

# LiTE Connect

## LiTEd



*It's nearly two months since the first issue **LiTE Connect** 'hit the stands' and I can still relive every moment of the trepidation with which I proof-checked the final cut, a little hesitant and unsure of how this e-newsletter would go across and down Philips Lighting.*

*In less than two hours from the first SEND click, my mailbox began to exude the fuzzy warmth of acceptance and that too, from some of the most unexpected points of contact in the lighting organization! Your responses encouraged us and egged us to keep raising the bar. It was sheer exhilaration to see you connect with our communique and even more challenging to ensure that ALL our initiatives from the Lighting University – or simply Li Univ as we fondly call it - elicit the same fuzzy warmth of acceptance.*

The next to come was **LiTE Class** – our personalized semi-formal lighting tutorial in the classroom format. The first two **LiTE Classes** in the North and West ended with eager participants from the Proff S&M and LiAS teams craving for more at the end of daylong sessions. And **LiTE Hour** – our Friday morning webinar featuring product launches and lighting domain lectures – recorded a mid-morning attendance of a hundred logins on the closing day of the fiscal year, the pressures of target compliance notwithstanding. The scoreboard reads – **4 LiTe Hours, 2 product launches, 3 light lectures, 355 logins!** Thank you – all of you – for making Li Univ your very own learning forum! We couldn't have asked for a better start!

*In all our activities we have tried to convey a very simple message – live our behaviors. Be eager to win, take ownership and team up to excel, and excel you will in everything you do. Living our behaviors presupposes an omnipresent passion to win, blended with the courage and conviction that stem from deep-rooted dreams. Together, these are what make champions out of winning teams.*

*Let me share with you with a real-life story of what a dream can do when blended with the right doses of passion, courage and conviction. Some of you may have heard or read it before. It still merits a thousand reads.*

*A lady in a faded dress and her husband dressed in a threadbare suit walked in without an appointment to the office of the President of the most prestigious educational institution in North America. The President's secretary frowned at them and said, "He will be busy all day." "We will wait," said the couple quietly.*

*The secretary ignored them for hours hoping they would go away. But they didn't. Finally, the secretary decided to disturb the President, sure that they would go leave quickly once they meet him.*

*The President took one look at the worn out attires and glared sternly. The lady said, "Our son had been admitted here and he was very happy. A year ago he died in an attack of typhoid. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial for him on the campus."*

*The President was not touched. He was shocked. "Madam, we cannot put up a statue for every student of ours who dies! This place will become a cemetery." "Oh no," the lady explained quickly. "We don't want to put up a statue. We thought we would give you a building." "A building?" exclaimed the President, looking again at their faded dresses. "Do you have any idea how much a building costs here? Our buildings cost close to ten million dollars!" The lady was silent. The President was pleased, thinking this was enough to get rid of them.*

*The lady looked at her husband. "If that is what it costs to start a university, why don't we start our own?" she queried. Her husband nodded. Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford walked away, traveling to Palo Alto, California, where they set up a university in the summer of 1891 as a memorial to their son bearing the name – The Leland Stanford Junior University. And the Stanford that we know was born.*

*Before I sign off, let me wish each one of you more enriching learning from Li Univ. Manifest your passion with **more numbers – more registrations, more certifications and more momentum!** These would be the most visible demonstrations of your hunger to learn and win. **We know you can do it!***

*And especially all of you who're young and in a hurry to make it big in life, let me – on behalf of Li Univ - wish you a very eventful and exciting journey!*

*Tread fast, but tread with caution. Tread with confidence. Keep your gears in control and be prepared to change direction whenever required. The road to success is often very slippery and full of unexpected twists, turns and hairpin bends. I had read many years ago, "Unless you're able to change direction, you'll end up where you're headed!"*

*In this journey, there will be times when you'll feel that you're slipping and losing balance. Never let them pull you down. Just get up and get going. As the great Mohammed Ali would say, "**You become a champion by fighting one more round. When things are tough you just get up and fight one more round.**"*

*Cheers till we meet again!*

**Soumya**

### GO GOALS

Setting goals is like setting up bowling pins. If you set them up correctly, knocking them down will be easy. If you happen to miss, don't worry, unlike in bowling, you'll have more than just 2 tries! It doesn't matter how you do it or how many tries it takes, as long as you knock those pins down, you're golden! Now if you set those pins up incorrectly, knocking them down will be a lot harder and you might just end up quitting.

