, including those who participated in the newspaper-reading exercise. At the end of the school day, a few students from Classes 6-12 were randomly chosen as they left school. Even those who had read out the news in the morning assembly were unable to recall most of what they had read.

The teachers revealed that the assigned students usually arrived a little early and hurriedly skimmed through the newspapers. This led to headlines being chosen randomly and read out mechanically; stuttering and mispronunciations being common while reading aloud; rapid reading which conveyed little meaning to listeners; a potpourri of news items often that confused rather than informed; and regular classes commencing immediately after the assembly, leaving no time to think over the news Consequently, the practice yielded minimal results, and continuing the same format is likely to remain a futile exercise.

**Meaningful use**

Instead, the same 10-minute slot could be used far more meaningfully within their regular classes: each student should engage directly with a newspaper, reading news stories of their own choice, followed by quick activities such as retelling, discussing, summarising, expressing opinions, and debating what they have read. Most importantly, these tasks should be carried out in pairs, triads, or small groups, to ensure the participation of all learners. The conventional practice of individual presentations should be avoided, as it is impossible to offer equitable opportunities to everyone and, even when done, are rare and infrequent. So inclusive learning spaces must be deliberately created.

Although the news of 'here and now' is accessible on digital media, the edge the print media enjoys is that the news stories are curated, offering backgrounds, profiles, and (un) biased interpretations. While fake news, misinformation, and disinformation characterise the current situation, the role of newspapers is unenviable, facilitating novice students to grasp authentic news and formulate viewpoints to share with their peers, parents and siblings, thereby deepening their thinking.

Another major advantage is that newspapers, aptly described as 'the poor man's university', encompass every dimension of life: politics, economics, commerce, sports, science, technology, wars, religions, films, celebrities, and more at local, state, national and international levels. In effect, they shrink the entire universe into a few pages. These attributes naturally induce a daily urge to read; habitual readers feel 'a sense of loss' if they miss even a single day.

The commonly cited benefits of reading newspapers – vocabulary enrichment, strengthening GK, preparation for competitive examinations, and the development of empathy – are merely spin-offs. More crucially, the much-touted 21st-century skills, such as creative and critical thinking, along with problem-solving skills, can be developed organically. Unlike the narrow academic focus of formal subjects, bringing newspapers into the fold is certain to create a cognitive appeal that can effectively motivate students to become willing readers.

**Challenges and solutions**

The major obstacle to this approach is ensuring access to newspapers for all students. Nevertheless, this challenge is far from insurmountable. Some strategies include adoption of schools as part of CSR initiatives by a newspaper, encouraging parents who can afford it to subscribe; allocation of a part of the annual library budget for newspapers; asking for help from alumni associations or local clubs; or even using back issues. Additionally, sharing of newspapers between two students will further help reduce expenses.

Halting the steep decline in reading among youngsters has emerged as a prime challenge and granting newspapers a legitimate academic status offers an immense potential to transform students into habitual readers.

The writer is the Chief Executive Chair, ELTAI, and former professor and Head, Department of English, Anna University, Chennai.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

**UCL India Excellence Scholarship**
An initiative of the University College London.
**Eligibility:** Permanent Indian residents who are in the final year of a Bachelor's programme or hold a Bachelor's degree from a NIRF Top 100 institution and a GPA equivalent to a U.K. first-class degree.
**Rewards:** £5,000 for a year.
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** February 26
www.b4s.in/edge/UCLI2

**DMI Patna PGDM Scholarship**
Offered by the Development Management Institute Patna.
**Eligibility:** Minimum 50% in UG degree in any discipline from UGC or AICTE-recognised institution and valid scores in CAT 2025, XAT 2026, GMAT (2022-26), CMAT 2026 or MAT September 2025.
**Rewards:** Up to 100% waiver of tuition fee
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** February 28
www.b4s.in/edge/PGDM1

**Think Big Undergraduate Scholarship**
Offered by the University of Bristol, the U.K.
**Eligibility:** Those who have applied to a UG course beginning in September 2026 and are classified as overseas student for fee purposes and are not receiving any other funding.
**Rewards:** Funding towards tuition fees.
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** April 10
www.b4s.in/edge/TBPS2

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

## Women in STEM

The British Council invites applications for the British Council Scholarships for Women in STEM for the 2026–27 academic year, as part of the British Council's Going Global Partnerships.

