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Empowering The Nation

Bihar Again Stamps Modi's Strong Leadership



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Uday India

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A Historic Landslide and a Political Rout

The Bihar verdict illustrates a harsh political reality--alliances cannot succeed when one partner behaves like a spectator. Rahul Gandhi's leadership vacuum left the Mahagathbandhan rudderless, disorganised, and unable to counter a well-prepared NDA. In the end, while many factors contributed to the collapse, Rahul Gandhi emerged as the foremost reason for the rout—a reminder that leadership, or the lack of it, can make or break an electoral coalition.

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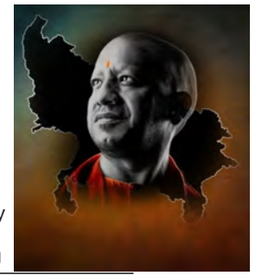
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MAILBOX

15 November 2025

E-mail: editor@udayindia.in

Your cover story on the Bihar assembly elections provides a comprehensive analysis of the high-stakes battle. It correctly identifies the key players—the seasoned Nitish Kumar, the aspirational Tejashwi Yadav, and the wildcard Prashant Kishor. However, the most significant takeaway from this election is the clear emergence of a new political dynamic that may well eclipse the old caste-based calculus. For decades, Bihar's politics has been dictated by the intricate arithmetic of caste combinations. While this remains a potent force, as evidenced by the careful candidate selection by both the NDA and the Mahagathbandhan, a new 'Mahila-Youth' (Women-Youth) equation is taking centre stage. The sharp generational and gender divide highlighted in your story is not a minor subplot; it is the central narrative of this election. On one hand, the NDA, under Nitish Kumar, has successfully built a formidable fortress of women voters. His welfare initiatives, particularly those empowering women through self-help groups and the promise of creating 'lakhpati didis,' have created a loyal constituency that appears to transcend caste lines. This is a testament to the tangible impact of targeted welfare schemes. On the other hand, Tejashwi Yadav's Mahagathbandhan is resonating powerfully with the youth, particularly young men, who are disillusioned by unemployment and outmigration. His audacious promise of one government job per family is a direct response to their deepest anxieties. This election has become a referendum on aspirations, and Tejashwi has successfully positioned himself as the agent of change for this demographic. The wildcard, Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj, while potentially fading in direct relevance, underscores this shift. Its appeal to educated youth signals a hunger for a new kind of politics, even if the vehicle for it is not yet fully formed.



-Ramneek Singh, Prayagraj

Containing the Undemocratic Rise of Political Dynasties

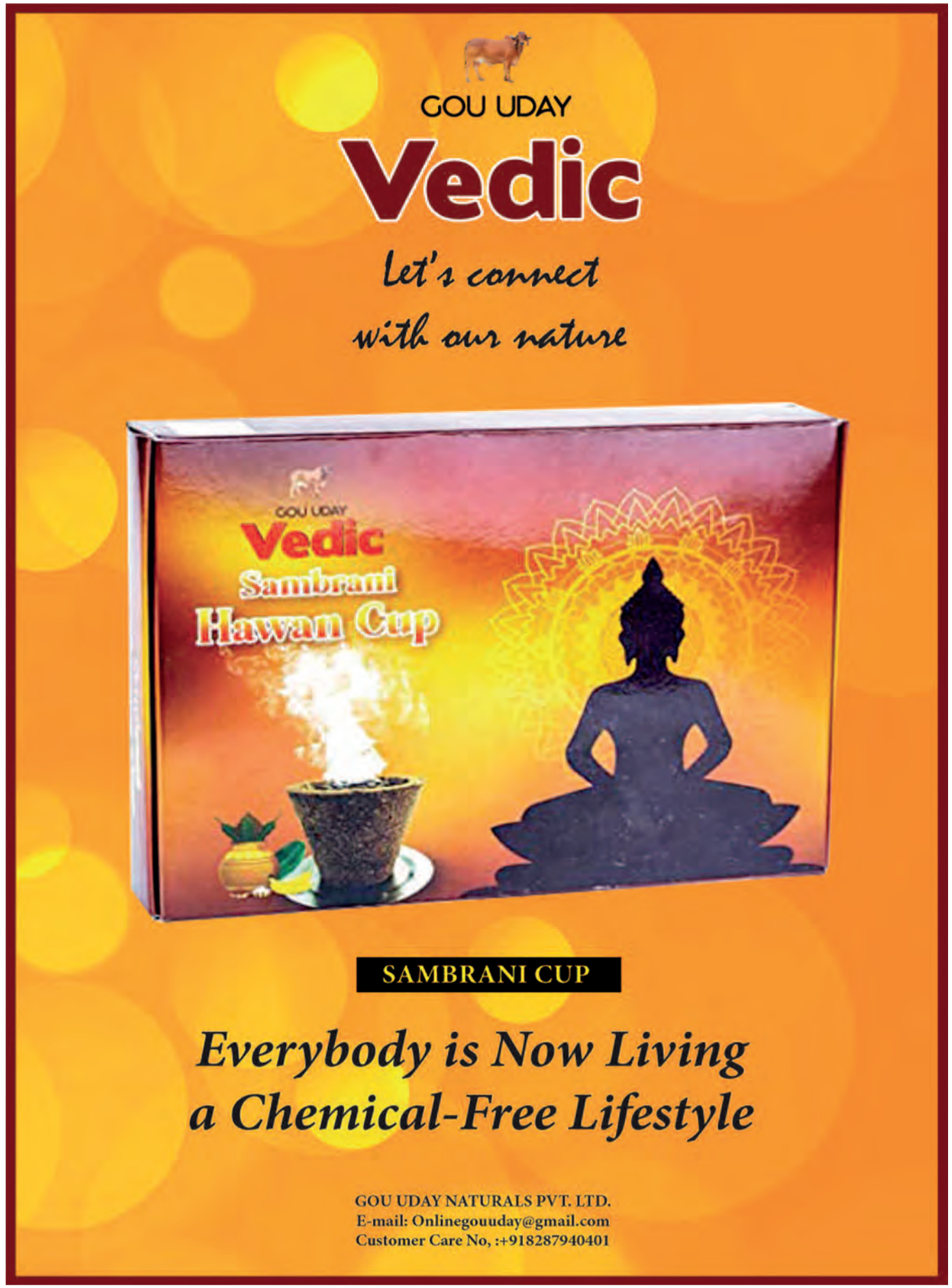
The article by Prakash Nanda on the pervasive nature of dynastic politics in India raises a critical issue for the health of our democracy. The timing of his piece, coinciding with elections in Bihar where dynastic leadership is prominent, underscores its immediate relevance. The data is indeed telling. With over 22% of our legislators having familial ties to politics, and prominent examples like the Gandhis, Yadavs, Abdullahs, and Pawars dominating national and regional landscapes, it is clear that political lineage often serves as a primary gateway to power. As the article note, dynasts possess an overwhelming advantage: financial capital, pre-established election machinery, and the invaluable asset of name recognition. This creates a profoundly uneven playing field, stifling new talent and meritocracy.

-Rajnish Sahay, Surat

* * *

While it is true that in a democracy, the electorate ultimately bestows legitimacy, we must question whether this "choice" is a truly free one when faced with the immense, inherited resources of a political family. The comparison to other professions like law or medicine is flawed. While a doctor's son may choose medicine, he does not automatically inherit his father's senior position in a hospital. In politics, however, we see heirs not just entering the fray but often anointed as party leaders and chief ministerial candidates by virtue of birth alone. This automatic succession deals a serious blow to democratic principles. It treats elected office and party leadership as a family heirloom rather than a responsibility to be earned. As the author rightly points out, if lineage alone were sufficient, the descendants of Mahatma Gandhi or Jay Prakash Narayan would be leading the nation today.

-Nandini Vats, Akola



Modi-Nitish Bonhomie

This victory was largely due to successfully consolidating a broad social base, particularly by securing the return of Chirag Paswan (now a Union Minister) –led Lok Janshakti Party to the alliance, which brought together upper castes, non-Yadav Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Dalits. The opposition Mahagathbandhan (MGB) failed to broaden its appeal beyond its core support, leading to its defeat.



Prakash Nanda



As I write this, the National democratic Alliance(NDA) is beginning its fresh innings of governing Bihar under the leadership of the redoubtable Nitish Kumar for the tenth time.

The NDA's victory in the just concluded elections in Bihar highlights several key lessons for the major political players, primarily emphasising the importance of a strong, inclusive coalition, effective welfare delivery, and cohesive alliance management.

This victory was largely due to successfully consolidating a broad social base, particularly by securing the return of Chirag Paswan (now a Union Minister) –led Lok Janshakti Party to the alliance, which brought together upper castes, non-Yadav Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Dalits. The opposition Mahagathbandhan (MGB) failed to broaden its appeal beyond its core support, leading to its defeat.

Secondly, the performance of the incumbent government and the effective delivery of welfare schemes (such as cash transfers and other state-sponsored initiatives) were significant factors in influencing voter behavior. Voters respond to schemes that are perceived as reliable entitlements rather than one-off inducements.

Thirdly women emerged as a crucial and distinct voting bloc, with a higher turnout than men. Their support for the NDA's policies was a key factor in the outcome, demonstrating that no party can afford to ignore this demographic as a game-changer.

Fourthly, the NDA's formula worked due to a clear hierarchy and a stable, unified message, with both the BJP and Nitish Kumar's JD(U) effectively managing internal dissent to ensure vote transfer among allies. In contrast, the MGB was seen as less cohesive, with a lack of a clear center of gravity.

Fifthly, the election showed that sustained, bottom-up engagement through local networks at the grassroots level holds more sway than campaigns built purely on media spectacle or social media traction. If one would have gone by spectacle of the rallies and campaigns of the Congress supremo Rahul Gandhi and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, then the MGB would have got more than 200 in the 243 seats of the state assembly. For the opposition, particularly the Congress party, the results highlighted the need for organisational depth, clear political messaging, and a more disciplined approach to alliance building, moving beyond episodic or personality-driven campaigns.

However, important though the above lessons are, for me what strikes most is that the Indian electorate has become really mature in assessing a leader's credibility and accessibility, and filtering national narratives through older local infrastructures.

As a political analyst I may be in a distinct minority, but the latest round of Bihar elections has further deepened my belief that electoral outcomes are no longer determined by the ethnic (caste or religion) or the identity factor alone. It is not "the most important thing" that matters. The assumption here is that the "masses" vote along caste or community lines, and thus, are "captive vote banks" – A Dalit will always vote for a Dalit leader, a Yadav will always vote for a Yadav, a Muslim will always vote for a Muslim. But nothing can be more simplistic than this. If masses will always vote along caste or community lines or as a monolithic block , elections would be a simple affair where any caste group which was dominant and had the numbers would automatically win. Had that been the case a Mayawati or an Akhilesh Yadav would never have been defeated or lost power in Uttar Pradesh. The same would have been the case with Lalu Yadav and his son in Bihar.

However, though the old habits and beliefs still persist, the fact remains that after the advent of the Narandra Modi phenomenon in 2014, and in the context of Bihar the image of Nitish Kumar as a capable administrator, the conventional barometers to study elections have outlived their utilities.

Modi has proved the limitations of the often lauded identity politics of caste, creed and region. As in the 2014 General Election, the results of this election have proved beyond any shadow of doubt that people have voted beyond caste lines. And, it is a healthy development. Indian democracy will be much stronger if one votes as an Indian, not as a member of a particular caste or religion.

Unfortunately the dominant sections within the Indian polity, and this includes the intelligentsia, glorify identity politics. For instance, if Yadavs, Muslims and Dalits vote as a block, they laud the phenomenon as consolidation for their respective rights. If somebody opposes this trend, he or she is branded as communal. In this sense, the Bihar electorate has taught these people a good lesson.

If the NDA has won, it is because of its empowering or aspirational politics, be it in the infrastructural development or welfare measures. The incumbent government led by Nitish Kumar and supported by Prime Minister Nrendra Modi appealed to the broad spectrum of society. And those aspirations have nothing to do with religion, caste or any other identity. People wanted development and a better future. In the process, they have rejected the systematic slanders (that continue even today, thanks to its sustenance by the mainstream media dominated by the so-called Left and liberals) that Modi is a deeply divisive figure.

In fact, the Bihar elections have proved once again that the more you demonise Modi, the more sympathy he draws from people at the ground level. The same is the case with baseless allegations against political adversaries. Voters are not impressed by countless allegations against Modi by Rahul Gandhi that do not have any substance whatsoever.

On the other hand, as in many elections over the last 10 years, the one in Bihar proved that in this country of great diversities, there are spaces for leaders who have the nationwide appeal and who conduct a presidential-style campaign by travelling thousands of miles and addressing public meetings, even if these are for local or Assembly elections. In fact, Modi's has been one of the largest mass outreaches in India's electoral history. Modi's support-base cannot be judged strictly in terms of regional or identity politics. This base, if at all, can be judged vertically in terms of class, not of caste or creed or region. And in this class divide, it is obvious that the poor, who are in much larger numbers, had been with Modi, or for that matter with the NDA.

Of course, now the habitual critics will express doubts over the longevity of this government, given the number of times Nitish has left and re-entered the NDA. Of course, during electioneering, Nitish had said that it was a mistake and he would never repeat it. It is perhaps underplayed that Nitish has always risen high in the company of BJP and not the other way round. He became the chief minister of Bihar for the first time in 2000, though for exactly a week (3 March, 2000 to 10 March, 2000) when the BJP-led government at the Centre (under Atal Bihari Vajpayee) released him from the Union cabinet to just have a chance towards an NDA regime in the state. That time, BJP had 39 seats in the Bihar Assembly whereas Nitish's party had only 18 seats. For that matter, in the 1999 General Elections to Lok Sabha, the BJP had 23 Lok Sabha seats from the then undivided Bihar, whereas JD(U) had only eight. In the 1998 General elections, BJP had 19 Lok Sabha MPs, against 10 from Nitish's then Samata party.

The point that emerges from above data is that despite the fact that Nitish has been much behind in terms of share of support-base, the BJP leadership has always promoted him. And to such an extent that after he became the chief Minister with a comfortable majority in 2005 in alliance with the BJP, the latter, by and by, ceded space to become a junior partner in every sense of the term.

In other words, until 2005, the BJP was the largest NDA constituent in Bihar, but the then Vajpayee-LK Advani leadership promoted Nitish to the extent that the JD(U), the younger brother to the BJP in Bihar, became the elder brother. In 2020, BJP had more numbers but Modi allowed Nitish to continue as the Chief Minister. The same has been the case this time too, despite the BJP emerging as the single largest party in the Assembly.

As an observer of Indian politics, one has to admit that contrary to the common perceptions, BJP (or its previous incarnation, Jana Sangh) has always been an honest and accommodative partner in the game of alliance politics, but this gesture of the party has rarely been reciprocated. Despite constituting the largest block in the Janata Party after the 1977 elections, it had inadequate representations in Morarji Desai's cabinet. It had an alliance with Bahujan Samaj Party, once, in Uttar Pradesh, but BSP chief Mayawati stabbed the BJP.

In the 1998 General Elections to Lok Sabha, Biju Patnaik was no more in the scene and all over Odisha people were talking of Vajpayee. And yet the BJP willingly became a junior partner to the newly formed Biju Janata Dal (BJD) led by Naveen Patnaik. In Maharashtra, as long as Shiv Sena was the elder brother, BJP did not have any chance to grow. The party separated in the 2015 Assembly polls of Maharashtra because of Shiv Sena's reluctance to give adequate seats. The BJP proved its worth by bagging more than double seats than the hitherto elder brother. Even after Shiv Sena's return to the NDA, it did not get even half of the BJP's tally in 2019 elections. That its leader Udhav Thackeray betrayed the BJP and went to form the government by disregarding the people's mandate is a different story.

However, at the moment, Modi-Nitish bonhomie looks too strong to be broken.

(prakash.nanda@hotmail.com)

After Bihar's Resounding Victory

Yogi Preparing to Write a New Chapter in UP

For the BJP, this 200-plus wave in Bihar is not just a victory but the first chapter of its 2027 strategy. This victory shows that the public has chosen good governance over jungle raj, dynastic politics, and caste upheavals. The effort to take this mindset to UP will now intensify. The BJP wants Bihar-like results in UP by balancing organizational strength, understanding of caste equations, and development-based politics.



■ Swadesh Kumar from Lucknow

The results of the Bihar Assembly elections have not only changed the political landscape there, but have also triggered new movements in the power equations of Uttar Pradesh. The historic performance that the NDA has delivered in Bihar has become a fresh source of enthusiasm within the BJP. Crossing the 200-seat mark out of 243 is no ordinary mandate. It is a political message that those who understand politics know will not remain confined to Bihar's borders, but will influence the political map of the entire Hindi belt. A key point for the BJP was that, for the first time, it emerged as the largest party in Bihar. In the previous election, the BJP had stopped at 74 seats, while this time it rose to nearly 90 seats in terms of wins and leads. On the other hand, the JDU also emerged as a strong partner by securing around 85 seats. The performance of the Mahagathbandhan was extremely disappointing. RJD slipped to around 25 seats and Congress was reduced to just 6. This is the scenario that has given a new direction to the entire political discourse.

Behind this victory, not only the strength of organization or alliance mattered, but the contribution of UP's leaders is also considered equally significant. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya was made co-in-charge of the Bihar election, and he handled strategies for 78 seats with Muzaffarpur as the center. His ability to connect with the OBC community proved highly effective in Bihar. The election strategy prepared along with Dharmendra Pradhan showed visible impact on the ground. Several UP ministers Brajesh Pathak, Mahendra Singh, Anil Rajbhar, Daya Shankar Singh, Suresh Rana, Dinesh Pratap Singh and others spent months visiting villages and working with party workers at the booth level. This effort was not limited to gathering crowds for rallies; it was a concrete part of the strategy to increase the vote percentage.

