

## PRESERVE FORESTS

Forests have special importance not only in our country but also in the whole world. Forests are the storehouse of great beauty of nature. The form of nature that forests provide inspires humans. The second thing is that forests are the basis of humans, animals, birds, creatures etc. Everyone's health is protected only through forests. Forest is thus a major necessity of our life.

If there are no forests then we will not exist and if there are forests then we will live. What I mean to say is that we have an integral relationship with the forest, which is continuous and the biggest. In this way, since our need for forests is paramount, we also need to protect it above all else.

Tree plantation is needed so that the trees remain safe. Their places should not be vacant, because if there are no trees or forests, our life will start becoming void. There will come a time when we will not be able to live. The reason for destruction of life will be that due to lack of forests the balance of nature will get disturbed. When the balance of nature gets disturbed, then the entire environment will become so polluted and impure that we will neither be able to breathe properly nor will we be able to consume food and water properly.

## Diwali's changed form

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

There is a tradition in our country of talking about lights, sweets, happiness, prosperity and good fortune on the auspicious occasion of Diwali, but the irony is that in today's times the meaning of Diwali has completely changed. The changed nature of Diwali now brings worries about pollution and traffic jams instead of happiness. The cultural traditions of Diwali have not disappeared but have adapted to modern sensibilities. It has a fascinating blend of cultural roots and contemporary aesthetics.

In the olden days, gift-giving during Diwali meant sharing homemade sweets and simple tokens of goodwill. Today the art of gifting has taken a glamorous avatar. Along with traditional sweets and diyas, you will also find modern gifts like fine wines, luxury chocolates and high-end gadgets. Liquor, once an unusual gift, has found its place alongside the traditional offerings. Diwali is deeply rooted in tradition and history, it remains highly relevant in contemporary India and among the Indian diaspora around the world for many reasons. Diwali serves as a reminder of cultural identity and heritage for millions of people, especially those living away from their country. This helps maintain a connection with their roots. For Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists, Diwali holds religious significance and is a time of prayer, contemplation and seeking blessings from the gods.

Diwali fosters a sense of community and connectedness among families, neighbours and friends who come together to celebrate. It promotes unity and social cohesion. Diwali is an important economic event, with increased consumer spending on gifts, clothing and festive foods. It also has an economic impact on various industries, including retail and tourism. Diwali is celebrated by Indian communities across the world, making it a global festival that transcends borders and cultures. It is recognized and celebrated in many countries. In the olden days, the festival was a time to seek blessings from the gods, reflect on one's actions, and strengthen family ties through rituals and prayers. Today, you will see that there has been a remarkable change in Diwali. While the spiritual essence remains, the festival has evolved into a vibrant, contemporary celebration. Today, it's all about the smell of cocktails, the sound of music and the vibrancy of parties.

People have shifted their attention from the seriousness of religious rituals to the fun of social gatherings. Diwali parties with dance, music and laughter have now become a major feature. The cultural traditions of Diwali have not disappeared but have adapted to modern sensibilities. It has a fascinating blend of cultural roots and contemporary aesthetics. In the olden days, gift-giving during Diwali meant sharing homemade sweets and simple tokens of goodwill. Today the art of gifting has taken a glamorous avatar. Along with traditional sweets and diyas, you will also find modern gifts like fine wines, luxury chocolates and high-end gadgets. Liquor, once an unusual gift, has found its place alongside the traditional offerings. In recent years, there has been an increased awareness of the environmental impact and pollution of firecrackers during Diwali.

This has led to initiatives to promote eco-friendly and noise-free celebrations. Modern Diwali celebrations also include increasing awareness of environmental concerns. In the past, firecrackers were common, and the night sky would light up with colourful displays. Now, there is a shift towards eco-friendly celebrations, with many people choosing silent or low-emission fireworks, or even avoiding them altogether, to reduce air and noise pollution. If you look at it, there is not even a simple mention of firecrackers anywhere in the reports of many government organizations regarding pollution in Delhi. You will find the main causes of pollution and their ratio in different reports of Delhi, IIT Kanpur, and IIT Tehri in a Google search. Firecrackers are just an excuse, Hindus are the target. Hindu culture is on target.

Various festivals and traditions of Hindus have already been targeted. Non-Hindus are among the petitioners who are coming forward to ban firecrackers in various cities and states of India. The organizations which have opposed firecrackers are the ones taking foreign funding. The special thing is that firecrackers are not banned in those countries. Fireworks are not responsible for pollution in the reports of government agencies but in the media reports. Meaning this report is affected. What does it mean that air purifiers are available for sale on a large scale in the market since the discussion about air pollution in the country started increasing in 2010? Therefore, the common man of the country appears helpless and helpless in front of the careless system. In the modern era, firecrackers have a deep connection with the festival of Diwali. However, lamps have more power than firecrackers. Because the light of lamps remains for a long time. And they also do not cause pollution.

