# Jnana Prabodhini Competitive Examinations Centre, Pune.
# Celebrating journey of its alumnus
# on account of
# Tridashakpurti Varsha 2025-26
# (30 years of establishment)

## Dr. Shrikar Pardeshi

- Presently working as Secretary to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra since Dec 2024.
- IAS, 2001 Batch - Maharashtra Cadre
- M.B.B.S., M.D. (Community Health) - B.J. Medical College, Pune
- Masters of Public Administration - Harvard Kennedy School, USA.
- Masters of Public Health - John Hopkins University, USA.

A celebrity among UPSC aspirants, an upright & innovative officer, extremely competent & approachable colleague are some of the hats Shrikar Pardeshi wears daily. He is an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of 2001 Batch of Maharashtra cadre.

Shrikar Pardeshi's life story is a compelling narrative of perseverance, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to public service, marked by significant reforms and impactful leadership across various administrative roles. From a childhood shaped by frequent relocations due to his father's government job, Shrikar's journey into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was far from conventional, beginning with a strong foundation in medicine and evolving into a passion for public health and governance.

Born in Islampur, Sangli district, Shrikar's early education was a mosaic of experiences across different towns. He completed his first grade in Nigdi, then moved to Akkalkot for second to fourth grade, attending a Nagar Parishad school. His primary and secondary schooling continued in Solapur (fifth to ninth grade at Siddheshwar High School) and

Sangamner (tenth to twelfth grade). This peripatetic childhood inadvertently prepared him for the varied challenges of an administrative career. Following his twelfth-grade examinations, Shrikar secured admission to the prestigious BJ Medical College in Pune in 1990, embarking on a path in medicine.

It was during his time at BJ Medical College that Shrikar laid the groundwork for his future in public service. He completed his MBBS, internship, and even his Post Graduate (PG) degree, an MD in Community Medicine, all at BJ Medical College, Pune. This period proved to be transformative, as he realized during his final year of MBBS that his interest lay more in public health than clinical medicine. He astutely observed that public health was influenced by a myriad of factors, including environment, sanitation, nutrition, health budget allocation, and health policy. This broader perspective ignited his desire to join the IAS, a path that would allow him to influence these critical determinants of public well-being.

Shrikar's pursuit of the IAS was a testament to his strategic thinking and resilience. During his internship in 1995, he began reading about successful civil service candidates in "Competition Success Review". Recognizing the intense competition, he prudently decided to pursue an MD in Public Community Medicine as a backup plan, ensuring he had a strong professional qualification to fall back on. While pursuing his MD from 1996 to 1999, he simultaneously prepared for the civil services examination, making two attempts but not clearing either. After completing his MD, Shrikar made the pivotal decision to dedicate a full year to UPSC preparation, a focused effort that ultimately led to his success.

His UPSC journey was not without its significant hurdles. A major setback occurred in 1999 when the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) announced a complete overhaul of the syllabus, particularly impacting his chosen optional subject, Marathi. The change meant a complete revision of literary works, making it impossible to carry forward his extensive preparation. Despite having prepared diligently for Marathi, he was compelled to drop it. Alongside Medical Science, he then opted for Geography, a subject he had liked since childhood. This strategic shift paid off, as he successfully cleared both the Mains and Interview in his very next attempt, emphasizing the importance of adaptability in the face of unforeseen challenges.

A key pillar of support during his arduous preparation was Jnana Prabodhini's competitive examination center in Pune. Shrikar learned about the center while still at BJ Medical College

(1996-1999) and started utilizing its library facilities around 1997. It was there that he met Santosh Vaidya, who later became an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and subsequently an IAS officer, along with other senior students. These interactions proved invaluable, providing him with crucial guidance on preparation methodologies, exam planning, and overall strategy. He also formed significant connections with Vivek Sir and Savita Tai at Prabodhini.

Shrikar highlights that Prabodhini played a vital role in providing maximum information to students who had limited exposure to the UPSC examination, particularly regarding the syllabus, question papers, and choices for optional subjects. The opportunity to meet and learn from senior students, like Santosh Vaidya, was instrumental in helping each student devise their personalized strategy. This support was especially critical because, at that time, many aspirants felt compelled to go to Delhi for preparation, a costly and often unfeasible option for many. Delhi's environment also had different priorities, with a heavy emphasis on coaching centers. In contrast, Prabodhini offered fundamental direction and support, including guidance on essential books and library resources, which proved immensely helpful in the early stages of preparation.

