

Siddharth Rajgarhia

What if you were told that a 20-minute activity holds the potential to reduce stress, strengthen writing skills, improve memory, instil problem-solving skills, and inspire goal-setting? Would it motivate you further to know it doesn't have a cost and can be practised in the comfort of your home? The activity is maintaining a journal.

From serving as a tool for self-exploration and improving mental clarity to easing anxiety and boosting memory, the benefits of journalling are abundant, especially for students who are often juggling multiple tasks and are overwhelmed by competitive pressures. Besides, it can also evoke a sense of gratitude and help process emotions on a daily basis. Journalling is more than just a record of daily events.

Goal setting

Goal setting forms an important part of a student's life and having well-defined goals helps value time and resources, and create achievements with-

Journalling can help one express thoughts and ideas and become a more proficient communicator, a skill that is invaluable in both academic and professional settings today.



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Magic of pen and paper

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in a certain timeframe. Journalling can help reaffirm the goals and serve as a record that can be referred to at any time. More importantly, it helps adopt a task prioritisation approach and make decisions from a place of clarity.

Boosts mental health

Often, negative emotions and pessimistic thoughts can run on a loop in our minds. Tackling them can

be challenging, especially during critical situations like exams, interviews, or college admissions. But if you pause and use a journal to put down these troubling emotions and thoughts, you are likely to be able to release them, find better clarity, and possibly come up with a solution that you wouldn't have otherwise thought of. This will reflect in the way you manage stress or face an-

xiety. This simple practice of putting down words into a page can help in more ways than one, especially for those dealing with mental health conditions and striving to attain a positive mindset. Journalling involves your cognitive skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical reasoning. This leaves the right hemisphere to wander freely and propels creativity and in-

tuitiveness, making a huge difference in one's well-being.

Self-reflection

As Ferris Bueller said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." This is particularly relevant in the case of students who struggle to slow down or take stock of the road they have travelled. Maintaining a journal can

prove to be a powerful practice to prompt self-reflection, identify one's strengths and weaknesses, improve relationships, and discover where interests and anxieties stem from. Journalling just before one goes to bed paves the way for introspection, which is an important human skill to become empathetic and an overall better person.

Communication skills

In today's digital whirlwind, students face challenges in effectively expressing their authentic thoughts and ideas. The art of communication and the ability to articulate one's thought process seems to be at risk. Journalling provides a safe space to hone these skills and experiment with language, practise grammar, and identify one's unique voice. If practised regularly, journalling can help express one's thoughts and ideas and become a more proficient communicator, a skill that is invaluable in both academic and professional settings.

The magic of pen and paper holds immense benefits for students. Besides unleashing one's creativity and allowing for meaningful reflection, it provides a therapeutic outlet for stress. So, grab that journal and start writing; you may unearth a world of personal transformation and self-discovery that you never knew existed!

The writer is the Chief Learner and Director of Delhi Public School, Varanasi, Nashik, Lava Nagpur, and Hinjawadi.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Danish Siddiqui Journalism Scholarship

The Danish Foundation aims to encourage students to engage in value-based journalism.

Eligibility: Open to EWS category undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in a recognised Indian university/institution. Annual family income should be less than ₹3.5 lakhs
Rewards: ₹50,000 for two years maximum
Application: Online
Deadline: January 31
www.b4s.in/edge/DANI1

Programme in Mathematics for Young Scientists (PROMYS India)

An opportunity offered in partnership with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
Eligibility: Open to students who are 15 years or older by May 5, 2024 and are currently in Classes 9 to 12 (or equivalent) at a recognised secondary or higher secondary school.

Applicants must have completed (or be in) class 9 before the programme begins.

Rewards: Scholarship covering tuition, housing, and meals for the six weeks of the programme
Application: Online
Deadline: February 1
www.b4s.in/edge/PORI

ADB Internship Programme

An opportunity offered by the Asian Development Bank.
Eligibility: Open for ADB member countries national including India who are enrolled in a Master's or Ph.D. level programme. Students must have an excellent command of English and be engaged in academic study in a field related to ADB's work. Applicants must have professional experience relevant to the assignment.
Rewards: Stipend for the internship's duration.
Application: Online
Deadline: February 15
www.b4s.in/edge/ADB16

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

GAT 2024

GITAM Deemed-to-be University has launched the GITAM Admission Test (GAT) 2024.