Your goals need to be SMART – that's Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. The point isn't that you haven't heard or read of SMART goals. The point is do you apply the SMART parameters when you really set your own goals? Use this as a ready-reckoner.

#### Specific

Not being specific is like setting each pin on a different lane. You're going to spend way too much time walking from lane to lane. If you're vague about what you want, you won't have any focus and will be spending more time and energy than you have to. If you want more money, ask yourself how much? If you want a new car - what model, what make, what color, what features? If you want a fast-track growth plan - what position, what responsibilities, what compensation and by when? You get the idea?

#### Measurable

A goal not being measurable is like not knowing if a pin has been knocked down. You'll end up trying to knock one that's already down or isn't even there! You need to be able to look at your progress and see if you're getting closer to your goals. Financial goals are easy to measure. Weight goals are easy to measure. A goal to be happier isn't. How do you even measure that? A better goal would be to laugh for 30 seconds, 20 times a day!

#### Attainable

Attainable goals are ones that you can reach. They are intelligent goals. Thinking you can go from 0 to 1 billion-rupee bank balance by May-end isn't intelligent, or for that matter, me (for those who've seen me!) losing 25 kilograms before the month-end without surgery! You need to set goals that are "out of reach, but not out of sight". They need to be big enough to force you to grow, get out of your comfort zone, but not big to the point you believe it'll take a miracle to accomplish!

#### Relevant

A goal not relevant to your life and circumstances is as bad as not having a goal at all! If you're six feet tall and weigh sixty one kilograms, losing weight may not be a relevant goal for you. Or on a more connectible note, if you're working as a freshman in Lighting H R, going for the LED Professional Certification in the first fifteen days of your joining may not be the most relevant goal for you. This is not to say that a LED Professional certification isn't specific, or measurable, or attainable in fifteen days of study. But it may not be very relevant to your immediate KRA-s, if you get what I mean.

#### Time-bound

Having a goal without a timeline is like rolling the ball once and then saying you'll take the next shot next year and expecting your teammates to be okay with it! A goal without a timeline is a distant dream, and that too, an improper one. It's never going to happen. It's only when you set a time frame that it will become a goal. If there isn't a timeline, what reason would you have to even get started? It's like saying that you'll achieve that steep Q2 sales target positively by the end of Q4! Will you have any takers?

That is why you need to work hard and SMART!

# LiTE Meter

Hi All,



It gives me a lot of joy and a lot more enthusiasm to share with you the launch of the “new and improved” New Hire Program launched by the Global Lighting University. This program will henceforth be called **Connected2Lighting (C2L)**.

We in Li Univ strongly encourage you and your team members, and in particular the new members of the Philips Lighting family, to visit the link and browse through the program. It is simple, user-friendly and very, very informative

On the certifications front, the first batch Certificates have been sent out. The next batch will be shipped soon.

