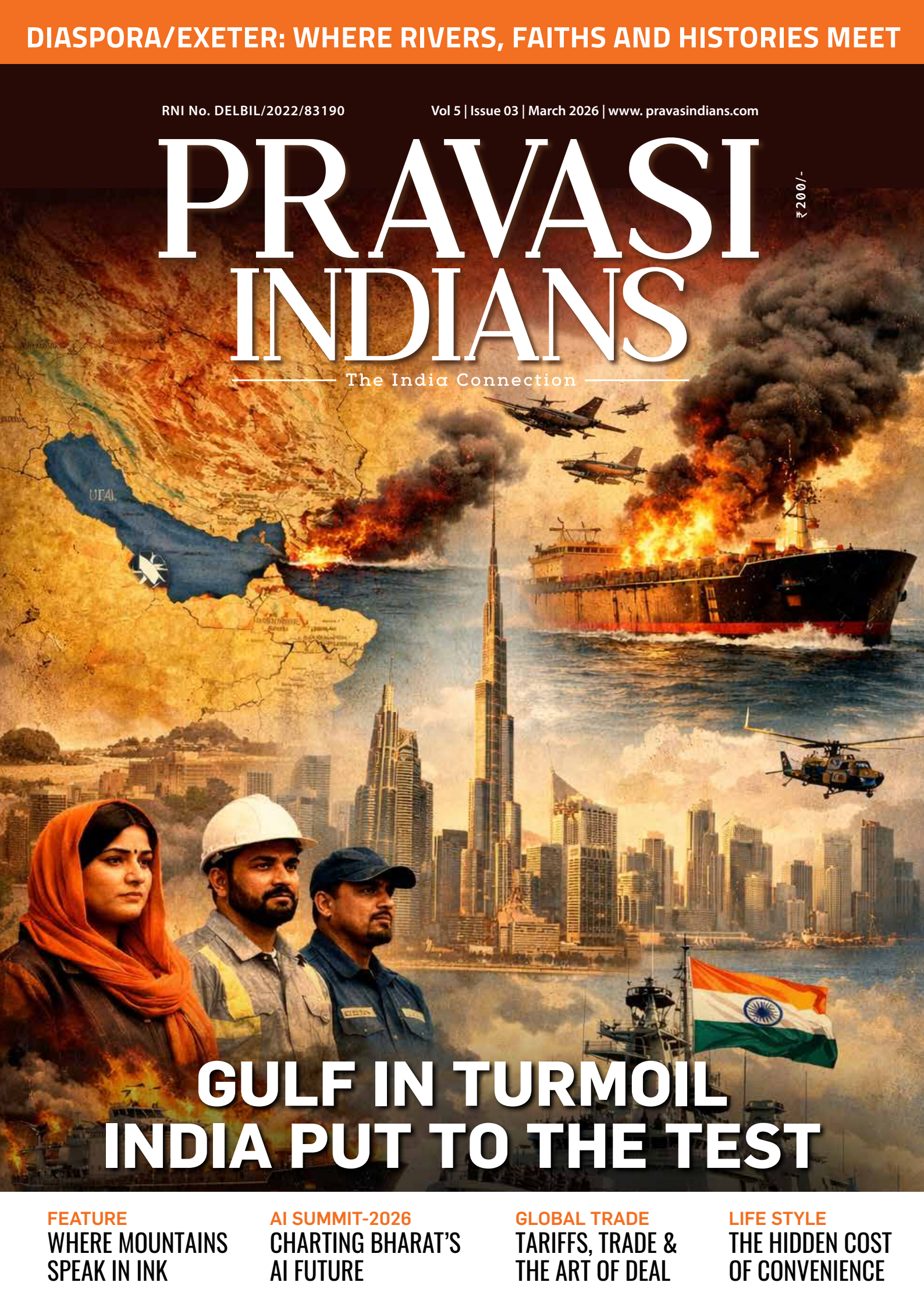


PRAVASI INDIANS

₹ 200/-

The India Connection



GULF IN TURMOIL INDIA PUT TO THE TEST

FEATURE
WHERE MOUNTAINS
SPEAK IN INK

AI SUMMIT-2026
CHARTING BHARAT'S
AI FUTURE

GLOBAL TRADE
TARIFFS, TRADE &
THE ART OF DEAL

LIFE STYLE
THE HIDDEN COST
OF CONVENIENCE

Ten Heritage Wonders

From the heart of India you've never heard of!



Over centuries, Madhya Pradesh has witnessed rulers, merchants, ideas and ambitions. Their legacy is enshrined in the form of stunning architectural and living heritage. It also lives on in the rustle of peepal leaves over obscure shrines, the scent of wet earth in a historic fort and a river's song echoing beneath ancient carvings. Every trip here challenges history buffs to go beyond famed sites into hidden destinations that remind us that heritage is not a relic, but a living rhythm.

bat.eshwar तेलोटेड

In rural Morena's badlands, a region once known for banditry, lies a group of temples at **Bateshwar**. More than a thousand years old, reduced to rubble by earthquakes, and lost for centuries, they were rediscovered in the 19th century and restored in the early 21st. Today, nearly 200 temples stand out for their antiquity and design, leaving visitors stunned.

varaha त्रणड

Even older are two 5th – 6th century CE period icons depicting God **Vishnu** in his **Varaha** incarnation, in which the god takes the form of a wild boar supporting Mother Earth. At Eran is a gigantic zoomorphic Varaha with gods, sages, demons and other beings carved on it. Home to an ancient **Vishnu temple** complex, inscriptions and coins are still found here. No surprise that locals do dawn circumambulation of the Varaha on auspicious days. The other Varaha is

a magnificent andromorphic one carved into the wall of a hill at Udayagiri. Religious icons are found all over the hill and metallurgical studies have stated the non-rusting Iron Pillar at Delhi's Qutab Minar complex probably came from here.

gyarasapur ड अजागर

Not far away is **Gyaspur**, a veritable open-air museum of ancient religious iconography. Around a single hill are the Maladevi Temple, Hindola Toranas, and the **Athkhamba** and **Bajramath shrines**. They represent an acme in temple architecture. Even more elaborately carved iconography is seen on the gateway of mighty Ajaigarh Fort, built a thousand years ago by the Chandelas and witness to many a battle. Speaking of battles, a Chaunsath Yogini Temple shrine visited by the medieval warrior queen Durgawati lies at Bhedaghat, on the banks of the Narmada outside Jabalpur. Its circular design makes it unique.

bhedaghat ड burhanpur

At **Burhanpur** is a mighty fort along the Tapti River, containing Mughal-era paintings within. The town is dotted with mosques and tombs, and just outside lies the first tomb of **Mumtaz Mahal**, a temporary abode for her remains while the Taj Mahal was being built. Older than all of these and forgotten in the western edge of Madhya Pradesh is the **Chaturbhujnath Nala** – a 5 kilometre stretch of stunning prehistoric rock art. In the same district is the majestic



where त्रलुड बड्गन त्रलुड डरु

Dharmarajeshwar Temple, an 8th century subterranean shrine cut out of rock. Climax the journey at another monolithic shrine, lying in the shadow of Gwalior's mighty fort. The 9th century **Chaturbhuj Temple** bears an inscription containing the world's second oldest mention of the number 'zero'. A great round figure to end a trip down history lane!

new heritage frontier

At the edge of Madhya Pradesh's heritage journey lie four new serial nominations: the **Ashokan Edict Sites, Chaunsath Yogini Temples, Gupta Period Temples, and Bundela Palace-Fortresses**. These wonders, both hidden and newly recognised, remind us that Madhya Pradesh is not just a land of history, but a living journey through time.



LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



Understanding a World in Transition

Dear Readers,

Every era believes it is living through extraordinary change. Yet the early decades of the 21st century appear to be compressing transformations in technology, geopolitics, economics and everyday life at a pace few generations have experienced. In this edition of *PRAVASI INDIANS*, our contributors explore how these shifts are reshaping the way we live, work and relate to the wider world.

We begin with a reflection on a phenomenon many urban Indians now take for granted—convenience. In the Lifestyle section, **DR. VENKATESH GANAPATHY** examines how services once seen as luxuries, from late-night food deliveries to groceries arriving within minutes, have quietly become part of daily life. What began as a pandemic necessity has evolved into a habit of instant consumption. Yet behind this digital ease lies a deeper conversation about health, environmental sustainability, neighbourhood economies and the fragile livelihoods of the gig workforce.

Workplaces too are undergoing their own silent transformation. **RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI**, a respected spiritual educator and columnist, reminds us that in the race for strategy, productivity and technology, organisations often overlook the human dimension of work. His reflection asks a simple yet profound question: how do people feel when they walk into their workplace each day? The answer, he suggests, may determine whether organisations nurture excellence or inadvertently cultivate burnout.

Beyond our offices and homes, global economic currents continue to shape national choices. Our South India Bureau Chief **B. SHEKHAR** analyses the evolving trade dynamics between India and the United States following discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former U.S. President Donald Trump. While the reduction of reciprocal tariffs may appear encouraging, he cautions that the real task lies in reading the fine print and strengthening India's long-term economic resilience.

Equally complex are the challenges facing the transition to clean energy. Civil engineer **SAURABH VERMA**, in conversation with sustainability expert **KSHITIZ RAJ**, points to an overlooked reality: the greatest bottleneck in renewable energy today is not capital or technology, but the electricity grid itself. Across markets, renewable projects increasingly depend on the ability to connect to an already overburdened power network.

This issue's Cover Story turns to geopolitics. Veteran diplomat and former ambassador **SANJAY KUMAR VERMA** examines rising tensions in the Gulf and the ripple effects that extend far beyond the conflict zone—touching oil markets, remittances, shipping routes and household budgets. For India, the moment highlights the delicate task of securing energy supplies, protecting its diaspora and maintaining diplomatic balance in a volatile region.

