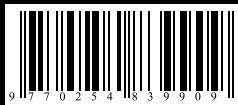


**ED RETURNING
THE BOOTY****IPL NEW STARS ON
THE HORIZON****WIDOWS GIVING BACK
THEIR DIGNITY**

www.indiatoday.in



MARCH 31, 2025 ₹100

OC

INDIA TODAY

The logo consists of three large, stylized lowercase letters 'g', 'd', and 'b'. The 'g' is orange, the 'd' is blue, and the 'b' is green. Each letter has a white eye-like shape in its center, and the letters are interconnected.

MAPPING INDIA'S GROSS DOMESTIC BEHAVIOUR

**A PIONEERING SURVEY REVEALS STARTLING
TRUTHS ABOUT THE CIVIC AND SOCIAL
ATTITUDES OF INDIANS**

Amul

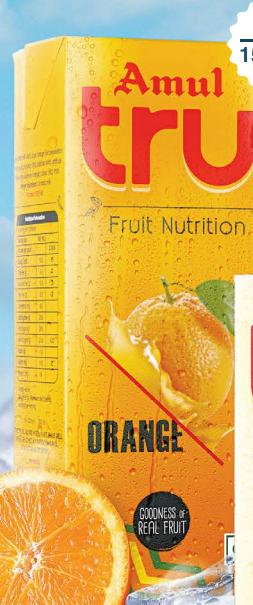


TRU LOVE with EVERY SIP of AMUL TRU

COMING
SOON



Refreshing flavour
in every pack.



*MRP (incl. of all taxes). Conditions apply.

There is much talk in India about becoming the third largest economy in the world in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) by 2030. This is a valid ambition that India must work aggressively towards achieving. Besides that, other factors determine whether a nation is regarded as a developed country: high human development indices straddling health and education, and world-class infrastructure that facilitates both ease of living and business. Yet there's another layer of reality that these criteria do not capture. This week, we propose an additional method beyond GDP to gauge a country's progress on the development path. We are calling it Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB). Think of it as the 'software' layer of society that interacts symbiotically with hard material factors: an umbilical cord ties GDP with GDB.

These are aspects difficult to quantify but easy to experience. The contrasts are stark. The well-ordered cityscapes of the developed world clearly rest on an external grid of excellent infrastructure that maximises life chances for all, guaranteeing the efficiency of a productive society. But they also flow from an invisible infrastructure of inner discipline. Their public spaces are kept clean not just by machines, but by an ingrained culture of empathy in which everyone participates. Their disciplined lane driving originates in the mind. The absence of this 'civic faculty' in India is so settled a fact that it's often taken to be in our nature. We felt the idea of development could be enriched with such invisible markers that have tangible economic effects. Take safety in public spaces. Or broad-mindedness about gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, or language. It's clear to see that these underpin livelihoods, enabling broad, unfettered economic participation.

Stopping callous littering or ensuring women's safety carries direct benefits: it will provide better health for our citizens and attract more foreign tourists.

So, we thought of creating a barometer to quantify aspects of Indian reality that we anecdotally witness. There is a well-known management mantra: if you want to change anything, measure it first. This week's cover story is an attempt to do that. We present the first India Today GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) Survey, done in collaboration with data analytics firm How India Lives. Conducted across 21 states and one Union territory with 9,188 respondents, we sought to gauge attitudes across four dimensions: Civic Behaviour, Public Safety, Gender Attitudes and Diversity & Discrimination. The results are always revelatory. In some cases, there is a tendency in such surveys to express the socially appropriate behaviour but do the opposite. For instance, according to the study, 85 per cent of Indians disapprove of ticketless travel. However, this struggles to hold up when cross-matched with data from the Indian Railways: 36 million ticketless or irregular travel cases were

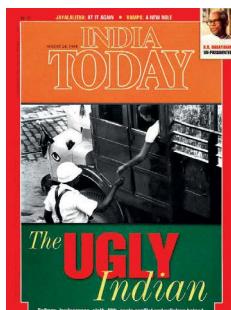
reported in 2023-24, yielding Rs 2,231.74 crore through fines. Then again, 88 per cent say they will report a serious accident if they spot one, but official figures tell us lack of timely medical attention causes 50 per cent of fatalities. This 'reporting diffidence' probably stems from lacking trust in the legal system. Despite these contradictions, we get fascinating insights into the differences in regional attitudes.

Nevertheless, there is depressing candour too: 61 per cent of Indians are willing to pay bribes; UP tops with 94 per cent. Similarly, 52 per cent are okay with cash transactions on property to avoid taxes. This collective surrender to corruption as a way of life is also a statement on the system. On gender, tradition holds firm: 67 per cent oppose women marrying against parental wishes, and 69 per cent think male members should have the final say in significant household matters. Interfaith and intercaste marriages elicit high veto rates of 61 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively. Only 54 per cent oppose housing societies prohibiting certain foods, though happily, 70 per cent welcome religious diversity in neighbourhoods. The high regional variation in attitudes confirms a global correlation between human development indices and the GDB, as revealed

by the progressive response profile of Kerala and Tamil Nadu compared to northern states.

Four guest columnists interpret the data in illuminating ways. Sociologist Dipankar Gupta points out that "an overwhelming number of people know what correct civic behaviour is but don't follow what they know to be proper". In the gap between word and deed, he sees space for enforcement. Guwahati-based professor and gender activist Rakhee Kalita Moral is struck by "the near-concurrence between urban and rural India" on gender issues, including in the 8.5 per cent who "somewhat agree" on wife-beating being "valid punishment for disobedience". Social anthropologist Ravinder Kaur notes the "all-round conservatism" on diversity. Former UP Director General of Police Vikram Singh leaves us with a line that should become our motto as we welcome foreign tourist footfalls: "Safety is not just the absence of danger, but the presence of trust." The purpose of this is to hold a mirror to society, which is what the role of media is. No survey is perfect but, hopefully, this will provoke public discourse on our civic behaviour. Education is key:

civic consciousness can and must be taught and learnt. Enforcement, too, is vital. If we are to become a Vriksh Bharat by 2047, we must pay as much attention to GDB as we do to GDP.



August 24, 1998

For full report,
please scan the
QR code




(Aroon Purie)

CHAIRMAN AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Aroon Purie
VICE CHAIRPERSON AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Kalli Purie
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dinesh Bhatia
GROUP EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Raj Chengappa
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Manoj Sharma
GROUP CREATIVE EDITOR: Nilanjan Das; **GROUP PHOTO EDITOR:** Bandeep Singh
EDITOR (FEATURES): Kai Jabin Fries
MANAGING EDITORS: Sunil Menon, S. Sahaya Ranjit; **MUMBAI:** M.G. Arun
EXECUTIVE EDITORS: Manisha Saroop, Kaushik Deka
SENIOR DEPUTY EDITORS: Sangram K. Parhi, Sasi Nair;
HYDERABAD: Amarnath K. Menon
DEPUTY EDITORS: Anillesh S. Mahajan, Pradip R. Sagar;
JALPUR: Rohit Parihar; **MUMBAI:** Suhanu Singh
SENIOR EDITORS: Sonali Acharjee, Ashish Mukherjee, Saikat Niyogi;
PATNA: Amitabh Srivastava
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Sonal Khetarpal; **MUMBAI:** Dhaval. S. Kulkarni;
AHMEDABAD: Jumana Shah; **BHOPAL:** Rahul Noronha
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Avishek G. Dastidar; **VIPUL GROVER:** Bengaluru; Ajay Sukumaran
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT: KOLKATA: Arkamoy Datta Majumdar
PHOTO DEPARTMENT: Chandra Deep Kumar, Rajwant Singh Rawat (Deputy Chief Photographers), Arun Kumar (Principal Photographer);
MUMBAI: Mandar Suresh Deodhar (Chief Photographer)
PHOTO RESEARCHERS: Prabhakar Tiwari (Deputy Visual Research Editor),
 Saloni Vaid (Chief Photo Researcher),
 Jodha Singh Adhikari (Principal Photo Researcher)
CHIEF OF GRAPHICS: Tanmoy Chakraborty
ART DEPARTMENT: Sanjay Pipiani (Creative Editor),
 Angshuman De (Senior Art Director), Rajesh Kumar Angira, Bhoomesh Dutt Sharma (Associate Art Directors), Santosh Kumar Sharma (Assistant Art Director), Praveen Kumar Gummadi (Chief Designer),
 Siddhant Jumde (Chief Illustrator)

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT: Harish Agarwal (Chief of Production),
 Naveen Gupta (Chief Coordinator)
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER:
 Suparna Kumar
IMPACT TEAM:
 Senior General Managers: Jitendra Lad (West), Syed Naveed (Chennai)
GROUP CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER: Vivek Malhotra
SALES AND OPERATIONS:
 Deepak Bhatt, National Head (Distribution)
 Vipin Bagga, General Manager (Operations)
 Rajeev Gandhi, General Manager (North)
 Yogesh Godhanlal Gautam, Regional Sales Manager (West)



Volume 50-Number 13; For the week
 March 25-31, 2025, published on every Friday

- Editorial/Corporate Office Living Media India Ltd., India Today Group
 Mediaplex, FC-8, Sector-16A, Film City, Noida - 201301; Phone: 0120-4807100
- Subscriptions: For assistance contact, Customer Care, India Today Group,
 C-9, Sector-10, Noida (UP) - 201301, email: weCare@intoday.com;
 Phone / WhatsApp: +91 8597 778 778 (Monday to Friday, 10 am - 6 pm).
- Sales: Direct all trade enquiries to General Manager (Sales), Living Media India Limited, C-9, Sector-10, Noida-201301 (UP).
- Regd. Office: F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.
- Impact Offices: 1201, 12th Floor, Tower 2 A, One Indiabulls Centre, (Jupiter Mills), S.B. Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai-400013;
 Phone: 022 69193355; Fax: 66063226
- E-1, Ground Floor, Videocon Towers, Jhandewalan Extn, New Delhi.
- Door No: 610, 610A, 612, 5th Floor, Block A, Imperial Chaitanya Building, Anna Salai, Teynmandap, Second Floor, Anna Salai, 600018.
- 201-Sai, Rymond Towers, 2nd Floor, Anna Salai, 600018.
- Bangalore-560025; Phones: 22212448, 22213037, 22218343; Fax: 22218335;
- 52, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, 4th Floor, Kolkata-700071; Phones: 22825398; Fax: 22827254; 6-3-885/7B, Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500082;
- Phone: 23401657, 23400479, 23410100, 23402481, 23410982, 23411498; Fax: 23402484 • 39/1045, Karakkatt Road, Kochi 682016; Phones: 2377057, 2377058; Fax: 2377059 • 2/C, "Suryaratn Bldg.", 2nd Floor, Behind White House, Panchwati, Office C.G. Road, Ahmedabad-380006; Phone: 26560393, 26560929; Fax: 26565293 • Copyright Living Media India Ltd. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited.

Printed and published by Manoj Sharma on behalf of Living Media India Limited.
 Printed at Thomson Press India Limited,
 18-35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007, (Haryana)
 and at Rajhans Enterprises, 134, Industrial Town, 4th Main Road, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560044, (Karnataka).
 Published at F-26, First Floor, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.

Editor: Raj Chengappa.

• INDIA TODAY does not take the responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material.

All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only



For reprint rights and syndication enquiries, contact
syndications@intoday.com or call +91 120-4078000
www.syndicationstoday.in

UPFRONT

BIHAR: TEJASWI'S QUOTA OFFENSIVE PG 6

**MAHARASHTRA:
 FAULTLINES
 RESURFACE PG 16**

INSIDE

LEISURE

**THE ART OF
 FASHION PG 73**

**Q&A WITH
 ABHISHEK
 BACHCHAN PG 80**

24
 COVER
 STORY



MAPPING INDIA'S GROSS DOMESTIC BEHAVIOUR

A pioneering survey reveals startling truths about the civic and social attitudes of Indians

ED

56 RETURNING THE BOOTY

The Enforcement Directorate makes restitution a priority, ensuring victims of financial fraud get their money back



CRICKET

64 NEW STARS ON THE HORIZON

A look at some of the under-the-radar players who could set this IPL season on fire

MAHARASHTRA

60 WIPING OUT THE STIGMA

Villages in western Maharashtra stop ostracising widows and ensure a better future for them

Note to the reader : From time to time, you will see pages titled 'An Impact Feature' or 'Focus' in INDIA TODAY. These are no different from advertisements, and the magazine's editorial staff is not involved in their creation in any way



Readers are recommended to make appropriate enquiries before sending money, incurring expenses or entering into commitments in relation to any advertisement appearing in this publication. The India Today Group does not vouch for any claims made by the advertisers of products and services. The printer, publisher, editor-in-chief and the editor of the India Today Group publications shall not be held liable for any consequences in the event of such claims not being honoured by the advertisers.

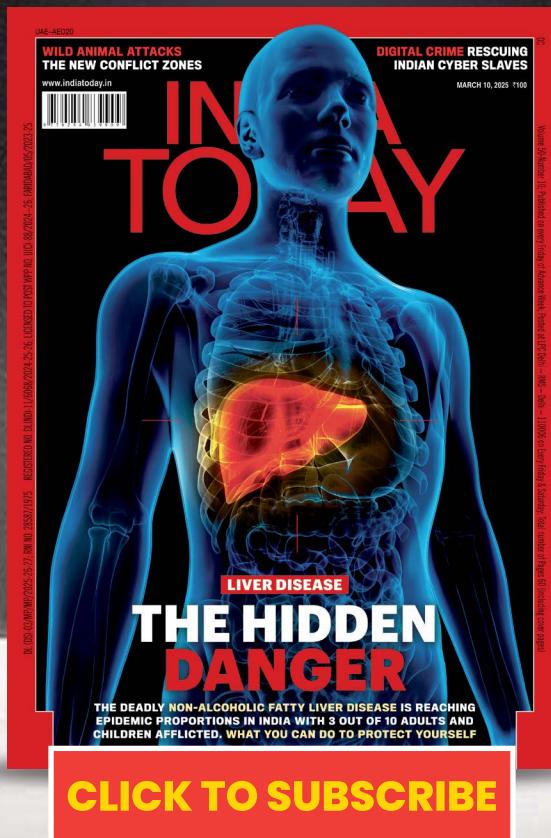


SCAN HERE TO SUBSCRIBE

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE, CONTACT: Customer Care, India Today Group, C-9, Sector-10, Noida (UP) - 201301.
 email: weCare@intoday.com | Phone / WhatsApp: +91 8597 778 778 (Monday to Friday, 10 am - 6 pm)

E-MAIL to:
letters.editor@intoday.com or log on to www.indiatoday.in

TO LIVE WELL, TREAT YOUR LIVER WELL!



1 YEAR UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS JUST FOR ₹999!

SUBSCRIBER BENEFITS

- 1 year unlimited access to all digital issues
 - Daily newsletter
- Ad-Lite access to premium web content
- Access to 48 years of archives
 - Multiple device access

INDIA
TODAY
MAKING SENSE OF INDIA

**BJP: SEARCH FOR
A NEW BOSS**
PG 9

**PUNJAB: THE SIKH
CLERGY TURMOIL**
PG 12

**MAHARASHTRA:
FAULTLINES
RESURFACE**
PG 16

**J&K: A LIQUOR
UPROAR**
PG 17

UPFRONT



BIHAR

ANI

TEJASWI'S NEW POLL PLAYBOOK

By Amitabh Srivastava

When the odds don't favour you, change the playbook. Bihar's leader of the Opposition in the assembly, Tejaswi Yadav, is doing just that. On March 9, as Chief Minister Nitish Kumar presided over a carefully choreographed display of governance, distributing appointment letters to 51,000 newly recruited teachers at Patna's Gandhi Maidan, just three kilometres

away, Tejaswi offered a starkly different narrative. Seated in protest, he accused Nitish of political trickery, claiming the much-touted jobs had come at the expense of "stolen reservations". While Nitish cast himself as a champion of employment, Tejaswi reminded Bihar's voters of the unfulfilled promise of 65 per cent reservation—struck down by the Patna High Court last year—blaming both the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) governments in Delhi and Patna for their inaction.

This marks a subtle but clear refocusing of Tejaswi's electoral strategy—from a universalist line to one hewing close to caste. The weapon is the allegation that the government is systematically depriving the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) of their rightful 15 per cent reservations in government



50 YEARS OF POWERING PROGRESS EMPOWERING WOMEN

At NTPC, we believe in putting the power in HER hands—power to lead, to innovate, to inspire. From hiring the first all-women batch of engineers to enabling leadership journeys, flexible work policies, and community upliftment, we are building a world where women thrive.



jobs and educational institutions.

With Bihar on the cusp of its assembly election, Tejaswi is acutely aware that he cannot allow Nitish to dominate the political discourse unchallenged. The incumbent's 'Rojgar Matlab Nitish Sarkar' (Employment Means Nitish Government) narrative has gained traction and, unless disrupted, it threatens to overshadow Tejaswi's own promises. Back in 2020, his pledge of one million government jobs propelled the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) to the single largest party status in the assembly, enabling it to secure 75 of the 243 seats. Five years later, Nitish has not only appropriated this promise but has amplified its execution, claiming that over 900,000 appointments have been made under his administration. The March 9 event was the latest spectacle in this ongoing political theatre.

Tejaswi has reframed the debate, arguing that the jobs being handed out are being carved out of the OBC and EBC quota that was promised but never delivered. At the heart of his argument lies the Bihar government's November 2023 decision to increase reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and OBCs from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. At the time, Tejaswi was serving as deputy chief minister in the Nitish-led government and had played a role in pushing this policy forward.

However, the political landscape shifted in January 2024 when Nitish abruptly severed ties with the RJD, Congress and Left parties to realign with the NDA. The move proved electorally beneficial—the Janata Dal (United) secured 12 of the 16 Lok Sabha seats it contested. But it also contributed to a legal and political quagmire. In June 2024, the Patna High Court struck down the 65 per cent reservation move, deeming it unconstitutional for exceeding the Supreme Court's 50 per cent cap. The apex court also declined to stay the verdict, dealing a major blow to the Nitish administration.

In a state as caste-conscious as



▲ **JOB PUSH** Nitish Kumar handing out an appointment letter in Patna, Mar. 9

• QUOTA OFFENSIVE •

■ **Nitish Kumar claims 900,000 appointments during his tenure; Tejaswi accuses him of quota theft**

■ **51,000 teachers recruited by Nitish administration, but Tejaswi alleges loss of reservations**

■ **RJD vows legal, political fight to restore 65 per cent reservations**

■ **Tejaswi reframes Lalu's legacy as social transformation, not misrule, seeking to neutralise the NDA's time-worn strategy**

Bihar, Tejaswi has seized upon this constraint on reservations to erode Nitish's standing. His appeal is calculated: he is actively courting Bihar's most decisive electoral demographic—the OBCs and EBCs—who together make up over 63 per cent of the state's 130 million residents. The recent caste survey confirmed their overwhelming numerical dominance, with EBCs

accounting for 36.01 per cent and OBCs for 27.12 per cent of the population. If Tejaswi can stoke their discontent, he hopes to fundamentally reshape the electoral landscape.

On March 9, as part of this game plan, Tejaswi demanded the restoration of the 65 per cent quota. Standing before a sea of party loyalists outside the RJD headquarters, he thundered: "Because of this government's theft of reservation, approximately 50,000 jobs have been snatched away from the people." The controversy surrounding the 65 per cent quota has simmered since last year, with the Patna High Court's ruling. Now, with the matter pending before the apex court, the RJD has vowed to challenge it in both the legislature and the judiciary. "We are monitoring the proceedings meticulously through our advocates. We shall not permit reservations to be dismantled—this is our commitment and our pledge," Tejaswi declared.

Yet, the RJD leader's strategy is about more than just reservations. His decision to embrace the RJD's legacy rather than distance himself from it signals a newfound clarity in his political approach. For nearly two decades, the Nitish-BJP alliance has relied on a simple electoral argument—to the

SEARCH DEEPENS FOR A NEW BOSS

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

effect that, before 2005, Bihar was a wasteland of lawlessness under Lalu Prasad Yadav, and only under Nitish did governance and development take root. Even Tejaswi, during the 2020 polls, held a careful line, offering a muted apology for his father's tenure while crafting a new identity of his own.

Now, he has abandoned that restraint. No longer willing to play defence, he is actively reclaiming Lalu's legacy—not as a liability, but as a badge of honour. Rather than shying away from the inevitable rhetorical attack—"Was there anything before 2005?"—Tejaswi has armed himself with historical records to flip the script. His argument: Lalu's tenure was one of social transforma-

TEJASWI'S DECISION TO EMBRACE THE RJD'S LEGACY SIGNALS A NEWFOUND CLARITY IN HIS APPROACH

tion. "The first achievement of Lalu Prasad since 1990 was to provide a stable government after Bihar had experienced 22 changes of government and five periods of President's rule since 1961," he declared. "He orchestrated social empowerment—achievements that were unprecedented in the preceding 150 years. It was under Lalu Prasad that individuals from EBC, OBC and SC communities ascended to roles as MPs, ministers and heads of boards and commissions."

This calculated shift marks a fundamental transformation in Bihar's electoral discourse. As the state inches toward another high-stakes election, Tejaswi is not retreating into damage control but rather attempting to rewrite the playbook itself. ■

Euphoric after the poll victories in three states, the BJP has 'renewed' the search for a new party president to succeed Jagat Prakash Nadda. The BJP chief's tenure is for three years, but Nadda has held the post since 2019—getting one extension after another, the last to ensure "continuity" in the preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. To form the electoral college that will formally vote for a new president, the BJP constitution requires that at least half the state units have elected their own presidents. That part of the process has also seen big delays.

Party sources say this was because the leadership was concentrating more on the series of state assembly elections in the second half of 2024, but it's also true that some of the key state units are riven with factionalism. Finally, in December, the process to fill the posts in the states was initiated in 29 of the 36 states and UTs, but has so far come to fruition in only 13;

Bihar and Rajasthan are the only two big states in the list. The problem has been compounded by the fact that, since last June, Nadda has also been doubling up as the Union minister for health and family welfare, expediency dictating a rare infringement of the BJP's 'one person one post' rule.

The choosing of a new president during a crucial passage for the party, a time when it is looking to steer a generational shift. Few would disagree that the BJP is at its peak now, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime into its third straight term, and the party, along with allies, in power in 22 states (and UTs).

The BJP leadership may have another round of consultations with the top leadership of ideological parent Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), but both sides say that "Modi's decision will be final". That said, the visible involvement of the Sangh in poll management since the LS election reverses has vouchsafed a phase of victories.

CLEARING THE HEIR
Nadda and Shah at a party function in Delhi



ANI

ANI



CHILLY AIR PM Modi and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at a function in Ayodhya in January

This has led to their recommendations being “actively considered” for district, mandal and, in many cases, state unit chief appointments. A senior Sangh pracharak told INDIA TODAY that they weren’t worrying about who becomes party president. “Whoever it is, we have the skillsets to work with them,” he says.

Meanwhile, the state units continue to throw up surprises. On February 27, a Bihar cabinet reshuffle saw party state unit chief Dilip Jaiswal resign his ministerial post. A week later, he was re-elected as state BJP chief. In mid-March, the BJP appointed district chiefs in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, but factionalism remains a worry. In UP, camps owing loyalty to CM Yogi Adityanath, his deputies Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brijesh Pathak, and even Union home minister Amit Shah, are on the prowl.

In Haryana, on Holi day (March 14), Union minister and ex-CM M.L. Khattar met senior state minister Anil Vij at his home in Ambala. The latter has made no bones about his animosity towards state unit chief Mohan Lal Badoli and CM Nayab Singh Saini (both Khattar loyalists). Things had worsened after Badoli issued Vij a showcause notice for his public tirades, so the ‘Holi milan’

THIS TIME, THE BJP LEADERSHIP IS MOVING CAUTIOUSLY AND “CONSULTING ALL STAKEHOLDERS” ON THE PARTY PRESIDENT ISSUE

was seen as an attempt at a thaw. Telangana is another battleground, with factions of Union ministers G. Krishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar and MP Etala Rajender circling each other.

The BJP has completed the election process of district chiefs in Gujarat, MP, Haryana, UP, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and some other states. In seven states, including West Bengal, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra, where the membership drive has been delayed, the new bodies will be decided on a nomination basis.

Odisha and Karnataka are the other big headaches for the central leadership. BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh recently returned empty-handed from Odisha as there was no consensus on the next state president. Sources say Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan will be travelling to his home state in a

bid to “put the house back in order”.

In Karnataka, ex-minister Basangouda P. Yatnal, MP K. Sudhakar, MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, along with a few other leaders, have ganged up against state unit chief B.Y. Vijayendra (the younger son of ex-CM B.S. Yeddyurappa). The national leadership is backing Vijayendra, and has served showcause notices to Yatnal. Sudhakar has got a bit more leeway, with the centre putting “on hold” the appointment of bete noire B. Sandeep as the district president of his home base Chikkaballapur.

Sources say after the LS setback and the resultant blame games, the BJP leadership is “consulting all stakeholders” on the party president issue. Nadda’s statement during the LS campaign—suggesting the BJP had outgrown the RSS—had come back to bite the party. As informal discussions continue to narrow down the list of candidates, several schools of thought are emerging. Among them is anointing the first woman BJP president, which backers argue will strengthen the BJP’s narrative in the second half of Modi 3.0 when the debate on delimitation and women’s reservation is expected to set off some fireworks.

Another idea is to have a party president from the South, which would also help counter the DMK-led delimitation storyline that the BJP represents northerners trying to put the screws on the south of the country. The BJP has had presidents from the South in the past (M. Venkaiah Naidu, Jana Krishnamoorthy and Bangaru Laxman during the A.B. Vajpayee era), but benefited little by way of expansion there.

A third parallel to these two strains is that a staunch BJP organisation man, who has served time in the Modi regime, should get a chance. The argument here is that the experience will “reduce the gap between the organisation (read RSS) and the government”. There is also talk of a “generational shift”, a younger leader of stature—who will speak for tomorrow’s voters—to take on the mantle. The coming days will tell us which track carries the day. ■

 85488 74887



RERA REG NO. UPRERAPRJ248777/03/2025
www.up-rera.in

ACE ACREVILLE

— AT YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY —

A 100 - ACRE TOWNSHIP



YOUR FOREVER LAND OF GRANDEUR

YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY'S
BIGGEST TOWNSHIP ARRIVING SOON



Artist's Impression

100 ACRE = 404860.6 SQ MTR

Site Address: TS-01, Sector-22A, Yamuna Expressway, Gautam Buddha Nagar (U.P.)
RERA REG NO. UPRERAPRJ248777/03/2025 | www.up-rera.in | www.acegroupindia.com



The information, specifications, and amenities depicted in this advertisement are for representational and illustrative purposes only and do not constitute a legal offering. The details mentioned, including amenities, fixtures, decorative elements, false ceilings, sizes, colors, and other features shown in images, are purely indicative and may not reflect actual project specifications or final deliverables. All information provided is based on current approvals and is subject to change as per statutory requirements and developer discretion. The images, content, and materials used in advertisements, hoardings, and promotional activities are artistic impressions and do not represent the actual development or final product. Prospective buyers are advised to verify all details through official documentation and legal agreements before making any purchase decisions. For accurate, verified and up-to-date project information, please visit the official website www.acegroupindia.com and the UP RERA website www.uprera.in. The project land i.e., Plot No. TS-01, Sector-22A, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Area, Gautam Buddha Nagar has been allotted by Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) to M/s Three C Homes Private Limited (Developer) through a Lease Deed dated 10.06.2011, registered at the Office of Sub-Registrar (Gautam Buddha Nagar) in Book No. 1, Volume No. 8687, Pages 1 to 30, as Document No. 10287 dated 10.06.2011, further supplemented by a Correction Deed dated 04.02.2013, registered in Book No. 1, Volume No. 12504, Pages 293 to 870, as Document No. 2553 dated 04.02.2013. Total Plot area admeasuring 404860.60 sq. mtrs. The project's Building Plan has been duly approved by YEIDA vide letter no. YEA/Planning/699/2024 dated 01.10.2024. The Project has been launched on 07.03.2025. Important Notice: The Developer is offering only plots in this project. Any visual representations of built structures are for reference only. The actual development may vary, and no express or implied warranties are provided regarding the project's final specifications or completion timeline.