His decision to switch optional subjects underscored his analytical approach to the exam. He initially chose Marathi due to its historical scoring advantage and his natural proficiency, having completed all his education in Marathi medium without any English medium or convent schooling. This gave him a "natural advantage". However, when the syllabus changed, he opted for Geography, a subject he genuinely enjoyed from his school days. He describes Geography as a "semi-scientific subject" that offered ample scope for diagrams, maps, and sketches, which aligned with his strong drawing skills cultivated during his school years in Solapur, where his teachers even encouraged him to sit for government drawing exams. These inherent advantages, such as the ability to effectively illustrate concepts with sketches and maps (he even drew a world map in a UPSC paper), made Geography a natural fit and contributed to his success in his third attempt, which he cleared after shifting to Geography. He recognized that his previous two attempts failed partly because he was preparing for MD simultaneously and only fully dedicated himself to UPSC after completing his MD.

For his crucial third attempt, Shrikar adopted a meticulously planned strategy across all stages of the examination. For Prelims, which then comprised General Studies and an optional subject, he chose Geography. He relied on standard textbooks and did not attend any

3

coaching classes for Geography, clearing the preliminary stage based purely on his interest in the subject and self-study. However, for General Studies, acknowledging its vast scope and the importance of current events, he did attend a class in Delhi, finding it beneficial.

For Mains, he continued with Medical Science, leveraging his extensive existing knowledge from MBBS and MD, supplemented by focused revision and additional reading at the National Medical Library in Delhi. Again, he did not attend any coaching classes for Medical Science or Geography, making his success a testament to self-directed learning and strategic preparation.

Shrikar's approach to Mains was particularly insightful. He recognized that aiming for exceptionally high scores (like 450-475) in a single subject, as some engineering or science background students from IITs might, was not always feasible or efficient for his subjects. Instead, he adopted a strategy of increasing his scores across all subjects, ensuring a balanced performance. This resulted in consistent marks across his three subjects (e.g., 336, 334, and 351 out of 600), which he believes was a more effective approach than focusing too heavily on one area. He emphasized precision and conciseness in his General Studies answers, adhering strictly to word limits (10, 20, 30, 50, 150, 200 words). His science background further aided him in maintaining specificity in his responses. A unique advantage came from his experience as an examiner for MBBS students' papers during his MD, which gave him an understanding of how examiners evaluate answers. This insight led him to strategically present his answers, using clear handwriting, good layout, and highlighting important points with blue or black pens to make it easier for the examiner to grasp the main content.

His first-ever UPSC interview was a surprisingly rapid-fire experience. Shrikar diligently prepared by giving numerous mock interviews at Prabodhini, other centers in Pune and Mumbai ( SIAC), and two to three in Delhi just before his main interview. These mocks were instrumental in familiarizing him with the panel dynamics and assessing his presence of mind. He also received valuable feedback after each mock, helping him refine his approach. While he expected complex analytical and situational questions, his interview turned into a "quiz master" style rapid-fire round of objective questions. Questions ranged from India's budget and health spending to naming the "Seven Sisters" states, leading him to jokingly feel like he was appearing for a fourth-grade scholarship exam. Despite the unexpected nature, he maintained his composure and answered truthfully. The interview lasted 25 to 30 minutes.

His score of 213 out of 300, a good mark, suggested that the board might have been testing his balance and presence of mind rather than just knowledge.

Reflecting on the evolution of the UPSC examination, Shrikar acknowledges that he is not entirely familiar with the latest patterns and therefore encourages current aspirants to consult officers who have cleared the exam in the last three to four years. He notes the dynamic interplay between UPSC's changing patterns and coaching classes adapting to them, describing it as a continuous "game". He reiterates that his choice of Geography was a "natural advantage" due to his science background, as the subject often involves scientific concepts like volcanoes and wind patterns. His lifelong interest in geographical formations and documentaries made studying the subject enjoyable and facilitated quick reading.

Shrikar's selection day in 2001 was intertwined with a significant personal milestone. He had married in 1999, after completing his MD, to his wife, who was also his peer from BJ Medical College, where they both studied Community Medicine. He gave his third UPSC attempt in 2000. Shrikar's interview was scheduled for May 9, 2001, in Delhi, and he was in Delhi for two weeks of preparation prior to the interview date. However, his son was born on May 5 in Pune, while Shrikar was in Delhi. He received the news via a phone call from his landlord (as mobile phones were not common then) after a mock interview. Immediately after his actual UPSC interview, he took a flight back home. The naming ceremony for his son was scheduled for May 16. Coincidentally, the UPSC results were declared at 5 PM on May 16, just as they were preparing for the ceremony. Along with his friend Vijay Pingle, he went to an internet cafe in Pune's Camp area to check the results. Shrikar initially scanned for his name in the top 100-200 ranks, and not finding it, felt nervous and left the cafe, assuming he hadn't cleared. Vijay, however, persevered and started checking from the first rank, discovering Shrikar's name at the 10th rank. Vijay Pingle, who secured a spot in the Indian Information Service then, also went on to become an IAS officer two years later.

