

NEEDING SAFE JOURNEY

In today's fast-paced world, travel has become an essential part of our lives, whether for business, leisure, or personal reasons. With the ease of transportation options available, millions of people travel every day across different modes such as roadways, railways, airways, and waterways. However, amidst the increasing frequency of travel, the importance of a \*\*safe journey\*\* has become more crucial than ever. Safety in travel is not just a matter of convenience, but a basic human necessity that ensures security, well-being, and peace of mind for travelers.

Travel, by its very nature, exposes people to a variety of risks. Whether one is driving, flying, or even walking, each form of travel carries inherent dangers. For instance, on the road, accidents due to reckless driving, poor road conditions, weather, and mechanical failures can cause fatalities and serious injuries. Similarly, in air travel, mechanical issues, human errors, and environmental factors like turbulence can pose dangers. Even on trains or buses, overcrowding, inadequate safety measures, and lack of proper maintenance can lead to accidents or unfortunate incidents.

One of the most significant reasons for prioritizing safe journeys is to minimize these risks. A safe journey ensures that travelers reach their destinations without harm, with minimal disruptions and inconvenience. Moreover, it protects not only the individual traveler but also the people around them, such as co-passengers, pedestrians, and others on the road or in the vicinity. Therefore, safety measures should always be at the forefront when it comes to travel.

The most obvious benefit of ensuring a safe journey is the prevention of accidents. Road accidents, plane crashes, and train derailments, while rare, can lead to loss of life and severe consequences. By taking necessary precautions, following safety protocols, and using safety gear such as seat belts, helmets, and life vests, we can significantly reduce the chances of accidents.

When we travel with safety in mind, it provides us with a sense of peace and reassurance. Knowing that we have taken the right steps to ensure our security - whether by checking vehicle conditions, wearing safety gear, or ensuring our travel documents are in order - helps alleviate stress and anxiety. This peace of mind is vital, especially in long-distance or international travel, where the unknown can be overwhelming.

Safe travel doesn't only relate to accidents but also to health. Travel, especially long-haul flights or extended road trips, can have an impact on a person's physical health. Staying hydrated, avoiding overcrowded places, adhering to hygiene practices, and keeping necessary medications close are all aspects of maintaining health while traveling. In addition, ensuring that travel spaces like airports, buses, and stations are hygienic reduces the risks of infections and illnesses.

When traveling, safety measures often include checks that can prevent delays and disruptions. For instance, conducting thorough security checks at airports or ensuring the safety of vehicles before departure can help avoid last-minute issues. Moreover, having a contingency plan in case of emergencies or unexpected events helps ensure that travelers can handle any situation calmly.

India's case for permanent seat at UNSC

**■ OMKAR DATTATRAY**

India is the largest democracy of the world and home to more than 140 crore people and is the country whose political executive is for peace in the world and is consistently advocating for the resolution of the conflicts and problems in the globe through dialogue and discussion .Thus she deserves a permanent membership in united nations security council and this has been the demand of India and the developing countries for many long years .Russia is in favor of giving permanent membership to India which is the third big economy of the world and its prime minister has a grand vision and noble mission of making India a Viksit that is developed nation by 2047.India's claim to a permanent seat in the UNSC are based on facts and is right and she should be given a permanent membership of the UNSC so that democratic representation is given to the world .India has long argued that it deserves a permanent seat at the UNSC due to its growing geopolitical influence ,stature and contributions to global peacekeeping efforts .After US and France ,UK also backs India demand for permanent seat in UNSC.UK Prime minister Keir Stammer has added his voice to a growing chorus for India's inclusion as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council {UNSC}."We want to see permanent African representation on the Council ,Brazil ,India ,Japan and Germany as permanent members ,and more seats for elected members as well, "Starnmer said it in his address to the 79th season of the UN GA held in New York .Granting India ,the most populous and largest democracy a permanent seat on the UNSC is not simply desirable ,but necessary for the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing global security challenges .India's claim for a permanent seat at UN is necessary and desirable because ,India is the fastest growing economy of the world .India's recent acquired status of a Nuclear Weapons state is a point in favor of its claim for a permanent seat at UN .India is the second -largest in terms of population and the largest liberal democracy in the world and hence deserves the seat .India has been one of the founding 51 members of the United Nations which signed the UN Charter in 1945 .Since that time India has been actively participat-

