

Marina
remains
closed

P3



Shaamil's
Chatbot
for the city

P4

Stream of words
from

The Write Track

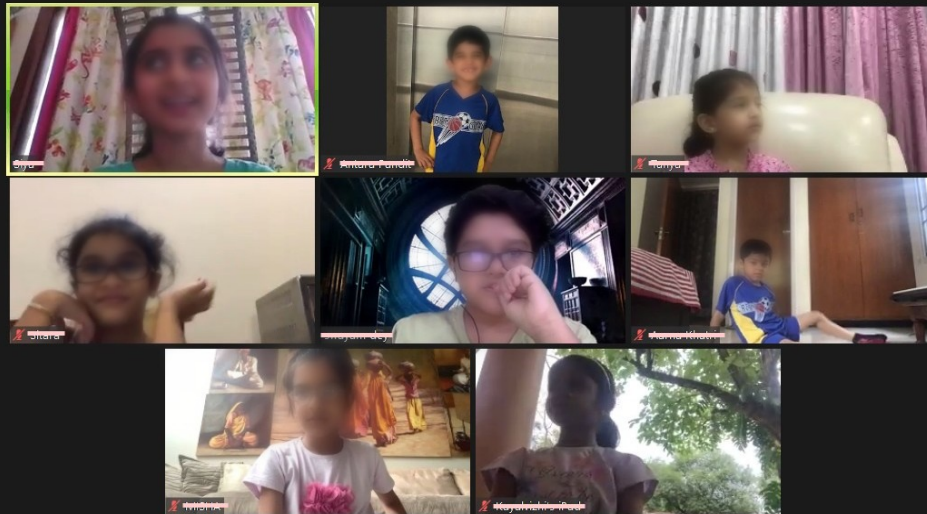
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June 14 - 20, 2020 : 8 Pages

YNEWS

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ePaper
from children
in the
newsroom



Meet the QuaranTEENS

A group of friends call themselves Quaranteens, help connect younger children with the frontline heroes

Sanjitha S

The month of May is synonymous with ecstasy in India. It is usually a time for relaxation and enjoyment with schools being closed for summer vacation. People go on tours, to beaches and parks and spend quality time with their near and dear ones. But none would have dreamt of staying locked up in their homes like the present scenario.

Despite their vacations being shattered, the energetic youngsters of India try their level best to lighten up things around them. One such group of friends – Siya Agarwal, Vedaa Choradia, Simran Gupta, Diya Arun, Dhiya Nachiyar, Anahita Elias, Swayam Dey, Madhav Venkatachalam and Simhan Arumugam, all 13-year-olds, who call themselves Quaranteens. They intend to make the best use of this lockdown and contribute their bit to help beat this pandemic. "During this lockdown, there is not much for children like us to do

except to attempt online competitions. But even these contests are often not for kids younger than us," says Siya.

This concern for the young ones led the Quaranteens to put their heads together and come up with a creative idea. The idea was to conduct online sessions for kids in the age group of five to nine years old. The session aims to make kids aware of our frontline heroes who work tirelessly for our well being and to show them our gratitude.

The interactive session conducted via Zoom Cloud Meeting would include ice-breaker games and some fun activities which would be knowledgeable to the kids. With the help of Mrs. Mahima Poddar, founder of Kindness Foundation, and Mrs. Antara Pandit, an author, the Quaranteens have also managed to arrange meetings with frontline workers to wrap up the session. "We are targeting the youngest members of our society so that they can express their gratitude to frontline

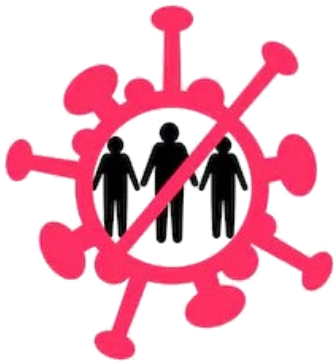
workers who are risking their own lives for ours," Siya says.

