


SHOWCASING RICH HERITAGE

To realize the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to showcase India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places to the people of India and the world, Indian Railways is going to run its Bharat Gaurav Deluxe AC Tourist Train on a very special tour 'Shri Ram-Janaki Yatra: Ayodhya to Janakpur' covering two most significant pilgrimage sites Ayodhya and Janakpur from the neighboring countries India and Nepal. The tourist train will start from Delhi on February 17, 2023 and this initiative will strengthen the bilateral relations and also promote the cultural relations between the two countries. The tourist train will include the visit of Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Kashi and Prayagraj as added attractions in the tour. There will be two night stays in the hotels, one each at Janakpur and Varanasi respectively, while the visit of Ayodhya, Sitamarhi and Prayagraj will be covered in the day halt at the destination. The State of Art Deluxe AC Tourist Train has a host of astounding features including two fine dining restaurants, a modern kitchen, shower cubicles in coaches, sensor based washroom functions, foot massager. The fully air-conditioned train provides two types of accommodation viz. 1st AC and 2nd AC. The train has enhanced security features of CCTV cameras and Security Guards for each coach and also equipped with infotainment system in the entire train. The proposed 7-day Bharat Gaurav Tourist train tour has its first stop at Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama, where tourists will visit Shri Ram Jannbhoomi temple and Hanuman temple and additionally Bharat Mandir at Nandigram. After Ayodhya, the train will move to Sitamarhi Railway station in Bihar and tourist will further proceed to Janakpur in Nepal by buses which is 70 Km away from Sitamarhi Railway station. During the stay at Janakpur, tourist can visit to Ram Janki Temple, Sita Ram Vivah Mandap and Dhamsh Dham. After visiting Janakpur, on the next day tourist will return back to Sitamarhi and visit Janki temple at Sitamarhi and Punaura Dham. From Sitamarhi, train will proceed on overnight journey to Varanasi. While at Kashi, tourists will visit Sarnath, Kashi Vishwanath temple & corridor, Tulsi temple and Sankat Mochan Hanuman temple. Tourists will move from Varanasi to Prayagraj by bus and visit Sangam, Shankar Viman Mandapam, Hanuman temple and Bharadvaj Ashram. After Prayagraj, the train will return back to Delhi on the 7th day of its journey. Guests will be travelling roughly 2,500 Km in this tour. In order to make this package more attractive and affordable to a large population, IRCTC has tied up with Paytm and Razorpay payment gateways for providing EMI payment option for breaking the total payment in small amount EMIs. Users can avail the EMI payment option for making payment in 3, 6, 9, 12, 18 or 24 month EMIs. These EMI payment options can be made through Debit/Credit Cards. COVID-19 final Vaccination is mandatory for all guests of the age of 18 years and above. Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train launch is in line with the Government of India initiative 'Dekho Apna Desh' to promote domestic tourism. At a price range starting from Rs. 39,775 per person, train will be a 7 days all inclusive tour package and the price will cover train journey in respective class, Night stay at AC hotels, all meals (vegetarian), all transfer & sight-seeing in buses, travel Insurance and services of guide etc.



OFF 'D' CUFF

Putting more life into our lives is real life

What is the meaning of life? The simplest yet the most meaningful response to this question came to me from my spiritual teacher, Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur: “Life in life is the real life.”

When we ruminate further, we understand that life is an experience. And any experience can be either subjective or objective. An objective experience identifies with the material world and is fact-based, like ‘the sun rises in the east’ or ‘the earth is round’. This is common for all. Whereas a subjective experience identifies with the inner world and is opinion-based – like ‘it’s best to wake up in the morning’ or ‘let us begin our day with positive intentions’. It can be unique to each one; it is our personal perception of reality.

Objective and subjective experiences are not independent of each other. An experiment conducted at Johns Hopkins University, gave evidence that it is nearly impossible to separate the objective and subjective experiences. We cannot fully separate our perception from the actual reality.

“Our subjective approach to the world stays with us,” says lead author Jorge Morales, the Perception and Mind Lab. “Even when we try to perceive the world the way it really is, we can’t completely discard our perspective.”

For example, our spiritual experiences are subjective and can never be negated. The objective and subjective experiences are always to be integrated. Our feelings and perceptions are very much integrated with actual events or tangible things. We can integrate

Humility is not cowardice. Meekness is not weakness. Humility and meekness are indeed spiritual powers.