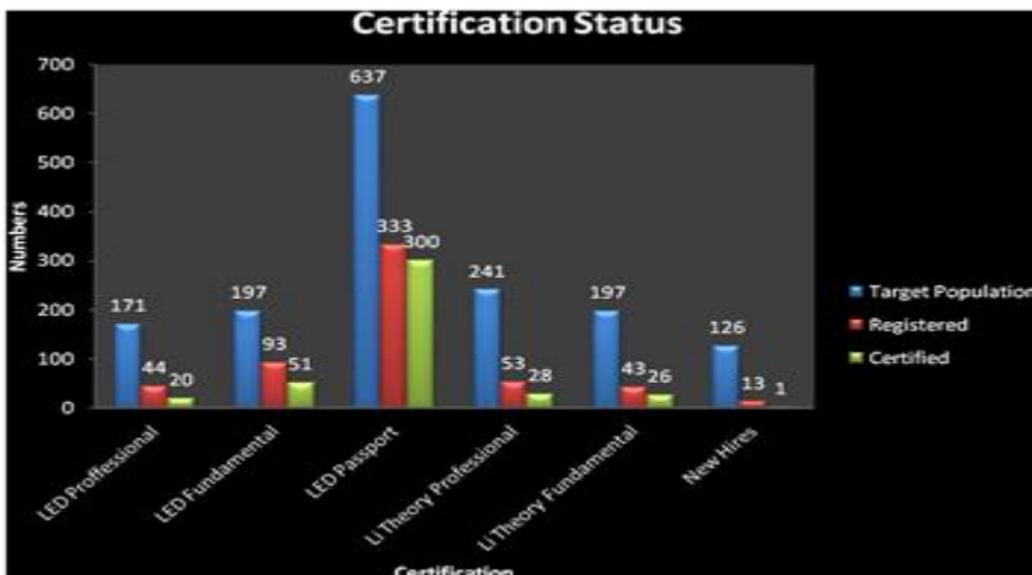
On the basis of your feedbacks over the past month, we have requested the global team to make the e-book **“Theory of Light and Lighting”** downloadable. This, we expect, will happen very soon. Along with this, we would expect more downloads, more test registrations and more certifications. That is what all of us must devotedly strive for.

Again working on your feedbacks, we are happy to announce that dedicated desktops known as **“Lighting Learning Kiosks”** have been put up in all regional offices to **empower employees without laptops to learn and get certified with ease. Contact your Regional HRM for details.**

Thank you for all your mails and inputs! They’ve been key enablers for us to review our programs, tools and strategies. They’ve helped us to be more effective! Do keep connecting and sharing your views, comments and suggestions. We value them and appreciate them immensely!

On this note let me sign off ... good luck and get certified!

**Swapnil**



**Quote**

Calvin: "Too bad the world will be ending soon."  
 Dad: "Beg your pardon?"  
 Calvin: "Halley's Comet. Comets are harbingers of doom."  
 Dad: "No they aren't, that's just superstition."  
 Calvin: "Really? Guess I'd better write that book report."  
 - Calvin & Hobbes

**To all of us who were counting on the world ending in 2012, please complete your certifications SOON ☺**

If we all did the things we are really capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves!

Thomas Edison

**NEVER GIVE UP**

At the peak of his political career, Sir Winston Churchill was invited to a convocation function in Harrow, his one-time alma mater and where, years ago, he had nearly flunked! Beleaguered at the sight of the audience which included many of his past teachers, Sir Winston could hardly find his voice when asked to speak.

Ultimately, he got up and just muttered three words, “Never give up.” He paused for a minute and couldn’t think of what more to say. All that would come out was a repeat in a more muffled tone, “Never give up.” And then finally, one more time, “Never give up” before he sat down.

The message wasn’t muffled though. It was loud, clear and poignant. The audience stood up and cheered.

**Accolades - Accelerating learning, celebrating success**

As a country, we are doing very well! If numbers are indications, which they are, our presence in the Lighting University **Hall of Fame** would visibly demonstrate our rising presence. Many of our colleagues feature prominently in the Hall of Fame.

For those of you who’re yet to multiply your Lighting University certifications, the **Hall of Fame** enlists individuals\* who have cleared a combination of 2 or more certifications at the Fundamental and Professional levels in LED and Lighting Theory.

We’re proud to list the Lighting University **Hall of Fame** entrants till 29 April, 2012.