For cadre allocation, Shrikar was asked if he desired a home cadre, to which he replied "Yes". At that time, cadres were allocated through a roster system. As he was ranked 10th in India and 1st in Maharashtra, he naturally received the single home cadre seat available that year.

His training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie proved to be an enriching experience. Shrikar had always been deeply involved in extracurricular activities since his MBBS and MD days, sometimes even more than

academics. He was the student editor of ",BYJEEMEC" the college magazine, in 1991, and served as the General Secretary of the Students' Union in 1992. During his internship in 1995, he again took on the role of General Secretary due to popular demand after the previous body was dissolved. He was also involved in the Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) as Secretary in 1997. Notably, his passion for extracurriculars was so strong that he even skipped the 1998 Prelims exam to attend a month-long mountaineering camp in Manali, believing that if he got selected into the IAS, he might never get the chance to pursue mountaineering again. Mussoorie provided ample opportunities to explore diverse extracurricular activities, including river rafting, mountaineering, long treks, and various cultural events like drama competitions. He was awarded with the Reena Sandhu Memorial Gold Medal for the best performance in extra-curricular activities during the IAS Professional Course at the Mussoorie academy.

The training model at LBSNAA aimed to provide a comprehensive foundation for future administrators. It included basic foundations in Political Science and Law, covering Civil Law, Criminal Law, and crucial land-related matters, which were essential for officers like Assistant Collectors. They were also taught about the division of powers, checks and balances, and the various tools available to them in administration. Management lectures were also part of the curriculum. A significant aspect was learning from practitioners – individuals working in the field who shared their experiences, successes, and even failures, along with best practices. Practical exposure was enhanced through field visits, such as a five-day village visit where officers studied village problems and needs, and then presented their findings, facilitating cross-learning and faculty guidance on potential approaches.

Upon completion of his training, Shrikar embarked on his probationary period in Kolhapur. This included a one to one-and-a-half month orientation at  YASHADA in Maharashtra, covering the state's history, geography, political culture, and Marathi language training, particularly for officers from outside Maharashtra. Following this, he spent 10 months in field training. This period involved crucial attachments, with 15-day stints at the Collector's Office, the Municipal Commissioner's Office, and the District Court. During these attachments, he acted as an observer, actively trying to understand the intricacies, "reading between the lines," and directly questioning District authorities about their decisions, problems, and even requesting to review relevant files. After approximately three months of observation, he transitioned to seven months of independent charges, where he was given full

responsibility for certain areas, marking a significant step in his practical learning. At this time, Shrikar was 28-29 years old.

He found Kolhapur to be a "very good district" to work in, noting its well-governed administration, disciplined staff, and well-maintained old records, perhaps influenced by the system established by Shahu Maharaj. He particularly emphasized learning from his experienced subordinates and receiving good mentorship from his seniors.

His probationary experiences provided early insights into grassroots administration. In Chandgad, he encountered the 'Vanrai Bandhara,' a low-cost, locally participatory method of water conservation that could recharge groundwater. This learning later proved invaluable when he implemented large-scale water conservation work in the Zilla Parishad of Yavatmal. As Prant officer in Karveer, he effectively resolved nearly 40 pending land matters as a quasi-judicial authority within one-and-a-half to two months, gaining a strong understanding of revenue matters and quasi-judicial processes. In Jaysingpur, a planned city by Shahu Maharaj, he undertook the challenging task of removing extensive encroachments on roads to restore their original grid pattern. This experience taught him about the administrative process, the resistance encountered, the importance of gaining public trust, and the unpredictable nature of successes and failures.

Shrikar attributes his ability to balance directives from seniors and the experience of subordinates to two key factors: thorough subject knowledge and understanding past administrative precedents. He believes that a complete grasp of the case facts and processes instills confidence when engaging in discussions or debates with both seniors and juniors. Additionally, understanding how the administration has handled similar situations previously, coupled with a strong command over government regulations, rules, and government resolutions (GRs), further strengthens one's confidence.

His first independent posting after district training was as Assistant Collector, Radhanagari, in Kolhapur, where he served for approximately one-and-a-quarter years. This role provided him with significant exposure to land records. Crucially, he gained valuable experience during the 2004 Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, serving as Assistant Returning Officer and Returning Officer, respectively. This was also the first time Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were introduced universally. Shrikar took the initiative to train staff and raise public awareness about EVMs, even preparing FAQs that were circulated by the

Collector throughout the district. This gave him firsthand experience with the Election Commission's highly organized and independent functioning.

