India has nearly 1,000 universities, making our higher education system one of the largest in the world. With a current enrolment of 35.7 million students, India is second only to China’s 41.8 million. India’s Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which refers to the proportion of 16 to 23-year-olds enrolled in higher education, went up from 8.1 per cent in 2001-02 to 27.4 in 2017-18, as per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE). However, it remains lower than the global average of 36.7 per cent. The Union ministry of human resource development aims to take this GER to 32 per cent by 2022.

The increase in student enrolment has been primarily driven by privately-owned institutions. However, as a 2019 report—‘Reviving Higher Education in India’—by the Brookings Institution, a US-based thinktank, highlighted, despite heading towards a “massification” of higher education, India lagged behind in the quality and distribution of higher education.

Given this disparity, it is imperative for an aspiring student to find the right university, which will not only impart a meaningful education but also enhance an individual’s employability. This is where the annual India Today Best University survey hopes to make a difference. Armed with a robust methodology, the survey ranks the country’s universities across four streams—general, medical, technical and law. With private universities beginning to play a larger role in the spread of higher education, they’ve been ranked separately under the general stream.

What is most encouraging about this year’s rankings is that universities that have in the past year been in the news for political developments have not let it sully their