

NAMO DRONE DIDI : Baba Jitto Shrine-Incredible Spot of Spirituality

Namo Drone Didi is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at transforming the lives of women in rural India by integrating drone technology into their daily activities. Launched as part of a larger movement to empower women and enhance agricultural practices, this program trains women to operate drones, enabling them to take on new roles in their communities and the agricultural sector.

The initiative addresses several pressing issues, the lack of job opportunities for women in rural areas, the need for efficient agricultural practices, and the potential of technology to drive economic growth. By equipping women with skills in drone operation, Namu Drone Didi not only creates employment opportunities but also promotes gender equality in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Training sessions are designed to be accessible and hands-on, allowing women to learn the mechanics of drone flying, maintenance, and applications in agriculture. Drones are increasingly used for various tasks, including crop monitoring, pest control, and precision farming, which can significantly enhance productivity and sustainability in agriculture. By learning to operate drones, women become vital contributors to local economies, helping farmers make informed decisions based on real-time data.

Beyond agricultural applications, the initiative fosters a sense of community and collaboration among women. Participants often form networks, sharing knowledge and resources, which can lead to entrepreneurial ventures or cooperative farming initiatives. The social aspect of the training creates a supportive environment, encouraging women to step out of traditional roles and pursue leadership opportunities.

Moreover, Namu Drone Didi aligns with broader goals of sustainable development. By leveraging technology, the program reduces the need for harmful chemicals and promotes eco-friendly farming practices. Drones can cover large areas quickly, reducing labor costs and increasing efficiency, ultimately leading to better crop yields.

Namu Drone Didi exemplifies the transformative power of technology when paired with a commitment to gender equality and community development. By empowering women in rural areas, the initiative not only enhances agricultural practices but also contributes to the broader social and economic fabric of the region. As more women embrace these opportunities, they pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for their communities.

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Reasi district of J&K Union Territory is said to be the hub of religious spots as this district is endowed with many religious plots. The district is blessed with the immense natural beauty. This hilly district is located about 72 km away from Jammu and is at 1528 meter above from mean sea level. As per 2011 census total population of the district is 3, 14,714. It was carved out from Udhampur district on 1st April, 2007. This district is surrounded by Udhampur, Rajouri, Jammu, Ramban and Shopian districts. Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir is also an abode of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. Every year millions of devotees visit this holy shrine to pay homage. The Chenab River passes through this district which is another centre of attraction in the district. This district is blessed with vast biodiversity. Reasi is one of the oldest towns of J&K. Every year Reasi district attracts lakhs of devotees across the globe. Internationally renowned places like Mata Vaishno Devi, Katra along with some historical places like Shiv Khori Shrine, Dera Baba Banda Bahadur, Siarh Baba, Nao Devian, Dhansar Baba, Ziarat Bajji Ismail etc. Are in Reasi district and millions of pilgrims from all over the world used to come in the district throughout the year.

Baba Aghar Jitto is an ancient shrine which is situated in the lap of Trikuta hills on Katra-Reasi main road at village Aghar Jitto which is around 6 km from Katra. Baba Aghar Jitto was a great devotee of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Baba Jitto was a farmer who sacrificed his life to get his due share of agricultural crop from landlord Bir Singh who denied him to give the committed share. After that he became famous among the farmers' community. This place is also source of attraction for the pilgrims from all over the country. On this spot Baba Jitto statue has been constructed

and natural source of water is really the centre of attraction. Every year a big fair is organized by the district administration at this spot and large numbers of people participate in this fair and pay respect to Baba Jitto. The Baba Jitto Mela is an important annual congregation of farmers and other pilgrims who gather at Aghar Jitto village to pay homage to Dogra folk hero Baba Jitto. The fair is held every year to honour and celebrate the memory of 15th-16th century folk hero Baba Jitto, who laid down his life to defend the values of honesty and justice.

