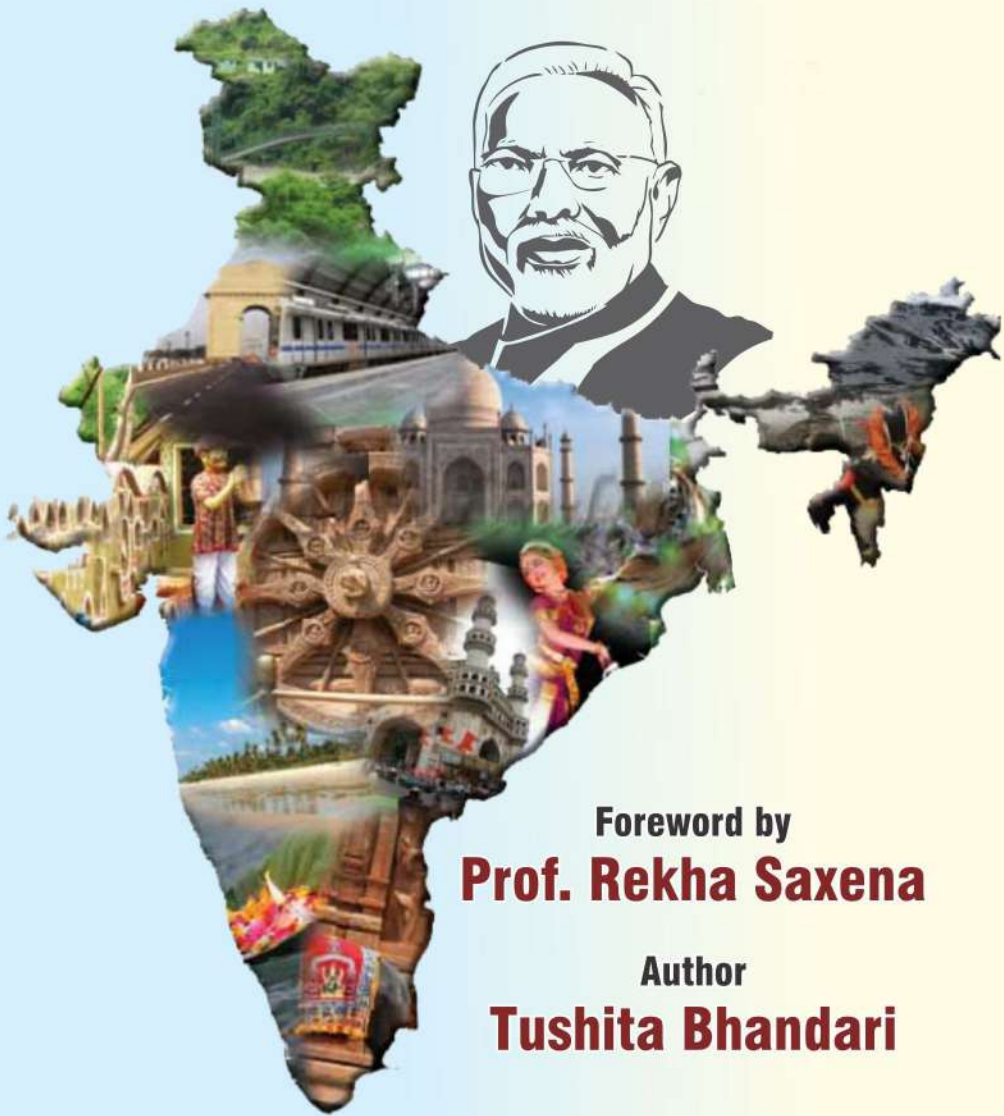


# India After 2014

New Chapters in Culture, History and Identity



Foreword by  
**Prof. Rekha Saxena**

Author  
**Tushita Bhandari**

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# **INDIA AFTER 2014: NEW CHAPTERS IN CULTURE, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY**

**TUSHITA BHANDARI**



**Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS)**  
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**INDIA AFTER 2014: NEW CHAPTERS IN  
CULTURE, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY**

By **Tushita Bhandari**

Foreword by **Sr. Prof. Rekha Saxena**

Afterword by **Dr. Amna Mirza**

Introduction by **Prof. Divya Tanwar**

Preface by **Tushita Bhandari**

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## Foreword



An examination of politics and society in modern India is inadequate without a thorough consideration of culture, history, and identity. Since 2014, India has seen a significant transition in the role of culture within governance and national affairs. These alterations extend beyond mere policy measures; they also signify profound transformations in the national consciousness and India's self-representation on the global stage.

In this backdrop, Tushita Bhandari's book, *India After 2014: New Chapters in Culture, History, and Identity*, published by the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS), presents a relevant and significant contribution. The study emphasizes the crucial role of cultural revival, institutional reforms, heritage protection, and spiritual diplomacy in India's developmental trajectory. It positions these achievements not just as governmental endeavors, but as components of a wider cultural renaissance that persistently influences the daily lives of individuals.

The author's balanced approach is notable; her analysis is evidence-based, including policy papers, government reports, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches, while also reflecting on the implications of these cultural transformations. She illustrates that culture, rather than being static, serves as a dynamic force that unites communities, fosters pride, and fortifies the nation's fabric. Her book enables readers to contextualize policy initiatives within a comprehensive framework of India's civilizational continuity and its ambitions in the contemporary global era.

The Centre for Narendra Modi Studies has persistently motivated young people to interact with modern India via meticulous study and insightful writing. This book articulates that purpose very well. India post-2014 will captivate not just academics and scholars of political science, history, and cultural studies but also all readers eager to comprehend how India's cultural imagination has influenced its trajectory since 2014.

**Sr. Prof. Rekha Saxena**

*Head of the Department*

Department of Political Science

University of Delh

## Afterword



India's story is an unbroken flow of ideas, traditions, and dreams - a constant exchange between the richness of its past and the aspirations of its future. Since 2014, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this exchange has gained new depth and urgency. Culture, heritage, and national identity have moved to the center of public life, education, and even how the world sees us. "India After 2014: New Chapters in Culture, History, and Identity" by Tushita Bhandari is a thoughtful exploration of this change. It captures the way our country has found new energy to speak proudly of its civilisational roots while engaging with modern challenges. What makes this book stand out is that it is a careful, balanced, and intelligent study of how India is reshaping its cultural identity. Tushita does not fall into the trap of presenting culture as a fight between tradition and modernity, or between religion and reason. She looks at these subjects with care, detail, and evidence. Each chapter - whether it is on reviving temple towns, bringing cultural symbolism into Smart City projects, or bringing back Indian Knowledge Systems - stands as a complete study on its own, yet fits perfectly into the book's larger message: India after 2014 is moving towards seeing itself as a civilisation with deep roots, not just a country born after independence.

The book's case studies are vivid and convincing. When she describes initiatives like the Kashi Tamil Sangamam, the Char Dham project, or preparations for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, she shows how these are not just religious or infrastructure events. They are efforts to connect different parts of India's civilisational map that had become disconnected. Her examination of the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya and the relocation of the Amar Jawan Jyoti shows how memory, heritage, and politics meet - not only in India but in the way

museums and memorials are shaped around the world. Another striking part of the book is the discussion on India's cultural diplomacy. Tushita brings to life events like the International Day of Yoga at the United Nations, the Global Buddhist Summit, and the global cultural branding through festivals like the Kumbh. She treats the link between spirituality and foreign policy with sensitivity - something not often discussed in international relations. It is refreshing to see culture treated as a living, influential part of diplomacy, rather than as a side subject.

This work also shows courage in handling sensitive issues. Tushita does not shy away from raising questions or pointing out challenges. She relies on original sources, government data, and global records, and presents them in a way that is clear but not simplistic. Her use of charts, tables, and timelines makes the research rich without making the reading heavy.

Importantly, the book reminds us that cultural revival is about reclaiming a way of seeing the world. Whether it is reviving Sanskrit, formally recognising traditional knowledge systems, or digitising temple and waqf records, the effort is to bring culture into the heart of development. Tushita's narrative shows that this is about giving cultural roots a place in modern life and governance. Yet, the book never becomes blind praise. It accepts that culture is constantly shaped by public decisions and private memories. By balancing admiration with alertness, Tushita pays true respect to India's heritage. She invites the reader to think, question, and reflect, rather than to accept anything without thought. In doing so, she contributes to an ongoing conversation about what it means to be Indian in the 21st century.

This book is a mirror held up to our times. It shows a nation rediscovering its inner confidence and reintroducing itself to the world on its own terms. Tushita Bhandari's voice joins a growing group of young thinkers who are telling India's story with honesty and clarity. I believe this book will inspire curiosity, encourage reflection, and deepen the understanding of India's unfolding civilisational journey.

**Dr Amna Mirza**  
Associate Professor  
University of Delhi

## Introduction



The Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS) has always believed in supporting meaningful research and thoughtful writing that helps people understand the new India that is taking shape. Our aim is to provide a platform for young voices who can reflect on India's transformation through honest, clear, and well-researched work. We are proud to encourage new writers who are committed to exploring India's cultural journey, governance, and civilisational values in a fresh and accessible way. In the past, CNMS has supported several such works, including the widely appreciated book *Constitutional Journey: An Overview from 2014-2024* by Rishi Raj Singh and Prince Shukla, from the University of Delhi.

Tushita Bhandari's book *"India After 2014: New Chapters in Culture, History, and Identity"* is a strong example of how young scholars are contributing to the understanding of India's civilisational journey in a modern context. She has shown that culture is a living idea that connects people, places, and values. Her writing shows how the Modi government has brought culture to the centre of governance and national pride. The book covers a wide range of topics—from temple revival to museum reforms, from spiritual diplomacy to cultural festivals—all showing how the government is using culture to unite the nation and present a positive image of India to the world.

What stands out most in this book is how carefully the writer has done her research. She uses speeches, government reports, data, and events to explain how culture has become a part of India's development journey. She doesn't just describe policies; she understands the deeper meaning behind



them—how they shape people's thinking, connect communities, and build a stronger nation.

The Centre for Narendra Modi Studies is happy to see that this book doesn't try to glorify everything blindly. Instead, it gives space to thoughtful analysis, critical questions, and genuine reflection. This balanced approach is important in today's world, where facts and emotions often get mixed up. Tushita handles these themes with maturity and clarity.

We also appreciate that the book looks at cultural governance as a way of shaping national identity. Whether it is the celebration of Yoga Day at the United Nations or the revival of Indian Knowledge Systems in universities, the book explains how these steps help in making Indians proud of who they are. It shows that development is about ideas, pride, and confidence.

This book is a useful guide for students of politics, culture, and also for teachers, journalists, diplomats, and anyone who wants to understand how India is changing. It is written in a way that is easy to read, yet full of depth. It makes complex ideas simple without losing their seriousness. That is a rare quality in academic writing and we are proud to support such a work.

CNMS believes that books like this help bridge the gap between academic thinking and public understanding. We are committed to encouraging more such efforts from young authors across the country. We invite students, researchers, and thinkers to take inspiration from this book and contribute their own voice to the narrative of New India.

We thank Tushita Bhandari for her dedicated effort and congratulate her on producing such a thoughtful and timely book. We hope that "India After 2014: New Chapters in Culture, History, and Identity" will be widely read, discussed, and debated.

**Prof. Divya Tanwar**

Professor in Cyber Security

Member, Advisory Council of CNMS

## Preface



India is more than a nation bounded and defined by rules and laws, it is a living, breathing civilisation. One whose very soul lives in its sacred geographies, plural identities, and timeless cultural continuities. Over the last decade, this civilisational ethos has found its voice ever more in governance, development, diplomacy, and discourse. It is from this intellectual interest to examine and record how India's cultural landscape has been reimagined and reasserted by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government that this book, *India After 2014: New Chapters in Culture, History, and Identity*, arose. It is not a traditional political analysis. Instead, it is a cultural-political examination of how the past is being repositioned to structure the present and the future.

The questions this book seeks to answer are numerous; How has heritage been constructed as development? What are we doing in modernizing temples, museums, archives, and rituals? How are we to read the symbolism in cultural diplomacy, repatriation of antiquities, or the emphasis on Indian Knowledge Systems in educational policy?

This book brings together on one platform themes that are usually approached separately urban planning and mythology, spiritual traditions and policy initiatives, folk revival and soft power. The intention was to thread them into a broad narrative of a civilisational turn that characterises post-2014 India. The process of writing needed not only research but also reflection. It entailed reading policy documents, PM's speeches, PIB files, archaeological records, and



ongoing debates. Every chapter, on the sacralisation of spaces, the festivalisation of identity, or the state-sponsored revival of Sanskrit, tries to present a multi-

layered analysis without compromising on clarity or balance.

The book deliberately eschews binaries. It is not celebratory propaganda nor dispassionate critique. Instead, it attempts to seize the richness of India's changing self how religion and modernity, memory and the state, spectacle and authenticity are existing simultaneously, contesting each other, and generating meaning in a new India. What characterizes the post-2014 era is not only the ferocity of cultural assertion, but the institutionalization of culture in statecraft. Initiatives such as Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, temple corridor schemes, artsy smart cities, or WAVES media and soft power summit each demonstrates a longer-term desire to articulate what being Indian in the 21st century will be. This book is my attempt to document that desire. It is not definitive. India's culture is too varied, its histories too grand. But if it provides the reader with a frame to comprehend the trends, the changes, and the philosophical issues behind India's cultural policy since 2014, then it will have been successful.

*This book is a dialogue between history and today, heritage and administration, and above all, between India and itself.*

**Tushita Bhandari**

July 2025

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I bow in gratitude to **God**, the eternal source of strength, clarity, and inspiration in every step of my life. Without divine grace, this journey would have remained incomplete. I extend my deepest gratitude to my parents, **Mr. Raman Bhandari** and **Mrs. Nisha Bhandari**, for being my unwavering pillars of support, patience, and encouragement. Your belief in me gave wings to my thoughts and allowed this book to come to life. My heartfelt thanks to my gurus mentors, teachers, and guides whose knowledge and discipline shaped my thinking and commitment to intellectual rigour.

This book would not have been possible without the immense support and guidance of **Professor Jasim Mohammad, Chairman, Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS)**. Sir, thank you for giving me this precious opportunity to write under your supervision. More than a mentor, you have been a path-shower, one who transformed my journey from an editor to a researcher, from a student to a thinker. Your confidence in me helped me realise a version of myself I never imagined possible. Your leadership at CNMS and your constant encouragement were instrumental in nurturing this work. I am truly honoured to have walked this path under your guidance.

A special and profound note of thanks to **Dr. Amna Mirza**, my guiding light and academic anchor. Your insights, scholarly patience, and generosity in sharing knowledge have played a crucial role in shaping not just this book but my broader understanding of politics, policy, and cultural identity. You have never hesitated to uplift or guide me -- be it in research, writing, or learning how to stand tall with

humility. Thank you for being a mentor who empowers, not just advises.

To my wonderful young companions, **Pushp Bhandari** and **Arnav Bhandari** currently navigating their school years with brilliance -- my heartfelt thanks for lending your time and energy to assist with extracurricular elements. Your thoughtful inputs in proofreading and copy-editing, along with your quiet dedication to the spirit of this work, have contributed greatly to its clarity and finesse.

I offer warm thanks to the **Prime Minister's Museum & Library** for facilitating access to valuable archival records that enriched the factual and narrative layers of this book. Your support contributed significantly to the depth and authenticity of the research

Lastly, I am also immensely thankful to the **Centre for Narendra Modi Studies**, not just for publishing this book but for providing a platform that values research, innovation, and civilisational discourse. Your support transformed this idea into a documented reality.

To all those unnamed but remembered friends, readers, archivists, and cultural enthusiasts, thank you for being part of this journey.

***Tushita Bhandari***

## **Table of Contents**

|                                                                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ♦ Foreword by Sr. Prof. Rekha Saxena                                                 | iii |
| ♦ Afterword by Dr. Amna Mirza                                                        | v   |
| ♦ Introduction by Prof. Divya Tanwar                                                 | vii |
| ♦ Preface by Tushita Bhandari                                                        | ix  |
| ♦ Acknowledgments                                                                    | xi  |
| <i>Chapter - 01: Cultural Governance in the 21st Century</i>                         | 1   |
| <i>Chapter - 02: Heritage And Politics of Preservation</i>                           | 6   |
| <i>Chapter - 03: Nationalism and Historical Memory</i>                               | 11  |
| <i>Chapter - 04: Sacred Geographies</i>                                              | 16  |
| <i>Chapter - 05: Civilisational Turn: From Gyan to Bharat</i>                        | 22  |
| <i>Chapter - 06: Festivals, Rituals, and Soft Power</i>                              | 28  |
| <i>Chapter - 07: The Changing Urban Landscape</i>                                    | 37  |
| <i>Chapter - 08: Art, Film and Literary Discourse</i>                                | 42  |
| <i>Chapter - 09: Folk Culture and Regional Revival</i>                               | 47  |
| <i>Chapter - 10: Culture as Soft Power</i>                                           | 53  |
| <i>Chapter - 11: Cultural Diplomacy and India's Global Projection</i>                | 58  |
| <i>Chapter - 12: Narendra Modi and the Civilisational Renaissance of Bharat</i>      | 63  |
| <i>Chapter - 13: From The Podium: Modi's Vision of India's Civilisational Legacy</i> | 68  |
| - Glance:                                                                            | 123 |
| - Conclusion:                                                                        | 126 |
| - Bibliography                                                                       | 131 |

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## **Chapter 1**

# **Cultural Governance in the 21st Century**

This ideological expression heralds a wider shift: culture in the 21st century is no longer limited to passive preservation it is strategically mobilized, curated, and projected as a central pillar of national identity. The Ministry of Culture has led this redirection. Its role has changed dramatically from being a predominantly administrative branch tasked with the stewardship of cultural institutions to being a central agency in shaping national narratives. Flagship programs like PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) and HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) have connected culture with tourism and urban development, thus integrating heritage into modern economic and infrastructural endeavors. The ministry has put more stress on digital outreach and visibility, best exemplified by the Vedic Heritage Portal initiated in 2023 under the auspices of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), which made Vedic texts, ritual guides, and multimedia materials available in Sanskrit and regional languages in digital form for public access. One of the most important changes has been the institution of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between the ministry and state governments like the 2025 MoU with Bihar Department of Archaeology which institutionalized IGNCA's functions of training, seminars, archaeological excavations, and awareness-generating, thus reflecting a centralizing trend in heritage policy-making. This change has created serious concerns regarding the autonomy



of cultural institutions, especially in the context of rising nationalism. The pull between institutional autonomy and ideological alignment is most apparent in the Sahitya Akademi, ASI, and IGNCA. Established in 1954 as a platform for literary diversity, the Sahitya Akademi was conceived as a politically unaligned, writer-centric institution. Since 2014, however, its autonomy has been brought under intense critical examination. The 2015 “award wapsi” movement where over 40 eminent authors returned their Sahitya Akademi awards highlighted deep discontent over the Akademi's perceived silence on rising intolerance and the murder of rationalist thinkers such as M. M. Kalburgi. The Akademi's refusal to condemn these incidents publicly was viewed as a failure to uphold intellectual freedom. Malayalam author C. Radhakrishnan's 2024 resignation from the general council of the Akademi, on grounds of political interference and the Union Culture Minister's symbolic launch of literary festivals, was a further sign of the increasing unease with the perceived undermining of institutional autonomy. Parliamentary standing committee reports since the last decade like those led by Sitaram Yechury and Satchidananda Mohanty had long before faulted the Akademi on grounds of transparency in governance, regional representation, and official apathy. Intellectuals such as Apoorvanand have contended that the Akademi, previously a Nehruvian site of pluralism, is presently working through a complicated field of ideological expectations, state patronage, and contracting critical space. At the same time, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), long mandated to preserve monuments and conduct archaeological study, has undergone a shift in mandate. While its technical role continues, ASI's conservation projects particularly those tied to sacred and civilizational sites are increasingly situated within larger political and religious narratives. The redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, the

restoration of Kedarnath post the 2013 floods, and the centrally backed makeover of Ayodhya's Ram Mandir precinct are illustrative of this trend. These projects are not simply conservation initiatives; they are acts of civilizational renewal that entail collaborative action by the state, religious organizations, corporate sponsors, and technocratic planners. Scholars like Tapati Guha-Thakurta have been arguing for quite a while that monuments are not mute stones but active texts places of memory, negotiation, and state inscription. Today, ASI is not only viewed as a guardian of heritage but also as a partner in a saga of national reawakening, whereby archaeology and architecture turn into tools of symbolic statecraft. The IGNCA has also gone through a quiet but powerful transformation. Founded in 1987 to foster interdisciplinary research in the arts, IGNCA initially accommodated units like Kala Kosa (textual research), Kala Nidhi (archive collections), and Janapada Sampada (folk traditions), operating with scholarly autonomy and cross-cultural approach. From 2014, IGNCA's activity has shifted towards a more civilizational and Sanskritic orientation. The Vedic Heritage Portal, offering online access to Rigveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda hymns, is not only a research vehicle but an ideological artefact retaking India's early spiritual knowledge for public awareness.

In July 2025, IGNCA's MoU with the Government of Bihar further solidified its status as a policy tool, allowing for heritage promotion, training local archaeologists, and cultural events. Critics fear that IGNCA's realignment threatens to marginalize heterodox, tribal, or syncretic traditions beyond the Brahmanical civilizational paradigm. Cultural theorists like Ashis Nandy have cautioned against such one-dimensionalization of tradition on the grounds that Indian civilization has historically always been a mosaic of disputed histories rather than a linear Hindu continuity. Still, supporters contend that these initiatives are responses to

long-overdue attention to India's overlooked literary and spiritual traditions, moving them into the public domain with the assistance of digital media and scholarly collaborations. The overall impact of these changes is a new cultural governance model in which the Ministry of Culture, formerly a quiet bureaucratic organization, has emerged as a key player in creating and circulating cultural narratives. This is best seen in how institutions such as Sahitya Akademi are now implicated in the larger governmental imaginations. Of late, literature festivals, translation awards, and schemes of writer mentorship have been conceived not by Akademi boards but declared by the Prime Minister's Office or the Culture Ministry itself. While such programs undoubtedly bring visibility and funding, they also risk bypassing the Akademi's collective processes and reducing it to an implementer of top-down agendas. Historian Sudipta Kaviraj reminds us that institutional legitimacy comes not only from efficiency but from procedural integrity, plural representation, and epistemic humility. When such institutions are absorbed into state narrative-making, their ability to foster critique and accommodate dissent is compromised. Adding to this complexity is the ideological context under which cultural policy presently functions.

Cultural policy here turns away from support and becomes assertion of a very old civilizational self, united under a majoritarian aesthetic. It is not accidental that policy focus is given to Vedas, temples, and Sanskrit as against Bhakti poetry, Sufi shrines, Buddhist manuscripts, or Dalit oral narratives. This makes for a layered issue: the state seeks to celebrate Indian culture but in doing so ends up favoring one strand over the others, thus reducing the multiplicity of India's plural pasts to a plane. However, this remaking of culture is not wholly without justification or reason. Supporters of the new cultural policy contend that the old Nehruvian-era institutions had grown stale, elitist, and

unaccountable. They reference the absence of digitization, weak outreach, and limited public participation as indications of a rotting postcolonial construct that required enlivening. The new framework, with its focus on technology, accessibility, and civilizational pride, is framed as a democratic remedy opening up culture for all, rather than the English-speaking metro intelligentsia. In fact, projects such as the Vedic Heritage Portal or the redevelopment of Kashi corridor have attracted huge public interest and popularity. They represent a going back to origins, a reclaiming of national identity, and an effort to tell India's story on Indian terms. But the task is to do this without undermining institutional integrity, academic autonomy, and cultural diversity. With the change in cultural governance in India, it is caught between two extremes autonomy and nationalism, scholarship and symbolism, pluralism and centralization.

The Ministry of Culture is now patron and storyteller, producing a narrative in which ancient civilization confronts digital modernity. Sahitya Akademi, ASI, and IGNCA, formerly autonomous or semiautonomous bodies, now collaborate with the state to forge a new cultural consensus. Whether this agreement is inclusive, conversational, and critically self-reflexive or hegemonic and exclusionary will not only depend upon policy choices but upon continued involvement of writers, scholars, artists, and the public. As we go further into this reimagined world, the pressing challenge is to retain the space for cultural critique alongside pursuing cultural pride. Only then can India really balance its time-tested values with its current ambitions.