Modern Diwali is a dynamic celebration that balances old-world charm with contemporary sensibilities. It reflects the changing lifestyle and priorities of people while keeping alive the essence of the festival - the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and the enduring spirit of togetherness that defines the Diwali season. Diwali, the festival of lights, captures the essence of Indian culture and spirituality. Its deep-rooted traditions, mythological origins and enduring symbolism continue to resonate with people of all backgrounds, transcending geographical boundaries. Diwali is not just a festival; it is a celebration of light, knowledge, unity and the victory of good over evil. It reminds us of the importance of inner light, compassion and togetherness in our lives. As Diwali approaches every year, it brings with it hope, happiness and the promise of a brighter future for all.

## Celebrating eco-friendly and Green Diwali

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

Festival of lights, sweets and firecrackers - Diwali, India's major and most popular festival is around the corner! A festival which commemorates the victory of good over evil. It is time to shop, decorate homes and get ready for the biggest celebration of the year. But with the increasing pollution concerns and global warming threats around the world, it is time to stop a while and re-think, "Is it worth celebrating diwali?" It is sad that today Diwali has become synonymous with noise, crackers and air and noise pollution. This notion has to undergo change and we should think about celebrating green Diwali. With the government having been initiating to reduce pollution during Diwali celebrations, we as citizens must pay deep attention to ensuring the proper implementation during Diwali festival. A festival that used to be celebrated with traditional diyas and homemade sweets has now changed to noisy crackers and splurging. It is not only harming the environment but also is putting a question mark on an individual's health. Though we do not want to spoil our Diwali vibes, it is better to celebrate green Diwali that will help you to save the environment as well as to enjoy the festival to the fullest. At the outset we should know what is green Diwali. In simple words, green Diwali is a way of celebrating the festival of lights by ensuring minimum damage to the environment especially due to bursting of firecrackers. The bursting of firecrackers not only causes pollution but is also detrimental to the health of people. Due to air pollution many people suffer from different types of pollution-related ailments during this festive season. So we should resolve to celebrate green and eco-friendly Diwali. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights with its variations also celebrated in other Indian religions. It symbolizes

the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Newar Buddhists, although for each faith it marks different historical events and stories, but nevertheless the festival represents the same symbolic victory of light over darkness, Knowledge over power, and good over evil. So originally a Hindu festival, Diwali has transcended religious lines and today it is celebrated by people of different religions. Whatever it is, Diwali should be celebrated in eco-friendly manner which means that we should celebrate this festival by ensuring minimum damage to environment and health of the people. Because the time is ripe to celebrate green Diwali for our own benefit and for the benefit of our fellow citizens. While celebrating Diwali, nothing should be done to harm the environment, nature and people's health and then only we will be celebrating green Diwali. Diwali is linked to the ancient legend of Lord Rama, who was deprived of his kingdom and sent to 14 year's exile and it is celebrated in honor of the return of Lord Rama, Mata Sita and Laxman to Ajodhya after defeating and killing of demon king Ravana. Diwali is celebrated on the Amavasya of the first fortnight of the Hindu month of Ashwin. This year it falls on chaturthi. Diwali the festival of lights is the most important festival of Hindus and it is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fanfare throughout India and by the Indian Diaspora abroad. People and especially the children wait anxiously and eagerly for this festival. Diwali is also a festival which celebrates togetherness. We should surely celebrate Diwali and feel joy on this occasion because it is the day on which Lord Ram along with Sita and Laxman had come back to Ajodhya after completing 14 years of exile and therefore this is the moment of merry making.

