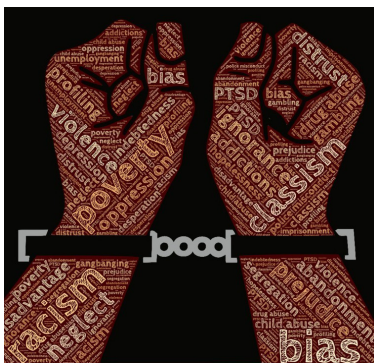


City Matters

1/2026

Decreasing Tolerance in the Society: A Growing Concern



www.google.com



Tolerance — the ability to respect and accept differing opinions, beliefs, and lifestyles — has long underpinned peaceful and progressive societies. In recent years, however, India, like many parts of the world, has witnessed a visible decline in tolerance. This shift is evident across political discourse, social media, and everyday interactions, raising concerns about social cohesion and democratic health. Notably, the ethos of Sanatan Dharma has historically emphasised tolerance and the acceptance of diverse paths to truth, reflecting the belief that different faiths can coexist harmoniously.

One of the clearest signs of this decline is growing political polarisation. Public debates have become more confrontational, with disagreements quickly turning hostile. Issues such as citizenship policies, elections, and regional identity have triggered protests that occasionally escalate into clashes. Even in academic and intellectual spaces, dissent is increasingly scrutinised. A notable example involves academic Ali Khan Mahmudabad, who faced an investigation over posts related to “Operation Sindoor,” though the Supreme Court of India affirmed his right to continue writing, highlighting tensions between free expression and oversight.

Social media platforms like X and Facebook have further amplified intolerance. While they enable connectivity, they also create echo chambers where users are exposed mainly to like-minded views. Incidents of online harassment targeting journalists, comedians, and influencers over political or cultural opinions frequently go viral, showing how digital spaces often reward outrage over dialogue. Coordinated trolling and cancel campaigns discourage open discussion and deepen divisions.

Religious and cultural intolerance also remains a pressing concern. India’s diversity has historically been a strength, yet recent years have seen sporadic communal tensions. In 2026, localised disputes over religious processions, places of worship, and dietary practices sparked unrest in parts of Maharashtra and Haryana. Viral misinformation has often intensified such conflicts, turning minor disagreements into major flashpoints. This trend contrasts sharply with India’s philosophical traditions that promote coexistence and mutual respect.

Intolerance is also evident in everyday life. Reports of discrimination based on language, caste, gender, or region continue to surface. In metropolitan areas, migrants from certain states have faced hostility over language use, while debates around dress codes and personal choices, including interfaith relationships, often trigger backlash. Educational institutions, too, have seen disagreements over curriculum and campus activism escalate into confrontation rather than constructive dialogue.

Several factors contribute to this decline. Economic pressures and job insecurity heighten anxieties, making individuals more susceptible to divisive narratives. The rapid spread of misinformation, coupled with low media literacy, entrenches rigid viewpoints. Identity politics further deepens divisions, reducing willingness to engage with differing perspectives.

Addressing this challenge requires sustained and collective effort. Education systems must prioritise critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity. Encouraging open dialogue can bridge ideological divides. Media platforms need stronger mechanisms to curb misinformation and hate speech, while governments and institutions must uphold constitutional values of free expression and inclusivity.

In conclusion, the erosion of tolerance in India is a complex but urgent challenge. Rebuilding a culture of respect, dialogue, and empathy — rooted in both constitutional principles and civilisational values — is essential for a more inclusive and resilient future.

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Pradeep S. Mehta

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

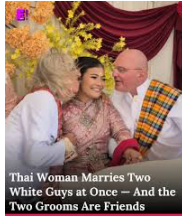
Footsteps Pause at Silicon's Door

A viral photo from San Francisco shows rows of shoes outside the office of AI startup Cursor, highlighting a growing “no-shoes” trend in Silicon Valley. Startups such as Replo, Spur, Speak, Flowhub and Composite are encouraging employees to leave footwear at the door and wear indoor slides.

