GROWING COUNTRY

here is growing public awareness and recognition of India's achievements and progress in various fields. India is said to be making significant advancements in education, healthcare, sports, and scientific and technological fields. India is noted for having some of the best doctors. scientists, engineers, technicians, and computer scientists. India is the second largest country in the world in terms of population, which can be a valuable resource for the nation's growth and development. India is experiencing an industrial revolution, which has led to increased prosperity and the creation of the world's largest market. There has been a reduction in the death rate and an increase in national income due to advancements in the field of medicine. India's development in the field of nuclear power is a notable achievement. The Indian armed forces are strong and capable. India's foreign policy is one of promoting peace and diplomacy. India is referred to as the world's largest democracy, highlighting its commitment to democratic values.

Innocent Killings again

continue in Kashmir OMKAR DATTATRAY -t is the ill luck and unfortunate for Kashmir that the militancy is again raising its ugly head .The spurt in Lthe killings of the policemen and innocent laborers from outside the UT is hair-raising and condemnable and any amount of condemnation pales into insignificance before the enormity of the terrorist killings of the innocent policemen and common civilians and those poor laborer from outside. The three killings in three days one after the other is a matter of grave concern and LG saying that normalcy has returned the valley is questionable and there is a big question mark on the claims of the BJP government and the UT administration .Something should be done to restore the trust and confidence of people in the government .The increase in the killings of the policemen and civilians puncture the claims of the BJP government of the centre and the UT administration that situation in Kashmir is limping back to normal .It is very sad and disturbing that the innocent killings are taking place in Kashmir and soaking the land with precious human blood .The militants are killing Kashmiris day in and day out and these savages have turned once paradise on earth into a hell .The common people of Kashmir should raise their voice against militancy and help the security agencies to fight militancy which is alien to the Kashmiri culture and these killings are a stain and blot on the much talked about Kashmiriyet .It is a foregone conclusion that unless and until the general public of Kashmir will not raise against militancy, no amount of the cordon and search operations and the fight of the security forces will yield any positive results .It is an old saying that God helps those who help themselves and so the people of Kashmir should raise their voice against militants and militancy and the threats , intimidation and the mayhem and killings will be subdued as no one has the strength including the militants to bring violence in its train. The time has come that the common Kashmiri should cooperate and raise their voice against militancy and only then the days of militancy will be numbered .Kashmir is the land of Sufism and the flag of Kashmiriyet should fly high and for this it is all the more necessary to fight the demon of militancy jointly and thus we should resolve to defeat and frustrate the designs of the militants who are hell bent to destroy Kashmiriyet and bring bad name to Kashmir .It is the hard fact that unless and until the common Kashmiri will not unite and raise their voice against militancy, no amount of anti militant operations will be successful .Therefore the people of Kashmir should seize the opportunity and unite to oppose the militancy and expose and frustrate the militants who are snatching the peace and pleasure of Kashmir and are turning the land of Kashmir into hell. Thus before it is too late, the commoners of Kashmir should go against militancy and loudly proclaim that Kashmiris are against militancy as it is alien to Kashmiri culture .The militants have brought havoc to Kashmir's plurality and tolerance and now it is the opportune time to unite and oppose the acts of militants as it has disrepute Kashmir and Kashmiriyet and we are morally and religiously bound to frustrated the evil designs of the militants who are working at the behest of foreign country .we should pledge and take on militancy as before the will of people militancy will definitely loose and therefore we should take on the demon of militancy to save the residual of Kashmiriyet and this will be written with the golden letters as it will give a death kneel to militancy otherwise one will conclude that the Kashmiris are siding with militancy. It is a hard fact and a reality that the roaring guns of militants will fall silent before the will and union of the people and so it is our moral and religious duty to raise our voice against militancy and show the whole world how the unarmed people of Kashmir have defeated the militancy. Besides this the security forces should maintain pressure on militants and curb militancy with iron fist. Intelligence should be made efficient and there should be no let up in intelligence and all those involved in the recent killings and spurt in militancy should be apprehended and brought to justice as per the law of the land . No leniency should be shown with the enemies of humanity and they should be caught and the judiciary should give them exemplary punishment or else the powers will face the wrath of public. We should strongly condemn the killings by the militants and organize demonstrations against such inhuman and savage killings as it has no place in the democratic ,liberal and civilized world or otherwise we are embracing the medieval times and are going back to stone age . Therefore without wasting further time, all of us should unite and fight militancy with the will of the public before which the guns of militants will become silent and so we should voice our concern and condemnation so forcefully that the militants will be on run and the sun of Kashmitiyet will again shine and illumine the land of Kashmir . This done the days will not be far off ,when militancy will be out of Jammu and Kashmir. Thus this should be our resolve and pledge that we have to fight the militancy to finish and with the end of militancy, the good days of pre 1089-90 area will come back and all will be once again all right .Our prayer to the almighty Allah should be that the all powerful will bring peace, security, brotherhood and pleasant old days will be back to life and Kashmir will once again become a paradise on earth .But for this all of us have to work hard and forge unity and put a strong fight against militancy so that it will come to an end. It is foregone conclusion that the militants guns will become silent and roars of militants who have become savages will again become human beings with humanitarian values high in their lives . This will become possible only if all of us will sink differences and unite to take on the militancy which is devouring innocent lives and putting us to trouble . So it is high time