This festival is celebrated by worshipping Lord Ram, and Lord Ganesha, but the business community worship Maha Laxmi - the goddess of wealth and seek her blessings. However, along with this goodness, there are a few not so good things which like air pollution, noise pollution and wastage of resources that can harm to the nature. Let us pledge to do our bit and celebrate green and eco-friendly Diwali so that no harm is done to the environment, nature and fellow citizens who are sick, old and students preparing for examinations. Like the good olden days we should lit beautiful Diyas to brighten our homes, shops and business establishments. It is cost effective and cheap to use and lit the earthen Diyas and illumine our surroundings. Electricity is an expensive commodity and the bill can cause a hole in our pockets. Therefore, it is so good to illuminate your homes, offices and other enterprises with diyas instead. Being traditional and organic, this is close to the spirit of Diwali and will help the people whose livelihood depends on the business. It is good to gift something handmade. Electronics and gifts made of plastic can contribute to waste after some time, therefore we should opt for personalized gifts made of natural materials like cloth and jute. The gifts as far as possible should be wrapped in newspapers. So instead of those shiny plastics which are difficult to recycle, wrap the gifts you plan to give to your close ones with newspapers. It is better to use the comic strips section of the newspapers for children. We should become trend setter and show way to others to celebrate green Diwali. It is better to make use of natural material for making Rangoli. Instead of chemical Rangoli colors, go for natural and use flowers like roses, marigold, chrysanthemums and leaves to make Rangoli. We can try using turmeric, kunkum and coffee powder for colors

as well. These things are not only eco-friendly, but can be disposed of easily in your compost bin the next day. It should be made a habit to donate your old things. Rather than throwing your things while cleaning your wardrobe, donate them to less privileged. The things will be reused thus reducing wastage. You can also give them firecrackers. This gesture will certainly be appreciated and bring a smile on their faces! It is all the more necessary to go for eco-friendly firecrackers. Although bursting crackers should be as far as possible avoided but it becomes difficult to convince the kids. The best thing to do in such situations is to buy eco-friendly crackers. These are made of recycled paper and make less pollution. It is better to make organic Rangoli. So ditch chemical-induced color powder while making Rangoli. The best way to celebrate green Diwali is to say no to fire crackers but it is easy said than done. The burning of firecrackers releases pollutants in the air and also creates noise pollution which makes deafening sound which is irritable also. It is good to use eco-friendly gifts and recycle decorations. As far as possible, reduce plastic use. It is so good if you buy green crackers. The supreme court has banned many kinds of firecrackers as it is hazardous to the environment and people's health. It is better to use natural colors for making Rangoli. Always so no to plastic gift wrappings. It is good to save electricity consumption for individual and national good. It is good to consume homemade sweets. It is so good to avoid firecrackers and save the wastage of money and put it to use for productive activity. Let the festival of lights which Diwali is illumine our minds and hearts so that we learn to work for others because those who only work for themselves are more than dead than alive according to saint, philosopher Swami Vivekananda.

## A social activist and a present day politician

■ SHIV KUMAR PADHA

While the social activists work and fight for the welfare of the masses, the politicians do the same for the leaves and fishes of the offices. This type of the work culture speaks loud about the ultimate aims, objectives and intentions behind their modus operandi in the public life. It is an established truth that the social activists of the time have been bringing about more changes and reforms in their contemporary societies all over the world as compared to their unpredictable politicians. As per the definition, social activism implies working with other people to bring about a change in society. The word "social" applies both to "society" and to the idea that the activism fosters opportunities for participation. It reflects a personal choice to engage in society for working towards the reforms of institutions, behaviors, relations, and expectations in society, whereas the main emphasis of majority of the present day politicians is to act in such a way as can help them grind about their own axis in order to achieve their long cherished political aspirations even at the cost of the sentiments and emotions of the people they pose as their well-wishers. There had never been dearth of social reformers and activists in the country who had been successful in their endeavor for the reformations and in their fight against the social evils, for the eradication of mal practices and orthodoxies prevalent in their contemporary societies. There is an endless list of the such reformers and activists but for whose efforts the Indian society would have perished since long and would have not emerged as one of the civilized and progressive nation on the globe. It is pertinent to list the names of some of the social activists who brought about such reforms in the society which are proving quite relevant and worth appreciating even in the present Indian scenario.

1. Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar, under the guidance of Keshav Chander Sen started the reforms movement in India in 1864.
2. Swami Viveka Nand the disciple of Rama

Krishna Param Hansa instilled life and breath in the dying soul of Hinduism, His sermons, "Atmano Mokshartham JagatMitya Ch:

3. Jyotiba Phule fought for poor, women and untouchable and founded Satya shodak Samaj to liberate shudras and untouchables.
4. Ravinder nath Tagore had been writer of National Anthem for India and Bangla desh. He is known as educationist, social reformer, Philosopher, painter, poet and a known social activist.
5. Meda Patekar, a political/ economist, fought on the issues of farmers, laborers, Dalits and women.
6. Bandha Shiva, Aruna Roy, Kiran Bedi, Mother Teresa had been the famous social activists and reformers.
7. Anna Hazare Padam Bhushan awardee 1992 fought against corruption, discrimination against rural population in the matters of development. He advocated for the need of transparency in all matters of governance.
8. Laxmy Aggarwal Indian Acid attack survivor and television anchor; Shubam Mistry founder of Akanksha foundation.
9. Vinobha Babe famous for Bhoodan movement.
10. Swamy Daya Nand Saraswati instilled pride in religion and self confidence in thousands of Indians and paved way for the rise of national movement on 7 April 1875. Restored Hinduism to its traditions and culture.
11. Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 19th century fought against superstitions, cast system, remarriage of widows and brought about many socio religious reforms in the society.

