

#RAAG BILAVAl

The Gentle Foundation of Melody and Emotion

The melody of Jana Gana Mana, India's national anthem, is rooted in Bilaval, which means that millions unknowingly engage with its structure daily



Raga Bilaval is often described as the musical equivalent of first light, clear, balanced, and quietly uplifting. It holds a special place in Indian classical music not because of its purity. Built entirely on *shuddha suaras* (natural notes), it corresponds closely to the Western major scale, making it one of the most accessible ragas for both learners and listeners. In fact, for many students of Hindustani music, Bilaval is among the very first ragas they encounter before moving on to more intricate melodic frameworks.

Its familiarity runs deep in everyday life. The melody of Jana Gana Mana, India's national anthem, is rooted in Bilaval, which means that millions unknowingly engage with its structure daily. This inherent simplicity, paired with emotional clarity gives the raga a universal appeal. It evokes feelings of calmness, optimism, and gentle joy, making it ideal for morning performances, devotional music, and reflective compositions.

Bilaval is traditionally performed in the early hours of the day, a time associated with renewal and spiritual clarity. Its tonal openness lends itself beautifully to prayer and hymn-based music. Many compositions in the Guru Granth Sahib are set in Bilaval, reinforcing its connection with devotion. Chants like Onkar Satnam resonate deeply when rendered in this raga, as the unembellished notes allow the meaning to shine without distraction.

The raga has also found rich expression in Indian cinema. Lyricist Gulzar and composer R. D. Burman beautifully explored its scale in "Sa Re



The Guru We No Longer Treat as One



Twenty-five years ago, a teacher's word in an Indian household was close to law. If a teacher scolded a child, parents did not storm the school demanding an apology, they usually apologised on the child's behalf. Today, in a growing number of homes, the very opposite happens. A child comes home with a complaint, and before the teacher's version is even heard, a parents' WhatsApp group has already decided the verdict. Somewhere between then and now, the relationship between teacher and student, the one Indian tradition once called guru and shishya, has quietly turned upside down. We still use the word "guru" with reverence in our festivals and our films. We have simply stopped extending it, in practice, to the people doing the job.

The Many Hats of a Modern Teacher

The change is not merely about respect; it is about what the job has become. A generation ago, the joint family absorbed much of a child's emotional and moral education. Grandparents told stories that carried values, uncles and aunts filled in when parents were away, and an elder sibling's supervision was almost automatic. The nuclear family, combined with both parents working, now the norm rather than the exception in urban India, has quietly out-

sourced much of that role to the school, and specifically to the teacher. A single teacher today is expected to be an instructor, a disciplinarian, a counselor, a substitute parent, an elder sibling and a friend, often to forty or more children at once, and to do it within five or six teaching hours a day that leave barely an hour of real one-to-one attention per child across a week. Textbook learning, board examination pressure, "holistic development" mandates, cultural and sports events, and now digital literacy have all been added to that same job description, while the number of hours in a school day has not grown at all.

This is not a complaint invented by teachers. It shows up in how policy itself describes the job. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, fixed a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 at the primary level and 35:1 at the upper primary level specifically because the law recognised that a teacher spread thinner than that cannot deliver both instruction and attention. Government data compiled from the

When the state's School Service Commission recruitment process was found by the courts to be riddled with fraud, the Supreme Court's order to cancel the tainted appointments swept up thousands of teachers, including many who had cleared the process fairly, into a single mass termination.

UDISE+ system shows large numbers of Indian states still exceed these ratios, and government schools running with a single teacher for an entire school are not a rare exception. Recent official figures put the count of such single-teacher schools at over a lakh across the country, serving more than 33 lakh students. The law drew a line; the ground reality routinely crosses it.



#REVERENCE

that was not hers to own. Even in smaller, everyday incidents, the pattern of a rushed public verdict recurs: a viral video from a classroom, whether it captures genuine misconduct or an ambiguous, out-of-context moment, tends to result in near-instant suspension long before any inquiry is completed. Due process still exists on paper, service rules require notice, a hearing and a reasoned order before disciplinary action, but the speed of social media routinely outruns it, and the teacher is presumed guilty in the public eye well before any committee has looked at the facts.