Amid these global shifts, the human story of movement and identity continues. **RAJEEV KUMAR's** reflective travel essay describes how his journey to the United Kingdom gradually transformed from an academic visit into a meditation on culture, faith and the quiet bonds that connect diasporic lives.

Technology, meanwhile, is reshaping the contours of the future. Reporting from the **AI Impact Summit-2026** in New Delhi, **D. P. VAJPAYEE** and AI researcher **SAMANVAY VAJPAYEE** show how artificial intelligence is no longer a distant possibility but a defining force of the present. Their report suggests that Bharat seeks not merely to adopt AI, but to shape its development with responsibility and inclusivity.

Complementing these perspectives is our evocative photo feature by **SANDEEP GOSWAMI**, celebrating artist **ASHOO SHARMA's** portrayal of the Himalayas not merely as a landscape, but as a space of introspection and awakening.

Finally, in our Horoscope section, **JYOTISH ACHARYA DINAIK** presents astrology as a traditional framework through which many seek to understand life's patterns and possibilities.

Together, these diverse voices remind us that while the world often appears fragmented into technology, geopolitics, economics and culture, our lives remain deeply interconnected. Understanding these connections may well be the first step toward navigating an increasingly complex future.

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

Connect on: info@pravasindians.com

Follow us on: [@pravasi_indians](https://www.instagram.com/pravasi_indians)

[@pravasi.indians](https://www.facebook.com/pravasiindians)

[@pravasindians](https://www.linkedin.com/company/pravasindians)



PRAVASI INDIANS

The India Connection

MARCH 2026 | Volume 5 | Issue 03

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Shiva Kumar, Sarita Shandilya, Binod K. Singh, Dr Suparna Soni, Kumar Ritwik

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor-In-Chief
Sudhanshu Ranjan

Managing Editor
Rajesh Kumar

Executive Editor
Uday Sahay

Editorial Advisors
Shashi K. Jha
Dr. Ravindra Prasad Singh

Publisher & CEO
Rashmi

Editor-Special Projects
Uday Shankar

Consulting Editor
Dr Rakesh Kumar Verma

Chief Operating Officer
Sunil K. Prasad

Design
Master Art Club

Website

www.pravasindians.com

Head Office

M/s Template Media LLP,
#302, 2nd Floor, Yuvraj Sadan,
B-537, Vasant Kunj Enclave,
New Delhi-110070

Registered Office

405, The Cedar Estate,
Golf Course Road, Gurgaon-122011

Printed at

Rolleract Press Services, A-83/1, Naraina Industrial Area Phase 1, New Delhi-110028

Printed, published and owned by RASHMI and printed at Rolleract Press Services, A-83/1, Phase-1, Naraina Industrial Area, New Delhi-110028 on behalf of M/s Template Media LLP. Place of Publication: #302, B-537, Vasant Kunj Enclave, New Delhi-110 070. Sudhanshu Ranjan is Editor

CONTENTS

06-11

COVER STORY

SANJAY KUMAR VERMA, a 1988-batch IFS officer and former Indian Ambassador to Sudan, Japan, and Canada, examines the rising tensions in the Gulf whose shockwaves travel far beyond the battlefield—through oil markets, remittance corridors, shipping lanes and even household budgets. As Washington, Israel and Tehran push West Asia into dangerous uncertainty, India confronts a delicate test of strategic autonomy: securing energy supplies, protecting its diaspora and maintaining diplomatic balance.



12-13

AI SUMMIT

A well-known science communicator and founder-chairman of DIAS Technologies India **D. P. VAJPAYEE** along with his son **SAMANVAY**, an AI researcher and PhD student at the University of Toronto, reports on AI Impact Summit-2026 held recently in New Delhi. They say “Artificial Intelligence is no longer a technology of the future — it is shaping the present. As nations race to harness its power, Bharat has signalled that it intends not just to participate, but to lead with a human-centric approach,” adding that the New Delhi summit marked a decisive moment in the country’s technological journey, where Bharat intends to shape the AI by responsibility and inclusive growth.

14-15

HUMAN CAPITAL

A well-acclaimed spiritual educator and columnist with over 9,000 articles to his

credit, **RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI** reflects on how strategy and technology dominate boardroom conversations in today’s competitive business world, often overshadowing workplace culture. Yet the real difference between sustained high performance and silent burnout lies in how employees feel when they arrive at work each day.

16-19

GLOBAL TRADE

Our Bengaluru-based South India Bureau Chief, **B SHEKHAR**, argues that Donald Trump’s move to reduce ‘reciprocal tariffs’ on Indian goods after talks with Narendra Modi may look like a diplomatic breakthrough, but the reality is far more complex. He further adds, “For India, the real challenge is not celebration but strategy—reading the fine print while strengthening economic resilience.”



20-21

CLEAN ENERGY



A civil engineer and infrastructure project management professional, **SAURABH VERMA** agrees with sustainability professional at Redaptive Sustainability Services in Denver, Colorado, **KSHITIZ RAJ**, that the real bottleneck for the clean energy today is grid, not capital or technology. He further concurs that renewable projects across markets increasingly face the greatest risk at the stage of grid interconnection. For financiers and developers alike, what once seemed a technical afterthought is now emerging as the decisive factor in project success.

22-30

FEATURE

An air traffic controller, technical consultant, motorcyclist-turned-magazine editor, author and photographer **SANDEEP GOSWAMI** salutes artist **ASHOO SHARMA** for capturing vast and timeless Himalayas not merely as mountains, but as moments of inner awakening despite the fact that Himalayas have been stirring the human imagination since long.

32-37

DIASPORA

RAJEEV KUMAR, a teaching fellow at Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul (Türkiye), reflects on his first journey to the United Kingdom, where the quiet hills of Exeter, riverside cafés, ancient cathedrals' strange encounters felt quite familiar. He further says, "What began as an academic trip soon unfolded into a meditation on culture, faith, diaspora and distance."

38-39

HOROSCOPE / राशिफल

ज्योतिष आचार्य दिनायक के अनुसार, ज्योतिष को केवल घटनाओं की भविष्यवाणी करने की प्रणाली के रूप में ही नहीं, बल्कि मानव जीवन में पैटर्न को समझने के एक पारंपरिक ढाँचे के रूप में भी माना जाता है। जन्म कुंडली जन्म के समय ग्रहों की स्थिति को दर्शाती है और ज्योतिषी इसकी व्याख्या करके व्यक्ति के जीवन में संभावित प्रवृत्तियों, चुनौतियों और अवसरों की पहचान करने का प्रयास करते हैं। मंत्रों का जाप, दान, उपवास और विशिष्ट रत्न धारण करने जैसी प्रथाएँ पारंपरिक रूप से स्वयं को ब्रह्मांडीय प्रभावों के साथ संतुलित करने के उपाय मानी जाती हैं।

40-42

LIFE STYLE

DR. **VENKATESH GANAPATHY**, in his article, reflects on how convenience has become the defining feature of urban Indian life. What began as a necessity during the pandemic has gradually turned into a permanent habit—from midnight food deliveries to groceries arriving within minutes. Yet beneath this one-click consumption lies a complex web of health risks, environmental strain, disappearing neighbourhood economies, and fragile gig livelihoods.

GULF IN TURMOIL

INDIA PUT TO THE TEST

When confrontation escalates in the Gulf, its tremors are felt far beyond the battlefield — in oil markets, remittance corridors, shipping lanes and household budgets. As tensions involving Washington, Israel and Tehran push West Asia into uncertain territory, India faces a delicate test of strategic autonomy: protecting its energy security, safeguarding its diaspora, and preserving diplomatic flexibility in an increasingly volatile region.



BY SANJAY KUMAR VERMA

With a diplomatic career spanning 37 years, the author served as India's Ambassador to Sudan, Japan, and Canada. Until recently, he was Chairperson of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a leading think tank, focused on the Global South and international economic issues. His interests lie in foreign policy, security, technology, and the global economy.





Geopolitical crises rarely arrive like a thunderclap; they gather like humidity, thickening quietly until the air suddenly feels unbreathable. February 2026 carries that oppressive quality. The confrontation involving Washington, Israel and Tehran has shifted from managed hostility to open, high-symbolism use of force. The joint US–Israeli strikes deep inside Iran, followed by Iranian state media confirming the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have pushed the region beyond a psychological threshold that will not be easily reversed. Iran’s retaliation, forceful enough to signal resolve yet calibrated to avoid an all-out war it cannot easily sustain, has taken the form of missiles and drones aimed at high-value targets associated with US and Israeli interests.

For India, the granular details matter less than the trajectory. We have lived for years with “tension” in West Asia and gradually learned to treat it as background noise. But when confrontation escalates to the level of leadership decapitation and survival instincts begin to dominate state behaviour, the risk spreads outward — beyond military theatres into shipping lanes, insurance premiums, currency markets, re-

mittance corridors, and ultimately into the everyday arithmetic of household budgets. The Gulf is not a distant stage for India; it is a vital junction where energy security, diaspora welfare, trade routes and strategic choices intersect within a narrow and sensitive geography.

Survival, Not Symbolism

Across many capitals, a single question now hovers: what happens to Iran’s political structure after a blow at the apex? Even if Washington frames its actions as focused on nuclear containment and regional deterrence, the optics inevitably raise the spectre of enforced political transformation. Yet Iran is not a fragile pyramid that collapses when one figure is removed. Its institutional architecture — the Revolutionary Guards, clerical networks, parallel governance structures, and entrenched regional alliances — provides depth and continuity that resist sudden external redesign.

History suggests that external pressure often consolidates rather than fractures such systems. When a society feels besieged, narratives of martyrdom and sovereignty can merge competing factions into a temporary unity. The language of resistance acquires moral force, even among critics





of the regime. This dynamic complicates any expectation of swift internal unraveling.