The first session was held on May 11, 2020, and the group received encouraging feedback from the children who participated in the session as well from their parents. The teens taught the kids how to draw and make a thank you card for a doctor. At the end of the session, the cards were presented to the doctor.

The subsequent sessions were held on May 14, May 18 and May 21. "The kids were taught to do a craft after which there was an interactive session with a service engineer," says Siya Agarwal.

The sessions are ticketed at INR 150. All proceeds would be given to Kindness Foundation's and Chennai Task Force's COVID Relief Fund. Parents who wish to enrol their kids for this online session can do so by contacting +91 93445 02996.

Gatherings, meetings banned in Chennai till June 27, 2020



Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai, A.K. Viswanathan IPS issued orders banning all assemblies, processions, fasts, demonstrations, human chain, meetings in any street, road or public places within Greater Chennai Police for a period of 15 days from June, 12, 2020 till 4 p.m. on June 27, 2020.

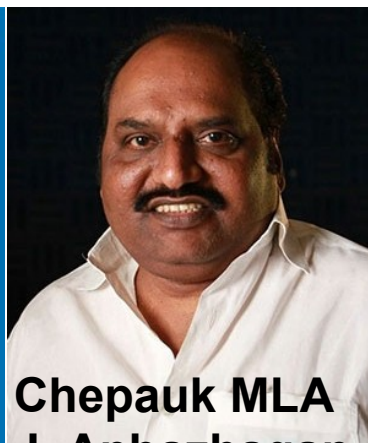
This, he said is "in the light of overall interest of the entire citizenry."

Protect yourself and others from getting sick

Wash your hands



- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste



Chepauk MLA J. Anbazhagan succumbs to COVID 19

A three-time legislator and the district secretary of Chennai West for DMK party died on June 11, 2020.

The MLA was actively involved in distributing aid to people in Chepauk and Triplicane. He was admitted to a private hospital on June 2 after he complained of breathing difficulties and later tested positive for COVID 19. His condition deteriorated and was on ventilator before he succumbed to the disease.

Zone-wise control room contact numbers in Chennai

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION



ZONAL COVIDCARE CONTROL ROOM NUMBERS

01 Thiruvottiyur 044 46556301	09 Teynampet 044 46556309
02 Manali 044 46556302	10 Kodambakkam 044 46556310
03 Madhavaram 044 46556303	11 Valasaravakkam 044 46556311
04 Tondiarpet 044 46556304	12 Alandur 044 46556312
05 Royapuram 044 46556305	13 Adyar 044 46556313
06 Thiru-Vi-Ka Nagar 044 46556306	14 Perungudi 044 46556314
07 Ambattur 044 46556307	15 Sholinganallur 044 46556315
08 Anna Nagar 044 46556308	HQ Ripon Building 044 4612 2300

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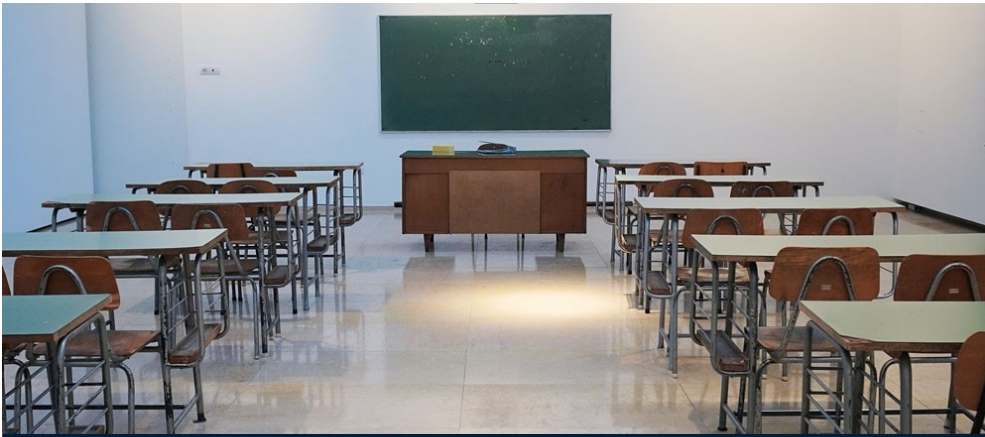
NEWS IN NUMBERS

30444 people in Chennai have so far been affected by COVID 19. Of which, 53%, that i.e. 15765 people have recovered as on

June 13, 2020. 13742 people are now undergoing treatment. 314 people have died.

