

TOWARDS EMPOWERING INDIA

The vision of a Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat (Child Marriage-Free India) is not merely a social reform agenda but a national moral imperative. Child marriage, despite being illegal for decades, continues to persist in pockets of the country, robbing millions of children—especially girls—of their childhood, education, health and dignity. Eradicating this social evil is essential for building an equitable, progressive and empowered India.

Child marriage violates fundamental human rights and perpetuates a cycle of poverty and gender inequality. Girls married at a young age are more likely to drop out of school, face early pregnancies, and suffer from malnutrition, domestic violence and maternal health complications. Boys, too, are forced into premature responsibilities, limiting their educational and emotional development. The long-term consequences weaken families, communities and the nation as a whole.

India has a strong legal framework to combat child marriage. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, clearly sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 for girls and 21 for boys. In recent years, the government has intensified efforts through awareness campaigns, stricter enforcement, and welfare schemes aimed at keeping children—especially girls—in school. Initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, PM POSHAN, and scholarships for girls are powerful tools in addressing the root causes of child marriage.

Education is the strongest weapon against child marriage. Every additional year a girl spends in school significantly reduces her chances of early marriage. Safe schools, accessible secondary education, digital learning, and skill development programmes empower young people to dream beyond early marriage and contribute meaningfully to society. Equally important is educating parents, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, about the long-term benefits of investing in their children's education.

The role of boys and men cannot be overlooked. Gender equality is not a women's issue alone. Sensitising boys about consent, respect and shared responsibility is essential to dismantle patriarchal mindsets that sustain child marriage.

A Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat is fundamental to achieving India's goals of women-led development, demographic dividend, and sustainable growth. Ending child marriage will lead to healthier families, stronger economies and a more just society. It is time for collective action—by governments, institutions, communities and individuals—to ensure that every child in India grows up free, educated and empowered. Only then can the dream of a truly developed India become a reality.

G.L. KHAJURIA

Roads are the lifeline arteries which carry the life blood of economy relating to trade and commerce to every nook and the corner of the country. These also play a pivotal role in national integration by way of communication amongst the various religions and shades.

According to the ministry of surface transport and highways, we are having a long stretch of around 4.50 million kms of roads length. And the overall benefits accruing therefrom ripple out vast, varied ramifications for the progress and prosperity of the country as a whole.

Now, with the ever exploding population which we all know has crossed 1.25 billion next to China and the trafficways have correspondingly increased manifold face to face with urbanisation and industrialisation. And these in togetherness are tantamounting to ever-escalating pollution, temperature, dust and a combination of noxious gases namely carbon monoxide (CO) carbon dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), Nitrous Oxide (N₂O) and emission of chloro-fluoro-carbons (CFCs) apart from the most hazardous halocarbons. These halocarbons originate from refrigeration and other cooling compound pollutants and are long persisting over hundreds and thousands of years when once get released into the atmosphere.

The expansion of roads width on either side of highways has ruthlessly massacred over lacks of erstwhile plantations which way these have diminished the pristine well-established glory and grandeur of the highways which now are devoid of lush green vibrant tree cover across the country. Now, while travelling on these highways, we often feel as something of our very vital missing so much so that no shade insight where once a while we can aspire to have a short stop over. Doesn't it jitter us when we are in travel-spree with family or friends?

It is, therefore, most pertinent to realise the changed scenario over a couple of years. And this is evidently very well before our eyes. And imagine the scenario elsewhere away from our sight, the overall forest cover (green gold)

Greening Highways



which is frizzling by the turn of the day. This is fundamentally tantamounting to environmental degradation resultantly giving birth to multihued off shoots of problem of problems.

Under this pernicious scenario, our highways demand top most attention for rejuvenation so that these become lively for beautification and glorification. It is as such becomes our moral and bounden duty to carry out mass campaign for gigantic plantation operation alongside highways so as to restore back erstwhile lost glory and beauty.

In forestry parlance, such plantations alongside highways are nomenclaturised as arboriculture or avenue plantation and the people so participating or engaged are called arboriculturist. These plantations are also carried out alongside railway tracks, canals apart from urban metropolis where this has an independent department. The predominant objective being to cloth such areas with green cover ensuring greenery, beautification and slowing down the temperature and averting pollution in its multitudinal manifesta-

tion. The concept of such plantations is no new as over the years the earlier rulers were very much enthusiastic and compassionate with this concept of plantations when we unfold the history.

