

The newest city school: Burnet Woods

It had been only a couple of days since I arrived from the other part of the globe at the University, Cincinnati and the USA. I took my son to a public school, a good mile away, to enroll him.

It was near the school that I had my first encounter with the "issue." "Vote Yes For Issue 4," the poster planted on the school grounds exhorted in large letters. Preoccupied as I was with my kid's admission, I didn't read the lines following it. It didn't, however, come as a surprise. Back home in my country, India, the government pleads with the citizens to restrict their issue (children) to one or two, and keep the families small. A highly populated country doesn't have any alternatives but planned families for the country's economic growth. India has trucks painted with gems like "A small family is a happy family" or even a direct suggestion like "We Two, Ours Two."

"So recession has finally caught up to this country, to restrict family sizes," I thought. Being still an affluent country, it makes sense to stop with a fourth kid. As my mother says, "Ideally a family should have four kids, two boys and two girls."

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The other issues too, but I was not concerned.

I was a bit surprised that the issue was being referred to the public. Children are the future of any nation! I was pretty sure that this was one issue which would get a thumping "YES."

Nov. 2 has come and gone. Issue 4 failed to get support from the public. Well, what happens to schools now? Why should I worry about this issue? My stay in this country is going to be for one year only. What about the facilities in schools in my own country? Quite a few of the schools in India's villages have hardly any facilities. Teachers hold classes under the shade of evergreen trees. It was like that in ancient times. For want of funds, this tradition is continued to this day in a few places. Of course there is at least one university established with the sole aim of learning in a sylvan atmosphere.

The people I met in the school were very

The bulb on my head blinked on when I saw the TV images explaining what Issue 4 was all about. To be fair, the commercials explained

warm. But what is the use, if the heating system of the school is not in working condition?

Coming back to the local scene, I notice a subtle message in the voting preferences. People want beautiful parks but are no longer prepared to shell out money for schools. If school buildings really become uninhabitable, what is the problem? You have wonderful parks around. The kids can be shifted to parks where classes can be held. The kids, I am sure, will love that. Winters may be a problem. But what with so much money going for parks, setting up a few log cabins (didn't Lincoln live in one?), with a cozy fireplace should be an attractive proposition. What is the harm in going "Back to the Nature?" It may be the next fad to catch on.

Do I hear lip-smacking noise from the producer of "Jurassic Park?" Oh yes, Steven, you can buy this title for your next film. I will be satisfied if you acknowledge my name in small print just before you end the film. But please do remember to send the check for the schools in Cincinnati. It will keep the fire burning!

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