The trend reflects pandemic-era work habits, though removing shoes remains uncommon in corporate offices — even in India’s startup hubs. (Tol, 28.02.26)

One Bride, Two Vows Across Borders

A Thai woman, Duangduan Ketsaro, married two Austrian men in a single wedding ceremony, drawing global attention. The two grooms are close friends who both fell in love with her.



Duangduan had lived with Roman for five years after meeting him in Pattaya and later dated Macky for a year. The trio discussed their relationship openly before deciding to formalise their unconventional union together. (HT, 02.03.26)

Faith Divides, Blood Falls Silent

An elderly woman, traced to her Jharkhand family of Ranchi, India, after more than two decades, was reportedly refused acceptance by her son because she had become

a Christian. Sushila Murmu, in her 70s, had lived at a Missionaries of Charity shelter in Kolkata since 2001 after being found wandering in the city. Murmu had often spoken of her husband and children, though much of her memory had faded.

(MoneyControl, 24.02.26)

Scripts of Tamil Echo in Egypt's Sands

A recent study has revealed ancient trade links between Tamilagam, India and the Roman Empire through nearly 30 Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit and Sanskrit inscriptions found in Egypt’s Valley of the Kings.

Dating from the 1st–3rd centuries CE, these were documented in 2024–25 by Charlotte Schmid and Ingo Strauch across six tombs in the Theban Necropolis, building on earlier surveys by Jules Baillet in 1926.

(TH, 12.02.26)

Empire's Shadow: Lutyens in Debate

Matt Ridley, great-grandson of architect Edwin Lutyens, criticised the removal of Lutyens’ bust from Rashtrapati Bhavan, replaced by C. Rajagopalachari’s.

The move sparked debate online, with opinions divided between preserving historical legacy and rejecting colonial figures, reflecting broader tensions over how nations interpret and present their past.

(Tol, 25.02.26)

Spotted Dreams in Kuno's Wild

Three cheetah cubs were born at Kuno National Park to South African cheetah Gamini, marking a



milestone for Project Cheetah. This is India’s ninth successful litter, raising the total cheetah population to 38, including 27 Indian-born cubs.

The achievement highlights ongoing conservation efforts since cheetahs were reintroduced from Namibia and South Africa during 2022–23. (TH, 18.02.26)

When Love Comes Back Home

Meet Pooja Bhatnagar, whose mother, divorced when she was one, left her with her grandmother to rebuild their future. Though apart, love endured — through calls, sacrifices, and resilience that built a life for both of them. Years later, her mother sought her consent to remarry. Amid opinions, she chose her mother’s happiness.

(www.thebetterindia.com, 20.03.26)

A Child Redraws Geometry's Lines

Japnoor Singh, an 11-year-old student from Amritsar, Punjab, India has received a design patent for a multi-utility geometry pen. The compact device combines a pen, pencil, eraser, scale and compass, replacing a traditional geometry box.

The innovation offers a practical, portable solution for students and highlights young India’s growing spirit of creativity and innovation.

(DB, 23.02.26)



Moya: The Machine That Mimics Life

China has unveiled Moya, a remarkably life-like humanoid robot introduced by DroidUp in Shanghai. Described as the world’s first fully biomimetic, embodied, intelligent robot, Moya can walk, smile, wink, nod, and maintain eye contact with human-like posture and expressions.



The debut has drawn attention to rapid advances in robotics and artificial intelligence, raising questions about how human-like machines could soon enter everyday life.

(MoneyControl, 05.02.26)

Sacred Forests Where Gods Reside

Himachal Pradesh, India, has around 500 sacred forests, or “Dev Vans”, protected by religious belief rather than formal law. Found in districts like Shimla and Kullu, these forests prohibit tree cutting and hunting, preserving biodiversity in its original form.

A study by the State Biodiversity Board shows that strong local faith ensures greater protection than enforcement, with even fallen wood left untouched. (DB, 19.01.26)

China’s Costly Quest for Lab Life

China’s biotech boom has doubled the price of lab monkeys to about ¥140,000, a level that exceeds average annual wages. Increased drug research, global licensing deals and revived funding have driven demand for preclinical testing animals.