What we are today is the result of the efforts of our reformers and social activists of the time. These days the politics and politicians are defined the way they are behaving in the society. Though the politics has been defined in multiple ways but the essence has always remained the same. Politics has now become a playfield of scoundrels, a dirty game, a hobby of clever char-

acters who do not speak truth even by mistake. The said interpretations of politics and politicians have become most befitting in the present era than ever before. Gone are the days when honesty, morality, truth were the hallmarks for a successful political career. These days, as it is observed, a successful politician is the one who is adept in the art of manipulation and maneuverability, who can speak lies with great ease, which never means what he says and never says what he means. Truthfulness, consistency and honesty are no longer considered as the virtues in the life of the present politicians.

There was a time when country had its leaders and the politicians the persons of dignity, high caliber, the persons of principals and of high morale, and had been true nationalists and patriots to the back bone. The present India is the result of the contributions of these leaders and politicians who laid the foundation of the present India on the concrete grounds, but the country has been watching a sudden down fall in the standards of the politics and its politicians which has never been so low as it is being observed ever since they faced Waterloo during the parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2019.

Since the last one decade the nation is experiencing a great upheaval and fall in the standards of speech, use of inappropriate, insulting language, passing derogatory, defamatory remarks against each other by the politicians with a sole purpose of tarnishing each other's image by the character assassinations and mudslinging game. The standard of the Indian politicians have never been so low as it is seen these days where the disgruntled politicians, in their endeavor of toppling the elected governments, lock, stock and barrel, do not hesitate in passing the blaspheming and seditious remarks against other religions, their gods and their own country only to please a particular community at the instance of their mentors sitting in the hostile countries with their sole aim of the destabilizing integrity, sovereignty and tranquility of Bharat.

In the wake of the forthcoming parliamentary elections in 2024 the race of hate speeches, spitting venom against the targeted community, political, security forces, and all the pillars of Indian democracy is gaining momentum every day. The political leaders in league with their sympathizers in other countries are sparing no efforts in bifurcating the Indian society on the bases, casts, sub casts, privileged and non privileged classes, languages, beliefs, faiths, regions and religions. As the parliamentary elections in the country are drawing near the actual intentions and faces of our politicians, hidden behind the deceptive mask, is being exposed day by day in their action and speeches.

A set of self proclaimed philanthropist of the country have initiated a derive against their own democratically elected governments outside the land and tarnishing the image of India on the international fora. These leaders, out of their jealous attitudes, have set a negative narrative against India and its government at a time when India is emerging as a third economy in the world, when the status of India has never been so high as it is now among the most popular, powerful and developed countries of the world. These responsible politicians must give hundred thoughts before uttering even a small syllable against their own country rather they must exhibit allegiance to the republic of India from the core of their hearts. It is the beauty of a democratic government where our representatives can exchange hot but decent words and sometimes come to the blows but they must restrain themselves from indulging in the activities and making the statements which prove detrimental both for the peace and harmony of the country and help maintain the brotherhood and fraternity in the country. It is the sincere advice to the politicians to keep one thing always in mind, country first, political parties second and the religion last. Only the sincere honest social activists and the politicians can steer the nation in the direction of development, peace and prosperity.

## Remarkable digital transformation of India

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Widespread digital transformation in India is leading the country into an era of digital governance. The economic liberalization of 1991, industry-related reforms, and increasing interest of foreign multinationals in the Indian market spiraled into the growth of the Indian IT industry and digital infrastructure in the country. The developments in the 1990s culminated in the introduction of the Information Technology Act, of 2000, India's first IP-related regulation. This was followed by the national e-governance plan in 2006.

The most recent digital reforms were introduced in 2015 under the Digital India Initiative. It aims to connect the population of more than a billion with governmental organizations, narrowing the divide between digital haves and have-nots. This multi-faceted program aims to transform the nation's consistently growing digital infrastructure into a public utility paving way for digital governance. Digital India's faceless, paperless, and cashless economy is slowly translating into easier access to various government services and platforms.

