'Steal This Book'

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The extent of plagiarism in India is yet to be reckoned. Does rote learning encourage plagiarism? Does the lack of training in proper ways of acknowledging sources lead to inadvertant plagiarism? These are issues that need discussion. But there is no denying that plagiarism is more widespread than it appears to be. While it occasionally surfaces, there appear to be no standard process for dealing with it.

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The title of this essay is taken from a book by Abbie Hoffman having the same name. Hoffman who wrote the book in 1970, was a social activist and anarchist in the United States during 1960s, and was the co-founder of Youth International Party, Yippies.

Although Hoffman credited Izak Haber for doing extensive research for his book *Steal This Book* that got published in 1971, the latter accused the former of plagiarising his idea and work in the article entitled *An Amerikan Dream: A True Yippie's Sentimental Education or How Abbie Hoffman Won My Heart and Stole 'Steal This Book'*, which was published in the September 1971 edition of *Rolling Stone* magazine, writes Volker Grassmuck (2008).

As per the *Advance Chambers 21st Century Dictionary* (revised Indian edition, 2001), 'plagiarize' means "to copy (ideas, passages of text, etc.) from someone else's work and use them as if they were one's own". One gets a similar meaning of plagiarism from the *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, sixth edition (2000), which says that 'plagiarize' means "to copy another person's ideas, words or work and pretend that they are your own".

It is said that the best plagiarist is one who reads a lot, and knows the best places and sources from where to steal. However, if somebody is such a scholar in a particular knowledge stream, then why s/he should plagiarize in the first place! Among other things, one reason for the rising cases of plagiarism in the academic circle, especially in India, is the culture of rote learning a person undergoes during schooling.

Plagiarism and Rote Learning

Rote learning seldom allows a person to be confident about one's talent of writing, thinking independently or questioning creatively. Therefore, one always falls back to parroting the same words the teachers teach in the class, or learn by heart the same answers, which are printed in guide books (that are quite popular among Indian students). The ability to think imaginatively and differently as an individual is somehow pushed aside in the run-up to get good grades. If words do not flow out naturally while someone is asked to pen down his/ her thoughts, then it is legitimate to worry about the way education is imparted. The use of games, videos, plays, painting and information and communication technology helps children to broaden their thinking horizons and skills. However, in our conventional education system

such tools of learning are not given enough prominence, although they are gaining popularity lately.¹

It is most unlikely that in a conventional Indian school, a short story would end up with multiple meanings for different pupils of a class. Besides, a teacher celebrates that moment when everyone in the class writes the same answer, which is taught.

Media reports of en masse cheating by students during examinations point to the problem of rote learning. Rote learning that enters a child's psyche at an early age, gradually leads to a culture of plagiarism.

Scholars in the field of education opine that the advent of internet has encouraged students of say, secondary, higher secondary or undergraduate levels to find resources online for completing assignments. It has often been found that students are insufficiently trained about the ills of plagiarism or how to write something skilfully. The phenomena is quite rampant in India

Sometimes students plagiarize when they think that they are not going to be caught or when they believe that plagiarism is an accepted practice because of which their teachers won't penalize them. Due to inadequate training about the issue of plagiarism, students pursuing higher education do not learn how to attribute or give credit to an author whose original work they simply cut-copy-and-paste while finishing their projects, term papers or assignments. When an original piece of work is used for research, students are not educated how to paraphrase, rewrite and give proper citation. Although students doing assignments may present a passage in their own words, often they underestimate the use of citing the original source.

Robert Harris in his write-up entitled *Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers* (version dated 18 May, 2015) has lucidly explained that there are a variety of reasons for students to indulge in plagiarism. While some students find plagiarising an easy short-cut to complete assignment and save on time, others do it for the sheer pleasure of thrill in breaking the rules created by a teacher. Sometimes students plagiarise from a source, which is of poor quality because the source was freely available, downloadable or easily accessible, says Harris in his essay.

