

THIRD WAVE

The situation is turning grim with each passing day as far as third wave of the coronavirus is concerned and the need of the time is that J&K administration should take a lead in containing this lethal disease which has once again started flexing its muscles by a more virulent variant Omicron which has gripped the entire UT as people are falling prey to it with a pace as never seen before. The Central Government in an advisory has averred that only 5 to 10 percent of cases need hospitalization in case of Omicron variant but looking into the number of people getting down with COVID-19, this small percentage will also comprise a large number of people thus making it necessary for the Government to take out of the box initiatives to save the people from the third wave of the pandemic. One thing is sure that if people will take things seriously and follow the norms in letter & spirit, there is no need to worry but if non-serious population will exceed the other segment then even God cannot save the UT from facing a catastrophe. Therefore, it solely depends on the people's attitude towards the disease and their behaviour will decide which way COVID-19 will go. In this context, the Jammu and Kashmir government has announced it will not impose a lockdown if people take appropriate measures and continue to follow COVID-19 protocol. This is true to the hilt because if the precautions will be taken by the people the need for lockdown will never arise. There are certain places where social distancing cannot be maintained in letter and spirit like while travelling in public transport, air travel, trains etc. In all such cases people should ensure that they should wear their masks in a perfect order and there is no lethargy in this regard. Unnecessarily venturing out is not at all advisable and people should stop this habit, as soon as possible, as lockdown will bring adverse situation for many therefore abstaining from any kind of misadventure with regard to coronavirus is the right thing which every person should do under the present prevailing conditions.

OFF 'D' CUFF



Arise, awaken, and stop not till the goal is reached

can be attained by conquering your mind through austerity and penance."

This ended Narendra's dilemma. He listened to his conscience. The negative thoughts that were clouding his mind vanished, dispelling darkness from his life. In resonance, the clouds in the sky had also dispersed, revealing the divine resplendent aura of the moon. All his doubts were being put to rest, and the turmoil in his mind was beginning to settle down. "Something" had got associated with his intellect that awakened the power of discretion within him and directed him to his Guru Sri Ramakrishna. That was indeed a momentous night when Narendra was transformed and became Swami Vivekananda? Let us get a glimpse of it.

It was midnight. As Narendra saw dark clouds in the sky, it was as if darkness was spreading over his mind. He couldn't see any ray of hope. Clouds thundered, and lightning struck. Lost in his thoughts, Narendra was walking barefoot towards his house. His feet were not supporting his body. It was as if they were pleading him to rest for a while. But he was numb to his body as his mind was elsewhere.

Suddenly, there was a heavy downpour, and Narendra was completely drenched in less than a moment. Defeated, he sat down in the middle of the deserted road and pleaded with folded hands, "O Lord, what are you punishing me for? There are so many sinful people in this world, but sparing them all, why are you punishing me? Is it because I have faith in you? Is this your way of justice?"

Narendra's eyes welled with tears of sorrow. Suddenly, he heard a voice within. His conscience asked him, "One who seeks pleasure does not consider the method of acquiring it. First, decide what you want - position, fame, wealth, comforts?"

His logical mind replied, "I want wealth but through the path of righteousness."

His conscience alerted him, "You will attain God on the path of righteousness, not wealth! What do you want - God, or wealth and comforts?"

Narendra shouted, "God, God, and God alone!" His conscience replied, "Then don't ask for comforts and conveniences. You can never attain God if you get entangled in worldly pleasures. God

