

## CHANGE OF GUARD

Gautam Gambhir will be India's next head coach, succeeding Rahul Dravid, who ended his tenure after overseeing India's victorious T20 World Cup 2024 campaign.

Gautam Gambhir, the former Indian cricketer and current politician, has left an indelible mark on Indian cricket and public service. Born on October 14, 1981, in Delhi, Gambhir's journey from a talented cricketer to a Member of Parliament reflects his dedication, resilience, and commitment to excellence in various spheres of life.

Gautam Gambhir's cricketing journey began in the streets and parks of Delhi, where he honed his skills and developed a passion for the game. His talent soon caught the eye of selectors, and he made his debut for Delhi in 1999 at the age of 18. Gambhir's consistent performances in domestic cricket earned him a spot in the Indian national team in 2003.

Gambhir's international career took off with notable performances in both Test and One-Day International (ODI) cricket. He was known for his solid technique, determination, and ability to anchor the innings. One of his career-defining moments came in 2007 when he played crucial innings in the final of the inaugural ICC World Twenty20, helping India clinch the title. His partnership with Virat Kohli in the final remains etched in Indian cricketing history. Throughout his career, Gambhir played pivotal roles in several historic victories for India. His memorable innings in the 2007-08 Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia, where he scored back-to-back centuries, highlighted his ability to perform under pressure. Gambhir's consistency as an opening batsman contributed significantly to India's success in both Test and ODI formats. Gambhir's crowning glory came in the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup final against Sri Lanka. Opening the innings, he played a crucial knock of 97 runs, anchoring India's chase and setting the stage for MS Dhoni's match-winning innings. His contribution was instrumental in India lifting the World Cup after 28 years, cementing his place as one of India's finest cricketers.

Beyond his batting prowess, Gambhir was known for his leadership qualities. He captained the Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) and Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), guiding the latter to two IPL titles in 2012 and 2014. Gambhir's astute captaincy and mentorship of young players underscored his commitment to nurturing talent and building successful teams.

In 2019, Gautam Gambhir ventured into politics and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He contested the Lok Sabha elections from East Delhi constituency and won with a significant margin, becoming a Member of Parliament. Gambhir has been actively involved in various social and developmental initiatives, leveraging his platform to address issues such as education, healthcare, and sports infrastructure.

Gambhir's contributions to Indian cricket and public service have earned him numerous accolades, including the Arjuna Award in 2008 for his outstanding sporting achievements. His philanthropic efforts through the Gautam Gambhir Foundation, focusing on healthcare and education for underprivileged children, reflect his commitment to social welfare.

Gautam Gambhir's journey from a talented cricketer to a dedicated parliamentarian exemplifies his multi-faceted persona. His achievements on the cricket field and in public service continue to inspire millions, highlighting his unwavering commitment to excellence and contribution to nation-building. As Gambhir continues to make strides in public life, his legacy as a champion cricketer and a dedicated leader will endure as a testament to his remarkable journey and enduring impact on Indian society.

## Book corner for children

■ VUAY GARG

We want every child to fall in love with books and reading, but sometimes young people may need a bit of help to get there. By creating a cosy, relaxing, fun reading space, you're helping children find new reasons to enjoy reading. You might have a big area or a tiny nook, but most importantly, the section of your setting allocated for books and reading will be attractive and enticing. So whether you're creating a book corner in your early years setting or for wee ones at home, these top tips will help you make the most of your space.

### Location

The term 'book corner' is used because putting books in a corner often creates a cosy space. While a corner may be the best place, it does not really matter where the book area is situated. In an ideal world, the book corner will have enough light for children to see the books and enough space for a sofa or chairs and cushions where a few children and an adult can snuggle up. It is worth considering if you want your book corner to be cosy and comfortable, away from the bustle of the nursery; or central and dynamic so that children pass the book corner many times in a session. If you want your book corner to feel magical, adding a pop-up tent or a fabric canopy will help.

### Keep your book corner tidy

We know how easy it is for book corners to get messy or for books to get knocked over in a bustling nursery. Encourage children to take ownership of the book corner by tidying the books at tidy-up time. Give a member of staff responsibility for checking that the books are in good condition and well-displayed.

### A place for everything and everything in its place

If you have any pots of funding you can access, it is worth investing in some durable, attractive shelving or boxes for storing books. These will save you time and give your book corner an identity. If you do not have a budget, you can make the book corner more exciting by displaying the books 'face on' and adding some posters and wall-stickers.

