

SNOWFUL VALLEY

As soon as snowfall starts, tourists move to the hilly areas. During snowfall, tourists enjoy activities like skiing, sledding, and mountain trekking. The weather seemed to be changing in the hilly areas. People are going to popular tourist places to see snowfall and enjoy the snowfall.

Kashmir is not called heaven for nothing. Its natural beauty attracts anyone and winter is a different story. After snowfall, when the entire valley of Kashmir is covered with white snow, it is a picturesque sight worth seeing.

Many places like Pahalgam, Peer Ki Gali, Dras Sector have received the first snow of this season. Apart from this, Sonamarg and Gulmarg of Jammu and Kashmir have also been covered with fresh snowfall.

Plenty of Poll Freebies are undesirable

■ **OMKAR DATTATRAY**

Our electoral democracy has been reduced to a big Tamasha of poll freebies as the political parties without any exception are offering freebies to the prospective voters to lure them towards the parties concerned. There is hardly any need and place for poll freebies given the politico-economic health of the country. But ignoring this hard fact, the political parties are busy in offering freebies to keep the voters to their side. However poll freebies are not needed but these have great sway upon the voters as the political parties and voters both are benefitted in short term though the country gets the shock of the freebies as it dents the economy of the country. Since our people particularly the uneducated ones and even the educated lot are induced and lured towards the political parties which promise them the freebies in run up to the polls. It has been seen that in the past the poll freebies work wonders in Delhi assembly elections and in Punjab assembly elections as well as the voters voted for the AAP in both these states proving the poll pundits wrong who had predicted the government of the BJP or NDA government. But the voters of the country are impacted and influenced by the poll freebies and the freebies change the political discourse and political narrative of the country. Political parties position their plans as welfare for the needy and dismiss others as wasteful giveaways. There is no legal definition of a freebie, so a useful thumb rule is to assess whether a government has planned the fiscal room before announcing a scheme. India's political climate is heating up ahead of nine state elections and the Lok Sabha polls due within next few months. A year after political parties argued over the use of freebies to woo voters, there is no dearth of such poll promises and policy moves. Take the recent cabinet decision to increase the cooking gas subsidy for the beneficiaries of the Ujjwala scheme by Rs 100 per cylinder. It comes at a time when the crude oil prices are on a boil, and tops up Rs 200 universal cut in cylinder prices in August last year. Does it make for a freebie? Or is the tag better suited to free electricity up to 100 units for families in Rajasthan or e-scooters given away to meritorious female students. To be sure, there is no legal definition, parties position their plans as welfare for the needy, and dismiss others as wasteful giveaway. The supreme court was told that the promise of pre-election freebies by the political parties is a corrupt practice under the Representation of the People's Act. A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud was also informed that pre election freebies is equivalent to bribe and is a ground for declaring an election to be void. Senior advocate Vijay Hansaria appearing for the petitioner, said, "Under section 123 of the RP Act, 1951, bribery is deemed to be corrupt practice for the purpose of the Act. The expression bribery has been defined to mean any gift, offer, or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature. Thus the promise made by the political party is nothing but a bribe within the meaning of section 123 (1) (A) of the RP Act, 1951, which is a corrupt practice, and if other conditions mentioned in the said section are fulfilled, is a ground for declaring the election to be void under the section 100 (1)(b) of the Act. Hansaria, arguing for the petitioner on pleas including the one filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay opposing promise of such handouts by the parties during polls, told the bench that two - judge bench 2013 verdict of the top court in the matter of S Subramaniam Balaji Vs Government of Tamil Nadu and others required reconsideration. The top court is seized of a batch of pleas against freebies promised by political parties. No political party can be singled out to offer the poll freebies as today all most all political parties offer the freebies to the voters and there is competition among the political parties for offering the poll freebies. The political parties without any exception indulge in offering poll freebies and promises which amount to freebies and there is one upmanship among political parties so far as offering poll freebies is concerned. Poll freebies are economically not viable and feasible and therefore there should be stoppage to the poll freebies for securing the economic health of the country. Freebies dent the very economy of the country and hence are unproductive and wasteful expenditure and thus should be stopped in the interest of the country. But the fact is that all most all political parties are busy in offering freebies and poll promises which are utopian and cannot be realized and thus such freebies have no place in our elections and democracy as these dent not only our economy but dent our democracy as well and so what is needed is that there should be a blanket ban on poll freebies. But for this the poll freebies should first of all be defined so that these are made cognizable offences under the RP Act 1951. Thus necessary amendments should be made in the Representation of Peoples Act to the effect that the poll freebies should be clearly defined so that all those candidates and political parties which engage into offering the poll freebies are tried in the court of law and required punishment is awarded to the wrong doers who indulge in offering poll freebies. In any case poll freebies are against the political hygiene and political economy of the country and hence the political parties should desist from offering the freebies to the people before the elections. Not only the AAP which is rightly called the mother of freebies, the Congress, SP, BSP, JDU, RJD, BJP and other parties as well are busy in offering poll freebies to the voters in order to induce and lure them to vote in their favor. In short we should not allow the political parties to lure us on the pretext of freebies and the best course is that the executive judiciary and legislature should work in unison and define poll freebies so that it can become a cognizable offence so that it can attract punishment as well and this way the atmosphere of poll freebies will discouraged.

