

TRUE LEADER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, born on 17 September 1950 in Vadnagar, Gujarat, is the hero of faith and development in Indian politics and is showing direction to the country and the world by becoming a megastar on the global stage. It is such a coincidence that Modi ji's birthday is on the day when the birth anniversary of Lord Vishwakarma, the god of creation, is celebrated in most parts of the country. Under his patronage, the color of nationalism in India has deepened and India is on the path of becoming a world leader.

In today's time, if there is any most popular personality not only in India but in the world, then it is the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. He has also taken India to the pinnacle by making it the highest place among the world leaders. The name of Narendra Modi, one of the most popular political personalities in the world, is resonating not only in India but also on the world stage due to his personality, working style, determination and ability.

Bringing back Indians trapped there during the Ukraine war, sending vaccines across the world during Corona, all these are the results of Narendra Modi ji's global thinking. Earlier the people of the country were away from foreign policy, but when such a big diplomatic program took place in India, every Indian became aware and felt proud. Narendra Modi became the first Prime Minister to make the world aware of India's heritage and strong history by showing the symbol of Nalanda University and Konark Sun Temple in G-20.

Along with the prosperity of the country, Narendra Modi has always been ahead in protecting the borders and giving respect to the soldiers and has encouraged the soldiers by providing them resources in every way. Today, India has become self-reliant in the field of defense and has come into the category of powerful nations, the credit for which goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi

K.V. SEETHARAMAIAH

With the inauguration of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Hindu Mandir, India has opened its first account of Hindu place of worship in Abu Dhabi. Currently there are two temples in Dubai dedicated to Gods Shiva and Krishna. The first Hindu temple in Dubai located in Bur Dubai is said to have been built in 1958. The second Hindu Temple of Dubai is in Jebel Ali Village next to the Sikh Gurudwara and Churches complex.

The first temple opened in Abu Dhabi is the first one after 66 years in United Arab Emirates (UAE). The temple inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 14/02/2024 has been reportedly built on 27-acre plot at a cost of Rs. 700 crore. UAE is home for 3.5 million (or 35 lakh) Hindus. It means it is one temple for every 11.67 lakh Hindus.

In contrast to this India has Muslim population of 204 million (2040 lakh) (2019 estimate) and there are 6 lakh active mosques. There is one mosque for every 340 Muslims in India. Hinduism is the oldest but third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. Hinduism could not spread its tentacles as speedily as Christianity and Islam religions all over the world.

The glaring example is the number of temples in UAE at just 3. In the 10 years of Modi rule, a temple came up in UAE with the co-operation of the UAE government. But the successive Governments of India in the past took no initiative for temples in UAE for over 60 years after independence.

Hindu places of worship outside of the country are a congregation point for Hindus living in foreign countries. Temples in foreign countries can be counted in fingers whereas Churches and Mosques in India are countless.

In the Hindu-dominated country India, Hindus have to fight against Hindus for the temples to come up. People opposed to the construction of temples advocate for the schools, colleges, hospitals only to come up. They fail to understand that the hospitals, educational institutions etc. are no reason to obviate the need of temples.

If the Christians and Muslims had thought on this line, the places of worship of these communities would not have outnumbered the temples all over the world. These communities have given importance both to the places of worship and infrastructures to the people.

Places of worship of any community deflect or insulate the people from violence to the possible extent.

Places of worship are abode of peace and tranquillity. Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai and the Prime Minister and people of the UAE must be profusely thanked for having allowed a magnificent temple to come up.

This would strengthen the bridge of friendship between India and UAE. Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves rich accolades for laying foundation for temple in 2019 and get it completed in less than 5 years.