Revival of traditional handicrafts in J&K

■ DR BANARSI LAL & DR SUJA NABI QURESHI

Handicrafts are the products that are produced by the artisans, either completely by the hands or with the help of tools or even by the mechanical means as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisans remains the most substantial component of the finished product. Handicrafts refer to the man-made products often made with simple traditional tools. In J&K handicrafts have remained the backbone since the time immemorial. Handicrafts played a crucial role in the preservation of traditional art, culture, heritage and skills. The crafts like embroidery, carpets, wood carving, costumes, shawls, jewellery, local grass baskets etc. have a significant impact of J&K across the globe. Special skills are also provided to the new learners to promote the handicrafts in J&K. Handicrafts occupy an important position in the economic structure of J&K. There is huge potential of handicrafts in J&K as this sector requires less capital and more labour. If some innovative strategies are made in this direction then this sector can open new employment opportunities in J&K. Some of the handicrafts of J&K are known worldwide because of their attractive designs, high quality and utility. Handicrafts in J&K are greatly helpful in creating the employment opportunities especially for the weaker sections of the society. There are numerous artisans who are directly associated with the handicrafts sector. This sector has huge potential in J&K and more employment opportunities can be created in the Union Territory of J&K, if proper marketing channels are made available. Presently our handicrafts earn around Rs 1,700 crores annually as foreign exchange. This sector is not blooming fully because of lack of proper branding of the products, attractive designs, low capital, competition with machine made products, poor exposure, lack of market intelligence, poor infrastructure etc. Turmoil in J&K has also affected this industry. This industry is facing number of problems and challenges and there is need to explore the possibilities for its revival. There is need to understand the prospects and challenges of handicraft industry of J&K. Handicrafts provide an immense opportunity with low capital and can become an emphatic source of foreign exchange. This sector is labour intensive and can create new avenues of employment especially for the rural people. The handicrafts from J&K have gained worldwide fame for the high quality craftsmanship. Many women are associated with this industry. Handicrafts help to raise per capita income of J&K and thus contribute in GDP of J&K. It has been observed through studies that handicraft is the second largest industry in J&K after tourism.

Union Territory of J&K is an abode of vast culture and ethnic diversity. Handicrafts are carefully nurtured here for the centuries as different crafts flourished in this charming land which is visited by the millions of tourists across the globe every year. With time these

arts gained more recognition. Presently J&K is known for woolen textiles, embroideries, Pashmina shawls, hand-knitted shawls etc. In 2018-19, exports of J&K handicrafts were 917.66 crores. Although the handicrafts from J&K face tough national and international competition but still this sector has shown promising results because of its uniqueness and utility. There is dire need to promote the artisans of J&K associated with this industry in order to promote this industry. There is need to work on cluster approach to give a boost to this industry. Technical and financial support is important for the artisans to set up units of commercial level. Special training centres need to be established to promote this industry. More and more Self Help Groups (SHGs) of women should be formed to engage in this sector. Boosting the tourism in J&K can boost the handicrafts industry as the tourists prefer the original hand made products. The increase in the tourists in J&K will directly increase the demand of handicraft products. There are number of schemes for the artisans launched by the Government, but there is lack of awareness of these schemes among rural people. Awareness camps should be organised in the rural areas to aware the local artisans on these useful schemes. Also the documentations and studies on rural handicrafts can also give beneficial results. There is need to revive the handicraft industry of J&K with new innovations. For instance new techniques of dying, designing, washing etc. need to be revamped. Geographic Indication (GI) Certification can also be provided to certain handicrafts and proper branding and labeling are also very important. Awareness on such kinds of schemes should be created among the artisans. It is very important to expand the market spaces for the handicrafts products. Special efforts are needed for the packaging purpose so as to make the products of national and international level. There should be the minimum involvement of intermediaries so that the artisans can enjoy the full financial profits. At least one handicraft should be prioritised in one district. The skill development trainings should be restructured and some new modules should be reframed by considering the employability and demands of handicrafts. Facilitation centres can be established to guide the artisans about their rights, insurance policies, welfare schemes etc. Raw material centres can also be established from where the artisans can procure the original raw material to make the quality handicrafts. The handicraft industry has huge potential in J&K as it has universal appeal and environment friendly. It can help to generate new employment opportunities in rural areas of J&K. Strenuous efforts are needed to encourage, preserve and promote this industry. Special exhibition shows should be organized to encourage this industry. Some of innovative technologies should be incorporated so as to reduce the price of these commodities.

The handicrafts are time consuming and that's why their prices are high because the labour cost is included in the products. The innovations can reduce their prices and enhance their quality and demand. Reasi district of Union Territory of J&K is known for its rich cultural heritage and this heritage is transferred from one generation to another. This hilly district of J&K is known for the grass handicrafts since time immemorial. The grass handicrafts in Reasi district have their own uniqueness and are liked by the visitors. The grass handicrafts such as Chabadi, Binna etc were fading gradually but recently the farm women of Reasi district has shown strong commitment to revive this sector. Presently they are making not only Binna and Chabadi but many other products such as laundry bags, footwears, pen-stands, dry fruit trays, jewellery boxes etc. by using local grass (locally called as Babiyani) and wild palm tree leaves with co-ordination of JKRLM. JKRLM should be applauded for its exceptional support to the farm women. KV Reasi is constantly guiding and motivating the farm women for commercial production of these handicrafts so that the farm women can fetch more money and improve their socio-economic conditions. This input material is easily available in the hilly areas of Reasi district. Many Self Help Groups (SHGs) from Pouni block of Reasi district have come forward for the revival of these fading handicrafts. They are making very attractive products which are having durability and are environmentally friendly. Initially the farm women were making these handicrafts in an unorganized way for the local use or for sale at low rate. Govt. and Non-Government Organisations are encouraging these SHGs for making these handicrafts of commercial level and facilitating them to sale their produce at good prices.