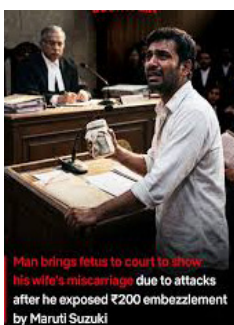
Analysts note that the surge reflects rapid growth in China’s pharmaceutical sector and a record number of early-stage drug developments. (SCMP, 18.02.26)

Dadi’s Window Shop in Kashi

In Varanasi’s Sut Tola near Ram Ghat, an elderly woman runs a unique first-floor grocery shop. Customers call from the street, and she lowers items in a bucket from her window. Selling essentials, her inventive delivery method has drawn attention, delighted locals and visitors, while reflecting the city’s everyday charm and resourcefulness. (IT, 07.01.26)

Foetus vs Maruti Suzuki in Court

The Madhya Pradesh High Court dismissed a ₹200 crore compensation plea against Maruti Suzuki, criticising the petitioner for bringing a miscarried foetus into court. It said that courts are



Man brings fetus to court to show his wife's miscarriage due to attacks after he exposed ₹200 crore embezzlement by Maruti Suzuki

not platforms for emotional displays and that decisions rely on law and evidence.

Petitioner Dayashankar Pandey alleged a ₹200 crore embezzlement and attacks on his family, including a miscarriage and his daughter’s permanent disability, seeking compensation and an impartial police probe. (NDTV, 18.03.26)

Polish Bhabhi Dances Desi Dreams

A Polish woman stole the spotlight at her devar’s baraat by dancing gracefully to the Bollywood song “Lo chali main.” Her smooth moves, expressions, and comfort with the music left viewers impressed, with many initially assuming she was Indian.



The revelation of her nationality made the performance even more special, showcasing the global appeal of Indian culture and the joy of cross-cultural celebrations. (DJ, 12.01.26)

Shadows Deepen in Karnataka Crime

In Karnataka’s Chitradurga district, a 35-year-old man allegedly killed his father over a dispute about marriage. Frustrated at remaining unmarried while his father had two wives, the accused reportedly attacked him while he slept.

The case highlights deep social pressures around marriage in rural areas and how unresolved personal grievances can escalate into tragic violence. (Tol, 09.01.26)

11 Cries in a Haryana Home

In Haryana’s Fatehabad district, Sanjay and Sunita welcomed a baby boy after 19 years of marriage and 10 daughters, bringing joy to their

family and drawing widespread attention.

Medical experts also warned of health risks, including a weakened uterus, due to repeated natural births, highlighting concerns about maternal health alongside the family’s celebration. (IT, 07.01.26)

A Smile Beyond Measure



A Malaysian man, Prathab Muniandy, has been recognised by Guinness World Records for having 42 teeth—10 more than the average person. The 33-year-old first noticed something unusual in 2021 during a family gathering, when he counted 38 teeth.

A dental X-ray later revealed four more unerupted teeth. By early 2023, all had emerged, mostly straight and without complications. (NDTV, 06.03.26)

At Last, the Sea Meets Their Eyes

A viral video shows an elderly couple experiencing the sea for the first time, touching viewers worldwide. Shared by their granddaughter, the moment captures their emotional reaction as they see and touch the ocean, offering prayers.

The story highlights the power of simple experiences and the deep joy of fulfilling lifelong wishes.



(NDTV, 11.01.26)

Ringing Out the Old, Jumping into the New

New Year rituals globally blend ancient traditions with hope for future prosperity, focusing on luck, love, and fortune. Key customs include eating grapes, ringing bells, smashing plates, and carrying suitcases, often designed to usher out the old year and welcome the new one with cheer.

Here are key New Year traditions from around the globe:



Japan: Temple bells are rung 108 times on New Year's Eve, with the final ring occurring at the stroke of midnight.

Philippines:

Wearing polka-dotted clothes or accessories at midnight is a popular custom. The circular patterns are thought to resemble coins and are believed to attract abundance, stability and good fortune in the year ahead.



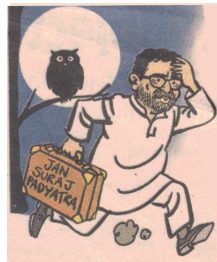
Panama and Ecuador:

Effigies known as "muñecos" are burnt at midnight to symbolise the old year being cast away. These effigies often represent famous figures or characters from the past year.