### Book corner optics

Try rotating the books you have on display if possible. You might want to have a 'Star Book' or 'Book of the Week' that is displayed prominently or that you read every day. It can also be worth putting out some small boxes or baskets with just four or five books in them so that children can pick out easily one they may like.

### Book Quality

Make sure the books on offer are in good condition and age-appropriate. Remember that it can sometimes be better to have a small number of appealing books than lots of tatty texts.

Since your book corner can be anywhere that works, you might want to consider having books in an outdoor space. Inspired by books like *The Gruffalo* or *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, your reading space could move outside into a deep, dark wood. If you have an outdoor shelter or a wooden tepee where books can be shared, then pop some books outside in plastic zippy bags.

### Choices

Ideally, there should be something for everyone in the book corner! Think about the types of books that are available in the book corner. It is important to have a range of picture books reflecting the diversity of our communities. Children need to see themselves represented in the books we share with them. This can help to build self-esteem and identity and enable children to appreciate both their own culture and the culture of others. Sharing stories that reflect and value the diversity of children's experiences can help to challenge stereotyping based on gender, race, sexuality, disability and poverty. Look at the books you have available, and ask yourself whether they reinforce or challenge certain stereotypes. Taking gender as an example, do the stories children hear tend to feature 'adventurous boys' and 'pretty princesses'? Are female characters portrayed as caring and sensitive, whilst male characters are tough? Zero Tolerance have produced a guide to auditing your book collection (this link will open in a new window) to support you in selecting books that challenge traditional stereotypes. We also have a list of picture books that challenge gender stereotypes which provides a good place to start.

(The writer is Retired Principal and educational columnist)

# Agniveer: Empowering India's Armed Forces for a Stronger Future

■ BHARATH NANDA

The Agniveer Scheme has recently been in the news, often for the wrong reasons, as debates and controversies swirl around its implementation and impact. Critics have raised concerns about various aspects of the scheme, questioning its effectiveness and long-term benefits. However, it is crucial to understand and appreciate the numerous advantages this initiative brings to the Indian Armed Forces. This article aims to delve into how the Agniveer Scheme will significantly benefit our defense forces and contribute to the nation's security and progress.

In a strategic move to bolster the capabilities and modernization of the Indian Armed Forces, the Government of India introduced the Agniveer Scheme. This initiative is poised to revolutionize the recruitment and training processes, ensuring that our defense forces remain agile, well-equipped, and ready to meet contemporary challenges.

The Agniveer Scheme aims to streamline the recruitment of young and dynamic individuals into the armed forces. By

focusing on merit-based selection and rigorous training programs, the scheme ensures that only the most capable and motivated individuals join the ranks. One of the standout features of the Agniveer Scheme is its emphasis on modern training methodologies. Recruits will undergo comprehensive training that integrates advanced technology, modern warfare tactics, and specialized skills. This will prepare them to handle a wide range of scenarios, from conventional warfare to counter-terrorism operations. Additionally, the scheme provides a clear career progression path for recruits, with opportunities for continuous learning and skill enhancement. This not only boosts the morale of the personnel but also ensures that the armed forces benefit from a pool of highly skilled and experienced soldiers.

By attracting younger recruits and equipping them with state-of-the-art training, the Agniveer Scheme significantly enhances the operational readiness of the armed forces. This is crucial in today's fast-paced and ever-evolving security environment, where quick response

times and adaptability are key. The inclusion of advanced technology in training programs means that recruits are well-versed in the latest defense technologies and systems. This technological edge is vital for maintaining superiority in various operational theaters, whether on land, sea, or air.

With a focus on merit and continuous development, the Agniveer Scheme fosters a sense of pride and dedication among the personnel. The clear pathways for career advancement also contribute to higher morale and stronger unit cohesion, which are essential for effective teamwork and mission success. The streamlined recruitment and training processes under the Agniveer Scheme reduce the time and resources needed to bring new recruits up to operational standards. This increased efficiency allows the armed forces to maintain a robust and ready force at all times.

The Agniveer Scheme is not just a boon for the armed forces but also a strategic asset for national security. By ensuring a steady influx of well-trained and motivated personnel, the scheme enhances the

overall security apparatus of the nation. This is particularly important in light of the evolving geopolitical landscape and the diverse security challenges that India faces. Furthermore, the Agniveer Scheme aligns with the government's broader vision of a self-reliant and resilient India. By fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement within the armed forces, the scheme contributes to the nation's long-term security and stability.

