

NC’s DAY DREAMING

The report claiming that National Conference President Farooq Abdullah has asked the people of Jammu and Kashmir to make sacrifices, as farmers protesting the new farm laws did, to restore its statehood and special status is nothing but day dreaming of veteran leader who is still living in fool’s paradise over the issue of abrogation of Articles 35A and 370. He was addressing a convention of the NC’s youth wing on occasion of the 116th birth anniversary of party founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah at his mausoleum at Naseem Bagh in Srinagar. It is pertinent to mention that after almost a year of protests by farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on November 19 announced the decision to repeal the farm laws passed last year to ease rules around the sale, pricing and storage of crops, and the Parliament passed a bill to repeal the farm laws on the first day of the ongoing Winter Session on November 29. The NC patron in a bid to instigate Kashmiris to indulge in upheaval has cited 11 months of agitation of farmers and over 700 deaths of tiller community. His stance that Kashmiris should also sacrifice their lives for repeal of decision on abrogation of Article 370 is nothing but open invitation of subversion and violence though the NC leader has categorically said that his party will never support violence and path of tumult and turmoil. Pertinently, the Centre revoked the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and split it into two Union territories on August 5, 2019. The NC leader raked up many controversies against the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and supported by Home Minister Amit Shah. Of course every issue has another side and that is being used by the NC leader to sway the people in Kashmir as under the Modi Government there is complete freedom for those who are nationalists and ready to carry out development in the UT. However those who have a separatist mindset and are inclined towards Pakistan in their way of living are the biggest enemies of the country and should be tackled with utmost care and mounting strictness. Dr Farooq’s assertion over the issue is nothing but daydreaming and should be taken as redundant advice by an octogenarian.



OFF ‘D’ CUFF

Unfolding the stockings: Mystery behind Christmas Toys

Christmas has become one of those festivals which has been infused with the materialistic practice of gift-giving. While the children who have now turned into adults have long been slapped with the ‘harsh reality’ that Santa does not exist and even if he does, he has never shown up to them in their entire lifetime. If anything can be known for sure, it is tracing the practice of giving toys to children at Christmas.

One historian Joseph Wachelder in his 2013 paper has traced the origin of gift-giving and in particular, toys for children to early nineteenth-century England. Early nineteenth-century England was when giving toys for Christmas first became a thing.

The story or rather, the history goes like this: Christmas in England before the Industrial Revolution, as Wachelder terms it, was a ‘public, exuberant, turbulent feast’. The celebration of Christmas as a festival was associated with harvesting. Harvest was a matter of celebration. The laborers used to get drenched with the spirit of celebration, marking a good harvest, and the patrons used to make fresh meat and plenty of drink abundant to them.

The Industrial Revolution brought about massive technological changes which also reflected in the socio-economic life of the people. One such outcome was seen in terms of earning the living through wage labor and that brought about a halt to the carnival-style holiday. Christmas had now become a family holiday from a public one. The practice of gift-giving also transformed.

Now, the gifts were for children instead of servants. The natural choice of gifts for children was found in the concept of ‘toys’. However, Wachelder has pointed out that the term ‘toy’ was not how we understand them today. It might be described as any small object which could help children exercise their senses of the imagination, their imitative and inventive power. Thus, the objective of giving toys to children was child development other than gift-giving on Christmas.

The gifts for children were not supposed to be expensive miniature objects intended to be just looking at them but something with which the kids could really play with them. Wachelder also perused the daily newspapers in London between 1800 and 1827 and found out that by 1816, advertisements for children’s gifts had started to show up in newspapers. Those ads had started to talk about Christmas.

Playthings such as ‘New Geographical Game’, ‘Chinese Puzzle No. IV’, ‘Chemistry sets, Kaleidoscopes’, ‘Thaumatrope’, and ‘Kaleidophone’ were advertised. Even the merchants had now started to have display windows and heavily decorated their warehouses. These developments marked the beginning of the Christmas shopping season and the prevalent materialistic practice of gift-giving.

The practice of gift-giving on Christmas is, however, reminiscent of the presents given to Jesus by ‘Wise Men’: Frankincense, Gold, and Myrrh. Gold suggests that Jesus was the King of Kings, and Frankincense symbolizes that Jesus is to be worshipped by the people. Myrrh is a perfume used on dead bodies which signifies the belief of Christians that Jesus will suffer and die.