In recent years, India has witnessed a remarkable transformation in its digital landscape. Government services have gradually been integrated into digital platforms, allowing for quick and efficient delivery at the grassroots level. Today, citizens can access these services with a simple click, receiving the assistance they need within seconds. As part of the government of India's vision to digitize the financial sector and economy, there has been consistent growth in digital payment transactions. Additionally, significant efforts have been made to prioritize financial inclusion as a crucial national goal, ensuring that every individual has access to financial services.

India has witnessed a significant transformation in its digital payment landscape. The government's initiatives have been well-received by the people, who have shown a remarkable willingness to embrace emerging technologies.

With relentless efforts, the government of India is dedicated to establishing the country as a global leader in the realm of digital payment systems. The aim is to position India as one of the most efficient and advanced payment markets worldwide and ensure widespread and affordable internet and digital accessibility for all its citizens, including those currently lacking access or underserved.

By achieving this goal, India seeks to foster new digital ecosystems capable of addressing various economic and social challenges across different sectors. This endeavour holds the potential to

establish a thriving digital economy, generating economic value of up to \$1 Trn by 2025, and positioning India as a global hub for digital innovation and production.

Digital India has set a significant goal of attaining a status characterized by "Presence-less, Paperless, Cashless, backed with Consent" transactions. The government of India has placed utmost importance on promoting digital payments, aiming to include every segment of the country's population within the formal framework of digital payment services. The ultimate vision is to ensure that all Indian citizens can access seamless digital payment facilities conveniently, affordably, quickly, and securely.

Digital payments offer a faster and more convenient alternative to traditional methods. By using digital mediums, individuals can avoid the inconvenience of long queues at banks or ATMs to withdraw cash. It also reduces the need to carry physical currency, minimizing the risks associated with handling cash. With just a smartphone and a stable internet connection, transactions can be completed with a single click, making it a convenient option for users.

Moreover, digital transactions help in controlling the circulation of black money by allowing the government to track and monitor all financial activities. This enables the elimination of counterfeit notes and facilitates better regulation of income taxes. Digital payments have emerged as a significant advantage during the pandemic. They enable contactless and safe transactions, eliminating the need for physical contact during monetary exchanges.

Over the past few years, India has witnessed an unprecedented surge in digital payment transactions. User-friendly and convenient digital payment methods such as Bharat Interface for Money- Unified Payments Interface (BHIM-UPI), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), pre-paid payment instruments (PPIS), NACH, AePS and National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) have experienced substantial growth, revolutionizing the digital payment landscape by facilitating both Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments.

More than one billion Aadhaar users and millions of internet users amplified the use and storage of personal data by the government and tech giants which exposed the inadequacy of current regulations in preventing privacy breaches. To counter such issues, the government recently unveiled the draft of the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 which is likely to safeguard personal data, with penalties for data breaches, however, non-personal data is kept out of its ambit.

Despite leaps in e-governance and structural reforms, the major challenge faced is the disparity in the penetration rate of internet services in rural and urban areas. Increasing internet penetration rates and teledensity also do not automatically translate to digital literacy which entails comprehending and critically utilizing digital platforms. It is likely that in the future digital inclusion is intertwined with socio-economic progress. And the biggest challenge will be to ensure that marginalized groups are not left behind in this digital progress.

With more than half a billion internet subscribers, India is one of the largest and fastest-growing markets for digital consumers, but adoption is uneven among businesses. As digital capabilities improve and connectivity becomes omnipresent, technology is poised to quickly and radically change nearly every sector of economy. That is likely to both create significant economic value and change the nature of work for tens of millions of Indians.

Digital education in India is evolving at faster rate over the years. It helps the students to learn complex concepts and theory in easier way through visual effects and graphics, the 3-D models etc. For example drawing and explaining Electromagnetic waves on chalk board is difficult. Through use of digital media it's easy to explain the things. We can see that the traditional chalk and talk method in school and colleges has been slowly changing with more interactive teaching methods as schools and colleges are increasingly adopting digital solutions. Digital learning involves more participation from students as the current generation of students is well-versed with laptops, I-pads, and smartphones. We can find many government and private players in the field of digital education like e-Pathshala by NCEERT, DIKSHA by MHRD and private educational platforms like Tata Class Edge, BYJU'S etc.

Owing to the steady economic growth and globalisation, education in India is no longer just a teacher talking to a bunch of students in a classroom. With more than 370 million internet users and hundreds of local as well as global business tycoons willing to invest in the future of education, online education in India has picked up pace. In fact, the e-learning market in the country is estimated to be worth more than \$3 billion. India is now the third largest online market for education in the world.

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