

RESTRUCTURING OF SKILL INDIA PROGRAMME

The Skill India Programme, launched in 2015 by the Government of India, has played a significant role in addressing the skill gap and empowering the youth by providing them with vocational training. With India's vast and diverse population, a focus on skill development is crucial for fostering economic growth, reducing unemployment, and ensuring that the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to meet industry demands. However, as the needs of the workforce and the economy evolve, it has become clear that the Skill India Programme must undergo restructuring to keep pace with the changing landscape of employment and industry trends.

The restructuring of the Skill India Programme is essential to enhance its effectiveness and increase its relevance in today's rapidly changing world. The key areas for restructuring should include improved training quality, increased industry partnerships, a stronger focus on digital skills, regional tailoring of programs, and better monitoring and assessment mechanisms.

One of the central aspects of the Skill India Programme's restructuring should be a renewed emphasis on offering training that is closely aligned with the current needs of industries. To address this, there should be a collaborative approach between the government, industry bodies, and educational institutions to identify emerging sectors and the specific skills required. By focusing on high-demand areas such as artificial intelligence, data science, renewable energy, and healthcare, the program can ensure that trainees are equipped with the competencies needed by employers. Additionally, integrating apprenticeships and internships into skill training will help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world industry needs.

The advent of digital technologies has transformed industries across the world, and India is no exception. The restructuring of Skill India should incorporate a stronger focus on digital literacy and specialized digital skills, ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the future.

Participatory Rural Communication

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Development is neither a simple nor straightforward linear process. It is a multi-dimensional exercise that seeks to transform society by addressing the entire complex of interwoven strands and living impulses. Rural development as in general terms is articulated by academicians, politicians and the UN bodies as an institute or an enabling force that works for the improvement, development and betterment of life of the rural people. We all are aware that India lives in villages and the country can prosper only when its villages prosper. In order to eradicate centuries old backwardness, illiteracy and poverty and to change the attitude of the people, several strategies are formulated, implemented, revised and rejuvenated. As far as rural development is concerned two approaches are discernible-one focussing on overall development and another concentrating on eradication of poverty. Various rural development programmes showed positive results and made a dent in poverty. Over the years the incidence of poverty has shown a declining trend. Devolution of power through Panchayati Raj Institutions after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment too has changed the rural scene but not to the desired extent. For that purpose, all the rural programmes, though considered landmark events are showing low potential for a sustained employment generation and insufficient impact on social development. The reason for this could be absence of effective convergence of these approaches that hampers full utilization of resources. Discussions of experts on rural development who are from both government and non-governmental agencies, it has been observed that it is necessary to have large scale participation of people at local level. Other points need to be focussed are-integration of various programmes and their implementation through convergence approach, need based location specific and demand driven projects, plugging leakages resulting in effective delivery mechanism and to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions with adequate financial and administrative powers. There is need to generate an awareness for people participation in various programmes. In this area all means of communication

need to be geared up but only after assessing which medium, where, with what effect and what kind of media mix be there and for what purpose. There is a need of media planning and proper communication strategy.

Information plays an important role in national development at every step. The Five Year Plans recognised the importance of communication from very first plan. It is said that information should reach people in their local dialect for their development. The communication support is needed to serve the specific sectors of economy. The development process focuses on development of human beings. Thus the people cooperation and participation need to be emphasised. The primary objective of development is to satisfy the essential needs of the people starting from the most disadvantaged groups of the society. The development process must be related with the cultural and ecological environment of the people. The well-known scientist of mass communication namely Dr. Wilbur Schramm, headed a team of experts who were invited by the Government of India in 1963 to get advise on development of information infrastructure in India. Dr. Schramm revised his view of trickle-down theory in which the information flows from top to bottom. Now it has been emphasised that communication should take place from the lower level to be effective.

