

PRESERVING IDENTITY

India's linguistic diversity is one of its greatest strengths. With hundreds of languages and dialects spoken across the country, regional languages form the backbone of India's cultural, social, and intellectual heritage. The promotion of regional languages is not merely a cultural responsibility but a national necessity to preserve identity, ensure inclusive development, and strengthen democratic participation in an increasingly globalised world.

Language is far more than a tool of communication; it is a repository of history, traditions, values, and collective memory. Regional languages connect people to their roots and shape their worldview. When a language declines, an entire cultural ecosystem-folk traditions, oral histories, literature, and indigenous knowledge-faces extinction. Therefore, promoting regional languages is essential to safeguarding India's pluralistic ethos.

In recent years, there has been renewed focus on regional languages through policy initiatives. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises education in the mother tongue or regional language, especially at the foundational level. This approach is supported by research showing that children learn concepts better in their first language, leading to stronger cognitive development and lower dropout rates. Teaching in regional languages also makes education more inclusive, particularly for students from rural and marginalised backgrounds.

However, challenges remain. English continues to dominate higher education, administration, and employment, often creating the perception that regional languages limit opportunities. This mindset has led to a gradual decline in the everyday use of many native languages, especially among urban youth. The solution does not lie in opposing English or other global languages, but in creating a balanced, multilingual ecosystem where regional languages coexist with national and international ones.

Technology offers unprecedented opportunities for revitalising regional languages. Digital platforms, social media, podcasts, e-books, and mobile applications can make local languages relevant to younger generations. Creating online content related to science, startups, governance, entertainment, and contemporary issues in regional languages can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Artificial intelligence tools such as translation software and voice recognition can further enhance accessibility and usability.

Civil society and communities also play a crucial role. Government patronage alone cannot sustain a language unless people take pride in using it at home, in public spaces, and in creative expression. Literature festivals, theatre, cinema, music, and storytelling in regional languages help keep them vibrant and dynamic. Families, too, must consciously pass on their mother tongue to children, ensuring intergenerational continuity. The promotion of regional languages is equally important for strengthening democracy. When governance, legal processes, and public communication are accessible in local languages, citizens can participate more meaningfully in decision-making. Language inclusion enhances transparency, trust, and accountability, bringing governance closer to the people.

Acknowledging dedication; Honouring resilience

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

Farming has been recognized as the backbone of our economy. This is not just because a vast percentage of population depends directly or indirectly for it as a means of livelihood or because it contributes 17-18% to country's GDP. It is also because agriculture is a way of life in the country. It is the oldest culture that binds communities from different faiths and religions into one single profession i. e farming. The community associated with this noble profession working day and night in intense heat or extreme cold only to ensure that none of us do not go hungry in the bed need to be given due honour and the resilience they have shown in raising agricultural production despite of so many challenges has to be acknowledged. Although their efforts matter every day, but Dec. 23 has been reserved as a special day recognizing their valuable contribution in the growth and progress of the nation. Dec. 23 is celebrated every day as National Farmers' Day also known as Rashtriya Kisan Divas.

Dec. 23 is also the birthday of fifth Prime minister of the country Choudhary Charan Singh and his birth date has been deliberately chosen as National Farmers' Day as a honour to the late leader for his outstanding contribution to the farming sector and rural development in the country. Choudhary Charan Singh. Born in 1902 in a middle class peasant family in Noorpur of district Meerut in Uttar Pradesh he left this world on May 29, 1987. He was a great farmer's leader who remained Prime minister of the country from July 28, 1979 to January 14, 1980. During his tenure as Prime minister of the country, he introduced many farmer friendly policies and enacted much legislation to improve the lives of the Indian farmers. He was first elected to U.P Legislative Assembly in 1937 from Chhaprauli constituency and continued to represent it many times. Choudhary sahib held several ministerial positions in Uttar Pradesh cabinet including Revenue, Agriculture, Home and Transport. Known for his simplicity and understanding of rural India's challenges, Singh introduced several policies to improve the lives of farmers and ensure sustainable agricultural development. He believed in empowering rural communities and foster-

ing a self-reliant agrarian economy.

