

## **5. Culture as a driver of economic growth**

**By Gopal Krishna Agarwal,**

### **The economic potential of handicrafts, religious and heritage tourism is waiting to be tapped**

Before India was plundered by foreign invaders, our thriving economy supported a glorious cultural heritage. India played a leadership role in all fields - whether it is art, culture, music, dance, food, festivals, architecture or handicrafts.

Indian civilization's contribution to the world heritage has been immense. We have always believed that there is a close interrelationship between culture and economy. We can use our cultural wealth to catalyse India's economy.

Cultural Economic Governance assumes great importance at the stage of policy formulation and its implementation. The cultural sector directly employs about 45 lakh people as artisans, performers, tourism guides etc.

In addition, handicrafts and traditional art industries provide employment to about 60 lakh people. Through introduction of new curriculum and vocational studies in the education system, the government has to work on skilling and capacity building of these stakeholders.

According to a report by the Ministry of Rural Development, only 10 per cent of rural artisans have access to formal training programmes. It is estimated that capacity building initiatives in cultural sectors can lead to a 20-30 per cent increase in productivity and revenue for cultural enterprises.

Establishing social and economic linkages for performing arts can propel growth in all art forms, contributing to huge employment and revenue generation. The Indian film industry alone contributes around ₹1,80,000 crore annually to the economy but its global potential is still unexploited.

Yoga in the US has become a \$15 billion business annually. Is there a way to ensure that the economic benefits of the wider acceptance of Yoga flows to India? All these and other important sectors have to be extensively worked on.

## **CULTURAL DRIVERS**

With the rise of aspirational Indians, there is a revival of pride in our cultural traditions and civilization values in the country. Initiatives like building Ram temple at Ayodhya; its ambitious redevelopment project, costing over \*85,000 crore is to be completed by 2031 transforming the city to accommodate a footfall of around 3 lakh pilgrims daily. Kashi Vishwanath Temple had 20,000-30,000 daily visitors before redevelopment; after the revamp, the daily number of visitors increased to 1.5-2 lakh.

There are approximately two million temples across India, in addition to their religious and spiritual importance, temples were designed to serve as commercial centres attracting tourists/pilgrims and support business activities in the areas of retail, transportation, and hospitality. Festivals in India are estimated to contribute 2-lakh crore annually. According to a CII report, Kumbh Mela in 2019 generated business over 1.2-lakh crore whereas the State of UP had to spend only 4,200 crore for the event.