

## BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

It is another praiseworthy step of the government that cops in J&K involved in counter-terrorism and security operations will soon get Bullet Resistant (BR) jackets to ensure their safety. This step in fact should have been initiated much before because the terror mongers have inflicted much damage in the past. Reportedly, the Jammu and Kashmir Police has initiated the process to procure over 8,000 BR jackets for its personnel and shall also procure BR vehicles of various levels of protection and glasses for vehicles, helmets, ultra-wide CCTV surveillance systems and deep search mine detectors. This will imbibe more confidence among the cops and will also equip them in a much better way thus enabling them to break the backbone of the terrorists active in the Valley and elsewhere. It has come to fore that as many as 7,416 BR jackets of level-5 protection and 784 BR jackets of level-6 protection will be procured by the police to provide its personnel involved in counter-terrorism and security operations the best possible protection. It is pertinent to mention that levels 5 and 6 indicate a high level of threat and protection. Besides JKP has floated bids for the procurement of 47 BR light motor vehicles (LMVs) of level-3 protection, 15 BR LMVs of level-2, 10 BR LMVs of level-1, 100 ultra wide CCTV surveillance systems, 12 deep search mine detectors and 45 mini drones. Of course if the same equipment would have been procured some time back the damage caused in the last over two months to the police force should have been avoided. Anyways it is a promising measure to minimize the security threat and will go a long way in containing the causalities in the encounters and ambushes which have seen a rise in the past few months as the terrorists are desperate to act because the security forces have tightened noose around them to root out terrorism as soon as possible. This surely will provide an edge to the police force, which is engaged in counter-terrorism operations, law and order maintenance and ensuring overall security.



## OFF 'D' CUFF

## Give Hope To Them

If you have 'hope', you have the motivation to move and the path to follow for realizing a better tomorrow. Hope can change someone's destiny! To have hope is to seek an outcome that brings betterment to life in one or another way. It not only can help make a difficult circumstance manageable, but also can improve life eventually. It's because when you envision a better future, it naturally motivates you to take appropriate actions to turn it into a possibility despite the troubles at hand. So, hope should be a part of everyone's life. Everyone must hope for something and it should be an inherent part of leading life. It helps people in profound ways when they want something in life from the heart. Moreover, having hope connects your past & present to the future. No matter how painful your past was, you still can hope to lead a good life in the future. And it's something that you can actually give to those who need it the most; they are the children who have lost their parents and who are struggling to get out of poverty. You can give hopefulness to orphans in various forms. Your small care would work like a flame of light in a dark tunnel—a tiny spark of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead so that they can feel enabled to come out of their misery. Here are some actions you can take to help orphans in your city.

Volunteering in NGOs/Orphanages. Generally, a family with a nurturing & caring environment is the perfect place to raise a child. Orphans or children who somehow got separated from their parents, can be successfully reunified with their family members or extended family members like cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc. If you are a professional who is aware about the crisis of orphans, you can volunteer in orphanages and work for reuniting these children from their parents, or at least spread awareness regarding the use of technology to reunite lost children with their families. Some NGOs and organizations are working in India wherein they have reunified many orphans with their families by using tracing technologies. In fact, volunteering in orphanages can bring a huge impact and it can change many lives if people are serious about it and kind from the heart. According to a news report, 'every eight minutes, a child goes missing in India.' In past, Indian police have done a great job in reuniting children with their families. Kudos to them! Often reports come up in newspapers about how children living in shelter homes

■ R K SINHA

The heart-wrenching incident at Mata Vaishno Devi Temple on New Year's eve once again proved that no matter what happens, we will never learn to control or manage crowd in a proper way. If we had learned from the prior mistakes, then the country would not have had to witness such a horrific incident again. But it is as if we have stopped learning. Suddenly at midnight, there were loud cheers among the devotees who came to pay their respects at the shrine of the Goddess. After that, there was a scuffle and stampede. The stampede took a terrible turn of events. Twelve pilgrims died tragically in the accident that took place around 2 AM. More than a dozen people were injured. Did the local administration not know that every year on New Year's night several devotees gather in the temple? Because of this, there is always the possibility of stampedes there. How were so many people allowed to go upstairs to the temple at once? The management of these religious places has to learn from their mistakes. Those going to these places will also have to be more alert. Along with this, we need to prevent large crowds from gathering at any fair or religious place on special dates, because as soon as the crowd gathers at one place, there is also the possibility of a stampede. There should always be better and alternative arrangements for clearing the crowd. Devotees should also avoid crowded areas. They cannot put all the responsibility of their carelessness on the administration itself. Before this, we have seen the disasters of Haridwar, Kumbh, and Nashik. But we are yet to see the change in our nature. When the threat of Omicron is looming over the country, it is beyond comprehension for devotees to flock to Vaishno Devi temple on such a massive scale. Due to overwhelming crowd, accidents happen not only in India