Project RERA Registration Number: UPRERAPRJ248777/03/2025, Project Collection Account Name: THREE C HOMES PVT. LTD. COLLECTION ACCOUNT ACE ACREVILLE, Project Collection Account Number: 99999599680656. One Acre = 4048.66 sq. mtrs. Please note that we disclaim any responsibility for information available on external websites, third-party links, emails, or social media platforms. Any reliance on such information is solely at the user's risk. Decisions should not be based solely on the images or illustrations in this advertisement. Under no circumstances shall we be liable for any loss or damages arising from reliance on promotional materials. The Developer reserves the right to modify, amend, or update project details, specifications, and information in compliance with prevailing statutory regulations, without prior notice.

The Sikh Clergy Turmoil

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

In the past four months, Sikhism's three key politico-religious institutions—the Akal Takht, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)—have plunged into turmoil. This institutional flux has created a dangerous void that experts warn could embolden radical elements in Punjab's socio-political landscape.

The Akal Takht is the highest of the five seats of authority in Sikhism, with its jathedar or ordained leader holding a stature akin to the Pope in Catholicism. The SGPC, which manages key gurdwaras across Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Chandigarh, has historically appointed

the Akal Takht jathedar. Meanwhile, the SAD, a dominant Sikh political party, has wielded considerable influence over both institutions. Together, these entities have shaped Sikh religious and political life for decades.

The crisis began on December 2, when the jathedars of all five Takhts, led by then Akal Takht chief Giani Raghbir Singh, demanded that the SAD accept Sukhbir Singh Badal's resignation from the post of party president, sack its top leadership and initiate a new membership drive. While Sukhbir underwent religious punishment—after being declared *tankhaiya* (excommunicated) for alleged mistakes committed during the SAD rule (2007-17)—and Balwinder

Singh Bhunder took over as the party's working president, the membership drive has made little progress.

By mid-February, the storm was blowing inward. The SGPC sacked Giani Harpreet Singh, jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib. Raghbir Singh objected, following which SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhami resigned from his post. It was only after much persuasion by Akali leaders, including Sukhbir, that he withdrew his resignation on March 18. But the crisis had already escalated: on March 7, the SGPC executive committee dismissed Raghbir Singh and Takht Kesgarh Sahib jathedar Giani Sultan Singh. As trigger for this bold step, it cited the



PAST CAMARADERIE SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhami with then newly anointed Akal Takht jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh in June 2023

PRABHJOT GILL

INSTITUTIONAL FLUX

► **The Akal Takht, SGPC and the SAD face turmoil with dismissals and resignations that have left a power vacuum**

► **Institutional instability has seen radical pro-Khalistan voices gain traction, protest the SGPC's authority**

► **Structural reforms are imperative to restore both stability and credibility**

Akal Takht jathedar's "failure to guide the *panth* (Sikh community) and address contemporary issues effectively".

Accusations of vendetta politics soon rent the air. The dismissed jathedars had played a key role in imposing a stringent *tankha* (religious punishment) on Sukhbir. Radicals have seized on this instability, arguing that the SGPC's actions reflect the influence of the Badal family, and lack legitimacy. The degree



**What's
stronger than
individuals?
Processes.**

**Individuals may change,
processes stay consistent.**

Tried and tested processes are fundamental to an organisation's success as they clearly define how things are done. That's why it is imperative to choose an investment manager backed by strong processes, not just by competent individuals.

Strong processes and risk management help you achieve your goals steadily and sustainably.

An investor education and awareness initiative of Nippon India Mutual Fund

#EdgeOfKnowledge

Contact your Mutual Fund Distributor or Investment Advisor | Give us a missed call on 8000112244 | Visit mf.nipponindiaimf.com/EdgeOfKnowledge

Helpful Information for Mutual Fund Investors: All Mutual Fund investors have to go through a one-time KYC (Know Your Customer) process. Investors should deal only with registered mutual funds, to be verified on SEBI website under 'Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions'. For redressal of your complaints, you may please visit www.scores.gov.in. For more info on KYC, change in various details and redressal of complaints, visit mf.nipponindiaimf.com/InvestorEducation/what-to-know-when-investing

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

of ingress this void in the establishment has allowed the radicals to make is alarming, even for the security agencies. Especially, when the state has already seen two pro-Khalistan leaders elected to the Lok Sabha in the 2024 general election: Amritpal Singh Sandhu (Khadoor Sahib) and Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa (Faridkot).

With the Bhagwant Mann regime deciding not to extend the detention of Amritpal and his aides under the National Security Act and bring them back to Punjab from the Dibrugarh jail in Assam—where they have been languishing for nearly two years—it may become difficult to keep the Khadoor Sahib MP behind bars for long. His presence will only add

opposed his appointment and that of Baba Tek Singh Dhanola as the Takht Damdama Sahib jathedar, given their association with Akali politics.

This leadership crisis echoes past turbulence. In early 1999, Akal Takht jathedar Bhai Ranjit Singh and SGPC chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra were sacked in quick succession, and replaced by Giani Puran Singh and Bibi Jagir Kaur, respectively. At the time, Sukhbir's father, Parkash Singh Badal, was both the SAD president and Punjab chief minister. Later, even Jagir Kaur and Puran Singh fell out, and the latter was sacked.

Back then, the Akali Dal's strong influence allowed the institutions to recover. Today, however, the party is grappling with a credibility crisis of its own. Its core Sikh support base



THE SGPC'S MOVE TO DISMISS THREE JATHEDARS HAS LED TO ACCUSATIONS OF VENDETTA POLITICS AS THEY PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN IMPOSING A STRINGENT PUNISHMENT ON EX-AKALI DAL CHIEF SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL

to the flux in Sikh politics. Radical factions, including Nihang groups, are already staging protests opposing the SGPC's control over jathedar appointments. They argue that Akal Takht leadership should be chosen by Sikh bodies worldwide, not the SGPC alone. (In fact, the SGPC's influence extends to only the three Takhts in Punjab, the other two being in Patna and Nanded.) How volatile the situation was became evident when Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj's installation as the new jathedar of Takht Kesgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib had to be advanced and conducted in the early hours of March 10, fearing violent protests. He now also serves as the acting jathedar of the Akal Takht. The radicals, including Damdami Taksal chief Harnam Singh Dhummra, have

has weakened, with voters drifting toward the Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and even the BJP. In terms of seats, the party is left with just one in the Lok Sabha and two in the state assembly. Further complicating matters, senior Akali leaders—Bikram Singh Majithia, Sharanjit Singh Dhillon, Lakhbir Singh Lodhinangal among them—have voiced concerns over the jathedar dismissals, only to be publicly rebuked by the party leadership. This internal rift underscores how deeply divided the Akali Dal has become over the issue.

As Sikh institutions navigate this unprecedented quagmire, calls for structural reforms are growing louder, seen by many as the only way to restore stability and credibility in the panthic leadership. ■

The Samajwadi Party (SP) is in a strange bind in Gujarat. It won two municipalities—Kutiyana and neighbouring Ranavav—in the recent local body polls for 68 municipalities, three taluka panchayats and the Junagadh Municipal Corporation. The trouble is, Kutiyana was won by the party's lone MLA, Kandhal Jadeja, son of late 'Godmother' Santokben Jadeja, the alleged doyenne of illegal mining and several transport businesses in the region in the '80s and '90s, whose life inspired the 1999 Bollywood film *Godmother*, a role Shabana Azmi essayed. The eldest of Santokben's four sons and heir to her dubious legacy, Kandhal has been acquitted in two murder cases but has several other cases under the Arms Act, TADA and criminal conspiracy in various stages of trial and appeal.

His political career had begun with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), on whose ticket he won the Kutiyana seat in the 2012 Gujarat election, a year after his mother's death. He held the seat for 10 years till 2022, when the NCP denied him a ticket for voting twice against its mandate in the Rajya Sabha polls. And though his history of cross-voting weighed heavy on the SP, it accommodated him, since the recommendation came from none other than Gujarat veteran and former chief minister Shanksinh Vaghela, an old aide of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav and whom Akhilesh Yadav often consults. Kandhal himself is believed to have become a Vaghela loyalist in return for a favour Vaghela extended as CM in the late '90s.

Kandhal and the SP make for strange bedfellows. The Akhilesh-led party is a member of the INDIA bloc and has contested elections in concert with the Congress. And it was the BJP that Kandhal cross-voted for in the Rajya Sabha polls while he was with the NCP. But when Kandhal won Kutiyana in December 2022, the SP's cycle was riding to victory in Gujarat after two and a half decades. The last time it did so was in 1998, when Jetha Bharwad, the incumbent deputy speaker of the Gujarat assembly, won Shehra in Panchmahal on an SP



TUSHAR TANKARIYA

[GUJARAT]

SAMAJWADI'S ASSET AND CHIEF LIABILITY

By Jumana Shah

mandate. He, however, soon shifted to the BJP and the SP could do little to establish its presence in the state.

That seems to be changing now. In the December 2022 state election, it contested 18 out of 182 seats. The lone seat of Kutiyana meant it finished fourth, after the BJP, Congress and AAP. Its 0.29 per cent vote share put it in fifth spot, behind even the BSP, which maintains a presence in Dalit-dominated seats, but it was clearly a fresh start.

In the local body elections that concluded in mid-February, the SP fielded 85 candidates, of which 43 won. Of these, six seats were won in tribal-dominated Chhota Udepur municipality, and three in central Gujarat's Kheda municipality. The BJP won 1,608 of the total 2,171 seats, 62 of the 68 municipalities, and all three taluka panchayats. The big loser was the Congress, whose tally shrunk

WHO IS KANDHAL JADEJA?

► **Kandhal Jadeja's win from Kutiyana, though the SP's lone success in the 2022 Gujarat election, marked its return in the state after 2.5 decades**

► **He's the son and heir of 'Godmother' Santokben Jadeja, who allegedly lorded over illegal mining and transport businesses in the '80s and '90s**

► **Held Kutiyana for 10 years since 2012 on an NCP ticket, till the party denied him one in 2022 for cross-voting for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls, against its mandate**

from 15 municipalities to one. AAP claimed to have finished second in 250 seats, and the SP said it finished second in 200 seats. The reason the latter has found steady resonance in Gujarat, which has been dominated by bipolar contests, is anti-incumbency. Amit Dholakia, head of the department of Political Science at the MS University, Baroda, says after nearly three decades in power, there is a natural restlessness among voters even though the BJP remains strong. "The Congress is still unable to emerge as a viable alternative. Non-BJP and non-Congress parties are finding some resonance," he says.

Vadodara-based Devendra Upadhyay, who was appointed Gujarat SP president in 2022, is upbeat about his party's future in Gujarat. "We are not restricted to Porbandar, but are working to mark our presence across the state," he says. "The SP will seriously contest the municipal corporation and gram sabha polls in 2026 and field candidates in the 2027 assembly polls. We do not 'recruit' workers, we attract volunteers who are convinced about our socialist ideology, with its focus on PDA (Pichhda, Dalit and Alpasankhyak)." Upadhyay, in fact, reveals that the party's state headquarters will soon be shifting from Vadodara to Ahmedabad.

Lucknow-based SP spokesperson Ameeque Jamei, however, indicates that the Congress will lead the polls in 2027 given the INDIA bloc's philosophy of letting the dominant regional player lead in a region. Gujarat spokesperson S.K. Dubey has a different view, though. "We stepped back in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh," he says, "but the Congress disappointed. Though an alliance is imminent, it does not mean we will not tap into voters disillusioned by the Congress and the BJP."

What of Kandhal? The face of the SP in Gujarat by default and the party's greatest strength in the state, could he also become their foremost challenge? Upadhyay says Kandhal has assured them that he will help spread the party's presence beyond Porbandar, but attracting local leaders who remain loyal to the party has always been a difficult proposition. ■



[MAHARASHTRA]

FAULT LINES RESURFACE

By Dhaval S. Kulkarni

On March 17, a group of Hindu right-wing activists gathered at the old Mahal neighbourhood in Nagpur to demand the demolition of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb in Khultabad in Maharashtra. Similar protests were taking place across the state. But soon rumours of protesters burning a fabric with religious inscriptions triggered violence in various pockets of Nagpur, leaving 33 people injured. The present spell of violence has exposed deep fissures across the state's socio-political landscape. Reigniting the whole con-

troversy around the Mughal emperor and his antagonistic interface with Maratha history is a Hindi film and political reactions to it.

HOW DID THE ROW ERUPT?

Chhaava, a biopic on Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, elder son of the Maratha empire founder Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, was released on February 14. It details how a 31-year-old Sambhaji was brutally tortured and killed on Aurangzeb's orders in 1689. At a time when the spotlight was on the Mughal emperor's absolutist ways, Abu Azmi, Samajwadi Party MLA from Mumbai, called him a "good administrator". Not only was Azmi suspended



VIOLENT REACTION (Top) Hindu right-wing activists protesting in Nagpur; vehicles set on fire during riots later in the day, Mar. 17

from the state assembly for the rest of the budget session on March 5, the whole episode also triggered demands by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal to level Aurangzeb's tomb—a simple grave, devoid of the trappings of the Mughal dynasty—at Khultabad near Chhatrapati Sambhaji-nagar (formerly Aurangabad, a city that had only been rechristened in 2023, in a rhetorical foreshadowing of the present tussle). Soon, Maharashtra ports

A LIQUOR UPROAR

By **Kaleem Geelani**

The setting: snow-covered Gulmarg. The occasion: The Elle India fashion show featuring creations—capes, pant suits, skiwear as well as bikinis—by Delhi-based designers Shivan & Narresh. As the models walked down the snow-covered ramp, viewers sat on low-slung chairs, some apparently sipping alcohol. But as videos and images of the show on March 7 were released, it roused the collective anger and indignation of Kashmir. What incensed Kashmiris was the fact that such an “outrageous and immodest” event took place in the holy month of Ramzan, disregarding local sensibilities in the Muslim-majority region. Notes of shocked disapproval came from the very top. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah clarified in the assembly, “This was a private party, organised it privately, in a private hotel and distributed their invitation cards privately. No permission was taken from the government, no...government official was involved.” The venue of the show was the Nedous Hotel, owned by the relatives of Omar. The organisers have been summoned by a Srinagar court to appear before it.

The uproar rekindled the continuing demand for prohibition of liquor in Jammu and Kashmir and came as a shot in the arm for the People’s Democratic Party’s (PDP)

The demand for prohibition comes from the belief that unemployment is pushing youth to alcohol and drugs

and fisheries minister Nitesh Rane of the BJP and Naresh Mhaske, Shiv Sena’s Thane MP, joined the demand to raze the tomb, as did Udayanraje Bhosale, Shivaji’s descendant and a BJP MP. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis backed the idea, too, but with a caveat. “Some things have to be done legally, because it is [a] protected [monument],” he said.

WHAT HAPPENED IN NAGPUR?

The Muslim groups allege that Hindu right-wing activists burnt an effigy of Aurangzeb’s tomb that was covered with a holy cloth. In the riots that ensued, mobs went on a rampage, attacking police personnel and civilians and damaging vehicles and public property. It left 33 people, including

TOGETHER WITH NAGPUR PROTESTS AND VIOLENCE, CHHAAVA’S RELEASE HAS EXPOSED FISSURES ACROSS MAHARASHTRA’S SOCIO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

three deputy commissioners of police, injured. The Nagpur police have lodged six FIRs against 1,200-odd persons at three police stations for the March 17 violence. Fahim Shamim Khan, president of the Minorities Democratic Party, the alleged mastermind, is among those arrested. He had allegedly led a mob to the Ganeshpeth police station, seeking action against VHP and Bajrang Dal workers. “[The riots] appear to be pre-planned by some people. Action will be taken against them,” Fadnavis said in the assembly on March 18. “A patriotic Muslim will never support Aurangzeb,” added deputy CM Eknath Shinde. ▀

IS THERE MORE TO THIS CONTROVERSY?

The controversy comes at a time when there is a growing Hindutva assertion in Maharashtra, with institutional backing. Aurangabad’s name change was accompanied by that of Osmanabad, which is now Dharashiv. Later, Ahmednagar was rechristened Ahilyanagar in what is seen as an attempt to erase markers of the state’s Muslim past. Muslim leaders condemn attempts to target them for the doings of medieval-era rulers. Saner voices note that calls for razing the tomb are misplaced and the monument should be seen as a symbol of the valour of the Marathas, who kept Aurangzeb pinned down in the Deccan, eventually heralding Mughal decline. But, they admit that his veneration is bound to touch a raw nerve, given the state’s complex social realities. Incidentally, *Chhaava* has also exposed the Maratha-Brahmin fault lines. Maratha groups allege that it was not Sambhaji’s brothers-in-law but his Brahmin clerks who betrayed him to the Mughals, leading to his eventual capture and murder.

WHY IS THERE UNEASE IN THE RULING ALLIANCE?

The competition between the BJP and the Shiv Sena to stress their Hindutva credentials has led to growing unease in the third Mahayuti ally: the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). A senior NCP leader told INDIA TODAY that such communal violence did not bode well for Maharashtra. “These conflicts may reduce the state’s appeal to potential investors, including those looking to set up base in the ambitious international cargo hub and airport project in Nagpur,” he noted. A Shiv Sena functionary admitted that calling for the tomb to be razed was “taking things too far” while another Mahayuti leader feels that though Hindu consolidation helped them come to power with an unprecedented 237 of the state’s 288 seats, such emotive issues could start proving to be counterproductive in the long run. ▀



COOL STYLE The controversial fashion show in Gulmarg in Kashmir; Mar. 7

new campaign on the back of a private member bill moved by its Kupwara MLA Fayaz Ahmad Mir on February 10. It seeks a blanket ban on the sale and consumption of liquor in J&K.

"It is not a political but a social issue. The rising unemployment is pushing youth into drugs and alcohol. If Bihar, Gujarat and Nagaland can go dry, why not Kashmir," PDP leader Iltija Mufti had said during a signature campaign against alcohol in Srinagar in February. Mufti has been leading the Opposition charge against the ruling National Conference on this and other issues. Key opposition BJP, with 28 MLAs, is seen to be playing second fiddle.

Religious leaders joined the chorus against alcohol and have expressed outrage over the fashion show. The most prominent was the Valley's top cleric and head of the separatist faction of the Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who has been resuming his activities since the restriction on his movements was lifted last year. "Already, lakhs of people are addicted to drugs. Yet they talk about economy and revenue when it comes to liquor ban.... If they can't benefit society, then at least for god sake, don't harm our values and morals," he responded when an NC legislator, Tanyir Sadiq, connected the sale of alcohol to tourism.

Kashmir, which lent its beauty to two generations of Bollywood films, had many cinemas and bars in its towns. The eruption of militancy in 1989 wiped off most. But, in recent years, J&K's liquor industry has been booming. Between 2022 and 2023, according to data from the excise department, 77 new liquor shops have come up—67 in Jammu and 10 in Kashmir. Overall, the number of

liquor vends has increased by over 40 per cent, from 217 in 2021 to 305 in 2025—291 in Jammu and 14 in Kashmir. Revenue generated by the department from liquor has nearly doubled—from Rs 1,353 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 2,600 crore in 2024-25. The most consumed liquor remains the local JK Special Whisky, which is manufactured in the region's 22 distilleries.

The rise in revenue has also to do with the introduction of e-auctioning of liquor vends by the LG-led administration in 2021, ending the decades-old system of leases. This opened the space for new bidders and competitive bidding each year. "There's a huge interest in liquor bidding and, from this year, the solvency against the bidding amount (demonstrating a bidder's financial position) has been slashed from 100 per cent to 50 per cent," a J&K excise department official tells INDIA TODAY.

Earlier, before the bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir, successive governments had scuttled legislature bills on prohibition. While the ruling NC in 1984 disapproved of a bill, the previous PDP-BJP government in 2016 ignored a widespread demand for prohibition in the assembly.

Significantly, a similar prohibition bill to that of the PDP was moved around the same time by the NC's Lal Chowk MLA, Ahsan Pardesi, as also one by an elected independent from Langate, Khursheed Ahmad Sheikh, the brother of jailed MP 'Engineer' Rashid.

Chief Minister Omar has chosen to be circumspect on the matter. "If we had to talk about it (the ban), we would have put it in our manifesto. Let the bill come, we will remind them (PDP) what they did in government," Omar told a digital media platform on February 27. J&K levies 50 per cent duty on liquor sales, and it forms a sizeable part of the cash-strapped UT's revenues. The Omar government cannot afford to lose it. ■

PROHIBITION PRESSURE ON OMAR

■ **A fashion show in Gulmarg draws Kashmiris' ire, who deplore such an event during Ramzan**

■ **This rekindles the continuing and old demand for a total ban on alcohol**

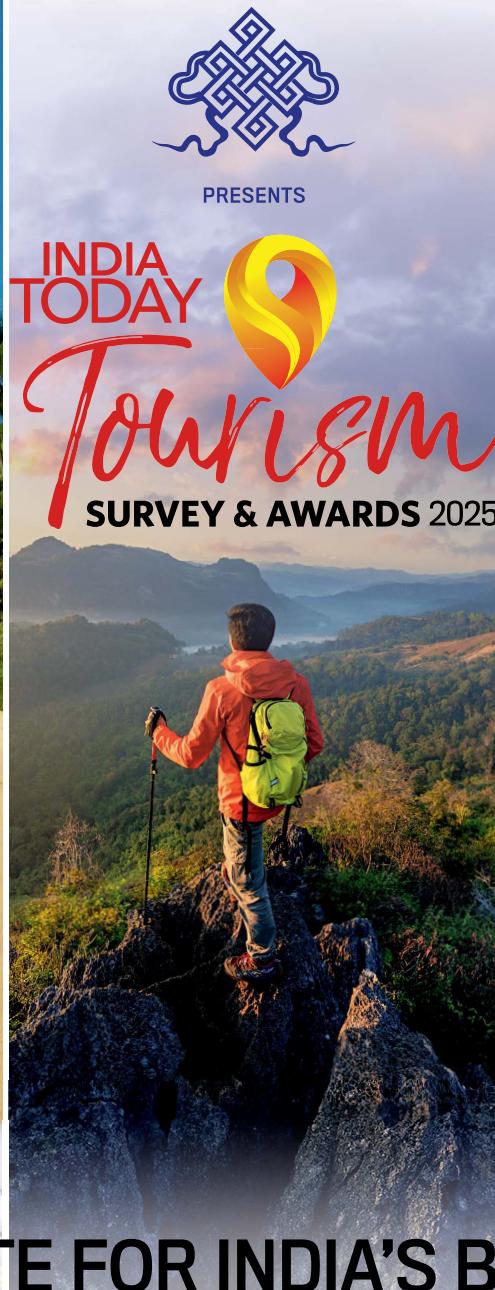
■ **Three MLAs have moved bills in the assembly demanding prohibition**

■ **But with excise duty from liquor making up a chunk of the cash-strapped UT's revenues, the ruling NC is in a bind**



*Beach
Destination*

PRESENTS



INDIA
TODAY
Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2025

VOTE FOR INDIA'S BEST

*Adventure
Destination*



*Instagrammable
Landscape*

 LOG ON TO www.indiatoday.in

WATCH THE GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY LIVE ON 28TH MARCH 2025

STATE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



Delhi Tourism

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



GLASSHOUSE

ALL TALK, NO PURGE

Rahul Gandhi has once again donned his reformist hat, this time in Gujarat, vowing to purge the local Congress of its "BJP sympathisers". Bold words, but whether Gujarat will actually see the sacking of the 20-odd delinquents, only time will tell. Rahul might also want to spend some time on Assam where party MLAs could offer a masterclass in political moonlighting, openly cosying up to the BJP. Since 2021, Shashikanta Das (Raha), Basanta Das (Mangoldoi), Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha (Karimganj North) and Siddeque Ahmed (Karimganj South) have, at different points, publicly pledged their admiration for the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government. The last two even campaigned for the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress high command's response? Suspension and petitions to the courts and the assembly speaker. Predictably, these have led nowhere—none of the leaders has been expelled so far.

Loaded Silence



ANI

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav is facing flak now for, of all things, "his silence". The SP chief was abroad when former close aide and socialist writer Manoj Yadav a.k.a. Frank Huzur died on March 6. He returned to Lucknow before Holi but did not visit Huzur's family or issue a statement. Inside the party, whispers grew: should the leadership acknowledge Huzur? On social media, SP supporters were seen lamenting that even Yadav loyalists are now a forgotten lot. Ironically, during the last SP government (2012–17), Huzur's *Socialist Factor* magazine was seen as the party's unofficial voice; the man even enjoyed government accommodation. After the 2017 defeat, though, they fell out, and Huzur drifted to the Congress. In the end, it was left to Rahul Gandhi to send a condolence letter to the family.

BACKING DMK

Days after a spat with the AIADMK over a broken promise of a Rajya Sabha seat, Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) leader and widow of the late 'Karuppu MGR' Vijayakanth, **Premalatha**, appears

to be eyeing a place in the DMK. On March 16, she backed the DMK government on the delimitation issue and welcomed the



state budget for 2025–26. She even defended the DMK in the alleged TASMAC liquor scam, urging critics to show proof before making accusations. Is a pivot towards CM M.K. Stalin's Secular Progressive Alliance on ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu election?

Work from 'Farmhouse', Anyone?

Telangana's feisty chief minister **A. Revanth Reddy** never misses a chance to corner arch-rival K. Chandrashekhar Rao, Bharat Rashra Samithi (BRS) supremo and his predecessor. On March 14, Revanth revealed that KCR, despite drawing Rs 57,84,124 as his MLA salary over 15 months, showed up in the assembly for just two days. Quoting the Supreme Court's definition of legislators as state employees, Revanth asked if KCR was following a new "work from farmhouse" model, long after the "work from home" practice ended. KCR, notorious for skipping the secretariat during his nearly decade-long stint as CM, might be slow to respond but, if the past is any indication, a counter-attack is merely a matter of time.

ANI

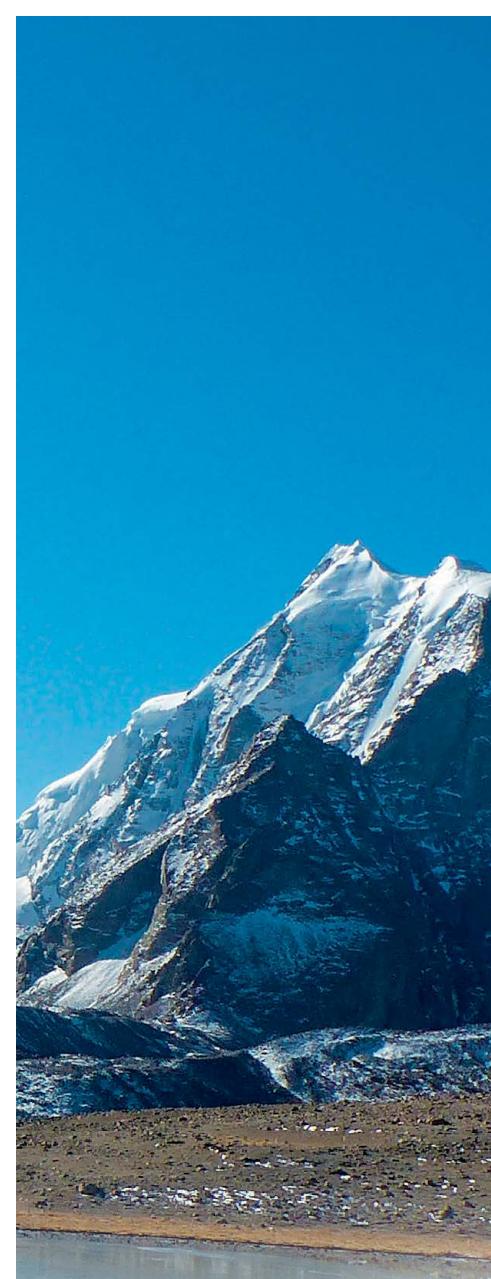


BOLLYWOOD EYES THE N-E

Bollywood is once again training its lens on the scenic hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim. This is good news for both Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) chief Anit Thapa and Sikkim CM Prem Singh Tamang, as their respective regions are coming out of a period of instability—strikes and flash floods being the culprits. Director **Anurag Basu** is one of the first to return for his upcoming film starring Kartik Aaryan and Sreeleela. The region has long been part of Bollywood's storybook—from *Barsaat* (1949) and *Aradhana* (1969) to Basu's own *Barfi!* (2012) and *Jagga Jasoos* (2017).



