

DID YOU KNOW

Bhasha Sangam

Nabeela Ata*

India's richness is marked by her cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. In order to celebrate these unique features of our country, the “*Bhasha Sangam*” initiative under the “*Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat*” ushers in a programme for schools and educational institutions to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian languages listed in Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India. “*Bhasha Sangam*” marks the unique symphony of languages of our country and is an expression of our shared dreams, hopes and aspirations for one India. This initiative is just the

beginning of a journey meant to create interest in these languages and a curiosity to learn more about them.

Bhasha Sangam was initiated by The Department of School Education & Literacy known as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (now known as the Ministry of Education). In order to celebrate the uniquely diverse character of our country, it provides an opportunity to schools and educational institutions (BIETs, DIETs, CTEs/IASEs, SCERTs, SIEs, School Boards, Directorates of School Education, etc.) to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian Languages. The objective is to familiarise every child with short, simple dialogues in all the 22 languages under Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India, taking up one language on each working day. This activity would contribute to enhancing linguistic tolerance and promote national integration.

The State/UT Departments of School Education are responsible



* Junior Project Fellow, DEE, NCERT, New Delhi

for running the programme. *Bhasha Sangam* aims to implement the vision of celebrating Linguistic Diversity which marks the appreciation of the unique symphony of languages of our country through a short dialogue consisting of five simple, commonly used sentences, designed in 22 languages for use by students of all classes. These sentences are provided on pages 1 to 22 of a booklet published under the title of “*Bhasha Sangam — Celebrating the Linguistic Diversity of India*” by the Department of School Education and Literacy (MHRD). They have been arranged in alphabetical order of the language (it may be noted that the translations in Roman and Devanagari scripts have been simplified for use by children). Facilitators are supposed to share sentences from each language with students, every day for 22 working days. Every day only one language should be shared. A schedule in this regard, given the language of the day, is placed on page ii of the above-mentioned booklet (*Bhasha Sangam — Celebrating the Linguistic Diversity of India*). In case any school misses a language on any day, then it should continue with the schedule as on page ii and cover the missing language at the end.

This booklet is by no means the only resource available for the programme. *Bhasha Sangam* has an active web page containing a multitude of other resources along with general information about the programme including

a basic introduction, objectives of the programme, its features, suggested activities and instructions for educational administrators. A digital book with audio recordings of the dialogues is also a part of the resources available on the website which can not only help students learn the correct pronunciations but can also prove useful for specially-abled students. Other materials include *Bhasha Sangam* Media, Highlights of *Bhasha Sangam* — Image Gallery, Videos of *Bhasha Sangam*, *Bhasha Sangam* Video Submission Form, and Instructions to Schools for uploading the *Bhasha Sangam* Videos on YouTube.

The programme advises the administrators to carry out the suggested activities in a joyful and interesting manner, as students have enjoyed the activities and participated with great enthusiasm wherever this initiative has been piloted as of now. This initiative is not mandatory so it doesn't require formal testing of any kind. Heads of schools may upload photographs and videos of daily activities under *Bhasha Sangam* on the website in the image and/or video gallery.

The resource materials available under the programme suggest many activities that familiarise facilitators with its basic idea, objectives and pedagogy. For example, the five sentences pertaining to the language of the day can be read out, e.g., Assamese on day 1, Bengali on day 2, etc., in the morning assembly, and

students can be asked to repeat them. In case there are any students from that State, generally, schools follow the Alphabetical order, e.g., Assam on day 1, West Bengal on day 2, etc., or who speaks the language studying in the school, then he/she or even all of them should preferably read out the sentences in the morning assembly. Similarly, any teacher, parent, non-teaching staff or any other person from that State who speaks the language, may be invited to read out the sentences. Senior students can also be encouraged to create posters on these sentences which can then be put up all over the school. Teachers can address the students and converse with them in the language of the day, and encourage them to do the same. Students may be encouraged to share these sentences with their families at home. The above-mentioned activities are just some examples which can help the administrators initiate the integration of varied Indian languages. The schools may plan and carry out other activities related to this initiative to effectively achieving the goals of this visionary programme.

Bhasha Sangam is a visionary initiative, attempting to not only bring tolerance for linguistic diversity and inclusion among students but also to the various levels of educational administrators. It provides scope and opportunity for State-level organisations particularly the SCERTs/SIEs, School Boards, BIETs,

DIETs, CTEs and IASEs to organise appropriate activities at the State, District and Local levels to promote *Bhasha Sangam*. It also suggests that officials should converse in the language of the day. It asks that all the CRCs, BRCs, BEOs and District Education Officers can lead the team of officers of their departments and visit schools to participate, encourage and appreciate celebrations of linguistic diversity. As noted above, these officials may also be encouraged to speak in sentences under this initiative.

Finally, under this initiative, all school headmasters/principals are asked to upload videos of the daily activities on the *Bhasha Sangam* YouTube Channel, named '*Bhasha Sangam* Video Submission Form'. In case administrators face challenges in uploading videos, they should refer to the 'Instructions to Schools for uploading the *Bhasha Sangam* Videos on YouTube' for which the link has been provided at the end of the webpage. All State and UT Departments of School Education, the DEO and the BEO running *Bhasha Sangam* should also upload photos and videos of activities at the State/UT level, the district and the block level respectively in the same procedure as the above three, or they may submit these directly to the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. of India.