

JUSTICE AND
TRANSPARENCY

World's richest man Elon Musk posted a movie 'Citizen Vigilante' on X after the governments across Europe denied its maker Arnie Hammer to show it for the fear of generating hate towards immigrants. Without going into the content of the film and the context of its banning by many governments, we must realize that technology has opened up the world. Such bans by governments have become meaningless in a seamless world created by internet. The governments have to deal with realities and not push them under the carpet. There is a lesson for all the authorities and power centers across the world. The cheap and freely available technology has changed the world and injustices and inequalities will be exposed rather easily. In India, when the movie Kerala Story or Kashmir Files was sought to be banned for it spoke about an uncomfortable realities. But the governments, including the one in Kerala, which criticized the film, rather wisely chose not to ban it.

REOPENING OLD CASES

The police investigation into SKIMS nurse Sarla Bhat's killing by the JKLF terrorists in the early nineties is a welcome sign. If anyone is interested in reconciliation in Kashmir, it can only come through justice and closure of killings. The case of sarla Bhat is not the only one to be probed: the government had reopened cases of even Kashmiri Muslims killed in cold blood by terrorists in those days where the writ of the state was weak. Everybody around knew the killers but nobody, including the police, dared to name them. The reopening of such cases will also give closure to the families who have been left to grieve for the loved ones and regretting that their killers are still around. This trend is part of the changing ground realities of Kashmir in which the Police is able to dig out details of killings by terrorists and files charges against them.

The echo chamber against Modi: When ideology outpaces evidence

Pramod Kumar Singh

Narendra Modi has won three national elections in a row, in 2014, 2019, and 2024, each time growing or strengthening the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. Alongside his continued popularity in polls, India has seen major improvements in infrastructure and digital systems. For instance, national highways have almost doubled since 2014, and digital tools like the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) now handle trillions of rupees in transactions every month. Internet connections have jumped from about 250 million to nearly 970 million. The government has also taken a more active role in foreign policy by joining the Quad, building closer ties with Gulf countries, and leading vaccine diplomacy.

Even with these changes, many Indian left-leaning writers, the Delhi-based 'Lutyens' English media, and much of the Western media still describe Modi's time in office as authoritarian and anti-democratic. This article argues that their criticism often reflects their own beliefs more than policy results, and that the pattern is less about careful analysis than a self-reinforcing echo chamber that uses selective standards and old narratives.

Modi's ascent, originating from a non-dynastic, RSS-linked background in Gujarat, bypassed the usual power structures. Because he reached out to people directly through rallies, his 'Mann ki Baat' radio show, and social media, he did not have to rely on traditional media. Many established English-language media outlets, which used to follow Congress-era views, have seen changes in their audiences and owners. As TV news has become more divided, some channels have backed the current government and focused on Hindi and regional-language viewers.

Critics call these channels 'Godi media' (lapdog media), but earlier media often



did not question Congress scandals or dynastic politics and rarely faced criticism for that. (BJP) policies challenge the traditional Nehruvian paradigm, which equates progress with Western-style secularism and state-led redistribution. Policy initiatives such as the abrogation of Jammu & Kashmir's special status (Article 370), the Citizenship Amendment Act (which expedites citizenship for persecuted non-Muslim refugees), and proposals for a uniform civil code are frequently described as 'anti-minority.'

However, the article argues that the available data indicate a more nuanced reality.

These international rankings deserve a closer look because they rely heavily on experts' opinions on issues like 'freedom of expression' and 'civil society.' On the other hand, clear facts, such as regular multi-party elections, voting rights for all, and peaceful changes in government, are presented as evidence of India's strong democratic record. Indian government reviews, including those from the Economic Advisory Council, have found problems with these rankings. They cite unclear expert selection, reliance on outdated polling data, and comparisons that may not fit each country's unique circumstances.