The two-hour test will take place at Bengaluru, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Kolkata, Visakhapatnam, Mumbai, and Pune.

Eligibility: Varies across programmes, with most courses requiring a minimum of 60% in Class 12. The exam format has a Gamified Exam in Section 1, followed by subject-specific questions in Section 2.
Deadline: March 28 (second phase)
For details, visit <https://www.gitam.edu/>

Archana Subramanian

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"I dream of becoming an astronomer," says Aryaan Nayak, a class 10 student of DAV Public School, Chandrasekharapur, Bhubaneswar while Krutika Routray, a class 10 student of KIIT International School, Bhubaneswar, wants to become a cosmologist.

These are among the two who have benefitted from the Tata Steel Young Astronomer Talent Search (YATS), a programme that helps school students develop an interest in Astronomy and Space Science among children. Begun in 2007 in collaboration with Pathani Samanta Planetarium, Bhubaneswar, which operates under the Odisha government's Department of Science and Technology, the initiative offers students in the state's rural and remote areas a chance to exhibit their talent.

In 2023, the theme was *The Moon Base: Future Launchpad for Space*, and over 80,000 students from across 300 schools in 30 districts participated. Events included an open offline quiz for students of classes 6-10. An MCQ assessment, conducted online and offline, was evaluated by an independent jury and the top two participants from each district were invited for the grand finale.

Pushing boundaries

"As India continues to push boundaries with ambitious plans for space ex-



ploration, there is an urgent need for a new generation of scientists and engineers to contribute to these groundbreaking endeavours. Initiatives like YATS play a pivotal role in inspiring young minds to explore the vast opportunities in space sciences and provide a unique platform for participants to connect with

like-minded individuals, educators, and professionals in the field. This net-working opportunity fosters collaboration and the exchange of ideas, creating a supportive community for aspiring astronomers," says Chanakya Chaudhary, Vice President, Corporate Services, Tata Steel.

Initially, the YATS was meant only for students of

Classes 9 and 10 but, over the years, it has expanded to include students from Class 6 to 8 as well. Mahamaya Mishra, a software developer who won the YATS in 2015, says that her participation "embedded the scientific spirit and the habit of asking 'Why?' in me" and that it encouraged her to choose a career in science by fostering her critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Anshuman Swain, who participated in 2009, is now a researcher at Harvard University, the U.S.

In 2023, Tata Steel took the top 20 winners on an exposure visit to the various facilities of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) across the country to learn about ongoing research from the top scientists. They also visited the Space Application Centre in Ahmedabad and interacted with the director.

Space Science is usually considered to be a subject for higher education, but the impact of a programme like this at the school level can be seen. For instance, Shashwati Nayak, a class 10 student of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya, Kendrapara, says that meeting and learning from experienced scientists helped her overcome her fear and plan to become a researcher in the field of science.

YATS offers physical and virtual participation modes. Students can either participate in the test at their schools or online. For details, visit <http://bit.ly/YATS2023>

Stay committed to your goals

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



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I am a final-year student of B.A. English. Is an MBA in Port Management and Logistics a good option? Is an entrance exam mandatory for all MBA courses in India? Arun

Dear Arun,

This is a specialised degree if you have a specific interest in the field of logistics, supply chain management, and port operations. Logistics and port management is a growing field, especially with the expansion of global trade and e-commerce. This programme will open up opportunities for shipping companies, logistics firms, port authorities, and related government agencies, both national and international.

Yes, most MBA programmes in India today require an entrance exam. The most common used by several B-Schools are — Common Admission Test (CAT) for the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Management Aptitude Test (MAT), Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) for admission to AICTE-approved management programmes, and the state-level exams for admission to state-run universities and colleges.

