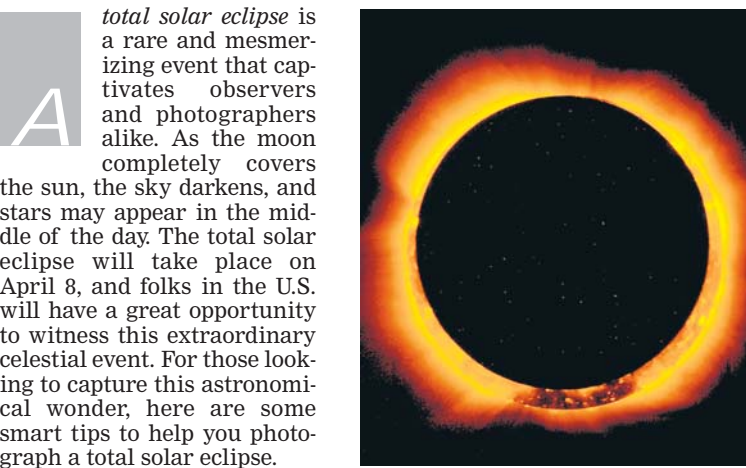


#PHOTOGRAPHY

Capturing Total Solar Eclipse

While capturing the eclipse is exciting, experiencing the event first-hand is equally important. Take moments to step away from the camera and observe the natural phenomenon.



Location scouting

Selecting the right location is paramount for capturing the eclipse. Research the path of totality to find a spot that offers a clear view of the sky. Consider factors like accessibility, weather patterns, and potential obstructions. Come early to your preferred site and make yourself familiar with the surroundings. A good location can make the difference between a good photo and a great one. Check local regulations and permissions required for photography in public spaces or private property.

Eye and camera protection

Safety should be your top priority. Use solar filters on your camera lenses to protect the sensor from intense sunlight. Similarly, protect your eyes with ISO-certified eclipse glasses. The only time when it's safe to view the eclipse, without protection or removing the camera filter, is during the brief period of totality, when the sun is completely covered by the moon.

Appropriate equipment

Your choice of equipment can greatly affect the quality of your eclipse photos. A DSLR or mirrorless camera, with a long focal length lens, is ideal, but even point-and-shoot cameras or phone cameras can yield good results, if used correctly. Always make sure that you have an arsenal of extra memory cards and batteries. Using a tripod will provide stability, and a remote shutter release can prevent camera shake during the capture process.

Camera settings adjustment

Understanding and adjusting your camera settings is crucial. Manual mode allows for greater control over exposure settings. A low ISO will reduce noise, and a small aperture will ensure sharpness across the frame. Shutter speed will vary depending on the phase of the eclipse, faster speeds for the partial phases and slower speeds for totality. Bracketing exposures can help capture the dynamic range from the bright corona to the darker skies.

Rehearse your photography

Practice photographing the moon to simulate the eclipse conditions, as both celestial bodies are similar in size, when viewed from Earth. Test different settings and filters to be prepared. According to NASA, "For DSLR cameras, the best way to determine the correct exposure is to test settings on the unclipped Sun beforehand. Using a fixed aperture of f/8 to f/16, try shutter speeds between 1/1000 to 1/4 second to find the optimal setting, which you can then use to take images during the partial stages of the eclipse. During totality, the corona has a wide range of brightness, so it's best to use a fixed aperture and a range of exposures from approximately 1/1000 to 1 second." Familiarity with your equipment will enable you to adjust settings quickly as the lighting changes during the eclipse.



Sumit Mitra The author is a veteran journalist

From the foundation of the Rashtriya Suayamsevak Sangh in 1925 to the progression of its ideology, close to its centenary year, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it has never strayed from its foundational credo of 'Hindu nationalism.' A mocking disdain for the word "secular," and the values associated with it are a common thread that has run through the 'safran brotherhood' all these 99 years. And Prime Minister Modi, in his decade-long rule, has largely succeeded in carrying the RSS method of welding the 'Hindu religion' with the 'Indian nationhood' even further. It follows a trajectory that invariably leads to the realm of 'Hindu Rashtra,' however speculative that may sound now. Since taking over as PM in 2014, Modi has pushed the envelope by holding out a future with virtual



extinction of the religious minorities, notably Muslims, from the political space. It is a long sweep from all that the RSS founders could imagine.

