

SHEETAL, THE WONDER-GIRL

Para Archer Sheetal Devi brings us immense pride with her spectacular performance in the 2026 Asian Para athletics where she equaled the world record with 704 points out of a possible 720 and setting a new Asian record women’s compound qualification round. The 19 years old Jammu girl is phenomenal. She is a role model for a generation. In Japan, where she is going to compete for gold in the finals, she delivered a near-flawless display of precision and consistency. Her performance has stunned the onlookers and experts. Sheetal is the Paris Paralympics bronze medalist and has now smashed all previous records to give her best ever performance.

The question arises: Has Jammu owned this daughter of the soil; Has Jammu celebrated her success enough. It looks like Jammu has forgotten her or maybe she is outgrown Jammu. Celebrating Sheetal Devi’s success and sharing her story with the youth can transform many lives, her story is not like that of any other successful sportspersons but it is a cut above.

PUJA STAMPEDE

The management of massive religious and cultural congregations in India must be relooked into in view of the recent stampede in a Puja Pandal in Kolkata killing 17 and injuring at least 25 persons. Such incidents are shameful and cut down the joy of celebrations. The governments all over the country must agree to protocols on crowd management on such occasions. It’s high time to evolve a national guideline to eliminate the deaths due to stampede. The government can take it as a challenge and ensure zero tolerance of the violations. Often the organizers of the melas, congregational prayers of other special occasions, are either private operators or the temple or citizens management committees with little expertise in crowd management. The government guidelines would solve this problem. Let us take a pledge that nobody will be allowed to die in a stampede in a temple or a mela in this hugely religious country.

Parul Chandra

The upcoming elections for Israel’s Knesset are being viewed as the most consequential in its political history. Being held in the aftermath of the deadly Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023, the vote has effectively transformed into a national referendum on Prime Minister Benjamin ‘Bibi’ Netanyahu’s leadership and the security failures under his watch.

These elections also have wider ramifications for Israel on issues of national security and accountability as Israeli voters continue to endure the fallout of the unprecedented strikes and hostage-taking by Hamas three years ago. They left the country shaken to the core, with questions over the abject intelligence and security failure. Their impact will also be felt in the upcoming elections.

Netanyahu, Israel’s longest-serving PM, is seeking re-election in the October 27 polls. However, a tough battle lies ahead for the 77-year-old Likud Party leader, who has relied on his right-wing, nationalist politics for decades. In the aftermath of the October 7 attacks, his credibility as the protector of Israel’s security interests took a huge beating. The Hamas assault left around 1,200 Israelis dead and around 250 taken hostage.

Bibi, however, has sought to counter criticism of his government by projecting himself as Israel’s protector, having launched a massive retaliatory military offensive targeting Gaza. The death toll in the Gaza Strip has exceeded 70,000, with Israel being widely condemned for the genocide in this Palestinian territory.

For now, Israel finds itself diplomatically isolated following the massive military campaign against Gaza and the consequent humanitarian crisis that unfolded there, with Tel Aviv even blocking access to food and water supplies to the region. Israel’s involvement in multiple re-

Israel elections: Can Netanyahu survive?



gional conflicts - with its bitter foe Iran, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria - has only added to the challenges confronting the Netanyahu government. Additionally, Bibi is also having to deal with strained ties with US President Donald Trump months after the two found common cause in launching military strikes against Iran earlier this year.

Netanyahu’s refusal to accept responsibility for the October 7 strikes that happened under his watch and the failure to set up a judicial commission of inquiry have also damaged his standing and could affect his electoral prospects. While several senior military and intelligence officials resigned, taking responsibility, Netanyahu clung on to power, maintaining that he had no knowledge of the attack.

Bibi’s political rivals have seized on this stance, promising a formal judicial inquiry if elected. Among them is the freshly minted Yashar party, led by Gadi Eisenkot, a former chief of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Eisenkot founded the centrist party in September last year and has emerged as Netanyahu’s main rival. He was part of Netanyahu’s war cabinet.

Significantly, the Yashar party leader has also promised to do away with exemptions from compulsory military conscription for ultra-Orthodox Jews. The issue of exemptions for Haredi men has been a controversial one in Israel and has gained momentum in the wake of the Gaza conflict. Secular Israelis maintain that such exemptions from enlistment are unfair.

Eisenkot, who lost a son and a nephew in Israel’s Gaza military campaign, is a relative greenhorn in politics compared with Netanyahu, having entered politics just four years ago.

Polls conducted in the run-up to voting day, however, indicate a close battle between Netanyahu and Eisenkot.