Check out specific requirements of the programme that you are interested in, as some institutions may have other requirements apart from the

entrance exam score.

I have a B.A. in Functional English and aspire to become a journalist. So I am taking a gap year to appear for entrance exams. Are there any certificate courses I can take or skills I can develop during this time? Hari

Dear Hari,

Actively engage and soak yourself in journalism by reading newspapers, following news websites, and participating in discussions about current events though the gap year. A few Certification Courses that will help you significantly are Journalism and Mass Communication, Digital Marketing, Data Journalism, Multimedia Production, Creative Writing, Photography and Visual Storytelling, Legal and Ethical Aspects of Journalism. Practise Writing Skills (to improve your ability to write clear, concise, and engaging content), Research Skills, Interviewing Skills, Media Literacy (Staying informed about current events, media trends, and news outlets), Networking, Critical Thinking and Time Management. Eventually, the combination of coursework, practical experience, and skills development will prepare you for a successful career in journalism.

I did my B.Com. from India and my Master's in Ireland. It's been five years since then but still I am not sure what to do with my career. I wanted to crack the Civil Services Exam but my preparation keeps getting disturbed. What should I do? Sanju

Dear Sanju,

This gap seems pretty

large! Suggest you seek the professional help of a career counsellor who will help you identify your interests and potential career paths based on your unique personality profile. Also, self-assess and reflect on your core interests, strengths, values, and long-term goals. What are your passions, and what kind of work or career path do you see and want for yourself? Define your career goals and create a roadmap to achieve them. If your goal is to crack the Civil Services Exam, evaluate why your preparation is being disrupted? Is there a specific challenge or distraction that you need to address? Make a focused study plan and seek support if needed. If this is not something that you are passionate about then work on finding your calling. Depending on your career interests, consider additional education or skill development. You need to be specific now with the course choices, certifications, and training programmes that can further enhance your existing qualifications. What is stopping you from gaining relevant work experience in your chosen field? While it is natural to experience doubts and uncertainties and being lost in your career as we start our professional lives, the key is to take proactive steps, stay committed to your goals, and be adaptable as you explore different opportunities.

I have completed B.E. ECE and am working as a Software Engineer. I wish to complete M.Tech. in Signal Processing (or similar courses) while continuing my job. Is this doable? Bose

Dear Bose,

Of course! It is doable.

Many universities and institutions offer part-time or online accredited M.Tech. programmes to accommodate the needs of working professionals. These programmes are designed to allow working professionals to enhance and upgrade their existing credentials and degrees and yet balance their studies with their jobs. Evaluate the credibility of the course and then understand the flexibility in terms of class schedules, assignments, and exams. Ensure that you will be able to manage your work commitments. Discuss your educational goals with your employer as many companies offer support for employees pursuing advanced degrees, such as flexible work hours or financial aid. Effective time management is crucial. Create a study schedule that balances your job, M.Tech. coursework, and personal life. Inform family and friends about your academic pursuits, as their support and understanding will be invaluable. Take advantage of online resources and virtual libraries provided by your university for research and study materials. Engage with your professors and peers through online forums and networks to build professional connections and gather insights. Stay committed to your education, and use your passion and determination to overcome challenges and remember your long-term goal/s.

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



Unlock success

Looking to apply to India's top Liberal Arts universities? These tips may come in handy.



CAREER CUES
Richa Dwivedi Saklani

When it comes to college admissions in liberal arts universities, students often find themselves competing with many others from their own schools and elsewhere. While there is no “right formula” to “crack” these admissions, here are some factors you can pay attention to.

Grades: A “holistic” admission process means that the universities consider factors beyond the student’s grades, but not instead of them! This means that universities are choosing from students with good grades and great credentials, so you need to present a well-rounded profile to be considered.

Activities: Most universities ask you for details on three to five activities. So

choose well and display diversity among sports, creative and community activities Class 9 onwards. Ensure that all options are filled. Upload any certificates that support your claims. Some universities ask you to mention books you have read. Fill all the spaces provided, even if these are prescribed books from your school curriculum.

