

# THE RISING NATION



Truth First, Fact Always

**Cover story**

## THE CRACK IN THE ABSOLUTE

**How Centralised Power Fractured Under Street  
Pressure**

# THE RISING NATION



Truth First, Fact Always

The fortnightly magazine from Authentic Press Private limited  
USHUS, I.T.I Chenakkala Road, Kalamassery, ,Ernakulam Dist. Kerala

- **Editor In Chief:** Suresh Unnithan
- **Managing Editor:** Nanditha Subhadra
- **Editorial Director:** Geetha V P
- **Editorial Coordinator:** Geethu Radhakrishnan
- **Technical Advisor:** Arjun Santhosh
- **Graphics:** Remya
- **Legal Advisor:** Adv. Salini T S



# Content

- 04** Special Story  
**The Invisible Threat from Above**
- 07** Cover Story  
**THE CRACK IN THE ABSOLUTE**
- 15** Technology  
**Solid-State Drives (SSDs) vs. Traditional Hard Disk Drives (HDDs)**
- 18** Mental Health  
**Silent Storms in Young Minds: How Unseen Anxiety Traps Teenage Girls and Why We Must Act Before It's Too Late**
- 21** Health  
**The Hidden Risk of Refined Sugar: It Harms More Than You Think**
- 23** Education  
**EDUCATION MAFIA: One Seat, Ten Thousand Dreams — Bought, Sold, and Shattered**
- 28** Film  
**Yami Gautam: A Blaze of Unbreakable Intensity**
- 29** Travel  
**Whispers of the Thunder Dragon: A Soulful Himalayan Awakening**
- 33** Sports  
**Spain's Second Dawn: When the Beautiful Game Stretched Across Continents and Found Its Soul Anew**
- 36** Legal  
**Unfair Trade Practices: Safeguards and Remedies under Indian Law**
- 39** Spiritual  
**Dharma and Karma: The Particular Pathway to Paramatma**
- 45** Editor's Diary  
**GEN Z: The Voters You Cannot Scare**



# The Invisible Threat from Above

**Atmospheric Pollution from Aviation and Rocket Launches — Damage to the Atmosphere, Human Health, and Vegetation**

**From Our Science Desk**



Every day the global fleet of commercial aircraft and an accelerating cadence of rockets release large volumes of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, soot, water vapour and other pollutants high into the atmosphere. Because these emissions occur at altitude, their climate and ecological effects are disproportionately large compared with surface sources of similar mass. This article presents the latest available statistics and the mechanisms of harm.

## 1. Scale of Daily Operations

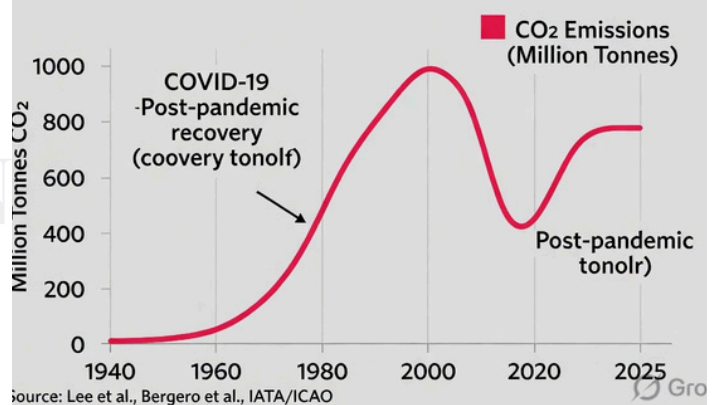
On a typical day in 2025–2026 approximately 110,000 commercial flights operate worldwide. Peak days exceed 144,000 flights. At any moment during busy daylight hours, 7,000–14,000 aircraft are airborne simultaneously. These numbers translate into continuous injection of pollutants into the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere.



## 2. Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Commercial aviation currently emits roughly 900–1,040 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, equivalent to 2.5–2.85 million tonnes every day. Aviation accounts for about 2.5 % of global anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub>, yet its total climate impact is higher because of non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects. Emissions rose steadily for decades, collapsed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

### Global Aviation CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 1940–2025

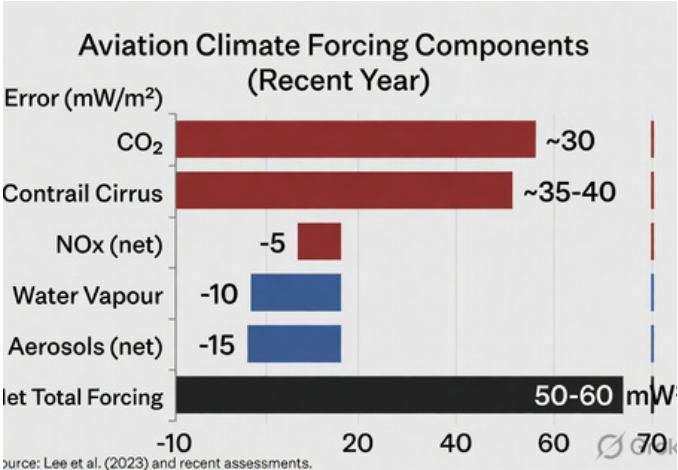


## 3. Full Climate Forcing — CO<sub>2</sub> Is Only Part of the Story

When non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects are included, aviation's contribution to radiative forcing is substantially larger. Persistent contrails and contrail-cirrus clouds, together with the net effect of NO<sub>x</sub> chemistry, produce warming comparable to (or greater than) the

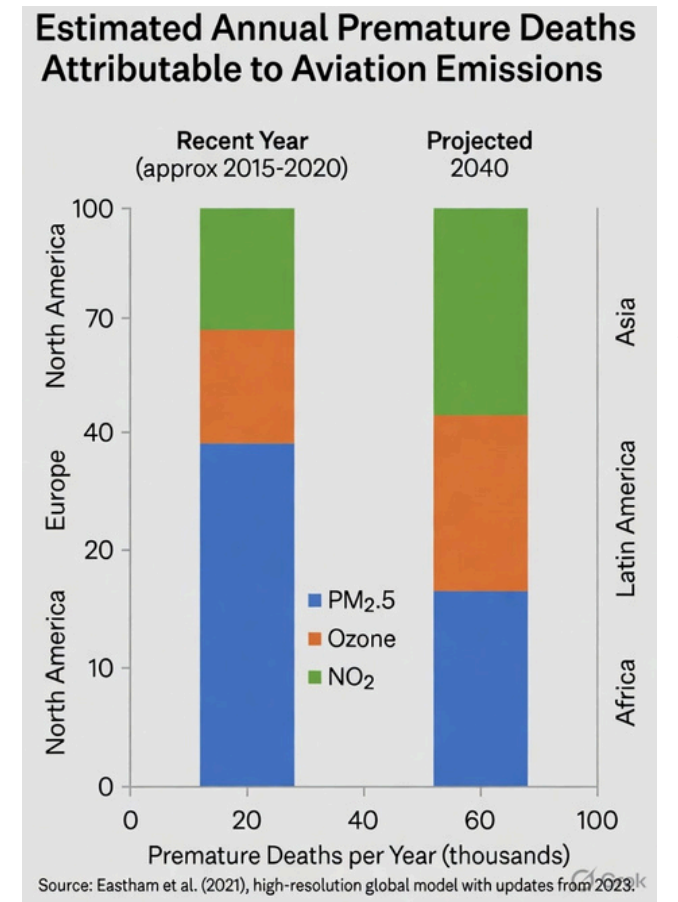


CO<sub>2</sub> forcing itself. Net effective radiative forcing from aviation is currently estimated in the range of 50–60 mW m<sup>-2</sup>, with large uncertainty attached to the contrail term.



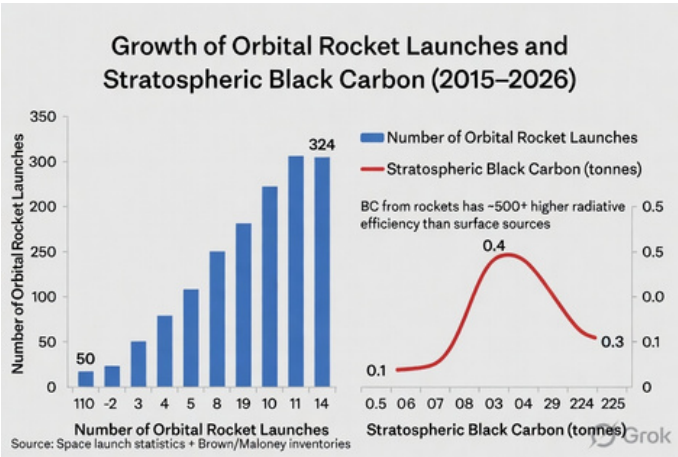
#### 4. Human Health Burden

High-resolution atmospheric chemistry modelling attributes tens of thousands of premature deaths each year to aviation-related PM<sub>2.5</sub> and ozone. Recent central estimates fall in the range of approximately 50,000–74,000 excess deaths annually. Without strong mitigation the total is projected to rise sharply by 2040. Cruise-altitude emissions, not only landing-and-take-off cycles, dominate the global health impact through long-range transport of secondary pollutants. The largest absolute burden falls on Asia.



#### 5. Rocket Launches — A Rapidly Growing High-Altitude Source

Orbital launches rose from roughly 100 per year in the late 2010s to 324 in 2025. Although the absolute mass of pollutants is still modest, black carbon injected directly into the stratosphere has a radiative efficiency approximately 500 times higher than the same mass emitted at the surface. Solid-rocket motors also release chlorine and alumina particles that contribute to stratospheric ozone loss. With launch rates continuing to climb, these effects are no longer negligible.



#### 6. Consequences for Vegetation and Ecosystems

- Nitrogen deposition from aircraft NO<sub>x</sub> acidifies soils and freshwater systems and alters plant community composition in sensitive habitats.
- Tropospheric ozone formed from NO<sub>x</sub> is phytotoxic, reducing photosynthesis, crop yields and forest productivity.
- Any additional stratospheric ozone depletion increases surface UV-B radiation, further stressing vegetation.

Climate warming driven in part by aviation and rocket emissions exacerbates drought, heat stress and shifts in growing seasons.

#### Summary of Key Quantities (mid-2020s)

| Indicator                                       | Approximate number      |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Commercial flights per day                      | 100,000–144,000         |
| Aircraft airborne at once                       | 7,000–14,000            |
| Aviation CO <sub>2</sub> per day                | 2.5–2.85 million tonnes |
| Aviation CO <sub>2</sub> per year               | 900–1,040 Mt            |
| Aviation-attributable premature deaths per year | ~50,000–74,000          |
| Orbital launches (2025)                         | 324                     |
| Radiative efficiency of rocket black carbon     | ~500× surface sources   |

## Conclusion

Aviation and space launch activities are indispensable, yet their high-altitude emissions create measurable damage to the climate system, air quality, human health and terrestrial ecosystems. Continued growth without aggressive technological and operational mitigation will amplify these impacts. Accurate monitoring, cleaner propulsion, sustainable aviation fuels, and policies that address both CO<sub>2</sub> and non-CO<sub>2</sub> effects are now essential if the benefits of flight and space access are to be sustained without unacceptable cost to the planetary systems that support life.





# THE CRACK IN THE ABSOLUTE

*How Centralised Power Fractured Under Street Pressure — and How Camouflaged Saboteurs Continue to Eat the Structure from Within*

**By Suresh Unnithan**



Truth First, Fact Always

Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation on 25 July 2026 is not a routine ministerial exit. It is the first public surrender of a political order that for twelve years treated accountability as dispensable and public anger as something that could be managed into silence. The governing premise was rigid and widely understood: no senior minister resigns under street pressure; no systemic failure is permitted to attach to the apex; loyalty is prized above competence. That premise has now collapsed. What was relentlessly projected as unassailable authority has suffered its first unmistakable fracture.

Yet the resignation must be read as more than a concession on one examination scandal. It is the moment when a deliberately engineered structure of centralised power, cultivated sycophancy and manufactured invincibility began to reveal its deep structural rot. Simultaneously, another quieter but equally lethal process has been at work: the systematic sabotage of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the government and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh by elements that operate from within, wrapped in the

colours of the most ardent support. These camouflaged operators — termites in saffron — have been eroding organisational credibility, social cohesion and moral authority with a precision that external critics could never match.

The two crises are not separate. One is the visible cracking of a centralised edifice under the pressure of a public that finally refused to disperse. The other is the slow, internal consumption of the very institutions that edifice was meant to serve. Together they constitute the most serious challenge the present political order has faced since it assumed national power. This cover story examines both, without embellishment and without dilution, and places the responsibility for diagnosis and remedy where it properly belongs — with those who still hold the levers of power and organisational authority.

## **The Architecture of Absolute Control**

The responsibility for the present moment rests overwhelmingly with the manner in which power was



consolidated and exercised. Narendra Modi did not merely lead a party and a government;

he hollowed both out and rebuilt them as instruments that answered to one centre. Independent voices were systematically eliminated. Criticism was reclassified as disloyalty. A culture of reflexive affirmation and careerist deference was installed as the operating principle. The result was a machine that could deliver electoral victories and project strength, yet proved brittle the instant it confronted a public that refused the familiar cycle of inquiries, assurances and quiet burial.

The pattern was established early and applied with consistent severity. One of the clearest early demonstrations remains the treatment of Sanjay Joshi. Once a senior organisational figure with deep roots in the RSS network and a record of building the party across states, Joshi was reduced to a political non-entity once Modi consolidated power in Gujarat. Differences that began in the mid-1990s hardened into open conflict. A controversial compact disc that surfaced in 2005 — later widely regarded as fabricated — provided the pretext for his removal. The decisive humiliation came in 2012. When then BJP president Nitin Gadkari attempted to rehabilitate Joshi, Modi made his own attendance at the party's national executive contingent on Joshi's exclusion. Within hours Joshi was forced out. The message was unambiguous and permanent: no leader who retained independent organisational standing or residual loyalty outside the Modi circle would be permitted to survive.

Similar methods were applied to other senior figures who once commanded respect within the broader Sangh ecosystem. The objective was not merely personal dominance; it was the creation of a hierarchy in which ultimate authority rested with one individual and a small circle of trusted managers. The party organisation was re-engineered around this principle. State units learned that preferment depended on demonstrated loyalty rather than independent political capital. The RSS, which had historically insisted on collective decision-making and institutional primacy over personality, found itself navigating a new reality in which the political face it had helped elevate increasingly overshadowed the parent body itself.

RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat has repeatedly underscored the organisation's traditional rejection of personality worship. The Sangh does not believe in vyakti puja — the worship of an individual. Only an ideal or a principle can be worshipped. In more recent remarks, Bhagwat has been careful to distinguish the political sphere from the organisational one, stating that Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of a political party, the BJP, and that the party is a separate entity, not an organ of the RSS. He has emphasised that leaders, organisations and governments are only aids; the real power lies in society.