In this chain, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's rallies also had a strong impact. He held 32 rallies and one major roadshow. Of the 43 candidates he campaigned for, most seats went into the NDA's bag. This was not just the effect of popularity, but also a display of the political skill of establishing his image of security, law and order, and development among Bihar's voters. Yogi's name and work were used as a powerful message in Bihar, and the results proved that this strategy was successful.

The biggest impact of Bihar's massive victory will now be seen in Uttar Pradesh. The 2027 assembly elections in UP may seem far away, but the BJP has already begun preparations. Discussions have intensified regarding organizational changes, cabinet reshuffles, and strategies to balance regional equations. The way caste arithmetic was handled differently in Bihar and balanced with development-oriented politics will now be attempted in UP as well. The BJP's top leadership is now reviewing the Bihar model so it can be implemented in UP, because after the setback in 2024, this election is not just about power but also about political prestige.

On the other hand, the strategy of allied parties will also be forced to change after the Bihar results. The Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party had claimed that it would contest 153 seats before the election, but eventually contested only 32, and lost most of them with even deposits forfeited. This sent a message that the pressure tactics regional parties used to increase their bargaining power with the BJP will not be as successful now. The NDA's strength in Bihar has indicated that the BJP is capable of winning elections on its own, and allies will have to rethink their strategies.

Behind this victory, not only the strength of organization or alliance mattered, but the contribution of UP's leaders is also considered equally significant. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya was made co-in-charge of the Bihar election, and he handled strategies for 78 seats with Muzaffarpur as the center. His ability to connect with the OBC community proved highly effective in Bihar. The election strategy prepared along with Dharmendra Pradhan showed visible impact on the ground.

Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party also received a strong message from Bihar. Even though the SP did not contest the election in Bihar, Akhilesh Yadav held 22 rallies as part of the INDIA alliance. The Bihar results have compelled the SP to consider that relying solely on the core vote bank is no longer possible. The era of the MY equation is over, and the PDA model that Akhilesh talks about now needs to be implemented at the ground level. Senior SP leaders also admit that the 2027 battle will be fought not on the basis of caste equations but on development and broader social partnerships. The SP will have to reach out to non-Yadav OBCs, non-Jatav Dalits, and emerging rural social groups, because the Bihar results have made it clear that the public is no longer willing to accept purely caste-based politics.

In the meantime, Akhilesh Yadav has made serious allegations regarding the SIR process and claimed that electoral manipulation took place in Bihar. He also said that such manipulation will not be allowed in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and UP. The SP claims that its PPTV meaning PDA Prahari will remain alert at every booth and closely monitor any potential irregularities. The BJP has strongly responded to these allegations. Keshav Prasad Maurya said clearly that leaders accustomed to defeat are now questioning the process to malign the people's mandate. He asserted that in 2027, UP will witness a sweeping majority like in 2017.

For the BJP, this 200-plus wave in Bihar is not just a victory but the first chapter of its 2027 strategy. This victory shows that the public has chosen good governance over jungle raj, dynastic politics, and caste upheavals. The effort to take this mindset to UP will now intensify. The BJP wants Bihar-like results in UP by balancing organizational strength, understanding of caste equations, and development-based politics. For the opposition, this election is a warning that old formulas must be abandoned and new politics adopted. However far this Bihar wave travels, it is clear that its impact will definitely reach UP. In the coming months, political strategies will be exchanged between states even more rapidly. It is hard to say which direction the 2027 election will take, but the Bihar results are enough to signal that political equations are changing fast and the next election will be more interesting, challenging, and unpredictable than before.

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How the Yogi Model Is Spreading a Web of BJP Governments

Politically, the Yogi Model has given the BJP a new "development versus crime" binary. This has given the party a moral advantage over the opposition. When the opposition raises issues like unemployment and inflation, the BJP counters by highlighting the Yogi Model and arguing that a crime-free society is the foundation of all development. This is why Yogi Adityanath is now seen as the most popular leader in the BJP after Modi. His image represents not only Hindutva politics but also that of a results-oriented administrator.

■ Sanjay Saxena, from Lucknow

Around eleven years ago, when Narendra Modi entered national politics during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the entire country was echoing with the idea of the Gujarat Model. Gujarat at that time was presented as an ideal state in terms of industry, investment, infrastructure, and power supply. "Development is the solution to all problems" was the central slogan. But with time, the language of politics, public expectations, and the very definition of governance have changed. In the political landscape of 2025, the BJP is promoting Yogi Adityanath's UP Model or Yogi Model far more than Narendra Modi's Gujarat Model. The reason is the growing public preference for security, strictness, and direct action.

After becoming the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2017, Yogi Adityanath took a path that overturned conventional perceptions of administration. He declared law and order as the first condition for development. The bulldozer became the symbol of his crackdown on criminals. Over the past few years, the image of "Bulldozer Baba" has gained recognition not only in UP's politics but across the entire country. Demolition of illegal constructions, the fall of assets belonging to mafia groups, and swift police action against criminals all these have given the Yogi Model a distinct identity. While the Gujarat Model focused on development, investment, and industrial promotion, the Yogi Model has become synonymous with law, order, and strictness. A large section of the public now links development directly with security. People believe that without rule of law, neither investment nor development can sustain. This thinking is what makes the Yogi Model unique and relevant. It is a model that talks about uplifting the poor while showing no leniency toward criminals.

The BJP has made this model a crucial part of its election strategy. In states like Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana, BJP leaders have projected Yogi Adityanath as a one-man army in their campaigns. Phrases like "the bulldozer will run" and "mafia-free state" have become common in their speeches. This strategy has benefitted the BJP in many states, as Yogi's image has emerged as that of an administrator who fears no one and does not take decisions based on caste or religion. The influence of the Yogi Model is not limited to northern India. In northeastern states like Assam and Manipur, the term "Yogi-style action" has started appearing in government contexts. Even the Eknath Shinde government in Maharashtra has described its actions against crime and illegal structures as inspired by Uttar Pradesh. From Delhi to Karnataka, bulldozer drives against criminals have become common in BJP-ruled states. This shows how Yogi Adityanath has turned administrative strictness into a new face of national political strategy.

Another significant aspect of this model is that it is deeply connected with public sentiment. Ordinary citizens believe that strict action against crime, corruption, and mafia elements is the real form of justice. Yogi Adityanath understood this sentiment well. While people had begun to expect more concrete results from the previously abstract notion of "development," the bulldozer model gave them immediate and visible outcomes falling buildings, razed illegal structures, and the arrest of criminals. This reassures people that governance is happening not just on paper but on the ground. Economically too, the Yogi Model has marked its presence. Uttar Pradesh has become one of the leading states in attracting investment. Securing billions of rupees in the Global Investors Summit indicates that industries can indeed thrive in a strict law-and-order environment. Foreign investors now consider UP a safe investment destination. Prime Minister Modi himself has repeatedly praised the Yogi government for redefining good governance through administrative firmness.

Politically, the Yogi Model has given the BJP a new "development versus crime" binary. This has given the party a moral advantage over the opposition. When the opposition raises issues like unemployment and inflation, the BJP counters by highlighting the Yogi Model and arguing that a crime-free society is the foundation of all development. This is why Yogi Adityanath is now seen as the most popular leader in the BJP after Modi. His image represents not only Hindutva politics but also that of a results-oriented administrator.

Interestingly, the discussion around the Yogi Model is not confined within India's borders. Political analysts in neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka have commented on it. Several provincial leaders in Nepal have openly said that their regions need a governance style as strict as Yogi Adityanath's to fight crime and corruption. On Bangladeshi social media too, bulldozer actions have been a widely discussed topic. Many in South Asian countries are starting to believe that even within democratic systems, strong leadership can curb crime and disorder. Of course, some critics argue that the Yogi Model challenges legal procedures. They claim that bulldozers cannot deliver justice only strong laws can bring real change. But supporters argue that the Yogi government has restored public confidence in law enforcement. Creating fear among criminals and trust among citizens is seen as a major administrative achievement and this is the strongest foundation of the Yogi Model.

Meanwhile, a debate is underway within the BJP on how the Yogi Model can be implemented on a national level in the coming years. The central government's policies already show glimpses of Yogi's style combining welfare with strict enforcement. The Modi-Yogi combination has become a new source of political energy for the BJP. While Modi manages India's international image, Yogi has become the symbol of grassroots governance.

Meanwhile, a debate is underway within the BJP on how the Yogi Model can be implemented on a national level in the coming years. The central government's policies already show glimpses of Yogi's style combining welfare with strict enforcement. The Modi-Yogi combination has become a new source of political energy for the BJP. While Modi manages India's international image, Yogi has become the symbol of grassroots governance. Today, when the BJP launches an election campaign in any new state, Yogi Adityanath's rallies are in highest demand. His slogans like "the mafia will see the bulldozer" electrify the crowds. People see in Yogi a leader who promises a fear-free society. This image has now become the BJP's new face. In this changing political landscape, it is clear that the Yogi Model has now become not just a governance style but a political ideology one that has made security and good governance complementary to each other.

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Faith Meets Flavour

The Sacred Taste of Kerala's Temple Prasadams

How devotion, culture, and cuisine come together in God's Own Country.



Pradeep Krishnan from Thiruvananthapuram

Perhaps Hindus of other States would be surprised to know that in Kerala, temple offerings—known as prasadams—go far beyond the usual laddus, pongal, or halwa. Here, devotion takes on a distinctly local flavour. The land of temples, rivers, and festivals celebrates divinity not only through rituals and chants but also through its kitchens. Every temple, big or small, has its own sacred recipe, often passed down through generations. From sweet payasams (puddings) simmered in brass vessels to offerings as unusual as fried fish and toddy, Kerala's temple prasadams reflect the region's rich blend of faith, culture, and culinary imagination—a true expression of how Hinduism embraces life in all its vibrant forms.

Kerala, the land of temples and traditions, breathes spirituality not just through its rituals and chants, but also through its food. Step into any temple courtyard during festival time, and what greets you—beyond the fragrance of camphor and jasmine—is the unmistakable aroma of prasadam being prepared.

For the devout, prasadam is not merely food; it is prasāda, divine grace in edible form. Every morsel, every spoonful, every offering carries the sanctity of devotion, the touch of ritual, and the soul of the temple. What makes Kerala's temples so fascinating is the astonishing diversity of their offerings—ranging from time-honoured dishes like palpayasam (milk pudding) to surprisingly unconventional ones like fish fry and toddy!

This journey across Kerala's temples is not just about tasting food—it's about discovering how Hinduism celebrates life itself. In its temples, art, music, architecture, and even cuisine unite to form a complete aesthetic and spiritual experience.

Hinduism: A Celebration of Life in All Its Forms

Unlike many traditions that separate the sacred from the secular, Hinduism celebrates life in its entirety. It recognizes the divine in every act—from cooking and serving food to eating and sharing it. The concept of naivedyam (offering) and prasadam (blessing) embodies this holistic spirituality.

Temples thus become living symbols of this worldview. Their walls are adorned with carvings of music, dance, nature, and food—all aspects of life treated as sacred. Festivals like Onam and Vishu and temple feasts like Vallasadya, bring communities together across caste and class lines, reminding everyone of the joy of sharing.

In this sense, Kerala's temple prasadams are not just culinary curiosities—they are living expressions of Hinduism's inclusive, life-affirming spirit. They show us that divinity can be tasted, not just worshipped; experienced, not merely imagined.

In Kerala, the temple kitchen is as sacred as the sanctum. The fire that cooks the offering is lit with mantras, the ingredients are purified, and the final dish is offered to the deity before being distributed among devotees. Each step is a ritual, each grain an offering, each bite an act of communion with the divine.

Nowhere else perhaps is the relationship between spirituality and sustenance as intimately woven as in Kerala's temples. Let us travel across the state to savour some of these divine delicacies—each a reflection of local culture, landscape, and devotion.

Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram: The Lord Who Cherishes Meni Thula Payasam

This is one of the rarest and most sacred offerings at the revered Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, holding a distinctive place among the naivedyams (foods offered to the deity) dedicated to the Lord. Prepared with meticulous care by the temple's traditional cooks, this exquisite payasam is made using the purest ingredients—fresh cow's milk, unrefined jaggery, ghee, and select aromatic spices—which together create a rich golden hue and an irresistibly divine fragrance. Offered to invoke the Lord's blessings for physical well-being and inner balance, "Meni Thula" symbolically denotes the protection and harmony of the body. The taste of this payasam is truly heavenly and mouth-watering, and devotees regard it as a sacred healing prasadam that bestows serenity, strength, and auspiciousness upon all who partake of it with devotion; this writer, too, is an ardent admirer of this majestic naivedyam (offering to the Lord).

For the devout, prasadam is not merely food; it is prasāda, divine grace in edible form. Every morsel, every spoonful, every offering carries the sanctity of devotion, the touch of ritual, and the soul of the temple. What makes Kerala's temples so fascinating is the astonishing diversity of their offerings—ranging from time-honoured dishes like palpayasam (milk pudding) to surprisingly unconventional ones like fish fry and toddy!

Kottarakkara Sree Mahaganapathy Temple: The Lord Who Loves Unniyappam

Lord Ganesha or Ganapathy, the remover of obstacles, is traditionally fond of sweets—and nowhere is this devotion sweeter than in Kottarakkara, near Kollam. The temple's Unniyappam(Sweet rice–banana fritters)—small, golden-brown rice flour balls fried in ghee with jaggery and banana—are legendary.

It is believed that Lord Ganapathy himself once expressed his desire for this delicacy to a devotee. Since then, Unniyappam has become the temple's signature prasadam. The preparation is done with great care: rice is soaked and ground, mixed with ripe banana pulp, jaggery syrup, and coconut bits, and then fried to a soft, fragrant perfection.

My experience is that the Unniyappam here carries a taste unlike any other—perhaps because it's infused with the warmth of devotion and the love of countless hands that have prepared and offered it in faith for generations.

Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple: The Milky Sweetness of Devotion

Nestled in the heart of Alappuzha district, the Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna Temple is renowned far and wide for its Palpayasam—a rich, creamy rice pudding made of milk, sugar, and rice, slow-cooked to perfection.

Legend says that Lord Krishna himself visits the temple every day to partake in this sweet dish. Devotees believe that the Palpayasam here has remained unchanged in taste and texture for centuries. It is prepared in huge bronze cauldrons over wood fires, filling the air with a heavenly aroma that seems to sanctify the entire temple.

The temple's Palpayasam has even become a metaphor for divine grace—sweet, sustaining, and eternal. For Keralites, no pilgrimage to Ambalappuzha is complete without this ambrosial blessing.

Sabarimala Ayyappan Temple: Aravana Payasam and Appam.

High up in the misty Western Ghats stands Sabarimala, one of the most famous pilgrimage centres in India. Millions undertake the arduous journey every year, and when they reach the sanctum of Lord Ayyappa, they are rewarded not just with spiritual fulfilment but also with two legendary offerings—Aravana Payasam and Appam.

Aravana Payasam, made of rice, jaggery, and ghee, is dense, dark, and deliciously rich. Its long shelf life and distinctive sweetness make it ideal for pilgrims who carry it home as a sacred gift. The Appam, deep-fried in ghee and crisp on the outside yet soft inside, complements it perfectly.

Together, these two prasadams symbolize the spiritual philosophy of Sabarimala—discipline, endurance, and sweetness after penance.

Parassinikadavu Sree Muthappan Temple: The God Who Eats Fish and Drinks Toddy

Travel north to Kannur, and you encounter one of Kerala's most striking examples of how spirituality transcends convention. The Parassinikadavu Sree Muthappan Temple, dedicated to the deity Muthappan—a unique blend of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu—is a place where ritual meets realism.

Here, devotees offer not laddus or payasam, but baked fish, grilled meat,



and toddy! Muthappan is believed to be a deity who lived among the common folk, hunting, fishing, and sharing food and drink with them. His worship reflects the earthy traditions of North Malabar, where bhakti blends seamlessly with folk culture.

During the temple's Theyyam performances, the deity himself is believed to partake of the offerings. For visitors, the experience is liberating—a reminder that Hinduism, at its core, embraces all aspects of life without judgment.

Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple: The Feast of a Thousand Flavours

If Ambalappuzha offers sweetness and Sabarimala austerity, Aranmula gives abundance. The Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple, on the banks of the Pamba River, is famed for its Vallasadya—a grand vegetarian feast offered to Lord Krishna in his role as the divine charioteer.

During the annual boat race season, teams of oarsmen (the Palliyodams) are treated to this magnificent spread as part of their devotion. The Vallasadya can include 64 dishes—ranging from avial, thoran, olan, and kichadi to payasam of different varieties. Each dish has symbolic meaning, representing gratitude, celebration, and community.

At Aranmula, prasadam is no mere offering—it's a cultural festival, a social celebration of life's richness and variety. Every leaf served becomes a canvas of Kerala's culinary and spiritual heritage.

Thiruvarpu Sri Krishna Temple: The Early Morning Usha Payasam

A few kilometres from Kottayam stands the ancient Thiruvarpu Sri Krishna Temple, known for its unusual ritual of serving Usha Payasam—a sweet rice pudding offered to Lord Krishna at dawn. It is believed to be the first temple in the entire world to open its doors each day, hours before sunrise, as the ever-hungry Lord here must be served without delay, the temple priests ensure that food offerings are never late.