ing in all the activities of the UN and other international agencies .India is well qualified by any objective criteria for a permanent membership of the Security Council.EAM Jaishankar said India ,Japan ,Brazil may get a permanent seat in the United Nations ,but for this India has to work hard. Recently ,on 23rd September ,Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the "Summit of the Future "at the UNGA in New York .During his speech ,he called for reforms in global institutions like the United Nations .During the recently held 79th session of the UNGA ,permanent member nations of the UNSC ,such as the US ,France and the UK ,extended their support for India to become a permanent member of the UNSC .Bhutan's PM has said that India deserves permanent UNSC seat .With its significant economic growth and leadership of the Global South ,India deserves a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, says Bhutan's PM Tshering Tobagy .India's bid for a permanent membership in a reformed UNSC ,got yet another boost with the support from Bhutan .During the high -level week ,several UN member states ,including permanent members such as France ,UK and US ,explicitly voiced support for India to become a permanent member in a reformed SC .French president Macron supports India's bid for a permanent membership in UNSC .There has been a growing demand to increase the number of UN permanent members to reflect the contemporary global reality .Despite persistent lobbying ,experts say it is unlikely India will gain permanent membership of the U.N Security Council any time soon for several reasons .India politicians have argued for decades that nation deserves to be member of the UNSC .An aspirational superpower India believes that it has been unfairly denied a seat at the high table .Several visiting foreign political dignitaries and international coalitions that have pushed for the UNSC reforms have also voiced support for India's candidacy for a permanent membership of the UNSC .However ,despite persistent lobbying by India ,experts are not hopeful of change in the near future .There are four key challenges India must overcome before it secures veto power in the UN.1-China's Opposition-Among the five permanent secu-

rity council members all except China -the US,UK ,France and Russia have categorically supported India's candidature in the past .As a close competitor of India in the regional and international politics, China is unwilling to endorse New Delhi's position. China is the only Asian country with a permanent UNSC seat. This adds to its power and international prestige, and China is unlikely to want to share this space with India. What is more, particularly amid an ongoing border dispute with India, China will resist any attempt by any of the four members to change the composition of the UNSC. China has unofficially dropped hints that it may back India ,provided New Delhi doesn't endorse Japan's bid. China Knows that New Delhi will not break the unity of the G-4 and thus ,considers it a safe bet to pit India against Japan.

2-Diaagreement on Membership Without Veto Power-Some parties have raised the prospect of India gaining UNSC membership without veto power. Groups including Uniting for Consensus -UFC -a powerful coalition led by Italy, with other members including Canada, Mexico, Spain, Pakistan, South Korea ,and Turkey -have advocated reinforcing the working of the General Assembly and increasing the number of non-permanent members. Its argument is that the addition of non-permanent members will make the UN more accountable and representative by accommodating relevant regional voices in the decision making process.

In doing so, the group argues ,the solution would mean there are more than a few chief custodians of the international system .But there are questions about what happens if India gets a high seat without veto power.

Could this be considered a piecemeal approach towards achieving the larger objective? Despite some parties saying they prefer this kind of arrangement, New Delhi is not comfortable with this proposition.

India's position is that all new permanent members to the security council must possess a veto .Thus ,it is unlikely this outcome will unfold.

3-weatern concerns that India may not align with US priorities-The United States has in principle endorsed India gaining a

permanent seat on the Security Council .But not any one believes US policy makers will actually support such a reform in practice. Indeed, in the past, 5-P countries have displayed "a habit of being non-committal" 'when it comes to actual decision making on veto power. As former U.S under secretary of state for political Affairs Nicholas Burns said in 2008,"We want to preserve the veto ,and we do not extend a veto to new permanent members."