For the 2026–27 academic year, 25 fully funded postgraduate scholarships are available to applicants from South Asia, in partnership with five universities in the U.K.: University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Manchester, Queen Mary University of London and Brunel University London.

Each scholarship is worth at least £40,000 and includes full tuition fees, living stipends, travel and visa costs, health coverage fees, and English language support where required.

For eligibility criteria and other details, viist https://shorturl.at/zOqKi

# Showcase leadership

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

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

**I have done B.A. History and want a career in the Defence Forces. What are my alternatives? Vignesh**

Dear Vignesh,

After graduation, you can take the Combined Defence Services Exam to apply for the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Officers Training Academy (OTA), or Air Force Common Admission Test (AFCAT) to join the Ground Duty (Non-Technical) branches. You can also write the UPSC Central Armed Police Forces Exam to become an Assistant Commandant in forces like the BSF, CRPF, or CISF.

Beyond this, you can explore becoming a historian, an archivist, or a cultural resources manager. Other roles like being an executive in a public relations firm or HR executive in a corporate are also feasible. You can also be a content strategist or writer across media and the digital space.

**I am in Class 8 (ICSE stream). How can I do my Class 11 and 12 in an English-speaking foreign country with a scholarship? Ananya**

Dear Ananya,

Most institutions look for students who are not just good at studies, but also active in leadership, sports, or community service. United World Colleges (UWC) offers fully or partially funded programmes for Indian students and has 18 campuses worldwide (including the U.K., Canada, the US.., and Singapore). It offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Scholarships offer both partial and full need-based support (covering tuition, room, and board). You will need to apply while in Class 10. They look for students passionate about social change, peace, and sustainability.

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) programme is funded by the U.S. Department of State. It allows Indian students to live with an American host family and attend an American high school for one academic year. It is a fully funded scholarship focussing on cultural exchange. You act as a "Youth Ambassador" for India. Check for the current criteria today.

The AFS Intercultural Programme offers exchange programmes to many English-speaking countries, such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia. They offer several merit-based and need-based scholarships (like the BP Global Citizens Scholarship), and applications usually open a year before the programme starts.

Some country-specific opportunities include HMC scholarships for students from specific countries (check if India is on the list for that year) to study at a top independent boarding school in the U.K. In Canada, Ridley College or Upper Canada College offer their own internal scholarships for exceptional international students. Singapore has SIA-NOL / GIIS scholarships, specifically for Indian students to study in Singapore for Junior College.

Start building your profile now in both academics and extracurriculars. Follow the websites of UWC India and AFS India to understand their specific essay prompts and interview styles.

**I am a B.Com (Finance) graduate preparing for the CAT. My interests are entrepreneurship and fashion. But design courses are mostly four-year programmes. How can I pursue my interests? Arya**

Dear Arya,

Bridge your commerce background with your passion using shorter, more strategic paths. Aim for a specialised two-year MBA programme that combine business with the lifestyle industry such as Master of Fashion Management or an MBA in Luxury Brand Management or even a general MBA with electives in Retail Management or E-commerce.

If you want to focus on designing clothes, look for short-term professional diplomas or certificate courses from institutes like Pearl Academy, JD Institute, or Hamstech that offer one-year PG Diplomas in Fashion Design or Fashion Entrepreneurship and certifications in Pattern Making, Fashion Illustration, or Garment Construction.

If you want to become an entrepreneur, look at fashion-tech or lifestyle incubators (like those at NIFT or IIM-Bangalore's NSRCEL) to start your own brand. Start small and use your finance skills to manage a lean supply chain.

**I am in Class 12 (Humanities). I am interested in preparing for the Civil Services and am considering Political Science as my main subject. I learnt about the CUET for admission to the Central Universities. Are these affordable? Do I need to be fluent in Hindi to study there? How can I choose the right course and institution through CUET? Lakshmi**

Political Science from a Central University is a highly strategic move. Central Universities are among the most affordable higher education institutions in India, as they are heavily subsidised by the Government of India. Most universities offer Post-Matric scholarships for SC/ST/OBC and EWS students, making the net cost almost zero for many.