**Certified LED Professionals + Lighting Theory & Application Professionals**

- Akhilesh Tomar
- Ananth Shenoy K
- Ramkrishna Narayan
- Surjya Neogy
- Soumo Ghosal
- Asesh Kr Dasgupta

**Certified LED Professionals + Lighting Theory & Application Fundamentals**

- Bijender Kumar Sheoran
- Shovan Kanti Kar
- Shwetank Dixit
- J. Mukherjee
- Sandipan Pan

**Certified LED Fundamentals + Lighting Theory and Application Professionals**

- E Kirubakaran
- Vishwanath S Mopagar
- Anirban Mukhuti
- Sridhar Dubba
- Rakesh Ramachandran
- Kalyan Raychaudhuri
- Sumit Kar

**Certified LED Fundamentals + Lighting Theory & Application Fundamentals**

- Anish B. George
- Susanta Bhaumik

**All certifications - the 5-star performers**

- Akhilesh Tomar
- Ramkrishna Narayan
- Surjya Neogy
- Soumo Ghosal
- Asesh Kr Dasgupta

## LiTE Page

### Innovations @Light & Building 2012 ,Frankfurt Messe

#### Partnership in Innovation



*It gives me a lot of pride and a lot of joy to share with you a new breakthrough in the Academy Program of Li Univ. In sync with our ongoing endeavors to partner with major Professional Institutions in the country, we have now entered into a formal Academic Partnership with the Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID) - the nodal body of interior designers in India.*

*This partnership will span a three-year period covering four sessions every year for students, teachers and young practicing designers. It will be co-branded as "The Philips- IIID Joint Academic Partnership" and will entail official certifications for qualifiers. Amongst others, the joint certifications will enable practicing designers to add values of significance to their professional credentials.*

*The partnership marks the advent of a new chapter in the chronicle of Li Univ - a first with many more to follow.*

*As Oscar Wilde would say, "God lets everything happen for a reason. It's all a learning process. We just have to keep going from one level to another."*

*Learn. Grow. Accelerate.*  
Sudeshna

*"The Highest Education is that which does not merely give us information but which makes our lives in harmony with all its existence"*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

At **Light & Building 2012, Frankfurt Messe**, Philips introduced **LumiStone** - a suspended luminaire that transforms office spaces and inspires innovative designs.

A modern office space has increasingly become a reflection of a company's brand and image. luminaires are important elements in creating environments in which employees feel at Philips **LumiStone** luminaire is this trend with its modern design features that spaces such as reception areas and meeting quality of light. **LumiStone was designed partnership with Henning Solfeldt, PLH Architects.**



become a visible Inspiring design-led attractive workplace comfortably engaged. The ideally suited to support enhance interactive office rooms with excellent by Philips in design manager at

"Collaboration, discussion and exchanging activities in today's offices. The objective with therefore to create an energy efficient lighting design that is able to enhance ambience and environment. And with LumiStone, we feel that we have designed a luminaire that can meet these needs," says Solfeldt.

#### Luminous textiles!

Philips is partnering with **Kvadrat Soft Cells** to bring an innovative luminous textile to market. With our addressable LEDs integrated into their acoustic panels, architects, interior designers and lighting specialists have new freedom to enhance spaces with texture and light.

This new partnership combines our leadership in LED lighting with Kvadrat Soft Cells' expertise in controlling sound absorption, giving lighting designers and architects total flexibility to create environments that attract, motivate and inspire people.



The wide range of Kvadrat textiles and broad spectrum of colors in our LED range have blended to make luminous textile a truly flexible way of creating the right atmosphere for a specific space, irrespective of function or the nature of work. The texture of the panels absorbs sound to create a comfortable working environment, while integrated LED lights enable the display of dynamic visual content. Together, they combine to make a space to be completely transformed, enhancing both user experience and brand's identity in tandem. Reflecting our commitment to developing lighting solutions that offer the user a limitless number of effects, moods and atmospheres, this partnership is set to take ambience creation to a whole new level.



#### Projects: Philips on Stage

Almost 40 years after its construction, the Montparnasse Tower in Paris can now be seen in a completely new light. This project has been executed by Philips in partnership with **lighting designer Régis Clouzet** and installation specialists Vinci Energies Citéos to deliver an innovative and sustainable lighting solution for the tallest and one of the finest buildings in Paris. The subtle lighting design contributes a new signature to the Paris nightscape.