Like many other folk heroes who begin their life as an ordinary person but are transformed into someone extraordinary by performing significant life events in their lives. Baba Jitto, originally named as Jit Mal, was an honest and truthful farmer of village Aghar Jitto. Baba Jitto was a Brahmin and great devotee of Mata Vaishno Devi. His aunt Jojan was having hostile behaviour towards him and finally he decided to leave the village along with his daughter Bua Kori. He went to his friend, Iso Megh at Kalnachak and there he requested Mehta Bir Singh, a feudal lord of the Ambrogra, to provide a piece of land for farming. Mehta Bir Singh gave Jit Mal a piece of barren and infertile land after signing an agreement that he would give him the one-fourth of his produce. Jit Mal's hard work transformed the infertile and barren land which finally yielded an excellent crop. When Bir Singh came to know about the excellent crop yield, he arrived at the fields along with his men and instructed them to lift three fourth of the crop yield and leave only a quarter for Jit Mal. Baba Jitto requested Mehta Bir Singh to follow the terms and conditions of the agreement but Mehta forcibly took the major share of the crop. Injustice done by Mehta compelled Jit Mal to stab himself after sitting on the heap of grains which got wet by

his blood. Her daughter Bua Kori with help of their pet dog Kalu, found the dead body of her father which was hidden in the Simbal tree trunk by the goons of Mehta. She then lit the pyre and burnt herself with her father. After that a fierce rain storm raged the area, the blood strained grains were washed away and all those people, even the birds, who had taken those grains later suffered from various ailments, untimely deaths, misfortunes etc. In order to seek pardon from the wrath of the holy great spirit, they not only asked for his forgiveness by worshipping him as a 'Kuldevta'-family deity but also making it mandatory for their future generations to venerate Baba Jitto and pay annual homage to him. There's also spring water that flows in front of the shrine. It is believed that water of this spring is holy.

It is said that if a childless lady takes bath in the pond at Aghar Jitto, she is blessed with a child. Aghar Jitto mela witnesses great hustle and bustle during three-day festival as pilgrims families and various groups belonging to diverse communities and hailing from different parts of the country assemble there to pay obeisance at the Baba Jitto temple and seek his blessings and the blessings of his daughter-Bua Kouri. People from every nook and corners have also been visiting this spot throughout the year and enjoy the unique place of spirituality. Especially the members of local and outside communities, who worship Bawa Jitto as a Kuldevta (family deity) come here to pay obeisance on occasions of important events in their families like marriage, birth of child, mundan (tonsure ceremony) or simply to thank or entreat the Bawa for his continuing protection and blessings. Baba Jitto Mela, the farmer's fair like other such congregations is a spectacle to behold. Apart from large number of kiosks of eatables and merchants displaying their wares for

sale, which include from trinkets to new popular electronics gadgets, the fair presents hosts of entertainments for every age group of people. During the festival there is regular recitation of folk songs by Yogis and 'Gardis' in form of Bawa's devotional ballads at the main shrine. Many entertaining cultural shows are also staged. While 'dangals'- the Indian style wrestling matches in which wrestlers from far a wide used to come here which draw a large crowd of sport enthusiasts.

During the fair, exhibitions and stalls are organized by different government departments like agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, animal husbandry, rural development etc. to aware the people about various technologies, government schemes and incentives so that people could avail the benefits. Most of the stalls of eatables especially Jalebi and Pakoras, which is a specialty of the mela, are being run by local people. Other than the shopkeepers, the local transporters like matador and bus owners also earn extra income by bringing large number of pilgrims to the mela site. The Aghar Jitto Mela is one of the most attended fairs in Reasi district. It is a major socio-religious event that brings together many people at Aghar Jitto village near Katra where devotees of Baba Jitto forget their caste, creed and language and share an experience of faith with full devotion. Security, safe drinking water, un-interrupted power supply, adequate provision of essential commodities, sanitation, fire services, medical services, transport arrangements etc. are provided to the devotees by the district administration. Wide publicity of mela through print and electronic media well in advance is also done so that more and more people participate in the event.