Recognising this does not require romanticising any side or demonising another. It simply acknowledges a recurring pattern in modern conflict: once survival becomes the organising principle of state behaviour, prudence and pride begin to wrestle within decision-making rooms. Iran must project strength to deter further strikes, yet it must also limit escalation because a prolonged war would grind an already strained economy. That tension between defiance and self-preservation generates unpredictability — not because leaders abandon rationality, but because every available option carries escalating cost.

Multipolar Hesitations

The global response has been cautious and fragmented, not because the crisis is minor, but because the international system itself is fragmented. Today's world is shaped less by rigid blocs and more by overlapping interests. Western allies, China and Russia, the European Union, and middle powers across Asia have each filtered the crisis through their own lenses — security commitments, sovereignty concerns, energy exposure, trade vulnerabilities.

In a multipolar moment, most states aim to preserve optionality. They speak in measured tones, avoid irreversible commitments, and seek to prevent today's statement from becoming tomorrow's strategic liability. Silence can sometimes be strategy.

India's official instinct in such moments is familiar: call for restraint, de-escalation, and civilian protection while keeping diplomatic channels open with all parties. This posture is often dismissed as fence-sitting. In reality, for a country deeply exposed to Gulf energy flows and home to one of the world's largest overseas workforces, it is closer to disciplined risk management than rhetorical neutrality. Strategic autonomy is not abstraction; it is insurance.

● ●

“The Gulf is not a distant theatre for India; it is a vital junction where energy, diaspora, trade routes and strategy converge in one narrow geography.”

● ●

The Hormuz Variable

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow stretch of water with an extraordinary ability to unsettle the global economy. Roughly 20 percent of global petroleum liquids consumption — close to 20 million barrels per day — passes through this corridor. Around a quarter to a third of globally traded LNG moves through the same maritime artery. At its narrowest point, the strait is only about 33 kilometres wide. It does not need to be formally “closed” to create disruption; fear alone can slow traffic, spike costs, and alter commercial behaviour.

Markets react less to what has occurred than to what might occur next. In past episodes of Gulf tension, Brent crude has climbed sharply on perception alone. A sustained two-week escalation could plausibly push prices upward even if physical supply remains uninterrupted. Insurance often becomes the first domino. War-risk premiums can rise steeply, turning every voyage into a larger gamble and inflating freight rates almost overnight.

A world already conditioned by shipping disruptions in other chokepoints has grown more sensitive to rerouting and delay. That sensitivity transmits rapidly into inflation expectations, central bank calculations, and investment decisions far removed from the Gulf itself. Geography may be local; financial consequences are global.

Energy, Inflation and the Indian Household

India's vulnerability begins with a straightforward statistic: more than 85 percent of our crude oil is imported, and roughly 60 percent of that crude originates in the Gulf region. When prices rise internationally, India pays not only in dollars but also through second-order effects — pressure on the rupee, expansion of the current account deficit, and upward stress on transport and manufacturing costs.

A sustained increase of around 20 dollars per barrel could expand India's annual import bill by approximately 25 to 30 billion dollars at present volumes. The macroeconomic implications are visible on charts: wider deficits, currency volatility, inflationary creep. Yet the true story unfolds quietly across daily life.

A higher diesel price increases the cost of transporting vegetables from farm to mandi, cement from plant to construction site, and consumer goods from warehouse to kira-

na store. Logistics margins narrow. Small enterprises absorb shocks first. Hiring slows. Households defer purchases. Even when the government intervenes to cushion consumers through fiscal adjustments, that cushioning consumes fiscal space — and fiscal space is finite.

Energy shocks are among the few external disturbances capable of penetrating deeply and quickly into domestic economic life. Preparedness, therefore, is not alarmism; it is prudence.

● ●

“When oil prices rise in the Strait of Hormuz, the impact travels quietly — from global markets to diesel pumps, from transport costs to household budgets.”

● ●

Chabahar and Strategic Options

While oil commands headlines, connectivity shapes long-term strategy. India's engagement with Iran is not confined to hydrocarbons. It includes geography, access, and strategic reach — particularly the development of the Chabahar port and its linkage to the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC). These initiatives reflect India's effort to access Afghanistan and Central Asia without dependence on Pakistan's transit geography.

Chabahar is more than infrastructure; it is strategic optionality. It represents the principle that diversified corridors enhance autonomy. Yet prolonged instability in Iran complicates these ambitions. Security risks rise. Commercial confidence weakens. Logistics slow. Investors hesitate in combustible environments.

For Indian readers, Chabahar is best understood not as a





port project but as an options strategy. When one corridor narrows, another should remain viable. When one partnership faces constraint, alternatives should exist. Foreign policy autonomy expands with the number of workable pathways available.

Strategic Autonomy Under Stress

India's core challenge is not choosing sides; it is managing a portfolio of relationships while safeguarding national interest. Our partnerships with the United States and Israel are substantial and multidimensional. Simultaneously, historical ties, energy considerations, and geographic realities necessitate functional channels with Iran.

In periods of escalation, strategic autonomy ceases to be a slogan and becomes economic common sense: reduce exposure, diversify risk, avoid signalling that forecloses future flexibility.

This involves unglamorous but essential work. Diversifying energy sources. Expanding strategic reserves. Negotiating flexible supply contracts. Strengthening shipping resilience. Preparing evacuation protocols for Indian nationals in the region. The Indian diaspora in the Gulf is both a human responsibility and an economic pillar through remittances that support millions of families.

Diplomacy, in such moments, is less about public grandstanding and more about sustained conversation. Channels

matter most when tensions run high. Restraint is not passivity; it is often the only instrument preventing a local confrontation from cascading into a generational rupture across West and South Asia.

Containing the Shock

The present confrontation is more than an exchange of missiles and statements. It is a stress test of deterrence credibility, energy security architecture, and the resilience of a global economy that remains deeply interdependent. It tests whether major actors recognise that escalation has diminishing returns, and that control becomes harder to regain once lost.

For India, the lesson is neither complacency nor panic. It is discipline. Gulf stability is not a distant diplomatic preference; it is embedded in our energy flows, trade arteries, remittance corridors, and overseas workforce.

In a fractured international order, countries that preserve options preserve autonomy. Geography does not negotiate. Markets do not wait. India's responsibility is to reduce exposure, maintain dialogue, protect its diaspora, and ensure that turbulence in the Gulf does not translate into fragility at home.

Strategic balancing, therefore, is not ambiguity. It is the steady practice of safeguarding national interest amid shifting winds — ensuring that when the air grows heavy elsewhere, it does not become unbreathable here. ■

● ●

“Strategic autonomy is not about choosing sides. It is about preserving options in a world where geography does not negotiate and markets do not wait.”

● ●

CHARTING BHARAT'S AI FUTURE

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a technology of the future — it is shaping the present. As nations race to harness its power, Bharat has signalled that it intends not just to participate, but to lead with human approach. The recent AI Impact Summit in New Delhi marked a decisive moment in the country's technological journey, declaring that Bharat intends to help shape the future of AI, guided not only by innovation, but by responsibility and inclusive growth.



BY D P VAJPAYEE

A well-known science communicator, the former author is founder-chairman of DIAS Technologies India.



BY SAMANVAY VAJPAYEE

The Jr. Vajpayee is an AI researcher and PhD student at the University of Toronto.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is set to become one of the most powerful and disruptive technologies of our time. For Bharat, this is a crucial moment. The decisions taken today will shape the country's technological future. The four-day AI Impact Summit, held from February 16 to 20 at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi, marked an important step in this journey. The

event signalled Bharat's growing role on the global technology stage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that Bharat should lead this AI revolution and ensure that it benefits all of humanity.

He introduced the idea of 'MANAV AI'. MANAV means human, and it stands for a human-centered approach to artificial intelligence. The letter M represents moral and ethical systems;

A stands for accountable governance and transparent rules; N refers to national sovereignty — meaning a nation should control its own data and protect its citizens' rights; the 2nd A stands for accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring AI is available to all, not just a few; and V represents validity and legitimacy. In simple terms, Bharat's vision is to develop AI responsibly and for the welfare of everyone.

The AI Impact Summit was one of the largest global gatherings on artificial intelligence. It saw participation from more than 20 heads of state, 45 ministerial-level delegations, and leading global technology experts. Over 70 countries signed the New Delhi Declaration, making it one of the most widely supported AI declarations so far. The summit also became the first major global AI event hosted in the Global South, with participation from over 100 countries and more than five lakh visitors.

The event showcased advanced AI technologies as well. Indian company Sarvam unveiled its large language models, Sarvam 105B and Sarvam 30B, presenting them as Bharat's answer to systems developed by global technology leaders. The summit highlighted Bharat's intention to become a serious player in advanced AI development.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), led by Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, described the summit as a major success. It reportedly attracted investment commitments worth hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure and deep technology sectors. The guiding message of the summit was "Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya" — welfare and happiness for all — emphasizing that AI should serve humanity without discrimination.

Many experts compare the AI revolution to the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century or the IT revolution of the 20th century. AI is advancing rapidly and can now perform tasks that once required human intelligence, including language understanding and creative problem-solving. Countries that fail to participate in this transformation may fall behind in the global economy.

At present, the United States and China lead in AI development. They are building what are called "sovereign AI stacks" — complete ecosystems that include advanced computer chips, powerful data centers, research

● ●
From New Delhi to the world stage, Bharat has declared its intent to shape the AI revolution — not just through innovation, but through ethics and inclusivity.

● ●
With the vision of MANAV AI, Bharat is advocating a future where artificial intelligence serves humanity, protects national sovereignty, and promotes shared global progress.