> (The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).

that all of us unite to frustrate and defeat the evil designs of

militants who are wrecking havor in Kashmir on behest of

the enemy country. In short the guns of militants will fall

silent before the Might and will of common Kashmiris.

Saffron- the 'Red Gold' of Kashmir

he name Saffron has its origins in the Arabic word zafaran which means L yellow. Botanically, wild saffron is known as Crocus cartwrightianus, while the commercially cultivated saffron is botanically called Crocus sativus, which is also the name of the flower. One of the most expensive spices in the world, saffron is also referred to as "Red Gold". Its history spans over more than 3500 years. The Romans used it as a deodorizer, the Egyptian healers used it to treat gastrointestinal ailments and it is said that Cleopatra used saffron for cosmetic value Saffron crocus has been predominantly cultivated in Iran and Kashmir. A very labour intensive crop, Saffron is a highly coveted spice and is often considered to be more valuable than

It is a spice that comes from the stigmas of the purple flowers of the plant Crocus sativus. Each flower contains three stigmas that are handpicked and then dried to make the saffron spice. It takes thousands of flowers to produce a few grams of saffron. The stigmas are typically of an orange-red colour, which is due to the content of crocetin, a type of acid and crocin. While buying saffron, it is important to keep in mind that the best kind of saffron has a deep red colour, a honey-like aroma with a delicate but musky taste.

It is late autumn in Kashmir, and villagers around Pampore - also known as the saffron town of Kashmir in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir are picking the delicate flowers to fill their wicker baskets. Kashmir's saffron (Crocus Sativus Kashmirianus), known for its flavour and colour, is harvested just once a year from late October till mid November.

Out of total 5.707 hectares of land under saffron cultivation in Kashmir, more than 90 per cent is in Pampore tehsil of Pulwama district in South Kashmir while the rest is in central Kashmir's Budgam and Srinagar districts. Known for its special aroma, saffron is a powerful flavouring and colouring agent.

Owing to its long and dark red hues, Kashmiri saffron is regarded as the best variety of saffron available in the market. High-quality and pure saffron can always be recognized by the unique aroma and features of the stigmas it contains. Best



Quality Raw and Organic Natural Kashmiri Saffron (Kesar).

The three components of each flowerpetals, yellow strands, and red threads-are arranged in order of importance. Pure saffrom is extracted from the red strands. More than 1,50,000 flowers are sifted and scanned for a kilogram of the crimson spice. After this, the strands are dried over a charcoal fire. Saffron, one of the most expensive spices in the world, is also referred to as the "crop of gold".

After suffering losses for years, finally there is good news for saffron producers of Kashmir with an yield of 15.04 metric tonnes (MTs) of prized spice in 2021. Earlier, the highest production was recorded in 1996 when the yield hit 15 MTs.

