

# TOGETHER

a national family magazine

## Election Result 2024

India waits in expectation

06-14

## Education

More is desired

18-29

**HALF THE PEOPLE LACK THE RIGHT EDUCATION.  
HALF THE PEOPLE NEVER VOTED IN THE ELECTION.  
ONE HOPES IT IS THE SAME HALF.**



**Together** is a national family magazine. It is a monthly, published by the Franciscans (OFM) in India. It was started in 1935 in Karachi, now in Pakistan. It got its present name in 1966.

The magazine **Together** is a conversation platform. Nothing changes until our families change. It is an effort at making worlds meet by bringing down fearful, pretentious and defensive walls. **Together** is a journey, an ever-expansive journey—from me to us, from us to

all of us, and from all of us to all. Let us talk, let us cross borders. The more we converse and traverse, we discover even more paths to talk about and travel together. **Together** is an effort to uncover our shared humanity.

Your critical and relevant write-ups, that promote goodness, inclusivity and shared humanity, are welcome. Your articles must be mailed to editor@togethermagazine.in before the 15th of every month.

## EDITOR

Saji P Mathew ofm  
editoroftogether@gmail.com  
editor@togethermagazine.in

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Jameson PC ofm  
John Sekar ofm

## COPY EDITORS

Augustine Pinto ofm  
Joy Prakash ofm

## LAYOUT

Kapil Arambam

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## DIRECTOR

Xavier Durairaj ofm

## PUBLISHER

Basil Lobo ofm

## MANAGER

Anthony Mathew Joseph ofm

## PUBLICATION OFFICE

Franciscan Publications  
St. Anthony's Friary  
#85, Hosur Road, Bengaluru - 560095  
Karnataka, India  
manager@togethermagazine.in  
info@togethermagazine.in  
Mob: +91-88971 46707 / +91-77366 64528

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# CONTENTS

June 2024 Vol 18 Issue 6

## EDITORIAL

### 04 Education Must Be Enabling, So Also A Government

Saji P Mathew OFM

## JUNE TOGETHER



### 06 India Unboxed: Elections 2024

Sumaiya Noorani, Samriddhi Lakhar

### 12 As We Reach the End of the Tunnel: General Election 2024 Result

Gerry Lobo OFM

## 06 INDIA UNBOXED

### Lok Sabha Elections 2024

An analysis of seven states indicates a decline of the unquestioned continuity of reign of the BJP/NDA bloc.



### 15 Exploring the Persistence of Incompetent Men in Leadership: Unveiling Gender Inequality and Gender Injustice

Dr George John

### 18 Holistic Education

Tony Marshall OFM

### 20 Beyond the Rat Race

Apoorv Tamrkar

### 22 India's Education System Needs School Psychology

Vignesh Bhat

### 26 Navigating Change: Supporting Students Through School Transition Periods

Kanchi Jain

### 28 In Praise of the National Education Policy 2020

Aakasha Munshi

### 30 Impact of NGO Internships

Dr Alice Mani

### 34 Witness Supreme!

Joy Prakash OFM



## IN PICTURES

### Wild Wanderings Through Thekkady

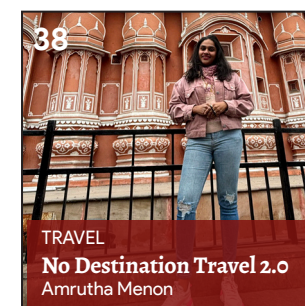
Saji P Mathew OFM



## IN STAMPS

### World Bicycle Day

Tom John OFM



## TRAVEL

### No Destination Travel 2.0

Amrutha Menon



## CINEMA

### Wild Tales

Romil Udayakumar TNV



## TRAVEL

### No Time to Spare

Susan D'Souza



# Education Must Be Enabling, So Also a Government

**The end result of a democratic election must be democracy.**

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

This summer has been a season (for the young) of writing exams and (for the adults) of casting votes; and for both, waiting expediently for the results. Come June, and it would be time for the students to get back to school, and for the politicians (the elected ones) to get back to the Parliament. Though this seems to be a coincidence, there definitely is a consequential connection between education and election, or one could qualify them saying, a good education and a good election. Gore Vidal, an American author, well known for his outspoken political opinions and his witty and satirical observations of American society, said about the American electorate, “Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for President. One hopes it is the same half.” Looking at the general percentage of voter turnout, and observing both the proportions of population having no privilege of education, and even if they have, considering the character of education often provided, we could, in line with Gore Vidal, say about the Indian electorate, ‘Half the people lack the right education. Half the people never voted in the elections. One hopes it is the same Half.’

If denying the right to participate in the election process was the bygone way to get the results in favour of a privileged few, denying the possibility, or inaccessibility to right political education for the masses seems to be a contemporary way. In an uneducated and disengaging electorate, how do people get information, how do they form their opinions and choices of candidates. They succumb to fake news, false narratives, and political advertisements that are dishonest and disinformation.

## Political Education

Everything improves with education—civic sense, politics, and democratic elections are no exception. We could have a choice as to whether to learn art, music, or mathematics, but in the case of political education, we must have a preferential option for it; because it puts at risk the constitutional rights and civil liberties of every citizen. Such an education provides everyone with the opportunity to play an active role in moulding the future of a democratic society. Political education attempts to instruct and motivate individuals of all ages to participate in societies and communities and make them more democratic; and be watchdogs of democracy; thus making sure that democracy does not get reduced to mere majoritarianism.

The Greek city-states in the 5th century BCE had understood democracy as, *demos* and *kratos*, meaning, ‘the people’ and ‘power or rule’ respectively; thus democracy is ‘the power or rule of the people’. It was the 16th president of America, Abraham Lincoln, who, in

the mid 19th century, gave one of the simplest modern explanations of democracy. He said, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Though it sounded as understood clearly, in demographically complex countries like India, the question emerged, ‘who are the people?’ Democracy began to be used by those who are more in numbers, and those who have more means, riches, and privileges to their advantage -thus bringing democracy, considered as the finest form of modern governance, to its knees. Political thinker Dr BR Ambedkar, influenced by his teacher, John Dewey, and perhaps inspired by Buddhism, countered and clarified democracy as a way of life, which could be further said as a society’s concern and mindfulness for the entire people, especially the marginalised other. It is not just about ‘us’ the majority, but also about ‘them’ the minority.

Ambedkar would place freedom, equality, and fraternity as essential conditions for democracy, and I would add education to this list; though Ambedkar may not have said it, his passion for learning and engagement, and how he reached that position of being the architect of the Constitution of India, would indicate it. Ram Jethmalani, who was an outstanding lawyer and Rajya Sabha member, believed that the greatest achievement of Dr Ambedkar was that he gave India a secular constitution although most of our laws are based on religion and most of our life is immersed in religion. He further clarified, “Secularism means the efficiency and superiority of education over illiteracy; it means superiority

of reason over blind faith, it means the superiority of science over religion.” Ambedkar was of the view that religion was to be tolerated, but not to be encouraged. He knew what it takes to become a modern society.

Elections without political education of the electorate can become very manipulative; and an electorate, which is educated and if unfortunately lacks the power and possibility of participating in free and fair elections could be frustrated. The end result of a democratic election must be democracy; and an educated electorate and free and fair election is the sure way to reach there.

## Becoming Enablers

Students choose to do studies in any discipline of their choice, like, science or commerce; but a good college would insist that while they do their studies in their chosen disciplines they also engage with art, music, dance, acting, poetry, writing, etc., no matter how well or badly, not to make money or fame, but to experience becoming, to discover what is within them; such an education enables one’s true becoming.

A free electorate with the benefit of fair elections elect the best possible leaders and government. It is the bounden duty of the elected in the government to enable the becoming of every people of the country; give them wings, provide them capacity to be free thinkers, innovators, entrepreneurs, artists, creators, and more. Enabling the becoming of a people would also mean to combat false narratives, biased policies, and the interference of archaic religious dogmas and doctrines. The people must be given the ability to be free choices, question, dissent, participate, and become.



Photo: Dibakar Roy / Unsplash

# INDIA UNBOXED

## ELECTIONS 2024

SUMAIYA NOORANI, SAMRIDDHI LAKHAR

Over a billion people of India, living inside and outside, rural and urban, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, and others, are waiting for the results of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Many factors will play crucial roles in this election outcome: from the aspirations of 18.5 million first-time voters aged 18–19 with a substantial portion of the electorate under 30, to diminishing Modi factor, to disillusionment of the people on employment and ache din front. Young voters were instrumental in the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) victories in 2014 and 2019. Campaigns and manifestos are increasingly tailored to address the concerns and aspirations of this dynamic group; this will continue to be in the BJP way. But the INDIA bloc and other regional parties opposing the BJP/NDA bloc have managed to gain a lot of ground in penetrating and reaching to the masses and talking to them about the dangers of an extreme right-wing government backed by corporate giants. The concerned civil society has majorly moved away from the BJP/NDA side. Civil society in India hugely value the ideals of secularism, democracy, and the constitution. With democracy and secularism in danger, political parties advocating policies, opportunities and benefits to favour a religious majority and conveniently excluding certain communities, blatant hate speech and then blatant denial of it, reinforcement of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), etc. have further damaged the image of the ruling establishment, and the trust common people had on them.

The Lok Sabha Election of 2024 in India showcased several noteworthy trends that would shape the political outcome of the elections:

**Digital Campaigning Dominance** The influence of digital campaigning continued to rise, with political parties leveraging social media platforms, targeted advertising, and data analytics to reach voters.

**Regional Parties' Resurgence** Regional parties play a pivotal role in several states, emphasizing regional issues and forming strategic alliances with national parties. These parties capitalise on their strong grassroots networks and deep understanding of local dynamics to secure significant electoral gains.

**Focus on Development** Putting aside religion and ideologies, the electorate exhibit a continued emphasis on development-oriented agendas, including infrastructure, employment generation, healthcare, and education. Parties that present credible and innovative development plans garner significant support from voters, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

**Identity Politics and Social Issues** Identity-based politics remain a significant factor, with parties appealing to caste,

religious, and linguistic identities to mobilise support. Additionally, social issues such as gender equality, environmental conservation, and minority rights gain prominence, influencing voter preferences and candidate selection.

**Evolving Coalition Dynamics** Coalition politics remain integral to the Indian electoral landscape, with pre-poll and post-poll alliances determining government formation. The fluidity of coalition dynamics underscore the importance of strategic partnerships and consensus-building in a diverse and multi-party democracy like India.

**Corruption** Disclosure of major scams like, electoral bonds, will definitely have an effect on the way informed voters cast their vote.

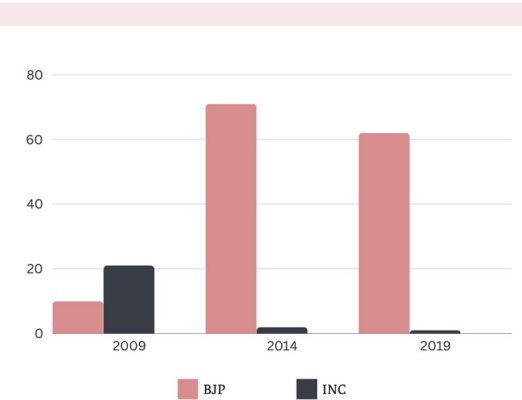
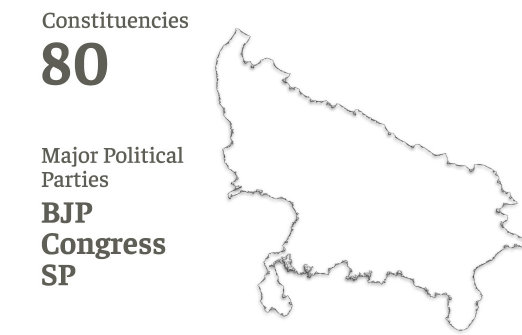
**Technological Innovations in Voting** The adoption of technological innovations to streamline the voting process, including electronic voting machines (EVMs), and online registration facilities, which are aimed to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in the electoral process, may make it easy for the powerful to misuse it and manipulate it to their advantage.

