

EMPOWERING YOUNG SCIENTISTS

The present Government has always advocated introduction of various scientific advancements in science and information technology in every sphere of life, which is presently giving desired results. Moreover, efforts are being made to inculcate an interactive and scientific approach among the youngsters from the very beginning, means school level so that their vision can be enhanced as per the competitive world. Further, special stress is being accorded for empowerment of young scientists as it is a fact that youth are future of every nation. In this regard, an International Webinar titled 'Inputs to Policy on Empowering Young Scientists' was conducted jointly by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India, the Indian National Young Academy of Sciences (INYAS), and the Indian Institute of Technology - Banaras Hindu University. The webinar was a part of the Office of PSA's initiative on Empowering Young Scientists with the aim to collate inputs on a new policy document to nurture and empower the next generation of young scientists and researchers (?45 years) in India that would translate into excellence in scientific and technological leadership for furthering the research and development in the country. Speakers from different parts of the world participated and gave their inputs. The speakers at the webinar were Professor T K Oommen, Michigan, Technological University, USA; Dr Manu Vora, ASQ Fellow, Chairman and President, Business Excellence, Inc., USA; Professor Anupma Prakash, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, University of Alaska; Professor Ganesh Bora, Associate Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Fayetteville State University; Professor Manoj K Shukla, Professor of Soil Physics, New Mexico State University, USA; Dr Keshav Swarnkar, Consultant General Surgeon, Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport, UK; Professor Nitin K. Tripathi, Professor (Remote sensing and GIS), Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok; Professor Sanjay K. Shukla, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia; Professor Bipashyee Ghosh, Research Fellow, Deep Transition, University of Sussex, UK; Professor Vikram Alva, Project Leader, Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology, Germany. The salient points which emerged from the webinar include recommendations for funding support for early career researchers; freedom to take up research in their area of interest; skill development - both hard and soft skills; involvement in decision-making; easing of administrative procedures for undertaking international collaborations; rewards and recognition of early career scientists and spreading awareness about opportunities for career growth to retain and encourage young researchers; spreading awareness on opportunities for collaboration and funding by investing in the networking of young scientists; good mentorship programmes and incentives for mentors; education on research ethics, research paper publications and supporting patent filing. These recommendations will be included in the final policy document that will emerge as an outcome of the consultations with scientists and researchers in India and the Indian diaspora done through questionnaire circulated to scientists and researchers (? 45 years of age) across India to get their feedback, the international webinar held on January 9, 2023, and an upcoming brainstorming session to be held in IIT BHU with young and senior scientists across the country. Speaking on occasion, Prof Ajay K Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, said, "It is our constant endeavour to empower the young scientists of India as it is an investment for the future of India."

OFF 'D' CUFF

As we grow anxious, we also become defensive, losing humility which is the basic tenet of spiritualism. As ego shoots up, the capability to absorb declines. New ideas, thoughts and alternatives become strange as seeking ceases. The other name of spiritualism is 'seeking' - the enormous thirst to know. Knowing is possible only when there is space to collect.

To become defensive is a natural tendency of the mind. Even when we are wrong, we want others to say that we are right. But we need to emancipate from this narrow confinement. By casting our idea as a small mole in the backdrop of a huge canvas of the universe, we can realise its limitedness and develop respect for alternatives. Even when the opponent is offensive, the benefit of the doubt principle can work effectively. Through practice, humility becomes a part of existence; even after thousands of provocations, one does not get agitated.

The path of devotion, as Sri Ramakrishna says, is easiest and convenient, and its essence is humility. Even when someone demolishes our ideas and beliefs, we are not supposed to retort. The best approach is to leave the place instead of entering any altercation. Even polite interjections may not work many times; why to waste energy, then? Being generous in forgiving is the best practice.

However, it does not mean that you continue to mingle with someone who tries to harm you. Maintaining a

-Arup Mitra

Nurture humility, key to realising the ultimate

safe distance in every respect is the most desirable approach.

Silence creates the opportunity to communicate with oneself. We acquire depth through such communications and it is this depth that enriches humility; through humility we mature and get closer to our own existence.

