

# PRAVASI INDIANS

The India Connection

₹ 200/-

## WHY TRAVEL MATTERS AGAIN IN 2026



**DIASPORA**  
FROM BIHAR TO BRITAIN:  
A CIVILIZATIONAL CROSSING

**VENEZUELA**  
THE DAY SOVEREIGNTY  
LOST ITS BORDERS

**UNION BUDGET-2026**  
WILL IT AID INDIA'S  
BANKING SECTOR?

**भ्रम-जाल**  
अमेरिका पहुँचना,  
ज़िंदगी नहीं

# Explore the Wildlife Capital of the World *Madhya Pradesh*

A land where silence breaks  
into stories of the wild.



*Imagine a silent forest! A silence ended by the wailing of Peafowl, the alarm call of a Rhesus Macaque or the cry of a Spotted Deer. And then, the crunching of leaves brings a majestic Tiger into view, the glare of its eyes arresting.*

*With 11 national parks, 24 wildlife sanctuaries, 9 tiger reserves and 3 biosphere reserves, Madhya Pradesh offers the finest such sightings for wildlife aficionados.*

## ***Bandhavgarh and Kanha***

Experience a close tiger encounter under the shadows of an ancient fort at **Bandhavgarh**. Stay in a treehouse, watch Langurs sunning themselves and Spotted Deer stitch golden lines through meadows on a lovely February day. Walk into biologically loaded **Kanha**, which is not just India's leading tiger habitat, but also has other mammals, birds, reptiles and insects in incredible number. Spot **Swamp Deer, Bears, Indian Bison and Pythons** in its stunning **Sal forests**.

## ***Pench***

Relive the adventures of **Mowgli** in **Pench**. Enjoy solitude listening to the forest's chorus — jungle fowl, cicadas, owls, and distant thunder. Take a **night safari**, follow tracks of **Indian Wild Dogs** or watch **Leopards, Porcupines, Pangolin, Wolves and Foxes** from a tree-observation platform.

## ***Panna and Kuno***

Enter a lush landscape punctuated by the **Pandav** and **Raneh waterfalls** at **Panna**. Indulge in a boat safari along the **Ken River** to spot **Eurasian Eagle Owls and Black Ibises**, not to forget **marshy crocodiles**. Zoom in on rare **Vultures** and listen to the music of the **Indian Paradise Flycatcher**. Glimpse life in a tribal village that skirts the edge of this biosphere reserve.

Be part of India's successful wildlife revival programme at **Kuno**. Join a **Cheetah safari** to try and witness the world's fastest land animal in its natural habitat. In February, the tawny savannah grass and open horizons increase the chances of a sighting. Live the slow life in the **Satpura National Park** area and allow yourself to be gilded on a boat.

Trace the pugmarks of sloth bears. Watch families of **Wild Boars** make their foraging way and observe a **Crested Serpent Eagle** wheel overhead seeking its prey.

## ***Van Vihar, Bhopal***

Drop into a city-wildlife interface at **Bhopal's Van Vihar**. Managed with modern zoo principles, carnivores live in expansive enclosures and herbivores roam free, while migrant birds enjoy the **Upper Lake**. **Bhimbetka's** heritage mixes with wildlife at **Ratapani**, home to **Sloth Bears** and the shy **Indian Wolf**.

## ***Gandhi Sagar***

**Gandhi Sagar reservoir** sees water, sky, and forest melt into one another allowing **Bar-headed Geese, Painted Storks, and Pelicans** to rest along small islands. The scent of Mahua fills **Sanjay-Dubri**, where **Leopards** rule. Savour a fab February at **Madhav National Park**, whose **Sakhya Sagar Lake** sees **Demoiselle Cranes and Tufted Ducks** lazing in the reedbeds. Madhya Pradesh is truly, a living, breathing epic — written in claw marks, wingbeats, and rustling leaves.



These destinations are well connected through an extensive road and rail network. Additionally, Madhya Pradesh is a pioneer in introducing intra-state air taxi services, connecting major tourist destinations across the state. Visitors may check the flight schedules to conveniently access the nearest city to these wildlife destinations.

## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



## Finding Meaning in a World That Moves Too Fast

Dear Readers.

As the world gathers pace once again—economically, politically, technologically—it is worth pausing to ask a quieter but more enduring question: *what truly anchors us when everything else is in motion?* This edition of *PRAVASI INDIANS* is shaped around that inquiry. Across continents, disciplines and lived experiences, our contributors examine how meaning, dignity and intent are being renegotiated in an unsettled world.

At the level of ideas and culture, **ANIL K PRASAD** revisits the language vision of Dr Rajendra Prasad, India's first President and a key architect of the Constitution. At a time when language debates increasingly harden into identity politics, this essay is a timely reminder that language, for Rajen Babu, was never about dominance or exclusion. It was about democratic participation, cultural continuity and national unity—values that feel urgently relevant in today's fractured discourse.

That concern for values also runs through the reflections of **RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI**, who asks whether modern development has quietly hollowed out our moral core. In an age that celebrates speed, scale and consumption, his essay challenges readers to reconsider whether progress without compassion, restraint and inner awareness can truly be called advancement.

Our Cover Story turns to movement of another kind—travel. **BALAKRISHNA SHEKHAR** argues that journeys in 2026 are no longer driven by escape or status, but by self-expression and intent. From ancestral returns to community-led experiences, travel is becoming a search for alignment and meaning. For Pravasi Indians, this shift feels deeply personal, echoing questions of belonging, memory and identity that sit just beneath the surface of every journey.

Education, too, emerges as a site where lofty ideals must meet everyday realities. Writing from Denver, sustainability professional **KSHITIZ RAJ** makes a compelling case for treating renewable energy not as a climate experiment but as an educational necessity. Reliable power, he reminds us, is what keeps classrooms usable, kitchens safe and learning dignified—especially in heat-stressed schools where outages quietly erode opportunity.

On the economic front, **SATISH SINGH** outlines what banks are looking for from the Union Budget—arguing that resilience will come not from short-term fixes, but from structural reforms that strengthen credit, deposits, digital systems and financial stability in a rapidly changing economy.

The global order itself comes under scrutiny in **SANJAY KUMAR VERMA**'s sharp reflection on Venezuela. The forcible removal of a sitting head of state, he argues, raises troubling questions about sovereignty, international law and the security of overseas investments—issues that resonate far beyond Latin America and matter deeply to the Global South.

Several pieces bring these larger themes back to the intimate scale of lived experience. **KRITIKA SINHA** writes movingly about raising a child abroad, where identity is negotiated daily and parenting becomes a shared journey of listening and trust. **RAJEEV KUMAR** reflects on a journey to Britain that reopened questions of history, belonging and civilizational memory for someone shaped by rural India.

Our Hindi section adds further depth—through **DR SHIVJI SRIVASTAVA**'s poignant poem *महानगर में दादी*, through **DR NILAY RANJAN SINGH**'s sobering tale of migration dreams in Punjab, and through Jyotish **ACHARYA DINAİK**'s reflective take on astrology as self-awareness rather than superstition.

Taken together, these stories suggest a common thread: whether we are travelling, teaching, governing, migrating or simply growing older, the real challenge today is not movement—but meaning. We hope this issue invites you to pause, reflect, and find your own bearings in a world that rarely slows down.

Happy reading *PRAVASI INDIANS!*

*Rashmi*  
CEO and Publisher

We would love to hear from you. We also invite diaspora members to write for us and share their experiences

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# PRAVASI INDIANS

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## HUMAN VALUES

A well-acclaimed spiritual educator and columnist with over 9,000 articles to his credit, **RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI** reflects on how development and modernity—often celebrated as progress—actually depict the erosion of human values. His essay raises a valid question: can advancement without humanity truly be called progress.

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## DIASPORA

A creative soul, **KRITIKA SINHA** offers a first-person reflection on the lived experience of raising a child abroad. She writes about the quiet reckonings no one prepares parents for, and the unexpected learning that emerges when Indian families raise children between cultures—where identity is fluid, and parenting becomes a shared journey of trust and understanding.

**20-23**

**RAJEEV KUMAR**, a teaching fellow at Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul (Türkiye), reflects on a journey that turned out to be far more than academic. Invited to present a paper in Britain, he writes: “For someone like me, coming from rural India, stepping into Britain carried layered meanings—personal pride, inherited memory, and civilizational curiosity. Landscapes, trains, accents, and strangers reopened old questions about history, belonging, and the many worlds that lie beyond familiar skies.”

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## EDUCATION REFORM

A sustainability professional at Redaptive Sustainability Services in Denver, Colorado, **KSHITIZ RAJ** argues that renewable energy is no longer a climate ideal or a pilot for schools, but an educational necessity. When power fails, he notes, lessons stall, technology turns ornamental, and heat makes learning unbearable—unless energy systems are designed to deliver consistency, safety, and dignity every day.



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## IDEAS / CULTURE

Having taught across India, Africa, Jordan, Massachusetts, and Oxford, **ANIL K PRASAD** revisits Dr Rajendra Prasad's writings and Constituent Assembly interventions to show why the first President of India's language vision—rooted in democracy, culture, and national unity—remains vital in today's sharply polarised linguistic debates.

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## VENEZUELA

**SANJAY KUMAR VERMA**, a 1988-batch IFS officer and former Indian Ambassador to Sudan, Japan, and Canada, reflects on an event many believed belonged to a bygone era. On January 3, the world witnessed a sitting head of state forcibly removed from his own capital by foreign military forces. "The United States' extraction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was not merely a

dramatic rupture in Latin American politics," he writes. "It was a direct challenge to the modern idea of sovereignty." The episode, he argues, raises unsettling questions about the authority of international law, the security of overseas investments, and whether power is once again beginning to trump principle in the global order.

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A Mumbai-based columnist and banker, **SATISH SINGH** outlines key expectations from the Union Budget and explains why targeted reforms—ranging from long-pending workforce changes and deposit mobilisation to MSME credit, digital transformation, and financial stability—are essential to building a resilient, future-ready banking system.

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**डॉ. निलय रंजन सिंह**, जो वर्तमान में स्टेट बैंक ऑफ इंडिया—डीआईएफसी, दुबई के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी हैं, अमरीक सिंह की कहानी के माध्यम से बताते हैं कि पंजाब के छोटे कस्बों में अमेरिका आज भी एक सपना बना हुआ है—ऐसा सपना जिसे नाम, ज़मीन और कर्ज़ के सहारे साकार करने की कोशिश की जाती है। यह कथा अवैध प्रवासन के रोमांच की नहीं, बल्कि उन चुपचाप चुकाई जाने वाली कीमतों की है, जो बेहतर भविष्य की उम्मीद में अक्सर अनदेखी रह जाती हैं।

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**ज्योतिष आचार्य दिनायक** के अनुसार ज्योतिष केवल भविष्य बताने की विद्या नहीं, बल्कि आत्म-जागरूकता का एक चिंतनशील विज्ञान है, जो जीवन-यात्रा के गहरे उद्देश्य को उजागर करता है। जन्म-कुंडली हमारे जन्मजात कर्मों और जीवन में मिलने वाले सबकों की ओर संकेत करती है, जबकि मंत्र, दान, उपवास और रत्न जैसे उपाय मानव चेतना को ब्रह्मांडीय शक्तियों की सूक्ष्म लय के साथ सामंजस्य में लाने के माध्यम माने जाते हैं।

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झाँसी में जन्मे और श्री चित्रगुप्त महाविद्यालय के हिंदी विभाग से सेवानिवृत्त **डॉ. शिवजी श्रीवास्तव** अपनी कविता *महानगर में दादी* के माध्यम से आज के सामाजिक हालात पर तीखा कटाक्ष करते हैं और लिखते हैं, "कहाँ अरघ दे सूर्यदेव को, कहाँ रखें अग्रासन... बेटे-बहू चले जाते हैं, बड़े भोर से ऑफिस; साँझ ढले तक ही दोनों आ पाते हैं, घर वापिस; चार साल के पोते को दादी कब तक बहलाएँ?"