4-The Regional Conundrum-India also faces formidable challenges to its leadership emanating from its own region. India influences the region, but not in absolute terms .Indeed ,as instability in the region has increased, so too have New Delhi's troubles. South Asia has, for example, become a battleground of India-China competition.

And while India-Pakistan rivalry captures most attention, there are major India -related issues that agitate people in Nepal ,Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and even in Bhutan. With the recent change of government ,Bangladesh is no longer on the same page. Queries over India's regional leadership raises questions over its claims to be a global power. There are convincing arguments that the UN is in desperate need of reform ,particularly the Security Council. Expanding the security council's membership to include developing countries like India would be benefit the UN and the international community. However New Delhi must make more concerted efforts to address criticisms to further legitimize its demand for a permanent membership. India's geographical ,political and social influences in South Asia cannot be ignored. Recent criticism around its increasing political intolerance -which is directly linked to the state of democracy in India -must be addressed and resolved .India needs better engagement with the region and much more internal work to strengthen its claim further. Sooner or later India will have to be accommodated into permanent membership in an extended and reformed Security Council and this is a foregone conclusion. Let us wait and watch the developments unfolding in future.

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Does God Exist?

**■ RAMESHWAR SINGH JAMWAL**

Sage Kapila started the debate about the existence of God when he enunciated the concept of "Purusa" (Soul) and "Prakriti" (Nature) thousands of years ago. Since then, there is a perennial debate going on in many literary sections, especially in the Western world about the existence of God. In almost all religions, the belief and the proposition that there is a supreme supernatural that is the creator, the sustainer, the ruler of the universe and may be, millions of more Universes, and all things in them, including human beings, exists in majority of followers of these religions. In many religions if any question is raised about the existence of God, it is considered blasphemous and as unpardonable sin as the God is also conceived as perfect and unfathomable by humans, as all-powerful and all-knowing (omnipotent and omniscient), and as the source and ultimate quest of man and of grounds of morality.

Belief in the existence of God (or gods) is definitional of theism and characteristic of many (though not all) religious traditions. But there are many who question the existence of God, primarily amongst those believing in Marxism and atheists, whose number is substantial. We in India are not aloof from such a bug and have a growing section, as shown by some politicians in the South, who have raised their fingers about such beliefs, especially amongst Hindu region, which is considered to be soft target, as no other religion would tolerate such a comment. But countering such arguments requires scientific explanations, which of course are very limited and hence the necessity to counter such tendencies through a thorough explanation but firstly we will have to find out as to what this scientific world is trying to find and how.

India, like many other nations in the world has established an Indian Astronomical Observatory in Hanle Ladakh, to make endeavor in search of exoplanets, star formations, stellar evolution, galaxies observation and much more. Scientists and many Nations are also in search of God's particle, the elusive search which is going on for decades and which has consumed Trillions. The Hadron Collider at CERN, Switzerland was established for researching fundamental particles that makeup matter and despite years of painstaking efforts, we have not been able to find out the exact basic elements constituting matter and what we call as Dark Energy or Dark matter, which constitutes more than 95% of the mass and energy of this Universe. These scientific endeavors are a must for our material and scientific progress and man's quest for finding the ultimate truth about this Universe will continue. But there can be other view points to look into all these aspects as well. Majority of Physicists and Cosmologists start with the assumption that there is no God and God is creation of man and not vice a versa and it is only nature, which is all pervading, without giving the exact definition of nature and what led to the formation of this nature, which decides so many things happening around us, from the creation of life to Galaxy and Star formations to the annihilation of atoms and their decay. In order to justify their such belief, they have come up with all types of concepts like Big Bang Theory, the String Theory, the Black Holes, the Dark Energy and Dark matter concept, the evolution of man from Chimpanzees and Gorillas and many other theories and concepts, which get rejected by the same

