

## SHRINKING FORESTS

Due to shrinking of forests for growth and further expansion of civilization or by clearing them and replacing them with signs of modern civilization, civilizations are increasing and our forests are getting destroyed. The removal of greenery from the face of our nature is a sign of our arrogance. Due to shrinking forests, it is becoming difficult for us to get pure air, water and land, which has proved to be a problem and hindrance for our health and life. Due to lack of forests, there is a huge shortage of various types of wild life animals. Due to this the balance of nature has been disturbed. Due to shrinking forests, we are not able to see the free and open form of Mother Nature and are covering it with artificiality.

## Gender gap in STEM fields remains a Global Challenge

■ VIJAY GARG

World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual Gender Gap Report, 2023, India was ranked 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity - an improvement of eight places from last year. While India had closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap, the report said; it had reached only 36.7 % parity on economic participation and opportunity.

In an ever-evolving global workforce, the gender gap's persistence in both education and employment remains a challenge that transcends geographical boundaries. Across the globe, gender-based disparities in education persist, creating complex challenges. The nexus between education enrolment rates, completion statistics, academic achievements, and the fields of study chosen by individuals is instrumental in shaping their career trajectories. An example in this context is the underrepresentation of females in STEM disciplines-science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These fields not only offer higher remuneration but also promise stability and growth. However, this lack of diversity keeps certain jobs specialised, which in turn makes it more likely for people to stay in particular job types.

Shifting trends  
The landscape of higher education is experiencing a transformation driven by women's increasing presence. Historically, women's enrolment in higher education has been a cause for concern, especially in developing countries where socio-economic and socio-cultural barriers limit their access to colleges and universities. However, an encouraging shift is occurring as women's enrolment in higher education has outpaced that of men over the past four decades.

According to a recent report by the Institute of International Education (IIE), female enrolment in higher education worldwide has expanded nearly twice as rapidly as male enrolment. This surge can be attributed to improved equity and access, heightened income prospects, and the internationally acknowledged necessity to reduce the gender disparity across all education levels.

The role of economic growth  
Economic growth plays a pivotal role in fostering gender equity and countries such as India and China serve as prime examples. The economic development of these nations has propelled greater female enrolment in both domestic and international higher education programmes.

India has made significant strides in promoting gender equity in higher education. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, female enrolment now surpasses that of males, with a gross enrolment ratio of 27.3% compared to 26.9% for males. This marks an 18% increase in female enrolment from 2015-16 to 2019-20. While the gender gap in STEM fields remains a global challenge, India is making progress. Despite India producing many female STEM graduates, females constitute less than 15% of researchers in STEM fields. However, data reveals a growing number of Indian women pursuing STEM studies in the United States, particularly at the master's level. Initiatives like the Indo-US Fellowship for Women in STEM are also working to close this gender gap. The winds of change are blowing, enabling females to access higher education abroad and pursue their dreams in top-notch institutions. Alongside economic growth and the breakdown of socio-cultural barriers, targeted scholarships and fellowships funded by governments, multilateral organisations, and private entities are paving the way for females in higher education.

Nevertheless, addressing the gender gap in international mobility and STEM studies requires collective efforts from individuals, society, and governments. Only through continued commitment and collaboration, can we ensure that women around the world have equal opportunities to excel in higher education and beyond.

## AQI of Delhi-An Alarm for Nation!

■ SUSHMITA SHARMA

The depleting air quality in Delhi is covering the headlines and also the lungs of general masses. But this is not the only issue that people out of Delhi are perceiving it as; for many this situation will only be limited to the centre but does this pollution will end up within the boundaries of the Delhi? Answer is a clear NO. Today those who find themselves as gazer will soon be the victims of it and this is a highly concerning issue for the whole nation.

The question is not how to clean Delhi but the question is that how to stop this bursting pollution of the nation.

The government on the one hand is stuck to the odd-even like remedies and people on the other hand are unconsciously contributing to pollution- generating activities and also industries and unwanted constructions are not behind.

Those who are suffering have no way to move out. They are trapped in a loop of pollution as the summers arrive the level of pollution slowly moves down and it seems conditions will be better but immediately the winters are there. Thus this pollution has failed the ultimate sun. The whole summers are not enough to clean up the environment because it's not only in winters that people or other sources starts creating pollution it is the process of the whole year and in initial winters stubble burning adds fuel in the fire.

Now the situation in Delhi is at emergency and we all have to understand it and should work collectively with government and other stakeholders to bring change and these institutions must work more responsible and must come out with some practical solutions which could pour out some relief full results; otherwise, the condition will be worse and will majorly affect the general masses. As this curse of pollution has already covered states like UP, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan.