The Indian populace after 2014 seems to align with the BJP's rise in culture and politics more than with any real decline in election fairness. Similar rankings have been criticised for favouring liberal-inter-

nationalist ideas over local ways of governing in diverse, developing countries. The article says double standards are clear. Western media often closely examines how India handles dissent or communal issues, but gives softer or less coverage to similar problems in countries like China (with Uyghurs), Pakistan (blasphemy laws and minority migration), or even Western countries when it suits their politics. For example, India was criticised for buying cheaper Russian oil during the Ukraine war for 'values,' while European countries making similar choices faced less criticism.

Media stories about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and farm law protests often focus on 'minority rights' or 'farmer distress' but don't always provide sufficient legal, economic, or historical context. This is part of a broader trend: when non-Western countries, especially India with its Hindu majority in a mostly Muslim region, show national or cultural pride, they are often described as illiberal. Since 2014, India's path of economic reform, infrastructure building, modernising defence, and pursuing a more independent foreign policy has challenged the idea that every country should follow a Western liberal model.

As China's influence has grown, India has also taken a more practical approach, but major Western media still give critical coverage.

They often mention issues like control of institutions, mistreatment of minorities, and economic problems, usually linking them to investigations by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against opposition leaders, even though these actions happened before 2014, too. Opposition-led state governments also employ comparable strategies, and the judiciary continues to function as a check on executive authority. When media members are arrested, it is

usually for charges under current laws about incitement or other offences, not because of broad censorship. Critical digital and print media are still active. The situation for minorities is complex and involves different trade-offs. Hate speech and occasional violence do happen and are tracked by the NCRB and civil society groups.

What is needed is the well-being of marginalised groups across numerous communities. Assertions of widespread 'othering' frequently emphasise perceived intent rather than measurable outcomes and may neglect the policy context of illegal migration and security challenges following partition. The introduction and the early rollout of GST caused problems, and issues such as unemployment and inequality persist. Still, India has experienced steady, strong growth among the world's major economies, increased foreign investment, rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, and a push for manufacturing and services through PLI schemes.

There are real criticisms, such as gaps in policy implementation, increased polarisation, some government overreach, and uneven welfare delivery, all of which deserve fair review. But ongoing outrage often goes beyond the facts and shows more about existing biases than about what is actually happening in India.

Indian voters have chosen continuity again and again, no matter what international rankings or the media say. The changes seen under Modi, even with their flaws, force established institutions to adjust to a world where Western views are no longer the only ones that matter. In this changing situation, countries in the Global South are placing greater emphasis on sovereignty, development, cultural identity, and democracy. The ongoing echo chamber shows how hard it is to change deep-rooted opinions, rather than pointing to any one feature of Modi's government.

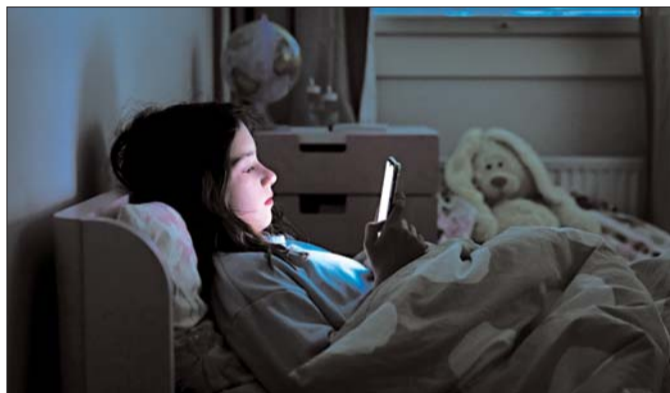
THE BLUE-LIGHT DIVIDE: WHY TODAY'S PARENTS ARE GIVING UP THE FIGHT

Nitin MADAN Kulkarni

It is one or two in the morning. All the lights in the house are off, save for a dim, blue glow spilling out from under a bedroom door. A mother wakes up in the middle of the night. She gets up to drink water and casually peeks into child's room. There they sit, a mobile phone clutched in hand, headphones firmly in place. Something is playing on the screen. Some game is going full throttle. Time has completely lost its meaning. This scene plays out every single night in countless homes today.

