

# WIFY

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December, 2023

# WFY

WORLD FOR YOU

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Team WFY

Editor-in-Chief: Melwyn Williams

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# From the Editor's Desk

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## REFLECTING ON THE YEAR'S END:

## EMBRACING HOPE FOR A NEW BEGINNING



By Melwyn Williams

**Hello, and welcome to the December issue of  
WFY Magazine!**

As we near the end of another memorable year, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our wonderful authors, colleagues, editors, and enthusiastic readers. Your continuous support has been key to our success, and we are grateful for all that you have done.

In this year's last issue, we bring you an interesting mix of sections that shed light on the accomplishments and experiences of people of Indian heritage all around the world. We bring the December edition with great pride, engaging in the stories and narratives that create the Indian Diaspora community.

Our cover story features Leena, a trailblazing woman who has risen to the top of the fashion world as Chanel's global CEO. Join us as we explore her illuminating path and important contributions to the industry.

Turning our attention to global politics, we present you with an interesting piece on the United States' recent lifting of sanctions against Venezuela, underscoring the potential benefits that India stands to reap from this move.

In our Human Interests & Social Pursuits area, we look at a heartbreaking narrative of a heroic rat-hole miner's risky duty, as well as a recent rescue mission in the hills of Uttarakhand, where the lives of 41 trapped people were at stake.

The Health & Wellness category contains informative articles that emphasise the necessity of actively participating in one's healthcare journey. Learn how to help your doctor help you achieve better results, investigate the significant link between social memory and behaviour, and receive insights into understanding obsessive-compulsive disorder and perfectionism.

We have two interesting pieces for individuals who enjoy travel and leisure. Discover the historical significance and haunting legends surrounding the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' Cellular Jail, and arm yourself with survival skills for a European vacation to ensure a great journey.

Our Feature section provides a classic Christmas cake recipe directly from the kitchens of India to satisfy your culinary desires. Celebrate the spirit of the season with this delectable treat.

The Art & Culture section features the creative expressions of gifted individuals. Immerse yourself in the world of prestidigitators, discover the mystery of invisible touch, and delve into the depths of love rooted in the soul with wonderfully penned poems.

Our Lifestyle category features enlightening pieces that teach vital life lessons from pets, celebrate the essence of Diwali as a harbinger of new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil, and provide advice on overcoming the scourge of overthinking.



From an academic standpoint, we investigate the rising demand for visas among Indian students, investigating the reasons behind this increase and its implications for higher education.

Economic and business aficionados will be particularly interested in our piece on the talent of strategic thinking. Learn about this important characteristic and its significance in today's economic world.

We shed light on the fascinating subject of UPI transactions and how they manage to remain free while still producing revenues by unravelling the complexities of finance and legal matters.

We hope that this exciting mix of content will be an engaging and educational read. We welcome you to contribute your own articles and Indian Diaspora news, particularly from your location, to help us out. Help us spread the word about WFY, an Indian Diaspora media organisation that covers intriguing stories from people all across the world. If you come across any fascinating unpublished content or articles in this space, we ask you to promote their submission and spread the word about our call to action. Consider advertising with us to promote your company or services, or perhaps volunteering your time and talents to help our publication and community.

Furthermore, we are happy to support the Indian Diaspora Global's "Keep the Door Open" campaign, which seeks 'Dual Citizenship' in India for those of Indian descent. We invite you to help this cause in any way you can, and you can learn more about how to get involved by clicking on the link provided below.

<https://indiandiaspora.world/index.php/who-we-are/dual-citizenship-campaign/>

Once again, we express our heartfelt appreciation for your continuous support. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Good luck with your reading!

**Namaste**

**-MELWYN WILLIAMS**

Editor-in-Chief, The WFY Magazine



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# Leena Leading The Big World Of High Fashion



By Melwyn Williams

*Who exactly is Leena Nair?*



Leena Nair is the first female CEO of the French luxury brand Chanel and a British Indian business executive. Prior to then, the 52-year-old was Unilever's first female and youngest-ever Chief Human Resources Officer, a job she left in order to join the legendary company in January 2022.

In 2017, Queen Elizabeth II recognised Leena Nair as one of the successful Indian business leaders in the UK, and among her many other accomplishments, she was also named "Role Model of Year, The Great British Businesswoman's Awards, 2021." In 2022, she was also named to Forbes India's Top Self-Made Women's List.

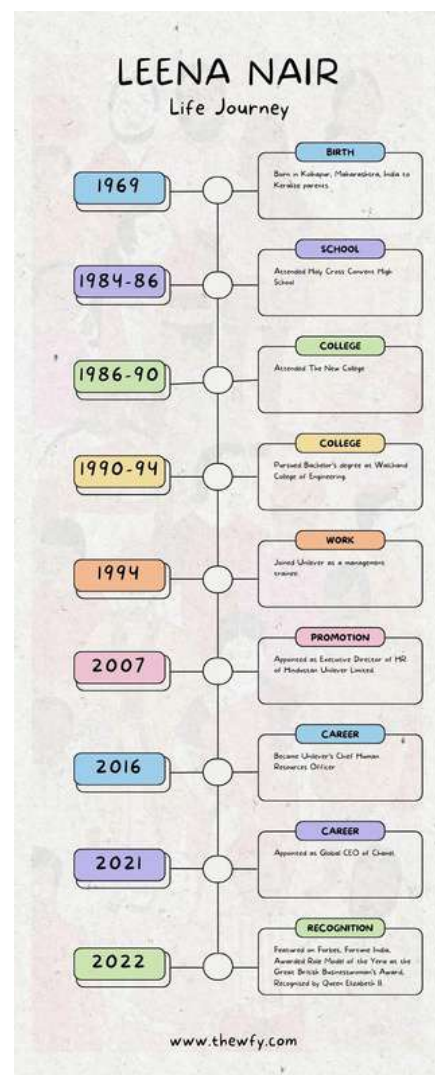
Leena, who is now located in London, has taken the leadership of one of the world's

largest couture companies, a business empire valued at Rs. 1,28,000 crore. She is an Indian businesswoman who has been the global CEO of Chanel, one of the world's most iconic luxury companies, since January 2022. She is well-known for her contributions to human resources, advocacy for workplace diversity and inclusion, and competence in leading and reforming global organisations. Leena is regarded as a visionary leader with the capacity to champion a long-term, purpose-driven agenda and a consistently outstanding track record of business accomplishments.

She has joined the ranks of Indian-origin executives such as Sundar Pichai, Parag Agrawal, and Satya Nadella at the helm of prominent global firms with Chanel. Nair, who managed 160,000 people at Unilever, will be located in London in her new post.

She encourages businesswomen to dream big and break down barriers.

**Leena Nair's Journey From Fashion Outsider To CEO At Chanel**



## How has the journey begun?

Leena Nair, a successful Indian business leader, was born in the Maharashtra city of Kolhapur in 1969. Nair's early years were defined by a steadfast dedication to knowledge, a trait that would serve her well in the future. She attended Kolhapur's Holy Cross Convent High School before transferring to The New College. She pursued her bachelor's degree in electronics and telecommunication engineering at the prestigious Walchand College of Engineering in Sangli, Maharashtra, driven by a passion for both business and technology. Following that, she continued her academic path at the XLRI-Xavier School of Management, where she was awarded a gold medal for her achievements in the discipline.



LearnwithLeena session with students of XLRI.

## Private Life



She was born in Kolhapur, a city with few educational opportunities, and grew up with numerous standards, taboos, and barriers dictating what girls may and cannot achieve. Leena Nair values a fulfilling personal life outside of the work environment. She is K. Karthikeyan's daughter and has a close relationship with her industrialist cousins, Vijay Menon and Sachin Menon. Leena is married and the proud mother of two sons. Leena, a woman with many hobbies, enjoys reading and running. Interestingly, she enjoys Bollywood dancing, exhibiting a colourful side to her nature.



Leena, Kumar, Aryan and Sid

## Professional Career

Under the direction of the strictly regulated family design company that fashion legend Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel founded in 1910, Nair, an outsider, is known as a "serial glass-ceiling breaker." Chanel is most recognised now for its tweed suits, quilted purses, and No. 5 perfume.

Leena Nair's career journey demonstrates her tenacity, perseverance, and unrivalled leadership abilities. Her career began in 1992, when she joined Hindustan Unilever as a management trainee. She worked her way up the corporate ladder, working in factories, sales, and corporate headquarters. She was named Executive Director of Human Resources at Hindustan Unilever Limited in 2007. Later that year, she became Unilever's "first female, first Asian, and youngest ever" Chief Human Resources Officer. Unilever has been designated the number one FMCG graduate employer of choice in 54 countries during her 25-year tenure.



Leena with Wang Yibo



Over a ten-year span beginning in 2010, she assisted HUL in achieving a 50/50 female balance in worldwide leadership.

She was also a member of Unilever's Leadership Executive, which is in charge of delivering the company's financial success as well as its ambitious environmental and positive social impact goals. Her strategy at HUL includes a pledge to provide a decent wage throughout its entire supplier chain.

Her leadership helped Unilever increase its human capital while negotiating the complexity of diverse regulatory and labour contexts in over 190 countries. Unilever was also named the number one FMCG graduate employer of choice in 54 countries as a result of this. Nair was a driving force behind Unilever's Diversity and Inclusion programme, guaranteeing a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Nair was chosen as Chanel's global CEO in December 2021, a testament to her significant leadership. She also serves as a non-executive board member for BT plc, as a member of the trust board for the Leverhulme Trust, and in other capacities.



## Honours and Awards

Nair's contributions to the world of business have not gone ignored. She has received various honours, including being named to Forbes India's Top Self-Made Women's List in 2022 and being named Role Model of the Year at The Great

British Businesswoman's Awards in 2021. Other honours include being named to Fortune India's Most Powerful Women's List in 2021 and being named as one of the outstanding Indian Business Leaders in the UK by Queen Elizabeth II in 2017.

Most recently, she was named to Fortune's list of the most powerful women in business in 2023, as well as the WWD 50 Women in Power List 2023.



**Nair mastered a variety of talents, from soap making to dealing with unions. Her experiences helped her develop resilience and the courage to reject social norms.**

Nair addressed the implications of artificial intelligence on the fashion business, stating that she believes machines will not create garments in the near future. She emphasised the significance of sustaining human inventiveness. She also gave insights regarding consumer preferences in the aftermath of the pandemic. Customers showed a significant preference for bold colours, and sequins were in high demand, showing a need for greater glitter and brilliance. Nair also reported a rise in lipstick sales as mask-wearing regulations relaxed, which corresponds to the concept of the 'lipstick effect' during economic downturns.

Chanel remains a major participant in women's fashion, with 565 stores globally and a

workforce of 32,000 employees. Despite difficult economic conditions, the corporation reported over \$17 billion in revenue in 2022, a 17% increase over the previous year. Nair's leadership continues to propel achievement and inspire women to break through glass barriers in business.



Leena Nair's life and career trajectory offer a picture of an outstanding woman who has broken down barriers and continues to affect the corporate world through her leadership, advocacy for diversity and inclusion, and human-centred approach. Her journey demonstrates her commitment, resilience, and remarkable leadership talents, and she serves as an inspiring role model for aspiring business executives all over the world.



-MELWYN WILLIAMS





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# Indian Perspective: US Sanction Relief For Venezuela, Know It All.