The Usha Payasam, made of rice, jaggery, ghee, and coconut milk, is offered in the early morning hours, symbolizing the start of a new day filled with divine energy. The fragrance of the payasam is so enticing that devotees say it fills the entire village, awakening hearts as much as it wakes the sun.

My late father's ancestral home stood near the western side of this sacred temple, and my wife and I make it a point to visit the shrine every year. Such is the devotion and demand for this divine offering that if one books for the Usha Payasam prasadam today, it may take at least a decade before receiving it—a moving testimony to the temple's timeless traditions and the unwavering faith of its devotees.

Alathiyoor Hanuman Temple: Kuzhacha Avil for the Mighty Devotee

Near Tirur in Malappuram district lies the famous Alathiyoor Hanuman Temple, where the prasadam reflects the strength and humility of the mighty devotee himself—Kuzhacha Avil (flattened rice mixed with jaggery, ghee, and coconut).

This simple yet powerful dish is offered to Lord Hanuman with reverence, as it symbolizes energy and endurance. The preparation is rustic, rooted in the agrarian traditions of the region, yet deeply symbolic of devotion and service. Devotees believe that consuming this prasadam brings courage, concentration, and health—the very qualities that define Hanuman.

Every handful of Kuzhacha Avil here feels like a blessing for strength and determination in life's battles.

Munch Murugan Temple, Thalavady: When God Accepts Chocolates

In a delightful example of modern devotion, the Munch Murugan Temple near Thalavady in Alappuzha has replaced traditional offerings with chocolates! Devotees here offer Nestlé Munch bars to Lord Murugan, the youthful warrior god known for his playful energy.

The story goes that a child devotee once offered his favourite chocolate to the deity, and soon after, his wish was fulfilled. Since then, the practice spread rapidly, turning this small shrine into a symbol of innocent faith.

Here, the boundary between tradition and modernity melts sweetly. Children love the temple, and the simple act of offering chocolates reminds everyone that devotion can be joyful, spontaneous, and deliciously sweet.

How Hinduism Turns Life Itself into Worship

Hnduism, one of the oldest living faiths on earth, is not just a religion — it is a way of life that sees divinity pervading every aspect of existence. From the rustle of a leaf to the rhythm of the cosmos, from the act of breathing to the offering of food, life itself is worship. It teaches that God is not distant or abstract but present in every being, every element, and every action performed with awareness and reverence.

In Hindu thought, the world is not something to be renounced but celebrated. Festivals mark the changing seasons, deities embody the forces of nature, and daily rituals sanctify the simplest acts of living. Lighting a lamp, bathing in a river, offering flowers, or chanting a mantra — each becomes a spiritual act when performed with devotion. This vision transforms ordinary life into a sacred journey, where the material and spiritual blend seamlessly.

Why Temples Have Kitchens — The Ancient Science of Temple Food

In Hinduism, the temple kitchen is not merely a place for cooking — it is an extension of the sanctum itself. The fire (agni) in the temple kitchen is treated as sacred, often lit from a ritual lamp that symbolizes divine presence. Food prepared here is not meant for taste alone, but for transformation — turning ordinary ingredients into prasadam, blessed and purified by devotion.

Every step, from washing rice to stirring payasam, is done in silence or with chants of God's name. Ancient temple architecture even ensured that kitchens faced specific directions for optimal energy flow — a blend of vastu and agamic science. Moreover, temple food reflects balance — sattvic ingredients that nurture calmness and clarity. Yet Kerala's tradition goes further, integrating local produce, Ayurveda, and community sharing.

In essence, temple kitchens remind us that when food is offered in love and purity, it becomes a bridge between the human and the divine — a fragrant expression of living spirituality.

Through its temples, arts, cuisine, rituals, and philosophy, Hinduism celebrates life not as a fleeting moment, but as an eternal dance of the divine — where every act, when performed in awareness, becomes worship, and every moment, a step closer to the Infinite.

Paravur Mookambika Temple: The Ayurvedic Offering of Health

In the serene coastal town of North Paravur lies the Mookambika Temple, a smaller yet deeply revered shrine of Goddess Saraswati. What makes it distinctive is its evening prasadam—a warm cup of Kashayam, a traditional Ayurvedic herbal tonic.

This unique prasadam symbolizes wisdom and well-being. Prepared from medicinal herbs like tulsi, pepper, and dry ginger, it soothes the body and mind alike. Devotees say that it sharpens focus, calms nerves, and prepares one for study or meditation—apt for a temple dedicated to the goddess of knowledge.

It's perhaps the only temple in India where one receives not just blessings for the soul, but also a healing draught for the body.

Sherthala Sree Karthyayani Devi Temple: The Mystery of Thadi

In the temple town of Cherthala (Sherthala), the presiding goddess Karthyayani Devi is offered a unique prasadam called Thadi. This preparation, whose recipe is known only to the temple cooks, is a thick, mildly sweet, and grainy dish made from local ingredients like rice powder, coconut, and jaggery.

Thadi is believed to have divine origins, with legends saying that the goddess herself revealed the method of its preparation. It is offered to devotees in small portions, symbolizing humility and restraint—a reminder that in devotion, even the simplest food can become sacred.

A Sacred Culinary Map of Kerala

Traveling through these temples is like journeying through the cultural and culinary geography of Kerala. From the milky sweetness of Palpayasam to the spicy freedom of Muthappan's fish fry, from the herbal Kashayam of Paravur to the early morning Usha Payasam of Thiruvarpu, each temple reveals a different flavour of devotion.

Together, they form a sacred map of Kerala's inner life—where faith is not confined to rituals but is woven into daily existence. Each prasadam tells a story: of climate, of community, of the land's abundance, and of people's creativity.

Temples in Kerala are not only centres of worship; they are cultural laboratories where music, dance, architecture, and cuisine evolve together. The making of prasadam is itself an act of meditation—prepared with purity, served with humility, and received with reverence.

The Taste of the Divine

To taste the prasadam of a Kerala temple is to taste a piece of its soul. Every temple has its signature, every offering its story. Whether it's the golden Unniyappam of Kottarakkara, the Kuzhacha Avil of Alathiyoor, or the chocolate bars of Thalavady, the spirit remains the same—love expressed through food.

These are just a few shining examples. Across Kerala, countless small village temples maintain their own vazhipadus—unique offerings born from local legend, seasonal produce, and centuries of inherited devotion. Each has a flavour, a faith, and a folklore of its own.

In a world often divided by beliefs, these temples remind us that spirituality can be as simple as sharing what we love. Kerala's temple prasadams thus stand as fragrant, flavourful symbols of unity—binding faith, culture, and cuisine into one seamless experience.

After all, as the scriptures say, "Annam Brahma"—Food itself is Divine.

(The content of this article reflects the views of writer and contributor, not necessarily those of the publisher and editor. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only)



A Historic Landslide and a Political Rout



Nilabh Krishna

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), anchored by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), delivered a historic mandate in the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, securing an unprecedented 202 seats. This marks the alliance's second-best performance in the state, falling just four seats short of its 2010 record of 206. In sharp contrast, the Mahagathbandhan, led by Tejashwi Yadav, suffered a humiliating setback, reduced to only 35 seats.

Bihar voted in two phases—November 6 and 11—and the elections witnessed an extraordinary surge in public participation. The Election Commission reported a 65.08 per cent turnout in the first phase and an even higher 69.20 per cent in the second. With an overall turnout of 67.13 per cent, Bihar recorded the highest voter participation in its history. Such enthusiasm at the polling booth contributed significantly to the scale of the mandate.

The NDA's victory goes beyond the boundaries of state politics. Its impact will be felt in the national political landscape, particularly in shaping the future of coalition arrangements. The Mahagathbandhan's dismal performance could also influence the trajectory and credibility of the larger Indi Alliance. The Bihar verdict reaffirmed several political realities: Nitish Kumar continues to hold strong sway over the electorate, the Congress remains the weakest link in the Grand Alliance, and the AIMIM is slowly entrenching itself in select pockets. Although exit polls predicted an NDA advantage, the sheer margin—with both BJP and JD(U) registering robust gains—surpassed all expectations.

High Stakes Battle

The stakes in this election were exceptionally high. For Nitish Kumar, the long-time steward of JD(U), the contest doubled as an assessment of his 20-year governance legacy. For RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, it was a critical generational test—a bid to cement his own political identity. The broader electoral context has traditionally revolved around a bipolar contest between the RJD-Congress-Left alliance and the NDA. However, the 2025 election transformed into a triangular battle with the entry of Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj movement, which attempted to reset Bihar's political vocabulary but ultimately failed to make a significant mark.

The election was also crucial for the BJP, particularly after the 2024 Lok Sabha mandate left the party dependent on allies like Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu. Bihar served as the next major battleground after Maharashtra for the BJP to reaffirm its foothold in the Hindi heartland following setbacks in Uttar Pradesh. Strategically, the party views Bihar as a stepping stone to the East, with Prime Minister Modi's remark "Ganga Bihar se Bengal jaati hai" underscoring an eye on the 2026 West Bengal polls.

Mahila Shakti's Mandate

One of the most defining features of this election was the unprecedented role of women voters. For the first time in Bihar's electoral history, women not only outnumbered men at the polling stations but decisively shaped the political outcome. Female voter turnout soared to an impressive 71.6 per cent compared to 62.8 per cent for men, signaling a dramatic shift in a state long governed by caste-driven political mobilisation.

For Nitish Kumar, this surge vindicated two decades of women-centric policymaking. Initiatives such as free bicycles for schoolgirls, prohibition, expanded representation for women in local bodies, police reservations, the Jeevika self-help network, and the recent ₹10,000 cash transfer scheme for nearly 25 lakh women created deep reservoirs of goodwill. Across districts, women voters credited these interventions for tangible improvements in their economic and social lives. The NDA's narrative of women's empowerment and "strong daughters of Bihar" resonated naturally with these beneficiaries.

The Bihar verdict illustrates a harsh political reality--alliances cannot succeed when one partner behaves like a spectator. Rahul Gandhi's leadership vacuum left the Mahagathbandhan rudderless, disorganised, and unable to counter a well-prepared NDA. In the end, while many factors contributed to the collapse, Rahul Gandhi emerged as the foremost reason for the rout—a reminder that leadership, or the lack of it, can make or break an electoral coalition.

The Mahagathbandhan struggled to match this emotional and developmental connect. Tejashwi Yadav's last-minute offer of ₹30,000 per year in women's accounts failed to gain traction, especially since the NDA's benefits had already been disbursed well before polling. Once again, the alliance appeared reactive rather than visionary.

Few elections in the state have been influenced so profoundly by women voters. Their overwhelming turnout did not merely contribute to the process—they reshaped Bihar's political geography. In many ways, the 2025 verdict is as much a mandate for the NDA as it is a testament to the rising political agency of women in Bihar.

How the NDA Engineered a Historic Landslide

The massive electoral triumph of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the Bihar Assembly elections marks one of the most decisive political mandates the state has witnessed in recent years. Winning 202 of 243 seats, the alliance not only consolidated its dominance but also demonstrated how a well-crafted mix of governance narrative, caste arithmetic, welfare delivery, and coalition management can create a near-unbeatable electoral force. The sweep was not a sudden wave but the result of a meticulously calibrated campaign designed to cut across the state's most complex social and political fault lines.

A major pillar of the NDA's victory was its ability to stitch together a broad and inclusive caste coalition. Bihar's caste matrix is deeply layered, but the NDA succeeded in unifying upper castes, EBCs, OBCs, Dalits and Mahadalits under its umbrella. The BJP held its traditional fort among forward castes while expanding its appeal among youth and first-time voters. Nitish Kumar's JD(U), despite criticisms about his political longevity, remained a magnet for Kurmis and EBCs, a sizeable demographic whose consistent support becomes decisive in tight contests. Smaller allies like LJP (Ram Vilas) and HAM added further depth among Dalit communities. This rainbow coalition eroded the once-formidable MY (Muslim-Yadav) base of the RJD, diluting its relevance beyond a few pockets. The opposition's overreliance on identity politics gave the NDA the space it needed to portray itself as a more inclusive and future-oriented platform.

The NDA also succeeded in reviving and reinforcing the "Jungle Raj" narrative, reminding voters of the lawlessness and fear associated with Bihar's 1990s political era under Lalu Prasad Yadav. The campaign skillfully positioned the RJD's return as a potential return to instability, contrasting it with the NDA's pitch of governance, development and rule of law. For many voters, especially in semi-urban and rural belts, this comparison struck an emotional chord. It helped convert apprehension into a pro-NDA sentiment, particularly among communities who felt vulnerable during earlier periods of disorder. The fear of sliding backwards—combined with the desire for predictable governance—gave the NDA an ideological edge that the opposition failed to counter convincingly.

Another turning point in the election was the unprecedented mobilisation of women voters. Female turnout surpassed male turnout in several districts, aided by targeted outreach by the Election Commission and the NDA's sustained narrative of empowering women through welfare schemes. Initiatives such as cash transfers, subsidised utilities, and rural livelihood programs touched households directly, and women emerged as key

beneficiaries. In a state where male migration is high and women often run households single-handedly, schemes promising financial security and social dignity created a powerful emotional and material connect. For many women, voting for the NDA was not just political preference but an endorsement of a governance model that they felt had tangibly improved their lives. The combination of the “Mahila” and “EBC” vote—referred to by BJP strategists as the “ME factor”—proved to be the decisive edge in turning the mandate into a landslide.

Despite concerns that Nitish Kumar’s image had dimmed due to frequent political shifts and age-related criticisms, he remained a stabilising force in the coalition. His governance record in social indicators such as education, health, roads and rural infrastructure continued to resonate strongly among voters who associate him with Bihar’s transformation from the turmoil of the past. Moreover, the seat-sharing arrangement between the BJP and JD(U) was handled with rare precision, avoiding the internal friction that often plagues alliances. Both parties campaigned cohesively, projecting unity and complementing each other’s strengths rather than competing for the same vote blocs. This organisational discipline reflected maturity and ensured that the NDA cadre functioned seamlessly at the booth level.

Electoral management also played a key role. Learning from the 2020 elections, where a fragmented NDA had struggled in some regions, the alliance invested heavily in booth-level mobilisation, micro-messaging, and targeted outreach. The BJP’s digital campaign machinery, combined with JD(U)’s grassroots presence, created an effective ground network capable of translating narrative into votes. The opposition, in contrast, appeared disjointed. Tejashwi Yadav’s RJD did attempt to broaden its appeal by focusing on unemployment and economic issues, but the message lacked depth and consistency. The Congress performed poorly, mired in internal conflict and organisational weakness, making the Mahagathbandhan look more like an uneasy coalition than a credible alternative.

Welfare politics played a significant supporting role in shaping perceptions. While critics questioned the timing of schemes like the ₹10,000 cash transfer for women announced before the polls, the impact on the ground was undeniable. For voters who rarely see direct financial benefits, the move symbolised responsive governance, even if it raised eyebrows among opponents. To many households, particularly among the poorest, these transfers represented immediate relief in a difficult economic climate. The NDA’s broader messaging positioned welfare as empowerment rather than entitlement, allowing voters to connect the benefits they received with a larger governance vision.

Ultimately, the NDA’s landslide victory in Bihar is a product of narrative control, social engineering, and impeccable execution. The opposition’s failure to present a compelling leadership face, a unified ideological plank, or a trustworthy governance alternative only widened the NDA’s margin. For the BJP, the win strengthens its grip over the Hindi heartland, proving that a mix of welfare, nationalism, caste realignment and governance talk can produce formidable results. For the JD(U), it reaffirms that Nitish Kumar—despite political fatigue—is still indispensable in Bihar’s electoral landscape.

This mandate illustrates a defining political truth: in a state as socially diverse and politically fragmented as Bihar, electoral success belongs to those who can combine stability with aspiration, welfare with governance credibility, and caste alliances with a forward-looking narrative. The NDA did this with precision, and the results reflect a decisive endorsement of its political strategy and its promise for Bihar’s future.

Why Mahagathbandhan Collapsed

The crushing defeat of the Mahagathbandhan in the Bihar Assembly elections stands as a textbook case of political miscalculation, organisational disarray, and leadership paralysis. While the NDA’s strategy was sharp and disciplined, the opposition’s structure was fragile from the outset. The alliance—led nominally by Tejashwi Yadav but heavily influenced by the Congress high command—crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions, internal rifts, and a complete failure to read the evolving aspirations of Bihar’s electorate. At the centre of this collapse was Rahul Gandhi, whose lack of seriousness, poor campaign timing, and repeated missteps made him the single biggest liability for the opposition alliance.



BJP supporters celebrating the party's victory in Bihar

The Mahagathbandhan’s first major flaw was its inability to project a united and coherent leadership. Tejashwi Yadav, though energetic and articulate on issues like unemployment, was constrained by the overwhelming baggage of the RJD’s legacy. The constant reminder of “Jungle Raj” created a psychological barrier for many voters, preventing them from seeing him as a credible chief ministerial alternative. Instead of helping him overcome this image problem, the Congress—especially Rahul Gandhi—added another layer of instability. Rahul’s erratic presence, lack of message consistency, and poor articulation of Bihar’s issues made the coalition appear disjointed rather than strengthened. Instead of amplifying Tejashwi’s campaign, his involvement diluted it.

