EDUCATIONPIUS

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Paul Wilson

ecently the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF) published its results under various categories including Overall, Universities, State Public Universities, Open Universities, Skill Universities, Colleges, Research Institutions, Innovation Institutions, Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Architecture and Planning, Law, Medical, Dental, Agriculture and Allied Sectors. On a positive note, the ranking framework has enabled the colleges to benchmark themselves using the framework and build capacity to meet the demand.

The idea of including state public universities as a separate category is an inclusive approach that brought Anna University and Bharathiar University from Tamil Nadu into the limelight by placing them in first and eighth positions respectively. This was implemented based on central universities being able to access relatively higher funding resources in contrast to state public universities. However, still there is scope for streamlining and refining the framework to be more inclusive and equitable.

First, it has been consistently inferred that only Delhi-based institutions occupy the top five to six positions followed by colleges from other states. If one looks carefully into the numerical strength of these institutions, many host

Going beyond the data An examination of how the NIRF rankings can be streamlined and refined to be more inclusive and equitable. around 1500 to 4000 students. Moreover, Delhi-based institutions primarily focus on undergraduate education and postgraduate courses are mostly conducted by the Delhi Univertion of comparing sity. On the other hand, the institutions of different ranked institutions in orders on the same plat-South India predominantly

form is not equitable as the

efforts in curating and ma-

naging the data would not

be of the same order.

Justice and fairness Second, though "outreach and inclusivity" are part of

the parameters, the equity performance of academic institutions is not reckoned as part of the NIRF metrics to measure the practice of "justice" and "fairness" through distributive equity that solicits a different treatment to the disadvantaged institutions in order to practice SDG 4. Therefore, colleges that perform excellently well with the available socio-economic status (SES) and demographic constrictions are not able to scale up under the ranking framework. Institutions ranked due to their exclusive cognitive excellence and meritocratic philosophy for admissions are valued through the existing framework more than inclusive institutions that admit students hailing from varied learning styles. Institutions with socio-economic advantage, demographic, historical legacy, exclusive identity, familial networks, social support system, personal endowments, material wealth, and a host of other intangibles that work in tandem to boost their prospects have to be differentiated from that of disadvantaged while evaluating performance under va-

rious rubrics. Third, assessment of 'teaching and learning' processes give importance to the infrastructure as per the framework than to the competency of the human resources, thus requiring a controlled perception building by the institution. However this has led to marketing manipulations by the institutions. Thus, if one goes only by the NIRF ranking, students ending up in a college with a low quality of education but better infrastructure with best data capture or simulation system.

Institution's USP Fourth, each institution is known for intangible noncognitive traits as a unique selling proposition that would add value to its culture. Academic success, personality and leadership development are created through 'social learning' integrated as part of the 'campus life' through non-credited activities. Though prescribing metrics for this is beyond this article's scope, it can be perceived that a longitudinal qualitative assessment to capture the institution's USP through qualitative assessment would beget a comprehensive perception. A few representative performance indicators of social learning could be civic responsibility, political agility, networking ability and social astuteness.

Finally, it obvious that NIRF ranking is all about the institution's agility to curate data proactively through proper documentation for assessment. The question as to whether the data and the academic reality are conformable is a question that is to be debated, as NIRF does not involve physical verification. (Views expressed are

The writer is the Principal and Secretary, Madras Christian College, Chennai

personal)

SCHOLARSHIPS

Unimoni Student Star

Scholarship 2024

An initiative by Unimoni to help Indian students pursue higher education abroad. Eligibility: Open to Indian citizens currently pursuing studies abroad who have a valid offer letter from the university and have scored minimum 60% in their Class 12, diploma, or graduation from a CBSE, ICSE, UGC-recognised, state or central government institution **Rewards:** Up to ₹500,000 and other prizes Deadline: March 31, 2025

National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students

Application: Online

www.b4s.in/edge/USSH1

(NFST) An opportunity offered by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India Eligibility: Open to Indian Scheduled Tribe (ST) students who are enrolled

www.b4s.in/edge/ASDA1 in full-time, regular M.Phil

New centres for XAT

The Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT) has added 34 new test cities for its 2025 edition with candidates being able to select up to six preferred cities. Conducted by XLRI Jamshedpur, XAT scores are accepted for or Ph.D. programmes at Ministry- approved institutions with a minimum of 55% marks at PG level. Annual family income must be less than ₹6,00,000. Rewards: Up to ₹35,000 along with an annual contingency grant up to ₹25,000

