

Journey Towards 'Viksit Bharat'

India's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'-a developed, prosperous, and inclusive nation-is no longer just a slogan but a comprehensive roadmap for socio-economic transformation. Rooted in the principles of self-reliance, equitable growth, and technological advancement, this vision reflects the aspirations of a billion-plus population seeking dignity, opportunity, and quality of life. Achieving 'Viksit Bharat' requires sustained efforts across governance, infrastructure, education, healthcare, innovation, and social equity. One of the key pillars of this journey is good governance. Recognising that efficient administration directly impacts development outcomes, the government has emphasized transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric policies. Initiatives such as the Digital India Programme, e-governance reforms, and the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration have fostered innovative governance models at the district and grassroots levels. By showcasing best practices and replicating successful schemes across regions, India is steadily institutionalizing a governance culture that prioritizes effectiveness and inclusivity. Economic growth and self-reliance are also central to the vision of a developed India. Policies promoting entrepreneurship, MSMEs, and start-up ecosystems have empowered youth and enhanced employment opportunities. At the same time, strategic investments in infrastructure-roads, railways, ports, and digital connectivity-are creating the backbone for a modern economy. The Make in India initiative, coupled with the push for technological innovation, positions India as a competitive player in global manufacturing and knowledge-based industries. Education and skill development form another cornerstone of the 'Viksit Bharat' dream. Equipping the youth with relevant skills, scientific temper, and innovative thinking ensures that human capital becomes a driving force for national progress. Similarly, healthcare initiatives, such as Ayushman Bharat and strengthened primary care systems, aim to ensure that prosperity is not merely economic but also social, with a focus on quality of life and longevity. Social inclusivity is equally critical. The path to development is incomplete without uplifting marginalized communities, women, and rural populations. Targeted welfare programs, financial inclusion schemes, and digital access are bridging historical divides, enabling more citizens to participate in the country's growth story.

Hum Log: The Serial That Changed Indian Television Forever

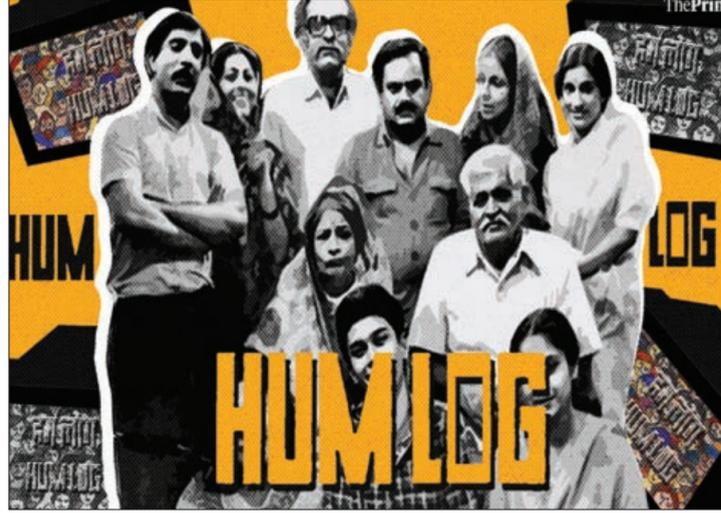
■ BHARTI SHARMA

7 July 1984 marked the beginning of a journey that made Doordarshan a household name.

Hum Log, which means "We People," was India's first television soap opera and the first Hindi serial drama. It started on 7 July 1984 on Doordarshan, which was the only TV channel in India at that time. The show ended on 17 December 1985, completing around 156 episodes. It was shown once a week at the same time and soon became a regular part of family life, with nearly 50 million viewers watching each episode.

The idea of Hum Log came from the Mexican serial Ven Conmigo (1975). In 1982, the then Information and Broadcasting Minister Vasant Sathe visited Mexico and saw how TV shows were used to teach people important lessons while entertaining them. After returning to India, he supported the creation of a similar show that could both teach and entertain viewers. This idea was called educational entertainment or edutainment.

The serial was written by the famous Hindi writer Manohar Shyam Joshi, often called the Father of Indian Soap Operas. He understood middle-class Indian life very well, which helped him create realistic and relatable characters. The show was directed by P. Kumar Vasudev and the title music was composed by Anil Biswas. Initially, it was planned for 52 episodes, but because it became very popular, it was extended to 156 episodes.