SANT DNYANESHWAR

ER NARINDER ROHMETRA

Sant Dnyaneshwar, also referred to as Dnyaneshwar, Dnyanadeva, Dnyandev or Mauli or Dnyaneshwar

Vitthal Kulkarni (1275-1296), was a 13th-century Indian Marathi saint, poet, philosopher and yogi of the Nath and Varkari tradition. In his short life of 21 years, he authored Dnyaneshwari (a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita) and Amrutanubhav. These are the oldest surviving literary works in the Marathi language, and considered to be milestones in Marathi literature. Sant Dnyaneshwar's ideas reflect the non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta philosophy and an emphasis on Yoga and Bhakti towards Vithoba, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His legacy inspired saint-poets such as Eknath and Tukaram, and he is one of the founders of the Varkari (Vithoba-Krishna) Bhakti movement tradition of Hinduism in Maharashtra. Dnyaneshwar undertook Samadhi at Alandi in 1296 by entombing himself in an underground chamber.



Golden Spice Turmeric and its Health Benefits

DR. BANARSI LAL

Health is the biggest wealth for all of us. Presently we are grappling with the unforeseen deadly Coronavirus pandemic. Immunity is our body natural defence against diseases-causing bacteria and fungus. It is due to the weak immune system because of which people are being affected by the widespread pandemic. Experts are guiding us to strengthen the immune system of body so that we can save ourselves from this virus. In order to fortify our immune system we should think for our ancient wisdom of the Indian kitchen system. Turmeric is loaded with anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and anti-bacterial properties due to presence of curcumin in it. So it should be added in our diet so that we can fight against different kinds of viral and bacterial diseases by strengthening our immunity system.

Turmeric is the yellow spice extracted from the tuberose rhizome of the plant Curcuma longa. It was originated from the South Asia region. Its scientific name is Curcuma longa belonging to Zingiberaceae family and is considered as the triploid. In Hindi it is commonly called as Haldi. It has been used in the traditional Indian systems of medicines for centuries to treat different types of ailments such as anorexia, diabetic wounds, jaundice, hepatic disorders and menstrual difficulties. Medicinal effects of turmeric are attributed to curcumin, the principal curcumanoid found in turmeric. Curcumin contains strong anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties. It is helpful to cure cancer and other inflammatory diseases. Curcumin affect has also been seen on the lymphoid cell populations, antigen presentations, cytokine production, humoral and cell-mediated immunity. Turmeric if taken properly, it can considerably reduce the chance of sick-

ness. Nutritionists and health experts have often considered turmeric as the booster for health immunity. Now as the summers are approaching, our immune system gets compromised slightly due to change in weather. Due to the weak immunity system people get affected by the various viruses and bacterial diseases. Turmeric contains anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and anti-bacterial properties. It also keeps us away from various serious ailments. Turmeric contains 3-5% of curcumin and it helps us to make our immunity stronger. Curcumin is phyto-derivative and it contains the healing properties. As the season approaches from cold to warm, individuals are affected by the flu or cold. Turmeric helps to cleanse the respiratory tract naturally. It protects the individuals from flu or cold and helps to fight the infection. People suffering with bronchial problems such as Sinusitis, Sinus etc. face lot of problems. Curcumin in turmeric is helpful to fight against such kinds of problems by building the strong immunity system. Bronchial asthma, congestion of nose and airways due to inflammation, cough, cold and shortness of breath affects children, adults and elderly people. Inflammation constricts the airways and thus makes it difficult to breathe. It leads to chronic inflammation and affects the lungs tissues. Curcumin in turmeric inhibits inflammation, relieves congestion, pain and improves breathing. Curcumin boosts the immunity of body and helps to fight against the various viral infections. It reduces the inflammation and reduces the cause of viral infection. It contains all the antiviral properties and reduces the replication of virus. It reduces the viral load. Although a good diet, proper sleep and a good exercise are good factors to strengthen the immunity but turmeric is very handy to improve the immunity of the body.

