



YouGRAF

**India Youth Aspiration
Index Preparatory Study**



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Introduction

YouGRAF (Youth Growth, Resilience, Aspirations, and Future Readiness) is proposed as an annual national index to systematically measure and understand the aspirations and development of India's youth, particularly in rural and low-income contexts. With India's working-age population peaking by 2030, YouGRAF provides a crucial evidence base for youth policy, skilling, and employment strategies.

The Indian Context

For rural youth in India, aspiration is not a fixed destination—it is a moving horizon that stretches with exposure, opportunity, and imagination. It's the inner compass that guides their vision of a "good life," often balancing personal dreams with familial duty and social expectation.

Aspiration is the starting point of mobility. It defines not just where youth want to go, but also what they are running from—social stagnation, unemployment, invisibility.

In the spirit of this challenge, YouGRAF is born;

- Growth → Strength to move upward.
- Resilience → Capacity to adapt to shocks.
- Aspiration → The energy to dream and plan beyond circumstances.
- Future-readiness → Skills and adaptability for a fast-changing world.

YouGRAF aligns directly with the **National Youth Policy** priorities especially in the domains of education-employment transitions, skilling and aspirational mismatch. Where NYP sets out the policy, YouGRAF provides the ground-level insights into youth motivations, barriers, and support systems. As India crafts its next phase of youth strategy, YouGRAF offers actionable insight for targeted interventions and culturally rooted engagement models.

YouGRAF is not just an index. It is a framework to understand, nurture, and enable the **Indian youth's journey from subsistence to success**. It is a lens, on ambition, adversity, and ascent of the young Indian.

YouGRAF is that lens that integrates ***aspiration, constraints, enablers, and Context.***

Highlights of the Report

Methodology & Research Approach

The YouGRAF Index has evolved through a series of structured research phases to effectively map youth aspirations in rural and migrant populations. The approach progressed through:

- Pilot 1: Qualitative and Quantitative with a control & treatment (skilling) sample approach.
- Pilot 2 : Random survey among 700 youth
- Final Framework : Census-aligned household survey in select village coupled with purposive urban migrant youth cohort surveys.

Key Findings Across Pilots

- Women are more educated but less employed, mobility and marriage acting as constraints.
- Young men show strong migration aspirations, often tied to pressure to support families.
- Many youth aspire to non-farm jobs but lack the skills or exposure to pursue them.
- Strong preference for short-term skilling, though current offerings often mismatch aspirations.

Youth Aspiration Segmentation

Youth Aspiration Segmentation

Emerging Segment	Core Driver	Key Traits
Family Lifters	Duty to support parents/family	Early earners, low personal ambition, prioritise family
Family Pillars	Household stability	Dependable, local, long-term support systems
Debt Repayers	Pressure to repay loans, family obligations	Urgent job-seekers, economically burdened, often low-skilled
Emotionally Obligated	Emotional duty to family	Sacrifice mobility, follow parental decisions, tied to home
Independent Climbers	Self-driven ambition	Aspirational, mobile, willing to take risks, focused on growth
Balancers	Blend of aspiration and family duty	Cautiously aspirational, seek compromise, semi-mobile
Hungry Hustlers	Fast income, influencer mindset	Risk-takers, image-driven, prefer short-term gains
Hybrid Straddlers	Seasonal migration & rural ties	Navigate city work and village farming, flexible yet root-bound
Stranded Aspirants	Status aspiration without action or readiness	Avoid manual work, want white-collar jobs, lack skills & clarity, often NEET
Earnest Preppers	Desire for stable salaried job with willingness to skill and grind	Still studying/training, realistic, resilient, preparing through effort

Emerging Patterns

- Skilling demand is strong, but many youth remain mismatched to available opportunities.
- Migration is both an aspiration and a strategy—youth often migrate seasonally or in groups.
- Financial responsibility (debt, family needs) heavily shapes the decision-making of youth.

Next Steps & Call to Action

YouGRAF Index will be scaled into a national annual survey anchored to Census, with quarterly focused studies on emerging youth trends.

Organizational Strength - Head Held High Foundation's Leadership

The Head Held High Foundation (HHHF) brings exceptional credibility and unique positioning to lead the YouGRAF initiative. Founded in 2007 HHHF has a mission “to eradicate rural poverty globally, beginning in India,” focusing on empowering youth and families in marginalized communities to achieve their potential “with their heads held high.” Its flagship Make India Capable (MIC) program has demonstrated transformative results – turning illiterate rural youth into capable, employed individuals.

The foundation combines trust and access in rural communities with a proven ability to design and execute large-scale youth programs. It has established partnerships with government, government bodies, corporates, and international organizations.

I. Approach and Methodology

YouGRAF is being developed through a phased approach, combining rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods to progressively lead to a national level study. The methodology balances breadth and depth – starting from focused pilot studies so it evolves into a comprehensive nationwide index aligned with the next Census.

The key phases;

- 1. Pilot 1** — The initiative began with a sample pilot among two segments of rural youth, a control and treatment sample approach, one group who have undergone training and job placements.



Second, a random survey among youth in adjoining geographies. This phase combined a quantitative survey with in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. By focusing on two sets of data, Pilot 1 uncovered baseline aspirations, early outcomes, and the influence of training on their goals. It also helped develop initial frameworks (e.g. identifying broad aspiration clusters) and refine survey instruments in a real-world setting.



- 2. Pilot 2** — To strengthen the representation of the sample and move closer to a national picture, the study was expanded to include 700 youth across multiple states and cities. This large-N quantitative phase captured a diverse cross-section—across gender, caste, education levels, and occupational roles—spanning metros, small towns, and rural areas.
- 3. Full Pilot** — Insights from the pilot study—particularly around rural-urban transitions—led us to adopt a Universal Coverage Sampling strategy. We shifted from randomly sampling eligible youth to surveying entire villages, complemented by dedicated youth questionnaires.

This simple yet strategic pivot offered a key advantage: by covering the whole village (India has over 600,000 villages, home to nearly two-thirds of its population), we could map every household—and, by extension, the broader community. Each household revealed its structure and the youth connected to it, enabling us to capture both those who currently reside in the village and those who have migrated. This village-based approach provides a more grounded, community-centric understanding of youth realities.

