

## AMARNATH BEYOND PILGRIMAGE

The Amarnath pilgrimage that began on Wednesday is more than just a religious travel. It's a common factor that binds Indians of all religions and caste. The trek to the cave of Amarnath at the glacial heights is a profound experience for the pilgrims, local service providers and administrators in human unity, divinity beyond symbols and tryst with nature. Above all it's a reminder that come what may Indians have faith in inter-religious unity. The Pilgrimage never stopped because of threats from terrorists, bad weather or something else. The pilgrims showed as much faith in the government's capacity to uphold the centuries old pilgrimage linked to Lord Shiva, despite challenges. The pilgrims who come from all over India and even abroad probably have no idea how much hard work civil official put in to make the pilgrimage a success. Thanks is also due to the security forces that keep guarding the icy peaks to make sure terrorists are not lurking around to disrupt the pilgrimage.

## LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE

Media must leave children alone and not manipulate their innocence and gullibility for TRP or viewership. Apart from social and moral obligation to protect the underage persons from harshness of media, the journalists and bloggers are also bound by the law to do to. Why is it that every time the media makes a sensational video of a child – as they have done recently in Srinagar where a school boy is shown mimicking a minister – they have to reminded that it's wrong and illegal? In this case, the authorities had to intervene to protect the child. The media regulatory bodies must lay down norms for self-regulation in such cases while the child rights bodies mush spread awareness and sensitivity about exposing children in the media, and above it, manipulating them for sensationalism.

## Arvind Mohan Singh

The story of Uttar Pradesh's healthcare system is much more than the story of hospitals and medical colleges. It is the story of a state that spent decades with advanced medical care concentrated in a handful of cities, and then witnessed one of the biggest transformations in its public healthcare system. For years, quality healthcare in Uttar Pradesh largely meant travelling to Lucknow. Today, that reality is changing. The biggest achievement is not the number of medical colleges built. The real achievement is that advanced healthcare is gradually reaching people where they live.

If we trace this journey from the British era to the present day, the biggest transformation was not the construction of a single institution. It was the decentralisation of healthcare. Modern medical education in Uttar Pradesh began during British rule with the establishment of King George Medical College in Lucknow. After Independence, there was an expectation that the healthcare infrastructure

would gradually spread across the state. That, however, did not happen. Lucknow continued to remain the centre of the state's medical ecosystem. Congress governments moved beyond Lucknow, but only to a limited extent. Medical colleges were established in cities such as Kanpur, Allahabad, Meerut, Jhansi and Gorakhpur, yet the overall healthcare model remained unchanged. Advanced treatment remained concentrated in Lucknow, while large parts of Uttar Pradesh continued to depend on the capital for specialised medical care. In effect, the system expanded geographically, but it was never truly decentralised. However, when it came to building centres for advanced treatment, Lucknow remained the obvious choice.

The Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party governments largely maintained the same centralised healthcare model. While a few medical colleges were added and the Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences was established during the Mulayam Singh Yadav government, it, too, was located in Lucknow.

Advanced medical care continued to be concentrated in Lucknow, and for millions of people across Uttar Pradesh, a serious illness still meant travelling to the state capital. In effect, there was some expansion in medical education, but there was no meaningful decentralisation of healthcare.

The healthcare system continued to revolve around a few major cities. Most people in Uttar Pradesh understood one simple reality. A routine illness could be treated at the district hospital. But if the disease became serious, the family would eventually have to leave for Lucknow.

The biggest weakness of Uttar Pradesh's healthcare system was not only the shortage of doctors. The larger problem was that advanced medical care remained geographically out of reach for millions of people. The story begins to change after 2017. For Yogi Adityanath, healthcare was never just another government department. His understanding came from years of public life in eastern Uttar Pradesh. He saw parents travelling from one hospital to another with almost no hope. Those experiences shaped his

understanding that Uttar Pradesh needed much more than better law and order. It needed a healthcare system where modern treatment was available closer to ordinary citizens. Perhaps that is why, after becoming Chief Minister, he looked at healthcare differently. The objective was not merely to build hospitals. The objective was to make advanced healthcare accessible. That became the foundation of healthcare decentralisation in Uttar Pradesh.

The government adopted a simple but ambitious vision. Every district should gradually have access to quality medical education and modern healthcare infrastructure. People should not be forced to travel to the capital for every serious illness. Advanced treatment had to move closer to where people actually lived. The vision soon began taking shape across the state.

Medical colleges were approved, constructed or expanded across districts that had never seen such institutions before. The objective was not simply to add new buildings to the government's records. Every new

medical college was expected to become the backbone of healthcare for its surrounding region.