Their handicrafts are exhibited at different levels and many people are coming forward to purchase their products. These farm women have shown innovativeness in their handicrafts and have given new designs and dyes by which their markets have increased. They are making strenuous efforts to revive these crafts and modernizing them with their zeal and innovativeness.

All these products are environment friendly and helpful to raise the income and employment among the rural women of the area. The demand of these handicrafts is increasing day-by-day because of their usefulness and uniqueness.

Their innovative efforts are very supportive to protect and preserve these handicrafts. With their endeavors, these farm women have got recognition and confident. They have developed entrepreneurial skills. This venture can prove as the crucial source of their livelihood and transform their lives.

(The authors are Head, KV Reasi and Scientist SKUAST-J)

Breach in Prime Minister's security

■ OKMAR DATATRAY

Unfortunately there was a major security lapse in prime minister's security in Punjab and such a security breach is unheard in our country. The Prime minister Narendra Modi's convoy was forced to strand on a flyover because of the blockade by the protesters in Ferozepur few days back. The Prime minister was forced to return to Delhi without attending any rally or any event. The security breach in the Prime Minister's security is a very serious matter and it needs to be probed so that all facts about the security lapse will come to light. The security to the Prime Minister in Punjab is sole responsibility of the state government but it failed to provide fool proof security to the visiting prime minister. It is alleged that Khalistani organization has asked the people of Punjab to disrupt the Prime Minister's rally and it has announced an award of 80 lakh for nefarious purpose of disrupting rally. Not only this, BJP supporters were not allowed to assemble for rally to be addressed by the Prime Minister in the poll bound Punjab. The lapse in Prime Minister's security is a serious and grave matter and it has created grief and outrage in the country as the people of the country are interested in the security of their beloved Prime Minister. The country has experienced and faced gruesome assassinations of two Prime Ministers namely Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi and it does not like to risk the life of the Prime minister Narendra Modi, who is very popular and is loved by all the people. There was threat to the life and limb of Prime Minister but thank God that he returned to Delhi safe and sound and the people of the country heave a sigh of relief on his safety. It is perhaps the Congress Government led by Charanjeet Singh Channi which engineered security threat to Prime Minister Modi who was to address a public meeting in Ferozepur but he was not allowed to attend or address rally. Not allowing Prime Minister to attend and address the public rally is very undemocratic and it should not have happened but perhaps due to collaboration of the congress government with the anti social elements. There is thus the outrage in the people of the country about the security lapse in the Prime Minister's visit. It was the responsibility of the government of Punjab to maintain law and order during



the Prime Minister's visit and rally and in this the state government has failed. But it is very unbecoming and unfortunate that the various political parties have not expressed concern and have not condemned the security breach in the Prime Minister's visit as he was forced to return to Delhi without attending and addressing the rally nor did he attend other programmes which were in his schedule. This is very unfortunate that the Prime Minister was not allowed to attend the rally and other events and this is a matter of grave and great concern. It needs through probe and investigation to fix the responsibility so that those responsible for the unfortunate security lapse are dealt with under the law of the land. The different political parties and the politicians have not with one voice expressed the agony and condemnation over the unprecedented security lapse. There is need to express the concern and agony over the breach in the Prime Minister's security by political parties cutting across the party lines because Prime Minister is not of any party or parties but is of the one hundred and thirty crore citizens. He is the Prime Minister of the country and as such he is not the prime minister of the BJP and its NDA partners but is the Prime Minister of the whole country and as such is worthy of respect and veneration by all the people of the country. Therefore he should have been provided security by the Punjab government for his rally and other events and programmes and there should have been no security lapse in the prime minister's security.