## **Chapter - 2**

### **Heritage and Politics of Preservation**

In the last decade or so, heritage in India has increasingly stopped being a quiet background to development it has come to the forefront, being used as a platform for political demonstration, spiritual renaissance, tourism, and national image-building. The Narendra Modi government's cultural vision since 2014 has seen a shift in heritage policy where state-directed conservation combines with civilizational symbolism and public spectacle. The change is not merely administrative but ideological; monuments are not merely leftovers of the past but rather conceptualized as markers of a shared civilizational identity. At the heart of the vision is the insistence on grandeur, accessibility, and spiritual renewal, which tends to create an uneasy tension between conservation ethics and the imperatives of mass politics and religious nationalism. Initiatives such as Adopt a Heritage, corridor-style temple restorations along the lines of Kashi and Kedarnath, and the growing visual spectacularization of religious and archaeological sites illustrate this trend.

In 2017, under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism with the support of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and private players, the Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan scheme was a ground-breaking action that indicated the government's commitment to engage non-state actors in the management of monuments. It challenged the private companies, NGOs, and public sector units to "adopt" heritage sites, not as owners, but as custodians providing

facilities, running visitor facilities, and adding to the visitor experience. This model was presented in the guise of a public-private partnership for 'monument mitras' (heritage friends) who could bring corporate zeal and financial resources into maintenance of heritage sites. On paper, this seemed new-fangled; it was presented as a move to democratize monument maintenance outside of the restricted capacities of the ASI, which looks after more than 3,600 centrally protected monuments nationwide. But the program quickly attracted flak from conservationists and historians. There were worries that sensitive conservation tasks were being entrusted to commercially motivated bodies that had minimal or no knowledge of archaeology, museology, or material heritage. The 2018 furore surrounding the adoption of the Red Fort by the Dalmia Bharat Group threw up a larger question was the state outsourcing its heritage to the market in the name of stewardship, or was it facilitating a new age of civic engagement with history?

This corporatisation of heritage was complemented by the state's overall focus on religious revivalism, particularly evident in the large-scale temple corridor redevelopments. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, dedicated in December 2021, is representative of this strategy. Planned as a means of enriching pilgrims' spiritual experience and connecting the temple complex to the Ganga ghats, the scheme evicted more than 300 properties, broadened lanes, and constructed marble walkways, statues, fountains, and new visual axes to the temple. Supporters saw it as a reclamation of civilizational character the cleansing and freeing of one of Hinduism's holiest places from the detritus of encroachments, colonial-era developments, and disordered urban expansion. Prime Minister Modi called the corridor a "symbol of India's eternal cultural spirit," connecting it directly to his vision of India as a civilizational state based on dharma.

It was not cheap, however. Conservationists and local historians voiced deep concerns about the lack of archaeological oversight, the demolition of historically layered built environments, and the flattening of Kashi's organic, lived heritage into a sanitized, stage-managed version of Hindu piety. Historian and architect V. S. Misra wrote that Kashi was never merely a city of temples; it was a palimpsest of sacred and secular engagements, with Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, and colonial influences woven into the fabric. The corridor, he contended, obliterated this multiplicity in favor of monolithic Hindu symbolism, thus undermining the plural nature of the city's historical ecology. Alongside, the Kedarnath Redevelopment Project, launched following the devastating 2013 floods, was framed as a spiritual and infrastructural revival. The redesigned *mandir* precinct, helipads, pilgrim rest houses, and the iconic statue of Adi Shankaracharya were woven together into a high-altitude Himalayan terrain redesigned for mass tourism and visual spectacle. Although the project certainly enhanced pilgrim safety and regional tourism, critics were concerned about the environmental sustainability of such grand-scale interventions within ecologically sensitive areas. Moreover, the use of religious symbols in a state-sponsored redevelopment effort obfuscated the boundaries between heritage preservation, religious promotion, and state legitimacy.

These conflicts are perhaps best appreciated in terms of increasing dichotomy between spectacle and conservation. Classical conservation practice, rooted in the ASI's 19th-century origins and subsequent global standards (such as the Venice Charter of 1964), emphasizes minimal intervention, authenticity, and reversibility. In contrast, the new model privileges visibility, scale, and narrative cohesion. The monument is not merely to be preserved but re-narrated; its meanings re-inscribed in ways that align with contemporary

identity politics. This transition can be seen not only in temple campuses but also in urban redevelopment projects such as the Central Vista in New Delhi or the Statue of Unity complex in Gujarat, where public memory and architecture are blended into mega-spectacles of state authority. The old paradigm of heritage as an academic, archaeological object is being replaced by a new paradigm in which heritage is performed, consumed, and mobilized for soft power and political legitimacy.

Scholars such as Romila Thapar have consistently cautioned that heritage is not an unchanging inheritance but a contested space. Each act of preservation is, at the same time, an act of selection and exclusion—what is commemorated, what is razed, what is subsidized, and what is overlooked. The preservation campaign of the Modi era, while rhetorically inclusive, betrays a distinct prioritization of some types of heritage: Hindu temples, Vedic practices, and sites of civilizational grandeur. By contrast, medieval Indo-Islamic architecture, syncretic shrines, or colonial-period heritage buildings have either been neglected or subject to public campaigns of renaming, re-contextualization, or even destruction. The 2022 controversy surrounding the Gyanvapi mosque, when ASI was ordered by court order to survey the site for Hindu symbols, shows how archaeology itself is increasingly being pulled into legal and ideological conflict. The danger in this case is that preservation gets mired with proof-seeking and political symbolism at the expense of historical inquiry. It would, however, be simplistic to write these heritage projects off as purely propagandist. They do capture real public interest in history, increased religious tourism, and democratization of access to heritage through roads, toilets, lights, and interpretation centers. For far too long, India's cultural sites were out of reach, ill-interpreted, and disconnected from the experiential worlds of nearby communities. The Modi government, in its own manner, has



imparted new energy, money, and political focus to cultural infrastructure. But ultimately, the key question is: can this energy be directed without subjecting heritage to spectacle? Can conservation be reconciled with critical historiography, multiple narratives, and ecological responsibility? And as we review the politics of conservation after 2014, we see an intensely multi-layered landscape. Monuments are being cleaned, restored, and presented on unprecedented terms. But they are also being ideologically constructed, with limited opportunities for contest. It is a rich brocade of Sanskritic, Dravidian, Indo-Islamic, tribal, colonial, and syncretic strands existing side by side, overlapping, and sometimes competing with one another. To maintain this complexity is not to dilute pride it is to enrich it." Authentic cultural confidence is not born from titanic spectacles but from the willingness to engage with complex pasts. As India continues to spend on its built heritage, it must also spend on interpretive integrity, conservation ethics, and critical public history. The politics of preservation cannot be avoided but it doesn't have to be reductionist. It can be dialogic, democratic, and intellectually demanding. Then only India's monuments can be not only symbols of an imagined past, but indications of a history that has been comprehended.

## **Chapter- 3**

### **Nationalism and Historical Memory**

Indian historical memory has always been a tricky landscape tillaged by colonial paradigms, nationalist redeployments, and diverse traditions of remembering. Since 2014, though, there has been a sharp turn in the way the Indian state constructs, exhibits, and institutionalizes memory. This turn is not limited to schoolbooks or cultural celebrations, but is powerfully manifest in the refiguring of museums, memorials, and national symbols. Within this emergent paradigm, museums stop being inert sites of preservation and instead turn into lively tools for nation-building, ideological communication, and identity consolidation. Nationalism in the 21st century is no longer merely narrated it is curated, space-embedded, and visually orchestrated. The Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, the relocations of the Amar Jawan Jyoti, and the upsurge of thematic exhibitions on "civilizational pride" all disclose in common a new politics of memory which aims to historicize the contemporary and contemporize the historical.

The Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, which was opened in April 2022, is a strong symbol of this change. Built adjacent to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) within the Teen Murti complex, the new museum claims to house the legacies of all Indian Prime Ministers, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi. On the surface, this appears to be an inclusive project an attempt to democratize historical representation and move beyond the Nehru-Gandhi legacy that has long dominated the institutional memory of Indian

politics. But the symbolic and spatial consequences of this shift are more complex. By incorporating the Nehru Memorial into a shared narrative of prime ministers, the Sangrahalaya quietly undermines Nehru's uniqueness while depicting a tradition of leadership that ends, visually and politically, with the present dispensation.

| 1. Redevelopment of Temple Corridors and Pilgrimage Sites                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project/Site                                                                                | Initiative Taken                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Uttar Pradesh                                                    | The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project has revitalized Varanasi by transforming its ancient ghats, narrow lanes and temple access.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Mahakal Lok Project Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh                                                  | The Mahakal Lok Project was launched to provide world-class amenities and spiritual ambience, enriching the pilgrim experience at the revered Mahakaleshwar temple.                                                                                                                   |
| Ma Kanakdham Temple, Assam                                                                  | The development of the Ma Kanakdham Temple focused on enhancing infrastructure and pilgrim facilities, ensuring a more comfortable and accessible spiritual experience.                                                                                                               |
| Ram Mandir, Ayodhya                                                                         | Bhoomipujan for Ram Mandir was held in August 2020; the grand temple was inaugurated on January 22, 2024.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Kedarnath Temple, Uttarakhand                                                               | The integrated development of Kedarnath includes the installation of the Adi Shankaracharya statue, symbolizing civilizational unity and enhancing the spiritual significance of the pilgrimage site.                                                                                 |
| Reconstruction of Juna Somnath Temple, Development of Promenade and Parvati Mandir, Gujarat | PM Modi continues the legacy of Ahilyabai Holkar by rejuvenating key pilgrimage sites, including development around Somnath temple and the construction of Parvati Mandir. Also, developed promenade offering pilgrims a majestic view of the Somnath Temple against the Arabian Sea. |

Source; Report; Culture to Pride, Progress in Every Step,  
<https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2025/jun/doc202563561601.pdf>

Every gallery in the Sangrahalaya has high-end digital interfaces, audio-visual narration, and interactive screens. The section on Narendra Modi by far the most elaborate is not merely an exhibit; it is a performative archive of the present, with visuals of Swachh Bharat, Statue of Unity, the Ram Mandir judgment, and India's vaccine diplomacy underlining themes of efficiency, pride, and global leadership. Critics, such as public historians and museologists, have been worried about the uneven focus on the present, the selective use of legacies, and the employment of contemporary technology to produce immersive, but possibly uncritical, history experiences. As cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai

points out, the museum in contemporary times is not any longer a space of "static display" but a "theatre of affect" it generates emotions, loyalties, and authenticity claims through design and repetition. The Sangrahalaya is a prime example of this affective turn, where history is staged as a theater of political legitimacy.

This symbolic reclamation is also evident in the relocation of the eternal flame of Amar Jawan Jyoti in January 2022. First lit in 1972 at India Gate, it was to commemorate the warriors of the 1971 war that the flame had, for decades, remained a respectful marker of military sacrifice during the war's post-independence period. Its move to the newly opened National War Memorial, located behind India Gate, was explained by the government as a consolidation of memorial space. Yet the move had profound symbolic significance. India Gate, built during colonial times, had been reclaimed after independence as a postcolonial space of sacrifice. By relocating the flame, the government not only highlighted the military's prominence in the new nationalist agenda but also performed a spatial distancing from colonial legacies. For the loyalists, the shift was overdue a righting of historical wrongs. For critics, including several veterans and cultural critics, the re-location represented a break in post-independence symbolic continuity and testified to the continued erasure of India's syncretic, multi-layered commemorative topography.

More generally, we are seeing the museumisation of identity in India, with culture, nationhood, and memory being institutionalized in thematic spaces under state guidance increasingly often. Museums like the Rashtriya Darshan Sangrahalaya, the Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum, and the Partition Museum in Daryaganj are all part of this large project. These museums strive to retrieve "forgotten" or

"marginalized" histories of tribal resistance, unknown heroes, civilizational knowledge systems, and ancient science. On the positive side, this represents a genuine effort to pluralize the long elite, colonial, or Anglicized-dominated narrative of history. On the negative side, curatorial efforts in most of these museums tend to be uncritical, thin on historiographical depth, and skewed toward mythological-nationalist synthesis. The boundary between historical fact and cultural belief tends to be blurred, and indeed, supplanted by civilizational pride narratives with little evidence-based support in a few instances.

Historian Neeladri Bhattacharya cautioned against the temptation to read the past as a "mirror of the present." In several of these museum spaces, however, that mirror is not just held up it is polished, made-up, and theatrically illuminated. Displays highlight Vedic science, ancient technology, spiritual ecology, and pre-colonial glory, and episodes of dissent, pluralism, or conflict are muted or left out. For instance, exhibitions tend to valorize Bhakti and Vedic traditions rather than syncretic Sufi movements or Indo-Islamic architecture as national heritage. In the process, the museum is not only a site of remembering, but also of selective forgetting. Public memory is thus actively constructed not just by what is exhibited, but by what remains excluded.

This new museological moment is not exclusive to India. Around the globe, states have attempted to construct national identity through cultural infrastructure. Indian experience differs in temporal terms. Since 2014, museums are being asked to do more than narrate the past; they are being asked to create a teleological narrative about India as a Rashtra, a cultural form that pre-exists the state and will

outlive political flux. This civilization-state story, exemplified by intellectuals such as Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and subsequently repeated in public rhetoric, receives material expression in museum architecture, urban planning, and iconic symbolism. Additionally, these museum spaces are equally performative. They depend on technology, holography, 3D walkthroughs, and immersive simulations to provoke affect. The visitor is not only a learner but also a participant in a choreographed national drama. Although this heightens engagement, it also threatens to convert the museum into a place of spectacle instead of contemplation, where complexity is sacrificed to coherence, and nuance to control over narrative.

But the emergence of such new museums has also been spurring critical questions: Who constructs memory? Who pays for these projects? Whose histories are brought to the surface, and whose are erased? What does it do with dissenting pasts, contested claims, or unpopular truths in these institutionalized memory regimes? *As feminist historian Urvashi Butalia once said, "Memory is a battlefield." In this present time, that battlefield is more and more being walled in marble halls, digital timelines, and state-endorsed exhibitions.*

Finally, the problem is not the development of new museums but the dedication to critical museology, one that provides space for argument, other voices, and multiple narratives. With India developing its memory infrastructure, it must also cultivate historical literacy, ethical curation, and academic independence. Only then can these institutions become not instruments of political validation, but actual sites of public history.

## **Chapter - 4**

### **Sacred Geographies**

Ever since ancient times, the Indian subcontinent has been dreamed of and lived in through its sacred geographies: rivers, temples, forests, and paths consecrated by myth, ritual, and remembrance. These "sacred geographies," as scholar Diana L. Eck calls them, are not spatial but are profoundly temporal and symbolic, sewn into the fabric of Indian civilization's narrative. The recent changes that have occurred in these landscapes under the cultural direction of the Narendra Modi-led government since 2014 represent not only infrastructural modernization but an ideological struggle to reorder the relation between religion, space, and nationhood. Whether through the formalization of pilgrimage routes such as the Char Dham Yatra or the re-emergence of mytho-historical paths like the Ram Van Gaman Path, or the monumentalization of temple towns through mega-projects like the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, sacred spaces are being increasingly leveraged as tools of cultural unification, religious resurgence, and national pride.

The Char Dham Project, officially known as the Char Dham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojana, is a flagship intervention in the state's effort to rationalize and augment pilgrimage infrastructure. Initiated in 2016 with an estimated cost of more than ₹12,000 crore, the project seeks to widen and upgrade roads to four major pilgrimage destinations in Uttarakhand: Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath. While articulated as a required effort at modernization to provide security, connectivity, and disaster

preparedness across the unstable Himalayan landscape, the project is similarly charged with symbolic capital. Through enhanced connectivity to the high-altitude shrines that constitute the "Char Dham" circuit, the government is not just constructing roads it is designing a corridor of civilization. These shrines are the focus of Hindu cosmology and have been integral to ritual itineraries for centuries, but their incorporation into a state-organized and standardized network is a move from organic religiosity towards state-organized, systematized pilgrimage culture.

This infrastructural holiness, though, poses environmental, archaeological, and cultural issues. The Himalayas are not just spiritually, but ecologically sensitive. Experts and activists, including those belonging to the Supreme Court-constituted High-Powered Committee, have cautioned against environmental damage due to tunnel boring, road-widening, and uncontrolled tourist flow in seismically active areas. Additionally, the homogenized visual look cemented pathways, railings, LED lights threatens to erase the textured cultural topography that developed naturally over centuries. The Char Dham project is thereby symbolic of the state's contradictory position: it attempts to conserve sacredness through modernity, but the machinery of modernity compromises the fragility of sacred geography. As scholar Ravinder Kaur writes, in new India, "infrastructure is not just a development promise it is a symbol of sovereignty and spiritual continuity."

One of the most ideologically charged projects in the sacred geography imagination is the Ram Van Gaman Path, an attempt to locate and monumentalize the route of Lord Ram in his 14-year exile as described in the Valmiki Ramayana. Through some of India's major states Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu the path is being redefined as a cultural heritage trail that



connects mythic memory with physical landscape. The initiative has been led by state governments, particularly in BJP-ruled states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, where the goal is to locate, conserve, and adorn the so-called places toured by Ram, including Chitrakoot, Shringverpur, and Dandakaranya. In 2020, the government of Madhya Pradesh allotted ₹40 crore for the construction of 66 marked sites on the path of Ram Van Gaman, including amenities such as interpretive centers, temples, and recreational spaces.

Here's the remarkable thing: the epistemological turn: the conversion of myth into cartography. Religious scriptures and oral traditions are being translated onto contemporary GIS systems and bureaucratic blueprints, and by so doing, merging faith with bureaucracy. The state no longer simply enables veneration; it stipulates, positions, and institutionalizes mythical travels into state-sanctioned tour circuits. This historicization of faith in spatial form is not unprecedented; pilgrimage trails such as the Buddhist Mahaparinirvana route or Sikh heritage routes have already been in place. Yet, at present, with this particular focus on the Ramayana, combined with the political significance of the Ram Mandir movement, the Ram Van Gaman Path takes on a sharply majoritarian character.

Nowhere is this intersection of sacred geography and political memory more apparent than in Ayodhya, the boyhood town of Lord Ram in the Ramayana and the epicenter of one of India's most divisive legal and cultural battles in recent history. The Ram Janmabhoomi struggle, launched in the late 1980s and culminating in the Supreme Court's ruling of 2019 that paved the way for the construction of the Ram Mandir at the contested location, is not just a legal ending but the start of an enormous spatial and symbolic reimagining of the city.

The building of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir,

dedicated in the first phase in January 2024, is not just a religious affair it is a civilizational milestone in the imagination of New India. The temple, with its imposing shikhara, expansive campus, and side museum complex, is being planned as part of a ₹30,000 crore initiative to turn Ayodhya into a global spiritual capital. New highways, an international airport, five-star hotels, and pilgrimage sites are in the process of being constructed to accommodate the anticipated stream of pilgrims and tourists. This modernization is likened to the Vatican or Meccanot religiously, but as a function of spatial centrality in relation to religious identity.

The temple itself, with its Nagara form of temple architecture, is being hawked as an icon of cultural renaissance and a rectification of past injusticesmost notably the desecration of the original temple and its usurpation by the Babri Masjid in the Mughal era, a long-debated claim now entrenched in nationalist rhetoric. Prime Minister Modi, during the foundation laying, had referred to the temple as a reflection of India's faith, perseverance, and civilization's memory. For most supporters, this marked an end to centuries of humiliation and the assertion of proud cultural identity. For analysts such as scholars Tanika Sarkar and Harsh Mander, the temple's resurgence represents a perilous blurring of religion and state, undermining the constitutional vision of secularism and the plural texture of Indian democracy. The wider spread of temple towns, Ayodhya, to be sure, but also Kashi, Ujjain, Somnath, Puri, and Srisailam demonstrates the state's constant investment in the modernization of sacred sites. Such projects typically involve corridor building, beautification, pedestrian walkways, sanitation units, and electronic signages. The message is transparent: to make sacred geography readable to the contemporary tourist while increasing its nationalist and spiritual symbolism. For example, the Mahakal Lok Corridor in Ujjain, dedicated in

2022, is full of murals, mythological sculptures, and landscaped gardens bearing not only devotion but also civilizational beauty. In the same vein, in Gujarat, the Somnath Temple complex has been continually enlarged and staged to affirm messages of revival, especially in relation to its repeated desecration by invaders according to historical record.

However, such urban-spiritual endeavors have multifaceted undertones. The development of holy towns into spiritual-industrial complexes poses significant issues regarding authenticity, gentrification, and layering of the past. Cities such as Ayodhya and Varanasi have historically been multi-religious, with thick interweavings of Hindu, Islamic, and folk practice. Corridorization tends to displace people, remove older architectural forms, and impose a unifying aesthetic vision based on an idealized and frequently Brahmanical Hindu past. As anthropologist Nita Kumar suggests, the city's memory is not only in its temples, but in its galiyan (lanes), ghats, and oral histories. In trying to monumentalize the holy, the plural, present multiplicities of such sites stand in danger of being erased.

Furthermore, sacred landscapes are increasingly intertwined with electoral politics. Development around pilgrimage sites tend to experience a boom prior to elections, where visits to temples and consecration rituals become an integral part of political spectacle. Religious identity, place, and nationalism therefore converge in deeply visual and performative terms. The temple becomes not only a place of devotion, but a node within the circuit of identity politics, cultural hegemony, and political messaging. While this can create pride and involvement among groups of people, it also cuts aggressively across divisions, freezes out competing narratives, and threatens to make holy space a competitive terrain of legitimacy.

Nevertheless, it would be negligent to overlook the authentic cultural renaissance and administrative efficacy that numerous of these projects have brought. Pilgrims are now provided with improved sanitation, accessibility, and security. Traditional craftsmanship is reinvigorating sacred architecture, and regional economies are experiencing growth through religious pilgrim tourism. The state's initiatives toward the convergence of technology, sustainability, and urban planning in pilgrimage management represent a noteworthy development in how faith and governance complement each other. But this resurgence needs to be rooted in plural values, cultural empathy, and ecological caution. Sanctity cannot be foisted; it has to spring from sensitivity towards the past and concern for the future.

Finally, sacred geographies in post-2014 India are not merely places of faith; they are platforms for scripting the nation. Roads, temples, and cities are not being reimaged only in brick and mortar, but in cultural memory. As sacred places become megaprojects, they are a narrative of imagined civilizational oneness in India symbolically rich, politically contested, and deeply consequential. Whether this sacred turn is a catalyst for more spiritual participation or simply a visual vocabulary of nationalism depends on the extent to which and the ways in which these spaces are inclusive and critical. India's spiritual topography is extensive and diverse; upholding that multiplicity is the real sanctity of sacred geography.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Civilisational Turn: From Gyan to Bharat**

In Indian cultural imagination, "gyan" or knowledge has never been an end in itself, an aggregative mass of facts or texts; it has always been known as a mode of being complete, divine, transgenerational. From the philosophical debates of the Upanishads to the technical texts of the Shilpa Shastras, India's knowledge traditions have fostered a civilisational culture where learning was inextricably woven into ethics, cosmology, and dharma. There has been a conscious political and intellectual attempt of late, particularly under the Narendra Modi government, to revive this civilisational imagination. This attempt is not merely one for curriculum reform it is a sign of a more profound turn: from the postcolonial discourse of development and modernization to a recovery of civilisation aimed at placing Bharat ahead of India, gyan ahead of whatever knowledge, parampara ahead of foreign pedagogies.

At the core of this civilisational transformation lies the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a historic document that heralds the most profound transformation of India's educational system in years. As opposed to earlier policies that focused on industrial training, proficiency in English language, or competitiveness in the global arena, NEP 2020 boldly situates education as an instrument of cultural and intellectual decolonization. The policy uses words like "Indian Knowledge Systems" (IKS), espouses Sanskrit and classical Indian languages, and seeks the incorporation of Bharatiya traditions within contemporary curriculum. It

seeks "rootedness in India" (Bharatiyata) while developing a scientific temper, and seeks to bring Indic wisdom together with modern inquiry.

NEP 2020 makes an emphatic distinction between foreign modernity and indigenous modernity. The report envisions a future where generations to come are not only employable in the international economy but are also inheritors of India's intellectual legacy. This is confirmed by the policy's support for mother tongue-based teaching, the revival of Sanskrit as a medium of classical knowledge, the addition of yoga and Indian philosophy, and the setting up of research centers on traditional arts, science, and technologies.

