

CHALTA HAI ATTITUDE

The gut wrenching South Delhi fire tragedy in which 21 people, including 17 foreigners died brings us back to the basic problem with the Indian people. We are too casual in adhering to the rules and regulations; we often display the chalta hai attitude in as far as preventive safety measures are concerned. The ill-fated hotel-cum guest house was located in a very congested lane of a thickly populated area. It had flouted all rules of building construction and running a hotel. The hotel was always booked to its full capacity, due to its proximity to a local famous hospital. The rescue operation was stalled leading to the painful deaths of the guests. Today after the tragedy, everyone is wise and pointing out the irregularities in the running of this particular business place. Only if the enforcing agencies were as alert to enforce the laws and rules in time, many people would be living today. The tragedy must make all Indians reflect on their behaviour of not sticking to the rulers and regulation and at time taking pride in flouting the small rules that can make living in India more enjoyable. Throwing garbage anywhere, spitting in public places, flouting the queue rule, bullying and pushing each other while boarding buses or metros – surely are not so uncommon in many parts of India. While governments can lay down rules and give us authorities to administer them, the behaviour of people can make such a difference. Indeed India being the most populous nation has its own set of problems. It's not easy to administer 1.4 billion people, so the best way to implement the rules and regulations would be to instill a sense of pride in each India in being a law-abiding citizen. The Chalta hai attitude ends making our lives more miserable.

Shweta Thakur Nanda

In a world overflowing with viewpoints, conservation discussions often gravitate towards renewable energy, green hydrogen, smart cities, electric vehicles, battery storage, and carbon markets. These technological breakthroughs and innovations are presented as solutions that will shape our environmental future.

They deserve the spotlight. However, what often gets overlooked is that we cannot consume our way out of climate change. The real challenge is behavioural.

Ecological deterioration and climate change are often debated as problems created by industries, governments, and macro-level financial systems. That is true, but only partially. We cannot ignore how environmental degradation is also the cumulative result of our everyday choices and practices that we, as a society and as communities, have normalised over time.

For instance, disposable plastic continues to be viewed through the prism of convenience rather than as a harmful pollutant. Indians are increasingly using

personal vehicles for travelling short distances - even to a salon or a gym. We leave public places dirty while keeping our homes spotless. We compulsively buy fast fashion despite knowing its environmental toll. These seemingly harmless individual choices collectively form a large ecological footprint.

Consider this data point: globally, 92 million tonnes of textile waste is generated every year, according to the UNEP. And India is one of the largest textile and apparel markets in the world, and the third largest exporter in this sector.

The challenge is not only to build sustainable infrastructure in a country like India, but also to build planet-positive habits. Clean technology and dirty habits will not give us a sustainable future.

But there is a silver lining. India has demonstrated in the past that behaviour change is possible at scale. The eradication of polio required convincing millions of families to embrace vaccination. The adoption of LPG connections under clean cooking initiatives required changes in household behaviour. The change in sanitation practices was achieved by shifting

Charu Pragma

On the Menstrual Hygiene Day (May 28), Delhi CM Rekha Gupta raised a very powerful voice by promising No more silence on Menstruation. While many political leaders and public figures treat menstrual hygiene as a welfare issue and focus on just the distribution of sanitary pads, she is trying to institutionalise the apparatus and position menstrual health as a public health matter.

In her article, the Delhi CM also linked menstrual hygiene to cervical cancer awareness. "This (menstrual hygiene) will be directly linked to awareness of HPV and cervical cancer. Cervical cancer remains one of the most common cancers among Indian women, and it is also one of the most preventable. By connecting menstrual health to HPV awareness, we treat a girl's reproductive health holistically," she argued.

India needs to treat health as a continuous journey instead of just focusing on building cure infrastructure. While all the new hospitals, the increase in the number of medical seats, colleges, and Jan Aushadhi Kendras are essential to ensure that no one loses lifespan or healthspan due to unfortunate incidents, the focus should be on minimising the need for the same in the first place.

A good parallel would be the city transport infrastructure - the European cities initially focused on improving the road and metro infrastructure for city commute, but could never keep up with the growing population and its needs - later they realised that the solution lies in eliminating/minimising vehicle commute altogether and redesigned the city for pedestrian and cycle traffic. And the result of this is that European cities are cleaner, the population is healthier, and the quality of life is much better. Similarly, we need to minimise the need for healthcare infrastructure by focusing on preventive healthcare.

Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunjji

The passing of celebrated personalities around the world draws millions into mourning - flowers laid at memorials, heartfelt tributes pouring in, and a collective sense of loss that transcends borders. These moments of grief reveal something profound: that certain individuals carve themselves so deeply into human hearts that their absence feels like a wound to the world itself.

Yet beyond the tears and tributes lies a deeper invitation - one that most of us decline. Each such departure is, in truth, a mirror held up to our own lives. If we were wise, we would pause and ask ourselves: Am I living meaningfully?

Am I leaving something worthwhile behind? These events carry within them the quiet whisper of a higher order, nudging us toward self-reflection and moral awakening. Seen rightly, the death of a great soul is not merely an ending - it is a rung on a ladder, an opportunity to rise higher in our own consciousness and conduct.

Sadly, human nature in this age is deeply lethargic. The jolt of grief stirs

cleanliness from a private chore to a collective civic duty. Alongside social change, India has also achieved financial revolutions through behaviour change. Consider how UPI and QR codes have transformed our financial transactions. In May 2026, 23.2 billion UPI transactions were carried out in India - a 24% year-on-year growth, according to data from the National Payments Corporation of India. As per NPCI, Indians carry out an average of 748 million daily transactions worth Rs 96,465 crore. From humble vegetable vendors to luxury showrooms, from es-

Cervical cancer prevention: Why linking HPV awareness matters



According to the WHO, cervical cancer is the 2nd most common cancer after breast cancer among women in India. Cervical Cancer is primarily driven by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and our country accounts for roughly 20% of the global cervical cancer burden against 18% of the global population. Cervical cancer is preventable through vaccination administered between the ages of 9 and 14 before any exposure to the virus.

Adolescence represents a narrow, vital developmental window. Treating menstruation, reproductive education, and cancer prevention as completely separate may make sense from a curative point of view, but from a preventive lens, all of this could be dealt with a holistic strategy. When a young girl learns about her reproductive system in early teens, this is the right time to introduce her to the preventive vaccination framework, also.

Many authoritative studies have pointed out that schools are the basis for preventive healthcare interventions. Sensitisa-

tion about HPV and the vaccination to prevent the same will end the pandemic and will make our coming generations healthy and productive.

For too long, India has focused on curative healthcare despite being a low-per-capita-income country. While we see the 'prevention is better than cure' slogan in almost every other clinic and hospital, preventive healthcare has not been the focus of the community or the policymakers. India has one of the highest out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures (OOPHE) in the world at 43%. It was even higher, 64 per cent a decade ago, but thanks to the Modi government's focus on healthcare infrastructure and improved spending, the ratio has decreased significantly. However, in a lower-middle-income country, people cannot afford to pay 43% OOPHE, which means the majority of India's population is one medical bill away from being pushed below the poverty line.

The people of the United States, with a per capita income of around 90,000 dol-

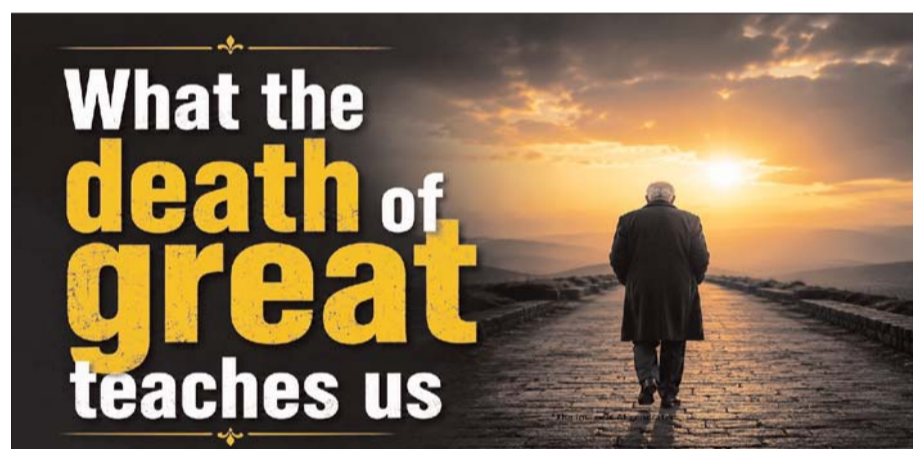
lars (30 times that of India), can afford to pay OOPHE, and most of Europe has fully public healthcare, but given India's stage of development, both of these models are unsustainable for us. T