The role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and particularly the internet, are transforming all human activities dependent on information including rural development and food security. ICTs can build and integrate the capacities of other media. This enables low-cost creation, access and distribution of information which requires a network rather than centralized approach. Languages, culture, socio-economic conditions of people and infrastructure should be taken into consideration while designing ICTs strategies. The emphasis is given on moving away from centrally maintained reservoirs of information towards distributed systems which link information resources from a variety of providers. In this modern age of electronic media, the cultural values of traditional media must not be disregarded. If we are to properly communicate in rural communities, we must learn

more about those communities traditional communication channels as well. Communication and information strategy must be supported by research and periodic appraisal. In order to make research more meaningful and participatory, a new approach for research and design of communication for development strategies and programmes was evolved by Sustainable Development Department of Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) which is known as Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA). This approach starts with the people. It views communication as an interactive process characterized by exchange of ideas, information, points of view and experiences among the persons. Communication is a two way process and all the people involved are important sources. In the sectors like education, health, agriculture, food, environment and infrastructure various development programmes and schemes are formulated to help villagers. Various ministries like rural, health and women and child care have a good network. This should be geared up for dissemination of information.

The new, on-going and structurally revised programmes need constant information flow. The information should reach in time to the beneficiaries of the programmes. Awareness, trainings and workshops etc. are needed for the beneficiaries. Mass media like radio, television, radio and print media information should reach to the people. The mass media information should also reach to below poverty line groups. Keeping in mind the illiteracy, inter-personal communication should be stressed by the extension workers. Panchayats can serve as the most effective information providers. So efforts should be made to reach information to Panchayats in their local language. Decentralised and village-level planning should lead to exploration of the potentialities of local communication networks. Communication should not be treated as a separate component. It should be integrated with the programme itself. Information through mass media certainly has wide reach.

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Empowerment of Women

■ ISHER SINGH JASROTIA

India is the largest democracy in the world, second to America wherein the basic features are enshrined in the preamble of our constitution - social justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, reflected in our constitution. These features are defeated when we are witnessing increasing crimes against women who are victimized to various atrocities, physical as well as mental torture, economic and sexual harassment, dowry death, infanticide.

If these multifarious crimes and victimization of women commensuration with innumerable other impediments, are not averted, these will continue to endanger and damage the society to a larger extent.

We cannot forget the atrocity meted out with the girl on 16th of December 2012 regarding the rape with that 23 years girl.

When we are talk of India which is the largest democracy, developing its economy at a very rapid rate, reality of the philosophy of our Constitution is otherwise. Peace and tranquility cannot take place due to the different religions, castes, cultures, traditions, regional disparities, until there is equal right of the women.

There have been constant controversial issues and challenging considerations before the society, regarding the Status of Women, growing terrorist activities and allied coinciding problems.

Social Justice - as a fundamental might in the comprehensive form in fact, is an important factor to determine and removal of social imbalance by law harmonizing the interest of different sections of society, way to built up a "Welfare State". Reality is that women are mothers, sisters, daughters and their counterpart in-laws-all are human being forming part of our society. From the days our society came into existence, the women continued to be treated not-equal due to numerous constraints,



cultural traditions, ethos, and inhuman treatments and vice versa.

On the other hand in the recent years, the women have played tremendous role to make the society on the path of civilized society, may it be education, industry, banking, Government/private undertaking or defence forces.

In the olden days, when there was little awareness of the society, the liberty of the women was confined to the four-wall of the houses and they were even sacrificed when the tradition of Sati was in prevalent. With the change of time, our social reformers like Keshab Chandra Sen, Dhondo Keshav Karve, Ramakrishna Paramahan, Saralabala Devi Chowdhari, Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and similar other reformers who had the visionary vision of plight of women, enlightened and awakened our society.

Similarly since our constitution was formed and the education was considered as the main factor for transformation of the society, women got the opportunities to excel their potentials in every field.

Women are now taking active part

in every field - may it be political, defense, security forces, education, industry or any other fields. To cite few examples, late Mrs. Indira Gandhi, our Ist Woman Prime Minister - a courageous, brave, bold lady, who had the passion for peace, Krishna Mehta - our Ist Woman M.P from Jammu & Kashmir state who had the vision of social transformation, Kiran Desai, a noted writer and youngest woman awarded Britain Highest literary award, Kiran Bedi, the IPS, Pratibha Patel, our Ist Women President and similar others who had been chief Ministers or Member of Parliament.

