

MAHA KUMBH : From Mother Tongue to Other Tongue

Resurrecting the ethos of Bharatiyata

■ DHARMENDRA PRADHAN

The Maha Kumbh Mela, held every 12 years at one of four locations in India (Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik), is one of the world's largest and most spiritually significant gatherings. The preparation for this grand event involves meticulous planning, coordination, and execution to accommodate millions of pilgrims, devotees, and tourists from across the globe.

The first step in the preparation for Maha Kumbh is the construction of essential infrastructure. Temporary tent cities, bathing ghats, and platforms are set up at the designated locations along the banks of the river, usually the Ganga in Allahabad or other sacred rivers in different cities. These make-shift yet well-planned arrangements are aimed at ensuring safe bathing, shelter, and sanitation for the large crowds. Special arrangements are made for food stalls, medical camps, and drinking water facilities, while the transportation system, including buses, trains, and local roads, is enhanced to accommodate the massive influx of people.

Security is a critical concern during the Maha Kumbh Mela. With millions attending, law enforcement agencies work tirelessly to ensure peace and order. Special teams, including the police, paramilitary forces, and volunteers, are deployed to maintain safety. Surveillance cameras are installed across the event zones, and drones are used for aerial monitoring. Crowd control strategies, such as barricades and entry points, are put in place to avoid stampedes and ensure smooth flow.

Religious preparation for the event includes the participation of various spiritual leaders, ascetics, and priests. Rituals such as the grand bathing procession, where devotees dip in the sacred river to cleanse themselves of sins, are the highlights of the Kumbh Mela. Spiritual discourse, yoga sessions, and cultural events are also scheduled to provide a holistic experience to the attendees.

Given the large crowds, public health and sanitation are also a top priority. Medical camps are set up, staffed with doctors, paramedics, and volunteers to handle emergencies. Adequate waste management systems are introduced to maintain cleanliness in the camps, bathing ghats, and food areas.

Bharatiya Bhasha Utsav, a week-long celebration from 4th to 11th December to mark our diverse linguistic heritage and to commemorate the birth Anniversary of the revered Mahakavi Subramania Bharati on December 11 is currently underway in all States and UTs. 'Unity through Languages' is the defining theme of this year's celebration, that captures the very essence of Bharat's civilizational ethos. Just a couple of months back, on 3rd October, 2024, the Union Cabinet under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi created a history of sorts by conferring the status of Classical Languages to as many as five languages - Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali, thus expanding the ambit of already recognized six other Classical Languages such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia. A profound acknowledgement of Bharat's exalted linguistic heritage, this pronouncement makes each one of our people having these languages a mother tongue, immensely proud.

India's diverse languages are expressions of Bharatiyata and these are intrinsic to our Indian Knowledge System. According to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, all Indian languages are national languages and they constitute the soul of Bharatiyata and hence, worthy of reverence. Linguistic diversity strengthens national unity and helps realize the goal of 'Ek Bharat Sresth Bharat'. Each one of our people, therefore, must wear linguistic pride as a badge of honour. The Prime Minister exemplified this even at the global stage when he emphatically said, "I proudly speak India's languages even at the UN. If it takes a while for the listeners to applaud, so be it." This assertion underscores his commitment to preserving India's linguistic diversity and highlights the value of linguistic pride.

Bharat is a land where multiple languages not only coexist but thrive. It is a living embodiment of the profound sublimity of multilingualism. Our linguistic diversity forms a rich, intricate tapestry, weaving together our national identity while nurturing the country's unity amidst bewildering diversity. This cultural strength faced massive erosion during colonial rule. On 2nd February 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay presented a memorandum, known as "Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education" to then Governor General of India, prioritizing English over native tongues that sought to create a class of Indians loyal to British interests, alienating generations from their cultural and linguistic roots. Ever since, an unwholesome colonial legacy lingered over centuries, grievously injuring our cultural and linguistic pride.