Hum Log told the story of a middle-class joint family and their everyday problems. The father, Basesar Ram, struggled with drinking and frustration, while his wife Bhagvanti was simple and hardworking, trying to keep the family together. Their children had different dreams: Lalloo, the eldest son, was looking for a job, Badki was responsible and active in social work, Majhli wanted to

become a film actress, Nanhe, the younger son, wanted to play cricket, and Chhutki, the youngest daughter, wanted to be a doctor. The grandparents, Dadaji and Dadi, also played important roles. These characters felt real and viewers became emotionally attached to them. A special feature of the show was veteran actor Ashok Kumar, who appeared at the

end of every episode as the narrator. He spoke directly to the audience, explained the story in simple words and often used short Hindi couplets. This created a strong connection between the show and the viewers.

The serial also addressed important social issues of the 1980s, such as dowry, poverty, unemployment, unfair treatment of women, superstition, drinking and family planning. It focused on the small problems of normal families rather than showing exaggerated drama. When the character Nanhe got leukemia in the story, thousands of viewers wrote letters asking that he should not die. This showed how much people cared about the characters.

When Hum Log ended in December 1985, it had already made history. It changed the way Indians watched television and showed that TV could be both entertaining and meaningful. After its success, other popular serials like Buniyaad and Nukkad followed the same style.

Hum Log was more than just a TV show. It brought families together every week, showed real-life struggles and lessons and set the foundation for Indian soap operas. Even today, it is remembered as the serial that truly changed Indian television forever.

(The writer is a student of Mass Communication & New Media at Central University of Jammu)

World Wildlife Day: Protecting the Silent Guardians of Our Planet

■ GOURAV SABHARWAL

Every year on March 3, the world celebrates World Wildlife Day, a global occasion proclaimed by the United Nations to honor the beauty, diversity, and importance of wild animals and plants. This day is not merely a celebration of majestic creatures roaming forests or swimming in oceans. It is a reminder that wildlife forms the foundation of life on Earth and that human survival is deeply connected to the well being of animals and ecosystems.

Animals play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Pollinators such as bees and butterflies ensure food production. Predators regulate populations and prevent overgrazing. Marine species sustain ocean health and support millions of livelihoods. Forest animals contribute to seed dispersal and biodiversity regeneration. Every species, from

the smallest insect to the largest mammal, holds a unique place in the intricate web of life. When one species disappears, the balance weakens, affecting agriculture, climate stability, and human health.

However, wildlife today faces unprecedented threats. Climate change is altering habitats at an alarming pace. Rising temperatures, melting glaciers, prolonged droughts, and unpredictable rainfall patterns are forcing animals to migrate or adapt rapidly. Many species cannot cope with such rapid environmental shifts, leading to declining populations and extinction risks.

Deforestation is another grave concern. Forests are cleared for agriculture, urban expansion, and industrial activities, destroying natural habitats. Iconic species such as elephants, tigers, and orangutans lose their homes as trees fall. When forests shrink, biodiversity declines, and

carbon absorption capacity weakens, further accelerating climate change.

Human animal conflict is increasing as well. As human settlements expand into wildlife territories, encounters become more frequent. Farmers lose crops to wild herbivores, and predators attack livestock. In response, animals are often harmed or killed. This conflict reflects a deeper imbalance between development and conservation.

World Wildlife Day urges us to rethink our relationship with nature. Sustainable development, reforestation efforts, wildlife corridors, and climate action policies are essential steps forward. Conservation is not only about saving animals; it is about protecting the planet's life support system. When we safeguard wildlife, we protect our own future. The survival of animals is inseparable from the survival of humanity.

Ride Every Market Cycle with Flexicap Funds



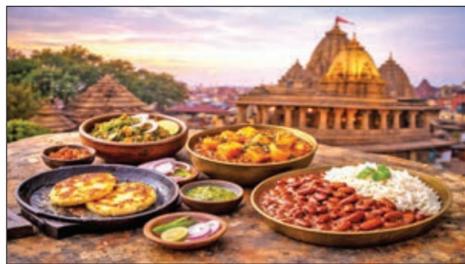
■ KAPIL KUMAR DHAR

Imagine being heavily invested in the small cap space in 2024 - you would be sitting on handsome returns at the end of the year. Now imagine holding a small cap concentrated portfolio in 2025 - your portfolio would likely be deep in the red. Or consider the opposite. A predominantly large cap portfolio in 2024 would have missed out on the stellar rally in small caps. But the same large cap exposure in 2025 would have delivered relatively stable return even as broader markets corrected. This highlights a key tenet of equity investing: holding an equity portfolio concentrated in either small, mid or large cap segments is not a sustainable way to create long-term wealth. Each market-cap segment goes through its own cycles of strength and weakness. The most effective way to ride out these cycles is to maintain exposure across all these market segments. That way a downturn in one would be compensated by an upturn in the other. With flexi cap mutual funds, one can do just that. These funds invest across market capitalizations tweaking their

exposure based on the segment's potential for returns. This is based on an analysis of various domestic and global macro factors, company fundamentals, valuations, long term growth prospects, etc. With flexi cap funds, investors can participate in the upside of an outperforming segment as well as limit downside when a segment falls out of favour. This balanced exposure ensures their portfolio is more stable through the different market cycles. This smoother portfolio performance ensures investors continue to stay invested through the ups and downs of the market. They don't panic in times of market stress and don't get greedy when certain segments of the markets are euphoric. Over time, this enables steady compounding and long-term wealth creation.