● ●
As the AI race intensifies between global powers, Bharat is positioning itself as a responsible technology leader — building partnerships, investing in infrastructure, and asserting its place in the digital century.

institutions, skilled talent, and secure supply chains. Other nations, including Bharat, are now working to strengthen their own AI capabilities to remain competitive and protect their technological independence.

AI, according to Nobel Laureate Professor Geoffrey Hinton, often called the "Godfather of AI," refers to systems that learn patterns from large amounts of data using neural networks. Over the past two decades, many major AI breakthroughs have come from leading institutions in North America, such as the University of Toronto, Stanford, MIT, and research labs like Google DeepMind and OpenAI. China has also emerged as a major AI power. Through the summit, Bharat signaled its intention to join this leading group of AI-driven nations.

Building a strong AI ecosystem requires more than software. It needs advanced semiconductor chips, reliable supply chains for critical minerals like lithium, high-speed data centers, clean energy, water resources, and skilled professionals. During

the summit, several partnerships were announced. Kenya, which has reserves of important minerals used in semiconductor production, expressed interest in collaborating with Bharat. Global technology companies such as OpenAI, Google and Meta also announced partnerships with major Indian firms including

Reliance Industries, Adani Group and Tata Consultancy Services.

The summit made one message clear: AI is not just about technology. It is about economic growth, national security, ethical responsibility, and global leadership. Bharat aims to ensure that its AI journey remains inclusive, responsible and aligned with human values.

As the world enters this new technological era, Bharat has signaled that it does not wish to remain a bystander. Instead, it seeks to shape the future of artificial intelligence — not only for itself, but for the broader global community. ■

CREATING A WORKPLACE THAT ENERGISES, NOT EXHAUSTS

In today's competitive business landscape, strategy and technology often dominate boardroom conversations. But beneath every successful strategy lies a quieter force: workplace culture. The difference between high performance and silent burnout often comes down to how people feel when they show up to work each day.



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

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

Most of us spend nearly a third of our lives at work. Naturally, the quality of our lives is closely linked to what we experience there. Ideally, the workplace should enrich us — offering purpose, accomplishment, learning, and meaningful relationships. Yet for many, the modern office feels less like a space of growth and more like a battleground of competition and stress.

In today's fast-paced and highly competitive environment, workplaces often operate under constant pressure. Deadlines, targets, office politics and job insecurity create a climate of anxiety. Over time, this stress quietly chips away at employees' physical health, emotional stability and overall well-being.

Research consistently shows that positive work environments lead to stronger engagement, healthier relationships, better productivity and improved financial performance. On the other hand, negative or fear-based

● ●

Workplace culture is not a soft issue — it directly impacts productivity, profitability and retention. Organizations that ignore employee engagement risk paying the price in absenteeism, burnout and declining performance.

● ●

cultures come at a cost. Studies indicate that disengaged employees show significantly higher absenteeism, more workplace accidents and a greater number of errors. The message is clear: workplace culture is not a soft is-

sue — it directly affects performance and profits.

But before we talk about transforming work culture, it is important to acknowledge everyday realities.

A typical office day often begins with a casual "How are you?" answered with a weary, "Just going on." The tone is set early. Conversations drift toward complaints — about colleagues, management, the system, or the world at large. Energy that could be invested in problem-solving is spent in criticism and blame. Gradually, the atmosphere becomes heavy with negativity.

Some employees, though sincere and creative, feel overlooked or underappreciated. Others become overly competitive, driven more by rivalry than teamwork. Jealousy, insecurity and silent resentment begin to shape interactions. By the end of the day, many return home drained — not just physically tired, but emotionally exhausted.

The cycle rarely ends there. Instead of meaningful rest, many turn to



screens and endless streams of information that further overstimulate and fatigue the mind. And then another day begins — repeating the same pattern.

Ironically, a place buzzing with activity and potential should be energising. Work, at its best, can be deeply fulfilling. There is a unique satisfaction that comes from completing a task with integrity and competence. That sense of accomplishment does not depend on applause or rewards. It generates its own quiet confidence and positivity.

The real shift begins within individuals. A positive workplace is not built only through policies and incentives; it is shaped by everyday attitudes. Choosing tolerance over judgment, collaboration over competition,

● ●

In an era of rapid change, the real competitive advantage lies not just in strategy or technology, but in creating environments where people feel motivated, valued, purposeful and psychologically safe.

● ●

and solutions over complaints can gradually transform the collective environment.

Workplaces have the potential to become extended families — not in a sentimental sense, but in the way respect, dignity and mutual support are upheld. Performance matters, but so does humanity. When people feel valued beyond their output, they contribute with greater commitment and creativity.

Ultimately, values and human connection lie at the heart of sustainable work culture. Without them, even professional success can feel hollow. With them, work becomes not merely a means of earning a living, but a space for growth, contribution and shared purpose. ■

TARIFFS, TRADE AND THE ART OF THE DEAL

When Donald Trump announced a reduction in “reciprocal tariffs” on Indian goods after a conversation with Narendra Modi, the news sounded like a diplomatic breakthrough. Yet beneath the headline figure of a proposed \$500-billion expansion in trade, the reality is far more complex. In global commerce, tariff cuts often signal negotiation strategy rather than lasting change. For India, the real challenge is not celebration but strategy—reading the fine print while strengthening its own economic resilience.



BY B SHEKHAR

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

When Donald Trump announced on Truth Social that the United States would reduce its “reciprocal tariff” on Indian goods to 18 percent following a conversation with Narendra Modi, the headline sounded like a breakthrough. Duties previously clarified at 50 percent on certain categories would fall sharply. In return, India was expected to reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers on U.S. products—possibly to zero—and significantly expand purchases of American goods, with a headline figure exceeding \$500 billion.

At first glance, the announcement appeared transformational. In reality, many economists advise caution rather than celebration.

The \$500 Billion Question

India currently imports less than \$50 billion annually in goods and energy from the United States. Even if imports were to double immediately, it would still take years to approach even half the announced target. At current trade growth rates, the \$500 billion figure represents a long-term aspiration, potentially stretching over two decades.

Such headline numbers are not unusual in high-level diplomacy. They often signal political intent and goodwill rather

than immediate contractual obligation. Several critical questions remain unanswered:

- Over what timeline would India reach \$500 billion in purchases?
- Which sectors are included—energy alone, or agriculture, defence, technology and services?
- Is there a legally binding commitment or merely a directional understanding?

Until a joint statement, negotiated text and enforcement mechanisms are made public, the announcement remains a political signal rather than a finalised trade agreement.

Tariffs as Tactical Leverage

Trump’s trade strategy has consistently reflected his background as a negotiator. In this framework, tariffs function as leverage—adjustable instruments rather than fixed commitments.

In 2025, Washington offered reciprocal tariff arrangements to several partners:

- 10% to the United Kingdom
- 15% to the European Union and Japan
- 19% to Indonesia and Malaysia
- 20% to Bangladesh and Vietnam

These rates were layered over existing Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariffs, except in certain negotiated arrangements.

The implication is clear: tariff reductions are rarely permanent concessions. They are part of an ongoing negotiation cycle. The same policy tool that lowers duties today can raise them tomorrow if political or strategic priorities shift.

India has already experienced such volatility. Between May and December 2025, Indian exports to the United



The Businessman in the White House

- Donald Trump approaches trade as a businessman and negotiator rather than a traditional diplomat.
- He views tariffs as leverage rather than fixed policy tools.
- Tariffs are used as bargaining instruments in negotiations.
- Reciprocal tariff arrangements have changed frequently over the past year.
- Tariff rates have been announced, revised, clarified and sometimes escalated within short periods.
- This volatility creates risk premiums and contractual uncertainty for exporters.
- Frequent changes make supply chain planning more difficult for businesses.

● ●

India currently imports less than \$50 billion annually from the United States. Reaching \$500 billion would require not just ambition but decades of sustained trade expansion.

● ●

States declined by 22 percent following tariff escalation. Textiles, leather and marine products were among the sectors most affected.

Garment exporters suddenly found themselves priced out of competition. Leather exporters reported order cancellations within weeks. Marine exporters saw margins squeezed almost overnight. Textile clusters in Tiruppur faced delayed orders; leather units in Kanpur renegotiated contracts; exporters along the western coast struggled to absorb rising costs.

These are not abstract trade statistics. They translate into fewer factory shifts, reduced overtime and postponed export contracts. A tariff reduction to 18 percent may provide relief—but relief is not the same as permanence.

Zero Tariffs? The Fine Print Matters

Trump's claim that India would reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers on U.S. goods to zero raises an immediate question: on which products?

India has historically protected several sensitive sectors, including food grains, genetically modified products and reg-

ulated agricultural imports. Tariffs on wines have reached 150 percent, while duties on automobiles have ranged between 100 and 125 percent. Liberalising these sectors carries significant political and economic implications domestically.

Without clarity on product coverage and implementation timelines, it would be premature to interpret the announcement as sweeping liberalisation.

Trade policy, after all, is not purely an economic exercise. It intersects with sovereignty, employment, food security and regulatory standards.

A Structural Contrast: The India–EU Framework

If any recent agreement deserves to be described as “structural transformation,” it may be the newly concluded India–EU



In modern trade diplomacy, tariffs are rarely permanent concessions—they are instruments of leverage that can be lowered or raised as political and strategic calculations shift.



trade framework. The European Union, represented by leaders such as Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa, finalised a framework encompassing nearly 23 percent of global GDP and roughly a quarter of the world’s population.

The scale is significant:

- \$20 trillion EU GDP
- \$4.2 trillion Indian GDP
- \$210 billion in existing bilateral trade

Under the framework:

- The EU will eliminate tariffs on 98 percent of Indian goods
- India will reduce or eliminate duties on about 97 percent of EU exports over a phased period of 7–10 years.

Labour-intensive sectors are expected to benefit substantially. Indian textiles and garments currently face tariffs in the EU market. Once those duties fall to zero, Indian exporters will compete on equal footing with Vietnam, which already benefits from an EU free trade agreement, and Bangladesh, which enjoys preferential GSP access.

Marine exports provide a clear illustration. EU tariffs ranging from 8 to 18 percent have long constrained Indian competitiveness. Even a 10 percent price differential can determine whether a European retailer sources from India or Southeast Asia. Removing that structural disadvantage changes market dynamics in a durable way.

Even this agreement, however, will require ratification across all 27 EU member states—a reminder that trade diplomacy moves deliberately, not instantly.

Volatility in the Global Trade Order

The broader global trade environment remains unsettled. The

The Supreme Court Factor

One often overlooked dimension in international trade announcements is the role of domestic institutions. In the United States, presidential authority over tariffs—especially those justified under national security or emergency provisions—has faced judicial scrutiny in the past.

The Supreme Court of the United States retains the power to interpret the scope of executive trade authority. Should it narrow presidential discretion, tariff adjustments may require deeper legislative backing. Should it uphold broad executive power, volatility could remain a defining feature of U.S. trade policy.

For India, this legal uncertainty matters. A tariff reduced by executive order can be modified by executive order. A tariff embedded in statute is far more durable.

The distinction is critical for long-term supply contracts, investment planning, and sectoral restructuring.

Modi’s Strategic Patience

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s approach to global trade has increasingly reflected calibrated pragmatism. Rather than reacting impulsively to short-term shifts, India has diversified its partnerships.

Consider the recently concluded agreement with the European Union. Unlike executive announcements, EU agreements require ratification across 27 member states, creating structural stability. Tariff schedules are phased over years. Market access commitments are codified.

For Indian exporters in garments, marine products, chemicals, and machinery, that stability matters. EU tariffs on many Indian goods will eventually fall to zero, eliminating the competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis Vietnam or Bangladesh.

The contrast is instructive. One pathway offers immediate headline relief; the other offers institutional durability.

United States has imposed high tariffs on multiple trading partners, at times stretching WTO-consistent frameworks.

Meanwhile, global supply chains remain heavily concentrated in China, which produces roughly 85 percent of the world’s laptops and more than 80 percent of its smartphones.

The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of such concentration. In response, many corporations have adopted a “China plus one” strategy to diversify production bases.

Southeast Asian economies—Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—have emerged as attractive alternatives. Mexico has strengthened its position through nearshoring advantages.

India, with its vast domestic market and demographic depth, should naturally attract such diversification. Yet businesses frequently cite production costs 10–15 percent higher than in China or Vietnam. Infrastructure gaps, regulatory unpredictability and logistics inefficiencies remain key challenges.

A Waypoint, Not a Destination

From a transactional perspective, the reduction of tariffs to



A reduction in tariffs may offer temporary relief for exporters, but long-term certainty depends on formal agreements, clear timelines, and enforceable commitments.



18 percent is not a destination; it is a waypoint.

For India, the appropriate response is neither distrust nor exuberance—but prudence. Strategic autonomy in trade policy requires:

1. Diversifying export markets
2. Expanding stable, rules-based trade agreements
3. Accelerating domestic reforms to reduce structural costs
4. Investing in long-term competitiveness

Notably, India's exports to the rest of the world grew by 5.5 percent even as shipments to the United States declined. That diversification itself is a sign of resilience.

The China Plus One Imperative

Meanwhile, the global trade environment remains unsettled. China continues to dominate global manufacturing in laptops and smartphones. Multinational corporations are diversifying under the "China plus one" strategy, with Southeast Asia and Mexico emerging as alternatives.

India, with its vast market and demographic scale, should be a natural beneficiary. Yet concerns over cost competitiveness—often cited as 10 to 15 percent higher than China or Vietnam—remain obstacles.

If there is a lesson in the current tariff episode, it is that India's long-term competitiveness cannot hinge on the tariff preferences of any one partner.

Celebration or Strategy?

Trade announcements create headlines. Implementation creates outcomes.

Until Washington and New Delhi release detailed documentation—including product coverage, timelines, enforcement mechanisms and binding commitments—it would be premature to interpret the tariff reduction as a structural shift in bilateral trade relations.

History suggests that tariff policy, particularly under leadership that treats trade as a negotiating instrument, can change quickly.

India's response should therefore be guided by strategic clarity: strengthen competitiveness, deepen stable partnerships such as the EU framework, expand manufacturing capacity and reduce structural costs.

Celebration can wait. Strategy cannot.

Economic advisers recommend constructive engagement—seeking written commitments, monitoring legal and policy developments in Washington, continuing to diversify export markets and accelerating domestic reforms.

In global trade, durability matters far more than declarations■

GRID

THE LAST-MILE HURDLE

In the race to build clean energy, the bottleneck is no longer capital or technology. It is the grid. Across markets, renewable projects are discovering that the greatest risk lies not in panels or power purchase agreements, but in the complex, often opaque process of interconnection. For financiers and developers alike, what once seemed a technical afterthought is fast becoming the decisive variable in project success.



BY SAURABH VERMA

A civil engineer and seasoned project management professional with over 15 years of experience in infrastructure projects, the author is a techno-legal expert with Executive Master's in Law and specialization in contract management.

When a commercial solar project in the American Southwest was delayed for nine months last year, the problem was not a lack of money or solar panels. It was a single distribution transformer. The local electricity company would not allow the project to send power to the grid until the transformer was replaced. That upgrade alone cost an extra \$340,000 on a \$1.2 million project and caused the company to miss an important federal tax credit deadline.

Stories like this are becoming common. Developers may arrange funding, buy equipment, and finish construction, yet still get stuck at the final step: connecting to the power grid. This stage, known as interconnection, often depends on routine things such as transformer capacity, power line limits, safety settings, study approvals, and utility procedures — many of

which are outside the developer's direct control.

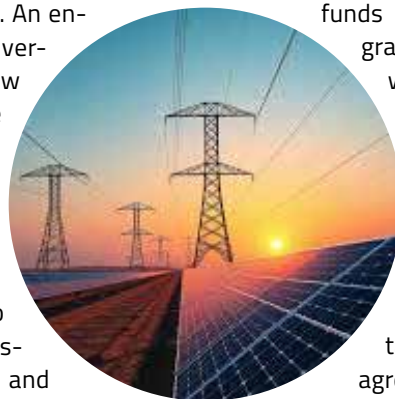
Some energy finance professionals are now treating grid connection as a major financial risk rather than a small technical detail. An engineer from Duke University, Kshitiz Raj, now a structured finance specialist himself at Redaptive in Denver, struggles hard to explain grid-related risks in simple financial terms so that banks and investors can understand and plan for them.

Instead of treating grid connection as a single budget item, Raj breaks it down into steps where problems can occur. After studying many projects across the United States, he created what he calls an "interconnection risk

register'. This is essentially a checklist of common problems and how they affect costs, timelines, and contracts. It prepares project managers to plan for possible delays, set aside extra funds if utilities require upgrades, and clearly define who pays for what.

This is not just theory. In business, time is money. A delay that seems small on paper can hurt a project once it affects revenue, tax benefits, or loan agreements. For example, a three-month delay in grid connection, combined with moderate extra equipment costs, can reduce a project's ability to repay its loans in the first year by 15 to 20 percent. That can create serious financial stress.

Raj has also studied what really





drives profits in solar projects. In an analysis published by *Environment + Energy Leader*, he found that a few basic factors matter more than most others: the total project cost per watt, how much electricity the system actually produces, and the agreed price of power under the contract. Other terms, like yearly price increase, often receive a lot of attention in negotiations but have less impact than these core fundamentals. This insight helps investors focus on what truly affects returns.

He has applied similar thinking in India. Here, different state electricity boards/companies manage grid access under different rules. As a result, two identical solar projects can take very different amounts of time to connect to the grid, simply because of paperwork and administrative steps. For investors, this uncertainty acts like hidden risk unless it is clearly tak-

● ●

A solar project can be fully built and fully funded – yet remain powerless if the grid is not ready. In today’s clean energy race, transformers, utility approvals, and interconnection studies are emerging as the industry’s most underestimated risks.

● ●

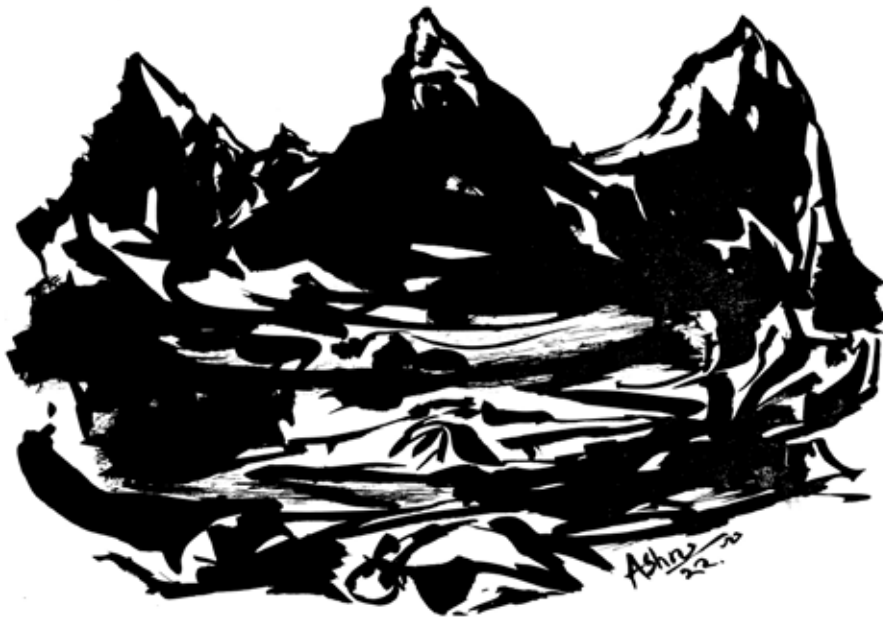
en into account at the project planning level and related financial implications.

