

## EDITORIAL

## Bring hope to countless families

As technology and scientific knowledge continue to advance, so too does the field of embryology. Embryologists are at the forefront of innovative research, exploring new techniques, and pushing the boundaries of what's possible in reproductive medicine and developmental biology. Embryology plays a vital role in understanding genetic inheritance and hereditary disorders. By studying the earliest stages of development, embryologists contribute to our understanding of genetic mutations and how they influence health and disease. In vitro fertilization (IVF) has revolutionized the field of reproductive medicine, offering hope to couples facing infertility challenges. Embryologists are at the forefront of IVF procedures, skillfully handling embryos in the laboratory and ensuring their optimal development before implantation. As embryologists work with living embryos, ethical considerations are paramount. They adhere to strict guidelines and regulations to ensure the ethical treatment of embryos and the responsible use of reproductive technologies. World Embryologist Day is celebrated with various events and activities aimed at promoting awareness about embryology. Seminars, conferences, and webinars are organized to discuss the latest advancements and breakthroughs in the field. Additionally, educational outreach programs help to inspire the next generation of aspiring embryologists. Embryologists play a crucial role in studying embryos and early-stage development. They contribute to advancements in reproductive medicine, genetics, and stem cell research. Embryologists are instrumental in the success of in vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures. They handle embryos in the laboratory and ensure their optimal development before implantation. Embryologists contribute to our understanding of genetics and heredity by studying the earliest stages of development and exploring genetic mutations and their impact on health. World Embryologist Day is significant as it honors the contributions of embryologists and raises awareness about the importance of their work. World Embryologist Day is a momentous occasion that pays tribute to the skilled professionals who dedicate their careers to understanding the earliest stages of life. Their expertise in embryology drives scientific advancements, revolutionizing fields like reproductive medicine, genetics, and stem cell research. As we celebrate this day, let us recognize the unsung heroes who shape our understanding of life's beginnings and bring hope to countless families worldwide. World Embryologist Day, is dedicated not only to the science of embryology but to the incredible individuals who make groundbreaking advancements possible. These unsung heroes work tirelessly in our labs, turning dreams into reality for countless couples and individuals. The work of an embryologist goes beyond the lab bench. They are dream-makers, giving hope to individuals and couples struggling with infertility.

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E-mail: jammubulletin@gmail.com

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## Hindi vs Marathi: From Harmony to Discord

BY  
RAMAKANT  
CHAUDHARY

**As elections near, Maharashtra's politics increasingly weaponises language, with migrant workers bearing the brunt of a narrative that contradicts India's constitutional ethos**

The politics of language has long been a contentious issue in India, often manipulated by vested interests to stoke regional sentiments for electoral gains and political self-aggrandisement. In Maharashtra — a state whose very name derives from the Hindi word *rashtra* (nation) — linguistic divisions are being weaponised to fuel social unrest, especially as elections approach. The recent spate of violent incidents targeting Hindi-speaking migrant workers, who are integral to the state's economic fabric, has cast a shadow over Maharashtra's image as a progressive and inclusive hub.

These attacks, often carried out by fringe elements associated with parties like Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), expose a troubling surge of linguistic chauvinism — one that undermines the country's cherished motto of

"unity in diversity" and threatens India's global image, especially as it champions the vision of One Earth, One Family, One Future. Home to Mumbai — India's financial capital — and Pune, a major industrial hub, Maharashtra owes much of its economic prowess to migrant labour. These workers, many of whom come from Hindi-speaking states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, are the backbone of key sectors including construction, manufacturing, and services. Estimates suggest that migrant workers contribute nearly 10 per cent to India's GDP, with a substantial share stemming from their labour in Maharashtra. Yet, these very individuals — who toil to build the state's infrastructure and fuel its growth — are increasingly being targeted for their lack of fluency in Marathi. These incidents, often orchestrated for political mileage, have provoked national outrage. What is more alarming is the apparent inaction by law enforcement agencies, which seems to have emboldened such elements further. This lack of accountability not only shields the perpetrators but also risks denting India's image as a progressive, inclusive nation — particularly when the country is actively branding itself as Viksit Bharat. With the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections on the horizon, linguistic agitations have taken centre stage in

Maharashtra's political discourse. Parties like the MNS and Shiv Sena (UBT), desperate to reclaim relevance in the state's shifting political terrain, appear to be resorting to divisive tactics to rally their voter base. By targeting Hindi-speaking workers, they aim to inflame regional pride and position themselves as protectors of the Marathi Manus (Marathi people). Yet this brand of politics reeks of opportunism and stands in stark contradiction to the inclusive ethos that has long defined Maharashtra. The Italian philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli's assertion that "politics has no relation to morals" seems particularly apt. These political actors relentlessly target vulnerable migrant workers while remaining conspicuously silent about high-profile figures — Bollywood celebrities, corporate tycoons, and politicians — who have built their careers and fortunes in Maharashtra despite lacking proficiency in Marathi.

