

# HENSON HERALD

Today is the Autumn Equinox and I am writing from Freshwater Bay in Pembrokeshire under a blue cloudless sky. Emma Lockley is kindly creating another issue of Henson Herald to send to the usual band of suspects and I'm sure you'll join me in thanking her for her excellent edition. Our correspondent in southern India Professor TV has written in both in Tamil and English about his reaction to the Pandemic in the form of poetry. He portrays the dark thoughts brought to many in these difficult times. Daniel Goodyear from Lambeth has joined the team as a



Proud to be a member of  
**Staffordshire**  
Chambers of  
Commerce.

freelancer and will be editing *Sky Stoke* an e-magazine for teenagers and young adults. Daniel is a financial wizard and is already looking for sponsorship for the next issue. We wish him a happy and fruitful experience in his new role.

The first public book launch to be staged since lockdown in 2020 will be held at the New Victoria Theatre, Basford, on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October 10am. It's a free event so please come along and hear the recent authors who have published with NSP.

Coffion Cynnes

Malcolm Henson (MD)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

St John Fisher Catholic  
School.....2

We Are All Going Out  
To Create Memories by  
TV.....3

Book Sales Figures  
from the Publishing  
Association Yearbook  
2021.....10

Poems by TV.....11

Sponsors.....13

## ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC SCHOOL (NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME)

During the first lockdown in spring 2020, the library was used as a base for key workers' children and vulnerable pupils to come into school so its librarian Rose Edwards was deployed on to other services.

Whilst at home, she “scoured the internet” for important opportunities to engage the children with. “With the lockdown there were a lot of authors and publishers keen to get their books and websites with extra links for free to pupils who were having to spend most of their time indoors, so there were opportunities for free e-readers, free audiobooks, author pages and chats as well as competitions,” she says. “You name it, I found it.”

When all the children returned to school in September 2020, she introduced new starters to the library and familiarised all pupils with the online Library Management System (LMS) in case of further lockdowns. She also got pupils set up on an online system through which they could publish book reviews and now more than 800 have been written in the last academic year, for which they were rewarded with handcrafted certificates and chocolate.

When the lockdown started again in January, Edwards stayed fulltime in the library. Pupils who were in school could reserve books at home on the LMS, and come and collect from her, similar to the click and collect services running in many public libraries. Edwards made bookmarks for pupils to choose from each time they collected books to further incentivise borrowing. She also launched a library newsletter featuring input from authors and showcasing new library stock, which is now a regular fortnightly fixture.

Many parents came to collect books their child had reserved but Edwards also delivered some on her way home to self-isolating students, driven by her husband (as she is unable to drive). “Perhaps I should have sent my husband out on the minibus as a mobile library delivery service—that’s a thought for the future,” she says.

*The Bookseller*

WE ARE GOING ALL OUT TO CREATE MEMORIES...

BY

THANGAVELU VASANTHA KUMARAN

Aaron Jude Ravindran 14, my grandson in Class X, has gone back to school after nearly two years of online classes. He is in Class/Grade 10 which is a crucial year for higher secondary education.

Parents consider Class/Grade 10 a great hurdle to pass, for this class decides largely the stream, science or arts or computer science, their grades in school determine their higher secondary schooling in Plus 2 education, Classes 11 and 12. Once having passed his Plus 2, with good grades, Aaron would go on to college and then on to university education.



Higher Secondary Children back at school in Chennai, India

My daughter and I are both happy and worried that Aaron is at school in the pandemic.

We are happy because he is happy to back in school and is able to be with his classmates who he has not seen for several months.

We are worried because there is a fear lurking in our minds that he might get infected at school and that he might not strictly follow the **sops** for students.

There is worry written on my daughter's face when Aaron finally comes home from school after his first offline class after months. He is happy because he has seen his friends after so long. He has had small joys of seeing his classmates and giggling with them, although not in the usual jostle and embrace.