By WFY Bureau USA

*The US sanctions relief for Venezuela, home to the world's greatest oil reserves, and what this could imply for India*

**WFY Bureau USA:** The United States' decision to relax certain economic sanctions against Venezuela, which has the world's largest crude oil reserves, presents an opportunity for Indian refiners, who have the capacity to refine heavy crude from the Latin American country. It can also assist India in further diversifying its oil import basket, considering that it has stopped importing crude from another sanctioned country, Iran, since 2019.

However, it will be some time before Venezuela's state-owned oil behemoth, Petróleos de Venezuela (PdVSA), returns to pre-sanction levels of 3 million barrels per day (bpd), as its infrastructure is obsolete and requires "substantial" investment to update.

Much depends on how fair the Venezuelan presidential elections in 2024 turn out, because that is the premise on which current President Nicolás Maduro was able to reach an agreement with the Americans.

Aside from the chance for Indian refiners, New Delhi is already in a "sweet spot" following months of cheap Russian oil. Because of the G7 countries' (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) price caps on Russian oil, Indian importers have gotten oil for less than \$60 per barrel. India, the world's third-largest oil importer, has also emerged as a unique participant this year, with its refineries reselling processed Russian crude to European and US markets.

Recent comments from External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Minister of Oil and Petroleum Hardeep Singh Puri reflect just how comfortable India is in this regard. This month, Jaishankar stated that India is "waiting for a thank you" from the rest of the globe after its strategic oil purchases helped to lower prices, meet countries' energy demands, and possibly even offset global inflation. Puri previously stated that India would "buy from wherever oil is cheap," noting that Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Reliance Industries (RIL) have previously purchased Venezuelan oil.

Indian refineries in Jamnagar, Barauni, and other locations has welcomed the lifting of US sanctions on Venezuela, which has long been in the grip of a socioeconomic and political catastrophe. Refineries in Jamnagar can refine the crudest of crude oil, so there's definitely an opportunity there. Venezuelan crude, unlike Russian Urals, has a high sulphur concentration and is more difficult to process. According to an industry source, RIL's gross refining margin (GRM) topped the Singapore oil benchmark in 2017 and for several years before that, which

occurred at a time when Indian oil corporations had a "buffet" of oil sources to select from, namely Venezuela, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

**The gross refining margin is the profit a company makes from converting each barrel of crude oil into fuel.**

After the United States imposed sanctions on Venezuela and Iran, India's oil basket shifted. Following the outbreak of the Ukraine war, Russia became India's primary supplier. According to industry sources, the rupee trade with Moscow has also been beneficial. With an average of 1.76 million bpd from April to September of this year, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are currently India's top oil suppliers. After the United States imposed sanctions on Venezuela in 2017 and reinforced them in 2019, India gradually curtailed its oil imports from the Latin American country.

**Pre-approval of Indian oil imports and joint venture failure**

Prior to the United States imposing sanctions on Venezuela in 2017 and 2019, India had consistently purchased crude from the Latin American country.

The rising trend started in 2012, when India surpassed China as the leading Asian customer of Venezuelan oil. That year, the Latin American country was India's third-largest crude supplier. According to data from the Indian commerce ministry, the peak occurred in 2014–2015, when India purchased over 22,000 metric tonnes of Venezuelan oil.

Many Indian enterprises were eager to increase imports in 2013–2014. According to a document from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), RIL aimed to raise its Venezuelan oil imports from 300,000 to 400,000 bpd. RIL had inked a 15-year heavy crude oil supply contract with PdVSA a few years prior.

Around 2014, there was also a lot of excitement from the IOC. It planned to import 1.5 million metric tonnes for its recently completed Paradip refinery, which would begin operations in 2016. According to the MEA document, HMEL, a public-private partnership between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and Mittal Energy Investments, is also intended to import two million metric tonnes of oil from the Latin American country for processing at its Bhatinda refinery in Punjab. During Smita Purushottam's stint as ambassador to Venezuela from 2012 to 2015, a rupee payment



structure based on "oil for goods"—similar to what the Chinese had in place until 2019—was proposed to the MEA. Indian exporters, particularly those in the pharmaceutical industry, were extremely frustrated by Venezuela's payment delays. It was also clear that Venezuela required many Indian consumer goods and infrastructure, such as Kirloskar Brothers pumps.

She approached the MEA in 2015 with a proposal for an oil-for-goods arrangement. The MEA "enthusiastically" endorsed the concept, while the Venezuelans were "extremely cool." "I suspect they didn't want to disrupt the steady flow of dollar trade from Indian oil firms," she went on to say. Purushottam served during the reigns of Venezuela's strongmen, Hugo Chávez (1999–2013) and current President Maduro. Both contributed to the crash of the economy, resulting in a state of "petro-narco" for many years.

A "petro-narco state" is a government that derives revenue from both petroleum and the drug trade. Maduro has previously been accused of drug trafficking, including plotting with a Colombian guerrilla organisation to flood the US with cocaine. In the early 2010s, Indian corporations investigated strategic investments in oil-rich Venezuela. PdVSA and India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) struck an agreement in 2013 to explore for oil fields in Venezuela's Faja region.

**However, collaborative ventures gradually died out.**

Consider the San Cristobal oil field project, in which ONGC Videsh had a 40% share and PdVSA had a 60% stake. Due to a payment issue, it became public knowledge in 2018 that PdVSA had been accruing a \$56 million deficit by failing to pay dividends to the Indian company for several years. To liquidate ONGC's overdue dividends, the project had to be renovated.

Even if further American sanctions against Venezuela are lifted, New Delhi will be "wary" of future cooperative ventures. A lot depends on the Venezuelan elections in 2024 and whether they are free and fair. Even if further American sanctions were eased, Indian

firms would not rush into strategic investments like they have in the past, but oil trading would be on the table.

#### **Oil as security**

Caracas may not have been interested in Puroshottam's plan, but the Venezuelan administration had no such reservations about signing agreements with Beijing or Moscow. Venezuela was the second-largest recipient of Chinese cash promises between 2000 and 2021. According to AidData, a research lab affiliated with the College of William & Mary in the United States, at least \$113 billion was lent to Venezuela during this time period for various causes.

The great majority of the funds were borrowed between 2006 and 2016, with the largest commitments being made in 2010 (\$29 billion) and 2015 (\$22 billion). PdVSA and China National United Oil Corporation (ChinaOil) inked petroleum sales and purchase contracts in many cases based on a pre-agreed price formula and pre-approved quantity until complete payback of all sums owed, according to AidData.

According to AidD, on November 6, 2007, a six-party framework agreement for the establishment of the Joint China-Venezuela Fund (JCVF) was signed to govern three other deals: a four-party agreement between China Development Bank (CDB), Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social de Venezuela (BANDES), ChinaOil, and PdVSA; an oil-backed, \$4 billion loan (facility) agreement between BANDES and CDB

Under the third agreement, the PdVSA pledged to sell 100,000 barrels of fuel and/or crude oil per day to ChinaOil until all payments owed under the second agreement were fully repaid. On the same day as the JCVF, the CDB and BANDES signed the Long-Term Facility Agreement, a \$20.3 billion oil-backed credit agreement. According to AidData, the facility was divided into two tranches: a yuan 70 billion tranche and a \$10 billion tranche.

In 2010 and 2011, the two tranches were entirely dispersed. By 2016, Venezuela owed approximately \$9.3 billion under the \$20.3 billion accord. According to AidData, PdVSA promised to sell 200,000–320,000 barrels of petroleum

per day at a pre-arranged price to ChinaOil on behalf of the Venezuelan government until the entire payback on this arrangement was made.

However, due to US sanctions on Caracas, ChinaOil reportedly stopped importing oil directly from PdVSA by 2019. China made no fresh loan obligations backed by Venezuelan oil after 2016.

#### **American policy has pushed Venezuela into the "waiting arms" of the Chinese.**

The United States barred Caracas from access to western capital markets. This left Venezuela without international money, and Beijing stepped in to lend to Venezuela. However, they were careful to ensure that direct investment in the country was kept to a minimum. China has no desire to provoke the United States by violating Venezuela's sanctions. There is no reason for Beijing to pick this fight (with the US).

While ChinaOil does not officially handle Venezuelan petroleum, oil from the country does find its way to Chinese ports—rebranded as "Malaysian" oil, for example, according to a Reuters investigation last year.

According to the study, China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC) has been transporting Venezuelan crude on three oil tankers—Xingye, Yongle, and Thousand Sunny—valued at around \$1.5 billion since 2020. CASIC, a state-owned firm specialising in defence and space technology, delivers the crude from Venezuela's Jose port. It finally reaches the Chinese seaside city of Ningbo (south of Shanghai) and is delivered to independent refineries in China.

#### **Fortune favours the brave.**

Venezuela reported total production of 2.8 million barrels per day (bpd) to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in October 2013, but in October 2023, it recorded total output of 7,86,000 bpd—a fourth of its total production a decade ago.

American sanctions in the middle of 2017 and an embargo on Venezuelan oil in the beginning of 2019 both contributed to a gradual decline in Venezuelan oil investment and output through PDVSA. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



(ECLAC), Venezuela now owns 17.5% of the world's oil reserves but is responsible for only 0.8% of output. The increased crude oil output in Venezuela is unlikely to have a significant impact on the global market in the immediate term.

Though hydrocarbon production may improve slightly, he believes that the record levels of 3 million bpd established in the late 2010s will not be reached. "Substantial investments are required (for PdVSA) to overhaul or upgrade its infrastructure," he went on to say. American sanctions made it difficult for the PdVSA to purchase spare parts to maintain its production facilities, lowering its daily output.

Venezuela has been unable to maintain its production facilities or purchase the spares needed to keep these units running. This is due to the consequences of American sanctions on the country. If sanctions are lifted, Venezuela will be able to purchase the necessary parts and resume production at previously seen levels. With the lifting of sanctions, oil production can thrive.

If that is the case, Beijing, in addition to India, will be looking to profit from the lifting of sanctions. According to Standard & Poor Global, China Oil is ready to re-enter Venezuelan markets.

- WFY BUREAU, USA





# Life At The End Of The Tunnel: A Daring Rat-hole Miner's Risky Task

By WFY BUREAU, INDIA

*The rescue of 41 workmen trapped inside the Silkya tunnel in Uttarkashi was a success. PMO and NDRF officials supported the 17-day multi-agency initiative. The trapped workers were safely rescued, with the first, Vijay Horo, being transported out on a stretcher. CM Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union Minister Gen. VK Singh greeted the workers. A slight earthquake caused debris to shift, a loud cracking sound halted work, and the danger of tunnel face collapse were all challenges. A physical test revealed that the workers were healthy.*

**WFY BUREAU INDIA:** After days of ups and downs and waves of hope and despair, the multi-agency mission to rescue 41 workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi finally succeeded on 28th (December) evening, when all of them were safely hauled out. The colossal operation, unmatched in its scope and ambition, brought an end to a 17-day nightmare in which the whole government apparatus, including the PMO, threw its weight behind the evacuation drill.

When the first trapped worker, Vijay Horo, was taken out on a stretcher by NDRF personnel at 7.28 p.m., emotions ran high and shouts erupted among the rescue workers, who had literally lifted mountains to get the guys out.