The widely performed custom of hanging stockings comes from the story of St. Nicholas whose symbolism is known as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, Christkind, Lady Befana or the Wise Men in different parts of the world. The practice of opening gifts also varies around the world. In the Netherlands, children open it on St. Nicholas’ Eve on 5th December, while in Belgium, Germany, Czechia and other European countries, they are opened on 6th December, St. Nicholas’ Day.

In the UK, the US, Japan, and other countries, the gifts are opened on Christmas Day, 25th December only. Catholic countries such as Spain and Mexico celebrate the day of Epiphany on 6th January and the gifts are opened on that day.

Rewati Karan

Need for popular Govt in Jammu & Kashmir

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The former state of Jammu and Kashmir is under the central rule from 2018 when BJP withdrew support to the PDP lead coalition government of Mehbooba Mufti. Jammu and Kashmir is being ruled by Lieutenant Governor and the people of the disturbed former state stand orphaned as the public has none to tell pleadings and redress his grievances as there is no popular government in place. The LG is the center’s representative and Incharge of the government in Jammu and Kashmir and there is no people’s and democratic government and the people feel alienation. Centre rule is no alternative to a democratic and popular government but it is a temporary and stop gap arrangement and therefore the centre rule cannot be carried on indefinitely and it must come to an end and pave way for a popular government to redress the people’s problems and sufferings. Thus the popular government of the people is the right answer and it should be installed to remove the alienation of the people. So for satisfying of the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the efforts should be made for installation of the popular government. People of disturbed Jammu and Kashmir yearn for their own government so that it can come to their rescue in times of their need. Popular government is definitely a better form of government than the central or governor’s rule and therefore it should be installed for the betterment and interest of the common masses. Therefore all steps should be taken to install a popular government in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore for the installation of the popular government all the necessary steps should be taken by the central government and the LG administration so that it can become a reality. Thus the much needed assembly elections which are long overdue should be held to usher in the true democracy in Jammu and Kashmir to sooth the hurt psyche and feelings of the people. The political parties of the former state and the people as well are becoming impatient and as such are demanding the holding of the assembly elections as early as possible after the winter. Therefore the central government should take the final call and declare the much needed assembly elections so that a popular government is

installed in Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest so that the people will have a sigh of relief. But for the assembly elections much needed delimitation of the assembly constituencies should be made on the basis of 2011 census to pave way for the holding of the assembly elections. Thus, delimitation which is the prerequisite for the holding of the elections should be carried to its logical conclusion so that the much over due assembly elections are held to give the people of Jammu and Kashmir their own democratic government. So the delimitation of the assembly constituencies should be completed in order to hold the elections in the union territory in order to mitigate the sufferings of the people. All the political parties regional as well as the national are demanding early elections of the assembly so that the people will elect a government of their choice. The various political parties have started the political tours to different parts of Jammu and Kashmir and have in fact commenced the political process and they are meeting the people and making the ground fertile for the assembly elections. As a matter of fact the political parties and the people of union territory are in favour of the early elections so that a people’s government will be in place very soon to give some relief to the disgruntled people. Now that the political parties and the general people are demanding the early elections so the central government should order holding of the assembly elections to the UT assembly in order to provide the opportunity to the people to chose their own government. Therefore for the interest of the general public the much needed assembly elections should be held to usher in true democracy in Jammu and Kashmir. Some political parties demand the restoration of the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir before the assembly elections and are making it the precondition for holding and taking part in the elections. The fact is that the assembly elections and the restoration of the statehood are two different things and subjects and it should not be made a necessary condition for holding of the elections. The Home Minister Amit Shah has made it clear that the process to restore the statehood will be initiated after the assembly elections and therefore there should be no confusion and misunderstanding on this account. The regional political parties