Bharat has a rich and diverse lingual demographic, with an overwhelmingly eighty per cent of the population identify themselves as Non-English, Native Language speakers. At the core of deeper learning is the mother tongue. Our languages are not just tools of communication-they are the repositories of history, traditions, and folklore, preserving the collective wisdom of generations and offering a unique worldview. Children, brimming with creativity and emotional intelligence, flourish when their education begins in their native language. A Primer in their mother tongue builds a seamless bridge from home to classroom, guiding them from 'mother' tongue to 'other' tongue-transitioning from speaking to writing, vocabulary to semantics, and language to subject comprehension. As Rabindranath Tagore poignantly noted, "A

child learns to speak not from textbooks, but from his mother." Education in the mother tongue fosters a natural progression from basic understanding to complex thought.

Bharat's linguistic diversity is a treasure-trove of both intellectual and cultural wealth. From the snow-capped peaks of Kashmir to the sun-drenched shores of Kanyakumari, and from the arid expanses of Kutch to the verdant hills of Kohima, our languages encapsulate the inner essence of our people. Teaching children in their mother tongue not only preserves their connection to heritage but also equips them for the future. By laying a robust foundation in the native language, we can empower children to master other languages and subjects with greater ease and comprehension.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 copiously embraces this vision. Seeking to reclaim our linguistic heritage, NEP places the mother tongue at the heart of early education, acknowledging that language is not merely a tool for learning but a core component of shaping identity, building confidence and fostering cognitive development.

The NEP 2020 necessitates equitable access to high-quality teaching and learning materials in various Indian languages for greater learning outcomes. It places strong emphasis on the fusion of technology with education, particularly in the context of preserving and promoting the nation's diverse linguistic heritage. From Bhasha Sangam programme and Machine Translation Centre of National Council of Educational Research and Training to Anuvadini App based translation of books including technical books in multiple Indian languages by All India Council for Technical Education to ASMITA - Augmenting Study Materials in

Indian Languages through Translation and Academic Writing - initiative by University Grants Commission and Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, there have been well-concerted efforts to create a robust ecosystem for promotion of Indian languages so as to make education inclusive.

Besides, the Government's groundbreaking initiative to produce Primers in 79 Indian languages is a monumental step forward, guaranteeing that children during early years, in rural, tribal, and remote areas receive quality education in their native tongues. These Primers, alongside other educational materials, are more than just resources-they are gateways to creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

Language shapes our thoughts, expresses our emotions, and connects us to our cultural roots. The NEP 2020 heralds a new era, where children can learn in their mother tongue and gradually master other languages. By decolonizing our education system, we seek to nurturing a generation of thinkers who will not only excel academically but also champion Bharat's rich cultural heritage. This transformation is not merely a policy shift-it represents a cultural renaissance.

As we look to the future, Bharat's linguistic diversity will be a cornerstone of educational excellence and socio-cultural and economic advancement. In this Anrit Kaal, as we pursue a Vikasit Bharat agenda, our mother tongues are poised to become powerful vehicles of development. Let us make our linguistic heritage the fulcrum of our progress, as Bharat ascends on the global stage.

(The writer is Union Minister for Education)

Environment, Development and Sustainability

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Environment sustainability refers to the responsible management of natural resources to fulfill current needs without compromising the ability of future generation to mitigate their needs. Its objective is to balance ecological, economic and social goals such as reducing carbon emission, promoting renewable energy and ensuring equitable resource access. Environmental sustainability is important to preserve resources like clean air, water and wildlife for future generations. Environment is one of the most important pillars of sustainable development. There is the need to establish a sustainable development process in rural India. Environmental aspect assumes great significance in growing deforestation, soil erosion, land degradation, water pollution, biodiversity loss and the like which continue to worsen economic development in rural India. The common property resources which are mostly natural resources must be protected for overall growth of the rural areas. The natural resources should be protected for overall growth of the rural areas. Such efforts not only lead to optimum utilization of natural resources but also generate more employment for the rural people. This initiative requires people's participation. For instance, afforestation activities cannot be successful without the help of local communities. The relationship between development and environment is well established. This requires the awareness on environmental issues. Environmental quality is an integral part of development. Without environmental ethics development is simply