Kaushik Deka with Amarnath K. Menon, Avaneesh Mishra and Arkamoy Datta Majumdar

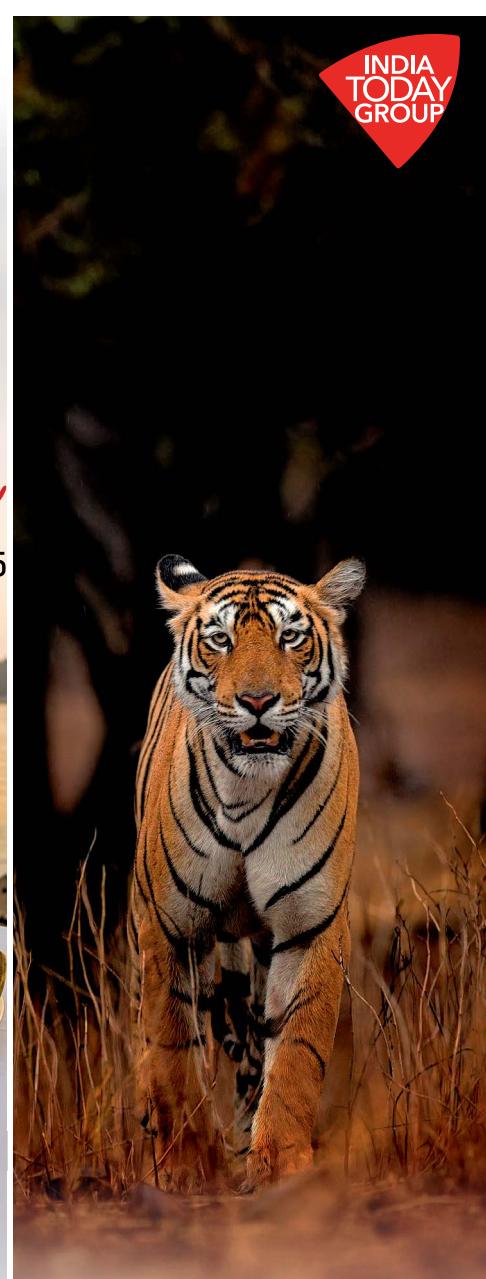


PRESENTS

INDIA TODAY

Tourism

SURVEY & AWARDS 2025



VOTE FOR INDIA'S BEST

Mountain
Destination

Culinary
Destination

Wildlife
Destination



LOG ON TO

www.indiatoday.in

WATCH THE GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY LIVE ON 28TH MARCH 2025

STATE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



Delhi Tourism

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



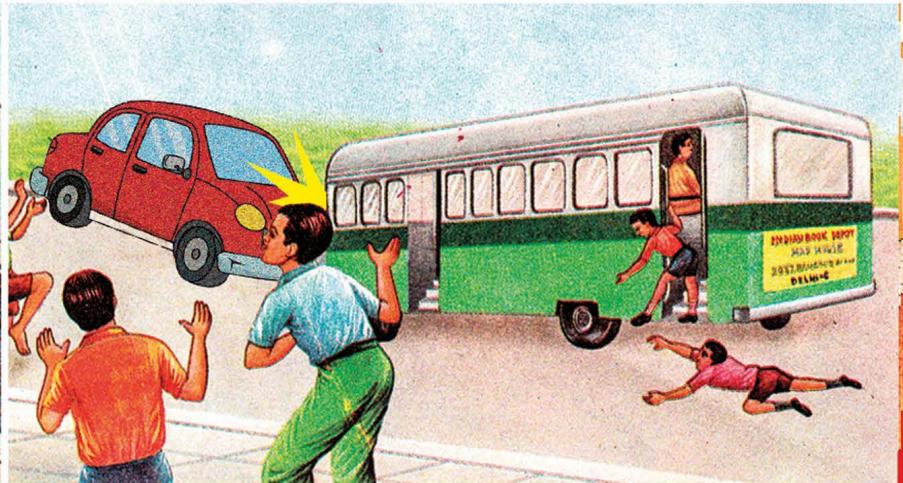
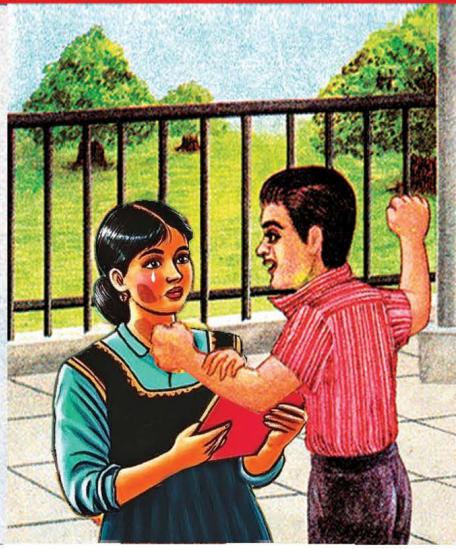
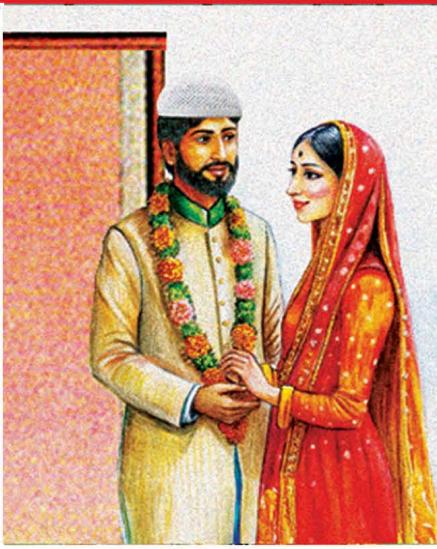
Simply Heaven!



**Visuals from the India Today
Conclave in New Delhi on March 7
where Reva University Chancellor
Dr. P. Shyama Raju is felicitating
Union Minister of Parliamentary
Affairs & Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju
and the Honourable Chief Minister of
Sikkim Prem Singh Tamang. Also
seen is India Today Group consulting
editor Rajdeep Sardesai.**

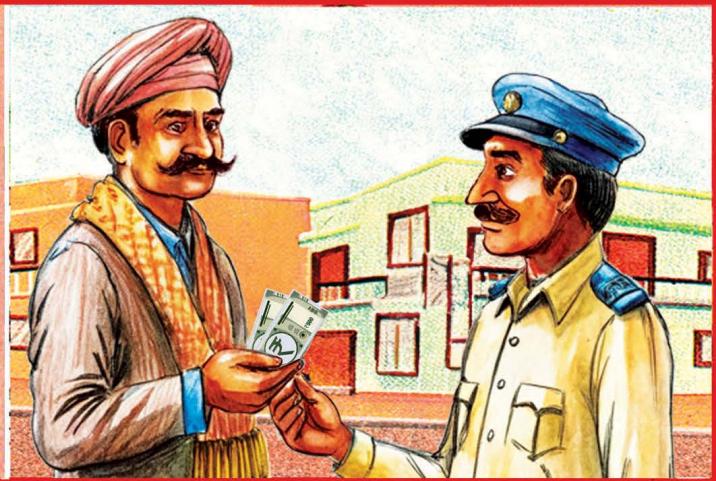
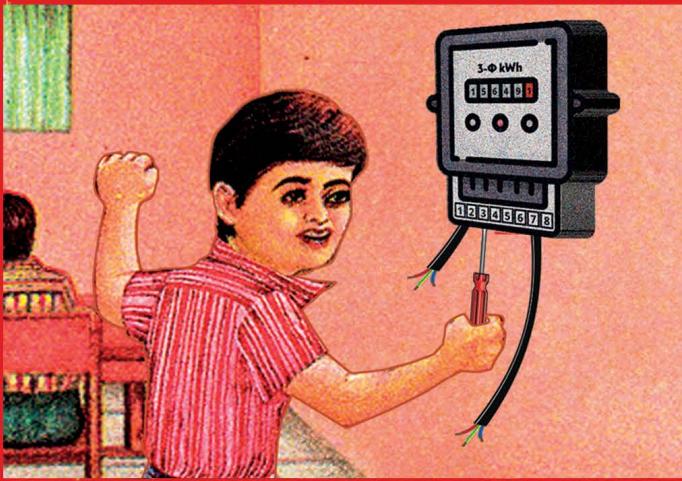






MAPPING INDIA'S GROSS DOMESTIC BEHAVIOUR

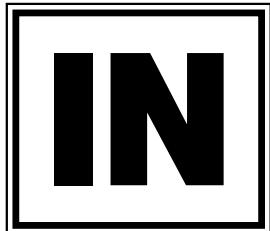
A PIONEERING SURVEY REVEALS SOME STARTLING TRUTHS ABOUT
OUR CIVIC AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES. AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
REMAIN KEY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE





COVER STORY

By KAUSHIK DEKA | Illustration by NILANJAN DAS



a nation determinedly coursing towards economic superpowerdom, one uncomfortable truth could well prove to be a dark undertow: our less-than-perfect civic conscience. India may be positioning itself to become the world's third-largest economy, with a projected Gross Domestic Product of \$7 trillion, or roughly Rs 581 lakh crore, by 2030, but its social fabric does not show such forward movement. To assess where the country stands, the India Today Group, in collaboration with data analytics firm How India Lives, embarked on a first-of-its-kind survey across 98 districts in 21 states and one Union territory asking 9,188 Indians not about their income or assets, but about decency, empathy and integrity, a measure that we are calling Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB).

And the findings are far from happy—61 per cent of Indians are willing to pay bribes to get work done; 52 per cent approve of cash transactions to avoid taxes; 69 per cent believe male members should have the final say in household matters; and half of the country's population is opposed to interfaith or inter-caste marriages. Numbers that suggest that India's economic ascendancy has not seen a corresponding elevation in our commitment to what should underpin it: civic behaviour, equity and social responsibility.

It was the contradiction between India's global economic ambitions and its domestic behavioural reality that prompted INDIA TODAY to undertake this pioneering survey. Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds out the promise and vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India), the path to true development cannot be paved solely with GDP numbers and infrastructure projects. India's journey to developed-nation status requires not just economic transformation but an attendant behavioural revolution—one that nurtures inclusivity, respect for rules, gender equality and civic responsibility.

Far from being some alien values imported from elsewhere, these are ideals that are deeply rooted in the Indian Constitution itself. Article 51A, introduced through the 42nd Amendment, lays out the fundamental duties of every citizen—moral obligations designed to strengthen the nation's social fabric. These duties urge citizens to promote harmony and the spirit of universal fraternity across religious, linguistic and regional divides; safeguard public

For the
detailed
report,
please
scan the
QR code



property; abjure violence; ensure education for children aged 6-14; and protect and improve the natural environment. In essence, the behavioural revolution India needs is already envisioned in its founding document. All we need to do is to put it into practice.

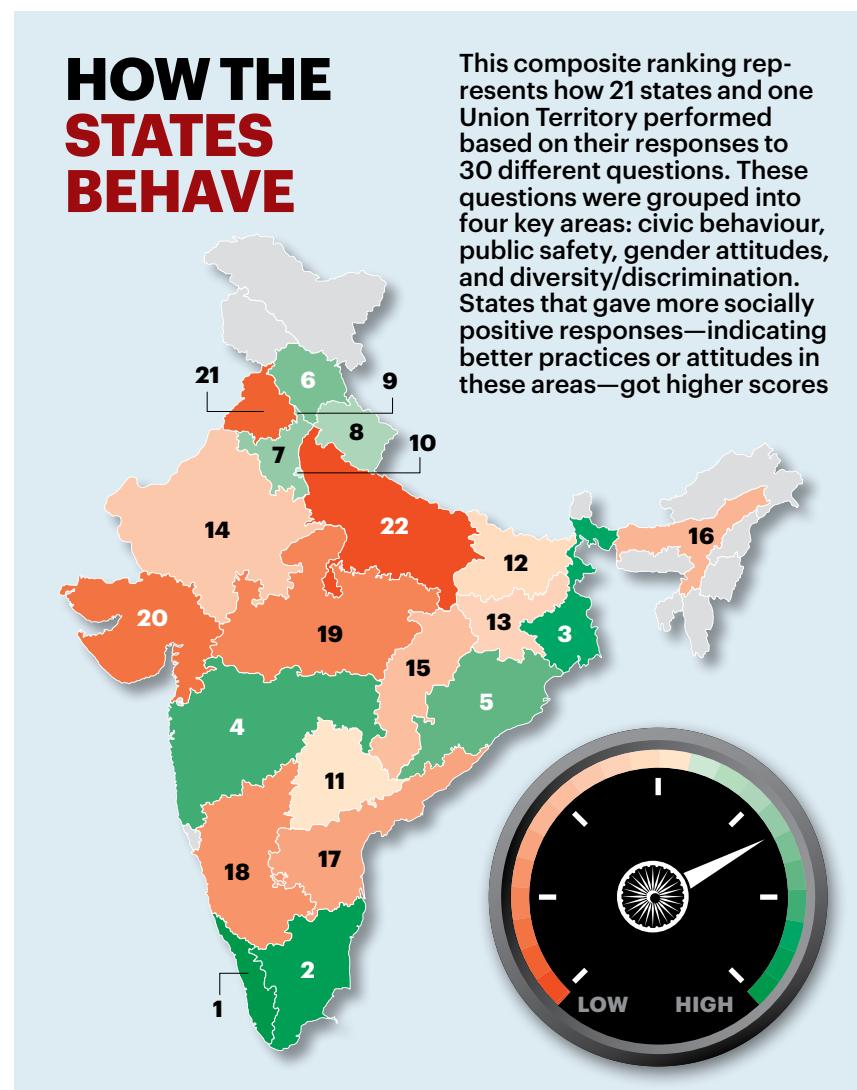
One could learn from the example of Singapore, a nation that transitioned from a third-world country to a first-world powerhouse within decades. Its transformation was not merely the result of shrewd economic policy but equally of cultivating civic consciousness and collective responsibility. Similarly, South Korea's rise from corruption-ridden governance to a top economy or Japan's post-war civic discipline leading to its industrial boom are enough evidence that responsible social behaviour is not just desirable but essential.

Other countries that rank high on human development indices—Sweden,

INDIA'S ECONOMIC ASCENDANCY HAS NOT SEEN A CORRESPONDING ELEVATION IN CIVIC BEHAVIOUR, EQUITY OR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Switzerland and Germany—exhibit a strong culture of public responsibility, too. Consider Switzerland, where public transport runs with clockwork precision and fare evasion is an alien concept. This is no reflection of efficient enforcement but a social trust that connects individual behaviour to collective outcomes.

PM Modi has consistently championed this message of collective responsibility through transformative initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. The India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour survey aims to hold a mirror



to our society, and offer the nation an opportunity to contemplate its collective progress along this multidimensional journey toward true development. To create a sense of healthy competition among states to achieve the desired social behaviour, the survey has ranked them based on their attitudes across four key dimensions: Civic Behaviour, which assessed participation in the common good and adherence to public rules; Public Safety, which measured trust in law enforcement and perceptions of personal security; Gender Attitudes, which evaluated views on gender

roles and equality; and Diversity and Discrimination, which examined biases related to caste, religion and ethnicity (*see methodology*).

The findings across the four domains give us a nuanced portrait of a geographically diverse society in transition, where conservative values coexist with modernising impulses. The regional variations—from Kerala to Uttar Pradesh—suggest that India encompasses multiple civic realities, each with different developmental implications. Encouragingly, there is a rising sense of responsibility and determination to set things

RANK 2025	STATE
1	KERALA
2	TAMIL NADU
3	WEST BENGAL
4	MAHARASHTRA
5	ODISHA
6	HIMACHAL PRADESH
7	HARYANA
8	UTTARAKHAND
9	CHANDIGARH
10	NCT OF DELHI
11	TELANGANA
12	BIHAR
13	JHARKHAND
14	RAJASTHAN
15	CHHATTISGARH
16	ASSAM
17	ANDHRA PRADESH
18	KARNATAKA
19	MADHYA PRADESH
20	GUJARAT
21	PUNJAB
22	UTTAR PRADESH

right. For instance, a day after a paan masala-spitting incident in the Uttar Pradesh assembly, the Speaker banned gutka and paan masala on the premises, with a Rs 1,000 fine for violators.

Ironically, as sociologist Dipankar Gupta observes, the survey overturns the long-held assumption that India's civic shortcomings stem from ignorance, necessitating widespread education on proper public behaviour. Instead, the findings reveal that most people already understand what is right, but routinely fail to act accordingly. The survey reveals that 85 per cent of

the respondents disapprove of evading transport fares. Yet, Indian Railways alone detected 36 million cases of ticketless travel in 2023-24, resulting in Rs 2,231.74 crore in fines.

The stark contrast between expressed belief—such as disapproval of littering, ticketless travel or gender inequality—and real-world action underscores a systemic failure of enforcement rather than awareness. The real challenge, therefore, is not teaching ethics but ensuring accountability, compelling individuals to practice what they profess to believe. There are enough global examples of such enforcement. Scoff at Communist China all you will, but in the 1980s, it mobilised elementary schoolchildren to shame adults who spit in public spaces. In New York City, spit-

of transparency in financial transactions parallels the experience of Sweden, where cash transactions represented just 1 per cent of the country's GDP in 2023. The Swedish embrace of digital payments hasn't merely modernised commerce, it has reduced tax evasion, minimised corruption and created a financial system where transparency is the default setting.

Perhaps nowhere is the development-behaviour correlation more evident than in gender attitudes. The World Economic Forum has consistently found that countries with the higher gender parity—like Sweden and Canada—tend to have higher per capita incomes and stronger social welfare indicators. The survey reveals contradictions that help explain In-

THE BEHAVIOURAL REVOLUTION INDIA NEEDS IS ALREADY ENVISIONED IN ITS CONSTITUTION. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS TO PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

ting on public transport was outlawed in 1986, with violators facing the possibility of arrest.

The survey uncovers other concerning patterns: an alarming willingness to pay bribes to get things done, for one. Consider Denmark, Finland, Singapore and New Zealand—the world's least corrupt nations, according to Transparency International. Though their combined population is roughly the size of India's Punjab, they rank among the top 25 countries in per capita income, with Singapore and Denmark securing spots in the top 10. This isn't coincidental to their economic success—transparent systems reduce transaction costs, encourage investment and ensure resources reach their intended destinations.

The digital payment revolution offers a glimpse of how civic behaviour can rapidly evolve. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents now prefer digital payments over cash, with Delhi leading at 96 per cent. This civic embrace

dia's struggle to fully harness its female workforce. While 93 per cent of the respondents believe daughters deserve the same educational opportunities as sons and 84 per cent support women taking jobs outside the home, these progressive attitudes coexist with patriarchal undercurrents. Sixty-nine per cent still believe male family members should have the final say in major household decisions. While 83 per cent of the respondents reject the idea that a husband is justified in beating his wife, as many as 14 per cent of women believe otherwise—a testament to the internalisation of patriarchal norms.

For the
detailed
report,
please
scan the
QR code



This isn't merely a cultural issue, it is an economic handicap.

The Nordic nations—Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland—have achieved their remarkable prosperity partly through the full integration of women in economic and political life. When Norway mandated 40 per cent female representation on corporate boards in 2003, sceptics predicted economic havoc. Instead, Norwegian firms saw improved governance and financial performance, a pattern evident across economies that embraced gender equality.

India's female labour force participation rate hovers at around 41 per cent, far below that of China (60 per cent) and the United States (58 per cent). A 2018 McKinsey & Company study estimates that India's GDP could potentially increase by 27 per cent if India can increase its female workforce participation to the same level as men.

ning classes, or participate in networking events without security concerns limiting their choices. The economic dividend of safety is so substantial that the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that advancing women's equality in the Asia Pacific could add \$4.5 trillion to the region's annual GDP by 2025, a 12 per cent increase over the business-as-usual trajectory.

Another telling statistic: 84 per cent respondents claim they would report a violent crime, yet in cities like Delhi, FIR registration remains abysmally low (only 7.2 per cent of theft victims formally report crimes). This discrepancy signals a lack of trust in the system, which, if unaddressed, discourages civic engagement.

Perhaps most revealing are the findings on diversity and discrimination.

ter. This is not just personal prejudice, it speaks of deep-seated social divisions that have economic implications.

As economists increasingly recognise the limits of conventional development models, this survey points toward a more holistic understanding. A nation's development is not dictated solely by policy prescriptions or economic blueprints. It is shaped on the streets, in classrooms, in public transport queues, and in homes where gender roles are negotiated.

Or maybe in a stadium. Like in Copenhagen, in the summer of 2021. During a UEFA Euro football match between host Denmark and Finland, Denmark's star midfielder Christian Eriksen collapsed following a cardiac arrest. But the crowd didn't descend into panic or chaos. Instead, fans formed a human shield to protect his privacy while medical teams worked. Outside the stadium, Danes quietly gathered, concern etched on their faces rather than spectacle-seeking. It was a moment that demonstrated the deep civic consciousness ingrained in Danish society—a society consistently ranked among the world's "happiest" and most economically successful.

This incident, seemingly unrelated to economic indicators or development metrics, reveals something profound about the invisible architecture of prosperous nations. It reflects a society where trust, responsibility and equality are no abstract notions but lived practices that permeate economic life. As India navigates its development journey, the India Today GDB survey could serve as a reminder that progress is not merely dictated by policy from the top but is a ground-up transformation driven by the everyday choices of millions. ■

THE REAL CHALLENGE IS NOT TEACHING ETHICS IN THE ABSTRACT BUT ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY, COMPELLING INDIVIDUALS TO PRACTICE WHAT THEY PROFESS TO BELIEVE

Public safety is more than a law enforcement issue; it is a determinant of economic activity. Tourists, businesses and investors are drawn to environments where they feel secure. Countries with low crime rates—such as Singapore and Switzerland—consistently rank among the most prosperous and remain popular destinations for global tourists. The survey shows 86 per cent respondents feel safe on public transport, but significant gender disparities lurk below the surface. In urban India, women's restricted mobility due to safety concerns represents an enormous economic opportunity cost.

Consider Japan, where women can safely navigate public spaces at any hour. This safety infrastructure translates directly into economic participation—women can work late shifts, attend eve-

The survey reveals progress alongside persistent challenges. If 70 per cent of the respondents are comfortable with religious diversity in their neighbourhoods, 60 per cent oppose religious discrimination in employment opportunities. These are encouraging movements in the desired direction. Cities like London, Dubai and Toronto—where diverse communities coexist—consistently rank among the world's most innovative and economically vibrant hubs, as evidenced by the global "Innovation Cities Index". The openness of these cities to different perspectives has created a fertile environment for entrepreneurship and creativity.

Most striking is the stark resistance to interfaith and inter-caste marriages—61 per cent of the respondents oppose the former, and 56 per cent the lat-

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code





PRESENTS

INDIA TODAY 

Tourism

SURVEY & AWARDS 2025



VOTE FOR INDIA'S BEST

Scenic Roads



LOG ON TO

www.indiatoday.in

WATCH THE GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY LIVE ON 28TH MARCH 2025

STATE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



Delhi Tourism

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



METHODOLOGY

The India Today Group, in collaboration with How India Lives (HIL) and Kadence International, conducted India's first 'Gross Domestic Behaviour' survey to study social and personal behaviours across the country.

► It covered 9,188 respondents from 98 districts across 21 states and one Union Territory

► The sample included 50.8 per cent male and 49.2 per cent female respondents

► They were also split as 54.4 per cent urban and 45.6 per cent rural respondents.

Since no single measurement could fully capture the diverse social and personal behaviours, the survey used multiple factors grouped into four broad themes:

► **Civic Behaviour** (participation in community activities, following public rules) – 12 questions

► **Public Safety** (trust in law enforcement, personal security perceptions) – 6 questions

► **Gender Attitudes** (views on gender roles and equality) – 7 questions

► **Diversity and Discrimination** (biases based on caste, religion, or ethnicity) – 5 questions.

A total of 30 questions were asked, with variations for urban and rural respondents. To rank states on these themes and overall, two indices were created using the following process:

SCORES OF QUESTIONS

To calculate scores for each question, individual survey responses from all 9,188 respondents were first aggregated to determine what percentage of respondents selected each answer option (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Strongly Disagree). These aggregated percentages—not individual responses—were then used in the weighting formulas described below to calculate scores for each question. Each question was then categorised by whether agreement or disagreement represented a positive response.

For questions where agreement indicated a positive behaviour—for instance, "Should daughters in the

family be encouraged to study or pursue education as much as sons?"—response percentages were weighted to reflect their strength. The percentage of respondents who "Strongly Agree" was assigned a full weight of 1 point, while the percentage who "Somewhat Agree" was given a lower weight of 0.3 points to acknowledge partial agreement while prioritising stronger convictions. The final score for each question was calculated using the formula: $(1 \times \% \text{ of respondents who strongly agree}) + (0.3 \times \% \text{ of respondents who somewhat agree})$, ensuring stronger opinions had a greater influence on the overall index.

Similarly, for questions where disagreement was the preferred response, such as rejecting wife-beating, the scoring used disagreement percentages to ensure alignment with the intended direction of the question. The percentage of respondents who "Strongly Disagree" was assigned a full weight of 1 point, while the percentage who "Somewhat Disagree" was given a lower weight of 0.3 points. This ensured that stronger opposition to undesirable behaviours carried more influence in the final score while still accounting for partial disagreement.

THEME INDICES

For each theme:

► Question scores were converted to a 0–1 scale based on the highest and lowest scores across all states using normalisation technique

► Each normalised score received equal weight within its theme ($1/N$, where N is the number of questions)

► Weighted normalised scores summed up to create the theme index

► Rural and urban indices were calculated separately, then combined using population weights, e.g., $(\text{Rural Theme Index} \times \% \text{ Rural Population}) + (\text{Urban Theme Index} \times \% \text{ Urban Population})$.

COMPOSITE INDEX

The overall composite index was created by:

► Giving equal weight to each theme and to questions within each theme (like in theme index)

► Summing all weighted question scores separately for rural and urban respondents

► Combining these rural and urban composite indices using population weights: $(\text{Rural Composite} \times \% \text{ Rural Population}) + (\text{Urban Composite} \times \% \text{ Urban Population})$.

HOW THE STATES WERE RANKED

Based on these indices, states were ranked individually for each theme, as well as in a combined ranking that reflected their overall performance across different social indicators. Higher index values indicate more socially positive responses, resulting in better rankings. All index values and intermediary scores don't have any intrinsic meaning as they are relative values based on the maximum and minimum among the states. Hence we publish only rank ordering and not the index values as they can be misconstrued.

LIMITATIONS

► The limited sample size and complex survey design resulted in estimates with higher variance (low precision), so trends are more reliable than absolute estimates

► Question selection reflects the commissioning entity's perspective

► Determining whether agreement or disagreement constitutes a "positive" response involves subjective judgement

► The weighting choices (equal weights for themes and questions, 0.3 weight for "somewhat" responses) are inherently subjective

► Index values are relative rather than absolute, making rankings more meaningful than actual scores. ■

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code



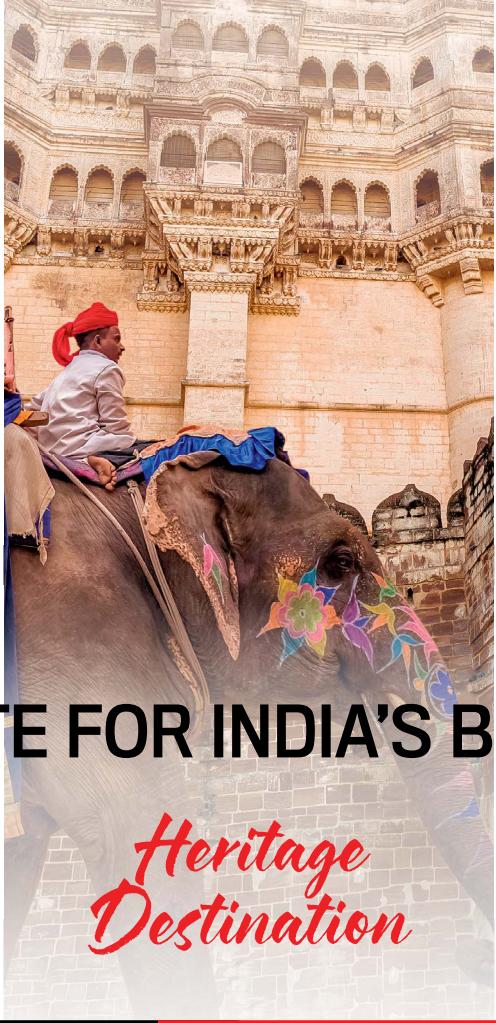


PRESENTS

INDIA
TODAY



Tourism
SURVEY & AWARDS 2025



VOTE FOR INDIA'S BEST

Mountain
Destination

Heritage
Destination

Wildlife
Destination

LOG ON TO www.indiatoday.in

WATCH THE GRAND AWARDS CEREMONY LIVE ON 28TH MARCH 2025

STATE PARTNER



ASSOCIATE PARTNER



Delhi Tourism

ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



ASSOCIATE SPONSOR



GAUGING THE CONSCIENCE QUOTIENT

India's civic values exhibit stark contrasts across states—while some lay complete store by integrity and responsibility, others are marred by corruption and ethical ambiguity

Civic behaviour is the glue that holds a society together, shaping the everyday interactions that define the quality of public life. From respecting public property to extending a helping hand in times of crisis, the choices individuals make reveal the collective character of a nation. Through 12 carefully designed questions, the India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour survey attempts to gauge public attitudes toward honesty, social responsibility and adherence to civic norms.