On 24 July 2026, speaking at the valedictory session of the Vishwa Mangalya Sabha's national meeting on "Yuganukul Matritva" (Contemporary Motherhood) at the Ambedkar International Centre in Delhi — an event focused on mothers and family — Bhagwat delivered a pointed observation that acquires particular resonance in the present political context. He said:

*"There was a time when obedience came naturally. When we were children, if our mother or father said something, there were no arguments. Once they had spoken, that was the end of the discussion. We also had deep faith in them. We believed they had seen more of life than we had, and that their experience would guide us in the right direction."*

*Times have changed, he continued. "The new generation asks questions, and one has to provide the underlying logic for everything. There is a great need to offer warmth, dedicate time, and engage in dialogue. It should be about discussion rather than dictation, and consensus*

*rather than orders. Nowadays, conversation has stopped even within families, this needs to change.”rather than orders. Nowadays, conversation has stopped even within families, this needs to change.”*

*He added: “Today, parenting cannot be about dictation. It has to be about discussion; not orders, but consensus.” And further: “We cannot act arbitrarily and become the masters of everyone through force.”*

These remarks, delivered to an audience of mothers on the very days when students were occupying the streets of Delhi demanding accountability, carry an unmistakable wider implication. A generation that refuses blind obedience in the family is unlikely to accept it in the political sphere either. Discussion, not dictation; consensus, not orders — the language stands in sharp contrast to a governing culture built on centralised command and the expectation of unquestioning loyalty.



Once in power at the Centre, the method of centralisation was institutionalised. A cadre of dependable sycophants was cultivated and rewarded. Ministers and party functionaries understood that public disagreement with the prime minister, or even the appearance of independent judgement on sensitive matters, carried career costs. Cabinet meetings and party forums became rituals of affirmation rather than forums of deliberation. The phrase “yes boss” ceased to be a description of individual behaviour and became the operating culture of the entire system.

This culture produced two related and corrosive consequences. First, the prime minister retained the final say on virtually every significant matter of government and party. Bureaucrats who aligned themselves closely with the political centre gained influence and protection; those who retained institutional independence found their space steadily narrowed. A small group of favoured officials and political managers operated with exceptional latitude. Second, accountability was systematically dismantled. When failures occurred — whether in policy implementation, administrative competence or ethical lapses — the instinct was protection rather than consequence. Ministers who proved incapable or whose portfolios became sources of repeated embarrassment were retained and insulated. The public justification was collective responsibility or the need for continuity. The practical effect was the complete absence of any credible mechanism that linked performance to tenure.

The long-standing doctrine that ministers in this government do not resign under pressure found its clearest public expression in Rajnath Singh’s 2015 remark during the Lalit Modi controversy: “There will be no resignation. This is not the UPA government, this is the NDA government.” That clip has been widely recirculated in the present crisis precisely because it captured the governing philosophy that held for more than a decade. Resignations were treated as admissions of vulnerability. Better to absorb criticism, deploy investigative agencies selectively, manage the media narrative, and wait for



Many of these promises remained substantially unfulfilled. The farm laws were introduced with fanfare and withdrawn after prolonged agitation that exposed the limits of unilateral decision-making. Employment generation consistently lagged behind the scale of the claims made. The rhetoric of minimum government and maximum governance coexisted with an expanding web of centralised control and selective enforcement. Public frustration did not erupt in a single dramatic collapse; it accumulated as a steady, corrosive erosion of credibility.

Even after the 2024 Lok Sabha verdict delivered a clear and unambiguous message — BJP falling short of an absolute majority and forced to govern with alliance partners — the leadership failed to recalibrate. The public had signalled that the earlier projection of invincibility no longer held. Instead of reading that verdict as a warning, the system continued to rely on favourable statistics, selective surveys and controlled narratives. Manufactured confidence substituted for honest assessment. The gap between official claims and lived experience among large sections of the population widened. That gap became politically combustible when the examination system — already plagued by repeated paper leaks and administrative failures — collapsed once more under the weight of the NEET-UG 2026 scandal.

The underperformance of several cabinet ministers compounded the damage. Portfolios critical to public welfare and national credibility were marked by repeated controversies, delayed responses and a visible absence of political ownership. Protection of the incapable became institutionalised. The message to the bureaucracy and to the political class was clear: loyalty insulated; competence remained optional. Over time this produced a government that could announce with great energy but struggled to deliver with consistency. The negative impact on public trust was cumulative and profound.

### **The Street That Would Not Disperse**

The NEET-UG 2026 paper-leak controversy and the broader crisis of examination integrity became the issue that finally tested the system's limits. Students

The underperformance of several cabinet ministers compounded the damage. Portfolios critical to public welfare and national credibility were marked by repeated controversies, delayed responses and a visible absence of political ownership. Protection of the incapable became institutionalised. The message to the bureaucracy and to the political class was clear: loyalty insulated; competence remained optional. Over time this produced a government that could announce with great energy but struggled to deliver with consistency. The negative impact on public trust was cumulative and profound.



Students and youth, organised under the Cockroach Janta Party and supported by a wider public that had tired of serial scandals, refused the familiar sequence of assurances, inquiries and eventual quiet. Protests at Jantar Mantar, police action that further inflamed sentiment, and the determination of a generation that saw its future being compromised forced a confrontation the government could not manage through the usual channels of deflection and delay.

It is in this context that the rare public intervention of Murli Manohar Joshi, a senior member of the BJP's Margdarshak Mandal, carries particular weight. In a statement that broke the long silence of the party's older ideological voices, Joshi wrote: "It is painful to see young students from different parts of the country assembled for days on the streets of New Delhi.

Their anxieties and concerns regarding the examination system are genuine and must be handled with empathy and a desire to find a lasting solution.. I fervently hope that this is not treated merely as a law-and-order issue to be tackled through the use of force. It is very painful to see that even young girls were brutally mishandled. Such use of force shall alienate large sections of Indian society from the national goal of Viksit Bharat.” The fact that a leader of Joshi’s stature felt compelled to issue such a public rebuke underscores the depth of the miscalculation. The government’s instinctive reliance on force rather than dialogue revealed how far the culture of centralised control had drifted from the older language of rajdharma.



Bhagwat’s simultaneous call for “discussion, not dictation” and “consensus, not orders” gains added force when set against the events at Jantar Mantar. A generation that refuses blind obedience in the family is the same generation that refused to accept institutional failure without accountability. The street demanded what the older culture of command had long denied: explanation, logic, and consequence.

Pradhan’s resignation letter spoke of preventing anti-national forces from exploiting the situation and of protecting students from legal complications. The language was consistent with the established style — deflective, nationalistic, and carefully constructed to avoid any admission that the system itself had failed. Yet the fact of the resignation was decisive. For the first time under this government, a senior minister was compelled to step down because the street would not go home. The old doctrine that ministers do not resign under pressure had been broken. Credibility, once projected as unassailable, had been forced into a public retreat.

## The First Signs of Reversal

The consequences are already visible and accelerating. Migratory politicians who joined the BJP from other parties in search of power and protection are watching closely. Absolute power that once appeared permanent now shows clear chinks. Political calculation changes when the centre looks vulnerable. Those who crossed over for the advantages of proximity to unchallenged authority are likely to reconsider their options once they conclude that the protective shield is no longer absolute.

The bureaucracy, long perceived as aligning itself tightly against the opposition, has begun to sense the shift. Officials who calibrated their conduct to the expectation of permanent dominance will recalibrate when that dominance appears less certain. The tone of confrontation softens when the political cost of excess becomes clearer.

Even the most vocal sycophants have started to dilute their earlier stridency. Nishikant Dubey and others who specialised in maximalist defence of every government action have modulated their public posture. In a system built on the amplification of the leader’s image, the first softening of the sycophantic chorus is itself a political signal that the old rules of engagement are no longer reliable.

The media that had been widely criticised as “godi media” for its perceived alignment with power has begun to adjust its tone. Coverage that once avoided direct confrontation with the central leadership has started to reflect the new reality of a government under visible pressure. Editorial caution is giving way, in places, to sharper questions. The information environment that once reinforced the projection of invincibility is no longer as monolithic.

## Ideological Erosion and Political Cost

Perhaps the most consequential long-term damage is ideological. The pursuit of power through tactical dilution — alliances of convenience, selective silence on uncomfortable issues, and the prioritisation of electoral arithmetic over doctrinal coherence — has eroded the commitment of ideologically driven followers.



Those who once saw the project as a mission rather than a career are increasingly disillusioned by the gap between professed principles and the actual conduct of power. That erosion is quieter than street protests but potentially more durable. Political capital built on ideological conviction is harder to recover once spent.

Mohan Bhagwat's reminders that the organisation is larger than any individual, that arrogance in work must be avoided, and that men who aspire to become "bhagwan" lose the path of service, now read less like abstract philosophical observations and more like quiet warnings directed at a political culture that elevated one man above the collective. His insistence on discussion over dictation, delivered to mothers even as students demanded accountability on the streets, sharpens the contrast between the Sangh's traditional rejection of personality cult and the reality of a highly personalised political project.

The combination is lethal: a centralised system that discouraged independent judgement, protected underperformance, relied on manufactured narratives after a clear electoral warning in 2024, and finally surrendered under student pressure. The resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan crystallises these accumulated failures. It is not the end of the Modi era. It is the beginning of its visible decline — the moment when the claim of absolute control first cracked under the weight of its own contradictions.

### **Termites in Saffron: The Camouflaged Saboteurs Within**

While the architecture of centralised control has begun to show its first public fracture, a parallel and more insidious process has been underway for years. The deadliest enemies of the Narendra Modi government, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the RSS are not the Opposition, the street agitators or the hostile media. They are inside the camp. Camouflaged hard-core "supporters" and self-proclaimed bhakts are operating like termites — silently, relentlessly, and with lethal precision. Masquerading as the most loyal foot-soldiers of the ideology, these elements are systematically torpedoing the party, the government and the Sangh Parivar through calculated hate-mongering. Their extreme videos and toxic propaganda create deep, lasting ill-will in society against the very organisations they pretend to serve.

These are not misguided activists. They are internal saboteurs. They are poison. And the government, the party and the RSS must identify them and weed them out with ruthless clarity before the structure collapses from within. These operators deliberately steal the language, symbols and emotional charge of genuine supporters. They flood digital platforms with short, high-voltage hate videos that attack communities, glorify violence and demand confrontation while wrapping themselves in the colours of "Hindu pride" and "Modi's India." The disguise works. Large sections of the public and the media swallow the packaging and assume the content carries official or organisational sanction. The result is catastrophic. Communal tension spikes. Social fabric frays. And every ounce of the political and moral damage is transferred onto the BJP, the government and the Sangh. These videos are not expressions of ideology. They are weapons aimed at the heart of the movement itself.



The method is cynical and effective. Outrage is rewarded by algorithms. The more extreme the content, the wider it spreads. The creators understand the brutal asymmetry: the reputational destruction falls on the party and the Sangh, while they themselves hide behind anonymity, disposable accounts and digital smoke-screens. What the ordinary citizen sees as the authentic voice of the movement is, in reality, a deliberate campaign of sabotage. These termites thrive precisely because they look like the wood they are devouring. Every day they remain unchallenged, they dig deeper into the foundations.

This is no longer a problem that can be managed with polite distancing or occasional press notes. It demands aggressive identification and decisive

elimination. Digital forensics, applied strictly through official channels, provides the necessary instrument. Electronic records — videos, metadata, upload trails and account information — are treated as primary evidence under the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023, when properly certified. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita provisions against promotion of enmity and deliberate insult to religious feelings, read with the Information Technology Act and the 2021 Intermediary Guidelines, already give the legal firepower to strike at content that incites hatred and violence.

The machinery exists. The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre under the Ministry of Home Affairs can coordinate national action, support forensic examination and compel platform cooperation under law. State cyber cells can register cases, secure subscriber data through due process and subject the material to expert scrutiny. Only evidence collected and certified through these channels will stand in court and protect the organisations from counter-attacks. Private freelancing by over-enthusiastic workers is not an option — it risks legal blowback and further muddies the moral ground. The fight must be professional, lawful and unrelenting.

Obstacles are real. Anonymity tools, burner accounts, foreign servers and AI-generated deepfakes make attribution difficult. Platform responses can be sluggish. The volume of toxic content is enormous. None of this is an excuse for paralysis. The alternative is slow organisational death. A serious political and ideological force cannot permit its identity to be hijacked by hate merchants in disguise. The BJP and the Sangh have shown the capacity for firm action when they choose to exercise it. That capacity must now be turned inward with full force — against the camouflaged elements whose only project is to provoke, divide and destroy the credibility of the institutions they claim to defend.

The required response is clear and non-negotiable: preserve the material in a form that supports later certification, file formal complaints with competent cyber authorities, drive professional forensic examination, publicly expose the fraud with evidence, and weed out the poison without hesitation. Silence is surrender. Vague statements are weakness.

When videos calling for violence circulate under the party's colours and the Sangh's symbols, the organisations must be able to declare, with hard evidence, that the speakers are impostors and enemies. Failure to do so will allow the public perception to harden that the ecosystem either tolerates or cannot control its own extremes. Once that perception locks in, moral authority is gone.

The termites are already deep inside the structure. They wear the mask of the most ardent bhakts while steadily eating away at the foundations of the party, the government and the RSS. Identifying them, exposing them and removing them is not an attack on genuine supporters. It is an act of organisational survival. The tools exist. The legal framework exists. The only missing ingredient is the will to strike hard and strike now.

### **The Dual Imperative Before Those in Power**

Unless the leadership undertakes genuine course correction — restoring accountability, distancing itself from pure sycophancy, confronting underperformance without protection, and recovering a measure of ideological seriousness — the cascade that began with Pradhan's resignation will continue. Alliance partners will press for greater space. Defectors will reassess. The bureaucracy will adjust its posture. The media will test new boundaries. And the public, having once forced a retreat, will remember that retreat is possible.

At the same time, the internal infestation cannot be left untreated. It is time the Sangh Parivar applies a thorough and uncompromising treatment against these termites. The infestation is internal, the damage is accelerating, and half-measures will not work. Cut out the poison completely and protect the structure before the termites bring the entire house down. Delay is no longer an option.

