

DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMACY

In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, dialogue and diplomacy stand as the most effective and humane pathways to resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation, and ensuring long-term peace. History is replete with examples where violence and aggression have only deepened divides and caused irreparable damage. In contrast, open channels of communication, mutual respect, and patient negotiation have led to breakthroughs even in the most difficult of situations. Dialogue allows opposing sides to voice their concerns, understand each other's perspectives, and search for common ground. It builds trust, reduces misunderstandings, and helps de-escalate tensions before they spiral into conflict. Whether it is between nations, communities, or individuals, a sincere and sustained dialogue is often the first step toward reconciliation and resolution. Diplomacy complements dialogue by offering a structured, respectful, and principled approach to managing differences. Through diplomacy, countries can establish bilateral and multilateral relationships that foster economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and political stability. It enables states to work together on global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, pandemics, and migration. Skilled diplomats play a crucial role in bridging divides, offering creative solutions, and keeping discussions alive even when progress seems impossible. The ongoing global crises - from geopolitical tensions to internal political unrest - highlight the urgency of choosing diplomacy over confrontation. Military interventions and economic sanctions may offer temporary leverage, but they often result in long-term instability and suffering. In contrast, diplomatic efforts, though slower and more complex, aim for sustainable outcomes that benefit all parties involved. Moreover, in our digital age, misinformation spreads quickly, fuelling hatred and polarisation. Here again, dialogue becomes essential - not just among governments, but within civil society, media, and educational institutions. Creating spaces for honest conversations, promoting empathy, and encouraging critical thinking are vital to preserving social harmony.

Dialogue and diplomacy are not signs of weakness, but of wisdom and strength. They require courage, patience that are essential for leadership in the 21st century.

A Decade of Dharma: Cultural Renaissance in the Modi Era

GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT



In January 2024, as the sun rose over the holy city of Ayodhya, a prayer whispered for centuries finally found its voice. The Pran Pratishtha of Shri Ram in his Ram Mandir was not just a religious milestone-it was a moment of civilizational redemption. After centuries of invasion, colonial distortion, and political delay, the temple stood tall-etched in sandstone, echoing with mantras, and pulsing with history. It wasn't just about architecture; it was about the healing of a wounded soul. The return of Shri Ram to his birthplace rekindled the spirit of a nation that had long carried the silence of exile in its heart.

A few months prior, another symbol of India's ancient spirit quietly returned to its rightful place. During the inauguration of the new Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi installed the Sengol-a sacred scepter presented to Jawaharlal Nehru in 1947 by Tamil Adheenams to mark the dharmic transfer of power. For decades, it had been forgotten, mislabeled, and dismissed as a walking stick. Its restoration was not just an act of remembrance-it was a powerful declaration that India would no longer view itself through borrowed eyes. The Sengol represented rule anchored in righteousness, not relics of empire-a decisive embrace of India's own statecraft and spiritual traditions, long overlooked in a post-colonial order.

Together, these moments signaled a deeper cultural resurgence-a civilizational stirring that would unfold across eleven transformative years.

From the outset in 2014, it was clear that under the Modi Government, culture would no longer be ornamental-it would be foundational. International Yoga Day, first observed in 2015, saw millions across the globe celebrate an ancient Indian practice that fuses body, mind, and spirit. Yoga was not just a wellness routine-it became India's greatest cultural export of the past few years.

Revival of traditional knowledge systems was given institutional force through the Ministry of AYUSH, which elevated Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy to national and global platforms. In parallel, the government launched missions to preserve classical languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Pali and Prakrit promote the digitization of manuscripts, and support endangered folk arts and crafts under schemes like USTTAD and Hamari Dharohar.

India's monuments too began to breathe with renewed vitality. The unveiling of the Statue of Unity in 2018 was not just about scale-it was about reclaiming narrative. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, long overshadowed, was placed at the forefront of national memory. The renaming of Rajpath to Kartavya Path symbolized a decisive shift from colonial symbolism to native accountability.