Today, almost every district in Uttar Pradesh either has a medical college or one is under construction. District hospitals that once struggled with limited resources are gradually being upgraded to include teaching hospitals, modern operating theatres, dialysis units, intensive care facilities, blood banks, advanced laboratories, and specialist doctors. The transformation, however, did not stop with medical colleges. Dialysis services expanded across the state. Trauma care facilities have increased significantly. Cardiology, neurology, urology, and several other super-specialty services gradually became available beyond traditional urban centres. Modern CT scan facilities, MRI machines, Cath labs and other advanced medical equipment have reached hospitals that had previously referred almost every serious patient to Lucknow.

As a result, many patients who once had no option but to travel hundreds of kilometres can now receive treatment much closer to home. Higher medical

education also witnessed rapid expansion. AIIMS Gorakhpur emerged as a major healthcare institution for eastern Uttar Pradesh. AIIMS Raebareilly strengthened access to advanced treatment for central Uttar Pradesh. Super speciality blocks were added to several government medical colleges, while postgraduate medical education expanded steadily with new MD, MS and speciality programmes. Today, Uttar Pradesh has one of the largest public healthcare and medical education networks in India. The number of medical colleges has increased significantly. MBBS and postgraduate seats have expanded. Every year, the state is producing far more doctors than it did a decade ago. The character of Uttar Pradesh's healthcare system has changed. There was a time when serious illness almost automatically meant travelling to Lucknow.

Today, for millions of people, quality treatment is available much closer to home. That is the real transformation. The greatest achievement of Uttar Pradesh's healthcare system is not merely the rise in the number of medical colleges.

## A verdict on failure, not a new ideology

## Nilantha Ilangamuwa

Twelve hours before Colombians cast their ballots in the 21 June presidential run-off, President Gustavo Petro announced that security forces had killed Iván Idrobo, the FARC dissident commander known as "Marlon" — second-in-command to Néstor Vera, alias Iván Mordisco, and one of the most wanted men in the country's southwest. Petro called it the heaviest blow yet against armed criminal structures in western Colombia. The timing was almost too apt: a state still fighting, region by region, to hold ground that has never fully been its own, even as the political project that promised to win that ground through negotiation was about to lose power at the ballot box.

By the next morning, Colombia had chosen its next president: Abelardo de la Espriella, a 47-year-old millionaire lawyer with no prior political experience, who narrowly defeated left-wing senator Iván Cepeda — 49.66% to 48.7%, a margin of roughly 250,000 votes out of more than 26 million cast, making him the most-voted candidate in Colombian history.

Supporters call him "El Tigre." Donald Trump, who endorsed him, called him a fighter "just like me." Commentators reached for the comparison Colombians were already making themselves: Javier Milei in Argentina, Nayib Bukele in El Salvador — outsiders who won less by proposing policy than by promising to demolish a political class rather than reform it. It would be a mistake, though, to read the result as evidence that Colombia has adopted a new ideology. What the vote mainly expressed was fatigue with two projects that had each failed on their own terms. Petro's administration, the country's first left-wing government, had promised social transformation and a negotiated peace with Colombia's remaining armed groups; it struggled to turn that promise into functioning state authority. The traditional right, for its part, spent



two decades promising order without dismantling the land inequality, criminal economies and institutional weakness that keep conflict alive in Colombia's periphery. In the space between those disappointments, a candidate who promised to tear the whole system down — rather than repair it — found room to grow. This pattern is not unique to Colombia. Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Costa Rica have all swung toward right-wing outsiders in recent election cycles, each time punishing incumbents for insecurity and stagnation without solving either. The cast keeps changing; the stage, and the problems on it, largely does not. Colombia has lived a version of this cycle before. Alvaro Uribe won the presidency in 2002 on a headline security platform that weakened the FARC insurgency and, for a time, restored confidence that the state could impose order. Uribe outlasted his presidency through allies Juan Manuel Santos and Iván Duque, but it also carried the "false positives" scandal — soldiers killing civilians and dressing them as guerrilla casualties to inflate body counts — along with persistent allegations linking parts of the security establishment to paramilitary networks. This year's election exposed the limits of that inheritance.

Paloma Valencia, the Uribe-backed Democratic Centre candidate and his most

direct political heir, was eliminated in the first round with just under 7% of the vote before endorsing De la Espriella to consolidate the right. Voters who once trusted Uribe now wanted something angrier and further removed from Colombia's political establishment — and De la Espriella did not try to revive that brand. He replaced it. His campaign succeeded partly because it was built for a different kind of politics: large rallies, evangelical church networks and a relentless social media operation organised around the tiger persona and short, emotionally charged content — the currency of a platform economy that rewards spectacle over argument. Cepeda, 63, a longtime human rights advocate who had led the polls from January until election day, ran on speeches and policy arguments, the traditional currency of Colombian politics. Where algorithms favour anger and simplicity, that older currency bought him less than it once would have.