community of scientists at later stages, who then offer some other strange concept or theory. There are still vast mysteries, unexplained or which defy all scientific explanations; as to what is life, how life came on earth, is there life in other parts of this Universe?, whether our planet and Sun had the same mass, dimensions and speed at the start?, what happens to the life energy after death, why humans have only an average life span of 100 years, why not 500 or 1000 years, and why each species has got its own life span?, How life was generated and what lead to its multiplication?, If life got extinguished after each catastrophic even like when asteroids hit earth or the great ice age spanning up to more than two million years started and ended, did the life start afresh or our progress started from where it had ended?, Why there is life cycle of all creatures and at what stage it is decided and what type of programme is fed in the genes or cells which dictates the decline of our body functions and ultimately leads to death? What is death? What happens to the life experiences retained in it? Is mind the repository of all our actions and memories or is it there in the brain? What about the speed of mind, can we travel with the speed of mind? What is the difference between mind and brain? What is intelligence and what is intelligent life? Does it depend upon the number of brain cells, called neurons or their processing capacity or the size of the brain? Why some people are more intelligent than others? Is intelligence also inherited from our parents or it has a different source? How the neurons take decisions; to form a particular type of protein and how much protein is to be constructed? How genes act, how they switch on and off and regulate the amount of protein to be constructed? What is soul and how many souls are there in our Universe? Is there any super soul or God? How souls come into being? How they move? What is the force or energy which moves and regulates them? How they enter different types of bodies?

Our concepts of time and space may be fundamental to our approach for the view of universe but our ideas about the evolution of universe, its expansion or its possible contraction and re-collapse have also changed many times and it is quite possible that in near future, some more radical concepts may also spring surprises but the fact also remains that we have not been able to find a unified theory of relativity and quantum physics, which many of us perceive as holding the key to revelation of the remaining part of the mysteries of cosmos. we have been able to calculate that the universe came into existence more than 13.8 billion years ago, after an explosion in small primeval ball of immense mass, which has been termed as big-bang, we are still not ready to calculate or judge the time or the time duration of existence of that fireball or a mass of energy which could produce such a gigantic Universe, whose boundaries we have not able to find. We still have no idea as to what made that fireball to explode, what was its size and what it contained, and whether universe can again contract to the same position if all the four known forces; gravity, electro-magnetic force, weak nuclear force and strong nuclear force, holding the balance of galaxies, stars, atoms and sub atomic particles, lose the equilibrium and balance. We are also at a loss to say with certainty as to whether we would be able to physically travel beyond our own galaxy, the Milky Way in next few thousand years and do real time examination of the possibility of any life or intelligent life in other galaxies. There are hundreds of such unexplained mysteries and if one treads on philosophical path shown by own great philosophers in ancient six

philosophical thoughts of India in Sankhya, Yoga, Mimansa, Nayaya, Vaissesika and Vedanta, we get inkling about all the myriad mysteries confounding us. Physics can help us to find the structures and compositions of non living things of nature, at macro and micro levels but is of not much use when we have to find out the source of life, its millions of types and their behaviors in response to myriad of situations, the evolution of smallest bacteria to the giant whales and elephants to the smart and intelligent humans. There are millions of species of life, trillions and trillions of individual entities in the known universe, some of which we have been able to investigate till today and without complete knowledge about all these factors, our quest to find the ultimate will always remain incomplete.

Division and inheritance of mental faculties is a puzzle, still unresolved. It may be mentioned during birth of twins, to form identical or monozygotic twins, one fertilized egg (ovum) splits and develops into two babies with exactly the same genetic information while to form fraternal or dizygotic twins, two eggs (ova) are fertilized by two sperms and produce two genetically unique children. The possibilities in spontaneous triplets, quadruplets and quintuplets will make it a nightmare for those investigating the division of mental faculties as a single egg cell is fertilized by one sperm cell and splits into, three, four or five identical embryos - this will result in three, four or five identical babies- same gender, same DNA but what about intelligence and mental faculties. The process for biological journey would be identical in all cases, but there could be possibilities of a few being physically weak.