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

Climate Change and Economy: Significant Challenges Ahead

■ **DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH**

Climate change has far-reaching impacts on the economy, affecting various sectors in significant ways: a. Tourism: Climate change threatens winter recreation industries due to reduced snow and ice, leading to substantial economic losses in regions dependent on winter sports. Increasing winter temperatures can degrade water quality, impacting freshwater fishing and water-based recreational activities. Wildfires and sea level rise further deter tourism by degrading air quality and submerging coastal regions, respectively. b. Businesses and Financial Markets: The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events can damage infrastructure and disrupt supply chains, leading to increased production costs. Climate volatility introduces uncertainty in resource pricing, affecting business operations. Regulatory changes aimed at mitigating climate impacts, such as carbon pricing, can also affect businesses. Companies are increasingly required to assess and disclose their financial risks related to climate change, with significant potential losses identified if preventive measures are not taken. c. Opportunities: Despite the challenges, climate change also presents new business opportunities. The transition to clean energy, construction of resilient and green infrastructure, and advancements in hybrid and electric vehicles are expected to drive growth in various sectors. Innovations in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals to address climate-related health issues, as well as developments in military and security services due to resource scarcity, represent additional areas for potential growth. d. Macroeconomic and Macroeconomic Policies: Climate change poses significant economic harm and risks to macro financial stability, especially in lower-income countries that are more vulnerable to frequent weather shocks. These countries will need to adjust their macroeconomic policies to accommodate these shocks and enhance their economic resilience through infrastructure upgrades. The non-financial corporate sector faces risks from climate damages and stranded assets, which can

impact corporate balance sheet quality. e. Adapting to and preparing for the impacts of climate change is crucial for minimizing economic harm. Governments play a key role in investing in resilience measures and considering ambitious plans like the Green New Deal to address climate change proactively.

Effects of climate change

The effects of climate change on the economy are multifaceted and can be observed across various sectors: a. Tourism: Climate change significantly impacts tourism, especially in regions dependent on natural conditions such as snow, ice, and coastal ecosystems. Warmer temperatures can reduce snowfall, affecting winter sports, while rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events can damage coastal tourist destinations. This leads to economic losses in areas where tourism is a major source of income. b. Agriculture: Climate change affects agriculture through changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, and an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events. This can lead to reduced crop yields, increased pest and disease prevalence, and disruption of food supply chains, impacting food security and agricultural economies globally. c. Infrastructure and Property Damage: Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, can cause significant damage to infrastructure and property. The costs of rebuilding and repairing can strain government budgets and increase insurance premiums, impacting economic stability. d. Healthcare Costs: The health impacts of climate change, including heat-related illnesses, respiratory problems from poor air quality, and the spread of vector-borne diseases, can lead to increased healthcare costs and economic burdens on individuals and governments. e. Energy Sector: Changes in climate patterns can affect energy production and consumption. For instance, increased temperatures can lead to higher electricity demand for cooling, while reduced water availability can impact hydroelectric power generation. This can lead to energy shortages and increased costs. f. Water Resources: Climate change can

lead to water scarcity or flooding, impacting agriculture, human consumption, and industrial use. The economic implications include increased costs for water treatment and infrastructure to manage water resources effectively. g. Labour Productivity: Extreme heat and other adverse climate conditions can reduce labour productivity, especially in outdoor and manual labour-intensive industries such as construction and agriculture. h. Financial Markets: Climate change poses risks to financial markets as it can lead to stranded assets in industries reliant on fossil fuels and affect the valuation of companies exposed to climate-related risks. i. Migration and Security: The adverse effects of climate change, such as environmental degradation and resource scarcity, can lead to migration and conflict, which have economic implications in terms of humanitarian aid, security spending, and lost productivity. j. Adaptation and Mitigation Costs: The costs associated with adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects represent significant economic investments. Overall, climate change poses a significant risk to global economic stability and growth.

