

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Long before the environmental protection became a slogan and a global business and fashion, people in India lived in harmony with nature. Revering nature, recycling of materials, including the food meaningfully has always been the Indian way. Even today when India is rated as the most fast growing country, our per capita emissions of earth heating gases remains the lowest. So on the world environment day does the world need to learn from India or we, the Indians, also need to sit up and do much more about saving the earth's environment and thereby the life that grows on it? The world surely needs to reduce consumption and make lifestyle changes following the Indians way. Using toilet paper which is made after chopping trees is not civilization it's vandalism. Using too much water through showers and bath tubs and easily be replaced by bucketfuls of water for bathing. There are thousands of other ways that the world must follow the Indians.

However, this traditional high position does not absolve Indians of their growing consumption driven lifestyles and call it growth. Despite Swaccha Bharat campaign ending the open defecation being a success, our cities face littering and solid waste management issues caused by lack of civic sense and rising consumptions. Indians foods based on locally grown produce are losing in competition to the processed foods pushed in by the MNCs. The awareness of eating locally grown foods is coming down particularly with Fen Z. The good part of the India story is that many entrepreneurs are launching recycling startups top reduce the wastage of resources. Indian government's push for the green energy particularly solar is going to be a game changer for bringing down the levels of global warming. It's the work in progress and would soon show results.

Modi's green diplomacy comes of age

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A defining feature of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent five-nation tour, which covered the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy, was the prominence accorded to green partnerships. Clean energy, green technology, shipping, the blue economy and climate resilience figured decisively in the agenda, highlighting how environmental and economic stakes have converged at a moment of global uncertainty. India's engagement abroad is no longer confined to conventional diplomacy; rather, it is strategically investing in partnerships and channels that secure long-term strategic interests, including energy security. In the wake of global turmoil, the resultant disruptions in supply-chain networks have exposed the vulnerabilities of fossil-fuel systems. The emphasis, therefore, is on convergence around clean energy, green technology and climate resilience, advancing self-reliance while shaping global environmental discourse and reinforcing a rules-based international order.

BOLSTERING GREEN DIPLOMACY

The Green Strategic Partnership with Norway elevates cooperation in clean energy, Arctic collaboration, defence technology, and other areas. With Sweden, the partnership focuses on green transition and resilient supply chains, while with the Netherlands, the engagement encompasses solar innovation, green hydrogen, storage and renewable investments, alongside maritime and sustainable agriculture. In the case of Italy, Prime Minister Modi and his counterpart, Prime Minister Meloni, agreed to strengthen the 2025-2027 Executive Programme for Scientific Cooperation, promoting joint research in renewable energy, quantum technologies, green hydrogen and the blue economy. Their joint tree-planting exercise underscored support for Prime Minister Modi's



domestic green drive. Further, elevating the India-Nordic relationship to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership further consolidates this vision. The tour, which secured nearly \$40 billion in investments, including from the UAE, is pivotal for its agenda, scope and timing.

Amid global supply-chain disruptions and mounting pressure on fossil-fuel systems, India's diversification of its energy basket through diplomatic channels is both a pragmatic and an economic necessity. The oil and gas crisis during disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz exposes this vulnerability. Committed to securing its energy needs beyond fossil-fuel dependence, India is embedding clean energy into external partnerships to build resilience against future shocks.

Second, in the new geopolitical reality, economic and ecological interests are increasingly intertwined and, in many instances, inseparable, and the Indian leadership is well aware of this. By cutting carbon emissions, adopting clean-energy

pathways and investing in green technology, India stands to gain significantly in building a decarbonised economy and improving developmental indicators for its underprivileged sections through access to clean and reliable energy supply, cooking fuel, sustainable transport, decent jobs, rural livelihoods and improved living standards.

Third, securing convergence with European countries on clean energy and climate action reflects a shift in mindset. Historically, differences around equity and differentiated responsibility have defined global climate negotiations, with developing countries pressing for finance and technology while developed nations urge emerging economies such as India to act at par. The change in approach stems from changing realities and increasing vulnerabilities. Though India is one of the most climate-impacted countries in the world, Europe too is increasingly facing climate-related disasters and extreme weather in the form of heatwaves, forest fires, rising

temperatures and rainfall anomalies. In 2025, Europe incurred losses of nearly €45 billion due to extreme weather events.

The European Union has also significantly pushed environmental norms. Through agreements on joint projects with India in green manufacturing and technology, renewable energy and the blue economy, European countries seek to reinforce environmental standards and strengthen multilateral frameworks. India, meanwhile, maintains its long-standing Global South position on equity while unlocking finance and technical expertise. Together, these efforts bolster a rules-based order with an emphasis on inclusivity, cooperation, partnerships and sustainable development.

India's diplomatic strength on the environmental agenda emerges largely from a wide array of domestic climate and environmental initiatives. India's decision to ratchet up its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) underscores its sincerity towards meaningful climate goals.

LEARNING TO CHANT WITH THE HEART

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

have been chanting God's names for a long time, but mostly inattentively. It is not that I did so intentionally, but it used to happen helplessly. I did not know how to get over this weakness, despite the fact that I knew that I was not reaping the full advantage of chanting.

To my credit, I never gave up chanting, doing it day after day. Finally, my Lord revealed why I was not attentive. The first reason became clear from the following three examples.

