


REVAMPING RAILWAYS

Playing a focused attention the ongoing cleanliness initiatives across the nation, inspired by the speech of Prime Minister, the Government of India launched Special Campaign in 2021 in Sept-Oct 21 focused on cleanliness all around, reducing pendency and improving work-culture at the work places. Enthused by the success of this Special Campaign, Government launched its sequel in September'2022 as 'Special Campaign 2.0' with increased targets and scope to further promote cleanliness and good governance in all spheres of working through improved work-culture. In consonance with the philosophy of Special Campaign 2.0, Ministry of Railways has set wide scope for itself in all spheres of its working keeping in view IR's presence over the length and breadth of the country. Ministry of Railways has taken up its all 7337 stations for Cleanliness Campaign, which is a mammoth task to deliver. A special emphasis has been laid for mechanized cleaning of stations. Special focus has been given on cleanliness of trains and stations (including approaches to major stations) and collection and safe disposal of plastic and other waste. One such effort by Bangalore Railway Station was appreciated by the Prime Minister.

From Oct 2nd onwards, Ministry of Railways has already held more than 7000 cleanliness campaigns which cover its stations, offices, workshops, Production Units and other offices. More than One lakh physical files and around 30000 e-files have been identified to be reviewed. 65 per cent target has already been achieved in this regard. All employees from top to bottom are geared up & deeply involved in disposal of pending matters including VIP/MP/MLA references and Parliamentary, State Govt/PMO References, around 50 per cent achievement has already been registered so far. In the 20 days of Special Campaign 2.0, Ministry of Railways has disposed of more than 2300 VIP References, 130 State Govt References and more than 2 Lakh Public Grievances. Campaigns are being closely supervised and held by Senior most officers of the units who are taking rounds of their offices frequently to spread importance and awareness.

Several other initiatives have also been taken during this Campaign which include development of IT applications for online processing and disposal of VIP(MP/MLA) References and Parliamentary References such as matters raised during Zero Hour and under Section 377 in Parliament by MPs. IT application developed indigenously for monitoring of VIP References entail various features like registration(uploading) of reference, marking/sending to unit/officer(s), receipt of replies from them, processing by unit concerned as well as submission of replies to be issued from Minister of Railways/MoS/GM/DRM, as the case maybe. Number of MIS reports can be generated to see status Subject/VIP/State/Unit (Directorate/Zonal Railway etc.)/Time Period. The system also generates weekly alerts through e-mails and SMS to concerned officials. The Minister/Officers can peruse and show the reply to particular public representative with just a click of the button.

Another module relating to real time monitoring of parliamentary references has also been developed on similar lines with all features of MIS built for monitoring of VIP references. The developments of these two applications has enabled Ministry of Railways to dispose of these references and have contributed immensely in the Special Campaign 2.0. In addition, public grievances are also monitored through the 'Rail Madad portal' which provides real time redressal of grievances and online monitoring of the pendency and disposal of these grievances. MOR has also decided to switch over to completely paperless working from 1st November by digitalizing all business processes and file work through e-office system.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Sanyas, Celibacy and God

There are three stages of life. First comes sanyas, renunciation, which means complete surrender through evaporation of ego. But, so long as there is life there is ego. You cannot do without it. You can only take it as His ego. Your mind then becomes manjari, budding seed. The picture of a new born baby in the mother's lap typifies sanyas.

Then comes the stage of brahmacharya, celibacy, when one lives in and through Him and feels His presence in every experience. True sanyas is a sort of subconscious behaviour or reflex action. And real brahmacharya is conscious perception of one reality through the manifold of existence.

While sanyas displays unconscious will and brahmacharya evinces conscious feeling, the stage grihastha is marked by complete merger in thought, feeling and will. The real grihastha is He, Himself, who dwells in this tenement of clay.

Actually, sanyas is the state of one who is self-poised, one who has no ego attachments.

Sanyas in the true sense of the term, implies the total annihilation of ego and identification with the Supreme I-Consciousness absolutely in everyday life. The five senses also surrender completely to the Self. Sanyas is possible only when life ceases. A living being cannot be a sanyasi.

Real renunciation, sanyas, is to be shorn of ego and to be in svabhava, a natural state of attunement with the Supreme. We are all purna kumbhas, pitchers full of Him. To install this Consciousness in our empiric being is the only necessity. Picking pockets is much better

■ G L KHAJURIA

There is no well accepted definition of wastelands but Bhumble has used the following definition for wasteland are those lands which are virtually unstable ecologically, whose top soil is completely lost, devoid of any vegetative cover. Such lands have developed toxicity in the root zones for the growth of most plants, both for growth of annual crops and trees". Further, this shall cover all and affected by erosions, floods, soil salinisation and alkalisation, water logging and so on. On hilly terrain, wastelands on snow clad mountains bare and denuded fragile rock which over the years are geo- logically unstable.

Some three decades back, the consultative committee of Parliament chaired by the then Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi on August 23rd, 1985 stated that India has a land mass of about 329 million hectares and estimates are that approximately degraded whose productivity is far below its potential. The broad sub-divisions of degraded land resources are in Agriculture (out of 143 million hect; at least 40 million ha or so are degraded) and in forestry sector, out of 75 million hect; 30 million hect have barely, some shrubs only, apart from the pasture and grazing and other uncultivated lands which are almost largely degraded. As, such we are having only 175 million of degraded lands in toto Amongst the major uses of land-Agriculture, forestry and grazing lands have been the most neglected and per-

haps the most degraded areas."

In such an inexplicable situation1 wastelands are formed by misuse or over-use and the large livestock population, far beyond the carrying capacity of pasture lands has probably been the major factor in the formation of wastelands. Besides, impeded drainage due to the construction of embankments, roads, canals, railway tracks and other multi-hued development have created new wastelands, The denudation and decimation of forest covert have ushered in large scale erosions resulted into big nullahs and ravine formation in the most degraded hills side down-below the plains. Water-ling is another glaring aspect accruing from canal seepage which defacto attribute the major part of degraded and wastelands.

Greening methodology: Greening or so to say afforestation of all such wastelands is the paramount need of the hour and - covering of all such lands with suitable vegetative species prevents soil erosion, water conservation, removal of salinity from soil, restores soil microbiological activity apart from lowering soil temperature increase in water percolation and above all increase the agricultural productivity of adjoining lands. The methodology of afforestation is, however, site specific and some of the mostly degraded wastelands are lands, ravines, hill slopes, coastal areas, areas subject to seepage, river banks and other areas of blackish water and as such different categories of wastelands demand different

ways of treatments.

User lands: Such lands which constitute a part of wastelands include saline, sodic and alkaline soils and such soils are met with on hard clay as well as on sandy tracks However, intermediate stages can also be met.Sandy soils with high PH Value 1 can be found alongside major rivers and such soils are characterised by PH range from 9 to 10 severe L drought during summer and heavy frost during winter with temperature going down to 0oC preceded flooding, lire hazards and sand drifts. On such soils popular at 5 m interval inrows, 4 m apart is best suited. Introduction of certain species in between is of ample importance and such suited species are 'Syzygiumcumini, terminalia arjuna' and Dalbergia sisso.

Denuded hill slopes: Hill slopes in Himalayas Shivaliks have their own sad stories to tell as in such areas, most of the top soil has been badly eroded to the extent of its total wash away which hinders planting on such barren and denuded areas So, in treating such areas, introduction of shrubs is the first step to go ahead and every precaution is to be ensured to avert biotic pressure. The shrubs should be preferably be nitrogen fixing and of the few are vitex negund Bana), Athatodavasica (Brankers) wood for diafruticosa etc. After the soil is reclaimed, the most suited plants needs planting (local species) supplemented and supported by soil conservation measures.

Ravines: The major problem with such

areas is that these occupy vast tracks and further such areas I are prone to soil erosions, scarce moisture ,fast run off, low precipitation, uncontrolled grazing, high temperature during summer and severe cold/frost during winter. Here, on such areas the main thrust should be on gully-plugging and once the gullies are plugged. Root cuttings are strongly recommended. After this being done, the most suited local spp. to site should be planted out to reclaim the wastelands and some of the most suitable viz Bamboos, grasses need preference at places for soil binding apart from introduction of Acacias, SyzygiumcuminiDalbergia sisso and caesiasiaimea on flat top areas. Nothing can be achieved unless their depredations are controlled and in so far as aerial seeding on such areas is concerned as a method of greening the wastelands, the operation has proved to be costly one, apart from a futile exercise.

As a corollary, all out attempts have been made over the years in greening/afforestation of wastelands, of which successful results have been achieved to varying degree. The moot point to emphasize is to protect such wastelands from grazing, lopping and above all illicit cutting. Once the area is afforested it should form a permanent feature of the landscape. The system as such should be that the ground always remains covered.

(The author is former Deputy Conservator of Forests, J&K).

National Ayurveda Day

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

In India, we have been celebrating 'National Ayurveda Day' since 2016. The day is also celebrated as birthday of 'Bhagwan Dhanvantri' regarded as 'Hindu God of Ayurveda' according to Hindu mythology (Bhagavata Purana), and is considered as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, who arose from 'Samudra Manthan', holding the nectar pot of immortality. Ayurveda is the 'The Science of Life' and is one of the branches of Vedas, as Upaveda of Rigveda or Atharva-Veda. It is a holistic system of medicine from India, which evolved from Brahma sages of Ancient India some 3000- 5000 years ago and is often called the "Mother of All Healings". The main classical Ayurveda texts begin with accounts of the transmission of medical knowledge from the Gods to sages, and then to human physicians. Ayurveda literally means the science of life and is ancient medical science incorporated in the 'Atharva Veda', the last of four Vedas.

In Hinduism, on this day, worshippers pray to Bhagwan Dhanvantari seeking his blessings for sound healing. Some scholars assert that Ayurveda originated in prehistoric times, and that some of the concepts of Ayurveda have existed from the time of the Indus Valley Civilization or even earlier. Ayurveda developed significantly during the Vedic period and later some of the non-Vedic systems such as Buddhism and Jainism also developed medical concepts and practices that appear in the classical Ayurveda texts. It follows a holistic approach to maintain health and fighting illness through therapies, massages, herbal medicines, diet control and exercises.

The principles and philosophy of Ayurveda are derived from universal laws of nature that have changed little through time.

Ayurveda believes in five basic elements Panchamahabhutas (space, air, fire, water and earth) manifest in the human body as three basic humours

known as Tridosas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) and states that balance of three 'Doshas' results in health while imbalance results in ill-health. These three govern creation, maintenance and destruction of bodily tissues as well as the assimilation and elimination.

Ayurveda is the traditional Hindu system of medicine based on the idea of balance in bodily systems and uses diet, herbal treatment, and yogic breathing. When diet is wrong, medicine is of no use. When diet is correct, medicine is of no need is the Ayurvedic proverb. Ayurvedic philosophy maintains that people are born with a specific constitution, which is called the Prakruti. The Prakruti, established at conception, is viewed as a unique combination of physical and psychological characteristics that affect the way each person functions.

Life (Aayu) is the combination (Samyoga) of body, senses, mind and reincarnating soul. Ayurveda is the most sacred science of life, beneficial to humans. It stems from the ancient Vedic culture and was taught for many thousands of years in an oral tradition from accomplished masters to their disciples.

Some of this knowledge was set to print a few thousand years ago, but much of it, is inaccessible. Ayurveda is a system of medicine with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. Globalized and modernized practices derived from Ayurveda traditions are a type of alternative medicine.

In countries beyond India, Ayurvedic therapies and practices have been integrated in general wellness applications and in some cases in medical use. According to the Charaka Samhita, "Compendium of Charaka" a Sanskrit text on Ayurveda (Indian traditional medicine) first taught by Atreya, and then subsequently codified by Agnivesa, revised by Charaka, (a Kashmiri by origin), the knowledge of Ayurveda is eternal and is revealed in each of the cycles of the creation of the universe.

From an existential crisis to breath of relief

■ M R LALU

Sincerely - I waited and waited until the result of the Congress presidential election was out. When it was out, the dominant question crept into my mind was about the next possible move by Shashi Tharoor. But he, unlike his G-23 compatriots, decided to march in tune with the party high-command's dictums and that was brilliant. The presidential election in the Congress party has been a moment that blessed all the insiders of the party to once again conveniently lean to show their depth of servitude to the party dynasty. And Shashi Tharoor for definitive reasons would be an outsider even if he decides to remain in the Congress. He would be strictly alienated among the leaders for his audacity to remain intelligently independent when others, the loyalists are blissful to think the way they are directed to think by the family high command.

A well qualified, well read and well-known Tharoor, has come out after the result was declared with a decent phraseology, saying that 'the revival of the party has truly begun.'

The ripple of political movements that the Congress has presently come up with has seriously made the party once again a well meaningful subject of political discourse even though it is out of power. Electing an octogenarian as its new president from outside the Gandhi family, the eligible voters in the Congress have indirectly endorsed their reluctance to give the grand old party a chance to metamorphose into a fresh avatar under a younger and intelligent Tharoor.

Tharoor could not win the presidency but his candidature should be seen as an announcement of an open dissent that has been visible and the effect of a quest that some of the insiders of the party cherished while plotting their rebellion. Tharoor may change his mind and prefer a decent exit from Congress before the

next general elections.

He had been skeptical and alleged that the presidential election was stage-managed and sheepishly rigged.

Though his candidacy was a public display of democratic disagreement inside the party, the leadership of the party projected this as an act of amiability and freedom rather than anarchy and acrimony in its democratic structure.

The essential eligibility irrespective of his old age, Kharge was supported for was his family proximity that the Gandhi family endorsed and staged the election drama for.

Being powerful without any power in the party, Rahul Gandhi has consistently maintained his dominance in Congress.

His longest walk intended to recapture the lost glory of the party has fundamentally added to the complexity that the Congress establishment is. An intelligent manoeuvre to stay away from the potential pitfalls such as the future political debacles; he has once again managed to continue in the limelight without any visible responsibility.

The party with its behavioural ethos to dawdle under the protective shadow of a family has almost lost its eminence since 2014. The storm that had shattered its hopes and dreams must be giving nightmares to the Congress even today.

The Modi factor, the winning strategy that the BJP is banking on, has been a profound hindrance for the Congress from gaining influence.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra by Rahul Gandhi and the coronation of Mallikarjun Kharge, a family loyalist as the President of the party, gives the Congress a chance to set up a parallel party structure that the BJP enjoys. There, it is Narendra Modi the supreme leader and a party president probably taking his orders.

This can also be seen as an overall experiment put in place well before the

general elections 2024, in which, if consensus could be built to project a new Rahul Gandhi, totally reinvigorated after the Yatra, emerging with a well knitted acceptance across party lines as a serious contender to Modi. The BJP must be counting this as a win-win situation.

For them, the Tharoor factor being crumbled from becoming instrumental in the Congress party's constitutionally structural build-up, the new elected president does not seem to have the mettle to bring about an increased vigour among its cadre; the only personality who would attempt to flex his muscles to take on the Modi juggernaut is Rahul Gandhi alone.

That being the case, the BJP does not have to do so many somersaults to retain its previous tally in the upcoming state elections in its strongholds.

The present scenario in the Congress is a true replica of renunciation that the Sonia era espoused in 2004. She was eulogised and hysterically beatified by the same loyalists in the party for her renouncing the post of the Prime Minister. Rahul Gandhi also for whatever reasons decided not to embrace the responsibility of the president and has certainly been extolled by the same loyalists for turning himself a renunciate. A frenzied party cadre thronging to his yatra in the southern states was evidently displaying this sympathetic attitude decisively. For them, the yatra would definitely transform the Gandhi seion into its ultimate saviour.

His 'no' to the presidency and his excitement to take a long march, which indeed, if completed as per the plan, would turn out to be a thrilling achievement for him in his personal pursuit of political relevance. Walking through the entire stretch of the dryness of his political career, as a leader, the Rahul factor is all set to gain prominence.

Interestingly, after Modi, in India he is

the only leader who enjoys a great deal of celebrity status in politics.

From 7 September to the distance that he should be inching closer to its culmination is expected to galvanise pro-Congress sentiments. But to counter a pan-India Modi impact, the entire stretch of distance he decided to walk is not enough. But unpredictability is the master when politics begins to play its tricky games.

If the Rahul yatra helps the Congress to embellish its presence with little eminence, it can also garner more political support from unexpected areas. Areas where the crowd sat to hear him throughout the rain are indicative to the attention that the electorate rewarded him for his newborn maturity.

With brand Modi's USP intact, the BJP is all set to focus on the upcoming state elections. The Congress is yet to make any noteworthy start.

A repeat of the saffron surge in its strong turf is predicted and undoubtedly this election does not bring any slippery moment for the BJP in Gujarat. But in Karnataka, with the tussle and fuss in the leadership of both the parties, the state elections are far from a viable prediction.

The repeat of a BJP sweep and Congress decline would further damage the prospects of the party and the effect of its historic Bharat Jodo Yatra would not refurbish the celebrated Rahul makeover and his prospects in the national elections would be grimmer. But the Kharge coronation will ultimately pull the Rahul Gandhi factor into a visible sphere of recognition as a serious leader and he should be aware of the genuine challenge that the Bharat Jodo Yatra throws at him.

He needs to establish his organisational popularity with meaning and purpose. A crippled mandate in the state elections would turn his reformer's image and saviour's prerogatives catastrophic.