

Z-MORH TUNNEL:
ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY

The Z-Morh Tunnel is a crucial infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity and facilitating year-round transportation in the remote and challenging terrains of Jammu & Kashmir. Situated on the Srinagar-Leh Highway (NH-1D), this strategically important tunnel is located near the town of Ganderbal, in the Kashmir Valley. The Z-Morh Tunnel is expected to revolutionize the region's connectivity, which has often been hindered due to harsh weather conditions, particularly during the winter months.

The tunnel will provide an all-weather road link to the town of Sonamarg and other areas in the region, significantly reducing travel time and ensuring that the road remains open year-round. This is particularly important because the Srinagar-Leh Highway, which is a lifeline for the region, is frequently closed due to heavy snowfall in winter.

The Z-Morh Tunnel, which is expected to be around 6.5 kilometers long, will allow vehicles to bypass the treacherous mountainous areas that are prone to avalanches and snow-blocked roads, making it a vital link in maintaining continuous connectivity.

The Z-Morh Tunnel, being built under the supervision of the Border Roads Organization (BRO), is designed to withstand the extreme weather conditions of the region. It will have a bi-lane structure and is equipped with modern ventilation and safety systems to ensure the safe passage of vehicles, even in adverse weather. The tunnel is part of a broader effort by the Indian government to improve infrastructure in Jammu & Kashmir, focusing on enhancing accessibility, boosting tourism, and supporting defense logistics in the strategically sensitive region.

The tunnel will not only benefit local commuters but will also play a pivotal role in enhancing tourism in the area, especially in Sonamarg, a popular tourist destination known for its scenic beauty.

By providing reliable access throughout the year, the Z-Morh Tunnel is expected to encourage greater tourist footfall, benefiting the local economy. Additionally, the Z-Morh Tunnel holds national significance due to its role in strengthening the defense logistics and operational capabilities of the Indian Army. The highway and tunnel will provide a safer and faster route for military convoys and supplies. In summary, the Z-Morh Tunnel is a game-changing infrastructure project that promises to enhance connectivity, safety, tourism, and defense logistics in J&K with long-term benefits for both the local population and the country.

Empowering Youth for a Resilient Future:
Celebrating National Youth Day 2025

■ PROF (DR.) JAIPAL SINGH



Swami Vivekananda, born as Narendranath Dutta on January 12, 1863, in Kolkata (then Calcutta), was a visionary spiritual leader, preacher, and social reformer. His teachings emphasized universal oneness, nationalism, character building, self-improvement, and rejecting superstitions. His words and actions inspired not only the youth of India but also the global community. Swami Vivekananda gained international recognition with his ground breaking speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893, where he introduced the concept of interfaith awareness to the Western world.

Swami Vivekananda's teachings resonate deeply with today's youth. He advocated values like selflessness, unity, truth and honesty while emphasizing the need for critical thinking and focused action. One of his famous quotes is: "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Success will come your way to touch your feet." He believed in the immense potential of youth. As per his vision, Youth is asource of change, possesses great capability of strengthening progress and isbulder of a strongnation.

GOI recognising the ideals and philosophies of Swami Vivekananda declared January 12 the National Youth Day (NYD) to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, a visionary who continued to inspire young minds and sternly emphasized the power of youth in nation-building.

NYD is being celebrated every year since 1985 with different themes to promote India's vision among the masses through the partici-



pation of Youth and Young minds. Some of the speaking themes from recent years are: Sabse Pehle Bharat(2011), Celebrating Diversity in Unity(2012). Awakening the Youth Power(2013), Youth for Drugs Free World(2014), 'Youngman and Youth for Clean, Green and Progressive India(2015), Indian Youth for Development, Skill and Harmony(2016), Youth for Digital India(2017), Sankalp ke Siddhi(2018)etc.

This year's theme for National Youth Day 2025 is "Empowering Youth: Building a Resilient Future." The theme is speaking itself of its significance i.e equipping youth with the tools to adapt, innovate, and lead a secured future. Concern of the Government of India is towards youth's involvement in nation building - by harnessing youthful energy, by utilising their creativity, ideas, thoughts, by addressing global challenges and by building sustainable/acceptable solutions with their fertile potential following the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda.

It is my strong belief that the youth of today

are the architects of tomorrow. Beyond academic learning, they are needed to be trained with the vision to multiply their critical thinking, problem-solving ability and strengthening of professional and leadership skills. Empowering them is not just an investment in their personal growth but a step toward building a strong and healthy society/nation that can innovate solutions to meet modern challenges and have the potential to bounce back from setbacks or difficulties so as to remain in alignment with the path of progress along with the rest of the world. By equipping young minds with accessible quality education, skill and vocational trainings, promoting digital literacy shall help us to prepare them for an ever-evolving world. Empowering youth also means creating an environment that values their voices and addresses their concerns for a resilient future where challenges are met with determination for sustainable progress.