During Ashoka's regime, this concept was very much in vogue, as he carried out extensive/intensive afforestation's alongside all avenue, other denuded areas. Similarly, Sher Shah Suri in 16th century carried out abundant plantation of ornamental, horticultural and shade bearing trees inter-mixed with flowering climbers, creepers and shrubs right from Mureshidabad (the then Bengal) to Peshawar via Delhi and Lahore.

Similarly, the Mughals were very much enthusiastic and compassionate about the construction of new roads and supplementing these by carrying out plantation. Shah Jahan brought Chinara from Iran and introduced in Kashmir and its vicinity. They carried forward this campaign on all available barren areas, preferably, the roadsides and

other road-linkages.

When we achieved independence, the spirit and sanctity of tree culture, plantation, promotion and propagation was still more invigorated. Our late Prime Ministers Shri J.L. Nehru, Shri L.B. Shastri apart from other prominent leaders, naturalist, environmentalists namely GB Pant, Dr. Rajinder Prasad, K.M. Munshi a footed large scale planting campaign.

It was too recently on the first day of July this year, when Nitin Gadkari, the union Minister for transport and highways convened a two-day meeting at Vishakhapatnam and consequently, a mega mission for greening highways was promulgated and this mission was nomenclaturised as "National Green highways Mission (NGHM)". Under the mission the Minister Kickedstart first ever massive National highways plantation campaign with a targeted budget of 300 crores to cover around 1500 kms of the first leg of 100000 kms of highways.

Nitin Gadkari further emphasised that the Ministry of Road and highways (MORTH), government of India endeavour the need and importance of developing green corridors along National highways, promulgating massive plantation, transportation, their progressive promotion and maintenance all through for the glorification-cum-beautification of highways apart from generating jobs and employment on larger scale.

According to Raghav Chandra, chairman NH AI, the government contemplates to earmark an estimated amount arounding 5000 crores which works out around 1% of roads construction amounting to 5 trillion ending year 2019 of this mission. This is synonymous with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in boosting rural economy. The funds as such are earmarked provide promotion and impulsive targeted greening highways mission, apart from opening up job-cum-employment avenues for around a million youth in broader spectrum.

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International Painting Workshop at IIM Jammu: Integrating Creative Practice into Management Pedagogy

PROF. SHYAM NARAYAN LAL

The Indian Institute of Management Jammu is all set to organise an International Painting Workshop from 12 to 16 January 2026. The workshop will bring together twenty-one painters of repute from India and abroad and will also include a group of emerging artists drawn from different regions of the country. This initiative does not stand in isolation. It follows three painting workshops conducted during 2025 and is best understood as a continuation of that academic engagement rather than as a separate cultural programme. Taken together, these initiatives reflect a sustained institutional effort to explore the place of creative practice within management education.

The story started a year earlier, in 2025, when three painting workshops unfolded one after another, each leaving behind traces of dialogue, discovery, and daring. Those gatherings planted seeds, and now, this international workshop is the flowering of that vision - not a separate cultural spectacle, but a continuation of an academic journey. Together, these workshops form a narrative of persistence: an institution daring to ask how art and management might converse, how brushstrokes might illuminate boardrooms, and how imagination might reshape leadership. In this story, IIM Jammu is not simply hosting artists; it is weaving creativity into the very fabric of management education, reminding us that to lead is also to dream.

The three painting workshops conducted last year were conceived as

exploratory efforts. They were not designed as extracurricular activities, nor were they intended to function as cultural interludes within an otherwise conventional academic calendar. Their purpose was more probing in nature. The intention was to examine whether sustained engagement with artistic practice could be meaningfully introduced into the learning environment of management education, and whether such engagement could alter how students approach learning, uncertainty, and reflection. What became visible over time was not excitement or novelty, but a quieter and more lasting change in student engagement.

In November 2025, two contemporary painting workshops—one led by K. K. Gandhi and the other by Bhushan Kesar—placed students in deliberately restrictive working conditions. Materials were limited, deadlines were compressed, and the emphasis shifted from individual output to collective effort. Verbal instruction was sparse. In the absence of clear direction, students had to rely on intuition, observation, and collaboration. These conditions unsettled familiar managerial habits that privilege clarity, speed, and efficiency. Instead, they created space for slower, uncertain, and at times uncomfortable forms of engagement, which gradually opened up new ways of thinking.

Alongside these contemporary experiments, the one-week Basohli painting workshop held in December 2025 introduced a different pedagogical experience. Rooted in a regional artistic tradition, the workshop demanded discipline, repetition, and prolonged immersion.

Learning did not proceed through experimentation or expressive freedom. It unfolded through careful attention to form, patience, and adherence to an inherited visual language. Students were introduced to a pedagogical mode grounded in apprenticeship and hands-on practice, approaches rarely encountered in modern management curricula. The encounter between contemporary experimentation and traditional immersion reshaped how participants understood learning itself.