Prevention of negative impacts

To prevent the negative impacts of climate change on the economy, several methods can be employed, ranging from policy interventions to technological innovations and sustainable practices: a. Carbon Pricing: Implementing carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems to internalize the external costs of greenhouse gas emissions. This approach incentivizes businesses and individuals to reduce their carbon footprint and fosters investment in clean technologies. b. Renewable Energy Transition: Investing in renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal to replace fossil fuels. This not only reduces emissions but also creates jobs and drives technological innovation in the energy sector. c. Energy Efficiency Improvements: Enhancing energy efficiency in buildings, transportation, and industry can significantly reduce energy consumption and emissions. This includes adopting energy-efficient appliances, improving

insulation, and optimizing industrial processes. d. Sustainable Agriculture Practices: Implementing sustainable agricultural practices such as precision farming, organic farming, and agroforestry can increase resilience to climate impacts, improve soil health, and reduce emissions from the agriculture sector. e. Infrastructure Resilience Building: Upgrading infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and sea-level rise, including the construction of sea walls, flood defenses, and resilient transportation networks. This reduces the economic costs associated with climate-related disasters. f. Reforestation and Afforestation: Planting trees and restoring forests can sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, preserve biodiversity, and provide economic benefits through sustainable forestry practices. g. Climate-Resilient Urban Planning: Designing cities to be more resilient to climate impacts through green infrastructure, such as urban green spaces and permeable pavements, which can help manage flood risks and reduce urban heat islands. h. Innovative Financing for Climate Projects: Leveraging public and private financing mechanisms to fund climate mitigation and adaptation projects. This includes green bonds, climate funds, and investment in climate-resilient infrastructure. i. Education and Awareness: Raising awareness about the impacts of climate change and the importance of sustainable practices among businesses, policymakers, and the general public to drive behavioural change. j. International Cooperation: Collaborating on a global scale to share knowledge, technologies, and financial resources to address climate change collectively. International agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, play a crucial role in setting shared goals and facilitating cooperation. By implementing these methods, it's possible to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on the economy and foster a transition towards a more sustainable and resilient economic system.

(The author is a youth motivator).

Ekadashi fast and our culture

■ **DR. SOUMYA RANJAN MOHAPATRA**

In Sanatan Dharma culture, the day of every lunar month, 11 days after the full moon and 11 days after the new moon, is called Ekadashi. The human body goes through a cycle approximately every 40 - 48 days, which is called a cycle. There are 3 specific days in this cycle when the body does not need food and these can be different for every person, and it is not necessary that they come at the same interval. It is not a good thing to force feed your body during these 3 days. If you know which are these 3 days, when your body is not asking for food, and abstain from eating during those days, then in this simple way many of your health problems will go away. You can easily identify this cycle if you get rid of the you must consume so many calories, so many proteins, and so many minerals' nonsense. Most people can identify those three days if they listen to their body. In ancient times, someone paid enough attention to his system and recognized those three days when his body should not eat, and that is why he said this. But then, there was no such awareness among the people so they fixed Ekadashi for this. There are 3 Ekadashis in every 48 day cycle and on this day the earth has a special condition. On the day of Ekadashi the earth is in a special condition. If we keep our body light and available that day, our awareness will turn inward. There is a high possibility of the inner door opening on this day. If your stomach is full, you are healthy and you are not aware, you will not be able to notice it. So, to remain alert, alert and also to keep the body pure, you remain without food on that day - that is, you had eaten food the previous night and now you will eat only on the night of Ekadashi.

Scientific Reason - Since ancient

times, devotees have been observing fast on Ekadashi twice a month. This fast is generally for everyone. Ekadashi ('ek' is 1, 'dasha' is 10) is the 11th day in the lunar calendar, i.e. counted from the new moon day and also from the full moon day. According to a research, the air pressure in the earth's atmosphere changes rapidly on both Amavasya (Amavasya) and Purnima (Full Moon) days. This is due to the orbital path - the conjunction of the Sun, Moon and Earth and their varying distances at particular intervals (ie every 24 hours for one complete rotation of the Earth). Accordingly, the pressure in the atmosphere also varies considerably and varies from day to day. This can be seen from the change in the nature of tidal waves on new moon and full moon days. On the day of Amavasya, due to increase in atmospheric pressure in the oceans, the waves become very high and violent. But from the next day onwards the waves calm down - this is a sign that the pressure has also reduced. Especially on the 11th day of Amavasya or Purnima, the pressure is very light or zero.