Earlier, at 7.12 p.m., a team of doctors and NDRF men entered the tunnel in accordance with a pre-determined SOP. The tired but stoic workers were greeted with garlands by **CM Pushkar Singh Dhami** and **Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways Gen VK Singh (retd)** after the final stage of the mission, which lasted just over an hour. "It was an unprecedented operation," claimed **Anurag Jain, secretary of MoRTH**. Access to electricity, water, and adequate room for the confined workers were key points in our favour. As a result of establishing the supply connection, the situation became more controllable." When discussing the difficulties, he noted that a little earthquake on November 16 caused the

debris within the tunnel to shift 3 inches. Further, "a loud cracking sound the following day panicked the workers, leading us to halt the work for three days." According to Jain, specialists predict that "the tunnel face could collapse, posing a significant setback to the entire operation." As a result, we made the decision to develop numerous measures in case such an incident occurred.

On Tuesday 28th December, evening, a rapid physical test was done for the workers inside the main tunnel itself, where a team of 28 medical personnel, including 15 doctors, chemists, and ward boys, was stationed. "All of the workers were determined to be physically fit. The majority of them had elevated blood pressure, which was attributed to anxiety from being in such a condition for so long. "Anti-anxiety pills were given to them," claimed one of the doctors who did the examination.

Later, the Chief Minister, Dhami declared that each worker would receive Rs 1 lakh in financial aid. He said that the state government would cover all of their medical expenses and that he would ask NHIDCL, the tunnel project's executing agency, to grant them 15 to 20 days of leave to let them return to their various states. The final portion of the rescue, which lasted more than 40 hours, proved to be a test of will and stamina for everyone on both sides of the 57 metres of rubble (behind which the workers were trapped). The most serious setback was the failure of the auger

equipment designed to drill an escape tunnel through the debris. The machine's blades became trapped in the channel on Friday, causing rescue attempts through the main tunnel route to come to a halt for more than 60 hours. Most of them thought that it is our misfortune, and now only a miracle from God can bring



about a change.

The "miracle" that everyone was looking for was realised by a group of small labourers known as "rat-hole" miners. They were called in to manually dig through the last 12 metres of debris after the auger machine parts were cleared from the escape path.

After starting work on Monday evening, the 'rat-hole' miners, armed with shovels and spades, had dug through the final stretch of detritus by Tuesday morning, accomplishing in less than 24 hours what drilling machinery had been unable to do for several days. After that, rescue teams were able to push within 800mm of welded-together pipes, which acted as an escape tunnel via which the stranded workers eventually emerged.

### Who is Munna Qureshi, the hero of the Uttarakhand tunnel rescue operation?

The rat-hole miners made a breakthrough in the Uttarkashi rescue mission when Munna Qureshi became the first miner to approach the trapped men.



The major 17-day rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel finished successfully on Wednesday, as all 41 workers walked out of the entrapment safely. The rescuers were in the spotlight, receiving all the accolades for their tireless hard work and resilience. In his statement, Prime Minister Modi praised the spirit of all those participating in the rescue operation, saying that everyone involved in the mission provided a great example of humanity and teamwork. Although rat-hole miners completed the final mile of the Uttarakhand tunnel, numerous government agencies with sizable personnel were on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Munna Qureshi, who was the first to approach the workers, has been praised as the operation's hero. Following the successful completion of the rescue mission, rescue officials met with Uttarakhand

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union Minister of State VK Singh.

Munna Qureshi, 29, is a rat-hole miner for a Delhi company that provides trenchless engineering services to clean sewer and water lines. He was one of dozens of rat-hole miners brought to Uttarakhand on Monday to clear the last 12 metres of debris.

After the US-made auger machine failed and had to be pulled from the trench, rat-hole miners became the last resort of the rescue mission. Rat-hole mining is a way of extracting coal by excavating small holes; however, it was outlawed as a coal-extracting method in 2014 due to its unscientific nature.

Munna Qureshi said he observed the 41 trapped workers when he lifted the last rock on Tuesday evening. "They hugged me, cheered in applause, and thanked me profusely," Munna Qureshi explained.

The other rat-hole miners who eventually reached the stranded men were Monu Kumar, Wakeel Khan, Feroz, Parsadi Lodhi, and Vipin Rajout. The men inside, who had been waiting for a long time for a break from the other side, screamed in joy and raised the miners. "They gave me almonds," stated one of the miners. The miners remained there for 30 minutes before the NDRF arrived to rescue the trapped men.

### Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh is home to 'rat-hole miners.'

Jhansi, located in the historic Bundelkhand region, has recently brought its 'rat-hole miners' to the forefront, highlighting their crucial role in the most difficult situations. Beyond simple headlines, these expert individuals displayed their prowess by rescuing 41 people from a clogged tunnel in Uttarakhand, adopting procedures that echoed a centuries-old tradition. When a cutting-edge US-made auger machine failed, the 'rat-hole' mining experience came to the rescue. With only hammers, trowels, and shovels as weapons, a group of six skilled "rat miners" from Jhansi joined forces with the Indian Army, NDRF, and SDRF rescue teams. They succeeded in breaching the rugged terrain, bringing trapped miners to safety after a terrible 17-day ordeal.

Colonel Deepak Patel, who led the Silkier rescue operation, stressed the importance of teamwork, emphasising the critical role played by these "rat miners" in critical moments. "It was the result of everyone's collective efforts; every rescue worker contributed significantly to it, and the role of the "rat miners" was definitely decisive at the last minute."

Rat-hole mining, which has a long history, entails manually extracting materials through narrow horizontal channels. This approach was historically important in the construction of 16th-century temples in the Bundelkhand region, which is known for its historical structures, forts, and temples.

The frequency of rat-hole mining in Jhansi is ascribed to the city's mountainous plateau with hard granite bedrock, which makes conventional drilling difficult. Earth scientists observe that rock cutters use this archaic technology to produce wells and ponds when explosives cannot be used because of the hard rock composition.

According to local reports, 'rat miners,' also known as 'khagars,' come from a variety of communities. Their competence ranges from quarrying to underpass construction, as well as pond construction, and they use instruments such as hammers and shovels.

### From obscurity to centre stage

- Rat miners, also known as 'khagars' in the Bundelkhand region, originate from a variety of communities, including Ahirwar, Kushwaha, Lodhi, Sahariya, and Koris.
- Six Jhansi rat miners, armed with hammers, trowels, and shovels, assisted in the rescue effort.

### Rat-hole mining is a family business.

- Rat-hole miners may crush rocks up to 10 quintals with hammers and shovels.
- Rat-hole mining was employed to build temples in the Bundelkhand region in the 16th century.





By Dr. Uma K

'A careful history will lead to the diagnosis 80% of the time'—this aphorism has been drilled into our heads ever since the second year of medical college. Our teachers could not stress enough the importance of good history-taking skills. However, as a doctor in the government service, I have found this an extremely arduous task. Patients generally exhibit resistance to parts with relevant information. The reasons could be many: the long queues that afford the doctors very little time to develop a rapport with the patient, the crowded OPD rooms, or the din in a busy hospital. Sometimes patients, having been to many doctors, are tired of repeating their history. A few patients are here only to get certain investigations done, and they are busy figuring out how to get the doctor to advise on that particular investigation. Some are shy, embarrassed, worry about being judged, or simply do not understand the relevance of the information sought in their treatment. This being the case in government hospitals, our counterparts in private practice face a different issue. They receive patients who have Googled all their symptoms and arrived at various diagnoses and treatment modalities. Equipped with knowledge acquired after hours of browsing, they are prone to showing it off. Patients' half-knowledge can be a dangerously maddening thing for the doctor.

As doctors, we need our patients to help us help them. So here, I'd like to share a few tips to make the most of your time with your doctor:

- Firstly, prepare a list of the symptoms you are experiencing along with the timeline. Prioritise by keeping the most important symptom at the top.
- Think about and write down all your concerns and questions.
- Bring all your medical information—a summary with dates, a list of medicines you are taking, and any latest investigations.
- Mention any changes you may have noticed in your appetite, weight, sleep, or energy level.
- Let the doctor know of any chronic conditions or diseases that run in your family.

## For Better Results: Help Your Doctor Help You

The only way for your doctor to know what's on your mind is for you to tell them. So, **be honest**. Once they have a better picture of your overall health, they can help you. For instance, I have at times noticed that patients are reluctant to share what they do for a living. This piece of information provides us with the nature of the person's job and any contribution it may have to the illness.

Similarly, certain conversations may seem awkward or embarrassing, especially about bladder and bowel movements, sexual health, or other intimate topics. Remember that your doctor has most likely heard similar things before. So **do not be embarrassed** to discuss them. For example, there are patients with a fever who may have a burning sensation while passing urine. Many such patients give us a history of fever only and do not consider it necessary to mention the burning pain. Usually, the doctor elicits this history. But, in the rare case that it is overlooked, a urinary tract infection can be missed.

Medical visits can be overwhelming, and sometimes even the most well-meaning doctor can present too much information too quickly and in complex terms. It's **OK to ask questions**. Ask your doctor to clarify what they're saying in plain language if they're talking in medical lingo. Next, repeat the information back to your doctor. This will help you absorb it, and it will also help the doctor know whether you understood. **Pay attention** to what your doctor is saying by keeping your mind clear of distractions. If you are overly focused on the next thing you want to say while your doctor is talking to you, you may miss important information. calls for some active listening.

Another tactic for better communication is to **bring along a close friend or family member**, especially if you have concerns that require complex treatment. Their extra set of ears can prove helpful. If you are an elderly patient or if your anxiety is elevated, a friend or family member can help you think of questions you might not recall otherwise. However, remember that if you want time alone with the doctor to discuss personal matters, you can ask your friend or family member to wait outside. Taking notes or writing them down immediately after the consultation can come in handy later when you're trying to recall exactly what your doctor told you. So **do take notes**. Finally, keeping an open mind and learning to trust your doctor will help make your visit more efficient.

- Dr. Uma K., MBBS, MD





# Social Memory Is Linked To Behaviour In A Big Way.

By  
**Anitha Ammanath**

**Social memory influences behaviour; researchers reveal the scientific secret behind memories.**

Amrita Binoy, a Malayalee girl, and her team have set the banner of success in Singapore with an invention that guides the treatment of Alzheimer's, dementia, and behavioural disorders. Amrita Binoy and her team have discovered the brain-chemical system that controls interaction with society by recording social behaviours and experiences as memories.

**How can the group's findings, including those of Amrita Binoy, regarding the hippocampal CA2 be simply stated?**

Our study describes an innovative data analysis system with the help of a neurotransmitter called 'acetylcholine' for CA2 memory in the brain region. In response to shifting external environments and behavioural patterns, the nerve cells in our brain release chemicals known as neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters play an essential role in regulating the responses of neurons that shape memory and behavior. The 'CA2' part of the brain that is the subject of research is the critical part of the brain responsible for memory formation. Our study was about how this small area inside the brain forms memories.

One fantastic thing about this region is that neurons in this region exhibit multifaceted memory characteristics compared to other areas of the brain. In particular, the phenomenon known as synaptic plasticity is less common in CA2 neurons than in other regions. Synapses transmit electrical signals from one nerve cell to another via neurotransmitters. Synaptic plasticity is when the connection between neurons in response to stimuli is strengthened or weakened, giving them the ability to create memories.