The reclamation of Sanskrit under NEP 2020 is especially significant. Sanskrit, popularly referred to as the "language of the gods," has traditionally been the repository of a vast body of Indian intellectual achievement ranging from metaphysics and poetics to mathematics and medicine. While earlier governments had pursued a utilitarian strategy towards classical languages conserving them through institutions but keeping them more or less aloof from mainstream pedagogy the present regime has taken on a more integrative and nationalist pitch. Sanskrit has been repositioned not as a classical language that is dead, but as a living civilisational code. In 2020, the Modi government enacted the Central Sanskrit Universities Act, which elevated three top institutions Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, and Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth to central universities. This action was not administrative in nature but ideological it aimed to bring Sanskrit studies from the periphery of cultural conservation to the center of academic acceptability.

Structural reforms are being complemented by pedagogical activities in alignment with Sanskrit revivalism. Organizations such as the Indian Council for Cultural

Relations (ICCR) and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti are facilitating the spread of Sanskrit through international scholarship exchanges, online courses, and school and college-level curriculum inclusion. Sanskrit has become an optional language in the CBSE and recommended as the preferred language of instruction in traditional sciences such as Ayurveda, Jyotish, and Vastu. These initiatives are not only linguistic these are political. They seek to restore a language traditionally linked with high knowledge, ritual, and authority as a national symbol and emblem of cultural pride.

But the Sanskrit revival project also beckons complicated arguments. Sanskrit, for generations, was protected by upper-caste keepers, and so entire parts of Indian society were excluded from its epistemic advantages. Critics like Sheldon Pollock and Romila Thapar have countered that a blind custodial revival of Sanskrit threatens to bring back the hierarchies of culture it once represented. Pollock's provocative *The Death of Sanskrit* argues that the demise of Sanskrit was not simply a matter of colonial indifference but also because it was disconnected from lived experience and public discourse. However, the alternative perspective in post-2014 India is that Sanskrit can be democratized released from priestly monopolies and reframed for all communities by translation, digital technologies, and open-access platforms. The contestation between revival and reinvention thus becomes seminal to grasping the role of Sanskrit in this civilisational shift.

Easily the most ambitious and all-encompassing model informing this knowledge realignment is the institutionalization of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Officially notified under the Ministry of Education and coordinated by AICTE, the IKS Division seeks to mainstream traditional Indian epistemologies in education and research. The mandate of IKS Division cuts across a broad spectrum of

subjectsmathematics (e.g., Baudhayana and Aryabhata), metallurgy (Zinc distillation at Zawar), agriculture (Vrikshayurveda), water management (step-wells, tanks), medicine (Ayurveda, Siddha), astronomy (Jyotish Shastra), governance (Arthashastra), aesthetics (Natyashastra), and environmental philosophy.

With the use of research grants, curriculum development, conferences, and collaborations globally, the IKS Division aims to situate India not just as a recipient of Western knowledge systems but as an historical and ongoing contributor to world knowledge. The program also involves mapping native practices, preserving ancient manuscripts, and supporting interdisciplinary research that integrates traditional systems and contemporary tools. Significantly, many IITs and NITs presently teach elective courses on IKS, and attempts are being made to institutionalize it as a cross-cutting issue within technical and humanities education.

The philosophical basis of IKS is in decolonization of syllabi, intellectual frameworks, and epistemic hierarchies. As educationist Anurag Behar puts it, "The decolonization of Indian education is not about rejecting modernity, but about re-scripting it with an Indian soul." The IKS effort places India as a knowledge civilisation, thus challenging the Eurocentric model that has long positioned non-Western knowledge as myth, superstition, or folklore.

This epistemological shift, however, has not been without its detractors. Critics such as Meera Nanda caution against the danger of pseudo-scientific revivalism, where myth masquerades as science with no critical examination. Such as, for example, assertions of ancient Indian flight or genetic science in the Vedas one given as proof in popular media and political orations have been criticized for mixing civilisational pride and untested claims. The threat, according to critics, is not in celebrating Indic knowledge per se but in



popularizing it in the absence of strict academic corroboration. For IKS to be a genuine intellectual option, it has to conform to the evidence, peer review, and pluralism requirements that underpin strong knowledge systems.

The other challenge is at the confluence of knowledge and identity politics. In prioritizing Sanskrit, Vedas, and Hindu epistemes, the IKS paradigm may end up sidelining other traditions Persianate sciences, Buddhist logic (pramana), tribal cosmologies, and regional knowledge systems in Tamil, Pali, or Kannada. A true civilisational turn has to be inclusive, recognizing India's multi-religious, multi-lingual, and syncretic past. The challenge for IKS, thus, is not just recovery, but representation of the several Indias that make up Bharat. In spite of these contestations, the IKS project is a critical juncture in India's cultural policy trajectory. It is the first occasion since independence that the Indian state has formally and institutionally sought to theorize its knowledge traditions not as marginal curiosities, but as being at the center of its development and self. This is seen in the development of IKS research institutes, the widening of Indic knowledge journals, and the inclusion of classical arts and sciences in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). In some sense, NEP 2020 is not merely about education it is about epistemic justice.

Further, this civilisational turn also permeates global diplomacy. India's international reputation is increasingly being managed via its civilisational heritage: yoga, Ayurveda, traditional music, Sanskrit studies, and Indian philosophy are being presented as soft power weapons. "Study in India," ICCR fellowships, and India Chairs abroad are framing what historian Sunil Khilnani once referred to as "India's global modernity" a mix of ancient wisdom and aspirational modernity. The symbolism is unambiguous. From official addresses invoking Vishwaguru Bharat (India as the world

teacher) to the gift-giving of sacred texts such as the Bhagavad Gita on diplomatic visits, the narrative of civilisations is being incorporated into statecraft. As cultural historian Kapila Vatsyayan once said, "India is not a nation-state in the western sense.". It is a civilisational state." The post-2014 era is the first unguarded policy effort to realise that vision not just culturally, but intellectually as well.

Overall, the civilisational shift in post-2014 India is a multi-layered project: the rediscovery of indigenous knowledge, the re-appropriation of Sanskrit and classical texts, a curricular reformulation of education, and a symbolic re-cartography of India as Bharat. It is a project full of promise and danger. It can result in a vibrant pluralistic rebirth if grounded in scholarly seriousness and universality or degenerate into chauvinist nostalgia if narrowed to ideological projection. Between Bharat and gyan, the path has to be one of self-disciplined rediscovery, rather than mythic return. To turn India into a knowledge power, its epistemological traditions need to be honored not as survivals of the past, but as conversations with the present.

## **Chapter- 6**

### **Festivals, Rituals, and Soft Power**

In the vision of contemporary nation-states, festivals and rituals cease to be limited to the private or the sacred they become spaces of cultural diplomacy, identity, and increasingly, tools of soft power. In India, such a shift is particularly acute in the post-2014 political-culture. The emergence of so-called 'civilisational state' under the regime of Narendra Modi has seen an intentional reshaping of the way festivals have been represented, shepherded, and exported within India and beyond. The commemoration of the festival, ritual, and sacred observance has moved from communal displays or religious practices to public events of nationalistic pride and global diplomacy.

At the center of this shift is the evolving state discourse that attempts to bring India's ritual calendar into alignment with its civilizational narrative. For example, festivals like Diwali, Holi, Navratri, Makar Sankranti, and Raksha Bandhan previously private, family, or regional affairs are now framed as national-cultural festivals. The presence of Prime Minister Modi at Deepotsav gatherings in Ayodhya, for example, is not merely symbolic but calculated. The state-organized lighting of lakhs of diyas on the Sarayu banks is today a world spectacle, enhanced by drone displays, digital narrative, and TV messages. These spectacles fulfill a double role: they reassert divine geographies and practices at home, while creating a world image of India as colorful, spiritual, and culturally grounded power. Political anthropologists' concept of the festivalisation of governance encapsulates this

state-led ritual turn. The cultural festivals are not merely employed to sell tourism and consumption but also to instil a sense of pride, unity, and continuity with India's civilisational heritage. Notably, celebration of the festivals has become an educational tool too. Official websites like MyGov, India Is, and social media initiatives by the Ministry of Culture regularly upload items disclosing the historical, religious, and scientific aspects of the festivals. Colleges and schools are invited to commemorate these events with theme-based assemblies, competitions, and painting projects instilling a civilisational awareness in the young generation.

Perhaps the most remarkable trend in this festival shift is the process of Yoga going global as a civilisational product and tool of soft power diplomacy. *Yoga, as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage" proclaimed by UNESCO in 2016, has been hailed as a gift of India to the whole world. The United Nations' declaration of 21st June as International Day of Yoga (IDY) in 2014, a move led by PM Modi was a milestone in India's cultural diplomacy. The inaugural IDY saw there mass demonstrations of yoga in 177 countries, making yoga not just a practice of health but a civilisational declaration of India as a global player.*

Yoga diplomacy is an interesting fusion of civilisational rejuvenation and contemporary wellness culture. It speaks to both the spiritual seeker and the health-conscious consumer. Organizations like the Ministry of AYUSH, ICCR, and the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga have been instrumental in institutionalizing yoga education, certifying teachers, and regulating schools to standardize and legitimize India's yogic heritage. The soft power appeal of yoga comes from its capacity to reach across faith traditions while conveying India's ancient spiritual capital subtly.

*As PM Modi would say, "Yoga is India's gift to humanity."*

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But this strategic civilisational outreach is not unique to yoga. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) and the diasporic engagement strategy more generally are another key part of the post-2014 cultural policy. India's diaspora, previously understood mostly in terms of remittances and technocratic achievement, is now idealized as civilisational ambassadors. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, organized every two years, is now more than just a conference it has evolved into a cultural-political gathering, where the leaders of the diaspora, cultural artists, entrepreneurs, and spiritual leaders assemble at the sponsorship of the Indian state. Awards, exchanges on Indian values outside the country, performances of Indian classical music and dance, and the promotion of Indian language and literature around the world are also part of the event.

The Modi government's emphasis on diaspora soft power is visible not only in PBD events but also in foreign visits. PM Modi's rallies in New York's Madison Square Garden (2014), London's Wembley Stadium (2015), and Sydney's Qudos Bank Arena (2014) were not mere diplomatic engagements—they were choreographed spectacles of Indian pride, drawing tens of thousands of diaspora Indians. These developments were frequently punctuated by references to Indian celebrations, salutations in local languages, and evocations of civilisational pride. In so doing, the Indian state frames the diaspora not simply as global citizens of Indian origin but as bearers of Indian culture, traditions, and soft power.

Since 2014, the Indian government has extensively invested in building the symbolic and lived ties between India's rich spiritual, linguistic, and cultural traditions. Underpinning much of these efforts has been the philosophy of *"Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat"* a vision of unity that honors diversity not as fragmentation but as plural strength. Launched on 31st October 2016, the Ek Bharat Shreshtha

Bharat programme was conceptualized to foster two-way interaction among various States and Union Territories, developing inter-regional affinity through exchange of languages, exposure to culture, and people-to-people contact. The focus has been not just on cultural festivities but also on generating national unity through emotional and intellectual integration.

### ***Kashi Tamil Sangamam: A Civilisational Reconnection***

The Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) has emerged as a flagship cultural program under this vision. Commemorating the age-old civilisational connections between Kashi (Varanasi) and Tamil Nadu two hallowed geographies the festival unites communities from two culturally disparate yet spiritually connected parts of India. The first edition of KTS 1.0 (2022) and the second edition of KTS 2.0 (2023) were conducted in Varanasi with the participation of 1115 and 674 artists respectively, such as spiritual leaders, scholars, musicians, and artisans. KTS 3.0 (2025), from 15–24 February, featured more than 869 artists and 190 local folk and classical ensembles, and attracted an audience of approximately 2 lakh visitors, a testament to the strong cultural interest and spiritual passion such inter-regional connections produce. The event marks a calculated state strategy to present Indian federalism not only in administrative parlance, but as a civilisational trade, upholding the notion that spiritual and linguistic diversity defines India.

### ***Respecting the Gurus: Sikh Celebrations and Religious Harmony***

The Modi administration has also stepped up national celebrations of Sikh gurus in commemoration of their historical and philosophical achievements: 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and 350th Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh Ji were celebrated by state-directed

events on an international level. Not only were these religious festivals but also tools of inter-faith communion and exchange, demonstrating India's willingness to be respectful and celebratory of the religious diversity of its past.

### ***Global Buddhist Summit: Diplomacy through Dharma***

India's role as the host of the Global Buddhist Summit reaffirmed its position as a guardian of Buddhist heritage and its importance in the universal moral order. In his speech, PM Modi stressed the ageless relevance of the Eightfold Path as India's civilisational gift to the world presenting it as a template for sustainable living, moral governance, and religious well-being in the 21st century. India's soft power insertion here was not just historical (as the land of Buddhism's birth) but philosophical positioning India as a moral voice in global conversation.

### ***Mahakumbh 2025: Spirituality at Scale***

Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 was the largest spiritual gathering in history, with 66 crore pilgrims attending over a single month. The size dwarfed the initial estimate of 45 crore visitors over 45 days. The event was a multifaceted blend of ritual, governance, and identity politics. Anchored in the old traditions, the active engagement by the state through digital crowd management, heritage branding, and religious diplomacy converted the Kumbh into a symbol of India's capacity for spiritual mass mobilization across caste, class, and region.

### ***Reform in Minority Institutions: The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025***

The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 sought to bring increased transparency and accountability to the administration of waqf properties through centralised digitisation and a strong online portal. The reform has been framed as a good governance initiative, and religious

charitable properties are not just protected but also administered transparently for public good.

*WAVES 2025: India's Cultural Soft Power Goes Global*

One of the biggest media diplomacy initiatives in recent times, the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES), conducted between 1st–4th May 2025 in Mumbai, took India's global role in media and cultural entrepreneurship to a new high. Highlights: More than 100 nations, 1,000+ M&E firms, and 1 lakh+ visitors attended, 77 nations signed the WAVES Declaration, demonstrating India's convening power, Business agreements for ₹1,300 crore signed and ₹8,000 crore MoUs with the Maharashtra government executed, The WAVEX platform provided 500+ startups with visibility, enabling Tier 1 and Tier 2 city entrepreneurs to present pitches to leading investors. WAVES heralded a change in India's reputation shift from passive cultural exporter to proactive global innovator in entertainment and soft power.

Through events such as Kashi Tamil Sangamam, Maha Kumbh 2025, Global Buddhist Summit, and WAVES, the government has attempted to integrate cultural celebration into national policy. These initiatives reflect a change in the way the state approaches culture not as the backdrop for policy, but as a organizing principle of national identity, diplomacy, and growth. Whether via sacred ceremonies, digital renewal, or multimedia summits, India's changing cultural policy after 2014 embodies a vision of unity-in-diversity nurtured by civilisational continuity as well as constitutional inclusivity.

This diaspora-focused strategy has not been without its critics, however. Academics have noted that it tends to serve disproportionately the upper-caste, Hindu, and economically wealthy sections of the diaspora, thereby excluding Tamil Muslims in Malaysia, Indian-origin Christians in the



Caribbean, or indentured labour communities in Africa. The danger is that diaspora soft power turns into a homogenized expression of India's cultural identity, effacing its pluralism. The perfect, then, would be a more expansive cultural diplomacy that acknowledges Indian heterogeneity abroad.

One of the biggest instances of ritual as soft power is the reformation of the Kumbh Mela. The Kumbh, traditionally, has been a religious gathering based on mythological cosmology, celebrated cyclically in four river-bank cities: Prayagraj, Ujjain, Haridwar, and Nashik. The Kumbh has undergone unprecedented infrastructural, administrative, and semiotic transformations since 2014. The 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh, awarded UNESCO Intangible Heritage status, was not only revamped as a religious celebration but as a demonstration of India's spirituality in the modern era. During the Modi regime, the Kumbh was also aggressively promoted via digital campaigns, short films, international roadshows, and foreign missions. ₹4,000+ crore was invested in infrastructure roads, sanitation, digital kiosks, and tent cities with Wi-Fi and QR-based navigation systems. For the first time, overseas visitors were invited through "Spiritual Tourism" packages. World leaders, foreign guests, and ambassadors were taken in at the Mela so they could view what the government called *"India's civilisational marvel."*

This spectacularisation of ritual exists on several levels. On the one hand, it enhances infrastructure, sanitation, and accessibility, making the Kumbh a cultural brand on a global scale. On the other hand, it creates issues related to commodification and state appropriation of sacred rituals. It is claimed that the Kumbh's spiritual spontaneity is being substituted with state choreography, in which sadhus are now cultural commodities, and rituals are made efficient for photographs. Cultural theorists like Arjun Appadurai have noted how such spectacles reflect "the work of imagination"

in modern stateshow rituals are reimagined to align with global optics.

The Kumbh Mela also becomes a site for civilisational narrative-telling. Laser shows depicting the Ganga's tale, Vedic science exhibitions, Bharat Mata pavilions, and giant sculptures of ancient seers reflect a re-telling of India's history on the scale of sacred geography. The intersection of religion, tourism, digital media, and statecraft in the Kumbh is representative of the post-2014 cultural regulationwhere India's festivals are no longer mere local customs, but a global heritage commodity.

Such ritual diplomacy is carried out in digital and cultural domains too. Culture Ministry and ICCR have initiated initiatives such as "Dekho Apna Desh," "India: A Festival of India" (overseas), and "Digital India Week" based on cultural themes. Online exhibitions on Diwali, Raksha Bandhan, and Holi are made available on global portals. Indian ritual films and documentaries are streamed on state-sponsored platforms such as Sansad TV and Doordarshan World. The state's cultural footprint is thus not just performative but also curatorial, shaping how festivals are remembered, archived, and disseminated.

In total, the post-2014 era has seen a clear shift in cultural policy of festivals and rituals. What was previously handled as private religion or anthropological interest is now central to India's statecraft and soft power foreign policy. Festivals have turned into locations of identity-making, economic mobilization, global branding, and cultural diplomacy. The transition from celebration to curation, ritual to spectacle, locality to globality marks the outline of India's cultural change.

But this transition has also to be calibrated attentively. As anthropologist Nandini Sundar warned, politicization of ritual for political purposes can potentially disengage

minority groups, secular practices, or other systems of belief. A cultural policy that prioritizes Hindu festivals and overlooks Islamic, Christian, Sikh, or tribal rituals can build asymmetries of cultural representation. The challenge thus is to develop a pluralistic soft power one that affirms Diwali and Eid, Holi and Bihu, Kumbh and Urs, as common cultural inheritances.

Ultimately, festivals are not just rituals they are cultural texts that inscribe memory, belonging, and identity. In their reformation from sacred practice into instruments of soft power, they expose the developing imagination of the Indian state. Whether these developments produce cultural empowerment or ideological consolidation will be a function of the grammar of inclusion, the ethics of representation, and the genuineness of engagement with India's varied ritual landscapes.

## **Chapter - 7**

### **The Changing Urban Landscape**

Urban environments are not just physical environments consisting of roads, buildings, and greens; they are meaning-making places. They carry the traces of political ideologies, civilizational imagination, memory, and power. Post-2014 India has witnessed a grand refiguring of urban space, not only in infrastructural terms, but also in its symbolic beauty and cultural stories. This reimagining is apparent in large-scale endeavours such as the Central Vista Redevelopment Plan, the Smart Cities Mission, and in the increasing application of architecture and public art to convey an image of India based on civilisational pride and national unity.

One of the most visible and contentious city projects of the Modi administration is the Central Vista Project. Announced in 2019 and envisioned as a transformation of Delhi's administrative heart, the project aims to redevelop the Rajpath (renamed Kartavya Path), build a new Parliament House, a Central Secretariat, a Prime Minister's residence, and a Vice-President's Enclave, all within a cohesive master plan. The stated objectives include improving infrastructure, creating a more efficient administrative setup, and decongesting outdated colonial structures. But the project's more profound implications are symbolic reassertions: a transformation from a colonial imperial look to one that is projected as civilisationally grounded and nationally indigenised.

The Central Vista has been referred to by critics as an act of aesthetic nationalism—the conscious building of a new

language in architecture to represent the ideology of the current regime. The new Parliament house, for instance, is built in a triangular shape, with Indian art and temple architecture motifs. The Kartavya Path, which was earlier known as Rajpath, has been reimagined to include a people-friendly ethos footpaths, public art monuments, gardens, and a ceremonial axis that attempts to go beyond colonial imagery. In speeches, Prime Minister Modi has called it "a space that reflects India's democratic ethos and civilisational pride."

However, symbolic tale of Central Vista cannot be understood in isolation. Its temporal transformation away from colonial legacies to a civilisational future is inscribed in its naming, plan, and aesthetic grammar itself. The Shivaji statue at India Gate, the relocation of Amar Jawan Jyoti from India Gate to the National War Memorial, and the move to fill public spaces with statues of freedom fighters, tribal chiefs, and ancient sages all indicate a changing historical memory. These gestures indicate a conscious rewriting of national iconography, in which colonial and Nehruvian legacies are being re-tuned, and new heroes and symbols are being brought to the fore to represent a greater continuity with pre-modern India.

Simultaneous with this is the ambitious Smart Cities Mission (SCM), initiated in 2015. Though the scheme first emphasized infrastructural objectives waste processing, digital connectivity, transportation within cities, and clean energy it has started incorporating cultural and heritage elements more and more. Varanasi, Ujjain, Ayodhya, Bhubaneswar, and Jaipur are not merely being modernized; they are being culturally curated. The concept of the Smart City has, in many instances, given way to that of a "civilisational city", where LED streetlights and high-speed internet sit alongside temples, ghats, heritage walks, and

mythological mapping.

Consider the case of Varanasi, the Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency. The Varanasi Smart City plan has in it not only e-buses and sewer improvements but also temple facade renovations, heritage street lighting, cultural signs in Sanskrit and Hindi, and digitalised museums. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, as a spiritual infrastructure development, is deeply rooted in the Smart City vision, fusing accessibility with monumental looks. It is as much a visual reaffirmation of sanctity as it is a state-led urban regeneration.

Here, urbanism is a vehicle of nationalism. The state is not simply delivering improved urban infrastructure it is building narratives. The development of Ayodhya as a religious-touristic destination with broad roads, international airport, themed Ramayana circuits, and sandstone walkways is a revealing instance of how urban design is being utilized to concrete a sacred-nationalist imagination. Other such developments in Ujjain (Mahakal Lok), Mathura-Vrindavan, and Dwarka only further reinforce this trend, as urban space is converted into ritual-heritage space, fusing religious tourism, digital cartography, and security infrastructure. This overlap of sacred and civic space is a major departure from the secular, functionalist model of urban planning that characterized the post-Independence period. Previous planners such as Le Corbusier for Chandigarh or CPWD for Lutyens' Delhi stressed rational, modernist urbanism. The current cultural-state urbanism, on the other hand, combines myth, history, and heritage into the vocabulary of urban aesthetics. It is urban planning as a civilisational storytelling exercise and as such, both politically resonant and deeply symbolic.

Aesthetisation of this sort, however, has not been entirely uncritical. Urban historians like Rama Deb Roy and Rashmi Sadana have voiced concerns that these cultural

drives to make cities more beautiful could displace informal economies, erase lived memory, and gentrify public spaces. For instance, the redevelopment of Varanasi's ghats and streets has led to eviction notices for vendors, artists, and small shopkeepers who had historically operated from those spaces. The risk, then, is that urban beautification becomes urban sanitisation, where real people are removed to make way for imagined heritage.

Moreover, this aesthetic nationalism raises questions about who gets remembered and how urban space is divided along lines of religion and identity. Monuments such as the Statue of Unity (Sardar Patel) and the planned Statue of Lord Ram in Ayodhya are not merely gigantic in size but gigantic in ideas attempting to establish a certain vision of Indian history that is beneficial to certain personalities and excludes others. The city skyline, in its statues and monuments, is made into an observable indicator of power and remembrance. At the macro level, this reimagining of the city is linked to India's global soft power endeavor. Cities such as Varanasi, Hampi, and Prayagraj are being promoted more and more in international platforms as models of India's heritage. Urban diplomacy marketing cities for their cultural capital is an emerging arena, and the Modi government has made sustained efforts to leverage G20 Summits, World Heritage candidature, and overseas visits to promote urban spaces as cultural assets.

