

## NARI SHAKTI: COURAGE AND INSPIRATION

In a world where courage often wears a uniform, the story of a brave female army officer stands out as a shining beacon of resilience, patriotism, and unwavering commitment to duty. She is not just an officer in the armed forces; she is a role model, a trailblazer, and a true embodiment of "Nari Shakti" - the power of womanhood.

Commissioned into the Indian Army after graduating from the prestigious Officers Training Academy, her journey was never easy. Coming from a modest background, she had to overcome societal stereotypes and personal challenges to pursue her dream of serving the nation. Her determination and grit were evident from the outset, as she excelled during training, earning the respect of her peers and instructors alike.

During her service, she was posted in some of the most difficult terrains, including high-altitude regions and border areas prone to hostile activity. Her leadership qualities shone brightest during a critical counter-insurgency operation where her unit faced a sudden ambush in a volatile region. Demonstrating exceptional presence of mind, she led her troops to safety, coordinated an effective counterattack, and ensured minimal casualties. Her bravery and tactical acumen not only saved lives but also played a crucial role in the mission's success.

Apart from combat duties, she has been instrumental in empowering local communities, especially women and children, in conflict-affected regions. Through civic action programs, she promoted education, health, and skill development, fostering goodwill between the army and the civilian population. Her efforts went beyond the call of duty, showing that a soldier's strength also lies in compassion and empathy.

She has also been a vocal advocate for gender equality in the armed forces. As one of the few female officers in a combat role, she broke barriers and inspired many young women to follow in her footsteps. She strongly believes that bravery knows no gender, and through her exemplary service, she continues to challenge stereotypes that question women's roles in defence forces.

## Dont worry folks, it is just a Mock Drill

■ MOHD. YASEEN

As Operation Shield is being conducted today across India's border states adjoining Pakistan, including Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, the public is urged to remain calm, composed, and fully cooperative.

This is a mock drill only, part of a large-scale, coordinated effort to strengthen India's emergency preparedness and response systems. There is no real threat, no reason for panic-this is a planned exercise, designed to ensure that the country's defense and civil forces are ready for any future contingencies.

People in affected areas may observe a significant presence of military and paramilitary forces, emergency vehicles, medical units, and disaster management teams.

Some may witness simulated situations, sirens, controlled evacuations, or drills resembling real-life emergency scenarios. But don't worry, folks-it's a mock drill only, being carried out with full transparency and under complete administrative control.

This exercise reflects the strength of a new, confident, and prepared India. A nation that is not only ready to defend its borders but is also committed to the safety and well-being of its people through timely planning and training. Rather than waiting for a crisis to unfold, India is taking preventive steps, sharpening its responses, and integrating all levels of governance-from the

armed forces to civil administration-to work in unison.

Operation Shield involves multiple agencies, including the Indian Army, Border Security Force, local police, fire and emergency services, medical departments, disaster response teams, and civil defense volunteers.

Each of these entities is rehearsing their role in emergency scenarios, ensuring that every response is swift, coordinated, and effective if the need ever arises.

The drill also includes the participation of hospitals, schools, local bodies, and transport departments, demonstrating a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to national safety. This level of preparation is a mark of a responsible democracy-transparent, inclusive, and committed to securing the lives of its citizens.

India's border regions have long stood as sentinels of national strength, courage, and resilience.

From the snow-capped valleys of Kashmir to the deserts of Rajasthan, from the plains of Punjab to the salt marshes of Gujarat, these areas have witnessed the grit of soldiers, the discipline of citizens, and the unwavering spirit of national unity. Operation Shield adds a new layer to this legacy-an organized, peaceful exercise in national vigilance.

Such mock drills are standard practice in modern defense and disaster management protocols across the world. They serve as critical tools to assess real-time

readiness, communication flow, coordination between departments, and public responsiveness. By simulating potential emergencies, authorities can identify gaps, improve response strategies, and ultimately save lives in times of actual crises.

Importantly, today's drill sends out a powerful message-India is alert, India is prepared, and India is peaceful, but never passive. The strength of a nation lies not just in its ability to respond to a threat, but in its foresight to prepare before one arises.

To all citizens observing the activities on the ground or coming across images and videos on social media, it is essential to stay informed and responsible. Avoid spreading rumours, unverified claims, or panic-inducing messages.

The administration has already communicated clearly that this is a mock drill. Trust the process and contribute by sharing accurate information.

Public cooperation is vital for the success of such drills.

Citizens in the border areas are requested to continue their daily routines, follow instructions issued by local authorities if any, and help create an atmosphere of calm and trust. Their support is not only appreciated-it is crucial.

