

## GREAT IDEA

The idea of hosting the first International Film Festival of J&K is a great one and needs to be executed with finesse. J&K was once a favourite haunt of filmmakers for shooting. This changed with Indian producer shifting to foreign locales and with military erupting in Kashmir. By the time, the situation improved in J&K, the film producers had lost interest in J&K. Also there was hardly any infrastructure to support the filmmaking. The proposed optics of the FIFFJK like screening popular film on big screen for the VVIPs or may be common people also to see from the comfort of shikaras is imaginative. The idea of inviting the neighbouring Chief Ministers for the show is also interesting and it may not only improve the goodwill for people of J&K but also create economic opportunities for the people. Also since the festival is proposed ten days after the Amarnath pilgrimage, it would boost the economy and keep the flow of tourists on.

LADAKH CRAFTS GET GI TAG  
Ladakh, the smallest UT in terms of population is a repository of human history. Its culture and unique lifestyle is preserved to a large extent by people despite intrusions and interferences. Despite limited resources, the region boasts of some unique crafts and traditions which deserves to be recognized and preserved in their fast evolving world. In this direction it's commendable that eight traditional handicraft products from Ladakh have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag, marking a milestone in preservation and promotion of the region's cultural and artisanal heritage. The crafts which got this unique identity include Ladakh Challi Textiles, Ladakh Thigma, Ladakh Painting, Pabu of Ladakh, Ladakh Nambu Textile, Ladakh Pashmina Textile, Ladakh Chilling Metal Work and Ladakh Likir Pottery. This tagging will surely boost the sale of these products and protect these from fake versions. Besides, this effort will go a long way in preserving the human heritage of the region.

Kalyani Shankar

The INDIA bloc, representing a coalition of opposition parties, recently gathered in Delhi to reflect on its journey so far and to share hopes for the future. On June 8, during a meeting organised by the Congress party, 23 out of the original 27 members expressed their strong commitment to working together, highlighting their dedication to unity and collaboration in these challenging times.

Some parties, such as the Trinamool Congress and the DMK, face challenges in their respective states. This has raised concerns about the alliance's chances in national elections. However, these challenges can also be seen as opportunities for growth. Recognising setbacks can strengthen the alliance and help supporters believe in its ability to overcome local issues.

At the meeting, the alliance agreed on a five-point plan. This plan includes writing to the Chief Justice of India about electoral manipulation and calling for the Education Minister to resign. The alliance also decided to meet at least once every two months.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the IN-

DIA bloc achieved significant success by reducing the BJP's seat count. Now, the BJP depends on allies such as the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party to maintain its majority, underscoring that political power is always shifting.

The recent meeting, led by the Congress party and attended by leaders such as Mamata Banerjee, focused on reaching a renewed agreement. This plan is designed to improve communication, schedule meetings every two months and develop joint strategies to address national issues such as the economy and unemployment.

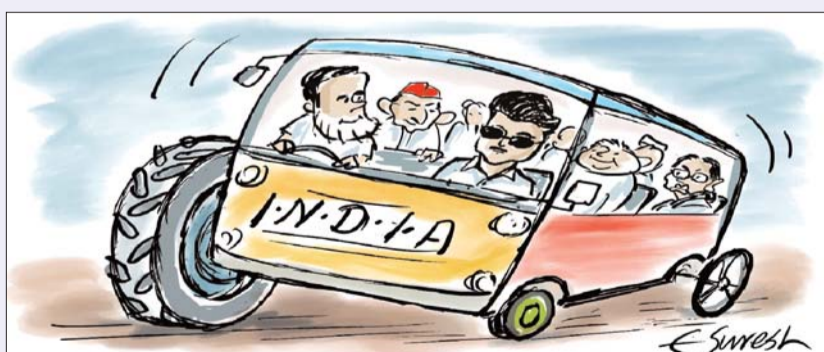
While there are some internal conflicts and the loss of key players like the DMK and AAP, the alliance still has a strong foundation. A setback occurred in June when Congress allied with Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, which might upset some members but could also lead to renewal.

The meeting revealed divisions within the alliance that became clear during the recent Assembly elections. Some parties found themselves on different sides. The DMK, an important partner from the South, did not attend the meeting due to disagreements over the Tamil Nadu As-

sembly elections. Congress then ended its partnership with the DMK and teamed up with Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam post-poll.