undermined. Natural resources are the wealth of any nation. Presently they are facing environmental hazards due to many reasons. Sustainable development is focused on any kind of betterment that should not harm the environment so that the well being of future generations is guaranteed and the harmonious relationship environment and development is sustained. The process of sustainable development tries to build social and economic progress satisfying the needs and values of the social groups without foreclosing future options. Rio-Earth Summit (1992) highlights the view that socio-economic development and environment protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing processes. Recently, the healthy rural environment has encountered divergent environmental hazards as an addition to their existing issues of social and economic hardships. Such threats badly affect the local community which is the impetus behind research for alternative sources such as cultivation in marginal lands. It constitutes a growing class of environment refugees. Sustainable rural development is felt as a necessary intervention to fight against poverty, unemployment and other complicated problems in rural areas. Sustainable rural development can promote growth and equity simultaneously and also promote the development of democratic process at the grass root level by creating awareness on social forestry, soil conservation, population control, protection of tanks, rural energy management, biodiversity, popularization of eco-friendly activities etc. Sustainable rural development on the one hand benefits local people and safeguards the flora and fauna

of a particular region on the other. At this stage common property resources are important but they are being neglected. They should be protected and organized through people's participation. Common property resources can generate more employment opportunities in rural areas. The sustainability of development for the rural people should dexterously and lucratively aim at motivating the people to get involved in community action and to ensure their participation in diverse and numerous environmental protection and optimum utilization of natural resources. Thus, rural development will obviously lead to an overall growth of rural areas.

People's participation plays an inevitable role in driving the fruits of development schemes. It is an important instrument to monitor the officials and contractors on the one hand and augment the empowerment of the local bodies on the other. It increases the worthiness of the project by means of achieving a steady and balanced growth from within the best use of natural resources. Environmental issues cannot be solved unless the local people take part in it. Their participation will help in promoting wildlife conservation, afforestation and also in employment generation. Local people skill and manpower are needed to deal with the aftermath of environmental disasters. The problems confronted in the rural areas do not involve huge amount of money but the fullest involvement of the people with a commitment to solve the problems. For instance, sanitation is a chronic problem in rural areas but it cannot be solved by the various programmes of the government alone. It can also be

solved by the people. Afforestation and arresting of deforestation can be carried with the help of local people. Protection of environment is mainly in the hands of the people. People's participation is imperative need.

Environment protection is an essential part of development. Without adequate environment protection, development is useless. It has been estimated that by 2030 food production will need to double and industrial output and energy use will increase three times in the world and five times in the developing nations. This growth can bring the risk of appalling environmental damage. It can also bring with it better environment protection, clean air water and eradication of poverty. Environmental damage affects the present and future human welfare. It affects human health and reduces agricultural productivity. Some problems are associated with the lack of economic development, inadequate sanitation, clean water and air pollution from biomass burning. Illegal cutting of forests is a matter of great concern. The lack of appropriate technology for maximum utilization of the raw materials, poor silvicultural practices, low recovery, low budgetary provision for forest operations have all hampered effective management. As a result fuel wood, timber, pole wood and carving wood are being exploited at unsustainable levels. Ecological degradation of wetlands together with pollution has resulted in the loss of flora and fauna. The high amount of fertilizers and other inputs required in agriculture for increasing the productivity has led to the degradation of the environment. Despite

decades of warning about pollution and efforts to control it, people are still being exposed to toxic pollutants. Pollution from agricultural land caused by leaching of nitrogen fertilizers has been detected in the ground water in many areas. In Hararyana, for example, some well water is reported to have nitrate concentration ranging from 114 mg. / litre to 1800 mg. / litre far above the national standard 45 mg. / litre. Government should monitor and implement policies to reduce pollution and environment degradation and to safeguard the natural system that supports renewable resources. Action should be taken for achieving a sustainable future.