Apart from that, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs collaborated to make sure that smart city development includes museums, digital heritage walks, amphitheatres, culture zones, and art districts. Initiatives such as HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) initiated in 2015 focused on conserving and rejuvenating the essence of Indian heritage cities through planning and design. While frequently eclipsed

by grander infrastructural initiatives, HRIDAY indicates a subtle vision of culture-led urban development. It indicates that the city is not just an arena of infrastructure but a site of intangible cultural heritage. In conclusion, post-2014 India witnesses a shift in paradigm in urban looks and planning, in which infrastructure making is intricately mixed up with national identity, historical memory, and civilisational pride. The Central Vista Project, Smart Cities with cultural zones, and heritage urbanism signify a new way of spatial governance where roads, monuments, and parks are curated not only for functionality but for ideological consistency.

While these changes represent the ambitions of an emerging India to assert power, order, and heritage, they need to be critically examined. Do they benefit people equally? Do they honor plural histories? Do they empower the marginalized? As cities become theaters of cultural spectacle, the task is to balance the democratic ethic of public space its inclusivity, accessibility, and memory against the interests of grandeur. Here, urban design is a political exercise a palimpsest of past, present, and future ideologies engraved not just in stone and steel but in narrative, representation, and exclusion. The Indian city since 2014 is no longer merely a place of governance or economy; it is a canvas of nationalism, painted in gargantuan scale, to be given its rightful place in the history of nations and the fantasy of its citizens.



## **Chapter - 8**

### **Art, Film and Literary Discourse**

In the cultural life of countries, arts tend to be at once a mirror and a battlefield both reflecting the dominant ideologies but at the same time questioning, resisting, or reinforcing them. In India after 2014, the space of art, cinema, and literature has emerged as a powerful site where state discourses, civilisational assertions, oppositional voices, and market forces converge in numerous ways. The Modi period has witnessed an unmistakable change in the tone, look, and political messaging of cultural work, precipitating arguments surrounding censorship, cultural nationalism, and the role of the state in determining discourse. Among the first flash points in this cultural ferment was the "Award Wapsi" campaign of 2015, when several leading writers, filmmakers, and thinkers like Nayantara Sahgal, Ashok Vajpeyi, and a few Sahitya Akademi awardees surrendered their state awards in revolt against growing intolerance, communal clashes, and what they saw as the complicity of cultural institutions. Provoked by events like the Dadri lynching and the killing of rationalist intellectual M.M. Kalburgi, the movement marked an uneasiness among writers and artists regarding the curtailment of space for opposition and the perceived converging of cultural institutions with the state. It was not just a protest; it was a reckoning a call to the arts to maintain their independence against an increasingly majoritarian discourse.

This was met with forceful reactions from pro-government analysts, who characterized the protests as

political or elite acts. The state itself, in turn, stayed generally silent, but made one point clear: the cultural realm was no longer neutral. These institutions like Sahitya Akademi, National School of Drama, FTII (Film and Television Institute of India), and IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) were turned into fields of appointment politics, and the directors and chairpersons were replaced with people who were sympathetic to the ideological ethos of the ruling regime. Scholars such as Ravikant and Sadan Jha pointed out how this reconfiguration of cultural institutions signals a departure from liberal-secular patronage paradigms towards civilisational-statist models, wherein Sanskritic and Hindu symbols are typically given priority over pluralist narratives.

Cinema, the most powerful medium in India, has experienced a parallel shift. The post-2014 era has also been marked by a biopic boom, notably on political leaders, soldiers, and spiritual icons. Movies such as PM Narendra Modi, The Accidental Prime Minister, Tanhaji, Uri: The Surgical Strike, Samrat Prithviraj, and The Kerala Story while diverse in genre are bound together by their valorization of nationalist manhood, martial bravery, and civilizational pride. Mythology, which was considered old hat in mainstream cinema, has returned in spectacular form in big-budget cinematic epics such as Adipurush, Ram Setu, and the revamped Mahabharata projects in production. These are not isolated aesthetic decisions; they form part of a broader cultural grammar that attempts to fit popular culture into the narratives of India's "civilisational renaissance," which are routinely sanctioned by state discourse.

The state has, in fact, played a substantial role in backing and popularizing these narratives. In the form of tax exemptions, calculated promotions, and cultural diplomacy platforms, films conforming to nationalist themes are

frequently privileged. For instance, *The Kashmir Files* garnered public support from ministers and even the Prime Minister, who hailed it as a corrective retelling of historical facts. The film, tackling the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, was attacked by many for its lack of balance and divisive storytelling, but it was framed as an act of cultural correction representative of a state-sanctioned historiography unfolding via cinema.

Concurrently, literary production has witnessed a radical change. Increasing numbers of publications state-supported as well as market-driven are taking up issues of civilisational pride, Hindu mythology, and revisionist histories. Writers such as Anand Neelakantan, Ashwin Sanghi, and Amish Tripathi have developed a huge readership, and their books often mix history and myth in a manner that resonates with popular cultural nationalism. Though these writers need not always consciously support state ideology, the appeal of such writing indicates a cultural atmosphere in which myth is no longer divorced from history, and civilisational greatness becomes a metanarrative.

Simultaneously, autonomous and critical literary voices are faced with mounting obstacles. Writers who criticise the state, challenge Hindutva politics, or underscore marginalised lives are regularly deplatformed, attacked by online trolls, or brought to the courts. The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) charges against poets and activists, and the detention of scholars under sedition or conspiracy charges, have produced a culture of creative fear. The chilling effect of these measures cannot be overstated; it not merely constrains what is articulated but also transforms what is conceived.

*Art, also, has not remained immune. Public festivals of art such as the Kochi-Muziris Biennale or Serendipity Arts Festival remain popular; but politically critical artists like*

*Tushar Joag, Subodh Gupta, or Shilpa Gupta have frequently been subjected to institutional restrictions or censorship. Installation or work deemed offensive to religious sentiments has resulted in exhibitions being shut down or galleries backing out, exposing how space for experimentation is becoming progressively charged.*

This is not to imply that state patronage has been uniformly oppressive or chauvinist. Programs such as the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, and Kala Utsav have facilitated funding and dissemination of varied arts, particularly from marginalized tribal, rural, and linguistic groups. But they come with an ideological biaselevating nationalist over subaltern themes, valorizing syncretism when it is domesticated within a civilisational narrative. Diaspora cultural spaces; e.g., Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, International Day of Yoga, and Indian Film Festivals internationally have also helped create a soft-power spread of Indian culture but frequently filtered through a lens of managed spirituality, myth, and Bharatiya identity. This global projection is herself engineered, wherein India's diversity is celebrated but also homogenized to project an overarching sense of civilisational coherence. Here, the boundary between art and propaganda, history and myth, literature and ideology grows thin. As Arundhati Roy rightly penned, "In India, we don't need a Ministry of Truth. Our truths shape-shift every election." Whether one subscribes to such a statement or not, one cannot deny that the arts are now embroiled with the politics of the time. At stake is not just freedom of speech, but the epistemology of culture itself how we know what we know, what we remember, and who narrates the story. As Partha Chatterjee has persuasively argued, the postcolonial nation tends to struggle over the task of reconciling the "*inner domain of cultural sovereignty*" with the external domain of modern politics. In present-day India, this interior space is increasingly being determined by

majoritarian symbols, civilisational longings, and aesthetic conformity to state ideology.

And yet, the persistence of counter-cultural voices, particularly in regional languages, Dalit literature, feminist poetry, street theatre, and independent cinema, keeps providing alternative visions of India. They keep reminding us that culture is never monolithic. It is an arena of contestation, negotiation, and becoming.

In summary, the post-2014 cultural space is characterized by state-led cultural aggregation and disperse but durable dissidence. The arts have emerged as a central terrain upon which India's ideological struggles are waged, frequently not in violence, but through metaphor, myth, silence, and spectacle. *It is here that India's cultural democracy will be contested in the future one film, one book, one poem at a time.*

## **Chapter - 9**

### **Folk Culture and Regional Revival**

The post-2014 years have seen renewed emphasis on India's folk cultures, indigenous crafts, and regional traditions. Typically set up as the "soul of India," folk art, music, performance, and handloom industries have not just aesthetic but profound civilisational memory and local identity. The cultural imagination of the Modi government one that is heavily reliant on "Vocal for Local", "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", and "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" has attempted to bring folk and local traditions into the mainstream national imagination of building the nation. While this has initiated institutional and economic space for marginalized artistic publics, it has also provoked issues of commodification, national branding, and the politics of planned visibility.

One of the pillars of this regional resurgence has been the institutionalized state patronage of crafts, handlooms, and performing arts under initiatives such as GI (Geographical Indication) tagging, ODOP (One District One Product), and craft villages. The GI tagging program, regulated under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, acquired renewed momentum after 2014. Such products as Pochampally Ikat, Madhubani paintings, Channapatna toys, Kanjeevaram silk, Phulkari, and Bastar metalwork have been both state-sponsored and globally exposed under this programme. This exercise does more than grant them legal protection; it brings them cultural legitimacy, market significance, and a history of indigenous-

ness for local artisans.

The One District One Product (ODOP) plan, initiated by the government of Uttar Pradesh in 2018 and subsequently replicated at the national level, tries to combine economic empowerment and cultural renaissance. It isolates one traditional product for each district be it Banarasi sarees, Kannauj perfumes, or Moradabad brassware and assists artisans with marketing, credit, and e-commerce connectivity. To date, 2024, the program has grown to encompass hundreds of districts spread across India, thereby creating a mosaic of regional identities into the economic fabric of the nation. The Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Culture coordinate to jointly promote these products in diplomatic events, G20 summits, and diaspora events, converting local heritage to soft-power capital.

At the same time, the "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" (EBSB) scheme, initiated in 2015 on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 140th birth anniversary, promotes inter-state cultural interaction and facilitates linguistic, culinary, and artistic assimilation across states. A state is matched with another state to promote its art, literature, and indigenous practices. For instance, Haryana and Telangana, Odisha and Maharashtra, or Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh have been matched under this program. By way of school curriculums, youth exchange activities, dance-drama festivals, and folk-art camps, EBSB attempts to nationalize regional culture without homogenizing it, but rather celebrating its difference in an integrative framework. Some observers, however, say that such initiatives, benevolent as they are, curate diversity in a way that collapses regional contests or local political rivalries into a greater civilisational narrative. In folk performance, the post-2014 years witnessed a tangibly enhanced institutional patronage for the endangered art forms. Programs initiated by the Zonal

Cultural Centres (ZCCs), part of the Ministry of Culture, have been working to revive and popularize arts such as Yakshagana, Karakattam, Chhau, Pandavani, Gotipua, Bhavai, and Tamang Selo, among others. Seasonal festivals such as Rashtriya Lok Kala Mahotsav, Bharat Lok Sangeet Utsav, and National Tribal Dance Festival provide a space for such performers to stage on national and international platforms. This has facilitated the revalorisation of folk as national, tending to place tribal and regional performances as "India's authentic voice."

The critical issue, though, is the mediation of folk cultures through state narratives. Anthropologists such as Nita Kumar and Paula Richman have cautioned that the state's selective approval can lead to the aestheticisation of culture instead of its wholesome preservation. A tribal dance tradition, for example, may be highlighted for its visual beauty on Republic Day festivities but the socio-political problems pertaining to that tribeland rights, education, ecological displacement can go unattended. This indicates a disjunction between symbolic inclusion and structural engagement.

Further, in many instances, folk traditions have been reinterpreted for nationalist or civilisational imagery. Ramayana dramas such as Ramlila and Ram Bhajans, for instance, have seen heightened patronage in the wake of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir movement, with state sponsorship being dedicated to Ramlila committees and lavish productions all over the country. The Kumbh Mela, proclaimed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, has also experienced unparalleled infrastructural and promotional investment in recent times, combining folk spirituality with cultural branding and tourism economics.

A significant extension of this regional revival is the gendered dimension of folk culture. Women's contribution to



weaving, folk songs, ritual dances, and community festivals is considerable but frequently marginalized in formal cultural spaces. Since 2014, there have been efforts to empower women weavers through self-help groups (SHGs), craft clusters, and Mahila Shakti Kendra schemes. Schemes for handloom sarees, organic dyes, and ecologically sustainable crafts promoted by women have accelerated through online platforms such as GeM (Government e-Marketplace) and India Handloom Brand. This step not only economizes folk culture but also presents a feminist interpretation of tradition where tradition is presented as a space of empowerment instead of subordination.

The digital revolution has also facilitated folk and regional artists to connect with new publics. Sites such as Hungama Folk Junction, Doordarshan archives, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts Digital Library, and private YouTube channels have greatly facilitated documentation, archiving, and popularising of lesser-known genres. The COVID-19 pandemic, paradoxically, accelerated the shift, as a number of artists shifted to Instagram, Facebook, and online workshops to ensure continuity and establish patronage networks.

Amidst this thriving ground, doubts still surround authenticity, sustainability, and representation. Others like Christophe Jaffrelot and Mukul Kesavan contend that revival in regions should be cautious not to commodify culture. The spurt of GI tags, ODOP branding, and festival festivals could lead to a "museumisation" of living traditions, where culture is frozen into performative artifacts, cut off from their natural social and ritual context. Additionally, communities usually have no control over how their cultural items are curated, interpreted, or commodified in international markets or in state fairs.

Also, in a heteropolitan polity such as India, folk cultures are usually politically mobilized. Language movements, caste-based performance exclusions, and region-specific traditions like the Jalikattu in Tamil Nadu or Dahi Handi in Maharashtra have become sites of cultural assertion and conflict. Whereas the post-2014 order has adopted regionalism, it has also been criticized for keeping dissenting folk forms on the margins or promoting those that resonate with civilisational-Hindu themes. Thus, Dalit musical traditions, anti-caste ballads, and tribal resistance songs continue to be underrepresented in prominent state festivals or in school curricula. However, the present stage of regional cultural policy is unmistakably strong in the areas of visibility, finance, and integration into the market. The fresh focus on folk culture as economic resources, instruments of soft power, and markers of identity has brought it from the periphery to the center. This offers a challenge and an opportunity to forge a democratised, pluralistic folk revival that not only respects the beauty of culture but also its historical contradictions, shared ownership by communities, and changing meanings.

Finally, the revival of folk culture and regional traditions since post-2014 India reflects the interlinked relationship among culture, politics, and economics. The state has been instrumental in reviving, branding, and exhibiting folk art as an integral part of this larger cultural nation-building effort. Whether this will result in a more sustainable, inclusive, and critically engaged cultural environment, or will simply yield a heritage product carefully crafted for national and international consumption, is yet to be determined. The real test of any culture policy is not only how effectively it conserves the past, but how meaningfully it engages with the living, breathing, and contested cultures of the present.

“It is India's clarion call to the world to come together to promote each other's heritage and amplify the spirit of human welfare, encourage tourism and create more job opportunities he said. Modi said that there was a time when heritage was ignored in the pursuit of development, but today, India's vision is development as well as heritage -- 'Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi...’”

*-PM Modi at 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee.*

## **Chapter - 10**

### **Cultural as Soft Power**

In world politics, culture has been a traditional soft power tool, able to bridge political borders and ideological divisions. Ever since 2014, Indian foreign policy, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been heavily betting on cultural diplomacy as a foreign policy tool for global outreach. By framing India not only as a contemporary democratic republic but also as the birthplace of ancient wisdom and values of civilisation, the government has used cultural idioms, festivals, spiritual philosophies, and knowledge traditions to reconstruct India's global self. It is a strategy which affects not only India's bilateral relations and multilateral interfaces but also converges with internal debates on heritage, identity, and national pride.

One of the most symbolic events of this cultural shift was the universal endorsement of June 21st as International Day of Yoga (IDY) by the United Nations in 2014. Suggested by Prime Minister Modi in his address at the UN General Assembly in September 2014, Yoga was presented as India's contribution to the world's civilisational tradition symbolizing balance between mind, body, and spirit. In a period of just three months, the resolution was co-sponsored by 177 nations, a record in the history of the UN, and this represents both the international popularity of yoga and the efficacy of India's diplomatic machinery.

International Day of Yoga has been an annual global phenomenon since its opening in 2015. From the Eiffel Tower to the Sydney Opera House, from Times Square to Kathmandu's Pashupatinath Temple, mass yoga sessions

have been held with state and embassy assistance. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in collaboration with its cultural wing Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), has hosted yoga performances, lectures, and diplomatic receptions in over 190 nations. The IDY events at UN Headquarters, with involvement from international leaders and UN representatives, have placed India not only as a political player but as a cultural idea leader. Celebrating yoga here has played a twofold role: projecting India's spiritual capital to the world while affirming a civilisational-nationalist discourse within the country.

In concert with yoga, museum diplomacy has also become a powerful new frontier in India's cultural projection. Over the past decade, the Modi government has initiated partnerships with global institutions like the British Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Louvre, and Victoria and Albert Museum for knowledge sharing, exhibitions, and repatriation dialogues. A significant achievement in this realm has been the repatriation of stolen Indian artefacts, particularly temple idols and sculptures, from countries like the US, Australia, and the UK. Since 2014, more than 300 cultural artefacts have been repatriated to India, some belonging to the Chola and Gupta eras, representing a paradigm change in heritage restitution diplomacy.

Indian museums have also seen changes that reflect a larger agenda of civilisational repositioning. The creation of the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, the renovation of the National Museum, and the digitisation of collections by institutions such as the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) indicate the state's desire to present a modern but grounded cultural identity. These trends are not institutional alone but discursive; they tell the story of India's past, its leaders, and its presence in the world through a carefully edited prism of

pride, continuity, and resilience. Joint exhibitions like those of the Buddha's relics, Indo-Roman trade, or Mughal miniatures have toured overseas, providing a multivalent picture of India that merges spiritual, aesthetic, and historical aspects.

At the center of this civilisational diplomacy is the reimagining of old universities like Nalanda and Takshashila as metaphors of India's international intellectual heritage. The Nalanda University initiative, which has backing from East Asian partners like Japan, Singapore, and China, is not so much seen as an educational institution but as a symbol of India's cosmopolitan past and its aspirational future. From the heritage of the ancient 5th-century centre of learning, contemporary Nalanda wants to establish India as a world centre for Buddhist studies, global affairs, and environmental sustainability. The vision of India as a Vishwagurua preceptor to the world has emerged as an overused rhetorical trope in governmental discourses. In UN, G20, and BRICS speeches, Prime Minister Modi has appealed to India's spiritual-philosophical heritage, from the Upanishads to Mahatma Gandhi, from Ayurveda to eco-living, strengthening the soft power lexicon without being geopolitically or economically focused.

The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) program, embedded in India's New Education Policy 2020, is not merely reserved for national school curricula but also exported globally through lectures, conferences, and university partnerships. Sanskrit, Vedic maths, classical Indian logic (Nyaya), and Ayurveda are being advanced as trans-civilisational offerings. ICCR fellowships and MoUs with foreign universities introduce Indian classical arts and sciences into departments as wide-ranging as Harvard to Heidelberg, SOAS to Tokyo University. This worldwide pedagogic initiative reinforces India's projection as a

civilisational power while satisfying diaspora and world academia's cultural curiosity.

The contribution of the Indian diaspora to cultural diplomacy cannot be exaggerated. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, observed every two years since 2003 and renamed after 2014 with enhanced visibility, has emerged as a flagship celebration for honoring the cultural accomplishments of Indian-origin people overseas. Organized in places such as Varanasi, Gandhinagar, and Indore, the festival convenes scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and Indian-origin politicians, reinforcing a cultural heritage narrative of Indian excellence globally. Likewise, Kashi-Tamil Sangamam and other diaspora gatherings across Indian regions connect the narratives of linguistic pride, spiritual unity, and civilisational continuity, facilitating a transnational cultural imaginary connecting regional India to the world.

Cultural diplomacy also finds its confluence with geopolitical imperatives. India's enhanced footprint in Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa has gone hand in hand with cultural outreach. Buddhist shows in Mongolia, classical dance festivals in Vietnam, and Sanskrit seminars in Kenya. Its Act East and Neighborhood First policies have had cultural chapters incorporating articles on shared heritage, trade connections, and historical awareness. India's hosting of the G20 in 2023 embodies this vision for cultural foreign policy with exhibition, temple tours, crafts demonstrations, and yoga performances integrated into the summit agenda, showcasing India as a negotiating partner, but also as a civilisational host.

But critical questions have been raised by scholars regarding the ideological wrapping of cultural diplomacy. Historian Romila Thapar cautions against the application of a "monolithic civilisational model" that disregards India's plural, contested, and syncretic histories. Others, such as

Ashis Nandy and Meera Nanda, criticize the shift towards spiritual nationalism, which presents culture as eternal and Hindu-focused, possibly excluding the subcontinent's Islamic, Christian, tribal, and secular traditions. Projection turns into imposition very easily, and soft power turns into civilisational exceptionalism if care is not taken.

Additionally, the use of culture as diplomacy raises issues of representation and selectivity. While yoga and Ayurveda are given high status, Sufi music, Bhakti poetry, Dalit literary heritage, and tribal cosmologies continue to be underrepresented within India's own global narrative. India's narrative as Vishwaguru is in danger of becoming teleological and triumphalist, unless it also recognizes the multiplicity of India's past experiences of trade and war, of caste and resistance, of faith and reason.

However, the years after 2014 witness an unprecedented cultural assertiveness in Indian foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy shifted from the margins of statecraft to its heart, where identity, economy, and world leadership converge. India no longer stands as a passive inheritor of tradition but is now an active curator of world values based on its ancient knowledge. Whether or not this model develops into plural, inclusive, and critically alert cultural cosmopolitanism or disintegrates into ideological insularity will seal the legacy of India's civilisational foreign policy in the 21st century.



## **Chapter - 11**

# **Cultural Diplomacy and India's Global Projection**

The cultural diplomacy of India since 2014 has transformed from a subsidiary role in foreign affairs to a key pillar of its global identity projection. Redefining India as a civilisational power and not just as a modern republic, the Modi regime has adopted heritage, spirituality, wellness, and ancient knowledge systems as diplomatic resources. This chapter examines the ways in which India has employed culture to brand itself globally as well as shape the way it is imagined by the world and by itself.

International Day of Yoga (IDY) continues to be the strongest manifestation of India's soft power revival. When Prime Minister Modi made the suggestion during the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2014, he had articulated Yoga as "an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition" that "symbolizes unity of mind and body, thought and action." The resolution was co-sponsored by a record 177 countries, the largest ever, and adopted in a record 75 days. With the initial celebration in 2015, when more than 35,985 individuals practiced yoga at Rajpath, IDY has now become a worldwide cultural phenomenon. 23.4 crore individuals took part internationally in 2023, while Uttar Pradesh alone in 2024 saw 25.93 lakh online yoga commitments.

Yoga in this story is not just physical health. It is used as a vehicle for India's civilisational continuity, a product that symbolises spiritual, environmental, and universal harmony. The 2025 theme of "Yoga for One Earth, One Health" aligns it even better with international debates on climate and

sustainability, and India's bid to establish a moral leadership role in world governance through its traditions.

Alongside yoga, Ayurveda too has turned into a diplomatic tool of soft power. Led by the AYUSH Ministry, India has signed 24 country-specific and 48 institution-specific MoUs across the world. It has set up 15 Ayurveda academic chairs overseas and runs 39 Ayush Information Cells in 35 countries. Ayurveda Day was celebrated in more than 150 nations in 2024, reflecting global adoption of traditional Indian medicine. These are not sheer cultural exports but institutional initiatives to reshape global wellness narratives via India's epistemologies.

Inclusion of Ayurveda in the WHO's ICD-11 classification and the inauguration of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine at Jamnagar further establish Ayurveda's scientific credibility. The "Ayush Visa" and "Heal in India" initiatives that integrate cultural heritage with economic and medical tourism further reinforce the correlation between cultural identity and global markets. A significant diplomatic success has been India's effort in the repatriation of stolen cultural artefacts. Before 2014, only 13 antiquities had been returned. By 2023, that number surged to 642, with the United States alone returning 578 artefacts, including 105 pieces in 2023 during Modi's official visit. This reclaiming is an increasing cultural assertiveness and the reassertion of India's moral and historical claim over its own civilisational remains. These returns come in ritualistic forms, portending not merely restitution but civilisational redemption.

India's museum diplomacy reinforces these repatriation initiatives. The Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, which opened in 2022, showcases the legacies of all Indian Prime Ministers in an inclusive manner, emphasizing democratic continuity. Simultaneously, initiatives such as the Tribal Freedom

Fighters' Museums and the redesign of Jallianwala Bagh Memorial beget carefully constructed spaces of collective memory that are national as well as transnational legibility.

These museums become ambassadors of India's civilisational ethos, where local stories are projected globally.