Hanumanji had just returned from Lanka, having met Mother Sita and burned Lanka. Obviously, Lord Ramachandra was very pleased. Seeing the Lord's mood, Hanumanji prayed, "O my Lord, please be kind enough to grant me Your unwavering 'bhakti' (devotion), which is the giver of immense 'sukha' (bliss)." (Shri Ramcharitmanas, Sunderkanda 33) Another example is that of Goswami Tulsidas, who prayed at the beginning of this Kanda, "O Raghukul Shrestha, please grant me Your unmixed bhakti." (SRS 2)

The third example is that of Vibhis-hanji, who, after meeting Lord Ra-



machandra, prayed, "O Merciful Lord, please grant me Your pure bhakti." (SRS 48)

Are these famous examples not indicating something? They are: bhakti can only be granted by God and God alone. No one can attain bhakti on his own, which I was trying to do. The second reason is equally compelling. Lord Krishna has cautioned in Verse 7.14: "This Maya (illusory nature) of Mine, consisting of the three 'gunas' (modes), is divine and very difficult to overcome."

What is the Lord cautioning about? Two facts: Maya is created by God and consists of three modes - goodness, passion, and darkness. These are all pervading in this material world, and everyone, without exception, is under their influence to varying degrees. (18.40) What happens due to such influence? The mind, which is fickle, forceful, strong, and obstinate (6.34), drags attention away from chanting to somewhere, anywhere. And we are helpless about it.

What is the solution? The Lord gives it: "Those who take shelter in Me alone are able to transcend this Maya." Mark the word alone, because God is the only option.

What is my experience? I have started to seek help before I begin chanting. It works until the mind wanders again. Then I pray for help once more and bring the mind back to chanting. It is working. From a very low percentage of attention, it has risen to a high percentage. I am over the moon about this transformation.

Is not chanting the highest 'yajna' (sacrifice), as described by Lord Krishna in Verse 10.25? This being so, it will yield maximum benefits if done properly, which I am hoping to gain. One more thing I am doing to increase my devotion is to begin thanking my Lord for all the successes that are coming my way. This thankfulness has started to enhance my love for God. Are we not, as small souls, quite helpless and largely ignorant, yet overwhelmed by such mercy? As a matter of fact, it makes all the difference.

The writer is a spiritual teacher and a popular columnist; Views presented are personal.

DK Shivakumar: Crowning of the Kingmaker

Kalyani Shankar

Karnataka is witnessing a significant political and generational transition with D.K. Shivakumar assuming the office of Chief Minister after the resignation of Siddaramaiah. The change comes after the Congress leadership successfully navigated a prolonged period of internal uncertainty and factional pressure. More than a routine change of guard, the transition signals a strategic recalibration by the party as it seeks to strengthen its position ahead of future electoral contests.

Shivakumar's rise is a remarkable political story. Born into a farming family, he has built a reputation as one of the Congress party's most effective organisers and crisis managers. Having won eight consecutive Assembly elections, he has emerged as a formidable political force in Karnataka. Over the years, his ability to negotiate, build alliances and manage political crises earned him the label of the Congress party's "troubleshooter."

His reputation was cemented in 2002 when the Congress-NCP government in Maharashtra faced the threat

of defections. Around 40 Congress legislators were flown to Bengaluru and accommodated at a resort to shield them from poaching attempts ahead of a crucial floor test. Then Karnataka Urban Development Minister Shivakumar was entrusted with overseeing the operation. He personally coordinated the legislators' stay and ensured their safe return for the trust vote, helping the government led by Vilasrao Deshmukh survive.

Since then, Shivakumar has repeatedly demonstrated his ability to manage complex political situations. Whether safeguarding legislators, forging consensus among rival factions, or handling delicate negotiations during Rajya Sabha elections and trust votes, he has become the party's go-to strategist during moments of crisis. His extensive political network and organisational skills have often enabled the Congress to weather difficult challenges. Now, the man who helped install governments finds himself at the helm of one.

The Congress High Command's decision followed months of speculation and bargaining. Shivakumar's supporters had argued that a power-sharing



understanding reached in 2023 entitled him to the chief ministership midway through the government's term.

As pressure mounted, party leaders from different factions travelled to Delhi to press their case. The High Command repeatedly intervened to maintain unity and prevent public discord before finally settling on a leadership transition.

Three major factors appear to have influenced the decision. The first was Siddaramaiah's advancing age; at 80, questions about succession had become increasingly relevant.

The second was the growing challenge posed by the BJP, which has been working to regain political ground in the state. The third was the need to honour internal commitments and main-

tain organisational cohesion within the Congress.

Siddaramaiah leaves office with a substantial political legacy. Known for his commitment to social justice and welfare policies, he played a key role in strengthening the Congress' support among backward classes, minorities and other marginalised communities. Reflecting on his journey after stepping down, he noted that he never imagined a village boy like himself would one day become an MLA, minister and Chief Minister. His story continues to resonate with many supporters across Karnataka.

Siddaramaiah's continued influence may also present challenges for the new administration. His loyalists remain a significant force within the Congress legislature party and are expected to seek a meaningful role in governance. As part of the transition, discussions have reportedly centred on accommodating several of his supporters in the cabinet and ensuring adequate representation for his political camp.

far, the transfer of power has been remarkably smooth. Siddaramaiah himself proposed Shivakumar's name, which was seconded by senior Con-

gress leader Parameshwara. Although the legislature party formally left the decision to the High Command, the observers eventually announced Shivakumar as the consensus choice, paving the way for his election as Congress Legislature Party leader.

Yet the real test begins now. Shivakumar must not only run the government but also manage competing interests within the party. Preventing the emergence of rival power centres while maintaining cordial relations with Siddaramaiah and his supporters will require political skill and patience. The Congress also faces the challenge of synchronising government performance with organisational strategy.

The road ahead is demanding. Karnataka Assembly elections are scheduled for 2028, followed by the Lok Sabha elections in 2029.

Shivakumar's success will be measured not only by his administrative performance but also by his ability to keep the Congress united and electorally competitive. For a leader long known for solving other people's political problems, the challenge now is to govern effectively while shaping the future of both the party and the state.