Deadline: October 31 **Application:** Online www.b4s.in/edge/NFTS2

AICTE-Saksham

Scholarship Scheme An initiative from the Ministry of Education implemented by the AICTE. Eligibility: Open to Indian nationals from a speciallyabled category, with a benchmark disability of not less than 40% and are in the first or second year (through lateral entry) of a degree/ diploma programme in an AICTE-approved institution. Annual family income should be less than ₹8 lakhs. Rewards: ₹50.000/annum **Application:** Online Deadline: October 31

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

admission to MBA programmes in over 250 business schools in

Important dates:

The exam will be held on January 5, 2025 and the last date to register is November 30, 2024.

For details of new centres and more information, visit https://xatonline.in/

> enhance learning, they should not replace the

between teachers and

data privacy and securi-

ty. These technologies

often require collecting

and storing sensitive in-

formation about stu-

dents' disabilities, learn-

ing needs, and progress.

Ensuring the protection

of this data is para-

mount, yet breaches

and unauthorised access

can occur, potentially

leading to misuse of per-

Effective implementa-

tion of EdTech in special

education requires com-

prehensive training for

educators and support

staff. Without this, the

potential benefits of

these tools may not be

sonal information.

Another concern is

students.

valuable interactions

Gain practical experience

have research as a culture

owing to their postgrad-

uate education. The ques-

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



Nandini Raman

I am doing my five-year LLB but do not want to work in judicial courts. Can I work in the corporate sector? What are my other options? Sivani

Dear Sivani.

A five-year LLB opens up various options beyond traditional judicial roles. You could become a corporate lawyer, an in-house counsel, a legal compliance officer, an intellectual property (IP) lawyer, a corporate governance advisor or even a freelance legal consultant. A legal analyst or an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) Practitioner are also lucrative careers today. You could also get into legal publishing and journalism or start your own legal consultancy or advisory service. Familiarise yourself with legal technology tools and software used in the corporate legal environment to streamline processes and enhance efficiency. Gain practical experience through internships in corporate law firms, legal departments of companies, or with corporate lawyers.

I am in the first year of my M.Sc. Agricultural Economics. I would like to develop my skills in Economics and other areas. What kind of courses should I look for? Muthu

Dear Muthu,

Some courses that would be of help are Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, Econometrics, Statistics, Applied Econometrics, Environmental Economics, Agriculture and Rural Development, Development Economics, Rural Economics, and Agribusiness Management. Check which topics are

embedded in your syllabus and focus on the ones that are not. Consider obtaining certifications analytics, project management, or environmental sustainability to complement your academic knowledge. Intern to gain practical experience with agricultural organisations, government agencies, or research institutes. Undertake research projects focusing on agricultural economics, policy analysis, or rural development

Can one do an M.Sc. Nutrition and Dietetics after a diploma in the same subject? Are there distance learning options for a PG in this stream? Is this a good option? Himanshu

Dear Himanshu, Distance/online learning options are available for PG in Nutrition and Dietetics, as it allows flexibility for students who may be working or have other commitments. Explore different M.Sc. programmes, both across traditional and distance learning, and compare curriculum, accreditation, faculty, and career support services. Typically, a M.Sc. admission requires a relevant undergraduate degree (B.Sc. in Nutrition or related fields) or a diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics. Some programmes may have specific GPA requirements or prerequisite courses. Before you enroll, research and ensure that the institution and programme are accredited and recognised and that the degree holds value and meets professional industry standards. An M.Sc. in Nutrition and Dietetics can open doors to various career opportunities such as a clinical dietician/nutritionist. a community nutritionist, a sports nutritionist, a researcher or an academician or also be a consultant in private practice or in corporate wellness

programmes. With increasing

awareness of health and nutrition, there is a growing demand for qualified nutrition

I completed my B.E. in **Information Technology last** vear but don't want to work in this field. I am unemployed and unable to figure out what to do. Should I prepare for the CAT or the government exams?