The man who made the party and the organisation dance to his tune now confronts the limits of the system he built. The dance has begun to falter. Authority that rests on the elimination of internal checks, the suppression of dissent, and the insulation of failure from consequence is authority that eventually confronts a public no longer willing to accept the bargain. Pradhan's resignation is the first

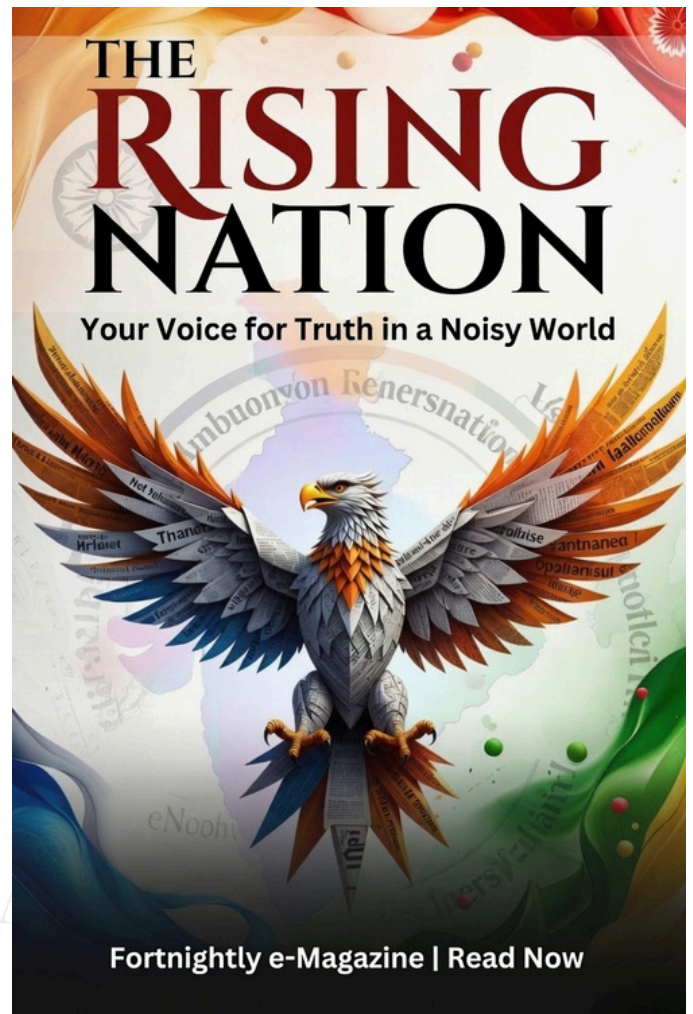


clear evidence that the bargain has broken. What follows will depend on whether the system can still correct itself — or whether the crack continues to widen until the structure itself begins to give way.

The signals to those who still hold power are therefore unambiguous. Restore genuine deliberation inside the party and government. End the culture that protects underperformance and punishes independent judgement. Confront the street with dialogue and lasting institutional reform rather than force. And turn the full force of lawful state and organisational machinery against the camouflaged saboteurs who have hijacked the language of loyalty to destroy the very institutions they claim to defend. The alternative is continued erosion — visible from the outside, invisible but lethal from within.

The absolute has cracked. The termites are already at work. The choice before the leadership is no longer whether to act, but whether it still possesses the clarity and the will to act before the structure itself begins to give way.

THE  
RISING NATION



# Solid-State Drives (SSDs) vs. Traditional Hard Disk Drives (HDDs):

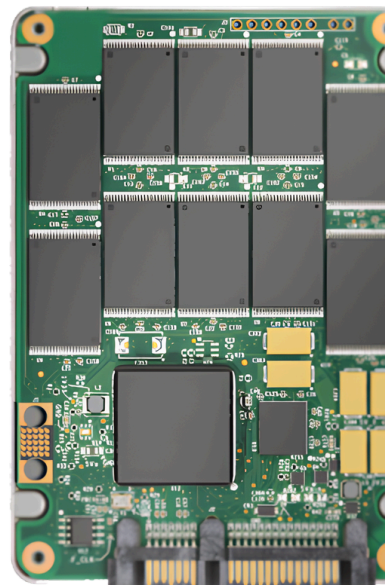
By Arjun Santhosh



**HDD**



**SSHD**



**SSD**

## ***Why SSDs Are Transforming Computing Solid-State Drives (SSDs) vs. Traditional Hard Disk Drives (HDDs): Why SSDs Are Transforming Computing***

Solid-State Drives (SSDs) are significantly more effective than traditional Hard Disk Drives (HDDs) because they use flash memory instead of moving mechanical parts to store and access data instantly. By removing physical limitations like spinning magnetic platters and read/write heads, SSDs completely eliminate data bottlenecks. This structural shift drastically improves your computer's responsiveness, energy conservation, and hardware durability.

In an era where we demand instant app launches, seamless multitasking, and lightning-fast file transfers, storage technology is no longer a behind-the-scenes detail—it's a game-changer. Whether you're a casual user frustrated by slow boot times or an IT professional optimizing systems, understanding SSDs versus HDDs helps you make smarter upgrade decisions.

## **How HDDs Work: The Mechanical Marvel (and Limitation)**

Traditional Hard Disk Drives have been the backbone of data storage for decades. Inside an HDD, data is stored on one or more spinning magnetic platters. A mechanical arm with read/write heads hovers just above these platters, moving rapidly to locate and modify data. This process resembles a miniature record player. The platters spin at speeds like 5,400 or 7,200 RPM. To access data, the head must physically seek the right track and wait for the platter to rotate into position. This introduces seek time and rotational latency—delays that add up quickly with random data access, such as loading multiple files or booting an operating system. HDDs excel at sequential reads and writes (large, continuous files like videos), achieving around 100–200 MB/s. However, random access performance drops dramatically, often to single-digit MB/s in real-world scenarios. They are also noisier, generate more heat, consume more power, and are vulnerable to shocks or drops due to their moving parts.



How SSDs Work: Electronics at the Speed of Light

SSDs store data in NAND flash memory chips—tiny electronic cells that retain information even without power. There are no moving parts. Data access relies on a controller chip that manages read/write operations across the memory array almost instantaneously.

This design delivers exceptional performance. SATA SSDs typically reach 500–560 MB/s, while modern NVMe SSDs over PCIe interfaces achieve 3,500–14,000 MB/s or more. Random access speeds are dramatically higher, eliminating the bottlenecks that plague HDDs.

SSDs are silent, run cooler, use less power (often 2–5W versus 6–15W for HDDs), and withstand shocks far better—ideal for laptops and portable devices.

Key Advantages of SSDs

- 1. Blazing Speed and Responsiveness Boot times drop from minutes to seconds. Applications launch instantly, and file operations feel instantaneous. In benchmarks, an SSD can deliver 2–30x better performance depending on the workload. For gamers, video editors, or anyone juggling large projects, the difference is night and day.
- 2. Energy Efficiency and Battery Life Lower power draw means longer battery life in laptops and reduced electricity costs in data centers.
- 3. Durability and Reliability Without mechanical components, SSDs handle vibrations, drops, and movement much better. They also produce no noise or excessive heat.
- 4. Compact Form Factors SSDs come in slim 2.5-inch drives or tiny M.2 sticks that fit directly onto motherboards, freeing up space and enabling thinner devices.

| SSD vs HDD      |          |           |
|-----------------|----------|-----------|
|                 | SSD      | HDD       |
| cost            | 8c/gb    | 2.5c/gb   |
| capacity        | 2tb max  | 12tb max  |
| latency         | .12ms    | 12ms      |
| I/O             | 500mb/s  | 125mb/s   |
| random I/O      | 125mb/s  | 2mb/s     |
| power           | .8 watts | 1.6 watts |
| noise           | silent   | 30 dba    |
| life expectancy | 10 years | 5 years   |

Trade-offs and Considerations

SSDs are not perfect. They cost more per terabyte—roughly 3–5x higher than HDDs in 2026 for equivalent capacities. HDDs remain king for bulk "cold" storage, such as archives, backups, and media libraries, where data is written once and read infrequently.

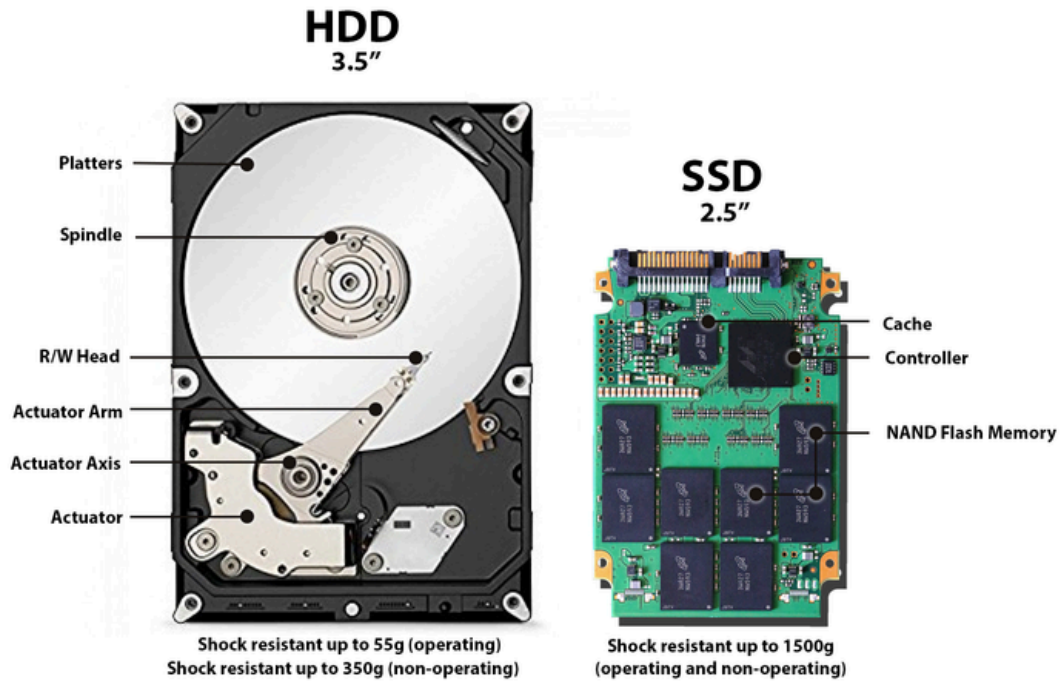
SSDs have a finite number of write cycles (measured in TBW—Terabytes Written), but for typical consumer use, modern drives easily last 5–10 years. Wear-leveling algorithms and over-provisioning make this rarely an issue for everyday users. HDDs, while mechanically wear-prone, suit long-term archival if powered occasionally.

Prices fluctuate; check current market rates, as NAND supply and demand affect SSD costs.

Types of SSDs: Choosing the Right One

- SATA SSDs: Affordable upgrade for older systems; great for general use.
- NVMe SSDs (M.2): High-performance option using PCIe lanes. PCIe 4.0 and 5.0 drives offer extreme speeds for demanding tasks.
- External SSDs: Portable, fast backups or media transport.

Hybrid setups work best: Use an SSD for your operating system, applications, and active files; pair it with a large HDD for mass storage.



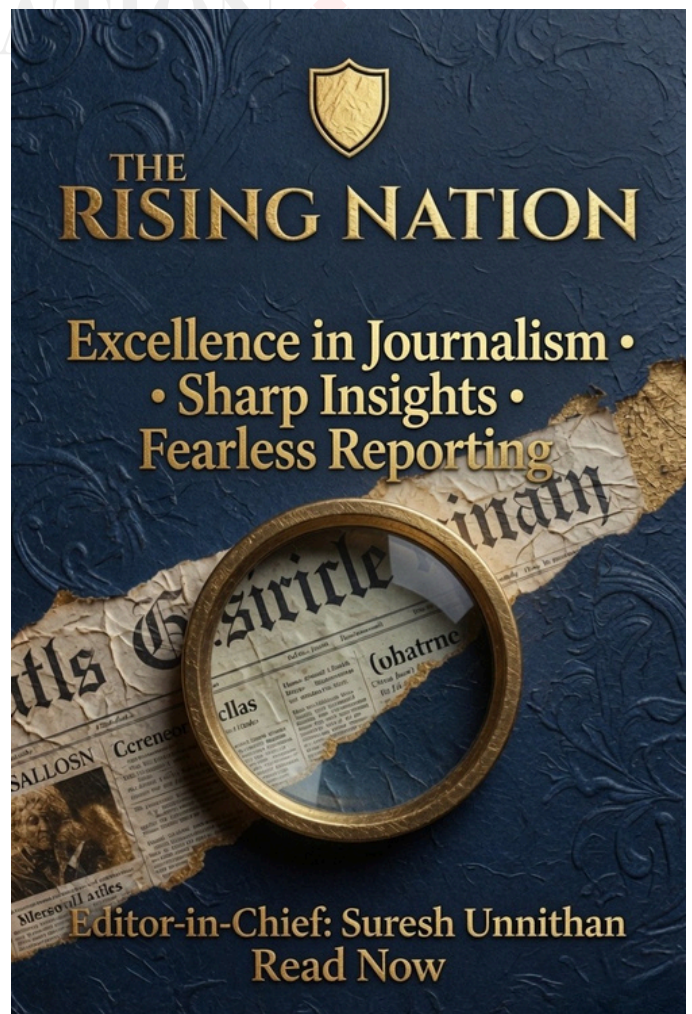
## The Future of Storage

In 2026, SSDs dominate consumer and performance computing, while HDDs persist in enterprise data centers for cost-effective capacity. Innovations like higher-density NAND, QLC/TLC cells, and improved controllers continue narrowing the price gap. AI and big data workloads increasingly use tiered storage—fast SSDs for hot data and HDDs for archives.

## Conclusion: Upgrade for the Win

Switching to an SSD is often the single most noticeable upgrade you can make to an older computer. It breathes new life into systems, reduces frustration, and future-proofs your setup. For new builds, an SSD should be non-negotiable as the primary drive.

Whether you're editing family videos, running a business, or simply browsing the web, SSDs deliver the responsive experience modern computing demands. The technology shift from mechanical to solid-state isn't just incremental—it's revolutionary. Your data deserves to move at the speed of thought.





# Silent Storms in Young Minds: How Unseen Anxiety Traps Teenage Girls and Why We Must Act Before It's Too Late

By Dr. Geetha Jacob, Clinical Psychologist



As a clinical psychologist with years of experience working with children, adolescents, and families, I have sat across from countless young girls whose bright eyes dim under the weight of invisible burdens. One such moment remains etched in my memory: a 14-year-old from Kerala, academically gifted and outwardly composed, who whispered through tears, “I worry all the time, Doctor. About everything. And I don’t know how to stop.” Her story is not unique. It reflects the growing crisis of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)—formerly termed anxiety neurosis—among early teenagers, particularly girl children in India today.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is a chronic mental health condition characterized by excessive, uncontrollable, and often irrational worry about everyday matters. What begins as seemingly normal adolescent concerns can evolve into a persistent state of apprehension that interferes with sleep, concentration, <sup>Fact</sup> relationships, and overall development. In my practice, I observe that this disorder disproportionately affects girls during early adolescence (roughly 12–15 years), a period marked by rapid hormonal changes, intense academic pressures, shifting social dynamics, and the emergence of self-identity amid cultural expectations.



The roots of this vulnerability in Indian girls are multifaceted. Societal emphasis on academic excellence, coupled with gender-specific expectations around behaviour, appearance, and family roles, creates a perfect storm. Social media further amplifies comparison and fear of missing out (FOMO), while economic pressures and uncertain futures add layers of worry. In Kerala, where educational aspirations run high, the competitive environment in schools often leaves little room for emotional processing. Without proper care and remedy, these young minds risk going astray—isolating themselves, losing confidence, or seeking escape in harmful ways.

Recent statistics from India highlight the urgency of this issue. Anxiety disorders have surged by 123.5% between 1990 and 2023. In urban Delhi, studies reveal a prevalence of 35.3% among adolescents, with significantly higher rates among females and older teens. Closer to home in Ernakulam district, Kerala, nearly 19.6% of adolescents experience social anxiety disorder, with girls facing elevated risk. Broader national surveys in major cities indicate that 3 in 5 students grapple with moderate to high anxiety levels, and girls consistently report greater emotional distress, sadness, and self-doubt compared to boys. These figures are not mere numbers—they represent young lives at a crossroads, where timely intervention can make the difference between quiet suffering and fulfilled potential.