In 15 zones in Chennai, 360 streets / buildings / areas are in containment as on June 12, 2020
List of containment areas >>

<http://tiny.cc/chennai-contain>



Class 10 Board exams cancelled. All students to be promoted

The class 10 (SSLC) Tamil Nadu State Board examination are cancelled and students are promoted in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Madras high court had questioned the state government for announcing the dates to hold exams from June 15, 2020, when the COVID 19 cases were on the rise and asked to take a decision by June 11, 2020.

In the meantime, on June 10, 2020, Chief Minister K. Palaniswami announced the cancellation of the Class 10 board exams and the remaining Class 11 exams that could not be held as per schedule.

All students will be promoted with 80% weightage for half yearly and quarterly exam marks and 20% for attendance.

Marina still closed for walking, jogging



Last week, many regular walkers were seen on the Marina walking on the tracks on the beach. And many were found to be without masks and physical distancing was also not observed.

All the beaches in Chennai - Marina, Elliots, Thiruvalluvar nagar and Palavakkam were closed for public from March 21, 2020. Barricades were put across the point of entries. However, when people suddenly flocked to the beach, police swung into action to remind people that entry to the beach is still not permitted.

Now, policemen posted at the beach are turning away people who come for a walk in the mornings and evenings. Policy say that strict action would be taken against those who are found walking at the beach.

The regular walkers were discussing on the social media as to why beaches are closed while shops and other services are now open. However, Chennai Corporation has clarified that the beaches are still not open for walking and workout.

WOW!



Mr Krishna Murti, a 97-year-old resident of Adyar was admitted at Kauvery Hospital with diagnosis of COVID-19 and mild symptoms.

Doctors and staff at the hospital cheer the discharged. Photo credit: Twitter

97-year-old man recovers from COVID-19

A. Krishna Murti, 97-year-old man, who admitted to the Kauvery Hospital in Chennai on May 30, 2020 after testing positive for COVID-19, has now fully recovered. He was discharged on June 12, 2020.

He had symptoms of fever, cough and breathlessness at the time of admission. He also had comorbidities such as mild hypertension and coronary heart disease.

On a video on the hospital's official Twitter handle, Dr, Vijayalakshmi Balakrishnan, consultant, Infectious diseases at the hospital says, "After 5-6 days he started becoming much better, walking around, talking to us and in fact, he gave us a lot of energy. By the time he went home we all had a good feeling."

In the video the doctor insists that "having contacted COVID is not end of life" and emphasises on remaining optimistic about recovery.

Teenager's Chatbot to the city's rescue

Dhurai A Navaneetham



Lately, all of our minds have been occupied with the news of COVID-19. Every day we look up the latest updates on cases, curfews and lockdowns. While improved technology has made news accessible at our fingertips, it has also created the bane of fake news, which is becoming a growing liability.

This was what got Shaamil Karim from Southern India's Chennai, thinking. A class 12 student of Sishya School, he says forwarding of fake and unverified news on social media was what prompted him to come up with a Chatbot for the city administration, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC). He along with his brother Shaaban Karim

reached out the Corporation with the idea of a chatbot for its social media pages.