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Augmenting Social Security Measures for Nation Building

■ DR. MANSUKH MANDAVIYA



Social security is undoubtedly essential for nation-building, particularly regarding labourers, for several key reasons such as economic stability, human capital development, increased workforce participation and support for economic policies. By providing financial support during employment contingencies like unemployment, illness, or retirement, social security helps maintain consumer spending, stabilizing the economy and promoting growth. A reliable safety net encourages individuals to enter the labour market, thus supporting broader economic policies aimed at the sustainable development of the nation.

Inspired by the strategic vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Ministry of Labour & Employment has implemented several significant policy decisions and steps like codification of labour laws, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana (PM-SYM) and National Pension Scheme-Traders Scheme, launching of unified web portal 'Shram Suvidha Portal', to bring transparency and accountability in enforcement of labour laws and ease complexity of compli-

ances, NCS was launched for transformation of the National Employment Service to provide a variety of employment related services like career counselling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, apprenticeship, internships etc., development of e-shram portal for creating a national Database of Unorganized workers, which is seeded with Aadhaar for optimum realization of the employability and extend the benefits of the social security schemes to the workers, ESIC COVID-19 Scheme to provide help and succor to the families of the Insured Persons (IPs) who died due to COVID-19, enhancing the quantum of Maternity Benefit, reduction in rate of ESIC contributions.

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation, a Social Security Organisation under the Ministry of Labour & Employment, has been a forerunner in providing Social Security to our country's workforce. Through its varied benefit schemes viz. medical and cash benefits, the workers of our country have benefitted over the last seven decades. ESIC, which looks after the health and social security of our Shramyogi families, has made historic progress in the last 10 years. During this period, ESIC has expanded its services from 393 districts to 674 districts, due to which today the benefit of health security is reaching 3.72 crore working families, which

was earlier limited to 1.95 crore in the year 2014. Today, the total number of beneficiaries has increased from 7.58 crore in 2014 to 14.43 crore in 2024.

Taking a step forward to holistically strengthen the social security and health infrastructure for the workforce of our country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of several health infrastructure projects, and launched various health programmes worth Rs. 12,855 Crore across the ESIC under Ministry of Labour & Employment, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Ayush, and Dept. of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers today at All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), New Delhi on 29th October 2024.

As part of these projects, the Prime Minister virtually inaugurated a 300-bedded ESIC hospital in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, which has the potential to be upgraded to 500 beds. This facility is expected to benefit around 14 lakh insured persons and their families. Additionally, he also laid the foundation stone for 06 ESI hospital projects with a combined capacity of 1,030 beds. These hospitals will be located in Bommasandra (Karnataka), Narsapura (Karnataka), Pithampur (Madhya Pradesh), Meerut (Uttar Pradesh), Atchutapuram (Andhra

Pradesh), and Faridabad (Haryana). The initiative aims to meet the medical needs of approximately 41 lakh insured persons and beneficiaries. The total investment for these projects amounts to Rs. 1,641 crore.

The inauguration and laying of foundation stones for Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) hospitals is a significant step in enhancing healthcare access for workers in India. By establishing new hospitals, the Modi government aims to improve access to quality healthcare services, particularly in industrial and semi-urban areas. These hospitals will offer a range of services, including outpatient care, inpatient services, emergency care, and specialized treatments. This focus on quality ensures that workers receive timely and effective medical attention, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy workforce.

These social security programs play an indispensable role in nation-building by supporting the invaluable workforce and their families and by prioritizing the establishment of ESIC hospitals, Modi Government is addressing critical health needs within the workforce, reflecting a commitment to worker welfare and the overall economic health of the nation.

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ONLY MOKSHA

■ MOHANJI



Bharat is a beautiful, powerful space. We are the only people who spoke about Moksha or Liberation. We did not talk about just heaven and hell. Heaven is when you are expanded. Hell is when you are contracted. We did not talk about this. We only spoke about Moksha (liberation). And this one thought made us stronger, determined, stable.

What is liberation? When you are living, your desires are very manageable; your desires are less. You are happy, contented, stable, peaceful. This is the state of liberation when living.

