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Nurture Alternate Passion at Any Cost

By Ananda Shankar Jayant | Published: 09th April 2016 10:00 PM | Last Updated: 07th April 2016 04:29 AM

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An invitation to speak at the 'Inspire series' of the India Conference at Harvard saw me early February, alongside, institution builder Pramath Sinha, Michelin-starred chef Vikas Khanna, and fashion designer Anita Dongre.

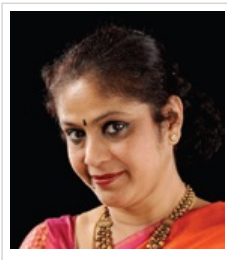
The string of commonality among the four speakers was the whole-hearted pursuit of innate passions and dreams. My own path has been one of engaging in my passion—classical dance—even as I continue to tread the echelons of administration.

In retrospect, I had liberated my passion from the overwhelming burden of livelihood, from the crushing yoke of success-bank balance-career-life calling cycle.

I had chosen not to tint my passion for dance, with the brush of monetising it as a single career choice. I truly believe that the binaries of 'chase your dreams' versus 'be responsible' are but constructs of our own mind. Life, work and passion need not be an 'either or' option. The trick here is balance—between what you love to do and what you need to do, to keep doing what you love to do, so that our unique talents can be channelised and actualised.

Ensure your pension, but don't give up your passion: I exhorted the packed hall at the Harvard Business School. Yet, India's youth is overwhelmed by the weight of familial and social expectations, mostly measured by the size of paychecks they get. Running toward that unidimensional goal, the youth have a little mind-space to explore what their passions are, leave alone nurturing it. Alongside this overwhelming pressure to succeed socially and financially, is the lack of a safety net, to dissipate negativity caused by oneself and the exceedingly angry and violent world around us. Daily news brings in the worst, we can as humans, possibly descend to... ad nauseum, ad infinitum, thereby inuring us to the ugly, and somewhere this desensitisation catches up.

So how can we retrieve this situation and our own humanity? Education—yes, with the caveat of an equal engagement in the liberal arts, an equal integration of arts, at school and college levels.



There is a crying need for a new education policy to provide for this early accessibility to the liberal arts, for all, as it is not just investment in culture but also in social capital; for arts in their very nature are the best healers of anger, hate, fear, loneliness, isolation, lack of self worth, etc., at both the emotional and cognitive level. This early engagement also helps the young find and channelise innate talents and overcome negativity.



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It's this talent or passion that will find bridges between our outer world and inner landscape, helping us step up from the mundane and the routine, even as it brings extraordinary focus and attention to everyday life, and embellishes career, and nourishes one's core. For even as our youth embellish their core competency on the path to great careers, nurturing an alternate calling or passion will nourish one's core strength, that can become the well spring of supreme positive energy, entirely at one's command.

Today, India sits at the table of the world's nations poised to emerge a leader. To actualise this extraordinary period, we must invest in our largest resource—a young populace—and prepare the students with value and broad-based education that will help them find work-life balance, as they tread an increasingly complicated world with confidence and lead with equanimity the world they will create and inherit.

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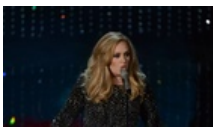
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