India's strength has always come from its unity and its collective spirit. Whether in times of celebration or challenge, the people of this country have always stood together.

Operation Shield is another occasion to

demonstrate that unity-not in response to an emergency, but in preparation for the future.

This is a moment to take pride in our institutions, our armed forces, our health workers, our local administrators, and most importantly, our people. A nation that prepares together, stays safe together.

The drill stands as a testimony to India's commitment to protect its citizens at all costs, and to constantly evolve, adapt, and improve in a changing world.

In a time when global uncertainties are rising and regional dynamics are constantly shifting, India's proactive stance through exercises like Operation Shield proves its resolve to safeguard peace through preparedness.

It also reflects a clear message-we believe in peace, but we are always ready to protect it.

Let us therefore look at today's mock drill not as an inconvenience, but as a badge of national discipline.

Let us show the world that we are a country of aware citizens who understand that rehearsals today ensure safety tomorrow.

To reiterate once more, don't worry, folks.

It's a mock drill only. A rehearsal in safety. A lesson in unity. A celebration of preparedness.

(The writer is a National Scholarship and Fellowship Holder from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India in the field of Theatre)

## WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2025: Unmasking Industry Tactics and Empowering Smokers to Quit

■ DR. SHIVAM, DR. KHUSHI, DR. SHALLI, DR. PRATEEK BHOBATE

The world observes World No Tobacco Day, drawing attention to the tobacco and nicotine industries' increasingly aggressive and dishonest marketing tactics. "Unmasking the Appeal: Exposing Industry Tactics on Tobacco and Nicotine Products," this year's topic, is a call to action for individuals, governments, and communities to identify and oppose the sophisticated strategies used to entice new users, particularly young people.

Every year on May 31, the World Health Organisation (WHO) observes World No Tobacco Day, which provides a global forum to advocate for effective tobacco use reduction policies and increase public awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco use.

**A Growing Risk Clad in Extravagance**

Tobacco smoking continues to kill approximately 8 million people annually, including 1.2 million non-smokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke, making it one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide. The popularity of modern nicotine products like e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, and heated tobacco devices has increased the risk to public health, even if traditional cigarette smoking is still a major concern. Flavoured options, social media influencers, and celebrity endorsements are used to sell these items as "safer alternatives" and attract younger consumers. According to WHO, over 3.4 billion people have watched nicotine-related content online, which is sometimes glamorised with glitzy packaging and

false claims. Health professionals caution that this is not merely promotion, but rather a conscious attempt to normalize addiction under the guise of modernity.

**India's Legal Stand: The COTPA Act**

India has implemented strong tobacco control laws through the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA). The act prohibits smoking in public places, bans direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products, mandates graphic health warnings on packaging, restricts sales to minors, and forbids sales near educational institutions.

However, experts argue that better enforcement and policy updates are urgently needed, especially to curb the rise of flavoured and electronic nicotine products that are slipping through regulatory cracks. Public health officials are calling for stricter digital marketing regulations, higher taxation on all tobacco-related products, and increased funding for cessation programs.

**The Silent Killers: Active and Passive Smoking**

Tobacco harms nearly every organ in the human body. Active smoking increases the risk of: o Lung, mouth, and throat cancers o Heart attacks and strokes o Chronic respiratory illnesses like COPD

Second-hand smoke is equally lethal, particularly for women and children. It can lead to: o Asthma and recurring respiratory infections o Cardiovascular diseases o Increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

Medical research now also links long-term exposure to tobacco smoke with complications during pregnancy, reduced immunity, and increased hospitalization rates.

**Turning the Tide: How You Can Quit**

Health experts emphasize that quitting tobacco is not only possible but also highly beneficial at any age. This year's awareness campaigns include free health checkups, school seminars, rallies, and support workshops across major Indian cities.

**For those looking to quit, small daily changes can make a big difference:**

1. Start your day with warm lemon water - helps detoxify your body
2. Eat a citrus fruit daily - oranges, amla, and sweet lime are natural detoxifiers
3. Snack smart - keep healthy options like boiled chana, almonds, or fenel seeds to curb cravings

Support is readily available. The National Quitline (1800-11-2356) offers free guidance and counselling to those ready to take the first step.

**The Road Ahead**

The message of World No Tobacco Day 2025 is clear: the fight against tobacco is far from over. By unmasking the industry's tactics and empowering individuals with the tools to quit, we move closer to a future where tobacco-related illnesses and deaths are a thing of the past.