In his nearly 15-minute speech, Rahul Gandhi expressed disappointment with some partners for not supporting issues such as the alleged "vote chori". He also criticised parties that attack Congress. Rahul Gandhi cautioned allies against undermining one another and urged them to unite in their fight against the BJP for the sake of the country and the Constitution. "Let me tell you, it is easy to beat them if we stand together and resist," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi



issues and work together.

During the Monsoon Session, improving coordination in Parliament will be a top priority. There will be daily meetings at the office of the Leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge. The INDIA Alliance has agreed to meet every two months, with the next meeting planned for August in Hyderabad.

The future of the INDIA bloc depends on its ability to integrate diverse political views, develop effective election strategies and advance initiatives such as regional outreach programmes and policy reforms. Strengthening ties with voters and supporting grassroots movements is essential. How the bloc manages disagreements and collaborates will shape its effectiveness.

While the INDIA bloc faces challenges, it also has potential. Retaining around 23 parties demonstrates a strong foundation that can prevent collapse. Although losing influential regional players like the DMK and AAP presents difficulties, the alliance's commitment to unity and engagement with voters prepares it for future opportunities.

The INDIA bloc's strategies, unity and responsiveness will play a vital role in ad-

ressing the needs of communities. This moment offers a valuable opportunity to grow together, collaborate and revitalise the INDIA bloc to serve the people.

However, it is important for the Opposition to genuinely reinvent itself to connect with the current realities that people face. As for the future, it is clear that the INDIA bloc's strategies, unity and responsiveness will play a vital role in addressing the needs of communities. This moment offers a valuable opportunity to grow together.

However, it is important for the Opposition to genuinely reinvent itself to connect with the current realities people face. The alliance's future success depends on the partners sticking to a five-point agreement made in June 2026. This plan aims to improve collaboration, election readiness and unity, highlighting the importance of working together.

The alliance's future success depends on the partners sticking to a five-point agreement made in June 2026. This plan aims to improve collaboration, election readiness and unity, highlighting the importance of working together.

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

## 1857 folklore: A national heritage

Raghendra Singh

The Afghan War in the early 1840s dealt a decisive blow to British pride. Then came the Crimean War reverses. The defeat of the army of Indus in 1842 sent signals to the Indian sipahi that their British masters were no longer invincible. The folklore of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh speaks of Kunwar Singh and Beni Madho Singh, highly agitated, vowing to cross swords with the British before they died. In 1842, the 65-year-old Kunwar was particularly exercised. He had seen the Maratha hey-

days. India could regain its glory. Kunwar Singh had been active in anti-British plots during the Sikh wars. The Bengal Army regiments deployed west of the Indus had a serious effect on their morale. The Muslim sipahis were demoralised for having been deployed against a Muslim state (Afghanistan). The 2nd Bengal Cavalry, during the 1st Afghan war, had refused to fight against Dost Mohammad and was therefore disbanded.

Let us try and comprehend the communal situation of that period. Shah Waliullah, a Delhi Maulvi, had translated the Koran into Persian. His son Shah Abdul Aziz translated the Koran into Urdu. Aziz declared India dar-ul-harb (enemy territory) the moment Lord Lake captured Delhi from the Marathas in 1803. Shah Waliullah had spoken out against the Marathas.

Yet he had not proclaimed India as dar-ul-harb (Islam's enemy territory) when Marathas were in power. Shah Waliullah's followers, termed 'Islamic fundamentalists' by the British, did not regard Sanatan Dharmis as the 'other'. The Mughal-Maratha alliance was considered natural.

Shah Waliullah's movement, dubbed Wahabi by the British, had nothing to do with the orthodox Middle East trends. It was a quintessentially Indian movement of liberation, fought when the East India Company was seen not merely as an exploitative arm of the British Empire, but also as an alien force bent upon re-engineering Indian society.

As for dealing with the 1857 Rising per



se, this was an armed mass movement and a planned political revolution of the Indian people as a whole, at one and the same time. Conscious actors and spontaneous masses played a crucial part - the peasantry was the leading force. 1857 was more 'nationalist' than the Congress-led twentieth-century freedom movement. People and forces from Gilgit to Tamil Nadu and from Manipur to Maharashtra fought for common aims.