-Swami Sivananda

Makar Sankranti heralds change of season

■ VINOD CHANDRASHEKHAR DIXIT

January 14, the Makar Sankranti (Uttarayan) day heralds the change of season. An event is best experienced at the heart of all the action. Makar Sankranti or Uttarayan - the kite flying festival in Ahmadabad - the world heritage city is synonymous with kite flying. It is celebrated across the country in different ways and the cultural significance of the festival varies geographically. Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious days for the Hindus, and is celebrated in almost all parts of the country in myriad cultural forms, with great devotion, fervor & gaiety. The word 'Makar' means Capricorn and 'Sankranti' is transition. The term Uttarayana is derived from two different Sanskrit words 'Uttara' (North) and 'Ayana' (movement), thus indicating a northward movement of the Sun on the celestial sphere. The international kite festival in Ahmadabad kite

flyers from across the country and the world. Kite enthusiasts from across India and also foreign countries are participating in the week-long festival that is being celebrated across cities in Gujarat. The festival of Uttarayan marks the day when winter begins to turn into summer, according to the Indian calendar. The days become longer, the skies clearer and the breeze cooler. A feeling of anticipation, joy and jubilation grips all who celebrate the occasion of thanksgiving and merry-making. Being popular as the Kite festival in Gujarat, it is also famous as the beginning of the harvest season and is celebrated on the same day of the English Calendar every year.

Kite flying during Makar Sankranti or Uttarayan is an important part of the celebrations. One of the reasons is that as it is a time of thanksgiving, it is also a time to be happy. Though Kite festival is celebrated all over Gujarat, it is the

most exciting in the capital city of Ahmadabad. The International Kite Festival (Uttarayan) in Ahmadabad is regarded as one of the biggest festivals celebrated. Months before the festival, homes in Gujarat begin to manufacture kites for the festival. Today, manufacturing of kites is a serious business. It attracts big names of the corporate world as kites provide for the most cost-effective opportunity for branding. Kites for Uttarayan are made of special lightweight paper and bamboo and are mostly rhombus shaped with central spine and a single bow. The festival gives boost to the kite industry which employs around 3 lakh people. A visit to the Patang (Kite) Bazaar in the middle of the night proves beyond all doubt that the entire population of Ahmadabad city is obsessed with kites and they crowd the streets and buy the stocks while negotiating and enjoying through the night. The Patang Bazaar is open 24 hours a day

during the Uttarayan week. All sorts of colourful shiny toys act as accompaniments to the kites. On Uttarayan, in Ahmadabad the sky is full of colourful kites of all sizes and shapes. One finds an unequalled experience. In the major cities of Ahmadabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, and Jamnagar the skies appear filled with thousands upon thousands of kites as people enjoy two full days of Uttarayan on their terraces. Wonderful and appealing kites in various shapes and hues decorate the sky like a thousand fowls. On this day, locals are hardly seen on the streets as everybody takes to the rooftop of their respective houses to fly kites. In Gujarat, a special winter vegetable called undhiyo is the specialty of the day. It's a preparation of several beans, roots and other local seasonal vegetables. It does not matter what your background or beliefs are but if you are in Gujarat on 14 January, you will doubt find yourself flying kites with everyone sharing fun and pleasure.

Sky in eyes, ground under feet

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

To be successful in life it is important to have patience and work dedicatedly hard toward your dreams. Nothing is free in life, and hence we need to put in all our efforts and push our limits to the extreme to achieve big things in life. Besides, setbacks and disappointments are indeed a part of everyone's journey, and we should accept them as they come. We should always focus on the present and do it with utmost care and dedication to create a better and happier tomorrow. We should talk less and work more. This will not only help us achieve our goals in the minimum possible time but will also give us some much-needed energy to invest in our important tasks. The world only cares about what we do, not what we say we will do. The words we say are usually of little importance compared to the actions we do. We should talk less and work more. This will not only help us achieve our goals in the minimum possible time but will also give us some much-needed energy to invest in our important tasks. It is important to understand the fact that the energy that we have is really limited, and hence it becomes very necessary to use it wisely. It is important to accept the fact that our actions define us, not our choices. A winner always finds ways to turn the right ideas into good actions. He will look for ways to give in to his dreams and turn them into reality. Also, remember that reality is hard and not as simple as we make it out to be. To avoid the rush later, we should complete our

tasks in advance. It is also necessary to watch your decisions carefully and introspect them. Our actions define our reputation and integrity more than words. Failing to do what we say and repeating this behavior over and over again is detrimental to our character as others perceive us. It destroys our credibility. If we don't do what we say we're going to do, we lose credibility. Following every promise we make and failing to fulfill it also lowers our integrity. After this, our words have no meaning. It also breeds mistrust. Trust is built on small actions, not dramatic moments made for movies. Finally, it limits opportunity. When our team can't rely on the promises made, the opportunities for us to prove ourselves become fewer and fewer. If you are known to be someone who does not deliver on promises and expectations, then you will have to face the consequences. Try to be someone of your word. Especially when it's a "little thing", make sure you do it. After all, if you fail at the "little things", no one will trust you at the "big things". It is important to accept the fact that our actions define us, not our choices. A winner always finds ways to turn the right ideas into good actions. He will look for ways to turn his dreams into reality. Consistently doing what you say you say is the foundation of integrity.