4. Importantly, by using the village as our Primary Sampling Unit (PSU), we ensured the systematic inclusion of often invisible or overlooked groups—such as NEET youth (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), young women who married early, and other marginalized subgroups that traditional random sampling methods are likely to miss.
5. Building on the new approach, YouGRAF selected Poolachinta—an agrarian village located between Hyderabad and Bangalore—as the study site. Trained surveyors conducted 140 household-level surveys, which were mapped against Census 2011 data to ensure comparability. Wherever households included youth aged 18 to 29, a dedicated youth questionnaire was administered. In cases where youth had migrated, the team followed up via telephone to ensure their inclusion. The results were highly encouraging, reinforcing confidence in this methodology. It introduced both rigor in sampling and a holistic view of household, youth, and socio-economic realities.



6. Alignment with Census - From the outset, YouGRAF's design has been aligned to India's census framework for comparability over time. The 2011 Census data was used as an anchor in pilot analysis to validate findings and measure change. Going forward, the full YouGRAF survey in selected villages will be directly tied to the Census - villages are chosen to mirror census sampling units, and questions are designed to complement census data. This alignment allows triangulation. It also sets up a longitudinal dimension - the 2025 baseline aspiration data in these villages will pair with fresh census demographics, and repeating the YouGRAF survey in future years will show trends post-2025.
7. In essence, YouGRAF will ride alongside the census, ensuring that as India's official data gets updated, so does the youth aspirations index. This phase involves planning for scale – selecting 100+ representative villages nationally (covering North, South, East, West, Northeast regions), training field teams to conduct the census-synchronized surveys, and establishing data systems that can ingest and compare multi-year data. By phasing in alignment with the census, YouGRAF aims to become a sustainable annual/periodic exercise built into India's data ecosystem, rather than a decadal study.
8. The National Youth Policy 2014, and its upcoming revision toward 2025, emphasizes five priority areas: Education, Employment and skill development, Entrepreneurship, Health and healthy lifestyle, Participation in governance. Where NYP sets out the policy, YouGRAF provides the ground-level insights into youth motivations, barriers, and support systems. YouGRAF framework contributes an important longitudinal and village-based lens, capturing all voices particularly women, NEET youth, early job seekers, and seasonal migrants. As India crafts its next phase of youth strategy, YouGRAF offers actionable insight for targeted interventions and culturally rooted engagement models.

II. Findings from the Pilot Phases

The pilots yielded rich insights into the state of youth aspirations, revealing clear segments (groups of youth by mindset), aspiration (gap between current status and goals), and persistent barriers. We summarize key findings from each phase -

1. Pilot 1 – Key Insights

The first pilot uncovered a dual narrative of optimism and persistent challenges. On one hand, these young people showed high personal ambition and some early success; on the other, they still grappled with systemic barriers like limited local jobs and social expectations. The initial cluster analysis of the Pilot 1 survey data identified four distinct “aspiration personas” among rural youth.

- **Stable Aspirants (34%)** – Young people who prioritize a steady income, often balancing personal ambition with family well-being. They embody the “rise but with roots” mindset – ambitious but risk-averse.
- **Moderate Seekers (6%)** – A smaller segment of pragmatic youth with moderate risk appetite. They are typically younger and are exploring opportunities but within limits.
- **Career-Driven Adventurers (27%)** – The highly ambitious risk-takers, driven by career growth and personal advancement. Their presence (27%) signals a rising tide of aspiration beyond tradition among rural youth.
- **Community-Oriented Traditionalists (33%)** – Nearly one-third of youth remained rooted in traditional values and community expectations. They remind us that for many rural youth, “aspiration” is a collective concept – it’s about uplifting one’s family, not just oneself.

The above clusters underscore that rural youth are far from homogeneous – they fall into clear sub-groups with differing motivations.

- Stable Aspirants can benefit from thoughtful job placement matching their steady approach.
- Moderate Seekers might thrive with peer mentorship and exposure to broaden their horizons.
- Adventurers need fast-track skilling, startup support or migration assistance to channel their risk-taking positively.
- Traditionalists may require inspiration and guidance to broaden their perspective while leveraging their strong community ties.

This 1st pilot led us to ***“bad skills in good times”*** and established that any youth index must account for aspiration levels, gender norms, and structural barriers together, rather than treating youth as one monolithic category.

2. Pilot 2 (700-Youth Survey) – Key Insights

The second pilot, with a broader survey of 1,000 youth, provided a quantitative pulse of youth across different regions. This large-sample study reinforced several themes from Pilot 1 while also unearthing stark gender, caste, and economic divides. Some key high-level findings included

-

Are Youth Working in Their Aspired Field?

Yes (working in aspired field)	45%
No (working, but not in aspired field)	55%
<i>Base: 478 employed respondents</i>	

Only 45% are working in the field they aspire to. The remaining 55% are engaged in jobs that do not align with their career goals.

Youth from SC communities report the lowest alignment - 29%

- Compared to 44% among OBCs
- 47% among STs
- 58% among General category youth.

Educational background plays a major role;

- Youth with only 12th-grade education showed the highest alignment (55%)
- ITI trainees and 10th-pass youth had the lowest alignment (~30%)
- Notably, even among graduates, only 40% are working in their desired field — 60% are employed elsewhere.

Confidence in Achieving Career Goals

Extremely confident	17%
Very confident	29%
Somewhat confident	34%
Slightly confident	16%
Not at all confident	3%
Base: 583 respondents	

Youth express confidence in achieving their career goals. When grouped, the top 2 box (very/extremely confident) includes **46%** of respondents. However, **19%** are either only slightly or not at all confident.

Interestingly, confidence levels do not differ too much by gender or caste. However it must be noted, the youth who are not yet in their desired field had just as high, if not higher confidence, as those already working in their dream field.

Five-Year Career Outlook

In a stable job	57%
Owning a business	32%
Supporting my family financially	32%
Pursuing higher studies	19%
<i>Base: 568 respondents</i>	

A stable job is the most common expectation, but a significant number of youth also have entrepreneurial goals or plan to support their families. Roughly one in five see themselves continuing with higher education.

What do youth look for while choosing professions?

	Graduate	Non Graduate	All
High Salary	46%	58%	53%
Job Security	53%	47%	49%
Skills and Talent	34%	34%	34%
Passion and Interest	34%	30%	32%
Geographic Location	11%	9%	9%
Influence of Role Models	13%	7%	9%
<i>BASE: 246 (Show interest in particular jobs)</i>	93	150	243

High Salary and Job Stability emerge as the dominant motivators for career choice. Personal passion or skill fit also plays a significant role, while location and role models are less influential.