Neither, however, is predicted to win the required 61-seat majority in the 120-member Knesset. Though Netanyahu faces an uphill electoral battle, he could still pull a rabbit out of his hat and manage to cobble together a coalition with the required numbers in the Knesset.

India, which is keeping a close eye on the unfolding electoral battle, has remained Israel’s staunchest ally even as Israel has been diplomatically isolated by

the rest of the world in the wake of the Gaza genocide.

The New Delhi-Tel Aviv embrace has grown tighter in recent years, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi becoming the first Indian PM to visit Israel in 2017. Modi and Netanyahu also share a warm personal rapport, with both leading right-wing governments predicated on nationalism and national security.

Modi made a second visit to Israel in late February this year, days ahead of the US-Israel offensive against Iran. The visit saw the two sides reaffirming their commitment to a robust special strategic partnership. India, meanwhile, seems to have diluted its long-standing robust ties with Iran, as well as its support for the Palestinian cause.

Defence and security remain the bedrock of the ever-expanding bilateral relationship between India and Israel. India is also part of the IU2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA) grouping. With Israel also being vital for India’s connectivity ambitions, the two countries are part of the India-Middle East-Economic Corridor (IMEC), which, however, can progress only if there is stability in West Asia.

Even if there is a change of government in Israel, the New Delhi-Tel Aviv clinch will not be affected, given their converging strategic interests. The two sides are also negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and seeking to collaborate on Critical and Emerging Technologies through a new initiative led by the national security advisers of the two countries. With just days remaining before this crucial election, both Bibi and Eisenkot will almost certainly need coalition partners to form the government.

Even though Israel has always had coalition governments, this election, in the wake of October 7, has deepened political divisions. A lot is at stake for Bibi in these elections. Will he prove to be the proverbial cat with nine lives?

WHEN THE ROOTS ARE DEEP, THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR

Lucky Kulkarni

Resilience is not about avoiding professional storms. It is about knowing what keeps you standing when they arrive.

There is an African proverb that says, “When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind.” It is a beautiful thought, but it carries an important lesson for professional life.

We spend much of our careers trying to build the visible parts of our professional identity-designations, salaries, achievements, titles, networks and recognition. These are our branches. They are what the world sees.

But storms do not test the branches. They test the roots. Every career eventually encounters its storm. A restructuring. A difficult boss. A missed promotion. A failed business decision. Organisational politics. Redundancy. A change in leadership. A career transition that was never planned. Sometimes, the storm arrives when we are least prepared for it. And when it does, we discover something important: our designation was never our identity.

A job can disappear. A title can change.



A company can move on without us. But the knowledge we have acquired, the values we have developed, the relationships we have built and the person we have become cannot be removed by an organisational decision. Those are the roots.

Resilience is often misunderstood as the ability to keep going without showing vulnerability. It is not. Resilience is the ability to bend without losing yourself. It is being able to say, “This has affected me, but it will not define me.” It is having the courage to

begin again when circumstances have taken away the certainty we once had.

In professional life, our deepest roots are often invisible. Integrity when nobody is watching. The ability to treat people with dignity when we have authority over them. The willingness to add value to people’s lives when we are already successful in leading the department.

The humility to accept that we may be wrong. The courage to walk away from something that no longer aligns with our

values. These qualities rarely appear on a business card. Yet they are often what determines how we survive the most difficult chapters of our careers.

There is also an important lesson here for leaders. Organisations should not measure resilience only by how much pressure employees can withstand.

A resilient organisation is one where people have strong roots-clarity of purpose, trust, belonging, values and the confidence to speak honestly.

When those roots are weak, even a small wind can bring a tree down. When they are deep, the same tree may lose branches, bend violently and look battered-but it remains standing. Perhaps that is the real meaning of a professional storm. It does not always come to destroy us. Sometimes it comes to reveal what we are made of. Years later, we may look back at the career crisis we once feared and realise that it forced us to discover strengths we did not know we possessed. The wind changed our direction. But it did not have to determine our destination. Build your roots when the weather is calm. Because when the storm comes, it is not the height of the tree that will save it. It is the depth of its roots.

Values: The Compass Gen Z Cannot Afford to Lose

Dr Swami Gyanananddas

Gen Z has grown up in a world unlike any previous generation. A smartphone places the world at their fingertips, artificial intelligence answers questions within seconds, and social media can turn an ordinary moment into a global spectacle. This generation is ambitious, informed, expressive and technologically confident. Yet, amid these extraordinary opportunities, one question becomes increasingly important: What will guide young people in deciding what is right, meaningful and worth pursuing? The answer lies in values.

