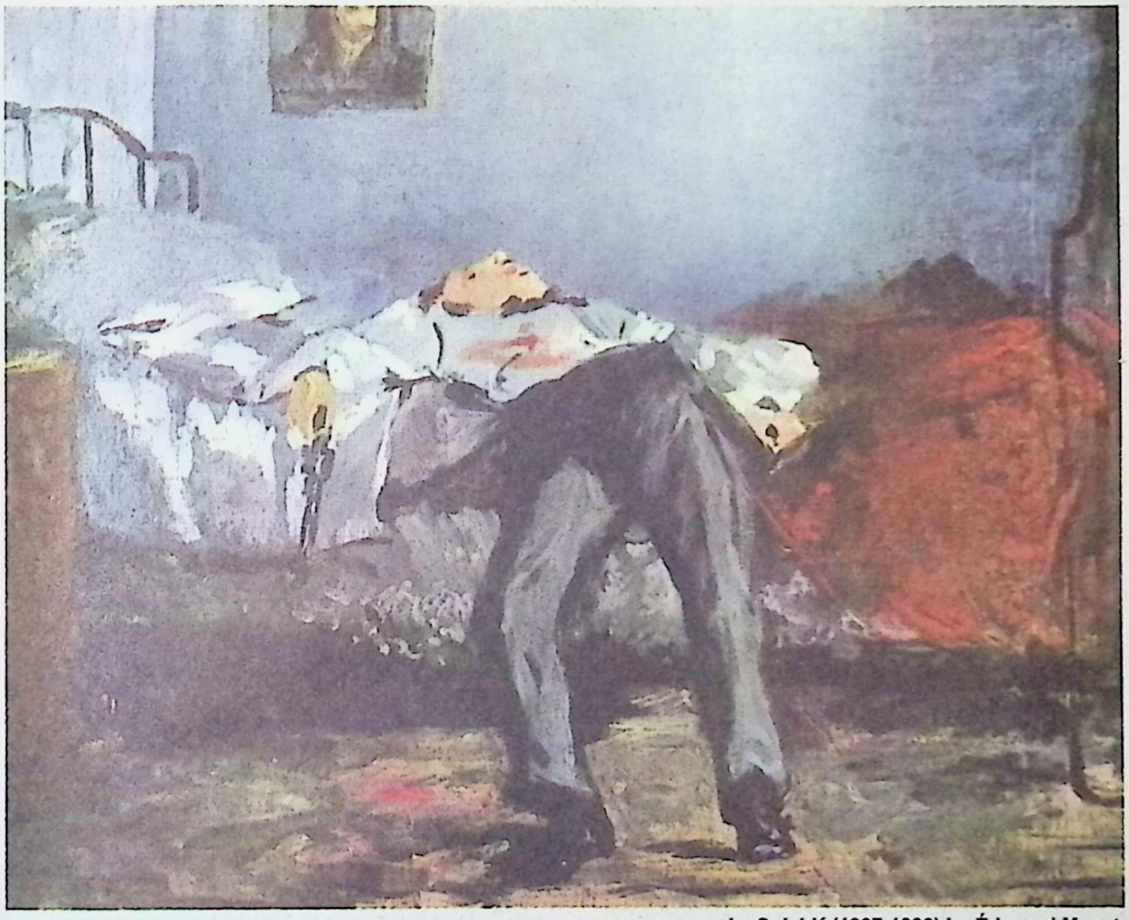


***Le Suicidé* (1887-1888) by Édouard Manet.**

There is no point denying that even confessing about having suicidal thoughts can lead to brutal bullying and stigmatisation in the hands of your peers and the society. When a young man turned to a widely popular Facebook page, posting a query to ways to end his life, people instantly thought that they had the upper hand in this situation, resorting to crude, judgmental statements and cruel jokes to drive home the point that his turmoil was not even worthy of attention. We need to acknowledge that many people use public forums in an effort to reach out, in hopes that some sympathetic stranger will tell them that all's not lost and that their lives are worth saving. Instead, they are usually ridiculed and shamed for suffering from depression and suicidal thoughts. In a country which has no active helpline or support group to help people in crisis, we need to have much more empathy when dealing with people who have such thoughts instead of leaving them to fend for themselves. It's no surprise that more and more youngsters resort to such a heartbreaking step instead of reaching out to someone, as to be honest, who is there to listen to them without judgment and bias?

Digital and online socialisation is not going away. If anything, with the growth of social avenues and platforms, young people will probably spend most of their time in front of a screen, building a virtual world of their own. We will continue to read and hear about youngsters taking their lives because of something they saw or read on the internet or the mass media. We, the parents, teachers, the media, and even the youth themselves, need to be more aware about the web of social and digital interactions. Guardians and teachers need to understand how the social media and the digital world work. They need to be easily approachable so that children who face depression or have suicidal thoughts can seek them and ask them for help. We don't need to state again that adolescents should spend more time away from the virtual world, and instead spend actual time having face to face conversations.

If you want to help your children steer clear from such dangerous thoughts as suicide, you first need to address the issues that are affecting them. You need to be empathetic and understanding. If we put in the effort to be there for them and to regard their concerns with utmost respect and attention as they deserve, we may yet see them return to us instead of resorting to the final option of death. ■