Graduates and non-graduates show distinctly different motivations when choosing their desired profession.

- Graduates are more likely to seek careers aligned with their interests, passions, and educational background. Over one-third (35%) cite passion or interest in the field as their primary motivator—higher than any other factor in this group.
- In contrast, non-graduates are significantly more likely to be driven by high income potential—with 42% prioritizing salary, compared to just 25% of graduates.
- The desire to make a social impact also shows up more among graduates (15%) than non-graduates (8%).
- Across both groups, factors like prestige, status, and job security remain secondary motivators, each cited by only around 6–10% of respondents.

Job Preferences

Government Job	34%
Digital & IT Services	19%
Self-employment / Business	14%
ITeS / AI-Enabled Roles	9%
Hospitality	6%



The most commonly preferred jobs among youth include government employment, Digital/IT services, Business. Government jobs reflect a strong pull due to their perceived security and prestige. High Salary and Job Security are the two primary motivational drivers for these job preferences.

Support Systems Youth Need

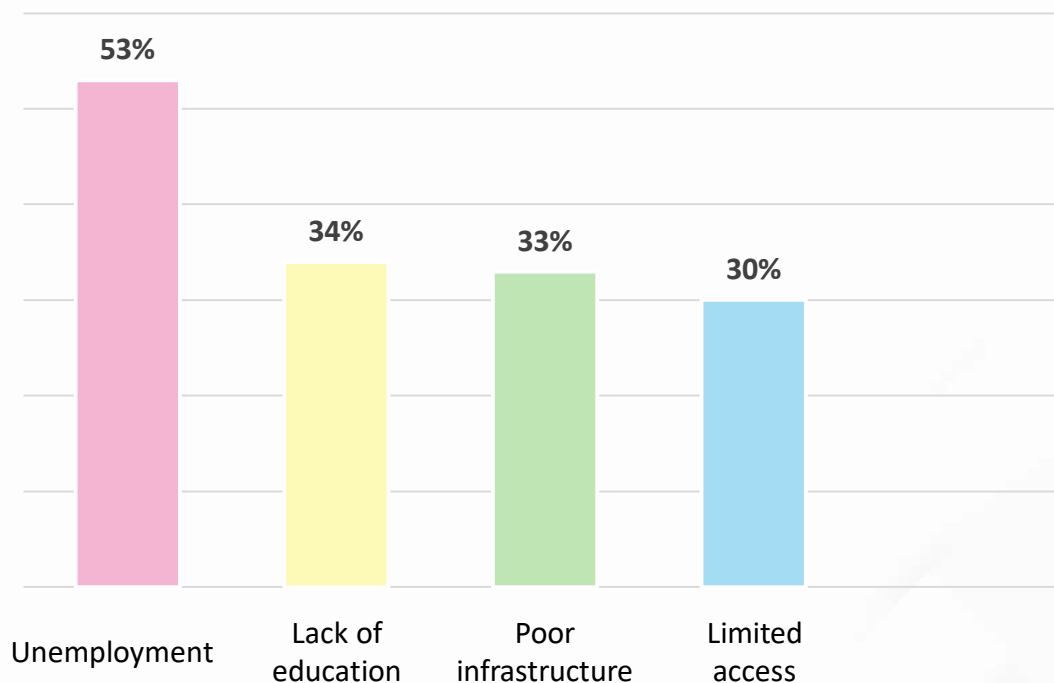
Skill-oriented training programs	55%
Family support (financial/moral)	47%
Continued education (higher studies/qualifications)	42%
Career guidance or mentorship	39%
Financial assistance (e.g. course fees)	38%
Communication skills development	20%

Large portion of the youth (55%) feel it is 'skill or job training' that can uplift them. An similar portion (47%) say it is Family Support that can support them, possibly pointing to financial + moral support. And in the case of young women, the support factor is only likely to be more pronounced.

The second level of support comes from a deficit; deficit of education (higher studies or qualifications), deficit of guidance and mentors, deficit of financial support to join courses or start businesses.



Youth Development Challenges



Challenges in Youth Development	Female	Male
Lack of education	36%	32%
Unemployment	57%	49%
Poor Infrastructure	28%	39%
Limited access to technology	27%	34%
<i>BASE (All)</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>293</i>

Challenges in Youth Development / AGE	18 to 21	22 to 25	26 to 29
Lack of education	32%	35%	40%
Unemployment	55%	52%	52%
Poor Infrastructure	29%	32%	49%
Limited access to technology	29%	29%	38%
<i>BASE (All)</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>102</i>

Unemployment or suitable employment was by far the top concern, cited by 1 of every 2 respondents. The next major issues were lack of education, poor infrastructure, and limited access to technology in that order.

These responses were consistent across locations, social categories, and genders. While priorities differed slightly (e.g., women emphasized education more, men noted infrastructure), the core challenges remain consistent across all groups.

Willingness to Migrate

Yes	65%
No	35%
<i>Base: 569 respondents</i>	

A significant share of youth are open to mobility and skill-building in pursuit of better opportunities.

- 65% said yes, they would be willing to migrate to another area for employment, while only 35% said no.
- Higher among the younger. 70% of the 18 - 21 year-olds compared to 55% of those aged 26 - 29.
- Social norms and family - only half of SC youth were open to migration, compared to 2/3rd among OBC, ST, or General youth.
- Interestingly, young women were about as likely as young men to consider migrating. This is an interesting trend if it holds, suggesting shifting attitudes as women pursue careers, ensuring they have an independent income source, an insurance of sorts. Family, social and safety considerations however remain affecting factors.

The 2nd pilot expanded and quantified our understanding of the complementary truths, of educational attainment, job attainment, support and challenges, gender roles, migration among others. The 2nd pilot with the large sample base was able to take us a step closer to the voices on the ground.

3. Full Pilot – Key Insights

The conscious core shift in the YouGRAF methodology, to the village in its entirety as our Primary Sampling Unit, proved the culture centric route, is most suited to the Indian context. Surveying every youth in a defined village, linking their profile to household context, caste, landholding, family migration history, yielded results.