It is very unfortunate that in spite of the intelligence reports about the holding of the protests Punjab police did not follow the blue book and has not prepared and kept the contingency plan and route for the prime minister's convoy. Since Punjab is a sensitive border state and a visit by the head of the country having a security breach has dangerous implications. The Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India sought a report from Punjab government on security breach in the Prime Minister's schedule and how it happened, besides a report has been demanded from the intelligence agencies over security lapse. Prime Minister was to visit the national Martyrs memorial at Hussainwala by helicopter but due to bad weather and poor visibility the prime minister waited for twenty minutes for the weather to clear up. But when weather did not improve it was decided to visit the martyrs' memorial by road and after necessary clearance from DGP. When Prime Minister was on his way to the national war memorial, and when it reached to the flyover, it was found that the road was blocked by some protesters and as such Prime Minister's convoy was stuck for almost twenty minutes on the flyover. It was a major security lapse on the part of the state government and needs a thorough probe to fix responsibility on the security breach and take a strict action on the defaulters. It is a big question whether a state government can scuttle the security of a prime minister which many BJP leaders are

well. They must use such platforms to entertain and edify people to raise spirit of loving one's country, its historical places and especially its heroes who had sacrificed themselves to give them this nation and liberty, because a large majority belonging to the fraternity does not know about country's past history. The tradition of online classes has forced students to take their classes on laptops and mobile phones as rising cases of coronavirus have forced the Government to close educational institutions.

For the time being, it's common to see adolescents wearing glasses but if we go back to early 90s, there were no smart-phones, no laptops etc and it was rare to

find juveniles wearing glasses. If you look at your surroundings, you will find that every fifth person is having a poor eye-sight. Such cases have escalated in many ways within last few years. Students' indulgence in mobile phones, online classes and their watching movies on televisions are the main reasons for this sorry state of affairs. Instead of bringing awareness and prosperity into the lives of people with the help of these appliances, students no matter which class they belong to misuse them. Our county's literacy rate is extremely low in comparison with other countries especially in the case of girls it is abysmally low. Many juveniles have lost their lives by falling onto train tracks and off the

claiming. Then what is the purpose and fun of a security brigade of the prime minister which is always with PM and what is the need for the security edifice of the centre. The need is to probe the security lapse and fix the responsibility and give a strict punishment to those found involved in the breach in the Prime Minister's security. The reasons for the breach in the security of the prime minister should be looked into and the lapse should be investigated and all those involved in the security lapse should be prosecuted and punished so that such lapses will not happen again with the head of the country, but it is doubly unfortunate that the issue of the security lapse in PM's security is being politicized both by the BJP as well as by the Congress party and in doing so they are making many security protocols public which is very risky as the security of many VVIPs is concerned. Both the BJP and Congress are leveling charges and counter charges upon one another which is very disturbing and unfortunate. The security of the prime minister is of supreme importance but to the political parties it seems to be secondary. All the political parties should realize that the security of the prime minister is of paramount importance and the prime minister is not of any party but is of the country. The political parties should desist from politicizing the issue of the security breach of the prime minister and should rise in one voice against the security breach and do everything possible so that such things will not happen in future again.

Any entity related with the security of the PM should play its role and part in enhancing and improving the security of the Prime Minister. It is a matter of satisfaction that Congress President Sonia Gandhi has told the Punjab Chief Minister to look into the matter of the security breach of the Prime Minister and Punjab government acted swiftly and sent the report concerning security lapse to the centre government. Anyway security lapse during Prime Minister's visit to Punjab is a serious matter and needs to be probed and responsibility fixed and the guilty punished by holding a speedy trial in the court of law so that such security lapse may not occur again.

roofs and killing their elders when restricted not to play such games and are still losing because they select tricky places for making videos and put their lives in danger. Parents must discourage and try hard to wean their children away from mobile phones until they complete their studies. The hazards of excessive use of mobile phones causes DNA damage, sleeplessness, eye cancer, infertility and cardiac problems. Last but not least, prima facie the Government needs to make a policy in which time-restriction mode should be framed after 2 hours usage, on daily basis, to save our youth and country from more crises.

Mool Raj,
Doda.

YOUR COLUMN

Bespectacled youth & smart-phones

Dear Editor,

As the world is changing steadily and heading towards introducing new technologies and innovations each year, Indian youth is destroying itself using mobile apps and by spending excessive time making videos and playing games on them. It is disturbing to see them glued to these gadgets even during these hard times, but their long debilitating sprees on mobiles render them sluggish and weaken their eyesight and health as