And if scenario remains the same than sour throats, red eyes, coughing chests and hard breathing will be new normal and our 80 per cent of income will be spent on health insurance and hospitals and children will be more at home rather than at schools and horrible mask days will be back. So stop it's a serious warning or we all will be dicing with death.

(The writer is Student Graduate from University of Jammu).

# Boosting Organic Farming in J&K

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Organic farming is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, so as to keep the soil in good health by the use of organic wastes and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes. Nutrients are provided to crops for increased sustainable production in an ecofriendly and pollution free environment. The aim is to create integrated, human, environmentally and economically sustainable production system which maximize reliance on farm derived renewable resources and management of ecological and biological processes and interactions so as to provide acceptable level of crop, livestock and human nutrition, protection from pests and diseases and appropriate return to the human and other resources. Organic farming means holistic production systems which refer earth friendly methods for cultivation and food processing. It differs from other systems by the certification procedures, specific standards and a specific labeling scheme. Insecticides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, growth hormones and antibiotics are not used in organic farming. Ecofriendly techniques are employed to increase the production. Organic farming is based on the integral relationship and we need to understand the relationship between different entities of a farm. The organic farming is based on organic relationship. Organic farming can be perceived as a system which should always be in search of natural alternatives suitable to the local specificity. The organic manures supply the nutrients in the soil, promote microbial activities and improve physical, biological and chemical properties of soils.

Agriculture is the backbone of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. This sector provides employment directly or indirectly to around 70 per cent population of J&K. Agriculture contributes about 65 per cent of J&K revenue which signifies the overdependence of the J&K on agriculture. The Environment Sustainability Index of J&K is worsening and is a matter of grave concern for the scientists and policy makers. There are various factors which are responsible for the environmental catastrophe in J&K. The use of fertilizers and other agrochemicals has started to increase in J&K which deteriorates the soil health. Organic farming is a method of farming in which we largely exclude the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, growth hormones



and we maintain the soil fertility by the organic manures, green manures, crop rotation etc. It is a unique system of farming which sustains the agro-ecosystem including biodiversity and soil biological activities. Organic farming can prove as a major tool for the second green revolution especially in the hilly areas of J&K.

Over the years, the farmers of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir have adopted new agricultural technologies but still J&K is having low productivity of almost all the crops. There is need to develop systematic approach and plan for the development in organic farming in Jammu and Kashmir as J&K has immense potential for organic farming. Demand for organic crops is also increasing. Several steps have been taken by the government in order to highlight the importance of organic agriculture in the growth of J&K economy. There is need to make strenuous efforts to promote organic farming in J&K. Soil health is also deteriorating day- by- day in some regions of J&K due to indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers in the soil. In order to sustain the health of soil organic farming is the best option. Because of Govt. efforts, organic farming is picking up pace in J&K. There is need of capacity building of farmers for promotion of organic farming in the region. J&K has huge potential for organic farming as a large area in J&K is already under semi-organic cultivation in hilly districts of J&K due to the lack of availability of chemical fertilizers in these areas and the farmers of these areas hardly apply the chemical fertilizers. Organic vegetables, ginger and

turmeric of Reasi distt., Basmati rice of R. S. Pura, rajmah of Bhaderwah, potato of Gurez and Machil and red rice of Tangdar, Kupwara are major organic products in J&K and have the potential to fetch more returns in the market. There is need to explore markets in the country and abroad for saffron, basmati rice, vegetables, rajmah, spices and various other agricultural produce from J&K.

Jammu & Kashmir farmers can tap the opportunity of growing demand of organic products. Organic agriculture is generally environment friendly maintains soil health and enhance biodiversity. Already large numbers of farmers of J&K are organically growing vegetables, spices, basmati rice, walnuts, herbs etc. organically. There is need to introduce organic farming commercially, scientifically and in a systematized way in J&K so that the farmers can get rich dividends and farming can become sustainable source of income of farmers. Keeping the importance of organic products there is need to shift from chemical to organic farming so that more and more area can be covered under organic farming in the region. Organic farming system is not new in J&K and it is being followed from ancient times. It is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land in such a way so that the soil health can be maintained. There is tremendous scope for organic Basmati rice in J&K which is grown on more than 35,000 hectares of land in J&K and has a production of over 88,000 metric tonnes, besides rajmah, spices, saffron, pulses and potato. There is need to

provide logistic support for organic farming to the farmers of J&K so that they can get maximum benefits from it.