Turmeric also said to be the golden spice is one of the most important spices across the globe. It contains a wide spectrum of qualities and medicinal uses. For countless centuries, many different people are using this versatile herb to treat a myriad of ailments. This crop is known for its multipurpose value such as for the medicines, colour pigment, spicy flavor etc. It is anti-cancerous, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antiproliferative, antioxidant, carminative diuretic etc. The curcumin found in it is used as a food colourant. Turmeric annual growth rate in terms of area is 3.7% and in terms of production is 9.1%. Its somatic chromosome number is 63. Modern science has recognized the healing qualities of turmeric and much research is being conducted on it. Presently turmeric is being used in the treatment of the most intense ailments afflicting today such as Diabetes, Sclerosis, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Aene, Kidney Infections, Alzheimer's disease, Arthritis, Anemia, Leprosy etc. It can also be used as the mosquito repellent, cure of scorpion stings and wound healer. It also helps to balance the reproductive system of the females and males. Presently it is one of the most important herbs in any natural medicines. Turmeric was very sacred to the Aryans due to its golden yellow colour. Even now the Hindus consider turmeric to have auspicious qualities and use it in many sacred ceremonies. During the Indian wedding ceremonies, the bride and groom paste it on their bodies.

India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric in the world and 46% of world turmeric trade is run by India. Jamaica and Peru are the main exporters of turmeric while Iran is the largest importer. In India total area under turmeric is about 1, 72,000 ha and

total production is about 8, 51,000 tonnes. Turmeric occupies 6.6 per cent of total area of spices in India. In order to mitigate the increasing demand of this spice there is dire need to cultivate this crop in a scientific way. Turmeric became valuable to human beings when it was discovered that the powdered rhizome preserved the freshness and nutritive value of foods. Turmeric is used as a condiment, dye, food colourant, drug and medicine. Turmeric rhizomes have yellow colour component as curcumin, essential oil (5-9%) and oleoresin (3-13%). Curcumin is the substance that is responsible for the biological activity of turmeric. Turmeric rhizome is 70% carbohydrates, 7% proteins, 4% minerals and 4% oil. It also has vitamins and alkaloids. Curcumin is used in cosmetics, preservatives, food industries and pharmaceuticals. The artificial colouring agents have been banned and so the use of curcumin is prompted. Curcumin protects the liver from toxic compounds as it acts like an anticoagulant by inhibiting collagen and by adrenaline induced platelet aggregation. Curcumin is also used to heal the wounds. It has antifungal and antiseptic effects. It has also antiviral effects and is found effective against the HIV. Various kinds of cancer including skin, colon and prostate can be cured by the use of curcumin. It has been proved through the research that turmeric stabilizes and protects biomolecules in the body at the molecular level which is shown in its antioxidant, anti-mutagenic and anti-carcinogenic action.

(The writer is Sr. Scientist & Head, KVK, Reasi, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Jammu)

Beyond Quotas: Bridging the discrepant divide in examination fees

SHIVANSHU K. SRIVASTAVA

In the pursuit of a truly inclusive society, reservation policies have been implemented to address historical disadvantages faced by specific sections of the population. However, a critical examination of the application fees for government examinations reveals an ironic incongruity, particularly in the case of candidates falling under the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category.

The EWS quota, conceived to uplift economically disadvantaged individuals, has encountered an unforeseen hurdle in the form of uniform application fees for both EWS and Open (General) category candidates. This discrepancy raises questions about the effectiveness of reservation policies when financial barriers impede the very individuals these policies aim to support. The essence of the EWS quota lies in providing opportunities to those who face economic hardships. However, the identical application fees for General and EWS candidates in various government examinations, including Judicial Services and Civil Services, hinder the intended upliftment. EWS candidates, often grappling with financial constraints, may find the burden of high application fees insurmountable, hindering their access to opportunities that reservation policies seek to provide.

Conversely, the substantially reduced application fees for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities appear incongruous with the underlying principle of reservation, which primarily addresses inadequate representation and not poverty-alleviation. The illogical connection between reduced fees and reservation status may inadvertently and unnecessarily benefit candidates from affluent backgrounds within the SC and ST categories, who already enjoy the benefits of reservations in both examinations and promotion, potentially excluding genuinely disadvantaged EWS individuals from the benefits they actually need. It is essential to reassess and reform the fee structure for government examinations, aligning

it with the socio-economic realities of each category. The existing uniformity in application fees fails to recognise the nuanced financial disparities among different reservation categories.