An analysis of seven states that come among the 10 biggest states (having the most number of constituencies) indicates a decline of the unquestioned continuity of reign of the BJP/NDA bloc. With the over-dependency on temple politics and hindutva ideology, people have lost faith in them and have stopped believing that they would bring about progress and employment in the modern sense of the term. Their outward image as a party with less corruption is broken with the surfacing of electoral bonds scam. NDA has poorly managed the Manipur unrest, farmer's protest, and attacks on minorities and institutions. After the initial phases of voting the BJP side look doubtful of their own victory, and are going desperate.

What has worked positively for the Congress-led INDIA bloc is that they have stood together as an opposition force, though some have moved away and are contesting independently; programmes like the Bharat Jodo Yatra by Rahul Gandhi have projected Congress as a party that knows the needs and aspirations of the common folks, and Rahul has emerged as a competent leader; Congress has won elections in recent major state elections, like, Karnataka and Telangana; and Congress' and its allies' image as a side that upholds the constitution and its democratic and secular values.



UTTAR PRADESH  
UNBOXED



Uttar Pradesh

The BJP-led state, Uttar Pradesh, has the highest number of constituencies, 80. Though a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) bastion for the last one decade, Indian National Congress (INC) and Samajwadi Party (SP) also used to have a hold on the population. BJP made a historic comeback by securing 255 out of 403 seats in the 2022 State Assembly Elections; and Congress was pushed farther back. Uttar Pradesh saw an average voter turnout of 55% in the first five phases. With two major political leaders, Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi, contesting in different constituencies in this state, the tensions are high.

Likely Outcome

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with the completion of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, highlighting progress in the campaign, and the Modi and Yogi factor may not be enough to retain the seat tally. INDIA bloc could surprise all and win over 20 seats in UP. The Jodo Yatras by Rahul and the campaign by Priyanka and others will have results.

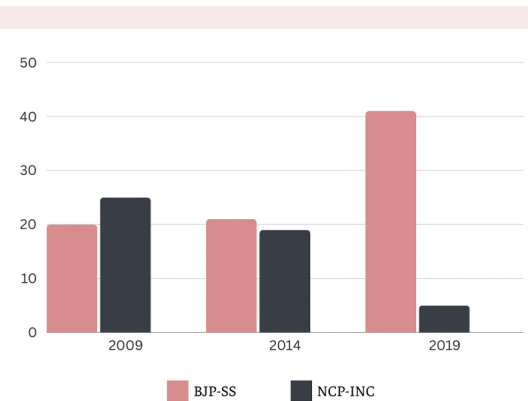
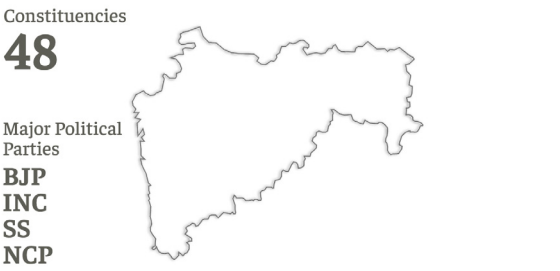
MAHARASHTRA  
UNBOXED

Maharashtra

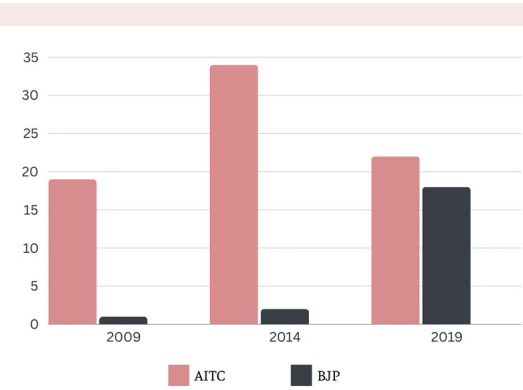
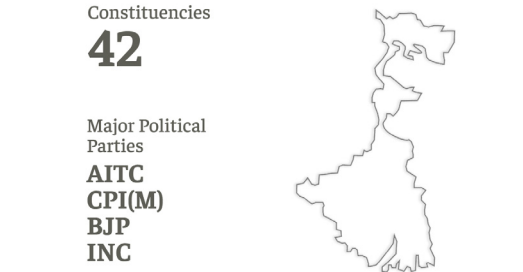
With a constituency count of 48, Maharashtra sees a tough competition between the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc. In the 2019 State Assembly Elections, BJP-SS alliance bagged the majority.

Likely Course

Maharashtra politics has taken near-chaotic twists and turns between 2019 and 2024, following the splits in the Shiv Sena and the NCP, toppling of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government and swearing in of Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government. It would be next to impossible for the BJP alliance to make a clean sweep in the state like the last two elections. The Congress led INDIA alliance may claim back 10–15 seats this time.



WEST BENGAL  
UNBOXED



West Bengal

With 42 constituencies, West Bengal, ruled by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), who has opposed Modi and his politics openly, will pose a serious threat to BJP-led NDA's aspirations in West Bengal. The secularist ideology and advocacy of support to all communities that AITC stands for, is supported by many in the state; and will reflect in the way the population votes.

Likely Outcome

2024 Lok Sabha elections are seeing much less aggressive AITC and BJP in West Bengal. The hyper-nationalistic narrative of BJP, and personal attacks on leaders have mellowed down, and parties are focusing on local issues of the state. It is a state to watch out, AITC is contesting alone, INDIA bloc mainly consists of Congress and AAP; and both are fighting the BJP. Both the fronts are equally posed, but AITC has better chances, and could win 21–24 seats.

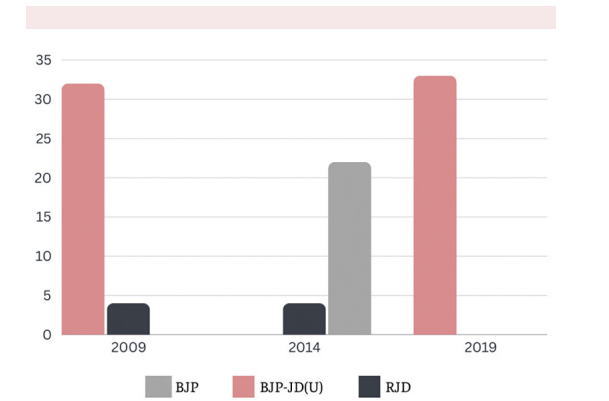
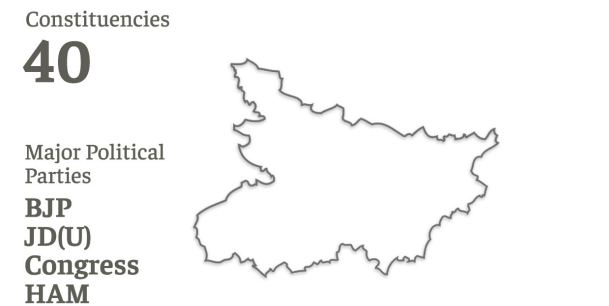
BIHAR  
UNBOXED

Bihar

A state with 40 constituencies, Bihar is a state where politics of religion can be prominently seen in competition between NDA and INDIA bloc. The recent death of the JD(U) leader Saurabh Kumar in an attack has raised tensions within the NDA alliance.

Likely Outcome

The BJP-led NDA will dominate election results in Bihar. People still have admiration for Modi, they look up to him; thus NDA could win in over 60% of seats. INDIA may make progress from the last Lok Sabha elections and win in five to seven seats. Though many may not like Nitish Kumar, the Modi wave is very strong in Bihar.





## Tamil Nadu

With 39 constituencies, the DMK-ruled (INDIA bloc) state of Tamil Nadu saw almost 70% of voter turnout. In 2021 DMK ended AIADMK's decade-long rule by winning the State Assembly Elections. BJP claims that they have grown in Tamil Nadu, but Stalin and his team is doing well; and that will hurt the hopes of the BJP in the state.

### Likely Outcome

DMK enjoys strong support for effective governance, directly benefiting citizens. There is also a strong anti-Modi wave and anti-Hindi wave in the state. The state, like other states in the South has a strong stance against Hindutva politics. Thus national BJP leaders have had no impact in Tamil Nadu. INDIA bloc with DMK with it will win most of the seats. AIADMK is on the back foot. BJP, in all probability, will open account in the state.

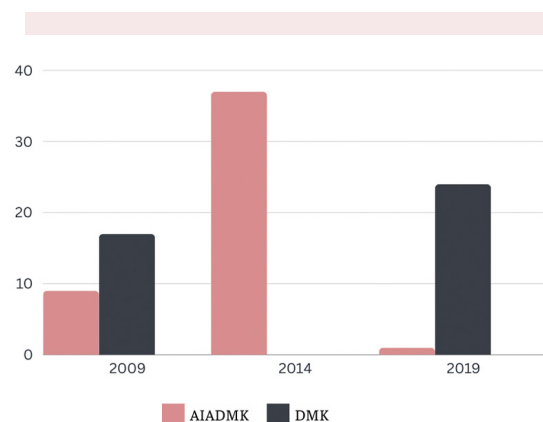
TAMIL NADU  
UNBOXED

Constituencies

39

Major Political Parties

DMK  
AIADMK  
Congress  
BJP



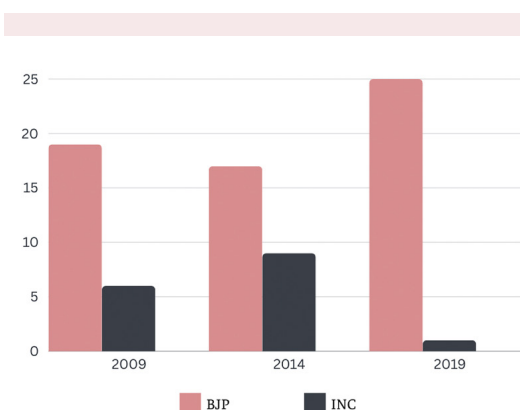
KARNATAKA  
UNBOXED

Constituencies

28

Major Political Parties

BJP  
Congress  
JDS



## Karnataka

A state with 28 constituencies, Karnataka is favoured by the minority despite the not so recent wins by the BJP. Though earlier Lok Sabha polls went in favour of the BJP, in the 2023 State Assembly Elections, Congress emerged victorious with 43% vote share. Recent, people and especially women centred, policies, and urban and rural developments, paired with hateful comments by NDA leaders have pushed the minority to stand with the Congress.

### Likely Outcome

Congress, with strong state leadership, enjoys the favour of people; and that will end the decade long BJP dominance in Lok Sabha elections. INDIA bloc could win in 18–20 seats. The recently surfaced sex scandle of JD(S) MP candidate will further harm the image of NDA in the state.

## Gujarat

With 26 constituencies, the power struggle between Congress and BJP is prominent in the state of Gujarat, though Congress is no match for BJP here. The political shift in the state is observed in anticipation as Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) gear up as INDIA alliance. Having won the Surat seat already, it is clear that even the campaigning is dominated by the BJP; Congress-led INDIA is almost not visible in the state.

### Likely Outcome

BJP is most likely to secure almost all seats hands down. But unlike in 2014 and 2019, Congress-AAP alliance not only will have an increase in their vote share, but might even win a couple of seats; thus spoil the BJP's dreams of a hat-trick.

