

## EYE OPENER

What is happening in West Bengal's villages and towns with the Trinmool Congress activists after party was defeated is an eye opener. The wrath of public for those who behaved as thugs and bullies when their party was in power is the best treatment they deserve. People are hounding TMC leaders who had taken bribes from them promising housing under PM Awas Yojna, which is a free scheme. They are gunning for those who had bullied them. Almost daily, one gets the news about incident of mob fury against TMC leaders. Though disturbing, these incidents also show the power of democracy. The common people who were somehow putting up with the TMC goons, waited for their moment. In a democracy, the people have the power to throw out a corrupt regime and this is what the voters of West Bengal did. This is a lesson for all the political parties, activists and leaders – the people are watching and judging them patiently.

## CRICKET'S WONDERKID

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, 15, has become the youngest Indian to be included in the national cricket team. His selection by the BCCI came when it announced Indian squad for the Tokyo Asian Games, where for the first time, cricket will be played. His performance and above all social behaviour in the recently concluded IPL 2026 touched everyone. He broke down like a small child – which he is – when his team Rajasthan Royals was defeated in the tournament. Behind his success and charm is years of hardwork and his father's dream to see his son play for India. As a kid, he would face at least 600 balls per day during practice. Interestingly, the BCCI has requested Vaibhav's parents to accompany him for the international matches to support him in settling down in a team of adults and in foreign lands. Vaibhav's rise has ignited thousand dream across India.

## India's broken exam system needs radical overhaul

Sanjay Rohmetra

The recently published newspaper reports on the second NEET paper leak and glitches found in the evaluation of the CBSE examination call for immediate attention to the assessment process being followed in the country. There is a need to re-think or reimagine the system of evaluation to get rid of a bygone educational framework and save the future of our country. Last year, some recommendations were made by the National Testing Agency on NET, NEET, and CUET. But these recommendations are not going to serve the purpose. They will limit learners to rigid, quantifiable answers rather than evaluate reasoning, creativity, and understanding of complex issues. The technology of today, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which use reinforcement-based learning, has immense potential to personalise assessments and analyse problem-solving processes.

Consequently, there are currently no restrictions on creating a question paper. Each question on the question paper can be different and yet have an equal level of difficulty for everyone. Furthermore, by utilising AI and AGI, everyone can receive feedback on his or her errors and the marks that have been deducted. It is crucial that forward-thinking and futuristic approaches be used to show the rest of the world that Bharat is leading the way in education and assessment, while simultaneously raising student performance.

Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary education have all been advocated



by NEP 2020. Therefore, any kind of restriction on course selection would never be fruitful. We cannot miss Tagore's vision of the "joy of learning" in the quagmire of searching for solutions to the leakage of question papers. Looking at the vastness of the country and the huge population of aspirants, we need to be more creative in our solutions. We cannot reduce exams and evaluations to a level of mere ritual. Due respect needs to be paid to the variety of ways people learn, think critically, and innovate. Frustration is writ large on the faces of students when they are made to run after scores at the cost of understanding and intelligence.

It is both an art and a science to determine what each student actually needs. Existing mediocre evaluation techniques, which mostly rely on examinations, are focused on rejection. This makes it much more difficult. Thus, the following are the main questions that must be answered: Do these tests fairly represent learning aptitude, critical-thinking abilities,

and knowledge absorption? What criteria should be applied to evaluate the relevance of assessments? Can the mental processes cultivated by the taught subject be evaluated using the current evaluation schemes? What standards may be established to comprehend how learning objectives influence conceptual cognitive maps? Are students ready to evolve successful creative ideas and adopt novel approaches? It is truly painful that, after so many years of Independence, we still operate with a beaten one-size-fits-all approach to gauge a student's ability. Human development is far too complex for uniform methods.

Students need not be treated as passive receptacles of information, which Paulo Freire called the "banking model" of education. He wanted students and teachers to co-create knowledge through active engagement. Such an approach would transform the role of assessments, making them tools for intellectual development rather than instruments of ranking.

Like Freire, Aurobindo Ghose's notion of "integral education" also considers evaluation as a reflection of a student's holistic development, not just his ability to recall information under pressure. In 1993, Professor Yash Pal's report, Learning Without Burden, equated rote learning with "the murder of curiosity". Expressing dissatisfaction with the current methods of evaluation, he said that essential skills like critical thinking, creativity, and inquisitiveness are being mercilessly killed. Further, in a country riven with social inequalities, Amartya Sen links rigid assessment structures with existing power dynamics, where marginalised groups are often deprived. For this, he blames systemic biases in education.