Rahul Gandhi’s role in the Mahagathbandhan’s defeat was particularly significant because it showcased the Congress’s inability to evolve with the political realities of 2025. Rahul failed to present himself as a serious campaigner. His rallies were limited, poorly timed, and lacked connection with local voters. His messaging remained tainted by national narratives that had little resonance in Bihar’s socio-political context. Worse, his vacation to Pachmarhi in the middle of the campaign was seen by voters as unforgivable negligence—confirming long-standing perceptions about his disinterest in electoral politics. When the leader of a major alliance partner appears absent and indifferent, it affects morale on the ground. Congress cadres were demotivated, and alliance workers questioned whether the party was even invested in winning.

Seat-distribution disagreements prior to the elections also weakened the coalition long before the polling began. The Congress demanded more seats than its organisational strength justified, leaving several constituencies contested by weak candidates. This overreach created fissures within the alliance, with RJD leaders privately expressing frustration at being forced to accommodate an ally that contributed little but demanded much. Once campaigning began, Congress candidates struggled without a support system, lacking both resources and grassroots networks. Many constituencies were effectively surrendered to the NDA even before voting began simply because the Congress failed to run an effective ground game.

Tejashwi Yadav’s campaign, despite moments of energy, was riddled with structural weaknesses. His strategy relied heavily on unemployment as a central theme, but the messaging was repetitive and failed to evolve. Voters were looking for a roadmap, not just criticism. The BJP and JD(U) successfully countered by reminding people of past instability and projecting themselves as protectors of governance and social order. In contrast, the Mahagathbandhan did not offer a convincing alternative governance model. Tejashwi’s manifesto promised government jobs in large numbers, but the lack of clear financial planning made the promises appear unrealistic.

What further crippled the opposition was its failure to match the NDA’s narrative on law and order, social welfare, and women’s empowerment. The NDA successfully mobilised women, EBCs, and Dalits with tangible benefits and a clear message of stability. The Mahagathbandhan underestimated the political agency of these groups, relying on caste arithmetic rather than addressing everyday socio-economic concerns. By the time they attempted last-minute course corrections, the NDA had already entrenched its messaging deeply among beneficiaries of government schemes.

Moreover, the Congress’s internal dysfunction became a public spectacle. Senior leaders gave disconnected statements, contradictory positions were taken on caste census and reservation policies, and no concerted effort was made to build a coherent ideological narrative. Rahul Gandhi’s speeches often appeared detached from Bihar’s realities, and his repeated attacks on institutions like the Election Commission backfired, making the alliance look like it was preparing excuses rather than presenting confidence. His presence at joint rallies did not add weight; instead, it overshadowed Tejashwi Yadav’s local appeal and reinforced the perception that the alliance lacked a stable centre of gravity.

The Mahagathbandhan also underestimated the scale of the NDA’s social engineering. While the opposition focused on traditional caste blocs, the NDA expanded its base through strategic outreach to women and economically backward communities. The opposition’s reliance on MY consolidation proved ineffective against a far larger and more diverse coalition that the NDA had stitched together. Congress’s inability to win back upper-caste or urban voters further shrank the alliance’s reach.

Ultimately, the Mahagathbandhan’s defeat was not caused by one factor alone—it was the result of a chain reaction of failures. But at the heart of this chain was the Congress leadership crisis, embodied in Rahul Gandhi’s lack of commitment and strategic clarity. His inconsistent presence, inadequate campaigning, and poor organisational oversight undermined the alliance’s credibility at a critical moment. Tejashwi Yadav, already burdened with his party’s historical baggage, could not compensate for the vacuum created by his national partner.

The Bihar verdict illustrates a harsh political reality— alliances cannot succeed when one partner behaves like a spectator. Rahul Gandhi’s leadership vacuum left the Mahagathbandhan rudderless, disorganised, and unable to counter a well-prepared NDA. In the end, while many factors contributed to the collapse, Rahul Gandhi emerged as the foremost reason for the rout—a reminder that leadership, or the lack of it, can make or break an electoral coalition.

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The Vote Gave Power

But Bihar Needs Vision



Rakesh Kumar

It is heartening to see that the people of Bihar have validated views expressed in the article, 'Between hope and cynicism…" published in last issue.

In choosing Nitish Kumar and ignoring the rising Jan Suraaj experiment led by Prashant Kishor, the people of Bihar have spoken with clarity. This mandate is not just a calculation of politics—it is a plea for stability, a conviction that amidst uncertainty, Nitish remains the last credible beacon of hope. This is not an ordinary mandate; it carries a moral weight. It is an act of faith, of patience, and of pragmatism merged into one.

But this faith is fragile. The people have not given Nitish another term merely to govern; they have entrusted him with the responsibility to finally deliver on the long-promised aspirations of development, dignity, and opportunity. Youth cannot wait endlessly for jobs and women want a safe and secure Bihar for their family. This MY factor has not defeated the other MY factor (Muslim Yadav) for patty freebies. Similarly, farmers cannot endure perpetual neglect, and its citizens cannot be asked to settle for half-measures. The expectations invested are larger than any electoral victory—they represent Bihar's longing for real change, a transformation that has eluded it for generations. Neither the pain of being called Pravasi (Bhaiyya) in their own country nor all the 20 million Bihari enjoy working outside Bihar. The overloaded trains to Bihar during Chhath puja are the evidence that physically they may live anywhere but their soul remains in Bihar.

The challenge is gigantic

For two centuries, Bihar has endured exploitation and misrule—from the colonial drain of wealth under the British Raj to the populist stagnation of later decades.

1. **Colonial Exploitation destroyed everything Magadh was known for (Late 18th – 1947)**
- The British Raj reduced Bihar to a resource colony.
- Indigo plantations, forced labour, and exploitative taxation drained the agrarian economy.
- Neglected Infrastructure development, left Bihar dependent and impoverished.
- Neglect of education coupled with recurring famine created a cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

2. **Independence brought Hope but little improvement (1947 – 1970s)**
- Independence brought optimism: Bihar was once considered a hub of intellectual and cultural richness, but political instability and corruption slowed progress.
- Migration of labour to other states began, as local opportunities dried up.

3. **The Era of caste becoming a source of conflict. (1980s – 1990s)**
- Bihar's politics shifted toward caste-based mobilization leading to violence by Maoist which led to rise of Ranbir sena.
- While this gave marginalized groups a political voice, governance weakened.
- Law and order deteriorated, infrastructure collapsed, and corruption became systemic.

4. **Lalu Prasad Yadav's Misrule (1990 – 2005)**
- Lalu's tenure symbolized populism over development.
- Railways under his leadership led to personal gains leading to criminal cases, but Bihar itself stagnated.
- Institutions eroded, crime rose, and the state's image declined sharply.
- The phrase "Jungle Raj" became synonymous with Bihar's governance.

5. **formation of Jharkhand as an independent state in 2010.**
- It stripped Bihar of natural resources.
- Revenue loss on account of lost royalty from minerals.

The people have not given Nitish another term merely to govern; they have entrusted him with the responsibility to finally deliver on the long-promised aspirations of development, dignity, and opportunity. Youth cannot wait endlessly for jobs and women want a safe and secure Bihar for their family.

Definitely all this demoralised people, but could not defeat them. The time has come to break this cycle and reclaim Bihar's rightful place as a cradle of culture, intellect, and progress.

From Critique to Confrontation: The Opposition's Distrust Politics.

Post election, the opposition seems inclined toward a confrontational, negative approach rather than constructive engagement. Instead of presenting a coherent alternative roadmap for Bihar, they are resorting to constant allegations—questioning Nitish Kumar's mandate, casting doubts on the credibility of the Election Commission. Attempting to create an atmosphere of distrust around the electoral process. It may energize their political base, but they risk undermining public confidence in democratic institutions and distracting attention from Bihar's pressing development challenges. By choosing accusation over accountability and disruption over dialogue, the opposition is hoping to create a situation similar to Bangladesh and Nepal. They have resources not only inside India but outside as well. Bihar being a border state makes the matter more challenging.

Silver lining in the dark clouds

Despite these challenges, the people of Bihar have consistently fought for dignity and representation. from the time of Chanakya uprooting the exploitative Nand Vansh, Bihar/ Magadh has fought against injustice. from uprising of 1857, to Champaran's satyagraha, to JP's student movement —Bihar has consistently sought transformation. Each struggle reflected the people's refusal to accept exploitation, injustice, or stagnation.

If Nitish is able to carry forward that legacy, channelling Bihar's historic spirit of resistance into a vision of inclusive development and social renewal the defeated forces have nothing more to do then licking their own wounds.

What Nitish Must Do Next?

From Kamraj midday meal in schools of Tamil Nadu, to recent turn arounds in Gujrat, MP and UP. it is clear that people of India respond to good governance, financial support, education, improved infrastructure and better health services. Patna has every resource which Hyderabad had, before Chandrababu Naidu took charge as CM. Today if Hyderabad competes with Bengaluru, Pune and Gurugram, it is just because of vision, commitment and the persistence. As soon as law and order improves, Bahubali's are tamed and corruption is dealt with deterrent, educated Bihari will draw attention of the global investors. The government has to;

Invest in Education & Skills of public at large.
- o Revive Bihar as a land of learning (Nalanda, Vikram Shila).
- o Modernize educational infrastructure to deliver digital literacy, vocational training, and research.

Agricultural Transformation to reap the benefit of vast river network.
- Introduce modern farming techniques, irrigation systems, and agro-industries.
- Support farmers with fair pricing, storage facilities, and access to markets.
- Make Bihar a hub for food processing and exports, despite being a leader in Makhana (lotus seed) most of the



NDA supporters celebrating NDA's victory in Bihar, at Patna party's office

profit is reaped by exporters and big traders only.

Industrial & Infrastructure Growth in harmony with local skills and resources.

- Build industries in energy, textiles, and technology to create jobs.
- Expand roads, railways, waterways and digital connectivity to integrate Bihar with national and global markets.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and small businesses.

Healthcare & Social Welfare

- Strengthen primary healthcare in villages, with telemedicine and mobile clinics.
- Address malnutrition, maternal health, and sanitation to uplift the poorest.
- Ensure welfare schemes reach citizens without corruption or delay.

The Call Bihar Awaits: A Slogan to Spark a Statewide Mindset Shift.

Bihar today needs a transformative mass campaign—something as emotionally resonant and mindset-shifting as “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan” given by Lal Bahadur Shastri. It motivated the nation crushed by 1962 defeat. The state’s challenges are not just administrative but deeply psychological, rooted in years of migration, limited opportunities, and a collective loss of confidence. A powerful, unifying slogan and movement could ignite pride, responsibility, and participation among citizens, especially the youth. Bihar needs a call that speaks to its strengths, rebuilds self-belief, and inspires people to see themselves as active partners in progress, not passive recipients of governance. Only such a campaign can create the cultural shift required for lasting transformation.

It is very much viable as NDA has successfully launched many such campaigns starting from Abki Baar Modi Sarkar, Beti Bachao Beti Badhao, Double engine ki sarkar, Swachh Bharat and Make in India etc.

Creating inspiring Youth leaders.

Biggest challenge is not just building roads or expanding welfare schemes—it is rebuilding trust and reconnecting governance with its young citizens. Bihar’s youth have lived between aspiration and exodus, watching opportunity slip through despite their potential remained unquestionable. Young voices must be placed at the forefront of its outreach, communication, and policy engagement.

Cultural youth icons like Maithili Thakur and a rising generation of young legislators can become transformative partners. Maithili, with her immense popularity, cultural influence, and deep connection to Bihar’s heritage, embodies the confidence and creativity of the state’s youth. Her voice carries credibility that no government advertisement or press conference can replicate. By involving figures like her in awareness campaigns, digital outreach, skilling drives, and cultural programmes, the state can turn governance into an inspiring experience.

Bihar’s young legislators, understand the language, struggles, and aspirations of a generation that communicates more through smartphones than political rallies. These MLAs can bridge the long-standing gap between government schemes and beneficiaries. Whether it is promoting entrepreneurship, education, health initiatives, or rural employment, these young leaders can give policies the one thing they often lack: resonance.

Bihar has the talent, the ideas, and a rising sense of self-belief. A collaborative model is needed so that the government partners with young cultural icons and emerging political leaders to build a narrative of possibility. If the state can harness these voices, it will not just implement schemes—it will ignite a mission. And missions, unlike schemes, transform societies. It will train them for future leadership roles.

Bihar’s Talent Abroad: Learning from UP’s Employment Strategy.

Bihar’s youth unemployment is one of its most pressing challenges, and managing it effectively requires both domestic job creation and strategic exploitation of overseas employment opportunities. Uttar Pradesh, for instance, has actively encouraged skill development programs aligned with international labour demand, particularly in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe, helping young workers find higher-paying opportunities abroad while also ensuring they return with skills and remittances that benefit the state economy.

Bihar can adopt a similar approach, but it has to overcome a unique hurdle. The state has a large proportion of semi-urban and rural youth with limited formal education and vocational skills. Without targeted skill mapping, certification programs, and placement support, simply sending youth abroad risks exploitation or irregular employment. However, if Bihar invests in industry-aligned skill centres, partnerships with foreign employers, and legal safeguards for migrant workers, it can turn this challenge into a significant opportunity. Gujarat did it by engaging with private training institutes, universities, and IT training centres to upskill youth in coding, software support, and business English.

Biggest challenge is not just building roads or expanding welfare schemes—it is rebuilding trust and reconnecting governance with its young citizens. Bihar’s youth have lived between aspiration and exodus, watching opportunity slip through despite their potential remained unquestionable. Young voices must be placed at the forefront of its outreach, communication, and policy engagement.

Combining overseas employment strategies with local entrepreneurship, MSME support, and public-private skill programs could reduce the pressure on migration. Done correctly, Bihar can replicate UP’s success.

Bihar’s Next Big Bet: Building Industrial Powerhouses.

Transforming its economic landscape by building industrial hubs akin to Noida or Gurugram needs translating recent momentum into concrete infrastructure. The state has assembled a land bank of 3,000 acres and is offering “plug and play” industrial sheds. With its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) projected to reach ₹10.97 lakh crore in 2025–26, and average annual growth over 11% in recent years, Bihar is increasingly becoming investor friendly. Still the state’s industrial output remains underdeveloped: manufacturing contributes only around 5.7% of total workers according to recent labour-force data. By creating well-planned industrial corridors — tapping into agro-processing, textiles, IT, and renewable energy — Bihar can retain its youth by attracting long-term investments. The ongoing Gaya Integrated Manufacturing Cluster, a 1,670-acre greenfield smart city project linked to the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, already shows that the vision is coming to life. If these pockets are backed by strong governance, skilled labour, and solid infrastructure — housing, transport, power — they can rewrite Bihar's growth story.

Flowing Forward: Reviving Bihar’s Historic Ganga Transport Network.

The National Waterways project (NW-1: Haldia to Allahabad) already includes the Ganga stretch in Bihar, offering a platform for revival. If Bihar invests in dredging, terminals, and logistics hubs, the state could cut freight costs by up to 30%, reduce pressure on roads, and revive river-based commerce that once powered its economy. Moreover, this can generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs, from vessel operation to logistics management, while positioning Bihar as a key trade corridor in Eastern India.

This is not just another chance—it is the last chance to prove that Bihar’s faith was not misplaced.

This is the moment for Nitish Kumar to rise above political arithmetic which led to changing loyalties. It is time to embrace visionary leadership. He must act with urgency, rebuild trust in institutions, and lay down a roadmap that outlasts his tenure. Roads, schools, hospitals, industries—these are not just projects, they are promises of dignity. If he falters, the disappointment will be historic; if he succeeds, Bihar can finally reclaim its destiny as a land of progress and pride. It will be a big boost to India 2047.

(The content of this article reflects the views of writer and contributor, not necessarily those of the publisher and editor. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only)



MODI-NITISH TSUNAMI

A MASSIVE MANDATE FOR THE NDA IN BIHAR

The historic landslide victory of the NDA reflects the will of the people of Bihar and will significantly influence national politics. It is strengthening Prime Minister Modi's leadership and the coalition. Nitish Kumar's JDU has re-emerged strongly, reaffirming his role within the NDA.



Manoj Dubey

Nitish Kumar became the Chief Minister in 2005, when Bihar was struggling with poor infrastructure, weak law and order, and a low literacy rate. Large-scale migration was taking place due to rising crime under the previous RJD government. Nitish Kumar prioritised development, governance reforms, and social welfare. His major achievement was restoring law and order, marked by a sharp decline in crime and more effective policing. Roads, bridges, and rural connectivity improved substantially through Mukhyamantri Gram Sampark Yojana and other infrastructure projects. Educational reforms such as free bicycles and uniforms for girls increased school attendance and boosted female literacy.

Health facilities expanded through new primary health centres. The Jal-Jeevan-Haryali Abhiyan and Saat Nishchay schemes focused on water conservation, sanitation, and employment. Bihar's power supply saw a major turnaround, achieving near-universal electrification. Socially, Nitish Kumar emphasized women's empowerment by reserving 50% of seats for women in local bodies and 35% in government jobs. Despite economic challenges, Bihar's growth rate often exceeded the national average during his tenure. Overall, his government transformed Bihar's image from a 'backward' state to one striving for inclusive development and good governance. There have been no corruption allegations against him, and he consistently avoided dynastic politics. He remains the most popular leader in Bihar. However, despite many achievements, the state still faces serious challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and migration.