When he became the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, he introduced the Land Holding Act of 1960, aiming to lower and standardize land ceiling limits ensuring fair distribution of agricultural land. He also played a leading role in drafting the Debt Redemption Bill of 1939, which alleviated the financial burden on rural farmers giving a relief to farmers from moneylenders and a key role in the enactment of the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1950. His dedication to farmers' welfare earned him the title of 'Kisan Leader', and his birth anniversary is celebrated as 'Kisan Divas' to honor his contribution to Indian agriculture and rural development. The Kisan Divas has been celebrated since 2001 in the country. Due to his contribution towards addressing the welfare and rights of Indian farmers and significantly impacting the nation's agricultural policies, he is also acknowledged as 'champion of farmers'. Commemorating with the birthday of a great visionary who devoted his whole life for welfare of farming community, National Farmers' Day also known as 'Rashtriya Kisan Divas' is celebrated every year on 23rd December.

Farming constitutes one of the oldest practices that mankind knows about and which is still in practice today. It dates back to over 10,000 years. One simply cannot undermine the role of farmer's in our life and economy at large. To ensure that they get due credit and attention that they deserve, countries across the globe observe their 'National Farmers' Day' every year. The event is also popularly called as 'Old Farmers' Day' in the United States (US). There isn't an exact date when celebrating Farmers' Day became a trend, but the tradition is being followed since the early 1800s. In different parts of the globe, the National Farmer's Day is celebrated on different dates by different countries.

In India, agriculture sector is a vital contributor to our economy; creating and providing livelihood opportunities to about 50% of the population directly or indirectly. Majority of the rural population including the women folk are engaged in this sector. Since independence, country has achieved many milestones in agricultural production. From a production of 50 million tonnes in

the post independence years, the food grains production now is almost seven times than it was in 1950s. The horticulture production in the country has exceeded food grains production in the country. The country has the largest area under cultivation. It is the largest producer of pulses, spices, milk, tea, cashew, jute, banana, jackfruit and many other commodities (FAO). It stands second in production of fruits and vegetables, wheat, rice, cotton and oilseeds. India has the largest cotton cultivation area all over the world after China and the USA. India is the third highest potato producing country. India is also the second largest producer of Pulses in the world. The country also has the largest livestock population.

The agriculture sector despite a vital contributor to the country's economy still suffers from some inherent loopholes and challenges like sustainability, climate change and its non remunerativeness. Indian agriculture is predominated by the presence of small and marginal farmers. This vital segment of Indian agriculture is often the neglected one; still outside the reach of developmental policies and programmes. They are still outside the formal framework of technological interventions, have no or little access to credit facilities and are not in a position to avail crop and livestock insurance. Although government has started many programmes for their empowerment, these are yet to show the results on grounds.

The government has also been proactively supporting the farming community by starting many programmes for their welfare and rejuvenation of farm sector. PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (PMKISAN) provides financial support to the farming community. PM Kisan Sinechai Yojana (PMKSY) aims at improving the irrigation potential and efficiency of the irrigation network in the country. Soil Health Cards are being provided to the farmers which contain detailed description of the fertility status of their soils and the recommendation thereof. The marketing structure in the country is also being improved with many marketing reforms. e-NAM is being strengthened to connect all the mandi across the country. Organic and Natural farming is being promoted in the country to reverse the negative effects of chemical led intensive cultivation. Credit and

insurance facilities are also being provided and their coverage is also being extended to include all the farmers. Special focus is being laid on the farm women and the youths. Many youths have now turned entrepreneurs and are providing job to many others instead of seeking job from others. Besides these, we also need to adopt and promote different practices for sustainable agriculture that result in food security and resilience. Practices like Zero/No tillage ensure that the soil is not ploughed but disturbed to the least possible extent. It helps to minimize mechanical soil disturbance which is essential to maintaining minerals within the soil, preventing erosion, and preventing water loss from occurring within the soil. Growing the same crops year after year of the practice of monocropping depletes the soil of different nutrients. Therefore crop rotation that involves growing different crops doesn't rob the soil of its nutrients; instead add to the nutrient composition of the soil. Practicing crop rotation with more than two species does not allow insect/pests and weeds to be set into a rotation with specific crops. The adoption of an integrated farming system approach that involves different components also ensure that the local resources and family labour is used effectively and farmers get compensated from another enterprise in case of failure of one enterprise. Government has started the National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) to undo the negative effects of chemical intensive farming and restore soil health to its original position. The NMNF will also create self employment opportunities for many youths.