The revival of Nalanda University and the reawakening of the Vishwaguru narrative form the intellectual fulcrum of India's civilisational diplomacy. Inspired by India's past learning institutions such as Takshashila and Nalanda, the university supported by ASEAN partners symbolizes a metaphor of India's global educational leadership. In the 2023 Global Buddhist Summit, Modi reasserted India's position in the conservation of Buddhist heritage and the promotion of peace, saying, "India gave the world Buddha, not yuddha (war)". By these symbols, India aims not only to reclaim historical depth but also to set the agenda for the future of world ethics. The Indian diaspora is also an important pillar of cultural diplomacy. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and events like Kashi Tamil Sangamam not only place the diaspora as economic benefactors but also as carriers of culture. The Kashi Tamil Sangamam in 2025 saw 869 artistes and 190 folk troupes attend, welcoming 2 lakh visitors, commemorating the age-old civilisational connection between the north and the south. Such occurrences consolidate India's internal unity while advancing plural heritage into the world.

India's initiation into media diplomacy came with the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in 2025, which saw more than 1,000 media firms from 100+ nations take part. Memoranda were signed with companies such as Google, Adobe, and NVIDIA, and the WAVES Declaration was endorsed by 77 nations. Such cultural-economic partnerships not only diversify India's soft power but also place it in next-generation industries such as animation, gaming, and digital storytelling. The construction

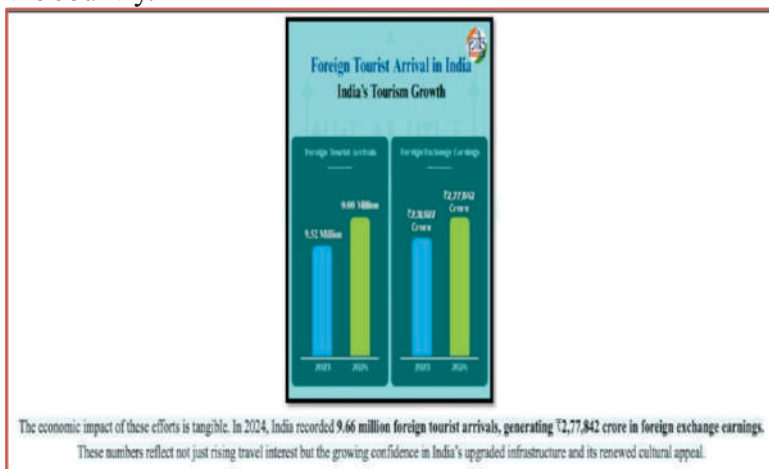
of cultural infrastructure such as Bharat Mandapam accommodating the tallest Ashtadhatu Nataraja statue in the world illustrates the manner in which the state embodies cultural pride in monumental architecture. Such areas, for instance, the refurbished Pragati Maidan, are not just built to hold conferences but as heritage diplomacy sites.

India's interaction with UNESCO World Heritage diplomacy has also gained momentum. The "Moidams: The Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty" was added as the 43rd UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2024. India currently has 62 more in the Tentative List and is actively campaigning to present regional and tribal cultures as having universal worth. This act democratizes the civilizational discourse by integrating hitherto unknown histories into global heritage models.

Yet, thinkers have challenged the essentialist definition of Indian culture in state diplomacy. The focus on Hindu spiritual symbols such as Yoga, Ayurveda, and Ramayana circuits has been controversial because it excludes non-Hindu, Dalit, tribal, and Islamic traditions from the international scene. This risks homogenizing India's diversity in a civilisationally majoritarian paradigm. Additionally, the practice of labeling spiritual traditions for tourism and diplomacy can result in commodification of sacred practices. The spectacle-bred cultural events albeit grandiose in scope sometimes neglect community agency, ritual complexity, and regional specificity. As Meera Nanda cautions, "The modern mythologization of tradition risks replacing empirical ethics with civilisational nostalgia."

Complementing these efforts, the HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme has majorly focused on developing 12 heritage cities. Together, these initiatives are preserving India's spiritual importance

and cultural heritage while driving a surge in tourism across the country.



Finally, India's cultural diplomacy in the post-2014 period has been expansive, assertive, and innovative. It is a conscious attempt to reimagine international perceptions of India along spiritual, cultural, and intellectual lines. The emphasis on yoga, Ayurveda, repatriated art, digital art, and international festivals shows the manner in which culture has also emerged as a national strategic asset. However, its long-term resilience will be based, not merely on hi-tech projection, but on diverse representation, historical integrity, and inclusive interaction. It is only then that India can actually fulfill the role of a Vishwaguru, a guide not merely of wisdom, but of diversity, complexity, and conversation.

## **Chapter – 12**

### **Narendra Modi and the Civilisational Renaissance of Bharat**

India, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm, has not just seen political or economic change but a deep cultural reawakening. This change is not accidental or superficial it is intentional, ideologically motivated, and based on a civilisational imagination that attempts to reclaim Bharat not only as a nation-state, but as an enduring cultural phenomenon. Since 2014, Modi has promoted the thesis that India's identity resides not in its constitutional structure but in its civilisational continuity. From the restoration of sacred sites to the reinterpretation of historical memory, the Modi period has reconfigured the governance and policy role of heritage. His faith that "Itihas chetna hai" history is consciousness encapsulates his vision of culture: the past must be conceived not as a finished book, but as an energizing source of national motive.

In this new dispensation, cultural renaissance is not the preserve of museums or learned articles. It finds expression in the physical transformation of temple towns like Kashi and Ayodhya, in the repatriation of antiquities, in the popularisation of yoga, in the integration of Sanskrit and Indian Knowledge Systems in education, and in the crafting of India's global image through symbolic diplomacy. What makes Modi's leadership distinct is not merely the visibility of these initiatives but their cohesion. These are not isolated programmes they are manifestations of a broader narrative of reclaiming India's cultural sovereignty. Scholar Swapan Dasgupta rightly notes that Modi's efforts are not just about

preserving heritage they are about restoring India's cultural capital and asserting that Bharat's story cannot be told through colonial frames. The redevelopment of spaces such as the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, the digitization of government records, and the redefinition of freedom fighters and obscure heroes in the popular imagination all suggest a state that views heritage as a *sine qua non* of nation-building.

The speeches of Modi, especially on the occasion of grand openings, attest to this focus. He does not view governance as a technocratic endeavor but places each development in the larger civilisational narrative. At the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor inauguration, he declared, “Kashi is not just a city, it is a symbol of India's eternal continuity,” reminding citizens that spiritual spaces are not outdated relics, but vital centres of cultural life. Modi's oratory frequently draws upon the epics, saints, rishis, and historical figures who have shaped India's ethos signalling a leadership style that marries policy with poetry, administration with ancestry. It is in this sense that he appears not just as a Prime Minister but as a chronicler of the Indian civilization positioning new to Indian politics.

This civilisational imagination can be glimpsed everywhere. In architecture, the Central Vista plan is not just a relocation of administrative infrastructure but an aesthetic and symbolic realignment of the Republic's core. In education, the National Education Policy 2020 relocates India's epistemic traditions, making space for classical languages, traditional medicine, and indigenous pedagogies. In diplomacy, the declaration of International Yoga Day at the United Nations is a defining moment of soft power, positioning India not just as an economic power but as a source of global wellness. Political analyst Ashutosh Varshney has observed that Modi's leadership introduces a cultural dimension to India's international image

transforming its identity from a passive postcolonial state to a confident civilisation state.

These efforts are not without institutional depth. Under Modi's leadership, India has undertaken the largest campaign of artefact repatriation in its history. More than 300 antiquities have returned to India since 2014 compared to just 13 in the previous six decades. Archivists and historians, including Meenakshi Jain, have pointed out that this reflects a shift from conservation to civilisational assertion. Modi's cultural policies thus go beyond symbolic acts; they involve legislative, administrative, and international coordination. Similarly, the revival of sites like Kedarnath and the conceptualisation of Char Dham highways are not only infrastructure projects they are gestures of cultural integration, linking sacred geographies with modern mobility.

The role of the diaspora is another important facet of Modi's cultural leadership. His interactions with overseas Indians have consistently blended national pride with civilisational belonging. By emphasising yoga, Ayurveda, Sanskrit, and the Ramayana in his global speeches, Modi has strengthened emotional ties between the Indian diaspora and their cultural roots. He has made India not only their home, but also their dharma Bhoomi the land of values and timeless truth. In venues ranging from Madison Square Garden to G20 summits, Modi has portrayed Bharat as a country that leads with wisdom, not merely wealth. In his address at the Global Buddhist Summit, he evoked the Buddha's teachings as a beacon of light for peace and sustainability in the world, reaffirming India's position as the spiritual mentor in a divided world.

Yet, this civilizational enterprise has not been bereft of criticism. They caution against the instrumentalisation of culture for political ends and warn that a singular narrative



may overshadow India's plural past. Yet even among critics, there is consensus that Modi's tenure has brought culture back into the centre of national discourse. Unlike the cultural policies of earlier governments, which often remained confined to institutions or the elite, Modi's approach has democratised heritage. By celebrating festivals at national platforms, integrating local traditions into government functions, and mainstreaming vernacular pride, his leadership has fostered what political theorists call cultural citizenship -- a model where identity, pride, and belonging are nurtured through shared narratives and symbolic participation.

Another striking feature of Modi's cultural strategy is its ability to engage both the sacred and the secular. The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, which had over 66 crore devotees participating, was not merely a religious event it was a gigantic exercise in cultural diplomacy, city planning, and social integration. Likewise, the WAVES 2025 summit in Mumbai put India's international media leadership in global perspective while anchoring it in its storytelling traditions. By raising such platforms, Modi shows the way that traditional spirituality and modern technology could coexist not as contradictions, but as continuities.

In this sweeping vision, Modi is a leader who combines emotional intelligence with cultural clarity. He is a leader who strolls the Ganga ghats and the G20 corridors with equal facility portraying Bharat both as sacred and strategic. His political popularity cannot be separated from his cultural positioning; the credibility he enjoys is not only based on developmental delivery, but on the sense of national mission he inspires. He has brought the lexicon of punarjagran civilisational awakening back to the world of politics. India is not becoming something other than it was; it is re-becoming what it always has been, according to his understanding.

But this is not nostalgia. It is regeneration. Modi does not plead for the restoration of culture at the expense of innovation he pleads for continuity with change. His India is at once ancient and futuristic, grounded and ascendant. His appeal for "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" is not political, it is civilizational. It suggests that India's ascendancy is not economically or technologically, but profoundly culturally and morally. As this book has established in its earlier chapters, the Modi period represents a tectonic shift in the way India approaches its past. Cultural rule has transitioned from the margin to the policy center. Festivals are no longer merely commemorated they are mobilized. Temples are not merely sites of devotion they are motors of heritage tourism and provincial economy. Archives are no longer storage spaces they are now instruments of national narrative. Under Narendra Modi, India's civilizational self has gained political voice.

This last chapter is not an overview; it's a meditation on the individual who brought this about. Narendra Modi is not only the Prime Minister of India he is perhaps the single most powerful cultural leader India has produced in recent times. His period of office will be recalled for policy and diplomacy, but for the way in which he caused an entire generation of Indians to view their past with pride, rather than shame. Through the process, he has assisted Bharat not merely to ascend, but to recall and recall with dignity, direction, and assurance.

## **Chapter - 13**

### **From the Podium: Modi's Vision of India's Civilisational Legacy**

Ever since taking office in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often reverted to India's civilisational depth, spiritual heritage, and cultural traditions as reference points in his public addresses. Much more than just symbolic references, his speeches, both national and international constitute an integrated and ideologically infused narrative that attempts to recast the manner in which India reflects upon its past and presents it to the world. This section compiles and analyses selected speeches by PM Modi that focus on culture, history, yoga, temples, archives, museums, and India's role as a Vishwaguru.

Through these curated addresses, delivered at sites like Kashi, Nalanda, Ayodhya, the United Nations, and at the inauguration of cultural institutions like the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya. Modi's cultural rhetoric unfolds as a blend of revivalism, nationalism, soft power, and civilisational assertiveness. The speeches reflect a strategic deployment of heritage both as a domestic tool for identity consolidation and an international asset for soft diplomacy. Modi's language frequently fuses ancient wisdom with modern aspirations, invoking metaphors of continuity, spirituality, and national rebirth. This approach not only appeals to domestic audiences rooted in cultural pride but also positions India on the global stage as a timeless civilisation reclaiming its voice.

By reading these speeches, we reveal trends in state-sponsored cultural production: how the memory is managed, how the symbols are resuscitated, and how the history is told

from the country's top seat. Whether it is speaking to pilgrims in Kashi, world leaders at G20, or yogic practitioners from all over the continents, Modi's words tell us something about the changing dynamics between politics and heritage in 21st-century India.

*"Bharat ek sanskritik rashtra hai. Yahaan virasat bhi hai, vikas bhi hai."*

*At the inauguration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham, 13 Dec 2021*

## **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** **addresses the World Sufi Forum**

Addressing the World Sufi Forum at New Delhi on 17th March, 2016, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi drew the attention of the world to the fact that India has become the principal centre of Islamic civilisation and has a distinct Islamic heritage. The four-day World Sufi Forum was organised by the All India Ulama and Mashaik Board bringing together numerous dignitaries, spiritual leaders, scholars, academicians and theologists from more than 20 countries. Alluding to the rich diversity of the Islamic civilisation, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi reiterated the inclusive culture of India, where the Islamic heritage evolved its own distinct traditions and blossomed in India's openness and culture. He highlighted the contribution of Islam to Indian art, architecture and culture, particularly in poetry and music.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi emphasised that, the Muslims of India were defined by the culture of peace, diversity and equality of faith in India and shaped by the values of the Islamic heritage of India, which upholds the highest ideals of Islam and rejects the forces of terrorism and extremism. PM Modi underlined the global relevance of the message of Islam and Sufism in a world where terrorism and extremism have become the most destructive forces. He emphasised that, the fight against terrorism is not a confrontation against any religion but a struggle between the values of humanism and the forces of inhumanity. He recalled the teaching of the Holy Quran Al Kareem that "if anyone slew one innocent person, it would be as if he slew a whole people; if anyone saved one life, it would be as if he saved a whole people".

## **New India: Shedding the Vestiges of Colonial Past**

Posted On: 01 DEC 2022 2:22PM

On August 15, 2022, while addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on India's 76th Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi talked about the '**Panch Praan**' for the coming **25 years (Amrit Kaal)**. Elaborating on the second Praan, he said, "In no part of our existence, not even in the deepest corners of our mind or habits should there be any ounce of slavery. It should be nipped there itself. We have to liberate ourselves from the slavery mind set which is visible in innumerable things within and around us. This is our second Praan Shakti." The history of modern India is deeply entangled with two centuries of British colonialism, and decades after Independence, our nation has continued to carry its colonial baggage in various forms, some conspicuous, and some subtle. Over the past few years, the Government has slowly been steering India away from these vestiges of British rule, and a number of steps have been taken across several domains to firmly mark the identity of New India, truly freeing it from its colonial past.

### **Rajpath Renamed Kartavya Path**



In line with his resolve for New India in Amrit Kaal to 'remove any trace of colonial mindset', Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the '**Kartavya Path**' in New Delhi on September 08, 2022. This change in nomenclature symbolises a **shift from erstwhile Rajpath being an icon of power to the Kartavya Path being an example of public ownership and empowerment**.

### **Statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Installed at India Gate**



A huge statue of the national hero and freedom fighter, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, has been installed near India Gate, replacing the statue of King George V which stood there. “At the time of slavery, there was a statue of the representative of the British Raj. Today the country has also brought to life a modern, strong India by establishing the statue of Netaji at the same place,” said the Prime Minister, at the unveiling of the statue. The granite statue was installed in the same place where a hologram statue of Netaji had been unveiled earlier this year on Parakram Diwas (January 23) by the PM. Resonant to the ongoing national endeavour to move away from colonial past, need was felt to transition to a **new naval ensign** that drew inspiration from our own rich cultural heritage. The previous ensign carried the Saint George's Cross and was a successor to the pre-Independence ensign which had the red Cross on a white background with the Union Jack of the United Kingdom on the top left corner. The new ensign comprises two main constituents - the National Flag in the upper left canton, and a Navy Blue - Gold octagon at the centre of the fly side (away from the staff). The Prime Minister dedicated the Ensign to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who built a strong navy to secure the maritime borders, thus symbolizing the indigenous might of India.

### **Tunes with Indian fervour at the “Beating the Retreat” Ceremony**



During Republic Day celebrations of 2022, a number of new tunes were added to the 'Beating the Retreat' ceremony to celebrate 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. These include 'Kerala', 'Hind ki Sena' and 'Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon'. The event came to a close with the ever-popular tune of 'Sare Jahan se Acha'. Indian musical instruments such as sitar, santoor, and tabla have also been added to the music ensemble. The retreat has thus been infused with an Indian flavour and patriotic fervour, to enable greater connect with the citizens.

### ***Construction of National War Memorial (NWM) and merger of flames of Amar Jawan Jyoti and NWM***



Constructed by the British to commemorate soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British in World War I, the India Gate (earlier



known as the All India War Memorial) is a symbol of India's colonial past. To mark India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 War, the Amar Jawan Jyoti was subsequently added at the above location as an ad-hoc arrangement, as the country did not have another memorial for Indian soldiers killed in wars. The National War Memorial, as a **symbol of independent India**, was inaugurated and dedicated to the Nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 25, 2019. It houses the names of all Indian martyrs from all the wars, including 1971 and wars before and after it. The NWM is thus a memorial for all soldiers who have either laid down their lives or will do so in the future in the service of independent India. Since its inauguration, all homage and remembrance ceremonies are being conducted only at the NWM, including those on National Days. In the presence of a National War Memorial, it was therefore considered appropriate to shift the eternal flame to this new location as it is an appropriate tribute to have the flame stand in honour of all bravehearts.

### **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Renamed**

On December 30, 2018, marking the 75th anniversary of the hoisting of Tricolour on Indian soil by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that Ross Island would be renamed **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep**; Neil Island would be known as **Shaheed Dweep**; and Havelock Island would be renamed as **Swaraj Dweep**. These islands had been named after the British rulers even in independent India. The Government erased these signs of slavery by giving them Indian names and Indian identity.

### **Railway Budget merged with annual Union Budget**

In yet another departure from British era practices, the Government merged the Rail Budget with the Union Budget from budget year 2017-18. The Railway Finances had been separated from General Finances in 1924 following the recommendations of the Acworth Committee (1920-21).

### **Other Initiatives taken to Remove Colonial Vestiges:**

- The Government has renamed certain key roads whose original names were iconic to the British era.
- a. The Race Course Road in Lutyen's Delhi was renamed to **Lok Kalyan Marg** in 2016. Prime Minister's famous residential address 7, Race Course Road thus became **7, Lok Kalyan Marg**.

- b. In 2017, Dalhousie Road was renamed **Dara Shikoh Road**.
- In 2019, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman broke away from a long-standing colonial era practice when she opted for the traditional Indian '**Bahi Khata**' rather than the briefcase while presenting the Union Budget. The time and date of the presentation of the Indian Budget, which was following the times of the British Parliament for so many decades, have also been changed.
  - The youth of the country are being liberated from the compulsion of learning in foreign language through the **National Education Policy**, which lays stress on education in the **mother tongue**.
  - In the last eight years, the Government has repealed more than 1,500 archaic laws, most of which were remnants of the colonial British era. "In this Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal, new laws should be made by abolishing the laws which have been going on from the time of slavery," Prime Minister Narendra Modi has highlighted.

India has entered a decisive phase, and is marching ahead rapidly towards a future marked by confidence and **Aatmanirbharta**. Freeing the country from the shackles of its colonial past will further secure the foundation of its sovereign identity as envisioned by the Constitution, and propel the nation forward with greater vigour as it charts new courses in the global arena.

**AG/HP/RC/KG/MZ**

(Features ID: 151220)

**Kashi is known to be a treasure chest of knowledge, duty and truth and it is indeed the cultural and spiritual capital of India:**

**PM**

**We in India are very proud of our eternal and diverse culture. We also attach great value to our intangible cultural heritage:**

**PM**

**G20 Culture Ministerial meeting concludes in Varanasi today**

**Cultural heritage is both a pillar of the past and a pathway to the future: Shri G.K Reddy**

**Shri G.K Reddy urges the Culture Ministerial Declaration to be named as Kashi Cultural Pathway**

*Posted On: 26 AUG 2023 5:46PM by PIB Delhi*

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting held in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh via video link today.

The Prime Minister welcomed the dignitaries to Varanasi, also known as Kashi, and expressed delight that the G20 Culture Ministers' Meeting is taking place here as the city is his parliamentary constituency. Referring to Kashi as one of the oldest living cities, the Prime Minister mentioned the nearing town of Sarnath where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon. "Kashi is known to be a treasure chest of knowledge, duty and truth and it is indeed the cultural and spiritual capital of India", the Prime Minister remarked and suggested the guests witness the the Ganga Aarti program, pay a visit to Sarnath and try out the delicacies of Kashi.

Highlighting the inherent potential of culture to unite and enable us to understand diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the Prime Minister said that the work of the G20 Culture Ministers Group holds immense significance for entire humanity. "We in India are very proud of our eternal and diverse culture. We also attach great value to our intangible cultural heritage", Shri Modi said as he underlined that India has been working hard to preserve and revitalize its heritage sites. He mentioned mapping the country's cultural assets and artists at the national level as well as village level. He also mentioned building

several centers to celebrate India's culture and gave the example of the tribal museums located in different parts of the country which showcase the vibrant culture of India's tribal communities. Referring to the Prime Ministers' Museum in New Delhi, the Prime Minister said that it is a one-of-a-kind effort to showcase India's democratic heritage. He also mentioned developing the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat' National Museum, which upon completion will stand as the world's largest museum showcasing India's history and culture spanning over 5,000 years.

In his opening remarks at the ministerial meeting Shri G.K. Reddy welcomed the Ministers of G20 countries, invitee countries and representatives of international organisations to one of the world's oldest continuously living cities, Varanasi which stands as a testament to India's rich cultural heritage.

He said that it is a matter of pride that the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi represents the Varanasi constituency in the Parliament.

He further remarked that as an eternal city by the Ganges, Varanasi captures the confluence of culture, arts, and traditions, making it a befitting backdrop for this G20 Ministerial meeting of Culture.



Shri G.K Reddy also said that cultural heritage is both a pillar of the past and a pathway to the future.

The Minister also said that the journey of discussions under the Culture working group of G20 has been inclusive and collaborative. He said under it we've progressed from identifying and deliberating the four priorities, to advance towards the action-oriented outcomes that would be a significant step in placing culture at the heart of global policymaking.

He also said that the invaluable contribution, insights, comments and feedback from the G20 Member nations have greatly enriched our shared dialogue.

Shri G.K Reddy also remarked that under India's Presidency and under the leadership of PM Modi, we have tried to capture not just the letter but, most importantly, the spirit of our collective vision.

In his concluding remarks at the meeting, the Minister said that throughout eight months spanning across the four meetings of the Culture Working Group, we were able to forge a robust Outcome Document, which marks a considerable step forward in the legacy of the Rome and Bali Declarations.

He also stated that our endeavors at this meeting have brought us to a unique juncture where almost all points found a unanimous consensus. We should be proud of the ambition, forward looking vision and purpose of the text that we are about to adopt. It truly testifies that Culture Unites All. It is in this spirit that I would like to ask you to name this achievement the Kashi Culture Pathway, he urged.

Shri G.K Reddy added that we have affirmed that the return and restitution of cultural property is an imperative of social justice and we committed, as G20 members, to lead the path towards enabling the conditions for a sustained dialogue to that purpose. He concluded his remarks by saying "let me symbolically adopt the Outcome Document and Chair's Summary we have endorsed and the terms of Reference of the Culture Working Group."

The G20 Culture Working Group (CWG), under the stewardship of India's G20 Presidency, released a pioneering report titled 'G20 Culture: Shaping the Global Narrative for Inclusive Growth'. This report encompasses insights and best practices derived from the Global Thematic Webinars on the priority areas articulated by the

Indian Presidency. The insights encapsulated in the report underline the importance of persistent engagement in deepening our collective understanding.

A salient feature of these webinars was the robust and diverse participation of record 159 experts from various cultural backgrounds and disciplines. This extensive collaboration not only enriched the discussions but also fostered a holistic and multifaceted exploration of the role of culture in global policymaking. The collective wisdom of these experts, representing G20 Members, Guest Nations, International Organizations and other stakeholders underscores the universality of the topics discussed and amplifies the credibility and depth of the report.