Well known Economist Gunnar Myrdal pointed out way back in 1968; "The ideal has always been that plan should come from people and meet their wishes and need and have their support in thought as well as deed. This is regularly stated in the plans as an important aim of planning and condition for their success." Environment protection is possible through effective participation of the people. It has been observed that unless the people are put at the core of any development activity, the relationship among the environmental development ceases to exist. It has been studied that people's participation is the most determining factor of biodiversity conservation. People living around the Periyar Tiger Reserve of Kerala can be taken as an example. It is not only taking care of the decentralized government control over forests but also ensuring the biodiversity conservation a reality. The participatory

approach to environmental protection can be strengthened through the decentralized planning which provides opportunity for the rural communities to effectively participate in the environmental. It has been observed that the rural people's level of environmental awareness and participation is important with respect to environmental endeavors. All the stakeholders should understand the present environmental crisis and find out suitable solutions to tackle this awful situation. The diet, prevention is better than cure is more related to the present day's environmental issues as it is directly proportional to man's survival problems. Sustainable rural development hints at the rational use of scarce resources with the support of people. A multifarious strategy needs to be formulated to solve the rural problems through development process and to protect the environment through community participation. A renowned environmentalist Sh. Anil Agarwal proposed a seven point environment agenda for India. Rural development should become holistic, at the same time, village ecosystems should be protected is one of them. It will help to an evergreen revolution in agriculture where productivity can be increased without any harm to social and economic fabric. Thus, the holistic approach towards rural development has to be taken into account which includes amelioration of the quality of life of the rural people through appropriate exploitation of natural resources. A silver lining for rural development is needed.

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Is alcoholism classified as a brain disease or a brain disorder?

■ SURJIT SINGH FLORA

Alcoholism is a complex condition that affects both mental and physical health. Individuals with alcoholism are those who have lost the capacity to manage their alcohol consumption. An individual struggling with alcoholism is unlikely to regain control over their drinking habits. Over an extended duration, the situation deteriorates rather than improves.

Consequently, the sole recommendation proposed is complete abstinence. A medical detox typically serves as the initial step in this process.

Medical professionals knowledgeable about alcoholism concur that it is not possible to transform an alcoholic into a normal drinker. While science holds the potential to achieve this in the future, it has not yet reached that point.

In 1956, the American Medical Association classified alcoholism as a disease, primarily to enable physicians to bill both patients and insurers for the treatment of this condition. I was involved in the alcohol and drug treatment industry from 1985 to 1992, with short stints as a consultant in 2009 and 2014.

Alcoholism does not align with the disease model, although there are indeed biochemical and biogenetic factors that may predispose individuals to develop a drinking problem. Currently, medical researchers are unable to identify a single gene on a specific chromosome as the definitive cause of alcoholism; however, there are four or five genetic markers that suggest a predisposition to the condition.

Alcoholism leads to cellular damage in the brain as well as in other major organ systems of the body. Although alcohol can cause damage to brain cells, the human brain possesses millions of unused cells that can compensate for this loss. This cellular damage represents the physiological basis of addiction. The destruction of sufficient cells in the human body results in a craving for additional alcohol, simply to

achieve a sense of feeling "normal" or acceptable. For example, physical dependency. Excessive dead cells ultimately lead to brain damage in individuals with chronic alcoholism. The liver, responsible for metabolizing alcohol, starts to encounter difficulties in performing its function due to cellular damage. The pancreas experiences inflammation. Stomach ulcers can occur. The kidneys' function decreases. The ability to filter toxins from the body diminishes. For the chronic alcoholic, the body can suffer damage in various degrees as a direct consequence of alcohol consumption.

The three main parts of the patient's brain, the prefrontal cortex (the part of understanding), the hippocampus (the part of thinking), and the amygdala (the part of anxiety), which alcohol numbs, are the main and real cause of the disease of alcoholism. As a result, the patient loses his intelligence and does not understand even when family members explain it to him. His mind constantly replays a series of thoughts about alcohol consumption. This series of thoughts prevents him from quitting alcohol, and he consistently experiences anxiety. Alcohol causes a physical disease, disorder, or problem known as liver damage.

Take a look at alcohol from this perspective: do you know how rubbing alcohol is painful to your skin when you have a cut? In order to eliminate microorganisms, it is used as a disinfectant. Although they have distinct molecular structures, beverage alcohol and isopropyl alcohol are essentially the same chemical and share characteristics. One is taken by mouth, while the other is applied topically to wounds and cuts in order to alleviate pain and promote healing. When they come into touch with cells, both types of alcohols have the same effect: they destroy those cells. Hard liquor is a poison, which means that it causes your throat to burn and dry up. One reason why people use alcohol is because it has the ability to change their mood by attaching itself to certain receptors in the

brain. You could experience feelings of euphoria, relaxation, and so forth. The fermentation of hops, which gives beer its distinctive flavour, is the process by which beer is formed. Beer includes the same kind of alcohol as wine. Grapes are fermented to produce wine. Therefore, the effects of hard liquor; wine, and beer on cells are same; the only differences are in the technique of manufacturing and the amount of alcohol ingested. In other words, the only difference between a shot glass of bourbon and a can of beer that is 12 ounces is that the bigger volume of beer causes an increase in the amount of urine that is produced while drinking it.