Perhaps no diplomatic engagement illustrated this shift better than the 2019 informal summit between PM Modi and Chinese

President Xi Jinping in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu. Far from the corridors of Delhi, the ancient port city-once a thriving center of the Pallava dynasty and Indo-Chinese maritime links-became the backdrop for a conversation between two civilizations. As the leaders walked amid rock-cut temples and stone chariots, India presented not just geography, but history; not just protocol, but legacy. It was soft power at its subtlest and strongest.

This cultural ethos flowed into India's global diplomacy in other ways too. PM Modi's state gifts to world leaders-ranging from Pattachitra paintings to lacquered toys for children-carried with them stories of India's artisans and timeless traditions.

The G-20 presidency in 2023 was another cultural milestone. Far from being confined to Delhi's diplomatic halls, the summit became a pan-India celebration of cultural identity. From tribal art displays to classical performances, India showcased not just its policy depth, but its soul. Every delegation was immersed in the colors, cuisine, crafts, and consciousness of Bharat. The message was clear: India is not a civilisation in past tense-it is alive, dynamic, and confidently global. During these years, over 600 stolen artefacts-including idols, sculptures, and manuscripts-were brought back from foreign museums and collectors. Each return was a restoration not just of art, but of honour. Similarly, Veer Bal Diwas was instituted to remember the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's sons, while Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas brought tribal freedom fighters into national focus.

Even the pandemic did not dim the cultural flame. Through virtual concerts, digital museum tours, and "Mann Ki Baat", the Prime Minister ensured that art, stories, and cultural pride continued to thrive within the solitude of lockdowns.

All of this converged into the campaign slogan: "Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi"-a call that economic growth must walk hand in hand with cultural pride. Under the Modi Government, this slogan wasn't mere rhetoric. It defined a new vision where GDP growth, digital infrastructure, and defense modernization were inseparable from temple restoration, tribal pride, and civilizational storytelling.

India today no longer tiptoes around its identity. It strides forward-unapologetically rooted and confidently modern. Cultural nationalism, once dismissed as regressive, has emerged as the binding force of progress. In the BJP's ideological compass, culture is not an accessory-it is the axis.

In these eleven years, the Modi era has not merely overseen a cultural policy-it has awakened a cultural consciousness. What began as restoration became resurgence. And what was once neglected as nostalgia has now become the nucleus of national identity.

The Ram Mandir and the Sengol will remain iconic symbols, but the deeper legacy lies in the collective realization that India's future is brightest when it remembers where it came from. We are not just a country with a long history-we are a living civilization with a long memory. And in that memory, under the watch of dharma, India has found its voice again.

(The writer is Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India)

Towards a Greener Future: Status of Organic Farming and SKUAST-Jammu's contribution

PROF. (DR.) PARSHANT BAKSHI

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, blessed with diverse agro-climatic conditions, holds immense potential for Organic and Natural Farming. Growing awareness about health, sustainability, and environmental conservation has led to a gradual shift among farmers and consumers towards chemical-free agricultural practices. In the Jammu region, organic and natural farming is emerging as a promising avenue for sustainable development, improved soil health, and enhanced livelihood security for small and marginal farmers.

Status of Organic and Natural Farming in Jammu Region

Jammu region's predominantly rain-fed agriculture, traditional cropping systems, and low baseline use of synthetic inputs make it ideally suited for organic conversion. Over the past few years:

► **Area under organic cultivation is expanding:** Encouraged by government schemes like Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCNDR), and initiatives under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) of J&K.

► **Farmers are adopting natural farming techniques:** Practices like use of cow dung and urine-based formulations (e.g., Jeevamrit, Beejamrit), mulching, crop rotation, and biological pest control are gaining popularity.

► **Demand for organic produce is rising:** Health-conscious consumers in urban centers of Jammu, Kathua, and Udhampur are showing interest in



chemical-free fruits, vegetables, pulses, and cereals.

