

INDIA AS A MEDIATOR

Mediation between warring nations is often a thankless task, but a neutral mediator can play a decisive role in reducing tensions. At a time when the ongoing Iran-US tensions are driving up the global cost of living, India should step forward as a mediator between the two sides. Such a role has already been suggested by several Iranian and Western leaders. India has often hesitated to assume major diplomatic responsibilities, partly because its leadership has traditionally preferred quiet diplomacy over self-promotion, while remaining focused on national growth and the aspirations of its people. Yet India is uniquely placed to act in the interest of global peace because it maintains strong relations with all key stakeholders — Iran, the UAE, which has been drawn into the conflict, Israel, and the United States, despite President Donald Trump's often unpredictable statements and policies. India also has a strong economic interest in preventing a prolonged conflict, as continued instability would sharply raise oil prices and increase the cost of essential goods both domestically and globally. India commands credibility in international diplomacy because of its earlier non-aligned policy and its current approach of maintaining balanced relations with major powers.

India has successfully played such a role before. In 1953, despite being a much weaker nation economically and militarily, it helped mediate between the Soviet Union and Austria, contributing to Austria's emergence as an independent and neutral state. India's deployment of troops during and after the Korean War (1950–1954) is still regarded as an important chapter in the history of international peacekeeping. Today, India is in a far stronger position globally, with a longstanding message of peace and concern for humanity at the core of its foreign policy. The world is likely to listen if India chooses to lead such an initiative.

16 deaths a day: Every dowry death shames entire Indian society

Siddharth Mishra

The recent incidents involving the death of model Twisha Sharma in Bhopal and Deepika Nagar in Greater Noida, which are being allegedly described as the dowry deaths, have once again brought the issue of continuity of dowry system in India in public discussion. Irrespective of the veracity of the causes of these deaths, it is so unfortunate, as we stand at a juncture of civilisational peak, that we still hear of dowry deaths that result from dowry related harassment. As per NCRB data, India recorded 5,737 dowry deaths in 2024, translating to about 16 women losing their lives every single day. Every conscientious citizen is naturally shaken to know this death ratio and is compelled to ask the question that why is it that the civilised society still has to hear of, and bear with, the dowry deaths?

At a point of time when India boasts of becoming a Vishva Guru and claims of being the fastest growing economy making all round development, how pernicious is it to have the phenomena of dowry death existing in this country. How farcical it is for a country to make such tall claims when it, rather than ensuring respect and security, miserably fails to protect its own daughters. Indian society very pompously boasts of empowerment, security and respect for women, and posits to be place where girls are worshipped and treated as deities. However, shamefully, we still have the retrograde practice of dowry prevailing among almost all the communities throughout the nook and corner of this country.

Though laws and machinery exist to prevent and control the menace of dowry in India, but that has largely remained ineffective in stopping or eradicating the social evil of dowry which continues and is widely pervasive in India. Indian laws such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 contain necessary provisions to check the menace of Dowry. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023



in its Section 80 (formerly Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code) applies specifically to cases of dowry death occurring within seven years of marriage while other provisions of law such as Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (formerly Section 498A IPC) continue to provide protection against cruelty and harassment for dowry demands irrespective of the duration of marriage. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 prohibits and penalizes giving or taking of dowry so as to safeguard women against dowry harassment. Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 provides for speedy investigation and trial of criminal cases including Dowry related cases.

The government has already directed that the dowry related cases must be adjudicated expeditiously to avoid further harassment of the women and has even appointed the dowry prohibition officers, and keeps issuing advisories to all States/UTs from time to time to effectively deal with, and for proper enforcement of law and convictions in, women related crimes. Further, Bureau of Police Research & Development, conducts training programmes for personnel of criminal justice

system including investigation officers, prosecution officers and medical officers etc. to deal with crime against women effectively and sensitively.

However, unfortunately, despite such comprehensive legal measures, the evil of dowry continues to exist in Indian society, and leads to frequent conflicts and disputes that sometime result in dowry deaths as well. This state of affairs signifies that the solution to this problem cannot be provided merely by legal measures, rather the solution must be sought elsewhere as well. Thus, tackling this problem requires not only making strong laws and ensuring their effective implementation but also simultaneously educating and sensitising people against this evil practice.

The voices against dowry must emerge from within the society in the form of strong public opinion to fulfil the gap between law and public policy in this regard. Thus, there is pressing need to educate and sensitise the society about the ill effects of practicing the dowry system. The presence of dowry system is not in the interest of the society and it creates a distrust in the institution of marriage, the ill effects of

which have already started appearing through delayed, broken or no marriages.

