

The soul of work

An anthology offers a panoramic view of the Indian experience at the workplace, across generations, professions and value systems

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Work, Wisdom, Legacy is an intellectually stimulating anthology that gathers reflections from 31 prominent Indian figures, offering a panoramic view of what work means in the Indian context—across generations, professions, and value systems. Compiled by former RBI Governor Y.V. Reddy alongside Ravi Menon, Shaji Vikraman, and Kavi Yaga, the book is as much about personal journeys as it is about societal evolution through the lens of work.

Each essay, distinct in voice and perspective, forms part of a larger tapestry that explores the ethics, purpose, and transformation of work. What makes the collection powerful is not just the stature of its contributors—which includes policymakers like Yashwant Sinha and P. Chidambaram, business leaders like N.R. Narayana Murthy and K.V. Kamath, and thinkers like Arun Shourie—but the honesty and nuance they bring to their experiences.

Reflections on the journey

Rather than reducing work to a matter of efficiency or economic necessity, the essays reflect on its moral and emotional dimensions. For instance, many authors examine how early family values, personal mentors, or pivotal career moments shaped their philosophies. There’s a recurring emphasis on integrity, humility, and the pursuit of excellence, not merely for material reward, but for fulfilment and legacy.

Y.V. Reddy’s essay, “God Laughs and Other Reflections,” provides a foundational tone for the book. Drawing on personal anecdotes, he articulates the importance of what he calls the three Is: intellect, industry, and integrity. His reflections suggest that the people we choose to work with—and the values they uphold—are as significant as the work itself. This sentiment is echoed across the anthology, making a subtle but strong case for ethics in public and private life.

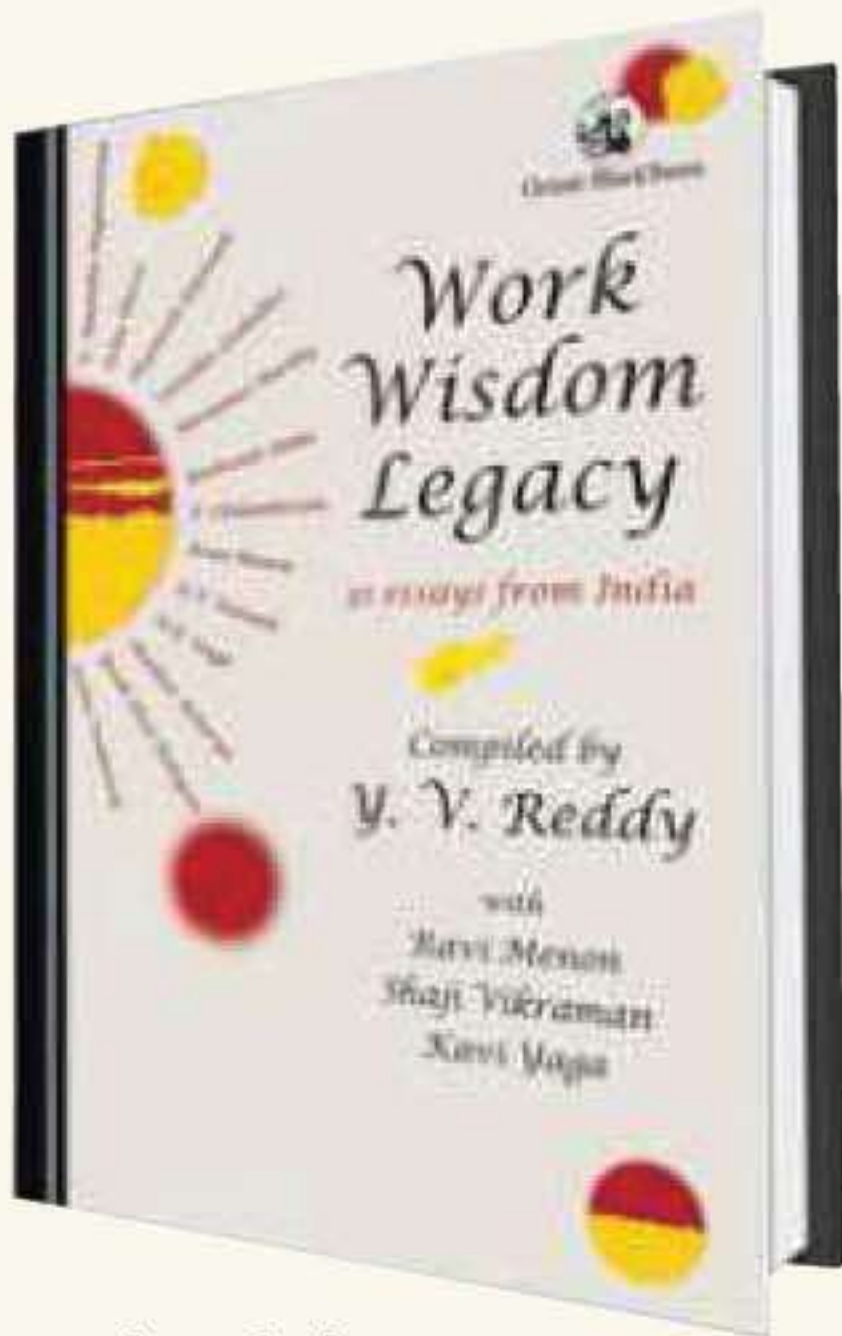
What also emerges is Reddy’s broader philosophical stance, captured in his emphasis on “assessing, not judging” others, an approach that encourages empathy and perspective over prescriptive thinking. At the book’s launch, fellow

contributors echoed how this mindset shaped their professional ethos, adding that the essays offer not just inspiration but introspection.

The volume’s strength also lies in its diversity. The authors span various domains, governance, law, banking, entrepreneurship, media, and each brings a distinct outlook. For example, some grapple with the shift from state-led development to liberalisation, while others discuss the challenges of leadership in a corporate environment undergoing rapid technological change. The essays are not instructional; they’re contemplative. They do not prescribe a single definition of success but invite readers to define it for themselves.

Contemporary relevance

The editors skilfully avoid making the book feel nostalgic or dated. Instead, the essays



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collectively offer a timeless relevance. As India’s young workforce navigates a volatile, competitive, and digitised job landscape, this book becomes a quiet guide, urging readers to look inward even as they strive outward.

Work, Wisdom, Legacy does not just celebrate achievements. It honours the long, often winding road to meaningful work. In doing so, it urges the reader to consider legacy not as the residue of power or wealth, but as the impact one has on others, through decisions, actions, and values.

In a time when conversations about work are often framed around burnout, hustle, and metrics, this book is a welcome change. It’s reflective, rooted, and deeply human.