Colleges across the nation organize events such as youth festivals, leadership workshops, and motivational speeches, seminars, cultural programs, debates, Sports competitions, essay contests and promotes various social initiatives to achieve the aims of the theme of NYD. Many institutions also engage students in community services, aligning with Vivekananda's call for serving humanity.

Teachers act as mentors, inspiring students to embrace positive values and guiding them in understanding Vivekananda's philosophies. Parents play a supportive role by encouraging participation and fostering a culture of discipline and compassion at home. Youth as role models set examples by promoting unity, creativity, and dedication to the well-being of society.

Both state and central governments play a crucial role by promoting initiatives that empower youth, such as skill development programs, scholarships, and awareness campaigns. National Youth Festivals, sponsored by the government, provide a platform for

young talents to shine. Its significance lies with the fact that PM Narendra Modi is to interact with 3000 young leaders selected through a merit based, multilevel selection process from over 30 lakh participants at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi today on Jan 12, 2025. Young leaders to present their vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 to PM Modi to ignite ideas for a brighter nation.

This day is special as it honours Swami Vivekananda's enduring message to the youth: to awaken, arise, and act with courage. His values of strength, wisdom, and selflessness inspire generations to build a better tomorrow and inclusive society. National Youth Day reminds us of the incredible potential of young people to shape the future and vision of the nation. It is a day for reflection, inspiration, and action. It is the time of the hour that families, educators, governments, and society must work together to nurture this potential. Without nurturing this potential any society/nation cannot fulfill its mission of success and achievements.

In gist, Author is of the view that Swami Vivekananda's message of empowerment, selflessness, and nation-building continues to inspire young people. He believed in the immense potential of youth, urging us to provide them with the right tools for growth and leadership.

The theme "Empowering Youth: Building a Resilient Future" highlights the need for a balanced approach - through education, skill development, entrepreneurship and digital literacy to prepare youth to face global challenges. By nurturing their potential, we empower them to lead with innovation and build a brighter and more resilient future."The youth of today, with their vision and determination, are poised to transform challenges into opportunities, ensuring a brighter future for all".

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Duggar Festival of Lohri-Festival of Bonfire

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

India is a land of fairs, festivals and festivities and Jammu and Kashmir is no exception to this. The people of Duggar Pradesh celebrate many festivals and the festival of Lori is one such festival celebrated by the Dugghar's. Lori is the festival celebrated in the whole of north India and the Duggar's of Jammu celebrate the festival of Lori with great pomp and show and take pride in celebration of this festival and it is the festival of bonfire ,traditions and rituals. Lori is celebrated one day before Makar Sankranti and it is considered the harbinger of spring season and the people of northern India including Jammu take the festival of Lori as the beginning of spring season and they feel that climate change takes place from the day of Lori. It is especially celebrated by the children and they take great enjoyment in the celebration of Lori and make merry and dance. The children and the young people go from door to door and seek offerings from the house-holders and the people as well offer money to those going from door to door. People sing and dance to the tunes of the drums and take great delight in the celebration of Lori. The importance of Lori festival and the folklore connected with it is very great in Dogri culture, tradition and rituals and duggar's attach much importance to the celebration of Lori festival. The festivities of Lori remain at the evening before Makarsankranti .On the evening of Lori



all the members of the family assemble around a fire and offer some dry fruits to the fire and make merry and dance .Lori is essentially a harvest festival mostly celebrated in Punjab, Delhi ,Haryana ,Himachal Pradesh and Jammu. People and in Jammu Duggars celebrate it with great fun ,excitement and enthusiasm .The customs and traditions may slightly vary from one region to another but the basically all of them are attached to the harvesting of the Rabi crops .The people of north India including Jammuites celebrate the festival of Lori as the end

of winter solstice .The harvested fields and front yards are lit up with flames of bonfire and people sit around it and engage into singing, dancing and merry making. Lori signifies the fertility of joy of life. People sit around the bonfire and throw puffed rice ,sweets and popcorn into flames. In the morning children of the locality gather in their new dress and go to every home singing songs of praise of Dulla Bhatti or Robin Hood of Punjab. Dulla Bhatti used to rob the rich people and distribute the wealth among the poor and underprivileged. People give the chil-