Following his stint in Kolhapur, Shrikar was posted as CEO of Yavatmal Zilla Parishad, a significant posting for two-and-a-half years. Yavatmal, a large district with 16 talukas, was one of the three most backward districts in Maharashtra according to the 2002 Human Development Report, offering immense scope for work. He found the people of Yavatmal to be very simple, which allowed for greater engagement and collaboration.

During his tenure in Yavatmal, Shrikar spearheaded several large-scale initiatives. He actively implemented the Total Sanitation Campaign, a movement to make villages open-defecation free. Within two-and-a-half years, they successfully made 200 villages open-defecation free through extensive public awareness campaigns, community dialogue, and government scheme support. He emphasized that it wasn't solely government-driven, as changing habits was paramount, and otherwise, toilets would remain unused. To foster local participation, they created their own Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, organizing competitions to produce public awareness songs based on popular local tunes, recorded in local studios and distributed as cassettes. They also utilized street plays, one-act plays, and drawing competitions. To motivate villages, gram panchayats that achieved open-defecation-free status were publicly honored in the Zilla Parishad General Body meetings, with flex boards displaying their names outside the ZP office, instilling a sense of pride.

Building on his learning from Kolhapur, Shrikar also undertook large-scale water conservation efforts in Yavatmal, utilizing Vanrai Bandharas and various watershed development programs, actively involving the local population to expand the coverage and effectiveness of these initiatives. Additionally, he launched a "Green Movement," planting approximately 2.5 million trees in two years with significant public involvement.

However, one of his most challenging and impactful initiatives in Yavatmal was transparent recruitment. At the time, Yavatmal was infamous for farmer suicides and was plagued by issues of paper leaks and corruption in recruitment. He focused on transparent and speedy results, particularly for 200 Gramsevak posts, which had attracted 20,000 applications. A critical situation arose when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was due to visit Nagpur two days before the Gramsevak exam, adding immense pressure. Suspecting an officer of being

involved in corrupt practices related to paper leaks, Shrikar devised a bold strategy. He called the officer, assigned him the responsibility of designing the paper, and emphasized the need for secrecy and avoiding any irregularities, subtly indicating his trust. Simultaneously, Shrikar secretly designed his own question paper. To ensure no local leaks, he printed these papers at a known printing press in Pune, taking care to avoid any mention of Yavatmal or local villages that might give away the origin. He even incorporated "weed questions" – locally relevant questions like "What is referred to as white gold?" (cotton, Yavatmal being a cotton-producing district) – to maintain the appearance of a local paper without revealing its printing location. The day before the Prime Minister's visit, Shrikar personally drove the printed papers from Pune, kept them locked in a room at his home, and distributed them to his staff from there on the exam day. This strategy successfully diverted the attention of those involved in fraudulent activities towards the suspected officer, leading them to believe that officer had prepared the paper. When the results came out, those who had paid money were furious, realizing none of their questions matched. The strategy was a success, leading to a High Court challenge in Nagpur, where opponents argued the paper lacked local questions. Shrikar successfully defended the case by citing the "white gold" question as a local one, and the court ruled in his favor. Consequently, all 200 appointments were made purely on merit, leading to widespread public satisfaction. So profound was the impact that some villagers even placed his photographs in their shrines, and billboards with his image remained in some villages. He replicated this success with another large recruitment drive for health workers, printing papers in Sangamner. These efforts significantly increased public trust in the system.

Shrikar faced significant internal and external pressure, especially after his transparent recruitment drive and court victory. There were attempts by some Zilla Parishad members, who had supported fraudulent activities, to bring a no-confidence motion against him. However, the overwhelming grassroots support for his initiatives, such as the village sanitation campaign, water conservation, and transparent recruitment, proved to be their shield. Public sentiment was so strong in his favor that the attempts to remove him failed, demonstrating the power of public goodwill against vested interests.

His next significant role was as Collector of Akola, where he served for approximately one and three-quarters years. Akola, being part of the Western Vidarbha region, was heavily impacted by farmer suicides. Shrikar focused on implementing government schemes aimed at supporting farmers in distress, including the Vasantrao Naik Shetkari Swavalamban Mission.

Beyond this, he initiated significant efforts for the development of Narnala Fort and parts of the Melghat region that extended into Akola. He promoted tourism and the cultural identity of the tribal communities in the area, notably by starting a three-day Narnala festival annually. He also oversaw the relocation of three villages (Bori, Poha, and Kund) for the expansion of the Narnala Tiger Sanctuary, which helped boost eco-tourism and tiger conservation activities, leading to a significant increase in the tiger population.