Fluency in Hindi is not a requirement. The primary medium of instruction and examination for Political Science is English. You can appear for the CUET in English even if the university is located in a Hindi-speaking state. Through the CUET portal, prioritise institutions known as "UPSC hubs" due to their academic rigour and active aspirant community. University of Delhi (DU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), and University of Hyderabad (UoH) all have highly competitive peer groups and strong academic foundations.

The Political Science syllabus overlaps significantly with the UPSC General Studies (Polity, Governance, IR) and the Optional paper. When studying for college exams, use UPSC-standard books. This way, you can prepare for both simultaneously

**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 Off the Edge.


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# An illusion of choice

## We must allow our students to grow into who they truly are, not who the system finds easiest to measure.

Kunal Vasudeva

We often say that students today have unlimited choice. More boards. More subjects. More colleges. More global exposure. On the surface, education looks flexible and open. On the ground, it has become quietly uniform. Today, most students are not choosing what they want to learn. They are choosing what will get them selected.

In urban India, profiles now begin early. Olympiads, leadership roles, NGOs, competitions, social impact projects, and international programmes. By the time students reach Class 10, many look like young professionals managing a portfolio. The work is real. The pressure is real. The sameness beneath it is easy to miss. This is the shadow curriculum. It is not written in any syllabus. No school officially teaches it. Yet everyone knows the rules. Students must look driven in familiar ways. They must show leadership in approved formats. They must appear well-rounded through pre-accepted categories. Slowly, genuine interest gives way to performance.

**Rewarding uniformity**

Sir Ken Robinson spent decades warning us that modern education systems reward uniformity more than individuality. He believed schools do not lack talent. They often fail to recognise it when it looks different. His fear was never that students were incapable but that their real abilities would go unnoticed because they did not fit neatly into narrow academic ladders.

India is now living that concern at scale. Students who enjoy history grow nervous because it feels impractical. Those drawn to design are told to keep it as a hobby. Students who think best through movement, sound, or space quietly step aside for those who fit the familiar academic mould. The range of visible aspiration narrows while the language of choice grows louder.

When we tell students they can be anything and then reward only a few things, the result is visible inside campuses. Many students arrive after years of disciplined effort and flawless profiles. Once admission excitement fades, something else sets in. Fatigue. Detachment. A quiet confusion about whether they are even in the right place. They did not fail. They succeeded too efficiently at someone else's idea of success. This is not a problem of motivation. It is a problem of alignment.

Across history, education has served two enduring purposes. It builds the ability to think. It builds the ability to solve problems. Calculation supports both.

Everything else is a tool to strengthen these abilities. When education shifts from building thinking to building signals, its centre weakens. India does not lack intelligent students. It lacks space for uneven genius.

Some students think best with numbers. Some through people. Some through systems. Some through creation. Some through story. A healthy education system notices these differences early and builds confidence in them. A fragile one quietly trains students to hide them.

Admissions systems did not create this pressure alone. Parents, schools, coaching centres, certification industries, and social media have all reinforced it. What began as an attempt to move beyond marks has become another form of standardisation. It looks modern. It behaves the same. The illusion of choice hides a deeper sameness.

If this continues, the long-term cost will not only be student dissatisfaction. It will be national. Societies do not advance through replication. They advance through original problem solving, moral courage, and diverse ways of thinking. These cannot grow inside narrow definitions of merit. We must become honest about what education is truly for.

**Real test**

The real test is not how impressive a student looks at eighteen. The test is how clearly they can think at 25. How firmly they can adapt at 35. How responsibly they can solve problems they have never seen before. Those abilities do not grow from checklists. They grow from deep thinking, lived experience, failure, and the confidence to stand apart without fear.

