

## Exam Based Promotions in SED

It is a good news that the Jammu and Kashmir government is mulling introducing a procedure wherein the promotion of teachers, masters, lecturers, administrators and officers in the School Education Department Jammu and Kashmir shall be done via examination base. If this proposal is once introduced, the procedure will change the decade-long scheme of promotions in the education department, which is entirely based on seniority of service and minimum acquired qualifications.

There is immense need of major change in education sector since the old age plane of promotion in education department not only pleased Govt official and the Education Department with things that have taken place with promotions of teachers, administrators, and officers in the department. And the kind of result is shown by teachers in Jammu and Kashmir.

It is observed that scores of teachers, masters, lecturers and officials are not giving a positive result, impacting the education level in Jammu and Kashmir. Keeping in views all facts and figures This is good thing that Govt of Jammu and Kashmir is conducting exam-based promotions in Education Department. There are several factors behind bringing this procedure to the Jammu and Kashmir Education Department like in order to streamline the education department and change the old tradition of promoting teachers merely on the seniority of service which is time consuming.

Another factors is the other is that several Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers (appointed under RTE Act) were 12th pass when they were inducted into the teaching profession. But, over time, they were promoted to higher positions, even though their performance remains below par which in turn I think affected education in Jammu and Kashmir. Same goes with other teachers, master, lecturers, who no doubt are well qualified. But they have failed to set a benchmark in their teaching career, which the people is unwilling to tolerate at any level.

Last but not least if the government is serious about the quality of education in schools, it is inevitable to reform the present promotion mechanism in the department. In the absence of this reform, every step whatsoever taken by the government will yield no results as is evident from the present scenario shown by surveys and data, already available in the public domain.

This mechanism can be akin to the departmental examination system for every promotion as being practiced by the central school systems like Kendriya/Navodya Vidhyalayas, most of the educationally forward states/UTs like Kerala, Mizoram, Chandigarh, Haryana, etc. The scheme for such a system can be copied from any of the above systems/states with local modifications, wherever required. I would finally like to suggest that the scheme of departmental examination-based promotions for the elevation of teachers, masters, lecturers, administrators, and officers in our department will go a long way in promoting talent, quality, and efficiency of human resources in our department.

The present scheme of promotions, entirely based on seniority of service and minimum acquired qualifications, has not only degraded the quality of a teaching-learning process in our schools, but it has also downgraded the morale of competent and capable teachers to the bottom," the memorandum read.

## Misleading Menstruation Myths That Need to Be Dispelled Immediately

■ DR. KANIKA GUPTA

Menstruation remains a sensitive topic, often surrounded by societal taboos and discomfort. It is considered messy and is generally avoided in polite conversations, even among women. Due to its 'taboo' status, young girls and women are frequently exposed to incorrect information. Across the country, females of various ages, educational backgrounds, living in rural or urban areas, and spanning different economic statuses, often experience embarrassment when discussing menstruation. Here are some prevalent menstruation myths that all women should be aware of. Nevertheless, as the saying goes, knowledge is empowering, and it's essential to disregard these misconceptions about menstruation. These seven myths continue to impede the progress of girls and women. The time has come for us to eradicate these myths once and for all.

Dispelling Menstruation Myths that girls are impure during their periods and should avoid cooking or visiting sacred places. Facts is that menstruation is a natural part of growing up, and there is no impurity associated with it. Besides Sanitary products should be discreetly covered when purchasing. But the fact is buying sanitary products is akin to buying any personal hygiene item, like soap or toothpaste. There is also myth that girls on their periods should not touch or approach plants, as it will harm them. But the fact is plants thrive on care, irrespective of who tends to them. Certain foods like curd, tamarind, and pickles disrupt menstrual flow. But Food choices do not influence the menstrual flow.

Girls should sleep separately during their periods. Menstruation is not contagious and poses no harm to others in the same room. Physical activity can disrupt menstrual flow.

Exercise and sports can actually help alleviate menstrual pain. Discussing periods in public leads to public shaming.

Just as you freely talk about your hair, makeup, or nail polish, discussing periods should be no different."