# WHY TRAVEL MATTERS AGAIN IN 2026

Travel is moving again—but not in the way it once did.

After years of disruption, distance and digital acceleration, 2026 is shaping up not as a return to old habits, but as a reckoning with why we travel at all. For a world—and a diaspora—redefined by mobility, belonging and choice, journeys are no longer about ticking destinations or displaying status. They are about meaning, memory and alignment. From ancestral returns and slow living to community-led experiences and deeply personal itineraries, travel has become a form of self-expression. This Cover Story explores how 2026 marks a decisive shift—from movement for escape to travel with intention, and why, for Pravasi Indians, this moment feels profoundly personal.



**BY B SHEKHAR**

The author, based in Bengaluru, is our South India Bureau Chief.

**A**s global travel regains momentum, 2026 is shaping up not merely as a year of recovery, but as a decisive turning point in how—and why—we travel. For Pravasi Indians in particular, travel has ceased to be about distance, frequency, or privilege. It has become a deeply personal act of return, reflection, and discovery.

The post-pandemic rush to “go everywhere” is steadily giving way to a quieter, more introspective question: *Why are we travelling at all?* Across continents, travellers are no longer chasing destinations for status or spectacle. Instead, they are seeking journeys that mirror who they have become—emotionally, culturally, and spiritually. For those living between worlds, travel is no longer escape. It is alignment.

In 2026, travel is less about ticking off landmarks and more about reclaiming meaning—through ancestral towns revisited, multi-generational family journeys, and slower,

more rooted explorations of places once taken for granted. The modern Pravasi traveller is not searching for novelty alone, but for belonging.

#### **From destinations to decisions**

This shift marks the arrival of what the global travel industry has begun calling the “whycation”—journeys shaped by emotional intent rather than itineraries. Data from leading travel platforms such as Hilton, Booking.com, Global Hotel Alliance, Skyscanner, and Condé Nast Traveler converge on a single insight: rest, relevance, and resonance now outweigh indulgence and visibility.

Travellers are making fewer trips these days, but more thoughtful ones. They are choosing places that allow them to pause rather than perform, to participate rather than consume. Wellness is no longer confined to spas; it is being sought in silence, slowness, and self-connection. Nature is no longer a backdrop for selfies, but a space for grounding.

For Pravasi Indians, this transition feels instinctive. Years of living abroad—navigating visas, professional reinvention, cultural negotiations, and hybrid identities—have reshaped how travel is perceived. The question is no longer *Where should I go next?* but *What part of myself am I re-connecting with?*

**2026 FORECAST FOR GLOBAL TRAVEL****Tourist Arrivals showing 5–7 % growth**

- 1.58 billion international tourist arrivals are projected for 2026 — marking an all-time record and surpassing pre-pandemic levels (2019), showing 5–7 % growth over 2019 figures.

**Aviation Industry predicts about 5.2 billion air passengers**

- The global aviation industry is forecast to carry about 5.2 billion air passengers in 2026—a key indicator of increased global travel demand and mobility.

**UN Tourism forecasts tourist arrivals to grow over 3–4 %**

- UN Tourism forecasts international tourist arrivals to grow over 3–4 percent in 2026 compared to 2025, as recovery continues and global travel normalises.

**India rediscovered, not revisited**

One of the most striking trends of 2026 is the rediscovery of India—not as a default homeland, but as a destination of depth. Travel data shows a clear movement away from overcrowded metros and toward secondary cities, small towns, and rural landscapes that offer authenticity over advertisement.

For Pravasi families, these journeys often carry an added layer of meaning. Introducing children born abroad to ancestral villages, regional languages, local foods, and lived histories has become an act of cultural continuity. These are not nostalgic detours, but deliberate investments in memory-creating.

Multi-generational travel, in particular, has emerged as a powerful form of reconnection. Grandparents become storytellers. Parents become translators—of culture, of change, of context. Children, in turn, become bridges between inherited traditions and global futures.

**The rise of slow, rooted travel**

Speed, once the defining feature of modern travel, is quietly losing its appeal. In its place is a growing preference for slow

**WHAT INDIA HOLDS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS in 2026**

**For international visitors, India's appeal increasingly lies not in scale, but in depth. Foreign travellers are arriving with clear purpose:**

- Wellness seekers exploring quiet Himalayan villages and South India's 'silent tourism' circuits
- Cultural scholars visiting lesser-known UNESCO and heritage sites beyond Jaipur, Agra, and Delhi
- Slow explorers choosing rail journeys, long stays, and village-based homestays over whirlwind itineraries

travel—longer stays, fewer locations, and deeper immersion. Travellers are choosing homestays over hotels, local guides over packaged tours, and lived experiences over curated attractions.

This shift is also reshaping the economics of travel. Community-led tourism, regenerative travel models, and locally owned enterprises are gaining ground as travellers seek to ensure their journeys do not merely extract value, but leave



● ●  
**Secondary cities and 'destination dupes' are emerging as powerful alternatives to overcrowded global hubs, reshaping tourism flows worldwide**

● ●  
**For Indian travellers, passion-led experiences—culture, wellness, food and nature—are now driving travel decisions more than luxury or status.**



#### **TOP GLOBAL DESTINATIONS FOR 2026**

**The following places repeatedly rank in travel industry for their appeal, diversity and cultural experiences:**

- Japan – A top-ranked global destination offering a compelling mix of ancient tradition, modern innovation, rich cuisine and safety. It's expected to remain at the top of many travellers' lists in 2026.
- Canada – Vast natural landscapes, multicultural cities and sustainable travel experiences make Canada a standout choice for diverse travellers.
- Ireland – Emerald landscapes, Celtic heritage and welcoming culture keep Ireland among the world's most appealing travel destinations.
- Mexico – From ancient Mayan ruins to vibrant cities and world-class beaches, Mexico's cultural and culinary riches attract travellers globally.
- United Kingdom – Iconic history, world-class museums, cultural diversity and dynamic cities like London make the UK a perennial favourite.
- Thailand (Bangkok) – Ranked among the most-booked cities worldwide for 2026, Bangkok combines culture, food, temples and urban energy.
- France (Paris) – Paris continues to be one of the most appealing cities in the world with its heritage, cuisine, art and urban experiences.
- Spain (Barcelona, Madrid) – Spain's cultural cities and vibrant scene make it one of the most-visited destinations globally, with tourism expected to grow further in 2026.
- Italy (Rome, Sardinia) – Italy remains iconic for its history, food culture and picturesque landscapes; destinations like Sardinia are rising as relaxed, less crowded alternatives.
- Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, Florianópolis) – Brazil's coastal cities are trending for their music, beaches, festivals and natural beauty



● ●  
 By 2026, travel has shifted from post-pandemic impulse to purpose-driven journeys, where intention matters more than itineraries.

● ●  
 The modern traveller is no longer asking, “Where should I go?” but “Why am I going at all?”



#### WHAT CATCHES TOURISTS' IMAGINATION IN INDIA IN 2026

- Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh: Long admired by anthropologists and music lovers, Ziro is emerging as a centre for cultural immersion. Visitors come to understand Apatani heritage, sustainable farming, and community rhythms—aligning strongly with global interest in indigenous knowledge and slow travel.
- Majuli, Assam: The world's largest river island is attracting travellers drawn to ecological fragility, neo-Vaishnavite traditions, and monastic life. As climate-conscious travel grows, Majuli represents journeys rooted in preservation rather than consumption.
- Chettinad, Tamil Nadu: For culinary historians and design enthusiasts, Chettinad's palatial homes, lime-plastered architecture, and spice-rich cuisine are redefining food-led travel—mirroring the global rise of grocery tourism and hyper-local gastronomy.
- Gokarna's Hinterland Villages, Karnataka: Beyond its beaches, forest trails, temple hamlets, and silent coves are emerging as restorative destinations, appealing to travellers seeking mental calm rather than visual spectacle.
- Mandu, Madhya Pradesh: With the revival of the Mandu Festival and extended tent-city experiences, this heritage destination is evolving into a living cultural hub—blending history, music, adventure, and slow travel.





### HOW THE 2026 SHIFTS PANNING ON THE GROUND

The transformation of travel behaviour in 2026 is visible across multiple dimensions:

- Distinct accommodation choices: Boutique hotels, eco-lodges, creative stays, and heritage homes are preferred over mass-market hotels.
- Individual-interest tours: Pottery workshops, in-depth culinary trails, and specialised treks are in high demand.
- AI-powered trip planning: Travellers increasingly design their own itineraries using AI tools rather than relying on pre-packaged tours.

### CHANGING DEMANDS

- Yoga retreats and mindful travel programmes gaining grounds
- 'Silent stays' focused on tranquillity and inner reconnection are preferred
- Indigenous spa services using local herbs and traditional therapies in demand

### TRAVEL RESEARCH FORECASTS FOR 2026

- Travels are increasingly being used to affirm identity and emotional well-being
- Pop culture and cuisine will remain powerful drivers of destination choice
- AI supports planning and efficiency, but human care and understanding remain central
- Local authenticity, genuine experiences, and policy flexibility remain top selection criteria



something behind. For a diaspora that understands displacement, rebuilding, and resilience, this ethical recalibration feels deeply personal.

Travel, increasingly, is being seen as a relationship rather than a transaction.

### Food as memory, culture as compass

Among the most emotionally resonant aspects of contemporary travel is food. Culinary journeys in 2026 are no longer indulgent add-ons; they are central to the travel experience. Regional kitchens, forgotten recipes, seasonal ingredients, and hyper-local cooking traditions have become gateways to understanding place and people.

For Pravasi Indians, food often serves as the most enduring cultural anchor. Travelling to taste, learn, and relearn regional cuisines is not merely about flavour—it is about reclaiming fragments of identity that migration often dilutes. In many ways, food has become the most accessible form of heritage education for the next generation.

### Wellness beyond luxury

Wellness travel, too, is undergoing a quiet transformation. In 2026, it is less about luxury retreats and more about inner recalibration. Practices rooted in Ayurveda, yoga, meditation, and indigenous knowledge systems are being rediscovered not as trends, but as living traditions.

Travellers are seeking experiences that restore balance rather than promise transformation. Silence is becoming a

● ●  
**Multi-generational travel is resurging, with families seeking shared memories, nostalgia and cultural continuity across three generations.**

● ●  
**Rural and community-led tourism has moved from the margins to the mainstream, supported by policy, platforms and changing traveller values.**

● ●  
**In 2026, travel has become a form of self-expression—reflecting identity, values and emotional alignment rather than mere consumption.**



luxury. Time offline is becoming aspirational. The goal is no longer reinvention, but reconnection—with the body, the land, and the self.

#### **Why this moment matters**

What distinguishes travel in 2026 is not scale, but self-expression. Nearly three-quarters of global travellers now seek itineraries that reflect their personal values and identities.



#### **GLOBAL TOURISM AT A GLANCE**

- Spain is the world's most visited country, receiving over 100 million international tourists
- Italy and Poland follow, each welcoming more than 70 million international visitors
- Countries like Kiribati, Bhutan, and Tonga receive only 10,000 international arrivals annually



### Coming home, differently

The year 2026 marks the beginning of a more intentional era in global travel—one defined not by excess, but by meaning; not by movement alone, but by mindfulness. For Pravasi Indians, travel is no longer about crossing borders. It is about crossing inner thresholds.

As the industry enters a phase of stable growth, the message is clear. Destinations and brands that understand emotional motivation, cultural nuance, and personal storytelling will shape the future of travel. Those that reduce travellers to checklists will be left behind.

For those willing to listen rather than consume, the world in 2026 is not smaller—but infinitely richer. And for the global Indian, travel is no longer an escape from home. It is, increasingly, a way of coming back—to a place, to a feeling, and often, to oneself. ■

For Pravasi Indians, this means journeys that reconcile global lives with cultural memory—temple towns revisited not as rituals, but as conversations; heritage trails walked not for history alone, but for context.

Travel has become a way to make sense of displacement, belonging, and evolution. It allows the diaspora to negotiate who they are without choosing between where they come from and where they live.