Dear Hardil

What will you be happy doing? What will fill your day with excitement, challenge and enjoyment? Get a career profile done to understand your personality, interests, hobbies, aptitude, and other traits and make an informed decision. The CAT is primarily for admission for MBA programmes in top institutes and requires intensive preparation, focusing on quantitative ability, data interpretation, verbal ability, and logical reasoning. If you want to do an MBA and get into management, finance, or marketing, this is a good option. For the Government exams, you could write the UPSC Civil Services Exam, and State Public Service Commission (PSC) Exams. Banking Exams like IBPS PO, and SBI PO, are relatively easier to crack and offer stable career options. Staff Selection Commission (SSC) Exams offer a variety of posts in government ministries and departments and the Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) Exams offer technical and non-technical positions. However, these also need committed preparation and focus to be successful.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Rubini P.

he landscape of special education is undergoing a transformative shift with the integration of **Educational Technology** (EdTech) tools and platforms that offer dynamic solutions that adapt to individual learning styles, ensuring that every student progresses at their own pace and caters to the diverse needs of students with unique abilities, fostering inclusivity and personalised learning.

EdTech's primary advantage in special education lies in its ability to customise learning experiences. Tools like speech-to-text software. interactive learning apps, and adaptive learning platforms cater to diverse learning needs and styles. Moreover, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies offer immersive experiences that can enhance understanding and engagement.

For example, students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can practise social interactions in a controlled, virtual environment before applying these skills in real-world settings.

Benefits learning Adaptive platforms: EdTech platforms that are designed for special education dynamically adjust content

Meeting diverse needs

By integrating EdTech in special education, we can empower students to reach their full potential

based on real-time performance, ensuring that students progress at their own pace and tailor content to suit different learning styles, providing targeted support for specific challenges that students may face. Data-driven perso-

nalisation: Continuous analysis of student data provides valuable insights into learning preferences, allowing educators to refine and adapt instructional strategies. By leveraging this data, teachers can tailor their approaches to match individual students' strengths, areas for improvement, and preferred learning

Gamified learning

experiences: Integrating gamification into Ed-Tech makes learning more enjoyable and interactive. Gamified features boost engagement, accommodate various learning styles, and foster a positive and motivating learning environ-

Accessibility and in**dependence:** EdTech allows students with physical disabilities to participate more fully in educational activities. For instance, eye-tracking technology enables students with limited mobility to control computers and interact with digital content using their eye movements.. Further, online learning platforms and digital

classrooms are valuable in situations where inperson learning is not feasible.

The downside

Despite these advantages, there are significant challenges and potential downsides to the increasing reliance on Ed-Tech in special education. One major concern is the issue of digital inequality. Not every student has the same acto essential technology and reliable

Internet connectivity. Moreover, there is a risk of over-reliance on technology, which can lead to diminished personal interactions and human connection. While EdTech tools can

Balancing act

fully realised.

While these innovations hold tremendous promise for enhancing special education, but a balanced approach that integrates EdTech with traditional teaching methods, prioritises data security, and ensures equitable access can maximise the benefits while mitigating the risks. By doing so, we can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment that empowers all students to reach their full potential.

The writer is Professor and HoD, Computer Science and Engineering, CMR University

SAVE THE DATE

Fevicreate IdeaLabs Pidilite Industries, through its art and craft platform

Fevicreate, is hosting the fifth edition of its nationwide science-based crafting contest, Fevicreate IdeaLabs. The theme this year is Wonders of Nature: Using Recycled Materials.