At the time of Leaving the body, the state of liberation is the state where you have No Baggage to carry. Imagine you're taking a flight. You have no check-in baggage; no cabin baggage, hands-free. That's a state when you are leaving the body, which is of a liberated existence, with zero desires to carry. No memories to carry. No agenda. What is going are the sheaths or koshas, which are empty. No storage, no memories. Free, peaceful. Liberation at the time of death.

Based on this one matter, Religions were formed. Philosophies were created: Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, you name it. It's all created out of this one point; a very important point.

Great MASTERS: Sai Baba, Bhagwan Nityananda, Anandamayi Amma, Paramahansa Yogananda, Babaji - so many Masters...we have seen various Masters. They all lived Love, and they propagate one point, one thought: Liberation.

Challenges and Strategies for Healthy Aging

■ R K SHARMA



Life is a beautiful gift granted to every human being. It encompasses the time between birth and death, passing through various stages, with the final stage being old age. In India, only about 12% of people reach this stage, making those who do so fortunate, honored with the status of senior citizens. However, old age brings its own set of challenges that require care and attention.

People often enjoy life without much thought about the final stage until they

cross the age of 50, when the signs of aging begin to manifest. It is at this point that individuals start to realize that the journey of life inevitably draws to a close.

Our bodies, like machines, start to show wear and tear with age. Unlike a machine, which can be replaced during a warranty period, our bodies come with no such guarantees. This makes it essential to care for our health as we age.

Just as machines need regular maintenance, our bodies require regular care. While machines come with a user manual, humans do not. However, scientists and medical researchers have provided extensive knowledge that can guide us in maintaining our health. Unfortunately,

this information is often ignored.

Aging is an unavoidable reality for all, but the rate and onset of aging vary greatly among individuals. This depends largely on how well a person maintains their body, including food habits and lifestyle choices. While some may experience premature aging, others, remarkably, continue to compete with younger generations, breaking records in sports and other areas. These cases demonstrate that aging doesn't have to limit one's potential and achievements. They also show that maintaining good physical and mental health relies heavily on individual choices and awareness of a healthy lifestyle.

The aging process can be slowed through timely actions like regular

health checkups, saving financially for old age, and maintaining social connections with friends and relatives. Avoiding unnecessary disputes with family members can contribute to a peaceful life. At this stage, one should stay busy with activities, hobbies, or recreation, rather than sitting idle. These activities should be chosen carefully to avoid unnecessary strain on the body, keeping one active without risking health.

In India, senior citizens are still respected within families and society, though this respect has seen some decline due to various factors. Nevertheless, the situation remains better than in many other parts of the world. Due to globalization, mass media,

and the influence of multinational companies, Indian society is increasingly adopting Western cultural values, which often place less importance on the elderly. If left unchecked, this trend could harm the fabric of Indian society.

It is crucial that senior citizens are not only honored through titles or awards but are also treated with respect within their families and society. Meeting their physical, emotional, and mental needs is essential. Keeping the elderly comfortable, both mentally and physically, can significantly delay the aging process. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that they are cared for with dignity and respect, in line with the core values of Indian culture.

A positive mindset plays a key role in

the aging process. Those blessed with life experiences and having faced various challenges should be mentally prepared for this natural journey. Rather than feeling sorrow at the culmination of life, one should focus on staying actively involved in daily activities, avoiding dependency on others, and doing whatever they can for themselves, their family, and society. As the saying goes, "The best helping hand is at the end of your sleeve." With a positive attitude and an appreciation for the gift of life, one can live the later stages of life without regret, creating an environment where aging has little effect on them.

(The writer is Retd Tehsildar, Kalakote).

Chhath Puja 2024: Auspicious day to gain divine blessings of Lord Sun

■ RAVI ROHMETRA

According to the Drik Panchang, the festival of Chhath Puja is celebrated on the Shashthi Tithi of the Shukla Paksha of the Kartik month. This year in 2024, Shashthi Tithi will start on Thursday, November 7 at 12:41 am in the early morning (am) and will end on Friday, November 8 at 12:34 am in the early morning (am).