The 1857 movement continued well up till 1875; in Bundelkhand, the last 'Sepoy war' bullets were being fired even in the 1880s. Refusing British offers of jagirs and an 'honorable' retirement in any place other than Lucknow and UP, Begum Hazrat Mahal died in Nepal, unvanquished and unconquered. The British never found Nana Saheb, his brothers (Baba Bhut and Bala Rao), and Azimullah Khan. They had 'vanished into thin air'. Rao Tula Ram was never 'caught'. In 1859, Tanya Tope was 'caught' and hanged - but, till the 1890s, the British remained skeptical, whether they had 'tried' the right man.

One of Nana Saheb's last letters, written in April 1859, in response to British charges of him being a murderer of women and children, is an extraordinary document. It reveals that Nana was not only willing to fight, but had preserved soldiers and had a plan, that Begum Hazrat Mahal had arranged to attack Calcutta and free Wajid Ali Shah, before marching on to Delhi, with a Poorabia-Gurkha force.

In overall strategic terms, the combina-

tion of mass movements and armed action was a major 1857 highlight. Defeat nowhere meant that revolutionaries were broken. The conventional view is that Indians lost militarily and politically.

From Chinhat to Kanpur to Arrah to Jharkhand to Orissa, Maharashtra and Gujarat, every major Indian victory was achieved in the open field, with our sipahis blending European with Asiatic tactics. The revolutionary sipahi fighting big battles had not commanded more than a platoon before 1857. This Indian performance was indeed historic - there is no such parallel in either the American War of Independence or the French Revolution.

The Indian post-Independence elite was cut off from 1857 memories. The Bahadur Shah Zafar-Wajid Ali Shah-Nana Saheb ethos was permanently lost. The true figures of how many Indians lost their life in 1857 has never been researched. Preliminary enquiry is staggering, almost unbelievable. Some 30,00,000 Sanatan Dharmis perished in the Kranti. As per British records, the rough estimate is about 25,00,000 killed in Awadh alone.

The British thinking had rested on the theory that once the Hindu-Muslim alliance was broken, India and Indian-ness could simply be effaced. The India of Ram and Krishna, Muhammad, Guru Nanak, khayal, tappa, thumri, bhajan, gurubaani and qawwali would simply have vanished - there would be no Indian State power, even such as we have today. In this sense, 1857 fighters won the battle of civilisation. After the 1857 war, European imperialism woke up to Asiatic assertion and gave up its plan of doctoring Asia culturally. Countries as diverse as Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Afghanistan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Vietnam and Korea reaped the benefits of this event.

But there is a lamentable lack of sound historical material from an Indian point of

view. The conditions of terror that prevailed post 1857 were such that any writing from an Indian's point of view, his version of 1857 history, seriously risked his skin. And it is precisely for this reason that the folk songs on 1857 constitute a very valuable source material. Their supreme value lies in the fact that they constitute an authentic record of the outlook of people whom they portray. There is a rich gold mine of it waiting for it to be explored, reflective of our living love of common people for writing the history of 1857.

In the folklore, one often finds those who went against the national uprising cursed as traitors. The people of those days had the political sagacity to differentiate between the patriots and the traitors. There runs through these folk songs, a burning hatred of the firangis. The deeds most glorified are the ones of fighting the firangi. The virtues most admired are bravery, courage and sacrifice. The real shame is known to lie in passivity and submission.

The folk songs of 1857 were written by a host of most talented folk poets. This literature is part of our national heritage, which forms an important source of historical material on the outlook and aspirations of the Indian people during the 1857 struggle. But most unfortunately, they are little known part of our patriotic poetic heritage. There is a strong need to document, popularise and enrich this national literature.

It is also necessary to put this to heart-warming music for stirring the nation's patriotic sentiments. It would be a fitting addition to our heritage of national music. To treasure, study and sing them is a simple way of paying the debt back to our forefathers who gave their lives during the kranti. The deeply moving and rousing incidents that find mention in the 1857 folklore can be excellent resource for inspirational creative work in our national literature and art.