hus, we have to focus on preventive healthcare in a big way if we want to have a healthy country that can reap the benefits of the demographic dividend by participating in the economy. Various studies have shown that health is directly linked to productivity, and as the cases of obesity, diabetes, breast and cervical cancer increase, the productivity of our young population will go down. If this demographic window is lost, India risks becoming old before becoming rich, and unless the country focuses on preventive healthcare to improve the healthspan and lifespan of the population, this risk will linger on.

Therefore, our political leaders and public figures need to work on this on a war footing.

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WHAT THE DEATH OF GREAT TEACHES US



something noble within us briefly. We feel moved to be better, kinder, more purposeful. But this feeling, like white froth on murky water, quickly fades. The noise of daily ambition and petty preoccupations returns, and we sink back into our familiar slumber, unchanged.

And yet, the lesson remains, patient and enduring. No matter one's worldview or philosophy, one truth stands undeniable: a life devoted to love, compassion, and selfless service to the suffering leaves the deepest and most lasting impression on humanity.

Wealth, power, and fame erode with

time - but genuine kindness and devoted service to others etch themselves permanently into the memory of the world. This is why millions weep for those they have never personally met. They are not mourning a body - they are mourning a spirit that elevated them.

This very observation raises a searching question. If a human being is nothing more than flesh, blood, and brain, then whom exactly do we mourn when that body lies lifeless and cold? To whom do we pray for peace? Why do virtues like compassion, love, and selflessness feel so distinct - so often in conflict - with our purely physical impulses and de-

sires? Does not a person sometimes willingly sacrifice their very body for a moral cause, suggesting that something within us stands apart from and above the material?

When one considers these questions honestly, alongside the vast body of accounts relating to near-death experiences, out-of-body states, and reincarnation, a compelling conclusion begins to emerge. The true actor behind the drama of life is not the body but the soul - a non-material, conscious entity that wears the body as a costume and uses it as an instrument to act, experience, and evolve. The body enables sensation; the soul gives meaning.

Embracing this truth transforms everything. Sorrow loses its stranglehold. Pettiness loses its appeal. Life gains urgent and beautiful purpose. Most importantly, this truth reminds us that our time here is not guaranteed. We must not postpone the good we intend to do, the love we mean to give, or the service we hope to render. Death teaches us, above all, to truly live - and to live well, beginning now.

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Clean tech, dirty habits: India's sustainability paradox



similar shift. Where environmental campaigns fall short is that the majority of messaging around ecological conservation is hinged on guilt, fear, or risk. People are constantly cautioned that climate change is an existential threat and that pollution is catastrophic. None of it is untrue. Yet fear, threat, or guilt rarely bring about the desired behavioural change. People gradually become indifferent.

Can carrying a steel water bottle be seen as modern rather than frugal? Can waste segregation become as socially expected as wearing a seatbelt while driving? Can carrying cloth bags to buy groceries be celebrated rather than invite raised eyebrows from neighbours? Can reusing clothes or taking public transport indicate civic maturity rather than economic limitation? Can we conserve water not as a sacrifice, but as responsible citizenship?

Social norms matter because human beings are deeply influenced by what they observe around them - they connect with and mirror their peers. Is it not the same principle on which the creator economy is flourishing?

So, when planet-positive behaviour becomes more visible and admired,

and its adoption is celebrated, change will happen faster.

India's upwardly mobile middle class will play a crucial role in this transition. Rising income is changing consumption patterns. The question now is whether a resource-intensive lifestyle or planet-positive choices will be seen as symbols of growth, status, and societal maturity. Slight nudges often accomplish results that regulations alone cannot. That is why public policy should consciously adopt behavioural insights.

The real transition will not happen in laboratories, industries, or boardrooms alone - it will happen in kitchens curbing food waste, in offices reducing consumption, in gated communities managing waste responsibly, and in people choosing how they shop, travel, and use resources.

Technology will remain vital in mitigating ecological challenges. But technology alone cannot build climate resilience - it equally depends on changing our habits: the way we live, consume, and care.

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