The Agniveer Scheme represents a significant step forward in the modernization and enhancement of the Indian Armed Forces. By prioritizing advanced training, technological integration, and career development, the scheme ensures that our defense forces remain at the forefront of national security. As India continues to navigate complex security challenges, the Agniveer Scheme stands out as a visionary initiative that will safeguard our nation's sovereignty and integrity for years to come. Jai Hind!

(The author is a Geopolitical Analyst and IT Entrepreneur based out of Jammu)

# Cooperatives for Rural Economic Empowerment

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

The Indian economy in the past, presently and in future will remain predominantly depend on rural development because very high proportion of the Indian population lives in rural areas. In 1901, 89 per cent of its total population was living in the village while in 2021 around 65 per cent still live in the rural areas. It is expected that by the turn of 21st century at least 50 per cent of population would be living in the rural areas. About two-third of India's workforce is engaged in agriculture in rural areas. Agriculture contributes around 17 per cent of India's gross domestic product. In agrarian country like India rural development is must for national development. In order to improve the quality of life of rural people, rural development is must. This requires a sustainable increase in the access of each and every individual to the basic necessities of life. Also every individual self-respect is must. The political, economic and social freedom is also must for the rural people. Development is the cherished goal of every individual, family, community and nation. Hence, it is the prime responsibility of every nation to initiate and sustain the process of development. Development is influenced by the multiple factors such as natural resources, technologies, human resources, different programmes, policies etc. The role of different institutions and organisations is well recognised for the rural development. They help in the rural development by way of provision of inputs, services, by influencing investments and savings etc. There is positive correlation between different organisations and level of rural development. In fact, all developed countries are well organised and all developing countries are either not organised or poorly organised. Lack of appropriate organizations is one of the most serious hurdles on the

pace and level of rural development in India. There is a need to design and launch appropriate organizations for the rural development in the country.

India has achieved self-sufficiency in the food grain production and milk production-the two important ingredients for the vegetarian diet. These two things have been achieved due to green revolution launched in the late sixties and white revolution launched in the early seventies. In 1950-51 the food grain production in the country was only 51 million tonnes which has increased to 329.6 million tonnes in 2022-23. Now India has emerged as the leading milk producer in the world leaving behind the United States of America. Now the per capita availability of food grains in our country is 514 gm per day. Currently the milk production in our country has increased to 230.58 million tonnes. Presently the per capita availability of milk in India is 459 ml/day. Per hectare yield rates of the major crops have also reasonably increased. Rapid urbanisation, change in food habits from consumption of food grains to milk and milk products, fruits and vegetables are new challenges to the Indian agriculture. Although India has made an impressive progress in the food grain production and milk production, the achievements in the poverty eradication and improving the life expectancy have been dismal. It has been observed that development in India is both encouraging and discouraging and there is need to enhance both. So, it is necessary to identify the determinants of development and implement them to achieve the desired level development.

There are many organizations which are working in agriculture and rural development in our country. They include public, companies, co-operatives, partnerships, charitable societies, trusts, institutions etc. All these organisations work together to cater the needs of the rural people.

# Nanhi Pari Scheme for Girl Child: A Good Initiative

■ DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH

The Nanhi Pari Programme is an initiative by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) in India aimed at improving the health and well-being of new-born girls. The programme was launched to address the issue of declining sex ratios and to ensure that female infants receive the necessary care and support right from birth and largely it includes: a. Health Check-ups: The programme focuses on providing comprehensive health check-ups for new-born girls, ensuring they receive necessary medical care and vaccinations. b. Nutritional Support: Special attention is given to the nutritional needs of female infants, including the provision of supplements and advice on proper feeding practices. c. Awareness Campaigns: The initiative includes campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and the value of the girl child in society. d. Monitoring and Follow-up: Continuous monitoring and follow-up are conducted to track the health and development of the new-born girls enrolled in the programme. e. Support for Families: The programme also extends support to families, helping them understand the significance of caring for the girl child and providing resources to do so effectively. f. Partnerships with Healthcare Facilities: The Nanhi Pari Programme collaborates with various hospitals and healthcare centres to ensure that the services are accessible to all eligible families. g. Reducing Infant Mortality: By offering targeted healthcare services to female infants, the programme seeks to reduce infant mortality rates and improve the overall health outcomes of new-born girls. h. Empowering Families: Supporting families with resources, information, and guidance to better care for their girl children, thereby fostering a more supportive environment for the development of the girl child. i. Creating a Supportive Healthcare Infrastructure: Collaborating with healthcare facilities to ensure that the necessary services are

accessible and available to all eligible families, thereby strengthening the healthcare system's ability to support newborn girls. In nutshell, the Nanhi Pari Programme aims to create a supportive environment for the girl child, promoting her health and well-being from the earliest stages of life. The primary purpose of the Nanhi Pari Programme is to address and mitigate the issues associated with gender disparity and to promote the health and well-being of new-born girls.