The incongruity in the application fees for government examinations not only stems from a flawed policy design but also raises serious questions about the wisdom behind these decisions. It reflects a lack of foresight in recognising the evolving socio-economic dynamics within reserved categories. The failure to adapt policies in tandem with changing realities highlights a disconnect between the intended purpose of reservation and its implementation. One cannot overlook the possibility that the uniform application fees might be a consequence of political considerations, with an eye on appeasing certain vote banks comprising certain caste-based communities belonging to the reserved categories. Political expediency has, at times, overshadowed the need for a nuanced and rational approach to policy formulation. The fear of alienating specific communities may have led to a reluctance to address the inherent discrepancies in the current fee structure. As a result, the genuine needs of economically weaker sections might be overshadowed by political calculations, further perpetuating the cycle of inequality.

It is crucial to distinguish between affirmative action aimed at empowerment and policies that inadvertently hinder the very communities they seek to uplift. Striking a balance between political considerations and the genuine socio-economic needs of the marginalized is essential to ensure that policies align with their intended objectives and contribute to a more just and equitable society. It is time for policymakers to reassess their approach, guided by a commitment to social justice rather than short-term political gains. To address this issue, both Central and State governments should consider implementing a tiered fee structure that reflects the economic background of candidates. Higher application fees for those who can afford it, such as General

category candidates, would contribute to a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Conversely, reducing fees for genuinely economically disadvantaged individuals within the SC, ST, and EWS categories would align with the true spirit of reservation policies.

The dichotomy between the purpose of reservation and the current fee structure is particularly pronounced when examining the evolving socio-economic status within reservation categories. Over time, some individuals from SC and ST backgrounds have risen above economic challenges, yet they continue to benefit from reduced fees. This unintended consequence perpetuates a cycle of inequality by diverting resources away from those who genuinely need them. An equitable fee structure would also require a thorough assessment of the financial background of applicants. Governments could implement a comprehensive system that takes into account income levels, family size, and other relevant factors to determine the appropriate application fees for each candidate. This targeted approach ensures that those who can afford higher fees contribute proportionally, while genuinely disadvantaged individuals receive the support they need. Moreover, the reevaluation of application fees should be accompanied by increased transparency and accessibility in the application process. Clear guidelines and support mechanisms should be established to assist EWS candidates in navigating the application process and securing the opportunities they rightfully deserve.

In conclusion, the disconnect between the application fees for government examinations and the intended purpose of reservation policies demands urgent attention. A recalibration of fees, tailored to the economic realities of each category, is imperative to ensure that reservation policies genuinely uplift the socio-economically disadvantaged. It is time for the Central and State governments to take a proactive stance, fostering a fair and inclusive environment for all aspiring candidates, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Confluence of Hindu and Muslim culture

OMKAR DATTATRAY

The construction and inauguration of the first Hindu temple in UAE's Abu Dhabi is not an ordinary development. It signifies the confluence and convergence of Sanatan and Muslim culture and civilization and the grand temple is the standing symbol of harmony and indicates the doctrine of Sanatan Dharma and culture that whole world is but a one family. Prime minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi at the end of his two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates. PM Modi inaugurated Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanastha (BAPS) Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, the first Hindu temple in the UAE. The temple is the proof of the combination of Hindu and Muslim culture and the evidence and symbol of universe being a one family. Ahead of the inauguration, PM Modi offered water in the virtual Ganga and Yamuna rivers in the temple premises and then proceeded to offer prayers inside the temple. The temple is in fact the example of India's Ganga-Jamnni tehzib and its imprint upon UAE's culture. "The BAPS temple will be an enduring tribute to the values of harmony, peace and tolerance, with both India and the UAE share," Modi said ahead of his visit to the Middle East nation. The pink sandstone temple sits on a 27-acre plot in Abu Dhabi, making it one of the largest in the Middle East. While Islam is the official religion of the UAE, the country is home to about 3.6 million Indian workers. Hindi-Muslim harmony and co-existence is the risen d'tre of this Muslim country. The guest list for the inauguration ceremony at the temple