A set of just two cell embryo would get rolling, producing four; then eight then sixteen, then thirty two cells to form placenta. The self organizing cells, with help from genes, would have complexity beyond description and the mass of cells would continue to increase by divisions called Mitosis and Meiosis, which would then flatten to form embryonic disc of initial two discs, the future ectoderm and future endoterm.

The ectoderm will continue to lead to the formation of our nervous system, the part of body, from where all the intelligent persons the world has ever produced, have given us the great ideas and concepts. But again the same paradox haunts us. How intelligence gets infused in this entire process, in the single offspring, in twins, in triplets, quadruplets and quintuplets. Is it contained in the genes inherited from the parents and how much percentage is being contributed by which parent and to which one of them? By these yardsticks, our parents should have been more intelligent than us; the grand parents should have been more intelligent than the parents and so on, since we are inheriting only a part of their mind and intelligence. Then let us analyze the contributions of the parents and grandparents of all those great personalities, scientists, intellectuals, whose ideas, theories, concepts and brain power changed the fate of this world. If they had contributed even 50% of the contributions of the illustrious sons and daughters, they too would have been known to the world at large, but hardly anyone knows their names or their contributions. This means that intelligence is not inherited from parents. Intelligence is also not something which depends upon the size of the brain or processing power of the neurons, then from where we get it; from the nature, we will come to that point later on. But both the physical and mental aspects have lot of relations, there can't be any intelligence without a physical complex brain and despite so much

progress in science, we have not been able to decipher much of the functioning of our brain. The neurogia, neural crest, spinal cord, the fore brain, brain wall, cerebral neo cortex, (which is the most sophisticated part of neural structure and where-in lie the intellectual powers, and the brilliance of the human is hidden) and most of the other parts of the brain develop in the womb itself, and the insertion of some of the software, the basic stuff also takes place in this period before birth. For example, a pup, if taken away on the day of its birth from its mother will still have those traits of urinating on the trunks of trees and tyres of the cars parked on the roads in the colony, a trait to mark territory, which trait he has not learnt from its mother or father as it had been segregated from them on the day of birth itself. Similarly, the trait of sharpening the claws, after passing of stool, by a special type of brisk backward movement of its legs is also such trait which came at the time of birth itself, along with the trait of crying at being hit, the eating of food, fondness for meat, swinging of tail on seeing family members and so many other traits including the life cycle of just around fifteen years, typical to dogs; the original software coming along with the hardware. But still, after birth also, the pup or the human child has to learn many things, the secondary uploading of software, which goes on throughout life, which too is a complicated process, as the retention of lot of it is required to cope up with situations which can emerge anytime during life. Where this entire data is to be stored, and how to utilize it in a split second is the incredible functioning of this three pound collection of mass of protoplasm, consisting of billions of cells and trillions of interconnections. He has to offload and discard millions of bits of data, being bombarded daily and retain only those parts, which can be useful in life and if during development in the womb, some parts do not develop fully due to scarcity of some trace minerals and other nutrients, there can be lot of problems for the person, who will grow up with physical and mental disabilities due to those deprivations. He will have many psychological and mental handicaps, the behavior deficits or behavior excesses, which can be troublesome for many people, his own family and the society, which was part of my study to learn about criminal behaviors and which led me to this path; of trying to investigate the origins and functioning of universe as well.

We also need to know the force working for generation and cessation of life, the migration of life energy and the inheritance patterns, both of biological and psychological factors. Matter, which we have investigated till today cannot infuse life and consciousness in the creatures which we term as having life, as it does not have the potentiality to do so and no amount of external or internal energies, which the science has discovered till today, the weak or the strong nuclear forces or the electro-magnetic force, can succeed in putting life in even a single bacteria, what to talk of human beings. So, for coming to a better understanding of the whole idea of life and the reasons of formation of this Universe, or may be many more Universes, called Multiverses, we will have to shed our opposition to the existence of the God, the only force that controls everything, by whatever name you may address it and his both types of energies, the 'Para' and 'Apara', as defined and explained by Lord Krishna in 'Bhagwad Gita', which will clear all our doubts forever.