Election Strategy and Campaign

Political parties raised a mix of development, social justice, and governance-related issues to attract voters. The ruling NDA highlighted two decades of achievements, including better roads, electricity, women's empowerment, law and order, and welfare schemes. They projected Nitish Kumar as a symbol of honesty, stability, and good governance. The direct transfer of Rs 10,000 to over one crore women proved to be a master stroke of the NDA government. Amicable seat-sharing and cohesion within the alliance were the strengths of the NDA. The BJP's strong organizational network and Prime Minister Modi's popularity further energized the alliance. Amit Shah, recognized for his strategic acumen, effectively shaped the NDA's approach. Prime Minister Modi, Amit Shah, J. P. Nadda, and Nitish Kumar, along with the Chief Ministers of the BJP-ruled states, campaigned vigorously. All five alliance partners worked as a seamless team and convinced the voters of their manifesto promises.

The opposition MGB, led by RJD and Congress, focused on unemployment, rising prices, corruption, migration, youth dissatisfaction, and anti-incumbency. Tejaswi Yadav promised a government job for one person in every family and criticized the government for failing to create employment despite years in power. Although the MGB's grassroots outreach and social media campaign were energetic, the alliance suffered from a lack of unity and lingering doubts about RJD's past governance and law and order record.

Both alliances made big promises in their manifestos to woo the voters. Overall, the Bihar election debate revolved around the contrast between 'development and stability' promised by the NDA and 'employment and change' demanded by the opposition.

Bihar's Condition

The state continues to battle several long-standing problems that hinder its development. Poverty and unemployment remain widespread, especially among the youth, due to limited industrialization and inadequate job opportunities. Agriculture, the main livelihood, suffers from inadequate irrigation, outdated techniques, and frequent floods or droughts. Education and healthcare systems face a shortage of quality teachers, doctors, and quality infrastructure, leading to poor human development indicators. Caste-based politics and corruption often disrupt governance and hinder fair resource distribution.

Bihar needs a multi-pronged approach. Promoting industries and small enterprises will generate jobs and reduce migration. This can be done by improving infrastructure and better law and order. Modernizing agriculture through improved irrigation, training, and market access will boost rural incomes. Investing in quality education, skill development, and digital literacy will empower youth. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, especially in rural areas, is crucial for a healthier population. Investment is vital for overall progress. Finally, promoting good governance, transparency, and social harmony will ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Bihar will have to transform its challenges into opportunities for long-term growth.



Nitish Kumar taking oath as the Chief Minister of the state for the 10th time at Gandhi Maidan in Bihar.

Record Voting

Elections were held in two phases on November 6 and 11, 2025, across 243 assembly constituencies. A record 67.13% of 74.5 million eligible voters participated, determining the outcome for 2616 candidates. Women voters, with 71.6%, outnumbered men voters at 62.8%. This indicated strong voter engagement and applied pressure on all major parties.

Results

Counting of votes was done on the 14th, and the results were announced by late evening. The National Democratic Alliance secured a landslide victory with 46.6% of the vote share and won 202 of 243 assembly constituencies (ACs) in the state. The BJP, JDU, LJP(R), HAM, and RLM won 89, 85, 19, 5, and 4 seats, respectively. The Mahagathbandhan (MGB) secured only 35 seats with 37.9% of the votes. The RJD, Congress, CPI(ML), CPI(M), and IIP secured 25, 6, 2, 1, and 1 seats, respectively.



Samrat Chaudhary taking oath as Deputy Chief Minister at Gandhi Maidan in Bihar.



Vijay Sinha taking oath as Deputy Chief Minister at Gandhi Maidan in Bihar

NDA's Triumph

- After two Lok Sabha majorities in 2014 and 2019, the BJP slipped below the halfway mark in the 2024 elections. This was dubbed as the beginning of the BJP's and, more importantly, Narendra Modi's decline. But the party has buried the ghost of the 2024 defeat and bounced back successfully.
- The seat distribution among the alliance partners was frictionless.
- The campaign was perfect, at the macro level, it focused on the empowerment of women, infrastructure and development, and the creation of employment.
- Pre-poll welfare measures, including Rs 10,000 to over one crore women, an increase in old-age pension, allowance to 12th pass students for two years, etc.
- Elections were contested under Nitish Kumar's leadership, who is the most popular leader in Bihar with no corruption allegations and a clean image.
- Reminding the people of 'Jungle Raj' under the RJD rule from 1990 to 2005, the majority of voters have seen it and would not want its repetition.
- MY (Muslim-Yadav) was reframed as Mahila-Yuva, and policies were drafted accordingly.
- Strong direct outreach by Modi and Nitish Kumar helped them connect with voters.

MGB's Decimation

The alliance, led by the RJD, contested the election in an unplanned and inconsistent manner from the beginning.

- The RJD and Congress faced a friendly fight in several constituencies due to disagreements over seat-sharing. This internal rivalry weakened the alliance's electoral coordination.
- Tejaswi Yadav led the campaign alone, appearing overconfident and taking Yadav voters for granted. Even his family members were not of any help to him. The alliance focused heavily on unemployment and corruption allegations but failed to counter the NDA's welfare schemes. The campaign lacked message, discipline and consistency. Personal remarks on Nitish Kumar's health were not appreciated.
- Despite Tejaswi's energetic campaign, a section of voters viewed MGB as inexperienced, especially compared to NDA's established image of 'stability and welfare delivery'.
- NDA successfully revived concerns about law and order during Lalu Yadav's era. This message of fear of the return of 'Jungle Raj' resonated strongly with the voters.
- There was no cohesion in the alliance partner. VIP of Mukesh Sahni was promised the post of Deputy CM, annoying the Congress, but the party did not win any seats.
- The promise of one government job per family, announced in desperation, to counter Rs 10,000 to women by the NDA, was totally impossible.
- Unlike the NDA's disciplined booth-level machinery, the MGB suffered from poor coordination, weak candidate selection, and a lack of grassroots mobilization.
- Women voters form a decisive block in Bihar, leaned strongly towards NDA due to welfare schemes and perceived safety. MGB lacked a women-centric pitch.
- Congress performed very poorly, hampered by organizational weaknesses and a lack of leadership. Rahul Gandhi's attack on SIR, his allegations of 'Vote Chori', and comments on PM Modi and the Chhath festival were unpopular. There was no coordination between Rahul Gandhi and Tejaswi Yadav. The campaign of Congress was ineffective, and the party became a liability to the alliance. Rahul Gandhi has done more harm than good to Congress and the alliance.

Prashant Kishore's Jan Suraj Party secured only 3.3% vote share but no seats. A good consultant or strategist may not be a successful politician. He worked very hard and focused on the important issues of jobs, migration, and industry. His party earned a lot of limelight but not enough votes. He selected good candidates to contest, but voters were not convinced. Unfortunately, Bihar and Biharis may not have been ready for the message yet, although his campaign did strike a chord with young people. If he has to be relevant in Bihar, he needs to continue his political work for the next five years.

Election Commission of India (ECI)

The ECI conducted the SIR and made a fair electoral roll. No violence was reported during the polling, and no re-polls were conducted. We should commend the ECI for organizing these elections smoothly. Unfortunately, some losing parties accuse the ECI of irregularities to help the ruling party. This is a disrespect to the mandate of the people. If the parties have the evidence, they can always approach the court. We remember the 2010 Bihar assembly election results, the NDA won 206 seats, 4 more than this time. The Election Commissioner was then appointed by the Congress-led UPA government.

Prashant Kishore

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Muslim Politics

The traditional MY (Muslim-Yadav) social equation has not worked for the RJD. Muslims were upset when MGB promised Mukesh Sahni's VIP the Deputy CM's post. The Mallah community only has about 3% population, against 18% Muslims in the state. AIMIM has emerged with the highest number of Muslim MLAs in Bihar, all 5 from the Seemanchal region. This makes Bihar the first state after Telangana where the AIMIM has the highest number of Muslim MLAs. This has happened when the overall number of Muslim MLAs in Bihar has dropped to a historic low of just 11, with an all-time high share from Seemanchal. This information shows that the representation of Muslims is increasingly becoming ghettoised as they are failing to get elected from areas where they do not have a sizable presence. And in a region where they have the numbers to get their peers elected, they prefer a Muslim party.

Conclusion

The historic landslide victory of the NDA reflects the will of the people of Bihar and will significantly influence national politics. It is strengthening Prime Minister Modi's leadership and the coalition. Nitish Kumar's JDU has re-emerged strongly, reaffirming his role within the NDA. Welfare-driven politics remains highly effective, and the BJP/NDA may increasingly adopt such schemes nationally, especially targeting women, backward classes, and other demographic groups. This win will shape upcoming state elections and potentially the next general election. For investors and policymakers, a strong NDA government lowers political risk in the short term. The magnitude of the NDA win may encourage other regional parties to align more closely with the NDA, viewing it as a winning alliance. It also diminishes the opposition, especially Congress, reducing their ability to offer a credible alternative at the national level unless they reconsider their strategy. This victory will enable the ruling coalition to secure all 10 Rajya Sabha seats in the upcoming biennial elections in the state, throughout the remaining term of the Modi government. The new state government under Nitish Kumar needs to fulfil the promises made to the people of Bihar. The rapid development of the state will contribute to a developed India by 2047.

(The content of this article reflects the views of writer and contributor, not necessarily those of the publisher and editor. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts



Broken Town Planning Cadre in the Age of Flooded Cities

The creation of a Town Planning Cadre—that is, the service structure and recruitment of professional planners—is not constitutionally mandated; it must rest on a statutory basis through State laws, service rules, or administrative orders.

■ Pallavi Prakash Jha ■ Kaushal Kishore

The ghost of 1988 flood revisited Gurdaspur and other 20 districts of Punjab. After 37 odd years, ripe and old people remembered the trepidation to that nightmare. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in the western Himalayas remained next to Punjab in this list. The Prime Minister visited flood hit states like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand to announce the relief package worth ₹4,300 crores. The flood and its destruction are being reported from certain other states as well. In this assembly elections of Bihar, flood is one of major issues, in addition to draught that affected at least 10 districts. Large scale destructive flood in different parts of the nation was an issue in Monsoon Session of the Parliament. The disaster management teams of states and centre have been trying hard to save the precious lives. Life in the relief camp has been a reality in most of the flooded regions. Haphazard urban sprawl with uncontrolled use of concrete in structures, pavers and blocked drainage systems are the crises in town planning becoming a part of the public discourse as a ritual these days. The failure of planning norms and Master Plans in its implementation at various levels as reflected from the repetition of destructive floods is an outcome of the lack of critical attention.

The 74th Constitutional Amendment (1992) mandates the establishment of planning bodies such as the District Planning Committee (DPC) under Article 243ZD and the Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) under Article 243ZE. It also empowers Municipal bodies, through Article 243W read with the Twelfth Schedule, to perform functions like "urban planning including town planning" and to implement town planning schemes, local area plans, and development plans as assigned by State legislation. Thus, there are constitutional mandates for planning institutions and functions.

However, the creation of a Town Planning Cadre—that is, the service structure and recruitment of professional planners—is not constitutionally mandated; it must rest on a statutory basis through State laws, service rules, or administrative orders.

The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has introduced the Special Assistance to the provinces for Capital Investment scheme with an allocation of ₹6,000 crores in 2022–23 and ₹15,000 crores in 2023–24. Within this scheme, the 'Urban Reforms' component is overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Many flagship government programs involving crores of expenditure—such as the AMRUT GIS-based Master Plans, Local Area Plans (LAPs), Town Planning Schemes (TPS), and the River City Alliance's Urban River Management Plans (RCA-URMPs)—demand robust town planning capacities at every level of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), state departments, and central agencies. These initiatives require professional planners equipped with modern GIS tools and multi-disciplinary expertise to guide India's rapidly urbanizing landscape.



Yet the recruitment frameworks being recently notified for filling permanent town planning positions reveals critical shortcomings that undermine both the profession and the very goals of urban development.

Broken Hierarchy of Posts: While multiple levels of posts—Chief Town Planner, Town Planner, Associate Town Planner, and Executive Town Planner—have long been created on the paper, recruitment has been limited only to the Assistant Town Planners, for example as in Jharkhand. Senior positions remain vacant across the states, depriving the ULBs of leadership and leaving long-term planning projects without required oversight and expertise.

Narrow Eligibility Criteria in Multi-Disciplinary Field: The eligibility conditions need to recognize graduates in Town Planning, Architecture, Civil Engineering with a Master's in Planning, also including professionals from allied disciplines such as Geography, Economics, Sociology and Statistics as recognized by the Institute of Town Planners, India.

Even within the recognized streams, the importance of Architecture graduates with planning specialization and those with GIS and Remote Sensing expertise cannot be overstated. In today's era of rapidly advancing technology and the dawn of AI-driven urban analytics, GIS skills are no longer optional—they are indispensable. By narrowing the pool, the recruitment ignores the very diversity that modern planning requires.

Lack of Transparency in Contractual Hiring: The contractual positions for the planners are being advertised on several recognised government portals. In most of them transparency is missing. There are certain unanswered questions such as how are these candidates shortlisted, interviewed, and selected? In absence of the publicly available selection data, such processes risk undermining credibility and fairness.

State of Contractual Town Planners: Another critical question here is why experienced contractual planners, who have already been serving at state level and central government projects in the contractual roles for years, are not being absorbed into permanent roles through lateral entry mechanisms. The senior bureaucrats from other services are often laterally inducted into ministries on the basis of domain experience. Why, then, is the same principle not applied to the urban planners, who have worked tirelessly on government programs like AMRUT master plans, LAPs, TPS, PMAY-U, NMCG programs and the urban river management plans?

Ignoring this experienced talent pool is especially damaging at a juncture when the cities face floods and unhealthy, unclean, and haphazard growth jeopardising the water bodies and biodiversity, while the urban fringe expands into villages, tribal areas, and forest zones, threatening both social and ecological balance.

Selection Process detached from reality: Several recruitments in the past like in the case of Assistant Town Planner advertisement issued in 2020—overlooked weightage for work experience. As a result, a fresh graduate could be ranked at par with, or even above, a planner who has spent years delivering critical projects for the government. This disconnect between experience and evaluation ultimately weakens the very schemes that depend on specialized expertise—such as GIS-based planning, river rejuvenation, urban housing and integrated transport—placing their outcomes at serious risk. As such the selection process seems to be detached from reality.

Undermining the Value of Higher Education: In fact, town planning is a profession that demands both academic rigor and practical exposure. If marks and weightage for evaluation criteria are not aligned with Town Planning qualifications and experience in the field, then what is the purpose of investing time, money and efforts into the higher education in planning? If the advanced study and years of experience are ignored or demeaned, the recruitment rules risk discouraging young professionals from entering this vital field altogether.

In essence, the urban planning is not just another administrative function—it is the foundation for sustainable, equitable and resilient cities. Unless recruitment policies are reformed to recognize the multi-disciplinary backgrounds, reward experience, qualifications and ensure transparency, India's ambitious urban development agenda may falter under the weight of its own flawed systems. The ritual of raising finger towards the town planners cannot settle the repetition of floods so long as these burning issues are not addressed appropriately and timely.

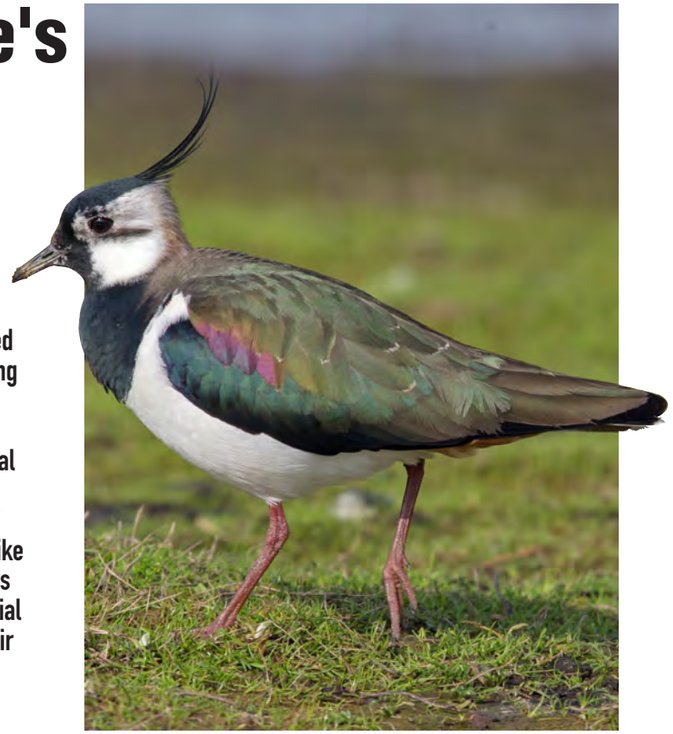
(Pallavi Prakash Jha is an Architect and Town Planner and Kaushal Kishore is an Activist, Author and Columnist)

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Lapwing: Nature's silent warning

"Where science fails, the lapwing warns first."

The lapwing is no ordinary bird, but a silent sentinel of nature. Farmers have long been used to predict rainfall, floods, or famine by observing the number, location, and timing of its eggs. Science also recognizes that such birds are "ecosystem indicators," signaling environmental changes in advance. Today, their habitats are under threat due to urbanization and the use of chemicals. If we ignore the warnings of birds like the lapwing, our vulnerability to future disasters will decrease even further. Therefore, it is crucial that we protect them and listen seriously to their messages.