We found that stimulation of receptors that bind to the chemical acetylcholine caused a decrease in the synaptic responses of CA2 neurons. But this was later found to lead to a higher synaptic response, similar to neuronal memory. Such modifications to the synaptic laws of analysis based on the history of neurons' activity are called 'metaplasticity'. These findings enhance our knowledge of the fundamental processes that govern memory formation in the CA2 region. Acetylcholine overflows into the brain's hippocampus in response to specific behavioural conditions during waking and sleeping; this can cause plasticity in the CA2 neurons, a subregion of the hippocampus, and thus form the memories we gain while wandering around in different



social environments.

**Why has this part gone unnoticed for so long?**

The CA2 region is much smaller than the other regions of the hippocampus. Therefore, the researchers did not think that neurons in this region played a significant role in memory formation. Further research focused on the CA1 and CA3 regions of the hippocampus. But since 2000, studies focusing on the CA2 region have begun to attract attention. The main reason for this is the discovery that CA2 neurons record social memory. Also, CA2 neurons had different genes and proteins than CA1 and CA3 subgroups. Scientists then started to look into how specific the activity of CA2 neurons was and how damage to CA2 neurons can happen in conditions like schizophrenia. Such research is still ongoing in many parts of the world. While CA2 neurons are essential for social memory, CA1 and CA3 neurons are more critical for special memory, episodic memory, and declarative memory.

For example, CA1 and CA3 neurons play an essential role in recording memories of the paths we travelled, memories of facts and information we learned, and events in our lives and when they occurred. But the fantastic thing is that most areas of the hippocampus are interconnected. Therefore, the function of CA1 neurons requires the interaction of CA3 and CA2 neurons.

**How do memories occur?**

The things we see, hear, and experience in our daily lives stimulate the nerve cells in our bodies. These signals reach the brain's neurons through electrical interactions between interconnected neurons, and different stimuli are recorded in other neurons as different types of memory. Nerve cells in various brain parts, such as the hippocampus, neocortex, amygdala, cerebellum, basal ganglia, and prefrontal cortex,

record multiple memories. When we experience the same things again, the same nerve cells that recorded those memories are re-stimulated, and through that, we can remember the same thing again. Synaptic plasticity increases the likelihood of nerve cells being reactivated as memories are renewed, strengthening the memory.

**What is social memory? How does it differ from other memories?**

When we first meet someone, their memory is recorded in specific nerve cells in our brain. When we meet that person again, that person will not be a stranger. For that reason, the same nerve cells that recorded the memories of that person are reactivated. Thus, our memories while wandering in different social environments are called social memories. Such memories are different from memories of places we went to or facts we learned. Social memory is formed through social interaction. Our memory of a person influences how we perceive and treat them. Therefore, social memory also controls our behaviour.

Knowledge of information analysis processes in the human brain is still minimal. Scientists in different parts of the world are continuing their research. It is hoped that this article will help more people understand neuroscience research and its potential and motivate children who are currently studying to do research.

- ANITHA AMMANATH





# Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder And Perfectionism: Know It All Now



**By Debjit Dey**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is something I have heard quite recently but have never much delved into the subject. As I started learning about OCD, I felt I probably had a few traits of OCD and hence made some detailed readings about the subject. Keeping aside the technicalities of the subject as usually perceived about OCD, mostly in a negative way, let's see how it's negatively popularised against being perfect.

Let's start with COVID-19. The medical community has advised everyone in the world to wash their hands multiple times per day in a specific way and for a specific minimum amount of time, correct? Now, one of the very common examples of OCD is washing hands frequently, as people are obsessed with cleaning. So, did the whole world have OCD during COVID-19? And I find still many people around the world continuing the habits picked up during COVID of washing hands, sanitising hands, and wearing masks while sitting alone in cars. OCD?

Take another example: obsession with symmetry is an OCD symptom. How about when you wish to see your hotel room well decked up with all the things that are nicely piled and decked up? or similar expectations in any shopping mall or hypermarket where we wish to see things symmetrically stored for both easy and aesthetic viewing. Or, for that matter, we all wish our home was always clean and decked up like a hotel room. But if our spouse is obsessed with such symmetry at home, we categorise it under OCD.

Obsession with certain things brings perfection. If great players are not obsessed with perfection, if great musicians and vocalists are obsessed with perfection, and if students are not obsessed with perfection, we will never have the Pele, Ronaldo, Messi, Elvis Presley, and MJ of the world. Unless the obsession for perfection is not harming anyone or intruding on someone's personal space, an obsession for perfection is always positive.

## What Exactly Is Perfectionism?

Before we discuss perfectionism and OCD, it is necessary to define perfectionism. To some extent, perfectionism can be useful. When compared to the opposite end of the spectrum, perfectionistic tendencies are usually preferred over "slob" tendencies. So how can you know what's good (not just nice, but ideal) and what isn't? According to research on perfectionism, there are two types of perfectionism: adaptive/healthy perfectionism and maladaptive/unhealthy perfectionism.

## Perfectionism that is adaptive and healthy

Adaptive or healthy perfectionism is related to psychological well-being and strong achievement in school and at work.

These characteristics set this type of perfectionism apart:

- Conscientiousness
- Behaviour with a specific goal in mind



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Excellent organisational abilities
- High expectations of yourself and others
- tenacity in the face of adversity

### Maladaptive/Unhealthy Perfectionism

In contrast, maladaptive or unhealthy perfectionism has been linked to discomfort, low self-esteem, and symptoms of mental illness. These characteristics set this type of perfectionism apart:

- Being heavily invested in other people's high expectations, such as parents or employers
- Concerns regarding whether or not you are doing something right
- Excessive concern with control Excessive concern with previous mistakes
- Fear of committing new errors

**ADHD perfectionism is a symptom that should be highlighted.**

### Perfectionism and OCD

Perfectionism, in its harmful form, has been closely connected to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Perfectionism appears to be more powerful if you have a high demand for things to be done "just right" or if you require assurance.

### Linked to a Desire for Certainty

For example, if you believe that your compulsions must be carried out perfectly, you may suffer from maladaptive perfectionism. It is not commonplace in these situations for people to feel that if the compulsion is followed out flawlessly, a dreaded consequence, such as the death of a loved one, will be avoided.

### Checking behaviours may increase.

If your OCD symptoms revolve around checking, you are likely to have unhealthy perfectionism. If you are not completely convinced that you have secured the door or switched off the cooker, you may return to check these items several times. This is linked to an overwhelming dread of making a disastrous error. You may be concerned about leaving the door open all day or burning down the house by keeping the stove on. Checking repeatedly promotes the notion that you are not flawless and may even be "losing your mind." This can make you feel even worse and less confident, which can exacerbate your checking behaviours.

### Can it heighten obsessions?

Unhealthy OCD perfectionism may feed obsessions. For example, if you have OCD, you may assume that you must have perfect control over your thoughts. When a strange or distressing notion enters your mind, you categorise it as dangerous since it is outside of your control. This drives you to pay even closer attention to the notion, which can contribute to the development of an obsession.

### Managing OCD Perfectionism

How can you deal with OCD perfectionism? The first step is to recognise your own OCD and perfectionistic tendencies. There are a few things

that can help you cope very well.

### Adopt a mindful attitude.

Mindfulness emphasises the importance of becoming less "invested" in our thoughts. Accepting that we have less control over our thoughts than we think can be quite beneficial in lessening the distress that often accompanies intrusive thoughts. Mindfulness meditation activities can aid in the development of a more objective awareness of our daily thoughts and emotions.

### Cognitive behavioural methods

Techniques similar to those used in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can also be beneficial. Cognitive restructuring and behavioural experiments, for example, can be useful in learning to objectively assess the risk and/or consequences of making catastrophic or even minor mistakes. Cognitive therapy can also be used to critically examine our assumptions about ourselves and others. You can learn to identify and alter these unhealthy ideas and behaviours by working with a therapist.

### Experiment with giving up control.

You may be requested to participate in distress tolerance exercises as part of cognitive behavioural therapy and/or exposure and response prevention therapy. This is your tolerance for loss of control. Examples include being barred from double-checking or changing something until it is "just right." Although this can be quite distressing at first, you will gradually build confidence in your capacity to handle a loss of control. Talking with a therapist is a terrific way to obtain a better understanding of your disease and get the input you need while you seek to decrease its impact on your life.

### Managing OCD Perfectionism

There are some things you can do to alleviate both OCD symptoms and perfectionism. Some suggestions:

- **Try self-help techniques.** Many of the self-help behaviours that aid in the treatment of OCD may also aid in the treatment of perfectionism.
- **Change your unhealthy perfectionism.** Addressing perfectionism in relation to the condition, in particular, is likely to help with many facets of the disorder.
- **Work on your overachieving habits.** Techniques that help overachievers deal with perfectionism may also help with OCD.

The most crucial aspect of recognising the function of perfectionism in OCD is to recognise how OCD is different for everyone. Whatever personality features a person possesses can play a role in the condition.

So, anyone with OCD, even superficially, and it's not harming yourself or others around you, be happy that you are a perfectionist, even in the smallest things in life.

- DEBJIT DEY





# KALAPANI NOW: THE CELLULAR JAIL OF ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS



By Brij K T

The name 'Cellular Jail of Andaman and Nicobar Islands' kickstarts a series of painful memories of the Indian Independence struggle. When I landed at the Veer Savarkar International Airport, it was the fulfilment of a journey to the yesteryears of freedom struggle, which is chained in the corridors of Kalapani.

Cellular jail is situated in **Atlanta point** almost 4 kilometres from the Veer Savarkar International Airport. Port Blair Air Port has been changed to Veer Savarkar International Air Port.



Same way, Havelock Island is changed to 'Swaraj Island' and Neil Island is changed to 'Shaheed Island'. Major General Havelock was the one who was particularly associated with India in suppressing the Lucknow siege in 1857. James Neil was the Brigadier General who fought on the side of the East India Company against the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. [It was renamed Shaheed Deep as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.]

As we enter the premises of the cellular jail, we feel some kind of different atmosphere altogether. I wandered, searching for the footsteps of the daredevils who sacrificed their lives for the dust in the corridors. I pressed my ears on the brick wall of the cell in an attempt to listen to the slogan "Vande Matharam." The feeble murmur of the warm breeze was like the sighs of the inmates.

**'Sarfroshi ki Tamanna ab hamare dil me hai.  
Dekhna ki zor kitna baazu e qatil mein hai!'**

I picked up these words from the silence of the gallows. Bismi Azimabadi wrote this Urdu poem as a tribute to young freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh. When young Ram Prasad Bismil was put on the gallows, these opening lines of the poem were on his lips!

The British ruled India from 1858 to 1947 for a long period of 89 years. When the British occupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1869, they used it as a prison. Political prisoners and hardened criminals from all over the British Raj were sent to the remote Andaman Islands as punishments.

The British used Viper Island in Andaman to deport prisoners, but they abandoned Viper Island jail once the Cellular jail was complete. The ruins of the gallows are there on a hilltop. Viper Island derives its name from the vessel HMS Viper, in which Lt. Blair came to Andaman in 1789.



## TRAVEL & LEISURE

In 1893, the British started the construction of the cellular jail, which was completed in 1906 under different chief commissioners from time to time. They used prisoners as labourers, built in the shape of cycle spokes of seven wings fanning out from a central watch tower. The seven three-storied wings were not of equal length. The panopticon idea was carefully adapted for effective surveillance and to manage the inmates with a smaller number of guards.