# WHY HARMONY MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Development and modernity are often celebrated as signs of advancement, yet beneath the surface lies a troubling erosion of human values. As ego, greed, and materialism take centre-stage, harmony in society, families, and even nature is breaking down. This essay questions whether progress without humanity can truly be called progress.



**BY RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI**  
(nikunji@gmail.com)

Writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist, who has written 9000+ articles/columns till date across India, Nepal & UK.



**W**e all want to be happy all the time—but is it really that easy? Not really. True happiness does not arise from fleeting pleasures or momentary excitement; it flows from living a life rooted in harmony. It is often said that a person who lives in harmony with the self also lives in harmony with the universe. Yet, if we pause and look around, how many of us can honestly claim to have achieved such balance? Very few. Each one of us is part

of a vast human rosary, bound together by a common thread of relationships. From the moment we are born, we begin forming bonds—first with our mother, then with family, friends, colleagues, and society at large. Even in death, we are cremated or buried by those with whom we share a connection. In essence, relationships define the very core of human existence.

However, with rapid modernisation and technological advancement, the entire dynamic of relationships has

undergone a profound transformation. Traditions and practices that once nurtured harmony within society and strengthened personal bonds are slowly fading away. This is an unfortunate yet undeniable reality that we can no longer ignore. Our obsession with a bigger car, a bigger house, a higher salary, and an ever-expanding ego is steadily eroding our value system. We are becoming more materialistic than truly modern. The paradox is striking: while we proudly claim to be progressing, we



are, in fact, regressing when it comes to human values. On one hand, we are modernizing at an unprecedented pace; on the other, we are steadily losing the human touch that once defined us.

Today, very few people pause to help a stranger in distress, and even fewer take genuine care of their elders at home. Loneliness and alienation have become common, even within families. In many cases, ageing parents are left to fend for themselves, while relationships suffer due to a lack of understanding, empathy, and communication. This moral and emotional degradation is visible in almost every sphere of life. The once-strong bonds between individuals and society have weakened considerably. The warmth that once characterised human interactions has been replaced by cold, transactional exchanges. People are quick to judge, yet slow to empathize. Instead of standing together during times of crisis, we have erected walls of indifference around ourselves.

This disharmony is not confined to human relationships alone. Our relationship with nature has also deteriorated, and as a consequence, we are

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**In a world driven by material ambition and technological speed, harmony in human relationships is quietly eroding. As ego and greed replace empathy and understanding, society finds itself progressing outwardly while regressing inwardly**

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witnessing nature's wrath in the form of droughts, famines, floods, cyclones, and other calamities. Our situation is rapidly shifting from bad to worse—we neither live in harmony ourselves nor allow others to do so. This brings us to an uncomfortable but necessary question: who is responsible for this decline?

Is it society? Is it technology? Or is it we, ourselves? Before blaming external forces, we must look inward. To restore harmony, we must first understand the root causes of its erosion. Let us remember that disharmony stems from ego, selfishness, material greed, and our unwillingness to listen and empathize. These vices have created deep rifts between individuals, families, and communities.

Harmony, in its simplest sense, signifies friendliness, unity, and cooperation. When we work selflessly for the welfare of others and cultivate genuine love and concern for those around us, we help create an atmosphere of peace. When we listen patiently to another person's viewpoint, we earn trust and mutual respect. These seemingly small acts generate goodwill and create a ripple effect of positivity throughout society. They open pathways to compassion, peace, and lasting happiness. Our interactions grow more meaningful, our relationships stronger, and our communities more cohesive. Gradually, understanding replaces judgment, kindness replaces indifference, and love replaces resentment.

Each one of us possesses the power to contribute to this transformation. We do not need to wait for governments to announce new policies or institutions to launch awareness campaigns. Change begins with the individual. The most crucial time to restore harmony is now. Never before have we witnessed such a rapid erosion of values and human connection. If we, as conscious and responsible individuals, act today—by spreading kindness, encouraging understanding, and upholding the values of unity—we can alter the direction of society. Future generations will remember us not for the wealth we accumulated, but for the wisdom we preserved and the values we protected. So let us not merely speak about harmony; let us practice it in our daily lives. Let us pledge to nurture and safeguard the values handed down by our ancestors. Let us instil compassion and integrity in every heart, so that we may build a world sustained by love rather than greed, by unity rather than division, and by peace rather than chaos. ■

# WHEN MY TEEN BECAME MORE GLOBAL THAN ME



Raising a child abroad comes with quiet reckonings no one prepares you for. Somewhere between school gates, dinner-table conversations, and gently questioned traditions, I realised my teen was growing up in a world far more global than the one I had known. This first-person reflection explores the emotional distance, unexpected learning, and slow understanding that unfolds when Indian parents raise children between cultures—where identity is negotiated daily, and parenting becomes a shared journey of listening, adaptation, and trust.



BY KRITIKA SINHA

Author is a creative person who sees life as a canvas and lives each day to learn something new, and loves sharing her experiences to motivate others and move forward in life.

## When My Teen Became More 'Global' Than Me

There are moments in parenting that arrive quietly but leave you unsettled long after.

For me, one such moment unfolded at the dinner table. I had cooked dal, rice and sabzi—the food I grew up with, the food that still feels like home—when I suggested watching

an old Hindi film. My teen sighed, eyes fixed on the phone, and said casually, “Why does everything have to be so... Indian?”

Or perhaps it happened earlier, when I corrected their Hindi and they laughed, “Relax, nobody talks like that anymore.”

There was no rudeness, no anger. Yet it hit harder than I expected. That

was when I realised something fundamental had shifted. My child—the one I raised, the one I carried abroad with so many hopes—was becoming more global than I was. And I wasn't quite sure how to respond.

### We Moved Abroad With Big Dreams

We didn't leave India because we didn't love it. We left behind ageing parents, siblings, familiar streets and a life that felt secure in its own imperfect way. We moved with dreams of better education, wider opportunities and a future where our children would not have to struggle as we once did.

In the early years, everything seemed manageable. Our children were young. They followed our routines, ate what we cooked and spoke our language at home. We assumed culture would pass on naturally, like habits or eye colour.

We didn't realise it needed care.

### The First Signs I Missed

The change came gradually. A softened accent. Hindi sentences increasingly laced with English words. Friends from

school taking precedence over long family calls back home.

At first, I dismissed it. This is normal, I told myself. Every child grows, every generation changes. Then came the questions.

Why do we do it this way? Why does it matter what people in India think? Why can't I decide for myself?

They were not rebellious questions.



**The moment my teen questioned “Why does everything have to be so Indian?”, I realised the real shift wasn't rebellion—it was the birth of a confidence shaped by a world I had entered as an adult but never lived as a child.**



They were calm, confident ones. And that confidence unsettled me—not because it challenged me, but because my teen was questioning things I had never questioned my parents while growing up.

That was when I understood: my child wasn't becoming difficult. They were growing up global—confident, questioning, and rooted in a world I had entered as an outsider but never experienced as a child. Our children were growing up in a world we had chosen for them, but we ourselves had never been raised in.

### The School-Gate Wake-Up Call

This is something many Indian parents abroad may recognise.

Schools here do more than teach subjects. They encourage children to speak up, to question, to look adults in the eye and explain what they think. On paper, it sounds ideal—and it is. But it also reshapes how children relate to authority.

I remember standing outside the school gate one afternoon, watching my teen walk out—relaxed, confident,



laughing with friends. Teachers spoke warmly. "Very articulate," one said. "Strong opinions," another smiled.

I felt proud. And quietly unsettled.

At home, instructions became discussions. Requests came with explanations. Boundaries were questioned calmly and without fear. There was no disrespect, yet it challenged everything I had grown up believing—that good children listened more than they spoke, that silence meant respect, that agreement meant love.

Here, my teen was learning that their voice mattered. Standing at that school gate, I wasn't just watching my child grow. I was watching myself change, whether I was ready or not.

### Two Cultures Under One Roof

Inside our home, I tried to hold on to what felt familiar—Indian food, values and ways of thinking. Outside, my teen lived a global life, shaped by different friendships, ideas and expectations.

Our conversations sometimes felt like negotiations. I was worried about values; they about freedom. Slowly, I realised the problem was not love, but understanding.

Many Indian parents abroad carry a quiet fear: that our children will forget where they come from; that India will become just a holiday; that our sacrifices will fade into irrelevance.

What is often unseen is how hard we worked to build a life from scratch—navigating loneliness, visas, finances and identity. When our children seem distant from these stories, it is not indifference. It is simply that they are still growing into an understanding that only time brings.

They don't need to live our journey. They only need to know it exists.

### Redefining Success

To us, success once meant stability—a steady job, a secure home, a future without constant uncertainty. To our children, success looks different. It means choice: the freedom to think, to decide and to become who they want to be.

Neither definition is wrong. They are simply shaped by different worlds.

At first, this gap created silences

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between us. Then something quietly beautiful happened. We began learning flexibility from them. They began learning patience and grounding from us.

Success stopped being a single idea. It became a shared journey—where security and freedom walk side by side.

### Caught Between Worlds

Children raised abroad often belong to everywhere and nowhere at once. In their country of residence, they are "Indian". In India, they are both Indian and foreign.

They move daily between worlds, adjusting language, behaviour and identity with remarkable ease. What





looks like confusion is often strength. They learn empathy early. They learn how to listen before they speak. They learn that identity can be layered without being lost.

Just as we once adapted when we moved, they are continuing that journey in their own way.

When we choose understanding over fear, the questions change. We stop asking why they are different from us, and begin asking how we can walk alongside them.

#### **What Changed Everything**

One day, instead of correcting my teen, I shared my story—my childhood in India, my parents and why certain things still mattered to me. Not as rules. Just as memories.

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**When my teen became more global than me, I thought I was losing culture. Instead, I learned that identity doesn't survive through correction, but through conversation—and culture travels best through stories, not rules.**

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For the first time, my teen listened not as a child being instructed, but as a person trying to understand.

That was my biggest lesson. Culture does not pass through force. It passes through stories.

The real victories are quiet. When my teen explains Indian festivals to friends. When they defend our food, values and accents. When curiosity replaces indifference.

Living abroad has taught me that parenting is not about control. It is about trust. About adapting without losing yourself.

When my teen became more global than me, I thought I was losing something. I wasn't. I was learning a new way to parent—and to grow alongside my child. ■

# FROM BIHAR TO BRITAIN: A CIVILIZATIONAL CROSSING

When the University of Exeter selected my paper for presentation, the journey that followed was far more than academic. For someone like me, coming from rural India and stepping into Britain—the former imperial nerve-centre—the experience carried layered meaning: personal pride, inherited memory, and civilizational curiosity. This travelogue traces moments of arrival, observation, and quiet reckoning, where landscapes, trains, accents, and strangers reopened old questions about history, belonging, and the many worlds that lie beyond familiar skies.



**BY RAJEEV KUMAR**  
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The author is a researcher and a teaching fellow at Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul (Türkiye).

It was a moment of immense joy when the University of Exeter in the UK selected my paper for presentation. It was not merely a professional milestone; it carried a deeply personal and symbolic resonance. Like many Indians, the idea of going to the UK for study or an academic presentation—almost instinctively framed as “going to London”—still holds a near-mythic aura. Families speak of such journeys with pride, as though a child travelling abroad signifies not only individual achievement but a collective ascent.

## Testing Sir Syed’s Idea of England

Perhaps such journeys have become more common today, but for someone like me—coming from rural India—the experience still carries a profound sense of cultural pride. I was especially happy for my father. In his quiet smile, I sensed generations of unspoken aspi-

rations finding momentary fulfilment.

For me, the journey was also an intellectual pilgrimage. As a student of civilizational studies, stepping onto the soil of a country that once colonized India stirred a mix of curiosity, irony, and reflection. We often criticise the West—and rightly so—but when opportunities present themselves, we embrace them with enthusiasm, sometimes without hesitation. I wanted to see for myself: How do people live here today? What kind of civilization has been built with the wealth once extracted from lands like mine? Sir Syed Ahmad Khan famously remarked—perhaps with some exaggeration—that “England is like heaven.” I wanted to test the truth behind those words.