The world only cares about what we do, not what we say we will do. The words we say are usually of little importance compared to the actions we do. Remember that life is actually a game and so we all should try to

win. Failure and disappointment are a part of everyone's life and it is useless to think more about these things.

It is more important to focus on the present and what will help you achieve your goals and forget about the past. Remember that winners don't do different things; They just do them differently. To be successful in life it is important to have patience and work dedicatedly hard toward your dreams. Nothing is free in life, and hence we need to put in all our efforts and push our limits to the extreme to achieve big things in life. Besides, setbacks and disappointments are indeed a part of everyone's journey, and we should accept them as they come. We should always focus on the present and do it with utmost care and dedication to create a better and happier tomorrow. We should talk less and work more. This will not only help us achieve our goals in the minimum possible time but will also give us some much-needed energy to invest in our important tasks.

It is important to understand the fact that the energy that we have is really limited, and hence it becomes very necessary to use it wisely. One should always value time because our life is made of it. So to achieve big things in life we need to work on the basics from the very beginning and strengthen our base. Always remember in life - he always becomes a winner, I am sure of this. Sky in the eyes, the ground under the feet.

(The author is Research Scholar in Political Science, poetess, freelance journalist and columnist).

Iran protests: US stubbornness & prejudiced opinion

■ MEHDI SARVAR

As per Ralph Walton Emerson, People only see what they are prepared to see. The unfortunate tragic death of Masha Amini, a 22 year old Kurd Sunni woman in Tehran, under the custody of guidance patrol reportedly arrested for defying Islamic Dress code and wearing an inappropriate attire has been making headlines for quite some time in leading news channels and finding mention in forums across the world though such incidents take place in every nook and corner of world.

The question is; what makes it special? The Iranian authorities have attributed her death to underlying disease denied by some quarters, which condemned it by terming it a murder.

In the wake of condemnations and sympathies, Iran's supreme leader terming it unfortunate and bitter incident saying "Our hearts are broken for the young girl," assumes huge significance.

The supreme leader breaking his silence on the unrest has accused the United States and Israel of planning the protests.

The question here arises where from US and its followers, whose track record on human rights is not satisfactory, derive authority to denounce this incident and support violent protesters leading to their further amplification.

Going by track record their interference in the affairs of other sovereign nations based on their vested interests has only resulted in violation and infringement of human rights and creation of human disasters from dropping atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to proxy war game being played in Ukraine.

In the name of liberation and empowerment they are targeting Iran through the medium of these protests by playing card of women empowerment.

US has a long history of racial discrimination which till date is going on as is evident from the protests that have been taking place for last three years there. One can ask as to why these protests didn't catch world attention even though participation of millions of people was observed.

The answer lies in the simple and straight fact that these protests were mostly peaceful because of their spontaneous nature unlike Iranian ones which were stimulated and biased attitude in terms of publicity.

The result of a recent investigation of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice associated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was that "The US, which is a leading State in formulating international human rights standards, is allowing its women to lag behind".

They declared that "the US is one of only seven countries which have not ratified the treaty, widely known as

CEDAW. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly which is described as an international bill of rights for women.

Now coming to dress code on the pretext of which US has been demanding regime change by undermining its socio cultural, historical, psychological, socio sexual, ethico-social and other dimensions besides neglecting its prevalence in almost all religions in one form or the other.

Our distancing from this dress code has been instrumental in raising crime against women in the form of rape. Going by statistics it is obvious that US and European countries advocating for rights of these women are at forefront in this regard.

The tragically ironical part of this story is that most of these cases go unreported there owing to poor outcome of results in favour of victims.

If we go by the logic of these so called civilised people regarding dress code as a constraint and impediment in the way of liberty, mental satisfaction of women and their empowerment, illegal drugs should also be favoured in agreement with this principle, again unfortunate part of this story is that developed countries led by US is promoting them through the medium of dark net with the help of crypto currency for their vested interests.

The way damage is done to the society by usage of these drugs is no more different to the scenario of dress code violation which in actual terms can be regarded as rust that is eating the basic fabric of humanity which is morality and paving the way for ethical vacuum. The fact of the matter is that avoidance of dress code and the perusal of the drugs are the two faces of same coin and are lethal for us as society. Psychologically these youth who are actually affected, fail to look at things from various perspectives because they have not yet had enough experience in life.