Saffron, in the past was cultivated on large scale land in rural areas of district Pulwama. However, due to different constraints in saffron cultivation, growers shifted to other horticultural crops and today the saffron crop is confined to the Pampore and its adjacent areas. Over the past two decades the production of saffron drastically declined by 68 percent and the growers feel devastated for this poor pro-

In the past 10 years, the low yield has become a deterrent for farmers and many of them have already shifted to other high yielding crops like apples and walnuts. The area under saffron cultivation has shrunk at a fast pace from around 5,707 hectares in 1996 to 3,875 hectares in 2010-11.

Planting is done in July, August and September either by hand or by machine, and harvesting comes at the end of October to mid-November, roughly eight weeks after planting. Saffron crocuses are sun-worshipping plants so they love to be planted in the dry open fields rather than in the shade.

Pampore meadows attract tourists from everywhere to witness the yellow, marron, and purple hues of the blossoms that bloom beside giant chinars and harvest time resembles a festival for villages in the area. On the first day of the harvest, saffron farmers head to the shrine of Hazrat Sheikh Sharif-ud-Din in Namblabal Pampore to offer some saffron.

These fragrant red strands have even featured in the poems and songs of the 16thcentury poet Habba Khatoon. Known as the Nightingale of Kashmir, Khatoon hailed from Pampore.

This spice is known by various names in India, including zafran in Urdu, kesar in Hindi, kong posh in Kashmiri, and kungumapoo in Tamil. Saffron is used in different ways. There's kahwa - the green tea laced with saffron from Kashmir. Beloved by many, it will make you fall in love with it at one sip. With spices like cardamom and cinnamon, this elixir is slowly brewed in a copper samovar. It is then served with a touch of honey and often garnished with almonds. It is also an important part of wazwan, the lavish Kashmiri supper platter. Saffron is used in cooking, but it also offers many health advantages. The oil from which safranal is produced reduces growth in cancer cells and functions as an anticonvulsant and antidepressant. The carotenoid alfa-crocin also has a

similar effect. Minerals are also abundant in it, including potassium, manganese, iron, calcium, selenium, copper, zinc, and magnesium. Additionally, it is high in folic acid, niacin, riboflavin, and vitamins A and

Every year, the government of Jammu and Kashmir organises a three-day Saffron Festival with cultural events. Held from the last week of October, it gives tourists a chance to see saffron fields and buy the spice directly from producers.

Kashmiri saffron was given a geographical indication tag by the geographical indications registry. The request was filed by the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, and facilitated by Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Sciences and Technology, Kashmir, and Saffron Research Station, Dussu (Pampore).

Kashmir Valley's Saffron has got the much-awaited geographical indication (GI) certification from the central government in a fillip to the homegrown spice, which is likely to fetch higher prices in the international markets as the GI certification establishes specific geographical origin and certifies certain unique qualities of the product. The GI certification enables those who have the right to use the sign in order to prevent a third party from using the sign. The GI certification would also stop the prevalent adulteration of Kashmir Saffron and the authenticated spice would fetch a much better price.

According to reports, Iran is currently the largest producer of saffron. It cultivates 300 tonnes of saffron every year. After the arrival of Iranian saffron, the price of Kashmiri saffron has halved since 2007. Today Iran produces 80 to 90 per cent of the world's saffron. Kashmiri saffron had a negative effect due to the arrival of adulterated saffron by Iran in the market.

However, despite all the difficulties and tribulations, the saffron business still employs thousands of people in Kashmir. The government is taking several steps to resurrect the sector and restore it to its former glory. The central government has started the National Saffron Mission in 2010 to revive the valley's production of the most costly spice in the world.

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Indigenous Agricultural Practices (IAP): Exploiting Traditional Wisdom

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

uman beings, since their existence on this planet have adapted themselves to the places where they live. Depending upon the topography of the place and the natural conditions prevailing over there, men successfully managed to overcome the adversities of the nature and the place where he lived. As life progressed, men got to understand about the nature, its resources and their judicious use, various natural phenomenon, the hardships associated with them and the methods to overcome these and its resources. In due course of time, men thus became a storehouse of such knowledge. All such knowledge is referred to as the 'indigenous knowledge' or the 'traditional wisdom' being transmitted from one generation to another. Every specific area has its own indigenous knowledge