Sanitizing a classroom in an urban, private school, in Chennai, India

He is so animated and very excited and thrilled to be back on campus. He also reports that, with a slew of safety measures in place, with temperature checks as the students entered the premises and teachers at the entrance briefing children and parents about the requirements for strict adherence to mask-wearing and physical distancing norms, everything appears safe at school.

### **Schools, Colleges and Universities across India welcome students back on Campuses**

The regional newspapers report that there has been no major absenteeism in schools, colleges and universities of the states of the Indian Union. If any, the schools across the states have seen 60 per cent of the students return to campuses. Also, nearly 50 per cent of the college and university students have returned to campuses on the first of September.

The children at school and the boys and girls at colleges and universities have begun to live their lives online since March 2020. Some of them have gone back to their colleges and universities for one of their final days of college/university life.



Pandemic-ravaged India, people in the queue at a vaccination centre.





Back to school in New Delhi after several months of Lockdown

With nearly two weeks of offline classes gone, most students believe that their return to campuses will be cherished, even as there are some traces of uncertainty. Many report that their excitement to meet their friends and classmates has surpassed the lingering doubts and nervousness as to what their entry into campus would bring about in the next few days or weeks.



Students tested COVID-positive in Tamil Nadu after schools reopened

### **How do University Students feel about returning to the Classroom?**

On a visit to the University after the reopening, the classrooms are bustling with greetings, gossip and laughter. As I hear someone greeting a friend, 'Hi, Guys', I see many faces in the classroom light up with mirth and a commotion that followed. Then, in just a jiffy, the entire class of 8-10 youngsters breaks out in loud cheers and laughter. No one seems to notice a stranger in their midst quietly leaving the classroom.

A student at the University of Madras had this to say:

For more than a year, I have been staring at screens from closed spaces. Before the lockdown and the suspension of offline classes, I did enjoy almost a year of my learning in a real classroom, before COVID wreaked havoc on the world. Now that I have been living my life online, and nowhere near finishing my graduation, I am happy to be back.

My classmates and I would cherish September 01, 2021, as the day we have finally got into the classroom and university almost after a year of online learning. It is however sad for all of us because it is also one of the final days of our university life.

Another student of Archaeology had this to say:

I have entered my classroom with mixed emotions. There are still traces of uncertainty. There is also great excitement in meeting my friends. Of course, I have seen them online but nothing like seeing them in flesh. At the university, social distancing is not a problem for classes are small, with 12 to 15 students to a class at the most. And the classrooms are bigger. With 50 per cent of the class strength at attendance for offline classes, it is quite safe, too.

### ***Sops for Reopening Schools, Colleges and Universities And a Note of Caution***

*Besides proper masks, a social distancing of 2 metres and frequent handwashes for students, the institutions must adhere to the following:*

*All institutions should ensure that the classes, chairs and sporting equipment are properly cleaned and sanitized.*

*All students, teachers and support staff should compulsorily have taken both doses of vaccination. Certificates should be kept ready for inspection.*

*If any student shows symptoms of COVID-19, people in close contact should undertake an RT-PCR test.*

*Clean drinking water should be made available for all students.*

**Note:** *But the fact remains that children below 18 years of age have not been vaccinated as yet, although their vaccination in India has long been approved. The states of the Indian Union have been busy vaccinating people.*

*There has been a report that 25 per cent of the vaccinated health staff have contracted COVID-19, although none of the infected required hospitalization.*

*In the meantime, Tamil Nadu, for example, has begun an intensive campaign for vaccination of all ages and thousands of vaccination centres are being set up across the state, on a war-footing.*

A third student of Sociology had this to say:

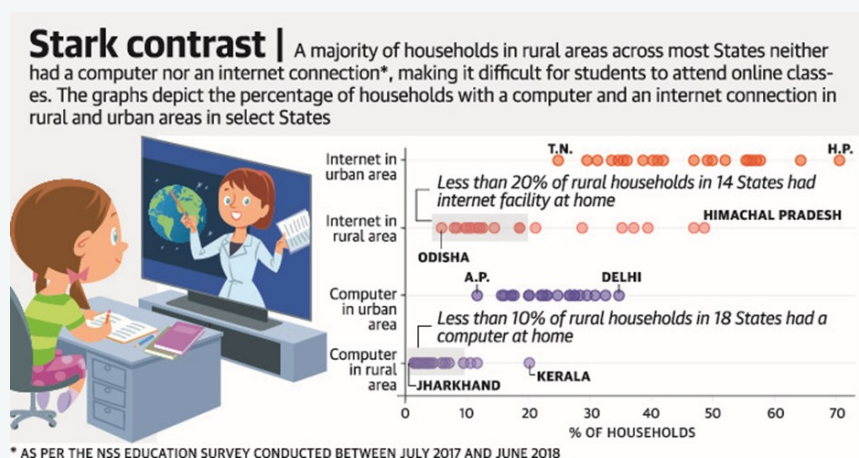
We are happy to be back. Our professors looked very different on Zoom. They are very pleasant and fair. We like them because they are now more friendly and they do understand what we have been through because they have been through the same, daily ordeal of online classes. But...

Given the imminent possibility of a third wave, in India, we are not sure how long the offline classes will go on and last. There is uncertainty all around and we know it is pervasive. What matters however is that we are together now. And we are going all out to create memories that would last for a long time.

### An Assessment of Online Learning

The joys of students on campuses aside, there are apprehensions that online learning has not helped: while only some students have been able to study online, learning has not been accessible to most.

Two surveys, namely, (a) School Children's Online and Offline Learning (SCHOOL) and (b) Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), have evaluated the impact of the pandemic on learning.



Digital Divide and Online Access in India

In August 2021, only 8 per cent of rural children and 25 per cent of urban children in India studied online regularly. Among them, many have found it difficult to follow the curriculum and several others have experienced connectivity issues.

Many children have faced mental stress and some have even attempted suicide after being unable to afford smartphones to attend online classes. There have been some deaths as well.

## The Two Surveys

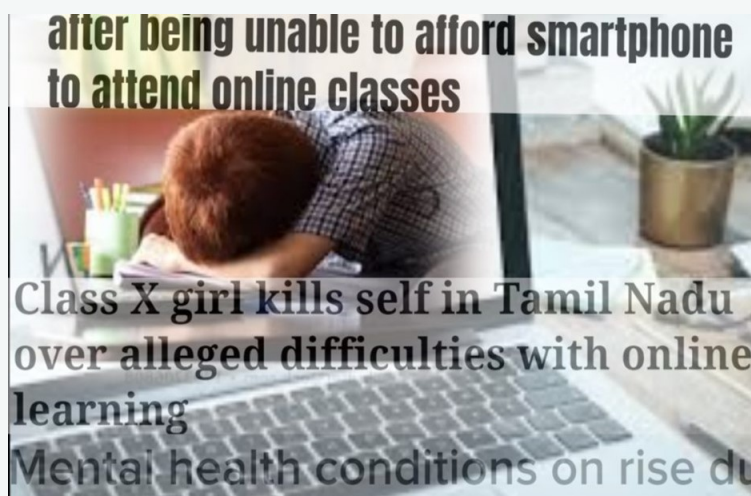
This year ASER conducted a study in March 2021 in 24 districts of Karnataka state alone, to estimate learning loss and understand the current status of learning in the country. A total of 18,000 children in the age group of 3 to 16 has been assessed for their reading and arithmetic skills.

The SCHOOL survey has covered 1,362 underprivileged children in August across 15 states. The survey has focused on children from rural hamlets and urban slums, who attend Government schools. Nearly 60 per cent of them has been from the Scheduled communities, Dalits and tribes.



Schooling in the Pandemic: NGOs to the rescue in poor and marginal areas.

The ASER survey has been conducted by the NGO Pratham, covering 18,385 children from 13,365 households between the ages of 5 and 16 years. It is the first since the pandemic set in.