Application essays: Krea asks for “your personal story”, Flame asks you to comment on “Creativity, innovation and research” and Ashoka asks for your considered view on a social topic. Your responses are often what distinguish you and give your application a distinctive voice. The key to writing a great college essay is to go deep into your own stories when writing a personal essay, and into data and facts when writing an opinion-based one.

For instance, “I have lived in many cities since my father had a transferable job” is a common state-

ment. “I grew up in cities as diverse as Pune, Chennai, Delhi and Kolkata, joyfully dancing to different tunes on Ganesh Chaturthi, Pongal, Lohri and Durga Puja” is endearing.

“Poverty and illiteracy are India’s biggest problems” is far less impactful compared to “Over 10% of India’s population lives below the poverty line according to a 2022 UNDP report. And almost a quarter of Indians are not literate according to the 2022 Census of India.”

Research, offer specific data, present visual and sensory clues to help the reader visualise your words, and present a confident narrative. Avoid using ChatGPT even to refine your essays since universities have different policies on this and generally don’t like AI-generated work!

Tests: Many liberal arts colleges require an entrance test like AAT for Ashoka, JSAT for OP Jindal, FEAT for Flame, among others. They normally as-



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sess English proficiency, logical and analytical reasoning, general knowledge and mathematical aptitude. Design-focused colleges test visualisation, spatial ability and creativity. There may additionally be sections on essay writing, verbal and quantitative reasoning, and data interpretation. Each exam aims to test your critical thinking, problem solving and aptitude in specific subjects. Familiarise your-

self with the test, its pattern and time duration. You can find mock tests and previous years’ sample papers online.

On-the-spot essay: This is the university’s way of testing how well you think on your feet, and how authentic your application essays are. Prepare by finding previous years’ topics and practising timed responses. Begin by understanding the question, outline key points that you want to highlight.

If the question asks whether you agree or disagree, try to analyse both sides of the argument and build a logical conclusion on either side with the support of examples, facts and evidence from current and past news. Be familiar with major current and past news stories. Manage your time wisely between planning, writing, and editing.

Interviews: An important part of almost all liberal arts admissions process-

es., this is your platform to sell yourself and highlight your unique strengths and credentials. So identify two to three key aspects of your profile that you wish to highlight and prepare to confidently present these at the first available opportunity. Always back up your answers with evidence from your life; instead of simply saying, “I am passionate about music,” say “I love music and this is why I set up a fusion music band

with my school friends. We have now performed in several school events and two private events.”

Before the interview, go through the university’s website, explore clubs or special initiatives in areas of your interest. Review your application and essays as interviews will always pick up cues from information in the application.

Another important tip is to be honest when you don’t know the answer to any question or admit that you took the wrong stance about something if the interview points this out. Dress well, be confident, don’t meander in your conversations and look at the interviewer while talking. Even online.

A final tip: choose which round you want to apply to depending on your preparation level. Most universities do not allow you to apply twice in the same year. So use your chance when you prepared for the test, written insightful essays and are prepared to present yourself strongly in an interview!

With inputs from Kritika Malhotra

The writer is Founder and CEO, Inomi Learning, a Gurugram-based career and college guidance firm. info@inomi.in



Ashok Rathod

In popular culture, sports has always been considered an outdoor activity to stay fit and healthy. While it is true that regular participation in games keeps us physically fit, the importance of sports in our lives goes beyond fitness and health. There should be a fundamental guiding principle: no school without sports. All students should get a chance to play a game of their choice. Our education system should follow the philosophy of using sports to equip children with life skills such as discipline, teamwork, leadership, accountability, patience, and self-confidence.

Range of benefits
Sports serves as a dynamic platform for nurturing a range of life skills and can help children become more confident, punctual, disciplined, and respectful, both on and off the field. It fosters teamwork, encouraging individuals to work together toward a common goal. This skill is invaluable in various aspects of life, both in academics and the

Including sports in the education system will not only help students learn a range of essential life skills but also create change within communities



workplace. Through sports, students also have the opportunity to take on leadership roles, nurturing qualities like responsibility, decision-making, and accountability. Moreover, sports teach students how to persevere in the face of setbacks and defeats, arming them with the mental fortitude to overcome challenges.