The website www.plagiarism.org explains why citation of sources is useful. It says that among other things, proper acknowledgement helps in finding the original source of ideas and indicates how much serious a student is about research. Another website, http://www.plagiarism.org also guides us on how to cite sources; informs us about various styles of citation that are used; says how and when to use quotes; gives the difference between quoting and paraphrasing; differentiates between bibliography, annotated bibliography and list of references; informs us about footnotes; and explains why plagiarism amounts to violation of copyright laws in the United States.

However, it is fairly safe to say that a student who is unaware of the perils of plagiarism may not know about the advantages of using proper citations, paraphrasing, quoting, giving the list of references, providing footnotes *et al*.

Implications of plagiarism

Lack of understanding of the issue of plagiarism affects research output at a later stage. Young scholars, working for projects in universities or research institutes, are sometimes found to cut-copy-and-paste other's work without attributing the sources that are used.

In 2011-12, Prof. CNR Rao, an Indian scientist, who was then a scientific advisor to the Prime Minister of India, got embroiled in a plagiarism controversy for writing a joint paper with Saluru Baba Krupanidhi and two Ph.D students, Basant Chitara and LS Panchakarla. One of the students Basant Chitara, who co-authored the paper for a scientific journal *Advance Materials* in 2011, later apologised and said that some portions of that paper were, lifted word for word from another paper by Surajit Ghosh *et al* (2010), which was published in the journal *Applied Physics Letters*.

It is not the case that professors and senior academicians are far behind in this race. There is ample evidence from the country to show that eminent persons plagiarize works of their fellow colleagues. Recently, the University of Hyderabad was awarded the first President's award for being the best university in terms of academic excellence and overall outstanding work (for the year 2015). However, in April 2016, the Vice Chancellor of University of Hyderabad Appa Rao Podile faced the allegation that he had plagiarized in three of his research papers (which he co-authored with others) published between 2007 and 2014.

Although the use of the plagiarism detecting software Turnitin is mandatory for students of University of Hyderabad when they submit their research papers for peer-review, in an interview given to *TheWire.in* Appa Rao has said that the use of anti-plagiarism software was not compulsory at the time his papers were submitted (please see the link of TheWire.in article dated 5 April, 2016 below).

The past history of plagiarism points out that even experts in the field of science and technology, steal works of young students and achievers. A report prepared by the Technical Expert Group on Patent Law Issues (set up in 2005), which was chaired by R A Mashelkar allegedly carried portions of a paper entitled 'Limiting the Patentability of Pharmaceutical Inventions and Micro-organisms: A TRIPs Compatibility Review', written by Shamnad Basheer in November, 2005. Shamnad Basheer was an Associate with the Oxford Intellectual Property Research Centre (OIPRC) of University of Oxford, and his work was funded by the Intellectual Property Institute. Facing criticisms from the media over the plagiarism issue, the R A Mashelkar Committee report was withdrawn in 2007 for re-examination and resubmission.

There are examples galore to indicate that the society at large becomes the victim due to plagiarism. Not only have the doers of such crime suffered when their acts of plagiarism were caught red handed, people whose hard work were copied without due credit also got hurt in the process. The quality of research particularly in science, technology, biotechnology, and other upcoming fields, therefore, require standards against plagiarism.

The movement of India towards a knowledge-based economy, access to higher education has become a focus of attention in the society. Even poor people have understood the importance of education and skills for upward socio-economic mobility. In such a scenario, the greed to achieve academic success within a short span of time and settle oneself comfortably in society at the expense of others with all material comforts is fast becoming the driving force for people to plagiarise.

Preventing plagiarism

One of the conventional ways to check plagiarism is to use softwares that can detect cut-copy-and-paste type submissions.

Among the anti-plagiarism softwares, Turnitin is quite famous but it is not freely available, unless one is enrolled in an academic institution to access it. For students, it is difficult to buy proprietary softwares because they have relatively low purchasing power. However, university libraries/ centres/ departments, research institutes and journals can purchase such softwares so as to detect plagiarized works and submissions. The online library resource of University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg (http://libguides.wits.ac.za/c.php?g=145299&p=952507) provides a list of various proprietary and free or open access softwares related to anti-plagiarism.