Today agriculture is witnessing a transformation. From subsistence to sustainable and from a traditional to digitalization, the agriculture sector in the present era is driven by innovation, entrepreneurship and precision. This has led to mobilization and empowerment of farming community. The startup culture in the country has scaled new heights. Innovation accompanied by entrepreneurship has led to establishment of many assets in the country and created lakhs of employment opportunities for youths. Youths of today no longer are job seekers, they are now job providers.

(The writer writes on agriculture and social issues)

■ MANZOOR AHMAD KHAN



The Importance of Physical Education for a Healthy Society

We must collectively turn our attention to the overall development of our children-whether they belong to our schools, our district, our state, or any part of our country. It is our shared responsibility to educate and enlighten society about the true meaning and importance of Physical Education, and to help every individual understand how to remain physically fit, mentally strong, and morally sound.

Physical Education is not merely a subject; it is a powerful tool for nation-building. Through proper guidance and awareness, we must teach our youth how to prepare themselves physically, mentally, and ethically, so that the coming generation grows into a strong, healthy, and responsible force for the future.

Physical fitness forms the foundation of a healthy life. Activities such as running, gymnastics, exercise routines, and stretching help improve strength, flexibility, endurance, and overall body efficiency. Alongside fitness, physical activities and sports like football, volleyball, kabaddi, and other indigenous and modern games play a vital role in developing stamina, agility, teamwork, and competitive

spirit.

Equally important is health and wellness education. Society must be informed about maintaining an active lifestyle, adopting healthy habits, and preventing lifestyle diseases such as obesity. A fit body supports a fit mind, enabling individuals to perform better in all walks of life.

Another crucial component of Physical Education is motor skills development, which includes balance, coordination, speed, body control, and overall physical development of students. These skills enhance confidence, performance, and efficiency not only in sports but also in daily life.

Physical Education also encourages lifelong physical activity. Students should be motivated

to continue regular exercise and sports participation as an integral part of their lives, even after completing their formal education. This lifelong commitment to fitness ensures long-term health and well-being.

Furthermore, Physical Education promotes teamwork and leadership qualities. Through games and sports, students learn discipline, team spirit, leadership, cooperation, respect, and sportsmanship-values that are essential for building a harmonious and progressive society.

In essence, Physical Education is not limited to sports alone; it is a comprehensive subject that plays a vital role in shaping healthy, active, disciplined, and responsible citizens. There was once an old saying:

"Padhoge likhoge banoge nawab, kheloge kudoge toh hoge kharab."

(Study to become powerful; play and you will be ruined.)

Today, this mindset has transformed into a powerful new belief:

"Kheloge kudoge banoge lajawab."

(Play and you will become outstanding.)

This shift reflects modern understanding-that sports, physical activity, and real-world experiences nurture creativity, confidence, character, and holistic development. Far from being a distraction, sports complement education and prepare young minds for real-life challenges and success.

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Vladimir Putin, Trump and India: A Test Case of Non-Alignment 2.0

■ PANKAJ SHARMA

India's foreign policy in the contemporary international system reflects a significant departure from its Cold War era non-alignment toward a pragmatic and interest-based strategy commonly described as "Non-Alignment 2.0." This shift is best examined through India's engagement with two powerful global leaders Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump. While Putin represents a revisionist challenge to Western dominance and Trump embodied a transactional and inward looking United States, India maintained productive relations with both without formal alliance or ideological commitment.

The global order of the twenty first century is marked by fragmentation, power rivalry and declining consensus on international norms. The optimism that followed the end of the Cold War has been replaced by renewed great-power competition, assertive nationalism and selective multilateralism. In this volatile environment, states face growing pressure to align with competing power blocs. India's response to these pressures particularly its engagement with Vladimir Putin's Russia and Donald Trump's United States offers a revealing insight into the transformation of its foreign policy doctrine. Both Putin and Trump challenged the liberal international order in different ways. Putin sought to revise global power hierarchies through assertive statecraft while Trump questioned alliances and multilateral institutions from within the Western system itself. India's ability to engage both leaders without becoming ideologically aligned with either demonstrates the emergence of what can be termed Non-Alignment 2.0, a doctrine that emphasizes strategic autonomy, pragmatic engagement and policy flexibility over ideological consistency.