Our farmers have indulged in indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and their numbering is increasing. In order to increase the agricultural production and control of insect-pests and diseases, our farmers are increasingly depending on agro-chemicals. Now the people are questioning the impact of modern agriculture on environment, economic and social aspects. Many farmers are seeking the alternative practices that would make agriculture more sustainable and productive. Organic farming is the only alternative taking care of all ecological aspects. A natural balance needs to be maintained for sustainability of crop production system. Therefore, recycling of resources through organic farming approach is of paramount importance. It can reduce the cost of cultivation and farmers can fetch more money. Organic farming is a market demand driven agriculture which aims to fetch more money. Postharvest crop residues can be utilized to the fullest extent. Organic farming has experienced a dramatic expansion in all the crops due to increase in the awareness in the food security and environment safety. With the awareness-cum-trainings on organic farming, the area under organic farming is increasing every year. Currently the demand for organic products is more than supply. The market for organic crops is growing at a very high rate each year due to increase in the health consciousness of the people. The reduction in the input cost in organic farming ensures higher economic net returns. The emerging challenge for food security and environment sustainability amid COVID-19 can be mitigated by the organic farming. Good market demand for organic products will have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the farmers. Organic farming can lead prosperity among the farmers of J&K. A proper strategy is needed to promote organic farming in J&K. An integrated approach from government and non-government organizations is needed to encourage the organic farming in J&K to mitigate the problem of climate change, health and sustainability.

(The writer is Sr. Scientist and Head of KVK, Reasi).

# The importance of Constitution Day

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The grateful nation has observed and celebrated the constitution day on 26thof November and resolved to abide by the provisions contained in this supreme document which in fact is the guiding force for the democratic and secular government and the citizenry at large .The constitution day reminds the citizens to follow and adhere the laws contained in the constitution so that we are in a position to live up to the constitutional provisions and follow our duties towards the country and not to claim rights only because rights and duties are the two faces of the same coin and so we should not only seek and enjoy rights only but observe our duties as well and thus there should be balance between rights and duties for leading meaningful and purposeful life in a democracy .The importance of the constitution day cannot be overlooked as constitution is in fact the lifeline of our parliamentary democracy .The constitution day also reminds us to respect and revere constitution which is no less than a holy book for Indians and so it is in the fitness of things to pay great regard and respect to the constitution and never do anything which is ultra virus to the constitution .It is pertinent to mention here that every year constitution day is celebrated on 26th of November as it marks the commemoration day of the adoption of our constitution. It is worthwhile to mention here that in the year 1949,the Indian constitution was adopted by the constituent assembly on 26th of November 1949.However the constitution came into effect from January 26,1950 and thus we celebrate republic day every year on this day .We have celebrated the constitution day all over the country on 26th November .It is observed every year on this day to commemorate the adoption of the Indian constitution although the constitution came into force from 26th November 1950.It was on November 19,2015 that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the central government had announced that November 26,would be celebrated as constitution day every year .Since then ,Constitution Day is celebrated every year on this day .This day has special importance for all the citizens as the day teaches us to learn about our rights and duties as well as about showing respect and regard to the constitution .The Indian constitution in its original form has 395 articles,22 sections and 8 schedules .Our constitution has 1,45,000 words and it is the longest adopted constitution in the world .However at

present our constitution has 470 articles,25 sections and 12 schedules as well as 25 appendices .The constitution day is not a holiday but it is celebrated by observing many programmes in various government departments ,organizations and the educational institutions. On this day in our schools and colleges various speeches ,dialogues ,debates ,quizzes etc are organized so that the awareness and understanding of our constitution is promoted among the students .The decision of the government of India to celebrate 26 November every year as constitution day to promote the values of the constitution among the citizens was notified by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 19th November 2015.The year 2015 marked the 125th birth anniversary of Dr B.R.Ambedkar ,also known as the father of the constitution .As a tribute to the chairman of the drafting committee of the constitution ,the Modi government planned year-long celebrations .It was on August 29,1947,the constituent assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of B.R.Ambedkar to prepare a draft of the constitution .On May 2015 in Mumbai .Prime minister Modi announced November 26 as Constitution Day earlier known as Law Day .Dr Rajendra Prasad ,the first president of India was the president of the constituent assembly ,which was established in 1946.It took almost three years to complete its historic task of drafting the constitution for the independent India. On August 29,1947,the constituent assembly set up a Drafting committee under the chairmanship of Dr Ambedkar to prepare a draft .While deliberating upon the draft constitution moved ,discussed and disposed of as many as 2473 amendments out of a total 7635 tabled .During this period it held eleven sessions covering a total 165 days .Out of these 114days were spent on the consideration of the draft constitution .The government of India declared 26 November as the Constitution Day on 19th November 2015 by a gazette notification .The PM of India Narendra Modi made the declaration on 11October 2015 while laying foundation stone of B.R.Ambedkar's Statue of Equality memorial in Mumbai .The year 2021 was the 131st birth anniversary of Ambedkar ,who had chaired the drafting committee of the constituent assembly .Previously this day was celebrated as the Law Day.26 November was chosen to spread the importance of the constitution and to spread thoughts and ideas of Dr Ambedkar .Various departments of the government celebrate the constitu-