Cuba and Puerto Rico:

The New Year is celebrated by throwing buckets of water out of windows at midnight to symbolise washing away the old year.



Colombia and Mexico:

People walk around their homes or briefly step outside, carrying an empty suitcase, as the clock strikes midnight. This ritual is believed to manifest travel opportunities, new adventures and a year filled with journeys.

Denmark:

People leap into the New Year by jumping off chairs and sofas at the stroke of midnight for good luck.



Russia:

A popular tradition involves writing a wish on a small piece of paper, burning it with a candle, mixing the ashes into a glass of champagne, and drinking it exactly at midnight. This ritual, meant to ensure the wish comes true, must be completed while the Kremlin clock chimes.



Brazil: People head to the beach to jump over seven waves while making seven wishes for the New Year.



Spain and Latin America:

People in Spain and Latin America eat 12 grapes, one with each chime of the clock. Each grape represents a month of good luck, while the under-the-table version is believed to invite true love.

South Africa: Old furniture and appliances are thrown out of the windows clearing the cluster of the past year to make space for the new.

Ireland: People make loud noise by banging kitchen pots and pans at midnight to scare away bad luck and evil spirits,

Echoes of Vande Mataram

The Ministry of Home Affairs has mandated singing all six stanzas of Vande Mataram at schools and government events, restoring its complete form. The directive sets a standard duration of 3 minutes and 10 seconds and establishes clear protocols.



Issued to mark the song's 150th anniversary, the move aims to promote cultural heritage, uniformity, and a deeper appreciation of its national significance. (Tol, 11.02.26)

A Landmark Cap on Seat Selection Fees

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has directed airlines to offer at least 60 percent of seats on domestic flights without additional selection charges. This seeks to curb excessive pricing, especially during peak travel periods, and ensure fair access for passengers.

The remaining 40 percent of seats can still be dynamically priced, allowing airlines some flexibility in revenue management.

(www.msn.com, 20.03.26)

Mount Abu Renamed Aburaj

The Government of Rajasthan has announced the renaming of Mount Abu to Aburaj, aiming to restore historical identity. Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma shared the decision in the Assembly.

Additionally, Kaman has been renamed Kamvan, and Jahazpur will now be known as Yagyapur, reflecting efforts to honour cultural heritage and local sentiments.

(www.currentaffairs.adda247.com, 28.02.26)

Steel Artery Links Delhi to Meerut

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the full 82-km Delhi–Meerut RRTS corridor, along with Meerut Metro services. The Namu Bharat integrates rail, metro, and bus networks, improving regional connectivity.

The project enables seamless intercity travel, reducing the need to live in Delhi and offering a modern “twin cities” mobility model. (TH, 23.02.26)

From Smoke to Fuel: Punjab's Turn

Punjab is addressing stubble burning by converting crop residue into 2G ethanol and biofuels, supported by a major plant in Bathinda.

Initiatives like the Pusa biodecomposer and residue management machinery are being promoted, while penalties discourage burning. The approach combines environmental protection with economic gains for farmers.

(DB, 11.02.26)

Highways Written in Records

The National Highways Authority of India set four Guinness World Records during the construction of the Bengaluru–Kadapa–Vijayawada Economic Corridor. Near Puttaparthi, crews achieved the longest continuous bituminous concrete lay (28.89 lane km) and the highest quantity (10,655 metric tonnes) within 24 hours.

These milestones reflect India's rapid infrastructure push and technological advancement in highway construction. (TH, 12.01.26)

Mewar's Legacy Etched in Records

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar set his 10th Guinness World Record by creating and distributing over 1,400 earthen pots in Udaipur.



The initiative promotes eco-friendly practices. He emphasised that earthen pots are healthier alternatives to refrigeration, reducing plastic use and electricity consumption.

(DB, 23.01.26)

Quiet Reforms in Anganwadi Corners

IAS Officer Arjun Pandian transformed *anganwadis* in Thrissur. Once the son of an *anganwadi* worker, he upgraded infrastructure and converted centres into community hubs with libraries.