In this scenario, members of the civil society should come forward voluntarily and stop giving and taking dowry in marriages of their children. The families must educate their children, especially, their sons against the dowry system and encourage them to be self-dependent. Boys should be taught to have high self-esteem, who should consider taking dowry as an inferior and insulting practice. Men and women in the families across all the communities must become part of a mass campaign for giving up the bad practice of dowry. The government must run campaigns against giving and accepting dowry in any form in the marriages. Even civil society should run #QuitDowry campaign through social media so that it turns into a mass movement and people, especially, the youth of this country start treating dowry as a degrading practice.

This movement shall succeed the day when dowry shall come to be treated as amounting to beggary and accepting it shall be considered as receiving alms. As the circumstances that led to the origin of dowry system do not any longer exist in this country, so there is no justification of its continuation at present. Dowry death is a curse for, and a darkest blot on, the whole civilised society as well as the state. It impinges upon the capacity of the state to protect the members of half of its population. Dowry death is not just a horrendous crime but also a matter of gravest concern and shame for the whole society.

However, if even a single dowry death does not shake the conscience of the society, then it severely reflects on the poor value system of members of society, and also adversely impinges on the values that the society is going to pass on to its future generations. The state and the society need to seriously start thinking about curbing this menace and should take meaningful, effective and foolproof measures to eradicate the social evil of dowry from the Indian society, completely.

DISCIPLINE: THE FOUNDATION OF A STRONG SOCIETY

Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj Ji

Discipline is essential for every living being, but for human beings, who are social by nature, it becomes even more important. Without discipline, society would descend into chaos, making peaceful coexistence impossible. Discipline is not something that can simply be learnt from books or imposed by others; it must become a natural part of daily life. From the moment a person wakes up until the time they go to sleep, discipline guides behaviour, thoughts and responsibilities.

The dictionary defines discipline as training oneself to act according to rules and maintaining a routine that develops skills and character. In reality, discipline acts as a control over emotions, actions and impulses. It helps individuals lead a balanced and organised life. Simple habits such as waking up on time, maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly and managing time properly are all reflections of discipline. However, discipline is not limited to routines alone. It also involves inner control — the ability to manage anger, speech, desires and reactions. A disciplined person may not be flawless, but such a person is dependable, calm and trustworthy. These qualities earn respect and create stability in



both personal and social life.

In today's world, indiscipline and the erosion of human values are becoming major concerns. Many social problems arise because people fail to exercise self-control and responsibility. No nation can progress without disciplined citizens. Lack of discipline often reflects frustration, dissatisfaction and a weakening of moral values. It leads to unrest, aggression and disrespect for social norms. What is often mistaken for freedom

may actually be uncontrolled behaviour driven by the desire for attention and recognition. Such attitudes disturb peace within society and weaken the collective spirit of progress. The younger generation, in particular, requires proper guidance and constructive engagement. Youth possess immense energy, creativity and ambition, but without direction these qualities can turn

into frustration and rebellion. Parents play a crucial role in shaping the character of their children. If they lead by example through honesty, sacrifice, understanding and integrity, children naturally learn to respect discipline. At the same time, children themselves must also take responsibility for their actions. Peer pressure and misguided influences often encourage negative behaviour and indiscipline among youngsters. One of the biggest reasons behind growing indis-

cipline is the decline of moral and spiritual education in schools, colleges and homes. Modern education focuses heavily on academic success and career growth, but often neglects values such as patience, humility, tolerance and respect for elders. Spiritual and moral teachings help individuals develop self-control and emotional balance. They transform restless minds into responsible and compassionate personalities dedicated to society. Another concern is the blind imitation of foreign lifestyles and cultures at the cost of traditional values. Modernisation itself is not harmful, but abandoning one's cultural roots entirely creates confusion and weakens social identity. Indian culture has always emphasised respect, discipline, family values and harmony. These principles were carefully nurtured by previous generations, but many of them are gradually fading in today's fast-changing world.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to revive strong moral foundations and cultural values among the younger generation. Discipline must begin at home and continue through education and society. Only by combining modern progress with strong ethical values can India create responsible citizens and a peaceful society. Discipline is the foundation of growth, harmony and success.