### Benefits of the scheme

The Nanhi Pari Programme offers numerous benefits aimed at improving the health, well-being, and social status of newborn girls and their families. Some key benefits of the programme include: a. Improved Health Outcomes: Regular health check-ups and timely immunizations help in early detection and treatment of health issues. Nutritional support ensures that girl children receive the necessary nutrients for healthy growth and development. b. Reduction in Infant Mortality: Comprehensive healthcare services reduce the risk of infant mortality among girl children by addressing preventable diseases and health conditions. c. Enhanced Awareness and Education: Awareness campaigns educate families and communities about the importance of gender equality and the value of the girl child. Increased knowledge leads to better care practices and reduced gender-based discrimination. d. Empowerment of Families: Providing resources, guidance, and support to families helps them better care for their girl children, fostering a positive and nurturing environment. Empowered families are more likely to invest in the education and well-being of their daughters. e. Supportive Healthcare Infrastructure: Collaboration with healthcare facilities ensures that necessary services are accessible and available, creating a robust support system for newborn girls. Strengthened healthcare infrastructure benefits all children, not just those enrolled in the

programme. f. Positive Social Impact: By promoting gender equality and challenging societal norms, the programme contributes to a more balanced and equitable society. Improved gender ratios can lead to long-term social and economic benefits, as empowered women are better able to contribute to their communities and the economy. g. Holistic Development: The programme addresses various aspects of a child's development, including physical, emotional, and social well-being. A holistic approach ensures that girl children grow up healthy, confident, and well-rounded. Overall, the Nanhi Pari Programme provides comprehensive support to ensure that newborn girls have a healthy and promising start in life, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society.

### Prospects of the scheme

The Nanhi Pari Programme holds significant prospects in India, given the country's ongoing challenges with gender disparity and the need for improved healthcare for female infants. Some of the potential prospects and positive impacts of the programme in India include: a. Enhanced Gender Equality: By focusing on the health and well-being of girl children, the programme can contribute to improving the gender ratio and promoting gender equality from birth. Changing societal attitudes towards girl children can lead to long-term shifts in gender norms and reduce gender-based discrimination. b. Improved Public Health: Widespread implementation of the programme can lead to better health outcomes for female infants, reducing infant mortality rates and improving overall child health. Enhanced healthcare services and regular check-ups can lead to early detection and treatment of health issues, improving the quality of life for girl children. c. Economic Benefits: Healthier girl children who receive proper nutrition and medical care are more likely to grow into healthy, educated, and productive adults, contributing to the economy.

Empowering women through better health and education can lead to

increased workforce participation and economic growth. d. Strengthened Healthcare Infrastructure: The programme's collaboration with healthcare facilities can improve the overall healthcare infrastructure, benefiting not just girl children but all children and their families. Improved healthcare services can lead to better health outcomes for the broader population. e. Social Development: Raising awareness about the value of girl children and promoting gender equality can lead to more inclusive and equitable communities. The programme can inspire other initiatives aimed at addressing gender disparities and improving child health and welfare. f. Government and Policy Support: Successful implementation of the programme can lead to increased government and policy support for similar initiatives, ensuring sustainable and long-term impact. Policy makers may be encouraged to allocate more resources towards gender equality and child health programmes. g. Community Engagement and Empowerment: The programme's focus on community awareness and education can lead to greater community engagement and collective efforts to support girl children. Empowered communities are better equipped to advocate for their rights and needs, leading to more robust social support systems. h. Replication and Scaling: Success of the Nanhi Pari Programme can serve as a model for other regions and states in India, leading to wider adoption and scaling of similar initiatives.

International recognition and support could also lead to the replication of the programme in other countries facing similar challenges.

In conclusion, the Nanhi Pari Programme has the potential to bring about significant positive changes in India by addressing gender disparities, improving child health, and fostering a more equitable society.

(The writer is a youth motivator and former Head of the University Department of Political Science, B.N. Mandal University)