There is a need to explore various perspectives and tested models on evaluation. The STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) model blends arts and sciences to develop problem-solving and creative thinking among students, breaking down the arti-

cial barriers between different fields of knowledge. This is strongly reiterated in NEP 2020, which recommends project-based learning, portfolios, performance tasks, and formative assessments across all levels of education. There can also be a model that includes the appraisal of a learner's capacity or capability through his or her role as a team member in completing assigned duties. It can be argued that students can continuously develop if assignments are given individually throughout the semester. On the other hand, if numerous assignments are given throughout the semester to a team, an individual, as a team member, may achieve better performance. Therefore, instead of being restricted only to objective, subjective, or group tests, assessment can be a combination of these categories to reach an accurate evaluation of each learner.

Group tasks are generally of two types. In the first type, one bigger problem is divided into parts. Each learner solves his or her part and then the solutions are integrated. <

In the second type, all team members work together to address the problem and then integrate the solutions. Both approaches play a part in assessing the learner both individually and collectively.

Thus, a reimagined evaluation system is imperative, as the current framework, with its fixation on rigid, uniform assessments, fails to capture the breadth of intellectual growth and creativity needed in today's world. This call to reform the assessment method is not merely an educational aspiration but a moral obligation on our part as academicians.

## THE HIDDEN HEALTH COST OF EMOTIONAL DISCONNECTION

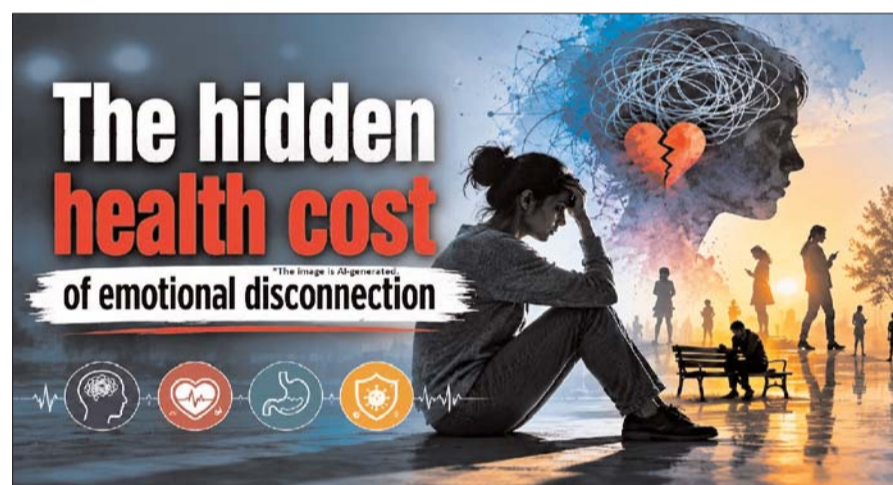
Pratiksha Vats

Many illnesses are not merely diseases of the body – they are expressions of an unheard mind. A significant part of human suffering today can be prevented, not only through medicine, but through awareness, emotional expression, and genuine human connection.

There is a quiet illness entering our homes. It carries no fever, appears in no diagnostic report, and yet settles invisibly into daily life – in missed conversations, in growing emotional distance between people who once shared everything effortlessly. In today's world, we measure love through responsibility – through how much we provide, how hard we work, how secure a future we build.

These intentions are genuine. But somewhere along the way, we have replaced presence with provision.

This absence is felt most deeply by those who rarely demand attention – our elders. Their meals are provided, medicines managed, comfort ensured. Yet emotional care remains missing. They sit quietly, near windows, watching time pass – not seeking entertainment, but connection. What they often hear instead are familiar words: "I



am busy," "Work is too much." These are not unkind words.

They come from responsibility. But over time, they replace emotional connection with explanation. Because love is not only measured in effort – it is felt in presence.

The World Health Organisation recognises that loneliness among older adults is not merely an emotional concern, but a serious health risk linked to depression, cognitive decline, and increased medical dependency. Loneliness does not remain only in the mind – it begins to shape the body. This pattern is not limited to elders.

Within relationships too, when emotional needs go unmet, they rarely surface as direct communication. Instead, they emerge as irritation, withdrawal, or unexplained physical symptoms – fatigue, headaches, persistent discomfort.

What appears as overreaction is often an unspoken need for closeness. A simple hug, a few minutes of undivided attention, can resolve what no argument can.

There is a deeper truth rarely acknowledged. In some families, attention increases when illness appears – people gather, conversations slow, concern be-

comes visible.

Unconsciously, a connection forms: \*when I am unwell, I am seen.\* Over time, this emotional adaptation may shape behaviour. Medical visits begin serving a dual purpose – not only for physical care, but for moments of togetherness. The root cause is not medical.

It is emotional absence. When emotional needs remain consistently unmet, a quiet cycle begins – loneliness leads to physical discomfort, which brings temporary attention, only for loneliness to return.

This cycle may gradually increase medical dependency, even when no purely physical cause exists.

What can interrupt this cycle is not complexity – it is consistency.

A few minutes of undivided attention daily, genuine listening, simple questions asked with real interest – these are not small gestures. They are emotional anchors.