The Law Recognises the Problem - Enforcement Lags Behind

To be fair to policymakers, Indian law is not silent on any of this. The RTE Act's Section 27 explicitly bars deploying teachers for non-educational work outside decennial census, disaster relief and election duties, precisely to protect classroom time. And yet, the exemptions have swallowed the rule: teachers remain the default workforce for election Booth Level Officer duty every election cycle, prompting Maharashtra's own education minister to publicly ask the state's chief minister to exempt teachers from BLO duty, and the Orissa High Court to seek an affidavit from the state government after a public interest litigation flagged how rou-

Honouring Our Furry Friends

bserved every year on August 26, National Dog Day is a heartfelt celebration of the loyalty, companionship, and unconditional love that dogs bring into our lives. Founded in 2004 by animal advocate Colleen Paige, the day aims to raise awareness about the plight of rescue and shelter dogs, and to encourage adoption from shelters and rescue organizations. Whether it's a trained service dog or a playful family pet, dogs play countless roles in human lives, from protectors and helpers to loyal friends. On this day, dog lovers across the world honour their furry companions and advocate for their well-being.



If the last two decades reshaped the teacher's job, the next one is likely to reshape it faster. The National Education Policy 2020 and NCERT's new AI Cell are already pushing artificial intelligence into the curriculum, but the deeper shift is in what students will need from a teacher at all. Career paths that once ran on rails, engineering, medicine, a government job, are being reorganised by automation in ways no textbook has caught up with yet. Someone will have to help a fifteen-year-old understand not just how to use AI tools but which professions AI is quietly redefining, and that job will fall, as it always does, on the teacher, without new training budgets, without smaller class sizes, and without any guarantee that the school itself will modernise at the same pace it expects the teacher to.

the country, private school teachers in large parts of India continue to earn a fraction of their government counterparts for comparable work, and enforcement of these judgments is patchy at best. Twenty years on, the government-versus-private divide in teacher pay and status that ought to have narrowed has, in most states, barely moved.

It Is Not All Bleak

None of this means that teachers, as a profession, have become indifferent, or that quality concerns are imaginary, both are fair conversations to have separately. But the same period that produced viral videos of misconduct also produced Vijay Kumar Chansoriya, a government primary school teacher in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh, who, on retiring after 39 years, donated his entire provident fund and gratuity, around Rs. 40 lakh, to underprivileged students, because, as he put it, he had once been poor himself and knew what that money could do for a child. Stories like his rarely trend the way a scandal does,

But the same period that produced viral videos of misconduct also produced Vijay Kumar Chansoriya, a government primary school teacher in Panna district, Madhya Pradesh, who, on retiring after 39 years, donated his entire provident fund and gratuity to underprivileged students...

tinely non-teaching assignments eat into instructional days. Punjab's education department has had to separately issue a directive insisting that teachers not be pulled away from the classroom, an order that would be unnecessary if the practice was not widespread. Section 17 of the same Act bans corporal punishment and mental harassment of children, a welcome protection for students that also, implicitly, stripped teachers of a disciplinary tool many once relied on, without anything structured being offered in its place.

On pay, the picture is similarly split between law and practice. The Delhi High Court ruled in 2023, relying on Section 10 of the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, that private unaided school teachers are legally entitled to the same pay scale as government school teachers, backed by Seventh Pay Commission rates. The Supreme Court's 2025 decision in State of Nagaland v Amos Seb similarly pushed for salary parity for teachers under central schemes. These are real, binding legal wins. But they exist because the disparity they correct is still the norm rather than the exception across most of

but they are far from rare in Indian schools; they simply do not generate outrage, and outrage is what travels.

The Next Test: Artificial Intelligence

If the last two decades reshaped the teacher's job, the next one is likely to reshape it faster. The National Education Policy 2020 and NCERT's



rajeshharna1049@gmail.com

#THE ORGANIST

He Never Sent a Bill

The parish priest often scolded him. "Bughden, take something. You deserve it." His answer never changed. "I live on bread, and that is enough."

For thirty-five years, every funeral at Holy Cross Parish in Mieleit passed to the sound of the same organ.

The music was never hurried. Every hymn was played with the same care, whether the church was filled with hundreds of mourners or only a handful of grieving family members. Every note carried dignity. Every farewell carried compassion.

And for every one of those funerals, the organist accepted exactly the same payment.

Nothing.

From 1989 until 2024, Mr. Bughden, the parish organist, never charged a family for playing at a funeral or a Mass for the dead. There were no envelopes quietly slipped into his pocket, no suggested donations, no conditions.