Yet, there is profound hope. GAD is highly treatable, and early psychological intervention yields excellent outcomes. From my clinical perspective, the cornerstone of effective treatment is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), widely regarded as the gold-standard psychotherapy for anxiety disorders. CBT equips girls with practical tools to identify distorted thought patterns—such as catastrophizing or overgeneralization—and replace them with balanced, realistic perspectives. Through structured sessions, typically spanning 12 to 15 weeks, individuals learn to challenge worries, engage in behavioural experiments, and gradually face feared situations. In my experience, adolescent girls respond remarkably well to CBT, especially when delivered in a warm, collaborative manner that respects their autonomy and cultural context.

If left neglected, the consequences extend far beyond temporary distress. Untreated GAD in adolescent girls often leads to academic underperformance, social withdrawal, and heightened vulnerability to co-occurring conditions such as depression or panic disorders. The physical toll is equally concerning: chronic muscle tension, fatigue, headaches, and sleep disturbances can weaken overall health. Perhaps most alarming is the risk of maladaptive coping. In their desperate search for relief from unrelenting worry, some girls turn to substances—alcohol, narcotics, or other drugs—as a form of self-medication. This pathway not only exacerbates mental health challenges but can derail education, strain family relationships, and lead to long-term dependency issues. As a psychologist, I have witnessed how untreated anxiety in teenage years casts a long shadow into adulthood, affecting career prospects, interpersonal bonds, and self-worth.

Complementing CBT are mindfulness-based approaches, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) elements adapted for teens. Techniques such as body scans, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindful breathing help regulate the physiological symptoms of anxiety. I often guide young clients through the 4-7-8 breathing method: inhaling for four counts, holding for seven, and exhaling for eight. Regular practice strengthens emotional regulation and reduces reactivity to intrusive worries. These skills not only alleviate immediate distress but build lifelong resilience.

School mental health programs represent a vital frontier in addressing this crisis at scale. In India, where most adolescents spend significant time in educational settings, integrating comprehensive mental health support within schools is both practical



and impactful. Effective programs should include:

- Regular awareness workshops for students, teachers, and parents on recognizing anxiety symptoms.
- On-campus trained counsellors or tie-ups with clinical psychologists for confidential screenings and short-term interventions.
- Curriculum-embedded life skills education focusing on emotional literacy, stress management, and problem-solving.
- Peer support networks that foster safe sharing and reduce stigma.
- Teacher training to identify early warning signs—such as frequent absenteeism, perfectionism, or physical complaints—and respond empathetically.

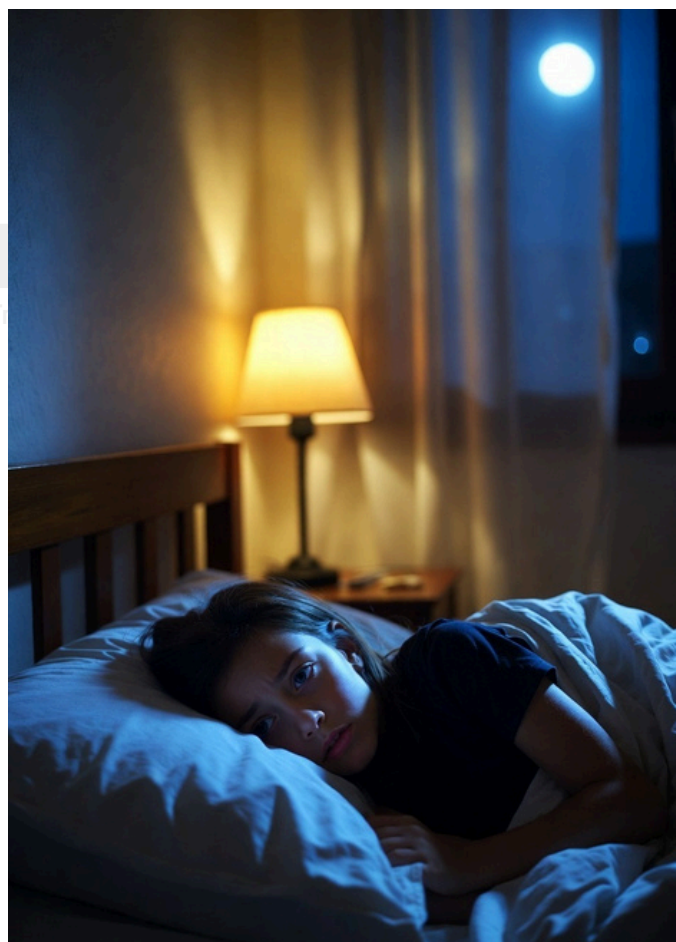
States like Kerala, with strong educational infrastructure, are well-positioned to pioneer model programs in collaboration with the National Mental Health Programme and local NGOs. When schools become nurturing environments rather than pressure cookers, we create protective buffers against anxiety escalation.

Family involvement is equally indispensable. Parents play a central role by cultivating open communication, validating emotions without rushing to solutions, and modelling healthy coping. Simple lifestyle adjustments—consistent sleep routines, physical activity, balanced nutrition, and mindful screen-time limits—provide foundational support. In cases of moderate to severe symptoms, I collaborate with psychiatrists for judicious use of medications (such as SSRIs) alongside therapy, always prioritizing the psychological foundation.

Early warning signs that warrant professional attention include persistent excessive worry, avoidance of school or social situations, somatic complaints without medical cause, irritability, concentration difficulties, and sleep disturbances. Families should not hesitate to seek help; early action prevents chronicity and empowers the child.

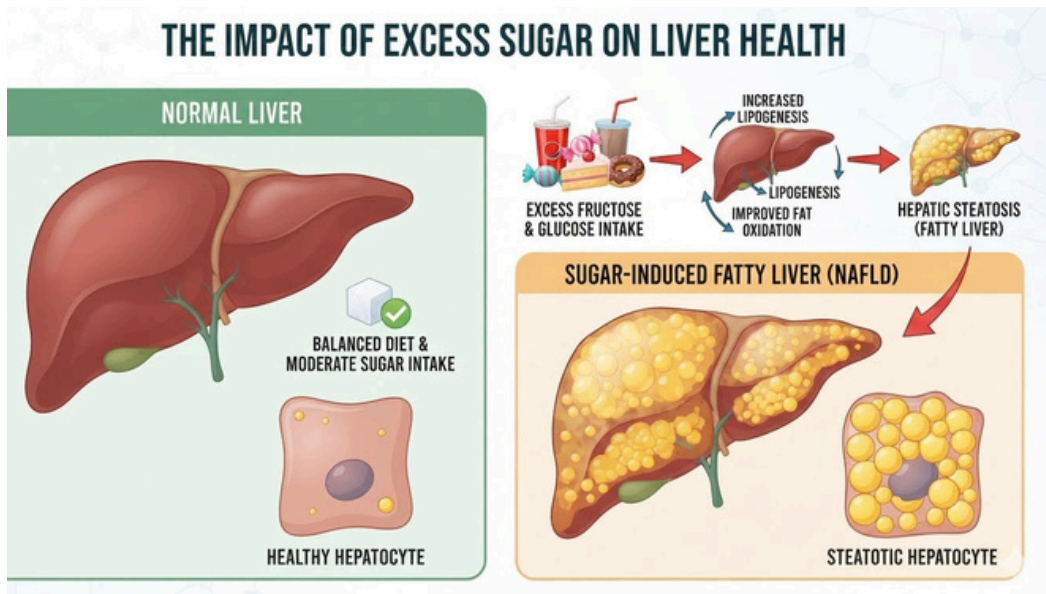
In conclusion, as a clinical psychologist dedicated to adolescent well-being, I urge parents, educators, policymakers, and communities across India to recognize the silent storms brewing in our teenage girls. The statistics are sobering, but the solutions are within reach. Through evidence-based therapies like CBT, mindfulness practices, strengthened school mental health programs, and compassionate family support, we can guide these young minds from turmoil toward resilience and hope.

No child deserves to navigate such burdens alone. By acting decisively today—with awareness, empathy, and structured care—we safeguard not only individual futures but the collective strength of our society. Let us commit to creating environments where every teenage girl feels seen, supported, and equipped to flourish. The time for action is now.



# The Hidden Risk of Refined Sugar: It Harms More Than You Think

By Dr E.T Arun Thomas – MD (Gen Med), DNB (Gen Med), DM (Nephro), DrNB (Nephro), SCE Nephro RCP (UK), MNAMS, FRCP (London), FIDF



In almost every kitchen you'll find a small bowl or packet of white sugar. It goes into tea, coffee, desserts, and countless packaged foods. Most of us know too much sugar isn't good, but few realise just how much damage refined white sugar can do when we eat it day after day. The problem isn't that our bodies can't handle sugar at all — it's that modern refined sugar is super-concentrated, stripped of everything useful, and hits the body far too fast and hard.

## What Happens When Sugar Is Refined?

Sugar starts as juice from sugarcane or sugar beets. Raw sugar still has some natural molasses — the sticky brown layer that contains tiny amounts of minerals and antioxidants. To make the bright white sugar we buy in shops, factories wash away the molasses, filter the sugar through charcoal, and crystallise it again and again until it is almost 100% pure sucrose. Sucrose is made of two simple sugars joined together: glucose and fructose.

The final product looks clean and pure, but it has lost the fibre, vitamins, minerals, and protective plant compounds that were in the original plant. What's left is pure, fast-acting sweetness with no nutritional value — just empty calories.

## Refined Sugar vs Natural Sugar

Sugar in a whole apple or mango is very different. It comes wrapped in fibre, water, vitamins, and antioxidants. The fibre slows down absorption, so blood sugar rises gently. Refined sugar has none of that protection. It floods the system quickly and forces the body to work overtime.

Even "less processed" options like jaggery or brown sugar still contain mostly sucrose and should be used sparingly, but they do keep a few more nutrients than pure white sugar.

## How refined sugar harms health:

### Spikes Blood Sugar and Insulin

Refined sugar shoots straight into the bloodstream. Blood glucose jumps sharply, and the pancreas pumps out large amounts of insulin to bring it down. Do this often enough and the body starts ignoring insulin (insulin resistance). Over years, this can lead to Type 2 diabetes, constant tiredness, and energy crashes.



## Promotes Obesity

Sugar adds calories without filling you up. There's no fibre or protein to signal "I'm full." Fructose goes straight to the liver and is easily turned into fat, especially dangerous belly fat. That's why sugary drinks and snacks make weight creep up even when total calories don't seem excessive.

## Harms the Heart

Too much sugar raises triglycerides (blood fats), increases blood pressure, and triggers silent inflammation throughout the body. Large studies show people who get a lot of added sugar have a much higher risk of heart attacks and strokes — even if they are not overweight.

## Causes Fatty Liver

The fructose in table sugar is processed almost entirely by the liver. When there's too much, the liver turns it into fat that gets stored inside liver cells. This is called non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), and it's now common in children and adults who never touch alcohol.

## Weakens Immunity

A single high-sugar meal can temporarily suppress the immune system for several hours. Over time, constant sugar keeps inflammation high and makes it easier to fall sick.

Empathy for the marginalized defines his tenure. By taking responsibility for past lapses in crowd management and providing compassionate appointments, Vijay demonstrated accountability. Initiatives like the "Singapenne" task force for women's security, stricter monitoring in maternal healthcare, and empowerment against corruption further amplify his pro-poor vision. He has urged citizens to reject bribes and report irregularities, positioning people as active partners in clean governance.

Drawing from his philanthropic roots through Vijay Makkal Iyakkam and on-screen portrayals of fighters against injustice, Vijay brings authenticity to public



service. His frugal leadership, emphasis on youth employment, crime reduction, and inclusive growth have silenced many skeptics. In a short span since assuming office in May 2026, his government has prioritized welfare delivery, revived stalled projects, and fostered hope among the masses.

Challenges persist – fiscal discipline, opposition critiques, and high public expectations. Yet, the early momentum is unmistakable. Vijay's style evokes comparisons to his cinematic heroes: decisive, people-focused, and incorruptible. For the fisherfolk, farmers, daily wagers, and grieving families, he represents a leader who walks among them, not above them.

The journey ahead will demand resilience, but the foundation of trust is strong. Thalapathy Vijay's Tamil Nadu is not just a political entity; it is a living testament to compassionate governance. In him, the people have found a Chief Minister who listens, acts, and cares – proving that true power lies in serving the last person in the queue.



# EDUCATION MAFIA: One Seat, Ten Thousand Dreams — Bought, Sold, and Shattered

By Suresh Unnithan

In the shadowed corridors of despair that define India's hyper-competitive examination ecosystem, the tragic suicides of countless young students stand as a damning indictment of a system gone horribly wrong. Year after year, bright-eyed aspirants from remote villages and modest homes arrive in coaching hubs like Kota, Sikar, Hyderabad, and Pala, only to have their dreams crushed under the unrelenting weight of paper leaks, merciless academic pressure mounted by so-called coaching experts, and the commodification of young lives. These "experts" — often glorified as mentors in glossy brochures and success rallies — transform classrooms into psychological pressure cookers, where every mock test rank becomes a verdict on worthiness, and failure feels like an existential end. Over-ambitious parents, driven by societal prestige, family expectations, and the illusory promise of a secure government seat in medicine or engineering, fuel this mafia by mortgaging ancestral lands, borrowing at exorbitant interest rates, and pushing their children beyond human endurance, often ignoring early signs of burnout and mental distress. Yet the prime culprits remain the governments at the Centre and in the states: their chronic regulatory lethargy, persistent failure to exponentially expand quality educational seats, inadequate oversight of coaching empires, and tacit political patronage allow the Education Mafia to flourish unabated, turning a noble pursuit of knowledge into a ruthless ₹50,000–70,000 crore annual private extraction machine rapidly barreling toward ₹1 lakh crore and beyond.

This is not mere rhetoric or journalistic exaggeration. The human cost is heartbreakingly real and quantifiable. In 2025 alone, NEET-linked student suicides reached record highs, contributing to at least 93 documented cases nationwide since 2021, with many concentrated in major coaching hubs. Kota, once celebrated as the coaching capital of India, has witnessed devastating peaks — 26 suicides in 2023, followed by 17 in 2024 despite mitigation claims. Fresh tragedies continued into 2025 and 2026, including incidents even after the NEET-UG paper leak

controversies. Students, often minors from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and other states, endure isolation from family support systems, perpetual ranking anxiety, sleep deprivation from 12-14 hour study grinds, and the soul-crushing realization that a single leak or poor performance can nullify years of sacrifice.



The 2026 NEET-UG paper leak saga exacerbated this crisis. The May 3 examination was cancelled following evidence of leaks involving multi-state rackets, with papers allegedly sold for amounts ranging from ₹30,000 to ₹28 lakh per candidate. CBI probes highlighted teachers contracted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) as key conduits, turning "protectors into predators." This led to a re-examination on June 21 under heightened security, but the damage was done — renewed anxiety, wasted preparation time, financial losses for families, and a fresh wave of mental health breakdowns. Similar patterns have repeated across exams like Vyapam (2013), REET, UPTET, and numerous state recruitments. Over the last two decades, at least 45 major leaks affecting over one lakh candidates each have surfaced, yet senior-level convictions remain abysmally low. Honest aspirants watch their toil nullified, while the mafia adapts and profits.