The cellular jail has uniformly isolated cells. The face of a cell will open to the back of the other cell, so communication between inmates is impossible. [The inmates were from several parts of the country and spoke different languages.] The so-called hell on earth has an independent thirteen-by-seven-foot cell that is secured with a sturdy iron bolt and lock on a rectangular grove on the outside of the cell. There is water around the jail, and it is highly unlikely to escape. It was referred to as Kalapani jail among freedom fighters during the independence movement. Kala is a reference to death, which was the inevitable end for those doomed to serve the punishment. Pani is the water around you. The inmates—I don't choose to call them prisoners or criminals because they are jailed for their demands for the civil rights of liberty and to live in their own land!



There was no toilet facility in the cell. **Two adjacent shallow dips are seen on the floor, one to serve food and the other to be used as toilets!**

The gallows are in full view of all cells, so they are forced to witness the dreaded executions. It is capable of hanging three prisoners at a time, with a door in the outer compound to carry the corpses out. The adjacent room is the kitchen for Hindus and Muslims.

Captain PF Brown, superintendent of the central jail in Jubbulpore, was appointed chief superintendent of the cellular jail.



In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Swadeshi movement, the partition of Bengal, and the emergence of extremist groups adopted violent methods. Revolutionary activists grew up in Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, and other provinces. Anushilan Samiti was the most active organisation that played a prominent role in planning and executing attacks on British officers, with its head office in Bengal and many other parts of the country.

The slogan "**Vande Matharam**," taken from **Bankim Chandra's Anand Math**, thrilled the revolutionaries. Among these thunderbolt workers were Barindra Kumar Gosh, the younger brother of Aurobindo and the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, and Bupendra Nath Dutt.

During the period of 1909 to 1938, the Cellular Jail—the Indian Bastille—was replete with the presence of the great personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. Among them were Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, etc., and many other eminent personalities. The list is long and distinguished.



Savarkar, the doyen of the Indian revolutionaries and the potential danger for the British Empire, was convicted and brought to the cellular jail with a display badge around his neck about his sentence. **Fifty years of punishment in Kalapani!**

I am not going into the details of their crime and punishment. Anyone who ever raised a voice against British rule was jailed and tortured. The life in the cellular jail was so dreadful and precarious that in every moment, some horrible experience awaited even the innocents. Gruesome torture and flogging were frequently resorted to on iron triangular frames, bar fetters, cross bars, neck rings, shackles, and leg iron chains. They were given a gunny-bag uniform. Unhygienic diets were other deterrents for those who refused to submit to the brutal wardens. Surprisingly, the jailors and guards, who were Indians like Mirza Khan, also made the prisoners' lives miserable. They were so cruel and carried out all punishments on their own brothers without mercy.

Food was served once every 24 to 30 hours. Rice porridge in rainwater with dust and wild grass was the food! The inhuman behaviour of British and Indian guards was beyond anybody's imagination. They were tortured mentally and physically. The sacred threads of the Hindu convicts were removed, and Pandit Ram Rakha attained martyrdom fighting for them.

The prisoners were forced to engage in backbreaking tasks like oil extraction and other gruesome work, and guards would be there to flog when they were not able to pull on. Many of them committed suicide or died of torture.

At last, Nanda Gopal and a few others led the first hunger strike in 1933. The Chief Commissioner didn't budge and said, "Let the dead bodies float in the ocean." During the strike, three patriots died, and a few were forced to feed.

**Rabindranath Tagore** was emotionally upset and remarked in his Telegram. "Your motherland will never forget her full-blown flowers." The campaigns of **Gandhiji** and Rabindranath Tagore brought some changes to the lives of the inmates. A handwritten magazine, '**CALL**', which had English and vernacular sections, was issued to them.

In 1937, they started the second hunger strike. Their political demands gave new impetus to the democratic movements in other jails. The political prisoners of Alipore Deoli, Berhampur, also started a hunger strike in support of their compatriots in Cellular jail.

The whole country awakened and supported the demand for the repeal of repressive laws and the repatriation of the exiled prisoners. The release of all political prisoners and the extension of civil liberty were the other demands. They transformed the cellular jail into an active centre for the freedom struggle. They dared any kind of suffering and even death to put their foot forward for their demands.

**Swaraj is our birth right. The echo in all cells.**

Eventually, as a result of the assurances made by national leaders like Gandhiji, Rabindranath Tagore, and Subash Chandra Bose, the hunger strike was called off on August 28, 1937, and the repatriation started from September 22nd onwards. At last, those who survived the treacherous and gruesome suffering were set free. The memoirs of the inmates, like Barindra Kumar Gosh's 'The Tale of My Exile' and several other biographies and autobiographies, narrate the inhuman tales of those

black days.

In 1924, Savarkar was released after writing several mercy petitions to the British. A biography named 'Life of Barrister Savarkar' authored by a certain Chitragupta was published.

The jail is a pilgrimage destination for freedom fighters. This colossal edifice has mutely witnessed the most treacherous of inhuman atrocities meted out by the freedom fighters.



The cells are open to the public, and the enclosure is where they were forced to engage in backbreaking work. The flogging stand, the gallows, the stone platform where the corpses are brought, and the isolated cells surprise you enough to make you wonder how someone could ever survive this inhuman torture. In total, there were 698 cells, and here, prisoners could be held in solitary confinement. Frequent executions took place in full view of the cells.

In the evening, there was a heart-touching film show about the history of Kalapani, right from the construction of the cellular jail to the sufferings and sacrifices of the inmates. The show runs through the independence struggle until we achieve freedom! The movie is projected on the walls and cells of the jail and on a screen in the centre, which brings those horrific days to life!

We could feel their presence as all the prisoners were shown inside the cell. The script and the presentation were so realistic that all the spectators were awestruck and immersed in some of the sung and unsung brave hearts. Suddenly, rain poured with thunder and lightning, but no one moved from where they were. Even nature was thundering. **"Inkilab Sindabdh!"**

***Tears rolled down along with the downpour. All spectators stood up and joined in when the national anthem of free India played, so it must have reached all the martyrs above!***

**Vande Matharam!**



**- BRIJI K T**





By Prof. Ujjwal  
K Chowdhury

## SURVIVAL BASICS FOR A EUROPEAN TRIP: KNOW IT ALL

Trip to Europe, solo or in group, is in the bucket list of Indians of all hues, the NRI/PIO variety and the domestic Indians as well. After a solo trip of 18-days, here I present my survival basics for a trip of this kind, here.

Group travel is always preferable to negotiate better for the hotel and some travel costs. However, if one has to travel solo, in-depth research is necessary. In any case, book flights and hotels months in advance to reduce the costs.

It seems it is better to get somewhat known places to stay, and need not stay in the heart of the city. Get general city and metro maps of each city, and have internet on cell. A recent group of travellers has gone to Vienna in a four-star hotel at just 100 Euros a day, having booked in July for October. I got City Hotel of Schwechat, just a few metro stations away from central Vienna, a three-star property, for 80 Euros a night which would be double at city centre.

However, the usual minimum decent room tariff in the cities of Europe is 100 Euro, decent meal cost is 20 Euro, decent snacks cost is 10 Euro. Average expenditure of a Day all expenses included is Rs.25,000 INR or 250-260 Euros, including the cost of various sites and museum visits. So, a 20-days visit to 6 European nations would cost Minimum Rs.4 lacs if alone, Rs.7 lacs as couple. Larger group

and advance booking can make it cheaper by around one-fourth. It is important to note that breakfast and wifi must be guaranteed while booking. They are not to be taken for granted. Be careful about check-in and check-out timings at each place of stay to avoid disappointments.

The best strategy in every European city on the first day is to have a city tour by Hop in- Hop off buses and select places to visit the next day. Two to three full days in a city is a good time. Also, a two days all-transport pass is the right way to travel in European cities as public transport system (underground metros specially) and signages are very well developed.

Specific cuisine and areas of interest must be identified in advance through research. Your personal must do list for each city should also be there. European cities marvel in history and historical monuments and hence prior research is very useful.

Be ready to walk 15000 to 20000 steps a day, 10 to 15 kms ideally for best experience. Have good quality handset and camera and learn using gimbal for sure. I travelled across Europe with a pro gimbal but not using it due to my ignorance of operating it.

The climate usually being pleasant, with much lesser humidity than South Asia, walking with Google Map or a physical map in hand is a bliss for





the able-bodied persons. However, be prepared for rain and cold wind. Yet travel light with half suitcase empty as the desire to buy a few things will always be there. Wash salons are there in every city.

For the Schengen visa, entering one nation (usually France or Germany) by flight is fine, but rest cities of the Schengen nations can be moved cheaper and with greater fun by bus or train. They are very clean and punctual. Schengen visa requires that you stay the longest in the first nation. So choose a major nation like France or Germany for your first stay.

Visiting museums, historical monuments, places of worship and walking across the cities are the

commonest work of tourists in Europe. If one adds visiting concerts, plays, cinema-show, a university or school campus, and surely the country-side, along with the usual, it makes the trip truly memorable.

Due to high costs, repeated travel is not possible. Hence, a well-researched, well-planned trip of Europe is always the preferred one.

My last trip was between October 7 and 25, and was spread across Paris of France, Amsterdam of Netherlands, Vienna of Austria, Bratislava of Slovakia, Rome of Italy, Vatican City, Hamburg and Frankfurt of Germany.

**-PROF. UJJWAL K CHOWDHURY**



FROM THE KITCHENS OF INDIA

# A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAKE

The Christmas Cake is a traditional and beloved dessert that is typically made and enjoyed during the Christmas season. It is a rich and decadent fruitcake that is often filled with a variety of dried fruits, such as raisins, currants, sultanas, and candied citrus peel. The cake is typically infused with aromatic spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, which give it a warm and festive flavour.



## Christmas Cake

The preparation of a Christmas cake usually begins well in advance, as it requires a period of soaking the dried fruits in brandy or rum to enhance their flavours and ensure a moist texture. The soaked fruits are then mixed with a buttery batter containing flour, eggs, sugar, and sometimes ground almonds or other nuts.

Once the cake batter is prepared, it is baked slowly and at a low temperature to ensure it cooks evenly and retains its moisture. After baking, the Christmas cake is often decorated with a layer of marzipan or icing, which is then adorned with festive designs and decorations. Some people also like to add a final touch by dusting the cake with powdered sugar or adding edible embellishments like edible holly leaves or berries.

Here's a simple and easy-to-follow recipe for Aloo Gobi, along with step-by-step instructions:

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups of mixed dried fruit (raisins, currants, sultanas, mixed peel, etc.)
- 1 cup of glace cherries, halved
- 1 cup of chopped nuts (such as almonds or walnuts)
- 1 cup of unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup of brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- 1 teaspoon of mixed spice (cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice)
- 1/4 cup of brandy or rum (optional)

### Step-by-step instructions:

1. Preheat your oven to 325°F (160°C). Grease and line a round cake tin with parchment paper.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the dried fruit, cherries, and nuts. If using alcohol, pour it over the mixture and let it soak for a few hours or overnight.
3. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Then, beat in the eggs one at a time.
4. Sift in the flour, baking powder, and mixed spice. Fold the dry ingredients into the butter mixture until well combined.
5. Add the dried fruit mixture to the cake batter and mix until evenly distributed.
6. Transfer the batter into the prepared cake tin, smoothing the top with a spatula.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for about 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
8. Once baked, remove the cake from the oven and let it cool in the tin for 10 minutes. Then, transfer it to a wire rack to cool completely.
9. For added richness, you can occasionally brush the cooled cake with a little more brandy or rum.
10. Once the cake is completely cool, you can decorate it as desired with icing, marzipan, or a dusting of powdered sugar.