Akola was known as a communally sensitive city, having experienced significant unrest during past riots in Mumbai and other places. Shrikar faced a particular challenge in 2008 when Ramadan Eid and Ganesh Utsav coincided in the same month. The traditional Ganesh immersion procession typically passed a main mosque through a very narrow road, coinciding with prayer times, leading to potential conflict. Shrikar, along with the Superintendent of Police (SP), engaged in extensive consultations with both Ganesh Mandals and Muslim community leaders. They found an interesting and successful solution: a temporary halt to the procession near the mosque, honoring the Ganesh Mandals at a stage set up before the mosque, and requesting them to complete their activities within 25 minutes during the main prayer time. This approach, achieved through stakeholder consultation, proved successful, demonstrating that local solutions can often be found without breaking traditions.

During a major flood in the Purna River, Shrikar found strong support from local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), particularly the Ajinkya Sahasi Sangh. Its head, Dhananjay Bhagat, had advanced mountaineering and rescue training (even beyond Shrikar's own Himalayan camp experience). With the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) still in its nascent stages and limited in units, this local group played a crucial role in rescue operations. This experience highlighted the importance of working with local organizations and providing them with technical material and training to enhance their capabilities during crises.

Shrikar also touched upon the delicate Collector-SP relationship, a common point of contention due to hierarchy. As a 2001 batch IAS officer, he was working with an SP from the 1995 batch. Shrikar adopted a policy of mutual respect, referring to the SP as "Sir" and reciprocating visits to each other's offices, breaking the usual expectation that the SP should always visit the Collector's office. This approach fostered a good working relationship, demonstrating clear thinking beyond superficial ego issues.

His transfer to Nanded as Collector in February 2009 was prompted by then-Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, who desired a new Collector in his home district after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Soon after joining, in March, the results of the 10th and 12th-grade board exams revealed a shocking reality: 3,500 students were caught in mass copying. The Latur board noticed unusually high marks from specific centers (Mukhed, Loha, Kandhar blocks) and, upon closer inspection, found identical answers and even identical mistakes across many answer sheets. Further investigation revealed that teachers were preparing model answers, photocopies, and circulating them during exams. This was a long-standing issue, with many exam centers run by politically influential individuals who offered "packages" for guaranteed marks.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi, Collector supervising the ongoing exams during "Copy Mukta Abhiyaan" in Nanded

Confronted with this "mass copying" problem, Shrikar, along with SP Sandeep Karnik (now Nashik Police Commissioner) and Zilla Parishad CEO Shravan Hardikar (now MD Maha Metro), brainstormed a solution. He drew a parallel to the successful conduct of the 2009 Lok Sabha elections in Nanded, where 2,500 polling stations were managed peacefully despite being a high-profile district. If elections could be managed, why not the comparatively smaller 140 exam centers?.

They developed a five-layered strategy for a "copy-free campaign":

1. Strict Control over Unauthorized Access : Mirroring election procedures, no unauthorized person was allowed within 100 meters of the exam center, eliminating the traditional crowding by friends, relatives, and those supplying chits or notes.

2. Thorough Frisking: Students were frisked for hidden chits, guides, or electronic devices, with female Anganwadi workers or teachers frisking girls in separate rooms. Only admit cards, pens, and writing pads were allowed inside.

3. Revenue Department Observers: To counter teacher complicity and external influence, revenue officials (Mandali Adhikari, Aval Karkoon, Nayab Tahsildar) were deployed as full-time observers at centers. Their role was to ensure no help from education department officials or school management, monitoring the process from paper arrival to sealing and submission.

4. Senior Officer Rotation: 16 senior heads of departments were appointed as continuous monitors, rotating randomly across the 8-9 centers in each taluka to ensure the system was working.

5. Direct Supervision on Critical Papers: Shrikar, the SP, and the CEO personally visited centers on the days of English and Mathematics exams (known for maximum copying), focusing on areas controlled by "big wigs". These visits were unannounced.

The results of this stringent strategy were dramatic: the 10th-grade pass percentage plummeted from 91% in 2009 to 31% in 2010, and the 12th-grade pass percentage dropped from 82% to 24%. While shocking, Chief Minister Ashok Chavan fully supported the initiative, acknowledging it as a true reflection of the situation. The campaign continued, with the October 2010 results seeing a further drop to 7% from 35% in October 2009. Shrikar continued to hold workshops for school managements, emphasizing the permanence of the new system. Gradually, as students started studying and teachers started teaching genuinely, the pass percentages rose back to 65% over the next three years. The impact was felt personally by citizens, as evidenced by an anecdote where a man thanked Shrikar, stating that his daughter, who previously relied on copying, now studied diligently because "even Brahma could not help her during the exams". This initiative transformed Nanded into a district where genuine study became the norm.