The new lighting design will entail . There are four distinct lighting scenarios - one per season - based on various lighting effects, multiple scattering rhythms and LED's infinite palette of colors. A fifth lighting scenario, named "festive", will add visual rhythm to various Parisian events such as the White Night (La Nuit Blanche) and the Music Festival (La Fête de la Musique). Artists (videographers, painters, designers and the creative persona from different realms) will be able to

adapt and control the Tower lighting - a symbol of modernity, creativity and movement - to match and enhance every occasion.

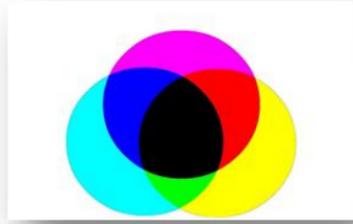
#### The lighting of the Tower in a few figures:

**972** dynamic LED battens and **58** LED projectors: Each LED has a lifetime of **50,000** hours, namely **15** years of use!

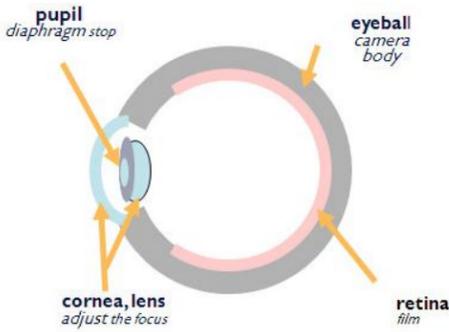
Power consumption: less than **25** kWh: Energy used for all **56** floors of this **210** meter tower equivalent to **10** household irons!!

# LiTE Know for beginners

## Light Color: Perception, Emotional and Physiological Responses



If coloured **paints** are mixed, the result will always be darker than those of the original paints. This form of colour mixing is called **subtractive mixing**. The mixing of two or three primary paint colours will produce black.



**Color** is such an everyday phenomenon that we don't usually give it a lot of thought. But colors can produce astonishing effects, for example, in the way they mix together. In the last issue of LiTE Connect, we talked about Light Spectrum and Vision. We know light is all about colours and that the human eye has different

sensitivities to different colours. The retina is the start of the nervous system leading into the brain. It consists of more than a hundred million light-sensitive nerve endings of two types, which because of their shapes, are called **'rods' and 'cones'**. We have ten to fifteen times more rods than cones. The rods are spread fairly evenly over the retina with the exception of the visual axis in the center, a spot called the 'fovea', where they are entirely lacking. The cones, on the other hand, are concentrated in the fovea and occur only sparsely in other parts of the retina. The rods and cones connect to the brain via ganglion cells and nerve fibers.

**The Cones** in our eyes are responsible for colour vision. We have Blue (S), Green (M) and Red (L) cones which combine depending on the spectrum of light to reproduce a precise colour.

Object colours play an important role in the perception of most scenes, and artificial lighting influences the appearance of object colours.



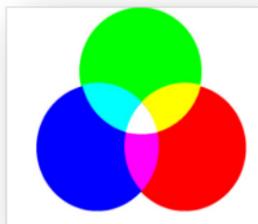
**Colour rendering** is the ability of artificial light to reproduce (render) object colours faithfully. Light sources with continuous spectrums do this better than those with discontinuous ones. When discussing colour rendering it is important to realize that "true colours" do not really exist. People tend to judge colours under what they consider to be natural, or true, lighting conditions, often mistakenly using daylight for the true colour benchmark. **But colours seen under daylight on a sunny day can differ widely from those seen under daylight with an overcast sky. This is due to the fact that the spectral distribution of daylight is not**

**constant, but changes from hour to hour and from season to season. The correct thing to do is to assess the colours under the same type of lighting as that existing in the area where they will be finally seen.** For example, an evening dress should be chosen under incandescent lighting, for this is the sort of lighting employed in the evening function where it is to be worn.

