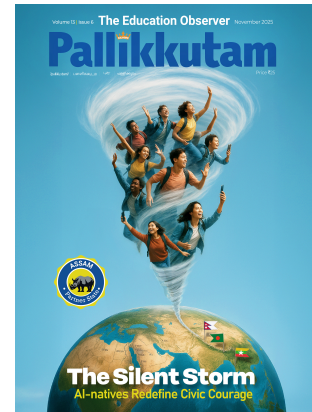


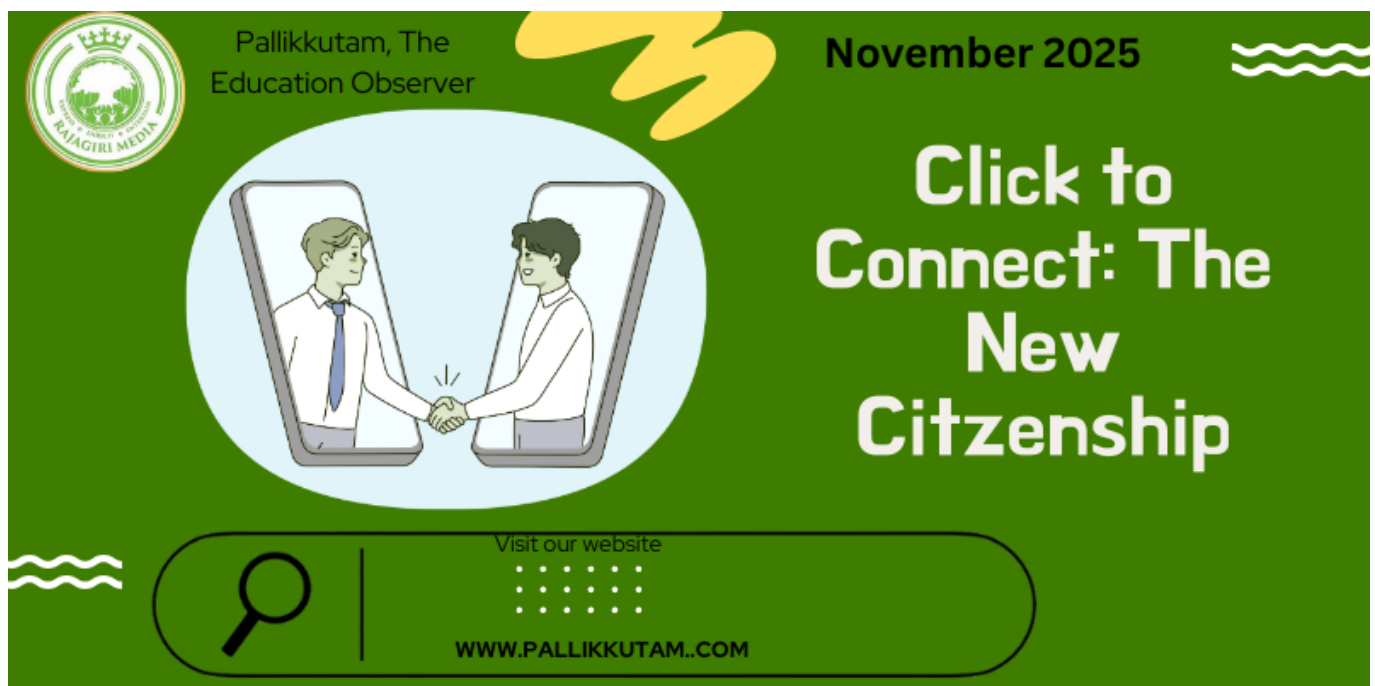
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Editorial

Click to Connect: The New Citizenship



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Spending long hours online and AI dependency may drive youth away from reality. Education rooted in reality creates responsible future citizens and netizens.

The quality of life within a republic is closely linked to the civic sense of its citizens. Scenes of littering, overflowing garbage dumps, road rage, harassment of women and children in public spaces, defacement of monuments, looting, and vandalism signify a lack of that sense. Article 51A of the Indian Constitution outlines the fundamental duties of every citizen, which include environmental protection, maintaining dignity, and preserving heritage. A well-developed civic sense can help reduce crime, create cleaner cities, and build stronger communities.

With the rapid expansion of the internet and the emergence of artificial intelligence, citizens are

also netizens in digital spaces. They now have greater access to information and wider social networks. Yet they are also increasingly exposed to information pollution in the form of fake news, misinformation, conspiracy theories, and deepfakes. Many react strongly to social issues such as unemployment, injustice, nepotism, and environmental degradation, though their responses are often fragmented, emotional, and short-lived.

AI-native generations spend a significant amount of their time in the cyber world and often turn to AI chatbots for emotional comfort and guidance. While this can provide temporary relief, it can also disconnect them from real life, keeping them within echo chambers and filter bubbles shaped by algorithms. The biases and hallucinations of AI systems can further distort their perception of reality. Hence, education for AI-natives must be designed to nurture civic sense by reconnecting learners with tangible experiences and helping them develop a grounded understanding of the world around them.

Education is a lifelong process that begins at home. How parents manage tantrums, arguments, and anger plays an essential role in shaping responsible citizens. Simple lessons such as tidying rooms, helping with daily chores, and comforting a crying child can cultivate empathy and concern for others from an early age.

Schools can build upon this foundation and extend it to the wider community. Every subject can be taught with relevance to real-world situations, enabling students to connect academic learning with social and environmental challenges. Such experiential learning not only enriches understanding but also instils a sense of purpose and responsibility.

The 121st Rajagiri Round Table Conference, held online on October 15, 2025, with the theme “Civic Sense in the Age of AI Companions,” emphasised the need for education rooted in real-life experiences. The discussions highlighted the importance of developing pedagogies and curricula that cultivate awareness of real social issues and equip students to address them through entrepreneurial thinking. Education must be both meaningful and productive, enabling students to earn by what they learn and to demonstrate that their learning has real value.

Instilling civic sense in netizens is a demanding but essential task. They must remain grounded in real life while navigating the complexities of the digital world. Their netizenship should strengthen their citizenship, guiding them to act with empathy, emotional intelligence, and a clear understanding of human realities.

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