Balancing sports commitments with academics demands effective time-management, which is essential as students progress through their educational

journey and face future responsibilities. In addition, sports provide a safe arena to acquire conflict resolution and emotional management skills, which can be applied to everyday life.

Participation in sports promotes physical fitness and encourages students to embrace a healthy lifestyle, positively impacting their overall well-being. Furthermore, it brings students from diverse backgrounds together, fostering inclusivity and promoting values of tolerance and acceptance.

Setting and achieving

goals in sports provides students with a blueprint for success in both their academic pursuits and future careers. Finally, success in sports bolsters self-confidence and self-esteem, leading to positive effects in other aspects of life and encouraging students to pursue their aspirations. These life skills are invaluable in shaping well-rounded, confident, and socially responsible individuals.

Transformative power
The transformative potential of sports extends well

beyond individual development. It holds the power to unite communities and address pressing societal issues. Through programmes that engage children and youth in sports, school dropout rates can be reduced, children can be kept away from additions, gender equality can be promoted and role models created within communities.

Sports is more than just a physical activity; it offers hope to children, youth, and communities. They inspire individuals to dream big, work hard to achieve those dreams, and contribute positively to the world around them. The impact of sports reaches into every facet of life, nurturing not just better individuals but responsible and confident citizens as well.

Sports is a potent tool to shape character enable students to make the right decisions, endure difficulties, and evolve into responsible and confident individuals. It has the potential to create lasting change, not only in the lives of children and youth but in the communities they are part of.

The writer is Founder, OSCAR Foundation.

The fintech revolution

Technology is transforming Venture Capital and Private Equity firms, leading to a surge in career opportunities

Gaurav Goel

The financial world is in the midst of a digital revolution. At the heart of this transformation is fintech, or financial technology. Fintech is reshaping how venture capital (VC) and private equity (PE) operate. Thus, it is also influencing career choices and opportunities available within the sectors. Technology has transformed VC and PE firms by streamlining deal sourcing through Data Analytics and AI. Due diligence is more efficient with online data sources and virtual data rooms. Real-time portfolio management and expanded fundraising through crowdfunding platforms are now possible. Technology has also introduced alternative fundraising methods and raised cybersecurity concerns.

Job roles
Professional roles in VC and PE organisations with a fintech focus encompass various areas.

Investment analyst: Evaluates investments, conducts due diligence, and offers recommendations, employing data analysis and financial modelling.

Portfolio manager: Oversees fund investments, optimises returns, and manages risks using real-time technology tools.

Data scientist: Extracts insights from financial data using advanced analytics and machine learning, aiding investment decisions and risk assessment.

Software developer/engineer: Builds and maintains tech platforms for analysis and portfolio management.

Compliance and regulatory specialist: Ensures regulatory compliance

through technology in fintech-focused firms.

Cybersecurity expert: Safeguards sensitive financial data from breaches in fintech operations.

Product manager: Develops fintech tools aligning with firm and market needs.

AI and ML specialist: Utilises AI and machine learning to enhance strategies, predictive analytics, and algorithmic trading.

Risk manager: Analyzes data to assess and mitigate investment risks.

Venture partner and advisor: Provides strategic guidance leveraging fintech and technology expertise.

Qualifications
Educational qualifications for such roles can vary depending on the specific job function and the firm’s requirements.

Undergraduate: A Bachelor’s degree in a relevant field is typically the minimum educational requirement for entry-level positions. Common majors include Finance, Economics, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Maths, or a related field.

Postgraduate: Many professionals in leadership and specialised roles hold a Master’s degree. Common programmes that are relevant include Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Finance, Master of Data Science, and Master of Computer Science. An MBA with a specialisation in Finance or Fintech can be particularly valuable. Roles in quantitative analysis and risk management often require degrees in Maths, Statistics, or Quantitative Finance.