**Colour rendering index and LEDs**  
Modern fluorescent lamps and white LEDs have one or more narrow peaks in their spectrum. The general colour rendering index Ra does not always give a good enough representation of the colour rendering by these light sources. CIE is therefore investigating new methods for assessing the colour rendering properties of white light sources with the goal of recommending a new **Colour Rendering Metric**

**White light is composed of a mixture of colours.** Not all spectral colours occur in all light sources, and where they do, the colour proportions vary. If white light strikes a surface, generally not all its colours will be reflected to the same degree. Those that are reflected most will together determine the colour impression of that surface. Thus, a green surface will reflect the light from the green part of the spectrum, and absorb red and violet.

**If coloured lights are mixed, the result will always be brighter than the individual component colours.** This is called **additive colour mixing**. What happens with additive colour mixing can be understood by considering the three basic colours of the visible spectrum: **red, green and blue. These three basic colours are known as the primary colours (RGB).** The secondary colours are Cyan (C), Magenta (M) and Yellow (Y).



The **colour appearance** of a light source radiating some kind of white light is highly influenced by the spectral composition of its light and can be characterized by its (correlated) **colour temperature**.

With proliferation of LED technology, and availability of efficient saturated colours, lighting designers and architects are increasingly using coloured lighting as a medium of expression. To perceive colour means to 'experience' it. These effects range from conscious, temporary to subconscious, physiological and long-term effects.

Colour is being used to attract people, to trigger psychological and emotional responses. Coloured light is more effective at addressing physiological effects as well, and therefore more critical, since it will impact the "well-being" of employees who spend extended periods of time in these areas.

If we analyze only **emotional responses**, every colour has specific properties that can evoke specific emotions. It is a **short-term response** that occurs in a few minutes. It is about personal preferences, culture, religion and content.

In general, warm colours, such as red, orange, and yellow are associated with sun and fire. Cool colours, such as blue and violet, are associated with air, sky and water, whilst green tends to be associated with nature. These are "immediate responses" only. There is also an emotional relationship between the lighting level and the tint of white light. At home, many people will experience a relaxing atmosphere at relatively low light levels with a warm light colour (low colour temperature). Where a more active and stimulating atmosphere is required such as offices, factories and schools, many prefer higher light levels with a cooler colours (higher colour temperatures).

*But colour has a 'long-term' effect as well. It is a form of energy, a bandwidth of wavelengths. When it is experienced for a longer period of time – minutes, hours or days – this energy affects bodily functions, like brain activity and hormone production, just as it influences our moods and emotions. It is assumed that source sizes play an important role as well, but effective source sizes have not been experimentally determined yet.*

Raising alertness levels, calming down of the body, relating to indices such as blood pressure and galvanic skin responses are all effects that need to be associated to physiological responses.

Research indicates that colours richer in longer wavelengths (reddish) are more arousing than those of short wavelengths (bluish). As with the psychological responses, our personalities play important roles in our physiological and subconscious emotional reactions to colour. Extroverts can cope with or may even require brighter colours, engaging shapes and other sources of stimulation in order to maintain a balance. However, an environment that over-stimulates the senses can lead to intense nervousness in introverted persons.

**White light, that varies in colour temperature and is in the blue component, can also cause physiological responses. Warm white light facilitates relaxation, while cool-white light is stimulating. White light with a strong blue component (high colour temperature) increases mental activity and activates the autonomic nervous function.**

Research into the photo-biological effects of light has become a subject of great interest since the discovery of intrinsically photosensitive retinal ganglion cells ('3rd receptors') in 2002. Photo-biological effects of light are the physiological effects of light on the eye e.g. melatonin suppressions and circadian phase shifts. Light of shorter wavelengths within the blue range seems to be most effective for addressing the 3rd receptor. In comparison with light of longer wavelengths, less light is needed to achieve the same biological stimulation. Night light results in an immediate suppression of melatonin and reduced tiredness. This effect is greater under blue light than under red light. This photo-biological research focuses on the effects of light during the night.

Lighting, thus, has not only visual effects but also significant non-visual biological effects and is very important for our health.