Let us work together to protect current and future generations from the harm of tobacco and nicotine addiction.

## UNMASK THE APPEAL & BREAK THE CYCLE

■ PROF VIKAS SHARMA & KOMAL SUDAN

World No Tobacco Day is celebrated every year on May 31. It is a global effort led by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to make people more aware of how smoking is bad for them and to push for policies that will help them quit. Since its inception in 1987, this day has been an important chance for health workers, activists and the government to talk about how bad tobacco is for people's health, the environment and economies around the world. Since tobacco use is still one of the biggest preventable causes of death worldwide, this observance is an important reminder of how urgent it is to eradicate tobacco use from our lives. Globally, there are 1.3 billion tobacco users, including an estimated 37 million children aged 13-15. Over 8 million deaths are caused by tobacco use each year, of which over 7 million are directly related to tobacco use and roughly 1.3 million are caused by secondhand smoke exposure for nonsmokers. Even though the risks of tobacco use are well known, addiction to it persists especially among young people. Because tobacco contains the extremely addictive chemical nicotine, it is difficult for users to stop once they have started. Additionally, tobacco smoke contains over 7,000 toxic chemicals including known carcinogens. These substances are linked to a number of severe health issues such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Smokeless tobacco products such as chewing tobacco and snuff are linked to oral cancers, gum disease and other conditions.

Every year on World No Tobacco Day, there is a different theme that brings attention to a different part of the tobacco problem. These topics have included exposing tobacco industry practices, empowering young resistance, encouraging tobacco taxes and preserving the environment from tobacco waste. The 2025 World No Tobacco Day theme, "Unmask the Appeal" highlights the tactics employed by the tobacco and nicotine businesses to appeal to young people in particular with their dangerous products. These industries use deceptive product designs, sweet and alluring tastes and marketing to make tobacco and nicotine use seem safe and desirable. This deliberate strategy hides the unpleasant realities of addiction and health harm, making it simpler for people especially teenagers to begin using these drugs and far more difficult to stop. The 2025 campaign encourages governments, groups and individuals to push for stricter rules that remove the appeal of tobacco and nicotine products by exposing these misleading practices and pointing out the marketing playbook of these businesses. The goal is to keep present and future generations from being duped into a lifetime of addiction, as well as to prevent tobacco use from becoming normal. This year's theme is



a strong call to action: demand responsibility, stand together and reject the lies. No more tricks. No more traps. It's time to unmask the truth and break the cycle.

In addition to being harmful to human health, tobacco usage is also a serious environmental hazard. The entire lifecycle of tobacco from cultivation to manufacturing to waste contributes to deforestation, soil degradation, water pollution and massive amounts of litter, particularly cigarette butts, which are the most discarded waste item globally. Economically, the burden of tobacco is enormous. Health care costs associated with treating tobacco-related illnesses are staggering and productivity losses from premature deaths and diseases strain both families and national economies. According to WHO, the global economic cost of smoking alone amounts to over \$1.4 trillion annually in health expenditures and lost productivity. Despite these challenges, significant progress has been made in tobacco control over the past few decades. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), adopted in 2003, was the first international treaty negotiated under the authority of WHO. It provides a comprehensive legal framework for countries to implement tobacco control measures, including banning tobacco advertising, promoting smoke-

free environments, placing health warnings on packaging and increasing tobacco taxes.

Education and public awareness campaigns are essential for assisting people in quitting smoking. On World No Tobacco Day, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and health organisations hold campaigns, demonstrations, public service announcements and educational programs to teach people about the risks of tobacco use and encourage them to stop. Schools and colleges engage students through contests, seminars and pledge drives helping to build a generation that understands the risks of tobacco and chooses healthier alternatives. In conclusion, World No Tobacco Day is more than just a date on the calendar, it's a powerful reminder of why we need to keep fighting against tobacco use. With millions of lives at stake, the observance urges for global cooperation in combating the tobacco industry's influence and supporting robust public health policies. This year's theme urges us all to see through the tricks of the tobacco industry and make smarter choices. So, let's stand united, raise our voices and keep pushing for a tobacco-free world where health and truth win over addiction and marketing lies.

(The authors are from the Division of Biochemistry, FBSc, SKUAST-Jammu)

## Architects of Hindi Journalism

■ ER. PRABHAT KISHORE

'Udant Martand' was the first Hindi weekly paper; which was published on 30th May 1826 from Kolkata. Yugal Kishore Shukla single-handedly carried out the work of publishing this first paper of Hindi in a resourceless state for the benefit of Indians.

