

English for you

K S Yadurajan

Join in a fascinating exploration of the English language, its structures and meanings; idioms, phrases and proverbs. Feel free to ask questions, not just on what you find in the column but on other matters as well.

A MISCELLANY OF COMMON USAGES

1. Cattle class

Referring to India's economy class air travel. Mr Shashi Tharoor seems to have called it 'cattle class'. This immediately set off a furor. Mr Tharoor was forced to apologize and withdraw the expression.

'Cattle class' may mean (1) class used for transporting cattle (2) a class with such low passenger amenities as to be fit only for cattle. Obviously it was this second meaning the Minister had in mind. But his detractors took it to mean in the first sense. They immediately concluded that the Minister had compared the people who travel in the economy class as being no better than cattle.

What a pity! Instead of taking the Minister's words in the intended sense and demanding better facilities from the airline companies, they extracted an apology and that was that.

Is it that we lack a sense of humour? Or that we fail to see how versatile the language is and in what ways it can be used?

More than a year ago our (then?) Ambassador to the US was in hot water when he referred to MPs who were opposed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (which was then yet to be signed) as 'headless chicken'. The Ambassador escaped parliamentary censure by less than a whisker.

The comparison was apt in the sense that a headless chicken will stutter about with no sense of purpose or direction (having no head and so no eyes). Since the P M had already given his consent to the treaty at Washington, and the cabinet had also approved it, what was the point in protesting against it?

2. The Lie

When President Obama addressed

the House on the Health Care Bill, at one point a Republican Member – the Republicans are opposed to the Bill – called out, 'You lie'.

Later the Member offered his apologies to the President and they were accepted. The House (with some Republicans supporting the motion) 'reproved' the errant Member.

'Reprove' is less severe than 'rebuke'. The underlying meaning in both cases is to censure or criticize a person for having done something wrong, unacceptable. 'To reprimand' is a stronger term; also it is the term used in case of officials. A higher authority may reprimand a lower officer for, say, dereliction (negligence) of duty.

The Republicans and the Democrats are sharply divided on the question of Universal Health Care. But the way the members conducted themselves – apart from a discordant shout by one member –

was something to watch, in sharp contrast to the scenes generally witnessed in our own Lok Sabha.

But it was not always so. A writer in 'The New York Times' under the title 'Joe Wilson's War' (Joe Wilson, Republican of South Carolina, was the member who shouted: 'You lie!') describes how things were in the pre-civil war days.

'Men pulled knives and guns on one another. There were shoving matches and canings – the most notorious being the 1856 attack by Representative Preston Brooks, Democrat of South Carolina, on Senator Charles Sumner, Republican of Massachusetts. Tables were flipped, inkwells and spittoons went flying. Occasionally there was a grand melee with dozens of congressmen pummeling one another, emerging after a few minutes of mayhem with torn clothing, assorted bumps and bruises and

topees askew. Not surprisingly, accompanying all of this was a slew of insults.'

Most powerful of them all was 'the lie direct'.

And what may that be? To understand that we go to Shakespeare. In 'As You Like It' Touchstone explains the various stages of a verbal encounter.

'The first, the Retort courteous; the second, the Quip modest; the third, the Reply Churlish; the fourth, the Reproof valiant; the fifth, the Countercheck quarrelsome; the sixth, the Lie with circumstance; the seventh, the Lie direct.' (As You Like It, Act 5, Scene 4).

In those days when a gentleman was accused of lying, there was nothing left to do but to fight a duel (or a protracted, careful negotiation).

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Have you got something to tell us about amazing facts of science? If so, do mail us your articles (not less than 300 words) to edex@expressbuzz.com along with your photograph.

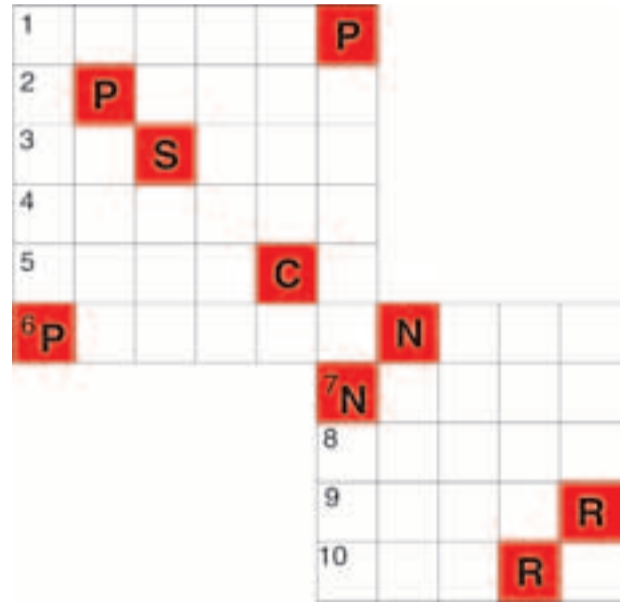
THE RULE OF TEN

In the puzzle below, the crossword has the essential feature of a Word Square viz. a row and its corresponding column houses the same word. Do remember, row or column, the word is the same.