We would have some more of this subject covered in the next issue of LiTE Connect.

LiTE Life

Quiz Con

1. He re-wrote the rule book in the consumer products industry. Having started off in the backyard of his home and moving door to door in person, he offered a product at less than 25% of the price of the most popular brand of the day manufactured by a large MNC. In about a decade, the total sales of his product overtook that of the MNC brand, capturing a 35% share of the Indian market through dexterous brand creation and a distinctive price advantage. Who is "he"?
2. A group of eight women started a cooperative with a loan of 80 rupees to make a household use product. Today, the turnover of the cooperative exceeds rupees 400 crores. For over forty years, the cooperative has stuck unflinchingly to its core values of ensuring gainful returns to its members and business partners, guaranteeing its huge consumer base an assured quality and affordable price and engaging itself in meaningful social and community development work. Can you name (a) the cooperative and (b) its product?
3. He was an Indian classical musician without a parallel. A Muslim by religion, he would begin his daily morning riyaz with an offering to Goddess Kali. His music was greatly loved and patronized by Rabindranath Tagore. It is believed that there wasn't an Indian musical instrument that he couldn't play with consummate mastery and that he could play stringed instruments to perfection reversing his hands every alternate minute without disrupting the tone or the quality of performance. Who was "he"?

Mail me your answers at [soumya.roy@philips.com](mailto:soumya.roy@philips.com)

Two Plus Two

A businessman was interviewing applicants for the position of Divisional Manager. He devised a test to select the most suitable person for the job. He asked each applicant, "How much is two and two?"

The first interviewee was a journo. His answer was, "Sir, twenty-two."

The second applicant was an engineer. He pulled out a slide rule and showed the answer to be between 3.999 and 4.001.

The third applicant was a lawyer. He stated that in the case of Khurana vs. Khurana, two and two was conclusively proven to be four.

The last applicant was an accountant. The businessman asked him, "How much is two and two?" The accountant got up from his chair, went over to the door and closed it. He then came back, leaned across the table and asked in a low voice, "On which side of the book would you like me to show it?"

One of them got the job. Any guesses, who??

Of the People, By the People

A farmer went to a Sunday "haat bazaar" in the nearest town some thirty miles away. He took his little boy with him.

At the market, he bought a donkey to carry his daily loads of crop from the fields to his village home. Pleased that the new beast of burden was a worthy investment, the man, child and donkey set out on their journey back. The child rode the donkey and the man walked alongside.

The route to home was long and tiring. There were four villages to cross before their own.

After a while came the first village. Just as they entered, they saw a familiar group of old men under a large banyan tree engrossed in a customary Sunday morning chat.

Just as they passed by, a few eyes looked up at them. And out came a loud comment – "Chhi chhi, what days have come! Look at that ... just no respect for an elder? How CAN the boy sit and allow his father to walk?"

The farmer was upset at what he heard. His son and he reversed roles.

They entered the second village. There was a similar chat group under a similar banyan tree. Eyes looked up and out came a comment – "Hey, look! Look! What days have come! A little child tiring himself by walking and a big strong man perched on the donkey! What a shame!"

The farmer was again upset. He decided to change a few things.

Up came the third village and the all-too-familiar men under a banyan tree. The farmer heard, "Hey Bhagwaan! Have you seen anything more stupid? This man has bought a donkey and is letting it walk without a load! At least one of them could have ridden on it!"

The farmer was vexed beyond words, not knowing what next to do.

Sometime later the fourth village came in sight, as did another group of men under another tree. This time the comment was loud and sharp. "Whatever has happened to us these days, brother? How can people be so unkind? A poor little donkey and two people riding on it in this summer heat! Just no compassion for a poor dumb beast ...!"

They were about to reach home. It was nearly noon and the banyan tree group in the village had just got up to disperse. The group members stared in amazement at what they saw, some of them with mouths gaping and jaws dropped. They saw a man treading into the village carrying a donkey on his shoulders, and the little boy trudging tiredly beside. "Oh no," said a voice, "our poor Kishen has got mad!"