The financial asymmetry is staggering and revealing. In the Union Budget 2026-27, the Ministry of Education received its highest-ever allocation of ₹1,39,289 crore (approximately ₹1.39 lakh crore) — an 8.27% increase over the previous year's Budget



Estimates of about ₹1.28 lakh crore. Of this, school education got a record ₹83,562 crore and higher education ₹55,727 crore. Combined Centre-and-State public spending on education remains around 4.1% of GDP, well short of the National Education Policy's 6% target.

Contrast this with what families themselves are forced to spend. India's private coaching sector already serves over 7 crore students and is valued in the range of ₹50,000–70,000 crore, with credible projections of crossing ₹1 lakh crore in the coming years. For NEET alone, public discourse and estimates circulating in mid-2026 (including figures highlighted by political leaders in Kota) put the annual collective outlay by the families of roughly 20–23 lakh aspirants at around ₹1.32 lakh crore — nearly matching the entire Union education budget. When coaching fees, hostels, food, materials, test series, and related costs for the major competitive examinations (NEET, JEE, UPSC, SSC, RRB and similar) are aggregated, independent estimates place the total household extraction in the region of ₹3.5 lakh crore every year. Average annual family expenditure per child in intensive packages routinely ranges from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹4–5 lakh or higher once living costs in hubs are included. The state engineers scarcity through limited seats; private syndicates harvest the resulting windfall through fear, hype, and exploitative practices.

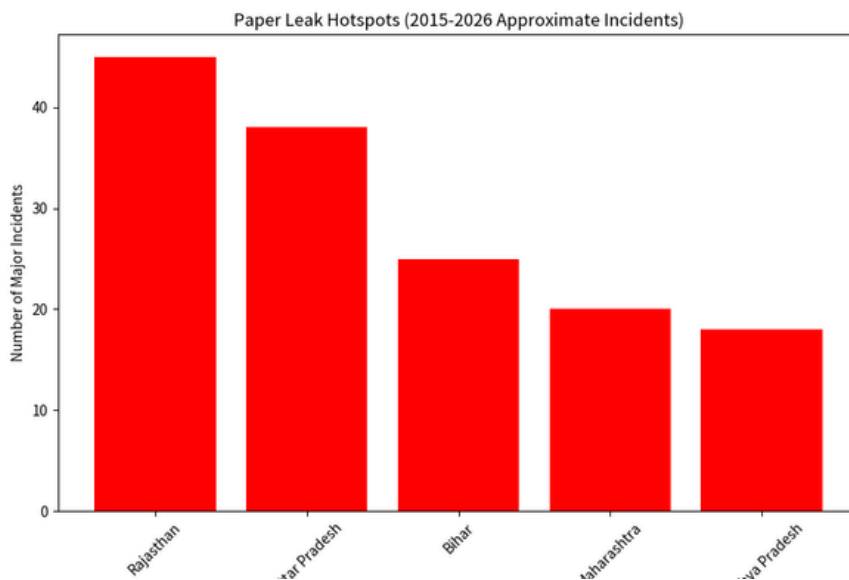
In Kota, the epicentre of this despair, students live in hostels with safety grills on windows — ironically installed to prevent suicides but symbolizing their prison-like existence. They face constant comparison via public rank displays, aggressive marketing by institutes promising “guaranteed success,” and distant parental expectations transmitted through anxious phone calls. Studies indicate that 73% of coaching students experience moderate-to-severe stress, with one in three exhibiting symptoms of clinical anxiety or depression. Many hail from lower-middle-class or rural backgrounds, where the family's entire economic hope rests on one child cracking NEET or JEE. When results falter — often due to systemic leaks rather than individual effort — the shame, debt, and pressure culminate in tragedy. Governments' response has been largely symptomatic: helplines, “Dinner with Collector” sessions, gatekeeper training for wardens, and recreational initiatives under programs like Kota Cares. These have reduced

numbers in some years, but they fail to address root causes like seat scarcity and unregulated coaching. Enrollments in Kota dropped significantly at points, yet the mafia simply decentralizes to other cities and online platforms, spreading the exploitation nationwide.

Kerala's regional variant is equally poignant. In Pala town, the Brilliant Study Centre ecosystem draws thousands of students with promises of top ranks in KEAM, NEET, and JEE. While it boasts impressive results, the intensive regimens, high fees (₹16,000 to ₹1.5 lakh or more for integrated packages), non-refundable policies, and aggressive marketing create immense pressure. Students report burnout, homesickness, and ecological fallout — high bacterial and chemical contamination in the Meenachil River due to student density and waste. Reports of student distress and dropouts surface periodically, with local protests highlighting how the coaching boom strains infrastructure and mental well-being. Kottayam district risks mirroring Kota's model, with smaller centres mushrooming and families squeezed financially. State governments, much like the Centre, have been slow to impose stringent mental health mandates or fee regulations, allowing the mafia to thrive under the guise of “educational excellence.”

These suicides are not isolated failures but predictable outcomes of a cartel that reduces students to revenue streams. The over-ambitious parents, often influenced by societal narratives equating success solely with MBBS or IIT tags, play a complicit role by prioritizing ranks over resilience. Governments bear primary responsibility for failing to create sufficient opportunities, enforce ethical standards in coaching, or integrate mental health support into the education framework. The result is a national tragedy: talented youth lost forever, families devastated, and India's demographic dividend squandered.

This exposé lays bare the full spectrum of the Education Mafia: a sophisticated, multi-layered cartel that has transformed India's hallowed pursuit of knowledge into a profit-driven extraction machine. It thrives on engineered scarcity, psychological manipulation, and systemic enablers from both private players and public inaction. While the Union government allocates roughly ₹1.39 lakh crore to the



education ministry, private syndicates, coaching conglomerates, paper-leak networks, dummy-school operators, and their political patrons extract generational wealth on a comparable or larger scale from middle-class and poorer households, erode mental health, commoditize young lives, and leave behind trails of debt and despair. The fallout extends far beyond individual tragedies — millions of talented youth ensnared in cycles of anxiety, multi-year “dropper” stagnation, and shattered aspirations.

### The Cartel's Blueprint: Layers of Exploitation

The Education Mafia functions as a tightly coordinated ecosystem rather than disparate rogue operators. Students are systematically reduced to revenue units, educational degrees to tradable assets, and merit to a marketable illusion.

**1.The Examination Paper Leak Cartel** At its core lies a sophisticated, multi-state network of tech operatives, printing-press insiders, corrupt officials, middlemen, and even compromised educators. Question papers are procured through bribes, sometimes weeks in advance. Paying candidates are often sequestered in resorts or safe houses the night before to memorize answer keys. The 2026 NEET-UG disruptions underscored deep vulnerabilities within the NTA and its contractors. Over the last two decades, at least 45 major leaks affecting over one lakh candidates each have come to light. Convictions at senior levels remain rare. The underground market prices a leaked paper at ₹5,000–₹35,000 (or far higher) per student depending on stakes. Honest aspirants see their efforts nullified, leading to erosion of trust and spikes in mental-health crises.

**2.The Predatory Coaching and Dummy School Nexus** Commercial institutes forge alliances with pliant private schools to bypass regulatory requirements. Students gain formal “enrollment” for attendance compliance but rarely attend regular classes, instead enduring marathon 12–14 hour daily grinds. Fees are often ₹2–5 lakh for two to three years and strictly non-refundable. Toppers are allegedly poached for promotional material. In Kerala, chains like Brilliant Study Centre Pala — which grew from 12 students and ₹1,500 capital in 1984 into an empire claiming over 60,000 students annually — epitomize regional dominance, with the attendant pressures, ecological strain, and infrastructure overload. Similar mega-empires dominate nationally, frequently fronted by retired bureaucrats.

**3.Admission Scams and Seat-Blocking Rigs** High-merit proxies occupy subsidized government seats during initial counselling and vacate them later for under-the-table cash deals. Forged documents, impersonation rings, and management quotas in private colleges further facilitate cash-based admissions that bypass merit.

**4.Publisher Cartels and Kickback Ecosystems** Proprietary study materials with built-in margins replace affordable NCERT books. Kickbacks grease preferential treatment. The pipeline is seamless: early tuitions → dummy schools → coaching factories → vulnerability to leaks → cash admissions.

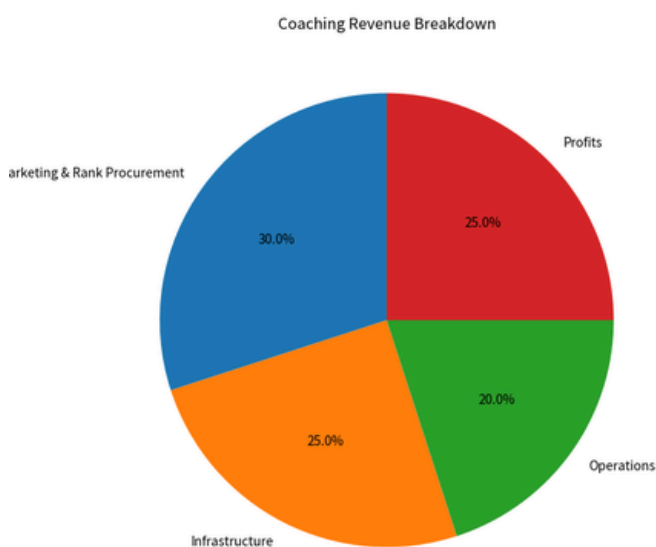
The mathematics of greed rests on engineered mismatch. NEET-UG sees 20–23 lakh applicants for roughly 55,000–1.3 lakh medical seats (depending on total including private), yielding success rates under



3% for government seats in many years. JEE Advanced and UPSC show even lower success ratios. Institutes aggressively market the “one in ten thousand” narrative while the 97–99% failure rates generate repeat “dropper” business. Millions languish for 2–5 years funding a parallel economy of rentals, messes, and transport instead of contributing productively.

Kota still symbolizes the human toll most visibly — exhausted faces, barred windows, and economic contraction after negative publicity — yet the model simply spreads. Kerala’s experience echoes the national malaise with local flavours of pressure, non-refundable fees, and environmental degradation.

The broader costs are national. The system produces credentialed but often under-skilled graduates, funnels diverse talent into narrow tracks, creates a massive unproductive “dropper” cohort, and erodes social mobility and institutional trust. Families, especially from rural and lower-middle-class backgrounds, mortgage their futures. India’s ambitions of becoming a developed nation by 2047 are undermined when human capital is squandered this way.

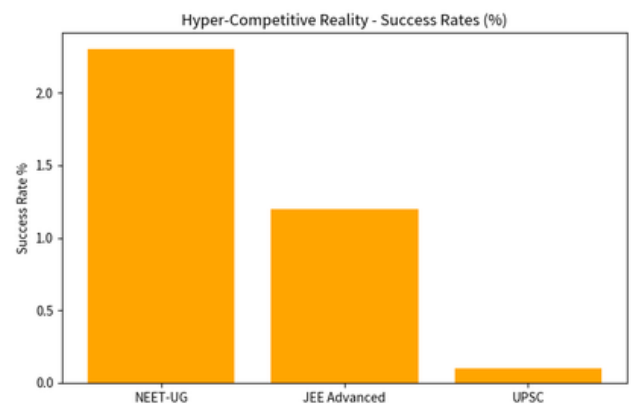


## Dismantling the Cartel: Urgent and Comprehensive Reforms

Confronting this entrenched greed demands bold structural overhaul:

- **End Artificial Scarcity:** Massively expand quality government seats through new institutions, multidisciplinary universities, and upgraded facilities aligned with industry needs.

**Regulate Ruthlessly:** Statutory fee caps, mandatory pro-rata refunds, complete bans on dummy-school practices, audited transparency, strict GST enforcement, and prohibitions on conflict-of-interest roles for retired bureaucrats



- **Reform Assessment Systems:** Multi-session, computer-based tests with robust security; closer alignment with school syllabi; holistic evaluation; and implementation of expert recommendations for NTA overhaul.
- **Mental Health Imperative:** Mandated counselling, wellness programmes, psychological screenings, age-appropriate norms, and nationwide parent-awareness campaigns.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Independent audits, fast-track special courts for leak and cheating cases with severe penalties including asset seizures, and probes into bureaucrat-linked institutes.
- **Diversify Educational Pathways:** Elevate vocational training, arts, sports, skills, and startups with parity in prestige and funding. Reduce over-glorification of a handful of career streams.

The Education Mafia is a monstrous creation born of governmental inertia and unchecked private avarice. From regional strongholds like Brilliant Pala to national syndicates, tens of thousands of crores (and by broader estimates, multiples of the Union education budget) change hands annually while dreams perish in silence. The Kota suicides, nationwide paper leaks, indebted households, and environmental strains are not side effects — they are the inevitable harvest of a profit-over-people paradigm.

The Rising Nation calls for an urgent national awakening. It is time to shatter the cartel through decisive action, democratize educational opportunities, safeguard the mental well-being of our youth, and transform the education sector into a true cornerstone of equitable nation-building. India's youth are not fodder for greedy syndicates or statistics in suicide reports — they are the architects of a truly rising nation. The greed must cease. The future must be liberated.

This investigative piece draws on verified trends, official data from CBI and government reports (including Union Budget 2026-27 figures), ground realities from multiple states, academic studies on student mental health, industry estimates, and journalistic insights as of mid-2026. Further probes, policy advocacy, and public discourse will continue through platforms like The Rising Nation.

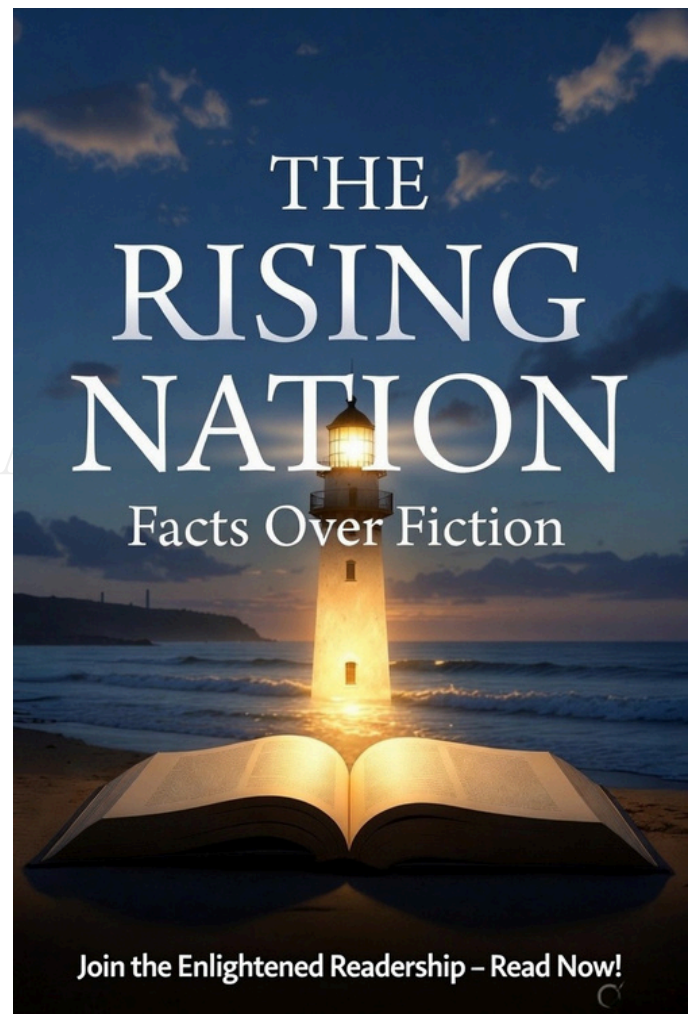
Call to Action: Parents, educators, policymakers, and civil society must unite to demand transparency and systemic change. Students — prioritize your well-being alongside ambition; seek help early. India deserves an education system that nurtures potential rather than exploiting it. Let us collectively reclaim the promise of our demographic dividend.