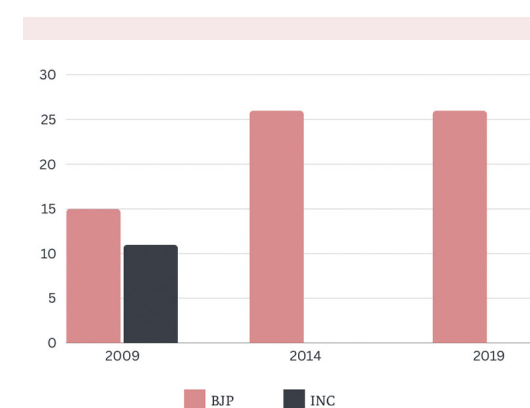
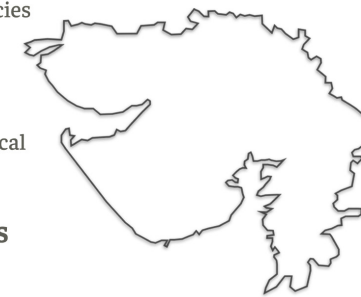
GUJARAT  
UNBOXED

Constituencies

26

Major Political Parties

BJP  
Congress



If these seven states, having 303 seats out of 543, are of any indication, the NDA/BJP have a slight edge. BJP could win in around 300 seats with their alliances.

On 4 June when the Lok Sabha election boxes (EVMs) are unboxed, who will have the last laugh? If the above discussed seven states, having 303 seats of 543, are of any indication, the NDA/BJP have a slight edge. BJP with their alliances could win in around 300 seats.

But there are other extraneous factors, like the small states and minorities with big problems of exclusion, less attention given to them, and being at the verge of losing their identity and position

often because of the generic BJP stance, 'one nation, one vote, one language, one religion, etc.' BJP has failed to deliver in many important fronts like, employment, price fluctuation, and human rights. The clean image of BJP is broken with the electoral bonds scam. The Modi wave factor is diminishing. Many regional small parties have resurged and taken their position against BJP. And, after 10 years of BJP rule, with the anti-incumbency factor, many look forward to a change. Yes. The changing political and social landscape of India could reduce NDA below 250; and BJP below 200. The country awaits the greatest election results on the planet—a result that is capable of changing the nature and destiny of a nation of over 1.2 billion people.



# AS WE REACH THE END OF THE TUNNEL GENERAL ELECTION 2024 RESULT

**The new government must begin from an ascending stance with taking citizens with it seriously and believing in their potentialities.**

GERRY LOBO OFM



**C**ampaigning for the National General Election has faded as the last phase of the election is approaching. The election heat has gradually cooled down and the voter is eagerly looking forward for the judgment day when the result will be out on June 4. While for the incumbent ruling party it might be clear who the winner is, the Opposition would be positively hopeful of deriving the benefit from all the effort they have put in for the game. Election campaign produced spectacular manifestos, particularly from the major parties in the country announcing attractive plans with promises. How far these manifestos

affected the voters' decision is a question apart. If one major party projected Nyay Patr, another titled its document in a catchy phrase, Sankalp Patr. The former projected justice as the core theme and as its philosophy, in order to protect constitutional rights, human dignity, rights of women and so on, in order to revitalise India's democracy which has been damaged due to arrogance on the part of the majoritarian government at the centre. With necessary welfare schemes attached to this philosophical visionary document, it offered hope to millions in the darkness of democracy covering the vast nation. The latter manifesto, on the other hand, already foreseeing a massive victory and underhandedly preparing a road-map for governance, hoped to build a "strong government," whatever it implied. It put forth "India's time," whatever it meant, for exponential growth on the international platform. One may have evaluated both these documents as empty promises and "jugglery

**The commoner, left without a choice—and perhaps out of fear, or just casually—might have practiced his or her franchise obligation with no critical thought about the good of the country.**

of words." The voter would know well these manifestos were nothing but vote-bank tactics used by well-fed and fattened political leaders whose aim was to reach the skies in their pursuit of power and wealth by appropriating unjustly the human and natural resources of the nation which is the right of all.

The election campaigning had been a degrading scene at times in the past months. Stone pelting at opposition candidates, defaming names, unearthing false cases, damning the dignity of persons, outright accusations and mud-slinging have all been the most unholy strategies used in a holy franchise exercise in the country, all for the sake of being elected as leaders in the national polity. What an irony! By hook or by crook one just wanted to be the winner. Lack of a sense of decency in one's public projection of a political head-weight has shown character-less, wild and aggressive tendencies in the electoral fight. The common people, on the other hand, would hardly concern themselves with truth. The outward flare of mouthful promises would satisfy them. Religious symbols and the politicians clad with attractive attire evoking religion would draw the attention of the weak minds. What kind of leaders would they be electing? Hidden criminality and heart full of lies did not matter to the voters. External spectacle by grand road-shows on flower-decked chariots, which only expended on the bread of the poor, had become a common scenario among political emperors, thus converting the wise to stupidity, the enlightened to darkness of error and the educated to a blind ignorance. Democracy for all one knows was used for electoral autocracy. Democracy, perhaps, was used as jungle rule or as sheer autocracy, the Hitlerian way. The ordinary citizens were in confusion as to listen to the truth or to the falsehood during the campaign.

Electioneering was not so much used for conscientizing voters about their lost rights or about their alarmingly degrading socio-economic conditions but for evoking religious sentiments and emotions with the use of temple images to provoke disdain towards other religious traditions and to create an aura around the candidate of being a just and honest person. The voters, on the other hand, could not make a distinction between the religion they profess and the political, economic and social issues bugging the nation today. The commoner, left without a choice, and perhaps out of fear, or just casually, might have practiced his or her franchise obligation with no critical thought about the good of the country. The majoritarian Hindutva party, undoubtedly, had fallen into the aforesaid description, by successfully selling out its ideology of 'One nation, one election, one religion.' This is an indication of how the incumbent government is camouflaging the policy paralysis which it is suffering from with grandiose projects. However, since the issues are not relevant for a vast majority of the people in our country, it matters a little to them concerning the policy paralysis or about the unemployment issue or about unconstitutional practices or about the electoral bond scheme scam. The Opposition parties should have consistently and relentlessly conscientised people on all these issues. The message about hypocrisy and autocracy in the ruling party and its government machinery should have come to every household even before the election was announced. Perhaps, the Opposition too is not that clean and virtuous?

With regard to the dominant manifestos which were made public to galvanise votes, the Sankalp Patr of the majoritarian party, the so called "Modi Party" as some have been calling it, which was released just a week prior to the



first phase of the general election, was questioned by enlightened critiques for its tardy announcement. Perhaps it was timed so accurately that at least some voters would consume the 'Disney-land' promises and the Chocolate cookies stated in the document. The highly learned critical academic analysts had pointed out the banality of the paper and its bundle of usual generalities, lacking vision and painting highly religious content to make Indians realise that this government is a government of the Hindu ideology as if no other religions have a place in this land. Several projects had been specified in the manifesto in order to create ultimately a Hindu Rashtra. All other welfare schemes were but magical figures which were not new to the voters because they were of the last two terms of the present dispensation though they carried splendid titles and spectacular images. Perhaps the manifesto was constructed without much thinking, lacking a vision, in the sure hope of winning a land slide victory, knowing well too that the electronic voting machines were in its domain, as the Election Commission of India being its servant, something that the voters were fully knowledgeable about. Some quarters of the media even revealed that the Prime Minister had even ordered the civil servants to prepare a hundred-day road map for his 'would be' government, and another road-map for six months in the sure hope of returning to power. If this is so, it is a blatant impropriety of the boss. It is jumping the zebra line of the model code of conduct prescribed by the Election Commission. But who cares? What do the voters say on this matter?

Though the election manifestos might be wild promises in order to woo the voters, the Nyay Patr might be considered as a worthwhile document offering hope and a sense of freedom from the authoritarian and autocratic rule since ten years with

its acche din never becoming a reality. The manifesto offers a path towards a progressive politics against the backdrop of inequalities. It has an alternative with proposals to eradicate the damage perpetuated by the Hindutva management. There is a philosophy enveloping this document of the secularist party. Equity and justice are two pillars on which the manifesto rests with largesse offered to citizens by way of realistic projects. It aims to safeguard democracy and freedom for all. It does not sound shallow as the Sankalp Patr does. Equity and justice pierce through the document with the aim of toppling the hierarchical mode of governance and to eliminate landlordism of the few who run the show at the centre stage of Indian democracy. A government which has been accusing the opposition on scams now stands condemned by the world for its innumerable scams and scandals in the last ten years of its rule such as the Electoral Bonds to mention just one of them. In sum, Nyay Patr, in the words of Zoya Hasan, is a "manifesto where inclusivity takes centre stage."

The election results that will be made public on June 4 will reveal which among the two manifestos citizens would vote upon, if they had seen on their door steps. Will "Modi fatigue" be realised by the decision of the voters or "Modi desire" is manifested in the results the country is awaiting. God forbid, that whoever stands victor, pain and distress, loss and despair are ever again experienced by the peace loving people of this nation. The new government must begin from an ascending stance with taking citizens with it seriously and believing in their potentialities rather than from a descending posture which has crushed the human spirit in the past ten years and has spread an environment of hate and violence in the society. Our country has witnessed the horror of hate – enough is enough!

*"Wisdom of our ancestors of the 1950's voted for an India that belonged to everyone, where Ram and Rahim were equivalent and where their devotees together toiled to propel their country to dazzling new heights."*  
—SHASHI THAROOR

## Exploring the Persistence of Incompetent Men in Leadership

# Unveiling Gender Inequality and Gender Injustice

**Indeed, a larger than expected number of those in leadership roles are incompetent, be that in business, politics or any other walk of life, even perhaps in religion, and the vast majority of them are men.**

Dr GEORGE JOHN

*"The fundamental cause of the trouble is that in the modern world is the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt."*  
—BERTRAND RUSSELL

**I**f we want to improve the competence of people in leadership positions, we need to first improve our own competence in selecting and judging them. Statistical analysis confirms the lay opinion that there are more male leaders than female, suggesting men are typically more deceived into believing their talents than women. Unsurprisingly, men are also more likely to succeed in their careers. The first rule of fooling other people into thinking you're better than you are is to fool yourself first. Indeed, a larger than expected number of those in leadership roles are incompetent, be that in business, politics or any other walk of life, even perhaps in religion, and the vast majority of them are men. As a rule, people in general seem





## Pretty much everywhere in the world, men tend to think that they are smarter than women.

unable to distinguish between confidence and competence. In any area of talent, there is an overlap between the two. Secondly, most of us love people with charisma, but there is a difference between effective leadership and simply being charming and good-looking. It is also true that even in the digital age, there is a rise in the allure of narcissistic individuals.

In the convoluted realm of leadership, a perplexing phenomenon persists, which is the prevalence of incompetent men in positions of power. This inquiry seeks to unravel the intricate web of gender inequality and gender injustice that underpins this idea of disparity, drawing upon an array of scholarly research from diverse disciplines and cultural contexts. The entrenchment of gender inequality within leadership roles constitutes a multifaceted issue that demands a thorough examination of its underlying causes and its pervasive effects.

Adrian Furnham and colleagues' groundbreaking study sheds light on a cultural dichotomy where male hubris intersects with female humility. Across various societies, ingrained gender norms often bolster men with unwarranted confidence while simultaneously stifling the assertiveness of women. Furnham's exploration of cultural dynamics offers invaluable insights into ways in which societal norms perpetuate the disproportionate representation of men in leadership positions. Their findings underscore a troubling reality: while men are often encouraged to exhibit confidence and

assertiveness, women frequently face societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which may inadvertently impede their advancement into leadership roles.