"Must be the heat ...." said another voice.

**People talk. They always have and will. How much would that matter to you?**

*All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles, my obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.*

Walt Disney

Back to School

It was still twilight. The city skyline was showing up eerily in the haze of the darkening grays and the radiance of the halogens. Sujit was trudging down the stairway of his high-rise office. It had been a stressful Saturday. His self-esteem had taken a bleeding beating and he was feeling down, desolate and unwanted. His "first-class" education seemed to have lost its relevance in life. His evening agenda had a very special event - his school reunion - and he knew he would HAVE to make it.

Rajat had changed. His close buddies knew him by the all-too-familiar flamboyance. Skyrocketing businesses, 18x7 work weeks, weekend golf, late night parties ... that was Rajat till Leena died. Five months ago. Two months of detected leukemia and she was gone, leaving behind their only child Rupak, 2 years and 3 months - a toddler in a city play school. Mothers making a beeline at the school gate every afternoon did not know Rajat. To them, he was the only parent of Rupak and he was never late by a single minute in either bringing the child to school in the morning or picking him up at the stroke of noon. To them, he was a doting adorable dad who never missed slinging the little backpack over the child's shoulders and hanging the water bottle around his neck with fond tenderness. Rajat reached for his car keys. He had to attend the reunion.

Debu was pressing his best white shirt. The memories had faded with time. Debashis Dutt, all-India first in ICSE, all-India first in ISC XII, nine gold medals in MBBS ... a CV that the world would gasp to believe. Life had played truant with Debu. He wasn't a doctor the country would hold in awe. He wasn't the surgeon the city papers would love to shoot for page one or page three. He was a lecturer of general medicine in a suburban medical college and had got his only son admitted in a nondescript local school. Debu was getting ready for the reunion.

It was past mid-evening when they met - Sujit, Rajat, Debu and so many more. Amar, Bishu, Rahul, Amit. They had all come. The school building looked just as new. The field was just as welcoming. The sight and smell were all so familiar. They hugged and they talked. Inane frivolities, grilling realities, achievements, failures ... there was so much to share. Men in their late forties walked up the stairs to the school chapel. The entrance door had not changed. The large picture of the Lord on the cross above the hall gateway had not changed. The love, caring and compassion that oozed from every square inch of the spotless white walls had not changed. Life rolled back. The 40's melted into blossoming teens. The run up the stairs, the noisy banter, the crazy muddiness of rain-drenched soccer, the roar of the class teacher ... all started coming back as if it was only yesterday. The hall came to life. The soft waft of the piano, the mellow violins, the saxophone, the clarinet, the scripture readings, the nervous solo hymns ... every little sound reverberated across the empty evening chapel. The voice of the Principal ... muffled, lost in the oblivion of dusty memory, a single word that used to refrain every morning, the start of every new day for so many years ... "CHARACTER ... CHARACTER ... CHARACTER is everything. Build your character, boys. That alone would make life true and enriching ..." A bell rang downstairs - this time, a real bell - a gong that they all knew and loved. The boys in the forties jerked out of stupor. They scrambled down the stairs in a childish caper.

The reunion dinner had been laid. A grand gourmet spread. There were hundreds of faces spanning generations of pass-outs. There was an improvised dance floor and a live DJ. Sujit, Rajat, Debu – they laughed and they cried. The track on the console had changed from "Seasons in the sun" to "Kun faya kun". Rays of sunshine pierced the night sky. Rainbows shone through the tears. Life, suddenly, had a whole new meaning - new dreams, new hope, new resolve – a realization of enormity far transcending the narrow crevices of pall and gloom and negativity. A new awakening had happened. The boys had a homecoming. When they left, they had forgotten to put back their masks and left behind their broken shells.

This is a real-life story of real-life people. If some of you ever feel like the guys I've talked about or if the tribulations of life make you even a fraction as beleaguered and as despondent as them, you can do what they did.

**Take time off and visit your school. It would work wonders for you.**