If the aims and objectives of social justice are to be achieved through liberty, equality and fraternity, essential reflected in the preamble of our constitution, crimes against the women have to be stopped by enforcing stringent measures and law. To establish a socialistic society (Welfare society) and civilized society, there is to be enjoyment of liberty, respect and dignity to all including women - ideal of living a peaceful life through freedom of speech, thoughts, expression, fellow feeling, brotherhood which can lead towards a modern civilization and socio-economic development. It is

firm conviction and admitted fact that the education is an important and paramount factors which can save our society from extinction, degradations deterioration.

Under Article 15, Prohibition of determination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, it has been held that s497 of IPC which say that in an offence of adultery though the man is punishable for adultery, the woman is not punishable as an abettor, is not unconstitutional, because such immunity is necessary for the protection of woman in view of their existing position in Indian society.

There have been debates and discussions for the cause of women, growing harassment and domestic violence. From time to time, government is proposing formulation of commissions and setting up of organizations for the redressed of women's victimization but no stringent steps have so far been taken for enforcement of such law which could prohibit unwanted happening in future.

In the context of sustained and substantial technological development, political awakening and consistency in the global environment, it is imperative that our society is brought up to the fashion of modern civilization by educating our new generation & enforcing stringent law.

Unless concrete and vigorous legislation as also demanded by the public in large, is not formulated and enforced, this trend of women victimization, crimes and harassment will continue to exist.

Some of the result oriented measures in view of essentials of principles of our society and culture which can be taken, are by educating the masses by launching various cultural, social-welfare programs in the educational institutions and colleges making the public and youngsters aware of the problems of the women, enforcement of vigorous and stringent legislation.

Union Budget 2025-26: A Boost To The Textile Sector

■ GIRIRAJ SINGH

Indian apparel & textile industry with a size of about US \$ 176 billion, contributes close to 2 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product and accounts for about 11 per cent of the manufacturing output. The textile industry is also one of the largest sources of employment generation in the country directly employing over 45 million textile workers. India is the sixth largest exporter of textiles and apparels and has a share of about 4 percent of the global trade in this segment. The share of textile and apparel (T&A) including handicrafts in India's total merchandise exports is currently about 8 percent. The sector has perfect alignment with Government's key initiatives like Make in India, Skill India, Women Empowerment and Rural Youth Employment.

The Budget announced an outlay of Rs. 5,272 crores for the Ministry of Textiles for 2025-26. This was an increase of about 19 percent over budget estimates of 2024-25 (Rs. 4417.03 crore), and is the highest in recent years. Budget for the Production Linked Investment Scheme for Textiles has been enhanced from Rs.45 crore (BID) in 2024-25 to Rs.1148 crore this year. Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for textiles is being implemented to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities and enhancing exports with an approved financial outlay of Rs 10,683 crore over a five year period. It covers sunrise sectors like the Manmade made Fibre (MMF), MMF apparel and Technical textiles segment, to enable these sectors to achieve size and scale, to become globally competitive.

Union Budget 2025-26 has announced a'Mission for Cotton Productivity'. This 5-year mission will facilitate significant improvements in productivity and sustainability of cotton farming, and promote extra-long staple cotton varieties. This mission would be jointly implemented by Ministry of Agriculture & Family Welfare (MoA&FW) and Ministry of Textiles.

National Technical Textiles Mission of Ministry of Textiles focuses on (i) research, innovation and development, (ii) promotion and market development (iii) education and skilling and (iv) export promotion in technical textiles. The Budget has added two more types of shuttle-less looms to the list of fully exempted textile machinery. Duty on Shuttle less loom Rapier Looms (below 650 meters per minute) and Shuttle less loom Air jet Looms (below 1000 meters per minute) for use in

textile industry has been made nil from the existing 7.5%. Budget announcement to increase Basic Custom Duty rate on knitted fabrics covered by nine tariff lines from "10% or 20%" to "20% or Rs.115 per kg, whichever is higher" will fortify the domestic textile industry by curbing the influx of low-priced imports of knitted fabrics. This measure will encourage the use of domestically produced fabrics, boost capacity utilization, and stimulate investments in local manufacturing. The budget has identified MSMEs as one of the engines, for bringing about transformative reforms in the economy. This gains importance for the textile sector; given that majority of India's textile and apparel production capacity is represented by MSMEs, which account for over 80% of the sector. Provisions like revision in classification criteria for the MSMEs with significant enhancement of credit availability with guarantee cover would help them achieve higher efficiencies of scale, technological upgradation and better access to capital. With the revised classification, now more units will come under MSME.