Furnham and colleagues' findings are further corroborated by research from Ohio State University, which suggests that narcissistic tendencies, commonly observed in men, can facilitate their ascent to leadership positions. Ohio State University's research on narcissism further elucidates the complex interplay between personality traits and leadership's emergence. The findings of their study suggest that individuals with narcissistic tendencies, characterised by an inflated sense of self-importance and lack of empathy, are more likely to assume leadership roles. This phenomenon, often observed in men, highlights the detrimental impact of toxic masculinity on organisational leadership and underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of leadership qualities beyond traditional gender norms.

Pretty much everywhere in the world, men tend to think that they are smarter than women. This has been highlighted in Sophie von Stumm's nuanced analysis which delves into the complexities of self-estimations of intelligence, revealing a tangled interplay between societal constructs and individual perceptions. Women, burdened by societal expectations and gendered stereotypes, frequently underestimate their own intellectual capabilities, thereby exacerbating the leadership gap. This self-estimation of intelligence adds another layer of complexity by highlighting the role of individual perceptions in shaping leadership outcomes. Women, who are socialised to downplay their achievements and intellectual abilities, may be less likely to assert themselves in leadership contexts, again contributing to the perpetuation of gender disparities in leadership roles. This internalised sense of inferiority, rooted in societal expectations, poses a formidable barrier to women's advancement and must be addressed through targeted interventions aimed at promoting self-confidence and self-efficacy.

The pivotal role of emotional intelligence in effective leadership is another key aspect and this has been studied in detail by S Y H Hur and colleagues. Prevailing societal norms often relegate emotional intelligence as a feminine trait, perpetuating the myth of male invincibility, in which Hur and colleagues' work offers a glimmer of hope. They showed that there is a potential pathway for breaking down gender barriers and fostering more inclusive leadership environments. However, there needs to be a paradigm shift in our understanding of the association of femininity with emotional intelligence for changes in entrenched attitudes to occur more widely. There needs to be a wider understanding of the reality that empathy, compassion, and interpersonal skills are human qualities irrespective of gender.

The truth that women are more sensitive, possess a greater degree of qualities of humility, and are more considerate, is perhaps one of the least counterintuitive facts. Paul T Costa Jr and colleagues in a large cross-cultural study across 26 different cultures have demonstrated that fact, while at the same time challenging conventional notions. And contrary to prevailing stereotypes, they showed that women exhibit commendable leadership qualities. This debunks the fallacy that leadership prowess is inherent predominantly to the masculine gender. This cross-cultural perspective, which is now accepted as a fact, serves as a powerful reminder that women possess wide-ranging leadership strengths and capabilities that are essential for organisational success.

Meanwhile, Blaine Gladdis and Jeff Foster's meta-analysis delves into the dark side of leadership, where toxic traits thrive amidst the corri-

dors of power. While malevolent leadership behaviours transcend gender, societal biases often shield incompetent male leaders from scrutiny, perpetuating the cycle of gender injustice. Even when it has been demonstrated that negative behaviours may manifest in individuals of either gender, societal biases and stereotypes, afford greater leniency to men, allowing them to evade accountability for their actions. This perpetuates a culture of impunity that not only undermines organisational integrity but also contributes to the perpetuation of gender disparities by reinforcing the perception that men are natural leaders. It has been conclusively shown, by the world expert on the incompetence of men in leadership, Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, of University College, London, that when compared to women, men are consistently more arrogant, manipulative, and risk-prone.

Furthermore, Alice Eagly and Blair Johnson undertook another meta-analytical study which further underscores the gendered nature of leadership styles. Despite clear evidence that there are diverse approaches to leadership, masculine stereotypes persist, hindering women's ascent to leadership positions.

Masculine leadership stereotypes, continue to dominate our collective imaginations, relegating women to the margins of leadership discourse. This kind of narrow conception of leadership, not only limits women's opportunities for advancement but also stifles organisational innovation and creativity by overlooking the unique perspectives and insights they bring to the table.

In this crucible, the tendrils of gender injustice intricately weave a complex tapestry entwined with cultural norms, societal expectations, and individual perceptions. The lexicon of leadership, historically dominated by masculine rhetoric, necessitates the need for a profound metamorphosis of attitudes to occur, embracing diversity and inclusivity. As we confront the entrenched gender biases that perpetuate the status quo, we must seize the opportunity to cultivate a leadership landscape where competence eclipses gender, heralding a new era of equality and excellence.

Quid pro quo, the onus lies on society to dismantle the patriarchal scaffolding. Carpe diem, the opportunity has to be seized to cultivate a leadership landscape, where a long saga of mostly incompetent men only in leadership, can be challenged, paving the way to a more enlightened and equitable leadership paradigm, forging a future in which meritocracy will reign supreme.

# HOLISTIC EDUCATION

**By offering a spectrum of learning opportunities, educators can engage students more effectively, foster cognitive development, and respect individual differences.**

TONY MARSHALL OFM

In the rapidly evolving landscape of 2024, the education sector is undergoing a transformative shift towards a more holistic approach to learning and development. This paradigm recognises that nurturing the whole student—intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and morally—is paramount for their success in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. There are three key strategies to foster holistic development amidst the challenges and opportunities of the 2024 education scenario.

## Embracing Diverse Learning Modalities

Educators must acknowledge and cater to the diverse learning preferences and styles of their students. This means integrating a range of technology-enabled platforms, gamified tools, multimedia resources, and interactive experiences into the curriculum. By offering a spectrum of learning opportunities, educators can engage students more effectively, foster cognitive development, and respect individual differences.

The importance of accommodating diverse learning modalities cannot be overstated. Research shows that catering to different

learning styles, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing, can lead to improved learning outcomes, higher test scores, and better retention rates. Moreover, it addresses the unique needs of students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia or ADHD, ensuring that no one is left behind.

As technology continues to advance, the opportunities for personalised learning experiences based on individual preferences and needs are expanding. Adaptive learning platforms, for instance, can dynamically adjust content and delivery based on a student's progress and learning style, providing a tailored educational journey.

Cultivating social and emotional intelligence in addition to academic prowess, nurturing social and emotional intelligence is crucial for holistic development. By incorporating socio-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks into curricula, educators can equip students with essential skills such as empathy, resilience, and conflict resolution.

Collaborative projects, peer mentoring programmes, and mindfulness practices create conducive environments for emotional growth, enabling students to navigate interpersonal relationships adeptly. Strategies for cultivating social and emotional intelligence include teaching self-awareness, promoting empathy, providing social skills training, creating supportive classroom environments, and teaching emotional regulation strategies.

Educators play a vital role in modelling positive behaviour, demonstrating emotional intelligence, and facilitating open communication and respect for diverse perspectives. Incorporating structured SEL programmes, such as the CASEL framework, provides a comprehensive approach to developing self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Encouraging self-reflection, goal-setting, and fostering positive relationships within the school community further reinforce social and emotional learning. Providing supportive resources, such as counselling or peer mediation, ensures that students who need additional assistance have access to the necessary support.

## Fostering Critical Thinking and Creativity

In the dynamic and uncertain landscape of 2024, fostering critical thinking and creativity is indispensable. Educational approaches should prioritise inquiry-based learning, problem-solving tasks, and project-based assessments that encourage curiosity, experimentation, and divergent thinking.

Strategies for promoting critical thinking and creativity include promoting inquiry-based learning, encouraging problem-solving activities, facilitating Socratic discussions, using divergent thinking techniques, providing open-ended assignments, integrating arts and creativity, encouraging reflection and metacognition, and offering opportunities for collaboration and autonomy.

## Nurturing Student Well-Being

Underpinning holistic development is the commitment to nurturing student well-being, which encompasses mental, emotional, and physical health. In the face of increasing mental health challenges, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, changing social dynamics, and academic pressures, prioritizing student well-being has become more vital than ever.

Creating a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel valued, respected, and accepted is fundamental. Promoting self-care practices, such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, exercise, and healthy lifestyle habits, equips students with essential coping mechanisms.

Providing access to mental health resources, including counsellors, psychologists, and support groups, reduces stigma and encourages help-seeking behaviour. Teaching coping skills, emotional regulation strategies, and problem-solving techniques empowers students to manage stress, adversity, and setbacks effectively.

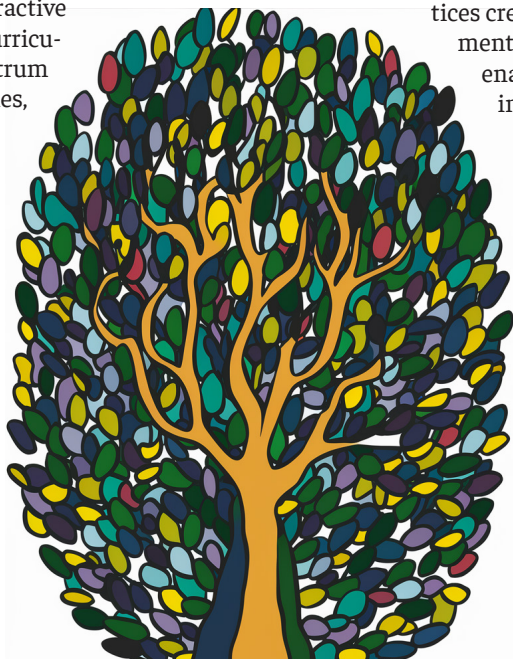
Fostering social connections, emphasizing work-life balance, addressing bullying and peer pressure, and cultivating a growth mindset further contribute to student well-being. Engaging parents and guardians as partners in this endeavour and leading by example as educators reinforce the importance of prioritizing mental, emotional, and physical health.

## Conclusion

Holistic development and nurturing student well-being are inextricably linked aspects of education, representing a comprehensive approach to supporting students' growth and success. By embracing diverse learning modalities, cultivating social and emotional intelligence, fostering critical thinking and creativity, and prioritizing student well-being, educators can create an environment that empowers students to thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

This holistic approach not only equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary for academic success but also nurtures the resilience, empathy, emotional intelligence, and creativity essential for navigating the complexities of life. It recognises the interconnectedness of intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and moral development, ensuring that students are supported in all aspects of their growth.

Ultimately, the goal of education is to support students' holistic development and well-being, empowering them to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and contributors to society.





# Beyond the Rat Race

**Students must be encouraged to build something of their own.... Building a startup molds your thinking capacity and builds resilience.**

APOORV TAMRKAR

The definition of success is highly subjective and cannot be questioned. What matters to one might be pointless to others. However, this subjectivity should not be an excuse to stop thinking big. We all are the outcome of the same education system, and somewhere, our approach toward life became narrower with time. Getting a job sounds like the end of the rat race every student is forced to participate. This approach slowly kills the creativity, innovation, and hunger to achieve big goals in life. When we look into the world, there are endless possibilities, but we shape our mindset in a way that getting a job is the only path to success, which is the biggest hindrance to the growth of students.

What can be the most practical solution for this? Our education system is the solution to this problem. Changing our approach towards education, instead of teaching them for exams, we must teach every subject to quench their thirst for

knowledge and inculcate curiosity. Just like computer applications and any other subject, students should be exposed to entrepreneurship. Not to make every other student a founder but to develop their belief system and prepare them to figure out their journey. Entrepreneurship teaches you how to identify a problem and look for solutions in merely available resources, contrary to our existing system, which teaches you to mug up solutions.

Mark Zuckerberg, Alan, Bill Gates, and Marla Kline have one thing in common. No, not all of them are successful startup founders; even two of them are failed founders (Alan and Marla Kline), but what is common among them is that they started their startup journey in college. Chances of success for a successful and failed startup are equal before starting. Even 99 of 100 startups fail in the next two years of execution. But this doesn't mean that one should not even try. Students must be encouraged to build something of

their own, not to be millionaires or raise funds, but to solve genuine problems. Building a startup molds your thinking capacity and builds resilience.