but in other countries also. A few years ago, there was a tragic accident due to a stampede in Mecca. There have been major accidents in year 2004 and again in 2006 in the race to kill the devil. If we go back a few decades, there was an enormous stampede at Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj in 1954, wherein hundreds of people lost their lives. The accident took place due to a stampede in the crowd that was stopped suddenly for facilitating bath of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The report stated that Nehru had decided to take a bath before the Akhadas which angered monks resulting into an uproar. The elephants present there were also enraged and crushed dozens of people. However, that incident was suppressed.

Similarly, the stampede of a Kumbh in Haridwar was caused by a stampede in the crowd that was halted for bath of the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Veer Bahadur Singh. Unfortunately, even some vicious elements, ignoring the dignity of religious places, start doing bad things there. At first glance, it seems that the same thing must have happened in Vaishno Devi temple. It is learned that after 2 o'clock in the night, there was a heated argument between some people which finally resulted into a scuffle. After this people started running away, due to which this accident happened. However, the police and administration officials reacted quickly and situation was controlled, but by that time, the damage was done. The administration is making such a claim. But how did they let the situation worsen in the first place? In fact, at places like fairs and temples, there is always a vulture sight of the enemies of humanity. It is necessary to nullify their intentions. At the time of the last Prayag Kumbh, the Yogi Government of Uttar Pradesh had trained the policemen posted in the fair from the National Security

Guards i.e., NSG and Army. They entered the situation and made sure that the threat had been neutralized. The arrangement on the same side should also be permanent in temples like Vaishno Devi. Remember that places like Vaishno Devi are bound to create a stampede when a politician, actor, or popular figure arrives. The crowd becomes furious and uncontrollable, so the administration has to act very intelligently. Talking about the accident in Vaishno Devi, let me also say that it is a matter of great concern that in our country, during religious places and worship ceremonies, dozens of people even in the process of bathing in rivers and ponds or immersing idols. He drowns and loses his life. A few years ago, 73 people lost their lives due to drowning during Chhath Puja in Bihar alone. Around 10 people drowned during the immersion of Durga Puja in Delhi. Of course, these were all heart-breaking incidents. He also used to expose all the claims and promises of the government, which the concerned departments keep saying that 'tight security arrangements have been made'. Incidents like the accident in Vaishno Devi will stop only when the preparations of our administration are solid. Otherwise, after a few days of apologizing and compensation to the kin of the dead/injured, everything will resume as before.

The officers looking after the management of Vaishno Devi should be asked what kind of preparations they had made for the possible crowd control on December 31. There was a whip on those officers who failed to discharge their duties.

This incident has created an atmosphere of mourning in the whole country. Crores of people have a strong faith in Vaishno Devi temple in the country, on which there has been a blow.

(The writer is a senior editor, columnist, and former MP)

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far.

