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On a terrace in a town near Delhi, a cop gives wings to govt job dreams



Head Constable Ajay Grewal takes classes on the terrace of his house in Bahadurgarh. *Tashi Tobgyal*

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ANCHOR

ARNABJIT SUR
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OVER 50 students crowd the terrace of a two-storey house late at night in Haryana's Bahadurgarh. Sitting on mattresses covering every inch of the terrace, their eyes are glued to the wall-mounted whiteboard.

His black marker streaking across the whiteboard, Ajay Grewal, 34, a Head Constable with the Delhi Police, explains how one can "logically" determine the day of a person's birth with just the date of birth and the number of leap years.

For nearly seven hours each day, Grewal, who joined the force in 2009, covers all important themes in general knowledge, reasoning, mathematics, English and Hindi — all for free for government job aspirants belonging to poor families.

Currently posted at the Delhi Police Training College in Jharoda Kalan, Grewal has been running the Vidyan Mahadan Coaching Centre from the terrace of his Bahadurgarh house since 2016. He says his "shattered" UPSC dreams prompted him to start the coaching academy.

Today, Grewal teaches nearly 10,000 students, including those who join online from UP and Rajasthan. The classes start at 6 pm daily. While the girls leave at 10.30 pm — "for safety reasons" — the boys end up studying until 3 am. "We usually have around 100 students on the terrace. The numbers dip when they have exams. The boys end up sleeping on the mattresses and blankets provided here. Some even have

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breakfast at my house before leaving," says Grewal.

Besides teaching the aspirants, Grewal also beams the class live on his dedicated YouTube channel via a mobile phone mounted on a tripod. His channel, Vidyan Mahadan, has over 6,000 followers and over 500 videos of coaching material for various government examinations.

In a small room connected to the terrace is Vikas Suhail, 26, one of Grewal's former students and a contractual civil engineer. Having joined Vidyan Mahadan in 2018, Vikas teaches a smaller batch with the help of a 70-inch smart TV that Grewal bought last year.

Talking about his failed UPSC journey, he says, "Growing up in Haryana, I was heavily into wrestling. I would practise at the akhada (a traditional wrestling ground) made by my father, a retired Delhi Police officer, near our house, and even participated in local and national tournaments. I continued wrestling even after I joined the Delhi Police in 2009. While wrestling helped me clear the physical exam for constables, UPSC was my real dream."

In 2013, Grewal started preparing for UPSC on his own. "From 2015 to 2020, I wrote the exam each year but failed to make it to the final stage. In 2016, I cleared the mains paper, but did not pass the interview stage," he says.

While preparing for the exams, around in 2016, he realised that several children in his neighbourhood aspired for government jobs but lacked access to coaching due to their poor financial backgrounds. "I thought I could polish my knowledge by coaching a few of these students. I started out with one student. Today, I have 10,000," he says.

Talking about his YouTube channel, he says it was easier said than done. Wearing a white polo T-shirt with 'Vidyan Mahadan' embossed on it, Grewal says his YouTube channel was dormant for nearly a year after he started. "After Vikas joined me in 2018, he started uploading short videos and holding live sessions. In fact, our online classes have received an excellent response," he says.

To help his students achieve their dreams, Grewal sleeps for five hours after finishing the classes at 3 am. "I wake up at 8 am and report for duty by 9 am. I return home by 5 pm, around the time my students start arriving for the classes. The session starts at 6 pm," he says.

At the police academy, Grewal is responsible for teaching new recruits how to use the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).

Like Grewal, his students too lead "double" lives outside the coaching centre. When he is not helping his father tend to their farm near their house in a village nearby in the day, Deepanshu Kaushik, 18, is in class — either at college or at the coaching centre.

"I joined these classes nearly four months ago, after I heard about them from a friend. I am a first-year BA student at a government college. Though I work on the farm to help my father, my family's sole breadwinner, I want to clear the UPSC exam," he says.

Then there is Ritu Barbola, 20, a former powerlifter who has competed in several inter-state competitions. "A year ago, I injured my shoulder while lifting in the 45-kg category. I have not been able to compete since then. I work on my recovery and practise sessions in the morning, and attend coaching classes in the evening," she says.

The daughter of a daily-wage labourer, Ritu often helps her father with manual work.

Yogita, 20, a college student, joined the classes in the hopes of a government job improving her family's dire financial situation. "My father has been bedridden for 14 years due to paralysis. He is finally able to move a little now. My mother runs a vegetable stall outside our house, but her earnings are not enough to run the family and pay for my father's treatment. Some relatives have been helping us with his medical bills. Two years ago, I started taking tuition at home for Class 11 and 12 students to help my mother. I realised that only a government job can really help us. I want to crack the SSC (State Service Selection) exam and have been taking coaching here for nearly a year now."

Sitting on a plastic chair in the front is Jitendra Gehlawat, 27, who has been trying to clear a government job exam with little success. Jitendra, whose father died last year, has gait and speech-related disabilities.

"He has been attending these classes for over a year. He walks nearly 3 km from his house each day to my house, arriving at 6 pm sharp. He is really good at Mathematics and reasoning," says Grewal.

Mindful of his students' comfort, he has drilled hooks for mosquito nets on the terrace walls. During winters, he shifts the class to the akhada. "Over 200 students can be accommodated there at once. It is much more comfortable for them to study there than the terrace during winters," he says.