What makes anyone an entrepreneur? Do we need a certification or degree or need to own a fancy office in Silicon Valley? You need an Idea that checks the four following points, and if you believe in your idea and execute it, you are an entrepreneur. The four parameters are: (A) Are you solving a genuine problem affecting a specific population? (B) You have a solution for that burning problem, and it is better than any other existing solution to save time and money or

make it easier. (C) Your solution is affordable for the population who is facing the problem. Your solution has to be viable for the users. (D) The solution is scalable without a parallel increase in the consumption of resources. Any idea that checks the above four points is worth executing.

The process of finding a business idea can be simplified by asking yourself: What do I know well? What do I enjoy doing? What do people need? Any idea that satisfies these three criteria could be your starting point. You don't need a fancy office, a large capital, or a big team to begin. Many successful ventures start with a single individual proving the concept, and then the right people join, forming what's known as a solopreneur. Your journey could start as simply as launching a YouTube channel, but your vision must align with the four points we discussed earlier.

Role of Schools and Colleges? In 2008, when two students at IIT Delhi started a startup, their college mailed them saying that working on a startup is not allowed for students. Today, India's highest number of unicorns are owned by students of IIT Delhi. We have seen a remarkable change in the promotion of entrepreneurship in colleges through E-cells and E-summits.

However, it is better to inculcate it into our education curriculum than a choice-based extracurricular activity. Colleges can build their network of incorporates, allowing students to seek guidance from experts in the subject matter. This will be a great add-on; students can learn in classrooms and understand the practical side from industry experts. These small steps, like including entrepreneurship in the curriculum and taking it seriously, will help students broaden their horizons.



HAVE A  
**HUNCH**



# India's Education System Needs School Psychology

VIGNESH BHAT

Like most other adults, I recall positive, warm events when I reflect on my school life. I am sure that the memories of friendships, favorite classes, academic progression, teachers' scoldings, and the daily school routine all contribute to enveloping us in the warm embrace of reminisce and nostalgia. Psychology, however, has proven that human memory is often flawed—particularly when it comes to the recall of events. How are we sure we are not prey to the “rosy retrospection effect”?



That the recollection of these events that leave us in a happy mood in the present are grossly biased and that, in reality, were events that our younger selves were not fond of? The difficulty with adjusting, building, and understanding friendships during our formative years, the boredom in everyday classes, the pressure that was felt because of the hyperfocus on grades and competition, the practice of teachers picking on one's wrong answers resulting in shame, and the exhaustive daily school routine that dictated most of our time confined to classrooms.

Due to the rosy retrospection effect, we often overlook the need for substantial improvements in our education system. For instance, we might remember our school days as a time of carefree learning, but in reality, we were often stressed about exams and grades. We convince ourselves that the system's flaws are insignificant because, in the grand scheme, we “made it out just fine.” We conveniently forget the daily struggles we faced as children and adolescents, our memories clouded by the drug-like effects of nostalgia. This perpetuates a cycle of the same mistakes, generation after generation. This is where the crucial role of school psychology becomes apparent. It steps in, ready to address the pleas of thousands of lakhs of students, pleas that we adults all too often dismiss.

When I say thousands of lakhs, I am not exaggerating. Our country boasts of having one of the largest education systems in the world, with over two hundred and sixty million students! This staggering number is a nightmare for Indian

parents. They don't want their children to be ‘just another child’; they want them to excel academically and be unique—paradoxical to the collectivistic cultural raising mannerisms they exhibit in other contexts. The intense competition that children face from a young age reinforces this mentality. To study, to do, to achieve. It's no wonder that students in our country and in collectivistic cultures generally face significantly higher academic and parental pressure.

It goes without saying that schools are mainly associated with solely learning in our country. Ironically, however, the teaching and classroom practices are outdated. Due to the lack of an extensive network of school psychologists in our country, the school environment and the education system fail to cater to the individual differences in learning in students and in the implementation of better, standardised approaches to assessments of learning and interventions for support. Other countries like Germany are moving ahead with fields such as learning sciences that aim to maximise cognitive capabilities, knowledge, and interventions for students. Yet here we are trying to enforce the same age-old practices onto all the children while expecting them to shine. A thoroughly established field of school psychology would help with broad curriculum development and more effective day-to-day classroom techniques. It would help cater to everyone's needs while reducing the pressure and need for competition, thus shifting the focus from academic achievement to overall well-being and development of students, a need that is often overlooked.

Due to the lack of an extensive network of school psychologists in our country, there is not enough emphasis on everything else a school is for a student. An institution that bestows children the opportunities to figure themselves out, form an identity and social relationships, and develop self-esteem and efficacy. A school is the stage on which the theatrics of formative events play out. School psychology acknowledges this essence. It understands the juggling that students must endure with academics and their social life,

often riddled by the behavioural outcomes brought about by hormonal changes that their young minds cannot comprehend yet. It is a necessary conduit between parents and students that encourages open communication and fosters the expression of much-needed warmth, affection, and understanding. Moreover, it shifts the paradigm of schools focusing on just academics. It helps establish a positive school environment that allows children to nurture their talents, build and sustain relationships, develop self-esteem and mental health, understand the importance of maintaining a critical, open mind, and, most importantly, learn to equip themselves with self-compassion in these confusing times. Contrary to popular belief, failure in these seemingly insignificant concepts in a school can cause adverse butterfly effects later in life. This period in a child's life is termed formative for a reason.

This could be why, while I was rewatching the marvelous movie *Taare Zameen Par* with my family, the takeaway for them at the end was, “See? When he pushed himself enough, he could achieve everything he could not.” I was honestly at a loss for words. The deep-rooted system has taken us to such an extent that even a visual presentation of how inclusive education, scientific interventions, emotional support, affection, praise, and mental health can positively influence a child is misunderstood completely. It is high time for school psychology to take the reins and guide India to a new, better education system that aims for holistic development.

“But how can we give individual attention to millions of children? Is that not unrealistic?” It is challenging to get there, but it is certainly not unrealistic. Increasing the network of school psychologists, collaborating with bodies that are already committed to the cause, and allowing all psychologists to ride on their vocational calling in their free time—there is always a way. We owe it to the young hearts to not limit ourselves to Ishaan's single fictional success story. The word *taare* is plural and signifies millions, after all.





IN PICTURES

# Wild Wanderings Through Thekkady

SAJI P MATHEW OFM

**M**y visit to Thekkady, nestled in the lap of the Western Ghats in Kerala, India, overlapping with Periyar Tiger Reserve, also called the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, felt like walking right into the thick pristine forest. Renowned for its wildlife reserves, lush forests, and picturesque landscapes, Thekkady offers a unique opportunity for travelers to immerse themselves in the wonders of nature.

Thekkady is one of the most renowned wildlife reserves in India. Spanning over 900 square kilometers, this sanctuary is centered around the picturesque Periyar Lake and Mullaperiyar Dam waters. The sanctuary boasts a rich variety of wildlife, from the elusive tiger to the lazily hanging Malabar giant squirrel. Elephants, gaurs (Indian bison), and sambar deer are common sights.

With over 265 species of birds recorded within its boundaries, it is also a haven for birdwatchers. It was a pleasure to see the Great Hornbill in all its magnificence right in the wild. Other often-sighted birds are the great cormorant, oriental darter, Malabar parakeet, and a variety of kingfishers and woodpeckers.





# Navigating Change: Supporting Students Through School Transition Periods

**Fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment can help students navigate these critical periods with confidence and resilience.**

KANCHI JAIN

**T**ransition periods in school, such as moving from elementary to middle school, middle to high school, or transferring to a new school altogether, are critical junctures in a student's academic and personal development. These transitions often come with a mix of excitement and anxiety, as students adapt to new environments, expectations, and social dynamics. School psychologists play a crucial role in facilitating these transitions, ensuring that students are supported emotionally, socially, and academically. This article explores the strategies and interventions that school psychologists employ to help students navigate these pivotal moments successfully.



## Understanding the Challenges of School Transitions

Transitions can be particularly challenging for students due to several factors such as each educational level comes with increased academic expectations. Students must adapt to different teaching styles, more complex subjects, and a greater workload, forming new friendships and integrating into existing social groups can be daunting. The fear of isolation or bullying can add to the stress.

Moving to a new school or advancing to a higher grade often brings about emotional upheaval. Students may experience anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and a sense of being overwhelmed and adolescence is a period of significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes. These developmental shifts can compound the stress of transitioning to a new school environment.

## The Role of School Psychologists

School psychologists are instrumental in easing these transitions through a variety of targeted interventions like effective orientation programmes which will help familiarise students with their new environment before the school year begins. These programmes might include tours, meet-and-greet sessions with teachers and peers, and informational workshops about school routines and expectations, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes teach essential skills such as resilience, emotional regulation, and effective communication. By integrating SEL into the curriculum, school psychologists help students develop the tools they need to manage stress and build positive relationships. Personalised counseling sessions can also provide a safe space for students to express their fears and anxieties. School psychologists can offer tailored strategies to help students cope with specific challenges they face during transitions. Pairing new students with older peer mentors can facilitate smoother transitions. Mentors provide guidance, support, and a sense of belonging, helping new students navigate the social and academic landscape.

Engaging parents in the transition process is crucial. School psychologists can organise workshops and provide resources to help parents support their children during these periods of change.

## Strategies for Successful Transitions

Preparing students for transitions well in advance can alleviate much of the associated anxiety. Providing detailed information about what to expect and offering opportunities to visit the new school can help demystify the process.

Ensuring that the school environment is welcoming and inclusive can make a significant difference. Initiatives such as welcome assemblies, buddy systems, and inclusive classroom practices foster a sense of belonging from day one.

Transition support should not end after the first few weeks of school. Ongoing check-ins and support groups can help students adjust over time and address any emerging issues. Teaching students resilience-building strategies, such as goal setting, positive thinking, and problem-solving, equips them to handle future transitions and challenges with confidence. Regular monitoring of students' progress and well-being during transitions allows school psychologists to identify and address any issues promptly. Feedback from students, parents, and teachers can help refine and improve transition support programmes.

## Case Study: Successful Transition Programmes

A middle school in New York implemented a comprehensive transition program that included summer orientation camps, peer mentoring, and SEL workshops. As a result, the school saw a significant decrease in absenteeism and behavioral issues among new students. Surveys indicated that students felt more prepared and less anxious about the transition, and parents reported higher levels of satisfaction with the support provided.

Transition periods are inevitable parts of the educational journey, but with the right support, they can be opportunities for growth and development. School psychologists play a vital role in guiding students through these changes, using a blend of proactive strategies and personalised interventions to ensure smooth and successful transitions. By fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment, we can help students navigate these critical periods with confidence and resilience, setting the stage for academic and personal success.



# In Praise of the National Education Policy 2020

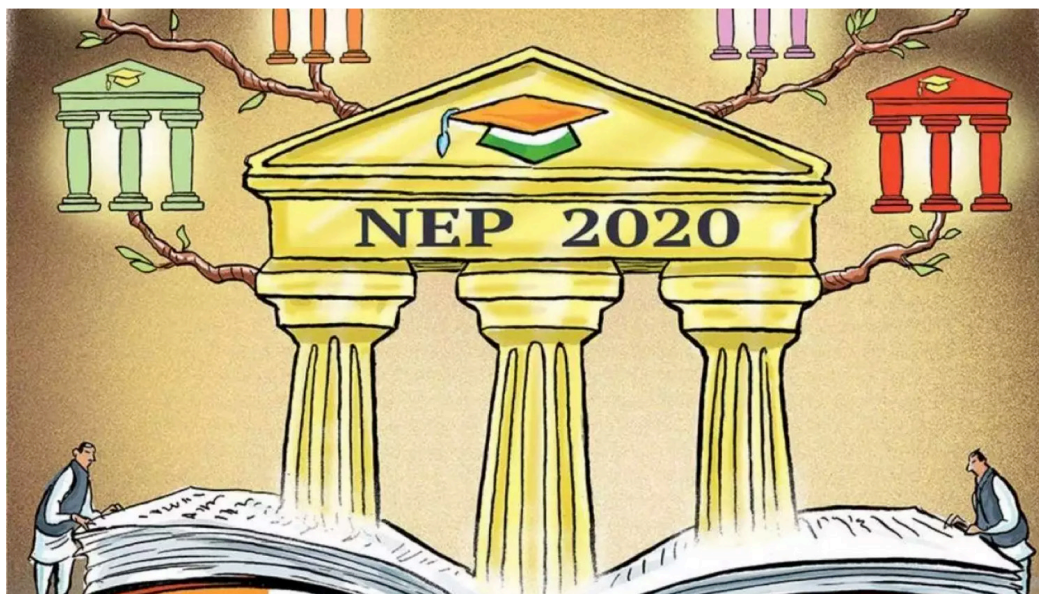
**The NEP blurs the lines of formal distinctions between what was previously recognised as arts, science, and commerce.**

AAKANSHA MUNSHI

**T**he Indian Education System has been facing backlash due to its inadequacies for the longest time now. With the heavy emphasis on rote learning and an outdated syllabus, students have collectively raised concerns that their schools have failed to impart adequate skills and practical knowledge that they should've been equipped with. It has been well established that formal education has not been able to keep up with industry demands either and that it fails to cater to individualistic talents and learning styles of students.

But, this wasn't always the case.

Tracing the roots of education in our country, we'd have to go back to the ancient times when learning was conducted orally by scholars, and knowledge was passed down from each generation. Much later, the Gurukul system of education was developed and students were taught under the supervision of a guru. This was a time when education was imparted in a more comprehensive manner by including a wide range of subjects with theoretical, as well as practical knowledge.



However, the largest and most unfortunate drawback of these times was the exclusion of women and the members of the lower castes in the educational spheres. With the arrival of the Muslim rulers, the education system changed drastically to promote religious and Islamic education. As the British arrived, Christianity took prominence. English became the medium of instruction, and the syllabus became limited to western science and literature. Even after independence, although inclusivity increased, our modern education system remained quite stagnant and retained its foundations from the British era.

As a long awaited response to this, The New Education Policy, approved by the Union Cabinet and adopted by the Modi government, has been introduced to restructure the Indian education system. It promises to reduce the gaps in the current system and deliver a mode of learning which can be beneficial to all citizens in the country. One of the primary goals of the New Education Policy is to promote Indian languages and cultures by liberating educational institutions from western modes of teaching and curriculum. It goes against the educational system which was developed during the colonial era, and aims to decolonise the minds of Indians.

The most significant change suggested by the NEP is the replacement of the 10+2 structure to 5+3+3+4 which consists of the Foundational Stage, the Preparatory stage, the Middle Stage, and the Secondary Stage. These divisions are based on the stages of cognitive development that children go through during their school years.

The Foundational Stage concentrates on language development and activity-based methods of teaching. The Preparatory stage continues with the methods used in the previous stage and introduces light textbooks as well as interactive classroom learning. The Middle

Stage builds on the previous stages to include more specialised subjects and abstract concepts in the domains of science, mathematics, social science, arts, and humanities. Experiential learning and establishing relations between these subjects becomes the goal of this stage. The Secondary Stage incorporates greater depth, critical thinking, attention to life aspirations, flexibility and student choice in the subjects. Furthermore, the NEP blurs the lines of formal distinctions between what was previously recognised as arts, science, and commerce. Students will be allowed the choice between a wide range of subject combinations rather than having to confine within a rigid stream.

Another crucial factor that the NEP keeps in mind is the importance of multilingualism. It states that the medium of instruction till grade V should be in the local language, and for the inclusion of the language to be continued wherever possible in the higher grades. Textbooks for various subjects will also be made available in the local languages and teachers are encouraged to have a bilingual approach in their classes. This would also give each state the freedom to choose its preferred language of instruction.

At a collegiate level, the undergraduate degrees would last three to four years and have multiple exit options during the time. One year of completion would allow the student to receive a certificate in the particular course, two years make way for a diploma, three years would finish a Bachelor's degree, and the fourth year would award the student with an honours degree. Along with that, an Academic Bank of Credit is being introduced which will store earned credits digitally for easy transferability, making the degree even more flexible.

These are merely a few of the changes that the NEP plans to implement, but inclusivity and flexibility can be clearly noticed as the fundamental goals of this policy where students get the option to choose in every step of their education. This is quite empowering as it entrusts the student to be capable of making decisions about their educational outcomes, and they become an active participant in their learning process instead of remaining a passive recipient of instruction. Even though we are only at the beginning stages, the NEP has begun to be accepted by multiple states across the country, and if executed properly, it might be able to achieve what can truly be recognised as the Right to Education.

# Impact of NGO Internships

**Students tend to understand the joy of giving more deeply. They learn to gain happiness by spreading happiness. Their experiences shape them to a whole different person.**

Dr ALICE MANI

In today's fast paced world, numerous types of organisations are at the fulcrum of the functioning of society. Among these organisations, the chain of control seems to be dominated by intergovernmental and governmental organisations functioning in their respective jurisdictions. We tend to believe that the maximum impact is created by organisations governed by these bodies. However, oftentimes we denigrate the impact that the non-governmental organisations have on society.



NGOs make a significant impact in multifarious ways. In the context of providing opportunities to students during internships, it has numerous benefits for both, students and the society at large. It instills in students, the sense of giving. Students willingly serve the community without any personal gain which helps build a different perspective on life. This also helps the community in multiple ways, leading to extensive development in domains that they choose to work in.

Students become more mindful of the small things in life. Often, NGOs work towards the upliftment of the underprivileged sections of society. When students involve themselves with such NGOs, and interact with disadvantaged people, they tend to appreciate life more. Acknowledging privilege whilst working towards helping others is beneficial for the entire community that we live in. It helps maintain an equilibrium in the social structure that we have created for ourselves.

Additionally, NGOs also help in creating a positive impact on someone's life. They do not work in conjunction with any governmental organisations and hence, there is significantly lesser bureaucracy. Due to less redtapism and a strong motive to enhance the society, everyone has the opportunity to grow exponentially. Students from privileged backgrounds learn to value their life more. This also contributes to their personal growth. Furthermore, when they see others struggle, they learn important life lessons and are better able to comprehend the plight of the poor. It ingrains in them compassion and increases their emotional quotient.

Several key NGOs are involved in spreading awareness to prevent diseases, sourcing expensive medications and giving them at discounted rates to those in need, and proselytising people to stay healthy.

During NGO internships, students develop personally and professionally. Though they do not always get paid, they understand the value of money. Though they are not exposed to a corporate workspace, they refine their communication and organisation skills. Putting in a significant amount of effort to understand an existing issue in society, learning how to work collaboratively in a team and working towards solving that problem helps students rekindle quintessential transferable skills that are highly valued in the corporate world. Empathising with people from different walks of life teaches them humility, which in turn, helps them become better versions of themselves. The small acts of kindness enable them to make a great difference in society.

Students working in NGOs also have the opportunity to scale the projects that they partake in, or even start a NGO of their own. When students engage in finding sustainable solutions in various sectors such as finance, healthcare and education, they gain a considerable amount of real-life exposure. This enables them to enrich and empower everyone around them, thereby helping everyone increase their quality of life.

In our country, a lot of NGO internships are also focussed on the education sector. These sorts of NGOs ensure quality education through their work of advocacy, developing

new frameworks to tap the potential of the youth, and imparting basic literacy skills to underprivileged students. In the process of imparting knowledge, students who choose to volunteer also hone their academic and interpersonal skills whilst ensuring that they make a positive impact on those who cannot access or afford the education that they deserve.

Health related NGOs are another important division that help our society to thrive. Several key NGOs are involved in spreading awareness to prevent diseases, sourcing expensive medications and giving them at discounted rates to those in need, and proselytising people to stay healthy. Again, students involved in such activities not only gain work experience in organising such projects, but also experience joy in making a difference in the world they live in.

Similarly, in each sector that a student works, they make some impact that allows them to view life differently. Common traits of the ethics of caring, of purpose and of responsibility are inherently present in most NGOs. This implies that along with professional growth, students who work with NGOs develop emotionally and psychologically too. Not all changes or results are always tangible. Students tend to understand the joy of giving more deeply. They learn to gain happiness by spreading happiness. Their experiences shape them to a whole different person.

I would like to share my personal experience here. For several years, I witnessed the plight of blind children and always wished to do something to mitigate their difficulties. Fifteen years back, when I was allotted invigilation duty for specially abled students in my University, it deeply ached me to see them suffer. I felt an immediate urge to do something for deprived sections of society. Today, I actively associate myself with various NGOs and encourage others too, for each individual action in the right direction can surely make a big difference.



NGOs strive towards noble causes, but they have some downsides too. Politicisation of issues is rampant, and several NGOs are driven by political agendas. For instance, some NGOs are set up with the motive of creating a large database and use that data without consent by selling it, leading to a breach of privacy of its members. Furthermore, certain NGOs are highly commercialised. They linkup various educational institutions with healthcare services for a fixed commission to profit out of the deal. Such issues are not uncommon. However, they come into the limelight only after thorough scrutiny. On critically examining the proposed documents of an NGO, it might be possible to identify some degree of fraudulent activity. This does not imply that no NGO is trustworthy. Our responsibility as a citizen is to be mindful of the events around us. We must ensure that we do not blindly sign agreements and fall prey to any kind of chicanery. Educational institutions must thoroughly research about the functioning of the NGO before partnering with it. Volunteers with a sound moral compass can help by not joining such NGOs.

Like any other institution, NGOs also have shortcomings. However, the constitution of an NGO and its actions reflect its intentions. While certain NGOs are misleading people and harming the society, most of them connote the idea of societal well-being. They benefit society in numerous ways and also mould students who work with these NGOs. Though one might argue that NGO internships look good on a student's resume, the impact that a student makes on someone's life is far more than what can be recorded on paper. For a country's infrastructure to develop using the available resources, all kinds of organisations must work in coordination and leverage their strengths to meet the needs of all the citizens. Our goal is to take necessary precautions to minimise losses and increase the overall utility of NGOs. Given this conclusion, we must acknowledge the kind of impact that NGOs have on society and the contribution that students are capable of making. The need of the hour is for each one of us to be empathetic towards the underprivileged and bring smiles to their faces without expecting anything in return.



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Sadly, many are pushed to the margins, sidelined, and excluded from decision-making, in policy matters, pushed out of social positions, positions in religious hierarchy, etc. because of their position in a particular section or intersection of society.

The *Together* magazine ([www.togethermagazine.in](http://www.togethermagazine.in)) is conducting an end-of-the-year audit to access the state of inclusivity in India. Please be part of the India Inclusion Audit 2023 by answering seven straightforward questions.

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You can also go to Google Forms directly <https://cutt.ly/inclusion-audit-2023>

# Witness Supreme!

JOY PRAKASH OFM

In 2010, a French film, *Of Gods and Men*, directed by Xavier Beauvois, won the Grand Prix at the Cannes film festival. More than a third of a million tickets were sold during the first five days of the release in France. The film was shown at Oxford and the students and academics filled the seats. At the end of the film there was total silence, as if it was impossible to break the spell of its story. I have seen the film at least five to six times. Why did this story of a few monks leave so many people utterly spellbound?

## Community of Monks

The film centred around a true story of a small community of Cistercian monks living in Algeria. They were deeply involved in the lives of the local Muslim villagers whom they loved and by whom they were loved, too. The Community, headed by Brother Christian de Chergé, 59, as Prior, comprised the 83 year-old Brother Luc Dochier whose medical ministrations brought the healing touch needed; Brother Celestin Ringear (57) who freely ministered to people in the streets, especially the alcoholics, prostitutes, and gays; the cook, Brother Michael (who had the good sense of leaving his cowl behind when the abductors took the brothers captive); Brother Paul Favre-Miville (who set up the irrigation system that served the monks and the neighbours in the cooperative gardens); Brother Christopher Lebreton, 45, a poet; and Brother Bruno, a former community member, now visiting the monks (when the day the abductors came).



All the brothers were drawn together by a common vision, a transcendent vision centred on the particular presence of Christ among a people that did not yet understand who this incarnate God of love is.

The monastery was in existence for 70 years and, with no possibility of vocations, the monks hailed from France. With the sudden cancellations of the 1991 Elections by the Government, the fundamentalist Islamic Party, an armed Islamic group, wanted all foreigners to leave the country.

In June 1994, the danger having increased, the apostolic nuncio invited the monks to come and live at the nunciature. The brothers did not judge the time as having come as yet to abandon their monastery. Prior Christian wrote to the abbot general: “The communities of men seem to be standing by their option to remain. This is clear so far as the Jesuits, the Little Brothers of Jesus, all the White Fathers. This option has its risks, which is obvious. Each one has told me that he wants to take them, (people of Islam) on a journey of faith into the future and in sharing the present with neighbours who have always been very close friends of us. The grace of this gift is given to us from day to day, very simply.”

## Testament of Brother Christian and His Extraordinary Letter

Sensing danger, Brother Christian wrote his “Testament”. This Testament, which was to be opened only after his death, and which he entrusted to his nephew, would in time be cherished as one of the great spiritual classics of the 20th century, though that was not the intention of the humble, monk whose very life sparkles with the reality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through “The Testament” as we shall see on the right!

*“When an A-Dieu is envisaged...If it should happen one day – and it could be today – that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems to encompass all foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my church, my family....*

*\*to remember that my life was given to God and to this country.*

*\*to accept that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure,*

*\*to pray for me – for how should I be found worthy of such an offering?*

*\*to be able to associate this death with so many other equally violent ones that have been allowed to fall into the indifference of anonymity.*

*My life has no more value than any other; nor any less value. In any case, it has not the innocence of childhood. I have lived long enough to know that I am an accomplice in the evil which seems, alas, to prevail in the world, and even in that evil which would strike me blindly.*

*I should like, when the time comes, to have enough lucidity to beg forgiveness of God and of my brothers and sisters in the human family, and at the same time to forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down. I could not desire such a death. It seems important to state this. I don't see, in fact, how I could rejoice if the people I love were indiscriminately accused of my murder.*

*It would be too high a price to pay for what will be called, perhaps, the “grace of martyrdom” to owe this to an Algerian, whoever he may be, especially if he says he is acting in fidelity to what he believes to be Islam. I know the contempt in which the Algerians as a whole can be held. I know, too, the caricatures of Islam which encourage a certain Islamism.*

*It is too easy to give oneself a good conscience in identifying this religious way with the fundamentalist ideology of its extremists. For me, Algeria and Islam are something different: they are body and soul.*

*I have proclaimed it long enough, I think, seeing and knowing what I have received from them, finding here so often that direct line bringing the gospel that I learned at my mother's knee, my very first church, finding it precisely in Algeria, and already in the reverence of believing Muslims.*

*My death, obviously, will appear to justify those who hastily judge me naïve or idealistic: ‘Let him tell us now what he thinks of them!’*

*This is what I shall be able to do, if God wills: to immerse my gaze in that of the Father to contemplate with him his children of Islam as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, fruit of his Passion, filled with the gift of the Spirit, whose secret joy will be to establish communion and to refashion the likeness in playing with the differences.*

*In this thank-you where, once and for all, all is said about my life, I certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today, and you, O my friends of this place, at the side of my mother and my father, of my sisters and brothers and their families – the hundredfold given as he had promised! And you, too, my last-minute friend, who would not have known what you were doing: yes, for you too I say this thank-you and this adieu – to commend you to the God in whose face I see yours.*

*And may He grant to us to find each other, happy thieves, in Paradise, if it please God, the Father of us both. Amen! Inshallah! —BROTHER CHRISTIAN*

On the night of 26 March 1996, Mohammed the watchman at the gate of the Monastery was roused from his sleep. The “Brothers of the mountain” as the monks called the armed group of Islamists, crashed into the monastery and demanded that Brother Luc, the doctor, take care of their wounded men. Brother Christian refused to allow it in view of Brother's age and serious asthmatic condition. With this the armed band rounded up all the monks they could find and were carried off into the night. The seven monks spent 56 days as hostages under the Emir. On 23 May, 1996, their headless bodies were found strewn on the desert sands of Algeria.



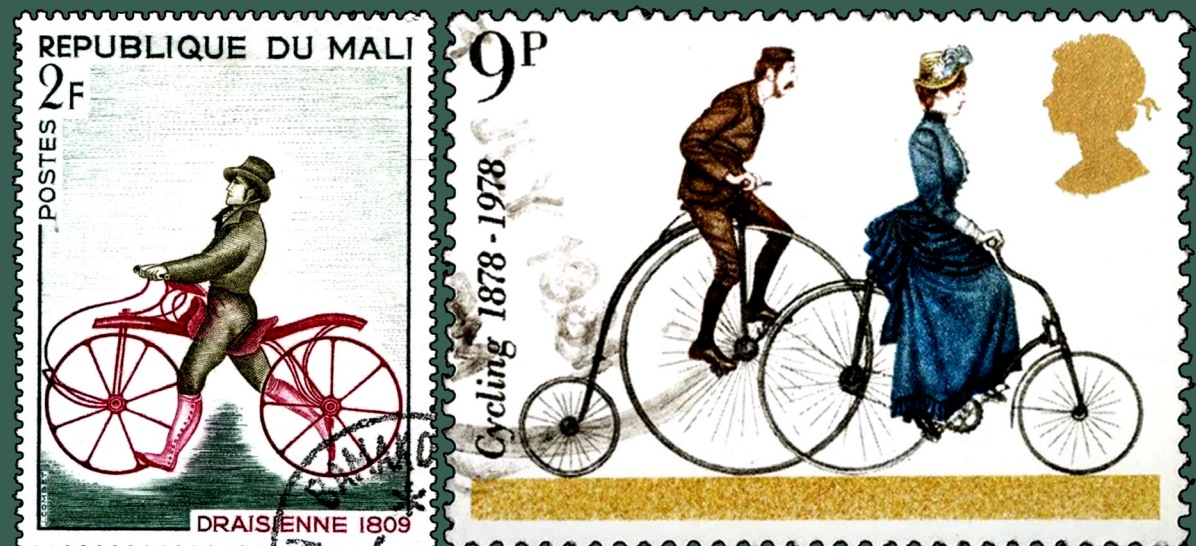
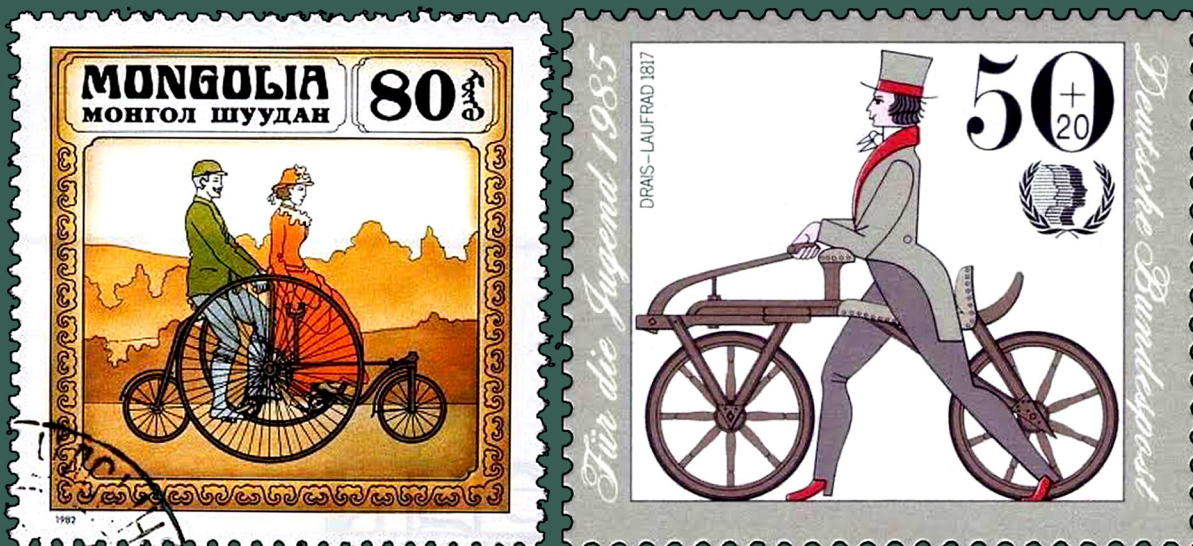
3 June

# World Bicycle Day

TOM JOHN

Designated by the United Nations, the World Bicycle Day is observed to highlight the tremendous health benefits that cycling extends to people of all age groups. This year, the day is celebrated with the theme, “promoting health, equity, and sustainability through cycling”.

The bicycle has been in use for two centuries, and it is a simple, affordable, reliable, clean and environmentally fit sustainable means of transportation, fostering environmental stewardship and health. It encouraged stakeholders to emphasize and advance the use of the bicycle as a means of fostering sustainable development, strengthening education, including physical education, for children and young people, promoting health, preventing disease, promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and respect and facilitating social inclusion and a culture of peace.





# No Destination Travel 2.0

AMRUTHA MENON completed a 15-day, 7,763-kilometre no destination road travel last month; starting from Bangalore, covering parts of Western and Central India, and escaping to Nepal and back to Bangalore again. Here is part two of her travel.



Imagine wandering down narrow lanes with colourful Chikankari clothes hanging everywhere, like a giant sidewalk. That's Lucknow, vibrant and unique. Lucknow's Rumi Darwaza, a giant, beautiful gate that screams "Hey, you've arrived in Lucknow!" It's like the official entrance to the old city that you can't miss. There's this clock tower that looks like it stepped out of a fairy-tale, all tall and grand, keeping perfect time. Right next to it, there's a step well with stairs leading down, like a secret entrance to another world. It's a neat mix of old and new. Lucknow's food culture is all about rich flavors and melt-in-your-mouth textures. Imagine aromatic biryanis with saffron rice and tender meat, or kebabs so flavorful they practically sing on your tongue. And don't forget the sweets! From syrupy jalebis to flaky sheermal bread, Lucknow's got something to satisfy every craving.