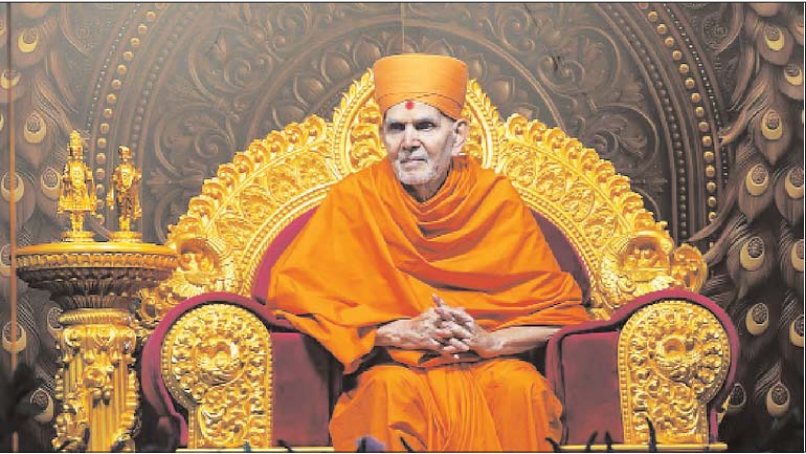
Values are the principles that guide our choices when no one is watching, shape our behaviour when we have power, and help us distinguish right from wrong when honesty becomes inconvenient. Knowledge tells us what is possible, technology shows us how to achieve it, and ambition determines where we wish to go. Values ensure that we move in the right direction.

For Gen Z, this distinction is especially important. In a culture where

likes, followers, views and comments often measure success, the temptation is to create an impressive image rather than cultivate inner character. An online identity can be carefully edited, but our character is revealed through our actions. What matters is not merely how we appear before the world, but who we become when the audience disappears.

Values and virtues are not developed through grand declarations. They take shape through everyday decisions. A student who refuses to cheat in an examination, a professional who gives credit to a colleague, and a person who admits a mistake rather than making excuses are all putting values into practice. Keeping promises, respecting parents and teachers, controlling anger, helping others without expecting recognition and returning what does not belong to us may seem like small acts, but together they build a life of integrity.

One of the greatest challenges facing Gen Z is the culture of instant gratification. Technology encourages us to expect immediate responses, entertainment and results. Values, however, require patience and disci-



pline. Just as a tree needs deep roots to withstand strong winds, a person needs firm principles to remain steady amid changing circumstances. Unfortunately, saying no to dishonesty, unhealthy comparisons, impulsive anger and harmful distractions is becoming increasingly difficult for the younger generation.

However, we must not assume that the entire Gen Z or young generation is moving in the wrong direction. Most importantly, even when some young people seem to be drifting away from values, we must not hate,

condemn or curse them. They, too, are children of God. Rather than rejecting them, we must understand their struggles, accept them with love and help them rediscover the right path. To instil values in others, we must first practise them ourselves.

An inspiring example of this approach is found in the life of Mahant Swami Maharaj. In 2001, a group of children from North America visited India. During their stay in Bochasan (Gujarat), he delivered a discourse on “Bhagwan and Guru - Our Best Friend.” He had prepared exten-

sively, even drawing 30-40 illustrations and creating a PowerPoint presentation. However, the children, exhausted by their journey, remained uninterested and fell asleep during the discourse.

Afterwards, Swamiji wrote them a heartfelt letter of apology. He acknowledged their discomfort, accepted responsibility for the lengthy talk and sincerely sought their forgiveness, even though he had prepared this talk with great care and hard work.

Years later, when these children had grown into young adults, they met Mahant Swami Maharaj at a sat-sang programme and asked him why he, a senior sadguru, had apologised to them despite not being at fault. Swamiji replied, “It is not about being big or small. In Satsang, we must become das na das — a servant of a servant.”

This incident offers a profound lesson in value-based education. Swamiji did not merely teach humility; he demonstrated it. He did not demand understanding from the children; he first tried to understand them. His example reminds us that

young people are more likely to embrace values when they experience them through the conduct of those who guide them.

Parents, teachers, elders and spiritual leaders therefore have a responsibility to lead by example. Scolding may silence a young person, and punishment may create temporary obedience, but neither necessarily transforms the heart. Love, patience, understanding and personal example create an atmosphere in which values can take root.

Gen Z has immense potential to shape the future. It needs freedom to explore, opportunities to grow and the wisdom to use both responsibly. Values are not barriers to progress; they are the foundation that makes progress meaningful.

When young people are guided with love rather than condemned for their shortcomings, we do more than correct their direction; we help them discover their own inner compass. Ultimately, the greatest gift we can offer the next generation is not simply advice on how to succeed, but an example of how to live well.