The findings reveal a complex tapestry of behavioural patterns across states, illustrating both encouraging trends and concerning disparities in public conduct. Tamil Nadu emerges as a paragon of civic virtue, securing the No. 1 rank, followed closely by West Bengal and Odisha, while Punjab languishes at the bottom, ranked 22nd. This stark contrast underscores the regional variations in how Indians navigate their civic responsibilities.

The findings offer encouraging signs. Nearly 87 per cent of respondents oppose tampering with electricity meters. Change is visible on the ground: Aggregate Technical and Commercial losses for power companies—a key indicator of power theft and inefficiency—

dropped to 15.3 per cent in FY23 from 37 per cent in FY05. Slowly but surely, social responsibility is gaining ground.

Yet, integrity frays when personal interests collide with moral considerations. A concerning 61 per cent of the respondents admit that they are willing to pay bribes to expedite bureaucratic processes, with Uttar Pradesh emerging as the worst offender. Public responsibility also exhibits stark regional contrasts. In an inspiring display of altruism, 99 per cent of the respondents in West Bengal say they would stop to help an accident victim, a figure that plummets to 22 per cent in Odisha.

Taken together, these findings suggest a nation in transition—one where traditional values of community assistance coexist with evolving attitudes toward digital governance and environmental stewardship, yet where systemic challenges of corruption and tax evasion continue to demand attention from policymakers and citizens alike. ■

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code



AFP

CIVIC BEHAVIOUR THE LEADERS AND THE LAGGARDS

RANK 2025	STATE
1	TAMIL NADU
2	WEST BENGAL
3	ODISHA
4	NCT OF DELHI
5	KERALA
6	HARYANA
7	MAHARASHTRA
8	UTTARAKHAND
9	HIMACHAL PRADESH
10	JHARKHAND
11	BIHAR
12	CHANDIGARH
13	TELANGANA
14	RAJASTHAN
15	MADHYA PRADESH
16	CHHATTISGARH
17	KARNATAKA
18	UTTAR PRADESH
19	ANDHRA PRADESH
20	ASSAM
21	GUJARAT
22	PUNJAB



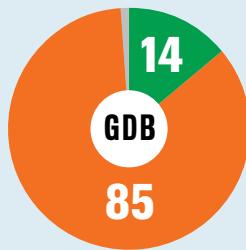


MANNERS DERAILED

Commuters travel in an overcrowded train at Loni in Uttar Pradesh

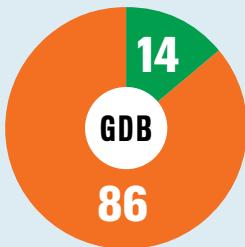
Civic behaviour reflects a blend of awareness and contradiction, where individuals acknowledge the importance of public responsibility but often struggle to uphold those values when faced with personal gain or convenience

Q. Is it acceptable to travel on public transport without a ticket or without paying the fare?



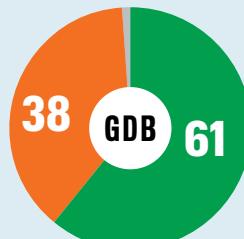
99% in DELHI disapprove of ticketless travel, while **54% in PUNJAB** are okay with it

Q. Is it okay to throw litter on the road or in a public place if no public garbage bin is available?



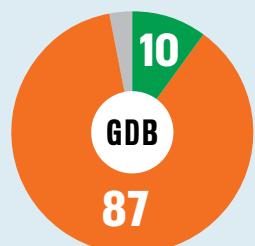
98% in KERALA object to throwing litter; **43% in PUNJAB** are fine with it

Q. Is it sometimes necessary to pay a bribe to get your work done?



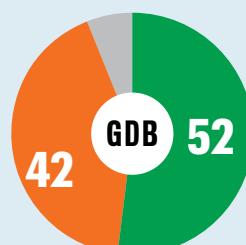
94% in UTTAR PRADESH are ready to bribe to get work done; **82% in TAMIL NADU** are opposed to the idea

Q. Is it fine to tamper with electricity meters to reduce bills?



98% in KERALA are against tampering with electricity meters to reduce bills, while **17% in ASSAM** are okay with it

Q. Are you comfortable paying or receiving cash for buying or selling property to avoid tax?

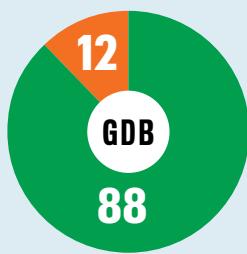


77% in MADHYA PRADESH approve of cash transactions to avoid paying tax, while **57% in MAHARASHTRA** are against this idea

■ Yes ■ No ■ Did not answer
(Figures in percentage)

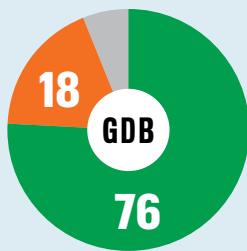
The 'Yes' and 'No' responses in GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) have been calculated as the combined percentages of answers-'Yes' (strongly agree and somewhat agree) and 'No' (disagree and somewhat disagree)

Q. If you witness an accident, will you stop to help and call the police or ambulance?



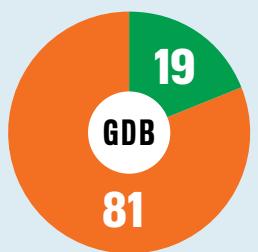
99% in **WEST BENGAL** will stop, but **78%** in **ODISHA** are unlikely to stop to help and call the police or ambulance

Q. Has UPI or digital payments replaced cash as your preferred mode for day-to-day transactions?



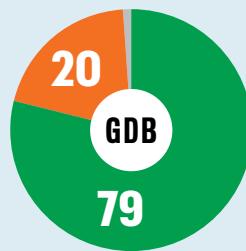
96% in **DELHI** prefer digital payments

Q. Is it alright to play music on a mobile phone without headphones in public spaces like buses, parks or cafes?



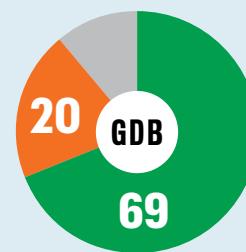
95% in **ODISHA** oppose not using headphones, while **37%** in **ASSAM** are fine with playing music without them

Q. Would you be comfortable approaching your sarpanch or corporator to address your grievances?



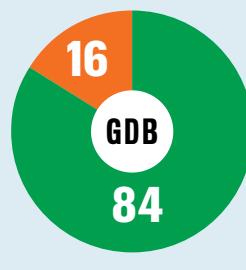
93% in **ODISHA** are comfortable approaching the local sarpanch or corporator; **65%** in **KARNATAKA** would hesitate to do the same

Q. Do you care about climate change?



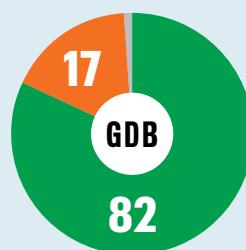
93% in **HARYANA** care about climate change; only **37%** in **UTTAR PRADESH** express such concern

Q. Do you think there should be a ban on the sale of tobacco products?



96% in **TAMIL NADU** want a ban on tobacco products, while **34%** in **GUJARAT** oppose such a ban

Q. Do you think there should be a ban on the sale of alcohol?



91% in **WEST BENGAL** want a ban on alcohol, while **42%** in **ANDHRA PRADESH** are against such ban

The 'Yes' and 'No' responses in GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) have been calculated as the combined percentages of answers—'Yes' (strongly agree and somewhat agree) and 'No' (disagree and somewhat disagree)

Civic conduct is marked by significant regional variation, highlighting how social conditioning, local governance and community culture shape people's willingness to act for the greater good

■ Yes ■ No ■ Did not answer (Figures in percentage)



By Dipankar
Gupta

The author is an eminent sociologist who taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University for three decades

The Compliance Conundrum

Indians know civic responsibility but often don't practise it. This survey reveals the disconnect between awareness and real-world behaviour

This survey comes to two important conclusions. First, most people in India know what the right thing is to do and then don't do it. Second, the southern states, particularly Kerala, are way ahead of the North in terms of civic consciousness. This includes a host of factors covering a wide spectrum. They stretch from awareness of public cleanliness, religious tolerance, banning tobacco, neighbourhood safety and, most striking of all, gender parity.

Like most surveys, one has to read this one too between the numbers, keeping in mind the many limitations that such exercises chronically suffer from. The most common one is that the very act of asking questions gives the game away and the responses then are, as if, rehearsed. The respondents are conscious that they are being judged and accordingly reply in ways that would make them look good.

On the face of it, some of the findings seem contestable, but if a long view is taken, then the figures tell us an interesting story. Here, two quick illustrations will suffice. This survey records that 99 per cent of the respondents in Delhi say ticketless travel is bad, or that 86 per cent disapprove of littering in public places, but everyday experiences on both these issues are very different.

Likewise, 87 per cent of the respondents believe that it is wrong to tamper with electricity meters or that 88 per cent say they would stop to call the police or ambulance should they come across a serious accident. Yes, these figures are questionable, but what emerges through this thicket of numbers is that people know that littering or tampering with meters or travelling ticketless is wrong. But why then are their

actions not in concordance with their statements?

There is no doubt now that the broad lessons in civics are comprehensively known. Even something that is often castigated as an elite concern, namely, climate change, is actually fairly well perceived among the general populace (as many as 69 per cent across India). Yet, if we surrender to these numbers without caution and go strictly by what the respondents report, we would be deluding ourselves and missing out on the big story, which is far more instructive.

The issue clearly is that if correct norms of public behaviour

have been articulated or understood, why then do most people flout them in practice? Before this survey, one calmly assumed that so many of us just did not know what was proper and civil and, therefore, we thought there was a mammoth task ahead of us to educate the ignorant masses. This survey tells us that such a conclusion is simply not true. The people of India do not need lessons in public ethics, what they need are enforcers in that department.

To this end,

the INDIA TODAY survey has adroitly accompanied many of its findings with nationwide statistics from other sources that tell us about actual public behaviour. This positions the stark contrast between what people say they do and what they actually do. If 88 per cent of the respondents did, in fact, stop and report a serious accident, as they record they would, why then does the ministry of transport report that 50 per cent of fatali-

Enforcement and not moralising is the need of the day. The task ahead is to make people do what they say they do

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code



ties occurred because medical attention was not provided in time?

Again, according to this survey, 93 per cent believe that daughters and sons should have the same educational opportunities; why then is the dropout rate for females so high in middle school? Likewise, if 84 per cent of those interviewed are happy to have their daughters work outside their home, why then are women so few in the organised sector, almost negligible in ITIs and most often compelled to work at home even after they are educated?

the last word on all household decisions. In addition, 30 per cent of women have stated that daughters and wives should take their family's approval before spending the money they have independently earned. Shockingly, 14 per cent of women actually approve of husbands beating up their wives.

In some other areas, too, there is a restatement of established traditional and rather anachronistic attitudes. In spite of urbanisation and the churn in rural India, over two-thirds of those surveyed said women should not marry

proportion of people who still stand by religious prejudices and this number is large enough to be worrisome.

Besides, the fact that, on the whole, South India, led by Kerala, surges ahead when it comes to civic correctness, it is quite remarkable that there are many areas where there is very little difference between rural and urban attitudes. Eve-teasing is a menace in villages, too, and both rural and urban India said the right things on questions like ticketless travel, public littering, education of girls and electoral behaviour. This shows that education on these matters has seeped down to the villages, which is what makes the discrepancy between thought and action so blatant.

Likewise, even on matters of gender, the variations between male and female responses were not really as much as one thought they would be. There is a general acceptance of patriarchal attitudes across the country. Both men and women are, more or less, in accord when asked to respond on whether men should take the final decision on household issues. There is also a similarity in responses on the matter of marriage outside the community. Men and women alike are generally not in favour of such unions.

Two conclusions. The first and the most unexpected one, as mentioned earlier, is that an overwhelming number of people know what is correct civic behaviour but then don't follow what they know to be proper. Second, there is little disparity between rural and urban responses as well as between genders. One would have expected them to be much wider. Both points strengthen the view that enforcement and not moralising is the need of the day. The task ahead is to make people do what they say they do. ■

FILTH CORRIDOR A
garbage-choked
sewage canal at Taimur
Nagar slum, New Delhi



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

In many rural households, an educated daughter-in-law is prized not because she can be an independent earner but because she can help her male children with their school homework. On this matter, too, the survey points out, in loud asides, how wide the discrepancy is between what people say they do and what actually happens. According to the National Family Health Survey, 58 per cent of women are not even allowed to visit a health facility or market.

When it comes to gender issues, we find a fair amount of acceptance among women of attitudes that actually do not favour them. Surprisingly, 43 per cent of women believe that men should have

against their parents' wishes. Consistent with this, a high 61 per cent oppose inter-religious marriages and nearly as many do not believe in inter-caste marriages either. If there is one zone where tradition has dug its heels and nails deep in, it is gender parity.

In these areas, unlike those we encountered earlier where there were wide discrepancies between the correctness of responses by respondents and their actual behaviour, here we find a certain concordance. Fortunately, 70 per cent are open to accepting neighbours of another religion and about 60 per cent oppose religious discrimination in jobs. Even so, there is a significant

For the
detailed
report,
please scan
the QR code





SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
CATEGORY - 1 UNIVERSITY BY UGC



Empowering Minds Enriching Futures

For Admissions, Contact:

+91 99400 58263 | 99401 68007 | 97898 22251

Toll-Free Number: 1800 425 1770

ENGINEERING | ARCHITECTURE | MANAGEMENT | ARTS & SCIENCE

LAW | DENTAL | PHARMACY | NURSING | PHYSIOTHERAPY | EDUCATION



THE FEAR FACTOR

The GDB survey results on public safety expose a diverse range of challenges, each demanding nuanced, state-specific solutions



ublic safety is not just about crime statistics, it is about how safe people feel in their everyday lives. To capture this perception, the India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB) survey explored public attitudes on safety through six key questions—ranging from concerns about eve-teasing and safety in public transport to willingness to report violent crimes and perceptions of neighbourhood security.

Kerala leads the nation in public safety, followed closely by Himachal Pradesh and Odisha, while Uttar Pradesh occupies the bottom position—a stark reminder of the regional variations in security perceptions across India. A most telling insight comes from the experience of women in public spaces—62 per cent of the respondents claim that eve-teasing is not a major issue in their areas, but nearly 44 per cent of women report facing harassment. Tamil Nadu emerges as the best-behaved state, whereas Karnataka fares the worst, with a staggering 79 per cent of the respondents acknowledging harassment as a frequent problem.

Public transport generally feels secure to 86 per cent of Indians, with Maharashtra leading at 89 per cent and Punjab trailing at 73 per cent. Neighbourhood safety follows similar geographical variations—73 per cent of Kerala residents report no unsafe areas, while 30 per cent of Uttar Pradesh residents identify zones they feel unsafe.

Perhaps most encouragingly, 84 per cent of the respondents said they would feel safe reporting violent crimes, though historical data suggests a significant gap between intention and action. A 2017 survey found that in big cities like Delhi and Mumbai, only a tiny fraction of theft victims (7.2 per cent and 5.9 per cent, respectively) actually filed FIRs.

Traffic discipline varies dramatically across regions, with rule abiding Assam (68 per cent reporting good compliance) contrasting sharply with Karnataka (89 per cent noting violations). Meanwhile, the survey captures an unexpected regional divide over stray dogs—96 per cent of Kerala residents oppose their presence amid 316,000 dog bite cases in 2024, while 64 per cent of Uttarakhand residents express comfort with local strays. These findings illuminate not just statistics but underscore a diverse range of public safety challenges, each demanding nuanced, state-specific solutions. ■

RANK 2025	STATE
1	KERALA
2	HIMACHAL PRADESH
3	ODISHA
4	WEST BENGAL
5	MAHARASHTRA
6	HARYANA
7	UTTARAKHAND
8	BIHAR
9	TAMIL NADU
10	NCT OF DELHI
11	JHARKHAND
12	TELANGANA
13	GUJARAT
14	MADHYA PRADESH
15	ASSAM
16	CHHATTISGARH
17	CHANDIGARH
18	ANDHRA PRADESH
19	RAJASTHAN
20	KARNATAKA
21	PUNJAB
22	UTTAR PRADESH

While there is a broad willingness among Indians to engage with authorities and uphold safety norms, actual practices often fall short

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code

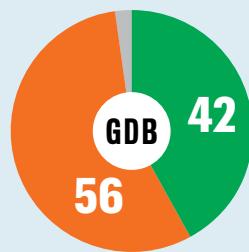


GDB:
Gross
Domestic
Behaviour is
drawn from
the responses
of all 9,188
participants
across 21
states and
one Union
Territory



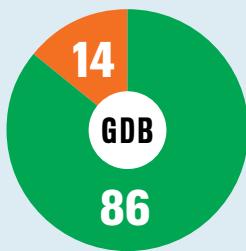
SHE POWERED Women police officers on patrol duty in Chennai
JASON G

Q. Is eve-teasing or harassment of women in public spaces a frequent problem in your area?



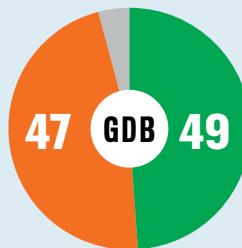
17% in TAMIL NADU reported eve-teasing; **79% in neighbouring KARNATAKA** accepted presence of this social menace

Q. Do you feel safe using public transportation such as buses, metros or local trains in your city?



89% in MAHARASHTRA feel safe in public transport; **27% in PUNJAB** feel otherwise

Q. Do people routinely flout traffic rules in the area where you live?

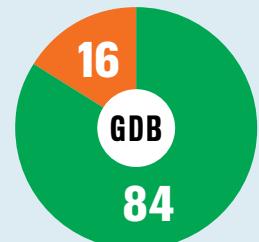


68% in ASSAM say traffic rule violations are not regular in their area; **89% in KARNATAKA** say it's common in the state

The 'Yes' and 'No' responses in GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) have been calculated as the combined percentages of answers—'Yes' (strongly agree and somewhat agree) and 'No' (disagree and somewhat disagree)

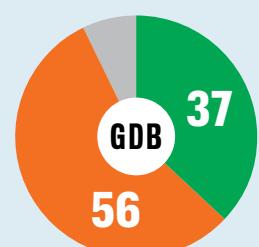
There is a noticeable gap between how Indians perceive safety and how they actually respond to unsafe situations, indicating an unwillingness to take proactive civic action despite awareness of problems

Q. If you witness a violent crime in your area, would you feel safe reporting it to the police?



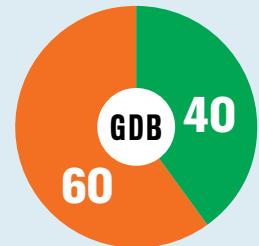
95% in TAMIL NADU said they would feel safe reporting a violent crime

Q. Are there areas in your neighbourhood where you feel unsafe?



30% in UTTAR PRADESH feel unsafe in certain areas in their neighbourhood; **73% in KERALA** feel safe

Q. Are you okay with the presence of stray dogs around your house or in your locality?



96% in KERALA don't want stray dogs around; **64% in UTTARAKHAND** don't mind it



By **Vikram
Singh**

The author is former Director General, Uttar Pradesh Police, and now Chancellor, Noida International University

A Battle to Win their Trust

The public safety survey reveals a nation neither wholly secure nor entirely anxious but rather existing in a curious state of in-between—a patchwork quilt of confidence and concern

If **public safety is a state of mind**, then India's mindscape is a collage of contradictions, paradoxes and flickering hopes. The first-ever Gross National Behaviour survey, conducted by the India Today Group in collaboration with How India Lives, sets out to quantify not just what we do, but how safe we feel while doing it. Of course, one might debate the sample size and methodology, but this survey has the potential to spark a national conversation on the conduct and civic sensibilities that define a truly developed nation. The survey reveals a nation neither wholly secure nor entirely anxious, but rather existing in a curious state of in-between—a patchwork quilt of confidence and concern that defies simple characterisation.

Kerala, the verdant coastal state known for its near-universal literacy and robust social indices, sits atop the public safety rankings. Yet even in this paragon of safety, contradic-

tions emerge. While only 10 per cent of Keralites report feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods—the lowest figure nationwide—the state demonstrates a curious anomaly: an overwhelming 96 per cent express discomfort with stray dogs in their vicinity. This aversion appears well-founded, as Kerala recorded a staggering 316,000 dog bite cases in 2024, more than doubling from 135,000 in 2017. One might say that in Kerala, the threat is not from one's fellow citizens but from their feral four-legged counterparts.

At the opposite end of the spectrum lies Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and the anchor of its political heartland. Here, a sobering 30 per cent respondents acknowledge unsafe areas in their neighbourhoods, while a third would not feel comfortable reporting a violent crime to the police. This reluctance to engage with law enforcement speaks to a deeper institutional mistrust, one that echoes across the nation in varying degrees.

In fact, what emerges from this mosaic of data is a nation still negotiating the fundamental contract

between citizen and state. The willingness to report a crime—84 per cent nationwide—suggests a theoretical faith in institutional justice. Yet the actual reporting rates from major cities may reveal a profound implementation gap. Indians appear to believe in the idea of law enforcement more than in its practice. The legacy of an indifferent police force takes years to erase, but every unreported crime scrawls a scar on the collective conscience.

Take eve-teasing, that polite phrase for an impolite menace. While 42 per cent of all respondents acknowledge the presence of eve-teasing in their areas, the figure rises to 44 per

The reluctance to engage with law enforcement speaks to a deeper institutional mistrust, one that echoes across the nation in varying degrees

cent when women alone are asked. This seemingly small gap exposes a telling social blind spot. It reveals how public perception can also fail to perceive the everyday indignities women endure in public spaces. Karnataka, considered among India's more progressive states given its tech-hub status, demonstrates the survey's most alarming statistic on this front: nearly four in five respondents (79 per cent) acknowledge that the state's women face harassment in public spaces.

Contrast that with neighbouring Tamil Nadu where only 17 per cent of



SAFETY FIRST Police officers on patrol duty in Park Street, Kolkata

Safety is not just the absence of danger, but the presence of trust. And trust, unlike GDP or growth rates, is not easily measured. It is sensed, it is lived, and it is lost in a moment

respondents claim that traffic rule violations are not regular in their areas—a statement that any visitor to India's cities might find surprising. Assam, often criticised for infrastructural inadequacies, ranks as the best-behaved state, with only 32 per cent reporting routine rule-breaking. Karnataka again finds itself at the bottom, with a staggering 89 per cent witnessing casual flouting of traffic norms. It seems chaos is less a function of development, and more an attitude problem.

In aggregate, 84 per cent of Indians say they would report a violent crime, 86 per cent feel safe in public transport, and 56 per cent feel secure in their neighbourhoods. On paper, these are respectable figures. But they mask the unevenness—the quiet tragedies and triumphs playing out in India's bylanes and alleys. Safety, after all, is not just the absence of danger, but the presence of trust. And trust, unlike GDP or growth rates, is not easily measured. It is sensed, it is lived, and it is lost in a moment.

This survey, for all its numerical precision, ultimately tells a story of contradictions and complexity. What it finds is that India's public safety landscape reflects its broader national character: uneven, evolving, and defying simple categorisation. ■

the respondents said harassment of women in public spaces is a problem. What explains such dissonance between two southern neighbours with comparable socio-economic indices? Perhaps it is the silent weight of public vigilance and community enforcement in one state versus the shrugs and silences in another. But perhaps, too, it is the weight of perception—and perception, as every policymaker knows, can be as oppressive as reality.

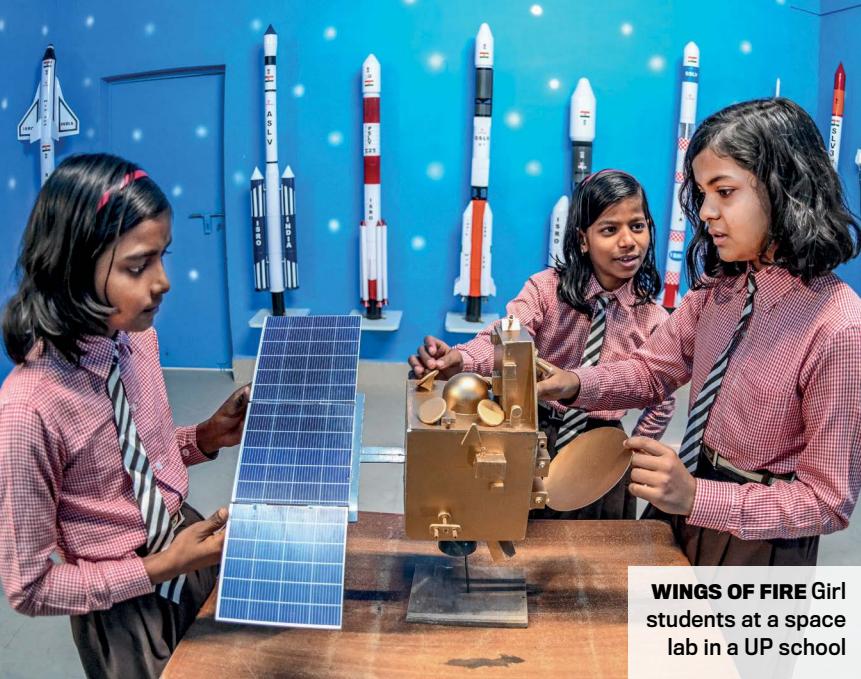
Public transport—the lifeblood of urban India—emerges as a rare bright spot in the safety landscape. Eighty-

six per cent of the respondents nationwide express feeling secure while using buses, metros and local trains. Maharashtra leads this category with 89 per cent of the respondents reporting feeling safe in public transit, a testament perhaps to Mumbai's generally well-regulated transportation network. Even Punjab, the laggard in this category, reports a respectable 73 per cent safety perception rate.

The survey's findings on traffic rule adherence present another fascinating window into India's relationship with civic order. Nationally, 54 per cent of the

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code





MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

WINGS OF FIRE Girl students at a space lab in a UP school



GENDER ATTITUDES

CRACKS IN EQUALITY

While Indian society embraces gender equality in education and employment, entrenched patriarchy continues to shape household decisions and personal freedoms for women



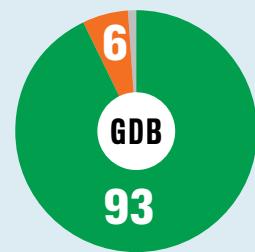
How do Indians perceive gender roles in their households and society?

The India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour (GDB) survey sought to answer this by posing six thoughtfully designed questions to over 9,000 respondents nationwide. The results on 'Gender Attitudes' paint a picture of a country caught between progress and persistent patriarchy. Kerala emerges as a beacon of gender parity, topping the rankings, while Uttar Pradesh languishes at the bottom.

In a society where tradition often dictates gender norms, a staggering 69 per cent of the respondents believe that men should have the final say in household decisions. This sentiment is most pronounced in Uttar Pradesh, where an overwhelming 96 per cent endorse this view. In contrast, Kerala offers a progressive counterpoint, with three-quarters of its respondents rejecting this notion outright.

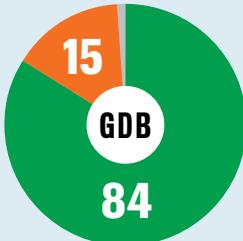
These attitudes extend to financial independence for women. While 91 per cent of Kerala's respondents—once again the highest among all states—support a woman's right to manage her own earnings, Odisha

Q. Should daughters in the family be encouraged to study or pursue education as much as sons?



98% in ODISHA believe daughters have the same right to education as sons; **22% in GUJARAT** don't agree with this notion

Q. Should female members of the family be encouraged to take up a job outside the home?



98% in UTTAR PRADESH are willing to encourage their daughters to take up jobs outside the home; **38% in GUJARAT** are opposed to this idea

■ Yes ■ No ■ Did not answer
(Figures in percentage)

The 'Yes' and 'No' responses in GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) have been calculated as the combined percentages of answers—'Yes' (strongly agree and somewhat agree) and 'No' (disagree and somewhat disagree)

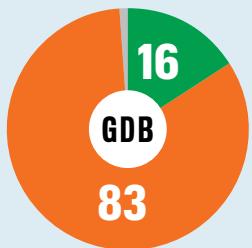
lags with just 27 per cent backing this idea.