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Indian Railways: Safer Than Ever Before

**■ A. K. KHANDELWAL**

Indians are safer on the railways than ever before, thanks to the well-thought-out initiatives of the past decade that have delivered significant results. This is particularly commendable given that no country transports more people by rail than India, which records over 1 lakh crore Passenger Kilometers (PKM) and around 685 crore passengers annually. The feat is unparalleled, even by our neighbour China, which transports roughly half as many passengers (around 300 crore annually) despite its more extensive rail network and a comparable population size.

The remarkable improvements in safety are evidenced by a steep fall in the number of consequential train accidents - a key metric to identify serious incidents - declining from 473 in 2000-01 to just 40 in 2023-24. This progress is through focused efforts to improve tracks, eliminate unmanned level crossings, regularly monitor the health of bridges, and digitise stations, among others.

These achievements become even more impressive when considering the number of passengers and the track length involved. On an average day, over 2 crore people travel across an expansive 70,000 Route Kilometer (RKM) - long network. This number reaches 3 crore per day in peak season, creating yet another world record!

This effectively means that India safely transports nearly 2% of its population on railways each day, compared to only 0.58% in China and 0.09% in the United States. For Indian Railways, the safety of passengers is a top priority; this is underscored by over Rs. 1 lakh crore investments in safety-related projects in 2023-24 , with plans for even greater spending in the current fiscal year. This will mean improved maintenance of trains, bridges, tracks, and signaling systems, as well as improved road safety near tracks through the construction of over- and under- bridges.

The Number of Accident per Million Train Kilometer (APMTK), an index of railway safety performance, has decreased from 0.65 in 2000-01 to 0.03 in 2023-24. This is attributable to enhanced track maintenance using modern, state-of-the-art track maintenance and renewal machines, improved track flaw detection, curbing rail weld failures, and a host of additional measures, including advanced technology to minimize human errors. Indian Railways has significantly increased the deployment of modern track maintenance machines, raising it to 1,667 compared to just 700 in use up to 2013-14, to improve track upkeep. Additionally, rail grinding has been implemented across the entire network to further enhance asset reliability. Furthermore, continuous track patrolling is undertaken to deter miscreant activities and address issues like vandalism, tampering with tracks, and placing foreign objects on the tracks, all of which pose serious safety risks to train operations. A mix of technological interventions and targeted training has been adopted to sustain and improve these outcomes. One cornerstone of this initiative is the increase in the number of GPS-based Fog Pass devices to loco pilots to help navigate fog-prone areas; they now number 21,742, compared to just 90 in 2014-15. Vigilance Control Devices (VCDs) have also been installed in all locomotives to boost pilot alertness, increasing from less than 10,000 in 2013-14 to 16,021 currently. Advanced Signaling Systems, such as Panel Interlocking, Route Relay Interlocking, and Electronic Interlocking have been provided at 6,575 stations out of 6,637 stations on broad-gauge routes. In addition, loco-pilots now undergo simulator-based training (simulating field experience) to enhance driving skills and reaction times, while front line staff receive training in fire-fighting and use of fire extinguishers. Overall, over 6 lakh Railway employees underwent various types of training, initial, promotional, refresher, and specialized, among others, during 2023-24. Beyond human safety, Indian Railways is also addressing wildlife and livestock protection by erecting 6,433 kilometers of fencing along tracks in 2024-25, with 1,396 kilometers completed as of August 2024, significantly reducing cattle collisions on these routes. To supplement these measures, there has also been a shift to LHB coaches, which have superior crash-worthy features, reducing chances of derailments and injury to occupants. These coaches, designed to avoid climbing over each other in a collision, are built for safe operation at speeds up to 160 kilometers per hour. Production has increased substantially, with 4,977 LHB coaches manufactured in 2023-24, more than double the 2,467 produced in 2013-14. Indian Railways has become safer for travel than ever before.

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