In the folklore, one often finds those who went against the national uprising cursed as traitors. The people of those days had the political sagacity to differentiate between the patriots and the traitors.

The writer is Advisor, Bharat Ki Soch; Views presented are personal.

## REDISCOVERING HOPE, PURPOSE AND LIFE

Boddapati Chandrasekhar

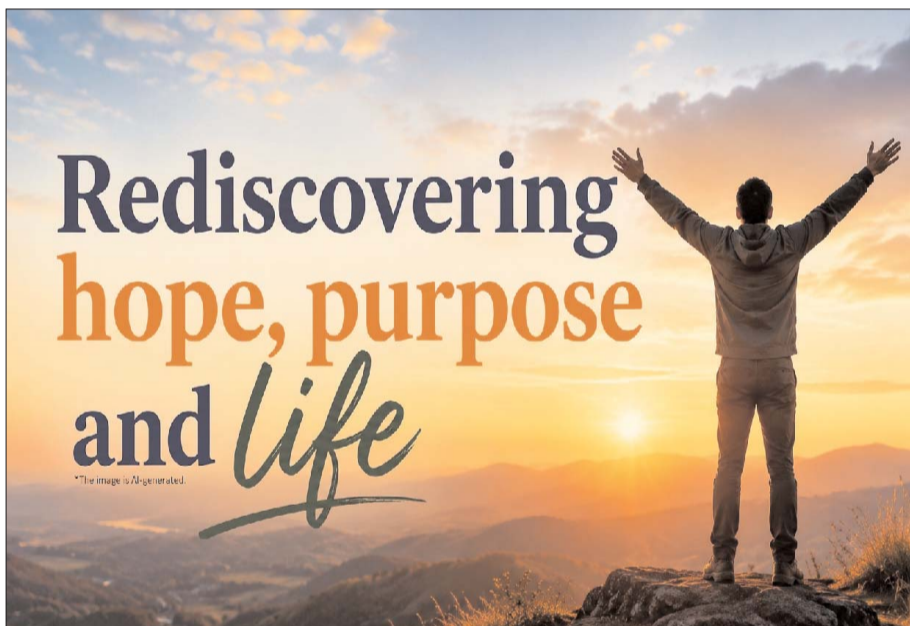
Life is not meant for dying. It is meant for living and letting others live," a writer once said. Very thought-provoking words these are! They contain a profound philosophy about the very purpose of human existence on this earth.

Life is not a burden imposed upon man, nor is it a meaningless journey moving helplessly towards death. It is a rare gift meant to be lived meaningfully, wholeheartedly and with a sense of awareness. To live life "to its absolute fullness" naturally leads us to the understanding that life itself is a celebration.

Here, celebration does not merely mean pleasure, amusement or uninterrupted happiness. It means accepting life in all its hues and rhythms. It means participating wholeheartedly in the flow of existence.

A person who lives meaningfully learns to cherish relationships. He values human bonds, understands emotions and discovers beauty even in ordinary moments. He learns from suffering, delights in small joys and gradually acquires emotional balance. That is where a person's true courage, wisdom and intellect lie.

Life is a blend of joys and sorrows. Light and darkness follow one another. The dazzling light gradually fades into darkness,



and even pitch darkness, in the course of time, must yield to penetrating light. Neither is permanent. This is the eternal law of nature.

Human beings gladly welcome happiness and revel in it. But when sorrow strikes, many lose their peace of mind. Unable to bear pain and disappointment, they become emotionally unstable and begin to view death as an escape.

At such critical moments, the wisdom gained through experience, the values nurtured from childhood, the strength imparted by education and even ordinary common sense seem to disappear. Man completely loses his sense of judgement.

"Man is a wonderful creation. In all of living creation, he is the most supreme, powerful and resourceful," said Shakespeare. Indeed, among all living beings,

man alone is blessed with an extraordinary power of thought. From the days of the primitive caveman to the modern technological age, humanity has undergone astonishing evolution and unimaginable transformation. Through his ever-sharpening intellect, man has achieved remarkable progress in knowledge, science, civilisation and technology.

Yet, a disturbing question remains. When sorrows surround him, why does man fail to display the same maturity and mental strength? Why does such a brilliant mind lose its resilience in moments of distress? Does he forget that troubles are temporary? Does he fail to realise that no night lasts forever?