The Christmas cake is typically served in small slices, enjoyed with a cup of tea or perhaps a glass of mulled wine, and shared with family and friends during the holiday season. It is a special treat that symbolises joy, togetherness, and the spirit of Christmas.

*Enjoy your delicious homemade Christmas cake!*

- WFY BUREAU



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# PRESTIDIGITATORS

By Rema Pisharody

Words are magicians  
With so full of life and laughter  
In a way they amass treasure mines  
Of strident idioms to entrap viewers..  
In one impressive rostrum..  
They enter the world to conquer  
With much pomp and poise  
Holding a wand that of gold..

Words are like migratory birds  
From a farthest forest,  
They fly across mountains  
and horizons to mould a nest  
of imagination to create,  
To recreate a million fables..

Words are prestidigitators,  
They glide beyond the territory of earth  
To touch upon the limitless sky  
To pluck a dream from the universe,  
To sing to dance with the cosmos..

Words are magnifiers and warriors  
They fight a war with no artillery or regiments  
They pierce the walls, invade terrains  
Speak in a million antonyms  
To fake a feel a love, to fuse to entrap  
to sedate the vulnerable heartbeats

Words are savants,  
However fall short of an alphabet  
to cop up the whole burden  
of a lost feeling or a petal of a dream..  
Words but take the lead  
To pretend to make believe  
That everything falls in its place..  
For real and unreal as in magic..

World perhaps a cover page  
Of a book of words  
Half read, half unread  
Half known, half unknown..





# Invisible Touch

**By Sarmistha Dey**

If I draw sight with words  
An ocean should be born in your eyes

If I planted a blood rose in the garden,  
Rose color should touch your lips.

If I embrace old age  
Your touch should cling to me like stubborn wrinkles,

If from the roof top flies away my beloved sparrow  
A hundred bulbuls should flutter their wings inside your heart hall.

If I gently touch my sweaty neck  
May your soul be thirsty,

If I wrap a blanket of light on the dark sky  
May one of your sleepless nights be mine alone.

If I see your heart on the canvas of my mind  
Your heartbeat should increase

If I smile gently and write "love" with the scratch of my pen  
That day you softly touch my ears with your lips and say, love you...

**- SARMISTHA DEY**





# Love Rooted In The Soul



By Sindhu Gatha

If there is love rooted in the soul...  
You can swim in any ocean.  
Can fly to the infinity of any space

Let's move forward with non-shaking feet  
that don't cut through the ditches

You can walk through the snow without socks

Even in old age, happiness can be rowed

An insatiable passion for life rather than death will arise

Everything that was put off thinking  
that it was not possible can be seen in possible in that moment

See the magic where everything you see becomes cool  
and everything you hear becomes pleasant.

Shades will be found in sun and roadsides

Spring blooms in hot summer

Earthly beauty will be seen in wind, rain, stone and soil

Even wounds will be sweetened

Have you experienced such a love?  
Anytime in your life?

- SINDHU GATHA





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# Diwali Celebrates New Beginnings And The Triumph Of Good Over Evil.

By  
**Sudha  
Mukhopadhyay**

## A REMINISCENCE

India's rich heritage, culture and vibrant traditions are reflected in its myriad festivals throughout the year. The festival that celebrates new beginnings, the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness, **DIWALI.....** just passed by.

**My CHILDHOOD-DIWALI memories are still intact in my mind.**

The main part of our diwali was always colourful rangoli, well-lit lamps, new clothes to wear and scrumptious food; what with all of my mother's kheer, besan laddoos and of course the gujias, papdis and varieties of mixtures ready for the occasion, well in advance?

From dozens of bright lights at my house entrance, to clay diyas and string lights distributed in each room of our home, the festive season was visible everywhere, from every nook and corner. The smell of incense, the acrid smell of burning crackers and the irresistible aromas coming from the kitchen are still vividly intact in my memory. The highlight of Diwali, which is the Laxmi puja, would be performed in the evening followed by a sumptuous dinner with the entire family sitting around the table and consuming all the delectables with merrh and laughter.

This festival always brought the whole neighbourhood out to enjoy the scene of fireworks, bulbs flashing and flames flickering. And each one of us watched endlessly in wonder. Diwali gave us the gift of togetherness, happiness and teamwork..... and more than anything, it gave us beautiful memories that would last us a lifetime.

Interestingly, while most of the country associates Diwali festivities with bursting of crackers at sundown, in Tamil

Nadu this happens by day, at the crack of dawn.

In West Bengal, this day is referred to as '**Kali Puja**' to welcome the Goddess who is an embodiment of a dark and dynamic feminine force.

Belonging to Madhya Pradesh, born & brought up in Tamil Nadu, married into a Bengali family, and having lived in the middle-east, I have tasted the best of all of my worlds. Thank you God, for everything. I can go to bed peacefully, remembering the good times and looking forward to yet another DIWALI, a festival that is a celebration of togetherness, of lights and of prosperity & love. It is a symbol of hope for humankind.

Sharing the wishes that I have read somewhere:

**"Light a lamp of love,  
Shoot a rocket of prosperity,  
Fire a flowerpot of happiness...."**

I am sure you and your family had a sparkling, spectacular, colourful and sweet DIWALI.

**-SUDHA MUKHOPADHYAY**





# The 10 Important Life Lessons Pet Dogs Offer

Embracing Wisdom: 10 Lessons Inspired by pet dogs

By **Kulmohan Kaur**

In a world that often feels like a whirlwind of responsibilities and challenges, the companionship of a pet dog provides a source of solace and profound life lessons. Beyond their wagging tails and boundless energy, our four-legged friends offer valuable insights that, if we pay attention, can enrich our human experience. Here are ten invaluable lessons we can learn from our beloved canine companions.

## 1. Devotion:

Dogs epitomize loyalty, forming deep bonds with their human companions that endure through thick and thin. This loyalty is not merely a display of affection but a powerful reminder of the strength that underlies genuine connections. By observing our dogs, we learn the importance of standing resolutely by those we care about, fostering a sense of loyalty and trust in our relationships.

## 2. Curiosity:

Dogs approach the world with boundless curiosity. Every rustle of leaves, unfamiliar scent, or intriguing sound becomes an opportunity for exploration. In our fast-paced lives, where routine can dull our sense of curiosity, dogs encourage us to embrace our inquisitive nature, discovering the richness of the world around us.

## 3. Tenacity:

When a dog sets its sights on a goal, whether it's catching a ball or mastering a new trick, they exhibit unwavering perseverance. Dogs don't easily give up, and their determination serves as an inspiration for

humans facing challenges. Learning from our pets, we can adopt a resilient attitude, facing obstacles with the belief that perseverance will lead to success.

## 4. Forgiveness:

Dogs possess an unparalleled ability to forgive. Whether it's an unintentional step on a paw or a missed mealtime, dogs quickly let go of grievances and continue to love us unconditionally. This forgiveness is a powerful lesson for humans who often struggle to release the weight of past mistakes. By learning to forgive and let go, we can foster healthier relationships and create a more positive and forgiving environment.

## 5. Self-Care Instincts:

One remarkable behavior dogs exhibit is their instinct to stop eating when they're unwell. Unlike humans who might force themselves to eat when feeling under the weather, dogs instinctively recognize the importance of rest and recovery. This teaches us a valuable lesson about listening to our bodies and prioritizing self-care, especially during times of illness or stress.

## 6. Prioritizing Rest:

Dogs are masters of the art of rest. They don't underestimate the importance of a good nap or a peaceful night's sleep. In a society that often glorifies busyness, dogs remind us of the necessity of rest for physical and mental well-being. By prioritizing sufficient rest, we can enhance our productivity, mood, and overall quality of life.

## 7. Living in the Moment:



Dogs have an innate ability to live in the present, a skill many humans struggle to master. While we often find ourselves preoccupied with the past or worried about the future, our canine friends revel in the current moment. Whether it's chasing a ball, enjoying a belly rub, or basking in the sun, dogs teach us the importance of embracing the now. Their zest for life serves as a gentle reminder that every moment is a gift to be savored.

#### **8. Unconditional Love:**

Perhaps one of the most remarkable qualities of dogs is their capacity for unconditional love. Regardless of our flaws, mistakes, or bad days, our furry companions love us with unwavering devotion. Learning from our pets, we can strive to cultivate more unconditional love in our own lives, fostering deeper connections with those around us. Dogs exemplify the power of acceptance and remind us that love, in its purest form, transcends imperfections.

#### **9. Celebrate Small Victories:**

For a dog, every walk, every treat, and every game of fetch is a cause for celebration. Their ability to find joy in the simplest pleasures serves as a powerful lesson for humans. In our pursuit of grand achievements, we often overlook the small victories that make life meaningful. Dogs encourage us to appreciate the little triumphs, finding happiness in the everyday moments that collectively shape our lives.

#### **10. Expressing Happiness after Separation:**

Dogs are masters at demonstrating sheer happiness upon reuniting with their loved ones after a period of separation. Whether you've been gone for a few minutes or several hours, the exuberant tail wags and joyful leaps speak volumes. This teaches us the significance of appreciating the people we care about and expressing genuine happiness when reconnecting after time apart. It underscores the importance of cherishing our relationships and celebrating the moments of reunion.

Our pet dogs are not just adorable furry companions; they are wise mentors imparting valuable lessons on living a fuller, more meaningful life. As we navigate the complexities of life, let's not forget to look to our loyal companions for guidance on how to live our best lives— one paw print and one wagging tail at a time.

**-KULMOHAN KAUR**





By Vanshika Arya

# The Ultimate Overthinking Cure: Know It All Here

## Overthinking: Know the Ultimate Overthinking Cure

***"A wandering mind is an unhappy mind," said Matthew Killingsworth.***

To be able to think is a superpower, a vital role that humans are given to do and perform for the betterment of our society, but what about the time when our thinking process decides, **"HEY THERE FELLA! I AM GOING TO BE HERE A LITTLE LONGER AND MAKE YOUR LIFE A LITTLE HARD TO DEAL WITH."**

Then what??? Do we have any answers for this? Or is it just something that, in today's already "life is so hard" phase, makes it a nonexistent problem?

As a young adult, I go through the everyday life struggles that everyone faces and that every individual has once faced or will face, like:

1. Am I doing enough for my future?
2. Am I very behind in life?
3. Where am I going with life?
4. How am I supposed to deal with this?

I would say that after and before any life-altering event, we go through 1000, or maybe more than 1000, questions in our heads just so that we can make the correct decision for ourselves. But in my 22 years of life, I have realised some things. One of the most important lessons that I learned as an individual is "don't be rigid."

The more I think about a problem, the more I involve myself in an unhealthy cycle of "what-ifs." I have ended up crying like a little girl who was afraid of running in relays just because she was afraid to run in the race.

Throughout 2023, I worked hard on finding ways that worked for me to deal with my overthinking so that even though I may sometimes end up making a not-so-good decision, I smiled my way through the next

chapter and made it work for myself instead of surrendering myself to my overthinking.