► **Certification and marketing remain challenges:** While interest is growing, there is a need for robust certification mechanisms, market linkages, and value chain development to ensure fair returns to farmers.

► **Role of Centre for Organic and Natural Farming, SKUAST-Jammu**
Recognizing the significance of organic and natural farming, Sher-e-Kashmir

University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu) established the Centre for Organic and Natural Farming at Chatha campus. This Centre has been playing a pivotal role in promoting and institutionalizing organic agriculture in the region. Its major contributions include:

► **Capacity Building and Awareness Generation**
The Centre regularly conducts train-

ings, workshops, and field demonstrations for farmers, extension workers, and entrepreneurs. It disseminates knowledge on preparation and application of organic inputs, pest management through natural means, and post-harvest handling of organic produce.

► **Development of Infrastructure**
The installation of a bio-fertilizer production unit under HADP's Project 16 on Alternate Agriculture System for Sustainability is a significant milestone.

This unit will cater to the need for quality organic inputs for farmers in the region.

The Centre has established model organic farms to showcase best practices in natural and organic farming.

► **Research and Technology Development**

Scientists at the Centre are engaged in research on region-specific organic packages for fruit crops, vegetables, pulses, and cereals.

Studies are being carried out on soil health improvement, organic nutrient management, and biological pest suppression under organic systems.

► Policy and Advisory Support

The Centre provides expert inputs for state-level policy formulation on organic and natural farming. It works closely with line departments, NGOs, and farmers' organizations to create a supportive ecosystem for organic agriculture.

► Promoting Market Linkages

Efforts are underway to facilitate certification processes and connect farmers to organic markets, thereby improving the economic viability of organic farming.

Way Forward

The Jammu region is on the verge of an organic transformation, driven by increasing awareness, ecological necessity, and institutional support from SKUAST-Jammu's Centre for Organic and Natural Farming. Going forward, scaling up these efforts requires:

► Strengthening of farmer producer organizations (FPOs) dedicated to organic produce.

► Streamlined certification and branding of Jammu's organic products.

► Development of value chains and organic clusters.

► Enhanced convergence of research, extension, and market initiatives.

The Centre for Organic and Natural Farming will continue to serve as a hub of innovation and capacity building, guiding the region towards a sustainable and resilient farming future.

(The author is Head, Centre for Organic and Natural Farming, Chatha, SKUAST-Jammu)

Enhancing Farmers' Income through Value-Addition in Agriculture

DR. BANARSI LAL

Agriculture forms the foundation of the Indian economy, offering sustenance and employment to a large section of population. Despite its vital role, the agricultural sector faces ongoing challenges that adversely affect the financial stability of the farmers. Factors such as fragmented land ownership, price fluctuations, restricted market access etc. contribute to persistently low and unstable incomes for farmers. Although there has been large industrialization in the last 60 years, agriculture still occupies the prominent place of importance. Agriculture has provided us the food security but so far it has failed to provide us the nutritional security. Value addition is the process in which for the same volume of a primary product, a high price is realized by means of processing, packing, upgrading the quality or other such means. Value addition is one of the important components of nutritional security. Sometimes farmers get less price of a particular farm produce due to its surplus production. This problem can be solved by the crop diversification which creates an opportunity to earn more money from the different crops produce. Crop diversification and value addition are the two techniques for the profit maximization and nutritional security. The most important problem now-a-days is to provide the remunerative price to the farmers for their farm produce. This problem can be solved by the value addition in different crops produce and can be marketed both inside and outside the country. This can also generate more employment for the rural people. Value added agriculture helps to increase the value of primary agricultural commodities through a particular production process. Small scales processing units, organic food processing, traditional crops production, agri-tourism and bio-fuels development are examples of various value-added projects that have supported to create new jobs in the rural areas.



