

**VALUES OF LIVE BY****PM Modi's call for inclusiveness in the Maldives and Sri Lanka is relevant in India too**

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Male this month, his first trip abroad after his re-election, he delivered a speech rich in meaningful metaphors to the Maldivian Parliament. He referred to the ties that bind India to the Maldives, and which could be extended to other maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean as well. Pointing out that the waves that wash the Indian shores are the same as those that reach the shores of the Maldivian island chain, Mr. Modi called them "messengers" of peace, friendship and trust that exist between the two countries. Going beyond geographical proximity, the speech spelt out common interests in maritime cooperation, democracy, pluralism, climate change, and in battling the twin scourges of terrorism and radicalisation. The agreements announced during the visit followed these themes as well: including MoUs on hydrography cooperation and sharing 'white shipping' information, and India's decision to fund a conservation project for Male's Friday Mosque built with coral in 1658. The Prime Minister expressed a resolve for the common fight against terrorism and radicalisation, which he called the "litmus test for today's leadership", and said "state sponsorship of terrorism" remains the biggest threat to all humanity today. On his next stop, for a few hours in Colombo, he spelt out the same message, making a detour after landing to visit the St. Anthony's Shrine in Kochchikade, one of the sites of the Easter Sunday terror attacks that left more than 250 dead.

Mr. Modi's twin visits underlined several initiatives that he had promoted in his first tenure, including his commitment to "Neighbourhood First" and "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)" for the Indian Ocean Region. Going forward, it is necessary to ensure that these themes receive constant attention through steady communication, and that relations are not allowed to fray as they did in the first few years of that tenure. The next imperative is the delivery of all projects that India has committed to, on time and within the budgets estimated, an area where India's reputation has suffered in the past. Finally, Mr. Modi chose to speak in Male about two important liberal values as common causes: democracy, which he called the Maldives a "glowing example of", and inclusiveness. He repeated his motto, Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas (together with all, for the development of all and with the trust of all), and his outreach to the mosque in the Maldives and the church in Sri Lanka reinforced the words. These words must be buttressed by the power of example, as

India's neighbours will see whether the same values that India hopes to see in its neighbourhood are implemented within the country.

<b><u>Words</u></b>	<b><u>Kind</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
Inclusive		All embracing compendious, complete
Relevant		Pertinent, applicable, apposite, apropos, germane
Metaphor		Figure of speech, figurative, expression, allegory
Refer		Mention, allude, broach, introduce, cite
Maritime		Naval, marine, nautical, seafaring
Point out		Refer, allude, mention, broach, introduce
Proximity		Closeness, nearness, presence, juxtaposition
Spell out		Explain, very clearly, expose
Co-operation		Collaboration, team work, partnership
Pluralism		Diversity, multiracialism, cultural, diversity
Radical		Extreme, extremist, rabid, fanatic
Scourge		Affliction, bane, curse, plague, menace
Announce		Declare, over, avow, herald, proclaim
Hydrography		Abyssal, aquatic, coastal
Conservation		Care, preservation, maintenance, upkeep
Resolve		Settle, sort out, fix, rectify, deal with
Detour		Deviation, circuit, diversion, branch
Shrine		Holy place, temple, church, altar
Fray		Unravel, wear thin, wear out
Buttress		Support, anchor, back, endorse

### **STARTING AT THREE**

#### **Extending the right to education to younger children would be a welcome step**

India's far-sighted Right to Education Act is making slow progress in mainstreaming equity, in the absence of a strong political commitment in several States. The proposal to extend its scope to younger children through early childhood education is, however, wholly positive. The move suggested in the draft National Education Policy to put children three years and older in a stimulating nursery environment is a welcome logical measure. The pedagogical

view is that the pre-school phase is crucial to stimulate a child’s curiosity and help her prepare for schooling at age six. The NEP proposal to infuse the existing child development schemes, which are primarily nutrition-oriented, with a learning component is in line with this thinking on holistic development. An extension of the RTE would be a big step forward, but in the absence of measures that will deepen equity, the law cannot be transformative. The Centre has to guarantee that in its totality, the Right to Education will encompass all schools bar those catering to minorities. This is necessary to achieve its moral goal of bringing quality schooling to all in the 6-14 age group; adding the early childhood section, now under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, will then be meaningful. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that only 12.7% schools comply with the law’s requirements, and at the pace seen since RTE became law in 2010, it will take decades to achieve full coverage.

Giving all children aged three and above the right to an education can become a reality only if the state is willing to live up to its promise of devoting more financial resources. An expenditure of 6% of GDP on education could have transformed the sector, given the large wealth generated since economic liberalisation. But far less is spent - for instance, 2.7% in 2017-18. The lost years have cost millions a brighter future, but the draft NEP provides an opportunity to make amends. Bringing more children into the formal stream needs a well-thought-out road map. The Centre has to play a leadership role to ensure that States, some of which have done a poor job of implementing the RTE Act, are persuaded to implement urgent reform. The NEP’s proposal to have well-designed school complexes, where pre-primary to secondary classes will be available, is in itself an ambitious goal that will require mission-mode implementation. Shortcomings in anganwadi centres must be addressed in the expansion plan. State governments will have to fill teacher vacancies and ensure that the training of recruits is aligned to scientific, child-oriented teaching methods. Education reform is vital to prepare for a future in which cutting-edge skills will be necessary for continued economic progress. Changes to the RTE Act that will prepare all children for a more productive schooling phase can help make India’s educational system morally fair and more egalitarian.

<b><u>Words</u></b>	<b><u>Kind</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
Mainstream		Announce, disclose, broadcast, make ideas, popular
Stimulate		Prod, motivate, trigger, galvanize
Nursery		A room in a house for the special use of young

	children
Pedagogical	Related to teaching
Curiosity	Inquisitiveness, interest, spirit of inquiry
Infuse	Fill, pervade, permeate, suffuse, inundate
Component	Constituent, integral, ingredient, element
Holistic	Comprehensive, integrated, aggregate, entire
Transformative	Transformational, metamorphic, cathartic
Encompass	Surround, enclose, ring, encircle, fringe
Comply with	Agree with, defer to, come round
Transform	Change, alter, metamorphose, transfigure, transmute
Liberalisation	Modification, decontrol, alteration
Amends	Compensations, damages, restitution, restoration
Persuade	Prevail on, coax, convince, influence, sway
Ambitious	Aspiring, determined, forceful, pushy
Align to	Line up, arrange, put in order
Egalitarian	Equalitarian
Cutting edge	Highly advanced, innovative, pioneering