Here are some of the good ways to deal with your overthinking and your mental well-being:

**Don't react:** The first mistake that we make as people is that we give an instant reaction to any problem; we don't give ourselves the time to think it through. It might be for many reasons, maybe because you were too attached to that particular dream, person, job, habit, etc. But you can look back at those situations and think that if you had reacted a little differently, the outcome would have changed easily.

Your situations don't define you; how you react to them does. For example, instead of letting your emotions get the best of you, take a step back, take a pause from a situation, and then react. A calmer mindset allows you to not react extravagantly to anything, and you can process the situation easily.

I use this method when I deal with any argument that arises. If I see myself breaking down negatively, I take a step back, allow the event to run through my mind, and return back with my points in a calmer tone because finding a solution in an argument should be the main goal.

**LEARN TO RESPOND:** Now we know that reacting isn't the first step to start with, so we have to find another way. An efficient way to deal with your overthinking is to learn how to respond instead of react.

Now, the major difference between reacting and responding is that responding lets you create a space between the event and your emotions and allows you to change the directives of the event. Learning how to respond also allows you to have that patience and





discipline as well, because a person who knows how to respond has that calm aura around them that comes with a lot of practice for patience and discipline.

For example, once a minor accident occurred at my home and my cousin sister got injured, at one hand my whole family was panicking and they were shouting and hovering around her, but I saw my father responding to the situation; his primary instinct was to get out of the house and bring the doctor to our home instead of crying and shouting or hovering around my cousin sister. Within minutes, the doctor was there, and the situation was uncontrollable.

This is how a person should respond. In one scenario, I saw people reacting to an event and not being able to do anything, but on the other hand, I saw my father responding quickly to an event and handling it. That is why learning how to be patient and when to respond is very effective for finding solutions.

**See A RED DOT:** We often give ourselves to negative self-talk or to negative talk about other people because this motion is easier. Negative self-talk lets you create a habit of getting used to the negatives of people and of yourself.

What I do when I notice myself negatively talking is picture a big red dot to remind myself to stop. STOP RIGHT THERE AND DO NOT GO FURTHER.

I give affirmations to myself, talk to myself gently, and remind myself of my good habits. Earlier, I used to only focus on the things that I couldn't perform well on, but then I applied this method and switched myself off from that situation. I create a healthy space for myself and only involve people of positive aura in that so that I can create a peaceful environment for me.

To achieve something good in life, you have to stop with the negatives. And start with the positives so that

you can manifest the goodness of life, hard work, and destiny. For example, when I notice myself criticising alone or negatively talking, I look in the mirror and then reassure myself by reminding myself of the positive habits in me. I list my good habits, read them out loud to myself, and find my forte.

Keep in mind that it is okay to introspect and find faults in your behaviour, but at the same time, it is unhealthy to constantly think about the negatives in life and be in an unhealthy cycle with no end. When you introspect, find solutions, not complaints.

**1-2-3 METHOD:** I found this method very effective and useful. What I do when I encounter any unwanted situation is count to 3, and at the exact 3 seconds, I shift myself to another event.

That is, I no longer allow myself to sit in the same position and shift to the next one. We can do this by quite literally changing our surroundings. You can take a walk, run errands, do some other work, carry out hobbies—anything that could distract you from the negative self-talk. I find this method very productive for myself.

It allows you to remove yourself from the negatives, gives you space to change the narratives of the situation, and allows you to be productive at the same time. For example, when I encounter an event that brings me stress and I know it will take me into a negative cycle, I count to 3 and then shift to my hobbies like writing, reading, working out, or anything that shifts my perspective and surroundings and allows me to have that space.

It's easy to get lost in a maze when you overthink things. We are all capable of becoming mired in apparently never-ending cycles of worried thoughts and dead ends, no matter how much we examine, assess, and worry.

There are those of us who are prone to constant dissection. Our surroundings can sometimes be the problem. The truth is that we actually respond to stress that is perceived rather than tension that is genuine. The majority of overthinkers are aware of the seriousness of the emotional and physical effects of excessive analysis, including weariness, anxiety,

and trouble sleeping. In the worst situations, it can ruin relationships and lives. Nevertheless, we can develop the necessary skills to control our cognitive processes, regardless of whether they are a result of nature or nurture.

It can be very challenging to identify overthinking for what it is, but doing so is essential to taking back control of our mental health. We must examine the interactions between our relationships, emotions, and thoughts in order to identify our triggers. This entails reflecting on our past experiences and probing further into our emotions and expectations. Then, with practice, we can overcome the overthinking habit and learn to trust ourselves more.

Stress is a universal experience that everyone encounters at some point in their lives. However, fretting and overanalyzing are not necessary. We can take a minute, confront our anxious thoughts with clarity and understanding, and build a space of positivity around them before engaging with them.

**-VANSHIKA ARYA**





# Indian Students Are Now In High Demand For Visas.

By WFY Bureau, USA

***Indian students received record-breaking over 140,000 visas from the US Embassy.***

Between October 2022 and September 2023, the US Embassy and its consulates in India issued an unprecedented number of student visas—more than 140,000. The US State Department said on Tuesday, "Our embassy and consulates in India issued an all-time record of more than 140,000 student visas."

The State Department of the United States said in a statement, "From October 2022 through September 2023 (the 2023 federal fiscal year), the Department of State has issued a near-record level of non-immigrant visas of more than 10 million globally."

Indian students received a record-breaking over 140,000 visas from the US Embassy. More than 1.2 million Indians travelled to the US last year, according to a statement from the US Embassy in India.

Half of the US embassies and consulates made more non-immigrant visa decisions than ever before. Furthermore, the statement stated that the US embassy had given around eight million business and tourist visitor visas—more than in any previous fiscal year since 2015. Additionally, the US embassies and consulates issued more than 600,000 student visas, the most since Fiscal Year 2017.

The statement went on to say that these accomplishments were made possible by creative solutions, like extending the authority for interview waivers, which let regular travellers who fulfil stringent national security requirements renew their visas without needing to go to an embassy or consulate.

"Looking into the future, we are exploring new technologies to assess opportunities to streamline operations, such as the option of domestic renewal in select visa categories," the statement stated.

The US Mission to India exceeded its target last month, handling one million non-immigrant visa applications by the year 2023. In a statement, the US Embassy and Consulates in India stated that over 1.2 million Indians travelled to the US last year, making it one of the most robust travel partnerships in the world.

Currently, more than 10% of all visa applicants globally are Indian, with 20% of all student visa applicants and 65% of all H&L-category (work) visa applicants being Indian. The statement further added, "The United States welcomes this growth."

In the meantime, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti paid a visit to the US embassy in the country's capital earlier this month to supervise the "unprecedented demand" among Indians for US visitor visas. 'Super Saturday' saw Garcetti as the special guest assisting the additional visa applications, according to the US Embassy.

**Unprecedented numbers of Indian students are studying overseas now.**

**Enrollment has sharply increased:** A record number of Indian students are studying overseas thanks to increased expectations, a rise in applicants from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, and an increase in the amount of financial aid and scholarships provided by foreign



universities. At the same time, the number of applications from Chinese students has decreased drastically.

More and more Indian students than ever before are planning to study overseas this autumn. There is a rise in applicants from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities as a result of growing desires for a career and education abroad. Furthermore, this coincides with international universities placing a greater emphasis on India by expanding their scholarship and financial aid programmes. According to several advisors, the number of students enrolling for the autumn semester has doubled from the previous year, and many of them are from Tier II cities. The US has seen a 25–30% increase in enrollment from Tier 2/3 cities.”

Another aspect is that the competition for talent from India has increased multi-fold after the pandemic, so scholarships and bursaries have increased as well.

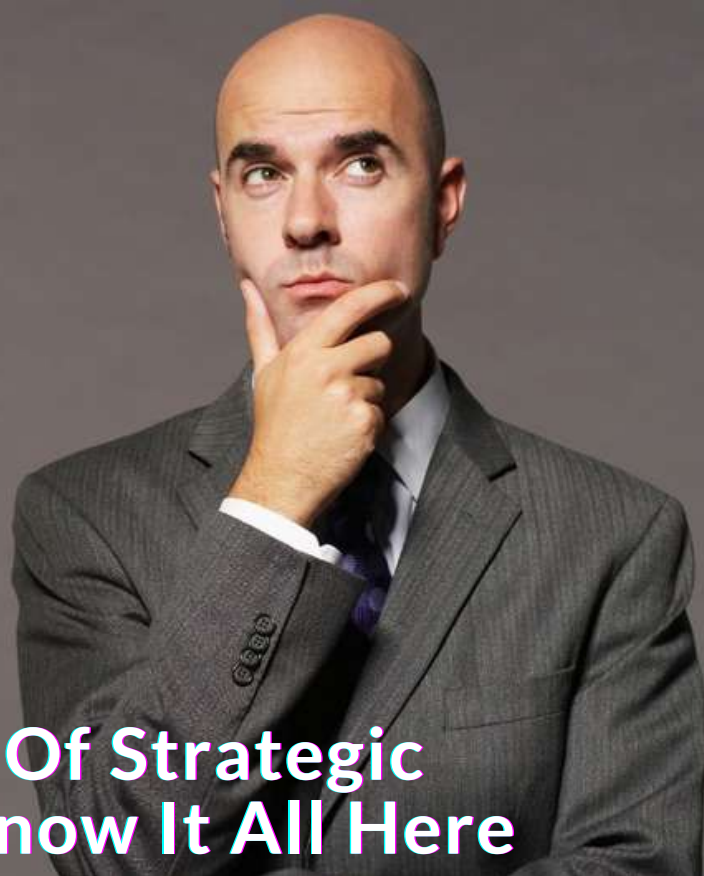
In addition, the UK government has decided to increase the cost of student and visitor/tourist visas. The British Government has announced that international visitors, including Indians, will now pay ₹1,543 (£15) more for a UK tourist visa valid for less than six months and ₹13,070 (£127) more for a UK student visa.

It was reported earlier that the Canadian student visa process will undergo a significant overhaul. According to a report, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) intends to introduce a new framework for trusted institutions to its student visa system by 2024. This framework is an essential part of a bigger plan to update the IRCC’s International Student Programme (ISP).

France announced last month that it too aims to welcome 30,000 Indian students by 2030, with the purpose of promoting academic achievement, strengthening cultural ties, and strengthening the two countries’ enduring friendship. The embassy and the French Institute made an announcement about the ‘Choose France Tour 2023’ in light of the programme. The education fair, which is being organised by Campus France and the French government, has taken place in four major Indian cities: Chennai on October 8, Calcutta on October 11, Delhi on October 13, and Mumbai on October 15. These education fairs have provided an excellent opportunity for Indian students and their parents to interact with the representatives of more than 40 French higher education institutions present at the fair and explore a wide range of study options, as per the Embassy of France statement.

**-WFY BUREAU, USA**





# The Skill Of Strategic Thinking: Know It All Here

By WFY Bureau

To put it simply, strategic thinking is the deliberate and logical process of analysing important variables and elements that will affect a team's or an individual's long-term performance in business.

Anticipating risks and weaknesses to be aware of and opportunities to seize is an important part of strategic thinking. In the end, strategic thinking and analysis produce a distinct set of objectives, plans, and novel concepts needed to endure and prosper in a cutthroat, dynamic environment. This kind of thinking needs to take market pressures, resource availability, and economic reality into consideration.

Research, analytical reasoning, creativity, problem-solving abilities, leadership and communication abilities, and decisiveness are all necessary for strategic thinking.