Attitudes toward domestic violence expose another troubling reality. While 83 per cent of the respondents disapprove of a husband beating his wife, the stark reality is that 14 per cent of women themselves justify such violence. The variation across states is telling—only 2 per cent of Uttarakhand's respondents condone domestic violence, while in Andhra Pradesh, the figure climbs to 31 per cent.

Education and employment rights for women attract widespread approval, with

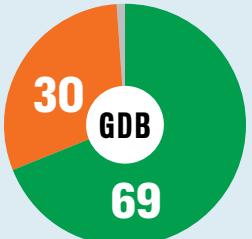
Q. Is a husband justified in beating his wife if she objects to his decisions regarding household matters?

98% in UTTARA-KHANd are opposed to such domestic violence; 31% in ANDHRA PRADESH back this notion



Q. Should male members of the household have the final say in major household matters?

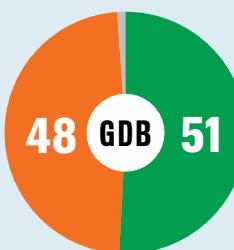
75% in KERALA are opposed to male members having the final say in household matters; 96% in UTTAR PRADESH think it should be the case



93 per cent believing daughters should have the same educational opportunities as sons. However, when it comes to autonomy in marriage, the picture is grim—67 per cent of the respondents feel women should not be free to marry against parental wishes.

The survey underscores a paradox: while Indian society is embracing gender equality in education and employment, patriarchal attitudes continue to dominate decision-making, personal freedoms and financial independence.

Q. Should women vote for the same candidate as the male members of their family?



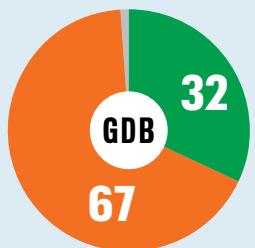
93% in KERALA want women to make their own voting choices; 91% in UTTAR PRADESH say women should vote for the same candidate as the men in their families

GENDER ATTITUDES THE LEADERS AND THE LAGGARDS

RANK 2025	STATE
1	KERALA
2	UTTARAKHAND
3	TAMIL NADU
4	HIMACHAL PRADESH
5	MAHARASHTRA
6	TELANGANA
7	CHANDIGARH
8	WEST BENGAL
9	ODISHA
10	NCT OF DELHI
11	HARYANA
12	JHARKHAND
13	BIHAR
14	MADHYA PRADESH
15	KARNATAKA
16	ANDHRA PRADESH
17	RAJASTHAN
18	CHHATTISGARH
19	PUNJAB
20	ASSAM
21	GUJARAT
22	UTTAR PRADESH

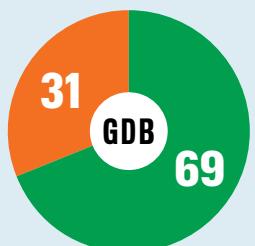
Q. Should a woman be free to marry whomever she wants, even against the wishes of her parents?

67% in KERALA think women should be free to marry against the wishes of their parents; 92% in CHANDIGARH oppose this idea



Q. Should a woman be free to make decisions about using the money she earns without requiring approval from male family members?

91% in KERALA say women are free to handle the money they earn; 70% in ODISHA say women should take her family's approval before making any such expenditure



The results reflect an uneven journey toward gender parity, with significant disparities between progressive and regressive pockets across the country. ■

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code





By **Rakhee
Kalita Moral**

The author is Professor of English, Dean of the Faculty of Language and Literature, and Chair of the Centre for Women's Studies at Cotton University, Guwahati

Understanding social behaviour is, admittedly, not an easy task. Unlike GDP or AQI numbers that are flashed in our everyday spaces, it is difficult to quantify social responses even when established theories, mechanisms and research methods attempt to calibrate them. There is a complex web of factors that drives humans to act, interact and react within diverse social contexts: the four broad planks in the India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour survey, thus, are indicators of likely behavioural patterns and can at best be considered relative. Gender attitudes assessed in the survey predictably reflect behavioural choices over a wide spectrum disaggregated along urban/ rural segments across the states and six key prompts directed to elicit ethical, informed and sane responses.

What is surprising however and, happily so, is that for nearly all the questions there is a near concurrence between urban and rural India, indicating a social transformation that closes several gaps in what is typically regarded as the great divide. Fifty years on from the historic 'Towards Equality' report, this survey, however, brings up certain concerning figures on the status of women despite the proliferating women's movements of the '70s and '80s.

That wife-beating as a valid punishment for disobedience, still a very tangible indicator of gender-based violence, continues to pit people across the spectrum, and yet also reveals an average of 8.5 per cent levelling the rural-urban population who "somewhat agree" to the principle is quite baffling. It is no truism that violence against women plagues the nation, a subject too vexing and complex to address in this short commentary. The decisive 70 per cent national index of those who "strongly disagree" comes as a relief. Personally, of course, the fact that this question must figure among the other indicators is disappointing given the assumption that even in our 21st-century digital worlds, certain attitudes do not evolve,

A Question of Agency

The survey brings up concerning trends for women whose competence, qualification or potential agency are blunted in order that they conform within the patriarchal stronghold



PURUSHOTTAM DIWAKAR

and that domestic abuse, penalising and female-bashing must remain as cogent and real indicators as the glass ceiling in the matter of gender attitudes.

If gender equality and the struggle for it by women in its earliest historical formulation meant suffrage and the sanction to vote, more than a century later, the inability to do so of one's own accord and as a free-thinking individual certainly doesn't vindicate the rights of women. The notion that intellectual judgement or rational choices by adult women might still depend on male affirmation in the family challenges ideas and notions about India's gender equality. Nearly half of the population across the heteronormative genders and along the rural-urban segments in India profess that males are better equipped to

decide domestic matters, volunteering away opportunities for women to be actually independent and empowered. A quarter of the respondents decidedly say no, but what is significant is that more states in the south of the country, with Kerala leading the count, "strongly disagree" on the matter. Does matriliney or matriarchal societies or perhaps literate populations balance the gender equation? Without an index from the north-eastern states except Assam, which is part of the survey, this is difficult to tell. And even if the NE cluster was to be included, is there proof that it is more gender-equal? Lack of electoral representation and real political participation in many of the states disinvest women of equality and equity in the region that has ironically had the privilege of some of the country's first Mahila Samitis, the Nupi Lan, or even the trailblazing Naga Mothers' Association.

Are we, then, still far from being a gender-equal nation or people? Where women's incomes have risen and they are often well-educated and attain posi-

will indicate a shared response across the rural-urban segments with about half of the respondents vehemently disagreeing with such freedom. On the other hand, over half the respondents across the gender split agree that women should be allowed to work away from their homes while over 77 per cent across rural-urban segments believe that daughters should pursue as good an education as boys do, even as a number of states reveal regressive attitudes. Evidently, gender stereotypes create a double bind for women whose competence, qualification or potential agency are blunted in order that they conform to the patriarchal stronghold. Financial autonomy and economic independence, while guaranteeing the place of the single woman in our society, is an issue that elicits mixed responses and there is no overwhelming majority about a woman's claim to her own money. Virginia Woolf's famous feminist position about "a room of one's own (and money)" and her passionate exhortation to women of her world to "possess yourselves of money to travel and to

The notion that intellectual judgement by adult women might still depend on male affirmation challenges notions about India's gender equality

tions of leadership, yet the gender norm prevails over basic questions like who decides, who works, who has greater liberties and who will a girl marry? Research in the social sciences and humanities has revealed that women exhibit greater communal behaviour and work well in solidarities and with groups while men are agentic and often lead the herd or dominate the group. In addition to this, traditional gender roles (read 'feminine') and socialisation patterns seem to influence the way men and women behave in social and domestic spheres and are also corroborated by perceptions that grow and persist out of this scenario.

Thus, findings around the question of women's freedom to marry of their own choice and in defiance of parents'

"idle..." seems sadly a wishful thought as far as domestic behaviour in our country goes. If there is a passport, women don't necessarily travel here.

Yet, I am hopeful that a younger India is likely to be more gender-equal, more democratic as it loosens away from centuries of entrenched and embedded patriarchies. The woman shall walk alone and rise, and still she must rise. ■

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code



NECESSARY HELP

Free ration being distributed at a government shop in Arjunganj, Lucknow

MANEESH AGNIHOTRI



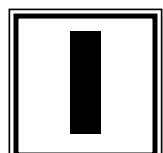
DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION THE LEADERS AND THE LAGGARDS



DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION

THE SLOW BLURRING OF BOUNDARIES

Caste or religious discrimination find fewer takers, but the boundaries stay firm when it comes to marriage outside faith or caste group

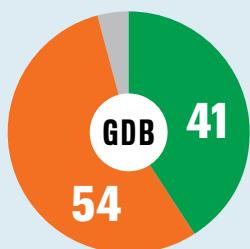


India, a land that prides itself on its diversity, reveals a deeply fragmented picture when it comes to acceptance and discrimination. The India Today Gross Domestic Behaviour survey explored public attitudes on social inclusivity through five key questions. While a national majority claims openness to religious and caste diversity, the data exposes entrenched biases that vary sharply across states. Kerala emerges as the beacon of inclusivity and ranks first, while Madhya Pradesh languishes at the bottom, illustrating the stark regional disparities in social attitudes across the country.

Respondents in Kerala overwhelmingly reject restrictions on food habits, oppose employment discrimination and welcome interfaith and inter-caste marriages. At the other end of the spectrum, MP, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand show the

RANK 2025	STATE
1	KERALA
2	TAMIL NADU
3	WEST BENGAL
4	MAHARASHTRA
5	CHANDIGARH
6	HARYANA
7	ASSAM
8	TELANGANA
9	RAJASTHAN
10	BIHAR
11	ANDHRA PRADESH
12	ODISHA
13	JHARKHAND
14	CHHATTISGARH
15	HIMACHAL PRADESH
16	GUJARAT
17	NCT OF DELHI
18	PUNJAB
19	KARNATAKA
20	UTTARAKHAND
21	UTTAR PRADESH
22	MADHYA PRADESH

Q. Do residents' associations or housing societies have the right to prohibit certain types of food (such as meat or beef) in individual apartments or common areas?

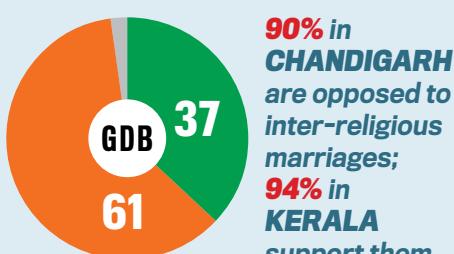


88% in KERALA are opposed to any ban on food types in their localities; **75%** in UTTARAKHAND back the idea

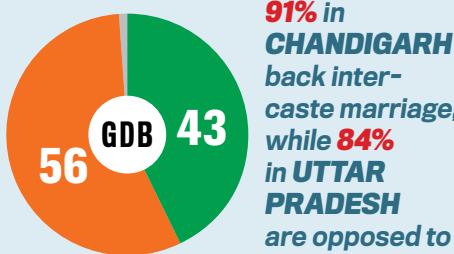
■ Yes ■ No
■ Did not answer

(Figures in percentage)

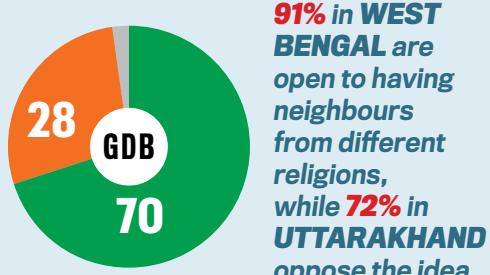
Q. Should a man and woman be free to marry each other even if they are from different religions?



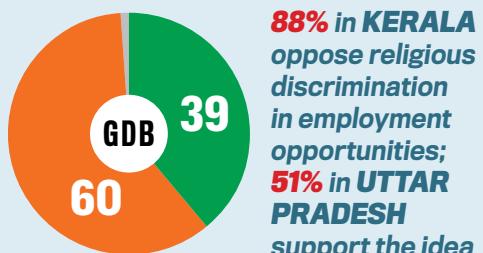
Q. Should a man and woman be free to marry each other even if they are from different castes?



Q. Are you comfortable with people or families from different religions settling in your village or area?



Q. Does an employer have the right to decide not to employ people from a certain religion?



The 'Yes' and 'No' responses in GDB (Gross Domestic Behaviour) have been calculated as the combined percentages of answers—'Yes' (strongly agree and somewhat agree) and 'No' (disagree and somewhat disagree)

most rigid social barriers, with high resistance to interfaith unions and a greater tendency to endorse religious discrimination in employment.

The survey offers encouraging news about neighbourhood diversity, with 70 per cent of respondents expressing comfort with neighbours from different faiths. West Bengal leads, with 91 per cent welcoming religious diversity in their communities; Uttarakhand demonstrates the highest resistance, with 72 per cent uncomfortable with such integration.

Perhaps most striking are attitudes toward intermarriage—61 per cent of the respondents oppose interfaith marriages and 56 per cent reject inter-caste marriages. Among states, 94 per cent in Karnataka oppose inter-religion marriages while 84 per cent in UP show resistance to inter-case unions.

In the workplace, 60 per cent of Indians oppose religious discrimination in hiring. Kerala leads, with 88 per cent rejecting an employer's right to discriminate based on religion.

These findings sketch a nuanced

portrait of India's path toward inclusion—a journey shaped by regional disparities, reflecting the nation's continuing struggle to balance its pluralistic ideals with deep-seated social divides. ■

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code



**WITH THE WIND
OF CHANGE**

Surender Kol, a Dalit,
at his home in Jamsoti
village in Sonbhadra
district, Uttar Pradesh



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR



By **Ravinder
Kaur**

The author is Professor (Emerita) Sociology and Social Anthropology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi

A Gradual Move Towards Inclusivity

Surprising results from several states—on religion and employment, for instance—point at softening attitudes on old divisions. The most liberal of our communities reside in all corners of the country

INDIA TODAY magazine has introduced a new survey to track the attitudes of Indians towards crucial aspects of socio-economic behaviour that impact everyday lives. The results are tabulated along rural-urban and gender axes. A unique aspect of the survey is that a 'Domestic Behaviour Index' has been created that ranks Indian states across various parameters.

One set of questions aims to understand where rural/ urban people, men and women, and various states stand on diversity and discrimination. The survey asks five questions to understand how liberal/ illiberal we are on some everyday as well as critical attitudes and choices. Briefly put, the questions are: 1) whether an employer should have the right to decide not to employ a person of a certain religion; 2) should people have the freedom to choose a spouse of another religion; 3) should people have the freedom to choose a spouse of a different caste; 4) should discrimination based on food-habits be allowed and 5) comfort or lack thereof of living with neighbours from different religions.

We delve into the responses to discern if attitude shifts have occurred in recent decades. It is important to note that surveys provide us with a snapshot at a point in time and poll a limited sample; hence, they can only capture "partial truths". The word limit of an article also prevents one from deeper sociological analysis. Nevertheless, here are some observations on what the survey reveals on diversity and discrimination.

A robust 60 per cent disagree that employers should have the right to exclude people from employment based on their religion. Women, in general, show more liberal tendencies than men, although their behaviour varies state-wise. A surprising finding is that Gujarat, with its history of communal conflict, is more liberal in not discriminating against employing people based on their religion than either Tamil Nadu or Bihar. However, on most other ques-

tions, the state doesn't exactly cover itself in glory. Strangely, Haryana is more liberal than Uttar Pradesh in not discriminating on the basis of religion—perhaps because there is little representation of the minority community there, while in UP, a larger number of workers allows ease of such discrimination, likely intensified by the vitiated climate in the state.

Chandigarh delivers a cluster of counterintuitive responses. Located in the heart of the patriarchal North, it is a massive outlier with extremely liberal attitudes on inter-caste marriage and co-habitation of different religious communities. But seemingly aberrantly, it pivots when it comes to marrying across faith or across parental will. The only other question on which it bucks its progressive grain is food-based discrimination. One wonders how Le

extremes, with the former completely eschewing discrimination and the latter feeling it is kosher to exclude people based on their food choices. Odisha is surprising because most states with a good mix of vegetarian and non-vegetarian diets are found to discriminate less. Among the northern states, Bihar is more liberal than southern states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which favour such discrimination.

Another finding appears surprising in light of media stories of members of the minority community being denied accommodation in majority-dominated areas. The survey shows that a large section of the polled in rural and urban areas (70 per cent and 62 per cent) and an equal number of men and women are comfortable with co-residing with people of other religious communities. Among the states, men and women in Uttarakhand and MP seem to be the most intolerant while in Haryana and Rajasthan, they are much less.

One key takeaway from the survey is that the traditional broad-brush way of understanding the country as two blocs—north and south of the Vindhya range—no longer holds. The survey finds that Kerala, West Bengal and Maharashtra are ranked highest by the index on these questions while Madhya Pradesh, UP and Uttarakhand receive the lowest ranks. While the latter states can still be identified within the old BIMARU trope, the most liberal states are spread across India, with Kerala in the South, West Bengal in the East, and Maharashtra in the West. Two highlights emerging from the survey are that attitudes towards some forms of communal living testify to the decreasing importance of caste and religious discrimination, while others, as in the domain of marriage, stubbornly cling on. ■

The broad-brush way of understanding India as two blocs—north and south of the Vindhyas no longer holds

Corbusier's architecture shaped social relations so ambiguously. Perhaps we need to deepen the data with a detailed qualitative study?

On the acceptability of inter-religious and inter-caste marriages, there is all-round conservatism, with rural areas being more so than urban and women being slightly more circumspect about transgressing caste and religious boundaries to find partners; this is most likely because women in India bear the brunt of such transgressions.

Caste and ideas of purity and pollution have long governed Indians' ideas about food consumption. However, over half of the polled do not support discriminating against others on the basis of food habits, even if they involve the consumption of beef and meat. Women are a little more liberal. Among the states, Kerala and Odisha lie at two

For the detailed report, please scan the QR code





EVERY DROP COUNTS FOR A THIRSTY NATION

As the world observes World Water Day on March 22, India finds itself at a critical juncture. A nation that once flourished with mighty rivers and abundant groundwater is now grappling with a severe water crisis. While the crisis is multi-faceted—driven by population explosion, climate change, and mismanagement—it is also an opportunity for reform, innovation, and sustainable solutions. If India is to secure its future, it must act decisively, blending traditional wisdom with modern technology to safeguard its most precious resource: water.

Lessons from Tradition

India's water wisdom is centuries old. The ancient baolis (stepwells) of Rajasthan, the johads (rainwater storage structures) of Alwar, and the kulhs (community irrigation systems) of Himachal Pradesh are testaments to the country's sustainable water management practices. These traditional methods, once abandoned in favor of modern infrastructure, are now making a comeback as viable solutions to contemporary challenges.

Restoring and integrating these indigenous techniques with modern technology can provide a robust framework for water conservation.

The Role of Technology and Policy

The government's Jal Shakti Abhiyan and Atal Bhujal Yojana have been steps in the right direction, promoting rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and sustainable agriculture. However, much more needs to be done.

Technology will be key to India's water security. Satellite-based groundwater mapping, AI-driven irrigation systems, and IoT-enabled water monitoring can significantly enhance efficiency. Desalination plants, wastewater treatment facilities, and decentralized water purification systems can provide alternative sources of clean drinking water. Moreover, policy reforms are crucial. A national water pricing mechanism, incentives for drip irrigation, and strict regulation of industrial and domestic wastewater disposal can help curb wastage. A decentralized approach, empowering

local communities to manage their water resources, can create sustainable solutions tailored to specific geographic needs.

Citizen Responsibility and Collective Action

Water conservation is not just a governmental responsibility—it requires collective action. Individuals must adopt simple but effective habits like fixing leaks, using water-efficient appliances, and reusing wastewater wherever possible. Community-led initiatives, such as reviving local lakes and promoting afforestation, can significantly impact local water availability.

Corporations, too, must step up. Industries must transition to water-efficient processes and invest in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects that promote water sustainability. Many global companies have already achieved "water positivity," meaning they replenish more water than they consume—an approach Indian firms must emulate.

The Road Ahead

India's water crisis is not insurmountable, but it demands urgency. If the nation continues on its current trajectory, the future looks grim—food production will decline, urban water conflicts will escalate, and economic growth will be severely hindered. However, if we take swift, decisive action today, we can reverse this trajectory.

On this World Water Day, let us recognize that water is not an infinite resource. It is time for India to treat water as a national security issue, a fundamental human right, and an economic priority. The path forward lies in a holistic approach—combining ancient wisdom with cutting-edge technology, stringent policy reforms with grassroots participation. The choices we make today will determine whether India thrives or thirsts in the decades to come.



PRESERVING EVERY DROP

HOW PEPSICO INDIA IS TRANSFORMING WATER CONSERVATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Water: The Lifeline We Must Protect

Water is the essence of life—nourishing ecosystems, sustaining agriculture, and shaping the well-being of communities. Yet, with depleting groundwater levels and increasing water stress, especially in rural India, the need for effective water conservation has never been more urgent. As the world comes together to observe World Water Day 2025, it serves as a reminder that sustainable water management is not just an environmental imperative but a fundamental necessity for future generations.

Recognizing this, PepsiCo India, under its “Partnership of Progress” philosophy, has been actively working towards strengthening water security. By working with local communities and experts, the company is driving water conservation efforts that directly impact those who heavily rely on it today.

A Region in Need: The Water Crisis in Hathras

Hathras, like many parts of Uttar Pradesh, has been facing a severe water crisis. Groundwater levels have been steadily declining and with erratic rainfall patterns.

The Watershed Health Initiative: A Sustainable Model for Change

To tackle the pressing water crisis in Hathras, PepsiCo India, in collaboration with FORCE Trust, launched the

Watershed Health Initiative. Through a combination of rainwater harvesting, pond rejuvenation, and well restoration, communities now have improved access to water for irrigation and daily needs.

The impact of the Watershed Health Initiative goes beyond numbers—it's about real change in people's lives. Through rainwater harvesting and efficient water management, the initiative has helped conserve 8.12 crore liters of water annually, ensuring long-term water availability for farming and daily use. More than 2,300 farming families have directly benefited.

The establishment of 45 water-efficient farms has improved irrigation techniques; soil management have significantly reduced water consumption while boosting crop yields. Farmers who once struggled with unpredictable water supply now speak of a renewed sense of security.

Shri Birendra Singh Rana, Hon'ble MLA of Sikandra Rao, lauded the effort, calling it “a crucial step towards sustainable rural development. Groundwater conservation is key to securing the future of agriculture, and this model can inspire similar transformations across the region.”

Yashika Singh, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer & Sustainability Head, PepsiCo India, emphasized, “we believe that true progress is built on collective action. We are working hand-in-hand with communities to develop scalable water solutions that have a lasting impact.”

Voices from the Ground in Kosi, A Community Transformed

The Kosi Kalan region of Mathura has long faced water scarcity due to high salinity in groundwater. PepsiCo Foundation and FORCE Trust partnered to implement a holistic program; through the construction of rainwater



Residents use the restored well with clean water access in a village in Kosi



safe drinking water infrastructure for students in a Sirthala school [Kosi]

harvesting systems, RO units, pond rejuvenation, and wells construction and restoration, 13 villages now have access to safe drinking water.

Schools in Sirthala and Mehrana have seen increased attendance of students, as a result of installation of RO systems ensuring safe drinking water, construction of toilets and rainwater harvesting structures and awareness among students on water usage, hygiene and sanitation.

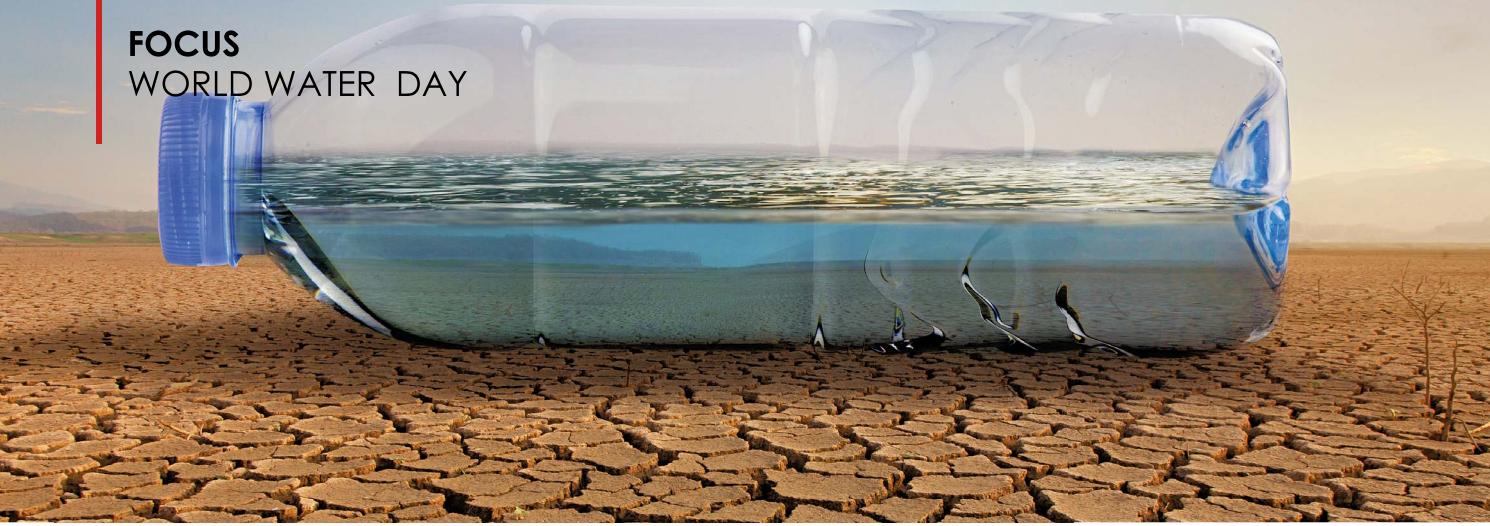
Bageet Singh, Village Pradhan of Mehrana, shared, “Many villagers were leaving the area due to the lack of drinking water. We had to spend a lot of money every month to arrange drinking water through water tankers. The transformation driven by PepsiCo Foundation and FORCE Trust in partnership with our community, has brought a lot of joy for the villages in Mehrana and nearby.”

The Vision Ahead: A Blueprint for the Future

The success of these initiatives is just the beginning. With its proven impact on water conservation and sustainable farming, this model has the potential to transform rural communities across India.

At its core, the initiative underscores the power of collaboration—when businesses, local leaders, and communities come together, meaningful change happens. Water conservation isn't just about infrastructure; it's about creating a culture of responsibility, where every drop counts.

With water scarcity emerging as one of the biggest environmental challenges of our time, corporates like PepsiCo India chipping in with long-term, community-driven solutions can make a significant difference. By integrating sustainability into their core operations and working alongside grassroots organizations, businesses can help ensure that rural communities have the resources they need to thrive—not just today, but for generations to come.



HOW COMPANIES ARE INNOVATING TO SECURE EVERY DROP

India, a country with a population exceeding 1.4 billion, faces severe water crises due to rapid urbanization, climate change, inefficient water management, and depleting groundwater levels. To combat this challenge, companies are stepping up with innovative solutions, combining technology, sustainability, and business models to ensure water security for the nation.

1. Smart Water Management Solutions

Several companies are leveraging smart technology to optimize water usage and distribution. Startups and established players are utilizing AI-driven analytics, IoT-enabled smart meters, and real-time monitoring systems to track water usage, identify leakages, and improve efficiency. Companies like WEGoT Utility Solutions and Jal Technologies provide IoT-based water management solutions to apartments, industries, and commercial buildings, reducing wastage and optimizing consumption.

2. Wastewater Recycling and Treatment

With fresh water becoming increasingly scarce, companies are investing in wastewater recycling technologies. Firms like VA Tech Wabag and Ion Exchange India Ltd. specialize in industrial and municipal wastewater treatment, enabling reuse for

non-drinking purposes like irrigation and industrial cooling. Many IT parks and manufacturing units have adopted Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) systems to recycle and reuse wastewater effectively.

3. Rainwater Harvesting Initiatives

To replenish depleting groundwater levels, companies are promoting rainwater harvesting. Real estate developers and industries are incorporating rainwater collection and storage systems in their projects. Companies like Tata Steel and ITC Limited have implemented large-scale rainwater harvesting projects in their plants and surrounding communities to reduce dependence on municipal supplies and groundwater.