-Swami Vivekananda

## When will we learn crowd management?

## Kranti-Jyoti Savitribai Phule

■ SUNITA BANGOTRA

Kranti-Jyoti Savitribai Phule was born on 3 January 1831 in a village of Naigaon in Sataru District, Maharashtra. Savitribai Phule was the eldest daughter of Lakshmi and Khandjo Nevase Patil, both of whom belonged to Mali community. Savitribai and Jyotirao had no children of their own. It is said that they adopted Yashwantrao, a son born to a Brahmin widow. At the time of her marriage Savitribai was an illiterate. Jyotirao educated Savitribai at their home. She also enrolled herself in two teacher's training programs. The first was at institution run by an American missionary, Cynthia Farrar, in Ahmednagar. The second course was at a Normal School in Pune. Given her training, Savitribai may have been the first Indian woman teacher and headmistress. Savitribai's birthdate, i.e., 3 January, is celebrated as Balika Din in the whole of Maharashtra, especially in girls' schools. After completing her teacher's education, Savitribai Phule started teaching girls at Maharanwadi in Pune. She did so alongside Sagunabai who was a revolutionary feminist as well as a mentor to Jyotirao. Not long after beginning to teach with Sagunabai, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule along with Sagunabai started their own school at Bhide Wada. Bhide Wada was the home of Tatyasaheb Bhide, who was inspired by the work that the trio was doing. The curriculum at Bhide Wada included traditional western curriculum of mathematics, science, and social studies. By the end of 1851, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule were running three different schools for girls in Pune. Combined, the three schools had approximately one hundred and fifty students enrolled. Like the curriculum, the teaching methods employed by the three schools differed from those used in government schools. Phule methods were regarded as being superior to those used by government schools. As a result of this reputation, the number of girls receiving their education at the Phule's schools outnumbered the number of boys enrolled in government schools.

Savitribai was also a published author and a poet. She published 'Karya-Phule' in 1854 and 'Bhawan Kashi Subhod Ratanakar' in 1892, and also a poem entitled 'Go, get education' in which she encouraged those who were excluded from attaining education.

Unfortunately, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule's success came with much resistance from the local community with conservative views. Savitribai often travelled to her school carrying an extra sari because she would be assailed by her conservative opposition with stones, dung, and verbal abuse. The Phules faced such strong opposition from the conservative and dominant castes (Brahmin) because they belonged to the oppressed caste (Mali, OBCs). The Sudra castes and women had been denied education for thousands of years. For this reason, many Brahmins/orthodox began to oppose Jyotirao and Savitribai's work and labelled it as 'evil'. This uproar was always instigated by the upper castes. Up until 1849, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule were living at Jyotirao's father's home. However, in 1849, Jyotirao's father asked the couple to leave his home because their work was considered a sin as per the 'Manusmriti' and its derived Brahmanical texts.

After moving out of Jyotirao's father's home, the Phules moved in with the family of one of Jyotirao's friends, Usman Sheikh. It was there that Savitribai met a soon to be close friend and colleague named Fatima Begum Sheikh. According to Nasreen Sayyed, a leading scholar on Sheikh, Fatima Sheikh knew how to read and write already; her brother Usman who was a friend of Jyotirao, had encouraged Fatima to take up the teacher training course. She went along with Savitribai to the Normal School and they both graduated together. She was the first Muslim woman teacher of India. Fatima and Savitribai opened a school in Sheikh's home in 1849. In 1850s, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule established two educational trusts. They were entitled the Native Female School, Pune and the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahars, Mangs, etc. These two trusts ended up encompassing many schools which were led by Savitribai Phule and later, Fatima Sheikh. Together with her husband, she taught children from different castes and had opened a total of 18 schools. The couple also opened a care center called Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha (Literally, Child-killing Prohibition Home) for pregnant rape victims and helped deliver and save their children. Savitribai and her adopted son, Yashwant, opened a clinic to treat those affected by the worldwide Third Pandemic of the bubonic plague when it appeared in the area around Nalasopara in 1897. The clinic was established at stern outskirts of Pune, in an area free of infection. Savitribai died a heroic death trying to save the son of Pandurang Babaji Gaekwad. Upon learning that Gaekwad's son had contracted the Plague in the Mahar settlement outside of Mundhwa, Savitribai Phule rushed to his side and carried him on her back to the hospital. In the process, Savitribai Phule caught the Plague and died at 9 PM on 10 March, 1897. In today's India, women are achieving desired goals and are competing with men in every line of work. Indian women are now leading many organizations and have elected as President, Prime Minister and Chief Ministers. Women of India must remember her contributions towards welfare of womenfolk especially girl children.