## Agra: A City Crowned by Love

Agra's like a treasure chest overflowing with history. It's got forts, palaces, and bazaars galore, but the undisputed champ is definitely the Taj Mahal. This white marble masterpiece is a total showstopper, a love letter built to last forever. Ever since I was a kid, the Taj Mahal was basically on my bucket list before there even were bucket lists. So, you can imagine my excitement after 29 years of dreaming to finally

be standing there! Picture this: everything is symmetrical, with four tall towers flanking a massive dome that seems to touch the sky. Boom, instant jaw-dropping moment. But that's not all! The white marble is like a blank canvas, and the artists went wild with tiny precious stones that sparkled like crazy. Flowers, fancy writing, the whole works. And then there's this giant pool reflecting the entire thing—it's like a magic trick for your eyes. Agra isn't just about the Taj Mahal's breathtaking white marble. Imagine yourself strolling through the Diwan Hall of Public Audience, where emperors once held court, or marveling at the intricate designs of the Jahangiri Mahal palace. After a day exploring Agra's historical wonders, your stomach will no doubt be rumbling. You gotta try the tandoori chicken—it's marinated in yummy yogurt and spices, then cooked in a clay oven until it's crazy juicy and tender. Or, if you're feeling creamy, the butter chicken is a dream. It's this tomato-based sauce that's smooth as anything, and the chicken just falls apart in your mouth. Seriously, prepare for a food coma! No visit to Agra is complete without sampling its vibrant street food scene. Head to the bustling Sadar Bazaar and lose yourself in a kaleidoscope of colours and aromas. Grab a piping hot samosa, a fried pastry stuffed with spiced potatoes and peas, or indulge in a plate of chaat, a savory and tangy snack with endless variations. Don't miss the local specialty, Petha, a translucent candy made from candied ash gourd, a sweet and refreshing treat to end your culinary adventure.

## A Whirlwind of Pink and History

You roll into Jaipur and it's like stepping right into a real-life Instagram post! The whole city's painted this amazing pink colour, and the first thing that catches your eye is this massive palace called Hawa Mahal. It's got hundreds of tiny windows all over the front, kind of like a beehive. Apparently, the cool breezes can whoosh through and keep things fresh inside. Jaipur isn't just about grand palaces and historical sites.

The city's heart beats in its vibrant bazaars, where you can lose yourself in a sensory overload. The bustling Johari Bazaar is a haven for shopaholics, offering a dazzling array of hand-woven textiles, colourful jewelry, and intricately carved souvenirs. From handcrafted leather goods and blue pottery to precious gemstones and Rajasthani puppets, the bazaar is a treasure trove waiting to be explored. Jaipur's got more to offer than just palaces and shopping! One cool spot is the Jantar Mantar. Forget fancy telescopes, this place is all about giant, awesome-looking instruments built way back in the Mughal era. They're basically like open-air tools for studying the stars and planets—sundials on steroids! It's a mind-boggling look at how people used to understand the universe, and it's pretty impressive. Jaipur's food scene is like a party in your mouth, and two dishes you gotta try are Laal Maas and Masala Chai. This dish is not for the faint of heart. It's basically melt-in-your-mouth mutton curry cooked in a fiery red chili and yogurt sauce. It's a flavor explosion that'll have you reaching for water and then going back for another bite because it's just that good. Just be sure to grab some cooling raita (yogurt dip) on the side to tame the heat a bit. This dish is a local favorite for a reason—it's a taste bud adventure! And the Masala chai, it can be called India's national drink but Jaipur does it right. It's sweet, spicy, and incredibly comforting—like a warm hug in a cup. Perfect for sipping on while you explore the city or just relaxing after a long day of eating Laal Maas.

## A Tapestry Woven with Diverse Beauty

Gujarat felt like a kaleidoscope of landscapes, cultures, and experiences: from the stark beauty of the desert to the vibrant hues of its festivals, it offers a unique blend of natural and man-made wonders that will leave you spellbound.

My first stop in Gujarat was Dholavira, one of the most significant and well-preserved archaeological sites of the Harappan civilisation. A city built with sun baked bricks, is divided into three distinct zones—the citadel, the middle town, and the lower town. Imagine busy marketplaces in the lower town, where intricate pottery, beads, and tools were exchanged. The middle town, which housed workshops and granaries, evidence of a thriving economy. Finally, ascend the citadel, the



administrative and religious center, and stand in awe of the grand structures that once dominated the cityscape. Dholavira's beauty was a visually appealing. The Harappans, despite living in a challenging environment, demonstrated remarkable foresight and knowledge of water management. The well planned drainage systems and strategically placed reservoirs ensured a steady supply of water, a testament to their understanding of sustainable living.

From Dholavira I went to experience a place that is out of this world. Imagine a massive expanse of white sand, stretching as far as you can see. During the dry season, it transforms into a surreal, almost lunar landscape—seriously, it looks like something from another planet! This massive salt marsh in Gujarat totally transforms during the dry season. The ground turns bone dry, leaving behind a vast expanse of white that stretches as far as the eye can see. It's like stepping onto another planet—seriously surreal! At night, the sky explodes with stars, a million tiny diamonds scattered across a black velvet canvas. It's like having your own private planetarium show, and it's absolutely breathtaking.

My next stop was my Dad's favorite place to be. I grew up listening to him narrating stories of his beautiful time spent here in this city. Ahmedabad was once a major center for Mughal rule, then came the British Raj, and finally, India's independence. This mix of influences is what makes the city so interesting. Ahmedabad isn't stuck in the past. This city is a thriving hub of commerce and industry, with a modern skyline that's constantly evolving. My favorite part was taking a walk along the Sabarmati Riverfront, a beautiful landscape that's perfect for an evening stroll. And to visit the iconic Sabarmati Ashram, the place where he lived and preached non-violence. It's a peaceful haven in the heart of the bustling city. Ahmedabad is a haven for foodies. The street food scene here is legendary. Forget boring old crackers, dhokla is where it's at! This Gujarati snack is basically a steamed lentil cake, but way more exciting. Imagine soft, fluffy squares of goodness made from a chickpea and rice batter, then steamed to perfection. Here's the deal: dhokla is kind of like a blank canvas for flavor. You can dunk it in chut-

neys (spicy dipping sauces) for a kick, drizzle it with some sweet yogurt for a tangy twist, or just enjoy it plain. So, next time you're in Gujarat, ditch the chips and grab a plate of dhokla. You won't regret it!

### Winter's Whisper: Crisp Breezes and Panoramic Vistas

Lonavala's beauty lies in its diverse landscape. Imagine winding roads snaking through verdant hills, dotted with cascading waterfalls and serene lakes. During the winter, a crisp breeze carries the sweet scent of wildflowers, painting the hills with vibrant hues. You can see a palette of browns, yellows, and oranges, revealing the rugged beauty of the underlying rock formations. Find a quiet spot overlooking a valley, breathe in the fresh mountain air, and let the worries of the world melt away. One of the most awe-inspiring experiences in Lonavala is witnessing a sunset from a mountain vantage point. As the sun dips below the horizon, the sky is filled with vibrant colours—fiery oranges, blushing pinks, and deep purples paint the clouds in a breathtaking display. The mountains themselves become silhouettes against this dazzling backdrop, creating a scene of unmatched beauty. The insanely delicious strawberry and cream at Mapro Garden, that's the real reason I gotta go back! Forget fancy desserts with a million layers and confusing names. This is a match made in heaven—fresh, juicy strawberries dipped in a cloud of creamy yogurt. One bite, and you're in heaven.

They say home is where the heart is, and after all this wandering, mine finally knew where it belonged. The open road was exhilarating, the constant change a thrill. But after weeks of chasing sunsets and ticking places off the list, a strange feeling started to creep in. I was missing that comfort of familiarity. The adventure was epic, but sometimes the greatest discoveries are the ones you already know by heart. So, with a smile on my face and a heart full of memories, I steered the car towards the most beautiful destination of all—home.

## CINEMA

# Wild Tales: A Savage Journey Through Human Vengeful Desires

ROMIL UDAYAKUMAR TNV

**W**ild Tales isn't just aptly named; it explodes onto the screen with a primal energy that lays bare the animalistic side lurking within us all. Unlike many foreign films where the English title feels like an afterthought, *Wild Tales* perfectly translates the essence of the Argentinian *Relatos Salvajes*. This isn't a movie about manners and restraint; it's about the raw, unbridled emotions that make us want to scream, fight, and unleash havoc on those who've wronged us.

The film unfolds as a series of six interconnected short stories, an anthology format that can be a gamble. In horror movies, it's common, but the quality can be uneven, leaving audiences disoriented and frustrated. Here, however, director Damián Szifron weaves his magic.

By taking the reins for both writing and directing all the vignettes, he ensures a consistent style and thematic core.

The beauty of *Wild Tales* lies in its ability to overcome the usual pitfalls of anthology films. Together, they paint a powerful portrait of human vengeance, served with a generous dollop of dark humour so addictive you can't look away.

Szifron opens with a cold splash in *Pasternak*. A model (María Marull) boards a plane, only to discover a bizarre connection with several fellow passengers—all linked to a mysterious man named Pasternak. This sets the stage for the rest of the film, where seemingly random situations escalate into the wildly unexpected.

In *The Rats*, morality takes centre stage. A waitress (Julieta Zylberberg) recognises a diner patron as the corrupt official who drove her father to suicide. The simmering resentment within her explodes when the cook (Rita Cortese) casually suggests a solution—poison. The audience is left grappling with the protagonist's internal struggle: is revenge a justifiable response, or a descent into darkness?

*The Strongest* takes the concept of road rage to a whole new level. A young businessman (Leonardo Sbaraglia) unleashes a torrent of insults at a beat-up pickup truck driver. Later, stranded with a flat tire in the middle of nowhere, he's forced to confront the very man he mocked. This story takes a terrifying turn, making us confront the dark fantasies we might harbour about getting even with rude drivers.

From here, Szifron dives into the complexities of class relations. *The Strongest* explores the rich versus poor dynamic, while *Bombita* tackles the frustrations of citizens versus a seemingly uncaring government. In *Bombita*, Simón (Ricardo Darín), a demolition expert, finds his life turned upside down by a towed car. A simple parking violation snowballs into a bureaucratic nightmare, mirroring the helplessness we've all felt dealing with petty authority figures.

The remaining stories delve even deeper into the wild side of human nature, venturing into territory best left for you, the audience, to discover. I'll let the audience have the say for the rest of the tales that are clearly most evidently wild.





POETRY



## No Time to Spare

SUSAN D'SOUZA

Did you say your morning prayers,  
No time to spare.  
Did you wish your elders at home,  
No time to spare.  
Did you have your breakfast with family,  
No time to spare.  
Did you smile at the first person you met,  
No time to spare.  
Did you make a call to check on your  
distant family member,  
No time to spare.  
Did you help anyone in need who came  
your way,

No time to spare.  
Years went by and now you are at  
heaven's door,  
You will bang and grind your teeth to  
open that door.  
Then you will realise  
No time to spare has become a reality,  
For I should have done best in all my  
assignments while there was  
still time to spare.  
Remember we are all called to serve and  
not be served,  
Keep saying henceforth I have time to  
spare  
From daylight to twilight in all what  
God has assigned me to do.



## LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR AT THE SERVICE OF THE ELDERLY POOR!



In 1839 in cold winter, Jeanne Jugan met and found God in the face of a poor elderly woman, blind and paralysed. She gave her bed to the poor woman, opened her home and her heart to her. Since then, many elderly people were welcomed by Jeanne Jugan and her daughters who are called "Little Sisters of the Poor" present all over the world in 32 countries. Jeanne said, "It is so good to be poor, to have nothing and to count on God for everything." She literally lived her saying and taught her daughters to trust in God's divine Providence.

**"Whatever you do to the least of my brothers you do unto me."  
Would you like to take care of Jesus in the elderly poor?**



**If you hear the call to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Saint Jeanne Jugan,  
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**Little Sisters of the Poor**

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Manager Marketing



marketing@integro.co.in



888 426 7304, 80 50074851



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