## London from Above: Order and Green

I was fortunate to have a window seat. It was around 1 PM UK time when the aircraft tilted gently for landing and the landscape of London began to unfold. It was one of those quiet ‘wow’ moments. The earth always looks mysterious and beautiful from above, especially during descent, but this felt different. I was excited. This was England.

I gazed with childlike curiosity, absorbing every detail, trying to store

the view in my memory rather than my camera. Below me stretched neatly divided fields, carefully cultivated farmland, clusters of elegant houses, and long lines of green trees. There was greenery everywhere—clean, orderly, almost rehearsed, with no trace of dust. Even from the air, the UK appeared meticulously planned, like a civilization that had spent centuries perfecting itself.

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**Stepping into  
Britain was not just  
a journey across  
borders, but a quiet  
crossing through  
history, memory, and  
inheritance.**  
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In that moment, after living seven years in Istanbul—where I had nearly concluded that I was residing in the world’s most beautiful city—I found myself softly reciting an Iqbal couplet:

*Sitaron se aage jahan aur bhi hain,*





*Abhi ishq ke imtihan aur bhi hain.*

(meaning 'Beyond the stars, there are more worlds. Love still has many trials ahead.')

### **An Unspoken Connection at the UK Border**

At passport control in Stansted Airport, the sign above read: "UK Border." I was about to cross it. The officer handling my passport was South Asian—perhaps Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or Sri Lankan—but unmistakably British, speaking in a polished British accent. I smiled instinctively, perhaps out of excitement.

Despite everything—the history of empire, displacement, and shifting power—there was something intimate in that encounter. A quiet, unspoken thread still seemed to connect us to the subcontinent. History, after all, leaves its imprints not only in books, but in faces and voices.

### **A Quiet Elegance on the London-Exeter Route**

Travelling light, with no luggage, I rushed to catch my train to Exeter. I landed at 1:30 PM, and my train was scheduled for 2:30 PM. From Stansted Airport, I boarded a train to Liverpool Street Station, then switched to the Elizabeth Line to reach Paddington Station. From there, a long journey awaited me westward.

The train from Stansted to Liverpool Street immediately impressed me—its speed, comfort, and quiet elegance. Even more captivating was the scenery rushing past: lush green fields, gentle hills, scattered farmhouses, and natural ponds dotted with small boat-houses. From the airplane window to the train carriage, I could not take my eyes off the land.

At Paddington Station, hunger caught up with me, and I had some time before boarding the next train. I entered the cafeteria, where a small open café was run by two women—one wearing *sindoor*, the other a hijab. When I asked which sandwich was halal, the hijabi woman guided me warmly.

Curious, I asked the woman wearing *sindoor* where she was from. "Nepal," she replied.

I smiled. "Then we're neighbours. I'm from Madhubani in Bihar—we share a border."

Her name was Eliza. When I told her I had just arrived via the Elizabeth Line, we both laughed. The conversation grew easy and warm. When I mentioned I was heading to the University of Exeter for an academic workshop, she looked genuinely pleased.

"You are lucky," she said. "Not everyone gets a UK visa. See everything you can. Learn everything you can."

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 from rural India,  
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### **UK's Elegance Now may Fade over Time**

I told her I liked the UK. She smiled knowingly. "Yes," she said, "but slowly, this feeling might change."

I ordered a small coffee. Though I paid for a small cup, they gave me a larger one. It felt like a quiet welcome gift.

### **Finding a Cosmopolitan Rhythm**

The Somali woman at the café smiled generously too. When I asked where she was from, she replied gently, "I'm from Somalia, brother," in a soft British accent. Standing there with coffee in hand, surrounded by voices from Nepal and Somalia, I did not feel like a foreigner. I felt part of a deeply cosmopolitan rhythm.

Across Paddington and London, no one seemed surprised by my presence as an Indian. Unlike in Istanbul, where every conversation begins with "Where are you from?", London felt different—less curious, more habitual. Istanbul has its own warmth; this was another kind. Perhaps living longer here would reveal more layers, but for now, I was slowly syncing with the city.

### **A City Shaped by Global Workers**

What struck me most was how workers from everywhere—South Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe—flowed naturally into London's daily life. The diversity felt organic rather than ornamental. Police officers and station staff, regardless of origin, were patient and courteous. In a city so crowded and busy, that civility stood out.

I could not sleep on the train to Exeter. Station after station passed, and my thoughts drifted to train journeys in Bihar—watching villages slide by, discussing crops, rainfall, and the fate of the season. Sitting there, far from home, I felt unexpectedly close to it.

### **Familiarities Beneath the Irony**

Half-heartedly, I wondered if there was some deeper connection between us and the British—perhaps that was why this land felt familiar. Maybe we even share blood relations. After all, they have sucked our blood for centuries. Sarcasm aside, the similarities were striking. Even the railway networks and ticketing systems reminded me of India. And honestly, I still believe India's old railway stations look more beautiful than many modern ones.

The train was not crowded, but it was expensive. Railways here are privatized, with multiple companies operating on the same tracks. Wi-Fi allowed passengers to work seamlessly during travel. It was a quiet, reflective journey—one that helped me arrive slowly and meaningfully, not only in Exeter, but into the journey itself.

For my Exeter experience, please wait for the next edition which is even more exciting. Until then—bye.

(To be continued...)

## EDUCATION

# WHY ELECTRICITY IS THE BACKBONE OF INDIA'S SCHOOLS

From classrooms to kitchens, India's schools run on electricity as much as they do on textbooks. When power fails, lessons stop, technology turns ornamental, and heat makes teaching unbearable.

Renewable energy for schools is no longer a climate ideal or a pilot project—it is an educational necessity. Designed right, it can deliver what reforms often promise but fail to ensure: consistency, safety, and dignity in everyday learning.



BY KSHITIZ RAJ

The author is a sustainability professional at Redaptive Sustainability Services in Denver, Colorado, where he focuses on energy efficiency and clean energy solutions for institutional and commercial clients.

India's classrooms run on more electricity than chalk and curiosity. When power is reliable, lights stay on during examinations, fans cool overcrowded classrooms in peak summer, laboratories function properly, kitchens meet midday-meal schedules, and computers become real teaching tools. When electricity fails, everything else falters with it. This is why renewable energy—especially rooftop solar for schools and community micro-grids—has moved beyond a climate ideal and emerged as a practical necessity for education planning.

The question is no longer whether clean energy supports learning. That

is already evident. The real challenge is how to deploy it in ways that can survive tight budgets, extreme heat, erratic weather, and the everyday realities of school administration—where administrators cannot afford to spend evenings troubleshooting technical failures.

School enrolment and digital education in India have grown faster than power infrastructure. This gap appears in small but frequent disruptions. A science lesson stalls because a microscope camera will not turn on. A smart board becomes useless when the backup generator fails. Equipment overloads weak power lines, causing schools to

meet midday-meal kitchen standards one week and fail the next. These are not isolated problems; they are daily interruptions that force teachers to improvise and students to lose valuable learning time.

A rooftop solar system designed around daytime school needs, supported by a modest battery, can reduce dependence on an unreliable grid during heatwaves or storms. A cluster of schools connected through a community solar micro-grid can continue functioning even when outages would otherwise cancel an entire day of instruction. Crucially, this does not require a nationwide overhaul. It requires



projects designed around educational needs rather than generic energy targets.

Schools have very different power profiles from factories or commercial buildings. Electricity demand rises during morning assemblies, examinations, lunch hours, and afternoon remedial classes. Fans, lights, laboratories, kitchens, water pumps, and computer rooms are often essential and must remain operational. Systems therefore need to be synchronised with the school timetable, with sufficient capacity to cover daily routines and handle short disruptions. Critical circuits must be protected, while non-essential loads are shed automatically. Equally important, equipment must be simple and familiar enough for local electricians to maintain. Advanced-looking systems often fail because spare parts are unavailable and repairs become unmanageable.

Most government and aided schools cannot absorb large upfront investments. Fortunately, workable financing models already exist. Under pay-as-you-go service models, developers install and maintain sys-



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**In India's heat-stressed schools, electricity is not a convenience— it is the backbone of learning. Without reliable power, classrooms fall silent, technology fails, and basic dignity slips out of reach.**

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tems while schools pay a monthly fee lower than their previous electricity bills. District- or state-level pooled procurement reduces costs, standardises equipment, and simplifies maintenance, ensuring that even remote schools are included. In some areas, CSR-funded community microgrids help bridge funding gaps while supporting nearby households. What matters across all models is predictability. Schools need clear contracts, modest escalation, and enforceable service standards— without repeated renegotiations.

When power becomes reliable, benefits are immediate and cumulative. Attendance improves during the hottest months because classrooms remain usable. Teachers adopt digital tools with confidence. Principals redirect diesel expenses toward books, fans, and basic facilities. Laboratories shift from demonstrations to hands-on experiments. Kitchens consistently meet food-safety norms. These changes may not be dramatic, but reliable power steadily raises educational quality.

Heat has become a serious educational challenge. Longer and harsher



summers make learning impossible in poorly ventilated classrooms. Solar-powered fans and modest power backups are no longer luxuries; they are necessities. Reliable electricity keeps refrigerators running to protect midday meals, ensures access to clean drinking water through pumps, and improves lighting in corridors, toilets, and hostel areas—especially for girls attending evening classes. Electrification restores dignity to spaces that would otherwise remain neglected.

Digital learning, too, depends on reliable power. Too often, technology arrives before proper wiring, turning smart screens into expensive showpieces. With well-designed energy systems, computer labs and digital classrooms can be placed on protected circuits. Networks remain uninterrupted. School heads can track usage, and teachers no longer have to warn students that the “smart class may not work today.”

School administrators rightly worry about anything that adds complexity or disrupts daily schedules. Renewable systems succeed only when they respect this reality. Maintenance must be planned, not emergency-driven. Spare parts should be locally available, and repairs should be swift. Teachers need only basic training: which circuits are protected, how to reset a breaker, and whom to call for support. Simple diagrams matter far more than thick instruction manuals.

Many projects fail for predictable

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**Renewable energy for schools has moved beyond climate symbolism. When designed around real classroom needs, it becomes a practical reform—keeping lessons running, kitchens safe, and students learning, day after day.**  
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reasons. They chase grants instead of sound design, install equipment without long-term service plans, or treat schools as isolated pilots with no standardisation. Successful programmes do the opposite. They begin with outcomes—cool classrooms, working labs, safe kitchens—and design systems backwards from those needs. They reward reliability, penalise downtime, train users, and standardise equipment that can be maintained easily.

At the state level, scaling requires discipline. Schools must be audited before procurement. Standard equipment packages should be defined. Tenders

must reward performance, not just the lowest price. District-level service hubs are essential. And outcomes that families actually care about—attendance, lab usage, food safety—should be measured and published. Transparency builds trust and momentum.

Renewable energy in schools is not a side initiative. It underpins nearly every education reform, from digital learning and STEM education to safety, health, and climate resilience. It also teaches by example. When students realise the fan above them runs on sunlight from the roof, sustainability becomes tangible rather than theoretical.

The best education technology is invisible. Students should not think about where power comes from any more than they think about chalk. They should walk into a well-lit classroom, feel a working fan, use a functioning computer, and complete a laboratory experiment on time. Renewable energy can make this normal—if it is designed for schools, focused on reliability rather than ceremonies, and respectful of the people who run schools every day.

India has expanded access to education remarkably well. The next leap is about quality and consistency. Reliable power is part of that leap. Install systems where they matter most, wire what matters first, pay for performance, and train those who keep schools running. Do these basics well, and renewable energy will quietly support learning—every single day. ■

# WHY RAJEN BABU'S LANGUAGE VISION STILL MATTERS

At a time when debates over language in India often slide into sharp identity politics, it is worth returning to the quiet ideas of Rajen Babu. As the first President of India and a key figure in the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad viewed language not as a weapon of dominance or exclusion, but as a bridge between democracy, culture, and national unity. Revisiting his writings and constitutional interventions reveals a vision that valued inclusiveness, clarity, and cultural confidence—one that remains deeply relevant to India's multilingual present.