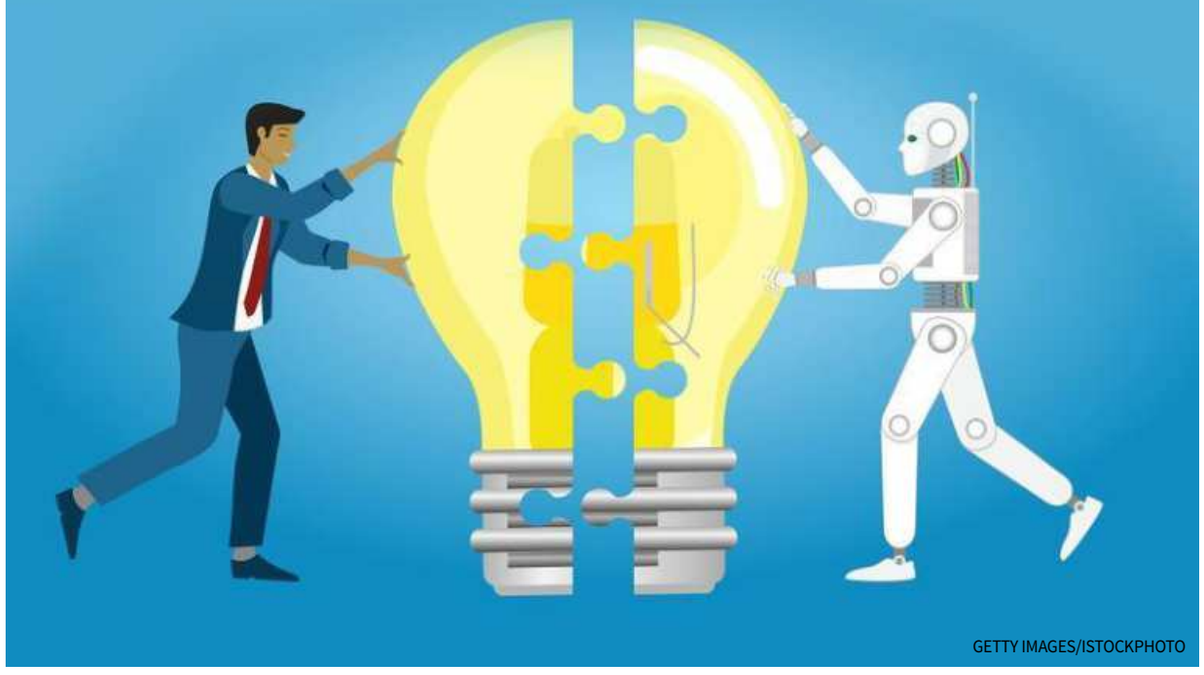
True education widens futures. It does not quietly narrow them. If we want students who build strong institutions, ethical companies, and stable societies, we must allow them to grow into who they truly are, not who the system finds easiest to measure.

Choice should feel uncertain. That discomfort is the price of freedom. When choice feels safe only inside one narrow corridor, it has already stopped being real.

The writer is the Managing Director and co-founder of the Indian School of Hospitality (ISH)

# The three 'A' s of AI

## By bridging academic theory with experiential learning, institutions can equip future business leaders with technical proficiency to leverage AI, and the ethical wisdom to govern it responsibly



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Balaji Thiruvenkatachari
S. Arunachalam

Digital and technological advancements are opening doors to exciting opportunities and AI is transforming operational tasks. In the business industry, according to the *IBM Global AI Adoption Index 2024-25*, 42% of enterprise-scale businesses are integrating AI into their various operational tasks. Today, many job-roles are being augmented or replaced by AI agents or companies, giving rise to new ways of working. For instance, an Asia-Pacific (APAC)-based application provider for the insurance industry utilised AI to reimagine the application lifecycle, cutting down the time from over 12+ months to just a few weeks.

The biggest disruption brought by AI is commoditisation of intelligence. According to reports, roughly 80% of business value is locked in unstructured data, such as MRI scans in healthcare or KYC documents in banking. Instead of relying solely on human expertise, companies are employing specialised AI agents to handle these tasks accurately. Low-cost specialised intelligence has become available, allowing humans to focus on high-order tasks such as strategy-building and research. But how do we bring AI and its unlimited potential to our students?

**Beyond rote learning**

To utilise AI's true potential, students need skills that go beyond traditional rote learning. This is where the "Three A's of AI" come in. These are adoption, absorption, and application. The first allows the understanding of AI integration into any process or function, helping students recognise where AI tools can bring values, evaluate the cost and benefit, and make strategic decisions to adopt them.