The 2011 Census becomes the anchor that we could validate and compare our findings, to measure change over time and build a longitudinal pathway into the future.

i. Youth Occupations - Between Aspiration and Accommodation

Today's rural youth stand at a threshold, balancing survival and dreams. Across both Poolachinta and migrant surveys, a clear shift is visible;

- Most live in PGs or shared rentals, away from home, and send money back regularly. Men dominate gig roles (delivery, ride-hailing), while women are in office support, retail, or kitchen roles.
- Migration was not driven by training or job-readiness but by friends or family connections.
- The city excites but also exhausts. Many don't see themselves there beyond 3–5 years.
- Farmer as a primary identity is vanishing. New Dual Identities are emerging - "Student + Farmer", "Worker + Farmer", "Aspirant + Helper" — layered, hybrid occupational self-images reflecting the complex juggling acts youth perform.
- Farming remains the safety net - Even those who migrate to cities or pursue other work treat farming as assurance, sustenance, and fallback. It provides emotional security — "If nothing else works, there's always the land."
- Migrant Work Realities - Migration is a loop, it is not a line, not a shift. Migrant youth were observed to flip between the city for earnings and the village for agriculture, sustenance.

- Job Precarity and Aspirational Resilience - Despite poor pay and instability, the dignity of earning and sending money home is transformational for the family.

ii. Household Survey in Poolachinta – Anchoring with a Village PSU

The Poolachinta village household survey yielded granular data on education, work, caste, migration, digital access, and youth transitions.

Key Learnings;

- Youth (18–29) make up ~18% of the population.
- The occupational ladder is shifting: older members are farmers or agri-labourers, while youth lean towards city jobs or training aspirations.
- Multiple earners per household are common, but many rely on a single steady income, often from a migrated youth.
- Poverty analysis revealed three categories — Poor, Moderately Poor, and Secure — using card type, income, and housing type.

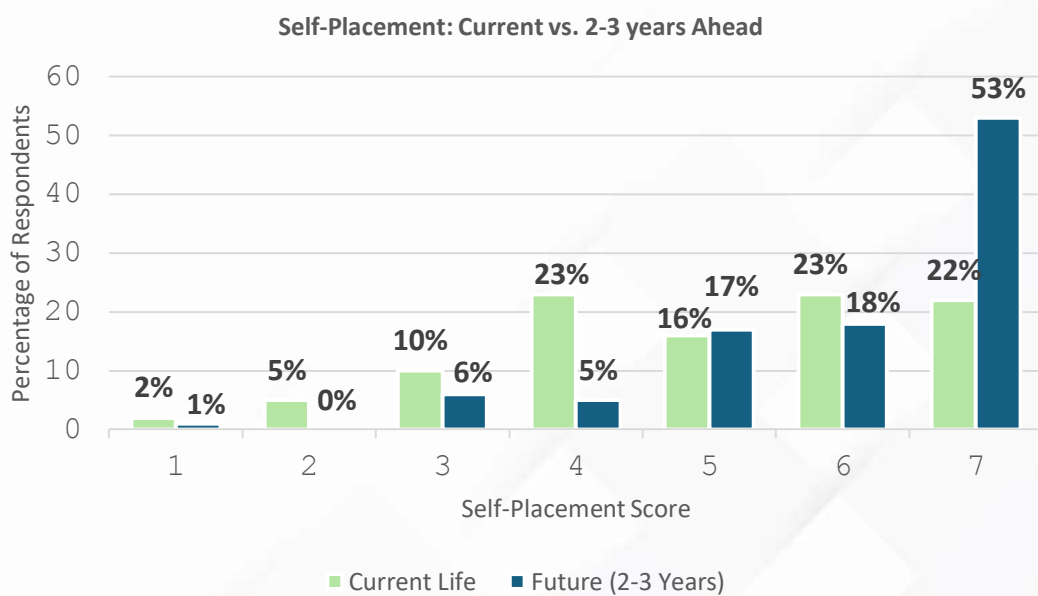
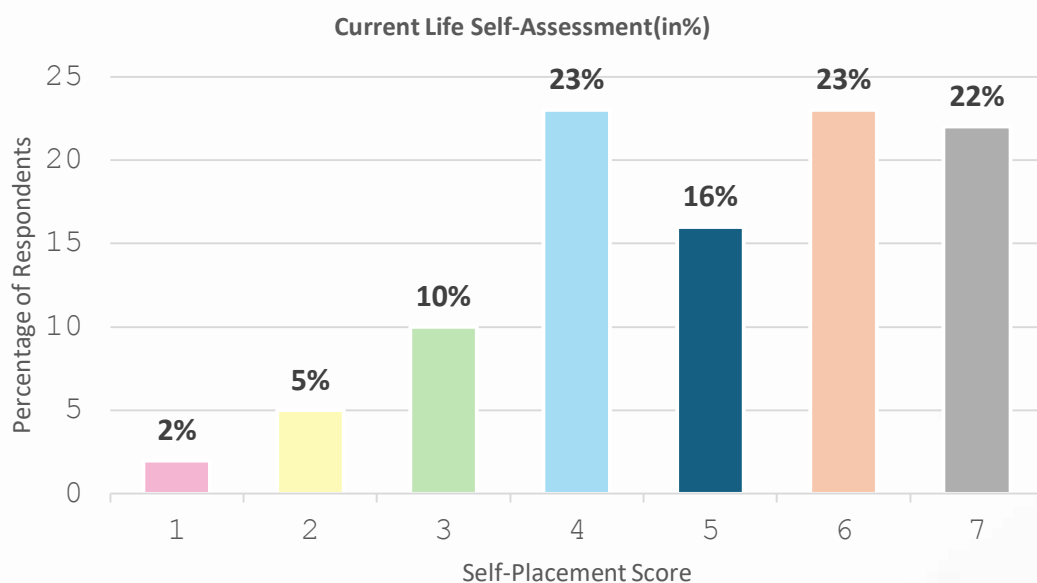
Household Example - One household had four adults: the father a casual labourer, mother an agricultural worker, daughter a housewife, and son a delivery worker in Hyderabad — whose remittance is the household's only fixed income.