This beautiful life must be lived until its very end.

We must protect our families, nurture our relationships and keep our loved ones safe and flourishing. Only then can we truly taste the sweet nectar of life. We must preserve our great civilisation, artistic brilliance and precious literature, passing them on to future generations. The humane qualities within man must multiply. He must grow into a person of wisdom, compassion and discernment.

If such a transformation takes place, could there be any heaven greater than this very earth?

## Can unity overcome internal fault lines?

Kalyani Shankar

The INDIA bloc, representing a coalition of opposition parties, recently gathered in Delhi to reflect on its journey so far and to share hopes for the future. On June 8, during a meeting organised by the Congress party, 23 out of the original 27 members expressed their strong commitment to working together, highlighting their dedication to unity and collaboration in these challenging times.

Some parties, such as the Trinamool Congress and the DMK, face challenges in their respective states. This has raised concerns about the alliance's chances in national elections. However, these challenges can also be seen as opportunities for growth. Recognising setbacks can strengthen the alliance and help supporters believe in its ability to overcome local issues.

At the meeting, the alliance agreed on a five-point plan. This plan includes writing to the Chief Justice of India about electoral manipulation and calling for the Education Minister to resign. The alliance also decided to meet at least once every two months.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the IN-

DIA bloc achieved significant success by reducing the BJP's seat count. Now, the BJP depends on allies such as the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party to maintain its majority, underscoring that political power is always shifting.

The recent meeting, led by the Congress party and attended by leaders such as Mamata Banerjee, focused on reaching a renewed agreement. This plan is designed to improve communication, schedule meetings every two months and develop joint strategies to address national issues such as the economy and unemployment.

While there are some internal conflicts and the loss of key players like the DMK and AAP, the alliance still has a strong foundation. A setback occurred in June when Congress allied with Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, which might upset some members but could also lead to renewal.

The meeting revealed divisions within the alliance that became clear during the recent Assembly elections. Some parties found themselves on different sides. The DMK, an important partner from the South, did not attend the meeting due to disagreements over the Tamil Nadu As-

sembly elections. Congress then ended its partnership with the DMK and teamed up with Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam post-poll.

In his nearly 15-minute speech, Rahul Gandhi expressed disappointment with some partners for not supporting issues such as the alleged "vote chori". He also criticised parties that attack Congress. Rahul Gandhi cautioned allies against undermining one another and urged them to unite in their fight against the BJP for the sake of the country and the Constitution. "Let me tell you, it is easy to beat them if we stand together and resist," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav of the Samajwadi

issues and work together.

During the Monsoon Session, improving coordination in Parliament will be a top priority. There will be daily meetings at the office of the Leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge. The INDIA Alliance has agreed to meet every two months, with the next meeting planned for August in Hyderabad.

The future of the INDIA bloc depends on its ability to integrate diverse political views, develop effective election strategies and advance initiatives such as regional outreach programmes and policy reforms. Strengthening ties with voters and supporting grassroots movements is essential. How the bloc manages disagreements and collaborates will shape its effectiveness.

While the INDIA bloc faces challenges, it also has potential. Retaining around 23 parties demonstrates a strong foundation that can prevent collapse. Although losing influential regional players like the DMK and AAP presents difficulties, the alliance's commitment to unity and engagement with voters prepares it for future opportunities.

The INDIA bloc's strategies, unity and responsiveness will play a vital role in ad-

ressing the needs of communities. This moment offers a valuable opportunity to grow together, collaborate and revitalise the INDIA bloc to serve the people.

However, it is important for the Opposition to genuinely reinvent itself to connect with the current realities that people face. As for the future, it is clear that the INDIA bloc's strategies, unity and responsiveness will play a vital role in addressing the needs of communities. This moment offers a valuable opportunity to grow together.

However, it is important for the Opposition to genuinely reinvent itself to connect with the current realities people face. The alliance's future success depends on the partners sticking to a five-point agreement made in June 2026. This plan aims to improve collaboration, election readiness and unity, highlighting the importance of working together.

The alliance's future success depends on the partners sticking to a five-point agreement made in June 2026. This plan aims to improve collaboration, election readiness and unity, highlighting the importance of working together.

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