Strategies for Combating Menstruation-Related Myths: Given the continued taboo surrounding menstruation, it is crucial to develop a thoughtful strategy to normalize discussions about this natural process. Here are several approaches to combat the prevailing myths about menstruation:

Raise Awareness: The fundamental strategy is to disseminate knowledge among adolescent girls and women. Often, mothers avoid discussing this topic with their daughters, and even adult women may lack accurate information.

Empowerment: Empowering girls and women is highly effective. Emphasizing the importance of education can enable them to make decisions that impact society positively.

Sanitation Facilities: Ensuring access to sanitary napkins and other sanitation facilities is imperative.

Accessible Sanitary Products: Making affordable sanitary napkins readily available in rural and slum areas is crucial, given the limited resources in these regions.

Engaging Male Partners: Highlighting the role of male partners in challenging these deeply ingrained myths is equally important. Educating boys about menstruation is a critical step in this regard.

(The author has completed Ph.D. in Human Development with special focus on children with special needs [Hearing impaired] from University of Jammu)

## 'Swachhata Hi Seva Pakhwada': A Jan-Andolan for Garbage Free India

■ GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

India, a country of remarkable diversity and stark contrasts, finds strength in its unity, especially in times of adversity. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, (Clean India Campaign) a flagship initiative led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands as a shining example of what collective will power can achieve in our country. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-G) is a jan-andolan (mass movement) for a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable India. However, this campaign is not merely about immediate action. It lays the foundation for a long-term vision, addressing waste management in both urban and rural areas, which has been made possible through the joint action of various departments across the government.

To give impetus to this cause, my entire team has been tirelessly working every day towards this mission, through regular state visits and high level reviews to ensure effective implementation of the vision of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is because of this resolve that we have achieved over 4.4 lakh ODF Plus villages under SBM-G 2.0 along with constructing more than 11.25 crores household toilets and 2.36 lac community sanitary complexes.

A pivotal component of this initiative is the Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) (Cleanliness is Service) campaign which enables Jan-Bhagidari (mass participation) towards this mission. We have already witnessed the profound impact of Swachhata Hi Seva in the year 2022. Around 10 crore people did Shramdaan activities during SHS 2022 and already around 9 crore people have done Shramdaan activities so far. SHS this year has seen more than 20 crore people participating in various activities so far in 12 days - averaging around 1.67 crore people participation per day. It is because of this huge people participation that we saw the nation achieving a remarkable milestone this year, going from 7% to 75%

Open Defecation Free Plus villages.

This year, the SHS campaign was launched by my cabinet colleagues Union Minister of Panchayati Raj & Rural Development Giriraj Singh, Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri and myself. The fortnight long campaign is being observed this year from September 15 to October 1, culminating in a nationwide Swachhata Shramdaan of 1 hour on the October 1, from 10 am to 11 am, on the call of our Prime Minister. This year, the campaign is being run as a joint initiative of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs through the Swachh Bharat Mission- Grameen (Rural) and Urban.

Swachhata Hi Seva is no ordinary campaign. It is a call to citizens to actively engage in 'Shramdaan' through voluntary activities aimed at fostering a sense of shared responsibility and to reinforce the message that sanitation is everybody's business. This year, under the banner of 'Garbage Free India,' the campaign aims to emphasize that sanitation is a collective duty and cleanliness should be an intrinsic part of our daily lives.

As we reflect upon the success of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign, it is essential for us to delve deeper into the nuanced aspects of this extraordinary endeavour.

At the heart of the campaign is an unwavering emphasis on visual cleanliness, extending to the welfare of Safai Mitras, often unsung heroes in our society. Recognizing their vital role is a commendable aspect of the campaign, underlining the need to uplift those who diligently maintain our surroundings.

SHS-2023 showcases an impressive array of activities, ranging from cleaning high-traffic public spaces to refurbishing sanitation assets, with the aim of rejuvenating public areas. Additionally, the cleaning of riverbanks, water bodies, tourist destinations, and historical monuments highlights our commitment to preserving

our natural and cultural heritage. The collaboration between the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs sets the stage for a robust waste management mechanism in line with this vision.