When AI speaks in tribal languages: The promise of inclusive development

Ranjana Chopra

In the forests, hills, and remote habitations that stretch across our country, a quiet yet consequential transformation is underway. Tribal communities, long awaiting their rightful place at the center of India's development story, are today emerging as active architects of the nation's progress. This is the spirit that underlies Janjatiya Garima Utsav: a national celebration of a journey towards Viksit Bharat, where progress is not a privilege of geography or circumstance, but a right belonging equally to every citizen.

The scale of the ambition To appreciate why technology has become indispensable to tribal development, one must first appreciate the magnitude of challenge. Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA), the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission, and related initiatives cover more than 63,000 villages across 549 dis-

tricts and 2,911 blocks in 30 States and Union Territories, benefiting more than 5.5 crore tribal citizens. With special focus on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), these efforts aim to ensure saturation coverage of essential services such as housing, drinking water, sanitation, education, healthcare, connectivity, and livelihoods. Reaching every family across such diverse and expansive terrain demands system that are data-driven, connected, and responsive and that is precisely what we are building.

Janjatiya Garima Utsav this year is organised around four thematic weeks, that together reflect the full arc of tribal development. The opening theme, "Technology as a Development Driver," captures how digital systems, science, and innovation are helping extend governance and opportunity to some of India's remotest communities. At the heart of this vision lies a simple principle: development must reach the last mile while remaining deeply respectful of tribal languages, cultures, heritage, and traditional knowledge systems.

Technology in service of tribal dignity

The most vivid illustration of what technology can accomplish when directed with purpose is BIRSA 101 — India's first indigenous CRISPR-based gene therapy for sickle cell disease. Sickle cell disease has long posed a significant health challenge for tribal populations, and India is now answering that challenge with advance science rooted in equity and accessibility. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has extended financial assistance to support research, clinical trial infrastructure, and technology transfer in collaboration with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), and Serum Institute of India Pvt. Ltd. A recent seminar at CSIR-IGIB brought together scientists, policymakers and Sickle cell warriors, reflecting both the scientific progress and the human urgency behind the efforts.

The shared goal is clear: to develop an affordable, one-time curative treatment that can reach every tribal

family in need. BIRSA 101 is not merely a medical milestone. It is a declaration that India's most advanced science will serve its most deserving communities. This conviction runs deeper than a single initiative. Efforts such as the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) and Ayurgenomics demonstrate how modern technology can help document, validate, and preserve the rich medicinal and ecological knowledge long safeguarded by tribal communities. The same spirit of inclusion is shaping how artificial intelligence is being integrated into tribal development. At the India AI Impact Summit 2026, the Ministry presented range of AI-enabled platforms built on a simple but powerful belief: that language is not a barrier to be overcome but an identity to be celebrated. Adi Vaani, an AI-powered Translator for Tribal Languages, supports text-to-text and text-to-speech translation, OCR, and delivery of government scheme information in tribal languages, enabling citizens to engage with public services in the language they speak at home. TriBoT, a multilingual conversational

AI assistant, further strengthens this effort by providing real-time guidance and grievance support to citizens in remote regions. These efforts were also discussed during a national seminar organised with the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Cell and IIT Delhi, which focused on culturally sensitive and community-centric applications of AI, including long-term preservation and strengthening of tribal languages.

Technology is also becoming a powerful instrument of cultural assertion and economic empowerment. The forthcoming TribeX platform aims to create a digital ecosystem for promoting tribal arts, languages, traditional knowledge, music, crafts, and cultural experiences. Complementing this effort, the proposed GI Potential Art and Craft Atlas of Tribal India will digitally map tribal handicrafts, forest products, and traditional art forms with Geographical Indication potential, helping strengthen branding, market access, and recognition of tribal intellectual heritage. Innovation Hubs, planned across Tribal Research Institutes in five states on a pi-

lot basis, will go further still, combining design and product development support, GIS-based planning dashboards, and incubation infrastructure for innovation-led tribal entrepreneurs and startups.

Technology is equally transforming the way governance reaches tribal communities. Survey Setu, deployed under PM-JANMAN for PVTG household surveys, enables real-time, geo-tagged monitoring of welfare delivery across remote regions. Operating across 18 States and 1 Union Territory, the platform has already recorded 3.43 lakh household submissions with support of 8,552 surveyors. Such data-driven systems help ensure that every eligible family is identified and connected to essential services.

In parallel, the Ministry is developing an AI-enabled Forest Rights Act governance platform to streamline claim submissions, GIS-based mapping, workflow monitoring, and grievance redressal. Together, these initiatives are making governance more transparent, responsive, and accessible for tribal citizens.