

THE WEEK's illustrious history and mission to tackle issues resonate with me deeply

- **Amitabh Kant***

As I pen this final column for The Week, I find myself reflecting both on the topics I've explored over the past nearly two years, as well as the publication that gave them a home – The Week, which has played a significant role in shaping public discourse in India. Founded in 1982, The Week has carved out a unique space in the Indian media landscape, emerging as one of the largest circulated English news magazine in the country. With its insightful coverage across politics, technology, culture, and social issues, it has become a critical platform that addresses matters pertinent to the lives of India's citizens.

As India's G20 Sherpa, I have had the fortunate opportunity to address a diverse range of governance and policy challenges on this platform. From exploring the potential of India's blue economy to analysing the implications of sustainable urbanisation, I have aimed to make my articles both informative and transformative, especially as we find ourselves in a period marked by India's unprecedented regional and global growth. At such a pivotal juncture in history, The Week has allowed me to connect with readers at a time when inclusive dialogue around these pressing issues is most essential.

The Week's illustrious history and its mission to tackle issues that affect the masses resonate with me deeply – reflecting in many ways own journey and values, which were significantly shaped during my time in Kerala. Having spent a large portion of my life in the Malabar region, I have seen the broad, and deep, impact of community-first values and a commitment to sustainable development first-hand.

In the early '80s, after completing my MA, I embarked on a journey that would lead me to the heart of Kerala. Although being assigned to the Kerala cadre through the UPSC examinations was unexpected and not my initial choice, it turned out to be among the most enlightening phases of my life. My initial days in Thrissur were a cultural revelation, but they also laid the foundation for my understanding of collective action and communication.

Living among the people of Kerala, within its diverse and dynamic communities, I learned the power of community and transformation. This experience has informed my approach to policy and governance throughout my career. During my time in Tellicherry from 1982 to 1984, I dove deep into the vibrant world of local fishermen and women, creating bonds that enriched my understanding of their lives, like introducing "beach level" auctions and opening bank accounts for them. My efforts to tackle issues like middleman monopolies and improving their access to resources were central to empowering these communities.

Further, Engaging in lively cultural festivals and celebrating traditional art forms helped weave unity among diverse groups, transforming governance into a shared journey rooted in collaboration and community empowerment.

Learning Malayalam was a key part of my integration into the community, and Malayala Manorama played a crucial role in that journey. Each morning, I'd start my day with the newspaper, using it to improve my language skills and truly understand the pulse of the region. Through its pages, I was introduced to the vibrant stories of Kerala's people—their festivals, their challenges, and their triumphs. This daily ritual helped me grasp the concerns and hopes of the community, keeping me informed and connected, and plugging me into an ecosystem of belonging unlike anything I had experienced before.

Throughout my time with the Government of India, I've been privileged to contribute to initiatives like the 'Incredible India' campaign and the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). Inspired by Kerala's 'God's Own Country' branding, 'Incredible India' helped elevate our tourism profile globally. At NITI Aayog, the ADP focused on uplifting underdeveloped regions through data-driven strategies and collaboration, echoing the grassroots empowerment I witnessed in Kerala.

And it is these experiences that have shaped my perspective in *The Week* – one that is able to offer an understanding of both local realities and broader national challenges. At the heart of these issues lies my belief in inclusive governance. The central theme emerging from these discussions has been that progress cannot be isolated to policies crafted in ivory towers; it must involve the input and experiences of everyday citizens. My advocacy for women's empowerment, the importance of reducing dependency on fossil fuels, and the need for climate-resilient urban planning all stem from a belief that true progress is collective in nature. Each article served as an opportunity to elevate these themes, showcasing the interplay between policy and the lived realities of our people.

A stand-out example from India's G20 Presidency was our collaborative approach to global negotiations in various sectors, including digital public infrastructure, climate change, and multilateral reform. The articles I wrote highlighted this shift toward consensus-building, emphasising India's role as a facilitator rather than merely a participant. Using *The Week* as a platform allowed me to narrate stories of innovation and resilience that often go unnoticed—the fisherman who embraced a new technology to better his catch, the small-scale entrepreneur harnessing digital tools to grow her business, and the communities coming together to celebrate their rich heritage while adapting to modern challenges.

Moreover, my experiences across the G20 cultural programmes have further instilled a profound appreciation for festivals as vital threads in the social fabric. Celebrating these occasions helped foster a sense of communal harmony, and I want my readers to recognize that these local stories are critical components of our national identity.

As I conclude this column, I remain optimistic for the future. *The Week* has helped me share insights and reflect the aspirations and concerns of our citizens. I've been grateful for the positive feedback from loyal middle-class readers, who help distinguish *The Week* as a platform for meaningful conversation. This connection serves as a reminder of journalism's power to inspire change.

Embracing community-first values, we must continue engaging with local narratives to shape our collective future. My hope is that these discussions will thrive, leading to societal transformations in years to come. Thank you, The Week, for providing a space to engage, reflect, and advocate for values that uplift and empower every Indian.

** The author is India's G20 Sherpa and former CEO, NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal.*