An engineer from Duke University, Raj does not suggest that grid problems can be eliminated. His point is simpler: recognize these risks early and plan for it. Developers, lenders, and investors should treat grid approvals, upgrade responsibilities, and utility studies as key financial factors — not last-minute surprises.

As the United States pushes for faster clean energy growth and India aims to reach 500 gigawatts power capacity by 2030, the ability of the grid to absorb new power is becoming a major challenge. In many cases, projects may be delayed more by transformers and paperwork than by technology itself. For investors, success will increasingly depend on understanding this final step — where engineering meets finance, and where the real bottleneck often lies. ■

WHERE THE MOUNTAINS SPEAK IN INK

Vast, silent and timeless — the Himalayas have long stirred the human imagination. In this evocative photo feature, artist Ashoo Sharma distils their grandeur into lines of ink, capturing not just mountains, but moments of inner awakening.



BY SANDEEP GOSWAMI

The author has shaped a life that blends engineering precision, entrepreneurial drive, literary sensibility and adventure-earned insight through his work as an air traffic controller, technical consultant, motorcyclist, magazine editor and photographer.

For Ashoo Sharma, the Himalayas are not merely a subject — they are a lifelong dialogue.

An artist, photographer and passionate trekker, Sharma has spent years walking the high-altitude trails of the upper Himalayas. The mountains he paints are not imagined landscapes; they are lived experiences. They rise from memory, silence and spiritual encounter.

Rendered primarily in pen and ink, brush and ink, and occasionally watercolour ink, this body of work distils the



vastness of the Himalayas into minimalist strokes and textured contrasts. Each peak is reduced to its essence — not as a geographical marker, but as a presence. The ridges curve like calligraphy. The shadows speak of depth and distance. The blank spaces are as powerful as the lines themselves.

There is restraint in these works, but never emptiness. Through deliberate simplicity, Sharma conveys stillness,







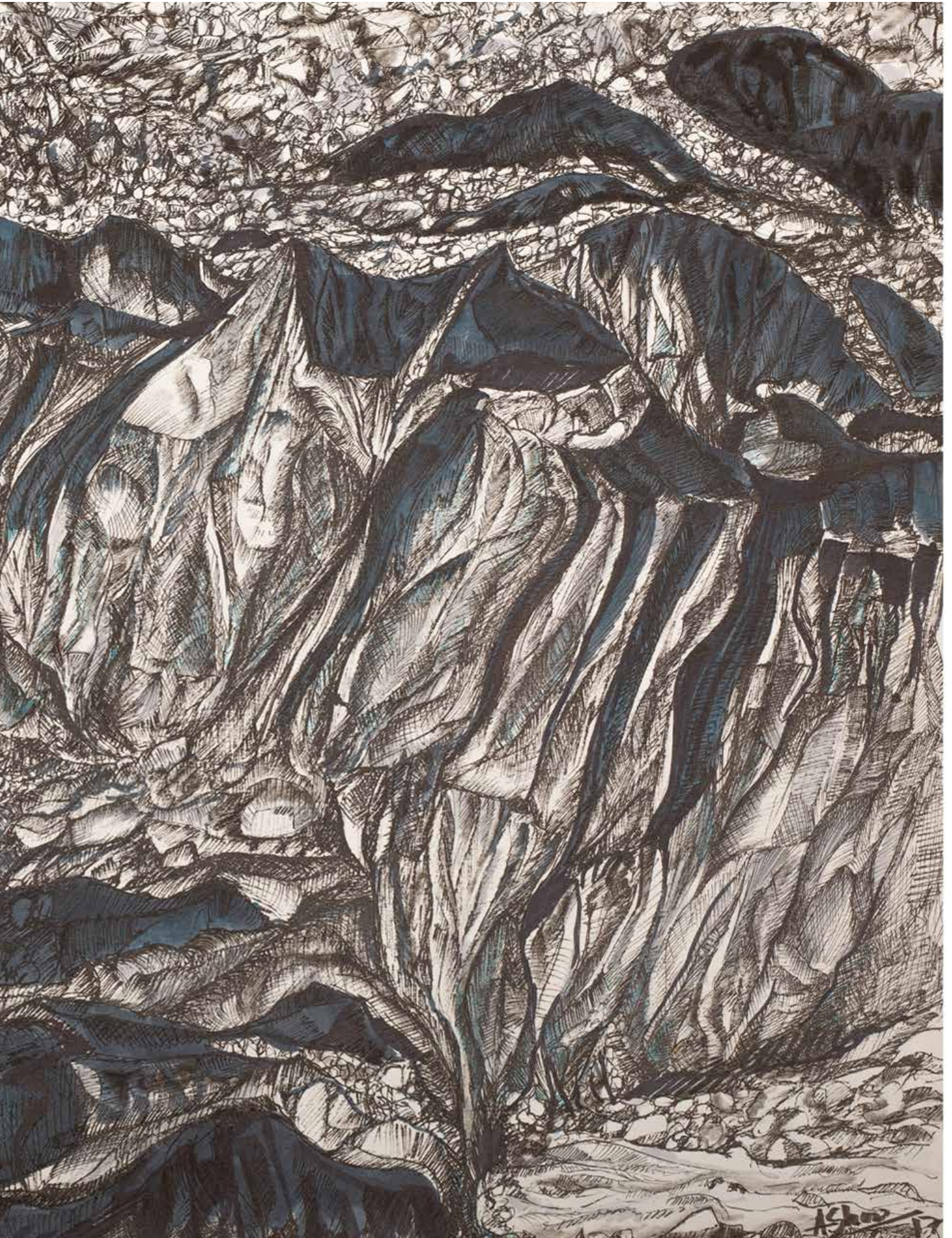
● ●
**The Himalayas, distilled into
ink — where vast landscapes
become intimate expressions
of memory and meditation..**
● ●



solitude and the overwhelming scale of the mountains. His gaze is not that of a tourist, but of a pilgrim — someone who has stood before snow and stone with humility.

In his interpretation, every mountain becomes an individual — an abstract portrait of character and energy. The Himalayas here are not landscapes to be conquered or consumed; they are forms to be listened to.





● ●
Through minimalist strokes
and deliberate silence,
each peak emerges not as
geography, but as presence.
● ●



This expanded series was exhibited from 20 to 24 February 2026 at the Convention Centre Foyer, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. Featuring nearly eighty framed works — from intimate 6 x 8-inch studies to expansive 24 x 30-inch compositions — the exhibition brought together pen and ink drawings, brush studies, watercolour ink pieces and select dry pastels.

Together, they formed a quiet constellation of peaks — an immersive visual journey that invites viewers to pause, breathe and perhaps rediscover their own inner mountain. ■

BOI



Thank You Bank of India

FROM



सर्वजन हिताय, सर्वजन सुखाय !

CHITRANSH SANSKRITIK SANKUL

चित्रांश सांस्कृतिक संकुल

C-202, Block-C, Kendriya Vihar, Sector-56, Grurugram 122011

Contact 9810766339, 8700353404, 9810825938, 9818970382



EXETER

WHERE RIVERS, FAITHS AND HISTORIES MEET

My first journey to the United Kingdom was more than an academic trip. In the quiet hills of Exeter, I encountered riverside cafés, ancient cathedrals, a growing mosque, and strangers who felt familiar. What began as a workshop visit slowly turned into a meditation on culture, faith, diaspora, and distance — and on how far one can travel, both across continents and within oneself.



BY RAJEEV KUMAR
rajeev.kumar@stu.ihu.edu.tr

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

I stepped off the train at Exeter St Davids railway station, needing to quickly catch another train to Exeter Central railway station. But I misjudged the timing and missed it by a few seconds. Slightly anxious, I ap-

proached a station guard and asked whether I could board the next train without buying another ticket. She smiled and assured me I could. "The next one arrives in fifteen minutes," she said kindly.

That small gesture set the tone for my first evening in Exeter of the United Kingdom.

The weather was unlike anything I had experienced before — cool yet sunny, gentle and welcoming. I lingered at the station, absorbing the quiet charm of the place before boarding the short ride to Exeter Central.

First Impressions of the City

As I stepped out of Exeter Central, excitement rushed through me: *I am in the UK — in Exeter!* My hotel was just two minutes away, and though it was already 6 PM, I was eager to explore.

The first landmark I encountered was Exeter College. It seemed open and boundary-less, blending naturally into the city. The architecture did not impose itself; rather, it conversed with its surroundings.

On the way, I met a young man from Saudi Arabia who guided me to a halal café called Fire-away Piz-



za Exeter, insisting it served the best pizza in town. Inside, Bengali music was playing. I met two South Asians — one from Haryana and another from Dhaka — and instantly felt a sense of diaspora warmth. On their recommendation, I ordered the “Asian pizza” for £12 and walked toward the river.

I sat on the steps by the water, eating my pizza and watching the evening unfold. The riverside was alive with cafés, pub-style seating, boaters, and people exercising in the water. Though I don’t drink, I appreciated the



social vibrancy. The atmosphere felt romantic and relaxed.

I crossed a bridge and eventually reached St Leonard’s Church, tall and dignified against the evening sky. Then I returned to my hotel, quietly content.

Queens Court Hotel: A Cultural Adjustment

I stayed at Queens Court Hotel, a charming British-style house with compact yet well-maintained rooms. The next morning, the lobby felt warm and café-like.

When I ordered an English break-

fast, I realised it was not halal. The staff immediately replaced it with a vegetarian alternative and a cutlet. Their kindness made the hotel feel less like accommodation and more like a home.

Then came a cultural shock.

There was no bidet or water spray in the toilet. I was stunned. In South Asia, water is essential for cleanliness. Here, toilet paper was the norm. I found myself adjusting, showering when necessary, and reflecting — half-seriously, half-humorously — on how cultures differ in the smallest, most intimate ways.

Travel teaches humility.

The University Experience

The next morning, I walked to University of Exeter. The campus was hilly and green, reminding me of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi where I had once studied. What struck me most was the absence of gates and guards. The campus flowed into the city seamlessly. It felt open, democratic.

The workshop I attended focused on syncretic traditions in South Asia, particularly the Bhakti–Sufi movement. It felt less like a conference and more like a spiritual gathering — a *mela* of minds. Scholars had travelled from different parts of the world to exchange ideas.

As Bulleh Shah wrote:

“Chal mele nu chaliye...”

Let us walk to the fair.

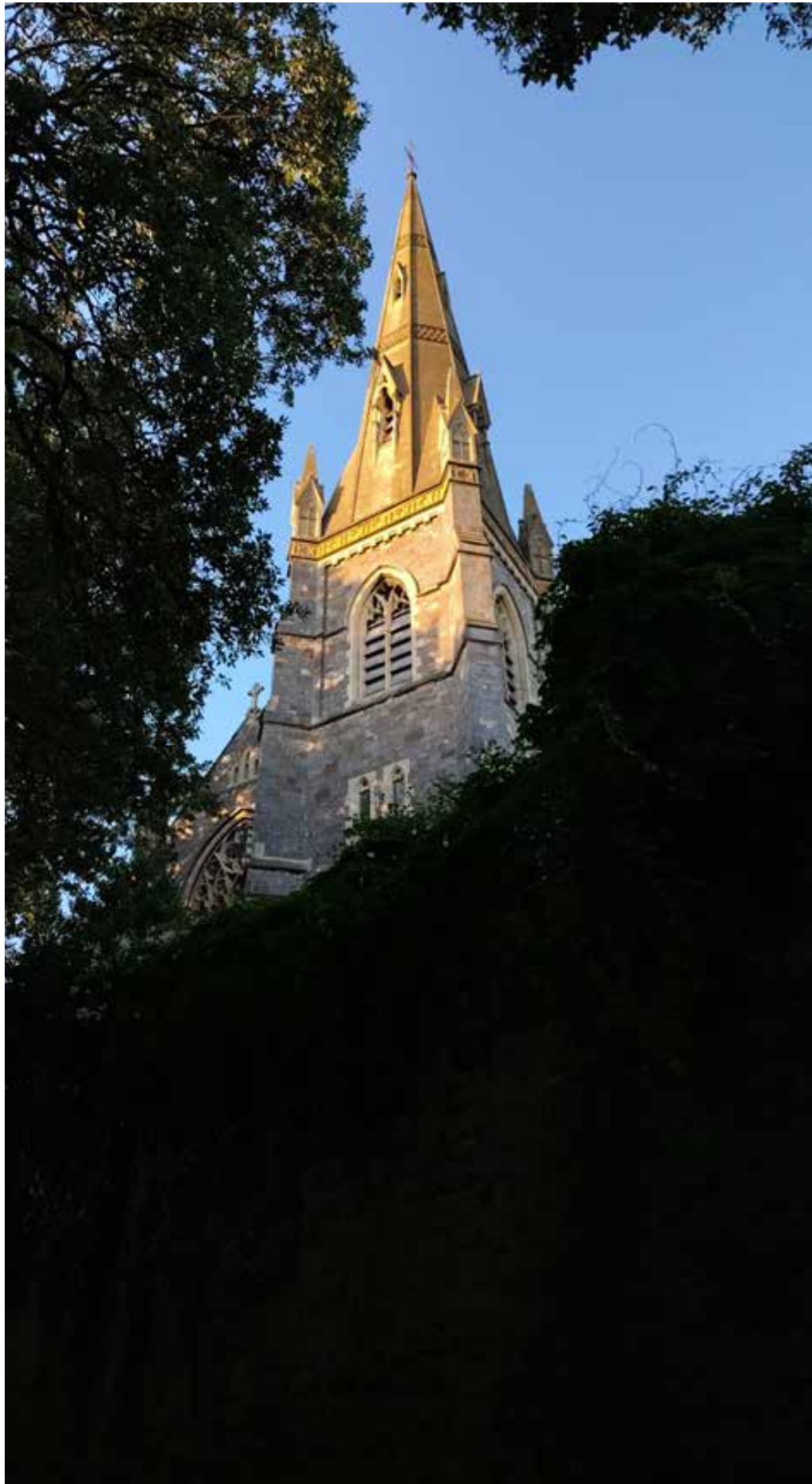
We had all come to this fair of knowledge.

I also visited the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, an impressive department supported by global philanthropy and home to a vibrant international research community.

Exeter’s Religious Landscape

Exeter is quieter and hillier than London. Its stone houses, narrow lanes, and Roman walls — dating back to around 200 AD — create an aged, poetic atmosphere.

I visited Exeter Mosque with a new Palestinian friend, Abdullah. What began as a small prayer space has grown into a three-storey mosque serving a flourishing Muslim community. The





● ●
From a missed train at Exeter St Davids to an evening by the riverside cafés, the author's first steps in Exeter unfold as a journey of small encounters and quiet discoveries. What begins as an academic visit soon reveals the warmth of diaspora connections, where strangers from South Asia feel instantly familiar.
● ●



managing committee is largely Bengali, and they've even built residential facilities to sustain operations. The diaspora here is not marginal; it is organised and confident.

Later, we visited an 11th-century church where an elderly priest named Jim reopened the doors just for us. When I asked for a photo, he smiled and said, "No — your camera will crack." We burst into laughter. It was a gentle, sacred moment.

Exeter Cathedral: Architecture and Power

In contrast stood the majestic Exeter Cathedral. Gothic arches soared upward, stained glass shimmered, and the sheer scale left me speechless. It was overwhelming — not just in size but in symbolism. These were not merely places of worship; they were statements of history and power.

● ●
Walking through cathedrals, mosques and historic streets, the author reflects on culture, faith and identity in a distant land. In the quiet hills of Exeter, a simple academic trip gradually turns into a deeper meditation on distance, belonging and the evolving experience of the global Indian diaspora.
 ● ●

I realised how architecture can dominate space — and people.

Reflections

Despite colonial wounds that history cannot erase, I had to acknowledge something: the infrastructure was strong, the city clean, and the systems functional. I saw no beggars. The diaspora — Muslim, South Asian, African — was visible and politically active.

This journey was more than a paper presentation. It was a confrontation with distance — geographic, cultural, historical — and with my own journey.

From a village boy with dreams to a thinker walking among cathedrals, coffee shops, and mosques in distant lands.

And this is only the beginning. London awaits.

TO BE CONTINUED...

SUBSCRIBE TO

PRAVASI INDIANS

The India Connection



1 year (12 Issues)

Cover Price: ₹ 2400

Inaugural Discount (17%):

\$27/ ₹ 2000

2 years (24 Issues)

Cover Price: ₹ 4800

Inaugural Discount (25%):

\$48/ ₹ 3600

MODE OF PAYMENT

Avail this Subscription Offer by visiting our website www.pravasindians.com and select one from a variety of online payment options. For your convenience, you can scan the following Bar Code which will take you to our website and you can opt for any of the Subscription Plans.



Alternatively, you can pay online directly to our bank account as per the following details:

Name of the Account: **M/s Template Media LLP**

Current Account No: 201003247489

Branch Address: Golf Course Road Branch, Sun City Business Tower, Sector-54, Gurgaon-122 002.

IFSC Code: INDB0000401

OR

Draw a crossed Cheque/Demand Draft/Pay Order/Banker's Cheque as per the opted Subscription Plan in favour of **M/s Template Media LLP** and send it to the following address:

M/s Template Media LLP,

34 A, K-Block, Saket, New Delhi-110017

In case of any query, we are available 24x7 on: +91-9810766338/9.

THE HIDDEN PATTERNS OF THE COSMOS

Astrology is often seen not only as a system for predicting events but also as a traditional framework for understanding patterns in human life. A Janam Kundli, or birth chart, is believed to represent the planetary positions at the time of birth and is interpreted by astrologers to identify potential tendencies, challenges, and opportunities in an individual's life. Practices such as chanting mantras, giving charity, observing fasts, and wearing specific gemstones are traditionally recommended as ways to seek balance and align oneself with perceived cosmic influences.



BY ACHARYA DINAIK

Astrology Science Dk can be contacted on
+91-9779027873

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.

मार्च-2026 राशिफल

नया महीना, नई ऊर्जा और नए अवसर

मेष (Aries)

करियर: नई जिम्मेदारियाँ मिलेंगी, नेतृत्व क्षमता बढ़ेगी।
धन: खर्च पर नियंत्रण रखें।
प्रेम: पुराने मतभेद दूर होंगे।
स्वास्थ्य: सिरदर्द/थकान से बचें।
शुभ दिन: 9, 18
शुभ रंग: लाल

मिथुन (Gemini)

करियर: कम्प्यूनिक्शन से लाभ।
धन: अचानक लाभ संभव।
प्रेम: नए रिश्ते की शुरुआत।
स्वास्थ्य: नींद पूरी लें।
शुभ दिन: 5, 14
शुभ रंग: पीला

सिंह (Leo)

करियर: मान-सम्मान में वृद्धि।
धन: आय के नए स्रोत।
प्रेम: आकर्षण बढ़ेगा।
स्वास्थ्य: ऊर्जा अच्छी रहेगी।
शुभ दिन: 8, 19
शुभ रंग: सुनहरा

वृषभ (Taurus)

करियर: स्थिरता और तरक्की के संकेत।
धन: निवेश के लिए अच्छा समय।
प्रेम: रिश्तों में मधुरता।
स्वास्थ्य: खानपान संतुलित रखें।
शुभ दिन: 6, 22
शुभ रंग: हरा

कर्क (Cancer)

करियर: पारिवारिक सहयोग मिलेगा।
धन: बचत बढ़ेगी।
प्रेम: भावनात्मक जुड़ाव बढ़ेगा।
स्वास्थ्य: पेट से जुड़ी दिक्कत से सावधान।
शुभ दिन: 10, 27
शुभ रंग: सफेद

कन्या (Virgo)

करियर: योजनाओं में सफलता।
धन: खर्च सोच-समझकर करें।
प्रेम: स्पष्ट संवाद जरूरी।
स्वास्थ्य: तनाव से बचें।
शुभ दिन: 11, 24
शुभ रंग: नीला

तुला (Libra)

करियर: साझेदारी से लाभ।
 धन: संतुलन बना रहेगा।
 प्रेम: रोमांटिक समय।
 स्वास्थ्य: कमर/पीठ का ध्यान रखें।
 शुभ दिन: 7, 16
 शुभ रंग: गुलाबी

वृश्चिक (Scorpio)

करियर: गोपनीय योजनाएँ सफल होंगी।
 धन: अचानक खर्च संभव।
 प्रेम: गहराई और विश्वास।
 स्वास्थ्य: क्रोध पर नियंत्रण।
 शुभ दिन: 4, 21
 शुभ रंग: मैरून

धनु (Sagittarius)

करियर: यात्रा और नए अवसर।
 धन: भाग्य साथ देगा।
 प्रेम: मिलता प्रेम में बदलेगी।
 स्वास्थ्य: फिटनेस पर ध्यान दें।
 शुभ दिन: 12, 26
 शुभ रंग: बैंगनी

मकर (Capricorn)

करियर: मेहनत का फल मिलेगा।
 धन: स्थिर आय।
 प्रेम: धैर्य रखें।
 स्वास्थ्य: जोड़ों का ध्यान रखें।
 शुभ दिन: 3, 20
 शुभ रंग: भूरा

कुंभ (Aquarius)

करियर: नए आइडिया सफल होंगे।
 धन: टेक/नवाचार से लाभ।
 प्रेम: स्वतंत्रता का सम्मान करें।
 स्वास्थ्य: मानसिक शांति ज़रूरी।
 शुभ दिन: 13, 28
 शुभ रंग: आसमानी

मीन (Pisces)

करियर: रचनात्मक कार्य में सफलता।
 धन: खर्च बढ़ सकता है।
 प्रेम: भावनाएँ प्रबल रहेंगी।
 स्वास्थ्य: ध्यान/योग लाभकारी।
 शुभ दिन: 2, 17
 शुभ रंग: समुद्री हरा

मार्च 2026 संदेश:

“सकारात्मक सोच, सही निर्णय और धैर्य — यही इस महीने की कुंजी है।”

THE HIDDEN COST OF CONVENIENCE

From midnight food deliveries to 10-minute groceries, convenience has become the defining feature of urban Indian life. What began as a pandemic necessity is now a permanent habit. But beneath the comfort of one-click consumption lies a complex web of health risks, environmental strain, vanishing neighbourhood economies, and fragile gig livelihoods. Are we paying more than we realise for the ease we celebrate?



BY DR VENKATESH GANAPATHY

Based in Bangalore, the author is a management educator.

Convenience has quietly become the organising principle of modern life. What began as a necessity during the Covid-19 pandemic has hardened into habit. Today, we embrace convenience with enthusiasm — rarely pausing to examine its long-term consequences.

Perhaps it is time to pause.

Ever since the internet became what marketers call the “zero moment of truth,” life on this planet has transformed. Information, services, entertainment, groceries, even companionship — all are now accessible through a device we cannot imagine living without. The smartphone has evolved into an all-purpose command centre. It has undoubtedly made life easier.

Or has it?

App Economy at Our Doorstep

Food delivery apps have woven themselves into the fabric of Indian urban life. Whatever questions linger about

their profitability, their popularity is undeniable. Reward points, loyalty bonuses, flash discounts, subscription memberships — the psychology of instant gratification has been perfected.

What was once an occasional indulgence has become routine. In dual-income households where time is scarce and professional demands relentless, ordering food feels practical. For bachelors wary of cooking, it feels liberating.

Cooking, once a daily ritual, is now seen by many as a logistical burden. Who will order groceries? Who will track inventory? Why bother when Alexa can remind you, and smart refrigerators

powered by machine learning can alert you to refills? E-grocery apps promise delivery in 10–20 minutes through neighbourhood “dark stores.” Meal kits — once popular in the West — have entered Indian kitchens. Even if one chooses to cook, who has the energy to clean, wash and stack utensils after a 12-hour workday?

The culture of work has shifted dramatically. The boundary between professional and personal life has blurred. In many sectors, availability is expected 24×7. The nine-to-five routine is largely obsolete. Miss a WhatsApp message at midnight and expect a follow-up call.



Instant response is the new normal.

In such an ecosystem, convenience becomes seductive.

The Illusion of Control

In cities like Bengaluru, many households now employ cooks. A competent cook can earn between 30,000 and 40,000 a month by working across homes — an encouraging sign of in-

Monthly totals often surprise us.

Convenience makes indulgence effortless.

The Vanishing Marketplace

There was once a simple pleasure in walking to the neighbourhood vegetable market — haggling mildly, exchanging pleasantries, building warmth with familiar vendors. That

social texture is fading.

Quick-commerce platforms promise near-instant delivery. Yet many of these businesses operate in a low-margin sector and struggle for profitability. Some have shut down; others survive on investor capital or IPO proceeds. The long-term sustainability of the model remains uncertain.

Meanwhile, neighbourhoods are in-



come mobility for marginalised communities. When guests arrive, a few taps on an app solve everything.

Yet something else quietly slips away.

When we outsource our meals, we surrender control over ingredients, oil quality, portion size and hygiene. Taste and nutrition do not always align. With lifestyle diseases rising sharply in urban India, frequent consumption of calorie-dense, late-night meals — pizza and garlic bread at midnight are hardly uncommon — carries consequences.

Digital payments add another layer to this illusion. Like credit cards, they reduce the psychological friction of spending. Money leaves invisibly.

● ●

Every 'discount' and 'flash offer' hides invisible costs — from inflated pricing and mounting household expenses to long-term health consequences driven by processed, calorie-dense consumption.

● ●

creasingly crowded with delivery bikes weaving in and out of streets. Yes, they create employment for gig workers. But the work is intense, commission-based, and precarious. A platform's closure can mean immediate unemployment. Delivery personnel often navigate unreasonable customer expectations under immense time pressure.

Residential complexes once accustomed to quiet afternoons now echo with the constant hum of two-wheelers. Parking spaces shrink. Congestion grows.

Who Pays the Real Price?

Beyond traffic and noise lies a deeper concern.



Traditional kirana stores — often family-run enterprises across generations — struggle to compete with deep-discount digital platforms. Small vegetable vendors barely break even. Restaurants quietly complain that food delivery aggregators erode their margins; some inflate menu prices by 20–30 percent online to compensate. Discounts are frequently calculated on marked-up prices.

Yet the word “offer” remains irresistible.

Packaging waste tells another story. Apartment complexes generate bucketfuls of cardboard, plastic and thermocol daily. Rarely do we pause to consider the environmental burden of hyper-speed consumption. Add to this the fuel used for rapid deliveries, rising urban congestion and deteriorating air quality — and the ecological cost becomes harder to ignore.

Convenience, it turns out, is not cost-free.

● ●

As quick-commerce platforms expand, traditional family-run stores and street vendors struggle to survive in an algorithm-driven marketplace.

● ●

A Moment for Reflection

This is not an argument against technology. Nor is it a moral indictment of food delivery or grocery apps. These platforms are now integral to modern life. They provide jobs, save time and offer undeniable utility.

But convenience, when unexamined, can reshape habits, health, community relationships and economic ecosystems.

What happens to the kirana family that loses its livelihood?

What becomes of the roadside vendor edged out by algorithmic pricing? What of the gig worker whose income depends on ratings and surge algorithms? What of the waste we generate without thought? What of our own health, quietly compromised by habit?

We may not have easy answers. But awareness precedes wisdom.

The pandemic accelerated digital adoption. The post-pandemic world normalised it. Perhaps the next phase demands balance.

Convenience is a powerful ally. But if it begins to erode community, sustainability and well-being, it deserves scrutiny.

Before we tap “Order Now” again, maybe we owe ourselves — and our society — a brief moment of pause.

Because the true price of convenience is rarely printed on the invoice. ■

POWERGRID - Powering South Asian Energy Cooperation



One of the World's Largest Power Transmission Company cum Leading Global Consultant

Cross-Border links with

- Bangladesh • Bhutan • Myanmar • Nepal

Prestigious Assignments in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka

Transmission Lines >179,594 ckm 280 Sub-stations Transformation capacity of 546,461 MVA



GRIDCON 2025

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CUM EXHIBITION

Innovations in Grid Resilience

9 - 11 March 2025 Yashobhoomi, Delhi

Organised By
**पावरग्रिड
POWERGRID**

In Association With
**cigre
India**



150+
Technical Papers

30+
Country Representatives

2000+
Conference Delegates

150+
Exhibiting Companies



Fast-track your business growth. Switch over to

BOI **MSME WELCOME OFFER**

- Enjoy low & attractive ROI
- Finance up to ₹50 crores
- Avail various concessions in processing and other charges
- Quick and hassle-free approval

Toll Free No.: 1800 220 229 / 1800 103 1906

www.bankofindia.bank.in

Follow us on     



Relationship beyond banking