4. Desalination Projects

India's long coastline presents an opportunity to harness seawater through desalination. Companies like VA Tech Wabag, Tata Projects, and IDE Technologies have set up desalination plants, particularly in water-stressed regions like Chennai and Gujarat, to supply potable water to cities and industries. Desalination, though energy-intensive, is increasingly becoming viable with advancements in renewable energy integration.

5. Water-efficient Agriculture Practices

Agriculture consumes nearly 80% of India's freshwater resources, often inefficiently. Companies are introducing precision irrigation techniques such as drip and sprinkler irrigation to optimize water use. Jain Irrigation Systems, one of the pioneers in micro-irrigation in India, has helped farmers reduce water consumption while increasing crop yields. Similarly, startups like Fasal and Cropln are using AI-driven solutions to provide real-time weather and soil moisture insights, enabling farmers to make data-driven irrigation decisions.

6. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and CSR Initiatives

Many companies are collaborating with the government through PPPs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs to improve water accessibility in rural and urban areas. Companies like Hindustan Unilever and Coca-Cola India have initiated community water programs, building check dams and restoring traditional water bodies. PepsiCo India, through its Sustainable Water Resource Development and Management program, has rejuvenated several watersheds, improving groundwater recharge and agricultural productivity.

7. Bottled Water and Water ATMs

To provide safe drinking water to underserved areas, companies have introduced affordable bottled water solutions and water ATMs. Organizations like Tata Trusts, in collaboration with local entrepreneurs, have set up water kiosks offering clean drinking water at nominal rates. WaterHealth India has installed decentralized water purification systems in rural and semi-urban areas, ensuring access to safe drinking water.

8. Sustainable Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure and real estate companies are incorporating water-efficient designs in new buildings. Green buildings with water-saving fixtures, wastewater recycling units, and rainwater harvesting structures are becoming standard in urban developments. Organizations like Godrej Properties and Lodha Group are leading the way in sustainable real estate practices, reducing water footprints in their projects.

9. Awareness and Behavioral Change Campaigns

Many companies are also investing in educating people about water conservation. Through awareness campaigns and school programs, companies like Nestlé India and Piramal Foundation are promoting responsible water usage among communities. Digital platforms and mobile apps are being leveraged to provide actionable insights on water conservation at the household level.

The Way Forward

While companies are playing a crucial role in tackling India's water woes, a collaborative approach involving the government, industries, communities, and individuals is essential for long-term water security. Policy reforms promoting water efficiency, incentives for rainwater harvesting and wastewater recycling, and stricter enforcement of water conservation laws will further strengthen these efforts. By combining technology, sustainable practices, and community engagement, India can overcome its water crisis and ensure a secure future for its growing population.





155 MLD C-Tech STP
in Pirana, Gujarat

LEADING THE CHARGE IN WASTEWATER TREATMENT TECHNOLOGY

With climate change intensifying water scarcity and rapid urbanization straining resources, wastewater treatment and water reuse have become critical pillars of sustainable water management. In India, where water demand is set to outpace supply in the coming decades, the need for efficient, technology-driven solutions has never been greater.

At SFC Environmental Technologies, sustainability is not just a guiding principle—it is the foundation of our existence. The company was established with the singular goal of treating wastewater and rejuvenating India's water bodies. Over the years, we have pioneered transformative technologies that help municipalities and industries meet growing regulatory and environmental expectations, ensuring that treated wastewater is a valuable resource rather than a liability.

ADVANCING WATER REUSE WITH PROVEN TECHNOLOGIES

SFC's flagship technology, **C-Tech™**, has set the benchmark for wastewater treatment in urban and industrial sectors. A high-performance **Sequential Batch Reactor** (SBR) process, C-Tech ensures high-quality treatment, operational efficiency, and energy savings. With over 1,100 C-Tech orders and 600+ commissioned plants across India, it has been instrumental in delivering the output required by national initiatives like **Namami Gange**, **AMRUT**, and **Smart Cities Missions**.

As water reuse gains increasing momentum, we have expanded our capabilities with advanced tertiary treatment technologies, such as **MEMCOR SUF**, introduced in collaboration with **DuPont**. This state-of-the-art ultrafiltration system enables:

- Safe and reliable water recycling for industrial and municipal use
- High-purity output for industrial processes and potable reuse
- Scalability and cost-efficiency for sustainable long-term operations

These solutions are helping cities reduce dependency on freshwater sources, and policymakers address the pressing challenges of water conservation.

SCALING OUR SUSTAINABILITY FOOTPRINT BEYOND WATER

Beyond wastewater treatment, SFC has broadened its impact on environmental sustainability by expanding into solid waste management. We have developed and operate two state-of-the-art Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) plants in Goa, treating over 350 tonnes of wet and dry waste daily that showcase our innovative waste-to-energy capabilities. These facilities efficiently process organic waste, with a biogas generation efficiency of up to 150Nm³ per ton of wet waste, contributing to clean energy production and sustainable urban waste solutions.

EXPANDING MANUFACTURING FOR A SELF-RELIANT FUTURE

In 2021, we started with a 20,000 sq. ft. facility in Pune. In just three years, we have expanded to 200,000 sq. ft., transforming from a single-product focus to a diverse, world-class fabrication unit. This rapid growth aligns with the Make in India initiative, enabling us to reduce import dependency, create jobs, develop local skills, and contribute to national economic growth.

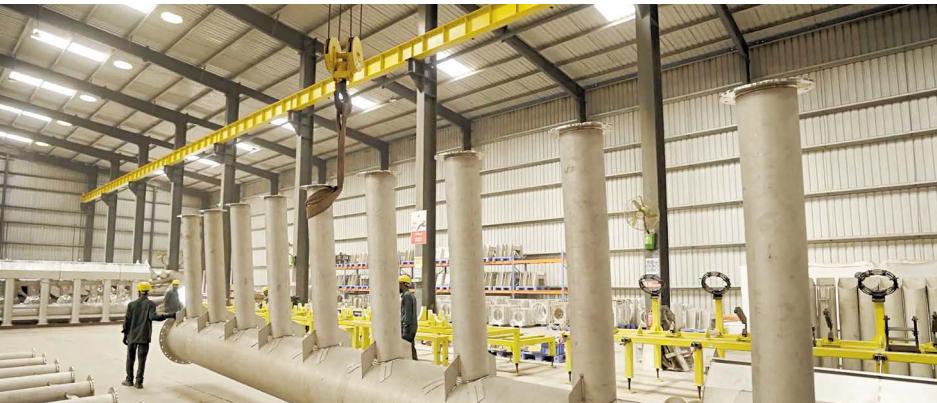
ALIGNING WITH ESG AND INDIA'S CIRCULAR ECONOMY VISION

Sustainability is ingrained in our DNA, influencing every aspect of our business. Our commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles is reflected in:

- **Environmental Impact:** Cutting-edge wastewater and solid waste treatment solutions that contribute to a circular economy.
- **Social Responsibility:** Strengthening urban infrastructure, enhancing sanitation, and supporting water security.
- **Governance & Financial Strength:** As a financially sound company, our credit rating was recently upgraded from CARE A- to A by CARE Ratings, reinforcing our stability and growth potential.

With increasing government focus on water reuse and resource efficiency, we anticipate significant growth in wastewater treatment and water recycling initiatives. Our continued expansion in Chakan MIDC aligns with India's Make in India vision, fostering self-reliance in environmental technology.

The path ahead is clear—a future where treated wastewater is a key asset rather than a discarded byproduct. With strong policy support, technological advancements, and responsible industry practices, India is well-positioned to lead the way in water sustainability. SFC remains committed to playing a pivotal role in this transformation, ensuring a resilient and resource-secure tomorrow.



Pioneering Sustainable Solutions in Wastewater Treatment

Q: How is SFC contributing to sustainable water management in urban and industrial sectors?

A: At SFC, we believe water is too valuable to be used just once. Our mission is to provide simple, flexible, and cost-effective environmental solutions that help cities and industries transition toward sustainable water use. Our C-Tech™ technology improves India's wastewater treatment, delivering high-quality water with minimal environmental impact. Submerged ultrafiltration (MEMCOR SUF) with DuPont ensures safe recycling and planet-focused efforts.

Q: How are you dealing with wastewater treatment and water conservation?

A: Water conservation isn't just about using less—it's about using wisely. Our solutions focus on treating, recovering, and reusing water at every stage:

- C-Tech: Advanced biological treatment optimizing energy efficiency.

• C-Mem, Fiber Disc Filters, and MBR: High-performance tertiary treatment.

- MEMCOR SUF: Enables large-scale reuse, reducing freshwater dependency.

Through Namami Gange, AMRUT, and Smart Cities, we are restoring rivers, improving urban sanitation, and driving industrial water sustainability.

Q: What steps has SFC taken to address climate change challenges on water resources?

A: We're enhancing water reuse, reducing wastewater treatment's carbon footprint, and incorporating energy-efficient technologies like Turbo Blowers and Solar Sludge Drying, ensuring sustainable water infrastructure accessibility across diverse geographies.

Q: What are your future plans for water infrastructure and conservation?

A: Over the next decade, we aim to:



Mr Sandeep Asolkar

Chairman & Managing Director of SFC

- Mainstream advanced water recycling across industries and municipalities.

- Integrate AI and smart monitoring for predictive efficiency.

- Strengthen partnerships with governments, industry, and research institutions.

With the right technology, mindset, and partnerships, we can transform India's water future—together with our industry peers, supporting organizations like The Times Group, and the government.

Driving the future of Wastewater Treatment in India

Q: Could you elaborate on the key government initiatives that your company is actively engaged with or finds particularly aligned with its mission and goals?

A: India's environmental and infrastructure goals, particularly in wastewater treatment and water treatment, are aligned with government initiatives like the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). We contribute by designing and implementing STPs and ancillary infrastructure, ensuring long-term sustainability and compliance with water quality standards.

Q: Can you share success story wherein your wastewater treatment solutions made a significant impact on a community?

A: Over the past seven years, 28 wastewater treatment and water supply projects have been developed across India, improving water security

and environmental sustainability. In Chhattisgarh, multiple projects have improved sanitation infrastructure and public health. In Bareilly Uttar Pradesh, 63 MLD wastewater treatment plants were completed ahead of schedule, reducing pollution and ensuring cleaner water. The company focuses on timely completion, high-quality engineering, and sustainable practices.

Q: What do you see as the future of wastewater treatment in India?

A: The future of wastewater treatment in India holds immense potential, driven by rapid urbanization, a growing population, and strong government initiatives. We are strategically positioned to lead this transformation.

Our expertise in High-Rate Anaerobic Digestors (HRAD) + SBR for nutrient removal and MBBR with IFAS optimizes existing infrastructure. Additionally,



Mr Sanjay Jain

Managing Director, Enviro Infra Engineers Limited

our advanced tertiary treatment technologies—ultra-filtration, disc filters, and UV treatment—ensure Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) compliance and water reuse.

As India moves towards a circular economy, our commitment to sustainability, technological innovation, and operational excellence positions us at the forefront of the industry. By aligning with national water management goals and embracing cutting-edge solutions, we are not only addressing environmental challenges but also reinforcing our leadership in shaping India's water-secure future.



EMPOWERING GREEN PLANET...

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WATER: SMART ENGINEERING FOR SUSTAINABLE TREATMENT AND CONSERVATION

Water is the foundation of life and development, yet rapid urbanization, population growth, and climate change are straining global water resources. India faces critical water management challenges, with cities like Delhi, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad at risk of running out of groundwater. A NITI Aayog report warns that nearly 100 million people could be affected by water scarcity if urgent action is not taken. India's water crisis is exacerbated by aging infrastructure, unchecked water losses, and, most critically, inadequate wastewater treatment. Traditional approaches to wastewater management fail to address the scale and urgency of the issue, demanding innovative, technology-driven solutions. Enviro Infra Engineers Limited, incorporated in 2009, is spearheading this transformation, championing advanced wastewater treatment methods that promise a cleaner and more sustainable future for India.

Pioneering Water and Wastewater Management
Enviro Infra Engineers Limited specializes in the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) and Water Supply Scheme Projects (WSSPs) for government authorities. These include Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs), Sewerage Schemes (SS), Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs), and Water Treatment Plants (WTPs). The treatment processes at most STPs and CETPs are Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) compliant, ensuring that treated water can be reused for horticulture, industrial applications, and other non-potable purposes.

Enviro Infra is also actively integrating "Waste to Energy" initiatives into its projects to reduce its carbon footprint and enhance sustainability. The company has installed solar power plants at select

sites, i.e. 1 MW unit in Kota and 800 KW in Bareilly, with a 3 MW facility in Bikaner and more underway in Jodhpur, Jaipur, and Varanasi. Additionally, compressed biogas (CBG) plants are being set up at STPs in Jodhpur and Jaipur, with the produced biogas to be sold to public sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) or used for power generation. These advancements underscore the company's commitment to sustainable development.

Expanding Presence and Strengthening Expertise
Over the years Enviro Infra Engineers has expanded significantly in states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. The company is strengthening its network and deepening its expertise in executing large-scale projects.

The company's second generation promoters, Sanjay Jain and Manish Jain, bring over two decades of experience in the water and wastewater treatment industry. Along with a highly skilled senior management team, they have been instrumental in driving the company's growth and securing large-scale infrastructure projects across India.

Capitalizing on Government Policy Initiatives

Government policies are pivotal in advancing infrastructure development. Enviro Infra Engineers leverages key initiatives like AMRUT, NMCG, and state-level wastewater recycling schemes. With increased allocations—AMRUT ₹40,000 cr, Namami Gange ₹3,290 cr, and Jal Jeevan Mission approx. ₹134,000 cr for FY25-26—the focus on strengthening water infrastructure is evident.

Enviro Infra Engineers strategically aligns with these government initiatives, enabling it to

secure contracts and drive impactful projects in wastewater treatment and recycling. We are executing five projects under AMRUT, five under the JJM, four under the NMCG. With continued government focus and increasing financial support, we are well-positioned to contribute to India's water sustainability goals while expanding our footprint in the sector.

Towards a Greener Future

By embedding renewable energy solutions such as solar and CBG into its wastewater treatment projects, Enviro Infra Engineers is setting new benchmarks in sustainable water management. The company is also actively seeking government incentives for green energy projects, reinforcing its leadership in environmentally responsible infrastructure development.

With a strong pipeline of ongoing and upcoming projects, Enviro Infra is poised to play a crucial role in shaping India's water sustainability landscape. By combining engineering excellence with environmental responsibility, the company is helping the nation navigate its water challenges while contributing to a cleaner, greener future.





PROBE HUB The ED headquarters in New Delhi

ARUN KUMAR

THE NATION | ED

RETURNING THE BOOTY

THE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE HAS MADE RESTITUTION A PRIORITY, AGGRESSIVELY TRACING ILLICIT FUNDS, MONETISING SEIZED ASSETS AND ENSURING THAT VICTIMS OF FINANCIAL FRAUD RECEIVE THEIR RIGHTFUL DUES

By Munish Pandey

For 57-year-old Somnath Chakraborty, employee of a private sector company in Kolkata, the promise of annual returns of more than 12 per cent enticed him to invest nearly Rs 2 lakh in a chit fund scheme floated by the Rose Valley Group in 2010. Like him, some three million small investors poured their hard-earned savings into the scheme, before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) launched an inquiry and declared it fraudulent in 2015. The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), the central agency responsible for investigating money laundering and terror financing, also stepped in.

For years, Chakraborty bore the weight of that loss with no hope of compensation. That changed six months ago, when he learned that the ED was returning money to those who had invested in Rose Valley. He, too, put in an application on their website. To his surprise, he received Rs 27,000 against his investments this January. "I never thought I'd see even a single paisa again," he admits, his voice a mixture of relief and regret. "I am grateful to ED for whatever I have received, but I still hope the full principal amount is returned."

For the ED, this is just the beginning. It has pledged to return all recovered funds worth Rs 6,600

RESTORING STOLEN WEALTH

WHAT IS RESTITUTION?

► It is a key element in global anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism financing investigations

► Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental watchdog of which India is a member, mandates that member countries establish a non-conviction-based confiscation regime, provided it aligns with their fundamental legal principles

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

► In India, restitution generally took place only after the completion of a trial under the legal framework of the PMLA

► However, recognising the need for restitution before trial completion, specific amendments were introduced in 2015

► The amendments allowed assets to be returned to legitimate claimants once the trial is underway, specifically after a Special Court designated for such cases frames charges

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS INVOLVE?

► The process of restitution begins with the identification, tracking and seizure of the proceeds of crime

► It involves uncovering often-complicated financial crime networks and pinpointing assets belonging to victims. Movable

and immovable properties of criminals are then attached

► The next stage is monetising these assets—turning seized property into liquid funds. This requires coordination with various authorities,

including courts and banks, to ensure that the assets are sold in a manner that maximises their value

► Once monetised, the proceeds are deposited in banks, and the court is notified to release the funds to the legitimate claimants

ceeds of crime seized by the ED, making significant strides in returning assets to their rightful owners,” says a high-ranking ED officer involved in the process.

A CONCERTED EFFORT

The ED has successfully restored more than Rs 27,000 crore to the victims of 31 mammoth scams, including legitimate individuals and banking institutions. The move also aligns with what Prime Minister Narendra Modi told INDIA TODAY in May 2024, “I feel from my heart that these people have looted the poor’s money by misusing their positions, and they should get it back.” The PM’s statement clearly signalled a shift towards ensuring that the benefits of the ED’s asset seizures reach those who have been wronged. In December last year, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, speaking in Parliament, cited the case of Vijay Mallya, in which the ED made a 100 per cent recovery from assets and returned Rs 14,131.6 crore to a consortium of 15 banks led by the State Bank of India. However, the former UB Group chairman, who owned Kingfisher Airlines, remains a fugitive in London. Other high-profile cases in which the ED has carried out restitution include the Nirav Modi case (Rs 1,052.58 crore), the Mehul Choksi case (Rs 2,695.90 crore), the Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd case (Rs 4,025 crore) and the Agri Gold Ponzi scam (Rs 3,339 crore).

This is happening not just for big fraud cases but also smaller ones, such as that involving Dr. SM CSI Medical College & Hospital in Kerala, where agents defrauded scores of individuals on the pretext of securing a medical seat. Last month, the ED returned Rs 89.75 lakh to six victims who had been defrauded. Rahul Navin, who currently heads the ED, has championed the cause of restitution as a cornerstone of the agency’s operations. His efforts mark a significant shift in how restitution is handled under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) framework, which allows for the restoration of assets once it has been determined that the properties in question were acquired through illicit means but ultimately belong to innocent victims (see *Restoring Stolen Wealth*).

MONEY RESTITUTED SO FAR BY THE ED

A total of Rs 27,300 crore in 31 money-laundering probes has been restored so far. Here are the main cases

A few of the figures have been rounded off



Vijay Mallya
₹14,132 CR.



Nirav Modi
₹1,053 CR.



Mehul Choksi
₹2,696 CR.



Rose Valley Chit Fund
₹450 CR.



Bhushan Power & Steel
₹4,025 CR.



Agri Gold Ponzi Scam
₹3,339 CR.

crore to the 3.2 million investors who were cheated in the Rs 17,520 crore Rose Valley scam. By March-end, the agency is planning to return Rs 450 crore to 900,000 investors through its restitution programme. In recent months, the ED has made the restitu-

tion of seized and attached assets a top priority in its fight against money-laundering and financial fraud. “Over the past several years, the agency’s focus has been on a concerted effort to ensure that victims of financial crimes are duly compensated from the pro-

CHALLENGES GALORE

While the success in restoring such vast sums of money may seem straightforward, the process itself is anything but simple. The ED's efforts to track, seize and ultimately return assets are labour-intensive and require detailed investigations, coordination with various authorities, and legal procedures that often stretch over months or even years. Money-laundering operations often involve intricate layers of transactions designed to conceal the origin of funds and obscure their true ownership. This is where the ED's expertise in forensic analysis plays a crucial role. By leveraging cutting-edge technology and forensic accounting methods, it can uncover the often-complicated webs of financial crimes and pinpoint the proceeds that belong to victims, even if these assets have been camouflaged or transferred through multiple channels.

Take the case of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam involving diamantaires Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi. One of the accused, Nehal Modi, Nirav's brother, managed the affairs of two companies—Twin Fields Investments Ltd and Bailey Banks and Biddle. Both firms received around \$50 million from Nirav Modi's dummy companies, which, in turn, obtained these funds through the fraud committed on PNB. Nehal also became the protector and investment advisor of Nirav Modi's The Ithaca Trust. The trust was alleged to have secured tainted funds amounting to \$30 million and used them to buy two immovable properties in the US.

Once the proceeds of crime are identified, as in the PNB case, the ED moves to attach both movable and immovable properties. While immovable properties like land, houses and office buildings are easier to track, identifying movable assets can be far more challenging. These assets may include luxury vehicles, valuable artworks, jewellery, cash held in bank accounts under the names of family members or associates, or assets hidden in offshore accounts. Even more complicated are cases where assets are held under benami ownership—properties that are technically



**ED DIRECTOR
RAHUL NAVIN HAS
CHAMPIONED THE
CAUSE OF RESTITUTION
AS A CORNERSTONE
OF THE AGENCY'S
OPERATIONS EVEN
THOUGH THE PROCESS IS
CHALLENGING**

owned by another person, but in reality belong to the accused. In Nirav Modi's case, the US flats purchased were in the names of his wife and sister.

The ED's efforts also extend to seizing machinery and industrial equipment in cases where illicit money has been invested in businesses or factories. However, such assets are often subject to rapid depreciation, forcing the agency to ensure their value is maximised before liquidation. The ED coordinates with various authorities, including courts and banks, to ensure seized properties are sold in a way that maximises their value. Once the assets are monetised, the proceeds are deposited in banks, and the court is notified to release funds to the legitimate claimants.

The challenges don't end here, though. The cooperation of various stakeholders is crucial, especially when assets are seized by both the ED and financial institutions like banks. Senior ED officials emphasise the importance of aligning all parties to work toward the common goal of returning money to the victims. "The goal is clear: to ensure victims receive their due compensation," says a senior ED official involved in the process. "We work closely with banks and other

stakeholders to ensure the restitution process does not get delayed. The quicker we can monetise and return the money, the better for the victims. When the money is returned to the financial institutions, it has a multiplier effect on the economy." The Bhushan Power & Steel case is cited as an example of how the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the processes under the PMLA can work in tandem. The company defaulted on Rs 47,200 crore in loans. The promoters, Neeraj Singal and Brij Bhushan Singal, diverted bank funds to private investments in the form of shares and properties. The company's books showed fake expenses alongside purchases of capital assets, many of which were made using the names of relatives or shell entities. In 2019, Bhushan Power & Steel was sold to JSW for Rs 19,700 crore through the IBC process. The ED also attached assets worth Rs 4,025 crore, which have now been restituted to various lenders, mainly banks that suffered losses.

In cases involving multiple accused—common in money-laundering operations—the process is even more complex. The accused can range from company directors to low-level operatives, such as drivers or hawala operators. Identifying and prosecuting all individuals involved is crucial to recovering the full proceeds of crime. The same holds true for identifying all the victims. The process of restitution becomes especially difficult and tedious when it involves a large number of victims and the liquidation of immovable assets, as seen in the Rose Valley chit fund case.

The ED is harnessing technology and the national payment system to make the process simple, transparent, foolproof and quick. While the ED is routinely accused of being used by the government as a weapon to target political opponents, the restitution process has brought the agency goodwill among large sections of the public. With restitution of funds recovered from frauds now becoming a top priority for the ED, the process, even if it may be slow or painstaking, will ensure that victims of financial frauds are not forgotten. ■



NURTURE
TO EXCEL,
LEAD TO
EMPOWER.



RP Goenka International School (RPGIS), a proud initiative of the RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, is an authorised IB World School and Eastern India's first IB PYP school. Designed to foster excellence, RPGIS blends cutting-edge infrastructure with emerging digital technologies and the latest educational research to shape resilient, future-ready leaders.

THE GANGES ODYSSEY



RPGIS recently staged **The Ganges Odyssey**, a musical tracing the Ganges' journey from the Himalayas to the Sundarbans. Blending mythology, history, and environmental themes, it reflected the river's essence and modern challenges. Graced by **Ms. Elizabeth Lee, Director of the American Centre**, the event received a standing ovation, reaffirming RPGIS's commitment to artistic excellence.

RPGIS – Where Art Reflects Purpose.

To know more, visit www.rpgis.in  @rpgis.india



WIPING OUT THE STIGMA

At long last, villages in western Maharashtra are taking it upon themselves to stop the practice of ostracising widows. Many of them are also taking steps to ensure the ladies have a better future

By Dhaval S. Kulkarni in Kolhapur



As

a young widow, Sonali Potdar braved taunts from fellow students and the society at large all the time. "They would criticise me for studying despite being a widow.... I was even derided for wearing a salwar-kameez," recalls the resident of Ambap village in Kolhapur district in western Maharashtra. Sonali's husband Sunil passed away 15 years ago. Saddled

with two small children, Sonali, now 42, soldiered on, completed her graduation and qualified to be a teacher. A journey that has been anything but easy.

Like many other regions of Maharashtra, Kolhapur, located in Maharashtra's sugar belt with an economy fuelled by a mix of agriculture, industry, educational institutions and co-operatives, too tends to cling to hoary traditions and stifling patriarchal norms handed down the ages. Ostracising widows is one of them. A husband's demise doesn't just entail the symbolic removal of the mangalsutra and toe rings (ornaments that adorn married women) or the wiping off of kumkum (sindoor/vermilion), and smashing bangles. Widows are also 'inauspicious' and barred from attending religious and social gatherings like weddings and birth celebrations and even the aarti during the Ganesh festival. The 'seclusion' extends to denial of job opportunities and property rights and, in some cases, even abuse and exploitation.

However, change is finally in the air. Villages in Maharashtra are trying to tackle this social evil and ensure that widows live life with dignity. The mass-driven movement began in Herwad in Kolhapur district in May 2022,

and has spread to other villages, who have approved resolutions banning the rituals associated with widowhood. Women will no longer be forced to remove their mangalsutras or other such markers announcing their widowhood status. The decision will also ensure they are invited to events like the haldi-kumkum ceremonies celebrated by married women in Maharashtra, and they are not barred from social events or visiting temples. In a bid to boost their social standing, widows will also now hoist the flag in the villages on occasions like Independence Day.

HERWAD SHOWS THE WAY

The seeds of this social revolution were sowed in June 2020 when former art teacher-turned-social activist Pramod Zinjade was at the funeral of an associate in Solapur district. The pyre was burning when he noticed a commotion. Zinjade realised that the man's widow was surrounded by a group of women who were forcibly wiping off her kumkum, breaking her glass bangles and mangalsutra, and removing her *jodvi* (toe rings). "The lady was pleading with them to let her keep the ornaments as a memory of her husband but the women did not relent. I decided then that no woman should be forced to undergo this ordeal," recalls the 67-year-old Zinjade.

Then, in March 2022, the Karimala-based Zinjade, a diabetic, had a health scare in the middle of the night. The next morning, he went to the local tehsildar's office and notarised an affidavit stating that after his death, wife Alka should be allowed to apply kumkum and retain her mangalsutra and bangles. The document also made it clear that she had the right to file a complaint against anyone who tried to force her to do otherwise. The officials were surprised to see the unusual request, with the steno who typed it out even advising Zinjade to seek psychiatric help.

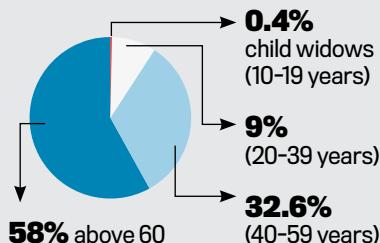
The story soon made it to the media and more people came forward to say



Photographs by MANDAR DEODHAR

56 MN NO. OF WIDOWED INDIVIDUALS IN INDIA; 78% ARE WOMEN

As expected, a majority of widows are seniors



Source: 2011 Census

TO NEW BEGINNINGS
Widows of Ambap village
in Kolhapur perform puja at
a temple

that they were eager to file similar affidavits. But what man does, a regressive society can easily undo—what if the people refused to endorse these affidavits? Zinjade's organisation, Mahatma Phule Samaj Seva Mandal, had done a lot of relief work in Kolhapur's Herwad village during the floods in 2019 and 2021 and the Covid pandemic, and the goodwill led them to sarpanch Suryonda Patil, who expressed interest in bringing a resolution to ban practices that victimised widows.