Historical Ties, Shared Heritage The narrative of linguistic exclusivity promoted by certain political groups sits uneasily with Maharashtra's rich historical and cultural legacy. Icons of Marathi pride — Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his son Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj — embodied an inclusive spirit that transcended linguistic barriers. Historical accounts record that Hindi-speaking com-

munities played a critical role in aiding Shivaji's daring escape from Mughal custody in 1666. A priest from Kashi, in a Hindi-speaking region, conducted his coronation in 1674, bestowing upon him the title of Chhatrapati. Sambhaji, celebrated for his valour, was also a scholar of Hindi, credited with authoring three significant literary works in the language — *Saatshtak*, *Nakshikha*, and *Nayikabhed*. His court welcomed Hindi poets such as Kavi Kalash, a trusted confidant and advisor. These historical instances reaffirm the deep cultural and linguistic bonds between Marathi and Hindi-speaking communities — a legacy of coexistence starkly at odds with today's divisive rhetoric. Prominent Maharashtra leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Kaka Kalelkar recognised Hindi's potential as a unifying force in India's diverse linguistic landscape. They advocated Hindi as a link language, capable of bridging regional divides without eroding local identities. Many Marathi poets, authors, and journalists have also enriched Hindi literature, further underscoring the shared linguistic heritage between the two languages, which share nearly 80 per cent of their vocabulary.

Hindi as a Link Language India's linguistic diversity is both its strength and its com-

plexity. With 22 officially recognised languages, 121 spoken by over 10,000 people, and more than 19,500 recorded mother tongues, communication across regions remains a formidable challenge. In this context, Hindi has emerged as a vital bridge, facilitating socio-economic integration and national cohesion. Political scientist Baldev Raj Nayar, in his seminal work *Hindi as a Link Language*, argued that Hindi's structural affinity with other Indian languages and its expansive cultural reach make it uniquely positioned to foster national unity. Unlike regional languages tied to specific identities, Hindi operates as a neutral conduit for dialogue, supporting communication without threatening local linguistic vibrancy. This insight is particularly relevant for Maharashtra, where diversity has historically been a source of strength — not division. Maharashtra's political leadership must transcend parochialism and work to heal rather than fracture society. Law enforcement agencies must act decisively against those who incite or perpetrate such violence. The judiciary, too, has a constitutional duty to uphold the right of every citizen to live and work anywhere in the country, free from discrimination. Civil society — media, academia, artists, and community leaders — must resist the narrative of lingu-

istic chauvinism. Educational institutions can champion multilingualism, fostering appreciation for the country's linguistic richness. Political parties, for their part, must abandon cynical identity politics in favour of addressing real issues: unemployment, infrastructure gaps, education, and social welfare — challenges that transcend language. The contributions of Hindi-speaking migrant workers to Maharashtra's development are undeniable. From constructing Mumbai's skyline to powering Pune's factories, they have been vital to the state's success. Protecting their dignity and rights is not only a moral imperative but a pragmatic necessity for sustained growth. The politics of linguistic division is a perilous path — one that jeopardises both the social fabric of Maharashtra and the broader Indian ideal of unity in diversity. By targeting vulnerable communities, political opportunists dishonour the legacy of Maharashtra's greatest icons and betray the values enshrined in the Constitution.

As India moves forward on the global stage, its progress must rest on the pillars of coexistence, respect, and inclusion. Only then can Maharashtra — and indeed the nation — embody the true spirit of Viksit Bharat.