The next day, the cycle continues: sleeping until eleven or twelve noon, waking up only after multiple nudges. When they finally roll out of bed, a phone is in one hand and a cup of coffee is in the other. The body is technically awake, but the natural rhythm of the day is entirely lost. Staying up all night, waking up at midday, and staring at a laptop or mobile screen until the early hours has become the new normal.

Times change, technology evolves, and lifestyles adapt. All of this is acceptable. But the fundamental needs of the human body remain unchanged. The body requires physical rest. The mind needs deep, restful sleep. The eyes need darkness, and the brain needs time to regenerate and recalibrate.



Today's generation, however, is competing with its own biology. They seem to believe that with enough technology and data, they can outsmart human physiology and circumvent the bio-rhythms.

teens have flipped the clock, treating night as day and day as night. As parents, we watch this happen. At first, we speak up. We advise them with love. Then, we try to explain the consequences. We repeat ourselves. Sometimes we get angry; sometimes we plead. But today's kids have an arsenal of pre-recorded responses ready to fire back: "Our generation's life is different." Hearing the dismissals routinely, parents eventually fall silent. But their minds are far from calm.

They know from experience that if you

mistreat your body, you will eventually pay the price. At twenty or twenty-five, you feel invincible. But the small seeds of chronic sleep deprivation, erratic routines, a lack of physical activity, and excessive screen time are quietly being sown.

In time, those seeds develop and grow. Irritability increases. Concentration wanes. Communication within relationships dwindles, confidence falters, and worst of all, the simple joys of life begin to disappear. Yet, for parents, the most painful part isn't witnessing these consequences; it is the agonising realisation that they can no longer reach their children. Parents are not the enemies of their children; they are the truest witnesses to their dreams.

They are the first to pray for their success and the ones who break inside when failure strikes. They stay up all night during illnesses and celebrate their children's victories more than their own. When a par-

ent asks a child not to stay up all night, it doesn't come from a desire to control. It comes from love. It comes from experience, care, and a fierce, selfless fear: "My child should not suffer."

But when nothing changes despite endless conversations, parents gradually retreat into silence. Children often mistake this for apathy, thinking their parents no longer care. In reality, they care deeply. They have simply realized that the power of words has been exhausted, and that life itself will have to be the teacher. This silence is not a defeat; it is a sad acceptance. A heavy helplessness.

The day parents stop arguing, their worries do not end-on the contrary, they intensify. Because being a parent is a lifelong sentence. The nature of the anxiety changes with age, but it never truly disappears.

Therefore, I have one request for today's younger generation: You do not have to accept everything your parents say. You do not have to agree with every opinion. Have your own thoughts, make your own decisions, and live your life on your own terms. But occasionally, try to listen to the love hidden beneath their nagging. Because a time will come later in life when you will suddenly understand the weight of everything, they are saying today.

The US at 250: Patriotism, pageantry, and politics in its historic anniversary

MR Dua

COME JULY 4, the United States of America will be 250 years old as an independent, sovereign nation (besides the world's richest and perhaps the most powerful country). The 250th birthday of America will be celebrated nationwide as per the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence from British rule on July 4, 1776, along with numerous other freedom-ushering-in events preceding the anniversary celebrations.

America's semi-quincentennial 250th founding day celebrations commenced this year on January 1, 2026, nationwide when the historical, the Washington Monument, was lit with festive birthday by lighting a 'Gigantic Birthday Candle,' especially designed for the occasion. "The illumination of the Washington Monument marked the beginning of the momentous year for our nation - 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence."

Alongside multiple festivities, the Ultimate Fighting Championship event took place with prayers at the White House on June 14, 2026, which was also Flag Day, and President Donald Trump's 80th birthday. A fair, called the 'The Great

American State Fair,' will be also organized on the National Mall on June 25 that will continue until July 25, featuring exhibits from all the 50 states of the union on the phenomenal events of the American history, America's exclusive culture and nonpareil innovations, unveiling the 'Story of America's Journey,' - celebrating its "most spectacular birthday the world has ever seen," as desired by President Donald Trump.

These 'spectacular' shows will be organised and managed by national groups, namely, "Freedom250" and the "America250" under the U.S. Public Law 114-196, also known as the Semi-quincentennial Commission Act, 2016, during Trump's first presidential term. This statute laid down that, as per this document, "America250" has been mandated to "plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the history of the U.S. leading up to the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States."