We have to be extra careful that whatever we do or say does not take us too far from our pursuits. If it does, then returning to the original seeking may get longer as adjustments will be time consuming.

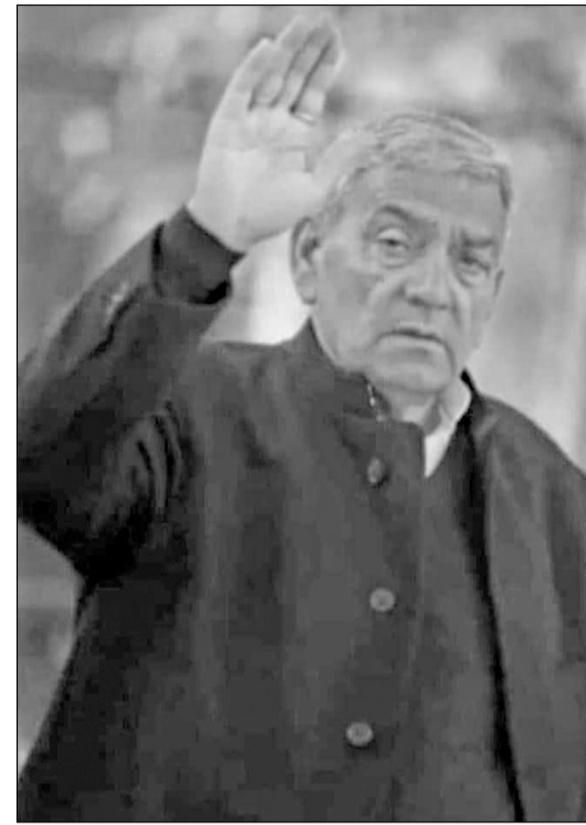
The path of devotion which recommends complete surrender with humility tries to encompass every action as a part of spiritual pursuits. In this process, the doer does not allow the ego to dominate. And at the same time, full attention is paid to attain perfection, because the action we do in the material world is considered as service to the universal spirit. At the mental plane, we can offer ourselves in the form of a lamp, a flower, and water-drops to the super consciousness. We can dedicate the work that we do in the material world in the same vein. This process helps attain higher levels in the path of spiritualism but without being conscious of any sense of achievement. We realise the transitoriness of everything including our body, and at the same time, take the opportunity of our existence and make its best use.

-Arup Mitra

Life & Influence of Yashpal Sharma: A Tribute

■ DR SUSHIL KUMAR SHARMA

When the sea is calm, anyone can steer the ship,' as Publius Syrus once put it. The mere words admit that only a small number of people have the strength of character, resolve, and perseverance to pull the ship out of the depths of troubled waters. One such personage had a huge impact on our lives and was truly one of a kind in the whole Pir Panchal area; he helped millions of people find their way through the labyrinth of prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. With much reverence and admiration, I refer to Yashpal Sharma, who has seen the development of different geographical and political formulations against the shifting backdrop of social and political events in the State of J&K since 1947. He gave everything he had to his society and to humanity. Through the movement he spearheaded in 1978, advocating regional disparities and job discrimination for the meritorious populace, he demonstrated both the principled position and the moral force underpinning it that were crucial in eradicating the system of corruption, nepotism, and poor governance. The ex-regent of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Minister for Health, Dr Karan Singh, said, "The violence in Poonch is emblematic of the popular discontent in the region." The significance of the movement can be grasped from this declaration. Remarkably, he came out the other side of this struggle without animosity, determined to build a new community based on open dialogue and mutual respect. The microcosm of brotherhood he helped preserve in the Pir Panchal region was in large part due to his use of dialogue and understanding in a region ravaged by terrorism and recurrent cross-border tensions. And when entrenched interests tried to tarnish and contaminate the traditional camaraderie among residents of this border district in August 2008, his effort to restore mutual confidence and faith among the people was particularly commendable, as observed by the renowned historian K D Maini. When terrorist activity was first detected in the area, he and other community leaders held numerous meetings with the public to bolster morale. Anything could happen, he told Prof Sumantra Bose in a 2003 interview, emphasising that the surrounding villages were teeming with militants (P.N. 155, Kashmir Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace). This sheds light on how he sees the scenario unfolding right now. Most of the villagers were forced to flee their homes that year owing to violations of the ceasefire, but he and his friends not only welcomed them with