Meaning: The word "chhath" means sixth in Nepali, Maithili, and Bhojpuri languages. This festival is celebrated on the 6th day of the month of Kartik of the Hindu Luni-Solar Bikram Sambat calendar and that's why the name is Chhath Puja. This word is a Prakrit descent from the Sanskrit word "Sashthi" and this festival is the longest and the most important festival of Hindus after the Navratri. It lasts for 4 days.

History: Some say that Chhath Puja is the oldest festival that may even precede the Ancient Vedas as the Rigveda contains hymns of worshipping the Sun and some similar rituals as followed in this festival. These rituals also have a mention in the

Mahabharata where Draupadi is portrayed performing similar rituals. On the advice of astute Dhaumya, the rituals of Chhath were followed by the Pandavas and Draupadi. This worshipping of the Sun solved many problems of Draupadi and later helped the Pandavas to regain their kingdom. The scientific or yogic history of this festival dates back to the Vedic times when the scholars or rishis of yore used this technique to remain without food as they used to absorb energy from the rays of the sun. This was known as Chhath Method. Some ancient suggest that Lord Rama and Sita kept fast and offered puja to the sun in the Kartika month during the Shukla Paksha during their coronation after returning from the exile.

Current Time: In the present time, Chhath is celebrated mostly in India and Nepal. The states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh in India and the Madhesh region of Nepal generally celebrate this festival with great enthusiasm. This festival is dedicated to the Sun and his younger wife Usha as an acknowledgment for the life on earth. So, there is no idol wor-



ship at all! Some Muslim people also celebrate Chhath. As there is no idol worship so there is no use of plastic, color, metals, etc. in constructing an idol & later immersing those idols on nearby water bodies that leads to pollution. That's why this festival is regarded as the most eco-friendly Hindu festival by the environmentalists.

4 Day Rituals: The rituals of the fes-

tival are arduous and are observed over a period of four days. The rituals are: holy bathing, fasting and abstaining from drinking water called Vratra, standing in water for long periods of time, and offering Prasad (prayer offerings) and Arghya to the setting and rising sun. Some followers also perform a prostration march as they head for the river banks.

Chhathii Maiya: Along with the Sun,

the Goddess who is worshipped during this Chhath Puja is known as Chhathii Maiya. Chhathii Maiya is also known as Usha in the Vedas and she is believed to be the beloved younger wife of Surya, the sun god. In Mithilanchal region she is also worshipped under the name of "Rana Mai".

Significance Of Chhath Puja: Now apart from the religious significance of thanking the Sun for providing us a good life, there is some science too attached to the rituals of this festivals. The rituals demand to pray at the river bank or standing at the river bank for long hours and there is an explanation to it. The ultraviolet rays of the sun are at their lowest during sunrise and sunset and that's why the sun rays are most beneficial at these two times. These sun rays then help in detoxifying the mind, body, and soul by removing all negative energies.

Places of Chhath Celebration: As said earlier, this festival is ornately celebrated among people of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhesh region of India and Nepal respectively. But people who shifted their base from these regions to elsewhere have also not stopped cele-

brating Chhath. So, one can see Chhath celebration in Northern, Southern, and Central urban centers in India too. Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bengaluru, etc. also celebrate Chhath. Similarly, people of Indian or Nepalese origin residing in Mauritius, United States of America, Fiji, United Kingdom, South Africa, Republic of Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Jamaica, Guyana, other parts of the Caribbean, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Macau, Japan, and Indonesia also celebrate Chhath Puja with dedication.

No Idol Worship: This is the only Hindu festival or perhaps the only festival in the world that signifies the rising and the setting Sun. The most unique feature of this Chhath Puja is that there is no Murti Pujan or Idol Worshipping unlike most of the festivals of the Hindu religion. Some people simply opine that Sun is necessary for the life of possibly every creature on the earth and this festival is a way to pay tribute to it irrespective of caste, creed, gender, race, and social stigmas.

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