Thus, investors who wish to invest in Flexicap funds may consider the ICICI Prudential Flexicap Fund. Given the dynamic nature of the scheme in navigating across market capitalizations, it has the potential to deliver a good investment experience across market cycles. In terms of returns, the fund has delivered a 9.91% CAGR over one year, a 18.93% CAGR over three years, and a 15.19% CAGR since inception (July 2021), as on January 31, 2026. (The writer is Financial Consultant, Mutual Fund Distributor, J&K)

Jammu: Where Faith and Flavours Coexist



■ SWATI SUMAN

Located in northern India, Jammu is often remembered as the "City of Temples." Its identity, however, is not rooted in faith alone. It also thrives in its kitchens, where traditions have been preserved for generations through taste. Amid rapid urbanisation and the growing influence of modern food culture, Jammu's traditional cuisine remains deeply connected to its cultural roots.

The culinary heritage of the Dogra region reflects simplicity balanced with depth. Unlike heavily spiced dishes commonly associated with North Indian cuisine, Dogra food relies on local ingredients and carefully measured flavours. A notable example is Kaladi, a traditional ripened cheese native to the region. Originally developed as a method to preserve milk in hilly terrains, Kaladi today represents both resourcefulness and continuity. Even now, the aroma of Kaladi roasting on roadside griddles forms a familiar part of Jammu's streetscape. Vendors serve it lightly salted and pan-seared, turning a modest dairy product into a symbol of local identity and small-scale livelihoods.

Another significant dish is Anbal, a sweet-and-sour preparation typically made with pumpkin. More than just a culinary item, Anbal holds an important place during festivals and family gatherings. Its distinct flavour profile reflects the social fabric of Jammu, balanced, warm, and layered. Usually prepared on special occasions, the dish carries emotional value and often evokes memories of shared meals and intergenerational bonding.

Seasonality plays a central role in Jammu's food culture. The region's terrain encourages the use of wild greens and locally foraged produce. Kasrod, prepared from tender fiddlehead ferns, is one such seasonal delicacy. Its preparation demonstrates the close relationship between community life and nature. Dishes like Kasrod are not merely about taste; they illustrate how food habits evolved in harmony with the environment.

While Rajma-Chawal is popular across North India, Jammu's version carries a distinct regional character because of locally grown kidney beans known for their texture and flavour. In many households, Rajma-Chawal is more than a routine meal. It is associated with Sunday lunches, visiting guests, and moments of familial comfort. Such dishes quietly anchor daily life in tradition.

However, as fast-food chains and global cuisines expand into smaller cities, traditional Dogra dishes face the risk of gradual neglect. Younger generations are increasingly drawn toward contemporary food trends, while older members of society confine to view these recipes as an essential part of cultural identity. This generational shift raises a larger concern. When traditional foods disappear, what fades with them is not merely a recipe but a story.

Jammu's culinary landscape reminds us that food is more than sustenance. It is a living archive of history, geography, and social relationships. The simplicity of Kaladi, the festive warmth of Anbal, and the seasonal relevance of Kasrod together reveal layers of cultural memory that define the region.

Preserving these dishes requires recognition beyond domestic kitchens. Documentation, promotion through local food festivals, and inclusion in culinary tourism initiatives can help safeguard this heritage. In every traditional flavour lies not only nourishment, but also the enduring narrative of a community.

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Contentment leads to happiness

■ PURAN CHAND SHARMA

At the outset I deem it appropriate to narrate a Moral Story for the enlightened and valued readers to enable and assist them to understand and fully grasp the meaning and significance of 'Contentment' which seems to be a rarest of the rare but most valued advice and learning for all human beings living on the 'Earth Planet' in this twilight hour when the human species appear to be engrossed and severely embroiled in the whirlpool of discontentment and hyper ambitiousness despite having access to variety of worldly pleasures and the phenomenal comforts. Let us understand and proceed in the right direction:

"Once a mighty king in the ancient times thought of evaluating his huge treasure of Gold, silver and all other property in cash and kind, ultimately drew the inference that he had amassed and possessed enough of property and wealth for his Seven generations but in the end his Eight generation would face extreme poverty and starvation. So he got worried and too depressed. Finally he thought of consulting a Famous Sage and scholar; shared his comprehensive tale of woe and requested for well thought out resolution. The sage heard his sad story patiently and asked him to do a noble job strictly as I guide you. "Take this bag of 'wheat flour' and respectfully deliver to an old lady at so and so address, there after; I would resolve your problem. The king agreed and proceeded as advised. When he arrived at the destination, he knocked at the door; after a while, an old lady opened the door. The king told her to take the bag of flour sent by the Sage. On hearing this, the poor old lady said, 'I do not need it as I have enough for the day. The king was exceedingly surprised. He thought what a fool, I am?', I have wealth and all other essential things for my seven generations and despite that I am awfully worried about my 8th generation and so on. This incident, satisfaction and contentment of poor old lady transformed his thinking and the way of life. He came running to the sage, narrated the entire story to the sage and happily told him that he is now a happy man, fully divorced from all worries."

Contentment and happiness In an age marked by speed, ambition and relentless comparison, the twin virtues of contentment and happiness often appear elusive. We tend to chase success, recognition, wealth and validation, believing that happiness lies just beyond the next achievement. Yet history, philosophy and real human experience consistently reveal a profound truth: happiness that depends solely on external gains is too fragile, while contentment, an inner state of sufficiency creates enduring happiness. Contentment is not passivity, nor it is the abandonment of aspiration. It is the calm acceptance of what one has, coupled with gratitude and balance. Happiness, on the other hand, is feeling of joy, satisfaction and well-being. When happiness arises from contentment rather than from comparison or possession, it becomes stable and meaningful. Ancient wisdom traditions across civilizations have celebrated contentment as the foundation of happiness. BHAGAVAD GITA, describes the Sthitprajna - as the person of steady wisdom, who remains steady in pleasure and pain. Such a person is content within, unaffected by external fluctuations. This inner equanimity forms the basis of lasting happiness. Similarly, the Roman philosopher; SENECA wrote, "It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor." His insight highlights that dissatisfaction not scarcity, is

often the real source of misery. In Indian history we find that Mahatma Gandhi lived a life of remarkable simplicity despite his immense influence. His famous statement that "The world has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed." It reflects the idea that happiness grows from self-restraint and ethical living, not from accumulation.

Likewise, the teachings of Gautam Buddha centered on the understanding that desire leads to suffering. By moderating desires and practicing mindfulness, one attains peace and happiness. These classic examples demonstrate that across cultures and centuries, thinkers have agreed that contentment is the seed and happiness is the fruit.

Contentment Vs Complacency

It is important to distinguish contentment from complacency. Contentment means being grateful and peaceful with what one has, while still striving ethically for improvement. Complacency, however, implies stagnation and indifference. A student who works diligently, accepts results calmly and seeks to improve without envy embodies contentment. But a student who refuses effort under the excuse of "being satisfied" practices complacency. True contentment energizes action. It frees the mind from jealousy and anxiety, allowing one to pursue goals with clarity rather than desperation.

Modern paradox: More possessions less peace Modern society often equates happiness with consumption. Yet research, experience and observation show that after basic needs are met, increasing wealth has diminishing returns on happiness. Social media comparisons intensify dissatisfaction. One constantly measures life against curated images of other's successes. In contrast, people who practice gratitude, meaningful relationships and purposeful work do enjoy the deeper happiness. The farmer who finds joy in harvest, the teacher who delights in student's growth or the grandparents content in family gatherings often experience a peace that no luxury can buy.

Psychological Perspective Positive psychology emphasizes gratitude, mindfulness and intrinsic goals as pillars of well-being. When individuals appreciate what they have and align their lives with values rather than vanity, their happiness becomes sustainable. Contentment regulates desire. It prevents the endless cycle of "if only" thinking: "If only I get this promotion." "If only I buy this house." "If only I gain more recognition". Such a conditional happiness keeps fulfillment perpetually deferred.

The moral and social dimension Contentment is not merely personal, it has social consequences. A content society is less prone to corruption, crime, and exploitation. When greed dominates, ethical boundaries weaken. When contentment guides action, integrity flourishes. The principle of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) in Indian philosophy advocates minimalism and ethical consumption. This principle is increasingly relevant in an era of environmental degradation and climate change. Sustainable living begins with moderated desire.

Inference Drawn Contentment and happiness are not gifts bestowed by circumstances but they are cultivated attitudes. From the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, Buddha and other great men of the times, humanity's wisest voices converge on one message: True happiness arises not from having more but from needing less. Happiness is not found in the market place of desires but in the sanctuary of a grateful heart.

(The author is President, Ved Mandir, Amphalla)