open arms but also visited the camps frequently to provide psychological and material support to the families. Aware of the difficulties border residents face on a daily basis and concerned about ingressions on traditional brotherhood among people of different faiths and understandings, he emphasised the importance of spiritual and religious institutions in fostering interpersonal behaviours and attitudes that emphasise a range of positive and pro-social goals (such as interpersonal warmth and friendliness, love, compassion, harmony, tolerance, and forgiveness) and that mitigate anti-social behaviour. With this goal in mind, he helped build various community halls for the locals and worked to protect Poonch's spiri-

tual and cultural traditions. His determination to give solace to a population bearing the brunt of terrorism and border tensions for decades is seen in the recently built NavGreh Temple, which is only three kilometres from the actual line of control.

Noting that he works in accordance with the worldview of activists who prioritise a problem-solving approach is essential at this juncture. While serving as president of the Poonch Municipal Council and a member of the J&K Legislative Council, he advocated for more citizen participation in local government. To this day, his tenure as mayor is remembered as Poonch's 'golden era' across all socioeconomic classes. While also serving on the Legislative Council, he oversaw the timely completion of all of his projects and the fair distribution of his CDF to individuals in need around the state. He claims to value openness, public participation, and personal responsibility in the workplace, all of which point to him being an advocate of good governance. From his vantage point, advancing the 'good governance' paradigm which emphasises, among other things, responsiveness, predictability, openness, accountability, the rule of law, public involvement, and consensus building-was the key to breaking the current impasse around the world and in J&K in particular. Given that these regions share a border with a hostile neighbour, he believed that the absence of higher education possibilities in these areas is a problem for both the general welfare of those who live there and for the nation as a whole. After coming to this conclusion, he questioned the relevant authorities during the legislature session about the reasons for the long delay in constructing the Poonch University Campus and establishing the requisite technical institutes. His dedication to updating the district hospital's infrastructure and technological equipment is indicative of his unparalleled interest in providing state-of-the-art medical treatment to the people living in the inaccessible border belt. In addition, he discussed the need for an industrial complex and for incentives for young people without jobs to create their own firms in a variety of formal and public settings. For decades, he struggled alongside people from all walks of life to establish social justice and a culture of peace. On the anniversary of the day he left us, may we never forget to use his life as inspiration and to answer his call to action in order to make society a more just, humane, and equitable place for all.

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Homage to Swami Vivekananda on National Youth Day

■ PURAN CHAND SHARMA

It was really a great thinking and commendable action on the part of union dispensation of the times to declare the birth day of Swami Vivekananda (12.1. 1863) as National Youth Day in the year 1984. At the time of his birth, country was passing through an extremely difficult phase of existence. Britain had been ruling the country and was in very powerful position. Most of the Indian kings had surrendered to the alien ruling establishment. First war of Independence 1857 had ended without substantial gains in our favor but it generated intense fear psychosis in the mind of British rulers. In this twilight hour, a child prodigy divinely endowed with phenomenal energy was born on 12.1.1863 in the family of Vishwanath Datta and Bhuvaneswari Devi in Kolkata. The child was extraordinary in behavior and too intractable to cope up with. Mother persistently experienced tough time to tackle the growing child in early childhood. He was named as Narendranath Dutt and his schooling happened in Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar's Metropolitan Institution wherein Narendra received Western education. Whilst at school teachers found him to be all together different from all other students. By virtue of his uncanny power of concentration and pin pointed mind he consistently left an indelible impression on his teachers who experienced over the period of time that, "Narendra had prodigious memory and tremendous intellectual capacity." He further pursued his studies in college, passed fine Arts Examination in 1881 and obtained Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in the year 1884 with the subjects such as Western Philosophy, European History, Sanskrit scriptures, Bengali Literature and Indian Classical Music. At this critical juncture powerful feelings and ideas relating to spirituality, existence or presence of GOD were constantly occurring in youthful mind. Where ever and whenever he happened to come across a wandering monk or ascetic, he used to hanker after them to understand whether he has seen God and could enable me to have a glimpse of Almighty but in vain. His curiosity and search for Supreme Being was growing more and more intense and feverish. Ultimately his firm resolve and iron will accomplished his success story of experiencing and realizing God when he somehow happened to arrive in Dakshineswar Temple to be the disciple of Shri Ram Krishna Paramhans in the year 1881. This proved to be the turning point in his life. Swami Ram Krishna answered all his tormenting queries with perfect ease and utmost confidence. He said, I have seen God and can show you. Ram Krishna had magnetic personality which influenced him deeply and meticulously settled on spiritual path. In due course of time Narendra transformed into a chief disciple of Ram Krishna.