Heightened Concern: The Mafia's Exploitation and Threat to the Education System — With Government as Mute Spectator

We are deeply concerned that the Education Mafia is not merely profiting from the system but actively exploiting and threatening the very foundation of India's education ecosystem. This cartel — through paper leaks, dummy schools, seat-blocking rackets, and predatory coaching empires — undermines merit, erodes public trust, and commodifies young lives on a massive scale. The repeated 2026 NEET-UG scandals, where teachers turned predators and papers were sold for lakhs, are not isolated failures but symptoms of a deeper rot.

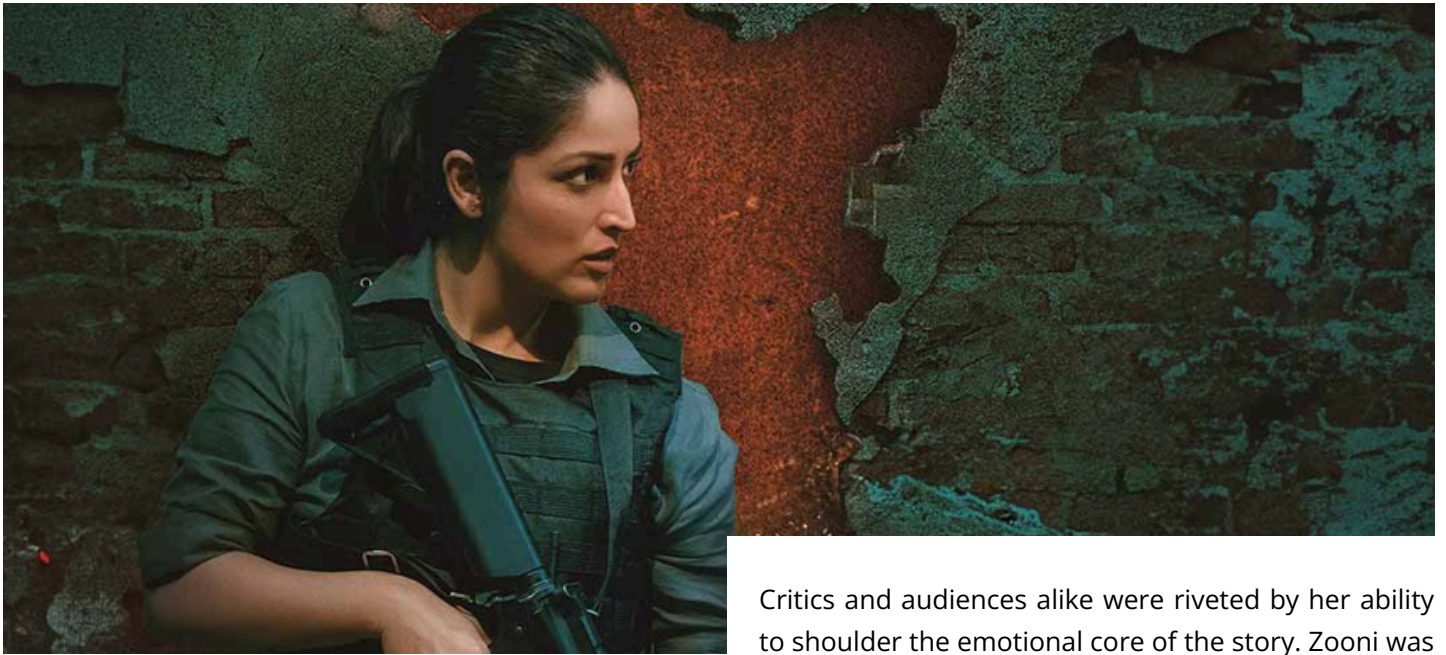
The government at the Centre and in states stands as a mute spectator, failing in its duty to protect students, regulate the sector, and expand opportunities. Regulatory lethargy, delayed reforms, weak enforcement of anti-cheating laws, and insufficient seat creation allow the mafia to operate

with near-impunity. Political patronage and conflicts of interest (e.g., retired bureaucrats running institutes) further embolden the cartel. While the Union education budget stands at ₹1.39 lakh crore, private extraction from families on competitive-exam preparation alone runs into comparable or larger figures (₹1.32 lakh crore estimated for NEET families; ~₹3.5 lakh crore across major exams). Lakhs of crores flow into private pockets as the state watches suicides mount, dreams shatter, and the demographic dividend is squandered.



# Yami Gautam: A Blaze of Unbreakable Intensity

By SKV



In the glittering arena of Bollywood, where dreams collide with destiny under blinding arc lights, Yami Gautam emerged like a thunderbolt — fierce, focused, and utterly magnetic. With eyes that pierce through the soul and a presence that commands the frame with quiet yet explosive power, she has carved a niche as one of Indian cinema's most compelling talents. Her journey, marked by grace, grit, and fearless choices, reached a dazzling crescendo at the 72nd National Film Awards, where she clinched the Best Actress trophy for her powerhouse performance in Article 370.

As Zooni Haksar, the fierce and highly determined intelligence officer plunged into a high-stakes world of espionage and counter-terrorism in the shadowed valleys of Kashmir, Yami didn't merely act — she inhabited the role with breathtaking conviction. Amid the film's ambitious but uneven political canvas, which struggled at times to balance its fervent narrative drive, Gautam's portrayal stood tall as the undeniable highlight. She brought profound emotional depth, subtle nuance, and unrelenting intensity to a complex, multi-layered character navigating national security crises, personal loss, and moral dilemmas. Every tense stare, every measured stride through danger, and every passionate outburst crackled with dramatic tension, revealing layers of vulnerability beneath an iron resolve.

Critics and audiences alike were riveted by her ability to shoulder the emotional core of the story. Zooni was no cardboard hero; under Yami's masterful touch, she became a living, breathing force — a woman torn between duty and destiny, whose quiet strength exploded into action when the stakes reached breaking point. This performance wasn't just commendable; it was a masterclass in resilience, proving that true cinematic brilliance can outshine even the limitations of its surroundings.

Truth First, Fact Always

This National Award is more than an accolade — it is a hard-earned milestone, her first, and a testament to years of dedicated evolution. Produced under her own banner, Article 370 also claimed Best Feature Film, yet it was Yami's luminous contribution that truly elevated the project, turning potential into potency through sheer artistry and commitment.

Yami Gautam represents the modern Indian actress at her finest: elegant yet edgy, graceful under pressure, and always ready to dive into roles that challenge and provoke. Her journey from promising newcomer to National Award winner is a tale of perseverance against the odds, illuminated by standout performances that linger long after the screen fades to black. In an industry hungry for authentic voices, she shines as a beacon of quality and conviction.

With this victory fueling her fire, Yami continues to blaze new trails — a performer whose intensity knows no bounds and whose best frames are still ahead.



# Whispers of the Thunder Dragon: A Soulful Himalayan Awakening

By Nanditha Subhadra



In the shadowed cradle of the eastern Himalayas, where the Thunder Dragon stirs ancient winds into whispered blessings, Bhutan unfolds like a living prayer—its mist-veiled peaks and prayer-flag hearts calling weary souls home. Here, beneath skies untouched by haste, a single woman in her early fifties found the verses of renewal she never knew she needed.

In the quiet rhythm of my early fifties, as a single woman navigating the structured world of IT—lines of code, virtual meetings, and the constant pulse of deadlines—I longed for something deeper, a pause that technology could never provide. A chance visit to Bhutan, our serene Himalayan neighbor, arrived like an answered prayer. Landing in Paro, the very air hummed with legend. Before heading to Thimphu, I made the sacred pilgrimage to the Tiger Nest Monastery (Paro Taktsang). Clinging dramatically to a sheer cliffside, this iconic gompā—built where

Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown on the back of a tigress—felt like stepping into myth itself. The steep, forested hike left me breathless, yet arriving at its golden doors brought profound stillness. Prayer flags fluttered like liberated thoughts against the abyss, and in the incense-scented silence, my midlife reflections found their first true echo.

Journeying onward to Thimphu, I felt an immediate, tender embrace from the mountains themselves. Here, in this zero-pollution kingdom, nature does not merely exist—it sings, it heals, and it reminds a woman of my years that beauty and peace are still profoundly possible.

Thimphu, the capital nestled at 7,657 feet (2,334 meters) along the Wang Chhu River, welcomed me with air so pure it brought unexpected tears to my eyes. After decades of breathing conditioned office air and city smog, this crisp, pine-scented breeze felt like

a gentle caress on my skin, washing away layers of fatigue I hadn't fully acknowledged. The mountains stood as majestic sentinels, their forested slopes rolling endlessly into the distance, cloaked in vibrant greens that seemed to pulse with life. In my solitary moments on the valley paths, I found myself whispering thanks—for this unexpected chapter where, unburdened by expectations, I could simply be.

What struck me most was the city's harmonious soul. Unlike the relentless pace I know too well, Thimphu moves with graceful intention. It is one of the rare capitals without traffic lights, where white-gloved officers direct flow with quiet dignity. I visited the Bhutan Parliament building, a striking example of traditional architecture where governance and Gross National Happiness converge in elegant balance. Its presence spoke of thoughtful leadership rooted in cultural wisdom.



Buildings throughout the city adhere lovingly to traditional Bhutanese architecture—warm timber, gracefully pitched roofs, and ornate motifs in orange and white that blend seamlessly with the landscape rather than intrude upon it. As I walked these streets alone, a single woman in her fifties reflecting on paths taken and untaken, the city's small-town warmth wrapped around me. Cafes offered quiet corners for contemplation, and the distant laughter of children mingled with the turning of prayer wheels.

The natural beauty here disrupted every preconception I carried. Bhutan's Himalayas are not distant backdrops but living companions—towering,

snow-kissed peaks that catch the light at dawn and dusk in hues of rose and gold. Dense forests of pine, oak, and rhododendron blanket over 70% of the land, creating a verdant sanctuary that purifies both air and spirit. I hiked gentle trails near the city, where sunlight filtered through ancient canopies, dappling the path like scattered blessings. The Wang Chhu river sparkled below, its glacial waters rushing with joyful abandon. In these moments, surrounded by such untouched splendor, a quiet ache in my heart softened.

I also encountered Bhutan's national animal, the Takin—a unique, sturdy creature symbolizing the kingdom's mythical heritage. Seeing it in a protected setting felt like meeting a gentle guardian of these lands, reinforcing the deep reverence Bhutan holds for its biodiversity.

How rare it is, at this stage of life, to feel so vividly alive, so connected to something greater than screens and schedules. Bhutan's status as the world's only carbon-negative country is no statistic to me now—it is a lived miracle of clean air filling my lungs and hope renewing my soul.





My days unfolded around sacred landmarks that touched me deeply. The Buddha Dordenma Project, with its towering 169-foot bronze statue high above the valley, offered a vantage point that humbled and uplifted me. This serene figure, containing thousands of smaller Buddhas within, gazes compassionately over the land. Sitting there alone as the sun dipped behind the peaks, painting the mountains in fiery oranges and deepening purples, I felt a profound emotional release. Tears came unbidden. In the vastness of these Himalayas, my solitary journey felt not lonely, but liberated. The panoramic sweep of forested valleys and rugged ridges mirrored the complexities of life—challenges overcome, beauty enduring. This land's natural richness healed places I didn't know were weary. My days unfolded around sacred landmarks that touched me deeply. The Buddha Dordenma Project, with its towering 169-foot bronze statue high above the valley, offered a vantage point that humbled and uplifted me. This serene figure, containing thousands of smaller Buddhas within, gazes compassionately over the land. Sitting there alone as the sun dipped behind the peaks, painting the mountains in fiery oranges and deepening purples, I felt a profound emotional release. Tears came unbidden. In the vastness of these Himalayas, my solitary journey felt not lonely, but liberated. The panoramic sweep of forested valleys and rugged ridges mirrored the complexities of life—challenges overcome, beauty enduring. This land's natural richness healed places I didn't know were weary.

The Tashichho Dzong, grand fortress on the riverbank, rose with timeless elegance, its white walls and golden roofs glowing against the emerald mountains. Housing both governance and monastic

life, it spoke of balance I have long sought in my own world. As evening light bathed the courtyards, I watched monks in flowing robes move with purposeful calm. Their presence stirred something maternal and reflective within me—a longing for the simplicity and devotion that transcends personal milestones or missed opportunities.

In the city's heart, the National Memorial Chorten became a daily anchor. Its white stupa and golden spire drew me each morning, where locals and I circumambulated together, spinning wheels and offering silent hopes. The collective quiet devotion, set against the ever-present mountains, filled me with a gentle warmth. As a woman who has built a career independently, these shared moments of faith reminded me of the universal threads connecting us all.



The interactions with Buddha bhikshus in nearby monasteries touched me most tenderly. These serene monks, young and old, welcomed conversation with open hearts. In the shaded courtyards of hillside gompas, amid fluttering prayer flags, they spoke softly of compassion, impermanence, and harmony with nature. One elder monk, his eyes twinkling with mountain wisdom, shared how the land itself is sacred—forests as living temples, rivers as veins of life. Their words resonated deeply in my early-fifties reflections: the courage to embrace change, the grace in solitude, the joy in simple presence. Walking back



through rhododendron-lined paths, with birdsong as my only companion, I felt emotionally replenished, as if the Himalayas had whispered affirmations to my soul.

Bhutan's culture is a living poem of resilience and reverence. Traditional arts flourish in workshops where artisans preserve ancient crafts. Markets overflow with the earth's gifts—fresh produce, woven textiles, and fragrant incense—reminding me of the honest labor behind true abundance. Prayer flags dance on every breeze, carrying mantras of peace across valleys. The philosophy of Gross National Happiness, woven into daily life, celebrates well-being over wealth. For someone who has measured success in projects delivered and systems optimized, this paradigm felt revolutionary and deeply moving. It validated the quieter victories of midlife: inner peace, meaningful connections, and respect for the world around us.

The disruption of natural beauty continued to astonish me on every trail and viewpoint. Towering peaks crowned with snow, lush valleys alive with wildflowers, and forests teeming with hidden life created an immersive symphony. Biodiversity thrives here—protected areas sheltering snow leopards, tigers, and cranes—because the people honor the land as an extension of their spiritual selves. In the golden hours, when light played across the ridges, I often paused, heart full, grateful for this chapter of

rediscovery. As a single woman in her fifties, these landscapes affirmed that life's most beautiful disruptions come not from chaos, but from deep, soul-stirring connection.