Why do individuals develop alcoholism?
To begin, both addiction and mental diseases have a hereditary component, which means that environment is not the only factor in these conditions. Regardless of how well life had been going up to that point, a person who comes from a family that has been in and out of rehabilitation and chooses to drink one day to celebrate or hang out with friends is a lot more likely to have problems with alcohol in the future. It is also impossible to know for certain that "everything in their lives is going well." I have met a great number of people who seemed to have everything and were well-liked by a great number of people. As long as they did not discuss what was going on, I would have been completely unaware of the following:

Substance misuse in the household
A relationship that is abusive
Having a gang of pals sexually assault you
Having one's family turn their backs on one following a death in the family
They were being told by their own perfectionism that they were not talented enough.
Having to deal with a significant medical problem
Every night, parents argue with each other at home.

An abortion or miscarriage
Having a fiancé in a conflict zone
Growing up with the experience of surviving a school shooting

It is impossible for anyone's life to be flawless, even if it seems to be so from the outside. Some individuals are very secretive and keep their negative traits hidden from everyone save a select few. As a means of covering up their suffering, some people become achievers. Certain individuals just do not want to discuss it.

Why is the treatment of the brain more important than the liver?

When the patient suffers from any physical disease/disorder/problem due to alcohol, the family members' direct attention goes towards the treatment of the patient's liver: The family members are not to blame for this. In fact, they do not understand the disease of alcoholism. Innocent family members keep wasting their valuable time and money by treating the patient's liver. When the patient's liver partially recovers, the family members experience a false sense of comfort, unaware that the liver treatment has not cured the patient's alcoholism, but rather exacerbates it. When the patient comes home from the hospital, he starts drinking alcohol again.

The patient's family members can learn valuable lessons from this situation.

The family members should learn that treating the patient's alcoholism, which includes brain damage or numbness, instead of treating the liver from the outset prevents the patient's disease from worsening and avoids wasting their time and money. Sometimes, delaying treatment can incur significant costs.

Also, it's a request to many doctors and clinics treating alcoholic liver patients to advise the family members as a matter of humanity that the patient cannot give up alcohol by treating the liver alone. Alcoholism, the primary cause of liver damage,

requires more intensive treatment.
Scientific treatment of the brain

They detoxify the patient's body and brain. Later, through special medicines and special therapies such as R. T. M. S. therapy (repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation), they treat the parts of the brain that have become numb due to the disease, the hippocampus (part of thinking), the prefrontal cortex (part of understanding), and the amygdala (part of anxiety) and the cells formed in the brain due to alcohol addiction. Once the disease heals these parts of the brain and destroys the cells, the patient begins to comprehend everything; his personality transforms, and he begins to understand and fulfill his responsibilities towards himself and his family. The thoughts and restlessness about alcohol disappear from his mind, and he gives them up forever. The bottom line is, there is no cure for alcoholism since it is a chronic illness; nevertheless, it can be handled in the same way that chronic diabetes may be maintained successfully. If not treated or controlled properly, both disorders have the potential to cause early mortality. First and foremost, cease all alcohol consumption. It is noted that the brain is the final major organ to achieve "full" functioning after an individual has consumed alcohol excessively. Consume highly nutritious foods not only for your brain but for your entire body as well. Aim to minimize your consumption of junk food. I knew someone whose struggle with alcoholism was so severe that when she finally achieved sobriety, it took her a considerable amount of time to even read the Big Book. However, she persevered and ultimately found her way back to her "normal." Every day, you might observe variations in your thought processes and information processing, yet it can take up to three years (and sometimes longer) for the brain to revert to its previous state.

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