Byju's co-founder tells kids to look for math in daily life

Arpita.Misra@timesgroup.com

There is symmetry in a snail, geometry in building blocks, and fractions in that pizza you share with your pals. And the cricket scoreboard could double as a math blackboard too.

Mathematics is beyond books and rooted in things around us, and for every child we need to find a hook that'll get them hooked to the world of numeracy, says Divya Gokulnath, co-founder of education technology giant Byju's. Math is crucial in rapidly growing areas like AI/ML, blockchain, cryptography (used in cybersecurity).

Divya is a BTech in biotechnology from RVCE, Bengaluru, and a VTU (Visvesvaraya Technological University) rank-holder. She fell in love with math after she started attending Byju Raveendran's aptitude classes in 2007-2008. "At that time, Byju was just starting off. I got to know about him

NATIONAL MATHEMATICS DAY

National Mathematics Day is celebrated every year on December 22 to recognise the achievements of mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, who was born on this date in 1887

through someone. The way he taught math connected to real life. Very complex looking problems would be solved just using common sense. My perception about the subject completely changed," says Divya.

From a learner, Divya became a teacher. She joined Byju, the founder of the company and now her better half, and started teaching math and data interpretation and reasoning to students, who were barely three-four years younger to her. Divya's first class had about 100 students. "To look more teacher-like, I'd often wear a sari to class," laughs Divya, who now tutors students of classes 4-7 in math and 8-12 in biology, on the Byju's app.

The phobia around math, says Divya, is often because of the way kids learn the subject. "In many places, addition and multiplication are taught separately. But the fact is, multiplication is nothing but repeated addition. Children need to understand the connection between concepts. There should be the process of enquiry and learning shouldn't feel like a chore," she says. On the app, the best testimonials Divya and her team get are when children say they have grown from hating to loving numbers.

To prepare kids for the unseen jobs of tomorrow, they need to be taught "how to learn" and not "what to learn", says Divya. "...Because studies suggest that for kids in primary school today, 63% of their jobs aren't even defined. We need to prepare them and that's possible only if they can learn, unlearn and relearn," she adds. Divya thinks engineers and technologists of the future will only be of better quality, as they'd all be digital natives, a born advantage.

Ask her about the big buzz around coding today, and Divya says the topic is not too far from making it into mainstream education, especially with the New Education Policy also underscoring it. "Just that it's not in the timetable yet," she says. She thinks coding today is how computer science was in the 90s. Some parents and children taking to it early on, some debating the right age for it. "But again, education is an investment, where you see the returns very late, never immediately," she says.

> 66 It is crucial for parents and teachers to understand that children aren't born fearing math. We must help children approach the subject by relating it to everyday things. It's a useful skill to have in the game of life
>
> **Divya Gokulnath |**
> CO-FOUNDER, BYJU'S