The second allows them to gain a deeper understanding of AI tools and effectively communicate and use AI in decision-making, problem-solving, and analytical thinking to drive high-value outcomes.

The third is the most critical: learning to use the learnt AI skills to solve real-world problems, whether it is optimising supply chain logistics or creating predictive risk models.

Everyone has significant strengths, weaknesses, and varied interests. Students can now use AI to amplify their strengths and improve their shortcomings. By creating a personalised learning path, AI allows students to learn at their pace. Adaptive learning platforms, AI chatbots and tutors help students evolve outside the traditional classroom setting.

While AI has proved to be an excellent catalyst, we still require the expertise and accountability that comes from structured learning paths, and the human touch. The real question is not if but how we can govern AI. This puts the focus on educational institutions to ensure that the academic curriculum meets modern corporate demands. This requires mandatory integration of AI, data ethics, and responsible use of AI, while balancing its technical and practical applications. Graduates will then be able to use AI as a partner for innovation, leverage tech to automate routine tasks, and focus human efforts on high-value tasks, while also prioritising the development of human-centric and ethical leadership skills.

Thus, the future of education relies on embracing 'Three A's of AI' and actively shifting from rote to root learning. By bridging academic theory with experiential learning, institutions can equip future business leaders with technical proficiency to leverage AI, and the ethical wisdom to govern it responsibly.

Balaji Thiruvenkatachari is the Founder, AI Champions Hub. S. Arunachalam is the Dean and Professor of Marketing, Badrka School of Management.

FUTURE PERFECT

# Saving lives with AI

## Anirvan Chatterjee, co-founder and CEO of HaystackAnalytics, on his domain and what students need to know about it

FUTURE PERFECT
Ananya Ganapathy

**What do you do?**

I am the Co-founder and CEO of HaystackAnalytics, a life sciences deep-tech company working in clinical genomics. At Haystack, we have built an AI-enabled platform that can ingest raw next-generation sequencing (NGS) data and use contextual and semantic search to determine the exact DNA change in the sample, which can then be mapped to a therapy. Essentially, we use genomics to enable first-time-right therapeutic choices.

**Why is your work important globally?**

While the field of clinical genomics is not new, it is far from actionability, accessibility, and affordability and is still locked up in high-end research labs. We aimed to transform NGS into a leapfrog technology for India and other countries with poor healthcare infrastructure so that any lab can start using genomics for patients. The IP that we have created enables NGS to provide results in a few hours at a cost comparable to the currently available RT-PCR technology.

**What is exciting about your work?**

Our product Infexn-NGS combines diagnostic kits with an AI-enabled software, allowing any molecular diagnostic lab to start using it without prior knowledge or skill in genomics or bioinformatics with a turnaround time of less than 24 hours. However, nothing motivates us more than the lives we are helping save. With a rapid rise in anti-microbial resistance, our technology helps administer the right therapy and detects the antibiotics that will not work for the specific pathogen type in the patient.

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

Far from it. I have been in science forever. In my Ph.D. and further research at Oxford, I studied the genetic mechanisms of the evolution of drug resistance in TB and later computational methods for decoding anti-microbial resistance. During my time at Oxford, I was part of the team that launched genomics for TB for the NHS in the U.K. and I became interested in ways this technology could be made available to patients in India.

**What should students specifically know about applying AI to healthcare?**

To begin with, AI will transform diagnostics and enable early detection of diseases. I think AI is going to be a great leveller of opportunity. With AI, a student of Maths or Social Sciences is as likely to have an equal opportunity to tackle healthcare as a student of Biology or Medicine. If I were a student today, I would spend a lot of time in the real world learning about a problem in my areas of interest. In short, gain deep knowledge in something and then go out into the real world to observe how a certain process works. The rest will be done using AI.

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

YOUNG ACHIEVER

# In the real world

## A student of Pearl Academy on how his concept was integrated into the Realme P4 Power

Sankalp Panchal

The Realme Designathon began in June, when I was busy with my final-year jury preparations at Pearl Academy.

Between finishing my graduation project, meeting deadlines, and preparing for the jury, participating in a national design contest was not something I had planned. When Realme visited the campus to announce the Designathon, I almost let the opportunity pass. But my mentor Divya Saxena, Product Design professor, encouraged me to apply.