## How to Develop Your Capabilities in Strategic Thinking

### What makes strategic thinking vital?

For every organisation, the competitive landscape is subject to swift changes. Emerging trends could happen quickly, and you'll need to catch up with them or get left behind. You will improve your ability to predict, identify, and seize opportunities by implementing regular strategic thinking into your work and personal routines.

Individually, strategic thinking enables you to contribute more to your position, grow in importance within your company, and demonstrate your readiness to take on additional responsibility.

### How to Develop Strategic Thinking Skills: An Overview

It takes more than just strategic thinking to succeed in the corporate world. It's also your responsibility to convey such concepts clearly. Using metaphors and analogies, anticipating the effects of potential decisions, connecting disparate concepts, simplifying complex issues, elevating the conversation to focus on the big picture and broader context, encouraging dialogue with questions, demonstrating your knowledge, actively listening, and seeking feedback are some ways to achieve this.

Do you think strategically? Do important individuals in your company, such as your supervisor and senior leadership, share this opinion? Making sure that those around you see you as a potential leader is vital if you want to advance in your profession. Communicating in a way that demonstrates your strategic mind is one way to accomplish that. You cannot only use strategic thinking. Additionally, you must speak strategically.

### Here are a few methods to follow:

#### Enhance your viewpoint.

Describe the larger scene and explain the larger story, rather than concentrating on details. You can provide the framework for the discussion of the tactical details by utilising phrases like "Considering our organisation's three-year vision" or "Reflecting on the trajectory of innovation in our industry." Ensuring that all parties are in agreement is another benefit of this.

#### Think ahead.

Strategic thinkers recognise new possibilities and problems. Statements such as "Projecting our growth by 2028" or "In light of our competitors' plans, should we be?" can show that you are planning for the future. By taking a proactive approach, you show that you can assist the company in formulating a long-term strategy.

#### Expect strong effects.

In addition to making decisions, strategic thinkers evaluate and convey the decisions' wider possible implications. By emphasising prospective outcomes or unintended consequences—for example, "This product has the potential to..." or providing further detail with "Beyond the immediate benefits, our long-term gains include..."—you can demonstrate your capacity for critical thought. By doing this, you are demonstrating that you prefer careful thought over hasty decisions.



**Make the connections.**

Provide examples such as "This unexpected increase in digital adoption directly influences our e-commerce strategy" or "Because of these supply chain constraints, we must revise our production timelines and product development strategy" to demonstrate your ability to see beyond surface events to the larger picture of systems and interconnections and your recognition of their significance. By doing this, you demonstrate an integrative and holistic way of thinking.

**Make the complex simple.**

Those with a strategic mindset are able to simplify difficult issues and convey a lot of impact. Use justifications like "In essence, this technology can" or "At its core, our strategy rests on three pillars" to reduce complex problems to their most basic parts. You demonstrate mastery of the subject by accomplishing this.

**Employ metaphors and analogies.**

Metaphors and analogies aid in the accessible communication of strategic concepts. You can demonstrate your ability to translate strategic jargon into common language and promote greater understanding and alignment by using comparisons like "imagine our marketing approach as a net, widening to capture diverse markets" or "think of our infrastructure as the backbone, supporting every function."

**Encourage strategic conversation.**

Ask thoughtful questions like, "If our brand were a story, what chapter are we in?" or "How does this decision echo our company's foundational values?" while you're having strategic conversations with coworkers. This fosters a culture of collaborative strategic thinking and conversation, which will help you hone your concepts and inspire others to take a strategic approach to thinking.

**Demonstrate your knowledge.**

When your strategic insights are based on actual events, they will have greater influence. Engage in strategic listening. Statements like "Considering the recent changes in digital consumption patterns..." or "The most recent study on consumer behaviour indicates..." demonstrate your awareness of the changing environment.

**Engage in strategic listening.**

Divergent viewpoints are best incorporated into strategic thinking, so it's critical to actively and intently listen to others. Comments like "Building on what you've said" or "Your point about market saturation aligns with" demonstrate your ability to do so. These remarks enhance your reputation as a strategy collaborator, provide depth to the conversation, and spark the group's collective intelligence.

**Ask for feedback.**

Ask for feedback from others to demonstrate your learning focus after engaging in strategic conversations. To show your dedication to development and progress, use inquiries like "Did the strategic direction resonate with everyone?" or recommendations like "How can we better align these discussions with our broader mission?"

In conclusion, company executives need to be proficient communicators and strategic thinkers. The people who are able to articulate strategy in addition to developing it will succeed.

**-WFY BUREAU**

# UPI TRANSACTIONS ARE FREE; HOW DO THEY MAKE A PROFIT?

By WFY Bureau

**In an effort to diversify their revenue streams, payment companies are deliberately charging for certain transactions, including credit card payments and recharges.**

## **How are UPI mobile payment companies profitable?**

**Commission income:** Each of these enterprises has a brand placement deal with a brand and a commission on spending agreement with providers of daily necessities like bill payment, DTH activation, and mobile recharge.

## **UPI: What is it?**

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) created the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a ground-breaking payment system. Since its launch in 2016, UPI has completely changed how people in India send and receive money, pay with UPI payment apps, and carry out online transactions. By facilitating the easy and quick transfer of money across various bank accounts, UPI makes it possible for consumers to send and receive money using their mobile phones.

## **How are UPI payment apps able to make money?**

UPI payment applications facilitate safe and easy transactions by acting as middlemen between users and their respective banks. These apps make money in a number of ways, even though they provide their services to consumers for free. Let's take a closer look at these sources of income:

### **Merchant Payments:**

With the help of UPI payment apps, customers may use their smartphones to pay both online and offline retailers. These applications impose a small fee known as a commission, which varies from app to app but is normally equal to 1% of the transaction value. Merchants' increased use of them has fueled the rapid growth of this revenue stream.

### **Value-Added Services:**

In addition to standard fund transfers, UPI payment apps frequently provide other services. In addition to bill payment and mobile recharge, these value-added services also include investing in mutual funds, buying tickets, paying insurance premiums, and more. In order to gain access to the user base of UPI apps, service providers that offer these services frequently collaborate with them and pay a commission or transaction fee.

### **Cashbacks and Incentives:**

UPI payment apps give users cashback offers and incentives to boost usage and user engagement. Sharing a percentage of the revenue received from retailers or service providers funds these incentives. Through incentives like discounts, cashbacks, or awards, UPI apps draw in new users and motivate existing ones to complete more transactions.

### **Advertising and Partnerships:**

Partnerships and advertising are two relatively small sources of income for UPI payment apps. Nevertheless, they offer an extra source of income that can assist in defraying the app's development and upkeep expenses. Users of UPI payment apps usually see tailored advertisements depending on their past transactions and other information. These applications work with companies, retailers, and service providers to present their customers with personalised ads or deals.

### **Platform Fees:**

In exchange for using the UPI infrastructure, UPI payment apps must pay a nominal platform charge to the NPCI. This charge helps the NPCI, which runs and maintains the UPI ecosystem, to make money. Depending on the volume of transactions handled by the UPI app, the platform fee may change.



### Transactional Costs and Revenue Implications:

Although UPI payment apps receive funding from the previously described channels, they also have to pay for some transactional expenses that have an effect on their bottom line. Among these expenses are:

#### Charges for Transaction Processing:

Every transaction that a UPI payment app processes may incur a modest fee. In return for supplying the UPI infrastructure and settlement services, the banks impose this cost. Depending on the volume of transactions and the terms of the partnerships between the UPI app and the banks, the transaction processing fees may change.

#### IT Infrastructure and Security:

For UPI payment apps to function properly, a strong IT infrastructure and transaction security must be maintained. To safeguard user data and stop fraud, they heavily invest in cybersecurity defences, compliance frameworks, and technological advancements. These security and infrastructure upgrades have an impact on the entire cost of operations.

#### Customer Acquisition and Marketing:

UPI payment applications run strong marketing campaigns and customer acquisition activities in an effort to grow their user base and boost acceptance. Significant marketing expenditures and promotional costs are associated with these initiatives. Although they have a long-term effect on revenue growth, they also have an immediate effect on profitability.

Apps for UPI payments feature a strong revenue-generation strategy. Competitiveness is one of the main issues UPI payment apps face. Due to the increasing popularity of UPI, there are already a number of apps accessible on the market, including Gpay, PhonePe, India's very own Bhim UPI, and many more. As a result, it is anticipated that competition will increase in the upcoming years. As app developers attempt to draw in more users by lowering rates, this may result in a drop in transaction processing fees and merchant commissions.

Significant changes are occurring in the fintech business as payment companies are now looking at new

and creative methods to monetize their platforms, prompting big participants to reassess their revenue models. A recent action by Google Pay, a significant player in the digital payment space, best illustrates this emerging trend.

Google Pay, a well-known player in the industry, recently started charging convenience fees for cell recharges, breaking with its long-standing policy of offering users these services for free. With this calculated move, Google Pay now aligns itself with competitors in the market like Paytm and PhonePe, who have previously imposed fees on some types of transactions.

Convenience fees are applied to recharges of Rs 100 or more made through the app's unified payments interface (UPI) service. The fees vary based on the recharge value and range from Rs 1 to Rs 3.

Google Pay's conduct is part of a larger industry trend where payment platforms are deliberately adding fees for particular transactions in order to increase the variety of income sources they receive. Leaders in the sector are looking for ways to maintain profitability in the face of increased competition, moving away from the conventional approach of providing a full range of services at no extra cost.

#### Dominance of key market players

The National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI's) most recent data clearly shows the dominance of a small number of major firms in the payment market. In March 2023, PhonePe, Google Pay, and Paytm accounted for a significant 94% of UPI transaction volumes and 96% by value combined. Convenience fees were chosen because they support their overall objective of maintaining profitability while navigating the intricacies of the changing financial scene.

As payment companies modify their revenue models, this strategic change will have a wider impact on the fintech industry. These businesses are looking into new revenue streams due to the struggle for market share and the need to maintain steady profitability.

**-WFY BUREAU**



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The Indian Diaspora Global is organising a consultation conference with the two major stakeholders in Indian democracy

# National Democratic Alliance & Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance

In line with the

## “KEEP THE DOOR OPEN” Campaign

We are seeking ‘Dual Citizenship’ for the Indian Diaspora spread across the globe.

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#### Our Mission

To empower the diaspora to be a force for good through a global platform to collaborate, build community engagement and catalyse social change.

#### Our Vision

Make this world a better place by spreading the spirit of Indianism.

#### Our Focus

Let's celebrate the spirit of Indianism and rediscover our roots by rekindling the relationships.

**To empower the diaspora to be a force for good through a global platform to collaborate, build community engagement and catalyse social change.**

**We are a group of Indian origin individuals from diverse backgrounds and professions who are committed to inspiring the diaspora to be a force for good by providing a platform to collaborate, build community engagement, and catalyse social change.**

#### Connecting Dots..... Connecting Roots

Let's make this World a better place by spreading the spirit of Indianism. Let the World take note of us as the true Human and lead by our example.

Our Team, our members shall be committed to building stronger communities with a culture of giving and inspiring social change. We endeavor to engage culturally with the help of Indian wisdom passed on to us by our ancestors.

By sharing insight, hosting events and connecting people, Indian Diaspora aims to bring together the professionally, geographically and religiously diverse people of Indian origin toward collective action worldwide.



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