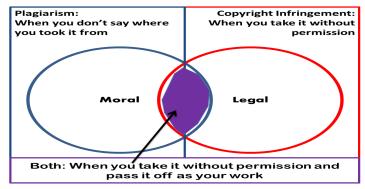
Softwares to detect plagiarism are useful for both open access and proprietary journals. Experts argue that open access or peer-reviewed journals should have anti-plagiarism policy so that plagiarized submissions are detected and filtered out. For example, regarding cutcopy-paste submissions. the **Symbiosis** Open Access Journals type (http://www.symbiosisonlinepublishing.com/plagiarism.php) has the policy that if a manuscript contains less than 5 per cent plagiarized content, manuscript ID will be provided but manuscript will be returned to author for revision. If manuscript contains less than 25 per cent plagiarized content, manuscript ID will not be assigned but author will be requested to revise the article/ paper. If manuscript contains more than 25 per cent plagiarized content, it will be rejected and author will be asked to rewrite the entire article. Digital submission of theses and dissertations by university students allows softwares to mine data and find whether a research work is genuine.

Experts argue that open access journals promote research. However, there is a general misconception among students that if something is available in open access format, then one can simply cut-copy-and-paste without acknowledgement. But as has already been said, the use of someone's ideas, texts, images etc. without proper acknowledgement actually amount to plagiarism, whether it is done from open access or proprietary journals. If a student is using text of some paper from a proprietary journal without paying the price or subscription fee (say by hacking), then it is both plagiarism and copyright violation.²

Plagiarism versus copyright violation

The website of University of Witwatersrand Johannesburg (http://libguides.wits.ac.za/c.php?g=145299&p=1355535) informs us that plagiarism and copyright infringement are two separate things. Put simply, I plagiarize something when I don't provide the original source, which I used. I violate copyright laws when I don't take permission from the publisher for using their material (Chart 1).

Chart 1: Difference between plagiarism and copyright infringement



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/e/e5/Plagiarism vs Copyright Infringement.png

There is another way to understand the difference between plagiarism and copyright violation. Plagiarism happens when I fail to give due credit to the author for copying material (which may be textual, ideas or images in 2-dimension and 3-dimension). I violate copyright laws when I fail to pay for using the resources or materials.

Plagiarism can take place without violation of copyright laws. If a work of William Shakespeare is used without due acknowledgement, then it can be termed as plagiarism but no copyright violation takes place in that case. It is because the copyright term has expired for the author who died long back in early 17th century.

Similarly, copyright violation can take place without plagiarism. This happens when I copy the movie *The Jungle Book* (released in 2016) from one DVD to another for profit or resale motive, but give due credit to the source viz. producer, director etc. of the original film, thus, avoiding plagiarism. The website of Project Gutenberg (https://www.gutenberg.org/) could showcase more than 50,000 free books because such books are no more protected under copyright laws.

The 'Terms of use' section of Project Gutenberg clearly says that "Our eBooks may be freely used in the United States because most are not protected by U.S. copyright law, usually because their copyrights have expired. They may not be free of copyright in other countries. If you live outside of the United States, you must check the copyright laws of your country before downloading or redistributing our eBooks. We also have a number of copyrighted titles, for which the copyright holder has given permission for unlimited non-commercial worldwide use". However, Project Gutenberg does not indulge in plagiarism because it provides due acknowledgement to the authors of books that can be accessed from the website.

In simple words, I indulge in both plagiarism and copyright violation when I take something from the publishers without permission and pretend to others that it is my original work.

When someone indulges in plagiarism, it is an ethical or academic offence, whereas violation of copyright laws is a legal offense. Plagiarism can lead to non-legal consequences, says one legal alert from Parlee McLaws LLP (2013).