**ANIL K PRASAD**

A Ph.D. and retired English professor, the author, having teaching experience across India, the Middle East, Africa, Jordan, Massachusetts, and Oxford, is a distinguished scholar, writer, and multilingual poet specializing in cross-cultural education and human rights. Recognized by Sahitya Akademi for translating few chapters of Yashpal's *Jutha Sach*, he has also received several awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award 2024 and Bihar Gaurav Samman 2025.

**D**r Rajendra Prasad (1884–1963), India's first President, was not only a nationalist leader, constitutional statesman, and freedom fighter, but also a thoughtful intellectual whose reflections on language, culture, and national integration helped shape modern India's democratic imagination. His writings and speeches—particularly *India Divided* (1946), his interventions during the Constituent Assembly Debates, his autobiography *Atmakatha* (1947), and

*Sanskrit Aur Sanskriti* (first published in 1974; revised edition 2010)—reveal a coherent and ethically grounded philosophy of language.

For Dr Prasad, language was never a narrow administrative issue. It lay at the intersection of democracy, culture, and national unity. He believed that linguistic choices could either empower citizens or alienate them; they could bind a diverse society together or deepen its fractures. Across his political, constitutional, and cultural writings, Prasad consistently argued for linguistic inclusiveness, cultural rootedness, and moral clarity as foundations of a democratic India.

His ideas on language emerge from three overlapping contexts: his political thought, his leadership during the Constitution framing, and his cultural essays in Hindi and English. Taken together, these sources demonstrate a sustained commitment to democratic communication, linguistic pluralism, and cultural decolonisation. In Prasad's vision, language was not merely a tool of governance but a medium capable of restoring India's intellectual self-confidence and nurturing national cohesion.

## Language and Democratic Participation

One of the central themes in Dr Rajendra Prasad's thinking is the intimate relationship between language and democracy. For him, language was not an elite ornament but the primary means through which political awareness and participation could reach the masses.

During the Constituent Assembly debates, Prasad repeatedly supported the principle that democracy must function in languages people understand and emotionally connect with. He believed that when governance operates in an unfamiliar or socially exclusive language, democratic participation weakens. His reservations about the long-term dominance of English arose not from hostility toward the language itself, but from the reality that English remained inaccessible to the majority of Indians.

In *Atmakatha*, Prasad reflects on the importance of simple, direct communication in political life. He warned that reliance on a foreign language could perpetuate inequality, dependency, and a sense of inferiority—precisely the conditions that an independent

democracy should seek to overcome. Language, in his view, was a democratic right, not a privilege reserved for the educated few.

### Language as Cultural Heritage

Prasad's reflections on language were deeply intertwined with his understanding of civilisation and cultural memory. He believed that language anchors a people in their history and collective consciousness. A national language, therefore, could not be chosen solely for administrative convenience; it had to reflect cultural continuity.



**For Rajen Babu,  
language was not an  
administrative tool  
but a democratic  
right—one that must  
speak to the people  
it governs.**

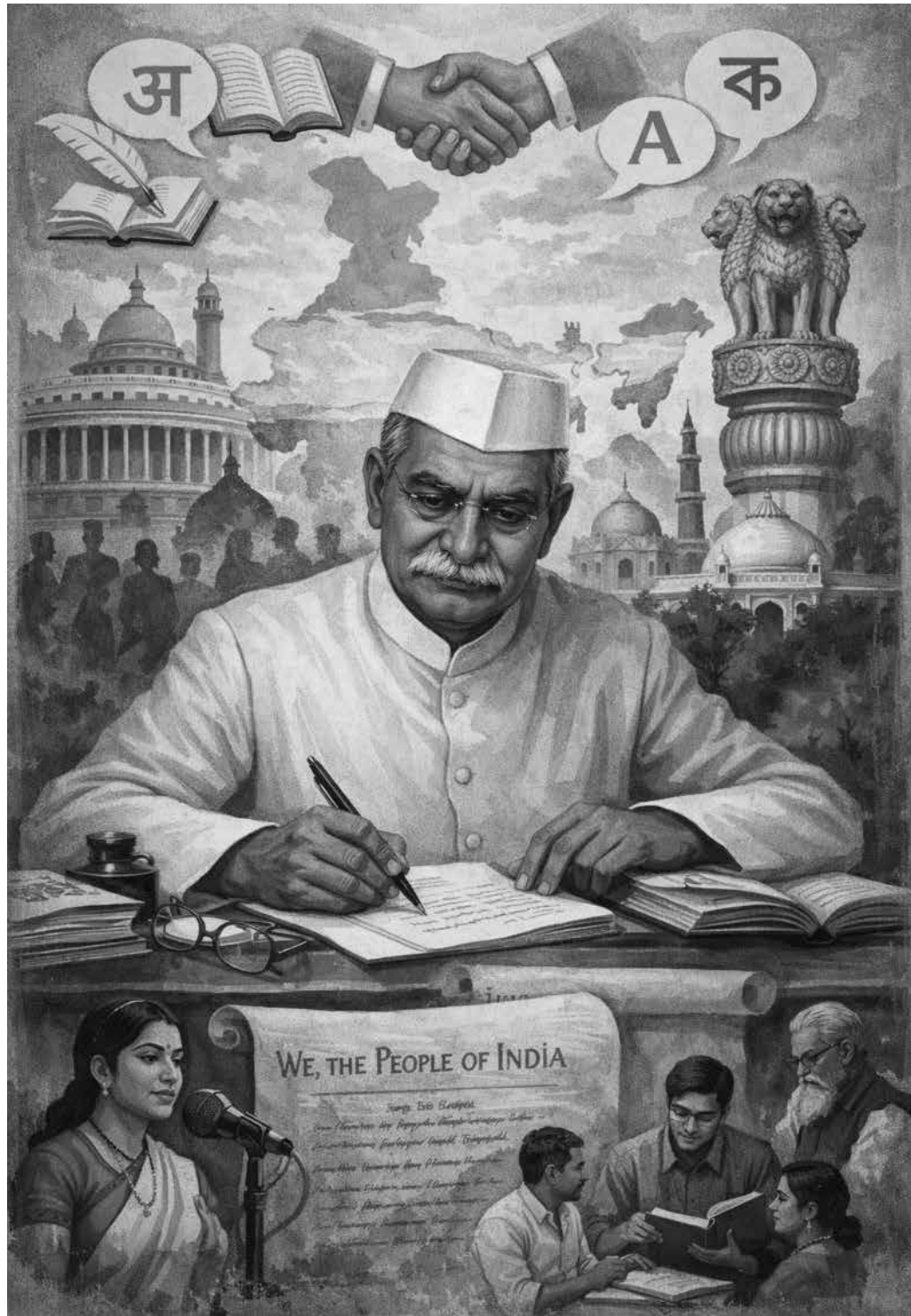


In *India Divided*, while addressing the political trauma of Partition, Prasad repeatedly gestures toward shared cultural symbols—including language—as essential to national integration. He argued that nation-building could not rely on narrow provincial or sectarian identities. Language, for him, was part of a larger civilisational inheritance that connected India's past with its future.

His preference for Hindustani or Hindi in the Devanagari script was rooted in its historical association with the masses and its deep cultural resonance in large parts of India. Yet this preference was never exclusionary. Prasad consistently emphasised tolerance, mutual respect, and accommodation among India's many linguistic communities.

### Language and National Integration

A significant dimension of Prasad's language philosophy concerns national unity. He recognised that linguistic diver-



sity was one of India's greatest cultural strengths, but also a potential source of political tension if mishandled.

In *India Divided*, Prasad critiques colonial strategies of "divide and rule," noting how cultural and communal differences—including language—were exploited for political ends. He understood that linguistic identities could be manipulated to foster di-

vision. As a result, the question of a national or link language had to be approached with sensitivity rather than coercion.

Prasad accepted the practical need for a common language to facilitate national communication, but he insisted that linguistic unity must emerge through consent and gradual accommodation. At the same time, he

strongly supported the development of provincial and regional languages as essential to a genuine federal democracy. This balanced vision anticipated the logic that would later inform India's three-language formula.

#### Clarity, Simplicity, and Ethical Communication

A less discussed but deeply important aspect of Prasad's thought concerns the ethics of language. He believed that public communication should be clear, simple, truthful, and morally responsible. For Prasad, how something was said mattered as much as what was said.

In his autobiography, he acknowledges Mahatma Gandhi's influence on his own preference for simplicity in expression. This influence is evident in Prasad's prose, which—whether in Hindi or English—is marked by restraint, transparency, and moral seriousness.

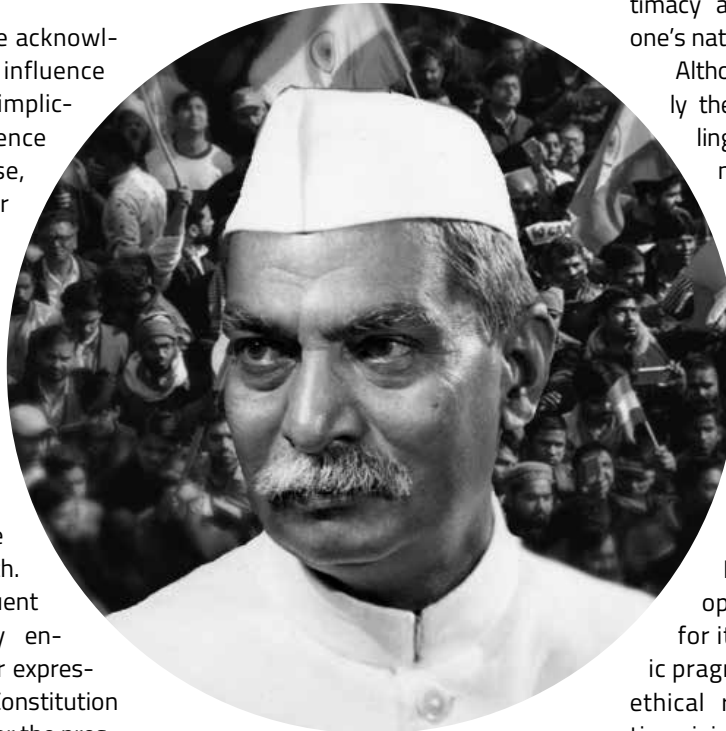
This ethical approach is particularly visible in *India Divided*, where Prasad addresses communal tensions in a measured and precise language, avoiding inflammatory rhetoric while maintaining analytical depth. As President of the Constituent Assembly, he consistently encouraged dignified and clear expression, fully aware that the Constitution was being drafted not just for the present but for generations to come.

#### Language and Decolonisation

Prasad's views on language are inseparable from his understanding of decolonisation. He recognised that colonial domination was not merely political but also intellectual and linguistic. While acknowledging the utility of English education, he remained wary of its role in creating a culturally detached elite.

For Prasad, political freedom without cultural and intellectual self-reliance was incomplete. Decolonisation, in his view, required rediscovering the expressive power of Indian languages,

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**From the Constituent Assembly to his cultural writings, Prasad consistently warned that democracy weakens when its language alienates ordinary citizens.**  
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**Rooted in Indian traditions yet open to plurality, Rajen Babu's language vision offers a humane alternative to both linguistic nationalism and cultural amnesia.**  
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promoting scholarship in indigenous tongues, and rejecting the assumption that modernity could exist only through English. Language, therefore, became a means of reclaiming cultural agency after centuries of subordination.

#### Language, Emotion, and Bhojpuri Roots

An often-overlooked dimension of Prasad's linguistic thought lies in his emotional attachment to his mother tongue and rural Bhojpuri-speaking background in Bihar. In his personal writings, he frequently evokes the intimacy and warmth associated with one's native linguistic environment.