Leaving Thimphu (and the unforgettable Tiger Nest) was bittersweet. The mountains, the monasteries, the monks, the Parliament's quiet dignity, the Takin's mythical presence, the Buddha Dordenma's compassionate gaze, and the pure, healing air had awakened a tenderness I will carry home. Bhutan taught me that true richness lies in cultural depth, environmental reverence, and the courage to embrace solitude as sacred space. In my IT world of precision and progress, I now hold a softer truth: sometimes the greatest optimization is surrendering to nature's wisdom.

This journey among the Thunder Dragon's whispers has left me emotionally transformed—more open, more grateful, and quietly hopeful. To the Himalayas and the gentle kingdom of Bhutan, I say thank you. You reminded a woman in her fifties that beauty, peace, and wonder are eternal companions, waiting patiently for those ready to receive them.



# Spain's Second Dawn: When the Beautiful Game Stretched Across Continents and Found Its Soul Anew

By Geetha V P



Night fell soft over New Jersey, and the world held its breath. At MetLife Stadium, beneath lights that seemed borrowed from the heavens, the final act of the greatest tournament ever staged reached its trembling close. Ferran Torres, a substitute risen from the shadows of the bench, struck once in extra time and the ball nestled in the net like a secret finally spoken. One-nil after extra time. Spain were champions of the world once more. Rodri, the midfield general who had orchestrated so much of their quiet dominance, lifted the golden prize high above his head, and for a moment the pitch itself seemed to glow with the weight of history. Then, as the celebrations bloomed in blue and red, something darker stirred—a rare and bitter skirmish between the newly crowned and the fallen, a sudden flash of fire that stained the purest night of the tournament.

This was the World Cup of 2026: vast, restless, and unforgettable. Where Qatar four years earlier had been a jewelled winter chamber, intimate and enclosed within the desert's quiet embrace, this tournament spilled across three nations like a great river in flood. Forty-eight teams. One hundred and four

matches. Thirty-nine days of football that stretched from the thin air of Mexico City to the salt wind of Vancouver, from the furnace heat of Texas to the electric nights of the American East Coast. The beautiful game expanded its kingdom, tested the limits of its own heart, and asked whether grandeur and poetry could still live in the same breath.

## The Expanding Pitch

In Qatar the world had gathered close. Eight stadiums stood within a short drive of one another, thirty-two nations played sixty-four matches in a tight, almost secretive twenty-nine days. The desert held the drama like a cupped hand, every journey measured in minutes rather than hours. In 2026 that hand opened wide. The tournament stretched across sixteen cities and four time zones, demanding journeys measured in thousands of kilometres. Champions now had to survive eight matches instead of seven. The format itself had grown—twelve groups of four, a new Round of 32, and the eight best third-placed teams advancing alongside the winners and runners-up. What had once been a concentrated festival became a continental odyssey.



New nations tasted the rare air of the World Cup stage, and none sang more purely than Cape Verde. The tiny island nation, population scarcely half a million, arrived as the humblest of debutants and left an indelible mark on the competition's soul. On their very first night they held mighty Spain to a goalless draw, a result that echoed around the football world like a sudden clap of thunder. They then shared a breathless 2-2 with Uruguay and shut out Saudi Arabia to finish unbeaten in the group stage—three draws, three points, second place. The smallest country ever to reach the knockout rounds advanced to face Argentina and fell only after extra time, 3-2, having forced the defending champions to dig deeper than anyone expected. In their blue shirts the Blue Sharks reminded the world that the beautiful game still belongs to the brave and the stubborn, not merely the powerful. Their journey became one of the purest stories of the expanded tournament.

The stadiums themselves were giants already standing—great American football cathedrals converted for a season into temples of the round ball. Night after night they filled until the concrete seemed to breathe. More than 6.8 million souls passed through the gates, a record that eclipsed even the legendary American summer of 1994. Crowds averaged near sixty-five thousand, with several venues regularly swelling past eighty thousand. The stands roared with the tongues of more than two hundred countries and territories. Yet this grandeur carried a cost. Travel wore at the legs of players. Heat pressed upon the lungs. The compact magic of Doha gave way to something grander and more uneven—a sprawling epic rather than a single glowing stage.

### **The Gaze of Millions**

If the organisation stretched the body of the game, the media and the watching world enlarged its spirit. Qatar's winter hours had forced many across the Americas to rise in darkness, the matches arriving as distant visitors at awkward times. 2026 arrived in the long light of the Northern summer, and North America claimed the tournament as its own. On American screens the final drew nearly sixty-three million pairs of eyes—almost forty million in English on Fox, another twenty-four million across Spanish-



language platforms. Across the full competition, average audiences more than doubled those of four years earlier. The numbers were not merely statistics; they were a confession of love long delayed, a continent finally opening its arms wide to the world's game.

Beyond the living room the digital pitch burned even brighter. Billions of video views swept across platforms like wind over summer grass. Official channels gained millions of new followers. Stories rose and fell with every matchday: Messi, the eternal number ten, chasing one last miracle at thirty-nine; Lamine Yamal painting the future in sudden, dazzling strokes; Mbappé hunting the Golden Boot with relentless hunger. The World Cup no longer arrived as a distant spectacle viewed through the wrong time zone. It lived inside the daily rhythm of a continent that had waited decades for this moment of belonging.

### **The People in the Stands**

And always there were the people. They filled the vast bowls until the concrete itself seemed to breathe with anticipation. They sang in languages that had never before echoed together under the same floodlights. They endured long journeys between cities, high ticket prices, and the occasional organisational stumble, yet still they came in their millions. In Qatar the festival had been concentrated, almost monastic in its intensity—a single glowing centre of pilgrimage. In 2026 it became a scattered carnival of different cities, different colours, and different intensities of joy.

Some venues shimmered with pure football magic, the atmosphere thick enough to taste. Others felt more functional than enchanted, the vastness of the geography diluting the shared experience. The beautiful game had grown immense, and in growing it had also grown uneven. Still the passion remained undiminished. The stands proved once again that the heart of the sport beats loudest when the many gather as one, shoulders touching, voices rising together toward the night sky.

### **The Final Night and the Breaking of the Spell**

Then came the last evening. Spain moved with the quiet authority of a side that knew its own superiority. Possession flowed from foot to foot like water finding its level. Chances accumulated. Argentina, reduced to ten men late in normal time after Enzo Fernández received a second yellow card, defended with the grim poetry of champions who refuse to die. Emiliano Martínez threw himself at everything, producing save after save as the Spanish waves kept coming. The score stayed locked at 0-0 until the 106th minute, when a cross from the right, a clever knockdown by Nico Williams, and Torres's decisive finish finally broke the resistance. The ball flew high into the roof of the net. Destiny had spoken.

The whistle sounded. Spain erupted in pure release. And then, almost before the echoes had faded, the rare and bitter thing happened. Tempers that had simmered through a physical, stop-start contest boiled over in the dying light. Players from the defeated side clashed with the newly crowned. Hands reached for throats. Bodies tangled across the centre circle. Coaches rushed onto the pitch to separate their own. In the long history of World Cup finals such open rupture immediately after the final whistle is almost unknown. The ancient code of the game—respect in triumph and in sorrow—had been briefly, violently broken. FIFA opened an investigation. The purest night of the tournament carried a scar that would not quickly fade. Messi walked away in tears. Whether this was his final World Cup only time will tell, but the image of the greatest player of his age leaving the stage with pain written across his face will linger long after the confetti has been swept away. Football, as it always does, offered both coronation and heartbreak in the same breath.

### **The Legacy Written in Light and Shadow**

World Cup 2026 will be remembered as the tournament that changed the dimensions of the beautiful game. It proved that an expanded, multi-nation format could fill the greatest stadiums on earth and command audiences never before seen on American soil. It gave new nations their hour under



the lights—none more stirring than Cape Verde's fearless, unbeaten stand in the group stage—and forced the traditional powers to adapt to a longer, more demanding campaign. It generated immense commercial power while revealing the strains of distance, heat, and imperfect organisation. The game grew larger, louder, and more complex, yet at its trembling heart it remained the same eternal drama: twenty-two players, a restless ball, and the pursuit of the ultimate prize beneath the lights.

Spain's victory was a triumph of control, patience, and collective excellence. Argentina's journey to a second successive final was a testament to fight and the enduring enchantment of Messi. The post-match skirmish stood as a raw reminder that even on the grandest stage the emotions of the game can spill beyond the white lines. The beautiful game had stretched itself across continents and found both glory and fracture. The question that remains is whether, in growing so vast, it can keep the quiet poetry that first made the world fall in love.

**\*Research by Nanditha Subhadra**



# Unfair Trade Practices: Safeguards and Remedies under Indian Law

## From Our Legal Desk

Unfair trade practices constitute deceptive, fraudulent, or unethical methods adopted by businesses in the promotion, sale, or distribution of goods and services. Such conduct undermines consumer confidence, distorts market competition, and frequently results in tangible financial loss, substandard products, or physical and mental harm. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (CPA) provides a comprehensive statutory framework to combat these malpractices, reinforced by the establishment of the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) and sector-specific regulations, particularly for e-commerce platforms.

### Recognising Unfair Trade Practices

The CPA identifies several manifestations of unfair trade practices, including:

- **False or Misleading Advertisements:** Misrepresentation of quality, grade, composition, benefits, or performance of products or services.
- **Deceptive Pricing:** Publication of fictitious discounts, drip pricing involving undisclosed charges, or artificial inflation of original prices.
- **Supply of Substandard Goods:** Sale of defective, expired, unsafe, or spurious items that fail to conform to declared specifications.
- **Hoarding and Black Marketing:** Artificial restriction of supplies intended to manipulate market prices.
- **Denial of Consumer Rights:** Refusal to issue proper invoices, cash memos, or honour warranties and after-sales obligations.

The Act further renders certain contracts “unfair” when they impose disproportionate or one-sided obligations upon consumers.

### Deceptive Advertisements and Social Media Endorsements

A growing concern in the digital ecosystem involves misleading advertisements and endorsements disseminated through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and others. Influencers, celebrities, and brands often promote products with exaggerated claims, undisclosed material connections, or unverified testimonials. Such practices fall squarely within the definition of misleading advertisements under the CPA.



The CCPA, along with the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements, 2022, holds advertisers, endorsers, and publishers accountable. Endorsers must exercise due diligence and ensure claims are substantiated by competent and reliable scientific evidence. Failure to disclose paid promotions or material connections constitutes an unfair trade practice. These violations are punishable with penalties up to ₹10 lakh for the first offence and ₹50 lakh for subsequent contraventions, along with directions to discontinue the advertisement and issue corrective statements. Platforms may also face scrutiny for hosting such content if they fail to exercise reasonable due diligence.



### Enforcement Powers of the CCPA

The CCPA functions as the apex regulatory body empowered to intervene proactively. It possesses wide-ranging powers to initiate suo motu inquiries, conduct investigations through its Director General, order product recalls, mandate refunds, direct discontinuation of unfair practices, and require corrective advertisements at the expense of the violator. Penalties for misleading advertisements extend to ₹10 lakh for the first contravention and ₹50 lakh for subsequent offences, with potential imprisonment. The Authority is also authorised to prohibit endorsers and initiate class actions in cases involving widespread consumer detriment.

### E-Commerce Specific Liabilities and Precedents

The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 impose stringent obligations on electronic commerce entities. Marketplace platforms must ensure accurate disclosures, maintain grievance redressal mechanisms, appoint designated officers, and exercise due diligence. They bear “fall-back liability” where seller negligence or omission causes loss to consumers. Failure to comply may result in loss of safe harbour protections under the Information Technology Act, 2000, and direct penal consequences. Judicial and regulatory precedents underscore accountability:

- The CCPA imposed penalties of ₹10 lakh each on Flipkart Internet Private Limited and Meta Platforms Inc. for permitting misleading listings without mandatory certifications and accurate technical specifications, constituting unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements.
- The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Chandigarh, held Swiggy and Instamart liable for short delivery and deficiency in service, rejecting attempts to disclaim responsibility on marketplace grounds.
- SpiceJet (operating its flight booking platform) was penalised by the CCPA for employing dark patterns, including pre-ticked checkboxes and deceptive interface designs.

These rulings affirm that e-commerce entities cannot evade liability by merely positioning themselves as intermediaries. Similar principles apply to social media-driven promotions.

### Available Remedies

Consumers aggrieved by unfair trade practices may seek the following reliefs before Consumer Commissions:

- Replacement or repair of defective goods at the seller's cost.
- Full refund of the consideration paid, together with applicable interest.
- Monetary compensation for financial loss, mental agony, and harassment.
- Orders directing cessation of the unfair practice and issuance of corrective advertisements.
- In appropriate cases, punitive damages and litigation costs.

Recent decisions of consumer commissions have directed full refunds along with compensation in cases involving defective consumer durables such as air conditioners and smartphones, reinforcing manufacturer and seller accountability.



## Procedural Roadmap for Redressal

**Collection of Evidence:** Preserve invoices, warranties, advertisements (including screenshots of social media posts), correspondence, and photographic or digital records.

**Issuance of Legal Notice:** Serve a formal demand notice detailing the grievance and stipulating a reasonable time (ordinarily 15 days) for resolution.

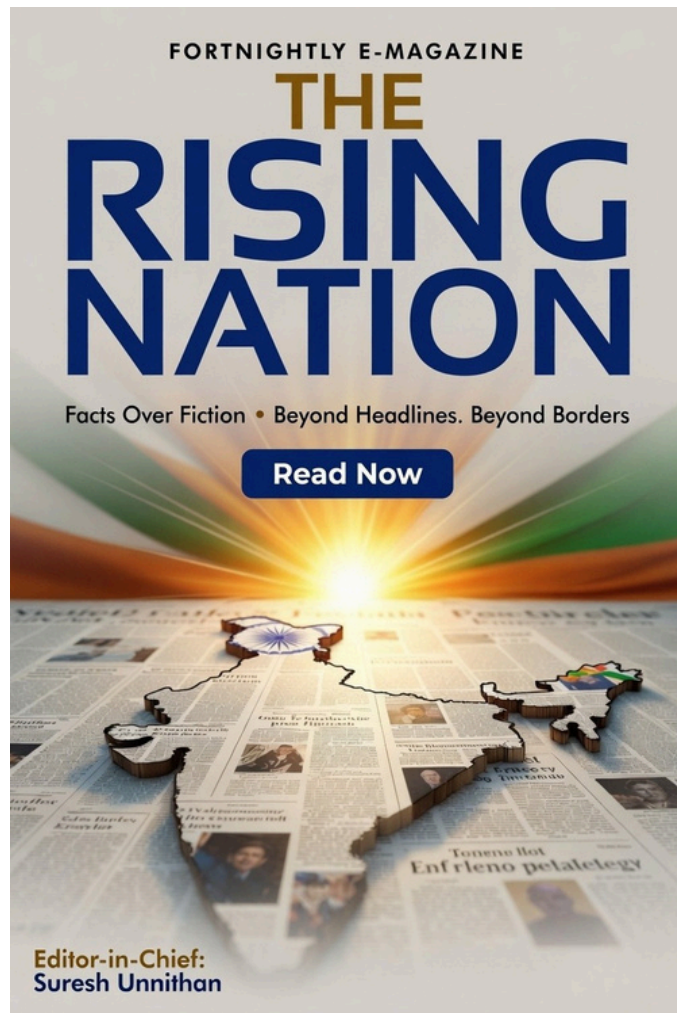
**Filing of Complaint:** Institute proceedings electronically through the E-Daakhil portal (edaakhil.nic.in) before the appropriate Commission based on the pecuniary value of the claim.