People insisted. He always refused. The parish priest often scolded him.

"Bughden, take something. You deserve it."

His answer never changed. "I live on bread, and that is enough."

As other organists gradually raised their fees, he continued to play without asking for a single coin. His music became known not because it was expensive, but because it was exceptional. Every chord was polished. Every hymn was performed as though it were the most important farewell of his life.

No one knew why. Then, in January 2024, the music stopped.

While playing during a service, Mr. Bughden suffered a heart attack. Witnesses later



recalled that he finished the final chord before quietly resting his head. He never rose from the organ bench again.

As parish members sorted through his belongings, they discovered an old notebook tucked inside the organ.

Inside were 1,024 names. Each name was followed by a funeral date.

The first entry was dated 14 February 1989.

It read: "Anna. My daughter. Leukemia. Funeral paid by the parish because I had no money."

Father Stanislaw played for free. He told me, "Become an organist. One day you will repay me, not with money, but with notes for others. I promise."

The mystery was solved. That promise became the purpose of his life. The notebook revealed that Mr. Bughden had kept count of every funeral he played without charge. There were exactly 1,024 names, the same number of days his daughter Anna had lived before leukemia claimed her life.

Each funeral was a repayment of a kindness once shown to him. Each hymn honoured not only the deceased before him but also the memory of the little girl he had lost. The final page carried one last entry.

Dated 14 January 2024, it simply read:

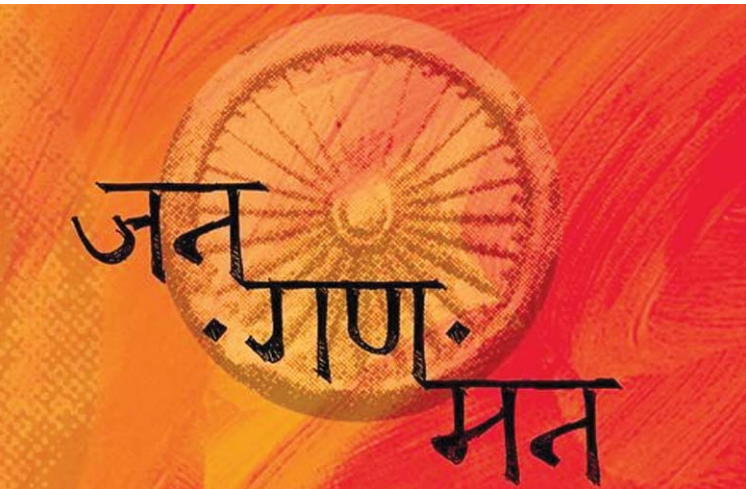
"Anna. I may come to you now."

Whether measured in money or recognition, Mr. Bughden left very little behind.

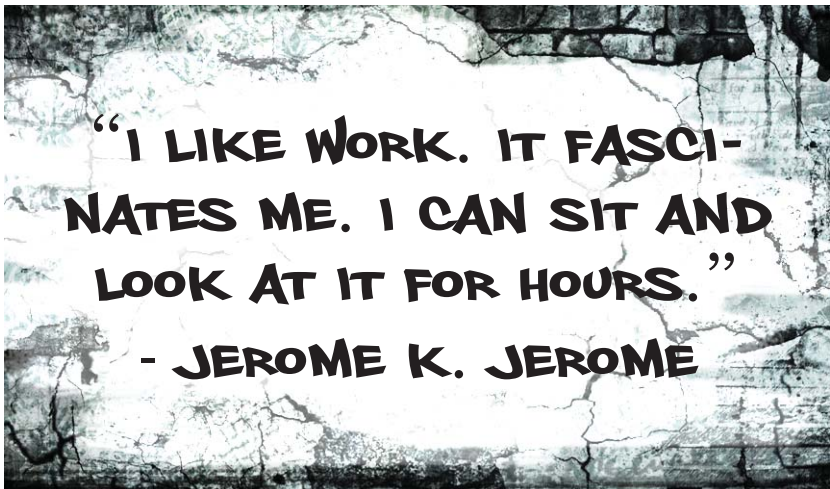
Measured in compassion, he left a legacy that cannot be counted.

Sometimes, the greatest promises are not fulfilled through wealth or fame. Sometimes, they are fulfilled quietly, one act of kindness at a time, one note at a time, for thirty-five faithful years.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