*(The author is a senior journalist, political commentator and communication strategist)*

## War without end: Global conflicts rise, humanitarian aid falters

BY  
ACHANA DATTA

In the uneasy aftermath of a 12-day armed confrontation between Iran and Israel — marked by unprecedented military exchanges and US involvement — a fragile and unsustainable "ceasefire" continues to hang by a thread. Rather than restoring calm, it has added another layer to an already combustible global security landscape. The year 2024 proved to be one of the most violent in recent memory, with the highest number of armed conflicts since the Second World War. According to the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, 61 state-based conflicts erupted across 36 countries, affecting nearly one-fourth of the global population.

The violence has grown not only in scale but also in intensity. Fatalities from these conflicts surged by 37 per cent between July 2023 and June 2024, while the average number of deaths per violent event rose by 17 per cent, highlighting an alarming increase in lethality, as per the Armed Conflict Survey 2024. The human cost has been devastating.

Civilian casualties jumped by 40 per cent in 2024, with one person killed every 12 minutes — bringing the annual death toll close to 200,000, according to Humanity & Inclusion UK. Yet, as violence intensified, the response from the international community became increasingly inadequate. The Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) reported that 186.5 million people across 77 countries required humanitarian aid in 2024. However, of the \$49 billion needed, only \$22.58 billion — less than half — was raised, leaving a gaping \$26.42 billion shortfall. This was compounded by a sharp drop in global humanitarian assistance, which fell from \$37.5 billion in 2023 to \$33.9 billion in 2024. Key donors, including the US, Germany, EU institutions, Canada, Norway, and France, all significantly slashed their contributions. Canada, for instance, reduced its aid by 40 per cent, and Germany by 23 per cent. While the funding to support victims declined, global military spending soared to unprecedented levels. In 2024, the world spent \$2.718 trillion on defence — roughly 2.5 per cent of global GDP — with more than 100 countries increasing their military budgets. The United States alone spent

\$997 billion, making up 66 per cent of NATO's total and 37 per cent of global military expenditure. NATO as a whole spent \$1.506 trillion, with 18 of its member states meeting or exceeding the 2 per cent GDP target for defence — the highest number since 2014. Looking ahead, NATO has announced plans to raise defence spending further, targeting 5 per cent of GDP annually by 2035 to counter perceived threats from Russia and terrorism. Critics argue that such an aggressive militarisation push will mainly benefit arms manufacturers, intensify the security dilemma, and worsen the climate crisis. Russia, meanwhile, spent an estimated \$149 billion on its military in 2024 — 7.1 per cent of its GDP — while Ukraine's defence spending rose to \$64.7 billion, consuming a staggering 34 per cent of its national income, the highest in the world. Israel also drastically ramped up its military spending by 65 per cent, reaching \$46.5 billion, or 8.8 per cent of its GDP — the second highest globally. Iran, constrained by sanctions, was forced to reduce its military budget by 10 per cent to \$7.9 billion, despite its continued involvement in regional conflicts. China, the second-largest military spender, increased its defence budget by 7 per cent to \$314 bil-



lion, accounting for half of all military spending in Asia and Oceania. India's military budget rose modestly by 1.6 per cent to \$86.1 billion, while Pakistan allocated \$10.2 billion to defence.

This lopsided prioritisation — more spending on arms and less on aid — underscores the weakening of global cooperation and the fraying of multilateral institutions designed to ensure peace. The Global Cooperation Barometer 2025, jointly published by the World Economic Forum and McKinsey, warned that the world's collective security framework is under "severe pressure." Multilateral platforms created to resolve disputes have largely failed to act decisively in the last

decade. According to the Multilateralism Index by the International Peace Institute and the Institute for Economics and Peace, international cooperation on peace and security saw its steepest decline between 2013 and 2023. The UN Security Council has not authorised a single new peacekeeping mission since 2014, as geopolitical rivalries among major powers have eroded the very consensus needed to uphold peace. In this bleak context, the UN80 Initiative — launched to mark 80 years since the adoption of the UN Charter — offers a glimmer of hope. It seeks to reinvigorate multilateralism and strengthen the capacity of global institutions to manage conflicts and humanitarian

crises. Despite its many flaws, the United Nations remains the most inclusive and representative global body. Its founding principles — rooted in preventing the recurrence of global war — are more relevant today than ever. As the world teeters on the edge of deeper conflict and humanitarian collapse, the urgent task before nations is to renew their commitment to global cooperation and peace. Militarisation without diplomacy cannot secure the future. A return to the principles of the UN Charter is essential — not just to prevent the next war, but to preserve what remains of our shared humanity. *(The writer is former Director General of Doordarshan and All India Radio)*