iii. Youth Aspirations - Dreams Measured, Gaps Revealed

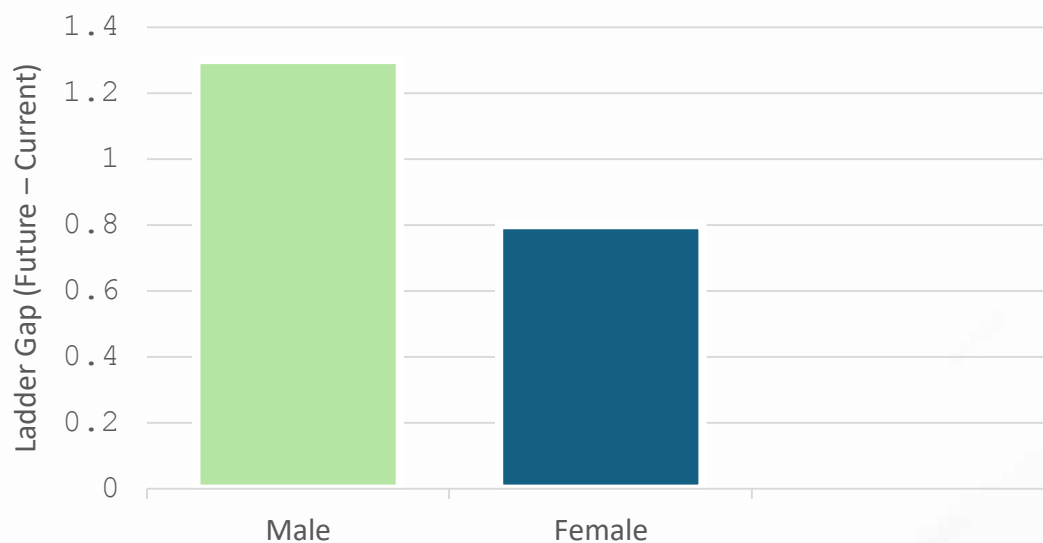
We asked the youth to locate themselves on a 10-step Life Ladder: "Step 1 = Worst possible life, Step 10 = Best possible life"

And we found;

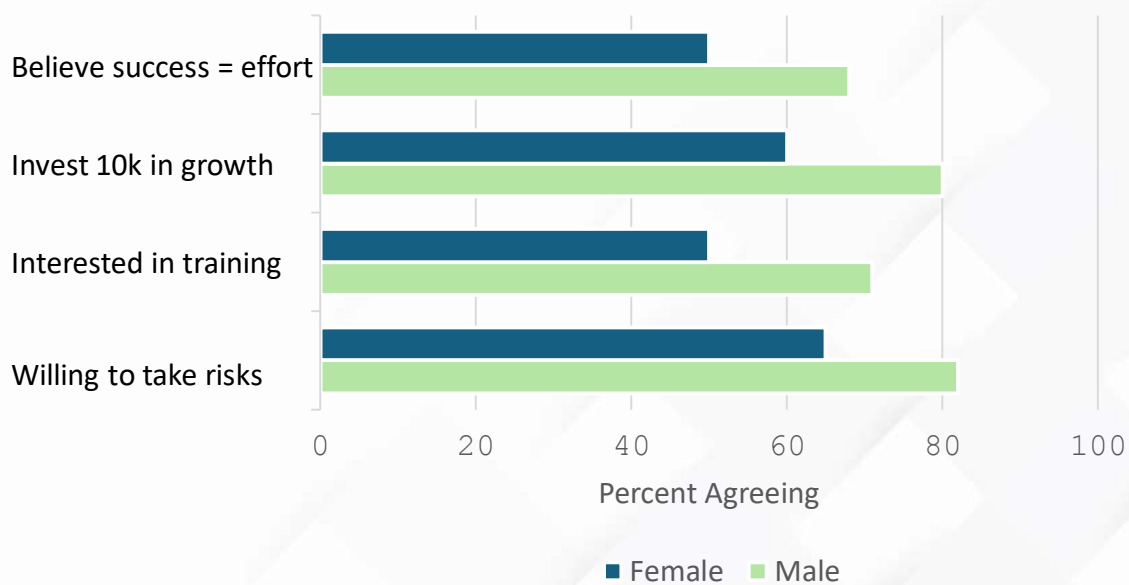
- | | | |
|---|---|------------|
| • Average Current Step | - | ~4.5 |
| • Average Desired Step (in 2 - 3 years) | - | ~8.2 |
| • Average Gap | - | +3.7 steps |



Average Aspirational Gap by Gender



Mindset Profile by Gender



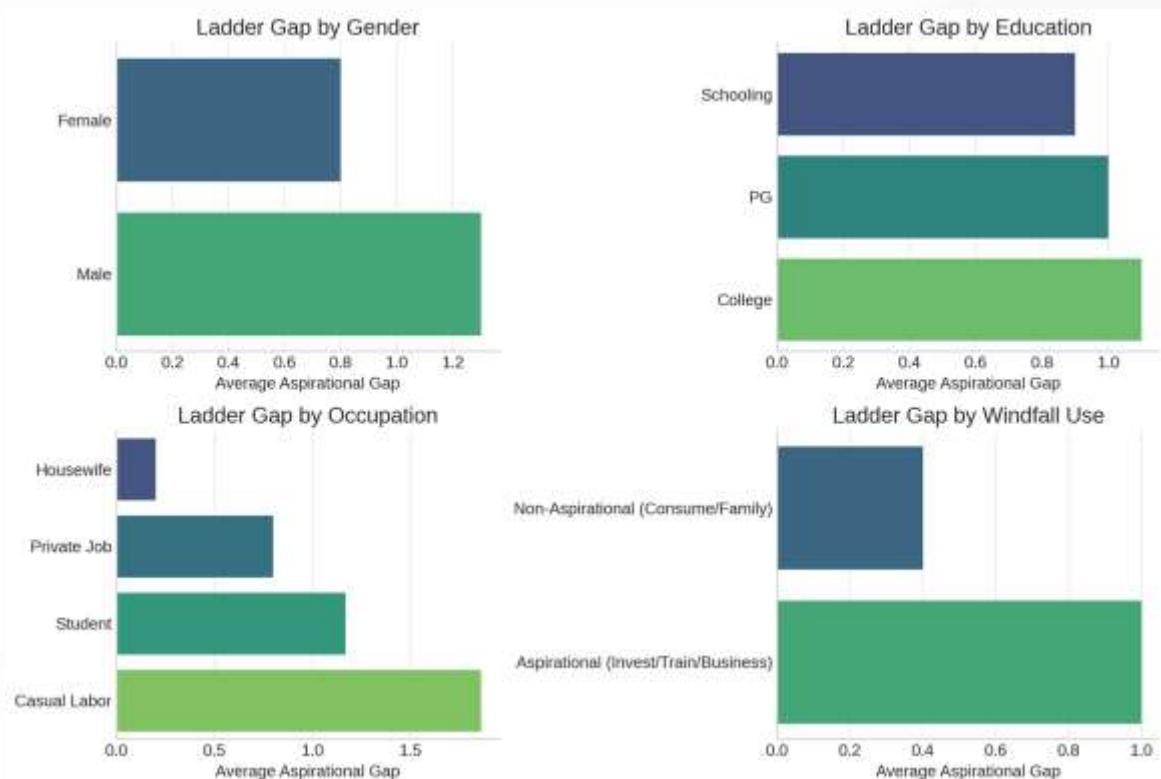
Barriers to Progress by Aspirational Segment