Although Prasad did not explicitly theorise Bhojpuri as a separate linguistic system, his respect for mother tongues clearly shaped his broader philosophy. He believed that political consciousness and education must grow from the languages people use in everyday life, and that any national language should never devalue regional or local expressions.

#### Conclusion

Dr Rajendra Prasad's philosophy of language stands out for its rare balance of democratic pragmatism, cultural rootedness, ethical responsibility, and integrative vision. Across his major writings and constitutional interventions, he consistently treated language as a foundational element of national life rather than a technical administrative concern.

He saw language as a democratic right, a carrier of cultural memory, a tool for national integration, and a medium of moral communication. At a time when linguistic debates often harden into rigid identity politics, Prasad's humane and inclusive approach remains strikingly relevant. His ideas invite India to build unity through cultural self-confidence, ethical clarity, and linguistic policies that serve the people rather than dominate them. ■

# THE DAY SOVEREIGNTY LOST ITS BORDERS

On January 3, 2026, the world witnessed a scene that many believed belonged to a bygone era: a sitting head of state forcibly removed from his own capital by foreign military forces. The United States' extraction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was not merely a dramatic rupture in Latin American politics—it was a direct challenge to the modern idea of sovereignty itself. For countries like India and the wider Global South, the episode raises unsettling questions about the validity of international law, the security of overseas investments, and whether power, once again, is beginning to trump principle in the global order.



BY SANJAY KUMAR  
VERMA

A 1988 IFS Officer having 37 years of experience who has served as India's Ambassador to Sudan, Japan, and Canada, the author is currently the Chairperson of RIS (Research & Information System for Developing Countries), a Global South Think Tank and has special interests in foreign policy, security, and the global economy.

The image of a sitting head of state being extracted by foreign military forces from his own capital is one the international system was meant to have buried with the end of the Cold War. Yet on January 3, 2026, the United States did precisely that in Venezuela. The capture of President Nicolás Maduro under 'Operation Absolute Resolve' is not merely a dramatic episode in Latin American politics; it constitutes a profound stress test for the very idea of sovereignty in the twenty-first century.



While New Delhi has responded with calls for restraint, regional stability, and peaceful dialogue—language broadly consistent with India’s reaction to Russia’s military action in Ukraine in February 2022—the implications of this intervention extend far beyond bilateral India–Venezuela ties. At stake is

an unacceptable line’ and sets a ‘dangerous precedent’, while South Africa characterised the operation as a ‘manifest violation of the UN Charter’ and demanded his release. India expressed comparatively milder ‘deep concern’ and reiterated calls for peaceful dialogue to ensure regional stability. While

that has historically enjoyed broad international consensus.

Senior US officials, including adviser Stephen Miller, went further, explicitly asserting American ownership claims over Venezuelan oil infrastructure and production capacity, framing the nationalisation of Venezuela’s oil industry



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## The forcible removal of Venezuela’s president marks a return to an era where military power, not international law, decides the fate of sovereign states.

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the credibility of the legal and political architecture on which the Global South has historically relied to shield itself from the discretionary use of force by stronger states.

BRICS nations voiced sharp concern over the US military intervention. Russia described it as ‘armed aggression’ and dismissed Washington’s justifications as ‘groundless’. China ‘strongly condemned’ the action and urged the United States to cease efforts at forcibly toppling governments. Brazil warned that Maduro’s capture ‘crosses

the intensity of responses varied within the bloc, the emphasis on sovereignty was unmistakably shared.

### The Nature of US Intervention

The 2026 operation represents the largest direct US military intervention in Latin America since the 1989 invasion of Panama. Acting on a presidential directive, US forces forcibly removed a sitting head of state from his capital city and extracted him from sovereign territory. Under international law, the action rests on exceptionally thin ground. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter explicitly prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, except in cases of self-defence or with authorisation from the UN Security Council. Neither condition was met. The forcible removal of a head of state by a foreign military power sans any multilateral sanction constitutes not merely an infringement of sovereignty but a direct challenge to the long-standing prohibition on unilateral regime change—one of the few norms

in 1976 as ‘theft of American resources’. Such rhetoric signals a return to the original nineteenth-century logic of the Monroe Doctrine, in which the Western Hemisphere was declared an exclusive US sphere of influence and intervention was justified as an expression of regional hegemony. This framing was reiterated in the US National Security Strategy released on December 4, 2025.

The intervention cannot be viewed in isolation from the two-decade escalation of US economic sanctions that preceded it. Since the 2019 oil embargo, Washington has imposed over 200 sanctions on Venezuelan individuals, state entities, and companies—measures enacted entirely through US domestic legislation. Though justified on grounds ranging from narcotics trafficking to the enforcement of purported ‘international’ norms, these sanctions functioned as instruments of sustained economic coercion.

### A Cycle of Interventions

The comparison with the 1989 invasion of Panama is instructive. In both cases,



US authorities justified intervention by invoking alleged criminality—drug trafficking in the cases of both Manuel Noriega and Nicolás Maduro—framed the operation as the restoration of democracy, and proceeded without multilateral authorisation.

This pattern predates the Trump administration. US interventions in Guatemala (1954), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Nicaragua (during the 1980s) demonstrate that international opposition to such actions often proves fleeting. The Venezuela operation is therefore not an aberration, but reiteration of a familiar template following a period in which unilateral military intervention carried higher reputational costs.

For India, this history is not merely academic. It bears directly on the security of its overseas investments, energy interests, and long-term strategic autonomy.

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**For the Global South, Venezuela is not a regional crisis but a precedent—one that exposes how easily overseas investments, energy assets and political autonomy can be rewritten by force.**  
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#### Risks to India

While India's current trade with Venezuela is modest—approximately US\$365 million in 2025, down from over US\$1 billion in 2023—India's equity investments in Venezuelan oil projects remain substantial and strate-

gically significant. ONGC Videsh holds a 40 per cent stake in the San Cristóbal field, with an investment exposure of roughly US\$200 million. Indian companies collectively hold stakes in the Carabobo blocks representing over US\$500 million in trapped value, immobilised by US sanctions.

A US-controlled or US-aligned government in Caracas could theoretically prioritise American oil companies over Indian investors, renegotiating terms or reallocating assets under the banner of 'restoring' Venezuelan sovereignty. Even if Indian investments are formally honoured, the precedent itself establishes that US military power can unilaterally reshape the legal and political environment governing foreign investments.

India thus faces a growing dilemma: whether to work with fellow Global South and BRICS partners to establish credible deterrence against such interventions, or to accept a

global order in which its interests remain structurally subordinate to hegemonic preferences.

### Global Energy Security

The longer-term implications extend to global oil markets and the currency regime underpinning them. Venezuela's proven reserves—estimated at 303 billion barrels, or roughly 17 per cent of the global total—exceed those of Saudi Arabia. Under a US-aligned administration, Venezuelan output could eventually rise from its current level of approximately 800,000 barrels per day to 2 million or more. Such an expansion would flood markets with heavy crude, benefitting US refiners specifically configured to process it, while reinforcing the centrality of the petro-dollar in global energy trade.

For India, the implications are mixed. Lower global prices would reduce India's import bill, a significant advantage given that crude oil accounts for roughly 12 per cent of total imports. However, if Venezuelan crude is preferentially channelled

a critical juncture in India's energy strategy. New Delhi has invested heavily in domestic alternatives: ethanol blending (already achieving 20 per cent by 2025), bio-CNG production (targeting a 5 per cent blend by 2028–29), and green hydrogen initiatives (aiming for 5 million metric tonnes by 2030). These are medium- to long-term investments. In the near term—over the next 10 to 15 years—India remains structurally de-

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**India's energy security faces a new vulnerability: when regime change can reshape oil flows overnight, diversification and alternatives become matters of national defence, not policy choice.**

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sanctions power. If oil trade migrates away from dollar-denominated channels, secondary sanctions imposed on non-US banks become less effective.

### India's Path Forward

What options does India have in response to the Venezuela precedent? First, New Delhi must consistently articulate that the international rule of law, as enshrined in the UN Charter, applies universally—regardless of a state's size or military power.

Second, India should accelerate energy-security measures aimed at reducing dependence on vulnerable overseas assets. Renewable expansion, alternative fuels, and strategic petroleum reserves should be viewed not as discretionary climate initiatives but as core national security imperatives. Diversification away from excessive reliance on any single region or alliance must remain central to policy.

Third, India could strengthen BRICS coordination on collective responses—diplomatic, economic, and reputational—to military interventionism. This need not entail alignment against the United States, but rather the establishment of shared expectations that unilateral force carries tangible costs.

Finally, India must recalibrate its non-aligned strategy for an era of contested sovereignty. The Venezuela episode underscores an uncomfortable reality: sovereignty today is no longer guaranteed by law alone, but by the collective willingness of states to defend the norms that sustain it. Non-alignment cannot mean quiet neutrality in the face of norm erosion; it must mean principled consistency and strategic coordination with others who share an interest in restraining unilateral power.

India was among the principal architects of the post-colonial sovereignty doctrine, giving voice to nations emerging from empire. If that legacy is allowed to erode when it becomes inconvenient, the cost will not be abstract. It will be paid in diminished autonomy, vulnerable investments, and a world in which rules bend—predictably and repeatedly—toward power. ■



toward US refiners while Asian markets face constrained access to heavy crude, regional prices could rise. Indian refineries—particularly those operated by Reliance and Indian Oil Corporation—are optimised for heavy crude and would be disadvantaged under such conditions.

The Venezuela precedent arrives at

pendent on crude oil imports from politically stable and predictable sources.

Equally significant is the petro-dollar dimension. Under both Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela sought to weaken dollar dominance by pricing some oil exports in euros and yuan. This directly challenged the financial infrastructure underpinning US

UNION BUDGET-2026

# WILL IT AID INDIA'S BANKING SECTOR?

As India prepares for the Union Budget 2026, the banking sector stands at a critical crossroads. From long-pending workforce reforms and deposit mobilisation to MSME credit, digital transformation, and financial stability, banks are seeking policy clarity that goes beyond short-term fixes. This piece outlines the key expectations from the Budget and explains why targeted reforms are essential to build a resilient, future-ready banking system.



BY SATISH SINGH

A Mumbai-based columnist, the author currently serves as an Assistant General Manager with SBI.

The banking sector, like several other key industries, is looking to the forthcoming Union Budget with specific expectations aimed at strengthening stability, efficiency, and workforce morale. One

of the most critical and long-pending demands of bank employees is the introduction of a five-day workweek. At present, there are no substantial structural or operational barriers to implementing this reform. Several major institutions—including the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), insurance companies, stock exchanges, and foreign banks—have already adopted a five-day schedule. Against this backdrop, bank employees are hopeful that the 2026 Budget will fi-

nally acknowledge and address this long-standing aspiration.

The demand gains further relevance in today's rapidly evolving financial ecosystem, where digital banking has significantly altered customer behaviour. A growing share of banking transactions now takes place through mobile phones and digital platforms, enabling customers to open or close accounts, transfer funds, and conduct deposits or withdrawals without physically visiting a bank branch. This digital transformation has reduced footfall across





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**As digital banking reshapes customer behaviour, the Union Budget 2026 faces growing pressure to address long-pending banking reforms—from a five-day workweek and fair taxation of employee allowances to measures that strengthen morale and productivity across the sector.**

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branches and reshaped the operational demands placed on bank employees, making the case for a five-day workweek even more compelling.

However, recent changes in government tax policies have created fresh challenges for bank employees. Allowances and benefits that were earlier exempt are now being taxed as regular income, directly affecting employees' take-home pay. This additional tax burden has strained the financial well-being of bank staff and adversely impacted morale. Addressing this concern by

announcing a five-day workweek, along with restoring tax exemptions on allowances, would provide immediate relief. More importantly, it would boost employee motivation and productivity, leading to improved service delivery and overall performance within the banking sector.

Another pressing concern confronting banks is the shortage of affordable capital, largely due to sluggish deposit growth. While credit demand has remained robust, deposit mobilisation has failed to keep pace. This imbalance

has prompted the RBI to take corrective steps, including reducing the repo rate and injecting liquidity through open market operations (OMO). Yet, these measures are temporary solutions and do not address the underlying structural challenge.