Here onwards commenced the most testing time for undaunted Narendra as his father passed away in 1884 leaving the family bankrupt sans any other source of living. Mother expected Narendra to shoulder the responsibility of beleaguered Datta family but Narendra was too engrossed in his unending spiritual jour-

ney. Guru Ram Krishna was not only tutoring him in spiritual education but also sensitizing him in respect of the major challenges and the colossal problems the country was confronted with in those turbulent times. Swami Ram Krishna by dint of his mystic and spiritual powers could have a glimpse of profuse vital energy of Narendra and ably harnessed it fully in the service of the enslaved Nation in those difficult times. He had been fully groomed for the mission ahead. However, things abruptly took a worse turn once again for Narendra now a monk, an ascetic metamorphosed into Swami Vivekananda when his Guru left for his heavenly abode in the year 1886. It was a big jolt and a nasty setback for the young Monk just taking off for the Historic Mission.

National Youth Day: The momentous decision to celebrate January 12, as National youth Day was taken to apprise the youth of the country about his immense contribution in motivating the eligible youngsters to join the ongoing nationwide movement for holistic freedom from British Rulers. As inspired by his mentor and Guru, he undertook a comprehensive tour of the entire country, interacted with youth in colleges and universities and received tremendous response. Accordingly the youth participation increased manifold which accelerated the crusade for freedom. He also enrolled young people as his workers for various missionary activities. He together with other monastic disciples founded famous Belur Math as well as Ram Krishna Mission for furthering the spiritual and patriotic activities which is still in action. He also worked relentless-

ly for education of women. The young monk was also dead against the practice of caste based untouchability and discrimination. He did not get bogged down despite severe opposition of his co-monks. Swami considered all these social evils as the greatest sin. In that dark era of slavery when people in the foreign countries held India in low esteem, Vivekananda made up his mind to participate in World parliament of religions to be held in Chicago in September 1893. Despite grave odds he attended the World Parliament with the help of Prof. John Wright of Harvard University and addressed the Parliament of 7000 delegates on 11.9.1893 as a young Indian Monk of 30 years. His opening remarks "Dear sisters and brothers....." Drew profuse applause and standing ovation from the distinguished crowd. Crux and dominant theme of his short speech was "Universality and Harmony of the world religions". He also emphasized on religious tolerance, advocated emancipation of women and an end to the worst excess of caste system. American press highlighted him as Star Speaker of the event who captivated the audience with his Personality and powerful speech. He also earned fame as Hindu monk who introduced Indian philosophy, yoga and Vedanta to the western world. He founded Vedanta society of New York in the year 1894. After accomplishment of his mission on foreign land, he returned to India and carried on his noble work with same zeal and enthusiasm for accomplishment of his divine goal till he left this mortal world in 4.7.1902. His message still inspires 'Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' Jai Bharat.

Future of nation depends on youth

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rightly said that the coming decade belongs to the youth and lauded them for believing in the system and questioning it when it does not respond properly. 12th January is celebrated as the National Youth Day every year since 1985 which has been an indelible part of India's tradition. Incidentally, this was also the day when Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest social reformers, thinkers, and philosophers of India, was born. He was the pioneer in leading the youth to meaningful protests through associations. The philosophy, ideas, and teachings of Swami Vivekananda can justifiably be called national assets from traditional and cultural points of view. At the same time, the youth are the future of our country. He belonged to the 19th century, yet his message and his life are more relevant today than in the past and perhaps, will be more relevant in future because persons like Swami Vivekananda do not cease to exist with their physical death. Addressing his recent 'Mann Ki Baat', Modi said that the youth hate anarchy and disorder and dislike casteism, nepotism and favouritism, remarks that come in the backdrop of recent violent protests in various university campuses over the Citizenship Amendment Act and proposed NRC. Swami Vivekananda had said, "My faith is in the

younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will become my workers they will work out the whole problem. They will spread my message from centre to centre until we cover the whole of India. He had to arise and awake a Nation which 'felt like a slave, under the shadow of the British and the west. It would be difficult to name any freedom fighter that time and afterward also, who were not influenced by the thoughts, ideals, and patriotism of Swami. Actually, if we analyze critically we will find that development of oneness, unity and the role of Indian became clear to everybody only after the speeches and works of Swami Vivekananda. In many places during his lecture session he said, "Our country requires a hero, be a hero, stand firm like a rock. Be brave, be brave Man dies but once". Youth are everything, they have the capability to do anything out of the box, the only thing they need is the direction or a mentor for the future of our country. Today the youth need safe spaces where they can come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision making processes and freely express themselves. The youth is considered to be the best asset of any country and investment in the human resource promises astonishing returns. Swami Vivekananda's teachings and Philosophy is very much relevant today. The number of problems that the nation is facing today

can be solved through his teachings. Swami's life and speeches are capable enough to develop in anybody the patriotic feelings and in return, the person is bound to contribute in the Nation Building. His call to the nation is: "Arise, awake; wake up yourself, and awaken others. Achieve the consummation of life before you pass off. Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." I would like to conclude with one of his quotation "My hope of the future lies in the youths of character, intelligent, renouncing all for the service of others, and obedient - good to themselves and the country at large". Our elders need to understand that a little space and trust shown in them will open the doors of the opportunities for the youngsters. Citing the cases when youth vociferously react whenever an incident of disorder takes place and make a video of it to make the culprit realize the consequence, Modi exhorted youth to give a thought to this responsibility and take a resolve on Vivekananda's birth anniversary on January 12. Swami Vivekananda taught us the essence of nationalism in his bold writings. He wrote, "Our sacred motherland is the land of religion and philosophy- the birthplace of the spiritual giants-the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man."

PROGRESSING J&K

ATDP, URIF to encourage, incentivize best performing Municipalities

Jammu and Kashmir Government will encourage and incentivize best performing Municipalities through additional grant-in-aid in the form of Urban Reform Incentive Fund (URIF) under Aspirational Towns Development Programme (ATDP). The ranking of the Municipalities across J&K will be based on the performance as per the benchmarks prescribed under Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Development Index-2022 (J&K MDI-2022). Special funds will also be provided for building capacities and covering gaps in these Municipalities. J&K MDI-2022 is a tool to assess the development of Urban Local

Bodies across the Union Territory of J&K against the normative development benchmarks.

While J&K MDI will act as a guide to evidence-based policy making, catalyse action to achieve broader developmental outcomes, including the Sustainable Development Goals, assess and compare the outcomes achieved by municipal bodies, give citizens an insight into the functioning of local bodies and build a dialogue between the stakeholders, the URIF will provide necessary financial incentive to Municipalities to undertake reforms, in their journey of becoming Aspirational Towns. Notably, J&K rolled

out ATDP, the URIF to incentivize undertaking of reforms in Municipalities, and the Assessment Framework for rating various Municipalities. Since the 74th Amendment Act gave constitutional recognition to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) as the third tier of governance in 1993, municipalities have become pivotal to urban governance. It is therefore apparent that the development and governance of the cities is determined by the functioning of Municipalities. They are the key agents that provide the enablers into making a city 'Smart, and Sustainable. The assessment framework examines the sectoral performance of

Municipalities across a set of 7 verticals/pillars, namely Quality of Life and Services; Economic Ability; Technology; Urban Planning, Governance, Sustainability & Climate Resilience and Citizen Perception, which include 37 sectors/categories and 138 indicators. The Municipal Development Index will also act as a guide to evidence-based policy making, catalyse action to achieve broader developmental outcomes including the Sustainable Development Goals, assess and compare the outcomes achieved by municipal bodies, give citizens an insight into the functioning of local bodies and hold them accountable.