Patil says the demise of many youngsters during the Covid pandemic and the uncertain future of their widows spurred him to make the move. After a sensitisation drive and some brainstorming, the Herwad gram sabha in Shirol taluka approved the landmark resolution on May 5, 2022. "Women are already reeling under the blow of losing their husbands, they don't need this added lifelong misery," notes Rekhatai Jadhav, the current Herwad sarpanch. In the past, the stigma had consigned widows to the background even at the weddings of their children since they were considered bad luck. Today, things have changed—widows like Ujjwala Vilas Shinge and Shrimanti Algonda Patil do the honours on occasions such as I-Day and crack the ceremonial coconut while launching development works.

"The younger generation is willing to accept change. Any social reform is gradual," notes deputy sarpanch Bharat Pawar. Shantabai Mirje, 59, who was widowed when she was barely out of her teens in 1985, recalls how she stayed confined to the four walls of her house for a decade before gradually venturing out. "In our times, women had little social exposure. Now, they go out to work and need to blend in, if nothing else, for their own security," she says.

THE GROUNDSWELL

Slowly but surely, the walls are finally coming down. After Herwad, Mangaon in Kolhapur's Hatkanangale taluka approved a similar resolution on May 13, 2022. (The village, incidentally, was the one that hosted the historic 'Mangaon conference' against caste

RAZIA ASIF MULLA, 35

Ambap village, Kolhapur

"My husband died 10 years ago. I have two children and stitch clothes for a living. Around eight years ago, I decided to start selling bangles to supplement my income. But since I am a widow, many women said they do not want me to put bangles on their hands. Eventually, I had to shut down the business. This belief that widows are inauspicious is terrible"



USHA SANJEEV MANE, 53

Ambap

"My husband passed away three years ago. I was firm that I wouldn't follow these rituals, and had the support of my family. But others like me have had to face much hostility in our society"



discrimination and untouchability in March 1920, which was attended by the then Kolhapur ruler, Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, who had just returned to India from the US.)

After the resolution, the Mangaon panchayat chose widows to be the symbolic sarpanch and deputy sarpanch for a day. Villager Umesh Jog says he is hopeful that things will change in the future. "Regressive

practices take time to be consigned to the dustbin of history," he reasons. Mangaon has gone one step further, and now offers cash aid of Rs 50,000 for women who wish to remarry. Women now already get Rs 11,000 worth of household goods and a sari worth Rs 3,000 for their marriage.

The latest to join the reformist bandwagon was Ambap, on January 26. With a 10,000-strong population, the village had some 200 widows, across age groups. The younger lot number around 50, the survivors left behind by Covid, road accidents and other fatalities. "Nowadays, even villages have nuclear families," says Ambap sarpanch Dipti Vikasrao Mane. "So, if the husband dies, his widow must fend for herself and the children. Many women from our village, including the widows, work in nearby industrial and garment units.

IN THE PAST, THE STIGMA HAD FORCED WIDOWS TO THE BACKGROUND EVEN AT THE WEDDINGS OF THEIR CHILDREN SINCE THEY WERE CONSIDERED BAD LUCK

VAISHALI MALGONDA PATIL, 42

Herwad village, Kolhapur

"In 2020, there were games for women in the village with the winners getting Paithani saris. I had bought two Paithanis to gift but wasn't allowed to give them to the winners on stage since I was a widow. It still hurts...we too have our dignity, they should ban practices that stigmatise us. The government must ensure social security for widows"



They tend to stand out without the kumkum or the mangalsutra, which draws unwelcome attention from some of the men. Such experiences further crush their confidence. The situation was begging for a change."

Mane and other gram panchayat members in Ambap worked on the plan for a year, counselling villagers to accept the resolution. Panchayat member Manik Dabhade says there was opposition initially from some quarters, but it gradually broke down and the motion was passed unanimously. Kavita Waghmode, 34, who lost her husband Tanaji to Covid three years ago, is one of those hoping life will turn a bit more normal in the coming days. She has had to take charge of their poultry farm since then, and the men looking at her "in a different manner" was only adding to her problems. It's the same with

the young Puja Nitin Nalawade. The 28-year-old, who lost her husband four years ago, says she has begun wearing her mangalsutra again after the gram sabha resolution. She's also happy that, unlike in the past, her daughter will not feel sad at them having to skip the annual haldi-kumkum event organised by the mothers at her school.

Inspired by Kolhapur's example, other villages like Nagzari in Satara, Vaghaliwadi and Kambleshwar in Pune's Baramati taluka, Dhamani in Sangli, and 29 villages around Khadakwasla near Pune city, have followed suit. "This is a peoples' movement and not a top-down movement. The people have

other states as well. In 2023, the Goa government promised to introduce a law to prohibit discrimination against widows. The legislation has yet to happen, but some village panchayats in the state have approved resolutions in this regard. On June 11, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) sent an advisory asking all states to rehabilitate widows, and also recommended a "suitable legislation to deal with the plight of abandoned widows, such as that against Sati *pratha*".

"This is a positive step. Some conventions can't be presumed to be healthy just because they were followed for ages....," says Aditi Tatkare, the



"It's a positive step [for widows]. Some customs can't be called healthy just because they were followed for ages..."

ADITI TATKARE, Minister for women and child development, Maharashtra

realised that social evils have no place in a healthy society," says Karthikeyan S., CEO, zilla parishad, Kolhapur. The parishad has been organising workshops, training sessions and mass awareness campaigns under the 'Mission Shakti' programme to sensitise village heads, functionaries and residents.

A SILENT SHIFT

In 2022, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government issued a resolution during the Covid pandemic, urging an end to rituals that persecuted widows. State government estimates say that so far 7,683 villages and 1,182 municipal wards have come on board. In Kolhapur, 271 of the 1,026 panchayats have approved these resolutions, and Karthikeyan feels the district may be free of the scourge in another two years.

The movement to ensure dignity for widows has gained momentum in

minister for women and child development, Maharashtra, adding that her department will create a committee of ladies in every village to oversee the implementation of schemes, including rehabilitation of widows.

Among those who have felt a load lift off their chests in the past few years is Prajakta Pawar of Mangaon, who lost her husband Santosh in 2022 to jaundice. She was one of the first to visibly benefit from the gram sabha's resolution. "The decision has helped us widows feel more secure, and I stress the word secure," says the 38-year-old. She still wears her mangalsutra and sindoor and is thankful for all the support, especially from her sisters-in-law. As she puts it, "The *aabhusan* (ornaments) belong to the woman and it has to be her call to decide if she wants to wear them or not." It may have come late, but more power to her and her sisters. ■

NEW STARS ON THE HORIZON

Every IPL season unfailingly brings us new cricketing heroes who dazzle us with their skills. A look at some of the players who could set the season on fire

By Siddharth Vishwanathan



The 2025 Indian Premier League will be the 18th edition of the tournament. No. 18 has an iconic connection with Indian cricket, thanks to Virat 'King' Kohli, who has turned the jersey number to legend status for India and his IPL franchise. This year, the marquee tournament comes at a time when a serious debate is on about whether the current Indian XI 'is the greatest white-ball team ever'.

What a difference 12 months can make. Last year, around this time, the mood was a lot more dark, questions were being asked about the players' commitment to country and the blue baggy cap; there was criticism over the IPL taking precedence over India's international matches, the lack of ICC trophies in the past 11 years. The concern was understandable, Indian cricket fans were still coming to terms with the trauma of the 2023 World Cup final loss at home.

Cut to now. In the past nine

months, India has won the ICC World T20 Cup and, for good measure, also added the Champions Trophy to its kitty. Winning two ICC events in the space of a year is a first in Indian cricket history. The T20 team has also won close to 90 per cent of their games in the latter half of 2024. From rock bottom in mid-2024, the talk in 2025 is about the incredible 'bench strength' and how the IPL has given our players a massive advantage.

Every season, the IPL churns out match-winners whom pundits liken to the next big thing. And, in the last few seasons, some of them have turned out to be the genuine article. Take Varun Chakravarthy and Harshit Rana, for instance. After their 2024 IPL heroics, Varun played a pivotal role in India's Champions Trophy success, while Harshit has impressed in all formats. In IPL 2025, the talent pool is set to get wider. Who will be the stars that stamp their authority on the tournament? Will we see a new, future superstar in this edition? INDIA TODAY takes a look at 15 under-the-radar players who could provide the magic moments of this year. ■

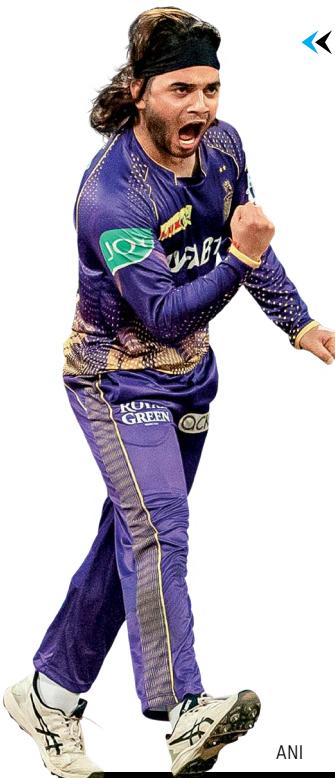




ANSHUL KAMBOJ, 24

Right-arm seamer, Chennai Super Kings

Picking up a perfect 10-for (all wickets in one innings) will do it for you. At least, it has for young seamer Anshul Kamboj who took 10/49 for Haryana against eventual finalists Kerala in the Ranji Trophy. The Karnal lad picked up a Rs 3.4 crore pay cheque (base price: Rs 30 lakh) after his earlier team Mumbai Indians and the Chennai Super Kings got into a bidding war for him. Kamboj, also the highest wicket-taker in the Duleep Trophy 2024-25 season, only played a couple of games for MI and never got a consistent run. Hopefully, his transition to the IPL grand stage will be a lot smoother with CSK.



◀ SUYASH SHARMA, 21

Leg-spinner, Royal Challengers Bengaluru

His hairstyle was compared to Neeraj Chopra's when he burst onto the scene in the 2023 IPL season. Suyash, who comes from Bhajanpura in Delhi, also grabbed some meme attention with his unusual style of looking up when delivering the ball. Despite a good debut season, Kolkata Knight Riders did not use him much in 2024 and Royal Challengers Bengaluru picked him up after some hectic bidding for the 2025 season. The Chinnaswamy Stadium has a great relationship with leg-spinners. Just ask Yuzvendra Chahal, who was RCB's leading wicket-taker in IPL till he moved on. Will Suyash spin a similar web this year?

ANI



AFP

JOSH INGLIS, 30 ▲

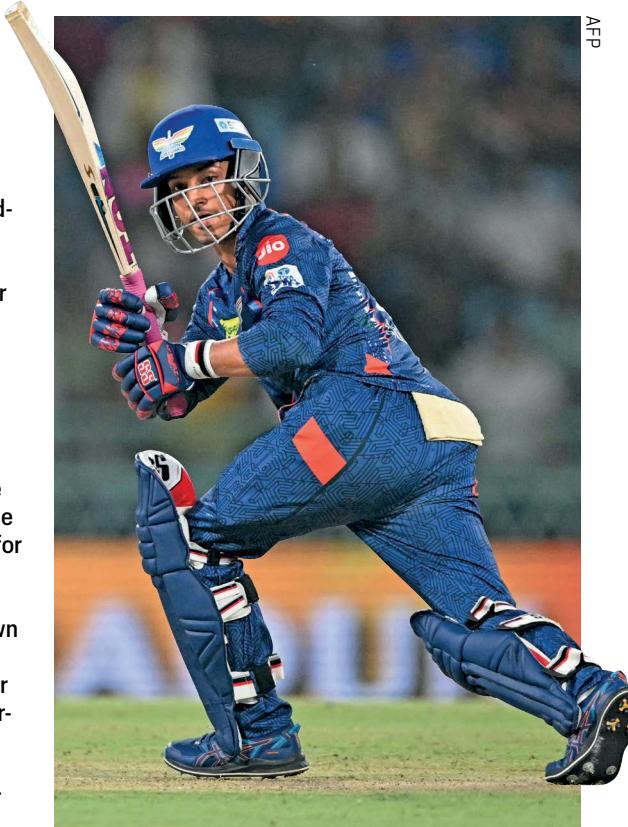
Wicketkeeper batsman, Punjab Kings

Steady in the middle overs and power hitting in the death, Inglis offers the complete deal. The Australian's hitting prowess was on show in Lahore in the Champions Trophy, and who can forget his calm knock against South Africa in the 2023 World Cup semi-final in Kolkata? Inglis, who made his debut in 2022, already has hundreds in all three formats. Making his IPL debut, the wicketkeeper-bat will be key for the Punjab Kings.

AYUSH BADONI, 25 ➤

Batter, Lucknow Super Giants

Badoni first hit the headlines when he hit 19 sixes in a knock of 165 off 55 balls in a Delhi Premier League match in 2024. The big-hitting reputation has been burnished by his Ranji trophy outings, so much so he's already being touted as leadership material for his side, Delhi. By the end of the 2024 Ranji Trophy season, he was also the top run-getter for his side. In his IPL side, Lucknow Super Giants, Badoni has been shifted up and down the order, with most of his impact knocks coming lower down the order. With an average of nearly 30 and a strike rate of close to 140, Badoni might just steal the show for the Super Giants this IPL.



AFP

➤ RAMANDEEP SINGH, 27

All-rounder, Kolkata Knight Riders

Gun fielder. Aggressive lower-order bat. If one needed a definition for utility, Ramandeep Singh ticks all the boxes. Hailing from Chandigarh, Ramandeep's rise in Indian cricket has been rapid, backed by a fantastic IPL 2024 to boost the Kolkata Knight Riders title charge. Apart from the IPL, Ramandeep also had a decent Emerging Asia Cup, the highlight being 64 off 34 balls versus Afghanistan. The race for the next big all-rounder after Hardik Pandya is heating up, with Nitish Reddy too in the picture.

AKASH MADHWAL, 31 ➤

Right-arm medium, Rajasthan Royals

A late bloomer for Uttarakhand, Akash Madhwal showed his class with a 5/5 in an Eliminator of IPL 2023, which helped Mumbai Indians advance in the play-offs. Although he has now shifted to Rajasthan Royals, the skills that he acquired at MI should hold him in good stead. His impressive show in India's domestic T20 tournament, the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, with eight wickets at an average of 12 runs apiece is a sign of what the Rajasthan Royals can expect from this 31-year-old pacer in IPL 2025.



ANI



ANI

SAMEER RIZVI, 21

Batter, Delhi Capitals

A 200 studded with 20 sixes, the fastest 50 in the history of domestic U23 men's competitions, a stellar show in the UP T20 League, they all helped propel Rizvi onto the big stage. The prize in 2024: Rs 8.4 crore and a spot in the Chennai Super Kings side. That didn't pan out as expected, and now Rizvi is with a new franchise, Delhi Capitals. The bid prize may have fallen in 2025, but the expectations from Rizvi's bat still remain sky high.



AFP



Photographs: AFP

JACOB BETHELL, 21

Batter, Royal Challengers Bengaluru

When he was 11, Bethell was told he was better than Brian Lara at the same age. The compliment, incidentally, came from the legend himself. Another big name emerging from the England coaching system, Bethell is all set to light up IPL 2025 for RCB. In his overall T20I career, Bethell has impressed with a strike-rate of close to 150. The Barbados born batter had a terrific 2024, turning out for England in all three formats of the game. If RCB elects to use his prowess to the fullest, then the 21-year-old could prosper.



NAMAN DHIR, 25

Batter, Mumbai Indians

When the IPL's most successful franchise decides to retain you, you know you have done something right. Mumbai Indians used the RTM (Right To Match) card to retain Naman Dhir in the mega auction, even though the youngster from Ambala did not have a very good Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy outing in 2024, averaging just 22. For MI, though, his knocks, such as the power-packed 62 off 28 balls in 2023 against Lucknow Super Giants, are reason enough for his top billing. Will this be the season where Naman's potential meets peak consistency?



VAIBHAV SURYAVANSHI, 13

Batsman, Rajasthan Royals

Thirteen years old and a Rs 1.1 crore contract to play for IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals, this is the stuff cricketing dreams are made of. Bihar born Suryavanshi, the youngest player ever in the IPL, has been trying hard to live up to the hype. Last year saw a 58-ball hundred against Australia in an Under-19, a blistering 71 runs playing for Bihar in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, and 176 runs in the Asia U-19 tournament. The intent is clear, is he ready now to play for bigger stakes?

INDIA TODAY HR INSIGHTS

PRESENTED BY



PRESIDENCY
UNIVERSITY

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK WITH SAFETY | EQUITY | INNOVATION



25TH MARCH, 2025
PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY,
YELAHANKA, BANGALORE

R. SAI KISHORE, 28 ➤**Left-arm orthodox, Gujarat Titans**

He might well be considered the long-lost twin of New Zealand star Rachin Ravindra, if only for similar hairstyles. In domestic cricket, Sai Kishore has been an integral part of Tamil Nadu's resurgence in the last couple of years. The fact that Gujarat Titans used the RTM to retain him (after Punjab Kings upped the pot to Rs 2 crore) means the franchise sees great value in his presence. If the Tamil Nadu Ranji team captain can repeat his heroics from the domestic leagues last year, then Gujarat Titans will greatly benefit. At an impressive 6'3", Sai is also one of the few tall left arm tweakers operating in the IPL.



PTI

**SURYANSH SHEDGE, 22 ⬆****Batter, Punjab Kings**

Mumbai cricket's new Mr. Finisher. In the 2024 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, Suryansh Shedge stole the limelight for his brilliant finishing in a crunch situation. An average of 43 with a staggering strike-rate of 251 was the key reason why Mumbai won the tournament. Shedge is from the Sehwag see-ball-hit-ball school of batting, but in his elastic strokeplay, there is an element of Suryakumar Yadav too. If his domestic exploits from last year are anything to go by, then Punjab Kings have certainly acquired a show-stopper.

RYAN RICKELTON, 28**Wicketkeeper-batsman, ▼ Mumbai Indians**

AFP

Adam Gilchrist was Ryan Rickelton's boyhood hero, and the legend would be proud of the likeness. South Africa's emerging star played for the Mumbai Indians' Cape Town franchise, and with an average of 53 and a strike-rate in excess of 175 over two seasons, the left-handed wicketkeeper bat could be a big boost to MI's stable top order. The century in the Champions Trophy has already given us a glimpse of the 28-year-old's prowess.

VIJAYKUMAR VYSHAK, 28 ▼**Right-arm pacer, Punjab Kings**

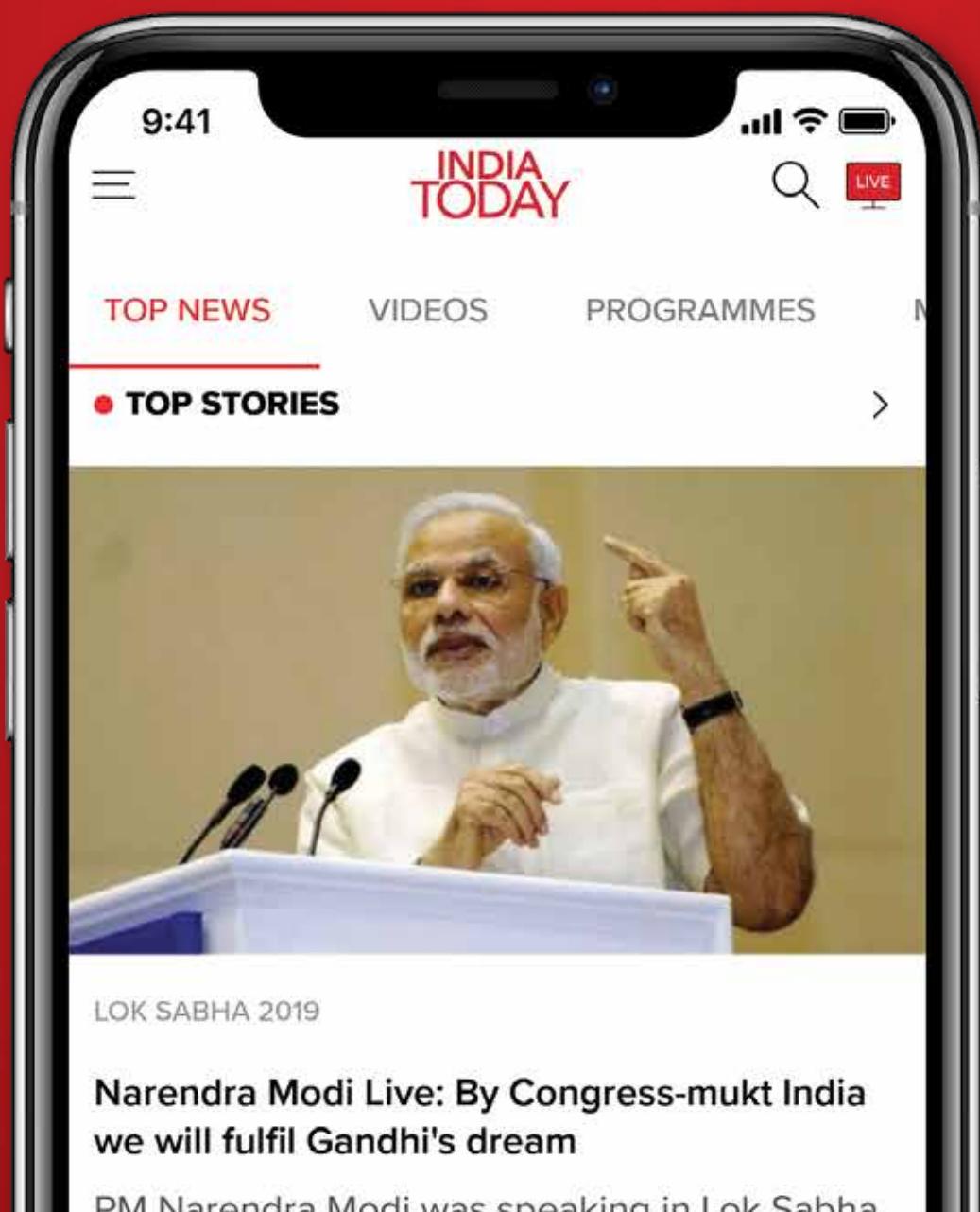
Karnataka's Vijaykumar Vyshak made an immediate impression in his debut match in IPL 2023 against the Delhi Capitals, taking 3/20 and raising some heat. Surprisingly, his earlier franchise, RCB, did not take full advantage of the pacer's abilities, restricting him to 11 games in two seasons. The Bengaluru pacer was in top form in the 2024 Duleep Trophy too, troubling batters with his swing and accuracy. Now with the Punjab Kings, Vyshak is sure to be a key part of their bowling line-up.



INDIA
TODAY

BREAKING NEWS

JUST A TAP AWAY



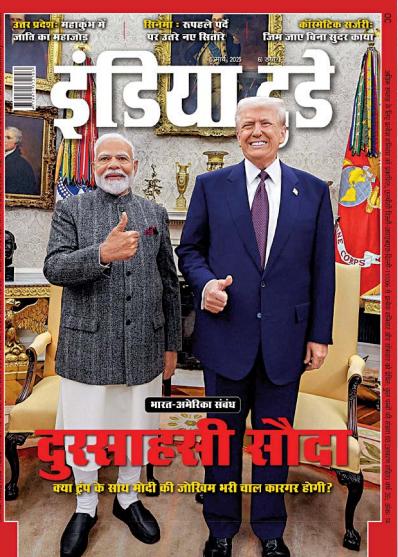
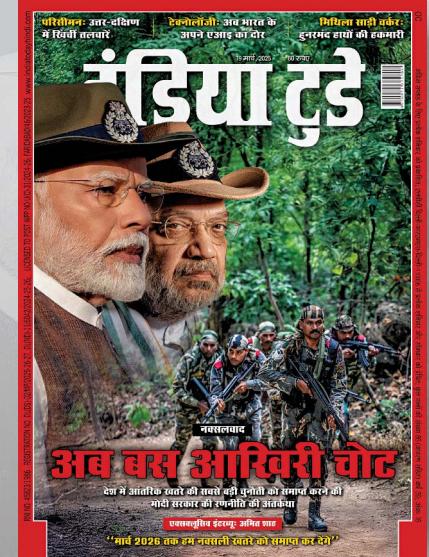
DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

AVAILABLE ON



इंडिया टुडे

देश की भाषा में देश की धड़कन



सबसे भरोसेमंद खोतों से, सबसे सटीक जानकारी

सब्सक्राइब करें और पाएं 68% तक की छूट

मोदी सरकार की रणनीति की आंकड़ा

एससक्रीय इंटरव्यू : अमित शाह

“मार्च 2026 तक हम नवाचली खातों को उत्पादा कर देंगे”



हाँ! मैं इंडिया टुडे को सब्सक्राइब करना चाहता/चाहती हूँ

अपनी पसंद के सब्सक्रिप्शन को टिक करें और फॉर्म को इस पते पर भेज दें— वी केएर, लिविंग मीडिया इंडिया लि. सी-९, सेक्टर-१०, नोएडा २०१३०१ (भारत)

टिक करें	अवधि	कुल अंक	कवर प्राइस (₹)	ऑफर प्राइस (₹)	प्लान	डिस्काउंट
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 वर्ष	52	3120	999	डिजिटल	68%
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 वर्ष	52	3120	2699	डिजिटल+प्रिंट	14%

कृपया फॉर्म को ब्लॉकलेटर में भरें

मैं चेक/डीडी जमा कर रहा/रही हूँ जिसकी संख्या.....है और इसे दिनांक.....को लिविंग मीडिया इंडिया लिमिटेड के पक्ष में (बैंक का नाम).....रूपये की धनराशि (दिल्ली से बाहर के चेक के लिए ₹ 50 रूपये अतिरिक्त जोड़, समान मूल्य के चेक मान्य नहीं होंगे) के लिए बनवाया गया है.

नाम..... पता.....

..... शहर..... राज्य..... पिन.....

मोबाइल..... ईमेल.....



सब्सक्राइब करने के लिए यहाँ स्कैन करें।

ऑफर के विषय में विशेष जानकारी के लिए निम्न माध्यमों से संपर्क भी कर सकते हैं

कॉल और Whatsapp के लिए
+91 8597778778

ईमेल भेजें
wecare@intoday.com

लॉग ऑन करें
subscriptions.intoday.in/intoday-hindi

ART: HOME AND THE
WORLD
PG 75

LECIURE

BOOKS: FOR THE LOVE
OF BIRDS
PG 78

OTT: DRAMA IN
UNIFORM
PG 76

Q&A WITH
ABHISHEK
BACHCHAN PG 80



ART/
FASHION

THE ART OF FASHION

DESIGNER
SABYASACHI
MUKHERJEE'S
ART FOUNDATION
FINDS A LASTING
HOME AT ASIAN
PAINTS' NILAYA
ANTHOLOGY IN
MUMBAI

W

What's it like to be Sabyasachi Mukherjee? "Tiring!" responds the renowned fashion designer. "You can't let the ball drop when there are so many people depending on you. I'm getting old—my mind is razor-sharp but the body is failing. When there is a conflict between mind and body, you start feeling tired," he confesses.

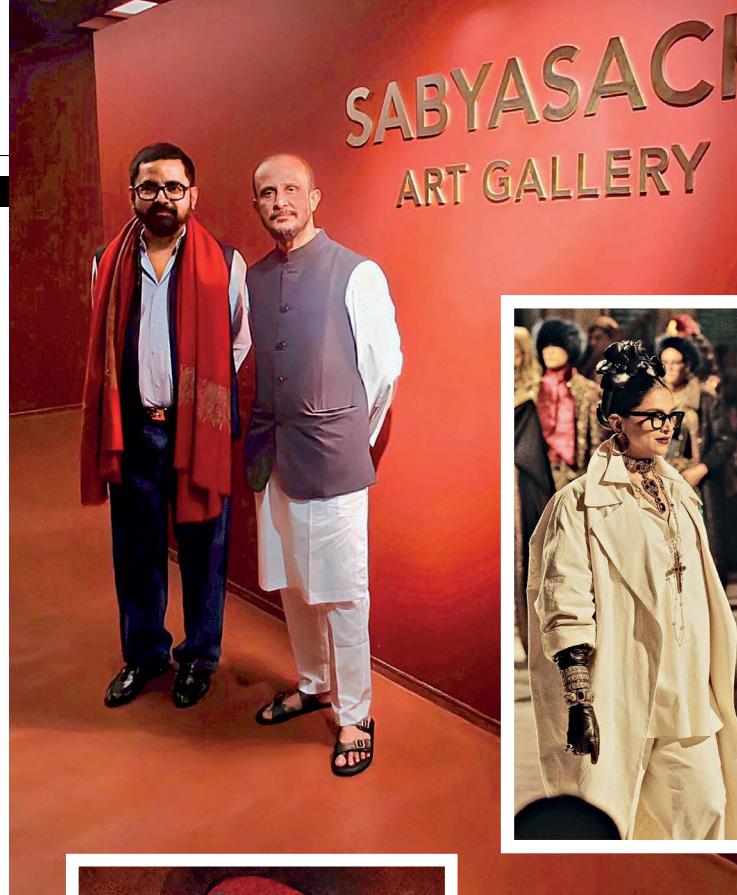
However, on the night of the launch of décor destination Nilaya Anthology—a 100,000 sq. ft space comprising retail outlets, an art gallery and a co-working space—in Mumbai, where the Sabyasachi Art Foundation has found its permanent home, the designer seemed far from tired, enthusiastically introducing the captivating works of artist-in-residence Atish Mukherjee to the guests in attendance. Sabyasachi established the foundation in 2014 as an initiative dedicated to mentoring and empowering artists from India. "I've been working with Nilaya for a long time and we built the brand together. When I learnt they are opening Anthology, I realised this is the right place to start the Foundation's first art gallery and give Atish his first show," he says, of the décor destination developed by Asian Paints.