In most situations, their innocent, unsophisticated minds, simply cannot understand the difference between wrong and right until they develop into more sophisticated beings.

Another issue of grave concern that must find its place here is the unethical human experimentation in US which affect disadvantaged and marginalised groups and are performed in violation of UN and even US rules and regulations and human ethics.

Any way it is internal matter of Iranian nation and it's subjects after all tragic nature of death can't justify the intensity and nature of these protests. The efforts of playing victim card and fuelling the fire just to destabilise the nation in question has again gone vain

though they have been successful in widening the net of sanctions on the pretext of trivial and propagandistic issues. The killing of Iran General Qassim Sluimani three years back is shrouded with mystery.

When UN, US Congress and other concerned organisations and personalities have held it illegal and illegitimate and not supported by even the laws of US itself then what was the need to eliminate him in a provocative way with the reason that he was plotting to make attacks on US military establishment in middle east with no solid proof ever made on record.

The reality was that with Iraq as mediator, negotiations had been going on between Saudi Arabia and Iran and it is believed that he had been attending meeting with the purpose of passing an important and crucial message on behalf of Iran to Saudi Arabia that could have ensured betterment in their relations thus paving the way for stabilised middle east. Another issue is of obtaining nuclear weapons.

In the disguise of obtaining these weapons by Iran, US with the oblique purpose of restricting it's growth and development and trying to curb it's sphere of influence in world particularly in middle east, has been making efforts to fool other nations but Iran has always prevailed due to its sincerity.

The height of the hypocrisy can be gauged from the fact of its withdrawal from nuclear pact signed and still blaming Iran for not cooperating. US actually knows the fact about non perusal of a nuclear bomb by the country but is still hell bent on creating obstacles, troubles, confusions and interfering in the internal matters of a sovereign country.

In this regard a fatwa has been issued according to which the production, development, stockpiling and using any form of weapons of mass destruction is forbidden in Islam.

This fatwa has been announced publicly in October 2003, stated in August 2005 in IAEA and also stands mentioned on the official website of Syed Ali Khamnei. Still US and West is trying to question its integrity, authenticity, credibility and conformity.

According to Gareth Porter writing for foreign policy Iranian aversion to nuclear and chemical weapons is sincere because of the historical episode during its 8 year war with Iraq and Iran never sought revenge for chemical attacks against Iraq which killed 200000 Iranians and severely injured 100000 more. According to spiritual leader, "our people are our atom bomb" and it is in this context that US has realised it and is targeting them by way of policies based on concocted and clandestine means and ways.

In this transitional phase of evolving world order marked by emerging trends from unipolar and dipolar to multipolar

world order at this juncture that has already made the world affairs complex and creating chaos, instead of seeking his valuable inputs and expertise in this regard unfortunately cartoons have appeared.

Having said that there is also an urgent need for addressing loopholes that have surfaced while handling such unrest and shouldering responsibilities as far as administration is concerned because after all killing of large number of children can't be justified.

Moreover the use of capital punishment as a short term tool to address protests should be removed and replaced with a more convenient and universally acceptable alternative.

It will definitely prove helpful to minimise trust deficit between local dissidents and the regime and their hearts won besides taking care of the international voices which are trying to exploit this issue.

At the same time the ruling hardliners should also try to engage reformists besides minority Sunni leader Molvi Abdol Hamid who blamed the leader and held him responsible for recent killings in Zahedanan and who as per a short note on Sepah news has been accused by revolutionary guards of encouraging and agitating youth against the sacred Islamic Republic, to explore possibilities to solve all the issues under the ambit of country's constitution.

Anyway the oblique purpose lying behind this whole episode is to destabilise this country and bring regime change that will suit the interests of US and its followers. With the current spiritual leader growing old there has been lot of speculations going on with regard to his successor.

In this regard a number of names have come for discussion and reportedly formation of an informal committee has also taken place that has been entrusted with the task to zero on the most suitable person for the succession.

In this connection the two persons that are supposed to be the main contenders are the current president Ebrahim Raisi a hardliner and spiritual leader's own son Mujtaba Khamnei who is known to have close proximity to Revolutionary Guards. But according to the sources close to current spiritual leader Raisi has more chances due to the leader's tilt towards him and that he doesn't want to make it an issue of hierarchy. Raisi's election as president is being seen as an incremental step towards it.

These protests can be taken as a final endeavour from both external and internal entities who feel their interests are associated with the country and obsessed by this conservative ruling establishment to put an end to it by demanding regime change that is going to make sure the exit of present president Ibrahim Raisi from the race of succession to spiritual leader.