tion day by organizing debates ,discussions ,symposiums and other programmes to celebrate and mark the constitution day throughout India .The educational institutions mainly celebrate this day with enthusiasm ,gaiety and fervor .The importance of the constitution is brought home to the children and students in schools ,colleges and universities and this prepares them for their future role as the leaders ,rulers and citizens of the democracy .The importance of the constitution is this that it decides how the government will be formed and constituted .It also sets limits on what government can impose on its citizens .These limits are fundamental in the sense that government may never trespass on them .To enable the government to fulfill the aspirations of a society and create conditions for a just society .The day aims to mark the significance of the constitutional values among citizens and also to bring awareness of the importance of the constitution of India among people and also of its chief architect ,Dr BR Ambedkar .Constitution Day also Known as Samvidan Divas or National Law Day is celebrated in India on November 26 every day to commemorate the adoption of the constitution of India .The day aims to mark and inculcate the significance of the constitutional values among the citizens of India and also bring awareness of the importance of the constitution and its architect ,Dr BR Ambedkar .The constitution of India is the longest -written constitution of any sovereign country in the world .Additionally it stresses the importance of constitutional fundamental Duties .Indian constitution has stood the test of the time and its guidance and light has made our destiny with the democracy a success.

To conclude the constitution of India is the life line and guiding force for the governments and its 135 crore citizens and the significance of the constitution day cannot be denied or exaggerated .It is important that the average Indian should know about the fundamentals of the constitution to become the worthy citizens of the democracy and the constitution day infuses spirit and energy among the citizens to know about the importance of the constitution and the constitution day .Let us imbibe the high ideals of secularism ,equality ,socialist pattern of society and egalitarian values as well as the values of fraternity enshrined in the constitution for marching ahead as the worthy citizens of the democracy.

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

## YOUR COLUMN Family pension to second wife: HC ruling

Dear Editor,

The Karnataka High Court has ruled that Family Pension is not payable to second wife when first marriage subsists. (Case Title: Mahalakshamma and The Secretary, Department of Rural Development and Panchayatraj). Case No: Writ Appeal No. 256 of 2023. Citation No. 023 Live Law (Kar) 447. Dismissing an appeal filed by the second wife of a deceased State employee seeking family pension, the division bench of Chief Justice Prasanna V Varale and Justice Krishna S Dixit has rightly held that the benefit of family pension should be made available to only the legally wedded wife. Second marriage when the first marriage is subsisting is no marriage in the eyes of law. The Division bench has upheld the judgment of a single bench that had dismissed the plea of the appellant. The plea of the appel-

lant for family pension along with arrears has been rejected on the ground that she was espoused by the employee (Nanjundaiah) while his first marriage was subsisting. The court viewed that the appellant was not the legally wedded wife for the purpose of grant of Family Pension. The court has invoked Section 17 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Under this section, bigamy is an offence. The court has observed that the provisions of the Rule 294 of the Karnataka Civil Services Rules (KCSR) provide for the sanctioning of a Family Pension to the family of a Government servant, after his demise, in harness or post-retirement. Accordingly, the court found the appeal devoid of merit. But, Rule 294 of KCSR has been deleted. Rules 294 to 297B have been deleted vide GN No. FD4 SRA 2000 dated 04/01/2003 (with effect from 01/04/1998). Doubt arises if the counsel for appellant is not aware of the fact that Rule 294 has been deleted or if the advocate for state government has concealed it. Rule 292-B: Again B. Death Gratuity Note 6 D (b) says that the gratuity amount is payable "To the surviving widow or if there are more widows than one, to all of them in such manner as Government deem fit, in the case of a male officer" If

the gratuity is payable in case the deceased employee leaves more than one widow, there cannot be any bar to distribute Family Pension among the surviving wives. The law is not firm on the bigamous marriage. It is not enough if the bigamous or polygamous marriage is prohibited by law. In so far as bigamous and polygamous marriages are concerned, the law makers should be stone-hearted while enacting laws because the marriages of this kind do not keep any family happy. Denial of terminal benefits to other wives of deceased employee when first marriage is subsisting can effectively discourage the women, women only, from going after the married person. "Women only" has been used because the case of more than one husband claiming the terminal benefits of the deceased woman employee has not surfaced. Denial of terminal benefits to the next of the first living wife may not eradicate the bigamous or polygamous marriage. But it certainly makes them repent for going in contravention of the established law and tradition. At least some women intending to marry a married person can learn some lesson from some women having already married the married persons.

K.V. Seetharamaiah