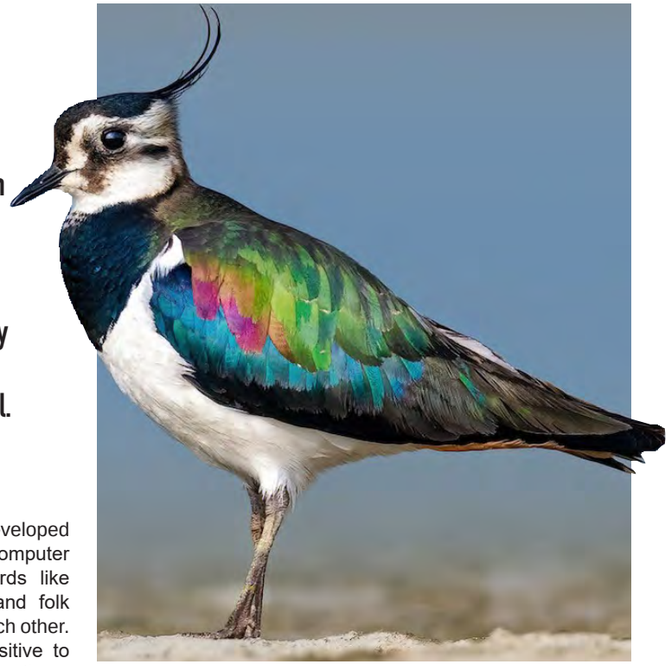
Dr. Satyavan Saurabh

Rural life in India has been in deep dialogue with nature for centuries. Farms, weather, and animals together influence both a farmer's daily routine and future. Amidst all this, the lapwing is a small bird, seemingly insignificant to the naked eye, but in the memories of farmers and folklore, it is considered a sentinel, an accurate weather forecaster. It is not just a bird, but a medium of communication between earth and sky, a silent messenger that foretells both crisis and prosperity.

Rural experiences show that the lapwing's behavior provides important clues for determining the weather and agricultural direction. If it lays four eggs, it is believed to bring good rainfall for four months. When it lays eggs at a height, people believe that there will be more rainfall than usual. If it is forced to lay eggs on a roof or tree, it is considered a sign of a severe flood. However, if it does not lay eggs, it is the most frightening situation, as people consider it a harbinger of famine. Farmers say that the fields where the lapwing lays eggs are never empty; they are sure to yield crops. Thus, this bird not only provides clues related to rainfall and weather, but also serves as a warning of extreme conditions such as fertility and famine.

Another folk belief is that the dead body of the lapwing is never seen anywhere except in Kurukshetra. Whether this is fact or symbolic, this belief makes it a symbol of the protection of life and existence. A farmer who sees the lapwing understands that this bird protects his soil, crops, and future. This is why the lapwing is also mentioned in rural folk songs and proverbs. It is one of those creatures whose activities have been relied upon for

The most important question today is conservation. If birds like the lapwing disappear from our midst, not only will popular belief be shattered, but a vital part of the environmental warning system will also be lost. To conserve them, we must reduce excessive pesticide use in fields, protect natural habitats, and conserve water sources. This will not only be the conservation of a bird, but also a safeguard for our own future and survival.



generations.

Now the question arises: when science has developed sophisticated tools like satellites, radar, and computer models for weather forecasting, what role do birds like the lapwing have? The answer is that science and folk experience complement each other, not contradict each other. Scientifically, birds like the lapwing are highly sensitive to environmental changes. Air humidity, temperature fluctuations, ground moisture, and water table rises and falls—all of these impact their behavior. This is why, in scientific parlance, they are called "ecosystem indicators." That is, creatures that, through their behavior, provide us with timely information about environmental changes.

Our ancestors, without resorting to the tools of science, understood these signals empirically and capitalized on them. For centuries, farmers have monitored the movements of the lapwing. If it delayed its egg-laying season, farmers would become alert. If it left the ground and moved to higher ground, they would become aware of increased rainfall and potential flooding. Thus, what folk experience has revealed is actually rooted in scientific reasoning. The only difference is that farmers expressed these signals in their own language and symbols.

Today, as we are immersed in the glare of urbanization and industrialization, the biggest crisis is that we have almost stopped listening to this silent language of nature. Urban dwellers often don't notice when a bird's habits are changing, when its numbers are dwindling, or when its voice is changing. This carelessness leaves us helpless in the face of sudden disasters. If we take the messages of the lapwing and other birds seriously, our capacity for disaster management could increase exponentially.

It is also said of the lapwing that this bird never leaves a field empty. Its laying eggs there is a symbol of reassurance for farmers. This belief itself holds a profound message: nature never disappoints humans, provided we respect it. But when we break nature's rules and tamper with it, even its guardian birds are forced to change their signals. This is why, at times, we can foresee a situation like a flood or famine in advance through the lapwing's behavior.

The importance of this bird isn't limited to rural life. It reminds us that every form of life is intertwined with the vast fabric of the environment. When a tiny bird can project a vision of the future through its eggs, it also serves as a warning to us not to tamper with this system. Science also tells us that even the smallest changes in the environment are first felt by birds and small creatures. If we listen to them in time, we can avoid major tragedies.

From an editorial perspective, it's appropriate to say that the lapwing is no ordinary bird. It teaches us that knowledge comes not only from laboratories and satellites, but also from farms and the behavior of animals. While modern science is based on data and technology, the lapwing offers warnings based on instinct and natural connection. Building a bridge between the two is the greatest need today.

The most important question today is conservation. If birds like the lapwing disappear from our midst, not only will popular belief be shattered, but a vital part of the environmental warning system will also be lost. To conserve them, we must reduce excessive pesticide use in fields, protect natural habitats, and conserve water sources. This will not only be the conservation of a bird, but also a safeguard for our own future and survival.

The conclusion is that while science relies on data and machines, birds like the lapwing provide instinctive warnings. Science may be late in its warning, but the lapwing warns in advance. Our greatest challenge is to listen to this silent communication and act accordingly. If we ignore this call, not only will the lapwing disappear, but the message it conveys will also be lost from our lives.

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Ganga in crisis

Pollution and health risks rise in Prayagraj's sacred rivers

A new study has found that the Ganga and Yamuna rivers in Prayagraj are dangerously polluted. The research links this contamination to untreated sewage, industrial waste, and agricultural runoff, posing growing health risks for the millions who depend on these rivers.

■ Amita Bhaduri

The Ganga, worshipped for centuries as India's lifeline, is now fighting a different kind of battle, not against drying up, but against pollution. A recent study titled, "Holistic analysis of Ganga basin water quality: a statistical approach with WQI, HMCI, HMQI and HRI indices," was conducted in the Prayagraj region, where the Ganga meets the Yamuna. It has revealed worrying levels of contamination that put both people and the river's ecosystem at risk.

A closer look at the rivers in Prayagraj

The study led by Dipti Tiwari and team examined water quality across eight locations along a 55-kilometre stretch of the Ganga and Yamuna between 2021 and 2022. Researchers chose sites that capture the full range of influences on the rivers from the spiritually significant Sangam, to areas affected by urban discharges (Sobatiyabagh), agricultural runoff (Draupadi Ghat), and cremation ghats (Rasoolabad and Daraganj).

Over 120 water samples were collected and analysed using a mix of conventional and advanced methods such as the Water Quality Index (WQI), Heavy Metal Contamination Index (HMCI), Heavy Metal Quality Index (HMQI), and Human Health Risk Index (HRI). Together, these offered a complete picture of the river's condition.

The findings reveal a troubling reality. The Ganga, once a symbol of purity, is now burdened with waste from cities, factories, and farmlands. What flows through Prayagraj today carries the story of how rapid development has outpaced environmental care.



Prayagraj's Triveni Sangam (Image: Juggadery, Wikimedia Commons)



Map showing all sampling sites

High concentrations of potassium, sodium, phosphate, and nitrate were found near agricultural areas such as Draupadi Ghat (S2) and Sangam (S5), pointing to the role of fertilisers and pesticides. These nutrients not only fuel eutrophication but also interact chemically with metals, altering their solubility and mobility. Cremation and ritual practices: Sites like Rasoolabad and Chatnag are used extensively for cremation and religious ceremonies. Human remains, ashes, and ceremonial substances often rich in organic and inorganic materials add to the biological and chemical load of the rivers.

What the data reveals about water quality

Water Quality Index: The WQI ratings showed a grim scenario: while some sites like Sangam and Rasoolabad were deemed to have "excellent" or "good" water quality, others such as Draupadi Ghat (S2) and Yamuna's Arail Kachar (S8) registered WQI values exceeding 50, categorising them as "poor". These ratings signal water that is "threatened or impaired", unsuitable for drinking, risky for bathing, and hazardous for aquatic life.

Heavy Metal Contamination and Quality Index (HMCI & HMQI): Across all eight sites, HMCI values exceeded 700, far surpassing the safety threshold of 100. Particularly high contamination was noted at S4 (Daraganj) and S8 (Yamuna), where industrial discharge and untreated sewage were rampant. The HMQI results corroborated this, showing heavy metal loadings, especially of lead (Pb) and cadmium (Cd), well beyond WHO and BIS safety limits. These metals are known for their carcinogenic and neurotoxic properties.

Health Risk Index (HRI): The health implications are staggering. Calculations of daily metal intake and oral reference doses revealed HRI values >1 for both Pb and Cd at multiple sites—marking them as hazardous for chronic consumption. The toxicity of these metals manifests in neurological disorders, kidney failure, reproductive harm, and even cancer. As a consequence, millions living along these banks, drawing water directly for household use, face a silent but growing public health crisis.

Pollution sources: Tracing the footprints

Urban discharge and open defecation: Only 42.8% of Prayagraj's 208 MLD sewage is treated before entering the river. The rest, alongside solid waste, carcasses, and untreated effluents, flows directly into the water. Draupadi Ghat and Daraganj proximal to high-density settlements—emerged as pollution hotspots.

Industrial effluents: Prayagraj hosts over 10,000 registered industrial units, ranging from textiles and chemicals to rubber and metal works. Sites like Sobatiyabagh (S1) and Daraganj (S4), surrounded by such industries, showed elevated levels of lead, cadmium, and chromium, indicating direct contamination via discharge or runoff.

Agricultural runoff: High concentrations of potassium, sodium, phosphate, and nitrate were found near agricultural areas such as Draupadi Ghat (S2) and Sangam (S5), pointing to the role of fertilisers and pesticides. These nutrients not only fuel eutrophication but also interact chemically with metals, altering their solubility and mobility.

Cremation and ritual practices: Sites like Rasoolabad and Chatnag are used extensively for cremation and religious ceremonies. Human remains, ashes, and ceremonial substances often rich in organic and inorganic materials add to the biological and chemical load of the rivers.

What land and satellite data show

Using Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) data from ESRI Sentinel-2 imagery, the study found clear spatial patterns. Areas with higher urban and industrial land cover recorded greater levels of electrical conductivity, dissolved solids, and heavy metals. In contrast, ghats with forested or green buffers, such as Chatnag (S7), showed better resilience and cleaner water — acting as natural filters. This insight highlights why land-use planning and green zones are essential for protecting river ecosystems.

Statistical deep-dive: PCA and cluster analysis

The study used Principal Component

Parameter	BIS Standard	Worst Value Observed	Location
TDS	500 mg/L	603 mg/L	S2 (Draupadi Ghat)
DO	≥5 mg/L	5.25 mg/L	S2
EC	300 µS/cm	872.2 µS/cm	S2
Alkalinity	200 mg/L	269.5 mg/L	S2
Fecal Coliform	0 MPN	4.9×10^3 MPN/100ml	S2
Lead (Pb)	0.01 mg/L	Exceeds limit at S4, S8	Daraganj, Arail Kachar
Cadmium (Cd)	0.003 mg/L	Exceeds limit at S4, S8	Daraganj, Arail Kachar

Analysis (PCA) and Cluster Analysis to decode pollution patterns. PCA isolated two main pollutant profiles one dominated by ionic contaminants (TDS, EC, Cl−, SO□²□), and the other by biological oxygen demand and sodium loadings. Cluster Analysis divided the sites into three groups:

Cluster 1: (S1, S3, S4, S7) – Urban/ industrial impact

Cluster 2: (S5, S6) – Agricultural influence

Cluster 3: (S2, S8) – Mixed and extreme pollution scenarios

This classification allows for targeted interventions depending on the dominant pressure at each cluster.

What's in the water? Parameter-wise breakdown

Results were compared with drinking water standards established by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

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Implications

The findings offer both a warning and a roadmap. The Ganga and Yamuna in Prayagraj are not just religious and cultural icons, they are public health concerns, biodiversity hotspots, and economic engines. Water quality degradation has serious consequences for health, the environment, and livelihoods. Poor water quality can lead to a rise in health risk index (HRI) values, which in the future can result in an increase of kidney disease, neurological disorders, and cancer. It also harms the environment by causing eutrophication, reducing dissolved oxygen, and increasing metal toxicity, all of which disrupt aquatic life. Lastly, it threatens the livelihoods of people who depend on rivers, such as fishers, farmers, and pilgrims, who face declining returns and increasing risks.

The findings offer both a warning and a roadmap. The Ganga and Yamuna in Prayagraj are not just religious and cultural icons, they are public health concerns, biodiversity hotspots, and economic engines. Water quality degradation has serious consequences for health, the environment, and livelihoods. Poor water quality can lead to a rise in health risk index (HRI) values, which in the future can result in an increase of kidney disease, neurological disorders, and cancer.

Recommendations

Strengthen sewage treatment: Increase STP coverage to 100%, ensure compliance with CPCB discharge standards.

Regulate industry: Enforce Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) in industrial hotspots like Sobatiyabagh and Daraganj.

Green buffer zones: Protect and expand riparian vegetation buffers to filter runoff.

Land use zoning: Align LULC-based zoning with pollution potential to control future expansion of high-risk activities.

Public health monitoring: Set up regular screening of communities along S2 and S8 for heavy metal exposure.

Behavioural interventions: Promote eco-sensitive ritual practices, including cremation and idol immersion alternatives.



Restoring the sacred

This study results consistently showed that water quality at several sites is far below desirable standards. At Draupadi Ghat (S2) and Arail Kachar (S8), WQI values of 51.97 and 66.98 indicated poor quality. Heavy metal contamination was severe, with HMCI values of 806.01 at Sobatiya Bagh (S1) and 981.33 at Arail Kachar (S8), reflecting high levels of lead (Pb) and cadmium (Cd). The HRI confirmed elevated health risks at these sites.

High concentrations of sodium and chloride further revealed pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage, industrial effluents, and improper waste disposal, alongside religious activities such as mass bathing during Kumbh Mela. These stressors threaten aquatic biodiversity, human health, and sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and tourism that depend on the rivers.

The findings underscore the urgent need for remediation, stricter regulation of industrial effluents, and continuous monitoring of water quality. Water treatment for drinking and irrigation may be necessary to protect communities. Without timely action, the cultural, ecological, and economic lifelines of the Ganga and Yamuna will remain at risk.

A river's cry for care

The story of the Ganga and Yamuna in Prayagraj is not just about data points and indices—it is about what we choose to see and what we choose to ignore. Behind every number lies a mother fetching water she no longer trusts, a child bathing in a river that once symbolised purity, and an ecosystem slowly gasping for breath.

Restoring these rivers is not only an act of environmental repair; it is an act of remembering who we are. The Ganga has always been more than a waterway—it has been a mirror reflecting the health of our civilization. When that reflection turns murky, it asks us to look inward and ask: how did a river worshipped as sacred come to carry the weight of our neglect? The time for care and renewal is now, before reverence becomes memory and the river's flow, a whisper of what it once was.

(https://www.indiawaterportal.org/rivers-and-lakes/rivers/ganga-in-crisis-pollution-and-health-risks-rise-in-prayagrajs-sacred-rivers)

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File photo of Surinder Koli.

SC Acquits Surendra Koli In Nithari Killings After 16 Years On Death Row

The Bench then notes in para 12, "The second pillar concerns the alleged discoveries and recoveries under Section 27 of the Evidence Act. The High Court found that no contemporaneous disclosure memo was proved. The narrative in the later-prepared seizure memorandum conflicted with the remand papers, which recorded a joint disclosure by both accused. The evidence also showed that the police and members of the public already knew that bones and articles lay in the open strip and that excavation had begun before the petitioner arrived. "

■ **Adv. Sanjeev Sirohi**

We all saw how the Apex Court in a robust, rational, remarkable and recent 26-page judgment titled Surendra Kohli vs The State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr in Curative Petition Diary No.49297 of 2025 and cited in Neutral Citation No.: 2025 INSC 1308 that was pronounced as recently as on 11.11.2025 has acquitted Surendra Koli of the lone case in which he was sentenced to death in a murder and rape case of a 15-year-old girl that pertained to the Nithari killings of 2005-06 in Noida. This leading case first came to huge prominence with the discovery of skeletal remains of children from a drain that was located just behind businessman Mohinder Singh Pandher's house in Noida in 2006. It was pointed out by the Apex Court that Koli's statement recorded under Section 164 of the CrPC "was recorded after about 60 days of uninterrupted police custody without meaningful legal aid".

It was pointed out by the Apex Court that, "The scene was not secured before excavation (of enclosed gallery behind house D5 at Sector 31 in Noida) began, the alleged disclosure was not contemporaneously recorded, the remand papers carried contradictory versions, and the petitioner was kept in prolonged custody without a timely, court-directed medical examination." It was pointed out by the top court that from December 29, 2006 to January 14, 2007, Koli was in police custody for 60 days but was not medically examined to rule out the possibility of physical torture. Later, Koli had retracted his confession and alleged that he was tortured in police custody. The Apex Court thus as we see did not treat his confession as voluntary or reliable.

It must be laid bare that Surendra Koli was earlier sentenced to death by the Trial Court and was affirmed by the Apex Court in 2011. Koli's review petition was dismissed in 2014. But in 2015, the Allahabad High Court had commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. What also must be noted is that in 12 companion cases built on the same confession and recoveries, the Allahabad High Court had acquitted him in 2023.