The International Painting Workshop scheduled for January 2026 builds directly upon these earlier experiences. Its five-day structure is a conscious academic decision. The duration allows participants to move beyond initial hesitation or curiosity into a phase where engagement deepens through repetition, difficulty, and gradual adjustment. Unlike short workshops that focus primarily on exposure or demonstration, this programme is designed to support incremental learning. Progress is uneven. Moments of uncertainty or frustration are not treated as failure, but as part of the learning process.

Several pedagogical features from the earlier workshops remain, though they are reworked rather than repeated. Restricted materials, collaborative tasks, time-bound exercises, and delayed explanation continue to function as learning devices. These constraints interrupt habitual problem-solving patterns and resist the impulse for quick resolution. Students are required to remain attentive even when outcomes are unclear. Over time, such engagement cultivates patience and reflective

attention-qualities that management curricula rarely address directly.

As the workshop unfolds, students begin to recognise the difference between activity and understanding, between being occupied and actually learning. They encounter the limits of purely instrumental reasoning and are pushed to rely on observation, intuition, silence, and shared interpretation. This kind of learning is not easily articulated or measured. It does not lend itself to immediate summary. Yet it leaves a durable imprint on how students think about decision-making, collaboration, and leadership.

What distinguishes this initiative within management education is the way visual arts practice is treated as a pedagogical medium rather than a cultural supplement. The workshop does not sit alongside academic instruction, nor does it provide a break from it. Instead, it creates a parallel learning environment that temporarily sets aside familiar classroom routines—lectures, cases, and assessments—and replaces them with sustained practice. This shift allows cognitive, emotional, and ethical capacities to develop in ways that conventional teaching methods often acknowledge but struggle to cultivate.

The international dimension adds depth without altering the core intent of the programme. Artists from different cultural backgrounds participate not as visiting instructors but as collaborators, working alongside students in shared studio spaces. Authority structures become more fluid. Learning takes shape through observation, informal dialogue, imitation, and mutual adjust-

ment. Cultural difference is encountered through the act of working together rather than through formal explanation. This stands in contrast to conventional models of international exchange, which typically rely on short visits or structured interactions.

From an academic perspective, the workshop becomes a setting where leadership qualities that resist easy codification can take root. The ability to remain steady in uncertainty, to exercise collaborative judgement, to act with ethical sensitivity, and to practice patience cannot be transmitted through lectures or case studies alone. These capacities emerge only through sustained involvement in contexts that mirror the ambiguity and relational complexity of real organisational life.

The orientation of the workshop aligns with the spirit of the National Education Policy 2020, particularly its emphasis on holistic, experiential, and multidisciplinary learning. By integrating artistic practice into management education, the initiative challenges rigid disciplinary boundaries and affirms the value of tacit and embodied knowledge. Its emphasis on process and reflection marks a shift away from examination-driven learning towards deeper engagement. At the same time, it resonates with the broader vision of Viksit Bharat, which calls for leaders who combine professional competence with cultural awareness, emotional resilience, and ethical judgement.

For students of IIM Jammu, the workshop complements formal management training in ways that are not immediately visible but are deeply formative. Engagement with artistic practice

unsettles efficiency-driven habits and opens space for alternative ways of thinking and working. Emotional responses such as hesitation, frustration, or doubt are treated as part of learning rather than as obstacles. Over time, students develop greater self-awareness and reflective capacity.

At the institutional level, the movement from short contemporary workshops to a regionally grounded immersion and finally to an internationally networked programme reflects deliberate pedagogical development rather than episodic experimentation. Each initiative informed the next, gradually integrating duration, scope, and feasibility into a coherent framework. This sustained commitment distinguishes IIM Jammu within the wider IIM ecosystem by treating creative practice as part of its pedagogical infrastructure rather than as a peripheral cultural activity.

Taken together, the three workshops conducted in 2025 and the International Painting Workshop of 12-16 January 2026 form a cumulative pedagogical sequence. The earlier initiatives established direction and feasibility; the present workshop deepens those insights through scale, duration, and international collaboration. Rather than episodic cultural experimentation, this progression reflects a clear institutional intent: to embed visual arts practice meaningfully within management education and to cultivate reflective, adaptive, and ethically grounded leaders capable of engaging with complexity and uncertainty.

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Can AI Shape India's Next Leap in Human Development?

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As Artificial Intelligence (AI) reshapes industries and social systems, India stands at a critical juncture. Recognised as a future AI powerhouse and lauded for its human development progress, the country now faces an essential question: Will AI serve as an engine of inclusive growth, or will it widen the gaps we've struggled to narrow?