A special postage stamp was also released, marking the journey of the hallmark campaign of 'Culture Unites All' under the CWG of India's G20 Presidency.

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**NB/SK/UD**

(Release ID: 1952503)

**PM inaugurates Nalanda University Campus in Rajgir, Bihar“  
Nalanda is a symbol of India's academic heritage and vibrant  
cultural exchange”**

**“Nalanda is not just a name. Nalanda is an identity, an honor, a  
value,  
a mantra, a pride and a saga”**

**“This revival is going to start a golden age for India”**

**“Nalanda is not just a renaissance of India's past. The heritage  
of many countries of the world and Asia is linked to it”**

**“India has lived and demonstrated sustainability as a model for  
centuries. We move forward with progress and environment  
together”**

**“My mission is that India becomes the center of education and  
knowledge for the world. My mission is that India should again  
be recognized as the most prominent knowledge center of the  
world”**

**“Our endeavor is to have the most comprehensive and complete  
skilling system in the world in India and India to have the most  
advanced research-oriented higher education system in the  
world”**

**“I have faith that Nalanda will become an important center of  
global cause”**

Posted On: 19 JUN 2024 12:51PM by PIB Delhi

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of Nalanda University at Rajgir, Bihar. The University is conceived as a collaboration between India and East Asia Summit(EAS) countries. Several eminent people including the Head of Missions of 17 countries attended the inauguration ceremony. The Prime Minister also planted a sapling.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister expressed delight and thanked his good fortune in visiting Nalanda within 10 days of taking

oath as the Prime Minister for the third term and said that it is a positive indication towards the developmental journey of India. “Nalanda is not just a name, it is an identity, a regard. Nalanda is the root, it is the mantra. Nalanda is the proclamation of the truth that knowledge cannot be destroyed even though books would burn in a fire,”, the Prime Minister exclaimed. He underlined that the establishment of the new Nalanda University would initiate the golden age of India.

The Prime Minister said that the revival of Nalanda near its ancient ruins will introduce India's capabilities to the world as it will tell the world that nations with strong human values are capable of creating a better world by rejuvenating history.

Shri Modi stressed that Nalanda carries the heritage of the world, Asia and many countries and its revival is not restricted to revival of Indian aspects. This is evident from the presence of so many countries in today's inauguration, he added acknowledging the contribution of the friendly nations in the Nalanda project. He also praised the people of Bihar for their determination to bring back its glory which is reflected in Nalanda.

Pointing out that Nalanda was once the living center of India's culture and traditions, the Prime Minister said that the meaning of Nalanda is the continuous flow of knowledge and education and this has been India's approach and thinking towards education. “Education is beyond boundaries. It inculcates values and thought while giving it shape.”, the Prime Minister said, highlighting that students were admitted to the ancient Nalanda University irrespective of their identities and nationalities. He also stressed the need to strengthen the same ancient traditions in the newly inaugurated Nalanda University Campus in modern form. The Prime Minister expressed delight that students from more than 20 countries are already studying at Nalanda University and said that it is the perfect example of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

The Prime Minister highlighted the Indian tradition of treating education as a tool of human welfare. He mentioned the upcoming International Yoga Day and said that Yoga Day has become an international festival. He said despite developing so many strands of Yoga, no one in India expressed any monopoly over Yoga. Similarly, India shared Ayurveda with the entire world, he said. PM Modi also underlined India's devotion to sustainability and said that in India, we have carried progress and environment together. This allowed India to



provide initiatives like Mission LiFE and International Solar Alliance. He said the Nalanda Campus with its pioneering Net Zero Energy, Net Zero Emission, Net Zero Water and Net Zero Waste model will carry forward the spirit of sustainability.

The Prime Minister emphasized that the development of education leads to the deepening of the roots of the economy and culture. This is borne out by the global experience and experience of the developed countries. “India that is working on its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047 is transforming its education system”, said the Prime Minister. He further added “My mission is that India becomes the center of education and knowledge for the world. My mission is that India should again be recognized as the most prominent knowledge center of the world.” Prime Minister noted initiatives like Atal Tinkering Labs catering to more than a crore children, interest in science generated by Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan, and Startup India leading to 1.30 lakh startups in India from a few hundred 10 years ago. Filing of a record number of patents and research papers and 1 lakh crore research fund.

The Prime Minister highlighted the government's efforts to create the most comprehensive and complete skilling system along with the most advanced research-oriented higher education system in the world. He also mentioned improved performances by India's universities in global rankings. Throwing light on the recent achievements in the field of education and skill development in the last 10 years, the Prime Minister mentioned a rise in the number of Indian educational institutions from 9 to 46 in QS Ranking and 13 to 100 in Times Higher Education Impact Ranking. Within the last 10 years in India, the Prime Minister informed that one university has been established every week, a new ITI has been established every day, an Atal Tinkering Lab has been opened every third day, and two new colleges have been established every day. He further added that India is home to 23 IITs today, the number of IIMs have gone up from 13 to 21 and the number of AIIMS has risen almost three times to 22. “In 10 years, the number of medical colleges has also almost doubled”, he said. Touching upon the reforms in the educational sector, the Prime Minister mentioned the New Educational Policy and said that it has given a new dimension to the dreams of India's youth. Shri Modi also mentioned the collaboration of Indian and foreign universities, and the opening up of new campuses of international universities like Deakin and Wollongong. “With all these efforts,

Indian students are getting the best educational institutions in India for higher education. This is also saving money for our middle class”, PM Modi added.

Mentioning the recent opening of global campuses of premier Indian institutions, the Prime Minister expressed the same hope for Nalanda.

The Prime Minister underlined that the world's eyes are fixed on the youth of India. “India is the country of Lord Buddha, and the world wishes to walk shoulder to shoulder with the mother of democracy”, the Prime Minister continued, “When India says 'One Earth, One Family, and One Future', the world stands with it. When India says 'One Sun, One World, One Grid', it is considered the way of the future for the world. When India says One Earth One Health, the world respects and accepts its views. “The land of Nalanda can give a new dimension to this feeling of universal brotherhood. Therefore, the responsibility of the students of Nalanda is even greater”, PM Modi said.

Calling Nalanda students and scholars the future of India, the Prime Minister underlined the importance of the next 25 years of Amrit Kaal and called upon them to carry the 'Nalanda Way' and values of Nalanda with them. He asked them to Be Curious, Be Courageous and Above All, Be Kind in line with their logo and asked them to work for positive change in society.

The Prime Minister expressed the belief that Nalanda's knowledge would give direction to humanity and that the youth would lead the whole world in the coming times. “I believe Nalanda will become an important center for global cause”, the Prime Minister concluded.

Governor of Bihar, Shri Rajendra Arlekar, Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Nitish Kumar, Union Minister for External Affairs, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Pabitra Margherita, Deputy Chief Ministers of Bihar, Shri Vijay Kumar Sinha and Shri Samrat Choudary, Chancellor of Nalanda University, Prof. Arvind Panagariya, and Vice Chancellor of Nalanda University, Prof Abhay Kumar Singh were present on the occasion among other dignitaries.

### **Background**

The Nalanda University Campus has two Academic Blocks with 40 Classrooms having a total seating capacity of around 1900. It has two

auditoriums having a capacity of 300 seats each, a student hostel with a capacity of around 550 students and various other facilities including an International Centre, an Amphitheater that can accommodate up to 2000 individuals, a Faculty Club and a Sports Complex among others.

The Campus is a 'Net Zero' Green Campus. It is Self-Sustainable with solar plant, domestic and drinking water treatment plant, water recycling plant for reusing wastewater, 100 acres of water bodies, and many other environment-friendly facilities.

The University has a deep connection with history. The original Nalanda University, established around 1600 years ago, is considered to be amongst the first residential universities in the world. The ruins of Nalanda were declared as a UN Heritage Site in 2016.

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DS/TS

(Release ID: 2026447)

**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Prime Minister's Office**  
18 SEP 2018 6:22PM by PIB Delhi

**English rendering of PM's speech at the laying of the  
Foundation Stones of various Development Projects in Varanasi**

My young friends from Kashi, who are present here in large numbers and my brothers, sisters and friends of Kashi! My greetings to you all! I am overwhelmed with the love and affection bestowed upon me by the people of Kashi. I feel like taking time out and visiting Kashi again and again.

Brothers and sisters,

HarHarMahadev!

It is really fortunate for me that I am beginning another year for serving the country with the blessings of Baba Vishwanath and Mother Ganga. Your affection and blessings inspire me every moment and strengthens the resolution of serving the countrymen.

Friends,

In order to take this expression of service forward, projects worth more than Rs.550 crore have either been launched or foundation-stones have been laid. These development projects are associated not only with Varanasi but also with the surrounding villages. It includes projects of basic necessities such as electricity and water as well as projects that promise new opportunities to farmers, weavers and artisans.

Moreover, new projects have been started to make the Benares Hindu University an important knowledge centre for the 21st century. I congratulate the people of Varanasi for these projects and offer my best wishes.

Friends,

Whenever I am amidst you, I tend to always remind you that all our efforts at bringing about a transformation are being done keeping the culture and heritage of Kashi intact. Modern facilities and infrastructures are being assimilated with the city by preserving its age-old identity. The difference between now and four-four- and-a-half years ago when the people of Kashi had made a resolution of

change is explicit. Isn't it? Can you make out the difference or not? Can you see the change? Thank you! Well, you are a witness to the situation where Kashi's condition was left completely to Lord Bholenath. Today I am extremely satisfied that with the blessings of Baba Vishwanath, we have successfully provided a new direction to the development of Varanasi.

Several years ago, every visitor of Kashi used to be pained by the deteriorating facilities and infrastructure of the city. Just like the dangling electricity transmission wires, Kashi too was entangled in its chaos. At that time, I had decided to transform the all-round chaos to all-round development. Today we can see all-round transformation in Kashi. I vividly remember; before becoming a Parliamentarian, whenever I used to visit Kashi, I used to wonder looking at the dangling electricity wires that when Varanasi would be freed from this? You can see for yourself that those wires are not there anymore in most part of the city. Work is underway at a rapid pace in the remaining areas to lay down the wires underground.

The 5 major projects related to electrification that have been launched today also include making Old Kashi free from dangling electric wires. These projects will strengthen the objective of supplying sufficient electricity to several surrounding villages along with Varanasi. Besides, the foundation stone of another electricity sub-centre has been laid. After it gets ready, the nearby areas will be able to get rid of the issue of low voltage.

Friends,

A lot of effort is being put to develop Varanasi as a gateway to the Eastern India. Therefore, the government's priority is to provide Varanasi with world class infrastructure. As per the needs of 21st century, facilities such as transport facilities, medical facilities and education facilities etc. are being developed. Today Kashi is shimmering under the illumination of LED. The flow of mother Ganga is easily visible at night too from across the city. LED bulbs have not only illuminated your lives but also reduced the electricity bill. Varanasi Nagar Nigam has saved a lot of money after LED bulbs were installed.

Friends,

Anyone who had visited Kashi four years back will now see expansion of new roads. For several years, discussion upon constructing a Ring

road in Varanasi was going on but the plan was just on file. After 2014 elections, the Ring road file was taken up. The previous state government of UP at that time didn't allow this plan to progress because they were afraid that Modi would be hailed for its success. So, they tried to put the file in the cold storage. However, as soon as you elected Yogi ji's government, the work is being completed at a rapid pace. A 4-lane road from Harhua to Ghazipur is almost done. Work on a new circuit from Harhua to Raja Talab and Chandauli is rapidly progressing. On this route, a bridge will be constructed over Ganga which will reduce the number of trucks entering Varanasi.

Friends,

The construction of Kashi Ring road will benefit not only Kashi but also the surrounding districts. The roads emanating from here are extremely significant to reach Bihar, Nepal, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh. This is the reason why the roads connecting the city of Varanasi within and with other states are being broaden and extended further. Crores of rupees have been spent on National Highway No. 7, that is, Varanasi-Sultanpur road, Varanasi-Gorakhpur section and Varanasi- Handiaroad link.

Brothers and sisters, Work on several road projects worth thousands of crores rupees is underway within Varanasi. Earlier people had to face a lot of trouble while travelling between Mahmoorganj and Manduadih; the school students had to suffer a lot; I need not remind you of it. After ages, the work on Manduadih flyover is complete. Similarly, after the completion of Samnegat bridge over the river Ganga has made travelling to and fro from Ramnagar easy. The demand to broaden the AndhuraBridge was as old as the bridge itself. The work to broaden the AndhuraBridge was suspended for several decades. That work has also been completed. Work is underway in different parts of the city including broadening of Bojuvid-Sindhora road, making Shivpur-Phulwaria road into a 4-lane one and broadening the road between Raja Talab Police station and Jakhini. The work on development of important Panchkosi passage in terms of religious beliefs and tourism is also progressing at a rapid pace. Approximately Rs.750 crores has been allocated for the construction of roads between BhagwatBridge and Court Road. You are already aware of the fact that earlier it was such a difficult road! A journey that should take a few minutes used to take hours. Often people used to miss their flights and trains due to heavy traffic jam. All these issues will definitely be eliminated after the completion of this road.

Friends,

The people visiting the airports are witnesses to the fact that Varanasi is developing. The number of tourists coming to Varanasi by flight is increasing. Four years ago, about 8 lakh people used to come to the Babatpur airport. This figure has shot up to 21 lakhs now.

The transportation system in Varanasi is being modernized in every possible way to bring about a Smart transformation in Smart Varanasi. Traffic system is being integrated so that a single mode of transport is not over-burdened. The integrated command and control center being built here is going to control the entire city's administration and public facilities. Once the work of the fast-moving multi-modal terminal in Varanasi is completed, the city is going to emerge as a major hub for transport and logistics. This will increase the connectivity of roads, railways and water transport, which will benefit the businesses and industries here. Work on developing a Ferry service is underway to help the Kashi visitors to reduce their travel time. Work on National Waterway No.1 between Varanasi and Haldia is underway. Work on turning the vehicles into CNG vehicles is going on at a rapid pace.

Brothers and sisters,

My happiness doubles when I see people posting photos of Varanasi Cantonment Station joyously on social media. Development work on stations like the Cantonment Station, Manduadih or city station has been expedited. Those are being modernized. The people travelling to Kashi by train can see pictures of New Kashi at the station only.

Friends,

Besides, work of doubling the track connecting Varanasi with Allahabad and Chhapra is in progress. Electrification work from Varanasi to Baliya has been completed. The work of doubling and electrification of Varanasi-Allahabad City section is in progress.

Along with the infrastructure, the connectivity of Varanasi to the rest of the country via rail has also increased manifold. Many new trains have been started from Varanasi in the last four years. Trains like Varanasi-Delhi, Vadodara, Patna Mahamana expresses, Varanasi-Patna Janashatabdi express with modern facilities have also drawn the attention of the people. Railway connectivity of Varanasi with other cities like Hubli, Mysore or Guwahati has strengthened.

Friends,

Now commuting to the city of Kashi has not only been made easy, but

it is also being beautified. Now our ghats welcome the guests not by garbage but by lights. It is now possible to ride both by a boat as well as by cruise in the waters of Maa Ganga. Arrangements have been made so that devotees can easily reach temples. This campaign of transformation through tourism has been going on relentlessly.

Brothers and sisters,

For the past four years, work is underway to protect the legacy of Kashi and to beautify our heritage. Mahatma Gandhi had begun his freedom movement from Maidagin Town Hall. Efforts have been made to revive the pride of the Heritage Bhawan. It has again turned into its original form.

Big and important parks of Varanasi have also been restored, developed and beautified. Light and sound show has been arranged for tourists in Sarnath. In order to promote tourism, religious centres like Budhha theme park, Sarangnath pond, Gurudham temple, MarkandeyaMahadev temple have already been beautified. Beautification of Bhairavkund, Sagarnathkund, Lakshmikund and Durganathkund has already been done. In the last four years, the people of Kashi have welcomed several leaders of different countries in a spectacular manner. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, France's President Macron and Germany's President Frank Walter have always praised and talked about the hospitality of the people of Kashi. Japan has, in fact, gifted aconvention centre to Kashi.

Friends,

Everyone will have his eyes on the hospitality of Kashi in the beginning of the next year. In January, Kashi will organize Kumbh of Indians settled across the globe. Therefore, the government is working at its level for this. However, your cooperation is indispensable. Every resident of Kashi has to come forward. Varanasi's essence, hue and heritage must reflect in every corner and street. We need to set such an example of cleanliness and hospitality that our Indian diaspora remember it throughout their lives. And I wish that the people who come here during Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas have such a brilliant experience that they end up becoming tourism ambassadors of Kashi; so that wherever they go, they say fascinating things about Kashi.

Brothers and sisters,

Kashi has witnessed a change also in terms of cleanliness. Today,



cleanliness is the new normal in the ghats, streets and every corner of Kashi. Robust solutions to not only cleanliness but also garbage disposal have been found. Fertilizer is being manufactured out of garbage by using modern techniques. A huge factory has been established in Karsara to turn waste into fertilizer. Everyday several metric tons of waste are produced. That waste is then turned into compost. A waste to energy plant has been set up in Karsara itself. Electricity is produced by this plant. Besides, biofuel plants have been set up in Bhavaniya, Pokhari, PahariyaMandi and IDA complex.

Friends,

Simultaneous efforts are going on to clean up mother Ganga from Gangotri to Gangasagar. Arrangements are being made to not only clean the river but also to inhibit the flow of garbage from the nearby villages and cities into the river. Thus, more than 200 projects worth approximately Rs.21, 000 crore have already been approved. In Varanasi, projects worth more than Rs.600 crores have been started with this motive. The Sewagetreatment plant in Dinapur and Ramana is progressing at a rapid pace. Work is also underway to create the infrastructure related to sewer plant. Along with the construction of thousands of new sewer chambers, more than 150 community toilets have also been constructed. Along with sewer work, efforts are going on to improve the drinking water supply system. In thousands of households the work of providing water connections and installing water metres is underway.

Friends,

Facilities like road, electricity and water supply have been delivered to not only Varanasi but also to the surrounding villages. As a Parliamentarian, I have the responsibility of developing certain villages and Nagepur is one such village where a major water project has been launched. All the villages like Nagepur, Jayapur, Kakariya, Domri etc. are now being linked to facilities like roads, water and electricity. Several other arrangements like playground, self-employment centres, better facilities for farmers and health care facilities are also being provided.

Friends,

Kashi is now emerging as a health hub for eastern India because of your active cooperation. Hospitals in different regions will turn Varanasi into a major medical centre of east India in the coming days.

The new and modern trauma centre of BHU is saving the lives of thousands of people. New cancer hospital and super- speciality hospital of Varanasi which is under-construction will be playing a crucial role in providing modern facilities for treatment.

Recently, BHU has signed an agreement with AIIMS to develop a World Class Health Institute.

Friends,

Today a Regional Ophthalmology Institute has also been inaugurated in BHU. About 54 years ago, LalBahadur Shastri ji had inaugurated the Ophthalmology department here. I have got the opportunity to extend this in the form of a regional centre. After this facility is completely developed, crores of people from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Nepal will be benefitted. Moreover, the people of Kashi would no longer be required to travel to bigger cities for eye treatment. From cataract to serious eye diseases - all can be treated at a very low cost. Also, this institute will produce high quality doctors and will help in excelling in research.

Friends,

Apart from setting up new hospitals, the existing ones have also been upgraded in Varanasi. The ESI hospital of Pandepur has been modernized at a cost of Rs.150 crore. Besides, the number of beds in the existing hospitals has also been increased. Private hospitals are also being encouraged. Besides, several healthcare centres and hospitals are being set up at Tehsil and Block levels.

Friends,

After Yogiji of BJP has been elected in UP, all the work has been progressing at an unprecedented speed. I congratulate Yogiji and his team for joining the Ayushman Bharat. The trial of this scheme that promises free treatment of up to Rs.5 lakh to 50 crore poor brothers and sisters in the country is going on in several parts of the country including UP. This scheme will be implemented across the country from 23 September onwards.

Brothers and sisters,

The government has also emphasized upon strengthening education along with health. Malviya ji had dreamt of providing Modern Education alongside traditional education. In order to fulfill his dream

and to expand BHU, several centres have been launched. Vedic knowledge has been linked to 21st century science and future technological solutions. The Vedic age has been linked to the contemporary period. On one hand, foundation stone for Vedic Science Center has been laid, while on the other hand, Atal Incubation centre too has been inaugurated.

Young friends,

We have attraction towards the future technology as much as pride in our ancient culture and traditions. This country with the strength of more than 80 crore youngsters is leaving an impression on the transient technological landscape. The Atal Incubation Centre was started in BHU by walking the path of future technology. This Incubation Centre of BHU will provide a new energy to the start-ups in the near future. I was informed that 80 start-ups across the country want to join it and 20 start-ups have already joined it. I congratulate the youngsters of Varanasi for this centre and specially those who have the courage and this mind-set.

Friends,

The work for giving a fillip to the rural economy and farmers has gained momentum over the past four years. The Perishable Cargo Centre in Raja Talab was launched in July. This cargo centre is not only saving the crops from getting damaged but also helping the farmers of Varanasi and surrounding areas in increasing their incomes by value addition. It not only stores vegetables like potatoes and tomatoes but is also very close to the railway station. This will facilitate the transportation of fruits and vegetables to other cities. Besides, the work on the International Rice Research Centre is nearing completion. This means that Kashi is going to play a leading role in storing high quality paddy variety in the future. We are making arrangements so that the farmer brothers and sisters of Varanasi get an alternative source of income as well. We are encouraging the farmer brothers and sisters to take up animal husbandry and apiculture along with agriculture. A little while ago, farmers were given boxes of bees. Here the prototype photographs were presented, but the boxes have already been presented to them. This is the motive behind it. Bees not only help in increasing the yield but also are a medium of increasing income by honey production. You will be glad to know that the country is producing record quantity of honey along with record yield of food grains.

Friends,

Ceaseless efforts are being made to elevate the standard of living of every class of people in Varanasi. Kashi is now among the few cities where households have cooking gas pipelines. For this, pipelines have been laid from Allahabad to Varanasi. Till date, the gas pipeline connection has reached more than 8000 households in Varanasi. Work is underway to deliver this to more than 40 thousand households in the coming days. Besides, the UjjwalaYojana has made the lives of the women easier by providing more than 60 thousand gas connections in Varanasi and its surrounding villages.

Friends,

These projects are opening up unlimited employment opportunities in Varanasi. The development of Varanasi has also opened up new possibilities for entrepreneurs. Come; let us together strengthen the resolution of this transformation in Varanasi with dedication. Let us contribute towards the construction of New Kashi and New India. I once again congratulate you all for the new projects that have been started. I hope you will keep inspiring me with your love and blessings. Brothers and sisters, even though you have chosen me as your Prime Minister but I am responsible and accountable to you as a Parliamentarian. And today, I have shown you a glimpse of the work that I have done as a Parliamentarian in the past four years. I believe that as a representative of the people, as your servant; you are my boss or High Command. Therefore, it is my responsibility to give you the account of every penny spent and time utilized. As a Parliamentarian, I am glad that I have got the opportunity to present before you the development and the work that have been done. Once again, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your affection and blessings.

Say along with me - Victory to Mother India!

Victory to Mother India!

Victory to Mother India!

Thanks a lot!

**PM inaugurates 46th Session of World Heritage Committee at  
Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**

**“India is committed to promoting global cooperation and  
engaging local communities towards heritage conservation  
efforts”**

**“India is so ancient that every point of the present here tells the  
story of some glorious past”**

**“Return of ancient heritage artifacts is a display of global  
generosity and respect for history”**

**“Maidam, first entry in the UNESCO World Heritage list from  
Northeast are special due their uniqueness”**

**“India's heritage is not just a history. India's heritage is also a  
science”**

**“The history of India and Indian civilization are much older  
and broader than the common understanding of history”**

**“It is India's clarion call to the world to come together to  
promote each others' heritage and amplify the spirit of human  
welfare”**

**“India's vision is - development as well as heritage- Vikas bhi  
Virasat bhi”**

Posted On: 21 JUL 2024 8:49PM by PIB Delhi

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi today. The World Heritage Committee meets annually and is responsible for managing all matters on World Heritage and deciding on sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage list. India is hosting the World Heritage Committee Meeting for the first time. The Prime Minister also took a walkthrough of various exhibitions showcased on

the occasion.