During the whole semi-quincentennial year, 2026, 'America250', 'Freedom250', along with the White House Taskforce, will organise more than 60 national events during the nation's year-long birthday celebrations. Besides, other festivities will include massive cultural pro-

grammes associated with many other national events at the National Initiatives.

In addition, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for Public Impact Projects relating to literature, art and culture will be awarded up to \$200,000 per project under the 'America250' vision. The main object of which is to create the most 'inspiring and unifying commemoration and apposite celebration in the nation's history, bringing Americans to reflect on the nation's history and its future.'

Meanwhile, during the July 4 national Independence Day festivities in all 50 states, the president has touted a 'Great American State Fair' across the country and on the National Mall. The 'Freedom250' activities kicked off by turning the Washington Monument into the 'world's tallest birthday candle,' along with projections depicting the nation's 'discovery, expansion, independence, and the future.' There will also be "Patriot Games", a nationally televised 'Freedom 250 Competition for School athletes, boys and girls... particularly the Hunger Games for participants- (hunger games' is an annual event wherein there's a fight to the death and survival). Trump's approach to the July 4 birthday festivities is said to have been influenced by the 'Cul-

ture Wars of 2020.'

the newly re-established 1776 Commission, President Trump has tasked it with creating a 'patriotic' ecosphere by lecture series intimately related to the country's founding, to be broadcast nationally throughout 2026. The 1776 Commission's version of history is reflected in Trump's 'statue garden, which remains a key part of the president's 'America250' vision.

President Trump is said to have underscored the need to celebrate the 'American Exceptionalism,' according to an independent author, Mary L.G. Theroux. She further avers: "While we enter a year celebrating America's 250th anniversary, there will likely be much soul-searching about how well we have delivered on the promise - the Independent will bring much to the conversation."

Meanwhile, Keith Krach, the Chief Executive of Freedom250, who served as a senior State Department official during Trump's first term, has said in a statement that "the illumination of the Washington Monument", - invite every American - and every friend of America - to join this historic celebration of the triumph of the American spirit."

In addition, the 'AmericaGroup250' has planned a 25-minute projection that

displays recurring at the top of each hour each night, cycling through five themed segments: Discovery; Revolution- Independence; Westward Expansion; the Industrial Revolution and the 20th Century; and Modern Day and the Future of the Nation.

Some of these projections are computer-generated, and images were received from the National Archives and the American Library of Congress. All these and more kerfuffles were envisaged before Trump's second term commenced in January 2025. Soon after his inauguration on January 20 last, President Trump seized the opportunity and started planning 'America250', 'Freedom250', and the November 20, 2026. The President's executive orders were on the way, and soon after, on December 2. The initial preparations for all these works are also on the way. "We will renew the patriotism, pride and pioneering spirit of America," the President said in a December talk, "and lay the groundwork for the next 250 years."

Meanwhile, according to a recent report in the daily newspaper USA Today, the opposition Democratic Party has criticised Trump's America250 plans. The U.S. Treasury Department proposal to print President Donald Trump's face on a

\$1 coin commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and a quarter-dollar coin honouring national heroes from the abolitionist, suffragette and civil rights eras has been scrapped and will be replaced by the nation's early White pioneers and revolutionaries.

(America's) Opposition Democratic Party members of both legislative houses, Congress - the Senate and the House of Representatives - members (termed as 'Congressmen' and 'Congresswomen,') have vehemently criticised the Trump Administration. They opine that Trump's schemes shouldn't valorise a living president, and should reflect the full scope of American history.

Further, USA Today points out that it would be like policies under the Trump administration when the United States Mint made the decision in 2025 to feature the president's face on currency, which broke the long-standing centuries-old tradition. The lawmakers are also questioning the legality of the Trump coin (already issued) for all categories.

Be that as it may, most schemes drawn up under America250 and Freedom 250 are estimated to cost several billion: according to one estimate, between \$12 billion and \$15 billion.