That gap points to something the Colombian left underestimated: politics is rarely won by explanation alone. Voters living with extortion, stagnant wages and a daily sense that the state had ceded ground to armed groups wanted proof that someone could seize back control, not just a diagnosis of why control had slipped.

Much of that frustration traces back to Petro's signature policy, "Total Peace,"

which rested on a genuine insight — that Colombia's violence has always been entangled with poverty, land inequality and the absence of the state, not ideology alone. But several armed groups treated negotiations as room to expand rather than disarm, deepening their grip on drug trafficking, illegal mining and extortion while talks dragged on. Communities promised peace often experienced the opposite: a state seemingly negotiating while criminal structures grew up around them. This is the trap both of Colombia's political traditions keep falling into.

The left correctly diagnoses the social roots of violence but struggles to assert authority; the right promises authority but avoids the inequality and institutional decay that let armed groups regenerate. What results, from both sides, is the management of crisis rather than its resolution. De la Espriella now inherits that trap, backed by an informal network of like-minded leaders across the region who built power on similar frustration. The danger is that anger, however satisfying as a campaign message, is not itself a governing strategy.

Punishing the guilty plays well as a promise; it does not build the institutions, fiscal credibility or administrative competence that outlast a single term. His mandate, meanwhile, is a narrow one. Congress remains divided, and Petro, even after formally recognising the outcome, continued to allege fraud and foreign interference in the vote count.

De la Espriella takes office on 7 August with more votes behind him than any Colombian president before him — and less unity than that number suggests. Winning, it turns out, was the easy part. Whether he becomes the leader who finally builds a state capable of holding its own ground, or simply the next performer in a theatre that keeps replacing its cast while leaving the script unchanged, is the question Colombia will spend the next four years answering.

## 'WE HAVE NOT RUN OUT OF WATER. WE HAVE RUN OUT OF VALUES'

## Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj Ji

We have built dams, passed laws, launched river-cleaning missions and still our rivers die, our lakes shrink and our groundwater disappears. Perhaps we have been solving the wrong problem. Water is not just a resource running out. It is a mirror, and what it reflects about us as human beings is deeply unsettling. We all know the importance of water, air and sunlight in our lives. Can we ever imagine a world sustaining life without water? The thought itself is so daunting. Of all the 5 elements of nature, water is the most primary, which impacts human life at many levels and it's provided to us in abundance by Mother Nature.

It is synonymous with life for when scientists search for traces of life in other planets, they first look for signs of water. The Earth can sustain so many life-forms because 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered with water, which is consumed directly or indirectly through the food chain and various life-supporting activities. One of its most vital sustainable aspects is in the form of a water cycle, which transforms salty sea water into clean water through rains & snowfall, which is otherwise very



scarce on earth.

Unlike fire, which devastates everything that comes in its contact, water gets polluted when it comes in contact with soluble impurities. This is precisely what makes water the most accurate metaphor for the human soul.

Like water, human souls are also highly impressionable and degradable, capable of becoming a deity or a demon depending on the environment they inhabit. In the Golden Age, when human souls were utterly chaste & downright innocent, their thoughts, words and mannerisms were within the bounds of the highest codes of conduct, as a result, all the elements functioned with inborn harmony & in innate

regulation.

Rivers never crossed their banks, rains never flooded lands, and the sun, air and earth gave plentiful resources without causing calamity. That harmony was not accidental, it was a direct reflection of the human consciousness that presided over nature.

However, with increasing human greed and ego, there has been rampant destruction of the natural order. Rising mental degeneration has led to environmental erosion on a massive scale.

Deforestation, toxic industrial discharge, reckless consumerism and unchecked population growth have created a devastating imbalance. But these are symptoms. The disease is internal which is in the form of gradual erosion of values, conscience and our sense of responsibility towards something larger than ourselves.

Do we ever thank Mother Earth? How many of us have thanked her for the free-air, water, food, sun and many more things

that she has given us since the time we have existed. How many of us have told her sorry for inflicting so much pain to her? Well! The simplest and easiest way to do this is by praying or meditating with positive thoughts, which most of us can do. We must realise that natural disasters in particular, are a wake-up call as to where we are investing all our energies. Today, the situation is grave. In many parts of India, people do not have access to clean drinking water, which is the most basic necessity for sustaining life. Riots erupt over water scarcity. State governments fight bitter legal battles over river-sharing.

The day is not far when nations will go to war over water and when that happens, no dam, no policy and no international treaty will matter if the human being controlling the tap has not changed within. It is high time we learn from these warning signals and change, not just our infrastructure, but our attitudes. Water is endowed with great healing, cleansing and life-giving value. It can only fulfil that potential if we keep it and ourselves clean. Remember! A polluted mind will always find a way to pollute its surroundings. Conversely, a conscious, values-driven human being will naturally protect what sustains life.

## UP's silent healthcare decentralisation revolution

## Arvind Mohan Singh

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