Addressing the occasion, the Prime Minister noted the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima and conveyed his best wishes to all citizens. He expressed delight that the World Heritage Committee meeting is commencing on such an auspicious day and India is hosting the event for the first time. The Prime Minister extended a warm welcome to all the dignitaries and guests from around the world, especially the Director General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay and expressed confidence that the World Heritage Committee meeting will script new records in history similar to other global meets in India.

Referring to the artifacts returned from abroad the Prime Minister mentioned that more than 350 heritage items have been brought back in recent times. “This return of ancient heritage artifacts is a display of global generosity and respect for history”, the Prime Minister said. He also pointed out the growing research and tourism opportunities in the field as the technology progresses.

Applauding the World Heritage Committee, the Prime Minister said that hosting this program is a matter of pride for India. He highlighted that North East India's historic Maidam has been nominated to enter UNESCO's popular World Heritage List. “This is India's 43rd World Heritage Site and North East India's first heritage to get the status of Cultural World Heritage,” Shri Modi said, expressing belief that Maidam with its unique cultural significance will become more popular and gain more traction after bagging a place in the list.

The Prime Minister said that the presence of experts from all around the world showcases the scope and capability of the Summit. He emphasized that the organization is being hosted on the land which is one of the oldest living civilizations in the world. Noting that the world holds various centers of heritage, the Prime Minister threw light on India's ancient eras and said, “India is so ancient that every point of time in the present moment is a reflection of its glorious past.” Referring to the capital of India, New Delhi, the Prime Minister said that it is the center of thousands of years of heritage and one can find heritage and history at every step of the way. He gave the example of the 2000-year-old Iron Pillar which has been rust-resistant and gives a glimpse of India's metallurgical prowess in the past. “India's heritage

is not merely history, but also science”, he said. He also noted that India's heritage is witness to the journey of top-notch engineering as he mentioned the 8th century Kedarnath temple situated at an altitude of 3500 meters which remains a challenging place for infrastructure development today due to incessant snowfall during winter. He also touched upon Brihadeeswara Temple in the South of India built by Raja Chola and its marvelous architectural layout and idol.

The Prime Minister also mentioned Dholavira and Lothal in Gujarat. Dholavira, famed for its urban planning and water management systems as ancient as 3000 BC to 1500 BC. Similarly, Lothal had amazing planning for the citadel and lower planning and an elaborate network of streets and drainage.

The Prime Minister asserted “India's history and sense of history are older and more elaborate than the normal, leading to the need for new perspectives to witness the past with technological developments and new discoveries”. He mentioned findings of Sinauli in Uttar Pradesh, where copper age findings are closer to Vedic Age rather than the Indus Valley Civilization. He talked about the discovery of a 4000-year-old horse-driven chariot. Such discoveries stress that in order to know India, there is a need for prejudice-free new concepts, the Prime Minister said, inviting the gathering to be part of this new stream. Underlining the significance of heritage, the Prime Minister said, “Heritage is not only history. Rather a shared consciousness of humanity. Whenever we look at historical sites, it lifts our mind from the current geo-political factors.” He encouraged people to use this potential of heritage for the betterment of the world, using them to connect hearts. “It is India's clarion call to the world to come together to promote each others' heritage and amplify the spirit of human welfare, encourage tourism and create more job opportunities through the 46th World Heritage Committee meeting,” Shri Modi added.

Recalling a time when heritage was ignored in the pursuit of development, the Prime Minister said today, India's vision is development as well as heritage- *Vikas bhi Virasat bhi*. Elaborating on the pride in heritage pledge during the last 10 years, the Prime Minister mentioned unprecedented steps such as Kashi Viswanath Corridor, Shri Ram Mandir, Modern Campus of ancient Nalanda University. “This resolve of India regarding heritage is linked with the feeling of

serving the entire humanity. Indian culture talks about us, not just about self”, he added.

Emphasizing India's effort to be a partner in global welfare, the Prime Minister mentioned the global embrace of Yoga and Ayurveda, the scientific heritage of India. He also recalled the theme of the G-20 Summit hosted by India - One World, One Family, One Future. In line with India's vision of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' the Prime Minister touched upon the promotion of Millets and initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and Mission LiFE

The Prime Minister reiterated that India considers the preservation of global heritage as its responsibility. That is why, the Prime Minister said, we are cooperating for heritage conservation in the countries of the Global South along with Indian heritage. He mentioned heritage sites like Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Cham Temples in Vietnam, and Stupa in Bagan, Myanmar and announced that India will contribute 1 million dollars to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to be used for capacity building, technical assistance and conservation of world heritage sites. He underlined that this money will be useful for the countries of the Global South. He also informed that a certificate program in World Heritage Management is also being started for young professionals in India. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that India's cultural and creative industry will become a big factor in global growth.

Concluding the address, the Prime Minister urged all foreign guests and dignitaries to explore India and informed them about a tour series for iconic heritage sites for their convenience. He expressed confidence that their experiences in India would make for a memorable trip.

Union Minister for External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar, Union Minister for Culture; and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Director General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay, and Chairperson of World Heritage Committee, Shri Vishal Sharma were present on the occasion among others.

### **Background**

India is hosting the World Heritage Committee Meeting for the first time. It takes place from 21 to 31 July 2024, at Bharat Mandapam in



New Delhi. The World Heritage Committee meets annually and is responsible for managing all matters on World Heritage and deciding on sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage list. During this meeting, proposals for nominating new sites on the World Heritage list, State of Conservation reports of 124 existing World Heritage properties, International Assistance and Utilisation of World Heritage Funds, etc. will be discussed. The meeting will be attended by more than 2000 international and national delegates from more than 150 countries.

Along with the World Heritage Committee Meeting, the World Heritage Young Professionals' Forum and World Heritage Site Managers' Forum are also being held on the sidelines.

Further, various exhibitions are also being set up at Bharat Mandapam to showcase India's culture. The Return of Treasures Exhibition showcases some of the retrieved artefacts brought back to the country. So far, more than 350 artefacts have been brought back. AR & VR technologies are also being used to provide an immersive experience for 3 world heritage sites of India: Rani ki Vav, Patan, Gujarat; Kailasa Temple, Ellora Caves, Maharashtra; and Hoysala Temple, Halebidu, Karnataka. An 'Incredible India' exhibition is also being set up to highlight India's rich cultural heritage, age-old civilization, geographical diversity, and tourism destinations along with modern developments in the field of Information Technology and infrastructure.

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DS/TS/RT

(Release ID: 2034814)

**PM inaugurates Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023**

**Launches multi language and braille translations of  
Thirukkural, Manimekalai and other classic Tamil literature**

**Flags off the Kanyakumari – Varanasi Tamil Sangamam train**

**“Kashi Tamil Sangamam furthers the spirit of 'Ek Bharat,  
Shrestha Bharat”**

**“The relations between Kashi and Tamil Nadu are both  
emotional and creative”**

**“India's identity as a nation is rooted in spiritual beliefs”**

**“Our shared heritage makes us feel the depth of our relations”**

Posted On: 17 DEC 2023 9:12PM by PIB Delhi

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh today. Shri Modi flagged off the Kanyakumari – Varanasi Tamil Sangamam train and launched multi language and braille translations of Thirukkural, Manimekalai and other classic Tamil literature on the occasion. He also took a walkthrough of the exhibition and witnessed a cultural program. Kashi Tamil Sangamam aims to celebrate, reaffirm and rediscover the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi – two of the country's most important and ancient seats of learning.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister welcomed everyone not as guests but as his family members. He underlined that arriving in Kashi from Tamil Nadu simply means traveling from one abode of Lord Mahadev to the other namely Madurai Meenakshi to Kashi Vishalakshi. Highlighting the unique love and connection between the people of Tamil Nadu and Kashi, the Prime Minister expressed confidence in the hospitality of the citizens of Kashi. Along with the blessings of Lord Mahadev, the Prime Minister emphasized that the participants will return to Tamil Nadu with Kashi's culture, delicacies and memories. Prime Minister Modi also highlighted the use of Artificial Intelligence in real-time translation of his speech in Tamil for the first time and reiterated its usage in future events.



The Prime Minister flagged off the Kanyakumari – Varanasi Tamil Sangamam train and launched multi language and braille translations of Thirukkural, Manimekalai and other classic Tamil literature on the occasion. Quoting Subramania Bharathi, the Prime Minister said that vibrations of Kashi-Tamil Sangamam are spreading throughout the country and the world.

Shri Modi noted that lakhs of people including heads of mutts, students, artists, authors, craftsmen and professionals have become part of Kashi Tamil Sangamam since its inception last year and it has become an effective platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas. He expressed satisfaction on the joint initiative by Banaras Hindu University and IIT, Chennai where IIT, Chennai is providing online support to thousands of students from Varanasi in Science and Mathematics under the Vidya Shakti Initiative. These recent developments, the Prime Minister said, are proof of the emotional and creative bond between the people of Kashi and Tamil Nadu.

The Prime Minister said that “Kashi Tamil Sangamam furthers the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat.’” This spirit was behind the organization of Kashi Telugu Sangamam and Saurashtra Kashi Sangamam, he said. The spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' got further strength from the new tradition of celebration of other statehood days in all the Raj Bhavans of the country. PM Modi also recalled the establishment of the sacred Sengol in the new Parliament

under the supervision of the Aadinam saints reflecting the same spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat. "This flow of spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' is infusing the soul of our nation today", he said.



The Prime Minister acknowledged that India's diversity has been moulded in the spiritual consciousness as signified by Great Pandian King Parakram Pandian who had said that every water in India is Gangajal, and every geographical location of the country is Kashi. Reflecting on the time when the centers of faith in Northern India were constantly under attack by foreign powers, the Prime Minister highlighted King Parakram Pandian's efforts to keep the heritage of Kashi alive with the construction of Tenkasi and Sivakasi temples. Shri Modi also recalled the fascination of the dignitaries taking part in the G20 Summit towards India's diversity.

The Prime Minister said that in other countries, nation has been defined in political terms whereas India, as a nation, is constructed out of spiritual beliefs. India, PM Modi said, has been unified by saints like Adi Shankaracharya and Ramanujam. The Prime Minister also recalled the role of yatras of Aadina saints to Shiv Sthans. "Due to these Yatras, India has remained eternal and unwavering as a nation", Shri Modi added.

Prime Minister Modi expressed satisfaction with the peaking interests of the country's youth towards ancient traditions as he observed that a large number of people, students and youth from Tamil Nadu are traveling to Kashi, Prayag, Ayodhya and other pilgrimage sites. "Darshan of Lord Ram in Ayodhya, who established Rameshwaram along with Lord Mahadev, is divine", the Prime Minister said, noting

that special arrangements are also being made for Ayodhya visit of those attending the Kashi Tamil Sangamam.

The Prime Minister emphasized the need for knowing each other's culture as this increases trust and develops rapport. Giving an example of the two great temple cities, Kashi and Madurai, Shri Modi said that Tamil literature talks about both Vagai and Gangai (Ganga). "When we come to know of this heritage we feel the depth of our relations", he said.

Prime Minister Modi expressed confidence that the confluence of Kashi - Tamil Sangamam will continue empowering India's heritage, and strengthening the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. Concluding the address, the Prime Minister hoped for a pleasant stay for those visiting Kashi and also thanked renowned singer Shriram for captivating the entire audience with his performance.

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister for Education, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, and Union Ministers of State, Dr L Murugan among others were present on the occasion.



Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for enlivening the cultural heritage and restoration of religious places and rekindling the spirit and aspiration of the people. He also highlighted the significance of Kashi and Tamil Nadu and several other knowledge centres of these two regions. Quest for the relationship between these two centres and the ancient knowledge that was practised here needs to be connected to

modern insight, technology, academics and entrepreneurship, he added.

In his address, Dr. L. Murugan said that India is embodied in one culture one heritage. He expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for taking the Thirukural, one of the greatest classics of Tamil to the entire world. He also thanked the Prime Minister for envisioning the Kashi Tamil Sangamam which strengthens the bond, culture and heritage between Tamil Nadu and Kashi. The Prime Minister has taken the message of "Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum kelir" to the UN, which means "we harbour a feeling of kinship for all places and all people are our own."

Shri Yogi Adityanath in his address said that through the initiative of Kashi Tamil Sangamam, a wonderful confluence of South India and North India is taking place, and the millennium-old relationship is getting new life. The confluence of two civilizations of ancient education and culture taking place in the Tamil Kartik month is the result of the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, he added.

The second phase of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam will continue till 30th December 2023. Last year, the first phase of Kashi Tamil Sangamam was organized from 16th November to 16th December 2022. Nearly 1400 (7 Groups of 200 persons each) people are expected to be travelling from different parts of Tamil Nadu, representing varied walks of life. During their stay in Kashi, as per their tour itinerary, they will also visit Prayagraj and Ayodhya.

The 7 groups of Students (Ganga), Teachers (Yamuna), Professionals (Godavari), Spiritual (Saraswati), Farmers and Artisans (Narmada), Writers (Sindhu) and Traders and Businessmen (Kaveri) have been named after seven sacred rivers of India.

The Ministry of Education, Government of India, will be the nodal agency for this event with participation from the Ministries of Culture, Tourism, Railways, Textiles, Food Processing (ODOP), MSME, Information & Broadcasting, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, IRCTC and related departments of Government of Uttar Pradesh.

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**SS/AK**

Release ID: 1987537)

### **Encouragement of Indian Culture Heritage**

Posted On: 21 JUL 2025 4:56PM by PIB Delhi

Since 2021, Ministry of Culture, Government of India has signed Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs) with 41 countries for disseminating Indian art and culture abroad to promote India's soft power and for developing and promoting inter-cultural relations between India and other countries in different areas of arts and culture like music, dance, theatre, museums & science museums, libraries, archives, protection and conservation of historic monuments and archaeological sites, literature, research & documentation, festival, anthropology, among others. Further, Festival of India are also organized in other countries latest been at Kuwait in March, 2023 and France in July, 2023.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has undertaken several measures to maintain and conserve the protected monuments and areas. Periodic inspections of the protected monuments and areas are conducted to assess the conservation status and requirements. Conservation of the monuments are done as per the need and also considering the availability of resources, following the national conservation policy. Additionally, ASI is improving monument documentation through digital records and condition mapping.

Two programs namely Yuva Sangam and Kashi Tamil Sangam (KTS) have been organized under EBSB.

Under Yuva Sangam, cultural-cum-educational exchange tours of youth among paired states take place, whereas under KTS, cultural exchange programme between two ancient seats of learning viz, Kashi and Tamil Nadu take place.

The Zonal Cultural Centers (ZCCs) organized the Vilupt Lok Evam JanjatiyaKala Utthan Mahotsav from October 2024 to March 2025 which was held at the divisional level across all seven cultural zones. This festival was a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of Textiles, State Governments and academic institutions. It featured intensive 15–21 day workshops every week offering immersive training and exposure to traditional art forms thereby creating a vibrant platform for reviving and keeping alive the diverse art forms of the country.

The Government has established dedicated digital archives to honour the heroes of the freedom struggle. Notably, the History Corner on the

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav website now transitioned to Amrit Kaal (<https://amritkaal.nic.in/>), mainly anchors the 'Freedom Struggle' theme under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. This section brings alive stories of unsung heroes, freedom movements, milestones, and sacrifices that shaped our journey to independence. It is organised into eight sub-sections:

1. Digital District Repository District-wise narratives of India's freedom struggle under four categories: People & Personalities, Events & Happenings, Hidden Treasures (Built & Natural Heritage), and Living Traditions & Art Forms.
2. Unsung Heroes Tributes to forgotten freedom fighters who are often forgotten.
3. Public Contribution Portal Citizens can share stories here.
4. Swatantra Swar Banned revolutionary literature including 509 digitised files of revolutionary poetry in 11 languages and features recitations by prominent personalities.
5. Podcast on Freedom Movement.
6. Rajyageet Melodic identities of States/Union Territories.
7. Freedom Corner Stories of India's struggle
8. Exhibitions Commemorating events like Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, and the Unity Festival.

Together, these initiatives preserve, digitise, and share stories once scattered or hidden, making them freely accessible to the public, researchers, and scholars.

Further, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has established a museum that is solely dedicated to honor anonymous and unsung heroes of freedom struggle i.e. 'Aazadi-ke-Diwane' in the Red Fort, Delhi.

This information was given by Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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**Sunil Kumar Tiwari**



**Launch of the Compilation of Prime Minister's Speeches on Culture – 'Sanskriti Ka Paanchva Adhyay' at IGNCA on 18th April 2025**

Posted On: 16 APR 2025 5:01PM by PIB Delhi

The compilation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's thoughts and speeches on culture, titled **'Sanskriti Ka Paanchva Adhyay'**, is now being presented to readers in the form of a book. The formal launch ceremony of the book will be held on Friday, April 18, 2025, at 5:00 PM at the Samvet Auditorium, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), located at Janpath, New Delhi.

The book will be formally released by Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Pujya Swami Avdheshanand Giri Maharaj, the head of the Juna Akhara. The event will be presided over by Shri Harivansh, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, Chairman of IGNCA, will be present as the Guest of Honour.

**'Sanskriti Ka Paanchva Adhyay'** is a curated collection of speeches by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered on various occasions, highlighting Indian culture, traditions, spiritual values, and cultural heritage. The foreword of the book is written by Shri Ram Bahadur Rai and the compilation has been done by Dr. Prabhat Ojha. The book has been published by Prabhat Prakashan.

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**Sunil Kumar Tiwari**  
(Release ID: 2122127)

**Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addresses the Centenary Celebrations of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Maharaj**

**India is the world's most ancient living civilization: PM**

**India is a service-oriented country, a humanity-oriented country: PM**

**Our government has granted Prakrit the status of a 'classical language': PM**

**We are running a campaign to digitize India's ancient manuscripts: PM**

**To further enrich our cultural heritage, more such big works need to be done: PM**

**All our efforts will be in the spirit of 'Jan Bhagidhari', with the mantra of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas': PM**

Posted On: 28 JUN 2025 1:18PM by PIB Delhi

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the Centenary Celebrations of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Maharaj in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi today. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the Prime Minister remarked that the nation is witnessing a momentous occasion in India's spiritual tradition, highlighting the sanctity of the centenary celebrations of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj. He stated that this event, imbued with the immortal inspiration of the revered Acharya, is creating an extraordinary and uplifting atmosphere. The Prime Minister extended his greetings to all attendees and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be present at the event.

Noting that today holds special significance for another reason, Shri Modi recalled that on 28 June 1987, Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj was formally conferred the title of 'Acharya'. He emphasised that this was not merely a title, but the beginning of a sacred stream that connected Jain tradition with thought, discipline, and

compassion. The Prime Minister remarked that as the nation celebrates the centenary of Acharya Vidyanand Ji Muniraj, the date serves as a reminder of that historic moment. Paying respects to Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj, Shri Modi wished that may everyone be showered with Acharya's blessings.

“The centenary celebration of Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj is not an ordinary event, it carries the memory of an era and echoes the life of a great ascetic”, remarked the Prime Minister, highlighting that to commemorate this historic occasion, special commemorative coins and postage stamps have been released. Shri Modi specially acknowledged and saluted Acharya Shri Pragya Sagar Ji, noting that under his guidance, millions of followers are walking the path shown by the revered Guru. Shri Modi mentioned that on this occasion, he has been conferred the title of 'Dharm Chakravarti' and humbly expressed that the Indian tradition teaches one to accept whatever is received from saints as a blessing. He therefore accepted the title with humility and dedicated it at the feet of Mother India.

Reflecting on the profound emotional connection shared with the divine soul whose words have served as guiding principles throughout life, the Prime Minister noted that speaking about such a revered figure naturally stirs deep emotions. He expressed that rather than speaking about Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj, he wished they could have had the privilege to listen to him once more. Shri Modi remarked that encapsulating the journey of such a great personality in words is no easy task. He stated that Acharya Vidyanand Ji Muniraj was born on 22 April 1925, on the sacred land of Karnataka, and was given the spiritual name 'Vidyanand'. He highlighted that Acharya's life was a unique confluence of knowledge and bliss. His speech carried profound wisdom, yet his words were so simple that anyone could understand them. Mentioning that Acharya Vidyanand Ji authored over 150 texts, undertook thousands of kilometres of barefoot journeys, and connected millions of youths with discipline and cultural values through his tireless efforts, the Prime Minister described Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj as a 'visionary of the era'. He expressed his fortune in having the opportunity to personally experience the spiritual aura of the Acharya and receive his guidance and blessings over time. He stated that at this centenary celebration, he

could still feel the same affection and closeness from the revered Acharya.

“India is the world's most ancient living civilization, our country has endured for thousands of years because its ideas, philosophical thought, and worldview are eternal”, stated Shri Modi. He noted that this enduring vision is rooted in the wisdom of sages, seers, saints, and Acharyas. He highlighted that Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj stood as a modern beacon of this timeless tradition. The Prime Minister observed that the Acharya possessed deep expertise in numerous subjects and demonstrated excellence in many domains. He praised the Acharya's spiritual intensity, extensive knowledge, and command over languages such as Kannada, Marathi, Sanskrit, and Prakrit. Highlighting Acharya's contributions to literature and religion, his devotion to classical music, and his steadfast commitment to national service, the Prime Minister said that there was no dimension of life in which the Acharya did not set exemplary standards. He underscored that Acharya Vidyanand Ji was not only a great musician but also a fierce patriot and freedom fighter, and a steadfast Digambar Muni who embodied complete detachment. He described him as both a reservoir of knowledge and a source of spiritual bliss. Shri Modi emphasised that the journey from Surendra Upadhyay to Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj was a transformation from an ordinary man to a transcendent soul. He called it an inspiration that the future is not bound by the limitations of the present life, but rather shaped by one's direction, purpose, and resolve.

Remarking that Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj did not limit his life to spiritual practice alone but he transformed his life into a medium for social and cultural reconstruction, the Prime Minister underlined that through the establishment of the Prakrit Bhavan and several research institutions, the Acharya carried the flame of knowledge to newer generations. He stated that the Acharya also gave rightful recognition to Jain history. By authoring seminal texts such as 'Jain Darshan' and 'Anekantvad', he deepened philosophical thought and promoted inclusivity and breadth of understanding. The Prime Minister noted that from temple restoration to the education of underprivileged children and broader social welfare, every endeavour of the Acharya reflected a synthesis of self-realisation and public

good.

Recalling that Acharya Vidyanand Ji Maharaj once said that life becomes truly spiritual only when it becomes a means of selfless service, Shri Modi said that this thought is deeply rooted in the essence of Jain philosophy, and intrinsically linked to the spirit of India. “India is a nation defined by service and guided by humanity”, exclaimed the Prime Minister, noting that while the world tried for centuries to quell violence with violence, India introduced the world to the power of non-violence. He emphasised that the Indian ethos has always prioritised the spirit of service to humanity above all.

“India's spirit of service is unconditional beyond self-interest and inspired by selflessness”, remarked Shri Modi, emphasising that this principle guides the nation's governance today. He cited initiatives like the PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, Ayushman Bharat Yojana, and free food grain distribution for the underprivileged as reflections of this ethos, aimed at uplifting those at the last rung of society. He highlighted that the government is committed to achieving saturation in all schemes, ensuring that no one is left behind and that progress is truly inclusive. The Prime Minister affirmed that this resolve is inspired by Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj's ideals and remains a shared national commitment.

“The teachings and words of the Tirthankaras, monks, and Acharyas remain timeless and relevant in every era. Today, the principles of Jainism such as the five Mahavratas, Anuvrat, Triratnas, and the Six Essentials are more important than ever before”, stated the Prime Minister. He noted that eternal teachings, too, must be made accessible to the common person according to the needs of the time. Shri Modi highlighted that Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj dedicated his life and work to this cause. “Acharya ji launched the 'Vachanamrit' movement to present Jain scriptures in colloquial language, he also used devotional music to convey profound spiritual concepts in a simple and accessible manner for the masses”, said Shri Modi. Quoting from one of Acharya's bhajans, the Prime Minister remarked that such compositions are spiritual garlands made from the pearls of wisdom. He added that this effortless faith in immortality and the courage to gaze toward the infinite are what make Indian spirituality

and culture truly exceptional.

