


MENTORING YOUNG AUTHORS

In rarest of the rare endeavours, the Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, has launched YUVA 2.0 - Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors, an Author Mentorship programme to train young and budding authors (below 30 years of age) in order to promote reading, writing and book culture in the country, and project India and Indian writings globally. In view of the significant impact of the first edition of YUVA with large scale participation from young and budding authors in 22 different Indian languages and English, YUVA 2.0 is now being launched. The launch of YUVA 2.0 (Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors) is in tune with the Prime Minister's vision to encourage the youth to understand and appreciate India's democracy. YUVA 2.0 is a part of India@75 Project (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav) to bring to the fore the perspectives of the young generation of writers on the theme: 'Democracy (institutions, events, people, constitutional values - past, present, future)' in an innovative and creative manner. This scheme will thus help to develop a stream of writers who can write on a spectrum of subjects to promote Indian heritage, culture and knowledge system. NEP 2020 has emphasized on the empowerment of the young minds and creating a learning ecosystem that can make the young readers/learners ready for leadership roles in the future world. India tops the chart in youth population being 66% of the total, waiting to be tapped for capacity building and thereby nation building. With the purpose of mentoring a new generation of young creative writers, there is an imminent requirement to take initiatives at highest level, and in this context, YUVA 2.0 will go a long way in laying the foundation of the future leaders of the creative world. The National Book Trust, India, under the Ministry of Education as the Implementing Agency will ensure phase-wise execution of the Scheme under well-defined stages of mentorship. The books prepared under this scheme will be published by National Book Trust, India, and will also be translated into other Indian languages ensuring the exchange of culture and literature, thereby promoting 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'. The selected young authors will interact with some of the best authors of the world, participate in literary festivals etc. The scheme will help to develop a stream of writers who can write on various facets of Democracy in India encompassing the past, present and future. Besides, it will also provide a window to the aspiring youth to articulate themselves and present a comprehensive outlook of Indian Democratic values at domestic as well as international platforms. This scheme has been conceptualized on the premise that the 21st century India needs to groom a generation of young authors to create ambassadors of Indian literature. In view of the fact that our country is ranked third in the arena of book publishing and we have a treasure trove of indigenous literature, India must project it at the global stage.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Contemplate Ganapati's form to connect with him

The name Ganapati immediately brings to mind the elephant-faced God, worshipped all over India irrespective of caste, creed, or religious beliefs. He is famous as the Vighnaharta, remover of obstacles, and is, therefore, worshipped before undertaking any task. Some devotees are content with just gazing at his divine form, chanting his name, or singing his glories. However, others are benefitted by contemplating his divine virtues, sports, or the symbolic meaning of his divine form. Let us see the auspicious form of Ganapati to be meditated upon and worshipped. Usually, an elephant has two tusks. They represent the vision of duality and also pairs of opposites. Ganapati is depicted as having one tusk – he has broken such false notions, has a vision of non-duality and is beyond pairs of opposites. 'O Lord, may we too not be tossed high and low by profit or loss, honour or dishonour, joy or sorrow, heat or cold and see oneness in all.' Hands represent the power to act. Ganapati accomplishes everything with his four hands. They also represent the four human pursuits – righteousness or merits; wealth; pleasures and comforts; and liberation. Ganapati can bestow all four on us. 'O Lord, may we accomplish much through your blessings.' Ganapati carries the goad, which signifies self-control. He also controls the entire world of things and beings, however big and strong they may be. Ganesh also carries a modak, sweet, in his hand. He is the giver of moda, all joy – worldly, spiritual or the ultimate bliss of Realisation. Modak also represents Vedanta, knowledge which gives bliss. Only one who is happy can make others truly happy. Ganapati lives in bliss, experienced directly as the modak in hand. 'O Lord, do give us eternal

Maharaja Hari Singh's Birthday; declaration of holiday & its ramifications

■ ADV RAMESHWAR SINGH JAMWAL

Now that the euphoria of birthday celebrations of Maharaja Hari Singh has ebbed down and we are back to the same uncertainties of life in this troubled UT of J&K, it's the time to introspect and foresee as to what lies ahead for our future generations in these troubled times and whether our fight for justice should end here, when the same marauding forces that worked against him from 1927, when he assumed the ruler ship of the state, till his demise and thereafter as well, are working overtime to achieve the unfulfilled agenda of 1947. We also have to analyze as to whether we have achieved the targets of social and societal reforms, initiated by him, which were unheard of in those times, their impact on the life of the citizens of J&K and whether we have dithered and floundered on them or have carried on the legacy with the same zeal, with which he worked for them, or we need to take mid course corrective measures so that we achieve the targets set out by him and carried out by many others in the corridors of power, who have ruled us for the last about seventy five years, after the invent of democratic set up in India and the then state and now UT of J&K. It's beyond doubt that it is only because of the pressure built up by Yuva Rajput Sabha that the Government of J&K, after nod from the central government and political leadership of the ruling dispensation relented and agreed for declaring 23rd September as holiday. Amit Shah's meeting with the representatives of YRS on 3rd October is not without political connotations. They were also justified in celebrating it but there have been questions about the display of weapons and confining it to one particular caste. Of course, there has been overwhelming support from many sections of society but the way it should have been celebrated by the people of the UT, irrespective of their religion or caste, was missing and this participation could have made huge difference in projecting the true thinking of the man, vilified by the shortsighted political dispensations that have ruled us for decades. But all has not been lost as yet and we can still change our future's discourse and achieve the twin targets of projecting the achieve-



A rare photograph of father of author with Maharaja Hari Singh in 1957 at Paris.

ments of this great modern thinker and social reformer and also help in building a better society and country, which he envisioned and laid the roadmap for it. For this we need to go beyond the revealed history of the man and need to know the real Hari Singh, even when he no longer remained the Maharaja of J&K and spent his last years, with that lingering wound of having been treated most unjustifiably by many in the country and the then state of J&K. The author has some ideas about the inner framework of his mind from 1952 till his death as the father of the author was perhaps the closest person to him, with whom he shared his inner thoughts in a period of about seven-eight years, from 1952 till 1957, when the palace intrigues made the father of the author to depart from Mumbai, little realizing that misfor-

tune that befell him was still at work. As, the critics of the present celebrations and of Hari Singh are still trying to project the present picture with something like the advent of Rajput or Dogra hegemony, we need to dive deep to find out as what Dogra Rule signified and what can be the meaning of present success in our future thinking and its likely impact on the events which will unfold in coming decades. For interpreting and understanding as to what Hari Singh represented, we need to go little bit into the brief history of J&K and understand as to what Dogra Rule meant in those days. Dogra Rule-1846-1947: Year 1339 had witnessed the emergence of the Mir Dynasty in Kashmir, led by Shah Mir who became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. For the next five centuries, Muslim monarchs ruled Kashmir; and this period includes the Mughal rule, from 1586 until 1751, and there was rule of Afghans as well, called the Durrani Rule, which dynasty ruled from 1747 to 1819. Then came the Sikh rule, as Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab had annexed Kashmir. In 1846, after the Sikh defeat in the Anglo Sikh war; the Treaty of Lahore was signed and Raja Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler (Dogras are a martial ethnic race, inhabiting Jammu, parts of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh) from Jammu purchased the region from the British under the Treaty of Amritsar, and who then became the new ruler of Kashmir. This was the start of Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir and the rule of Gulab Singh's descendants, continued till 1947, when he signed the Instrument of accession with India, which was not accepted by Pakistan and since then the dispute is continuing and four wars have been fought between the two countries and which dispute threatens the lives of millions in the two nuclear armed countries. Pakistan has continued the proxy war, through its Jihadi war machine, created by General Zia-Ul-Haq, former ruler of Pakistan to bleed India. His doctrine of a "Thousand Cuts" is still being religiously followed by the so called modern dispensations, which have ruled Pakistan for the last few decades.

(to be continued....)