From Classical Non-Alignment to Strategic Autonomy

India's original policy of non-alignment emerged during the Cold War as a response to bipolar rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rooted in anti-colonialism and moral idealism, it aimed to preserve independence



from military blocs while advocating peaceful coexistence. While it provided diplomatic space, classical non-alignment was also constrained by ideological rigidity and implicit dependencies. The post Cold War international environment necessitated a shift. Economic liberalization, globalization and evolving security threats pushed India toward a more flexible approach. The concept of strategic autonomy gradually replaced non-alignment in official discourse, signaling a move away from ideological distance toward interest-based engagement. Strategic autonomy allows India to cooperate with multiple powers simultaneously while retaining decision-making independence. This framework is particularly useful in understanding India's relations with Putin and Trump, whose leadership styles tested global norms and alliances.

Vladimir Putin's Russia and India: Pragmatism amid Polarization

India's relationship with Russia has historically been characterized by continuity and trust. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia

re-emerged as a strong, centralized state with a foreign policy increasingly confrontational toward the West. The Ukraine conflict and subsequent Western sanctions further polarized global politics, placing India under diplomatic pressure.

Despite this, India chose sustained engagement over rupture. This decision was driven by structural considerations rather than sentiment. Russia remains a crucial defense partner for India, supplying advanced military equipment and enabling technology transfers that few other partners offer. The depth of this cooperation makes abrupt disengagement strategically costly. Energy cooperation further reinforced this pragmatism. India's increased import of discounted Russian oil during global economic uncertainty reflected a prioritization of domestic economic stability over external political expectations. India's refusal to explicitly condemn Russia during the Ukraine war attracted criticism but New Delhi framed its position around dialogue

diplomacy and humanitarian concerns. This stance illustrates Non-Alignment 2.0 in action-engagement without endorsement and cooperation without alignment. From a realist perspective, India's approach reflects a clear prioritization of national interest over moral absolutism.

Donald Trump and India: Strategic Convergence without Dependence

Donald Trump's presidency disrupted established norms of U.S. foreign policy. His "America First" doctrine questioned alliances, trade arrangements, and multilateral institutions, generating uncertainty even among traditional partners. Yet paradoxically, India-U.S. relations strengthened during this period. The most significant area of convergence was China. Trump's increasingly confrontational stance toward Beijing aligned with India's own security concerns, particularly following tensions along the Line of Actual Control. Defense cooperation expanded, strategic dialogues intensified, and India became central to the Indo-

Pacific framework. However Trump's transactional approach also highlighted the limits of partnership. Trade disputes, immigration restrictions, and abrupt policy reversals underscored the conditional nature of U.S. engagement. India responded with calibrated cooperation deepening ties where interests converged while avoiding overdependence or ideological alignment. This approach reflected the essence of Non-Alignment 2.0: partnership without permanence and alignment without subordination. India engaged the United States as a strategic partner; not as an anchor of its foreign policy.

Managing Contradictions: India between Putin and Trump

Maintaining relations with both Putin and Trump required diplomatic dexterity. Russia and the United States represent competing visions of global order; yet India avoided being drawn into binary choices. Instead it pursued a multi-vector foreign policy, engaging diverse platforms such as BRICS and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation alongside Russia while strengthening cooperation through the Quad and bilateral mechanisms with the United States. This strategy is often criticized as opportunistic but it is better understood as adaptive realism in a multipolar world. India does not seek ideological consistency; it seeks strategic space. By refusing to choose sides, India positions itself as an independent actor rather than a subordinate ally. Such autonomy enhances India's global relevance. In an era of polarization, states capable of engaging across divides gain diplomatic leverage and strategic credibility.

Non-Alignment 2.0: Theory and Practice

Non-Alignment 2.0 is best understood through the lens of realism and multipolarity. Realism emphasizes state interest, power and survival while multipolarity recognizes the diffusion of power away from any single hegemon. India's foreign policy reflects both traditions. Unlike classical non-alignment, which sought distance, Non-Alignment 2.0 emphasizes engagement without entanglement. It accepts that global politics is competitive and often coercive, requiring flexibility rather than moral rigidity. India's engagement with Putin and Trump demonstrates that strategic autonomy is not passive neutrality but active choice. It allows India to cooperate widely while preserving the freedom to recalibrate as circumstances change. Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump represent distinct disruptions to the contemporary international order. India's engagement with both leaders highlights a foreign policy that is pragmatic, flexible and rooted in strategic autonomy. This is not non-alignment as withdrawal, but non-alignment as agency.

In an increasingly polarized world, India's Non-Alignment 2.0 demonstrates that influence does not require permanent alliances. By choosing engagement over alignment and interest over ideology, India asserts itself as an independent pole in a multipolar system capable of navigating contradictions without surrendering sovereignty.