- Low aspiration youth cite lack of money and job availability most
- High aspiration youth more often cite lack of education and family support
- High-movers are aware of personal capacity gaps; low-movers blocked by context

Enablers to Move Up by Aspirational Segment

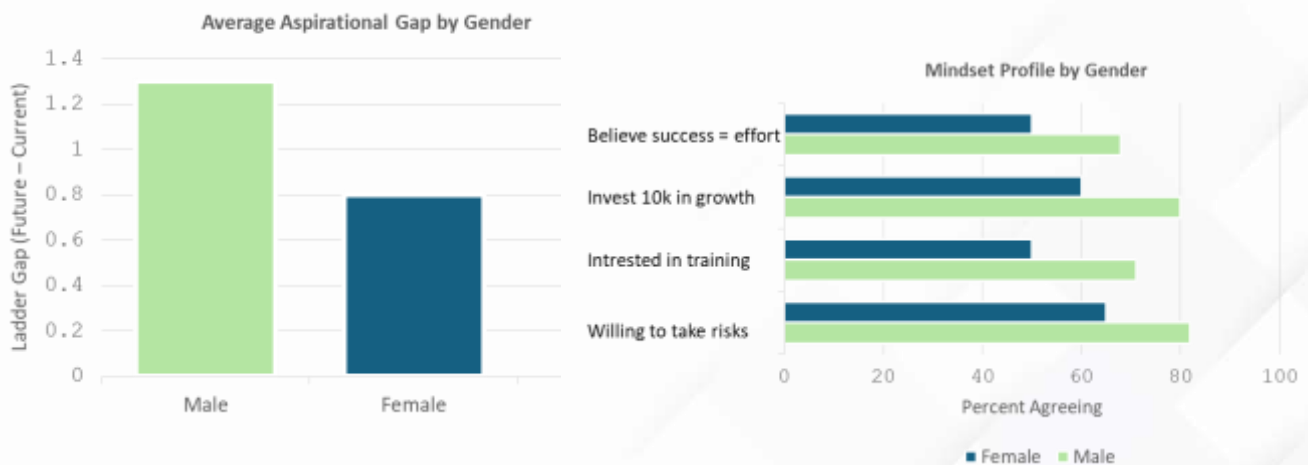
- High aspiration youth overwhelmingly want job guidance and opportunity
- Low aspiration youth more often say they need family support or steady income
- Government schemes are equally desired across all segments

3. Aspirational Segments by Demographics & Use of Windfall



- **Gender** – Males show significantly higher average ladder gap than females
- **Education Level** – College youth are more aspirational than those with only schooling
- **Occupation** – Students and casual labourers have the highest aspiration; housewives the lowest
- **Windfall Use Orientation** – Youth who plan to invest in self/future aim higher than those focused on consumption or family needs

4. Aspirational Segments by the Mindset



- **Aspirations vs Reality** – The “Ladder Gap” - Many rural youth have aspirations that far exceed their current status, creating a large “ladder gap” between where they are and where they want to be. In the pilot village, youth were asked to rate their current life on an aspiration ladder (with rungs representing steps like stable job, owning a house, leadership role, etc.) and then their desired rung five years from now.

- **Aspirations vs Reality** – The “Ladder Gap” - Many rural youth have aspirations that far exceed their current status, creating a large “ladder gap” between where they are and where they want to be. In the pilot village, youth were asked to rate their current life on an aspiration ladder (with rungs representing steps like stable job, owning a house, leadership role, etc.) and then their desired rung five years from now.
- **The gap was striking** – especially for young women and lower-caste youth, who often placed themselves low currently but very high in the future. This suggests both high hopes and high frustration potential - without bridging mechanisms, such youth could become disillusioned.
- YouGRAF’s data underscores the importance of policies that connect ambitions to opportunities – through scholarships, job reservations, or mentorship – to help youth climb their aspiration ladder one rung at a time.
- **Resilience and Financial Priorities** - Despite hardships, rural youth display a notable sense of resilience and future-orientation. When asked hypothetically how they would use an unexpected small windfall (e.g. ₹10,000), the majority prioritized stability – debt repayment, savings, or investing in education – over immediate consumption.
- This indicates that youth, even in low-income settings, are striving to secure their futures and shoulder family responsibilities before indulging in any personal desires, hinting at suppressed personal development.

5. Skills and Training - Mismatch and Missed Opportunities

Awareness ≠ Action ≠ Outcome

- High awareness - 70%+ youth have heard of computer courses, data entry, tailoring, and English speaking courses. And, they are the most popularly advertised courses in their nearby towns.
- Obsolete Choices - Despite massive market changes, outdated courses dominate perceived options - Tailoring & Data Entry are still seen as top skilling options.
- Satisfaction Levels - Less than 30% of trained youth report satisfaction with course quality or job linkage.
- Friend/Relative Training Awareness - Over 65% youth say they do not know anyone personally who attended a course and succeeded. Role model deficit stifles training momentum.
- Willingness to Skill - About 60% express interest in training IF affordable, local, and job-guaranteed. Migrant youth (already migrated, aware) are more willing to undertake longer city-based courses (6 months) compared to rural youth (first step, unaware).

6. Migration Choices - Comfort of Village vs Dreams of City

Migration is a loop, not a line, not a shift .