dren money, sweets, peanuts etc. The evening is known as Lori loot. The children sing"Dabba bharaya leera da,Ai ghar ameera da"which means -"Box filled with cloths strips ,this house is rich .And those who weren,t that generous had to face a bunch of kids chanting the following: "Hukka bahai Hukka -Ai ghar bhukka meaning -"Hukka oh! Hukka!" this house is full of miseries, "As the sun sets in the evening ,huge bonfires are set and lit up in the harvested fields or in front of house. For that purpose, logs of wood are piled up together and the fire is lit .The significance and legends about Lori festival are many. Lori is the first of India's rich and diverse mēlange of festivals .It is celebrated with great pomp and show as well as energy across different regions of the country and in Jammu it is celebrated in a special manner in the new calendar year. In north India and predominately Punjab the Lori festival is associated with harvesting season. The significance and legends about Lori festival are many and these link the festival to the Punjab region. It is believed by many that festival marks the passing of winter solstice. Lori marks the end of winter and is a traditional welcome of longer days and the suns journey to northern hemisphere by the people in the northern region of the Indian subcontinent. It is observed the night before Magi ,also known as Makar Sankranti and according to the solar part of the lunisolar Vikrami calendar it typically falls on the same date

every year that is 13th January. Lori is an official holiday in Punjab ,Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh .The festival of Lori is celebrated by Hindus ,Sikhs ,Christians and Muslims and this strengthens the communal harmony and exhibits our unity in diversity. In northern India and predominately Punjab this harvesting festival begins the festivities of spring. The festival of Lori is said to commemorate Dulha Bhatti's bravery and his resistance against the Mughal rulers. As already said the auspicious festival of Lori is celebrated by Punjabies, Haryanvis, Dogras of Jammu with great joy. The children and young people specially celebrate this festival bt singing and dancing to the tunes of the drum beates. Children make merry and enjoy by dancing round the bonfires and offering rice, peanuts and Raveri to the fire. In Punjab Pakistan, it is not observed at official level, however Hindus and Sikhs and some Muslims observe the festival in rural Punjab and the cities Faisalabad and Lahore. Mohammad Tariq ,former director of Faisalabad Arts Council believes it is important to keep the festival alive as Lori is celebrated in Pakistan, Punjab and in Indian Punjab. The history of Lori, a seasonal festival of north India is as old as that of story of Indus valley civilization itself. The festival of Lori in fact marks the end of winter and the coming of spring and the new year .The fires lit at night ,the hand warm-

ing the song and dance and the coming together of an otherwise atomized community are only some of the features if this festival. The Lori of north India coincides with Pongal in Tamil Nadu ,Makar Sankranti in Bengal, Magha Bihu in Assam, Tai Pongal in Kerala ,all celebrated on the auspicious day of Makar Sankranti. There are some interesting socio -cultural and folk legends connected with Lohri. The ancient significance of the festival is it being a winter crop season celebration and is linked to Punjab region. A popular folklore links Lori to the tale of Dulla Bhatti a Rajput tribe .The central theme of many Lohri songs is the legend of Dulla Bhatti whose father was a Zamindar who lived in Punjab during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar. He was regarded as a hero in Punjab, for rescuing Punjab girls from the tyranny of foreign rulers. Therefore the festival of Lori is also an occasion for remembering Dulla Bhatti and his bravery. In brief Traditionally it is a community bonfire where people gather around it, sing songs ,munch on festive delights and make merry. In brief, the festival of Lohri and the Dogra culture, customs, rituals and roots should be kept alive and thus the festival should be celebrated in a befitting manner so that it will speak about the great culture and it should be transmitted to future generations.

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Rural Youth Empowerment and Sustainable Development

■ DR. BANARSI LAL

Every year 12th of January is celebrated as the National Youth Day in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of great spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda was a great religious leader whose ideals inspired the country's youths. Swami Vivekananda was born on 12th of January, 1863 at Kolkatta, India. He was a Hindu monk and the main disciple of the mystic Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was a great philosopher, poet, writer and orator. He always inspired the country's youths for better education, work and dedication. He was an instrumental in introducing the philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world. He published lot of books from 1887until his death on 4th of July, 1902. Many schools, colleges, universities and various other organisations across the nation celebrate this day and various programmes such as processions, speeches, recitations, music, youth conventions, seminars, sports competitions are organized. Swami Vivekananda was extremely patriotic and is considered as a hero for his contributions to the philosophies of India. He was a voracious reader and used a wide range of subjects including the philosophy, religion, history, social science, art and literature. After his 1893 speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he was called as the "Messenger of the Indian wisdom