A **Chatbot** is a software application used to interact with the user in place of a person replying manually. Chatbots come in many types – the one developed by Shaamil is a 'Rule-based' Chatbot, which is one where the user communicates with the Chatbot through the press of a button. The Chatbot, available via Messenger on GCC's Facebook page, asks users about their preferred language – either English or Tamil, as they are spoken by the vast majority of Chennai's population – after which there is a list of frequently asked

questions, each of which is selected by pressing the corresponding key. Anxious residents' frantic queries are answered with a host of COVID-19 related information from helplines to testing sites to lockdown restrictions. "I identified the common queries after going through the already existing ones on GCC's social media page," he says.

Shaamil also runs a coding club for school students free of cost, where he teaches programming in different languages. "I usually use Java, but for the Chatbot, I used JavaScript as well as Python", he says. He also credits his family for encouraging him. "My brother was the one who introduced me to Computer Science in the first place. I was hooked because of the endless possibilities of technology. My parents are also supportive of my activities".

For Shaamil who finds anything unconventional to be interesting and takes a lot of interest in computer science, the bot was a way of aiding the city administration deal with a deluge of queries from concerned residents in an efficient way.

Shaamil's brother, Shaaban Karim, an engineering student at BITS Pilani, Hyderabad, worked alongside him. "My brother contributed just as much as I did for the project", Shaamil states. They were aided by Mr. G. Prakash, Commissioner of GCC, Mr. P. Madhusudhan Reddy, Joint Commissioner of GCC as well as Mr. B. Thirunavukarasu, PR head of GCC. "I loved the people I worked with. The workspace was amazing. It was so exciting and fun to be at the centre of the whole operation", he says. "I plan to scale up this project to other cities too", he adds.

"I think COVID-19 is going to have a huge, never-before-seen impact on the economy. All my praise goes to the frontline workers for risking their lives and putting in long hours in order to save people", Shaamil signs off.

>> **More reports on Page 5**

Gopika Kumaran, an Economics graduate now, who used to be a student reporter for YOCEE has provided editorial suggestions for these reports. She has written for her university magazine – *The Context*, an online news website called *the Bastion*, and become a peer tutor at the University Writing Centre.

**★ WORLD
TEENAGE
REPORTING
PROJECT
COVID-19**

A global collaboration of teenage reporters in newsrooms around the world to produce stories about what their peers are doing to help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organizer is Global Youth & News Media.

YOCEE is proud to have been a part of the World Teenage Reporting Project > COVID-19, put together by Global Youth & News Media News. The project aimed at combating the prevailing image of teenagers as anything but proactive problem solvers. Here are the first set of reports that were showcased on the collective website. You can read all the stories from across the world here -

<https://tinyurl.com/ydcl54ho>

The tale of two brothers on a mission to fight hunger

Shalini Ramesh

Two brothers – Jai and Preet Aswani, aged 17 and 13 respectively, strive to create a lasting change in their communities, and in their own selves. Their most recent mission amidst the pandemic is 100 tons of Rice and Pulses.

Born 2 Win Foundation

It all began when they used to attend a class in their apartment 8 years ago. When they learnt about the hazards of bursting firecrackers, the duo set out on a mission – writing 'Stop bursting firecrackers' in chalk, around their apartment. At that time, only five families supported them. Preet and Jai were determined to get everyone to say no to crackers. That's how the Born 2 Win foundation, the brainchild of the Aswani brothers and their mother, was born. It is 'a social enterprise which strives to eradicate social challenges,' says their website.

Growing up, the foundation was a major part of their lives – teaching them numerous skills along the way. As the years sped by, their foundation reached more ears. Kiran Bedi – The Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, flagged 2000 children and the Aswani brothers in a marathon from Puducherry to Chennai, that raised 5 lakh rupees, aiding a visually impaired girl with her education.

Fighting hunger

During the nation-wide lockdown, people rush to the nearest supermarkets to buy the necessities.

But there are still people who can't afford to do so. Realising this, the Born 2 Win Foundation came up with a mission – One hundred tons of rice & pulses, distributing them to old-age homes, orphanages and pet shelters. "Hunger has no religion. Let's fight together hunger as human beings," says their website. Twenty-five lakhs meals are distributed to the destitute, so far. Jai and Preet's grit, fortitude and sheer determination is a living proof that young adults can make a difference in spite of a crisis.