Expectations of Paharis from Home Minister's visit

■ DR VIVAK M ARYA & DR NITAN SHARMA

One phenomenon inherent to the framework of the plural society that dominates the Indian subcontinent is the coexistence of populations with vastly varying levels of material and intellectual development in a relatively limited space. This article focuses on social concerns that were largely brought about by empty vows, guarantees, and promises made to the autochthonous societies in the erstwhile State of J&K, and it explores the potential outcomes of these two paths: confrontation and ultimate harmonization. Even while certain indigenous people have benefited from legal recognition as Scheduled Tribes since the early 1990s, J&K Reorganization Act, 2019 has also extended to them what is still available in the form of political reservations and the Forest Rights Act. In a similar vein, the Pahari tribe's linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity likely blossomed in the wild, among forests, rivers, and mountains, but this is still an open question. On the other hand, the approaching visit of the Home Minister in J&K and the subsequent addressing of gatherings in Rajouri and Baramulla is widely seen as a chance to rectify the wrongs committed against the Pahari Tribe over the course of the previous few decades. According to former PRO to Late Kuldeep Raj Gupta, Former Vice Chairman Pahari Advisory Board Vikrant Sharma, the Home Minister's repeated utterances regarding the condition of Paharis and even assuring them that the next Chief Minister can be a member of Pahari Tribe has given new life to the struggle of Pahari population. It is vital to note right away that Pahari-speaking people live in the Pahars, or upper reaches of the Pir Panjal range, in the districts of Poonch, Rajouri, Baramulla and Kupwara, as well as a few pockets in Kashmir districts. It is important to note that while it has frequently been suggested on social media that Pahari Speaking People demand tribal status on the basis of language, this needs to be clarified right away. The amendment in J&K Reservation Act clarifies that for claiming the benefits of Pahari speaking people category, a person must be a member of the Pahari clan, community or tribe having a distinct cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity. Additionally, the Pahari group shares the geographic isolation and socioeconomic backwardness that have already been established and even underlined by numerous commissions and experts. The people of these mountainous regions are well aware that the majority of the amenities required for a contemporary lifestyle are not

available to them. These communities' residents lack access to adequate roads, schools, and health facilities, among other necessities. To get to schools, hospitals, or to use a transportation service from the main road, Pahari people must travel quite a distance on foot. The socioeconomic circumstances of the Pahari people are directly impacted by the lack of all such facilities. A little more than 80 per cent of the population is reliant on agriculture and raising livestock. Famous historian KD Maini reported that during the summer months, close to 35 per cent of the Gujjars, Bakervals tribes, and Pahari people of Poonch-Rajouri Districts move to Dhoks and Margs. They migrate in the form of a caravan and have their own Dhoks and Margs where they shift alongside Qabilas and families. Similar to this, according to information from Lokesh Sharma, President of the Pahari Welfare Forum in J&K, notable dhoks in Poonch that are exclusively home to Paharis include Makhari, Doba, Desaldori, Sari, Magrian, Satarban, Sapanwali, Doda, Udanpathri, Sultanpathri, Noorpur, Trar, Peeran ni Mauri, Thandaban, Narian and Ranga. We may, thus, be able to understand the Pahari people as being disadvantaged and underprivileged by considering their transhumance lifestyle and socioeconomic circumstances. Sensing the hardships endured by this ethnic group, several cabinet decisions even in the erstwhile J&K State strongly supported the Pahari tribe's popular demand for scheduled tribe status. All prior governors, especially General K.V. Krishna Rao, also supported this desire, which is expressed as follows, "The Pahari Speaking People of the State, who are primarily concentrated in remote border regions and are subject to considerable economic distress, as is evident from their backwardness in comparison to socio-economic indices, despite sharing the same kinds of disadvantages as the Gujjars and Bakervals, have been unfortunate middlemen," the report reads (Trishanku Swarg). For the sake of equity and to ensure equitable development, it is essential to include Pahari-speaking people in the development process by giving them the same privileges as tribes in terms of scheduling on a priority basis. Various regional parties, including the National Conference, the Indian National Congress, and others, included it in their election manifestos. The former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee passionately backed it during his visit to Karnah in 2002, and the state BJP leadership also pushed the case to the Centre for approval, therefore the BJP leadership has also agreed to

settle the issue. Despite several permits and endorsements from high dignitaries, the Paharis were denied their just share for a variety of reasons. Numerous committees were even formed to investigate the veracity of their claim. The Peerzada Anin Committee Report stands out among them because it categorically states in its recommendations that there is a desperate need to mainstream this community by bringing them under the purview of positive discrimination as governed by the constitutional principle of affirmative action and as applied to other marginalized communities of the country. The Pahari population in erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir has been found to largely resemble a stock of people with primitive qualities, such as traditional marriage customs, dress pattern, shyness of contact, and haïrdo. This was discovered during the macro-field survey, etc. Mountainous and border regions' residents depend on nature for their daily necessities, such as food, fuel, and energy; and therefore live in close contact to it. Their major line of work is agriculture and related agricultural pursuits. They share striking similarities with other tribal tribes in the state in terms of the social organization, culture, and way of life. Pahari Tribe's case is stronger than those of any other community for ST status because it has received recommendations from numerous commissions and committees, including S.L.Bhat Report, the Justice Sagheer Report, Interlocutors, Institute of Peace and Conflict, and a recent report by the J&K Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission popularly known as Justice GD Sharma Commission. The aforementioned actions at the national and state levels are further evidence of the steady and unwavering nature of demand. Despite the fact that they have a legitimate claim and have been fighting for it for the better part of forty years, it is evident that the Pahari community has seen no actual benefits from the aforementioned commitments, guarantees, and promises. However, against the backdrop of J&K's reorganization, the Pahari community can be seen breathing a sigh of relief after receiving some encouragement in the form of 4 per cent local-level reservation and a promise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the Red Fort on the eve of Independence Day that justice would be served to Paharis as well. Although they fare poorly on socioeconomic indices, this vulnerable group has long served as a strong line of defense for the country and has been deservedly rewarded with the Padma Shri Award for their members'

YOUR COLUMN
Lower bird diversity in urban forests

Dear Editor,
According to a recent study done by a University in Sweden, cities have a detrimental impact on bird diversity. Even if forest areas are of the same quality, urban woods have much fewer bird species than rural forests. The researchers examined 459 natural woodlands located in or near 32 cities in southern Sweden. They counted the occurrence of different bird species, and the result is clear: in natural forests located in a city center, there are on average a quarter fewer species of forest birds compared to forests outside the city. In terms of endangered species, about half as many species were found in urban forests compared to rural forests. The results deepen our knowledge of the impact of cities on biodiversity, says William Sidemo Holm, one of the researchers behind the study. It is already well known that urbanization is one of the main driving forces behind the loss of biodiversity, as cities spread out across the globe. What is not as well known, however, is how cities affect protected natural areas in a city. "Our study demonstrates that you cannot surround nature with urban development and believe that it will remain as it is, there is going to be a negative effect," says William Sidemo Holm, who worked on the study during his time as a doctoral student at Lund University. The researchers wanted to specifically examine similar forests, or habitats. It is therefore not city parks that have been compared to countryside forests, emphasizes William Sidemo Holm. The study is one of the first to compare the diversity of similar habitats along a so-called urban gradient. "This way we know that the results are not driven by differences in the actual habi-

tats, which in this scenario was natural forest. Instead, it was the surrounding environment that was different", he says. The fact that an urban environment has such a clear negative impact on forest bird diversity may have to do with access to food, the researchers believe. Many birds depend on food resources not only in their immediate vicinity but also in their surroundings, and in cities there are fewer insects, for example. In addition, some species are sensitive to artificial disturbances such as noise and light, which occur more in cities. "Our results highlight the importance of taking surrounding nature into account in urban planning. Above all, it is important to avoid the expansion of cities adjacent to protected environmental areas where there may be endangered species we found that these are particularly sensitive to urban surroundings," says William Sidemo Holm. The study also showed that urban forests can be important for bird diversity. Although a majority of the bird species was more common outside the cities, there were species that were more often found in cities, such as the hawfinch. The reason may be that cities have more fruit trees that can provide them with food. "Our conclusion is that it is important to preserve natural forests both in the cities and outside them in order to maintain local diversity," says William Sidemo Holm. In order to better preserve the biodiversity of cities, more knowledge is needed on how to reduce the negative impact on natural areas from the surrounding urban environment, say the researchers. In the future, it would be particularly interesting to investigate whether coherent green infrastructure in cities, or between city and countryside, can increase the opportunities for bird species in the city to find the necessary resources.

Vijay.

PROGRESSING J&K
New land laws- major step towards progressive development

The new land laws are being hailed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir as a major step towards the development and progress of J&K. The historic initiative of the government is revamping the agriculture and allied sectors besides ensuring holistic development of all sectors. J&K Government is constantly working towards creating a modern, efficient, transparent and citizen-friendly UT which protects and safeguards the land. The new land laws which replaced old laws that existed in the erstwhile state of J&K will also help revamp the agriculture sector, foster rapid industrialisation, aid economic growth and create jobs. Key amendments were made to four major state laws that governed the ownership, sale, and purchase of land in the erstwhile state. These are The J&K Development Act, 1970, The J&K Land Revenue Act, 1996, The Agrarian Reforms Act, 1976 and The J&K Land Grants Act, 1960. The designation of land for industrial purposes will open up greater employment avenues for the youth who have always yearned for the industrial revolution in J&K so that they can get better employment opportunities. According to the new land law, agricultural land can only be sold to an agriculturist and he has been defined as a person who cultivates land personally in the UT. The term 'agriculture land' unambiguously is defined to include not just agriculture but horticulture and allied agro-activities as well. The most extensive definition includes not just horticulture but poultry, Animal Husbandry, among others. While progressive provisions of the repealed laws have been retained by including them in the modified Land Revenue Act, new provisions have been added to modernize existing laws.