Recognised with the Best District Collector award under ICDS, he has demonstrated a personal commitment to strengthening grassroots childcare systems. (IE, 05.02.26)

Rail Runs on Breath of Hydrogen

India is set to launch its first hydrogen-powered train on the Jind–Sonipat route in Haryana. The train can reach speeds of 150 kmph and uses clean electrochemical technology.

This initiative marks a major step toward reducing diesel dependence and advancing sustainable mobility in Indian Railways. (Tol, 06.01.26)

Stone of Shiva, Vast as Faith

The world's largest Shivling has arrived in Bihar after a 45-day, 2,500-km journey across five states. Carved from a single block of black granite in Mahabalipuram, the 210-tonne structure was installed at the Virat Ramayan Mandir on January 17, 2026.

Seen as a rare spiritual milestone, the installation has sparked excitement among devotees and scholars, many of whom call it an event of historic significance not witnessed in centuries. (Tol, 08.01.26)



Mehta's Move: Linking Policy & Learning

Pradeep S Mehta has been appointed “Professor in Practice” (Public Policy) at JECRC University, reinforcing efforts to bridge academia and real-world policymaking. The appointment, conferred by Vice-Chairman Arpit Agarwal, reflects a growing trend of integrating industry experts into higher education.

In this role, Mehta will deliver lectures, mentor students, and lead policy discussions, offering practical insights into public policy. His engagement aims to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and real-world understanding, strengthening their ability to contribute effectively to governance, policy analysis, and public affairs.



When Old Rules Fade with Time

The Rajasthan Assembly has scrapped the decades-old two-child rule for municipal elections, a day after removing it for panchayat polls. Through the Rajasthan Municipal (Amendment) Bill, 2026, individuals with more than two children can now contest local body elections.

Officials said the rule had become outdated due to rising awareness and education levels. However, opposition leaders criticised the move, arguing that it weakened earlier efforts to promote population control policies. *(ToI, 11.03.26)*

Desert Dreams, Forged in Steel

Rajasthan has launched the Industrial Park Promotion Policy, 2026 to boost private investment and infrastructure. It promotes world-class parks via PPP, and hybrid models, requiring at least 50 acres and 10 units.

The policy expands eligible sectors, offers subsidies up to ₹40 crore, green incentives, and duty exemptions. With plug-and-play support and the RajNivesh single-window system, it aims to enhance ease of doing business and industrial competitiveness. *(ToI, 25.02.26)*

From Sand to Servers: A Digital Dawn

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced a new data centre project in Jaipur, with groundwork to begin soon. Speaking at the Rajasthan Digifest Tie Global Summit 2026, he said 10 lakh youth

will be trained nationwide in AI, with 5,000 trained locally through Laghu Udyog Bharati.

The state also launched its AI-ML Policy 2026 to boost infrastructure, startups, and digital access across Rajasthan. *(TH, 07.01.26)*

Where Mornings Begin with Words



The Rajasthan School Education Department has mandated 10 minutes of daily newspaper reading in government school assemblies to improve vocabulary and reading habits. Students will learn five new words each day.

Schools must subscribe to at least two newspapers — English and Hindi for senior classes, and Hindi papers for upper primary. The Rajasthan School Education Council will provide funding to strengthen students' language skills and awareness. *(TH, 03.01.26)*

Rails of Jaipur: 2055 Vision

To serve a population exceeding one crore by 2055, the Jaipur Development Authority, with RITES, has unveiled a comprehensive mobility plan. It envisions seven metro alignments spanning 138 km, supported by buses, cabs, and e-rickshaws for last-mile connectivity.

Bus routes will complement, not duplicate, metro lines. Alongside

Phase 1 and 2, three new corridors are proposed, aiming to create an integrated, efficient transport network for the city's future growth and connectivity needs. *(ToI, 21.02.26)*

Two Decks, One Greener Journey

Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur are set to introduce electric double-decker buses by late 2026, with 50 buses planned — 30 for Jaipur and 10 each for other cities. Led by Jaipur City Transport Services Limited, the initiative aims to improve connectivity across tourist hubs, airports, and transit points.