Jai and Preet with their mother Varsha Aswani

"We are not allowed to go outside; we help our mother co-ordinate the whole process, and keep track of the distributions. Other adult members of the organisation volunteer to distribute the provisions," said 13-year-old Preet, in a telephonic interview.

"We have reached 216250 people, and supplied 54.25 tons of rice and pulses. I am very proud of how far we have come," says the proud mother – Varsha Aswani, the Managing Trustee of the organisation.

In addition to rice and pulses, the foundation has also distributed provisions, cooked meals, water, sanitary napkins, hand sanitisers, gloves, masks, pet food, biscuits, and more. The list just goes on!

Inspiring other teens

"No one is you, and that is your superpower," concludes Jai Aswani. What lays behind us and what lays in front of us is insignificant. It is what is in us that matters.

As a teen, it is hard to understand who you are. The Aswani brothers seem to have crossed that hurdle – finding themselves. Sometimes when things fall apart they may actually be falling into place.

When asked about balancing studies and work, "we focus on the distribution work mostly on the weekends. We make sure our academics and social work do not clash. I also am able to make time for art, cricket, and long-distance running," answered Jai in an interview.

Jai Aswani has been invited to over 17 events as a Guest Speaker, inspiring many other teenagers on the way.

Contact the Aswanis on +919884361161

WE WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU DO THESE DAYS

In these unusual times, we want to know how you are doing!

Have you been learning at home? Have you found a new hobby to pursue? Did you help anyone who were in need? Did you cook? Cleaned up your closet or bookshelf? Worked out at home? Created a board game? Why not share your experiences with Y News readers?

Email your report with pictures, to editor@yocnee.in

Do include your name, age or class. By writing in, you give consent to Y News publishing details and photographs of those involved in the report.

The Write Track

Writing on daily prompts - Summer of 2020

My school calendar that went blank suddenly

Maitreyi Aravindan

I was happy and really excited when my summer vacation was approaching and when I was just about to write my exams, but suddenly I got a message from school which said that my exams got cancelled. Though that was unexpected, I felt good at that time to have no exams. However, that was short-lived as after two months of enjoyment, I got really bored. I wanted my school to start once again.

When I began to wonder when will I get back to school I later realized that my school calendar had gone blank. Yes, I found there was just nothing on it. I started feeling staying at home very uncomfortable. I had many plans for this year as I heard that this year we are going to be into a new school building, would be meeting a new team of

teachers and I was excited to show everyone my new school bag, did I



forget that I will be writing with pen this year onwards and no more hassles of sharpening the pencil anymore. I was also looking forward to new sports events, picnics, field trips and many more events for this year.

Now, because of corona pandemic, I really hope they don't cancel all these wonderful events and my calendar remains empty.

Anytime when my parents' phones beep for a message or a call, I am feeling excited that it would be from my school about online classes, or just about anything that would fill my school calendar, but still, I have not received anything. Because of all this, I feel my school calendar empty. Due to corona, I heard that our school is planning that only 10 children can come to school and we all should wear a mask and carry hand sanitizers every day. So, because of this, I won't be able to meet all my friends the same way we did before. I am hoping and praying that my school calendar will soon be filled and I will have a lot of wonderful activities to do in the coming days.

Yet I am looking forward to going to school once again.

Writer's block, we have all been there

Akshaya Ramani

I started writing from when I was in 9th standard in school. I started from poems, continued with articles, blogs, reports, book reviews and went on to scribble whatever came my way. I always aspire to explore all forms of writing. Being a blogger for five years, I still face this writer's block from time to time. Even now, when I am typing out this piece, I am bereft of words. For me, writer's block is not something like I am

running out of words, but simply about I can't pull the right ones now.