In Nanded, Shrikar also initiated parallel projects to support education and governance. Recognizing the frequent visits from students seeking guidance for civil services exams, and the time constraint it posed, he started monthly group guidance sessions at the Collector's office on the 5th of every month. These sessions became so popular, attracting students from neighboring districts like Parbhani, Hingoli, and Latur, that they had to be moved to the Shankararao Chavan Auditorium, which had a capacity of 1,000. From these interactions, he

realized the need for resources, similar to what he found at Jnana Prabodhini. Consequently, he established a competitive exam library and reading rooms using funds from the District Planning Committee, which have since produced many successful MPSC and UPSC candidates.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi in a regular guidance session to UPSC Aspirants at Nanded

Another significant initiative was the detection of bogus students in schools. In 2011, the Education Minister, Rajendra Darda, approached Shrikar about budget issues, citing informal feedback about non-existent students and excess teachers. Shrikar himself had observed discrepancies in classroom strength during his exam visits. Tasked with a sudden inspection of 3,500 primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools with 700,000 enrolled students, he realized a one-day inspection was impractical due to travel distances and the possibility of students shifting between schools belonging to the same trust. Drawing inspiration from election procedures, one of his extension officers suggested using indelible ink on students after their verification. Shrikar immediately procured the ink from the Mysore Ink Factory, and for the first time, students as young as six were marked with the ink typically reserved for 18-year-old voters, exciting them. The inspection was announced eight days in advance (September 7-9, 2011), ensuring no excuses for absence. The findings were startling: 1,40,000 bogus students were found out of 700,000 enrolled students in Nanded. This report led Chief Secretary Ratnakar Gaikwad to implement the same strategy statewide. The statewide inspection found 2 million bogus students out of 20 million (10%). This revealed a wastage of approximately 3,500 crore rupees (10%) from the state's 35,000 crore education budget. The government immediately froze new teacher recruitment and ordered the adjustment of existing excess teachers. Shrikar noted that many private aided schools had inflated student numbers to justify more teachers, leading to illegal appointments in exchange

for donations. This reform also curbed fraud related to free textbooks, uniforms, and midday meals. Crucially, this massive de-duplication effort was achieved manually, without technology like Aadhaar, relying on election experience and stakeholder consultation.

During his stint as Collector Nanded, Shrikar received the Prime Minister's Award in 2011 for best performance in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme at the hands of the Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh. He also won the Best Collector Award in 2011 at the hands of then Chief Minister Shri Prithviraj Chavan.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi receiving award from PM Late Shri. Manmohan Singh for his excellent work in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2011



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi being awarded the Best Collector Award at the hands of Hon. CM Shri Prithviraj Chavhan in 2011

When queried about the underlying "psychology" that drives him to undertake such transformative initiatives, Shrikar believes that solutions to systemic problems are often found within the system itself. He emphasizes openness to ideas, especially from juniors, and

readily incorporates good suggestions. He stresses the importance of sustainability: for reforms to last beyond an officer's tenure (typically 2-3 years), local people must be involved, and their ideas, combined with administrative strategies, must be implemented. His focus has always been on interventions that are "sustained". He cited the Sarathi initiative (System of Assisting Residents and Tourists through Helpline  Information) he implemented in Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) as an example of a sustainable reform.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi with Shri. Sharadchandra Pawar at Pimpri Chinchwad
Science Centre, Pune.

As Commissioner of Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), Shrikar initiated further reforms. He observed that citizens faced numerous small difficulties, from non-functional streetlights to uncleared garbage or fallen trees, which ideally should not require them to approach the municipal corporation or councilors. Furthermore, there was a lack of standardized information on basic civic services, leading to arbitrary requirements for documents in different wards. PCMC, despite being one of Asia's richest municipal corporations, lacked such standardization. He focused on standardization, proactive disclosure, and proactive resolution of grievances. The Sarathi helpline and app allowed citizens to report issues like blocked drainage, which were then promptly addressed. E-books and apps were also developed to provide necessary information. This system significantly aided in resolving daily grievances and was successfully continued by his successors, even incorporating technological advancements.

IAS Shrikar Pardeshi observing on-going developmental activities.