should show flexibility and not insist for the restoration of the statehood before the elections and instead they should ready for jumping in the election fray when the assembly elections are held. The popular government can only be a reality when the assembly elections are held to give the people their right to elect their representatives otherwise not. Therefore without any reservation and inhibition the much over due assembly elections should be held to pave way for the electing a government of their choice at the earliest. The political parties, both regional as well as national and the central government, should shun their rigidity and make ground ready for the holding of assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. As said, at the outset that central or governors rule is no alternative to a popular government and so all efforts should be made by the stakeholders for the early assembly elections so that a democratic Government is installed in Jammu and Kashmir to address the problems of the people. Therefore, if the political parties especially the regional are sincere in demanding the restoration of the statehood they should readily take part in the Assembly elections when these are held and should forcefully demand early assembly elections as it is only after the assembly elections that process to initiate the statehood can begin. The popular government is the need of the hour and all the political parties and the central government and the LG administration as well as the common citizens should sincerely work towards making a conducive atmosphere for the holding of the elections in Jammu and Kashmir. It should be appreciated by the political parties, central government, LG administration as well as the general people that the atmosphere is good for the conduct of the elections and therefore all the political parties regional as well as the national should take part in the elections when it will be declared by the election commission of India. In short, for the installation of the popular government the assembly elections are mandatory and thus the assembly elections should be held for the electing of the popular government in Jammu and Kashmir. The sooner it is done the better. Let the dream of popular government be realized for the interest of people and the nation.

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Importance of co-curricular activities for students

■ VIJAY GARG

Activities which complement but are not part of the conventional academic curriculum are known as Co-curricular Activities. It means that Co-curricular activities are those activities which fall outside the regular academic curriculum yet they are a part of schooling or collegiate life. These are observed in tandem with an institute’s curriculum and have a yearly schedule. Most of the educational organisations in various different parts of the world facilitate these activities for school and college students. The faculty is mostly involved in organising and directing these activities in schools while it may be independent of faculty in universities or colleges. Co-curricular activities exist at all levels of education, from 4th-6th, junior high/middle school, high school, college and university education. These activities are compulsory in some institutions while in others it’s voluntary. Where these are compulsory all school students must participate them alongside the standard study curriculum. At higher levels of education student participation generally, include academic points in lieu of the efforts put by a student in a particular activity. These are held outside standard curriculum hours and the activities partaken depend on the nature of the institute and occasion. Today these activities have become more profound than ever before. Most of the institutes highlight them as a crucial advertising factor in their prospectus or advertisements in order to attract parent-students attention. Though not all of these activities may pursue with great enthusiasm these are however popular and leave a lifelong lasting experience for most. These activities are not examined in the same way that the academic curriculum is, and because most of them take place outside lessons, such activities have less status in education than the main curriculum. However, they are often held to be very important to the wider education of young men and women. Co-curricular activities form the core of students’ life. Many schools and colleges have different units like clubs or houses in which all the students have been divided into four houses. Each house has a house Master & staff of the school to guide the students for various internal competitions. There are many types of co-curricular activities like Morning Assembly Programmes, Inter-House Competitions, House Meetings, Poems Recitation, Calligraphy, On-Spot Drawing & Painting Competitions, Group Singing, Elocutions, Solo Singing/Rhymes, Quiz, Moot Courts, Rangoli competitions, Individual Talent Show, Guest talks / Slide Show, Fancy Dress competition, NCC, School Band, Scout & Guides, Performing Arts, School Choirs, Foot Drills, Annual Functions, Sports Competitions, Youth Festivals, NSS etc. Co-curricular activities are also referred as ‘Extra-curricular’ activities. Grammatically speaking there is a difference between the two. Extra-curricular is self-explanatory, i.e. activity which is extra or additional to curricular but is more leisure-oriented than learning oriented. Extra-curricular activities are mostly conducted after school hours. They generally don’t complement academic studies. However, some of the activities overlap each other; some extra-curricular activities can also be co-curricular and vice versa. Depending upon the institutes certain activities are considered co-curricular while for some it is extra-curricular. Therefore, in the academic sphere, there isn’t any clear consensus as to which is what? Thus, the gap between the two is negligible in the academic sense. Students feel that should have the right to choose whether they