Eligibility: Students from Classes 1 to 8 Last date: October 20

www.fevicreate.com/

■ Somaiya Winter School Somaiya Vidyavihar

University has opened applications for the Somaiya Winter School Programme, which (batch 2) https://t.ly/bjNCm provides school students

with a glimpse of university life and helps them explore potential career paths. **Eligibility:** Students from

Classes 9 to 12 from any

board of education Dates: November 4 to 9 (batch 1); December 27 to 31 (batch 2) Last date: October 30 (batch 1); December 23

Admissions and scholarships JAIN Online has opened

Online Master of Arts in Public Policy. Eligibility: Bachelor's degree (minimum three years) in any stream from a UGC-recognised university

https://bit.ly/3XteBaa

admissions for its two-year

Jaipuria Institute of

Management has opened applications for its PGDM in Retail Management, Marketing, Service Management and Financial Services for 2025-26. **Eligibility:** Bachelor's degree with minimum 50%. Valid score in CAT, CMAT, XAT, MAT or GMAT. Last date: January 31,

https://www.jaipuria.ac.in/



THINK Aruna Sankaranarayanan

readers that they read a book for the sheer joy of reading. But what about re-reading a book? What propels some people to revisit pages, to journey again with familiar, albeit slightly altered, characters? Does rereading non-fiction also feel different? While reading entails a silent conversation between a writer and a reader, re-reading adds another element to this exchange. Our former self – or at least how we remember ourselves – interacts with our present self as we reencounter pages. In doing so, we not only gain fresh insights but also understand our inner worlds better. What aspects have remained the same or morphed over time?

In *The Harvard Gazette*, Liz Mineo interviews Har-

vard professors to find out what compels them to reread certain books despite their tightly packed schedules. Evelyn Hammonds, Professor of African and African American studies, has been rereading The Colour Purple by Alice Walker at least once every year, as she derives "something new from it" each time. The story, which examines the "bonds of womanhood and sisterhood", resonates even today as we understand the significance of a sense of community in our lives. Given that relationships and community have always been and will always be an integral facet of the human condition, books like The Colour Purple are timeless. Ya-Chieh Hsu, Professor

of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology, prefers audiobooks as they can be heard while we are exercising or doing chores. Hsu listens to *Big Magic* now and then as it helps her be creative in her field. Though the book is written from a writer's viewpoint, Hsu finds that she too can draw lessons from it. She finds one



chapter, 'Walk Proudly', particularly poignant as it emboldens her to "be brave". As creativity in any discipline involves taking risks, Hsu listens to this chapter "countless times" as it inspires her to soldier on.

As we evolve

In an article in The Yale Review, Viktor Brombert admits that he sometimes forgets that he has even read a book. On perusing the book again, he discovers that he had read it earlier by seeing the scribbles he had pencilled in the margins. At times, he finds that he is not the same person who read the book earlier and wonders why he even underlined certain lines or made some comments that don't resonate with his current self. He realised that his "way of reading the text had shifted", as he himself has changed in many ways.

Though we know the story, a writer can continue to surprise us when we revisit a work. I read *The Painted Veil* by Somerset Maugham for the first time in my early twenties. I re-

member being profoundly moved by the protagonist's arc. From being a rather despicable character, she transforms into a relatable, even likeable, person. When I was drawn to rereading the book in my forties. I wasn't sure whether I would feel the same way. Weirdly, though I remembered the book fairly well, it felt like I was reading it for the first time. I struggled to put it down. Of course, this also speaks to Maugham's gift as a writer and his nuanced understanding of human vulnerability. I'm hoping to revisit this book in my sixth decade.

When I read non-fiction, I usually mark portions that I find significant with a pencil. Later, when I need to refer to the book, I usually reread the marked-out portions. Given that we have limited time, I find this method effective for most non-fiction titles. But fiction has to be devoured from end to end.

The writer is the author of Zero Limits: Things Every 20-Something Should Know. She blogs at www.arunasankaranarayanan.com

Nitin Gaur

e live in a world where financial markets are as responsive as social media feeds, and your smartphone isn't just a wallet; it's your entire bank. Imagine students not just learning about this world, but building it. That is the new age of business education, where financial technology (fintech) is the *Lingua Franca*.

Business schools are now faced with the challenge of preparing students for a world where financial innovation is reshaping every aspect of the industry. When it comes to financial education, many institutions teach elements and mechanics, such as accounting and financial strategies, but seldom is the art of fintech taught. The question is no longer whether to incorporate fintech into curricula, but how to do so to prepare students for the digital finance revolution.