The Human Development Report (HDR) 2025 highlights the urgency of this dilemma. It calls for a revived interest on human agency and inclusion, urging policymakers to balance technological progress with fair planning. For India, which has made notable strides in health, education, and poverty reduction, this is more than an academic question. It's about how we build a future where rather than replacing human potential, AI strengthens it.

India ranks 130th out of 193 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), an improvement from 133rd the previous year. Life expectancy has risen from 58.6 years in 1990 to 72 today. Average years of schooling and per capita income have

also grown significantly. According to NITI Aayog, over 248 million people exited multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23. These gains reflect decades of economic expansion and social investments—from Ayushman Bharat to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. But in a world shaped by automation, digital exclusion, and rising inequality, such progress remains fragile.

On the technology front, India is gaining momentum. The Stanford AI Index 2025 ranks India 4th globally for AI development, which is remarkable for a lower-middle-income country. For the first time, 20% of India's AI researchers are staying in-country, a sign of growing domestic capacity. AI is already transforming sectors—from predictive crop advisory services in regional languages to AI-enabled diagnostics in healthcare. If scaled equitably, such technologies could become game-changers for India's development story.

That said, progress is not evenly distributed. India's AI ambition clashes with the reality of stark digital divides, between urban and rural, rich and poor, male and female.

Reliable internet access and basic digital literacy are far from universal. The same HDR notes that India's HDI value drops by 30.7%, when adjusted for inequality, which is among the steepest declines in Asia. Female labour force participation and political representation remain dismally low. Unless built inclusively, AI may end up serving the few, not the many.

The threat of job displacement looms especially large in India's vast informal sector, which employs over 90% of the workforce. AI may create new kinds of employment, but it will also render some traditional roles obsolete, often the very jobs that keep vulnerable communities afloat. Layered onto this is a host of ethical dilemmas, including algorithmic bias, opaque decision-making, and data privacy violations. Operating in a regulatory vacuum, we risk building systems that replicate and reinforce existing inequalities, only at machine speed.

There is an urgent need to place people at the centre of AI policy. India needs an AI strategy that prioritises ethics, fairness, and the well-

being of its people, ensuring that technology serves development, not the other way around. This means designing systems that are transparent, just, and accountable. Digital access must become a basic right, as it has in Finland and Estonia. Investing in equitable digital infrastructure beyond urban tech hubs is non-negotiable. Public-private partnerships can play a key role, but they must be guided by public interest, not profit alone.

Upskilling the workforce is also urgent. From the codebase to the clinic, everyone needs to learn how to work with AI, without losing sight of what makes us human. The National Education Policy 2020 and the Skill India Mission must evolve to meet this moment. At the same time, we need a regulatory framework with real power to enforce accountability. Privacy laws, algorithmic assessments, and ethical AI guidelines must move from discussion papers to binding regulations. Still under development, the Digital India Act could be a watershed, if it remains anchored in democratic values.

AI offers India a powerful lever for

development, but it is no silver bullet. If handed over entirely to the market and allowed to run unchecked, it could deepen structural divides and outsource exclusion to machines. But when harnessed intentionally, it can unlock breakthroughs.

AI's developmental promise becomes meaningful when it is embedded in public systems and aligned with people's everyday needs. Telangana's use of AI-powered crop forecasting supports small farmers by offering timely, localised advice that improves decision-making. In Odisha, AI-supported early warning systems have strengthened disaster preparedness and helped reduce loss of life during cyclones and floods. Karnataka has begun using AI tools in government hospitals to assist with early disease detection, particularly in districts with limited specialist care. Kerala's experiments with AI-based learning platforms in public schools aim to narrow learning gaps, while states such as Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are using data analytics to improve welfare delivery and reduce administrative delays. Taken together, these experiences suggest

that AI can strengthen health, education, and human security when it is treated as a public good rather than a tool that benefits only a few.

India stands at a decisive moment. The question is no longer whether to embrace AI, but whether we will shape it or be shaped by it. The real danger is not that machines will outsmart us, but that we may trade away our values in pursuit of efficiency. As AI ethicist Timnit Gebru warns, "The problem is not the technology itself, but the values of those who design and deploy it."

India's AI journey must be grounded in justice, not just innovation. To build a Viksit Bharat, India must balance speed with inclusion and choose the harder path of equitable integration, where AI isn't used to bypass inclusion, but becomes a tool to deepen it. Why does this matter? Because in the age of intelligent machines, what counts most is not how smart our tools are, but how fair our societies remain.

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