Indian laws on plagiarism

The Section 63 of Indian Copyright Act (1957) that was amended in 2012 states that those who violate the law will be subjected to imprisonment and fine. It says that a person who

indulges in or encourages violation of copyright laws shall be imprisoned for a term between 6 months to 3 years and with a fine between fifty thousand and two lakh rupees.

If the violation of copyright laws, however, is not for profit motive, in that case the court may, for adequate and special reasons to be mentioned in the judgement, impose a sentence of imprisonment for a term of less than 6 months or a fine of less than fifty thousand rupees.

The Section 57 of Copyright Act give authors the right to claim authorship of their works. It says that authors can claim authorship of the work independently of their copyright and even after the assignment either wholly or partially of the said copyright.

The National Intellectual Property Rights Policy released on May 12, 2016 also says that the rights of creators have been strengthened as a result of recent amendments to the Copyright Act.

Originally, only books and publications received protection against copyright violations. So, copyright law earlier came under the ambit of Ministry of Human Resource Development. However, due to the recent amendments to the copyright law, films, music, industrial drawings etc. too are given protection against copyright infringement. The recently released National IPR policy says that the administration of the Copyright Act 1957 along with the office of the Registrar of Copyrights, will be transferred to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) from the Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Human Resource Development).

It has been recently decided that the copyright law will be brought under IPR. The IPR policy has also stated that the country's IPR regime is compatible with WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

Research output from India

A data analysis done by Richard Van Noorden (2015) entitled 'India by the numbers' shows that although the number of scholarly papers the country produces has increased by almost four times between 2000 and 2013, it has been outperformed by China. China spends 2 per cent of its GDP on research whereas in India's research spending as a percentage of GDP is just 0.9 percent. Published in the *Nature* news features, the report (May13, 2015) has relied on research output databases like SCIVAL or SCOPUS.

Elsevier's SCIVAL (https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scival) offers database of research performance of 7,500 research institutions and 220 countries worldwide. Similarly, Elsevier's SCOPUS (https://www.scopus.com/) provides abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature.

In a recent report published in the *Hindustan Times* entitled 'Just 4 institutes account for a third of India's research output', Sanchita Sharma says that although nearly 60 per cent of medical institutions in the country produced no research for a decade, and four medical colleges counted among the top 10 global institutes, published the most research output between 2004 and 2014. These 4 institutes are AIIMS (Delhi), PGMIR (Chandigarh), Christian Medical College (Vellore) and Sanjay Gandhi PGIMS (Lucknow).

Based on the open access database of research output from Indian Citation Index (http://www.indiancitationindex.com)³, (considered to be similar to international databases

like SCOPUS/ SCIVAL) covering around 1000 best Indian journals from various disciplines, an attempt has been made by the present author to see the trend in publication of 'research articles' from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi between 2005 and 2015. Jawaharlal University (New Delhi) has been chosen for the analysis because it ranks third among Indian universities, as per the India Rankings 2016 prepared by National Institutional Ranking Framework. Two science and technology institutions, namely Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) and Institute of Chemical Technology (Mumbai) are the top two universities in India

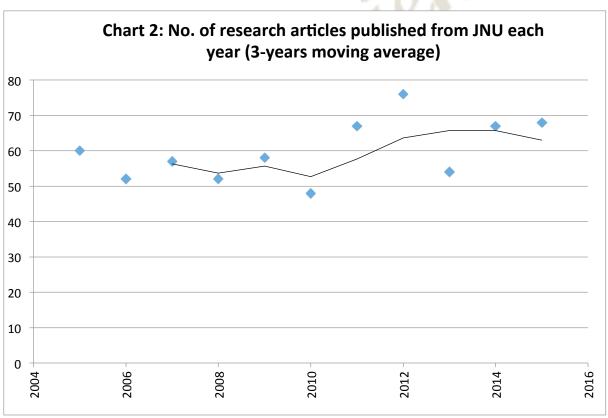


Table 1: Research articles published from JNU between 2005 and 2015

Years	No. of research articles published from JNU each year
2005	60
2006	52
2007	57
2008	52
2009	58
2010	48
2011	67
2012	76
2013	54
2014	67
2015	68

Source: Indian Citation Index (accessed at 3.00 pm on 15 May, 2016)

Table 1 shows that the number of research articles published from JNU has risen from 60 in 2005 to 68 in 2015, with fluctuations in between.