Born in Kanpur in the year 1788, Shuklaji was the Proceeding Reader in Diwani Kacheri of Kolkata and published 'Udant Martand' for the Hindi loving people. Then its price was two rupees per annum. Looking at the news and other materials published in the paper; it appears that the foundation of journalism in those days was laid on struggle, sacrifice and fearlessness.

Apart from domestic, foreign and local news, comments and articles on humor and satire were also published. It contained the appointment of government officials, fortnightly letters, time of arrival and departure of ships and the market rates of Kolkata. He was confident that this newspaper would get the full support of the government and the public and would continue its journey uninterrupted. But his hope was not fulfilled. As a result, due to his limited resources and meager capital, he had to close down the paper after one and a half years with its last issue of December 4, 1827.

Even after the closure of 'Udant Martand', the spirit of journalism continued to strike in Shuklaji's heart. As a result, in 1850, after collecting some money, he started the publication of another paper named 'Shamyadant Martand'. This was a shining symbol of Shuklaji's vibrant journalism. But misfortunes follow him again and due to lack of capital, it has to be closed after two years. It was the courage of Shuklaji's hard-working personality that he took the initiative to publish the Hindi newspaper without any kind of government assistance. The self-respecting nature of Shuklaji was never acceptable to bow down to the British bureaucracy. This remarkable man, who single-handedly inaugurated the door of Hindi journalism, died in 1853 in Kolkata. The first two decades of 20th century is famous as the 'Dwivedi Yug' in the history of Hindi journalism. Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, the promoter of literary and cultural journalism, took the editorship of 'Saraswati' in 1903 and continued to edit it till 1920. In this period he gave new direction and dimension to journalism, due to which this period is termed as 'Dwivedi Yug'. The publication of 'Saraswati' started from the Indian Press, Prayagin January 1900. Initially, its editorial board consisted of Babu Kartik Prasad Khatri, Kishori Lal Goswami, Babu Jagannath Prasad Das B.A., Babu Radhakrishna Das and Babu Shyam Sundar Das BA. There were essays on 59 subjects in the first issue of 'Saraswati'. The last lines

of its editorial are worth praising: - "Due to the immense compassion of the Supreme Karunik Almighty Jagdishwar such a unique opportunity has been received that today we are excited with new enthusiasm in the service of the spiritual people of Hindi and have come with a new gift whose Name is Saraswati. In the issue of 'Saraswati', an essay by Babu Radhakrishna Das was related to Bharatendu Harishchandra. Unnayak Prasad Vajpayee, the exclusive of modern journalism, has written in relation to 'Saraswati' in the history of newspapers: - 'In 1900, the President of Indian Press of Prayag, Babu Chintamani Ghosh published 'Saraswati'. In those days a message printed on 'Saraswati' was as - 'Kashi Nagari Pracharani Sabha Dwara Anumodit'. 'This meant that Saraswati had the support of the Sabha. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi used to send articles and poems in 'Saraswati' even from his service period as Telegraph Inspector in GIP Railway in Jhansi (probably 1901 or 1902). In the year 1903, when he became the editor of 'Saraswati', the line 'Kashi Nagari Pracharani Sabha Dwara Anumodit' was removed from the paper.

During the editorship of Dwivedi, 'Saraswati' made great progress and in the Hindi world, his essays became fierce. He became a source of inspiration for Hindi writers and journalists. He wrote many comments in Saraswati on the ability to edit and the education system of editorial arts. In the year 1907, with the efforts of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya, one of the propagator of Indian journalism, the publication of a Hindi weekly named 'Sahitya' was started from Prayag. Initially Malaviyaji himself was its editor; but when he became more busy in public works, Rajarshi Purushotam Das Tandon took over its editorship. During the First World War it was briefly converted to a daily, which was again made a weekly. Around 1907, 'Hind Keshri' came out from Nagpur in the editorship of Madhav Rao Sapse, which contained Hindi translation of Lokmanya Tilak's writings. In the year 1909 Tilak and Sapse were tried for sedition, but surprisingly Sapse apologized. Unhappy with this happening, the publication of Hind Keshri was stopped. Many Hindi papers came out during the First World War (1914-1918), but most of them were discontinued after the end of the war. Only 'Vishwanitra' which came out from Kolkata in 1915 with the effort of Shri Moolchand Agrawal, is still being published today. It was also published from Mumbai, Delhi and Patliputra, but later it was closed. In contemporary or later dates, literary journalists like Baburao Vishnu Paradkar, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Bharatendu Harishchandra and others gave a new direction to journalism with their writings.

(The author is a technocrat & educationist)