to the western world". His thought provoking lectures, quotes and writings have been a subject of study and a great source of inspiration for the youths. Government of India declared the celebration of National Youth Day in 12th of January, 1984. Rural development in India is extremely vital for the overall progress of the nation.In rural areas,there have been many aspects that need to be focused upon such as employment generation, construction of houses, agricultural industries, skill development of the people, schools, colleges, universities, health care facilities, energy, water etc. For the development of any nation ,the role of youths is very important. Development of any nation depends on the development of its youths. Youths are more creative, energetic and innovative. It is highly important for any nation to encourage and support the young generation. Rural youths have indomitable energy and enthusiasm for the rural change. Migration of rural youths in urban areas in search of employment has risen fastly. This has resulted a decline in workforce in the agricultural sector. The advent of free market has been able to generate employment opportunities in the private sector which requires highly skilled workers. A majority of rural youth may not meet the criteria of private sector for a variety of reasons, like lack of advance technical expertise, inadequate train-

ings etc. The globalization process has brought certain changes whose implications for the rural society and the rural youths need to be thoroughly understood. Presently India is the youngest country in the world. The concept of the youth has been defined by the researchers as the period in an individual life that begins from the end of childhood and entry into adulthood.As per the United Nations, youth is defined as a person in 15-24 years of age group whereas the census of India treats people in the age group of 15-29 years as youths. According to Baizerman (1991), in the third world countries youth have not been able to play a vital role in the developmental process and has remained a marginalized group. The participation of the rural Indian youth can be more impressive if more attention is paid on them. Mass media does not pay more attention on rural youths. Due to their proximity to institutions like universities, colleges, institutions of mass communication, political centres and by virtue of being an integral part of modernisation process like developing a rational outlook, adopting different sub-cultures and promoting cosmopolitanism, the urban youth continuously remains in the limelight. Rural areas are slow in their socio-economic development, slow pace of modernisation, industrialization, overpowering presence of powerful but retrogressive social institutions,

inequitable distribution of land and most significantly and under utilisation of human resources. The stereotype of rural youth is gullible, conservative and he himself tries to fastly change but cannot escape from the adverse impact of the aforementioned problems. The latest information should be reached to the rural youths of the remote areas. There has been a sustained campaign by the market forces to increase their rural marketing operations as three-fourths of the consumers live in rural areas and more than half of the national income is generated in rural areas. It has been observed that mostly television is the forte of the market forces and continuously promote consumerism which stimulates unrealistic desires in the rural youths. The political processes at the village level are intertwined with the operational aspects of the existing social hierarchy. It has been observed that rural youths are encouraged during elections campaign but the number of elected representatives from this segment is very low. Thus, despite their sincere efforts in the democratic processes they have a long way to go in holding positions and decentralization of political power has not resulted in major changes in the social structure of villages.

Young people are very innovative and creative in problem solving and in finding solutions.About 50 per cent of the world's population are youth and chil-

dren.There are about 1.2 billion 15 to 24 years old youths in the world and one billion reside in the developing nations.Youths represent the challenges and opportunities for development.It has been observed that increasing population, over exploitation of biological resources, construction activities and changing consumption has led to the loss of bio-diversity. For all this rural population cannot be held responsible for excessive consumption as it is the youth of urban areas whose consumption levels reached new heights leading to enormous pressure on the natural resources. The industries release untreated effluents contaminating the water reserves which will expose the nearby rural population to waterborne diseases. The toxic wastes of the industries are dumped in the waste lands on the outskirts of the urban areas or nearby villages which poses a serious impediment to the wasteland development projects. Watershed development is a major agricultural activity. It is the youth of village who take the responsibility in the success of watershed projects like construction of check dams and water tanks. The educated rural youths can prevail on the rest of population to take steps to preserve ground water resources. Joint forest management is another dimension of environment protection. The youth in the villages can be mobilised to take care of illegal felling of trees

and make social forestry programme successful. In rural areas gender discrimination is very high. Less literacy rate and traditional thinking of the people are the major reasons for the inferior status to the rural women. It has been observed that a large number of women representatives are chosen in the Panchayats. Despite their success the rightful ascendancy of women is questioned by the male dominated society and the position of rural female remains secondary in all aspects of life. Rural female youths in some cases have to marry below the stipulated age because of family pressure and obsolete norms of the community. There is need to motivate the rural female youth to take part in her decision making. With the implementation of employment generating schemes, efforts should also be made to sensitise the rural youths on various social issues. The mass media, whose influence on society is quite significant, should be prevailed upon to increase the focus on developmental issues and social concerns. In order to avoid the rural migration government should encourage the rural based industries. More employment should be generated in the rural areas during the off season of the year. Development in rural areas can stop the rural migration and may reduce the pressure on the urban areas.

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