Source: Indian Citation Index (accessed at 3.00 pm on 15 May, 2016)

Note: The Chart 2 shows a 3-years moving average trend line on the number of research articles published from JNU each year. The trend line has smoothed out fluctuations in the data so as to indicate a clear pattern. Neither the linear trend line nor the exponential line are good fit to the data since in the former case the R-squared value is 0.269 and in the latter case the value stands at 0.257 (chart not provided here).

Over the period, there has hardly been any increase in the no of upublished articles.

What can be done?

The discussion that follows is based on a book edited by Haviland and Mullin (2009), what can be done by the faculty so as to create research temperament among students.

The book entitled *Who Owns This Text?: Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disciplinary Cultures* (2009) presents the findings of interviews that were conducted with the faculty across disciplines at various academic institutions in the US regarding their views on ownership, intellectual property and plagiarism. It finds out that how plagiarism is defined across disciplines such as computer science, sociology and archaeology.

In the book, an attempt is made to understand that why teaching students about plagiarism has not yielded desired results. Students often fail to distinguish between their own discourse and the discourse offered by sources. Carol Petersen Haviland and Joan A Mullin (2009) have observed that the generic definition of plagiarism and concomitant punishment of students could not tackle the problem. Therefore, through interviews they try to find out that how faculty across various disciplines deal with plagiarism. They analyse how the legal definitions of intellectual property, ownership and plagiarism work for academics.

The book informs us that text is considered as a property under the Intellectual Property (IP) framework. The book then goes on to find that how various disciplines define what is owned and what is not. Concluding, Haviland and Mullin (2009) point out that as copyright and anti-plagiarism laws get stringently defined and applied, complexities will arise on ownership issues during information sharing, mashups, collaborative research and creation of knowledge commons.

The authors have noted that being used to their intertwined systems of communication and citation, the faculty members were found to be sure about what constituted intellectual property and how collaborative practices add to knowledge. But members of the faculty were unable to articulate the same to their student. The students were not often taught in the conventions of their major disciplines/ fields.

Haviland and Mullin (2009) have suggested that there is need for a set-up or process "in which faculty can engage students, exploring with them the "who, where, when, what and—most importantly—the why" of disciplinary knowledge and knowledge building". This way "students will not merely "learn rules," but rather they will see the concepts that undergird the ways in which disciplines—and different instructors within those disciplines—shape their research questions and define their research practices as they build on, reconsider, or reject others' worlds through their particular lenses".

Haviland and Mullin (2009) emphasize on the role of "internal motivations" for faculty rather than just external ones so that they facilitate in creating knowledge, instruct students in major fields and tackle the problem of plagiarism. Faculty should indulge in studying and sharing research processes instead of just disseminating knowledge in the classroom, the editors have noted.

Haviland and Mullin (2009) have discussed the importance of looking beyond the conventional ownership practices, and explain the need to go online for accessing and understanding terms and conditions of ownership under Creative Commons, CopyWrong, or Flickr.

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¹ Mirambika Free Progress School (http://www.mirambika.org/Pgcw011.htm) is one such initiative (amongst many such world over) to impart holistic education among children (upto class X). The school was started at the DElhi dranctic sting said plobin the chirambic waste: Hosing ukaning hydranethor was by phoston adaptmentative ty 2014, http://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/article/2014/01/02/bob-swartz-losing-aaron/

³ Free access to Indian Citation Index database is for a trial period of 1 month from the date of registration. For more information, please log on to: http://www.indiancitationindex.com/ici.aspx?target=faq