- Strong preference for nearby town over distant city - 70% rural youth prefer training or jobs in nearby towns even if salary is 30–50% lower than big cities.
- City migration feared for - loneliness, costs, insecurity, family disconnect.
- Virtually No Uptake for Overseas Migration - Only 2% showed serious interest in overseas jobs. Aspiration is rising — but rootedness is still strong.
- Hopes and Hurdles - We see the rise of the “Hybrid Straddler” – youth who partially migrate (working in a city for a season and then returning home to help with harvest or family needs). These Hybrid Straddlers treat migration as a temporary opportunity to earn lump sums, not a permanent relocation.

7. Smartphone Readiness - The Digital Bridge to Aspiration

Ubiquitous. Ready Vehicle?

- Smartphone Penetration - 90%+ of youth surveyed (both village and migrant) own or have access to a smartphone.
- Primary Uses -
 - 92% - Entertainment (YouTube, short videos, music apps)
 - 75% - Social Connectivity (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram)
 - 52% - News/Information (local news apps, YouTube news channels)
 - 23% - Digital Payments (UPI apps like PhonePe, Google Pay)
 - 21% - Learning/Skill Acquisition (YouTube tutorials, online classes)

Aspiration Trigger - Smartphone users rated higher on the ladder compared to non-users or passive users.

8. Earnings and Spending - Security Before Consumption

Where does the money go?

Among both rural and migrant youth -

- Top Spending Heads;

○ Sending Money Home	- 55%
○ Repaying Loans	- 30%
○ Saving for Emergencies	- 28%
○ Investing in Skill Courses / Exams	- 22%
○ Personal Consumption (clothes, phones, festivals)	- 18%

Youth prioritize security (family support, debt repayment, savings) over self-consumption.

9. ₹10,000 Unexpected Windfall: A Window into Priorities

We asked: "If you suddenly received ₹10,000, how would you use it?"

Key Findings;

- Future-Oriented Usage (courses, savings, investing) : ~48%
- Past/Obligation Usage (debt repayment, family support) : ~43%
- Immediate Consumption (buying goods, festivals) : ~9%

Majority of the youth wanted to invest or stabilize. They are forward-looking, but burdened by family needs and debts. Interestingly, youth who chose “investment/savings” had higher ladder aspirations. Those choosing “debt repayment” often had lower current ladder positions but similar desired steps — showing hope despite constraints.

The windfall is found to be of immense support to the ladder question type for measuring aspirations.

10. Emerging Segments: Early Validation of the YouGRAF Framework

- Our pilots reveal ten emerging segments of rural and migrant youth, shaped by varying degrees of ambition, obligation, mobility, and financial pressure. They go beyond surface demographics to reflect how youth actually navigate opportunity and constraint. Each segment represents a distinct pathway anchored in the motivations that drive real-world choices.



Emerging Segment	Core Driver	Key Traits
1. Family Lifters	Duty to support parents/family	Early earners, low personal ambition, prioritise family income
2. Family Pillars	Household stability	Dependable, local, long-term support systems
3. Debt Repayers	Pressure to repay loans, family obligations	Urgent job-seekers, economically burdened, often low-skilled
4. Emotionally Obligated	Emotional duty to family	Sacrifice mobility, follow parental decisions, tied to home
5. Independent Climbers	Self-driven ambition	Aspirational, mobile, willing to take risks, focused on growth
6. Balancers	Blend of aspiration and family duty	Cautiously aspirational, seek compromise, semi-mobile
7. Hungry Hustlers	Quick income, fast influenced	Risk-takers, image-driven, prefer short-term gains
8. Hybrid Straddlers	Seasonal migration & rural ties	Navigate city work and village farming, flexible yet root-bound
9. Stranded Aspirants	Status aspiration without action or readiness	Avoid manual work, want white-collar jobs, lack skills & clarity, often NEET
10. Earnest Preppers	Desire for stable salaried job + willingness to skill	Still studying/training, realistic, resilient, preparing through effort

- The pilot data supports at least 7 out of these 10 emerging segments. This segmentation framework adds a rich, human-centered layer to the index, going beyond numbers to describe who the youth are in terms of mindset. Table 2 provides an overview of the YouGRAF emerging segments identified so far, along with their core drivers and observed traits.
- 7 out of 10 segments have clear, visible representation already in the pilot data.
- 2 segments (Hungry Hustlers and Eligible Earners) show early signals — likely to strengthen with broader urban/rural data.
- None of the segments are absent — all 10 fit meaningfully across different youth pathways.

Even with a limited pilot, the YouGRAF Segmentation Framework stands validated as a culturally grounded, behaviourally rich lens to view India's rural and migrant youth. YouGRAF is not just an index. It is a mirror — reflecting the diverse pathways India's youth are walking today.

These ten segments highlight the diverse motivators and behaviours among India's rural (and migrant) youth. For example, a “Family Lifter” and an “Independent Climber” might both be 22-year-old rural men, but one is funnelling all earnings to support family and the other is spending money on coaching classes to crack a competitive exam. Traditional socioeconomic categories alone wouldn't capture this difference — but segments do.

From a practitioner perspective, recognizing these segments means ability to design interventions that resonate with each group's psyche. The pilots already indicate that most youth-centric programs will not be one-size-fits-all - a Hungry Hustler might benefit from entrepreneurial micro-grants or digital skills, whereas a Self-Survivor first needs basic social protection and guaranteed employment to stabilize her life.

This validation of the segmentation framework is a cornerstone finding, confirming that YouGRAF's approach of combining data with human stories is yielding a culturally grounded, nuanced lens on youth. Youth are not monolithic dreamers; they are Family Lifters, Balancers, Hustlers, and more — each with distinct needs and contributions.

In sum of the YouGRAF Pilot Studies

- In sum, the combined pilot phase results reinforced why YouGRAF is both necessary and promising. We saw ambition in every corner, but also hurdles at every step – whether it’s girls whose aspirations are cut short by marriage, or boys oscillating between hope and helplessness in the face of unemployment. We also saw resilience and creativity – youth finding ways to hustle, save, learn, or migrate to improve their lot.
- These insights fed directly into designing the YouGRAF index framework, ensuring it captures not just metrics but meaning. The next section outlines this framework and how it will be implemented going forward.