— By R Gopalakrishnan

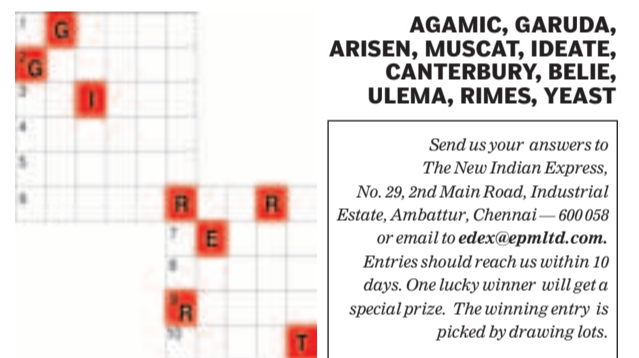
CLUES

1. Give a new and improved form or structure (6)
2. Heroic or grand in scale (6)
3. A person's facial expression (6)
4. Remove the letters of TEN & PIT from INCAPACITATE and reorder the remaining letters. (6)
5. Mysterious tricks performed for entertainment (6)
6. Mild jokes (10)
7. This raises water from a stream using a chain of pots or buckets revolving around a wheel driven by the water current. (5)
8. Remove from TAPESTRY the 3-letter word meaning a tailless gorilla and form the word with the rest of the letters. (5)
9. A vertical section between the treads of a staircase (5)
10. (Indian) Religious pilgrimage (5)



Winner of the November 16 issue: Dr.K.N. Viswanathan, Prof of Medicine, SMV Medical College, Puducherry-605107

ANSWER FOR NOVEMBER 16 PUZZLE



AGAMIC, GARUDA, ARISEN, MUSCAT, IDEATE, CANTERBURY, BELIE, ULEMA, RIMES, YEAST

Send us your answers to The New Indian Express, No. 29, 2nd Main Road, Industrial Estate, Ambattur, Chennai – 600 058 or email to edex@epmtid.com. Entries should reach us within 10 days. One lucky winner will get a special prize. The winning entry is picked by drawing lots.

pc shortcuts

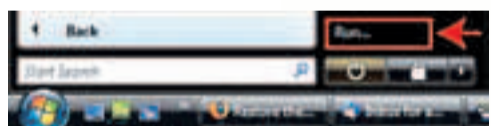
Windows Vista Run Command

WINDOWS XP users are used to having their Run Command, but when Vista came out this function was condensed down into the Search Bar. It works basically the same, but there are purists out there that miss the Run Command, proper; as it originally was in XP. So let's learn how to bring it on back!

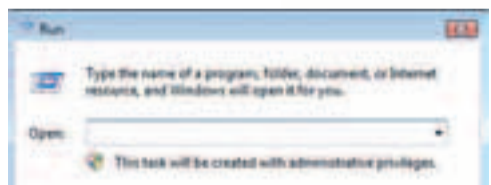
Right-Click the Start Button and choose "Properties". Then select the Start Menu tab and click the "Customize" button.



About three quarters of the way down the list of customization choices, put a check next to the "Run Command" option, then click "OK"



If you just want to skip permanence, then hit the Windows Key + r. That should bring up the Run Command right away.



Happy Learning,
—Manickavel Muthusamy
manicexp@yahoo.com

The more you give to another person, the more joy and fulfillment you experience

Life Sutra By **AVIS**

(The author is an Evangelist of Human Spirit, a Performance Enhancement Coach and a Reputation Consultant. He can be reached at avis@imagequity.in; <http://sixsigmaforthesoul.blogspot.com>)

Go, touch a life!



Illustration: Tuhin Chakraborty

In a recent interview, Shiv Nadar, the founder-chairman of HCL Corp, among the richest people in India, said that he felt he should have taken to philanthropy a lot earlier in life. He was answering a question on what he felt he should have done more in his life. Nadar then went on to outline how setting up his University was now his focus and how much joy he was getting from just giving his time, his money and attention. Bill Gates was driven by the same sense of purpose when he quit as CEO of Microsoft Corp and started giving away his wealth to projects that can make our world a better place for everyone.

Sometime ago, a young 18-year-old boy, over a cup of coffee, taught me an important lesson. He said he was choosing to pursue a career in Economics so that he could understand how economies worked and use his learning to transform the lives of all those who were hungry and poor. "I don't want to wait till I am 40 to realise that I have the capacity to touch and transform another life. I am starting now," he had stated emphatically.