## Irrelevance of Vidhan Parishads

■ OKMAR DATTATRAY

It is not without valid and sound basis that Vidhan Parishads are irrelevant in Indian democracy. Thus, Vidhan Sabhas are superfluous and are not needed in our parliamentary democracy leave alone for accommodating those people who fail to elect through proper elections. The upper houses also called as the house of elders are a drain on the country's exchequer and as such it should be done away with for the good of the Indian political system and democracy. The presence of the upper houses or the legislative councils in the Indian states and union territories as well at the national level the Raj Sabha only inflates budgets of the concerned governments and in case of the national level it increases the expenditure of the union government and therefore there is no need for the upper houses in our democratic system. The bicameral system is only a burden on the parliamentary democracy. In the Indian scheme of things it has become a tool and technique to accommodate the blue eyed ones to the upper houses in the states and at the national level as well. There is need for the reform of our system of the democracy and we should not blindly copy the practices prevalent in the western democracies and so we should prone the bicameral system and eliminate the upper houses for the sake of the economy of the country and for making the system more representative and democratic. Therefore there is no need for the house of elders in our parliamentary democracy except to adjust those who fail the test of the elections and thus get nominated to the upper houses. The house of elders do not serve the democracy in any manner and therefore the upper houses should not be allowed to continue for the good of the political system and parliamentary democracy. The bicameral system only leads to delays in making of the laws in the country as the legislations have to pass through the route of the upper houses and therefore it leads to unnecessary delay in passing of the laws. In Indian scheme of things it has been experienced that the upper house causes delay in the passage of the laws and thus the presence of the bicameral system does hardly contribute to the strengthening of the democratic traditions and therefore the upper houses are redundant and as such they should not be allowed to continue.

Help Monetarily. It is a harsh reality that many orphanages in the country are facing an 'excess' due to which they are unable to offer the best environment for children. Many of these institutions keep working despite dire challenges.

Society must make sure that those who make it their life's calling to help such vulnerable children get some financial support and also treated with dignity. Take a little effort to help these orphanages that truly work like messengers of God to help such children. Your small financial support can bring a positive difference in a child's life forever. Further, you can approach such children at orphanages and social service organizations and make them aware about free educational opportunities for them. There are many schools and colleges that provide education to such children along with offering skill-development programs. Let them know about it and reap its long-term benefits.

To sum up, if you have intent, diverse ways are available to help such children who are forced to live a miserable life in the absence of their parents. A single step, no matter how small, can change the destiny of such children forever. Just give it a try and bring hope to the life of at least one such child.

God gave him a stone and told him to ask everyone its

value, but not to sell it. The man took that stone and went to an orange seller. He showed it to orange seller and asked him about its value. The orange seller answered that I can give you 10 oranges for this precious stone. He apologized to him and said that God has told me not to sell it and went away. Now, he went to a vegetable seller and asked same question. In reply, vegetable seller answered that I can give you a sack of potatoes for the stone but he again apologized and went away. Now, he approached a jeweller and asked him same question, in reply the jeweler said that he can give a ring for the precious stone. Again, he apologized and went away. Finally, he reached a precious stone-seller and enquired about the value of stone, who answered that he can give Rs 50 lakh for it. The man got surprised and became speechless. On seeing him silent, the stone-seller told him if Rs 5 lakh is less, than I can give you a maximum of Rs 2 crore but will you give me the precious stone. The man didn't give him the stone and went back to God and asked now please tell me what is

value? God said as a precious stone was deserving Rs 2 crore but orange seller was giving you only 20 oranges for it, similarly, your value is very precious but people do not understand it and judge you on basis of their information and the way they see you. Only I know that you are very valuable but not people because they only judge you on basis of what they see. Same is the story of your life, marks hardly matter, they don't have value, but the people who judge you on basis of marks have same information and ideology like that of orange seller. Those who are like stone-sellers will definitely praise you because they know what your value is. A three-digit number can never decide your future or personality. Just remember marks and merit cannot predict what you are, but your hard work predicts and decides. So always remember what the famous couplet of Allama Iqbal, 'Girtai Hain Shehsawar Maidan-e- Jung Mein, Woh Tifl Hi Kya Girey Jo Ghutnon Ke Ball Chalen.'

Mool Raj.

## YOUR COLUMN

## Marks really don't matter

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my deep concern regarding marks secured by the students in various examinations, through the medium of your esteemed daily newspaper for J&K UT students as results of various classed will be declared in near few months or days. Results bring a happiness or grief for students as who get shining percentage, get happy while few unlucky become sad due to less marks. Students who think that they are losers after getting low percentage are totally wrong. Marks can never decide what you are or what you will be. You are still worth and valuable. Let me quote a story to make you understand and refresh your mind: Once a person asked God what is my value?

God gave him a stone and told him to ask everyone its