However, a pre-requisite for the project's final success is to obtain a 'composite majority community' with all its fault lines of caste and culture neatly sutured, if not airbrushed.

While these cracks have remained there, the BJP has dexterously leapt over some of the gaps by using the plank of 'religion.' But its success is limited to the northern and western states. Besides, it's too early to conclude that the Ram temple in Ayodhya is indeed the vote-catcher that the BJP has presumed it to be. And, while the presumption has some basis for the electorate in the north and west, there is no proven evidence that the 'pull of religion' may work in the south.

In that region's five states, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, Modi has some allies but not much of a popular following. Of the region's 129 Lok Sabha seats, the BJP won 29 in the 2019 election. And these victories came mostly from Karnataka, 26, where the state unit of the main opposition, the Congress, was rudderless, while there were problems in

Modi's keenness to win in the south cannot be explained merely by his party's 'hyper-nationalist' thirst. What matters more is to be accepted by the south's more discerning and better educated electorate. Victory in the south also brings respectability. Bengaluru and Hyderabad, the capitals of Karnataka and Telangana, respectively, are home to most of India's techgiants and also to the Indian wings of global behemoths like Amazon and Microsoft. Of the 14 Indian suppliers to Apple, the maker of iPhone, 11 are from the south. Two-thirds of the hefty export revenue that India earns from the export of tech services originates from the south.

Modi Should Woo South For More Reasons Than One



#ELECTIONEERING



its ties with the local coalition partner JD(S), led by H.D. Deve Gowda, a former prime minister. In 2019, the BJP had a token presence in Telangana but none in Tamil Nadu, the largest state of the south (39 seats) and Kerala (20), the state with the best social indices score in the country. In this year's election, Modi is going all out to expand his base in the south, with new alliances forged in Andhra Pradesh (with Jan Sena and TDP), in Karnataka (with JD(S)), and in the BJP's persistent effort to tie up with as many 'Dravidian' parties as possible, in Tamil Nadu. In Kerala too, the BJP is on a vigorous dating spree as the formation of the opposition bloc, I.N.D.I.A., has narrowed the tactical gap between the state's two traditional rivals, the Congress and CPI (M), thus making some of their followers look for new pasture in the BJP. The Economist magazine has recently reported that the BJP's push in the south began in Tamil Nadu three years ago when it 'recruited thousands of activists there and changed local leaders.'

Of course one has to wait till the election results in May to know if the three-year-long campaign has borne fruit. But Modi's keenness to win in the south can

For the BJP with a definite project to mould the country into a socio-cultural unity, the south has become an outlier, causing considerable embarrassment to the party's traditional champions of the 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindusthan' outlook. But numbers tell a different story. The south, with merely 20 per cent of the national population, draws 35 per cent of foreign direct investment, with a fast rising trend in FDI in the 'new economy' sectors.

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For the BJP with a definite project to mould the country into a socio-cultural unity, the south has become an outlier, causing considerable embarrassment to the party's traditional champions of the 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindusthan' outlook. But numbers tell a different story. The south, with merely 20 per cent of the national population, draws 35 per cent of foreign direct investment, with a fast rising trend in FDI in the 'new economy' sectors. While the BJP under Modi is desperately wooing the south, it has not been fair to the country's foremost region in scientific and technical attainments, with three of the four Indian Nobel laureates in Science being from the south (the fourth being Har Gobind Khorana, a physiologist). Tamil Nadu, the state with just about 6 per cent of India's population, contributes 16 per cent of its industrial production. Chennai, its capital, with its network of affordable quality hospitals, is not only the 'healthcare capital of India' but also that of neighbouring nations like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. However, the Centre, under the Modi administration, has refrained from rewarding the five southern states. The Centre, armed by the power delegated by the 15th Finance Commission, devolved a disproportionately large share of the Central tax funds, with large voter population. They have been mollycoddled at the cost of the south. In 2023-24, of the net proceeds of Union taxes