For a sustainable resolution to the deposit crunch, traditional investors must be encouraged to return to the banking system. The Union Budget should therefore consider introducing special tax incentives for bank deposits and, where feasible, abolishing existing taxes on savings instruments. At present, savings accounts, recurring deposits, and fixed deposits are all subject to taxation, discouraging long-term household savings in banks. In parallel, sensible tax treatment for mutual funds, pensions, insurance products, and other financial instruments is essential to ensure the availability of stable and low-cost capital across the financial ecosystem. A stronger deposit base would enable banks to meet rising credit demand more effectively, thereby stimulating economic growth.

Further strengthening the banking system requires urgent attention to the issue of inactive and dormant accounts. According to data available as of June 2025, over ₹67,000 crore lay idle in such accounts across Indian banks, with no active claimants. Clearer regulations and improved processes for handling dormant accounts could allow these funds to be channelled productively into lending activities. Strategic budgetary provisions in this area would help unlock a significant pool of idle capital.

Encouragingly, the banking sector's asset quality has shown steady improvement. The RBI's half-yearly Financial Stability Report released on December 31, 2025, highlighted that the gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio declined to 2.1% by September 2025 and is projected to further improve to 1.9% by March 2027. While current NPA levels remain manageable, further strengthening can be achieved through enhanced credit guarantee schemes, risk-sharing mechanisms, and targeted policy interventions. Such measures

would reinforce financial stability and sustain long-term economic growth.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) remain a vital engine of India's economy, and banks play a pivotal role in supporting this segment. The country is home to over 65 million MSME units, employing nearly 280 million people. Together, they contribute around 30% to India's GDP and account for approximately 45.73% of total exports. Given their economic significance, the Union Budget must include dedicated provisions to strengthen MSME financing and resilience.

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**With credit demand rising and deposit growth lagging, targeted Budget interventions—ranging from tax incentives for deposits to stronger MSME financing and technology-driven governance—are critical to building a resilient, future-ready banking system.**

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Recent trends indicate that MSMEs have benefited from improved consumer demand during the festive season, healthier cash flows, and GST slab rationalisation introduced in September. To sustain this momentum, the government should focus on simplifying access to government schemes and streamlining GST and tax compliance in the upcoming Budget. These measures would significantly enhance ease of doing business and accelerate MSME growth.

The sector is also undergoing a digital transformation, driven by increased adoption of online tools, UPI-based payments, improved cash

flow management, and greater transparency through digitalisation. To build on these gains, budgetary support must empower banks to deepen MSME outreach. Investments in digital infrastructure across rural areas and Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are especially critical to extend banking services to underserved regions and promote inclusive growth.

In the evolving financial landscape, banks must go beyond their traditional role as lenders and emerge as strong, globally competitive institutions. One path towards this goal is the strategic consolidation of smaller banks into larger entities capable of delivering transparent and efficient services nationwide. Simultaneously, accelerated adoption of advanced technologies—particularly artificial intelligence, blockchain, and digital banking solutions—can improve operational efficiency, risk management, and customer experience.

Attracting both domestic and foreign private capital through comprehensive tax reforms is equally important to revitalise MSMEs and strengthen the broader financial system. Leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain can significantly reduce loan processing times, enhance security, and improve credit assessment. In addition, targeted policies to encourage investment in green energy projects and critical infrastructure must be backed by concrete budgetary commitments.

In conclusion, the Union Budget to be presented on February 1, 2026, offers a crucial opportunity to reinforce India's banking sector through measures that promote digital innovation, financial inclusion, MSME lending, and improved governance of public sector banks. The adoption of a five-day workweek, coupled with tax relief on employee allowances, would not only improve staff morale but also enhance productivity and profitability. Together, these reforms can help build a more resilient, efficient, and future-ready banking system—one capable of supporting India's long-term economic ambitions. ■

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# अमेरिका पहुँचना, ज़िंदगी नहीं

पंजाब के छोटे कस्बों में अमेरिका आज भी एक सपना है—ऐसा सपना जिसे नाम, ज़मीन और कर्ज़ के सहारे सच करने की कोशिश की जाती है। अमरीक सिंह की कहानी उसी सपने की है, जो 'डंकी रूट' से होकर अमेरिका तो पहुँचता है, लेकिन आज़ादी, सुरक्षा और सम्मान की तलाश में सालों तक अटका रह जाता है। यह कथा अवैध प्रवासन के रोमांच की नहीं, बल्कि उस कीमत की है जो सपनों के पीछे भागते हुए चुपचाप चुकानी पड़ती है।



डॉ. निलय रंजन सिंह

हाल ही में मिले 'सीईओ ऑफ द ईयर' पुरस्कार सहित कई अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मानों के प्राप्तकर्ता, लेखक वर्तमान में स्टेट बैंक ऑफ इंडिया, डीआईएफसी, दुबई के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी हैं।

पंजाब के हमारे शहर में दो चीज़ें बहुत मशहूर थीं—कबड्डी और अमेरिका जाने वाले लड़के। कबड्डी खेलने वाले बच्चे मिट्टी में लोटते थे, और अमेरिका जाने वाले डॉलर में। इन दोनों के बीच सबसे ज़्यादा चर्चित नाम था—अमरीक सिंह।

अमरीक के पिता, भूपेंद्र सिंह, ने बेटे का नाम बड़े सोच-समझकर रखा था। उनका मानना था कि नाम ही किस्मत का पहला वीज़ा होता है। भूपेंद्र सिंह के लिए 'देश' का मतलब अमेरिका था। गाँव वाले हँसते हुए कहते, "भूपेंद्र, तेरा बेटा तो नाम से ही विदेशी है।"

भूपेंद्र सिंह गर्व से जवाब देते, "हमने नाम में ही वीज़ा लगवा दिया है।"

लेकिन नाम में वीज़ा लगाना जितना आसान था, पासपोर्ट में लगवाना उतना नहीं।

अमरीक ने देखा कि गाँव के जो लड़के अमेरिका पहुँचे थे, वे दो ही रास्तों से गए थे—या तो आईआईटी करके, या फिर 'डंकी रूट' से। आईआईटी का रास्ता अमरीक के लिए बंद था। गणित में उसका दिमाग खरबूजे जैसा था—मीठा, पर हल्का फुल्का। बचा सिर्फ़ डंकी रूट।

डंकी रूट गाँव में एक रहस्य था। कोई कहता, यह ज़मीन के नीचे बनी सुरंग है जो सीधे कैलिफ़ोर्निया ले जाती है। कोई कहता, यह किसी एजेंसी का नाम है। और कोई इसे रेगिस्तान में ऊँट की सवारी बताता।

असल में, डंकी रूट एक ऐसा जाल था जो गरीबों के सपनों को पकड़ता था और उन्हें

अमेरिकी सीमा पर छोड़ देता था—ज़िंदा रहे तो किस्मत, मर गए तो आँकड़ा।

अमरीक ने घर-बार बेचकर डंकी रूट का टिकट खरीदा। कीमत थी—पिता की दस बीघा ज़मीन, माँ के गहने, और साहूकार का कर्ज़।

एजेंट ने भरोसा दिलाया, "यह आखिरी भुगतान है। अब तुम सीधे न्यूयॉर्क पहुँचोगे। ग्रीन कार्ड जेब में होगा।"

यात्रा की शुरुआत दिल्ली के एक तंग से दफ़्तर से हुई, जहाँ अमरीक और दस अन्य लड़कों को 'ट्रेनिंग' दी गई। ट्रेनिंग में सिखाया गया—"अगर कोई पूछे कि कहाँ जा रहे हो, तो कहना टूरिस्ट। अगर पूछे पैसे कहाँ हैं, तो कहना चाचा के पास। अगर पूछे कि क्या करोगे, तो कहना घूमूंगा।"

इसके बाद दिल्ली से दुबई, दुबई से तुर्की, और तुर्की से मैक्सिको।

मैक्सिको में उन्हें एक छोटे से कमरे में ठूस दिया गया—बीस लोग। यहीं पहली बार बताया—

"अब आगे रेगिस्तान है। पैदल चलना होगा। पानी खुद उठाना होगा।"

अगली रात एक वैन उन्हें रेगिस्तान के किनारे छोड़ गई। 'कोयोट' नाम का आदमी था, जो सीमा पार कराता था।

अमरीक ने पूछा, "डंकी रूट कहाँ है?"

कोयोट हँसा, "यही है। यहाँ गधे भी नहीं चलते, पर तुम चलोगे।"

तीन दिन और तीन रातें—पैरों में छाले, पेट

में भूख, और दिल में डर। चौथे दिन एक बाड़ दिखाई दी।

"वही अमेरिका है," कोयोट बोला, "अब खुद जाओ।"

बाड़ पार करते ही अमरीक ने सोचा—अब ज़िंदगी शुरू होगी।

लेकिन ज़िंदगी से पहले एक पुलिस वाला मिला।

"हैंड्स अप।"

उसी पल अमरीक को पहली बार लगा कि शायद नाम किस्मत नहीं बदल सकता।

उन्हें डिटेंशन सेंटर भेज दिया गया—एक बड़ा हॉल, सैकड़ों चेहरे, अलग-अलग देश, एक-सी बेचैनी। वही उसकी मुलाकात रमेश से हुई, जो पाँच साल से वहीं था।

रमेश बोला, "यहाँ समय नहीं चलता। यह वेटिंग रूम है—कुछ को शरण मिलती है, कुछ को डिपोर्टेशन। हम जैसे लोग बीच में लटके रहते हैं।"

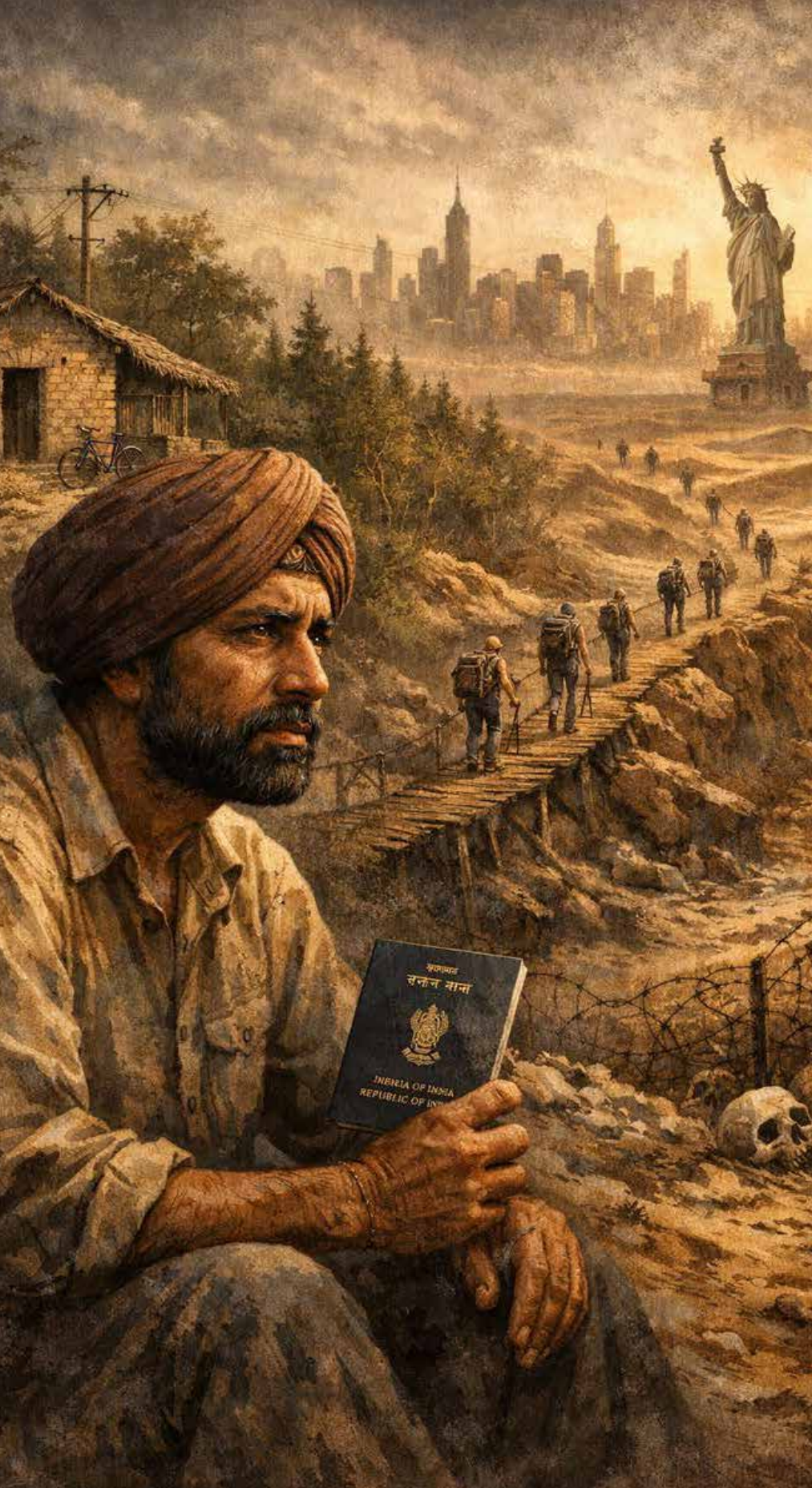
कई महीनों बाद वकील मिला। दो विकल्प थे—एसाइलम या डिपोर्टेशन।