Highlighting that the centenary year of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj is a year of continuous inspiration, Shri Modi emphasised the responsibility to not only imbibe the spiritual teachings of the Acharya in personal life but also to carry forward his work for the welfare of society and the nation. He highlighted Acharya Vidyanand Ji's pivotal role in reviving the ancient Prakrit language through his literary works and devotional compositions. The Prime Minister noted that Prakrit is one of India's oldest languages and the original medium of Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings, in which the Jain Agamas were composed. He remarked that due to cultural neglect, the language had started fading from common use. Shri Modi further stated that the efforts of saints like Acharya Vidyanand Ji have now become national efforts. He recalled that in October 2024, the government granted Prakrit the status of a classical language. He mentioned the digitisation drive launched to preserve India's ancient manuscripts, which includes a significant number of Jain scriptures and texts related to Acharyas. The Prime Minister further noted that the government is promoting the use of mother tongues in higher education. Reaffirming his address from the Red Fort, he reiterated the resolve to free the nation from the mindset of colonialism and to advance with both development and heritage in tandem. Shri Modi stated that this commitment guides the ongoing development of India's cultural and pilgrimage sites. He recalled that in 2024, the government organised large-scale celebrations to mark the 2,550th Nirvana Mahotsav of Bhagwan Mahavir, which was inspired by Acharya Vidyanand Ji Muniraj and blessed by saints like Acharya Shri Pragya Sagar Ji. Remarking that in the times ahead, the nation must undertake more such large-scale efforts to enrich its cultural heritage, the Prime Minister affirmed that, like the current programme, all such initiatives will be guided by the spirit of Jan Bhagidari with the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas.

Shri Modi stated that his presence on the occasion naturally evoked the memory of Navkar Mantra Diwas, during which nine resolutions were also shared. He expressed happiness that a large number of citizens are earnestly working to fulfil these pledges and added that the teachings of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj strengthen these

commitments. Reiterating the nine resolutions, the Prime Minister stated the first resolution is to conserve water. He urged everyone to recognise the value of every drop, calling it both a responsibility and a duty towards Mother Earth. The second resolution is 'Ek Ped Maa ke naam', to plant a tree in the name of one's mother and nurture it just as mothers nurture us, making each tree a living blessing from the mother. The third resolution emphasises that cleanliness is not for display it reflects inner non-violence. He added that every street, neighbourhood, and city must be kept clean with collective participation. 'Vocal for Local' being the fourth resolution, Shri Modi urged citizens to choose and promote products made by fellow Indians, rich with the sweat and soil of the country. The fifth resolution is to explore and understand India, while it is good to see the world, one must also deeply know, experience, and cherish India. The Prime Minister outlined the sixth resolution to adopt natural farming, stating the need to free Mother Earth from harmful chemicals and promote organic farming across villages. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle being the seventh resolution, the Prime Minister advised mindful eating, inclusion of millets in traditional Indian meals, and reducing oil consumption by at least ten percent to combat obesity and boost vitality. The eighth resolution is to embrace yoga and sports as part of daily life. Shri Modi stated the ninth resolution as to help the poor, underlining that holding the hand of the underprivileged and aiding them in overcoming poverty is the truest form of service. The Prime Minister expressed confidence that by working on these nine resolutions, citizens would also reinforce the teachings of Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj.

"India's vision for the Amrit Kaal is deeply rooted in the nation's consciousness and enriched by the wisdom of its saints", stated Shri Modi, highlighting that 140 crore citizens are actively working to realise the Amrit resolutions and build a developed India. He remarked that the dream of a developed India means fulfilling the aspirations of every Indian. The Prime Minister noted that this vision draws inspiration from Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj, and that walking the path shown by him, internalising his teachings, and making nation-building the foremost duty of life is a collective responsibility. Shri Modi concluded by expressing confidence that the sanctity of the

occasion would further strengthen these commitments and paid his respectful tribute to Acharya Shri Vidyanand Ji Muniraj. Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekawat and revered Saints were present among other dignitaries at the event.

### **Background**

The Centenary Celebrations of Acharya Vidyanand Ji Maharaj marks the formal commencement of a year-long national tribute, being organised by Government of India, in collaboration with Bhagwan Mahaveer Ahimsa Bharti Trust to honour the 100th birth anniversary of Acharya Vidyanand Ji Maharaj, a revered Jain spiritual leader and social reformer. The year-long celebration will include cultural, literary, educational, and spiritual initiatives across the country, aimed at celebrating his life and legacy and spreading his message.

Acharya Vidyanand Ji Maharaj authored more than 50 works on Jain philosophy and ethics. He played an instrumental role in the restoration and revival of ancient Jain temples across India and worked for education, especially in Prakrit, Jain philosophy, and classical languages.

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MJPS/SR  
(Release ID: 2140372)



**Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's remarks on Union Budget 2025-26**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 will fulfill the aspirations of 140 crore Indians: PM**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 is a force multiplier: PM**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 empowers every citizen: PM**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 will empower the agriculture sector and give boost to rural economy: PM**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 greatly benefits the middle class of our country: PM**

**Viksit Bharat Budget 2025-26 has a 360-degree focus on manufacturing to empower entrepreneurs, MSMEs and small businesses: PM**

Posted On: 01 FEB 2025 3:58PM by PIB Delhi

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered his remarks on the Union Budget 2025-26 via video message today. Highlighting that today marked an important milestone in the journey of India's development, Shri Modi remarked that this budget reflects the aspirations of 140 crore Indians and fulfills the dreams of every citizen. He highlighted that several sectors were opened up for the youth, and the common citizen will drive the mission of Viksit Bharat (Developed India). The Prime Minister emphasized that this budget is a force multiplier which would increase the savings, investment, consumption, and growth. He congratulated the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman and her team for this 'People's Budget'.

Prime Minister remarked that typically, the focus of the budget is on how to fill the Government's treasury. However, he said this budget focused on how to fill the pockets of the citizens, increase their

savings, and make them partners in the country's development. He emphasized that this budget lays the foundation for these goals.

“Significant steps have been taken towards reforms in this budget”, said Shri Modi and highlighted the historic decision to promote the private sector in nuclear energy. He added that civil nuclear energy will ensure a significant contribution to the country's development in the future. He emphasized that all employment sectors were given priority in the budget. Pointing out two major reforms that will bring significant changes in the coming time, Shri Modi said that granting infrastructure status to shipbuilding will boost the construction of large ships in India, accelerating the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan and including hotels at 50 tourist destinations under the infrastructure category will significantly boost tourism, providing new energy to the hospitality sector, which is the largest employment sector. The Prime Minister stated that the country was progressing with the mantra of "Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi" (Development and Heritage). He mentioned that significant steps were taken in this budget to preserve one crore manuscripts through the launch of the Gyan Bharatam Mission. Additionally, a National Digital Repository inspired by Indian knowledge traditions will be created.

Remarking that the announcements made in the budget for farmers will lay the foundation for a new revolution in the agricultural sector and the entire rural economy, Shri Modi highlighted that under the PM Dhan-Dhanya Krishi Yojana, irrigation and infrastructure development will take place in 100 districts. He emphasized that increasing the limit of the Kisan Credit Card from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh will provide greater assistance to farmers.

Highlighting that the budget has exempted income up to ₹12 lakh from tax, the Prime Minister said tax reductions were made for all income groups, which will greatly benefit the middle class and those who have been newly employed.

“The budget has a 360-degree focus on manufacturing to strengthen entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and small businesses, creating new jobs”, emphasised the Prime Minister. He highlighted that sectors like clean tech, leather, footwear, and the toy industry had received special support under the National Manufacturing Mission. He stressed that

the goal was clear to ensure Indian products to shine in the global market.

Pointing that the budget places special emphasis on creating a vibrant and competitive investment environment in the states, Shri Modi highlighted the announcement to double the credit guarantee for MSMEs and startups. He mentioned the introduction of a scheme to provide loans up to ₹2 crore without guarantee for SC, ST, and women first-time entrepreneurs. He emphasized the significant announcement for gig workers, with their registration on the e-Shram portal for the first time, enabling them to access healthcare and other social security schemes. The Prime Minister stated that this reflects the Government's commitment to the dignity of labor. He highlighted that regulatory and financial reforms, such as Jan Vishwas 2.0, will strengthen the commitment to minimum government and trust-based governance.

Concluding his address, the Prime Minister remarked that this budget not only addresses the current needs of the country but also helps in preparing for the future. He highlighted the initiatives for startups, including the Deep Tech Fund, Geospatial Mission, and Nuclear Energy Mission. He extended his congratulations to all citizens for this historic budget.

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MJPS/SR  
(Release ID: 2098529)

### **116<sup>th</sup> Mann Ki Baat Episode;**

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, during the 116th episode of his monthly radio program Mann Ki Baat, emphasized the significance of Lothal in India's maritime history. Known as the site of the world's first dockyard, Lothal is now witnessing the construction of the National Maritime Heritage Complex, under Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, a grand museum dedicated to showcasing India's 5000-year-old maritime history that began with the Harappan civilization.

Speaking on the initiative, PM Modi said, “Lothal is a proud symbol of India's maritime brilliance and ancient trading capabilities. The museum being developed here will become a global hub for learning and appreciating our rich seafaring heritage. I urge everyone to contribute by preserving and sharing manuscripts, historical documents, or artefacts with the National Archives of India.” The Prime Minister further highlighted the Oral History Project, which documents the experiences of Partition survivors. With only a few witnesses of the Partition era remaining, this initiative aims to preserve their stories for future generations. As part of India's ongoing campaign to preserve its ancient heritage, PM Modi encouraged citizens to actively participate by contributing to these efforts and ensuring the legacy of India's maritime and cultural history is safeguarded. Set to feature an array of exhibits, interactive displays, and educational programs, NMHC is expected to become a major tourist destination, attracting visitors globally and fostering a greater appreciation for India's maritime heritage. The physical progress for Phase 1A of the project has reached 57%, marking a significant milestone in its development.

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**NKK/AK**

(Release ID: 2076573)

**PM inaugurates Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi**

**“ Vishwanath Dham is not just a grand building. This is a symbol of the Sanatan culture of India. It is a symbol of our spiritual soul. This is a symbol of India's antiquity, traditions, India's energy and dynamism.”**

**“Earlier the temple area was only 3000 square feet which has now been enlarged to about 5 lakh square feet. Now 50000 - 75000 devotees can visit the temple and temple premises”**

**“The dedication of Kashi Vishwanath Dham will give a decisive direction to India and will lead to a brighter future. This complex is a witness of our capability and our duty. With determination and concerted thought, nothing is impossible”**

**“For me God comes in the form of people, For me every person is a part of God. I ask three resolutions from the people for the country - cleanliness, creation and continuous efforts for self-reliant India”**

**“Long period of slavery broke our confidence in such a way that we lost faith in our own creation. Today, from this thousands-year-old Kashi, I call upon every countryman - create with full confidence, innovate, do it in an innovative way”**

**Felicitates and has lunch with the workers who worked on the construction Kashi Vishwanath Dham**

Posted On: 13 DEC 2021 3:16PM by PIB Delhi

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi today. He prayed at the Kaal Bhairav Temple and Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Kashi. He also took a holy dip in river Ganga.

Starting his address with pranam at the feet of 'Nagar Kotwal' (Lord Kaal Bhairav), the Prime Minister said nothing special happens without his blessings. The Prime Minister sought the lord's blessings for the countrymen. The Prime



Minister cited Puranas which say that as soon as one enters Kashi, one becomes free from all bondage. "Blessings of Lord Vishweshwara, a supernatural energy awakens our inner soul as soon as we come here". He added that this whole new complex of Vishwanath Dham is not just a grand building. This is a symbol of the Sanatan culture of our India. It is a symbol of our spiritual soul. This is a symbol of India's antiquity, traditions, India's energy and dynamism. The Prime Minister said 'when one comes here, they will see not only faith but will also feel the glory of the past here. How antiquity and novelty come alive together. How the inspirations of the ancient are giving direction to the future, We are witnessing this very vividly in Vishwanath Dham complex', he added.

The Prime Minister noted that earlier the temple area was only 3000 square feet which has now enlarged to about 5 lakh square feet. Now 50000 - 75000 devotees can visit the temple and temple premises. That is, first the darshan and bath in Maa Ganga, and from there directly to Vishwanath Dham, he informed.

Dwelling on the glory of Kashi, the Prime Minister said that Kashi is imperishable and is under the patronage of the Lord Shiva. He expressed his gratitude to every worker in the construction of this grand complex. They did not let even Corona stop the work here. He met and felicitated the workers. Shri Modi had his lunch with the workers who worked for the construction of the Dham. The Prime Minister also lauded the artisans, people associated with the

construction, administration and those families who had their homes here. Along with all this, he also congratulated the UP government, Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath, who toiled relentlessly to complete the Kashi Vishwanath Dham project.



The Prime Minister said the invaders attacked this city, tried to destroy it. The city is witness to the history of Aurangzeb's atrocities and his terror. Who tried to change civilization by the sword, Who tried to crush the culture with fanaticism. But the soil of this country is different from the rest of the world. If there is an Aurangzeb, said the Prime Minister, Shivaji is also there. If any Salar Masood comes, then brave warriors like King Suheldev make him taste the might of India's unity. And even during the British era, the people of Kashi knew what happened to Hastings, said Shri Modi.

The Prime Minister went on describing the grace and importance of Kashi. He remarked that Kashi is not a matter of mere words, it is a creation of sensations. Kashi is that - where awakening is life; Kashi is that - where death is also a festival; Kashi is that - where truth is the culture; Kashi is where love is tradition. He added that Varanasi is the city from where Jagadguru Shankaracharya got inspiration from the purity of Shri Dome Raja and resolved to unite the country in the thread of unity. This is the place where Goswami Tulsidas created a celestial creation like Ramcharitmanas with inspiration from Lord Shankar. The Prime Minister continued and said that Lord Buddha's enlightenment was revealed to the world in Sarnath, here. For the betterment of the society, sages like Kabirdas appeared here. If there was a need to unite the society, then this Kashi became the center of the power of devotion of Sant Raidas, the Prime Minister added.



The Prime Minister said Kashi is the land of four Jain Tirthankaras, the epitome of non-violence and austerity. From the integrity of King Harishchandra to the knowledge of Vallabhacharya, Ramanand ji. From Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Samarth Guru Ramdas to Swami Vivekananda, Madan Mohan Malaviya. The Holy land of Kashi has been home to sages, acharyas beyond count. The Prime Minister remarked that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj came here. From Rani Lakshmi Bai to Chandrashekhar Azad, Kashi has been the karmbhoomi of many fighters. Talents like Bharatendu Harishchandra, Jaishankar Prasad, Munshi Premchand, Pandit Ravi Shankar, and Bismillah Khan are from this great city, he said. The Prime Minister said that dedication of Kashi Vishwanath Dham will give a decisive direction to India and will lead to a brighter future. This complex is a witness of our capability and our duty. With determination and concerted thought, nothing is impossible. The Prime Minister said “Indians have the power to make the unimaginable come true. We know tapasya, know penance and we know how to spend day and night for the country. No matter how big the challenge, we Indians can defeat it together”.

The Prime Minister said today's India is reviving its lost heritage. Here in Kashi, Mata Annapurna herself resides. He expressed happiness that the statue of Mother Annapurna, which was stolen from Kashi, has now been re-established in Kashi after a wait of a century. The Prime Minister said for him, God comes in the form of people and for him every Indian is a part of God. He asked for three resolutions from the people for the country - cleanliness, creation and continuous efforts for self-reliant India.



The Prime Minister called cleanliness a way of life and called for people's participation in this enterprise, especially in the Namami Gange Mission. The Prime Minister said the long period of slavery broke our confidence in such a way that we lost faith in our own creation. Today, from this thousand-year-old Kashi, I call upon every countryman - create with full confidence, innovate, do it in an innovative way.



The Prime Minister said that the third resolution that needs to be taken today is to raise our efforts for self-reliant India. In this 'Amrit Kaal', in the 75th year of independence, we will have to work for what India will be like when India celebrates a hundred years of independence, The Prime Minister Concluded .

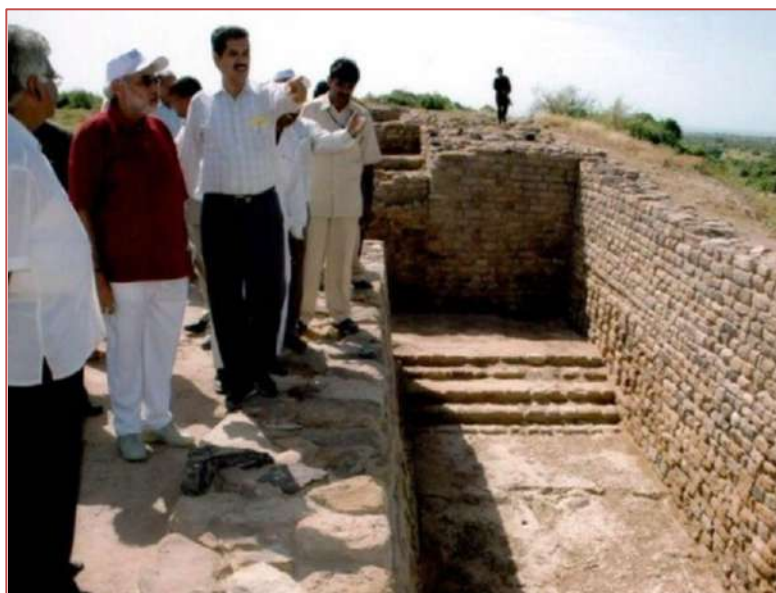
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**DS/AK**

(Release ID: 1780884)

## Glance







*3 January, 2016: Shri N.K. Sinha, Secretary, Culture showing the exhibits to the Prime Minister.*

## **Conclusion:**

### **Towards a Plural Civilisational Future**

*"It is our civilizational ethos and heritage that provide the basis what could be termed as India's soft power. We are blessed to have this in abundance."*

*-PM Narendra Modi in an interview to Les Echos, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023.*

The post-2014 years have been a turning point in the new history of India. Not just in electoral terms or with economic reconfigurations, but with the symbolic remaking of the country's cultural, civilizational, and historical self. This book has sought to map that shift not as a partisan history but as a thoughtful, evidence-driven record of how history, heritage, identity, and state policy have become thoroughly implicated in the imagination of a New India. From yoga and Ayurveda as tools of international diplomacy to the re-ordering of sacred geographies and urban visions, India's cultural topography has seen both unmatched renewal and conscious ordering. The state institutions, the policies, and the symbolic acts spanning the redevelopment of Central Vista to the Adopt a Heritage program, from the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor to the new history textbooks, from diaspora festivals to restoring repatriated artifacts have been the instruments of this ordering.

At the center of this change is an ideological shift an effort to conceptualize India not only as a secular modern democracy (as the Nehruvian or Ambedkarite imagination had envisioned), but as a civilisational state anchored in its ancient heritage, spiritual tradition, and cultural oneness. This turn to civilisationalism has remapped the discourse of the state. Ministries of Culture, Education, AYUSH, and Tourism



are not backbenchers anymore; they are major tools in recasting national identity. But this change is not monolithic. It is full of tensions, contradictions, and possibilities.

*The Civilisational Frame: Between Continuity and Construction*

Civilisation has been a highly debated term in Indian historiography. While colonial historians employed it to proclaim or criticise India's past, nationalist intellectuals such as Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and Tagore redefined civilisation as ethical prowess as opposed to technological prowess. Post-2014, we witness a new type of civilisational narrative a mix of cultural confidence, institutional reformation, and international projection. This story is a claim to be going back to roots, but also a selective reconstruction. The notion of Vishwaguru India as the spiritual mentor of the world has become an easy plank for speeches, summits, and symbolic policies. It represents a rightful pride in the intellectual tradition of India (from Nalanda to Upanishads) but can also become triumphalist if unconnected with critical thinking or internal pluralism. What is celebrated tends to be Sanskritic and majoritarian. Folk cultures, Sufi cultures, tribal epistemologies, and even Buddhist heterodoxies are included but tends to be selected to serve a grand narrative. The risk is not in pride, but in reducing difference. As Romila Thapar reminds us, "civilisations are not static wholes they are contested, disrupted, and reformed continuously."

One of the characteristic traits of the Modi period has been the ideological reappropriation of cultural institutions. From the Sahitya Akademi to the ASI, IGNCA, NCERT, and Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, these institutions have seen a change in leadership, content, and outreach. Museums are more than archives now they are platforms for identity performance. Monuments no longer remain static they are

branded, brought to life, and occasionally reconstructed. The museumisation of identity has enabled the state to fashion memory to determine what is worth remembering, and what will be forgotten. At one level, it has resulted in broader representations such as museums for tribal freedom fighters and projects for marginalised arts. At another level, it has also resulted in exclusions, more so of Muslim, Dalit, or oppositional histories.

*Reclaiming Public Spaces: Urban Nationalism and Sacred Geographies*

India's urban and sacred spaces are not only being reinvented aesthetically, but also ideologically. Developments such as the Central Vista, Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Mahakaal Lok, and Ram Mandir are a manifestation of a new politics of visibility where the state visually makes a statement of its civilisational narrative through architecture, statues, and monumentalism. Smart Cities have turned into smart-civilisational cities, where digital planning combines with heritage curation. Public spaces no longer bear the weight of infrastructure alone but the onus of narrative as well. Temples, formerly localised religious locations, are nationalised pilgrimage centres these days backed by airports, festivals, and virtual tourism.

The post-2014 period has witnessed a profound symbiosis of culture and the economy. Under initiatives such as ODOP, GI tagging, PRASHAD, and Swadesh Darshan, India's local crafts, rituals, and sites of heritage have been incorporated into global branding efforts. India's cultural economy isn't expanding it is being remodeled for tourism, commerce, and foreign policy. A Banarasi sari is no longer merely handloom it is an emblem of the nation. A Ramlila performance is no longer merely a village ritual it is a cultural export. This can be liberating providing economic respect to craftsmen and international reputation to local traditions. But

it can also be commodified where culture is frozen, stylised, and commodified out of community control.

### **Global Projection: Yoga, Ayurveda, and Diplomacy**

India's single biggest cultural success story has been projecting itself globally as soft power by means of Yoga, Ayurveda, classical music, and philosophy. Its International Day of Yoga, WHO Centre for Traditional Medicine, and museum partnerships with institutions such as the British Museum and Smithsonian are all a testimony to this transformation. These are not mere cultural exports they are ideational exports. India is no longer responding to Western categories; it is presenting alternatives. *"Yoga for One Earth, One Health", "Ayush Visa", and "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" are efforts to provide Indian paradigms for international issues.*

But even here, inclusion is important. According to scholars such as Meera Nanda and Partha Chatterjee, knowledge diplomacy must be plural, not purist. If Sanskrit texts alone are traded, and vernacular epistemologies neglected, India could lose the very diversity that made its civilisational ethos so widely respected. One of the lesser noted, but vital elements of culture is discord. The 2015 "Award Wapsi" movement, opposition from writers, filmmakers, and artists, and increasing censorship in the media and among academics indicate a tense coexistence between freedom and culture.

Whereas state patronage has grown for "aligned" artists, oppositional voices be they Dalit writers, feminist archivists, or militant filmmakers have frequently suffered institutional silence or hostility. The arts cannot flourish in patronage alone they require plurality, debate, and space for contradiction. A genuinely civilisational democracy must keep in mind: culture without liberty turns into folklore, and heritage without dissent turns into hegemony. India's cultural



strength has always been not singularity, but plurality. From Vedic mantras to Baul songs, from Ajanta paintings to Sufi qawwalis, from Tantric texts to Dalit oral epics India's identity has never been monophonic but polyphonic. The post-2014 reassertion of culture is not in itself problematic. Cultural pride, indeed, is necessary in decolonising minds and in the healing of historic wounds. But the future resides in inclusive cultural nationalism, whereby pride should not become prejudice, and revival should not become revisionism. India is at a crossroads today. There is one path to a confident, plural, democratic civilisation history-based, change-oriented, and modest in leadership.

The other path is to narrow, exclusionary revivalism, where only a few identities are legitimised. The actual challenge of the coming decade is not to construct corridors, build statues, or design museums. It is to make sure that each Indian no matter the caste, creed, gender, or language finds themselves in the narrative India tells the world. This book has tried to chart the shape of that changing narrative. A narrative in which heritage turns into hope, identity turns into invitation, and civilisation turns into conversation not conclusion.

*India has rediscovered its cultural voice in the post-2014 era. It is noisier, more assertive, and more international. But voice is not vision. The question now is: Can India be a Vishwaguru not by proclaiming it so, but by being the most plural, ethical, and imaginative civilisation of the 21st century? The answer to this lies not merely in government schemes, but in what we want to remember, conserve, question, and imagine -- together.*

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