His experience at PCMC also involved the challenging task of demolishing illegal constructions. He noted that PCMC, despite its rapid growth from a cluster of villages into a large municipal corporation, still retained a "village mindset" among its populace regarding planned development. Upon joining in May 2012, he was confronted with a High Court order to take action against increasing illegal constructions. Coincidentally, a building collapse in Mumbai around the same time, which killed over 70 people, underscored the dangers of unauthorized structures. He informed local leaders that such constructions were dangerous and violated the Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act (MRTP) and Maharashtra Municipal Corporation Act. Starting in late June,  he began demolishing various types of illegal structures, including those built on open spaces reserved for schools, health centers, gardens, or those encroaching on riverbeds, or multi-storied buildings constructed without proper permission. These actions significantly curbed illegal constructions, although they did come with threats and required police protection for Shrikar.  In his tenure of 19 months, Shrikar demolished 580 unauthorized buildings, many of which were multi-storey complexes.

Before his move to the Prime Minister's Office, Shrikar Pardeshi served as the Inspector General of Registration & Controller of Stamps in Pune for a year. This department is responsible for authenticating property transactions between individuals, ensuring a secure database of ownership records (like the 'Satbara' or property card) and collecting stamp duty, which is a significant revenue source for the government. Building on the computerization work of his predecessors (Dr. Nitin Kareer and  Chokalingam), Shrikar rolled out the e-registration software. This allowed for convenient online registration of rental agreements (11-month or 3-year leases) where ownership wasn't transferred. Appointed agents could facilitate the process without parties needing to visit the office, reducing queues and saving

time. He also implemented the Sarathi model here, creating a helpline, website, app, and e-book to provide comprehensive information and guidance to the public.

Shrikar's move to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was not through application but through a selection process where he was among 15 officers shortlisted and then interviewed by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. He joined as a Director in April 2015 and was later promoted to Joint Secretary, serving for over five years until July 2020. This tenure provided him with a "bird's eye view" of national administration, offering profound insights into decision-making processes at the central government level. He found the PMO, especially under the current Prime Minister, to be highly systematic and strategic, operating with a long-term vision (10, 20, 30 years) for India's future. He observed and participated in intellectual discussions with top secretaries, ministers, and heads of agencies like NITI Aayog, gaining an understanding of high-level thinking and international best practices.
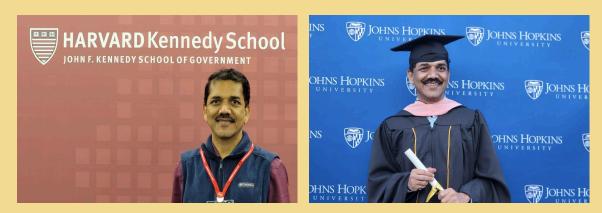


IAS Shrikar Pardeshi and his family with Hon. PM Shri Narendra Modi
during his tenure at PMO, Delhi.

Countering a common misconception that the Prime Minister does not listen, Shrikar affirmed his experience was the opposite: the Prime Minister attentively listened to field experiences and insights, incorporating new ideas into decision-making. He described the PMO's structure as driven by "vision and passion". He also addressed the perception of the PMO being overly centralized, arguing that it's crucial for the head of the government to set the vision and drive the entire system. He cited examples like the vision for Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) and Make in India, which led to significant advancements such as Operation Sindoor for defense indigenization, reducing the country's vulnerability.

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Shrikar was in the PMO, with the primary goal being infection containment. He highlighted two critical decisions made by the PMO: first, to contain the spread of the infection, given India's large population and high density, to prevent the health system from being overwhelmed. Second, a crucial decision was made by the Prime Minister very early on, within the second or third month, to develop an indigenous vaccine. This foresight, driven by the understanding that external vaccine supply might not be sufficient or timely for India's vast population, led to the development of Covaxin, significantly accelerating the vaccination drive.

After his tenure in the PMO, Shrikar took a break to pursue further studies in the United States. He completed a Master of Public Administration (MPA) at Harvard Kennedy School in May 2021, followed by a Master of Public Health (MPH) at Johns Hopkins University in May 2022. This period of two years served as a welcome change, offering him a fresh perspective. Learning from colleagues from diverse organizational backgrounds allowed him to compare working systems and connect his practical field experiences with theoretical frameworks of leadership, negotiation, and management, etc.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi at Harvard Kennedy School, USA and
John Hopkins University, USA.

