

We make much ado about anything and everything

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In Tamil, there is a saying that too much of even honey is poison. I am sure that similar sayings are there in other languages of this great nation. However, as a society with such a rich and diverse culture and heritage, we seem to have a national “obsession” with overdoing almost everything. I have often had an intriguing feeling to see this obsession causing so much of detriment to people. In public places, we see people talking loudly and endlessly without caring about others. In buses and trains, even during night, we can find people talking or sometimes quarrelling loudly. I have felt extremely embarrassed by such unruly behaviour of fellow Indians even in international flights.

Another thing I have noticed is that during travel, be it any mode, Indians seem to be munching eatables throughout their travel (probably except the time they sleep) which we cannot see in advanced countries, where people quietly read or listen to music. Indian weddings are noisy and elaborate with ritual after ritual and a flamboyant display of jewellery and other material possessions and, of course, food too. Besides, we make a fuss about every little thing. Our filmdom and media world are also obsessed with overdoing everything.

No Practical Skills

In, education, both the teacher and the taught (even many administrators) feel that imparting of too much information and doing a lot of things determine the quality of education. Most students in India write pages and pages of answers, containing just a mere reproduction of class notes or notes from guides without

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any kind of analysis, synthesis, knowledge integration and application to practical situations.

Even our public functions are elaborate events with lengthy speeches (that too, as many as one can possibly accommodate within the Indian stretchable time). Our governance is ridden with heaps and heaps of paper work, endless meetings and unimaginable formalities seldom found in progressive countries.

The ramifications of this collective phenomenon of overdoing everything can be observed at various levels, in areas of mundane daily living to more complex societal phenomena. I have been seeing a particular trend among small businesses, large corporate houses and even educational institutions, service industries and, to some extent, even among governments, State and Central. To cite an example, in an urban neighbourhood, after seeing one entrepreneur running photocopying shop profitably, several others open the same business, that too, on the same street and eventually, all of them go out of business.

Among educational institutions, a similar thing happens when schools and colleges mushroom in particular localities offering more or less the same types of course, competing with one another, without catering for far-flung, educationally deprived areas.

Service industries are no better either. In the case of governments, they regulate, control or restrict or even interfere too much; or go to the other extreme of liberalization, globalisation and privatization, resulting in further

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marginalization, alienation and social exclusion of some sections. Specifically in economic policies and programmes, we find an over-emphasis on “growth,” which is just an indication of doing much quantitatively without being able to achieve ‘inclusive’ and ‘sustainable’ development.

We see a rapid, ill-planned expansion of urban centres, mindless acquisition of motor vehicles, leading to unprecedented levels of pollution, chaotic traffic and ever-increasing accidents claiming precious lives; mind-boggling vertical expansion of housing stock with practically no consideration for safety, sanitation, water resources, energy utilization and skyrocketing real estate costs.

We, Indians, generally seem to be having the illusion that ‘doing more and more’ is indicative of success, achievement, progress and prosperity. What we fail to understand is that we need to return to the basics concentrating on the quality rather than quantity of anything.