At this juncture, it is also important to recognise the 'Whole of Government' approach adopted under SHS-2023. This innovative approach has enabled 59 government departments, apart from DDWS and MoHUA, to initiate over 30,000 activities and ensuring the participation of over 7.5 lac people so far to promote Swachhata (cleanliness) all over the country. Further, the most significant achievement of the campaign is the unprecedented mobilization of communities. People from all walks of life, including students, government employees and local communities unite to address a common cause. Young minds embrace the importance of waste segregation at its source, evolving into champions of cleanliness in their communities. Cultural events and special programs transcend regional boundaries, fostering a collective sense of purpose.

The campaign also marks the launch of the SHS Portal for this year, which meticulously records voluntary work under this initiative. This introduces a level of transparency and accountability previously unseen in such campaigns, offering a tangible method to quantify the outstanding efforts of participating citizens and organizations. Concurrently, the Indian Swachhata League, integrated into SHS-2023, injects a competitive spirit into the campaign. I would like to request all my fellow citizens to imbibe the spirit of Shramdaan, learn from the teachings of the father of our Nation and actively participate in the Swachhata Shramdaan on the October 1 and contribute in their own way to making our villages, towns and cities 'Sampoorna Swachh'.

(The writer is Minister for Jal Shakti, Government of India.)

## Gojri Language needs to be introduced in educational institutions

\*Tribal language is being ignored continuously

■ CH RASHID AZAM INQULABI



The National Education Policy 2020 has proposed various reforms in school education as well as higher education including technical education. A number of action points, activities for implementation in school education as well as higher education are suggested in the National Education Policy 2020.

The National Education Policy 2020 has 'emphasized' on the use of the mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till Class 5 while, recommending its continuation till Class 8 and beyond.

Gojri is the mother tongue of a substantial segment of the population on both sides of LoC India and Pakistan, its speakers can be found in numbers in the nook and corner of the union territory of J&K. Other native languages spoken as mother tongue do have their own area of influence but very limited reach. Kashmiri for instance is spoken in the valley. Dogri, Punjabi, Mirpuri, and between the right side of river Chenab and Pir Panjal various mother tongues are modes of communication like Pogali, Hambal-Gooha, Siraji, Badervahi, Saroodi, Bheelsavi, Padri and Kishitawari etc. Gujjari and Potwari are the only two languages spoken on both sides of Pir Panjal and LoC.

Gojri Language was included in the 6th Schedule of the J&K Constitution in 1999. Gojri should have been on the concurrent list after Kashmiri while framing the 6th schedule on merit. The demand for including it in the 8th schedule constitution of India was made by the writer, and poet of the Gojri language many times, and ultimately authorities were forced to think about the inclusion of the Gojri language in the 8th schedule of the constitution.

Our Nation is known for diversity and this diversity is all because of languages spoken here. As such we strongly project that this largely spoken language be properly documented and researched in the academic circle. This is high time for those who are at the helm of affairs to consider the introduction of the Gojri language in the curricula of Higher Educational Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir. There is a need for a Separate Department of Gojri to be created in Colleges and Universities in the interest of the preservation of this rich and historic language.

Moreover to further promote the interest in this language Serious thought is to be given towards initiating the teaching of and learning of the Gojri language at UG and PG levels as per the new Education policy 2020. Even though it is envisaged in the New Education Policy that up to primary Education teaching and learning process will be initiated in the mother tongue, the same is needs to be carried to higher classes and up to the Ph.D. level as a separate subject.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) recommends that all students will learn three languages in their school under the 'formula'. At least two of the three languages should be native

to India.

For example: If a student in Mumbai is learning Marathi and English, he/she will have to choose to learn another Indian language. Three-language formula, teaching/learning Hindi will be mandatory in those states where the language is not usually spoken.

The choice of languages learned will depend on the state and the students. However, it is mandatory for at least two of the three languages to be native to the country - one of which is most likely to be the local/regional language.

Although a statement issued by the Ministry of Education says that "no language will be imposed on any student. Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Class 5, but preferably till Class 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language." "Wherever possible" local language/mother tongue should be used. Therefore the school is likely to continue teaching in their medium of instruction and use the local language when High-quality textbooks, including in science, will be made available in home languages

In cases where home-language textbook material is not available, the language of the transaction between teachers and students will still remain the home language wherever possible. Teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction

Gojri books to be introduced in Government schools from Ist to 8th class. A good number

of books are available in the Gojri language which can be taught to the students in schools and college level. Many religious books and other books were translated into Gojri by eminent writers. It was in the early seventies that AIR Srinagar, AIR Jammu, CHL Mysore, and JK Cultural Academy played significant roles in the development of the Modern Gojri Language and literature. We at an individual level, working wholeheartedly have authored more than three dozen volumes on different aspects of the Gojri language without any official position/patronage, thus fulfilling all the requirements for its inclusion in prestigious institutions within and outside J&K. Today Gojri is spoken/understood by over 50 million people in the Sub-Himalayan Indian States as well northern parts of Pakistan & Afghanistan. Many universities have undertaken M.Phil / Ph.D. level research in Gojri including DU, JNU, IJU Islamabad, Harare University, Allama Iqbal Open University, Lahore, Punjab University Lahore, and Peshawar University. However, at the same time, it is really painful to share that Kashmir and Jammu universities have not exhibited any interest in this regard although Central University started a Certificate course in Gojri in 2015.

The matter had already been taken up with the Lieutenant Governor for introducing the Gojri Language in Universities, colleges, and school education so that Justice may be done with a regional language.

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## Pitru Paksha in Sanatan Dhrama

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Pitru Paksha or the fortnight of the dead has its own significance in Hinduism or Sanatan Dhrama and it is an annual occasion when Hindus offer food and other things to their ancestors. In Sanatan Dhrama, a person has three debts called Dev Rin, Rishi Rin and Petra Rin and an individual has to pay these debts to free him-self from these debts. In Pitru Paksh, Hindus remember their dead ancestors and pay off their debts to dead ones by making offerings and by performing tarpana.

Hindus anxiously wait for the arrival of Pitru Paksha so that they get the opportunity to liquidate their debts to their dead relatives. However Pitru Paksha is considered by Hindus to be inauspicious, given the death rite performed during the ceremony, known as Shradha or Tarpana. In southern and western India, it falls in second Paksha (fortnight). Hindu lunar month of Bhadrpada (September) and follows the fortnight immediately after Ganesha Utsav. It begins on the Pratipada (first day of the fortnight).

Pitru Paksha-fortnight of the parental ancestors is a 16 -lunar day period in Hindu calendar when Hindus pay homage to their ancestors -Pitrs, especially through food offerings. The period is also known as Pitri paksha, Pitru Paksha, pitri Pokkho, sorah Shradha, Kanaget, Jitiya Mahalaya in Bengal, Apra Paksha, and akhadpak, Pitru pandharaveda or pitru paksh in Marathi. Pitru Paksha is considered by Hindus to be inauspicious, given the death rite performed during the ceremony called as Shradha or Tarpana. This period ends with the no moon day known as Sarvapitri Amavasya, pitri Amavasya, PEDDALA Amavasya, Mahalaya Amavasya.

The end of pitru paksha is named as Mahalaya. Pitru paksha is considered by Hindus to be inauspicious, given the death rite performed during the ceremony, known as Shradha or Tarpana. The end of Pitru paksha and the beginning of Matri Paksha is named as Mahalaya

.Most years, the autumnal equinox falls within this period that is the sun transitions from the northern to the southern hemisphere during this period. In north India and Nepal, and cultures following the purnimanta calendar or solar calendar, this period may correspond to the waning fortnight of the luni-solar month ashvina, instead of Bhadrpada.

The performance of Shradha by a son during Pitru Paksha is considered compulsory by Hindus, to ensure that the soul of the ancestor goes to heaven. In this context, the scripture Guruda Purana says, "there is no salvation for a man without a son." The scriptures preach that a householder should propitiate ancestors (Pitris), along with the gods (devas), elements (bhutas) and guests. The scripture Markandeya Purana says that if the ancestors are content with the shradhas, they will bestow health, wealth, knowledge and longevity and ultimately heaven and salvation -moksha upon the performer. The performance of Sarvapitri amavasya rites can compensate a forgotten or neglected annual Shradha ceremony, which should ideally coincide with the death anniversary of the deceased. The ceremony is central to the concept of lineages.

Shradha involves oblations to three preceding generations by reciting their names as well as to the lineage ancestor-gotra. A person thus gets to know the names of six generations (three preceding generations, his own and two succeeding generations -his sons and grandsons in his life, reaffirming lineage ties. Anthropologist Usha Menon of Drexel university presents a similar idea-that Pitru Paksha emphasizes the fact that the ancestors and current generations and the next unborn generation are connected by blood ties. The current generations repay their debt to the ancestors in Pitru Paksha. This debt is considered of utmost importance along with a person's debt to his gurus and his parents. This debt has to be paid back to

the dead ancestors, gurus, gods and gusts and Sharddas performed to give peace to their souls and in return get the blessings from the those who had left the mortal frames and are in the Pitru Lok. Pitru Paksha also known as Shradh, is a lot more than just not eating non veg, no shopping, no celebrations, and all about the negative things attached! Pitru Paksha (Shardh) is a 16-day period of paying homage to your ancestors who have departed from the materialistic world, as per Hindu calendar. The period is marked by offering prayers, food and daan to the needy and the priests in the temple. All the rituals are performed in respect and remembrance of the ancestors who left for heavenly abode and to wish them well wherever they are.

Hearing that Indra replied to Karna that he only donated gold and jewels to people during his life and never offered food and water in the name of ancestors. To this Karna told Indra that he did not know about his ancestors because he was blessed by Surya deva, the Lord of light and day to his mother and he had no clue of his ancestors. After this Karna was sent to earth for a period of 15 days so that he could perform Shradha of his dead ones and donate food and water. Since then, this period of 15 days is regarded as pitru Paksha. As documented in Gharud Purana Shradh holds major significance in the first year of death of a person. As per the ancient scriptures, it is believed that soul starts traveling to Yamapuri on the 14th day of death and reaches there in 17 days. They again travel for 11 months to reach the court of Yama. It is said that till the time the soul reaches the court, it has no access to food, water and clothes.

The daan, tarpan and offerings that we perform during Pitru Paksha reaches these souls and satisfy their hunger and thirst. The Shradha puja is performed by a male member, mostly the eldest male member of the family, or oldest son. The Shradha requires the participation of a

karta -the doer and a pandit -the priest. The puja begins when a pandit comes home and to perform a havan, after the havan rice is offered to the departed souls, which is followed by offering food to the pandit. The puja concludes with Dakshina and Daan to the pandit and the needy people. A part of the food that is prepared is offered to cows, dogs, and crows. In case the date or thiti of the deceased is not known to anyone then the Shradh ceremony is performed on Amavasya. Thus 16 -day ritual of pitru paksha also known as Shraadh paksha is an important part of Hindu life.

It is the time for Hindus to break away from everyday life and pay homage to ancestors. Sacred rituals and offerings take place throughout the two weeks of pitru paksha. These traditions each have deep -rooted meanings for the people of the Hindu faith. In Hinduism, death is part of the greater cycle of life and rebirth, known as samsara or flowing around. As part of this greater life cycle, death practices and rituals are key within the religion of Hinduism. Hindus traditionally follow traditional death rituals and rites that stem from ancient religious principles. Pitru Paksha is just one of those traditional death rituals, but it is the one that takes up more than two weeks of time each year -her life, each individual must find a way to repay those debts.

One debt is known as the ancestral loan or pitru Rna. Pitru paksha is the time every year when everyone has the opportunity to make a payment towards their ancestral loan debt. Thus dan, food, water and other offerings should be made by Hindus to the dead ancestors during the 15 day period called Pitru paksha. Let our ancestors be satisfied and bestow peace, prosperity and health and wealth to those making food and water offerings to them during the pitru paksha.

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