Fully state-funded, the project promotes eco-friendly mobility



while enhancing the travel experience, with routes aligned with infrastructure and mobility plans. *(ToI, 10.03.26)*

A Field of Dreams Rises in Amer

Maharana Pratap Sports University will be established in Amer, for which around 2 lakh square metres of land has been identified, and construction of the boundary wall has already begun.

The project is estimated to cost over ₹101 crore. It will offer international-level sports and training facilities, providing lakhs of youth in the state with opportunities to grow and excel. *(DB, 11.03.26)*

When Taste Meets Trial

Operations at a McDonald's outlet in Jaipur's Gaurav Tower were halted by the District Consumer Commission over allegations of unsafe cooking oil exceeding permissible limits. The panel also restrained Ranveer Singh from promoting the outlet, citing misleading advertisements.

The interim order followed inspection findings and a consumer complaint, raising concerns about food safety, accountability, and the influence of celebrity endorsements on public trust.

(Tol, 17.03.26)

Plastic Seized, A City Reminded

Jaipur Municipal Corporation seized 230 kg of banned single-use plastic and fined traders nearly ₹1 lakh during a joint drive with pollution authorities. Inspections targeted shops and factories violating the ban.



The crackdown highlights the ongoing challenge of enforcing plastic bans, urging citizens and businesses to adopt sustainable alternatives and support cleaner urban living.

(Tol, 18.03.26)

School on Wheels

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma announced "School on Wheels" for every district under the Raj Pahal programme, aimed at educating children from nomadic communities. Mobile schools, temporary camps, and readiness

programmes will ensure learning despite migration.

The initiative complements housing and hostel support for these communities, seeking to bridge educational gaps and integrate marginalised groups into mainstream development with dignity and opportunity.

(Tol, 23.02.26)

Tracks of Time, A City Awaits

After years of delay, Jaipur's Tonk Road Metro corridor will soon begin construction following the foundation stone laid by Narendra Modi. Planned to link commercial hubs with the airport and key railway stations, the project revives a long-pending vision.

With multiple revisions to its blueprint, the corridor reflects Jaipur's evolving urban mobility ambitions, promising faster, more connected transit for a growing city.

(Tol, 19.02.26)



Racing Against Time, Saving Lives

Rajasthan's Health Department plans to add 250 ambulances to strengthen the 108 emergency network. With over 1,100 ambulances already operational, the expansion aims to improve last-mile connectivity and ensure faster access to medical care.

The initiative focuses on timely intervention, recognising that in emergencies, every minute can make the difference between life and loss.

(Tol, 16.02.26)

A City's Mirror, Fading Clean

Sanitation concerns in Jaipur's Walled City threaten its ranking in Swachh Survekshan 2025. Irregular waste collection, clogged drains, and visible garbage heaps have reduced coverage to nearly 60-65 percent.

Residents and former councillors warn of health risks and damage to the city's image. As a heritage hub and tourist draw, the



area demands urgent attention, with calls for a dedicated sanitation strategy to restore cleanliness and civic pride.

(Tol, 15.02.26)

Wings of Care, Travel Made Gentle

Jaipur International Airport has enhanced accessibility for passengers with reduced mobility. Facilities include PRM assistance booths, dedicated seating, wheelchair services, and Braille maps. A first-of-its-kind stairlift makes it easy to move between levels.

With separate check-in lanes and trained staff support, the initiative reflects a shift toward inclusive travel, ensuring comfort, dignity, and independence for elderly and differently abled passengers.

(Tol, 03.02.26)

Villages Chart their Future

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma launched the Mukhyamantri Viksit Gram-Ward Abhiyan on Rajasthan Day to craft development roadmaps for all villages and urban wards. The initiative promotes participatory planning through local master plans covering infrastructure, resources, skills, and jobs.

By focusing on agriculture, traditional industries, and value addition, it aims to boost incomes, create employment, and reduce migration while building a "Viksit Rajasthan."