To further the above agenda, and to give a fillip to the Indian textile industry, a mega event - Bharat Tex 2025, is being organized by 11 major textile industry bodies and supported by the Ministry of Textiles. Bharat Tex 2025 would be one of the largest of events of its kind in the world both in scale and scope, as it brings the entire textile industry value chain, from raw materials to finished products and including accessories under one single roof. Built around the twin themes of resilient global value chains and textile sustainability -the event focuses on sustainability, innovation, and global collaboration. The main event will be held from February 14-17, 2025 at the Bharat Mandapam and will cover the entire value chain of textiles from raw materials to finished products, while related exhibitions such as accessories, garment machinery, dyes and chemicals and handicrafts, will be held from February 12 to 15, 2025 at the India Expo Centre and Mart Greater Noida. With the enabling policy support in place, efforts would be needed to be further energized to make India Atmanirbhar in the entire raw material value chain, tap more investments, augment its domestic market size and exports, and maintain and enhance its potential for ensuring large-scale livelihood opportunities.

(The writer is Minister for Textiles)

Mockery of Dogri Language by Akashvani Jammu Will Dogra's tolerate this

■ MOHD. YASEEN

The Dogri language, an integral part of India linguistic and cultural heritage, has long been a symbol of the Dogra community's rich traditions. Recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, Dogri deserves institutional support and ethical stewardship to ensure its rightful representation in media and governance. However, recent revelations regarding the recruitment process for the Editorial Executive/Newsreader cum Translator (Dogri) positions at the Regional News Unit (RNU) in Jammu have raised serious concerns about transparency, fairness, and the overall integrity of the selection process.

Language plays a critical role in shaping identity and preserving cultural heritage. Dogri is not merely a means of communication but an expression of the Dogra community's historical and social legacy. Given the importance of media in language preservation, it is essential that recruitment processes for language-specific positions be conducted with the highest standards of integrity, fairness, and expertise. Any deviation from this standard not only undermines institutional credibility but also endangers the status and recognition of the language itself.

In recent times, Prasar Bharati, India public broadcaster; has come under scrutiny for various recruitment-related controversies. This latest issue concerning Dogri-language positions at RNU Jammu has further deepened concerns about how regional languages are treated within the national broadcasting framework. The process should have ensured that Dogri experts played a leading role in selection, yet available evidence suggests a troubling lack of linguistic expertise among those responsible for evaluating candidates.

Mohd. Yaseen, a cultural activist and recipient of the National Scholarship and Fellowship from the Ministry of Culture, has formally raised these concerns with the higher authorities of Prasar Bharati by filing a First Appeal of RTI. His appeal highlights alarming irregularities in the recruitment process, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the selection and posing a serious threat to the

dignity of the Dogri language itself.

The written examination process first came under scrutiny when an RTI response revealed that the paper was set by Naseer Ahmed Rather, an IIS officer, with only minimal consultation from Professor Veena Gupta, a highly respected former Dogri professor. While Professor Gupta credentials are beyond question, her limited involvement raises an important concern, why were more Dogri scholars consulted in a process meant to assess proficiency in the language? The Dogri community has several renowned linguists, writers, and academics who could have contributed to a fair and comprehensive evaluation. Their absence from the process reflects an institutional disregard for linguistic expertise.