**Early stage**

The competition was structured in three stages, and each stage pushed my thinking further. In the initial stage, I focused on understanding the brief and responding instinctively rather than over-analysing. As a student of Product Design, I had been trained to value process, observation, and context, and I leaned heavily on that learning. I began by observing how people of my age interact with their smartphones, not just as devices but as personal objects that are constantly present in their daily lives.

Instead of starting with references or trends, I spent time sketching freely. I was more interested in how a design felt rather than how impressive it appeared.

While sketching, I noticed how people my age and younger than me often exhibit different traits. We are drawn to advanced technology but also appreciate simplicity. We like expression, yet value restraint. This idea of contrast slowly became central to my design direction.

Clearing the first stage itself felt unexpected. As I moved into the second stage, the pressure increased. Balancing academic responsibilities with the Designathon was challenging, but also forced me to become more disciplined with my time and ideas. During this stage, my concept began to take clearer shape. I realised that a design does not need to explain everything immediately. Sometimes, it only needs to invite curiosity and connection.

**Deeper engagement**

The final stage involved deeper engagement with the Realme design team and was particularly eye-opening. My ideas were reviewed in detail and I received structured feedback that pushed me to think beyond sketches. I was introduced to real-world considerations such as feasibility, usability, and scalability. Some elements of my design had to be refined or rethought but the core idea remained intact. What stood out was how collaborative the process felt. Feedback was not about correction but about strengthening the idea.

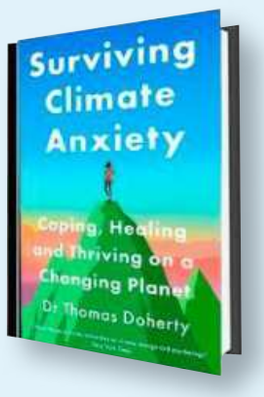
Clearing all three stages of the Designathon felt surreal. As a student nearing graduation, it was difficult to believe that an idea developed alongside my jury work had made it through every round. More than the outcome, the journey itself became the most valuable part of the experience.

The Designathon taught me important lessons about design and about myself. I learned that instinct and structure are not opposites, but partners. I understood the importance of being open to feedback while staying true to an idea. Most importantly, the experience helped me trust my perspective as a young designer.

Participating in this challenge changed how I approach design today. It reminded me that growth often comes from taking chances, even during uncertain moments. Sometimes, all it takes is saying yes to an opportunity you almost missed... it really feels like a dream.

The writer is a final-year student of Product Design, Pearl Academy, Mumbai Campus

ON THE SHELF



■ **Surviving Climate Anxiety**

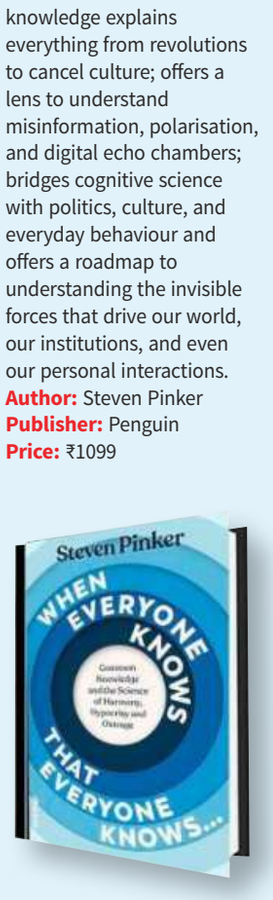
Over a decade ago, Dr. Thomas Doherty predicted a mental health crisis of global proportions. Today, we are more anxious than ever, seized by an impossible new source of mental anguish: climate change and the global environmental crisis. In this book, he shares a step-by-step psychological approach to understand and heal our environmental anguish and provide readers with the tools and knowledge they need to orient themselves to our current climate crisis, to be able to manage their own reactions to it, and plan for their future of positive personal growth.