Certifications: Certifications such as the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) and Certified Private Equity Professional (CPEP) can enhance qualifications

for roles that involve investment analysis and portfolio management. For roles involving data analysis and technology, certifications like Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), and relevant programming and data analytics certifications can help. For roles related to cybersecurity, certifications like Certified Information Security Manager (CISM) and Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) are valuable.

Legal and compliance qualifications: Professionals in compliance and legal roles often hold a degree in law or have qualifications in compliance and regulatory studies.

Entrepreneurship and innovation: For positions involving the development of fintech products or business strategy, knowledge in entrepreneurship and innovation can be valuable. Courses or programmes related to innovation management and entrepreneurship can be beneficial.

Given the rapidly changing nature of fintech, ongoing professional development is essential. Staying current with industry trends and emerging technologies through workshops, seminars, and online courses can be advantageous.

It is important to note that while educational qualifications are essential, practical experience, networking, and soft skills, such as communication and problem-solving abilities, are also crucial for success. As the industry continues to evolve, being adaptable and open to lifelong learning is a valuable trait for professionals in these sectors.

The writer is the Founder-Director of Fynocrat Technologies.

Aim for the stars

Space education encourages critical thinking, challenges students to solve complex problems, and fosters a deep interest in scientific inquiry

Narayan Bhargava

Among the crucial pillars of progress, India’s space capabilities is an pivotal element. An early space education programme is essential to inspire students and ignite their curiosity and nurture a passion for science and technology. Moreover, space education encourages critical thinking, challenges students to solve complex problems, and fosters a deep interest in scientific inquiry. The ecosystem of government and private schools can play a pivotal role in incorporating space education into their curricula through a long-term vocational training programme with an emphasis on activity-based experiential learning.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a modern education paradigm for the 21st century and emphasises experiential learning, critical

thinking, and a multidisciplinary approach. These principles provide a solid foundation for space education at the school level, aligning with the broader objectives of NEP 2020. Collaborations with ISRO, private space organisations and the start-up ecosystem will offer invaluable insights and hands-on experience through mentorship programmes, internships, and educational resources. These partnerships bridge the gap between the classroom and real-world applications such as developing small satellites for low-earth orbit range or drones. Leveraging technology such as satellite imagery, space data, and open-source tools, can be used to teach students about Earth observation, climate monitoring, and remote sensing, reinforcing the relevance of space education in the modern world. Incorporating space education with an environ-



mental and global perspective emphasises Earth’s fragility and the role of satellites in climate change monitoring and disaster management.

Powerful tool
Technology can be a powerful tool for space education. Schools should invest in virtual reality (VR) technology or space exploration simulations, allowing students to virtually experience space missions, lunar landings, and planetary exploration. This approach will make learning immersive and memorable. Organising field trips to planetariums, observatories, and science museums will also help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Encouraging students to undertake hands-on projects, such as building mo-

del rockets, creating scale models of celestial bodies, or designing experiments related to space science, fosters creativity and problem-solving skills. These make learning engaging and relevant. Olympiads, competitions, and quizzes also promote space education by encouraging healthy competition and driving students to delve deeper into the subject.

Establishing district-level space or astronomy clubs is another promising approach. These will provide an engaging platform for students to explore topics such as stargazing sessions and to host workshops, and discussions on recent space missions. Interactive sessions featuring guest speakers, scientists, or astronauts can be incredibly motivating with real-world insights making

space exploration seem accessible.

Careers-guidance and interactive learning material such as textbooks, online modules, and multimedia resources add depth and visual appeal. Assessment and recognition through certificates, awards, and scholarships will also motivate students to excel. Although, learning aids or tools for space education are expensive, effort must be made to make them affordable in order to democratise space education. Most importantly, a long-term path needs to be created for schools provide space education till the higher secondary level. To maintain continuity, institutional alliances need to be developed for graduate and postgraduate courses. An industry-accredited curriculum also needs to be developed and awareness created about the various career opportunities in this area.

In essence, an early space programme education empowers students with a sense of wonder, curiosity, and global awareness while preparing them for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

The writer is Founder and Managing Director, Narayan Bhargava Group.