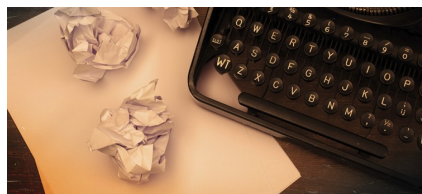
I would be in a writing spree. But all of a sudden, my blogs/articles would seem to lack the soul. I would have come to a screeching stop. But I won't give up right there. I would take a break, get back to books and try again. Sometimes,

I have been hard on myself for that. But it just didn't help. I started to experiment and try penning whatever comes to my mind without any prejudices. I think that's where we go wrong. We keep judging every word we write. We keep thinking of something better, better- either words or ideas, wasting the best

we have. Too high self-standards. Maybe it might not be 'better', but it's not 'bad'. At least, that was in my case.

As a result of my experimenting, I have many columns started in my blog like Sunday night tryst- an attempt to write on every Sunday. I write what I feel and not what I want. It's like free drawing, going with the flow with no criticism.

Within a few weeks, I would feel better and something would pop up in the middle of the week. Say Thursday and a new column is born as 'A Thursday Twist'. I have a column for each writer's block- they just end when my block is clear. But the experiment is endless. Sometimes, I feel its good to see a dead end so that you can try new routes.



The Day I came home to find out that school was closed...

Vishal Ramesh

On March 15, 2020, I came home, and my mom came and told me that the school was closed for the next 15 days because of COVID-19. I was devastated, but part of me felt relieved since I would feel nervous before all exams even though I usually ended up with amazing scores. I knew that school would restart after 15 days. History followed its course, and as we all know, the newly phrased 'lockdown' was extended by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. And I knew after that the School holidays would resume.

I felt a bit bad since I had not said goodbye to my friends and teachers at school.

I received some homework, but after that, I felt a bit empty, since school was a part of my life. At home I learnt more than I ever heard through online courses I found, I began helping around the house, and it soon became my routine.

I called my friends and talked to them, which made that emptiness feeling go away a bit. I enjoyed watching MasterChef at home, reading more books, experimenting, cooking, and

much, much more.

So, this lockdown was not a bomb of devastation, it was a fortress of opportunities unlocked. I began to understand myself more, and I felt extremely excited when the school announced that there were online classes would start in a few weeks.

As I learnt increasingly, not only about myself, about others, and what I liked. When I found out that SpaceX and NASA were launching astronauts to the ISS, I jumped in excitement. I sat in front of the TV

and had everything set up and began to watch it live. After a while, the mission got scrubbed, because of weather reports. The next day when they tried again, Dragon (the spacecraft they were riding) successfully docked with the ISS. I felt so happy since I am a huge supporter of SpaceX and NASA.

After that, I received an update from my school about my online classes, and my excitement multiplied since I was going to meet my friends and I was finally going to learn the way I liked to.

The day before the first day of online

classes began, I had set everything up in my small makeshift 'workspace' and went to bed, but unable to sleep because of my said excitement. The next day I was woken up by my mother exceedingly early, and I did my morning chores and sat in front of the computer, and going on the online class.

It turned out that I was 1 and a half hours early, so I read a book and watched another episode of MasterChef. After that, I realized that I was still about 30 minutes early. But I still entered it, and some of my friends were already there.

I really enjoyed the classes and felt grateful to be a member of this great school.

So, for you, it might have been a not so wonderful experience for you, but for me, it was one my best. Thank you, and I hope this changes your opinion on COVID-19.

It might even be God's gift.



Guess what do we do this summer apart from the regular reporting! Writing and more writing! But now, we are writing together on daily prompts. These are submissions as part of the daily writing exercise.

Want to join?