## **Major findings of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) August 2021**

- The report states that there is a slight shift in enrolment from private to government schools across all age groups.
- The survey reports nearly a year of 'learning loss' among students across the State.
- The decline in foundational skills is visible throughout the elementary grades, among students enrolled in government as well as private schools.
- The report finds that 56.8% of Class/Standard I students surveyed are unable to **read letters**.
- In comparison, the 2018 ASER states that 40% of Class I students were unable to read letters. This is a drop of over 16 percentage points.
- About two-thirds of Class VIII students (66%) can read a **standard II text**, compared to 70% in 2018.
- The study notes that only 9.8% of the Class III students can read a standard II level text. In 2018, however, 19.2% of the students in the same category were able to read a Class II level text.
- There is a similar drop in learning level in reading skills in Class V as well as Class VIII.
- The decline in learning levels is **steeper in the arithmetic skills** of the students.
- Nearly two-fifths (42.6%) of the students in Class I are unable to recognise numbers one to nine.

The survey has shown that 28 per cent of the rural children have studied regularly while 37 per cent of them have not at all. Only 8 per cent of them have regularly attended online classes or learned through videos.

In Tamil Nadu, the state Government has pitched in with Kalvi TV, telecasting lessons for the students of the Government schools and the poor urban and rural areas. Education of children through television has not taken off in the country despite regular educational broadcasts on the National TV Doordarshan.

Whereas a fourth of the students in urban areas have had regular private tuitions, only 14 per cent of the students in rural areas have had such an opportunity.

A little less than a fifth of the students have studied at home without help in urban areas while only 15 per cent of the students of the rural areas have had such a chance of learning without help and regularly.

A fifth of the urban students and nearly two-fifths of rural students have not studied at all during the pandemic.

Lack of online materials or unavailability of a device has been the major challenge for 43 per cent of the rural parents concerning online materials and for 36 per cent of them concerning smartphones.

Learning loss due to lack of online materials and the unavailability of a device means that nearly a third of the Class V students cannot read Class II level texts. The share of the Class V students who can do subtraction is 42 per cent of the Government schools and 50.4 per cent of the private schools.

There has been a general decline in reading and mathematical skills in Class V and Class VIII students in the country.

### **Teachers on a Learning Curve and Innovation**

Teachers, it appears, have been on a learning curve. There is the case of a private Girls' High School in Chennai where the teachers have stretched themselves to pre-record lessons in WhatsApp, for students from one-smartphone households who cannot afford to attend live online sessions.

In this Gopalapuram school, when thrust into online classes, a clutch of digital immigrant, textbook loving teachers have bumbled their way into digital literacy. They have slowly become more comfortable in front of the screen, so to speak, from bewilderment to poise.

Thinking back on the learning trail and curve, the pre-recorded video lessons with the easy medium of WhatsApp seems the perfect solution and innovation. This has later been suggested to a teacher of another school in the city and she has come out with very impressive results for her students.

The experience has been like rediscovering the happiest moments when life seemed to stand still to allow for a taste of pure bliss. The fact of the matter is that it can be repeated and with more new ideas and innovations.

## **PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION YEARBOOK 2021 STATISTICS**

Unit sales of printed books increased by 6% in 2020 for fiction, but this was outweighed by decreases in volume sales in all other categories, and particularly for ELT. Printed ELT unit sales were 34% lower in 2020 than in 2016, with double digit decreases also seen for school and academic and professional books over the 5 years whilst there was a 3% drop for fiction and non-fiction and reference. Children's volume sales grew by 2% over the 5 year period (Table 1.2c). Table 1.2c Publisher sales of printed books: by category (net units) TOTAL Fiction Non-fiction/ reference Children's School ELT Academic/professional m m m m m m m 2016 646.1 117.4 200.5 174.7 48.2 61.4 43.8 2017 651.0 121.2 200.7 179.9 44.6 59.0 45.5 2018 655.7 114.4 206.8 189.7 46.1 57.8 40.9 2019 653.4 108.2 211.3 189.3 45.8 59.0 39.8 2020 607.2 114.5 194.4 177.3 41.9 40.3 38.8 % change in sales 2017/2016 +0.8 +3.2 +0.1 +3.0 -7.4 -4.0 +4.0 2018/2017 +0.7 -5.6 +3.0 +5.4 +3.2 -2.0 -10.1 2019/2018 -0.3 -5.4 +2.2 -0.2 -0.7 +2.1 -2.6 2020/2019 -7.1 +5.8 -8.0 -6.3 -8.5 -31.7 -2.6 2020/2016 -6.0 -2.5 -3.0 +1.5 -13.2 -34.4 -11.3 NB: % changes calculated prior to rounding. Between 2016 and 2020, the non-fiction and reference sector saw its share of unit sales of printed books rise from 31% to 32% (a level also seen for each of the last three years), while children's book share increased from 27% to 29% (also seen in each of the last three years). Fiction's share rose slightly from 18% to 19% since 2016.