The YouGRAF Index Framework

The YouGRAF Youth Aspiration Index is built around four dimensions – Growth, Resilience, Aspiration, and Future-Readiness (G-R-A-F) – which together paint a holistic picture of youth development. Each dimension represents a critical aspect of a young person’s journey from potential to prosperity -

- **Growth (G)** - The capability to move upward in life. This dimension measures tangible progress in skills, education, income, and career. For example, metrics under Growth include educational attainment, skill certifications, job transitions, income changes, and entrepreneurial ventures. Growth encapsulates how well a youth is advancing economically and socially – essentially tracking the strength and momentum of their upward mobility.
- **Resilience (R)** - Resilience indicators cover financial security (savings, insurance, debt levels), mental and physical health, and social support systems. It gauges whether youth have the buffers and coping mechanisms to handle challenges such as job loss, family crises, or economic downturns. This dimension recognises that success isn’t just about rising fast, but also about not collapsing when hit by hardships.

- **Aspiration (A)** - The vision for a better life and the ability to dream beyond one's current circumstances. This is the core of YouGRAF – capturing the level and scope of a youth's ambitions. It is measured through self-reported aspiration ladders, career goals, desired lifestyle, and opportunities. Aspiration indicators also look at whether youths have plans and the confidence to pursue them. For instance, does a young woman aspire to start a business or pursue higher education?
- **Future Readiness (F)** - The preparedness for a fast-changing world, including adaptability and relevant skills for emerging opportunities. Measures digital literacy, exposure to new ideas/new skills and vocational adaptability. Can they learn and pivot as industries evolve? In essence, Future Readiness looks at how well today's youth can meet tomorrow's challenges. .

The YouGRAF index - each surveyed youth will have a profile across these dimensions. The national index will aggregate these to provide scores or insights at various levels (village, district, state, national), and by demographics (gender, caste, education level, etc.).

Link to Annual Survey and Ongoing Studies

At full scale, the **YouGRAF Index** involves an annual national survey and quarterly focused studies feeding into the framework. Each year, a comprehensive master survey will be conducted covering a representative sample of youth across India.

This master survey will produce the core index values for G, R, A, F – akin to an annual “Youth Barometer” that stakeholders can track year over year. The survey will leverage the village PSU approach (surveying entire youth populations in selected villages for depth) combined with stratified sampling for other areas to ensure national representativeness.

The outcome would be an **Annual YouGRAF Report** with an overall index score (and sub-scores by dimension), trends, and analysis of which areas or groups are rising or lagging.

Quarterly Focus studies will be launched to delve deeper into specific themes or sub-populations that emerge as important. These are shorter, targeted research exercises each quarter, designed to keep the pulse on dynamic issues and to triangulate the main survey findings.

For instance, one quarter's focus study might concentrate on "Digital Aspirations in Rural Youth" – perhaps a deep-dive in a few communities on how internet access is shaping new dreams (building on the fact that smartphone use is widespread but needs nurturing for learning). Another quarter could focus on young women in a particular state or on aspirations of migrant gig workers in cities.

These studies will use methods like qualitative interviews, rapid surveys, or even field experiment approaches to generate insights.

YouGRAF On-demand studies, allowing stakeholders—policymakers, institutions, NGOs, or researchers—to suggest or co-design studies based on pressing issues or strategic interests. For instance, a stakeholder may request an exploratory study on "aspirations among youth in flood-prone districts", or a government department may seek a rapid assessment of skilling outcomes in a particular state.

By having this modular focus study component, YouGRAF ensures it remains adaptive and policy-relevant throughout the year. YouGRAF is not just a monitoring tool but a dynamic platform for collaborative inquiry and solution-building.



YouGRAF Triangulation and Comparability

A cornerstone of the framework is ensuring data triangulation – meaning the index’s findings can be cross-verified and enriched by other data sources. Aligning with the Census and possibly the National Sample Survey (NSSO) allows cross-checking demographic and economic variables.

The quarterly studies bring in qualitative/contextual validation for the quantitative survey patterns. Moreover, by standardizing certain questions with international youth surveys or SDG indicators, YouGRAF can compare its results with broader benchmarks.

The design also builds in **Longitudinal Comparability** - by surveying some of the same villages and even the same individuals over time, the index can track trends and causal shifts.

YouGRAF - Adaptability and Future Proofing

That balance of consistency and adaptability ensures the index remains relevant as youth realities evolve, while maintaining a core that lets us compare year-to-year progress.

The framework is designed with adaptability in mind. Youth aspirations in 2025 may look very different by 2030 – new types of jobs, different social values, unforeseen challenges (altered education/work, AI at work). The YouGRAF index will be reviewed and refined regularly - indicators can be updated, new segments may be added if they emerge. The quarterly studies act as a sandbox to pilot any such changes. If a new phenomenon is detected (for example, a wave of reverse migration), the framework can adapt by incorporating that into the next survey cycle. This design adaptability means YouGRAF is not static – it’s a living index that grows with the changing landscape of youth development.

In summary, the YouGRAF framework marries conceptual soundness (G-R-A-F dimensions) with a pragmatic implementation plan (annual surveys + quarterly deep-dives). It emphasizes robust, triangulated data collection and a commitment to evolving its design over time. The ultimate goal is an index that is credible, comparable across years and regions, and yet responsive to new insights – providing stakeholders with both a steady compass and a flexible toolkit to navigate youth development.

- ***Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection***
The framework's emphasis on continuous growth and resilience supports the relentless pursuit of excellence among our youth, transforming challenges into stepping stones.
- ***Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way***
Through critical thinking and future readiness components, we ensure our youth can navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world while staying true to their roots.
- ***Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action***
YouGRAF's comprehensive approach expands horizons, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship that transforms rural landscapes.
- ***Into that heaven of freedom, let my country awake***
This is our call to action – to awaken the potential of every young Indian, regardless of their background. Through YouGRAF, we work towards Tagore's vision of freedom – freedom from limitation, freedom to aspire, and freedom to achieve.

As we implement YouGRAF across rural India, we're not just building a framework; we're realizing a poet's dream of an India where every mind is truly without fear. In doing so, we're not merely measuring progress; we're catalysing the transformation of rural youth from observers to architects of India's future.

The journey from aspiration to achievement, from potential to prosperity, begins now. Through YouGRAF, we invite all stakeholders to join us in this mission of creating an India where every young person, regardless of their origin, can hold their head high and contribute to our nation's progress. For in their success lies the fulfilment of both Tagore's vision and India's promise.



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