Hands-on approach

Fintech is not only transforming the way money and value instruments are moved around the globe but is also defining new asset classes and monetisation strategies around these classes. It is shaping new business models never seen before. To remain relevant and impactful, Bschools must go beyond conventional teaching methods and embrace creative, hands-on approaches that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

ractice.
A litmus test would be to



Future of finance

B-schools must integrate fintech into the curriculum to prepare students for the digital finance revolution

measure the implications of fintech in case studies, devise new business models and structures, and create new business economics enabled by fintech. Students should be encouraged to experiment with real trading apps, budgeting tools, even cryptocurrency wallets. Experiencing the frustration of a clunky interface or the excitement of virtual investments is where real learning happens.

Or picture a scenario where students have to develop a business plan for a Web 3.0 start-up focused on decentralised lending. They could dive into the intricacies of creating smart contracts on the blockchain, devise strategies to navigate regulatory landscapes, or innovate marketing approaches to at-

tract a user base wary of traditional financial institutions. By tackling these real-world challenges, students will gain a deep understanding of both the technological and regulatory hurdles involved in launching a venture.

Emerging technologies
Moreover, fintech is interdisciplinary, combining finance, technology, and
regulatory compliance. Bschools must reflect this
complexity in their curric-

Traditional silos – such as separating finance from technology–fail to capture fintech's interwoven reality. Schools should develop close relationships with industry stakeholders, including technology firms, financial institutions, and regulatory bodies.

Looking ahead, it is also important to incorporate emerging themes like Blockchain, AI, and Web3 into the curriculum. Blockchain's potential to transform industries,

Al's ability to revolutionise data analysis and decision-making, and Web3's emphasis on user privacy and security require students to understand these technologies, their regulatory challenges and impact on consumer behaviours.

For those looking to make their mark in the financial world, here are a few key tips: First, stay curious and never stop learning. This sector changes at breakneck speed, so make it a habit to keep up through experimentation. Second, master data analytics. Understanding and leveraging data is crucial, so familiarise yourself with tools that will help you interpret large datasets to make informed decisions. Third, explore all the emerging technologies that are shaping the future of finance.

Understanding their potential can give you a competitive edge. Finally, keep the user experience at the forefront. Design products with the end-user in mind, ensuring they are intuitive, accessible, and solve real problems.

The future of finance is being written now, and it is up to B-schools to ensure their students are not just learning about these changes but actively contributing to them.

The writer is former Advisory Board Member, Stanford University, and Faculty Member, Tetr College of Business.

A new legal landscape

The introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) represents a foundational shift that will shape careers and professional paths

Ramakrishnan Raman

he replacement of the Indian Penal Code with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has an impact how law is taught and practised. The IPC, created in 1860, has been the backbone of criminal law in India. Despite being updated, it reflects its outdated origins and doesn't address many of today's legal challenges. The need for BNS comes from the urgency to modernise India's legal system to handle issues like cybercrime, environmental law, and human rights.

BNS brings in many important changes, such as clearer definitions of crimes, simpler procedures, and tougher penalties for crimes against women and children and also covers new areas such as cyber offences and organised crime, and includes international human rights standards. The code also adopts modern ideas of restorative justice, focusing on rehabilitation and reformation instead of just punishment.

Making the shift

Switching to BNS will require big changes in law school programmes. Courses will need to be updated to reflect new legal rules and principles. This will be challenging, as it involves retraining teachers and updating materials. It provides many new case studies and legal scenarios for students that offer practical insights and help them navigate the changing legal landscape.

To connect theoretical knowledge with real-world application, law schools must emphasise internships and practical programmes that will allow students to work directly with the new legal code, helping them under-



stand it better and prepare for professional practice.

Navigating the new legal landscape will require new skills, such as understanding digital forensics, cyber laws, and international human rights standards. Law schools must integrate technology into their programmes, teaching students to use legal databases, digital tools, and cyber forensic techniques.

New avenues

BNS also highlights the importance of ethical conduct and professionalism. This includes understanding the ethical implications of new legal rules and maintaining integrity in all professional dealings. The introduction of BNS opens new opportunities for academic research. Comparative legal studies, examining the differences between IPC and BNS and exploring their impacts will be a rich field of study. Research on human rights law, as included in BNS, will also become more prominent.