wish to pursue them, rather than forcing them to give equal importance to something they do not wish to do. They find handling both, academic and co-curricular activities very demanding and as such, they lose interest in them. Also making co-curricular activity compulsory takes the fun out of it. If some were forced to take part, they would be less enthusiastic and spoil the activity for the rest. To be successful, Co-curricular activities need to be voluntary so that they can develop personal development benefits. Many students, parents and others consider that the academic curriculum is much more important and should be given more status in schools and colleges than the co-curriculum. According to them, educational institutes are only meant to deliver education and awarding recognised qualifications. They also view higher education of a greater importance than the co-curricular when being selected by employers. There is also a view based on the logic that there is more need for super talented individuals and as such institutes should make specialised individuals in their selected fields. Most modern careers require expert knowledge and skills, which can take years to acquire. Co-curricular activities distract students from developing skills in whatever selected field they have chosen to specialise in. According to them, a doctor or an engineer is known for his or her worth in the job he/she performs rather than being an all-rounder. Therefore they do not require such skills as part of their formal education. Many co-curricular activities require great expenditure. These require more staff to organise and manage such events. Some believe that co-curricular activities can be pursued even after completing academic education. There is no need to compromise academic education by over-emphasis on non-academic activities when most professions still provide a range of career opportunities. For example, if someone is fond of cultural activities he can pursue these when he/she has achieved the preferred academic goal. Often co-curricular activities offered by schools are already available in the wider community. For example, a school cricket team may deprive the local town’s cricket club of young players, while school adventure activities might weaken NCC or NSS activities. So a strong co-curriculum may have the effect of killing off lots of worthwhile community-based activities because they do not receive school credit. There is also a concern amongst some that co-curricular activities are already available in abundance outside the school curriculum in the form of clubs, teams, societies etc. So, if these are available there is no need to spend money and time in pursuing these activities in educational institutes. One can also switch career in accordance with his or her interest through evening classes and continuing education programmes which can restrain them. Many activities are repetitive and are very common. They are observed as a casual affair or as a formality. Therefore these offer no excitement on the part of the students as they aren’t interesting enough. It helps to develop the all-round personality of the students to face the undaunted task and turbulent world of future. Experience and accolades gained through many of these activities help during internships and other school-sponsored work programs. The aim of curricular activities is to make the students fit for the future time and to develop a sense of competitive spirit, co-operation, leadership, diligence, punctuality, team-spirit as well as to provide a backdrop for the development of their creative talents. Whenever someone is chosen as a head boy or is given leadership in certain mat-

Bhopal tragedy-1984: A tale of apathy, lack of safeguards

■ KAPOOR SINGH

Bhopal gas tragedy was a gas leak incident occurred on intervening night of December 2-3 1984 at the Union Carbide India limited (UCIL) pesticide plant located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. It is considered among the world’s worst industrial disasters. The gas leaked at the plant was Methyl Isocyanate and killed almost 3,787 people while lakhs received permanent injuries (non-fatal). The above given data is just an estimate but not exact, as it vary from report to report. 37 years have passed but still the wounds of tragedy are fresh among minds of residents of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The owner of the company and main culprit of the tragedy, Warren Anderson fled to USA right next day to avoid court appearance. It was a really a horrible incident in which several innocent children and old-age citizens lost their lives. This horrible tragedy taught us that if scientific technology is mishandled, then it may cause devastation and destruction, which exactly happened in this case. With passage of time scientific technology developed to greater extent but there is dire need to do a lot more. Unfortunately, at that time India was not so advance in the field of technology, so we were totally dependent on western countries and it was completely their choice, to whom they will depute to carryout self-benefited projects. Of course, most non-professional scientists and their allied came to countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc. It is apt to mention here that during 80s, we were reaping fruits of green revolution and no heed was paid to technology. Despite having sufficient grains, several people used to die due to lack of food as there was no proper distribution system in place. In context of technology, we were far behind at that time. The factory of Union Carbide India Limited was built in 1969 to produce pesticides using Methyl Isocyanate as an inter-mediate. No doubt we achieved the food grain target within few years, but nobody knew when it would become emerge as a disaster. 1980 demand for pesticides had fallen but production continued, leading to build up of stores of unused MIC where the method was used. In 1976, two local Union traders complained of pollution within the factory; but no heed was paid and consequently an employee died. In 1982 also, gas leaked and 24 employees got exposed, all of whom were admitted in hospital, but even then no SoPs were framed for the factory. One month later, in February 1982, MIC leakage affected eighteen more workers. Further, just after six months a chemical engineer came into contact of MIC and received 30 per cent burn injuries but even then the work continued on the same pattern. In late October 1984, tank of gas lost its ability to control nitrogen gas pressure, means MIC couldn’t pumped out. In early December 1984, most of the plants of MIC were malfunctioning i.e., whole system was in a bad condition. During the late evening hours of December 2, 1984 water entered in a side pipe. The entry of water into the tank subsequently resulted in an exothermic reaction, which was contaminates causing highly ambient temperature and various other factors. MIC gas leaked from tank continuously and approximately at 2 PM the plant’s public siren was sounded for an extended period of time. The initial effects of exposure among people were coughing, sever eye-irritation, feeling of suffocation, burning sensation in respiratory tract, breathlessness etc. People suddenly awakened and start running away from the plant. Thousands died by the following morning. Low technical knowhow, apathy of dispensation to intervene, lack of safeguards needed in the plant for safety and security of workers, inter-alia prevalence of capitalism over scientific approach were believed to be main causes of this horrible tragedy.