Value addition in agriculture is needed for the profitability of the farmers, to empower the farmers and weaker sections of the society, to provide safe, quality and branded food to the consumers, to reduce post-harvest losses, reduction in import and increasing exports, encourage the growth of subsidiary industries, to reduce the risk of marketing, to promote the crops diversification and to increase the financial stability of the farmers. Attentiveness to consumer demands in quality, variety and packaging are important. In order to be unique and novel, new product should be attempted. The product we develop should be one of its own kinds for which crop and variability indigenous to our country should be exploited. The product should be new and unusual like black or blue rose so that no one can compete in the market. Biotechnology can be utilized for the value addition especially in horticultural crops. The product we develop should have demand in the market. The product should have high value for

low volume for ease of trading and distribution and the extracts such as spices and herbal plants can fulfill this requirement. Quality and quantity of the product should be maintained in the market. Ultimately market is the key for success of any product.

In the present era the whole world has become a single global market and there is too much competition in the market. Value addition and crops diversification has become key words in the agricultural trade. Product diversification is must for harnessing the full potential from present scenario of development. Value addition helps in the avoidance of post harvest losses, industrialization, employment generation, export, extended availability of produce, foreign exchange earnings, product diversification, easy marketing etc. Agro-processing industries can play a significant role in achieving the objective of 'doubling the farm income'. The consumption of processed foods is synchronous with the rise in incomes as income

elasticity of these foods is very high. Presently our country reached the status of 'lower middle-income' among the countries in the world and therefore, the share of processed food in the food basket of our population is bound to go up. Urbanisation, diversification of diets, globalization of diets, rising share of women in work force, nuclear families, changing policy perspectives including digitalisation and export opportunities propel growth of food processing sector. Agricultural innovations have a significant impact on agricultural performances and can be beneficial for both the producers and consumers. Processed foods were considered as rich people food for a long time and suffered heavy taxation, riddled with so many taxes including steep taxes for packaged products. This has been gradually changed with successive reduction in excise duties and state taxes to benefit farmers. Concept of cold chain was non-existent before the nineties and post-harvest losses were very high due to poor infrastructure facilities. Transport costs are relatively high leading scholars to conclude that importing from other countries is cheaper than transporting from one part of the country to another. Standards and protocols for food safety and laws for food safety were almost negligible.

Before eighties the food policy in India has mainly concentrated on increasing the production with a view to substitute imports which became a common feature during the immediate post-independence years. Before eighties the issue of processing the food did not arise as a policy question. On the other hand, the industrial policy since the second five year plan concentrated on the heavy industries required to build up the necessary infrastructure for the industrial development. Though there were some food processing industries in the organized sector, they were part of small and village industries and have no separate identity. The consistent rise in per capita incomes

and the shifting of the incomes after 1981 to a higher growth path led to the rise in middle classes, who were able to purchase the power to buy the processed foods. The growth of manufacturing industry also necessitated encouraging food processing sector. The central government, in view of these changes, has started attempts to invigorate the sector by forming a separate ministry for food processing industries in 1988. India is a late entrant into the food processing sector and international market. Though some measures are initiated after the formation of the ministry for the speedy development of the sector, it is only after the country embarked on full scale liberalization in 1991 that the food processing sector got real impetus. Several policy initiatives for freeing the licensing system, foreign investment etc., are taken during this time to encourage this sector.

The main paradox in food processing industries is the dichotomy between organised and unorganised segment in regard to output and employment. While output and value added are higher in the organised segment, unorganised segment with one-fifth of output employs three times higher employment. Food processing sector creates lot of employment in comparison to the manufacturing sector as a whole. The productivity of this sector needs improvement though studies show that there has been improvement after 2000s. There is a need to infuse more technology in both the organised and unorganised segments with liberal provision of credit. Value of land poses the biggest threat to unorganized manufacturing in general and food processing in particular and needs special attention of the policy makers. Recent initiatives like mega food parks and cold chain schemes are well conceived and showing signs of positive impact.

(The writer is Chief Scientist & Head of KVK Reasi SKUAST-J)