Further concerns arise from the composition of the interview panel as per the RTI reply, which included Ghulam Abbas, Director, Central Bureau of Communication, J&K, Vivek Kumar, Deputy Director (Finance), Akashvani, New Delhi, N. Gulshan Raina, Head, RNU Jammu, Sanjay Kumar Saxena, Assistant Director (TM & SO), Prasar Bharati Secretariat, New Delhi, Anil Bhat, Bureau Chief, PTI Jammu, and Jagmohan Sharma, Senior News Reader cum Translator (Dogri) at RNU (contractual employee). One of the most alarming aspects of this panel was the involvement of Jagmohan Sharma, a contractual employee, in conducting voice tests for candidates, a role that should have been handled exclusively by neutral, permanent officials. Yaseen himself recalls that his voice test was conducted by Sharma and Vijay Bajaj, another contractual employee, raising serious procedural concerns. Furthermore, during the interview process, Mohd. Yaseen was only interviewed by Mohd. Abbas and Gulshan Raina, while the other panel members did not participate. This selective involvement further raises doubts about the fairness and impartiality of the evaluation process.

The role of contractual employees in such critical decision-making processes needs to be questioned. While they play a crucial role in Prasar Bharati daily operations, their employment status makes them vulnerable to external pressures. Their involvement in

recruitment processes creates a clear conflict of interest, as their own job security depends on the very organization conducting the hiring. This compromises the objectivity and fairness of the selection process.

Beyond irregularities in the written test and interviews, the method of communicating results also raises ethical and procedural concerns. Selected candidates were informed via WhatsApp before an official announcement, leaving non-selected candidates in a state of confusion and reinforcing perceptions of favoritism. For an institution of Prasar Bharati stature, such informal communication methods damage its credibility and erode public trust. Official results should be announced through proper channels to ensure fairness and transparency.

This controversy highlights a larger systemic issue, the disregard for Dogri and other regional languages in institutional decision-making. The recruitment process should have ensured that Dogri scholars and language experts played a central role. Instead, it appears that non-experts dictated crucial aspects of the selection process, undermining the very purpose of linguistic preservation. If regional languages like Dogri are to survive and thrive, they must be treated with respect in institutional settings. The media plays a crucial role in language promotion, and any compromise in the recruitment of language professionals weakens the position of the language itself. The current controversy is not an isolated case; it is part of a larger trend where regional languages struggle for institutional recognition and fair representation.

Mohd. Yaseen's appeal is not a personal grievance but a call for systemic accountability. His concerns highlight an urgent need for a transparent review of the entire recruitment process, reassessing whether all procedural guidelines were followed. If irregularities are found, corrective measures should be taken, including a possible re-examination or re-evaluation of candidates. There is also a need for a more inclusive approach where Dogri scholars, historians, and linguists play a central role in any future recruitment or decision-making related to the language. This would ensure that

linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and journalistic integrity are upheld.

Institutional reforms are necessary to ensure that recruitment for regional language positions adheres to the highest ethical and professional standards. A dedicated committee of Dogri experts should be established to oversee all Dogri-language content and recruitment in Prasar Bharati. Such measures would prevent future controversies and ensure that Dogri gets the representation it deserves. The current issue is not just about recruitment-tâ€t it is about how India values its regional languages and whether their rightful place in governance and media is safeguarded.

Dogri is more than just a language; it carries the identity, history, and pride of the Dogra people. Any lapse in its institutional treatment is an injustice to the community that cherishes and sustains it. Prasar Bharati, as a guardian of linguistic diversity, must take this issue as an opportunity for introspection and reform. Addressing these concerns with sincerity will not only restore faith in the system but also reaffirm its commitment to protecting and promoting India's regional languages.

As efforts to bring these irregularities to light continue, the Dogra community must stand together to ensure that Dogri is treated with the respect and seriousness it deserves. Ensuring a fair and transparent recruitment process will set a precedent for other regional languages and reinforce the organization's responsibility in preserving India's linguistic diversity. This is not just about one recruitment process, it is about the dignity of Dogri and the people who speak it. The language preservation and rightful representation require collective vigilance, advocacy, and institutional commitment. By addressing these issues, Prasar Bharati has the opportunity to reinforce its role as a custodian of India's cultural richness and linguistic heritage. (It is a personal opinion of the writer)

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