(Tol, 20.03.26)

Words Rooted in the Desert Soul

Jitendra Kumar Soni, Jaipur's district collector, has won the 2025 Sahitya Akademi Award in Rajasthani for *Bharkhama*. The collection reflects rural life, relationships, and cultural values, and inspired a 2024 film that also earned him recognition.

A prolific writer with over 15 books, Soni blends administration with literature, bringing Rajasthan's lived realities to life in words that resonate deeply across generations.

(Tol, 17.03.26)

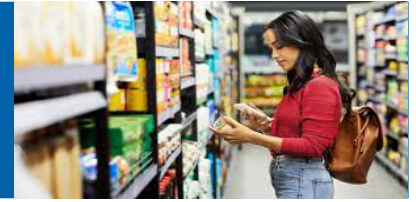


Protecting India's Consumers 40 Years

Can I Trust What I'm Going to Buy?

Pradeep S. Mehta*

India has a robust legal framework for consumer protection, but everyday trust in product safety still depends on how consistently these laws are enforced.



A mother in Jaipur recently described her morning routine – making tea, packing school lunches, and scanning food labels, not out of curiosity but anxiety. Long, unfamiliar ingredient names left her uncertain. “I don’t even know what it means,” she said. “I just hope it’s fine.” That quiet hope defines the experience of millions of Indian consumers who rely on unseen checks when buying food, medicines, toys, or gadgets.

World Consumer Rights Day, observed on March 15, highlights this gap through its theme, “Safe Products, Confident Consumers.” In India, the answer to whether consumers can feel confident is mixed: sometimes yes, often uncertain, and not yet consistently reliable.

India has made significant progress in building institutions. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, is among the strongest in Asia. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) oversee food safety, while the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certifies a wide range of products. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) investigates violations, and National Consumer Day on December 24 reinforces awareness. These institutions reflect a serious commitment to consumer welfare.

However, data reveal persistent gaps. In the past five years, regulators tested nearly 8.7 lakh food samples, with almost 20 percent failing quality standards. These were not luxury

goods but everyday essentials, such as milk products and packaged snacks. The State Food Safety Index further shows that more than half of India’s states and union territories fall short of minimum benchmarks for testing and surveillance. This creates uneven protection—products may be rigorously checked in one region but inadequately monitored in another.

The rise of digital commerce has added new complexities. Prices change at checkout, extra fees appear, or subscriptions are pre-selected. Recognising this, the CCPA identified 13 such practices as unfair trade practices in its 2023 guidelines. While platforms have been asked to self-audit, enforcement remains uneven.

The issue is not with e-commerce itself, which has greatly expanded access and convenience, but with ensuring that digital consumers receive the same protections as those shopping in physical stores.

Consumer confidence ultimately depends on institutional credibility. Consider air travel: passengers rarely question safety because they trust regulatory systems. That confidence is built through consistent oversight, not occasional interventions. Indian consumers need similar assurance—that products on shelves and screens are reliably vetted, and that violations are swiftly addressed.

Progress is visible. Quality control orders now cover over 800 product categories, product recalls are

becoming more transparent, and the CCPA has taken action against misleading advertisements and faulty goods. Yet, more consistent implementation is needed.

Three practical improvements could make a significant difference. First, product recall systems should be accessible and user-friendly, with information easily available online rather than buried in official notices. Second, enforcement must be continuous and predictable, not limited to periodic crackdowns. Regular, quiet oversight builds far greater trust than reactive action during crises. Third, clearer labelling and tools like QR codes can help consumers verify product certifications instantly.

No consumer should have to rely on hope. Every parent should feel confident that the products they buy meet established safety standards. India has the laws and institutions in place; the challenge lies in using them to their full potential.

Confident consumers do more than protect themselves – they strengthen markets, reward ethical businesses, and push out unsafe practices. Consumer safety is not separate from economic growth; it is essential to building a system that is trusted, resilient, and sustainable.

**Secretary General of CUTS International. Abridged from an article appeared in The Asian Age and Deccan Herald on March 12, 2026.*

Sources: DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DJ: Daily Jagran; HT: Hindustan Times; IE: Indian Express; IT: India Today; NDTV: New Delhi Television; SCMP: South China Morning Post; TH: The Hindu; Tol; Times of India

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