ters, it boosts self-confidence and sense of achievement. Additional activities for school students are a means to enhance social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline and self-confidence. Competitions may also be organised to create a competitive environment and groups with an objective to work towards a better society and the world as well. In today’s competitive world, percentage makes a lot of difference during admission into various courses. Such students are given preference as compared to non-participants. These may make a difference when the students are considered for the most popular courses. When the students in their early teens are given some responsibilities like giving first aid they acquire a sense of responsibility. Some tasks require precision, management and organizational and such activities provide training to prepare students for the outside world. In polytechnics and universities, certificates of such activities are given weight by potential employers. Students in the form of Alumni etc., act as counselors or guides in their respective institutions in such matters. They impart what they have learned to their juniors. Whilst doing so they are imparting knowledge and helping in the development of a productive society. Such activities divert student’s attention from harmful activities like drugs, crime etc. It channelize their energies in fruitful activities. Physical activities like running, football etc. help not only in the physical fitness they also refresh the burdened mind. Success in organizations requires more than high intellect. Thus, college recruiters commonly examine job candidates’ Co-curricular activities in search of well-rounded, emotionally intelligent, and interpersonally skilled students. Intuitively, Co-curricular activities are like valuable student experiences. These activities are really important as they have a potential of developing the intellect of a student which is always not possible with theoretic procedures. For this co-curricular activities need to be effective so that they can give the right exposure to the mind. When effective these activities provide a practical hands-on approach to the students which provide similar experiences which they will face in the outside world. Such experiences go a long way in producing multi-faceted personalities which, in due course of time may bring honour to the country as well. Students have a right to a broad education. A wide range of experiences prepares students better for the future, especially in today’s uncertain world. Broad education can provide better preparation for life in a society where an individual may need to change career several times in their life. Student minds aren’t mature enough to ascertain what’s good and what’s bad for them? Their decisions may be influenced by peer pressure etc. but at the same time, these activities should not be forced. Co-curricular activities need to be more refined, varied and interesting so as to be widely accepted and successful. A successful co-curriculum builds links between the school and the wider community, bringing local enthusiasts into work with students and sending students out to work on community projects. Many children have talents in all sorts of different areas, and it is wrong to force them to specialise too early. A career is not the only part of an adult’s life - school needs to make sure they have interests and skills that will help them in their family and leisure lives too. Through equal balancing of academic and co-curriculum, the students have the chance to exercise their rights and the opportunity to be multi-talented.

this helps them cope up with certain situations. Of course, this is just a way of running away from one’s self but people who are prone to drugs would never understand that. At last, there comes a stage when a person who takes drugs becomes dependent on them and has to keep on taking them due to avoid the pain of withdrawal symptoms. The effects of drugs can vary in numerous situations as well. First and foremost being the mental wellbeing. A person, to cope up with situations tries drugs and due to the addicting effects doesn’t recognize reality. Drugs completely change the way they think and behave. This, in turn, affects whatever relationships they have in their life and the impact is mostly always negative. So stay away from drugs.

Kshitiza, Jammu.