Mail to editor@yocce.in

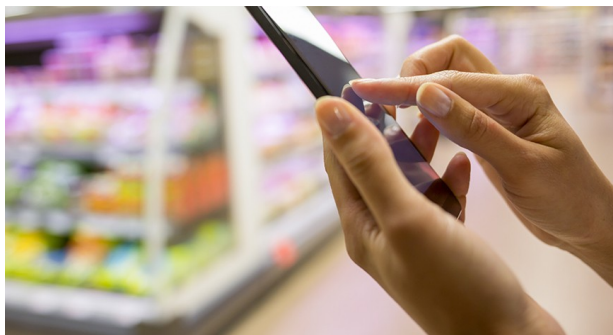
We will send you the prompts daily. Write and get published!

Photos that smile

Shivaathmika Jayapal

I like to take photos on my mobile phone, that you will smile at them later on. For example, if you go on a short trip you will most likely forget what you did. If you click multiple pictures you will definitely remember and just smile.

Maybe it was just a normal day when you go to the grocery store when it opens and the store is stocked full and you just click a picture. Now if you look at that photo you will think how were



you able to go to that grocery store at that time without feeling scared or worried, maybe taking extra self-precautions because it might not be that clean right now!

I also think just taking photos of random things also wastes the space on your phone. You can only fill your phone with photos you really need. Sometimes you might think a picture of a grocery store or a mall might not be as important before, but now you do, because pictures hold memories and memories are what we all need.

If we all think about what we used to do we will feel as if we are doing it right now and we will all feel relaxed. We can also tell our children, grand-children and great-grand-children that we survived through this time and feel proud of ourselves.

Feeling stuck about what to write or where to begin!

Shalini Ramesh

Ah, my old foe. We meet again.

Lurking right around the corner and waiting. Waiting as my creativity flows in vibrant bands, brighter than my imagination itself – forming a protective aura, keeping you at bay. Just when I let my guard down, you strike – stifling my coils of ingenuity into mere darkness.



However I try, I cannot extract my imagination from your grasp. My free-flowing swirls of cognitive thinking are no more.

'Sticks and stones may break my bones. But words can never hurt me.' I would rather prefer the sticks and the stones, rather than having 'wordlessness' hurt me.

Wordlessness. Noun. A state of mind where you cannot express your thoughts in words. I can make up words, but I am unable to put them together to create a harmonious balance of events. Coming to think of it, all words are made up. But, that's not the point.

It's like having imaginary friends who refuse to talk to you.

All that stands in your way is one giant – wait no, a gigantic monstrous wall of heinousness. All you need to do is bring in a humongous excavator, and you are set. I wish it were that easy. I really do. I wish I could pick it up and hurl it away like a Lego block. Don't try stamping it though. Ouch. Woe be it to the poor soul who tried that.

There are many who claim to have writer's block but are just really lazy. Been there. Done that.

Now I wish that I was really just lazy. Not stuck up with a foul basket case of Writer's Block. People say there are 'cures' for this. *Nilavembu Kashayam* ought to do the trick. Nah, just kidding. One can dream, though.

My go-to cure is reading a good book. Reading helps you get back in touch with the calming process of writing. Reading your own work again can be quite the inspiration to get you started again! Or you can write about not being able to write. It doesn't matter if it is not up to your usual standards.

The flow of writing is not something you can have a timetable for. It comes and it goes. It is up to us to capture those moments and use them wisely – like I am doing right now. Sitting in front of the laptop at 12:06 in the morning!

The ability to express events, thoughts, and emotions in words is precious.

Don't let a simple Lego block be in the way. Put pen to paper, and thoughts to words – and all will be well. Just start writing.

Catching food on camera

Ankur Chandrasekar



Food looks colourful. It looks good when photographed. The close-ups look still more wonderful. When there are many ingredients with various colourful vegetables, I love to take a picture of them.

From a simple coffee in a mug to a vegetable pulao, food photos are very nice to look at, even at a later time. I have tried to catch the steam

from a piping hot coffee, but never could. I will get that someday.

I love the variety of food on plates, while we as a family eat out. Though it is difficult to take a shot of all of it together,

I try to capture at least a few of them. Sometimes I take photos of each plate individually.

My photos have never been great. But I love to click on the mobile phones whatever I feel is beautiful.