Before illness becomes the only language through which someone is heard, we have the chance to listen earlier. Because no one should have to fall sick just to feel seen.

The writer is Nutritionist, Wellness Coach and Health Writer; Views presented are personal.

## From the forest to the Red Fort: A new tribal discourse

Avinash Negi

India's tribal communities have often lived at the margins of public conversation, even though they remain deeply connected to the soul of Indian civilisation. The Janjati Sanskritik Samagam held at Delhi's Red Fort on May 24 sought to change that reality. More than a government-sponsored cultural gathering, it became a powerful reminder that tribal identity is not separate from India's national identity – it is one of its oldest and strongest foundations.

For many who arrived in Delhi from remote forests and hilly regions, this was their first visit to the national capital. They did not come merely as beneficiaries of welfare schemes or participants in a cultural programme. They came carrying centuries of memory, tradition, and resilience. As tribal songs echoed through the

Red Fort and traditional drums filled the air, the event created a rare moment where the country's political center connected with its civilizational roots.

At the heart of the Samagam was the legacy of Bhagwan Birsa Munda, lovingly remembered as "Dharti Aaba" – the Father of the Earth. His 150th birth anniversary has become a rallying point for a wider tribal awakening across the country. Birsa Munda was not simply a freedom fighter who challenged British rule. He stood for something much deeper – the right of tribal communities to protect their land, culture, faith, and way of life.

When Birsa Munda called for "our rule" instead of the "Queen's rule," he was speaking about dignity and selfhood. He believed tribal society should not lose its identity to outside forces. That message continues to resonate strongly today.

The larger ideological vision

behind the Samagam also reflects a long-held belief associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – that tribal communities are not outside the Indian mainstream, but are an inseparable part of Bharat's cultural family. The phrase heard repeatedly during the event, "Tu-Main Ek Rakt" (You and I are one blood), captured this sentiment beautifully. It sought to reduce the emotional distance between the tribal citizen, the villager, and the urban Indian.

For decades, tribal communities have often been viewed only through the language of poverty, welfare, or backwardness. The Samagam tried to replace that gaze with one of respect and belonging. It reminded urban India that tribal traditions are not relics of the past, but living knowledge systems rooted in harmony with nature, community life, and spiritual balance.

Yet behind the celebration lies a

deep concern that many tribal leaders openly expressed – the fear of losing their cultural identity through large-scale religious conversions and outside influence. Across several tribal regions, there is growing unease that missionary-driven conversions are slowly weakening traditional customs, local belief systems, and community bonds that have survived for generations.

It is this concern that has brought the issue of "de-listing" converted Scheduled Tribes into sharp national focus. Organisations such as the Janjatiya Suraksha Manch have been particularly vocal in arguing that constitutional benefits meant for Scheduled Tribes should remain with those who continue to preserve tribal customs, traditions, and social practices. Their argument is that reservations and constitutional protections were originally designed to safeguard vulnerable indigenous commu-

nities and their unique identities, not to encourage religious and cultural disconnection from those roots.

Supporters of de-listing believe that if large-scale conversions continue unchecked while constitutional benefits remain unchanged, tribal identity itself may weaken over time. They argue that preserving tribal civilisation requires legal and constitutional safeguards that protect original traditions and discourage cultural fragmentation. Alongside cultural preservation is the equally important question of self-governance. Tribal communities continue to demand stronger implementation of the PESA Act in Fifth Schedule areas so that local people retain control over land, forests, and village institutions. For them, real empowerment is not just about roads, subsidies, or welfare announcements. It is about having the right to protect their tradi-

tions and make decisions about their own future.

At the same time, there is also a visible shift in the tribal landscape. Increasingly, tribal communities are moving from dependence to entrepreneurship. Government initiatives such as PM-JANMAN and the Dharti Aba Janjati Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan aim to combine economic development with cultural confidence.

Traditional tribal products – textiles, forest produce, herbal knowledge, handicrafts – are now finding larger markets. Platforms such as Aadi Mahotsav are helping tribal artisans connect directly with buyers while preserving the authenticity of their work. This is important because economic growth becomes far more meaningful when it strengthens identity instead of erasing it. Another encouraging step is the effort to bring tribal heroes and histories into the national main-

stream. For too long, the sacrifices of tribal freedom fighters remained absent from schoolbooks and public memory. Museums dedicated to tribal resistance movements are helping correct that silence and giving younger generations role models rooted in their own history.

The Janjati Sanskritik Samagam ultimately represented more than a cultural event. It reflected a growing national recognition that tribal communities are not passive recipients of development, but equal partners in shaping India's future.

The real success of such efforts, however, will depend on whether cultural pride is matched by long-term respect for tribal identity, traditions, and self-governance. India's tribal communities do not seek charity; they seek recognition, dignity, and the freedom to preserve the civilizational heritage they have protected for centuries.