included Indian government officials, Bollywood stars and members of the billionaire Ambani family, senior Abu Dhabi officials were in attendance. Former Indian Ambassador to UAE, Navdeep Suri, said that it is a very symbolic day for the Indian community, for a large Indian diaspora that we have in UAE. For many years, it has been a spiritual need, a religious need for them. And I know that in 2015, when the prime minister came here for the first time, he put in a request to Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, then crown prince of Abu Dhabi, that it would be nice if some land could be granted for a temple construction. He told ANI. Singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan also arrived at the temple and expressed happiness over the opening of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi. "This is an extremely happy moment for India and Indians all over the world. This is historic moment in our lives where we are going to witness a Mandir which is so magnificent and spiritual coming on the land like Abu Dhabi. Only our PM Narendra Modi can execute it."

The temple is the standing and living testimony to the communal harmony and religious tolerance and diversity. It is also the best example of the religious convergence of Hindu, Muslim and other religions. The temple is the epitome of communal harmony, a goal envisioned by both India and the UAE. The temple is constructed on 27 acres of land, with 13.5 acres dedicated to the temple complex area and the other 13.5 acres

allotted for parking which can accommodate 14,000 cars and 50 buses. The 13.5 acres of land was gifted by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a Muslim king for the construction of a Hindu temple, said a BAPS spokesman. What makes this temple special is the beautiful confluence of religions that led to its construction. The lead architect of the BAPS Hindu temple is a catholic Christian, the project manager a Sikhs, the foundational designer a Buddhist, the construction company a Parsi group and the director comes from Jain tradition and thus the very construction exemplifies communal harmony and religious tolerance as different people of different religions have contributed to the construction of this magnificent and grand temple. As per BAPS, Pramukh Swami Maharaj the 10th spiritual guru and head of the sect, had envisioned a Hindu temple far away in the desert land of Abu Dhabi way back in April 1997. His vision was to bring countries, communities and cultures together, which aligned with the UAE's initiative to promote cultural diversity and tolerance.

During the foundation stone laying ceremony in April 2019, Mugheer Khamis Al Khailli, chairman of the department of community development, said, "Laying the foundation stone of the temple is reflective of the landscape of tolerance and pluralism in the UAE." The camel, a symbol of persistence, commitment and endurance, has been etched into the carvings of the Abu Dhabi temple while drawing inspiration from the landscape of the UAE. The temple has carvings of symbolic animals native to the UAE like camels, oryxes and falcons. There are also 14 depictions of parables from

Arabian, Egyptian, Mesopotamian and other civilizations. In May 2023, during a visit by ambassadors from 30 countries, Akio Isomata, Ambassador from Japan said, "I see a philosophy of tolerance in the carvings". Last month, when diplomats from 42 countries visited the temple, deputy Ambassador of the UK Jonathan Knight stated, "So many different faiths coming together to build something that will last for generations. This combination and coming together of different religious people is very marvelous thing and reflects universal brotherhood and harmony. The temple is built in the traditional Nagara style and the temple front panel depicts universal values, stories of harmony from different cultures, Hindu spiritual leaders and avatars. The height of the temple is 108 feet with a length of 262 ft and width of 180 ft.

While the external facade uses pink sandstone from Rajasthan, the interior uses Italian marble. The temple has two central domes, the Dome of Harmony and Dome of Peace, emphasizing human coexistence through the carvings of earth, water, fire, air and plants.

There is a Wall of Harmony, one of the largest 3D-printed walls in the UAE, features a video showcasing key milestones of the temples construction. The word harmony has been written in 30 different ancient and modern languages. In fact besides being a place of worship for Hindus, the temple is the reflection of communal harmony and tolerance and it is really a confluence and convergence of different religions and cultures.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).