Currently serving in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) in Maharashtra, Shrikar handles policy formulation and implementation of programs in social, rural, urban and welfare sectors, postings of IAS and IPS officers, appointments of personal staff of the Ministers, law and order and other security-related matters and public grievances. He acknowledges that citizen's out-of-pocket health expenditure remains a concern despite schemes like Ayushman Bharat (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana). He attributes this to implementation issues, such as incomplete beneficiary enrollment, ongoing hospital empanelment, and complexities with

package coverage. He states that while the scheme's vision is sound, the problem lies in the incomplete coverage and slow implementation, which they are actively working to expedite.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi with Hon. CM Shri Devendra Fadnavis

To address these challenges, Shrikar suggested to the Chief Minister the creation of a Social Sector War Room, inspired by the highly successful Infrastructure Sector War Room (2014-2019) led by the Chief Minister that expedited projects like the Atal Setu, Coastal Road, Samruddhi Mahamarg, and Mumbai Metro by bringing multiple agencies (PWD, Municipal Corporations, Environment, Coastal Authority) onto a single platform to resolve inter-departmental issues. The Chief Minister agreed to this concept of Social Sector War Room. In just eight months, a total of three meetings of the Social Sector War Room chaired by the Chief Minister have expedited implementation of nine flagship programs of the Central Government. In appointments, he aims for transparency, considering an officer's competence, expertise, and the state's specific needs. Long-term impactful initiatives include supporting the development of a major cybercrime center at Mahape in Navi Mumbai, promoting the use of AI in the Home Department, and rolling out Acts like the Public Security Act and amending bills like the Narcotics Act to introduce stricter provisions.

Shrikar acknowledged the perception of "slowing down" in Maharashtra's administration, stemming from political instability after the 2019 state elections. He admits that the state bureaucracy itself found it difficult to operate during this period of five years, leading to a conservative approach in administration. To counter this, after Devendra Fadnavis became CM again in Dec. 2024, they introduced a 100-days program. This program fostered a "competitive and participative mode" by recognizing good work without focusing on punishment, thereby generating enthusiasm and energy. Initiatives included an "Office

Improvement Campaign" (Karyalaya Sudharana Abhiyan) focusing on improving office structures, visitor facilities, websites, field visits, and green initiatives, which saw a substantial rise in implementation. Furthermore, 48 departments collectively identified 902 policy-level initiatives, with 706 (78%) successfully completed within the 100-day target.



Hon. CM Shri Devendra Fadnavis and Hon. DCM Shri Eknath Shinde felicitating IAS Shrikar Pardeshi on achieving 100 days action plan of Government of Maharashtra.

The next phase of 150-days involves developing a Vision Document for Developed Maharashtra 2047, with interim goals for 2035 (Maharashtra's 75th anniversary) and short-term goals for 2029 (end of the government's 5-year term). Other ongoing reforms include e-governance reforms (similar to the Sarathi model in PCMC) to address citizen and business pain points. Administrative reforms for service-related matters (HR) are also being tackled, clearing backlogs in vacancies, promotions, appraisal reports, and departmental inquiries to re-motivate the government's human resources. He believes that this concerted effort is successfully getting the "derailed vehicle back on track," restoring meritocracy and competitive participation.

Regarding the new generation of bureaucrats, Shrikar observes that they are tech-savvy and adept at utilizing new technology, which is a positive development. However, he also notes a "disturbing observation": many of them  tend to be more demanding, seeking specific postings and facilities, and some are more inclined to project themselves, particularly on social media. The government has now formulated social media guidelines for officers to address this.

On the topic of public-private partnerships and collaboration, Shrikar views it as a "good idea" and notes that currently, such collaborations often occur through organizations and NGOs. However, he cautioned against collaborations with individuals who might misuse government affiliations for personal gain or fraudulent activities, such as promising recruitment or contracts in exchange for money, which he notes has been a growing concern.

Looking ahead to his remaining eight years in service (until 2033), Shrikar expressed his personal preference to work in public health. He is also open to returning to the Government of India, valuing the "large canvas" it offers for impact.

Finally, reflecting on Jnana Prabodhini's 30-year journey, Shrikar noted its evolution from being a library to providing active coaching, counseling, and interview guidance to creating a network of serving officers. He praised its current model of connecting officers through WhatsApp and Zoom groups, fostering dialogue, cross-learning, and morale-boosting. The mentoring of the young officers in the field is proving to be a crucial contribution of JPCEC. He emphasized that UPSC preparation is not about "spoon-feeding" but a process where individuals must learn from diverse sources, and Prabodhini's current approach of facilitating interaction and idea exchange among officers aligns well with this philosophy.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi and his family at JPCEC Office in Pune along with Dr. Vivek Kulkarni Sir, Dr. Savita Kulkarni tai and other Senior Office bearers of Jnana Prabodhini, Pune.

IAS Shrikar Pardeshi interacting with other senior officers and newly selected UPSC officers of JPCEC at Jnana Prabodhini, Pune.



IAS Shrikar Pardeshi along with Senior Administrative Officers of JPCEC and Office bearers of Jnana Prabodhini at Jnana Prabodhini, Pune.