**Participation in Proceedings:** Engage in hearings, which may be conducted virtually, with scope for mediation.

## Critical Considerations

Complaints must be filed within the statutory limitation period of two years from the date the cause of action arises. Clauses purporting to exclude refunds or limit liability are legally ineffective where unfair trade practices or defects are established.

In an era of expanding digital commerce and social media influence, informed vigilance and timely invocation of statutory remedies remain the most effective deterrents against exploitative practices. Consumers are urged to document transactions meticulously, verify claims, and utilise the mechanisms provided under the CPA, E-Commerce Rules, and endorsement guidelines to uphold their rights.



# Dharma and Karma: The Particular Pathway to Paramatma

*By Suresh Unnithan*



In the sacred verses of the Bhagavad Gita, Dharma emerges as the eternal pillar of righteousness, the divine order that upholds the cosmos and guides the soul toward its ultimate purpose. It is the sacred duty, the moral compass aligned with the will of the Supreme, enabling one to live in harmony with the universe. Yet, Dharma does not stand alone; it is profoundly shaped and sustained by Karma, the principle of action. Karma acts as the vital contributor to Dharma, for it is through righteous and devoted actions that one truly attains and perfects Dharma. The Gita teaches that adherence to Karma—particularly Nishkama Karma, or selfless action without attachment to results—is the key to fulfilling one's Dharma impeccably. This intertwined relationship forms a spiritual ladder, ascending from dutiful action to divine realization. However, the journey culminates beyond all material dharmas: in complete surrender to the Supreme, relinquishing everything—including Dharma itself—to attain the seat of Paramatma, the Supreme Soul. This is the ultimate goal of human birth: to transcend the cycle of samsara and merge with the eternal through pure devotion and surrender.

Spiritually inclined, the Bhagavad Gita reveals that life is not merely a series of events but a sacred journey toward God-realization. Dharma, as the foundation, ensures actions align with cosmic harmony, while Karma propels the soul forward. By performing Karma without desire for fruits, one purifies the heart, perfects Dharma, and draws closer to Paramatma—the indwelling Supreme who resides in all beings. Yet, the highest truth is that even Dharma must be transcended in exclusive surrender. This article explores these concepts in depth, drawing from key verses with their translations and detailed elaborations to illuminate their profound spiritual essence.

## **Dharma: The Eternal Righteousness and Path to the Divine**

*Truth First, Fact Always*

Dharma, in the Bhagavad Gita, is the inherent righteousness that defines one's role in the grand tapestry of existence. It is not rigid law but a fluid, soul-elevating principle rooted in devotion to the Supreme. Spiritually, Dharma is the vehicle for self-realization, leading the practitioner from material bondage to the blissful seat of Paramatma. Lord



Krishna, the embodiment of Paramatma, declares Dharma as the protector of the universe, intervening when it declines to restore spiritual equilibrium. Chapter 4, Verse 7:

**यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य  
तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥**

Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself.

This verse reveals the divine mechanism of cosmic maintenance through the Lord's incarnations, emphasizing a profound spiritual principle: the eternal vigilance and intervention of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to preserve dharma (righteousness) against the encroachment of adharma (irreligion). At its core, the verse illustrates that whenever there is a palpable decline in Vedic principles—manifested as discrepancies in executing the rules of the Vedas, which are direct orders from the Lord Himself—and a rise in irreligiosity driven by demonic tendencies, the Lord descends not to create anew but to manifest His eternal form. This descent is not bound by rigid schedules, though He may appear at appointed times, as He is fully free to act at His will.

Spiritually, this underscores the Lord's role as the sole originator of true religion, with the Vedas serving as His spoken instructions aimed at establishing surrender unto Him. The purpose of Vedic principles is to guide humanity toward complete God consciousness, culminating in unconditional surrender to the Lord. When these principles are disturbed—such as through materialistic misuse or rampant materialism—the Lord intervenes through specific incarnations, each with a tailored mission to restore balance. The spiritualism here lies in the universality and accessibility of this process: the Lord can manifest anywhere, adapting His teachings to contexts, yet the mission remains constant—to awaken awareness of the Supreme and obedience to dharma. This inspires practitioners to recognize divine interventions as opportunities for spiritual elevation, fostering devotion by aligning with the Lord's will to counteract irreligion and promote eternal surrender, ensuring the soul's progression toward liberation.

#### **Chapter 4, Verse 8:**

**परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् । धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय  
सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥**



To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.

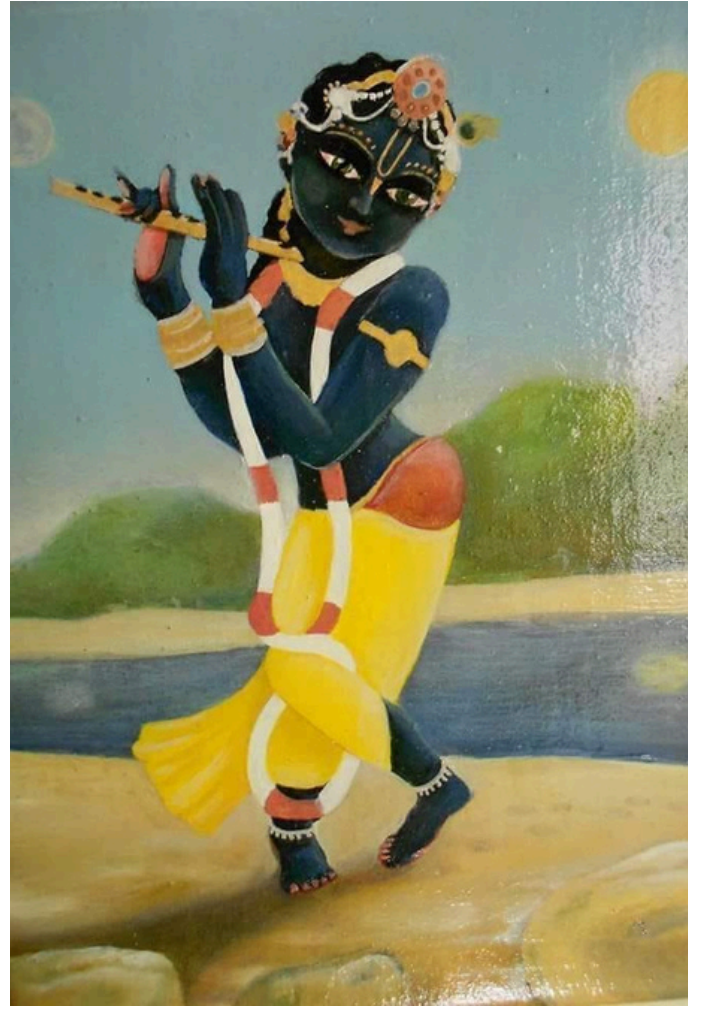
The spiritual essence of this verse reveals the divine purpose of the Lord's appearances across ages: to deliver pure devotees engaged in God consciousness, who are considered true saints regardless of external qualifications, while annihilating those lacking this consciousness. The Lord descends not primarily to destroy demons directly but to protect and appease His unalloyed devotees harassed by opposing forces. This incarnation establishes dharma by reestablishing religious principles, with the Supreme as the origin of all incarnations. The prime motivation is to alleviate the anxieties of devotees yearning for the Lord's personal pastimes, emphasizing service to His pure followers. In every age, the Lord appears to propagate divine consciousness, redeeming even the fallen through mercy. This underscores a theology of devotional protection, where spiritual liberation prioritizes the devotee's welfare, fostering a consciousness centered on the Supreme that transcends material existence and promotes devotion for upliftment.

#### Chapter 18, Verse 47:

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् । स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥

It is better to engage in one's own occupation, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Duties prescribed according to one's nature are never affected by sinful reactions.

The spiritual essence of this verse emphasizes the supremacy of one's inherent dharma (occupational duty) over imitating another's, even if the former is performed imperfectly. Duties are assigned based on one's natural disposition, and one must adhere to this without artificial imitation, for no occupation is inherently sinful when dedicated to the service of the Supreme Lord. Sinful reactions arise only from actions motivated by personal sense gratification, not from discharging prescribed duties for the Lord's satisfaction. The core spiritualism lies in aligning all work with sacrifice for the Divine, transforming mundane occupations into paths of liberation,



avoiding bondage by focusing on the supreme cause rather than egoistic pursuits. Thus, one achieves freedom from sin by acting according to one's nature, dedicating efforts to please the Supreme, ensuring spiritual advancement without fear of karmic reactions.

#### Karma: The Contributor to Dharma's Attainment

Karma, the law of action, is the dynamic force that contributes to Dharma's realization. The Gita spiritually frames Karma not as mundane work but as a devotional offering to Paramatma. To attain Dharma, one must adhere to Karma diligently, for inaction breeds stagnation, while selfish action binds the soul. The key is Nishkama Karma—action without desire for results—which purifies motives and perfects duty.

#### Chapter 2, Verse 47:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never



consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

This verse emphasizes the principle of detached action as a core spiritual practice. One's right lies solely in performing prescribed duties aligned with one's nature and scriptures, without any claim to the fruits. Attachment to outcomes makes one bound by reactions, leading to bondage. Similarly, attachment to inaction is forbidden, as it hinders liberation.

Spiritually, this teaches non-attachment and selflessness in karma-yoga: act out of duty, without desire for rewards, as such disinterested service elevates one toward freedom from material entanglement. Prescribed duties must avoid result-oriented motives to prevent bondage. True spirituality demands engaging in duty as a path to liberation, rejecting both inaction and selfish gain. This fosters equanimity, where the soul acts as a pure servant of the divine will, transcending ego and material illusions for ultimate spiritual realization.

### Chapter 3, Verse 9:

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः । तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय  
मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

Work done as a sacrifice for the Supreme has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

The spiritual essence of this verse centers on performing all actions as offerings to the Supreme Lord, transforming work into a sacred sacrifice that leads to liberation. Work detached from this purpose binds the soul through reactions. By dedicating duties exclusively for satisfying the Divine, one achieves freedom while fulfilling necessities. This practice embodies divine consciousness, where every activity serves the Lord's pleasure. The verse emphasizes detachment, urging performance of work perfectly without attachment, under divine guidance. Spiritually, this elevates the practitioner from entanglement to a liberated state, advancing toward transcendental loving service, the ultimate path to



returning to the divine abode. It teaches that true spirituality lies in selflessly offering labor to the Divine, recognizing work as a means to spiritual elevation.

The Intertwining: Nishkama Karma Perfecting Dharma, Culminating in Surrender

Dharma and Karma are spiritually intertwined, with Nishkama Karma as the thread weaving perfection into duty. To attain Dharma, adherence to Karma is essential, but only selfless Karma leads to its flawless execution. This union forms Karma Yoga, where actions fulfill Dharma while detaching from results, fostering equanimity and devotion.

Yet, the Gita's most profound revelation transcends even perfected Dharma. In Chapter 18, Verse 66—the ultimate verse—Lord Krishna declares:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज । अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो  
मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.

The core spiritualism of this verse lies in the ultimate simplicity of surrender to the Supreme as the path to liberation. It transcends complex religious processes by emphasizing exclusive devotion: abandon all dharmic varieties not aligned with divine consciousness and fully depend on the Lord. This surrender is an attitude of faith and attraction to the Lord's personal form, freeing one instantly from sinful reactions without preliminary efforts.

Spiritually, it reveals the Supreme as the savior, where devotion elevates one beyond partial visions, making it the pinnacle of transcendentalism. Practitioners experience immediate purification, protection, and progress toward perfection, embodying trust, love, and non-worry. This essence underscores that true spirituality is relational surrender, not striving, leading to eternal freedom. This complete surrender is the highest path, assuring liberation through divine grace alone. It resolves the seeker's quest: Nishkama Karma perfects Dharma, but ultimate freedom comes from offering even Dharma at the feet of Paramatma.

### **Attaining the Seat of Paramatma, the Ultimate Goal**

Through the sacred interplay of Dharma and Karma, perfected by Nishkama action and crowned by total surrender, the Bhagavad Gita charts a spiritually profound path. Dharma, upheld by selfless Karma, purifies the soul, but the final leap—relinquishing all dharmas in exclusive devotion—grants direct union with Paramatma. This realization—eternal communion with the Supreme—is the true purpose of human birth, where boundless peace and bliss await. Inspired by Krishna's divine assurance, may we embrace this journey, surrendering fully to reach the ultimate seat of divine love.







## Editor's Diary

# GEN Z: The Voters You Cannot Scare

Politicians who dismissed Generation Z as digital noise, seasonal protesters or disposable vote banks have been exposed and humiliated. The Cockroach movement did not simply force an education minister's resignation. It inflicted a public and calculated defeat on a political class that had grown arrogant in its belief that the young could be managed, distracted, polarised or intimidated into silence.

For years those in power assumed young Indians could be fed narratives, divided by identity or quietened by the machinery of investigation. That assumption has been shattered. Gen Z has stepped off the screen and onto the street, and it is already preparing to step into the ballot box. By 2029 they will form India's largest adult voting bloc — nearly 380 million strong. They arrive not as clients or clients-in-waiting, but as a generation that has stopped believing the old assurances and begun measuring power solely by results.

Their voting strategy is already clear and unforgiving. They reject the exhausted currency of identity politics and propaganda. They will judge every government and every aspirant by concrete failures: chronic unemployment, compromised examinations, climate neglect and economic unfairness. They organise faster than party machines, communicate beyond controlled media, and refuse the old fault lines that once delivered reliable majorities. A generation capable of forcing a senior minister out in weeks will not forget how it was treated when the next election arrives

Many already face joblessness, repeated exam failures caused by systemic leaks, and a future narrower than the one repeatedly promised.

When survival itself feels precarious, threats of further harassment do not intimidate — they radicalise. History is unambiguous: populations with nothing left to lose become the hardest to control.

This warning is not reserved for those currently in office. It applies with equal force to those waiting in the wings, polishing their own claims to power. The opposition cannot assume it will automatically inherit youthful anger. Gen Z has already demonstrated that it will judge every contender by performance, not pedigree or recycled rhetoric. Empty promises will be exposed as ruthlessly as present failures.

Corporates who treat the country primarily as a market for extraction rather than a shared responsibility should also take note. A generation that demands accountability from governments will eventually demand it from business. Profit extracted at the cost of fairness, environment or opportunity will face organised resistance — first in the marketplace of ideas, then in the marketplace of votes, and finally in the marketplace of consumption. Those who regard the nation as a temporary balance sheet will find this generation unforgiving.

The political class now faces a binary choice. It can continue underestimating a force that has already shown its capacity to disrupt, or it can confront the issues that actually move this cohort. There is no third option. The old methods — narrative control, identity mobilisation and selective intimidation — are finished. Gen Z has nothing to lose and everything to demand. Those who still believe they can take these voters for granted are living in a past that is already over. 2029 will not be kind to them.





# THE RISING NATION



Truth First, Fact Always