## **Telling Stories**

I am a father  
and a husband and  
between the two  
everything is spontaneous.

In my household,  
Everything is staged and controlled  
Even down to where I stand or sit.

Concentrating on one woman  
for so many years, oh My,  
what did I get myself into?

I see strangeness  
sitting around the house  
and in a very sterile home bubble  
and looking at things  
that seems very odd.

Demons and ghosts seem  
to lurk everywhere,  
in garages, shelves, bathrooms  
and behind dangling curtains  
and top of attics.

They are there always  
in perfect darkness  
and perfect posture and silence.

The worst is that  
they seem to talk with you  
and you see them smile,  
and they seem to tell  
jokes and stories.

Then they are  
completely different people,  
even better than my wife  
and children.

T. Vasantha Kumaran August 28, 2021

### **Tired of carrying life about!**

i am 72,  
i have four children,  
a girl and three boys;  
i live with my daughter,  
for my sons are sort of  
degenerates and asthenic  
and oh my! hen-pecked  
i suffer from depression  
and have done it for years.  
i hide it  
but it hurts 'coz  
it involves alcohol  
and razors  
and it oh so hurts  
and so I hide  
away from life and  
suffer in silence.  
i battle with depression  
for manic episodes last  
so long and  
it sure gets heavy  
carrying the shit about.  
i feel tired  
lugging it about.

T. Vasantha Kumaran  
September 02, 2021

### **Pain and Bewilderment (in the Pandemic)!**

modern life  
is a mystery.  
stubborn pathologies,  
alienation,  
isolation,  
anomie,  
anomy,  
powerlessness  
are united and  
are facist mysticism!  
progress,  
creativity  
are new-age self-ideology!  
new-age resolution and  
quality of being resolved is  
far from reach.  
experience of love,  
fear,  
hatred,  
grief and worry  
are all frighteningly traumatic!  
mein kampf  
QAnon and  
supramental consciousness  
are all pain and bewilderment  
in the pandemic!!

T. Vasantha Kumaran  
March 02, 2021



High quality advice  
delivered at a personal level

**deans**  
your partner in business

## FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION COVERING ALL OF STAFFORDSHIRE

All sectors covered:

- Individuals
- Partnerships and Sole Traders
- Small and Large Companies/Groups
- Trusts and Pensions
- Academies and Schools
- Agricultural and Medical



Our services include:

- Accounting and Audit
- Taxation and VAT
- Book-keeping
- New Business Start Up
- Corporate Finance
- Business Valuations
- Payroll



**TEL : 01785 258311**



Gibson House, Hurricane Court, Hurricane Close, Stafford ST16 1GZ

Email: [info@deansaccountants.com](mailto:info@deansaccountants.com)

[www.deansaccountants.com](http://www.deansaccountants.com)

Henson Editorial Services & North Staffordshire Press, Smart Innovation Hub, Denise Coates Foundation Building, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5NS

Henson Editorial Services, Unit 12 Dark Gate, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, SA31 1PS

Email: [enquiries@hensoneditorial.com](mailto:enquiries@hensoneditorial.com)

[Ellie@hensoneditorialservices.co.uk](mailto:Ellie@hensoneditorialservices.co.uk)

<http://www.northstaffordshirepress.com>

<https://hensoneditorialservices.co.uk/>

@EditorialHenson



Staffordshire Chambers  
**BUSINESS AWARDS**  
COMMENDED

**19**