Now, on the basis of this fact, the importance of Ekadashi fast can be explained as follows-

1. Compared to any other day of the lunar cycle, the atmospheric pressure is lowest on the day of Ekadashi. Thus, this is the best time to fast and cleanse our body. If we fast on any other day, the high pressure/stress can harm our system. On this day, the body never experiences pain as we cleanse our systems, thus rejuvenating the entire body system - especially the liver/stomach/intestine. Since the atmospheric pressure increases rapidly and doubles on the 12th day of Amavasya/Purnima (called Dvadashi), to avoid any complications in the body, people observing fast are advised to break

the fast the next day in the morning. Consume as much food as possible. ,

2. It has been observed that fasting on this day is also very conducive to focusing on meditation and prayer. According to science, after we eat food, it takes about 3-4 days for the brain to understand it. It is said that if we eat light/fast food on Ekadashi day, that food will reach the brain accordingly on Amavasya/Purnima day.

Story of Shattila Ekadashi

Yudhishthir asked Shri Krishna: Lord! Which Ekadashi occurs in the Krishna Paksha of Magh month? What is the method for that and what is its result? Please tell us all these things. Shri Bhagvan said: Nripashrestha! Ekadashi of the Krishna Paksha of the month of Magh (Pansh according to Gujarat and Maharashtra) is famous by the name of 'Shattila', which is the destroyer of all sins. Listen to the sinful story told by the sage Pulastya to Dalbhya.

Dalbhya asked: Brahmini! The beings who have come to the mortal world often keep committing sinful acts. What is the solution so that they do not have to go to hell? Please have mercy and explain.

Pulastya ji said: Mahabhab! When the month of Magh comes, a person should take a bath and become pure and should give up evils like lust, anger, ego, greed and backbiting etc. while maintaining control over the senses. Remembering Lord Devadhive, wash your feet with water and collect the cow dung lying on the ground. Mix sesame seeds and cotton in it and make one hundred and eight pindikas. Then when Ardra or Mool Nakshatra comes in Magh, then follow the rules to perform Ekadashi of Krishna Paksha. Take a proper bath and become pure and worship Devadhive Shri Vishnu with pure feel-

ings. In case of any mistake, chant the name of Shri Krishna. Do Jagran and Homa at night. Worship the deity Shri Hari who holds the conch, disc and mace with materials like sandalwood, arga, camphor, naivegh etc. After that, remembering God and reciting the name of Shri Krishna repeatedly, worship God with pumpkin, coconut or bajora fruit and offer Ardhya. In the absence of all other materials, worship and offering can be done with even a hundred betel nuts. The mantra of Ardhya is as follows:

'Shri Krishna in the form of true love! You are very kind. You are the provider of shelter to us shelterless creatures. We are drowning in the ocean of the world, please be happy with us. Kamalayan! Universal feeling! Subrahmanya! Great man! Everyone's ancestors! Greetings to you! Jagatpate! Please accept the offering given by me along with Goddess Lakshmi.

After that worship the Brahmin. Donate him a water pitcher, umbrella, shoes and clothes. While donating, say - 'May Lord Shri Krishna be pleased with me through this donation.' Donate a black cow to the best Brahmin as per your capacity. Dvishreshtha! A learned man should also donate a vessel filled with sesame seeds. If those sesame seeds are sown, the number of branches that can be produced from them will ensure that he is honored in heaven for a thousand years. Take bath with sesame seeds, apply sesame paste, drink water mixed with sesame seeds, donate sesame seeds and use sesame seeds for food. In this way, O great human being! Due to the use of sesame seeds in six works, this Ekadashi is called 'Shattila', which destroys all sins.

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Use of Unfair Means (Cheating) in Examinations

■ **VIJAY GARG**

Education System is a tool that enables people to lead productive lives according to their talents and interests. For Education systems to be fully effective it must give an individual the training of a independence and leadership. At the same time, it should provide for the development of all the vocational abilities needed for the creation of a progressive and democratic society. The quality of education that is imparted to youths contribute largely to the formation of their attitudes. So whatever kind of education is imparted will determine the quality and nature of the educated youth coming out of the schools, colleges and universities. Education is a great builder and if it is deficient or decadent it can be a destroyer too. History is proof of such deficiencies or lack in education. Greece and Rome were once world leaders owing to the fact that these were great centres of learning and education. But when these centres ceased to exist it resulted in the downfall of these empires.