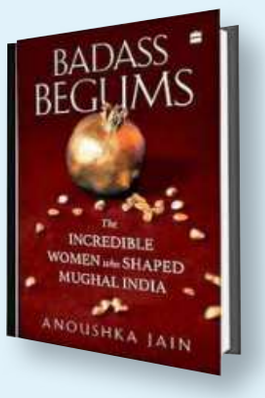
**Author:** Dr. Thomas Doherty
**Publisher:** Hachette
**Price:** ₹899

■ **When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows...**

What if the key to understanding why societies rise, collapse, riot, or unite lies in a simple but profound idea: that we're constantly thinking about what others are thinking about us? In his latest work, cognitive scientist Steven Pinker decodes how common knowledge explains everything from revolutions to cancel culture; offers a lens to understand misinformation, polarisation, and digital echo chambers; bridges cognitive science with politics, culture, and everyday behaviour and offers a roadmap to understanding the invisible forces that drive our world, our institutions, and even our personal interactions.

**Author:** Steven Pinker
**Publisher:** Penguin
**Price:** ₹1099





■ **Badass Begums**

History rarely shines a light on the formidable Mughal begums who boldly navigated the imperial courts, brokered powerful deals, reshaped Delhi's skyline, created private spaces for women, fought battles and resisted patriarchy, all from their place behind the purdah. Meet 10 such Mughal-era women whose lives rippled with ambition, romance, intrigue and fierce resilience. Jahanara Begum, Roshanara Begum; Begum Samru; Maham Anga, Mubarak Begum; Qudsia Begum w and others come alive in an eye-opening journey through their breathtaking legacies and creations still hidden in the by-lanes of the city of Delhi.

**Author:** Anoushka Jain
**Publisher:** HarperCollins
**Price:** ₹399

# *Back to the fundamentals*

## As AI automates routine coding, what does it mean for software engineering students?

Abhimanyu Saxena

If AI can write code, why should you learn to code? The honest answer is that AI does not replace software engineers; it multiplies the best ones, and the opportunity is only getting bigger.

The headlines make it seem like coders are at risk, but the on-ground reality is different. Companies are not reducing engineering teams but are raising the bar. Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, has said that AI helps coders work faster and more creatively, while Google continues to hire engineers at scale. Developer platform GitHub's chief executive has argued that the most innovative companies will hire more developers, not fewer, as AI increases ambition and throughput.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**Where the difference is**

Fundamentals matter more than ever. Google has even reintroduced in-person rounds for technical roles to curb the use of AI tools in interviews. The companies that set the pace know one thing: good engineers will always be defined by their grasp of core computer science. The worth of a software engineer is no longer measured in lines of code, but in the complexity of problems solved. That is where AI is making a difference.

We are already seeing an AI-augmented software lifecycle; strategy informed by real-time data; AI assisting in code generation and testing; devOps pipelines with built-in security, and continuous learning from live systems. According to reports from *Tenet*, and a 2026 *Quantumrun Foresight* report, tools like GitHub Copilot now account for as much as 46% of code in some projects, while Shopify has reported a 15% reduction in commit times after adoption. The result is faster cycles, better productivity, and higher morale.

**Much in demand**

This automates routine coding and frees up time for creativity, architecture, and product design. A single skilled engineer, augmented by AI, can now deliver what once required an entire team. The career outlook is clear. Software engineering is expanding, not contracting. A *McKinsey* study projects that the demand for tech talent will be two-to-four times higher than supply in the coming years. The European Union alone could face a shortfall of nearly four million skilled engineers by 2027. *LinkedIn's Q2 2025* report named Software Engineer as the most in-demand role worldwide.

The skills that matter most in this environment are equally clear:

**Computer Science fundamentals:** Data structures, algorithms, operating systems, and networks.

**Systems design and architecture:** Cloud-native environments, microservices, scale, reliability and security.

**AI fluency:** Prompting, delegating, and verifying AI outputs.

**Creative problem-solving and soft skills:** The ability to collaborate and communicate effectively in self-organising teams.

At scale, companies will run AI-augmented development pipelines with security and accountability built in. Human judgment, ownership, and responsibility will remain at the centre. This is the best time in history to be a software engineer. AI takes away the repetitive parts and gives you room to think bigger, ship faster, and build bolder. For those willing to do the challenging and rewarding work of mastering fundamentals and learning human-AI collaboration, the next decade holds extraordinary opportunities.

The writer is the co-founder of Scaler and InterviewBit.