The Apex Court also upheld those acquittals on July 30. We thus see that same evidence yet opposite outcomes. On November 14, a curative Bench led by Hon'ble Mr Justice Vikram Nath observed that, "Two set of outcomes resting on the same evidentiary foundation cannot lawfully coexist." It held that such discord "imperils the integrity of adjudication". The Bench thus ruled that intervention was a constitutional duty, not discretion.

At the very outset, this learned, laudable, landmark, logical and latest judgment authored by Hon'ble Mr Justice Vikram Nath for a Bench of the Apex Court comprising of CJI Hon'ble Mr Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, Hon'ble Mr Justice Surya Kant and himself sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 1 that, "Delay condoned. This curative petition presents an exceptional case for the exercise of our curative jurisdiction. The petitioner shows that a manifest miscarriage of justice endures and that two sets of outcomes resting on the same evidentiary foundation cannot lawfully coexist. When final orders of this Court speak with discordant voices on an identical record, the integrity of adjudication is imperilled, and public confidence is shaken. In such a situation, intervention ex debito justitiae is not an act of discretion but a constitutional duty. We therefore entertain this petition to preserve the purity of this Court's process and to vindicate the rule of law."

While shedding light on curative jurisdiction, the Bench enunciates in para 2 observing that, "The curative jurisdiction of this Court exists to prevent abuse of process and to cure a gross miscarriage of justice. In Rupa Ashok Hurra v. Ashok Hurra (2002) 4 SCC 388, the Constitution Bench of this Court recognised that this power flows from the inherent authority of this Court to do complete justice and to protect the integrity of its judgments. However, the constitutional source of this power is coherent and limited. Article 129 of the Constitution of India (hereinafter "The Constitution") declares this Court to be a court of record with inherent powers to preserve the purity of its process. Article 142 of the Constitution empowers this Court to make such orders as are necessary for doing complete justice. Article 137 of the Constitution recognises the power of review and marks its limits. Article 145 of the Constitution of India authorises the framing of rules. Order XLVIII of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, titled "Curative Petition" prescribes the filing requirements, the certification by a Senior Advocate, and the preliminary circulation to a bench as indicated in Rupa Ashok Hurra (Supra). These provisions together sustain a narrow jurisdiction that may be invoked only after review has failed to correct a grave defect."

Be it noted, the Bench notes in para 5 that, "This curative petition arises from Criminal Appeal No. 2227 of 2010 decided on 15.02.2011, by which this Court affirmed the petitioner's conviction and sentence of death in the Rimpa Haldar case. The review petition against this order was dismissed on 28.10.2014 in Review Petition (Crl.) No. 395 of 2014. On 28.01.2015, the High Court commuted the death sentence to imprisonment for life. In twelve companion prosecutions founded on the same confession and recoveries, the High Court acquitted the petitioner on 16.10.2023, and on 30.07.2025, this Court dismissed the State appeals and affirmed those acquittals. The present petition is brought on the footing that irreconcilable outcomes have arisen on an identical evidentiary framework and that a manifest miscarriage of justice remains despite the dismissal of review."

To put things in perspective, the Bench envisages in para 6 while elaborating on the background of the case stating that, "6.1. Surendra Koli, the petitioner herein, was employed as a domestic help at House D5, Sector 31, Noida. The house was owned and occupied by one Moninder Singh Pandher, the employer of the petitioner. From early 2005 residents of Nithari began reporting that women and children were missing. In March 2005, children in the neighbourhood playing cricket noticed a human hand in the narrow open strip between Houses D5 and D6 and the Jal Board residential quarters. On 03.12.2006, a human hand was again noticed during drain cleaning on the main road in front of the row of bungalows D1 to D6.

6.2. On 29.12.2006, the local police took the petitioner into custody in connection with FIR No. 838 of 2006 concerning the disappearance of Payal, one of the victims. On the same day Pandher was detained outside D5. When the police and panch witnesses reached D5, a large crowd had already gathered and digging was underway in the open strip between D5, D6 and the Jal Board compound. Multiple skulls and bones with footwear and clothes were recovered from that strip on 29.12.2006. A knife was recovered from beneath the terrace water tank of D5. On 31.12.2006 further human remains and articles were taken out from the covered storm water drain in front of Houses D1 to D6. Multiple FIRs were registered on 30.12.2006 for different missing persons.

6.3. On 09.01.2007, the State transferred investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946. A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory at Agra examined D5 between 04.01.2007 and 06.01.2007. Teams from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Central Forensic Science Laboratory assisted the CBI in searches at and around D5 through mid-January 2007.

6.4. Thirteen trials followed. Each proceeded on a common evidentiary foundation that comprised the alleged disclosure leading to recoveries and the confessional statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). The present matter concerns the case relating to Rimpa Haldar, a minor who went missing in 2005."

It is worth noting that the Bench notes in para 8 about the other twelve cases that, "8.1. Between 2010 and 2021, the petitioner was tried and convicted in twelve additional capital cases arising from the same circumstances in the Nithari area at House No. D-5, Sector-31, Noida. These trials proceeded

on the same evidentiary foundation, namely the confession recorded under Section 164 of the CrPC and alleged discoveries and recoveries said to have been made at the petitioner's instance under Section 27 of the Evidence Act. In two of these cases the co-accused, Moninder Singh Pandher, was also convicted by the Trial Court.

8.2. By a set of judgments dated 16.10.2023, the High Court allowed the petitioner's appeals in all twelve matters and acquitted the Petitioner. The High Court held that the confession under Section 164 CrPC could not be treated as voluntary or reliable. It recorded that the petitioner had been kept in uninterrupted police custody for about sixty days before the confession was recorded, that there was no meaningful or private access to legal aid, that the recording Magistrate did not express the clear satisfaction on voluntariness that Section 164 CrPC requires, and that the Investigating Officer was brought into the room at the outset and kept immediately available outside, which undermined voluntariness. The High Court noted repeated assertions within the confession of tutoring and references to torture and concluded that the bar under Section 24 of the Evidence Act was attracted.



8.3. The High Court further held that the alleged discoveries and recoveries under Section 27 of the Evidence Act were inadmissible and unreliable. The prosecution did not prove any contemporaneous disclosure statement. There were material contradictions between the panchnama narrative and the remand papers, including a reference to a joint disclosure by both accused that could not stand with the later version that the petitioner alone led to discovery. The evidence showed that members of the public and the police were already aware of body parts at the recovery site and that excavation had commenced before the petitioner arrived. The principal site lay in an open strip behind D-5 and D-6 and in the drain on the main road, which was not under the petitioner's exclusive domain. These features negated the essential element of discovery by the accused.

8.4. On the forensic record, the High Court found an absence of corroboration. Searches of D-5 by expert teams did not yield human bloodstains or human remains that would be consistent with multiple homicides and dismemberment inside the house. There was no incriminating trace in the kitchen or on utensils. A semen stain on a quilt did not match with the petitioner or the identified victims. The DNA work undertaken by the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics linked certain remains to families of missing persons but did not connect the petitioner to the actus reus within D-5. The High Court therefore held that the circumstantial chain was incomplete.

8.5. The High Court also found that the recoveries of a knife and an axe did not advance the prosecution case. Neither implement bore human blood or tissue. The prosecution did not establish that the cut marks on bones, if any, were consistent with those implements or that these specific implements were used. There was no independent proof that the petitioner possessed the skill or capability to carry out the precise acts alleged with those implements. Taken with the absence of incriminating traces within D-5, the supposed weapon link failed. The High Court criticised the investigation as botched and shifting, and recorded that material avenues, including the organ-trade angle noted by a committee of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, were not probed. In two of the twelve matters the High Court also acquitted Moninder Singh Pandher.

8.6. The State preferred appeals against the acquittals. By an order dated 30.07.2025, a three-Judge Bench of this Court dismissed those appeals. The acquittals recorded by the High Court on 16.10.2023 have therefore attained finality."

Do note, the Bench then notes in para 9 that, "In view of the foregoing narrative, the petitioner has shown grounds that lie within the narrow compass of the curative jurisdiction recognised in Rupa Ashok Hurra (Supra). What is asserted is not a plea for reappraisal of evidence but a fundamental defect that impeaches the integrity of the adjudicatory process. The petitioner points to outcomes of this Court that cannot be reconciled on the same evidentiary substratum and to defects that bear directly on voluntariness, admissibility and investigative fairness. Such inconsistency engages the guarantees of equality and due process under Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution and warrants consideration ex debito justitiae. The petition carries the averments and certification required by Order XLVIII of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013 and has been placed before us in accordance with the prescribed procedure. We are therefore satisfied that the threshold for invoking the curative jurisdiction is met and we proceed to examine the merits."

Do further note, the Bench then also notes in para 11 that, "We accordingly test the present conviction against the legal defects that led the High Court, and thereafter this Court, to discard the common evidentiary pillars in the companion matters. Those defects were not factual peculiarities confined to other victims. They were structural infirmities inherent in the mode of proof relied upon across the Nithari prosecutions. The petitioner's Section 164 CrPC statement was recorded after about sixty days of uninterrupted police custody without meaningful legal aid. The recording Magistrate did not record the clear, unqualified satisfaction that the statute demands. The Investigating Officer's proximity to the recording process, including his presence at the outset and his ready access, thereafter, compromised the environment of voluntariness. The text of the statement itself repeatedly adverted to tutoring and to prior coercion. These features attracted the bar under Section 24 of the Evidence Act and rendered the confession inadmissible as a matter of law. We find no principled basis on which the same statement can be treated as voluntary and reliable in this case when it has been judicially discredited in all others."

Adding more to it, the Bench then notes in para 12 that, "The second pillar concerns the alleged discoveries and recoveries under Section 27 of the Evidence Act. The High Court found that no contemporaneous disclosure memo was proved. The narrative in the later-prepared seizure memorandum conflicted with the remand papers, which recorded a joint disclosure by both accused. The evidence also showed that the police and members of the public already knew that bones and articles lay in the open strip and that excavation had begun before the petitioner arrived. These features negate the essential element of discovery by the accused and reduce the exercise to a seizure from an already known place. Those findings were upheld when the State's appeals were dismissed on 30.07.2025. The present conviction rests on the same recovery architecture. Once the disclosure is not contemporaneously proved, once prior knowledge is established, and once contradictions infect the record, Section 27 of the Evidence Act ceases to operate. The legal conclusion cannot change from case to case when the premise is identical."

It would be instructive to note that the Bench then hastens to add in para 13 noting that, "The forensic analysis reinforces that conclusion. Extensive searches of D-5 by expert teams did not yield human bloodstains, remains, or transfer patterns consistent with multiple homicides and dismemberment inside the house. The DNA work undertaken by the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics in Hyderabad linked certain remains to families of missing persons. That science aided only identification. It did not prove authorship of homicide by the petitioner within D-5. Knives and an axe were exhibited without proof of blood, tissue, or hair consistent with use in the alleged crimes. There was no credible chain of custody or expert testimony establishing that a domestic help with no medical training could perform the precise dismemberment described. These gaps were central to the acquittals in the twelve cases. They are equally present here."

It cannot be lost sight of that the Bench points out in para 14 that, "We add that the High Court's critique of the investigation was not rhetorical excess. It was anchored in record-based deficiencies that bear directly on fairness and reliability. The failure to secure prompt and independent medical documentation during the long spell of police custody, the perfunctory legal-aid arrangement at the moment of confession, the presence and influence of the Investigating Officer during the Section 164 procedure, the contradictions in remand and recovery papers, and the neglect of material avenues of inquiry, including the organ-trade angle flagged by a governmental committee, cumulatively undermine confidence in the prosecution's case theory. We find ourselves in agreement with that assessment. The same infirmities, viewed through the lens of the present record, cannot yield a different legal conclusion."



Most rationally, the Bench then underscores in para 15 postulating that, "We must emphasize that Article 21 of the Constitution insists on a fair, just and reasonable procedure. That insistence is at its acutest where capital punishment is imposed. Although the petitioner's death sentence in this case was commuted to imprisonment for life on 28.01.2015, the conviction continues to carry the gravest consequences. To allow a conviction to stand on evidentiary basis that this Court has since rejected as involuntary or inadmissible in the very same fact-matrix offends Article 21 of the Constitution. It also violates Article 14 of the Constitution, since like cases must be treated alike. Arbitrary disparity in outcomes on an identical record is inimical to equality before the law. The curative jurisdiction exists to prevent precisely such anomalies from hardening into precedent."

Most remarkably, the Bench propounds in para 16 holding that, "We are mindful of finality. We are equally mindful that curative relief is exceptional and proceeds on narrow grounds. The present case crosses that exacting threshold. The confession that anchored the conviction is legally tainted on grounds already accepted by this Court in the companion matters. The supposed discoveries do not satisfy the statutory preconditions for admissibility. The forensic and investigative record does not supply the missing links. Once those keystones are removed, the circumstantial chain no longer holds. The conviction cannot be sustained without departing from principles that now stand authoritatively applied to indistinguishable prosecutions arising out of the same occurrence. For these reasons, we hold that the petitioner has established a fundamental defect that impeaches the integrity of the adjudicatory process and that relief is warranted ex debito justitiae within the parameters of Rupa Ashok Hurra (Supra)."

As a corollary, the Bench then holds in para 19 that, "For the reasons recorded above, the curative petition is allowed." In a nutshell, we thus see that the petitioner Surender Koli is thus released from prison. He is acquitted of all the charges. We thus see as pointed out in para 21 that, "Criminal Appeal No. 2227 of 2010 is allowed. The judgment dated 13.02.2009 in Sessions Trial No. 611 of 2007 passed by the Additional Sessions Judge, Ghaziabad, and the judgment dated 11.09.2009 passed by the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad in Criminal Confirmation/Appeal No. 1475 of 2009 are set aside." Very rightly so!

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Polygamy Must Now Be Completely And Permanently Banned And Abolished

I have just no hesitation in saying that polygamy is a deep rooted social evil which must be banned completely from India and is the root cause of poverty in India as those who are not much educated marry many especially in tribal areas where it is permitted and among Muslims who are not financially sound as they fail to realize its serious repercussions. It merits just no reiteration that India cannot afford now the continuation of polygamy anymore for anyone and there can be just no gainsaying that no one can ever be placed above the nation under any circumstances as that would jeopardize our national interests which we cannot afford at any cost. It is the national interests that should be placed paramount and not anything else.

■ Adv Sanjeev Sirohi

My very best friend Sageer Khan 32 years ago most strongly batted in Sagar in Madhya Pradesh for complete banning and so also for complete abolition of polygamy in India and said that polygamy and more children are the root cause of backwardness of Muslims which cannot be ever justified under any circumstances! Sageer said that when polygamy and polyandry was abolished for Hindus and related religions in 1955 then why in 1993 polygamy not abolished for Muslims which is root cause of over population and so also of economic backwardness of Muslims and so also an incentive for people of other religions to convert to marry more than one? Most disgracefully and most astoundingly even 32 years later we still see that leave alone uniform civil code being enacted as recommended by Apex Court and so many High Courts time and again even polygamy has not been abolished uniformly even as end of 2025 has begun with month of November running!

I have just no hesitation in saying that polygamy is a deep rooted social evil which must be banned completely from India and is the root cause of poverty in India as those who are not much educated marry many especially in tribal areas where it is permitted and among Muslims who are not financially sound as they fail to realize its serious repercussions. It merits just no reiteration that India cannot afford now the continuation of polygamy anymore for anyone and there can be just no gainsaying that no one can ever be placed above the nation under any circumstances as that would jeopardize our national interests which we cannot afford at any cost. It is the national interests that should be placed paramount and not anything else.

What is most frustrating to note is that even though India has crossed China in becoming most populated country in the world still Centre is most dead determined not to ever permanently and completely abolish polygamy in India without any distinction on ground of religion! To be most brutally honest, it was Sageer Khan who first ingrained in me that polygamy is the root cause of extreme poverty and complete backwardness of Muslims and was most vocal proponent of complete and permanent abolition of polygamy all across India! There can be just no gainsaying that population will definitely be hugely controlled if polygamy is completely abolished which is the crying need of the hour also as India is the most populated country in the world now beating China also for which we definitely cannot ever feel proud of!

It was good to note that PM Narendra Modi is lauding and applauding Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami for ushering uniform or common civil code as he calls and so also abolition of polygamy and banning conversion also! But why all this cannot be done in Centre also for whole nation? When even Muslim countries like Turkey and Tunisia have long ago abolished polygamy and so also there are lot of restrictions in Pakistan and Bangladesh also on polygamy then why in India we see polygamy having a free run among Muslims in India and still not being abolished as it is a social evil which definitely cannot be ever justified under any circumstances! Even Assam Cabinet very recently on November 9, 2025 has approved a new law banning polygamy and anyone found guilty of indulging in polygamy will face seven years imprisonment. Why can't it be banned nationally now?

Arif Mohammad Khan who is Governor of Bihar just like my very best friend Sageer Khan also most vehemently supports the complete abolition of polygamy in India. He very rightly said after the abolition of triple talaq verdict most sagaciously in 2017 that, "The Supreme Court has used the word 'unconstitutional' to describe triple talaq in a majority judgment. The door is now open and other provisions like polygamy can be challenged on the basis of its being arbitrary and unilateral. In fact my understanding is that like triple talaq, the unrestrained right to polygamy also finds no sanction in the Quran. It was an Arab practice and every Arab practice is not part of Islam. This judgment has opened the door, it is the beginning of a journey not the end and now the women will not stop at anything less than genuine equality of status as guaranteed by the Constitution of India."