"तुम सिख हो? बढ़िया," वकील बोला, "कह दो भारत में तुम्हारी जान को खतरा है।"

"पर मेरे साथ तो कुछ नहीं हुआ।" "तो झूठ बोलना सीखो। यहाँ झूठ ही सच है।"

अमरीक ने झूठी कहानी पर दस्तख़त किए—उसी घर पर हमले की कहानी, जिसे बेचकर वह यहाँ पहुँचा था। ज़िंदगी का सबसे बड़ा व्यंग्य।

काम की इजाज़त मिली। फैक्ट्री में चिकन पैकेट बनाने लगा। वही सुरेश मिला, जो दस साल



डंकी रूट से अमेरिका पहुँचना अमरीक सिंह के लिए सपना नहीं, एक लंबा इंतज़ार बन गया—जहाँ हर दिन आज़ादी की जगह डर, झूठ और अनिश्चितता ने उसका पीछा किया।



अमरीक की सफलता अमेरिका पहुँचने में नहीं, बल्कि ज़िंदा बच निकलने में थी—एक ऐसे रास्ते से, जो सपनों को बेचता है, पर ज़िंदगी छीन लेने से नहीं हिचकता।



से अमेरिका में था। सुरेश बोला, “सपना तो वहीं रह गया, हम यहाँ फँस गए।”

कोर्ट में जज को कहानी सुनानी थी। वकील ने कहा,

“रोना ज़रूरी है।” पर अमरीक रो नहीं पाया।

जज ने कहा, “मुझे तुम्हारी कहानी पर भरोसा नहीं।”

अपील, इंतज़ार, वही चक्र।

इसी बीच भारत से ख़बर आई—पिता को दिल का दौरा पड़ा। अमरीक जैसे भेज सका, खुद नहीं आ सका। पिता नहीं बचे। अमरीक टूट गया।

फिर प्रियंक मिला—स्टूडेंट वीज़ा पर आया था, अच्छी नौकरी में था। नए वकील से मिला।

इस बार अमरीक ने सच लिखा—पूरा सच।

जज ने कहा, “गलती मानने वालों को दूसरा मौक़ा मिलना चाहिए।”

वर्क परमिट मिला।

धीरे-धीरे उसने एक छोटा सा फूड ट्रक शुरू किया—नाम रखा,

‘डंकी रूट ड्रीम कैचर’।

कर्ज़ उतरा। माँ के लिए घर बना।

एक दिन गाँव के एक लड़के का फोन आया, “भैया, मैं भी अमेरिका जाना चाहता हूँ।”

अमरीक ने मुस्कराकर कहा, “डंकी रूट से मत आना। पढ़ाई करो, हुनर सीखो।”

लड़के ने कहा, “पर आप तो सफल हो गए।”

अमरीक बोला, “मैं सफल नहीं हुआ। मैं बच गया। और बचना, सफल होने से बिल्कुल अलग बात है।” ■

# THE QUIET MUSIC OF THE COSMOS

Astrology is not merely about predicting events; it is a contemplative science of self-awareness that illuminates the deeper purpose of one's life journey. A Janam Kundli reflects the karmic patterns we inherit and the lessons we are meant to encounter, while practices such as mantras, charity, fasting, and gemstones are traditionally understood as ways of harmonising human consciousness with the subtle rhythms of cosmic forces.



## BY ACHARYA DINAIK

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With over fifteen years of dedicated practice in astrology, the author brings a deep engagement with classical astrological principles, offering interpretations that are thoughtful, grounded, and insightful.

## फरवरी-2026 राशिफल – मुख्य प्रवृत्तियाँ

- इस महीने सूर्य मीन में प्रवेश करता है जिससे माह की ऊर्जा ज्यादा भावनात्मक, संवेदनशील, और रचनात्मक बनती है।
- मध्य महीने में सौर ग्रहण और चन्द्रमा की पूर्णिमा जैसी घटनाएँ भावनाओं और रिश्तों में गहराई लाती हैं।
- बुध (Mercury) फरवरी के अंत में रेट्रोग्रेड होने वाला है (26 फरवरी के बाद) — इसलिए तब यात्रा, संचार और निर्णयों में सावधानी जरूरी होगी।

### मेघ (Aries)



ऊर्जा और आत्मविश्वास मजबूत रहेगा। करियर में अवसर मिल सकते हैं लेकिन मेहनत जरूरी होगी। रिश्तों में भावनात्मक कनेक्शन बढ़ सकता है।

### वृषभ (Taurus)



सोच स्पष्ट और बातचीत सशक्त रहेगी — बातचीत/सौदे में लाभ मिलेगा। नौकरी व करियर में थोड़ी रुकावटें संभव, पर समझदारी से काम बनेंगे। प्यार व दोस्ती के अवसर मिल सकते हैं।

### मिथुन (Gemini)



कम्युनिकेशन स्किल्स का उपयोग काम में आएगा। कुछ तनाव या भ्रम रेट्रोग्रेड के कारण महसूस हो सकता है अंत महीने में। रोमांस व दोस्ती दोनों में मज़बूती आएगी।

**कर्क (Cancer)**

भावनाओं में गहराई और संवेदनशीलता रहेगी। परिवार व दोस्तों के साथ बेहतर समझ बनेगी। कुछ चुनौतियाँ भी पेश आ सकती हैं, पर दृढ़ता से निपटा जा सकता है।

**सिंह (Leo)**

रचनात्मक ऊर्जा और आत्म-प्रस्तुति के लिए अच्छा समय। प्रेम सम्बन्ध और रोमांस में वृद्धि होगी। करियर में आगे बढ़ने के भरोसेमंद मौके मिल सकते हैं।

**कन्या (Virgo)**

संगठन, योजना और ध्यान की आवश्यकता है। मानसिक स्पष्टता से कामों में सफलता मिल सकती है। स्वास्थ्य पर थोड़ा ध्यान दें।

**तुला (Libra)**

संपर्क और नेटवर्किंग मजबूत होगी। कुछ पारिवारिक तनाव संभव है लेकिन समाधान भी निकलेगा। रिश्तों में संतुलन बनाने की कोशिश करें।

**वृश्चिक (Scorpio)**

जोश और आकर्षण इस महीने बढ़ेगा — रोमांस का समय अच्छा है। कुछ तनाव के क्षण आएंगे लेकिन आप संभाल सकते हैं। संबंधों में गहराई और समझ बढ़ेगी।

**धनु (Sagittarius)**

आत्म-विश्वास और ऊर्जा विश्वसनीय बनेगी। मिलों, शिक्षा, यात्रा संबंधी अवसर मिल सकते हैं। नए रिश्तों व परियोजनाओं के लिए अनुकूल समय।

**मकर (Capricorn)**

माह की शुरुआत में कार्यों में गति रहेगी। बाद में संभवतः निर्णयों में देरी या संचार में भ्रम हो सकता है (बुध रेट्रोग्रेड के कारण)। योजना व धैर्य से काम पक्का करें।

**कुंभ (Aquarius)**

आत्म-मूल्य और भावनाओं को समझने का विषय उभर सकता है। सामाजिक जीवन में योगदान और लोगों से जुड़ने का अच्छा अवसर। आर्थिक योजनाओं में सावधानी ठीक रहेगी।

**मीन (Pisces)**

यह राशिफल के अनुसार आपको भावनात्मक संवेदनशीलता और प्रेम में उन्नति का समय मिल सकता है। गुरुवार-सीमा वाले दिनों में संपर्क और समझ अच्छा रहेगा। अंत माह में मन की स्पष्टता बढ़ेगी।

**ध्यान देने योग्य सुझाव**

- रेट्रोग्रेड अवधि में (26 फरवरी के बाद) योजनाओं और निर्णयों को दोबारा जांचें।
- रिश्तों में भावनात्मक अंतर्दृष्टि और संवाद पर ज़्यादा ध्यान दें।
- रचनात्मक कार्यों, कला, और आत्म अवलोकन के लिए यह महीना सकारात्मक है।

# महानगर में दादी



डॉ. शिवजी श्रीवास्तव

झाँसी में जन्मे और श्री चित्रगुप्त महाविद्यालय के हिंदी विभाग से सेवानिवृत्त, लेखक कविता, कहानी, गज़ल, लेख, संस्मरण, नवगीत, समीक्षा, नाटक, रेडियो, टेली फ़िल्म आदि विधाओं में दखल रखते हैं। कवि का कहानी संग्रह *यक्ष प्रश्न* तथा जीवनी पुस्तक *चंद्रशेखर आजाद के विश्वस्त सहयोगी क्रांतिकारी डॉ. भगवान दास माहौर* प्रकाशित है। प्रस्तुत है उनकी एक कविता 'महानगर में दादी'।



तुलसी चौरा ढूँढ रही हैं  
महानगर में दादी।  
घर है या मुर्गी का दड़बा  
छत ढालान न आँगन  
कहाँ अरध दें  
सूर्यदेव को  
कहाँ रखें अग्रासन  
कहाँ विराजेगे ठाकुर जी  
पूजा होगी कैसे  
ये सवाल दादी के मन में  
उठते हैं रह रह के  
जैसे तैसे दादी जी ने

खुदको यूँ समझाया  
क्या मलाल मन में करना है  
सब प्रभु जी की माया  
फिर भी अकसर  
दिल में उनके  
हूक उठा करती है  
ओसारे में खड़े नीम की  
जब जब याद सताती।  
बेटे बहू चले जाते हैं  
बड़े भोर से ऑफिस  
साँझ ढले तक ही दोनों  
आ पाते हैं घर वापिस

चार साल के पोते को  
दादी कब तक बहलाएँ  
अजब गजब जिद उसकी दिन भर  
पूरी न कर पाएँ  
दादी के हाथों का उसको  
हलवा तक न भाता  
जिद्दी बच्चा रोते रोते  
भूखा ही सो जाता  
सारे घर में करता है तब  
भाँय-भाँय सन्नाटा  
सन्नाटे में दादी की  
तबियत बेहद घबराती। ■

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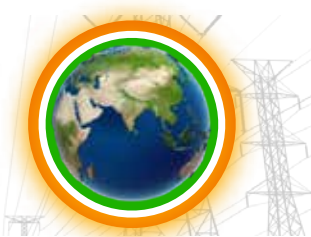
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- ▶ Law enforcement agencies never ask for money on **phone, WhatsApp, or video calls**.

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- ▶ Never share **OTP / PIN / CVV / Passwords**
- ▶ In case of digital fraud, call **Helpline 1930** immediately