For someone who tasted success early—his debut collection shown at Lakme Fashion Week in 2002 opened the fashion world's eyes to a designer to watch out for—Sabyasachi has built a global luxury brand which employs over 3,000 people and has retail stores in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and New York. You'd think he would be everywhere, hobnobbing at parties or giving lengthy interviews. But the designer chooses to pour his energies into building his brand, which is now 25 years strong.

He puts it down to being a "reticent Bengali". On a serious note, he says if he had to sell himself to sell his designs, he'd rather not sell them at all. "I've always wanted the product to rise beyond the creator. There are people who get into this business because they want to be famous and powerful. I just wanted to create jobs," he says. He confesses that a lot of people wrote him off as arrogant because he's reticent but they realise now that his intent was correct. "I like the work to speak for itself," he shares.

There's a clarity of purpose that shines through when he

"I ALWAYS WANTED THE PRODUCT TO RISE BEYOND THE CREATOR. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO GET INTO IT TO BE FAMOUS...I JUST WANTED TO CREATE JOBS," SAYS SABYASACHI



DIFFERENT DESIGNS

Clockwise from left: 'Untitled' by Atish Mukherjee at the Sabyasachi Art Foundation; Sabyasachi with the artist; Deepika Padukone walks the ramp at the Sabyasachi 25 Years Show in Mumbai

speaks. "When you're constantly told that you're the best thing after the sewing machine, you start believing in that bulls**t and that is the beginning of your downfall. I had to protect my mind, so I stayed out of people's lives. At the end of the day, they are paying top dollar for my mind. If I let my mind get corrupted by people around me, then I'm not creating a sustainable business," he adds.

In January this year, he celebrated his quarter century in the business with a fashion show in Mumbai that saw models walking down the ramp in a collection that was an extraordinary medley of contrasts in colours, textures and techniques. It was a testament to the diversity of his inspirations and the artistry of his designs. "I think you become relevant when you embrace change. We are more globalised than ever without even having to travel because the internet makes you travel all the time. In the future, there will no longer be American or Indian or African

HOME AND THE WORLD

A group art exhibition at **TRI Art & Culture, Kolkata**, offers an unconventional take on the concept of 'home'



citizens—there will be global citizens and I think the 25 years show acknowledged that,” he says.

With Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd now having a 51 per cent stake in the brand, the designer sees the move as an important one to empower the bottom and the middle of the pyramid. “It has allowed me to create insurance policies for not only people who work in my company but for their immediate families and spouses as well,” he says, adding that theirs is a beautiful marriage where the corporate lets him lead the business and they strengthen the backend by being the wind beneath his wings. In the years to come, the designer wants to expand his brand, but not at the cost of integrity. “We will go wherever we think there is an important role for the brand to play...like beauty...probably hotels at some point of time,” he says, adding that the best had always belonged to India but it was appropriated and plundered from us. “I want to spend the next 25 years bringing the respect back to India,” he signs off. ■

—Deepali Dhingra

The punctuation marks in South Kolkata gallery TRI Art & Culture's latest exhibition **HOME?!** underscore the comfort of the domestic space alongside questioning what it really entails. Decaying dining tables, mutant chairs and a suit made of paper in this mixed-media “surreal mimesis of interior spaces”, as the curatorial note puts it, forces viewers to re-examine what makes a home, home.

The exhibition, curated by Lekha Poddar, brings together 20 artists working across painting, sculpture, textiles and photography. **HOME?!** encapsulates the entrepreneur and art patron's roots in Kolkata, as well as the year-old

gallery space's earlier avatar as a private residence, now, a 70-year-old heritage property.

What's most striking about **HOME?!** is the range of artwork on display, all of which has been carefully curated to signal the exhibition's theme. On

HOME?!, curated by Lekha Poddar from the collection of her Devi Art Foundation, will be on at TRI till March 30

impression of a cob-webbed, forlorn dinner scene. Beside it is Prajakta Potnis's ‘Porous Walls-4’, where a dysfunctional, metal ceiling fan is overwhelmed with plastic termite eggs. “For a long time, I wanted to curate an exhibition around these works which I thought would fit perfectly in a home setting,” says Poddar. “This exhibition is a surrealist take on home, where none of these artworks can be used practically.”

The first floor, containing the study and bedroom, displays multiple artworks, which include Sudarshan Shetty's mobile furniture work; Udeya Vir Singh's ‘No One's Chair’, a mutant put together using broken limbs of various wooden chairs; Mithu Sen's overwhelming ‘Burnt by the Sun’, consisting of an illuminated black silk veil punctured by incense stick marks that convey the story of Behula from Shivapurana, in Bengali; and Anita Dube's haunting suit made out of paper stained to suggest an immaterial presence wearing it. In conjunction with the exhibition, TRI is hosting various home-themed events, including experiential meals, choreographed enactments and an artist panel. ■

—Devarsi Ghosh



INSIDE JOB
The **HOME?!** exhibition;
(Left) ‘Dinner for Six’, mixed media by Anoli Perera

[OTT]

Drama in UNIFORM

NEERAJ PANDEY HAS MANAGED TO ROPE IN THE LEADING STARS OF BANGLA CINEMA FOR NETFLIX'S *KHAKEE: THE BENGAL CHAPTER*

E

ven before *Khakee: The Bihar Chapter* (2022) became one of Netflix's most popular Indian originals, its creator Neeraj Pandey knew he wanted it to be a franchise, one that could travel to a new state each season. With the viewership defying expectations, Pandey got the green signal.

In its second run, Pandey has a homecoming of sorts, having set the show in Kolkata, where he grew up. "Everything has changed now and in a way nothing has changed too," says Pandey, who was raised in Howrah. "I find that dichotomy every time I come here, that's the

beauty of Cal [Calcutta]."

And he has managed a coup of sorts, having roped in Prosenjit Chatterjee and Jeet, two immensely popular stars of Bangla cinema, to act together for the first time. While the veteran Chatterjee plays



CALCUTTA CALLING (Top) Aakanksha Singh and Jeet in *Khakee: The Bengal Chapter*; left, Prosenjit Chatterjee in the series



Nikhil Madhok, Head of Originals, Amazon Prime India, has had a busy first quarter. There's been the well-received season two of *Paatal Lok* (January); the moving father-son drama, *The Mehta Boys*; the tale on passionate cinephiles in *Superboys of Malegaon* (February), and the slice-of-life comedy in *Duphaiya*. "The best part of my job is that typically by a Sunday or Monday, I get a call from a talent, in front or behind the camera, and they are like 'I've

never experienced this in my life,'" says Madhok. "That one call brings so much joy. It makes the two-three years of work spent making it [show or film] worthwhile."

Madhok started out with a marketing stint in Unilever before moving to where his heart lay—in "storytelling". He joined NDTV Imagine and then the programming team of Star before becoming a key member of its digital iteration, HotStar. Madhok made an impression spearheading HotStar

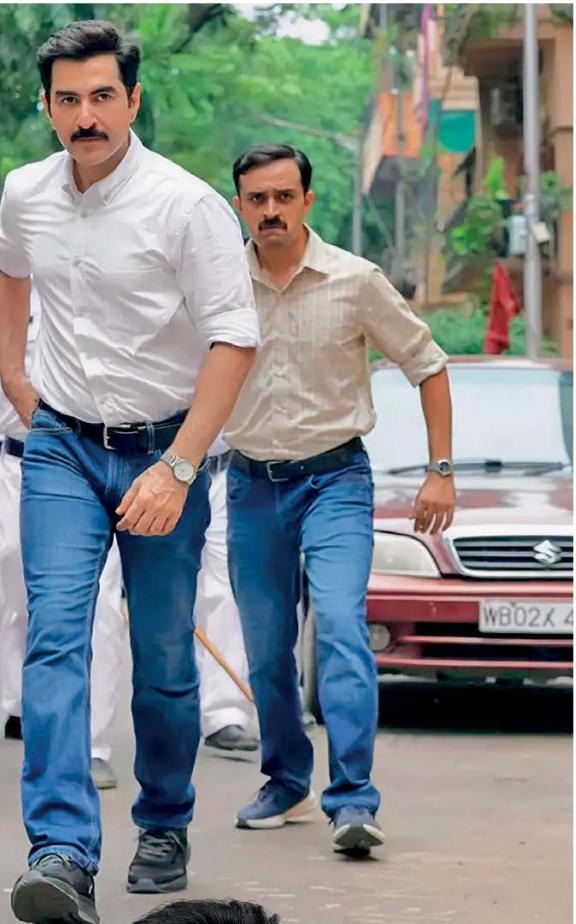
specials like *Aarya* and *Special Ops*. It was his work here that would land him a call from Gaurav Gandhi to be the head of Hindi originals at Amazon Prime in 2022. "The way Amazon focuses on storytelling, long-term thinking and customer obsession is special," he adds. With the departure of Aparna Purohit last year, Madhok was elevated to head of original content. Eight months into the job, series like *Call Me Bae* and *Duphaiya* bear his creative imprint. Amazon Prime India has

[OTT]

GUY NEXT DOOR

Nikhil Madhok is bringing his brand of relatable programming to Amazon Prime India as its head of original content

also announced a desi version of the game show, *The Traitors*, to be hosted by Karan Johar, and a first-of-its-kind attempt to produce a film based on an existing franchise in *Mirzapur*. Says Madhok, "I believe that it'd



a politician, Jeet gets into the shoes of a police officer who is at loggerheads with the leader. "The only dream we were chasing was to get the biggest ensemble to tell this story," says Pandey. Additionally, the show features Saswata Chatterjee a.k.a. Bob Biswas of *Kahaani*, Ritwik Bhowmik, Aadil Khan, Chitrangada Singh and Parambrata Chatterjee.

"This is something called destiny," says Prosenjit Chatterjee about sharing the screen with Jeet. "I knew Neeraj won't ask me to do something which is not meaningful." While a third Hindi web series (*Jubilee* and *Scoop*) for Chatterjee, for Jeet, it is not only his foray into long-format but also the first time he showcases his talents to a Hindi audience. "It's a no-brainer when it comes from Neeraj Pandey, a platform like Netflix and a show like *Khakee* which has won acclaim... this is the best launch," says Jeet.

It helped that *Khakee* came with a scale that neither had experienced in Bangla cinema. The show is in Hindi but the actors ensured they reached out to their respective fan bases by dubbing in Bengali. "There's a sprinkling of Bengali [in the Hindi version] as well," adds Pandey. "Wherever we felt we can speak in Bengali, we retained those lines."

Khakee: The Bengal Chapter enables Netflix India to make a major impact in the Bengal market



For Tanya Bami, Series Head, Netflix India, the show enables the platform to make a major impact in the Bengal market. In fact, Netflix hosted the trailer launch in Kolkata and courted the local media in early March. "Telling

authentic stories with language not a barrier, being local, doing culturally rooted stories and going deeper with different backdrops" is top of the agenda for Netflix, says Bami. "We want Bengal to own the story and, hopefully, the voice will travel across India and beyond." ■

-Suhani Singh



Madhok is open to the idea of exploring popular Amazon Prime series in different formats, like a film on *Mirzapur*

be a good strategy to see if some of our popular IPs can be explored in different formats."

Madhok has seen first-hand how the OTT landscape has evolved. "The pace at which it has grown and the variety of storytelling it has enabled has exceeded expectations," he says. But, of late, there's talk of how OTT budgets are being slashed, stars taking precedence over talent and

fear of censorship.

Every industry in "the beginning is growth-focused," says Madhok about the concerns. "Then it goes through a period where you figure out the right economics going forward. There was a plethora of OTT platforms and everybody was producing. Now... the amount of content produced has scaled down."

At Prime, he ensures that isn't the case.

Among the 2025 titles Madhok is looking forward to are *Daring Partners* featuring Tamannah and Diana Penty, a new season of *The Family Man*, the Nagraj Manjule-directed *Matka King* starring Vijay Varma and Tamil original *Local Times*. "I hope we see continuity and disruption and newness," he says. He'd also like those calls to keep coming. ■

-Suhani Singh



FOR THE LOVE OF BIRDS

ASAD RAHMANI'S MEMOIR, *LIVING WITH BIRDS*, CEMENTS HIS REPUTATION AS INDIA'S GREATEST LIVING ORNITHOLOGIST

U

Unlike his famous predecessor Sálim Ali, Asad Rahmani is not a household name. He does not have a Wikipedia page. And, perhaps because he is not on Instagram, the younger generation may be unaware of his immense body of work. Yet, most conservationists acknowledge Rahmani as the country's greatest living ornithologist. His memoir, long overdue, has finally appeared in print.

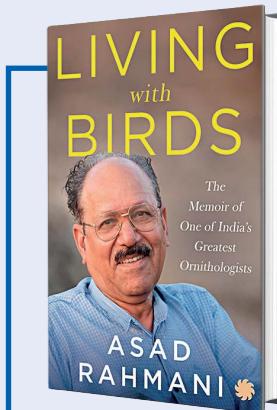
That it did is fortuitous, not least because the senior conservationist is in his seventies and well-placed to reflect on an illustrious career. In October 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, he had a brush with death.

His book's title, then, is apt. *Living with Birds* traces Rahmani's life in ornithology and conservation, much of it undertaken with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), the prestigious organisation where he began his career and later helmed as its longest-serving director.

Rahmani spent his childhood and youth in Lucknow before continuing his education at Aligarh Muslim University.

It was here that his wildlife activism began. When a senior faculty member shot a peacock, young Rahmani ensured the perpetrator was brought to justice. Decades later, returning to his alma mater as an academic, he watched peafowl roam freely and felt vindicated.

thological success story of the past five decades worth telling finds its way into the book—from studying the rare Bengal Florican's courtship and the vulture extinction crisis of the late 1990s to an expedition to the remote Andaman archipelago to study the Narcondam Horn-



THE CENTREPIECE OF THE BOOK IS RAHMANI'S EXPERIENCE WITH CONSERVING THE **GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD**

LIVING WITH BIRDS
by Asad Rahmani
JUGGERNAUT
₹599; 368 pages

He also fostered a passion for writing, inspired by M. Krishnan's erudite columns on wildlife in *The Statesman*. "The first thing that I bought with my own earnings was a typewriter," he writes. The second thing, purchased with money from his writing, was a second-hand Zenit camera.

Although much of what Rahmani writes has an elegiac ring, given the immense loss of biodiversity India faces today, he remains hopeful. Every orni-

bill. His accounts of fieldwork often read like a report on rural India, rich with well-observed vignettes of village life, infant mortality and the persistent inadequacies of rural healthcare.

The centrepiece of the book, however, is his experience with conserving the Great Indian Bustard, whose imminent extinction troubles him deeply. The peacock-sized ground bird, once widespread across the Indian subcontinent, is now critically endangered. Decision-makers

even considered it for India's national bird but rejected it due to its name. Today, the bustard has disappeared or been decimated in six states and many of its grassland habitats are irreversibly lost.

Each account is enriched by sharply observed profiles of notable figures—from Sálim Ali's infamous short temper and Huma-yun Abdulali's dubious driving skills to Rahmani's complex equation with his mentor, BNHS director J.C. Daniel. The most revealing account is one dedicated to Ali Hussain, the bird trapper from rural Bihar whose exceptional prowess earned him a trip to America.

Despite its wealth of material, *Living with Birds* often reads like a report or diary, at times bogged down by numerous acknowledgements. Its language is simple and direct. Some information, such as bird taxonomy, does not reflect recent revisions. Unlike Sálim Ali's memoirs, which captured the popular imagination, *Living with Birds* talks solely to committed bird enthusiasts, when it could have done so much more. ■

—Bijoy Venugopal

In 2021, a couple of years before the terrible ethnic conflict started in Manipur, the state threw up some of the most reliable sites to see one of India's stunning but rare pheasants. Named evocatively as 'Nong-in' in the Meitei language, it means 'one who follows the tracks of the rain'. Also known as Mrs. Hume's pheasant to the English-speaking world, it is named after the wife of the temperamental but prodigious ornithologist Allan Octavian Hume.

With the help of the Maharaja of Manipur, Hume described the pheasant in 1880 and dedicated the discovery to his missus. In the intervening 140 years, it had been reliably seen only a couple of times, once notably by the late ornithologist Ravi Sankaran in the mid-2000s. So, when Harmenn Huidrom, one of Manipur's competent birdwatchers who had been

Most of the essays are
FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS
by committed birders

involved in a few discoveries of uncommon birds in the region before, verified claims advertised by the village chairman of Razai Khullen of about 350 Nong-ins in their area, it sent jubilant shockwaves through the Indian birding community.

This episode and 11 others are part of *The Search for India's Rarest Birds*, a new anthology of essays by birdwatchers and researchers on their quest to find birds that haven't been seen for several decades. The book is published by Juggernaut and Indian Pitta Books. The latter is an imprint run by Anita Mani, who is one of the editors of the book. The other editor is the noted birder Shashank Dalvi.

Mani and Dalvi also co-write the essay on Nong-in. Being visible at night, when the pheasant roosts—and not in the daytime—is what makes the Nong-in rare. The pheasant is also rare due to the uncommonness of its preferred conifer-oak forest habitat. Rarity is the central epithet around which each essay is written. The reader is taken on an adventurous ride through incredibly diverse habitats across India, including the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The essay on the Jerdon's courser, a nocturnal ground-dwelling bird, tells us how it was rediscovered in 1986 in the dry deciduous savannas of Cuddapah district in Andhra Pradesh after decades of no-show. It has gone incognito again since 2008, waiting to be rediscovered once more. Its presumed low numbers makes the courser rare.

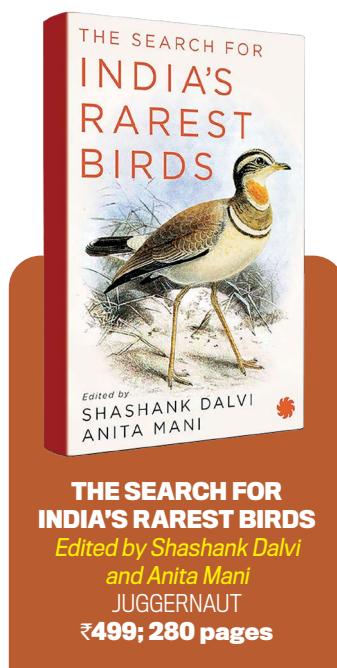
Occurrence of a bird only in very few places and altitudinal elevation can also make a bird rare. The essay on Banasura Chilappan, a species of laughing thrushes, tells us that it is found only on a few peaks in Wayanad district in Kerala.

Almost all the essays are first-hand accounts. Not only does the zeal of the writers come through but their emotional journeys keep the reader hooked. One slight quibble is that people like Huidrom, who had found a bird, could have been given an opportunity to write an essay too. The book is a fantastic account that tells us that it takes a conscious endeavour to see rare birds. It is also a reminder that the might of the human hand can push these birds to being lost forever. ■

—Vrushal Pendharkar

Lost and Found

A new anthology of essays on the quest to find birds that haven't been spotted for decades



Don't Worry...

BE HAPPY. THAT'S THE DANCE-DRAMA FILM **ABHISHEK BACHCHAN** STARS IN, ABOUT A WIDOWER AND HIS DAUGHTER WHO HAS DANCE REALITY SHOW DREAMS



Photograph by
BANDEEP SINGH

Q. A film centred around dance.... Were you surprised director Remo D'Souza considered you for *Be Happy*?

Not at all. I love dancing. I did a film called *Naach* (2004). When Remo came—I have worked with him [as choreographer] several times and seen the films he's directed—I was excited to see what he'd offer me in terms of a story. Unfortunately, the role didn't demand that much dancing! I hope he'll give me the opportunity to dance for him in a dance film. Maybe if he did *ABCD* again? I'd audition for it.

Q. You received some of the best reviews of your career for Shoojit Sircar's *I Want to Talk*. Did your father give you a bouquet and a note as he does to those whose performances he's loved?

No. Maybe I should fight him more for it. My parents have always been constructive with their feedback. Even if they have not liked something, they have not been disparaging but guided me.... But I did get a very sweet message from my father.

Q. Both *I Want to Talk* and *Be Happy* are relationship dramedies touching on the complex father-daughter dynamic. You have a teenage daughter yourself. Were there moments where it felt like art imitating life?

My daughter thankfully has not hit that kind of teenage yet. Not just a father-daughter dynamic, but anything that is true to your personal life just makes that emotion accessible. A lot of your personality does bleed into the parts you play.

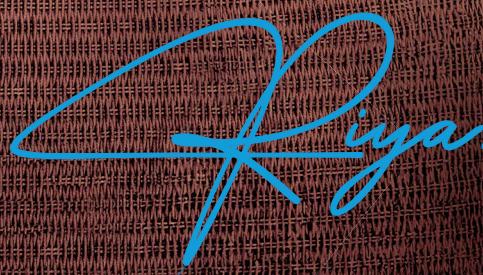
Q. It's your second collaboration with Amazon Prime. How was it this time around?

I started my OTT journey with Amazon Prime [*Breathe: Into the Shadows*]. It's nice that a platform decides to back a film which is telling the family to watch a film together and not individually. I hope it paves the way for more feelgood and family-oriented OTT content.

—with Suhani Singh

Haq, ek behtar zindagi ka.

SIGN UP EARLY TO FULFIL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES



Riya

Early investor in Mutual Funds

Be it buying your own dream home, planning a holiday with your parents or starting your own venture, mutual funds play an important role to achieve your dreams. Moreover, starting investments early help you to achieve your goals faster through power of compounding.

To know more, contact a MFD/RIA/AMC or give a missed call on **8655097225**

An investor education & awareness initiative of UTI Mutual Fund. To know about the KYC documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc. please visit <https://www.utimf.com/servicerequest/kyc>. Please deal with only registered mutual funds, details of which can be verified on the SEBI website under "Intermediaries/market Infrastructure Institutions." All complaints regarding UTI Mutual Fund can be directed towards service@uti.co.in and/or visit <https://scores.sebi.gov.in> (SEBI SCORES portal), or to escalate, investors may visit <https://smartodr.in/> Online Dispute Resolution Portal (ODR Portal).



Watch the
films here

UTI SWATANTRA®
India Invest Karo®

THE BIGGEST MEDICAL UNIVERSITY IN THE GULF

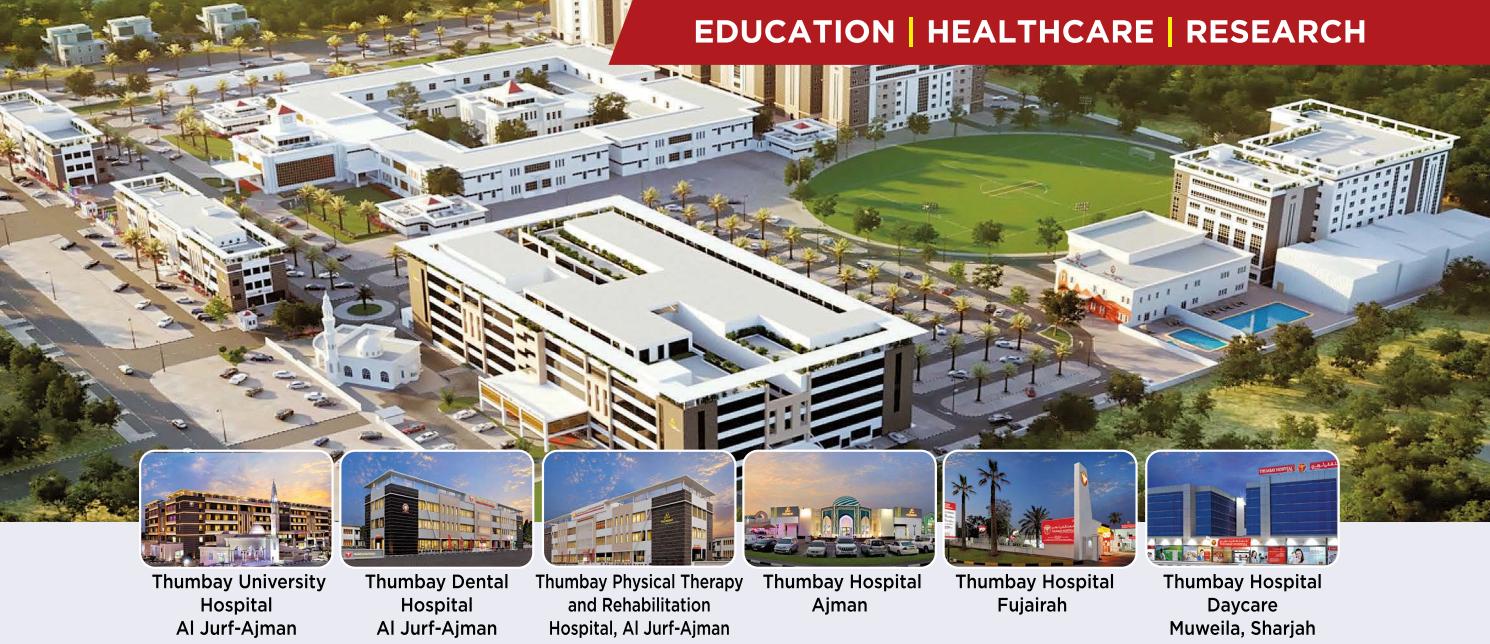


جامعة الخليج الطبية
GULF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER

**The largest network of Thumbay Academic Hospitals,
Clinics, Labs & Pharmacies in the region**

**ADMISSIONS
OPEN 25-26**

EDUCATION | HEALTHCARE | RESEARCH



Thumbay University
Hospital
Al Jurf-Ajman



Thumbay Dental
Hospital
Al Jurf-Ajman



Thumbay Physical Therapy
and Rehabilitation
Hospital, Al Jurf-Ajman



Thumbay Hospital
Ajman



Thumbay Hospital
Fujairah



Thumbay Hospital
Daycare
Muweila, Sharjah

Foundation Programs

- GMU Foundation Program (UK-USA)
- International Foundation Program Upper Austria

Diploma Programs

- Diploma of Dental Assistant • Diploma in Pharmacy Technician

Bachelor Programs

- Dentistry • Pharmacy • Nursing • Biomedical Sciences • Healthcare Management and Economics
- Anesthesia Technology • Medical Imaging Sciences • Medical Laboratory Sciences • Physiotherapy
- Optometry • Audiology and Speech Language Pathology

Scan here to
Visit website



Nationally
and
Internationally
Accredited
Programs

Pathway to International Medicine Program (Twinning Program)

- Higher Diploma in Preclinical Sciences (**3 Years Study in Gulf Medical University, UAE + 3 Years Study in selected International Universities**)
Poland - Italy - Malaysia - UK - Americas - Uzbekistan

Master Programs

- Public Health (Collaboration with University of Arizona United States) • Physical Therapy • Endodontics
- Periodontics • Clinical Pharmacy • Drug Discovery and Development • Postgraduate PharmD
- Healthcare Management and Economics • Health Professions Education • Medical Laboratory Sciences
- Medical Ultrasound • Neonatal Critical Care Nursing • Artificial Intelligence and Health Informatics

THUMBAY
GROWTH THROUGH INNOVATION

Doctoral Dual PhD Programs

- Precision Medicine (PhD PM) with Université Paris Saclay, France
- Dual PhD in Health Professions Education GMU & Erasmus University Netherlands