None other than the PM Narendra Modi himself since last about 12 years has been constantly batting most staunchly for uniform or common civil code but on ground we see most distressingly that leave alone uniform or common civil code not even polygamy has been completely abolished in India which is only serving to increase the population of country further which is most detrimental for our long term national interests and is doing no good to our nation! Who is stopping Centre from complete abolition of social evil like polygamy? Why Centre has failed to catch the bull by the horns on this front?

I have just no hesitation in saying that polygamy is a deep rooted social evil which must be banned completely from India and is the root cause of poverty in India as those who are not much educated marry many especially in tribal areas where it is permitted and among Muslims who are not financially sound as they fail to realize its serious repercussions. It merits just no reiteration that India cannot afford now the continuation of polygamy anymore for anyone and there can be just no gainsaying that no one can ever be placed above the nation under any circumstances as that would jeopardize our national interests which we cannot afford at any cost. It is the national interests that should be placed paramount and not anything else.

My very best friend Sageer Khan in Mackronia locality in Sagar in Madhya Pradesh way back in 1993 who was the first to educate me on this as pointed out earlier also was at pains to point out that polygamy is a deep rooted evil among Muslims especially but he said that we see no PM taking any bold initiative in this regard to permanently weed out polygamy which is the root cause of increasing population and social backwardness of Muslims. Sageer Khan also pointed out that, "Polygamy is the root cause of conversion in India and this only increases hatred among different religions as for Hindus it was banned just some years after independence and religions associated with Hinduism like Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism among others which I term as the worst discrimination perpetrated on Hindus who inspite of being in majority have to go to jail if they marry more than once even though prior to 1955 Hindus had no restriction whatsoever among men or woman to marry more than one and there was no upper limit but for us no PM has ever dared to do so which is the crying need of the hour and I very strongly feel that no PM in future also can ever dare to do so even though it has been abolished in many Islamic countries fearing anger and strong backlash among Muslims which just cannot be justified and Muslims must accept like Hindus and related religions its abolition rather volunteer themselves for its permanent and complete abolition and banning as it will help in controlling population and poverty both"!

Now we are in November 2025 and why still we see no PM in last 79 years of independence taking any initiative of any kind to root out this menace of polygamy for once and all is beyond my comprehension even though triple talaq has been outlawed? How prophetic true the words of my very best friend Sageer Khan have turned out to be! This despite the unpalatable truth that India has just recently overtaken China in population and yet Centre is most shamelessly, senselessly and stupidly not willing to take any serious action on this score.

We see so many prominent feminist and Islamic scholars also like Arif Mohammad Khan who is Governor of Kerala and who most stoutly opposes polygamy and demands its total



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abolition in our country due to its huge implications for gender inequality which only subjugates women and fosters deepest discontent among people of different religions as I have pointed out earlier also. He minced just no words to point out unequivocally that, "If Triple Talaq can be challenged, then unrestrained right to Polygamy should also be challenged. Nowhere in Quran does it allow anyone to practice such oppressive customs. This Constitution doesn't permit any positive discrimination on the basis of religion." It is truly incomprehensible that why then do we see that there is no meaningful initiative being taken in this regard by Centre to abolish it completely? What is Centre fearing?

Arif Mohammad Khan also points out that, "The Quran prescribes monogamy as a norm (24.32) and allows polygamy under very exceptional circumstances (4.2- 3). But the patriarchal mindset ignored the norm and adopted conditional permission as the regular law. If we no longer demand the right to have slave girls, then we can also reconsider polygamy, particularly in the light of the fact that the marriage contracts of the Prophet's daughters had a provision to obligate their husbands not to take another woman during the lifetime of the wife." In this context we need to note that the Kerala High Court also recently on October 30, 2025 in a leading case titled XXX & Anr vs State of Kerala & Ors held that no second marriage registration for Muslim man if first wife objects. Why should second marriage be allowed at the first instance in a nation that has become so hugely over-populated?

My very best friend Sageer Khan in 1993 said most vocally underscoring that, "Why Hindus are forced to become Muslims to marry more than once? Polygamy should have been abolished for both or for none but Nehru very wrongly imposed monogamy only on Hindus which is most disgraceful and cannot be ever justified. Muslims should be treated on par with Hindus and polygamy should be abolished among us also. This will greatly help in controlling the population also in our country. When Hindus can be brought down to one both male and female then why can't Muslim males be also not brought down to one and Muslim females are already one as they unlike men cannot marry more than one? Centre and our law makers must give it a serious thought!" Why even after so many years of independence we still see no concrete action being taken?

It is an undeniable fact that for far too long this most pressing issue of uniform civil code has been hanging fire and our



law makers have just callously preferred to always look the other way around on it. Why is it that film actor Dharmender had to become Muslim to marry a second time to marry Hema Malini after they fell in love after filming Sholay in 1975? Why is it that the son of former Chief Minister of Haryana – Bhajan Lal named Chander Mohan also had to change his name to Chand Mohammed and so also Anuradha Bali had to assume a Muslim name Fizza and convert to Islam just to marry each other as Chander was already married and in Hindu religion one cannot marry than one as per 1955 amendment restricting Hindus men and women to one even though earlier there was no limit?

The moot question is: Why polygamy was not completely abolished for one and all? There are millions of such cases where the conversion is purely on the temptation to marry more than one women! Why can't this most dirty sham which is root cause of many conversions also end once and for all?

Why can't law be same for one and all? Will it not help control population also if monogamy is imposed on one and all? I have so many Muslim friends who come from good family and not even one has resorted to polygamy even though they have the freedom to do so. It is the poor Muslim men who resort to polygamy more as was pointed out first to me by my very best friend Sageer Khan and it only serves to further increase poverty which definitely cannot be ever justified under any circumstances!

To put it mildly: When Hindus can be made to shun polygamy and polyandry in 1955 then why can't the same be done among Muslim men in 2025 after seventy years? My best friend Sageer Khan also always wanted Muslims to abolish polygamy as it is a very bad practice and cannot be ever condoned under any circumstances! Sageer Khan also used to often ask: "Why Centre trembles to do anything on this score? Why can't monogamy be imposed equally on people of all religion alike when Nehru could impose it only for Hindus way back in 1955? It has become a fashion to marry more than one. This is the root cause of increase in population and extreme poverty in India."

It is high time and Centre must now seriously ponder on it and stop dishing fake excuses most conveniently to justify continuance of polygamy on one pretext or the other! It has to be definitely taken most seriously that none other than the Allahabad High Court which is not only the biggest High Court in India but also the biggest High Court in the world in a most learned, laudable, landmark, logical and latest judgment titled Furkan And 2 Others vs State of UP and Another in Application u/s 528 BNSS No. – 14448 of 2025 that was pronounced as recently as on 08.05.2025 has in a significant observation on the scope of Muslim personal law has underscored clearly that though Islam permitted more than one marriage and allows up to four marriages, this concession is strictly conditional and prone to being 'widely abused' in practice and it even went against the mandate of Muslim law. Why should it then not be completely abolished as was done 70 years ago with Hindus and related religions without even a whimper of protest from anyone?

In a nutshell, it must be gracefully acknowledged that of course, the ball is now in Centre's court! It is for Centre to take the much needed and much pending initiative on this count also! If uniform civil code cannot be ushered in due to difference in laws among different religions, the least that can be done now is to abolish polygamy completely as India is already the most populated country in the world and so we must definitely act now before it is too late for nation comes first and religion comes next as said so very commendably by my very best friend Sageer Khan! No denying it! Moreover, polygamy does no good to anyone and is a reprehensible malpractice and only contributes in deteriorating the condition of women and so also contributes to increase in poverty and population both! So there can be just no gainsaying that polygamy must be now completely and permanently banned and abolished! It brooks no more delay any longer now! No denying or disputing it!

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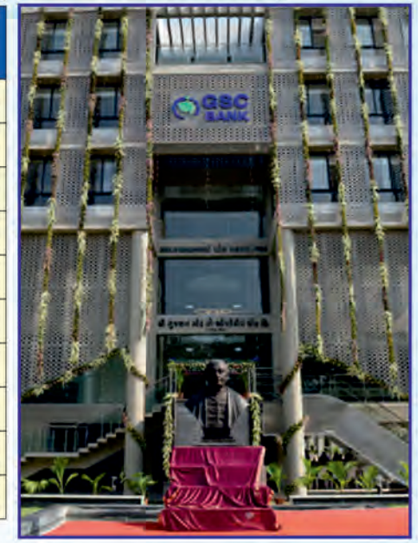
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Financial Position of the bank

(Rs. in Crore)

Particular	2008-09	2014-15	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Deposits	3209.95	6368.88	10611.87	12012.21	13606.56
Advances	1786.58	5921.99	8362.36	9325.49	9424.73
Total Fund	346.39	612.64	1143.22	1207.36	1285.52
Total Business	4996.53	12290.87	18974.24	21337.70	23031.29
No. of Branches	1 (H.O)	9	33	33	33
Per Branch Business	4996.53	1365.65	574.98	646.60	697.92
Dividend (%)	---	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00
Gross NPA (%)	17.93	2.20	0.75	0.68	0.34
Net NPA (%)	9.29	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net Profit	-52.66	44.61	105.59	106.59	93.51



Deposits Rs. 13606 Crore

Net Profit Rs. 93.51 Crore

Advances Rs. 9424 Crore

Total Business Rs. 23031 Crore

- Scheduled Apex Bank functioning for 65 years, is one of the foremost State Co-operative Banks of the country.
- Scheduled Apex Bank providing refinance to about 28 lakh farmers of the state through 1451 branches of 18 District Banks and more than 10300 Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies.
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- A bank that complies with parameters such as capital adequacy ratio, credit deposit ratio, NPA, cost of management as a sound bank.
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Surat's Green Leap

A Blueprint for India's Sustainable Urban Future

Viral Desai

Surat, often celebrated as the diamond hub of India, has now polished its reputation with an even rarer gem: becoming the nation's first city to achieve a fully 'Green BRTS' (Bus Rapid Transit System). This monumental transition, spearheaded by the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC), is not merely an upgrade of its transport fleet but a bold stride towards India's ambitious goal of becoming a Net Zero Carbon country by 2070. The economic and environmental ripples generated by this change offer a compelling blueprint for other urban centres battling pollution and budgetary constraints.

The transformation is comprehensive and absolute. The SMC took a decisive step to convert its entire mass transportation system to green energy, successfully replacing all 352 diesel buses operating across 13 BRTS routes with electric buses. This means that on Surat's BRTS network, a crucial artery for the city's two lakh daily commuters, not a single diesel bus is operational anymore. While 1.25 lakh travelers are currently enjoying the benefits of these new electric buses, the impact extends far beyond passenger comfort and convenient travel; every journey now actively contributes to the preservation of the environment.

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On the environmental front, the impact is nothing short of transformative for the city's air quality and climate goals. The immediate positive effect of zero tailpipe emissions has been a success in preventing the emission of approximately 200 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) every month. Annually, this mitigation effort translates to a massive reduction of 2,372 tonnes of CO2 emissions.



The economic implications of this green shift are immediately apparent and substantial. According to figures released by the SMC, the induction of these electric buses is resulting in an annual saving of approximately *18 lakh litres of diesel*, translating to a daily fuel conservation of roughly 6,000 litres. This colossal saving provides a robust financial return, demonstrating that sustainable transport systems are not just an environmental cost but a significant economic asset. The long-term reduction in fuel procurement and maintenance costs—electric buses require less upkeep due to fewer moving parts—further solidifies the financial viability of this project.

On the environmental front, the impact is nothing short of transformative for the city's air quality and climate goals. The immediate positive effect of zero tailpipe emissions has been a success in preventing the emission of approximately 200 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) every month. Annually, this mitigation effort translates to a massive reduction of 2,372 tonnes of CO2 emissions. Furthermore, environmental experts note that this transition has led to an estimated 15% reduction in the city's overall pollution levels, with a marked decrease in toxic elements like PM 2.5 and Nitrogen Oxides. The air is cleaner, the streets are quieter, and the public health benefits for Surat's residents are invaluable.

Surat's success story underscores a critical national need: the urgent decarbonisation of urban mobility. For too long, Indian cities have grappled with debilitating air pollution, with the transport sector being a primary contributor. India's cities are the engines of economic growth, but they are also grappling with rising respiratory illnesses and climate vulnerability. The choice for other metropolitan and Tier-2 cities is clear: embracing green public transportation is the most effective and equitable way to address the twin crises of air pollution and climate change.

Cities across the country must follow Surat's lead by prioritising the electrification of their public fleets and establishing fully 'Green Transit Systems'. Electrification reduces the reliance on imported fossil fuels, boosting energy security while significantly lowering operating costs for transport undertakings, ultimately benefiting the public exchequer. Moreover, a clean, reliable, and modern public transport system encourages citizens to move away from single-occupancy private vehicles, tackling congestion and further amplifying emission reduction efforts.

Ultimately, the Surat Municipal Corporation, by fully converting its BRTS to an electric-only system, has cemented its place as a national leader in urban sustainability. It has laid a tangible, profitable, and pollution-free foundation, leaving a distinct mark on the path towards India's 'Net Zero' carbon emission target. This is a powerful message to all Indian urban authorities: investing in green transit is not merely an environmental favour, but a smart, strategic investment in the economic health, public well-being, and sustainable future of the city. The time for other cities to accelerate their shift to electric mobility is now, ensuring that the momentum established by Surat propels the entire nation toward a cleaner and more resilient future.

(The author is a known Environmentalist and the pioneer of Satyagraha Against Pollution movement, viraludayindia@gmail.com)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Bihar Verdict: A Lesson in Leadership, Organisation, and Credibility



Deepak Kumar Rath

The results of the Bihar elections once again underscore a fundamental truth of Indian politics: leadership, organisation, and credibility ultimately determine the success of any alliance. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) demonstrated strength on all three fronts—entering the electoral battlefield with meticulous preparation, deep ground-level connect, and a coherent narrative—which paved the way for its historic victory. In stark contrast, the Mahagathbandhan (MGB) failed to present a unified command, a compelling message, or even basic organisational cohesion, leading to a rout that will be analysed for years. The NDA's triumph was not a spontaneous event but the culmination of a disciplined strategy. Under the steadfast leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the alliance projected an image of stability and experience. Their narrative was clear and potent: a combination of Kumar's legacy of governance and Modi's promise of national security and central support. This was not merely rhetoric; it was backed by a formidable organisational machinery that worked relentlessly to translate this narrative into votes. The BJP's well-oiled booth-level management, coupled with the JD(U)'s local networks, ensured that their message permeated every corner of the state. They entered the fray not as a coalition of convenience, but as a prepared and confident unit.

Against this backdrop, it cannot be gainsaid that the Mahagathbandhan presented a picture of disarray. While the RJD's Tejashwi Yadav campaigned vigorously on a platform of jobs and social justice, his efforts were severely undermined by the alliance's foundational weaknesses. The most glaring and damaging factor was the leadership vacuum at the national level. Rahul Gandhi's weak campaign trail, his perceived indifference at crucial moments, and his inconsistency emerged as the single most significant factor behind the alliance's failure. His directionless campaign and recurrent political missteps, including ambiguous statements on key issues like Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and vote chori, seriously eroded the Mahagathbandhan's credibility. Voters were left with a simple, devastating question: who was the leader they were being asked to trust? Tejashwi Yadav, despite his energy, struggled under the weight of this leadership deficit, unable to shoulder the entire burden of challenging a well-entrenched NDA. This election, therefore, transcends the immediate numbers. It delivers a clear and powerful message on political accountability. In a mature democracy like India, public trust aligns decisively with those who show the capacity to lead—not with those who shy away from responsibility. The electorate in Bihar, known for its astute political consciousness, rewarded a coalition that projected competence and unity, while punishing one that appeared fragmented and adrift. The Mahagathbandhan's defeat will echo in Indian politics for years to come as a decisive reminder. It reaffirms that elections are not won through catchy slogans and hastily assembled alliances alone. Ultimately, victory is forged in the fires of credible leadership, relentless hard work, and the demonstrable ability to earn the people's confidence. The Bihar verdict is a textbook case study in how these timeless principles continue to shape the nation's political destiny.



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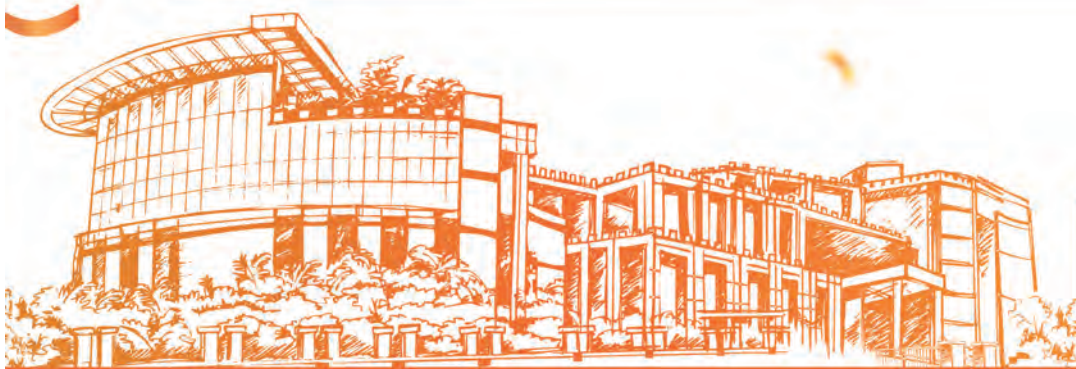
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