The word 'indigenous' is used to or refer to the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else. Indigenous Knowledge (IK) thus can be defined as a corpus of knowledge of peoples belonging to a particular geographical area. Native knowledge, traditional knowledge, cultural knowledge and civilization knowledge are synonymous terms. It is unique to a given culture, society or a country. Indigenous Knowledge is 'unique, traditional and local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of women and men indigenous to particular geographic area'. It is stated that 'indigenous knowledge system is a cumulative body of knowledge and belief. handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment'. This indigenous technical knowledge holds a greater relevance in agricultural sector to make it more sustainable and profitable. In agriculture, all such knowledge comes under Indigenous Agricultural Practices (IAP). IAP are an

unwritten body of knowledge. There is also no systematic record of what they are what they do and how they do what they do, how they can be changed, their operations, their boundaries and their applications.

The tribal communities living in far, remote and inaccessible places facing vagaries of weather are store house of Indigenous Knowledge. About 8.6 percent of the Indian population belongs to a category listed as 'Scheduled Tribes' enumerated in the Schedule to Article 342 of the Constitution of India. Tribal people have been seen to be strongly associated with the forests, hills and remote areas, practicing a unique lifestyle, having a unique set of cultural and religious beliefs. Almost 90% of the tribal population of the country lives in rural areas. There are 90 districts or 809 blocks with more than 50% tribal population and they account for nearly 45% of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in the country. In other words, almost 55% of the tribal population lives outside these 809 tribal majority blocks. Another study done in 2007 reported that the Central Indian tribal homelands, comprising roughly 100 districts and running across the belly of the country, are home to roughly 55 million tribal people, more than 70 percent of India's tribal population. Notwithstanding the rich vegetation and good rainfall, this belt is home to one of the largest concentrations of rural poverty in the world.

For centuries, these communities have developed various indigenous agricultural practices for cultivation of different crops; processing and storage of produce and conserve natural resources. The development of indigenous agricultural practices including management of natural environment has been a matter of survival to these people who have generated these systems. Traditional environmental knowledge of peoples of India is greatly useful in developing location specific strategies for the protection of biodiversity and also useful in

mitigation plans for coping with climate change and to sustain it. The location-specific knowledge gained through close interaction within natural and physical environments and cultural adaptation are now recognized to be more eco-friendly and sustainable. This local knowledge and practices have also been reported to help people in drought prediction

and extreme weather management. Insect pests cause serious damage to crops and livestock. Today all our policies and programmes revolve around sustainability and organic methods of doing agriculture are at the core of sustainable agriculture. The organic methods largely avoid the use of toxic chemicals which have already caused irrepairable damage to the ecosystem. The philosophy of today is to use chemical control methods like insecticides and pesticides on plants only as a last resort only after other cultural and preventative measures have failed. If an insecticide or pesticide is required to be used, the least toxic option should be used first. A number of pesticides can be made at home using ingredients' that we can commonly found in our home, neighbor or village. Using homemade organic pesticides to manage insect pests offers several advantages, including the accessibility of the ingredients, low cost and low toxicity to humans and other mammals. Garlic solution, Neem Oil, Pepper, Soap solution, Tobacco solution and may other homemade remedies are a glaring example of how traditional wisdom can be exploited to get rid of chemicals from agriculture and save the

environment. Natural Farming being promoted today by the government is also infact a synthesis of indigenous knowledge. All the four components of Natural farming viz Beejamrit, Jeevamrit, Mulching and Wapasha are the outcome of indigenous wisdom accumulated through experience and practice. The various protection preparations

Neemastra, Brahmastra, Agniastra and Dashparni extract used in natural farming are the outcome of local wisdom. Farmers can check the right time for sowing of seeds by estimating the amount of soil moisture in the soil simply by making a ball of soil of their fields.

The indigenous agricultural practices found greater use and are much more prevalent in regions where climate is a limiting factor. Farmers in such regions have to store the produce for winter months when none can be produced in the open due to freezing temperature outside. They have developed indigenous storage structures to store the produce. In Union Territory of Ladakh, Cellars/Tsothbang, Sadong are used to store vegetables. Cellar is an underground structure constructed by digging pits with length and breadth and depth ranging from 3 to 5 m each depending upon the requirement of the farmer to store vegetables in winter months. Peoples in Gurez have also dug underground pits called Khow to store potatoes and other vegetables. These are tried, tested and trusted and do not require any electric or other kind of power supply, being done using the locally available resources. Moreover, these traditional method/techniques do not require any type of energy and does not bear any substantial cost. Studies have also revealed that the shelf life of stored vegetables in these structures is comparable with modern day energy intensive methods of storage. The stored vegetables serve as important source of nutritive food during the snow covered period in the region.