If current education systems are to be evaluated they too suffer from various shortcomings and faults, though there are still many exceptions. Nonetheless, there is a need to address and end the malpractices that are commonly committed during examinations. These malpractices are at the pre-conduct, conduct and evaluation stages and range from leakage of question papers to copying, changing answer books, impersonation, misconduct in examination centre, approaching invigilators/examiners, making false entries in award list/ examination registers and issuing fake certificate/degrees etc. The use of unfair means in the examination is a trend that isn't going to end soon. The whole system of education revolves around Examinations which play a pivotal role in the success or failure of the system. They are also the barometers of the success or failure of students. The resort to copying and use of other

unfair means/ malpractices in examinations is a serious problem which needs an immediate solution. This problem is like a disease in our educational system which is messing up the future of the youth and the society as a whole as well.

Why do Students Resort to Unfair Means?

Fear of Failure: The fear of is one of the top reason for some students to cheat in exams. Some students anticipate a lot of problems if they fail the exams. Their fear dwells in their parents complain about bad grades, their friends mocking and a possible dark future too. They get stressed and the end result is cheating in exams.

Lack of Ability: There are few students who have no potential of taking up the challenge of exams. Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence cause them to cheat. Instead of studying hard, paying attention to classes, reviewing lessons and doing exercises they cheat in exams.

Lack of Interest: Some students have no interest in studies at all. They find it useless as they know that they are going to take over their father's business or follow traditional family business after their studies. For them, school is just a formality and a pass time. They find no need to study and cheating seems to be an easy way out. Cheating for Fun & Show-off: Some students cheat in exams is because enjoy taking risks. It sounds ridiculous but in reality, there are certain students who get thrilled and excitement in doing such malpractices. They want to be popular by showing-off their ability. For some, it is an ego issue and for some, it is a dare for a bet or otherwise.

Availability of Sources: Technology and money facilitated cheating tools in the form of elements such as ex-students, co-students, parents, teachers, examiners, invigilators, examination staff and outside elements. They are readily available either due to money or otherwise. Easy Approach: Using unfair means in the form of chits, guides,

paid candidate, question paper leak, bribed teachers or examiners etc. appears to be a shortcut to hard work. When there are shortcuts who wants to make efforts to study. Habitual Use: For successful cheaters, it becomes a bad habit which gives them the confidence to do it again. Such students just can't do without cheating in spite of the fear of getting caught as the fear is overshadowed by tasted success. Poverty: Some students come from poor families and they are working too many hours in paid employment to cope with schoolwork. They can either study or work so an easy way out is using unfair means. Substance Addiction: Some have developed an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Such students have only one thing in mind and that one thing sways them away from studies. Anti-social Elements: Students from families having a history of violence and psychiatric problems tend to be influenced by their environment. They indulge in crime and other anti-social activities which alienates them from studies Good Grades: Some students are ambitious and want good grades at all cost to get admissions in reputed college or university. Though many of them are bright students, they want to leave no chance to top and the temptation to cheat to get the coveted admission or scholarships becomes very powerful. By Hook or by Crook: The prevalent attitude of getting things done either By Hook or By Crook in present times is becoming acceptable and sort of norm. Corrupt officials and governments are leading examples. In such an environment cheating is no big deal. How to deal with the Problem of Use of Unfair Means in Exam? Purpose of Examinations: When the purpose of examinations becomes a method to gain grades rather than for it's learning value, there is degradation in the value of examinations in the eyes of the students. It becomes a formality then. Legal Consequences: Strict laws

regarding cheating should be implemented to prevent cheating. Incentives to Informers: Students who are aware of cheaters should be given incentives in secret to prevent this malpractice. Video Surveillance: Using cameras even if they are dummies instils a fear of being taped and 100 % chance of getting caught which itself will prevent cheating. Tracking School Staff: School staff can be tracked by hired detectives for the possible perpetrator. Extra Stress on Policies and Guidelines Regarding Cheating: These need to be fully communicated to students in various ways like the bulletin board, verbal announcement before the exams, warning on the exam sheet etc. This induces a fear and rejection of cheating. Fair Exams: There is a need to create a test that is fair to the students. Some students use an instructor's reputation for giving "unfair" tests as an excuse to cheat. "Fair" means that the exam tests the material that you said it would cover; that students have enough time to complete the exam and that there is a reasonable grade distribution.

Pre-coded Sheets: Use of Pre-code answer sheets and test booklets that use a numbering system so that the number on each test booklet matches the one on each student's answer sheet is also an effective way to prevent cheating.

Clever Marking: To eliminate cheating after the exam has been returned to students, mark the answer sheets in such a way that answers cannot be altered (such as using a permanent felt-tip pen).

Seating Arrangements: Number seats and tests and then assign students to sit in the seat with the same number as the number on their test.

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