Clearly, the teenager's message-which Nadar and Gates were to discover a trifle late in life-is all about awakening to the real purpose of our creation. If we have not touched another life, we haven't lived a life of purpose.

Unfortunately, we don't quite get this elementary truth easily. We lead our lives chasing materialistic goals, protecting possessions, fighting fires and brooding over the past. Where then is the time to even stop and look at another life, let alone touch it?

A 'shocking' secret about life is that the more you give to another person-your time, your money, your attention, your knowledge, your shoulder-the more joy and fulfillment you experience and the more enriched you become. The irony is we think exactly the opposite, hoard everything we have, and crave for that elusive joy of our lives.

Be sure. You too can practice giving and touching another life. Here's how. Define what you have and don't have in your life. It is normal for us to focus on what we don't have and worry about it. Instead, flip the paradigm, and focus on giving away what (ever) you have. And watch the magic happen in your life.

For instance, you are a student, who aces History, but is poor in Math. Instead of brooding over your poor grades in Math, help someone in your class who is struggling with History. As a high-flier with an MNC, you have little time for yourself. Money, however, is not an issue. Write a cheque each month to support a local charity and go across personally to hand over the donation to them. You are losing in business because of certain strategic mistakes you made and are noticing that another entrepreneur is struggling to enter your domain. Instead of treating him as your competitor, go share your learnings from running this business with him. You can't eat much because of your heart condition, complications from diabetes and obesity. Instead of craving for food, go feed the hungry on the street, every single day.

Nothing works like giving folks. You will soon find someone helping you with Math or more time becoming available for yourself and your family or your business picking up or your health stabilizing-as the case may be. There is no magic here, really. It is just that you have risen above your obsession with yourself and what you don't have and have given away selflessly-what (ever) you have. This has caused you to log in to the Universe's frequency. In essence, we are like mobile phones who need a network signal to perform all key functions like Voice, SMS and Internet. Let's heed the teenager's clarion call and get started. By touching another life, we will now be able to get grace (a.k.a life's signal strength) in abundance and, therefore, live a life of joy, success and fulfillment.

TOWARDS THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED!

(Continued from page 1)

Experts suggest this is an area, which should be dealt only at the postgraduate and research level. "A degree in bioinformatics is unfortunately much sought after. A lot of this arises from the ill informed hype that has been built up around it. Students do not always realise that what is important is a good foundation in physics/math/chemistry/biology/computer science/engineering and bioinformatics needs to be built on top of that. As a viable career/bioinformatics needs to be taken to the research and doctorate level," explains Prof Krishnaswamy from the Madurai Kamraj University.

He also advises that a good doctorate with training in bioinformatics has lot of potential. "For example in the advanced post graduate diploma course in bioinformatics we ran for

more than 10 years, almost 80 per cent finally went in for PhD programmes either after going through industry or academia," he says.

Healthcare informatics

Healthcare informatics or medical informatics is a term describing the use of information technology within the health care industry. Medical informatics deals with both the clinical and public health aspects of health care. Medical informatics and Bioinformatics (also known as computational biology), are sometimes grouped together and called, more broadly, Biomedical Informatics.

"Currently Amrita University is the only University in India that offers a full-time two-year Masters' in Medical Informatics. I have been associated with formulating the Course Content there when I was a faculty at the Centre for Digital

Health. Currently I offer a fully online 12-week Certificate Course on Health Informatics at PSG IMS & R: <http://psgimsr.in/online-hi/>

There are a few other distant mode certificate / diploma courses



from India that are based on printed text materials and for ethical reasons I shall not comment on them. In my online course I have been getting

students from all over the world - eg, USA, UK, Europe, Africa, Iran, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The general feedback is very good since all my modules have a mandatory time-bound assignment that is akin to a real life problem," says Dr Suptendra Nath Sarbadhikari, (MBBS, PhD) the Founding Chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics at PSG IMS&R, Coimbatore and also the Editor-in-Chief of the Indian Journal of Medical Informatics (2007-2011).

Currently job openings are not many in India. However, participants successfully completing courses on health informatics are likely to be involved in the identification, planning, implementation and use of computer-based information systems in all areas of the healthcare industry, including hospitals and health directorates.

Right now not many hospitals in India are fully digital. However, within 5 - 10 years the laws of the land will most likely require mandatory digitization of the hospitals. The early movers are likely to benefit more in such a scenario.

"Those who take up training in such disciplines now (when there is clearly not much of a demand) will naturally gain a lot as and when health informatics in India becomes a routine requirement. My personal guess is that within the next 5-10 years all healthcare delivery will be somehow linked to ICT. Even the WHO aims to make all persons in the world have access to an informed healthcare provider by 2015. Anyone (either from healthcare or technology background) associated with and/or interested in healthcare delivery can pursue such courses," Dr Sarbadhikari says.