Policy analysis will become increasingly important, as scholars examine how BNS affects existing legal policies and helps develop new ones. The implementation of BNS will create diverse career opportunities in litigation, academia, consultancy, and policymaking. Lawyers trained under the new code will be wellequipped to handle a wide range of legal issues and better prepared to engage with international legal systems, participate in global legal discussions, and contribute to the development of international law.

The introduction of BNS represents a foundational shift for law students that will shape careers and professional paths. By embracing the changes and innovations, the next generation of lawyers will be well-prepared to uphold justice, tackle modern legal challenges, and contribute to the global legal community.

The writer is Vice Chancellor at Symbiosis International (Deemed University).

N. Gokarneshan

lmost every institution's success is determined by its academic results and placements. Despite the news of high placement records and lucrative salaries, often we find that many students quit their jobs within a year as they are unable to cope with the workplace demands. This is primarily because they are unable to adapt to changing trends.

Apart from the placement training cell, teachers can play a supportive role as well. While the former focuses on resume writing and interview preparation, the latter can offer more value additions to the students. This can be done through the following strategies.

Skill identification: Students should be encouraged to develop their inherent skills and acumen. For example, someone with good communication skills

Real-world ready

While placement cells have their place, teachers can do their bit to ensure that students are ready for the workplace

can be trained for marketing jobs, while one who is good at academics can be encouraged to consider research or teaching.

Alumni interaction:

Former students who have been successful can be invited at regular intervals to talk to current batches about what they will encounter at the workplace. This can be through sharing of experiences, challenges faced and how these were overcome. This will help students understand the reality of the job.

Teacher experiences: Teachers with prior industrial exposure can share their experiences and stress the importance of learning on the job and being punctual and sincere.



Industry visits: Students should be given a suitable format for their internships and industry visits. Inviting industry ex-

perts to evaluate the knowledge gained thus will help students understand where they stand and what they need to do to improve.

Real-world problems: Students should be given

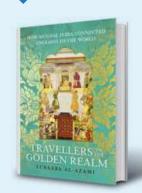
case studies involving actual problems and issues faced by industries. Working out solutions to these will help them develop their analytical and problem-solving skills, which come in handy at the workplace.

Mock interviews: Apart from the help given by placement cells, teachers can invite HR personnel from companies to evaluate students and suggest how and where they can improve. This will also create awareness among the students about what more they need to do.

Mentorship: This is at the heart of the training and teachers need to mentor and nurture students to develop those inherent skill sets that will sustain them in their jobs.

The writer is Professor and Head, Department of Textile Chemistry, SSM College of Engineering, Komarapalayam, Tamil Nadu.

ON THE SHELF

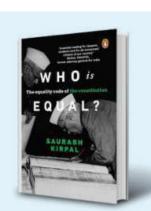


■ Travellers in the Golden Realm: How Mughal India Connected England to the World

Before the East India Company and before the British Empire, 16th and 17th century merchants, pilgrims and outcasts from England ventured to India: Father Thomas Stephens, a Catholic fleeing his home; the merchant Ralph Fitch looking for jewels in the markets of Delhi; and John Mildenhall, an adventurer revelling in the highwire politics of the Mughal elite. It was a land ruled by formidable women such as Empress Nur Jahan Begim, **Oueen Mother Maryam** al-Zamani, and Princess Jahanara Begum. Their collision of worlds helped connect East and West, launching a tempestuous period of globalisation spanning from the Chinese opium trade to the slave trade in the Americas. Author: Lubaaba Al-Azami **Publisher:** Hachette India **Price:** ₹1,999

■ Who is Equal?: The Equality Code of the Constitution

In 1950, we, the people of India, gave ourselves a constitution that promised justice, liberty and equality to all its citizens. Decades later, as a nation, we still struggle with inequality in



various forms: religion, sex, caste, gender. As we forge ahead, it is imperative to ask, 'who is equal?', and 'is the idea of equality elusive to achieve?' This book seeks to untangle the philosophical and practical tangents of inequality prevalent in our country and positions India at the intersection of equality and inequality, Author: Saurabh Kirpal **Publisher:** Penguin **Price:** ₹699