The indigenous wisdom particularly in agriculture sector is fast vanishing. Younger generation is not aware of all these practices. It is necessary to sensitize them about the economic and environmental benefits of indigenous agricultural practices.

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PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE **ADAPTATION**

he principle of "Live and let live" is a guiding philosophy that promotes happiness and progress among human beings. It emphasizes the importance of coexistence through adjustments and adaptations, fostering peaceful living on our planet. It encourages individuals to respect each other's differences and find common ground, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious and progressive society.

Currently, the evidence of the horrors of war and displacement is stark, as it is well before us with countless lives disrupted, homes destroyed, and suffering inflicted on innocent people. Regarding the general nature of humans, they possess both inherent characteristics, such as empathy and cooperation, as well as ambitious and egoistic tendencies, which can drive them to pursue power, wealth, and dominance.

The Israel-Palestine dispute has been ongoing for decades and may potentially escalate into a global conflict. It has already led to global economic depreciation, mass migration, and widespread destruction. It is also perilously close to a nuclear confrontation. A similar situation can be seen in the Ukraine-Russia war, which has caused displacement, destruction, and the potential for future conflicts due to the immigration of people to other countries and resulting disputes with the native populations of those places.

In the present geopolitical scenario, we observe how China, based on its economic and military strength, is expanding its bor-

ders into neighboring countries and even faraway regions, such as the South China Sea. This highlights the impermanence of borders and the critical role of survival and adaptation in such situations. Then, some present encroachments at LOC in Ladakh & Arunachal Pradesh. So, Immigration and exodus are result of the after affects of land disputes along boundaries that leads to uprooting the natives and this phenomenon is historically revealed

and still humans don't understand the horrific after affects of war. Human beings are innately curious and perpetually learning creatures. However, in our fast-paced world, the constant influence of social media, TV, and other distractions often disrupts our peace and leads us to turn against one another. We must acknowledge that human nature is unpredictable. Just as dogs were domesticated from wolves but retained certain primal characteristics, humans evolved from hunter-gatherer ancestors over thousands of years, yet some of our primal instincts still emerge when they align with our personal or community interests.

Kashmir has also experienced a cultural mix due to invasions by oppressive forces and invaders who converted Kashmiri Hindus to their religion, by killings, lootings etc. and forced them to leave the valley multiple times. Today, the valley is predominantly inhabited by Muslims, while the original residents, are now refugees in various parts of India and around the world.

During the 11th to 14th centuries, Kashmir became deeply immersed in philosophical and religious pursuits, possibly neglecting its military aspects. This, combined with internal intrigues and conflicts among the ruling elite, could have weakened the society from within. Human greed to migrate outside to settle in foreign lands like migration of Indians to Canada and places to places like UK., USA, Australia and elsewhere also become nascent centres for dispute as the main culprits the man has a desire to grab more with egoistic plans and wants more & more. Humans, if they want to remain in harmony with all beings in nature have to adopt the policy being helpful to needy and deserving which only can lead to harmonious living on this planet and attaining the aim of peaceful co-existence while incurring all methods of adaptability and brotherhood. Truly, Sanatan Dharma is Way of Living which reveals the concept of live and let live. The main principle of Sanatan Dharma which opens a ray of hope is to calm down the turbulent waves of frightful wars that has engulfed whole world today. Sanatan Dharma is now spreading on the globe because its main principle enunciates a policy of "Live and Let Live" in harmony with equnimous adaptation. It is an art of living for betterment of humanity on the globe as a whole.

Lastly, there is no substitute for peace and tranquility. The purpose of life is to be achieved through pragmatic and peaceful coexistence and service to society. In spiritual terms, there is a need for introspection, atonement, and purification so as to overcome all the storms that threaten our world. Otherwise, the alternative is enduring conflicts for thousands of years.