International Whisk(ey) Day

Whiskey has a long and venerable history as one of the most recognizable forms of distilled spirits in the world. The name for Whisk(ey) comes from the Gaelic language, where it was referred to as Uisce Beatha, which means 'The Water of Life.' It wasn't long before the name was shortened to Uisce (merely Water) and then the pronunciation slowly changed over time from Ish-Key, to Whiskey. And that pronunciation has remained ever since. Take a sip of the liquid gold that hails from the barrels of fermented grains. It's a complex, warm, and welcoming elixir.



#AROUND-D-WORLD

Where to See the Northern Lights

With more activity in coming years, even destinations like Scotland and Michigan are making the aurora map

Witnessing the natural phenomenon of the aurora borealis belongs on every traveller's bucket list. But determining where to see the northern lights is a complex matter. The awe-inspiring sight, which occurs when electrically charged solar particles interact with gases in the earth's atmosphere, is best enjoyed in rural areas where little light pollution allows aurora to shine its brightest. Traditionally, aurora hunters head to high-latitude destinations above the Arctic Circle in places like Finland, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Iceland, Greenland, and Alaska, along a ring known as the Aurora Oval. While a light show is never guaranteed, this area close to the Earth's northern pole boasts the highest probability of catching aurora activity.

There's never been a better time to view this extraordinary display. Activity is on the upswing, with scientists predicting that the northern lights will happen more frequently and intensely throughout 2024 and 2025. Try to go with Indigenous guides, from communities who have long had ties to this sight. They can make your northern lights experience all the more special.

Blaskogabyggo, Iceland

Almost every picture that we see of Iceland's otherworldly landscapes makes us stop in our tracks, especially those with that famous glow against the winter night sky. While many spots, along this country's coastal ring road, lend themselves to northern lights-watching, the flat terrain of Thingvellir National Park in southwestern Iceland and its proximity to Reykjavik make it one of the best and most easily accessible spots for getting these prize-worthy, slow shutter speed shots of the northern lights.

Svalbard, Norway

Northern Norway, undoubtedly, ranks as one of the best places to see the aurora, but Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago between the mainland and the North Pole, is the only inhabited destination in the world where you can witness the northern lights at any time of day. To experience the phenomenon, while you're having



Rovaniemi, Finland

If your dream is to sleep under the stars and winter's otherworldly glow, there's no better place to do it than Finnish Lapland. The country's northernmost region happens to be flush with hotels that are purpose-built for snoozing under the night sky, where the Northern Lights are visible about 200 nights a year.



Yellowknife, Canada

Love the idea of the northern lights, but not so into the freezing cold? Look no further than the capital of Canada's Northwest Territories, which has a second aurora borealis observation season in late summer/early fall, in addition to the traditional winter viewing months. Pick one of the Northern Lights-based packages at the fly-in Blackford Lake Lodge on remote Blackford Lake, where it's possible to watch the phenomenon from the main house's expansive glass windows.

Fairbanks, Alaska

Ideally located under the aurora oval, low rainfall and an inland location contribute to countless, clear winter nights, and excellent viewing throughout a lengthy aurora season. Just outside the city lie several must-do lookout points like Cleary Summit, which even has its own cozy Aurora Borealis Lodge. Alternatively, head to one of greater Fairbanks's hot spring resorts to soak in the aurora scene.

Upper Peninsula, Michigan

Surrounded by untouched wilderness and the Great Lakes, Michigan's Upper Peninsula boasts little light pollution and hundreds of miles of unobstructed north-facing views along Lake Superior's shoreline. For prime Northern Lights spotting territory, set up your tripod at Keweenaw Dark Sky Park, headquartered at the rustic Keweenaw Mountain Lodge, which holds stargazing workshops and events year-round. Northern lights season here is between August and April, with peak months being October, November, and April. An added bonus, if you come in the fall is that you'll also be in town for leaf-peeping.



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman