

## SELF-RELIANT INDIA

Behind any developing and super powerful country, a student has a special contribution. It is the students who create the future of the country and always work to take it in a new direction. Youth have the most important role in the economic, social and cultural progress of any country.

Students work as the backbone of a developing country. Always plays an important role in taking our society and country to new heights.

Only students can prove helpful in making India self-reliant. Every student is full of new energy and ambition. The more enthusiastic, patriotic and skilled a student is, the stronger he will be a contender for the development of a country and its progress and progress.

Every student has a rainbow of the future of his country in his eyes, which always inspires him for the progress of his country and society.

Today, a youth is behind every success of India. This success is the result of the strong will power of a youth.

To make the Self-reliant India campaign successful, the way our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inspired the youth and citizens of the country by studying closely all the important facts related to land, labour, liquidity and law, economy, infrastructure, technology, Dynamic demography and demand have called for even greater strength.

## One Nation, One Election: A Gateway to a Stronger & Progressive Democracy

■ BY NITISH MAHAJAN

The concept of 'One Nation, One Election' aims to synchronize all the elections held across India, allowing simultaneous voting for both the state legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha. It has the potential to strengthen democracy, ensure efficient governance, save valuable resources, and promote greater political stability in the country.

Currently, elections in India are held separately for the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies at different times. This results in a significant amount of resources, time, and manpower being expended in conducting elections multiple times in the span of a few years. Moreover, the constant cycle of elections tends to disrupt governance and the smooth functioning of the government.

India, being the largest democracy in the world, faces unique challenges when it comes to holding elections. With a population of over a billion people, conducting elections is no small feat. The logistics involved in ensuring a free and fair voting process, the deployment of security forces, and the management of polling stations across the country require substantial resources. Therefore, the idea of holding simultaneous elections has garnered support as a way to consolidate these efforts and streamline the electoral process.

In this regard, a committee was constituted under the former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, to explore the feasibility of "One Nation, One Election". This committee will examine the various aspects and implications of implementing this concept and present its findings to the government. If India does move forward with simultaneous elections, it will join the ranks of just three other countries in the world - Belgium, Sweden, and South Africa - that currently hold polls concurrently.

Of these countries, Sweden's approach to simultaneous elections is particularly noteworthy. Sweden conducts elections for county and municipal councils simultaneously with general elections (Riksdag elections) every four years. This practice has proven to be efficient and has contributed to a more consistent electoral process.

The benefits of implementing "One Nation, One Election" in India are significant. One of the primary advantages is the reduction in costs associated with conducting frequent elections. By holding elections simultaneously, the expenses for logistics, security, and manpower can be significantly reduced. This would free up resources that could be redirected towards developmental projects and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of citizens.

Furthermore, the frequent interruptions caused by election campaigns and code of conduct regulations hinder the government's ability to implement long-term policies and reforms. By aligning the timing of elections, the government could focus on governance and effective decision-making without constant disruptions. This would result in more stable and sustainable development in the country.

Additionally, simultaneous elections would also lead to increased voter participation. Currently, voter fatigue is a common occurrence as citizens are called to vote multiple times within a short span of a few years. By consolidating elections, citizens would be more motivated and engaged in the electoral process, leading to higher voter turnout. This would strengthen the voice of the people and foster a more representative democracy.

Critics of the "One Nation, One Election" proposal argue that it may undermine the federal nature of India's democracy. They believe that staggered elections allow for greater regional representation and give states the freedom to choose their own governments based on local issues. However, it is important to note that simultaneous elections would not infringe upon the states' autonomy. State elections would still be held, albeit in sync with the national elections, thus striking a balance between national unity and regional representation. As India moves towards becoming the third-largest economy in the world by 2027, it is imperative to re-imagine and redefine its democratic processes. The visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi has propelled the country towards progress and development. Implementing "One Nation, One Election" would be a significant step in this direction. It would not only bolster the efficiency of the democratic system but also inspire confidence in India's stability and governance on the global stage.

The concept of "One Nation, One Election" holds great potential for India's democracy. By aligning the timing of elections for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, the country can reduce costs, enhance governance, and promote greater voter participation. India has the opportunity to join the ranks of a select few countries that already hold simultaneous elections, setting an example for other nations. As India continues to progress under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi, implementing "One Nation, One Election" will serve as a gateway to a stronger and more progressive democracy.

(Co - Incharge BJP social media department JKUT).

## Building Sustainable and Peaceful Societies

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens.' These words of former president of United States, Mr. Bill Clinton back in 1994 are very apt and relevant. It has been rightly said to be the road to human progress and the means through which every man, women and child can realize his or her full potential. It is critical to economic development of a nation as well as well being of individual and community. A high literacy rate of a country gets reflected in various other human development indices. Literacy has traditionally been thought of as reading and writing, but it is more than that. What exactly is literacy? Miriam-Webster Dictionary defines literacy as 'the quality or state of being literate: educated...able to read and write.' It is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Alberta Education defines literacy as the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living. Literacy skills refer to all the skills needed for reading and writing. They include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print, and the relationship between letters and sounds. Other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension. Given the importance of literacy in creating just and fair societies, Sep. 08 every year is being celebrated as International Literacy Day all across the globe.

History of International Literacy Day (ILD): This world celebrates 'International Literacy Day' every year on September 8. This day was declared as the International Literacy Day by United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its 14th

General Conference which was held on October 26, 1966. Since 1967, International Literacy Day (ILD) celebrations have taken place annually around the world to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society.

Theme of ILD for 2023: This year the theme for this globally important day is Promoting Literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies. Literacy is central to the creation of such societies, while progress in other areas of development contributes to generating interest and motivation of people to acquire, use, and further develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The world today is focused on meeting the targets as envisaged in Sustainable Development Goals SDG 2023. This theme for the year 2023 gives us an opportunity to join efforts to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on education and lifelong learning and to reflect on the role of literacy in building more inclusive, peaceful, just, and sustainable societies. In doing so, it will embrace the reciprocal relations between literacy and other areas of development.

Literacy Rate Statistics: United Nations consider literacy as a basic human right. The global literacy rate for women is 81%, compared to 89% for men and 63% of all illiterates are female. There are still approximately 773 million people in the world who cannot read which makes one out of every seven person illiterate. Burkina Faso with a literacy rate of 12.8% is the country with the lowest literacy rate in the world. Not just developing or under-developed countries but many developed countries are also facing the problem of illiteracy. India currently has the largest population of illiterate adults in the world with 287 million. This is 37 per cent of the global total. Post independence

the country has made remarkable progress in improving the literacy rate. The Indian literacy rate has jumped from 40.76% in 1940 to 77.70% (2021 and 2022). And this weightage is achieved after a very long period of reforms and policies. At the national level, male literacy stands at 84.70%, while female literacy stands at 70.30%. According to the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5), adult women (aged 15-49) have a literacy rate of 71.5%, while adult men (aged 15-49) have a literacy rate of 87.4%. Kerala is the most literate state with a literacy rate of 96.2 per cent while Bihar is the state with lowest literacy rate. The top ten states in India in terms of education are Kerala, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Haryana and Gujarat.

Literacy and Development: Many factors contribute to the development of a Nation and literacy is the most important of them. Literacy provides a platform to the individuals for their personal development only after which they can contribute towards the development of nation. Literacy is an essential tool for the empowerment of citizens. Literacy is directly related to development. When people will be more educated they will gain more knowledge and understand best things for them. The human capital will increase as a result the GDP of that country will increase. Literacy is the foundation of community and economic development. When everyone can read, whole communities thrive.

The Corona pandemic a couple of years back further deteriorated the literacy levels all over the globe. To contain the spread of the pandemic and given the highly infectious nature of the virus, many governments were forced to shut down their educational institutions. Schools were closed down in more than 190 countries. Studies reveal that it disrupted the education of 1.27 billion children and youth. It

also affected 63 million primary and secondary teachers in about 165 countries. During Covid-19, in many countries, adult literacy programmes were absent in the initial education response plans, so the majority of adult literacy programmes that did exist were suspended with just a few courses continuing virtually, through TV and radio, or in open air spaces. But, the literacy cannot wait for anything.

The day reminds us of the importance of literacy for individuals, communities and nations and also highlights the necessary requirements to help build more literate societies around the world ILD 2023 will be celebrated at the global, regional, country and local levels across the world. At the global level, a conference will be organized in person and online on Friday, 8 September 2023, in Paris, France. This year International Literacy Day (ILD) calls upon the teachers and adult literacy educators to reflect on and discuss how innovative and effective pedagogies and teaching methodologies can be used in youth and adult literacy programmes to face the pandemic and beyond. The Day also gives us an opportunity to analyze the role of educators, as well as effective policies, systems, governance and measures that can support educators and learning. We can also contribute to beating this stigma of illiteracy from our society by involving ourselves with the organizations working for promotion of literacy, donating books to school libraries or students, facilitating enrollment of drop outs or resource poor children in schools, providing poor students with basic schooling necessities like uniform, school bags, pencil boxes, notebooks etc. Let us all commit ourselves to make literacy a bridge that leads us from misery to hope, peace and sustainability.

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## A Healthy Birthday Bash!

■ DR. ISHA GUPTA

Schools and families commonly provide traditional 'party' options such as cakes, lollies, pastry foods and soft drinks to celebrate student birthdays and special events. However, these options don't support healthy eating messages, as they are most often low in nutritional value and high in energy, saturated fat, sugar and/or salt. Try these ideas to help make classroom birthday parties and other school celebrations enjoyable for children, while reinforcing the healthy eating messages and practices being taught in the classroom.

Food ideas

The traditional candy partying in classrooms on the occasion of birthdays can lead to dental caries, the most commonly occurring dental disease in both children and adults. This can be replaced by health eating ideas for everyone which are non-

sticky and thus less cariogenic. Following are some of the ideas:

- Use of Savoury
  - ▶ Popcorn (minimal fat, salt and/or sugar added)
  - ▶ Wholegrain or wholemeal crackers
  - ▶ Platter of salad-based sandwich triangles or wraps
  - ▶ Baked potatoes with toppings (e.g. coleslaw, plain yoghurt, baked beans and reduced fat cheese)
  - ▶ Corn on the cob
  - ▶ Vegetable or meat BBQ kebabs
- Sweet Alternatives
  - These options can be offered as a healthier alternative to birthday cakes and lolly bags:
    - ▶ Sliced fruit platter (serve alone or with reduced fat yoghurt)
    - ▶ Fruit kebabs (fresh or frozen), fruit salad, fruit platters, canned fruit (in natural juice)

- ▶ Watermelon slices
- ▶ Dried fruit without added sugars or coatings snack mixes (muesli, dried fruits, nuts or popcorn). Check your school's allergy/anaphylaxis policy regarding the provision of nuts and products containing nuts.
- Drinks
  - ▶ 100% fruit juice without added sugar (serve size 250ml or less).
  - ▶ Get the students involved in making fresh juices.
  - ▶ Reduced fat plain or flavoured milk (serve size 300ml or less).
  - ▶ Fruit smoothies (made with frozen fruit, reduced fat yoghurt and milk). Serving size of 300ml or less.
  - ▶ 100% fruit juice slushes with no added sugar. Serving size of 200ml or less.
- Non-food ideas
  - Dress up
    - ▶ Birthday student can wear a special sash, crown, cape, or carries a special item

for the day.

- ▶ Invite all students to celebrate the special day by wearing a selected colour or special item (e.g. badge, funny hat, a red coloured piece of clothing, etc.).

Dance

- ▶ Have a classroom dance party or 'dance-off' competition. Let the birthday student choose their favourite song to play from a list of classroom favourites (approved by teacher first).

Watch

- ▶ Birthday student chooses favourite online video clip for class to watch (teacher to approve first).

“Wishing you a Happy Birthday with a Teethy Smile”.

(The writer is Postgraduate Scholar guided by Prof. Dr. Bhavna Kaul HOD Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry Indira Gandhi Govt. Dental College , Jammu).

## Fostering Rural Handicrafts in J&K

■ DR. BANARSI LAL & YOGAL KISHORE SHARMA

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has a rich history in the handicrafts sector. This sector has been an integral part of the culture of J&K. J&K has rich tradition of rural crafts from generations. This sector is helpful to raise the economy of J&K. J&K is known for the traditional handicrafts, embroidery, wood carving, paintings, shawls etc. The region's cultural heritage is maintained through these crafts. This sector is helpful to provide the avenues of income and employment among the artisans of J&K. Handicrafts are traditionally passed on from one generation to another generation. In J&K particular handicrafts are produced in specific areas and thus providing income and employment opportunities to the local communities. The handicrafts sector is labour intensive thus create many employment opportunities of local community and thus able to raise the socio-economic status of the people attached to this sector. This sector is totally practical and the products are crafted with hands using simple local tools. This sector from J&K has gained accolades from across the globe for the innovative designs, high quality and versatility of local handicrafts. Handicrafts have been significant contributor to the economy of Union Territory of J&K. J&K brought significant progress in the handicraft sector over a period of time. The craft persons brought innovative changes in the different handcrafted products and there is a great demand of these crafts in the market within and outside the country.

Union Territory of J&K can be considered as the hub of handicrafts. These handicrafts can reach to the users across the globe. Recently this sector has gained the boost leading to several new changes. JKRLM, KVKs, NABARD and other concerned organizations have taken innovative steps to promote this sector. They provide technical skills along with the financial assistance to the artisans. Many areas wise handicrafts development centres have been established which are helpful in the production and market the crafted products. Many artisans now use the online mode to sale their products. It helped to give a boost to this sector. The govt. support and use of new technologies helped to revive and promote this sector. This sector has the potential to uplift the economic status of the people. A multifaceted approach needs to be followed covering availability of raw material, trainings, developing infrastructure, establishing credit links, providing marketing facilities etc. to the artisans. The capacity building needs to fostered and the master artisans should be utilized to train the new generations of arti-

sans. New markets need to searched and the artisans' products need to be exhibited in different programmes such as Kisan Melas, distt. level events, national level events etc. organized by the concerned organizations. Handmade crafted material should be promoted to develop the authenticity of the products as compared to the machine made products. It will help to exhibit the regions diverse cultural heritage at the national and international level. Geographical Indication (GI) certification of different products will acknowledge the unique identity of the particular geographical regions. This initiative improves the sale and import of the handicrafts. The branding and labeling of the products helps to develop the consumer confidence. J&K traditional handicrafts has the potential to be marketed across the globe. Proper mechanism is needed to link the artisans with the buyers. Handcrafts material are sustainable and eco-friendly. They promote the Vocal for Local slogan of the Indian govt.

The local grass handicrafts made by rural women of Reasi distt. is appreciable as they have revived the lost heritage. They are making different types products such as Chabadi, Binna, pen stand, laundry bags, dry fruit trays, hot cages etc. from local grass namely Babian and Wild palm. These products have long durability and have great demand in the market. Rural women of Reasi distt. of J&K have established the sale counters at Reasi-Shiv Khori Road, Katra Chowk, Katra Railway Station, Aghar Jitto village etc. Their crafted products have significant attraction for the tourists/devotees visiting at Shree Mata Vaishno Shrine and other visiting spots in the district. They are showcasing their products in the Kisan Melas, Conferences, Workshops etc. organized by the different organizations. Reasi distt. administration, JKRLMN, KVK, Reasi, NABARD and other concerned organisations are facilitating these rural women to train and market their products. These products are needed to reach at broader level to increase their sale and fetch more returns. The e-commerce platforms may help more to sale their crafted products and some new markets can be searched for them. They may connect with more buyers by utilizing social media, e-commerce and other digital methods. This will help to increase their income and employment. These rural women need not to rely on the intermediaries or go to the market to sale their crafted products. Different firms may connect with them to purchase their products.

It will be a big boon for these rural women enabling them to fetch more returns and sustain their livelihood. From creating income and employment opportunities to

reviving the dying crafts, rural women from Reasi distt. has built an inspirational story. Many e-commerce platforms such as Amazon Handmade, Handicraft Mall, Etsy etc. are designed for the artisans and craftsmen and women. They provide secured payment process and accessible product listing. These platforms also provide artisans access to analytics and customer data which may help them to understand their customers and improve their marketing efforts and products. Many rural youths can be encouraged for the startups on rural handicrafts. Their is need to work on the supply chain and quality of the products. Their is also need of sustainability in the income of the craftsmen or women and guarantees that the crafts are conserved and passed on from generation to generation.

Rural crafts can create employment opportunities that can help to curb the rural migration. Rural craft industries can create employment opportunities to rural people of J&K which can help them to earn a livelihood without migration towards the urban areas. Rural crafts can provide a source of income diversification for rural people.

The G20 can provide better access to the international markets to J&K handicrafts.

This can be done by reducing the trade barriers, promoting trade fairs and exhibitions and simplifying customs procedures. In J&K a lot progress has been made in the handicraft sector in the recent years. J&K is known because of the rich cultural heritage and handicrafts.

However due to the introduction of mechanized sector this sector has faced several challenges.

This sector has also made progress in marketing of traditional handicrafts in recent years. Many artisans are now using the social media or digital media platform to sale their crafted products. This has helped the artisans to widen their market and increase their income.

Although the artisans are facing certain challenges but even then they are able to revive this dying sector.

They need appropriate support and promotion of their products. By tapping the unique attractions of the crafted products, rural tourism can be promoted and some more employment opportunities can be created in the rural areas of J&K. This will help to conserve the rich cultural and natural heritage of J&K.

(The writers Dr. Banarsi Lal is Sr. Scientist & Head of KVK, Reasi SKUAST-J and Yoyal Kishore Sharma, Nodal Officer, Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission, JKRLM, Reasi, J&K).

## YOUR COLUMN HAS SHASHI THAROOR TUMBLED AND STUMBLED?

Dear Editor,  
To counter the move for renaming India as Bharat,

Shashi Tharoor has suggested to change the acronym I.N.D.I.A. as B.H.A.R.A.T. for the team in which Congress is also a party. He wants the acronym B.H.A.R.A.T to denote Betterment, Harmony And Responsible Advancement For Tomorrow. In this, he has taken into consideration the conjunction 'and' as part of acronym and excluded the preposition 'for' from it. Has Tharoor tumbled and stumbled? Either both 'and' and 'for' should have

been included as part of acronym or both of them should have been excluded. He knows if 'for' is included it becomes BHARAF.T. If 'and' is excluded it becomes BHRAT. Inclusion of 'and' and exclusion of 'for' is 'marriage of convenience'. It is well known that the principles and policies of politicians are 'marriage of convenience'. "Marriage of convenience" has intruded in forming the acronym also.

K.V. Seetharamaiah